



EDPQS Toolkit 2: Reviewing and improving the quality of prevention work (Self- Assessment and Reflection Toolkit)

Overview

Authors

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About the EDPQS project

The EDPQS provide a set of principles to help develop and assess the quality of drug prevention. They offer a comprehensive resource outlining all the elements of drug prevention activities. The EDPQS have been developed by the European Prevention Standards Partnership from a research project co-funded by the European Union. The Partnership undertook a review and synthesis of existing international and national standards as well as consulting with more than 400 professionals in six European countries. The EDPQS are the first European reference point on high quality drug prevention based on a consensus incorporating scientific evidence and practical experience.

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Further information

Please visit our website for additional materials on the EDPQS: www.prevention-standards.eu



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Who should read this document?

- Are you a practitioner or front-line worker delivering drug prevention with target populations?
- Are you a programme developer wanting to develop a new drug prevention intervention?
- Are you a service manager having to review drug prevention activities within your service?
- Are you an evaluator wanting to assess the formal quality of a prevention programme?
- Are you a professional interested in developing or assessing a prevention or health promotion activity?
- Are you a regional coordinator wanting to develop a local prevention action plan on the basis of quality criteria?
- Do you want to improve the quality of your prevention work based upon the European standards for quality in drug prevention?
- Do you want to assess your progress in achieving quality in your prevention related work?

If you answered “yes” to any of the questions above please continue reading.

If you are one of the wide range of people working within the drug prevention community, this toolkit can be of value to you. It will be of particular interest if you are a professional involved in planning or implementing a drug prevention activity, programme or other prevention related initiative. The toolkit offers a response to key questions:

- What is quality in drug prevention?
- What are quality standards in drug prevention?
- How could I benefit from using quality assessment tools to review my work?
- How can I better understand the quality of what is being undertaken in our drug prevention work and support?

Few people would argue with the view that prevention is better (and cheaper) than cure. However, a lot of what is done in the name of drug prevention is not based on what “works” or on what constitutes “quality”. Yet “quality” is a key issue that has to be addressed if positive outcomes are to be achieved. Identifying and encouraging quality in prevention work has been the focus of **the European Drug Prevention Quality Standards (EDPQS) Project**.

If you are interested in using practical tools, based on the EDPQS, that could motivate and help you to achieve “high quality” in your day-to-day prevention work, your working group setting or within your organisation, this toolkit could be of significant help and support to you.

This document provides an overview of the Toolkit and instructions for use. The related Checklists and a blank synthesis profile form for self-completion are available from <http://prevention-standards.eu/toolkit-2/>

1. What are the European Drug Prevention Quality Standards (EDPQS)?

The EDPQS provide a set of **principles** to help **prepare, and assess the quality** of, drug prevention and offer a comprehensive resource outlining all the formal elements of drug prevention activities.

The EDPQS have been developed by the European Prevention Standards Partnership as part of a project co-funded by the European Union. The EDPQS are a result of review and synthesis of existing international and national standards, as well as consultations with more than 400 professionals in six European countries. They are the **first European reference point on “high quality” drug prevention based on a consensus incorporating scientific evidence and practical experience**. The Standards are

intended for a wide range of drug prevention activities (e.g. drug education, structured programmes, outreach work, brief interventions), settings (e.g. school, community, family, recreational settings, criminal justice) and target populations (e.g. young people, families, ethnic groups). Drug prevention activities that are considered using these Standards may have their focus on legal substances, such as alcohol or tobacco, and/or illegal substances or be undertaken within a broader context of health promotion.

Quality Standards: benchmarks that help judge whether an activity, a provider, etc. represents high quality. Quality Standards are typically based upon professional consensus. Their main focus is on structural and procedural aspects of quality assurance, e.g. evaluation, staff composition and competencies, participant safety, etc. (*Glossary for use with the European Drug Prevention Quality Standards, see the Appendix in the EDPQS Manual*).

The EDPQS Project cycle – three levels of detail: Stages, Components, Attributes

The European Drug Prevention Quality Standards are ordered chronologically in a project cycle, describing the development, implementation and evaluation of drug prevention work (Figure 1). The full set of Standards are published in a manual <http://prevention-standards.eu/manual/>

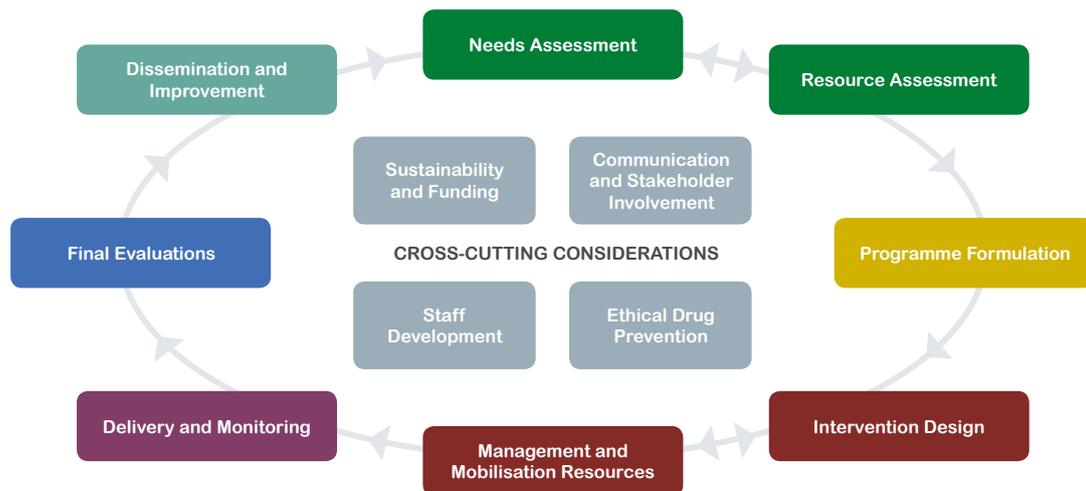


Figure 1: The drug prevention project cycle

The project cycle is made up of eight **stages** plus four **cross-cutting considerations**. It is a simplified model of drug prevention work which professionals should carefully *adapt* to the particular circumstances of their prevention work. Each project stage is divided into several **components**, which outline what actions to take. In total, there are 31 components across all project stages and four components within the cross-cutting considerations (Figure 2).

Figure 2: The EDPQS Components

Cross-cutting Considerations
A: Sustainability and funding
B: Communication and stakeholder involvement
C: Staff development
D: Ethical drug prevention
1 Needs Assessment
1.1 Knowing drug-related policy and legislation
1.2 Assessing drug use and community needs
1.3 Describing the need – Justifying the intervention
1.4 Understanding the target population
2 Resource Assessment
2.1 Assessing target population and community resources
2.2 Assessing internal capacities
3 Programme Formulation
3.1 Defining the target population
3.2 Using a theoretical model
3.3 Defining aims, goals, and objectives
3.4 Defining the setting
3.5 Referring to evidence of effectiveness
3.6 Determining the timeline
4 Intervention Design
4.1 Designing for quality and effectiveness
4.2 If selecting an existing intervention
4.3 Tailoring the intervention to the target population
4.4 If planning final evaluations
5 Management and Mobilisation of Resources
5.1 Planning the programme - Illustrating the project plan
5.2 Planning financial requirements
5.3 Setting up the team
5.4 Recruiting and retaining participants
5.5 Preparing programme materials
5.6 Providing a programme description
6 Delivery and Monitoring
6.1 If conducting a pilot intervention
6.2 Implementing the intervention
6.3 Monitoring the implementation
6.4 Adjusting the implementation
7 Final Evaluations
7.1 If conducting an outcome evaluation
7.2 If conducting a process evaluation
8 Dissemination and Improvement
8.1 Determining whether the programme should be sustained
8.2 Disseminating information about the programme
8.3 If producing a final report

Please note that the numbering of components does not necessarily indicate priority or chronological order.

Attributes (figure 3) constitute the third level within the standards, defining each component in greater detail. If used for reflection on prevention work, these attributes define attainment towards the particular component.

Figure 3 (example of an attribute at component 1.1)

1.1 Knowing drug-related policy and legislation:

BASIC STANDARD	NOTES AND EXAMPLES
<p>1.1.1 The knowledge of drug-related policy and legislation is sufficient for the implementation of the programme.</p>	<p>Examples of policy and legislation: relevant legislation covering drugs, alcohol, tobacco, medicines and volatile substances; health education policy.</p>

At the attribute level, *basic* and additional *expert* Standards (representing a higher level of quality; see Figure 4 for an example) are provided. It is helpful to see these in their proper context in the full EDPQS manual. Attributes allow a review of the Standards within a variety of prevention activities and according to the different capacities of organisations.

Figure 4 (example of an expert standard at component 1.1)

ADDITIONAL EXPERT STANDARDS	NOTES AND EXAMPLES
<p>1.1.3 The programme complies with relevant local, regional, national and/or international standards and guidelines.</p>	<p>Basic Standard if required by existing policy and legislation.</p> <p>Example of Standards: existing standards on making services young-people friendly (e.g. Department of Health, 2007).</p>

The EDPQS manual encourages practitioners and other professionals working in the prevention field to think about how existing activities relate to the Standards and how they can be improved in order to obtain (even) better and more sustainable results.

In this Toolkit you will be introduced to some tools (Checklists and Questionnaires) based on the EDPQS. These are intended to help professionals who are not yet familiar with the concept of quality standards in prevention and who wish to find out more about this topic.

The manual containing all standards is available to download from:

<http://prevention-standards.eu/manual/>

2. How can the EDPQS Self-Assessment & Reflection toolkit work for you in practice?

This toolkit should support you to improve and make your day-to-day job easier and help to fill the gap between science and practice. In particular, it can offer support and reassurance in the planning or implementation phase of your activity. It can offer a common model for communication among different prevention workers, support professional and organisational development and help to orientate the professional culture in prevention towards high quality.

The purpose of this toolkit is to help and promote self-learning, self-reflection and self-improvement. It aims to raise awareness regarding the need for “high quality” drug prevention. It is not about external evaluation or judgment on your performance: it is an opportunity to enhance your everyday work and help to ensure that you take into account the important issues of quality provision in your efforts to prevent substance use and promote health.

The EDPQS highlight the following aspects of quality in prevention work (see also the EDPQS Position Paper at <http://prevention-standards.eu/position-paper/>):

- Relevance of activities to target populations needs and (inter)governmental policies
- Adherence to accepted ethical principles
- Integration and promotion of the scientific evidence base
- Internal coherence, project feasibility and sustainability.

Using this toolkit requires basic background knowledge and understanding of the Standards in the field of drug prevention and/or health promotion.

Note: Whilst the EDPQS are a reference point on “how”¹ to develop, deliver and sustain a prevention programme, they do not provide guidelines on “what” activities should be delivered. For the latter purpose, EDPQS users should refer to resources such as the EMCDDA Best Practice Portal² or the International Standards on Drug Use Prevention (see Additional guidance section for details).

When can you benefit from using the EDPQS Self-Assessment & Reflection Toolkit

This toolkit can provide benefit to help:

- ★ **Review** the quality of ongoing or completed prevention programmes
- ★ **Assess** whether prevention related activity is undertaken or likely to operate in a way that can be considered “high quality”
- ★ **Assess** the quality of your prevention project plan
- ★ **Raise** your professional competences and those of your working group or organisation
- ★ **Support** high quality planning of a new prevention intervention³.

This toolkit can be used in different circumstances:

- To conduct a self-assessment on your own activity at the individual level
- For self-reflection or discussion in group settings within the same prevention programme (e.g. by a team of practitioners who are delivering the programme in direct contact with the target population)
- For assessment of prevention activities within the same organization (e.g. by service managers) or multiple providers (e.g. by regional planning teams).

What can you find in the EDPQS Self-Assessment & Reflection Toolkit

This toolkit can support your day-to-day practice and give you the chance to review the quality of your new, ongoing or completed prevention activity in accordance with the EDPQS. It can be used for informal purposes of self-reflection including the identification of strengths or areas for further development and professional learning.

Accordingly, the core elements of the toolkit correspond to a range of “graded” tools (from basic to in-depth use) that you can select and combine according to your needs or different stages of your prevention work on the basis of the particular circumstances.

In particular, the Toolkit includes:

- ★ A template for a Workplan on your self-assessment activity
- ★ A Quality Assessment Checklist of your current work with a few questions at the level of EDPQS *components*: you will be asked to answer “Yes” or “No” and rate the achievement of each Standard and component
- ★ A **Quality Synthesis Profile** showing a visual global result of how your prevention work relates to EDPQS at each *stage* and within the entire project cycle, identifying critical areas that need improvement
- ★ An **Improvement Support Questionnaire** with open questions at the level of *Standards components* to further support self-reflection on your activity and plan actions for improvement
- ★ An Action Plan template with a summary of actions to be taken
- ★ A section with **Additional Guidance** highlighting a few additional tools based on scientific evidence to support and guide your improvements towards “high quality”

The materials in this toolkit are also available for completion and use online, please see: www.prevention-standards.eu/toolkit-2/

3. Before the self-assessment: Workplan for EDPQS self-assessment activity

To help you get started, a list of questions is provided which you should consider before planning the self-assessment activity according to the particular circumstances of your prevention programme or organisation:

- a. Are you planning to use this toolkit by yourself?
- b. Are you going to involve your team?
- c. Is there anyone else you should involve? With which specific role(s)?
- d. What do you want to achieve? What is the aim of this activity?
- e. What time and resources can you spend on this self-assessment activity?
- f. Are you planning to repeat this activity periodically?

It may be useful to organise your answers within a Workplan, using the template below (Figure 5):

Figure 5: Workplan template

WORKPLAN FOR EDPQS SELF-ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY					
Prevention Intervention, programme, initiative to be addressed	Who is responsible of this self-assessment?	Who else will be involved? With which specific role?	What is the aim of this self-assessment?	Which resources will be used?	What are the start and end dates?

4. Use instructions for the Self-Assessment & Reflection Checklists

The Checklists are based on the EDPQS. They are divided according to the eight project stages plus four cross-cutting considerations. The Checklists mainly refer to the *basic* Standards, summarising the attribute level standards (as described in Section 1 of this document).

While using the Checklists, you are not required to follow the chronological order of the cycle, but you can adapt it on the basis of the particular circumstances of your prevention work. For example, if an activity is already in the implementation phase, you may wish to begin using the Checklist at that phase as it may be more relevant than the earlier project stages on programme planning.

When you are ready to reflect on your own prevention work's position in relation to the EDPQS and to identify strengths or areas for further improvement, either the Quality Assessment Checklist or the Improvement Support Questionnaire will act as a good support tool.

Even the use of only one of the tools represents an effective exercise for self-assessment and self-reflection regarding your work.

The time required to complete the entire Quality Assessment Checklist is approximately one hour, and the same amount of time should be assumed for each part of the Improvement Support Questionnaire, although the time spent will depend on different factors (e.g. if you want to use the Checklists individually or within your working group).

You may wish to consider if you are:

- ★ At an advanced stage of your project plan or programme's implementation phase
- ★ Oriented to involve your team
- ★ Able to dedicate time and resources to the self-assessment activity
- ★ Intending to plan a periodical review of this activity
- ★ Willing for an in-depth self-assessment activity
- ★ Strongly motivated to improve your work based on the EDPQS.

If so, you might want to undertake a two step EDPQS Self-Assessment & Reflection process as follows (further details on the Quality Assessment Checklist, the Quality Synthesis Profile and the Improvement Support Questionnaire are provided below):

1st STEP: Check Quality Achievement

Take an overview of your prevention work and check the quality achievement on the basis of the EDPQS.

- **Use the Quality Assessment Checklist:** try to answer to each question and rate your quality achievement at the level of each Standard *component*
- **Use the Quality Synthesis Profile** to get a total overview of how your prevention work corresponds to the EDPQS at the level of each project stage, and the entire project cycle, to help identify the strengths of your prevention work and the critical areas that need further efforts for improvement.

2nd STEP: Refine by reflection on paths for improvement

Refine by reflection on your prevention work, concentrating on areas identified as critical in the Quality Synthesis Profile at the previous step.

- **Use the Improvement Support Checklist:** try to answer the questions concerning the *components* in respect to the critical areas identified in the Quality Synthesis Profile, so as to support further discussion and in depth reflection; find out which efforts are required to improve; record actions you need to plan and undertake.

Note: The questions included in both the Quality Assessment Checklist and the Improvement Support Questionnaire mainly correspond to the basic Standards at the attribute level.

While answering the questions, you might want to clarify some point or have more information about a specific EDPQS standard. **Self-Assessment & Reflection** toolkit users are encouraged to refer to the Manual at www.prevention-standards.eu/manual/ to access the complete list of Standards: checking also the expert Standards and examples of their evidence can help to better understand what is being asked in the questionnaire.

Using the “Quality Assessment” checklist

Each section of the Checklist consists of four columns:

1. Name of the component: *You are encouraged to highlight the main issue concerned with the related Standard*
 2. A list of questions that correspond to the Standard’s component indicating also the corresponding EDPQS standards at the attribute level for easy cross-referencing
 3. A scale *Yes – No/Unsure – Not Applicable* to be ticked for each question
 4. A *smiley* to indicate if your prevention work is doing well with regard to each EDPQS *component*
- ☺ It is suggested that you tick the smiley if you answered (nearly) all questions (70-100%) with Yes. So, for example, if there are four questions regarding a particular EDPQS component, the smiley should be ticked if three or four questions were answered with Yes; if there are five questions, the smiley should be ticked if four or five questions were answered with Yes; and so on. If you considered an entire component Not Applicable, then the smiley is not ticked.

Tip: the option ‘Not applicable’ should only be ticked if appropriate. Users should beware of choosing this option too easily or too frequently, acknowledging instead that perhaps the Standard is applicable but not currently feasible.

Tip: The questions regarding components C (Staff development), 5.2 (Planning financial requirements) and 5.3 (Setting up the team) are identified (in blue colour) as recommended for service managers or regional team coordinators. If you are a front-line practitioner, you may need to skip these questions.

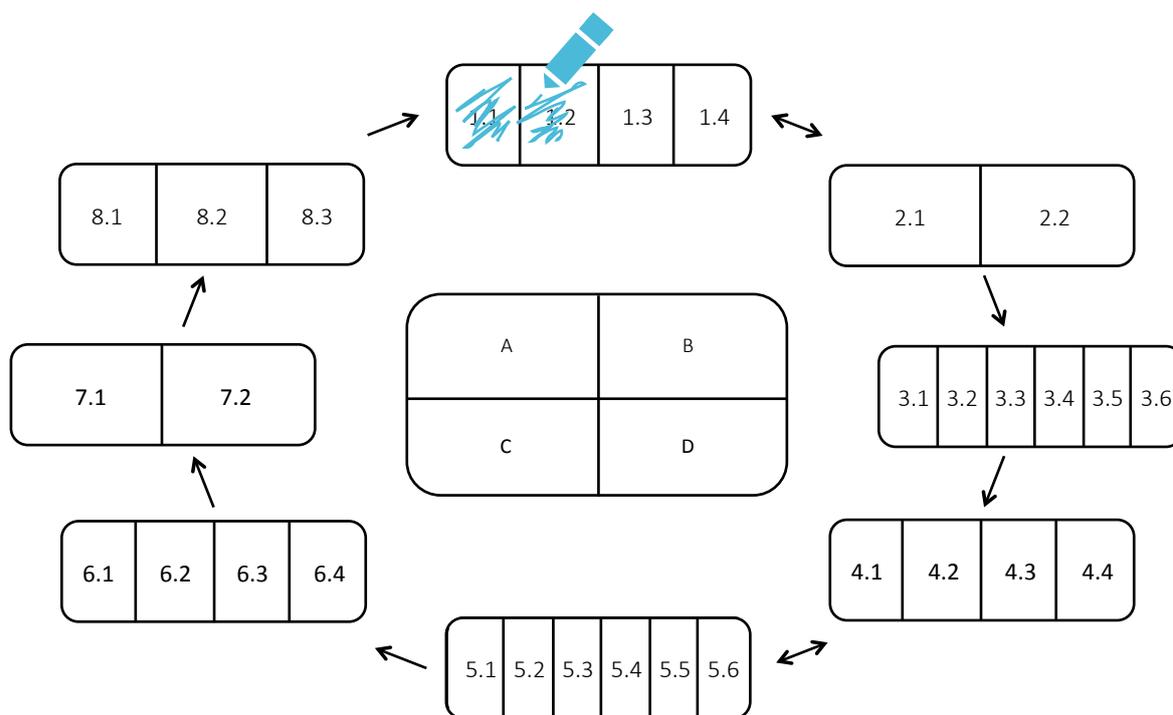
How to rate the EDPQS achievement of your prevention work

If you are using the electronic version of the Checklist you don't need to bother about the rating score of your prevention work. The computer will do the job for you.

If you are using a printed version of this Toolkit, you will have to create your own quality synthesis profile at the end of the self-assessment exercise. The completed profile will show how well your prevention work is doing in relation to the EDPQS, based on your answers to the Quality Assessment Checklist (*smileys*).

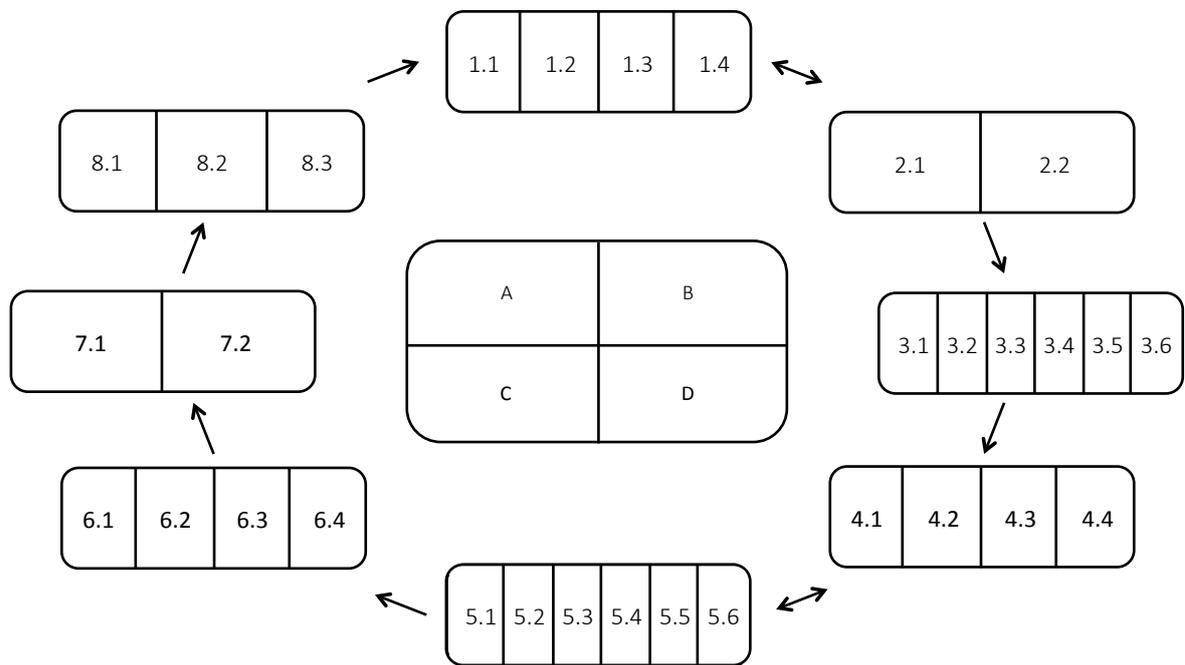
Just cross out the columns (components) in which you rated a 😊 score (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Project Cycle Synthesis Profile, example of written completion



You can print the following image of the Project Cycle Synthesis Profile (figure 7; overleaf) to calculate your score. A blank version is available to download from <http://prevention-standards.eu/toolkit-2/> . If you are using the electronic version of the checklist the computer will do the job for you.

Figure 7: Synthesis profile image



Take time to consider your Quality Synthesis profile and consider the following questions:

- What do you think of the result?
- Does this assessment represent what you expected?
- Are you surprised by any particular aspect?
- Are you satisfied with the answers given in the Quality Assessment Checklist (Step 1)?

When you feel ready, you may want to go through the second Step: consider the white columns at each stage of the project cycle synthesis profile and use the Improvement Support Checklist to consider the level of each identified weak component in some depth.

Using the Improvement Support Questionnaire

This Questionnaire uses the same chronological order as the project cycle.

A summary of the basic Standards at the *component* level appears at the top of the section of the Questionnaire.

It consists of three columns:

- 1. Issues to consider:** a few questions with respect to the specific Standards are addressed using *how*, *what*, *who*, etc. to help further reflection. The corresponding EDPQS standards are also shown for easy cross-referencing.
- 2. Notes on current situation:** this column allows you to comment on your work and to be explicit about possible obstacles or possibilities to achieve the standards.
- 3. Actions to take:** this column allows you to record actions and changes required to improve current efforts. Actions and changes should be realistic. However, it may also be useful to note longer-term actions and aims that can be tackled at a later point in time.

5. After the self-assessment: Action plan

The following table can be completed to record a summary of the outcomes from applying the Quality Assessment Checklist and Improvement Support Questionnaire.

SUMMARY OF SELF-ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY BASED ON THE EDPQS Review of own work in accordance with Standards:		
Self-assessment undertaken by:		
Self-assessment date:		
Next self-assessment date:		
Action plan		
Action to be taken: <i>Summary of action points:</i>	By whom?	By when?
Resource implications:		
Resources needed: <i>(e.g. what is required to take identified actions and how can it be obtained?)</i>	Available resources: <i>(e.g. what existing structures are available that can be built upon, existing networks that can be utilised, and available guidance?)</i>	

Additional guidance

European Drug Prevention Quality Standards (EDPQS)

The main web page about the EDPQS, including further toolkits, can be found at:
www.prevention-standards.eu

EMCDDA Best Practice Portal

The collection on effective approaches to prevention and other types of intervention by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA)
<http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/best-practice>

EMCDDA's Prevention and Evaluation Resources Kit (PERK)

To improve planning you will also find the EMCDDA's Prevention and Evaluation Resources Kit (PERK) helpful - <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/perk>

This tool compiles evidence-based prevention principles and promotes the notion that prevention planning and evaluation are interlinked. It provides a step-by-step guide that helps to determine whether a project is sound and well-designed.

UNODC International Standards on Drug Use Prevention

This resource published by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) summarises the currently available scientific evidence for policy-makers and practitioners. It describes interventions and policies that have been found to result in positive prevention outcomes and their characteristics, and identifies also those activities that are unlikely to produce positive outcomes.
<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/prevention/prevention-standards.html>

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References

- 1** Quality Standards: a benchmark that helps judge whether an activity, a provider, etc. represents high quality. Quality Standards are typically based upon professional consensus. Their main focus is on structural and procedural aspects of quality assurance, e.g. evaluation, staff composition and competencies, participant safety, etc. (Glossary for use with the European Drug Prevention Quality Standards- Appendix in EMCDDA Manual).
- 2** <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/best-practice>
- 3** To improve planning you should refer to the Prevention and Evaluation Resources Kit (PERK) – <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/perk> This tool compiles evidence based prevention principles and promotes the notion that prevention planning and evaluation are interlinked. It provides a step-by-step guide that helps to determine whether a project is sound and well-designed.

