



QUALICITIES: objective archived!

The two years and a half which just passed have been devoted to the creation and the application of the quality approach "Qualicities" within the European partnership created by 14 member cities of the Alliance of European Cities of Culture (AVEC) with the support of program INTERREG IIC.

Qualicities, it is the symbol of our commitment and the technical tool of the achievement of our common objective: to transform the remarkable local heritage that we inherited from our ancestors into a source of a sustainable development for ourselves and for next generations.

It is the tool which was tested by the Qualicities communities for a better local implementation of the four commitments of quality suggested by the European Charter of the Cities and Territories of Culture.

A quality approach

Initially, Qualicities is a working method which enables the city council to be mobilized and offer a continuously improved quality of services for the citizens, fixing their objectives of progress year after year. This method was developed during two years and a half by a first series of 14 cities in 7 countries

Qualicities stresses in particular the essential role of the civil servants of our communities, and the importance of offering them training to increase competences corresponding to our ambition; the approach also insists on the importance to adopt a true integrated approach of management and sustainable development.

The concrete criteria of Qualicities were selected by the cities, on the basis of their best practice, current or desired. This approach made it possible to give to the referent document of good practices - which indexes the minimum standard level - a pragmatic and realistic dimension.

A European label

But Qualicities is also a European label intended to publicize and make known, locally and internationally, the efforts of the communities which will have successfully passed the quality audit ensured by independent professionals.

Promote and share the approach

Eventually, Qualicities is the occasion to develop profitable partnerships with technical organizations - as the group AFAQ-AFNOR, which helped us to build the method and the label and of the organizations and international NGO - as the European Union, the Council of Europe or ICLEI - which share our values and our ambition to make of Europe a society both rooted and dynamic.

This is why we decided to focus on the circulation throughout Europe of this extraordinary tool helping local decisions. I will be during the coming year an important mission of the Alliance of European Cities of Culture (AVEC).

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I. ASSESSMENT

Qualicities project began in May 2005, during a European session organized in Arles (France). After this meeting, the partners had for 1st mission of listing all the current good practices in their community to meet the requirements of the European charter of historical cities and territories. (www.avecnet.net).



Consequently, each partner had to set up in its community a "Qualicities local committee" in charge of managing the implementation of the referent document standards once and approved definitely.



From this data base of current good practices, a work of synthesis was made in collaboration with the quality officer, Amandine Leopold and the expert team (Group AFAQ AFNOR Paris*) hired by the partners to support them in the approach.

The lead partners met in Pézenas (France) in May 2006 around workshop on precise topics to be discussed in the referent document and later in Ubeda (Spain) in July 2006 to exchange their experiment concerning the setting up of the local committees in charge of the approach locally.

The objective was to write a first referent document (gathering the standards required to obtain the label) and present it during Qualicities foro in Toledo (Spain) in October 2005. In Toledo, partners could validate the project of GP referent document and take note of the continuation of the approach: the lead partner communities ** of the project were charged to organize local meetings with more precise needs and good practices needed or already set up.



In December 2007, in Anderlecht (Belgium) the final referent document was validated by the project partners.

After the adoption step, the test process could begin and was followed by the first audit for the attribution of the brand to the city of Evora (Portugal) on May 7 and 8, 2007.

These meetings enabled the team of experts, to refine the referent document and present it at the partners at the in Evora (Portugal) in February 2006. This meeting marked the beginning of the local application of the approach.



Finally the partners met in May in Cosenza (Italy) to prepare the process of audit in each community. The City of Evora, which had just been audited, shared its experiment with the other cities and discussions started on the issue the system of perpetuation of the quality method and Qualicities label.

*AFNOR = Association Française de Normalisation.

** **Lead partners : in charge of the setting up of the quality process :** The city of Anderlecht (Belgium) project leader / The city of Arles (France) / The city of Ubeda (Spain) / The city of Cosenza (Italy) / The city of Evora (Portugal) / The city of Toledo (Spain) / The city of Pézenas (France) / the county of Baranya (Hungary).

Test partners : in charge of checking and optimizing the quality process by testing it : The city of Mertola (Portugal) / The city of Vienne (France) / The city of Tours (France) / The city of Isla (Malta) / The city of Birgu (Malta) / The city of Bormla (Malta).

II. NEWS

European session of Cosenza :

The eight lead partners of the European Project Qualicities gathered on May 17 to 19, 2007 in Cosenza, Calabria, Italy. This session enabled the 8 cities, very much committed in the project to share their experiences and to make the right conclusion to develop the approach in their own community.

Representatives from Anderlecht (Belgium), Arles (France), Baranya (Hungary), Birgu (Malta), Cosenza (Italy), Evora (Portugal), Pézenas (France), Toledo (Spain), Ubeda (Spain) described the state of progress in their community : some cities were ready to be evaluated, others will soon be and others would rather wait for next year to test the setting up of the approach in their management system.

The city of Evora, which had just been evaluated (2 weeks before the meeting), shared with the others the reality of the audit.

The AFAQ AFNOR listener, Mr Jean Hurtrel, who worked on the audit of Evora, was also in Cosenza to give his opinion and thoughts about the quality of the label, the time that will be needed for an audit in the future and on technical details bound to the evaluation session.

This first experiment revealed extremely positive. The organisation of an audit is not simple at all. Thanks to this first pilot audit, the listener team could stress out tracks of improvement in the organisation.

Eventually, discussion begun around the system which would perpetuate the quality approach and label after the projects final deadline (December 2007). The Alliance of European cities of culture will be the owner of the label Qualicities from the end of the project et it is essential to prepare the organisation of the new service that will be created, with defined objectives and communication tools for a good development of the brand.

Cosenza :

The city of Cosenza is 238 m of altitude, close to the mountain called Sila, and the river Crati. This river spills in the Ion sea, in Eastern Calabria, in the plain of Sibari.

Old metropolis of the Bruttians, Cosenza was the mural for Italian people against Greece influence of Ion people and kept throughout the centuries a special feature which differentiates it from other cities of the region.

Nowadays, Cosenza counts more than 76.000 inhabitants and beneficiate of a remarkable cultural policy . During the latest years, thanks to a policy of enhancement, refurbishing and restoration of heritage, the cultural area knew a strong expansion. The city became thus a referent point in the whole region.

<http://www.comune.cosenza.it/>





III. TO BE FOLLOWED

AUDITS

At the end of the session of Cosenza, partners who were ready gave the dates that could fit the best for an audit in their city :

Evora (Portugal) => May 7 & 8, 2007

Vienne (France) => July 2 & 3, 2007

Anderlecht (Belgium) => September 2007

Arles (France) => September 2007

Birgu (Malta) => end of August 2007

Pézenas (France) => December 2007

Cosenza (Italy) => December 2007

The results of the audits of each candidate will be published in the final session of Baranya (Hungary) in October 2007.

IV. AND NEXT

Final session of the project Qualicities in Baranya (Hungary) October 18, 19 & 20, 2007.

Travels on October 17 & 21.

Program

Thursday October 18 = technical meeting

Friday Octobre 19 =

Morning : technical meeting on final report

Political meeting for the attribution of the label to the candidates

Afternoon : Conference & attribution of attestation of the label

Saturday October 20 =

Morning Steering committee

Afternoon Visit of local achievements

A joint meeting for three INTERREG projects - Qualicities, Inherit & Cultured – will be held in Pistoia (Italy) on October 8 & 9, 2007.

Presentation of results of the 3 projects and exchange of good practices to think of a way of enhancing together the results of the three projects.

Find more information on the three project on <http://www.quicnet.net/>