QUALITY
ASSURANCE
OF **NON-FORMAL**
EDUCATION
A FRAMEWORK FOR
YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

MANUAL

european
youth forum

Youth
in Action
Programme

COUNCIL OF EUROPE   CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

YO!

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Acknowledgments

WELCOME TO
THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF
QUALITY
ASSURANCE OF
NON-FORMAL
EDUCATION!

Welcome!

You may be reading this for a number of different reasons, either because you are involved in Non-Formal Education (NFE), or want to learn more about it. Maybe you're interested in Quality Assurance, or this just seemed interesting on someone's bookshelf, why not? Anyway, welcome!

NFE is a major activity for most Youth Organisations, organisations that have a long tradition in education and have been responsible for providing thousands of young people with skills, competences and knowledge that have highly contributed to the creation of fulfilled, empowered and active citizens throughout the years.

Youth Organisations are one of the main providers of NFE and their commitment to quality education is naturally a permanent concern. The European Youth Forum, along with contributing Member Organisations (MOs) developed a framework for Quality Assurance of Non-Formal Education, that not only provides organisations with tools for growth and self-improvement, but also functions as a clear signal to external stakeholders and society that Quality Education is a priority for youth organisations and should be recognised as such.

This proposed framework for Quality Assurance is based on a cycle of different steps that are to be followed by a group of organisations working together as peers from start to finish, providing feedback and helping each other throughout the whole process.

What is this manual?

This Manual has been developed by the European Youth Forum as a support tool for the implementation of the framework for Quality Assurance in Non-Formal Education. The framework entails a cycle with a number of essential steps, and the present publication aims to be a helpful companion for organisations implementing it in their NFE projects.

Each of the steps is addressed through detailed explanation, examples and activities, so it's easy to follow and understand what is meant at each stage.

The QA framework proposed by the YFJ has been promoted since the pilot phase in 2010, when several Member Organisations helped design and consolidate it. This development process made it clear that a comprehensive tool addressing and condensing information, methodology and other elements was needed to help implement such a system. All doubts, clarifications, definitions and best practices that appeared during those first cycles are the basis for this manual and the main goal is simply to make things easier for all actors involved in Quality Assurance of Non-Formal Education.

Who is this for?

First of all, this is mainly aimed at helping Youth Organisations implement the framework for Quality Assurance in NFE proposed by the European Youth Forum. It helps them through the different stages and gives them relevant information, examples and other references.

There is, however, a different sort of use for this manual as well. If your organisation has gone through a QA cycle at a European level, or has learned about it and decides to implement it as your own system, some planning and facilitation is needed. This publication will provide you with the tools to set up your own cycle with your peers.

You will find a useful companion in this manual, and it will hopefully help you see that the process is not complex or difficult. Based on the premise that this kind of process needs to fit the nature of different organisations - and not the other way around – this manual will help you understand what it all means, and how it should be made specific to your reality. It's this diversity that makes youth work so rich, and we can all learn from each other.

How to use the manual

This Manual is expected to be used by participants in the training cycle of the framework for Quality Assurance in NFE, but also by anyone interested in implementing this framework in their NFE work. There is a glossary and a reference index at the end to make your work easier.

There are three main kinds of information in this Manual:

General information:

Useful for any type of user but especially for participants in the cycle. This will provide you with explanations about the whole framework, the QA cycle and all important information. This information will be present throughout the whole manual and will be written in black, in a normal font.

Practical exercises:

There are many practical questions and written exercises in this manual. Sometimes we'll ask you to reflect about a topic or write down your conclusions about something. Sometimes the manual will provide you with empty fields for you to test some of the steps in implementing the QA process or to try out some other elements. This is a manual to be used! These practical exercises should be put into practice by

participants, but also as an inspiration **anyone implementing the QA framework.** These parts will be displayed in purple.

> **Relevant data and examples:**
>
> We'll present you with examples, data or other information to help contextualise or explain different elements. Look for these in the grey boxes.

Tips for planners and prep teams

Because some of you will be using this publication as an aid to implement the QA framework on your own, there are specific issues that are only present in planning and won't be a concern to participants. First of all, all exercises in the manual can be used in your sessions as tools for your work. Also, matters regarding logistics and facilitation will be addressed and some solutions and ideas will be recommended. These items will be displayed in grey and in a different font.

QUALITY AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

What is Non-Formal Education?

Non-Formal Education (NFE) is an organised educational process that gives young people the possibility to develop their values, skills and competences other than the ones gained in the framework of formal education. Those skills (also called 'soft skills') include a wide range of competences such as interpersonal, team, organisational and conflict management, intercultural awareness, leadership, planning, organising, co-ordination and practical problem solving skills, teamwork, self-confidence, discipline and responsibility.

What is special about Non-Formal Education is that individual participants are the actors actively involved in the education/learning process. The methods used aim to give young people the tools to further develop their skills and attitudes. Learning is an ongoing process; one of its crucial features is "learning by doing". "Non-formal" does not imply unstructured; rather, it refers to the fact that the process of non-formal learning is shared and designed in such a way that it creates an environment in which the learner is the architect of the skills development. The structured and goal-oriented nature of Non-Formal Education is in fact the main differentiating factor between informal and non-formal learning.

DID YOU KNOW?

Only 20% of learning throughout life happens in the formal education system!*

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*Source: Cross, J. (2007). *Informal Learning: Rediscovering the Natural Pathways That Inspire Innovation and Performance.* San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc

Is your Organisation a provider of Non-Formal Education?

These questions may help you:

1. Does your organisation provide educational programmes aiming at personal development and empowerment?

2. Do members of your organisation gain skills or knowledge from your activities?

3. Do your education programmes take into account the individual characteristics of your participants?

4. Do your educational activities put participants at the center of the learning process and involve them in shaping their learning path?

5. Do participants in your activities learn with each other and through practical experience?

6. Are your educational programmes characterised by mobility, flexible time management and combinations of environments?

If most of these questions hit home and describe your organisation, you're providing NFE to young people!

Quality

Let's get straight to the point: **What is quality anyway?** Before we move further, here's a little play for you to think about this.

→ From the central circle, develop ideas, words or concepts you think are directly or indirectly related to quality. Feel free to put down words that connect or branch out from other words you wrote. Use as many lines as you need!
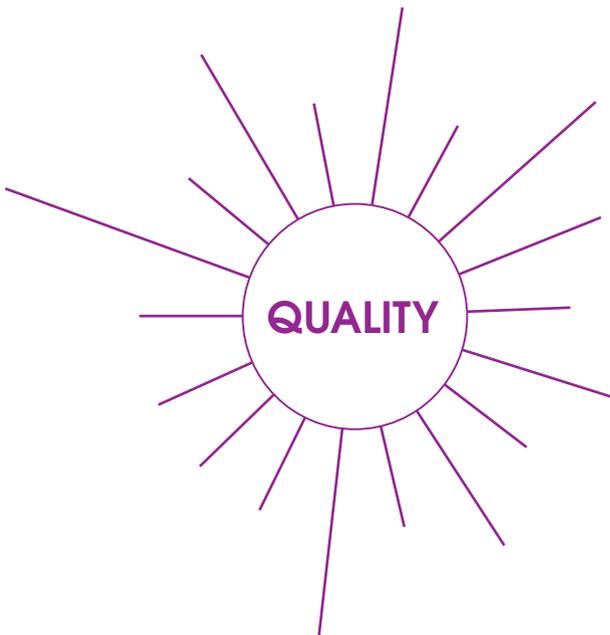
QUALITY

→ Ok. Now that little exercise made you reflect a bit more about quality and what it means to you, let's look into real life situations.
For example, what is a good quality film? How about a quality ice-cream?
Think about it individually and then compare and discuss it with the group.
Try other things as well.

If you want to make it a group exercise come up with a list of different things, write them down and toss them into a box or a bag. Have someone pick one at random and open a discussion about quality in that item. Make it fun by adding stuff that's not so obvious. After all, what is a good quality bathtub?

Back to NFE.

What does it mean to be a quality educator? And how about a quality NFE activity?

→ Discuss it with people around you. Does everyone agree or are there different perspectives?

Needs

Does a film need to be delicious to have good quality? How about the acting in the ice-cream? For each item you thought about above, you surely got different results depending on what you were looking at, right? Now we start talking about what is in the origin of any quality. What are the needs to be addressed and how are they approached?

→ Turn to the reality of your organisation. Make a small map of your learners' needs and those of society too.
We'll help you organise them:

NEEDS

YOUNG PEOPLE

PARENTS

SOCIETY

SCHOOL SYSTEM

YOUR ORG.

From those needs, which ones would you elect as most important, relevant or urgent?

→ Select 5 and come up with general ideas on what your organisation could do to meet those needs.
Remember, your organisation may already have projects that address some of them.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

The needs you came up with are probably the most obvious. But not all of them are that clear and sometimes different tools can give you unexpected results.

→ Where can you look for those needs that can best help your organisation play its role as NFE provider? We'll start with some ideas, but you surely know other ways too (write them down in the empty boxes).

Mission	Parents
Schools	Questionnaires
Strategy Papers	Work Plan
Member Proposals	Previous Evaluations
Expectation Sessions	Studies

Who cares about quality?

Besides internal improvement and the goal of a job well done, there is one other big advantage of a functional quality assurance system like the one we are implementing. Do you think the work of your organisation and others like yours is widely recognised? Should it be? Why?

→ Let's get practical again.

A. **WHO** should understand what is happening in the youth/NFE field? Use the table on the next page to help you get your ideas in order.

B. And why should they? Next to each actor write down **WHAT** they are gaining from your work. You may find it useful to revisit the needs chart you worked on previously.

C. And **WHY** should your Organisation care? What positive outcomes does your organisation get once each of those actors understands NFE and recogniSes its importance? Fill in the last column with that information.

→ Remember: WHO should be aware of NFE? WHAT are they gaining with it? And WHY should your Organisation care?

A. WHO?	B. WHAT?	C. WHY?

If you are working in a large group, divide into smaller teams and have them come up with a list for the first column. Compare results, creating a final list with everyone's input. Get back together and divide the list evenly into small parts, so each team fills in only part of the rows. Finish up by presenting and discussing everyone's work.

THE **QUALITY ASSURANCE** FRAMEWORK

A big step towards recognition of NFE and its value is a widespread acknowledgement of the quality of NFE. In our continuous work of self-improvement as youth organisations, a quality assurance system is a powerful tool that works both towards internal growth and improvement through peer work and networking and as an external symbol of our contribution as serious educators.

You will learn a bit more in detail about each of the elements that constitute the framework, but there is some basic information you will find useful from the start.

> **Key elements of the European Youth Forum Framework for Quality Assurance of Non-Formal Education:**
>
> → **IT IS BASED ON A SPECIFIC NFE PROJECT.** The Quality Assurance process is to be applied to a specific project that will be followed from start to finish
>
> → **IT IS A CYCLE.** There are several important steps in this Framework. They are all part of a cycle that goes from planning to final evaluation. It is a cycle rather than a timeline because as a result of going through it organisations can reflect on improvements how to improve in their future NFE projects.
>
> → **IT IS FLEXIBLE.** This system is not based on standards, but rather a list of indicators that each organisation is to translate into their own terms and reality. You will find detailed information on these indicators in the following chapters.

> → **YOU WILL NOT BE ALONE.** This is a path that is followed alongside your peers, a group of other organisations that provide help, assistance and feedback on the way, while you implement the framework. You will also support them in the same way.

Step-by-Step

This framework is based on a series of important steps that lead from a first stage of common understanding among participating organisations and their projects to a final point of quality assessment, going through a process of peer feedback, group work and network-based improvement for all actors involved.

This is what the QA cycle looks like:

QUALITY ASSURANCE CYCLE

8. REFLECTION AND EVENTUAL CHANGES WITHIN THE ORG.

7. FEEDBACK MEETING

1. PREPARATION

6. REPORT

2. KICK-OFF MEETING

3. DEVELOPING AND SHARING INDICATORS

5. EVENT

4. FEEDBACK ON INDICATORS
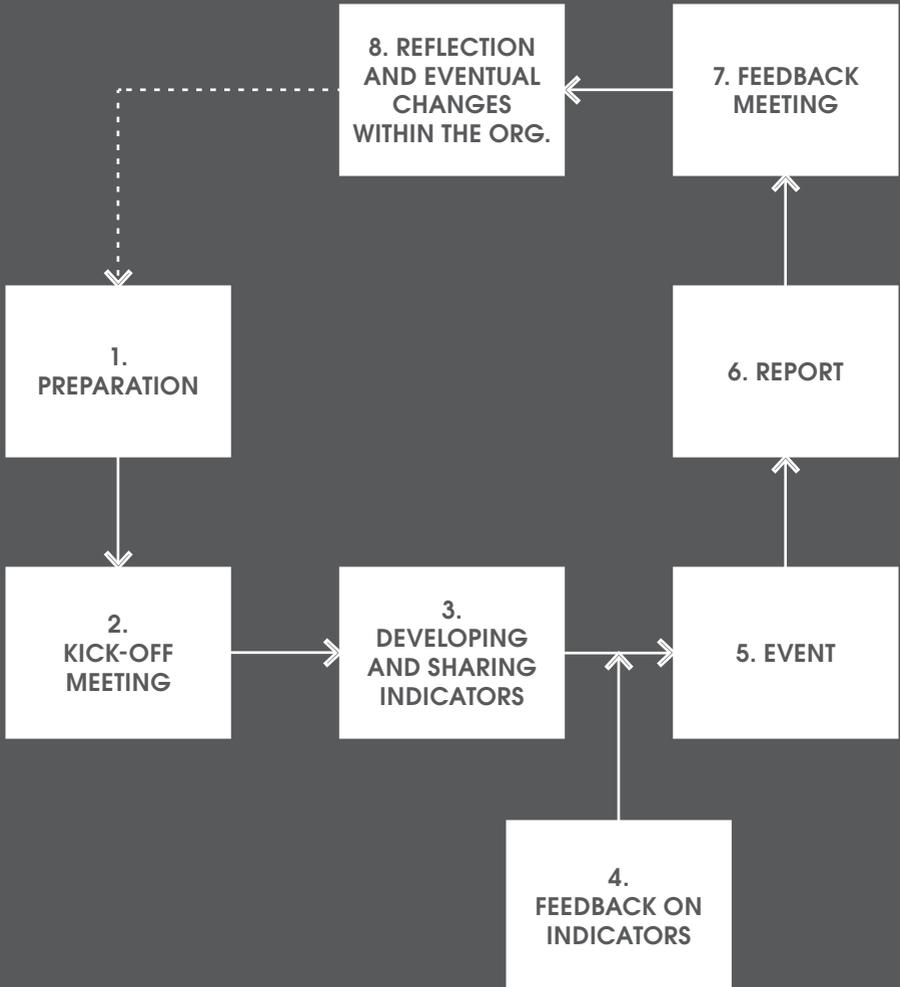
Preparation

→ Selecting your NFE project

As mentioned before, each organisation needs to select a NFE project that will follow all the steps from start to finish. The selected project can be a set of activities or a one-time event, and should fit certain criteria:

It should fit the relevant timeframe.

You will be working with this project from needs assessment to planning to final evaluation. If you look at the step-by-step chart, this means that there needs to be enough time between the kick-off meeting and the feedback meeting for everything to develop properly. The dates for those steps in the timeline will be set beforehand, so have that in mind when deciding on a timeframe for your project or choosing a project to enter a cycle established with a group of peers. Once you have learned about all the steps in the following pages, it will be clearer exactly how much time each stage will need.

If you are taking the initiative to implement a QA cycle with other organisations, make sure you set up enough time for everyone's projects to be developed. Make sure all the participants have the appropriate conditions to go through each step. The timeframe for the whole cycle should be agreed upon by everyone! Don't forget that other processes like funding applications and internal changes can also influence the timeline for your projects.

It needs to be well represented.

When an organisation takes part in a Quality Assurance cycle that implies a commitment to implement and follow through in the whole cycle, it also means that the selected project will be subject to Quality Assurance in the terms that are proposed by us.

Organisations will be working as peers, in constant communication, and as such there is the need for each organisation to be represented. That person or people will be the link between their project and the peers, providing feedback to their work but also getting the information from the trainings and receiving feedback on behalf of their organisation. Therefore, it is essential, that those people are actively involved in all stages and have an influential role in the planning of their project. To have someone playing the part of an external quality assurance agent will not provide satisfying results. Someone who is only there to implement the QA framework will not be sufficiently engaged in the planning to provide all neces· sary information during meetings with peers, and it will be hard to include quality assurance in all developing stages if it is not coming from within and in an integrated way.Quality Assurance is not a one-man show, and it should be a concern for the whole planning team.

→ Starting your Project

As we have seen when we first looked into the needs of learners and society, they are the basis for a quality NFE project. But needs by themselves are hard to work with because most often we come up with a general list of things that need to be addressed. It becomes easier when we take those needs and turn them into aims for the project and further into objectives.

Needs, Aims and Objectives

It's the start of a new year and you are setting up a resolution list for the next 365 days. In the past year you have had irregular schedules, skipping meals and eating more fast food than you would like. Your exercise, which used to be pretty common, is now as rare as a Beethoven piece on a teenager's MP3 player.

As a result, you have gained some extra pounds and you now feel the need to lose some of them, so you add "lose weight" to your resolution list. But that's not really enough, because you know (this has happened before) that this is too vague and not very helpful. You realise you need a specific value to stick to. After some thought, it's decided: You want to lose 5Kg that year. It's specific enough, not utopian, achieving it would make you feel good and you can now come up with ways to get yourself to that point. By the end of the year, you can see whether you got there or not, and try to understand why. Good luck!

This little story was a basic example of the process going from needs to objectives.

→ Did you easily recognise the 3 steps in the previous example? What are they?

Turning *needs* into *objectives* is a simple process that most organisations already go though, even if they don't call it this. *Needs* have to be translated into aims for a project, but it's the objectives that make your job easier and clear.

> An objective is specific, measurable and easy to assess at the end of a process.
> It's the objective that defines the work to be done and how to achieve it.

→ Remember the list of needs you came up with in page 13?
Let's go back to them. If you were to start planning an NFE project that would address them, in what way could you turn them into workable goals?

What could be an aim for a project created to address each of the 5 selected needs? And having found the aim, can you turn it into one or more objectives that are specific, measurable and easy to work with? Use the following table.

NEED	AIM	OBJECTIVE(S)

Although this process is very useful to systematise the reasoning behind your project and make it easier to work with, bear in mind that sometimes objectives can be easily set directly from needs (it can depend on their nature). If a measurable objective naturally appears, you don't necessarily have to come up with an aim in between just for this 3-step process to happen at all costs.

Sometimes you will feel the need to specify more than one objective for an aim. That is normal, and it's up to you to list the objectives how you see fit. Just remember that the more details you set, the best it will be to work with.

This should be a fluid process of simplification, not a strict form.

→ Finding your peers

Peer work is the most important element of this quality assurance system. We could use other methods, like external evaluations or standard systems, but there are many advantages in having an internal process based on peer-review and co-development.

→ What benefits do you see in working this way?

Here are some keywords to help you start.

Each keyword relates to a positive aspect of a peer-based quality assurance system among NFE youth organisations. Try to find what we mean with each one. Feel free to add others, of course.

[Trust]_____

[Understanding]_____

[Sharing]_____

[Methodology]_____

[Equality]_____

[Recognition]_____

[Experience]_____

[Growth]_____

[Diversity]_____

[Goals]_____

_____

_____

So yes, you will need peers to work with you in order to achieve better outcomes and the results you expect. If you are taking part in a cycle that is already planned, chances are that you have other organisations to embark with you on this journey.

If you are organising your own peer group, you will have to contact other potential participants. You will need at least 3 organisations (including yours) for the system to work properly. They will have to be NFE providers (not all youth organisations have educational purposes) and you can aim for diversity choosing participants from different fields or using different methodologies, or opt for a group where everyone has similarities. The process itself doesn't focus on content, and diversity is often a source for improvement, but the choice of participants is up to the organisations involved in setting up the system. There is also the possibility of adding other organisations or maybe experts as peers, if you feel this will improve the feedback and the overall results of the process. However, make sure this is something that all participants are comfortable with and those other actors are indeed perceived as peers and not outsiders. Trust and comfort are key for this system to work.

Where can you find your peers?

There are several platforms you can use to look for organisations to work with you. Here are some ideas but you probably have other options you can also consider.
- Get in touch with organisations you have worked with in the past;
- Check your local Youth Council for potential peers;
- Visit the SALTO network and contact some of the members. (www.salto-youth.net);
- Other networks you may be a part of.

Call out!

Depending on how you do it, there will probably be the need to call for participants. All information should be made available in advance, especially everything regarding scheduling. You should be clear about the goals of this peer-group and present your motivations in a way that is clear and even appealing for any potential participants. Make sure to describe all characteristics that you are seeking in organisations and clearly explain any selection procedures, if necessary.

→ **Kick-off meeting**

The Kick-off meeting is the official start of the QA cycle. This is where everybody meets and creates a common ground on quality, each other's projects and the whole system.

By the end of the Kick-off meeting participants are expected to:
→ Have reflected about quality and its meaning - like we have done in chapter 1;
→ Have understood indicators and their importance – quality indicators are an essential element of this framework that will be addressed fully in the next chapter;
→ Be familiar with the different steps of the cycle, including an agreement about

the timeline and individual deadlines for each organisation;
→ Have learned about each other's organisations and projects;

There are several elements that are important in a kick-off meeting, from a planning perspective. You will need:

Participants: A few organisations to work as peers, as detailed above.

Space: Big enough for the group you have. As any other NFE training, make sure you have plenty of space for group work and dynamic activities;

Trainers/facilitators: There is some information to be delievered in this meeting, so make sure the methods used are appropriate and effective.

Material: Apart from the usual material needed for NFE methods, the workbook is essential and is presented at this stage.

From the start, it's important that your peers understand your organisation and the project, so presenting it well is essential. You need to be concise and clear, and try not to lose your audience with too much information. There is always the possibility of questions afterwards!
Depending on the amount of participants, it can be decided that everyone is divided into smaller groups that will remain until the end of the process. This will make it easier to get familiarized with other projects and feedback to be directed to fewer participants, which can give better results.

Elemental information about your organisation is enough for others to become familiar with and contextualise your project. The next table includes the kind of information you should provide.

Are you yourself familiar with all of it?

→ Fill out the table below with the relevant information about your organisation:

NAME OF THE ORGANISATION
MISSION
EDUCATIONAL APPROACH

After everyone is acquainted with your organisation, your main focus is to present the project selected by your organisation to undergo the Quality Assurance cycle.

→ You can use the following table to systematize all necessary information. Write it down, you'll find it useful.

NAME OF THE PROJECT
DATE OF THE PROJECT
(SHORT DESCRIPTION VENUE, NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS, ORGANISING PARTNERS, ETC.)
AIM

OBJECTIVES

LEARNERS' NEEDS ADDRESSED BY THE PROJECT

NEEDS OF SOCIETY ADDRESSED BY THE PROJECT

Workbook

The Quality Assurance process is accompanied by a workbook that is to be filled in at every step. It is handed out/ distributed and explained during the kick-off meeting and it will be a useful tool until the end, by which point it will have

been filled in completely with information regarding all steps.

The information you wrote in the previous page is the first step in the workbook. This manual will help you fill it in at every stage of the cycle. You can find a copy of the workbook as Annex 1 to this manual.

→ Developing Indicators

As said before, indicators are an essential part of this framework. Because of diversity and nature of organisations, there is a need to be general enough to accommodate every possible reality when setting a list of parameters under which to assess quality in NFE.

At the kick-off meeting the list of 11 quality indicators are introduced. These will be adapted to each project through sub-indicators.

These indicators refer to trainers, preparation, resources, methodologies and participation in a general way and it's up to each organisation to make them their own by creating sub-indicators that are taken into account when developing their project. When developing your own sub-indicators, feel free to set as few or as many as you need.

Sub-indicators should be very concrete - as concrete as the objectives you have defined - so they have to be specific, measurable and something you can use at all times during the planning, implementation and assessment of your project. Remember: sub-indicators are there to make your job easier.

When working on an indicator, think about it this way:

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO MY NFE PROJECT?

LIST OF QUALITY INDICATORS

1. The assessed needs of learners & society and the mission & values of the organisation are translated into objectives.

2. The objectives are reflected in the NFE scheme[1].

3. The educational methodology selected is suitable for the learning process.

4. The necessary resources are available.

5. Resources are used in a sustainable, cost effective and responsible way.

6. Educators (such as trainers/volunteers/facilitators etc.) have the necessary competences.

7. Educators are prepared.

8. The communication between all actors is managed effectively.

9. Learners influence their learning process.

10. Learners understand their learning outcomes and can transfer them.

11. All actors are involved in the continuous evaluation process.

[1] The NFE scheme refers to your selected NFE project

The following is a list of all quality indicators with a short explanation of each one and good and bad examples of sub-indicators.

1. The assessed needs of learners & society and the mission & values of the organisation are translated into objectives.

This indicator is looking at the needs of the participants and addresses the needs of society; it considers whether their needs are included in the objectives of the project. It is to ensure that your project is relevant to today's society and the needs of the participants, as well as to ensure that the values of the organisation are reflected in it.

Example of sub-indicators:
a) (Good) The subject of the seminar addresses youth employment, a relevant issue in today's society as assessed through a member questionnaire.
b) (Bad) The seminar is about peace development.

2. The objectives are reflected in the NFE scheme.

This indicator is to ensure that the objectives of the NFE project are captured in the programme. The easiest way is to make sure there are specific activities for each objective or at least that the objectives are taken into account when the programme is prepared.

Example of sub-indicators:
a) (Good) The programme has been developed at least six weeks before the activity begins; sessions touching upon the objectives of the programme are colour coordinated to indicate which objectives it addresses.
b) (Bad) The programme has been prepared beforehand.

3. The educational methodology selected is suitable for the learning process.

When preparing a programme it is important to take the learning methods into consideration. Who is participating? What level of experience do they have? Do they have special needs that should be taken into consideration? In what order have you set up the programme? Consider the learning process and make sure that the basics are covered before moving on to the more advanced subjects. The same goes for the well-being of the participants; ensure that the programme is well balanced.

Example of sub-indicators:
a) (Good) The methodology selected for the programme is diverse and balanced. There should be at least 5 different methodologies, evenly distributed.
b) (Bad) The methodology selected for the programme is diverse and well-balanced.

4. The necessary resources are available.

When planning your project it is important to remember what you need regarding resources, should these be human or material resources (both venue and practical resources such as documents/flip-charts etc.). Consider when you will need the different resources, how you will obtain them, and whether you have a backup plan in case resources are missing.

Example of sub-indicators:
a) (Good) The technical resources (flip-charts, paper, pens, beamer, and computer) will be available at the venue during the whole event, and a person (name) from the prep-team will be responsible for the technical equipment both in the preparation and during the event.

b) (Bad) There is someone responsible for technical equipment during the event.

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5. Resources are used in a sustainable, cost effective and responsible way.

When preparing your project, consider the (human and material) resources you are planning to use and examine them; are they sustainable, cost effective and do you use them in a responsible way? How do the participants travel to the event? Are you purchasing material your organisation already has available? Have you considered renting/borrowing versus purchasing equipment? Do you need insurance for the venue/equipment? Is the valuable equipment placed in a safe storage during the time such equipment is for the event?

Example of sub-indicators:
a) (Good) The organisers will prepare a document suggesting cheaper, more sustainable ways to get to the venue, as well as informing that only the cheapest way of travel will be reimbursed. This document will be sent to the participants when informed about the selection .
b) (Bad) The participants will be informed of cheap ways to travel to the venue.

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6. Educators (such as trainers/volunteers/facilitators etc) have the necessary competences.

It is important that the educators involved in the NFE project have an interest in taking part in it, and have the relevant skills and competences to do so. Ensure the educators responsible for the different parts have the necessary skills for that particular task.

Example of sub-indicators:
a) (Good) The trainers and facilitators will specify their previous experience on the topic of the project in their applications.
b) (Bad) We will ensure the educators involved have relevant competences.

---

7. Educators are prepared.

All people involved in the NFE project should have the necessary information in order to deliver a good quality event. The educators should be informed on the resources available. Do you have the possibility of having a preparatory meeting beforehand? How will the educators communicate before and during the project?

Example of sub-indicators:
a) (Good) A requirement from all the trainers and facilitators is that they are able to participate in the planned preparatory meeting before the start of the project.
b) (Bad) The educators involved in the project will receive relevant information.

---

8. The communication between all actors is managed effectively.

Communication is important in all phases of the NFE project, from start to finish. How will the people organising the project communicate before the event? Telephone, e-mail, Skype meetings, physical meetings? Do all people involved have the necessary resources for planned communication? Do you have an agreed code of conduct regarding communication? Is there someone facilitating the communication? During the event, do the people involved understand each other, regarding language? Do the educators involved have meetings during the implementation of the project? Is there a method for communicating the needs of participants to the educators both before and during the event?

Example of sub-indicators:
a) (Good) During the event there will be daily reflection groups for all participants, led by the educators as part of the programme, and the results will be discussed in the daily evaluation meeting.
b) (Bad) The participants and leaders communicate well.

9. Learners influence their learning process.

The participants (learners) are those who can best reflect upon their own learning process, and as each person is learning in different ways and through different methods, there should be an opportunity for the participants to reflect on and influence their learning process. Prior to the start of the project, has there been any research regarding the participants' priorities and wishes for the event? During the event, is there time for participants to reflect on their learning? Is there a specific method you wish to offer the participants to reflect on their learning process? As learning also happens in retrospect; how is the event evaluated?

Example of sub-indicators:
a) (Good) In the beginning of the project, participants are invited to set learning expectations for the event, which they have the opportunity to reflect on during the event.
b) (Bad) Learners are able to change the content of seminar.

10. Learners understand their learning outcomes and can transfer them.

An important part of an event is learning, and the learners' opportunity to be aware of their own development should be a main focus during an event. When preparing an activity, it is important that the participants (learners) are able to understand the aims and objectives of the event, and that these are visible throughout the activities. An important goal should be to ensure it is possible to transfer that information onto other fields like academic contexts, the labour market, or their personal life.

Example of sub-indicators:
a) (Good) Learners were able to summarise what they learned in their workshop at the evaluation at the end of the event.

b) (Bad) Learners confirmed they learned what they were supposed to learn.

11. All actors are involved in the continuous evaluation process.

To better develop both your organisation and your project, evaluation must be an important part of the process. Evaluation is something one does continuously, and ensures both participants, leaders, organisers, facilitators and other actors involved have the opportunity to evaluate, to both improve the learning process and improve the current and future project Use different methods of evaluating for different actors; the evaluation for participants will most likely be different from the evaluation for facilitators. Remember to report the evaluation result if you wish to use this for future reference.

Example of sub-indicators:
a) (Good) Facilitators are invited to join the daily evaluation meeting of the project leaders, which is included in the schedule.
b) (Bad) All actors have the opportunity to evaluate.

Why isn't there an indicator about outcomes?

We can't really control outcomes. All we can do is take a hold of the process as much as possible so the outcomes are the ones expected. There is no real benefit in assessing a project as successful if the only reason for that result was chance. Systematising a process in a more organised way gives you a chance for improvement, sharing of knowledge and overall growth for an organisation.

Indicators in the workbook

The chart of indicators and sub-indicators is a major part of your workbook. There you have the opportunity to write down your sub-indicators and, also very importantly, specify where they fit within the timeline of your project.

There are three main stages in a NFE project: **Planning**, **Implementation** and **Evaluation**. But you can come up with other phases in between, if you feel the need or choose to work in smaller steps. That structure is specified in the workbook as well, right before the list of indicators, as a reference so you can apply a timeframe for each sub-indicator.

At a later stage you will also be able to assess each indicator, whether everything happened according to expectations or not and why. This is to be filled in during the evaluation phase, after the event takes place. You can think of it as an assessment for each indicator and sub-indicator.

Exercise!
→ Can you come up with an example of a sub-indicator for each of the indicators explained in the previous pages?
It has to be different from the one stated in the explanation (naturally!) and they

don't have to be developed from or even related to a specific project (just like the ones we used). You can use your own project or other projects you know, that's not the most important for this exercise. Just make sure it fits well with the indicator, that it is specific and measurable. Also, using the three main steps as a reference (**Planning**, **Implementation**, **Evaluation**), include the phase in which that indicator would be present.

Example:

6. EDUCATORS (SUCH AS TRAINERS/ VOLUNTEERS/FACILITATORS ETC.) HAVE THE NECESSARY COMPETENCES.	
SUB-INDICATOR	PHASE
The trainers and facilitators will specify their previous experience on the topic of the project in their applications.	Planning

1. THE ASSESSED NEEDS OF LEARNERS & SOCIETY AND THE MISSION & VALUES OF THE ORGANISATION ARE TRANSLATED INTO OBJECTIVES.	
SUB-INDICATOR	PHASE

2. THE OBJECTIVES ARE REFLECTED IN THE NFE SCHEME.	
SUB-INDICATOR	PHASE

3. THE EDUCATIONAL METHODOLOGY SELECTED IS SUITABLE FOR THE LEARNING PROCESS.	
SUB-INDICATOR	PHASE

4. THE NECESSARY RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE.	
SUB-INDICATOR	PHASE

5. RESOURCES ARE USED IN A SUSTAINABLE, COST EFFECTIVE AND RESPONSIBLE WAY.	
SUB-INDICATOR	PHASE

6. EDUCATORS (SUCH AS TRAINERS/VOLUNTEERS/ FACILITATORS ETC.) HAVE THE NECESSARY COMPETENCES.	
SUB-INDICATOR	PHASE

7. EDUCATORS ARE PREPARED.	
SUB-INDICATOR	PHASE

8. THE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN ALL ACTORS IS MANAGED EFFECTIVELY.	
SUB-INDICATOR	PHASE

9. LEARNERS INFLUENCE THEIR LEARNING PROCESS.	
SUB-INDICATOR	PHASE

10. LEARNERS UNDERSTAND THEIR LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CAN TRANSFER THEM.	
SUB-INDICATOR	PHASE

11. ALL ACTORS ARE INVOLVED IN THE CONTINUOUS EVALUATION PROCESS.	
SUB-INDICATOR	PHASE

→ Feedback on indicators

Once sub-indicators are set by the organisations, the peer group is called upon to provide feedback, aiming to clarify or improve any points. Timing is of the essence here, and deadlines for sub-indicators and following feedback need to be set beforehand, so there is still time to work on indicators in a timely fashion within the timeline. These deadlines should be set at the kick-off meeting.

Giving Feedback

Look at indicators as if you were the one setting goals for yourself - can you measure and easily assess those elements or are they a vague chart of intentions? Imagine yourself working with them and consider whether those sub-indicators would do the job clearly. If not, how could they be improved? Pay attention to the phase in which each sub-indicator is set to happen, as sometimes it can be unclear or incomplete.

Feedback is built upon constructive input and is the basis for peer-learning. Be sensible when replying to a list of indicators and remember that you are part of a group. Your input is valuable but so is the feedback of others. Make sure you have all

information necessary and if not, clarify everything before making assumptions or taking things for granted. Be clear and try to make suggestions instead of stating absolute truths. Give feedback on positive aspects also.

This feedback can be organised with the whole group or smaller sub-groups of organisations, in order for everyone to be closely involved in other projects. This will depend on the dynamics and specifications of your peer group.

→ Remember the list of indicators a few pages before (Chapter 2.4.1)? Each item has examples of good and bad sub-indicators. Under the bad example of a sub-indicator you will find a line. Go back there and write down some feedback on that example. Make it as if you were replying to a fellow participant in your cycle!

What to do with feedback?

As you might imagine, feedback is the point where peer-cooperation appears in full. The mini-network created for each cycle will contribute to your sub-indicators with their questions and suggestions towards an easier process and more effective integration within the project. This is why it is essential to share your indicators with the rest of the group in a timely manner, so improvements can be made in time for planning and implementing your NFE project.

Once you have some input from your peers, go back to your own list of indicators and re-evaluate them in this new light. Chances are that you will find interesting perspectives, new interpretations of specific points and even some points that were not clear in your original and needed clarification. There is also the possibility that some

feedback didn't take into account some specificities of your organisation or is simply proposing alternative ways of doing things.

It is your team's task now to come up with a final working list of sub-indicators that make up the fabric of quality assurance of your project. Looking at all of them should give you an overview of what should be expected from that process in order for everything to work out well.

→ Implementing your NFE Project

It has been made clear that your indicators should be an integral part of the project from planning to implementation, to further moments of evaluation and assessment.

→ Is it clear for you what role indicators can have in each step?

We have covered the planning phase in the previous chapters and now we are right at the implementation phase itself. You have prepared everything perfectly, following all sub-indicators that involved planning, so now what?

Some indicators are connected to steps during the implementation of the project. If you programmed moments for assessment – such as feedback sessions or daily staff meetings – respect them and try to take full advantage of them.

Remember, Quality Assurance is not an extra part of your project so moments like that should be sensibly integrated in the schedule and all actors should be aware of their importance.

Specific feedback should be able to result in adaptations to the workflow and even programme to accommodate the real needs of participants or other elements.

➔ After the event

Your event has happened. Hopefully your learning outcomes were achieved and you are all quite happy with the result. Or maybe not, but that can be useful too, of course.

You are now in the post-event timeframe. You probably had a quick evaluation moment right after the end of your event, but well rested heads can make a more sensible assessment of what happened. It is now time to go back to your workbook.

Looking at the list of sub-indicators you had identified as essential for this to be a quality assured project; how well did you do?

→ Were all the objectives achieved as you had predicted? If not, why? Could the organising team have done something about it?

→ Was the Quality Assurance process naturally included in your NFE project? If not, was it extra work? What can be done differently so QA fits well into the workflow?

→ What were the strengths and what challenges did you encounter?

→ Were there any noticeable differences in this event because of the implementation of a QA system? In what way?

Some of the questions above can be answered in the workbook, assessing the final conditions of your sub-indicators and project as a whole.

The final document, once it's filled in, becomes your report assessing the quality of NFE in your project.

➔ Feedback Meeting

Near the end of each QA cycle, at the Feedback Meeting the peer-group gets together once again to share their reports and give feedback on the whole process.

This is when the group will decide whether the NFE project provided was quality assured, based on the degree to which the QA process was implemented in the project. This is NOT the time to assess the quality of the education provided.

The feedback meeting gives participating organisations the space to briefly present their reports. Everyone should be familiar with each other's work, from previous communications online as a preparation for the meeting.

All members are asked to provide feedback on the way each organisation implemented the Quality Assurance process as presented above. Peer work is once more evoked, as the strength of this feedback session comes from the diversity and informed input from your fellow organisations who accompanied you from the beginning as a group.

However, it should be only the start of a new approach to quality in organisations, as it is expected that organisations will start utilising this system on their own future NFE projects.

Only peers take part in the feedback and assessment process. Even though trainers, facilitators and other possible actors may be familiar with the cycle, those who have actively been involved and shared throughout the process should make the final assessment. The Feedback Meeting has one of the key moments of the cycle, in which the participating Organisations assess and decide whether a specific project was quality assured.

Again, the assessment is NOT on the project itself and its value, but on the degree to which the quality assurance framework was implemented. It starts with a self-assessment by the organisation and it ends with the peers stating their

views on whether Quality was properly assured in that NFE project according to the framework proposed here.

→ <u>What next?</u>

If your organisation has successfully taken part in a QA cycle, you have probably found the benefits of following this process. The cycle doesn't end in a feedback meeting, because representatives are expected to go back to their respective organisations and somehow digest the whole process and results. You will have learned about other peers and their practices, but you will probably have also gained new knowledge about your organisation. Maybe there are some improvements to be made, or new approaches to be experimented with, but the bottom line is, you will leave the process as a renewed organisation with new concepts, skills and a wider awareness of different practices.

Besides the learning you went through, you can also take it to the next level: start implementing the proposed QA framework in your future NFE projects! It's easier now that you have done it once and there is always this manual to help you. For best results, you can also find your own peers to work with, spreading the concept and helping others to be a part of this. Check out chapter 2.2.3 again - it is about finding peers and making the best of them. Maybe some of the organisations you worked with as a participant are interested in keeping the peer group working! That's a good way to start. That, and reading this manual again with fresh eyes!

Glossary & Reference index

We have collected the main concepts and terms used in the manual for easy reference. Each entry includes a short explanation, which in most cases is not a definition, but rather what the term means in the context of Quality Assurance of Non-Formal Education.

You can also find where the term is mentioned throughout this publication.

Aims

In the context of Non-Formal Education, an aim is a general goal of a project or an event. It should come as a result of needs assessment and it can be further developed into objectives, which are more specific and detailed.

Mentioned in pages 18, 19, 20, 22

Evaluation

A Project can be divided into three major stages in time: Planning, Implementation and Evaluation. The last stage is when you assess the results of your project, whether the goals were achieved and what can be changed for future projects.

Mentioned in pages 18, 23, 27, 28, 34

Feedback Meeting

One of the steps of the Quality Assurance cycle. It takes place after the project has been implemented and it's the moment when all peers get back together and assess the process that has taken place, as well as the implementation of Quality Assurance on each other's projects.

Mentioned in pages 17, 18, 34, 35

Implementation

A Project can be divided into three major stages in time: Planning, Implementation and Evaluation. When you implement a project you are making it happen, as the result of the planning stage. Although it is central, it is not more or less important than the other two stages.

Mentioned in pages 23, 28, 33

Indicators

The Quality Assurance framework is not based on fixed standards, but on indicators of quality. These should be adapted to each project and organisation, through the creation of sub-indicators, which focus on specific points related to each indicator.

Mentioned in pages 16, 17, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34

Kick-off Meeting

One of the steps of the Quality Assurance cycle. It is when all the organisations get acquainted as peers and receive the necessary information for a successful implementation of the framework. It is also at this moment that everyone agrees on the timeline for the peer work.

Mentioned in pages 17, 18, 21, 23

Needs

A relevant Non-Formal Education project should come from the real needs of learners and/or society. These should be assessed properly and not come from speculation.

Mentioned in pages 12, 13, 18, 19, 20, 23, 25

Non-Formal Education (NFE)

The target of our Quality Assurance system. NFE is an organised educational process that takes place alongside the mainstream systems of education and training and does not typically lead to certification. It is the main type of education provided by NGOs, particularly in the youth field.

Mentioned in page 10

Objectives

The aim of a project or event should be specified into objectives, which are more detailed and measurable. These objectives are essential to shape the project and assess its results.

Mentioned in pages 18, 19, 20, 23, 25, 34

Peer Feedback

When implementing the Quality Assurance framework, it is through peer feedback that your work is assessed at a higher level and from different and partial points of view. It is also a commitment by all involved, in order to improve every project and contribute to the overall quality of NFE.

Mentioned in pages 16, 17, 20, 32, 33, 34

Peers

These are companions during the Quality Assurance cycle. In our framework, peers are youth organisations, who are represented by individuals. Your peers will contribute to the improvement of your project by helping you successfully implement Quality Assurance.

Mentioned in pages 16, 18, 20, 21

Planning

A Project can be divided into three major stages in time: Planning, Implementation and Evaluation. During planning, you should assess the needs of your learners, come up with objectives based on those needs and prepare the project with those objectives in mind. It is also when most technical preparation is done, in terms of resources and programming.

Mentioned in pages 18, 23, 28, 33

Planning tips

These will help you set up your own cycle and implement the framework with peer organisations.

Mentioned in on pages 12, 14, 18, 20, 21, 33

Quality

In this context, the quality of NFE in youth NGOs is the degree to which selected needs of society and of learners are reached and addressed

Mentioned in pages 11, 12, 13, 21, 34

Quality Assurance

A dynamic process used to ensure that the learning outcome will satisfy the requirements for quality. The process we propose has two elements: an internal element, related to the development of indicators, and an external element, related to the peer-review and peer-feedback.

Mentioned in pages 16, 18, 33, 34

Quality assurance cycle

Our Quality Assurance system is based on a cycle of key steps, which are explained in detail on pages 15-35. It is a cycle rather than a timeline because each succession of steps on a project should feed into the planning of the next one.

Mentioned in pages 16, 17, 18, 21, 34, 35

Workbook

It's the record of the process of a project through the Quality Assurance cycle. It covers all steps and facilitates the implementation of the framework.

Mentioned in pages 23, 28, 34

ANNEX I
WORKBOOK

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION
QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS

Workbook

SECTION 1. Description of your organisation and of the NFE project in which you will be applying the Quality Assurance Process (QA).

1.1. Organisation

→ **Name:**

→ **Website:**

→ **Mission:**

→ **Educational Programme** (approach & key strategic areas)**:**

1.2. NFE Project

→ **Title:**

→ **Dates:**

→ **Location/venue:**

→ **Participants (profile & number):**

→ **Organising partners:**

→ **Overall Aim:**

→ **Specific Objectives:**

→ **Timeline** (dates of planned activity/ies, including preparatory meetings)**:**

SECTION 2: Internal Quality Assurance Process (within your organisation)
This section is to be filled in at the stage of planning the project, and should be submitted to peers for feedback at the latest two months before the activity takes place.

2.1. Needs assessment (this part is to be filled in when designing the project)

→ **Which learners' needs will the activity address?**

→ **Which needs of the society will the activity address?**

2.2. The QA Process in your project

→ **How are you planning to apply the quality assurance process throughout your project cycle? Please include a timeline, the division of roles within the team, and any methods or strategies you plan to use.**

2.3. Quality Indicators

Quality Indicator 1	The assessed needs of learners & society and the mission & values of the organisation are translated into objectives.	
Description: What concretely does this mean for your project?		
	Sub-indicator	Phase
Assessment procedure: Which sub-indicators will you use to asses this indicator throughout the project? And at which phase of the project cycle will it be used?		
Final Self-Assessment (to be filled in at the end of the project, after the evaluation)		

Quality Indicator 2	The objectives are reflected in the NFE scheme	
Description: What concretely does this mean for your project?		
	Sub-indicator	Phase
Assessment procedure: Which sub-indicators will you use to asses this indicator throughout the project? And at which phase of the project cycle will it be used?		
Final Self-Assessment (to be filled in at the end of the project, after the evaluation)		

Quality Indicator 3	The educational methodology selected is suitable for the learning process.

Description: What concretely does this mean for your project?	

	Sub-indicator	Phase
Assessment procedure: Which sub-indicators will you use to asses this indicator throughout the project? And at which phase of the project cycle will it be used?		

Final Self-Assessment (to be filled in at the end of the project, after the evaluation)	

Quality Indicator 4	The necessary resources are available.	
Description: What concretely does this mean for your project?		
	Sub-indicator	Phase
Assessment procedure: Which sub-indicators will you use to asses this indicator throughout the project? And at which phase of the project cycle will it be used?		
Final Self-Assessment (to be filled in at the end of the project, after the evaluation)		

Quality Indicator 5	Resources are used in a sustainable, cost effective and responsible way.	
Description: What concretely does this mean for your project?		
	Sub-indicator	Phase
Assessment procedure: Which sub-indicators will you use to asses this indicator throughout the project? And at which phase of the project cycle will it be used?		
Final Self-Assessment (to be filled in at the end of the project, after the evaluation)		

Quality Indicator 6	Educators (such as trainers/volunteers/ facilitators etc.) have the necessary competences.
Description: What concretely does this mean for your project?	

	Sub-indicator	Phase
Assessment procedure: Which sub-indicators will you use to asses this indicator throughout the project? And at which phase of the project cycle will it be used?		

Final Self-Assessment (to be filled in at the end of the project, after the evaluation)	

Quality Indicator 7	Educators are prepared.	
Description: What concretely does this mean for your project?		
	Sub-indicator	Phase
Assessment procedure: Which sub-indicators will you use to asses this indicator throughout the project? And at which phase of the project cycle will it be used?		
Final Self-Assessment (to be filled in at the end of the project, after the evaluation)		

Quality Indicator 8	The communication between all actors is managed effectively.
Description: What concretely does this mean for your project?	

	Sub-indicator	Phase
Assessment procedure: Which sub-indicators will you use to asses this indicator throughout the project? And at which phase of the project cycle will it be used?		

Final Self-Assessment (to be filled in at the end of the project, after the evaluation)	

Quality Indicator 9	Learners influence their learning process.

Description:
What concretely does this mean for your project?

	Sub-indicator	Phase
Assessment procedure: Which sub-indicators will you use to asses this indicator throughout the project? And at which phase of the project cycle will it be used?		

Final Self-Assessment
(to be filled in at the end of the project, after the evaluation)

Quality Indicator 10	Learners understand their learning outcomes and can transfer them.
Description: What concretely does this mean for your project?	

	Sub-indicator	Phase
Assessment procedure: Which sub-indicators will you use to asses this indicator throughout the project? And at which phase of the project cycle will it be used?		
Final Self-Assessment (to be filled in at the end of the project, after the evaluation)		

Quality Indicator 11	All actors are involved in the continuous evaluation process.
Description: What concretely does this mean for your project?	

	Sub-indicator	Phase
Assessment procedure: Which sub-indicators will you use to asses this indicator throughout the project? And at which phase of the project cycle will it be used?		

Final Self-Assessment (to be filled in at the end of the project, after the evaluation)	

2.4. Self-assessment, conclusions and lessons-learned
This section is to be filled in after implementing the project, and during the evaluation phase.

About your NFE project

→ **What were the strong points of your NFE project?**

→ **What challenges did you encounter in your NFE project?**

→ **What would you do differently next time?**

About the Quality Assurance Process

→ **How did you find applying the quality assurance process within your project?**

→ **What were the strong points about your QA process?**

→ **What were the challenges about your QA process?**

→ **What would you do differently next time?**

→ **What is your assessment about your QA Process? Has it contributed to delivering a good quality NFE project? If so, in which way?**

SECTION 3: External Quality Assurance Process (by Peers)
This section is to be filled in after the peer-feedback meeting. It will contain the feedback received by peers based on the self-assessment in section 2.

Peer-Feedback report

→ **Peer-feedback provided by:**
(name of peer organisation(s) providing feedback)

About the NFE project

→ **Strong points of the project:**

→ **Challenges of the project :**

About the Quality Assurance Process

→ **Strong points on how the QA process was applied:**

→ **Challenges in applying the QA process:**

→ **Recommendations:**

Final Peer Assessment
The peers agree/disagree with the self- assessment on the quality assurance of the project.