

Abstract of the Study of Tools

QUALITY OF NGOS IN EUROPE



ABSTRACT



GOBIERNO
DE ESPAÑA

MINISTERIO
DE DERECHOS SOCIALES
Y AGENDA 2030



POR SOLIDARIDAD
OTROS FINES DE INTERÉS SOCIAL

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Authors:

Nora Daoud
Israel Sánchez
CAIS

Coordination:

Ana Santa Mata
Laura Miranda Gómez
Institute for the Quality of NGO - ICONG

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PRESENTATION



PRESENTATION

Since 2008, the Institute for the Quality of NGOs - ICONG is established as a non-profit association, as the result of the desire of the Spanish Third Sector to work together in the field of quality. The Institute aims to disseminate and promote the culture of quality and the incorporation of quality systems in the Third Sector.

This document is an operational summary of the report on the Study of Tools named “Quality of NGOs in Europe”, published in November 2022 and developed under the programme “Alliances for the Quality of NGOs in Europe, funded by the Ministry of Social Rights and Agenda 2030.

**For more information,
please visit our website**



<https://icong.org>



**Report on the Study of
Tools named “Quality of
NGOs in Europe”**

INTRODUCTION & CHALLENGES



INTRODUCTION & CHALLENGES

In ICONG we have been working in quality in the Spanish Third Sector since its creation. We developed our own NGO Quality Standard, certification process and capacity building opportunities. But back in 2018 we started wondering, are there other organizations in Europe doing something similar?

Our curiosity led us to develop this study in order to understand what European organisations were doing in terms of quality management. In this document we wanted to summarise the results of this study, to bring them closer to all the people who, like us, are curious.

The focus has been on asking questions, becoming familiar with, and understanding the logics and the situation in the European Third Sector in this first contact. With a view that the priority was not exhaustive statistical analysis, but rather observational discovery work, we gradually let go of that responsibility and worked to shape three different approaches:

- **Towards the object: tools**
- **Towards the subject: organizations**
- **Towards the system: power and gender**

We wanted to identify a series of key magnitudes linked to the object of study and see how they related and correlated with each other, specifically designing the techniques and tools to capture these relationships.

- **Dimension 1- How are organizations funded?**
- **Dimension 2- How is the Third Sector organized?**
- **Dimension 3- How is the gender perspective integrated?**

Knowing what's out there has been the challenge that has encouraged us in this European exploration... and some questions have been our guide.

- **What tools do European NGOs use for quality management?**
- **Are there any specific ones for NGOs and the third sector?**
- **Are they governed by ethical principles and Values?**
- **Are they mandatory and required by funders?**
- **What is the main motivation for an NGO to choose?**
- **What are the characteristics of their ecosystem?**
- **What can we learn from them?**
- **How can we enrich each other?**

With this perspective in mind, we began the journey that has led us to these results. We hope you enjoy it as much as we did.

*The Third Sector, representing organised civil society, is a term coined from economics and refers to the set of social activities that are not driven by the profit motive and do not depend on either the state or the market to function. Multiple terms are often used to refer to the Third Sector: non-profit, non-governmental, civil society, social economy...

METHODOLOGY & RESULTS



METHODOLOGY & RESULTS

As with all research, we started with some suppositions or assumptions about what we thought was happening in Europe in order to contrast them. These suppositions are based on our own experience in the field of quality for NGOs in Spain, and our interest has been to contrast them, for which we have developed a methodology based on surveys and interviews.

With this perspective in mind, we develop the **six hypotheses** on which the study is based and from which the different approaches, variables and objects of study are derived. Among them we include:

- 2** **hypotheses** about the use of quality tools in regard to the funding of the organization.
- 2** **hypotheses** about the use of quality tools in regard to the structure and composition of the Third Sector in the country.
- 1** **hypothesis** about the representativeness of the organization in regard to the diversification of sources of funding.
- 1** **hypothesis** about the integration of the gender perspective in the tools used by the organizations.

This is the starting point for the research process described below, which is divided into four phases.

MARCH - MAY

PHASE 1

It seemed essential to us, as a starting point, to investigate other studies, reports, papers, and articles on the Third Sector at the European level, as well as on quality management in Europe, always through the scope of its application to NGOs and the Third Sector. With this information and deep research, we built a **database** of more than 900 relevant organizations that were representative of:

- The third sector of all the countries of interest, most of the pan-European countries.
- Their sectoral scope, including social action, human rights, cooperation, and development...
- Their typology, meaning first, second, or third level, or singular organizations*.

* Definition of these terms can be found in the [study, section 2](#).

MAY - AUGUST

PHASE 2

In the process of data collection, we continued with the development and dissemination of an **online survey**. This is based on the hypotheses of the study and is designed in four sections:

- Data on the person filling in the survey.
- General data about the organisation.
- Questions about the use of quality models & tools.
- Questions about the third sector in the territorial scope.

The survey was open for four months and available in three languages (English, French and Spanish). A total of 74 responses to the survey were received, of which 54 organizations completed the survey to the end.

* This survey can be found in the Annex 1 [of the study report](#).

JULY - SEPTEMBER

PHASE 3

Since the survey allows for limited information to be collected, we set out to conduct in-depth interviews as well. To this end, we developed a script that would allow us to develop points of interest that were not covered in the survey, including the history of the organisations, characteristics of their tools and insight into the third sector and the gender perspective.

Based on the results of the surveys, we identified organizations and persons of reference that are particularly relevant to the object of the research that together with other relevant people in the third sector formed our pool of interviewees, from 12 different countries. A total of eighteen in-depth interviews were conducted.

* This script can be found in the Annex 1 [of the study report](#).

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER

PHASE 4

Once all the information had been collected, we were in a position to validate or refute the initial hypotheses. In the design of the survey as well as in the script of the personal interview, the different variables to be crossed were taken into account in order to establish a framework of analysis that would allow us to shed light on these assumptions.

The result is the validation of 4 out of 6 hypotheses, as the other 2 were not possible to validate within the reach of this study.

Hypothesis 1: *The more dependence on public funding the more use of quality management standards, models, and tools.*

The level of dependence on public funds is particularly relevant in the organizations surveyed, reaching 75%, with more than half of their funding coming from public sources. With these available data and the entities in the sample, we see a direct relationship between public funding and the use of quality management systems.

Hypothesis 2: *The more economic independence & diversification of income, the more use of quality management tools (with versatility, flexibility, and freedom to use).*

More than 81% of the organisations have more than three different sources of income and are the ones that use the most quality management standards, models, and tools. The diversification implies higher levels of coordination, management capacity and efficiency in cross-cutting processes, elements that are usually influenced by this type of tools.

Therefore, the organization's degree of dependence on public funding has a direct correlation with the use of standards.

Hypothesis 3: *The more disorganised the NGO sector, the less use of quality management standards models and tools.*

Most of the studied organizations participate in networks and platforms and as the results show, most of them use quality management standards or models. Moreover, several second or third level organizations have created tools specifically for their network of member organizations.

NETWORK / PLATFORM MEMBERSHIP	TOTAL	% USE OF STANDARDS, MODELS or TOOLS	% DON'T USE OF STANDARDS, MODELS or TOOLS
YES	80,33%	52,46%	11,48%
NO	19,6%	4,92%	6,56%

Hypothesis 4: *The more diverse and heterogeneous in sizes of organizations, the less use of standards, models, and tools.*

Not possible to validate. In order to analyse this hypothesis, a prior study of the third sector in each country should be carried out, together with its strengths, weaknesses, and dialogue with the administration.

Hypothesis 5: *The more diversification of sources of funding in the NGO sector, the more differences in their organization and representativeness.*

Not possible to validate. In order to analyse this hypothesis, a prior study of the third sector in each country should be carried out and this line of research should be investigated by means of a bibliographic search and interviews with key actors in the third sector in each country.

Hypothesis 6: *Quality tools in Europe do not integrate a gender perspective.*

While it might seem that this strong female presence in organizational structures and decision-making processes would have a significant effect on organizational culture and even on quality systems, the data collected do not support this hypothesis.

We have detected a generalized absence of this perspective throughout the study of the tools, perceiving that the organizations either do not recognize its importance or do not see the need to integrate this perspective in their management systems. Only one exception was found in the study.

PORTFOLIO OF TOOLS



PORTFOLIO OF TOOLS

Throughout this process we had the opportunity to discover and learn about various quality management systems in the Third Sector in each country. This portfolio aims to be a bank of tools, knowledge generation, ideas, and possibilities for innovation, fully recognizing that the tools included must provide value to our client: Third-Sector organizations and small or medium-sized NGOs, in any field of intervention in Europe.

To highlight this diversity and heterogeneity, we have chosen a common classification in order to highlight what characterizes, differentiates, or unites them:

- Typology: standards, models, or tools.
- Entity and organisation that developed it.
- Specificity for NGOs, if it's specially designed with the values and principles of the third sector.
- Partial or total scope of the management system covered. By scope we mean whether the system is applicable.
- Sector or field of action/implementation.
- Territory of countries where it applies.
- Public/private nature of the tool.
- Possibility of application to another country or territory.
- Management areas covered.
- Inclusion of gender-related terms.
- Organizations that promote and support it.
- Of particular interest to ICONG.

In total a set of 22 tools are collected, among which we can find 9 standards, 5 models and 9 tools.

Below there are some examples of each of them, from among those contained in the portfolio, and in the map that we developed to illustrate the use of this tools from a territorial perspective, which can be found on our website: www.icong.org/



4. NORMA CALIDAD ICONG



The NGO Quality Standard is a quality management standard created directly at the initiative of the NGO sector and which includes the most modern principles of organizational management, adapting them to the reality of social action.



Type	Standard
Founding organization	ICONG
Specificity for NGOs	Yes
Partial / total scope	Total scope of the management system
Sector / field of action	NGO sector
Territory of application	Spain
Public / private nature	Private
Possibility of application in another country or territory	Yes
Management areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Attending to the needs and expectations of beneficiaries and stakeholders ✓ Improving quality, effectiveness, and efficiency ✓ Towards transparency in resource management ✓ Evaluation and accountability ✓ Good governance ✓ Knowledge generation and transfer ✓ People participation and empowerment ✓ Leadership, people management, and volunteer models ✓ Document management ✓ Process, project, and operational management (control, monitoring, etc.) ✓ Management by values and ethical principles (integrity, human rights, independence, etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender mainstreaming
Includes gender related terms	No
Promoted and supported by	ICONG
Link	https://icong.org/

9. TRUSTED CHARITY STANDARD



PQASSO Quality Mark (Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organizations)

The Trusted Charity Standard has been offered and delivered by NCVO since 2009 and is a nationally recognised quality standard for NGOs. It was previously known as the PQASSO quality mark.

PQASSO (Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organizations) is a performance assessment system and quality mark for NGOs in the UK. The assessments use a peer review system among small NGOs.



Type	Standard
Founding organization	Charities Evaluation Services
Specificity for NGOs	No. It can be used by other types of social enterprises.
Partial / total scope	Total
Sector / field of action	NGO sector
Territory of application	United Kingdom
Public / private nature	Private (public label)
Possibility of application in another country or territory	Yes
Management areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Attending to the needs and expectations of beneficiaries and stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving quality, effectiveness, and efficiency • Towards transparency in resource management ✓ Evaluation and accountability ✓ Good governance ✓ Knowledge generation and transfer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People participation and empowerment ✓ Leadership, people management, and volunteer models <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document management • Process, project, and operational management (control, monitoring, etc.) • Management by values and ethical principles (integrity, human rights, independence, etc.) • Gender mainstreaming
Includes gender related terms	No
Promoted and supported by	NCVO and WCVA
Link	https://trustedstandard.org.uk/trusted-charity-standard/

At ICONG, we liked it because:

This quality model, promoted by a private organization, is publicly recognized. Organizations that are considered to meet a compliance level of 2 or higher are eligible to carry an official UK government seal of endorsement demonstrating that the organization is well managed.

11. THE E-QALIN QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM



The E-Qalin quality management (QM) system for residential homes, home care and services for people with disabilities is the result of a successful Leonardo da Vinci project (2004-2007) funded by the European Commission with partners from Austria, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and Slovenia.



Type	Model
Founding organization	European project (Leonardo da Vinci) with training and consulting agencies together with interest organizations of care home managers and about 50 care homes (AT, DE, IT, LU, SI).
Specificity for NGOs	Yes
Partial / total scope	Total scope of the management system
Sector / field of action	For care homes, home care facilities and services for people with disabilities
Territory of application	Austria, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and Slovenia
Public / private nature	Private
Possibility of application in another country or territory	No
Management areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Attending to the needs and expectations of beneficiaries and stakeholders ✓ Improving quality, effectiveness, and efficiency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Towards transparency in resource management ✓ Evaluation and accountability ✓ Good governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge generation and transfer ✓ People participation and empowerment ✓ Leadership, people management, and volunteer models <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document management • Process, project, and operational management (control, monitoring, etc.) ✓ Management by values and ethical principles (integrity, human rights, independence, etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender mainstreaming
Includes gender related terms	No
Promoted and supported by	Depending on the territory. In Slovenia, a new law was enacted stating that residences must be adapted to implement EQALIN.
Link	https://www.e-qalin.net/

En ICONG nos gustó porque:

“Involvement and training are the key words, so involvement of staff and stakeholders according to the criteria as well” (Dr. Kai Leichsenring).

The key innovation of the EQALIN model is stakeholder involvement, which is systematic for each criterion. In the same way, stakeholder training helps to implement quality management in organizations.

19. MADAC MODEL FOR SELF-ASSESSMENT AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT



The Model for Self-Assessment and Continuous Improvement (MADAC) was developed by F3E and Coordination SUD in 2010. Adapted from the EFQM, MADAC is a practical tool to aid reflection. It allows a global analysis of the different components of an NGO, its areas of practice and its results. It is also a tool for action, which makes it possible to identify the strengths to be consolidated and the areas of improvement to be prioritized in an NGO. It forms a part of a logic of continuous improvement.



Type	Tool
Founding organization	Coordination Sud and F3E
Specificity for NGOs	Yes
Partial / total scope	Total scope of the management system
Sector / field of action	International cooperation and development
Territory of application	France
Public / private nature	Private
Possibility of application in another country or territory	Yes
Management areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Attending to the needs and expectations of beneficiaries and stakeholders ✓ Improving quality, effectiveness, and efficiency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Towards transparency in resource management • Evaluation and accountability ✓ Good governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge generation and transfer ✓ People participation and empowerment ✓ Leadership, people management, and volunteer models <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document management ✓ Process, project, and operational management (control, monitoring, etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management by values and ethical principles (integrity, human rights, independence, etc.) • Gender mainstreaming
Includes gender related terms	No
Promoted and supported by	Coordination Sud and F3E
Link	https://f3e.asso.fr/autour-du-madac-sur-les-demarches-qualite-pour-les-ong/

At ICONG, we liked it because:

Based on the EFQM model, the self-diagnosis and continuous improvement tool (MADAC) has the same referential but tries to make organizations reflect. It wants a more reflective, more flexible tool, although it has its disadvantages (no obligation to develop it, among others).

**CONCLUSSIONS AND
VALUABLE LESSONS
LEARNED FOR THE
SPANISH CONTEXT**



CONCLUSSIONS AND VALUABLE LESSONS LEARNED FOR THE SPANISH CONTEXT

It is important to re-emphasize that this study is not intended to provide a complete mapping of organizations and quality management instruments in Europe. It is a first attempt to explore some standards or models that can give us clues to broaden our knowledge on this subject in Europe and, above all, to continue opening spaces of connection.

With this in mind and in response to the main approaches of the study, we can draw the following conclusions.

On the **organisations** studied in the study, we can find:



A high dependence of most organisations on public funds, which may be local, national, or European.



80% of the organizations surveyed are organised in platforms or networks.

On the **tools** developed or supported by these organisations, we noted that:



80% of them use quality management systems, with the majority using tools or codes.



Around 80% of the entities are not certified in any quality management standard.



Most platforms or networks have created a specific standard, guideline, or tool.

On the **system** in the third sector, in particular in relation to the gender perspective, we find that:

- The organizations surveyed are mostly composed of women.
- The third sector in the countries of the people interviewed perceive that it's feminized, especially in the care and support areas.
- Generalized absence of this perspective throughout the study of the tools, perceiving that the organizations either do not recognize its importance or do not see the need to integrate this perspective in their management systems.

Last but not least, in this process, the interactions, conversations, enquiry, and analysis have brought us new elements that have enriched our vision, and we want to share them in the form of small lesson headlines. Some of them include:

- Moving towards a common language for the Third Sector, as different backgrounds lead to different meanings of the terms we use.
- Need for an in-depth study of the European Third Sector
- Advocacy as a field of work in the European Third Sector
- Dichotomy between recognition vs. volunteering
- ... and many others

In conclusion, more support and participation will be needed to make some of the proposals a reality. From this perspective, strengthening European NGOs becomes a European mandate, so from ICONG we understand that we will have to open the focus and look beyond to continue generating knowledge, exchange and learning between entities to improve their management, an area that all organisations have in common, regardless of their size, origin and area of specialisation.



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