



# European Network of Public Employment Services

## Quality Management in PES

Thematic paper

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

A PES Working Group (WG) was established in 2021 to exchange good practices and knowledge on Quality Management (QM) within the PES Network, with the aim of strengthening QM in PES. Three virtual WG meetings were held between October 2021 and the end of March 2022.

The WG was jointly hosted by the Austrian (AMS) and German PES (BA). A further seven PES participated: Belgium-VDAB, Croatia, Estonia, Iceland, Lithuania, Portugal and Spain.

This paper summarises the outcomes of this WG and embeds them in a wider QM framework.

### Focus of the Working Group

QM as a holistic approach is an important topic for PES and needs to be reflected upon and adapted over time. All WG members were invited to specify their priority topics within the QM sphere.

The following list summarises the results of that process and forms the outline for this paper:

- 1) Learn about the range of QM models and relative advantages and disadvantages.
- 2) Devise ways to create a culture of QM.
- 3) Know how to involve customers in developing processes and products.
- 4) Build knowledge on customer feedback methods and their relative efficacy.
- 5) Share experiences on self-assessment in practice.
- 6) Study project management and portfolio management.

To deepen the work on these topics, good practices from all PES were shared and discussed in the WG.

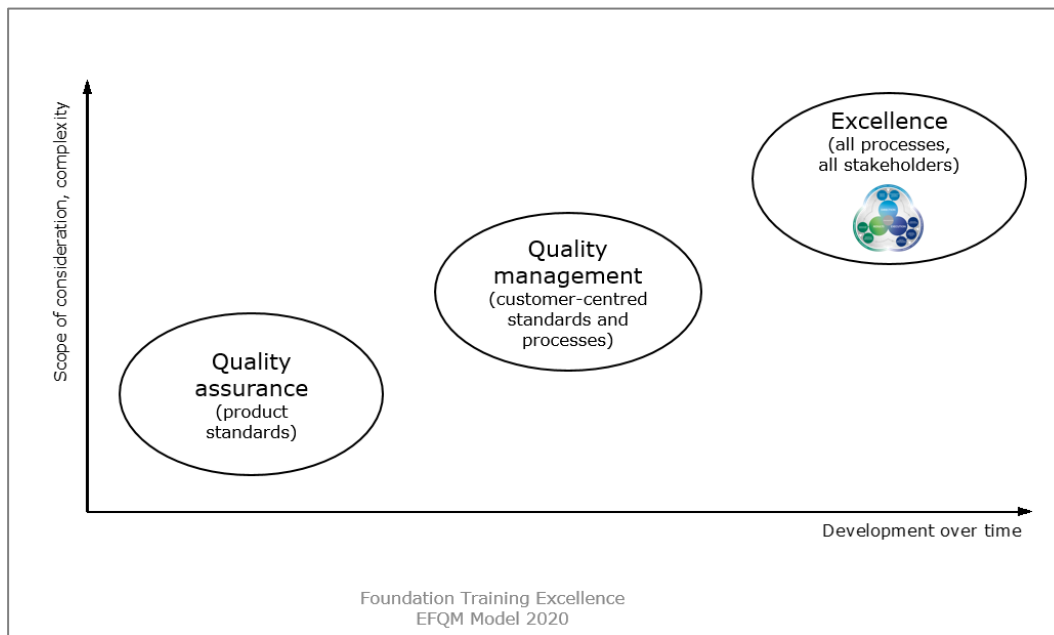
## 2. QUALITY MANAGEMENT MODELS - OVERVIEW AND COMPARISON

### 2.1 Overview of the different Quality Management (QM) models

#### Historical development

The focus of quality and QM has widened in recent decades. Increasingly, it includes all processes within the organisation and is used to build sustainable relationships with all key stakeholders, not only with customers. Following these developments, the various QM models evolved and became more complex and holistic. One important step was a move from *product* quality to *process* quality, which led to the inclusion of the whole organisation in QM.

This evolution effectively began in the 1950s and 60s, with a growing interest in Quality Assurance (QA), which grew into the more expansive QM in the 1970s and 80s, with an emphasis on measuring customer satisfaction. The main difference between these earlier approaches to quality measurement and the current emphasis on excellence is in the complexity of the latter – with more stakeholder involvement, additional elements, and challenges in its use. Figure 1, below, demonstrates the development from quality to excellence.

**Figure 1: Development of organisational quality**

Source: Quality Austria 2022

After sharing the experiences WG members have had with QM models, we will discuss selected models to understand the different structures and focuses, before going on to compare them. At the end of this section, some guiding principles are set out to support PES in choosing the model that is suitable for their organisation.

#### **PES experiences with QM models:**

- **Focusing on the client without using a specific model** – allows the PES to focus on the awareness of client satisfaction. A disadvantage is the difficulty of adopting improvement measures uniformly across the organisation (e.g. used by PT).
- **ISO 9001** – helps to define management processes, core operational processes and supporting processes. Audits show compliance with the requirements, providing recommendations and suggestions for improvement to those responsible for managing the process (e.g. used by LT; use being discussed by IS).
- **CAF** (Common Assessment Framework) – strengths of the model include its compatibility with public institutions. It is free of charge and less complex to introduce in PES compared with, for example, the EFQM model (e.g. plans to use CAF in HR).
- **PES Benchlearning (BL) model** – aims at creating a systematic and integrated link between benchmarking and mutual learning activities. It supports PES to improve their performance by comparing themselves with peer PES and learning from them via qualitative and quantitative assessments of their performance. The aim of BL is to launch an evidence-based self-sustaining system of continuous and measurable performance increases in PES, leading to better results and contributing to the effective functioning, and convergence, of labour markets<sup>1</sup> (e.g. EE's new assessment model for regional offices is based on CAF and the PES BL model).
- **EFQM** (European Foundation for Quality Management) model – promotes a common understanding of which dimensions are important, and should therefore be prioritised, to manage the organisation holistically. The approach integrates

<sup>1</sup> See: European Network of Public Employment Services - [PES Network Benchlearning Manual 2021](#).

strategy development, process, and goal orientation, as well as customer and employee orientation, in the long term. Using RADAR logic helps to close control loops and identify strengths and areas for improvement. Translating the requirements and suggestions from the theoretical model into the workings of the PES can be challenging (e.g. used by AT, BE-VDAB, DE since 2020).

- **EVAM model** – the Spanish model for public administration, adapted from EFQM, is a recommended model for provincial directorates. A self-assessment tool, including a questionnaire, supports units with limited management capacity. The test combines the vision of management, following the phases of the PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, Act) cycle. EVAM may be more easily accepted within an organisation when EFQM is seen as too complex to apply (e.g. used by ES).

In the following, the various QM models are explained, and suggestions made to adapt approaches already used and/or help with the implementation of models that PES may adopt in the future (ISO 9004, PES BL model).

### Structure and elements of QM models

- QM models follow the **PDCA cycle** (Plan, Do, Check, Act – also known as the Deming Circle/Cycle).
- All models offer **requirements** and suggestions that can be implemented; depending on previous knowledge, it can be very challenging to understand what is expected.
- Some models have additional **evaluation tools** to identify strengths and/or areas for improvement, and to score or evaluate the maturity or excellence level of the organisation (e.g. EFQM with RADAR logic, ISO 9004 with self-assessment-tool).
- The EFQM model provides a **development path**, using a self-image approach to describe (e.g. via a questionnaire), evaluate (using RADAR logic) and improve the organisation.
- With some models, organisations can receive a **certificate** (e.g. ISO 9001 with external audits); with others, alternative methods of external recognition are possible (e.g. EFQM with external assessments).

The following sub-sections provide an overview of selected elements of the models already mentioned, including references to the differences and similarities in the approaches.

They are intended to encourage in-depth discussion, and do not claim to be comprehensive.

#### *2.1.1 ISO 9001 (2015 standard)*

ISO 9001 is not the model most utilised in the organisations represented by the PES WG members, but it is very popular, widespread, and successfully implemented in sectors of all sizes around the world. It builds upon seven **Quality Management Principles** (QMPs):

- QMP 1 – Customer focus;
- QMP 2 – Leadership;
- QMP 3 – Engagement of people;
- QMP 4 – Process approach;
- QMP 5 – Improvement;
- QMP 6 – Evidence-based decision-making;
- QMP 7 – Relationship management.

These QMPs help to decide whether the orientation of the 'norm' aligns with the existing vision and culture of the organisation. Alternatively, they can provide the basic structure for establishing an organisation's values and strategies.

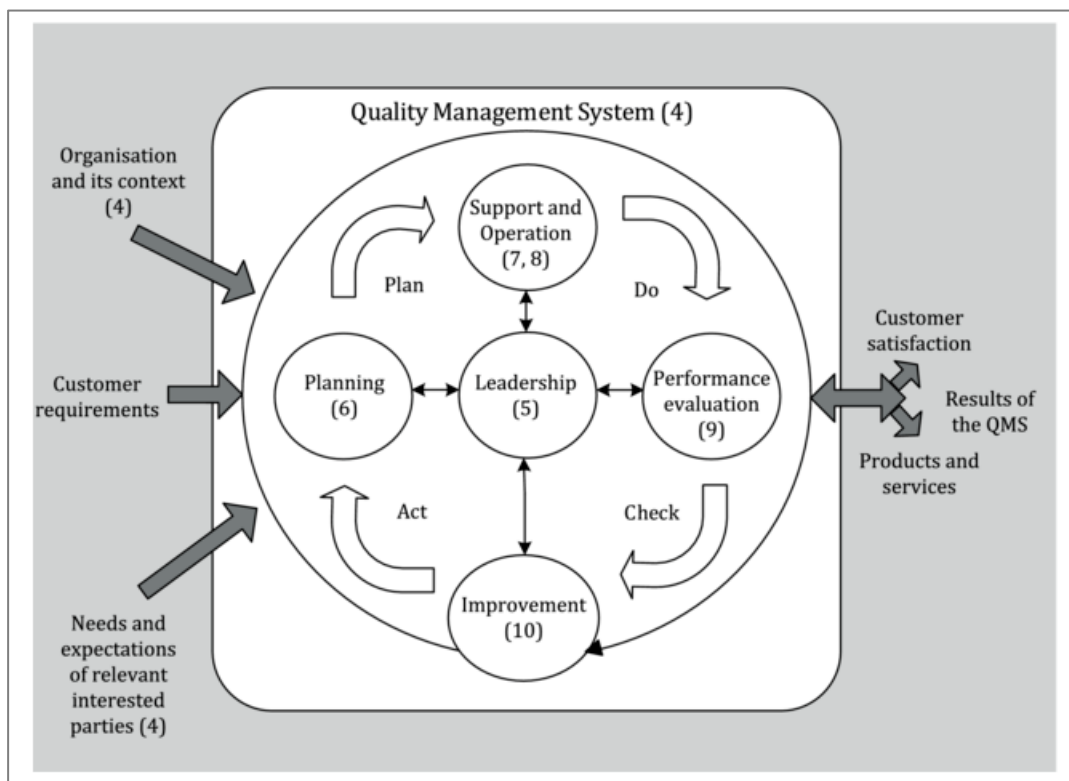


### ISO 9001:2015 standard (structure, requirements)

The emphasis is on customer needs and achieving customer satisfaction. It does not include the creation of a comprehensive self-image (though it does entail descriptions of processes, vision, strategy, and some outcomes).

ISO 9001 follows the previously cited Deming Circle, with 'Plan, Do, Check and Act' (PDCA) describing requirements that must be fulfilled to meet the standard. Besides customer requirements, the needs and expectations of other relevant interested parties must be determined, and their influence on the QM system understood. The focus of this system is to reach customer satisfaction, with the ability to consistently provide products and services that meet customer and regulatory requirements. The PDCA cycle can be applied to all processes and to the QM system as a whole. Figure 2, below, illustrates how clauses 4–10 can be grouped in relation to the PDCA cycle.

**Figure 2: Representation of the structure of ISO 9001 in the PDCA cycle**



Source: ISO 9001:2015. Quality Management systems — requirements

#### 2.1.2 EFQM approach (model 2020)

##### Developing an organisation towards excellence

EFQM is the most holistic and open model because it also assesses the strengths of the organisation. Thus, while ISO 9001, for instance, only evaluates whether a standard is fulfilled or not, EFQM also measures 'over-fulfilment' of a standard, towards excellence.

The aim of the EFQM approach is to create an understanding of how to design a path to take the organisation in the direction of excellence. Excellent organisations achieve and sustain outstanding levels of performance that meet or exceed the expectations of important stakeholders.

The following advantages of the EFQM approach are also helpful to PES, supporting them in solving their individual challenges. Benefits for organisations that increase their level of organisational excellence are on different levels: better results (e.g. better economic performance, higher effectiveness and efficiency); better image (e.g. more emotional

customer loyalty, more willingness to recommend, higher attractiveness as an employer); more attractive corporate culture (e.g. more reflection, higher motivation, enthusiasm and performance of the people – more involvement, participation and commitment); more agility and robustness (e.g. more proactive handling of change requirements); more transparency, clearer governance, better balance with all relevant stakeholders (e.g. in-depth discussion, maintaining sustainable relationships); and strong focus on the long-term perspective (sustainability comprehensively understood, including ecological, economic and social aspects).

The suggested development towards excellence proposes three steps that can be repeated regularly:

- **Describe:** following the excellence approach, the organisation captures and describes the approaches it has deployed and results it has achieved, using a self-description process. This description can be of varying depth and scope and refers to the model criteria (see example of questionnaire in Figure 8).
- **Evaluate:** the self-description produced will be evaluated with the RADAR logic. This reflective process makes visible the organisation's strengths, potentials and current level (score), and summarises them in a report. The evaluation can be done by internal (e.g. colleagues from other sites of the PES) or external assessors (e.g. from other PES or companies of other branches to learn from them).
- **Improve:** the identified strengths and potentials are prioritised and turned into concrete suggestions for improvement, which are then converted into actions and projects. It is important that actions are not just focused on reducing potentials, but also on expanding or increasing identified strengths.

#### **EFQM model criteria (structure, content)**

The EFQM model's structure is based on the simple but powerful logic of asking three questions, and inviting the organisation to reflect upon them (see Figure 3 below):

- **WHY** does this organisation exist? What purpose does it fulfil? Why did it choose this particular strategy? (direction)
- **HOW** does it intend to deliver on its purpose and strategy? (execution)
- **WHAT** has it achieved to date? What does it intend to achieve in the future? (results)

**Figure 3: EFQM model 2020 – criteria**



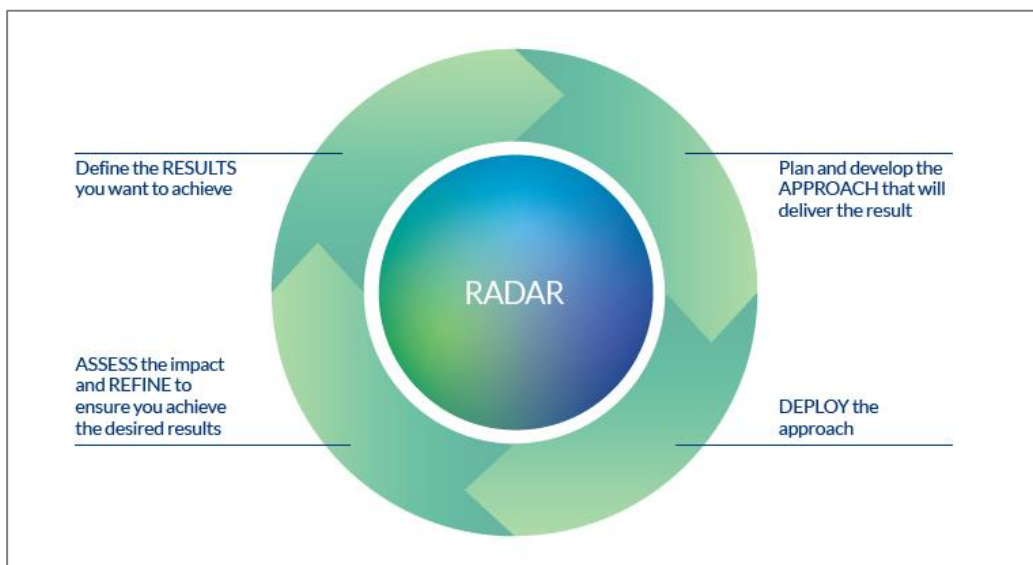
Source: [The EFQM Model, revised 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, EFQM 2021](#)

The seven criteria and the underlying sub-criteria help to understand which actions or enablers are important to reach organisational excellence, including the results that should be demonstrated.

**RADAR (assessment, scoring)**

The self-description of an organisation within the EFQM model is evaluated using the RADAR logic. The elements of RADAR are Results, Approaches, Deployment, Assessment and Refinement. RADAR helps to identify where an organisation’s strengths and opportunities for improvement lie. It is a tool that builds upon the PDCA cycle and incorporates scoring, to show what level of excellence (points between 1 and 1,000) has been reached. Figure 4 provides an overview of this diagnostic tool.

**Figure 4: RADAR diagnostic tool**



Source: The EFQM Model, revised 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, EFQM 2021

### 2.1.3 CAF – Common Assessment Framework

The CAF is the first European quality management tool specifically designed for the public sector. It has taken information from the EFQM model, which is sometimes very general, then translated and tailored it explicitly for the public context. The purpose of the guidelines (which include helpful examples) is to support public administrations to deliver or develop higher quality.

Based on EFQM's 2013 version, the CAF is self-explanatory to use and has simple evaluation tools at all levels, particularly for scoring enablers and results. It has the added advantage that it is compatible with the RADAR tool. Thus, it is a good way to start the excellence journey.

Figure 5, below, displays the enablers assessment panel in CAF classical scoring. The organisation needs to find evidence of strengths and weaknesses and choose the level reached within each phase. The method of scoring is cumulative: each phase must be accomplished before the next step is reached.

**Figure 5: Enablers panel – classical scoring**

ENABLERS PANEL – CLASSICAL SCORING		
PHASE	ENABLERS PANEL - CLASSICAL SCORING	SCORE
	We are not active in this field, we have no information or very anecdotal.	0-10
PLAN	We have a plan to do this.	11-30
DO	We are implementing / doing this.	31-50
CHECK	We check / review if we do the right things in the right way.	51-70
ACT	On the basis of checking / reviews we adjust if necessary.	71-90
PDCA	Everything we do, we plan, implement, check and adjust regularly and we learn from others. We are in a continuous improvement cycle on this issue.	91-100

Source: [CAF – Common Assessment Framework 2020](#), European CAF Resource Centre, European Institute of Public Administration, 2019, p. 54

The 2020 version of the CAF is still based on the EFQM model 2013, therefore the content does not reflect the new EFQM model 2020.

### 2.1.4 PES Network Benchlearning approach

The PES Network's benchlearning (BL) tool provides a detailed model and approach for PES, combining self- and external-assessment. BL is defined as a process for creating a systematic and integrated link between benchmarking and mutual learning activities in all the fields that are usually covered by a PES. The concept was put into practice in 2015. According to the PES BL manual, 'the general reason for benchlearning is to support each PES to improve their own performance through a structured and systematic reflection on their performance against the performance of an ideal PES and through institutional learning from peers'.<sup>2</sup>

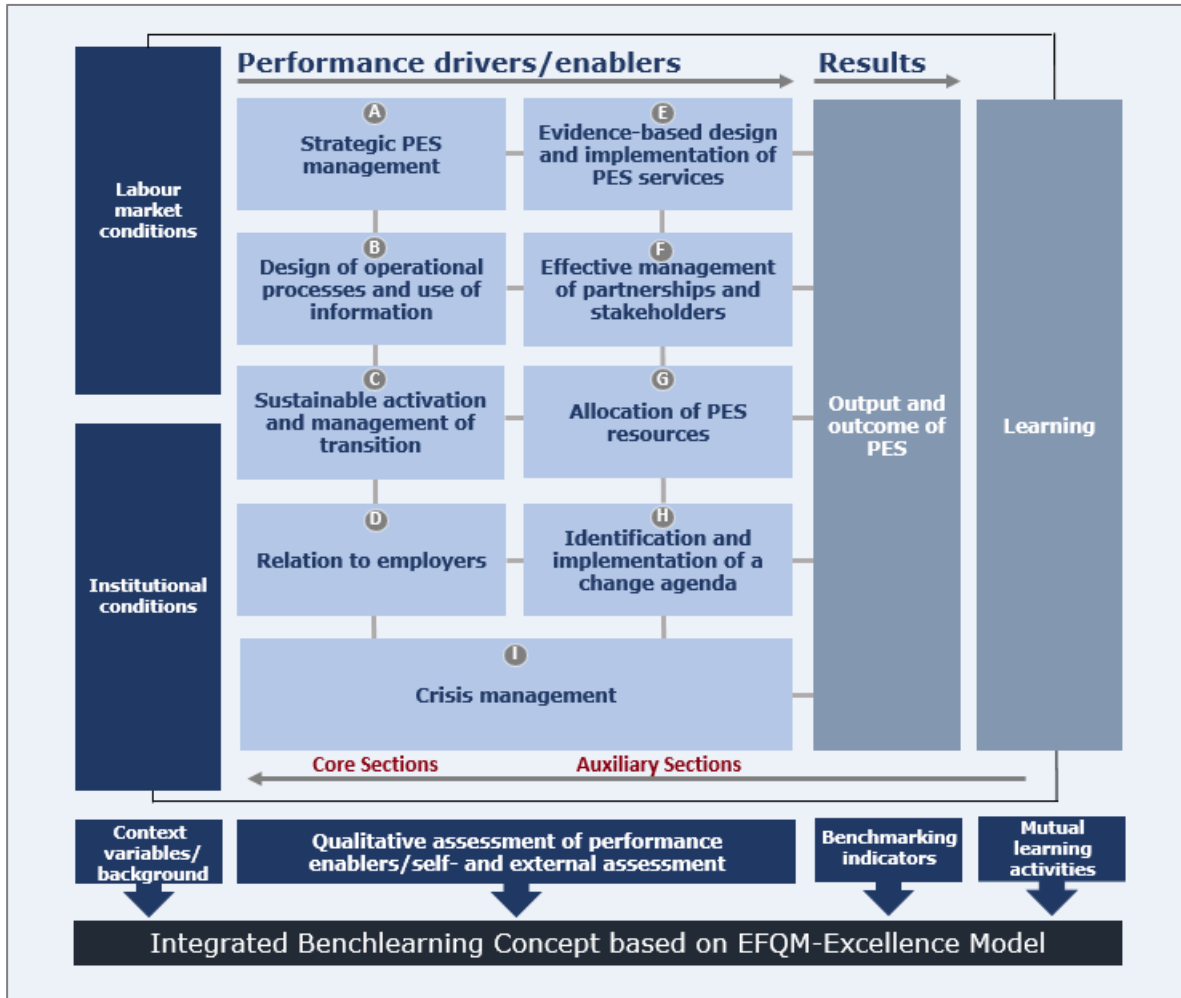
To support the benchmarking activities (including quantitative and qualitative elements), the individual national context in which PES operate is taken into account. PES

<sup>2</sup> See: [European Network of Public Employment Services - PES Network Benchlearning Manual 2021](#), p.1.

benchlearning is based on the CAF model (which, in turn, comes from the EFQM Excellence model 2013) and on the PDCA cycle.

The PES BL process includes a clearly formulated and agreed definition of theoretical PES excellence. All areas of this definition, and how they are embedded in the PES context, are outlined in Figure 6.

**Figure 6: Description of the PES Benchlearning model and assessment process**



Source: European Network of Public Employment Services - PES Network Benchlearning Manual 2021, p.6

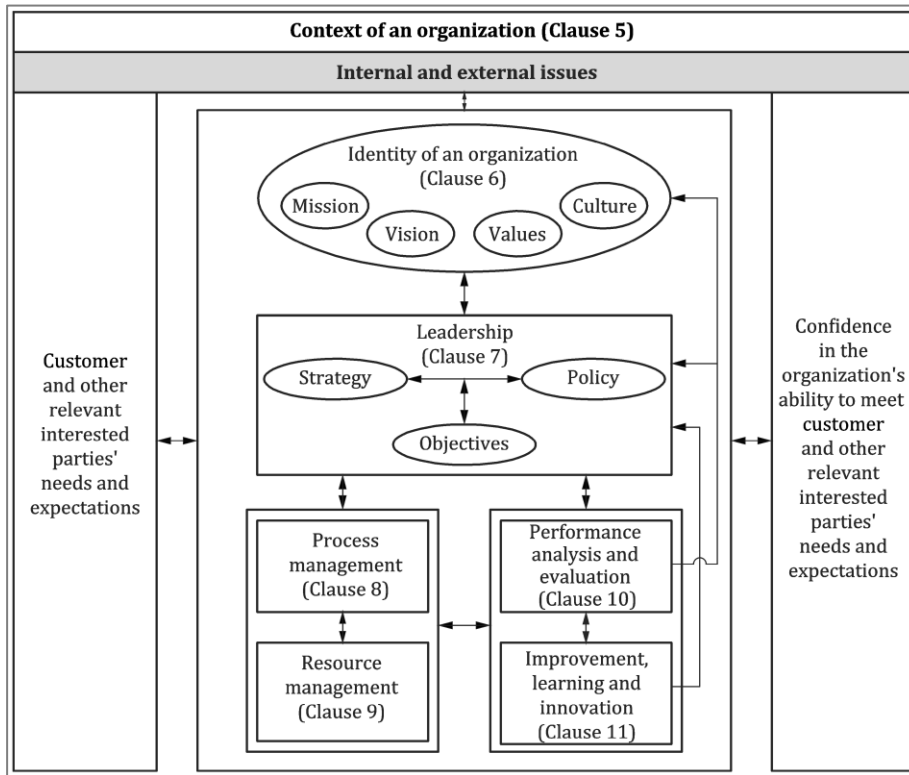
The PES BL model supports valuable, targeted and effective mutual exchange among PES in Europe. Ultimately, it aims to create a rich database containing information on European PES performance outcomes, performance enablers, and their relationship.

### 2.1.5 ISO 9004:2018 – guidelines to achieve sustained success

While ISO 9001 endeavours to secure confidence in an organisation’s products and services, ISO 9004 focuses on providing confidence in the organisation’s ability to achieve sustained success. The systematic development of the overall performance should meet the expectations of all relevant stakeholders, not only the customers.

With a self-evaluation tool that can be used with little prior experience, it can be suggested as a good starting point towards achieving excellence. Figure 7 provides an overview of the ISO 9004 structure.

**Figure 7: Representation of the structure of ISO 9004**



Source: Quality management – Quality of an organisation – Guidance to achieve sustained success, ISO 9004:2018

ISO 9004 provides a self-assessment tool that can be used without deeper knowledge of ISO 9001, or other QM models. The application of this model provides a holistic view of the performance of the organisation and the level of maturity of its management system. It helps to identify areas for improvement and determines priorities for action. Besides using the tool for the whole organisation (macro-focus), it can help to develop single processes or activities (micro-focus).

For each element of the structure (see clause 5–11 above), five maturity levels are defined. The organisation can compare its present situation to the listed scenarios. Deciding which maturity level should be reached (or is necessary to fulfil the defined strategy) demonstrates the gaps that need to be closed.

Figure 8, below, further explains by providing an example of a grid to assess the maturity level for the sub-clause 'relevant interested parties'.

**Figure 8: Example of maturity levels for the sub-clause 'relevant interested parties'**

Subclause	Maturity level		Conclusion	
	Level	Item <sup>a</sup>	YES	Results/comment <sup>b</sup>
5.2 Relevant interested parties	1	The interested parties are determined, including their needs and expectations and whether the associated risks and opportunities are informal or ad hoc.		
	2	Processes to meet the needs of some interested parties are established.		
		Ongoing relationships with interested parties are established as informal or ad hoc.		
	3	Processes for determining which interested parties are relevant are in place.		
		Processes for determining the relevance of interested parties include consideration of those that are a risk to sustained success if their needs and expectations are not met and those that can provide opportunities to enhance sustained success.		
		The needs and expectations of the relevant interested parties are identified.		
	4	Processes to fulfil the needs and expectations of the interested parties are established.		
		Processes for assessing the relevance of the needs and expectations for relevant interested parties are in place and are used to determine which ones need to be addressed.		
	5	The needs and expectations of key interested parties are addressed and reviewed such that improved performance, common understanding of objectives and values, and enhanced stability have been realized in some of these ongoing relationships.		
		Processes and relationships with relevant interested parties are fulfilled according to the relevant needs and expectations determined. This has been done as part of understanding the benefits, risks and opportunities of ongoing relationships.		
		The needs and expectations of all relevant interested parties are addressed, analysed, evaluated and reviewed, such that there is improved and sustained performance, common understanding of objectives and values, and enhanced stability, including recognition of the benefits derived from these ongoing relationships.		
<sup>a</sup> Items outlined in levels 3 to 5 are intended to be a progression of thought that is based on the guidance provided in the applicable subclause.				
<sup>b</sup> This may include recognition of aspects where the organization is partially meeting a maturity level.				

Source: Quality management – Quality of an organization – Guidance to achieve sustained success ISO 9004:2018

Compared with EFQM, this tool combines the content of the criteria model with RADAR. It can be described as a 'one-stop-shop', which makes the application much easier, especially for beginners.

### 2.1.6 Discussions and conclusions

#### Discussion of examples and approaches

One main difference between ISO 9001 and EFQM is the fact that the ISO standard is often required by customers of the company, to ensure that a certain minimum standard in QM is fulfilled and demonstrated, while EFQM is mainly used as a holistic development tool to support the company towards a higher organisational quality. With EFQM, focus or motivation is, in many cases, more internally driven (besides the fact that its holistic approach deals with the wider context and key stakeholders), because this model is not as widespread or well known as ISO 9001. Furthermore:

- ISO 9001 historically focuses on identifying deviations, highlighting where the standard is not fulfilled. EFQM additionally invites us to expand existing strengths and to use them more widely in the organisation or ecosystem.



- While ISO 9001 takes care of delivering the products and services of an organisation, ISO 9004 focuses on providing confidence in the organisation's ability to achieve sustained success – as does EFQM.
- EFQM reminds and invites us to take a holistic responsibility, including ecological, economic and social aspects. Following EFQM methodology, the organisation benchmarks with the 'best in class' to learn and further improve.
- CAF and the PES Benchmarking approach are models already customised for selected sectors, and therefore make beginning the process much easier.
- The role of the EFQM model and how KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) need to be linked to PES strategy is important – excellence means that the organisation can reach the set targets or strategies.
- PES WG members using the EFQM approach agreed that it provided the opportunity for a more holistic approach. There was also support from some participants for the EFQM because although it may be, in parts, more challenging than some other models, it is easier to use throughout an organisation, particularly where a regional structure dominates.

### Conclusions and learning

From the discussions during the PES WG, it became clear that the most important strategy was to **choose the model that fits to the organisation's knowledge and maturity level, as well as the vision/strategy and culture**. Some guiding principles to select an appropriate model include:

- Beginners may start with a self-assessment, using maturity levels like ISO 9004 or the PES BL approach; experts may prefer an external EFQM assessment (including feedback from external assessors or experts).
- Beginners in the PES sector may use CAF (because the requirements for what constitutes excellence or maturity are clearly described and 'translated' for the sectors); experts may use more 'open' models (to widen the view and find individual interpretations of the requirements or specific solutions).
- Beginners may focus on the needs of the customers (e.g. using ISO 9001); experts will try to fulfil the expectations of all key stakeholders (e.g. using ISO 9004, EFQM, PES BL approach). More advanced organisations can use EFQM and where 'key words' used in the approach are not clear, it is recommended to refer to the requirements of ISO 9004 for inspiration.
- Beginners may focus on performance indicators; experts additionally try to demonstrate ecological and social responsibility.
- Beginners may conduct an assessment without creating a self-image (learning mostly takes place during the site visit and is based on the feedback report); experts can describe the organisation and make the document available to the assessors before the site visit (learning starts while creating the self-image, different views have to be merged, gaps related to the criteria or their implementation are immediately visible).
- For finding the most appropriate level of using the models, it is essential to look at the resources available. If resources for improvements are in short supply, an in-depth assessment might only lead to frustration in the organisation because action for improvement cannot be implemented within the set time frame.

## 2.2 Creating a culture of Quality Management

### Understanding the culture



Creating a QM culture is considered the most challenging aspect of the process and can require a long-term commitment to bringing about desired change.

The model of organisational culture (by Schein) shows that some aspects can be visible (such as behaviour, timing, etc.) while others are invisible and therefore difficult to monitor (e.g. through appropriate KPIs), to determine if change is happening.

**How to develop the culture**

Besides leadership, criterion 2 of the EFQM model also focuses on defining and promoting culture. Different ways to enable the desired culture can be seen in Figure 9, below:

**Figure 9: Criterion 2 – EFQM model**



Source: Quality Austria UQEG 2022

*2.2.1 Good practices and conclusions*

**Creating a QM culture: good practices from the WG**

The example of the Good Practice Award in the Austrian PES illustrates efforts to create a QM culture in PES. This initiative has been operating since 2008 and has become an established part of the calendar for its regional offices, with staff nominating projects to be considered by a jury for the annual award.

This encourages the exchange of good practice projects and mutual learning among the staff in the different PES regions. Bids are evaluated according to the effect on improvement, regional transferability, innovation, and gender equality.

**Conclusions and learning**

According to the EFQM approach, culture is the specific collection of values and norms shared by people within an organisation that influence behaviour (e.g. how people communicate with each other or interact with external customers).

In many cases, we see that culture is the core that provides the underlying 'what' and 'how' actions are taken, and what type of behaviour is undesirable or not suitable. Sometimes it is helpful to analyse the existing culture to understand the main elements and manifestations.

All quality-related activities (e.g. internal or external audits or assessments) build upon the organisational culture. The invisible parts of the culture often shape behaviour more

than official rules and regulations. An appreciative reflection on culture enables sensitive issues to be addressed and changes to be initiated (e.g. by focusing on the parts and behaviour of the desired culture that have already been implemented or achieved).

### **3. CUSTOMER INVOLVEMENT AND CUSTOMER FEEDBACK**

#### **3.1 How to involve customers in developing processes and products**

There are different methods for ensuring customers can be involved in developing processes that traditionally were managed by the organisation itself. Agile methods (e.g. rapid prototyping, design thinking) support the organisation's ability to change direction/focus in response to an emerging opportunity or threat, in a timely way.

Involving customers in developing processes and products is strongly connected with cultural aspects of PES, which must recognise the potential value of such involvement. There has not yet been a significant amount of (systematic) practice or experience in PES regarding the involvement of customers in process and product development. However, co-created products can lead to customers being more positively disposed to PES services, provided that their inputs do lead to real change.

EFQM reminds us that the 'prosumer' can be engaged in designing the products, services or solutions they wish to consume. The digital world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century offers significant potential. Besides the fact that participation of the customer in the developing process secures products according to their wishes (i.e. customers know which problem needs to be solved and what alternative solutions might be best suited), involvement often increases customer loyalty. This is due to the more intensive exchange and increased communication and interaction that comes as part of the cooperation. Risks are also reduced because deviations are identified more quickly and customer feedback is more precise, making it easier to take corrective action.

EFQM invites organisations to use insights about the target groups for defining and implementing the overall experience. It is important that the different phases of value creation fit together, seamlessly and consistently. Additionally – besides all standardisation – opportunities to personalise the overall experience of the target groups should be taken, using different resources and competencies.

The next sub-section demonstrates an interesting method for involving existing and potential customers. Additionally, the vision of involving internal staff from different parts and levels of the organisation was realised.

#### **3.2 Good practices and conclusions**

##### **Customer involvement and feedback: Good practices from the WG**

With its 'BA of the Future' initiative, the German PES (BA) has taken a different path to the traditional customer feedback techniques by conducting personal interviews with existing and potential customers (jobseekers and employers).

The action was stimulated by feedback from the 2018 PES assessment of the BA. This rich source of information (including that gathered from working groups across the whole organisation) was then combined with trend data on, for example, digitalisation, to help shape the service provision of the future. Testing of the use of the information showed the need for concepts to be adapted to different agencies within the BA, but the process of a national rollout has started. One example of how the process has been used is the move to better connect different parts of the service (including new counselling methods), which was influenced by valuable customer feedback.

The key strengths of the approach include the involvement of staff across the organisation. The main challenges are the time involved and resources required. Also, there can occasionally be a conflict of interest between what customers want and the interests (and regulations) of the PES.

### **Conclusions and learning**

- It is important that staff are adequately trained to gather customer feedback and properly document the results. The EFQM model speaks in this context about the importance of having the necessary resources and competencies, and of the empowerment of the people involved.
- The results can be used as a helpful input to adjust or change the PES strategy.
- The effect of the findings on changing the culture of the organisation may not be immediately obvious but positive long-term effects are expected.
- Sometimes existing or future customers do not know exactly what they are expecting from the organisation – the organisation must therefore also be courageous and proactive in setting trends and devising products.

### **3.3 Customer feedback methods and their efficacy**

#### **Methods of collecting customer feedback**

Key issues to discuss include consideration of the range of options available, especially exploiting the opportunities presented by social media. But all approaches should aim to make it attractive for the customer to participate, and to demonstrate how the information will be used and why it will be useful.

Customer feedback can be obtained through traditional methods such as surveys. Bias, for example, can be present in responses (e.g. surveys with a small response rate can be dominated by certain groups of customers) and should be controlled if possible.

The offer of an incentive could help increase survey response rates, but asking the appropriate questions remains an important factor in the quality (and quantity) of responses.

### **3.4 Good practices and conclusions**

#### **Collecting customer feedback: Good practices from the WG**

In Belgium, the Flemish PES (VDAB) uses the 'Hello Customer' tool. This provides customer feedback via a 'touchpoint' tool that asks for a response on satisfaction levels. A dashboard shows all the results, which are analysed rapidly and fed through to the work of counsellors, thus completing the loop. A demonstration of the tool showed its interactivity and potential value in improving service delivery. The approach, for example, allows feedback from employers on customers placed by the PES, to be compared with that from the customer placed. All the information is used by managers and team leaders and is linked to KPIs. The key strengths of the system were summarised as the extensive response range (meaning also less risk of bias) and the immediacy of the overview it can provide. The major challenge is the time taken to configure the approach, given its dependency on IT systems.

Another way to gain customer feedback – via an online questionnaire – is implemented in the Croatian PES, offering a different perspective on using IT to gather information. This involves customers (employers and jobseekers) and PES staff and has been piloted in two regions, with the intention to roll it out nationally when fully tried and tested. The questionnaire has three types of inquiry, starting with general questions (basic levels of satisfaction with services), specific questions (on business processes), and questions

related to any proposed changes (from the customer perspective). One issue emerging from the pilot schemes was the importance of the timing of the survey – it was first issued in July 2021 but then extended beyond the summer to September, due to a limited response. The findings from the survey have enabled the identification of aspects of delivery that need attention and some changes have been made to key indicators.

### **Conclusions and learning**

Three lessons learned from implementing the 'Hello Customer tool' can be outlined as: provide training for staff; close the loop by ensuring all information is available; and insert the approach into monitoring and KPIs.

Lessons learned from using the online questionnaire are covered under the following four points: an online tool can be quick and can capture a large sample but depends on the digital literacy of customers; shorter questionnaires are likely to result in higher response rates but may suffer in the quality of response; the timing of implementation of the survey can be crucial to success; and reaction to the survey results needs to be swift to be most effective in bringing about change.

Overall conclusions and key points:

- Response rates can be affected by using different methods (for example, texting) and the reliability (believability) of the results should be examined.
- Capturing the views of counsellors is a very positive aspect of both approaches.
- Considering the length of any questionnaire (i.e. the shorter the better for higher response rates) and its most appropriate timing (e.g. not launched during a vacation period) are crucial to achieve useful response rates.
- The results of such inquiries must be seen to be used by PES, including team leaders and individual counsellors, where appropriate.
- Different levels of access to IT and the ability to use it means that certain segments of the customer base will need to be engaged with in more direct ways, such as telephone or face-to-face contact.
- Linking the results of surveys with QM models and KPIs is essential if the activities are to be useful in bringing about a change of culture in the PES (e.g. the knowledge of which processes significantly influence the queried KPIs helps to initiate necessary control measures, if necessary).

## **4. SELF-ASSESSMENT IN PRACTICE**

### **4.1 Good practices and conclusions**

The WG on QM featured several examples of regional self-assessment. The Estonian PES uses three QM approaches – CAF, PES BL, and internal assessments of regional offices, deployed in different years since 2010. In 2021, a new approach to regional offices was set up (based on CAF and the PES BL model) to understand more about what was successful and why. Pilot regions are testing the process at various stages through to November 2022. A new internal assessment model was created that required a trained team of assessors.

Germany adopted an EFQM model from 2018, in search of a more holistic approach to QM. In this, the focus has been on self-assessment at different levels in the PES, with results shared to spread good practice. In Austria, the EFQM model is also used for internal assessment by regional offices, though with a high degree of flexibility in its application. Assessors from head office and the regions are involved and around two to three days are spent onsite holding discussions with staff at all levels, including some from local offices within a region, with each office falling into a three-yearly cycle. Where the need for

improvements have been identified, a report on progress is required within two years. An external assessment is held every fourth year.

The examples show the complexity of creating a self-image for an assessment, following the EFQM approach. If a questionnaire is used to describe the organisation, knowledge about the seven criteria and the RADAR logic is helpful. Figure 10 and Figure 11, below, give examples of such self-image questionnaires.

Figure 10: Example of self-image questionnaire – criterion 1 to 5

3.1 Criterion 1: Purpose, Vision & Strategy  
An outstanding organisation is defined by a purpose that inspires, a vision that is aspirational and a strategy that delivers.

Criterion 1	Status quo of organisation		
	Approaches	Deployment	Improvement
1.1 Define Purpose & Vision How are purpose and aspirational vision that resonates with its stakeholders developed? How are stakeholder involved in definition, shaping and communicating purpose and vision?			

**Approaches**

Please describe most important procedures, processes and routines related to the question  
⇒ *"That's what we have planned"*

- Have important stakeholders helped to shape or develop the procedures?
- Do the procedures help to fulfil and respond to the stakeholders needs?
- Are the procedures designed to be fit for the future?
- Do the procedures support the organisation's direction and strategy?
- Are the procedures coordinated or linked with other routines if necessary?

**Deployment**

Please describe how you implement your approaches, procedures or processes in the organisation  
⇒ *"That's how we put it into practice"*

- Is the deployment of the procedures done in relevant areas or parts of the organisation?
- Is the realisation of the procedures effective?
- Is it implemented in a timely manner?
- Does the execution enable flexibility and adaption if necessary?

**Improvement**

Please describe how you already assess and refine approaches and their deployment for development  
⇒ *"That's how we already improve it"*

- Is feedback on the effectiveness (doing the right things) and efficiency (doing it right) collected or measured?
- Is the feedback understood and shared?
- Are findings from measurements, trend analysis or benchmarking used to improve performance in appropriate timescales?
- Are creativity and learning used to generate innovative solutions for the approaches and their deployment?

Source: Quality Austria

Figure 11: Example of self-image questionnaire – criterion 6 and 7

6B People Perception Results  
Provide the most important KPI regarding people perception

Description of key figure	2016	2017	2018	2019
Year				
Actual				
Plan				
Benchmark				

How is data segmented?  
Additional note on key figure:

7D Strategic & Operational Results for Business & Governing Stakeholders  
Provide the most important KPI to forecast and ensure future, strategic performance regarding business and governing stakeholders

Description of key figure	2016	2017	2018	2019
Year				
Actual				
Plan				
Benchmark				

How is data segmented?  
Additional note on key figure:

**6: Stakeholder Perceptions**

Please describe results that are based on (direct) feedback of key stakeholders showing how they perceive and see the organisation  
⇒ *"That's how stakeholders perceive the organisation"*

- These perceptions relate to key stakeholders
  - Feedback from surveys, focus groups, ratings (e.g. delivery and after-sales support)
  - Information from press or social media (e.g. impact of governance and operations of the organisation on community)
  - External recognition, advocacy, structured review meetings (e.g. overall experience of dealing with the organisation)
  - Investor reports and compliments/complaints
  - Feedback compiled by customer relationship management teams
  - ...

**7: Strategic & Operat. Performance**

Please describe results that are used by the organisation to monitor, understand and improve its overall performance or to forecast future performance  
⇒ *"That's what we monitor and forecast our performance"*

- Results to monitor and improve current, operational performance:
  - Indicators related to the fulfilment of key stakeholders' expectations
  - Indicators related to the achievement of operational or financial objectives
  - Indicators to measure or improve operational performance
  - ...
- Results to forecast and ensure future, strategic performance:
  - Indicators to forecast the perceptions of key stakeholders
  - Indicators related to achievements of strategic objectives
  - Indicators to forecast future performance
  - ...

Source: Quality Austria

## Conclusions and learning

- The models used for the self-assessments invite the organisation to reflect on different topics: leadership, planning, partnerships, employees, processes, results of regional performance plans, employee-related results, and customer-related results. The importance of the PDCA cycle in everyday work and on a strategic level is reinforced.
- Self-assessments provide an opportunity to learn and improve by viewing the work of different parts of the organisation (e.g. assessors visiting regional offices).
- Resources required to make it work effectively must be planned and provided. In particular, the creation of a self-image takes time and needs an experienced team.
- From a long-term perspective, internal assessments allow benchmarking and comparisons between the different regions, and support learning from each other and the adoption of good practices.
- It is not necessary to rank regional offices according to certain performance criteria and outcomes from assessments do not need to appear in any performance indicators.
- The focus is therefore on identifying strengths and opportunities to improve, using the outcome of the assessment to define activities to develop the organisation.

## 5. PROJECT- AND PORTFOLIO-MANAGEMENT

### 5.1 Good practices and conclusions

The WG on QM also discussed good practice examples of project management and portfolio management. The Flemish PES VDAB, for instance, uses the Portfolio Management Office (PMO). This practice goes back to 2019, when the PES adopted an ambitious strategy involving various projects, with a need to manage each effectively. The PMO underpins structure in project execution with requirements for effective project leadership and regular information contributing to a comprehensive database, as well as a roadmap for implementation with stages and responsibilities shown. The so-called 'PMO Flow' asks a series of questions on projects under six headings: ideate, create, shape, build, adopt, and evaluate. Projects are monitored and project leaders and managers use a comprehensive database featuring colour-coded information on implementation, with a calendar and clear responsibilities.

In the Icelandic PES the Four Disciplines of Execution (4DX) approach is providing an off-the-shelf way of bringing structure and accountability to projects involving different stakeholders. The model has four focus points: decide what needs to improve; define a productive and influenceable measure; keep a scoreboard; and hold accountability meetings. In particular, the model encourages the participation of relevant players at all levels in the organisation, including regular accountability meetings and keeping people engaged until an issue is resolved, without impinging too much on their time.

## Conclusions and learning

- To handle a wide range of projects, a PMO helps to keep control of them, allows the prioritisation of projects (e.g. strategic importance), masters complexity and ensures the sharing of project outcomes across the PES.
- The interaction and balance between ownership of single projects (e.g. by the project manager) and responsibility of the project portfolio (e.g. by the PMO) must be secured.
- The 4DX approach fits well with the discussion about excellence because it supports organisations to reach outstanding results. Starting with lead measures (Discipline 1) that drive the achievement of the most important goals (Discipline 2), a



compelling scoreboard (Discipline 3) is used, and accountability (Discipline 4) brings everything together.

- Using 4DX means to focus and reduce complexity, so it can be conducted alongside daily business. It is more about narrowing the goals than to expand them, because if you follow more than two to three goals you will not be able to reach them with excellence. To start, it is best to focus on a single goal over a timespan of at least three to six weeks, so the model is not suitable for very short-term objectives. It can be challenging to clearly identify what is the task and how to measure objectives and progress.
- The 4DX approach helps to identify and understand important cause-and-effect relationships and supports the prediction of important goals – all topics that are directly related to EFQM.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The highlights of the WG's discussions, learnings and conclusions are presented below:

### **QM models – overview and comparison**

The various QM models have changed over recent decades and become more complex and holistic (e.g. by including all processes of the organisation, focusing on all relevant stakeholders, considering the whole ecosystem, and taking wider responsibility in ecological, economic and social fields). Some approaches guide and support the organisation in the direction of sustainable management. The structures of the models follow the PDCA cycle (Plan, Do, Check, Act – including a mindset that supports continuous improvement) and offer content that should be implemented to reach a standard or to become excellent or outstanding.

The experiences of the PES show that some focus on QM topics without using a specific model, or use self-developed models, while others use one or more established approaches or consider changing to another system. To choose the approach that fits to the PES, it is helpful to check what knowledge exists of the models, take into consideration the maturity level of the organisation, the vision/strategy regarding its goals and desired outcomes, the culture, and the resources available to run and improve the system.

### **Creating a culture of Quality Management**

Organisational culture can be seen as a powerful framework to run QM within the organisation. It helps to reinforce the commitment of the relevant stakeholders, to engage and support the organisation's vision and strategy.

It is therefore necessary to understand the current culture, identify gaps and promote the desired culture. One activity to deepen culture in the fields of creativity and innovation is demonstrated in the Good Practice Award of the Austrian PES. It has a clear impact on improvement and innovation, regional transferability of outcomes and learning, and gender equality – all important elements of a successful organisational culture.

The role of management in changing the QM culture is central. Role models are essential to promote and consolidate the desired culture.

### **Customer involvement and customer feedback**

Following the concept of many QM models, it is an important activity to get feedback from, or to engage, relevant stakeholders, such as customers or key partners. Different methods such as (online) questionnaires, interviews, discussions or dialogues can be used.

Feedback collected through survey methods needs to use questionnaires that are clear in their questions and show the expected completion time. The need for anonymity should be considered, which may depend on how the results will be used. Raising response rates can

be encouraged by asking questions of direct relevance to customers. Findings should be considered with open minds and applied to what changes are needed.

However, what customers want may not always be compatible with what PES are able to do. Nevertheless, in time, more extensive changes might be possible (for example, via a change in legislation). Linking the results of surveys with QM models and culture is essential if the outcomes are to be useful to steer and improve the PES (e.g. using KPIs).

### **Self-assessment in practice**

As a starting point, self-assessment is essentially a tool to understand the organisation. The focus should be on what is necessary, to minimise complexity. In any process, the auditors or assessors are crucial and must be properly trained and committed. CAF has the advantage that it can be used at different levels in an organisation, but success in any method will benefit from the right culture. Activities can be focused at sub-national levels, which was evident in the PES examples presented. If this indirectly encourages competition between areas, then this may be a positive outcome.

To decide which assessment method fits to the PES, it is helpful to consider the level of maturity of the organisation in the understanding of the base approach (e.g. EFQM), as well as past experience of self-assessment. The expected level of robustness, accuracy, consistency, and detail of the outcomes of the assessment determines the processes of data collection and evaluation. And as we have seen in many discussions, the level of dedicated resources can limit the possibilities and methods.

### **Project and portfolio management**

The project and portfolio management approaches offer alternative ways of ensuring the value of development initiatives are maximised and support the direction of the organisation. In the highly structured PMO approach, there are many elements that need to come together if it is to be successful, though it may be the best approach where PES are going through many changes simultaneously.

In contrast, the use of the 4DX approach can be more easily accommodated in everyday activities since it should impose only limited resource requirements on staff. In any case, the successful interaction between the projects must be secured (e.g. to share resources).



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