

Report

5th EQAVET Annual Forum

Date: 26-27 March 2014

Venue: Athens, Greece

Introduction

This EQAVET Annual Forum was the fifth to take place within the new phase of the work at European level regarding quality assurance in Vocational Education and Training (VET) since the adoption of the Recommendation on the establishment of the quality assurance reference framework for VET and the subsequent establishment of the Secretariat to support its implementation.

The Annual Forum was hosted by The National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational orientation (EOPPEP) in Greece.

Twenty –five EU countries were represented at the Annual Forum. Apologies were received from EU Member States: Poland, Slovakia and Spain; as well as from partner countries: Liechtenstein, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Turkey. The Social Partners were represented by the European Trade Union confederation (ETUC), the European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (UEAPME), the European Centre of Employers and Enterprises (CEEP).. Observers from the European Credit system for VET (ECVET) network, Eurochambres, European Providers of Vocational Education and Training (EUproVET), the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe were also present. The European Development Centre for Vocational Education and Training (CEDEFOP) and the European Training Foundation (ETF) were also represented. Apologies were received from the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR),

The Annual Forum was chaired by the European Commission represented by Ms Dana Carmen Bachmann, Head of Unit Vocational Education and Training Policy; Leonardo da Vinci Programme, DG Education and Culture, and Joao Santos recently appointed deputy head of unit.

A full list of participants can be found on the [EQAVET website](#).

Opening speeches and Introduction to the Annual Forum 2014

The Annual Forum was officially opened and welcomed by Dana Carmen Bachmann who thanked The National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Orientation (EOPPEP) in Greece for hosting the meeting. She also welcomed representatives of Member States, the Social Partners' representatives and the representatives of agencies representing VET providers and other observers.

She noted that quality assurance should be seen as the underpinning principle that drives reform in VET within the context of the EU strategy E&T2020 review process, by which Member States are in the process of assessing and defining guidelines for future developments. Also, she referred to the review process of the *Bruges Communiqué on enhanced EU cooperation in VET* which is appraising the progress of the implementation of the short term deliverables (STDs) of the Bruges Communiqué. CEDEFOP will prepare a VET Policy Monitoring Report and a new set of STDs for VET (agreed within the Copenhagen process) will be adopted jointly by the Commission and the Council in the 2015 Joint Report. These should reinforce the Copenhagen process and create a new momentum for a high level commitment to take forward the new priorities.

She observed that the EQAVET Annual Forum and the discussions that will take place will create an opportunity for the EQAVET network to provide input in relation to quality assurance in VET which will support the discussions at DGVT meeting; which is taking place in Athens on March 27-28. And that these discussions will be of great value as essential actors of EU VET policy have been invited to the forum, such as social partners, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Eurochambres, European VET providers associations, ECVET, ENQA and EQAR.

Antonios Glaros, representing the chief executive of the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational orientation (EOPPEP) - the national public body which works on the certification of qualifications, the licensing of LLL providers and on vocational guidance and counselling in Greece- welcomed participants to Athens and in his presentation outlined how the different transparency tools (EQF, Europass, ECVET and EQAVET) have been coordinated under the same initiative and within EOPPEP in order to increase the quality and efficiency of LLL services. He mentioned that the National Quality Assurance System for LLL providers (π3) covering adult education, VET, vocational guidance and counselling is aligned to EQAVET principles and based on EFQM procedures. EOPPEP is the quality assurance national reference point in Greece. Also it is also member of the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network. He presented the progress made in the sector and the EOPPEP website, which is the common window for information in relation to LLL provision and service in Greece.

The speech is available [here](#).

European Commission and the presentation of the broader EU policy context

Dana-Carmen Bachman, European Commission, presented the Commission initiative ***Towards a European Area of Skills and Qualifications*** (EASQ). The initiative aims to respond to the insufficiencies in the recognition and transparency of skills and qualifications which are hindering the development of the right mix of skills and qualifications as well as the mobility needed to achieve a better match between skills and jobs in the European labour market. Also, the initiative reflects the rapid socio-economic and technological changes; which require flexible learning pathways, and the opportunities offered by technological development and internationalisation.

The economic crisis has exacerbated these issues and European policies and tools for transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications (developed at EU level within the ET2020

strategy and the Bologna process) are urgently called to play their role to support growth and competitiveness, tackle unemployment and promote social inclusion. The EASQ initiative aims to promote the implementation and improvement of these policies and tools in order to be coherent and centred on the learner, promoting flexible learning pathways; support the growing use of digital learning and internationalisation of education; provide better services to learners and workers by simplifying and making them more accessible; and support national structural reforms which aim to achieve these objectives.

This initiative has been developed within the context of the European Commission's communication 'Rethinking Education'. There is a public ongoing consultation (launched on 17 December 2013 and continuing until 15 April 2014) which aims to engage stakeholders in a common discussion about skills and qualifications, transparency and recognition; and on how European tools could be improved and synergies strengthened. Also, the public consultation aims to collect views on the adequacy of the related European policies and instruments and on the potential benefits of developing an EASQ. In addition position papers are welcomed, allowing organisations and authorities to express their views and detailed arguments.

The public consultation will reflect on:

- How to place a stronger focus on higher and more relevant skills
- Further strengthening links between education/training, mobility and the labour market
- Adapting to internationalisation trends
- Ensuring overall coherence of tools and policies and further implementing the learning outcomes approach
- Ensuring clarity of rules and procedures for the recognition of skills and qualifications for further learning
- Increasing the focus on quality assurance
- Providing learners and workers with a single access point to obtain information and services supporting a European area of skills and qualifications.

More information at:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/more_info/consultations/skills_en.htm (the consultation home page includes the link to a background document, the questionnaire and informs on how to submit contributions).

In addition, Dana-Carmen referred to the next steps of the public consultation process: a technical background study (carried out by an external contractor) will be launched in early 2014 in order to gather further information (this will be published by May 2014). A Conference will be organised in the first half of 2014 to conclude the public consultation. Based on the results of the public consultation and the results from the current evaluations (EQF, Europass, EQAVET, ECVET, Progress Report on Quality Assurance in higher education) the Commission may launch a proposal in relation of implementing the EASQ in 2015; and in 2016, the revision of policies and tools.

Also, she referred to the publication of Eurobarometer survey in early 2014

The presentation is available [here](#).

Sophie Weisswange, European Commission, presented the results of the **Commission report to the European Parliament and Council on the implementation of the EQAVET Recommendation**. The results, which are based on the external evaluation and the results of the EQAVET Secretariat's survey, highlight that there is a need to:

1. Increase the role of EQAVET as an instrument of transparency by strengthening:
 - the qualification design, assessment and certification processes in line with EQAVET
 - the learning outcomes dimension of EQAVET
 - closer relationships with NQF and EQF
 - links with ECVET
 - greater coordination with Europass
2. Increase the role of EQAVET as an instrument to enhance mobility by increasing:
 - cooperation with other quality assurance initiatives
 - the transparency of national quality assurance measures – this has been identified as an on-going challenge
3. Improve governance at the:
 - European level - by involving more stakeholders (students, teachers, industry) rather than just focusing on IVET and institutional stakeholders
 - National level – by involving stakeholders in all stages of the implementation process
4. Address the following areas of VET in order to develop an holistic approach to the application of EQAVET:
 - Informal and non-formal learning
 - Work-based learning
 - Adult learning
 - Open education resources (OER) – e.g. mass on-line open courses (MOOCs)

In the conclusions of the report, the Commission plans to undertake the following actions in order to increase European cooperation in quality assurance for lifelong learning (utilising also the results of the report on quality assurance in HE):

- Consult stakeholders on the findings of this report and on the need to improve the coherence between quality assurance in different education sub-sectors, and furthering synergies and convergence of EU transparency and recognition tools.
- Examine how EQAVET can contribute to a common approach to quality assurance for lifelong learning.

The report invites members to use the funding available through Erasmus+, ESF and Horizon2020.

The presentation is available [here](#).

Working with partners: EQF and ECVET and social partners

Sophie Weisswange provided an update on the Copenhagen instruments ECVET and EQF. In relation to EQF, she reported that by the end of 2013, 21 Member States have presented their national report on referencing their national qualifications levels to the EQF. Seven countries wish to complete their referencing process in 2014. Six countries have started indicating the relevant EQF level in their new certificates, diplomas, Europass supplements (the diploma or the

certificate supplements) and/or national qualifications databases. The external evaluation of the EQF has been completed and the Commission has adopted its report to the European Parliament and the Council on the implementation of the EQF Recommendation on December 19, 2013.

In relation to ECVET, CEDEFOP is monitoring the implementation of ECVET and the findings suggest that ECVET requires political commitment at national level. The current situation (in 37 countries/regions) is that there are nine countries/regions with VET-credit systems prior to ECVET; one country intends to adjust existing credit system to ECVET; 28 countries/regions without VET-credit systems; ten countries/regions see ECVET as part of modernisation of national VET systems; nine countries/regions are currently testing the relevance of ECVET for their VET or lifelong learning systems; and 18 countries/regions have made no decision on the future role of ECVET at national level

More information on the findings of the reports on the implementation of EQF and ECVET is available in Sophie's presentation [here](#).

Agnes Roman, The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), emphasised the importance of the EQAVET tool; however she also noted that in the light of the current economic situation and the PIAAC results, the work in the EQAVET network needs to be focused not only in IVET, but also in CVET and apprenticeship. In these areas, social partners are key actors; therefore there is a need to create closer cooperation with social partners at both EU and national levels. Also, quality CVET and apprenticeship can contribute making VET more attractive. So, ETUC welcomes the recent EU initiatives -Youth Guarantee and European Alliance for Apprenticeships- which address these areas. Both initiatives highlight the need to develop and improve curricula in order to ensure that apprenticeships remain adjusted to the need of the labour market and that quality is assured, in particular in relation to the assessment of apprenticeships and working conditions. ETUC has organised two training seminars for trade unionists to explore the implementation of some of EQAVET indicators. This was a positive experience. A training seminar in April 2014 on EQAVET in VET and apprenticeship will be also organised. ETUC launched a project '*Towards a European quality framework for apprenticeship and work-based learning: best practices and trade union contributions*' in 2013, which aims to identify the characteristics for establishing quality apprenticeships in Europe (more information of the project can be found [here](#)). ETUC will launch a new project to set up indicators of quality of apprenticeship, interviewing 20 countries and asking trade unions, employers and public services about how the EU level tools can help improving quality of apprenticeship and WBL. In relation to the EASQ, ETUC considers that there is need to reflect on the use, cost effectiveness, coordination and simplification of the transparency tools; and notes that social partners are not fully involved (at both EU and national levels). The focus should be on facilitating the improvement of quality of VET, increasing the number of and improving the quality of apprenticeship places, better skills-match, and the recognition of qualifications. For ETUC, there should be a better understanding among citizens, especially students, teachers, trainers, and social partners of the benefits of the tools.

Nele Muys, Federation of Self-employed and SMEs (UEAPME), noted that for employers and learners there is a need to simplify, coordinate and streamline the EU initiatives in order to facilitate access to information and the communication on the benefits of implementing and using the EU tools/initiatives. This will also have a positive impact on the interest of the local and regional level. There is a need to consider the difficulties and funding implications of implementing the tools/initiatives, in particular for SMEs. UEAPME recognises the role of work-based learning for fostering employability of young people and that this needs to be reflected in the EASQ proposal, which UEAPME welcomes and stresses the need to enhance the quality and transparency of traineeships. It is also important to foster the attractiveness of VET. For employers the focus should be on the quality of work-based learning not only on the number of placements offered by companies.

The presentation is available [here](#).

EQAVET feedback on the EASQ public consultation – workshop session and plenary reports on discussions

Participants were divided into four groups working in parallel, which reflected and discussed the preparation of EQAVET network's feedback in response to the public consultation process of the European Area of Skills and Qualifications (EASQ). For each group, a facilitator and a rapporteur were appointed, who were supported by an expert. Facilitators encouraged and guided discussion and rapporteurs documented discussion which was presented in plenary on Day 2 of the Annual Forum. Participants received in advance the background information and the questionnaire prepared by the Commission on EASQ and a discussion paper prepared by the Secretariat setting out key issues for the network to consider (the paper was developed by the Secretariat in consultation with the EQAVET steering committee and ad hoc experts). The discussion paper invited network members to reflect on the following ideas which were seen as important in terms of the effective implementation of EASQ. Comments on these issues were seen as important in preparing feedback to the consultation:

- the creation of a set of quality assurance principles which can underpin all forms of VET in Europe (these principles should cover adult learning, school-based VET, higher VET, non-formal and informal learning, digital learning, MOOCS etc.);
- the development of a set of common indicators to measure the quality of all forms of VET (these indicators should cover adult learning, school-based VET, higher VET, non-formal and informal learning etc.). These indicators should be used for all qualifications on the EQF (Levels 1-8) though the priority for developing the indicators should begin with VET qualifications at Levels 3-5;
- measures to facilitate learners' progression and the transparency of learners' achievement in Europe.

Members of the network agreed that it is important that the feedback to be submitted to the public consultation is seen as the collective view of the network and no particular comment should be attributed to any individual, Member State or stakeholder group. Member States were encouraged to submit their own input and views, which may not reflect the priorities identified by the network as an EU level body. The network should focus on those areas where network members have the

greatest expertise and experience i.e. quality assurance, VET and European instruments. Individual members of the network, their organisations and ministries may contribute a broader and more detailed response to the consultation.

Members of the network welcomed the EASQ proposal, because it can: increase the visibility and importance of VET and provide a new impetus for reforms in VET and quality assurance (and a need for increasing transparency and mutual understanding); and make progress towards greater coherence with the other European transparency tools and initiatives. This should be pursued for the benefits of the learners and employers. EASQ should put learners at the centre.

However, members noted that the main challenges are in relation to the implementation process in the national context; and to engaging with all relevant stakeholders. Both issues take time and require funding. In order to alleviate some of this burden, there is a need to ensure a clear methodology, timescale and “road-map” for implementation. The implementation issues need to be considered and developed at the beginning of the process rather than at some later date.

Following discussions in the four groups, five main messages were agreed at the Annual Forum. These are that:

1. the priority is to simplify and explain existing instruments rather than create new ones;
2. there is a need to quality assure the assessment process based on learning outcomes;
3. it is more important to strengthen the quality assurance culture rather than create new indicators;
4. the implementation of the EASQ should include marketing and communication;
5. the EASQ needs to be built on what already works with improved links between the existing European instruments.

These messages summarised the discussion taking place at the workshop which were presented/reported by rapporteurs in plenary. These reports can be found here: [Group 1 report](#); [Group 2 report](#); [Group 3 report](#); [Group 4 report](#)

Presentation of results of EQAVET activities 2013- 2014

Sean Feerick, director of the Secretariat, presented the progress made on the implementation of EQAVET 2013-2015 work programme since the Annual Forum in 2013 held in Dublin. The work programme is designed to support Member States in developing their strategies for the implementation of the Recommendation and enhancing cooperation in the field of quality assurance. The activities developed within the work programme respond to two levels of action: to support actions at national level and at EU level contribution to the overall goal of ‘Making LLL and mobility a reality’.

Two working groups were established in 2013 in order to address the need of NRPs on:

- Facilitating the development of a quality assurance approach for work-based learning (WBL) in line with EQAVET
- Supporting VET systems to address the interrelation between EQAVET and existing QM systems/tools.

As a result, online guidance has been developed. This new online resource is accessible from the homepage of the EQAVET website at www.eqavet.eu. The working groups and the results of their work presented in the new online resource framed their work on the mid-term plan of the Bruges Communiqué in relation to EQAVET. This plan invites countries to

1. establish QA frameworks in accordance with EQAVET by 2014
2. establish –by the end of 2015- common QA framework for VET providers, which also applies to WBL compatible with the EQAVET Framework.

The new resource offers guidance in relation to these two issues, in order to support the work of NRPs and other relevant stakeholders to improve and implement their quality assurance systems in line with EQAVET. The new resource follows the same look and approach as the *Online Quality Cycle tool* developed by the working groups in 2012, i.e. it is a tool designed to provide user-friendly and interactive guidance, and it can be further developed in order to respond to needs of policy context or the needs Members States as they develop their national approaches to the implementation of the Recommendation.

When entering the site on [Aligning a QA approach with EQAVET](#), the site provides an overview of the 4 modules or steps needed for the alignment process, offering practical support, advice and tools. An introduction to the guidance, a contextualisation and the rationale for undertaking the alignment exercise; and an explanation to users of how the guidance works are also offered. Also *mapping tables at system and provider levels* were developed by the working group, which provide a methodology for those in the process of aligning a quality assurance approach with the general framework of EQAVET if they are using an approach based on either the EFQM Excellence Model or the ISO 9001 Standard.

In relation to the online resource on Guidance on [QA for work based-learning in line with EQAVET](#), the site presents the 6 building blocks for WBL. The building blocks are a set of simple ‘calls for action’ which can be undertaken by VET systems and providers in order to improve the quality assurance of WBL. These are based on the analysis of 25 case studies from 14 countries.

The sites are linked to the *Online Quality Cycle tool* and acknowledge the work of participating countries (i.e. those who have participated in working groups and have made possible the development of this new resource). The Social Partners are also listed.

Two peer learning activities were organised in 2013 on: May 2013 on Self-assessment for system and providers (Budapest); and December 2013 on Indicator 6 in the IVET and CVET sectors (Belfast). As a result two policy briefs have been published on the web (available [here](#)). Two more peer learning activities will be organised in 2014 on: May 2014 on the impact of QA system in IVET (Vienna) and Winter 2014 on indicator 9.

A Dissemination Conference (Nov. 24-25) will be organised building and capitalising on the results of the EQAVET Sectoral Seminars on the healthcare, tourism and catering, construction and the ICT sectors. The Secretariat has put in place measures in order to ensure coordination between this conference and *Sector Skills Alliances – Meeting skills needs through vocational education and training (VET) reform conference* organised by the Commission on April 15, 2014.

A *Joint expert seminar on quality assurance and permeability between VET and HE* was organised in conjunction with CEDEFOP and took place in October 2013. A report has been

published (available [here](#)); and the Secretariat and CEDEFOP are analysing areas of common interest that can move forward further cooperation with the sector.

Sean also pointed out the importance of the EQAVET website as a common point of information and reference in relation to EU quality assurance in VET. The Secretariat regularly updates, revises and improves it in order to ensure the consolidation of the website as the primary tool of communication and dissemination. The Newsletter is also an important source of dissemination.

The Secretariat is in the process of analysing the completed survey 2013; and it will present preliminary results to the steering committee in its meeting in June.

The presentation is available [here](#).

Update on the work of the scientific advisors : ETF and CEDEFOP

Elizabeth Watters, European Training Foundation (ETF), provided an overview about ETF and the work it undertakes in relation to enhancing quality assurance of VET in partner countries - Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine Syria, Tunisia, Israel, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Russia and Iceland. She pointed out the international dimension of EQAVET and the interest these countries have in the Framework and the work developed by EQAVET, which can be easily reach through the website. She acknowledged the importance and value of these and the need for the Network to be aware of this international dimension. She presented the main features and progress of the *Torino process*, which was launched in 2010 in order to review the status and progress of VET in the ETF partner countries. The objective is to acquire up to date knowledge about the policies and their results in a country; and to strengthen the ownership, participation and evidence-base of policy making to improve the performance of policies.

The presentation is available [here](#).

Tina Bertzeletou and George Kostakis, European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP), provided an overview of the publications in relation to VET and quality assurance which are underway. Tina presented the study on *Quality approaches in learning and training patterns in European small firms*, which will analyse training patterns and work based learning in SMEs, focusing on the provision of informal and non-formal training in 28 EU countries. She also presented the study on *Quality management approaches to establishing a quality culture within VET institutions* which aims to assist VET providers in introducing internal systematic quality management systems, offering guidelines, criteria, tools, practical examples and advice based on the analysis of 20 case studies of VET-providers operating within national or sector quality frameworks in the EU. George presented the study on *Quality assurance of the certification process in IVET*, to be published in 2015, which explores the quality assurance arrangements that support the certification process in European countries in initial VET and the

interaction with learning outcomes. The study will present an overview of policy developments in 28 Member States and 10 case studies in three sectors: the healthcare, ICT and tourism sectors.

The presentation is available [here](#).

Election of EQAVET steering committee

Four nominations accompanied by letters of support for their nomination to the steering committee were received by the deadline on 12 March, 2014. As the number of nominations received did not exceed the number of places available for elected members in the steering committee, the Secretariat proposed to accept all four candidates. These are: Leena Koski (Finland), Wolfgang Kreher (Germany), Katalin Molnar-Stadler (Hungary), Dana Stroe (Romania). The Annual Forum agreed with this procedure and welcomed the newly appointed steering committee.

Therefore, the composition of the steering committee for the period 2014-2016 will be as follows: elected members: L. Koski, W. Kreher, K Molnarné-Stadler, D. Stroe; presidency trio: LT, EL, IT (March- June 2014), EL,IT,LV (July-December 2104), IT,LV,LU (January-June 2105), LV,LU,NL (July-December 2015); social partners (ETUC, UEAPME); scientific advisors (CEDEFOP, ETF); and the European Commission.

The 1st and 2nd meetings of the steering committee have been agreed and will take place on June 10 and Nov. 18, 2014.

Tour de Table Session - exchange of information

Participants had the opportunity to provide updates about current developments in the area of quality assurance in VET in their countries/organisations and express their views on how the network can support this work. A background paper was prepared by the Secretariat and distributed in advance which guided participants' inputs and maximised the limit time allocated to each (5mins). The session was chaired by Joao Santos.

These are some of the main messages which summarise the inputs from participants provided at this session:

- EQAVET has been a catalyst for reform and modernisation of VET in many countries. Some of them are in the process of mapping their approach with the EQAVET indicative descriptors and indicators. Countries value the generic and tool-box aspect of the EQAVET Framework.
- The quality assurance processes related to and involved in the development of the learning outcomes approach for VET seems to be a priority in many countries (in particular in relation of the assessment process). In this respect, the Network needs to reflect and address this area of concern.

- There is a need to clarify the work on quality assurance in relation to EQAVET and Annex 3 of EQF, at both EU and national levels, within the progress towards establishing NQFs.
- The above points call for greater cooperation and synergies with EQF and ECVET.
- There is a need to shift some of focus and efforts from IVET to CVET and work-based learning; as countries are making this move and they need support. In these areas the quality assurance of assessment, certification and accreditation of providers is of key importance. Also, the quality of teachers and trainers.
- These matters highlight the importance of focusing on flexible VET that providers can adjust to the regional/local and the labour market needs, realising a bottom-up approach. That SMEs can benefit from.
- Member States value the cooperation and sharing of practices and knowledge developed during the years by the Network (peer learning activities and working groups are considered of great value). This has contributed to increase mutual understanding, trust, transparency and mobility in VET across the EU. They commented that in some instances/activities it is important to cluster countries around areas of similar interest.
- An important focus is on quality assured effective transition pathways (school to work and vice versa) including to higher education.
- There is a need to reflect on the quality assurance elements which can successfully contribute to the recognition of prior learning and informal and non-formal learning.
- A priority is to work towards increasing the status and positive image of VET.
- There is a need to develop support that can assist Members States in the utilisation of available EU funds.

Secretariat proposals for activities 2014 -2015 – workshop session and plenary reports on discussions

Sean Feerick introduced the session – the Secretariat proposes to establish

- A working group of NRPs working on the area of quality assurance and adult education in the context of CVET
- A joint expert group with membership from the ECVET and EQAVET networks
- A supplementary peer learning activity (PLA) in order to address the issue of how VET providers address the issue of quality assurance of assessment procedures and transnational mobility

The topics have been decided after conversations with the steering committee, NRPs and ad hoc experts; and build on discussions at the Annual Forum in 2013, the findings of the report of the European Commission to the European Parliament and Council on the implementation of EQAVET and consideration for the development of the EASQ. The Secretariat prepared a background paper as a basis for a preliminary draft mandate for the activities described above and distributed in advance to the Forum in order to contextualise and prompt discussion. These are the general messages emerging from the session:

- The topics proposed are the right ones. The Secretariat needs to refine the papers using the feedback provided by members in order to define the scope of the activities proposed.
- The activities proposed focus on increasing collaboration with other education sectors and the world of work; and transparency between the various quality assurance systems in

order to strengthen mutual trust among VET systems, strengthening the recognition of learners' qualifications within and across borders which is key priority for the EU.

In relation to the working group on quality assurance and adult education in the context of CVET, the messages were:

- It is important that the focus is on CVET and not on all forms of adult education.
- In the context of CVET, the recognition of prior learning is of key importance and should be considered.
- In the scope of CVET, not only the sectoral competencies are addressed but also soft skills and interpersonal competencies as needed by the labour market. The group should explore and clarify this issue, focusing on the LLL perspective.
- There is a need to explore the elements that motivate 'adults and workers' to learn and up-skill and expectations from participation.
- It would be important to examine common principles/criteria for CVET and quality indicators relevant to CVET building on the work developed by the thematic group on Adult Learning and EQAVET. For this reason, some members expressed the need to involve experts/members who worked in the thematic group on Adult Education.
- The group should involve representatives of the labour market (chambers) and other relevant stakeholders (e.g. trainers).

In relation to the joint expert group with membership from the ECVET and EQAVET networks, the messages were:

- The group will be of great value in relation to the exchange of information and best practices, and learning from each other, promoting complementary and greater synergies.
- However this can not be the only objective. The group should explore more complex issues, such as the design, assessment and certification and recognition of learning outcomes.
- The results of the discussion will be reported to the ECVET committee; also ECVET seminars should inform and be informed by the work to be developed in this group.
- The work of this working group should inform the PLA analysed below.

In relation to a supplementary peer learning activity (PLA) on how VET providers address the issue of quality assurance of assessment procedures and transnational mobility, the messages were:

- Participants agreed that this topic is of key importance.
- All forms of learning can be included.
- The reflections and outcomes of the work of joint expert group EQAVET-ECVET should be considered and integrated on the content to be developed for this PLA.
- Clustering countries in what members termed 'mini PLAs' should be considered.

The Secretariat will revise and redraft the papers for this session according to the comments made. The full reports of this workshop session can be found here: [Group 1 report](#); [Group 2 report](#); [Group 3 report](#); [Group 4 report](#)

Closing remarks

The Chairperson, Joao Santos, closed the meeting. He acknowledged that the topics for Network activities for 2014-2015 proposed are relevant and respond to the issues highlighted in the Commission report to the European Parliament and Council on the implementation of the EQAVET. Also, they contribute to the review of ET2020 strategy.

He thanked the hosts, network members, the experts, the representatives of the social partners and other observers and groups for their attendance, active cooperation and commitment to the Network. He thanked the Secretariat for its work.

Note: All presentations made at the Annual Forum have been uploaded on the [website](#).