

# **EQUASS 2018**

## **Principles, criteria and Indicators**

© EQUASS 2017  
V.010117

## **Table of contents**

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Principles</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1. Leadership</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. Staff</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>3. Rights</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>4. Ethics</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>5. Partnership</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>6. Participation</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>7. Person-centred approach</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>8. Comprehensiveness</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>9. Result-Orientation</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>10. Continuous improvement</b>	<b>22</b>

## Introduction

The European Quality in Social Services (EQUASS) is an initiative of the European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR). EQUASS provides comprehensive services in the areas of development, promotion, recognition and certification of quality, all of which comply with the European requirements<sup>1</sup> for quality in the provision of Social Services. EQUASS aims to enhance the social service sector by engaging sector providers in quality, continuous improvement, learning and development, in order to guarantee service users quality of services throughout Europe.

EQUASS offers recognition and certification programmes for quality in social services. It enables organisations that provide services in the social sector to engage in an external assessment process at a European level. This means they can prove the quality of their services to service users and other stakeholders.

The EQUASS 2018 system comprises 10 Principles for Quality that are derived from stakeholder consultation in the social sector and based on the European Quality Framework for Social Services (Social Protection Committee, 2010). Each principle for quality is broken down into detailed quality criteria. Specific performance indicators will clarify the performance according to the quality criterion. This document presents the principles, criteria and indicators that must be taken into account while implementing the EQUASS criteria and striving for valid and relevant results for EQUASS recognition by the European Quality for Social Services. It also briefly describes five perspectives on which performance on implementation and results will be assessed.

EQUASS 2018 recognition will be given to those social service providers who can show successful implementation of all EQUASS 2018 requirements. To help in this assessment, an assessment grid has been developed.

To help in this assessment, an assessment grid has been developed. This has two perspectives:

- 1) “Implementation of approaches”: to what extent have social service providers implemented clear and sound approaches, systems and methods for the criteria and are they able to implement improvements.
- 2) “Results”: to what extent have social service providers identified relevant results for the criteria and are they able to successfully implement improvements based on comparing results with other social service providers in the sector. Each perspective has 5 levels of performance<sup>2</sup> that correspond to phases of organisational development and learning. They are linked to the various types of recognition: “Committed to EQUASS Assurance” (Stage 1), “EQUASS

---

<sup>1</sup> Position Paper on Quality (High Level Group on Disability, September 2007) and the Voluntary Quality Framework for Social Services (SPC, October 2010)

<sup>2</sup> The levels of performance are closely related with each other: each levels also includes performance criteria taken from the previous level.

Assurance certification” (Stage 2), “Committed to EQUASS Excellence” (Stage 3) and “EQUASS Excellence certification” (Stage 4 and 5).

The EQUASS certifications<sup>3</sup> ensure that there is a satisfactory performance on the EQUASS principles for quality and one which meets the requirements set in the European Quality Framework for Social Services. It also ensures performance on the key elements of an operational Quality Management System<sup>4</sup>.

The EQUASS 2018 system is customised for the social sector and offers a comprehensive approach based on specific quality criteria, performance indicators and clear external assessment and audit procedures. After sending the application form and some core documentation, a site visit is carried out. This involves an external audit based on how the service provider performs in its implementation of the EQUASS criteria and its achievement of valid and relevant results. During this site visit, an independent auditor verifies the applicant’s implementation of the criteria and the achieved results by reviewing core documentation and conducting interviews with employees, service users and other relevant stakeholders.

The assessment outcomes and the audit are detailed in a written audit report. An organisation that meets the criteria for EQUASS certification will be certified for three years. EQUASS certified organisations are committed to report their progress on performance, improvements and development on annual basis. The EQUASS Awarding Committee, an international consortium of various European social sector stakeholders, oversees the EQUASS system and its processes.

---

<sup>3</sup> EQUASS recognition / certification is based on a comprehensive scoring system. The EQUASS scoring system is described in a separate document.

<sup>4</sup> 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)

# 1. Leadership

- Social service providers demonstrate governance, leadership and social responsibility. They promote social justice by inclusion into the society. They set ambitious organisation and service goals and encourage best practice. Social service providers are committed to continuous learning and innovation.

## Criteria 1

The social service provider defines and implements its vision, its mission and corporate values in the delivered services by establishing ambitious organisation and service goals.

- Indicators:
  1. The social service provider has implemented the organisation's Mission, Vision and Values (*Documentation of Mission, Vision and Values is required*).
  2. Employees demonstrate their contribution to the implementation of organisation's mission, vision and values.

## Criteria 2

The social service provider defines and implements a system for management that promotes a quality culture.

- Indicator:
  3. The service provider has implemented ways of working that contribute to the common quality culture of the social service provider.

Additional EQUASS Excellence requirement:

- A. The social service provider has results of evaluating the performance of managing the organisation. (*Documentation of the results evaluating the performance of managing the organisation is required*)

### Criteria 3

The social service provider demonstrates its commitment to long-term quality goals, continuous learning, innovation and new technology.

- Indicators:
  4. The social service provider has implemented its organisation's quality policy (*Documentation of organisation's quality policy is required*)
  5. Social service provider has defined long-term quality goals and demonstrates measures for continuous learning, innovation and new technology.

### Criteria 4

The social service provider defines and implements an annual planning and review process reflecting the organisations objectives and service activities delivered.

- Indicators:
  6. The social service provider has implemented annual planning. (*Documentation of annual plan is required*)
  7. The social service provider carries out a review on objectives and services results described in the plan.

### Criteria 5

The social service provider demonstrates its commitment to social justice and active inclusion of persons served into the society.

- Indicator:
  8. The social service provider shows concrete commitment to social justice and active inclusion of person served.

Additional EQUASS Excellence requirement:

- B. The social service provider has results on the inclusion of person served into the society. (*Documentation of results on the inclusion of person served into the society is required*)

### Criteria 6

The social service provider demonstrates Corporate Social Responsibility through its commitment to sustainable activities contributing to society.

- Indicator:
  9. Social Service Provider operates concrete commitment and concrete practices of Corporate Social Responsibility.

## 2. Staff

- Social service providers lead and manage their staff to achieve the organisations objectives and to deliver person centred services. They are committed to employ qualified staff based on required knowledge, skills and competences. They promote diversity of staff in the workforce. Social service providers enhance a culture of staff engagement and staff well-being, development and continuous learning of all staff for the benefits of person served. They show compliance with health, safety and appropriate working conditions of its persons served and staff (including volunteers).

### Criteria 7

The social service provider defines and implements a staff recruitment and retention policy that promotes the selection of qualified personnel based on required knowledge, skills and competences.

- Indicators:
  10. The social service provider has implemented a staff recruitment and retention policy and procedures (*Documentation of policy and procedures on staff recruitment and retention is required*).
  11. Employees of the organisation are aware of the recruitment and retention policy.

### Criteria 8

The social service provider operates its service in compliance with mandatory national legislation for health and safety, providing appropriate working conditions, adequate and agreed staff levels and staff ratios, and measures for rewarding employees and volunteers.

- Indicators:
  10. The social service provider shows compliance with national legislation requirements for health and safety, appropriate working conditions, adequate and agreed staff levels and ratios.
  11. The social service provider has implemented measures for recognition for employees and volunteers.

### Criteria 9

The social service provider implements measures for staff development based on a plan for personal growth, continuous learning and development.

- Indicators:
  12. The social service provider has implemented a development plan for employees based on needs. *(Documentation of the staff development plan is required)*.
  13. The social service provider reviews the development plan with the employees on regular basis.
  14. The social service provider has results of effectiveness of employees' personal growth, continuous learning and development. *(Documentation of results on personal growth, continuous learning and development in required)*

### Criteria 10

The social service provider defines and implements requirements for competence in the identified roles and functions of staff and evaluates them on an annual basis.

- Indicators:
  15. The Social Service provider has implemented the competency requirement, roles and responsibilities for each function in the organisation *(Documentation of competency requirement, roles and responsibilities for each function is required)*.
  16. The social service provider has evaluated competence requirements, roles and responsibilities of staff on annual basis.

### Criteria 11

The social service provider recognises staff as a resource for feedback and engages staff in planning, in the development of services and in quality improvement.

- Indicator:
  17. The social service provider has demonstrated measures for the involvement of staff in planning, service development and quality improvement.

Additional EQUASS Excellence requirement:

- C. The social service provider has results on the engagement of staff. *(Documentation of results on engagement of staff is required)*

### Criteria 12

The social service provider operates specific measures that enhance the motivation of staff.

- Indicator:
  18. The social service provider has demonstrated measures for satisfying and motivating employees.

Additional EQUASS Excellence requirement:

- D. The social service provider has results on the motivation of staff. *(Documentation of results on engagement of staff is required)*



## 3. Rights

- Social Service Providers are committed to protect, promote and respect the rights of the person served in terms of equal opportunities, equal treatment and freedom of choice, self-determination and equal participation. This commitment is visible in the organisational values and in all elements of service development, service delivery of the social service provider. Social Service providers ensure that persons served understand and approve all their proposed individual interventions.

### Criteria 13

The social service provider guarantees the rights of person served and these rights are outlined in a Charter of Rights that is based on international human rights conventions.

- Indicators:
  19. The social service provider has implemented a charter of rights for person served based on international human rights conventions (*Documentation of charter of rights for person served is required*).
  20. Employees are aware about the rights of person served and demonstrate respecting the rights of service users.

### Criteria 14

The social service provider informs and supports persons served in understanding their rights in an accessible way.

- Indicator:
  21. The social service provider ensures that the people served are aware of their rights.

Additional EQUASS Excellence requirement:

- E. The social service provider has results on implementing proposals made by persons served. (*Documentation of results on implementing proposals made by persons served is required*)

### Criteria 15

The social service provider respects that person served freely pursue personal goals and aspirations in line with their choices, needs and abilities.

---

- Indicator: 22. The social service provider supports the persons served in pursuing their personal goals.

### Criteria 16

The social service provider evaluates its performance in promoting and practicing the rights of person served in all areas of the organisation.

---

- Indicator: 23. The social service provider has results on promoting and respecting the rights of person served. *(Document on results on promoting and practicing the rights of person served is required)*

### Criteria 17

The social service provider has an accessible complaint management system that registers and responds complaints from persons served, purchasers and other relevant stakeholders.

---

- Indicators: 24. The social service provider has implemented an accessible complaint management system. *(Documentation of complaint management system is required)*  
25. The complaint management system responds to all complaints.

## 4. Ethics

- Social service providers operate on the basis of ethical guidelines that respects dignity and wellbeing of staff, persons served and their families or care givers. They provide service based on trust, confidentiality, honesty to persons served. Social service providers promote protection of persons served from abuse and misconduct.

### Criteria 18

The social service provider promotes ethical behaviour and wellbeing for staff, persons served and their families or caregivers.

- Indicators:
  26. The social service provider has implemented a policy on ethics and wellbeing for all. (*Documentation on policy on ethics and wellbeing is required*)
  27. Employees, persons served and their families or caregivers demonstrate how they act according to the organisation policy on ethics and wellbeing for all.

### Criteria 19

The social service provider defines and implements its guidelines on ethics, which ensures that the dignity of the persons served is respected.

- Indicators:
  28. The social service provider has implemented a Code of Ethics to ensure the dignity of person served and to govern staff behaviour in service delivery. (*Documentation of Code of Ethics is required*)
  29. Social service provider ensures that staff, person served and families are aware of the Code of Ethics and act accordingly.

### Criteria 20

The social service provider facilitates access to services and resources in a non-discriminatory and transparent manner.

- Indicators:
  30. The social service provider ensures access to advocates and/or supporting persons
  31. The social service provider demonstrates non-discrimination around access to services.

### Criteria 21

The social service provider ensures services operate in a safe working environment to ensure the physical security of persons served, their families and caretakers.

- Indicator: 32. The social service provider has implemented a health and safety plan. *(Documentation of health and safety plan is required)*

### Criteria 22

The social service provider operates mechanisms that prevent the physical, mental and financial abuse of the person served

- Indicator: 33. The social service provider has implemented procedures that prevent the physical, mental and financial abuse of persons served. *(Documentation of procedures that prevent the physical, mental and financial abuse is required)*

Additional EQUASS Excellence requirement:

- F. The social service provider has results on protecting the persons served from abuse and misconduct. *(Documentation of results on protecting the persons served from abuse and misconduct is required)*

### Criteria 23

The social service provider defines, monitors and evaluates a set of principles, values and procedures that govern behaviour in service delivery containing aspects of confidentiality, accuracy, privacy and integrity.

- Indicators:
  - 34. The social service provider has implemented procedures to ensure the confidentiality of sensitive information, the accuracy of records, privacy, dignity and physical integrity of person served. *(Documentation of procedures for ensuring confidentiality, the accuracy of records, privacy, dignity and physical integrity of person served is required)*
  - 35. The social service provider has reviewed its procedures for the confidentiality of information, accuracy of records, privacy, dignity and physical integrity of the person served on regular basis.

Additional EQUASS Excellence requirement:

- G. The social service provider has results on respecting the confidentiality of information of person served. *(Documentation of results on respecting the confidentiality of information of person served is required)*

## 5. Partnership

- Social service providers operate in partnership with relevant stakeholders to support the organisation achieve its vision and mission. The partnerships support the reliable sequence of comprehensive services and person-centred outcomes. The partnerships contribute to the inclusion of persons served into society.

### Criteria 24

The social service provider works in partnership with relevant stakeholders to ensure a continuum of comprehensive services and inclusion of person served.

- Indicator: 36. The social service provider demonstrates the use of partnerships ensuring a continuum of comprehensive services and inclusion of person served.

Additional EQUASS Excellence requirement:

- H. The social service provider has results on partnerships that support the continuum of comprehensive services.  
*(Documentation of results on partnerships that support the continuum of comprehensive services is required)*

### Criteria 25

The social service provider evaluates the results and benefits of its partnership for the person served and for the organisation

- Indicator: 37. The social service provider has relevant tangible results and benefits of its partnership for persons served and for the organisation. *(Document of results and benefits of its partnership is required)*

## 6. Participation

- Social Service providers ensure the full participation and active inclusion of person served and representation at all levels of the organisation and within the community. They involve persons served as active participants in decision-making in the service team. In pursuit of more equal participation and inclusion, social service providers support the empowerment of the persons served. They support advocacy to promote equal opportunities of and participation for persons served.

### Criteria 26

The social service provider is responsive to and supports the person served in expressing individual contributions, opinions and views.

- Indicator: 38. The social service provider provides opportunities for the person served to express their opinions and views.

### Criteria 27

The social service provider includes persons served as active participants in service planning, service delivery and evaluation of the services.

- Indicators:
  - 39. The social service provider has implemented a policy and procedures for including persons served as active participants in service planning, delivery and evaluation. *(Documentation of policy and procedures for including persons served is required)*
  - 40. The social service provider has results of including person served as active participant in service planning, in service delivery and in the evaluation of services. *(Documentation on results of including person served is required)*

### Criteria 28

The social service provider reviews and reflects annually on the participation of persons served, based on their input.

- Indicator: 41. The social service provider demonstrates how it has reviewed and reflected on the participation of person served.

Additional EQUASS Excellence requirement:

- I. The social service provider has results on the practice of participation on an annual basis. *(Documentation of results on the practice of participation is required)*

### Criteria 29

The social service provider implements specific measures for staff and service users to understand, enhance and improve the empowerment of person served.

- Indicators: 42. The social service provider has defined and implemented the concept of empowerment for persons served. *(Documentation of a defined concept of empowerment is required)*  
43. The social service provider can show tangible results of empowering person served. *(Documentation on tangible results of empowering persons served is required)*

### Criteria 30

The social service provider implements specific measures for staff and person served to understand and establish an empowering environment.

- Indicators: 44. The social service provider has established the conditions for creating an empowering environment.  
45. The employees and persons served understand how an empowering environment is facilitated.

Additional EQUASS Excellence requirement

- J. The social service provider has results on the creation of an empowering environment. *(Documentation of the creation of an empowering environment is required)*

## 7. Person Centred Approach

- Social service providers provide services are driven by the needs, expectations and capacity of persons served. Services delivered take into account the physical and social environment of the persons served. These services aim to improve the quality of life of the persons served. Social service providers respect the individuals' contribution by involving the persons served in self-assessment, planning, service delivery, feedback and evaluation.

### Criteria 31

The social service provider delivers services that are responsive to individual choices, needs and abilities of the persons served in line with organisation's mission, vision and values.

- Indicators:
  46. The social service provider supports persons served to express their needs, expectations and choices.
  47. The social service provider delivers services based on the needs and expectations of the persons served.

Additional EQUASS Excellence requirement:

- K. The social service provider has results of assessing needs, expectations and the capacity of persons served. *(Documentation of results of assessing needs, expectations and the capacity of person served is required)*

### Criteria 32

The social service provider has a clear concept of Quality of Life for Person Served and implements activities, which are based on a needs assessment of the person served, with the aim of improving their quality of life.

- Indicators:
  48. The social service provider has defined and implemented the concept of Quality of Life for persons served. *(Documentation of defined the concept of Quality of Life is required)*
  49. The social service provider has tangible results of the activities that improve the quality of life of person served. *(Document of results of improving quality of life of person served is required)*



### Criteria 33

The social service provider documents and reviews the planning and delivery of services based on the identification of individual needs, expectations and changing circumstances of persons served in an Individual Plan.

- Indicators:
  50. The service provider has implemented an Individual Plan for each person served that records needs, expectations, services and results of person served. *(Documentation of Individual Plan is required)*
  51. The Individual Plan of the person served is reviewed and updated regularly.

### Criteria 34

The social service provider takes into account the physical and social environment of the person served when developing, delivering and evaluating the services provided to the persons served.

- Indicator:
  52. The social service provider delivers services that address the physical and social needs of the person served.

### Criteria 35

The social service provider involves the persons served in the design and reviewing the Individual Plan to ensure his / her individual contribution is part of the plan.

- Indicators:
  53. The social service provider has implemented procedures for involving persons served in creating and reviewing their Individual Plan. *(Documentation of procedures for involving persons served is required)*
  54. The social service provider has tangible results of their actions to involve person served in their Individual Plan. *(Documentation of results of involving person served is required)*

## 8. Comprehensiveness

- Social service providers ensure that the person served has access to a continuum of holistic and community based services. They are committed to providing services that span from early intervention to support and follow up. The services should be delivered in a coordinated way and through a multi-disciplinary team approach or in a multi-agency setting.

### Criteria 36

The social service provider ensures that the person served can access a continuum of services that span from early intervention to support and follow up, responding to changing requirements over time.

- Indicators:
  - 55. The social service provider delivers a continuum of services.
  - 56. The social service provider has results of evaluating the continuum of services. *(Documentation of results of continuum of services is required)*

### Criteria 37

The social service provider operates services from a holistic approach based on the needs and expectations of the person served, family or care givers.

- Indicator:
  - 57. Services are based on the holistic assessment of needs and expectations of person served, family and caregivers that takes account of the persons' life situation and environment.

Additional EQUASS Excellence requirement:

- L. The social service provider has results on holistic services. *(Documentation of results on holistic services is required)*

### Criteria 38

The social service provider identifies and reviews the service delivery activities, and monitors and maintains control over their quality.

- Indicators:
  - 58. The social service provider has implemented its key delivery activities. (*Documentation of key delivery activities is required*)
  - 59. The social service provider monitors the performance of the key service delivery activities on regular basis.

### Criteria 39

The social service provider delivers services to the persons served in a community based setting and in line with the provider's vision and mission.

- Indicators:
  - 60. The social service provider demonstrates that it delivers services in a community based setting.
  - 61. The social service provider demonstrates that key service activities are delivered in line with its vision and mission.

Additional EQUASS Excellence requirement:

M. The social service provider has results on community-based services. (*Documentation of results on community-based services is required*)

### Criteria 40

The social service provider delivers services to the persons served in a coordinated way.

- Indicator:
  - 62. The social service provider shows evidence that the activities are coordinated and delivered in a continuum.

### Criteria 41

The social service provider delivers services to the persons served in a multi-disciplinary or multi-agency setting.

- Indicator:
  - 63. The social service provider demonstrates that services are delivered in a multidisciplinary way.

## 9. Result Orientation

- Social service providers aim to achieve planned results, benefits and best value for persons served and relevant stakeholders (including funders). They demonstrate the achievements of the organisation and persons served, in line with their mission and their core activities. Service impacts are measured and monitored, and are an important element of continuous improvement, transparency and accountability processes.

### Criteria 42

The social service provider identifies its business and service results and has formal periodic and independent reviews.

- Indicators:
  - 64. The social service provider has identified and records its business and service results. *(Documentation of business and service results is required)*
  - 65. The financial results have been periodically validated by independent review to ensure financial continuity & sustainability. *(Documentation of independent review is required)*

Additional EQUASS Excellence requirement:

- N. The social service provider has tangible organisational results. *(Documentation of tangible organisational results is required)*

Additional EQUASS Excellence requirement:

- O. The social service provider has tangible service results. *(Documentation of tangible service results is required)*

### Criteria 43

The social service provider records results, outcomes and benefits of services for person served on individual and collective bases.

- Indicator:
  - 66. The social service provider has identified the outcomes and benefits to the person served on an individual and collective basis. *(Documentation of outcomes and benefits to the person served on a collective basis is required)*

### Criteria 44

The social service provider evaluates results and benefits for persons served, in line with its mission, in order to determine ways to improve and give best value for persons served, funders and other relevant stakeholders.

- Indicator: 67. The social service provider has implemented actions for improving services after evaluating outcomes, results and benefits.

Additional EQUASS Excellence requirement:

- P. The social service provider has results of best value for relevant stakeholders.  
*(Documentation of results of best value for relevant stakeholders is required)*

### Criteria 45

The social service provider measures the satisfaction of persons served and all relevant stakeholders by internal and/or external evaluation.

- Indicator: 68. The social service provider has recorded an overview of satisfaction of person served and other relevant stakeholder.  
*(Documentation of satisfaction of person served and other relevant stakeholders is required)*

### Criteria 46

The social service provider provides accessible and easily understandable information on records of results, outcomes, including results of surveys.

- Indicator: 69. The social service provider can demonstrate that information about results are understood by person served, staff and other relevant stakeholders. *(Documentation on perceived information on results of stakeholders is required)*

### Criteria 47

The social service provider actively disseminates organisation performance on business and service results among its staff, person served and all relevant stakeholders.

- Indicator: 70. The social service provider demonstrates ways of disseminating information about the performance of the organisation.

# 10. Continuous Improvement

- Social service providers are committed to continuous learning and continuously improving their services and their results. They are proactive in meeting future needs of persons served, staff, funders and stakeholders using evidence-based information for developing and improving delivered social services. They operate systems to compare service performance and continuous improvement.

## Criteria 48

The social service provider defines and implements a system of continuous improvement of results of services, way of working and learning.

- Indicator: 71. The social service provider has implemented a system of continuous improvement and learning. *(Documentation of system of continuous improvement and learning is required)*

Additional EQUASS Excellence requirement:

- Q. The social service provider has tangible results of improving services. *(Documentation of tangible results of improving services is required)*

Additional EQUASS Excellence requirement:

- R. The social service provider has tangible improved results. *(Documentation on tangible improved results is required)*

#### Criteria 49

The social service provider operates mechanisms, which provide information to understand of future needs of persons served, staff, funders and stakeholders.

---

- Indicator: 72. The social service provider demonstrates that it uses information about the future needs of persons served and stakeholders to develop and improve its services.

#### Criteria 50

The social service provider initiates improvement initiatives by comparing and exchanging performances on approaches, results of services, activities and outcomes of person served.

---

- Indicator: 73. The social service provider can demonstrate it has compared approaches, methods of implementation and results with other social service providers. (*Documentation of the comparison is required*)