

# Common Quality Framework for Social Services of General Interest

Brussels, 21 June 2010

The Common Quality Framework for Social Service of General Interest has been developed in the framework of the PROMETHEUS project which is granted by the European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity 2007-2013 (PROGRESS VP/2008/004 - Promoting quality of Social Services of General Interest), managed by the Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities of the European Commission.

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## Foreword

This document is proposed as a CEN workshop Agreement (CWA) and describes a Common Quality Framework for Social Services of General Interest (CQF for SSGI) and core criteria for quality assurance in Social Services of General Interest. This CWA is a consensus-based document and was drawn up in an open workshop environment. This CWA has been drafted and approved by a workshop of representatives of interested parties from the sector.

The document has been developed through an intensive process of consultation and collaboration involving a number of contributing partners representing a wide mix of different social services and different stakeholders at European and National level. This group consisted of service user organisations, service provider organisations, funders of social services, policy makers, quality accreditation organisations, universities and local authorities. The names of the individuals and their affiliates that have contributed to this CWA can be found attached in annex 1. The overview of CEN WS 51 participants is based on the lists of attendance of the 4 CEN workshop meetings. An overview of their contributions to the CWA and the contribution of the two public consultations are available from the CEN Secretariat

The development of the CWA was started on the 9<sup>th</sup> of February 2009 by the approval of the CEN WS 51 Business plan. The final endorsement round for this CWA was started on the 7<sup>th</sup> of June 2010 and closed on the 13<sup>th</sup> of September 2010.

The present workshop has been carried out in the framework of the Prometheus project which is supported by the European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity 2007-2013 (PROGRESS) managed by the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities of the European Commission.

Special thanks must be given to all participants who sent in their written contributions and who contributed to the debates and shared their views on quality in the social sector. The Common Quality Framework is the outcome of an intensive process which took place in an open atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding.

Brussels, 21 June 2010

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## **Executive summary**

This document presents a non-compulsory common framework for Quality in Social Services of General Interest (SSGI). The framework takes into account European, national and local quality initiatives in various social services sectors, and is the expression of communalities in quality approaches of the participants and the organisations they represent. The framework contributes to a common understanding of the nature of quality in Social Services of General Interest.

The Common Quality Framework for Social Services of General Interest (CQF for SSGI) describes a set of domains, preconditions and principles, as well as a set of key criteria that influence the quality of social services. The quality principles are operationalised into qualitative criteria that allow for quality assurance. Compliance with the principles and criteria can be demonstrated in various ways, depending on the particular legislative, cultural and socio-economic context. Therefore the CQF for SSGI intends to be flexible enough to be applied to all social services that are organised at the regional or local level of all EU member states.

The CQF does not only define quality, it also constitutes a reference framework with the aim to assess, assure, develop, evaluate and improve quality in SSGI. Moreover, it reinforces transnational aspects of mutual learning, exchange of good practices and a comparison of performance of the provision of social services in the European Member States (= benchmarking).

The framework describes all fundamental aspects of quality in social services and therefore includes the responsibilities of regulators (National, Regional and Local authorities and other stakeholders) as well as social service providers. The framework is built upon six domains which have been worked out in eight preconditions for quality and nine leading principles. The CQF model describes: the contextual aspects, organisational aspects, the aspects of process delivery and the aspects of outcomes related to quality in social services. The relationship between the domains are characterised as interdependent and expressed in a model. The domains, the preconditions, the principles for quality and the underlying criteria for quality assurance are designed to provide a framework within which service providers, funders and regulators can evaluate their performance and their contribution to the quality of the social services, as well as plan their developments. The framework also provides a frame of reference for persons served to evaluate their expectations on the delivered services. The descriptions of the quality principles and core criteria for quality assurance are based on the analysis of the written contributions of the stakeholders on quality in SSGI and the results of the debates at the CEN workshop 51.

Considering the diversity of services and variety of choices made by Member States to deal with quality assurance and development in SSGI, the core criteria for quality assurance are presented as possible answers to specific questions which are transferable to any social service or social service provider when reviewing existing policies. Although providers of some particular social services (for example emergency services, social housing etc.) might face challenges regarding the application of some specific criteria of the common quality framework, the preconditions and the quality principles will for all social services be the crucial factors in addressing quality.

## 1. Introduction

This document proposes a non-compulsory framework for Quality in Social Services of General Interest (SSGI) taking into account European, national and local initiatives on specific services. It contributes to the definition of quality in Social Services of General Interest.

The issue of quality in SSGI and being effective in addressing the needs and rights of individuals, is of concern to policy makers, funding bodies, service providers and, most crucially, the users of those services. This document considers the diversity in concepts and perspectives associated with the meaning of quality and elaborates a definition and a set of principles for quality in service planning, delivery and evaluation. The aim is to derive a common definition of quality that can be applied to all SSGI and to identify a set of core principles that promote understanding of the nature and diversity of social services and quality measurement. This process leads to a set of key criteria that influences the quality and improvement of services and contributes to the understanding of the core of service provision and delivery of SSGI.

The Common Quality Framework (CQF) for SSGI is based on the contribution of existing quality concepts and perspectives on quality. Various stakeholders contributed to the European debate on quality and described their views on quality in policy documents:

- a.** The European High Level Group on Disability identified common European Quality Principles and criteria for SSGI provided to people with a disability. (High Level Group on Disability, 2007)
- b.** The European Platform for Social NGOs identified nine 'golden principles' for Quality. (European Platform of Social NGOs, 2008)
- c.** The European Association of Service Providers to People with a Disability (EASPD) indicated a number of Quality Principles which are value-driven and adopted the concept of Quality of Life. (European Association of Service Providers to People with a Disability, 2006)
- d.** The European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR) defined nine Principles for Quality in consultation with key stakeholders in the disability sector. (European Platform for Rehabilitation, 2002)
- e.** The Council of Europe (CoE) adopted a recommendation for the development and implementation of Quality Improvement Systems (QIS) in health care (Council of Europe, 2007) and a resolution about full citizenship of persons with disabilities through inclusive new technologies, in which a number of key principles have been identified, such as availability, accessibility, affordability, adaptability, compatibility, usability, awareness, appropriateness, and attractiveness. (Council of Europe, 2001)
- f.** The European Union for Supported Employment (EUSE) defined quality as 'a degree or standard of excellence'. Based on this definition the EUSE developed a framework of guidance to support employment providers. (European Union for Supported Employment, 2005)
- g.** Inclusion Europe (IE) introduced a philosophy about quality evaluation where the users and their advocates play central roles. (Inclusion Europe, 2003)
- h.** The Federal Association of non-statutory Welfare (BAGFW) defined quality as standard requirements specific to welfare work. These standards are designed to be characteristic of quality management within professional social service organisations. (Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft für der Freien Wohlfahrtspflege, 2008)

- i. The European Federation of National Organisations working with Homeless People (FEANTSA) described its view on quality in homeless services with the Donabedian conceptual model of quality. (FEANTSA, 2009)

The CQF for SSGI intends to be flexible enough to be applied to the national context of all EU member states, and to overcome legal, socio-economic and cultural differences in the various countries. Moreover, the CQF should ensure that a European concept of quality can be flexible, compatible with and complementary to existing national quality systems in the sector, and can be applied to services that are organised at the local or regional level. This will be achieved by defining quality principles which are operationalised into qualitative criteria for quality assurance. Compliance with the principles and criteria for quality assurance can be demonstrated in various ways, depending on the particular context.

The CQF has been defined within a CEN Workshop carried out in the framework of the Prometheus project. As such, the CQF is a result of the project. This project is supported by the European Community Program for Employment and Social Solidarity 2007-2013 (PROGRESS) managed by the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities of the European Commission.

The Prometheus project has been selected for financing together with seven other projects, following a Call for Proposals (VP/2008/004 - Promoting quality of Social Services of General Interest) which aimed to support bottom-up initiatives having a trans-national character and develop mechanisms for the definition, measurement, assessment and improvement of quality of social services of general interest. This Call for Proposals is part of a larger Commission strategy for supporting the quality of social services across the EU, announced in the Commission Communication "*Services of general interest, including social services of general interest: a new European commitment*" (COM(2007) 725) which also encompasses (i) the development, within the Social Protection Committee, of an EU voluntary Quality Framework providing guidelines on the methodology to set, monitor and evaluate quality standards for social services and (ii) the financing of training initiatives of local public authorities on the application of Community rules to SSGI, aimed notably at ensuring that quality concerns can be fully reflected in cases of outsourcing of social services.

Neither the Commission strategy as such nor, more specifically, the present document aim to develop European standards on social services. The contents of the CQF do not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission.

The PROMETHEUS project addresses the various aspects of quality: definition of quality (Quality framework and criteria), measurement (indicators), assessment (processes, procedures for [self]-assessment), and improvement of quality of SSGI (development of action plans for improvement of quality).

## 2. Scope

In order to be able to work and agree on a CQF and meaningful quality criteria of SSGI, it is necessary to have a common understanding of the basic nature and principal objectives of these kinds of services, regardless of the nature of the social service provider, their different forms and variety of user groups.

Social Services of General Interest are a particular manifestation of the relationship between society and its members, concentrating on the social needs of individuals and specific groups. SSGIs fulfil a public mission operating on the basis of inclusion, participation and well-being in society through the full recognition of the guiding principle of human dignity. They aim to implement fundamental social, economic and participatory rights of the person on the basis of the concepts of equality, equal opportunities and social justice. They intend to enable citizens to exercise their rights. SSGI are a concrete form of societal solidarity and contribute substantially to social cohesion and implementation of the values of European society.<sup>1</sup>

The European Commission<sup>2</sup> identified two main categories of SSGI:

1. Statutory and complementary social security schemes, organised in various ways (mutual or occupational organisations), covering the main risks of life, such as those linked to health, ageing, occupational accidents, unemployment, retirement and disability;
2. Other essential services provided directly to the person. These services that play a preventive and social cohesion role consist of customised assistance to facilitate social inclusion and safeguard fundamental rights. According to the European Commission [Commission implies that there are no separate categories as it says explicitly that services can "include the 4 dimensions"], these services encompass:
  - a. assistance for persons facing personal challenges or crises (such as debt, unemployment, drug addiction or family breakdown).
  - b. activities that ensure that the persons concerned are able to completely reintegrate into society (rehabilitation, language training for immigrants) and, in particular, the labour market (occupational training). These services complement and support the role of families in caring for the youngest and oldest members of society in particular.
  - c. activities to integrate persons with disabilities or long-term health problems.
  - d. social housing, providing housing for disadvantaged citizens or less socially-advantaged groups.

The Commission Communication recalled that EU Member States have the responsibility to define which services are identified as services of general interest. Education and training, although they are services of General Interest, are not covered in the Communication of the European Commission.

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<sup>1</sup> Integrated Social Services in Europe, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg 2007

<sup>2</sup> See : Commission Communication "*Implementing the Community Lisbon programme: Social Services of General Interest in the European Union*" {SEC(2006) 516}

A 'paradigm shift' in attitude and approach towards the role and position of service users in SSGI can be identified. In this new attitude and approach, service users of SSGI have not been viewed as 'objects' of charity, medical treatment, caretaking and social protection. Rather they are considered and viewed as persons with rights who are able to (or should be supported to) claim those rights and make decisions in their lives based on free and informed consent as well as being active members of society. The new attitude and approach to service users is expressed in human rights conventions and declarations<sup>3</sup> and has substantial consequences for quality concepts used in the provision of social services: the recognition of persons served in making choices and having control over their own life.

#### **a. Policy context**

The Lisbon Treaty and its specific Protocol on Services of General Interest (SGI) reminds us that SGI, including social SGI, occupy a special place in the shared value of the European Union. The Protocol confirms the "*essential role and wide discretion of national, regional and local authorities in providing, commissioning and organising services of general economic interest as closely as possible to the needs of the users*". The need for a high level of quality of those services is also recognised in the Protocol.

After a specific SSGI Commission Communication in 2006, another Commission Communication adopted in November 2007 (COM 2007-72), identified objectives and principles of the organisation of social services, provided guidelines on the application of Community rules to SSGI and proposed a strategy to support the quality of social services across the European Union

The objectives and principles of the organisation of social services identified in the 2007 Communication are the following:

Social services are often meant to achieve a number of specific aims:

- they are person-oriented services, designed to respond to vital human needs, in particular the needs of users in vulnerable positions; they provide protection from general as well as specific risks of life and assist in personal challenges or crises; they are also provided to families in a context of changing family patterns, support their role in caring for both young and old family members, as well as for people with disabilities, and compensate possible failings within the families; they are key instruments for the safeguarding of fundamental human rights and human dignity;
- they play a preventive and socially cohesive role, which is addressed to the whole population, independent of wealth or income;
- they contribute to non-discrimination, to gender equality, to human health protection, to improving living standards and quality of life and to ensuring the

<sup>3</sup> The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol, New York, 2006  
The European Social Charter (revised), Strasbourg, 1996  
The European Charter on Rights and Freedom of older persons in Residential Care, Maastricht, 1993.

creation of equal opportunities for all, therefore enhancing the capacity of individuals to fully participate within society.

These aims are reflected in the ways in which these services are organised, delivered and financed:

- in order to address the multiple needs of people as individuals, social services must be comprehensive and personalised, conceived and delivered in an integrated manner;
- they often involve a personal relationship between the recipient and the service provider;
- the definition and delivery of a service must take into account the diversity of users;
- when responding to the needs of vulnerable users, social services are often characterised by an asymmetric relationship between providers and beneficiaries which is different from a commercial supplier / consumer relationship;
- as these services are often rooted in (local) cultural traditions, tailor-made solutions taking into account the particularities of the local situation are chosen, guaranteeing proximity between the service provider and the user while ensuring equal access to services across the territory;
- service providers often need a large autonomy to address the variety and the evolving nature of social needs;
- these services are generally driven by the principle of solidarity and are highly dependent on public financing, so as to ensure equality of access, independent of wealth or income;
- non-profit providers as well as voluntary workers often play an important role in the delivery of social services, thereby expressing citizenship capacity and contributing to social inclusion, the social cohesion of local communities and to intergenerational solidarity.

As for the application of EU rules to SSGI, it must be noted that, whilst the organisation and financing of social services is the Member States' competence, such competence has to be performed in conformity with the applicable EU rules. In particular, insofar as social services are economic activities according to the jurisprudence of the European Court of Justice, they come under the scope of EU rules on State aid and internal market. Since public authorities and service providers active in the social field experience difficulties in understanding and applying such rules and asked for clarification of the legal framework, the Commission committed in the 2007 Communication to clarify the legal framework applicable to these services and to provide more practical guidance and support to interested parties. The two FAQ documents which accompany the Communication and answer a series of questions

relating to the application of State aid and public procurement rules, are a first expression of this commitment, together with the setting up of an interactive information service (IIS)<sup>4</sup> in January 2008. Moreover, as mentioned above, the Commission is launching training initiatives for local public authorities.

As for the Commission strategy supporting the quality of social services across the EU, the Commission will notably support, as mentioned above, the development, within the Social Protection Committee, of a voluntary European Quality Framework providing guidelines on the methodology to set, monitor and evaluate quality criteria. The work in this area has already started, in line with the 2009 work programme of the Social Protection Committee.

At the European level there are no mandatory standards for SSGI, and taking into account the principles of subsidiary and the diversity of Europe, this CEN Workshop Agreement does not advocate for such standards but rather a common understanding of quality in the social sector by identifying agreed quality principles and criteria. In the contribution to the European debate on quality in the social sector, some organisations in the social sector emphasised the importance of and need for a European Quality Framework and criteria for quality assurance.

## **b. Rationale**

The CQF constitutes a reference framework with the aim to assure, improve, develop and evaluate quality in SSGI. The framework describes and includes all fundamental aspects for quality in social services and therefore indicates the responsibilities of regulators (National, regional and local authorities and other stakeholders) as well as social service providers. The framework is built on the 6 Domains and Key Principles for Quality which are derived from a consultation process by a number of key stakeholders (European and National) in the social sector. The CQF may be considered as a *cross-cutting instrument* that can help policy makers, service providers, practitioners and service users to get a better insight into the demands for quality assurance in SSGI, to identify areas of provision that need improvement, and to take decisions on how to improve them based on a common reference. The CQF for SSGI also allows for capturing and classifying best practice within and across Member States.

The CQF can be applied at both the system and service provider levels and can therefore be used to assess the effectiveness of SSGI. It emphasises in particular the improvement and evaluation of the 'inputs', 'outputs' and 'outcomes' of SSGI in terms of increasing social cohesion, improving social inclusion, participation and exercising human rights of services users, and promoting better access to social services, in particular for disadvantaged people. The CQF aims to increase the effectiveness, transparency and mutual trust in SSGI services, within and across countries.

Quality assurance and quality development are continuous processes. The CQF itself is not an exception. The CQF is based on the expectations and demands of the stakeholders and has been developed via a process of consulting stakeholders (European and National level) on a voluntary basis through a CEN workshop programme. The CQF must be evaluated regularly in particular contexts and in comparison with existing quality approaches through

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<sup>4</sup> The IIS is a web service which provides answers to citizens, public authorities and service providers regarding the application of Community rules.

the assessment of practical initiatives undertaken in different settings, while keeping its main feature of 'context independence'. This is a delicate exercise where feedback plays a key role in reviewing the common references (principles and quality criteria) of the framework, thereby improving its European added-value. The CQF does not intend to promote the development of prescriptive standards for SSGI.

The CQF model is designed to:

- i. facilitate planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and review of quality in social services and quality systems by all sectoral stakeholders at all appropriate levels in the EU Member States.
- ii. reinforce transnational aspects of mutual learning, exchange of good practices and a comparison of performance of the provision social services in the European member states (= bench marking)

It comprises: A set of reference criteria for Quality Assurance, including users' rights to exercise participation, control and complaints along with a set of tools to facilitate quality improvement actions.

The European definition of 'quality in social services' expressed in the CQF model is a flexible definition which can be applied to the national context of all European member states and therefore overcomes legal and socio-economic differences and differences in the participation of service users in a given culture. The CQF model and the non-prescriptive approach also contributes to the promotion and acceptance of tolerance, diversity, rights and values. Moreover, the CQF ensures a European concept of quality which will be compatible and complementary with existing national quality approaches in the sector, and can be applied to social services that are organised at the regional or local level. Compliance with the principles and criteria can be demonstrated in various ways, depending on the particular context.

The CQF could be used in national quality systems, or by the EU member states in describing their expectations towards quality in SSGI or to guide service providers to strengthen their internal quality management systems. Such a process should involve all relevant stakeholders, particularly providers and users, both directly and via their representative organisations.

### **3. The CQF model**

The CQF provides a model in relation to contextual aspects, organisational aspects, process of service delivery and outcomes.

#### **a. Contextual aspects**

Contextual aspects relate to the legislative, physical and organisational context in which social service providers work. The contextual aspects are considered to have a direct effect on quality because they increase or decrease the probability of good performance. They are preconditions for quality. The preconditions are essential for achieving quality in social services.

Contextual aspects address the responsibilities of national and public authorities towards social problems in society, directly or as a facilitator / enabler. SSGI are considered to be services for all persons. Especially for the most vulnerable citizens, quality of social services is an opportunity to exercise their human rights and to contribute to their social inclusion.

The preconditions are considered as essential measures for achieving quality in social services and the extent to which the preconditions are met will define to a great extent, and in some cases to some extent, the level of the quality of the services that can be provided. Regulators and service providers have their own specific and shared responsibilities toward the quality of social services. Fulfilling the preconditions is the responsibility of the public authorities and those who are responsible for creating the context (e.g financial resources, legislation) in which social service providers operate.

Meeting the criteria for quality assurance of the CQF is the responsibility for those who deliver the service: the service provider and the professionals, taking into account how the preconditions have been met.

#### **b. Organisational aspects**

Organisational aspects relate to characteristics of the service providers, and to the tools and resources they have at their disposal for governance of the services. It includes the human, physical and organisational competences that are needed for service delivery. The organisational aspects are considered as a direct measure for quality because they have a direct effect on the performance of the service provider from a managerial perspective.

#### **c. Process of service delivery aspects**

Evaluating the process of service delivery is essential to evaluate quality. It refers to the relationship between the provider and user and the consequence this has on the situation and quality of life of service users. This relationship is determined by interpersonal behaviour. Knowledge regarding the process of delivery of the social service may give information about the key factors that influence the outcomes. It may also provide information if services should be improved or adjusted. Knowledge of the process is also an important criteria for the co-ordination and/or the organisation of service delivery.

#### **d. Outcomes**

Outcomes are the tangible results of the actions undertaken to improve the service user's current and future situation. The overall quality of life of the person served or client satisfaction as well as the capacity of the services to respond objectively to users are considered as a key outcome in evaluating and monitoring social services.

This includes the following interrelated aspects and domains:

Aspects	Domains	Quality principles	Preconditions
Contextual	Preconditions for service delivery		1. Supportive social policy framework
			2. Rights based approach
			3. Legislative framework
			4. Sustainable funding
			5. Stakeholder dialogue
			6. Affordability
			7. Accessibility
			8. Availability
			<b>Quality criteria</b>
Organisational	Requirements for the service provider	Good governance	a. Good management
			b. Accountability and transparency
			c. Annual planning
			d. Collection of feedback
			e. Systematic Quality Improvement
			f. Confidentiality
		Partnership	a. Partnership
Service delivery process	Needs of Persons served	Rights	a. Charter of Rights
			b. Non-discrimination
			c. Complaint management
			d. Freedom of choice
			e. Self-determination
			f. Access to advocate – support person
		Participation	a. Information
			b. Persons served actively involved in decision-making & evaluation
			a. Empowerment of persons served
Requirements for staff	Competence of staff	a. Skilled professionals	
		b. Working conditions	
		c. Training and development of staff	
		d. Staff levels and staff ratio	

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			e. Volunteers
		Ethics	a. Respect to human dignity
			b. Ethical code for professionals
	Requirements for the service	Person-centeredness	c. Ensuring safety and security
			a. Tailor-made services
			b. Proximity
		Comprehensiveness	c. Affordability
			a. Holistic approach
			b. Promotion of quality of life
			c. Seamless provision of services
Benefits and outcomes	Benefits and service results	Result orientation	d. Access to multi-disciplinary supports and services
			a. Benefits for service users
			b. Records of outcomes
			c. Reviewing results
			d. Transparency of results

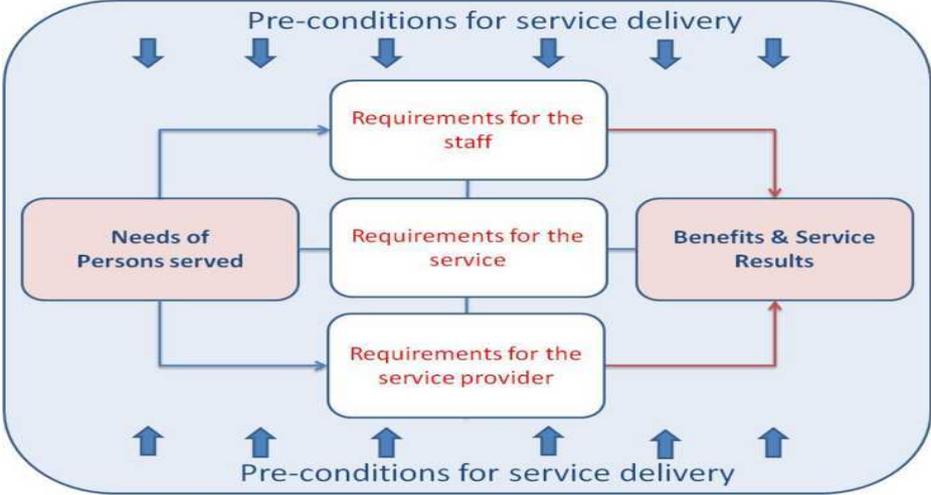


Figure 1: Common Quality Framework for Social Services of General Interest

The relationship between the identified domains for quality in SSGI is illustrated in figure 1 above. The relationship between the domains and the principles for quality is characterised as interdependent and should not be viewed or evaluated isolated from the framework. The figure illustrates a process that links the **needs of persons served** to those who have **responsibilities** in providing the service to the person (service providers and staff) and **characteristics** of the provided service itself, with the aim of creating appropriate **outcomes and benefits for the person served**. The needs of persons served in the provision of services are reflected in the principles: Rights and Participation. The shared responsibilities of the regulators of SSGI for creating and facilitating a context in which quality services can be delivered are expressed by the blue arrows: the preconditions for service delivery.

The framework is designed as a process and contains the basic elements of a process: input, throughput, output. Since the service provider requirements include a mechanism for systematic continuous improvement, the framework also reflects the cycle of continuous quality improvement.

The domains, the principles for quality and the underlying criteria for quality assurance are designed to provide a framework within which service providers, funders and regulators can evaluate their performance and their contribution to the quality of the social services, as well as plan their developments. The framework also provides a frame of reference for persons served to evaluate their expectations on the delivered services.

Based on the identified quality principles of the CQF, core criteria for quality assurance have been identified. Considering the diversity of services and the variety of choices made by member states to deal with quality assurance and development in SSGI, the core criteria are presented as possible answers to specific questions which are transferable to any social service or social service provider when reviewing existing policies.

The descriptions of the quality principles and core criteria for quality assurance are based on the analysis of the written contributions of the stakeholders on quality in SSGI and the results of the debates at the CEN Workshop 51.

## **Domain 1: Preconditions for service delivery**

Public authorities, regulators, funders and the social service providers have their specific responsibilities in creating the context: an environment where quality can be delivered by social service providers. The responsibilities are very much related to each other and the social service provider often does not always have direct influence on contextual elements. This is one of the reasons to consider the contextual elements as 'preconditions' rather than as direct quality criteria that need to be achieved and directly influenced by social service providers. In many cases the preconditions of quality will be related to each other and therefore interdependent.

Quality of service is not solely dependent on the organisation of services or the nature of the provider (public body / NGO / commercial provider, for-profit / not-for-profit). Quality of services should include the choice of the individual user, the availability and affordability of services and a rights-based approach.

When assuming that the choice of the individual user is considered as an important condition for quality, it has consequences for the creation of the context in which social service providers operate. 'Having a choice' implies that at least more attractive and adequate service and/or options for receiving services are available and that sufficient funding is available for multiple providers to operate different types of services of different nature. If 'having a choice' is taken seriously by the policy makers, service providers and funders, all stakeholders have a responsibility to contribute to the creation of an environment where individual choices are possible and respected; an environment in which a high level of information of alternatives and variation of services is available.

When considering the issue of quality of social services for service users, it is necessary to ensure the safety of the service for the user and flexibility of the service itself. The applicability of the framework to a wide variety of social services is essential, as services are so diverse and the quality of a social service may depend on traditions. Monitoring social services also contributes to the process of quality assurance. Nevertheless, human rights and the respect of the inherent dignity of the person must always be at the core of the organisation and the provision of the social services.

The identified preconditions for quality are:

### **1. Supportive social policy framework**

Effective European and National (regional and local) policies, based on a thorough understanding of the social problem by using quantitative and qualitative evidence, should encourage and support the delivery of social services which combat social problems and contribute to the implementation of human rights. Social services providers that operate in a policy vacuum may not be able to provide adequate quality in social services. Solid understanding of the social problem - its changing scope and nature - and evidence-based policies are considered as a fundamental precondition for providing high quality services. The public responsibility and public funding will often come quite naturally with better understanding of the social problem.

## **2. Legislative framework**

The relevant authorities at the national, regional and European level must ensure a legislative framework that underpins the social policy - including social objectives - division of responsibilities enshrined in law. The legislative framework should also take into account the specificities of the SSGI and preventing a negative impact on universal access to quality services of a cross border 'market' and an increasingly competitive environment in the social service sector. The legislation must be clearly understandable and the comprehensive stable legal frameworks should emphasise and encourage user involvement, (including through their representative organisations), empowerment, choice and full citizenship; a holistic approach and space for innovation and improvement.

## **3. Sustainable funding**

Sufficient financial resources are considered as a precondition for the provision of adequate quality. A lack of financial resources will put pressure on the delivery of quality social services. Sustainable funding should be in line with the overall objectives of social services, allowing the service provider to provide social services within the required infrastructure. Sustainable funding is also necessary to ensure that the provision of social services is continuous and to avoid the negative impacts on the user of disruption in care.

## **4. Stakeholder dialogue**

The way stakeholders and actors in the social sector cooperate and communicate with each other influences the environment in which social service providers operate. An environment where stakeholders formalised the communication and cooperation in bureaucratic rules and regulations may limit the opportunities for the person served, the service provider and the staff to meet specific quality requirements. A non-cooperative environment hinders the provision of quality social services. Cooperation needs to be flexible in order for the service provider and the staff to meet specific quality requirements and to ensure maximum opportunities for the person served.

## **5. Affordability**

In many cases, SSGIs are not provided within a "normal" supplier/consumer relationship. Those users with the least financial means often have the most need, and life risks such as unemployment are often structural rather than individual. In many cases SSGI are considered as a way of protecting human rights. Therefore it is essential to ensure that social and health services are provided on the basis of solidarity, regulated by public authorities, as opposed to within a pure market, which would not guarantee access to services for all: everyone should have the right of access to quality social services. Where services are provided for remuneration they must be affordable to all.

## **6. Accessibility**

Accessibility relates to the location and administration of services, the physical set up as well as clear and easily available information about the service. The responsible authority, in partnership with the social service provider, must ensure that services are accessible to all people who may require the services. They should actively tackle existing barriers that prevent persons from engaging with the services. They should facilitate the accessibility of social services for the user by providing opportunities to ensure that everyone is able to

access these social services because of location, that social services are physically accessible to all users including persons with a disability and that information about the social services is accessible to all users including the provision of alternative services .

## **7. Availability**

Access to a wide range of social services should be facilitated and the provision of extensive information should be insured in order to allow choice and an appropriate response to needs. Opportunities for training members of the workforce and support systems are also essential to ensure necessary services can be provided.

## **Domain 2: Requirements for service providers**

### **1. Good Governance**

Description: Organisations providing social services are managed in a transparent, effective, and structured manner and are accountable in relation to organisational performance. They communicate effectively, provide easily accessible and understandable information to users, define functions and responsibilities, provide independent complaint procedures and comply with European, National, Regional, and local legislation and regulations.

Core criteria for quality assurance:

#### **a. Good management**

- i. The social service provider clarifies the contributions and interrelations of those who manage, design, deliver, support and evaluate the provision of the service.
- ii. The social service provider records outcomes of individual service plans and continuous evaluation of the appreciation of the service by the persons served.
- iii. The social service providers demonstrate proactive provision of information to person served.

#### **b. Accountability and transparency**

- i. The social service provider has mechanisms in place for carrying out periodic and independent reviews of its financial and non-financial results including participatory review mechanisms, and makes relevant information available publicly.

#### **c. Annual planning**

- i. The social service provider establishes and documents an 'annual planning' and review process.

#### **d. Collection of feedback**

- i. The social service provider has mechanisms in place for collecting independent feedback from persons served, funders and other relevant stakeholders concerning the provided services and for reporting the potential impact of the feedback.

**e. Systematic Quality Improvement**

- i. The social service provider has mechanisms in place for systematic continuous improvement.

**f. Confidentiality**

- i. The social service provider has mechanisms in place for defining, documenting, monitoring and evaluating procedures for assuring confidentiality of data regarding the persons served and the service provided to them.

**2. Partnership**

Description: Organisations providing social services are proactive in creating partnerships to enhance social structures through the engagement of society and contribute to the development of an inclusive society through the removal and prevention of barriers to access of its services. Social services are responsive to local needs and local conditions and provided in partnership with communities and other public and private actors who ensure the delivery of local services.

Core criteria for quality assurance:

**a. Partnership**

- i. The social service provider operates in partnership with persons served, either individually or through their representative organisations as appropriate, funding bodies, policy makers, other relevant stakeholders and other actors in the community in identifying needs, planning, research, development, the service delivery (specialised and mainstream), monitoring and evaluation and in ensuring that the service contributes to an inclusive society.

**Domain 3: Needs of the person served**

**1. Rights**

Description: Organisations providing social services respect international human right conventions by promoting and implementing the rights of the person served in terms of equal opportunities, equal treatment, equal participation, freedom of choice, self-determination, and control of their own life.

Core criteria for quality assurance:

**a. Charter of Rights**

- i. The social service provider assures the rights of the person served as outlined in a document easily accessible to all users, their relatives and organisations representing them which is based on international human rights conventions<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> The European Convention on Human Rights, the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the European Social Charter (revised) of the Council of Europe and other international Human Rights Convention.

**b. Non-discrimination**

- i. The person served receives services based on equal opportunities which are provided free of discrimination on all grounds<sup>6</sup>.

**c. Complaint management**

- i. The social service provider has a user-friendly complaint management mechanism based on independent complaint procedures that registers and manages complaints and feedback on performance from the persons served, purchasers and all other relevant stakeholders.

**d. Freedom of choice**

- i. The social service provider facilitates the person served with a fair choice of services along with a choice of how those services are delivered to the individual.

**e. Self-determination**

- i. The social service provider respects the fundamental right to self-determination of the person served.<sup>7</sup> They freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

**f. Access to advocate – support person**

- i. The social service provider facilitates the person served in choosing and having access to advocates<sup>8</sup> and/or supporting persons.

**2. Participation of person served**

Description: Organisations providing social service are committed to the participation and empowerment of the persons served to make decisions, by involving them in defining their personal needs and capacities. They involve persons served and organisations representing service users as active members in the decision making process, in the provision and evaluation of services

Core criteria for quality assurance:

**a. Information**

- i. The social service provider provides comprehensive information of the range of services available, their objectives, their function and quality assessment, as well as providing information regarding users' involvement.

**b. Person served is actively involved in decision-making and evaluation**

- i. The social service provider has participatory planning and appraisal mechanisms in place for users as part of an on-going structured stakeholder dialogue process in the management of the service, including the definition of the needs and services, as well as of the evaluation of quality.

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<sup>6</sup> The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union in art 21.

<sup>7</sup> Article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (UN)

<sup>8</sup> Advocates may be individuals and/or service user groups

ii. The social service provider facilitates through comprehensive information and effective, transparent processes, the inclusion of the person served as an active participant in the design, the development, the decision, the planning and the independent review of the services and of the service systems.

**c. Empowerment of person served**

i. The social service provider operates specific instruments for the service user to improve his / her personal empowerment and personal situation and that of the community, including mechanisms for establishing an empowering environment. The instruments should facilitate the user's independence and self-determination as far as possible.

**Domain 4: Requirements for staff**

**1. Competences of staff<sup>9</sup>**

Description: Organisations providing social services offer quality services provided by skilled and competent professionals working under approved employment and working conditions. They are committed to staff / volunteer development and learning for the benefits of the person served and of other stakeholders.

Core criteria for quality assurance:

**a. Skilled professionals**

ii. Staff are recruited based on a recruitment and retention policy that promotes the selection of qualified personnel with required knowledge, skills and competences.

**b. Working conditions**

i. The social service provider adheres to the applicable legislative framework and ensures decent equal pay for equal work and decent working conditions.

**c. Training and development of staff**

i. Staff members are trained appropriately in the understanding of the characteristics of the populations they serve and in respecting human rights.

ii. Competences, skills and support of staff members are identified, determined and evaluated.

**d. Staff levels and staff ratio**

i. The service provider operates the social services on the basis of relevant, adequate and agreed staff levels and staff ratio (number of person served / number of staff).

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<sup>9</sup> Volunteers are considered to be covered by the word 'Staff'.

**e. Volunteers**

- i. Volunteering is welcomed, promoted and valued. Volunteers are given the training necessary to ensure they can carry out their tasks and have appropriate supervision. The ethical code for professionals also applies to volunteers.

**2. Ethics**

Description: Organisations providing social services commit themselves to their ethical values, respect the dignity of the persons served and their families or carers, protect them from exploitation and abuse while respecting their physical and mental integrity, and specify the ethical practices for professionals and volunteers within the organisation.

Core Criteria for quality assurance:

**a. Respect to human dignity**

- i. The social service provider defines and monitors its policy on ethics that respects and assures the dignity of the person served, their family and caretakers, as well as protecting them from abuse while promoting social justice.

**b. Ethical code for professionals**

- i. Behaviour of staff is governed by a set of principles and values that contains aspects of confidentiality, accuracy, privacy, integrity as well as respecting the rights of the person served.

**c. Ensuring safety and security**

- i. The social service provider operates mechanisms which prevent the physical, mental and financial abuse of users.
- ii. The social service provider provides services in a safe way within a safe environment to ensure the physical security of persons served, their families and caretakers.

**Domain 5: Requirements for services**

**1. Person-centred**

Description: Organisations providing social services offer services consistent with the individual needs of the person served to improve their quality of life. They promote equality of opportunities and are affordable and available to persons served.

Core criteria for quality assurance:

**a. Tailor-made services<sup>10</sup>**

- i. Social services offered as a range of services are coordinated and consistent with individual needs assessment, so they meet the multiple needs of the person served, the needs of related beneficiaries and the objectives of the service.

**b. Proximity**

- i. Social services are offered at the location that is most beneficial for the person served, family and caretakers, thus aiming for the (re)integration of the person served into society.

**c. Affordability**

- i. Social services are offered at prices that are affordable for the person who needs the services.

**2. Comprehensiveness**

Description: Organisations providing social services offer services which are holistic and seamless, assure continuity by achieving consistency between different services, and promote the quality of life of the person served avoiding the negative impact of disruption of services.

Core criteria for quality assurance:

**a. Holistic approach**

- i. Social services are based on a holistic approach which reflects the needs, expectations and capacities of the person served and which aim to improve the well-being of the person served.

**b. Promotion of quality of life**

- i. Social services enhance 'Quality of Life' for the person served.

**c. Seamless provision of services**

- i. Social services are coordinated by integration and/or by collaboration among the different service providers (centres or establishments) and they are pro-active in the reduction of barriers to access these services.
- ii. The social service provider invests in offering continuous and sustainable services.

**d. Access to multi-disciplinary supports and services**

- i. The service providers facilitates access to multidisciplinary services and support which meets the needs and demands of the persons served.

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<sup>10</sup> Tailor-made should be understood as: services based on the needs of a person. Tailor-made services can be offered to a group of persons with the same need. In emergency service there is also a very quick judgments (=assessment) on what is needed and appropriated to deliver to a person. In many cases this is carried out by a professional and in a split of a second.

## **Domain 6: Benefits and service results**

### **1. Result orientation**

Description: Organisations providing social services offer services that achieve results by focusing on the benefits for the persons served and other relevant stakeholders. They report their achievements to stakeholders and society.

Core criteria for quality assurance:

#### **a. Benefits for service users**

- i. The social service provider evaluates the impact of its services on the quality of life of the service user.
- ii. The social service provider registers outcomes and benefits for the person served of the received services.

#### **b. Records of outcomes**

- i. The social service provider supplies accessible and easily understandable records on outcome, including personal perception and achievements, while ensuring protection of privacy and personal data.

#### **c. Reviewing results**

- i. The social service provider carries out regular independent reviews of systems and procedures to achieve the targeted results.

#### **d. Transparency of results**

- i. Relevant financial and non-financial results are accessible by persons served, funders and other relevant stakeholders.
- ii. The social service provider reviews the personal responsibility of all people involved in the service provision for achieved results.

Annex 1: Overview of CEN Workshop participants (CEN WS 51)

The CEN Workshop Participants are listed in alphabetic order based on the organisations they represent.

Parent	Anne Sophie	AGE Platform Europe (AGE)
Endel	Gottfried	Association of Austrian Social Insurance Institutions (HVB)
Tiburcy	Ulrich	BAGFX EU
Roca	Maria	C. Valencia (Spain)
Sorzano	Maria	C. Valencia (Spain)
de Bucquois	Patrick	Caritas
Gheorghe	Andrea	Casa Iona (Romania)
Tilling	Ian	Casa Iona (Romania)
Gulacsi	Andreea	CEN-CENELEC Management Centre
le Gall	Gaid	CEN-CENELEC Management Centre
Alder	Jan	Center for Akkreditering og Kvalitetsudvikling (CAKU)
Kokholm	Trine	Center for Akkreditering og Kvalitetsudvikling (CAKU)
Schepfer	Jean-Claude	Centre de Réadaptation de Mulhouse (CRM)
Craddock	Gerald	Centre for Excellence
Hubbard	James	Centre for Excellence
Rihlo	Antonio	Centro de Reabilitação Profissional de Gaia (CRPG)
Siegel	Norbert	Deutsches Institut für Normung DIN (Germany) (Secretariat)
Scholz	Stephanie	Diakonisches Werk
Jensen	Karl-Wiggo	Durapart AS (Norway)
Cultrera	Concetta	DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities of the EC (Observer)
Placencia	Immaculada	DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities of the EC (Observer)
Calderon	Sandra	EU Red Cross
Jones	Laura	Eurodiaconia
Roy	Heather	Eurodiaconia
Fazi	Elodie	European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN)
Gomez	Gengoux	European Association for the Co-ordination of Consumer Representation in Standardisation (IASBL)
Zelderloo	Luk	European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD)
Andersen	Ask	European Disability Forum (EDF)
Goosens	Tamara	European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU)

Gosme	Liz	European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless ( FEANTSA)
Spinnewijn	Freek	European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless ( FEANTSA)
Jarre	Dirk	European Federation of Older Persons (EURAG)
Garel	Pascal	European Hospital and Healthcare Federation (HOPE)
Curtopassi	Elena	European Network of Social Authorities (ENSA)
Kukuckova	Jana	European Plaform for Rehabilitation (EPR)
Spooren	Jan	European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR) (Vice Chairman)
Buttier	Julie	European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR)
Giarratano	Simona	European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR)
Brown	Eleanor	European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR)
van Beek	Guus	European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR) (Chairman)
Colligan	Pauleen	European Platform of Social NGOs
Di Puppo	Roshan	European Platform of Social NGOs
Caimi	Valentina	European Platform of Social NGOs
Schulz-.W.	Wolfgang	European Social Insurance Platform (ESIP)
Wolfe	Ilka	European Social Insurance Platform (ESIP)
Schlender	Christina	German Association of Towns and Municipalities
Schröder	Christina	German Association of Towns and Municipalities
de Reuver	Jane	Heliomare (the Netherlands)
Simon	Mathieu	Ile de France Europe
Chotard	Fançoise	Ile de France Europe (France)
Delepaut	Rafaella	Ile de France Europe (France)
Word	Kartina	Inclusion Europe
Henke	Winfried	Josefsheim gGmbH (Germany)
Künemund	Martin	Josefsheim gGmbH (Germany)
Haukom Apeland	Helene	Kompetanseutvikling Grenland AS (GREP)
Thunes	Ester	Kompetanseutvikling Grenland AS (GREP)
Cat. Nilsen	Annette	Kompetanseutvikling Grenland AS (GREP)
Spangelo	Elisabeth	Kompetanseutvikling Grenland AS (GREP)
Havenstrom J.	Gro	Kompetanseutvikling Grenland AS (GREP)
Agapitou	Adriana	Municipality of Alimos (Greece)
Manetou	Maria	Municipality of Alimos (Greece)
Malinge	Philppe	Nantes Metropole
Guaveia	Valeria	Nord Pas de Calais (France)
Stergiou	Georgios	Regio Europa

Goumas	Athanasios	Regio Europa
Crowley	Michael	REHAB (Ireland)
Mazzone	Chiara	Représentation de la Région Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur
Maucher	Mathias	Solidar
Furet	Juliette	Union Habitat
Ghekiere	Laurent	Union Habitat
Toussain	Virginie	Union Habitat
Caron	Vincent	University of Barcelona
Nardini	Laura	Veneto Region
de Jong	Rudy	Wonen Limburg