

Quality Study 10 Belgium (Flanders) case study

At a glance

- Decentralized delivery of social services by three linguistic communities.
- The Healthcare Inspectorate audits all services financed by the Flemish Ministry of Welfare, Public Health and Family, analysing both technical requirements and client perception and satisfaction.
- Since 2019, services funded by the Ministry for Economy, Innovation, Work, Social Economy, and Agriculture have to be registered and obtain a quality certification. Various certifications are accepted by the Flemish government; EQUASS is not among them.
- Local providers participate in the elaboration of certifications.

Quality trends

Belgium is a federacy in which responsibilities for social and health services are divided between the federal level, three regions (Flemish, Walloon and Brussels Capital) and three linguistic communities (French, Flemish, and German). From 2013, there has been a substantial devolution of responsibilities for different care sectors from the federal level to the regionsⁱ. Consequently, national level institutions are responsible for social welfare and employment, while the so-called person-related matters: **health policy (sanitary education and preventive medicine) and assistance to individuals (social welfare, aid to families, protection of youth, immigrant assistance services) fall into the hands of the three communities**ⁱⁱ. Due to the narrow scope of research, this fact sheet focuses on the regulations and quality trends in Flanders, where the Community and Regional institutions have been merged.

The regulation of different care services and their quality depends on the funder. Services funded by the Healthcare Ministry (for example, disabled care, daycare, mental healthcare, residential elderly care, home care, hospitals) are regularly audited by the Healthcare Inspectorate¹. These audits have a specific approach for each sector. The audit also includes interviews and surveys with staff and clients. Information on audits is made public and can be consulted openly by all interest parties. There is no cost for organizations to certify.

On the 2nd of September, 2019 the Decree concerning the quality and registration model of service providers in the Work and Social Economy policy area² entered into force.

The decree applies to service providers working in the sector of employment policy, professional training, and the social economy. The decree foresees that all providers must be registered and fulfill the minimum quality conditions in terms of customer focus, personnel management, and financial management. There are three different ways to confirm that these requirements are met: to have a recognized quality certification (Figure 1 presents the certification systems recognized by the Flemish government); to be

Figure 1 - Certificates recognized by the Flemish government

- Qfor WSE
- Qfor ProcessScan
- Prose niveau A+, A en B
- RSS (Recruitment, Search and Selection)
- K2a en K2b
- EFQM Excellence Award 5*
- EFQM Recognised for Excellence 4*
- NIAZ: Nederlands Instituut voor Accreditatie in de Zorg
- JCI: Joint Commission International
- ISO 9001
- ISO 29990
- ISO 29993

¹ Zorginspectie, <https://www.departementwvg.be/home-zorginspectie-organisaties>

² Decreet betreffende het kwaliteits- en registratiemodel van dienstverleners in het beleidsdomein Werk en Sociale Economie
<https://codex.vlaanderen.be/Zoeken/Document.aspx?DID=1031586¶m=inhoud&ref=search&AVIDS=>



certified in another sector (e.g., education); or to hold a certification issued by the Flemish government. A new certification will become available in 2021. Currently, service providers within Work and Social Economyⁱⁱⁱ can obtain temporary certification issued by the Flemish Employment and Vocational Training Service.

Table 1 Six minimal criteria for Flemish providers offering services in work and social economy^{iv}

Service to customers	The service provider uses human resources methodologies for their employees in the field of recruitment and selection, integration, follow-up, performance, and evaluation of employees.
	The service provider and their staff have subject-related knowledge and experience, and there are mechanisms for maintaining it. The service provider reinforces the expertise of their staff through guidance, support, and training initiatives.
Personnel management	Human resources methodologies: there are tools or methodologies in place for staff management, development and evaluation of staff performance.
	Personnel: service provider staff works with an employment contract or as temporary workers.
Financial management	The service provider is responsible for periodic follow-up of their budget planning. The service provider conducts financial management with a schedule that is regularly monitored. Account keeping follows accounting rules. Government subsidies and premiums are spent efficiently.
	The service provider monitors their revenues, costs, investments, and asset liquidity, and solvency.

Concluding, **there is a move towards a stricter and more organized oversight of quality in different social services**. One interviewed provider maintained that they do not expect big changes in the foreseeable future as it will take time to implement the current regulation. Moreover, the organization expected that the government also would make audit results available to the public, similarly as it is done in the healthcare sector. Finally, the requirement for service providers to become certified by September 2021 most probably will lead to more active certification among them.

Place of EQUASS in the overall system

One interviewed provider mentioned participating in the elaboration of new quality standards, which will be included in the governmental list of recognized certificates, the EQUASS is not among them.

The certification under elaboration at the time of drafting this study in late 2019 is based on the Supported Employment Quality Framework (SEQF) and adapted to the Flemish reality. The SEQF is developed upon a detailed comparison of different quality systems and the Supported Employment model and principles: EFQM, EQUASS Assurance, ESF Flanders quality model, Quality Standards (EUSE/BASE).

The certification will target organizations working with supported employment as it reflects their challenges and needs. While the providers interviewed do not see a market for EQUASS in the region, one can observe that the list of governmentally recognized certifications is open to change and expansion. Thus the effort might be made to include an extra certification, arguing that they a) cover the minimal standards foreseen by the Flemish government b) reflect a reality of specific type of services.



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ⁱ Pacolet, J., de Wispelaere, F. (2018) *ESPN Thematic Report on Challenges in long-term care: Belgium*, European Commission, p. 4.

ⁱⁱ <https://portal.cor.europa.eu/divisionpowers/Pages/Belgium-Introduction.aspx>

ⁱⁱⁱ Kwaliteits en Registratiemodel van Dienstverleners in het beleidsdomein werk en sociale economie. Infossession presentation, 4th of July, 2019, VAC Gent.

^{iv} Besluit van de Vlaamse Regering tot uitvoering van het decreet van 29 maart 2019 betreffende het kwaliteits- en registratiemodel van dienstverleners in het beleidsdomein Werk en Sociale Economie, <https://codex.vlaanderen.be/PrintDocument.ashx?id=1032143&datum=&geannoteerd=true&print=false#H109523>
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