

Final evaluation report

Introduction

Enhancing and promoting Quality in Social Sector is a policy priority at EU level as well as in Lithuania. Quality certification and outcome measurement instruments offer guarantees for service-users and allow public authorities/funders to make optimal use of the available budgets for rehabilitation services.

The European Quality in Social Services system (EQUASS) is currently the only European quality system which specifically focuses on the social services sector. The system was initially developed for disability services and has been successfully applied to social services in various EU Member States. EQUASS does not only allow to measure and certify quality, but it also offers a framework for benchmarking, bench learning, organisational development and learning and systematic quality improvement.

The current Lithuanian ESF project “Improvement of the quality of social services, using EQUASS quality assurance system”, Nr. 08.4.1-ESFA-V-421-01-0001, implemented by Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre and funded by European Union Structural Funds 2014-2020, aims to pilot the EQUASS Assurance system to twenty rehabilitation service providers in Lithuania. The pilot phase has a scope of 2 years (June 2017 – June 2019). Moreover, the project intends to raise awareness on quality of various types of social services to a wider sample of sectoral stakeholders, and to build up capacity for a further rollout of the EQUASS Assurance system throughout Lithuania for additional hundred social service providers. The aim of the evaluation of the pilot phase (period June 2017 – Jun 2019) is to collect information in a systematic way about the successful practices and performance of all actors in the project and to identify issues for improving the effectiveness and the efficiency of the implementation strategy. This may result into suggestions to improve the implementation strategy and implementation practices by adapting the instruments provided to support and monitor the implementation, the training for EQUASS consultants, centre coordinators and EQUASS auditors and the management and coordination of the project.

Design of the evaluation

In the pilot phase of the ESF-project, twenty public organisations providing social services will be selected to implement the EQUASS Assurance system. The project management has selected the pilots based on specific criteria that include a representation of a wide range of social services, a variation of size and the representation in different geographical contexts. The selected organisations providing social services have applied for the pilot phase on voluntary basis. In the pilots' phase various role / functions will act and contribute to the implementation strategy for implementing the EQUASS assurance system. In this strategy, various activities will be carried out.

The evaluation of the pilot phase will include:

- The evaluation of performance of all actors (Project manager(s) – EQUASS consultant(s), centre coordinator(s), staff of pilots involved and EQUASS auditor(s)) from different angles based on specific criteria.
- Also, all activities (training events, self-evaluation, planning, implementation activities, bench learning events, internal auditing, information events, external auditing etc.) will be evaluated from the perspective of those who have participated, supported, those who are responsible for coordinating and those who are responsible for delivery.

Overview Pilots ESF project Lithuania

Name	Location	Target group(s)	Services
Day activity centre	Klaipėdos	Disabled (intellectual and mental) persons	Social day care
Vilnius city social support center (department of social services at home)	Vilniaus	Disabled and elderly persons Families and disabled children	Support at home, day social care at home, integral care
Day activity centre „Šviesa“	Vilniaus	Disabled (intellectual and mental) persons	Social day care
Centre for disabled "Klaipėdos lakštutė"	Klaipėdos	Disabled and elderly persons	Institutional social care, social day care, day social care at home
Day centre for youngsters	Panevėžio	Disabled (intellectual) persons	Social day care
Kaunas region social support centre	Kauno	Families (pregnant and under-age)	General and social care services
Public inst. "Vilties Akimirka"	Vilniaus	Children with intellectual disability, families, carers	Special transport service, day social care
Šiaulių municipality care home	Šiaulių	Disabled and elderly persons	Short term and long term social care
Šv. Juozapo care home	Panevėžio	Disabled and elderly persons	Short term and long term social care
Radviliškio Parapijos community social service centre	Šiaulių	Children and families at social risk	Social skills development and support
Zarasų social care home	Utenos	Disabled and elderly persons	Short term and long term social care
„Jurbarko social services“	Tauragės	Disabled and elderly persons children with disability	Social day care (at persons home)
Vilniaus special kindergarden "Čiauškutis"	Vilniaus	Children with special needs	Day social care
Druskininkų municipality social service centre	Alytaus	Families and children at risk	Social skills training and support

Name	Location	Target group(s)	Services
Anyksčių region municipality social service centre	Utenos	Disabled and elderly persons	Social day care (at persons home)
Alytaus medical and sport rehabilitation centre	Alytaus	Disabled and elderly persons	Social care
Kalvarijos municipality family care home	Marijampolės	children under 18	Children social care home (long term)
Trakų care and social service centre	Vilniaus	Disabled and elderly persons homeless persons	Support at home, day social care at home, integral care
Tauragės social service centre	Tauragės	Homeless persons	Social services for homeless (accommodation and social services)
Šiaulių city municipality social service centre	Šiaulių	Homeless persons	Social services for homeless (accommodation and social services)

Evaluation of project activities

This final evaluation report includes the following aspects of the project:

1. Capacity building
 - a. The training of the EQUASS-consultants
 - b. The training for the coordinators of the pilots
 - c. The training for the managers of the pilots.
 - d. The training of the EQUASS Auditors
2. The phases of the project
 - a. Self-evaluation on current performance against the criteria for EQUASS Assurance certification
 - i. The process of self-evaluation
 - ii. The instrument(s) for self-evaluation
 - iii. The results of the self-evaluation process.
 - b. Implementation
 - c. EQUASS Certification audit
3. The performance of the key actors in the project
 - a. The project manager
 - b. The EQUASS consultants
 - c. The EQUASS auditors

The methodology

The evaluation of the 20 pilots in the project will be focused on the collection of quantitative and qualitative information. This information will be used for adjusting and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the activities the project. Both methods provide highly relevant information for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the management and coordination, the support and capacity building and implementation of the EQUASS system in the project. The methods of collecting quantitative and qualitative information combined in order to provide the best overview of the pilot phase in the project.

The quantitative data is collected by surveys or questionnaires and by reviewing the results of self-evaluation. Analysis these quantitative data involves is reflected in statistical analysis. The strengths of these quantitative data include their generalizability, the ease of analysis, and their consistency and precision. In addition, the quantitative data do not provide an understanding of the context of the pilots. Therefore, it does not explain the complexity of the issues and the interactions in the project.

The qualitative data is collected through interviews and case studies from the results of the self-evaluation process. The analyses of qualitative data include the comparison and the interpretation of patterns. Interviews have been conducted with EQUASS consultants and Project manager with the aim of exploring experiences and complex issues. The interviews have been structured (see: Interview format in Annex ..) and conducted under controlled conditions (Skype or Telephone). The qualitative data provide contextual data to explain complex issues and complementing the quantitative data.

The evaluation of pilots in the Lithuanian ESF project has both qualitative and quantitative. The choice of methods used in the evaluation have been selected based on the timeline of the planned activities and available resources.

The results

In describing the results of the evaluation, the following format is used.

1. Description of the purpose of the activity
2. Summary and conclusion of the evaluation for the activity
3. Recommendations for improvement, development, intervention and/or change.

Capacity building

1. The training of the EQUASS-consultants

The aim of training consultants is to build up capacity of EQUASS consultants who have the competence to support, advice Social Service Providers in the implementation of the EQUASS quality system.

The Lithuanian participants of the consultant training events have been selected by the project management (VRC).

During the pilot phase a training for consultant have been delivered. The training took place at 15-17 March 2017 (three days) and 20-21 April 2017 (two days) at the location of Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre. Seven participants of this training have been acting as EQUASS consultant in the pilot phase of the project. The training events were facilitated in English Language by an EQUASS expert / trainer with simultaneous interpretation.

The EQUASS consultant training in March 2017 was highly appreciated by the participants. The average score of for all presented topics is: 4,75. (maximum score is 5.00) The average score on cohesion is 0.40 (less than 0.60) which means that there is less variation in opinions of the participants on their appreciation of the topics addressed during the training. In the interviews, the EQUASS consultants expressed that they feel confident in applying the information in their interaction with the Social Service Providers. (Information about the EQUASS system and applying methodology of self-evaluation)

The evaluation of the training identified to the following recommendations for future training of consultants in the Lithuanian project:

1. The organiser of the training (EQUASS) may consider to offer a modular approach of the training with fixed allocation of time for each topic. (e.g. 3 hours for each topic) For each module a variation of learning activities (mixed form of learning) should be offered (presentation – workshop- exercises - examples- discussion – interaction).
2. The program of the EQUASS consultant training for consultants in the Lithuanian project could be more based on the specific context of the role of the consultant in the Lithuanian project. In this case, the project management may consider to discuss the content of the program with organiser so a more tailor-made program can be offered.
3. In order to build up an in-depth understanding of the EQUASS framework, its principles and underlying criteria, and to build up the confidence of the EQUASS consultants in understanding the requirements for certification, more specific time and efforts should be dedicated to a more detailed understanding of the EQUASS criteria. (e.g. more detailed clarification of the criteria for the various sectors.)
4. An in-depth understanding of the various phases and steps in the implementation process and an in-depth understanding of specific topics (e.g. quality policy – Empowerment – Quality of life – Systematic Improvement-Measuring Outcome and Results) is crucial for the consultant. The in-depth understanding of the various phases and steps in the implementation process and the in-depth understanding of various topics will increase the competence and confidence of the EQUASS consultant in supporting SSPs in the Lithuanian project. A more tailor-made approach in the formal training of consultants in the Lithuanian project could address this point.

The specific recommendations, see above, have been successfully implemented in the training of consultants in the 2nd phase of the project. This training took place in 29-30 October 2018 and 19-21 November 2018. The 2nd coordinators training was also highly appreciated by the participants. The average score of for all presented topics is: 4.72. (maximum score is 5.00) The average score on cohesion is 0.38 (less than 0.60) which means that there is less variation in opinions of the participants on their appreciation of the training topics. Feedback from the participants shows that the structure of the program, the translated slides, adapted program, the variation of workshops was highly appreciated. Participants expressed their appreciation on the training methods and working with the more experiences EQUASS consultants of the Lithuanian project.

2. The training for the coordinators of the pilots

The aim of the coordinators training is to create a common understanding about the requirements of the EQUASS system and the role of the coordinator in coordinating activities, motivating and involving staff in the implementation of the EQUASS system.

The 20 participants represented 20 Social Service providers in the areas: Social Day Care, Support at home, Integral care, Institutional care, Special Transport services, social skills development, long-term and short-term social care, Social services etc.

The pilots of the Lithuanian project are selected based on specific criteria. The participants of the coordinators training have been selected by pilot organisations. Most of the EQUASS consultants also participated in this training. The training took place at 11-15 September 2017 (three days) at the location of Vilnius local administration (Town hall). The training was facilitated in English Language by an EQUASS expert with simultaneous interpretation.

The coordinators training was highly appreciated by the participants. The average score of for all presented topics is: 4.53. (maximum score is 5.00) The average score on cohesion is 0.57 (less than 0.60) which means that there is less variation in opinions of the participants on their appreciation of the training topics. Feedback from the participants shows that the training was perfectly organized (including accommodation and meals) and that the content was highly relevant for the coordinators of the pilots. Participants expressed their appreciation on the training methods and working with the EQUASS consultants of the Lithuanian project.

The evaluation of the training event identified to the following recommendations for future training of coordinators in the Lithuanian project:

1. Due to create a more in-depth understanding of the presented topics and the consistency of interpretation of the presented slides and information, it would be an improvement also to present the information on the PowerPoint slides in the Lithuanian language.
2. For the upcoming training events for coordinators it is recommended that information is sent a at least two weeks before the training days with clear instructions when to send in the homework so the trainer has time to prepare the feedback on the test and this could be presented at the training days. For enhancing the participants to read and to study the 'Key documentation about the EQUASS system', it is recommended to attached an assignment to the document that needs to be send in to the trainer. This mechanism will encourage the participants to prepare the training properly and it gives the participants the opportunity to express their needs and expectations on the issues that are addressed at the training event. The learning may become more valuable for the participants due it will be based on their individual needs and expectations.
3. It is strongly recommended to inform all participants of the coordinators training prior to the training event about the importance and detailed IT system requirements for participating effectively at the workshops.
4. It is recommended that EQUASS consultants participate in the workshops where the participants are working in smaller groups. These common activities, at the beginning of the process of implementation, will contribute to building up a relationship based on confidence and trust between the SSP and the EQUASS consultant, which is a condition for successful implementation.

The specific recommendations, see above, have been successfully implemented in the training of coordinators in the 2nd phase of the project. This training took place in 18-20 February 2019.

The 2nd coordinators training was also highly appreciated by the participants. The average score of for all presented topics is: 4.63. (maximum score is 5.00) The average score on cohesion is 0.49 (less than 0.60) which means that there is less variation in opinions of the participants on their appreciation of the training topics. Feedback from the participants shows that the translated slides, adapted program was highly appreciated and that the content was highly relevant for the coordinators of the pilots. Participants expressed their appreciation on the training methods and working with the EQUASS consultants of the Lithuanian project.

3. The training for the managers of the pilots.

The aim of the training for managers is to create a common understanding about the requirements of the EQUASS system.

Specific objectives of the training have been specified and evaluated. The training was provided to the managers of the 20 pilots of the project. The 20 participants represented 20 Social Service providers in the areas: Social Day Care, Support at home, Integral care, Institutional care, Special Transport services, social skills development, long-term and short-term social care, Social services etc.

The pilots of the Lithuanian project are selected based on specific criteria. The participants in the training for managers have been selected by pilot organisations. The training took place at 19-20 October 2017 (two days) at the location of Vilnius local administration (Town hall). The training was facilitated in English Language by an EQUASS expert with simultaneous interpretation. The information that is shown (PowerPoint) has been translated into Lithuanian language.

The training for managers was highly appreciated by the participants. The average score of for all presented topics is: 4.62. (maximum score is 5.00) The average score on cohesion is 0.51 (less than 0.60) which means that there is less variation in opinions of the participants on their appreciation of the training topics. Feedback from the participants shows that the training was well organized and that the objectives were fairly reached (score 2.54; max score 3.00). There is a relative high variation of opinions in reaching the objectives. (Standard deviation is 0.63). All indicators for meeting the objectives of the training are above 2.22. (max score is 3.00) 50 % between 2.22 and 2.50 and 50 % between 2.50 and 3.00.

The evaluation of the training event identified to the following recommendations for future training of managers in the Lithuanian project:

1. In order to build up this understanding of the EQUASS framework, its principles and underlying criteria, more time and efforts should be dedicated to explain and analyse requirements for certification. It is recommended to allocate more time and various workshops in understanding the EQUASS system.
2. Working in smaller groups would work better if the EQUASS consultants participated in these workshops / small groups. Therefore, it is recommended that all EQUASS consultants participate in the workshops of the training for managers where the participants are working in smaller groups. These common activities will contribute to building up a relationship with the key persons of the organisation (decision makers) based on confidence and trust, which is a condition for being accepted as a competent consultant and for successful implementation.

4. The training of the EQUASS Auditors

The aim of the training for auditors is to build up the capacity for external independent assessment with the purpose to assess the performance of the social service provider against the EQUASS criteria for certification.

The Lithuanian candidates for the auditor training have been put forward by the project management and selected by EQUASS based on the following criteria:

- Qualified for auditing organisation according to international and/or national quality systems
- A career of at least five years in managerial and/or professional roles
- Works experiences in social sector
- Understanding and speaking English language
- Educational background: university or higher education degree, or equivalent experience

For registration, a candidate needs to send in registration form, CV, motivation letter. A candidate must meet at least 60 % of the criteria. Between 60 % and 100 %, an interview with the candidate has been carried out in order to investigate if the candidate can be successful meeting the requirements for becoming appointed as EQUASS auditor.

During the pilot phase a training for EQUASS auditors have been delivered. The training program is a standardised training program that is delivered in other EU member states. The content of the training is built up around the following objectives: Understanding the EQUASS standard, Understanding and applying the EQUASS method of assessment, preparing and carrying out the site visit (documentation review and interviewing) and reporting performance of the social service provider on the EQUASS criteria for certification (including providing suggestions for improvement and additional development).

The training took place at 05 - 08 November 2018 (four days) at the location of Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre. During the training event and at the end of the training the candidates (5 candidates) must give proof of understanding the EQUASS system and applying the methodology of assessing performance of the social service providers against the EQUASS criteria for certification and writing a feedback reports on performance (including suggestions for further development and improvement). The performance of the candidates during the training are calibrated to prevent variation in assessing the performance of social service provider against the EQUASS certification criteria. training event was facilitated in English

Language by an EQUASS expert / trainer. All candidates successfully passed the tests during and at the end of the training and have been appointed as EQUASS auditor. The appointment will be valid for 3 years.

Due to the low number of participants (5), there has been no statistical analysis of feedback of the participants about the training. Participants expressed that the training has been very demanding but also very useful for them to look at the EQUASS system from the perspective of an auditor. Applying the methodology of assessment requires a discipline of following up the process and procedures of assessment (including the preparation of the site visit) and the administration of the results (incl. scoring)

The phases of the pilots in the project

Phase 1: Self-evaluation on current performance against the criteria for EQUASS Assurance certification.

The process of self-evaluation

In the EQUASS implementation strategy at Social Service Provider level, management and staff are expected to understand the EQUASS standard (Principles, criteria and indicators) and the steps that needs to be carried out for successful and effective implementation of the requirements for EQUASS certification.

The first activity that has been carried out is 'An information event about the EQUASS system'. The aim of this activity was to inform employees and management about the content of the EQUASS standard and to make them aware about the implementation strategy and the self-evaluation process.

All 20 pilots have received this 'Information event about the EQUASS system'. Because too many employees working in the scope of the implementation, some of the pilots have had more than one event. At these events the EQUASS consultant presented the EQUASS standard, the overall implementation strategy and the way the process of self-evaluation will be carried out.

The EQUASS self-evaluation methodology is build up in three dimensions:

1. The availability of clear documented approaches. The documented approached must be reviewed on availability and on relevance for the criteria. There are three types of answers: 'Available', 'In process' and 'not-available'. The answers 'In process' and 'not-available' will generate a recommendation.
2. The implementation (putting the approaches into practice) of the described approaches. The evaluation of the implementation is carried out by the self-evaluation questionnaire. The questionnaire is built up with 83 statements. The statement needs to be answered by employees (within the scope of the self-evaluation). There are three types of answers: 'Agree', 'Disagree' 'No opinion'. The statements in the questionnaire is investigating how the practice of the Social Service Provider is working. There is always a minimum of 2 statements to investigate the extent of implementation of criteria. The answers of the employees are put into the worksheet 'Input data questionnaire". The input of the answers is statistically managed by 2 parameters: mean and standard deviation. The correlation between mean and variation of answers generates a percentage score. Percentage scores lower that 75 % will generate a recommendation.
3. The availability of documented results. The documented results must be reviewed the availability of relevant indictors for measuring these results and if the results are representing the outcome of the services (instead of efforts). There are three types of answers: 'No results', 'Some results' and 'Results based on relevant indicators". The answers 'No results' and 'Some results will generate a recommendation.

The self-evaluation process has started after the initial information events at the sites of the pilots. In some of the pilots more than one information event has been organised. All pilots have followed the self-evaluation process as it was proposed during the EQUASS consultant training. The questionnaire has been used for collecting information about level of implementation. The data is put into the Excel file. The assessment on required documentation for approaches and the documentation of results have been carried out with the support of the coordinator and/or the manager of the pilot. The self-evaluation process has finalised at the mid of December 2017.

Ad 1: The availability of clear documented approaches

The analysis of the survey among the pilots (N=20) shows that different functions have been involved in the review of documentation of the key approaches.

The overview gives the percentage of functions that have been involved in the review of the documentation of the key approaches.

	Functions	Actual numbers (N=20)	Percentage
1	General manager	19	95%
2	Department manager(s)	12	60%
3	Employees serving service users	12	60%
4	Other employees	7	35%
5	Service users	0	0%

The analysis of the self-evaluation documents (N=20) shows that the **vast majority** (> 75 % SSP) of the social service providers have the following documentation:

1. A full description of organisations' vision, mission and values. (76 %)
2. A detailed description of current roles and responsibilities of employees (94 %)
3. Organisation's key service delivery activities (94 %)
4. Independent review to ensure financial continuity & sustainability (75 %)

The analysis of the self-evaluation documents (N=20) shows that **majority** (50% SPP > < 75 % SSP) the social service providers have the following documentation:

1. The current organisation's annual plan (59 %)
2. Organisations' Health and Safety plan for employees and person served (65 %)
3. The Individual Plan for persons served (4 examples) (59 %)

The analysis of the self-evaluation documents (N=20) shows that a **limited number** (25% SSP > < 50 %) of social service providers have the following documentation:

1. The full description of organisation's policy on staff recruitment and staff retention (41 %)
2. Organisation's Charter of Rights that reflects fundamental rights of persons served (35 %)
3. Organisation's procedures for involving persons served in the individual planning process (29 %)
4. Organisation's procedures to assure confidentiality of sensitive information, the accuracy of records, privacy, dignity and physical integrity of person served. (29 %)
5. Organisation's plan for staff development and learning (41 %)
6. A description of organisation's complaint management system (41 %)

The analysis of the self-evaluation documents (N=20) shows that a **very limited number** (12 % SSP > < 25 % SSP) of social service providers have the following documentation:

1. A full description of organisation's policy on Ethics and wellbeing for all (24 %)
2. Organisations' Code of ethics (24 %)
3. A full description of organisation's policy and procedures for including persons served in the design, delivery and evaluation of services. (24%)

The analysis of the self-evaluation documents (N=20) shows that almost **none** (0 % SSP > < 12 % SSP) of social service providers have the following documentation:

1. A full description of organisation's quality policy. (12 % SSP)
2. Organisation's procedures on prevention of physical, mental and financial abuse of persons served (6 % SSP)
3. Organisation's defined concept of empowerment of persons served (6 % SSP)
4. Organisation's defined concept of Quality of Life of persons served (0 % SSP)
5. Organisation's continuous improvement and learning system (12 % SSP)

Overview of performance on documentation (N=20)

The red "X" means: less than 50 % of the SSP are meeting these requirements. The more the "X" are put into the right columns, the fewer SSP are meeting this requirement.

The black "X" means: more than 50 % of the SSP are meeting these requirements. The more the "X" are put into the left columns, the more SSP are meeting this requirement.

	Documentation	75% > < 100%	50% > < 75%	25% > < 50%	12% > < 25%	0% > < 12%
1	Vision, mission and values.	X				
2	Quality policy.					X
3	Annual plan		X			
4	Policy staff recruitment and staff retention			X		
5	Staff development and learning plan			X		
6	Roles and responsibilities of employees	X				
7	Charter of Rights			X		
8	Complaint management system			X		
9	Policy on ethics and wellbeing for all				X	
10	Code of ethics				X	
11	Health and Safety plan		X			
12	Procedures prevention abuse					X
13	Procedures to assure confidentiality			X		
14	Procedures for including persons served				X	
15	Concept of empowerment of persons served.					X
16	Concept of Quality of Life of persons served					X
17	The Individual Plan for persons served		X			
18	Procedures for involving persons served in the individual planning process			X		
19	Key service delivery activities	X				
20	Business and service results		X			
21	Independent review	X				
22	Continuous improvement / learning system					X

Conclusion: The vast majority of the Social Service Providers do not have relevant and clear documentation of their approaches.

Exception: More that 50 % of the Social Service Providers have documentation on:

1. Vision, mission and values
2. Roles and responsibilities of employees
3. Key service delivery activities
4. Independent review
5. Annual plan
6. Health and Safety plan for employees and person served
7. Individual Plan for persons served

Recommendation: It seems that fundamental documentation on approaches is missing in many of the pilots. This may not always mean that SPP does not have valid approaches. Approaches, procedures and systems might be implicit and not written down. For EQUASS certification is important to have documented the core approaches. The documentation will facilitate the communication on common believes and on a common way of working. (putting this into practice) These documentations can be considered as reference documentation for monitoring and assuring quality in the provision of services. It is recommended to make SSP aware of the function (WHY) and benefits of proper documentation of their key approaches, system and ways of working. Documentation of the key approaches, system and ways of working might be the first priority in the implementation plan of the EQUASS system.

Ad 2: The implementation (putting the approaches into practice) of the described approaches.

The analysis of the survey among the pilots (N=20) shows that different functions have been involved in answering the questions of the self-evaluation questionnaire.

The overview gives the percentage of functions that have been involved in answering the questions of the self-evaluation questionnaire.

	Functions	Actual numbers (N=20)	Percentage
1	General manager	18	90%
2	Department manager(s)	14	70%
3	Employees serving service users	20	100%
4	Other employees	14	70%
5	Service users	0	0%

Conclusion: Various functions of those who are employed by the Social Service Providers are involved in answering the questionnaire. Therefore it is expected that the answers represent these various functions. Service users have not been involved in reviewing the implementation of the key concept of the EQUASS standard.

Recommendation: It is recommended to explore ways of involving service users in the process of self-evaluation.

Ad 3: The availability of documented results (outcomes).

The analysis of the survey among the pilots (N=20) shows that different functions have been involved in the review of the documented results.

The overview gives the percentage of functions that have been involved in the review of the documented results.

	Functions	Actual numbers (N=20)	Percentage
1	General manager	19	95%
2	Department manager(s)	14	70%
3	Employees serving service users	14	70%
4	Other employees	8	40%
5	Service users	0	0%

The overview below shows the required results (outcomes) and the percentage of SSP that have presented the outcomes based on relevant indicators.

	Results	No results	Some results	Valid results
1	Results of personal growth, continuous learning and development of employees.	30%	40%	15%
2	Results of promoting and practicing rights of person served respected in your daily work.	50%	35%	0%
3	Results and benefits organisations' partnerships .	40%	30%	15%
4	Results of involving persons served in service planning, delivery and evaluation of services.	40%	30%	15%
5	Results on empowering persons served .	55%	30%	0%
6	Results of improving quality of life of persons served.	50%	35%	0%
7	Results of involving persons served in their Individual Plans.	30%	20%	35%
8	Results of ensuring a continuum of services .	40%	40%	5%
9	Results on outcomes and benefits to person served of the provided services.	40%	40%	5%
10	Results that show satisfaction of persons served and other relevant stakeholders .	20%	55%	10%
11	Information that business Results are understood by person served, staff and other relevant stakeholders.	40%	35%	10%
12	Results of comparison of performance, approaches, outcomes and/or activities.	45%	40%	0%

The analysis of the self-evaluation documents (N=20) shows that a **very limited number** (0% SSP > < 15% SSP) of social service providers **have valid results** based on relevant indicators. Exception: 35% of SSP have results of involving persons served in their Individual Plan. (while more than 75% of the SSP have expressed that they do not have written procedures for this)

The analysis of the self-evaluation documents (N=20) shows that a **between 20% and 55%** of social service providers **have some results**. It is not clear what kind of results are available. It is clear that these results are NOT based on valid and relevant indicators and therefore Social Service providers do NOT meet EQUASS requirements for results.

The analysis of the self-evaluation documents (N=17) shows that **between 40% and 55%** of social service providers **have NO results** at all.

Exception:

1. Results of personal **growth, continuous learning and development** of employees. (30%)
2. Results of **involving persons served** in their Individual Plans. (30%)

3. Results that show **satisfaction of persons served** and other relevant **stakeholders**. (20 %)

Conclusion: The vast majority of the Social Service Providers that participated in the self-evaluation process do not meet the requirements for results in the EQUASS system (Assurance level). The vast majority of the Social Service Providers who are involved in the self-evaluation process do not measure the results with valid and relevant indicators.

Recommendation: It is recommended to prioritise the measurement of results (outcomes). Informing, training and supporting SSP in identifying relevant indicators for measuring the results might have positive impact. It will focus the activities that are derived from the documented approaches. This has also a positive impact on the implementation of these approaches. It is strongly recommended to encourage the identification and definition of common indicators per sector. Having common indicators will facilitate exchange of practice and results. It encourages benchmarking and bench learning which may boost the performance on quality criteria in the sector. It may also facilitate organisation to grow to another level of performance in the EQUASS system.

The self-evaluation questionnaire

In the evaluation of the process of self-evaluation at the pilots, we have asked the EQUASS coordinators of the pilots (N=20) about the clearness of the questions.

The table below gives the opinions of the EQUASS coordinators (N=20) about the clearness of the questions in the self-evaluation questionnaire.

Rating		Percentage
Very clear	3	15%
Clear	10	50%
Unclear	6	30%
Very unclear	1	5%

The feedback from the interviews with consultants learned that some employees have difficulties in understanding the statements / question. (language is too difficult and not always clear; sometime there more than one variable in a statement / question which make is difficult to do a clear assessment). (See: Interim evaluation report January 2018)

Further analysis of the collected information shows that there is a correlation between ‘the clearness of the questions in the self-evaluation questionnaire’ and ‘having clear documented approaches’. While almost none of the organisations have documented: a clear quality policy; clear procedures on prevention of physical, mental and financial abuse of persons served; clear concept of empowerment of persons served; clear concept of Quality of Life of persons served and a clear continuous improvement and learning system, the is a potential risk that employees do not understand the questions about the implementation of these concept.

Similar risks are there for those topics that have very limited or limited documented approaches about : policy on Ethics and wellbeing for all, Code of ethics, policy and procedures for including persons served in the design, delivery and evaluation of services, policy on staff recruitment and staff retention, Charter of Rights, procedures for involving persons served in the individual planning process, procedures to assure confidentiality of sensitive information, the accuracy of records, privacy, dignity and physical integrity of person served, plan for staff development and learning and a complaint management system.

Further analysis also shows that there is no correlation between “having a more experienced EQUASS consultant” and ‘the clearness of the questions in the self-evaluation questionnaire’. 40 % of the organisation working with “a more experienced EQUASS consultant” expressed to have difficulties in understanding the questions of the questionnaire. The wording of the concepts and the concepts itself need to be clarified and explained by the EQUASS consultants.

Conclusion: 65 % of the coordinators who are involved in the survey (N=20), has the opinion that the questions are ‘very clear’ (15 %) or ‘clear’ (50 %). 35 % of the coordinators who are involved in the survey (N=20), has the opinion that the questions are ‘unclear’ (30 %) or ‘very unclear’.

Recommendations: It is recommended to improve the questionnaire on the following elements: easy and understandable language for the employee (may consider to use specific language per sector). It is recommended to pay attention to the questions in the questionnaire before asked them to answer by explaining the purpose of the questionnaire, explaining the options for answers, explaining the wording and the concepts used in the questionnaire. It is recommended to explore other ways of collecting relevant information about implementation of key approach in the EQUASS system. This could be through another method

(e.g. consensus meeting with employees) or by a more flexible way of investigating the 'level of implementation' depending on the outcome of the documentation review. In other words, based on the documentation review a number of questions are selected to investigate 'the level of implementation'. Where no clear documented approaches have been identified, no questions about 'putting into practice' will be asked to employees. (It is expected when there is no documented clear approach, the organisation may not have an explicit approach communicated to and implemented by employees).

All persons who have involved in the survey (N=20) expressed that they have had enough time to fill in the self-evaluation questionnaire.

We have also asked the opinions of the pilots on the following topics:

1. The value of the process of self-evaluation
2. The value of the self-evaluation instrument
3. The value of the results / outcome of the self-evaluation process
4. The involvement of employees and management in the self-evaluation process
5. The performance of the EQUASS consultant in the self-evaluation process

Ad 1 The value of the process of self-evaluation

Question: 1. How would you value the process of the self-evaluation?

	Value	Number (N=20)	Percentage
1	Very good	1	5%
2	Good	16	80%
3	Nor good or bad	3	15%
4	Bad	0	0%
5	Very bad	0	0%

Conclusion: 85 % of the participants involved in the survey, expressed that the self-evaluation is highly valued: Very Good (5 %) and good (85 %). None of the participants did not appreciate the process of self-evaluation.

Ad 2 The value of the self-evaluation instrument

Question: 1. How would you value the use self-evaluation instrument?

	Value	Number (N=20)	Percentage
1	Very good	3	15%
2	Good	6	30%
3	Nor good or bad	8	40%
4	Bad	3	15%
5	Very bad	0	0%

Conclusion: 45 % of the participants involved in the survey, appreciated the use of the self-evaluation instrument: Very Good (15 %) and good (30 %). 40 % of the participants did not expressed themselves explicitly. 15 % did not appreciate the use of the self-evaluation instrument.

Comments: The relative high percentage of respondents who did not appreciate the use of the self-evaluation instrument (15 %) may be caused by the experiences of the self-evaluation questionnaire. (see: page 4)

Ad 3 The value of the results / outcome of the self-evaluation process

Question: 1. How would you value the results of the self-evaluation?

	Value	Number (N=20)	Percentage
1	Very optimistic	1	5%

2	Realistic	15	75%
3	Poor (we are much better)	3	15%

Conclusion: 75 % of the organisations, involved in the survey, have the opinion that the outcomes of the self-evaluation process are realistic. 15 % of the participants (3 out of 20 participants), involved in the survey, have the opinion that their performance is much better as shown in the results of the self-evaluation process. Further analysis shows that there is no correlation between 'the performance of the EQUASS consultant' and 'the opinion of the organisation about the outcome of the self-evaluation process'.

Ad 4 The involvement of employees and management in the self-evaluation process

Questions: 1. How would you value the involvement of the management in the self-evaluation process?
2. How would you value the involvement of the employees in the self-evaluation process?

	Value	Involvement of employees		Involvement of management	
		N= 20	Percentage	N= 20	Percentage
1	Very good	7	35%	11	55%
2	Good	8	40%	7	35%
3	Nor good or bad	3	15%	1	5%
4	Bad	0	0%	0	0%
5	Very bad	0	0%	0	0%

Conclusion: The organisations, involved in the survey, appreciate the way employees (75 %) and management (80 %) are involved in the self-evaluation process.

The results of the self-evaluation process are expressed in a spider web diagram and in a number of recommendations as result of the assessment on documentation for approaches, results and implementation. Comparing the spider web diagrams, we could state the following conclusions: All pilots have a unique spider web diagram. There is a huge variation of performance. There are common topics that could be considered as common challenges for learning, development and improvement. The common challenges are:

1. Organisations work with a lot of approaches that are 'implicit' and therefore not documented. While documentation is required for the EQUASS recognition.
2. Organisation do not have a solid and systematic approach on specific topics in the EQUASS system. More than 50% of the pilots do not have:
 - a. a quality policy;
 - b. procedures on prevention of physical, mental and financial abuse of person served;
 - c. policy and procedures for including person served in the design, delivery and evaluation of services;
 - d. a concept of empowerment of person served;
 - e. a concept of Quality of Life of person served;
 - f. procedures for involving persons served in the individual planning process
3. The vast majority of the pilots do not have the habit to measure outcomes as results of their efforts. Traditionally efforts and financial performance how the available budget is spent are measured and reported for the Local / National Authority. More than 76% of the pilots do not have relevant outcomes for the EQUASS criteria that requires results.
4. The outcomes of the self-evaluation process have been presented and discussed with the coordinator and the management of the pilots. The outcomes indicate that it might not be feasible for all pilot to be successful in an external audit within the period of 12 months. It is expected that the vast majority of the pilots will need more time

and support to implement the EQUASS system in a successful way. It is expected that about 15 % of the pilot may be ready for external verification at the beginning of 2019. Some organisations expressed that they are convinced that their practice of the performance on the EQUASS criteria is much better as the diagram is showing. The vast majority of the pilots are expected to 'produce documentation' for proving evidence in meeting the EQUASS criteria. This might indicate that the EQUASS system may not have been well understood.

Recommendations

Recommendations for improving the self-evaluation process

It is recommended to describe and to visualise the process of self-evaluation in a clear and standardised way so all actors in this process know WHY this is done, HOW they should carry out this process and WHAT is expected from the contribution of all actors. It is recommended to include the process of those organisation that have less than 10 staff. (In these cases, it might not make much sense to use the self-evaluation questionnaire)

Recommendations for improving the self-evaluation instrument

There are various experiences with the instrument(s) for self-evaluation. During the process of self-evaluation some consultant identified some bugs in the Excel file. This has been communicated to the developer and the bugs have been fixed. The feedback from the interviews with consultants learned that some employees have difficulties in understanding the statements / question. (language is too difficult and not always clear; sometime there more than one variable in a statement / question which make is difficult to do a clear assessment). The instrument has been very helpful in collecting, processing and presenting information about the current performance against the EQUASS requirements for certification. The instrument also includes recommendations for development and improvement (based on the input of data). For some of the consultants is was not always easy to link the recommendations to the EQUASS criteria and to transfer them into an implementation plan.

It is recommended to improve the instrument on the following elements: The questionnaire: easy and understandable language for the employee (may consider to use specific language per sector). The Excel file: integration of the recommendations given in the excel-file and the design of the implementation plan.

Recommendations for improving the self-evaluation outcomes

1. Implicit approaches need to be discussed and administrated so all employees will have a formal reference document where it is explained WHY, HOW and WHAT is expected in putting this approach into practice. This process of documentation will facilitate transparency and communication on a number of core topics of the EQUASS quality system. It would be helpful to develop a strategy/ method how to document 'Implicit approaches'. This strategy could be useful to have in 'the tool box of the EQUASS consultant'.
2. On 6 key topics in the EQUASS system (50 % of the required documentation), the vast majority of organisations do not have a solid and systematic approach. Due to the fact that no approach has been identified, documentation is not available and implementation (putting into practice) has not taken place. Due to the variation of social services and target groups, it might not be feasible to present 'one approach for all'. (e.g. Quality of life concept for children might be fundamental different that Quality of Life concept for person with a disability and/or elderly persons. In line with the feedback provided in the interviews, it is recommended to offer training / information opportunities for the 6 specific topics in the various social sectors. The training and information should be aiming to develop and/or to adopt a solid and clear approach on the topic(s), to describe this approach in a reference document which is accessible for all employees (including writing the executive summary for the application) and to present a clear strategy of implementing thi(e)s(e) approach(es) in the daily practice of the social service provider.
3. More than 76% of the pilots do not have relevant outcomes for the EQUASS criteria that requires results. In the EQUASS system, having no results can be compensated by higher performance on approach and implementation. However, for the vast majority of the pilot a solid approach and implementation is not yet available. Not having relevant outcomes on the 12 requirements for results is an important factor for failing in the external audit. factor. Therefore, it is highly recommended to create an opportunity for learning and development of measuring outcomes. This opportunity could be offered for all pilots, per individual pilot and/or for specific sectors (e.g. disability services, elderly care, child care, homeless services). The project management may also consider to develop key indicators for measuring results for 12 requirements in the various social sectors. These common indicators will have the advantage that effort in development of indicators and instruments for measuring the results are shared. (so less

work burden for individual pilots) Another advantage might be that common indicators may create the opportunity for benchmarking and bench learning. This may benefit the development of the whole social sector in Lithuania.

4. For the fast majority it will not be feasible to implemented the EQUASS system within the scheduled period of time (2017-2018). The delay in executing the project activities, cause an implementation time of maximum 12 months. Therefore, it will be feasible that the pilots will be ready for a successful external audit in January – March 2019. The majority of the pilots will require more time for development, implementation and collecting the relevant results. Pilots may also have a need for support by EQUASS consultants after December 2018. Therefore, it is recommended to investigate the opportunity and availability of support after December 2018 and to have a flexible moment of applying for external audit in the period after Jan 2019. A successful implementation of the EQUASS system, which is verified by external auditors, is in the interest of the Social Service Provider and in the interest of the project (80 % successful audits (120 organisation) is defined as success indicator for project).

Phase 2: Implementation

The EQUASS implementation strategy at Social Service Provider level, is based on the outcomes of the self-evaluation process. The recommendations of the self-evaluation process will be transformed into an implementation plan. In the implementation plan, for each recommendation concrete actions, deadlines and person responsible for the action will be described. The aim of the implementation plan is to set out concrete actions for development and improvement so the Social Service Provider will meet the requirements for EQUASS certification. It is the role of the EQUASS coordinator and the EQUASS consultant to develop such a plan. It is strongly recommended to involve management and employees in this process of development. When the implementation plan is finalised, it will be communicated to the staff and monitored by the EQUASS coordinator.

The analysis of the survey among the pilots (N=15) shows that different functions have been informed about the content of the implementation plan. The overview below gives the percentage of functions that have been informed about the content of the implementation plan.

	Functions	Actual numbers (N=15)	Percentage
1	General Manager	14	93%
2	All Employees	11	73%
3	Some employees	4	27%
4	Coordinator	12	80%
5	Service users	6	40%
6	Stakeholders	4	27%

In order to understand WHAT needs to be done by WHOM, it is crucial that all actors involved in the implementation plan have a common understanding about the described content. The analysis of the survey among the pilots (N=15) shows that the vast majority of the implementation plans have been clear: They have a clear content, it is clear who is responsible for completing the tasks of the plan and the milestones are clearly set.

	Clearness of the implementation plan	Actual numbers (N=15)	Percentage
1	Very clear	8	53%
2	Clear	7	47%
3	Unclear	0	0%
4	Very unclear	0	0%

	Clearness of allocation of tasks	Actual numbers (N=15)	Percentage
1	Very clear	9	60%
2	Clear	6	40%
3	Unclear	0	0%
4	Very unclear	0	0%

	Clearness of milestones / deadlines	Actual numbers (N=15)	Percentage
1	Very clear	4	27%
2	Clear	9	60%
3	Unclear	1	7%
4	Very unclear	0	0%

Commitment and involvement of staff and management are considered key success factors for sustainable implementation of the EQUASS system. The analysis of the survey among the pilots (N=15) shows all Social Service Providers involve their staff in the implementation of the EQUASS system. The vast majority of the pilots also involve management functions in this process. 53 % of the pilots have involved their service users in the implementation of the EQUASS system.

	Functions	Actual numbers (N=15)	Percentage
1	General manager	13	87%
2	Department manager(s)	12	80%
3	Employees serving service users	15	100%

4	Other employees	8	53%
5	Service users	11	73%

The implementation plans of the pilots have communalities but also differences (see: outcomes of the self-evaluation process). Also, Social Service Providers differentiate for each other through available resources (number of staff) for carrying out the action described in the implementation plan. Due to the delay in the process of identifying the pilots (August 2017) and starting up the process of self-evaluation (September 2017), the implementation plans have been available in November 2017. However, the milestone for full implementation of the EQUASS system (December 2018) has not changed. Based on the experiences in other countries (e.g. Norway and Portugal), the average throughput-time for implementing the EQUASS system (including the self-evaluation process) (EQUASS assurance level) is 24 months. The pilots in the Lithuanian EQUASS project will have less time (16 months) for implementing the EQUASS system.

The analysis of the survey among the pilots (N=15) shows that 53 % of the pilots estimated that they have enough time for implementing the EQUASS system based on the implementation plan and the given time frame (deadline: December 2018). 13 % of the pilots prefer to have more time while 27% of the pilots do not know.

	Expected time for implementation	Actual numbers (N=15)	Percentage
1	Yes, I will have enough time	8	53%
2	No, I would prefer to have more time	2	13%
3	I don't know	4	27%

The actions in the implementation plan can be divided into three main actions:

1. Identifying and describing the core approaches that are required for EQUASS certification
2. Putting into practice what has been agreed and described
3. Identifying and recording the required outcomes (results) that are required for EQUASS certification.

Ad 1: One of the conclusions of the self-evaluation outcomes is the 'organisations work with a lot of approaches that are 'implicit' and therefore not documented'. A **very limited number** (12 % SSP > < 25 % SSP) of social service providers have documented the following approaches (see: analysis of self-evaluation outcomes): A full description of organisation's policy on Ethics and wellbeing for all (24 %); Organisations' Code of ethics (24 %) and a full description of organisation's policy and procedures for including persons served in the design, delivery and evaluation of services. (24%). Almost **none** (0 % SSP > < 12 % SSP) of social service providers have the documented the following approaches (see: analysis of self-evaluation outcomes): A full description of organisation's quality policy. (12 % SSP); organisation's procedures on prevention of physical, mental and financial abuse of persons served (6 % SSP); organisation's defined concept of empowerment of persons served (6 % SSP); organisation's defined concept of Quality of Life of persons served (0 % SSP) and organisation's continuous improvement and learning system (12 % SSP).

In development and recording of the approaches various function have been involved. In all pilots the management (100 %) and employees (93 %) directly serving service users have been involved in the development and the documentation of the approaches. In 33 % of the pilots, the Social Service Provider has involved Service Users in the development and the documentation.

	Functions involved in describing approaches	Actual numbers (N=15)	Percentage
1	General manager	15	100%
2	Department manager(s)	9	60%
3	Employees serving service users	14	93%
4	Other employees	4	27%
5	Service users	5	33%
6	Other Stakeholders	1	7%

The majority of the pilots (80%) have discussed the identified and described approaches with the employees in a meeting. In 47 % of the cases the meetings were organised on monthly basis. In 20 % of the cases the meeting was organised on weekly bases.

Ad 2: Putting into practice what has been agreed and described.

In other words, the practice of the Social Service Provider should comply with the described approaches. In the survey, we have asked the pilots to express their opinion about the value of the identifying and describing the approaches. All pilots express the value of having identified and described their approaches. 67 % of the pilots expressed that the description is realistic description of the current practice. 33 % of the pilots expressed that the description is more optimistic that the current practice.

	Value of described approach	Actual numbers (N=15)	Percentage
1	Very optimistic	5	33%
2	Realistic	10	67%
3	Poor	0	0%

The outcomes of the self-evaluation process show that almost none of social service providers have a defined concept of empowerment of persons served and a concept of Quality of Life of persons served. Many other concepts, approaches were lacking and therefore additional information and/or training could be helpful to create a better understanding so the EQUASS system can be implemented successfully. In the 2nd survey of the pilots (2018) we have asked the pilots which additional training event would be helpful for becoming successful in the implementation of the EQUASS system. In the figure below, the topics 'Measuring Results' (60 %) and 'Identifying outcomes' (67 %) have been identified as topics with a relevance for the majority of the pilots. Also the topics 'Dealing with Ethical issues' (20 %), 'Quality of Life' (20 %) and 'Assessment of needs' (20 %) can be considered as relevant.

	Relevant additional training	Actual numbers (N=15)	Percentage
1	Overall Management	1	7%
2	Project management	1	7%
3	HR management	2	13%
4	Rights of Service users	1	7%
5	Dealing Ethical issues	3	20%
6	Individual Planning	2	13%
7	Empowerment	2	13%
8	Quality of Life	3	20%
9	Identifying outcomes	10	67%
10	Measuring results	9	60%
11	Needs assessment	3	20%

The implementation process (putting approaches into practice) is the responsibility of the employees. Employees should understand WHY these approaches are important and HOW to act in relation with the approach. There are many factors that influence a successful implementation. In the survey we have asked the pilots about the challenges they have faced in implementing the identified and described approaches. In the figure below, the vast majority of the pilots (87%) has identified that "The available time" is the biggest challenges in 'putting approaches into practice'. (There is a contradiction with other information where 53 % of the pilots have expressed that they expected to have enough time for implementation) Also 'motivation of staff' (53 %) and 'lacking human resources'. (40 %) are considered as challenges in implementation.

	Challenges in implementation	Actual numbers (N=15)	Percentage
1	Motivation of staff	8	53%
2	Lacking financial resources	2	13%
3	Lacking human resources	6	40%
4	Lacking clear policy	4	27%
5	Availability of time	13	87%

Ad 3: Identifying and recording the required outcomes (results) that are required for EQUASS certification.

One of the conclusions of the self-evaluation outcomes was that 'the fast majority of the pilots do not have the habit to measure outcomes as results of their efforts'. (see: conclusions self-evaluation) The topics 'identifying outcomes' and 'measuring results' have also been identified by the pilots as relevant for additional training. The evaluation of the implementation of the EQUASS system shows that as well as management and employees are involved in the identification of the results which are required for EQUASS certification.

	Functions involved in collecting the results	Actual numbers (N=15)	Percentage
1	General manager	8	53%
2	Department manager(s)	10	67%
3	Employees serving service users	14	93%
4	Other employees	4	27%
5	Service users / stakeholders	11	73%

For eligible outcomes for EQUASS certification, clear indicators are required. 87 % of the pilots (N=15) expressed that the indicators they have identified are clear. 13 % of the pilots (N= 15) are uncertain about the indicators. The vast majority (73 %) of the pilots (N= 15) discussed the achievements on the indicators in a meeting with the employees.

Phase 3: EQUASS certification audit

After the period of implementation, a certification audit will take place. The main aim of the certification audit is to assess the performance of the Social Service Provider against the EQUASS criteria for certification. The certification audit will be carried out by a qualified EQUASS auditor who has no conflict of interest with the organisation that is assessed. The pilots will apply for the audit by sending an application form and by uploading additional information. The auditor will assess the approaches (by documentation review), the implementation of the approaches (by observation of the practice and by interviewing management, employees, service users and other relevant stakeholders) and the achievements (by review of records of outcomes).

Until today (1 May 2019), 13 EQUASS certification audits (68 %) have been carried out and reported.

	EQUASS Principles	Scores of the first ten pilots (2019)									
		LIT-01	LIT-02	LIT-03	LIT-04	LIT-05	LIT-06	LIT-07	LIT-08	LIT-09	LIT-10
1	Leadership	4,33	4,00	4,00	4,33	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,33	4,67
2	Staff	4,00	4,57	4,00	4,57	4,57	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,57
3	Rights	4,00	4,00	4,00	5,00	4,40	4,40	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,80
4	Ethics	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,23	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	5,00	4,33
5	Partnership	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	5,00	4,00	5,00	4,00	4,00	5,00
6	Participation	4,00	4,57	4,00	4,57	4,57	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	5,14
7	Person Centred Approach	4,00	4,29	4,00	4,86	4,57	4,29	4,57	4,00	4,00	4,57
8	Comprehensiveness	4,00	4,29	4,00	4,29	4,00	4,00	4,57	4,00	4,00	4,29
9	Result orientation	4,00	4,33	4,00	4,33	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,33
10	Continuous Improvement	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,67	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00
	TOTAL	40,33	42,05	40,00	44,18	43,78	40,69	42,14	40,00	41,33	45,70

EQUASS Principles		Scores of the first ten pilots (2019)									
		LIT-11	LIT-12	LIT-13	LIT-14	LIT-15	LIT-16	LIT-17	LIT-18	LIT-19	LIT-20
1	Leadership	4,33	4,33	4,33	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,33	4,33	4,00	
2	Staff	4,29	4,29	4,29	4,00	4,00	4,29	4,29	4,00	4,00	
3	Rights	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	
4	Ethics	4,33	4,00	4,33	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	
5	Partnership	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	6,00	4,00	4,00	
6	Participation	4,57	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	
7	Person Centred Approach	4,29	4,00	4,29	4,00	4,00	4,29	4,00	4,00	4,00	
8	Comprehensiveness	4,29	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	
9	Result orientation	4,33	4,00	4,33	4,00	4,33	4,00	4,33	4,00	4,00	
10	Continuous Improvement	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	
	TOTAL	42,43	40,62	41,57	40,00	40,33	40,58	42,95	40,33	40,00	

Until today (1 May 2019) all external assessment (EQUASS Certification audits) has been successful for the social service provider. The scores of the first 10 social service providers show less variation in total scores. Minimum score: 40,00 points. Maximum score: 44,18 points.

The performance of the key actors in the project

The project manager

Planning the activities

The project activities are schedules in a project Gant-chart (excel file). According the planning the project should have started at 01-01-2017. Various factors caused a delay in selecting the consultants, the executing of the Consultant training, the kick-off conference of the project and the selections of the pilots. Still there are a number of scheduled and planned activities that need to be accomplished. (e.g. project web site – Establishment of a stakeholder committee- and dissemination of information about the project) The project manager has spent about 25 % of the available time to the project. There too many other responsibilities and other factors that influenced the percentage time spent to the project. Most of the factors are out-of-the-control of the project manager. Spending less time to the project than allocated may have impact on the planning of the activities (delay). The delay may also have impact on the success of the project.

The piloting of the project (20 pilots) have been scheduled in the period January 2017 – December 2018. Various external factors caused a significant delay in building up the capacity for the project (training consultants) and the selection of the 20 pilots. The delay had impact on the throughput time for the 20 pilots. (9 months less though put time for implementation the EQUASS system).

Controlling the activities

In the beginning of the project, the project manager face challenges in controlling the activities and meeting deadlines. In many cases deadlines were not set yet. The pilot phase requires an intensive process of coaching the EQUASS consultants so they can learn from their experiences by reflection and exchanging information. It is the role of the project manager to facilitate and coordinate this process and to assure that the consultants improve their performance so they can deliver high quality services in the implementation process of the upcoming 100 Social Service Providers in the project. In the beginning of the pilots phase less time has been spent to the coaching activities of the project managers. Key factor for having the feeling of “being-not-in-control” is the available time for managing the project. The project manager has too many tasks and responsibilities to assure a proper management and control of activities. During the pilot-phase, the project management became more and more ‘in-control’ on the project activities. More experiences and a more pro-active approach contribute may have contributed to become ‘in-control’.

Communication with consultants, coordinators and sub-contractors

Communication with consultants, coordinator and sub-contractors is not characterised by a systematic approach. Many of the communication action are ad-hoc and limited to phone call and email communication. The EQUASS consultants who have been involved in the interviews expressed that a more frequent structural communication would benefit the overall performance and competences of the consultants. This could be facilitated by having team meeting (e.g. one a month) were practice can be exchanged and common challenges could be discussed in order to have create a common solution for similar challenges. It is the responsibility of the project manager to facilitate and to coach this process of learning and communication. The factor available time in relation to other tasks and responsibilities in the project (as EQUASS consultant) and outside the project (in VRC organisation) has a huge impact on the performance of the project manager in the project.

Recommendations for improving management of the project

1. It is recommended to have more frequently an in-depth reflection and analysis of the all task and responsibilities (including current performance) of the manager in the project in relation to the needed time and the available time and other task in the VRC organisation. The aim of the reflection and analysis is to create an acceptable workload for the project manager so she can a feeling of ‘being-in-control’ and for carrying out the responsibilities of coordinating activities (and working according deadlines), facilitating a smooth operation of the project activities and facilitating the internal communication and the learning / coaching of the EQUASS consultants.
2. It is recommended to carry out a so call Risk-Analysis on the current performance and the challenges of the project manager. The risk analysis will make VRC aware of the negative impact for the individual (e.g. not performing as expected - burnout) and the organisation (as project promoter for being responsible for successful meeting the project objectives and successful implementation of the scheduled the project activities).

The EQUASS consultants

Knowledge and skills about the EQUASS system

The EQUASS consultants, who are involved in the evaluation of the 1st phase of the project (Information and self-evaluation) expressed that they have sufficient knowledge and competence to facilitate the process of introducing the EQUASS system, the self-evaluation and the development of the implementation plan. The result of the evaluation however creates some worries. The EQUASS consultants identified a growing need for additional training and information about the following topics in the EQUASS system: organisation' quality policy; procedures on prevention of physical, mental and financial abuse of person served; policy and procedures for including person served in the design, delivery and evaluation of services; a sector specific concept of empowerment of person served; a sector specific concept of Quality of Life of person served; procedures for involving persons served in the individual planning process; systematic improvement method and measuring outcomes / results for the 12 EQUASS criteria. They emphasize that information and training should be sector specific with practical examples that can be used as an inspiration to apply this in the organisation of the Social Service provider in the Lithuanian context.

Availability

EQUASS consultants have limited time to support the pilots in the implementation of the EQUASS system. (120 working hours per organisation of which 24 hours working on site) Seen the tremendous need for support in identifying solid approaches that are documented, identifying a strategy for implementing (put into practice) of these approaches and measuring relevant outcomes for the EQUASS criteria based on valid indicators, all interviewed consultants express to wish to have more time for working with the employees at the site. In the current situation, the information event and the self-evaluation process has been carried out on site. Most of the allocated time for direct contact (24 hours) are already spent to the 1st phase of the project. All consultants expressed that they make themselves available for supporting and communication with the pilots. Some of the consultants carry out the task of the consultant additional to a full-time job.

Communication with colleagues, pilots and project management

Pilots are allocated to EQUASS consultants. Some consultants have one pilot and other have two, three or four pilots to support. Communication between consultant and pilots is carried in face-to-face meeting and with phone and email. Face-to-face meetings are limited. Communication between consultants are mainly with email and with a 'platform' on the internet. In this 'platform' consultants can exchange experiences, rise up problems, find and share solutions. All interviewed consultants are very pleased with this 'platform'. All consultants expressed that they would gain benefits in having so called 'team meetings'. In these team meetings, the consultants will have more time for an in-depth discussion and exchange of experiences. The team meetings can facilitate a process of Intervention and coaching.

Awareness of the context of the pilot

All consultants are fully aware of the various context and situation of the pilots. The contexts vary from highly motivated employees for learning and implementing the EQUASS system till pilots where employees are not motivated at all and afraid for the upcoming changes. The vast majority of the pilots have the impression that the performance on the EQUASS criteria can and must be verified on the basis of the availability of relevant and valid documentation. The EQUASS consultants face the common challenge to defecate this misunderstanding. EQUASS consultants also experienced a variation on leadership and management style which has impact on the motivation of the employees. In some of the context the poor facilities of the pilots (safety and hygiene) are not representative for providing the quality of service as intended by the EQUASS system.

Ad 5 The performance of the EQUASS consultant in the self-evaluation process

The performance of the EQUASS consultants (N=7) is evaluated by collecting the feedback of the pilots of the project (2017: N=20 & 2018: N15). The maximum score is 4,00.

Question: 1. How would you value the **performance of the consultant**?

Competences of consultants	N=20	N=15	
	2017	2018	Deviation
Overall quality of the support	3,55	3,53	-0,02
Leading the discussions	3,55	3,47	-0,08
Facilitating the decisions	3,55	3,53	-0,02
Use of technology (Excel / PowerPoint)	3,60	3,40	-0,20
Communication about ideas and information	3,42	3,33	-0,09
Clarification of the EQUASS standard	3,70	3,47	-0,23
Changing way of working when new opportunities require such a change	3,35	3,36	0,01
Acting steadily and effectively under time pressure	3,40	3,50	0,10
Suggesting original solutions	3,25	3,54	0,29
Understanding of how things work in your organization	3,55	3,40	-0,15
Being available for support and answering questions	3,85	3,73	-0,12
Keeping arrangement and promises.	3,75	3,67	-0,08
Average score	3,54	3,49	-0,05

The overview above shows the scores on key competences of the EQUASS consultants. The maximum score is 4,00 (very good). The overview shows the results of the survey in 2017 (N=20) and the survey in 2018 (N=15). The deviation of the scores between 2017 and 2018 are expressed. There is a significant deviation (> 0,20) in scores for the competences:

1. Use of technology (Excel / PowerPoint) (negative)
2. Clarification of the EQUASS standard (negative)
3. Suggesting original solutions (positive)

The significant deviation in scores can be explained as follows:

1. Use of technology (- 0,20): in the phase of implementation, the EQUASS consultant may have used less or no technology as Excel and PowerPoint.
2. Clarification of the EQUASS standard (- 0,23): in the phase of implementation, the EQUASS consultant may have been confronted with an in-depth-knowledge and understanding of the EQUASS standard: Principles, criteria and indicators. Especially on the requirements of the results and special in-depth-knowledge on the topics like rights, ethics, empowerment, quality of life, holistic approach and systematic continuous improvement the EQUASS consultants may have experienced some challenges in giving adequate answers to the social service providers.
3. Suggesting original solutions (positive): on average, all consultants have given practical solution in meeting the requirements for certification.

Overview of detail of actual number of valuing performance of EQUASS consultants for the period 2017 and 2018.

	Performance criteria (2017)	Very bad	Bad	Good	Very good	Average score	Cohesion
1	Overall quality of the support	0%	5%	35%	60%	3,55	0,59
2	Leading the discussions	0%	10%	25%	65%	3,55	0,67
3	Facilitating the decisions	0%	5%	35%	60%	3,55	0,59
4	Use of technology (Excel / PowerPoint)	0%	5%	30%	65%	3,60	0,58
5	Communication about ideas and information	0%	16%	26%	58%	3,42	0,75
6	Clarification of the EQUASS standard	0%	0%	30%	70%	3,70	0,46
7	Changing way of working when new opportunities require such a change	0%	5%	55%	40%	3,35	0,57
8	Acting steadily and effectively under time pressure	0%	5%	50%	45%	3,40	0,58
9	Suggesting original solutions	0%	15%	45%	40%	3,25	0,70
10	Understanding of how things work in your organization	5%	0%	30%	65%	3,55	0,74
11	Being available for support and answering questions	0%	0%	15%	85%	3,85	0,36
12	Keeping arrangement and promises.	0%	0%	25%	75%	3,75	0,43
	Average scores					3,53	0,59

	Performance criteria (2018)	Very bad	Bad	Good	Very good	Average score	Cohesion
1	Overall quality of the support	0%	7%	33%	60%	3,53	0,62
2	Leading the discussions	0%	13%	27%	60%	3,47	0,72
3	Facilitating the decisions	0%	7%	33%	60%	3,53	0,62
4	Use of technology (<i>Excel / PowerPoint</i>)	0%	7%	47%	47%	3,40	0,61
5	Communication about ideas and information	0%	13%	40%	47%	3,33	0,70
6	Clarification of the EQUASS standard	0%	13%	27%	60%	3,47	0,72
7	Changing way of working when new opportunities require such a change	0%	21%	21%	57%	3,36	0,81
8	Acting steadily and effectively under time pressure	0%	14%	21%	64%	3,50	0,73
9	Suggesting original solutions	0%	15%	15%	69%	3,54	0,75
10	Understanding of how things work in your organization	0%	13%	33%	53%	3,40	0,71
11	Being available for support and answering questions	0%	7%	13%	80%	3,73	0,57
12	Keeping arrangement and promises.	0%	13%	7%	80%	3,67	0,70
	Average score					3,49	0,69

The orange marked cells in the figures above show potential issue for attention in the performance of the EQUASS consultants.

The cells in the column 'Cohesion' (=standard deviation) shows the cohesion of feedback of the organisations that participated in the survey (N=20 in 2017 and N=15 in 2018). A standard deviation of less than .60 (indicated in green) indicates a strong cohesion among the participants in valuing the performance criteria. Cohesion with a higher variation as 0,60 is marked with orange.

Conclusion: Analysis show that those organisations that value low performance of the EQUASS consultant ('Bad' and/or 'very bad') and the variation of opinions have slightly increased. Further analysis shows that those organisations that value low performance of the EQUASS consultant ('Bad' and/or 'very bad') on one criterion they have also done this for the other criteria. in other words: "... when an organisation value the performance of the EQUASS consultant as "bad in leading the discussions", this organisation also value the performance of the EQUASS consultant low on "Communication about ideas", 'suggestion original solutions' and 'understanding of how thinks are working in the organisation'. There is no correlation between 'the performance of an EQUASS consultant' and 'low performance in organisation". In other words: EQUASS consultant that performance low in one organisation on certain aspects did not perform low in other organizations.

Recommendations for improving performances of the consultants

1. It is recommended to consider to organise other and more frequent learning experiences with consultants about the key topics of the EQUASS system. The learning experiences can be organised in formal training (e.g more tailor-made consultant training or more training days for becoming EQUASS consultant), calibration of approaches and experiences, but also in visiting organisation that have successfully implemented the EQUASS system. (or a combination of both) Additional resources for organising these learning events could be found in the sub programs of the EU Erasmus Plus program. Learning experiences based on training and exchange of information should have the following content: a practical approach (with concrete examples) relevant for the various services / target groups (disability services, elderly persons, children, homeless service etc.) and based on a solid, sound and evidence based theoretical framework.
2. It is recommended to consider to explore the possibilities of creating more flexibility in permitting the consultants to deliver the support at the site of the pilot (more contact hours) and to review the availability, the actual support and the challenges more frequently with the EQUASS consultants. Although consultants are not formally responsible for the success of implementation of the EQUASS system in the organisation of the pilots, many of them still feel some mind of responsibility. This review may provide crucial information for making appropriate agreements with the consultants in supporting the 100 social service providers in the period after 2019.

3. It is recommended to organised 'team meetings' more systematically and frequently. The 'team meetings' may contribute to the learning process of the consultants (exchange of information and experiences) and to the 'team building process' of the consultants. "team meeting' can also be used for in-depth discussions, Intervision and coaching. They may contribute to the confidence and competence of the consultant.
4. It is recommended to consider to organised learning experiences in 'management of resistance' and 'management of power based on authority'. The learning experiences can be facilitated by formal training (e.g. adjusting the content of the EQUASS consultant training), practical workshops and by addressing the issues in the 'team meetings'.

The EQUASS auditors

EQUASS auditor have been selected and trained to assess the performance of the Social Service Provider against the criteria for EQUASS certification. This process of section is based on strict criteria and is described in the EQUASS procedures. All auditors that have been involved in the selection and training are meeting the formal criteria for appointment. The process of assessment has also strict procedures for application, preparation, assessment and reporting. (See: EQUASS Procedures)

The performance of the auditors has been evaluated based on the following information / data:

1. Feedback from the social service provider after the external assessment / certification audit
2. The quality of the content of the audit report: consistency in feedback related to the scoring and the feedback to the social service provider to encourage continuous improvement and additional development in improving the performance on the EQUASS criteria for certification.

Ad 1: There has been limited feedback given by the social service providers about the performance of the auditor. In general, it can be said that Social Service Providers appreciate the way the auditors perform and interact with the staff and service users of the organisation. Social Service Providers who applied for certification had not expressed any complaint about the performance of the auditor during the site visit.

Ad 2: The audit reports, written by the auditor, are reviewed by the office in Brussels. The audit reports are written in English and will be translated into Lithuanian language after approval of the content of the auditor report. Criteria for review are: consistency in feedback related to the scoring – quality of the feedback to encourage continuous improvement and additional development in improving the performance of the Social Service Provider against the criteria for EQUASS certification. For all auditors, it was the first formal experiences of assessing performance of the social service provider against the EQUASS criteria and writing an official audit report. The process of reviewing the audit reports by the office in Brussels is a process of additional learning for the auditor. The information provided by the reviewer, is brought up to consider and take-in-to account to improve the audit report. Analysing the content of the audit report and adaptations of the reports after receiving feedback from the reviewer, shows that all auditors highly appreciated this process to improve their performance as EQUASS auditor. The analysis also shows the learning curve of all auditor who carried out more than one audit. The recommendations given as feedback in the first audit report are considered in the second audit report which cause a higher quality of feedback in the first version of the reports. In some cases, auditors have delivered such a high quality of feedback, that even no recommendations have been formulated by the Brussels office.

Recommendations

In order to keep the high level of quality of the audit reports, it is strongly recommended that EQUASS auditors frequently calibrate their experiences in assessing Social Service Providers against the EQUASS criteria for certification and calibrate their performance in writing feedback for the Social Service Providers: consistency in scoring and written feedback and the feedback to the social service provider to encourage continuous improvement and additional development in improving the performance on the EQUASS criteria for certification. The calibration will keep the quality of the audit report high and it will prevent a variation of the quality of the audit report based on individual interpretation and performance.

Conclusion

In the pilot phase of the project, twenty public organisations providing social services have been selected to implement the EQUASS system. (Assurance level) The project management has selected the pilots based on specific criteria that include a representation of a wide range of social services, a variation of size and the representation in different geographical contexts. The selected organisations providing social services have applied for the pilot phase on voluntary basis. One organisation stepped out of the project during the pilot phase.

Based on the analysis of the information (quantitative and qualitative information) collected during the various phases of the project, we may conclude that the implementation of the EQUASS system in the 19 pilots, representing a wide range of social services in the Social Sector of Lithuania, has been successful from various points of view.

1. Piloting the EQUASS system in 19 organisations lead to build up capacity for managing, supporting and assessing Lithuanian Social Service Providers on criteria for EQUASS certification.
2. Piloting the EQUASS system in 19 organisations lead to testing, adapting and improving Instruments for self-evaluation, planning, implementation, application and (internal and external) assessment of the EQUASS system. All instruments are available in Lithuanian language which facilitates the accessibility of the EQUASS system.
3. Piloting the EQUASS system in 19 organisations lead a positive success rate: 95 % of the Social Service Provider who have started the process of implementation has successfully finalised this process with official EQUASS certification (Assurance level).
4. Social Service Providers who have been involved in piloting the EQUASS system have expressed their appreciation about the expertise and support of the management and the consultants in the process of implementing the EQUASS system
5. Piloting the EQUASS system in 19 organisations lead to valuable learning experiences for all actors involved. One of the most valuable learning experiences is to make information about the EQUASS system (key documentation, instruments, training, materials etc) adaptable and more tailor-made to Lithuanian social sector.

Successful piloting of the EQUASS system in 19 organisations in the Lithuanian Social Sector does not guarantee a successful continuation and successful outcomes for the implementation of the EQUASS system in the up-coming 100 social service providers in this project. As we have learned in this pilot phase, the quality of this project mainly depends on the quality of the key-actors in this project: the competences and performance of the project manager, the consultants, centre-coordinators, the trainers, managers and employees of the social services and EQUASS auditors. Therefore, it is recommended that there is a continuous reflection on the performance of all these actors in the continuation of the project. Mechanisms like national and international calibration of consultants and auditors, sharing experiences, effective communication, project meetings, conferences, intervision and additional learning and development events may contribute to the overall success of this project. Piloting the EQUASS system has contributed to the awareness of these key-success factors and it has created a solid basis achieving the aims of the project: "Improvement of the quality of social services, using EQUASS quality assurance system".

Eindhoven, 1 May 2019