

This report presents the results of a Peer Learning Activity, which has been prepared by the independent expert named on the cover. The report is based on a peer learning activity where policymakers and practitioners from a number of countries exchanged ideas and experiences on an issue of shared policy interest. This report reflects the opinions of the participants and does not constitute an official European Commission or ENQA-VET position.

Report on the

Peer Learning Activity on

Quality Assurance Procedures for

Student Assessment

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Executive Summary

In order to reinforce the Lisbon strategy, in 2002 was launched the Copenhagen Process having as priorities: promoting mobility, improving transparency, ensuring the recognition of competencies and qualifications and developing common instruments for quality in VET. The next three follow-up ministerial meetings (Maastricht, 2004, Helsinki, 2006, Bordeaux, 2008) reinforced the Copenhagen priorities and established specific focus areas up to 2010.

In order to improve the employability, the match between demand and supply and the access, one of the main priorities was to build common quality assurance systems and procedures at European level. Among the result of the Copenhagen Process were the Fundamentals of a 'Common Quality Assurance Framework' (CQAF) for VET in Europe (June 2004) and the creation of European Network on Quality Assurance in VET (ENQA-VET – October 2005), whose role was to promote the use of the CQAF, cooperation, networking and exchange of experience.

In order to add significant value to the development of quality assurance in VET across Europe, one of the main directions of ENQA VET activity is the organization of several Peer-Learning Activities (PLAs). The PLAs need to contribute significantly to the fulfilment of ENQA VET mission by: building a shared understanding of quality assurance, fostering sustainable cooperation among relevant stakeholders and supporting education authorities to develop the education and training systems within and across Europe.

The topic chosen for the PLA in Finland (as included into the ENQA VET Work Programme) was **“QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES FOR STUDENT ASSESSMENT”**. There are many (and well known) arguments in favour of considering this topic as a critical one for the education and training systems, in general, and especially for the VET systems. The contribution of this topic is consistent within the Copenhagen Process mentioned above:

- Ensuring better knowledge of the level of performance means increased transparency concerning VET systems and qualifications.
- Motivating the learner and offering positive, constructive feed back on the progress ensures the base for the continuity within lifelong and life-wide learning perspective.
- An increased mobility and the recognition of competencies and qualifications is impossible without a convergent European approach regarding the expected results of VET (learning outcomes).

Thus, the assessment of the student's knowledge, skills and competences should be quality assured in the terms stated by the “Deming Cycle” (“plan” – “do” – “check” – “act”), as reflected within the Proposal for the EQARF. The pillar of activity was the “red line” through the “quality cycle” mentioned above, through the topics approached:

- Policy development of Student Assessment
- Student assessment Quality Assurance (QA) procedures in VET
- Skills demonstrations as a part QA of Student Assessment
- QA procedures for Assessment of on-the-job learning
- Competence based Qualifications
- National Evaluations based on Skills demonstrations

The PLA was organized by the Finnish National Board of Education (FNBA) and the programme was designed by the FNBE representative appointed for this activity after

the consultation of the ENQA VET Secretariat and of the expert appointed for this PLA. In order to present the points of view of all main stakeholders regarding the main topic, a wide range of institutions were visited or represented during this PLA: policy makers, VET providers, stakeholders' representatives.

The completion of the pre activity questionnaire (reflecting both participants' expectations and the state of the arts in their own VET systems) was the main activity realized before the PLA. This questionnaire offered significant input regarding the ways this topic is approached in different VET systems. The main issues resulted from this analysis were:

- The necessity for common framework for student assessment, for IVET and CVET.
- The necessity of common national and / or sector standards, both for IVET and CVET.
- The further development of European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the correlation between EQF and the National Qualifications Frameworks should be both based on common concepts and similar standards.
- The national procedures for student assessment are different, in many systems, for IVET and CVET. The degree of generalization of the national procedures for student assessment is different too from a country to another.
- There are many and different ways in establishing the school enterprise relationship in student assessment. An agreement, at European level, on some major rules and principles regarding the school-enterprise relationship in student assessment is needed.
- It is necessary to find better ways to involve and motivate the employers for participating at student assessment (including at European level).
- The appropriate balance between theory and practice, between work based assessment and school based assessment is different from a VET system to another, and also for each sector, level and qualification.
- The assessors (especially from enterprises) should benefit from specific training.
- There is a need for common European procedures for awards, regarding both the awarding procedures and the awarding bodies, and also for monitoring and evaluating the student assessment. Peer review and external evaluation of VET providers may be parts of these mechanisms.
- Student self evaluation should have a more consistent part in the overall assessment mechanisms.
- In all VET systems there is a lot of available information for all stakeholders but efforts have to be made to make this information available for the disadvantaged groups.
- There are limited and not systematic mechanisms put in place to review the student assessment policies and procedures. There is a need to introduce, at national and European levels evidence based institutional mechanism to inform the decision making process.
- Strengthening the convergence of VET policies at European level concerning student assessment is necessary.
- Rethinking public funding for VET within a common European coherent framework is needed.

The expectation for each PLA is to build more convergent ideas and initiatives. The increasing convergence was ensured by the presentations and discussions during the PLA and the post-activity reflection. During the PLA, the participants had the opportunity to attend a number of 17 presentations, followed by discussions and, apart of these discussions, there were three rounds of general discussion and reflection, led by the.

The PLA met the expectations of all participants and produced a consistent added value at individual, national, regional and European levels. The “unity in diversity” may be considered the agreed approach. Thus, the interpretation and the use of the common instruments at policy and implementation levels (EQARF included) will be different from a VET system to another.

There were planned and realized three “reflection sessions”. Some main ideas emerged during these reflection sessions:

- Quality is a matter of values, a cultural issue more than a technical one
- The main strength of the Finnish system (obvious in all assessment policies and procedures, including in the “skills demonstration” method) is the specific alloy of trust, accountability and empowerment at VET provider level. The Finnish education was defined, by participants, as “confidence based education” and as a “success oriented school”. In Finland there is an obvious culture of authenticity, cooperation and partnership among all stakeholders.
- The Finnish society (and, consequently, the education system) is genuine cohesive and inclusive. In Finland, really, “nobody is left behind”: there are national and local programmes for disadvantaged groups and individuals, there is public and private support for the integration of the persons with special needs etc.
- The “balance” was an issue widely discussed. The conclusion was that each education system, each assessment methodology should be carefully balanced between: national / local; theory / practice; school based learning and assessment / work based learning and assessment; external assessment / self-peer- internal assessment; formative assessment / summative assessment; trust / control; individualization of education / mobility of the qualified persons. The points of balance on all these continuums are culturally determined and different for each VET system.
- There is a general need to extend and to modify the role of the teacher in order to satisfy the learner’s and the labour market needs.
- The systems and procedures for evaluation and recognition of prior learning should be further developed.
- The gap between the development of the policies regarding the QA mechanisms and the scarcity of resources allocated for the implementation of such mechanisms should be approached.
- This Finnish approach of “deregulation” leads to a major insight for the implementation of the EQARF: “think global, act local”.
- Promoting learning was considered as a must for a quality assured student assessment: the assessment procedures should lead to further learning (in a lifelong and life-wide perspective) and the assessment itself should be seen as a learning experience, both for assessor and for the assessed.
- The QA mechanisms and systems have not to be seen as “another task” for teachers and principals but they should be embedded into the “normal” organizational life of the VET provider.

The results of this PLA **confirm the ENQA VET policy choices** regarding the **implementation of the EQARF**:

- The need to further development of a common set of concepts, values, principles, targets, outputs and outcomes and mechanisms in quality assurance and quality management at European level.
- The role of the partnership between the central / local Government and the main stakeholders is crucial.

- The role of the VET provider is increasing in establishing and promoting QA systems and mechanisms.
- The implementation of the EQARF should take care of cultural differences and to consider the cultural impact on policy development and, mainly, on policy implementation of QA mechanisms.
- The reconciliation of the different frameworks existing for IVET and CVET is necessary in most of the European VET systems.
- Making VET more attractive is a must for most of the VET systems.

The PLA in Finland was very well prepared and organized and produced a wide range of ideas, useful at national and European levels. The participants' comments were enthusiastic and I strongly believe that this PLA will influence them all.

In the context of EQARF, the importance of PLAs will increase and, for this reason, the ENQA VET conclusions and report may establish some characteristics and even one (or several) format(s) for this kind of activity.

This topic, "QA for student assessment" may be considered one of the most productive at European level, especially regarding policy matters.

It is obvious that the specific methods, techniques and procedures are, more or less, driven by the culture, tradition, sector, "power balance" between the stakeholders involved and many other local factors. Thus, the next PLAs on QA should be more focused on these issues relevant for **policy level** such as:

- Standards and qualifications in relationship with the European Qualification Framework (EQF) and with the National Qualification Frameworks.
- Unifying IVET and CVET.
- Individualizing VET.
- Stakeholders' involvement and the new roles for teachers and trainers.
- The appropriate balance between national steering and local initiative in quality assurance.
- Feed back and review procedures in order to inform the decision making process ("evidence based decision making").
- Awarding structures and procedures.
- The balance between self evaluation, peer evaluation / review and external evaluation.
- Rethinking public funding for VET.

1. Introduction

1.1. The policy context at European level

In March 2000, the European Council in Lisbon established a very ambitious strategic aim for 2010 of making European Union “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy of the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion”

The economic competitiveness and the sustainable growth and, as well, better paid and more attractive jobs, are all depending on the competences acquired by the labour force during the initial and the continuous vocational education and training (VET). For this obvious reason, in 2002 was launched the Copenhagen Process. In the Copenhagen Declaration, approved on 30 November 2002, the Ministries responsible for VET in the Member States, candidate countries, EFTA-EEA countries, the European social partners and the European Commission, agreed on enhanced European cooperation in VET. There were established four priorities:

- Promoting mobility by enhancing the European dimension in VET;
- Improving transparency (concerning VET systems and qualifications), policy making, information and counselling / especially from the perspective of lifelong learning;
- Ensuring the recognition of competencies and qualifications, including establishing a common set of principles regarding the validation of nonformal and informal learning.
- Developing common instruments for quality in VET including by paying attention to the learning needs of teachers and trainers.

The next three follow-up ministerial meetings (Maastricht, 2004, Helsinki, 2006, Bordeaux, 2008) reinforced the Copenhagen priorities but, on the others hand, established specific focus areas for the next period of time.

The last follow up meeting, held in Bordeaux at the end of 2008, set four objectives for the period 2009-2010:

- **Implementing the tools and schemes for promoting cooperation in the field of VET** - with a particular focus on:
 - establishing National Qualifications Frameworks on the basis of learning outcomes;
 - the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training;
 - the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework.
- **Heightening the quality and attractiveness of VET systems** - by promoting the attractiveness of VET to all target groups, and by promoting the excellence and quality.
- **Improving the links between VET and the labour market** – by
 - developing forward-planning tools focusing on jobs and skills in line with the Council Resolution on "New skills for new jobs";
 - ensuring the involvement of the social partners;
 - improving guidance and counselling (throughout life) to ease the transition from training to work;
 - promoting adult training, in particular in the workplace, with special attention to SMEs;
 - developing validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes;
 - increasing mobility;
 - increasing the role of higher education in VET.

- **Strengthening cooperation arrangements** by:
 - increasing the efficiency of mutual learning activities;
 - strengthen linkages between VET, school education, higher education and adult training;
 - consolidating exchanges and cooperation with third countries and international organisations, such as the OECD, the Council of Europe, the ILO and UNESCO.

The main outputs of the Copenhagen Process are, until now:

- **The Europass** - a single framework for transparency of qualifications and competences - launched at a special conference under the Luxembourg Presidency on 31 January - 1 February 2005.
- The Council Resolution on **strengthening policies, systems and practices in the field of guidance throughout life**, which brings a coherent approach to this topic across education and training sectors at Community and national levels (May 2004).
- The Council Draft Conclusions on the "**identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning**" endorse a set of common European principles to help develop confidence and trust in this rapidly emerging sector (May 2004)
- The Council Conclusions on **Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training**, which endorse a Common Quality Assurance Framework for VET providers and systems (June 2004) and the elaboration of the **Fundamentals of a 'Common Quality Assurance Framework' (CQAF) for VET in Europe** (June 2004)
- The Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on a **European Qualifications Framework (EQF)**. The EQF will relate different national qualifications systems to a common European reference framework (January 2008).
- The Commission proposal for a Recommendation on a **European credit system for VET (ECVET)** (April 2008).
- The Commission proposal for a Recommendation on a **European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF)** (April 2008).
- The Council Resolution on **strengthening policies, systems and practices in the field of guidance throughout life** (November 2008).

It is obvious that quality assurance (QA) and quality management (QM) systems and procedures are one of the main topics with relevance for all the above mentioned aims and objectives and, thus, present in all documents mentioned above. The quality seems, at national and European level, becoming a more and more important issue, having in mind both sides of this concept, the objective one (devising standards) and the subjective (meeting and exceeding customers' satisfaction).

The European Network on Quality Assurance in VET (ENQA-VET) was established in October 2005 by the Commission, with the support of countries participating in the Copenhagen Process and the social partners. ENQA-VET main role was, during the first work programme (2006-2007), to promote the use of the Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF) on a voluntary basis, and promote cooperative, inclusive and sustainable networks at all levels. It is a platform of exchange of experience, debate and consensus-building on concrete proposals on quality assurance and development. It will serve as a bridge with EQF and link VET to higher education.

The second ENQA-VET work programme was adopted in 2007. The European Commission agreed to designate a grant of up to 2 Millions EUR to the Network as

activity based funding. The funding is intended to enable the Network to plan, manage, organise and resource its activities for 2008 and 2009. Specifically the Work Programme will enable the Network to:

- add significant value to the development of quality assurance within VET across Europe through European cooperation;
- position itself as a key player in the area of QA;
- promote the development of synergies and avoid duplication of work across a range of European agencies, organisations and Networks.

“The Network provides a platform for regular exchanges of experience, debate and consensus-building on concrete proposals at European level. It acts as an 'umbrella' for various initiatives and thematic work reflecting the priorities, needs and concerns of a wide range of stakeholders at systems and providers levels. It allows for blending and connecting developments at both national and European levels and brings sustainability to the process of European co-operation in the field of quality assurance in VET”¹.

1.2. Peer learning activities: purpose and rationale

In order to add significant value to the development of quality assurance in VET across Europe through European cooperation, one of the main directions of ENQA VET activity is the organization of several Peer-Learning Activities (PLAs). The PLAs need to contribute significantly to the fulfilment of ENQA VET mission by:

- **Building a shared understanding** of quality assurance and development among, member countries, social partners, regulatory/national authorities and providers.
- **Fostering sustainable cooperation** among relevant stakeholders at different levels.
- **Supporting education authorities** to develop the education and training systems within and across Europe.

Consequently, the PLAs are important means to accomplish all five key objectives of ENQA VET network. One of the main results of the ENQA VET Work Programme for 2008 and 2009 will be a general evaluation report, “Learning from Peer Learning”. This evaluation report will review the Networks Peer Learning activity. It will:

- **Outline the purpose and context** for the activity.
- **Describe and evaluate** the Peer Learning case studies.
- **Identify key findings and learning points.**
- **Draw conclusions** (including identify and measure impacts).
- **Explore the potential of new forms** of Peer Learning activities.
- **Make recommendations for the future development** of Peer Learning.

Besides the general framework outlined in the ENQA VET Work Programme 2008-2009, the purpose of the PLAs was specified during the PLA Briefing Meeting from September the 10th 2008. Each PLA should:

1. Provide a clear European benefit and added-value, not only for the individual participants, and including for developing a culture of peer review at a European level.
2. Develop recommendations for the Commission on the “VET package” (EQF, ECVET and EQARF) and its implementation and contribute to the ENQA-VET work programme.
3. Offer opportunities for participants’ reflection.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/qualitynet_en.html

4. Follow a “Pillar of Activity” (a main topic), through over all activities, with focus on quality assurance aspect of each topic (including stakeholders’ and VET providers’ involvement).
5. Be planned, prepared and organized in advance and comprise not only the visit but also pre-PLA and post-PLA activities. In this respect, a specific focus will be on the follow-up: what the participants are doing in their own systems as a result of the PLA.
6. Generate usable and transferable results at participant, national and European levels (including for the host country). For this reason, the participants need to be engaged with the topic in their home country as “key multiplier function”.

Starting from these aims, one of the questions from the Pre-activity questionnaire² tried to reveal the match between the participants’ expectations and these desired outcomes. The **summary of these expectations** is listed below:

- Learning, improvement and development, e.g. concerning new models from other countries, creating new ideas together – Austria
- Find out what goes on else where; share knowledge and ideas; learn about new methods and practices; exchange ideas for future work – Cyprus
- An overview of evaluation processes in VET, CVET in different EU countries; issues related with the introduction of evaluation processes as well as solutions – Czech Republic
- To learn about quality assured assessment as implemented in Finland and other member states; to explore issues in student self assessment as a basis for attainment of qualification, including in relation to equity and perception - Ireland
- The skill demonstrations approach practiced in Finland and aiming to improve cooperation between school and labour market has similarities with the new assessment approach envisaged by the Luxembourg Ministry for Education and Vocational Training. Further insight, experiences as well as identification of strengths and weaknesses of this approach could be of great value for Luxembourg.
- Dialogue and especially inspiration – Netherlands
- Knowledge and experience in the quality assurance aspects and on student assessment, as one of the most important aspects of QA at school and system levels – Romania
- To understand how others ensure the employers' voice is heard and fully recognized in assessment – UK.

Analyzing the participants’ expectation we may conclude that all of them fit within the general framework planned, for all PLAs, by ENQAVET.

1.3. The “pillar of activity”: Quality Assurance Procedures for Student Assessment

In this section I shall describe and comment the main topic of the PLA and the programme. I shall try, as well, to outline the reasons behind the choice of Finland to host this specific PLA activity.

The topic chosen for the PLA in Finland (as included into the ENQA VET Work Programme) was **“QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES FOR STUDENT ASSESSMENT”**.

² See Appendix A

There are many (and well known) arguments in favour of considering this topic as a critical one for the education and training systems, in general, and especially for the VET systems. In this respect, being aware that all European and national documents focus on this issue, we mention only the contribution of this topic at the purposes of the Copenhagen Process and, in particular, of EQARF. In order to attain the aims of these European processes it is essential to improve and to evaluate **“the ‘outputs’ and ‘outcomes’ of VET in terms of increasing employability, improving the match between demand and supply, and promoting better access to lifelong training, in particular for disadvantaged people”**.

The assessment is a key issue not only for VET but, in general, for all education systems: the quality, the equity and the efficiency of educations are conditioned by the effectiveness and the quality of the assessment of the students' learning outcomes. The main functions of assessment are:

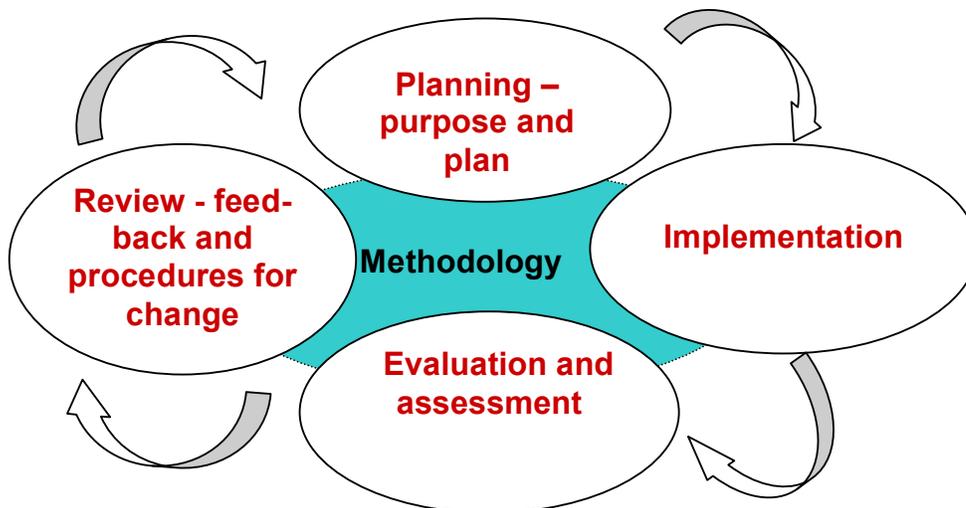
- To evaluate the level of specific knowledge, skills and competencies, related with a norm or criterion (i.e. standard), for a specific individual or target group and for different purposes (e.g. passing to another level of education, selection, employment, promotion etc.).
- To provide feed-back on progress and, thus, motivating learners and increasing learning.
- To evaluate the learning process itself – judging the level of adequacy of the learning situations and experiences for the knowledge, skills and competencies targeted.
- To evaluate the curricular aims and objective in relations with beneficiaries' needs and policy goals.
- To evaluate the VET and overall education policies themselves.

Having in mind these main functions and in order to meet the established goals within the Copenhagen Process mentioned above, the contribution of this topic is essential:

- Better knowledge of the level of performance (knowledge, skills and competencies) means increased transparency concerning VET systems and qualifications.
- Motivating the learner and offering positive, constructive feed back on the progress ensures the base for the continuity within lifelong and life-wide learning perspective.
- We cannot conceive an increased mobility and the recognition of competencies and qualifications without a convergent European approach regarding the expected results of VET (learning outcomes) and, of course, of the levels of attainment of these results in different systems.

Summarising, it is almost impossible to develop a European dimension for VET and common instruments for quality in VET without knowing, comparing and analysing how the student is assessed in different systems. The same, it is obvious that all above mentioned focal points mentioned above (see p. 1-4) without effective, transparent and shared assessment mechanisms

In order to improve the employability, the match between demand and supply and the access, the assessment of the student's knowledge, skills and competences should be quality assured in the terms stated by the “Deming Cycle” (“plan” – “do” – “check” – “act”), as reflected within the Proposal for the EQARF:



The pillar of activity, **quality assurance procedures for student assessment**, was the “red line” through the “quality cycle” mentioned above, through the topics approached:

- Policy development of Student Assessment
- Student assessment Quality Assurance (QA) procedures in VET
- Skills demonstrations as a part QA of Student Assessment
- QA procedures for Assessment of on-the-job learning
- Competence based Qualifications
- National Evaluations based on Skills demonstrations

The focus of this PLA was the specific ways the student assessment ensures, on ones hand, the match between the results (in terms of knowledge, skills and competencies) and the educational targets (set through objectives and standards), and on the others hand, the customers’ satisfaction for these results. For these reasons, the visits and presentations planned involved a wide range of institutions and stakeholders’ representatives.

The PLA was organized by the Finnish National Board of Education (FNBA) and the programme was designed by the FNBE representative appointed for this activity, Mrs. Leena Koski, after the consultation of the ENQA VET Secretariat and of the expert appointed for this PLA, beginning with September 2008.

The Final programme is presented in **Appendix B**.

In order to present the points of view of all main stakeholders regarding the main topic (QA for student assessment), a wide range of institutions were visited or represented during this PLA:

- **Policy makers:** Ministry of Education and Finnish National Board of Education.
- **VET providers:** Keskuspuisto Vocational College and Special Education Resource Center, Salpaus Further Education, Kaarina Social and Health Care College and Perho Culinary School
- **Stakeholders’ representatives:** Lahti Region Educational Consortium and the Federation of Finnish Technology Industries.

The first question that could be asked (and was asked by all participants) was: “Why the Finnish system is an example of “best practice” in education and in the field of student assessment?”

According³ to international surveys, Finland is one of the most competitive countries in the world. This success can be attributed to an efficient and open public sector and an egalitarian, high-quality education and research system. According to the OECD PISA survey, young Finns’ knowledge and skills rank among the best in the OECD countries in mathematics, science and reading literacy. In adult education and training, the number of participants has grown by 200,000 people over the past ten years to the extent that the participation rate is now 54% of the working-age population.

According to the Finnish officials⁴, the Finnish success is explained by a complicated network of interrelated factors such as the **pedagogical philosophy**, the **individualism and inclusion**, and **equal opportunities and equity**. Analyzing more in depth the functioning of the Finnish school, the specific QA policies are based⁵ on specific features (confirmed during the PLA):

- **Democratic and trust based evaluation and QA** – for instance, there is no national inspection.
- **Local accountability** – at provider level.
- **Humanist, holistic approach** to student assessment and the use of evaluation results.
- Goals of **empowerment and personal development**.
- **High level of professional skill** (teacher education).
- **Conservative and compliant, slow in change but careful and considered**.
- **High level of consensus** and local agreement.

The Finnish VET education system⁶ is based on providing all children and young people with equal basic education services. In Finland, education is compulsory, starting from the year in which the child becomes seven years old and ending when he/she is 16.

Vocational schools provide vocational qualifications. The studies take three years. Practical training is part of vocational school education. In addition to written exams, professional skills must be demonstrated in practice. Completing vocational education qualifies the student to seek admission to polytechnics or universities.

The objective of vocational education and training is to guarantee access to skilled labour force and to support industry-driven innovations. Special attention is paid to improving the quality and effectiveness of training and its relevance to working life and to increasing appreciation of vocational skills. New challenges to development arise from European co-operation in vocational education and training, notably the Copenhagen process. Greater mobility among students and qualification-holders calls for the development of credit transfer systems and quality assurance in education and training.

³ http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Julkaisut/2006/liitteet/eng_opm15.pdf?lang=en ; see also **Appendix C** for the general structure of the Finnish education system.

⁴ Pekka Kupari - Finnish Institute for Educational Research, University of Jyväskylä (Presentation for Study Visit, Romanian TVET Delegation, September 17, 2008)

⁵ See below, the presentation: **National evaluations based on skill demonstrations and COAF Model** (Mari Rökköläinen, Counselor of Education (No. 13).

⁶ <http://www.edu.fi/>

Finland also operates an apprenticeship training system. Young people already in working life can obtain basic vocational qualifications through apprenticeship training.

Adult education and training offers citizens the opportunity to obtain education and complete qualifications at any stage of life. Adults can study either in the same educational institutions as young people, or at institutions and units aimed at adults, as is done in liberal adult education.

Vocational upper secondary qualifications, further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications can also be obtained through competence tests independent of how the vocational skills have been acquired. To this end, qualification-oriented education and training is offered to the whole youth age group (16–21) and measures are taken to upgrade and update adults' competencies. As the population grows older, it is essential to accelerate young people's transition to further and higher education and, subsequently, to the labour market by streamlining student selection procedures, speeding up graduation and enhancing recognition of prior learning.

2. Exchanging Views and Sharing Best Practices: the Main Issues

One of the main purposes of ENQA VET is **building a shared understanding** of quality assurance and development among member countries, social partners, regulatory/national authorities and providers. For this reason, using the Pre-Activity questionnaire we tried to see how this topic is approached in different VET systems, as a basis for further discussion, and how easy or difficult will be to build the required common understanding of this very important topic – QA in student assessment, within the EQARF framework.

The **list of participants**⁷ reflects the range of experiences and institutions involved in VET provision and development: Ministries of Education, regulating bodies and other Institutions at national level (including QA agencies), school inspectorates, universities, VET Providers. In this respect, the principle of selecting people with potential impact at national and even European levels was respected. The diversity of experiences and positions was confirmed during the discussions and reflected by the diversity of opinions.

2.1. Preliminary activities - the pre-activity questionnaire:

The completion of the **pre activity questionnaire**⁸ (reflecting both participants' expectations and the state of the arts in their own VET systems) was the main activity realized before the PLA. The pre activity questionnaires were filled in by the participants from: Austria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Finland, Ireland, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Romania and UK-England.

The summary of the answers at the pre-activity questionnaire were presented in the first day of the PLA, during the first Discussion and Reflection Session⁹. The main findings are listed below. At each topic, there are presented some issues that might be interesting at European level.

a. Designing student assessment: policy and planning

In most of the countries, there is not a single national framework for student assessment, covering both IVET and CVET – exceptions: Finland, Ireland and UK – England. Most of the national frameworks refer to the IVET and (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Romania) and, for some of them, with a different framework for CVET (Cyprus – in process of development, Czech Republic and Romania):

Issues: the necessity for a singular framework for student assessment, common for IVET and CVET

In most of the countries there are national VET standards (exceptions: Austria and Cyprus – but for both, work in progress -, and Luxemburg). The standards were developed mostly for IVET and less for CVET and are correlated with the National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs). There are different ways in defining these standards.

Issues: the necessity of national and / or sector standards. The necessity of common standards for IVET and CVET. The further development of EQF and the correlation between EQF and NQFs both based on common concepts and similar standards.

⁷ See Appendix D

⁸ See Appendix A

⁹ See Appendix E, the expert's presentation

Generally, there are national procedures for student assessment for both IVET and CVET (exception, Austria, with regional procedures), within the existing frameworks, standards and qualifications. There are more procedures for IVET and less for CVET, mostly due to the state involvement and responsibility in initial schooling (including IVET). The balance between the national and local levels in establishing and adapting assessment procedures is different from system from another.

Issues: the national procedures are different, in many systems, for IVET and CVET; the degree of generalization of the national procedures is different from a country to another.

Student assessment is, generally, competence based (work in progress in Austria, Cyprus, Luxemburg). Usually, the competence based evaluation is not the sole criterion or method of evaluation. The “competence” is defined differently in the participating countries and, the same, the degree of generality.

Issues: the different definitions of “competence” in different systems

b. Implementing student assessment

There are common procedures for student assessment, developed at national or sector level, for IVET, correlated with the school leaving exams. The procedures for CVET are usually different and less “centrally” controlled (only in Ireland, Netherlands and UK there are common procedures). The procedures also vary according to the nature of learning, the awards standards, the qualification level, the context, the programme of learning etc. In several countries (Czech Republic, Ireland, UK) the procedures may target partial qualifications.

Issues: the unification of the student assessment procedures for IVET and CVET.

In most of the countries, there is a strong relationship between school and enterprise in student assessment. This relationship is rather weak in Cyprus, Netherlands (for IVET) and Luxemburg and unclear in UK. There are different methodologies and different degree of formalization / regulation. For instance, in Ireland one “internal verifier” and one “external authenticator” verify the quality of student assessment, no matter who is the provider – school or employer. In Finland, the “qualifications committees”, involving the major stakeholders, define rather in detail, the assessment procedure.

Issues: there are many ways in regulating the school enterprise relationship in student assessment; reaching agreement, at European level, on some major rules and principles regarding the school - enterprise relationship in student assessment (how, at what level, who are the “contracting partners” etc.); involving and motivating the employers in student assessment.

There are, in all VET systems, both theoretical and practical components of student assessment. The role of practical component is generally increasing, even if there are a lot of systems where the theoretical component is still the main one (Cyprus, Romania).

Issues: finding the appropriate balance between theory and practice for each sector, level and qualification; the possibility to define, for each country, a specific “balance point”.

There are, in most of the VET systems (exceptions: Austria, Cyprus), both work based assessment and school based assessment, but the role of work based assessment is generally increasing. The proportion of work based assessment and

school based assessment also vary depending on the level of qualification and sector.

Issues: finding the appropriate balance between work based assessment and school based assessment for each sector, level and qualification; the possibility to define, for each country, a specific “balance point”.

The assessors for VET are usually VET teachers and instructors or sector experts with pedagogical qualification and / or consistent experience. In most of the countries there are no specific regulations in this respect.

Issues: the need for specific training and qualification for assessors - standards included.

c. The consequences: evaluating and assessing student assessment

The outputs of the assessment procedures are very different from a country to another, especially regarding the awards / diplomas / certificates granted after the completion of a specific VET programme. It is the same situation regarding the awarding bodies (“certification authorities”), which are very different from a country to another. In some countries, there is only one “certification authority” (usually, the Ministry of Education – e.g. Romania), in others (e.g. Ireland) there are several “awarding bodies”. In some systems (e.g. UK), parts of qualifications may be awarded.

Issues: common European procedures for awards, regarding both the awarding procedures and the awarding bodies; unifying the types and structure of awards at European level.

There are many kinds and very different mechanisms put in place, in different VET systems, for monitoring the student assessment (e.g.: supervision / inspection by regional / national authorities; externally appointed observers / experts as members in assessment committees; public examinations; grievance / complaints procedures to superior / external bodies. The mix of these mechanisms is different from a system to another. Only in Ireland the monitoring is seen, explicitly, as a part of a wide and complex QA system.

Issues: common European mechanisms / procedures for monitoring the student assessment.

There are many kinds and very different mechanisms put in place, in different VET systems, for evaluating the student assessment (e.g.: feed-back from the students themselves; supervision / inspection by regional / national authorities; external appointed observers / experts as members in assessment committees; statistical surveys at national / regional level). The mix of these mechanisms is different from a system to another. Only in Ireland the assessment is evaluated, explicitly, as a part of a wide and complex QA system, by the external authenticators.

Issues: less concern in evaluating than in monitoring the student assessment; designing common European mechanisms / procedures for evaluating the student assessment, as an important part of common quality mechanisms; peer review and external (international) evaluation of VET providers may be parts of these mechanisms.

d. Closing the circle: review, feed-back and procedures for change

In all VET systems there is a lot of available information for all stakeholders (e.g. Information regarding: policies, regulations, standards, curriculum, results and statistics, guidelines, content and procedures, QA specifications and demands).

Usually, the regulating institutions and the providers share the responsibility for communication and for the stakeholders' information.

Issues: making information available for disadvantaged groups.

There are limited and not systematic mechanisms put in place to review the student assessment policies and procedures (e.g.: publishing inspection results, sharing information and statistics, periodical public analysis and review). The periodical reports / surveys / analysis published periodically and the statistics at provider and system levels are the most common mechanisms of this kind. Only in very few countries there are regular in-depth studies and surveys. Only in Ireland, these mechanisms lead explicitly to changes in the policies (every five years) and guidelines for student assessment (including in teacher training).

Issues: closing the “Deming Cycle”: introducing, at national and European levels evidence based institutional mechanism to inform the decision making process, regarding the review of the student assessment policies and procedures (“evidence based decision making”).

In all systems there are envisaged or ongoing significant reforms / changes: centralized exams and competence oriented assessment (Austria); VET reform, including student assessment issues (Cyprus); leaving school examinations reform (ISCED 2C) and “Maturita” (ISCED 3A) (Czech Republic); curriculum reform, “skills demonstration”, unifying the assessment criteria (Finland); the implementation of the qualifications and of the FETAC assessment policy (Ireland); the implementation of a new law on VET - competency based evaluation, integrating competencies acquired in different contexts, stakeholders involvement (Luxemburg); central examination in certain fields (the Netherlands); NQF, competency based & standards based assessment, stakeholders involvement, externalization of examinations (Romania); new unit-based system of qualifications (based on credit) - performance will be assessed against learning outcomes in each unit - UK.

Issues: ensuring the convergence of these reforms / changes.

In all systems there are, more or less, put in place mechanisms to match the student assessment results with the labour market needs. The main categories of such mechanisms are: research studies (Austria); the use of national indicators (such as unemployment) (Cyprus); market led strategies and policies (Ireland); tracking studies (Cyprus and Ireland); the use of assessment standards designed together with the main stakeholders and based on NQF (Czech Republic, Luxemburg, Romania); “Skills demonstration” (Finland); regulating institutions involving social partners (Netherlands – “Centres of Expertise”, Romania – “Sector Committees”).

Issues: ensuring common European mechanisms to match the student assessment results with the labour market needs; ensuring the convergence of national policies in this respect.

The student's involvement in assessment is very limited. There are some initiatives in this respect: self evaluation / group reflection (Czech Republic); study plans made by student for skills demonstration (Finland); permanent feed-back and dialogue (Finland); increasing learner's responsibility and appeal procedures (Ireland).

Issues: increasing the role of self evaluation in the overall student assessment policies and procedures.

The stakeholders are involved in student assessment at national level in all VET systems. The institutions involved are: public regulating institutions – i.e. Ministries; Inspectorates; VET schools; higher education institutions; chambers of commerce or similar and employers (unions and individual); research institutions; partnership

structures at national, regional or local level; trade unions; external evaluators. The mechanisms for stakeholders' involvement are: examinations review; assessors' nomination; inspection; NQF and standards development; examination content and procedures approval; competence-based tests organization and supervision; external reviews; giving advice; funding.

Issues: expanding stakeholders' involvement at European level by European structures and mechanisms.

There are, in most of the VET systems, mechanisms put in place in order to document the quality of student assessment by companies and workplaces: feed back on the competencies and skills of the newly appointed employees; feed back during apprenticeship, practical training and examinations; internal training and assessment; authentication process (Ireland); surveys and reports – at VET schools request.

Issues: reinforcing the principle of evidence based assessment and evidence based decision making.

The resources (human, logistic, financial, time) involved in VET assessment and the funding mechanisms (public, private, by the student) are very diverse and different from a system to another.

Issues: rethinking public funding for VET within a common European coherent framework; increasing the effectiveness for the use of the public funding for VET.

2.2. The visit and its consequences

This section will deal with the visit itself and will try to report on how it contributed to build common understanding. The expectation for each PLA is to build more convergent ideas and initiatives. The increasing convergence was ensured by the presentations and discussions during the PLA and the post-activity reflection – provoked by the Post – Activity Questionnaire.

During the PLA, the participants had the opportunity to attend a number of 17 presentations (see Appendix F). Each presentation was followed by discussions and, apart of these discussions, there were three rounds of general discussion and reflection, led by the expert (their results are presented in the next section).

Until now, the main post visit activity was filling in and collecting the answers at the post-activity questionnaire¹⁰. The questionnaire was filled in by the representatives of Austria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Ireland, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Romania and Estonia. A summary of the participants' answers is listed below.

- The PLA met the **expectations** of all participants (from “quite well” – Cyprus, to “above expectations” – The Netherlands).
- The **added value** of the PLA was consistent in terms of **personal development**: improved knowledge, extended vision and a pro-change attitude. This personal added value was reinforced by the formal and informal discussions and exchanges.
- The **insights and added value at national and regional level** regard the structure of curriculum, relationship between national core curricula and regional / local curricula, the position of assessment within the curriculum, the assessment techniques and procedures, the cultural specificity of the assessment procedures which make impossible the transfer, as such, from a VET system to another.

¹⁰ See Appendix G.

- The **added value** was considered at **European level**, as well:
 - freedom liaised with the responsibility at the VET provider level;
 - the involvement of all relevant stakeholders and creating unity of views at national level;
 - “living procedures”, good and transferable practices, more than “filling documents in”;
 - the importance of quality management in VET and the need for a common quality management system at European level;
 - individualized education and self assessment as a formative assessment;
 - the voluntary character of Quality Management (QM);
 - the need of “reference standards” for student evaluation at European level;
 - the financing of policy development and of the implementation of QA in student assessment at national and European level;
 - the “publicity”, at national and European levels, of assessment as “investment in individual expertise”.

The “unity in diversity” may be considered the agreed approach: each education system uses what the specific stakeholders consider as appropriate in the specific country context. Thus, the interpretation and the use of the EQARF (at policy and implementation levels) will be different from a system to another: it would be like “trying to get into the Finnish system but still wearing our own clothes”.

All participants committed themselves to **disseminate** the learning experiences by different means (reporting to authorities, presentation at own institution level, reporting to different work groups and networks, further developments of QM at own institution level, discussion with students and colleagues, training programmes and conferences).

3. Key findings and learning points

Most of the key findings and learning points are already presented by the answers at the post-activity questionnaire. In this section I will try to summarize them and to add the comments and the issues raised or reinforced during the reflection activities.

There were planned and realized **three “reflection sessions”** (see the Programme below - Appendix 1): the first, one hour and a half at the end of the first day (“Summary of the questionnaires”), the second, three quarters of an hour, in the second day (“Conclusion and feedback session”), and the third (“Discussion, Conclusions and Feedback”), two hours and a quarter, at the end of the third day. All these sessions were led by the expert, with the support of the hosts.

I shall summarize below the participants’ interventions – mainly the ideas I consider **relevant at national and, mostly, at European levels** and the results **more likely to be used and transferred** in other national VET systems.

- **Quality is a matter of values, a cultural issue more than a technical one.** We all agreed the need of a common definition for a “good” (“quality”) school, but we are far to reach a common understanding of what “good” means. For instance, the existence of a control structure (i.e. “inspectorate”) is considered necessary in a lot of educational systems but is considered useless in Finland – due to the cultural specificity (mutual trust, cooperation, openness etc.).
- The main strength of the Finnish system (obvious in all assessment policies and procedures, including the “skills demonstration” method) is the specific alloy of **trust, accountability and empowerment at local (i.e. school, VET provider) level**. The Finnish education was defined, by participants, as “**confidence based education**”. This feature explains more of the success of the Finnish students at international testing (e.g. PISA): the quality of the education provision is the same in all Finland schools because (among other causes):
 - all stakeholders and the education authorities trust the schools and the teachers; this trust of all stakeholders, one in each other, is considered, by all participants, a major feature of the system and a major cause of the success;
 - the school and the teachers are accountable to the stakeholders regarding the quality of education, in a way defined as “intelligent accountability”;
 - the teachers and the school management teams are really empowered (they have the knowledge, the skills, the attitudes and the authority) to implement, in a proper way, all the agreed mechanisms and procedures (including for student assessment and “skills demonstration”).These features define a “**success oriented school**”.
- In Finland there is an obvious **culture of authenticity, cooperation and partnership among all stakeholders**. The agreement among employers, schools and authorities are quickly met and based on common interest. It is not even necessary to meet and to negotiate within formal agreements, being often enough to establish, inside a common and general framework, some “ad hoc” structures and mechanisms (e.g. consortia, committees etc.). Besides this, all the information regarding the reform initiatives is public and all issues are discussed openly. **The result is the commitment and not a simple compliance**. The stakeholders’ commitment is essential for any change and reform process.
- Related with the cooperation culture, there are other features: the Finnish society (and, consequently, the education system) is **genuine cohesive and inclusive**.

In Finland, really, “nobody is left behind”: there are national and local programmes for disadvantaged groups and individuals, there is public and private support for the integration of the persons with special needs etc.

- The **balance between national steering and local initiatives** was an issue widely discussed. The conclusion was that each education system, each assessment methodology should be carefully balanced between:
 - nationally designed assessment procedures and QA mechanisms – more likely to ensure the validity of the assessment, reliability and the employers’ confidence;
 - locally developed assessment and QA instruments – more likely to ensure the equity and the relevance of assessment for local and individual needs.This balance is culturally determined and different for each VET / education system.
- **The issue of “balance” was widely discussed**, regarding several other aspects of student assessment:
 - theory versus practice;
 - school based learning and assessment versus work based learning and assessment;
 - external assessment versus self / peer / internal assessment;
 - formative assessment versus summative assessment;
 - trust versus control.The points of balance on all these continuums are culturally determined and different for each VET / education system.
- There is a general need **to extend and to modify the role of the teacher**: s/he is no more a “transmitter” of knowledge or skills, but, more and more, adviser, facilitator, trainer, assessor, tutor for companies and for the “on the job learning”. The teacher has to individualize the education provision and, as well, to work in team with other teachers, trainers, tutors and assessors.
- **The individualization of education**, especially in VET, is a very important issue and a focal point for future development. This issue is closely linked with the **mobility of the qualified persons** (horizontally, from an occupational field to another and vertically, from an educational / qualification level to another) and with the **evaluation and recognition of prior learning** (experiences and competencies acquired in non formal and informal contexts).
- There is an obvious tension, at both national and European levels, between the **development of the policies regarding the QA mechanisms and the scarcity of resources** allocated for the implementation of such mechanisms. There are not enough resources allocated for a quality assured assessment of students. The same lack of resources was mentioned regarding the **partnership structures** (“stakeholders’ consortia”).
- This Finnish approach of “deregulation” leads to a **major insight for the implementation of the EQARF** - a “sandwich” approach:
 - the general agreed values, principles, issues and questions to be answered and the commonly defined results (outputs and outcomes) may be considered the two “slices of bread” which defined at European level;
 - the interpretation, the adaptation, the operationalization of those general principles, on one hand, and the choice of the methods and procedures for

gaining the expected outcomes and to evaluate them (“the filling”) should be defined at national level.

- **Promoting learning** was considered as a must for a quality assured student assessment: the assessment procedures should lead to **further learning** (in a lifelong and life-wide perspective) and the assessment itself should be seen as a **learning experience**, both for assessor and for the assessed. The QA procedures and systems tend, often, to forget the learner: his/hers individual needs, interests, demands and prospects for future development should be carefully considered.
- The QA mechanisms and systems have not to be seen as “another task” for teachers and principals but they should be **embedded into the “normal” organizational functioning of the VET provider.**

4. Conclusions: expected impact and possible benefits - emerging policy issues at European level

The results of this PLA **confirm the ENQA VET policy choices** regarding the **implementation of the EQARF**:

- **The need to establish a common set of:**
 - **concepts, values, principles and targets** for QA and QM mechanisms at European level;
 - **agreed outputs and outcomes** – in this respect the WG on **indicators** has an important role;
 - **agreed mechanisms** for establishing a common approach – in this respect were mentioned the peer review & peer learning activities.

- **The role of the partnership between the central / local Government and the main stakeholders is crucial.** This partnership may be formalized as national / regional consortia or other specific structures (like, for instance, Sector Committees or Qualification Committees). Those structures should be funded in an appropriate way, including from public money. The employers have to be involved in establishing and promoting QA / QM mechanisms, including at European level.

- **The role of the VET provider is increasing in establishing and promoting QA systems and mechanisms.** In this respect:
 - self evaluation and peer evaluation will have a very important role in ensuring the coherence at national and European levels; it will be necessary to introduce training programs for peer assessment in real work environments;
 - the validity of assessment procedures and, especially, for self assessment, will become a very important issue; for this reason, the development of critical self awareness of young people is a must;
 - work based learning and work based assessment will be reinforced in order to increase employability.

- **The implementation of the EQARF should take care of cultural differences** and to consider the cultural impact on policy development and, mainly, on policy implementation of the QA mechanisms.

- **The reconciliation of the different frameworks** existing for IVET and CVET is necessary in most of the European VET systems. In order to increase learners' employability and mobility, it is necessary to unify at national level the qualification framework, the occupational / professional / training standards, the assessment procedures, the QA mechanisms. This unification should be mediated by the European Qualification Framework (EQF).

- **Making VET more attractive** is a must for most of the VET systems. "For so many countries, vocational education and training is not as attractive as in Finland, and thus tends to reach out to more disadvantaged sectors of society". Establishing **quality awards and quality based financing** is seen as important, in order to re-motivate the VET learners, educators and stakeholders.

5. Recommendations: the future of the PLAs

The PLA in Finland was very well prepared and organized and produced a wide range of ideas, useful at national and European levels. The participants' comments were enthusiastic and I strongly believe that this PLA will influence them all.

In the context of EQARF, the importance of PLAs will increase and, for this reason, the ENQA VET conclusions and report may establish some characteristics and even one (or several) format(s) for this kind of activity.

This topic, "QA for student assessment" may be considered one of the most productive at European level, especially regarding policy matters.

It is obvious that the specific methods, techniques and procedures are, more or less, driven by the culture, tradition, sector, "power balance" between the stakeholders involved and many other local factors.

But, in order to build a common understanding, to promote mobility, to improve transparency, to ensuring the recognition of competencies and qualifications, and to developing common instruments for quality, common mechanisms have to be designed but **starting from the policy level at both ends of the process: policy and planning and mechanisms for review, feed-back and change.** The operational procedures are very interesting but they need to be seen as examples and applications within a specific system and culture.

Thus, the next PLAs on QA should be more focused on these issues relevant for policy level such as:

- VET standards – occupational, professional, curricular, assessment standards "philosophy" and design.
- Unifying IVET and CVET.
- Qualifications – definition, components (knowledge, skills, competencies).
- Using EQF for redesigning NQFs.
- Individualizing VET.
- Stakeholders' involvement in VET design, delivery and evaluation – structures, regulation, motivation.
- New roles for teachers and trainers.
- The appropriate balance between national steering and local initiative in QA.
- Feed back and review procedures in order to inform the decision making process ("evidence based decision making").
- Awarding structures and procedures.
- The balance between self evaluation, peer evaluation / review and external evaluation.
- Rethinking public funding for VET.

All these issues may be added to the specific ones, mentioned in the sections 2, 3 and 4 (see above).

6. Appendices

6.1. Appendix A: Pre activity Questionnaire



Peer Learning Activity on Quality Assurance procedures for Student Assessment 24-26 November, 2008 - Helsinki

QUESTIONNAIRE for Participants

Peer Learning Activity – Student Assessment

Peer learning activities are a central part of the ENQA-VET work programme. They provide an opportunity for participants to reflect collectively and individually on how their own professional practice can develop as a result of the opportunity of constructive engagement with other countries/institutions/organisations' experiences of addressing similar issues.

This peer learning activity will focus on the quality assurance aspects student assessment. The attached pre activity questionnaire is designed to enable participants to reflect on the subject of the peer learning activity before the activity commences and is an essential part of your preparation as a participant. Your responses will be collated by the Expert, Mr Serban Iosifescu, who will be working with participants throughout the peer learning activity, and will be used to inform the group of national processes and procedures in student assessment. The analysis of the questionnaire will also be used to facilitate further reflection during the peer learning activity.

To be completed and returned to siosifescu@yahoo.com and to agraves@engavet.eu

Deadline: Monday November 10th 2008

SECTION I - STATE OF THE ARTS

In this section we would like to obtain information about the policies and practical arrangements in your country, regarding the student assessment in VET. When answering the questions please keep in mind the steps of the CQAF model.

Purpose and plan

Is there a national framework for student assessment, covering both IVET and CVET ?
Are there national standards for student assessment, covering both IVET and CVET ? (If so, please describe what kind of standards are put in place – occupational, professional, training etc.)
Are there established national procedures for student assessment for both IVET and CVET ?
Is student assessment competence based ? (If so, please describe how a competence is defined and structured)

Implementation

Are there any common procedures for student assessment, developed at national / sector level, for IVET or CVET ?
What is the nature of school – enterprise relationship in student assessment ?
What is the balance between theory and practice in student assessment ?
What is the balance between work based assessment and school based assessment ?
Who may be an “assessor” ?
What qualification is needed for student assessors / evaluators ?

Assessment and evaluation

What are the outputs / consequences of the assessment procedures (qualifications / awards / diplomas / certificates / counseling / advice etc.) ?
What mechanisms are put in place to monitor the student assessment ? (who / how / when / where)
What mechanisms are put in place to evaluate the student assessment ? (who / how / when / where)

Feedback and procedures for change

What information on student assessment is available and accessible for all stakeholders?
Are there mechanisms put in place to review the student assessment policies and procedures ?
Are there any periodical reports / surveys / analysis worked out and published periodically, relevant for student assessment ?
Are there significant reforms / changes envisaged at national level in the field of student assessment ?
Are there established mechanisms to match the student assessment results (i.e. qualifications) with the labour market needs ?

Methodology

What is the nature of student participation in quality assurance for his/hers assessment ?
What is the role of self-assessment (if any) ?
Who are the stakeholders involved in all student assessment phases (devising national framework and / or standards, process, monitoring, feed-back and change) ?
What is their involvement ?

How do the enterprises/workplaces document the quality of student assessment ?
What resources are involved in the organisation of student assessment ?
Who finances the student assessment ?

Trends

Which are the major trends, at national level, regarding student assessment ? (Please keep in mind the impact of student assessment on major indicators like student/enterprise satisfaction, attendance and dropout rate, mobility and employability etc.)

SECTION II - REFLECTIONS

In this section we would like to have your personal opinion on the different aspects.

Strengths

What are the main strengths of the current approaches to quality assurance for student assessment in VET (at national and European Level) ?

Weaknesses

What are the main weaknesses of the current approaches to quality assurance for student assessment in VET (at national and European Level) ?
--

What can be transferred and mainstreamed?

Which of the elements, of the practices you have reported on, could be de-contextualised and transferred to other European countries and to EU-level?
Which could be the added value on European level?

SECTION III - DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE PROGRESS

Challenges

In this section we would like to obtain more information about the challenges to be addressed in the coming years.

What are the main challenges ahead?

How could current difficulties be overcome?

Proposals

Finally we would like to make recommendations and proposals on:

- how to proceed with cooperation in VET in general and specifically concerning student assessment at European level;
- how to transfer experience with Work Based Learning between different countries.

What do you think is most needed for further improvement?

SECTION IV - EXPECTATIONS FOR THE PLA

What do you expect of the Peer learning Activity (keeping in mind the time and place of the PLA) ?

SECTION V – DATA SOURCES

Please list the main sources – paper and electronic – containing and developing the information given above:

SECTION VI - CONTACT DETAILS

Country	
Organisation	
Name	
Address	
e-mail	

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION !

**Peer Learning Activity
on Quality Assurance Procedures
For Student Assessment**

24-26 November 2008

Finland

PEER LEARNING ACTIVITY
ON QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES FOR STUDENT ASSESSMENT

24-26 November 2008

Finland

Leena Koski

Topics

Policy development of Student Assessment
Student assessment QA procedures in VET
Skills demonstrations as a part QA of Student Assessment
Quality Assurance Procedures for Assessment of on-the-job learning
Competence based Qualifications
National Evaluations based on Skills demonstrations

Day 1- 24th November

Meeting place:	FNBE (Finnish National Board of Education) Kumpulantie 3 00520 Helsinki
9.00-9.45	Opening of the program Mr. Mika Tammilehto, Director, Ministry of Education Targets of the peer learning visit and the programme Mr Serban Iosifescu and Secretariat/ Leena Koski
9.45-11.00 Finland	Educational policy development in Vocational Education and training in New Challenges in Student Assessment Mr. Mika Tammilehto, Director, Ministry of Education Discussion Quality Management Recommendations and Student Assessment Ms. Leena Koski, Counsellor of Education, Finnish National Board of Education
11.00 – 11.45 Framework	Development of Skill demonstrations at national level in CQAF Ms. Seija Rasku, Counsellor of Education, Ministry of Education
12.00 – 12.45	Student assessment quality assurance procedures in VET Ms. Sirkka – Liisa Kärki, Counsellor of Education Discussion
12.45-14.00	Lunch Change of location to Keskuspuisto Vocational Institute Tenholantie 10 00280 Helsinki www.keskuspuisto.net
14.00 -15.00	Quality Management in Keskuspuisto Vocational Institute

	Mr. Samuli Sollo, Quality Assurance Procedures for Student Assessment Ms. Liisa Metsola and Mr. Samuli Sollo Student Discussion Coffee break
15.00 -16.15	Skill demonstrations and CQAF Framework Challenges Mr. Miika Keijonen, Project Coordinator
16.15-17.45	Summary of the questionnaires Discussion and questions and answers in the group Guided by the Expert
20.00 -	Evening programme, Dinner

Day 2- 25th November

8.00	Bus from Hotel Helka to city Lahti
Meeting place:	Salpaus Further Education Kongressikeskus Fellmanni Kirkkokatu 27 15140 Lahti www.salpaus.fi
10.00-10.30	Coffee Opening
10.30-11.15	Quality Assurance and improvement by VET provider Ms. Pirkko Aro, Adviser/Salpaus Further Education Ms. Jaana Ilomäki, Internal Auditor/Lahti Region Educational Consortium
11.15-11.30	Curriculum process and assessments Ms. Jaana Ilomäki, Internal Auditor/Lahti Region Educational Consortium
	Discussions
11.30-12.30	Quality Assurance Procedures for Assessment of the on-the- job learning and Skill demonstrations Ms. Sannakaisa Raatikainen, Adviser/Salpaus Further Education Mr. Heikki Tuomainen, Lecturer/Salpaus Further Education
12.30-13.30	Lunch

13.30-14.00	Quality Assurance procedures in Competence based qualifications in CQAF Framework Ms. Sannakaisa Raatikainen, Adviser/Salpaus Further Education Mr. Arto Tikkinen, Lecturer/Salpaus Further Education
14.00-14.30	The role of Qualification Committees in Quality Assurance Mr. Arto Tikkinen, Lecturer/Salpaus Further Education Ms. Sannakaisa Raatikainen, Adviser/Salpaus Further Education
14.30 – 15.15	Conclusion and feedback session Guided by the Expert Ms. Pirkko Aro, Adviser/Salpaus Further Education Ms. Jaana Ilomäki, Internal Auditor/Lahti Region Educational Consortium
15.15-16.30	Coffee break and Discussion and conclusions in the group Guided by the Expert Ms. Pirkko Aro, Adviser/Salpaus Further Education Ms. Jaana Ilomäki, Internal Auditor/Lahti Region Educational Consortium
16.30-17.00	Site visit of the premises
17.30 – 19.00	Visit of Ski Museum, Lahti Sport Centre
19.00 – 20.30	Dinner in Restaurant Voitto
20.30 -	Bus transport from Lahti to Helsinki

Day 3- 26th November

Meeting place:	FNBE (Finnish National Board of Education) Kumpulantie 3 00520 Helsinki
8.30 – 9.15	Social partners' involvement in Student assessment Ms. Marja-Terttu Tanttinen, The Federation of Finnish Technology Industries
9.30 – 11.00	National evaluations based on skill demonstrations and COAF- Model Student Assessment and VET-LSA Ms. Mari Rökköläinen, Counsellor of Education Discussions
11.15 – 12.30	Making changes in CQAF Framework The use of national evaluation data of skill demonstrations as a tool for quality assurance Ms. Maria Luoma-Aho, principal

Kaarina Social and Health Care College
www.ksto.fi

Student assessment as a part of quality assurance procedures of the
VET provider Discussion

Mr.. Pekka Selenius, Deveopment manager, Perho Culinary School

Future challenges in student assessment
Discussion

12.30 – 13.30

Lunch

13.30 -15.45

Discussion, Conclusions and Feedback

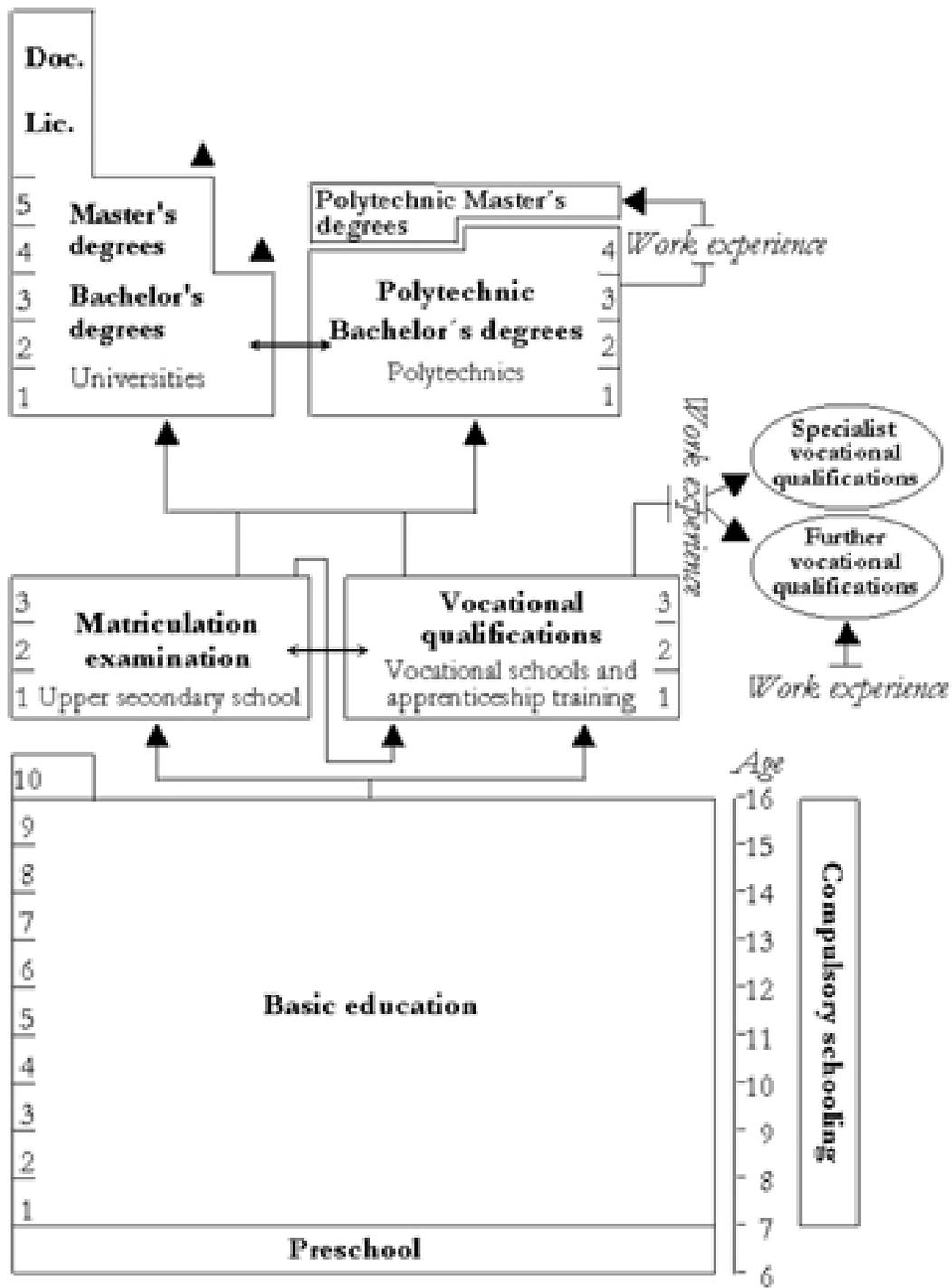
- Feedback
- Conclusions
- Further activities on national level
- Further cooperation on European level.

Guided by the Expert

15.45 - 16.00

Closing of the program

6.3. Appendix C: An overview of the Finnish education system



6.4. Appendix D: List of participants

QA for Assessment, Finland 24-27 November 2008	
1. AUSTRIA	<p>Ao.Univ.-Prof.Dr. Michaela Stock Karl-Franzens-University Graz, Department of Business Education and Development Universitaetsstrasse 15 A-8010 Graz michaela.stock@uni-graz.at</p> <p>Elisabeth Riebenbauer Department for Business Education and Development Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz Universitätsstraße 15/G1 A - 8010 Graz elisabeth.riebenbauer@uni-graz.at</p>
2. CYPRUS	<p>Mr Nicholas Andilios Director of Makarios 3rd Technical and Vocational School in Nicosia nicos@intercol.edu</p>
3. CZECH REPUBLIC	<p>Libor Berný NUOV - National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education libor.berny@nuov.cz</p>
4. ESTONIA	<p>Ms Ülle Parbo Vocational Education Department of the National Examinations and Qualifications Centre ylle.parbo@ekk.edu.ee</p>
5. FINLAND	<p>Ms. Mari Rakköläinen Counselor – Ministry of Education mari.rakkolainen@oph.fi</p>
6. IRELAND	<p>Andrina Wafer Further Education and Training Awards Council FETAC - Ireland awafer@fetac.ie</p>
7. ITALY	<p>Raimondo Bolletta Head of International Relations INVALSI, Roma r.bolletta@gmail.com</p>
8. LUXEMBURG	<p>Christophe Struck Ministry of Education - expert in charge of the implementation of the new law concerning VET christophe.struck@men.lu</p>
9. THE NETHERLANDS	<p>Mr. Ton Heijkants Manager of the Quality Assurance department – Netherlands School Inspectorate tonheijkants@onderwijsgroepitilburg.nl</p>
10. ROMANIA	<p>Nina Hanciuc QA expert at the Romanian Agency for QA in Pre University Education nhanciuc@yahoo.com</p>
11. UK	<p>Keith Brumfitt Strategy Director - Children's Workforce Development Council - CWDC brumfittk@hotmail.com</p>
12. CO-ORGANISERS FINLAND	<p>Leena Koski Leena.koski@oph.fi Expert – FNBE</p>

	Ms. Seija Rasku Seija.rasku@minedu.fi Counselor – Ministry of Education
13. EXPERT	Serban Iosifescu serban.iosifescu@medu.edu.ro Chairman – Romanian Agency for QA in Pre-University Education

6.5. Appendix E: Expert's Presentation



PEER LEARNING ACTIVITY ON QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES FOR STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Helsinki – 24-26 November 2008

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ENQA - VET

Aims to:

- Support the Copenhagen process in increasing the quality of VET
- Strengthen European cooperation in the area of QA in VET
- Support member states and participating countries to develop and reform their own systems
- Improve the mobility of learners and workers across Europe

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The aim of the Peer Learning Activities (PLAs)

To provide opportunities for **policymakers** and **practitioners** from one country to learn, through direct contact and practical cooperation, from the experiences of their counterparts elsewhere in Europe, within systems which have demonstrated particular strengths in the delivery of a specific subject related to QA in VET

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Components

- Presentations
- Documents & data & information
- Communication
- Networking
- Sharing
- Reflection

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Stages

- Preparatory activity
 - Establishing content, program and logistics;
 - Pre activity questionnaire – introducing reflecting on the topic
- PLA:
 - Presentation by the host country of domestic context and models of good practice
 - Reaction and comparison activities by the participating countries (including brief presentations on national context)
 - Opportunities for discussion of key issues and findings
 - Identification of key findings
 - Reflection and Evaluation activities.
- Post PLA activities:
 - Post activity questionnaire;
 - Reports & dissemination;

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Key Principles

- The PLA should provide a clear European benefit and added-value.
- Opportunities for reflection by participants should be built into each stage of the programme.
- The "Pillar of Activity" (the main topic) logic should be followed.
- Recommendation on EQARF is a key element in the background to all PLAs.
- Hosts and experts should be aware of the need to work within the context of the "VET package" which is premised on EQF, ECVET and EQARF

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Topics

The "Pillar of Activity": Quality Assurance Procedures for Student Assessment

Topics:

- Policy development of Student Assessment
- Student assessment QA procedures in VET
- Skills demonstrations as a part QA of Student Assessment
- Quality Assurance Procedures for Assessment of on-the-job learning
- Competence based Qualifications
- National Evaluations based on Skills demonstrations

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Expectations for the PLA

- Learning, improvement and development, e.g. concerning new models from other countries, creating new ideas together – Austria
- Find out what goes on else where; share knowledge and ideas; learn about new methods and practices; exchange ideas for future work – Cyprus
- An overview of evaluation processes in VET, CVET in different EU countries; issues related with the introduction of evaluation processes as well as solutions – Czech Republic
- To learn about quality assured assessment as implemented in Finland and other member states; to explore issues in student self assessment as a basis for attainment of qualification, including in relation to equity and perception - Ireland

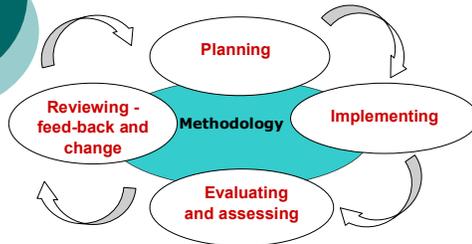
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Expectations for the PLA

- The skill demonstrations approach practiced in Finland and aiming to improve cooperation between school and labor market has similarities with the new assessment approach envisaged by the Luxembourgish Ministry for Education and Vocational Training. Further insight, experiences as well as identification of strengths and weaknesses of this approach could be of great value for Luxembourg.
- Dialogue and especially inspiration – Netherlands
- Knowledge and experience in the quality assurance aspects and on student assessment, as one of the most important aspects of QA at school and system levels – Romania
- To understand how others ensure the employers' voice is heard and fully recognized in assessment - UK

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Learning from peer learning: I: Pre activity questionnaire



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Planning

- The existence of national framework for student assessment, covering both IVET and CVET:
 - Generally, there are different frameworks covering IVET and CVET – with exceptions: Finland Ireland and UK - England
 - Question: is it necessary such a framework ?
- The existence of national standards for student assessment, covering both IVET and CVET:
 - Generally, there are national standards – exceptions: Austria and Cyprus (for both, work in progress) and Luxemburg – only for IVET; in many countries are different for IVET and CVET
 - Questions: Do we mean the same thing when we define "standard" ? Why are they useful ? Is it necessary to unify them for IVET and CVET ?

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Planning

- The existence on national procedures for student assessment for both IVET and CVET:
 - Generally, there are national procedures (exception, Austria – regional ones) – but, in many countries, different for IVET and CVET and with a different degree of generalization
 - Question: Is it necessary to unify them for IVET and CVET ?
- Is student assessment competence based ?
 - Usually yes, but not as the sole criterion.
 - Question: Do we mean the same thing when we define "competence" ? Why the "competence" is the base for VET in most countries ?

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Implementing

- The existence on common procedures for student assessment, developed at national / sector level, for IVET or CVET:
 - Usually there are national procedures for IVET correlated with the school leaving exams.
 - The procedures for CVET are usually different and less "centrally" controlled.
 - In Ireland, Netherlands and UK there are common procedures.
 - Question: Is it necessary to have the same assessment procedures for IVET and CVET ?

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Implementing

- The nature of school – enterprise relationship in student assessment:
 - Yes, in most of the countries but with different method and degree of formal regulation (e.g. Ireland – "the external verifier"; Finland "qualifications committees").
 - Questions: Is it necessary to involve the employers in student assessment ? How to motivate them ?
- The balance between theory and practice:
 - In all countries there are theoretical and practical components.
 - The role of practice is increasing.
 - The proportion is depending on the qualification

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Implementing

- The balance between work based assessment and school based assessment:
 - In most of the countries there are both
 - The proportion is depending on the qualification
 - The importance of work based assessment is increasing.
 - Question: Why is work based assessment so important ?
- Who are the assessors ? What qualification is needed ?
 - Usually, teachers and instructors from schools or sector experts with pedagogical qualification.
 - A lot of systems have no specific or strict regulations.
 - Question: Should be the assessor qualified as such?

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Evaluating and assessing

- The outputs / consequences of the assessment procedures:
 - Very different from a country to another
 - The awarding bodies ("certification authorities") are very different from a country to another.
 - Questions: Is it necessary to unify the awards, the awarding procedures and the awarding bodies throughout all Europe ? How ?
- Mechanisms for monitoring the student assessment:
 - Supervision / inspection by regional / national authorities
 - Externally appointed observers / experts as members in assessment committees.
 - Public examinations
 - Grievance / complaints procedures to superior / external bodies.

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Evaluating and assessing

- Mechanisms for evaluating the student assessment:
 - Feed-back from the students themselves
 - Supervision / inspection by regional / national authorities
 - External appointed observers / experts as members in assessment committees
 - Statistical surveys at national / regional level
 - Question: Why is it less concern in evaluating than in monitoring ?

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Feedback and procedures for change

- The available information for all stakeholders:
 - Information regarding: policies, regulations, standards, curriculum, results and statistics, guidelines, content and procedures, QA specifications and demands.
 - The regulating institutions and providers share the responsibility for communication and stakeholders' information
- Mechanisms put in place to review the student assessment policies and procedures:
 - Rather limited and not systematic: publishing inspection results, sharing information and statistics, periodical public analysis and review
 - Question: How to close the "Deming Cycle" ?

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Feedback and procedures for change

- Periodical reports / surveys / analysis worked out and published periodically:
 - Statistics, on yearly basis, in all countries, at system and provider level
 - In several countries: regular in-depth studies and surveys.
- Significant reforms / changes envisaged at national level:
 - Centralized exams and competence oriented assessment (Austria)
 - VET reform, including student assessment issues (Cyprus).
 - Leaving school examinations reform (ISCED 2C) and "Maturita" (ISCED 3A) – Czech Republic.

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Feedback and procedures for change

- Significant reforms / changes envisaged at national level:
 - Curriculum reform, "skills demonstration", unifying the assessment criteria – Finland
 - The implementation of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999 and the FETAC assessment policy – Ireland
 - The implementation of a new law on VET - competency based evaluation, integrating competencies acquired in different contexts, stakeholders involvement – Luxemburg
 - Central examination in certain fields – The Netherlands
 - NQF, competency based & standards based assessment, stakeholders involvement, externalization of examinations - Romania.
 - New unit-based system of qualifications (based on credit) – performance will be assessed against learning outcomes in each unit - UK.

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Feedback and procedures for change

- Mechanisms to match the student assessment results with the labor market needs:
 - Market led strategies and policies - Ireland
 - Tracking studies – Cyprus and Ireland
 - Using assessment standards designed with stakeholders’ involvement and based on NQF – Luxemburg, Romania.
 - “Skills demonstration” - Finland
 - Regulating institutions involving social partners – Netherlands, Romania

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Feedback and procedures for change

- The nature of student participation in quality assurance:
 - Self evaluation / group reflection – Czech Republic.
 - Study plans made by student for skills demonstration; permanent feed-back and dialogue - Finland.
 - Increasing learner’s responsibility and appeal procedures - Ireland
- The role of student’s self-assessment:
 - Very limited
 - Question: Why ?

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Feedback and procedures for change

- The stakeholders involved in student assessment:
 - Who: public regulating institutions – i.e. Ministries, Inspectorates, VET schools, higher education institutions, chambers of commerce or similar and employers (unions and individual), research institutions, partnership structures at national, regional or local level, trade unions, external evaluators.
 - How: examinations review, assessors nomination, inspection, NQF and standards development, examination content and procedures approval, competence-based tests organization and supervision, external reviews, giving advise, funding.

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Feedback and procedures for change

- How the quality of student assessment is documented by the companies / workplaces ?
 - Feed back on the competencies and skills of the newly appointed employees
 - Feed back during apprenticeship, practical training and examinations.
 - Internal training and assessment
 - Authentication process (Ireland).
 - Surveys and reports – at VET schools request.
- Resources involved:
 - Human, logistic, financial, time.
 - Public and private – including the student,
 - Question: Is public funding essential ?

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Trends

- Major trends:
 - Standard and competence based assessment - within the NQFs (re-organizing the NQFs)
 - Increasing stakeholders involvement and strengthening cooperation
 - Increasing transparency in assessment procedures
 - Increasing sophistication of information systems and more data – especially at provider level
 - Increasing flexibility of curriculum (modularity)
 - Increasing mobility of learners inside the qualification system
 - Increasing importance of work based and practical examination

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Trends

- Effects:
 - Increased stakeholders satisfaction
 - Increased employability
 - Reduced dropout rate
 - VET becoming more attractive

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Reflections

- Strengths:
 - Diversity and comprehensiveness
 - Reliability – if based on real working conditions
 - Enhancing learning outcomes
 - Transparency and comparability of qualifications
 - Accountability for quality

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Reflections

- Weaknesses:
 - Lack of coordination among institutions (public – private), levels (IVET – CVET)
 - Lack of coherence at national level
 - Too much localization and diversification may cause difficulties in mutual recognition
 - Traditions – i.e. the encyclopedic concept of education, academic approach to education etc.
 - Lack of motivated employers
 - Lack of balance between individual and social needs
 - Lack of resources
 - Inappropriate training for assessors
 - Sometimes, assessment is felt as threatening
 - Lack of confidence and trust
 - Question: may the VET system lead or be driven by the labor markets ?

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Reflections

- Elements to be transferred at EU-level:
 - Dual education – Austria
 - Clearly established common policies and practices – Cyprus
 - Tools for recognition of continuing education results in relation to ECVET – Czech Republic
 - The national evaluation system based on skills demonstration – Finland
 - The implementation of a NQF – Ireland
 - Modular structure and evaluation of initial VET – Luxembourg
 - Integrated assessment based on recognizable processes in work – Netherlands
 - A list of key competences, common to several professions / occupations – Romania
 - The importance of the employer in setting the agenda and outcomes – UK

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Reflections

- The added value at European level:
 - Comprehensive IVET - Austria
 - Professional qualifications at a more uniform level and teaching and learning activities which will lead to more uniform outcomes - Cyprus
 - A tool for comparison of National Qualifications Frameworks and consistent use of them by all European countries – Czech Republic
 - EU and OECD publications are of great value in reflecting emerging skills shortages and demands; a small number of EU wide initiatives targeting specific predicted skills gaps at particular levels of the EQF would add value and help direct awards, provision and assessment - Ireland.
 - Evaluation studies on the implementation of modular structured and assessment in initial VET could be of significant added value to the European policies in the field of VET – Luxembourg

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Reflections

- The added value at European level:
 - To connect assessment to the way education works and especially the way future employees work – Netherlands
 - Assessment based on critical aspects of the competences units and on principles such as availability, authenticity, quality, transferring capability – Romania
 - Learner and employee mobility as there is greater trust between employers - UK

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Challenges

- Challenges:
 - National and international comparability in IVET; to standardize CVET – Austria
 - The contemporary increasing unemployment; inappropriate training; increasing school dropouts; insufficient and inappropriate VET programmes – Cyprus
 - To motivate employers for participation in assessment; to develop new tools for assessment at national level in relation to European traditions – Czech Republic
 - To find balance between the uniformity and flexibility of student assessment; the clarification of recognition of prior learning, grades and competencies achieved - Finland

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Challenges

- Challenges:
 - Embedding a commitment to quality and continuous improvement across diverse systems and contexts; creating the openness for peer review and for a real emphasis on quality rather than survival/market lead forces; realizing links across IVET, CVET and Higher Education both nationally and at European levels; emphasis on global competitiveness – Ireland
 - Implementation of EQRF and increase of mobility – Luxemburg
 - Standardization of examination / assessment among schools; increasing the quality of assessments in and by companies – Netherlands
 - To create and implement a NQF compatible with EQF – Romania
 - Developing confidence in other countries' student assessment systems - UK

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Challenges

- Ways to overcome the current difficulties:
 - Introduce retraining programmes, revise and improve the VET programmes in order to make them more attractive and related with the students and companies needs – Cyprus
 - Higher stability of education policies in EU countries; gradual comparison of levels in different countries; including investments in education – Czech Republic
 - European wide principles, standards and qualifications for assessment training; raising awareness of quality within day to day practice, rather than at systems levels; greater involvement and respect for practitioners, stronger links between policy and practice – Ireland

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Challenges

- Ways to overcome the current difficulties:
 - Exchange of good practice and cooperation – Luxemburg
 - Communication – Netherlands
 - Creating working groups, composed by representative of all interested stakeholders – Romania
 - A sector-based approach, more employer-focused, could be more effective across Europe (the work on qualifications across Europe tends to involve government regulators and researchers rather than employers). Creating "zones of trust" around qualifications - UK

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Proposals

- Comparability, standardization – Austria
- Extend the work on intended learning outcomes which will consider local, national and European needs. Take into serious consideration the entry students characteristics and if needed provide remedial work before they enter into VET programmes. Upgrade the skills of evaluators and assessors. Provide a wider range of teaching and learning activities and events. Closer collaboration with industry – Cyprus
- To increase mutual knowledge about European development; to continue in the development of European frameworks and recommendations; further ECVET development and bringing the ways of assessment and recognition of education close together – Czech Republic

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Proposals

- Realistic allocation of resources; development of incentives e.g. for global companies that implement work based assessment in the EU arena. Strengthened links between policy-makers and practitioners and funding agencies, including reporting structures. Standards and accessible CPD programmes for practitioners in relation to the diverse strands of building high quality systems e.g. curriculum design, review, assessment – Ireland
- Conceive a coherent quality assurance system that can be easily and efficiently adopted by large as well as small VET providers. Build a European resource centre on implementation and evaluation studies on national work-related assessment methods and emphasise, exchange and further develop good practice models - Luxemburg

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Proposals

- International dialogue and transfer – by including persons who are involved in development and implementation of this new way of learning and assessing. Benchmarks on regional standards / CQAF. Pilots / test e.g. exchange of practical assessments – Netherlands
- Sharing best practice via common activities – e.g. peer learning or peer review activities – Romania
- Employers need greater influence over assessment decisions - UK

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Do not forget !

Common Principles for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and vocational Education and Training in the context of the European Qualifications Framework

When implementing the European Qualifications Framework, quality assurance - which is necessary to ensure accountability and the improvement of higher education and vocational education and training - should be carried out in accordance with the following principles:

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Do not forget !

- Quality assurance policies and procedures should underpin all levels of the European Qualifications Framework.
- Quality assurance should be an integral part of the internal management of education and training institutions.
- Quality assurance should include regular evaluation of institutions, their programmes or their quality assurance systems by external monitoring bodies or agencies.
- External monitoring bodies or agencies carrying out quality assurance should be subject to regular review.
- Quality assurance should include context, input, process and output dimensions, while giving emphasis to outputs and learning outcomes.

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Do not forget !

- Quality assurance systems should include the following elements
 - clear and measurable objectives and standards;
 - guidelines for implementation, including stakeholder involvement;
 - appropriate resources;
 - consistent evaluation methods, associating self-assessment and external review;
 - feedback mechanisms and procedures for improvement;
 - widely accessible evaluation results.

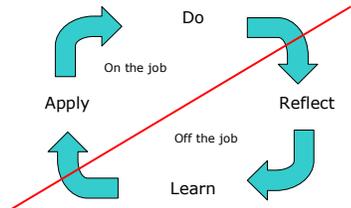
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Do not forget !

- Quality assurance initiatives at international, national and regional level should be coordinated in order to ensure overview, coherence, synergy and system-wide analysis.
- Quality assurance should be a cooperative process across education and training levels and systems, involving all relevant stakeholders, within Member States and across the Community.
- Quality assurance orientations at Community level may provide reference points for evaluations and peer-learning.

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Do not forget: the learning cycle



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6.6. Appendix F: Summary of presentations

1. Educational policy development in Vocational Education and training in Finland. New Challenges in Student Assessment (Seijka Rasku, Counsellor, Ministry of Education -replacing Mr. Mika Tammilehto, Director, Ministry of Education).

Topics:

- VET Policies in Finland: QA in VET, including introducing EQARF.
- New challenges in student assessment: the reform of the core curricula and requirements for the competence based qualification following the EQF approach and introducing “skills demonstration” (SD) in core curricula; reform of the assessment scale (from 1-5 to 1-3); recognition of prior learning; evaluating the overall learning outcomes on the basis of skills demonstrations.

2. Development of Skill demonstrations at national level in CQAF Framework (Seija Rasku, Counsellor of Education, Ministry of Education).

Topics:

- the national policy context on SD – aims: bringing together the education and the world of work; increasing the match between education and the labour market needs; increasing the VET attractiveness; the need to introduce systematic work based learning in the core curricula; the SD became operational since 2006 with the agreement of the social partners;
- the objectives of SD: promoting quality and employment, matching education with the labour market; involving the employers and employees; giving feedback on learning outcomes in order to develop instruction;
- the SD as an essential part of student assessment: legal basis, school – enterprise cooperation, methodology, social partners involvement at local and regional levels, independent certification;
- the impact of SD: piloted 1999-2006; study in 2004 – positive effects on overall assessment, motivation, trust and attractiveness of VET; problems: uniformity, equality, the scope of the competences;
- SD as instrument to measure the effectiveness of the whole VET system and the use of SD to evaluate the national learning outcomes; national evaluation of SD in 2009.
- The national QM system in Finland: national steering; education provider level; external evaluation – all within the EQARF.

3. Student assessment quality assurance procedures in VET (Sirikka – Liisa Kärki, Counsellor of Education).

Topics:

- the education system of Finland;
- vocational qualifications: 8 sectors, 52 vocational qualifications, 120 study programmes at upper secondary level (three years);
- competence based qualifications system for adults: awarding the qualifications, regardless how and where the competences have been acquired with the social partners involvement (Qualification Committees);
- aims and structure of the VET system, national curricula and standards;
- targets of assessment and procedures: knowledge, skills and competencies (including LLL ones);
- principles and roles of assessment; the role of self assessment;
- accreditation and certification;
- QA of student assessment at national and provider levels;

4. Quality Management in Keskuspuisto Vocational Institute (Samuli Sollo, Keskuspuisto Vocational Institute).

Topics:

- the quality circle;
- pedagogical planning and management;
- the management and implementation of processes;
- assessment and evaluation: the Finnish prize of vocational education; types of evaluation;
- feedback and procedures for change: team work; student satisfaction survey regarding “on the job learning”.

5. Quality Assurance Procedures for Student Assessment (Liisa Metsola, teacher, and Samuli Sollo, student Keskuspuisto Vocational Institute).

Topics:

- individual education plan – general presentation;
- intake of students;
- needs assessment (students) and suitability assessment (study program);
- planning and implementing the individual education plan;
- evaluation and change of the individual education plan;
- transition: support for employment and further education.

6. Skill demonstrations and CQAF Framework Challenges (Miika Keijonen, Project Coordinator, Keskuspuisto Vocational Institute).

Topics:

- SD in practice: the “Deming Cycle” – planning, implementation, evaluation and assessment, feedback and procedures for change;

7. Keskuspuisto Vocational College: Vocational Education College; Special Education Resource Centre Helsinki (Miika Keijonen, Project Coordinator, Keskuspuisto Vocational Institute).

Topics:

- Keskuspuisto Vocational College – statute and educational offer for persons with special needs.

8. Quality Assurance and improvement by VET provider (Pirkko Aro, Adviser/Salpaus Further Education, Jaana Ilomäki, Internal Auditor/Lahti Region Educational Consortium).

Topics:

- Lahti Region Education Consortium description;
- national and regional policies;
- internal auditing for success and high performance: policy papers; values, mission and vision; process chart; the use of EFQM, CQAF, BSC models;
- QA system and procedures in Salpaus Further Education

9. Curriculum process and assessment (Jaana Ilomäki, Internal Auditor/Lahti Region Educational Consortium).

Topics:

- Salpaus Further Education: cooperation with working life – roles of different parts in providing education;
- national core curricula and curricula at providers’ level;
- qualifications and parts of qualifications;
- assessment: concept of vocational competence; drawing up a competence chart;
- on the job learning and assessment: processes and guidance; partnership between school and enterprise.

10. Quality Assurance Procedures for Assessment of the on-the-job learning and skill demonstrations. Case: Vocational Qualification in Fishery (Heikki Tuomainen, teacher, project manager Salpaus Further Education).

Topics:

- the position of competence based qualifications for adult learners within the Finnish education system;
- transformative teaching;
- the partnership between school and company in on the job learning and SD: curriculum planning; on the job learning plan; skills demonstration plan; assessment methods; the role of SD in national assessment.

11. Quality Assurance procedures in Competence based qualifications in CQAF Framework and the role of Qualification Committees in Quality Assurance. Case: Jewelry (Arto Tikkinen, Lecturer/Salpaus Further Education, Sannakaisa Raatikainen, Adviser/Salpaus Further Education).

Topics:

- competence based qualification in Jewelry: the path leading to competence based qualification;
- QA procedures at provider level;
- the arrangements for a competence based qualification assessment: tripartite evaluation; quantitative and qualitative evaluation;
- the role of external bodies (Qualification Committee and FNBE).

12. Social partners' involvement in Student assessment (Marja-Terttu Tanttinen, the Federation of Finnish Technology Industries).

Topics:

- the role of the social partners – the case of technology industries;
- the main problems of the sector;
- the quality of VET and the role of the SD;
- challenges for the schools and the for social partners at national and regional levels.

13. National evaluations based on skill demonstrations and CQAF Model (Mari Rökköläinen, Counsellor of Education).

Topics:

- policies regarding the evaluation system in VET;
- quality and evaluation;
- context based assessment; evaluation and SD;
- findings from the pilot projects: the new evaluation model; the evaluation based on SD; the link between evaluation at national and local levels;
- main issues and challenges – the plans for the future.

14. European Large Scale Assessment for VET (VET-LSA) (Mari Rökköläinen, Counsellor of Education).

Topics:

- concept and content;
- target group and timeline;
- policy impact.

15. Using learning results to ensure quality both in education and training and at workplaces (Maria Luoma-Aho, principal, Kaarina Social and Health Care College).

Topics:

- using the learning results: how does working life benefit from learning results;

- SD and curriculum;
- Applying QA in instruction and cooperation with working life;
- SD and peer assessment in quality work.

16. Evaluation system, databases and examples of evaluation measures. A Finnish approach (Leena Koski, FNBE).

Topics:

- the system of monitoring and assessing the educational sector in Finland;
- the role of different players;
- the national evaluation of learning outcomes in Finland for the VET sector;
- the role of SD.

17. Student assessment as a part of quality assurance procedures (Gun-Marit Nieminen, principal of Perho Culinary schools, replacing Pekka Selenius, Development manager, Perho Culinary School).

Topics:

- the description of Perho Culinary Schools;
- on the job learning;
- assessment of learning outcomes;
- self evaluation of students.

6.7. Appendix G: Post Activity Questionnaire



Peer Learning Activity on Quality Assurance procedures for Student Assessment 24-26 November, 2008 - Helsinki

POST ACTIVITY QUESTIONNAIRE for Participants

Peer Learning Activity – Student Assessment

Peer learning activities are a central part of the ENQA-VET work programme. They provide an opportunity for participants to reflect collectively and individually on how their own professional practice can develop as a result of the opportunity of constructive engagement with other countries/institutions/organisations' experiences of addressing similar issues.

This peer learning activity focused on the quality assurance aspects of student assessment. The attached post activity questionnaire is designed to collect participants' reflections on the subject of the peer learning activity after the activity and is an essential part of your contribution as a participant. Your responses will be collated by the Expert, Mr Serban Iosifescu. The analysis of the questionnaire will also be used to evaluate the added value of the peer learning activity.

To be completed and returned to siosifescu@yahoo.com and to agraves@enqavet.eu

Deadline: Friday December 19th 2008

SECTION I - Learning and dissemination

Expectations

Did the Peer learning Activity meet your expectations ?

Added value

What has been the added-value of your participation in terms of your personal learning ?

What has been the added-value of your participation in terms of the professional context in which you are working ?

What do you consider to be the specific European added-value of the Peer Learning Activity ?

Insights

What insights have you gained which you feel be useful to a wider audience of your peers at regional and/or national level ?

What insights have you gained which will be used to a wider audience at European Level ?

Dissemination and contribution

How will your experiences / learning during the PLA be disseminated to a wider audience within the system in which you are working ?

What contribution will your participation in the PLA enable you to make to policy **development** in your country ?

What contribution will your participation in the PLA enable you to make to policy **implementation** in your country ?

How has the PLA contributed to a common body of knowledge at European level that will enhance the quality assurance aspects of student assessment ?

SECTION II – The organisation

In this section we would like to have your personal opinion regarding the way the Peer Learning Activity was managed

Strengths

Which were the main strengths of the PLA management and organization ?

Weaknesses

Which were the main weaknesses of the PLA management and organization ?

SECTION III – PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Finally, we would like you to make recommendations and proposals regarding the future development of PLA

What do you think is most needed for further improvement of the PLA ?

SECTION IV – CONTACT DETAILS

Country	
Organisation	
Name	
Address	
e-mail	