



UN Expert Group on National Quality Assurance Frameworks
Comments on NQAFs (received in response to the questions in the
13 August 2010 EG launch letter/e-mail):
Switzerland: Nicolas Mlynek, 6 September 2010

Please find below my answers to the four questions in your e-mail, from the point of view of FSO, Federal Statistical Office in Switzerland :

1) What are your country's or agency's experiences – if any – with the development or use of an NQAF?

We have developed a quality framework for our Statistical Office, based on the Common Assessment Framework, a version of the EFQM for public management. As you know, this framework is a model for Total Quality Management. We chose this model for several reasons, the main was to put in place a top-down strategy for quality in three layers : beginning from a TQM model (layer quality management), through a set of quality tools helping in reaching goals (layer quality assurance) down to quality tools helping in measuring quality (layer quality control). Of course these three levels are developed in coordination but with different speeds. A TQM approach is a long-term vision and has no upper limit (except in terms of budget), quality control tools are more operational and in place quicker.

In parallel, we are currently developing a tool that is trying to map all the recommendations that apply to us in the top layer TQM : Code Of Practice, EFQM and recommendations of LEG on Quality. The idea is to monitor all the measures that contribute to fulfill the recommendations mentioned before, and secondly to try to reduce the work needed for updates in having this follow-up in one tool.

Relevant paper on this topic : *"Implementation of a TQM approach: CAF as a quality cockpit ?"* – paper for the Q2010 conference in Helsinki 4 – 6 May. 2010, by Nicolas Mlynek, see <http://q2010.stat.fi/papers/>.

But this approach is valid for our Statistical Office, this is not really a national framework. This is due to the specific organization of Switzerland that has 26 cantons, more or less 26 countries in one country.

2) What problems and obstacles have you experienced or anticipate experiencing in developing and implementing an NQAF?

In the development phase of the project, the main source of problems or obstacles was to get a common set of definitions : what is quality ? Quality assurance ? Quality management ? Quality is well known in our office, and a great number of measures or tools are in place already. But quality does not necessarily mean the same for all.

Concerning the implementation, the main obstacle was our ambition : we planned to address all the three layers (TQM, Quality Assurance, Quality Control) at the same time, probably too much. This project coincide with other major transverse projects in our Office.

3) What are the main needs and priorities from a country perspective vis-à-vis the development and implementation of an NQAF?

We would strongly suggest that this new assurance framework be developed not as just another recommendation or as a minimal requirement, but as an overarching one that could be used as a reference by all. As mentioned before, there's already a huge number of recommendations, tools, handbooks, etc ... and sometimes they are redundant, sometimes incomplete. This initiative is the occasion of combining all this material.

Another point we would like to mention is on the content of the NQAF : we would



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strongly support the suggestion made to enrich the future framework with examples and measurable indicators. These examples could come from identified best practices, practices that are working already. Indicators can be goals to reach for a specific best practice.

I personally participated in defining and implementing a NOAF in a different field, and the result that was the most appreciated was to gain a consensus among all the national partners on what are the minimum requirements for us, in our country, in our specific field of activity. To obtain this, we documented every indicateur with best practices and defined for every indicator a value to reach at minimum. These values were hard to define ! But as a result, almost all the partners at the end said that this is the state-of-the-art for us.

4) What are your initial comments regarding the three proposed templates for a generic NOAF presented in the Statistics Canada report ?

We think that the best model to achieve this goal is the first one (the Canadian model of a quality assurance framework): it is very clear in defining and structuring the aims of a quality system, and it stays at a sufficiently general level at the same time.

Best regards,

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