Improvement of Social services, the application of the quality system EQUASS

Final Evaluation Report

Dr. Brigitte van Lierop
Dr. Liubovė Murauskienė

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INDEX

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE PROJECT AND THE IMPACT EVALUATION

The project '**Improvement of Social services, the application of the quality system EQUASS**' was launched in March 2017 and continues until the end of 2021.
The aim of the project is to develop the quality of social services in Lithuania by implementing the EQUASS quality system, based on the requirements of the Voluntary European Quality Framework for Social Services.

The European Quality in Social Services (EQUASS) is an integrated sector-specific quality certification system that certifies compliance of social services with European quality principles and criteria. EQUASS aims to enhance the social sector by engaging service providers in quality and continuous improvement and by guaranteeing service users quality of services throughout Europe.

During the lifetime of the project, each participating organisation starts with carrying out a self-assessment to find out what improvements are needed, after which improvement goals will be formulated and translated into activities related to reaching the formulated improvement goals. In the meantime, centres will be trained and advised how and what to do to reach the improvement goals and to reach the level of the EQUASS Assurance Certificate. This certificate means that the social service provider has results, based on relevant indicators that clearly show how the social service provider is meeting the requirements of the criteria.

Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre is managing this project, in cooperation with the European Platform for Rehabilitation. During the lifetime of the project, the EQUASS system will be implemented in around 120 social services providers in Lithuania: 20 social service providers took part in a pilot project, after this another 100 were selected to take part in the dissemination phase of the project.

The implementation of EQUASS at the participating centres implies for them to actively realise a higher level of quality compared to the situation before implementing EQUASS. In other words, to realise a positive impact on the service delivery, because of the focus on the service user on the one hand and a focus on the continuous development of staff on the other hand. And, to realise a positive impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation of the social service provider, because of the focus on the standardisation of activities, the monitoring of activities and the continuous development of the services based on the needs of the service users. And, last but not least, it will have an impact on the transparency of the social service providers about their activities and results, towards their funders, their own staff and their service users: there will be more transparency.

The EQUASS Assurance Certificate guarantees centres have reached a specific level; auditors of EQUASS will ask for 'proof' of this level by means of documents to show 'the presence of the quality criteria mentioned in the EQUASS system. This is one part of showing the impact of the implementation of a quality system.
In this project '**Improvement of Social services, the application of the quality system EQUASS**' it is explicitly chosen to go one step further and assign an independent external expert to carry out an impact evaluation, during the period 2019 – 2021, when around 100 social service providers were selected to take part in the implementation of EQUASS. In this independent impact evaluation, five types of stakeholders had the opportunity to give their opinion about the different aspects being part of the implementation of EQUASS. They were asked to give their opinion twice: the first time at the beginning of the implementation, and the second time either after being audited or at the end of 2021, being the end of the impact evaluation period. The answers of these five stakeholder groups have been analysed to find out the impact on the implementation of the quality system EQUASS. Knowing this impact helps answering key questions for evidence-based policy making: what works, what doesn't, where, why and for how much?

This final report describes the results of the impact evaluation.

1.2 STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT

The following chapter 2 will continue with the explanation of the study design including the evaluation methodology, target groups and instruments. Chapter 3 consists of a short description of EQUASS, whereas chapter 4 describes the participating respondents.

Chapter 5 contains the findings related to the impact on the service delivery, where the focus lies on the rights of the service users and the person-centred approach. Chapter 6 focuses on the business aspects of the organisation of the social service providers. All chapters will be based on the comparison of the data in the first measurement and the data in the second measurement.

Funders and partners form a special group in this impact study, as important stakeholders and relevant from the perspective of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system. Some extra attention is given to elements considered important for funders and partners, and will be described in chapter 7.

At three moments during the impact evaluation period, focus groups have been held, to combine the findings of the quantitative data with qualitative information. The outcomes of these focus groups will be described in chapter 8.

Chapter 9 finally describes a discussion, related to the evaluation model and comes to conclusions based on all the findings described in the former chapters. This chapter will end with some recommendations to be used for policy making and dissemination of quality systems in Lithuania.

"Care and Quality are internal and external aspects of the same thing.
A person who sees Quality and feels it as he works is a person who cares.
A person who cares about what he sees and does is a person who's bound to have some characteristic of Quality."

Robert M. Pirsig

2 METHODS AND THE MATERIALS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the impact evaluation of the project 'Improvement of Social services, the application of the quality system EQUASS' is to analyse and assess the impact of the implementation of EQUASS quality system on the social services sector development. Central in this impact evaluation are therefore the changes in quality that are needed and expected to occur when implementing the EQUASS quality system. Important in this, is the opinion of what is needed related to quality aspects of the individual organisation; needed by the different stakeholders that could benefit from this increase in quality. And, last but not least, the purpose of EQUASS is to create changes in quality that last in the long-term.

Based on these starting points, the following central questions are formulated
- What changes are caused by the implementation of EQUASS?
- What was the rationale behind the change?
- Are the changes in line with the needs of stakeholders?
- Are the changes expected to be short-term or long-term and why is this?

During the entire evaluation period, these central questions form the lead for all underlying questions.

2.2 ORIGINAL STUDY DESIGN

For the study design of this impact evaluation, we planned to use the following definition of impact evaluation[1]:

Impact evaluation assesses the changes that can be attributed to a particular intervention, such as a project, program or policy, both the intended ones, as well as the unintended ones. In contrast to outcome monitoring, which examines whether targets have been achieved, impact evaluation is structured to answer the question: how would outcomes such as participants' well-being have changed if the intervention had not been undertaken? This involves counterfactual analysis, that is: a comparison between what actually happened and what would have happened in the absence of the intervention'.

Based on this definition, the following **research design** for the evaluation of the impact of the project 'Improvement of Social services, the application of the quality system EQUASS' was planned to use: A Pre-test – Post-test with Non-Random Assignment to Intervention or Control Groups.
During the implementation phase of the EQUASS quality system, the arrangement of a control group became challenging. The introduction of the GDPR became crucial for organisations and the number of organisations willing to join could not match the required number for a control group. It is therefore, the original design has been replaced with the following design.
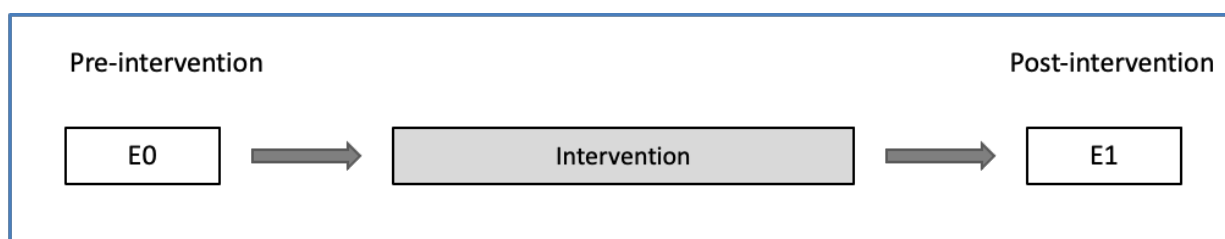
In this design, service users are part of the evaluation, and results regarding the opinion of service users prior to the implementation are compared with the opinion of service users after implementation. Also, opinions of all important stakeholders, being the staff, funders, partners and managers are included in this evaluation study.

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[1] Impact Evaluation: https://www.worldbank.org/en/research/dime/research. Retrieved 30 March 2020.

2.3   TARGET GROUP

This impact evaluation includes those groups that have a direct connection when implementing EQUASS, being:

- Service users of social service providers
- Staff of social service providers
- Managers of social service providers
- Funders of social service providers
- Partners of social service providers

2.4   INSTRUMENTS

In this impact evaluation, there were two moments of quantitative data gathering as can be viewed in the study design. For these two moments questionnaires for each target group have been developed.

In the **pre-test,** each questionnaire consisted of three main groups of questions:

- Questions about the current situation related to quality aspects
- Questions related to their opinion about the impact of the implementation of EQUASS
- Questions about their position, age, gender and some other relevant aspects

In the **post-test,** each questionnaire consisted of two main groups of questions:

- Questions about the current situation related to quality aspects
- Questions related to their experiences about the impact of the implementation of EQUASS in the organisation

2.4.1   QUESTIONS

In order to be able to gather data related to the first central question 'what changes are caused by the implementation of EQUASS', the questionnaire contains all relevant aspects that are part of the EQUASS quality system.

The EQUASS quality system is clear in the criteria that individual organisations need to meet in order to reach a specific level of quality. It is those criteria that are included in this impact study. For each stakeholder, a selection of questions is used, based on the relevance of the aspect and the role of the stakeholder.

- *For service users, these questions are related to their experience with the specific aspects.*
- *For funders, the questions are related to the relevance of the information for their funding decisions as well as to their current view on the application of the different aspects of quality in their funded organisations.*
- *For managers, the questions are firstly related to more generic aspects of quality for their organisation. Secondly, they were asked to rate their current view on the applications of the different more specific aspects of quality in their organisation.*
- *For staff, the questions were related to their current view on the applications of the different aspects of quality in their organisation.*
- *For partners, the questions are related to the relevance of the information for collaborative activities as well as to their current view on the application of the aspects of quality in their specific partner organisations.*

In order to be able to gather data for the second central question 'What are the reasons behind the change':

- *A short literature review was carried out to find reasons for implementing quality systems in the social sector and the care sector. A list of 'reasons' was prepared and managers were asked for their opinion. They also had the opportunity to add reasons. Reasons for implementation are related to the impact managers expect when implementing EQUASS. In the document study, information has been gathered to find out about the improvement goals of each participating organisation. And, in the Post-test, questions about the experiences of managers related to the impact of the implementation of EUQASS has been added.*

In order to be able to gather data for the third question 'are the changes in line with the needs of the stakeholders':

- *An open question was formulated to find out the quality aspects funders view as of importance for the quality of the services. In the Post-test, the answers of this Pre-test has been transformed into closed questions with rating scales.*
- *To find out the needs of the service users, a literature review was carried out leading to a list of existing needs of service users. The questionnaire for service users needed to be short which meant making choices and deleting possible relevant questions to bring into view the needs of the service users. The list of remaining questions is in line with the currently internationally used questionnaire for service users. See literature list.*
- *To find out the needs of staff, staff had the opportunity to give their opinion in an open question about the advantages and disadvantages of the implementation of EQUASS.*
- *An open question was formulated for the partners to bring into view those aspects partners consider as of importance for the collaboration with other organisations. In the Post-test, the answers of this Pre-test has been transformed into closed questions with rating scales.*

- In order to be able to answer the last question 'are the changes expected to be short-term or long-term and why is this', representatives of participating social services providers have been asked their opinion concerning this issue during the focus group interviews.

See for the list of questions, the following page. Answering categories were on a 5-point Likert scale.

Items in questionnaires	Service user	Funder	Manager	Staff	Partner
Opinions related to the importance of the services of social services providers in general		•			
Opinions concerning the information needed for funding of social service providers					
Expectancies related to working in partnership					•
Reasons for implementing EQUASS			•		
Opinions concerning Quality and General Aspects of Organisation			•		
Opinions concerning Quality and Employees			•		
Opinions concerning Quality and Service Users			•		
Opinions concerning Quality and Partners and Society			•		
Opinions concerning Quality and Economics			•		
Opinions relevance of specific organisational information concerning the quality of services		•			•
Opinions relevance of specific staff related information concerning the quality of services		•			•
Opinions relevance of specific 'rights of service users' information for the quality of services		•			•
Opinions relevance of specific health and safety' information for the quality of services		•			•
Opinions relevance of 'involvement of stakeholders' information for the quality of services		•			•
Opinions relevance of specific 'treatment aspects' information for the quality of services		•			•
Application of quality aspects in relation to General Aspects of Organisation		•	•	•	•
Application of quality aspects in relation to Staff/Employees		•	•	•	•
Application of quality aspects in relation to Quality of Life of Service Users			•	•	
Application of quality aspects in relation to Human Rights	•	•	•	•	
Application of quality aspects in relation to Ethical Issues			•	•	
Application of quality aspects in relation to Abuse Issues			•	•	
Application of quality aspects in relation to Empowerment			•	•	
Application of quality aspects in relation to Corporate Social Responsibility			•	•	
Application of quality aspects in relation to Health & Safety		•	•	•	•
Application of quality aspects in relation to Involvement of Employees		•	•	•	
Application of quality aspects in relation to Involvement of Service Users	•	•	•	•	
Application of quality aspects in relation to Funders and other stakeholders			•	•	
Application of quality aspects in relation to Respecting the Rights of Service Users	•		•	•	•
Application of quality aspects in relation to Complaint Issues	•		•	•	
Application of quality aspects in relation to Partners in Continuing Services	•		•	•	•
Application of quality aspects in relation to specific 'treatment' aspects	•	•			•
Application of quality aspects in relation to Monitoring of Results			•		
Application of quality aspects in relation to Dissemination of Results			•		
Beliefs and value of beliefs related to quality aspects				•	
Positive aspects of implementing EQUASS				•	
Disadvantages and doubts related to implementing EQUASS				•	
Level of satisfaction of cooperation					•
What is your age?	•	•	•	•	
What is your gender?	•	•	•	•	
What is your job title?		•	•	•	
How long have you been in this position?		•	•	•	
How long do you work in the social service sector?		•	•	•	
Anything to add?		•	•	•	•

2.4.2 FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

This quantitative data gathering are accompanied by qualitative data derived from focus group interviews held with a selection of with a selection of managers of participating social service providers. These focus group interviews have been held during the last period of the implementation. Focus group interviews were held to gather perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes about the implementation of EUQASS. The main purpose of focus group research is to draw upon respondents' attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences and reactions in a way where other methods are not applicable. Special attention has been given to gather data to be able to answer the fourth central question 'Are the changes expected to be short-term or long-term and why is this?'

2.5 RESPONSE COLLECTING

The questionnaires for funders, managers, staff and partners have been transferred to Survey Monkey, an online survey instrument. Letters of invitation were developed as well as procedures for data collection. See appendices. The questionnaire for the service users have been sent via email and printed by each participating organisation.

Each manager and all members of staff were invited to complete the questionnaires. The contact person of each participating organisation coordinated the invitation. It was also the contact person that invited partner organisations and funding organisations to complete the online questionnaire.

For service users, a specific number of paper versions of questionnaires were disseminated during five weekdays. Service users had the opportunity to complete the questionnaire with the support of an accompanying person.

The completed questionnaires in Survey Monkey were exported into an SPSS data file for analysis. The paper versions of the questionnaires for service users were sent via post and entered manually into Survey Monkey after which they were exported into an SPSS data file for analysis.

2.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Different statistic methods were used for analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to create an overview of the characteristics of the respondents. The findings of the funding organisations and the partner organisations were also brought into view via descriptive statistics.

When looking at the findings of service users, management and staff, independent samples T-tests have been used for analysis to compare the results of the first measurement and the results in the end, the results of the second measurement.

3   EQUASS

3.1   INTRODUCTION

The European Quality in Social Services (EQUASS) is a European and sector-specific quality system for organisations that provide social services and that are committed to comply with fundamental values and quality principles in the sector. EQUASS aims to enhance the social services sector by engaging service providers in quality, continuous improvement, learning and development and by guaranteeing service users quality of services throughout Europe. The EQUASS initiative is designed on the basis of 'user-centred' systems and strategies and comprises of ten Principles, translated into fifty criteria for Quality that are based on universal values and are recognised in Europe. The ultimate goal for EQUASS is the creation of a user-centred approach in social services. The principle of 'user-centeredness' must be deployed throughout an organisation, not only in terms of policy, strategy and systems and approaches, but also in the attitudes and behaviour of frontline staff and made visible in the achievements: the outcomes and results.

3.2   PRINCIPLES OF QUALITY

The ten quality principles of EQUASS reflect the wishes of its European stakeholders, consisting of all relevant parties involved in the social service sector: client representatives and advocacy groups, social partners and funders. The ten quality principles combine business efficiency requirements with a strong focus on protecting the rights of the clients, as well as a person-centred approach, while ensuring a professional development and training of the staff. Each of these ten quality principles will be explained shortly.

Framework of the ten principles of quality
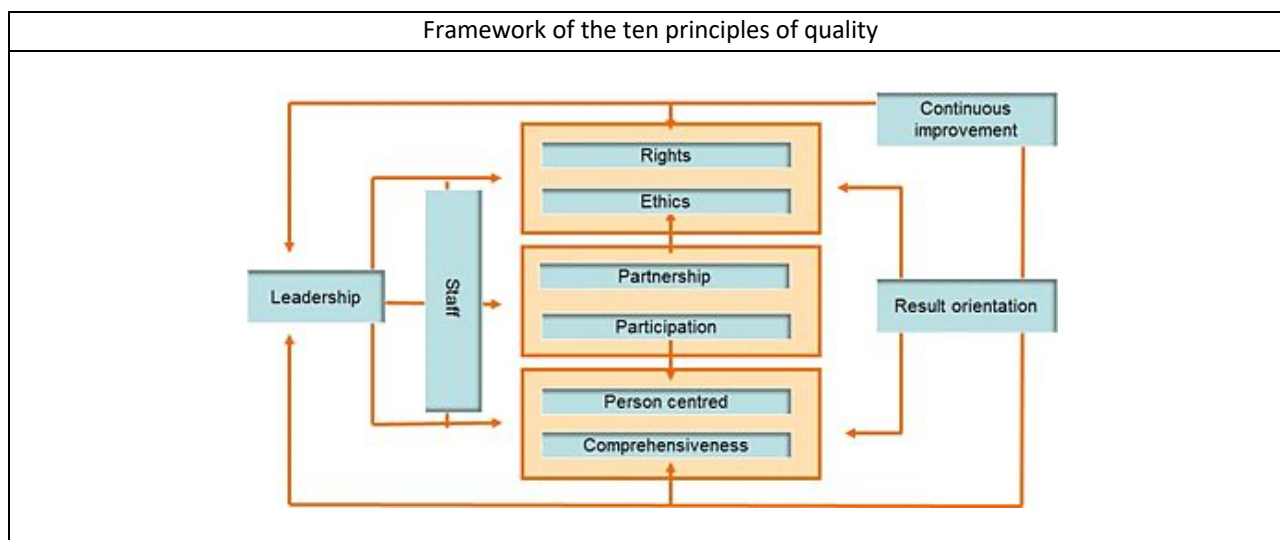
3.2.1   LEADERSHIP

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.

3.2.2   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 wellbeing, 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.

3.2.3   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.

3.2.4   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.

3.2.5   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.

3.2.6   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.

3.2.7   PERSON CENTRED APPROACH

Social service providers provide services are driven by the needs, expectancies 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.

3.2.8   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.

3.2.9   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.

3.2.10   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.

Social services providers that meet the EQUASS certification requirements for European Quality in Social Services have demonstrated their compliance with the Voluntary European Quality Framework for Social Services, The Common Quality Framework for Social Services of General Interest, the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

3.3 THE PROCESS OF CERTIFICATION

The EQUASS Quality Assurance in Social Services can be viewed as a fundamental requirement for operating social services, having a feasible threshold in terms of costs, efforts and resources required. The EQUASS Excellence in Social Services is awarded to service providers that can demonstrate achievements and continuous improvement from three different perspectives: approach, deployment and results. An organisation that meets the EQUASS Excellence criteria is certified for a three-year period. Within this project 'Improvement of Social services, the application of the quality system EQUASS' there is the aim to reach Quality Assurance level. It is this certification process that will be explained.

3.3.1 THE APPLICATION DOSSIER

When a Lithuanian organisation wants to certify, the first step is to contact the Local License Holder of EQUASS who supports and monitors the process of auditing. The Local License Holder will check the eligibility of the application and the services concerned, as well as the completeness of the application dossier. The applicant is entitled to define the scope for the EQUASS application. This scope can be the entire organisation as well as one single department or business unit within that organisation. An essential criterion is that the application relates to a number of services directly provided to persons and that it contributes to their inclusion and/or an improved quality of life. When the application is eligible and complete, an auditor of the Local License Holder will contact the applicant.

This auditor is trained in the EQUASS quality approach and in how to assess the performance of the applicant based on the EQUASS Principles for Quality and the EQUASS criteria. The EQUASS auditor is responsible for all phases of the audit including the writing of an audit report.

3.3.2 THE CERTIFICATION AUDIT

The local audit process consists of four steps:
1   *Desk review*
2   *Preparation of site visit*
3   *Site visit*
4   *Reporting*

STEP 1   THE DESK REVIEW

The auditor will receive a copy of the application form and will use this information to complete the desk review and desk scoring. Based on this review, the auditor will identify priorities for discussions and interviews during the site visit. Also the auditor will select the required documentation in the checklist that needs to be made available during the site visit for a review.

STEP 2   PREPARATION OF SITE VISIT

The auditor will send a proposal for the planning and the programme of the site visit to the applicant at least ten working days before the dates of the audit. The audit plan contains the following elements:
- *Date and time to review the documentation and other information resources*
- *Time for giving the feedback on the site visit to the applicant and the staff*
- *Time to do the synthesis of scoring and information for the final audit report*
- *Time for visiting the service operations*
- *An interview with the Chief Executive Officer at the end of the site visit*

The planning and the programme must be agreed by the applicant and communicated to the staff. The auditor will visit the premises where the services are practiced and meet a number of staff, service-users and other stakeholders who are relevant for the scope of the audit. The audit plan should be flexible and permit changes, based on collected information during the site visit.

STEP 3 THE SITE VISIT

When visiting the premises, the auditor will collect evidence to verify the performance of the applicant on the EQUASS criteria and the required results through interviews, examination of documents and observation of service operations, situations and conditions. All will be registered and reported. At the end of the site visit the auditor will hold a meeting with the relevant staff of the applicant and present to them the observations. This feedback aims to ensure an understanding of the audit findings and the recommendations planned to be given in the audit report. The standard number of days for a site visit of a single site is two days of 8 hours a day, larger organisation or multi-site organisations will take more days.

STEP 4 REPORTING

After the site visit the auditor reviews the outcomes of the audit: the scores, required documentation and the results. Based on this, the auditor writes the report and sends it to the Local License Holder. If there are criteria that do not comply with the minimum requirements for the EQUASS Assurance certification, the auditor will provide the audit report with recommendations for improvement and for additional learning and development. This feedback may be the basis for the additional audit. The Local License Holder will inform the applicant about the decision of the Awarding Committee for certifying the applicant with the EQUASS Assurance certification.

3.3.3 THE REVIEWING PROCESS FOR EQUASS ASSURANCE CERTIFICATION

The Local License Holder sends the audit report to the EQUASS coordinator in Brussels for review. The EQUASS coordinator in Brussels selects an expert for reviewing the audit report in order to check if the report meets the following criteria:

- *Is the report written in the right format?*
- *Is the scoring consistent with the feedback on the performance?*
- *Does the feedback refer to the relevant and eligible type of evidence: documentation – information gathered by interviews of director, managers, staff, service users and other relevant stakeholders – observations in the premises where the services are practiced?*
- *Do the suggestions for improvement refer to improving the current performance practices and/or to learning and developing activities that are compliant with next performance stages in the EQUASS assessment grid?*

The expert formulates the results of the review and informs the auditor about these results. If needed the auditor will make the adjustments in the audit report based on the received feedback from the expert. The expert will check the adjusted audit report and then sends the approved report to the EQUASS awarding committee in Brussels. The EQUASS coordinator in Brussels, who is part of the awarding committee, will send the approved audit report to the applicant and the Local License Holder and inform them about the decision of the Awarding Committee for certifying the applicant with EQUASS Assurance Certification which has a validity of two years.

3.3.4 PROGRESS REPORTS

The applicant has the obligation to report twice on the progress and outcomes of the implementation of the recommendations on improvement and development. The auditor will review the progress report and, where necessary provides recommendations and suggestions for improvement, learning and development. This progress report, including the feedback of the auditor, will be validated by EQUASS in Brussels and the validated report will be sent to the Social Service Provider.

3.3.5 ADDITIONAL AUDIT

In case the Social Service Provider does not meet the requirements for EQUASS certification, the applicant has the possibility to go for an additional audit. This is possible when the recommendations for improvements are implemented within 6 months after the audit. The additional audit will be organised and carried out after receiving the applicant's report on improvements.

4 DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Each participating organisation received the necessary information for inviting respondents of each target group. This chapter describes the type and number of participating organisations, the number, gender and age of the responding service users, the number, gender, age and information about the job of the responding staff members and managers and the number and type of organisation of partners and funding organisations.

4.2 PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS

In total, 103 social service providers were approached to take part in this impact evaluation. Of these 103 organisations, 93 took part in this impact evaluation. The response rate on centre level is therefore 90%.

The social service providing organisations participating in the project 'Improvement of Social services, the application of the quality system EQUASS' carry out different types of activities for different types of clients. Activities of the participating centres focus on the care of children and youth, on the social care of adults, in some cases specifically on the social care of females as other centres focus on the elderly in for instance retirement homes. See the list in table below.

Social services	Family and Child Welfare centres	Social Assistance centres
Social care homes	Charity and Relief Fund Home helpdesks	City hostels
Crisis centres	Children's villages	Pensions for Children and Youth
Nursing homes	Centres for people with intellectual disabilities	Social Welfare homes for Children
Care and employment centres	Retirement homes	Day centres
Community social centres	Social and educational centres	

4.3 OVERVIEW OF RESPONDENTS

Questionnaires were completed by members of staff, by service users, by management and by partners of the participating organisations as well as the funders of the organisations. Follows an overview of some demographic figures of the different target groups.

4.3.1 SERVICE USERS

In total 5534 service users have completed the questionnaire; 2457 respondents in the first evaluation round and 3059 respondents in the second evaluation round.

Of the total group of respondents in the first evaluation round, 66% were female (N=1631) and 32% were male (N=797); 38 respondents chose not to answer this question.

Of the total group of respondents in the second evaluation round, 71% were female (N=2160) and 28% were male (N=885); 14 respondents chose not to answer this question.

In measurement 1, the ages of the respondents are equally divided between all age groups, with the exception of the age group '65 years and older': 40% of the respondents in this first group are older than 65.
In measurement 2, we see the same division of around 10% of the respondents belonging each age group, and again, 43% of the total number of respondents is 65 years or older. See table on following page.

Age categories of service users	Evaluation round 1		Evaluation round 2	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Younger than 25 years of age	221	8,9%	264	8,6%
Between 25 and 34 years of age	272	11,0%	339	11,1%
Between 35 and 44 years of age	374	15,1%	456	14,9%
Between 45 and 54 years of age	295	11,9%	358	11,7%
Between 55 and 64 years of age	284	11,5%	316	10,3%
65 years and older	987	39,9%	1325	43,3%
Missing values	*42*	1,7%	*1*	0,0%
Total number of service users	2475	100,0%	3059	100,0%

4.3.2 STAFF

A total number of 2249 of staff members have completed the questionnaire; 894 respondents took part in the first evaluation round, before the implementation of the EQUASS quality system and 1355 respondents took part in the second evaluation round, after the implementation of EQUASS.

Of the total group of respondents in the first evaluation round, 60% were female (N=539) and 4% were male (N=34); 55 chose not to answer this question and 266 respondents have not answered this question.
Of the total group of respondents in the second evaluation round, 74% were female (N=1006) and 4% were male (N=59); 89 chose not to answer this question and 201 respondents have not answered this question.

Referring to the age of staff members, the average age in the first evaluation round is 46 years, the average age in the second evaluation round is 45 years. In round 1 and round 2, one out of seven respondents is younger than 35 years of age, also one in seven has an age between 35 and 45 years. In round 1, around one in three respondents is older than 45 years of age, in round 2, almost half of the respondents is older than 45 years.

Age categories of staff	Evaluation round 1		Evaluation round 2	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Younger than 25 years of age	15	1.7%	25	1.8%
Between 25 and 34 years of age	114	12.8%	197	14.5%
Between 35 and 44 years of age	135	15.1%	255	18.8%
Between 45 and 54 years of age	188	21.0%	334	24,6%
Between 55 and 64 years of age	142	15.9%	287	21.2%
65 years and older	10	1,1%	20	1,5%
Missing values	290	32.4%	237	17.5%
Total number of staff members	894	100,0%	1355	100,0%

When looking at the jobs of the respondents, there is variety of types of jobs within the respondent group.

Job title	Job title	Job title	Job title
Accountant employee	Health care professional	Deputy director	Operator
Administrative employee	Household manager	Dietitian	Nurse
Assistant	HR	Doctor	Occupational therapist
Assistant nurse	Kitchen assistant	Driver	Physiotherapist
Case manager	Kitchen worker	Educator	Psychologist
Assistant social worker	Massage therapist	Electrician	Social worker
Chief nurse	Nanny	Employment specialist	Specialist
Head of department	Warehouse worker	Coordinator	Speech therapist
Cleaner	Other	Cook	Visiting care worker

A large part of them works as social worker, assistant social worker, nurse, nurse assistant, or employment specialist. Also, quite a number of workmen have completed the questionnaire. There are also dieticians, massage therapists and psychologists. Office workers like accountants and administrative employees participated as well as head of departments.

4.3.3 MANAGEMENT

A total number of 247 members of management have completed the questionnaire; 124 managers in evaluation round 1 and 123 managers in evaluation round 2. The majority of the managers are female, respectively 82% in both rounds. In both rounds, 11% of the managers reported to be male and, in both rounds, 10 respondents chose not to answer this question.

Some of the respondents are younger than 25 years of age. In both evaluation rounds, half of the respondents are aged between 25 and 44 years of age. Around one in four of all responding managers in both rounds have an age above 45 years.

Age categories of management	Evaluation round 1		Evaluation round 2	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Younger than 25 years of age	9	7,3%	10	8,1%
Between 25 and 34 years of age	32	25,8%	19	15,4%
Between 35 and 44 years of age	36	29,0%	47	38,2%
Between 45 and 54 years of age	21	16,9%	26	21,1%
Between 55 and 64 years of age	6	4,8%	2	1,6%
65 years and older	0	0,0%	0	0,0%
Missing values	20	16,1%	19	15,4%
Total number of staff members	124	100,0%	123	100,0%

When looking at the job titles of the members of management in both groups, most of them are director or deputy director. Others have titles like head of unit/department, manager or coordinator.

4.3.4 PARTNERS

A total number of 403 partner organisations have responded to the request to join this evaluation: 165 partner organisations in the first evaluation round, and 238 partner organisations in the second evaluation round. Partner organisations carry out different types of activities focussing on different types of clients. The list contains a variety of organisations, including schools, support centres, social care homes, community centres and day centres.

Partner organisations:		
Community centre	Social care home	Church community
Public library	Institution for assistance for adolescents	Polyclinic
Youth Day centre	Public Health Bureau	State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service
Municipality of the city or district	Ministry of Social Security and Labour	Social Care home
Communication Centre	Crisis centre	High school
Education Centre	Leisure Hall	Education Centre for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Day Care Centre for Seniors with disabilities	Centre for Empowering Women	Independent living house for children
Department of Disability Affairs	Care home	Medical Centre
College	Rehabilitation Centre	Centre for Ergonomic Devices
Primary school	Child Welfare Centre	Special School
Centre for social & cultural services for youth	University business school	Centre for psychological support and counselling

The respondents of the 165 partner organisations in evaluation round 1 refer to 66 centres participating in this project 'Improvement of Social services, the application of the quality system EQUASS'. The respondents of the 238 partner organisations in evaluation round 2 refer to 75 centres participating in this project.

4.3.5   FUNDERS

A total number of 83 funding organisations have responded to the request to join this impact evaluation: 37 funding organisations in evaluation round 1 and 46 funding organisations in evaluation round 2.

Almost all organisations are city or district municipality administrations; occasionally it is the ministry of Social Security and Labour or a community social centre. Many of them provide funding to different organisations participating in this project.

4.4   REASONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION EQUASS AND FIRST VIEW ON IMPACT

A large number of social service providers has been approached to join this quality improvement project: improvement of quality by implementing the EQUASS quality system.

Those that agreed to join had different reasons to do so. A large majority of managers of participating organisations in the first evaluation round, mention their willingness to implement a quality system like EQUASS because of the possibilities to be able to respond to pressures of service users, to realise a focus on continuous improvement, to improve processes and practices, to strengthen the focus on quality in the organisation and to improve the quality of life of their service users.

What do you expect of the implementation of EQUASS?	Round 1 N = 124	To what extent do you notice the impact of the implementation of EQUASS?	Round 2 N = 123
Respond to customer pressures	89%	An improved response to customer pressures	81%
Focus on continuous improvement	85%	A focus on continuous improvement	91%
Improve processes and practices	85%	Improved processes and practices	91%
To strengthen the focus on quality in our organisation	85%	A strengthened focus on quality in our organisation	94%
To improve customer's quality of life	85%	An improved customer's quality of life	90%
Become a role model in social services	77%	Being a role model in social services	91%
Enhance the organisation's image	77%	An enhanced organisation's image	92%
To innovate service delivery	77%	An innovated service delivery	81%
Comply with legal requirements	69%	Better compliance with legal requirements	87%
Respond to pressures of other stakeholders	69%	An improved response to pressures of other stakeholders	79%
To standardise practices across different locations	69%	Standardised practices across different locations	83%

In the second evaluation round, after the implementation of EQUASS, managers were asked to give a general impression of what they noticed to be the impact of the implementation of EQUASS. According to the responding managers, almost all aspects noticed to be improved since the start of this implementation process; the impact of the implementation on the aspects they considered important, appears to be present.

In the continuation of this report, detailed aspects of the implementation of EQUASS will be described, including information whether the implementation of the EQUASS quality system has impacted on the service delivery and business efficiency of the organisation in relation to the ten principles of quality of EQUASS.

5 FINDINGS AND THE IMPACT ON THE SERVICE DELIVERY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Enclosed in the ten quality principles of EQUASS are quality-aspects related to service delivery. These quality aspects mainly have to do with protecting the rights of the service users and a person-centred approach.

Protecting the rights of service users touches on different aspects of quality within the organisation of the social service provider. Rights have to do with respecting the individual service user in all aspects of the service delivery. Two of the ten principles of quality within EQUASS are fully related to the rights of service users. It concerns the principle of Rights and the principle of Ethics. The principle of Rights focuses on equal opportunities and equal treatments, including also the obligation for the social service provider to ensure all service users understand the interventions proposed to them and to ensure all service users approve these interventions. The principle of Ethics focuses on the dignity and well-being of service users and their families or care givers, including the protection of service users from abuse and misconduct.

Having a person-centred approach touches also on different aspects of quality within the organisation of the social service provider. A person-centred approach has to do with creating the best match between the needs of the service user and the services offered. One of the ten principles of quality within EQUASS is fully related to this person-centred approach. It focuses on services driven by the needs of the service users, including also their physical and social environment. And it focuses on involving service users in their services; in their personal service plan. The principle of Participation also relates to elements of the rights of service users; it is included by a focus on supporting the empowerment of service users.

In this impact evaluation, we have been analysing the state of the art and development of these quality aspects during the lifetime of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system. For all participating social service providers, we look at differences in the first measurement and the second measurement.

5.1.1 READING THE TABLES

This report contains a huge number of tables. Follows now a short explanation how to read these tables.

The first column of each table consists of the statements related to quality. The second column and the third column show the average score in the first and second evaluation round. All items in the questionnaires consisted of answering categories on a 5-point Likert scale.; the scale used, was 0 – 4.

All respondents answered each item and their scores were counted and divided by the number of respondents. This average score can be found in each table under the name 'mean'.

The higher the scores, the more respondents agree with the statement in the table.
The average scores in this report are between 2 and 4.

- *Average score of 4: the experiences of the respondents fully comply with the statement*
- *Average score of 3: the experiences of the respondents comply with the statement, though not fully*
- *Average score of 2: most of the experiences of the respondents do not comply with the statement*

A reading rule that can help: A score below 3 can be viewed as a low score
A score above 3,5 can be viewed as a high score

Also, each table includes the minimum scores and the maximum scores.

5.2   RIGHTS OF SERVICE USERS: GENERAL ASPECTS

The rights of service users are key in the Quality Management System of EQUASS. We will take a look at all aspects related to the rights of service users within this quality system, and describe the impact of the implementation of EQUASS on these rights. In this description, we will always start with the impact on the service users, then we will look at the impact on the organisation and staff. Where relevant we will include the opinion of the funders and partners concerning aspects related to rights. And see whether their opinion has been influenced by the implementation of the EQUASS quality system.

IMPACT ON THE SERVICE USERS

The first aspect is a quite straightforward aspect, that is informing the service users about their rights as a service user. In the first round, a large number of service users confirms with the statement that they have been informed about their rights, in the second round, the scores are higher. The difference appear to be significant, meaning it is not a coincidence and most likely related to the implementation of EQUASS. The majority of the service users also feels satisfied about the way they were informed about their rights. The number of service users in the second measurement that agreed with this statement differs significantly with the answers in the first measurement.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
I am informed about my rights as service user	3,4	3,7	0	4	***
I feel satisfied about the way I have been informed about my rights	3,5	3,7	0	4	***

IMPACT ON THE ORGANISATION

The impact on the organisation related to the general aspects of the rights of service users is significant. It starts with a significant improvement of the number of managers mentioning to have a clear description of these rights.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
We have a clear description of the rights for our service users	3,3	3,9	0	4	***
The rights of our persons served are based on the international human right conventions	3,4	3,9	0	4	***
We ensure that every employee knows and understands these rights for our service users	3,2	3,9	0	4	***
We ensure that every service user knows and understands these rights	3,1	3,7	0	4	***
We have rules and guidelines how to act and work in a non-discriminative way	3,2	3,9	0	4	***
Our employees know how to act in a non-discriminative way	3,4	3,9	1	4	***
We regularly check whether we are working in a non-discriminative way	3,0	3,8	0	4	***

Informing service users about their rights means there must be a clear description of these rights. A small majority of the managers participating in the first round mentioned to have this clear description, based on the international human right conventions. Of all managers participating in the second round, almost all managers mentioned they had this description. This is a significant improvement.

A significant improvement can also be recognised in the number of managers ensuring their staff know and understand these rights. Almost all managers in the second round agree with this statement, compared to a significantly smaller number of managers in the first round. This significant increase is also recognisable in the number of managers ensuring service users know and understand these rights. Compared to the first round, all managers gave higher ratings about ensuring their service users know and understand these rights in the second round, after the implementation of the EQUASS quality system.

Part of these rights for service users are the rules and guidelines how to act and work in a non-discriminative way. Significant improvements can be seen regarding this quality aspect. Before the implementation of EQUASS, a small majority of the managers mention to have these rules and guidelines in place, and having employees who know how to act in a non-discriminative way.

In the second evaluation round, the number of managers reporting this, has increased significantly. The number of managers answering positively on carrying out a regular check whether they are working in a non-discriminative way is significantly higher in the second evaluation round, compared to the first round.

IMPACT ON STAFF

The impact on staff of the implementation of EQUASS is significant in relation to the rights of service users in general. Informing service users about their rights, means staff need to know about the existence of these rights of service users, they need to know and understand these rights and they also need to include them in their daily practice. If we compare the number of staff in the first round, reporting about knowing the existence of these rights, understand these rights and include them in the daily practice, with the number of staff reporting this in the second round, we see a significant increase.

Different from the managers, most employees in the first and second evaluation round mention they work in a non-discriminative way. Even then, compared to the first round, a significantly larger number of staff reports this in the second evaluation round.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
We have a clear description of the rights for our service users	3,3	3,9	0	4	***
My organisation has supported me in knowing and understanding the rights for service users	3,4	3,8	0	4	***
In my daily work, I work in a non-discriminative way	3,8	4,0	2	4	***
In my daily work I include the rights of users in all areas needed	3,6	3,9	1	4	***

IMPACT RECOGNISED BY FUNDERS AND PARTNERS

The number of **funders** stating 'their' social service provider actively invests in informing their service users about their rights has significantly increased in the second round, compared to the first round.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
This SSP actively informs their service users about their rights	3,5	3,8	0	4,0	**

Funders have the option to answer 'I do not know', only 11% has made use of this option. The impact of the implementation of EQUASS is clearly recognised by funders regarding to this quality aspect.

A majority of the responding **partners** in the first round, state 'their' partner social service provider actively invests in informing their service users about their rights. The number of partners having this opinion increases slightly, though significantly in the second round.
The option to answer 'I do not know', has been used by 15% of the partners. The impact of the implementation of EQUASS is recognised by partners regarding to this quality aspect.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
This SSP actively invests in informing their service users about their rights	3,7	3,8	0	4	

5.3   RIGHTS OF SERVICE USERS: PROCEDURES

Protecting the rights of service users has also to do with making use of all kinds of procedures to ensure these rights. We will look more thoroughly on the impact of the implementation of EQUASS on the presence of these procedures; on 'paper' and in daily practice whether employees know and understand these procedures and whether they act according to these procedures.

IMPACT ON THE ORGANISATION

The impact on the organisation of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system is significant in relation to procedures to ensure the rights of service users. Compared to managers the first evaluation round, managers in the second round significantly more often agree to have implemented procedures that ensure the confidentiality of sensitive information, the accuracy, privacy, dignity and physical integrity of their service users. This also counts for managers reporting their employees know and understand all these procedures as well as managers reporting about their employees act according to these procedures; compared to the first round, significantly more managers in the second round report this.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
We have implemented procedures to ensure the confidentiality of sensitive information,	3,6	3,9	1	4	***
We have implemented procedures to ensure the accuracy of records of our service users	3,1	3,8	0	4	***
We have implemented procedures to ensure the privacy of our service users	3,3	3,8	0	4	***
We have implemented procedures to ensure the dignity of our service users	3,3	3,8	1	4	***
We have implemented procedures to ensure the physical integrity of our service users	3,3	3,9	0	4	***
Our employees know and understand the procedures to ensure the confidentiality of sensitive information of our service users	3,5	3,9	1	4	***
Our employees know and understand the procedures to ensure the accuracy of records of service users	3,1	3,8	0	4	***
Our employees know and understand the procedures to ensure the privacy of our service users	3,2	3,8	0	4	***
Our employees know and understand the procedures to ensure the dignity of our service users	3,3	3,8	1	4	***
Our employees know and understand the procedures to ensure the physical integrity of service users	3,3	3,9	0	4	***
Our employees act according to the procedures to ensure the confidentiality of sensitive information of our service users	3,4	3,9	1	4	***
Our employees act according to the procedures to ensure the accuracy of records of our service users	3,0	3,8	0	4	***
Our employees act according to the procedures to ensure the privacy of our service users	3,2	3,8	0	4	***
Our employees act according to the procedures to ensure the dignity of our service users	3,3	3,9	1	4	***
Our employees act according to the procedures to ensure the physical integrity of our service users	3,3	3,9	0	4	***

The number of managers reporting their employees have this knowledge and understanding, and the number of managers reporting their employees act according to these procedures, are strongly related to the number of managers reporting to have these procedures in place.

IMPACT ON STAFF

According to staff of the responding organisations, the implementation of EQUASS impacted highly on the presence of these procedures, and the inclusion of these procedures in their daily practice.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
We have procedures to ensure the confidentiality of information sensitive for service users	3,6	3,9	0	4	***
I have included procedures to ensure the confidentiality of information sensitive for service users within my daily practice	3,6	3,8	0	4	***
We have procedures to ensure the accuracy of records concerning service users	3,3	3,8	0	4	***
I have included procedures to ensure the accuracy of records concerning service users within my daily practice	3,3	3,7	0	4	***
We have procedures to ensure the privacy of service users	3,5	3,9	0	4	***
I have included procedures to ensure privacy of service users within my daily practice	3,5	3,8	0	4	***
We have procedures to ensure the dignity of service users	3,6	3,9	0	4	***
I have included procedures to ensure dignity of service users within my daily practice	3,6	3,9	0	4	***
We have procedures to ensure physical integrity of service users	3,5	3,8	0	4	***
I have included procedures to ensure physical integrity of service users within my daily practice	3,5	3,8	0	4	***

The number of staff reporting in the second evaluation round, after the implementation of EQUASS, about having procedures in place ensuring the confidentiality of sensitive information, the accuracy, privacy, dignity and physical integrity of their service users, is significantly higher compared to the number of staff reporting about the presence of these procedures in the first round, before the implementation of EQUASS. Compared to the first evaluation round, significantly more staff report in the second evaluation round about including these procedures in their daily practice.

IMPACT RECOGNISED BY FUNDERS AND PARTNERS

In the second round, a large majority of **funders** answers positively on the statements about 'their' social service provider having procedures in place that ensure the confidentiality of sensitive information, the accuracy, privacy, dignity and physical integrity of their service users. The number of funders having this opinion in the second round, has increased slightly, and appears to be only partly significant.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
This SSP has procedures to ensure the confidentiality of information sensitive for service users	3,5	3,8	0	4	*
This SSP has procedures to ensure the accuracy of records concerning service users	3,4	3,8	0	4	*
This SSP has procedures to ensure privacy of service users	3,6	3,9	0	4	*
This SSP has procedures to ensure dignity of service users	3,6	3,8	0	4	
This SSP has procedures to ensure physical integrity of service users	3,5	3,8	0	4	

Funders have the option to answer 'I do not know'. This option has been used by an average of 12% of the funders; the impact of the implementation of EQUASS is only partly recognised regarding to these quality aspects.

In the second round, a large majority of the responding **partners** state 'their' partner social service provider has procedures in place that ensure the confidentiality of sensitive information, the accuracy, privacy, dignity and physical integrity of their service users. The number of partners stating this in the second round, has increased significantly compared to the partners stating this in the first round, before the implementation of EQUASS. The option to answer 'I do not know' has been used by 22% of the partners. For those who haven't used this option, which is still 78%, the impact of the implementation of EQUASS is recognised regarding to these quality aspects.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
This SSP has procedures to ensure the confidentiality of information sensitive for service users	3,8	3,9	1	4	***
This SSP has procedures to ensure the accuracy of records concerning service users	3,7	3,9	1	4	***
This SSP has procedures to ensure privacy of service users	3,8	3,9	1	4	**
This SSP has procedures to ensure dignity of service users	3,8	3,9	1	4	*
This SSP has procedures to ensure physical integrity of service users	3,8	3,9	1	4	**

5.4 RIGHTS OF SERVICE USERS: COMPLAINT ISSUES

When service users have a complaint about their services, they need to know what to do. And, organisations of social service providers need to have a system in place to handle complaints. Their staff need to know how to respond on complaints.

IMPACT ON SERVICE USERS

According to the responding service users, EQUASS appears to have an impact on their knowledge around complaint issues and their opinion about being taken seriously by the social service provider.

Significantly more service users in the second evaluation round, after the implementation of EQUASS, report to know what to do when they have complaint. This means the large majority of all service users know what to do when they have a complaint.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
I know what to do when I have a complaint	3,6	3,8	0	4	***
My opinion is taken seriously	3,6	3,8	0	4	***

Almost the same number of respondents mentions their opinion is taken seriously. Again, the impact of the implementation of EQUASS appears to be related to this increase.

IMPACT ON THE ORGANISATION

The impact of EQUASS on the organisation in relation to handling complaints is clearly recognisable, can be concluded when looking at the responses of the managers in the first and second evaluation round.
Compared to the first round, there is a significant increase of managers in the second round stating to have a clear system of being responsive to complaints; almost all managers respond positively to this.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
We have a clear system of being responsive to complaints	3,5	4,0	0	4	***
We respond to all complaints	3,7	3,9	0	4	**
All our employees know the complaint procedures	3,4	3,9	0	4	***
Our funders know the complaint procedures	3,2	3,8	0	4	***
We collect and register all complaints	3,7	4,0	0	4	***

A large majority of the responding managers in the first round report to collect and register all complaints and respond to these complaints. In the second round, the number of managers reporting to do this, has increased significantly. Compared to the first evaluation round, before the implementation of EQUASS, significantly more managers in the second round state their employees know the complaint procedures.

IMPACT ON STAFF

The impact on staff in relation to complaint issues appears to be quite present. Compared to the first evaluation round, a significantly larger number of staff reports about having a clear system of being responsive to complaints. Also, compared to the first round, a significantly larger number of staff in the second round knows how to respond to complaints of their service users.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
We have a clear system of being responsive to complaints	3,4	3,9	0	4	***
I know how to respond to complaints of my service users	3,2	3,7	0	4	***

IMPACT RECOGNISED BY FUNDERS AND PARTNERS

In the first round, a majority of responding **funders** state 'their' social service provider has a clear system of being responsive to complaints. The number of funders stating this in the second round has increased, though not significantly. The option to answer 'I do not know', has been used by an average of 9% of the funders; the impact of the implementation of EQUASS is not recognised by funders regarding to this quality aspect.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
This SSP has a clear system of being responsive to complaints	3,5	3,8	0	4	

A majority of the responding **partners** in the first and second round state 'their' partner social service provider has a clear system of being responsive to complaints. The option to answer 'I do not know', has been used by an average of 24% of the partners. For those who haven't used this option, which is still 76%, the impact of the implementation of EQUASS is not recognised regarding to this quality aspect.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
This SSP has a clear system of being responsive to complaints	3,8	3,9	0	4	

5.5 PERSON CENTRED APPROACH AND INVOLVEMENT IN 'TREATMENT'

An important aspect of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system is to involve service users in their personal 'treatment'. Within the different settings of the participating social service providers 'treatment' can include medical treatment, psychosocial treatment, long term support, physical treatment, long term guidance. This is the reason for the quotes in the word 'treatment'. It is also the way it is explained in the survey for all stakeholders. For easy reading the quotes are left out in the following text.

Involving service users in their treatment, first of all means they need to be informed about their treatment, and this information should be explained in a way they understand. Informing is one thing; service users also need to know they have possibility and right to express their opinion about the services delivered to them. Then, involvement means service users need to give permission to this treatment; no treatment without permission needs to be the general rule. The treatment of the service user will be based on their needs, and goals will be formulated based on these needs.

Discussing these goals also means spending time on discussing expectation and choices of service users. Then, service users need to be supported in formulating goals, based on their needs, expectations and choices. This will all lead to an individual plan, where again this service user is actively involved in creating this plan. During their treatment, service users need to have the opportunity to discuss their progress with staff of the social service provider. And, when treatment in other organisations is needed, service users need to be supported in creating the support of these other organisations.

This all means on an organisational level, that service users have indeed the opportunity to express their needs, expectations, choices and goals. Also, staff needs to be able to explain the planned treatment in a way service users can understand. And, staff need to know how to support service users in expressing these needs, expectations and goals and how to complete the individual plan with the service users. In this plan, all relevant life dimensions of the service users need to be taken into account. Then, during the treatment, staff needs to support service users in pursuing their personal goals. And, there need to be a match between the level and number of staff and the support needed of service users. Let us see the impact of the implementation of EQUASS on these aspects of quality.

IMPACT ON SERVICE USERS

According to service users, the impact of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system on their involvement in their personal treatment appears to be significant in some essential aspects of the EQUASS quality system.

In general, a majority of service users report in the first round to be supported in expressing their needs, expectations and personal goals. In the second round significantly more service users report this.

Also, a large majority of the responding service users mention to be informed about their treatment and is satisfied in how this treatment is explained to them, still a significant increase is recognisable between the first round and the second round.

A majority of service users in the first round report to be supported in formulating their personal goals and pursuing these goals, and is satisfied about this support and the regular discussion about the progress. In the second round, a significantly larger number of service users report positively about these statements.

Also, a majority of responding service users report to be supported by their social service provider to continue part of the services in another organisation and feels satisfied about this support. Still, there is a significant increase between the first round and the second round; more service users answer positively to these statements.

Impact can be recognised in the number of service users knowing they have the possibility and right to express their opinion about the services delivered to them. Compared to the first round, a significantly larger number of service users in the second round, after implementation of EQUASS, reports about knowing to have the right to express their opinion about the services delivered to them.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
I am supported in how to formulate as concrete as possible my needs, expectancies and choices	3,6	3,7	0	4	***
I am supported into formulating my personal goals	3,4	3,7	0	4	***
I am informed about my 'treatment'	3,6	3,8	0	4	***
I am satisfied in how they explained the 'treatment'	3,6	3,8	0	4	***
I first have to give permission for a 'treatment'	3,3	3,6	0	4	***
I am supported to pursue my personal goals	3,4	3,7	0	4	***
I am satisfied about the support I receive when pursuing my personal goals	3,5	3,7	0	4	***
I am actively involved in creating my own individual plan	3,1	3,6	0	4	***
Together with my service provider, we discuss my progress regularly	3,3	3,7	0	4	***
I know I can express my opinion of the services delivered to me	3,5	3,8	0	4	***
I am satisfied about the way employees of this organisation show their respect in their contact with me, with my family	3,7	3,9	0	4	***
If other services are needed, this SSP supports me in creating the support of other organisations	3,5	3,7	0	4	***
I feel satisfied about the way this SSP supports me in creating the support of other organisations	3,5	3,7	0	4	***

Impact is also recognisable in 'giving permission for a treatment'. A significantly larger number of service users in the second evaluation round reports to 'be asked for permission for treatment', compared to the number of service users reporting this in the first round.

And also, the involvement of service users in creating their own individual plan has been increased after the implementation of EQUASS. Compared to the first round, significantly more service users in the second evaluation round report to be actively involved in their own individual plan. Finally, an impact can be seen in the satisfaction of service users about the way staff show their respect in their contacts with them and their family; a significant increase is recognisable between the first and second evaluation round.

IMPACT ON THE ORGANISATION

According to the responding managers, the impact of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system on the involvement of service users in their personal treatment appears to be significantly positive in almost all aspects.

In the first evaluation round, before the implementation of the EQUASS quality system, a majority of the managers responds to have a clear way of how they support service users. In the second round, the number of managers reporting this has increased significantly. When supporting service users, almost all managers in the second round report to include all life dimensions and the personal environment of the service user. This is a significant increase compared to the managers reporting this in the first round.

A majority of managers in the first evaluation round report about their service users having the opportunity to express their needs and to formulate their personal goals. In the second round the number of managers reporting this has increased significantly.

Compared to the first evaluation round, the number of managers in the second round stating their employees working with service users know how to support them in expressing their needs and formulating their goals and aspirations has increased significantly. This significant increase also counts for the number of managers mentioning their employees working with service users explain to the service users what interventions are planned and do this in a way that is understandable for service users.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
We have a clear way of how we support service users if necessary	3,4	3,9	0	4	***
In our services, we take into account all life dimensions of persons served	3,6	3,9	0	4	***
In our services, we take into account the personal environment of persons served	3,6	3,9	0	4	***
Service users have the opportunity to express their needs	3,6	3,9	1	4	***
Service users have the opportunity to formulate their personal goals	3,5	3,9	0	4	***
Employees working with service users know how to support service users to express their needs	3,5	3,9	1	4	***
Employees working with service users know how to support service users to pursue their personal goals and aspirations	3,5	3,9	1	4	***
Our service users are explained about what interventions are planned	3,5	3,9	0	4	***
Employees working with service users, know how to explain the suggested interventions in a way that it is understandable for service users	3,4	3,9	0	4	***

For these interventions, a majority of the managers in the first round and a significantly larger number of managers in the second round report to make use of individual plans wherein the needs of the service users are recorded, as well as the services delivered and the results of the services.

This significant increase is also recognisable in relation to specific procedures to involve service users in the development of their individual plan. The number of managers reporting positively on this, is significantly larger in the second round, compared to the first round.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
We use 'Individual Plans' to record the needs of our service users, the services delivered to our service users and the results of the services	3,7	4,0	0	4	***
We have a specific procedure to involve our service users in the development of their 'Individual Plan'	3,2	3,9	0	4	***
We have adequate employees' levels and ratios	3,5	3,7	0	4	
Interventions only take place after approval of our service users	3,3	3,9	0	4	***

Being able to support their service users by means of a match between the level and number of staff and the support needed of service users, a majority of the responding managers in both the first round and the second round answers to have these adequate employee levels and ratios, the impact of the implementation of EQUASS appears to be not recognisable.

Impact appears to be again realised by the implementation of the EQUASS quality system when it comes to asking service users for approval for the planned intervention. Compared to the first evaluation round, a significantly larger number of managers in the second round reports to ask for approval and only then let the intervention take place.

IMPACT ON STAFF

The impact on staff of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system appears to be significant when it comes to quality aspects related to the involvement of service users in their treatment.

Compared to the first evaluation round, before the implementation of EQUASS, a significantly larger number of staff reports to support their service users to express their physical and social needs, expectations and choices and to formulate their personal goals and aspirations.
In the first round around half of the responding staff mentions to complete the individual plans with the needs, expectations and choices of the service user and to include this plan together with the service user. This compared to a majority of staff reporting to do this in the second round; a significant increase. In these individual plans, the personal environment of the service user is taken into account by staff; also, significantly more staff answers positively to this in the second round compared to the first round.

The number of staff reporting to ask for approval for the intervention has been significantly increased in the second round compared to the first round, as well as the number of staff reporting to explain these interventions in a way that is understandable for the service users. Also, the support during the intervention appears to be influenced positively by the implementation of EQUASS. In the second round a significantly larger number of staff report to support their service users in pursuing their goals.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
I enable my service users to express their physical and social needs, expectancies and choices	3,5	3,8	0	4	**
I complete the Individual Plans with the needs, expectancies and choices of my service users	2,8	3,5	0	4	***
I complete the Individual Plan together with my service users	2,7	3,4	0	4	***
I provide the service users with the opportunity to formulate their personal goals and aspirations	3,4	3,8	0	4	***
I support the service users in pursuing their goals	3,5	3,8	0	4	***
I explain all interventions needed to our service user in a way it is understandable for them	3,3	3,7	0	4	***
For every suggested intervention, I always ask the service user for approval	3,2	3,7	0	4	***
I take into account the personal environment of the service user	3,5	3,8	0	4	***
According to me, our employees levels are adequate, from the perspective of the services we offer	3,4	3,7	0	4	***

According to a majority of staff in the first round, their employee levels are adequate, from the perspective of the services offered to service users. The number of staff reporting to have adequate employee levels increases significantly in the second round.

IMPACT RECOGNISED BY FUNDERS AND PARTNERS

In the first round, a large majority of the responding **funders** state 'their' social service provider supports service users into express their needs and to formulate pursue their personal goals. The number of funders stating this in the second round increases significantly. In the first evaluation round, a majority of the funders state to have an overview of staff related to services, in the second evaluation round, more funders answer positively, though the difference appears to be not significant.

The option to answer 'I do not know', has been used by 17% of the funders in the first round and 7% of the funders in the second round: the implementation of EQUASS is to a large extent recognised by funders regarding to these quality aspects.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
This SSP supports service users into formulating and pursuing their personal goals	3,6	3,9	2	4	**
This SSP enables their service users to express their needs	3,4	3,8	1	4	**
This SSP has an overview of staff related to services	3,4	3,6	0	4	

In the first round, a large majority of the responding **partners** state their partner social service provider supports service users into express their needs and to formulate and pursue their personal goals. The number of partners stating this in the second round has increased significantly.

The option to answer 'I do not know', has been used by an average of 10% of the partners: the implementation of EQUASS appears to be recognised by partners regarding to these quality aspects.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
This SSP supports service users into formulating their personal goals	3,7	3,8	1	4	*
This SSP enables their service users to express their needs	3,7	3,8	1	4	**
This SSP supports service users into pursuing their personal goals	3,7	3,8	1	4	*

5.6 AN EMPOWERING APPROACH

Involving service users in their treatment asks for an empowering approach; an empowering approach by staff. And, staff needs to be supported by the organisation to include this empowering approach in their daily work. This also means the organisation needs to have a clear description and definition of this empowering approach.

The question is whether the implementation of the EQUASS quality has had a positive influence on the inclusion of an empowering approach in the service delivery to service users.

IMPACT ON THE ORGANISATION

There appears to be a significant impact realised by the implementation of EQUASS related to the aspect of empowerment. Compared to the first round, there is a huge and significant increase in the number of managers in the second round reporting to have a clear description of what they define as 'empowerment of service users' and having employees that know this description of empowerment and deliver their services in an empowering way.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
We have a clear description of what we define as 'empowerment of service users'	2,7	3,9	0	4	***
Our employees know this description of 'empowerment'	2,6	3,8	0	4	***
Our employees deliver their services in an empowering way	2,8	3,8	0	4	***
Our service users know this description of empowerment	2,4	3,6	0	4	***
Measures related to the empowerment of our service users have been implemented in all relevant areas of our organisation	2,5	3,7	0	4	***

Before the implementation of EQUASS, a relatively small number of managers report their service users know this description of empowerment, compared to a majority of managers in the second round: a significant increase. Also, compared to the first evaluation round, a significantly larger number of managers in the second round report to have implemented measures related to the empowerment of service users in all relevant areas of the organisation.

IMPACT ON STAFF

The impact on staff of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system appears to be significant when it comes to quality aspects related to working in an empowering way. Compared to the first evaluation round, a significant larger number of staff in the second round, after the implementation of EQUASS, reports to have a clear description and definition of empowerment of service users, to know this description and to have an empowering way of delivering working included in their daily work.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
We have a clear description of what we define as 'empowerment of service users'	3,0	3,9	0	4	***
I know our organisation's description of empowerment	2,9	3,9	0	4	***
I have included the concept of empowerment into my daily work	3,2	3,9	0	4	***

5.7 ETHICAL ASPECTS AND WELL BEING

Including ethical aspects in the treatment of service users starts with having a clear view on ethics, well-being and quality of life. This clear view needs to be 'translated' into a Code of Ethics, a policy on ethics and well-being and a description of Quality of Life. Procedures to prevent the abuse of service users can be seen as part of the policy related to ethics and well-being. And then, this Code of Ethics, this policy of ethics and well-being for all, need to be included in everybody's work, in daily practice; management and employees need to know and work according to this code of ethics, this policy and to act according to the procedures around the prevention of abuse of service users. A last aspect of well-being of service users concerns the attention for their health and safety.

IMPACT ON SERVICE USERS

For service users the attention for their well-being is key. The large majority of service users is satisfied about the way there is attention for their well-being. Still, in the second round a significantly larger number of service users reports being satisfied, compared to the first evaluation round, before the implementation of EQUASS.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
I am satisfied about the way there is attention for my well-being	3,6	3,8	0	4	***

IMPACT ON THE ORGANISATION

The impact on the organisation of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system on ethical aspects, appears to be quite strong. All quality aspects show a significant increase in presence between the first and the second evaluation round. In the second evaluation round, after the implementation of EQUASS, almost all managers report positively on all quality aspects related to ethics and well-being.

A larger majority of responding managers in the first evaluation round mentions to have implemented a Code of Ethics within their organisation and within the daily practice of the management. In the second round the number of managers reporting this increases significantly. Also, a majority of managers mentions their employees know this Code of Ethics and have included this code it in their daily practice. In the second round, there is a significant increase of managers reporting this.

Compared to the first evaluation round, significantly more managers in the second round report about the presence of a clear written expression of policy on ethics and well-being and having this policy included in their daily practice. An impact can also be recognised in the extent to which employees know and understand this policy and have it included in their daily practice. The number of managers responding positively to these statements has increased significantly in the second round, compared to the first round. in

A clear description of what is understood by Quality of Life for their service users is reported present in the first round by a small group of managers. This number increases significantly in the second evaluation round, after the implementation of EQUASS. The same pattern can be recognised by the number of managers reporting about their employees knowing this description of Quality of Life.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
We have implemented a Code of Ethics	3,4	3,9	0	4	***
We as management include our Code of Ethics into our daily practice	3,6	4,0	0	4	***
All our employees know our Code of Ethics	3,3	3,9	0	4	***
Our employees have included our Code of Ethics into their daily practice	3,3	3,9	0	4	***
We have a clear written expression of policy on 'ethics and well-being for all'	3,0	3,9	0	4	***
We include this policy on 'ethics and well-being for all' into our daily practice	3,2	3,9	0	4	***
All our employees know and understand our policy on 'ethics and well-being for all'	2,9	3,9	0	4	***
Our employees have included our policy on 'ethics and well-being for all' into their daily practice	2,9	3,8	0	4	***
We have a clear description of what we understand as being Quality of Life for our service users	2,6	3,9	0	4	***
Our employees know our description of Quality of Life	2,4	3,8	0	4	***

Compared to the first evaluation round, all kinds of procedures to prevent, the physical abuse, mental abuse and financial abuse are reported to be present within the organisation by a significantly larger number of managers in the second round. Also, the number of managers in the second round reporting about having employees knowing and understanding these procedures and acting according to these procedures, has increased significantly compared to the first round.

Regarding the health and safety of service users, a small majority of the managers in the first round before the implementation of EQUASS, report to have a clear written plan to take care of this. In the second round, the number of managers reporting this, has increased significantly. A comparable number of managers in the first and second round mention their employees know and understand their plan for health and safety of the service users.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
We have implemented procedures that prevent the physical abuse of service users	3,1	3,9	0	4	
We have implemented procedures that prevent the mental abuse of service users	3,0	3,9	0	4	*
We have implemented procedures that prevent the financial abuse of service users	3,1	3,9	0	4	
Our employees know and understand the procedures how to prevent the physical abuse of service users	3,1	3,9	0	4	
Our employees act according to the procedures that prevent the physical abuse of service users	3,0	3,9	0	4	*
Our employees know and understand the procedures how to prevent the mental abuse of service users	3,0	3,9	0	4	*
Our employees act according to the procedures that prevent the mental abuse of service users	3,0	3,9	0	4	
Our employees know and understand the procedures how to prevent the financial abuse of service users	3,1	3,9	0	4	
Our employees act according to the procedures that prevent the financial abuse of service users	3,1	3,9	0	4	
We have a clear written plan for health and safety for service users	3,1	3,8	0	4	
Our employees know and understand our plan for health and safety related to service users	3,0	3,8	0	4	

IMPACT ON STAFF

The impact on staff of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system on ethical aspects appears to be significant. All quality aspects show a significant increase in presence between the first and the second evaluation round. Almost all staff report positively on all quality aspects related to ethics and well-being.

In the first evaluation round, before the implementation of EQUASS, a majority of responding staff reports about the presence and implementation of a Code of Ethics within their organisation. This number has increased significantly in the second round. Compared to the first evaluation round, a significantly larger number of staff in the second round knows this Code of Ethics and has included it within daily practice. Comparable results can be found regarding the policy on ethics and well-being. Compared to the first round, a significantly larger number of staff in the second round reports to have a clear written expression of policy on ethics and well-being, to know this policy and to have it included in their daily practice.

A clear description of what is understood by Quality of Life for service users is reported present in the first round by around half of staff, this increases significantly in the second evaluation round, after the implementation of EQUASS. There is also a significant increase in the number of staff knowing this description of Quality of Life in the second round, compared to the first round.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
We have implemented a Code of Ethics	3,3	3,9	0	4	***
I know our Code of Ethics	3,5	3,9	0	4	***
In my daily work, I have included our Code of Ethics	3,6	3,9	0	4	***
We have a clear written expression of policy on 'ethics and well-being for all'	3,2	3,9	0	4	***
I know our policy on ethics and well-being	3,2	3,8	0	4	***
In my daily work, I have included ethics and well-being of clients	3,4	3,9	0	4	***
In our organisation, we have a description of Quality of Life of our service users	3,0	3,9	0	4	***
I know our organisation's description of Quality of Life of our service users	2,8	3,8	0	4	***

In the first evaluation round, before the implementation of EQUASS, a majority of staff reports the presence within the organisation of procedures to prevent, the physical abuse, mental abuse and financial abuse, to understand these procedures and to have them included in their daily practice. In the second round, after the implementation of EQUASS, the number of staff reporting this, has increased significantly.

Also, compared to the first evaluation round, the number of staff in the second round reporting about having included the health and safety rules for service users within their daily practice, has increased significantly. .

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
We have implemented procedures that prevent the physical abuse of service users	3,2	3,8	0	4	***
We have implemented procedures that prevent the mental abuse of service users	3,2	3,8	0	4	***
We have implemented procedures that prevent the financial abuse of service users	3,2	3,9	0	4	***
I understand the content of our procedures that prevent the physical abuse of service users	3,4	3,8	0	4	***
I understand the content of our procedures that prevent the mental abuse of service users	3,4	3,8	0	4	***
I understand the content of our procedures that prevent the financial abuse of service users	3,4	3,8	0	4	***
I have included procedures that prevent the physical abuse of my service users within my daily practice	3,4	3,8	0	4	***
I have included procedures that prevent the mental abuse of my service users within my daily practice	3,5	3,8	0	4	***
I have included procedures that prevent the financial abuse of my service users within my daily practice	3,4	3,8	0	4	***
I have included the health and safety rules for service users within my daily practice	3,6	3,9	0	4	***

IMPACT RECOGNISED BY FUNDERS AND PARTNERS

The impact of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system on ethical aspects appears to be only slightly recognised by **funders.** In both the first and second evaluation round, a large majority of the responding funders state 'their' social service provider has a Code of Ethics and a policy on ethics and well-being.

Procedures to prevent the physical, mental and financial abuse of service users are reported to be in place in 'their' social service provider by a large majority of the funders in both rounds. Procedures that prevent mental abuse and procedures that prevent financial abuse show a small, though significant increase, according to the responding funders. Procedures that prevent physical abuse appear to be comparably present in both rounds, according to the funders.

The option to answer 'I do not know', has been used by 26% of the funders in the first round and 13% in the second round: the impact of the implementation of EQUASS is to a small extent recognised by funders regarding to these quality aspects.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
This SSP has a code of ethics	3,7	3,8	1	4	
This SSP has a policy on ethics and well-being for all	3,5	3,8	1	4	
This SSP has procedures that prevent the physical abuse of service users	3,6	3,8	1	4	
This SSP has procedures that prevent the mental abuse of service users	3,6	3,9	2	4	*
This SSP has procedures that prevent the financial abuse of service users	3,4	3,8	1	4	*

The impact of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system on ethical aspects appears to be recognised by **partners.** In both the first and second evaluation round, a large majority of the responding partners state 'their' social service provider has a Code of Ethics and a policy on ethics and well-being, still there is a significant increase in almost all scores of the statements answered by partners.

Compared to the first round, significantly more partners in the second round state 'their' partner social service provider has a Code of Ethics and a policy on ethics and well-being.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
This SSP has a code of ethics	3,7	3,9	1	4	**
This SSP has a policy on ethics and well-being for all	3,7	3,9	1	4	***
This SSP has procedures that prevent the physical abuse of service users	3,7	3,9	1	4	**
This SSP has procedures that prevent the mental abuse of service users	3,8	3,8	1	4	
This SSP has procedures that prevent the financial abuse of service users	3,7	3,9	1	4	**

Procedures to prevent the physical, mental and financial abuse of service users are reported to be in place in 'their' social service provider by a large majority of the partners in both rounds. Procedures that prevent physical abuse and procedures that prevent financial abuse show a significant increase, according to the responding partners. Procedures that prevent mental abuse appear to be comparably present in both rounds, according to the partners.

The option to answer 'I do not know', has been used by an average of 25% of the partners: the implementation of EQUASS is recognised by partners regarding to these quality aspects.

6 FINDINGS AND THE IMPACT ON BUSINESS EFFICIENCY

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Enclosed in the ten quality principles of EQUASS are quality aspects related to business efficiency. Delivering services to service users should be done in a balance between costs and highest quality possible. This means attention on an organisational level, for effective and efficient ways of working, while including the best service delivery. When working more effective and efficient, the organisation saves money and time and resources that can be spend on more clients, faster trajects, less return, less complaints, etc.

To realise a positive impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation of the social service provider, the EQUASS quality system includes different quality elements, included in the ten principle of quality. Within the principle of Leadership, it is included by a focus on clear organisational goals, encouraging best practices, and standardisation of procedures and services. In this principle of Leadership, business efficiency is also included by a focus on continuous learning and innovation. This focus can also be found within the principle of Staff, where it is included in the development and continuous learning of staff. And also by a focus on employing qualified staff based on required knowledge, skills and competences, and a focus on the development and continuous learning of all staff for the benefits of the service users.

Part of the quality principle of Staff concerns the attention for the health and well-being of staff. Business efficiency can be reached by a focus on health and well-being of staff, because of its positive impact on the motivation of staff and indirectly on the prevention of retention and long-term sick leave.

Within the principle of Partnership, the business efficiency is included by a focus on the opinion of stakeholders about all quality aspects of the organisation of relevance to them. In this principle of Partnership, business efficiency is also included by a focus on mutual cooperation to support the service users in an optimal way. Within the principle of Result Orientation, business efficiency is included by a focus on the measuring and monitoring of the impact on services delivered, with the aim of using the information to improve the services.

Also, within this principle of Result Orientation, business efficiency is included by a focus on transparency. Being transparent to stakeholders can be viewed as an indirect way of realising business efficiency; being transparent means showing others how budgets are spent, what services are delivered and what results are realised. Being open in this stimulates showing the efficiency, effectiveness and accountability of the organisation. Within the quality principle of Continuous Improvement, business efficiency is included by a focus on improving services while using evidence-based information and by using all opinions of stakeholders.

6.2 SETTING AMBITIOUS GOALS

Setting ambitious goals and encouraging best practices starts with having a clear description of the mission, vision and values of the organisation. And then, use them as a guide in all actions of the organisation, including formulating the quality requirements and having them adopted by everybody working in the organisation of the social service provider. If this is in place, long-term goals can be formulated and disseminated throughout the organisation. Also, based on these long-term goals, a yearly planning can be made, including clear objectives and service results.

IMPACT ON THE ORGANISATION

The impact on the organisation of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system on setting ambitious goals, appears to be quite strong. All quality aspects related to this, show a significant increase in presence between the first and the second evaluation round.

 A majority of the responding managers in the first round report to have a clear written description of their mission, vision and values, an annual planning based on long-term goals, as well as clear objectives and results in this annual planning. In the second round, this number increases significantly.

In the first round, before the implementation of EQUASS, a majority of the managers mention their actions are guided by their mission, vision and values. In the second round, almost all of the responding managers report this; a significant increase.

Concerning the clear long-term quality goals, a majority of the managers in the first round report to have them formulated, compared to the significant larger number of managers in the second round. Also, compared to the first round, significantly more managers in the second round mention their employees know these formulated long-term goals.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
We have a clear written description of our mission, vision and values	3,8	4,0	2	4	**
In our actions, we use our mission, vision and values to guide us	3,6	3,9	2	4	***
We have an annual planning	3,8	4,0	1	4	***
We have formulated clear objectives and service results in our annual planning	3,6	3,9	1	4	***
Our annual planning is linked to our long-term goals	3,6	3,9	1	4	***
We have formulated clear long-term quality goals	3,4	3,8	1	4	***
Employees in our organisation know the long-term quality goals we formulated	3,1	3,6	1	4	***
Our quality requirements are aligned with our organisational mission and values	3,6	3,9	1	4	***
Our common way of meeting quality requirements is adopted by all people in the organisation	3,2	3,7	1	4	***

The implementation of EQUASS appears to have an impact on two other essential aspects of quality. In the first round, before the implementation of EQUASS, a majority of the managers mention their quality requirements to be aligned with their organisational mission and values. In the second round, the number of managers reporting this alignment has significantly increased. And, compared to the first round, a significant larger number of managers in the second round, reports about these quality requirements being adopted by all workers in the organisation.

IMPACT ON STAFF

The impact on staff of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system on setting ambitious goals appears to be significant. All quality aspects show a significant increase in presence between the first and the second evaluation round.

Compared to the first round, a significantly larger number of staff in the second round mentions the organisation's mission, vision and values to be clearly recognisable in their work and quality requirements being aligned with the organisational mission and values. Also compared to the first round, a significantly larger number of staff reports to know and to work with clear and concrete long-term quality goals.

A majority of staff mentions to work with an annual planning and with clear objectives and service goals in their annual planning. In the second round, there is a significant increase in the number of staff reporting this, compared to the first round.

Also, a significant increase between the first round, before the implementation of EQUASS, and the second round, after the implementation of EQUASS, can be seen in the number of staff reporting to have included the common quality culture aspects in their work. See table on next page.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
In my work, our organisation's mission, vision and values are clearly recognisable	3,5	3,8	0	4	***
Quality requirements are aligned with organisational mission and values	3,4	3,8	0	4	***
In our organisation, we work with clear and concrete long-term quality goals	3,4	3,8	0	4	***
I know the long-term goals that are formulated within our organisation	3,3	3,8	0	4	***
We work with an annual planning for the activities we undertake	3,7	3,9	0	4	***
I work with clear objectives and service goals in the annual planning	3,5	3,8	0	4	***
In my work, aspects of our common quality culture are clearly recognisable	3,3	3,7	0	4	***

IMPACT RECOGNISED BY FUNDERS AND PARTNERS

The impact of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system on setting ambitious goals appears to be hardly recognised by **funders.**

Compared to the first round, a significantly larger number of the responding funders in the second round states 'their' social service provider has a clear written description of their mission, vision and values.

The number of funders stating their social service provider has an annual planning, an operational planning procedure and works with clear objectives and service goals in their annual planning is in both rounds comparable.

Compared to the first round, more, though not significantly more funders in the second round state their' social service provider has formulated clear and concrete long-term quality goals.
The option to answer 'I do not know', has been used by an average of 16% of the funders: the implementation of EQUASS is hardly recognised by funders regarding to these quality aspects.

Statements and options on a scale of 1 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
This SSP has a clear written description of their mission, vision and values	3,4	3,8	1	4	*
This SSP works with an annual planning	3,7	3,9	2	4	
This SSP has an operational planning procedure	3,4	3,7	0	4	
This SSP works with clear objectives and service goals in this annual planning	3,6	3,8	1	4	
This SSP has formulated clear and concrete long-term quality goals	3,3	3,6	1	4	

The impact of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system on setting ambitious goals appears to be recognised by **partners.**

Compared to the first round, a significantly larger number of the responding partners in the second round states 'their' social service provider has a clear written description of their mission, vision and values, has an annual planning and works with clear objectives and service goals in their annual planning.

Compared to the first round, significantly more partners in the second round, after the implementation of EQUASS state their partner social service provider has formulated clear and concrete long-term quality goals.
The option to answer 'I do not know', has been used by an average of 10% of the partners: the implementation of EQUASS is clearly recognised by partners regarding these quality aspects.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
This SSP has a clear written description of their mission, vision and values	3,8	3,9	1	4	**
This SSP works with an annual planning	3,8	3,9	1	4	***
This SSP works with clear objectives and service goals in this annual planning	3,8	3,9	1	4	**
This SSP has formulated clear and concrete long-term quality goals	3,7	3,9	1	4	***

6.3   WORKING ON INNOVATIONS

One other important aspect of quality within the EQUASS quality system relates to the continuous attention for development and working on innovations and to compare the functioning of the organisation with other social service provider in the same sector. Let us see whether the implementation of EQUASS impacted the attention for working on innovations and this comparison.

IMPACT ON THE ORGANISATION

The implementation of the EQUASS quality system appears to have a significant impact on the policy of the organisation around working on innovations. In the first round a relatively small number of managers reports about having a clear policy to work continuously on innovations and to inform themselves continuously about new technologies. The number of managers reporting this in the second round, after the implementation of EQUASS has significantly.

The impact of the implementation of EQUASS appears to be even stronger on comparing the functioning of the organisation with other organisations working in the same sector. Compared to the first round, a significantly larger number of managers in the second round reports to have indicators how they function compared to other social service providers in the same sector.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
We have a clear policy how to work continuously on innovations	2,7	3,5	0	4	***
We have a clear policy how to inform ourselves continuously about new technologies	2,6	3,4	0	4	***
We have indicators to monitor how we 'function' compared to other SSP's in the same sector	2,3	3,6	0	4	***

IMPACT ON STAFF

Staff has the opportunity to be involved in quality improvement, which is part of working on innovations. The impact on staff of the implementation of EQUASS related to being involved in quality improvement will be described in paragraph 6.6 Involvement of stakeholders in organisational issues.

IMPACT RECOGNISED BY FUNDERS AND PARTNERS

The impact of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system on working on innovations appears to be not recognised by **funders.**

The number of responding funders stating 'their' social service provider has a clear view how they work on innovations and how they keep up with new technologies is comparable in both rounds.
The option to answer 'I do not know', has been used by an average 22% of the funders in round 1 and 4% of the funders in round 2; the implementation of EQUASS is not recognised by funders regarding to these quality aspects.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4				
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max Sign
This SSP has a clear view how they work on innovations	3,4	3,4	1	4
The SSP has a clear view how they keep up with new technologies	3,3	3,4	1	4

The impact of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system on working on innovations appears to be not recognised by **partners.**

The number of responding partners stating 'their' social service provider has a clear view how they work on innovations and how they keep up with new technologies is comparable in both rounds.
The option to answer 'I do not know', has been used by an average of 17% of the partners: the implementation of EQUASS is not recognised by partners regarding to these quality aspects.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
This SSP has a clear view how they work on innovations	3,7	3,8	1	4	
The SSP has a clear view how they keep up with new technologies	3,6	3,7	0	4	

6.4 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF STAFF

Within the EQUASS quality principle of Staff, there is a focus on employing qualified staff based on required knowledge, skills and competences, and a focus on the development and continuous learning of all staff for the benefits of the service users. To be able to give input to this quality principle, the organisation needs to have descriptions of all positions of their employees, including their function, roles and responsibilities.
Based on this description, evaluations can take place to evaluate the competence requirements, roles and responsibilities of employees, preferably on an annual basis. Also needed is an employee's development plan, with clear guidelines how employees can learn, and based on the needs of the employees within the organisation.

Knowing the needs of employees implies having an insight in the development and growth of these employees. Development also has to do with motivation, it is therefore the implementation of EQUASS includes having clear measures to motivate all employees within the organisation. Let us see the impact of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system on these aspects of quality.

IMPACT ON THE ORGANISATION

The impact on the organisation of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system in relation to the professional development of staff, appears to be quite strong in most, though not all cases.

Almost all responding managers report in the first round and in the second round about the presence of a descriptions of all positions of their employees, including their function, roles and responsibilities.

A significant difference can be recognised when asking the managers to what extent they evaluate the competence requirements, roles and responsibilities of employees on an annual basis. In the second evaluation round, a significantly larger number of managers reports positively to this statement compared to the first round.

A large majority of managers report in the first round to have an employee's development plan, in the second round, significantly more managers report this. Compare to the first round, the number of managers in the second round answering this employees' development plan to be based on the needs of their employees, increases significantly. In the second round, the regular update of this employees' development plan is mentioned by a significantly larger number of managers, compared to the first evaluation round. is

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
We have descriptions for all positions of our employees	3,9	4,0	2	4	
All employees have a description of their function, including roles and responsibilities	3,9	3,9	2	4	
We evaluate the competence requirements, roles and responsibilities of employees on an annual basis	3,7	3,9	0	4	**
We have an employees' development plan	3,7	3,9	1	4	*
Our employees development plan is based on the needs of our employees	3,6	3,9	1	4	***
We regularly update our employee's development plan according to the needs assessment	3,4	3,9	1	4	***
We regularly carry out a needs assessment among our employees regarding learning and development wishes	3,4	3,9	1	4	***
We have an insight into the development and growth of our employees	3,5	3,9	1	4	***
We have clear guidelines about the way our employees can learn	3,3	3,8	1	4	***
We have clear measures related to motivating all our employees	3,2	3,7	0	4	***

Before the implementation of the EQUASS quality system, responding managers report to regularly carry out a needs assessment among their employees regarding their learning and development wishes, to have an insight into the development and growth of their employees and to have clear guidelines how their employees can learn. In the second evaluation round, after the implementation of EQUASS, the number of managers reporting this, increases significantly.

Also, a significant increase is recognisable in the measures related to motivating all employees. In the first round, a smaller number of the responding managers reports to have these measures in place, compared to the number of mangers in the second round.

IMPACT ON STAFF

The impact on staff of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system on their professional development appears to be significant. All quality aspects related to quality aspects show a significant increase between the first and the second evaluation round.

A large majority of staff in the first evaluation round and almost all staff in the second evaluation round have a description of their position, including their role and responsibilities: a small though significant increase. Compared to the first round, a significantly larger number of staff in the second round states they have to report about their competence requirements in relation to their roles and responsibilities.

A majority of staff in the first round know they can develop themselves in a continuous way and confirms having the possibility to do so, in their organisation. In the second round, the number of staff stating this increases significantly.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
I have a description of my position, including my role and my responsibilities	3,8	3,9	0	4	***
I have to report about my competence requirements in relation to my roles and responsibilities	3,5	3,8	0	4	***
I know I can develop myself in a continuous way, in this organisation	3,6	3,8	0	4	***
I have the possibility to learn and to develop myself in this organisation	3,6	3,8	0	4	***
I regularly have to complete an assessment about my needs for development	3,4	3,8	0	4	***
I regularly have to inform my management about my development	3,5	3,8	0	4	***
My personal learning and development possibilities are based on my needs	3,5	3,8	0	4	***

A majority of staff the first round reports about having the possibility to complete an assessment about their needs for development, informs their management about their development and states their personal learning and development possibilities are based on their needs for development. In the second round, after implementation of EQUASS, there is a significant increase of staff reporting this.

IMPACT RECOGNISED BY FUNDERS

The impact of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system on working on the development of staff appears to be recognised by **funders.** A majority of the responding funders state in the first evaluation round 'their' social service provider has a description of all roles and functions within the organisation, reports annually about the competence requirements, roles and responsibilities of their employees and has an employee's development plan. In the second round, the number of funders stating this, increases significantly.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
This SSP has a clear description of all roles and functions within the organisation	3,7	3,9	1	4	*
This SSP reports annually about the competence requirements, roles and responsibilities of employees	3,6	3,9	1	4	*
This SSP has an employee's development plan	3,6	3,9	2	4	**

The option to answer 'I do not know', has been used by an average of 12% of the funders; the implementation of EQUASS is recognised by funders regarding to these quality aspects.

6.5 HEALTH AND SAFETY FOR EMPLOYEES

Health and safety is key for staff of the social service providers, plans and procedures to organise the health and safety for employees should be in place and practiced by each employee. Let's see the impact of the implementation of EQUASS on the health and safety issues for employees.

IMPACT ON THE ORGANISATION

The implementation of the EQUASS quality system appears to have an impact on the health and safety for employees.

Compared to the first evaluation round, before the implementation of EQUASS, almost all managers in the second round report to have clear written plan for health and safety for employees, and report their employees know this plan and have included their health and safety in their daily practice.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
We have a clear written plan for health and safety for employees	3,4	3,9	0	4	***
Our employees know our plan for health and safety related to them	3,3	3,9	0	4	***
Our employees include their health and safety in their daily practice	3,5	3,9	0	4	***

IMPACT ON STAFF

The impact on staff of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system on health and safety issues appears to be significant. Compared to the first round, a significant larger number of staff respond they know the health and safety plan of the organisation and they act conform this health and safety plan.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
I know our health and safety plan	3,6	3,9	0	4	***
I act conform to our health and safety plan	3,6	3,9	0	4	***

IMPACT RECOGNISED BY FUNDERS

The impact of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system on health and safety appears to be recognised by **funders.** Compared to the first round, significantly more, almost all of the responding **funders** state 'their' social service provider has a health and safety plan for their employees.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
This SSP has a health and safety plan for their employees	3,6	4,0	2	4	*

The option to answer 'I do not know', has been used by an average of 13% of the funders; the implementation of EQUASS is recognised by funders regarding to these quality aspects.

6.6 INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS IN ORGANISATIONAL ISSUES

Another aspect of the EQUASS quality system concerns the involvement of stakeholders in organisational aspects, of relevance for them as stakeholders. Relating to quality, most important are the 'customers' of the social service provider, being the service users. Also, the workers within the organisation are important to involve in all kinds of organisational aspects, since it directly impacts on their work and their services delivered to service users. Other stakeholders can be funders, their opinion about different organisational aspects is important since it can influence their funding. Let's have a look at the impact of the implementation of EQUASS on involvement of stakeholders.

IMPACT ON SERVICE USERS RELATED TO THEIR INVOLVEMENT

The positive impact on service users of the implementation of EQUASS related to their involvement appears to be quite significant.

In the first evaluation round, a majority of the service users report about the possibility to give their opinion about the content and type of services, in the second round, the number of service users reporting this, increases significantly. Also, a significant increase in involvement of service users can be recognised in the possibility for them to be involved in the appointment and training of staff.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
This SSP offers me the possibility to give my opinion about the content of the services	3,3	3,6	0	4	***
This SSP offers me the possibility to give my opinion about the types of services	3,2	3,6	0	4	***
This SSP offers me the possibility to give my opinion about the appointment of staff	2,8	3,3	0	4	***
This SSP offers me the possibility to give my opinion about the training of staff	2,5	3,1	0	4	***
This SSP offers me clear and concrete information about the results of their services	3,3	3,6	0	4	***

Another positive and significant impact can be recognised in the extent to which the social service provider offers service users clear and concrete information about the results of the services they offer.

IMPACT ON THE ORGANISATION RELATED TO THE INVOLVEMENT OF SERVICE USERS

The positive impact on the organisation of the implementation of EQUASS related to the involvement of service users, appears to be present and this positive impact is significant.

In the first evaluation round, a majority of the managers report about having clear procedures how their service users can express their opinion about topics that are of relevance to themselves as users and topics that are of relevance for the services in general. In the second round, there is a significant increase in the number of managers reporting this.

There is also a significant increase recognised in the number of managers reporting to regularly review their activities for active user involvement. Another increase in the number of managers stating positively to the statements, can be seen in the knowledge of organisations about the topics brought in by service users and the aspects that are seen as relevant for their service users. Related to this, almost all of the responding managers in the second round report to have an overview of actions that they have undertaken to anticipate on the topics brought in by service users; this is a significant increase compared to the number of managers reporting this in the first round.

Compared to the first round, a larger number of managers in the second round reports their service users receive information about the results of the services of the organisation in an 'accessible' and 'understandable way.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
We have clear procedures how our service users can express their opinion about topics that are of relevance to themselves as users	3,2	3,9	0	4	***
We have clear procedures how our service users can express their opinion about topics that are of relevance for our services	3,1	3,9	0	4	***
We regularly review our activities for active user involvement	3,1	3,9	0	4	***
We have an overview of topics brought in by service users	3,4	4,0	0	4	***
We have an overview of what actions have been undertaken to anticipate on the topics brought in by service users	3,3	3,9	0	4	***
We know what aspects of our service are seen as relevant for our service users	3,3	3,9	0	4	***
We disseminate information about the results of our services to our service users	3,0	3,9	0	4	***
We ensure this information users is 'accessible' and 'understandable for all our service users	3,0	3,8	0	4	***

IMPACT ON STAFF RELATED TO THE INVOLVEMENT OF SERVICE USERS

According to staff of the different participating organisations, there appears to be a significant positive impact of the implementation of EQUASS related to the involvement of service users.

Compared to the first evaluation round, before the implementation of EQUASS, 58%, a larger number of staff mentions to have and to know the procedures how their service users can express their opinion about all topics that are of relevance to themselves as users.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
We have clear procedures how our service users can express their opinion about all topics that are of relevance to themselves as users	3,4	3,9	0	4	***
I know the procedures of how to involve our service users and to let them express their opinions	3,4	3,9	0	4	***
I actively encourage my service users to express their opinions and views about our services	3,4	3,8	0	4	***
I report regularly about the needs, expectancies and choices of my service users	3,4	3,8	0	4	***

Also, an increase can be recognised in the active investment of staff to encourage service users to express their opinion. This information needs to be put in the right place, at the management of the organisation. Significantly more staff in the second round mentions the reporting of this information to the management, compared to the number of staff mentioning this in the first round.

IMPACT RECOGNISED BY FUNDERS RELATED TO THE INVOLVEMENT OF SERVICE USERS

The impact of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system on the involvement of service users appears to be clearly recognised by **funders.**
The number of responding funders stating 'their' social service provider offers service users the possibility to express their opinion and views about the services in the second round, is much larger compared to the number of funders stating this in the first round.
The option to answer 'I do not know', has been used by 10% of the funders; the implementation of EQUASS is clearly recognised by funders regarding to this quality aspect.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
This SSP service users have the possibility to express their opinion and views about the services	3,4	3,9	2	4	***

IMPACT ON THE ORGANISATION RELATED TO THE INVOLVEMENT OF STAFF

There seems to be a strong positive impact on the organisation of the implementation of EQUASS relating to the involvement of employees.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
We involve employees in planning our services and activities	3,5	3,8	1	4	***
We communicate within our organisation the opportunities for employees to be involved in planning	3,6	3,9	2	4	***
Most employees know the opportunities to be involved in planning	3,5	3,9	1	4	***
We involve employees in service development	3,3	3,7	1	4	***
We communicate within our organisation the opportunities for employees to be involved in service development	3,5	3,9	1	4	***
Most employees know the opportunities to be involved in service development	3,4	3,8	1	4	***
We involve employees in quality improvement	3,4	3,8	1	4	***
We communicate within our organisation the opportunities for employees to be involved in quality improvements	3,5	3,9	0	4	***
Most employees know the opportunities to be involved in quality improvements	3,4	3,9	0	4	***

Compared to the first round, the number of managers reporting to involve their employees in planning services and activities, service development and quality improvement, increases significantly in the second round.

Also, a significant increase is recognisable in the second round, in the number of managers mentioning they communicate about the opportunity for staff to be involved in planning, service development and quality improvement. And, in the second round, significantly more managers answer positively on statements related to having employees that know they have the opportunity to be involved.

IMPACT ON STAFF RELATED TO THEIR INVOLVEMENT

The positive impact on staff of the implementation of EQUASS in relation to their involvement in organisational issues, is significant.
In the first round, a majority of staff report to have the opportunity to be involved in planning of the services and activities and in quality improvement. In the second round a significantly larger number of staff reports this. Regarding the opportunity to be involved in service development, significantly more staff reports in the second round to have this opportunity, compared to the first round.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
I have the opportunity to be involved in planning our services and activities	3,4	3,7	0	4	***
I have the opportunity to be involved in service development	3,2	3,6	0	4	***
I have the opportunity to be involved in quality improvement	3,4	3,8	0	4	***

IMPACT RECOGNISED BY FUNDERS RELATED TO THE INVOLVEMENT OF EMPLOYEES

The impact of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system on the involvement of staff appears to be clearly recognised by **funders.**

Compared to the first round, a significantly larger number of funders states in the second round 'their' social service provider actively involves employees in service development and quality improvement
The option to answer 'I do not know', has been used by 18% of the funders; the implementation of EQUASS is clearly recognised by funders regarding to these quality aspects.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
This SSP actively involves employees in service development	3,4	3,8	2	4	**
This SSP actively involves employees in quality improvement	3,5	3,8	2	4	**

IMPACT ON THE ORGANISATION TO THE INVOLVEMENT OF OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

There is a positive impact on the organisation of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system recognisable related to the involvement of other stakeholders.

When asking managers in the first evaluation round about the involvement of funders, a small number of managers mentions to have procedures how their funders can express their opinion about all topics that are of relevance to them and to the service users of 'their' organisation. In the second evaluation round, after the implementation of EQUASS, a significantly larger number of managers mentions to have these procedures in place for funders.

When asking managers in the first evaluation round about the involvement of other stakeholders, a small number of managers mentions to have procedures how other stakeholders can express their opinion about all topics that are of relevance to them and to the service users of 'their' organisation. In the second evaluation round, after the implementation of EQUASS, a significantly larger number of managers mentions to have these procedures in place for other stakeholders.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
We have clear procedures how our funders can express their opinion about all topics that are of relevance to them	2,8	3,7	0	4	***
We have clear procedures how our other stakeholders can express their opinion about all topics that are of relevance to them	2,8	3,7	0	4	***
We have clear procedures how our funders can express their opinion about all topics that are of relevance for our services	2,8	3,7	0	4	***
We have clear procedures how our other stakeholders can express their opinion about all topics that are of relevance for our services	2,7	3,7	0	4	***

6.7   COOPERATION

Service users might need support and treatment before, during or after the services they receive of the social service provider taking part in this study. Within the quality principle of Comprehensiveness, it is stated services should be delivered in a coordinated way and through a multi-disciplinary team approach or in a multi-agency setting. Let us see if the implementation of EQUASS has impacted the cooperation with partner organisations.

IMPACT ON SERVICE USERS

The majority of the service users mentions their social service provider supports them in creating the support of other organisations, and they feel satisfied about this support. The number of service users reporting this, increases significantly between the first and second evaluation round. The implementation of EQUASS appears to have an impact on this aspect of quality.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
If other services are needed, this SSP supports me in creating the support of other organisations	3,5	3,7	0	4	***
I feel satisfied about the way this SSP supports me in creating the support of other organisations	3,5	3,7	0	4	***

IMPACT ON THE ORGANISATION

The impact of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system appears to present in cooperation and partnership quality aspects. In the first round of this evaluation study, a small number of the responding managers reports about having clear indicators for the results of their partnerships with other organisations, in the second round this number increases significantly.

Compared to the first round, before the implementation of EQUASS, a significantly larger number of managers in the second round reports positively on statements about having a clear view what profit or non-profit organisations they like to cooperate with in order to create a continuum of services for their service users, and to have created this continuum of services needed for their service users.

And, significantly more managers in the second round report about having engaged all relevant parts of their organisation in partnerships and/or cooperate with relevant others to create this continuum of services for their service users, compared to the first round.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
We have clear indicators for the results of our partnerships	2,2	3,7	0	4	***
We have a clear view what profit or non-profit organisations we like to cooperate with in order to create a continuum of services for our service users	3,4	3,8	0	4	***
We have created this continuum of services needed for our service users	3,5	3,8	1	4	***
All relevant parts of our organisation are engaged in partnerships and/or cooperate with relevant others to create this continuum of services for our service users	3,4	3,8	0	4	***

IMPACT ON STAFF

The impact on staff of the implementation of EQUASS appears to be significant in relation to the cooperation with relevant other organisations. A small majority of the responding staff mentions in the first round to be engaged in partnerships and/or cooperate with relevant other organisations in order to create a continuum of services for their service users, compared to a significantly larger majority of staff reporting this in the second round.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
I am engaged in partnerships and/or cooperate with relevant other organisations in order to create a continuum of services for my service users	3,0	3,6	0	4	***

IMPACT RECOGNISED BY FUNDERS AND PARTNERS

The impact of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system on the cooperation with relevant other organisations appears to be recognised by **funders.**
Compared to the first round, a significantly larger number of funders in the second round states 'their' social service provider works in partnership or cooperates with other profit and non-profit organisations in order to create a continuum of services for their service users.
The option to answer 'I do not know', has been used by an average of 16% of the funders in round 1 and 7% in round2. The impact of the implementation of EQUASS is clearly recognised by funders regarding to these quality aspects.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
This SSP works in partnership or cooperates with other profit organisations in order to create a continuum of services for their service users	3,5	3,9	2	4	**
This SSP works in partnership or cooperates with other non-profit organisations in order to create a continuum of services for their service users	3,5	3,8	0	4	*

The impact of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system on the cooperation with relevant other organisations appears to be hardly recognised by **partners.**
A majority of the responding partners in both the first round and the second round state 'their' partner social service provider works in partnership or cooperates with other profit and non-profit organisations in order to create a continuum of services for their service users. The increase in the number of partners mentioning the cooperation with profit organisations, appears to be slightly significant.
The option to answer 'I do not know', has been used by 17% of the partners: the implementation of EQUASS is recognised by a larger number partners regarding to these quality aspects.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
This SSP works in partnership with profit organisations to create a continuum of services for their service users	3,7	3,8	1	4	*
This SSP works in partnership with non-profit organisations to create a continuum of services for their service users	3,8	3,9	1	4	

6.8 MEASURING AND MONITORING SERVICES WITH THE AIM OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

A key element of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system is the focus on continuous improvement, by measuring and monitoring of services delivered to service users and all aspects related to this. For the organisation it means that clear procedures are needed about how to record and monitor their business and their service results. It also means the organisation needs to have clear indicators how to measure and monitor the needs and abilities of service users in relation to the services delivered and the results of these services, and to have clear indicators to measure and monitor the satisfaction and quality of life of service users and to measure and monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of the services related to the outcomes and benefits of the service users.

Another aspect related to the services for service users concerns the monitoring of the procedures to ensure the confidentiality of sensitive information, the accuracy of records, the privacy, dignity and physical integrity of service users. Measuring and monitoring the satisfaction of funders and other stakeholders is another essential element of this focus on continuous improvement.

IMPACT ON THE ORGANISATION

The impact on the organisation of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system related to measuring and monitoring services with the aim of continuous improvement, appears to be positively significant in all measured aspects.

According to a small number of the managers in the first evaluation round, their organisation monitors their objectives and service results, and the efficiency and effectiveness of their services on a regular basis and also have clear indicators how to do this. In the second evaluation round, after the implementation of EQUASS, a significantly larger number of managers reports to have this in place.

Also, according to a small number of the managers in the first round, their organisation have a procedure of planning actions for improvement, based on the evaluation of their service results. In the second round, a significantly larger number of managers reports this.

Compared to the first round, before the implementation of EQUASS, significantly more managers in the second round report to have procedures in pace how to record their business and service results.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
We have clear procedures how to record our business and our service results	3,2	3,8	1	4	***
We have clear indicators how to monitor our objectives and service results	2,5	3,8	0	4	***
Our financial results are periodically monitored by an independent reviewer	2,1	3,4	0	4	***
We regularly monitor the progress towards reaching our objectives and service results	2,6	3,8	0	4	***
We have a procedure of planning actions for improvement	2,3	3,7	0	4	***
Our actions for improvement are based on the evaluation of our service results	2,5	3,8	0	4	***
We have clear indicators to monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of our services	3,3	3,9	0	4	***
We regularly monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of our services related to the outcomes and benefits for our service users	2,8	3,8	0	4	***

A small number of managers in the first round reports to measure the satisfaction of their employees on a regular basis, and to have clear indicators how to measure this. In the second round there is a significant increase in the number of managers reporting to have this in place.

Measuring the satisfaction of service users and having clear indicators how to do this, is reported by a small number of the managers in the first evaluation round. In the second round the number of managers reporting this, increases significantly. Also, monitoring the Quality of life and needs and abilities of service users and having clear indicators to do so, is reported to be done by a small number of the managers in the first round and a significantly larger number of the managers in the second evaluation round.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
We have clear indicators how to measure the satisfaction and motivation of our employees	2,8	3,8	0	4	***
We regularly measure the satisfaction and motivation of our employees	2,8	3,8	0	4	***
We have clear indicators how to measure the satisfaction of our service users	3,0	3,8	0	4	***
We regularly measure the satisfaction of our service users	2,8	3,8	0	4	***
We have clear indicators to monitor Quality of Life of our service users	2,7	3,8	0	4	***
We regularly monitor the improvements in Quality of Life of our service users	2,5	3,8			
We have clear indicators to monitor the needs and abilities of our services users	3,0	3,9	0	4	***
We regularly monitor the needs and abilities of our service users in relation to the services delivered and the results	2,8	3,8	0	4	***

Monitoring their partnerships on its success in creating a continuum of services for their services users appears to be positively impacted by the implementation of EQUASS. Compared to the first round, a significantly larger number of managers in the second round reports to do this. Also measuring the satisfaction of their funders and other stakeholders, and having indicators to do so, appears to significantly positively influenced by the implementation of the EQUASS quality system.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
We monitor these partnerships and these cooperations on their success in creating a continuum of services for our service users	2,5	3,7	0	4	***
We have clear indicators focussing on relevant aspects for our funders	2,6	3,7	0	4	***
We regularly measure the satisfaction of our funders	2,2	3,6	0	4	***
We have clear indicators focussing on relevant aspects for our other stakeholders	2,2	3,6	0	4	***
We regularly measure the satisfaction of our other stakeholders	2,2	3,6	0	4	***

The monitoring of the procedures related to ensure the confidentiality of sensitive information, the accuracy of records, the privacy, dignity and physical integrity of service users is reported to be in place by a significantly larger number of managers in the second round, compared to the first round.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
We regularly monitor our procedures to ensure the confidentiality of sensitive information of our service users	3,3	3,9	0	4	***
We regularly monitor our procedures to ensure the accuracy of records of our service users	3,2	3,9	0	4	***
We regularly monitor our procedures to ensure the privacy of our service users	3,2	3,9	0	4	***
We regularly monitor our procedures to ensure the dignity of our service users	3,3	3,9	0	4	***
We regularly monitor our procedures to ensure the physical integrity of our service users	3,2	3,9	0	4	***

IMPACT ON STAFF

Staff experiences a significantly positive impact of the implementation of EQUASS in relation to monitoring aspects. Compared to the first round, before the implementation of the EQUASS quality system, a significantly larger number of staff in the second round reports to know their organisation monitors the progress of reaching these objectives and service results on a regular basis.

Also related to a focus of the organisation on their satisfaction and motivation to work in this organisation, there is a significant increase recognisable between the two evaluation rounds. Reporting about prevention activities appears to be significantly increased after the implementation of the EQUASS quality system. Before the implementation, a majority of staff answers positively on the statements about having to report on a regular basis about how they prevent the physical, mental and financial abuse of their service users. After the implementation of EQUASS, a significantly larger number of staff reports positively on these statements. In the first round, a small number of staff mentions they have to report about how they include empowerment in their daily work. In the second round there is a significant increase recognisable in the number of staff answering positively to this.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
I know our organisation monitors the progress of reaching these objectives and service results on a regular basis	3,4	3,8	0	4	***
I experience measures of the organisation specifically focussing on increasing my satisfaction and motivation to work here	3,3	3,7	0	4	***
I have to report regularly about how I prevent the physical abuse of my service users	3,2	3,7	0	4	***
I have to report regularly about how I prevent the mental abuse of my service users	3,2	3,7	0	4	***
I have to report regularly about how I prevent the financial abuse of my service users	3,2	3,7	0	4	***
I have to report regularly about how I include empowerment into my daily work	2,8	3,6	0	4	***

IMPACT RECOGNISED BY FUNDERS AND PARTNERS

The impact of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system on measuring and monitoring services with the aim of continuous improvement, appears not to be recognised by **funders.**

In both the first round and the second round, a comparative number of funders state 'their' social service provider assesses the progress towards reaching their objectives and service results on a regular basis. The scores given by the funders on the statement about 'their' social service provider having clear indicators how they measure their service results, that provide them with the strategic information how to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their services, and having actions planned for improvement bases on the evaluation of their business in relation to their service results, are higher, though this appears to be no significant difference, it might be coincidental. This also counts for most of the statements concerning measuring and monitoring services. Higher scores, though not significantly higher, can be seen at the statements around having clear procedures in place how to record business and service results, measuring the satisfaction of their service users and measuring the benefits for their service users.

A slight positive and significant difference between the first round and the second evaluation round can be seen in the number of funders stating 'their' social service provider measuring the satisfaction of their stakeholders.

The option to answer 'I do not know', has been used by an average of 19% of the funders in round 1 and an average of 5% in round 2. The impact of the implementation of EQUASS is in most cases not recognised by the funders regarding to these quality aspects.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
This SSP assesses the progress towards reaching these objectives and service results on a regular basis	3,5	3,5	1	4	
This SSP has clear indicators how they measure their service results	3,4	3,5	1	4	
This SSP uses clear indicators that provide them with strategic information how to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their services	3,3	3,4	1	4	
Planning actions for improvement of this SSP are based on the evaluation of their business in relation to their service results	3,5	3,6	0	4	
This SSP has clear procedures how to record their business and their service results	3,5	3,7	1	4	
This SSP has clear indicators how they measure the levels of satisfaction of their service users	3,3	3,5	1	4	
This SSP has clear indicators how they measure the benefits for their service users	3,3	3,5	1	4	
This SSP measures the satisfaction of their stakeholders	3,4	3,7	2	4	*

The impact of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system on measuring and monitoring services with the aim of continuous improvement, appears to be recognised by **partners.** Compared to the first evaluation round, before the implementation of EQUASS, significantly more partners in the second round state 'their' partner social service provider has clear indicators how they measure their service results, the levels of satisfaction of their service users and the benefits for their service users.

This also counts for the significantly increased number of partners in the second round stating their' partner social service provider has clear procedures how to record their business and their service results.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
This SSP has clear indicators how they measure their service results	3,6	3,8	1	4	*
This SSP has clear indicators how they measure the levels of satisfaction of their service users	3,6	3,8	1	4	**
This SSP has clear indicators how they measure their service benefits for their service users	3,6	3,8	1	4	*
This SSP has clear procedures how to record their business and their service results	3,7	3,9	1	4	***

The option to answer 'I do not know', has been used by an average of 21% of the partners. The impact of the implementation of EQUASS is recognised by partners regarding to these quality aspects.

6.9   TRANSPARENCY

Part of the quality principle Result Orientation is also being transparent about results, to all stakeholders. And stakeholders are service users, employees, funders, partners and possibly other stakeholders. let's see whether the implementation of EQUASS impacted on this transparency to these stakeholders. Questions related to this element are mostly asked to the participating managers, to find out the impact on the organisation.

IMPACT ON THE ORGANISATION

The implementation of the EQUASS quality system has positively impacted the dissemination of the results of the services to service users, employees, funders, partners and other stakeholders.

Compared to the first evaluation round, a significant larger number of managers in the second round reports to disseminate their results to employees and funders, and to disseminate their results to service users, partners and other stakeholders.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
We disseminate information about the results of our services to our employees	3,5	3,9	0	4	***
We ensure this information is 'understandable' for them	3,5	3,9	0	4	***
We disseminate information about the results of our services to our service users	3,0	3,	0	4	***
We ensure this information users is 'accessible' and 'understandable for all our service users	3,0	3,8	0	4	***
We disseminate information about the results of our services to our funders	3,5	3,9	0	4	***
We disseminate information about the results of our services to our partners	2,9	3,8	0	4	***
We disseminate information about the results of our services to our other stakeholders	2,9	3,8	0	4	***

In the second evaluation round, after the implementation of EQUASS, there is also a significant increase recognisable in the number of managers reporting to make this information 'accessible' and 'understandable for all of their service users.

IMPACT RECOGNISED BY PARTNERS

The impact of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system on transparency appears to be recognised by **partners.**

Compared to the first evaluation round, before the implementation of EQUASS, a significantly larger number of partners in the second round reports about 'their' partner social service provider sending them information about their results.
The option to answer 'I do not know', has been used by 17% of the partners. The impact of the implementation of EQUASS is recognised by partners regarding to this quality aspect.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4					
	Mean 1	Mean 2	Min	Max	Sign
This SSP sends us information about their results	2,8	3,1	0	4	*

7 OPINIONS OF FUNDERS AND PARTNERS ABOUT QUALITY

7.1 THE OPINION OF THE FUNDERS ABOUT THE PRESENCE OF QUALITY ASPECTS

Those organisations responsible for the funding of the social service providers can play an important role in the quality of the services delivered. When evaluating the impact of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system, the opinions of the funding organisations about what they expect to be of good quality needs to be taken into account.

7.1.1 OPINIONS IN THE FIRST MEASUREMENT, BEFORE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EQUASS

A large majority of the funders expect services to be accessible. According to almost all funders, services need to be effective and have a mix of disciples. And, according to almost all, funders expect social service providers to treat their service users properly and with dignity and respect. Services should be affordable for service users. Also, a large majority of the funders want their social service providers to work with quality systems. A smaller majority of the funders carry the opinion that service users should have a freedom of choice and also that service users should be treated fast. Also, a smaller majority of the funders carries the opinion that their social service providers should share their results. Less than half of the funders see it as important their social service providers make use of evidence-based treatments.

Statements and options on a scale of 0 – 4	Mean	Min	Max
Services need to be accessible	3,9	3	4
Services need to be effective	3,9	3	4
They need to have a right mix of disciplines	3,9	3	4
Users need to be treated properly	3,9	3	4
Users are treated with dignity and respect	3,9	3	4
Services need to be affordable	3,8	2	4
SSP's need to work with quality systems	3,8	2	4
Their users should have a freedom of choice	3,6	2	4
Users need to be treated fast	3,6	2	4
SSP's need to share their results	3,6	2	4
They need to make use of evidence-based treatments, as much as possible	3,2	1	4

7.1.2 CONCLUSION, AFTER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EQUASS

As can be read in the chapters 5 and 6 of this final impact report, most of these aspects have been included in the surveys of this impact study and funders were asked to give their opinion about these aspects being present. It can be concluded that the implementation of EQUASS has positively impacted the presence of the expected elements mentioned by the funders.

7.1.3 WHAT DO FUNDERS NEED, ASKED BEFORE IMPLEMENTING EQUASS

Another aspect of importance is the opinion of the funding organisations about the information they need, to make a 'well-informed decision' about the funding of a specific social service provider as well as to make strategic choices. Summarising the answers of the funders to this question, three general elements can be recognised. The first element concerns a general overview of all aspects of services, the second element concerns a need for concrete figures and facts what to expect from this service provider and the third element concerns aspects relating to a clear description of the results of the activities of the specific service provider.

7.1.4 WHAT DO FUNDERS RECEIVE, ASKED AFTER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EQUASS

The list of elements mentioned by funders needed to make a well-informed decision around funding has been transformed into statements used in the second measurement. Funders are in this second measurement requested to rate the extent into which social service providers receiving their funding, meet their needs for information.

A large majority of the responding funders receive information about the goals of the organisation, the numbers of recipients of services, the budget, financial statements and prices, reasoned letters regarding the need for funds and a description of activities to be carried out by the organisation.

Information aspects received from the organisation funded, on a scale of 0 – 4?				
	Mean	Min	Max	SD
The formulated goals of the organisation	3,8	1	4	0,6
A concrete number of recipients of services	3,8	2	4	0,4
A reasoned letter regarding the need for funds	3,8	0	4	0,7
Timely and correct implementation of the budget and financial statements	3,8	0	4	0,7
A description of activities to be carried out by the organisation	3,8	0	4	0,7
A set of service prices of the organisation	3,6	0	4	1,1

A majority of the funders report about receiving a clear report with an overview of the services actually taken place, information about why to maintain specific services and concrete information about the cost-effective use of the funds allocated.

Information aspects received from the organisation funded, on a scale of 0 – 4?				
	Mean	Min	Max	SD
A clear report with an overview of the services actually taken place	3,6	0	4	0,9
Concrete information about why to maintain specific services	3,6	1	4	0,8
Concrete information about the cost-effective use of the funds allocated	3,5	0	4	1,0

A smaller majority of the funders report to receive information about the benefits to the beneficiaries of the organisation, information to justify steps to improve service delivery and information about the challenges of the organisation. Also, a smaller majority of the responding funders receive information about employee retention and information about clear staff retention policies and procedures.

Information aspects received from the organisation funded, on a scale of 0 – 4?				
	Mean	Min	Max	SD
The benefits to the beneficiaries of the organisation	3,5	1	4	0,8
Information to justify steps to improve service delivery	3,5	1	4	0,7
The challenges of the organisation	3,4	0	4	1,0
Information about employee retention	3,3	0	4	1,2
Clear staff retention policies and procedures	3,3	0	4	1,2

Again, a smaller majority of the funders receive clear information with indicators about measures beneficial to the recipients of the services, indicators to measure service efficiency and service effectiveness and indicators how to measure the quality of the service delivery. Also, a smaller majority of the funders receive information about the presence of competence development courses and training. Less than half of the funders mention to receive information about personnel training plans.

Information aspects received from the organisation funded, on a scale of 0 – 4	Mean	Min	Max	SD
Clear information with indicators about measures beneficial to the recipients of the services	3,2	0	4	1,1
Clear information with indicators about service efficiency and service effectiveness	3,2	0	4	0,9
Clear information with indicators how to measure quality of the service delivery	3,1	0	4	1,0
Information about the presence of competence development courses and training	3,1	0	4	1,3
A personnel-training plan	2,7	0	4	1,5

7.2   PARTNER'S EXPECTANCIES CONCERNING IMPORTANT ASPECTS FOR PARTNERSHIP

7.2.1   WHAT DO PARTNERS EXPECT WHEN WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP, ASKED BEFORE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EQUASS

Partner organisations distinguish different expectancies in collaborating with the participating social service providers. Looking at the list of expectancies, quite a number of expectancies have to do with trust and transparency and being open to each other, in compliments and in critics. Also, quite a number of expectancies focus on mutual development in knowledge and in working together in projects for innovation and improvement of services. Other expectancies that can be recognised have to do with the benefits for service users in creating a continuum of services.

When working together in partnership, we expect the following from our partners:		
Cooperative attitude	Active collaboration in projects	Sharing best practices
Continuity of services	Openness	Sharing professional experience
Mutual case discussion and planning	Making use of specialist's consultation	Sincere engagement
Creating a secure environment	Joint seminars	Benefits for the service users
Confidence	Involvement in problem solving	Transparency
Participation in joint activities and projects	Improvement of overall staff competence	Looking for common solutions for new services
Active communication	Exchange of relevant information	Coordination of joint activities
Sharing information about procedures, decisions and results	Effective, professional and timely communication	Possibility to criticism, to comment on each other's activities and services

7.2.2   WHAT ASPECTS ARE PRESENT, ASKED AFTER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EQUASS

The list of expectancies is transferred into aspects. In the second measurement, after the implementation of EQUASS, partner organisations were requested to rate the extent to which their partners in social services meet their expectancies. Partners differ in their choice of these expectancies; we should take that into account when looking at this list of expectancies to what extent they are present according to the partners. Still, it provides us with a view to what extent these important aspects are known as being present in the cooperation with this specific partner.

A majority of partners mention the presence of confidence and effective, professional and timely communication as being present in their cooperation. Also, exchange of relevant information, openness, strengthen and developing cooperation and experiences of sharing, are present in their cooperation with partner organisations being part of the EQUASS impact study.

Present at the partner organisation on a scale of 0 – 4				
	Mean	Min	Max	SD
Confidence	3,7	0	4	0,8
Effective, professional and timely communication	3,6	0	4	0,9
Exchange of relevant information	3,5	0	4	0,9
Openness	3,4	0	4	1,0
Strengthen and develop cooperation	3,4	0	4	1,0
Experiences of sharing	3,4	0	4	1,0

A small majority mentions the presence of creating a secure environment, possibility to criticism, to comment on each other's activities and services in their cooperation. Also, a cooperative attitude, sharing information about procedures, decisions and results and the coordination of joint activities, are present in their cooperation with partner organisations being part of the EQUASS impact study.

Present at the partner organisation on a scale of 0 – 4	Mean	Min	Max	SD
Creating a secure environment	3,3	0	4	1,4
Possibility to criticism, to comment on each other's activities and services	3,3	0	4	1,2
Cooperative attitude	3,1	0	4	1,2
Sharing information about procedures, decisions and results	3,1	0	4	1,2
Coordination of joint activities	3,0	0	4	1,2

Other aspects mentioned by less than half of the responding partners as being present in their cooperation are described in the table below. It concerns aspects like for instance achieving common goals, involvement in problem solving, mutual case discussion and planning and mutual discussion and planning.

Present at the partner organisation on a scale of 0 – 4	Mean	Min	Max	SD
Achieving common goals	2,9	0	4	1,2
Involvement in problem solving	2,8	0	4	1,4
Service continuity for service users	2,7	0	4	1,5
Mutual case discussion and planning	2,7	0	4	1,4
Making use of specialist's consultation	2,7	0	4	1,5
Improvement of overall staff competence	2,5	0	4	1,6
Mutual discussion about planning and results	2,4	0	4	1,4
Looking for common solutions for new services	2,4	0	4	1,5
Active collaboration in projects	2,4	0	4	1,6
Mutual activity planning	2,3	0	4	1,3
Celebrate together	2,3	0	4	1,6
Joint seminars	2,0	0	4	1,7
Creating possibilities for internships	2,0	0	4	1,8

Some of the mentioned aspects are aiming at general cooperation activities, for instance looking for common solutions for new services, active collaboration in projects, improving of overall staff competence and joint seminars. A smaller number of partners answers positively to the presence of these aspects.

8 RESULTS OF THE FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The Project 'Improvement of Social services, the application of the quality system EQUASS' aims to improve quality of social services by introduction of integrated social sector-specific quality certification system EQUASS in Lithuania in 2019-2021. The impact evaluation component of the project seeks to analyse and assess the impact of the implementation of EQUASS quality system on the development of the social services sector. This impact evaluation of the implementation of EQUASS implies both quantitative and qualitative research. The latter research allows for the better understanding through first-hand experience. Qualitative research data derived from focus group interviews helps to enrich impact assessment quantitative data by exploring some issues in depth.

Key issues of interest for the focus group discussions are experiences related to implementation of EQUASS as well as the feelings and beliefs about short- and long-term perspectives of EQUASS in Lithuanian social sector.

In February 2021, in October 2021 and in January 2022 managers of all organisations contracted under the second and all consequent stages of the Project have been invited to join focus group discussions.

Two Focus Groups took place on 18 and 23 of February 2021; two focus groups took place on 19 of October and 15 of November; and three final focus groups took place on 11, 19 and 24 of January 2022. In total, 59 participants from different types of both social services' providers and geographical areas shared their experience in implementation of EQUASS and opinions on its long-term impact.

The duration of the meetings was 1- 1.5 hours. The information received is treated as confidential. After the introduction about the goal, issues and rules of the discussion, the participants shared their experiences in implementation of EQUASS.

Participants were asked to elaborate on two questions:
- *What are your experiences with the implementation of EQUASS?*
- *What would be the future perspective of the EQUASS quality system in Lithuania*

8.2 EXPERIENCE IN IMPLEMENTATION EQUASS

The participants described numerous **benefits gained** thanks to the EQUASS.
Many participants stated that EQUASS enabled their performance as more systematic and even meaningful; they also confirmed appropriateness of their activities. Some quotes:
- *Now we see the overall picture.*
- *By measuring we recognised how much we really do.*
- *We have found the path we will take. We are all on the same path together.*
- *We see many good things: professionalism, quality, and microclimate.*
- *Due to external assessment, we made sure we were on the right track.*

The participants agreed that acquisition of the good **tool to measure quality** of services is extremely important for their work. Some quotes:
- *We used to make surveys on particular topics but now we may consider the overall system.*
- *Now we could measure quality in different perspectives – those of users, family members, employees.*
- *We use the tool which the best fits for the social services.*
- *We moved from measuring satisfaction to more comprehensive approach of measuring quality of life of our service users.*

Correspondingly, due to the tool the providers could **trace the changes** and identify gaps.

- *After two years of measurement, we distinctly observed a progress. We could see weaknesses and they are in a focus for improvement next year. So EQUASS not only enables quality but continuous improvement too.*

Many of participants mentioned enjoying new ways of communication with different audiences. Some quotes:

- *We moved from legally correct long documents to simplicity that is more readable.*
- *We changed language: fewer commas, more dots.*
- *Our service users now make their choices by using numerous pictures with we introduced in our routine practice.*

Involvement of all employees in quality improvement was recognised as an important benefit by many participants. Some quotes:

- *All employees now understand what 'quality' means, what we are speaking about.*
- *All employees including those who are not directly involved in the service provision recognise that quality depends on their activities and involvement.*
- *We did a lot for strengthen the motivation. Communication is paramount; people have to speak up, to be heard.*
- *The employees realised the need for lifelong learning.*

As a result, radical **change of internal culture** and relationship in some providers was noted. For instance, liberation from the culture of fear as one of the major dimensions of organisational climate was stressed. Some quotes:

- *There was a shift from 'feeling guilty' to 'freedom to experiment' atmosphere. We allow ourselves to be creative even if some indicators had negatively changed. And we could enthusiastically search for innovations.*
- *We have been surprised by the creativity of the staff.*
- *Social workers made a lot of practical suggestions.*
- *"Collegial way of doing things" came into place.*
- *Now everybody, staff and service users, participate and help each other.*
- *Our trade union acknowledged significant support provided to the employees.*

Some participants underlined a role of EQUASS implementation in revealing/enlightening **shared values** and **establishing common language**. Particularly, within the situations when EQUASS implementation helped a lot in a process of merging organisations and/or communicating with the branches. Some quotes:

- *Supervision is a way to the common language; and it gives a space for productive changes, not repeating old mistakes.*
- *Lithuanian culture is that of producing/keeping a lot of rules 'on paper'. Now we had a chance to review them. So, we shifted from straightforward control of working processes to another 'control mechanism' when everybody participates in the review of practices. Thus, decisions are made together so they become much more shared and do not provoke resistance.*

The **benefits for service users** and their relatives were perceived as obvious. Some quotes:

- *Service users did enjoy that we started to ask them questions, discuss with them important issues, etc. Family members/carers also positively responded when they had got a voice.*
- *We used to ask service users quite fragmentary, now we recognise the comprehensive structure, e.g. that some aspects are exactly about the rights of the service users.*
- *While asking new questions, sometimes we observed unexpected reactions like the following: whether living condition can be considered as bad?*
- *We moved towards real values of social work - the more we involve the recipient, the more we talk about why we do it. Relationship with relatives was strengthened, now we were talking much more, e.g. about EQUASS.*

Some participants recognised that a radical change in **enabling of the service users** had occurred. Some quotes:
- *We started to speak with children not about them. Consequently, even more, we observed positive shift in the community attitude towards a foster child from just an object of pity to recognition of personalities.*
- *We progressed significantly working with individual plans. Previously a team of specialists identified the needs, now service users are involved in this process.*
- *We are not completing plans but making plans in according to wishes and preferences of the service users.*
- *Our service users are proud of their individual plans.*

The managers admitted that they discovered new approaches and perspectives as well as remembered "forgotten" or considered less important things.
- *Eventually we assessed occupational risk.*

EQUASS facilitated **communication** with the partners and surprisingly:
- *We found out a lot of interesting information.*
- *We found more great partners. Why had not we done it before?*

CHALLENGES

During the discussions, the participants agreed on some key challenges in implementation of EQUASS.

A challenge to understand and implement an **overall system** of quality assurance.
- *We used to work in the opposite manner by establishing an annual plan and let it down to the employees. Now we start with involvement of the service users, who do understand and do participate. So the planning starts from the very bottom, than it continues at the units, and finally the managers get involved.*
- *The most important training on concepts of quality of life and enabling should be given at the very beginning. After such training occurred at the halfway, we had to revise everything already done because the understanding of essential approached significantly changed.*
- *There was no enough time for very implementation, when everyone needs to get to know and understand.*
- *Some participants agreed that description of results is improper, too sophisticated for presenting it to service users and their relatives.*

A challenge of significant **additional workload** for employees.
- *We had worked in evenings and during weekends to assure an implementation of EQUASS.*
- *A lot of work due to preparation of additional documentation: while some of the documents and reports at certain degree duplicate those required by regulation.*
- *Those 22 documents pushed out of balance, not only that, all employers and service users must be aware about them.*
- *Now we needed to prepare more documents of different types: tones for employees, others for the service users.*
- *Extremely complicated work, particularly for coordinators. Surely, more efforts are needed to meet higher requirements but it is a lot indeed.*

A challenge to **involve employees** and establish the teams.
- *Involvement of employees was very demanding; we had to start from the common questions like "Is it for me indeed? ", „What could I say? ", etc.*
- *There was a lot of staff resistance at the beginning.*

A challenge to **involve services users.** On the participants' opinion, providers could be confronted with significant problems of **involving** particular groups of service users, e.g. severely disabled, mentally ill, children, etc.

- *Getting mutual understanding and feedback require a lot of creativity.*
- *Our service users try to please people, so one will get an answer from them depending on the way how the question is set.*

In one particular case, a challenge in getting proper **external support** was noticed. One participant faced a situation:

- *An auditor came to control not for help: now we have a lot of additional work with staff to prepare employees for the second round after their negative experience previously gained. The employees felt to be interrogated. Now they are scared and do not want to communicate with the auditor for the second round.*

The participants lively discussed the issues of external audit. It was mentioned that there is no chance to discuss the audit, if something goes wrong. Participants agreed that a quality of audit strongly depends on the personality of auditors, and that in vast majority of cases they consider external audit as positive experience. They even proposed to find more acceptable term for the audit.

CONTEXT

Through the discussions on implementation of EQUASS, the participants mentioned a lot of important contextual factors both disabling and enabling.

As **disabling**, the following contextual factors were listed:

- *Huge number of challenges common in the social sector, coming new external requirements or initiatives to launch parallel projects disturb the process.*
- *Turnover of employees weaken team working.*
- *Dominating culture of control mostly through the rules and papers sometimes prevent providers from the fast progress and stakeholders from successful collaboration.*

Among **enabling** contextual factors, the following ones were indicated:

- *EQUASS provides an opportunity to improve competitiveness and attractiveness at competing market of social services.*
- *The project gives a chance to present the work done, to show the advantages and to prove effectiveness to the founders/funders. We could clearly present our progress and tools, demonstrate concrete results with figures and cobweb charts.*
- *As one of the participants stated, if a proper internal culture is already in place, no particular challenges are experienced in EQUASS implementation. No problems with separate papers if the system established well. Concerning new employees, mentors and other members of the teams are helpful to introduce into the job.*
- *There are positive changes in understanding of governance in the sector. Even state institutions are moving towards a role of assistant not controller.*
- *Quality improvement system in place is one of the criteria in assessment of the managers. It creates personal incentives in implementation and keeping EQUASS.*

Many participants liked benefits gained from comparisons with other social providers. External recognition of the quality of performance is important for the participants. Some participants noticed numerous aspects of this acknowledgement, e.g. prestige, better competitive position, better organisation's image for the founders, etc. At the same time, a lack of positive changes in this field was a sharp disappointment for other members of the Focus Groups.

- *The certificate gives nothing. We are disseminating a lot of information about our performance but what of that? We just repeated to ourselves that we are doing well.*

An influence of some factors varies a lot for different providers: the COVID-19 pandemic, when fewer services were provided and quality of life of service providers was definitely deteriorated, when abruptly decreased face-to-face communication with the staff, partners, etc. hindered implementation.

- *Due to suspended provision of services, we had got enough time for preparing the documentation.*

FACILITATORS

The participants advised what could help for successful EQUASS implementation.

- *Some participants stated that it was helpful to start implementation with some smaller units or with certain service. While for others EQUASS implementation for single service significantly influences everybody in the organisation, so they are in favour for certification of the whole organisation.*
- *Already started implementation of the quality improvement system will make the process easier when just review of available documentation is needed.*
- *Significant explanatory work about EQUASS followed by voting both by service users and employees before signing the project agreement was strongly recommended. We went into agreement when majority voted positively.*
- *It is important to find proper ways to involve all staff in practice. In our large organisation we establish many working groups who reflected the suggestions, so all employees interacted and got enabled.*
- *Who is involved as a representative of the founder could matter a lot. Commonly, a civil servant from municipal department of Social Welfare participates in external assessment. However, a case described by one of participants when the major was involved in external assessment suggested that it could bring great improvement in visibility and mutual understanding.*
- *The auditors who are prepared to speak properly with different types of the service users could help in the smooth implementation.*

A couple of issues likely seem to be of relatively low importance for the participants:
Perspectives to establish the groups of representatives of the service users are not considered as promising:

- *nothing will change, it is not a way to attract those who are not participating, and the same active people will be presented.*

Continuity of services is perceived as transferring service users to another social services provider. On the participants' opinion, as far as it occurs according to the rules and indications, it is not worthy to discuss. Some managers just added that they attend other institutions to share observations with the service users who are leaving for staying there.

8.3 FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Several times the participants said that they gave a kick, meaning a **strong impulse** for the changes. Some of them noticed that the changes inspired by EQUASS will continue over time as they fundamentally changed the organisation itself. Some quotes:

- *It differs from a time-limited project that is over and that's it. Nowadays, when planning we are considering how useful this is, e.g. what the training will bring, etc.*
- *The employees committed to changes, even measuring of results is not perceived as an extra work.*
- *The inner desire to change is crucial for long-term impact. There will be nothing where the decision to participate came top-down, from the authorities.*

The participants feel **uncertain about the EQUASS perspectives** in the country. As the members of the focus groups stressed, many providers intend to go further with the quality improvement; they recognise that even establishing the quality improvement system requires long time. However, they are not aware about possibilities and conditions to continue with EQUASS. For instance, nobody knows about the EQUASS procedures after 2023. One quote:

- *We intended to broaden EQUASS to the whole institution. However, not clear how it could be done. Currently we are participating with one service but what about our intention to apply EQUASS for other services?*

The discussants believe that the system should **not be mandatory**. However, the participants unanimously stated that incentives for quality improvement, building culture of prevention and dissemination of good practices should be definitely supported.

EQUASS should be recognised at least as one of the proper **quality improvement systems** in the country. Some quotes:
- *There are many talks about Lithuanian quality standards, is it necessary to invent a bicycle once more?*
- *Why not to decide that an EQUASS certificate is sufficient to prove high quality of service, and correspondingly give up extensive (quite duplicating) reporting?*
- *Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Department of Supervision of Social Services under the MSSL as well as municipalities should coordinate requirements for licensing, and quality criteria/indicators.*
- *We need in national-wide system (-s) of quality improvement.*
- *Synchronization of standards and requirements as well as adjusting them to different types of social services is of great value.*
- *Motivation is important but unified requirements are even more important being a condition of success.*
- *While implementing EQUASS, municipality-initiated implementation of LEAN.*

External support to make sure that we are doing the right things, properly implementing the recommendations is highly acknowledged. Some quotes:
- *Now we feel loneliness, we need in reflections.*
- *Consultant could help us to move forward confidently.*
- *For external recognition, more dissemination about EQUASS is needed. For fruitful collaboration, stakeholders should be aware about the EQUASS.*
- *Those reached certain level of performance might be awarded by free training, some events in Lithuania or communication with international organisations.*

Training should start from the description of the EQUASS. One quote:
- *We are more or less familiar with the basics of management, but we are eager to know about the system, about the challenges.*

Training about most fundamental concepts, e.g. enabling and quality of life, should be available for all employees. The participants suggest giving access to recordings for the distance learning. And, as mentioned above, this training should be scheduled much earlier. Moreover, there is a need in more consistency in treatment of the concepts and terms among consultants, auditors, etc. one quote:
- *Some kind of glossary might be of use.*

An opportunity of **peer interaction** is explicitly acknowledged. One quote:
- *Regular discussions with colleagues about the problems and solutions, learning from others will be appreciated.*

9 DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 DISCUSSION

In this discussion, we will highlight shortly those aspects that have had influence on our findings, and mention how relevant these aspects will be for drawing conclusions.

9.1.1 LIMITATIONS IN THE RESEARCH DESIGN

First of all, during this impact study, we have encountered a limitation in the original research design. As described in chapter 2, for the evaluation of the impact of the project 'Improvement of Social services, the application of the quality system EQUASS', we planned to use: A Pre-test – Post-test with Non-Random Assignment to Intervention or Control Groups. Though, during the implementation phase of the EQUASS quality system, the arrangement of a control group became challenging because of the introduction of the GDPR in Europe, and we replaced this design with a Pre-test – Post-test design.

This study design implies having an uncertainty whether the changes distinguished in the impact evaluation study are a direct result of the intervention, because with this model you do not eliminate other factors that could be of influence. There some factors of influence in this impact evaluation study. One important factor of influence might be the de-institutionalisation activities of public social care institutions, steered by the national government. Also, on the local level of the municipalities, diverse changes in requirements are introduced. These factors might be of influence, though in general, the number of alternative explanations being the reason for the change is small, meaning the chance the changes are indeed directly related to the implementation of the EQUASS quality system is quite high.

Concerning the number of respondents, these can be considered as large enough to draw conclusions and to compare the first moment of measurement with the second moment of measurement.

Altogether, the impact described in the findings, can with quite some certainty be related to the implementation of EQUASS. Let's take a look at the results and answer the research questions.

9.2 CONCLUSIONS

This impact study has been carried out to find answers on the following questions:
- What changes are caused by the implementation of EQUASS?
- What are the reasons behind the change?
- Are the changes in line with the needs of the stakeholders?
- Are the changes expected to be short-term or long-term and why is this?

In this conclusion part, these questions will be answered, based on the findings in the chapters 5 – 8.

9.2.1 WHAT CHANGES ARE CAUSED BY THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EQUASS?

When looking at the findings of this impact study in relation to the implementation of EQUASS, it can be concluded that many quality related changes have occurred in the participating social service providers. As already mentioned in the discussion, external, national legislative and procedural aspects might have been of influence, the chance these changes have been caused because of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system is quite likely. From this perspective we will answer this question about what changes are caused by the implementation of EQASS.

Rights of service users

Key element within the EQUASS quality system are the **rights of service users**. Based on the findings described in chapter 5 – 8, we can conclude that significant positive changes in these rights, since the implementation of EQUASS, have been recognised by management, staff, service users and partner organisations.

The positive significant changes can be seen in:
- The development of the procedures of the rights of service users
- The inclusion of these procedures on an organisational level
- The implementation of all kinds of procedures to protect these rights for service users
- In the daily work of staff
- In the presence of a description of these rights
- Service users knowing these rights
- Employees knowing these rights
- Employees acting and working in a non-discriminative way

Another aspect related to the implementation of the EQUASS quality system is the attention for a **person-centred approach**. Based on the findings described in chapter 5 – 8, we can conclude that significant positive changes in this person-centred approach, since the implementation of EQUASS, have been recognised by service users, staff, management, partner organisations and in most case funders.

The positive significant changes can be seen in:
- The involvement of service users in their treatment
- Asking the opinion of service users about the services delivered to them
- Asking service users for their needs and expectations
- Involving service users in setting their goals
- Involving service users in the development of a personal plan
- Approaching service users in an empowering way

Attention for the **well-being** of the service users is also an important aspect within the EQUASS quality system. Based on the findings described in chapter 5 – 8, we can conclude that significant positive changes in well-being, since the implementation of EQUASS, have been recognised by service users, staff, management, and to some extent by funders and partner organisations.

The positive significant changes can be seen in:
- the presence of a Code of Ethics
- a policy on ethics and well-being
- attention for the Quality of Life of service users

Business efficiency

Another key element of EQUASS related to quality is business efficiency. Based on the findings described in chapter 5 – 8, we can conclude that the significant positive changes in business efficiency, since the implementation of EQUASS, have been recognised by staff and management, and to some extent by funders and partner organisations.

The positive significant changes can be seen in:
- The presence of a description of the **mission, vision and values**
- The presence of an annual planning based on clearly formulated long-term goals
- The presence of clear objectives and results in the planning

Quality also has to do with working on **innovations.** Based on the findings described in chapter 5 – 8, we can conclude that significant positive changes in innovations, since the implementation of EQUASS, have been recognised by staff and management, funders and partner organisations.

The positive significant changes can be seen in:
- a continuous attention for development and working on innovations
- comparing the functioning of the organisation with other social service provider in the same sector

Another key quality aspect concerns the **professional development of staff**. Based on the findings described in chapter 5 – 8, we can conclude that significant positive changes in the professional development of staff, since the implementation of EQUASS, have been recognised by staff and management and to some extent by funders.

The positive significant changes can be seen in:
- employing qualified staff based on required knowledge, skills and competences
- a focus on the development and continuous learning of all staff for the benefits of the service users
- having descriptions of all positions, including their roles, functions and responsibilities.
- an insight in the needs of staff
- a learning plan
- an individual employee's development plans
- plans and procedures related to the health and safety for employees

Another aspect of the EQUASS quality system concerns the **involvement of stakeholders** in organisational issues, of relevance for them as stakeholders. Based on the findings described in chapter 5 – 8, we can conclude that significant positive changes in the involvement of stakeholders, since the implementation of EQUASS, have been recognised by service users, staff, management and funders.

The positive significant changes can be seen in:
- The involvement in organisational issues by service users
- The involvement in organisational issues by staff
- The involvement in organisational issues by funders
- The organisation of the involvement arranged by management

Cooperation with different disciplines within the organisation and with other organisations, to guarantee the efficiency and quality of services delivered to service users is another aspect of the EQUASS quality system. Based on the findings described in chapter 5 – 8, we can conclude that significant positive changes in cooperation with different disciplines, since the implementation of EQUASS, have been recognised by service users, staff, management, funders and partner organisations.

A key element of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system is the focus on **continuous improvement.** Based on the findings described in chapter 5 – 8, we can conclude that significant positive changes in continuous improvement, since the implementation of EQUASS, have been recognised by staff, management and partner organisations.

The positive significant changes can be seen in:
- Measuring and monitoring of services delivered to service users and all aspects related to this
- Clear procedures how to record and monitor business and service results
- Clear indicators how to measure and monitor services
- Clear indicators how to measure satisfaction of service users and quality of life issues
- Clear indicators for monitoring the efficiency and effectiveness of the services

A last aspect concerns the **transparency** of results to all stakeholders. Based on the findings described in chapter 5 – 8, we can conclude that significant positive changes in transparency, since the implementation of EQUASS, have been recognised where relevant by service users, staff, management and partner organisations.

The positive significant changes can be seen in:
- Disseminating information about services and results to service users
- Disseminating information about services to employees
- Disseminating information to funders
- Disseminating information to partner organisations

Summing up
This implementation of quality aspects via the EQUASS quality system has changed the organisation of the work within the social service providers in a significant and positive way, and is recognised

9.2.2 WHAT ARE THE REASONS BEHIND THE CHANGE?

A large number of social service providers has been approached to join this quality improvement project by implementing the EQUASS quality system. Those that agreed to join, had different reasons to do so.

A large majority of managers of participating organisations in the **first evaluation round**, mention their willingness to implement a quality system like EQUASS because of the possibilities to be able to respond to pressures of service users, to realise a focus on continuous improvement, to improve processes and practices, to strengthen the focus on quality in the organisation and to improve the quality of life of their service users.

Also, aspects like for instance being a role model in social services, an enhanced organisation's image, an innovated service delivery, better compliance with legal requirements, an improved response to pressure of stakeholders apart from service users and realising standardised practices across different locations are also mentioned as being reasons to implement EQUASS. In the **second evaluation round**, after the implementation of the EQUASS quality system, almost all aspects are quite to hugely improved since the start of this implementation process. According to the majority of the responding managers, the impact of the implementation on the aspects they considered important, is quite strong to huge.

9.2.3 ARE THE CHANGES IN LINE WITH THE NEEDS OF THE STAKEHOLDERS?

Service users can be viewed as the most important stakeholders in this impact study. Their needs were first brought into view via a literature study and then, in relation to the quality principles of EQUASS translated into questions and disseminated to thousands of service users taking part in this impact study. Looking at the findings reflected in mainly chapter 5 and partly chapter 6, in can be concluded that the described changes are completely in line with the needs of the service users.

One other important stakeholder concerns the **funders** of the social service provider. Their needs were asked in an open question in the first measurement, at the beginning of the implementation of the EQUASS quality system. in chapter 7, an overview of their needs is described. In the questionnaires belonging to the second evaluation round, funders are asked whether these aspects are present in 'their' social service provider. As can be read in the chapters 5, 6 and 7 of this final impact report, the presence of the elements needed by the funders, is confirmed by the funders. Looking at these findings, it can be it is concluded that the changes are in line with the needs of the funders.

Because of the importance of the cooperation in relation to the needs of the service users, **partner organisations** are an important stakeholder and also, they are asked via an open question in the first measurement, about their opinion of partnership. In chapter 7, an overview of their expectations about the cooperation and partnerships, are described.

In the questionnaires belonging to the second evaluation round, partners are asked whether these aspects are present in 'their' social service provider. As can be read in the chapters 5, 6 and 7 of this final impact report, the presence of the elements needed by the partners, is to a large extent confirmed by the partners. Looking at these findings, it can be it is concluded that the changes are in line with most of the needs of the partners.

9.2.4 ARE THE CHANGES EXPECTED TO BE SHORT-TERM OR LONG-TERM AND WHY IS THIS?

During the focus group interview, this topic has been discussed in depth by the members of these focus groups. According to quite a number of members, the changes inspired by EQUASS will continue over time as they fundamentally changed the organisation itself.

As the members of the focus groups stressed, they intend to go further with the quality improvement. They recognise that even establishing the quality improvement system requires long time. They are uncertain whether the implementation of quality will be related to the implementation of EQUASS, since they are not aware about possibilities and conditions to continue with EQUASS.

According to the members of the focus groups, external support would be of great help, to make sure that they are doing the right things. In other words, changes on the long term will only be possible if they are supported in implementing the recommendations in a proper way. Part of this will be training about the system and the challenges of the EQUASS quality system. And then, in a later stage, peer interaction, to learn from colleagues about the challenges and the solutions.

Among the members of the focus groups, there is no doubt about the content related aspects of quality, there is a reasonable doubt about the administrative work load of the quality system. A barrier for the use of the quality system on the long term, will be this huge amount of administrative work which is part of the implementation procedure. If there could be ways to make this administrative work load less, it would be a positive drive for members to continue working on quality.

9.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

When looking at the findings and results of this impact study on the EQUASS quality system, one could only draw one conclusion: this is good for all, the service user, staff and society. The first recommendation is related to this one conclusion:

- *Invest in the implementation of quality systems in social service providers.*

At the same time, it becomes clear the administrative burden of this quality system EQUASS can be a serious barrier in the motivation of social service providers to implement this quality system. A second recommendation is related to this observation:

- *Invest in developing a quality system with less administrative impact, and with the same principles of quality as EQUASS.*

Another aspect concerns the controlling aspect of EQUASS. Quality is something that should be within the veins of the social service provider, not seen as an obligation. In this impact study, we see the huge increase and also the positive changes in quality recognised by service users, staff, management and in most cases funders and partners. For the long-term success, it would be helpful if the 'supporting role' is dominant, instead of the 'feeling' of social service provides about this 'controlling role'. A third recommendation is related to this observation:

- *Invest in quality experts that have a supportive role towards social service providers, with an emphasis on stimulating, facilitating and rewarding the implementation of quality in the organisation.*

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