



QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM FOR BUSINESS START-UP ADVISORS

Structure

The **German Association for Entrepreneurial Initiative (VDG)** works since 2004 in the promotion of small business start-ups. One of the main goals of the organization is to involve political, economical and social agents for the improvement of the entrepreneurial conditions. Their most important contribution is the development and implementation of an accreditation system for business start-up advisors which made the professionalization and the establishment of minimum quality standards possible.

The English organization **SFEDI**, founded in 1996, provides entrepreneurs and business start-up advisors with a wide range of tools and standards. The success of them let SFEDI to be recognized by the UK government as the national standards setting body for business support and business enterprise.

Thanks to the experience achieved by these two organizations and their commitment to extend their experience within Europe, it will be a pleasure to let new partners join and share the experiences and create the bases for a common European space for business start-up support together. For this end we have developed an organizational structure divided between Excellence Centres and Award Centres in order to reach the great number of business start-up advisor networks existing in Europe.

Excellence Centres will work on a European perspective, setting the bases for a homogeneous system that will allow the professionalization of the sector all over Europe.

Summarizing, the Excellence Centres would be in charge of the following matters:

- Coordination of the Award Centre's
- Implementation of a homogeneous quality standard system
- Design and implementation of structured working materials
- Identify, tailor and offer best practice solutions for start-up advisors
- Coordination of policymakers and business start-up advisors for continuous improvement of the QMS

The Excellence Centres are composed by an Accreditation Board, where managers of award centres and experts in the matter would discuss and set guidelines; an Advisory Group, an external group composed of European experts, institutional authorities and organizations working in entrepreneurship; and a secretary in charge of the operative and administrative coordination.

Award Centres will work on a national/ regional level and will have direct contact to the business start-up advisor networks. In short, they will provide:

- Accreditation against Excellence Centre qualifications
- Management and organization of start-up advisor networks



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- Management and administration of awarding process
- They are also eligible to have their own learning and assessment programs.

Accreditation

The accreditation system is composed of two levels. The first level accreditation is designed for business start-up advisors with less than two years of experience. To acquire it the advisor will go through a four phase process:

- **Eligibility/ access criteria:** prove of business, managerial, financial, psychological and pedagogical knowledge's. Prove of the existing quality process, if exists (how they document, evaluate and carry out the advising process)
- **Info event and personal interview:** a professional profile will be written down for each advisor.
- **Training:** based on the profile, recommendations will be given on additional training. The training will be on: cross-sectoral knowledge (legal and economic aspects, marketing etc.), access to finance, regional/ local specific characteristics, client oriented assessment techniques, code of conduct etc.
- **Prove/ Test:** The adviser knowledge and skills will be proven through an oral or written test (tbd). Signing of the code of conduct.

With the first level accreditation the advisor will be proved in basic knowledge's, skills and approach techniques necessary to conduct a business start-up advising process. The validity of the certificate is two years and after them the advisor would be eligible for the second level accreditation.

The second level accreditation is directed to advisors with proven experience of up to two years in the sector. To be granted with this accreditation the advisor has to go through the following phases:

- **Eligibility/ access criteria:** *idem* first level certification.
- **References:** the advisor has to take part in four client interventions, in which other advisor acts as an observer. At the same time 20 documented advising cases have to be proven from the last two years.

Signing the code of conduct the advisor will be granted with the second level certification. Its **validity** is also **two years** and within them the advisor has to take part in **two colloquiums** (one per year) in order to extend the validity of the certificate.