



Member States Report
on the Implementation
of the
Work Programme
2008-2009

Second ENQA-VET Survey



Table of contents

Foreword	4
Executive Summary	6
Introduction	8-9
Background and purpose	8
Process and Method	8
Response to the Survey	9
Chapter 1:	
Introduction and background information about national approaches to quality assurance in VET	10-12
1.1 Participating national authorities	10-12
1.2 VET governance in participating countries	12
Chapter 2:	
National VET policies developments in quality assurance	13-17
2.1 Introduction	13-14
2.2 European policy developments and reviews regarding quality assurance	14-17
2.3 Key findings on policy developments among countries participation in the Survey	17-18
Chapter 3:	
Policy Area of quality assurance improvements for VET and the implementation of EQARF.....	19-33
3.1 Introduction	19
3.2 European improvements in quality assurance: outcomes based approach	19-21
3.3 European improvements in quality assurance: role of stakeholders	21-25
3.4 European improvements in quality assurance: labour market and vulnerable groups	25-29
3.5 Implementation of the EQARF.....	29-30
3.6 Key findings on quality assurance improvements and the implementation of the EQARF	32-33
Chapter 4:	
Dissemination on information and the establishment of the Quality Assurance National Reference Points (QANRPs)	34-42
4.1 Establishment of QANRPs	34-37
4.2 Dissemination and promotion of ENQA-VET's work among countries	37-40
4.3 Links with Higher Education	40-42
4.4 Key findings on dissemination of information and the establishment of QANRPs	42
Chapter 5:	
Findings and Conclusion	43-45
5.1 Key findings	43-45
5.2 Conclusions	45
References	46-53
Annex 1: Country abbreviations.....	47
Annex 1: Survey 2009	48-53

List of tables, figures and boxes

Tables

Table 1.1 General information about participating institution	11
Table 1.2 Institutions primary domain	12
Table 2.2.1 Policy developments on quality assurance for VET since January 2008	15
Table 3.2.1 Areas of policy developments	20
Table 3.3.1 Stakeholders involvement	22
Table 3.3.2 Break down of stakeholders	23
Table 3.3.3 Types of relevant stakeholders	24
Table 3.4.1 Introduction of initiatives to encourage employers to provide opportunities for updating the knowledge and skills of the workforce	26
Table 3.4.2 Methodology used to encourage input from the representatives of the labour market	27
Table 3.4.3 Introduction of initiatives to encourage disadvantaged groups to participate in training and/or other forms of lifelong learning (LLL)	28
Table 3.4.4 Methodology used to encourage disadvantaged groups to participate in training and/or other forms of lifelong learning	29
Table 3.5.1 Implementation of EQARF among participating countries	30
Table 3.5.2 Implementation of EQARF among participating countries 2008 compared to 2009	30
Table 3.5.3 Methodology for implementing the EQARF among participating countries	31
Table 4.1.1 Establishment of QANRPS among participating countries	34
Table 4.1.2 Year of QANRPS establishment among participating countries	35
Table 4.1.3 Method of QANRPs' establishment among participating countries	36
Table 4.1.4 Collaboration with QANRP	37
Table 4.1.5 Collaboration between ENQA-VET and QANRPs, 2008 compared to 2009	37
Table 4.2.1 Promotion of ENQA-VET among participating countries	38
Table 4.2.2 Promotion of ENQA-VET, 2008 compared to 2009	39
Table 4.2.3 Promotion of ENQA-VET among participating countries	40
Table 4.3.1 Development of links between quality assurance in VET and HE	40
Table 4.3.2 Development of links between quality assurance in VET and HE 2008 compared to 2009.....	41
Table 4.3.3 How institutions are linking quality assurance in VET and HE	42

Figures

Figure 2.2.1 Policy developments on quality assurance for VET since January 2008	16
Figure 2.2.3 Distribution of policy developments in quality assurance across countries	17
Figure 3.3.1 Distribution of the areas of policy developments among countries	20
Figure 3.3.2 Stakeholders involvement	23
Figure 3.3.3 Number of relevant stakeholders among countries.....	25
Figure 4.1.2 Year of QANRPS establishment among participating countries	35

Boxes

Box 2.2.1 Country example: institutional reforms	16
Box 2.2.2 The category specified under "other" includes	16
Box 3.2.1 The category specified under "other" includes	20
Box 3.3.2 The category specified under "other" includes	23
Box 3.4.1 The category specified under "other" includes	27
Box 3.4.2 Country example: Methodology used to encourage input from the representative of the labour market	28
Box 3.4.4 The category specified under "other" includes.....	29
Box 3.5.3 The category specified under "other" includes.....	31
Box 4.2.1 The category specified under "other" includes.....	39
Box 4.3.3 The category specified under "other" includes.....	42

Foreword

European quality assurance for vocational education and training (VET) has developed significantly since 2002 when education Ministers of 31 European Countries, social partners and the Commission endorsed the *Copenhagen Declaration* which set the basis for European cooperation in VET. The Copenhagen Declaration set up the so called 'Copenhagen Process', which is reviewed every two years, i.e. the so denominated Maastricht Communiqué (2004), Helsinki Communiqué (2006) and the Bordeaux Communiqué (2008).

As a part of this process, the European Network on Quality Assurance in VET (ENQA-VET) was established by the European Commission in October 2005 to support the implementation of the above Declaration. The main purpose of the Network is mutual learning and consensus building on quality assurance and to create a structured and sustainable platform for Member countries to exchange information, experience and debate.

A major step in the Copenhagen Process was taken with the adoption of Europass, which aims to establish common principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning, the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the European Credit system for VET (ECVET) and the European Reference Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQARF). The EQARF was developed to address the need for common understanding of quality assurance in European VET and achieve effective and efficient VET provision to meet the evolving needs of society, the economy and individuals while fostering trust, transparency and labour mobility across Europe.

These common tools and methodologies have encouraged and influenced policy change and are having a growing impact on quality assurance procedures across Member States' VET systems¹.

The current Progress Report shows evidence of the growing importance of quality assurance in the VET sector. Significant levels of legislative initiatives which underpin quality assurance policy development and implementation and a specific focus on how to ensure implementation of the new EQARF are driving forces in this process. Participation in ENQA-VET, the European Network for Quality Assurance in VET, has also been a catalyst for advancing in this process.

The work undertaken within the context of the ENQA-VET work programme 2008-2009 has mobilised key specialists and policymakers across Europe. This collaboration, involving exchange of experiences and perspectives on important issues of shared concern has enabled participants to share experiences, discuss examples of practice and engage in a genuine process of policy learning.

The process has been underpinned by the key supporting role played by the ENQA-VET Board and Secretariat but also the valuable input of the scientific advisors who have played an important role in the advancement of our work in quality assurance. The presence of the colleagues from ETF and CEDEFOP has enabled the Network to position its work in the context of what is happening in VET across systems at EU level and in the pre-accession and neighbouring countries.

¹ Reviewing the priorities and strategies of the Copenhagen Process: Maastricht Communiqué (2004), Helsinki Communiqué (2006) and Bordeaux Communiqué (2008).

CEDEFOP, in particular, through its research and publications, has provided invaluable thematic support across a broad range of the Network's activities. This has been of particular importance in the work of the thematic groups, the preparation of the specifications for the studies and the preparation of the peer learning activities.

The present report updates the findings of the first ENQA-VET survey report on the implementation of its work programme 2008-2009 and considers the main national developments since then. In addition, the report looks at the impact that ENQA-VET has had on these developments.

The results of this survey offer a valuable insight into quality assurance procedures and policy developments in VET across Europe, which will contribute to further future discussion on quality assurance in Europe.

Executive Summary

Objectives of the report

Member States are required to submit regular reports to the ENQA-VET Secretariat in order to update information on their participation in the Network activities and the impact of the establishment of ENQA-VET on VET system in Europe. For this purpose, ENQA-VET has conducted a new survey, which collected information on policy developments in Member States concerning quality assurance in VET up to 2009.

The present report collates and analyses responses from 23 European countries providing an update on the survey undertaken in 2008 by the ENQA-VET Secretariat as a part of its mandate mentioned above.

The present progress report differs from the previous one in so far as it aims to move from a mere gathering of information about quality assurance developments and initiatives in VET across EU, to conduct a more analytical approach and a comprehensive description of quality assurance procedures/developments. The objective is to assess if ENQA-VET has impacted on VET policies developed by national systems since 2008. The assessment of this impact is difficult to grasp as very often policy actions depend on particular national operational contexts.

This progress report takes, as starting point, the description of quality assurance policy developments in countries participating in the Survey, with the objective of increasing understanding of these processes and their contexts in order to provide a base from which further action might be considered.

Findings

Chapter 1 identifies the responding institutions and position of those responding and their countries. This shows the degree to which those involved in the completion of the Survey have prominent roles and responsibilities in the national context or have the capacity to advise those who address critical factors for implementation. The analysis of the level at which national quality assurance responsibilities are held within a country shows some interesting patterns: no countries conduct quality assurance policy for VET solely at a regional level. Three-quarters of responding countries are doing so at national level, the rest of the countries do so at a combination of both national and regional level.

Chapter 2 provides details on national VET policy developments in quality assurance among Member States participating in the Survey (since January 2008). The analysis of the responses shows that major progress has been made towards EU convergence in methods and procedures despite national institutions/systems, varying priorities and/or cultural/contextual needs and traditions. One significant finding in this Chapter indicates that, within a two year period, countries have introduced significant changes in their VET system, with quality assurance implications. ENQA-VET has contributed to these policy developments by using policy learning methodology and focusing on supporting national improvements in quality, efficiency and effectiveness of VET, making it more responsive to socio-economic needs -which are the main motives for countries in implementing and reforming legislation concerning VET. The main challenge ahead is the ability to sustain and move forward this process.

Chapter 3 is concerned with the policy area of those policy developments regarding quality assurance. A very rich source of data illustrates the increasing extent to which

countries are shifting to outcome-based learning, involving stakeholders and improving employability and social inclusion of VET provision. All of this contributes to and supports the implementation of the EQARF, EQF and ECVET. It also shows that the large majority of countries have supported the implementation of the EQARF model by adapting it to the requirements of the national context. This demonstrates that the EQARF is a flexible instrument that it can be served as a 'tool box'². The Chapter concludes that these quality assurance policy improvements are to a large extent influenced and guided by EU dimension of quality assurance initiatives undertaken by ENQA-VET.

Chapter 4 focuses on the dissemination of information and increasing awareness and understanding of quality assurance among ENQA-VET member countries. It also covers the extent to which countries have developed links between quality assurance in VET and in Higher Education (HE). Evidence suggests that countries are a) actively promoting ENQA-VET; b) successfully establishing the national quality assurance reference points (QANRPs); and c) increasingly cooperating with the QANRPs. The analysis shows that among countries participating in the Survey there is a causal relationship between the occurrence of b) and c) and ENQA-VET membership. In relation to the developments of links between VET and HE, the responses suggests that in comparison to 2008 there is a significant increase of cooperation between the two institutions but further work is needed in this area.

Final Conclusions

Overall, evidence suggests that ENQA-VET has achieved the objectives determined in its work programme 2008-2009, which implies that ENQA-VET has played a crucial role in the establishment and recognition of EU policy developments and initiatives in VET in relation to quality assurance among Member States.

² Ján Figel (the European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth) *European Parliament debate on EQARF/ECVET*, December 2008 (www.europarl.europa.eu).

Introduction

Background and purpose

The Bordeaux Communiqué, the most recent review of the Copenhagen Process emphasised the importance *of collaborating in the establishment of the common quality assurance reference framework (EQARF) and participating actively in ENQA-VET* in order to achieve excellence and quality of VET, foster attractiveness, build confidence in national systems, increase labour mobility and links between VET and the labour market by regularly evaluating, monitoring and improving on the basis of evidence³.

There is need to assess ENQA-VET's contribution to embedding a culture of quality assurance and promoting the EQARF (European Quality Assurance Reference Framework) in European VET systems. The evaluation of this contribution is the purpose of this progress report.

The first ENQA-VET survey was undertaken in September 2008: 17 countries participated in the online survey using the SurveyMonkey electronic tool for web-based questionnaires. This survey addressed VET quality assurance practices in the EU countries among ENQA-VET members. The survey findings were published in the Network website⁴ which for the first time detailed the policy developments in quality assurance in VET in ENQA-VET member countries.

The Survey for 2009 addresses, broadly speaking, the same issues as the 2008, i.e. levels of policy developments in relation to quality assurance and the implementation on the EQARF, including the establishment of QANRPs, and links between quality assurance developments in VET and higher education (HE).

The results of this survey will form a substantive part of the final report which ENQA-VET must prepare for the European Commission at the end of the current contractual period.

The progress report goals are:

1. to update the 2008 survey
2. to assess the role of ENQA-VET in policy developments/improvements in relation to quality assurance in VET system across Europe
3. to have a better insight into how the ENQA-VET work programme 2008-2009⁵ has influenced the introduction of new legislation for VET among participating Member States
4. to gather on progress on national quality assurance frameworks on adaptation of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQARF) and
5. to survey Member States' attitudes towards the establishment of National Quality Assurance Reference Points (QANRPs) as part of a broader dissemination strategy which should facilitate a synergy/converge process toward EU's goals.

Process and Method

The project was divided into three phases: firstly, the ENQA-VET Secretariat in conjunction with the Board designed and developed the second ENQA-VET survey

³ Ministers for vocational education and training: *Bordeaux Communiqué*; Bordeaux, November 2008.

⁴ www.engavet.eu

⁵ ENQA-VET work programme 2008-2009, December 2009 at www.engavet.eu

(attached as an annex in the report). The Survey was distributed among ENQA-VET member countries as a Word-Office document on 26 May 2009 with a response deadline of 31 July 2009. The Survey had to be completed collaboratively by the country representative in ENQA-VET and an appropriate representative of the relevant Ministry(ies) in each country. This ensured that the gathered information on national progress in quality assurance was relevant and up to date.

The second phase involved preliminary statistical analysis of the responses. The third phase involved the final analysis and the production of the present report by the ENQA-VET Secretariat.

Response to the Survey

The Survey was largely based on the survey undertaken in 2008. It updates the former in order to reflect the relevant developments since then, including the establishment of the EQARF and the designation of the QANRP as a pre-condition for the successful implementation/national adaptations of the reference framework among Member States.

The Survey addresses three issues:

- A) Level of policy development in relation to quality assurance among Member States and the implementation of the EQARF/CQAF
- B) Member State actions relating to the dissemination of information, including the collaboration with the Quality Assurance National Reference Point (QANRP) in each country.
- C) Links between quality assurance developments in VET and higher education.

In order to gather relevant and pertinent information, the Survey required collaborative input from representative of the appropriate national authority and ENQA-VET member.

The Survey was completed by 26 institutions representing 23 countries (Cyprus sent two responses reflecting the Ministry of Education and Culture's perspective and ENQA-VET member perspective, from Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus. Italy sent three different responses of Part D and C, completed separately by the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Education and ISFOL - Istituto per lo Sviluppo della Formazione Professionale dei Lavoratori, ENQA-VET member).

Bulgaria did not participate in 2008 Survey as it is not currently member of ENQA-VET. However, because it has taken part actively in the Network activities, it is important to assess the impact of its participation in the country's policy development in quality assurance for VET.

Therefore, the 2009 survey covered a significantly wider distribution than the previous one, which was completed by 21 institutions from 17 Member States.

Chapter 1:

Introduction and background information about national approaches to quality assurance in VET

General information about the 23 countries participating in the Survey is presented in Tables 1.1 and 1.2.

1.1 Participating national authorities

Table 1.1 provides the name/s of the national authority institution/s of those involved in the completion of the survey; it also presents the title, function or position held by those responding.

The name of the institutions and functions in the table are reproduced as they were written by those who responded to the Survey. Therefore, some of these are named by their national names while others have been translated into English.

Table 1.1 shows that, in most cases, those involved in the completion of the survey have prominent roles and responsibilities at national level or have the capacity to advise those who address critical factors for implementation in the national context.

It also shows that the institutions responding are public authorities.

It also illustrates that there are four groups under which responses can be described:

- a) only one person has completed the survey;
- b) different representatives with different roles from the same institution have responded collaboratively;
- c) various people with different roles from different national institutions have answered the survey in a collaborative manner; and
- d) various people with different roles from different institutions within the country have answered the survey differently (i.e. Cyprus and Italy⁶).

While cases a) and b) are easy to explain, cases c) and d) required more attention. Almost half, 35 per cent, of responses belong to groups c) and d) –AT, CY, FI, IE, IT, NL, RO, SI-.

The responses provided by these two groups appear to indicate a homogeneous perspective within the national system on developments in quality assurance for VET. So, when a different answer for the same question is provided by different institutions within a country, it seems to be the result of the specific scope and responsibilities held by the individual in her/his organisation.

However, in other instances the different answers to a same question appear to suggest that different national institutions responsible for quality assurance in VET do not share the same vision or VET policy strategy.

This last situation seems to illustrate how VET policies have to consider the complex interdependence between economic, social and educational aspects.

⁶ This last instance reflects the different institutional role of the organisations responding the survey within common national policies and strategies for quality assurance.

Table 1.1 General information about participating institutions

NAME OF THE INSTITUTION INVOLVED IN THE SURVEY	COUNTRY	FUNCTION
-Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture -Head of College for Engineering, Steyr -Austrian Reference Point for QA in VET	Austria (AT)	-Head of Research, Quality and Development in VET -Head of VET college -Head of QANRP
-Ministry of Education and Science	Bulgaria (BG)	-Chief Expert
-Ministry of Education and Culture -Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus	Cyprus (CY)	-Chief Education Officer -Senior Human Resource Officer
-National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education	Czech Republic (CZ)	-Expert of QA in VET
-Ministry of Education	Denmark (DK)	-Senior Adviser
-Ministry of Education and Research	Estonia (EE)	-Head of Vocational Division
-Ministry of Education -Finnish National Board of Education	Finland (FI)	-Counsellor of Education -Counsellor of Education
-Hessisches Kulturministerium	Germany (DE)	-Leitender Ministerialrat
-National Institute of Vocational and Adult Education -National Institute of Vocational and Adult Education	Hungary (HU)	-Head of International Relations -Senior Quality Expert
-Department of Educations and Science -Further Education and Training Awards Council	Ireland (IE)	-Principal Officer -Director of Awards and Standard
-Ministero Dell'Istruzione -Ministero of Labour -ISFOL	Italy (IT)	-Ispettore -Researcher Officer -Director of Research
-Methodological Centre for VET	Lithuania (LT)	-Head of VET Information Unit
-Ministere de l'Education nationale et de la Formation professionnelle	Luxembourg (LU)	-Pédagogue - Chargée de Mission
-Malta Qualification Council -Malta Qualification Council	Malta (MT)	-Chief Executive -Senior Manager Standards and Qualification
- Ministry of Education Culture and Science - Association of VET Colleges	Netherlands (NL)	- Policy Officer, Directorate of VET - Advisor Strategy and Education
-Norwegian Directorate For Education and Training	Norway (NO)	-Adviser
-Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity	Portugal (PT)	-Deputy Director for Employment, Vocational Training and VET Providers Accreditation System
- Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection		- Deputy Director of the Dept. for Employment
- National Centre for the Development of Initial VET - National Council for Adult Vocational Training	Romania (RO)	-QA Expert - Director of the Project Implementation Unit
-Ministry of Education and Sport -National Institute for VET -National Institute for VET	Slovenia (SI)	-Senior Counsellor in Educational Development Office -Head of Dept. for Research and Development Strategies -Counsellor in Educational Development Office
-State Institute of Vocational Education	Slovakia (SK)	-Department of International Cooperation
-Ministry of Education -Ministry of Education	Spain (ES)	-Deputy Directorate of Guidance VET -Education Technical Adviser
-Swedish National Agency for Education	Sweden (SW)	-Director of Education
-Learning and Skills Improvement Service	United Kingdom (UK)	-Executive Director, Development Programmes

1.2 VET governance in participating countries

The responses revealed that most quality assurance policies for VET in Member Countries are conducted at national level. It also shows that there is no “pure” decentralised model among respondents as VET policy tends not to be conducted *only* at regional level.

Table 1.2 provides an overview of at which level VET policy is conducted in Member States participating in the Survey.

Table 1.2 Institutions primary domain

PRIMARY DOMAIN	Response count	Response percentages	Countries
Regional	0	0%	–
National	17	74%	CY, CZ, DK, EE, FI, HU, IE, LT, LU, NL, MT, NO, PT, RO, SI, SW, UK
Both	6	26%	AT, BG, DE, ES, IT, SK

Table 1.2 shows that some countries (26 per cent) have delegated responsibilities to regional/local level. In some, countries this move may be motivated by:

- a) the principle that states that regionally/locally-based decision-making is more effective and tailored to regional/local needs;
- b) the federal structure of a country, which requires liaison with autonomous regional/states within the national territory.

In some cases this means that the State defines the overall education/VET strategy and provides broad guidelines -through legislation, funding, curricula and qualification frameworks- while regional institutions are given discretion on the practical arrangements for VET provision, such as training offer/content, selection of target groups, staff recruitment or independent budgetary decisions⁷.

In these circumstances, regional institutions are granted more flexibility in generating their own funding and in allocating funds according to their specific needs.

In these instances, the Survey does not go far enough to allow a deeper analysis to assess how national policy-making and control and local implementation and decision-making are articulated regarding quality assurance for VET within the country. Further research is needed in this area in order to assess how EU policies and activities of European networks (such as ENQA-VET) have an impact and are implemented regionally and locally.

It is worthwhile remarking that in decentralised governance systems quality assurance is crucially important in order to ensure transparency and accountability.

⁷ CEDEFOP: *Continuity, consolidation and change. Towards a European era of VET*; Luxembourg 2009.

Chapter 2: National VET policy developments in quality assurance

2.1 Introduction

Quality assurance in European VET systems has developed significantly since the European Council Resolution of 19 December 2002 on European Cooperation in VET⁸. The developments have been both organisational and structural and have modified the role and relevance of quality assurance for VET.

The Council Recommendation of 2002 highlighted the need for European cooperation, which had proved to be a lever for promoting quality improvement in VET. The Council recognised that this cooperation has facilitated the exchange of experiences, mutual learning and consensus-building in common principles, guidelines and tools for quality development. It also stressed the need for European common points of reference (such as EQF, EQARF, ECVET and Europass) to ensure transparency, consistency and portability of qualifications between the many streams of development across Europe, thereby facilitating mutual trust and mobility in a borderless lifelong learning perspective. All of this should happen without infringing the Member States' autonomy in the governance of their VET systems.

Based on these European general goals, the ENQA-VET work programme⁹, drawing on the principles of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC), provides support to member countries to work together towards the achievement of common priorities and objectives and build a shared understanding of quality assurance and developments among key stakeholders (social partners, regulatory/national authorities and providers). The key objectives of ENQA-VET are to:

- 1) Contribute to European policy developments and reviews regarding quality assurance;
- 2) Support the introduction and implementation of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF);
- 3) Build sustainable European cooperation and exchange of good practice in quality assurance in VET within and among member countries and between VET organisations and other key stakeholders;
- 4) Build sustainable European cooperation and exchange of good practice in quality assurance by creating links/bridges between VET and higher education to further development and support to the entire education and training system in the EU;
- 5) Promote the effective use of communications to increase awareness and understanding of quality assurance, the Network and its activities.

This chapter examines the first objective of ENQA-VET outlined above. It analyses the current state of development of ENQA-VET members (plus Bulgaria) as perceived by national institutions responsible for quality assurance in national VET systems.

It also assesses the causal relationship between the activities developed by ENQA-VET, described in its work programme 2008-2009, and the various developments undertaken by Member States participating in the Survey in relation to objective one.

⁸ Council Resolution (19 December 2002, JO 2003/C 13/02) and Declaration (adopted in Copenhagen on 29 and 30 November 2002) of the European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training on the Promotion of Enhanced European Co-operation in VET.

⁹ ENQA-VET work programme 2008-2009; December 2007 at www.engavet.eu

It is worth noting that this assessment –the role the ENQA-VET’s work programme 2008-2009 has played in EU developments regarding quality assurance in VET- is done irrespectively of the different structures and functions of VET systems in which national institutions operate.

However, every institution operates in the context of its national VET system, even within the individual institutions’ boundaries, very often determined by culture and traditions.

This means that even though there is some convergence in European quality assurance processes in which the analysis can be generalised, there are limitations to which the results and impacts of the ENQA-VET work programme 2008-2009 on the diversified systems and national strategies for VET can be assessed.

2.2 European policy developments and reviews regarding quality assurance

The ENQA-VET work programme 2008-2009 was designed to foster common guidelines, criteria, instruments and indicators for quality assurance, involving all relevant stakeholders across and within Member States. The work programme was also designed to act as a communication anchor for the EQARF Recommendation among key national stakeholders.

The work programme proposed a range of type of activities which were essential in ensuring that the Member States and the European Commission are supported to implement the EQARF Recommendation in a way which embeds a culture of quality assurance throughout the EU.

The methodology used for ENQA-VET’s activities was based on policy learning methods, which use knowledge sharing, exchange of good practices and cooperation on relevant policy issues, which are aimed to stimulate decision making policy, policy developments and/or policy formulation in Member States participating in the activities¹⁰.

These activities were focused on finding the best guidelines and experiences to improve quality, efficiency and effectiveness of VET, thereby making it more responsive to labour market and societal needs (principles inspired by the EQARF Recommendation). In this way, the ENQA-VET work programme has addressed an essential aspect of policy development in countries as improving quality, efficiency, effectiveness and responsiveness to socio-economic needs are the main motives for implementing and reforming legislation concerning VET in countries¹¹.

Table 2.2.1 below illustrates the dynamic process of implementing national quality assurance measurements among Member States participating in the Survey since the implementation of the ENQA-VET work programme 2008-2009.

¹⁰There is a shared understanding among academics of policy learning as an instrument for policy change. Moreover “for Raffae and Spours, policy learning has an impact not only on the policies themselves but also on the way they are designed. It is hard to identify or quantify how much policy change is due to policy learning. However, I would argue that the evidence on how it changes the way policy is made is much clearer”; ETF: Yearbook 2008, *Policy Learning in Action*; Italy 2008.

¹¹ CEDEFOP: *Continuity, consolidation and change. Towards a European era of VET*; Luxemburg 2009.

Table 2.2.1 Policy developments on quality assurance for VET since January 2008

POLICY DEVELOPMENT ON QA FOR VET, 2008-2009	Response count	Response percentages	Countries
Development of a national framework of QA	10*	44%	DE, EE, FI, IE, LT, NL, RO, SI, SK, UK
Introduction of new legislation, development, review and/or reform of VET national system relating to QA	14	61%	DK, FI, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, NL, PT, RO, SI, SK, SW, UK
Use of quality indicators for VET	11*	48%	AT, DE, DK, ES, FI, MT, NL, PT, RO, SI, UK
Development of VET national-standards aligned with EU standards and guidelines	11	48%	CZ, DE, ES, HU, IT, LU, NL, PT, RO, SI, SK
Introduction of EQF	16	70%	AT, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, IE, LT, LU, MT, NL, NO, PT, RO, SI, SK
Introduction of ECVET	8	35%	AT, CZ, DE, FI, IE, LU, NL, SI
Other	9	39%	AT, BG, CY, EE, FI, IE, LT, MT, NO
None	0	0%	–

*Malta will do it at the end of 2009

*EE uses indicators before 2008

As shown in table 2.2.1 above, all countries have made remarkable progress in national policy developments concerning quality since 2008 -no country participating in the Survey reported no action taken since 2008-:

- More than 60 per cent of countries reported having introduced new legislation and new developments and/or reviewed/amended/reformed the existing legislation in relation to quality assurance of their national VET systems.
- Almost 50 per cent of countries have used quality indicators for VET (48 per cent).
- Almost 50 per cent (44 per cent) of reporting countries have developed a national framework for quality assurance¹².

In relation to the **European dimension** of policy developments/improvements for VET, the figures are more significant. Countries were asked to report on the implementation of common European measurements designed to support continuous improvement of the quality and governance of national VET systems (i.e. EQF or ECVET), the results are:

- 70 per cent of institutions responding have introduced the European Framework of Qualification (EQF) or designed a National Framework of Qualification aligned to the former.
- 11 out of 23 countries, i.e. almost 50 per cent of participating countries, have developed VET national standards in line with European standards and guidelines.

¹² According to the ENQA-VET Peer Learning Activity held in Malta 2009, these developments are, in the majority of countries participating in the activity, focused on the EQARF. ENQA-VET Peer learning activity *On the Impact of EQARF*; Malta, May 2009 at <http://www.engavet.eu/policy-briefings.html>

- 35 per cent (i.e. 8 countries out of 23) have reported that they have already introduced the European Credit system for VET (ECVET).

Box 2.2.1 Country example: institutional reforms

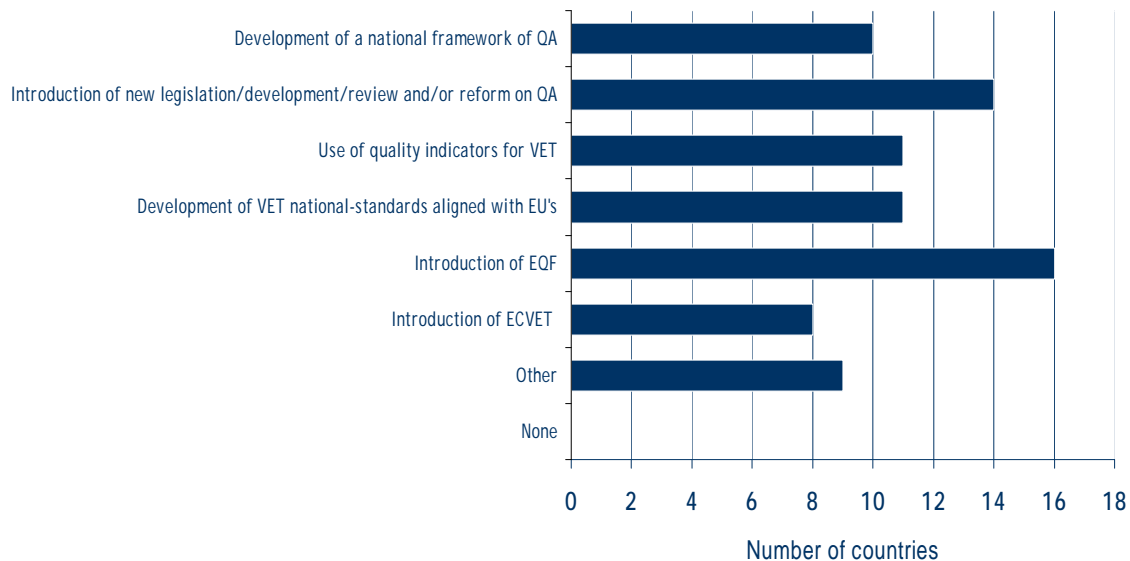
Estonia: Standard for vocational education and training is in force since 2006. In 2009 it was amended to reflect the learning outcomes methodology of the national qualifications framework and EQF.

Between 2008 and 2009 44 national curricula were approved according to educational standards in VET.

A new national qualification framework was set up by a new legislative act: the old 5-level qualifications framework has been replaced with a new 8-level framework in line with the EQF-

Figure 2.2.1 below illustrates the dynamic process of policy developments across Member States participating in the Survey.

Figure 2.2.1 Policy developments on quality assurance for VET since January 2008



Box 2.2.2 The category specified under “other” includes

Cyprus: System for Assessment and Certification of Training Providers (2008-2009): The system involves stakeholders and it has been designed by the Human Resource Development Authority. The system defines the criteria and the procedures for the assessment and certification of training providers and trainers, which aims to improve quality assurance and effectiveness of the training provision

Finland: The recommendations for quality assurance in VET has been signed by the Minister for Education in 2008 and the development of a strategy for Quality management in VET is about to start

Lithuania: A programme for the improvement of resources for practical training was approved and its implementation has started. The programme foresees further development of VET quality assurance system at national and provider levels

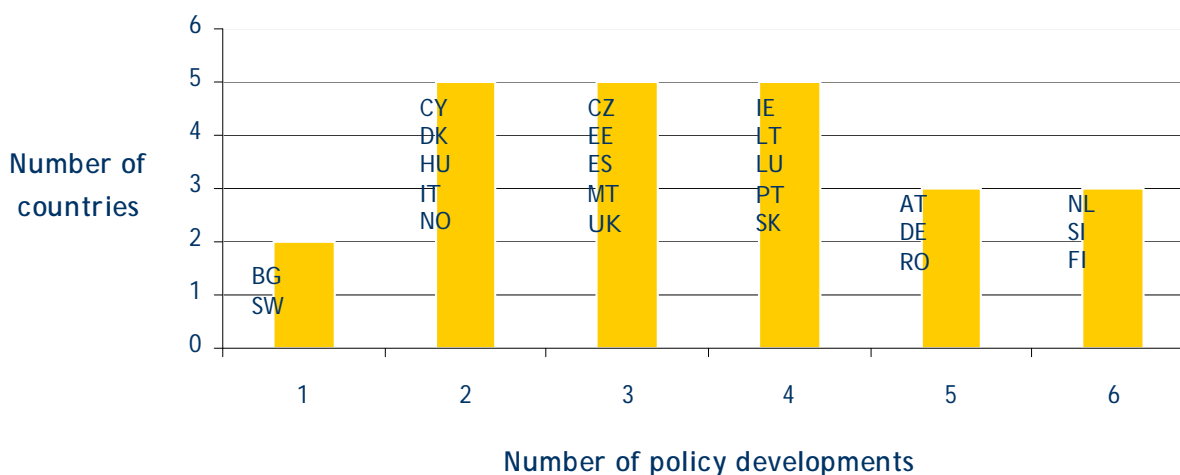
In general terms it is therefore possible to record that ENQA-VET Member States have seen a significant level of policy developments, including legislative initiatives on quality assurance for VET since January 2008.

The high level of activity suggests that exogenous factors -beyond the diversity of national organisations and regulations developed over time by countries participating in the Survey- are contributing and fostering the policy changes. It seems that these changes are influenced by broader drivers which are, in some extent, guiding the policy developments in national VET systems.

European initiatives, Networking and cooperation are obviously important elements for consideration.

Figure 2.2.3 below illustrates the distribution of policy developments in quality assurance in Member countries participating in the Survey:

Figure 2.2.3 Distribution of policy developments in quality assurance across countries



2.3 Key findings on policy developments among countries participating in the Survey

The main findings to be drawn from the responses are:

- All countries have launched general and comprehensive reforms, initiatives and/or reviews of their VET systems with quality assurance implications since 2008.
- The responses to the Survey demonstrate that the European initiatives, such as the EQF and ECVET have contributed to these reforms¹³.
- Policy learning methodology, which includes knowledge sharing and cooperation/exchange of good practice, has been proven to be a lever for promoting quality assurance in VET¹⁴. This suggests that ENQA-VET, by using policy learning methods, fostering a culture of quality improvements and collaboration and being a communication anchor has stimulated, inspired and guided policy developments regarding quality assurance in Member States.

¹³ As the Bordeaux Communiqué acknowledged: "joint efforts to develop EQF are having a significant catalytic effect: the EQF appears to be substantially contributing to the implementation of national qualifications frameworks". The Bordeaux Communiqué, November 2008.

¹⁴ Commission staff working document on the establishment of the EQARF; Brussels, April 2008.

These major findings give a picture of a consistent and coherent process across different levels of implementation across and within Member States. Sharing understanding of common policy issues, the availability of common instruments/tools and being involved in a culture of quality improvements have contributed to this energetic quality and convergence process.

The results of the Survey show that national authorities seem to be encouraged to a greater or lesser extent by the European objectives of the Copenhagen Process. ENQA-VET is an important part of this process as it "*supports the creation of a common understanding on quality assurance and fosters mutual trust*"¹⁵ which contributes to the development of capacity and synergy of policy developments across Member countries towards EU goals.

High numbers of policy developments among countries participating in the Survey demonstrate that ENQA-VET has contributed to policy developments and reviews regarding quality assurance in member countries by using policy learning methodology and focusing on supporting improvements in quality, efficiency and effectiveness of VET, making it more responsive to socio-economic needs, which are the main motives countries have for implementing and reforming legislation concerning VET.

The main challenge ahead is the ability to sustain and move forward this process.

¹⁵ Ministers for vocational education and training: *Helsinki Communiqué*, December 2006.

Chapter 3:

Policy Area of quality assurance improvements for VET and the implementation of the EQARF

3.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses to what extent the ENQA-VET work programme objectives 2 and 3 have been accomplished. These objectives are as follows:

- 2) Build sustainable¹⁶ European cooperation and exchange of good practice in quality assurance in VET between VET organisations and other key stakeholders;
- 3) Support the introduction and implementation of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF).

The European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF) supports the EQF and ECVET implementation. The three instruments benefit from each other's success¹⁷.

The EQARF seeks to create a developed and consistent quality assurance and improvement system and approach in VET across countries, which contributes to increased effectiveness of VET provision. The rationale for a common reference framework for quality assurance in VET is to capitalise more effectively EU human resources and to ensure transparency, consistency and portability of qualifications between the many streams of development across Europe. The establishment of common points of reference facilitates mutual trust, transparency and mobility, while respecting Member States' autonomy in the governance of their VET systems.

3.2 European improvements in quality assurance: outcomes based approach

The implementation of the EQARF implies the development of a strategy which should be orientated towards:

- 1) shifting the content and organisation of VET to an outcomes-based approach to teaching, learning, assessment and steering;
- 2) increasing stakeholders' cooperation and involvement, which increase accountability and relevance of VET;
- 3) helping VET respond to labour market needs by anticipating and addressing enterprises' skill needs;
- 4) balancing excellence and equity of VET provision.

The responses to the Survey suggest that the main policy objectives among Member States are orientated to facilitate the introduction of the four elements or steps for VET provision outlined above, which both improve significantly quality assurance in VET and facilitate and fulfil the implementation of the EQARF.

¹⁶ Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training; Brussels, 2008/0069 (COD) LEX 1033, April 2009.

¹⁷ "The Framework should therefore support the implementation of the EQF, in particular the quality of the certification of learning outcomes. It should also support the implementation of other European instruments, such as the European Credit Systems for VET, and the Common European Principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning"; Ibidem, 2008/0069 (COD) LEX 1033, April 2009.

Table 3.2.1 below shows the thematic area in which the policy developments/reforms undertaken by Member States, analysed in the previous section, were connected:

Table 3.2.1 Areas of policy developments

POLICY DEVELOPMENT ON QA FOR VET IN RELATION TO:	Response count	Response percentages	Countries
Qualifications	19	83%	AT, CY, CZ, DE, EE, FI, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, MT, NL, PT, RO, SI, SK, SW, UK
Curricula	19	83%	AT, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, MT, NO, PT, SI, SK, SW, UK
Awards	6	26%	EE, FI, IE, MT, SK, UK
Competences	16	70%	AT, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, HU, IE, LU, MT, NL, PT, RO, SI, SK
Other	4	17%	FI, ES, NL, SW

The results on Table 3.2.1 show that Member States' policy efforts are clearly focused on areas of VET provision that can be expressed in outcomes/outputs rather than inputs:

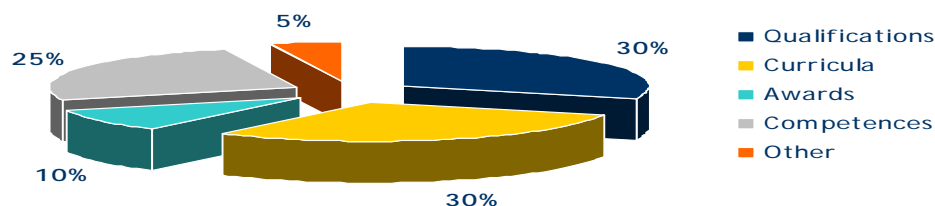
- 83 per cent of Member States' policy developments in VET are connected to qualifications and curricula;
- 70 per cent to competences;
- 26 per cent to awards;
- Only 4 per cent of policy improvements for VET among countries participating in the Survey targeted other issues.

Box 3.2.1 The category specified under "other" includes

Finland: Quality Management of VET providers
Spain: Official certification
Sweden: VET system design and administration

Figure 2.3.1 below examines the percentage break down of the areas of VET provision at which responding countries have orientated their policy efforts. It shows that those efforts are mainly focused on qualifications, curricula, competences and awards (only a small percentage, 5 per cent are concentrated on different element of VET provision).

Figure 3.3.1 Distribution of the areas of policy developments among countries



The Figure shows that:

- the policy area qualifications and curricula, together account for 60 per cent of total policy developments/reforms at which countries have concentrated their efforts;
- 25 per cent to competences; and
- only a small percentage of policy developments target areas of awards and others.

The results confirm the current European trend of shifting policies towards outcome-based approaches to education provision. According to recent studies, learning outcomes seem to be influencing the content and the organisation of VET in Member States, including areas of teachers' training, curricula and student assessment¹⁸. Important contributors to this shift are the EQF and ECVET, which are based on learning outcomes¹⁹.

Learning outcomes are mainly expressed in terms of competences. Learning outcomes are an integral part of the output-focused approach, which is based on external reference points which influence the teaching-learning-assessment relationship of education provision. The learning and steering output-approach increases the precision of VET provision/programmes by focusing on achievements. It benefits quality assurance as the output-based approach builds on common methodological approaches. The learning outcome-based approach is a precondition for common European tools and mechanism to succeed²⁰.

The responses support the main findings registered in the previous chapter in relation to the important role played by European initiatives and tools (namely EQF, ECVET) and ENQA-VET in developing a platform for policy learning and cooperation as drivers of policy change in national contexts towards quality improvements and/or quality convergence.

It is important to bear in mind that the activity of each national institution is embedded in, and pertinent to, the characteristics of the organisation of each national system. However, progression towards some elements of convergence, which enhance mobility, improve the employability of graduates thereby increasing the attractiveness of VET, requires the identification and establishment of supra-national common references and practices.

3.3 European improvements in quality assurance: role of stakeholders

In the Survey three questions were put to the national institutions addressing the issues of how they are dealing with the involvement of stakeholders, responsiveness to the labour market needs and relevance to vulnerable groups in relation to the reform processes they have undertaken since 2008 in their VET systems.

¹⁸ *The Bordeaux Communiqué*; November 2008.

¹⁹ Learning outcomes potentially links VET and higher education and facilitates the recognition of informal learning and promote labour and learners mobility. They also improved national/international recognition and transparency of qualifications.

²⁰ Stephen Adam: "Using Learning Outcomes. A consideration of the nature, application and implications for European education of employing learning outcomes at local, national and levels"; United Kingdom Bologna Seminar, July 2002.

Countries were asked if 1. “relevant stakeholders were involved in the reform process”; if 2. they “have introduced any initiative to encourage employers to provide opportunities for updating the knowledge and skills of the workforce”; and 3. “have introduced any innovative approach(s) and or initiative(s) to encourage disadvantaged groups (*i.e. unemployed, migrants, students with special education needs, ethnic minorities, older people etc.*) to participate in training and/or other forms of LLL”.

In relation to question 1, all countries (100 per cent) responded that relevant stakeholders were involved in the reform processes undertaken in VET since 2008.

Table 3.3.1 Stakeholders involvement

HAVE RELEVANT STAKEHOLDER BEEN INVOLVED IN THE REFORM PROCESS, 2008	Response count	Response percentages	Countries
Yes	23	100%	AT, BG, CY, CZ DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, MT, NL, NO, PT, RO, SI, SK, SW, UK
No	0	0%	–

It has been demonstrated that quality assurance is a product of interaction between actors and elements in the system and of how these different actors and elements are linked and interdependent to each other within the four stages of the quality cycle (*i.e. planning, implementation, evaluation and review*). As a result of this interaction the various stakeholders/actors involved in the provision of VET arrive at a shared notion of quality.

In particular, the collaboration of labour market representatives in VET reforms establishes a framework of consultation and cooperation enhancing the ability of VET provision to respond to the ever changing labour market requirements and needs. This improves quality and attractiveness of VET.

Table 3.3.2 and Figure 3.3.2 below examine which stakeholders have been involved in the review policy process undertake since 2008 by Member States participating in the Survey, showing that:

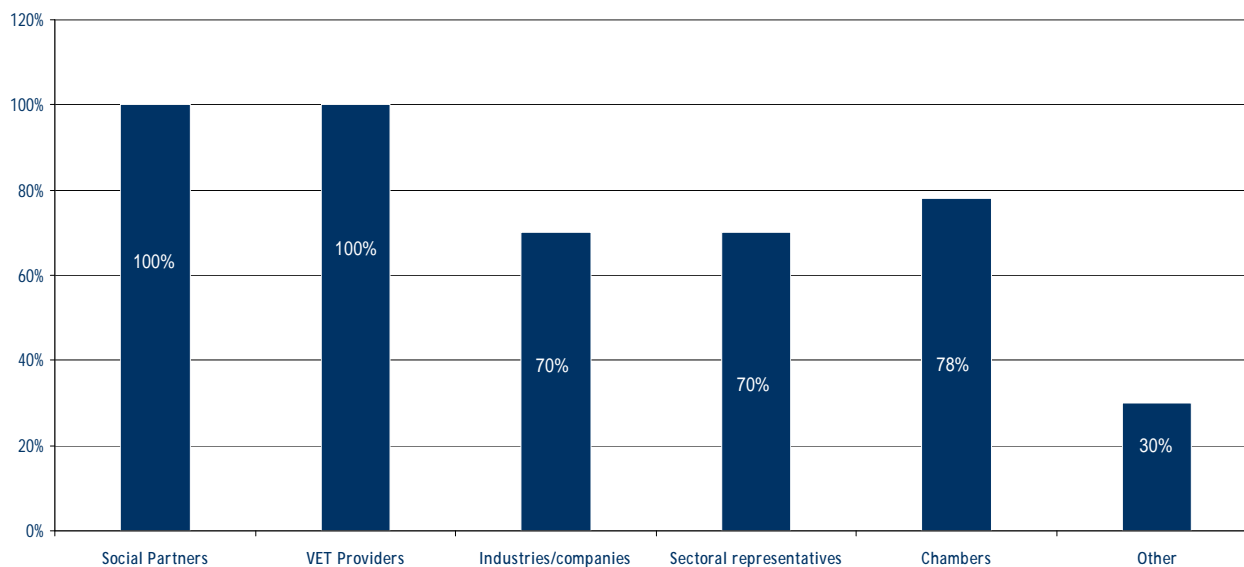
- all institutions have engaged with social partner and VET providers in the reform process;
- 70 per cent of total national institutions have cooperated with industries/companies and sectoral representatives;
- a large majority of institutions have involved chambers (78 per cent).

The high percentages indicate that countries are collaborating with and engaging in a process of consultation with key stakeholders, particularly with labour market representatives. This indicates that countries participating in the Survey are focusing their efforts on improving the quality and attractiveness of VET.

Table 3.3.2 Break down of Stakeholders

WHICH STAKEHOLDER/S HAVE BEEN INVOLVED? :	Response count	Response percentages	Countries
Social Partners	23	100%	AT, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, MT, NL, NO, PT, RO, SI, SK, SW, UK
VET Providers	23	100%	AT, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, MT, NL, NO, PT, RO, SI, SW, UK
Industries/companies	16	70%	AT, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, HU, FI, IE, IT, LT, MT, NL, SK, SW, UK
Sectoral representatives	16	70%	CY, CZ, DK, EE, HU, IE, LT, LU, MT, NL, NL, PT, RO, SK, SW, UK
Chambers	18	78%	AT, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, HU, IE, LT, LU, MT, NL, SI, SK, SW, UK
Other	7	30%	AT, DE, EE, ES, LT, NL, SW

Figure 3.3.2 Stakeholder involvement



Box 3.3.2 The category specified under “other” includes

- Austria: Research institutions focussing on VET and representatives of regional school boards*
- Germany: Schools and universities*
- Estonia: Representatives of municipalities and learners*
- Finland: Student and teacher organisations*
- Lithuania: Policy makers*
- Netherlands: Student’s representatives and municipalities*
- Spain: General and Regional administration*
- Sweden: Teachers*

The involvement of stakeholders in VET is very significant across countries. It is difficult to assess the degree of influence stakeholders have had either in the reform of policies or in the formulation of new initiatives/policies, which were described in the previous section, since 2008.

The contribution of and consultation with relevant stakeholders plays a crucial role in quality assurance arrangements²¹. The EQARF Recommendation acknowledges that in order to effectively implement the quality cycle, a shared strategy vision should be encouraged among key stakeholders: thereby *“making best use of the Framework, involving the social, partners, regional and local authorities, and all other relevant stakeholders in accordance with national legislation and practices”*²².

The ENQA-VET work programme 2008-2009 has fostered sustainable and inclusive activities oriented to nurturing a culture of cooperation in which relevant stakeholders at different levels have an important role to play. Working with social partners in order to build a shared understanding of quality assurance and developments has been a priority for the Network. The results of the Survey suggest that this objective has been achieved.

Table 3.3.3 and Figure 3.3.3 analyse the diversity of stakeholders collaborating in national VET systems. It shows that:

- almost a third of all countries (61 per cent) have involved five or more than five types of stakeholders.
- almost half of national institutions (39 per cent) have collaborated with two, three or four relevant stakeholders in their VET reforms.
- no country has involved less than two types of relevant stakeholders in their policy developments/reforms undertaken since January 2008.
- EE and NL are exceptional cases by involving 7 different types of stakeholders, including students, in their VET reform/consultation process.

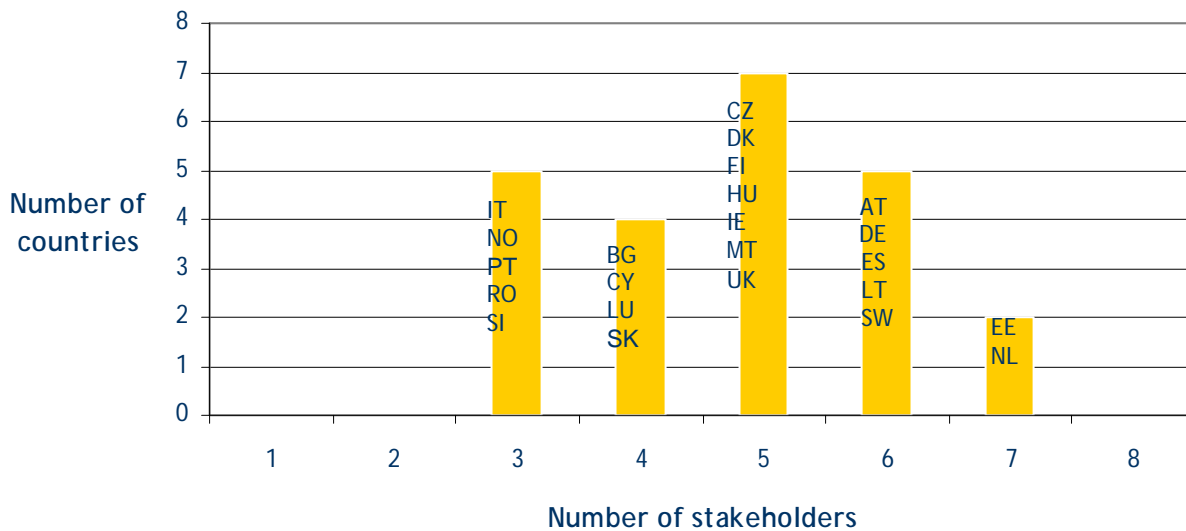
Table 3.3.3 Types of relevant stakeholders

HOW MANY STAKEHOLDERS HAVE BEEN INVOLVED?	Response count	Response percentages	Countries
None	0	0%	–
Less than two	0	0%	–
Between two and four	9	39%	BG, CY, IT, LU, NL, PT, RO, SI, SK
Five or more	14	61%	AT, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, HU, IE, LT, MT, NL, SW, UK

²¹ “A) Social partners organisations have a major role to play in VET and should be a basic principle in assuring the quality of VET. B) Cooperation and exchange of experiences with national Chambers can replace the lack of quality assurance procedures in SMEs. C) Decentralisation of responsibilities and empowerment of social partners in every stage in the development of quality assurance for VET is important”. Main policy issues extracted from ENQA-VET Peer Learning activity on the role of social partners in quality procedures in VET, October 2008 (see <http://www.engavet.eu/policy-briefings.html>).

²² Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for vocational education and training; Brussels, 2008/0069 (COD) LEX 1033, April 2009.

Figure 3.3.3 Number of relevant stakeholders involved among countries



Beyond the diversity of national strategies, it seems that the participation and integration of labour market representatives is thought to be one of the crucial factors for quality assurance and improvement of VET systems.

This clear trend, however is at odds with the lack of integrating students and teachers into quality assurance mechanisms and reforms. Only four countries reported to have involved learners and/or teachers in their policy developments/improvements (EE, FI, NL and SW) -this may be due to the fact that students and teachers were not among the option given in the Survey-.

3.4 European improvements in quality assurance: labour market and vulnerable groups

Identification and anticipation of skills needs is one of the main priorities of the European agenda.

Quality assurance is a mechanism to achieve effectiveness and efficiency of training provision in order to meet the evolving needs of society, the economy and individuals by regularly evaluating, monitoring and improving it, on the basis of evidence.

The EQARF, as a tool for supporting quality assurance in VET, gives particular emphasis to the results of VET provision in terms of anticipating and avoiding skills mismatch and promoting better access to lifelong learning, especially for vulnerable groups in the labour market.

To the question: *"Has your country introduced any initiatives to encourage employers to provide opportunities for updating the knowledge and skills of the workforce? (skills needs forecasting, etc...)"* the responses were:

Table 3.4.1 Introduction of initiatives to encourage employers to provide opportunities for updating the knowledge and skills of the workforce

INITIATIVES TO ENCOURAGE INPUT FROM LABOUR MARKET REPRESENTATIVES	Response count	Response percentages	Countries
Yes	22	96%	AT BG, CY, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, MT, NL, NO, PT, RO, SI, SK, SW, UK
No	0	0%	–
No response	1	4%	CZ

Table 3.4.1 above gives a picture of a clear trend among countries:

- all countries have set up and put in place mechanisms and/or initiatives, which ensure that VET provision is relevant and linked to the labour market requirements.
- CZ did not respond.

This testifies once more, than countries are focusing their efforts on improving quality assurance of VET provision by introducing initiatives to encourage input from labour market representatives.

Labour market representatives' involvement enhances the transparency and confidence of quality assurance procedures and the standing of the VET sector as a whole.

The involvement of stakeholders is an indicator of VET's:

- a) shift from a teaching to a learning focus;
- b) relationship with society, industry, employers and professional needs; and
- c) interest in transnational comparability.

Countries were asked to identify the methodology used when introducing initiatives to encourage employers to provide opportunities for updating the knowledge and skills of the workforce. A classification of four groups was identified:

Group a) countries have introduced new legislation, new programmes, or new schemes or they have amended/modified existing legislation in order to comply with/promote employers' input;

Group b) countries have established a new agency or have allocated public funding to provide opportunities for updating the knowledge and skills of the workforce according to market needs;

Group c) countries have conducted research and publication of data and reports in order to anticipate market skill requirements;

Group d) countries have used European Social Funds (ESF) for this purpose;

Table 3.4.2 Methodology used to encourage input from the representatives of the labour market

METHODOLOGY USED TO ENCOURAGE INPUT FROM LABOUR MARKET REPRESENTATIVES	Response count	Response percentages	Countries
Legislation/programme	10	46%	AT, BG, EE, ES, NL, NO, PT, SK, SW, UK
Agency/funds	6	27%	IE, IT, LU, MT, RO, SI
Research, data and report	3	14%	AT, CY, DK
ESF	1	5%	LT
Others	3	14%	DE, FI, HU

Table 3.4.1 above shows that the preferred methodology among responding countries is to introduce new legislation, schemes or initiatives to ensure that input for the demand-side of the labour market is considered:

- The majority of countries participating in the Survey (46 per cent out of 22) acknowledge having introduced and/or reviewed legislation/programmes.
- Some countries have introduced more than one methodology, namely Austria, type a and c (described in page 25).

These results emphasise the relevance and impact of ENQA-VET in member countries. ENQA-VET's working methodology is based on cooperation, stakeholder's inclusion in all activities and learning policy methods, which are instruments for policy change. So: 1) that countries are focusing on developing and reforming legislative aspects of their own systems rather than focusing on other types of measures -i.e. their attitudes seem to be inclined towards policy changes- shows that ENQA-VET is influencing these developments by using its policy learning methodology. The fact that 2) countries are increasing stakeholder involvement shows that ENQA-VET is influencing these developments by supporting cooperation with stakeholders at every level of the quality assurance process of VET provision.

Box 3.4.1 The category specified under "other" includes

Germany: Encourage work based learning which ensures that labour market representatives are involved in very aspect of VET provision
Finland: Employers are participating in skills needs forecasting
Hungary: The new module-based NQR and the related vocational and examination requirements (SZVK) uniformly regulate the structure, the content and the qualification requirements (learning outcomes) both of the initial vocational education (IVET) and of adult training(CVET). They were developed in cooperation with the economy actors including employers' representatives

Box 3.4.2 Country example: Methodology used to encourage input from the representatives of the labour market

Ireland: Over the last number of years Ireland has put in place a range of initiatives to encourage employers to update the skills of the workforce. This includes the establishment of two awarding councils and the launch of the National Framework of Qualifications. The Councils have put in place flexible awarding arrangements that support providers to facilitate learners in the workplace to achieve national certification and credit. Work place learning centres can register as providers and offer training and certification opportunities to their learners. In addition, a number of schemes were established e.g. Skillnets and One Step Up to financially support employers and employees towards achieving quality training and certification

To the question: "Has your country introduced any innovative approach(es) and/or initiative(s) in VET to encourage disadvantaged groups (i.e. unemployed, migrants, students with special education needs, ethnic minorities, older people etc.) to participate in training and/or other forms of lifelong learning?", responses were:

Table 3.4.3 Introduction of initiatives to encourage disadvantaged groups to participate in training and/or other forms of lifelong learning (LLL)

INITIATIVES TO ENCOURAGE VULNERABLE GROUPS IN A LLL PERSPECTIVE	Response count	Response percentages	Countries
Yes	19	83%	AT, BG, CY, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, MT, NL, NO, PT, SI, SW
No	2	9%	SK, UK
No response	2	9%	CZ, RO

Table 3.4.3 above illustrates very clearly that countries are introducing initiatives to encourage disadvantaged groups to participate in training and/or other forms of lifelong learning education and training:

- 83 per cent of countries have taken some initiative while only 9 per cent report no initiatives.
- Two countries have not responded to the question.

The high percentage points out the active policy developments undertaken by Member States in relation to promoting and supporting better access to lifelong learning, in particular for vulnerable groups in the labour market. This testifies the policy importance countries are attaching to developing quality assurance for VET provision balancing excellence and equity.

As in the previous question, countries were asked to identify the methodology used when introducing initiatives to encourage disadvantaged groups entering and participating in VET in a LLL perspective. The same classification was used:

Group a) countries have introduced new legislation, new programmes/courses, or new schemes or they have amended/modified existing legislation in order to encourage vulnerable groups;

Group b) countries have established a new agency or have allocated public funding for this purpose;

Group c) countries have conducted research and publication of data and reports in order to identify the needs of this group;

Group d) countries have used the European Social Fund (ESF) to encourage disadvantaged group entering and participating in VET in a LLL perspective;

Table 3.4.4 Methodology used to encourage disadvantaged groups to participate in training and/or other forms of lifelong learning

METHODOLOGY USED TO ENCOURAGE VULNERABLE GROUPS IN A LLL PERSPECTIVE	Response count	Response percentages	Countries
Legislation/programme	16	84%	AT, BG, CY, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, HU, IE, LU, MT, NL, NO, PT, SI
Agency/funds	0	0%	–
Research, data and report	0	0%	–
ESF	2	11%	IT, LT
Others	1	5%	HU

Table 3.4.4 above shows clearly that countries, in order to encourage disadvantaged groups to participate in training and/or other forms of lifelong learning education, tend to review and/or introduce legislative initiatives as opposed to other measures:

- 84 per cent of countries out of 19 are doing so;
- 11 per cent out of 19 countries are using European Social Funds for this purpose.
- No country has set up a new agency or allocated public funding for this purpose. Nor has any, conducted research in order to identify the needs of this group.

The results show again that the ENQA-VET policy learning methodology seems to have had an impact on countries, as participating institutions are reforming, reshaping or reformulating legislation and regulations rather than using other mechanisms for change and improve quality in VET.

Box 3.4.4 The category specified under “other” includes

Finland: Preparatory instruction and guidance for vocational upper secondary education and training was launched in 2006. The goal of this pilot scheme was to lower the threshold from basic education to vocational upper secondary education and training and to reduce drop-out rates at the initial stage of vocational training. It was targeted at young people completing their basic education and who do not have a clear idea concerning their choice of career, or who do not possess the skills and knowledge needed for entering vocational education or for coping with vocational studies. These young people are facing the risk of being left completely outside education and training and becoming socially excluded. A student participating in preparatory training and guidance can flexibly apply for or enter VET qualification training when it is appropriate for the student. The pilot will come into common practice by 2010

Hungary: Students with special education and training needs

3.5 Implementation of the EQARF

The results in section 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4, suggest that the large majority of respondent national institutions have established procedures to ensure quality assurance in their VET systems by addressing key areas: i.e., shifting to learning outcomes-based approach

and increasing involvement of relevant stakeholders and prevalence of vulnerable groups.

The overall picture offered by the results is that strengthening national policies regarding quality assurance is a current trend in Europe.

This clear trend and interest among Member States in quality assurance reflects the policy important work undertaken in an ENQA-VET context.

Both factors, national self-interest and European cooperation, will facilitate the implementation of the EQARF.

Countries were asked whether they have undertaken any initiative to support the “direct” implementation of the EQARF/COAF”.

Table 3.5.1 Implementation of EQARF among participating countries

SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EQARF?	Response count	Response percentages	Countries
Yes	18	78%	AT, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, FI, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, MT, NL, PT, RO, SI
No	5	22%	ES, NO, SK, SW, UK

Table 3.5.1 shows that relevant progression has been made in the implementation of the EQARF in national settings among participating countries:

- The vast majority, 18 countries (i.e. 78 per cent) have supported the direct implementation of the EQARF model by supporting initiatives in their VET systems;
- Only 5 countries who responded did not take any initiative to support the implementation of the EQARF. This does not imply that these countries are not improving their VET systems by introducing quality assurance procedures that, indirectly, move forward the implementation of the EQARF. As stated earlier, these countries are taken significant policy initiatives in order to improve quality assurance of their national systems (i.e. by shifting to learning outcomes-based approach, increasing involvement of relevant stakeholders and prevalence of vulnerable groups) which facilitate the implementation of the EQARF.

Table 3.5.2 below compares responses in relation to progress on the implementation of EQARF made in 2008 Survey and those in the Survey 2009:

- 18 countries have implemented the EQARF model in 2009, 12 in 2008.

Table 3.5.2 Implementation of EQARF among participating countries 2008 compared to 2009

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EQARF	2008	2009	% Change 2008-2009
Response count	12	18	50%
Countries	AT, CY, DK, EE, FI, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, NL, UK	AT, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, FI, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, MT, NL, PT, RO, SI	BG, CZ, DE, EE, MT, RO, SI

Table 3.5.2 illustrates the significant rate of increase of 50 per cent between 2008 and 2009, which shows that ENQA-VET member countries are progressing on implementing the EQARF at a high rate.

It is important to sustain this rate, which demonstrates that the measures put in place are working, and that networking and European cooperation are playing an important role in this progress.

Countries were also asked which methodology they used to implement the EQARF model. The results are outlined in Table 3.5.3 below:

Table 3.5.3 Methodology for implementing the EQARF among participating countries

METHOD FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EQARF	Response count	Response percentages	Countries
By developing national quality assurance frameworks which adapt the EQARF to the national context	6	33%	AT, FI, HU, LU, NL, RO
By reforming legislation which facilitates/introduces steps toward EQARF implementation	1	5%	IT
Both of the above given options	5	28%	DE, DK, IE, LT, MT
Other	5	28%	AT, BG, CY, CZ, EE
All of the above options	2	11%	PT, SI

Table 3.5.3 shows that the preferred method for implementing the EQARF among participating countries responding “yes” (i.e. 18 countries out of 23) is by adapting the EQARF model to the national context.

The second less preferred option for supporting the implementation of the EQARF among respondents is combining the two methodologies given, i.e. adapting the EQARF to the national context and reforming legislation. There are other methods for supporting the implementation of the EQARF, which are specified in the box below.

Box 3.5.3 The category specified under “other” includes

Austria: launched a comprehensive quality management system which is at present focussed on initial vocational education and training (IVET). This quality initiative - Qualitätsinitiative Berufsbildung (QIBB) - is one element of the national strategy to adopt the EQARF. QIBB covers teaching and learning processes and administrative processes in every type of school and at every institutional level in the VET school system

Bulgaria: We are currently establishing the National Reference Quality Assurance Point and a structure for the national approach of quality assurance in VET in accordance with the EQARF

Cyprus: a) Preparation for the introduction of a National Qualifications Framework; b) Introduction of a Competence-Based System of Vocational Qualifications; c) Development of a System for Assessment and Certification of Training Providers

Czech Republic: National project co-financed by ESF “Way to Quality - Self-evaluation”

Estonia: Estonian VET system has developed and put in operation national set of indicators. National (VET system level) quality assurance system is described on the basis of CQAF model. Training providers are autonomous in choosing quality assurance models and methods. All training providers use some kind of quality assurance system for their administration, training provision and self-evaluation. Approximately 60% use formal models like EFQM based EKKA model (majority), very few ones ISO 9000, Balanced Scorecard and the CQAF

Portugal: Articulate with entities in this area of quality assurance

Slovenia: Act for VET in 2006 introduced Quality Assurance system in VET with regard to the EQARF/CQAF, Act for Education in 2008 introduced self evaluation for undergraduate education

- Six countries (33 per cent) participating in the Survey acknowledge having supported the introduction of the EQARF model by adapting it to the national context.
- A total of five countries (28 per cent) support the implementation of the EQARF by simultaneously adapting the Framework to national contexts and reforming legislation;
- Five countries reported supporting the implementation by using other methods (two have introduced VET providers self-evaluation which is complementary and effective means to quality assurance).
- Only one country has exclusively used the method of reforming legislation in order to support the implementation of the Framework (IT);
- Two countries (PT and SI) have supported the implementation of the EQARF by doing all of the above options.

These results confirm that the EQARF is a flexible instrument that can be adapted or applied to national contexts or in accordance with national legislation and practices, i.e. it can be served as a “toolbox”.

In this sense, the Framework will provide for a common reference in Europe regarding quality assurance which is compatible/consistent with national governance and operational methodologies for VET. In other terms, the Framework appears to perfectly adapt to/with national contexts complying with the condition of subsidiarity or Member States’ autonomy for the governance of their VET systems.

This ensures that the EQARF will provide a new impetus to the continuous improvement of quality management practices in VET systems among Member States, which enables a process of consistency and transparency between the different policy initiatives in and within Member States, thereby improving mutual trust and facilitating mobility of learners and workers, on a voluntary basis.

3.6 Key findings on quality assurance improvements and the implementation of the EQARF

The main findings to be drawn from the responses are:

- There is an obvious trend towards output based learning and steering, which supports the EQARF, EQF and ECVET implementation.
- Participating countries are improving VET provision in order to: provide more timely and appropriate responsiveness to rapid economic and social changes by involving relevant stakeholders and by improving employability and social inclusion in VET provision.
- These trends confirm that there are common European efforts oriented towards continuous improvement of quality management in VET systems which ensure a process of consistency and transparency between the different policy initiatives in and within Member States, thereby improving mutual trust and facilitating mobility of learners and workers, with a LLL perspective.
- The results corroborate the evidence that the EQARF appears to be capable of being used as a common reference for quality improvements without infringing the principle of subsidiarity in the education field, providing a new coherent impetus to the continuous improvements of quality management practices in VET systems among Member States.
- It is broadly recognised that in the field of quality assurance management, European cooperation has proved to be a lever for promoting quality improvement in VET. ENQA-VET by fostering cooperation, has played an

important role in this respect. It has supported a culture of continuous improvement in VET and facilitated and supported exchange of experiences, mutual learning and consensus-building on common principles, guidelines and tools for quality developments in VET between VET organisations and other key stakeholders.

- Evidence shows that ENQA-VET by fostering cooperation and using policy learning methodology has inspired policy changes in Member States participating in the Survey, creating a synergy process towards common European goals, such as the implementation of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF).

Chapter 4: Dissemination of information and the establishment of Quality Assurance National Reference Points (QANRPs)

This chapter analyses to which extent ENQA-VET has achieved the following objectives, described in its work programme 2008-2009:

- 4) Promote the effective use of communications to increase awareness and understanding of quality assurance, the Network and its activities.
- 5) Build sustainable European cooperation and exchange of good practice in quality assurance by creating links/bridges between VET and higher education to further develop and support the entire education and training system in EU.

4.1 Establishment of QANRPs

The EQARF Recommendation invites Member States to designate a Quality Assurance National Reference Point (QANRP) for VET that brings together national/regional key players -with a role to play in the development of quality assurance in VET- in order to ensure the follow up of initiatives and efficient dissemination of information.

With the adoption of the EQARF Recommendation, the QANRPs have a legal basis which ensures that the national reference point is *“linked to the particular structures and requirements of each Member State and that, in accordance with national practice, brings together existing relevant bodies and involves the social partners and all stakeholders concerned at national and regional levels, in order to ensure the follow-up of initiative”*²³.

Table 4.1.1 below shows that the large majority of countries have successfully established the QANRP.

Table 4.1.1 Establishment of QANRPS among participating countries

ESTABLISHMENT OF QANRPS	Response count	Response percentages	Countries and year
Yes	19	83%	AT, CY, CZ, DE, DK, ES, FI, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, MT, NL, PT, RO, SI, SW, UK
No	4	17%	BG, EE, NO, SK

- The large majority of countries (83 per cent) reported to have established their reference point.
- Only four countries (17 per cent) reported not yet to have a QANRP in place.

The rationale for the establishment of the QANRPs is to ensure European cooperation in the field of quality assurance management, facilitate the exchange of experiences, mutual learning, consensus-building on common principles, development of guidelines and tools for supporting quality. The QANRPs connect and adapt the European general

²³ Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for vocational education and training; Brussels, 2008/0069 (COD) LEX 1033, April 2009.

goals to the national context facilitating the implementation and adaptation of the EQARF.

The results in Table 4.1.1 corroborate the trend described in previous chapter that countries are orientating their efforts to promoting and adapting the EQARF model to their national contexts in order to improve the quality of their VET systems. The establishment of the QANRP is a pre-requisite for the successful implementation of the EQARF.

Countries were asked when their QANRP was appointed:

Table 4.1.2 Year of QANRPS establishment among participating countries

YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT	Response count	Response Percentages*	Countries and year
2006	3	16%	IT, RO, NL
2007	7	37%	AT, CY, CZ, ES, FI, HU, LT
2008	5	26%	DE, IE, LU, PT, SI
2009	1	5%	MT
No response	3	16%	DK, SK, UK

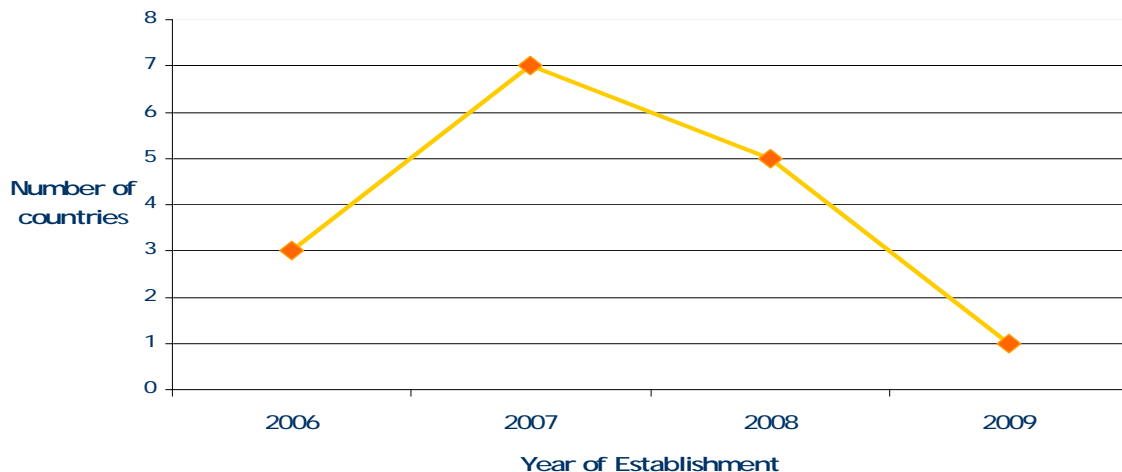
* Percentages are calculated based on 2009 Survey level of participation, i.e. 19 countries out 23, which have established the QANRP.

The year at which participating countries established their QANRP is presented in Table 4.1.2 above. It shows that:

- Almost half of countries (37 per cent) appointed their QANRP in 2007.
- By 2008, a further increase of 5 countries established QANRPs in their national context.
- In 2009 only one country appointed its QANRP.

Figure 4.1.2 below represents the rate at which countries were establishing QANRPs. It clearly shows that the peak year was 2007, when the EQARF become part of the Commission's Legislative and Work Programme for 2007. This programme sets out the concrete actions at the core of the Commission's political delivery for 2007.

Figure 4.1.2 Year of QANRPS establishment among participating countries



The results show that most countries have established their QANRP, which ensures "ownership of the quality assurance process and the commitment of national authorities to adapt European tools and instruments which will support national policies"²⁴.

ENQA-VET has supported the establishment and work of QANRPs, recognising that QANRPs are an appropriate channel for communication and dissemination of activities and information which ensure the success implementation of the EQARF.

ENQA-VET, as part of its work programme 2008-2009, has organised two meetings of the QANRPs in order to ensure that they are operative in the national contexts. They also have a dedicated area on the ENQA-VET website to ensure communication and cooperation.

The Survey also asked countries to describe the method by which their QANRPs were established:

Table 4.1.3 Method of QANRPs' establishment among participating countries

METHODOLOGY USED FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF QANRPS	Response count	Response percentages	Countries
The QANRP is located outside the Ministry of Education and/or Labour	12	63%	AT, CZ, FI, HU, IE, IT *, LT, MT, RO, SI, SW, UK
The QANRP is located within the Ministry for Education and/or Labour	4	21%	CY, DK, ES, LU
Your organisation is part of QANRPs	3	16%	DE, NL, PT

**In IT the Ministry of Labour, but not the Ministry of Education, provided funded for the establishment of the national reference point.

Table 4.1.3 described how the QANRPs have been appointed. It shows that:

- The majority of countries (63 per cent) have established the reference point within an agency or institution other than the Ministry. This illustrates the increasing trend in the EU to give intermediate bodies, rather than Ministries, responsibilities for monitoring and evaluating the quality management processes and procedures related to the implementation of policy developments. In the majority of cases, these intermediate bodies are also the national representative in ENQA-VET. This shows the important influence ENQA-VET has had in the establishment of QANRPs.
- Four countries have reported locating the QANRP within the central government Ministry for Education and/or Labour. This further emphasised the trend to devolve responsibilities for quality assurance management to intermediate bodies rather than manage centrally (as in the large majority of responses the QANRPs is located within intermediate bodies).
- 16 per cent of countries acknowledge that their reference point is a combination of different institutions. The institution responding to the Survey is part of that combination of structures. In all such cases, the Ministry is part of this structure.

²⁴ G. Allulli and T. Bertzeletou: "Quality Assurance National References Points: a strategic instrument for dissemination and involvement"; June, 2008.

Countries were also asked if the institution they represent has collaborated with their quality assurance reference point. Table 4.1.4 presents this information, which is based on 19 countries, i.e. those which reported to have established their QANRP.

Table 4.1.4 Collaboration with QANRP

HAS YOUR ORGANISATION COLLABORATE WITH QANRP	Response count	Response percentages	Countries
Yes	18	95%	AT, CY, CZ, DE, DK, ES, FI, HU, IT*, LT, LU, MT, NL, PT, RO, SI, SW, UK
No	0	0%	-
No response	1	5%	IE

*The Ministry of Education skipped the question

- The Table shows high level of cooperation between ENQA-VET members and QANRPs with all countries referring to collaboration between both entities.
- As Table 4.1.5 below shows, in the Survey 2008 only 15 countries reported to collaborate with the national reference point.
- This means a rate of increase of 20 per cent.

Table 4.1.5 Collaboration between ENQA-VET and QANRPs, 2008 compared to 2009

COLLABORATION WITH QANRPs	2008	2009	% Change 2008-2009
Response count	15	18	20%
Countries	AT, CY, CZ, ES, DE, DK, FI, IE, IT, LT, LU, MT, NL, SW, UK	AT, CY, CZ, ES, DE, DK, FI, HU, IT, LT, LU, MT, NL, PT, RO, SI, SW, UK	HU, PT, RO, SI

The high rate of increase suggests that significant progress has been made and that there is a clear process of change which is moving Member States towards the implementation of the EQARF Recommendation.

It is important to sustain this trend and find the best support for the work of QANRPs both at national and European level. It is also essential to find the best channels to foster cooperation between the different QANRPs.

ENQA-VET has played a significant role in the establishment of QANRPs and has acted as the communication link for the different national reference points.

4.2 Dissemination and promotion of ENQA-VET's work among countries

This section aims to assess the extent at which ENQA-VET has been successfully promoted among countries participating in the Survey. This provides an indication of how effective the ENQA-VET communication strategy has been, which was designed to increase awareness and understanding of quality assurance, the Network and its activities.

ENQA-VET has collected and analysed quantitative data relating to Member States' levels of participation on ENQA-VET activities for 2008²⁵. High levels of participation have been observed in the range of activities outlined in the ENQA-VET work programme

²⁵ The data analysis is available on the Network's website at www.enqavet.eu

2008-2009, which suggests that the activities undertaken are responding to policy needs and/or learning needs in participating countries.

The high participation rates indicate:

- 1) ENQA-VET's activities are perceived to be useful by participating countries;
- 2) ENQA-VET's activities respond to the needs of Member States in addressing the relevance of quality assurance in the national policy context.
- 3) ENQA-VET's methodology based on the Open Method of Cooperation which promotes voluntary cooperation and learning from good practices among Member States has proven successful.

The Survey asked institutions to report on steps and initiatives other than participating in ENQA-VET's thematic groups, peer learning activities, conferences and General Assembly that they have taken to promote ENQA-VET's work in their countries.

Table 4.2.1 below shows the level and the various initiatives undertaken by participating countries in order to promote ENQA-VET. It shows that:

- The most common way of promoting the work of ENQA-VET is by mentioning it in publications: almost three quarters of participating countries (65 per cent) have referred to ENQA-VET in its national publications.
- 14 countries responded to have a description/link of ENQA-VET in official websites.
- 14 countries have promoted ENQA-VET's work via their QANRPs.
- Only two countries reported not to promote the work of ENQA-VET.

Table 4.2.1 Promotion of ENQA-VET among participating countries

PROMOTION OF ENQA-VET	Response count	Response percentages	Countries
Set up links on official websites or placed a description of ENQA-VET network on your website	14	61%	AT, CZ, FI, HU, ES, IE, IT*, LT, NL, PT, RO, SI, SW, UK
Referenced ENQA-VET in publications	15	65%	AT, CY, DE, FI, IE, IT, LT, MT, NL, NO, PT, RO, SI, SW, UK
ENQA-VET's work is disseminated by your QANRP	14	61%	AT, CY**, CZ, DE, FI, ES, IE, IT, LT, MT, NL, RO, SI, UK
None	2	9%	BG, SK
Other	7	30%	AT, CY, HU, EE, IT, LU, SI
No response	1	4%	DK

*These are ISFOL responses. The Ministry of Education did not respond to the question. The Ministry of Labour set up links and reported that the QANRP disseminated ENQA-VET's work.

**Ministry of Education and Culture reported only this option

- Under the category "other", five countries (i.e. 22 per cent) reported to have promoted the work on ENQA-VET is presentations for conferences and seminars. The category "other" is presented in Box 4.2.1 below:

Box 4.2.1 The category specified under “other” includes

Austria: Presentations introducing ARQA-VET and its function and tasks, ENQA-VET has also been introduced and its work and work programme presented
Cyprus: Co-organisation with the QANRP of meetings and seminars with stakeholders and other interested institutions for the promotion of the CQAF/EQARF. (Human Resource Development Authority)
Hungary: Presentations at conferences and training courses
Estonia: Results of the work within ENQA-VET have impacted on developments of VET. ENQA-VET itself is not promoted
Italy: Conferences, newsletter, seminars (ISFOL)
Luxembourg: Presentations and discussions of EQF and information from ENQA-VET: in the Ministry and with Social Partners
Slovenia: We are in progress of renovating the Institute websites and preparing new reference point website. We are going to place a link to the ENQA-VET website there too

These results show that the work of ENQA-VET and its activities have been promoted in the Member States. Moreover, the high figures demonstrate that the ENQA-VET communication strategy to increase awareness and understanding of quality assurance, the Network and its activities among EU countries, is successfully working.

Table 4.2.2 below compares figures from 2008 and 2009 in relation to the level and the type of initiatives undertaken by participating countries to promote ENQA-VET. It illustrates that:

- ENQA-VET member countries are increasing the promotion of ENQA-VET in their national contexts, with high levels rate of increase in all types of initiatives between 2008 and 2009.
- The dissemination of ENQA-VET’s work by the QANRPs continues to be very prominent among countries and it has remained constant over the two years period.

Table 4.2.2 Promotion of ENQA-VET, 2008 compared to 2009

PROMOTION OF ENQA-VET	2008 Response count	2009 Response count	% Change 2008-2009
Set up links on official websites/ description of ENQA-VET	8 AT, CZ, DE, IE, IT, LT, NO, SW	14 AT, CZ, FI, HU, ES, IE, IT, LT, NL, PT, RO, SI, SW, UK	75%
Referenced ENQA-VET in publications	6 CZ, DE, IE, IT, LT, NO	15 AT, CY, DE, FI, IE, IT, LT, MT, NL, NO, PT, RO, SI, SW, UK	+100%
ENQA-VET’s work is disseminated by your QANRP	14 AT, CY, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, IT, LT, LU, MT, NL, SW, UK	14 AT, CY, CZ, DE, FI, ES, IE, IT, LT, MT, NL, RO, SI, UK	0%
Countries have represented ENQA-VET at conferences/seminars	3 AT, CY, IT	5 AT, CY, HU, IT, LU	67%

Tables 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 indicate that ENQA-VET has significantly been promoted in/among Member countries and that Member countries are continuing to do so.

Evidence presented in Table 4.2.3 below also demonstrates this argument. The table shows that most institutions (65 per cent) have a link to the ENQA-VET website. As indicated in Chapter 1, the institutions participating in the Survey have very prominent roles and responsibilities within their national contexts and hold a high level of influence. ENQA-VET's work can be said therefore to reach a wide audience of key stakeholders within each national context.

Table 4.2.3 Promotion of ENQA-VET among participating countries

DOES YOUR ORGANISATION HAVE A LINK TO THE ENQA-VET WEBSITE?	Response count	Response percentages	Countries and year
Yes	15	65%	AT, CZ, FI, ES, IE, IT*, LT, MT, NL, PT, RO, SI, SK, SW, UK
No	8	35%	BG, CY, DE, HU, EE, IT*, LU, NO

*The Ministry of Labour answered no, while ISFOL yes. Ministry of Education did not answer the question.

4.3 Links with Higher Education

This section will provide an overview of the cooperation and exchange of good practices regarding quality assurance between VET and Higher Education (HE). It evaluates whether ENQA-VET has promoted the effective use of communication, cooperation and exchange of good practices relating to quality assurance between VET and HE.

Table 4.3.1 Development of links between quality assurance in VET and HE

HAS YOUR ORGANISATION DEVELOPED LINKS BETWEEN QA in VET and HE?	Response count	Response percentages	Countries and year
Yes	12	50%	AT, CY, DE, FI, DK, IE, LT, MT, NL, PT, RO, SW
No	12	50%	BG, CY*, CZ, HU, EE, ES, IT, LU, NO, SI, SK, UK

*Ministry of Education and Culture.

Table 4.3.1 shows that half of the countries participating in the Survey have developed links between quality assurance in VET and Higher Education.

This evidence suggests that further work needs to be done in this area in order to build a sustainable European cooperation and exchange of good practices with regards to quality assurance in the entire EU education system.

Therefore it can be concluded that the ENQA-VET work programme has partially achieved the objective of promoting an effective use of communication, cooperation and exchange of good practices relating to quality assurance between VET and Higher Education. However, progress has been made:

- 12 countries have actively developed links between VET and Higher Education.

- In 2008 only 9 countries reported developing links in VET and Higher Education in relation to quality assurance issues, which represent a 22 per cent rate of increase (see Table 4.3.2 below):

Table 4.3.2 Development of links between quality assurance in VET and HE, 2008 compared with 2009

LINKS BETWEEN QA in VET and HE	2008	2009	% Change 2008-2009
Response count	9	12	33%
Countries	CY, DK, ES, IE, IT, LT, NO, SW, UK	AT, CY, DE, IE, FI, DK, LT, MT, NL, PT, RO, SW	AT, NL

Table 4.3.3 below presents the method used to establish links between VET and Higher Education regarding quality assurance by the 12 countries participating in the Survey which have reported to have done so.

Table 4.3.3 How institutions are linking quality assurance in VET and HE

METHODOLOGY APPLIED	Response count	Response percentages	Countries
By co-participating in conference/seminars	10	83%	AT, CY, DE, FI, IE, LT, MT, NL, RO, SW
By carrying out joint research studies	4	33%	AT, DE, FI, NL
By jointly using and collecting data and sharing data relevant to both	5	42%	CY, FI, DK, IE, NL
By cooperating in addressing future labour market needs	9	75%	CY, DE, FI, DK, IE, LT, NL, PT, RO
Other	3	25%	AT, LT, MT

The table clearly shows that the most applied methods to link VET and Higher Education among the 12 countries are:

- co-participating in conferences and seminars. Almost all institutions have used this methodology.
- 83 per cent have cooperated with Higher Education to address future labour market needs.
- 33 per cent of countries have jointly utilised and collected data relevant to VET and Higher Education.
- Almost half of institutions (42 per cent) have carried out research studies with Higher Education.
- 3 countries have applied other method listed in Box 4.3.3 below

Box 4.3.3 The category specified under “other” includes

Austria: Conference on “Quality Assurance in Higher Education (HE) and Vocational Education and Training (VET)” within the Austrian Presidency in 2006 and the study “Quality in Education and Training. Cases of Good Practice in Vocational Education and Training and Higher Education”, 2006 was commissioned by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture and supported by the European Commission

Lithuania: By cooperation in evaluation processes and methodology development

Malta: The Malta Qualifications Council links HE and VET as it is responsible for the Malta Qualifications Framework and it oversees that Higher Education providers and VET providers provide qualifications that are quality assured. Furthermore, the Referencing Process of the Malta Qualifications Framework to the European Qualifications Framework also includes link with the QF of the European Higher Education Area

4.4 Key findings on dissemination of information and the establishment of QANRPs

The main findings to be drawn from the responses are:

- The vast majority of countries have established their QANRPs, which indicates that there is a clear trend of national policy adjustments oriented towards the implementation of the EQARF.
- ENQA-VET has played a crucial part in the establishment of QANRPs. Evidence suggests that Member States’ decisions regarding to QANRPs were defined by their ENQA-VET membership and the legislative status of the EQARF.
- The establishment of QANRPs ensures that dissemination, awareness and understanding of the benefits and importance of quality assurance and networking in countries are happening in an effective manner.
- Countries have increasingly promoted the Network and its activity in their national contexts, which provide evidence that ENQA-VET has achieved the goal of boosting the effective use of communication to increase awareness and understanding of quality assurance across Member States, thereby, fostering a culture of quality assurance improvements among Member Countries.
- These show that a sustainable process of communication, cooperation and exchange of good practices is being built among Member States through ENQA-VET membership regarding quality assurance. The challenges ahead are to sustain and continue this process at the high rates seen in 2009.
- Nevertheless, more work needs to be done in boosting links between VET and HE in order to achieve a coordinated cooperation and exchange of good practices in European education system.

Chapter 5: Findings and Conclusions

This final Chapter seeks to summarise the key findings from the ENQA-VET Progress Report on the implementation of the work programme 2008-2009, Survey 2009.

The Chapter does not describe the data analysed in previous chapters. It rather identifies areas which provide insights which explain not only “what” is being done between 2008 and 2009 in VET regarding quality assurance in Member countries, but also “why” and what patterns of activities and emerging trends can be identified and the impact of ENQA-VET.

The key findings of the Progress Report are analysed against the objectives proposed in the ENQA-VET work programme 2008-2009.

The Chapter comments on some of the changes which have occurred in participating countries since the 2008 Survey was completed.

5.1 Key findings

Objective 1) ENQAVET has contributed to European policy developments and reviews regarding quality assurance:

- All countries participating in the Survey have launched general and comprehensive reforms, initiatives and/or reviews of their VET systems with quality assurance implications since 2008.
- The responses to the Survey demonstrate that the European initiatives, such as the EQF and ECVET have contributed to these reforms.
- ENQA-VET by using policy learning methods, fostering a culture of quality improvement and collaboration and being a communication anchor has stimulated, inspired and guided policy developments regarding quality assurance in Member States.
- These major findings give a picture of a consistent and coherent process of different levels of implementation across and within Member States. Sharing understanding of common policy issues, common instruments/tools availability and being involved in a culture of quality improvements have contributed to this energetic quality and convergence process.

Objective 2) ENQA-VET has supported the introduction and implementation of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF):

- There is a significant rate of increase of 64 per cent between 2008 and 2009 in relation to implementation of the EQARF, which shows that ENQA-VET Member countries are progressing in preparing for the implementation of the EQARF at a high rate.
- It is important to sustain this rate, which demonstrates that the measures put in place are working, and that networking and European cooperation are playing an important role in this progress.
- The results of the Survey corroborate evidence that the EQARF appears to be capable of being used as a common reference for quality improvements without infringing the principle of subsidiarity in the education field, proving a new coherent impetus to the continuous improvements of quality management practices in VET systems among Member States.
- Evidence shows that ENQA-VET by fostering cooperation and using policy learning methodology has inspired policy changes in Member States participating in the Survey, creating a synergy process towards common European goals, such as the

implementation of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF).

Objective 3) ENQA-VET has built sustainable European cooperation and exchange of good practice in quality assurance in VET within and among member countries and between VET organisations and other key stakeholders:

- There is an obvious trend towards outcome based learning and steering, which supports the EQARF, EQF and ECVET implementation.
- Participating countries are improving VET provision in order to: provide more timely and appropriate responsiveness to rapid economic and social changes by involving relevant stakeholders and by improving employability and social inclusion in VET provision.
- High percentages of market representative's involvement emphasised countries concentration on employability within VET provision.
- These trends confirm that there are common European efforts oriented towards continuous improvement of quality management in VET systems which ensure a process of consistency and transparency between the different policy initiatives in and within Member States, thereby improving mutual trust and facilitating mobility of learners and workers, with a LLL perspective.
- ENQA-VET, by fostering cooperation, has played an important role in this area. It has supported a culture of continuous improvement in VET and facilitated and supported exchange of experiences, mutual learning and consensus-building on common principles, guidelines and tools for quality developments in VET between VET organisations and other key stakeholders.
- Nevertheless, there seems to be a limited use of learners and teacher input in the quality assurance reform process.

Objective 4) ENQA-VET has promoted the effective use of communications to increase awareness and understanding of quality assurance, the Network and its activities

- The vast majority of countries have established their QANRPs, which indicates that there is a clear trend of national policy adjustments oriented towards the implementation of the EQARF.
- ENQA-VET has played a crucial part in the establishment of QANRPs. Evidence suggests that Member States' decisions, regarding the QANRPs, were defined by ENQA-VET membership and the legislative status on the EQARF.
- The establishment of QANRPs ensures that dissemination, awareness and understanding of the benefits and importance of quality assurance and networking in countries are happening in an effective manner.
- Countries have increasingly promoted the Network and its activity in their national context, which indicates that ENQA-VET has achieved the goal of boosting the effective use of communication to increase awareness and understanding of quality assurance across Member States.
- This shows that a sustainable process of communication, cooperation and exchange of good practices is been built among Member States through ENQA-VET membership regarding quality assurance. The challenges ahead are to sustain and continue this process at the high rates saw in 2009.

Objective 5) ENQA-VET has built sustainable European cooperation and exchange of good practice in quality assurance by creating links/bridges between VET and higher

education to further develop and support the entire education and training system in EU (i.e. including higher education)

- More work needs to be done in boosting links between VET and HE in order to achieve a coordinated cooperation and exchange of good practices at all levels of European education and training in a lifelong learning perspective.

5.2 Conclusions

Summing up, evidence suggests that ENQA-VET has achieved the objectives determined in its work programme 2008-2009, which implies that ENQA-VET has played a crucial role in the establishment and recognition of EU policy developments and initiatives in VET in relation to quality assurance among Member States.

Furthermore, the analysis of the Survey results suggests that ENQA-VET has supported the process established within the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration, as it was envisaged by the Commission.

The analysis indicates that the main purpose of the Network has been accomplished. It supports Member States efforts to promote the quality of education and VET systems, by fostering mutual learning and consensus building on quality assurance and creating a structured and sustainable platform for Member countries to exchange information, experience and debate in order to maintain consistency and transparency between the different policy initiatives of the EU.

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Annex 1: *Country abbreviations*

AT	Austria
BE	Belgium
BG	Bulgaria
CZ	the Czech Republic
DK	Denmark
DE	Germany
EE	Estonia
IE	Ireland
EL	Greece
ES	Spain
FR	France
IT	Italy
CY	Cyprus
LV	Latvia
LT	Lithuania
LU	Luxembourg
HU	Hungary
MT	Malta
NL	the Netherlands
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal
RO	Romania
SI	Slovenia
SK	Slovakia
FI	Finland
SE	Sweden
UK	United kingdom

Annex 2: Survey 2009

INTRODUCTION

Under the terms of its current work programme ENQA-VET is required to prepare a progress report on its activities and the level of participation in Member States. This survey is designed to prepare the report for 2009 and will complement the ENQA-VET survey conducted in 2008. The results of both surveys will provide an overview of the ENQA-VET contribution to policy developments in the quality assurance of vocational education and training (VET) in the Member States. **The results of this survey will form a substantive part of the final report which ENQA-VET will prepare for the European Commission at the end of the current contractual period.**

The survey aims to gather information on VET systems within Member States' national contexts. Please note that in order to gather information on progress in quality assurance and the role of ENQA-VET in VET systems in Member States national context, it is essential that the survey is completed collaboratively by the Member State representative in ENQA-VET and an appropriate representative of the relevant Ministry(s) in each country.

Therefore, Part A of the survey will require collaboration with the representatives of the appropriate national authorities in each Member State while Parts B and C may be answered from the individual ENQA-VET member's perspective.

SURVEY OBJECTIVES

The present survey is designed to examine the role of ENQA-VET in policy developments in relation to quality assurance within the Member States. The Secretariat aims to have a better insight into how the Work Programme 2008-2009 has influenced the introduction of new legislative initiatives among participating states (i.e. introduction of national quality frameworks, developments on adaptations of EQARF/CQAF to national contexts, progress on implementation of EQARF/CQAF etc).

SURVEY

The survey addresses 3 issues:

- A) Level of policy development in relation to quality assurance among Member States and the implementation of EQARF/CQAF.
- B) Member State actions relating to the dissemination of information, including the collaboration with the Quality Assurance National Reference Point (QANRP) in each country.
- C) Links between quality assurance developments in VET and higher education.

This survey should be completed and returned to the Secretariat (Karolina@enqavet.eu) and copied to aoviedo@enqavet.eu no later than **30 June, 2009**.

QUESTIONS

PART A) NATIONAL VET POLICY AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EQARF/CQAF

Objective: *this section will provide an overview of national developments in quality assurance among Member States and how ENQA-VET has contributed to this process within its Work Programme 2008-2009*

1. In general, at what level is VET policy conducted in your country? (select all relevant)

- Regional
- National

2. What policy developments relating to quality assurance in VET have taken place in your country since January 2008? (select all relevant)

- Development of a national framework of quality assurance
- Introduction of new legislation, development, review and/or reform of your VET national system relating to quality assurance
- Use of quality indicators for VET
- Development of VET national standards which are aligned with European standards and guidelines
- Introduction of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)
- Introduction of the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) to facilitate the recognition of knowledge, skills and competences gained by individuals in different learning environments or through periods of VET abroad
- None
- Other - Please specify

3. These developments are mainly connected with:

- Qualifications
- Curricula
- Awards
- Competences
- Other - Please specify

4. Have relevant stakeholders been involved in the reform process?

Yes

No

4.1 If yes, specify *(select all relevant)*

Social partners

VET providers

Industries/companies

Sectoral representatives

Chambers

Other - Please specify

5. Has your country introduced any initiatives to encourage employers to provide opportunities for updating the knowledge and skills of the workforce? *(skills needs forecasting, etc...)*

Yes

No

5.1 If yes, specify

6. Has your country introduced any innovative approach(es) and/or initiative(s) in VET to encourage disadvantaged groups *(i.e. unemployed, migrants, students with special education needs, ethnic minorities, older people etc.)* **to participate in training and/or other forms of lifelong learning?**

Yes

No

6.1 If yes, specify

7. Has your country undertaken any initiative to support the implementation of the EQARF/CQAF?

Yes

No

7.1 If yes, how?

By developing national quality assurance frameworks which adapt the EQARF/CQAF to the national context

By reforming legislation which facilitates/introduces steps toward EQARF/CQAF implementation

Other - Please specify

PART B) DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE QANRP

Objective: *this section will gather information about the process of European cooperation and exchange of good practices with regard to quality assurance in VET within and among member countries and how ENQA-VET has worked with the QANRP and promoted the effective use of communications to increase awareness and understanding of quality assurance, the Network and its activities*

8. Have you or your organisation assisted in the establishment of the Quality Assurance National Reference Point in your country?

Yes

No

8.1 If yes, how?

Your organisation has provided funding to establish a new institution which represents QANRP in your country

The national QANRP has been appointed within your organisation

Other – Please specify

8.2 If yes, when? (approx. year)

9. Have you or your organisation collaborated with the QANRP on quality assurance policy issues for VET in your country?

- Yes
- No

10. What steps/initiatives other than participation in ENQA-VET's thematic groups, peer learning activities, conferences and General Assembly have you taken to promote ENQA-VET's work in your country? (select all relevant)

- Set up links on official websites or placed a description of ENQA-VET network on your website
- Referenced ENQA-VET in publications
- ENQA-VET's work is disseminated by your QANRP
- None
- Other – Please specify

11. Does your organisation have a link to the ENQA-VET website?

- Yes
- No

PART C) LINKS WITH HIGHER EDUCATION

Objective: *this section will provide an overview of the developing European process of cooperation and exchange of good practices regarding quality assurance between VET and Higher Education. It will also look at how ENQA-VET has promoted the effective use of communication, cooperation and exchange of good practices relating to quality assurance between VET and Higher Education*

12. Has your country developed links between quality assurance in VET and Higher Education?

- Yes
- No

12.1 If yes, how?

- By co-participating in conference/seminars

- By carrying out joint research studies
- By jointly using and collecting data and sharing data relevant to both
- By cooperating in addressing future labour market needs
- Other – Please specify

PART D) PERSONAL DETAILS

Name:

Organisation:

Title:

Name:

Organisation:

Title:

Name:

Organisation:

Title:

