Quality Management Procedures in the Czech Agency of European Educational Programme.

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Introduction

The Czech National Agency of European Educational Programme (NAEP) is a division of the state enterprise House of International Services of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (Dům zahraničních služeb MŠMT). NAEP task is to implement and manage the national part of international programmes providing support of activities associated with schooling, education and other areas in compliance with the rules of sponsor's programme. NAEP covers EU programme like Socrates, Leonardo, Grundtvik, Erasmus, Tempus, eLearning, Monnet, Label, Euroguidance and programme EEA/Norwegian FMP in the area of cooperation among schools/scholarships.

The frame for the NAEP procedures is specified by Decision No 1720/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an action programme in the field of lifelong learning. Decision in article 44 explicitly determines radical administrative simplification of application procedures as essential practice for successful implementation of the programme. Administrative and accounting requirements should be proportional to the size of the grant. Simultaneously article 45 directs or stipulates to take appropriate measures to prevent irregularities and fraud.

International standard ISO 9001define the basic common criteria for quality management procedures. One of the NAEP programme, SOCRATES, obtain the first certification of ISO 9001 in 2006. NAEP implemented the quality management system (QMS) in spring 2007.

QMS in NAEP emphasis on the following principles:
  a) satisfaction of programme sponsors, mainly faultless performance of each programme or conjunctive financial rules
  b) satisfaction of programme applicants, mainly transparent and simple procedures associated with information/call, evaluation, monitoring for applicants and data gathering for appraisal of each programme
  c) promotion of good practices, nationwide utility maximalization
  d) effectivity and cost effectiveness of internal procedures
  e) devolved transparent responsibilities
  f) information security
  g) detection and prevention of irregulaties or fraud usage of administered resources

The QMS in use since March 2007 covers all criteria required by ISO 9001 and has been successfully assessed by external accredited certification body DCIT.

Management responsibility

The top management of NAEP is directly responsible for setting up an overall Quality Policy and taking all the necessary measures for this Quality Policy to be understood, implemented, and maintained in all level of NAEP structure. The QMS has been clearly defined and documented with the description of all processes and its objectives. The clear definition is reached by simplification based on Key Process Area (KPA) corresponding to the staff

cognitive reception of procedures associated with every phase of every programme emergence. Key Process Goals (KPG) checked by NAEP coordinator and Key Process Indicators (KPI) for measuring the effectivity and cost effectiveness are defined for every KPA. Definition of KPG has been developed by an appropriate programme manager and amended by the quality manager with respect to the risk analysis approved by the top management. Definition of KPI is founded on basic indicators such as elapsed time and personal capacity. Assessment of material or external cost has minor significance and has been replaced by overhead addition to the personal cost.

Management control of performance is defined at four levels:
1. Responsibility of each programme manager, who prepares for every KPG and KPI records on the programme checklist
2. Independent checking of KPG and KPI records on the programme checklist by the NAEP coordinator. The NAEP coordination approval serves as one of the approvals for associated financial requests issued by programme manager to the payment and accounting division.
3. An internal audit to assess the correctness of selected activities of the programme manager and NAEP coordinator. The selection is derived from the yearly plan of internal control based on the risk analyze and approved by the top management.
4. Yearly review of all QMS parts based on the analysis of KPI results and detected non-conformities and feedback from sponsors and applicants.

Apart from the four performance levels there are standard controls based on financial data provided in euro on side of the programme manager and in the Czech crown in accounting division.

Assesment of satisfaction.

Assessment of sponsor's satisfaction is done by their responses to the provided reports and by the results of an external peer review. Assessment of applicant's satisfaction has to be obtained on an ongoing basis because the necessary correction of procedures must be implemented as soon as possible. Due to this, the used method is based on continuous analysis of FAQ (frequently asked question) It reflects the applicants perception of received information and instructions. The second subsequent criterion is occurrence of applications disqualified due the formal inadequacies.

Assessment of promotion of good practices and nationwide utility maximalization is in its development period. Base frame of eight key competencies for lifelong learning determines the annex to COM(2005)548. The main problem is to specify impact of used resources to the increasing key competencies under condition of non-existence of suitable etalon. Successful applicants should prepare the reports summarizing its results. After collecting the data from these reports the NAEP coordinator would organize the assessment of the data focused on the correlation of enforcing applicants in real life comparing its status with the average status of the youths with the same level of education and with the appropriate level a few years ago. Typical example of the measured status is age in which the applicant achieved defined level on a university or involvement in international research teams. The problem of these measures is the timing because measured status of applicants became effective after some years only. Resulting this proper input data for this assessment should be collected from employers (universities, research and high-tech institutions, statistical offices) and the start of this

assessment is significant after some years initiated by the ending of the first supported applicants activities. These types of measuring procedures are not yet included in NAEP QMS and the top management is preparing the kick-off document specifying the way to this target .

Information security and detection of irregulaties or fraud

The procedures of information security correspond to the international standard BS 7799 and would be upgraded to the upgraded standard ISO 17001. These procedures are not certified by an external assessor because the certification cost is over the reasonable overhead resources. The basic of information security procedures had been externally assessed together with the QMS certification.

The internal procedures for collecting data and detection of irregulaties or administered resources frauds are considered confidential and are not included in documentation accessible by every employee. The procedures used in accounting division are compliant with the relevant parts of the accounting standard ISA 240 and the procedures for collecting data and assessing the negative signals used in internal audit are compliant with the standards 8001:2003 published by Australian Standard Office with respects to the OLAF reports.

Conclusion

The introduction of ISO 9001 in the domain of educational agency is a real challenge for all similar institutions. It was made clear in the above description that the introduction and establishment of a quality assurance system such as NAEP QMS helps drastically control all completed tasks on required levels.

Implemented Quality Management System in the Czech Agency of European Educational Programme fulfilled three main request's domains:
- clear objectives and competencies among the unit and persons involved,
- well described procedures cumulated in Key Process Area which eliminate confusion and diminish time and work load to get the targets of every KPA,
- respect the expectation and interest of all involved parts.

It contributes to high level of suitability and reliability, and reaches a high level of transparency in the provided services. Defined agency outputs clarifies competencies and responsibilities of NAEP agency for everybody involved in high level education and therefore it constitutes effective communication with all partners. The internal procedures and measures provide a useable management control tool for continuous improvement and effectivity and cost effectiveness of the provided services.