



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 Quality indicators for vocational education and training

Countries taking part: BE, CZ, DK, IE, LT, HU, MT, NL, AT, RO, SI, SK, TR; and Social Partners

SUMMARY

This policy note is based on the work undertaken in the context 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 Working Group on Indicators (WG2) is a participatory consensus building and facilitative body which liaises with the Working Group on Guidelines (WG1) and is an integral part of the wider EQAVET community of practice. WG2 was set up within the EQAVET work programme (2010-2013) in order to support Member States in implementing the *Recommendation on the Establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training*, in particular Annex II (a reference set of selected quality indicators for assessing quality in VET). The mandate of the Working Group is to offer support to the Member States, in particular to the National Reference Points in implementing the set of ten indicators at Member State level. This support takes the form of an **EQAVET Indicators' Toolkit** to be made available both as an online resource and as a published hard copy.

EMERGING POLICY ISSUES

The discussions in the WG2 stressed the importance of the EQAVET indicators proposed in Annex II of the Recommendation as guidance to support the development of a culture of quality assurance and their use on a voluntary basis. Participants have made a commendable effort to reach consensus by building common ground where it was possible to share the interpretation of a selected number of dimensions for each one of the ten indicators. This shared interpretation will frame the application of the EQAVET indicators at Member State level and thus help the relevant stakeholders in assessing and improving existing systems and provision of VET.

ANALYSIS of OUTCOMES New knowledge and/or European added value

The outcomes of WG2 may be analysed at two different levels:

1. At the level of the **common** knowledge on indicators. This knowledge is not only the result of the contributions made by the WG's participants (who offered their varied experiences and practices as available in their respective Member States)

but also of the interactive process and continuous negotiation needed to achieve a new shared understanding of each of the ten indicators and their main implementation dimensions;

2. At the level of the **European added value**, which is brought about through:
 - the exchange of information among participants both on their Member States' VET systems and Quality Assurance approaches and their reflection on their own practices;
 - a process of mutual adaptation and co-evolution between the Member State and the European levels concerning EQAVET issues;
 - the co-construction of the **EQAVET Indicators' Toolkit** which has got to be / must be / has yet to be crystallised as a European tool and is meant to be "metabolised" at national level;
 - the dissemination of the **EQAVET Indicators' Toolkit** to Member States, particularly to National Reference Points and their differential adoption and use of it.

This analysis will be more comprehensive when these outcomes are situated against/in a national context of existing national or regional VET practices and an assessment of the extent to which they will represent a significantly different way of doing things. At present, the most salient feature of the WG2 outcomes, however, is their contribution to the process of implementing the EQAVET Recommendation to render European VET systems more transparent and to build up trust between VET stakeholders at national and European level.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS or KEY MESSAGES for POLICYMAKERS

At national and
European level

While the difficulty and complexity of implementing EU policy instruments may be widely recognised, the most adequate key message to put forward in relation to the implementation of the EQAVET Recommendation is the need to carefully think about **how the implementation effort is or should be organised**. Since the National Reference Points are tasked with implementing the EQAVET Recommendation they will need to develop an adequate constituency (i.e. "positive" stakeholders who can support the use of the indicators) with the aim not only of gaining acceptance but also of operationalising the implementation process through a) the identification and mobilisation of key VET stakeholders, b) the enhancement of communication and coordination in dealing with cross-cutting quality assurance issues, c) the promotion and marketing of the Recommendation, in particular the ten EQAVET indicators and d) a mediation and/ or brokerage role regarding priorities, sharing of resources, and authority. The National Reference Points will need to collaborate closely with the appropriate national authorities in order to do this.

METHODOLOGY

With the assistance of the EQAVET Secretariat, a WG2 was organised to open discussion on the implementation of the EQAVET Recommendation, particularly of the set of ten indicators. As from the first meeting, WG2 was subdivided into two smaller groups, subgroup 1 and subgroup 2, that were assigned the task of exploiting a subset of five indicators, respectively indicators 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 and 2, 4, 6, 8, 10. Four coordination meetings took place between 24 June 2010 and 10 January 2011 which served a) to expand on the work undertaken between meetings, b) to take joint decisions regarding the tasks at hand, c) to reach consensus on specific issues related to the ten indicators and d) to validate the pre-final versions of the materials which are to be both published and offered on line.

The greatest role of WG2 was to provide a legitimate forum a) for discussion of difficult and controversial issues, b) for connecting and harvesting ideas which might be shaped into a concrete guidance tool and thus, c) to deliver the **EQAVET Indicators' Toolkit**.

CHALLENGES

The 2009 *Recommendation on the Establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET*, and particularly the reference set of selected quality indicators for assessing quality in VET, is at an initial implementation stage or, in other words, it is too early yet to know when the EQAVET indicators will be institutionalised in an active and effective VET policy at national level.

Successful implementation depends on a number of conditions, among which the following may be highlighted: political support from the relevant actors; a concerted effort to persuade the decision makers of the advantages of implementing the EQAVET indicators; the stakeholders' familiarity with and awareness of the quality indicators and their positive attitude towards the use of quality indicators as a tool to improve the quality of VET; the need to address constraints such as time and organisational issues and the sharing of practical experiences from different countries who have implemented the EQAVET indicators.