

Concept Note

Risk- and Safety Management System

Self-Assessment for Tour Operator

Introduction

Risk and safety management is a vital element for the quality of travel products in the tourism industry. Travelers are more and more aware of risks associated with journeying to foreign countries and safety is an important criterion in their choice of destination. Additionally, feedback from tourists and their impressions about a country depend on how safe and comfortable the trip, journey or tour is. That's why international tour operators have become more and more demanding of safety practices from local suppliers of services. These service providers are expected to introduce and demonstrate rigorous safety management procedures. Risk and safety management therefore directly impacts customer satisfaction, business results and overall reputation.

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and international tour operator Explore Worldwide have joined forces in a strategic partnership to reinforce the safety skills of tour operators and their extended suppliers through a value chain approach¹. Technical assistance is provided to support awareness building, risk and safety skill-building, sharing of knowledge and provision of trainings to enhance operational safety standards. As part of this broader partnership project, GIZ is actively supporting tour operators in **setting up a comprehensive and systemized risk and safety management system**.

Risk- and safety management system

A risk and safety management system is a management system that focuses on ensuring safety of tourists/clients and staff by efficiently managing operational risks through leadership commitment, clearly defined responsibilities, roles, processes and procedures (e.g. SOPs, EPP, Incident Reporting), building capacity among staff with training; and monitoring of practices and results with objectives and targets. It is a system that is woven into the fabric of an organization, a system that becomes part of the organization and the way people do their jobs.

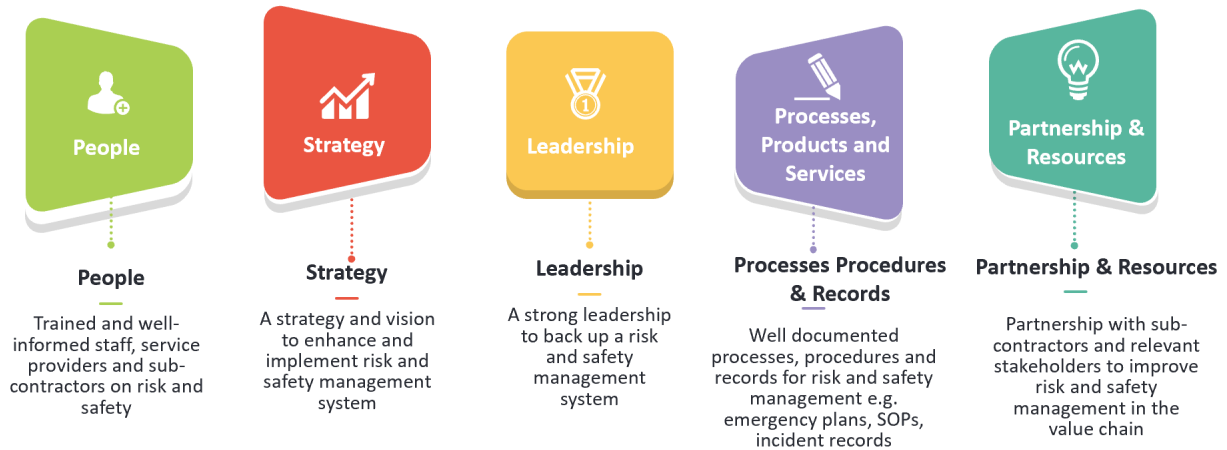
Such a system demands a holistic view on safety. When viewed through the lens of a quality management framework, namely the EFQM Excellence Modell from the European Foundation for Quality Management², the risk and safety management practices can be assessed and managed in a way to form a coherent system that is continually improved and delivers the intended strategy.

¹ The foundational belief of the value chain approach is, that in globalized markets the sustainability/competitiveness of firms is tied to the industries in which they participate (from input suppliers to clients; support markets that provide technical, business and financial services to the industry; the business environment in which the industry operates etc.). In this way, sustainability/competitiveness at the firm and industry level are interdependent. Increasing the sustainability/competitiveness of the firm is only effective when the sustainability/competitiveness of the industry is similarly raised by interventions at all levels of the value chain.

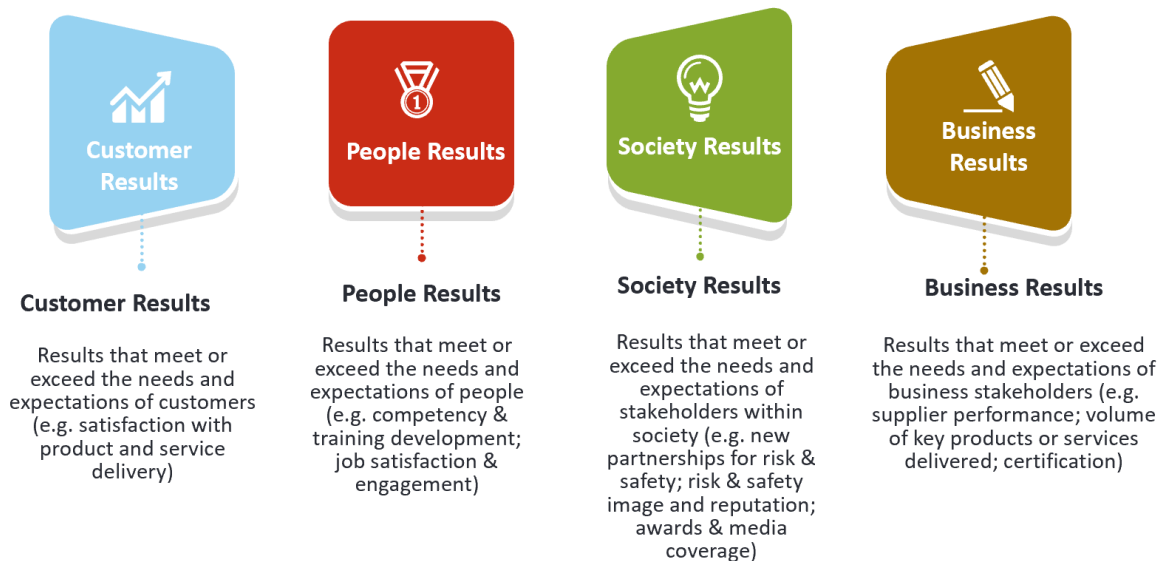
² <https://www.efqm.org/>

The framework of the EFQM Excellence Modell is based on cause and effect relationships between what the organization does (**Enablers**: Leadership; Strategy; People; Partnership and Resources; Processes, Procedures and Records) and the results it achieves (**Results**: Customer; People; Society; Business).

Enablers: What is the organization doing?



Results: Which results does the organization want to achieve?



The results need to be linked to key strategies and should clearly show that the organization is progressing. In this context, reliable data need to be collected to monitor if targets have been reached and if approaches and their deployment are effective and efficient. Thus, the overall system is cyclic and based on continuous improvement: organizations plan their approaches, deploy approaches, assess and refine approaches to achieve defined results.

Self-Assessment of risk and safety management system

Self-assessment allows organizations to individually assess advancement in terms of risk and safety management. The present self-assessment approach was especially developed for the tourism sector, in the forefront tour operators and aims to

- 1) **systematically assess and evaluate** the quality of organization's current risk and safety management system and practices, guided by a quality management framework, namely the EFQM Excellence Modell
- 2) **identify discrepancies** between the status quo and the desired state
- 3) **identify strategies** to improve risk and safety management for the operational activities of organizations

As a result, the self-assessment process allows organizations to recognise the desired risk and safety management system, gather evidence about the present system, and increase understanding on actions that are applicable to close the gap between the two. All three are a precondition to act. Thus, the main aim and output of the self-assessment is the **development of an Action and Monitoring Plan** to solve exposed gaps and improve the risk and safety management system and practices.

As the self-assessment process is led by organization's themselves, learning and reflection are encouraged and ownership for the risk and safety management system within the organization ensured.

Target group

The main target group for the self-assessment are tour operator. Additionally, other enterprises and organizations that are offering travel products, such as transport companies, accommodation facilities or associations and NGOs can use and benefit from the self-assessment.

Methodology

This section explains in detail the self-assessment process. It aims to ensure that users are sufficiently informed and equipped to successfully organize, carry-out and follow-up the self-assessment process.

The self-assessment process can be divided into 3 phases: Preparation Phase; Self-assessment; Follow-up. Although the self-assessment phase is the main concern of this note, all three phases are equally important: a good preparation is key for the process, and the whole self-assessment phase is only useful if actions are taken afterwards.

Preparation phase

Select the core team: At the start of the self-assessment process, organization's need to select the key staff managing the self-assessment process. A clear definition of roles and responsibilities, ways of working as well as adequate time resources dedicated to these tasks will be decisive.

Complete the online training course "Risk Management": It is highly recommended that the core team completes the online training and assignments per course: The online training provides an introduction and broad overview on risk management, ensures familiarity with the overall system, its components, terms and the process overall. The course is free of charge and accessible after a short and easy registration on the website <https://www.riskmanagement4tourism.org/project/risk-management-online-training>

Ensure involvement of key staff and departments: A successful risk and safety management system demands participation and collaboration of various departments, teams and staff. During the whole self-assessment process and especially when developing the Action and Monitoring Plan, a broad participation and involvement will be decisive. As a minimum, the following departments should be involved and available during the self-assessment process:

- CEO/Top management
- Sales/booking department
- Operational department
- Insurance department
- Transport department
- Quality management/control
- Training department

Organizations are advised to engage staff and departments early in the process.

Self-assessment

Self-assessment checklist: The self-assessment checklist is the main document that guides the self-assessment process. The checklist provides organizations with a systematic approach that assesses current practices related to each building block of an efficient risk and safety management system (1. Leadership & Strategy; 2. Identification of risks and hazards; 3. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs); 4. Emergency Preparedness; 5. Incident Records; 6. Action Plan; 7. Staff training; 8. Monitor; 9. Continuous Improvement).

Each of these building block comprises questions to assess the level and quality of current practices. For each question, 'Yes', 'No' or 'Not Applicable' options can be selected by scrolling down from the 'Answer' column. Additional guidance on what do assess and how to improve current practices, procedures and records is provided in the 'guidelines' and 'recommended action' columns.

It is recommended that organizations provide a brief explanation (see column Explanation and supporting evidence) for each question, particularly for the questions that are answered with 'Yes'. The questions that are answered with 'No' demonstrate the gap areas. In that case, organizations are advised to follow 'recommended actions'.

Action and Monitoring Plan: Developing an action and monitoring plan to address gap areas and continuously improve the risk and safety management system is the overall aim of the self-assessment. A template (see sheet: Action-Monitoring Plan) that is aligned with the self-assessment checklist is provided.

It is advised to develop the Action and Monitoring Plan covering actions and targets over a timespan of at least 2 tourism seasons.

Consult the website and use existing guidance, resources and tools: Throughout the self-assessment process, organizations are advised to consult <https://www.riskmanagement4tourism.org/>. Besides providing the online-training course “risk management online training”, the website offers background information, tools (e.g. risk assessment matrix) and examples (e.g. of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), Emergency Preparedness Plan(s), Incident Reporting forms). All accessible free of charge.

Follow-up

Implementation of the Action and Monitoring Plan: Once the self-assessment process is finalized and an Action and Monitoring Plan is available, organizations need to focus on planning and implementation. Clear roles and responsibilities and the mobilization of adequate human and financial resources will be decisive.

Organizations that have finalized the self-assessment process can request technical assistance from GIZ. As a first step, organizations are required to send the filled-in self-assessment checklist as well as the developed Action and Monitoring Plan to riskmanagement4tourism@gmail.com. Further steps, guidance and support will be planned individually.