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ENHANCING SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN PUBLIC SECTOR THROUGH APPLICATION OF THE COMMON ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

Introduction

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 aspirational Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) started with SDG 1 – End poverty in all its forms everywhere – made corporate world focused on long-term viability and investing in sustainable future for all. Impact on society and the environment is becoming a critical measure of performance of any organisation. Its contribution to sustainable development is known as “social responsibility”.

The concept of social responsibility has its origins in the private sector. There are various guidelines and tools on implementing the sustainable development goals (SDGs). Many approaches have a long history and has been developed before the UN Agenda 2030. The first edition of the EFQM Excellence Model, a comprehensive management framework used by over 30,000 organisations in Europe, was issued in 1992. In 2004, EFQM in cooperation with recently formed United Nations Global Compact produced the “Framework for Corporate Social Responsibility” and updated it in 2013 with the new “EFQM Framework for Sustainability” [1] This model gives organisations a framework to support the effective translation of corporate sustainability principles into practice. International standard ISO 26000:2010 “Guidance on social responsibility” [2], the world’s first voluntary standard on social responsibility, which provides guidance on how to operate in an environmentally, socially and economically responsible way. In 2016, ISO developed guidelines with explanation of the main connections between the SDGs and ISO 26000 [3]. Thus the first SDG (End poverty) is strongly connected to the clause 6.4.4.2 of ISO 26000 and under the core subject “Labour practices” states: “An organization should pay wages at least adequate for the needs of workers and their families. In doing so, it should take into account the general level of wages in the country, the cost of living, social security benefits and the relative living standards of other social groups” [2].

Private sector actively use social responsibility in order to achieve comparative advantage and better performance, at the same time responsibility of an organisation for the impacts of its decisions and activities on society and the environment has always been the main objective of the public sector. Public

sector organisations have to embrace a responsible behaviour in order to develop the economic, social and environmental components of the community (local, national and international) in which they operate. Public management practice shows widely use of business methods and tools adopted to public sector. One of the prime example practiced throughout Europe is the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) model – a total quality management (TQM) model inspired by the EFQM Excellence Model specially designed for public sector organisations and actively growing since 2000.

CAF in brief

The CAF Model is a result of co-operation among the EU Ministers responsible for Public Administration. The CAF Resource Centre at the European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA) is in charge of further development of CAF methodology and coordination of the network of CAF users across Europe.

The CAF is offered as an easy to use tool to assist public sector organisations to introduce quality management through the comprehensive self-assessment framework that is conceptually similar to the major TQM models, EFQM in particular, but is specially conceived for the public sector. Among CAF users there are organisations from such field like Education [4], Social Services, Healthcare, Transport and Infrastructure, Police [5] and even Churches. But the most CAF-claimed area is Federal Governmental Bodies as well as Local and Regional Administrations [6, 7].

The model is based on the premise that excellent results in organisational performance, citizens/customers, people and society are achieved through leadership driving strategy and planning, people, partnerships, resources and processes. It looks at the organisation from different angles at the same time; a holistic approach to organisation performance analysis.

Being a generic tool CAF includes the 9 criteria, 28 sub criteria and the scoring system. The structure of the CAF Model is illustrated on fig. 1. Further description of the CAF Model is given by CAF-2013 brochure [8]¹.

¹ CAF brochure is available online on the EIPA CAF webpage: <https://www.eipa.eu/portfolio/european-caf-resource-centre>

The CAF Model

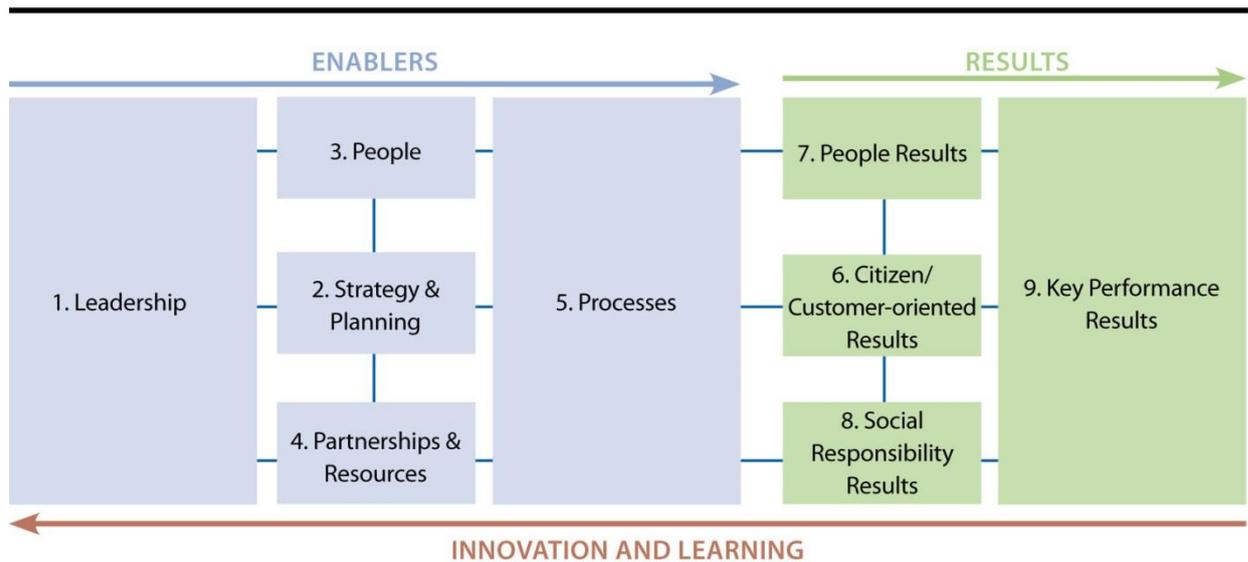


Figure 1. The CAF Model

The nine-box structure identifies the main aspects requiring consideration in any organisational analysis. Criteria 1-5 deal with the managerial practices of an organisation: the so-called Enablers. These determine what the organisation does and how it approaches its tasks to achieve the desired results. In criteria 6-9, Results achieved in the fields of citizens/customers, people, social responsibility and key performance are measured by perception and performance measurements. Each criterion is further broken down into a list of sub-criteria. The 28 sub-criteria identify the main issues that need to be considered when assessing an organisation. They are illustrated by examples that explain the content of the sub-criteria in more detail and suggest possible areas to address, in order to explore how the administration fulfills the requirements expressed in the sub-criterion. These examples represent a lot of good practices from all over Europe. Not all of them are relevant for every organisation, but many can be considered as points of attention during self-assessment. Integrating the conclusions from the assessment of the enablers and results criteria into the managerial practices constitute the continuous innovation and learning cycle that accompanies organisations on their way towards excellence.

The CAF aims to be a catalyst for a full improvement process within the organisation and has five main purposes:

1. to introduce public administrations into the culture of excellence and the principles of TQM;
2. to guide them progressively to a fully-fledged PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, Act) cycle;
3. to facilitate the self-assessment of a public organisation in order to obtain a diagnosis and a definition of improvement actions;
4. to act as a bridge across the various models used in quality management, both in public and private sectors;
5. to facilitate bench learning between public sector organisations.

Since its launch, nearly 3000 public sector organisations across and outside Europe have used the model, and the number of CAF users continues to grow.

CAF and Social Responsibility

Actual version of the Common Assessment Framework, CAF 2013 [8], has two key references to social responsibility. First, Social Responsibility –is one of eight Principles of Excellence. These are fundamental concepts of excellence initially defined by EFQM and translated to the public sector in order to integrate TQM principals and into the public sector philosophy and start transfer from bureaucratic public organisation to the one oriented towards total quality:

- Principle 1: Results orientation
- Principle 2: Citizen/Customer focus
- Principle 3: Leadership and constancy of purpose
- Principle 4: Management by processes and facts
- Principle 5: People development and involvement
- Principle 6: Continuous learning, innovation and improvement
- Principle 7: Partnership development
- Principle 8: Social responsibility

These principles lay in the basis of the Procedure on CAF External Feedback (PEF) [9] and form the TQM maturity scale of for levels that helps organisation to move forward towards excellence.

The principle of social responsibility means that public sector organisations have to assume their social responsibility, respect ecological sustainability and try to meet the major expectations and requirements of the local and global community. According to the TQM maturity levels the level of social responsibility of organisation can be define as following [9]:

- “Zero” level: No evidence of thinking about social responsibility matters.
- “Initiation” level: The organisation is aware of its impact on society (social and environmental). Examples: the organisation makes a distinction between its mission and its corporate social responsibility as a public institution; the organisation identifies the areas of impact in terms of social, economic and ecological issues and impact on the media.
- “Realisation” level: The organisation is actively involved in activities related to social responsibility and ecological sustainability. Examples: the organisation works on mutually beneficial projects on societal issues; the organisation has started to implement initiatives that have an impact on social, economic and ecological issues and on the media.
- “Maturity” level: The organisation meets or exceeds the major expectations and requirements of the local and - where appropriate – the global community. Examples: management has defined a vision on relevant issues concerning corporate social responsibility, and employees share this vision; the organisation integrates this vision into the strategy and action plans; the organisation promotes opportunities and develops initiatives to work on mutually beneficial projects with society; the organisation has carried out measurements of corporate social responsibility and ecological sustainability in some areas and the results have been discussed.

The social responsibility principle is partly reflected in 3 Enables criteria of CAF: “Leadership”, “Strategy & Planning”, “Partnerships and Resources” and the 7th criterion of Results “People Results”. And the importance of social responsibility issues on the way to sustainable development is proved by its the directly integration into the structure of the CAF Model : the 8th criterion of CAF is “Social Responsibility Results” [8].

The main mission of a public organisation is always dedicated to satisfying a category of needs and expectations of the society. This may include the organisation's approach and contribution to quality of life, protection of the environment, preservation of global resources, equal employment opportunities, ethical behaviour, involvement with communities and the contribution to local development. In CAF logic, the main feature of social responsibility translates the will of the organisation, on the one hand, to integrate social and environmental aspects in its decision-making considerations (criterion 2), and on the other hand, to be able to respond to the impact of its decisions and activities on society and the environment.

The performance of an organisation towards the community in which it operates (local, national or international) and its impact on the environment have become a critical component of the measurement of its overall performance. An organisation working on its social responsibility will:

1. improve its reputation and image to the citizens as a whole;
2. improve its ability to attract and retain staff members and maintain motivation and commitment of its staff;
3. improve its relations with companies, other public organisations, the media, suppliers, citizens/customers and the community in which it exists.

The measures cover both qualitative/quantitative measures of perception (sub-criterion 8.1) and quantitative indicators (sub-criterion 8.2). They can be related to:

- ethical, democratic and participative behaviour of the organisation;
- environmental sustainability;
- quality of life;
- economic impact as effects of organisational behaviours.

Social Responsibility Self-assessment with CAF

Using the CAF Model is a learning process for each organisation. The key method in the basis of CAF methodology is the self-assessment that allows to give an indication of the direction to follow for improvement activities; to measure your own progress; to identify good practices as indicated by high scoring for Enablers and Results; to help the organisation to find valid partners to learn from. A 10-step implementation plan (fig. 2) helps organisations to use CAF in the most efficient and effective way. Detailed guidelines of self-assessment procedure, scoring panel and tools can be found in CAF brochure [8].

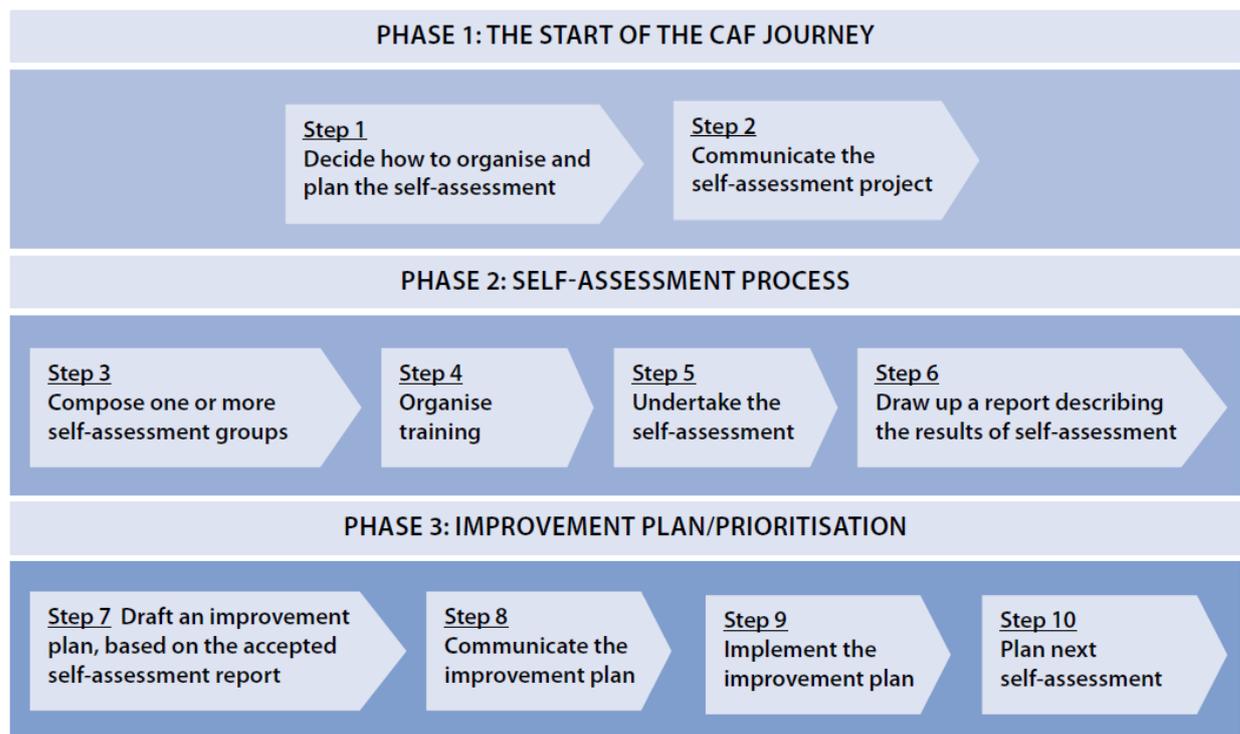


Figure 2. Ten steps of CAF implementation in the organisation

Self-assessment under criterion 8 “Social Responsibility” based on CAF model structure: criterion is broken down into a list of sub-criteria; sub-criteria identify the main issues that need to be considered when assessing an organisation. Criteria from “Results” part are evaluated by perception and performance measurements. Each sub-criterion is illustrated by examples, good practices those explain the content of the sub-criterion in more details and suggest possible areas to address.

Self-assessment group consider what the organisation is achieving regarding its social responsibility, through the results of Sub-criterion 8.1 “Perception measurements” and Sub-criterion 8.2 “Performance measurements”.

Perception measurements focus on the perception of the community of the performance of the organisation on a local, national or international level. This perception can be obtained through different sources, including surveys, reports, public press meetings, NGOs, CSOs (civic service organisations), direct feedback from stakeholders and the neighbourhood, etc. The perception gives an indication of the effectiveness of the social and environmental strategies. It includes the view on the impact on the quality of life, the approach and results on environmental issues, etc.

Some examples those can be considered as points of attention during self-assessment:

- Public awareness of the impact of the organisation’s performance on the quality of citizens’/customers’ life (e.g. health education, support of sport and cultural activities, participation in humanitarian operations, specific actions towards disadvantaged people, cultural activities open to the public, etc.).
- Perception of the economic impact on society at the local, regional, national or international level (e.g. the creation/attraction of small business activities in the neighbourhood, creation of public roads or public transport that also serve existing economic actors).
- Perception of the approach to environmental issues (e.g. perception of the ecological footprint, energy management, reduced electricity and water consumption, protection against noise and

air pollution, stimulating mobility by public transport, waste management of potentially toxic waste).

Performance measurements of Social Responsibility Results focus on the measures used by the organisation to monitor, understand, predict and improve the performance regarding its social responsibility. It should give a clear indication of the effectiveness of the approaches of the organisation on societal issues. They can consider the ethical behaviour, the initiatives and results of prevention of health risks, the initiatives to exchange knowledge, the initiatives to preserve the resources and reduce the environmental impact, etc.

Examples those indicate evidence of social responsibility:

- Programmes to prevent health risks and accidents for citizens/customers and employees (number and type of prevention programmes, assistance in the fight against smoking, healthy food education, the number of beneficiaries and the relation to cost/quality of these programmes).
- Organisation's activities to preserve and sustain resources (e.g. the presence of providers with socially responsible profile, degree of compliance with environmental standards, use of recycled materials, use of environmentally friendly modes of transport, reduction of nuisance, threats and noise, reduction in use of utilities e.g. water, electricity, gas).
- Quality of the relationship with relevant authorities, groups and community representatives.
- Support for international development projects and participation of employees in philanthropic activities.

SORAF: Social Responsibility Assessment Framework

CAF experts and national correspondents actively apply CAF methodology to different sectors and fields. One of the good example is the Social Responsibility Assessment Framework (SORAF) developed in Belgium Federal Public Service Personnel and Organisation in 2014 and conceptualized in 2016 [10]. SORAF is a self-assessment tool aiming at developing the social responsibility of the public sector and assessing its impact on society. SORAF answers the following questions:

- What does social responsibility entail for the public sector?
- How to integrate social responsibility into the decision-making processes as well as into the organisations culture, strategy and management plans.
- How to implement and evaluate social responsibility in the public sector.

SORAF helps to identify the impacts of the organisation on its stakeholders and its sphere of influence referring to the 7 themes of social responsibility identified by ISO 26000:

1. Governance of the organisation: Is social responsibility integrated into the vision, strategy and planning, the key performance indicators of the organisation?
2. Human rights: To what extent does the organisation pay specific attention to risky situations such as social movements, asylum seekers, youth unemployment and low-income pensioners?
3. Labour practices: does the organisation provide the best working environment for their employees and what about the suppliers' employees?
4. Environment: what has the organisation done to reduce energy consumption and how can it improve?

5. Fair operating practices: what are the practices put in place to fight against corruption? How are common goods managed? Common goods are a new concept between public goods and private property. This can consist of natural goods, such as water and forests. This may also be abandoned buildings retrieved by public authorities and entrusted to a managing committee composed of civil society representatives and public authorities for social and cultural purposes.
6. Citizen's issues: one of the most famous aspects is free access to information for all, without forgetting those that do not have internet access.
7. Community involvement and development: encouraging local firms through development, for example short supply chains.

Each theme or core subject is subdivided into action domains totalling 42.

To conclude, SORAF deepens the diagnostic of social responsibility inclusion into the workings of the public organisation. SORAF does this particularly by extending the issues considered and the inclusion of the sphere of influence of the organisation.

Despite the effort to become a standard for all types of private or public organisations, the ISO 26000 standard is limited in its application in public organisations. In this respect the purpose of SORAF is to:

1. extend the mission of public service administration to the different aspects of social responsibility, while taking into account the international standards used;
2. integrate social responsibility into the strategy of public organisations (via production of an action plan for the governance of the organisation focused on social responsibility);
3. professionalise the implementation and the evaluation of social responsibility in the public sector;
4. offer a simple instrument of enhancing social responsibility dedicated to public services, developed by the public sector (and free);
5. make the public sector agents aware of the inclusion of social responsibility in public service missions and involve them in social responsibility actions;
6. facilitate the social responsibility comparisons and best practice exchange between public organisations;
7. intensify exchanges between public organisations and stakeholders when gathering of needs and expectations;
8. integrate the principles of social responsibility in the operation of public organisations: accountability, transparency, ethical behaviour, recognition of stakeholder interest, particularly during the presentation of reports to stakeholders.

Most of SORAF areas appear in all the CAF criteria, but are developed more in depth (fig. 3).

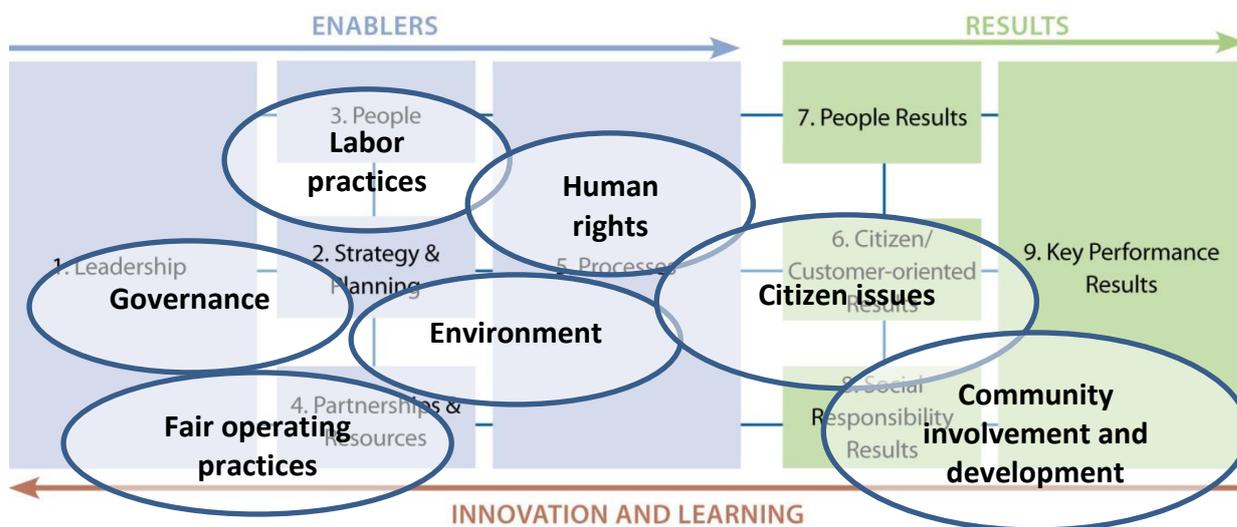


Figure 3. SORAF, CAF and ISO26000 clauses

SORAF and CAF, as two self-assessment instruments, are conceived in order to be used independently and complementarily. They should not be considered as competing with each other. A CAF diagnostic can lead to an action proposal linked to criterion 8, implementing SORAF if the organisation considers deepening this area. In a similar way it can consider implementing the ISO 9001 certification in relation to criterion 5. The implementation of SORAF can first lead the organisation to use CAF, if it intends to commit to the path of excellence and the participative approach.

Conclusion

The only criterion that has been changed in from the previous version of the Common Assessment Framework – CAF 2006 is criterion 8 “Society Results”. In CAF 2013 a new term has been introduced – “Social responsibility”, and the name of criterion has been updated. Social Responsibility Results became a part of the CAF criteria. Currently EUPAN CAF Working Group is developing a new version of the model – CAF 2020 [11]. Definitely a new CAF will respond to main modern challenges in public administration reforms and reflect the UN Agenda 2030. Thus it would be an excellence model worth spreading to achieve SDGs.

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