



Introduction

This report has been drafted by the EQAVET National Reference Point of Belgium (Flanders) and describes the main quality assurance arrangements in vocational education and training.

SECTION A - DESCRIPTION OF QUALITY ASSURANCE ARRANGEMENTS

1. Initial VET (IVET)

Introduction

In Flanders initial VET is organised at secondary and at post-secondary (i.e. Secondary after Secondary Education (Se-n-Se) and higher vocational education (or HBO5) level as part of formal education. The provision of IVET as part of formal compulsory education (until 18 years old) is a shared responsibility between the Ministry of Education and Training, the Ministry of Employment and the (VET) schools.

Besides fulltime secondary education, young people aged 15 or 16 years old can decide to embark on a system of learning and working. They can follow a programme in part-time vocational secondary education, which is organised by centres for part-time vocational secondary education (CDO and Syntras). These can be autonomous (like the Syntras). CDO's tend to be connected to a school for fulltime secondary education.

1.1 Quality assurance arrangements at system level in IVET

- National Framework for quality assurance in initial VET – who is in charge of what?
The quality of education in Flanders is ensured by the government, which imposes conditions to be met by the school or institution in order to receive financial support and become accredited.
The institutions in charge of external quality assurance at secondary education level and higher vocational education level are the Ministry of Education, the Agency for Higher Education, Adult Education, Qualifications and Study Grants (AHOVOKS), the Inspectorate, the Vlor (Flemish Council for Education and Training) (levels 1 to 4 of the NQF Flanders) and/or the Commission for Higher Vocational Education (level 5 of the NQF Flanders).
- Statutory stakeholder involvement in quality assurance in initial VET systems
Agreements or so-called 'covenants' are made between industry and education,

aimed at improving quality in both IVET and CVET. Within this enhanced cooperation, the focus is on implementing new education and training programmes in which schools are more responsive to the skill needs of industry. Furthermore, VET schools and businesses work together on organising workplace training for VET students. Businesses give financial support to the schools so that they can update their infrastructure.

Overall, social partners are involved in the layout of the professional qualifications which will form the basis for VET of the different education and training providers.

- Requirements for evaluation and review

- Identification of training needs

Training needs are identified through studies carried out by VDAB. Each year a report is made on bottleneck occupations and the pathway of graduates and current vacancies are analysed. It is also in relation to these analyses that applications for organising new programmes are approved by Government. Furthermore, concrete training needs in specific sectors are identified through cooperation between industry and education.

- Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on VET providers

At the moment every accredited secondary school or Syntra centre can submit an application to organise VET programmes at level 1 to 4. The requirements are:

- The programme has to respond to social, economic, cultural or technical needs;
- The content of the programme has to align with one or more current valid frameworks;
- The programme has to be adapted to the level of development and the talents of the target group and to the grade and the type of education.
- The programme has to fit into the existing offer of programmes and has to prepare for further education or employment opportunities.

- - Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)

- Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators

The Inspectorate is responsible for monitoring the quality of education and training provision of Flemish schools. The Flemish Government delivers annual inspection reports to the Flemish Parliament, based on the working activities of the Inspectorate and dealings with one or more quality aspects of education. The Inspectorate covers qualification levels 1 up to 4 in terms of quality control whereas qualification levels 5 to 8 are covered by the NVAO.

The Flemish Government makes explicit which reference framework the Inspectorate should use during inspections and can apply differentiations according to the level of education. At the moment the inspectorate uses the CIPO model which stands for Context – Input – Process – Output.

1.2 Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in IVET

- Planning at VET provider level (including identification of training needs)

The quality assurance at provider level comprises internal reviews, which are the responsibility of the provider, and external reviews carried out by the Inspectorate (and the Visitation Commission in the case of HBO5). Every VET provider is regarded as competent and responsible for programming, evaluation and programme certification.

- Requirements for monitoring and review (self-assessment)
The Decree on Quality in Education of 8 May 2009 stipulates that primary and secondary schools are responsible for their own quality. One of the criteria that are evaluated by the Inspectorate is whether schools have developed an internal quality assurance system. Self-evaluation is officially encouraged as part of the present inspection system and the current-day programmes for external support of schools. Primary and secondary schools formulate their own objectives based on their own pedagogical project.

Primary and secondary schools have a diverse range of tools available, which were developed for self-evaluation. It is part of the school's autonomy to decide how they will conduct the self-evaluation. To strengthen the internal quality assurance of schools and their ability to implement policies, schools will be supported by the Pedagogical Support Services.

Institutions providing higher vocational education are also expected to ensure internal quality assurance of the education and training programmes they offer.
- Certification, assessment and validation of learners
The certification and assessment of learners is part of the internal quality assurance system of every VET provider and is part of the criteria used by the inspectorate.
- Stakeholder involvement
The involvement of stakeholders is part of the internal quality assurance system of every VET provider and is part of the criteria used by the inspectorate.

2. Continuous VET (CVET)

Introduction

A large number of institutions in Flanders provide programmes at CVET level. The most important ones are: centres for adult education, VDAB, the Syntras, centres for agriculture and socio-cultural institutions. The new integrated system of external quality assurance will have its greatest effect on CVET programmes as the many different systems of quality assurance will be partly replaced by one new procedure and framework.

2.1 Quality assurance arrangements at system level in CVET

- National Framework for quality assurance in CVET – who is in charge of what?
In Flanders, there are several types of CVET which can be initiated by public authorities, companies, social partners or individuals. The ministries involved are: Education and Training (covering secondary adult education, higher vocational education of adult education and part-time artistic education), Employment (covering vocational training for jobseekers and employees – VDAB and entrepreneurial training (SYNTRA Flanders and the Syntras), Agriculture (training agriculture) and socio-cultural work (Culture).

The educational provision of formal vocational adult education is organised by CVOs within 13 regional working areas in Flanders. In each of these working areas, a consortium sees to an optimum course offer and the cooperation between the various centres. The CVO's offer programmes on level 2 to 5. From 2019 on, higher education institutes will be able to offer programmes on level 5.

Consequently, these programmes will not be the subject of the new integrated quality assurance system.

The VDAB and Syntra Flanders are both agencies under the competence of the Department for Work and Social Economy with the social partners represented in the Management Council.

The VDAB provides vocational training for adults in its competence centres. The VDAB is managed on a joint basis by the social partners under the supervision of the Flemish Community. The VDAB offers skill enhancement through the provision of training courses in their own competence centres as well as in cooperation with partners. This type of cooperation with third organisations only refers to those training courses set up for jobseekers and not for those courses organised for employed people or students.

SYNTRA Flanders was set up by the Flemish Community (the department for Work and Social Economy) to support the development of education and training programmes, which stimulates an entrepreneurial spirit. The entrepreneurial training programmes are organised by the 'Syntras', which are training providers comparable to schools.

- **Statutory stakeholder involvement in quality assurance in CVET systems**
With regard to legislation and/or policy notes, the social partners and other stakeholders are always involved via the strategic advice councils. In Flanders, with regard to VET, they typically concern a broad range of stakeholders coming from the following policy sides: education and training, work and social economy and the cultural sector.
- **Requirements for evaluation and review**
- **Identification of training needs**
The same instruments are used to identify training needs in CVET (report on bottleneck occupations, analyses on the pathway of graduates and the current vacancies) as in IVET.
- **Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on CVET providers**
There is a substantial amount of legislation on who can organise which programmes or can grant qualifications.
- **Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)**
The new quality assurance framework has to ensure that all vocational education and training programmes as well as prior acquired competences that lead to the same vocational qualification can guarantee that people having gone through the pathway in reality possess the same set of competences. The integrated quality assurance framework is applicable to all public and private providers of vocational qualifying pathways with the exception of higher education, including HBO5, which have a separate system of external quality assurance.

The framework is based on questions to assess the quality of a programme, which are then elaborated into various themes and facets. For each of the facets there is a quality descriptor.

- **Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators**

Two forms of monitoring and evaluation currently exist: an internal evaluation or self-assessment and an external evaluation undertaken by the Inspectorate with regard to the adult education centres (formal education). SYNTRA Flanders and the VDAB have their own monitoring and evaluation internal and external mechanisms. The Inspectorate monitors the quality of education provided in adult education centres.

SYNTRA Flanders evaluates the five regional Syntras every three years concerning name and brand reputation, market share, client satisfaction and the effectiveness of the training. The evaluation of the quality assurance process is monitored by an external assessment panel which is a visitation commission composed of internal and external members (including from AHOVOKS). SYNTRA Flanders is responsible for the implementation of integral quality assurance in the Syntras.

- Requirements CVET providers have to comply with (if not described in 1st section) Requirements vary, depending on the provider, since providers can fall under different departments.

2.2 Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in CVET

- Planning at CVET provider level (including identification of training needs)
The quality assurance at provider level comprises internal reviews, which is the responsibility of the provider, and external reviews carried out by the supervision of each department. Every VET provider is regarded as competent and responsible for programming, evaluation and programme certification.

- Requirements for monitoring and review (self-assessment)
In terms of self-assessment, as is the case for the providers of IVET, CVET providers have to monitor in a systematic way their own quality and they are free to choose how this is done.

For example, the Syntras have to carry out an in-depth self-evaluation using a specific EFQM-based instrument. The VDAB on the other hand, works with the EFQM framework as an internal system of quality assurance by the Quality Service within the VDAB. Moreover, quality is assured by stakeholders by means of client satisfaction surveys, complaint management, etc. and by the Internal Audit of the Flemish Administration (IAVA) which evaluates the VDAB.

- Certification, assessment and validation of learners
The certification and assessment of learners is part of the internal quality assurance system of every VET provider and is part of the criteria used by the inspectorate.
- Stakeholder involvement
The involvement of stakeholders is part of the internal quality assurance system of every VET provider and is part of the criteria used by the inspectorate.

SECTION B - INTERACTION BETWEEN NATIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND EQAVET

- National Reference Point – Introduction

Flanders has an EQAVET National Reference Point in place within AHOVOKS. AHOVOKS is an autonomous agency set up by the Ministry of Education and Training in 2009. Its main mission is to develop a quality assurance system for education, VET pathways and pathways for prior acquired competences pathways that lead to certificates of recognised qualifications. AHOVOKS realises its main mission by undertaking the following tasks:

- Formulating the endpoints ('einddoelen') for education, VET and prior acquired competences which lead to certificates of recognised qualifications;
- Guaranteeing unambiguous and clear certification processes. Overall, AHOVOKS has the lead role in the quality assurance of qualifying pathways. Furthermore, AHOVOKS was set up with the idea of providing a very close link with EU developments.

The person responsible for the NRP role also fulfils the role of EQF NCP, which provides added value in the form of a stronger link between the two EU instruments in the implementation in Flanders.

The process of setting up the NRP in Flanders was fairly evident considering the already existing role of EQF NCP as well as the tasks of AHOVOKS, which provides for the implementation rather than the design side of policy.

- National approach to enhance quality assurance

The Flemish integrated quality framework, which forms the basis for external quality assurance for all pathways which lead to a vocational qualification, can be seen as the final element in the development of the Flemish Qualifications Framework and the Flemish implementation of EQAVET. This framework has been elaborated by the Department of Education and Training, AHOVOKS, the Inspectorate, the Department of Work and Social Economy, VDAB (Flemish Public Employment and Vocational Training Service) and Syntra Flanders.

Within the framework of the Flemish Qualification Structure, vocational qualifications are being developed which will form the basis for future professions. Both formal pathways and non-formal pathways within different policy departments can lead to these vocational qualifications. All these pathways need to be externally quality assured by the same system to guarantee equal social recognition. The procedure for this external quality system is being developed and will fit in the existing systems of supervision.

- Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance

The EQAVET framework, and more specifically the descriptors and indicators, have served as a source of inspiration for the development of the integrated approach to external quality assurance. However, it has proven to be difficult to adopt them as such since everything has to be adapted to the Flemish context, i.e. because of the integrated approach, several policy domains and different policy priorities have to be taken into account.

Overall, it was felt that even though the EQAVET framework is rather general and self-evident, it does at the same time provide a very useful way of bringing

information together as well as providing inspiration for the tools to develop quality assurance measures.