Implementation of the Voluntary European Quality Framework for SSGI at Member State level

Some examples

Introductory remark

Several EU Member States have taken initiatives that stimulate the implementation of the VEQF in the field, mainly by financing social service providers in their attempts to be certified by the European Quality System for Social Services (EQUASS). The funding programmes do not refer explicitly to the VEQF as they were in most cases drafted before the EVQF was launched in October 2010. However, EQUASS was during 2011 modified in order to be 100% compliant with the VEQF for SSGIs. In Portugal and Estonia, the projects had a certain scale and an initial follow-up initiatives were approved, so those countries are most likely to be examples of good practice and sound results. The actions in Lithuania and Slovenia have a smaller scale, and only recently launched, which does not allow yet making conclusions on their results.

Portugal

The Ministry of Social Solidarity launched the "National Strategic Reference Framework 2007/2013, with an axis or an operational agenda for *Human Potential***.** The so called *POPH* (operational programme for human potential) has established a priority axis concerning *Citizenship, Inclusion and Social Development* (priority axis nr. 6). In this axis there is a specific measure for *Quality in Services and Organisations*[1] (measure 6,4).

Under this measure 6.4 - Quality in Services and Organisations**,** the *ARQUIMEDES Programme*[2] has been established. The ARQUIMEDES Programme is directed to capacity building and quality in the sector of disability services. For service providers, this programme finances both the consultancy services aiming at the organizational development at all levels and the certification under EQUASS Assurance or Excellence. Nearly 100 disability service providers throughout Portugal got in this way audited and certified. The objectives are to bring services in line with the European[3] and International quality requirements, aiming at optimal outcomes of services and ultimately the quality of life of people with disabilities.

Estonia

The Ministry of Social Affairs launched an ESF programme "Support measures for employment 2010-2013". During phase 1 of this programme (2010 – 2011), seven rehabilitation service providers were financially supported to pilot the quality management system EQUASS – which assess compliance with the VEQF. During phase 2 (2012 – 2013), a follow-up project will finance the implementation of the EQUASS system in 25 service providers, not only in the field of rehabilitation but also in the wider area of social welfare.

---

[1] More information about the structure of these programmes can be found on http://www.poph.qren.pt/content.asp?startAt=2&categoryID=370. There is also an English version of QREN in http://www.qren.pt/download.php?id=510.
[2] Legal basis on http://www.poph.qren.pt/upload/docs/eixos/D_18364_08_TI_6.4.pdf. Explanation on the programme on http://www.poph.qren.pt/upload/docs/eixos/6_4_Programa_Arquimedes.pdf.
[3] In the document http://www.poph.qren.pt/upload/docs/eixos/6_4_Programa_Arquimedes.pdf you may find at page 3 a clear reference to the UN Convention of rights of persons with disabilities and the Disability High Level Group Position Paper on quality

SOCIAL SERVICES EUROPE

Lithuania

The Ministry of Social Affairs supported two initiatives in the field of improving/promoting quality in social services in Lithuania:

- A first project is implemented by the Vocational education centre in Siauliai and is titled "The development and implementation of internal quality systems in vocational training in Siauliai vocational education and training centre" (Project code Nr. VP1-2.2-ŠMM-04-V-03-007). It is financed through the Operational programme for promotion of social cohesion 2007-2013 Nr. VP1-2.2-ŠMM-04-V, under the measure "Providing the highest quality formal and informal education services".

- The second project was contracted to the labour market training centre in Utena and has the title "the development and implementation of internal quality systems in vocational training for labour market training centres in the Utena region (Project Nr. VP1-2.2-ŠMM-04-V-03-006). It is financed through the Human resource operational programme, 2nd priority "Life-long learning" under measure VP1-2.2-ŠMM-04-V „High quality formal and informal education".

Slovenia

Amendments to the act on "Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities" (OJ No 87/2011) stipulates that the University Rehabilitation Institute (URI) is responsible for the quality standards within this domain. URI received financial and operational support from the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, and started to introduce the EQUASS within the employment and rehabilitation programs/organisations.

During 2011, much energy and resources were engaged in the process of preparing a team of consultants and two auditors. At the end of that year, the two providers were audited and certified. In 2012, a larger sample of Slovenian employment centres and service providers to persons with disabilities will be approached, with the aim to create a pool of interested key organizations that could further disseminate the quality system in the social services sector.

March 2012
info@socialserviceseurope.eu