Intellectual Output O4:

Designing a Quality Development Framework (QDF) for Career Guidance Providers

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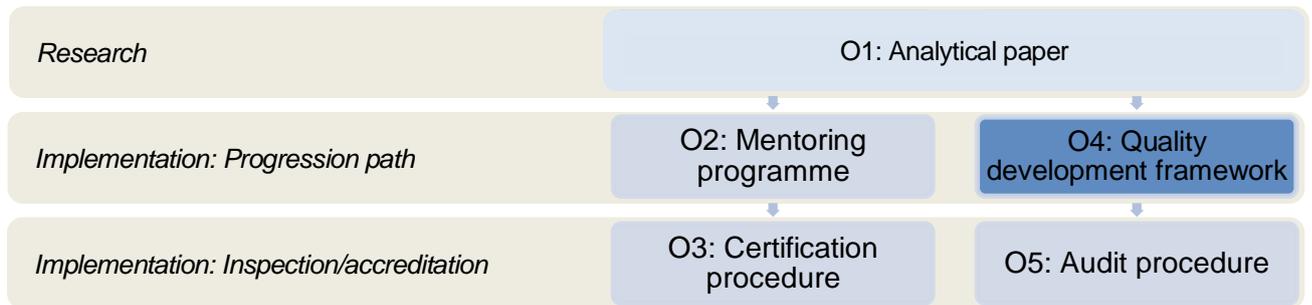
Content

General Introduction

This document was produced within an Erasmus + funded project "Qual-IM-G" that builds on the experience of different projects, initiatives and existing mechanisms in the field of quality assurance for career guidance in the partner countries. It recognises that countries, depending on the history in the field of careers will have varying traditions in developing quality standards to support individual practitioners and organisational procedures and proposes a set of intellectual outputs that can optimize the implementation of existing mechanisms in the field of quality assurance for career guidance or facilitate the development of new ones:

- **O1: Analytical paper on impact and success factors of different QA approaches in Europe:** Through qualitative and quantitative research, the current state of different trans-national and national QA practices in CG were analysed. The paper identifies the success factors and impact of these different approaches and is the basis for the development of the following outputs (iCeGS).

- **O2: Mentoring programme for CG practitioners**: A non-formal mentoring/training programme that allows practitioners to comply with a quality standard. It contains training modules that allow the counsellor to develop skills and competences in areas required in most of the QA practices focused on individual counsellor. It contains a core mentoring programme for areas most important in certification processes and supplementary modules (abif).

- **O3: Certification/accreditation procedure of CG practitioners:** Procedure for the accreditation of counsellors with recommendations and examples of self-assessment tools and procedures, list of possible required evidence and a checklist for the implementation of such mechanism (SKPKR).

- **O4: Quality development framework (QDF) for providers**: A model that supports service providers with their continuous quality development and assurance irrespective of a formal external certification/auditing process (see O5). The implementation of the QDF requires voluntary commitment and a participative process of all members of the organization wishing to improve their services. The QDF is applicable to various Quality Standards existing in different countries. It focusses however on those indicators that are most commonly present in different standards (*nfb*).

- **O5: Audit/labelling procedure for providers**: Contains pre-audit process, self-evaluation questionnaire/checklist, audit plan and certification process diagram (BKS Úspech).

The following details these outputs and shows how they relate to the key aims of the project:

Figure 1: Summary of

Research	O1: Analytical paper
Implementation: Progression path	O2: Mentoring programme / O4: Quality development framework
Implementation: Inspection/accreditation	O3: Certification procedure / O5: Audit procedure

All the outputs are freely available for download on the website www.guidancequality.eu. For more details about the different outputs please contact the respective lead organizatio**n.**

Country	Organization	Representative	Email address
Slovakia	Association for Career Guidance and Career Development	Board of the association	info@zkprk.sk
Czech Republique	Association for Career Guidance and Career Development	Alice Müllerová	sdruzenikp@gmail.com
Germany	National Guidance Forum in Education, Career and Employment	Karen Schober/ Barbara Lampe	info@forum-beratung.de
Austria	ABIF – analysis, consulting and interdisciplinary research	Claudia Liebeswar	liebeswar@abif.at
United Kingdom	International Centre for Guidance Studies at the University of Derby	Siobhan Neary	S.Neary@derby.ac.uk
The Netherlands	NOLOC - Professional Association of career guidance counsellors in Netherlands	Board of the association	info@noloc.nl
Norway	Inland Norway University of Applied Science	Erik Haug	Erik.Haug@inn.no

1. Preface

The project "Quality Implementation in Career Guidance" (Qual-IM-G) aims to analyze the implementation of quality standards and quality assurance mechanisms and policies in the involved European partner countries, to identify success factors of quality implementation as well as possible obstacles, and to provide recommendations and tools for successful implementation strategies. Quality development and quality assurance in Career Guidance and Counselling (CGC) occurs at two levels – at the level of the individual guidance professional and at the level of the organization that provides career guidance services. Furthermore, governments and other policy makers are responsible for creating appropriate legal and institutional regulations and a political environment, which support the quality development for "good guidance".

The concepts and tools developed in the course of the Intellectual Outputs of the Qual-IM-G Project are designed to support practitioners, providers and policy makers in their effort to implement continuous and sustainable quality development in career guidance provision.

Intellectual Output 4 deals with the philosophy, design, and practical use of a Quality Development Framework (QDF) for guidance provider organizations which can be used either for the continuous quality and professional development within the organization but also to prepare and support a certification or auditing process. The IO4 product consists of two parts:

> This paper ("Designing a Quality Development Framework (QDF) for Career Guidance Organizations") describes the theoretical background and concepts of quality development in career guidance and counselling (CGC) and the essential features for designing a QDF.

> The second paper "The Qual-IMG – Quality Development Framework (QDF) – a Toolbox for Guidance Organizations" is a manual and describes in detail the phases, steps and tools for the quality development process in an organization with the QDF.

The "Qual-IMG – Quality Development Framework (Qual-IMG QDF) proposed here is widely influenced by the *German BeQu-Concept* which was developed by the German National Guidance Forum (*nfb*) in cooperation with the University of Heidelberg and a large number of experts, actors, stakeholders, and policy makers in the field of career guidance ("Open process of Coordination'') and with funding from the Federal Ministry of Education and Research from 2009 – 2014. The BeQu-Concept is an integrated quality model based on a systemic approach. It consists of a catalog of 19 Quality Standards for CGC, a Competence Profile for career guidance practitioners (CGP), and a Quality Development Framework (QDF) for provider organizations. Its implementation on a voluntary basis is supported by the *nfb* and its members (Schiersmann/Weber 2013; *nfb*/Research Group Quality in Guidance, Berlin/Heidelberg 2014/2016).

2. What we are talking about – some definitions around quality development

There are many terms and expressions being used in the context of quality implementation, not only in the career guidance sector but also in any other area where quality matters. So, it might be useful to define some of these expressions – just for the purpose of this project – in order to be sure, we are all talking about the same issues. This is especially important in the context of the development and presentation of a Quality Development Framework in Intellectual Output 4 because there might be different understandings of what

a QDF is. The Analytical Paper (IO1) already contains some common definitions. For the purpose of the design and implementation of a Quality Development Framework some additional aspects should be added.
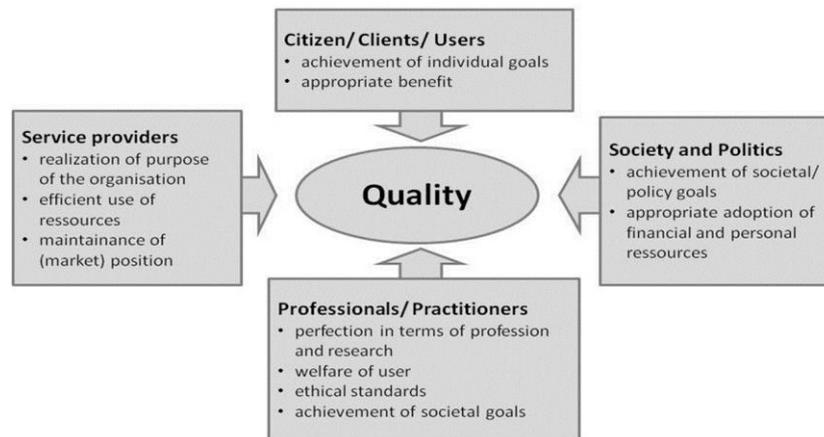

Figure 2: Defining Quality – multiple actors and stakeholders; Source: Schiersmann et al., 2008, p. 27

Quality: In everyday language the word is mostly used in the sense of "good quality" and refers to an implicit or explicit measurement on a scale from "bad" to "good". However, quality is not an objectively defined normative issue which is irrevocable or unalterable. It is a *relational* term, which refers to the expectations, values, interests, and resources of the involved actors who have to agree on a common understanding of what they define as "quality" (Sultana 2018). The concrete definition of quality in career guidance therefore is the result of a negotiation process between the involved actors and stakeholders (see Figure 2): the professionals, policy makers, the providers and the wider society (Schiersmann/Weber 2013, p. 45).

Quality Standard refers to a defined *degree* of quality, which an organization or a public authority sets for the service provision they are responsible for. It defines what an organization or the public authority expects from the provider and his employees in delivering these services or that a client can expect when using the service (Hooley/Rice). It also should reflect the opinion and beliefs of the professional guidance community (CGP, Researchers) about quality in career guidance. A Quality Standard usually is described by a number of dimensions, criteria, and (measurable) indicators. The quality standard can be defined by law or other normative regulations or it is the result of a common process of understanding by the actors and stakeholders involved. Depending on its legal status a quality standard can be binding (e.g. for members of an association or for service providers and professionals receiving public funding) or it can be just a recommendation to the professional community (practitioners and/or providers) that is supported by voluntary self-commitment.

Quality Framework is a comprehensive concept that describes the characteristics and requirements, the structures and processes of career guidance provision in a country, in a certain guidance sector, a region or a professional association and that addresses the different roles and responsibilities of the involved actors, stakeholders, and policy makers. The Quality Framework also includes an agreed Quality Standard with defined quality dimensions, criteria and measurable indicators.

Quality Development describes means and processes that help individuals or organizations to improve their services towards a (self-)defined quality standard. This process can be based on a formal or an informal agreement between guidance professionals and the provider organization. Quality Development can also be initiated and established in a broader context, e.g. on a national, regional or sectoral basis. It can be initiated

and carried out on a bottom-up basis as well as in a top-down manner, by law or other compulsory mechanisms (e.g. public funding). Quality Development usually refers to a systematic Quality Development Framework.

Quality development in a career guidance organization always implies *organizational development* because it affects the organization as a whole, its culture, structure and processes, the communication and collaboration patterns. The phases and tools of the QDF thus support organizational development as they can raise the knowledge and understanding of the participants about the organization, strengthen their identification with the organization and improve teambuilding among colleagues and management.

Quality Development Framework (QDF) is a *tool* to support the process of quality development within an organization. It describes the phases of a quality development process and helps the organization to identify strengths and weaknesses, to define the roles of the involved partners (practitioners, management) in the process, and to define the goals and expected outcomes of the quality development process as well as the steps and activities to be taken.

A QDF as such is "just" a tool and *independent* from the *specific content* of a certain quality standard or quality criteria, whereas a *Quality Framework* always is connected to the specific content of the quality standard it refers to. But when a QDF is implemented in an organization it always has to refer to a defined quality standard which is agreed and valid in that organization.

The QDF which is being developed in the context of the Qual-IM-G project primarily is designed to support the quality development in *single* provider organizations. It can however also be used in a broader sectorial or even national quality development strategy.

Quality Management (QM)/ Quality Assurance (QA) describe formalized systems of structures, processes, and activities within an organization to manage, improve, or maintain the quality of the service provision. A QM or QA system is usually required when a provider organization applies for a certification or a quality mark/quality label.

Certification is the formal process a person or an organization has to follow and document if they apply for a quality certificate (quality label or quality mark). A certification is usually administered by an external certifying body, which at the end of a successful auditing process testifies the achievement of the defined Quality Standard for the applying individual or organization and hands over the Certificate (Quality label, Quality Mark). Some employers or public authorities require a certification as a precondition for staff recruitment or public funding. Certification/accreditation processes however, are usually quite expensive for the individual or the organization unless there is some public funding for it.

Accreditation/Audit usually means the certification and acknowledgement by a public authority, either a governmental of other official body that is entitled to award an accreditation on the basis of a successful certification/auditing process.

Quality Mark or Quality Label is the final product ("Certificate") of an accreditation, auditing, or certification process which is awarded to a person or a service provider who fulfills all the necessary quality requirements for a certification/accreditation. It allows the holder to use the Certificate/Label in his/her PR and Marketing activities. Most quality labels have to be renewed after 3 – 4 years. There are numerous Quality Labels and Quality Marks for career guidance and counselling services in operation in all European countries including a few transnational and European labels – mostly operated by private companies or non-profit organizations. Their scope and acknowledgement differ widely and depend on the awareness and acceptance of the Label among employers, customers, governmental and other official bodies.

3. Quality Standards and Quality (Development) Frameworks for Career Guidance in Europe –

3.1 Some Research Findings from Intellectual Output O 1

"The review of national systems through the collected templates show few examples of developed quality development frameworks ….. In the collected examples in this project the main approach seems to be 'preparation systems', which focus on preparation for concrete accreditation and quality assurance assessments." (Dodd et al. 2019).

The research paper mentions a few examples from the seven countries investigated that either have a quality framework at national or regional level or are in the process of establishing a QDF:

- The Netherlands: The Dutch professional association NOLOC and the Career Management Institute CMI decided to merge their quality development and quality assurance systems and create one common national Quality Framework.

- Ireland (NCGE): established a sector specific QDF ('A Whole School Guidance Framework') on national level in line with the requirements of The Educational Act that schools have to provide students with "access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices". Within this context Ireland established a Quality Development Framework which defines the areas of career learning and support for students on a policy level, not on the single organization level.

- Norway (Skills Norway): is on its way to establish "a national quality framework based on the understanding that all involved partners have a different role to play in a comprehensive lifelong guidance system. This includes: A Framework for Career Management Skills, …. Ethical Standards and Guidelines; …. Quality Indicators/Benchmarks/Data Gathering."

- In the UK, the "Matrix-Standard" provides a detailed Quality Development Framework that leads to a certification, which is compulsory for public acknowledgement of a guidance provider organization and for public funding.

- In the other partner countries, a number of Quality (Development) Frameworks exist on national level, mostly developed and established by professional associations, Higher Education Institutions, or private companies. They are not compulsory and not linked to public policy.

- In some countries however (like Germany), regional Quality Labels with detailed QDF's for guidance provider organizations are in operation, which are compulsory for public funding of the service in that specific region (e.g. Berlin, Hessen, Baden Württemberg).

- On EU / International level a number of Quality Development/Assurance Frameworks exist, some of them leading to an individual certification (e.g. the "Global Career Development Facilitator", the "European Career Guidance Certificate"), and others which serve as recommendation for national policy and systems development. (e.g. the ELGPN "Quality Assurance and Evidence Framework and the CEDEFOP Framework "Professionalizing career guidance – Practitioner competences and qualification routes in Europe", or the NICE Competence Framework). [1]

In addition to the quality systems and frameworks investigated the research paper IO1, two recently published *sector specific Quality (Development) Frameworks* should be mentioned because they provide not

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[1] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/5193_en.pdf

only quality frameworks but also practical recommendations and tools for the implementation of a quality development process:

- The **Handbook "Enhancing Quality in Career Guidance"** (Sultana 2018), which resulted from the ERASMUS+ project **"MyFuture"** and deals with career guidance and *career education in secondary schools.* The book gives an overview over international quality development strategies and practices in this area and depicts a framework with six fields of action for the development and improvement of school guidance services. It also provides recommendations and links for school teachers and managers to resources and tools for quality development in school career guidance and highlights the importance of the "reflective practitioner as guarantor of quality provision" in career guidance.

- The **Gatsby Benchmark**, developed in the UK is another sector specific Quality Framework in the context of *school career guidance*. Eight benchmarks are suggested for effective and high-quality career guidance in schools. The benchmarks are designed to give orientation to schools and policy makers but also serve as a standard against which the performance of schools can be monitored and measured.

The framework and fields of action recommended for the implementation and improvement of school career guidance are quite similar in both handbooks. They refer to such dimensions as

- Career education/career learning/careers curriculum
- Career information, in particular labour market information, workplace experience, encounters with employers and further/higher education
- Career resource centres
- Partnerships/networks
- Career counselling, personal advice, addressing the needs of each student
- Professionalism/reflective practice and practitioners.

3.2 Quality Standards and Quality Frameworks for CGC most common in Europe

The research findings from IO1 show that there is a great variety of Quality Standards and Quality Frameworks in practice in European countries in the field of CGC. They differ in structure, terminology, and the way they group the different dimensions and criteria to broader categories. Some are based on an input-process-output model, others are based on a systemic approach or on concepts of professional competences. Some are sector specific; some are directed toward an external auditing; others refer to internal quality development. However, despite these differences in terminology and classification there are many common features and overlaps between them with respect to the concrete quality dimensions and criteria.

The IO1 Output paper summarizes the most frequently reported quality dimensions and criteria among the 21 submitted Quality Standards and Quality Assurance Frameworks in the participating countries of the project:
- Enhancement of Professionalism (12) and
- Continuous Professional Development of CGP (8)
- Improving Service process (10)
- Improving Leadership/Management (9)
- Improving CG-Methods and Techniques (9)
- Available Resources (4)
- Using Labour Market Information (4)
- Monitoring Client Satisfaction (3)
- Promotion of Service/Marketing (3)

- Compliance with Ethical guidelines (1)
- Other (8)

As a practical example of the similarities and differences between quality standards, we compared the concrete quality criteria and dimensions of three national quality standards from the UK (Matrix), Czech/Slovakia, and Germany (BeQu) (see Annex Table A1): Whereas the UK Matrix Standard focuses mainly on organizational and management issues including outcome monitoring the German BeQu-Standard puts more emphasis on the process-related aspects of the guidance provision. The mission of the organization, compliance with ethical principles and continuous quality development are equally important in all three frameworks. The Czech/Slovakian Standard highlights in particular the social and pedagogical outcomes (Career Management Skills), the Mission and Vison of the service and the practitioner qualification and competences. In total however the majority of quality dimensions, criteria and indicators occur in all three Standards no matter under which category they are registered.

The QDF developed in the context of this ERASMUS+ Project focuses on those dimensions and criteria of quality which are present in most European quality frameworks. The classification used follows the **key domains of quality assurance** defined by Hooley and Rice (2018):

- Policy
- Organisation
- Process
- People
- Output/outcome
- Consumption

Table 1 shows the most common quality dimensions and criteria and their classification along these key domains of quality development and quality assurance.

Table 2: Quality dimensions and criteria in CGC by key domains of quality assurance

Key Domain	Quality Dimension	Criteria/Indicator
Policy/ Societal goals	Social inclusion Equity/equal opportunities Ethical principles	Impartiality/Objectivity Gender/culturally sensitive service
Organization	Leadership/management Mission and vision/Ethical principles Participative Organizational culture (communication/ collaboration) Material/Human Resources Promotion of Service/Marketing Networking/Partnerships	Management by objectives Measurable aims and objectives Clear structures, workflows and responsibilities Information resources: actual and quality assured information Effective use of technology Continuous quality development
Process	Service customized to client's needs Establishing an efficient and confidential relationship with client Openness of results/free from bias and administrative sanctions	Guidance contract Quality and relevance of guidance methods and diagnostic tools Effective information management and use of technology/distance counselling tools Action plan Feedback and impact evaluation Signposting/referral to other service
People/Practitioners	Professionalism Practitioner Competences Continuous professional development Self-reflection	Acknowledged competence profile Required entrance qualification Opportunities for Self-reflection/Supervision Participation in further training Application theory to practice Effective use of counselling techniques and diagnostic tools
Output/Outcome	Acquisition of CMS and Decision-making competences Educational achievement Labour market integration Economic outcomes	Opening up educational or vocational opportunities/placement Action Plan Contact with the world of work Drop-out rates from education Unemployment rates Outcome monitoring and evaluation Supply of skilled workforce Social costs of un-/underemployment (e.g. welfare and health expenditures etc.)
Consumption/Clients	Client centeredness Service customized to client's needs Protection of client's rights Avoiding conflict of interest	Accessibility/Transparency of the service Adequate information of clients about service Data protection, confidentiality, Voluntary usage of the service Guidance contract Monitoring of customer satisfaction Complaint management

4. Essential Features of a Quality Development Framework (QDF) for Career Guidance Providers

In order to start and successfully administer a quality development process in an organization it is helpful to have a framework that recommends a structure and procedures for the various activities a quality development process requires. The nature of a QDF can be divers and cover a rangfrome very tight and binding structures and procedures to more flexible and variable steps and measures depending on the nature and specific circumstances of an organization. What kind of QDF is preferred depends on the goal and function of the quality development process which an organization is aiming for: If the goal is a formal certification or accreditation by an external body the organization will have to follow the prescribed procedures of an external QDF. If the organization wishes to improve its professionalism in order to better serve their clients and meet the professional needs of their staff the QDF they use can be much more individual and flexible. The latter however needs a high degree of self-commitment of the staff members as well as of the management of the organization.

In a survey among German users of quality assurance mechanisms we found out that large providers who receive public funding are more interested in prescribed and formalized QDF's whereas small service providers and self-employed guidance practitioners preferred a more flexible and individually designed QDF (*Katsarov* 2015).

When starting a quality development process, it is crucial to consider that quality development always implies *organizational developmen*t. In most cases the activities and measures taken to improve the service quality impact the whole organization, its structures, management, processes, and vice versa. Changes in the organization and the organizational environment on the other hand have an impact on the quality of the service and may require new measures and activities for quality development. Quality development and organizational development therefore require a wholistic approach which means that the management as well as the whole staff (not only the guidance professionals), and sometimes even external partners and customers/clients have to be involved in the process and committed to the idea and goals of the quality development process. The procedures and tools of a QDF should be designed in a way which arouses, strengthens and keeps up the individual's motivation to take part in the process and actively support it. The active involvement of the relevant actors therefore is an important feature of a QDF.

Quality development in career guidance must always refer to the content and nature of career guidance as a complex individualized and communicative social service that cannot only be regulated by formal requirements, structures, and organizational procedures. Therefore, the QDF always has to be linked to the agreed quality standard in the organization.

A quality development process needs to start with activities which create commitment and motivation of the organization members to engage in quality development activities and with a commonly shared status quo analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the service provision. The status-quo analysis facilitates the setting of goals and objectives for the quality development process. On the basis of the statu- quo analysis the organization members can prioritize potential action fields and make their choice about those fields that need quality improvement most urgently.

In case the organization is applying for a certification and uses the QDF for this purpose the goal setting and the choice of activities and measures is less flexible and adaptable to the specific situation of the organization because external certification usually requires to follow prescribed procedures and quality criteria which will to be assessed during the certification process.

Quality development is a *continuous* process within an organization. It needs a common understanding of the involved organization members and clearly defined roles, rules, responsibilities, and resources.

Different from an external certification process, it does not end when the award is received. Quality development is much more than executing and completing bureaucratic checklists at a given time – it is a commitment to continuous service improvement and professionalism.

Summarizing some essential features of a Quality Development Process with the QDF:

- Wholistic approach
- Linked to organizational development
- Participative process
- Active involvement of all organization members and relevant external experts (management, staff, clients, partners)
- Self-commitment of all involved organization members to quality development and the agreed goals and procedures
- Transparency of the proces es and a transparent communication strategy
- Flexible goal setting on the basis of a comprehensive status-quo analysis of strengths and weaknesses
- Flexibility and adaptablity of the process to the specific situation of the organization
- Commonly agreed Quality Standard as frame of reference
- Monitoring Ddocumentation and evaluation of effects
- Sufficient resources (time and human resources)
- Continuous quality development
- Transferability and sustainability

5. The "Qual-IMG Quality Development Framework" – an organic approach

This chapter proposes the design and implementation of a flexible and adaptive QDF for career guidance provider organizations who wish to improve their service quality and professionalism. The *Blue Print* for this was adapted from the *German BeQu-Concept* which was characterized in the Analytical Paper (O1) as a "wholistic, comprehensive, and participative approach with a high degree of provider autonomy". Following the model of Hooley and Rice (2018) it can be categorized as an "organic approach" (*Figure 3*).
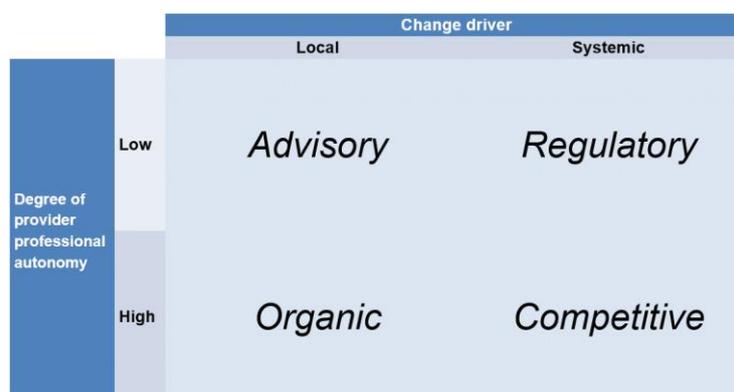

Figure 3: Hooley and Rice Model of a QA Certification

As typical features of an organic approach Hooley and Rice propose:

- Quality is defined by the provider and the professional.
- Driven by professional values and the desire to do a good job.
- Mechanisms include quality circles, supervisory arrangements, peer observation and mentoring, professional networks and local self-evaluation.
- Involvement of users as co-producers.

5.1 The Six Phases of the QDF – an Overview

The proposed QDF is designed to support guidance provider organizations in their effort to improve the quality of their service irrespective of the question whether or not the organization wants to apply for a certification or holds already a Quality Label. It can be used in connection with any acknowledged Quality Standard and it can support already existing quality assurance mechanisms or auditing processes by integrating guidance specific quality criteria in the process. Most quality assurance systems like ISO, EFQM or TQM operate on a structural, managerial and business-administrative level with no link to the specific requirements of professional career guidance quality criteria. The proposed QDF combines the structural elements of a quality assurance mechanism with guidance specific content. Although it is designed as a transversal cross-sectoral national approach its implementation so far is not compulsory but depends on local decisions of providers, professionals or associations.

In its structural appearance the QDF does not differ much from quality assurance cycles that are common in more or less all quality assurance mechanisms (e.g. UK-Matrix Standard). The framework is divided into six consecutive phases (see *Figure 4*):
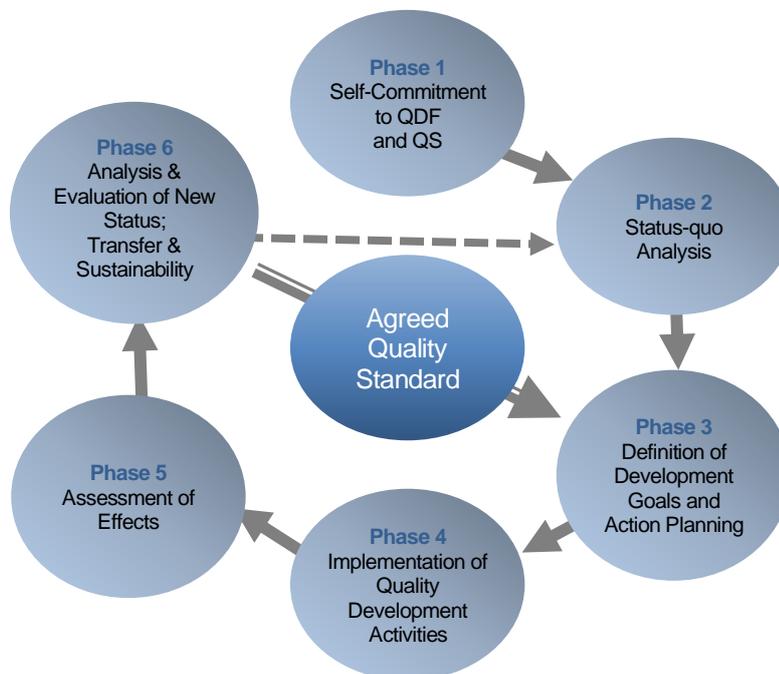

Figure 4: Six phases of the BeQu – Quality Development Framework

There are however fundamental differences between the proposed QDF and other Quality management mechanisms: The Qual-IMG QDF is open to the baseline situation of the organization and the variety of potential activities and measures which can be realized within the quality development process. That is why the assessment of the results and the impacts are not primarily linked to a prescribed certification model but rather to the goals which were defined by the members of the organization on the basis of their status-quo analysis. Subject to the assessment are not only the organization, the management, and its outputs, but also the activities and measures undertaken. In this context the reflection of the whole process and the stabilization and sustainability of the achieved transformation are of particular importance. The openness of this QDF enables organizations of different size, structure, orientation and – last but not least – different resources, to apply the QDF in their quality development process.

Table 3 presents an overview and short description of the six phases of the QDF and their benefit for its practical implementation. The complete QDF with a detailed description of the different phases as well as the steps to be taken and the tools supporting the process is presented in the IO4 paper:

"The Qual-IMG Quality Development Framework – a Toolbox for Guidance Providers"

available on the project website http://guidancequality.eu/project-outputs/.

For the success of the quality development process it is crucial that it is organized as a *participative* process where all staff members and the management are involved in the different phases or at least included in a transparent communication process.

Table 3: QDF-Phases - Overview

Phase	Content	Function	Tips & Tools
Phase 1: (Self-) Commitment for Implementation of the QDF and the Quality Standard	Organizing the entry in the process/Kick-off; Clarifying necessary input and resources; Involving all staff members and management; Establishing effective working structures and transparent communication paths	Promoting the awareness for the importance of quality development; Motivation of all actors involved; Open exchange of expectations, fears and requirements; stable framework conditions, acceptance, commitment and support for the process	**Tips:** - Getting started with the QDF - Organisation of the Cooperation **Tools:** - Check-up for the entry into the quality development process - Resources and Expectations
Phase 2: Analysis and Documentation of the Status quo	Stocktaking and analysis of the current situation in the organization along all quality criteria of the quality standard with a checklist; Identifying quality gaps and change requirements; Defining the relevance for the organization; involve if appropriate partners and clients;	Promotes self-confidence and certainty re strengths, Promotes readiness and motivation for change; Promotes reflection and professionalism; Raises collective knowledge about the organization and about the professional competences of colleagues	**Tips:** - Guide to the QDF-Tool "Checklists" - Examples for the processing of quality standards **Tool:** - Checklists for recording the current status (Status-quo analysis)
Phase 3: Definition of development goals, Prioritization and Action Planning	Discussion and decision about developmental goals, Prioritization among several identified change requirements according to the relevance for the organization; Planning and concretization of quality activities; Dividing goals into sub-goals and final goals; Identifying supportive and impeding influencing factors; Define success criteria; establish project management tools;	Reduces the variety and diversity of problems to be tackled; Relieves from the burden of too many panned activities and expectations; Creates achievable steps; Joint formulation of goals contributes to the motivation and energization of participants	**Tips:** - Setting priorities - Exemplary methods for prioritization - Target determination and concretisation - Planning of quality development activities - Exemplary approach to beneficial and impeding influencing factors **Tools:** - Description of objectives and activities - Implementation plan

Phase	Content	Function	Tips & Tools
Phase 4: Implementation of Quality Development Activities	Implementation of organization specific quality projects on the basis of objectives derived in phase 3; Project management methods should be used and clear responsibilities determined; Reflection and continuous monitoring of interim results, effects and goal achievement; Flexible reaction/adaptation to changing conditions	Through active participation of all organization members in the implementation changes and improvements can be experienced; Realization of quality development activities creates new solutions, existing routines and rituals can be overcome and first success experiences can trigger a positive dynamic.	**Tip:** - Controlling **Tool:** - Implementation Plan
Phase 5: Documentation and Assessment of effects of the measures taken	Editing and reflecting results of quality development project; Documentation as reports, statistics, presentations, external publications etc.; Updating the checklists of phase 2; Evaluation by comparing the results with the predefined success factors; Uncover and reflect any new upcoming needs for quality improvement; Make results and evaluation accessible to all organization members; External communication: information of relevant stakeholders, policy makers, clients etc.;	Secures the new achieved status quo, promotes stability and continuity; Visualization of goals not (completely) achieved enables discussion about possible further options for action and quality development projects;	**Tips:** - Recording and processing of results - Evaluation of the results of the quality activities - Guide to the QDF-Tool "Assessment of target achievement" **Tools:** - Evaluation of the target achievement
Phase 6: Analysis and Evaluation of the New Status; Securing Transfer and Sustainability	Reflection of the whole quality development process in the organization, Individual and organizational learning experiences; Organizing appropriate formats for this reflection process that suits the organization and its members; Reflecting how the results have been achieved, which paths the organization has chosen/change in organizational culture etc.; Reflecting on influencing factors; acknowledging, appreciation and celebrating the achieved new status; taking decision about the continuation of the quality development process on the basis of phase 3 results;	Appreciation promotes motivation for further quality development projects; Learning experiences can be transferred to other situations and used in the future; Problem solving ability of the organization and the staff members and their adaptability have been strengthened; **"Quality development is organizational development!"**	**Tips:** - Learning outcomes from the quality development process - Guide for the tool "Learning outcomes from the quality development process". **Tool:** - Learning outcomes from the quality development process

6. Testing the QDF – Experiences and Lessons Learnt

6.1 The German Piloting Phase

As mentioned earlier the piloting of the QDF in Germany with 59 provider organizations in a time frame of three years was accompanied by the Institute of Educational Research of the Heidelberg University (IBW). The implementation process required from the participating providers the attendance of four workshops spread over one year. In the workshops the participants were prepared for the implementation of the different QDF-phases. They had the opportunity to give feedback about the results achieved and discuss problems of implementation with the researchers and the other participating organizations. On an optional basis the piloting organizations could get consultation by email or telephone and one-site consultation provided by the IBW. The researchers recorded and analyzed the results from the completed checklists and questionnaires and summarized qualitative information they got during the workshops and consultation sessions with the participating organizations.

This chapter gives a brief summary of the main results and experiences the *nfb* and the Heidelberg Research Group compiled during the piloting phase. More detailed information is available in the German publications (Schiersmann/Weber 2013; *nfb*/Research Group Quality in guidance 2014).

1. The issues examined during the quality development processes in the participating organizations spread widely over the different areas of the Quality Standard. In total all five dimensions of the BeQu-Quality Standard were addressed: the transversal standards, the process-oriented standards, the organizational issues, competence and professionalism-oriented standards and standards referring to the societal context and policy goals.

2. As a general overall feedback three quarters of the participating organizations rated the implementation of their quality projects as successful. Some were ambivalent about the success, partly because of exogen factors like the unforeseeable loss of financial or human resources or sudden changes in the management. Others had not finished the process yet due to lack of time.

3. More than half of the Quality Officers of the participating organizations confirmed positive learning outcomes for the organization but also for themselves. They highlighted in particular that the "assisted external view on their work and the assisted reflexive process" were extremely helpful including the fact that they for the first time had enough time to deal with quality issues although the time expenditure seemed to be quite high.

4. Some reported as a positive effect of the quality development process that for the first time they had recognized the professional competences of their colleagues and co-workers in the team. In line with this experience the persons involved valued the teamwork and the chance to work together in a team including the integration of the team members into a common time frame and working rhythm. According to the feedback this team experience had improved the internal communication and the atmosphere within the team.

5. Another important outcome refers to structural effects: participants appreciated that reasonable solutions and measures were found and established during the process which do not have to be questioned and justified every time once again.

6. With respect to their personal learning outcomes more than 80 percent of the Quality Officers reported that they had gained new insight and knowledge about the importance of structural and procedural conditions in their organization, e.g. regulations for internal communication, responsibilities and accountability and the value of continuity and track keeping.

7. The managers involved in the process highlighted as personal learning outcomes and with respect to their own professionalism that they have recognized the importance of Human Resource Development Measures and the need to reflect continuously their own understanding of guidance

and counselling as well as their own role and function as managers in this process. With respect to their staff members a number of managers had realized that the staff members were more open for the quality development process and had more professional competences than their managers had thought.

8. More than 70 percent of the Quality Officers think that the quality development process will continue for the future in their organization. Some however fear, that the increasing work load and upcoming organizational changes or fluctuation in the team and management might demotivate the professionals involved and thus impair the sustainability of quality development in the organization.

9. The feedback also indicates that the quality of guidance service has improved – at least in the areas where the quality projects were carried out.

10. The results of the piloting phase in the participating organizations show that quality development definitely has an impact on organizational development and promotes organizational learning as well as serving the continuous professional development of guidance professionals and managers of the organization.

11. Important however is that a QDF has to be linked to an agreed or acknowledged Quality Standard. The German BeQu-Standard which is based on a systemic approach to career guidance and counselling addresses not only the different dimensions, criteria and indictors of quality but also allows to address the responsible actors. These are not only the guidance professionals but also the management of the guidance organization and the relevant policy makers in the various guidance sectors.

12. The QDF presented here can of course be implemented and used with any other appropriate Quality Standard in any national context. It can also be used in connection with an already existing Quality Assurance System in order to integrate guidance specific issues and content into the quality development process as long as that system is flexible enough to adapt to the specific situation of the single organization and is organized as a participative process involving all staff members, managers, external partners and clients/customers.

6.2   The Czech/Slovakian Testing Seminar

The test was organized as a joint two-day workshop with 22 guidance practitioners, providers, and responsible staff from public authorities with the aim to introduce the QDF and to discuss its usefulness and transferability in career guidance systems in other European countries with different social and political contexts.

The workshop was jointly organized by the Czech and Slovakian partner organizations
-        SKPRK, CZE (*Andrea Csirke*)
-        BKS Úspech, s.r.o. (*Pavol Kmet*)
-        ZKPRK, SK (*Tomas Sprlak*)
and took place in the "Centre Education for All" (Česká 166/11) in Brno.

The preparation and implementation of the seminar was in the responsibility of the trainers from the German National Guidance Forum (*nfb*), *Susanne Schmidtpott* and *Karen Schober*. The workshop was held in English language with some simultaneous translation facilities if necessary. For the purpose of the testing and the practical exercises during the seminar the QDF and its tools were adjusted to the Czech/Slovakian Quality Standard which was familiar to the participants. Presentations and other workshop materials were available in English and Czech/Slovakian language. The workshop programme, all materials and a comprehensive report of the testing results are available on the project website www.guidancequality.eu. For preparation a brief introduction to the ERASMUS+ project, the Quality Standards and the Workshop Programme were sent to participants 2 weeks ahead of time.

Objektives of the Workshop

- Introduction to Quality Development Frameworks for Career Guidance: concepts, goals, content, procedures, and outcomes

- Application of the QDF to the Slovakian/Czech Quality Standards for career guidance organizations,

- Supporting provider organizations to initiate and successfully complete a quality development process in their organization with the QDF and its tools,

- Evaluation and Feedback on the usefulness and practicability of the QDF and the tools.

**Expected outcomes and benefits**

- Participants have a deeper understanding of quality development processes as part of organizational development

- Participants experience the importance of a participative process of quality development and of the benefits of involving all members of the organization

- Participants can apply the QDF and its tools in their organization

- Participating organizations learn how to prepare for certification and auditing procedures.

In the course of the workshop, phases of theoretical input alternated with phases of practical work in small groups and plenary discussion along the six phases of the QDF. In the final feedback session, participants were asked to give a quantitative evaluation of the QDF using a rating scale (1 – 6) along different criteria and a qualitative statement.

Testing Results: Quantitative Rating of the QDF

For the quantitative feedback we used a 6-scale rating in a "spider web" where participants were asked to assess different aspects of the usefulness and applicability of the QDF as a tool for quality development in a career guidance provider organization. Results are shown in Figure 5:

Figure 5: Rating results of the QDF from 15 participants regarding different criteria[*)]
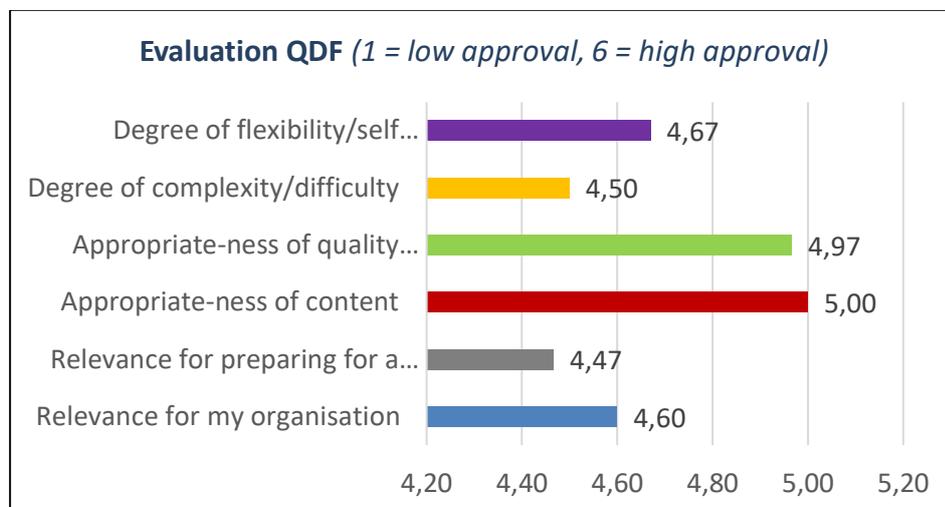
) Degree of flexibility and self-determination; Degree of complexity/difficulty; Appropriateness of Quality Standard; Appropriateness of content; Relevance for preparing for a certification/auditing process; Relevance for my organization;

The overall quantitative rating reveals a fairly high appreciation of the QDF as a useful tool for quality development (average 4.7; no single rating lower than 3).

Looking at the single criteria, it seems that the content and standards of the QDF were much appreciated by the participants whereas on the other hand the QDF seems to be quite complex and difficult so that it might not fit for some of the organizations. This may be the reason why some participants think that the QDF is not so useful as a preparation for a certification.

Testing Results: Qualitative Feedback to the QDF

The quantitative rating results are well underpinned by the oral feedback of the participants. A large majority thinks that the QDF is a useful tool to structure the process of quality development in their organization. Even if some providers intuitively already work in a similar way, the QDF helps to make people aware of the necessary structure and processes of a continuous quality development. Some participants however felt that the QDF can not be useful for their particular organization – either because the organization is too large and complex or because the organization works already with an external predetermined quality management or because they work as single self-employed practitioners (sole traders) without enough resources for such complex procedures.

In any case, even if the QDF might not fit for each type of provider organization the framework of the QDF seemed to be also helpful for the individual practitioner and his/her attempt to improve their service quality and professional development. Even if they do not follow the whole quality circle of the QDF it helps to analyse their present situation and set priority goals for further improvement.

Another important outcome of the workshop is that participants became aware that quality development needs time and continuity and cannot be managed and achieved in a short time frame. This perception however leads to the argument that the QDF cannot be established in provider organizations which do not have sufficient resources or which work on a temporary project basis. For some participants the complexity of the QDF with its different phases and tools also makes the implementation of the QDF too difficult.

Resume

Summarizing the quantitative and qualitative results and feedbacks from the participants the workshop and the testing of the QDF turned out to be successful and of great value for most of the participants.

Thinking of the QDF as a transversal tool which can be used by career guidance provider organizations to improve the quality of their service the feedback from the workshop indicates that the QDF can very well support such processes if the management of the organization is ready to engage in such a participative and non-directive process. This however depends largely on the type of management and the type and size of the organization: whether it is a large bureaucratic organization where career guidance is just one of several business fields, whether the service is regulated by tight legislative rules, or whether it is a small organization with career guidance as the predominant activity.

Regarding the usefulness of the QDF to prepare for an external certification or auditing process the feedback was not so unanimous. In a formal certification process the organization has to follow prescribed procedures and is measured against prescribed quality criteria and benchmarks. Usually there is no flexibility for the management and staff to identify the areas where improvement is needed most urgently by themselves and to set their own goals for the quality development in their organization. The QDF is primarily a tool for quality *development* and not for measuring the compliance with a predetermined quality standard or benchmark. Nevertheless, the well-structured processes and procedures, the helpful tools of the QDF and the time for reflection of own practice and goal setting were appreciated by all participants as helpful tools to *develop* their service quality and professionalism which in the end is also an essential aspect in a formal certification process.

For the further development of the QDF the testing results recommend to make it less complex and leave space for flexible application of the phases and tools and maybe just use the QDF for further professional and organizational development.

6.3 Feedback from International Experts

Feedback was gathered from Austrian, British and Norwegian researchers and practitioners and from Professor Ronald Sultana (Malta University) along the following questions:

1. What do you think about the overall concept of the Quality Development Framework?
2. What are strengths and weaknesses of the concept?
3. In terms of practicality and usefulness: Do you think that the QDF process with the tips and tools provided can be easily implemented in all CG provider organizations in any European country? Can you give some practical examples?
4. Do you see any severe obstacles that could hinder the implementation of the QDF?

The following section summarizes the feedback from the experts who were able to react to the request.[2]

Professionals from Austria: Feedback on the Quality Development Framework (QDF)

"The quality development framework as a whole is a well-thought-out concept that has already proven itself in Germany. The representatives of the counselling organisations particularly appreciate the emphasis on the involvement of all employees and the importance given to both the joint development of the objectives and the communication of the results.

Due to the wide range of projects that can take place in educational and vocational guidance, the quality development framework offers a great advantage due to its strong individualisation potential. The steps of the process are well described; the numerous offers to support the QDF representatives certainly can contribute to the good success. Thus, the steps described can be carried out in a small organisational unit in the same way as in a highly complex organisation.

Great care should in any case be taken in phase 1, since the success and the idea of a successful implementation of quality development depend very much on the extent to which the formulated goals are related to the available resources. The more visible the success of the quality development process is, the greater the motivation to continue to deal with it continuously.

Recommendation: However, the paper on the quality development framework is quite general overall and leaves some questions unanswered with regard to the **concrete implementation**. In practice, further information on how the QDF should be applied or **(online) trainings** would be helpful."

Researchers from UK/Norway: Evaluation the QDF approach

"The QDF, derived from the German BeQu-Quality Concept, has an innovative audit approach that uses an internal assessment approach only. Their approach is a participative process of assessment. The organisation management alongside practitioner staff decide on both their assessment indicators based upon their priority quality development areas.....

… The QDF draws attention to the fact that quality development in career guidance and counselling implies organisational development. This means that a quality development framework enables organisations to activate and integrate both the individual perspectives of staff members and the perspective of the organisation to develop and safeguard solutions for assuring or enhancing the quality of guidance, which suit the organisation. Providers of guidance services can use the QDF:

- for a systematic introduction of quality development into daily work,

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- to improve existing quality approaches with respect to aspects, which are specific for career guidance and counselling,
- to document and communicate their quality development efforts to funders and responsible policy makers."

Recommendation: "For many partner countries quality labels are voluntary. If labels are part of the policy on career guidance then it could help increase motivation and interest on the part of providers. In order to improve services *labels which, adopt a continuous development approach should be prioritised by policy to embed a consistent cycle of improvement for providers."*

The feedback from both testings' as well as from the international experts support the participative, democratic and flexible guidance centred approach of the Qual-IMG Quality Development Framework. The recommendation to focus more on the concrete implementations procedures is to some extent already fulfilled with the "Qual-IMG-Toolbox" which is an essential part of the whole IO4 output. The recommended development of an (Online-)Training or some kind of blended or embedded training however could be helpful for the implementation of the QDF and will have to be considered in a future project.

Literature and Resources

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Table A1: Comparison of Quality Standards and Quality Assurance Frameworks in selected Countries – corresponding standards

The BeQu Quality Standards for Career Guidance and Counselling (Overview)		Czech/Slovak Quality Standards for Career Guidance Practitioners and Organizations (corresponding standards)		UK Matrix Standard for Career guidance for Organizations, Schools and Sole Traders (corresponding standards)
T	**Transversal Quality Standards**	**2.2 Criteria for the quality of service**		
T1	Good guidance focuses on the clients' concerns, interests, competences and potentials.	**3.2**	**Needs Analysis and individualisation of Service**	**3.3 … the service delivery is centred upon the individual and their needs and goals and … is free from bias.**
T2	Good guidance, in principle, requires voluntary participation.	**?**		**3.4 Clients are given appropriate options to explore and understand that they are responsible for making their own decisions.**
T3	Good guidance is easily accessible and transparent for clients.	**3.1+3.2**	**Clients are adequately informed, Service is customized to an individual client based on an analysis of his/her needs.**	**1.6 The organisation promotes the service in ways which are accessible to all those eligible to use it.** **3.1 The service is defined so that clients are clear about what they might expect.**
T4	Good guidance is committed to ethical principles and protects clients' rights.	**1.2**	**Ethics**	**3.3 The service provided is impartial and objective. Where a service is part of an organisation that directly provides other services, …it should be safeguarded that there is no conflict of interest.**
T5	Good guidance is based on a strategy of continuous quality development, which is in accordance with the quality standards presented here or comparable standards.	**5.3** **4.3**	**Quality Management and continuous improvement Feedback and Impact Evaluation**	**4.1 The organisation …. measures and evaluates the service against its stated aims and objectives and identifies improvements.** **4.2 …. monitors and evaluates client outcomes to support and improve service delivery.** **4.3 …. evaluates feedback on the service to build upon its strengths and addresses any areas for Improvement.** **4.4 …. evaluates the effectiveness of its partner-ships and networks to improve the service.** **4.5 … defines quality assurance approaches which are used to improve the service.**
P	**Process-Related Quality Standards**			
P1	Good guidance requires the joint development of a relationship, which is advantageous in view of the clients' concerns and the guidance process.	**2.3 Transversal Competences**	**Establishing efficient counselling relationship**	

	The BeQu Quality Standards for Career Guidance and Counselling Process-Related Quality Standards	Czech/Slovak Quality Stand. for Career guid.	Czech/Slovakian Criteria for the quality of service	UK Matrix Standard for Career guidance for Organizations, Schools and Sole Traders
P2	Good guidance does not presuppose results and requires the collaborative clarification of the clients´ expectations as well as an agreement on the objectives, procedure and desired outcomes of the guidance process.	**2.3 Transversal Competences**	**Contract Identification**	
P3	Good guidance requires a joint analysis and reflection of the clients' situation as well as their interests, values and resources.	**2.4**	**Quality and relevance of tools**	
P4	Good guidance assists clients in developing alternative solutions, making decisions and transferring them into action in an active and autonomous manner.	**2..4** **4.2**	**Quality and relevance of tools** **"Social outcomes"**	**3.4 Clients are given appropriate options to explore and under-stand that they are responsible for making their own decisions.** **3.6 Clients benefit from signposting and referral to other appropriate agencies or organisations.**
O	**Organisational Circumstances, Requirements, and Strategies**			
O1	Good guidance is oriented by an organisational mission statement, which describes the purpose of the guidance organisation, the strategy, goals and ethical principles of its guidance services.	**1.1**	**Mission and Vision**	**1.1 The service has clearly defined measurable aims and objectives which link to any wider Organisational strategic aims.** **1.2 The leadership team has effectively communicated what the organisation is striving to achieve and how this relates to the service/s being delivered. Staff can clearly describe what the organisation is trying to achieve and have a clear understanding of where it is heading.**
O2	Good guidance requires clearly defined processes, workflows and responsibilities, which promote guidance as a communicative social service.	**1.3**	**Planning and management by objetives**	
O3	Good guidance requires a constructive and participative culture of communication and collaboration within the guidance organisation.			
O4	Good guidance requires the provision of adequate human and material resources for the specific guidance service offers in view of the quality standards presented here.	**3.4**	**Material and space conditions**	**2.2 Clients are provided with current, accurate and quality assured information which is inclusive.** **4.7 Effective use is made of technology to improve the service.**
O5	Good guidance requires a good collaboration between the guidance organisation with its partners and other relevant actors in the social environment.	**2.3** **5.2**	**Multidisciplinarity and partnerships** **Research and development**	**1.8 The organisation establishes effective links with other appropriate partnerships and networks to enhance the service.**

	The BeQu Quality Standards for Career Guidance and Counselling Process-Related Quality Standards	Czech/Slovak Quality Stand. for Career guid	Czech/Slovakian Criteria for the quality of service	UK Matrix Standard for Career guidance for Organizations, Schools and Sole Traders
S	**Societal Context and Objectives**			
S1	Good guidance considers the relevant societal context and current developments in the educational and vocational systems and the labour market, in addition to clients' individual situations, and makes this knowledge accessible for clients in an adequate manner.	2.1	**Information resources Contact with the world of work**	**3.5 When exploring options, clients are provided with and supported to use appropriate resources including access to technology.**
S2	Good guidance empowers clients to pursue their educational and professional development autonomously (capacity for self-organisation).	3.3	**Active role of the client and widening of career opportunities**	
S3	Good guidance assists clients in sustainably pursuing and realising their educational, vocational, and employment-related goals.	4.1	**Career Management Skills (CMS)**	
S4	Good guidance promotes the social inclusion and equality of (potentially) disadvantaged groups, especially regarding gender, age, handicaps, cultural and ethnical background.			**1.3 The organisation implements policies to promote equality and diversity, impartiality, confidentiality and professional integrity in all aspects of service delivery.** **3.3 The service delivery is centred upon the individual and their needs and goals and … is free from bias.**
C	**Quality Standard on Practitioner Competence and Professionalism**	**6.2**	**Provider ensures continuous development of competencies to improve the service**	
C1	Good guidance presupposes that guidance practitioners are capable of offering professional guidance. The required competences are specified in a competence profile for guidance, which corresponds to the quality standards presented here.	**2.3 Transversal Competences**	**Application of theory in practice using counselling micro-techniques; Self-reflection**	**2.3 The organisation defines the skills, knowledge, competencies and qualifications, in line with current national recognised professional qualifications and frameworks, for individual staff roles, linked to the aims and objectives of the service.** **2.4 Staff are supported in undertaking continuous Professional development and provided with opportunities for career progression.**