

Annual Report 2014





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Editorial



Dear readers,

2014 was a strategic year for EQUASS, in which we consolidated our partnerships, rolled out a new training programme, and continued on our mission of engaging social service providers in providing their users the highest quality of services of which they are capable.

The new EQUASS Consultancy training programme has shown great success in providing consultants, quality managers, and directors many tools on how to successfully implement a quality system in a social services organisation, but also on how to maintain a sustainable quality culture, by linking it to everyone's everyday work.

EQUASS continued to certify social services across Europe, a total of 162 organisations serving over 20.500 persons, and employing over 5.800 persons. It is now a widely acknowledged fact that in the past decade, employment in the health and social services sector in Europe is growing much faster than in other sectors of the economy. The European Commission tells us that between 2000 and 2009, there were 4.2 million new jobs created in the so-called 'white-sector' in Europe, and some estimates place the potential for the workforce growth between 2010 and 2017 to an additional 5 million more.

Within this context, the sector of social services is going through a rapid growth, and a change towards individualised services, within the community, and aiming at enhancing the potential and quality of life of each services user, according to the goals that these users define themselves. The European Platform for Rehabilitation believes that quality of social services is more than ever a national and European priority, which is why it continues to promote EQUASS as tool for implementing a human rights-based approach to service design delivery.

The next big step for EQUASS will be to update its standard by consulting stakeholders on how the requirements for quality have changed in Europe since 2009, when the current version of the EQUASS was developed, 6 years ago. This consultation started in 2014 and will continue until the end of 2016.

In this consultation and development process, EQUASS will be looking at how the priorities in the sector may have shifted in the past 6 years, but also how the auditing and verification process can be improved upon. EQUASS will be focusing on creating a system that allows organisations to move through stages of organisational development, and encourage them to reach higher and higher. This new standard, the EQUASS SSGI 2018 version, is set to replace the current EQUASS 2012 version as of January 2018.

Yours sincerely,

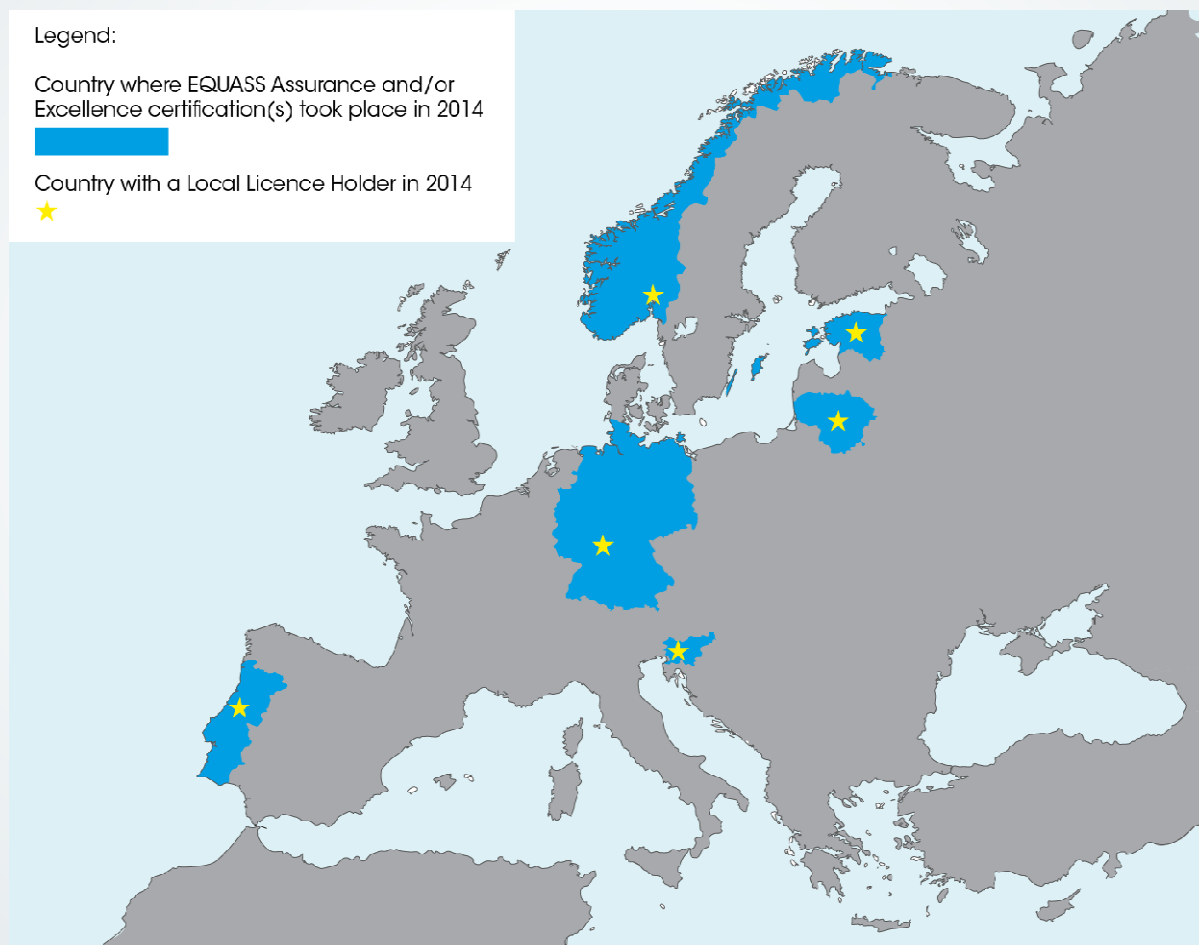
Jean-Paul Essers

President - European Platform for Rehabilitation





EQUASS Certifications in 2014



**158 EQUASS Assurance
organisations awarded
in 2014**

**122 in Norway
16 in Portugal
10 in Estonia
5 in Slovenia
4 in Germany
1 in Lithuania**





**4 EQUASS
Excellence
organisations
awarded in 2014**

**3 in Portugal
1 in Greece**

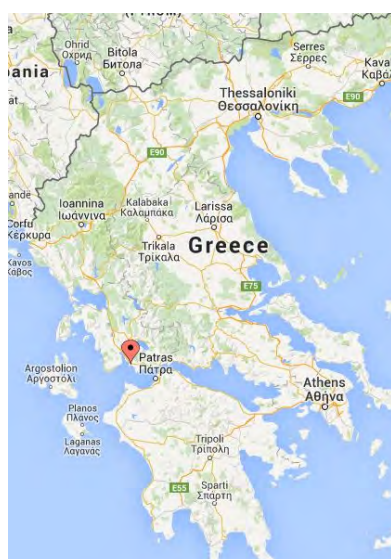
EQUASS Excellence Highlights



APPACDM de Soure counts 46 employees and deliver care services to 98 patients.

APPACDM de Portalegre was founded in 1962 and currently deliver care services to 213 patients.

Fundação AFID Diferença is composed of multiple sites and count up to 167 employees and 1 184 patients benefiting from various care services.



Workshop Panagia Eleousa is certified for the second time.

About 136 people benefit from their services delivered by a highly qualified staff of 50 employees.



EQUASS Local Licence Holders (LLH)

The dissemination and expansion of EQUASS in Europe is assisted by a set of local representatives, called Local Licence Holders. The LLH serve as a local intermediary between the EQUASS customers and the EQUASS Secretariat, and coordinate the certification process between applicants and auditors in the countries where an LLH is established. The EQUASS Secretariat only comes into action when the full application dossier and Audit report are submitted for approval.

In Estonia, Germany, Lithuania, Norway, Portugal and Slovenia, EQUASS Assurance certification services can be obtained through the Local Licence Holders detailed hereafter. For EQUASS Assurance certification in countries other than those listed above, and for EQUASS Excellence certification in all of Europe, applications are made directly to the EQUASS Secretariat, based in Brussels, Belgium. The EQUASS Secretariat **in no way outsources or delegates** to the Local Licence Holder the decision on awarding the Quality Mark, but trains, supports and monitors the LLH. National Stakeholder Committees are established in countries where the volume of certifications (actual or expected) is significant, and requires to consult with the sector actors for input and scrutiny on the role and implementation of EQUASS in the country. The Committee consultation and comments benefit the cycle of continuous improvement for both for the LLH and the management of EQUASS in Brussels.

Estonia



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Astangu is a leader of promoting quality of social services in Estonia. Since January 2012, Astangu acts as an EQUASS Local License Holder. Over 80 service providers are involved in the implementation of an EQUASS Assurance quality system.

EQUASS Assurance has been implemented in Estonia since 2010 with the support of the European Social Fund, with currently 37 certified organisations as of April 2015. Analysis of the social sector from the perspective of quality of services have been carried out during 2012-2013 and the report will be used in further planning of the sector by the Ministry of Social Affairs. Since January 2015 the Centre for Quality in Social Services is created to promote EQUASS in Estonia and quality of social services. More information about Astangu centre: <http://eng.astangu.ee>



Germany



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EQUASS Deutschland is operated by the Brüsseler Kreis, a collaboration of the major Protestant and Catholic social enterprises in Germany. The Brüsseler Kreis is active in providing care for persons with disabilities, the elderly, youth and in education. With about 40 000 workers and more than 35 000 in-patient, partly-in patient and out-patient care clients, they serve about 100 000 persons yearly, with a turnover of around € 1.7 billion. EQUASS Deutschland is represented by the organisation Josefsheim Bigge, located in Olsberg.

Lithuania



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VRC, a public organisation funded under the Ministry of Social Affairs, has a leading role in promoting quality in the Vocational Rehabilitation sector in Lithuania. VRC provides medical and vocational rehabilitation services, social day care, practical driving assessment and a driving school for people with disabilities.

VRC was also the recipient of the EQUASS Excellence Mark in 2011. The services audited serve over 600 persons and employ over 100 staff members.

Norway



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The company EQUASS Norway AS was officially established in January 2012. Before that, it was still operated as a division of the Association of Vocational Rehabilitation Enterprises (AVRE), an employer and interest organisation for approximately 110 not-for-profit organisations spread across Norway. These EQUASS in Norway has benefited from a tremendous boom in operations due to the decision of the NAV, the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Organisation, to recognise EQUASS as one of several certification systems available to organisations providing services to people with disabilities.

As of May 2015 , EQUASS Norway has fterminated its EQUASS Licence Holder activities, and EQUASS in Brussels is now the contact point for EQUASS Assurance certifications in Norway.

Portugal



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APQ is a membership based non-profit organisation founded in 1969. Its purpose is to promote and spread knowledge and experiences in the field of quality organisational excellence, as well as practices that lead to increase the productivity between organisations in Portugal. APQ is recognised as the leading non-governmental institution of the Portuguese quality movement.

APQ regroups around 2200 members, covering organisations from various sectors and dimensions, public and private, and a wide number of auditors, consultants and quality managers. APQ is also a Sectorial Standardisation Body in the field of Quality Management, responsible for three Technical Committees - Quality Management, Conformity Assessment and Risk Management.





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The development unit for vocational rehabilitation of URI in Ljubljana has a leading role in promoting quality in the vocational rehabilitation sector of Slovenia. Its role is recognised through public mandate and financially supported by the Slovenian Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs. The University Rehabilitation Institute in Ljubljana started its role as EQUASS Licence Holder in January 2011.

Evaluation of the 2014 audits

Every year, EQUASS sends a evaluation questionnaire to all the service providers that have received an audit in that year.

The participants could grade various aspects of the audit and its organisation with scores between 1 (very poor) and 5 (excellent). Here are the average scores received in 2014:

Topic	Average Score
The overall quality of the site visit	4,35
The communication about the programme of the site visit	4,41
Relevance of the interviews with stakeholders	4,40
The site-visit preparation form	4,25
The content of the audit report	4,46
The information about the EQUASS audit procedure	4,46
Respect of the audit procedures by the auditor	4,73
Respect of the audit procedures by the Local licence Holder (if applicable)	4,61
Respect of the audit procedures by the EQUASS unit in Brussels (if applicable)	4,25
The communication with Local Licence Holder (if applicable)	4,38
The communication with the EQUASS unit in Brussels (if applicable)	4,33



Interview with a member of the EQUASS Awarding Committee



Dirk Jarré

President of EURAG, the European Federation of Older Persons

EURAG is the oldest transnational non-governmental organisation created by and for older persons in 1962, 53 years ago.

When did you first come to learn about the EQUASS quality system for social services of the European Platform for Rehabilitation?

Well, in early 2009 EURAG was asked to participate in an open workshop of the European Commission financed “Prometheus Project”, under the leadership of the European Platform for Rehabilitation, that had for mission to describe a Common Quality Framework for Social Services of General Interest in terms of quality principles as well as the core criteria for quality insurance. Having already worked professionally on various issues of social services, I represented EURAG in this process.

Together with the European Committee for Standardisation, CEN, a large coalition of NGOs and public structures providing social services or representing users of such services cooperated in this project during one and a half years to come up, in September 2010, with a common definition for quality in social services to be used as a reference and basis for further quality initiatives in a large range of social service sectors. Interestingly the Social Protection Committee of the European Union later adopted most of the elements of these quality definitions in its recommendations to EU member states.

What elements of quality in social services are the most important to EURAG? What are the trends and recent developments in the requirements for quality in social services to older persons?

The most important aspect of social services for older persons is, from the point of view of EURAG, the unconditional respect and promotion of human dignity

and the full recognition of human rights so that older persons are neither considered nor treated as objects of care but as fully respected receiving and co-determining partners of social services.

On the other hand it is very important to understand that older persons constitute not simply a homogeneous group but that they are as diversified in their personalities, their needs and their abilities as all other groups of age.

We consider that individuals at any age and in any situation have their specific potential that needs to be discovered, respected, maintained, promoted and valued. Quality social services endeavour to respond as much as possible to these differences in order to support people through respectful and understanding attitudes and action.

What has been your experience of EQUASS as a quality system along the years?

One of the outstanding features of EQUASS lies in the fact that it is, on the one side, based on a set of ten strong principles that, in a comprehensive interrelationship and by taking into consideration the potential and the specificities of all the stakeholders involved, determine the most important aspects of quality of social services to human beings in need.

However, the criteria or indicators that are based on these principles to measure in an objective and traceable manner quality performance are not written in stone and thus rigid forever but undergo regularly a process of critical screening as to their validity and specific weight. According to socio-cultural developments, changing needs of service users and other changes in society they can be readjusted and completed.

What has always impressed me during all the years I have the privilege to serve on the EQUASS Awarding Committee is the fact that we have a continuous, frank and very constructive debate about the effectiveness of these criteria and indicators, reflecting on them according to our various and quite diverging personal and institutional backgrounds and experiences. This allows us to suggest systematic and operational modifications to the benefit of



all stakeholders.

I find it also very important that the European Platform for Rehabilitation, the “owner” and thus responsible for EQUASS, has a very broad and admirably comprehensive understanding of social services and is interested in a large range of issues connected with the sector. Thus it has been a great honour for me to be asked twice to contribute key speeches to major EPR events, one “On Ethics in Rehabilitation” and the other one “On the Importance and the Scope of Impact Assessment”.

What advice would you give to an organisation providing services to elderly persons that is considering starting the process of implementing EQUASS?

It seems to me that the following three presuppositions must prevail to be successful in an EQUASS

implementation process:

First: It must be absolutely clear that the dignity, the fundamental rights and the wellbeing of the person served are of paramount importance for the social service delivered to an individual.

Second: The declared objective must be to systematically and continuously improve the quality and the effectiveness of the services offered – and that EQUASS is seen as a guiding instrument to measure progress in the services’ outcome.

Third: All stakeholders must be involved in an on-going and respectful manner in order to allow them to invoke their various needs, their potential, their limitations and even their dreams to be adequately taken into account.





Interview with an EQUASS Assurance certified organisation



Mette Veiby

Director of Follo Futura

Mette Veiby is the Administrative Director of Follo Futura, a centre for vocational guidance and training to persons with disabilities in Ås, south of Oslo, Norway. Follo Futura also produces equipment for physiotherapy and physical rehabilitation. Mette Veiby has been working in Follo Futura since 1992, as Quality Manager in her first decade in the organisation, and as Director for the past 13 years. Follo Futura was certified 3 times with EQUASS Assurance, starting with the first certification in October of 2009

When did your organisation first come to learn about the EQUASS quality system for social services?

Follo Futura learned about EQUASS in 2002/2003 when we were attending a meeting at EPR in Belgium together with colleagues from the Attføringsbedriftene (*ed. note: Norwegian Association of Vocational Rehabilitation Enterprises*).

At what point did Follo Futura decide to start the process to implement EQUASS with the intention of becoming certified with EQUASS Assurance, and why?

Follo Futura started to implement EQUASS in the spring 2009 and we were certified in the autumn the same year. We experienced that the system was taking care of the participants in our services in a better way. EQUASS has standard for how to maintain the human resources in the system.

What were the biggest challenges that you had with implementing EQUASS Assurance in your organisation? How did you overcome them?

Actually with did not meet any big challenges in the

implementation process. Follo Futura was at that time certified according to ISO 9001:2008 and had already a quality system. We also had been attending a group at Attføringsbedriftene that was working with quality indicators. We experienced that EQUASS had “solutions” for how to handle some of the indicators.

What differences has the EQUASS Assurance implementation brought to Follo Futura, and the way it operates?

For Follo Futura EQUASS is a management system. It helps the organisation to work after procedures and always look for better ways of doing our services. At the same time the system involves the participants and the employees in evaluating and developing the services. For us the “Årshjulet” (*ed. note: Cyclical annual plan*) is the most important document in the system. It’s a toolbox for all our activities by setting quality goals, corrective actions and innovation activities. We work with “Årshjulet” and this involves the whole organisation in all the goals and activities we are going to perform during the year.

Follo Futura also has an ISO 9001:2008 certification. Could you tell our readers something about the interaction between the two quality systems in your organisation?

Follo Futura has certified all their products and services in the ISO 9001:2008 in 1994. If we look for the differences in the systems, we would say that the ISO 9001:2008 system focuses on the process while EQUASS is more into participant satisfaction and how to involve them in the services.

What advice would you give to a social service provider organisation that is considering starting the process of implementing EQUASS Assurance?

The EQUASS system is a good management system that makes sure that your organisation has the same directions and goals in the way of offering the services.



DeSqual Project



Project for the Development of Sustainable of quality Assurance in VET (DESQUAL)

In the DeSqual project, the EQUASS unit of EPR works with partners in the field of Vocational Education and

Training (VET) for people with a disability in The Netherlands, Germany, Norway, Ireland, Estonia, Lithuania, Portugal, Spain, Greece and Slovenia. The project aims to create sustainable quality for service providers. The goal of DeSqual is to involve quality and quality improvements in daily practice of both staff and management of the sector.

In many quality projects for VET, much attention is paid to the creation and the implementation of a solid structure of a quality system and to the quality behaviour of staff. Experiences from the last decade show that many VET-providers face the challenge to maintain the quality performance according EQAVET requirements on a daily basis. In other words: they have the challenge to assure the sustainable implementation of EQAVET requirements in their quality systems. This has to do with elements that are below the surface: quality awareness and quality culture. In the DeSqual project, we aim to also change those 2 elements in an organisation.

The project started on November 2013 in Brussels when partners first met and defined what is needed for VET providers to work on sustainable quality improvements. Then 10 VET Providers made improvement actions/plans to increase quality awareness, quality culture and quality behaviour of staff.

After that, a tailored modular training program for quality assurance was developed by 4 expert organisations. EQUASS is represented in the project by EQUASS Key Expert, Guus van Beek.

In November 2014 and January 2015 the full train-the-trainer program was executed for staff of the pilot sites. The modules that were given are:

- ★ Quality of Life & Individual planning
- ★ Measure and enhance Empowerment
- ★ Staff Involvement in Culture Quality Improvement
- ★ Result of Improvement actions
- ★ Partnership and cooperation
- ★ Needs and expectations from society
- ★ Internal audit
- ★ Staff performance review
- ★ Linking strategic planning, annual planning and core activities

Based on the knowledge of the train the trainer program, the pilots started with the implementation of their improvement plans. Issues they are working on are staff involvement, leadership, partnerships, quality of life in persons centred planning and meeting the demands of society. The pilots are supported in the project by quality experts.

A general tool as well as specialised tools are developed to measure changes in the quality culture and quality improvement on the pilot sites. The results of these plans will be ready and published at the end of the project in October 2015.

For further information we refer you to the website: www.desqual-leonardo.eu



Overview of Trainings



In 2014, EQUASS organised 4 EQUASS Assurance auditor trainings, 1 full training for new auditors in Norway, and 3 calibration sessions. These were attended by a total of 32 participants.

Additionally, 2 EQUASS Consultant training took place in Lisbon, then Coimbra, Portugal, with an attendance of 12 persons per training.

9 new EQUASS Assurance auditors were trained, and 8 persons were recognised as EQUASS consultants.

EQUASS complaint management

EQUASS strives for continuous improvement, and has implemented a series of procedures used to address complaints and resolve disputes. The EQUASS complaint process is available to all and can be consulted at the following link: <http://www.equass.be/equass/index.php/about-equass/quality-control>

In 2014 the EQUASS Secretariat received 1 formal complaint

The table below gives an overview of the complaint received in 2014, and how it was dealt with.

Reason for the complaint	Number of complaints	Reaction	Resolution
Dissatisfaction of the Licence Holder about the current level of communication and dissemination of materials	1	The EQUASS secretariat held a meetings with the Licence Holder in order to find remedies and solutions, and jointly agree on a new approach.	The EQUASS Secretariat has introduced an information letter only for Licence Holders, to keep them informed about the current news and developments within EQUASS

External Publications

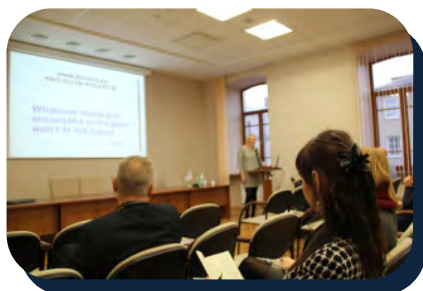
“Quality is what we do everyday”

On October of 2014, Norwegian research institute Nordlandsforskning published their impact study of EQUASS in the Norwegian sheltered workshop sector. Titled “Quality is what we do everyday”, this report was commissioned by the Norwegian Labour Directorate - NAV - in order to measure the impact of EQUASS in the quality of the services, and the improved functioning of the organisations who implemented it.

This independent report showed a very positive effect of EQUASS on the sheltered workshop market, and also highlighted a few points that will be taken into account when designing a new and improved EQUASS 2018 standard for SSGI.



EQUASS event in Lithuania



On December 3rd 2014, the EQUASS representative in Lithuania, the Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre, organised an EQUASS awareness raising event in Vilnius, in collaboration with the Ministry of Social affairs.

The event presented the EQUASS system to service providers and local stakeholder, as well as the impact of its implementation, and various implementation strategies in select EU countries. The event was supported by EQUASS Experts: Natalja Markovskaja, Keiu Talve, Guus van Beek and Michael Crowley.

NASO - Bulgaria

In June of 2014, EQUASS contributed to the Ninth National Forum of Social Service Providers, organised by the National Alliance for Social Responsibility (NASO), with support from the Bulgarian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, National Association of Municipalities in Bulgaria and EASPD. Marie Dubost of the EQUASS Unit gave an overview of EQUASS as a human rights-based quality management system and how it may contribute to the development of Bulgaria social services sector, in relation to the conference's topic: "European Partnership for New and Quality Social Services".



Quality events in Estonia



On September 30th 2014, the EQUASS unit, in collaboration with the EQUASS representative in Estonia, organised a series of seminars around the topic of quality in Social Services. The morning session revolved around the current state and challenges of quality of social services, in Estonia and in Europe. This seminar was facilitated by Guus van Beek and Keiu Talve. The second event was a round-table and workshop around the practical implementation of person centred social services, coordinated by EQUASS Expert Michael Crowley.

The events attracted over 45 participants, coming from various service providers, as well as local authority representatives. This event was supported by the Progress Programme of the European Union.

Quality events in Sweden

On November 18th 2014, the EQUASS unit organised a seminars around the topic of quality in Social Services in Sweden. The morning session revolved around the current state and challenges of quality of social services, in Sweden and in Europe. The seminar touched on the rationale and principles behind a European Quality Framework of Social Services and its development; the use of quality systems in social services, and the presentation and comparison of various quality models. The second part of the event was a workshop around the Swedish and European quality approaches and concepts in social sector, an example from the mental health sector, and examples from neighbouring Scandinavian countries. These seminars were facilitated by Guus van Beek, Leena Mellenius, Anja Kivimäki and Marie Dubost.

This event was supported by the Progress Programme of the European Union.



EQUASS Structures and Staff

Composition of the EQUASS Secretariat

The EQUASS Secretariat operates the EQUASS system from the offices of EPR in Brussels.

- ★ The EQUASS Manager has final say on the strategic decisions and finances, and reporting to the EPR members, owners of the system.
- ★ The EQUASS Coordinator manages and monitors the daily operations and implementation of the annual work plan, including budget and contracts, marketing, certifications and communications with clients and auditors.
- ★ The EQUASS Key expert provides content expertise on all issues related to the certification system, developing new consultancy products, validating awarding decisions in EQUASS Assurance. The Key expert also delivers most EQUASS trainings and consultancy services.

★ Jan Spooren

EQUASS Manager (until September 2014)

★ Marie Dubost

EQUASS Coordinator

★ Guus van Beek

EQUASS Key Expert

Composition of the EQUASS Core Group

The EQUASS Core Group is an advisory body composed of quality practitioners and experts. They provide a balanced and diversified views on the EQUASS system, processes and procedures. Their recommendations are then provided to the EQUASS Awarding Committee or the EQUASS Management, depending on the topic of the recommendations. The Core Group meets 2 to 3 times per year.

★ Michael Crowley, RehabGroup (Ireland)

★ Jan Spooren, EQUASS Manager

★ Hubert Vornholt, Josefsheim Bigge (Germany)

★ Guus van Beek, EQUASS Key Expert

★ Ester Thunes, GREP (Norway)

★ Marie Dubost, EQUASS Coordinator

Composition of the EQUASS Awarding Committee

The EQUASS Awarding Committee is the body in charge of validating the EQUASS Awarding criteria for EQUASS Assurance and Excellence, and approving any changes made to the certification systems of applicants and auditors. It includes various members of European social partners, funders, policy makers, service providers and service user representatives. The Awarding Committee meets 1 to 2 times per year.

European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR) - Mr. Frank Flannery

European Social Insurance Platform (ESIP) - Mr. Wolfgang Schulz-Weidner and Mr Franz Terwey

European Association for Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD) - Mr. Luk Zelderloo

Council of Europe (CoE) - Ms. Irena Kowalczyk-Kedziora

Business Disability Forum - Mr. Paul Day

Rehabilitation International (RI) - Mr. Jan Johansen

European Federation of Older People (EURAG) - Mr. Dirk Jarré

European Disability Forum (EDF) - Ms. Donata Vivanti-Pagetti and Ms. Simona Giarratano

European Network of Social Authorities (ENSA) - Mr. Johan Lindstrom



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@EQUASS_Europe



Linked In group for EQUASS professionals and stakeholders

(www.linkedin.com/grp/home?gid=4162355)



EQUASS UN Convention on Rights of People with Disability (UNCRPD)

Video: <https://youtu.be/iLaZX6ib6Tk>



What is EQUASS?

The European Quality in Social Services (EQUASS) is an initiative of the European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR). EQUASS provides a range of comprehensive services in the area of approval and certification of quality, all of which comply with the European requirements for quality in the provision of Social Services. The certification programmes are complementary to existing quality certification programmes at the national level and are overseen by an independent International Awarding Committee that includes representatives from key European stakeholders.

www.equass.be

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