

Civilitas



QUALICITIES

www.qualicities.org

DÉVELOPPEMENT DURABLE
DES VILLES DE CULTURE
QUALITY BRAND OF SUSTAINABLE CULTURAL CITIES

Interviewing: Miss Amandine LEOPOLD, quality officer of the Qualicities project.

Civilitas : Qualicities began in May 2005, could you remind us the objectives of this project?

Amandine Léopold : The Qualicities project pursues one main goal: the sustainable development of European historical cities.

The project of quality method and Qualicities European brand was born within the A.V.E.C. association to help local communities to implement the European charter of cultural cities and territories (1).

The cities of the A.V.E.C network had the common wish to develop their local economy on a sustainable way, based on the protection and enhancement of their cultural and natural heritage; they also wish to benefit from efficient management tools to help them achieve this goal.

Thus was born the idea of creating a project around which cities and territories from various European countries could gather and share their experiments as well as create a data base and other tools contributing to their development.

The assistance of external consultants (AFNOR) specialized in quality certification is also one of the main assets of the project."

(1) www.avecnet.com/charter.html

PROJECT PART-FINANCED
BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

North East South West
INTERREG III C

C : How is QUALICITIES financed?

A.L. : "The Qualicities project is part-financed by the European Union and by the partner communities, within the framework of the Interreg III C West program.

This Project aims at exchanging experiences on method and activities undertaken by the communities.

The goal is not only to operate a transfer of knowledge, but also to establish a true co-operation on the achievement of various aspects of the project; this co-operation is put into practice by a shared responsibility: each partner is co-responsible for the setting up of one of the 5 components of the project."

C : Qualicities offers a progress method. What is it all about?

A.L. : "The Qualicities approach, which aims at permanently improving quality of the activities, services or products offered by the partner communities, is based on the common creation of a good practices referent document⁽²⁾, which will become a tool of for excellence and visibility building aimed at citizens and visitors.

This approach, which aims at facilitating the local implementation of the European charter of cultural cities and territories, stresses in particular the identification, reinforcement and development of skills local civil servants.

Once designed and tested, these tools will be made available to all interested cultural city or territory throughout Europe.

C : What is the QUALICITIES brand? What will be the benefits for applying cities?

A.L. : "The Qualicities brand is intended to reward a quality approach launched by cities and territories of culture in the field of sustainable development.

Many partners in each city will be associated by the municipality to the achievement of the quality standards, thus contributing to its gaining the European recognition that will be brought by this quality brand; all will benefit from its positive consequences.

To be accepted in the Qualicities European list will first of all mean to become part of the network of cities or communities sharing such an international recognition. This will also generate benefits of a permanent international communication, dissemination and information system.

The brand will also mean to visiting tourists that the City or the Area in which they are staying, makes permanent efforts to enhance its heritage, to offer quality reception services and to improve in a sustainable way its natural and socio-economic environment"

⁽²⁾ *The Register of good practices includes:*

- Reference practices:
 - already set up in the community,
 - which should be implemented to ensure the success of specific policies in any participating community,
 - Skills necessary to ensure the setting up of every identified reference practice."



Qualicities Seminar in Toledo

The Qualicities Partnership:

Lead partners: in charge of setting up the quality process: City of **Anderlecht** (Belgium), leader of the project, **Communauté d'Agglomération Hérault Méditerranée** (France), city of **Arles** (France), **Baranya** county (Hungary), city of **Cosenza** (Italy), city of **Evora** (Portugal), city of **Ubeda** (Spain) and city of **Toledo** (Spain).

Test partners: in charge of testing and optimising the setting up of quality process:

City of **Olomouc** (Czech Republic), city of **Tours** (France), city of **Vienne** (France), city of **Isla** (Malta), city of **Birgu** (Malta), city of **Bormla** (Malta) and city of **Mertola** (Portugal).

Synthesis of activities:

The Qualicities project began in May 2005, at the launching session organized by Arles (France).

Then, the partners were asked to list all the good practices that had been set up in their community to answer the European charter of cultural cities and territories (find the charter at <http://www.avecnet.net/charte.html>).

From that initial data base of existing good practices, a work of synthesis was completed in collaboration with the AFNOR(*) expert company,

The objective was to build a first good practices referent document (register of the criteria that the partner cities and territories and others cities, potential applicants, will have to match to obtain the brand) and to present it during the first Qualicities forum held in Toledo (Spain) in October 2005.

During the Toledo forum, partners validated the first version of the good practices referent document

The lead partners were invited to organize local meetings with AFNOR experts, in order to give them a more precise idea of their needs and good practices (both the existing and wished ones).

These meetings allowed the team of experts, to refine the register and present it to the partners at a European meeting in Evora (Portugal) in February 2006.

That meeting marked the beginning of the local application of the approach: each partner was requested to set up in their community a "Qualicities local committee" in charge of implementing, in the future, the good practices referent document as soon as it would be designed and approved.

Qualicities lead partners also met in Pézenas (France) in February 2006. Workshops studied precise topics relative to the content of the referent document.

Today the final phase of the good practices referent document started. The local committees of each partner transmitted their comments, criticisms and suggestions to their representatives who discussed them in Ubeda (Spain) in July 2006.

After this step of validation of the good practices referent document in Ubeda, the implementation and self assessment process has begun and will be followed in autumn 2006 by the setting up of a local Personalised Progress Plan by each partner aiming at reaching the goals of the good practices referent document. This Progress Plan will have to be validated by the local political authority which will then have to put it in practice.



During spring 2007, a first series of audit will be organised for the attribution of the brand to the partners following their progress plan and respecting the good practices referent document.

*AFNOR = French Association of Normalisation.

Register of good practices:

The final good practices referent document should be composed of 10 chapters which will translate the European charter of cultural cities and territories into a set of concrete practices.

At the time of the audit for the attribution of the brand, the auditor will check if and how the audited City actually puts in practice the 4 topics of the European charter.

The Register of good practices is scheduled to be updated every 3 years. Each city's respect of the brand's standard will also be audited anew every 3 years.



To find out more about QUALICITIES, please:

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