



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

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 Quality indicators for vocational education and training

Countries taking part: BE, CZ, DE, DK, EE, IE, LV, LT, HU, MT, NL, AT, PT, RO, SI, SK, UK, TR; 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 Quality indicators for vocational education and training. It brings together the contributions made by 13 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).

OBJECTIVE OF THE WORKING GROUP

The Recommendation on establishing a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (Reference Framework) was adopted by the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers of the European Union in June 2009. It constitutes a significant stepping stone in paving the road towards quality assurance in the field of Vocational Education and Training (VET) and responds to the policy goals as defined by the Ministers of Education, the Commission and the European Social Partners within the Copenhagen process.

Recognising that the implementation of such an instrument is best achieved by cooperating within the context of the EQAVET Network, Member States willingly participate in the Working Group on Indicators in order to develop auxiliary tools and guidance to help MS and VET providers implement the Recommendation.

EMERGING POLICY ISSUES

The work developed by ENQA-VET (2008-2009) focused on the list of ten indicators in the proposal for the Recommendation on establishing a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET in order to arrive at a shared/joint operational definition for each one of the ten indicators in Annex II of the proposal. The operational definitions of the indicators are intended to support the production of reliable, timely and relevant information on the performance of VET at system and providers' level.

Stakeholders at different power and organisational levels, both at Member States and European level, realise that they have to overcome many challenges and approach the implementation of these indicators with skill and institutional capacity. They are, consequently, aware of the need to uncover the information encapsulated in each one of these indicators if they wish to find the answer to the questions, i.e., a) "How far have we come in assuring quality in VET?" in the short/medium term and b) "How far have we come in assuring **systemic** quality in VET" in the longer term. Progress in the field both at Member States and EU level is likely to be incremental and iterative.

ANALYSIS of OUTCOMES

New knowledge and/or European added value

The EQAVET Working Group on Indicators is made up of participants who, against their specific national and /or sector backgrounds, know different things and hold different views on indicators in general and, particularly on the indicators proposed on the Reference Framework. By agreeing to share and cross-reference the information available, the group will deliver a working tool to be used in implementing the set of ten indicators at national level.

The toolkit is meant a) to be customer- oriented; b) to help drive subsequent data collection, analysis and reporting; c) throw light on existing misconceptions and knowledge gaps about the purpose of the Reference Framework's indicators and suspicions about their function; and d) contribute to acknowledge the value of information to evidence-informed decisions at system and providers' level.

These outcomes will therefore constitute an important contribution to the progress of capacity building in the field of quality assurance both at national and European level.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS or KEY MESSAGES for POLICYMAKERS

At national and European level

It is perhaps not wrong to say that the current global financial/economic crisis has maximised the need of getting the best results from policies and programmes in Education and Training. Indeed, given the difficulties that most countries are facing, there seems to be constant and growing pressure on governments and organisations to be more reactive to demands from stakeholders for accountability and transparency, effectiveness and delivery of results.

There needs to be, therefore, some way to document and demonstrate whether the improvements in the VET system/ the VET provision have or have not occurred. The set of indicators, if regularly used, will provide information whether or not the outcome has been achieved. As VET stakeholders' needs for information will be different at each level, it is crucial that the information flows up and down across system and providers' level in order to promote alignment, coordination and interconnection at national level.

METHODOLOGY

In the first meeting of the EQAVET Working Group on Indicators, the representatives of Member States and Social Partners agreed on the following methodology:

- a) To build on the definitions developed and agreed by the ENQAVET Thematic Group on Indicators;
- b) To capitalise on the knowledge and experiences in relation to use indicators and outcome- based performance approaches for VET by Member States and such organisations as CEDEFOP, EUROSTAT, SGIB, UOE, OCDE, etc;
- c) To use a matrix which will analyse each indicator under a set of common categories;
- d) To cooperate with the EQAVET Working Group on Developing Guidelines and Group on Key Terms in clarifying some key concepts/terms used in the Reference Framework Recommendation.

CHALLENGES

The challenges for the EQAVET Working Group on Indicators in producing an auxiliary instrument which deals with indicators are many and not to be ignored. Just to mention a few, for example, the Group needs:

- a) to realise that, even if there may be an agreement on national outcomes, they need to be aware of the complexities and subtleties of other Member States than their own and sector contexts;
- b) to consider that stakeholders' needs are diverse and, consequently, the uses of the information will vary from one level to another;
- c) to draw attention to why, what and how may findings be reported.

Last, but not least, the deliverables of the WGI need to be produced in time (by June 2011) to support Member States to define their national strategy to improve their quality assurance system.