GUIDE FOR THE APPLICATION OF THE EFQM SELF-ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY IN PARTNERSHIPS
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1. INTRODUCTION

This guide aims at making available to all entities / partnerships a methodology for self-evaluation in partnership projects, which was implemented under the project 2WORKSAFE, and was based on the EFQM methodology and in their self-assessment questionnaire.

Therefore this guide consists in the narrative of the experience of the project 2WORKSAFE in using this methodology for its self-assessment, the description of the followed steps, the main difficulties encountered, how they were overcome, as well as some suggestions for future applications.
2. THE EFQM METHODOLOGY AND THE SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

In addition to the external assessment, it was also predicted a self-assessment for this project based on the methodology of EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) which includes a questionnaire for self-assessment (Determining Excellence, Taking the first steps - the questionnaire approach, EFQM ). This questionnaire was to be applied twice during the project. The first exercise was performed through the implementation of the project, at the middle stage of the implementation, and the second exercise was performed at the end of the project.

The questionnaire was developed to support any organization or company to determine its position on a scale of business excellence. It is based on a tried and tested method of organizational evaluation in a wide range of aspects, which altogether define excellence in terms of capabilities and organizational outcomes.

The questionnaire considers EXCELLENCE in a broader sense and not merely considers the aspects of quality management systems (such as ISO 9000). It analyzes issues such as the efficiency of procedures, obtaining continuous improvement in products and services, the organization's commitment in developing their human resources to achieve their goals and excellent results.

The questionnaire consists in 50 questions, with equal impact on the final result obtained by the organization, and distributed by nine sections or topics, which are:

1. Quality Leadership
2. Policies and Strategies
3. People
4. Partnerships and Resources
5. Processes  
6. Outcomes for clients / target-groups  
7. Results for those involved  
8. Results for society  
9. Performance Results  

These nine aspects constitute the "EFQM Excellence Model". Having been developed by EFQM, nowadays this self-assessment model is used by a large majority of European countries in order to identify the organizations that demonstrate superior performance.

The organizations which decide to fill in the questionnaire may expect the following benefits:

- Support on the identification of its current positioning in world business and on the determination of the priorities and directions for the future;  
- Possibility to make comparisons with other organizations;  
- Support on the progress monitoring from a base set;  
- Support on the assessment from the organizational members different views, regarding the successes and weaknesses of the organization;  
- Creates a starting point for the implementation of priority improvements. In the meantime, it may persuade the organizations to not move forward with too many improvement measures, simultaneously.

The questionnaire can be completed in different ways:

- individually, for better identification with the EFQM Excellence Model and an individual assessment of the organization;  
- by multiple people individually, whose responses will be aggregated, an average result determined and the areas of greatest divergence of views identified;
• as a group exercise in which the strengths and areas for improvement are analyzed in advance, in order to obtain a result from the group on the organization assessment.

The methodology has also defined the calculation formula of the obtained results by the organization after the exercise of answering to the different issues/topics.

These results may be presented through different ways, which are complementary:
• graphics (bar, radar, etc.);
• within a table, showing the calculations that led to the partial results by topic.
3. THE METHODOLOGY IN PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS

This methodology was originally developed to be applied to companies/organizations. When applying it to a partnership/project it obviously implies some adaptations.

A. Thus, the first adaptation was to think on the partnership as a company, an organization, with the following matches:

- Seniors responsible – elements who represent every partner – Steering Committee;
- Responsible – responsible elements in each partner, for the various activities, participating in the monitoring/coordinating meetings;
- People – other elements in each partner, involved or not in the project.
- Costumers – target-groups, Programme Managers Entities, Companies, employees, individuals;
- Suppliers – other on-going projects in the same field, services suppliers.

B. The next step was to answer to the question presented in each section/topic; analysing their relevance, as for the content and as for the time being, adapting to the partnership reality. Here the 2WorSafe Partnership opted to elect a facilitator, a person from the coordinator partner, who made a brief adaptation of each question to the context of the partnership and project. Every partner was invited to present its punctuation to each question and to add comments as a support to its punctuation/evaluation.
In the first application of the questionnaire, some non-applicable questions were defined, in order not to be considered in the field of the project self-assessment:

- 4. Partnerships and Resources – Questions 4 and 5
- 7. Results for People Involved – Questions 1, 2 and 3.

These questions were related to company resources, such as building, equipment, materials, new technologies and, by the other hand, with aspects as absenteeism, staff turnover, training, accident rates, which shouldn’t be consider in the field of the partnership.

C. The timing of the questionnaire application (the exercise of self-assessment) is also relevant. When it was applied in the project mid-term, one could verified that some questions had to be punctuated as “not started”, due to the fact that there weren’t results yet or the project time wasn’t sufficient for a correct evaluation. Here, we can give as example, the questions of the topics 6, 8 and 9.

When applied at the end of the project, it was possible to answer to all those questions.

D. The partnership used different ways when filling out the questionnaire, in two different moments of the self-assessment: project mid-term and project end. Thus, in the mid-term self-assessment, it opted for an individual exercise (one partner – one answer) and obtaining consensus in the partnership meeting in which the self-assessment exercise was conducted. At the end of the project, for the self-assessment, the partnership opted to answer to certain topic in a more widely way (one answer per topic) due to the difficulty of differentiate the answers per question.
E. A graphic bar was used to present the results: global results and results per topic. A analysis per topic was also added, outlining the main comments made by each partner, during the self-assessment exercise.
Results on the application of the EFQM methodology, at the end of the Project.

Example of the analysis per topic:

1. Leadership
   - Achievement for the Leadership was 80%
     - Management Plan is our strategic statement and it is in use.
     - Organizational structure has been set up.
     - Management platform was set up and the documents are there
     - There was an upgrade in the communication in between the meetings. Management platform and email are now in active use.
       ➢ We still have to do more in the contact with our customers.

5. Processes
   - Achievement for Processes is 100%
     - We have set up good documentation system: management platform.
     - We have the Diagnosis of training needs and the Questionnaire of training needs available online at http://www.ctcp.pt/inovacao/2worksafe/
     - We have self-assessment system: EFQM Determining Excellence.
     - We have project work plans.
     - We have evaluation in every meeting.
     - We discussed and discuss the results of evaluation at every meeting at the very beginning.
     - We have the Panel of external experts
       ➢ We have the outcomes and now is possible to understand if the aims will be achieved.
4. MAIN DIFFICULTIES / STRATEGIES TO OVERCOMING

The main difficulties encountered in the self-assessment exercises were related to the ability to see the partnership as an organization and to adapt the questions presented in the questionnaire to the partnership reality.

Therefore, it’s important to be provided with some elements in the partnership with some prior experience on applying this methodology in a similar context, who can clarify every question, adapting each one of them to the reality of the partnership, outlining the aspect under consideration in every question.

The advantages of using this methodology are beyond the fact that it is a tool widely used in Europe and available in several languages, being able to analyze the performance of the partnership in a huge number of aspects which can be considered keys to the success of the project, supporting the individual reflection as well as the contribution of each partner to the project objectives, facilitating the detection of trigger points for improvement and corrective actions.
5. HOW TO ACCEDE TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire described above is accessible only through the publication: EFQM – Determining Excellence, Taking the first steps – a questionnaire approach, EFQM, Brussels.

In Portugal it can be acquired through the APQ - Portuguese Association for Quality (English version).

There are versions in Spanish, Italian, and many other languages.
6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Occupational EFQM – Determining Excellence, Taking the first steps – a questionnaire approach, EFQM, Brussels
- www.efqm.org
- www.apq.pt