

Winter 2009/
 Special TQS

REVES focus

European Network of Cities and Regions for the Social Economy

Social Economy: Application of quality criteria for social services - Analysis carried out in the framework of the TQS project -



The TQS project has received funding from the European Community under the PROGRESS programme.

Social economy and its role in shaping and defining quality of social services stood at the centre of the second research phase of the project "Territorial Quality Standards in Social Services of General Interest" (TQS in SSGI). What is the added value generated by social economy service providers, and where can we find its origin? Are social economy organisations in a position to provide good practice examples for a participatory definition of service quality? Co-operatives Europe and CECOP (European Confederation of Workers Cooperatives, Social Cooperatives and Social and Participative Enterprises) examined the different co-operative principles and the influence the latter (may) have on quality criteria in social services provided by co-operatives. In this analysis, specific emphasis was laid on services delivered by social housing and social co-operatives (working in the field of labour inclusion, socio-sanitary services, education...). A number of examples

demonstrate that the translation into practice of principles such as "democratic member control", "information, education and training" or "concern for the community" adds to quality of a specific service: A service provided by social economy does thus not only reply to one specific need of a single person, but it encourages the (future) service beneficiary to take an active part in communicating and fulfilling this need with the help also of a larger community. Thereby, economic, social, environmental and/or cultural interests of this community are also taken into account. Courses and care services for specific housing organisations are examples for such services with added value. The Consortium PARSEC (IT) complemented the findings of the EU level analysis of Co-operatives Europe and CECOP with a local case study, based on the experiences of its members (co-operatives and associations). It focused specifically on

aspects that influence the definition of quality within the organisation. In this context, PARSEC also highlighted the difficulties social economy service providers face with regard to the establishment of coherent quality criteria - difficulties that are linked, for instance, to a diversity of commissioning authorities and their (differing) expectations. In their conclusions, PARSEC stress the need to better take into consideration and interlink different stakeholders and governance levels that have an impact on quality in one way or the other. The outcome of this research was discussed during the second TQS project workshop on 5 and 6 November 2009 in Faenza (IT). Building on this exchange, Co-operatives Europe and CECOP are currently adding to the results of their analysis a specific chapter on new legal forms of social co-operatives and their potential to enhance quality in social services. The complete study will be published on the REVES website in the end of January 2010. (ek)

Quality in Social Services of General Interest: Survey on basic terms and concepts

Previous to the transnational project meeting in Faenza (IT), a survey has been conducted on the definition of terms such as "social services of general interest", "general interest" or "quality" in different TQS partner territories.

From the replies by the partners it became first of all clear that a concrete definition of the term "Social Services of General Interest" does not seem to exist in most member states and local territories. Moreover, the term appears to be rarely used. Public and private actors often simply speak of "social services", which also helps distinguish them from services of general interest such as telecommunications, energy, transport... However, frequently, a basic understanding on what kind of services should fall in this category exists in society and throughout Europe. In the replies to the TQS survey, the following categories were listed:

- Care for elderly, children, persons with a disability and other groups in need;
- Social security
- Social re-integration and prevention
- Employment
- Specific services for orientation and re-integration into the labour market of disadvantaged persons
- Social housing ...

In some member states, health and education are not considered "social

services (of general interest)". Nevertheless, in the framework of the TQS project, both service domains will be counted in, as they are often closely linked to other social services and have a considerable social impact.

In several cases, social services are partially defined and regulated through national and regional legislation. Most TQS partners reported that SSGI are delivered, in their city or region, by public and (social) private actors. Delivery of social services in Sweden and Poland has for a long time been ensured above all by public providers. However, this is about to change - (social) private actors get more and more involved in service provision.

A peculiarity regarding legislation regulating relations between local authorities and different types of service providers represents the Italian "Framework law for the realization of an integrated system of social interventions and services" (Law 328), which attaches a community perspective and the principle of participation to service planning, provision and monitoring/evaluation.

All project partners seem to agree on several main characteristics of social services (of general interest):

1. SSGI are based on fundamental rights and principles.

2. SSGI serve the whole community.
3. SSGI contribute to social cohesion.

Definition and use of the term "general interest", in turn, are - in TQS partner cities and regions - fairly more unclear. It often has to be evaluated on a case-to-case basis if something is of general interest. Nevertheless, most TQS partners listed the following more general principles that are, according to their experiences, linked to the concept of "general interest":

- Respect of fundamental rights/human dignity
- Accessibility
- Equality
- Impartiality
- Equity
- Universality
- Reciprocity
- Transparency
- Participation
- Efficiency

All TQS partners reported very similar challenges they are now facing with regard to service provision and service quality. Their replies show that these challenges are related most often to *changes* regarding the needs of different groups of the population (elderly, migrants, young people...). TQS partners consider it necessary to review the system of service provision to make it better respond to these changes. A major issue herein is sustainability. New ways have to be found to allocate

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- 1. SSGI are based on fundamental rights**
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resources more appropriately and to share costs. Moreover, partners highlighted the necessity to re-define the role of social economy and other not-for-profit organisations when it comes to service provision and service design: the missing level playing field with public authorities not only in service provision, but also in planning and evaluation of services is perceived as a major obstacle. Yet other difficulties are caused, in many TQS partner territories, by (EU) procurement rules which, in their application, lead to

advantages for larger (private) structures, a focus more on price rather than on quality, and ignorance regarding the characteristics (and possible added value) of specific service providers.

Solutions to the aforementioned challenges and difficulties are seen, by TQS partners, in the following actions (to quote only some examples):

- Diversification of the service offer;
- Promotion of participative processes in service planning, implementation

and evaluation;

- Person-centred interventions based on the empowerment of the beneficiary;
 - Networking;
 - Coordination between different actors in the social and health sector;
 - Development of new forms of cost-sharing.
- All these aspects will be taken into consideration by the TQS project partnership while developing methods for a participatory definition of quality criteria in social services of general interest. (ek)

“There is a necessity to re-define the role of social economy and other not-for-profit organisations when it comes to service provision and service design.”

Faenza Workshop and launch of local research: The role of different stakeholders influencing service quality and links between them

TQS partners met for a second transnational exchange, a workshop, from 5 to 6 November 2009 in Faenza (IT).

The objectives of this meeting were a) to discuss and define key elements of quality and pre-conditions that have to be taken into account when conceiving methods for the definition of local quality criteria in SSGI; b) to deepen the issue of communication, interaction and participation between service providers, local authorities, services users and other stakeholders in the local community, and c) to have a first exchange on the TSR@approach as possible method for a

participatory definition of local quality criteria in SSGI.

Discussions started with a short overview of results of a survey on the definition of terms such as "SSGI" or "general interest" in different EU member states (see previous article). Subsequently, partners had a closer look at the "service quality chain", thereby trying to identify various stakeholders at different levels that influence quality of social services through their expectations and/or actions. Moreover, the agenda included the presentation of an analysis of existing quality criteria for social services and

their definition in social economy organisations, in particular co-operatives (see previous article).

In addition, partners had the occasion to have an insight in the application of the participatory TSR@ approach in Faenza. This information fed into a first brainstorming on possible methods to define local quality criteria for social services through the participation of all relevant stakeholders.

In the beginning of December 2009, TQS partners, i.e. local authorities and social economy organisations, will start in-depth research on existing processes to define quality criteria for



Launch of local research on different stakeholders influencing quality of social services and their relationships between each other

social services in their cities and regions. Focus points herein will be, for instance:

a) relationships between different stakeholders and governance levels that influence quality in social services;

b) methods and means for information and interaction between different stakeholders, or

c) ways to fulfil pre-conditions for quality in SSGI such as accessibility, knowledge of the territory and the population's needs or an adequate sharing of resources.

At the same time, REVES, the European Network of Cities and Regions for the Social Economy, will carry out research on already

existing methods for participation in different policy fields.

After conclusion of their research, TQS partners will meet again in June 2010 in Gdynia (PL). They will discuss first proposals for a concrete methodology for a participatory definition of local quality criteria in SSGI. (ek)

News from the European Commission: Implementation of the Services Directive

Commission website providing details on implementation of the services directive in EU member states

The three year period given to the EU member states to implement the "Directive on services in the internal market" (short: Services Directive) is coming to an end on 28 December 2009. Different measures were taken. Most member states decided to adopt specific (horizontal) legislation. Some countries such as France and Germany, in turn, are integrating the general principles of the directive in already existing pieces of legislation.

Detailed information on the implementation process in each member state, including related decisions and other documents issued by the European Commission, the Council and the European Parliament, can be found on the websites of the Commission at:

http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/services/services-dir/news_en.htm or http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/services/services-dir/implementation_en.htm.

Calendar

June 2010 (tbc): Workshop "Participatory definition of quality criteria in social services of general interest: Which methods?", Gdynia (PL)

October 2010 (tbc): Final conference - Presentation of the results of the TQS project, Brussels (BE)

27-28 October 2010: Third European Forum on Social Services of General Interest, Belgium (date and place to be confirmed)



The project “Territorial Quality Standards of Social Services in General Interest”

Objective of the project:

The objective of this project is to develop local mechanisms for a participatory (re-)definition and measurement of local quality standards for social services of general interest which would respond to local needs and provide an orientation for service users, providers, local authorities and other relevant parts of the local community.

More specifically, the project aims to develop and test:

- Mechanisms to identify criteria for the definition of local quality standards: Who should participate in the definition of these standards, when and how, by which means etc.?
- Mechanisms to ensure that local quality standards are coherent with national and European minimum requirements as well as with international benchmarks
- Mechanisms to identify useful *indicators* for quality in SSGI
- Mechanisms to improve local policies concerning the provision of SSGI, based on the aforementioned analysis of local quality standards

Actions foreseen (15 December 2008 - 31 October 2010):

1. Analysis on existing European guidelines/obligations regarding quality assessment and standards in SSGI
2. Analysis on quality standards applied in the performance of social economy service providers
3. European level analysis on methods for the definition of quality in SSGI
4. Analysis on the definition and application of quality standards in SSGI at local level
5. Developing and testing methods for the definition of local quality standards in SSGI
6. Elaboration of a Vademecum for local authorities and other local actors
7. Conception and publication of recommendations to local, national and European decision-makers as well as to social economy

Outputs:

- Vademecum for local and regional authorities (political decision-makers and administration in general), social economy and other service providers
- Political recommendations to local, national and European decision-makers as well as to social economy
- Short communication package (including summary of the project findings, a bibliography, relevant websites and contacts)
- Specific section on REVES website

Partners:

- Cooperatives Europe (BE)
- CECOP (BE)
- Region Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (FR)
- Pfefferwerk Foundation Berlin (DE)
- Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (DE)
- Prefecture of Piraeus (GR)
- PARSEC Consortium Soc. Coop.(IT)
- Province of Piacenza - Consortium SOL.CO Piacenza (IT)
- City of Livorno - Arci Solidarietà ONLUS (IT)
- City of Faenza - Zerocento Società Cooperativa Sociale ONLUS - Cooperativa Educativa Famiglie Faentine C.E.F.F. - RicercAzione Società Cooperativa Sociale (IT)
- City of Pordenone (IT)
- City of Gdynia (PL)
- SERUS (SE)
- Association of local authorities of the County of Jämtland (SE)
- Coompanion (SE)

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