

European Quality Mark

BUSINESS MODEL



www.europeanqualitymark.org

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1. INTRODUCTION

The European Quality Mark (EQM) is a result of a two year project called *RECALL – Recognition of Quality in Lifelong Learning*, which was carried out with the support of the Commission of the European Communities under the Leonardo da Vinci programme from October 16th 2006 to December 15th 2008. The EQM is a quality mark jointly developed by institutes and organisations in eight countries covering the South, North, East and West of Europe. It reflects the needs and cultural differences at both the local and national levels of the partners involved. The institutes and organisations participating in the RECALL project were:



The Education and Training Service Centre (IS, promoter)
Fræðslumiðstöð atvinnulífsins
www.frae.is



The Public Learning Association for non-formal adult education (DK)
Folkeligt oplysningsforbund - Horsens
www.fof-rr.dk



Consortium Employment and Environment (IT)
Consorzio Lavoro e Ambiente
www.galileo.it



The Methodological Centre for VET (LT)
Profesinio mokymo metodikos centras
www.pmmc.lt



The Norwegian Association for Adult Learning, NAAL (NO)
Voksenopplæringsforbundet, VOFO
www.vofo.no



Vocational School of Leiria (PT)
Fundação Escola Profissional de Leiria
www.epl.pt



The National Institute for Vocational Education and Training (SI)
Center RS za poklicno izobraževanje
www.cpi.si



The Open College Network Yorkshire and Humber Region (UK)
www.ocnyhr.org.uk

As demanded by projects carried out with the support of the Commission of the European Communities under the Leonardo da Vinci programme, the EQM website and all other products of the RECALL project will be accessible free of charge for two years after the termination of the project. Until the formal establishment of the National EQM Authorities, the institutes and organisations participating in the RECALL project function as the

provisional National EQM Authority as well as the provisional European EQM Authority. Interested parties should contact their national institute or organisation listed above.

2. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE EQM

Rapid developments in the labour markets and education systems in Europe have brought about enormous changes in education and training provision in post compulsory and adult learning. This provision often falls outside any formal education system and it is difficult to assure the quality of the training provided. As people become aware of the importance of updating their skills and employers demand increasing accountability, learning providers may need to be able to prove the quality of their programmes.

Quality is a complex and multi dimensional concept. Objectively seen, quality refers to standards, results and goals that are set for a process. Subjectively seen, quality refers to the individual experience of the process. Organisations aiming for quality know that it is an ongoing process. When high quality standards are set, it requires a constant review of one's work. The purpose of this review is to find ways to improve.

There is a wide range of quality frameworks such as ISO, IIP and EFQM, which cover a lot of important internal quality processes. EQM covers these as well as providing a focus for the quality assurance of non-formal learning providers and the learning process.

The EQM process is a transparent assessment process where the learning provider gets the opportunity to review own processes by using a set of indicators that are based on standards commonly agreed by eight organisations representing eight European countries.

FOR THE LEARNING PROVIDER

The EQM gives the learning provider the opportunity to engage the organisation and the staff in a transparent developmental process, with the aim of enhancing the quality of their work. The EQM is a tool which will help the learning provider and the staff explore how to quality assure the learning process and how the provider and staff support it.

At the core of the EQM process is the learning provider's self-assessment. By completing the EQM Assessment Form, providers need to engage their staff in exploring what quality assurance to external criteria means to their current practice and future development possibilities. It will enable all staff to review their practice and processes in relation to the learning they offer. All evidence the provider needs to put forward will come from the processes and documents that are in use at the time of the assessment process.

The EQM is cost effective as it offers the provider help to identify areas for development and improvement if the organisation cannot meet criteria set in the EQM assessment form. Providers meeting criteria set in the EQM Assessment Form are encouraged to share their good practice processes with other learning providers throughout Europe for a transnational implementation of quality work within the non-formal learning sector.

FOR THE SERVICE USER

Potential service users are individuals and organisations seeking to gain new learning and improve competences. The EQM gives the service user the opportunity to search for a learning provider in a more informed way and choose the ones that offer the best quality. The EQM is about how effectively the learning provider understands what systems and activities are required to provide and support learning in relation to recognized European standards for quality assurance of learning.

THE EQM PROCESS

The EQM is a transparent assessment process where the learning provider gets the opportunity to review own processes by using a set of criteria that are based on commonly agreed standards (see figure 1). It helps organisations to identify what they do well and what needs development in their practice. The transparency of the EQM Assessment Form gives the provider the opportunity to make an action plan for improvement and actually implement good quality practice before asking for the external evaluation of the practice.

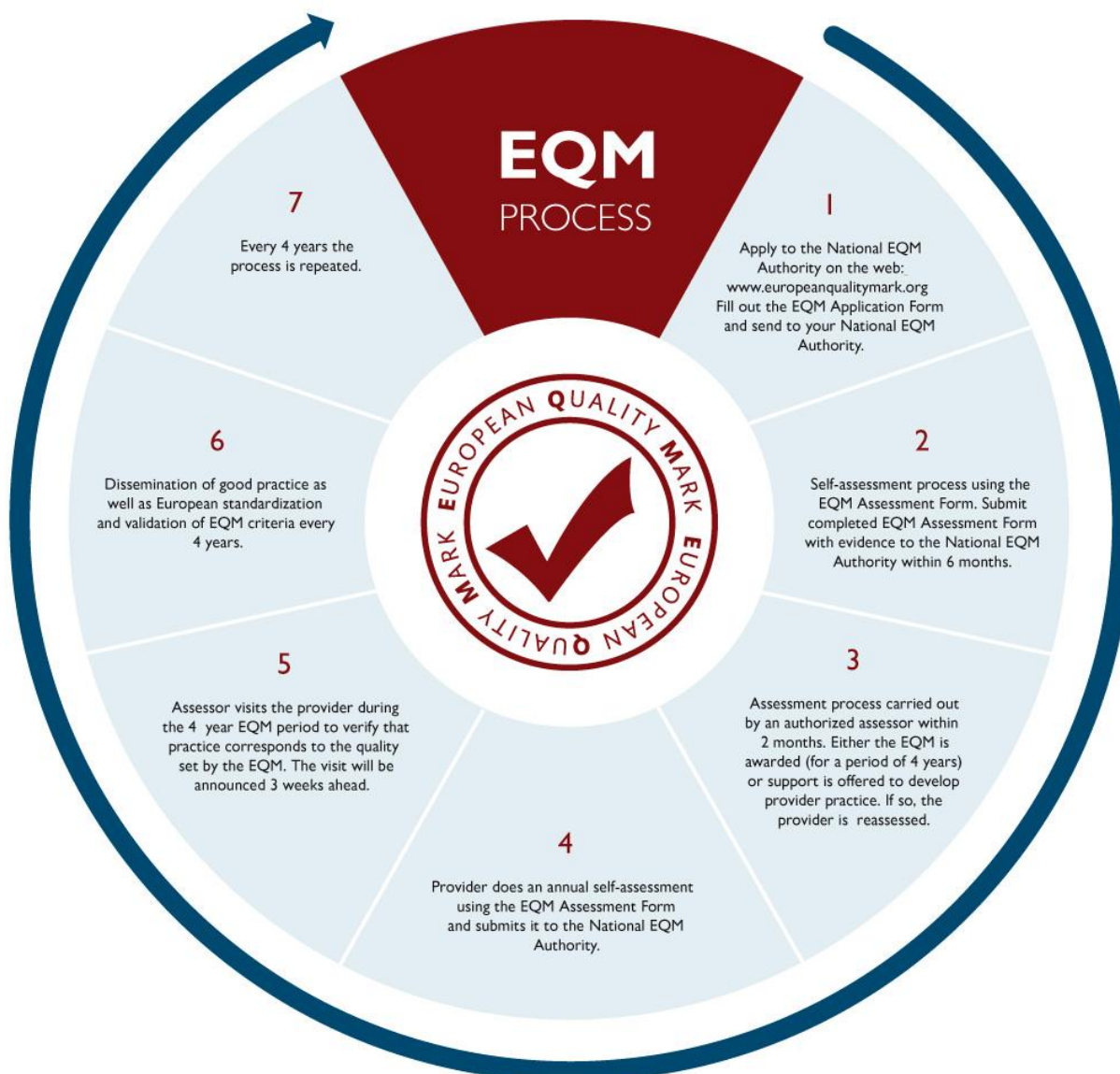


Figure 1. The EQM process.

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT THROUGH A DIALOGUE

At the core of the EQM is the self-assessment process where the learner and the learning that takes place are set in focus. As such the EQM is a developmental model for all new providers and a confirmation of good practice for experienced providers. The self-assessment process is built on a dialogue between partners, involving the management, the staff and the assessor. Therefore the EQM is an objective tool for improving the quality of the work and to implement a quality approach within the whole organisation. The EQM has been developed through the collaboration of eight partners within Europe, who share the vision that it will

continue to be a non-competitive peer review, where individuals and organisations help to build up an association of excellent learning providers aiming for better quality within the non-formal learning sector.

Applying for the EQM means completing the EQM self-assessment process including the assessment by the EQM assessor. The EQM is granted for four years and an annual self-assessment is needed to keep the EQM accreditation. As such the EQM is an ongoing assessment process where the learning provision is monitored externally and every four years it is assessed against standards agreed commonly by European parties. The EQM is

- developmental
- ongoing
- external
- objective
- impartial
- commonly agreed by European parties

The platform for the implementation of the EQM is the mutual understanding of the EQM developers that there is a need for common quality assurance of non-formal learning providers. The structure of the EQM authorities is therefore based on the idea of a democratic liaison of European parties coming together to enhance quality for the countries of Europe.

The EQM in brief

- The EQM is designed to meet the emerging requirements for learning and commonly agreed quality assurance criteria for non-formal learning providers.
- The EQM is awarded for four years.
- The EQM is based on an annual self-assessment verified by an external assessor, who is both, a judge and adviser to the provider.
- The EQM is implemented through a dialogue and a cooperation between persons involved in the EQM process: Provider-Staff-EQM Assessor (The Golden Triangle).

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EQM

The EQM is designed to help providers meet the emerging European and national requirements of quality to support funding applications for learning provision. It is appropriate for all types of non-formal learning provision, and can also be used in other kinds of learning.

The EQM is a transparent developmental tool for learning providers, where the aim is to enhance the quality within the non-formal learning sector in Europe. When implementing the EQM on a national and European level it is essential that there is a common understanding and an agreement on the establishment of this common quality mark and the methods used. The motivation to use the EQM has to be internal, where the providers see the advantages of implementing this quality consciousness and assessment process in their work.

4. THE EUROPEAN EQM AUTHORITY

The European EQM Authority is made up of representatives from each the National EQM Authorities. It meets at least once a year and will be governed by an elected board.

The roles of the European EQM Authority are to:

- Manage and maintain the standards and criteria of the EQM
- Standardise and validate the practice of the National EQM Authorities.
- Support and enhance the quality assurance of non-formal learning providers throughout Europe.
- Promote the EQM to the European Commission and throughout Europe.
- Facilitate a network between EQM approved providers at a European level.



The tasks of the European EQM Authority are to:

- Implement the EQM at a European level.
- Recognise and monitor the National EQM Authorities.
- Maintain the EQM Assessment Form and update it according to European development.
- Standardise the EQM practice.
- Develop the EQM.
- Maintain the EQM website.

Until the formal establishment of the National EQM Authorities, the institutes and organisations participating in the RECALL project function as the provisional European EQM Authority.

5. THE NATIONAL EQM AUTHORITY

The National EQM Authority is a body responsible for the maintenance of the EQM within its national boundaries and represents its country in the European EQM Authority. The National EQM Authority will always need to be sufficiently external to the providers to avoid any possible conflict of interests.

In some countries the geography or the size of the population can demand a regional structure.

Until the formal establishment of the National EQM Authorities, the institutes and organisations participating in the RECALL project function as the National EQM Authorities.

The role of the National EQM Authority is to:

- Support and enhance the quality assurance of non-formal learning providers within their country.
- Promote the EQM at a national level.
- Facilitate a network between EQM approved providers at a national level.

The tasks of the National EQM Authority are to:

- Award the EQM and the EQM certificate. Approved learning providers are entitled to use the EQM logo to promote their organisation according to guidance from the EQM National Authority.
- Train and monitor the EQM assessors.
- Deal with complaints or appeals from providers.
- Review the EQM process.
- Maintain a national EQM website as well as to contribute to the overall maintenance of the EQM website.
- Disseminate the idea and vision of the EQM.
- Ensure that the National EQM Authority's practice meets the standards of the European EQM Authority.

6. THE EQM WEBSITE

www.europeanqualitymark.org

The EQM website is a very important information/dissemination channel and the main tool in the application and assessment process. Therefore it is foreseen that documents on the EQM website will be presented in official languages of the countries represented within the European EQM Authority. As for now, documents on the website are published in the national languages of the organisation participating in the RECALL project and the development of the EQM.

The role of the EQM website is to:

- Facilitate access to documents related to the EQM.
- Disseminate the EQM.
- Provide information on the EQM process.
- Be a source of expertise and good practice.
- Be a forum for EQM approved providers to share information.

The content of the EQM website:

- General information on the EQM.
- Information about the European EQM Authority.
- Information about the National EQM Authority.
- Application form for the providers.
- The EQM Assessment Form.
- Guidelines for providers and assessors including glossary of terms.
- Examples of good practice.
- List of EQM approved providers throughout Europe.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

The content of this information source for peer mentoring are examples of good practice that will be collected from the EQM Assessment Forms filled out by the learning providers. The idea is also to build up an interactive database or a discussion forum, where learning providers can share their ideas and experiences with other providers in similar situation. This will be a discussion forum where learning providers can exchange experiences and views, raise awareness of quality and network.

To be able to fulfil those expectations, the forum will need flexible and parametric software, with the possibility of future changes in accordance with the development of the EQM. These changes include changes of questions and/or examples of answers. The forum has to be able to work with different types of documents and attachments, where it is easy to recognize the national origin of the documents and the language used within the document. Thus, the software needs to be able to divide the attachments, on a user request, by language, country of origin, file type and by question/item within the EQM Assessment Form. A clear connection between the forum on peer mentoring and the EQM Assessment Form makes it easier for the learning provider to complete the Assessment Form on her/his own, which should result in a lower cost of running the National EQM Authority.

Before the realization of this activity, there is a need to appoint the administrator of the EQM web site and the peer mentoring forum. This administrator would be responsible for the maintenance of the website and monitor the use of the forum. The forum is supposed to be user restricted to avoid any abuse of the information presented there.

7. COST OF THE EQM

The EQM meets standards in quality assurance commonly developed and agreed across Europe. The EQM supports the prospect for development as articulated in the Copenhagen Declaration and the European Qualifications Framework. It is a tool for learning providers to plan, implement, evaluate and improve their training activities. The aim of the EQM is to assist learning providers in better managing the quality of their training provision. Therefore it is foreseen that the establishment of the European EQM Authority and the National EQM Authority will be supported financially by an external body. Later it is expected that the fee structure mentioned below, will cover the cost of running the EQM and make the EQM economic sustainable.

The fees are thought to cover the cost of running the European EQM Authority as well as the National EQM Authority including the price of employing assessors for the assessment process. The size of the fees will be set according to the economic level in each European country participating in the European EQM Authority. These fees will be decided jointly by the European EQM Authority to avoid too much difference between member countries.

As demanded by projects carried out with the support of the Commission of the European Communities under the Leonardo da Vinci programme, the EQM website and all other products of the RECALL project will be accessible free of charge for two years after the termination of the project.

Application fee

When completing an application for the EQM the provider pays an application fee. Once this payment has been processed, the provider will be able to download the Assessment Form from the website and contact an assessor for guidance.

Assessment fee

When submitting the EQM Assessment Form to the National EQM Authority, the provider will have to pay the EQM assessment fee. This starts the assessment process carried out by an authorized assessor within 2 months from the submission of the EQM Assessment Form. Either the EQM is awarded or support offered to develop provider practice. If further support is needed, then reassessment will follow at an agreed time.

Annual fee

The provider will pay an annual fee to the National EQM Authority, which gives the provider access to the peer review forum as well as the possibility to seek minor guidance from the National EQM Authority. Every four year the process is repeated, and includes the payment of the EQM assessment fee.



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Commission. Neither the European Commission nor any person acting on behalf of the Commission is responsible for the information provided in this document.