



EQAVET

European Quality Assurance
in Vocational Education and Training

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

POLICY BRIEF 2

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 of 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 ongoing work and online discussion between members of EQAVET's working group on Developing guidelines to support the implementation of the Reference Framework. It brings together contributions from 18 European countries and Social Partners as they reflect on the development of 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).

OBJECTIVE OF THE WORKING GROUP

The adoption of the Recommendation on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (VET) created a new legislative basis for promoting cooperation between EU Member States. In line with the Recommendation, Member States have joined the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework Network (EQAVET) which is supporting them and their Quality Assurance National Reference Points. This working group is focusing its activity on developing instruments and guidelines for Member States to support training providers and develop their national approach to quality assurance.

EMERGING POLICY ISSUES

The working group has developed a simple online guidance which helps Member States to analyse their own quality assurance systems in terms of the indicators and indicative descriptors set out in the Recommendation. The significant differences between initial and continued VET, publicly and privately funded VET, and school and work-based VET all have an impact on quality assurance at the system level. Whilst the [Recommendation](#) and the [Bruges Communiqué](#) do not distinguish between different types of VET, the reality for most Member States is that these differences are so significant that it is often difficult to develop a universal solution.

ANALYSIS of OUTCOMES New knowledge and/or European added value

The online guidance:

- recognises that many Member States already have effective quality assurance systems and their need revolves around monitoring how well things operate;
- establishes clear relationships between indicators and indicative descriptors in order that Member States can introduce or refine existing approaches in line with the Recommendation.

It is divided into three sections:

- support for those developing a national system;
- support for those monitoring their existing system; and
- examples of current practice in Member States.

The on-line guidance considers how existing practice in relation to quality assurance leads to high quality provision as measured by the indicators and indicative descriptors. The working group's analysis is developing a shared view on which quality assurance activities are most likely to lead to improved outcomes for learners.

The working group has also developed a short questionnaire which the EQAVET Secretariat will send to Member States in May 2011. This will help to identify what further support would be useful for National Reference Points and Member States. The lessons from this exercise will inform the development of the national reporting process which will be organised by the European Commission by the end of 2012.

**POLICY
RECOMMENDATIONS
or KEY MESSAGES
for POLICYMAKERS**
At national and
European level

The working group has completed its analysis of quality assurance at the "system level". The EQAVET website contains this analysis which makes clear that:

- there are many equally valid ways of addressing the development of a national or regional quality assurance system;
- an holistic approach which links the four phases of the quality cycle (planning, implementation, evaluation and review) is more likely to be successful;
- when introducing a system-level approach, it is important to consider implementation, evaluation and review at the planning stage.

The next stage of the analysis will consider how national approaches can best be aligned with those used by the full range of training providers. Establishing a consistency across all training providers, within a system-wide approach to quality assurance, requires an extensive communication plan. There are particular challenges for Member States with decentralised approaches to quality assurance as much of the existing practice may be of a high quality and reflect the needs of autonomous training providers.

METHODOLOGY

The working group has drawn on expertise from across Europe. The early analysis has benefited from the experiences of many national experts, members of the National Reference Points and staff from European organisations such as CEDEFOP and ETF, and those representing social partners. Throughout the duration of the four meetings of the working group, EQAVET organised an online forum which provided additional opportunities for discussing the early analysis and draft proposals.

CHALLENGES

Now that the early analysis has been completed at a "system level" the main challenge is to develop European-level advice and guidance for training providers. The quality assurance approaches used by providers reflect different traditions and often vary depending on whether they are involved in initial or continuing training, are work- or school-based, and whether they are publicly funded or not. The working group will focus on the lessons learnt from those training providers whose quality assurance systems align with the national "system-level" developments. Examples of effective practice will help National Reference Points support those individual training providers that are seeking to use the European level indicators and indicative descriptors.