



**EQAVET**

European Quality Assurance  
in Vocational Education and Training

Supporting the implementation of the  
European Quality Assurance Reference Framework  
for Vocational Education and Training

**POLICYBRIEF**

*This policy brief has been prepared in order to share the results of an EQAVET Peer Learning Activity on supporting training providers to identify areas and implement actions for improvement in line with EQAVET. The peer learning activity, organized within the EQAVET Network, provides a means of discussing, sharing and learning from each other on areas of strategic importance for the successful implementation of the Recommendation on establishing a European quality assurance reference framework for VET. The policy brief reflects the opinions of those who participated in the peer learning activity and does not constitute an official European Commission or EQAVET position.*

Peer Learning  
Activity on

**Higher VET and the role of quality assurance**

*Participating countries:* AT, BU, HR, CY, CZ, EE, FI, DE, IE, IT, LT, RO, SK, SI, SE, UK (Wales) and ME; and a colleague from the European Training Foundation (ETF).

### SUMMARY

This policy note is based on the peer learning activity (PLA) held in Cyprus on 20-21 March 2018. The PLA was part of the [EQAVET 2018-19 work programme](#) and was organised by the EQAVET Secretariat in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Culture in Cyprus. It included a half-day study visit to the Techniki Scholi Larnacos.

The PLA brought together colleagues from VET providers and those with a national or regional responsibility for VET policy from 17 countries and the European social partners. Many participants represented a Member State's Quality Assurance National Reference Point (NRP) – these were established as part of the EQAVET Recommendation and have a central role in supporting the VET quality assurance arrangements in their system.

The PLA methodology used by EQAVET enables participants to share their knowledge and experiences by using examples of practice and policy implementation. This provides a starting point to reflect on the shared challenges faced by education and training systems across the EU. This PLA looked at VET qualifications at EQF Levels 5 to 7 which are provided outside the higher education sector. The discussions considered how:

- the provision of higher VET increases the attractiveness and relevance of VET;
- quality assurance can contribute to fostering parity of esteem between qualifications in higher academic education and higher VET

The following comments are based on participants' reflections which were informed by presentations from Cyprus, Austria, Ireland and UEAPME (The European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises).

This policy brief is not a verbatim report but an analysis of the quality assurance issues which were raised. It is intended as information for those who are attempting to use quality assurance in higher VET in order to support the development of high quality HiVET by meeting the demands of employers for qualifications and graduate employability. The PLA was informed by a background paper and the analysis of participants' experiences of using quality assurance as part of the approval, evaluation or accreditation process.

*More information on this PLA is available on the EQAVET website [here](#).*

### POLICY CONTEXT

In December 2010, the European ministers for vocational education and training, the European social partners and the European Commission met in Bruges to review the strategic approach and priorities of the Copenhagen process for 2011-2020 and agreed to 'develop or maintain post-secondary or higher VET at EQF level 5 or higher, as appropriate, and contribute to achieving the EU headline target of 40% with tertiary or equivalent education'<sup>1</sup>.

The OECD's report *Skills Beyond School (2014)*<sup>2</sup> argued also that post-secondary vocational education is a largely '**hidden world**' but is of key importance to the development of systems that are able to respond to the increasing demand for higher level technical and professional skills (defined as ISCED level 5 and above).

<sup>1</sup> The Bruges Communiqué on enhanced European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training for the period 2011-2020 [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/repository/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/brugescom\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/brugescom_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> OECD (2014). *Skills Beyond School: Synthesis Report, OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training*. Paris: OECD Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264214682-en>



On the other hand, the European Commission's *New Skills Agenda for Europe* (2016)<sup>3</sup> has acknowledged that 'Higher level VET provision is steadily expanding and is valued by both learners and employers for providing skills needed on the labour market. Such developments need to be further encouraged and be appropriately integrated into the qualification frameworks and systems.'

This trend was highlighted in a study on higher vocational education and training (HiVET) commissioned by the Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, which argued that 'Although not all countries have already implemented their NQF and referenced their national qualifications levels to EQF levels, research clearly shows that most countries link qualifications in the area of higher VET to EQF 5. However, there are also higher VET qualifications linked to EQF levels 6 up to 8'<sup>4</sup>.

HiVET has become a policy issue and is perceived to be developing as a subsystem in the European VET landscape. It is therefore timely to further explore QA processes in HiVET, particularly the use of the *EQAVET Framework* in higher VET.

## Peer Learning Activity OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this Peer Learning Activity (PLA) was to exchange knowledge and experience about *Higher VET and the role of quality assurance* in participating countries by reflecting on:

- How effective and/or useful are current approaches to quality assurance in the provision of HiVET?
- What are the enablers of, and barriers to, quality assurance systems that meet the expectations and needs of higher VET providers?

The PLA was organised into two workshops based on presentations of case studies from three Member States (Austria, Cyprus and Ireland) and UEAPME (The European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises):

- Session one consisted of two small group sessions, followed by two plenary sessions that addressed the topic of quality assurance systems in the provision of HiVET: one session was dedicated to the role of quality assurance in HiVET at system level
- Session two looked at the role of quality assurance in HiVET at provider level.

## CASE STUDIES

A summary of these cases is presented below. Further information on each case study is available on the EQAVET website [here](#).


At the SYSTEM LEVEL, the case studies covered:

### CASE STUDY FROM CYPRUS

#### Key points

QA in HiVET at post-secondary level includes accreditation of the post-secondary institutes of vocational education and training; monitoring of HiVET provider processes and outcomes based on the four phases of the quality cycle (PDCA) and on data collected from students and employers.

Post-Secondary Institutes of Vocational Education and Training (PSIVET-MIEEK) is a project co-funded by the European Social Fund and the Republic of Cyprus. The project began in 2012 and was accredited by the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education in 2017.



The slide contains the following text:

welcome  
Parfeis Zacharopoulos  
QUALITY ASSURANCE OFFICER PSIVET-MIEEK  
21/3/2019

// THE ROLE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEMS IN THE PROVISION OF HIGHER VET  
// HOW IS DONE IN CYPRUS?

Our institution – PSIVET-MIEEK is a project co-funded by the European Social Fund and the Republic of Cyprus. The Ministers Committee established PSIVET-MIEEK in February 2012.

VISION OF MIEEK  
Our vision is to offer high-quality Certified Vocational Education and Training Programs in Developing Areas so as to meet the high demand in the labor market.  
Also, to improve / upgrade the qualifications / skills of our citizens, especially young people, enabling them to be suitable candidates for employment opportunities within the European labor market.  
This vision has been successfully adopted and shared between all involved parties and is considered to be our main guideline for any major decision taking needed regarding our institution.

co-funded by the European Social Fund and the Republic of Cyprus

The aim is to: a) offer high-quality certified VET programmes in areas that are in high demand in the labour market and b) improve / upgrade the qualifications / skills of Cyprus citizens, especially young people, enabling them to be suitable candidates for employment opportunities within the European labour market.

The approach to quality assurance includes the accreditation of the project as well as the use of the quality cycle (PDCA), namely by:

- ▶ identifying which courses are in demand in the labour market by collecting data directly from local businesses and indirectly from social partners in the PSIVET-MIEEK council
- ▶ selecting staff on the basis of both their academic /teaching qualifications and practical working experience in the related industry. The

<sup>3</sup> European Commission (2016). [Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee of the Regions. A New Skills Agenda for Europe. Working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness](#). COM/2016/0381 Final.

<sup>4</sup> European Commission (2016). [Study on higher vocational education and training in the EU](#).

- admission of students is also based on specific selection criteria, namely the secondary school qualifications grade
- ▶ conducting an internal evaluation to ensure the development and improvement of the quality of programmes, management system, etc. This evaluation is based on the collection of data and feedback from students, employers and all people involved in the planning and implementation processes
- ▶ using the evaluation exercises to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the system on a continual basis.

## CASE STUDY FROM AUSTRIA

### Key points

A systemic approach to managing quality in VET, including HiVET, is used: a multilevel system based on a common framework; quality development is implemented as a target-driven continuous process based on the four phases of the quality assurance cycle (PDCA) and by using specific quality management instruments

### Lessons learned: What works!

- 🔍 The multi-level system (federal level, county, school) is an advantage → the architecture makes sense.
- 🔍 The investment of resources for the QM (headmasters, esp. quality managers) is important.
- 🔍 Tempo had been reduced at an early time – this was good.
- 🔍 The support structure functions.
- 🔍 Cooperation in and between schools was strengthened because of QIBB.
- 🔍 A QM system without external evaluation was no disadvantage – although it is not always easy with pure self evaluation.
- 🔍 It always was stressed that the learning and improvement of the students has to be the main concern (not to forget!).



The Austrian case study illustrated a **systemic approach** to managing quality in HiVET. In Austria, HiVET includes **school-based provision** (VET colleges, add-on courses, post-secondary VET courses and schools for people in employment) and **pathways outside formal schools or HE institutions** (master craftsperson schools, industrial master colleges and building craftsperson schools) and qualifications awarded on the basis of an examination by a certifying authority or an interest group (e.g. master craftsperson exam, proof of competence exam).

QIBB is an initiative of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research to implement a systematic quality management approach in schools. It constitutes the **common framework** encompassing all IVET school types and including all organisational levels: schools, inspection, Ministry. QIBB promotes the development of common strategies and offers sufficient scope for the

particularities of individual schools. Find further information at <https://www.qibb.at/de/English>. Quality development is implemented as a target-driven continuous process based on the model of the four phases of the quality assurance cycle (PDCA). The process is controlled, supported and structured by using specific quality management (QM) instruments as depicted below: Austria has been developing its QM system since 2004 and lessons have been learnt.

Finally, it was stressed that student **learning and improvement** has to be the primary concern.

## CASE STUDY FROM IRELAND

### Key points

A systemic approach to managing VET quality, including HiVET, is used: issuing quality assurance guidelines that highlight areas where providers are expected to have quality assurance policies and procedures in place; and conducting regular evaluations of how effectively providers are implementing those quality policies and procedures

The Irish case study also illustrated a **systemic approach** to managing quality in HiVET. In Ireland, higher VET consists of levels 4-8 of the European Qualifications Framework and covers the private sector (VET & HE), the public VET system and the public HE system.

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is the **integrated** agency for quality and qualifications in Ireland whose mission is: a) to promote the enhancement of quality in Ireland's further and higher education and training, and quality assure providers; b) to support and promote a qualifications system that benefits learners and other stakeholders. In the Irish context, VET quality assurance is a shared responsibility between VET providers and QQI. See further information at: <http://www.qqi.ie/Pages/Home.aspx>



Particularly relevant is their QA life cycle based on **7 stages**, i.e.: 1. core QA guidelines: these outline the elements which are fundamental and common to all providers associated with QQI. 2. Initial institutional approval: access to validation for all providers is limited by the approved scope of provision. 3. Programme validation: providers are required to evaluate their programme against QQI validation criteria. 4. Annual dialogues: meetings that provide an opportunity for both parties to consider a range of issues relating to the development of the QA infrastructure; 5. Institutional reviews: opportunities to provide an independent external review of the effectiveness and implementation

of the institution's own internal quality assurance procedures. 6. Monitoring: undertaken regularly by providing each institution, review team member and institutional coordinator, with an opportunity to provide structured feedback on the review process. 7. Enhancement activities.

At the VET PROVIDER LEVEL, the case studies looked at:

## CYPRUS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

### Key points

QA in HiVET programmes at university level is developed through accreditation of HiVET programmes and strong links with local industry (applied research and industry placements)



#### Department of Agricultural Sciences, Biotechnology & Food Science

- Consulting
  - Creating the curriculum for the STVE Programme on Dairy Science-Cheesemaking to satisfy the requirements of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education
    - Strengthening partnerships and networks between companies, VET providers and higher education institutions
- 8 weeks Industrial Placement
  - Thoughts for increasing this even more
- Strong links with local industry
  - Applied research projects

curriculum for the STVE Programme on 'Dairy Science-Cheese making' as well as satisfying the requirements of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education. The Department regards these activities as a way of strengthening partnerships and networks between companies, VET providers and higher education institutions.

In Cyprus VET provision is covered by a mix of institutions, i.e. secondary technical and vocational education (STVE) under the aegis of the Ministry of Education and Culture, private institutions of higher education, private universities and public universities. Courses in the higher education sector tend to have a greater academic focus, although many degrees have a vocational focus (e.g. agricultural sciences).

The Cyprus University of Technology set a number of goals for 2016-2020 including under the principle of lifelong learning: developing targeted vocational training programs to maintain the knowledge-based society, i.e. continuing training pathways for adult workers and non-traditional students who return to training in order to update their skills through the Centre of Professional, Business and Personal Development & Food Science in the Cyprus University of Technology, namely its proven role in creating the

## THE AUSTRIAN HIGHER TECHNICAL FEDERAL COLLEGES

### Key points

QA approach is based on a PDCA cycle used as an instrument to improve teachers' and managers' professional activities and to enhance teaching/learning and administrative processes at provider level. Self-evaluation results are shared online, enabling benchmarking of HiVET providers

In Austria, the Higher Technical Federal Colleges (HTLs) include schools and colleges for engineering, arts and crafts which cover 20 different fields with numerous specialisations. The HTLs concept of higher vocational training include: general education (40%), theoretical technical background (45%), practical experience (15%) in manufacturing, production, laboratory and workshop, a mandatory internship of minimum 8 weeks and 35-40 units per week.

The qualification is awarded for completing school leaving examinations and diploma examinations while the certification (EQF level 6) requires three years' experience and a certification interview.

### Conclusion



#### ► Benefits of QA

- PDCA-Cycle is **the** instrument for achieving continuous improvement
- Management tool
- QIBB supports development in terms of
  - pedagogical, didactical, professional
  - personnel, organizational
 aspects

This case study focused on the design, construction and manufacturing of an individual piece of furniture by each one of the students in the HiVET programme. Three aspects were considered and in each one the PDCA cycle was applied with the following QA effects, i.e.

- **Learning and teaching:** individualisation of teaching and learning; competence oriented teaching, testing and assessing;
- **Work safety:** compliance with legal work safety requirements (concerning teachers and students);
- **Acquired vocational skills:** support in the implementation of the new final examination regulations (examination guidelines with process descriptions), recognition of prior learning (agreements with selected universities).

## IRISH REGIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARDS (ETBs)

### Key points



QA procedures are in place following the issue of guidelines and requirements at macro level. Governance was identified as a key factor in developing QA in the ETBs and a new governance strategy is currently being developed

This case study focused on the regional education and training boards (ETBs). There are sixteen such boards which are independent statutory entities representing VET providers at NQA levels 1-6 and HiVET at NQA levels 5-6; all have QA procedures and new quality assurance guidelines and requirements from QQI came into effect in 2016. A key feature of quality assurance in ETBs is a high level of collaboration, cooperation and sharing good practice in quality assurance development, management and improvement, through a national representative body, ETBI.



A cooperative project on **governance of QA in VET** was the topic selected to illustrate the Irish case study. The project engaged a governance expert to evaluate QA governance in all 16 ETBs, the outcome of the project is an ETB QA Governance **Reference Handbook** to provide support for the ETBs in establishing, implementing, and evolving QA governance structures and processes.

The key elements of the new QA governance model are: proposed establishment of an overarching VET quality council, broad staff representation, external stakeholder representation and learner representation. Some new **QA governance structures** are emerging through the development of new national apprenticeships: National Consortium Steering Group (with industry partners), FET Quality Council, –National Programme Board and National Examination Board for each national apprenticeship programme, and New Apprenticeship

Monitoring and Enhancement Panel. All governance units established within this model have prescribed membership, terms of reference and operating procedures which cover their responsibilities and remit.

As a final note, the Irish representative reminded the PLA participants that development and establishment of such a process **takes time**.

## ERASMUS+ PROJECT: QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

### Key points

The project developed *European Guidelines on Quality Assurance in Higher VET* that identified a set of 12 quality features based on the quality assurance cycle (PDCA).

This case study is the result of a three-year Erasmus+ project (2014 -2017) that involved UEAPME and five national organisations from Austria, Belgium, France, Germany and Greece. The project is available [here](#).

The main objectives of the project were:

- ▶ to promote greater parity of esteem between higher academic education and higher VET
- ▶ to increase the visibility of higher VET (qualifications)
- ▶ to create more transparency and a better understanding

The project was developed on the basis of a number of **assumptions** on HiVET, i.e. meeting the companies' demand for qualifications; securing the employability of individuals; acquiring and developing management and leadership skills (particularly with a view to founding a new company).

The two main **outcomes of the project** were: 1. the *European Guidelines on Quality Assurance in Higher VET* that identified a set of 12 quality features; 2. setting up of a *European QA Network* with the aim of guaranteeing the sustainability and further development of the QA Guidelines and fostering the eventual development of a Higher VET Area, in which the Guidelines will be used.

## DISCUSSION & REFLECTIONS

The case studies presented during the PLA reflected the diversity of HiVET contexts across Europe and how systems and providers approach quality. **Differences across countries of what is considered to be HiVET is mirrored in content, types of providers and programmes, interest of policy makers and labour market demand.**

Additionally, it seems we have a 'confused policy area' without a clear definition and place in national qualifications frameworks (i.e. they are defined as post-secondary VET, short cycle

programmes, professional higher education, professional bachelors' programmes, higher VET, dual higher VET) with limited permeability and in many countries limited progression opportunities. In fact, providers vary from traditional universities to universities of applied science, companies or upper secondary VET schools, public or private. Further points of difficulty are the boundaries and the connections between the sectors that offer examples of inter-institutional competition as well as of collaboration.

In some EU countries, business and industry have criticised VET providers for their lack of responsiveness to employer needs. The nature of the labour market is a key factor in explaining the spread and intensity of employer demand for higher skills; it follows that the viability and currency of HiVET programmes and qualifications is dependent on both their appeal to employers and attractiveness to learners.

The information provided by participating countries at the PLA highlighted a relevant feature:

- **the general principles and practices of regulatory and quality assurance systems for VET, including higher VET, are in place in most countries;**
- **these include initial VET provider accreditation, national frameworks for qualifications and institutional self-assessment, which are sometimes combined with external assessment (e.g. by peers, inspectors).**

This suggests that countries seem to need and use external accountability combined with internal quality assurance regimes.

During the PLA, participants disclosed a number of issues when discussing two main topics as follows:

## 1. How effective and/or useful are current approaches to QA in the provision of higher VET?

- ▶ **Need for a set of QA principles:** QA principles are general and consequently useful in all forms of VET; however, clear criteria, core procedures and guidelines specifically for HiVET are needed;
- ▶ **Integration** of QA frameworks and national qualifications frameworks in order to improve coherence **and closer links** between (Hi)VET and HE based on parity of esteem as part of the broader tertiary sector with different roles for each sector in terms of skills and knowledge development
- ▶ **Quality assurance dimensions** for HiVET should include:
  - ✓ Systematic focus on learner and employer needs
  - ✓ Flexibility of HiVET provision, including the recognition of prior learning as a means of career change or for further study
  - ✓ Relevance of HiVET programmes to the labour market in order to bridge the gap in skill demand and supply and foster graduate employability
  - ✓ Setting standards to enable self-assessment, measurement of results and benchmarking as well as external quality assurance
  - ✓ Engagement of key stakeholders (both internal and external) at all stages of the quality cycle, i.e. planning, implementing, evaluating and reviewing provision
  - ✓ Strong work-based learning component in HiVET programmes
  - ✓ Development of the competence of key actors, e.g. institutional leadership, academic and work-based experience of teaching/training staff, comprising their professional development

## 2. The enablers of, and barriers to, quality assurance systems that meet the expectations and needs of higher VET providers

Premise: Quality assurance is a means to an end, not an end in itself

- ▶ **Barriers to QA systems** to meet the expectations and needs of HiVET providers include
  - ✓ **Inadequate** financial and human resources
  - ✓ **Lack of knowledge** about quality assurance
  - ✓ **Organisational factors** such as the complexity of E&T systems and issues related to the autonomy of institutions
  - ✓ **Clarification** on the policy objective for the implementation of QA
- ▶ **Enablers of QA systems** to meet the expectations and needs of HiVET providers include
  - ✓ **Engagement** of the whole training institution in QA implementation, i.e. leadership/management, teaching/training staff, learners, as well as business and industry
  - ✓ **Capacity building** of HiVET providers and staff to generate, interpret and use data through, for example, case studies, peer reviews
  - ✓ **Accreditation** systems: clear, simple and timely administrative processes
  - ✓ **Clarity** of policies, particularly when dealing with different systems, in order to avoid confusion
  - ✓ **Credit transfer:** a self-directed pathway within and across a range of different qualifications and institutions
  - ✓ **Promote** the development of QA culture supported by the provision on targeted support

## EMERGING POLICY ISSUES

The changing nature of work and the implications for skill development have emerged both in the European Union and in the individual Member States as a policy priority. At present, there is an increasing demand for people to work in highly skilled jobs; this type of work requires employees and employers to solve problems by processing new information.

Needless to say, present day policy issues are complex and there are no clear answers; it follows that debates display divergent views on many issues, e.g. the increasingly blurred relationship between higher and vocational education, the functions of the state regarding funding and regulation, the role of business and industry in education and the character of the workforce.

The issue of equipping learners for the challenges and changes that they will undoubtedly face may be perceived as one of the drivers for the creation of HiVET programmes. Some would argue that HiVET is still under-developed: HiVET providers seem to have limited autonomy to develop new qualifications and, additionally, these programmes are spread across several 'sectors', e.g. higher education, VET, companies.

Nevertheless, Cedefop's publication *National qualifications framework developments in Europe 2017* argues that there has been a rapid development of higher VET policies in many countries and that trend 'can partly be seen as directly influenced by the outcomes-based perspective provided by the NQFs and their learning outcomes-based levels. This shows that NQFs can make vocational qualifications at these levels more visible and contribute to increased diversity of qualifications designed for different purposes'.<sup>5</sup>

Based on available literature and the discussions during this PLA, some emerging policy issues are:

## AT SYSTEM LEVEL

- **How to address two key and interdependent triangles:**
  - **System architecture, funding and regulation:** a key decision for policy makers is how best to resolve current funding and regulatory issues created by the complexities of the current E&T systems architecture
  - **Innovation, entrepreneurship and enterprises:** any change in strategy, structure or E&T sectors will require a remix of the groups which currently represent the *status quo*
- **How to link/ integrate** NQFs and QA frameworks in order to develop comprehensive frameworks that strengthen the links between education and training sectors. The objective is to reduce barriers to progression and to strengthen permeability between education and training systems/sectors. However, as cited in the previously mentioned Cedefop publication, 'one of the fundamental challenges comprehensive frameworks face is to take account of the epistemological differences in knowledge and learning that exist in different parts of education'.
- **Governance models** at system and provider level based on a three-dimensional (Hi)VET-business cooperation<sup>6</sup>, i.e.
  - **(Hi)VET process** (Curriculum development, VET delivery, feedback loop)
  - **topic of cooperation** (matching supply and demand, work-based learning, digital skills, innovation, mobility, entrepreneurial skills, social inclusion, raising awareness),
  - **level of cooperation** (global, EU, national, sectoral, local/regional, individual)

## AT PROVIDER LEVEL

- **Keeping HiVET provision current and relevant** for business and industry is a challenge for both providers and employers in fast changing economies. Timely and relevant labour market provision is a key factor in ensuring quality in HiVET.
- This challenge is generally amplified by issues related to the limited (or non-existent) **autonomy of HiVET institutions** to develop HiVET programmes that can respond to current skill needs of employers. Other longer-term challenges, such as developing HiVET programmes that feature 'new skills for the emerging labour markets', will require adequate **resources**.
- **Capacity building** of teaching/training staff is also widely recognised as vital for learner success. It follows that HiVET providers need to ensure that there are opportunities available for the continuous professional development of teachers/trainers. including how to generate and use relevant data to support HiVET teaching and learning.
- **Leaner centered** by promoting flexible and individualise learning that meets their needs

<sup>5</sup> Cedefop (2018). [National qualifications framework developments in Europe 2017](#). Luxembourg: Publications Office.

<sup>6</sup> For further nature, function or quality of this form of engagement information, see [European Commission \(2017\). Business cooperating with vocational education and training providers for quality skills and attractive futures](#)

## AT LEARNER LEVEL

- **How to engage students** in quality HiVET processes is a policy priority; their engagement is crucial to the enhancement of job related skills and competencies with a view to increasing employability and facilitating recruitment. There are, however, barriers and challenges in relation to the nature and form of this engagement.
- Most providers would claim to receive feedback from their students, where, usually, students assess their overall satisfaction with the perceived quality of provision, e.g. the design of the curriculum and the quality of teaching. However, it is less clear what role students play in quality assurance mechanisms such as HiVET governance structures, internal evaluations, participation in curriculum development as well as their role in 'closing the feedback loop'.

## AT EMPLOYER LEVEL

- **Engaging employers** is a key quality feature of HiVET. In order to ensure that qualifications are valued by employers, it is important that employers be involved in the planning, implementation, evaluation and review of HiVET programmes. This would guarantee a good fit between the employer needs and the graduate qualifications. Ultimately employer opinions on qualifications affect the entrance and progression of graduates in the labour market.
- **Employers' input** into HiVET processes (e.g. curriculum development, programme delivery, feedback loop) is important; additionally, however, enterprises should provide time and opportunities for learners, like **work-based learning** opportunities. These opportunities benefit learners but also give access to companies to a workforce that they have helped train for their field.
- Some employers, however, would argue that the frequently mentioned conflict between employer ranking of work experience as crucial for graduates and the lack of resources, e.g. time, and money, available for WBL is a **disincentive** to offering more WBL opportunities.