CAF Excellence Recognition***

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CAF Excellence Recognition*

CAF User

PROCEDURE FOR CAF EXCELLENCE RECOGNITION

IMPROVING PUBLIC ORGANISATIONS THROUGH SELF-ASSESSMENT

CAF
COMMON ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

CAF
European Resource Centre

EIPA

EUPAN
european public administration network

Improving Public Organisations Through Self-Assessment

Common Assessment Framework (CAF) Excellence Recognition

June 2025

Contents

List of Abbreviations

CAF   Common Assessment Framework
CER   CAF Excellence Recognition
ECU   Effective CAF User
EUPAN   European Public Administration Network
EFA   External Feedback Actor
NO   National Organiser
PER   Procedure for Excellence Recognition
ReSPA   Regional School of Public Administration
SA   Self-assessment
QM   Quality management
TQM   Total quality management

Foreword

In the late 1990s, the importance of quality management in the public sector became increasingly recognised within the European Union. To unify efforts and initiate a collaborative learning process across Europe, EU Ministers responsible for public administration encouraged their Directors-General to promote exchanges and cooperation among Member States, leading to the development of common quality management models, approaches, and tools.

One of the most prominent and significant outcomes of this collaboration was the creation of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) in the year 2000 – a European quality management tool specifically for the public sector. The CAF was developed by the public sector for the public sector. It operates on the principle that outstanding organisational performance, customer satisfaction, employee engagement, and societal contributions are achieved through leadership-driven strategies, effective planning, engaged people, strong partnerships, optimal use of resources, and efficient processes. Excellent performance and good governance in the European public space, with trustworthy collaboration with countries beyond Europe is at the very core of the CAF.

When implementing and maintaining the CAF, public organisations invest significant effort and resources. It became clear early on that CAF users needed feedback not only on the methodology but also on its impact. These organisations wanted to make sure their self-assessments were thorough, their improvement plans aligned with results, and they were making real progress towards TQM. Additionally, they aimed to showcase their progress both within their organisations and to external stakeholders. This is why in 2009 the so-called External Feedback Procedure was developed as a result of a common work of the CAF National Correspondents Network.

In the ever-evolving quest for excellence, and in the context of new trends and user needs the public sector is facing, the need to update both the CAF model and the External Feedback Procedure was identified. Again, actions were taken in the CAF National Correspondents Network and within the wider CAF community. The new revision is based on surveys conducted among CAF organisations and External Feedback Actors, where their practical experience and recommendations are shared. The new Procedure for CAF Excellence Recognition 2025 (CER) is a new version of the previous Procedure on External Feedback (PEF), which was published in 2013[1].

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[1] The old PEF remains valid, despite the publication of the new CER on the EIPA website, following its approval by EUPAN. Both the PEF and CER will be equally applicable during the transition phase. The transition phase will last 1.5 years enabling sufficient time for development of the training curricula for the External Feedback Actors, and training and collecting possible shortcomings/user experiences for improvements.

The initiative to update the PEF originated from the Austrian CAF National Centre in September 2022. The proposal was subsequently presented to the CAF National Correspondents in October 2022. An agreed procedure for the update was established, including two in-depth surveys designed to assess the need for and, ultimately, the scope of the PEF update. The surveys were designed to analyse the satisfaction levels of public sector organisations and gather insights from CAF External Feedback Actors (EFAs) with the Effective CAF User (ECU) label. The key focus areas included the level of satisfaction with the PEF procedure, the usefulness, visibility, and duration of the ECU label, and motivations for re-certification. They also examined the roles of National Organisers and EFAs, as well as broader perspectives on motivation and satisfaction with the PEF process. Developed by the PEF Revision Working Group, the surveys were conducted in two phases: January–February 2023 for ECU organisations, and April–May 2023 for EFAs and CAF experts. The process was managed centrally by the European CAF Resource Centre at EIPA, in close collaboration with CAF National Correspondents and working group members wherever possible.

Their collaborative effort, driven by a shared commitment to the common European interest, reflects a deep conviction that their work represents a significant step forward in advancing qualitative good governance across Europe. Moreover, it aims to inspire excellence and spread these standards globally.

The CAF Excellence Recognition was reported to the EUPAN Working Level meeting and presented at the EUPAN Directors-General in May 2025, during the Polish Presidency.

Executive Summary

The CAF Procedure for Excellence Recognition

The aim of the new version of providing peer and expert feedback on the CAF implementation was to create a new dynamic in the CAF community in Europe and beyond. The initiative for a new revision of the PEF is an answer to the recent CAF development (CAF 2020), and the needs, expectations, and recommendations from the CAF users, the EFAs CAF experts, and international CAF network, based on their rich experience in the process of its implementation. The aim of this updated version is to make the evaluation and recognition of the excellence and efforts to reach excellence using the CAF a simpler one, with even more concise and easy-to-follow steps, covering the context and logic of the old Procedure for External Feedback – the PEF.

The objectives of the CAF Procedure for Excellence Recognition

The demand for external recognition among public sector organisations is a critical aspect of their commitment to implementing CAF as their TQM model. This demand stems from various factors and has significant implications for both the organisations themselves and the stakeholders they serve. The objectives for CER can be summarised as the following:
- Validation of efforts

Public sector organisations often operate under intense scrutiny and accountability. Implementing TQM through the CAF involves considerable effort, resources, and commitment. External recognition serves as a formal validation that their efforts have led to meaningful improvements in quality and performance, alongside guiding organisations towards

higher maturity through increasing levels of recognition.

- Benchmarking and comparison

Striving for excellence and external recognition allows organisations to benchmark their performance against similar entities. This comparison helps to understand where they stand in relation to their peers, and provides a reference point for continuous improvement.

- Credibility and trust

Being recognised in excellence principles and criteria enhances the credibility of an organisation. It demonstrates to stakeholders, including citizens, employees, and partners, that the organisation is committed to high standards and is willing to be held accountable for its performance.

Mechanisms of the CAF Procedure for Excellence Recognition

Experts (EAs) in CAF provide a more technical and objective analysis of the organisation's performance. Their feedback includes justified detailed evaluations of the steps in the process of CAF implementation, outcomes, and adherence to excellence principles, which are invaluable for identifying gaps and opportunities for improvements.

New perspectives

Engaging with external feedback opens up new perspectives and ideas for quality improvement. It encourages organisations to think beyond their immediate context, and consider innovative approaches that have been successful elsewhere.

Impact of CAF Excellence Recognition

External feedback in Excellence Recognition helps organisations identify achievements and areas for improvement, refining strategies to meet quality standards and stakeholder expectations. It guides future quality initiatives, enabling goal-setting, improved management practices, and continuous development.

Recognition fosters employee pride and motivation, reinforcing a culture of excellence. Externally, it enhances the organisation's reputation among stakeholders, signalling leadership in quality management and commitment to high standards.

This acknowledgement also boosts stakeholder trust and engagement by demonstrating transparency, accountability, and dedication to improvement, building stronger community support and partnerships.

Recognition levels

Depending on the experience in the application of the CAF and its degree of maturity, three different levels of recognition can be awarded to the organisation:

- CAF Excellence Recognition* (1 star)
- CAF Excellence Recognition** (2 stars)
- CAF Excellence Recognition*** (3 stars)

A basic recognition, 'CAF User', can be awarded to the organisations that demonstrate effective use of the CAF model, through the achievement of self-assessment and the definition of an improvement plan. The term CAF User is awarded after a simple verification by the National Organiser of the coherence and completeness of the related documentation, without the application of the assessment schemes for pillars 1, 2, and 3.

The full description of the different recognition levels is given in the Appendix 1 – CER Levels of Recognition.

The CAF Excellence Recognition Levels
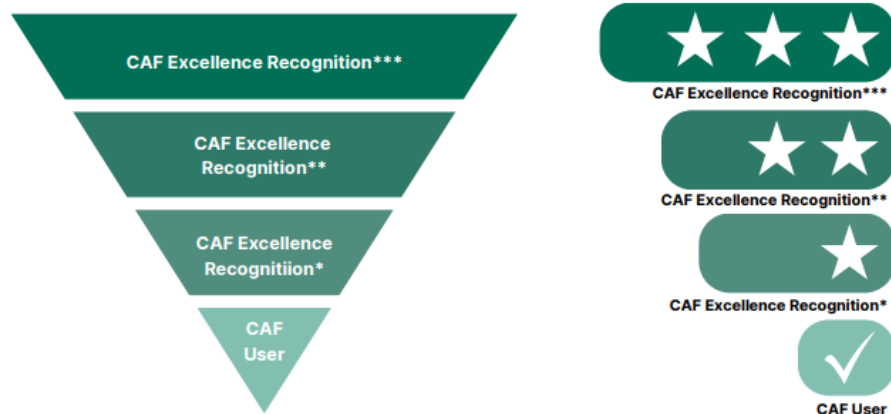
The Procedure for CAF Excellence Recognition is built upon three pillars, fully covering the process and assessment of TQM maturity:

01

Pillar 1

The process of self-assessment

Assessment Scheme 1 (Appendix 2.1)

02

Pillar 2

The process of improvement actions

Assessment Scheme 2 (Appendix 2.2)

03

Pillar 3

The TQM maturity of the organisation

Assessment Scheme 3 (Appendix 2.3)
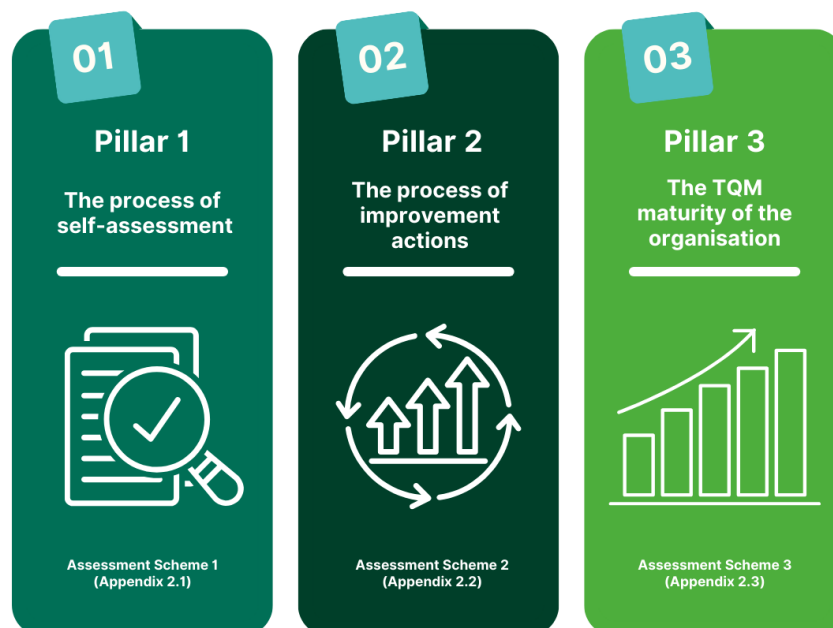
Pillar 1: The process of self-assessment

The self-assessment serves as a basis for the identification, planning, and implementation of improvement inside the organisation. In the first pillar of the CAF Procedure for Excellence Recognition, the quality of the self-assessment process is central. With the procedure, the CAF External Feedback Actors will look at the ability of the organisation to make an effective, well-planned, and correct self-assessment (in accordance with the guidelines in the CAF Manual). This will identify strengths and improvement areas, ideas, and proposals on which an improvement plan will be based, and will not be looking at the validation of scores given in the CAF self-assessment.

Therefore, the CAF External Feedback Actors will look at the ability of the organisation to make an effective, well-planned, and correct self-assessment based on the steps as described in the CAF model.

Pillar 2: The process of improvement actions

The next important element in an effective CAF implementation is acting upon the results from the self-assessment. Improvement actions need to be prioritised and translated into an improvement plan that will be carried out. In this second pillar of the CAF Procedure for Excellence Recognition, the External Feedback Actors will look into the planning procedures adopted and the process followed for the improvement plan's implementation under monitoring and control.

Pillar 3: The TQM maturity of the organisation (the broader scope of excellence)

One of the aims of the CAF model is to guide public sector organisations closer towards the important values of TQM. By applying the CAF model, these values should – over time – become part of the culture of the organisation. The assessment scheme for TQM maturity is therefore based on the eight fundamental Principles of Excellence. The evaluation concerns the maturity level achieved by the organisation as whole, considering in particular the effect on it from self-assessment and improvement actions.

The Process of the CAF Excellence Recognition

Implementation of CAF Excellence Recognition at national level

The CAF National Organiser is appointed at national level to be in charge of the implementation of the CER in the country. This role can also be filled by a regional organisation designated by the countries to act as the CAF National Organiser[2]. The National Organiser selects a core group of CAF External Feedback Actors (the evaluators). The underlying principle of the CAF Procedure for Excellence Recognition is that organisations can make use of it at minimum cost. General common guidelines for the CAF Procedure for Excellence Recognition are described in this procedure. By following the guiding principles, Member States will be able to guarantee that the CAF Procedure for Excellence Recognition processes are organised in a qualitative way, ensuring homogeneousity and that – as a consequence – the previously named Effective CAF User Label – now the CAF Excellence Recognition – enjoys a high acceptance and recognition across the European Union and beyond.

The role of the European CAF Resource Centre

Besides managing the CAF, the European CAF Resource Centre under the European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA) in Maastricht supports the Member States in the implementation of the CAF Procedure for Excellence Recognition through a number of initiatives. First, it promotes the CAF Procedure for Excellence Recognition at European level, introducing the CAF National Correspondents to this procedure and offering a common European training scheme for CAF External Feedback Actors. Second, it coordinates support for Member States that do not have a National Organiser, and organises the CAF Procedure for Excellence Recognition for non-EU members who do not have a National CAF Centre, and European institutions.

Application by CAF users

Each public organisation using CAF can apply for the CAF Excellence Recognition under the following two conditions:
1. The application should be made not before six months but not exceeding twelve months after the CAF improvement plan has been developed.
2. The organisation registers as a CAF User in their countries and/or it is registered as a CAF User in the European database of CAF users, hosted by EIPA.

The applicant organisation will then go through the different phases of the CAF External Feedback Procedure:
Phase 1: the application;
Phase 2: the process of providing feedback;
Phase 3: the final decision and awarding of the CAF Excellence Recognition.

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[2] As an example: Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) of the Western Balkans, hosting the Regional Quality Management Centre.

Roles, tasks, and profile of the CAF EFAs

The CAF EFAs play a crucial role in the CAF Procedure for Excellence Recognition. The main tasks of the CAF External Feedback Actors are the following:

- Conduct a thorough study and reasoned analysis of the CAF implementation through a process of self-assessment and improvement actions, and an assessment/evaluation of whether the organisation is implementing TQM value. This is based on the three CER pillar and CER level requirement.
- Provide feedback and suggestions on strengths and areas of improvement regarding the process of CAF implementation.
- Support and renew enthusiasm in the organisation to work with holistic quality development and self-assessment with the CAF model.

A CAF External Feedback Actor requires a balance of personal and professional skills, coupled with a commitment to timely and appropriate conduct, as well as full objectivity in assessment. They must have participated in the European or national training course to become a CAF External Feedback Actor.

Conclusion

The CAF Procedure for Excellence Recognition significantly enhances the utility of the CAF for public sector organisations. This procedure provides a formal mechanism for these organisations to compare their performance against established quality standards and their peers, helping them identify strengths and areas for improvement. The structured feedback from peers and experts involved in the recognition process offers detailed, justified, and valuable insights, making the evaluation process more meaningful and actionable. By focusing on continuous improvement, the procedure encourages organisations to exceed current quality standards, fostering a culture of ongoing development and excellence. External feedback from peers and experts provides an objective evaluation, often more critical and unbiased than internal assessments, leading to a deeper understanding of their performance. Engaging with these external evaluators also exposes organisations to new perspectives and innovative ideas, which can significantly contribute to their quality improvement strategies. The comprehensive feedback received covers various aspects of performance, including process efficiency, customer satisfaction, and employee engagement, providing a holistic view of the organisation's current state. Achieving recognition through this procedure not only boosts the satisfaction of employees and management by acknowledging their hard work, but also motivates them to continue striving for excellence. This recognition process enhances accountability and transparency, demonstrating to stakeholders that the organisation is committed to maintaining high standards of quality. Moreover, it significantly boosts the organisation's reputation, signalling to citizens, partners, and other public sector entities that it is a leader in quality and dedicated to continuous improvement.

PART 1: The CAF Excellence Recognition (CER)

1. Effective use of the CAF model

The use of the CAF model provides an organisation with a powerful framework to initiate a process of continuous improvement. The CAF provides:
- an assessment based on evidence, against a set of criteria which has become widely accepted across the public sector;
- opportunities to identify progress and outstanding levels of achievement;
- a means to achieve consistency of direction and consensus on what needs to be done to improve an organisation;
- a link between the different results to be achieved and supportive practices or enablers;
- a means to involve employees in the improvement process;
- opportunities to promote and share good practices within different areas of an organisation and with other organisations;
- a means to integrate various quality initiatives into normal business operations;
- a means of measuring progress over time through periodic self-assessment.

The CAF Excellence Recognition has been created to further support organisations in using the CAF most effectively in their quality management journey, and to exploit to the maximum the features as described. There are three main reasons why it is important to use the CAF effectively and to receive feedback on this.

Reason 1: The success of the CAF depends on the way in which it is applied

The methodology for implementing the CAF in an organisation is not strict rules and regulations to be followed, but is to be regarded as recommended steps based on experience and successful applications during many years of working with the CAF. A successful implementation of the CAF strongly depends on the way in which the CAF model is used in an organisation. It can be useful for organisations receiving feedback on its usage to further improve their effectiveness in the future.

Reason 2: Working with CAF also means launching improvement actions

Applying the CAF model in an effective way not only means carrying out a self-assessment, but also involves creating an improvement plan and carrying out the actions in this plan. Receiving feedback on this plan and mainly how it has been implemented can be one important way in which the CAF Excellence Recognition Procedure can provide added value. Another important reason is the motivational aspect. As experience in many projects has shown, motivation and

dynamics are usually quite high in organisations when starting the improvement plan. The challenge, however, is to continue and to successfully complete these efforts. The external feedback can therefore help organisations keep up the momentum and avoid losing their motivation or dynamics.

Reason 3: Excellence is an ongoing process

The eight Principles of Excellence form the basis of the CAF model (as described in the previous part).

Organisations that are starting to implement the CAF have the ambition to grow towards excellence in their performance and have introduced this culture of excellence in the organisation.

Effective use of the CAF should, in time, lead to the further development of this type of culture and thinking within the organisation. Receiving feedback on this can help organisations develop this culture.

2. The principles of the CAF Procedure for External Recognition

There are five general principles underpinning the CAF Procedure for External Recognition:

1. The CAF Procedure for Excellence Recognition is a common European framework, to be implemented according to the national contexts on a voluntary basis.

2. The CAF Procedure for Excellence Recognition promotes feedback of the implementation of CAF and its effects on the organisation. This feedback is given by External Feedback Actors who have received training in CAF Excellence Recognition by the European CAF Resource Centre and/or National Organisers.

3. The CAF Procedure for Excellence Recognition leads to one of a possible three levels of the the CAF Excellence Recognition (*, **, ***) which will be valid for three years.

4. The decision and responsibility for implementing the CAF Procedure for Excellence Recognition at a national level belongs to each Member State/National Organiser. Or, as described above, in case there is no formal decision on the national level to have a National Organiser, the European CAF Resource will provide support.

5. The CAF Procedure for Excellence Recognition is built upon three pillars. These pillars are elaborated in detail in the next part of this procedure, and in the various assessment schemes and scoring guides contained in the respective appendices.

01

Pillar 1

The process of self-assessment

Assessment Scheme 1
(Appendix 2.1)

02

Pillar 2

The process of improvement actions

Assessment Scheme 2
(Appendix 2.2)

03

Pillar 3

The TQM maturity of the organisation

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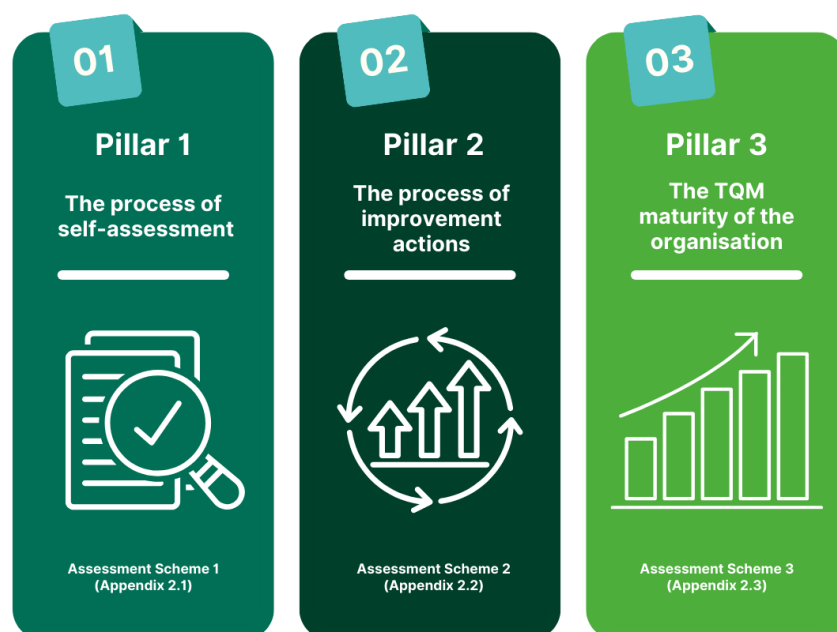
Pillar 1: The process of self-assessment

The quality of the self-assessment serves as a basis for the success of future improvements. In the first pillar of the CAF Excellence Recognition process, the quality of the self-assessment process is central. To obtain an in-depth look at the quality of the process, Steps 1–3 of the process must be analysed. An assessment scheme has been developed for the assessment of these different steps; all these steps are translated into specific actions. Below is an example of the different actions defined for Step 1 of the self-assessment process. For a detailed description of all the steps, see Appendix 2.1: Assessment Scheme on Pillar 1.

Self-assessment process Pillar 1 – STEPS
Step 1: Decide how to organise, plan, and communicate the self-assessment.
Step 2: Organise information/training and prepare the self-assessment.
Step 3: Perform the self-assessment.

Scoring of the organisation is based on clear and simple evaluation scales.

The scheme recognises the ability to make an effective and well-planned self-assessment that increases the organisation's understanding of the fundamental principles required to become excellent. The evaluation scale has five levels:

1	The activities have been carried out in a very limited way.
2	The activities have been carried out in a limited way.
3	The activities have been carried out in an acceptable way.
4	The activities have been carried out in an effective way.
5	The activities have been carried out in an outstanding way.

This evaluation scale has been detailed for each action in descriptors, defining the interpretation of the real situation of the organisation with regard to the specific theme.

For a further explanation of the scoring and its use, please refer to the Appendix 3 – The CAF Excellence Recognition Scoring Guide. Below is an example of the assessment scheme for the Step 1.1.

Step 1: Decide how to organise, plan, and communicate the self-assessment					
Levels	1	2	3	4	5
Actions					
1.1. Assure a clear management decision regarding the objectives, set up the project management plan (e.g. responsibilities,	There is no evidence of a clear decision in consultation with the management and other stakeholders, or definition of the	There is some evidence of a decision, but with limited evidence of consultation with management and other stakeholders.	There is evidence of a formal decision by the management, in consultation with management and other stakeholders. The project	There is clear evidence of a formal decision by the management, in consultation with the organisation and other stakeholders.	There is strong evidence of a formal decision by the management, involving the organisation and stakeholders.

timeline, resources, training, scoring panel definition) and scope (e.g. the self-assessment group covers the whole organisation or only parts/units/ departments).	the scope and involvement of the management in the start of the process. There is no evidence of a project management plan. There is no clear scope for SA.	The project management plan is incomplete or incoherent. The rational for the choice of the scope is not clear.	management plan is not fully detailed or coherent. There is a clear rational for the choice of the scope.	The project management plan is detailed and coherent. There is a clear rational for the choice of the scope and there are clearly defined objectives.	The project management plan is detailed for all the elements; the coherence of the contents shows deep and informed reflections. There is a clear rational for the choice of the scope and there are clearly defined objectives, with a view to continuity and broadening prospects.

Pillar 2: The process of improvement actions

The second important element of an effective CAF implementation is the use of results of the self-assessment to improve the organisation. Conclusions have to be prioritised and translated into an improvement plan covering a (limited) list of well-chosen actions. This second pillar of the CAF focuses on this phase of the CAF implementation and covers Steps 4 to 6 of the process. The steps all provide a detailed insight into the improvement plan, the quality of this plan, and how it is created, communicated, implemented, and monitored to product a real added value for the organisation.

For CAF Excellence Recognition*, the assessment is limited to the Steps 4 and 5, as it is aimed at verifying the planning and the process of improvement and is not meant for assessing the results of the improvement actions.

Steps in Pillar 2	
Step 4:	Draft an improvement plan, based on the accepted self-assessment report.
Step 5:	Define, implement, and monitor the improvement actions.
Step 6:	Manage the improvement projects and review the results.

As in Pillar 1, all these steps are translated into specific actions and are evaluated against the same five-point evaluation scale presented above. For a detailed presentation of the different actions in all the steps of Pillar 2, see Appendix 2.2 – Assessment Scheme on Pillar 2 and the Scoring Guide, and Appendix 3 for an in-depth explanation of the scoring on this pillar.

Pillar 3: The TQM maturity of the organisation

The third pillar of the CAF External Feedback focuses on the eight Principles of Excellence and a shift in focus towards these principles after applying the CAF model.

The evaluation team assesses the maturity level achieved by the organisation, looking in particular at the improvement derived from self-assessment and the action plan, and whether they have stimulated the introduction and development of a culture of excellence within the organisation.

The evaluation scale has four levels:

0	= Initiation level has not been achieved
I	= Initiation level
R	= Realisation level
M	= Maturity level

Description of the evaluation scale

The scale follows an **incremental progression model** with four distinct levels:

- **0 (Not achieved)**: The initiation level has not been reached.
- **I (Initiation level)**: The foundational level; basic requirements are met.
- **R (Realisation level)**: This builds upon the **Initiation level (I)** by fulfilling all its requirements plus additional, more advanced criteria; it is represented as **I +** in the table.
- **M (Maturity level)**: This is the highest level, which includes all requirements from the **Realisation level (R)** plus further, more sophisticated criteria; it is represented as **R +** in the table.

This **incremental approach** ensures that each level incorporates and expands upon the requirements of the preceding level, progressively strengthening the implementation.

The extent of the evaluation of the principles and the level needed to achieve recognition varies for the three levels of certification, since higher levels of recognition require the organisation to demonstrate a higher level of organisational maturity. See Appendix 3 – The CAF Excellence Recognition Scoring Guide.

Below is an example of the Assessment Scheme (for the Principle of Leadership):

Leadership	Leadership excellence couples visionary and inspirational leadership and bases decisions on evidence and facts. Leaders establish a clear mission statement, vision, and values, and ensure capability, resilience, and sustained public trust. They create and maintain the internal environment and organisational culture in which people can become fully engaged in achieving the organisation's objectives and reaching high levels of excellence.

Level	0	I – Initiation	R – Realisation	M – Maturity
Key definition	The initiation level has not been reached.	Leaders establish a clear mission statement, according to legislation and regulation requirements as well as taking into account the stakeholders' expectations.	I + leaders constantly challenge and review the organisation's strategy to stay resilient and ensure organisational agility.	R + leaders establish a strategic vision encompassing organisational capability, resilience, and sustained public trust.
Explanation	There is no evidence that leadership is performed in an effective and professional way.	Leaders define the strategic objectives and structural framework of the organisation. Leaders communicate and explain the mission, vision, values, objectives, organisational rules, structures, and procedures to employees and stakeholders. Leaders define appropriate managerial structures, processes, functions, responsibilities, and competencies.	Leaders define the strategy, based on the vision, mission, and values of the organisation and evaluate its performance. Leaders are committed to define, maintain, and develop adequate organisational structures and systematic approaches to efficiently and effectively fulfil the mission and vision. Leaders empower, drive, and inspire staff to contribute to organisation's goals and improvement. Leaders define a balanced set of results and outcomes, and evaluate the performance and impact of the organisation. Leaders reorganise the organisation's structure according to requirements based on internal and external changes. Leaders empower, drive, and inspire staff to contribute to the organisation's goals and improvement.	Leaders constantly develop the organisation's structure and systems according to internal and external requirements and dynamics, to provide an organisational framework for excellent performance. Leaders continually work on the further development of an excellent organisational culture together with all internal and external stakeholders. Leaders and managers are perceived as role models. Leaders promote mutual trust and a learning culture, and they stimulate employees to develop their competences. Empowerment and a culture of delegation is widely promoted, and people are effectively supported to reach personal and organisational objectives.
Examples of practices/ instruments		Mission statement Organisational rule book	Strategy Values (e.g. Code of Conduct, Sustainable Development Goals) Objectives (organisational and individual levels)	Vision Leadership evaluation Feedback culture Communities of practice Innovation labs Strategic foresight

PART 2: The process of CAF Excellence Recognition

Implementation of the CAF Excellence Recognition at national level

The Member States will consider and follow the general common guidelines for the CAF Excellence Recognition process as described in further detail in this part. By following these guidelines, Member States will guarantee that the CAF Excellence Recognition process is organised in a qualitative way and that – as a consequence – the CAF Excellence Recognition enjoys a high standard across the European Union. The concrete implementation of the CER procedure in the different countries shall be a standardised one, following all requirement as described in this CER procedure. In case specific, marginal, or national context needs to be respected which derives from this procedure, the National Organiser shall communicate and coordinate the changes with the European CAF Resource Centre at EIPA.

The National Organiser (NO) is appointed at national level to be in charge of the implementation of the CAF Excellence Recognition in the country. The organisation in charge depends on the national context and can be a separate organisational unit at the ministry in charge of public administration or at another organisation, a separate organisation, or others. Irrespective of a concrete organisational solution, the NO must be recognisable and promoted as such.

The National Organiser selects a core group of CAF EFAs (the evaluators providing external feedback), organises training for them at national and/or European level, distributes the workload among them and evaluates their functioning at regular times. The NO awards the CAF Excellence Recognition based on the recommendations of the CAF External Feedback Actors and informs the European CAF Resource Centre of the recognitions awarded so this information can be incorporated in the European database.

The role of the European CAF Resource Centre

Besides managing the CAF database, the European CAF Resource Centre at EIPA in Maastricht supports the Member States in implementing the CAF Excellence Recognition Procedure through a number of initiatives: promoting the

procedure at European level, introducing the CAF National Correspondents to this procedure, and offering a common European training scheme for CAF EFAs, coordinating support for Member States that do not have a National Organiser, and organising the CAF Excellence Recognition Procedure for non-EU members and European institutions.

Requirements to apply for the CAF Excellence Recognition

Every public organisation using CAF can apply for the CAF External Feedback under the condition that the following eligibility criteria are fulfilled:

The application should be made not before a lapse of six months but not exceeding twelve months after the CAF self-assessment report has been delivered to management.

Working with the CAF implies carrying out a self-assessment and launching concrete improvement actions. To receive sufficient feedback on this second part, the organisation needs time to collect, prioritise, and define the possible actions. The second requirement is that the organisation must register or be registered as a CAF User in the online European database of CAF users, which is hosted by EIPA at caf.eipa.eu.

The organisation can register itself or be registered through a process at national level, incorporated by the CAF National Correspondent in the European database, depending on the situation at national level. On the website of the European CAF Resource Centre at EIPA (www.eipa.eu/caf), the organisation can find the location of the person or organisation responsible for the CAF in their country.

Organisations meeting these two requirements may apply for the CAF Excellence Recognition.

As mentioned in the Executive Summary, the new CER procedure makes available three possible levels of recognitions, depending on the maturity grade of the organisation, along with the CAF User level, which does not represent a formal Excellence Recognition, but the start of using and implementing the CAF.

> *The first level of recognition (CAF Excellence Recognition*) is a mandatory starting position for those organisations who are at the very beginning of their external recognition journey. The organisations that obtained the recognition CAF Excellence Recognition*, however, can apply for CAF Excellence Recognition** or, if they think they have the necessary requirements, they can request the evaluation for the CAF Excellence Recognition***.*

The CAF Excellence Recognition Procedure consists of three phases to be undertaken by the organisation:
Phase 1: the application
Phase 2: the process of providing feedback
Phase 3: the final decision and awarding of the CAF Excellence Recognition.

Procedure for CAF Excellence Recognition

Step 1 — The application

Step 2 — The process of providing feedback

Step 3 — The final decision and awarding of the CAF Excellence Recognition
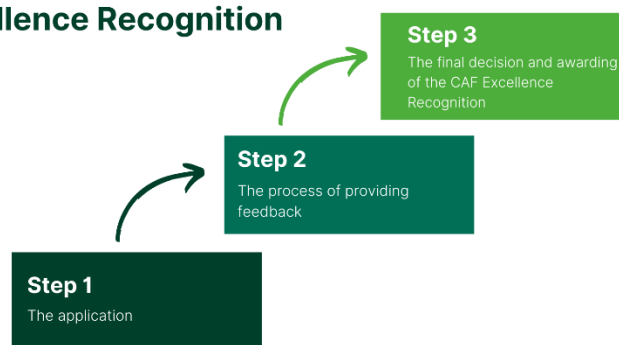
Phase 1: Application for the CER

In this phase, the actors are the applicant organisation on the one hand and the National Organiser on the other hand.

Four different steps need to be taken in this phase, as illustrated below:

PHASE 1

Applicant Organisation
- STEP 1 — Request
- STEP 3 — Complete documents

National Organiser
- STEP 2 — Send information package
- STEP 4 — Check documents

START PHASE 2
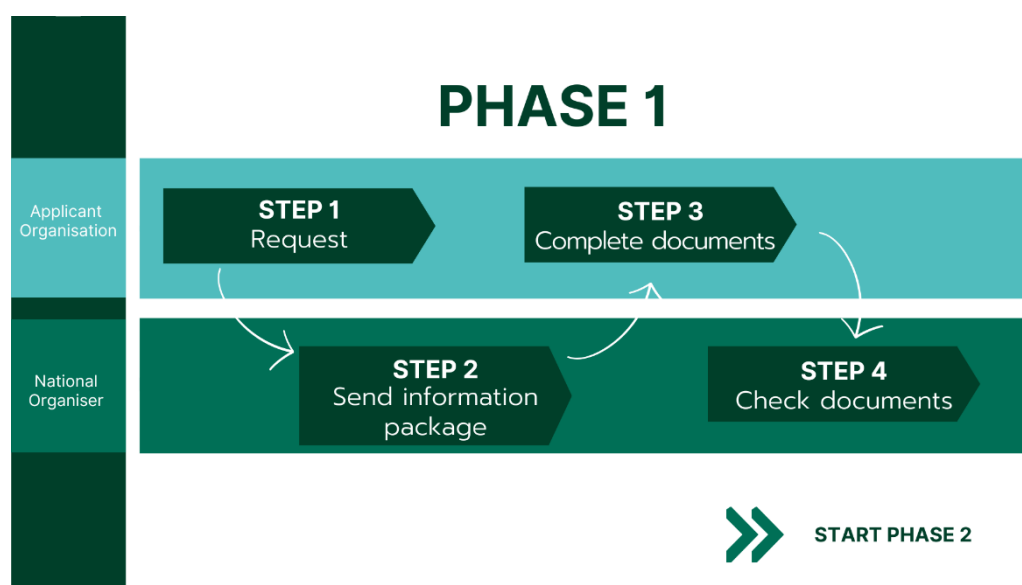
STEP 1.1
The candidate public organisation contacts the National Organiser (NO) to request CAF Excellence Recognition. To that end, it submits the statement (see Appendix 5) confirming its fulfilment of the two requirements and indicating the level of recognition required.

The first application to Excellence Recognition must in any case be for CAF Excellence Recognition*. The Recognition path below indicates the rules to progress between the different recognition levels.

STEP 1.2
The National Organiser, while confirming receipt of application, will send a complete information package and invite the applicant to submit:
- A short presentation of the organisation;
- A brief description of the CAF self-assessment process:

- the last self-assessment report(s) presented to the management;
- action plan(s) for implementation;
- if needed, other useful documents for the evaluation (needed at the discretion of the National Organiser).

STEP 1.3

The applicant completes the requested information and returns it to the NO to proceed towards the CAF Excellence Recognition (Phase 2).

STEP 1.4

Once the required documents have been received by the National Organiser, the applicant organisation will receive a written acknowledgement, thereby signalling that the feedback procedure (Phase 2) could start.

Phase 2: Evaluation and provision of the CAF Excellence Recognition

After the applicant organisation has fulfilled all the requirements in the first phase, the actual procedure is launched in Phase 2.

This phase consists of six major steps and involves three different actors:
- the applicant organisation;
- the National Organiser;
- the CAF External Feedback Actors.

These CAF External Feedback Actors are those who will judge the CAF assessment and its impact on the organisation, and provide the organisation with useful feedback.
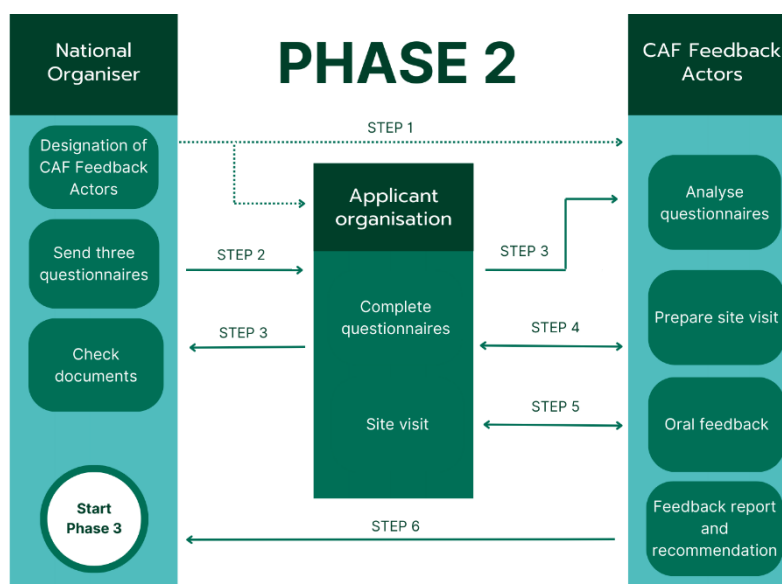
STEP 2.1

The National Organiser will designate two or more CAF External Feedback Actors, the number depending on the type, size, and complexity of the applicant organisation.

The different aspects of the CAF External Feedback Actors' role are described in the next part.

STEP 2.2

The National Organiser informs the applicant organisation of the CAF External Feedback Actors in charge and sends the three assessment schemes for Pillar 1, Pillar 2, and Pillar 3. The applicant organisation is invited to complete the three assessment schemes based on its own judgement and to submit them to the CAF External Feedback Actors designated and/or to the National Organiser (based on national context/ arrangements):
Assessment Scheme for self-assessment process;
Assessment Scheme for the improvement process (Steps 4 and 5; Step 6 only for application for CAF Excellence Recognition ** and ***);
Assessment Scheme on TQM maturity.

STEP 2.3
The National Organiser verifies the completeness and coherence of the documentation received (presentation of the organisation, process description, self-assessment report, action plan, assessment schemes) and sends the complete package to the CAF External Feedback Actors.
The CAF External Feedback Actors will analyse the assessment schemes submitted by the National Organiser and all the documents submitted.

STEP 2.4
Preparation of site visit.
The CAF External Feedback Actors propose and agree with the organisation a plan for the site visit, with an indication of the contact names or groups for workshops and interviews, along with the documentation to be consulted during the site visit.
The site visit can be both in person or online, or as a mixed approach.

STEP 2.5
The minimum, the recommended durations of the site visit are:
1 day for CAF Excellence Recognition* (one star);
1.5 days CAF Excellence Recognition** (two stars);
2 days for CAF Excellence Recognition***(three stars).
This can vary depending on the complexity and size of the organisation.

The CAF External Feedback Actors examine whether the organisation has implemented the CAF model effectively.
- They analyse the quality of the self-assessment process, using the answers to the assessment scheme as a guide for discussions (Steps 1 to 3).
- They then discuss the drafting, communication, and implementation of the improvement process, based on the answers to the assessment scheme for improvement (Steps 4 and 5), with a number of people involved in this process.
- Only for CAF Excellence Recognition** and CAF Excellence Recognition***, the EFAs discuss the results of improvement plan and actions from the last self-assessment and the impact on the organisation based upon the improvement plan assessment scheme (Step 6).
- To evaluate the extent to which a TQM culture has been installed, different stakeholders will be interviewed, based upon the assessment scheme on TQM maturity.

The CAF External Feedback Actors provide the organisation with an initial verbal impression of their findings.

STEP 2.6
Based on all the information gathered before and during the on-site visit, the CAF External Feedback Actors prepare a feedback report within one month. The CAF External Feedback Actors submit this report to the National Organiser along with a recommendation of whether or not the applicant organisation qualifies for the Recognition of a CAF Excellence Recognition*, CAF Excellence Recognition** or CAF Excellence Recognition***. (A template of the feedback report is shown in Appendix 4).

The CAF Excellence Recognition Levels

*recommended: 1, 1.5 or 2 day site visit

| CAF User | CAF Excellence Recognition * (1 day site visit) | CAF Excellence Recognition **(1.5 days site visit) | CAF Excellence Recognition *** (2 days site visit) |

Possible path
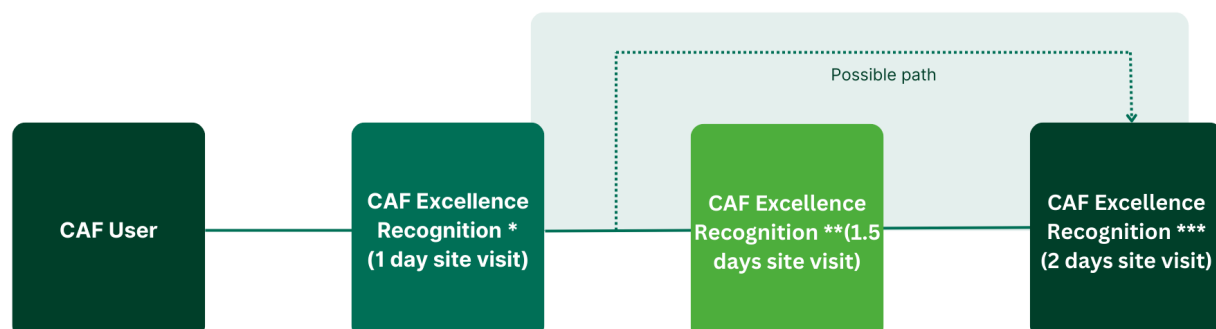
Phase 3: Decision/Designation of the CAF Recognition

STEP 3.1

The National Organiser makes the final decision based on the report/recommendation of the CAF External Feedback Actors.

STEP 3.2

The National Organiser will send the feedback report together with the decision to the applicant organisation. The organisation cannot appeal against the decision.

STEP 3.3

If there is a positive decision, the applicant organisation receives the recognition 'CAF Excellence Recognition*' or 'CAF Excellence Recognition**' or 'CAF Excellence Recognition***' in a timely manner.

STEP 3.4

The National Organiser informs the EIPA CAF Resource Centre when an organisation has been awarded the Recognition. The CAF Resource Centre publishes the information (receipt of the Recognition and date) in the online European database of CAF users.

Remark 1:

The CAF Excellence Recognition*, the CAF Excellence Recognition**, the CAF Excellence Recognition*** expire after three years and may be renewed after a new self-assessment and a new improvement plan based on CAF, followed by a new application for the recognition process.

Remark 2:

If the organisation is not awarded the CAF Excellence Recognition because it does not fulfil the criteria, it may apply again after a minimum period of three months and maximum period of twelve months. For the other cases of identified shortcomings before, during, and after the on-site visit, see the section 'Recognition levels and certificate' in Appendix 1.

PART 3: The CAF External Feedback Actors

The CAF External Feedback Actors play a crucial role in the CAF Excellence Recognition. This part describes their role and tasks. In addition, the required competences, training, and Code of Conduct and behaviour are explained.

Roles, tasks, and profile

The main task of the CAF External Feedback Actors in the CAF Procedure for Excellence Recognition is to:

- analyse the implementation of CAF through the process of self-assessment and improvement actions, and analyse whether the organisation is implementing TQM values;
- provide feedback and suggestions on strengths and areas of improvement regarding the CAF implementation process;
- promote the use of the CAF model in the daily activities of the organisation.

One of the goals of the CAF External Feedback is to promote peer review and bench learning within the European public administration. It is for this reason that the CAF External Feedback Actors are peers from within the public sector.

Being a CAF External Feedback Actor requires a balance of personal and professional skills, coupled with a commitment to timely and appropriate conduct. To conduct the CAF Excellence Recognition process competently, the CAF External Feedback Actor needs to have a broad knowledge and experience of management processes and development, and change processes within public sector organisations. The CAF External Feedback Actors can obtain the necessary competencies from a variety of sources including work experience (e.g. via the European Foundation for Quality Management assessor), education, and specialised training.

The CAF External Feedback Actor must have participated in the European or national training course required to become a CAF External Feedback Actor (acknowledged by the CAF National Correspondent and in collaboration with the European CAF Resource Centre). Highly experienced CAF users in the public sector are part of the target group for participation in the training courses for External Feedback Actors; this promotes exchange between organisations and increases knowledge within the organisations.

Competences needed to conduct the CAF Excellence Recognition

To fulfil the role described, CAF External Feedback Actors need to possess some general competences. Such competencies are a shown in the following graphic.

In more concrete terms, the competences can be described as follows:

Understanding of the CAF model and its internal linkages.
This includes understanding the structure and content of the CAF model and the linkages between and within results and enablers.

Practical experience with CAF and/or other TQM models as a framework for self-assessment and quality improvements.
The CAF External Feedback Actor must have experience with implementation of the CAF model and/or other TQM models.

Understanding of the fundamental TQM principles and values.
The CAF External Feedback Actor must have a good understanding of the fundamental values of TQM and how the values and principles can be applied in practical quality development in organisations.

Able to demonstrate an understanding of different public sector organisations and their varying demands and needs.
The CAF External Feedback Actor must be able to understand the different demands and needs with regard to implementation of the self-assessment process and the improvement actions. The CAF External Feedback Actor does not use the examples and procedures contained within the CAF Excellence Recognition material as a checklist. However, they understand that the approaches that are effective and appropriate in one organisation can be insufficient in other public organisations due to different values, leadership, people, and internal processes.

Practices good interpersonal skills and effective communication.
The main task of the CAF External Feedback Actor is to provide precise and motivating feedback that supports the organisation's continuing dedication to holistic and systematic quality development through CAF.
The CAF External Feedback Actor should have skills and competences to ensure that the CAF Excellence Recognition process is conducted in a way that supports learning, collaboration, and dialogue. They must therefore be able to communicate effectively in the context of the specific type of institution and use non-abusive language.

Able to work in a team.
When approaching and working with the applicant organisation within the context of the CAF Excellence Recognition, the CAF External Feedback Actor must act in a collaborative way, sharing the workload, and acting in a complementary manner.

Training required
As the CAF Excellence Recognition is a common European initiative, the CAF External Feedback Actors need to share the

most important principles, aims, values, and methodologies of the procedure. Training is therefore provided at national level by the National Organiser and/or the organisations responsible, and at European level by the European CAF Resource Centre at EIPA. A minimum common core has been defined for this training. This two-day training course consists of five parts, each of them serving particular aims. Regular updates of knowledge must be ensured.

Part 1: The CAF
Goals: The main features of the CAF and the process of its implementation are presented.
Results: The CAF External Feedback Actors need to know the specificities of the CAF model, the context of public sector organisation, and the different steps for applying the CAF model as described in the CAF guidelines.

Part 2: The CAF Excellence Recognition: Philosophy and System
Goals: The main features and pillars of the CAF Excellence Recognition Procedure are presented.
Results: The participants of the training have obtained the knowledge of the overall context, approach, and objectives of the CAF Procedure for Excellence Recognition, have an in-depth insight into the philosophy and ambitions of the system, and be able to translate these – via the main features and pillars – to CAF applicant organisations.

Part 3: How to Evaluate (Applying the CAF Excellence Recognition)
Goals: The detailed steps in the CAF Excellence Recognition are presented.
Results: The participants know, understand, and are able to work with the different assessment schemes and scoring guides. They know how to carry out a sound document analysis and conduct the site visit.

Part 4: Code of Conduct and Behaviour
Goals: The Code of Conduct and behaviour for the CAF External Feedback Actors is presented.
Results: The CAF External Feedback Actors know their role as well as what to do and how to behave.

Part 5: Reporting and Giving Feedback
Goals: How to report and give feedback is presented.
Results: The CAF External Feedback Actors are able to provide feedback (orally and written) and reporting in a professional and satisfactory manner.

Code of Conduct and behaviour for the CAF External Feedback Actors

The Code of Conduct is a common framework which states the values and principles of the CAF Excellence Recognition, and the requirements set for the conduct of the CAF External Feedback Actors. At national level, the CAF National Correspondent (and/or the National Organiser) may describe additional principles and requirements for the conduct of the CAF External Feedback Actors.

The CAF External Feedback Actors must maintain high standards of ethical behaviour, which means they must maintain independence, conduct themselves in a courteous and respectful fashion, perform their duties diligently, competently, and in a timely manner, and maintain a personal position which is free from conflicts of interest.

Independence

The CAF External Feedback Actors must maintain sufficient independence and always give appropriate, effective, and correct feedback to the applicant organisation. This includes maintaining impartiality and guarding against bias at all times.

Personal opportunity or gain

The CAF External Feedback Actors must not have past or future ties (financial or otherwise) with the applicant organisation, which could influence the feedback and validation process.

Conflict of interest

The CAF External Feedback Actors must identify and avoid any actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest with the applicant organisation which may throw doubt about their independence. Any identified conflicts of

interest must be brought to the attention of the CAF National Correspondent or delegated organisation, which will act on the information. A conflict of interest could, for example, be the fact that the CAF External Feedback Actor has been or is an employee of the organisation or is employed by an organisation with a conflicting interest towards that organisation. Furthermore, a CAF External Feedback Actor cannot participate in giving feedback to organisations where they have participated in the implementation of CAF (thereby validating their own work).

Courtesy and respect
The CAF External Feedback Actors must always conduct themselves in a courteous and respectful fashion, e.g. by responding promptly to requests for information, being punctual, and not engaging in activities that would bring the CAF External Feedback Actor, CAF Excellence Recognition process, or the CAF model into disrepute.

Diligence
The CAF External Feedback Actors must conduct themselves in a diligent, competent, and timely manner. If the role as CAF External Feedback Actor cannot be carried out in such a manner, the assignment should not be taken on.

Confidentiality
Communication and the information gained during the CAF Excellence Recognition process is confidential and may not be discussed or divulged to third parties (except to the persons/organisation responsible for awarding the CAF Excellence Recognition).

Positive attitude
CAF External Feedback Actors must support/instil enthusiasm and motivation in the organisation.

Appendix 1: CER Levels of Recognition

The CAF Excellence Recognition Procedure has three levels of recognition in total, and one level demonstrating the CAF use. The levels of recognition intend to highlight and emphasise the organisations that can demonstrate a higher level of maturity in the application of the CAF model in the self-assessment, an effective management of the improvement plan and actions and, as a consequence, a higher level of implementation of TQM principles.

The current procedure includes the levels of recognition indicated below.

CAF User
It is intended to recognise the organisations that demonstrate the effective use of the CAF model, through the realisation of the self-assessment and the definition of an improvement plan. The National Organiser will issue a certificate after a simple verification of coherence and completeness of a self-assessment report and improvement plan.

CAF Excellence Recognition*
It is intended to recognise the organisations that are able to demonstrate effective use of the CAF model, through the realisation of the self-assessment and the definition and implementation of an improvement plan and actions with real added value. For this level and for Pillar 2, for the improvement plan the candidate organisation will demonstrate the real start of the plan and actions. However, the full completion/implementation of the plan and its results are neither required nor assessed for this level. For the eight TQM maturity principles, at least the 'Initial' level of maturity is required. See Appendices 2.1., 2.2., and 2.3., and Appendix 3 for a detailed explanation of the requirements.
The Recognition requires a site visit (on-site or online) with a minimum duration of 1 day by a minimum of two External Feedback Actors appointed by the National Organiser.
The CAF Excellence Recognition* is mandatory for a new applicant organisation, and access to the higher-level

recognitions requires that the organisation has obtained the CAF Excellence Recognition*.

CAF Excellence Recognition**

It is intended to recognise the organisations that are able to demonstrate the implementation of the improvement plan and actions up the completion and results. Moreover, the TQM maturity is assessed more in depth and higher levels are required.

The Excellence Recognition** requires a site visit (on-site or online) with a recommended duration of 1.5 days by a minimum of two External Feedback Actors appointed by the National Organiser.

The application for CER** requires a previous CAF Excellence Recognition*. See Appendices 2.1, 2.2. 2.3., and Appendix 3 for the detailed explanation of the requirements.

CAF Excellence Recognition***

It is intended to recognise the organisations that are able to demonstrate a higher maturity level in the application of CAF model and in TQM principles. The TQM maturity is assessed in depth and higher levels are required.

The Excellence Recognition*** requires a site visit (on-site or online) with a minimum duration of 2 days by a minimum of two External Feedback Actors appointed by the National Organiser. The application for CER*** requires at least a previous CAF Excellence Recognition*. See Appendices 2.1, 2.2, 2.3., and Appendix 3 for the detailed explanation of the requirements.

Below is the CAF Excellence Recognition Path and the rules for the recognition certificates in case of a positive or negative verification by the External Feedback Actors.

The CAF Excellence Recognition Levels

*recommended: 1, 1.5 or 2 day site visit

Possible path

| CAF User | CAF Excellence Recognition* (1 day site visit) | recommended path | CAF Excellence Recognition** (1.5 days site visit) | recommended path | CAF Excellence Recognition*** (2 days site visit) |

CAF Excellence Recognition* is mandatory as first recognition

CAF Excellence Recognition* is mandatory

CAF Excellence Recognition* or CAF Excellence Recognition** are mandatory
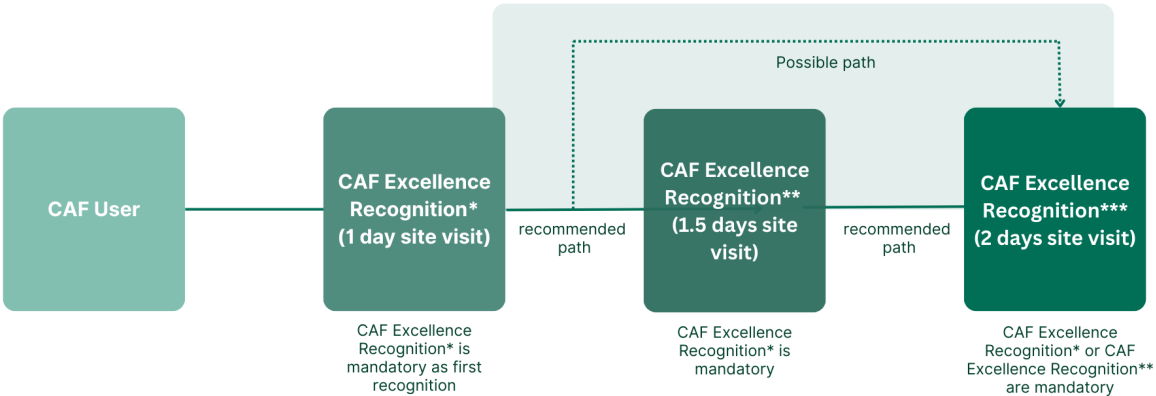
CAF Excellence Recognition Levels

Fact sheet at a glance

- The path CAF User – CER* – CER** – CER*** is not mandatory but recommended
- A CAF user cannot apply for CER** or CER***, only for CER*
- An organisation which is mature in TQM can skip the CER** Phase and apply for the CER***
- As CER*** is non mandatory, an organisation can choose not to go for CER***, but to repeat CER**
- As CER** is non-mandatory, an organisation can choose not to go for CER** but to repeat CER*
- It is recommended to strive to higher recognition levels instead of repeating the same level of recognition
- Notice related to validity of three years of the label: the maximum validity time is three years, where the CAF organisations can apply also before the expiry of the validity for a higher recognition

It can also happen that the External Feedback Actors identify some suboptimal aspects in their evaluation and cannot immediately recommend the recognition to be awarded. The possible issues that can be identified, minimum time, and requirements for repetition of CER assessment are listed in the table below, as well as indicated in the visualisation of the possible issues.

Problems in documental analysis

(before or during the site visit)

Problems on self-assessment:

Major problems in the SA Report (e.g. many incoherences or incompleteness compromising the significance of the SA or with implications on the Action Plan): minimum 12 months for repetition; a new SA Report and a review of the Action Plan is required

Problems on action plan:

Major problems in Action Plan (e.g.: no coherence of projects with results of SA, no development plan, no project targets; only for CER** and CER***: no results of improvement actions): min. 6 months, new Action Plan

Minor problems in Action Plan (e.g.: no evidence of start and initial monitoring of plan and projects, limited project development plan, limited targets): min 3 months, partial review of Action Plan

These are general guidelines/possibilites/observations and the EFAs, as a team, shall consider each case separately, and if needed, consult with the National Organiser.

Two or more steps can not reach the minimum score: minimum 12 months for repetition

A single step can not reach the minimum score: minimum 3 months

Problems in steps

Two or more requisites not met: minimum 12 months for repetition (no new SA or Action plan if they meet the specific requirements)

A single requisite not met: minimum six months for repetition (no new SA nor Action plan if they meet the specific requirements)

Problems in principles

Site Visit

In case of a negative report – CAF Excellence Recognition*** in case of positive verification of specific requisites. If a CER applicant applies for CER***, but the EFAs did not find sufficient evidence, the CER** or CER* can be awarded, based on evidence.

The above conditions apply to CER*, CER**, and CER***

Appendix 2.1: Assessment Scheme on Pillar 1

The self-assessment phase
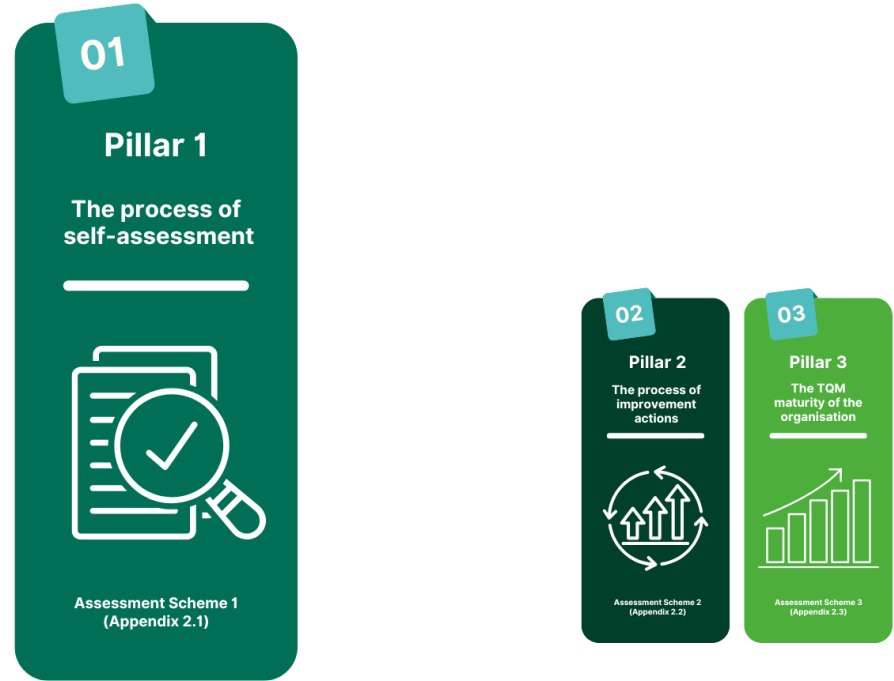
The following assessment scheme includes questions relating the first three steps of Pillar 1, which focus on the planning and implementation of the self-assessment process.

It is used by the EFAs regardless of the required recognition level. The reference of the questionnaire is the 'Ten steps to improve an organisation with CAF' as defined in the CAF model. The activities of each step have been adjusted and expanded to take into consideration the lessons learned from the relevant experiences at European level. The following questionnaire includes questions relating to the first three steps, which focus on the planning and implementation of the self-assessment process.

Evaluation scale

The evaluation scale has five levels.

This evaluation scale has been detailed for each activity in phrases defining the interpretation of the real situation of the organisation with regard to the specific theme.

1	The activities have been carried out in a very limited way.
2	The activities have been carried out in a limited way.
3	The activities have been carried out in an acceptable way.
4	The activities have been carried out in an effective way.
5	The activities have been carried out in an outstanding way.

Evidence: definition

A range of various tangible and intangible documents/facts/information delivered before and during the site visits.

Step 1: Decide how to organise, plan, and communicate the self-assessment (SA)					
Levels	1	2	3	4	5
Actions					
1.1. Assure a clear management decision regarding the objectives, set up the project management plan (such as responsibilities, timeline, resources, training, scoring panel definition), and scope (such as the SA group covers the whole organisation or only parts/units/departments).	There is no evidence of a clear decision in consultation with the management and other stakeholders, of the definition of the scope and involvement of the management in the start of the process. There is no evidence of a project management plan. There is no clear scope for self-assessment.	There is some evidence of a decision, but with limited evidence of consultation with management and other stakeholders. The project management plan is incomplete or missing. The rational for the choice of the scope is not clear.	There is evidence of a formal decision by the management, in consultation with the organisation and other stakeholders. The project management plan is not fully detailed or coherent. There is a clear rational for the choice of the scope.	There is clear evidence of a formal decision by the management, in consultation with the organisation and other stakeholders. The project management plan is detailed and coherent. There is a clear rational for the choice of the scope, and clearly defined objectives.	There is strong evidence of a formal decision by the management, involving the organisation and stakeholders. The project management plan is detailed for all the elements, including material and/or human resources for both self-assessment and improvement; the coherence of all the contents shows deep and informed reflections. There is a clear rational for the choice of the scope and clearly defined objectives, with a view to continuity and broadening prospects.
1.2. Appoint a CAF project leader along with the composition of the self-assessment group (on the basis of specified criteria such as their knowledge of the organisation and competencies) and define the role of manager(s) in the self-assessment	There is no evidence of definition of the SA Group. There is no appointment of a project leader. There is no definition of the role of manager	There is no formalised definition of SA composition and/or appointment of a project leader, with defined criteria for the choices. The role of manager in the process is not clearly defined.	There is evidence of allocation of tasks, definition of the SA group, and appointment of a leader by management, but there is limited evidence of criteria for the choice of SA Group and appointment of a leader.	There is clear formal evidence of the allocation of tasks, definition of the SA group, and appointment of a leader by management, on the basis of representativeness and knowledge of the organisation and the CAF model.	There is strong evidence of formalised tasks assigned by the management, with definition of the SA group and appointment of a leader on the basis of representativeness, knowledge of the organisation, expertise on the CAF model, and acknowledged leadership.

process.	in the process.		The role of manager in the process is defined, but with no considerations of related opportunities and risks.	The role of manager in the process is defined, considering the related risks and opportunities.	The role of the manager in the process is clearly and formally evaluated and defined, considering the related risks and opportunities.
1.3. Define and implement the internal and external communication plan for all CAF phases/steps, including the communication of the progress made with improvement actions/plan, involving relevant stakeholders – with a special focus on the staff of the organisation.	There is no evidence of a communication plan.	There is some evidence of a communication plan, but it only partly covers the CAF process phases, or the different internal and external stakeholders. The communication is not addressed to the of stakeholders.	There is evidence of a communication plan for the CAF process phases, covering main stakeholders, but it is not completely structured (responsibilities, resources, time scheduling). The communication is not clearly addressed to the main internal and external stakeholders.	There is clear evidence of a communication plan for the CAF process phases, covering all relevant stakeholders. The communication plan is structured, including responsibilities, resources, time scheduling, and monitoring. The communication is addressed to the relevant internal and external stakeholders.	There is strong evidence of a communication plan for the CAF process phases, in coherence with the plans and strategies of the organisation. The plan is clearly structured, including responsibilities, resources, time scheduling, and monitoring. The communication is addressed to all internal and external interested stakeholders and clearly includes the involvement.

Step 2: Organise information/training and prepare the self-assessment (SA)

Levels	1	2	3	4	5
Actions					
2.1 Organise information/training activities for leaders and managers (top and middle) to promote ownership and commitment, and if needed, for external stakeholders.	There is no evidence of information/training activities for leaders, managers, and people.	There is some evidence of information/training activities for leaders/managers and people, but not complete for the different aspects (e.g. model, self-assessment process). The information/training activities are not adequate to promote ownership and commitment.	There is evidence of information/training activities for leaders/managers and people, and if required for external stakeholders. The information/training activities take into account the main aspects (e.g. model, SA process). The information/training activities are partly addressed to promote awareness, ownership, and commitment.	There is clear evidence of information/training activities for leaders/managers, people, and external relevant stakeholders. The information/training activities take into account all the aspects (e.g. model, SA process). The information/training activities are addressed to promote awareness, ownership, and commitment at each level.	There is strong evidence of well-planned information/training activities for leaders/managers, people, and external stakeholders. The information/training activities are organised to take into account the different aspects (e.g. model, process, metrics), based on the evaluation of different needs. The information/training activities are clearly addressed to promote awareness, ownership, and commitment at each level.
2.2 Train the members of the SA group on the CAF model: objectives, roles, criteria, phases, methodology, prioritisation, action planning, implementation, and use of the scoring panel(s).	There is no evidence of training of the SA group.	There is some evidence of training, but it is not complete to cover the plan or not adequate for the needs of the members of the SA group. The training is not complete or adequate for contents, participation, time scheduling, and	There is evidence of training. The training covers the key elements of the plan and is adequate for the needs of the members of the SA group. The training is complete and adequate for content, participation, time scheduling, and	There is clear evidence of training covering all the elements of the plan, and it is adequate for the needs of the members of the SA group. The training is complete and adequate for content, participation, time scheduling, and	There is strong evidence of training covering all the elements of the plan. The members of the SA group(s) are adequately trained, according to the specific needs of each member. The training is complete and adequate for content, participation, time scheduling

		tools/teachers.	tools/teachers.	tools/teachers.	and tools/teachers. The effectiveness of the training has been positively verified.
2.3 Prepare the self-assessment in providing the SA group with a list of relevant information and documents for the CAF self-assessment.	There is no evidence of relevant documents and information for SA being collected and made available to the SA group.	There is limited evidence of documents being collected and made available to the SA group, or they do not sufficiently cover the necessary information for all the criteria of the model, key processes, and results of the organisation.	There is evidence of documents and information for SA being collected and made available to the SA group. They cover most of the necessary information for the criteria of the model and most of key processes and results of the organisation.	There is clear evidence of documents and information for SA being collected and made available to the SA group. They cover the necessary information for all the criteria and all the key processes and results of the organisation.	There is strong evidence of documents and information for SA being collected and made available to the SA group. They consider all the CAF criteria and all the relevant processes/projects and results. They provide information on planned activities (plan), their realisation (do), verification (check) and improvement (act) for all areas.

Step 3: Perform the self-assessment (SA)					
Levels	1	2	3	4	5
Actions					
3.1 The members of the SA group make up a list of strengths, areas for improvement, and improvement ideas/proposals, and give a score for each subcriterion of CAF, taking into consideration the relevant data, facts, and evidence.	There is no evidence of self-assessment generating a list of strengths and areas for improvement and scores being prepared by the members of the SA group, or they do not cover all CAF criteria.	There is some evidence of self-assessment, with individual inputs made available by the members of the SA group with some indications of strengths, areas for improvement, and/or scores, but they are not available from all the members and/or are not complete for each subcriterion.	There is evidence of self-assessment with individual inputs being made available by the members of the SA group, with strengths, areas for improvement, and/or scores, complete for each subcriterion of CAF, but their connection with relevant data, facts, and evidence is not clear.	There is clear evidence of a complete self-assessment, with individual inputs with a list of strengths, areas for improvement, and scores from all the members of the SA group, complete for each subcriterion; their connection with relevant data, facts, and evidence is clear.	There is strong evidence of an in-depth self-assessment, with individual inputs and a list of detailed and proper strengths, areas for improvement, and scores, available from all the members of the SA group and complete for each subcriterion; their connection with relevant data, facts, and evidence is clear. The individual inputs are detailed to support the analyses and to address the improvement actions.
3.2 Collect the individual self-assessment inputs and prepare the consensus meeting, assuring all conditions for its success.	There is no evidence of collection of individual self-assessment inputs and preparation for the consensus meeting.	There is some evidence of collection of individual inputs, but there is no analysis for use in the consensus meeting. There is limited evidence of preparation for the consensus meeting.	There is evidence of collection of individual inputs and analysis for use in the consensus meeting. There is some evidence of preparation for the consensus meeting, defining roles and approach.	There is clear evidence of collection, aggregation, and analysis of individual inputs for the consensus meeting. There is clear evidence of preparation for the consensus meeting (such as time scheduling and roles, availability of relevant documents).	There is strong evidence of collection, aggregation, and analysis of individual inputs as a basis for the consensus meetings. A detailed preparation of the consensus meeting is evident (time scheduling, roles, availability of relevant documents, rules, and criteria to facilitate the consensus).

3.3 Conduct the consensus meeting, reach consensus on strengths, areas for improvement, ideas/proposals for improvement actions, and scoring for each subcriterion.	There is no evidence of a consensus meeting with participation of the SA Group and with discussion and consensus on strengths, areas for improvement, ideas/proposals for improvement actions, and scoring for each subcriterion.	There is some evidence of a consensus meeting, but no clear evidence of analysis of all elements (strengths, areas for improvement, ideas/proposals for improvement actions, and scoring for each subcriterion); there is no clear evidence of final consensus.	There is evidence of a consensus meeting, with analysis of all elements (strengths, areas for improvement, ideas/proposals for improvement actions, and scoring for each subcriterion). The consensus is clear and documented.	There is evidence of a consensus meeting, with analysis of all elements (strengths, areas for improvement, ideas/proposals for improvement actions, and scoring for each subcriterion) and documented discussion and registration of different positions. The consensus is formally documented.	There is clear evidence of a consensus meeting, with detailed analysis of all elements (strengths, areas for improvement, ideas/proposals for improvement actions, and scoring for each subcriterion). The different positions of participants are registered together with other useful information for following phases. The consensus is formally documented.
3.4 Prepare the self-assessment report containing the description of the CAF phases, implementation up to self-assessment for each subcriterion: strengths, areas for improvement, ideas for improvement actions, scores.	There is no evidence of a final report according to the results of the consensus meeting, or the final report is not complete for each subcriterion.	There is limited evidence of a final report according to the results of the consensus meeting, or the final report is not complete or coherent for: strengths, areas for improvement, score for each subcriterion.	The final report according to the results of the consensus meeting is complete (strengths, areas for improvement, ideas for improvement, scores) and mostly coherent with the model and partially adequate to address the improvement.	The final report according to the results of the consensus meeting is complete (strengths, areas for improvement, ideas for improvement, scores), clear, coherent with the model, and adequate to address the improvement.	The final report according to the results of the consensus meeting is complete (strengths, areas for improvement, ideas for improvement, scores), clear, coherent with the model, and largely adequate to address the improvement. Ideas for possible improvements are clearly indicated.

3.5 Present the final self-assessment report to the management of the organisation, assuring its acceptance.	There is no evidence of presentation and discussion of the final report with the management of the organisation.	There is some evidence of presentation of the final report to the management of the organisation but there is no evidence of discussion of results in formal and documented meeting(s).	There is evidence of presentation and discussion of the final report to the management of the organisation in formal and documented meeting(s). The final report is formally approved by the manager.	There is clear evidence of presentation of the final report to the senior management of the organisation. It has been presented and discussed in formal and documented meeting(s), with a detailed analysis of strengths and weaknesses. The final report is formally approved by the manager.	There is strong evidence of presentation of the final report to the senior management of the organisation. It has been presented and discussed in formal and documented meeting(s), with detailed analysis of strengths and areas for improvement. A first evaluation of the possible actions has been made. The final report is formally approved by the manager.

Appendix 2.2: Assessment Scheme on Pillar 2

The improvement plan phase

Reference

The assessment scheme covers the steps of Pillar 2.

Step 6 focuses on the completion of projects, their results, and related added value for the organisation[3].

Evaluation scale
The evaluation scale has five levels.
This evaluation scale has been detailed for each activity in phrases defining the interpretation of the real situation of the organisation with regard to the specific theme.

Evidence definition
A various range of tangible and intangible documents/facts/information is delivered before and during the site visits.

1	The activities have been carried out in a very limited way.
2	The activities have been carried out in a limited way.
3	The activities have been carried out in an acceptable way.
4	The activities have been carried out in an effective way.
5	The activities have been carried out in an outstanding way.

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[3] CER* applicants are invited to strive for the completion/implementation of the improvement projects, and this will be reflected accordingly in the CER report.

Step 4: Draft an improvement plan, based on the accepted self-assessment (SA) report					
Levels	1	2	3	4	5
Actions					
4.1 Collect and concretise all proposals for actions for improvement, including the ideas formulated during the SA.	There is no evidence of collection of ideas and proposals for improvement actions.	There is some evidence of collection of proposals for improvement, but without a complete analysis of the results of the SA and/or without the involvement of the interested functions.	There is evidence of collection of proposals for improvement actions for the results of the SA and from the involved functions, taking into consideration the ideas formulated during the SA.	There is clear evidence of collection of proposals for improvement actions for all the results of the SA and from all the involved functions, in a formal way, taking into consideration the ideas formulated during the SA.	There is evidence of collection of proposals for improvement actions, in a formal way, taking into consideration all the results of the SA and starting from the ideas formulated during the SA. The proposals are based on a detailed and documented analysis involving the interested stakeholders.
4.2 Prioritise improvement ideas/actions taking into account strategic objectives of the organisation, impact on stakeholders, internal impact, ease of implementation, and resources needed.	There is no evidence of prioritisation of improvement actions.	There is some evidence of prioritisation of the improvement actions, but the criteria are not clear or coherent.	There is evidence of prioritisation of the improvement actions, on the basis of defined and coherent criteria.	There is clear evidence of prioritisation of the improvement actions, on the basis of defined and coherent criteria. The prioritisation criteria are documented, taking into consideration the impact on strategy and objectives of the organisation, and the feasibility of the actions.	There is strong evidence of prioritisation of the improvement actions, on the basis of defined and coherent criteria. The analysis of possible actions, the prioritisation criteria, and the evaluations are documented, taking into consideration the quantitative impact on strategy and objectives of the organisation, and the feasibility of the actions.

4.3 Draft the action plan elaborating objectives/targets, assignment, and improvement to the plan project flow.	There is no evidence of an action plan, or the action plan cannot define the main phases of the activities.	There is some evidence of an action plan, but the main defined phases are not based on the PDCA (plan, do, check, act) cycle.	There is evidence of an action plan based on the PDCA cycle, but without a complete definition of objectives or responsibilities, resources, implementing period, or project flow.	There is clear evidence of a structured action plan for the selected improvement actions, based on the PDCA cycle with a complete definition of objectives, responsibilities, resources, implementing period, risks mitigation, and project flow.	There is strong evidence of a structured action plan for the selected improvement actions, based on the PDCA cycle with a detailed definition of objectives, responsibilities, resources, implementing period, risks mitigation, and project flow. Management is fully committed to implementing the entire action plan and the implementation status is regularly discussed in management meetings.
4.4 Obtain the approval of the improvement plan by the management and integrate into the normal strategic planning process.	There is no evidence of approval of the improvement plan and/or no correlation between the action plan and the strategic planning of the organisation.	There is evidence of approval of the improvement plan, but the integration of the action plan is limited (e.g. time scheduling and/or planning of resources and/or impact of the actions on strategic objectives).	There is evidence of approval of the improvement plan and integration into the strategic plan of the organisation (e.g. time scheduling, resources, impact of the actions on the strategic objectives).	There is clear evidence of approval of the improvement plan and integration of the action plan into the strategic plan of the organisation (e.g. time scheduling, resources, impact of the actions on the strategic objectives, checks, reviews, and related responsibilities).	There is strong evidence of approval of the improvement plan and integration of the action plan into the strategic plan of the organisation (e.g. time scheduling, resources, impact on the strategic objectives, checks and reviews, involvement of leaders); the action plan is formalised as part of the strategic planning and control.

Step 5: Define, implement, and monitor the improvement actions					
Levels	1	2	3	4	5

Actions					
5.1 Define ownership of the entire improvement plan and improvement actions in a participatory approach.	There is no evidence of definition of ownership for the programme and projects, or the minimum two projects have not been implemented.	There is some evidence of definition of ownership for programme and/or for the projects, but the level or coherence of the roles are not demonstrated. There is limited involvement and participation in the projects. There is limited evidence of transparency and responsibility delegation. The minimum two priority projects have been implemented.	There is evidence of definition and communication of ownership for the programme and projects. The level of assigned responsibilities is adequate and the roles of the owners are coherent with the activities to be achieved. The involvement and participation in the projects are adequate; a minimum of two priority projects have been implemented.	There is evidence of definition of ownership for programme and projects. The ownership is communicated to ensure transparency and responsibility delegation. The level of assigned responsibilities is adequate and the roles of the owners are coherent with the activities to be achieved. There is extensive involvement and participation in the projects. A minimum of two priority projects have been implemented.	There is strong evidence of definition of ownership for the entire improvement programme and for single projects and activities, at the appropriate level and coherent with the activities to be achieved. The delegation of responsibilities is formally defined and communicated to all the interested stakeholders to guarantee transparency, involvement, and collaboration. A minimum of two priority projects have been implemented.
5.2 Define detailed improvement actions and targets, establish ways to measure and evaluate the performance of the actions and the results.	There is no evidence of detailed projects plans and targets and/or defined monitoring.	There is some evidence of detailed project plans, but not consistent or complete (e.g. targets, responsibilities, resources) and/or limited definition of monitoring and assessment.	There is evidence of detailed project plans, but the consistency is not demonstrated and/or targets, responsibilities, resources are not completely defined or consistent; monitoring and assessment are not adequately defined.	There is evidence of detailed and consistent project plans with definition of targets, responsibilities, and resources; monitoring and assessment are adequately defined and planned.	There is clear evidence of detailed and consistent project plans, defining phases, significant targets, responsibilities, resources, planned monitoring, and assessment.

5.3 Implement and monitor the improvement plan and improvement actions on regular basis in accordance with the PDCA (plan, do, check, act) approach, involving people and relevant stakeholders.	There is no evidence of implementation of the improvement plan.	There is some evidence of implementation of the improvement plan, but deficiencies are evident in terms of, for example, completeness, extent of deployment, controls, monitoring, changes to the planning due to lack of resources, or changes to priorities.	There is evidence of implementation and control of the improvement plan, with a substantial alignment to the scheduling or documented and deviations from the scheduled plan. There are no relevant deficiencies in terms of completeness, extent of deployment, controls, monitoring, or changes to the planning for example.	There is clear evidence of implementation of the improvement plan, with a structured control. The plan is aligned to the scheduling or the deviations from the scheduled plan are limited, and do not reduce the completeness, extent of deployment, controls, or monitoring; they are analysed and documented.	There is strong evidence of implementation of the improvement plan, with a structured control. The deviations from the scheduled plan are properly analysed and documented, and are clearly finalised to improve the scheduling and to assure the attainment of the best possible objectives (such as completeness, extent of deployment, controls, monitoring).

Step 6: Manage the improvement projects and review the results					
Levels	1	2	3	4	5
Actions					
6.1 Monitor the implementation of plan and actions (up to the end of projects) on a regular basis, with reference to scheduling.	There is no evidence of monitoring of the improvement plan and actions. There are important deviations from plan (such as completeness or execution time).	There is some evidence of monitoring of the improvement plan and actions, but it does not cover the main phases of the plan and actions (such as intermediate steps, end of projects, surveys of results). There are some significant deviations in the plan and/or actions (such as completeness or execution time).	There is evidence of monitoring of the main phases of the implementation of the improvement plan and actions (such as intermediate steps, end of projects, surveys of results). There are no main deviations in the plan and/or actions (such as completeness or execution time), affecting the overall success of the plan.	There is clear and documented evidence of monitoring all the main phases of the implementation of improvement plan and actions (such as intermediate steps, end of projects, surveys of results), with formal feedback on progress and final results. There is evidence of compliance of plan and actions with the schedule (such as completeness or execution time).	There is strong, documented evidence of structured monitoring of all the phases of the implementation of improvement plan and actions (such as intermediate steps, end of projects, surveys of results), with documented feedback on progress and final results clear. The monitoring is finalised to improve the scheduling and to assure the attainment of the best possible results. The plan and actions are complete and consistent with planning as consequence of the effective monitoring.
6.2 Achieve results in line with objectives.	There is no evidence of documented results for the improvement plan and actions, or the results are not coherent with the objectives.	There is some evidence of documented results for the improvement plan and actions, but they only partly cover the objectives, or there are major deviations from targets.	There is evidence of documented results for the plan and actions, covering the main objectives. Some deviations from targets are documented and motivated and do not affect overall success of	There is evidence of documented results for the plan and actions, covering all the objectives. There are no or only marginal deviations from targets, as demonstrated by the success of the plan and	There is strong evidence of documented results for the plan and actions. All the objectives reach or exceed the targets, and demonstrate an effective project management and clear success of the plan and actions.

			the plan and actions.	actions.	
6.3 Review the final project to capitalise on experiences.	There is no evidence of project review to evaluate the results and capitalise on the experiences.	There is weak evidence of project review, limited to an informal evaluation of results for the plan and actions.	There is some evidence of final project review, with formal evaluation of results of the plan and actions, but without evidence of a deep analysis of lesson learned to capitalise on positive and negative experiences.	There is evidence of final project review, with formal evaluation of results of the plan and actions, and documented analysis of lessons learned to capitalise on positive and negative experiences.	There is strong and documented evidence of project review. The lessons learned and positive and negative experiences of the plan and actions are discussed and analysed to be considered for future experiences, and are shared inside the organisation.

Appendix 2.3: Assessment Scheme on Pillar 3

The TQM Maturity

Reference

The assessment scheme for assessing the overall maturity of the instalment of the TQM principles and philosophy is based on the eight TQM principles as formulated in the CAF model:

The assessment scheme has included some additional aspects, which are to be taken into consideration in CER 2024:

- Strategic vision and leadership that ensures capability, resilience, and sustained public trust;

- Coherent, anticipatory, evidence-informed, participatory, digital-ready, and inclusive policymaking;
- An impartial, professional, merit-based, collaborative, and effective civil service, performing in good working conditions;
- High-quality, innovative, human-centric, and accessible public services;
- Alignment with the main requirements embedded in ComPAct4;
- Subsidiarity, coordination, accountability, openness of public administration, integrity, and oversight of administrative processes;
- Sound and sustainable public finances, underpinned by integrated and comprehensive accruals-based public accounting systems.

Areas of assessment

All eight principles are to be checked to gain an understanding of the TQM maturity within the organisation.

The extent of the evaluation of the principles and the level needed varies for the three levels of recognition, since higher levels require the PER applicant to demonstrate a higher level of organisational maturity.

CAF Excellence Recognition*:

All the principles will be assessed and two principles, chosen by the organisation, will be assessed in depth (one of which must be either Result Orientation or Customer Focus).

The minimum required level is 'Initial' for all the eight principles.

CAF Excellence Recognition:**

All the principles will be assessed and three principles, chosen by the organisation, will be assessed in depth (one of which must be either Result Orientation or Customer Focus).

All eight principles must at least reach the 'I' (Initial) level or higher, of which at least four principles must reach at least the 'R' (Realisation) level.

For one of the principles, chosen by the organisation, progress from a previous positive assessment must be demonstrated, with a higher evaluation level (for example from 'Initial' to 'Realisation' or from 'Realisation' to 'Maturity').

CAF Excellence Recognition*

All the principles will be assessed and four principles, chosen by the organisation, will be assessed in depth (including Result Orientation and Customer Focus).

At least four principles must reach at least the 'Realisation' level.

At least one principle must reach the 'Maturity' level.

No more than one principle may be at the 'Initial' level.

For one of the principles, chosen by the organisation, progress from a previous positive assessment must be demonstrated, with a higher evaluation level (for example from Initial to Realisation or from Realisation to Maturity).

Evaluation scale

The evaluation scale has four levels:

0	= The Initiation level has not been achieved
I	= Initiation level
R	= Realisation level
M	= Maturity level

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1 Result and Outcome Orientation

Result and Outcome Orientation	The organisation focuses on results and outcome to fulfil the organisation's vision, mission, and strategy, and to meet stakeholders' needs and requirements.			
Level	0	I – Initiation	R – Realisation	M – Maturity
Key definition	The initiation level has not been reached.	The organisation uses information about relevant stakeholders and result areas for its management.	I+ The organisation uses a set of targets, indicators, and results to be achieved in relation to the relevant stakeholders' needs and to support the fulfilment of its vision, mission, and strategy.	R+ The organisation ensures that results and outcome orientation cover all key organisational functions and units, and is constantly adapted according to stakeholder needs and requirements. The measurement of results and outcome lead to continuous optimisation in all areas of the organisation.
Explanation	There is no evidence that targets and results are defined.	Different stakeholders are identified. Some targets and indicators are defined and measured for internal processes, products and/or services, e.g. social or financial ones. There is systematic evaluation of some key results and main areas identified for measuring results and outcome.	The organisation has defined and continually updates its overview of relevant internal and external stakeholders. Indicators for measuring effectiveness and efficiency are in place. Results, outcome, and indicators are systematically monitored and reviewed. Information about results and outcome are shared within the organisation. Results and indicators are used to initiate improvement activities. Initiatives to support a result-	A balanced set of indicators and targets for results and outcomes are defined for all key processes and products or services. Stakeholders are involved in the definition of results, indicators, and targets, and in the review of results. Perception and performance indicators are systematically used. Results are systematically monitored for all key processes and products, and used for continuous improvement.

Examples of practices/ instruments			oriented culture are set.	A result-oriented culture encompasses the entire organisation.
Examples of practices/ instruments		• Stakeholder analysis • Activity report • All types of reports that assess the organisation's effectiveness, at least in the area of financial management, and assess the compliance of tasks with legal requirements.	• Performance indicators • Performance reviews • Systems control (at the level of services, processes, finances, employees, citizens/ customers, for example) • The use of external, publicly available systems, and portals providing evaluation opportunities.	• Inclusion of employees, citizens/customers, stakeholders in results evaluation • Evidence based, participatory, and inclusive strategy formulation • Balanced scorecard • Systematic results and outcome measurements.

2. Citizen/Customer Focus

Citizen/Customer Focus	The organisation focuses on the needs of present and potential citizens/customers and offers high-quality, innovative, human-centric, and accessible public services. The stakeholders are systematically involved in the optimisation and development of products and services, and the improvement of the organisation's performance.		
Level	**0**	**I – Initiation**	**R – Realisation**	**M – Maturity**
Key definition	The initiation level has not been reached.	The organisation has an overview and comprehensive understanding of its range of present and potential citizens/customers, information about their differentiated needs and expectations, and plans activities on this basis.	I + The organisation systematically involves citizens and customers in the evaluation and improvement of its performance.	R + The organisation ensures high-quality, innovative, human-centric, and accessible public services by systematically and constantly monitoring and optimising its performance.

Explanation	There is no evidence that the organisation systematically focuses on the needs of present and potential citizens/customers.	Management and employees have an overview of their respective customers and their needs and requirements. Employees understand the demands and expectations defined in legislation and regulation regarding citizen/customer service.	The opinion, feedback, needs, and ideas of customers about the services and the performance of the organisation are systematically collected. The fulfilment of the differentiated needs and expectations of citizens/customers are systematically monitored. Activities are ongoing to improve the products, services, and relationships to citizens/customers. There are constant relationships with citizens/customers to collect opinions, feedback, needs, and ideas.	The citizens/customers (of differentiated categories) are involved in the co-design of products/services, co-decision, co-production and co-evaluation (where applicable). Processes, products and services are designed around citizens/customers needs, assuring a lean and agile approach. The ongoing improvement activities for citizens/customers products and services are structured and based on a medium-to-long-term perspective. A continuous two-way communication and exchange of information is ensured to relevant stakeholders, taking into account the specific needs. Customer surveys (or other forms of feedback) and customer results are regularly and systematically measured and discussed in a continuous improvement perspective. The accessibility to public services is innovative and centred around citizen/customer needs.
Examples of practices/ instruments		There is adequate access for customers/citizens to information (such as folders, brochures, digital services) Endeavours are in place for creating a common understanding of customers' needs and requirements in the	Citizen/customer surveys Targeted polls One-stop shop Citizen participation activities Indicators related to citizen/customer's satisfaction are defined and measured.	Periodical Citizen/Customer Surveys are carried out and evaluated Systematic Complaints Management Inclusion of citizens/customers into activities for the improvement of services (such as a quality circle, focus groups) Customer journey mapping Customer-focused digital services

		organisation. Results of the public consultation are published.		

3 Leadership

Leadership	Leadership excellence couples visionary and inspirational leadership and bases decisions on evidence and facts. Leaders establish a clear mission statement, vision, and values, and ensure capability, resilience, and sustained public trust. They create and maintain the internal environment and organisational culture in which people can become fully engaged and empowered in achieving the organisation's objectives and reaching high levels of excellence.			
Level	0	I – Initiation	R – Realisation	M – Maturity
Key definition	The initiation level has not been reached.	Leaders establish a clear mission statement, according to legislation and regulation requirements, as well as utilising the stakeholders' expectations.	I + Leaders constantly challenge and review the organisation's strategy to stay resilient and ensure organisational agility. They inspire employees and guide them towards excellence.	R + Leaders establish a strategic vision encompassing organisational capability, resilience, and sustained public trust. They demonstrate the ability to maintain constancy of purpose in a changing environment.
Explanation	There is no evidence that leadership is performed in an effective way.	Leaders define the mission, vision, strategic objectives, and structural framework of the organisation. Leaders communicate, explain, and update the mission, vision, values, objectives, organisational rules, structures, and procedures to employees and stakeholders. Leaders define appropriate managerial structures, processes, functions,	Leaders define the strategy, based on the vision, mission, and values of the organisation and evaluate its performance. Leaders are committed to define, maintain, and develop adequate organisational structures and systematic approaches to efficiently and effectively fulfil the mission and vision. Leaders empower, drive, and inspire staff to contribute to organisation's goals and	Leaders constantly develop the organisation's structure and systems according to internal and external requirements and dynamics, to provide an organisational framework for excellent performance. Leaders continually work on the further development of an excellent organisational culture together with all internal and external stakeholders. Leaders and managers are perceived as role models. Leaders promote mutual trust, a learning culture, and they stimulate employees to

		responsibilities, and competencies.	improvement. Leaders define a balanced set of results and outcomes, and evaluate the performance and impact of the organisation. Leaders reorganise the organisation's structure according to requirements based on internal and external changes.	develop their competences. Empowerment and a culture of delegation is widely promoted, and people are effectively supported to reach personal and organisational objectives.
Examples of practices/ instruments		Mission statement Organisational rule book	Strategy Values (e.g. Code of Conduct, SDGs) Objectives (organisational and individual levels)	Vision Leadership evaluation Feedback culture Communities of practice Innovation labs Strategic foresight Techniques and tools of an effective leader (such as motivation and evaluation system, human-centred leadership approach)

4. Process Approach

Process approach	The organisation designs and manages processes to increase value and to deliver user-centric products and services for citizens/customers and other stakeholders. All resources are targeted at achieving the mission and strategy of the organisation supported by managed and coordinated processes across and beyond the organisation, and eventually together with relevant partner organisations. Integrity and oversight of processes are ensured.			
Level	0	I – Initiation	R – Realisation	M – Maturity

Key definition	The initiation level has not been reached.	Key processes – with linkage to the relevant result areas – are identified and managed.	I + Lean processes are designed around customers' and stakeholders' needs, to support the organisation's strategic goals.	R + The efficient and effective holistic interaction between structure, systems, processes together with mission, vision, strategies, and objectives is observed. Integrity and oversight of processes are ensured.
Explanation	There are no key processes and responsibilities identified.	A basic approach for process management with activities and responsibilities is defined.	Processes are effectively planned and managed, with a clear definition of ownership, allocation of resources, and definition of targets in line with the strategy and planning of the organisation. Indicators of the main processes are systematically measured, and results are analysed and used to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of processes.	The organisation has a detailed view of all processes (including management, operational, support, and improvement processes). The processes, their results, and outcomes are systematically monitored and eventually improved according to the monitoring and measurement results. The organisation promotes and assures process innovation and optimisation by use of internal performance management and national and international good practices. Benchmarking, market research, customer surveys, and other forms of feedback are implemented to anticipate and identify improvements. Linkages between other relevant management approaches such as the management of knowledge or risk, and opportunities or complaints are defined and managed. The organisation involves people, customers, partners, and suppliers in

				optimising the quality and efficiency of processes.
Examples of practices/ instruments		Documenting key processes and process owners and teams	Process map
Documentation of all processes
Easy access to documented process
Identification of indicators and key success factors
Process optimisation initiatives	Benchmarking/bench learning
Internal suggestion systems
Risk and opportunities management
Innovative approaches in process delivery/ optimisation (e.g. design thinking, Kanban, shared services)

5 People Engagement

| People engagement | People at all levels are the essence of an organisation and their full involvement enables their abilities to be used for the organisation's benefit.
The organisation manages and develops human resources as its most valuable resource for fulfilling its mission, vision, strategy, and objectives. The contribution of employees is maximised through their development and engagement, and the creation of a working environment of shared values, a culture of trust, openness, empowerment, and recognition. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Level | 0 | I – Initiation | R – Realisation | M – Maturity |
| Key definition | The initiation level has not been reached. | The organisation's staff is managed in number, competencies, and capacities in alignment with the organisation's mission, vision, and strategy. | I+ The organisation follows a long-term strategy for human resource development and deploys the needed managerial systems/practices. | R+ The organisation ensures a culture in which the staff can contribute and further develop their skills, talent, competences, engagement, and motivation. |
| Explanations | There is no responsibility/function for human resource management established. | According to the organisation's mission and strategy, a plan for attracting, employing, training, and developing people is defined and applied.

An organisational unit or | The organisation has human resource ,anagement that develops competencies and involves people in a structured way to improve products, services, and processes. | Internal and external initiatives support the approach of a culture of 'openness and trust' and the establishment of a 'learning organisation'.

Good working conditions and work–life balance initiatives are systematically |

		function is dedicated to the management of human resources. Training and development plans are based on available and needed competencies, and consider individual needs. Dialogue and open communication are encouraged through meetings and working groups.	People are involved in the decision-making process, and suggestions and creative ideas are promoted with a formal approach. Performance goals are defined, and results are reviewed. Knowledge and Information are systematically managed.	considered for people's well-being and participation. The dialogue between managers and people is systematic and supported by appropriate practices and tools. Performance goals are defined for the different levels and results are measured and rewarded. Systematic measures for attracting people and employee retention are in place.
Examples of practices/ instruments		Training plan Meeting structure	Human Resource Management strategy Job descriptions and requirements profiles Competency framework Staff survey Performance interviews and individual performance goals Knowledge management system Teambuilding initiatives System for gathering ideas and suggestions	Regular staff surveys Communities of practice Talent management activities Employer branding activities Flexible working time/trusted flexitime Mentoring and coaching Well-being initiatives – workshops, analyses/questionnaires of organisational climate or satisfaction Reward system Indicators that measure people's responsibility for what the public thinks about the organisation – how they perceive what the organisation does, what it has done, what it plans to do and how it will behave towards customers/citizens.

6 Change and Innovation

Change and Innovation	Excellence means challenging the status quo and effecting change by continuous learning to create innovation and improvement. An organisation has to have a fact-based picture of its current situation and the will and capacity to initiate necessary changes, building the ground for continuous learning, innovation, and improvement.			
Level	0	I – Initiation	R – Realisation	M – Maturity
Key definition	The initiation level has not been reached.	The organisation shows a basic positive approach towards continuous improvement and innovation.	I + Continuous improvement and innovation is systematically promoted in the organisation.	R + The organisation systematically challenges the status quo and encourages, accepts, and integrates innovation and regularly compares its performance with other organisations.
Explanation	There is no evidence that the organisation is open for change and innovation.	Improvements actions based on internal assessment and external observations are initiated. Necessary changes and challenges are proactively managed.	Leadership and employees are aware of the need for continuous improvement and innovation. The organisation's processes constantly benefit from improvement and innovation inputs by internal and external stakeholders. The organisation develops systems for gathering ideas and suggestions from employees. Management encourages employees to take responsibility for improvement actions. Different innovation and change initiatives are underway.	Continuous improvement and innovation form a major part of the organisation's strategy. Business intelligence, new technologies, and bench learning are used to identify and support the innovation strategy. An innovation-driven culture is sustained, people are empowered when developing and implementing innovative activities. Innovation and changing initiatives are carried out according to the principles of the PDCA (plan, do, check, act) cycle. Indicators and targets for assessing the improvement and progress are defined.
Examples of		Action plans/improvement	System for gathering ideas and	Innovation strategy

practices/ instruments		plans	suggestions Rooms for innovation (such as Labs)	Benchmarking/bench learning Skills to use creativity methods and tools Change projects with clear concepts of before and after-effect measurement Use of new, digital technologies (such as IoT, KI, BI) Change management Systems of talent management

7 Partnership Development

Partnership development	Public sector organisations need others to achieve their targets and should therefore develop and maintain value-adding partnerships. The organisation interacts and collaborates with public and private organisations, citizens/customers, civil society organisations, and society as a whole, and establishes mutually beneficial partnerships.			
Level	0	I – Initiation	R – Realisation	M – Maturity
Key definition	The initiation level has not been reached.	The organisation identifies key partners from the private and public sectors and civil society to build sustainable relationships.	I + The organisation formalises partnerships to reach mutual advantages.	R + The organisation manages partnerships in a win–win situation to enable delivery of enhanced value and to optimise the use of resources.
Explanation	There is no awareness for the need of partnership development.	The organisation manages some partnerships for mutual benefit and to sustain its strategic objectives.	The interaction with partnership organisations is incorporated in the organisation's frameworks, processes, and monitoring activities. Management has a clear view of the most important partnerships and the development possibilities of these, based on identified mutual benefit targets.	The organisation has a clear understanding of the mutual benefits and monitors its sustainability. Optimisation is promoted and conducted in a participatory way. The organisation ensures systematic partnerships with all significant relevant partners. The organisation ensures a regular evaluation of partnerships and is

			Key partners (such as purchaser–provider, supplier, co-production, complementary/ substitution product provider, owner, founder) from the private and public sectors and civil society are identified to build sustainable relationships based on trust, dialogue, and openness. Partnership agreements have been concluded.	systematically looking for new partnerships in accordance with aims of organisation. The organisation's principles and values by selecting providers with a socially responsible profile in the context of public procurement are ensured.
Examples of practices/ instruments		Lists of key partners with indication of impact/influence Regular meetings with key partners.	Partnership agreements Clear definition of roles and targets based on relevant regulations and legislation.	Evaluation of the effectiveness of the different partnerships with respect to results and outcomes Identification of social value aspects

8 Social Responsibility

Social Responsibility	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. Furthermore they incorporate social responsibility issues and observe their impact on sustainability, quality of democracy, transparency, ethical behaviour, the rule of law, openness, and integrity.			
Level	0	I – Initiation	R – Realisation	M – Maturity
Key definition	The initiation level has not been reached.	The organisation identifies the areas of impact in terms of social, economic, and ecological issues.	I + Sustainability and social responsibility, including climate change, are considered in the strategies and plans.	R + UN Sustainable Development Goals are used as reference for the sustainability vision and strategy of the organisation.
Explanation	There is no awareness for social responsibility in the organisation.	Some occasional initiatives demonstrate attention to social, economic, and ecological issues.	The organisation is aware of its function as role model with respect to social responsibility and makes sure that all members of staff share this understanding.	The organisation develops a vision towards holistic social responsibility based on its own mission, taking into account its impact on the local, region, national, or international level.

			The organisation is committed to respecting the local, national, and global requirements with respect to social responsibility. The organisation proactively implements initiatives and projects that have an impact on social and ecological issues. Indicators and targets are defined for the key aspects of social responsibility and environmental sustainability.	Activities and impact in the interest of social responsibility are communicated to promote further activities and participation. The organisation is committed to fulfil local, national, and global requirements with respect to social responsibility. Sustainability opportunities and initiatives are searched and implemented with society for mutual benefits. Sustainability indicators and targets are defined for key aspects (social, environmental) and outstanding results are achieved.
Examples of practices/ instruments		Activities and events addressing social responsibility	Strategy including sustainability aspects Social responsibility/sustainability indicators Sustainable public procurement initiatives Compliance with accessibility requirements	Indicators measuring fulfilment of UN Sustainable Development Goals or other relevant international or national social responsibility goals Reporting on social responsibility and sustainability Sustainable budgeting

Appendix 3: The CAF Excellence Recognition Scoring Guide

Background

The purpose of this document is to act as a guide for the CAF EFA to assessing the level of achievement reached in the CAF Excellence Recognition, and whether an applicant organisation is qualified to receive the recognition.

The Scoring Guide describes the basic principles for an assessment by the CAF External Feedback Actor and scoring of the organisations working with CAF.

The scope of the assessment comprises three pillars

The three pillars are:
- assessment of the self-assessment process, which covers the first three steps of the assessment scheme;
- assessment of the planning and the process of improvement, which covers the steps from four to six of the assessment scheme;
- assessment of the TQM maturity of the organisation by examining the maturity level it has attained, based on the eight Principles of Excellence (the broader scope of excellence).

The assessment schemes cover these pillars and serve as the main frame of reference for an assessment by the CAF External Feedback Actor. Each of the pillars will be scored through the appropriate evaluation scale, and the pillars have specific scoring profiles (profiles which must be met to obtain the Recognition). The first section on scoring methodology outlines the basic principles with regard to scoring by the CAF External Feedback Actor.

Scoring methodology

The main purpose of the procedure is to serve as a framework for the provision of systematic external feedback to CAF users requiring it. The assessment process and the examination during the site visit must therefore be provided in an open and respectful manner, which supports learning and dialogue. The CAF External Feedback Actor should behave in such a manner that the site visit is not perceived as a one-way gathering of evidence, but as a possibility for discussion and feedback.

The CAF Excellence Recognition must be flexible enough to handle many types of organisations in terms of complexity and size. The actions described in all three pillars, and their correlation to the scores, should therefore not be used as a checklist, but as a guide. In addition to the actions described here, other actions not included may also be appropriate for certain organisations. This means that the scoring should not be perceived as a mechanical exercise, but should be based on both the overall impression of the organisation when the site visit has been concluded, as well as the various evidence gathered with regard to specific steps, actions, and changes.

Evidence

The assessment schemes serve as the main frame of reference for the CAF External Feedback Actor. Evidence gathered at the site visit and through written accounts gives a correct assessment of the organisations working with CAF. Evidence will be gathered through interviews and workshops with all (internal) relevant stakeholders from the organisation, and through various existing written accounts connected with the CAF implementation.
Written documents include self-assessment reports, improvement plans, and other relevant documents.

It is important to stress that 'evidence' does not have to be identified only in written form, but can take the form of practice, interviews, and opinions of the stakeholders, and a comparison of these statements between the different groups. Secondly, the organisation is not expected to prepare new written accounts in the process of the Excellence Recognition scheme; the examination should, where possible, use materials that are already available.

Scales

Organisations are scored on the basis of evaluation scales (see Part 2 of this Scoring Guide).

The scheme recognises the ability of an organisation to make an effective and well-planned self-assessment that increases its understanding of the fundamental principles needed to become excellent.

Scoring the self-assessment process and improvement actions (Pillars 1–2)

Some basic principles are available to guide the CAF External Feedback Actor. To make the decision on whether a step should be assessed as acceptable (level 3) or effective (level 4) for example, the CAF External Feedback Actor should use the PDCA (plan, do, check, act) approach as a guideline for each step. The CAF External Feedback Actor considers whether the organisation has planned, developed, checked, and adjusted the actions, where reasonable, in an effective way. Important questions could be:

Has the applicant organisation planned the step effectively and included relevant issues and contingencies?

Has the step been developed and implemented according to the plan? If not, were changes to the implementation reasonable and based on solid arguments?

Has the organisation, if appropriate for the step, checked whether the chosen approach has achieved the intended results?

Did the organisation adjust actions during the process or plans to change the approach, based on checks and lessons learned?

The PDCA should not be used as a scoring tool, but as a framework for reflection with regard to the planning and implementation of the self-assessment and improvement actions.

The assessment schemes completed by the applicant serve as the main frame of reference for the CAF External Feedback Actor when scoring. The first two pillars (self-assessment process and improvement plan) are scored at the level of the five steps and not the 18 or 21 underlying actions. The CAF External Feedback Actors are thus invited to use the assessment schemes as a framework for scoring by giving the individual actions a rating and examining what the ratings add up to on the level of the five steps (see Part 3 of this Scoring Guide).

Scoring TQM values (Pillar 3)

To support the scoring of maturity, the Assessment Scheme provides a range of examples that indicate which possible actions constitute different levels of maturity (see Part 3 of this Scoring Guide). Again, the examples serve as a guide only and the context and type of organisation can impact which and how many actions are appropriate for reaching different levels of maturity.

See Appendix 1.3 for the detailed indication for the depth of assessment and requirements for CER*, **, or *** recognitions.

The Assessment Scheme on TQM values completed by the applicant serves as the main frame of reference for the CAF External Feedback Actor. In addition to the Pillar 3 document, the CAF External Feedback Actors examine the self-assessment reports and the improvement plans to make an overall assessment of the level of maturity reached for all eight principles. The aim is to decide whether the reports and the improvement plans show that actions are either in place or under development, making it reasonable to judge that the first level of maturity has been reached.

Evaluation scales

There are evaluation scales for the self-assessment process and the improvement actions (Pillars 1–2).

The self-assessment process and the improvement actions are assessed through the same evaluation scale of 1–5 points. What is examined is the way the self-assessment and the improvement process have been planned, developed, checked, and adjusted and, only for CAF Excellence Recognition** and ***, the completion of the projects.

1	The activities have been carried out in a very limited way.
2	The activities have been carried out in a limited way.

3	The activities have been carried out in an acceptable way.
4	The activities have been carried out in an effective way.
5	The activities have been carried out in an outstanding way.

All steps in both pillars (Steps 1–5 for CAF Excellence Recognition* and 1–6 for CAF Excellence Recognition** and ***) must be assessed by the CAF External Feedback Actor.

Evaluation scales for the TQM values

The assessment of the TQM values relates to the maturity level achieved by the organisation. The TQM values consist of the eight Principles of Excellence.

The evaluation scale has four levels:

0	= The Initiation level has not been achieved
I	= Initiation level
R	= Realisation level
M	= Maturity level

The evaluation of the TQM maturity determines the extent to which the organisation has succeeded in implementing holistic quality development values.
All eight principles are to be checked, to gain an understanding of the TQM maturity within the organisation.
The extent of the evaluation of the principles and the level needed varies for the three levels of recognition, since higher levels require the candidate to demonstrate a higher level of organisational maturity.

CAF Excellence Recognition*: All the principles will be assessed and two principles, chosen by the organisation, will be assessed in depth (one of which must be either Result Orientation or Customer Focus). The minimum required level is 'Initial' for all the eight principles.

CAF Excellence Recognition:** All the principles will be assessed and three principles, chosen by the organisation, will be assessed in depth (one of which must be either Result Orientation or Customer Focus). All eight principles must at least reach the 'I' (Initial) level or more, of which at least four principles must reach at least the 'R' (Realisation) level. For one of the principles, chosen by the organisation, a progress from a previous positive assessment must be demonstrated, with a higher evaluation level (for example from Initial to Realisation or from Realisation to Maturity).

CAF Excellence Recognition*:** All the principles will be assessed and four principles, chosen by the organisation, will be assessed in depth (including Result Orientation and Customer Focus). Four principles or more must reach at least the 'R' (Realisation) level. At least one principle must reach the 'M' (Maturity) level. No more than one principle must remain at 'I' (Initial) level. For one of the principles, chosen by the organisation, a progress from a previous positive assessment must be demonstrated, with a higher evaluation level (for example from Initial to Realisation or from Realisation to Maturity.

Scoring profiles

The scoring profile for the self-assessment process and the improvement actions (pillars 1–2) profiles cover:
- Assessment of the process of self-assessment, which covers the first three steps of the Procedure for Excellence Recognitions;
- Assessment of the improvement process (planning and implementation), which covers the steps from four to six (from four to five for CAF Excellence Recognition*).

The assessment made by the CAF External Feedback Actor will be based on evidence gathered by interviewing different groups in the workplace and the self-assessment reports, the improvement plan, and other relevant documents. A score from 1 to 5 is given for each of the six steps globally.

To obtain the Recognition, the minimum requirements are as follows:
- for Steps 3 and 5, a score of at least 4;
- for all the other steps, a score of at least 3.

All steps must be assessed by the CAF External Feedback Actor.

The CAF External Feedback Actor uses the assessment scheme as a framework for scoring by giving the individual actions a rating, and examining whether the actions add up to the score given on the level of the steps. The final decision on whether the organisation obtains the Recognition is based on the scoring profile for the steps, not the individual actions.

The scoring profile is marked with grey for the assessment levels not allowed to obtain the recognition.

Scoring profile Pillar 1	1	2	3	4	5
Step 1: Decide how to organise and plan the self-assessment.					
Step 2: Organise information/training and prepare the self-assessment (SA).					
Step 3: Perform the SA.					
Scoring profile Pillar 2					
Step 4: Draft an improvement plan, based on the accepted SA report.					
Step 5: Implement the improvement plan.					
Step 6: Manage the process and review the results (note 1).					

Self-assessment (SA) process Pillar 1	1	2	3	4	5
Step 1: Decide how to organise, plan, and communicate the SA.					
1.1 Assure a clear management decision regarding the objectives, set up the project management plan (such as responsibilities, timeline, resources, training, scoring panel definition) and scope (such as does the SA group cover the whole organisation or only parts/units/departments).					
1.2 Appoint a CAF project leader along with the composition of the SA group (on the basis of specified criteria such as their knowledge of the organisation and competencies), and define the role of managers in the SA process.					
1.3 Define and implement the internal and external communication plan for all CAF phases and steps, including the communication of the progress made with improvement actions/plan, involving relevant stakeholders – with a special focus on the staff of the organisation.					
SA process – overall score – Step 1:					
Step 2: Organise information/training and prepare the SA.					
2.1 Organise information/training activities for leaders and managers (top					

and middle) to promote ownership and commitment, and if needed, for external stakeholders.					
2.2 Train the members of SA group about the CAF model: objectives, roles, criteria, phases, methodology, prioritisation, action planning, implementation, and use of the scoring panels.					
2.3 Prepare the SA by providing the SA group with a list of relevant information and documents for the CAFSA.					
SA process – overall score – Step 2:					
Step 3: Perform the SA.					
3.1 The members of the SA group make up a list of strengths, areas for improvement, and improvement ideas/proposals, and give a score for each subcriterion of CAF, taking into consideration the relevant data, facts, and evidence.					
3.2 Collect the individual SA inputs and prepare the consensus meeting, assuring all conditions for its success.					
3.3 Conduct the consensus meeting, reach consensus on strengths, areas for improvement, ideas/proposals for improvement actions, and scoring for each subcriterion.					
3.4 Prepare an analytical SA report containing the description of the CAF phases, implementation up to SA for each subcriterion: strengths, areas for improvement, ideas for improvement actions, scores, as well as general conclusions of strengths and areas for improvement, and identified priority areas for improvement.					
3.5 Present the final SA report to the management of the organisation, assuring its acceptance.					
SA process – overall score – Step 3					

Step 4: Draft an improvement plan, based on the accepted SA report.					
4.1 Collect and concretise all proposals for actions for improvement, including the ideas formulated during the SA					
4.2 Prioritise improvement actions taking into account strategic objectives of the organisation, impact on stakeholders, internal impact, ease of implementation, and resources needed.					
4.3 Draft the action plan (at least two priority projects being elaborated), with general objectives/targets, responsibilities, assignment, and improvement plan project flow.					
4.4 Obtain approval of the improvement plan by the management and integrate into the normal strategic planning process.					
Improvement plan definition – overall score – Step 4					
Step 5: Define, implement, and monitor the improvement actions.					
5.1 Define ownership of the entire improvement plan and improvement actions in a participatory approach.					
5.2 Define detailed improvement actions and targets, and establish ways to measure and evaluate the performance of the actions and the results.					
5.3 Implement and monitor on a regular basis the improvement plan and improvement actions in accordance with the PDCA approach, involving people and relevant stakeholders.					
Improvement plan implementation – overall score – Step 5					
Step 6: Manage the improvement projects and review the results.					

6.1 Monitor the implementation of plan and actions on a regular basis (up to the end of projects), with reference to scheduling.					
6.2 Achieve results in line with objectives.					
6.3 Hold a final project review to capitalise on experiences.					
Improvement process management and review – overall score – Step 6					

Scoring profile TQM values (Pillar 3)

These scoring profiles cover assessment of the TQM maturity of the organisation by examining the maturity level it has attained. The assessment of maturity with regard to TQM values is based on the eight Principles of Excellence (the broader scope of excellence).
All eight principles will be examined. The depth and the rules for the assessment of TQM principles for the different levels of recognition is described in Appendix 2.3.

A score signifying the level of TQM maturity is given for each of the eight Principles of Excellence. The requisites to obtain the Recognition are indicated in Appendix 1.
The assessment by the CAF External Feedback Actor will be based on evidence gathered by interviewing different groups in the workplace, by internal documentation, and achieved and measurable results.

To support the self-evaluation and the examination by the CAF External Feedback Actor of the eight Principles of Excellence, examples describing each level for the eight principles have been included in the assessment scheme. The examples should be seen as a guideline for the CAF External Feedback Actor's examination of the eight principles. For a detailed description of the principles, please refer to Appendix 2.3, 'Assessment Scheme on Pillar 3'.

Scoring profile for TQM Principles	Maturity Level			
	0 No evidence	I Initial	R Realisation	M Maturity
1. Result and Outcome Orientation				
2. Citizen/ Customer Focus				
3. Leadership				
4. Process Approach				
5. People Engagement				
6. Change and Innovation				
7. Partnership Development				
8. Social Responsibility				

Total (for each maturity level)	
Progress from previous assessment	Principle chosen by the organisation: Progress demonstrated: yes ( ) from to no ( )

Appendix 4: Template of the CAF Excellence Recognition Report[5]

CAF Excellence Recognition Report

External Feedback Report on CAF Excellence Recognition
(indicate recognition level)
(Name of the organisation)

CAF External Feedback Actors: names
Date

Recommended: Logos of the National Organiser, and CAF organisation, all in same size

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Feedback report

Name of the organisation:	
Address:	
Contact person:	
Telephone:	
Website:	
E-mail:	
Assessment period:	
On-site visit:	
CER level applied for: [*,**,***]	
CER level awarded: [*,**,***]	
Date:	
Team of CAF External Feedback Actors	

Section 1: General comments

Overview of main findings

[Insert ½ page describing the main themes in the feedback report].

Key strengths

[Insert 3–4 findings on key strengths].

Key areas of improvement

[Insert 3–4 findings on key areas of improvement].

Key recommendations

[Insert ½–1 page on main recommendations].

CER level applied for:

CER* obtained

CER** obtained

CER*** obtained:

Section 2: Feedback on the self-assessment process

General comments about the self-assessment process:				
Step 1: Decide how to organise, plan, and communicate the self-assessment. Strengths • [Insert strengths] Areas for improvement • [Insert areas for improvement]				
The activities have been carried out in a:				
very limited way ☐	limited way ☐	acceptable way ☐	effective way ☐	outstanding way ☐

Step 2: Organise information/training and prepare the SA Strengths • [Insert strengths] Areas of improvement • [Insert areas of improvement]				
The activities have been carried out in a:				
very limited way ☐	limited way ☐	acceptable way ☐	effective way ☐	outstanding way ☐

Step 3: Perform the self-assessment Strengths • [Insert strengths] Areas of improvement • [Insert areas of improvement]				
The activities have been carried out in a:				
very limited way ☐	limited way ☐	acceptable way ☐	effective way ☐	outstanding way ☐

Step 4: Draft an improvement plan, based on the accepted self-assessment report Strengths • [Insert strengths] Areas of improvement • [Insert areas of improvement]				
The activities have been carried out in a:				
very limited way ☐	limited way ☐	acceptable way ☐	effective way ☐	outstanding way ☐

Step 5: Define, implement, and monitor the improvement actions Strengths • [Insert strengths] Areas of improvement • [Insert areas of improvement]				
The activities have been carried out in a:				
very limited way ☐	limited way ☐	acceptable way ☐	effective way ☐	outstanding way ☐

Step 6: Manage the improvement projects and review the results Strengths • [Insert strengths] Areas of improvement • [Insert areas of improvement]				
The activities have been carried out in a:				
very limited way ☐	limited way ☐	acceptable way ☐	effective way ☐	outstanding way ☐

Section 3: Feedback on TQM values

Comments on assessed TQM values, in accordance with the CER level applied for:
[Insert chosen Principles of Excellence]
Strengths • [Insert 2–4 strengths]
Areas of improvement • [Insert 2–4 areas of improvement]

The organisation:	has not reached the Initiation level ☐	has reached the Initiation level ☐	has reached the Realisation level ☐	has reached the Maturity level ☐

Comments on progress from the previous assessments (relevant for CER**, CER***)

Section 4: Scoring profile

Scoring profile Pillar 1	1	2	3	4	5
Step 1: Decide how to organise and plan the self-assessment.					
Step 2: Organise information/training and prepare the self-assessment.					
Step 3: Perform the self-assessment.					

Scoring profile Pillar 2	1	2	3	4	5
Step 4: Draft an improvement plan, based on the accepted self-assessment report.					
Step 5: Implement the improvement plan.					

Step 6: Manage the process and review the results.					

Scoring profile for TQM Principles	Maturity Level			
	0 No evidence	I Initial	R Realisation	M Maturity
1. Result and Outcome Orientation				
2. Citizen/ Customer Focus				
3. Leadership				
4. Process Approach				
5. People Engagement				
6. Change and Innovation				
7. Partnership Development				
8. Social Responsibility				
Total (for each maturity level)				
Progress from previous assessment	Principle chosen by the organisation: Progress demonstrated: yes ( ) from to no ( )			

General comments/findings/considerations about the TQM values applied in the organisation

Appendix 5: Form for Applicant Organisation

Contact details, applicant

Name of the organisation:			
Address:			
Contact person:			
Telephone:			
E-mail:			
Date:			
Website:			
The organisation is applying for:	CER*	CER**	CER**
Previous CAF Recognitions:	Yes No		
The organisation (or department) is registered as a CAF User in the European online database of CAF users:	Yes No		
CAF has been implemented in the organisation as a whole:	Yes No; CAF has been implemented in part of the organisation, namely:		
The CAF improvement plan/actions were concluded and delivered to the management of the organisation on:	Indicate date		

Signature by a senior manager of the organisation (e.g. General Director)

Name: Title:
Place: Date:

Signature:

This signature confirms that the information provided is correct and that you agree to the conditions for applying.

Please send the application to: [Address of the CAF National Organiser or European CAF Resource Centre]

Appendix 6: CAF Excellence Recognition Example

Common Assessment Framework

European Total Quality Management for the Public Sector

Name Organisation [logo]

is awarded

CAF Excellence Recognition [*, **, ***]

[date]

[Signature of the National Organiser and/or Minister in charge]

Issued by: **National Organiser / CAF National Centre**

[name / country / logo]

Overview of the main changes of the PEF and CER terminology changes

OLD (PEF)	NEW (CER)
CAF External Feedback Procedure	CAF Procedure for Excellence Recognition CAF PER
Effective CAF User Label (CAF ECU)	CAF Excellence Recognition (CER)
Effective CAF User (ECU)	CAF User CAF Excellence Recognition (CER) and accordingly: CER* CER** CER***
Questionnaire/s	Assessment Scheme

Overview of the main changes in the questionnaires (*now: Assessment Schemes*) and steps accordingly

OLD (PEF)	NEW (CER)
9 steps, 35 actions in Pillars 1 and 2	6 steps, 21 actions in Pillars 1 and 2
PILLAR 1 – ASSESSMENT SCHEME	
Steps 1–6 22 actions in total	Steps 1–3 11 actions in total
PILLAR 2 – ASSESSMENT SCHEME	
Steps 7–9 13 actions in total	Steps 4–6 10 actions in total
PILLAR 3 – PRINCIPLES OF EXCELLENCE	
8 principles	8 principles Slight adaptation/update based on new TQM aspects such as Compact, SGD, good governance

Procedural changes/Application for the PEF/CER

OLD (PEF)	NEW (CER)
The application should be made not before six months but not exceeding twelve months after the CAF improvement plan has been developed.	The application should be made not before six months but not exceeding twelve months after the CAF improvement plan has been developed.

The CAF is the result of the cooperation among the EU Ministers responsible for public administration. The CAF is offered as a common TQM model to assist public sector organisations to use quality management approaches and techniques in public administration. It provides a general, efficient, easy-to-use framework, which is suitable for a self-assessment of public sector organisations and their development towards excellence!

European CAF Resource Centre, in collaboration with National CAF Centres

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