



**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 the establishment of 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: AT, BE, CZ, DE, EE, IE, HU, LT, LV, MT, NL, SI, PT, RO, UK, TR; and Social Partners

#### SUMMARY

This policy note is based on discussion during and after the fourth meeting of the EQAVET working group on quality indicators for vocational education and training. *It brings together the contributions made by 16 European countries and Social Partners reflecting on ways to develop 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)).*

## OBJECTIVE OF THE WORKING GROUP

The second phase of the EQAVET Work Programme (2010-2012) has focused on supporting the National Reference Points (NRPs) in order for them to support training providers. The Working Group on Indicators (WG2) was mandated, therefore, to deliver a range of supporting materials on monitoring and self-assessment by using the EQAVET indicators. These materials were developed between June 2011 and February 2012 and, in order to fully achieve this objective, the Working Group has

- capitalised on the knowledge and experience of Member States, National Reference Points and such organisations as EUproVET (VET providers association) CEDEFOP, ETF, etc.
- ensured an holistic approach by using the four phases of the quality cycle (planning, implementation, evaluation and review);
- explored how to use the information provided by EQAVET indicators to improve and develop VET provision.

The work of WG2 has contributed to the production of a web resource which will help Member States and their Quality Assurance National Reference Points in their implementation efforts in relation to quality assurance management systems in line with the EQAVET Recommendation.

## EMERGING POLICY ISSUES

The discussions of WG2 were very useful in identifying issues about the implementation of the EQAVET Recommendation at VET provider level. Namely, it was recognised that the implementation process is a heavily context-dependent activity and involves such processes as interpretation, negotiation, bargaining, and ambiguity management. It was also acknowledged that the National Reference Points play a crucial role in catalysing change locally while connecting with their peers at European level.

Members of WG2 (and those members of WG1 who participated in the meetings of WG2) believe that the instruments developed at EU level can be easily adapted to address local problems and understandings while engaging VET providers in the implementation process of the EQAVET quality cycle. The main benefit of this approach is that it can help the relevant stakeholders at national/regional level to reach consensus on decisions to initiate the changes envisaged, both in scope and nature.

## ANALYSIS of OUTCOMES

New knowledge and/or European added value

The VET objectives at EU level, i.e. to improve employability, achieve a better match between training demand and supply and ease access to VET, permeate the EQAVET Recommendation and seem to be replicated in the VET policy considerations of the Member States of the European Union. Or to put it the other way round, even if each country has its own particularities, there is also a significant overlap between their national policy making and their joint policy making in vocational education and training at European level.

The EQAVET Recommendation seems, therefore, to respond to the need of VET systems across Europe

- a. to face the socio-economic challenges of an increasingly globalised world;
- b. to set up a coherent and sustainable knowledge base about VET;
- c. to induce change at system and at VET provider level.

In this context, it might be said that the work developed by the EQAVET Working Group on Indicators is aligned with the argument that “innovation occurs when individuals produce novel solutions and members of the relevant domain adopt them as valuable variations of current practice”.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the **Guide for National Reference Points** is the result of a working group which can be best defined as a joint venture involving representatives of Member States and Social Partners. This **Guide** is, however, more than the sum of its parts in the sense that it is based on the sharing of ideas/ knowledge/practices that have percolated up from national/regional contexts and results in a new instrument. This instrument will support NRPs in developing practice-oriented solutions for VET providers to establish a quality assurance culture and organisation as well as to strengthen self-monitored and cooperative learning.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS or KEY MESSAGES for POLICY MAKERS, At national and European level

The following are the key messages for policy makers:

### At national level

- a. Develop a national/regional approach aimed at improving quality assurance at VET provider level; and making best use of the **Guide** involving all relevant stakeholders in accordance with national / regional practice;
- b. Promote a continuous and evidence-based dialogue about quality assurance in VET by setting the appropriate mechanism(s) to ensure good communication among all groups of VET stakeholders.

### At European level

- a. Reinforcement of collaboration and coordination among the governance bodies of the European instruments (EQAVET, EQF and ECVET) in order to develop a holistic approach to VET;
- b. Continued improvement of the EQAVET indicators, particularly
  - further work on indicators **number 5** (Placement rate in VET programmes), **no. 6** (Utilisation of acquired skills at the workplace), **8b** (Prevalence of vulnerable groups: success rate of disadvantaged groups according to age and gender) and **9b** (Mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market: evidence of their effectiveness)
  - strengthening cooperation with the work that has been undertaken by the Standing Group on Indicators;
  - development of indicator(s) on VET curriculum/ programme quality.

## METHODOLOGY

The Working Group continues to draw on expertise from across Europe. The early analysis has benefited from the experiences of many national experts, members of the Quality Assurance National Reference Points and staff from European organisations of VET providers (EUproVET), of social partners and expert groups such as CEDEFOP, ETF, EUROSTAT, SGIB, UOE, OECD, etc. Throughout the meetings of the working group, and in preparation for the Annual Forum in March 2012, EQAVET members have used the on-line forum to discuss emerging findings and to comment on draft proposals.

<sup>1</sup> Bailey, J. R., and C.M.Ford (2003) in L. V. Shavinina (ed.) *The International handbook on innovation*, Pergamon, London.

## CHALLENGES

It is generally acknowledged that policy implementation is a challenging process because it needs to be shaped over time by interactions between policy goals, methods and heterogeneous VET provider settings. Thus, the main challenge for the Working Group on Indicators (June 2011-February 2012) was to produce a **Guide for National Reference Points** that might be used to support VET providers in implementing the EQAVET Recommendation, particularly the EQAVET set of ten indicators at local level.

The production of this **Guide** took into consideration the fact that there is a growing demand for accountability in education and training systems, which has brought to the forefront of the policy stage the measurement of learning outcomes and learner achievement.

However, despite being an impetus for accountability as well as an important component in the VET Quality Assurance process, the emphasis on monitoring and evaluation should not be used as an end in itself but rather as a means to improve the functioning and quality of the VET provision.