



**ANNUAL
REPORT
2016**

The European Quality in Social Services (EQUASS)

Content

Editorial

1. Brief Presentation	4
<i>Mission, Vision and Values</i>	4
<i>Our services / offer</i>	5
2. Main achievement in 2016	6
<i>Development of EQUASS 2018</i>	6
<i>EQUASS certification overview</i>	8
<i>Building capacity</i>	10
<i>Dissemination of our message</i>	11
3. Impact of EQUASS on the ground	13
4. EQUASS people	15
5. How to support us.....	17



Dear readers,

2016 saw a number of important developments that aimed to strengthen the ability of EQUASS to

support the social sector in its mission to provide high quality services to its beneficiaries, based on European recommendations for quality. That year, EQUASS finalised an update to the EQUASS quality system, EQUASS 2018, which will be available to service providers as early as spring of 2017, and will entirely replace the system adopted in 2012 as of January of 2018. This new EQUASS 2018 system addresses a series of improvements requested by the sector, to support social services in making quality part of the everyday life of their organisation.

In 2016, EQUASS also adopted a new strategy for 2017-2019. Its aim is to further strengthen the bonds between the various EQUASS internal and external actors, and enhance their ability to successfully promote the EQUASS vision for quality of social services, in a durable and impactful way.

Much like the services providers who use our tools and methods, EQUASS itself will continue to assess and improve the results and impact of its work. External impact research and consultations are some of the ways in which we continually evaluate our ability to reach our goals.

This publication also contains a collection of testimonials from organisations that were recently certified.

Finally, the EQUASS team continues with the communication of our message across Europe, and the building of new strategic partnerships. 2016 was also the year EQUASS increased its social media presence, as an additional way to keep stakeholders informed about relevant EQUASS news and European developments in our sector.

As our social sector continues to pivot towards more competition in service markets; and towards more community-based, person-centred services that aim to achieve long-term improvements in people's quality of life; EQUASS will continue its efforts in providing the tools and spaces to exchange on how services can best serve their users in this evolving context.

We look forward to making these goals a reality, and thank you again for your continued support to EQUASS.

Yours sincerely,

Marie Dubost
EQUASS Manager

Brief presentation



MISSION

EQUASS enhances the social sector by engaging social service providers in continuous improvement, learning and development, in order to guarantee service users quality of services throughout Europe.



VISION

EQUASS contributes to a European social service sector where high-quality services ensure and promote inclusion and a high quality of life for the service users.



VALUES

Commitment to inclusion: We believe that social services should contribute to a greater agency, self-determination, autonomy, inclusion and quality of life of the social service users. In supporting social service providers in delivering the best quality of services to their beneficiaries, we wish to contribute to our vision of a high quality of life for everyone.

Customer focus: We believe in providing a responsive and high quality service, by being competent, flexible and friendly with our commercial partners, and responsive to complaints.

Partnership & Cooperation: We value our relationship with our key partners, contractors and stakeholders, and wish to create a sense of community, by increasing their ownership in major strategic decisions and by seeking a win-win outcome to all our negotiations.

Transparency: Our stakeholders, partners and customers should understand how EQUASS works, what we focus on, how we decide and award, and to give us feedback on those.

Professionalism: We believe that responsible, motivated and competent professionals deliver professional services, and we want our staff and other representatives to be a reflection of that principle.

Ethical approach: We ensure an impartial outcome for our awarding decisions, and expect all those who work with us to act in accordance. We ensure the confidentiality of all sensitive or personal information that is sent to us in the context of our activities, and ask that our partners, contractors and auditors do the same.

Our services / offer

EQUASS promotes, supports and recognises quality in the social sector by organising or contributing to the following activities:



Promote Quality

Awareness raising: events, research and publications

EQUASS promotes continuous quality improvement, learning and development on issues around quality in social service provision; the place of service users and their social services in society; the importance of a quality approach in social service provision, the positive impact of good services and the damaging social cost of poorly-run services. EQUASS frequently organises dissemination actions on these issues.



Support Quality

Development and delivery of training actions

EQUASS offers trainings for auditors and consultants in the EQUASS system. It also offers service providers the opportunity to attend seminars on the EQUASS system, on quality in social services and to participate in learning events where performance on services are compared and exchanged.

Consultancy and support in projects

EQUASS offers consultancy, tailor made advice or research on quality issues to individual service providers and others, including in the context of short or long term projects, European or otherwise.



Recognise Quality

Quality Recognition

EQUASS offers two recognition programme for quality assurance and excellence in quality in social services. These programmes enable social service providers to engage in an external independent assessment process by which they assure quality of their services to service users and other stakeholders. All EQUASS recognition programmes are based on a Quality Framework (a set of quality Principles), quality criteria and performance indicators that are customised for the social sector. An international Awarding Committee oversees the certification process.

Main achievement in 2016

Development of EQUASS 2018

In 2016, EQUASS finalised the development of an updated edition of its Quality Framework for European Social Services. The new system, called EQUASS 2018 will fully replace the previous version (EQUASS 2012 for SSGI) as of January 1st 2018.

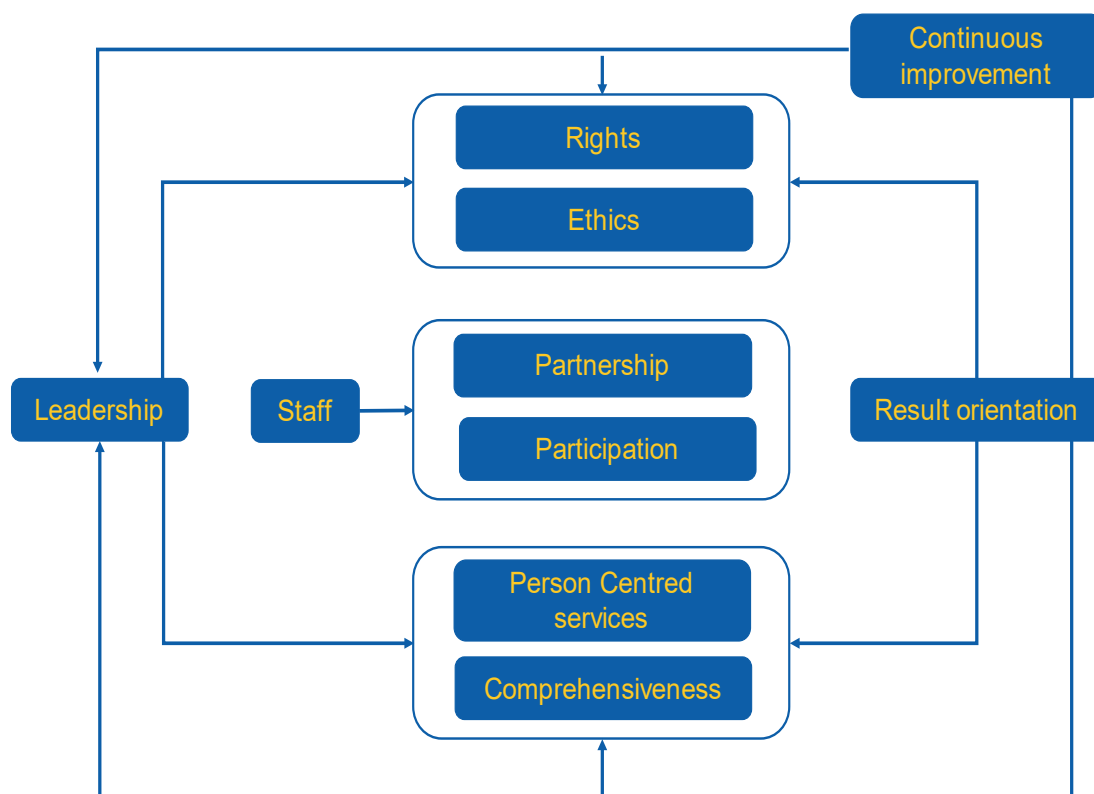
The new EQUASS 2018 system is based on 10 Principles for Quality. These principles for quality are derived from consultation of stakeholders, reports of research and impact studies of the EQUASS 2012 system. Each principle for quality is broken down into specific quality criteria.


The 10 principles for quality express the core values of delivering quality services in the social sector. The quality principles are strongly interrelated with each other.

EQUASS 2018 recognition will be given to social service providers who can show successful implementation of EQUASS 2018 criteria. For assessing the performance of the social service providers, an Assessment Grid has been developed. This grid can be considered as reference guidelines for implementation and assessing the performance of social service providers on the criteria.

The assessment grid has two angles:

1. "Implementation of approaches": To what extent have social service providers implemented clear and sound approaches, systems and methods.
2. "Results": To what extent have social service providers identified relevant results for the criteria and are they comparing their results with other social service providers in the sector.





The EQUASS 2018 recognition ensures satisfactory performance on all EQUASS principles for quality. It also ensures satisfactory performance on the key elements of any operational quality management system¹.

The EQUASS 2018 recognition ensures satisfactory performance on all EQUASS principles for quality. It also ensures satisfactory performance on the key elements of any operational quality management system¹.

Overview of major changes in the EQUASS 2018 version:

1. Principles, criteria and indicators formulated in a **more understandable and accessible language**.
Glossary of key concepts.
2. More supportive of organisational learning, **continuous improvement, capacity building**, continuous development and growth
3. One **coherent and consistent method of assessment** that encourages providers to grow to a next stage of performance.
4. **More flexible** in meeting the certification requirement for specific branches of the social sector and national contexts.
5. **Increased demands on measuring and recording results** based on relevant and valid indicators.
6. More opportunities for providers to **exchange and compare their results**, for organisational learning and development.
7. **Less documentation**, less bureaucracy, more user-friendliness.
8. Emphasises the **implementation of quality approaches** and their systems, and how they are put into practice.
9. EQUASS 2018 recognition / certification is given for a period of **3 years** (both Assurance and Excellence)
10. **Follow-up and guidance** for 2 years after the audit: annual improvement and development reports are reviewed by the auditor.

¹ The basic elements for quality management are: 1. Identifying customer needs and expectations; 2. Management of processes ; 3. Management of responsibilities; 4. Management of resources; 5. Measurement and data analysis; 6. Customer satisfaction; 7. Systematic Quality Improvement system (ISO 9000 system)

Overview of EQUASS Certifications awarded in 2016



Highlights of 2016 Certifications



Five Portuguese organisations obtained EQUASS Excellence recertification in 2016



Other sectors of social services

Services to Homeless persons or persons at risk of homelessness:

In June of 2016, Dublin Simon Community was certified with EQUASS Assurance for 12 of its locations, for the provision of temporary, semi-permanent and permanent housing services.



Foster care services for minors:
In July of 2016, an SOS Children Village in Valmiera, Latvia, was certified with EQUASS Assurance. This village has 12 family houses, each with one SOS Mother and up to six children in the house. In years past, other SOS children's villages in Estonia has successfully undergone an EQUASS Assurance audit. This was however the first EQUASS external audit in Latvia.

Building Capacity



1 consultants training



EQUASS 2018 auditors trained

2 auditor trainings

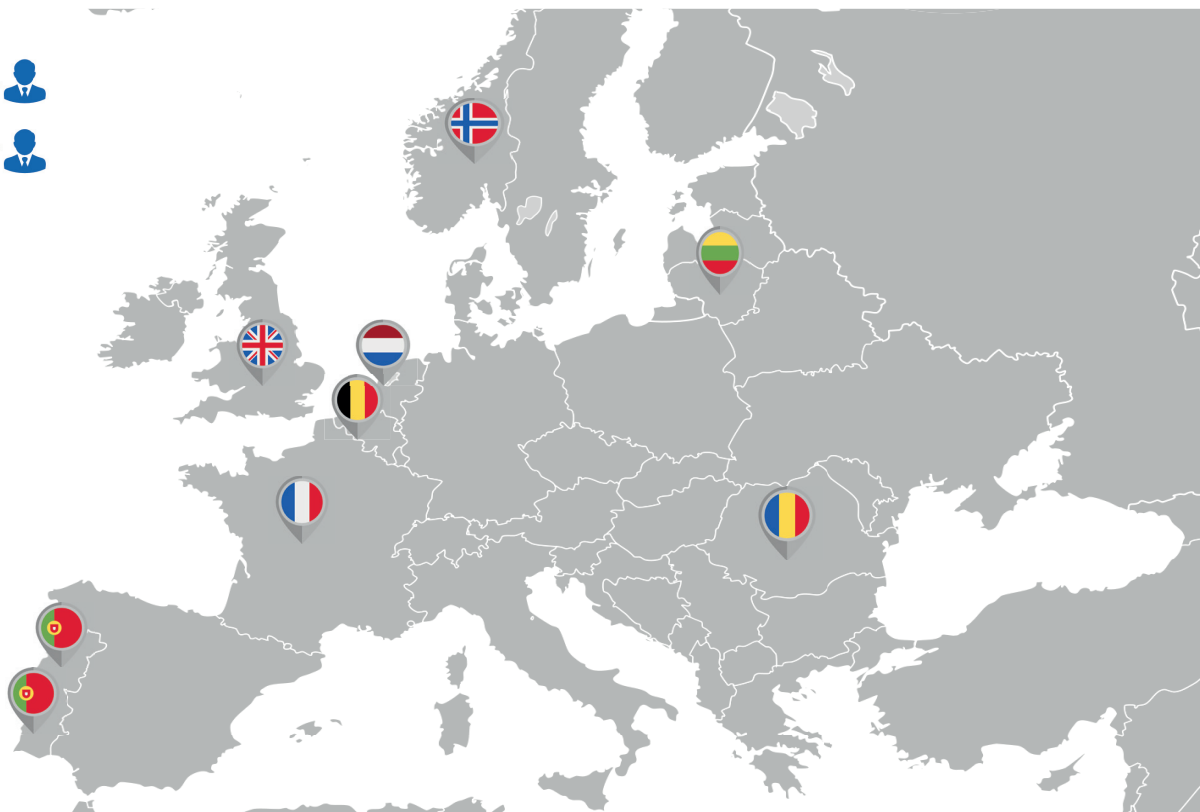


In 2016, EQUASS initiated a train-the-trainer (ToT) programme for 3 consultants to learn to perform official trainings. The ToT programme will continue into 2017.



Dissemination of our message

Dissemination events on Quality



External publications about EQUASS



The Impacts of EQUASS Assurance on Social Service Providers: Results from a Survey - Nuno Melão

The Impacts of EQUASS Excellence on Social Service Providers: Results from a Survey - Nuno Melão

Social Media

EQUASS is mainly active on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. With our presence on social media we would like to increase involvement with followers and keep them up-to-date about EQUASS' activities. These include posting newly certified organisations, events, EQUASS updates, as well as interesting news from certified organisations.



300 followers

36 new followers in 2016

390 views per months

13 views per day

October/November/December are the busiest months for our account!



157 page likes

42 page likes in 2016

APPACDM Coimbra Certification post is the most popular with 324 likes



344 members



1 video

Impact of EQUASS on the ground

Testimonials



“ EQUASS is giving us a common quality management system that focuses on the rights and obligations in our organisation. It contributes to giving the organisation an integrated quality policy. It leads us to reflect on how we work. It also has a greater focus on the interpersonal aspect ”

Heidi Gjøsæter, GREP, Norway

“ The principles underpinning the benchmark reflect modern social services working for the inclusion and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities and disability in Europe, which makes it possible to align the transnational level implementation practices of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ”

APPC Quality management group
Associação do Porto de Paralisia Cerebral, Portugal



“ EQUASS actually raised a quality culture in our institution. It helped us in finding ways to prove what we actually do. It also helped us manage our time, improve communication and more clearly define roles and responsibilities ”

Maria Melaniti, Theotokos Foundation, Greece

“ What I like most about EQUASS is the work with staff and their work with the clients in an educational way so that everything we do benefit the clients. The clients and staff discussing important subjects regularly, this has been very empowering for the clients (and staff). Also a great feature is that you get yourself organized on an annual basis, it automatically gives you a good direction of priorities, what goals you need to set ”

Sara Morgan, Eskilstuna kommun, Sweden





“ Since EQUASS we started with a quick scan in 2004, we are more focused. We are involving all stakeholders (students, staff, funders and external) in developing and delivering our services. Also we are evaluating our added value better. EQUASS has affected our culture where there is more quality awareness and where we are more transparent. ”

Birgit Grimbergen, REA College Pluryn, The Netherlands

“ EQUASS is a meaningful tool with which to measure ourselves against best practice in the industry. The principles are appropriate for the work we do and the indicators made the requirements tangible. EQUASS provided us with genuine reassurance that in general we have quality processes and practices, while also providing a tool to address any gaps for improvement.

The person centred focus was a very attractive feature of the tool and something that wasn't as heavily emphasised in other standards we examined. This approach would be key to how Dublin Simon Community works. Preparing for the audit allowed us to continuously re-establish this approach amongst staff, volunteers and management. ”



Dublin Simon Community, Ireland



“ The implementation of this model had a great impact on the process of internal reflection on our practices and created a greater collective awareness of our fragilities and areas for improvement. Enabled the development of organisational capacity through effective management both internally and externally, built on an analysis of evidence-based results. It also increased the involvement of all stakeholders in the life of the institution, enabling better service delivery to the client. ”

Graciete Campos,
Associação Portuguesa de Paralisia Cerebral de Faro, Portugal



EQUASS Structures and staff



EQUASS Secretariat

Loredana Alen (start. June 2016) – EQUASS Officer
Madeleine Clarke (Until June 2016) – EQUASS Officer
Marie Dubost – Manager
Grete Kvehaugen – EQUASS Officer



Technical services

Guus van Beek - Key Expert



Supporting services

Cinzia de Letis – EPR Communications Coordinator
Laura Jones – EPR Secretary General
Laurence Meuret – EPR Financial officer



Marketing representatives

Peter Adam (Belgium)



Local Licence Holders (LLH)

APQ, Portugal
Astangu, Estonia
VRC, Lithuania
Josefsheim Bigge, Germany
URI, Slovenia



National Representatives

Panagia Eleousa, Greece



EQUASS Awarding Committee

European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR) - Jean-Paul Essers

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

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

Council of Europe (CoE) - Irena Kowalczyk-Kedziora

Business Disability Forum - TBD

Rehabilitation International (RI) - Jan Johansen

European Federation of Older People (EURAG) - Dirk Jarré

European Network of Social Authorities (ENSA) - Johan Lindstrom



EQUASS Technical working group

Guus van Beek (Chairman)

Karl-Wiggo Jensen (Norway)

Carla Gonçalves Pereira (Portugal)

Keiu Talve (Estonia)

Marie Dubost (EPR)

Michael Crowley (Ireland)

Natalja Markovskaja (Lithuania)

Winfried Henke (Germany)

Observers

Geir Moen

Denis Mota

Isabel Silva



EQUASS Subcommittee of the EPR Board of Directors

Thor Fjellvang (Norway)

Manfred Schulte (Germany)

Special thanks to:

The EQUASS
Technical group for
its contribution to
the development of
the EQUASS 2018
standard.

How to support us



DONATE



Donations

Help us ensure our services are affordable everywhere they are needed.

Donations are used to offer reduced prices of quality development services to private non-profit social service providers that are struggling financially, but are strongly committed to improve the quality of their services, and maximise the quality of life of their service users.

EQUASS is a division of the European Platform for Rehabilitation asbl/vzw, a non-profit association registered under Belgian law.

Contact us at equass@equass.be to find out how to donate

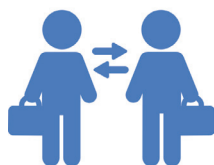


Sponsors

You can sponsor a specific activity or event to help us reduce or even eliminate the cost of attendance in a region where social service providers have been hard hit by austerity measures and budget cuts to social programmes.

If you would like to sponsor an individual non-profit in their quality development efforts, EQUASS can help you identify such an organisation based on your criteria.

Contact us at equass@equass.be



Partners

EQUASS is constantly looking for partners in the public and private sectors, to develop win-win solutions and projects that help us and our partners reach our common objectives.

Partnership agreements can take many forms.

Contact us with your ideas at equass@equass.be

**EQUASS is an initiative of
the European Platform for
Rehabilitation (EPR).**

EQUASS promotes quality in the social sector by organising or contributing to 4 main types of activities:

1. Quality Recognition
2. Development and delivery of training actions
3. Consultancy and support in projects
4. Awareness raising: events, research and publications

EQUASS Secretariat

Avenue des Arts 8 c/o CCI
1210 Brussels, Belgium

Tel +32 2 736 54 44

Email: equass@equass.be

Website: www.equass.be



[EQUASS_Europe](#)



[EQUASS.Brussels](#)