



# 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 note summarises the key issues emerging from the EQAVET working groups, which have been established to advance the implementation of the EQAVET work programme 2010-2013. The note has been prepared by the EQAVET Secretariat experts managing the work and content of the working groups. The EQAVET working groups provide the means by which the EQAVET Network will address and work on areas of strategic importance for the successful implementation of the Recommendation on establishing a European quality assurance reference framework for VET. The key task of the working groups is to develop practical guidance and materials which will assist Member States in developing their national approaches to the implementation of the Recommendation and reporting on progress. This note reflects the opinions of the working groups' participants and does not constitute an official European Commission or EQAVET position.

## EQAVET Working Group

## *On Developing guidelines to support the implementation approaches for using the Reference Framework*

*Countries taking part: BE, CZ, DE, EE, ES, IT, CY, LV, LT, HU, NL, AT, PT, RO, SI, FN, UK, HR; and Social Partners*

### SUMMARY

*This policy note is based on the ongoing online-work and discussion taking place between and during meetings 1 and 2 of the EQAVET working group on Developing guidelines to support the implementation approaches for using the Reference Framework. It brings together the contributions made by 18 European countries and Social Partners reflecting on developing national approaches to the implementation of the European quality assurance reference framework for vocational education and training (all the material is available on the website at [www.eqavet.eu](http://www.eqavet.eu)).*

### EU POLICY CONTEXT

The European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training has created a new legislative basis for supporting EU Member States on quality assurance in VET. The Reference Framework promotes cooperation between EU Member States by encouraging them to participate fully in the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework Network and support their National Quality Assurance National Reference Points.

### OBJECTIVE OF THE WORKING GROUP

The Working Group is developing on-line instruments and guidance that will help Member States and the National Reference Points devise an approach aimed at improving quality assurance at national level making best use of the Reference Framework in accordance with national legislation and report on progress every four years.

### EMERGING POLICY ISSUES

Earlier work by ENQA-VET (<http://guidelines.engavet.eu/>) identified that Member States are using the Reference Framework to enhance their existing systems in order to produce a national or regional approach to quality assurance. To date 16 National Reference Points have been created to lead this work. For some National Reference Points the main focus is developing the national or local system while others have focused on providing support to individual VET providers.

One issue being considered is the relationship between the indicators and indicative descriptors set out in the Recommendation and ENQA-VET's work to identify the key "building blocks" that underpin quality assurance in VET (for more information, visit <http://guidelines.engavet.eu/>). For some National Reference Points the main priority has been the indicators against which reporting will take place in four years; others have found the "building blocks" an easier way to look at how best to develop a system. The Working Group is analysing these relationships in order to develop guidance that meets every National Reference Point's needs.

**ANALYSIS of  
OUTCOMES**

*New knowledge  
and/or European  
added value*

Early activity by the Working Group has confirmed ENQA-VET's analysis that individual Member States are starting from different perspectives and have a range of priorities. However, despite these differences, there is agreement that quality assurance needs to be considered first at the system level, rather than the provider level. As such this has become the priority for the Working Group.

It is also clear from the first meeting of the Working Group that, whatever the priority and perspective, there needs to be a consistent understanding of, and relationship between the indicators, indicative descriptors and "building blocks". The Working Group has started to analyse these relationships and establish a common understanding of the interconnections at a system level. An interactive, easy-to-use on-line resource is being designed to present these relationships in a way that helps National Reference Points implement their own quality assurance processes.

The Working Group, in partnership with the European Commission and the EQAVET Working Group on quality indicators, is also looking at the key terms contained in the Recommendation. Where these terms have not already been defined and agreed at a European level, the Working Group will propose a set of definitions.

**POLICY  
RECOMMENDATIONS  
or KEY MESSAGES  
for POLICY-MAKERS**

*At national and  
European level*

The Working Group's early analysis has confirmed there are a number of equally-valid ways of addressing the development of a national or regional quality assurance system. The existence of a range of tools (e.g. the indicators, the indicative descriptors and the "building blocks") is providing different ways of analysing the current arrangements.

Early work has also highlighted the importance of developing an holistic approach which considers the four phases of the quality cycle (planning, implementation, evaluation and review) as well as how the four phases work together. There has been little enthusiasm for a partial approach which considers each phase sequentially as this is seen to undermine or inhibit the creation of a national or regional system.

**METHODOLOGY**

The Working Group is drawing on expertise from across Europe to ensure progress is rapid and lessons are learnt from others' experience. The Working Group will:

- focus on quality assurance of VET rather than quality of VET;
- capitalise on the knowledge and experiences of Member States and organisations such as CEDEFOP and ETF;
- collaborate with EQAVET's Working Group on quality indicators in clarifying the key terms used in the Recommendation;
- find solutions that respond to the different needs and national contexts and to the different stages of implementing the Recommendation in Member States.

**CHALLENGES**

The Working Group needs to produce materials in time to help Member States to define their strategy to improve their quality assurance systems at a national level. As the Recommendation invites Member States to complete this process by June 2011, the Working Group recognises that materials need to be available as soon as possible. In producing guidance, which will be web-based through EQAVET, there is a need to prepare resources that support improvement, help key partners to reflect on their current arrangements and offer pragmatic and policy-relevant solutions.