Evaluation of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET)
Caveat

These country reports are an Annex to the *Evaluation of the implementation of EQAVET* carried out by ICF GHK for the European Commission, DG Education and Culture. The reports present the views of country researchers not those of the countries covered. The reports are based on:

- Review of legislation and documents describing national quality assurance in VET; and
- Interviews with representatives of public authorities in charge of quality assurance as well as those of stakeholders.

The reports were drafted in the period October 2012 – February 2013 and present the situation as of these dates.

Certain sections of the original reports were removed to ensure anonymous treatment of responses to certain questions asked for the purpose of the evaluation.
A1.1  **Country report - Austria**

Author: Florian Berger (Technopolis)

**Part 1 – Description of quality assurance arrangements and of recent developments**

- For school-based VET in Austria, there is an elaborated, multi-level quality assurance system (QIBB), which was launched in 2004. It covers a quality control circle, annual work programmes, instruments to collect evaluation data, peer reviews at schools etc.
- There was a high involvement of Austrian representatives in the European debate on quality assurance in VET.
- Consequently, reforms in QA in the Austrian school-based VET strongly mirror developments within EQAVET (e.g. the quality control circle). Quality control within the in-company training part of the dual VET is brought up to a lesser extent by country experts involved in EQAVET and the corresponding Austrian initiatives.

**Quality assurance arrangements at system level in initial VET**

*National Framework for initial VET – who is in charge of what?*

In Austria initial VET is to large part extent organised in a dual system: training takes place at two places of learning: at the training company and at a vocational school. According to Tritscher-Archan und Nowak (2011), 55% of Austrias VET programmes are school-based and 45% are within the dual VET system. Consequently, quality assurance needs to be discussed for school-based as well as firm-based VET. In what follows, we will first describe QA in vocational schools and afterwards refer to QA for the company-based part of VET.

The national framework for quality (QA) assurance in *school-based VET* in Austria is called QIBB (*Qualitätsinitiative Berufsbildung*). It was launched in 2004. It covers both pedagogical processes and administrative processes at vocational education institutions. It addresses all types of institutions in VET.

The main instruments of QIBB are:

- A continuous quality control circle (similar to the EQAVET cycle)
- Mission statements (with a long-term orientation, core messages regarding function and self-image)
- The quality matrix (called Q matrix, which defines long-term and medium-term objectives, implementation measures, results, indicators, evaluation methods)
- The annual work programme (medium and short-term objectives)
- The definition of key processes
- The objective-setting discussion or management & performance review
- The procedures and instruments to collect evaluation data and quality reports

Main legislative responsibility for QA in VET schools at the upper system level in Austria lies with the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture (BMUKK). In some areas, other ministries are involved (e.g., the Federal Ministry for Health for non-medical healthcare professions, the Federal Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth for company based training, see below). School legislation is implemented in the governmental school authorities at state level. The most relevant legislative documents are the Schulunterrichtsgesetz (School Instruction Act) and the Schulorganisationsgesetz (School Organisation Act) (Tritscher-Archan & Nowak, 2011).

QA procedures based on the QIBB are coordinated at the federal level with the specialist departments at the BMUKK. There is also the position of a “Federal Quality Process Manager” (*Bundesqualitätprozessmanager*) for each type of school. At the state level QA is the responsibility of the “State School Inspector” (*Landesschulinspektor*) and the “State Quality Process Manager (*Landesqualitätprozessmanager*)” (Jonach, Wulz, & Gramlinger, 2011).
Furthermore, QIBB has a quite complex system architecture with steering committees for every type of school, an overarching steering committee with representatives from all types of VET schools as well as conventions at the provincial and federal level (Landeskonferenzen/Bundeskonferenzen)\(^1\).

For **firm-based training** the Federal Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth is responsible. Relevant legislative acts are among others the Federal Apprenticeship Act (*Berufsausbildungsgesetz*) as well as a list defining all apprenticeships. It also decrees the Training and Examination Rules (*Ausbildungs- und Prüfungsordnungen*) for all apprenticeships. A further important institution is the Bundes-Berufsausbildungsbeirat (Federal Advisory Committee on VET) which has an advisory role with respect to new apprenticeship (Archan & Mayr, 2006).\(^2\) In addition to their involvement in the Bundes-Berufsausbildungsbeirat, the social partners are also involved in quality assurance of firm-based VET via the “Lehrlingsstellen” (apprenticeship offices) which evaluate the quality requirement for companies willing to train apprentices.

**Statutory stakeholder involvement in initial VET systems**

Generally speaking, the involvement of societal stakeholders in VET system in Austria is high, especially in the area of the dual education system. An example is the Bundes-Berufsausbildungsbeirat (Federal Advisory Committee on VET), where stakeholders from employees’ and employers’ organisations are involved. Its purpose is regulated in §31 *Berufsausbildungsgesetz*. An example of the work provided by the committee is expert expertise regarding new vocational qualifications. Its work also covers aspects of quality assurance. There is a similar committee at the provincial level (Landesausbildungsrat).

Specifically in the context of QIBB, external experts are involved in the steering committees, which are responsible for the implementation quality assurance at different types of schools.

For the administration of the firm-based VET, social partners are involved via the “Lehrlingsstellen” at the Chambers of Commerce to ensure (together with union representatives) the eligibility of the training firms to take part in the apprenticeship system (Archan & Mayr, 2006).

**Requirements for evaluation and review**

Within QIBB, evaluation of vocational schools is mainly done in the form of self-evaluation (internal evaluation); evaluation is organized for individuals (teachers and management of VET institutions), but also at the system level. The system level evaluation consists of feedback processes on the school level, the state level and the federal level. There is a web-based evaluation platform with a pool of evaluation instruments, which is used for organising system level evaluations. The results can be analysed for a specific type of school or across all types of VET institutions, depending on the subject for evaluation.

In addition to the evaluation areas laid down by every educational institution in accordance with its annual work programme, nationwide evaluation focuses are specified. For the vocational schools (*Berufsschulen*) the focus in the school year 2012/2013 was on quality assurance in the areas of “individualised learning” and “individual feedback”\(^3\)

QIBB also has a component of external evaluation. Every school can decide on participating in a peer review process. Peers can be teachers of other schools, VET researchers, company representatives etc. The peers evaluate specific defined area of educational quality and give oral and written feedback to the school.

Based on the evaluation effort, every institution submits a quality report to the relevant higher level of management once a year. It contains a review of the situation at the end of (school) year, and a follow-up plan with strategic and operational objectives. Agreement regarding the

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1. The system architecture is visualized on this website: [https://www.qibb.at/de/ueber_qibb/qibb_architektur.html](https://www.qibb.at/de/ueber_qibb/qibb_architektur.html)
2. See also the paragraph below under the heading „stakeholder involvement“
3. For the evaluation focuses of other types of VET institutions see [https://www.qibb.at/de/qibb_evaluation/bundesschwerpunkte.html](https://www.qibb.at/de/qibb_evaluation/bundesschwerpunkte.html)
future development and implementation objectives of a specific school is reached in discussions between management of the two responsible management levels concerned. This objective-setting process is called “management and performance review” and builds on the quality report.

For firm-based VET the above-mentioned “Lehrlingsstellen” (Apprenticeship Offices at the Chambers of Commerce) control the eligibility of the firms, which want to train apprentices. For example, infrastructure requirements (tools, machines etc.) as well as the qualification of the trainers are evaluated (Archan & Mayr, 2006, p. 34) (for more information see also below).

**Identification of training needs**

In the framework of the QIBB quality matrix, a number of QA measures regarding the identification of training needs are described. This includes regular meetings with industry representatives, the use of feedback from companies, the integration of experts from companies into development and evaluation of curricula, developing the framework conditions for projects with partners from industry. The identification of training needs is therefore an important part of the existing quality assurance system. For firm-based VET the identification of training needs is in part also fulfilled by the Federal (and Regional) Advisory Committees.

**Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on VET providers**

Most vocational school institutions in Austria are public and correspondingly have to comply with different legislative acts such as Schulunterrichtsgesetz etc.. Private VET institutions have to comply with the Austrian Private School Act (Privatschulgesetz). This means that they need to fulfil a number or requirements concerning school administration, teaching staff, facilities etc. and are subject to supervision by school authorities (§§ 22, 23 Privatschulgesetz).

For firm-based training, companies interested in training apprentices need to apply for an examination in which the firm’s suitability is checked (request for declaration). The apprenticeship offices of the Federal Economic Chamber will – in cooperation with the Chamber of Labour evaluate whether the company meets the prerequisites for apprenticeship training. Only if this examination is passed the firm is entitled to recruit apprentices (Tritscher-Archan & Nowak, 2011). In addition the trainers responsible for the apprentices within the firm need to meet qualification requirements. These consist of both technical knowledge within the vocation, but also pedagogical skills and legal knowledge. Trainers have to pass special exams. Alternatively, a course consisting of 40 hours of special training has to be taken. Continued training of the trainers is not required by law (Archan & Mayr, 2006).

**Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)**

Within the QIBB quality matrix, the quality and transparency of learning validation (exams) plays an important role. Two main measures and the expected output are defined in the matrix. Additionally, three indicators are integrated in the QA framework.

**Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators**

Monitoring in school-based VET relies on the self-evaluation process of each institution. Based on the evaluation tools school specific monitoring or a monitoring across schools is realized. The most important monitoring instruments are the quality reports at different system levels as well as the yearly management and performance reviews.

In QIBB several main indicators are used. They cover the topics

- Career prospects and applicability of the qualification in the world of work

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4 The quality matrix can be downloaded (in German) at https://www.qibb.at/de/downloads.html#c326
Personal and specialist competences acquired by graduates to study and take part in CVET measures

Up-to-dateness, innovation and practice-orientation of the education and training programme

School achievements and educational

Atmosphere at school and in class

Partnership with the business community and other educational and social institutions

International orientation of the education and training programme

Agreements on strategic and operational objectives

Strategic resource management

Systematic personnel development

Systematic evaluation

Criteria and descriptors for QA are defined in the quality matrix. It covers for areas: Teaching and Learning; Quality; Industry and Society; and Internationality. In every area, long-term and medium-term objectives, implementation measures, outputs, indicators, evaluation methods are described.\

In general, the EQAVET indicators are not necessarily directly implemented in Austria. The main reason for this is a lack of adequate data for these indicators, especially at the provider level. There is work in progress on data collection, which will contribute to implementing more EQAVET indicators. At the moment, there is a correspondence of at least 6 indicators used in QIBB with the indicators used in the CQAF/EQAVET (BMBWK, 2006):

- Share of VET-providers applying QM-systems respecting the Common Quality Assurance Framework by type of used approach,
- Investment in training of trainers,
- Percentage share of participants who have taken up a VET programme and completed it successfully,
- Destination of trainees after training,
- Utilisation of acquired skills at the workplace, from the viewpoint of employer and employee,
- Mechanisms to relate developments in labour market to VET-systems

How is the quality assurance implementation monitored?

The main monitoring instruments are the quality reports provided by the institutions, but also at the state and the federal level. The quality reports of one systemic level are based on the reports by the next lower level. This means that the state quality reports are based on the reports by the schools as well as the performance review discussions between school and state level. The federal quality report is based on the school specific quality reports, the state quality reports and review discussions between the federal and the state level (QIBB Steuergruppe, 2011).

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)

Changes to the quality assurance system since 2009 include the introduction of peer review processes at VET schools. These visits from external experts are voluntary and have no supervisory function. Results are not automatically available to governmental school authorities. Peer reviews are described as the possibility to “learn from friends”. A main driver for establishing the peer review system was the need for having an element of external evaluation, since QIBB is rather focused on self-evaluation exercises. A further new element was the federal quality report, which completed the system of quality reports within QIBB.

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008

The VET Quality Initiative – QIBB described above was launched in 2004 to implement a comprehensive quality management system in Austrian VET schools. QIBB is the element of

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for the quality matrix see https://www.qibb.at/de/downloads.html#c326
the national strategy aiming at the implementation of the EQAVET Reference Framework and was intended to be in line with the EQAVET Reference Framework in terms of objectives, guiding principles, priorities and structure.

There was a general recognition that quality assurance and development in VET was getting more attention at the various levels, including the European level, but also among companies with topics like ISO 9000, Total Quality Management etc. For Austria the topic became thus more and more important both on the national level, but also the European level.

**Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in initial VET**

The national framework for quality (QA) assurance in school-based VET in Austria (QIBB - *Qualitätsinitiative Berufsbildung*) is a multi-level framework. This means that the basic concept described in section A 1.1 (the quality control circle, the quality matrix, the objective-setting discussions/management & performance review, the quality reports) is relevant at the system level, but also applicable at the provider level. QIBB is relevant for every type of VET school.

The head of every school is responsible for quality management at the institutional level (see § 56 (2) Schulunterrichtsgesetz). He/she is in charge of the strategic management and is operationally supported by a school quality process manager (Schulqualitäts-prozessmanager/in).

The criteria and indicators for quality assurance at the provider level are – as on the systemic level – based on the quality matrix. This includes also indicators on aspects like the school atmosphere, student satisfaction, completion rates, employability of students etc. EQAVET indicators are partly used (see above).

For **firm-based training**, there are content requirements for every apprenticeship on the provider level laid down in the training regulations (Ausbildungsordnungen). The training regulations also include provisions concerning the final examinations (Tritscher-Archan & Nowak, 2011).

**Planning at VET provider level (including identification of training needs)**

QIBB formulates a number of requirements for VET providers concerning the planning of teaching. Objectives like having a clear practical relevance of curricula are stated in the quality matrix. Implementation measures are defined and indicators for evaluation are integrated.

Within **firm-based VET** planning for VET training needs to comply with the training regulations. As long as this is the case apprentices can and should be fully integrated in the every-day work at the firm.

**Requirements for monitoring and review (self-assessment)**

The quality assurance implementation at the provider level is monitored by the state school inspectors (*Landesschulinspektoren*), based on the quality reports of the schools and the performance review talks between state school inspectors and the head of the individual school.

**Certification, assessment and validation of learners**

Within the QIBB quality matrix, the quality and transparency of learning validation at the provider level are addressed with at least one objective (Objective 1.3: To safeguard the quality and transparency of examinations). VET schools are required to disclose requirements, dates and criteria of performance appraisal and assessment and to develop and specify standards for leaving examinations. In order to quality assure these measures, three indicators are defined (Availability of learning objectives; transparent performance assessment perceived as fair; and the existence of competence models for leaving examinations and selected subjects).
Stakeholder involvement

Stakeholder involvement ranks high on the agenda of quality assurance in VET schools. An example for this is that one quality area in the quality matrix explicitly refers to “Economy and Society”. Three objectives are defined, including regular contacts with stakeholders from business, education and authorities.

Outputs from quality assurance at provider level

The main output from quality assurance process at the provider level are the school quality reports, every VET provider has to submit once a year.

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET at provider level since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)

As noted above, a new element at the provider level was the possibility for schools to participate in peer review process or to be peer reviewed.

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET at provider level since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008

As described above, QIBB was introduced in 2004. This new framework did not only affect QA at the system level, but also at the provider level. It was therefore the most relevant reform for QA at the VET provider level.

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in continuous VET

National Framework for CVET – who is in charge of what?

CVET/ adult education in Austria is an extremely heterogeneous sector. The following forms exist (Tritscher-Archan & Nowak, 2011):

1. Continuing vocational education and training
   a. Enterprise CVET (at own company, parent/associate companies, manufacturers’, CVET institutions, or other external providers; informal learning on the job);
   b. External, institutionalised CVET (at schools, HE institutions, CVET establishments), including obtainment of qualifications later in life;
   c. Qualification and skills training measures as an instrument of active labour market policy: these include courses and employment promotion schemes set up by Public Employment Service (AMS)

2. General adult education and public education

CVET in the form of 1b), i.e. external institutionalised CVET can also be defined as formal CVET as compared to informal CVET. The following text will refer to this kind of CVET.

Since the public sector in this area makes up only a minor part and the social partners are an important stakeholder group in CVET (Tritscher-Archan & Nowak, 2011), the following texts refers to CVET institutions organised by the social partners like the Economic Promotion Institute (Wirtschaftsforderungsinstitut, WIFI) or the Vocational Training Institute (Berufsforderungsinstitut, bfi).

Since the CVET sector is very heterogeneous, there is no general framework for compulsory quality assurance. For example, the curricula at state CVET schools are developed by the Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture, whereas those at non-state institutions are independent from any governmental influence, even if they receive (co)funding from the state (Archan & Mayr, 2006). CVET providers active in the area of active labour market policy have to comply with locally established quality assurance schemes like OÖ Qualitätssiegel (in the state of Oberösterreich) or Cert-NÖ (in the state of Niederösterreich) and/or global standards such as ISO 9001 or ISO 29990.

Independent from the area of active labour market policy, there are three main quality initiatives:

- Weiterbildungsakademie Österreich: wba ist a certification scheme for providers (individual teachers/trainers) active in adult education
- **Initiative Erwachsenenbildung**: education providers are accredited based on institutional conditions, quality of curricula and quality of teachers

- Ö-Cert, an Austrian-wide quality framework regarding the recognition of quality in Austrian adult education institutions. Ö-Cert is a framework that includes the CVET institutions organised by the social partners (but is not limited to them). The following analysis refers to Ö-Cert.

The main components of the Ö-Cert certification scheme are very basic requirements regarding the mission statement, organisational aspects, basic curricular requirements (e.g., training courses for specific software cannot be certified) and requirements regarding the democratic principles. Additionally, one of ten quality management systems (ISO 9001, ISO 29990, EFQM etc.) needs to be in place at the provider. Ö-Cert can be seen as QA measure at the system level since stakeholders from the state level, the federal level (BMUKK) and from learning providers are involved.

The process of quality assurance in Ö-Cert is mainly based on an inspection of documents submitted by the VET institutions to the accreditation group. This group consists of five experts from education, training and research.

**Statutory stakeholder involvement in CVET systems**

There is no statutory requirement concerning the involvement of stakeholders in Ö-Cert. However, in the development of Ö-Cert various stakeholders from the state and the education sector were involved.

**Requirements for evaluation and review**

There are no binding requirements for evaluation and review for non-state CVET providers if they are not active in the field of labour market policy. Correspondingly, there is no systematic comprehensive evaluation at the system level, neither.

**Identification of training needs**

At the system level, there is no state-driven systematic process for the identification of training needs. However, the social partners’ CVET provider institutions have strong feedback from the respective stakeholders (employers or employees). This way training needs are indirectly identified and feedback for future training programmes is assured.

**Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on CVET providers**

For CVET providers outside the area of training courses within the Public Employment Service (AMS), there is no accreditation requirement. Only if the provider is active within the AMS, quality management system certifications are required. These requirements partly differ from state to state.

**Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)**

The validation of learning results is in the responsibility of the individual CVET provider. Where regulations concerning formal qualifications exist, curricula are defined in analogy to them and quality assurance is ensured via the results of final exams (Tritscher-Archan & Nowak, 2011).

**Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators**

Quality assurance in the Ö-Cert certification scheme is based on criteria described above. These include requirements concerning the mission statement, organisational aspects, basic curricular requirements and requirements regarding democratic and ethic principles. They do not correspond to the EQAVET descriptors/indicators. However, since all institutions certified according to Ö-Cert need to have a supplementary quality management system in place, overlaps between the EQAVET indicators and indicators used for instance within the EFQM can be seen (e.g., completion rates).
The implementation of quality assurance measures within Ö-Cert is monitored through regular re-certifications.

**Quality assurance arrangements in continuous VET at provider level**

As stated before, this description focuses on CVET provided by institutions organised by the social partners like the Economic Promotion Institute (*Wirtschaftsforderungsinstitut*, WIFI) or the Vocational Training Institute (*Berufsforderungsinstitut*, bfi). Since there is no general framework for quality assurance among these institutions the analyses focuses on the certification scheme Ö-Cert.

**Requirements CVET providers have to comply with (if not described in 1st section)**

As explained before, there is no general overarching framework for quality assurance in CVET. However there are three quality initiatives (see above), one of which is Ö-Cert. Ö-Cert is applicable to all kind of CVET providers. Ö-Cert institutions are Ö-Cert office, responsible for the operational work. Additionally, there is a steering group (consisting of 9 representatives from the Länder and 4 from federal level) as well as the accreditation group which is responsible for the final certification decision. At the provider level usually the head/director of the CVET institution is heavily involved in QA activities or the preparation of a certification. He usually supported by a staff member in charge of quality control.

**Planning at CVET provider level (including identification of training needs)**

Providers themselves formulate curricula of CVET programmes at non-state institutions. Where relevant acts and/or exam regulations concerning qualifications exist, curricula are defined in analogy to them. Quality assurance of teaching is ensured via the results of final exams, but also via regular evaluations and participant surveys. However, these evaluations are not legally required but – if applicable – required within the QM system in place the provider.

EQAVET indicators are not explicitly used. Since Ö-Cert implies the use of an additional QM system like ISO 9001 or ISO 29990, indicators are potentially used within these QM systems.

Monitoring of quality assurance within Ö-Cert is assured through regular re-certifications and progress reports. These need to be prepared by institutions, which only received preliminary certification.

**Requirements for monitoring and review (self-assessment)**

Ö-Cert requires a re-certification if the corresponding quality management certification is renewed.

**Certification, assessment and validation of learners**

The validation of learning results is in the responsibility of the individual CVET provider. Where regulations concerning formal qualifications exist, curricula are defined in analogy to them and quality assurance is ensured via the results of final exams (Tritscher-Archan & Nowak, 2011).

**Reforms of quality assurance in CVET at provider level since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)**

A change to the quality assurance framework in CVET was the introduction of Ö-Cert in 2011. The main driver for introducing Ö-Cert was the large number of different quality management schemes like ISO 9001 or ISO 29990 on the market. Additionally, there were state-specific certification schemes for CVET providers in Austria. The intention of Ö-Cert was to enhance transparency on the market by establishing a certification scheme relevant for all types of CVET providers in all regions of Austria on a voluntary basis.
In addition to Ö-Cert the “Initiative Erwachsenenbildung” was established in 2011. It supports educational offers, but also accredits/certifies education programmes according to qualitative minimum requirements.

Reforms of quality assurance in CVET at provider level since 2003 - 2008

The third quality initiative, which includes certifications at the provider level, was introduced in 2007 (Weiterbildungsakademie Österreich). The main motivation was to support the professionalization of CVET providers and to support high quality life long learning this way.
Part 2 – Interaction between national quality assurance and EQAVET

National Reference Point

The National Reference Point in Austria, ARQA-VET, is hosted at the Austrian Agency for International Cooperation in Education and Research. It has a staff of five employees and a budget of around Euro 400k per year (plus additional project funds which raise the budget by around 15%). The institution sees itself as a service institution for actors in VET providing services and know-how in the fields of quality assurance and quality development. It has five main areas of activity:

- Information of the national stakeholders about the activities of the European network and vice versa
- Active support of the implementation of the work programme of ENQA-VET
- Development of specific measures to support QA and quality development in VET
- Awareness raising amongst stakeholders concerning the advantages of the principles, methods and tools of QA
- Operational support to the Ministry in the implementation of QIBB (Quality Initiative Vocational Education) and the national and European activities. This part of the ARQA-VET work is at the moment the most important and time-intensive

According to several interviewees, the resources of the NRP in Austria are relatively high compared to NRPs in other countries. In the discussions on the European level preceding the establishments of EQAVET NRP, Austria strongly advocated for the NRPs to be sufficiently staffed in order to be able to have a real impact on QA systems. Consequently, the Austrian NRP was established in the current form and mandated with a large range of responsibilities. Interviewed stakeholders expressed the view that these responsibilities are well met and that the NRP does generate a real added value. Examples include the operational support for QIBB or the operational and conceptual work on the peer reviews now newly introduced to the Austrian system.

One of ARQA-VET’s flagship programmes is VET-CERT, a Leonardo da Vinci/EQAVET project aiming at developing guiding recommendations for competence profiles for individuals in charge of quality assurance at VET institutions as well as for supportive training models.

There are plans that the NRP is going to play a significant role in the future when the quality assurance system is expanded also to other educational areas such as CVET.

National approach to enhance quality assurance

The national approach for quality assurance (QA) in VET in Austria is the Quality Initiative VET, launched in 2004. It covers both pedagogical processes and administrative processes at vocational education institutions and addresses all types of schools in VET. QIBB built on several existing quality initiatives (for example Qualität in Schulen – Q.I.S) and school-specific quality management systems (HTL Q-SYS, a quality management system established at the technology and crafts orientated higher colleges Höhere Technische Lehranstalt).

QIBB is built around several components such as a continuous quality control circle, the quality matrix (defining long-term and medium-term objectives, implementation measures, results, indicators, evaluation methods), self evaluations, management & performance reviews, mandatory quality reports as well as peer reviews at schools.

QIBB is a quality assurance system at different layers or levels. It covers evaluation at the school level (outputs are for example the individual schools’ quality reports), but also at the system level. This means that quality reports are produced for the state level, but also for the federal level. The system architecture is rather complex, but consequently also quite comprehensive.

A new element in QIBB is the option for schools to participate in peer review processes. This is mandatory, but is seen as a chance for schools to “learn from others”. Results from the peer-reviewed visits are not necessarily communicated to the authorities. The peer review is
thus no concept of supervision, but rather an innovative concept in order to develop school
quality further.

Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance

Quality assurance ranks high on the political agenda in Austria, mainly in VET and
increasingly also in general education. Even before QIBB, there were several VET QA
initiatives on quality assurance like QIS or HTL Q-SYS. Representatives from Austria were
therefore also involved in discussions on this topic on the European level in the 2001/2002
forum on quality assurance in VET or the 2003/2004 technical working group. Consequently,
there was constant feedback and interaction between the developments in Austria and
developments on the EU level.

There was a common understanding among all interviewees, that the EQAVET
recommendation from 2009 as such did not have a direct effect on the national approach.
Quality assurance did not considerably move up (or down) on the political agenda, but
remained in its position. Concerning the indicators or descriptors within EQAVET, on the one
hand there is a natural correspondence between the EQAVET indicators and the nationally
used indicators. The reason for this is that – as pointed out – Austria was actively involved in
the work on developing indicators at EU level and brought in the their suggestions for
indicators. On the other hand, interviewees pointed out that Austria does not necessarily
focus systematically on aligning its indicator set with the EQAVET indicator set.

Nevertheless, all interviewed partners did recognize that the activities on the European level
did have a kind of motivational effect on work on the national level. The awareness that
quality assurance in VET is a highly relevant topic also in other European countries helped to
keep up the focus on the work and triggered interest in the situation within other member
states. One interviewee stated that specifically in CVET, the activities concerning the Ö-Cert
certification scheme were significantly pushed by the EQAVET. EQAVET thus helped to
show the relevance of quality assurance measures and contributed to the acceptance of the
topic.

Synergies with other EU level instruments

In Austria, both the NRP for EQAVET and the Coordination Point for the National
Qualification Framework in Austria are both located at OeAD (Österreichischer
Austauschdienst). Therefore there is exchange of information between the involved persons
and experts in one of the transparency initiatives are also involved in the other. There are
plans for 2013 to make this exchange of information more frequent by organising specific
meetings for it. An example for synergies between EQAVET and ECVET on a “personal
basis” is the fact that the head of ENQAVET NRP is also one of the Austrian ECVET
experts. Additionally, stakeholders from the social partners (employers’ and employees’
organisations) involved in the work on one initiative (EQAVET, EQF, ECVET) are more often
than not also the ones involved in the other initiative. This, again, means that exchange of
information and synergies between projects are realised to a certain extent. Furthermore,
the challenges in the coming years are similar for the work on the EQF and the EQAVET,
namely extending the coverage of the instruments from the formal education sector to the
non-formal sector.

However, some interviewees pointed out that at the moment synergies between EQAVET
and the EQF are somewhat limited.6 It was indicated that especially in EQF the various
interests from different stakeholder groups (companies, trade unions, higher education
representatives) make the process in EQF rather difficult. The discussion on quality issues in
the debate on EQF is, therefore, distracted by these different “side-shows”.

There are no significant links at the moment between quality assurance in VET and higher
education. There are no indications that this might change in the near future. With respect to

6 Another interviewee pointed out that it is not useful to enforce synergies between the three initiatives. While
there are clear thematic overlaps, the initiatives do each have a specific focus. Joint seminars or similar activities
are therefore not always directly useful for the stakeholders from the different initiatives.
quality assurance in adult education, the synergies might become larger in the future, since there are plans to extend the coverage of QIBB and thus the work of ARQA-VET from VET schools only to adult education or continuing education in general.

A1.1.1 Sources


A1.2 Country report – Belgium (Flanders)

Author: Eliza Kritikos (external expert to ICF GHK)

Part 1 – Description of quality assurance arrangements and of recent developments

The main developments in quality assurance in Flanders over the last years are:

■ The Decree on Quality in Education (8 May 2009);
■ The Decree on the Flemish Qualifications Framework (30 April 2009);
■ The set up of the Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training (2009);
■ The Decree on Secondary-after-Secondary education and Higher Vocational Education (30 April 2009);
■ The concept paper on an integrated system of external quality assurance (2012)\(^7\). The changes that will be brought about when being implemented will mean that semi-public and private providers will now also be able to provide professional qualification certificates which are equivalent in value to the professional qualification certificates issued in formal education. Furthermore, the whole VET system will now also be subject to a systematic external quality assurance framework.

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in initial VET\(^8\)

Context

This chapter describes initial VET at secondary and at post-secondary (i.e. Secondary after Secondary Education (Se-n-Se)\(^9\) and higher vocational education or HBO5\(^9\)) level.\(^10\)

In Flanders, one uniform legislation\(^11\) is applicable to the entire secondary education system, i.e. the general, technical, art and vocational streams as far as matters are concerned such as certification, curricula, pupil assessment, etc. On the other hand, HBO5 and some aspects of Se-n-Se are regulated by a separate decree, i.e. the Decree of 30 April 2009 concerning the Secondary after Secondary Education (Se-n-Se)\(^12\) and Higher Vocational Education\(^13\). Se-n-Se and HBO5, like secondary education, are financed or subsidised by the Flemish Community.

The provision of IVET as part of formal compulsory education (until 18 years old) is a shared responsibility between the Ministry of Education and Training, the Ministry of Employment and the (VET) schools.

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\(^7\) Qualification levels 1 to 4 fall under this new integrated quality assurance system with regard to professional qualifications. The same goes for professional qualifications at qualification levels 5 to 8 obtained outside higher education. Higher vocational education (HBO5) and professional qualifying pathways at bachelor level en higher fall outside the scope of the integrated quality assurance framework. Note that HBO5 (which has been developed recently) is not part of the Flemish implementation of EQAVET but is described in this report as part of the overview of the overall Flemish VET quality assurance system.

\(^8\) Overall, the demarcation between IVET and CVET is not always clear cut in Flanders. Generally speaking, vocational education and training programmes followed before entering the labour market are considered as IVET (initial education) whereas vocational education and training programmes followed after having had work experience is part of CVET (adult education).

\(^9\) In order to avoid confusion with higher vocational education provided in the Netherlands, it is called HBO5 since 2009. It matches the European education level 5 whereas the Dutch higher vocational education matches the education level 6: Bachelor. In the Flemish HBO5, programmes can be found which previously were called tertiary education. HBO5 is, as a qualification level, situated between secondary and higher education. On the other hand, secondary after secondary education (Se-n-Se) is situated at qualification level 4.

\(^10\) Vocational education and training programmes are possible both within the IVET and CVET systems and this at different qualification levels (i.e. 2 to 5 of the Flemish Qualifications Framework).


\(^12\) Last (fourth) cycle of technical, art and (part-time) vocational secondary education provided by fulltime secondary schools.

Besides fulltime secondary education, young people aged 15 or 16 years old can decide to embark on a system of learning and working. They can follow a programme in part-time vocational secondary education, which is organised by centres for part-time vocational secondary education (CDO and Syntra’s). These can be autonomous (like the Syntra’s) but tend to be connected to a school for fulltime secondary education.

The general framework for quality assurance

The quality of education in Flanders is ensured by the government, which imposes conditions to be met by the school in order for them to receive financial support and become accredited. More specifically, the Decree on Quality in Education of 8 May 2009 defines the overall system-level quality assurance requirements for the following levels of education: primary, secondary education, Se-n-Se and adult education. Additionally, the quality assurance with regard to the work-based learning side of part-time vocational education programmes provided by Syntra Flanders, is also regulated in the Decree on Quality in Education. The Decree on Higher Vocational Education and Se-n-Se on the other hand regulates, amongst other aspects, the quality assurance of higher vocational education.

In Flanders, the institutions in charge of quality assurance at secondary education level and higher vocational education level are the Ministry of Education, the Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training (Agentschap voor Kwaliteitszorg in Onderwijs en Vorming – AKOV), the Inspectorate, the Vlor (Flemish Council for Education and Training) (Level 1 to 4 of the NQF Flanders) and/or the Commission for Higher Vocational Education (level 5 of the NQF Flanders)

Overall, the Flemish quality assurance system is composed of the following three levels:

- **Level 1**: this consists of the self-evaluation part in which the education and training programme is being evaluated by the institution itself of which the output is a self-evaluation report
- **Level 2**: this concerns external evaluation and can be performed by either the Inspectorate or the Visitation Commission (in the case of higher vocational education). This results in an Inspectorate or Visitation report (in the case of higher vocational education)
- **Level 3**: this concerns accreditation and is done by the NVAO (for higher vocational education) and leads to an accreditation report

The AKOV was established in 2009 and is responsible for quality assurance. With the creation of the AKOV, the Flemish government took the initiative to centralise all activities regarding the supervision of the quality of educational and training courses as well as procedures for recognition of prior acquired competences, both leading to recognised qualifications, within one entity, except for higher education. More specifically, it is responsible for the quality assurance of vocational education and training as well as prior acquired learning pathways which lead to recognised qualifications. The inspectorate, as part of AKOV, is responsible for the quality control.

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14 Centra voor deeltijds onderwijs of CDO.
15 Syntra Flanders (Flemish Agency for Entrepreneurial Training) determines the provision of training whereas the “Syntra’s” are the individual training centres. Syntra Flanders and the Syntra’s are further described in A1.3.
16 Furthermore, centres offering part-time vocational secondary education are regulated by the Decree of 14 July 2008 on the system of learning and working in the Flemish Community. In Dutch: ‘Decreet betreffende het stelsel van leren en werken in de Vlaamse Gemeenschap.
18 It regulates quality aspects of Se-n-Se as well but not the quality assurance since for Se-n-Se this is regulated by the Decree on Quality in Education and thus it is the Inspectorate who performs the quality control whereas for higher vocational education the quality control body is the NVAO and the use of visitation commissions.
19 http://www.hogeronderwijsregister.be/kwaliteit-accreditatie
Planning at VET system level and requirements for evaluation and review

The Flemish Ministry of Education and Training issues a policy note (beleidsnota) every six years and a policy letter (beleidsbrief) yearly. The policy note sets out what the strategic goals will be for the coming policy period and how the priority issues will be addressed. The current policy note covers the period 2009-2014 and formulates specific strategic objectives with regard to VET education. The policy letter provides an overview of what has been achieved in the previous working year as well as an overview of the planning for the coming year.

Besides the policy notes and the policy letters at policy level, which form the basis for policy and policy implementation, there are the management agreements and business plans for the different agencies responsible for the implementation of policy (and thus at operational level).

The evaluation of the part-time vocational secondary education system and a first evaluation of higher vocational education are planned in 2013.

Stakeholder involvement, identification of training needs

Agreements or so-called ‘convenants’ are made between industry and education aimed at improving quality in both IVET and CVET. Within this enhanced cooperation, focus is put on implementing new education and training programmes in which schools are more responsive to the skill needs of industry. Furthermore, the VET schools and businesses work together on organising workplace training for VET students. Businesses give financial support to the schools so that they can update their infrastructure.

Overall, social partners are involved in the layout of the professional qualifications which will form the basis for VET of the different education and training providers.

The recent development of higher vocational education required intense cooperation between the university colleges and centres for adult education, and also with SYNTRA and the VDAB, which need to offer the possibility to take on and validate components of the higher vocational education programmes.

The involvement of the business community is present at all VET levels, both via the Flemish Qualifications Framework and the sector agreements.

Certification, assessment and validation of learning

The process of referencing the Flemish Qualifications Framework to the European one has been completed in 2011.

AKOV coordinates the process to recognized vocational and educational qualifications. With the exception of qualifications in higher education, which NVAO is competent for AKOV is responsible for the deployment and quality assurance of the Flemish Qualifications Framework. It furthermore supports the description of the competences per descriptor element in the preparation of vocational qualification records.

Also, as part of its tasks, AKOV registers and communicates the recognized vocational and educational qualifications. For this purpose, a database is developed in which the recognized qualifications are collected and categorized. This database facilitates the transparency and comparability of qualifications awarded by education and training providers.

AKOV has an important role as part of the quality assurance system and thus the validation of learning. More specifically, its tasks in this regard include the following:

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23 AKOV registers and communicates the recognized professional and educational qualifications. For this purpose a database developed which recognized qualifications collected and arranged. This database facilitates transparency and comparability of qualifications awarded by education and training providers.
Overseeing quality for compulsory, adult education, student counselling, part-time education and apprenticeships followed in the context of learning and training programmes

Overseeing quality of education and training programmes offered outside the policy domain of Education and Training which lead to certificates issued by recognised vocational qualifications

Overseeing APL settings where people can have their skills tested and recognised

Like all programmes provided by IVET and CVET, the programmes provided at higher vocational education level prepare the student to be able to exercise a profession. These programmes are, in terms of level, situated just below the professional bachelor and have a duration of about two years. Those who succeed in the programme have obtained the graduate diploma. The higher vocational education programmes are very strongly practice orientated. Moreover, a significant number of programmes have a shortened learning pathway in a professional bachelor programme. Those who obtained a graduate diploma can consecutively follow a bachelor programme and are exempt from a part of the programme.

Accreditation in higher vocational education is done by the NVAO. The NVAO implements the conditions laid down by the Decree on higher vocational education and Se-n-Se with regard to the “test new HBO5-programme” and grants accreditation for higher vocational education. The NVAO takes formal decisions to accreditation on the basis of reports in which the programme to be accredited is reviewed by a committee of experts.

Within the new integrated system of external quality assurance (this new approach is further described below), institutions or entities who wish to provide professional qualifying pathways will have to submit an accreditation file at the independent cell of AKOV. This cell will make an assessment of the quality of the proposed pathway and it will formulate an opinion for accreditation. If the opinion is positive, accreditation is received by AKOV and the institution or entity can legally grant qualification certificates. Non-accreditation leads to the professional qualifying pathway not being recognised by the public authorities and thus there will be no valid qualification certificates granted.

At the moment, i.e. the school year 2012-2013, only the Centres for Adult Education (CVO) provide higher vocational education (HBO5) programmes. In future, also higher education institutes (hogescholen) will be able to offer these programmes. An exception to the provision of HBO5 concerns the higher vocational education for Nursing (HBO5 – nursing) which is organised in fulltime secondary education schools with a duration of three years instead of two.

The Decree on higher vocational education determines the criteria that have to be met in order for an institution to be able to provide higher vocational education. A demand for provision of higher vocational education programmes has to be submitted to the Commission Higher Vocational Education and the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation body. An important criteria to be met is the “macro-efficiency test”.

For the organization of a course of higher vocational education, an institution of full-time secondary education, an adult education centre or college can cooperate with:

- One or more educational institutions
- One or more public providers of vocational training for adults
- One or more sectors of the profession to which the training leads
- Businesses or organizations

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24 http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/wegwijs/akov/
25 Decree on Se-n-Se and higher vocational education (30 April 2009)
27 www.ond.vlaanderen.be
28 Decree on Se-n-Se and higher vocational education (30 April 2009)
**Monitoring inspection and use of indicators**

The Inspectorate has the responsibility to monitor the quality of education and training provision of Flemish schools. The Flemish Government delivers yearly an inspection report to the Flemish Parliament which is based on the working activities of the Inspectorate and which deals with one or more quality aspects of education. Title IV of the Decree on Quality in Education– Inspection – is not applicable on higher vocational education (HBO5).

Basically, the Inspectorate covers qualification levels 1 up to 4 in terms of quality control whereas qualification levels 5 to 8 are covered by the NVAO.

The Flemish Government makes explicit which reference framework the Inspectorate should use during inspections and can apply differentiations according to the level of education. The inspectorate uses the CIPO model which stands for Context – Input – Process – Output. The use of this model is made obligatory since 2009 on the basis of the 2009 Decree on Quality in Education. Furthermore, indicators are used which are the following:

- Equal opportunities to access education;
- Care policy and pupil guidance;
- Language policy;
- Policy with regard to the orientation of pupils;
- Evaluation policy with regard to pupils and students;
- Policy choices which are geared towards the optimal use and support of staff;
- Policy with regard to training and professionalization;
- Policy with regard to participation²⁹.

In time, indicators to assess the quality of professional qualifying pathways, will be developed within the new integrated system for quality assurance.

**The main changes to QA at system level introduced since 2009 (Adoption of the EQAVET Recommendation)**

The final element to the development of the Flemish Qualifications Framework³⁰ and the Flemish implementation of EQAVET can be found in the Flemish integrated quality framework, which forms the basis for external quality assurance for all pathways which lead to a vocational qualification. This framework has been elaborated by the Department of Education and Training, AKOV, the Inspectorate, the Department of Work and Social Economy, VDAB and Syntra Flanders in the concept note “An integrated system of external quality assurance” of July 2012³¹. This new Flemish approach to external quality assurance in VET is further explained in detail in A1.3 and Part 2 of this report since structuring the CVET system was the main priority in mind when developing this new approach.

**The main changes introduced since 2003 (beginning of the EU cooperation that led to EQAVET adoption)**

The main changes were introduced since 2009 and are described above and further in A1.3.

**Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in initial VET**

**Context**

The quality assurance at the level of IVET comprises:

- Internal reviews in the form of required self-assessments and;
- External reviews undertaken by the Inspectorate (and the Visitation Commission in the case of HBO5).

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²⁹ Decree of 8 May 2009 on Quality in Education.
³⁰ Translated into legislation via the Decree concerning the Qualifications Framework of 30 April 2009.
³¹ In Dutch: ‘Een geïntegreerd system van externe kwaliteitszorg’.
Monitoring and evaluation – Self assessment

Self-evaluation is officially encouraged as part of the present inspection system and the current-day programmes for external support of schools. Primary and secondary schools formulate their own objectives based on their own pedagogical project.

The Decree on Quality in Education of 8 May 2009 stipulates that primary and secondary schools are responsible for their own quality. One of the criteria that are evaluated by the Inspectorate is the fact whether schools have developed an internal quality assurance system\(^{32}\).

Primary and secondary schools have a diverse range of tools available, which were developed for self-evaluation. It is part of the school’s autonomy how they will concretely interpret the self-evaluation. To strengthen the internal quality assurance of schools and their ability for a smooth conduct of policies, schools will be supported by the Pedagogical Support Services (Pedagogische begeleidingsdiensten)\(^{33}\).

Also institutions providing higher vocational education are expected to ensure internal quality assurance of the education and training programmes they offer,

Monitoring and evaluations – External reviews

Primary and secondary education schools are submitted to a regular external review by the Inspectorate. In terms of timing, the Decree on Quality in Education states that every institution has to be inspected at least once every ten years. All inspection teams use the same set of tools to ensure uniformity during the inspections and moreover, the inspection procedures are identical throughout the Flemish Community\(^{34}\). The inspectorate has integrated the common quality assurance framework, which provides space for a specific approach to VET schools. SYNTRA Flanders works on the basis of a ‘practice commission’ which is equally represented by the social partners and which supervises the training and apprenticeship agreements. This commission is mainly responsible for the qualitative development of the training programmes and this both for the learning part and the apprenticeship agreement\(^{35}\). This part of the training programme falls under the Inspectorate with regard to its quality control.

At the HBO5 level, the external review of higher vocational education programmes is coordinated by the Flemish Higher Education Institutes Council (VLHORA) and the steering committee and are based on a protocol of quality assurance laid down by the Inspection, the VLHORA, the steering committee and the accreditation body. This protocol of quality assurance is adapted to the following criteria of the assessment framework: education content; education process; result of education; physical facilities, quality of staff, organisation and internal quality assurance.

Visitations of institutions providing higher vocational education take place at least once every eight years and are undertaken by the visitation commission.

Planning at VET provider level and stakeholder involvement

In order to organise a higher vocational education programme an institution of fulltime secondary education, a centre for adult education or a higher education school (hogeschool) can cooperate with the following stakeholders:

- One or more education institutions;
- One or more public providers of vocational programmes for adults;
- One or more sectors of the profession to which the programme leads;
- Companies or organisations.

\(^{32}\) Decree of 8 May 2009 on Quality in Education.


\(^{34}\) Also Syntra is inspected with regard to its learning provision as part of the Decree on Quality in Education.

\(^{35}\) www.syntravlaanderen.be
Within such cooperation, one institution is appointed as coordinating institution. Only this coordinating institution is competent and responsible for programming, evaluation, programme certification and quality assurance.\footnote{Decree of 30 April 2009 on HBO5 and Se-n-Se.}

**The main changes to QA at provider level since 2009 (Adoption of the EQAVET Recommendation)**

The Inspectorate has moved away from conducting integral full inspections since 2009 and now carries out differentiated full inspections, i.e., it inspects schools, academies and centres on the basis of individual school profiles. This individual school profile is based on a source analysis and fine-tuning in the educational institution itself and provides inspectors with a good view on the quality of the institution. Based on this, the inspectors then decide what they will focus on during their full inspection: which area of study, course of study or other aspects will be examined during the actual full inspection. The inspectors decide on the focus of these full inspections with due regard for the perceived strengths and weaknesses of every individual institution.

**The main changes introduced since 2003 (beginning of the EU cooperation that led to EQAVET adoption)**

There were no specific changes introduced at provider level since 2003.

**Quality assurance arrangements at system level in continuous VET**

**Context**

In Flanders, continuous education and training is financed and subsidised by the Flemish Community and organised by recognised centres for adult education (CVOs).\footnote{As stated in the Decree of 15 June 2007 regarding adult education.} There is not one complete system for accreditation of providers for adult learning but instead there are different systems for quality assurance and accreditation in place.\footnote{Accreditation note} Quality assurance can be different for each public provider; a different recognition or financing can be linked or there is a different focus, monitoring can take place via an external institution or an internal institution, etc.\footnote{Flemish Ministry of Education, Concept note – Version July 2012 ‘An integrated system of external quality assurance’.

A large number of institutions in Flanders provide vocational training programmes at CVET level. The most important ones are: CVOs, VDAB (Flemish Public Employment and Vocational Training Service), the Syntra’s, centres for agriculture, socio-cultural institutions, etc. The general quality approach applicable to primary, secondary and higher education does not apply for these institutions.\footnote{With the exception of the CVOs of secondary adult education as well as the training provision provided by SYNTRA in part-time vocational education for which the Inspectorate does the quality control.} Instead, these training providers have developed their own quality assurance systems\footnote{Referencing of the Flemish Qualifications Framework to the European Qualifications Framework. Flemish Government, AKOV, July 2011.}.

Besides young people who want to embark on further education, HBO5 programmes should also offer qualification possibilities for jobseekers and working people. Therefore, it is possible to follow short and flexible pathways and people with relevant experience will be able to run through a pathway much quicker. Furthermore, those following the programmes will be able to obtain “part” certificates whereas dual pathways will allow working people to acquire certain competences in the workplace.\footnote{http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/nieuws/2009/0130-HBO-pers.htm}
The Flemish Community framework: who is in charge of what

In Flanders, several types of CVET exist which can be initiated by public authorities, companies, social partners or individuals.

The ministries involved are the following: Education and Training (covering secondary adult education, Se-n-Se, higher vocational education of adult education and part-time artistic education), Employment (covering vocational training for jobseekers and employees – VDAB and entrepreneurial training (SYNTRA Flanders and the Syntra’s), Agriculture (training agriculture) and socio-cultural work (Culture).

The educational provision of formal vocational adult education is organised by CVOs within 13 regional working areas in Flanders. In each of these working areas, a consortium sees to an optimum course offer and the cooperation between the various centres.

Generally, the criteria for education for funding VET programmes and courses are:

- Need (economic, social, technological, etc.)
- The content: referring to reference frameworks
- The educational and pedagogical context
- The optimization and safeguarding of the continuity of the (study) career
- Available financial and material means

Generally, the criteria for employment are:

- Bottle-neck professions
- Target group policy

The remainder of this section describes only the quality assurance concerning the VDAB, SYNTRA Flanders and the Syntra’s since these can be considered as being the main providers of CVET in Flanders.

Planning at CVET system level and stakeholder involvement

Similar to the role of the Ministry of Education and Training in IVET, the Ministry of Employment and Social Economy issues policy notes and letters with regard to the planning of the CVET system.

Who can deliver CVET

There is a substantial amount of legislation on who can organise which programmes or can grant qualifications. The main providers of training, i.e. the VDAB and the Syntra’s (under Syntra Flanders) are explained in more detail below.

The VDAB and Syntra Flanders are both agencies under the competence of the Department for Work and Social Economy with the social partners represented in the Management Council.

The VDAB provides vocational training for adults in its competence centres. The VDAB is managed on a joint basis by the social partners under the supervision of the Flemish Community. The VDAB offers skill enhancement through the provision of training courses in their own competence centres as well as in cooperation with partners. This type of cooperation with third organisations only refers to those training courses set up for jobseekers and not for those courses organised for employed people or students.

SYNTRA Flanders was set up by the Flemish Community (the department for Work and Social Economy) to support the development of education and training programmes, which stimulate an entrepreneurial spirit. SYNTRA Flanders contributes to the realisation of the objectives of the PACT 2020 and the breakthroughs of Flanders in Action (ViA). The entrepreneurial training programmes are organised by the ‘Syntra’s’, which are training providers comparable to schools.

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44 Decree of 7 May 2004 setting up the VDAB.
Certification, assessment and validation

Some of the VDAB training programmes are externally evaluated by means of certificates, like the ISO9000-certificate. This type of quality assurance exists next to the permanent evaluation by its own Quality Department.

The new quality assurance framework has to ensure that all vocational education and training programmes as well as prior acquired competences that lead to the same vocational qualification can guarantee that people having gone through the pathway in reality possess the same set of competences. The integrated quality assurance framework is applicable to all public and private providers of vocational qualifying pathways with the exception of higher education, including HBO5, which have their separate system of external quality assurance.

The framework is based on questions to assess the quality of a programme, which are then elaborated into various themes and facets. For each of the facets there is a quality descriptor.

The decision establishing the AKOV stipulates that an independent cell is responsible for the quality assessment of the vocational qualifying pathways. According to the new integrated framework for external quality assurance this cell will be composed of the education inspectorate, supplemented with sectoral experts, experts of the VDAB and SYNTRA Flanders direction departments\(^46\). The accreditation process as described in 1.1.6 is also applicable here.

Monitoring and evaluation

Two forms of monitoring and evaluation currently exist: an internal evaluation or self-assessment and an external evaluation undertaken by the Inspectorate with regard to the adult education centres (formal education)\(^47\).

SYNTRA Flanders and the VDAB have their own monitoring and evaluation internal and external mechanisms.

In terms of self-assessment, as is the case for the providers of IVET, CVET providers have to monitor in a systematic way their own quality and they are free to choose how this is done.

For example, the Syntra’s have to carry out an in-depth self-evaluation using a specific EFQM-based instrument. The VDAB on the other hand, works with the EFQM framework as an internal system of quality assurance by the Quality Service within the VDAB. Moreover, quality is assured by stakeholders by means of client satisfaction surveys, complaint management, etc. and by the Internal Audit of the Flemish Administration (IAVA) which evaluates the VDAB.

As discussed in the first section of this annex, the Inspectorate monitors the quality of education provided in adult education centres according to the Quality in Education Decree of 8 May 2009.

In terms of external review, Syntra Flanders is externally evaluated by IAVA and by the quality auditors of the ESF-agency. The Syntra’s have been awarded several quality labels over the past years including ESF-label, Qfor, R4E, etc.\(^48\)

SYNTRA Flanders evaluates the five regional Syntra’s every three years concerning name and brand reputation, market share, client satisfaction and effectiveness of the training. The evaluation of the quality assurance process is monitored by an external assessment panel which is a visitation commission composed of internal and external members (including from AKOV). SYNTRA Flanders is responsible for the implementation of integral quality assurance in the Syntra’s.


\(^{47}\) As can be found in the Decree on Quality in Education.

Main changes to QA at system level introduced since 2009 (Adoption of the EQAVET Recommendation)

One of AKOV’s tasks since its set up in 2009 is ensuring the quality assurance of the pathways that lead to certificates of recognised qualifications. These include the vocational training provided by the VDAB and the training courses run by SYNTRA Flanders as well as private programmes and prior acquired competences pathways. The agency shall thus monitor quality assurance within the VDAB competence centres and within the Syntra’s.

Furthermore, with the implementation of the concept note (as explained in part A1), the Inspectorate of the Flemish Community will issue its advice on whether any new institutions seeking accreditation of their VET programmes on offer or any institution seeking to have a new programme component accredited has met the necessary accreditation criteria49.

The concept note and its developed approach will constitute some ground-breaking changes in the Flemish VET landscape. One of these changes concerns the fact that the training programmes provided by the VDAB and SYNTRA will now by subject to the new quality assurance requirements set out in the concept note.

The aim is that after a pilot phase of the new approach set out in the concept note (i.e. December 2012 to June 2013 2012), the new requirements for external quality assurance will be translated into a new Decree by 2014. The extra tasks given to the Inspectorate in the context of the new integrated framework for quality assurance will be added to the Decree on Quality in Education.

The main partners in the implementation of the pilot phase are the AKOV, the department for Education and Training, the department for Work and Social Economy, the Inspectorate, the VDAB and SYNTRA Flanders. Also invited to be part of the implementation group is the department for Culture, Youth, Sport and Media.

Main changes since 2003

No specific changes are noted since 2003.

Quality assurance arrangements in continuous VET at provider level

Providers like VDAB and SYNTRA as well as other semi-public and public providers will have to follow, once the new approach set out in the integrated system of external quality assurance has been implemented, the new quality assurance stipulations if they want to offer a training programme which leads to a certified qualification.

Certification, assessment and validation of learners

In Flanders, there is currently not one general system for accreditation of adult learning providers. Instead, there are different quality assurance and accreditation systems in place.

Stakeholder involvement at CVET provider level

With regard to legislation and or policy notes, the social partners and other stakeholders are always involved via the strategic advice councils. In Flanders, with regard to VET, they typically concern a broad range of stakeholders coming from the following policy sides: education and training, work and social economy and the cultural sector.

Reforms of QA in CVET at provider level since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET recommendation)

Since January 2009, SYNTRA Flanders has decided to use the external ESF quality audit as an integrated instrument for the whole SYNTRA-network for entrepreneurial training. SYNTRA Flanders uses several indicators to monitor the functioning of the network (including for example surveys on effectiveness of the courses). Each SYNTRA training centre has a quality manager who for his or her organisation takes part in a working group


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around internal quality assurance in the whole SYNTRA network for entrepreneurial training50.

Part 2 – Interaction between national quality assurance and EQAVET

National Reference Point

Flanders has an EQAVET National Reference Point in place within the AKOV, the Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training. The AKOV is an autonomous agency set up by the Ministry of Education and Training in 2009. Its main mission is to realise a quality assurance system for education, VET pathways and prior acquired competences pathways that lead to certificates of recognised qualifications51. AKOV realises its main mission by undertaking the following tasks:

■ Formulating the endpoints (‘einddoelen’) for education, VET and prior acquired competences pathways which lead to certificates of recognised qualifications;
■ Monitoring the quality of the institutions which offer such pathways;
■ Guaranteeing unambiguous and clear certification processes.

Overall, AKOV has the lead role in the quality assurance of qualifying pathways52. Furthermore, AKOV was set up with the idea of providing a very close link with EU developments.

The person responsible for the NRP role also fulfils the role as the EQF NCP, which provides for the added value of a stronger link between the two EU instruments in the implementation in Flanders.

The process of setting up the NRP in Flanders was fairly evident considering the already existing role of EQF NCP as well as the tasks of the AKOV, which provides for the implementation side of policy rather than design.

National approach to enhance quality assurance

Flanders has developed their approach towards quality assurance in VET, which is made explicit in the policy note called ‘An integrated system of external quality assurance’53. The thinking behind the Flemish strategy to enhance quality assurance is based on the notion that obtaining a qualification in IVET has the exact same value as the qualification obtained in CVET and thus the Flemish Ministry of Education opted for a combination of IVET and CVET rather than making a distinction between the two systems.

The integrated approach has as a consequence however that the process of building up the approach develops much slower since a broad range of stakeholders (i.e. the different Ministries’ departments of Education and Training on the one hand and Employment on the other hand, the social partners and sector councils) have to be involved and consulted.

Another dimension of the integrated approach is the strong focus on the bringing together of the implementation of the other EU instruments in the field such as EQF and ECVET. The development of the Flemish Qualification Structure formed the basis and now increased focus is put on the implementation of EQAVET in Flanders.

The focus of the Flemish approach is on external quality assurance since the providers in Flanders, compared to some other national education and training systems have a high level of autonomy with regard to internal quality assurance. In practice however, internal quality assurance measures seem to be well tuned to the external quality assurance measures.

52 Geintegreerd kwaliteitskader - note
In terms of the status of this recently developed approach, a pilot phase has started in December 2012 to find out what works in practice and therefore the indicators have not been developed yet.

In terms of time line, the objective is to have a new Decree on external quality assurance in VET based on the policy note by September 2014. This decree can then be considered as the Flemish implementation of EQAVET.

It is expected that the new approach will ensure enhanced requirements for VET quality assurance at both system and provider level, especially in CVET which is the priority area in this development because of the higher number of problems it has in terms of its transparency. However, the new approach will be applicable to both IVET and CVET. The approach guarantees furthermore the monitoring of VET quality whilst respecting the providers’ own way of working. It was reported that the process leading to the new external quality assurance approach is quite a revolutionary one which is based on building bridges between different policy domains, which would have not been possible about five to ten years ago.

Within the framework of the Flemish Qualification Structure, vocational qualifications are being developed which form the basis for future professions. Both formal pathways and non-formal pathways can lead to these vocational qualifications and thus, the change lies in the fact that both these pathways need to be externally quality assured and not only the formal ones. Semi-public and private providers can within the new approach issue certifications, which are equal to the ones obtained in formal education.

The integrated approach also fills in the composition of the independent cell within AKOV, which is responsible for the implementation of the quality assessment of the vocational qualifying pathways. This independent cell will be composed of the Inspectorate (this is also where the cell will be brought under and directed by), sectoral experts, experts from the VDAB and SYNTRA Flanders ‘regies’54. The experts will be appointed according to the vocational qualifying pathway, regardless of the provider55.

**The content of the EQAVET framework – use and usefulness**

The EQAVET framework and more specifically, the descriptors and indicators have served as a source of inspiration in the development of the integrated approach of external quality assurance. However, it has proven to be difficult to adopt them as such since everything has to be adapted to the Flemish context, i.e. because of the integrated approach, several policy domains and with that, different policy priorities had to be taken into account.

Overall, it was felt that even though the EQAVET framework is rather general and self-evident, it does at the same time provide for a very useful way of bringing information together as well as providing inspiration for the tools to develop quality assurance measures. The fact that EQAVET mainly focuses its implementation on the provider side proves to be less useful to the Flemish context since the Flemish Community does not interfere with the providers’ internal quality assurance mechanisms. The providers are obliged to have an internal system in place in order to obtain financing and be accredited but they are free to choose the content of it. The Department for Education and Training as well as AKOV work at the system level and concentrate on the external quality assurance aspect. Moreover, the EQAVET approach concentrates much more on the formal side of education (IVET) whereas in Flanders there is for example a stronger link, now within the new integrated system, with the labour market, and thus a stronger focus on CVET and in terms of involvement, on the social partners.

Overall though, the EQAVET approach has been closely followed and adapted where necessary to the specific characteristics of the Flemish context. Moreover, the EQAVET approach easily joins up with the quality assurance system in higher education.

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54 Or direction departments.
Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance

It was reported that there was somehow a simultaneous awareness on the importance of developing a strategy and overall, quality assurance has always been high on the Flemish political agenda. The EQAVET Recommendation gave the Flemish process a more legitimate basis, stronger support and could be considered to have been a trigger.

However, it is felt that the EQF is the main driving force in increasing transparency and consistency in the VET developments between Member States whereas EQAVET complements this process and instigates trust because of its enhancement of quality assurance in the VET systems. An important question whilst implementing the EQF in Flanders was how to make the education landscape more transparent; how to better link the provision of education to the labour market demand and thus enhance the link between education and the labour market.

Partner organisations involvement

As discussed earlier, the development of the integrated approach towards external quality assurance involved a broad range of stakeholders.

In the pilot phase, a selection of schools and centres will be involved to obtain feedback on the strategy developed.

Additionally, the following policy partners and labour market stakeholders will be involved: departments of Education and Training, Employment and Social Economy, Culture, Youth, Sports and Media, AKOV, the Education Inspectorate, VDAB and Syntra Flanders. Important to note is that it is the ‘regie’ departments of VDAB and SYNTRA, i.e. the policy preparatory parts that are part of the process and not the competences centres.

Synergies with other EU level instruments

As explained above, there is a very strong synergy in Flanders between EQAVET and the EQF in which the EQF is the point of departure. The translation of this synergy is made through the AKOV hosting both the NRP and the NCP roles in the same person.

Furthermore, as part of the integrated approach, implementation of EQAVET entails the linkage with ECVET in order to ensure consistency.

With regard to the link with the quality assurance framework in other parts of education and training, it was explained that the experiences within higher education had served as a source of inspiration.
Sources

Decree of 14 July 1998 on Community Education
Decree of 14 July 2008 on the system of learning and working in the Flemish Community
Decree of 8 May 2009 on Quality in Education
Decree of 30 April 2009 on the Flemish Qualifications Framework
Decree of 30 April 2009 on Se-n-Se and Higher Vocational Education
Mandate AKOV (2011-2015)
Country report – Belgium (Wallonia)

Author: Axelle Devaux (ICF GHK)

Part 1 – Description of quality assurance arrangements and of recent developments

The main developments in quality assurance in VET in Belgium (Fr) over the last decade are:

- A 2007 Decree created the Inspectorate Body, specified its organisation and missions and clarified the status of the inspectors. This included a description of their role in controlling quality of training in IVET (secondary level) and CVET for adults;
- A review of the 1991 Decree establishing CVET for adults is under discussion. At the end of 2012, the Government adopted a first draft of a new Decree reforming CVET for adults. This draft Decree foresees a merger of the Higher Council for Social Advancement (hereafter Higher Council) with an advisory body in charge of CVET for adults into a new Social Advancement General Council. It also foresees EPS opening up to eLearning. This Decree should be adopted in 2013.

In French Speaking Belgium (Walloon Region and Bruxelles Region), education and training related competences are with the French Speaking Community.

One important aspect of education in Belgium is the principle of freedom in education, i.e. the organisation of schools may not be subject to any restrictive measures. This principle is written in the Constitution and is the basis for relationships between VET providers and public authorities at regional and community level. This principle has consequences on the way quality assurance operates in the country: The institutions have a high degree of autonomy, but there are control mechanisms in place to assess the extent to which education and training provided by these institutions are up to the Community standards.

These points are developed in the sections below.

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in initial VET

National Framework for initial VET – who is in charge of what?

In Belgium (Fr), IVET includes mainly vocational education and training delivered at secondary level (lower and upper). IVET falls under the responsibility of the Ministry in charge of education for the French Speaking Community.

IVET includes full-time education, provided by vocational education institutions, and dual vocational education and training (combination of practical training in the workplace with training. Dual vocational education and training implies a partnership between a VET provider, a pupil and a company. Qualifications awarded through dual pathways represent about 10% of qualifications awarded at secondary level.

The constitutional principle of freedom of education in Belgium limits the role of the regional and Community authorities in education and training and prevents any restrictive measures to the organisation of schools. Schools have a great autonomy in terms of management and pedagogy and educational methods. In term of quality assurance, it means that networks of

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58 Enseignement de Promotion Sociale
59 http://gouvernement.cfwb.be/enseignement-de-promotion-sociale-avant-projet-de-d-cret
60 Commission de Concertation
61 Walloon Region and Bruxelles Region - French Speaking part - are grouped under Federation Wallonie-Bruxelles
62 Ministère de l’Enseignement obligatoire et de Promotion sociale en Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles
VET providers and VET providers themselves are responsible for ensuring quality of their training offer. At Community level, regulatory mechanisms to ensure quality of education and training are provided within this school autonomy context. There is a quality assurance framework at system level: the inspection services are responsible for quality assurance in IVET since its creation in 2007 (2007 Decree).

**Statutory stakeholder involvement in initial VET systems**

Overall, the stakeholders involved in VET systems include:

- The government of the French Speaking Community
- Networks of other controlling authorities
- VET providers
- Inspection and pedagogy councils
- Representatives of employers and trade unions

As the main controlling authorities, the government of the French Speaking Community and networks of other controlling authorities are involved (policy design, implementation, monitoring) in initial VET systems. The government also provides funding to VET providers and coordinates the inspection.

In 2009 a Decree introduced regional VET committees. These committees may (voluntarily) be set up by VET providers to ensure dialogue with other VET provider’s public authorities and networks of controlling authorities, with the view of rationalising the education and training provision in a given territory.64

The 2012 Decree on validation of learning reinforces the role of these stakeholders in the definition and validation of learning units.

Regarding other stakeholders’ involvement in the activities of the inspection body, the 2007 decree foresees that the inspection and pedagogy councils in place at the level of each education and training provider networks should cooperate. In practice, this translates into, for instance, the inspection reports being shared with the pedagogic councils of the VET providers’ networks.

Besides this formal requirement, activities of the inspectorate body and their results are usually presented to and discussed with VET authorities at regional or community level.

**Planning at VET system level**

Due to the freedom in education principle, planning in IVET is mainly the responsibility of the VET providers. At system level, the government of the French Speaking Community is responsible for coordinating IVET provision and dialogue among the networks of providers. It is also in charge of budgetary planning at system level and of ensuring that the IVET education system complies with the minimum regulatory requirements and standards.

The government is supported in its planning role by advisory bodies:

- The Education System Steering Committee is in charge of coordinating and monitoring the education system and supporting policy reform. Members are representatives of the inspectorate body, networks of training providers, public authorities (Ministry in charge of education), social partners, parents and pedagogy experts.
- Although its role is not directly linked to education and training planning, the Educational and Training Council, which brings together about 30 education and training providers, formulates expert advice on the development of the education and training system and on future priorities.

The inspectorate body also indirectly supports planning with the submission of its annual report on the education and training system.

As said above, since 2009 regional VET committees may be set up by VET providers to ensure dialogue with other VET provider’s public authorities and networks of controlling

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authorities, with the view of rationalising the education and training provision in a given territory\(^65\), thus contributing to a better match between training offer and needs.

**Requirements for evaluation and review**

There is no specific requirement for evaluation and review at system level, apart from those linked to the inspection. Inspection is *de facto* mandatory for VET providers. For instance in the case of subsidised VET providers, the decision to grant subsidies to a VET provider will be based on the outcomes of the inspection report about this VET provider.

**Identification of training needs**

FOREM (regional public employment service) monitors the labour market under the ‘Job Focus’ exercise. The objective of Job Focus is to identify labour force shortage risks before they occur. FOREM’s training needs identification is used by the government in the framework of the work of the Education system steering committee.

Regarding IVET, results from inspections are also taken into account to match education and training offer to needs.

**Who can deliver VET and under what conditions - Accreditation or other requirements on VET providers**

As introduced above, initial VET in French Speaking Belgium is delivered by schools that belong to different networks depending on their legal status\(^66\):

- The network set up and administered by the French Speaking Community of Belgium
- The network of subsidised VET providers (in general these are set up by municipalities and provinces)
- The network of subsidised VET providers that are not set up by public authorities but which have an independent status. It contains a sub-network of VET schools set up by confessional bodies

The Wallonia-Brussels Federation is ‘controlling authority’ for the institutions that fall under its remit. In other cases (subsidised VET providers), the controlling authorities are part of controlling authorities networks that represent them at government level.

According to the principle of freedom in education, it is possible to set up schools with very limited links to the public authorities. There is no accreditation process as such, but the conditions to get funding are much more restrictive and these to award recognised qualifications are more restrictive. Schools that aim to benefit from funding (subsidies) from the Community must comply with the provisions of laws, decrees, and regulations with regard to their structure (that should be approved by the Minister), the curriculum (teaching should be in line with applicable decrees, in particular, in the case of compulsory education, with respect to the core skills and final achievement targets), health and hygiene standards, etc. Schools must also comply with their obligation regarding the inspection.

**Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)**

Assessments are required for each IVET provider, in compliance with the education and training regulation. However, due to the freedom of education principle, the type and frequency of these assessments in place in the schools that belong to their network are left up to the controlling authorities.

The 2012 Decree\(^67\) on validation of learning introduces validation of learning units in VET. This validation is planned to be piloted in a limited number of training fields, based on

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definitions elaborated by the government in consultation with VET stakeholders. Implementation will be carried out with the support of the inspectorate body.

*Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators*

Monitoring is the responsibility of the Education System Steering Committee. This advisory body systematically collects data about pupils’ progression through the system, about the system’s functioning and results, and making proposals. The work of the Steering Committee is prospective and aims to prepare informed decision at system level.

Regarding the inspection, the review organised by the system may focus on a class, an institution or a group of institutions. The legal basis does not specify the requirements for control and review (e.g. launching mechanism, frequency, etc.). Heads of education and training institutions may proactively request a review of their staff.

**Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008 and since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)**

The following reforms concern IVET and CVET both at system and provider level:

- Creation of the Inspectorate body with the 2007 Decree. The body was created to monitor and evaluate quality and performance of teachers, VET providers as well as about the system as a whole
- In 2009 a Decree introduced regional vocational education and training committees to rationalise the education and training provision in a given territory
- In 2010 the government created a professions and qualifications department, which is in charge of developing job and training descriptions in terms of learning outcomes, applicable to the Wallonia-Brussels Federation (not implemented yet). Once set up, this Department will also be in charge of assessing whether VET institutions comply with the job and training descriptions and reach these learning outcomes
- In 2012 a Decree on validation of learning units in VET

**Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in initial VET**

The role of the inspection has been detailed in section A3.2. The following sub-sections will focus on other requirements and practices at provider level and mention the inspection when relevant at provider level.

**Planning, monitoring and self-assessment at VET provider level**

In line with the freedom in education principle VET providers are in charge of defining their strategy. School heads are responsible for planning (school plan) and monitoring (annual activity reports). The controlling authority also reports on the activities of VET providers in its network.

Both reports are reviewed by the inspectorate body. The latter may formulate recommendations on the schools’ or the network’s activity reports. In this case, the network has to take action in relation to these recommendations (implementation at network level or VET provider level).

**Stakeholders’ involvement at provider level**

A school council is created at provider level by each provider. This council brings together the head of the institution, delegates from the controlling authority, and representatives of the staff, of the social, cultural and economic sectors, of the parents, and of the pupils. The

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69 Service francophone des métiers et qualifications

school council is involved in planning (preparation of the school plan) and monitoring implementation of the school plan (annual activity reports).

Certification, assessment and validation of learners

Each school may choose the type and frequency of assessments in line with what is in place under the responsibility of their controlling authorities.

In full time education and training, certification is carried out by the class council at the end of each year. The class council examines whether pupils have successfully completed the year, i.e. met the required knowledge and competencies for each of the subjects concerned.

For dual VET, certification is the responsibility of the class council of secondary dual vocational education and training. Dual education students must reach the same level of competence as full-time students.

Outputs from quality assurance at provider level

Schools monitor their activities and achievements against the school action plan on an annual basis. The school annual activity report monitors implementation of the school plan. The annual activity report covers an assessment of the measures implemented to achieve the general objectives set for schools at system level, the pedagogical plan of the controlling authority and of the school. It includes the following indicators: pass and failure rates, appeals against decisions taken by the class councils and the results of such procedures, the number of and reasons for registration refusals and figures about continuing training for teachers at the school.

All IVET providers are subject to inspection. The inspector(s) in charge of the review draft a report, which specifies the planning and sources for the review, provides factual evidence and formulates conclusions and recommendations about quality and efficiency. The dissemination of the review report depends on a decision of the head of the inspectorate body. The head of education and training institution reviewed does receive the report. The recommendations of the inspection do not have a binding nature. The head of the institution reviewed may decide not to follow the report’s recommendations in which case (s)he has to inform the inspectorate and provide an explanation why the recommendations are not accepted.

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in continuous VET

CVET in French Speaking Belgium includes CVET for adults and VET schemes specifically designed for job seekers, promoted by the public employment services (FOREM71 and Bruxelles Formation) and for workers, promoted by the VET providers focusing on specific sectors, such as management of SME training (IFAPME and EFP72).

In CVET, there is neither unified provision nor unified quality arrangements. The government of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation coordinates CVET in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, within the boundaries of the freedom of education principle. It organises CVET for adults. Other CVET providers (institutions or groups of institutions) propose their own quality assurance systems, but none is predominant.

National Framework for CVET – who is in charge of what?

CVET for adults falls within the competence of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation. The Higher Council73 organises CVET for adults in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation.

The government of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation is responsible for general policy on continuing education for adults, but regions are competent for the provision of CVET. The main actors at regional level are:

71 Office wallon de la formation professionnelle et de l'emploi
72 Institut wallon de formation en alternance et des indépendants et petites et moyennes entreprises et Espace Formation PME
FOREM: VET agency and public employment service for the Wallonia-Brussels Federation (except Brussels). Aims to support people to manage their career plans and enterprises to manage their human resources. FOREM plays a role of ‘coordinator of the job market in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation’. FOREM coordinates VET centers.

Bruxelles Formation: VET agency and public employment service for the Wallonia-Brussels Federation (Brussels only)

IFAPME and EFP are other important CVET actors. IFAPME provides training adapted to the specific requirements of the self-employed and SMEs. EFP is IFAPME’s counterpart in the Brussels Region.

The majority (roughly 90%) of CVET is provided via a partnership between FOREM, Bruxelles Formation and IFAPME. FOREM is responsible for around 40,000 trainees per year, while the other partners are responsible for another 10,000 trainees.

**Stakeholders’ involvement**

Given the complexity of the institutional organisation of VET in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, public authorities have set up working groups and transversal committees to ensure information and coherence of the policies and actions of VET stakeholders.

In CVET for adults, stakeholders are represented in the Higher Council that brings together representatives of the networks of controlling authorities, of school management and teaching staff, of trainees, the Ministry in charge of education in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, the Inspection and social partners.

FOREM and Bruxelles Formation are jointly managed by representatives of the workers and of the employers. FOREM also consults its committees in charge of employment and training at local level.

**Planning at system level and identification of training needs**

For CVET for adults, planning is the responsibility of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation (Ministry of education). The Higher Council has an advisory role relating to the adequacy of CVET for adults as a response to socio-economic and cultural needs, as well as on matters to do with promoting, developing and improving this form of education.

FOREM, under its role of regional public employment service, monitors the labour market under the ‘Job Focus’ exercise. ‘Job Focus’ aims to identify areas in which there is a mismatch between training and needs of the labour market, as well as to anticipate future skills needs. The body, as training provider, benefits from this training needs identification exercise.

**Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on CVET providers**

The government of the French-speaking Community is responsible for the accreditation of VET providers in general. For CVET for adults, there is no accreditation of providers, except for those providers granting certifications linked to regulated professions.

FOREM, Bruxelles Formation, IFAPME and EFP have an agreement with the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, under which they carry out their VET provision and coordination activities. FOREM and Bruxelles Formation act as public employment services; therefore there is no need for its VET providers to be accredited (including sub-contractors). IFAPME and EFP accredit their VET providers. Accreditation implies compliance with criteria related to security, equipment, staff, etc.

However, FOREM, Bruxelles Formation, IFAPME require its service providers to provide evidence of quality assurance measures:

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74 CEF: ‘Vers une politique cohérente de gestion de la qualité dans le cadre de l’éducation et de la formation tout au long de la vie ?’, 2010
FOREM developed a quality assurance system inspired by ISO and received an ISO 9001 certification in 1997. The certification focuses on the training courses provided by FOREM, in particular the procedures (training guidelines, the monitoring of trainees, etc.) which apply when partner organisations or external trainers operate at FOREM.

Bruxelles Formation (as well as its counterpart in the Flemish Community) adopted The FOREM QA system. Bruxelles formation also uses the EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) for self-assessment of its VET providers.

Most IFAPME’s training centres received the Qfor label in 2008 and IFAPME had the objective of having all its training centres have the label in 2010. Qfor Method is a modular system of quality evaluation and certification of training institutes and consultancy firms. It is based on two kinds of quality control:

- Client satisfaction: past experiences of clients, based on the assumption that if past clients were satisfied, there is a high probability that future clients will also be satisfied
- Processes: conformity of the business processes and resources to specific quality criteria, which focus on the appropriateness of tools and methods for each situation, in order to ensure effectiveness

**Certification, assessment and validation of learning (system level)**

For CVET for adults, the French Speaking Community (Walloon and Brussels Region grouped under the Wallonia-Brussels Federation) is responsible for the organisation of continuous assessment and examinations and award and statutory recognition of achievement certificates.

For CVET provided by FOREM, Bruxelles Formation, IFAPME and EFP, certification and assessment is the responsibility of the CVET providers.

Regarding validation, a skills validation consortium has been established, which brings together representatives of the different types of CVET provision: CVET for adults (Ministry in charge of education), workers and job seekers (FOREM, Bruxelles Formation, IFAPME and EFP). The skills validation consortium ensures coherence in validation of learning among these five actors.

**Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators**

Quality assurance in CVET for adults falls under the responsibility of the inspection. The same system level requirements apply as for IVET providers.

Under the agreements between the Wallonia-Brussels Federation and FOREM, Bruxelles Formation, IFAPME and EFP these VET providers have to report on a series of indicators – mainly output indicators - aiming to show that they are fulfilling their mission:

- FOREM uses indicators compiled which feed a monitoring database. These indicators are related to training, integration of trainees, trainee satisfaction, human resource development inside FOREM Formation, as well as budgetary and financial aspects of the organization. The monitoring database is updated on a monthly basis
- Bruxelles Formation collects indicators at three levels: activity-level indicators; process-level indicators and management-level indicators. The latter are dedicated to strategy and management of CVET in the Brussels area. Some of these indicators are in line with the EQAVET indicators
- IFAPME and EFP focus on the indicators agreed in their contract with the Wallonia-Brussels Federation. IFAPME reports on these indicators (indicators dashboard) on a biannual basis

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75 No evidence that it has been done
Part 2 – Interaction between national quality assurance and EQAVET

National Reference Point

There is no formal NRP in place in Belgium (Fr). The Wallonia-Brussels Federation has not formally appointed NRP, but FOREM and the French Speaking Qualifications have been informally asked to act as NRP in the meantime.

The main obstacle to appointing a NRP is that there is no ‘obvious’ candidate for this position. To create a consensus the NRP should represent all aspects of VET in the Region (IVET, CVET, validation, etc.). This task could not be done by one actor only.

National approach to enhance quality assurance

There is no common approach to quality assurance at regional level, but each of the main actor adopted measures to ensure quality in the VET area under their responsibility.

There has been discussion about establishing a joint approach to quality assurance among VET actors in the region/Community, which would be open to all VET providers in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation. This would involve, for instance, the creation of a joint quality assurance agency, which would be in charge of quality assurance at all levels of education and training (including IVET and CVET).

IVET and CVET actors agree that a common approach to quality is necessary to ensure mutual trust among VET actors. For the time being, most actors have developed their own quality approach and they are not ready to change for something different (this is particularly true for IVET), even if it means have a common and trusted approach with other actors at regional or European level.

The education and training advisory body (CEF) has played an important role in triggering the discussion on quality assurance. In 2010, the advisory body published a background document about quality assurance in VET. It also organised events where the different quality approaches in place were presented to VET stakeholders.

The following barriers have been identified:

- There is an ongoing VET reform in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation and priority has been given to ECVET-related aspects of the reform. The implementation effort that is required from school staff is considered heavy and time wise. It was decided to focus on this reform before launching quality-related reforms, especially as it would directly impact on the same target group
- Some VET provider and their networks are reluctant to give up on their own quality approach for a (new) joint approach to quality assurance in VET

Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance

Quality assurance in VET is considered high in the agenda, its European dimension under EQAVET to a lesser extent. VET actors understand that they need to work together on this issue, they are aware that the EU has supported an initiative in this direction and have been involved in activities aiming to see the extent to which quality approaches in VET were in line with EQARF/EQAVET.

In terms of EQAVET’s influence on the policy agenda in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, the EQAVET contributed to put quality assurance in VET higher in the agenda in the sense that it triggered discussions and events at national and European level about this issue. However, the influence of EQAVET is limited, as this issue already existed and current discussions about a regional/community approach to quality assurance in VET have taken place independently of EQAVET.

CEF: ‘Vers une politique cohérente de gestion de la qualité dans le cadre de l’éducation et de la formation tout au long de la vie ?’, 2010
Important steps (creation of the inspectorate body and the QAA) have taken place before the EQAVET Recommendation. No link can be made with preparatory discussion or activities under EQARF before the Recommendation.

In terms of activities, the education and training advisory body (CEF) has organised a series of activities related to quality assurance in VET, and has always included the European dimension (EQARF/EQAVET) in the discussion and publications. In 2010 it assessed the extent to which the QA systems in place in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation would be able to feed EQAVET indicators. In most cases, the results of this exercise show that data related to the EQAVET indicators could be collected, but are not as such for the time being (except some context indicators in the case of Bruxelles Formation or FOREM). The report issued after this assessment shows an intention to make a link between the QA systems in place and EQAVET. This link may look artificial regarding some of the EQAVET indicators, (e.g. satisfaction rate of individuals and employers (indicator 6(b)) is fed in terms growths in number of registrations and indirect positive feedback from employers). CEF has contributed to keep EQAVET present in the political agenda, but there is not evidence that CEF’s opinions have been taken into account at policy level (e.g. reference to EQARF/EQAVET in CEF opinions, but no further reference to EQAVET in recent legislation).

Synergies with other EU level instruments

Most education and training actors (general education, VET (IVET and CVET), validation, higher education, etc.) are involved in discussion regarding quality assurance in the framework of the CEF.

The quality assurance agency, which is in charge of quality assurance in higher education, is also involved in quality assurance of higher VET and CVET for adults. This involvement implies involvement in discussion regarding quality assurance in VET.

There has been a lack of synergies at European level between the instruments (quality assurance in higher education, ECVET, EQF and EQAVET) and that this lack of synergies is translated at national/regional level in the implementation of these instruments. The only approach that seems to ensure synergies at national level is to centralise all activities related to these instruments under the same authority (e.g. quality assurance agency in charge of all education and training levels).

Sources

Publications:

CEF: avis 2010 on quality assurance in vocational training

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IWEPS, Chiffres clés de la Wallonie, issue 11, 2008

Legislation:

Circulaire 2010 on the respective roles of these actors in quality assurance

Decree 2008 on the quality assurance agency

Decree 2007 on the Inspectorate body

Websites

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77 EQARF in the text

78 CEF: ‘Vers une politique cohérente de gestion de la qualité dans le cadre de l’éducation et de la formation tout au long de la vie ?’, 2010
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http://www.cpu.cfwb.be
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http://enseignement.catholique.be
http://www.gallilex.cfwb.be
http://gouvernement.cfwb.be
http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be
A1.4 Country Report – Bulgaria

Author: Eva Atanassova (external expert to ICF GHK)

Part 1 – Description of quality assurance arrangements and of recent developments

- An inter-institutional working group was set up with the purpose of devising a national approach to quality assurance in VET in consultation with the social partners.
- A national approach to quality assurance in VET including self-assessment was devised in 2012 in line with EQAVET and its indicators. It was piloted in 22 vocational schools in the country and validated through broad consultations with all main stakeholders.
- The self-assessment model based on EQAVET indicators was introduced into vocational schools in 2012/2013 school year.
- Further development of a unified national approach to quality assurance in initial and continuous VET at system and provider level takes place under a current European Structural Fund project managed by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science.
- Legislative changes in respective acts, School and Pre-school Act and the VET Act, were initiated to ensure the necessary legislative basis for introducing a national quality assurance system.
- National Qualifications Framework encompassing professional qualifications was adopted in 2012.

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in initial VET National Framework for initial VET – who is in charge of what?

The two bodies responsible for Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Bulgaria are the Ministry for Education, Youth and Science (MEYS) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. MEYS has the overall responsibility for the entire school system and is the main policy-making body with budgetary responsibility and control for Initial Vocational Education and Training (IVET).

In Bulgaria, IVET begins as early as the completion of the sixth grade, i.e. when students are 13 or 14 years old. Until the age of 16, comprehensive education is the dominant education model for students. IVET elements are dispersed within the comprehensive education during this period. After completing this training period, a student obtains a comprehensive education certificate as well as initial level qualification in a certain occupational field.

In the upper secondary education, a similar mechanism exists. Students in vocational upper secondary schools (VUSS) receive IVET along with secondary education. An alternative is attending gymnasia VUSS. If a student is admitted to gymnasia VUSS after the 7th grade, the educational programme lasts 6 years. Vocational gymnasia are the most popular among the institutions providing IVET since they offer the possibility to acquire a VET qualification and complete secondary education. IVET is also available to individuals who are older than 16 and have already finished upper secondary school.79

The legislative framework of initial and continuing vocational education and training in Bulgaria is provided by several acts the main of which are the Public Education Act and the Vocational Education and Training Act (1999). The latter sets the normative framework for the organization of the initial and continuing vocational training with a main goal to guarantee the quality of VET in accordance with the needs of the labour market and the trends in the European Union. The VET Act regulates the provision of certain conditions that ensure the functioning and development of the VET system based on the cooperation among the VET institutions and government institutions, local authorities and social partners.

Further on, the Recognition of Vocational Qualification Act (2008) regulates the conditions and rules for the recognition of vocational qualifications, acquired in other EU member states or third countries in order to gain access and practice regulated professions. The Employment Promotion Act (2001) sets general policies for employment, methods to gather

information about employment, promotion of employment, formulates the transition from passive social assistance towards active measures of the labour market in order to increase the employment and raise the qualification of the labour force. The Crafts Act (2001) regulates the conditions and rules for training crafts, including training at a work place in the craft enterprise and determines the basic degrees of the craftsmen training.

Statutory stakeholder involvement in initial VET systems

According to the VET Act the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science implements the state policy in VET by adopting the State Educational Requirements for acquiring professional qualification; approving the List of Professions for VET; proposing for approval to the Council of Ministers the List of Regulated Professions; approving the state admission plan for state and municipal schools; approving programmes for qualification in VET; allocating financial resources and controlling their utilization; analysing the results and the efficiency of VET.

The Regional Inspectorates for Education of MEYS implement the state policy in VET in the respective region by coordinating the interaction between the schools, the local government and regional structures of the social partners.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy participates in implementing the state policy in VET by determining the needs of VET through analyzing the tendencies in the development of the labour market; participating in the development, coordination and updating of the State Educational Requirements for acquiring qualification on professions; participating in the coordination of the List of Professions for VET; participating in the coordination of the state admission plan in the schools through the regional labour offices.

The branch ministries are involved in the development, coordination and updating of the State Educational Requirements for acquiring qualification on professions; in the development, coordination and updating the List of Professions for VET as well as in the coordination of the state admission plan for the schools they finance.

Municipalities participate in forming the policy in VET on their territories regarding the need for specialists; the vocational orientation of students, unemployed and other persons; the changes in the register regarding the institutions in the VET system. They are responsible for the compulsory education of pupils up to the age of 16, pre-school education, extra-mural activities, financing, provision of equipment, premises, school meals, hostels, recreation and sport facilities, for allocation of the financial resources approved by their budget for vocational education, training and orientation; the development of the material and technical facilities of the schools, of the centres for vocational training and the centres for information and vocational orientation by financial resources from the municipal budgets; the determining of the state admission plan for the schools.

The organisations of employers participate in the development, updating and coordination of the List of Professions for VET; propose changes in the register regarding the institutions in the VET system; participate in the development, coordination and updating of the State Educational Requirements for acquiring qualification on professions; participate in the organisation and holding of examinations for acquiring professional qualification and propose representatives for participation in the examination commissions.

The organisations of employees on the national level participate in updating of the State Educational Requirements for acquiring qualification on professions; participate in the development, updating and coordination of the List of Professions for VET. Branch trade union organisations defend the interests of trainees before the employers on issues of employment and practical training in the enterprises; participate in organising and holding the examinations for acquiring professional qualification and propose representatives for participation in the examination commissions.\textsuperscript{80}

\textsuperscript{80} VET Act
Planning at VET system level and identification of training needs

The central administration of the MEYS approves the obligatory school documentation – guidelines, compulsory curricula, programmes, State Education Requirements, school plans, textbooks, handbooks, etc. in accordance with the *Level of Education, General Education Minimum and Curriculum Act*. The State Educational Requirements for VET (as per the *Public Education Act*) determine the organisation of the admission of candidates and of VET, the structure and content of the framework programmes for VET and the organisation of the practical training for the school VET.

According to a state plan for admission, the VET is organised by the state and municipal schools. The state plan for admission is approved for schools and professions for each school year. The state and municipal schools, with the exception of art schools, in compliance with the strategies, forecasts, programmes and plans for development of the respective municipality submit proposals for state plan for admission for professions to the Regional Inspectorates for Education. The latter coordinate the proposals with the respective financing bodies, with the Commission for Employment at the Regional Council for Regional Development and with the regional structures of employers. The state plan for admission to state and municipal schools is approved by MEYS based on a proposal of the Regional Inspectorates for Education in coordination with the Minister of Labour and Social Policy and the Minister of Regional Development. The state plan for admission to art schools is approved by the Minister of Culture. The conditions and the procedure for approval of the state plan for admission are determined with a regulation issued by the Minister of Culture and the Minister of Education. Private vocational schools, Bulgarian schools with foreign participation and foreign vocational schools determine independently their plan for admission.81

MEYS adopt the State Educational Requirements for acquiring qualification for professions and the institutions in VET; approve the state admission plan for state and municipal schools as well as programmes for qualification in VET. According to the VET Act the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy determine the needs of VET by analysing the tendencies in the development of the labour market. However, no data have been collected to illustrate how the labour market development and needs are being established and analysed.

Requirements for evaluation and review

- External evaluation of schools is carried out by the Regional Inspectorates under MEYS located in the 28 administrative centres. In 2005, the Centre of Control and Assessment of Education Quality in Bulgaria was established, as a state scientific-informative section of the MEYS, to improve internal and external evaluation, and the systems for quality control of secondary schools. The Centre implements its activity by developing models and mechanisms for school-based evaluation and assessment; systems for control of the quality in education in Bulgarian schools; elaborates exam materials and standardized tests, incl. state matriculation exams.
  - The assessment of outcomes and the organisation of examinations are specified in accordance with the State Educational Requirement for the assessment system. With regard to the organisation of state examinations for acquiring a degree of vocational qualification, the Minister of Education approves a national examination programme, which regulates the criteria for assessment of outcomes.82

Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on VET providers

Bulgarian IVET institutions are public and private, and are school-based approved by the Minister of Education. The art schools are under the authority of the Minister of Culture. The administration of school education in Bulgaria is organised on four levels: national, regional, municipal and school level. Decentralization and broadening the autonomy of education establishments are major characteristics of school education nowadays.

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81 VET Act
82 Bulgaria. VET in Europe – Country Report, 2011, Cedefop
The school should be compliant with the State Education Requirement for acquiring professional qualifications that is established in cooperation with employers for every profession stated in the List of Professions for VET. The State Education Requirement includes requirements for the minimum entry qualification and education level; description of work activities, responsibilities, personal qualities, working conditions specifics, equipment and tools; opportunities to continue vocational training; objectives of the training; learning outcomes; requirements for the material resources for theoretical and practical training; requirements for learners.

The development of the curriculum and the vocational training programmes within the school system is a responsibility of the MEYS. The content of vocational training, the breakdown per types of training and the development of curricula and training programmes are based on the State Educational Requirements for acquiring professional qualification. The curriculum is learning outcomes oriented where the latter are being defined by means of knowledge and skills acquired in the course of VET or through professional experience.

Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)

The right to exercise a regulated profession is certified with one of the following documents: diploma for completed professional education; document certifying professional qualification; document certifying the acquired legal right to exercise a regulated profession. The acknowledging authority may require from the person applying for acknowledgement to prove that it has the required professional experience, where the duration of training is one year less than the required training duration for the regulated profession. There are four degrees of professional qualification with the following requirements:

- For the first degree - acquired professional competence for practising professions which include routine activities carried out under permanent conditions
- For the second degree - acquired professional competence for practising professions which include activities of complex nature carried out under changing conditions
- For the third degree - acquired professional competence for practising professions which include activities of complex nature carried out under changing conditions, as well as assuming responsibility for the work of other persons
- For the fourth degree - acquired professional competence for practising professions which include a wide range of activities of complex nature carried out under changing conditions, as well as assuming managerial responsibilities for the work of other persons and for the allocation of resources

The minimum entry educational level for acquiring the respective degrees of professional qualification varies. For the first degree - completed 6th grade is required; for the second and third degree - completed 7th degree or primary education; and for the fourth degree - completed secondary education.

Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators

Control over the teaching process and its results are carried out by the MEYS, Regional Inspectorates for Education, the head teachers and deputy heads. A special department at the MEYS, i.e the Coordination and Control in Secondary Education, manages and controls the activity of the 28 Inspectorates for Education and the schools. The Inspectorates for Education are established in the country on a regional level – they are specialized territorial bodies of the MEYS for operative administration of the education structures. They have planning, organizational, coordination and control functions over school activities within their respective region.

The inspecting bodies monitor school compliance with legislation, school curricula and syllabuses and state education requirements in terms of performance and efficiency of the teaching methods used, and also organize examinations. They assist the teachers and evaluate their work and the quality of education delivered as well as the preliminary

83 VET Act
preparation, organisation and implementation of the annual national external tests and matriculation exams.\(^{84}\)

As part of the PHARE Technical Assistance 2003 BG 2003/004-937.05.03 “Vocational Qualification” Project, *Practical Guidelines for External Monitoring and Control of VET institutions* were devised and trainings were conducted for those responsible for establishing and implementing a system of external monitoring and control in Bulgaria. The latter follows the above procedures based on the regulations in the VET Act.

As part of this administrative approach following an act of the Minister of Education, the regional inspectorates at the MEYS monitor whether the vocational schools carry out self-assessment or other ways of quality assurance and summarize the results of the inspection. At the beginning of the school year at a meeting with the regional education inspectorates the MEYS clarify the expectations of the ministry from the schools with regard to the quality assurance and explain the indicators. (More detail on the self-assessment quality assurance model based on the EQAVET indicators is provided in section A4.2 below.)

According to the Bulgaria EQAVET Secretariat Survey 2012 all EQAVET indicators are always used in IVET and CVET at system and providers levels. Also all indicative descriptors are used in IVET and CVET at system and providers levels except the following:

- Guidelines and standards devised for implementation at different level – although since the survey this has been well addressed
- Quality standards at VET-provider level developed
- The national standards and processes for improving and assuring quality are relevant and proportionate to the needs of the sector
- Early warning systems are implemented
- Processes are regularly reviewed and action plans for change devised. Systems are adjusted accordingly

*Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)*

According to the Bulgaria EQAVET Secretariat Survey 2012 a national approach and model have been devised and published aimed at improving quality assurance systems at national level and making the best use of the EQAVET Framework in accordance with national legislation and practice. It has been printed as publicly available document and published on the MEYS website as an official document.

A national model for quality assurance in VET was developed as part of a joint project between the British Council and the MEYS (2010/2012). It is in line with EQAVET and fully based on its indicators. The model was developed by an inter-institutional working group set up with the purpose of devising a national approach for quality assurance in VET in consultation with social partners as part of a Framework agreement of 2009 between MEYS, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the National Agency for VET and the main trade-unions in Bulgaria. The model encompasses the system, regional and VET providers’ levels, and was developed with UK expertise. The 10 indicators of the national quality assurance model correspond to the 10 EQAVET indicators and follow the quality assurance cycle: planning, implementation, evaluation and review.

In this model each indicator is further described in specific detail for both systemic and providers levels in IVET and also CVET. The purpose is to establish a coherent national approach of quality assurance for the entire system of VET (initial VET and CVET) where the system and the providers use the same indicators. The model also explains the key participants in the quality assurance process, their role, responsibilities, collaboration mechanism, i.e. MEYS, NAVET, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, National Employment Agency, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Health, branch ministries, an

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independent institution for quality assessment in VET at the Council of Ministers (to be established for external independent assessment and inspection), employer organisations, trade unions, VET providers, teachers, trainers, students, and others.

Further on the model envisages the control and assessment to be carried out through a national system for monitoring and control of the quality of VET; internal assessment (self-assessment) and external assessment.

The self-assessment methodology, developed as part of the model, has been piloted in 22 vocational schools in the country and validated through broad consultations with all main stakeholders. The next step is introducing legislative changes in respective acts (School and Pre-school Act and the VET Act). These draft acts are at the stage of secondary reading in the Parliament and are expected to be adopted within the next few months. Next steps of developing and mainstreaming the model include:

■ Information campaign among all stakeholders about the aims of the quality assurance system and about the European practices in the field
■ Institutionalization of a quality assurance system
■ Training of relevant staff on the national approach and the quality assurance methodology in VET
■ Provision of reliable information sources, researches, analyses to support the process of quality management in VET
■ Popularization of the system and continuing exchange of good national and international Practices in quality assurance in VET
■ Establishing an effective feedback model

The booklet of the national approach of quality assurance in VET includes also few case studies from the UK (England and Scotland), Austria, Estonia and Norway.

A Lifelong Learning Strategy was developed for the period 2008 – 2013 including key requirements for quality assurance. The National Qualifications Framework in line with EQF degrees was approved in 2012 with defined paths between the sector qualifications and the EQF degrees.

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008

Before 2009, although quality assurance was a priority in the education policy, no specific systemic activities in this area have taken place. However, three strategic documents were published in order to reach the Lisbon goals for Lifelong Learning (LLL) reflecting the importance of the quality assurance:

■ School and pre-school Education Development National Programme 2006-2015: This document determines key curricula goals for pre-school and upper secondary education in Bulgaria. It emphasises the widening of access to education and the opportunity for LLL programmes
■ National Strategy for Further Vocational Training 2005-2010: it aims to define the national priorities for development of LLL in Bulgaria. The quality of training along with better access and institutional and social partnerships are key in the strategy;
■ National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2008-2013 highlighting the importance of the quality of the education and training
■ Common National Exam Programmes for VET were introduced in 2007/2008 school year that was a step towards a coherent national quality assurance approach. Also, with an internal regulation of the Minister of Education the schools were required to conduct self-assessment against a certain set of indicators

A major development in this period was devising and publishing Practical Guidelines for the External Monitoring and Control of VET institutions in 2006 under PHARE project BG 2003/004-937.05.03 “Vocational Qualification” Project (Technical Assistance to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy) as well as a training manual for those responsible for introducing and establishing the system for external monitoring and control. The Guidelines

explain the quality assurance concept, its value for the VET system, the Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF), the process of external monitoring and accreditation, the European standards for agencies for external quality assurance, the legislative framework regarding the external monitoring and accreditation in Bulgaria. The Guidelines are based on the CQAF as well as the European Guidelines for self-assessment of VET providers, 2003.

Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in initial VET

Requirements VET providers have to comply with

The institutions in the VET system include vocational schools; vocational secondary schools; art schools; vocational colleges; centres for vocational training; centres for information and vocational orientation; centres for qualification of training specialists. Vocational schools carry out initial vocational training leading to acquisition of first and second degree of professional qualification. They admit students with a completed 6th grade.

Vocational secondary schools carry out vocational education for acquiring second degree of professional qualification, with a duration of four years, or third degree of professional qualification with a duration of five or six years. They admit students with completed primary education or 7th grade. Vocational secondary schools may also carry out vocational training for acquiring first, second and third degree of professional qualification and qualification on part of the profession. Vocational secondary schools may also carry out vocational education for acquiring fourth degree of professional qualification based on an order issued by the Minister of Education, provided that they meet the requirements determined by the state educational requirements. Vocational colleges carry out vocational training for acquiring fourth degree of professional qualification with duration of up to two years depending on the acquired professional qualification degree. They admit persons with completed secondary education.

Planning at VET provider level (including identification of training needs)

The school is a legal entity. Its pedagogical, organizational, methodological, administrative and managerial autonomy has been extended considerably in recent years. The school administrative bodies are the Head and the Pedagogical Council. The regional, community and school administrations ensure the necessary organizational, pedagogical, material, financial, staff and other conditions required for effective education to take place.

Each school develops its curriculum in compliance with the provisions of the VET Act and the State Educational Requirements. The State Educational Requirements for the acquisition of professional qualifications specify the requirements under which the curricula and syllabi for each profession shall be worked out. The studies are structured into three groups of subjects: compulsory (Bulgarian language and literature, a selected foreign language, history, geography, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, philosophy, physical education, theory and practical training); compulsory-elective (1 or 2 subjects from comprehensive or vocational instruction, optional, but compulsory for study within the framework of the established hours of study per week) and elective (subjects that feature/do not feature in the curriculum, which are optional and studied in addition to the compulsory hours). The relation between theoretical and practical vocational training depends on the specific characteristics of the studied occupation.

The school curriculum should be consistent with the interests of the students and the resources of the school. It is adopted with a decision of the pedagogical council of the school and approved by the head of the inspectorate for education.

The process of decentralisation with regard to the planning of financial resources in secondary education started in 2003 with the establishment of standards for financing, e.g.

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86 VET Act
88 Level of Education, General Education Minimum and Curriculum Act 1999)
for the number of the personnel, for salaries and social security contributions and for the support of one student. Up until 2006, the standards were applied solely for the municipal schools, and from 1 January 2006 - for the state-owned schools as well, which include most vocational schools and vocational secondary schools. The unified expenditure standards for the support of one student were introduced on 1 January 2007.\(^{89}\)

The head teacher manages the school’s funds – both budgetary and extra-budgetary. Experts at the MEYS and Inspectorates for Education, as well as head teachers are employed on the basis of a competition announced by the MEYS, and the deputy head teachers, teachers and other members of staff are appointed by the head teacher. The head teacher is responsible for all activities – he/she plans, organizes, manages, coordinates, motivates and monitors the work of the teachers and the school in general.\(^{90}\)

In regions where the sector is well presented, the head teacher and the school management have a strong relationship with employers through the practical training arrangements and are expected to have a good understanding of the employers needs and to consider this in the planning process. Changes in the plan should be approved by the Regional Inspectorates for Education.

**Requirements for monitoring and review (self-assessment)**

Within the framework of a joint project between MEYS and British Council “Skills for employability” (2010-2012) a Manual for self-assessment of VET schools was developed in compliance with the EQAVET indicators reflecting the phases of the quality assurance cycle. An on-line tool to support the self-assessment process in VET schools has been introduced among representatives of local authorities, VET providers and stakeholders. (More information is provided below.)

**Certification, assessment and validation of learners**

The completion of secondary vocational education is certified with a school leaving certificate meeting the requirements of successful completion of secondary education, certificate for professional qualification, issued upon completion of vocational training and a certificate granting the right to practice a profession, issued for license requiring professions.\(^{91}\)

According to the VET Act the vocational secondary schools and vocational training centres may issue a document for professional qualification, which refers to the state requirements. The company certifies the qualification, which is organised in the system of in-service training.

Vocational education is concluded by state matriculation examinations for graduating secondary education according to the Level of Education, General Education Minimum and Curriculum Act and the State Education Requirements; as well as state examinations for acquiring professional qualification - theory of the profession and practice of the profession. Different examination requirements are in place for the existing 5 programmes of vocational training. Vocational training in A, B, C and D Programmes is concluded by examinations for acquiring professional qualification. For completion of E and F Programmes the organisation and the content of the examinations are determined by the educating institution in coordination with representatives of employers and employees and when acquiring a professional qualification degree - also according to the State Educational Requirements for acquiring qualification on professions. The commissions for holding the examinations include representatives of the educating institution, the employers and employees. The representatives of the educating institution are teachers or other persons carrying out vocational training. The representatives

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\(^{89}\) BULGARIA. VET in Europe – Country Report, 2011, Cedefop


of the employers should have qualification in the respective professional sphere and those of the employees - qualification and time of service not less than four years in the respective profession.92

**Stakeholder involvement**

The state plays a leading role in planning, financing, organizing and monitoring the quality of education. At the same time the role of social partners becomes more evident. The employer representatives and social partners state their requirements for staff training, take part in defining the List of Professions and the development of the State Education Requirements through the tri-partite commissions and the Managing Board of the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training. A special system has been developed for employer participation in the assessment of the pupil's professional competence.

Following the last developments in the legislation concerning the system of initial vocational training, the apprenticeship system is under the responsibility of the employers and is regulated by the Labour Code. The theoretical and practical part of the apprenticeship is the responsibility of the employers. The training is provided in the company’s training centres or in the schools of the formal vocational training under the request of employers. According to the VET Act practical training shall be carried out in enterprises of natural and legal persons as well as in educational and production facilities with the enterprises.93

School public bodies can be set up, such as the Parents' Council, the Students' Council, the Class Council, etc. Involvement of local stakeholders in the school management has been further encouraged by changes in the Rules governing the implementation of the National Education Act that stipulate possibilities for parents and pupils to take active part in the process of decision-making related to organization, activity and image of the school.94

**Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET at provider level since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)**

Under the above-mentioned joint project of British Council Bulgaria and MEYS, a new self-assessment model was devised for the vocational schools in Bulgaria. Guidelines and tools for self-assessment of vocational schools were developed and published in Feb. 2012. The model was developed by a working group with head teachers from 18 vocational schools, VET experts from 3 Regional Inspectorates for Education and VET experts from MEYS. It follows the four stages of the quality assurance cycle and is entirely based on the EQAVET indicators and concept.

The Guidelines aim to help the schools in the process of self-assessment and include essential detail on the self-assessment process, benefits, steps to be followed, who to be involved, their roles and responsibilities etc. They also include a set of tools and templates for data collection and analysis of the results, comprehensive description of the indicators and descriptors and of the proposed scores.

The process of developing the self-assessment model and tools was the same as for devising the national approach of quality assurance described above.

A web-based tool for self-assessment was created to facilitate the self-assessment process of the schools.

After being tested in 22 vocational schools as part of the project, the self-assessment methodology has been introduced in all vocational schools in Bulgaria as from the 2012/2013 school year. By a regulation of the Minister of Education, the head teachers of the vocational schools are required to conduct the self-assessment on the basis of the indicators included in the methodology, which are based on EQAVET.

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92 VET Act
93 VET Act
Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET at provider level since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) - 2008

Guidelines for self-assessment of vocational schools based on CAF concept were developed as part of an EU-funded project in 2003. Indicators related to leadership, purposes and values of the VET provider, strategy and planning, partnerships, resources, management of teachers, trainers and other staff, management of the process, outcomes of the education and training, social outcomes etc. form the basis of the self-assessment. The experience of other EU countries, such as Ireland, the UK, Spain, Finland and Belgium was taken into account in developing these self-assessment guidelines and tools.

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in continuous VET

National Framework for CVET – who is in charge of what?

Continuing vocational education and training (CVET) in Bulgaria is defined as training to be delivered to persons over 16 years, which are no longer in the formal education system. It addresses employed and unemployed.

Policy responsibilities for developing CVET in Bulgaria are divided between the MEYS and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The VET Act provides the legal basis of CVET for the purpose of guaranteeing its quality in line with the demand on the labour market. The Employment Promotion Act regulates the introduction of active measures on the labour market meant to boost the employment rate and enhance the qualification of the workforce. According to these two acts, CVET can be provided by all institutions of the formal education sector, private and public training centres, agencies, municipalities, social partner organisations and enterprises.

As a whole, the challenges in the CVET system relate to improving the mechanisms for information openness and feedback; improving the quality of training to secure access to the European labour market; creating mechanisms for motivation of both the users of qualification services and the organizations that invest in the continuing vocational training; streamlining the efforts of all social partners, the bodies of the local government and the non-governmental organizations in the area of human resources development.

Statutory stakeholder involvement in CVET systems

There are several institutions that share the responsibilities for decision-making and planning in CVET.

The Council of Ministers determines the policy of the state in the field of education and employment.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Science guides, coordinates and controls the accomplishment of the state policy in VET. The Ministry regulates and methodically guides the CVET.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) develops, coordinates and implements the state policy in the field of the professional qualification of the labour force (employed and unemployed persons). The Ministry is responsible for preparation of the annual National Employment Action Plan, for determination of the needs of vocational training by analysis of the trends in the labour market and for the organization of the professional consultation.

The National Employment Agency under the administration of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy implements the state policy for stimulation of the employment, for providing professional consultation as well as for vocational training of unemployed and employed persons.

The National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET) is specialized body of the Council of Ministers, created by the VET Act (1999), in order to license activities in the VET field and coordinate the institutions related to the vocational orientation, training and
education. The Agency regulates the vocational training carried out in the licensed centers for vocational training; develop and approve criteria for licensing; issue and withdraw licenses for vocational training and vocational orientation; develop and propose to MEYS the List of Professions for VET; develop the State Educational Requirements for acquiring qualification on professions.

Branch Ministries participate in the development, coordination and updating of the State Educational Requirements for acquisition of qualification for professions; name their representatives in the Board of Managers and the expert commissions on the professions in NAVET.

The representative organizations of employers and the organizations of workers and employees on the national level participate in the development, coordination and updating of the State Educational Requirements for acquisition of qualification by professions; name their representatives in the Board of Managers and the expert commissions in NAVET; participate in the organization and carrying out the examinations for acquisition of vocational qualification and suggest their representatives for the examination commissions.

The National Council for Promotion of Employment at the Minister of Labour and Social Policy is a permanently operating body for cooperation and consultation in elaborating employment policy.

The National Consultative Council for Vocational Qualification of the Labour Force carries out activities on coordination of the national policy and strategies for vocational training of the labour force, for coordination on national level between the social partners on the life-long learning, for coordination of the needs for vocational training.

The Directorates “Regional Labour Office”, within the complex of activities for encouraging the employment, organize the implementation of the state policy for acquisition of vocational qualification, suggest measures and training projects, coordinate and support the activities of the local Labour Offices, including services for vocational consulting and orientation within the region.

The permanent and temporary Employment Commissions at the Regional Councils for Regional Development determine, organize and control the implementation of the state policy for encouraging the employment and the training for acquisition of vocational qualification on a regional level.

The Municipalities participate in the policy development within their territories regarding the need of specialists and workers; the professional orientation of students, unemployed and other persons; the development of the material-technical bases of schools, Vocational Training Centers and Centers for information and professional orientation through financial means from their budget.

The Directorates “Labour Office” provide professional information, consultancy and orientation for submission in the most appropriate programme, employment and training; organize vocational training of employed and unemployed persons.

The Councils for Cooperation at the Directorates “Labour Office” of the Employment Agency monitor the implementation of the programmes and measures included in the National Employment Action Plan; control the adherence to the regulations for selection of the respective programmes and measures.

Planning at CVET system and identification of training needs

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, acting jointly with the MEYS develop and coordinate the policy and strategies of training of unemployed and employed adults for attainment of vocational qualification at national level; organize the National System for Training of Unemployed and Employed Persons for Attainment of Vocational Qualification; study, analyse and forecast the needs of training of adults for attainment of vocational

qualification. They are supported by a National Advisory Board for Labour Force Vocational Training, consisting of representatives of ministries, agencies, commissions, employers’ and employees’ organizations and other not-for-profit legal entities.  

CVET is financed by the state budget and from the European Social Fund through Operational Programme „Development of Human Resources“ with Managing Authority the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. Financed activities are in the field of continuing training and re-qualification (both of employed and of unemployed persons) for improvement of productivity of the labour force, the competitiveness of the employed people and the efficiency on the labour market in general. The objective is to ratify the practice of lifelong learning, which should provide for higher quality of the labour force in compliance with the tendencies on the labour market.

The CVET alignment to labour market needs is to be ensured through labour market surveys conducted by the Employment Agency with the participation of employers. On this basis the Employment Agency develops a national plan for employment and plans respective trainings. Often the focus is on trainings in professions requiring a low level qualification (about 10 professions) mainly for people who have been unemployed for a long period of time. Otherwise, the providers are expected to establish the training needs through researching the employers’ demand prior to launching a new vocational training course.

**Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on CVET providers. Requirements for evaluation and review**

The continuing vocational training is delivered in Bulgaria by institutions for formal education and training and non-formal training. Main institutions for continuing vocational training in the field of the formal education and training, according to the VET Act, are the vocational schools, the vocational secondary schools, the vocational colleges and Centres for Vocational Training.

NAVET licenses the Centres for Vocational Training and monitors their activities.

The system of higher education carries out continuing vocational training through specialized units at the higher schools. All higher schools in the country have units for post-graduate qualification and units for training of persons aged above 16 in professions and specialties.

The enterprises carry out non-formal continuing vocational training of own employees. The training is in the form of courses for vocational qualification, on-the-job training, participation in seminars, conferences, etc.

"Labour market training" under active employment measures of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy includes qualification courses contracted by the Labour Offices. The National Employment Agency organize training for attainment of vocational qualification in accordance with the needs of the labour market, the requirements of employers and the endorsed plan for the following trainees: unemployed persons; factory and office workers at micro enterprises and small enterprises, etc.

The vocational schools offer evening courses for adults in the field of management, hotel and catering, automobile building, construction, mechanics, agriculture, transport, etc.

School-based CVET takes place in vocational training schools, vocational gymnasium, vocational colleges and art schools, vocational classes for acquisition of vocational qualification in basic and secondary schools. Training is delivered for employed and unemployed, with some schools providing training courses for the local labour offices.

The CVET centres organise training for acquisition of vocational qualification, acquisition of qualification for part of vocation, updating of existing vocational qualification, and training for

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97 Employment Act
98 BULGARIA. VET in Europe – Country Report, 2011, Cedefop
99 Employment Act
key competencies (ICT, foreign languages, etc.). They mainly organise short-term courses for unemployed financed by the Local Labour Office.  

**Accreditation and Licensing – Stakeholder involvement**

NAVET was established by the *VET Act* as a state body for licensing of activities in VET system. No accreditation procedure is in place, only a procedure for licensing the vocational centres. NAVET licenses institutions in the VET system upon request of the training institution or of the MEYS, or upon decision of its Managing Board; develop and approve criteria for licensing in compliance with this Act and with the National Education Standards; develop and approve the specific licensing procedures and the related documentation.

For licensing purposes NAVET establishes expert commissions in the vocational areas included in the List of Professions for VET as well as for career guidance. Expert commissions consist of 9 members each, including one representative from each of the MEYS, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the respective branch ministry; 3 members representing organisations of employers from the respective branch and 3 members from the respective branch trade unions. The expert commissions prepare reports with proposals to the NAVET Chair for licensing vocational training centres.

To obtain a license the vocational centre should prove the need for the qualification or the course through a needs analysis, employment figures etc. Other requirements include:

- Existence of mission, vision of the centre
- Effective quality assurance mechanism is in place
- A number of data sources such as teacher qualifications, success rate of the pupils or trainees when continuing their education, employment rate of pupils and/or trainees, satisfaction rate of pupils/trainees and teachers, satisfaction rate of companies where trainees are employed, satisfaction rate of parents
- Quality of examinations (a sample of written examinations or questions for oral examinations, scenarios for practical examinations etc.)
- Participation in international programmes, in local or regional projects
- Collaboration with industry

Through on-site visits the expert commissions check whether the data provided are accurate and whether the buildings and facilities meet the existing requirements. They also assess whether the centre meets the requirements to implement the State Educational Requirements to acquire a qualification on a profession. The Chair of NAVET makes decisions on licensing on the basis of the reports of expert commissions.

Apart from the licensing procedure the stakeholder involvement is ensured and formalized through a *Framework agreement* of the MEYS, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, NAVET, Association of Industrial Capital in Bulgaria, Confederation of Employers, Bulgarian Chamber of Industry, Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Bulgarian Union of Private Entrepreneurs, Union for industrial initiative for cooperation in VET. The purpose of the Agreement, signed for the period 2009 – 2015, is to improve the cooperation mechanism of main stakeholders in VET, to coordinate decision making for joint actions and for sharing responsibilities for modernizing of VET as a key factor for developing competitive work force, for improving employability and for economic growth. The areas of cooperation include: restructuring of vocational education to facilitate professional and geographical mobility and employability opportunities; increase of investment for enhancing access, quality and attractiveness of VET through private-public partnership in VET, alignment of VET with the European processes and politics. One of the agreed joint actions is developing a national system for quality assurance in VET. Activity implementation under this agreement is foreseen at 3 levels: at national, regional and local level (incl. bilateral agreements between vocational schools and employer organisations).

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101 VET Act

102 PHARE Technical Assistance 2003 BG 2003/004-937.05.03 “Vocational Qualification” Project
**Certification - assessment and validation of learning (system level)**

At national level the acquisition of professional qualification takes place in compliance with the National Education Standards for acquisition of professional qualifications. Standards have been developed for all professions included in the List of Professions for VET, which is binding for all VET providers who can issue a certificate for professional qualification recognized by the state.

A national educational standard for the evaluation system has been developed to regulate the types of examinations and their organisation, including the organisation of state exams for the acquisition of vocational qualification. At national level the MEYS is responsible for the development of National Examination Programmes for conducting the state exams for the acquisition of degrees of vocational qualification.103

**Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators**

Among the main objectives of NAVET is to “assure and maintain quality in the vocational education and training of young people and adults according to the labour market needs and the development of the Bulgarian economy competitiveness”.

NAVET jointly with the National Employment Agency carry out administrative control and monitoring of the providers on the documentation required for licensing and of the training. It is rather administrative control of the vocational training than quality assurance. The latter is particularly difficult as there is no a coherent quality assurance system in place and sufficient resources.

**Reforms of quality assurance in CVET since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)**

The main reform in this period is the development and piloting of the national model for quality assurance in VET (2010-2012) described under the identical section for the IVET above. As explained, the model is designed for the initial and also for CVET.

**Reforms of quality assurance in CVET since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008**

The Council of Ministers drafted and adopted the following strategic documents in compliance with the European framework for lifelong learning in which the importance and the priority of the quality assurance is recognized: the National Continuing Vocational Training Strategy (2005-2010) and the Updated Employment Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria (2008-2015). Assurance of the high quality of the continuing vocational training, increase of the investments in the continuing vocational training, scientific assurance of CVET are stated as priorities. Particularly for meeting the quality assurance priority the following was envisaged:

- Improving the qualification of the teaching staff in the field of continuing vocational training
- Improving the qualification of the suppliers of continuing vocational training
- Elaborating a package of general principles for validation of the non-formal training or the self-dependent studying, for securing compatibility with those of the countries of the European Union
- Introducing the European tools for acknowledgment and evaluation of qualifications;
- Updating the material-technical education base

As described above, a key requirement for obtaining a license is the existence of an effective quality assurance process.

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103 Information Gathering Exercise. Quality assurance procedures in the processes of certification, curricula setting, accreditation and training of trainers in European VET systems.
Quality assurance arrangements in continuous VET at provider level

Requirements CVET providers have to comply with

To be licensed the vocational centre has to demonstrate that it has a mechanism to assure quality and a strategy for its development as well as transparent plans and training programmes based on standards. The centre also has to ensure access to the training and to evidence it has a mechanism for identification of training needs. Thus, the vocational centre should have a quality assurance system in place but there is no specific requirement this to be based on EQAVET although the latter is being recommended.

In summary, the requirements CVET providers have to comply with include:

- Offering training plans and programmes in accordance to the State Education Requirements
- The teachers/trainers to have qualification and education as per the State Education Requirements
- The material training base for theoretical and practical training to be in line with the State Education Requirements for respective profession/s.

Planning at CVET provider level (including identification of training needs)

The vocational centres are expected to identify the needs of training through researching the needs of employers in the sector and the profession. In certain cases the employers approach the vocational centres for organising and conducting trainings for their needs. The competition among the vocational centres for learners and training programmes trigger a demand-driven approach and motivation.

Requirements for monitoring and review (self-assessment)

Respective information is provided under the Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators (CVET-system level) and the Reforms of quality assurance in CVET below.

Certification, assessment and validation of learners

The state examinations on theory and on practice of the profession are carried out according to national examination programmes in compliance with the State Educational Requirements for acquiring qualification on professions. The vocational schools, vocational secondary schools and colleges, as well as the licensed Centres for Vocational Training, certify the completed vocational training by documents complying with the State Educational Requirement for documents in the system of the public education.

At provider level the vocational schools, vocational high schools, vocational colleges and centres for vocational training are responsible for the implementation of the National Examination Programmes through state exams for the acquisition of professional qualifications. The VET Act stipulates the prerequisites for the validation of knowledge, skills and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning, such as the opportunity to certify the knowledge and skills obtained while practicing a profession or after a practical training has been conducted and a nationally recognized certificate has been received.

The curricula for the acquisition of professional qualification by persons who have reached the age of 16 is developed by the educational institutions or by the applicant for vocational training in compliance with the requirements of the relevant National Education Standards for the acquisition of professional qualifications.

Stakeholder involvement

According to the VET Act the commissions for holding the examinations shall include representatives of the educating institution, of the employers and of the employees, and for

104 Vet Act
art schools - also of representatives of the respective higher art schools, with equal quotas. The representatives of employers should have qualification in the respective professional sphere and those of the employees - qualification and time of service are least four years in the respective profession.

Employers are also well presented in practice trainings as part of CVET. Employer representatives and social partners take part in setting up the List of Professions and in developing the State Education Requirements.

More detail on stakeholder involvement is described in the description of the CVET system level above and the section on identification of training needs.

Reforms of quality assurance in CVET at provider level since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)

The Guidelines for Self-assessment described in the identical section for the IVET above are designed for IVET and CVET as part of the policy to develop a unified approach to quality assurance. The self-assessment tools are now only used in IVET and after their further development and piloting under the on-going ESF project they would be adopted for CVET.

Reforms of quality assurance in CVET at provider level since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) - 2008

Guidelines for self-assessment and quality of the vocational centres were developed in 2003 and have been used since although not systematically. Setting a quality assurance mechanism was a requirement for the provider to obtain a license.

Part 2 – Interaction between national quality assurance and EQAVET

National Reference Point

The National Reference Point (NRP) for Bulgaria is the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science. The Minister of Education nominated and by an internal official regulation gave a mandate to the Directorate “Policy Development, Analysis and Assessment” of the Ministry to host the NRP of EQAVET. Details on the remit and responsibilities of MEYS are provided above. The Minister nominated Ms Emilyana Dimitrova, expert in vocational education and currently Acting Director “Policy Development, Analysis and Assessment” of the same Ministry as a NRP representative in EQAVET Network.

The NRP in Bulgaria was set up as early as in 2010, when the EQAVET Recommendation was issued. This was a result of a process that included a broad discussion and consultation with relevant state institutions, i.e. MEYS, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and NAVET. In addition, the parallel cooperation with the European structures in quality assurance contributed further to the NRP establishment.

Currently the NRP team includes 4 experts and thus the resources at the disposal of the NRP include two part time experts from MEYS, one from NAVET and one from the Labour Market Policy Directorate of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. There is no specific allocated budget for NRP activities. Certain expenses are covered by the MEYS, e.g. for participation in the NRP meetings and activities. Quality assurance activities and projects are funded by the Operational Programme for Human Resource Development as well as partner organisations, e.g. British Council Bulgaria that supported the development and piloting of the national quality assurance model and the self-assessment tool in VET in Bulgaria in accordance with the EQAVET Recommendation (2010-2012).

A1.4.1.1 What are the implemented activities of the NRP and the planned activities for the future?

Soon after the EQAVET was issued, in December 2009, a national concept was developed for elaborating a national approach, clarifying the need of establishing a unified quality assurance approach in VET and the need of developing a system of quality assurance (internal and external assessment). This concept was discussed with the social partners and a process of developing a culture for quality assurance based on EQAVET started.
The NRP organised a broad consultation on the national approach for quality assurance. A national network of experts in quality was set up and on this basis an inter-institutional working group was established within the framework of which the national approach to quality assurance was discussed. The working group elaborated and agreed certain criteria for quality assurance, analysed the system, approved and validated the quality assurance model and respective Guidelines for self-assessment developed under the project of MEYS and British Council Bulgaria Skills for Employability in accordance to the EQAVET Recommendation. The national quality assurance approach and model were further tested in 22 vocational schools.

Two large-scale national conferences with key stakeholders (VET providers, social partners, employers’ representatives) were organised (2011/2012): the purpose of the first was to identify the areas for improvement in quality assurance in VET, to develop the culture of quality assurance and to brief the stakeholders on the next activities in quality assurance in VET. At the 2nd conference the results from an analysis of quality assurance in VET in Bulgaria and the national quality assurance model were presented. The interesting debates and critics during these events evidenced the interest of the stakeholders in the quality assurance system and the needs in this area. Two workshops for VET providers were organised with the aim to further develop the quality assurance culture, including culture for self-assessment, to facilitate the use of the self-assessment manual and the on-line based self-assessment tool, developed under the MEYS-British Council project.

The national model and the self-assessment guidelines then formed the basis of a larger-scale project “Management for effective vocational education” under the Operational Programme BG051PO000-3.2.03 of the European Social Fund, “Elaboration and introducing a system for management of vocational education in vocational schools”. Under this project the model will be further developed and fine-tuned and then, mainstreamed in the entire VET system in Bulgaria (initial and continuous VET). A national platform for introducing the indicators will be also devised; school teams will be trained in carrying out self-assessment, analysing and using the self-assessment results and, on this basis, taking informed governance decisions. Under the project, research will be conducted on the employer’s needs in vocational education quality. The project is for 2 years ending in 2014. All these activities have been initiated and driven by the NRP. One of the outputs of the above ESF project would be a National Programme for enhancing quality in VET by 2020.

An Activity Plan of the NRP is to be developed in line with the new Work Programme of EQAVET 2013 – 2015. The main activities will aim to ensure publicity of quality assurance, to engage key stakeholders (institutions responsible for developing national policy in quality assurance, VET providers, social partners, mainly employers, trainees – students and adults), to set up incentives for engaging employers in quality assurance, organise campaigns for explaining benefits from the quality assurance for different stakeholders.

The NRP in Bulgaria also promoted the EQAVET concept, EQAVET website and respective information materials. There is a link to the EQAVET website from the MEYS official site. The EQAVET newsletter and network were also promoted at the Working Group established for developing a national approach in quality assurance.

**What is the added value of the NRP compared to existing national structures from the national perspective?**

The added value of having an NRP in place compared to previously existing national bodies/units is mainly manifested through the fact that now the policy of quality assurance and the respective quality assurance activities are implemented in a better structured and coordinated way. The NRP also ensured a systematic approach of developing and introducing the national quality assurance system in VET.
Who are the main actors engaged by the NRP?

In the process of developing a national model of quality assurance key stakeholders took part: governmental agencies, trade unions, lead business organisations, employers, head teachers and teachers. The Inter-institutional Working Group (23 people), established for developing a national approach to enhance quality assurance, includes the same stakeholders who signed the Framework Agreement for cooperation in VET (ministries, NAVET, 6 country-wide organizations of employers, and syndicates).

The social partners’ involvement in quality assurance is ensured through the legislation but also the established mechanism. They were informed and consulted during the process of developing a quality assurance approach, model and methodology. However, the employers are not sufficiently motivated to take part in the discussions; usually the employer organisations are represented by administrative staff and not the employers themselves.

What were the main issues in relation to the set up an NRP?

There have not been any issues with the setup of the NRP since the quality assurance has been a high priority for the government, respectively MEYS, and the EQAVET provided a strong impetus for developing a national policy and system in quality assurance in VET.

National approach to enhance quality assurance

As described above, a methodology for self-assessment, a key aspect of the national approach to enhance quality assurance in VET, has been elaborated and tested across 22 schools. The national quality assurance model is still at its conceptual stage and is publicly available (published at the MEYS website). It clearly defines the key actors in VET, their role and responsibilities in quality assurance and the synergy of these responsibilities. It also demonstrates that the quality assurance is a complex development consisting of the quality of education/training environment, the resources and the management. The model also determines the next steps of developing and introduction of the quality assurance system.

The model is now further developed as a systemic approach with new tools for collecting data and quality assurance under the above-mentioned ESF project. A current priority is embedding in respective legal acts the roles and responsibilities of relevant institutions in quality assurance. In the new draft Law for School and Pre-school Education there is a specific chapter for quality management in the education institutions including vocational schools. 17 State Education Standards will be introduced through this law, one of which is for quality management and another for the status and career development of pedagogical specialists also including quality assurance. A specific standard is proposed for inspection. The new law envisages setting up as a legal entity a National Educational Inspectorate working with external assessors. This draft law is at second reading in the Parliament. Respective amendments of the VET Act are currently being elaborated so that to include the needed legislative basis for introducing the national quality assurance model in VET. This systemic approach will be part of the national policy in education.

Thus, the process for designing this approach encompasses the above amendments of the legislation (both acts). An analysis of the current lifelong learning strategy (2008 - 2013) is being carried out and then a new Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2013 – 2020 is to be elaborated, one of key aspects of which will be again the quality assurance. There is a well-recognized need to introduce a unified coherent national approach to quality assurance in the vocational education for students and vocational education for adults (both in initial and continuous VET).

The major trigger to design the national approach is the demographic decline in Bulgaria and subsequent decrease of pupils and students. As a result, the VET providers compete in ensuring better education of higher quality. In addition, the employers in Bulgaria demonstrate they are not sufficiently satisfied with the quality of their workforce, which is another motivation factor for the quality.
What changes/evolutions to quality assurance processes does it propose? (is it likely to propose?) What are the main priorities and objectives of the approach?

Although until recently there was no a coherent strategy for quality assurance, the quality assurance itself was included in key documents of the MEYS, such as the Programme of the Ministry for the Development of Education, Science and Youth in Bulgaria (2009 – 2013), the Action plan for its implementation, the Lifelong Learning Strategy etc.

The above mentioned ESF project aims to elaborate and introduce a unified system for VET governance in Bulgaria based on the quality of the training and education services. This will be achieved through the following core activities:

- Developing a system of indicators for the effectiveness of the vocational education process (reflecting all EQAVET indicators)
- Devising a model and legislative basis for a unified system for VET governance
- Establishing mechanisms for maintaining and supporting the unified system for VET governance – a web-based platform with questionnaires for self-assessment
- Establishing the unified system for VET governance in the vocational schools – training of school staff (from 132 schools) in applying the tools and methodology as well as in developing plans to enhance the quality on the basis of information collated through the web-platform.

Thus, the project will develop further a coherent national model of the quality assurance system that will be piloted within the project lifetime, followed by a thorough analysis on required improvements and, if necessary, the model then will be fine-tuned.

The self-assessment as a tool for improving the policy of the respective education providers or institutions is the main component of this approach. The external independent assessment, through inspection, will be regulated by the new law. Currently the regional inspectorates conduct administrative control but not sufficiently quality control. From 2012-2013 school year the self-assessment, as developed under the joint project of MEYS and British Council, is introduced in the vocational education. This self-assessment model will be further developed with more tools and more quality assurance indicators in consultation with national partners, schools, social partners and ministries.

Along with the self-assessment by school teams, an external assessment by students, parents, NGOs and syndicates is foreseen. Guidelines for the external quality assessment are being currently elaborated together with guidelines for head teachers for planning quality enhancement on the basis of collected data. This independent external assessment would use the same indicators and would be aligned with the EQAVET Recommendation. This would create transparency and trust in the education providers as well as in the quality of the education.

Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance

The issue of quality assurance in VET was a priority for the national authorities in Bulgaria since 2003 up to 2009 and certain actions have been initiated (e.g. Common National Exam Programmes for VET – a single exam for acquiring a level of professional qualification in IVET and CVET, differentiated payment of teachers, National Professional Skills Competitions for school system etc.). However, other priorities have prevailed in the agenda. The external influence and the EQAVET were needed to trigger more focused national efforts towards quality assurance.

The quality assurance in VET is high on the national policy agenda in education and training, hence amendments of the Act for School Educational and VET Act to integrate specific aspects of quality assurance incl. in VET were proposed. The EQAVET Recommendation set up a clear framework within which the countries can compare their quality assurance results.
All EQAVET indicators were used in developing the national system of indicators. They are currently embedded in the self-assessment conducted by all vocational schools this school year.

However, at the system level challenges have been faced with indicator 5 of EQAVET which cannot be applied in isolation from other external factors. The economic crisis is the major reason for the unemployment among vocational education graduates rather than the lack of a long-term demand in certain professions. Hence, a vocational school cannot be closed if the demand in a certain profession at this stage is not sufficient.

Indicator 6 (Utilization of acquired skills at the workplace) is important but difficult to measure at this stage in Bulgaria.

Regarding indicators 7-10 it is difficult to establish a link between the percentage of unemployment and the quality (i.e. indicator 7). These indicators relate to the unemployment but are not always clearly connected with the long-term planning.

Thus, an analysis is needed to establish which data collected against indicators are directly linked to the quality as there is a number of external factors that influence the same results and should be taken into consideration. Identification of such additional factors and their isolation would require a specific methodology, which at this stage is difficult to devise.

Otherwise, the EQAVET framework (criteria, descriptors, indicators) is found coherent by all interviewees. All EQAVET indicators are now used and embedded in the current national model and particularly the self-assessment. Even more, Bulgaria has developed and included in the self-assessment introduced in 12/13 school year across the vocational schools more indicators than those in EQAVET.

EQAVET had a pivotal role for initiating the process of developing and introducing a systemic national approach to quality assurance. The major benefit of EQAVET was offering an integrated system of indicators. The inter-institutional working group in quality assurance was established when the EQAVET Recommendation was adopted in 2009. Similarly, EQAVET influenced the concept and the focus of the joint project between MEYS and British Council for developing a model of quality assurance and self-assessment tool in VET. It also raised the interest of stakeholders manifested in setting up and taking part in the inter-institutional working group in quality assurance and in developing the draft Law for School education and the amendment of the VET Act.

The concept for elaborating a national approach of quality assurance was devised in late 2009 after the EQAVET Recommendation was adopted. Then in 2010 NRP was established and in the beginning of 2011 an analysis of the status quo of quality assurance in VET in Bulgaria was developed by an independent institution, the Balkan Institute of Labour and Social Policy. The analysis results were presented at a national conference under the project of MEYS and British Council, where a discussion took place on developing a national systemic approach and required legislative changes.

Thus, the EQAVET played a critical role for developing quality assurance of VET at system level. With regard to the quality assurance at VET providers – this level has not been yet developed.

The EQAVET indicators have been integrated in the national indicators for quality assurance in IVET. With regard to CVET – there is a requirement the vocational education centres (CVET providers) to elaborate such indicators. In order to be licensed they have to develop their own systems for quality.

In summary, the next key activity in quality assurance is introduction of the national indicators based on EQAVET in the school education through the new Act for School Education and then with the VET Act amendments – the indicators to be introduced in the vocational education centres (CVET providers). The latter at the moment are not obliged to use the same indicators. Unification of indicators in IVET and CVET is envisaged.
Interviewees considered that EQAVET contributes to the transparency and consistency of VET developments between Member States as it helps guarantee and prove the quality of the qualifications obtained in Bulgaria as in the other countries.

EQAVET also contributed to better clarity of the quality assurance terminology. For example, previously Bulgaria put more emphasis on the control, the quality assurance was part of the licensing of the VET providers but there was not a coherent system and approach. EQAVET provided the framework that allowed these various practices and approaches in quality assurance to be systematized. It also triggered an analysis of the quality assurance practices in Bulgaria, of the need to introduce systematically self-assessment and it provided guidelines for the development of a national system for quality assurance.

An advantage of EQAVET is that it focused the attention on the needs of the learners/trainee. It also trigged a dialogue in Bulgaria with the participation of the social partners and other stakeholders. This helped identify certain issues and challenges that had to be discussed and clarified when developing the national approach.

A1.4.2 Synergies with other EU level instruments

Bulgaria has developed its NQF aligned with the 8 levels of EQF in which the professional qualifications have been mapped (NQF was adopted in 2012).

The VET (both initial and continuous) in Bulgaria does not use a credit system.

There is no synergy with the quality assurance measures in higher education. No direct link is in place in governance of VET and higher education and hence in quality assurance issues. At the level of institutions some cooperation is evident based on trust (e.g. no entry exams for vocational school graduates for joining higher education institutions in certain professions) but this is not regulated through law or formalized otherwise. Similarly, sharing of resources is not systematic. Structural synergies are ensured at the level of the MEYS.

It is expected that the quality assurance in VET system will help the transition from VET to higher education by making the VET more transparent. Some of the universities recognize the professional competences acquired in VET schools. Thus, it enhances the mutual trust between the secondary education and the higher education. It strengthens the learner’s motivation to continue the education process as a basis for their career development.

As the education system in Bulgaria is centralized, the same stakeholders are responsible for EQF and ECVET at national level and thus the synergy in governance is ensured through the coordination of MEYS of these processes.

How does the NRP cooperate with other institutions in charge of quality assurance in the country?

At national level the right actors have been engaged in the formulation of the national approach enhancement of quality assurance but more efforts are needed to ensure the same effect at regional level that depends on capacity and resources.

There is a framework agreement with social partners for cooperation in VET. Key stakeholders are actively involved in the inter-institutional working group for introducing the national approach of quality assurance. Close cooperation is also ensured through participation in joint projects with social partners for dissemination. The national network of experts in quality assurance represents all relevant institutions.

Sources

Vocational Education and Training Act Bulgaria 1999
Employment Promotion Act 2001


http://www.eqavet.eu/Libraries/EQARF_Indicators/EQARF_Indicators_Bulgaria.sflb.ashx


Bulgaria. VET in Europe – Country Report, 2011, Cedefop

EQAVET Secretariat Survey, Bulgaria, 2012
A1.5  

Country report – Croatia

Author: Marija Pavkov (external expert to ICF GHK)

Part 1 – Description of quality assurance arrangements and of recent developments

- Development of self-assessment on-line tool for VET schools as one of the outputs of the IPA funded project “VET Quality Assurance development project” (led by the Agency for vocational education and training and adult education)
- Vocational Education and Training Act (from 2009) regulates quality assurance system on national level
- Strategy for the development of the system of VET (2008-2013) describes the need for the establishment of quality assurance system in VET

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in initial VET

National Framework for initial VET

Vocational education and training in Croatia is organised within the Primary and Secondary School Education Act\(^\text{105}\) and Vocational Education and Training Act\(^\text{106}\), which regulate competence acquisition needed for obtaining vocational qualification.

VET schools can be established by private and physical persons, as defined by Primary and Secondary School Education Act. Current practice is mirrored in the fact that mostly counties are founders of VET schools.

The system is comprised of technical and vocational schools that last for four years, vocational schools for associated trades and crafts occupations that last for three years and include apprenticeships and three year vocational schools with industrial programmes, special education programs for the acquisition of medium or lower qualifications for students with disabilities and programs up to two-year duration for acquisition of lower qualifications.

Vocational education is defined as the process of competence acquisition (knowledge, skills and competence in narrow sense), if the results of the process are evaluated and confirmed in the procedure conducted by the institutions for vocational education.

Quality assurance system in initial VET is defined by the Primary and Secondary School Education Act, Vocational Education and Training Act, Act on pedagogical and professional supervision, Act on Educational Inspection, Act on the National Centre for the External Evaluation of Education\(^\text{107}\) and Ordinance on State Matura\(^\text{108}\). The quality of the vocational education in institutions for vocational education is determined on the basis of insights / inspections in the work of the institutions and on the basis of national tests for external evaluation of education. The institutions involved in quality assurance at national level are: Ministry of Science, Education and Sports (MSES later in the report); Agency for VET and adult education (AVETAE later in the report); Education and teacher training agency (ETTA later in the report); National Center for external evaluation of education (NCEEE later in the report); as well as the Educational Inspection (EI later in the report).

The AVETAE and ET TA perform pedagogical and professional supervision of the VET institutions (initial VET) whereas only AVETAE is responsible for professional supervision in continuous VET, as defined by the Vocational Education and Training Act, Act on pedagogical and professional supervision\(^\text{109}\) and Adult Education Act\(^\text{110}\).

\(^{105}\) Official Gazette 87/08, 86/09, 92/10, 105/10, 90/11, 5/12, 16/12, 86/12, 126/12 (Narodne novine 87/08, 86/09, 92/10, 105/10, 90/11, 5/12, 16/12, 86/12, 126/12); http://narodne-novine.nn.hr/default.aspx

\(^{106}\) Official Gazette 30/09 (Narodne novine 30/09)

\(^{107}\) Official Gazette 151/04 (Narodne novine 151/04)

\(^{108}\) Official Gazette 97/08 (Narodne novine 97/08)

\(^{109}\) Official Gazette 73/97 (Narodne Novine 73/97)

\(^{110}\) Official Gazette 17/07 (Narodne Novine 17/07)
Inspection supervision of the initial VET institutions is performed by the School Inspectorate of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports as defined by the Act on Educational Inspection\(^{111}\).

All policy related documents relevant to VET have to go through the consultation process with relevant stakeholders before being approved by the Croatian Parliament. The consultation process is determined by the Croatian Government and is performed with other public administration bodies and with the interested public.

**Planning at VET system level**

Initial VET is based on national curriculum, vocational curriculum and school curriculum. Vocational curriculum determines the monitoring, evaluation and appraisement approach, amongst other elements (duration of education, material and human resources pre-conditions, learning outcomes, number of weekly and yearly teaching hours, weekly teaching hours according to teaching subjects, subject curriculum described with goals and contents, ways of teaching and types of learning environment).

Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education is a public institution with the mission to plan, develop, monitor and evaluate the school system and “out of school” system in the area of vocational education. The responsibilities of the Agency, amongst others, as defined by the Vocational Education and Training Act are the following: analytical, research and development activities in the field of vocational education, preparation of information to government authorities, the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Croatian Parliament, conducting further (in-service) education and training of teachers in the field of vocational education, pedagogic supervision in the field of vocational education, establishment and maintenance of the information system of vocational education, participation in the evaluation, self-evaluation and external evaluation, preparation and development of methodology for developing occupational standards and vocational qualifications and curriculum, participation in the proposed network of institutions and curricula, which are referred to founders and infrastructure to support the relevance and rationalization of the system of vocational education, preparation of the proposals on occupational standards and provision of expert opinion on the proposals of others, preparation of proposals for vocational qualifications and provision of expert opinion on the proposals of others, development of vocational curricula and provision of expert opinions on the proposals of other applicants, cooperation with the social partners and other stakeholders in the vocational education.

Vocational Education Council has 17 members from different social partners\(^{112}\) appointed by the Minister for Science, Education and Sports. The duties and responsibilities of the Vocational Education Council are defined by the Vocational Education and Training Act as: proposing education sectors, coordinating the work of all stakeholders in the field of vocational education, launching initiatives for the adoption of new or changes to existing curricula, proposing measures and activities and strategy development of vocational education.

On the proposal of the Vocational Education Council, the Minister for Science, Education and Sports, based on the prior expert opinion of the AVETAE, decides on the establishment of educational sectors as integrative areas of one or more professions. Each educational sector is comprised of a group of curricula on the basis of which, students acquire

\(^{111}\) Official Gazette 61/11, 16/12 (Narodne Novine 61/11, 16/12)

\(^{112}\) 1 member proposed by the Croatian Employers’ Association, 1 member proposed by the Croatian Chamber of Economy, 1 member proposed by the Croatian Chamber of Commerce, 3 members of trade union representatives, 1 member proposed by the Minister responsible for the economy, 1 member representatives of national associations of people with disabilities who represent students with disabilities, at the proposal of the Minister of Health and Social Care, 1 member proposed by the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education, 1 member proposed by the Croatian Employment Service, 1 member proposed by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, 4 members representatives of vocational education institutions, 1 member representative of university studies, 1 member representative of professional studies.
knowledge, skills and competences, in a narrower sense, in one profile, in order to be able to perform certain tasks in a variety of occupations.

For each educational sector, a Sector Council is established which may consist of sub-sectors. The Minister for Science, Education and Sports establishes sector councils and appoints and dismisses its members. Each Sector Council consists of a maximum of 20 members who are experts appointed on the proposal of the ministries responsible for each sector and with the consent of the employer, and from the ranks of employers’ associations, trade unions, professional associations, national associations of people with disabilities, higher education institutions, vocational education institutions and other stakeholders. In each Sector Council one member of the ministries responsible for specific sectors is appointed as well representatives of relevant institutions for vocational education and state agencies.

Social partners / stakeholders included in VET in Croatia are: Ministry of Science, Education and Sports; Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Crafts, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Tourism, Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education, Croatian Chamber of Economy, Croatian Chamber of Trade and Crafts, Vocational schools, Trade Unions. With the establishment of 13 Sector Councils for 13 educational fields (in 2006) all other relevant stakeholders (Croatian Employment Service, Central Bureau of Statistics, Universities, Colleges, Local and regional self-government, small and medium-sized enterprises, legal persons engaged in mediation in employment and VET) joint the work in defining the qualifications and competences relevant to VET programmes according to the Croatian Qualification Framework (CROQF). Stakeholders encourage and guide the development of VET at the national, regional and local levels.

Through their representatives stakeholders participate in the activities of vocational education sector councils, consider the needs of the labour market, contribute to the professional qualifications and curricula to the needs of the labour market and individuals, promote lifelong vocational learning, co-fund vocational education in accordance with their capabilities and contribute to the quality of vocational education.

Statutory stakeholder involvement in initial VET systems and Identification of training needs

Sector councils express the needs of the labour market, higher education, and all other components of Croatian society, by: defining the necessary professional qualifications, analyzing existing and required competencies within sectors and subsectors, giving opinions to the AVETAE on the required content of vocational qualifications, developing content standards parts of vocational qualifications, promoting the sector and employment opportunities within the sector, providing proposals on the network of curriculum to the vocational education institutions’ founders, establishing profiles within each educational sector.

The duties and responsibilities of VET institutions / providers are defined by the Vocational Education and Training Act as: performing vocational education of regular students and activities of vocational education, aligning educational offer with the needs of the labour market, establishing local partnerships, developing and adjusting parts of the curriculum in accordance with the local and regional needs.

The vocational training system allows horizontal and vertical mobility. The conditions for continuous education for acquisition of higher level qualifications (vertical flow) are defined and described by the Minister of Science, Education and Sports. The terms and conditions of the possibilities for continuing education for the same qualification level (horizontal flow) is determined by expert bodies of VET institutions/providers as directed by the AVETAE.

113 Founded by the AVETAE on 01.07.2006.
114 As defined by the Vocational Education and Training Act
Requirements for evaluation and review

VET quality assurance system is defined by the Vocational Education and Training Act as permanent evaluation of participants (students), VET institutions and processes in the VET system. The quality of VET delivery on provider level is based on the insight of the provider’s work as well as it is based on national and special tests, according to special regulations.

Quality of the VET is accomplished on four levels: rational curriculum network and the network of VET institutions, unique database for information monitoring and system management, evaluation system and evaluation data gathering, stimulating and correcting measures.

Institutions for vocational education are obliged to perform self-assessment and external evaluation of student achievements / outcomes, as defined by the Vocational Education and Training Act. Self-assessment is performed for the following key areas: planning and programming of the work; teaching and learning support; student achievements; material conditions and human potential; employees’ professional development; human relations in the institution for vocational education; management and leadership; cooperation with other stakeholders. External evaluation of student achievements / outcomes is performed by the National center for the external evaluation of education as defined by the Act on the National Center for the External Evaluation of Education by means of national tests and matura exam. Self-assessment of VET schools (VET providers) based on the approach and methodology of the National Center for External Evaluation of Education (NCEEE) differs from the self-assessment of VET schools approach developed by the Agency for VET and adult education (AVETAE). The NCEEE self-assessment approach is currently in testing phase and is offered to the gymnasia schools. In terms of the assessment content and approach, the self-assessment is in its first part based on the results / outcomes of the matura exams, whereas in its second part it requires descriptive answers to the questions that cover 10 priority areas. The priority areas are based on the 8 self-assessment key areas defined by the Vocational Education and Training Act. The aim of the NCEE self-assessment process is to strengthen the inner capacities of schools for better performance at national tests and matura.

The self-assessment approach developed by the AVETAE used the logic and the methodology of the EQAVET.

Self-assessment of the VET institution is monitored and evaluated by the Quality Commission, a body named by the VET institution governing board.

Identification of training needs

Parts of the vocational curriculum, mostly 15% of the special and elective part of vocational content, are defined by VET provider together with VET stakeholders, local and regional government, in accordance with the national curriculum.

Sectoral councils are counselling and expert bodies which express the needs of the labour markets, higher education and all other stakeholders and Croatian society in general. Stakeholders are involved in the process of VET development on national, local and regional levels.

Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on VET providers

VET institutions perform vocational education and training upon the approval and decision of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports. In general terms, as defined by the Law on Vocational Education and Training, any legal and physical identity form can establish the VET school.

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115 Official Gazette 151/04 (Narodne novine 151/04); http://narodne-novine.nn.hr/default.aspx
Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)

Vocational qualification is the formal name for the set of competences of defined level, volume, profile and quality, and which is being proved by public document issued by an accredited institution.

Occupational standard defines the content of the vocational qualification on certain level of complexity and describes knowledge, skills and vocational competences in terms of the needs of the labour market. Its function is development of qualification standards and vocational curriculums.

Validation and assessment of learning at system level is achieved by means of National tests and student achievement testing by the National Center for the External Evaluation of Education.

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)

VETIS programme\textsuperscript{116}, developed by AVETAE, compiles and allows processing of all relevant information about schools, students, staff, school equipment, school buildings and facilities, gym, dormitories, student applications to competitions, teacher applications for continuous teacher training, etc., required for the analysis, planning, monitoring and management of vocational education. The information gathered reflects primary parameters on educational inputs. The IPA\textsuperscript{117} VET Quality Assurance development project\textsuperscript{118} (led by AVETAE) resulted in the development of the methodology for self-assessment of VET schools software application\textsuperscript{119} (E-quality). The approach and methodology developed integrated evaluation of educational processes and outputs, in addition to VETIS information gathering. The data/information obtained through both on-line applications could be in future, used for detailed qualitative and quantitative analysis at provider and system level. The IPA VET Quality Assurance development project was described as a Success project by the European Commission\textsuperscript{120}.

Strategy for the development of the system of Vocational Education (2008-2013)\textsuperscript{121} recognises and defines quality assurance in VET as one of the priority areas for the development of the VET system in Croatia.

According to the person interviewed, the Strategy for the Development of Science and Education in Croatia is under development and is based on the Guidelines document for the enactment of the Strategy, written by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports together with the Croatian Academy of Science and Arts. In that strategy quality assurance will be one of the priority areas.

Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in initial VET

Planning at VET provider level (including identification of training needs)

The VET institution (provider) aligns educational offer with the needs of the labour market and establishes local partnerships. It also develops part of the curriculum in accordance to the local and regional needs.

\textsuperscript{116} http://www.asoo.hr/default.aspx?id=14
\textsuperscript{117} IPA – Instrument of Pre-accession; EU-funded projects
\textsuperscript{118} http://www.asoo.hr/euprojekti/kvaliteta/
\textsuperscript{119} http://e-kvaliteta.asoo.hr/pages/public/login.xhtml
\textsuperscript{121} Croatian Government, 2008 http://www.asoo.hr/UserDocsImages/Dokumenti/Strategija%20razvoja%20strukovnog%20obrazovanja%20u%20RH.pdf
**Requirements for monitoring and review (self-assessment)**

Foundations for the requirements for self-assessment are defined in the Vocational Education and Training Act. Even though the VET schools are obliged to perform self-assessment once during the school year, the assessment remains on voluntary basis at the moment.

**Certification, assessment and validation of learners**

Primary and Secondary School Education Act defines the school certificate (svjedodžba) as the official document which confirms completion of each school year. School certificate is a public document. Completion of secondary education programs in vocational schools ends by defending a final paper (završni rad). Students in vocational education programs that last for at least four years have the possibility of taking the state graduation exams (state matura) that allow them to continue their education at the tertiary level.

**Outputs from quality assurance at provider level**

In the programme developed by AVETAE, outputs are defined as the self-assessment report and the school improvement plan. It is recommended that the self-assessment report is written yearly at the same time. The report should consist of the results from the E-quality application and an overview of what was done well, satisfactory and non-satisfactory compared from the previous year’s results and from the improvement plan.

**Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET at provider level since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)**

Self-assessment of VET providers (schools) based on two approaches described in A1.1.

**Quality assurance arrangements at system level in continuous VET**

**National Framework for CVET – who is in charge of what?**

Vocational training, as part of the continuous VET, is defined as education for acquisition of competences for performing simpler jobs.

Vocational further training, as part of the continuous VET, is described as education by which further additional competences of the same or higher qualification level inside the same educational sector for which the learner has recognised qualification.

Continuous VET is performed at adult education institutions and VET schools.

Continuous VET is part of the adult education system and therefore, additionally to the Law Vocational Education and Training Act, Adult Education Act, applies to the delivery and especially quality assurance in CVET. Adult Education Act defines that the Agency for adult education is responsible for monitoring, development and evaluation of the adult education system. Administrative and inspection monitoring of adult education institutions is conducted by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports whereas supervision of the work of the adult education institutions (providers) is performed by the Agency for VET and adult education.

The AVETAE performs pedagogical and professional supervision of the VET institutions (continuous VET), as defined by the Adult Education Act and Vocational Education and Training Act.

**Requirements for evaluation and review**

The self-assessment of institutions providing continuous VET can be performed by means of E-qualification programme and manual developed by AVETAE. The manual has a special part devoted to the delivery of adult education programmes as part of the planning and programming of the work, as a self-assessment priority area.

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122 Agency for adult education was established in 2006. Later on, in 2010, Agency for VET and Agency for adult education were merged into one Agency for VET and adult education.
There are, at the moment, no special requirements for evaluation and review for adult education institutions at the system level.

**Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on CVET providers**

Continuous VET can be delivered by adult education institutions and VET schools. For VET schools providing continuous VET, the requirements are the same as for VET school providing initial VET because both, IVET and CVET are being delivered at the same schools. In regard to adult education institutions, the Rule book on the standards and normative, the way and procedure for the compliance of the conditions in the adult education institutions describes the minimal technical and hygienic conditions; as well as minimal space, human resources and material conditions for the adult education programme performance.

**Reforms of quality assurance in CVET since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)**

The reforms of quality assurance in continuous VET at system level since 2009 are the same as the ones that happened for the initial VET, when discussing the reforms on the level of VET schools.

**Quality assurance arrangements in continuous VET at provider level**

**Planning at CVET provider level (including identification of training needs)**

Vocational training and vocational further training programmes have to be developed in accordance with labour market needs. During design of the programme and planning, the real labour market needs for acquisition of certain skills, competences and knowledge have to be supported with documents and/or research data.

**Requirements for monitoring and review (self-assessment)**

The self-assessment of VET schools is enabled via E-qualification programme and manual. The self-assessment of adult education institutions is neither obligatory nor defined by the law. Therefore, it can be done on voluntary bases.

**Certification, assessment and validation of learners**

Knowledge, skills and competences acquired are proved by the provision of the public certificate issued by the VET school or adult institution provider. The Rule book on public documents in adult education defines the name, the content and the form of the Public document.

**Outputs from quality assurance at provider level**

In continuous VET, the quality assurance is regulated only for VET schools. In the programme developed by AVETAE, outputs are defined as the self-assessment report and the school improvement plan. It is recommended that the self-assessment report is written yearly, approximately at the same time each year. The report should consist of the results from the E-quality application and an overview of what was done well, satisfactory and non-satisfactory compared from the previous year’s results and from the improvement plan.

**Reforms of quality assurance in CVET at provider level since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)**

The reforms of quality assurance in continuous VET at provider level since 2009 are the same as the ones that happened for the initial VET, when regarding VET schools.

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123 Official Gazette (Narodne novine 129/08, 52/10)
124 Official Gazette (Narodne novine NN 129/08, 50/10)
Part 2 – Interaction between national quality assurance and EQAVET

National Reference Point

According to an interviewee, there is an “informal” NRP in Croatia based at the Agency for vocational education and training and adult education (AVETAE) because the AVETAE is responsible for VET development on national level and at the same time performs professional and pedagogic supervision of VET schools. Since it is not a formal structure, the NRP has no official mandate yet nor has the AVETAE the mandate itself. The “informal” NRP has at the disposal resources of the AVETAE, national budget and EU funded projects.

According to another interviewee, there are no obstacles in setting the NRP because the “informal” NRP is performing all the activities relevant to the quality assurance as if it were the official NRP.

National approach to enhance quality assurance

The Ministry of Science, Education and Sports developed a Strategy for the development of the system of Vocational Education (2008-2013) in which national quality assurance was recognised as one of the priority areas. The approach to quality assurance establishment requires the following steps: defined and measurable objectives and standards, and guidelines for their implementation; consistent methods of self-assessment and external evaluation; conditions, mechanisms and procedures for the subsequent improvement in the case unsatisfactory results of the evaluation; availability of evaluation results to the general public.

As part of the implementation of the IPA (Instrument of Pre-accession) Operational Programme for Human Resources Development, the IPA EU-funded project on Quality Assurance in VET was delivered by AVETAE in the period 2010-2012. The project developed E-qualification on-line tool for the self-evaluation of VET schools as well as the manual for self-evaluation. Additionally, the project developed Strategic guidelines for quality assurance in VET and a draft version of the National strategy of quality assurance in VET in the Republic of Croatia. According one of the interviewees, the draft was developed in a tripartite partnership (employers, unions, educational sector) during consultations and meetings that lasted for 18 months. AVETAE was responsible for draft development with the support of international experts and national working groups. The motivation for the development of the draft strategy was reflected in the need to broaden the evaluation process from external quality (formal level) to the inner quality and foster the trust in the VET system. Another stakeholder pointed out that the motivation was triggered from the insights of current practice that has shown what needs to be changed, modified and/or improved. On the other side, the developments on EU level fostered initiatives which reflected in the national need to answer to those initiatives.

The results of the IPA project were transferred and presented to the VET schools in Croatia by means of teacher in-service training organised by AVETAE, as well as they were disseminated at seminars for school principals.

Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance

The self-assessment manual and tool described above were developed according to the EQAVET methodology. The four level process (plan, perform, check, react) in accordance with EQAVET principles was implemented and the conceptual approach was adapted to the needs at the national level. The three elements in EQAVET: quality criteria, indicative descriptors and quality indicators were transferred into national approach and were identified and named as priority areas, quality areas and quality criteria. There are six priority areas that cover eight quality areas defined by the Vocational Education and Training Act.

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125 http://www.ssmb.hr/libraries/0000/3980/strat_smjernice_print_3_FINAL.pdf
**Synergies with other EU level instruments**

In 2012, the draft Croatian Qualification Framework Act was presented and is planned to be approved by the Croatian Parliament in 2013.

The draft Act establishes the NQF and defines its application. The Act determines the link between NQF and both EQF and QF-EHEA. It also defines positioning of qualifications according to described levels and different qualification types. ECVET and ECTS are also defined as well as HROO (Croatian Credit System for General Education). One ECVET credit corresponds to 15 to 25 teaching hours. The Act describes quality assurance of NQF application, but makes no reference to EQAVET.

Piloting of the ECVET application begun in 2012 and the process is still under development and validation.

The Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education (Official Gazette 45/09) defines external and internal quality assurance and quality improvement. The Acts reflects the QAHE Framework. Parts of the act concern CVET – such as accreditation and re-accreditation of VET institutions providing adult education. External quality assurance and quality improvement system is based on national, European and international standards. The Agency for Science and Higher Education is responsible for the external quality assurance and quality improvement of higher education system. However, the Act does not refer to the ENQA principles. The Agency is obliged to fulfil conditions for full membership to the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the European Register of Quality Assurance in Higher Education (EQAR) four years after the Act enactment.

It was highlighted that synergies in governance, sharing of resources as well as structural synergies are very weak. There is general overlapping of concepts in terms of institutional responsibilities for application, monitoring and validation of EU level instruments on national level.

**Sources**


Primary and Secondary School Education Act

Vocational Education and Training Act

Pedagogical and Professional Supervision Act

Educational Inspection Act

Rule book on the organisation and delivery of teaching in VET schools

Act on the National Centre for the External Evaluation of Education

Ordinance on State Matura

Strategy for the development of the system of Vocational Education (2008-2013)

Adult Education Act

Rule book on the standards and normative, the way and procedure for the compliance of the conditions in the adult education institutions

Rule book on public documents in adult education

Strategic guidelines for quality assurance in VET

Draft version of the National strategy of quality assurance in VET in the Republic of Croatia

State pedagogical standard of the secondary education system\textsuperscript{127}

Decision on the establishment of educational sectors in VET

Ordinance on the methods, procedures and elements of evaluation of students in elementary and middle school

\textsuperscript{127} Official Gazzete (Narodne novine) 63/08, 90/10
Country report – Cyprus

Author: Stelina Chatzichristou (ICF GHK)

Part 1 – Description of quality assurance arrangements and of recent developments

- There is no national approach to quality assurance in Cyprus.
- The development of Vocational Qualifications System and the latest quality assurance system for CVET providers are considered main building blocks towards the adoption and implementation of an overall national approach to quality assurance.
- An important educational reform takes place in Cyprus. Quality assurance seems to be one of the goals of the education reform. Public consultation has been in place since 2009. Specific proposals have been delivered regarding full transformation of the assessment culture and practice throughout the education system and its players (learners, teachers curricula etc.)\(^{128}\). However, no formal action has been taken since then.

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in initial VET

**Context**

Initial Vocational Education and Training (IVET) in Cyprus includes Upper Secondary Technical and Vocational Education (STVE), the Apprenticeship System and the initial training programmes subsidised by the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA) (Archi Anaptxis Anthropinou Dynamikou, AnAd). There are also public institutions of tertiary education that offer IVET programmes. Moreover, as one of the novelties of the evolving education reform, post-secondary vocational schools started operating on November 8th, 2012\(^{129}\).

Both for IVET and CVET, the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance (MLSI) and HRDA, are responsible for setting the general regulations. Although its role is more central in CVET, HRDA also provides IVET programmes. These programmes are mainly targeted to unemployed and economically inactive persons or to new hires of companies and organisations\(^{130}\). Moreover, the Cyprus Productivity Centre (CPC), functioning under MLSI, is responsible for the Apprenticeship System, along with MoEC. Other ministries and bodies also play a role, including the following:

- The Planning Bureau, the main responsibilities of which lie with policy-making
- The Ministry of Finance, which has responsibility for the preparation and follow up of the National Response to the Lisbon Strategy\(^{131}\)

Given that IVET in Cyprus is mostly school-based, the current analysis will focus on the Upper Secondary VET (STVE) offered in technical schools.

Along with the regular programmes of Technical and Vocational Education offered in the relevant schools, the Apprenticeship System operates as a cooperative programme of the MoEC and the MLSI. The Apprenticeship System offers professional education and training to youth aged 15-18 years, who choose not to continue to the upper secondary general cycle (Lykeio)\(^{132}\). The Apprenticeship System is changing (New Modern Apprenticeship-NMA),

\(^{130}\)http://www.hrdauth.org.cy/easyconsole.cfm/id/172, (in Greek) cited on 04/01/2013
\(^{132}\)http://www.moec.gov.cy/mtee/index.html, cited 06/12/12
becomes more flexible and is expected to function as a bridge to formal education, for people that have mainly work experience. The NMA will become fully operational in 2015. The NMA is considered of importance and will, thus, be examined.

Education Reform

Starting in the academic year 2001-2002 and concluding in 2004, Secondary Technical and Vocational Education went under a reform. The most significant changes that were incorporated in the modernised STVE concerned upgrading of curricula, introduction of new specialisations, the introduction of New Modern Apprenticeship, systematic training of VET teachers etc.

However, it was in 2003 that the Ministerial Board approved the creation of a seven-bodied Committee of academics to study and evaluate the education system of Cyprus. The Committee was expected to provide a report with recommendations on the modernisation and reform of the domestic education system. An Education Board (Symboulio Paideias) was formulated, in order to monitor the development of the consultations and of relevant research. According to the respective website, the last meeting of the Board was realised in July 2007. Moreover, a specific website was devoted to the Reform, where one can find all reports issued until 2009. No additional actions, consultations etc. seem to have taken place since. In this framework, Technical and Vocational Education, as well as evaluation and assessment were recognised as pillars to be examined by the Committee and thus, in need for a reform.

More specifically on quality assurance, a focused report with suggestions on a new and holistic evaluation plan was issued. The report acknowledged that the current system of quality assurance bears inefficiencies, in terms of providing solid information on the quality of educational work at school unit and national level. This is a result of the emphasis in the evaluation of teachers as individuals and only through inspection. The report also underlined the difficulty in developing self-assessment models under the existing system.

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134 Cedefop, 2011
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**The general framework for quality assurance**

Overall, there is no national framework for quality assurance in the Cypriot education system. However, there are policies and procedures in place in each education level. Since the education system is much centralised, MoEC is mainly responsible for quality assurance. The legislative provisions for education are scattered through many pieces of legislation (Laws Nos 5/71, 56/83, 123/85 and 154 (I)/99).

In secondary education, private schools – either general or technical and vocational - fall under the Department of Secondary (general) education. However, according to the interviewee, when it comes to private VET schools, the Department seeks assistance from the Department of Technical and Vocational education, especially regarding inspection. There is also an Advisory Commission for Private Education that MoEC summons only for important matters, such as the establishment of a private school. A significant characteristic of the Committee is that it includes delegates from the religious minorities (Law on Private Schools and Tuition Centres, 1971)\(^{135}\).

**Statutory stakeholder involvement in initial VET systems**

- Trade unions and employers’ organisations hold representatives in the Apprenticeship Board (Συμβούλιο Μαθητείας) that functions under the MLSI. The Apprenticeship Board is responsible for supervising the operation of the Apprenticeship System. This Board has a tripartite character with representation of the government (MLSI, MoEC, CPC, Planning Bureau), technical schools, employers’ and employees’ organisations and the HRDA, thus ensuring the effective and coordinated effort of all interested parties. The members of the Board are appointed by the Minister of Labour and Social Insurance for a two-year period. The Board examines issues that arise, takes decisions on the specialisations that will operate the following year and consults the CPC.

- Monitoring of the operation of the Apprenticeship System for each specialisation in each district falls under the responsibility of the Joint Apprenticeship Committees. These committees also have tripartite character and their members are appointed for a two-year period. The Committees are accountable for submitting suggestions to the Apprenticeship Board regarding any problems arising from the operation of the System (for example revision of curricula, monitoring of the training of the apprentices and dissemination of information to the public of the aims and goals of the System)\(^{136}\).

- Moreover, in the academic year 2010-2011, the Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education enforced its collaboration with several stakeholders, so as to incorporate and adjust to the current development needs of the local economy and industry. Some of these stakeholders were the Technical Education Advisory Body, advisory committees for sectors/specialties of secondary VET and employers’ organisations.

- Namely, the collaboration concerned the introduction of new curricula in specialties in upper secondary VET, the levels and the content of VET programmes, employability and professional development of VET graduates, systematic update of information of trainers on technological developments, as well as the trainers’ training on new industrial methods and processes\(^{137}\).

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\(^{135}\) [http://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/enop/non-ind/1971_1_5/division-dd5c999e60-cf1b-4012-8012-e3b35b683716.html](http://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/enop/non-ind/1971_1_5/division-dd5c999e60-cf1b-4012-8012-e3b35b683716.html), (in Greek), cited 04/01/2013

\(^{136}\) Cedefop Refernet (2011)

Curriculum development is a collective effort involving qualified STVE staff, experts from other training institutions, STVE Advisory Committee members, trade unions and employers' representatives. Suggestions are also made by teachers, inspectors and local school boards. The STVE curriculum is subject to approval by the Council of Ministers before being implemented. Curriculum of IVET programmes is based on frameworks approved by the Council of Ministers.

**Planning at VET system level/Identification of training needs and Requirements for evaluation and review**

The occupations, which are covered by the Apprenticeship System, are determined every year according to the demands of industry, the facilities that the laboratories offer, and the teachers of the VET schools.

Quality assurance rests on the Inspectorate of the Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education. Inspectors are responsible for supervising public and private VET schools and for the appraisal of the respective teaching staff. Moreover, the inspectors make sure that private schools are aligned with the provisions of the law. Public schools carry out an internal evaluation in the form of an informal summary report on the school, which the head-teacher draws up with the cooperation of the teaching staff. The report is submitted to the Ministry at the end of the school year.

Also, the Centre of Educational Research and Evaluation of the Pedagogical Institute executes evaluations and internal assessments on the whole of the education system. However, internal evaluations are executed only through assignment from the MoEC, thus on an ad hoc basis.

**Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on VET providers**

In Cyprus, private schools have to conform with and apply all regulations, criteria and processes that apply for public ones. According to the interviewee, the relevant laws and regulations are stricter when it comes to private providers. The MoEC is responsible for the accreditation of private providers. Overall, private schools fall under the Department of Secondary Education, as mentioned earlier. However, as said by the interviewee, the latter Department seeks assistance from the Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education. As far as public IVET schools are concerned, there is no respective accreditation system. Yet, all educational programmes are approved at national level.

More specifically, a private provider must meet certain criteria and go through a predefined application process in order to establish a VET school. The criteria for gaining licence from MoEC refer to a broad list, from building infrastructure, to school name, teaching staff qualifications etc.

As far as teachers/trainers are concerned, developments are anticipated since the Ministry aims at concluding the dialogue regarding the timetables of VET schools and take final decisions on the new assessment system and the modernisation of the way teachers/trainers are allocated. Currently, newly-appointed teachers go through a two-year probation period. During that period, head-teachers and inspectors report on the new teacher’s progress every six months. After the probation period and following the proposal of the inspector, teachers are evaluated once a year for the first two years and then at least once every three years, until reaching 25 years of service. Evaluation takes place once in four years, after this stage.

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138 UNESCO (2012)
139 UNESCO, 2012
141 2011 Yearly Report of the MoEC
Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)

Cyprus has not developed an NQF yet; thus, the relevant certifications are not linked to NQF/EQF levels.

STVE in Cyprus is offered in two education programme paths: Theoretical and Practical. School leaving certificates (apolytiria) are equivalent to those of secondary general education schools and are awarded upon successful completion of either programme. Therefore, STVE school leavers are eligible for admission to universities and other tertiary education institutions in Cyprus and abroad. Qualifications provide access to regulated occupations. However, each employer decides about the competence of the employees since there is not an official skill accreditation body.

The Apprenticeship Certificate allows access to a number of regulated occupations (e.g. building contractors, electricians), provided that all the other requirements of the relevant legislation are being observed. Moreover, the new Apprenticeship System allows for the recognition of learning outcomes even from non-formal and informal learning, paving the way for the validation of such learning in other education levels, as well. The NMA will be linked to the national System of Vocational Qualifications.

As far as award of vocational qualifications are concerned, HRDA is responsible for their certification. The certification is realised through exams, where knowledge, competences and skills are tested, so as to reference the learner’s learning outcomes to a qualification. One of the most significant initiatives, currently taking place, concerns the development and operation of a Vocational Qualifications System (SVQ), under the auspices of HRDA. Given the dual role of HRDA in IVET and CVET, a study is currently taking place (anticipated to be concluded in the second semester of 2013), concerning the feasibility and possibility of recognising the branches/ specialisations of secondary and tertiary technical and vocational education, the Apprenticeship System as well as other initial vocational training programmes\(^{142}\). Such a development would promote recognition and certification of vocational qualifications, no matter the educational path chosen.

Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators

Inspection is the main tool for quality assurance in Cyprus, both in VET Schools and in the Apprenticeship System.

As far as IVET Schools are concerned, inspections take place every two years, according to the interviewee. There are inspectors for each branch of specialisation, who bear the responsibility of ensuring the proper implementation of the curricula. In that respect, inspectors monitor the work of trainers and safeguard that the curriculum is adequately covered, through the use of effective teaching methods. Inspectors are also responsible for ensuring the effective use of the infrastructure of technical schools, aiming at the best possible learning experience for students\(^{143}\). They also check the existence and functionality of data-keeping processes and documents, and of specialised committees, such as committees for school trips. Finally, the learning progress of the students is under continual assessment throughout the school year, culminating at the final examinations. Students’ progress is counted in the trainers’ evaluation.

According to the interviewee, inspectors draw conclusions on the way each school operates by having separate discussions with the student board, parents’ association and teachers’ association. A school’s evaluation also depends on specific indicators, such as percentage of drop-outs.

The inspector communicates any recommendation to the School in writing and compliance is mandatory. Operation licences for private providers can even be revoked based on inspections.

The MLSI, as the responsible authority for the Apprenticeship System, appoints inspectors on a yearly basis. These inspectors are VET teachers by profession. Their responsibilities simulate those of the VET schools inspectors. Inspection is performed regularly by on-site

\(^{142}\) HRDA Annual Report, 2011

\(^{143}\) Cedefop, 2011
visits at the place of work of trainees. Apprenticeships inspectors hold an additional role, as point of contact for the apprentices, in case any issues arise, both from their education in schools and in their workplace\textsuperscript{144}.

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation -2008)/2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)

No reform has taken place in the quality assurance framework. However, a holistic education reform has been initiated, where quality assurance has been identified as one of the areas of improvement.

Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in initial VET

There is no quality assurance framework in place for VET providers in Cyprus, explicitly linked to the EQAVET framework. The centralised education system of Cyprus leaves little room for action that does not relate to the MoEC. Consequently, as analysed earlier, the main IVET providers are VET schools under the auspices of the MoEC. In upper secondary vocational education the vast majority of providers are public schools. Private providers have to meet certain criteria in order to be assessed and certified by the MoEC, as described previously.

Requirements of VET providers: monitoring and review (self-assessment)

As stated by the interviewee, public VET schools are obliged to form an Accomplishing Objectives Committee, set by the head-teacher. This Committee is responsible to monitor the elements that the inspector will evaluate, and makes sure that the school meets the targets established by MoEC on a yearly basis. Each school can choose additional objectives to meet their specific, internal needs. There are no specific guidelines from MoEC regarding this type of self-assessment: neither regarding the objectives that a school sets nor the way they are assessed. According to the interviewee, however, schools are mostly interested in meeting the inspection criteria and so, the goals that they set through the Committee mainly serve this goal. Inspectors check whether the school set an Accomplishing Objectives Committee, which goals were defined, what actions were taken towards meeting them and if goals were actually met.

Private schools are obliged to submit to the MoEC specific information before the commencement of each school year. This information regards their teaching staff, curricula, data on students and recent graduates, infrastructure etc. However, private schools are not obliged by the Ministry to perform any type of self-assessment. Rather, the inspection focuses on operational issues and covers the information that private providers have to send to the Ministry\textsuperscript{145}.

Additionally, if significant changes take place in a private school, such as in name, location, ownership, curricula content etc., the school is obliged to inform the MoEC within seven days and wait for approval\textsuperscript{146}.

Requirements for Certification, assessment and validation of learners

School leaving certificates (\textit{apolytiria}), equivalent to those of secondary general education schools, are awarded upon successful completion. Assessment of learners, both in technical schools and in the apprenticeship schema involves regular tests and final examinations. In industry, the apprentices are assessed by their supervisors and their grade appears on the certificate which is issued by the CPC, for the apprentices who successfully complete the course.

\textsuperscript{144} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{145} The relative legal framework on private schools does not provide any detail regarding the inspection and assessment of private schools. Given that private schools fall under the jurisdiction of the Department of Secondary Education, none of the interviewees had specialised knowledge on the matter.

\textsuperscript{146} http://egkyklioi.moec.gov.cy/Data/pvt124a.pdf (in Greek), cited 04/01/2013.
Quality assurance arrangements at system level in continuous VET

**National Framework for CVET**

Formal CVET programmes are provided at the Evening Technical School, which operates under the supervision of the Directorate of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education of the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Regarding non-formal CVET, there is a plethora of providers: Technical and Vocational Education of the MoEC and public training institutions, as well as private, such as colleges, training institutions and enterprises. Other forms of non-formal CVET are supported by other ministries, mainly the MLSI, focusing on their field of expertise. CVET programmes are offered from the Pedagogical Institute (under the MoEC), the Open University, evening schools, as well as adult education centres. Vocational training is offered from specialised, tertiary level institutions, such as the Higher Hotel Institute of Cyprus, under the MLSI.

However, the dominant actor in the field of CVET is HRDA, as it approves and subsidises training programmes implemented by public and private institutions for over 30 years. This report will focus on the role of HRDA, especially due to the latest developments in evaluation of providers, trainers and infrastructure.

**Statutory stakeholder involvement in CVET systems**

The Human Resources Development Authority-HRDA is governed by a tripartite 13-strong Board of Governors, comprised of government, employer and trade union representatives. The main source of income comes from the Human Resource Development levy paid by all companies in the private sector and semi-government organisations. The levy corresponds to 0.5% of the payroll of each contributing company. The rationale for the development of HRDA’s training schemes as well as the System for the Assessment and Certification of training providers is the result of direct stakeholder involvement within the tripartite HRDA Board which also decides about the allocation of financial and other resources for the training and development of human resources within the overall socio-economic policy of the government.

**Planning at CVET system level and identification of training needs**

The HRDA conducts, on an annual basis, a study to help develop estimates regarding the needs of individuals by specialty. Those estimates are used to plan the implementation of training programmes by specialty and province- thus, meeting the needs of the economy in well-trained workforce. The assessment of future training needs is based on data collected through questionnaires sent to stakeholders. The yearly studies are conducted in collaboration with social partners, aiming at a holistic approach of analysis.

Training needs of individual enterprises are assessed on a continuous basis by HRDA training officers as a result of the examination and approval of specific training programmes.

In the Development Strategic Plan 2007-2013 and the Sustainable Development Strategy special focus was given to green skills. Hence, HRDA conducted a research on “Green Skills in the Economy of Cyprus 2010-2013”. This study provides forecasts on employment needs in “green jobs” and in green skills across the economy overall. Based on those forecasts, specific suggestions are included on the inclusion of green skills in specific vocational training programmes.

The HRDA is currently conducting a study aiming at the identification of forthcoming employment and training needs related to the development of the energy sector (natural gas).

**Requirements for evaluation and review**

HRDA uses its subsidy policy as an evaluation mechanism. Thus, firms that are actively involved in VET provision pay 0.5% of their payroll to the HRDA, as mentioned earlier. In order to receive subsidy, the training activities must be approved by HRDA.

In that framework, firms prepare and submit training programmes to the HRDA on a continuous basis. There are quality criteria to be met, such as duration and content, in order
to be approved. HRDA inspectors also perform on-site control visits on the day of the training on a randomly selected sample of training programmes.

Moreover, training providers submit to the HRDA on six-month basis proposals for multi-company training programmes covering a variety of training needs of enterprises, which are also evaluated and approved for subsidy on the basis of a set of quality criteria. The basic criterion is for the proposed training programme to address the focus areas that HRDA has selected. These focus areas are identified based on economic and labour market forecasts.

Requirements on CVET providers - Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators

HRDA links its subsidy policy to quality assurance of the relevant training programmes. The most recent development in that front regards the development of the Quality Assurance System (ΑξιοΠιστοΣυν) for assessing and certifying training providers. One of the novelties of the systems pertains to the fact that all elements of the training provision must be quality assured from HRDA; that is trainers, providers/institutions and the infrastructures of providers. According to HRDA\textsuperscript{147}, the System comes as an outcome of consultations among the stakeholders and specialised studies on the needs of the Cypriot economy. The main aim for the development of the system is to set minimum quality standards and improve the quality of training for any relevant activity undertaken or funded by the HRDA.

Under the System, assessment that will lead to certification concerns Vocational Training Centres, Vocational Training Structures and Trainers in Vocational Training. As part of the new approval system, applications are made on-line and will be assessed as follows\textsuperscript{148}:

- Vocational training institutions are assessed against three main criteria: ability to organise and deliver training activities, human resources, and administrative infrastructure
- Vocational training infrastructures are assessed against the following criteria: general specifications, training classrooms, administration facilities, coffee break area, hygiene facilities and equipment
- Trainers of vocational training are assessed mainly on the basis of their academic and professional qualifications, their professional experience and their training experience. In addition consideration is given to individuals' participation in the HRDA's 'training the trainer' activities and the demonstration of a sample training programme.

After the full implementation of the System, certain restrictions will be applied by HRDA, so as\textsuperscript{149}:

- Only certified VET providers will be able to apply for sponsorship by the HRDA (excluding firms that organise and implement enterprise-based training for their staff)
- HRDA will be able to subsidise training activities held only at certified VET Structures. (except for companies implementing enterprise-based training for their staff, within their premises)
- Only certified VET trainers will be given the opportunity to serve as instructors in the HRDA sponsored training activities. It is expected that the System will be fully implemented by the end of 2012. The HRDA will monitor the performance of certified VET providers on a continual basis. The reassessment will take place every three years, providing the HRDA with the possibility to withdraw the certification
- Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)

\textsuperscript{147} Σύστημα Αξιολόγησης και Πιστοποίησης των Συντελεστών Παροχής Κατάρτισης (ΑξιοΠιστοΣυν). Κέντρα Επαγγελματικής Κατάρτισης (ΚΕΚ). Οδηγός Πολιτικής και Διαδικασιών. http://axiopistosyn.anad.org.cy/images/media/assetfile/2012%2003%2030%2006%20%CE%B7%CE%B3%CF%CE%82%20%CE%9A%CE%95%CE%9A.pdf, cited on 6/12/12

\textsuperscript{148} ENQA-VET, Developing guidelines for supporting quality assurance in VET systems

\textsuperscript{149} http://axiopistosyn.anad.org.cy/, (in Greek) cited 29/11/2012
As mentioned above, the HRDA is currently developing a Vocational Qualifications System (SVQ), which will award vocational qualifications in a number of occupations in priority areas. The certification process, which is operational for certain occupations, is realised through exams, where knowledge, competences and skills are tested, so as to reference the learner’s learning outcomes to a qualification.

Reforms of quality assurance in CVET since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)

The promotion of the HRDA’s important strategic objective for the introduction of a System of Assessment and Certification of Training Providers is a significant reform. Given that its computerisation is already in place, its full implementation should be shortly realised. The System is operational and able to accept applications from interested persons and organisations. The assessment mechanisms are currently in preparation.

Quality assurance arrangements in continuous VET at provider level

Planning at CVET provider level (including identification of training needs)

Trainees in the private training institutions and enterprises play a significant part in the development of training activities. In cooperation with the managers of the training institutions and the management of their enterprises respectively, they plan the training activities and then they proceed with the identification of target groups, the development of the curricula, the selection of suitable training tools and the organisation of the programmes. In the case of the programmes that will be submitted to the HRDA for approval and subsidisation, these have to conform to the annual thematic priorities (for all training schemes) and to satisfy the requirements of the HRDA.

Requirements for monitoring and review (self-assessment)

The new quality assurance programme of HRDA that has just started its implementation includes (self) assessment methodologies used by vocational training providers in the certification criteria. In other words, one of the elements that HRDA inspectors look into, so as to certify the quality of a provider, are the types of evaluation (e.g. debriefing, formative), evaluation pillars (trainers, curricula, learners, infrastructure etc.), tools (questionnaires, diagnostic essays etc.), ways to publicise/disseminate results of evaluation, recipients of evaluation results (public authorities, HRDA, employers, learners etc.), evaluation tools etc.

Stakeholder involvement

Given the multi-stakeholder synthesis of HRDA’s Board, it can be supported that stakeholders participate in quality assurance of CVET providers. The HRDA is governed by a 13-member Board tripartite character, which brings together representatives of governments, employers and trade unions. Specifically, the Board includes five members representing the Government and the other eight represent equally the most representative employers ‘and workers’ organisations.

Part 2 – Interaction between national quality assurance and EQAVET

National Reference Point

The Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education, based in the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) serves as the NRP in Cyprus and has been serving as...
such since the beginning of the country’s involvement in the ENQA-VET network. The main reason for hosting the NRP in the Ministry is the centralised education system of Cyprus that places the Ministry at the core of all decision-making. Moreover, all the EU tools are gathered in the Ministry, which assists coherence in the policies developed and actions taken.

The Department of STVE supervises and monitors providers and coordinates all relevant actions. It is responsible mainly for the quality assurance of IVET, since CVET is primarily managed by the HRDA, as both interviewees stated. Both also confirmed the harmonious collaboration between them. The Department is also responsible for setting new curricula and assure that credit transfer is made available. Furthermore, it controls and assesses the quality of laboratories and other infrastructure that is mandatory for the execution of VET programmes, as well as monitors whether VET teachers should be further trained on special topics and makes sure this training is made available. About twice a year, the NRP reportedly organises informative events regarding quality assurance/EQAVET, bringing together training providers, educators and social partners. In these events EQAVET was promoted and explained to all relevant stakeholders.

According to the interviewees, there were no previous bodies in place. Having an NRP created additional value, since the promotion of EQAVET was endorsed. However, the NRP functions as part of the Department of STVE and not as an autonomous body. Moreover, it implements the already established agenda of the Department of STVE and does not have an explicit mandate and agenda. Although the respective interviewee reported that the NRP performs its duties seamlessly, in financial and human capital terms, no specific budget or personnel is attributed to the NRP as such.

**National approach to enhance quality assurance- EU framework content**

There is no national approach in place, mainly because emphasis is attributed to NQF on a policy level. The NQF is regarded as the basis for the development of all other tools. Thus, when the NQF will be ready (anticipated beginning of 2013) efforts to fully develop the other EU tools will be enforced.

As stated in the first part of this country report, although a national approach is yet to be developed quality assurance lies high in the agenda of the MoEC, the HRDA and the stakeholders. The concurrent education reform is expected to bring significant value to the outcomes of the education system, including the assurance of its quality. Novel institutions, such as the post-secondary schools that function since September 2012, are expected to speed the processes for a national approach to quality assurance through the lens of EQAVET- granted that NQF will be concluded and launched.

According to the interviewees, another factor that is believed to exercise pressure on relevant developments is the soaring unemployment that calls for immediate, yet qualitative actions in vocational training.

Especially in CVET, the processes taking place are assessed as significant and ensuring quality. Tools/processes like the Vocational Qualifications System (VQS) and HRDA evaluation/certification system are expected to be incorporated in the national approach when the latter is officially developed.

**Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance**

According to the interviewees, the importance of quality assurance had been long identified in Cyprus. The accession of Cyprus in the EU in 2004 seems to have triggered the goal of adjusting the training system to the demands of the European market, particularly in CVET; thus, promoting training quality was central to HRDA’s strategic plan (2004-06)\(^ {154} \). The plan also announced the consideration and gradual introduction of an assessment and certification system of training providers. In the following strategic plan (2007-2013),

\(^ {154} \) http://www.hrdauth.org.cy/images/media/assetfile,strategicplan0406.pdf, (in Greek) cited 04/01/2013
currently under implementation, the need to strengthen the quality assurance systems in the country was explicitly related to CQAF (Common Quality Assurance Framework for VET)\(^\text{155}\). Overall, the EQAVET framework and mainly the 2009 Recommendation were assessed as very useful by the interviewees, since the latter is believed to have boosted the visibility of the quality assurance issue and promoted it at a higher place on the policy agenda. More specifically, the elements of the framework have facilitated the self-assessment of the various VET systems and of the quality assurance processes in place. They were helpful especially for the assessment of training providers designed by HRDA (ΑξιοΠιστοΣυν). So, according to the interviewee, although no national approach on quality assurance is yet in place, the philosophy of the Recommendation was influential in shaping the new quality assurance system that HRDA put forward.

In CVET, most indicators are monitored, which will facilitate the “transition” to the national approach to quality assurance (when formally launched), as an interviewee assessed. For example, HRDA holds a computerised system regarding data for all training actions (statistical data, funding, completion rates etc.) This data is accumulated for every launched Training Plan. Specific indicators based on this data can be drawn during and after the completion of each training activity/programme. Moreover, these indicators are fed into relevant reports, which assess the training programmes and the HRDA initiatives overall. The next Training Plan of HRDA (2014-2020) predicts further use of these data/indicators, so as to facilitate re-examination and re-evaluation of the training programmes and providers. However, utilisation of skills acquired from employers/businesses is considered a difficult indicator to monitor.

**The content of the EQAVET framework-use and usefulness**

As analysed above, the EQAVET framework mainly influenced developments in quality assurance of CVET in Cyprus, both at system and provider level. Especially the toolkit it offers for self-assessment is considered very useful. An interviewee believed that at provider level, improvement has been observed through the quality assurance system that HRDA has put in place: the new system motivates providers to meet all quality criteria, so as to pass the quality check. This stems from the fact that companies will not trust a corporate/vocational training programme from a provider that has not been quality assured by the HRDA, given the good name and high profile of the latter. Moreover, according to the HRDA system, not only the provider, but also the trainers and even the physical infrastructure of the provider must be quality assured. This has already ignited a chain of quality related demands: companies seek quality assured programmes, providers hire and try to retain quality assured trainers, and improvements are made in infrastructure (where needed), in order to ensure accreditation from HRDA. Thus, according to the interviewee, this process leads to boosting the quality of provided CVET programmes.

**Synergies with other EU level instruments**

The Department of STVE, where the NRP is based, is also leading the development of the NQF and its referencing to the EQF. The Department is also responsible for ECVET. The Cyprus Productivity Centre that functions as the implementation organisation for the New Apprenticeship System is also the national Europass centre\(^\text{156}\). MoEC is also involved in the Europass process. Consequently, and especially due to the small size of the country, all EU tools are handled completely or partly from MoEC. As admitted by the interviewees, the proximity of the people involved in the various instruments facilitates collaboration and promotes the understanding of each instrument from various officers in the Ministry. This close collaboration is anticipated to speed up processes of formatting a national approach on quality assurance, once the NQF is completed.

MoEC also moderates quality assurance and evaluation of the private universities and colleges. It was the relevant department (Higher and Tertiary Education) that set the

\(^{155}\) Ibid.

institutional framework to provide accreditation to the pertinent curricula. Nowadays, the evaluation and accreditation of private higher education institutions is run by the Council of Educational Evaluation–Accreditation (SEKAP). The SEKAP is an independent body, appointed by the Council of Ministers upon the recommendation of the Minister of Education and Culture. According to the NRP, no collaboration takes place with SEKAP.

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157 http://www.highereducation.ac.cy/en/council-educational-evaluation-accreditation.html, cited on 7/12/12
A1.7 **Country report – Czech Republic**

Author: Daniela Ulicna (ICF GHK)

Part 1 – Description of quality assurance arrangements and of recent developments

The main developments in quality assurance in the Czech Republic over the last decade are:

- In terms of qualifications, assessment and certification move towards outcome-based standards and transparent assessment standards (though the implementation of these measures is still work in progress);
- Systematic stakeholder involvement in qualification design and efforts to strengthen their involvement in assessment and subsequently certification;
- Requirements for planning reforms and measures at system level and at regional level and related strengthened monitoring;
- Introduction of self-assessment at provider level and related to that the willingness to enhance quality assurance culture at provider level;

The main reform in quality assurance in CVET regards the systematic linking of training programmes to nationally defined qualifications standards as part of qualifications system development. The main instrument for ensuring the quality of publicly funded CVET courses for unemployed (which constitute the major part of publicly funded CVET) is the accreditation by the Ministry of education, youth and sport. The accreditation procedure has become linked to the qualifications system in the past years.

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**Quality assurance arrangements at system level in initial VET**

**Context**

Initial VET in the Czech Republic is school based. This report discusses initial VET at upper-secondary level and post-secondary level. VET delivery at upper-secondary level is regulated by the same legislation as pre-primary, primary and secondary general education. A number of the quality assurance measures described here in initial VET are also applicable to the general education system. In the Czech Republic, the provision of initial VET is a shared responsibility between the national administration, the regional administration and VET schools. Decisions on developing new qualifications or updating existing qualifications are national. The competence-based framework VET curricula are defined at national level. Regions allocate funds to VET schools, decide on the network of VET schools, decide which programmes to open and what the capacity of these programmes in terms of students enrolled will be. VET schools develop detailed school curricula, teachers decide on the choice of methods for teaching and for formative assessment. VET schools are relatively autonomous when it comes to recruitment of teachers and decisions about their future training. National standards and requirements have to be respected for the final assessment that leads to the award of the qualification (see below).

**The general framework for quality assurance**

At national level, the institutions in charge of quality assurance are the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (the Ministry later in the report) and the Czech School Inspection (School Inspection later in the report). Stakeholders have a role in the national QA process regarding definition of qualifications and framework VET programmes.

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158 The Education Act (561/2004) which governs a number of issues regarding quality assurance concerns pre-primary, primary, secondary education as well as post-secondary VET.

159 The source of funding is national but regions decide on the distribution.

160 Note that the division of responsibilities between national and regional level is planned to be reviewed in the near future.
The overall system-level quality assurance requirements are defined in the Education Act (Law 561/2004 Z.z).

**Planning at VET system level and requirements for evaluation and review**

The paragraph nine of the Education Act defines that the Ministry draws up a long term development plan for the education system (*Dlouhodobý záměr vzdělávání a rozvoje vzdělávací soustavy České republiky*). This should be consulted with the relevant social partners and regional authorities. It is approved by the Government following which it is discussed in the parliament. This is happening every four years. The current long-term plan was approved in 2011 (the previous one dates back to 2007)\(^{161}\). Annual reports related to the implementation of the long-term plan should also be made public.

This long-term development plan covers all aspects of publicly funded or regulated education and training in a lifelong learning perspective – from pre-school education until adult learning.

The long-term development plan is based on the analysis of the current situation of the Czech education system which uses different sources and indicators, including the reports of the School Inspection, of the National Institute of Education (NUV) or sources such as OECD reports.

The structure and focus of the long-term development plan is set defined in a 2005 Decree (Vyhlaska 15/2005). This defines the basic principles for the development plan (lifelong learning, quality and effectiveness enhancement, equal opportunities and based on the socio-economic situation and forecasts). It also defines that, among other things, enhancement, monitoring and evaluation of quality of education should be included in the long-term plan.

According to the Education act, regions are also required to develop strategies for development of education system. This is related to the fact that regions have important decision-making powers regarding the education and training infrastructure and shaping the offer of training programmes. The strategies they develop have to take into account the national long-term development plan. They are submitted to the Ministry for consultation (not for approval). The regional education strategy is to be approved by the regional authorities (elected body) and it is to be publicly available.

It is increasingly the case that reforms introduced are piloted before being rolled out at large scale. The piloting process is supported by providing methods, ensuring communication and dissemination as well as monitoring. For example, the reform of the final assessment to achieve the professional certificate (see also below) is being reformed to bring greater homogeneity of standards used. The new form of assessment is being developed since several years now and schools can opt in to use it on voluntary basis before it is made compulsory. The results show that in 2011/2012 the majority of schools voluntarily opted in.

**Stakeholder involvement, identification of training needs**

Social partners have an advisory role in national policy making on VET. They have to be consulted on legislative changes and issue an opinion (which is not binding). As noted above, they are also consulted when it comes to strategic planning of education and training reforms and policies (long term development plan). They should also be involved in the formulation of regional education strategies.

Sectoral councils (which are voluntary professional groupings) bring together representatives of employers, professional bodies, and experts on human resources in the sector (but possibly other parties). Sectoral councils have for objectives to\(^{162}\):

- Monitor labour market needs in terms of qualifications;
- Identify changes in the sector and related arising needs;

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Mange, guide and ensure the development of materials that describe the professional/labour market conditions of a given profession (group of professions) which are used as basis for developments in the education system.

Note that, currently sectoral councils define the basis for qualifications standards for partial/professional qualifications integrated in the national qualification system (see below). The linkage with their work and the qualifications for the formal VET system is still in the process of development.

Sectoral councils have started being set up in 2010 (after a pilot phase in 2008). Their contribution to the above objectives is still ‘work in progress’.

Their work is supported by an agreed methodology approved by the Ministry of Education 163.

Representatives of the labour market also take part in groups (oborove skupiny and odborne skupiny), which work together with the National Institute for Education in defining national framework curricula for VET 164 (see below).

**Certification, assessment and validation of learning**

There are three main qualification types in IVET:

- Qualifications that are equivalent to the EQF level 3 – these result in the achievement of the professional certificate;
- Qualifications that are equivalent to the EQF level 4 – which result in the upper-secondary leaving certificate that gives access to higher education (maturita);
- Qualifications that are equivalent to the EQF level 6 – these are post-secondary VET qualifications.

These are qualifications of the formal VET system and can only be achieved through formal training.

Ultimately all should be defined in terms of qualification and assessment standards as well as framework curricula as defined in the national qualifications system. The definition of these standards is still an ongoing process.

For all types of qualifications there is a national definition of the composition of the assessment jury for final examination that leads to certification. For qualifications at level 3 the jury has to comprise a representative of the profession.

The final examination for qualifications at level 3 is currently being reformed with a view to put in place common assessment tasks/descriptions for all those preparing the same qualification 165.

General education components of qualifications at level 4 (Czech language, foreign language, mathematics) are assessed using centralised external examinations. The professional subjects/modules are based on the assessment defined by schools. Schools are the ones who also define the assessment process for VET qualifications at level 6.

**Who can deliver VET and under what conditions**

All educational institutions have to be registered in the school register. Schools can be set up by public or private legal entities. The conditions for setting up a school are clearly defined in the Education Act.

Among a range of documents regarding the capacity of the institution to deliver educational activities, the legal entity concerned has to provide a statement of the region and of the municipality (if these are not the legal entities setting up the school) about the setting up of the school.


165 Jezberova et al (2012) *Koncepce nové zavřečné zkoušky v oborech středního vzdělání s vyučním listem*
Monitoring inspection and use of indicators

The School inspection has the responsibility to monitor the quality of education and training provision of Czech schools – from pre-primary to upper-secondary. It does so based on a set of criteria (indicators), common to all types of schools, which are grouped into the following areas:

- Equal opportunities to access education;
- School curriculum;
- School governance and management;
- Human resources;
- Equipment;
- Financial situation;
- Effective organisation of education;
- Effective support for personal development of pupils and students;
- Partnership;
- Effective support to development of functional literacy;
- Systematic assessment of individual and group education outcomes;
- Systematic evaluation of education results at school level.

In the academic year 2012-2013 the School inspection will pilot the use of selected indicators (inspired by EQAVET), which have been selected by the Ministry to become part of quality assurance in VET in the future.

The main changes to QA at system level introduced since 2009 (Adoption of the EQAVET Recommendation)

The 2011 long-term education plan contains quality assurance in VET as part of the main reform measures (this was not the case in the 2007 long-term plan). This section of the plan contains the following objectives:

- Reformed final certification assessment (ensure greater homogeneity across VET providers) and related to that use of results to inform further developments in education and training – at provider level and the level of bodies managing VET schools;
- Enhance the quality of work-based component of programmes by developing standards for these periods;
- Support cooperation between VET schools and businesses;
- Continue the activities of the national reference point (including to identify what has been gained through mutual learning and exchange);
- Actively participate in the activities of the EQAVET network; and
- Progressively introduce the use of selected instruments of EQAVET, in particular selected indicators, in the national system of quality assurance.

In the period 2009-2012, the ministry commissioned a system level national project on development of self-assessment tools for education and training providers. The project was run by the former National Institute for VET (now part of National Institute for Education) and the National institute for continuous education. The results are now available for providers to be used.

The main changes introduced since 2003 (beginning of the EU cooperation that led to EQAVET adoption)

The statutory requirement for the Ministry and for the regions to develop a long-term education plan was embedded in the 2004 legislation.

The 2004 legislation also introduced the requirement for schools to carry out self-assessment.

166 Kritéria hodnocení podmínek, průběhu a výsledků vzdělávání na školní rok 2012/2013 http://www.csicr.cz/getattachment/645ff361-4f61-4d59-9983-6fb294e9ab47
Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in initial VET

Initial VET providers in the Czech Republic are VET schools. The quality assurance at the level of VET schools comprises:

- Required self-assessment; and
- School inspection.

Monitoring and evaluation - Self-assessment

Schools are required to carry out self-assessment based on the Education Act 561/2004 and its amended version 472/2011. The 2011 amendment states that the self-assessment report is the basis for school’s annual report thus linking the self-assessment to school governance and management. While schools are required to carry out self-assessment, the form and the criteria to use are not prescribed in the legislation. The period under evaluation is also not defined by legislation and schools can decide how often to carry self-evaluation. In the past self-evaluation was required on annual basis but this was considered to be too frequent by many schools and led to the fact that the self-evaluation was done in a superficial manner. The requirement to carry out self-evaluation every year was removed from the legislation as part of efforts to diminish administrative burden on schools.

As a result of the above-mentioned national project on self-assessment, there is a range of guidance materials available to schools to support their self-assessment. These differentiate between tools for directors and tools for teachers.

Monitoring and evaluation - School inspection

The remit of the School inspection covers VET schools at upper-secondary as well as post-secondary level. As said above, the School inspection follows criteria that are common to all types of schools. Specific indicators in the field of VET are going to be piloted in 2012-2013.

At secondary level, VET programmes in schools follow national framework curricula. This is not the case in post-secondary VET. Post-secondary VET programmes are developed by the providers themselves (without a national reference) and they have to be accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Post-secondary VET. The accreditation process follows a formal framework, which defines the aspects of VET programmes and of the provider that are judged by the Commission during the accreditation process. As said earlier, post-secondary VET falls under the remit of the School Inspection.

Planning at VET provider level, stakeholder involvement

As part of the recruitment process for school principals, the principal has to draw up a long-term development plan for the institution which is approved by the School Council.

Each school has to develop school level curricula. These are approved by the School Council, which is the governing body (or board) of the school.

Schools also have to draw up annual activity reports that are also approved by the Council.

School Councils are composed of elected representatives – 1/3 is designated by the legal entity setting up the school, 1/3 is elected by students or representatives of minors and 1/3 is elected by teachers.

In addition to the above, School Councils have to approve the following:

- Rules for students’ assessment;
- School development plans;
- Budget;
- Inspection report;

This is defined in the Education Act.

169 http://www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/pro-odborniky-3
The main changes to QA at system level introduced since 2009 (Adoption of the EQAVET Recommendation)

The 2011 revision of the Education Act no longer requires the schools to carry out self-assessment on annual basis.

They are also not required to produce a report on self-assessment (this was taken out from the legislation as part of efforts to diminish administrative burden on schools).

The main changes introduced since 2003 (beginning of the EU cooperation that led to EQAVET adoption)

As said above, self-evaluation was introduced by the 2004 Education Act.

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in continuous VET

Context

Continuous VET in the Czech Republic is rather fragmented and only parts of it are regulated – these are parts that are publicly funded and/or which relate to regulated professions of different ministries. There are no quality assurance requirements or guidelines on C-VET that is fully privately funded (be it by the individual or a company). These providers can choose to develop a quality assurance framework (such as implied by the ISO certification) but they are not required to do so\(^1\).\(^2\)

The C-VET sub-systems that are regulated concern provision such as:

- Publicly funded training for unemployed;
- Continuous training for civil servants;
- Continuous training for health care professionals (required by legislation);
- Continuous training for teachers (required by legislation);
- Continuous training of police and armed forces (required by legislation);
- Etc.

The different C-VET sub-systems fall under different ministries (Home affairs, health care, education, etc.). In most cases the quality assurance is ensured through programme accreditation. Each ministry has its own accreditation commission for these purposes.

The rest of this section describes only the quality assurance concerning these aspects of C-VET:

- Requalification courses for unemployed; and
- Recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

Requalification courses for unemployed are commissioned by public employment services from continuous training providers (referred to as providers of lifelong learning in the Czech context). Can be funded as requalification courses those education and training programmes that are:

- Accredited by the ministry of education as requalification courses (see below); or
- Courses that prepare for the final examination which fall under the law on recognition of non-formal and informal learning (176/2006 – see below); or
- Accredited by another ministry under which falls the given programme (e.g. health care – not discussed here); or
- Regularly provided by a school (registered in the national register of education institutions) or university – i.e. these are not C-VET programmes but initial education and training programmes (or their parts) attended by persons as part of lifelong learning (the quality assurance applied is that of I-VET or higher education).

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\(^1\) Provision of education activities outside schools, delivery of courses and lectures is not a regulated activity and to obtain a business licence in this field there are no specific requirements. Only general requirements for obtaining any business licence apply. See the law on business licence (zivnostensky zakon) http://www.mpo.cz/dokument104038.html

\(^2\) http://www.msmt.cz/vzdavani/rekvalifikacni-programy
Only the first two cases are discussed here.

**National framework: who is in charge of what**

The competent ministries define the conditions under which CVET courses can receive public funding (i.e. they define the need for accreditation, set up the accreditation committee and define the rules for accreditation).

The Ministry of education defines the division of responsibilities for recognition of non-formal and informal learning. This is clearly set in the law 179/2006 on recognition of learning outcomes from further learning\(^\text{173}\).

Continuous training for unemployed (re-qualifications) is purchased by Public Employment Services based on tenders (only accredited programmes can apply). Recognition of non-formal and informal learning is funded by the individual, the employer or in cases of unemployed the public employment service. Other sectors of CVET have other sources of funding and ways of allocating public funding.

**Planning at CVET system level and stakeholder involvement**

The above mentioned long-term education development plan concerns also continuous VET. It is therefore not further described here.

Stakeholders are consulted about the priorities for the long-term plan as described above. They are also involved in the definition of qualification standards as described in the section on IVET. These standards are also the basis for recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

**Who can deliver CVET**

The requirements for the accreditation of the Ministry (point a) above) are based on a specific decree (176/2009\(^\text{174}\)). The decree defines what aspects of the C-VET programme, capacity of the C-VET provider (equipment, staff), assessment and certification process are examined as part of the accreditation process. These aspects are not particularly related to the EQAVET descriptors or indicators. Note that in case the programme prepares for a profession/ activities for which there is a qualification standard in the national qualifications framework\(^\text{175}\), the programme has to correspond to the qualifications standards in the framework and the assessment has to follow the assessment standards and be carried out by an authorised body/person (see below).

**Certification, assessment and validation**

Another part of Czech C-VET system is the possibility to gain qualifications through recognition of non-formal and informal learning. This applies to those qualifications listed in the national qualifications framework. These can be full or partial qualifications (referred to as professional qualifications as from 2012)

These qualifications are designed through a clearly defined process involving the sectoral councils as discussed in section on IVET. Each qualification is based on a qualification and assessment standard, which is the basis for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning (for the assessment).

The quality assurance for the award of these qualifications is described in the related legislation\(^\text{176}\). It is based on the fact that the assessment and award of the qualification can only be carried out by an authorised person/ body. This authorisation is issued by the responsible ministry. The criteria for the authorisation are defined in the legislation (179/2006) and emphasis is given on the professional competence, experience and capacity of the person/ body.

\(^{173}\) zákon č. 179/2006 Sb., o ověřování a uznávání výsledků dalšího vzdělávání a změně některých zákonů

\(^{174}\) Vyhláška č. 176/2009 Sb., kterou se stanoví náležitosti žádosti o akreditaci vzdělávacího programu, organizace vzdělávání v rekvalifikačním zařízení a způsob jeho ukončení

\(^{175}\) http://www.narodni-kvalifikace.cz/default.aspx

\(^{176}\) Zákon č. 179/2006 Sb., o ověřování a uznávání výsledků dalšího vzdělávání a o změně některých zákonů
Increasingly, requalification courses are also expected to lead to qualifications that are listed in the national qualifications framework.

**Monitoring and evaluation**

As part of the quality assurance at system level, the ministry of education carries out regular monitoring of requalification courses. The information monitored concerns:

- Numbers of C-VET providers and their distribution across the territory;
- The legal form and economic activity of providers;
- Size of providers according to staff employed;
- The numbers of accredited programmes and the extent to which the programmes were actually delivered (taught) in the year monitored;
- Funding sources for the programmes taught;
- Amount of funding received for the programmes taught;
- Thematic and sectoral coverage of programmes taught;
- Data on participants;

The monitoring is based on a survey of C-VET providers (lifelong learning providers according to the Czech terminology). The results are publicly available [177].

**Main changes since 2009**

Since 2012 the national institute for education is running a large national project (UNIV 3 [178]) which supports VET schools to develop CVET programmes as part of active labour market policies. This project includes development of guidance and methodological standards for design of programmes as well as training of school staff. This project builds on a previous project (UNIV 2 [179] - 2009-2012), which supported VET schools to become centres of lifelong learning.

**Main changes since 2003**

The aforementioned accreditation of requalification programmes was introduced in 2004. The authorisation process for recognition of non-formal and informal learning was introduced in 2007 when the legislation entered in force.

**Quality assurance arrangements in continuous VET at provider level**

As described above, the quality assurance in C-VET takes mainly the form of programme accreditation.

C-VET providers are not required to have specific quality assurance measures in place.

**Part 2 – Interaction between national quality assurance and EQAVET**

**National Reference Point**

The Czech Republic has an EQAVET National Reference Point in place. It is led by the Czech School Inspection, but is a joint activity with the National Institute for Education [180] and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. As described in the 1st part of this country fiche, the School Inspection is in charge of external evaluation of education and training providers from pre-primary to post-secondary VET in the Czech Republic.

Both the School inspection and the National Institute for Education (more specifically the VET department – formerly a separate institution) took part in the development of EQAVET since 2005. In 2010, the School inspection and the National Institute for Education agreed

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180 Formerly the National VET Institute took part but this organisation was merged together with other ministry agencies into the National Institute for Education.
that the leadership for the Czech NRP should remain with the School Inspection. Based on this agreement, an explanatory document for the attention of the Ministry of education was prepared and via this document the School Inspection asked the Ministry to nominate them as the NRP. The explanatory document contains:

- An explanation of what is EQAVET;
- Description of the Czech involvement with EQAVET;
- Work programme for EQAVET activities in the period 2010-2012;
- Presentation of the proposed mandate for the Czech NRP; and
- A description of the planned activities.

Based on this request the Ministry nominated the NRP.

The mandate of the NRP covers both IVET and CVET.

The mandate for the NRP is formulated in this document. The mandate covers the following activities 181:

- Integration of selected EQAVET indicators into the Czech methodology for evaluation of VET under the responsibility of the School inspection;
- Coordination of the Czech national network on quality assurance (see below) and the transformation of this network by engaging a broader range of bodies;
- Organisation of meetings of this network;
- Active participation in European activities related to EQAVET;
- Cooperation with those in charge of EQF and ECVET; and
- Dissemination and translation of EQAVET network materials via a website.

The NRP does not have its own financial resources. Its activities are funded from the own budget of the two institutions concerned. There is no clear budget allocation. While specific persons have been nominated as members of the NRP, these are persons who were already employed by these organisations and there was no redefinition of their tasks or job descriptions to reflect their participation in the NRP. No specific post were created or redefined and therefore it is not possible to estimate the human resources capacity at the disposal of the NRP.

The NRP has carried out the following activities so far:

- There is a national network on quality assurance in the Czech Republic. This network was set up in 2007 and its creation is clearly linked to the activities of the ENQA-VET network since 2005 182. The network was enlarged and now comprises around 25 persons comprising the ministry of education, representatives of VET providers, employers’ representatives, representatives of school trustees and other national bodies in charge of aspects of the education system. There are no representatives from higher education. The network is now coordinated by the NRP meets twice a year. The meetings have for objective to inform the members about EU activities on EQAVET; The NRP translated the EQAVET IT tool and the examples of good practice;
- Involvement in EU level activities in particular the working group 1.

The plan is to continue these activities in the future.

There is no explicit monitoring framework for the results of NRP activities.

It is reported that the main added value of the NRP is that it is a cooperation on the issue of quality assurance between different organisations and persons who would otherwise not have sat around the same table discussing this issue.

It should also be noted that the National Institute for Education is also the National Coordination point for the EQF in the Czech Republic. One staff member of this agency is

181 Ceska Skolni Inspekcie (2010) Ustaveni Národního referenčního bodu pro zajišťování kvality odborného vzdělávání v České republice. Materiál pro jednání PV MŠMT (Establishment of the National Reference Point for quality assurance in VET in the Czech Republic. Discussion Material for PV MSMT)

also the Czech representative in the ECVET Users’ Group. Therefore the EQAVET NRP is interlinked with those in charge of these two instruments.

**National approach to enhance quality assurance**

There is no separate national document that would be dedicated to EQAVET implementation as such. There is no plan to develop such separate document. The approach followed in the Czech Republic is to focus on ensuring that enhancing quality assurance in VET is embedded into strategic national policy documents on education and training and VET more specifically. As said in the section 1 of this country report, quality assurance and EQAVET is explicitly mentioned in the long-term development plan for education and training. This document contains indication of measures to strengthen quality assurance. There is a proposal for future developments in VET, which is yet to be discussed and agreed by the government. This proposal contains several measures, which are related to the evaluation of aspects of VET – in particular when it comes to cooperation between schools and companies.

As said in the part 1 the school inspection is to pilot selected EQAVET indicators in its external evaluation activities this year. These will be in particular the indicators 1a (share of VET providers applying internal quality assurance); 2 and & b (share of teachers and trainers having followed continuous training and the resources invested) and 8a (share of disadvantaged learners). It was also planned that the indicators 3 (participation in programmes) and 4 (completion of programmes) could be embedded in the piloted framework but this was not clear at the time of writing this report.

The National Institute for Education based on a mandate from the Ministry of Education was preparing a large-scale national project (ESF funded) to be called ‘together’ at the time of drafting this report. The project is to focus on cooperation between VET schools and companies. This project should in particular develop framework guidelines for cooperation between schools and businesses. It is foreseen that elements of EQAVET will be incorporated into the guidelines.

An earlier national project called ‘road to quality’ which developed guidance for VET providers’ self-evaluation reflects mainly national priorities and policy making.

**The content of the EQAVET Framework – use and usefulness**

According to the persons interviewed, the main contribution of the EQAVET framework to Czech developments on quality assurance was the following:

- Its existence and the European activities created an opportunity for the different relevant administrations and the national stakeholders involved to engage in a discussion on quality assurance and to engage in a dialogue. The instrument created a momentum for national debate.
- It also created an opportunity for those involved to question the existing practice. In the Czech Republic there was a tradition of data collection about initial VET and there were a number of indicators available. The use of indicators was not new to the Czech system. However, as a result of the EU exchanges, the people involved gained a different perspective on the use of this data. In particular it became questioned whether the data available in the country is actually being used to support decision making. The main emphasis now is on this aspect – making sure that the information available is used to develop decisions on VET policies (cycle approach) not just to monitor the results.
- There was also more emphasis on quality assurance in C-VET and willingness to collect more data on indicators related to C-VET but this is not only linked to EQAVET but also other developments in the field of C-VET.

Therefore, according to the persons interviewed, the main contribution of EQAVET is not so much linked to the technical content of this instrument (the descriptors and indicators) but it is rather linked to the existence of the instrument as such.
The interviewees mainly commented on the usefulness of the indicators and did not discuss the descriptors, which indicates that the indicators were most influential in the Czech context. As seen from the above, some of the indicators are being transferred to the national context.

One interviewee judged the different elements of EQAVET coherent. The only difficulty was seen to be with the indicator on unemployment rates as this is seen as not being strictly related to the quality of education and training but also strongly dependent on the economic situation. The other interviewee did not comment on the internal coherence of EQAVET.

The interviewees saw as the main challenge for national developments on quality assurance the development of a culture of quality assurance in VET schools. Positive developments in this direction started with the obligation for VET schools to carry out self-assessment. There was a national project (road to quality as noted above) supporting this. Among other things this project introduced voluntary peer-review among VET providers. Though they were initially somewhat reluctant and sceptical about this aspect positive feedback was received and some reported continuing these activities. This indicates, according to one interviewee, that there is progress towards better understanding of quality assurance in schools. The main contribution to this growing awareness is seen to be coming from the national activities about exchange of good practice and cooperation at national level. However, stakeholders also reacted positively to the EU EQAVET IT tools where good practices are presented and some were interested in their quality assurance measures being portrayed in this EU tool.

**Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance**

The theme of quality of vocational education and training has been on the policy agenda in the Czech Republic since the end of 90s. However, the focus on quality assurance is newer. Changes to the quality assurance in the country were made in the 2004 reform of the Education Act (see above), which brought the requirement for schools to carry out self-evaluation. It also brought the requirement for more systematic quality assurance at system level, which reflects the cycle approach of planning, implementation, evaluation and review.

Interviewees agreed that European cooperation on quality assurance was influential in setting the national agenda on this topic in particular in the early years 2000’s and around the accession of the Czech Republic. It is believed to have served as a catalyst for national developments. People influencing the national developments were the ones also taking part in European exchanges, but not only at the level of the EU but also within the OECD.

The development of the national qualifications system (which was seen by the interviewees as clearly influenced by EU developments) was an important trigger for reforms to quality assurance.
Another trigger for development of quality assurance was the decentralisation and the fact that schools were delegated important competence regarding school management. As stated above, the more recent effect of EQAVET at national level was the fact that it motivated the main stakeholders in the country to regularly discuss the topic of quality assurance.

The developments taking place since 2009 are rather incremental. The most notable being the piloting of some of the EQAVET indicators planned for the academic year 2012/2013. The existence of the ENQA-VET network led to the establishment of a national network on quality assurance, which continues and has been enlarged in the past years. As a result national stakeholders are regularly informed about EQAVET. At the same time the most notable developments in stakeholders’ interest/activities in quality assurance are due to the national developments (self-evaluation of providers mainly).

**Synergies with other EU level instruments**

As stated earlier, the National Institute for Education that takes part in the NRP is also a key agency in the Czech context for EQF and ECVET implementation.

One interviewee commented that the NQF development in the Czech Republic is strongly affected by the European developments. The NRP development in turn affects quality assurance.

The issue of quality assurance arises in the national debate on EQF but in a somewhat different perspective than EQAVET. The focus on quality assurance as part of EQF is more on quality of education and training standards and on testing the level of learning outcomes on students’ completion of training (standardised assessment procedures). While in relation to EQAVET the emphasis so far has been on the management of quality assurance processes to improve practice rather than on the standardisation.

Therefore the development of the NQF brings in new issues for quality assurance, including in VET. According to one interviewee, the development of level descriptors in the Czech NQF will bring the need to ensure that these descriptors are supported by evaluation and assessment tools that ensure the required level of learning outcomes is met.

When it comes to the links with ECVET, this is expected to focus more on the work-based learning components of VET. As said above, there is a project planned to improve cooperation between VET schools and companies, including work-based learning. The tools developed as part of this project are expected to combine ECVET and EQAVET.

When it comes to synergies with quality assurance mechanisms in other sectors of education and training this is for the moment not that clear. The school inspection has a coherent approach to external evaluation for all schools – from primary to secondary – including VET and post-secondary VET. Higher education quality assurance is completely separate and there are for the moment very little links – even when it comes to aspects such as contacts among bodies and persons involved. On the other hand the NQF development could give new inputs for such cooperation.

**Sources**

**Legislation**

The Education Act (561/2004)

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A1.8  **Country report – Denmark**

Author: Astrid Henningsen (ICF GHK)  

**Part 1 – Description of quality assurance arrangements and of recent developments**

The model for quality assurance in initial VET is based on common principles and measures – including notably:

- Common national guidelines
- Institutionalised involvement of stakeholders at system and providers levels (planning, implementation, evaluation review - and assessment)
- Ministerial approval, monitoring and inspection
- Evaluations by the Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA)
- Self-evaluation
- Output monitoring
- Testing and examination
- Transparency and openness

These principles also apply largely to CVET – even if some implementation aspects differ.

The Danish model is compliant with the CQAF model and the four-step planning and implementation model.

In the late 1990's and the 2000's external evaluation and output monitoring gained importance. By 2005 the Ministry set out common indicators for measuring quality in IVET – which subsequently has been subject to annual review. The Copenhagen process in 2002 and the CQAF has inspired the Danish approach to quality in VET. In particular these initiatives have promoted the use of indicators in IVET as well as the use of central inspection of providers and of the quality of education and trainers. However, several of the elements of the current Danish approach to quality assurance were implemented prior to the Copenhagen process.

At providers level funding of innovation and development projects have been used to promote quality development and self-evaluation at provider level. With the full integration of self-evaluation into providers operation these projects were in the second half of 2000's phased out.

The governmental change in 2011 has led to a change in focus of quality assurance – with enhance focus on the content of education in relation – as well as other important factors that may impact on students’ competition.

**Quality assurance arrangements in initial VET (IVET)**

**National Framework for initial VET/CVET**

In Denmark, the provision of IVET is a shared responsibility between the national administration, social partners, VET providers and enterprises. IVET programmes are based on the principle of dual training, where the learners enter a contract with a company, after a basic training programme and alternates between school based learning and work based training.183

The Ministry of Children and Education is the body responsible for legal, policy and programme definition aspects of VET in Denmark (both IVET and CVET). The Ministry is also responsible for approving the colleges that are to provide the basic and main courses in VET, as well as for approving new IVET qualifications.

The provision of IVET in Denmark is characterised by a high level of decentralisation - where providers have a great level of autonomy in adapting VET to local needs. Since the 1990’s a framework governance approach has been implemented based on taxi meter grants per student. The aim of this approach has been to improve responsiveness and effectiveness –

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183 Something about basic training – followed by an alternate programme
leaving it to VET providers to adapt and develop VET to labour market needs in cooperation with local training committees.

The Danish system for quality assurance in IVET is comprehensive and covers planning, implementation, evaluation and assessment and review. Initiatives to promote quality assurance in VET were taken already in the 1990’s and have been subject to continued development. The last significant VET reform took place in 2007.

**The general framework for quality assurance**

At national level, the institution in charge of quality assurance is the National Agency for Quality and Supervision, under the Ministry for Children and Education. Since 2011, the Agency is responsible for test and exams within IVET, oversight of IVET providers and development of evaluation systems for IVET. As outlined above, the Ministry of Children and Education is the body responsible for legal, policy and programme definition aspects of VET.

Stakeholders have a formalised and important role in the national QA process regarding definition of qualifications, general framework VET programmes, planning and assessment.

The overall system-level quality assurance requirements are defined in the Danish Vocational Education and Training Act (Bekendtgørelse af lov om erhvervsuddannelser, LBK no.171 of 02/03/2011).

Since the 2007 reform of VET, the orientation of IVET programmes have become clearly focused on learning outcomes— and programmes are competence based. The curricular is based on the NQF.

**Planning at VET system level and requirements for evaluation and review**

A number of national Acts and Regulations provide the national framework for IVET. The Danish Vocational Education and Training Act\(^\text{184}\), Act for Institutions for Vocational Education and Training\(^\text{185}\), and The Statutory Order regarding Vocational Education and Training\(^\text{186}\) set out the overall aims of VET – as well as objectives for the medium and long term. Objectives are not linked to EU goals.

National framework also covers delivery including:

- Access to IVET
- Systems for appointment of vocational colleges
- Rules and requirements for teacher qualification
- Quality assurance at providers level (quality requirements)
- Form and general content of programmes
- Requirements regarding providers’ educational plans
- Testing and evaluation of learners
- Requirements as regards to transparency of evaluation results (providers systems for quality assurance)
- Framework for stakeholder involvement (system and provider level)

**Stakeholder involvement, identification of training needs**

An important aspect of IVET provision in Denmark (and for CVET provision) is the high level of stakeholder engagement and involvement. Social partners, as well as colleges, enterprises teachers and trainers are involved in a continued dialogue as regards further development of IVET – and this with the aim to ensure its continued relevance, quality, innovation and development. The close institutionalised involvement of the social partners is not only a central characteristic of the Danish VET system – but also of quality insurance in place.

Social partners play an important role at both system and providers levels – and for planning, implementation, evaluation and review. At system level, the Advisory Council for Initial

\(^{184}\)Bekendtgørelse af lov om erhvervsuddannelser, LBK no.171 of 02/03/2011

\(^{185}\)Bekendtgørelse af lov om institutioner for erhvervsskiltuddannelse LBK 878 of 08/08/2011

\(^{186}\)Bekendtgørelse om erhvervsuddannelser BEK no. 1514 of 15/12/2010
Vocational Education and Training – composed by the social partners schools and teachers associations and other individuals appointed by the Ministry - is closely engaged in policy development and objective setting and provides advice on all aspects concerning IVET, including recommendations on the establishment of new VET qualifications, adaption of VET qualifications or where appropriate discontinuation.

National Trade Committees, representing employees and employers within a sector, develop the specific regulations for each of the VET programmes stipulating duration, content, subjects, contents and competence levels.

The National Trade Committees are responsible for monitoring of skill development on the labour market and recommend on this basis changes to the existing programmes.

**Certification and validation of learning**

There are three main qualification types in IVET:

- Qualifications at the level 3 of the DK NQF (also EQF level 3) – these result in the achievement of the professional certificate
- Qualifications at the level 4 of the DK NQF (EQF level 4) – these result in professional certificate result in the upper-secondary level (Bevis or Svendebrev)
- Qualifications at the level 5 of the DK NQF (EQF level 5) – these are typically specialisations or complementary degrees – access is mostly subject to completion of a VET degree at a lower level, but may also be VET of a longer duration.

The Ministry establishes the overall structure and supervises the examination during the IVET education. The Trade Committees establish final examination standards and issue final certification standards. Actual assessment is undertaken with independent assessors drawn from local enterprises.

Each of VET programmes (currently 120) are governed by a specific regulation setting out IVET programme objectives and stipulating duration, content, subjects, contents and competence levels. The national curriculum is a framework curriculum and requirements related to content are flexible allowing adaptation to local needs.

Overall objectives and the framework is drawn up at national level, but the providers are relatively autonomous within the framework.

In 2007, a legal framework was implemented for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning within VET.

**Who can deliver VET and under what conditions**

The Ministry approves institutions, and confers rights to provide specific VET programmes to schools. Specific conditions needs to be fulfilled to be approved, and if these conditions are not fulfilled the approval may be revoked.

National Trade Committees approve training places. Training places need to fulfil specific requirements to be accredited. The Trade Committees are also responsible for inspection of the approved enterprises.

**Monitoring, inspection and use of quality indicators**

The Ministry (National Agency for Quality and Supervision) monitors VET providers in terms of educational results. The Ministry furthermore undertake legal, financial and pedagogical inspections of VET – based on various information sources.

Indicator based monitoring is used – with data collection on the following quality indicators for IVET:

- Tests and examination results
- Completion rates
- Completion times
- Dropout rates and time
- Transition rates into other educational programmes
- Transition rates in the labour market
Of importance for IVET is in particular, competition rate and transition into the labour market. Screening is undertaken on an annual basis for all IVET providers (VET schools) and is used to identify unsatisfactory operating institutions.

**Evaluation at system level**

External evaluation is ensured via the Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA), an external independent body responsible for evaluation of all education and training in Denmark. The stakeholders targeted by the recommendations of the EVA studies are obliged to follow up on these.

**The main changes to QA at system level introduced since 2009 (Adoption of the EQAVET Recommendation)**

The legal framework for IVET has been consolidated under a single legislation. The content and approach to quality assurance has however not been altered.

The change of government in 2011, however, has changed focus of quality assurance.

Before 2011, the quality of education was measured at system level mainly in terms results (using performance indicators as key quality measurement). Since 2011 however there has been a shift in quality measurement. Currently, the focus lies both on results and on the content of education in relation to the framework and objectives set out for the different educations – as well as other important factors that may impact on students’ competition.

**The main changes introduced since 2003 (beginning of the EU cooperation that led to EQAVET adoption)**

Quality assurance came on the agenda in the in 1990’s. Systematic quality assurance was this period introduced as a national requirement implemented though self-evaluation all VET providers – and self-evaluation became a part of the national strategy.

External evaluation and quality assurance was initiated in the late 1990’s. EVA was set up in 1999. During the 2000’s output monitoring has gained enhanced importance. By 2005 the Ministry set out common indicators for measuring quality in IVET – which subsequently has been subject to annual review.

The literature suggests\(^\text{187}\) that initiatives initiated by the Copenhagen process in 2002 and the CQAF has inspired the Danish approach to quality in VET. In particular these initiatives have promoted the use of indicators in IVET as well as the use of central inspection of providers and of the quality of education and trainers.

Also, the implementation of the NQF in Denmark has impacted on the approach to learning outcome. The adoption of the 2007 VET reform, has promoted alternative VET pathways and a legal framework was implemented for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning within VET.

However, the literature also suggests that several of the elements of the current Danish approach to quality assurance were implemented prior to the Copenhagen process.

**Quality assurance arrangements at providers level in initial VET**

**Requirements VET providers have to comply with**

The quality assurance at the level of VET schools comprises:

- Planning
- Self-evaluation
- Stakeholder involvement
- Output monitoring

A general measure for quality assurance is the requirement for transparency as laid down in the Statutory Order on Transparency and Openness\(^\text{188}\). This Act requires all providers to publish information on the courses, pedagogical values and practices, strategy plans as well as information on the key performance indicators.

**Planning**

As outlined above, as long as primary national objectives and the framework rules are met, the specific content of training may vary from college to college in order to adapt IVET to local needs and demand. All VET colleges develop local training plans which set out specific objectives for the VET programmes delivered and specifics as regards curricular.

**Self-evaluation**

Self-evaluation plays a central role in the Danish approach to quality assurance and is considered the “backbone” of the Danish approach to quality assurance\(^\text{189}\). When systematic quality assurance came on the agenda in the in 1990’s, self-evaluation was introduced as part of the national strategy to quality assurance. It became subsequently a national requirement to all VET providers.

The Statutory Order regarding Vocational Education and Training\(^\text{190}\) requires all IVET providers to put in place a system for quality assurance to ensure continued quality development to document the quality system and to publish results. IVET providers must have:

- A documented quality system – including specific procedures for methods of evaluation within specific VET programmes, and an approach for involving trainees and enterprises
- Procedures for information collection and self-evaluation
- An annual follow up plan and a plan for public dissemination. The follow up plan for improvement must include strategies to improve the completion rate and it should form part of the subsequent annual action plan. Reporting and publicity of the results must be ensured

In contrast IVET providers may choose their own quality concept and there are no requirements as regards to the evaluation model to be used. This approach allows providers to adapt the quality approach to specificities of the VET provider and the trainings delivered.

Quality rules also apply to in-company training for which the Trade Committees are responsible. However the Ministry’s focus is on school based part of IVET as in-company training is under the jurisdiction of the social partners.

**Stakeholder involvement**

Stakeholder involvement at provider level is institutionalised – in local training committees - and plays an important role for quality assurance. Local training committees consist of representative of the social partners, representatives of the teachers and of the trainees. The local training committees ensures the relevance of the VET training delivered and provide advice to the VET colleges on all matters related to the VET programmes provided. They also ensure cooperation at local level between the colleges and the local labour market.

Employers are furthermore engaged in the examination of students.

**Output monitoring**

In addition to self-evaluation an important aspect of the quality assurance process is output monitoring at providers level. Within this system providers are encouraged by the offer of additional funding to attain certain goals in pre-defined priority areas – including quality. Additional quality grants are triggered by documented quality activities by the providers – and reporting on results via a questionnaire to the Ministry. Publication of results by the providers is mandatory.

\(^{188}\)Bekendtgørelse af lov om gennemsigtighed og åbenhed i uddannelserne m.v., LBK no. 880 of 19/09/2005

\(^{189}\)Idem

\(^{190}\)Bekendtgørelse om erhvervsuddannelser BEK nr 1514 af 15/12/2010
The main changes to QA at provider level introduced since 2009 (Adoption of the EQAVET Recommendation)

No significant changes – no changes can be attributed to EQAVET

The main changes introduced since 2003 (beginning of the EU cooperation that led to EQAVET adoption)

Funding of innovation and development projects – providing, earmarked funding for quality development projects at provider level has been an important tool to promote quality development and self-evaluation at provider level. Such projects were initiated in the 1990’s and continued in the years 2000’s – with the aim to integrate “self-evaluation” into providers overall management philosophy – and to promote quality assurance from the process side.

With the full integration of self-evaluation into providers operation these projects were in the second half of 2000’s phased out.

Quality assurance arrangements in Continued VET

As IVET, CVET is provided through a public system – and school based CVET is often provided by colleges delivering IVET and/or provided as on the job training.

However, there is an increase supplementary training, internal company training, and private training offered. In addition, liberal adult education such as evening classes is provided. These trainings however, are not covered by quality assurance measures for CVET.

CVET (and IVET) in Denmark is understood as continued education and training leading to a recognised vocational qualification within a certain trade and profession. In Denmark, CVET is generally targeted skilled and unskilled workers. Considering that IVET and CVET typically are provided by the same institutions – the quality approach implemented is largely similar.

National framework, guidelines and curricular

The Act for Institutions for Vocational Education and Training¹⁹¹, the Statutory Order on common competence descriptions for CVET¹⁹² as well as the Statutory Order on CVET and adult education¹⁹³ provide the framework for delivery of CVET including:

- Overall objectives for CVET
- Systems for appointment of vocational colleges (the Act cover both IVET and CVET reflecting that providers are typically the same)
- Systems for competence descriptions of CVET qualifications
- Frameworks for stakeholder involvement (system and provider level)
- Frameworks for the development of the competence descriptions

The competence descriptions for CVET, of which there are currently some 140, have been drawn up by the social partners in cooperation with the ministry of Education. These are divided into some 2,200 different CVET modules. The competence descriptions provide the framework in which providers are obliged to adapt their training offer (see below).

Stakeholder involvement

As for IVET social partners play an important role in the management, priority setting, development, organisation and quality assurance of the programmes.

The Advisory Council for adult and continued vocational training, composed by representatives of the social partners, provide advice to the Ministry of Children and Education on any issue related to the development of CVET and set out the framework for the development of standards and curriculum for CVET

¹⁹¹Bekendtgørelse af lov om institutioner for erhvervsrettetuddannelse, no. 878 af 08/08/2011
¹⁹²Bekendtgørelse om fælles kompetencebeskrivelser for erhvervsrettetvoksenc- og efteruddannelser og om arbejdsmarkedsuddannelser, no 802 af 22/09/2003
¹⁹³Bekendtgørelse a f lov om arbejdsmarkedsuddannelserm.v.no 381 af 26/03/2010
Furthermore, the social partners, as noted above play a leading role in the development of the common competence descriptions.

**Identification of training needs**

As for IVET the social partners play a key role in the identification of CVET training needs.

**Accreditation**

The same rules as for IVET apply. The Ministry approves institutions, and confers rights to provide specific CVET programmes to schools. Specific conditions needs to be fulfilled to be approved, and if these conditions are not fulfilled the approval may be revoked.

**Monitoring, inspection and use of quality indicators**

The Ministry (National Agency for Quality and Supervision) monitors CVET providers in terms of educational results. According to the latest available information (2008) the only indicator currently monitored is completion rate of CVET.

The Ministry furthermore undertake legal, financial and pedagogical inspections of VET providers – including CVET – based on various information sources.

**Validation of learning and transparency**

Same measures apply as for IVET.

**The main changes to QA at system level introduced since 2009 (Adoption of the EQAVET Recommendation)**

The content and approach to quality assurance has not been altered.

**The main changes introduced since 2003 (beginning of the EU cooperation that led to EQAVET adoption)**

The same observations as for IVET apply to CVET. It should be noted, however, that use of indicators in the case of CVET is limited to the use of a single indicator: competition rate (according to 2008 information).

**Quality assurance arrangements at providers level in continued VET**

**Planning and stakeholder involvement**

Within the framework of the competence descriptions for CVET, CVET providers adapt the provision of training to local needs. To this end the CVET providers are obliged to draw up a policy stating how the institution will ensure that the CVET provision will need the local labour market needs. This policy is a requirement for funding.

The social partners and local enterprises play an important role as regard the development and provision CVET at local level, selecting and adapting with the provider the CVET provisions at local level.

**Self-evaluation**

As for IVET, CVET providers are required to put in place a system for quality assurance to ensure continued quality development, formulate a follow up plan, and a plan for dissemination. However, in the case of CVET providers are required to carry out comparative evaluation of all the CVET programmes that they provide allowing the establishment at national level of aggregated data on quality of CVET.

To this end a national self-evaluation tool was developed in the late 1990’s and started operating in the year 2000\(^{194}\). The national self-evaluation tool is a compulsory element of the CVET self-evaluation tools and of providers’ quality assurance tools. The tool measure participants and employers satisfaction with the training provided. The tool allows to each provider to adapt it, adding additional questions to the mandatory ones.

\(^{194}\)http://www.viskvalitet.dk
Assessment and recognition

CVET providers are responsible for assessment of learning outcomes and examination according to national standards set by the sector continuing training committees and issue certificates (within the national framework).

The main changes to QA at provider level introduced since 2009 (Adoption of the EQAVET Recommendation)

No significant changes.

The main changes introduced since 2003 (beginning of the EU cooperation that led to EQAVET adoption)

No significant changes – no changes can be attributed to EQAVET

Part 2 – Interaction between national quality assurance and EQAVET

National Reference Point

The NRP, set up in 2011, is hosted by the Danish Ministry for Children and Education, National Agency for Quality and Supervision.

The National Agency for Quality and Supervision under the Ministry for Children and Education, is hosting the NRP. The agency is responsible for:

- Quality development in primary and lower secondary school,
- Test and examination, lower and higher secondary school, IVET and CVET – as well as adult education
- Monitoring and control, lower and higher secondary school, IVET and CVET: covering financial control, institutional control and control and monitoring and control of content.
- Monitoring also covers indicator based monitoring
- Financial contributions to schools – Inc. VET schools

The Agency was set up on 1 March 2011 following a change of government. Before this date quality assurance in VET was under the Ministry of Education. The set-up of the Agency coincides with the set-up of the NRP.

The limited development of NRP activities – but also more generally with Denmark’s work with EQAVET may be explained by several factors.

Before 2011, the quality of education was measured mainly in terms results (using performance indicators as key quality measurement). Since 2011 however there has been a shift in quality measurement. Currently, the focus lies both on results – and on the content of education as well as other important factors that may have impacted on students’ competition.

Following the governmental change and the set-up of the National Agency for Quality and Supervision, the NRP role has been shifted among different staff. Due to the reorganisation, the NRP role had previously received limited attention.

The NRP has been consolidated only in August 2012 – with a defined NRP and member of the AG. The function, operation and mandate of the NRP are still to be defined. There is currently no action plan for the NRP – and consequently no approach for monitoring of the implementation of NRP activities.

The scope of action of the NRP is currently in the process of being defined.

National approach to enhance quality assurance

There is currently no “National Approach to enhancing quality assurance” as called for by the EQAVET Recommendation. The approach has not been devised due to limited political priority to quality development pre march 2011 – and hereafter due to reorganisation of quality assurance related issues for schools and VET within a single Agency.

It is anticipated that a national approach will be devised in 2013 or 2014.
However, the potential content is still to be defined. It is considered that if a national approach is to be devised it the added value at system level and providers’ level need to be clearly established – considering the system already in place for quality assurance in VET.

**Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance**

The EQAVET Recommendation has not had significant impact till date on the development of quality assurance in VET.

In contrast, as outlined above prior initiatives have impacted the development of the “national approach to quality assurance as developed in the early 2000 - and in particular the use and take-up of common indicators and external evaluation.

**Synergies with other EU level instruments**

As a strategy for EQAVET implementation is yet to be devised, work with other stakeholder groups – and interaction with other EU level instruments – is yet to materialise.

**Sources**


EQAVET Secretariat survey, 2011, and follow up 2012

Information Gathering Exercise, Quality assurance procedures in the processes of certification, curricula setting, accreditation and training of trainers in European VET systems

EQAVET, 2011

Description of the VET System in Denmark, and EQARF Indicators Denmark from: http://www.eqavet.eu/gns/what-we-do/implementing-the-framework/denmark.aspx

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<th>Country report – Estonia</th>
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**Part 1 – Description of quality assurance arrangements and of recent developments**

Summary of recent changes to quality assurance requirements and measures at provider or system level since 2009:

- In the period 2005-2008 VET curricula were substantially improved. The development of VET curricula is still on-going (ESF programme *Substantive Development of Vocational Education 2008-2013*). The redesigning of curricula system based on learning outcomes and linked to NQF to be completed by 2013. It is planned to develop a uniform methodology for evaluating learning outcomes.

- The development of the national qualifications framework (NQF) is on-going. Various types of VET qualifications have been already linked to the NQF. Qualifications and descriptors are not yet included in VET qualifications documents. The referencing to the NQF is to be completed by 2013.

- The modernisation of the methodology for the preparation of vocational standards and the renewal of these standards is on-going (ESF programme *Development of professional qualifications system 2008-2013*). It is anticipated that all national VET study programmes will be updated based on new professional standards by 2013.

- The legal basis for ECVET has already been developed but the transition to a credit point system for VET that conforms to the ECVET is planned until 2013.

- A system of performance indicators for educational institutions were introduced with legislation in 2007 and reinforced with new regulation in the last quarter of 2009 (Directive No. 1031). Yearly performance data on each indicator for all the schools are publicly available through the Estonian Education Information System (EHIS).

- In terms of quality assurance, a system of internal evaluation, based on mandatory and regular internal self-assessment reports, is in place since 2006. It will be supplemented by a system of external evaluation (giving schools a right to conduct studies in curriculum groups) expected to be operational by the end of 2012. This system has been tested in selected industry sectors since 2011 and the state recognition process should be completed in all curricula groups by 2014.

**Quality assurance arrangements at system level in initial VET**

**National Framework for initial VET – who is in charge of what?**

The Estonian government is responsible for development of VET strategies and implementation of state education development plans (including for the IVET and adult education).

The Ministry of Education and Research (MoER) coordinates and leads the development of VET policy and its implementation through municipalities and other line ministries.

In 2012 the National Examination and Qualification Centre (NEQC) was integrated in Foundation Innove, a structure under the MoER. The Foundation is a non-profit organisation, established in 2003, that coordinates the development of lifelong learning activities, implements programmes and projects. Innove continues the activities of the Foundation VET Reform in Estonia (1995-2003).

The legal basis for VET development and provision is established by a number of laws:

- Vocational Education Institutions Act (1998), regulating the provision of VET at upper and post-secondary (non-tertiary) education levels as well as role of VET institutions and VET provision in applied higher education institutions.

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195 included the programme of the coalition for 2007-2013
Institutions of Applied Higher Education Act (1998) specifies, among other, the role of higher education institutions and applied higher education programmes in VET institutions.

A New Professions Act (2008) was developed specifying the tasks of the Vocational Councils, establishing the qualifications system (8 levels identical to the EQF) and an entirely competence based approach to qualifications system.

IVET in Estonia is delivered by education institutions on the basic, upper secondary and post-secondary education levels. The state allocates funding directly to the state VET-schools and to municipalities for delivering IVET in the three municipal VET schools as well as in a couple of private VET schools. Funding mechanism is state allocated study places (i.e. per capita system).

There are two types of VET standards in Estonia:

- The Standard for VET (SVET), approved by a Government regulation in 2006, provides a set of uniform requirements for VET programmes on basic or secondary and post-secondary education level (among other, requirements for national and school curricula, the terms and conditions for recognition of prior learning, expected learning outcomes, study volumes and graduation requirements for different types of IVET programmes, requirements for pedagogical staff and the curriculum groups in accordance with the ISCED 97 classification). The principles for formulating the SVET are established by the Vocational Education Institutions Act.

- The national curricula for VET are documents that set objectives for VET, the expected learning outcomes, determine the requirements for commencing and graduating, establish the modules for school curricula and their volumes, outline the possibilities and conditions for electing modules and possibilities of specialisation. The national curricula for VET are transferred into regulation by the MoER. By the end of 2011, 56 national curricula for VET had been approved. The process of renewing the vocational curricula and making these learning outcome based started in 2011. Classification of curricula into broad groups of studies, fields of study and programmes is based on the ISCED 97.

National curricula are prepared on the basis of approved professional standards. In turn school curricula (of VET institutions) are prepared on the basis of the national curricula. Since 2009 new students are admitted to VET institutions only on the basis of the updated curricula designed to ensure a uniform level of quality.

The VET content in school curricula is organised in modules. Learning outcomes, aligned with the requirements of occupational qualification standard, are set for each module included in a curriculum. A module may consist of one or several subjects or topics and its volume is expressed in study weeks.

Statutory stakeholder involvement in initial VET systems

The various institutions responsible for VET (quality) include the MoER, other Ministries, social partners, associations of municipalities, cities and VET providers that participate in working groups responsible for devising VET development plans (a process led by the MoER).

The development plans are meant to ensure that the VET delivered corresponds to the needs of learners, strategic objectives of the society at large and social partners by involving the representatives of these parties in planning state-commissioned VET.

The participation of social partners in VET is regulated by national legislation (i.e. the Vocational Education Institutions Act) as well as social partner agreements. Social partners are involved in planning strategic developments in VET through their work in VET Council advising the MoER.

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196 Estonian EQF referencing report
197 Estonian VET Development plan 2009-2013
Through the Professional Councils set up on the national level social partners are responsible for the development of professional standards (implemented through an ESF project).

The social partners also have a consultative role in developing qualification requirements. Social partners and other stakeholders have been involved in the process of developing legislation on the system of state recognition (accreditation). They are also the members of assessment commissions.

The standards and qualification requirements are used to develop national curricula. Social partners, among other stakeholders, are also involved in the development national curricula, led by the MoER and Foundation Innove.

National level social partners have also signed the Trilateral Agreement on Joint Activities committing to developing VET (including the implementation of VET development plan, increasing the attractiveness, flexibility and accessibility of VET, use of the ESF/ERDF for improving study environment of VET schools, development of lifelong learning opportunities in these schools and aligning the national qualifications system to the EQF).

Planning at VET system level

A national scale Development plan for Estonian Vocational Education and Training System 2009-2013 was developed by MoER, in consultation with various stakeholders, and approved by the government in 2009. The Plan contains an overview of activities undertaken during the previous four years and objectives supported by action plan for the next five years. The Plan has been implemented through a number of ESF co-funded projects and other activities.

The Plan for the period 2009-2013 contains four main objectives for reform of VET system – development of system focus on the learner, quality of education, connection between education, society and the labour market as well as the organisation of vocational education.

More specifically the 2009-2013 Development plan provides estimates of the number of students in the reference period, anticipated volume of admission to VET institutions, ensures the availability of VET in the regions, for various target groups, adult education, etc.

The 2009-2013 Development plan also reviews the funding available for VET in the previous planning period, the use of the ESF co-funding in development of VET and proposes a financial plan for the development of VET in the period 2009-2013 (detailed for each objective and corresponding measures foreseen).

Requirements for evaluation and review

Each new development plan for VET (there have been two so far) provides an overview of the outcomes and the execution of financial commitments of the previous plan. The Development Plan for the period 2009-2013 reviews of the progress achieved in the period 2005-2008.

The 2009-2013 Development plan also lists the measures to be undertaken in each of the priority action areas (objectives – i.e. the needs of learners, quality and competiveness of VET, VET links to society and labour market as well as effectiveness and sustainability of VET system and its financing). The 2009-2013 Development plan also includes a financial plan for development of VET in the period.

The national curricula are reviewed if the professional standard that these have been based on has become outdated, requires amendments or has been cancelled. New curricula are developed when professional standards are established.

Identification of training needs

The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications is responsible for researching the skills and human resources needed on the labour market. The annual forecasts produced by

\[198\] Accessible on the MoER website: http://www.hm.ee/index.php?1511073
the Ministry for each sector are one of the components considered by the MoER in determining the number and type of state funded study places in VET.

**Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on VET providers**

The MoER issues licences to VET institutions that give them the right to run particular VET programmes and issue recognised qualification certificates.

Currently licences are only issued to private and municipal VET institutions. The reform of external accreditation will replace the licences system with state granting the right to conduct studies in a new curriculum group and extending this right through accreditation. This new system will cover all VET institutions. The right to conduct studies will be granted on the basis of a number of criteria – correspondence of curriculum the national curriculum and the SVET, staff meeting qualification requirements, suitable education infrastructure to meet the curriculum objectives and a justification of staring instruction in a particular curriculum group.

The right to conduct studies can be extended on the basis of accreditation, based on the assessment in the following fields: educational process (a core process), leadership and management, management of human resources, cooperation with interest groups and management of resources. The assessment includes the review and analysis of documents, including the self-assessment report per curriculum group, a school’s development plan and its action plan and other documents as well as a school visit, including interviews with teachers, students, employers, alumni and observations.

The current reforms above will entail that the system of internal evaluation (put in place during the period 2006-2010) will be been supplemented by external evaluation – accreditation of schools in curriculum groups. This new accreditation system was developed since 2008 and piloted during the period 2011-2012 in seven curriculum groups (school participation was voluntary). It is expected that the accreditation of all curriculum groups will be in full force by 2013 and completed by 2014. The MoER and the Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency (EKKA) are responsible for the accreditation of curriculum groups in VET institutions.

According to the new system, the accredited schools will have the right to deliver their programmes and qualification certificates for six years. If the accreditation is conditional the period will be reduced to 3 years, with the requirement to undergo another assessment in the end of this period. The education and training in curriculum group will be terminated if the accreditation is denied.

Currently there is no link between quality assurance and funding. But with the introduction of the new system – accreditation of curriculum groups – funding will only be allocated to accredited providers. The accreditation gives the right to provide VET and it is also a pre-condition to have the status of a VET school.

**Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)**

According to the Vocational Education Institutions Act there are four types of VET programmes in Estonia, with corresponding VET qualifications:

- Upper secondary VET certificate
- VET without basic education requirement certificate
- VET based on basic education certificate
- VET based on upper secondary education certificate (i.e. post-secondary VET)\(^{199}\)

In Estonian occupational qualifications system the labour market is divided into 16 sectors (on the basis of statistical classification of economic fields in Estonia) and each sector is managed by an occupational (sector skills) council.

Institutions represented in occupational councils are nominated by the Government (10-20 institutions) and persons representing these institutions are nominated by the Minister of

\(^{199}\) Estonian EQF referencing report
Education and Research. Typically institutions represented in occupational councils are: employers organisations of the sector, trade unions of the sector, professional associations of the sector, education and training institutions and responsible ministries.

The objective of the occupational council is registering the viewpoints and suggestions of different institutions, and achieving a consensus upon working out, developing and implementing the occupational qualifications system of the sector. Occupational councils are responsible for:

- Making proposals for developing and updating occupational standards; approving them
- Giving right to awarding bodies to award professional qualifications and to participate in supervision exercised over the awarding bodies
- Approving the procedure for awarding occupational qualifications
- Approving the amount of the fee for awarding and recertifying occupational qualifications;
- Resolving disputes related to awarding of professional qualifications
- Making other relevant proposals concerning the sector (the amount of state-commissioned study places), etc.

The occupational council appoints experts who shall map (in working groups) the main occupations in this sector or activity field, develop the occupational qualification standards and work out the scheme for awarding occupational qualifications.

Cooperation between sector skills councils is coordinated by the Board of Chairmen of Sector Skills Councils (BCSSC). BCSSC decides on the allocation of the initial occupational qualifications in the NQF and the need to develop higher qualification levels, and approves the need for the development of the occupational qualification standards.

**Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators**

After 2003 the Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF) was adopted by the MoER for the mapping of quality assurance at the system level.

The use of indicators proposed by the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQARF) recommendation in Estonia is presented.

According to the 2009-2013 Development plan, the entry of VET graduates into the labour market and the proportion of graduates who continue their studies are important indicators of VET quality in Estonia. Since 2007, this data is collected by MoER from VET institutions.

Data necessary for the management of the Estonian VET system is collected in the EHIS. The EHIS, in addition to regular surveys on the development of VET system, is used to provide data to the policy makers.

According to the 2012 EQAVET Secretariat survey all indicative descriptors for IVET system are used in Estonia, except for quality standards at the VET provider level (only guidelines at this level are provided).

Regular work on creating quality assurance system in IVET was started in 2004. A system of quality assurance was developed that includes the following set of obligatory indicators for self-assessment:

- Graduates who pass qualification exam on relevant profession (by curriculum groups)
- Share of drop-outs (by curriculum groups)
- Continuing education path of graduates on next educational level in next school year
- Graduates’ employment six months after graduation (by curriculum groups)
- Fulfilment of qualification requirements of teaching staff
- Further occupational training of teaching staff
- Age structure of teachers and other pedagogy
- Personnel flow (left and recruited)
- Ratio of students and teaching staff
- No of students per personal computer in their use
- Students dormitory/hostel (No. of places in hostel, No. of applicants)
- Fulfilment of state commissioned study places (by curricula groups)
Performance indicators of educational institutions were approved by Directive No. 1031 of the Minister of Education and Research on 20 October 2009. However, based on a different regulation the indicators were already in force since 2007. The school performance data by each indicator is publicly available from the EHIS (ehis.ee).

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008

In 1990s quality assurance principle and the first instruments to assure VET quality were introduced. More specifically, the government approved the Conceptual bases of vocational education and passed the second Vocational Educational Institutions Act in 1998.

In 2001 the Government approved the Action Plan for Developing the Estonian Vocational Education and Training System for 2001-2004, setting the main directions for the development of the vocational education system.

In 2002-2003 Quality Award model and competition was created for VET schools, based on European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM). According to a Study200 schools have been taking an active part in competing for the Quality Award and increasing number of VET schools implement the award system as a tool for internal evaluation and improvement.

Between 2004 and the current Development plan (covering the period 2009-2013) there were four documents that served as basis for the development of Estonian VET – the Development Plan for the Estonian Vocational Education System for the years 2005-2008 and renewed VET Institutions Act (2006), The vocational education standard (2006) and the Plan for reorganising the network of state owned vocational educational institutions in 2005-2008.

During the pre-accession period (since 1995 to 2004) VET infrastructure and curricula were considerably improved using Phare supports.

In 2004 work was stated on creating quality assurance system in IVET that includes a set of indicators for self-assessment. The self-assessment is obligatory since October 2009.

In 2004 the State Examination and Qualification Centre initiated the development of national curricula for VET. 56 national curricula were developed and approved by the end of 2011.

In the period 2005-2008 a number of ESF co-funded projects were implemented, including:

- Project Quality assurance in VET institutions through organisation of quality-related training and development of internal assessment system undertook a survey of VET provider quality assurance activities, developed a handbook for internal quality assessment of VET providers and provided training on quality management to VET providers as well as stated an on-going award quality award competition for VET institutions (2003).

- Project The Development of VET Curricula, led by the NEQC in cooperation with social partners, revised a major part of national curricula and developed the contents of vocational education for 132 professions, structuring these in modules and organising in 15 curriculum groups.

- Project Development of a system of initial and continuing training for vocational teachers researched training needs of vocational teachers, developed a model of initial and continuing training for vocational teachers and tested in 15 curriculum groups.

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)

A number of ESF co-funded projects started in 2009 (following the approval of the Development plan for VET 2009-2013):

- The development of Estonian Qualification System,
- Professional training on adults and development activities
- Training of Adults in Informal training centres

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Promoting Adult Education
Developing E-studies in VET institutions
Developing the content of VET in 2008-2013 and Promoting VET

Most of these projects will be finalised by 2014. In addition, modernisation of vocational education facilities is in process, to be finalised by the end of 2015.

Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in initial VET

Training providers are autonomous in choosing quality assurance models and methods. In Estonia all training providers do use some kind of quality assurance system for their administration, training provision and self-evaluation. Approximately 60% use formal models such as EFQM based the EKKA model, very few use ISO 9000, Balanced Scorecard and CQAF.

The MoER is responsible for the formal IVET providers.

Quality assurance in Estonian VET system consists of:
- Internal quality assurance – undertaken by the VET institutions and involving external consultations
- Regular external evaluation of schools – undertaken for licensing as well as thematic and ad-hoc state supervision (national review)
- Regulations stipulated by legislation (e.g. qualification requirements for teaching staff, curriculum system, etc.)
- State recognition system (accreditation of VET schools by curriculum groups)

The licensing of VET programmes is based on the assessment of their compliance to regulatory requirements, staff qualification levels, learning environment and other criteria. Licences are generally valid for the period of curriculum nominal duration. Only local government and private VET institutions need to apply for licences to the MoER. The state VET institutions are subject to the same quality assurance procedures, but are not required to obtain a licence. This system will be replaced by the state recognition system (described in the next section) with the new VET institution’s Act (planned take force in January 2013).

Requirements VET providers have to comply with (if not described in 1st section)

Private and municipal training providers must be licensed by the MoER according to the Vocational Institution Act and Private School Act. Only licensed providers have the right to implement their respective VET programmes and issue recognised qualification certificates.

School curricula (for each study programme) are developed by schools on the basis of the SVET and the corresponding national curriculum. The MoER and NEQC (since 2012 Innove) checks whether a school curriculum corresponds to SVET and the national curriculum. The approved school curricula are registered by the MoER in the EHIS.

Training providers, as autonomous institutions, are responsible for quality assurance system. Providers can choose among different quality assurance systems based on what they find the most appropriate (e.g. EFQM/EKKA, Balanced Scorecard, ISO 9000, etc.). The emphasis is placed on the outcomes of the quality assurance, rather than the system chosen. The majority of providers use EFQM, ISO 9000 or other systems designed internally.

In line with the Development Plan for the Estonian Vocational Education and Training System in 2009-2013, a state recognition system (accreditation by curriculum groups) has been developed to ensure quality of vocational education in Estonia. State recognition means an external assessment of curricula groups and study process.

Assessment commission consists of (one or two) representatives of educational system as well as (one or two) employers from the sector corresponding to curriculum group under review. These partners were also involved in development of the principles and rules of state recognition system. It is anticipated that results of the state recognition process will form the basis for giving or taking away the right to conduct studies in a certain field as well as the allocation of state funding.
In 2011, pilot rounds of state recognition were carried out in 23 VET institutions providing education in construction, hotel and catering fields. In 2012, pilot rounds in another five study fields were carried out. If the pilot rounds demonstrate that the system is successful, the state recognition will be implemented in all fields of study by 2013.

Planning at VET provider level (including identification of training needs)

Through their participation in councils of VET providers (at least 50% of council members need to be social partners’ representatives) social partners are involved in the management of VET institutions.

VET institutions also cooperate with enterprises in providing company-based training and mandatory practicing in work environment as a compulsory part of every curriculum.

Requirements for monitoring and review (self-assessment)

Schools in Estonia play an important role in quality assurance. They are required to undertake a self-assessment every three years. This self-assessment also applies to private training providers. Private training providers must be licensed (schooling licence) by the MoER according to the Private School Act.

VET schools in Estonia operate pursuant to Vocational Education Institutions Act and legislation issued on the basis thereof and pursuant to their statutes. In their statutes schools, among others, describe the functions of their structural units. One of such functions of schools is the monitoring of transitions from VET to work in six months after graduation. These data are not collected from private VET schools.

Activity indicators for VET schools including indicator for monitoring the employment of VET graduates six months after graduation, are stipulated in the Regulation of Minister of Education and Research (Directive No. 1031 of 20 October 2009). School performance data according to these indicators is publicly accessible on ehis.ee.

The 2012 EQAVET Secretariat survey provides an overview of all indicative descriptors at the VET providers’ level. According to the Estonian response to the survey, all indicative descriptors at provider level are at least sometimes used in the country.

Certification, assessment and validation of learners

Currently only private and municipal vocational education institutions require licences to deliver VET programmes and certificates. The new state recognition system introduced currently foresees an external assessment (accreditation) of study process.

According to the new Vocational Education Institutions Act that came into force on 1 January 2013 the accredited schools will have the right to deliver their programmes and qualification certificates for six years. If the accreditation is conditional, the period will be reduced to 1-3 years, with the requirement to undergo another assessment in the end of this period. The training in curriculum group will be terminated if the accreditation is denied.

The major proposed change compared to the valid procedure for education licences lies in the fact that, according to the new procedure, there will be no need to reapply for an education licence for each curriculum after its nominal period of study is over; but the right to conduct studies will have to be extended after an established period of time.

A person can graduate a VET programme by completing the curriculum and passing the foreseen tests and examinations. The number and areas of exams are determined by school curricula. The forms of graduation certificates and their supplements are determined by specific government regulation.

Stakeholder involvement

At provider level social partners participate in School Boards.

On the local level good cooperation between providers and enterprises exists in some sectors.
Representatives of employers are assigned by a relevant professional council to be members of the assessment commissions in accreditation process in their corresponding sectors.

**Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET at provider level since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008**

Since 2003 quality assurance tools have been developed in order to offer training providers additional and voluntary quality assurance options.

The development of quality assurance instruments, where major responsibility lies with VET providers began in 2003, following an extensive consultation with VET stakeholders. This led to the creation of the VET system Development Plan for 2005-2008, which helped to describe the current system and set out what needed to happen to strengthen VET system as whole, including quality assurance. The Development plan included the objectives of developing quality assurance system and introduction of quality management principles at the state and VET provider level. The system was to include regular internal and external evaluation of VET institutions, involving social partners, and the implementation of VET quality assurance system. The next stage in the development of the quality assurance system will be the focus on external evaluation of study process (accreditation)\(^{201}\).

Development plan for the Estonian Vocational Education and Training System emphasises the need to modernise the infrastructure of vocational education institutions. One major activity is renovating and building practical training bases and other infrastructure of vocational education institutions according to an investment plan. In the period 2004-2007 study facilities were renovated and modernised in 10 VET institutions as a part of the first round of reforms supported by the ERDF. The second round of modernisations is on-going. It is planned to renovate all the state owned (29 at the moment) and three municipal VET schools by 2015.

**Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET at provider level since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)**

During the recent years a new external accreditation and state recognition system (based on curriculum groups) has been tested and very recently (January 2013) introduced\(^{202}\).

In Estonia, ensuring state-of-the-art-technology in VET schools is defined as a priority by the Government Regulation (Operational Programme Development of Living Environment, priority axis of Development of Educational Infrastructure) and an investment plan has been approved for 2007-2015. By the end of 2012 37 of the 88 objects have been modernised, with the rest of the projects are in progress.

**Quality assurance arrangements at system level in continuous VET**

**National Framework for CVET – who is in charge of what?**

CVET in Estonia is a synonym for adult education governed by the Adult Education Act (1993). The Law does not differentiate IVET and CVET\(^{203}\) – both adults who have and have not previously studied a profession are considered as pursuing adult education.

Adult education includes distance learning, evening courses, part-time study or as an external student participating in in-work or non-formal training. The state supported non-formal adult education mostly relates to the training of the unemployed, in-work training of the people at the risk of unemployment as well as training of education institutions’ staff. The non-formal CVET is the responsibility of training institutions and other providers.

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\(^{202}\) [State Recognition in Vocational Education and Training. A Concept, 2010 (pg. 9)](http://ekka.archimedes.ee/files/_Akr_konseptioon_300410_f%C3%B5lge.pdf)

\(^{203}\) All official documents talk about adult education rather than CVET, because there are not data available for CVET.
The main national policy-planning document for CVET hence is the *Development Plan for Estonian Adult Education 2009-2013*. The Development Plan includes two Implementation Plans (2009-2011 and 2011-2013) with concrete activities, budgets and responsible institutions. The MoER has the overall responsibility for the development, implementation and any possible revisions of the Development Plan.

Concrete CVET activities are funded by various Ministries (the MoER, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications) according to the needs identified in their respective sectors. For example, the training for the unemployed and other vulnerable groups is commissioned by employment offices and funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs.

CVET is delivered by general secondary schools for adults, vocational education institutions and institutions of higher education and a large number of private adult training providers. Since 2007 the MoER funds short term training for working adults, delivered by existing VET schools and professional higher education institutions having VET programmes. The training is co-funded by the ESF and delivered through the *Work-related training and development activities for adults* project. Since 2010 the project also targets the unemployed.

The MoER also funds work-related training of the VET institutions’ staff through a number of ESF co-funded projects. In some regulated professions (e.g. healthcare and teachers) regular in-work training is mandatory and funds for training are allocated in the annual salary fund.

*Statutory stakeholder involvement in CVET systems*

The Development Plan for Estonian Adult Education was developed by the MoES and approved by the Adult Education Council, which is composed of representatives of various ministries, social partners and provider and representatives of adult learners.

In case of formal CVET, social partners also contribute to developing professional standards for each profession through the national level Professional Councils.

*Planning at CVET system level*

The objectives of adult education are established by the *Development Plan for Estonian Adult Education 2009-2013*, which aims to improve access to formal and non-formal learning for adults to increase the participation in lifelong learning to 13.5% by 2013. The plan also provides operational goals for formal-CVET that could be summarised as follows:

- Improving of economic situation by the means of adult education
- Opening education system to formal adult learning
- Providing non-formal adult learning opportunities
- Ensuring the quality and flexibility of adult learning
- Ensuring effectiveness and sustainability of adult learning

*Requirements for evaluation and review*

The Implementation Plans – developed in the context of the *Development Plan for Estonian Adult Education 2009-2013* – are presented to the Adult Education Council before these are submitted to the Government for approval.

The MER also develops implementation reports for the Development Plan every two years, which are submitted to the Adult Education Council for review before they are presented to the Government.

One of the measures in the 2009-2013 Development Plan foresees to increase the number of educational institutions that have joined the adult training sub-registry in the EHIS (from 0 in 2008 to 150 in 2013).

*Identification of training needs*

IVET and CVET adult education courses are planned by a task force, consisting of various stakeholders, meeting twice per year. These stakeholders identify priorities in training needs in line with the labour market demand.
One of the measures in the 2009-2013 Development Plan anticipates the development of the conception and methodology of competence based workforce prognoses in the period 2010-2013.

Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on CVET providers

For CVET the licences will be replaced by the right to register the curriculum at the EHIS, an online database of the whole educational system in Estonia.

Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)

General certification principles apply to formal CVET providers.

Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators

No data was identified regarding the monitoring, inspection and the use of indicators in adult education.

Reforms of quality assurance in CVET since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)

According to the 2009-2013 Development Plan:

- The MoER will make legislative proposals in the period to improve the quality of non-formal adult education by requiring more transparency in providers activities
- The MoER will initiate the development of state-funded outcomes-based non-formal adult training study programmes in institutions of higher education, vocational education institutions and in liberal adult education centres
- The MoER will amend legislation to provide unified requirements for certificates to be issued upon graduation of non-formal adult education

Reforms of quality assurance in CVET since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008

No data available from the sources reviewed and consulted.

Quality assurance arrangements in continuous VET at provider level

The MoER is responsible for the formal CVET providers. The non-formal CVET is the responsibility of training institutions and other providers.

Some companies have their own training schemes and support. ESF also supports in-work training in companies. In-work training is also provided by a number of specialised private companies and increasingly by higher education institutions, VET institutions and professional associations.

Requirements CVET providers have to comply with (if not described in 1st section)

CVET curricula are developed by schools, in line with the applicable legislation of the founding body.

Training at company level is not a legal requirement in Estonia, but the Adult Education Act encourages the state, local authorities and employers to coordinate and organise adult education.

Planning at CVET provider level (including identification of training needs)

Planning of the state commissioned adult education is the responsibility of the MoER and other ministries in their respective areas. Planning the rest of the non-formal adult education is the responsibilities of those who commission it (e.g. municipalities, enterprises) and the beneficiaries.

Requirements for monitoring and review (self-assessment)

Private training providers need to acquire licences issued by the MoES, in line with the provisions of the Private School Act. Licences are valid for three to five years.

Currently public just as private providers are required to undertake a self-assessment every three years.
The licenses system will be replaced by the right to register a curriculum at the EHIS online database.

**Certification, assessment and validation of learners**

Since professional standards apply also to CVET, CVET leading to the award of professional qualifications is largely subject to the same regulations as IVET.

**Stakeholder involvement**

At provider level social partners participate in School Boards.

On the local level food cooperation between providers and enterprises exists in some sectors.

**Reforms of quality assurance in CVET at provider level since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)**

Please see section A8.1.

**Reforms of quality assurance in CVET at provider level since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008**

No data available from the sources reviewed and consulted.

**Part 2 – Interaction between national quality assurance and EQAVET**

**Basic information**

There is no EQAVET NRP in Estonia. The tasks of policy development and implementation of quality assurance are undertaken by a network of responsible institutions and there is no perceived need to formalise this work in the form of an NRP.

The functions related to quality development and assurance in VET are the responsibility of the MoER and the Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency (EKKA). The MoER has participated in EQAVET related EU developments since 2005 and the EKKA – since 2009.

The national approach to enhancing quality assurance in VET is constituted by a number of policy documents (listed under subsection 8.1). Two VET Development Plans have been produced since 2005 (covering the periods 2005-2008 and 2009-2013). Aligned with the Development Plans *A Concept of State Recognition in Vocational Education and Training* was developed in 2010. The process and goals of VET institutions’ self-assessment are regulated by the Vocational Institution Act.

**National Reference Point**

Formally an EQAVET NRP has not been established in Estonia. The functions related to quality assurance are the responsibility of the MoER. The EKKA is also engaged in development and implementation of state recognition system and EQAVET cooperation.

According to the interviewees, one of the reasons for not nominating an official NRP for EQAVET is to avoid any unnecessary tasks and formal requirements of the EQAVET Recommendation – and to allow the current institutions to focus on their own activities, which are in line with the national priorities. The interviewees also noted that the MoER in cooperation with the EKKA can cover all the functions traditionally allocated to a NRP.

While the work on quality assurance in VET started already in 1990s (as outlined under subsection 8.1) a systematic work of the MoER on this topic started in 2005 – in the context of the first VET Development Plan. The aim of this process was to build a new system for quality assurance in VET.

The MoER is currently responsible for quality assurance developments at national and provider level, international cooperation including at European level. This work is supported by the State and ESF funding (in the area of VET only ESF funding). More specifically the MoER is responsible for systematic development for quality assurance systems at all levels.
as well as for the development of legislation and the currently implemented transition to the state recognition system.

**National approach to enhance quality assurance**

Estonian Competitiveness Strategy 2020 includes several VET related activities such as comprehensive planning of state commissioned study places in vocational education and upper-secondary general education to ensure the increase of the number of VET students; financing schemes of different types of education and increasing funding vocational education as well as raising quality of VET and its relevance to labour market needs.

National approach is reflected in several documents that are publicly available and developed in consultation with a wide range of VET stakeholders:

- Development Plan for the Estonian Vocational Education and Training System 2009-2013[^204] – outlined in section 8.1;
- A Concept of the State Recognition in Vocational Education and Training[^205] – describing the new state recognition process; and
- The Vocational Institutions Act – providing the process and criteria for self-assessment.

In development plans for the Estonian vocational education and training system (for the years 2005–2008 as well as 2009–2013), extra emphasis has been placed on issues regarding quality. Objectives concerning the quality of vocational education establish the development of a quality assurance system and introduction of quality management principles at both state and educational institution levels, including regular internal and external evaluation of institutions of vocational education and training (VET institutions), involving social partners.

The VET quality assurance is a working system, in continuous development. Analogous to developments in other EU Member States (Finland), Estonia has also developed a system of indicators for self-assessment to facilitate assessment of the VET performance at provider level (provided with the Vocational Institutions Act). As such, the national approach of quality assurance in VET can be considered as a common quality assurance framework for VET providers.

Just like EQAVET circle, according to the Concept of the State Recognition in Vocational Education and Training the Estonian model for quality assurance in VET is divided in four parts: planning, implementation, evaluation / making an assessment (measuring), feed forward and feedback (adjustments). The quality assurance model for Estonian vocational education and training system (based on CQAF – predecessor of EQAVET) is presented below.

[^205]: [http://ekka.archimedes.ee/files/_Akr_kontseptsioon_300410_t%C3%B5lge.pdf](http://ekka.archimedes.ee/files/_Akr_kontseptsioon_300410_t%C3%B5lge.pdf)
The national approach is focused on education and training process and results in VET institutions, including attention to quality of practical training and co-operation with industry. The approach places an emphasis on core process of schools – education and training.

The state recognition system (accreditation) in VET is in a piloting phase since 2011. The piloting is providing information on whether schools are ready for the process of accreditation. It also gives feedback on what are quality assurance processes on provider level, how these are organised, and, of course, on the quality of VET provided.

The national quality assurance approach was developed based on the analysis of current monitoring and quality assurance instruments and needs of stakeholders, developments foreseen in state supervision system and quality assurance in higher education, success of voluntary EFQM based Quality Award Model for VET institutions, world-wide developments in QA ideology (from central and state level regulations to provider level responsibility taking), etc.

**Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance**

The initiatives to improve the quality assurance procedures in VET started before the country joined the ENQA-VET network and before the ENQA-VET Recommendation was issued. However, the national approach is very much in line with the EQAVET approach. The common qualification framework (CQAF model) developed by the technical group before the creation of the ENQA-VET network was used in Estonia to describe the quality assurance system in VET.

The stakeholders consulted could not say that the 2009 EQAVET Recommendation has led to the introduction of new activities. According to the interviewees the quality assurance developments and the understanding of importance quality assurance in VET were already there before the Recommendation and there was no need to change the approach. It was however underlined that the participation in European network was important from the point of view of dissemination and learning of good practices and cooperation in working groups.

The interviewees noted that there are no major contradictions between the Estonian approach and the approach proposed by the EQAVET Recommendation. The main idea of EQAVET is to provide a holistic approach to quality assurance, based on common principles shared by the involved countries. What particular models or indicators are used on the national level is contextual. It also has to remain contextual in the future – as countries have different VET and quality assurance systems.
Quality assurance in VET is one of the top priorities of the Development Plan for the Estonian vocational education and training system 2009-2013. The EQAVET network has been engaged in the pooling of experience concerning quality assurance in VET, harmonising concepts between Member States and further developing the CQAF model. As such, EQAVET is not been the impetus to quality assurance activities in Estonia but has been used as a support to these.

Apart from the MoER and the EKKA, a number of other institutions and private companies are involved in the quality assurance in Estonia. Employer representatives at the qualifications authority are nominated by the Occupational councils. Innove has different tasks in relation to VET development, VET content and teacher training. As the EKKA only has six employees, it often relies on contributions of experts from different institutions in the VET system. Estonia has two councils – one for HE and one for VET, each with 15 members. Qualification authorities, trade unions and representatives of VET providers (Estonian Vet development association) – all take part in quality assurance.

According to the interviewees, stakeholders are generally interested in cooperation in the EQAVET framework. They are participating at sectoral seminars, conferences, etc. The stakeholders were also informed then the EQAVET case studies were prepared for the EQAVET portal.

There have been no events organised to disseminate information specifically on EQAVET in Estonia. The information is shared with the key stakeholders on day-to-day work relationship basis and in relation to their specific roles in quality assurance. For example, the stakeholders are involved in the development and implementation of the state recognition system in VET. When the MoER organises a new accreditation year, it organises training seminars and information days for providers. These events are used to explain the accreditation process and evaluation criteria. Furthermore, training is offered to employers’ representatives who will work as evaluation experts, explaining why particular criteria are important.

**Synergies with other EU level instruments**

The vocational qualifications system is developed and administered by Estonian Qualifications Authority. The link between learning outcomes and the Estonian qualifications system are described in a Vocational Education Standard, adopted by the Government (amendment to SVET since 2009).

The development of the national qualifications system in line with the eight levels of the EQF is one of the objectives of the trilateral Agreement on Joint Activities. The alignment is currently in progress, managed by the Estonian Qualification Authority (an NGO established by social partners and Government).

The SVET included in the Vocational Education Institutions Act links the types of VET qualifications to the NQF/EQF, while the national curricula for VET assign the NQF levels to the corresponding types of qualifications.

All IVET curricula correspond to a certain EQF level (2-4), stated in the respective VET standard. The NQF/EQF level and learning outcomes are not yet indicated in vocational qualification certificates.

The ECVET based credit system in Estonian VET was introduced in with the amendments in the Vocational Education Institutions Act. The volume of curricula and modules are expressed in VET credits (1 credit = 40 hours study week).

New Vocational Education Institutions Act will come into force 2013 and there the ECVET/EKAP will be introduced. Study week/credit was in use before ECVET recommendations, introduced with amendments to the VET Institution’s Act in 2006.
Sources


Country report – Finland

Author: Astrid Henningsen (ICF GHK)

Part 1 – Description of quality assurance arrangements and of recent developments

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in initial VET

Context

Initial VET in Finland may be school based or apprenticeship based. This report discusses VET at upper-secondary level and post-secondary level. VET delivery at upper-secondary level is regulated by the Vocational Education Act\(^\text{206}\) and the Decree on Vocational Education\(^\text{207}\).

In Finland the provision of initial VET is a shared responsibility between the national administration and VET providers. Decisions on developing new qualifications and updating of core curricular are national. The state provides funding for VET providers; defines standards of teacher qualifications and grants the authority to provide IVET to providers. Within the framework, providers have autonomy to develop and adapt the curricula to meet local needs.

The general framework for quality assurance

At national level, the institutions in charge of quality assurance are the Ministry of Education and Culture and Finnish National Board of Education. Stakeholders have a statutory role in the national QA process.

The Vocational Education Act and the Decree on Vocational Education lay down the Framework for quality assurance. There are two types of quality assurance mechanisms in Finland:

- Normative mechanisms (licensing/accreditation, qualification requirements, skills demonstrations, matriculation examination, financing, self-evaluation, taking part in external evaluations)
- Voluntary mechanisms (quality management recommendation, quality awards etc.)

The quality assurance framework relies on three principal elements:

- National steering of VET (Development plan for education and research, licensing/accreditation, funding, core curricula and qualifications, skill tests etc.)
- Quality management by VET providers (including obligation for self-evaluation)
- External evaluation of VET

Quality management by VET providers is central to the Finnish approach to quality assurance. VET provision is characterised by decentralisation and normative regulations have been decreasing since the late 1990’s.

In quality management, attention is given to outputs – and less to inputs. A system for monitoring and evaluating learning outcomes is developed currently by the FNBE. There are no systems for inspection. In contrast there is a system for external evaluation.

Development of quality assurance systems at providers’ level is supported by various voluntary mechanisms developed/managed at system (see below). Quality development measures are furthermore encouraged by financial incentives.

The system for quality assurance and development may be seen as comprehensive covering all parts of the quality cycle.

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\(^{206}\) Vocational Education Act 630/1998

\(^{207}\) Decree on Vocational Education 811/1998
**National steering and planning at VET system level**

The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for the strategic and normative steering. The Ministry of Education and Culture sets general goals for VET and defines the qualification structure.

The Decree on the Development Plan for Education and University Research\(^{208}\) lay down that the Government adopts a 5 year plan for the development of education and university research. The Education and Research Development Plans are the key documents of the Finnish education and research policy directing and guiding the implementation of the educational policy in Finland. The current plan was approved in 2007\(^{209}\).

The Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE) has a wide range of tasks related to the development of education all through pre-primary and basic education, general and vocational upper secondary education and training, adult education and basic education in the arts. As regards national steering and planning the FNBE is responsible for drawing up the national core curricula detailing goals/objectives for pre-primary and basic education and general upper secondary education and the national qualification requirements for vocational education and training and competence-based qualifications. The national core curricula are framework curricula. Within the framework each provider develops its curricula to meet local needs.

**Stakeholder involvement**

Stakeholder involvement in the Finnish VET system is formalised at both system and providers level and stakeholders engagement form an important part of quality assurance and development.

National Education and Training Committees were set up in 2007 to plan and develop vocational education and training. The legislation\(^{210}\) defines the composition and tasks of the committees. There are altogether 26 National Education and Training Committees. They are required in vocational upper secondary and adult education as well as higher education. Their task is to follow, evaluate, anticipate and analyse the development of skills needed in the labour market; to make suggestions for the qualitative and quantitative development of training; to survey the core curricula and qualifications requirements and give statements regarding issues in their sector. The Committees comprise representatives of the national education and training administration, teachers, employers and employees.

The development of the national qualifications and core curricula is undertaken by the FNBE in cooperation with national Education and Training Committees (tripartite expert consultative bodies). The core curricula are discussed in the Education and Training Committees of each occupational sector and qualifications committees.

Stakeholders are also involved in many others activities such as Quality Awards for VET, Development of the Quality strategy and preparation the criteria for quality assurance and development system. Also the development of supporting QA tools and materials are made in close cooperation with stakeholders.

**Identification of training needs**

Information on skills needs is produced by the FNBE. The FNBE uses a calculation model derived from the forecasts of changes and natural wastage in the total labour force. Forecasts are presented for different fields of study and levels of education. Quantitative skills anticipation information is also provided by the Labour Force 2025 project co-ordinated by the Ministry of Labour.

The important governmental bodies for skills anticipation are National Education and Training Committees and the Advisory Board for Educational Co-operation. Their task is,

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\(^{208}\) Asetus koulutuksen ja yliopistossa harjoitettavan tutkimuksen kehittämisuunitelmasta 987/1998

\(^{209}\) Ministry for Education (December 2007) Education and Research 2007-2012, Development plan


\(^{210}\) Which legislation
among others, to monitor, evaluate and anticipate the development of vocationally oriented education and training and competence required in working life in their own field.

In addition, the Confederation of Finnish Industries EK conducts a regular labour force and skill needs survey. It is directed to all enterprises with more than 250 employees, a quarter of enterprises with 10–149 employees and one fifth of enterprises with 3–9 employees.

**Type of IVET qualifications**

There are currently 52 IVET qualifications and 120 study programmes. The national requirements of vocational qualifications were reviewed in the period 2008-2010. The revision included the structure of the requirements, the organisation of studies, the requirements of skills as well as the targets and criteria of assessment.

To complete an upper secondary level vocational qualification normally takes three years – which may be school or apprenticeship based. School based VET is done mainly in schools but has elements of on the job learning (minimum of six months\(^{211}\)). Apprenticeship based training is done 80% in the work place. In this case, the employer must be able to offer sufficiently diverse training and appoint a qualified or sufficiently experienced person as a tutor.

IVET qualifications are placed in the draft Finish NQF at level 4 (the NQF expected to be adopted early 2013).

There is full permeability between IVET and general education. An IVET qualification provides general eligibility to higher education at the same level of general upper secondary education. Full permeability, is applicable for learners having completed school based IVET as well as apprenticeship based VET.

**Certification, assessment and recognition of qualifications**

Competences acquired are assessed by means of vocational skills demonstrations – performing work assignments relevant to the vocational skill requirement. Other assessment methods may be used to supplement vocational skills demonstrations.

The vocational skills demonstrations are conceptualised, implemented and assessed in cooperation with the professional representatives – within the framework of the national core curricular.

IVET qualification is composed by vocational units (90 credits, of which at least 20 from on the job learning), core subject units (20 credits), and free choice units (10 credits) – a total of 120 credit points. Assessment is undertaken for the vocational, core subject units and for the free choice units. Theory and practice are assessed together within each Unit. Qualifications are generally completed and assessed one module at a time. There is no final exam.

Knowledge skills and competences are described as learning outcomes within the unit.

**Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – authorisation of VET providers**

The authorisations to provide VET are granted by the Ministry of Education and Culture. In order to provide education and training within the Finnish VET/CVET system, the provider needs to have a permission granted by the Ministry. The Ministry has to evaluate prerequisites of an applying organisation before granting authorisation.

The authorisation covers both the study fields, which can be provided by the provider and the total number of students. In order to be authorised, the applicant must prove that the planned education and training is necessary, its professional skills and financial ability to organize training in an appropriate manner\(^{212}\). In addition, the licenced provider has to obey the other paragraphs of the applicable law and decrees.

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\(^{211}\) An IVET qualification is composed by vocational units (90 credits, of which at least 20 from on the job learning), core subject units (20 credits), and free choice units (10 credits) – a total of 120 credit points

\(^{212}\) Art 9 24 630/1998
Once authorised, training providers can target the training provision as they see fit within the national framework to meet the needs of the local labour market. There are currently some 150 IVET providers. Education providers are mostly municipalities or federations of municipalities – but may be private organisations.

It may be noted, that according to the VET quality strategy 2011-2020, the evaluation of the prerequisites will be given a clearer role in QA and in continuous quality improvement in the future. Furthermore, a set of criteria will be developed for the evaluation. Also a system for electronic transactions in VET licensing will be developed for the support of the evaluation.

**Teacher requirements**

Requirements for teachers form part of the quality assurance system – and are defined by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

All teachers in vocational training are required to have a master degree in the relevant field (or if not available the highest possible qualification available in the field). Core subject teachers much in addition have at least 60 ECTS credits in pedagogy – whereas teachers of vocational subjects must have in addition to a degree from a university of applied science, complete pedagogical studies (60 ECTS credits) as well as at least 3 years of work experience in their field. Teacher development forms part of continued monitoring at national level (see selection below on indicators).

**Monitoring and use of indicators at system level**

Performance indicators are used to monitor at national level performance. Indicators are composed by “impact indicators” and indicators related to staff. The following indicators - are used:

- Impact related indicators
  - Placement in employment
  - Placement in further education
  - Dropout rate
  - Penetration rate

- Staff related indicators
  - Formal competence
  - Staff development

The tracking system in place for impact related indicators (via personal numbers) allow impact measurement over long periods of time.

Beyond national performance monitoring, the indicator system is used to promote quality development at provider levels. The indicators provide the basis for the development of a composite performance index. The performance index (which also takes into account education, student and local environment) is used to allocate “top up” performance based financing high performing providers - with the aim to encourage quality improvement.

Performance-based financing represent currently 3% of the core funding. The remaining 97% is statutory core financing (based on number of students taking into account into account differences in costs). The basis for allocation of performance based financing is made publicly available. Via benchmarking and making publicly available the performance index it plays an important steering role – beyond the financial incentive to improve.

It is understood that this model is relatively unique in the European context. The system has been in place since 2006.

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213 Furthermore, type and nature of quality assurance mechanisms used at provider level is measured.
External Evaluation

As presented in the subsequent section, the Quality Management Recommendation recommends that providers are subject to external evaluation at least every three years. As indicated above there is no inspection systems for VET providers in Finland.

Voluntary systems to promote quality improvement

As outlined above, self-evaluation forms the backbone of quality assurance and development in the Finnish VET system. In order to develop and support mechanisms for quality assurance and development at providers level a number of voluntary systems have been put in place at system level.

Quality awards for VET

Quality award has been offered in Finland for more than a decade. The purpose of the award is to encourage and promote quality management of VET providers and evaluation of training. The awards identify good practice and promote exchange of these practices. The awards also more generally aim at highlighting the importance of VET. The award has an annual theme, based on education policy goals. One to four prizes are given each year to providers for successful work on quality and its results.

In order to receive the award VET providers need to apply. Based on the written applications 10 providers are shortlisted for external evaluation – and six retained for field visits. The board of evaluators include representatives of all stakeholders (employers, employees, VET providers, teachers and students).

The evaluation framework is based on the EFQM model (9 different evaluation areas. In addition annually a specific theme of interest is nominated, for year 2011 it was individual learning paths, for 2012 entrepreneurship. Each year maximum four providers can get the award, including min. 50,000€ prize money for each winner.

Considering its budgetary implication it forms part of performance based funding – as an incentive for quality enhancement.

Quality management Recommendation

A Quality Management Recommendation for Vocational Education and Training\textsuperscript{214} has been devised in 2008, by the FNBE and Ministry of Education and Culture working with VET providers, representatives of business and industry and students. The Recommendation has been forwarded to VET providers with the letter signed by Minister of Education.

The Quality Management Recommendation is based on the EQAVET model – and is seen a major contribution to the Finnish implementation of the Copenhagen process measures. The Recommendation is divided into sections on the basis of what is regarded as the characteristics of an excellent organisation – and is targeted providers. The following areas are covered:

- Consideration of functions as a whole
- Customer focus
- Leadership
- Result orientation
- Continuous learning, innovation and improvement
- People as resources-effective processes-relevance to the world of work and partnerships
- Social responsibility

Within each of these areas the Recommendation provides specific recommendations as regards, planning, implementation and review. The Quality Management Recommendation is structured so that it serves as a practical assistant tool for VET providers to develop quality management and also aims to encourage them to continuously improve the quality of their operations and results.

The Recommendations for VET in Finland is aimed for all types of vocational education and training in Finland. Main target groups are all VET providers, including CVET, and their various units and forms of operation. The recommendation is voluntary for VET providers. VET providers may use these recommendations according to their own situations.

The FNBE, in cooperation with VET providers, has developed different tools to support the implementation of the Recommendation. The tools include procedures and criteria for peer reviews in IVET and CVET. Training on peer review has also been organised. This work has been informed by lessons learned from Leonardo projects.

Quality assurance meetings

National network meetings to stimulate and develop quality development and assurance at provider level have been organised for a number of years – with currently 3 meetings annually. The meetings engage providers, enterprises/private organisations and other actors who want to be engaged. There is no requirement for participation.

Provider networks

To further support quality management and learning at provider level – and specifically the implementation of the VET Quality Strategy (see below) - FNBE has since 2011 been providing funding based on the state budget for the set-up of regional – or thematic - networks of VET providers. Funding is available for both IVET– on the basis of call for proposals. There are also grants for CVET providers in state budget.

In 2011, based on project applications, 6 regional quality networks were established. In 2012 additional 11 networks were established. The aims of the quality networks include e.g.:

- Implementation of the quality strategy at the provider level
- Recognizing and disseminating good practices of QM in VET
- Promoting and developing QM at the provider level through networking taking in consideration the different experiences and stages of the organisations
- Promoting peer learning in developing QM in VET

In order to provide quality development among all providers – including those less experienced – one of the awarding criteria is that networks should also include VET providers which do not have a long tradition with quality management. QM.

The main changes introduced since 2003 (beginning of the EU cooperation that led to EQAVET adoption)

Quality assurance and management in VET in Finland has evolved significantly over the last decade. The following major changes should be noted:

- Review of qualifications, development of new core curricular – and increased decentralisation and flexibility towards providers to develop local curricular and training approaches to best meet local needs
- Enhanced focus on continued development of quality assurance systems and self-assessment at providers’ level – supported by various voluntary mechanisms developed at system level and financial incentives.

The mechanism to support QA development at provider level includes quality awards for VET, performance-based financing, Quality Management Recommendation and set up of a national network.

Main changes to QA at system level introduced since 2009 (Adoption of the EQAVET Recommendation)

The focus on framework support has continued since 2009 and VET providers remain at the centre of quality assurance and development approaches. Within this framework major changes/developments include: the publication of a Quality Strategy in 2011, for the period

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215 See http://www.oph.fi/rahoitus/valtionavustukset/ammattilainen_koulutus/laatustrategian_tuki
2011-2020\textsuperscript{216} - to guide further development of quality assurance. The strategy is based on The Education and Research Development Plan for 2007-2012.

In the framework of the strategy, the following developments should be noted:

- The requirement for all VET providers to have an effective quality assurance and development system in place by 2015
- The development of a set of criteria applicable to different kinds of VET provision to document effective quality systems (by March 2013). These criteria will be used for developing and assess QA systems. The role of self-assessment is in this system is very important.

Beyond these criteria and requirements – financial support is provided for the development of QA at providers’ level (funding of regional/thematic networks).

**Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in initial VET**

The quality assurance at the level of VET schools comprises:

- Planning
- Self-evaluation and operative quality assurance and development system in place (by 2015 at the latest)
- Stakeholder involvement
- Skills demonstrations
- Taking part in peer review, quality awards and benchmarking - using Performance based Financing data (public available on the webpage of FNBE)

**Planning**

Within the framework provided by the legislative acts and the core curricular, providers have autonomy to develop and adapt the curricula to meet local needs.

As outlined above, as long as primary national objectives, the framework rules and requirements for core curricula are met, the specific content of training may vary from college to college in order to adapt IVET to local needs and demand. At local level, the VET providers draw up their own curricula based on the core curricula. Teachers themselves may choose methods to achieve objectives defined in the core curriculum. In addition, each student follows an individual study plan.

**Self-evaluation**

Quality assurance in Finland enjoys a high level of decentralisation – and the providers are – as outlined above - is the main actor involved in quality assurance.

The mandatory quality assurance at the level of VET provider comprises:

- Self-assessment
- External evaluation (see section below)

Evaluation requirements are defined in the Government Decree on the evaluation of evaluation and training which govern all lower and higher secondary education – as well as adult education\textsuperscript{217}.

All providers are required by law\textsuperscript{218} to undertake self-evaluation of VET provision and its effectiveness with the aim to develop of education and improve the conditions for learning.

Fulfilling the statutory requirements requires providers to have an operational system in place, which includes effective quality management procedures. The nature of the self-evaluation to be undertaken is to be defined by the provider and decisions on quality enhancements; quality management and self-assessment are decided by the provider. In terms of quality assurance providers:

\textsuperscript{216} Ammatillisen koulutuksen laatustrategia 2011-2020
\textsuperscript{217} 150/2003
\textsuperscript{218} Art. 24 630/1998
Collect and analyse evaluation results and other feedback information;
Make use of results obtained in other evaluations, such as the results of national evaluations;
Develop their operations by means of internal audits;
Co-operate with other education and training providers by carrying out benchmarking and peer reviews.

In Finland, VET providers make diverse use of various quality assurance methods. According to a survey undertaken in 2009 by a sample of providers:

- 61% Uses the EFQM Excellence Model
- 49% Balanced scorecard
- 36% ISO standards

In addition, smaller shares of providers indicated use of Total Quality Management and CAF.

Research furthermore suggests that a significant share of providers have been engaged in systematic quality assurance work for a significant period of time. Among those surveyed in 2009, 27% of the providers had made systematic quality work over 10 years, 27% over 6-10 years, 19% over 3-5 years and 27% the respondents less than 3 years.

External evaluation

The Government Decree on the evaluation of evaluation and training lays down that participation in national external evaluation is mandatory for all VET providers.

The QM Recommendation recommends that each provider has an external evaluation of their operations carried out at least once every three years. To this end, the Ministry of Education and Culture has set up an independent expert body, the Education Evaluation Council, for national external evaluation.

The Council, together with the Ministry of Education and Culture, is responsible for educational evaluation and its development in the areas of basic education, upper secondary school education, vocational education and vocational adult education as well as independent civic education. The Ministry of Education and Culture decides the plan for national evaluations.

Besides undertaking external evaluation of providers – and thematic evaluations - the Council aim to develop an evaluation system and to develop evaluation methods for the needs of various users. In carrying out national evaluations, self-evaluations results from providers are used. Dissemination of good and successful practices is also seen as a task for the Secretariat of the Finnish Education Evaluation Council, which works as a separate institute of the University of Jyväskylä.

The FNBE carries out follow-up evaluations of the national learning outcomes. The Ministry Education and Culture prepares an evaluation plan for the external evaluation of training and follow-up assessments of learning outcomes.

Stakeholder involvement

The Vocational Education Act (Art 6) lay down that labour market needs are to be taken into account when providing VET training – and is to be organized in collaboration with the relevant sectors.

For the assessment of skills demonstrations each provider set up one or more bodies whose members represent education providers, teachers and students, as well as employers in the relevant business.

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219 As referred to in Leena Koski, 2011, Quality Assurance of Vocational Education and Training and the Finnish Educational system, presentation in the Framework of the “from Good to the Best Project, 13.4.2011
220 råd för utbildningsutvärdering
The body approves the plans for implementation and assessment of skills demonstrations as part of the provider's curriculum, supervises professional test operations and decides on assessors of professional tests.

**The main changes introduced since 2003 (beginning of the EU cooperation that led to EQAVET adoption)**

The changes at provider level are closely interlinked with changes at system level. As outlined, the last decade has been characterised by increased decentralisation of responsibility for development of curricular and a strong focus on development of quality assurance at provider’s level.

This has been followed up by continued development of quality assurance mechanisms at provider level – using various instruments – such as peer learning – and update of different QA tools.

In addition to support mechanisms such as the National recommendations and the national quality awards – quality enhancement has been supported by national and Leonardo projects (especially Peer Learning).

**The main changes to QA at providers level introduced since 2009 (Adoption of the EQAVET Recommendation)**

The main changes since 2009 relate to the implementation of the VET quality strategy – which obliges VET providers to have a comprehensive system for quality assurance and development in place by 2015 – and consequently an objective which providers currently work against.

Another important change is the work by providers in the thematic/regional networks – which were initiated in 2011.

**Quality assurance arrangements at system level in continuous VET**

**Context**

Generally, CVET in Finland covers all education and training intended for adults at all levels of the education system. Based on the major funding source the adult education can be divided in three categories: self-motivated education for which the Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible, labour market training for which the Ministry of Employment and the Economy is responsible and staff (or in-service) training for which the employers are responsible.

However, for the scope of the assignments, only the following qualifications are a considered – which are all governed by the Vocational Adult Education Act (631/1998) and Vocational Adult Education Decree (812/1998):

- Upper secondary vocational qualifications completed in the form of competence-based qualifications
- Further and specialist vocational qualifications
- Preparatory training for further and specialist vocational qualifications and
- Other types of upper secondary level additional vocational education and training

Learners having obtained an Upper secondary vocational qualification may enrol and achieve further vocational training in their respective field. In 2010, there were some 187 further vocational qualifications. In addition, some 129 specialist qualifications are available. In order to achieve such qualifications learners need to demonstrate command of the most challenging work assignments in their field.

Further and specialist vocational qualifications are achieved though competence based tests. In addition, further training not leading to any specific qualification is organised according to needs of learners and employers.
Planning at CVET system level and stakeholder involvement

The above-mentioned education development plan concerns also continuous VET. The Ministry of Education and Culture sets general goals for VET – including CVET and defines the qualification structure. The Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE) defines and decides on the national Qualification Requirements, detailing goals/objectives and core curricula for each of the qualifications.

In the development of CVET the Ministry is assisted by the Council of Lifelong Learning consisting of representatives of different interest groups.

The Finnish National Board of Education assists the Ministry in preparing decisions on education policy. It also decides on the Requirements of Competence Based Qualifications, which describes the aims and content of the qualifications.

For competence-based qualifications tripartite Qualification Committees oversee and develop the implementation. They also ensure consistent quality of qualifications and issue qualification certificates. Qualification Committees include representatives of the employers, employees, and teachers – and where necessary entrepreneurs.

Who can deliver CVET

The overall responsibility for the development of adult education and training rests with the Ministry of Education and Culture. Labour market training is purchased by the employment authorities and the financing is channelled through the Ministry of Employment and the Economy. Adult employment training falls within the administrative sector of the Ministry of Employment and the Economy.

Several organisations are engaged in the provision of CVET in Finland. The intermediate level of administration, comprising the Regional State Administrative Agencies and the Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment has an important role in promoting vocational adult education and training and implementing continuing teacher education.

Adult education organisations are owned by the State, local authorities; joint municipal boards; as well as private organisations, such as associations, foundations and companies. Local authorities maintain the majority of general upper secondary schools for adult students, adult education centres, vocational adult education centres and other vocational institutions.

For schools providing public funded CVET accreditation is similar to that of IVET. For competence-based qualifications tripartite qualification committees – with assistance from Finnish National Board of Education – grant permission for VET providers to offer competence-based qualifications for a specific period.

In addition, for CVET sector, providers, which function on commercial bases, are numerous. However, the organisations do belong under the jurisdiction of Ministry and are not subject to public funding. However, from the point of view of quality management, the commercial based training organisations do often have some QM system or mechanism in use, e.g. based on some well-established system like ISO.

Certification, assessment and validation (competence-based qualifications)

At the end of training learners demonstrate their skills in practice in a competence test in order to obtain a competence-based qualification.

The system allows recognising learners competences – irrespectively of where these are acquired. To achieve a competence based qualification learners need to demonstrate their vocational skills in competence tests.

Competence-based qualifications system is intended to enable working age adults to gain qualifications without necessarily attending formal training. It is possible to take competence-based vocational qualifications, further vocational qualifications and special vocational qualifications or only parts of them through the competence test system – allowing recognition and validation.
Qualification certificate are in two parts: final certificate by the VET provider and certification of skills by the local board for Skills Demonstration (the latter based on skills demonstration).

Framework for quality assurance

At national level, the institutions in charge of quality assurance are the Ministry of Education and Culture and Finnish National Board of Education. Stakeholders have a statutory role in the national QA process regarding definition of qualifications and of the “framework VET programmes”.

A for IVET the quality assurance framework relies on three main elements, National steering of VET; Quality management by VET providers (obligation self-evaluation: provision and quality) and External evaluation of VET.

The normative and voluntary measures, which have been presented for IVET, are also applicable for publicly funded CVET provision.

Main changes since 2003

As above (under IVET)

Quality assurance arrangements in continuous VET at provider level

The quality assurance in CVET takes the same form as for IVET – and is therefore not described here.

Part 2 – Interaction between national quality assurance and EQAVET

National Reference Point

The National Reference Point (NRP) is hosted by the Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE).

Main responsibilities of FNBE’s are:

- Drawing up the national core curricula for pre-primary and basic education and general upper secondary education and the national qualification requirements for vocational education and training and competence-based qualifications.
- Evaluation of education. The FNBE evaluates learning outcomes and improves the efficiency of training.
- Information services. The FNBE co-ordinates information networks and services in the education sector, produces indicator data and information for anticipating educational needs, maintains the financing system for the education sector, and publishes training guides.
- Support services for education.

The NRP is integrated in the organ and structures responsible for quality assurance development in VET at national level – it does not constitute a separate structure or organ, and NCP activities can accordingly not be clearly distinguished from those of the host.

As a promoter of quality assurance in VET the FNBE takes a leading role in the quality assurance development at systems levels – covering each of the aspects covered above.

In relation to EQAVET the NRP role is to disseminate and promote the approach defined by the EQAVET Recommendation – and does so through its varied activities including:

- Its sub-site on QM on webpage of FNBE
- The Quality Award for VET
- Trainings for VET providers and yearly the quality seminar for VET
- The national network meetings it organises for VET providers.

The FNBE has also been engaged in various Leonardo projects related to quality assurance – including notably Peer Review in Initial VET (2004–2007), Peer Review Extended - Implementing the CQAF through Peer Review (2007) and Peer Review Extended II (2007-2010).
Finally the FNBE cooperate with other NRPs and take part in EU level activities.

A specific person is assigned the role of NRP. However, the NRP does not have a separate mandate. In reality the NRP role is integrated in the activities that the FNBE undertakes to promote and develop quality assurance – and cannot be seen as a separate activity. Consequently HR resources cannot be defined.

Within this framework the FNBE undertake all of the activities laid down in the EQAVET Recommendation – and engage with the actors defined above.

**National approach to enhance quality assurance**

A national approach has been devised for the period 2011-2020. The approach does not consolidate the current QA approach – but set out a strategy for quality assurance development for the 2001-20 period.

The national VET strategy was published and approved in 2011. The Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE) devised the strategy, working with VET providers, representatives of business and industry and students.

The VET quality strategy defines the aims, guidelines and development measures for the common quality strategy for VET so that all sectors of national QA system and all forms of VET are covered, including CVET.

Main elements of the strategy and the expected key results are presented in the box below:

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**VET quality strategy**

- Quality management will be made systematic at all levels of operation and all forms of VET. In support of this aim, the steering tools in VET will be developed to support quality assurance and continuous improvement.
- By 2015 the VET providers will have effective quality system / operational system. In addition, a set of criteria and a process, applicable to different kinds of VET provision, will be developed for auditing QA systems.
- The evaluation of prerequisites for providing VET will be given a clearer role in QA and in continuous quality improvement. A set of criteria will be developed for the evaluation. In addition, the support system for electronic transactions in VET licensing will be developed in support of the evaluation.
- The system of VET financing will support the VET providers in achieving the aims set for the quality of operations and continuous quality improvement. To this end, the funding system will be clarified to apply uniform criteria to the funding of different forms of VET. In addition, the relative weight of good performance will be moderately increased in the financing of initial and further VET, and measures of performance-based funding will be developed.
- The steering of and decision-making in VET will be based on reliable and varied performance and evaluation data and other knowledge bases. To this end, a uniform knowledge architecture will be developed in support of steering, monitoring and decision-making.
- The quality of education and training will be transparent and based on public performance data. To achieve this, all salient findings relating to the quality and impact of VET will be published.
- Systematic and long-term support will be given to VET providers at different stages of QA work in developing their quality management by means of self-evaluation and peer learning, as well as peer review, recognition and incentives. In addition,

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quality improvement tools and support will be developed for VET providers at different stages of quality management.

- Knowledge needed for the development of VET provision, administration and operation will be strong and up-to-date and will be constantly enhanced. To attain this aim, measures will be taken to ensure that the competencies of the teaching personnel, institutional management and on-the-job mentors are up-to-date.
- Quality assurance in VET will use uniform operational principles, procedures and processes which help achieve the aims set for VET.
- Quality improvement will be based on continual learning and operational development. To this end, procedures will be developed for the identification and utilisation of good practices. Further, cooperation in quality assurance will be stepped up with operators in other administrative sectors with the aim of harmonising procedures.
- Quality assurance in VET will be practised and actively developed in collaboration with national and international partners.
- The lines of strategy and their implementation will be reviewed every three years and the strategy will be revised, where necessary.

**Source:** Ministry of Education and Training

**Actions taken so far to implement the approach**

As outlined the strategy set as objective that all VET providers will have effective quality system by 2015 – a target which is also set out in the Development Plan for Education and University Research.

In order to ensure the VET providers will have effective quality system by 2015 – a number of measures have been put in place – and activities undertaken. These are notably:

- Development of a set of criteria applicable to different kinds of VET provision to document effective quality assurance and development systems (by March 2013). As outlined in the box above these criteria will be used for auditing QA systems.
- Encouragement and support to the development of regional/thematic networks – as presented above – which are to support mutual learning and QA development (selection has been undertaken). In the framework of the kick of events of these networks the FNBE participate. The EQAVET principles, learning material check which one in the Finnish fiche) – from EQAVET, and information on national sources are disseminated.

In addition, role of Performance-place financing system will be slightly increased.

Currently other initiatives are considered, which could further support QA development at providers level and implementation of the strategy. The use of online support tools (such as structured online surveys targeted at enterprises and students) is expected to be expanded in the future to support QA and development at providers level. This process is however not well advanced.

**Process leading to the establishment of the approach**

In preparation of the strategy, an open discussion on quality and how quality in VET should look by 2020 took place. A consultation among students, teachers, VET providers, enterprises and other stakeholder groups was undertaken to contribute to:

- The definition of quality in VET for 2020
- The definition of the quality assurance mechanisms that would be needed to ensure that the needed level of quality would be delivered

The consultations (survey) received more than 4000 replies.

223 www.minedu.fi/OPM/Julkaisut/2011/ Ammatillisen

224 Asetus koulutuksen ja yliopistoissa harjoitettavan tutkimuksen kehittämissuunnitelmasta 987/1998
The strategy was devised by a working group consisting representatives of the Ministry of Education and Culture, the National Board of Education, the social partners, the Teachers Union, the Union of Finnish Communes, the Students organisations, the Unions of Providers of Vocational Education, CIMO the Centre of international mobility, The Federation of Finnish Enterprises and cooperation and Finnish Education Evaluation Council.

Whereas working groups on VET have existed previously, the set of a specific working group on quality assurance in 2010 was the first of its sort – and the first attempt to define an overarching and comprehensive strategy for quality assurance in Finland.

Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance

Engagement in EQAVET and ENQAVET – and approach

Finland has been engaged in EQAVET – and prior to this ENQA-VET – since the start-up of this process (2002). From the start of this process Finland has taken a very active part in the process – and the development. The objective has been two fold and complementary:

- To learn from the process and to engage
- To influence the process – ensuring its continued relevance in the Finnish context.

With regards to the first point, it has been important to ensure that Finland was able to implement the Recommendation.

With regards to the latter point, it has been of outmost importance to ensure that the approach developed – and associated the EQAVET Recommendation has been sufficiency flexible to accommodate to different systems – and to avoid top down restrictive approaches. The EQAVET Recommendation is in this regard a success.

Impact of the EQAVET processes

The process initiated in Copenhagen in 2002 had an agenda setting effect contributing to putting the issue of QA assurance on the table – also in the Finnish context.

EQAVET is in many respects perceived as a process for implementation – with its systems for implementation. As such EQAVET has had a positive impact on a number of level:

- Working groups and Informal exchange in the framework of EQAVET activities are perceived very positively – as fora for learning and exchange on QA.
- Meetings also have positive spin off in terms of leading to bilateral exchange and cooperation (noted with AU, NL and others).
- Finally, the EQAVET process provides the basis for understanding – and brings about a “common language” – and a framework for understanding different and similar challenges.

Generally it is noted that informal discussion and bilateral cooperation have had significant impact on QA development.

Impact of the Recommendation – policy developments triggered

The Recommendation is not considered to have had a particular agenda setting effect. As outlined above, QA in VET was already high on the agenda by 2009. However, the EQAVET process since the early 2000’s is considered to have contributed in keeping political attention to the issue of QA. The Recommendation, in contrast, is considered to have a direct and positive impact on the development of the national strategy. The Recommendation led to the set-up of the first national working group specifically focused on QA in VET in Finland. It also led to the first overarching policy paper on quality assurance in VET.

Impact on stakeholder involvement

The Recommendation is not considered to directly have impacted on stakeholder engagement or interest. However, by triggering the set up national working group specifically focused on QA, it has encouraged engagement of stakeholders in the conceptualisation and development of QA of VET.
Furthermore, it is also considered that EQAVET has had an indirect impact on VET providers – especially those less active.

Finally, as QM is high in the political agenda for VET providers (also with a little experience on QM) pays more attention to QA topics. Considering that EQAVET has contributed to agenda setting – some indirect impact can also be noted in this regard.

**Use and usefulness of EQVET framework**

The general framework has – as outlined above – provided the basis for the development of the Quality management Recommendation – which build on the framework and provides guidance to providers on how to implement in practice.

The Finnish Quality Recommendation and Quality Strategy are in line with the descriptors in EQAVET. EQAVET descriptors are considered helpful, providing a very good basis for quick evaluation of system level QA and QA systems of VET providers. They are also considered useful for those starting quality work as well those already having quite long experience on QM. Some of the descriptors are more challenging like the “early warning system”

The material developed by the EQAVET Network based on the descriptors has been used in Finland (Please see above).

As regards the EQAVET indicators – some are used in the Finnish context. As outlined, Finland has quite a long tradition working with indicators and VET providers are used to work with indicators (e.g. in BSC). The challenge in the future is to develop a more holistic approach in analysis and effective use of all the data collected.

While ranking is used in the Finnish context, EU level ranking is not considered appropriate.

**Synergies with other EU level instruments**

Progress on synergies with other EU level instruments at EU level – but the progress is slow and further efforts are considered needed in this area. Also at the national level, there is scope for developing synergies and cooperation between the different initiatives. There are no issues at local level (as regards ECVET and EQAVET developments).

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Finland, VET in Europe – Country Report. 2011. CEDEPOF

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A1.11 **Country report – France**

Author: Axelle Devaux (ICF GHK)

Part 1 – Description of quality assurance arrangements and of recent developments

The main developments in VET over the last decade are:

- **2004 Act** on vocational training and social dialogue, modified in 2009\(^{225}\). The 2004 Act introduces the national Council for Lifelong Learning, which aims to ensure dialogue among social partners on training policies. It also gives legal value to the principle that all employees should benefit from training in continuation of their initial education and training (right to get 20 hours of training per year). The 2009 text introduces new bridges to lifelong learning. It also extends the right to continuous training to job seekers and self-employed.

- **2005 Act**\(^{226}\) on education details France’s action plan for education and training. Quality is described as a priority in the preparatory documents for this legal text\(^{227}\).

- In December 2012\(^{228}\) France announced a new Act on Education, to be adopted in 2013. This Act will mainly concern the primary level but will include elements about secondary education and training; it will emphasise the attractiveness of IVET paths.

- **The high school reform in 2010**\(^{229}\) introduced individualised education and training paths.

- **New Acts and schemes about the decentralisation process and VET** should also be adopted in 2013-2014.

In relation to quality assurance:

- In 2006 a 2001 Law\(^{230}\) enters into force, which introduces a new approach to performance (objectives, indicators and monitoring) in public action. This text concerns activities carried by public authorities or with public funding and introduced a culture of results, of spending more wisely and making public action more effective by drawing up performance indicators. This stimulated action to ensure quality in VET.

- In 2001 the Ministry in charge of education introduced a quality label for IVET (Lycée des Métiers\(^{231}\)). The GretaPlus label, launched in 2000, is a national public (Ministry of education) quality label for CVET providers which are part of the Greta network (bringing together public schools from the ministry of education, delivering CVET) The label was reformed in 2009 with the support of the national standardisation organisation (AFNOR).

**Quality assurance arrangements at system level in initial VET**

IVET in France is divided into different components:

- Traditional vocation education:
  - At secondary level IVET can be delivered in a vocational or agricultural high school (lycée) or a vocational training unit within a general and technological or a multipurpose (lycée polyvalent) high school. These schools may be public and depend from the ministry of Education or from other ministries, private or semi public.
  - At higher levels (higher education) vocational education can also be delivered by higher education institutions (e.g. universities)

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\(^{225}\) LOI n° 2009-1437 du 24 novembre 2009 relative à l’orientation et à la formation professionnelle tout au long de la vie (1) http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000021312490&categorieLien=id


\(^{227}\) http://cache.media.eduscol.education.fr/file/editorial/38/2/rapportannexe_114382.pdf

\(^{228}\) http://www.education.gouv.fr/pid23791/special-n-1-du-4-fevrier-2010.html

\(^{229}\) http://www.education.gouv.fr/pid23791/special-n-1-du-4-fevrier-2010.html

\(^{230}\) Loi organique n° 2001-692 du 1 août 2001 relative aux lois de finances http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT00000631294&dateTexte=vig

\(^{231}\) http://eduscol.education.fr/cid47596/le-label-lycee-des-metiers.html
Apprenticeship, during which the apprentice, who has a contract of employment with a company, is trained alternately in the workplace and in an apprentice training centre. Traditionally, it is the craft-based sectors that make most use of this form of training.

At the secondary level, IVET providers are either state-owned or contracted by public authorities to provide training following a national curriculum (both referred to as ‘public’ VET providers hereafter). They are all subject to inspection performed by representatives of the Ministry of education at regional level.

The Ministry of Education has a voluntary system level quality label for IVET providers: Lycée des Métiers, which will be the focus of this section.

**National Framework for initial VET at the secondary level – who is in charge of what?**

In France, State education and training is a shared responsibility of the Ministry in charge of education (IVET and part of ‘public’ provision of CVET) and the Ministry in charge of employment and vocational training (‘private’ provision of CVET). Other ministries, such as the Ministry of agriculture, also provide VET in the area under their responsibility. Ministries’ involvement in IVET is quite strong: vocational qualifications, recruitment and training of teachers, organisation of the inspection, and contracts with private IVET providers and funding.

These operations are managed at regional level by a representative of the Ministry. Regional education authorities are managing logistics and administration of IVET providers at secondary level. Two others actors are also very important in the management of the system: the Regional Councils and regional representatives / branches of professional sectors and social partners. Regions are also financing the schools equipments.

External quality assurance in the French education system is the responsibility if the inspection body: A general national education inspection body in charge of external quality assurance of IVET providers, with the support of regional education inspectors who are in charge of the assessment of secondary schools and teachers. There is also a national education and research general inspectorate, involved in all administrative aspects of the education system, which monitors the implementation of educational policies and their overall impact.

Moreover, the ministry of Education designed a label for IVET public schools: Lycée des Métiers. It was introduced in 2001 (first providers received the label in February 2002). It became part of the education national education legislative body in the framework of the implementation of the 2005 school Act. The label is granted to IVET schools depending from the ministry of Education that demonstrate strong professional profiles and partnerships with the regional economy and communities.

**Who can deliver IVET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on VET providers**

IVET providers (private or public) deliver IVET in line with the education action plans and curricula of the Ministries and the action plan of the education ministry representatives at regional level (academies). They should also be in line with the regional orientations concerning the training priorities concerning VET in their region defined by Regional Councils. Each of the 26 Regions define, after a consultation with social partners and State representatives, contracts with the State about programming of VET provision and priorities, according to their regional needs, based on labour market demand and prospective territorial studies about labour market needs.

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232 Circulaire du 8 décembre 2005 relative au label lycée des métiers

233 Code de l’education
http://eduscol.education.fr/cid47567/textes-de-reference.html

234 La loi pour l'avenir de l’Ecole du 23 avril 2005
http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000259787&dateTexte=&categorieLien=id
Statutory stakeholder involvement in initial VET systems

As explained in the sections above, the main stakeholders in IVET are ministries and their representatives at local level, including inspectorate bodies, and regional authorities, who define the main orientations of the IVET system.

The ministry of Education is then involved in the process leading to the Lycée des Métiers label award. Applications are assessed at regional level by a committee bringing together representatives of the following stakeholders: professional organisations are also represented (at least one third of the assessment committee), regional inspectors (IA-IPR), regional authorities, social partners, heads of VET institutions, teachers, trainers, and parents of students.

Social partners are involved in the identification of training needs: Social partners are consulted by Regional authorities when identifying the training needs and defining the regional training priorities.

Requirements for evaluation and review

The Lycée des Métiers label is awarded by the Ministry in charge of education (representative at regional level) to state owned IVET providers. However, it is a voluntary label, i.e. there is no requirement for IVET providers to have the label to provide VET. Once they are awarded the label, implementation of the (compliance with the criteria) is monitored annually by the representative of the Ministry at regional level.

Inspection is mandatory for all schools.

Identification of training needs

Identification if training needs and definition of training priorities (in line with national orientations) take place at regional level, under the responsibility of regional authorities and based on consultation with social partners and State representatives, and prospective territorial studies about labour market needs.

Through the Lycée des Métiers label the Ministry encourages IVET providers to be involved in the identification of both training offer and training needs. In the framework of the label VET providers are invited to develop partnerships with other IVET and CVET providers, social services, regional authorities, professional organisations, chambers of commerce, public employment services, NGOs, etc. to pursue this objective.

Planning at VET system level

The Ministry in charge of education adopts a national action plan in line with the 2005 Act. At regional level this national action plan is implemented by Ministry representatives and regional education authorities, which themselves establish multiannual action programmes. VET providers develop institutional action plans under the form of an institutional ‘project’. This institutional project becomes the basis for a ‘contract’ between the institution and the Ministry.

Regional employment and vocational training coordination committees have been established. These committees – made up of regional representatives of the Government as well as representatives of the regions, trade unions and employers’ organizations, and regional chambers of agriculture, commerce, industry and trades – are tasked with promoting cooperation among the different agencies involved in vocational training. They ensure better coordination of vocational training and employment policies at national level. Specifically their functions include policy analysis, research, monitoring and evaluation.

Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)

Assessments in IVET leading to the award of vocational qualifications are in line with the regulations concerning those qualifications. Outcomes of these assessments (tests) are shared with the student and its family on a regular basis. At the end of the training, pupils can obtain different qualifications (professional baccalauréat or professional aptitude certificate).
The quality of these assessments falls under the responsibility of inspection territorial bodies. Quality in the assessment process is not amongst the (nine) criteria for awarding the label Lycée des Métiers. However, the guideline to partnerships with stakeholders in the framework of the label mentions that label holders should ensure quality in assessment of periods of traineeship as part of the curriculum.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning in France is long-established practice. The current validation system stems from legislation introduced in 1992, first for qualifications delivered by the Ministry of education and agriculture, then sports. The concept was extended to all qualifications officially recognised by the state and social partners as part of the national qualifications directory (RNCP).

Validation of prior learning (and services linked to this validation in terms of information and assessment) is. Every institution applying for Lycée des Métiers must have at least one staff member trained to advise and support applicants to validation of non-formal and informal learning. This is in line with the validation of experience practice in France. In particular a “quality charter” was developed by the State and validation of non-formal and informal learning stakeholder in 2008 in order to outline a set of key principles for the provision of support to applicants. The charter describes the function of support within the validation process and how stakeholders involved should interact. Several regions, universities and professional federations have signed an agreement with the support centres to ensure they offer a minimum guarantee of quality.

**Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators**

France’s system level education and training evaluation framework has been developed in line with the performance culture in public administration introduced by the 2001 Act.

Regional education inspectors are in charge of the assessment of secondary schools and teachers. On a content aspect, inspections will typically assess compliance with the national curricula and their objectives. On an organisational aspect, inspections will cover organisation of the training time, of the share theory/practical aspects of the training. Inspectors also assess pedagogy of the course. Inspection is also use to support career advancement decisions.

The general inspectorate for administrative matters is in charge of monitoring and evaluating management of the education and training system. Its role includes control functions, studies, evaluation and recommendations and about the overall operations and effectiveness of the education system. It report to the Ministry of education (evaluation department), which is responsible for monitoring and evaluation of education and training policies, with the support of the general inspectorate.

Regarding the indicators used for award of the Lycée des Métiers label, they are defined at regional level by the assessment committee. Theses indicators should be in line with the nine award criteria of the label (defined at national level) and take the regional context into account (regional indicators in line with national criteria).

Once awarded, the label is valid for five years (renewable). During these five years, the label implementation is monitored annually. An interim report submitted annually to the regional representative of the Ministry of education, which provides the VET provider with comments and recommendations on how to improve implementation. Annual interim reports and their follow-up are taken into account in the decision to renew the label after five years of the initial award.

**Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008 and since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)**

The main reform in IVET is the introduction of the Lycée des Métiers label in 2005. The label will be reviewed in 2013-2014. This review will be mainly inspired by findings of an ongoing EQAVET national project (QALEP) which focuses on self-evaluation in Secondary Vocational Schools (see Error! Reference source not found. Error! Reference source not found.).
Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in initial VET

Planning at VET provider level (including identification of training needs)

IVET providers are state-owned or contracted by the state. Each year they develop institutional action plans (projects), in line with the national action plan or regional action programme defined at system level. This institutional project becomes the basis for a contract between the provider and the Ministry representatives at local level.

The national action plan is developed taking into account training needs in the country, while the regional education action programme and the institutional project (provider level) are developed in line with local and regional training needs.

Requirements for monitoring and review (self-assessment)

Each school is in contract with the Ministry representatives at local level. The contract specifies the objectives of the school and indicators to assess whether these objectives have been met.

For the time being, self-assessment in IVET takes place on a voluntary basis. They are performed by a board of governors under guidance from the school head and in liaison with the inspection unit.

In any case, the board of governors drafts an annual activity report on the school's contract. This report takes into account the implementation of the school's educational plan, the objectives to meet and the results obtained.

Stakeholder involvement

The existence of partnerships with actors from the economic and social stakeholders is one of the nine award criteria of the label Lycée des Métiers. The above-mentioned guideline to partnerships with stakeholders mentions encourages IVET providers to build partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders (economic and social observatories, regional development actors, enterprises and enterprise networks, employment and social inclusion, representatives of trainees and their families, NGOs, public authorities and other VET stakeholders), at local and regional level, but also national and international. The objective is to better understand the local context, labour market needs and requirements for the training offer.

Outputs from quality assurance at provider level

Following the award of the Lycée des Métiers, the VET provider submits annually and interim report to the regional representative of the Ministry of education. Following the submission of this report, the VET provider receives comments and recommendations on how to improve implementation, if relevant.

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET at provider level since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)

The main reform in IVET is the introduction of the Lycée des Métiers label in 2005.

The ministry of Education is currently considering a reinforcement of self-evaluation in IVET schools, taking into account the QALEP project which is based on the EQAVET Recommendation and the Lycées des métiers labellisation process.

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in continuous VET

CVET is delivered by one of the 48,000 public and private training providers operating in the country. Public providers cover 20% of CVET provision in France. These include the local public education institutions group (Greta network), the national adult education society (AFPA), and agriculture-related training providers. The private provision landscape is more open and scattered. There is no specific requirement in the country to set up a business that delivers training as a service - in general any legal entity may provide training services. As a result, there is a great variety of training providers, from individual players to greater training provider organisations.
Out of the quality measures for CVET in France, the GretaPlus plus is the closest to a system level quality assurance approach. It is not as such applicable to the entire CVET sector in the country or a given part if the territory, but applies to all public CVET providers, all grouped under the Greta network (public CVET providers under the responsibility of the Ministry of education). Other quality measures focus on providers and will therefore be covered in section Error! Reference source not found. Error! Reference source not found..

Who can deliver VET and under what conditions - accreditation or other requirements on CVET providers

Public CVET providers are IVET (public secondary schools) that also provide continuous training and related services (tailored training, guidance and support to beneficiaries). These VET providers may group under a Greta structure, thus bringing together their resources with the aim to establish a joint strategy for CVET delivery in a specific area. The Greta network brings together more than 6500 VET providers under more than 200 Greta structures. Greta provide a public service as regards CVET, but is in competition with private CVET providers for both delivery of CVET for private clients (e.g. companies, professional branches), individuals or public clients (e.g. public authorities, national employment service).

Greta has developed its own quality system (Greta Plus) in 2000. This system has been revised in 2009. In 2012, 15-20% of the Greta held the Greta Plus label. The GretaPlus label is open to members of the Greta network, which provide tailored services for beneficiaries in line with quality standards designed by the national standardisation organisation (AFNOR). These standards have been developed so that the label’s requirements are in line with the EQAVET framework.

National Framework for CVET and statutory stakeholder involvement in CVET systems

CVET policies are the responsibility of the ministry of employment and social affairs at national level. This includes policy orientation, legal dimension, dialogue with social partners and funding action for specific target groups (migrants, prisoners, etc.). Regional authorities are competent for designing and implementing training policies, depending on economic and social priorities in their territory. The national employment service is responsible for training unemployed people. The Ministry of education is in charge organisation of the Greta network.

Other stakeholders include the business sector. Enterprises’ contribution to CVET is organised by branch organisations235, which collect mandatory contributions, pool resources and implement training policies defined by the branches.

Planning and identification of training needs

In France, the Ministry in charge of employment and vocational training regularly publishes employment market statistics and analysis. These provide an overview of the job market situation in the country. Specific diagnosis on employment and training and forecast the future needs in specific business sectors are the responsibility of the observatories of occupations and qualifications, managed by the social partners (professional branch organisations). The national employment service is the interface between job seekers and companies and, as such, aims to adapt its training offer to individual requirements, but also employment opportunities at national level.

The GretaPlus label criteria foresee include, for instance, that the Greta establishes a development plan and an annual work programme in line with the needs of the clients (those who organise or order the training), of the beneficiaries of the training course (those individuals who actually take the courses) and relevant to the regional, national and European context. The development plan and an annual work programme should also take into account results from previews activities.

235 Organismes paritaires collecteurs agréés (OPCA)
Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)

The existence of an assessment and certification system is part of the criteria for the award of the GretaPlus label. In particular, label holders have to offer assessment and validation of learning that is adapted to the specific situation of the training. The minimum requirement is the delivery of a completion record, but Greta may also grant qualifications compiled in the national qualifications registry (referenced to the European Qualifications Framework) or branch-specific qualifications. Another criterion of the label is the provision of adequate information about assessment and validation to the trainees, prior to the training.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning is also one of the criteria for award of the GretaPlus label.

Those Greta, which provide tailored services linked to validation of non-formal and informal learning may apply for the label specifically for these services.

Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators

The GretaPlus label is awarded for three years, renewable. Pre-requisites for application to the label are:

- Use of the label's quality standards over a year
- Completion of at least one self-assessment involving members (CVET providers) of the applying Greta
- Completion of an audit performed by the regional representatives of the Ministry in charge of education

The application includes a report about these assessments and is submitted to the central services of the Ministry.

GretaPlus quality standards have been designed after the EQAVET Recommendation and taking this Recommendation into account. Some of the EQAVET indicators are used to check compliance with these standards:

Once the label is awarded the label holder submits a monitoring report annually. The label holder received comments and recommendation on how to improve implementation in line with the label's standards.

Reforms of quality assurance in CVET since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008; since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)

The main reform regarding quality assurance in CVET delivered by the ministry of Education is the reform of the GretaPlus label in 2009.

While quality arrangements under the Greta network cover public CVET providers, the quality assurance landscape is more complex for private providers. The way quality assurance operates in VET is further described in the sections below.

Quality assurance arrangements in continuous VET at provider level

Requirements CVET providers have to comply with

Quality measures in CVET have also developed in the last years. This development is market-driven: users and clients have been more demanding in terms of quality. In reaction, the market has developed tools and measures to evidence the existence of quality approaches in CVET provision. Development of quality requirements for CVET is also influenced by the ongoing debate in France about the effectiveness and efficiency of public spending in CVET. Training delivery for public authorities (National authorities, regional authorities, public employment service, private sector, etc.) is often contracted following a tendering procedure. Calls for tender require that tenderers provide evidence of the existence of a quality assurance system. As a consequence, quality assurance is de facto required in the context of training services under public contracts.

A series of quality systems are open to private providers. These include certification and compliance with national and international quality standards such as ISO (international) or
standards established by the national standardisation organisation AFNOR (e.g. ANF 214’, which includes standards related to quality of service provision). Other options include accreditation, i.e. formal recognition that a training provider is competent to deliver a specific kind of training services, as defined by a professional organisation. The national vocational training federation (FFP) is at the origin of the establishment of an accreditation system for training providers (organisations) by the national training provider association (OPQF). Labels have also been developed at national and regional level, On top of the GretaPlus label, outlined under 0, some regions have developed their own labels (e.g. regional label ‘Languedoc Roussillon’). 

Planning at CVET provider level (including identification of training needs)

Some of the quality systems in place for private CVET providers explicitly refer to planning and identification of training needs. For instance, one of the criteria for certification from the national standardisation body AFNOR for training provision (NF 214 training service) is that the CVET providers’ training offer is tailored to and in line with training needs, which implies that training needs identification has to be part of the planning strategy of the CVET provider.

To identify training needs, CVET providers may use existing sources, CVET private providers may benefit from additional services from organisations managing some of the quality systems introduced above. Some of these additional services aim to support them to better target their training offer to the needs of the labour market. For instance, CVET providers which are certified by the national standardisation body AFNOR for training provision (NF 214 training service) benefit from additional services from AFNOR, amongst these support to training design in line with training needs and information about training needs, etc.

Requirements for monitoring and review (self-assessment) and outputs from quality assurance at provider level

CVET providers may voluntarily apply for certification, accreditation or a label. The requirements for monitoring and review and the outputs vary from a quality system to another:

- Certification and accreditation: In most cases, certification requires an application, an initial external audit assessing compliance with quality standards or criteria and follow-up audits on a regular basis (e.g. every five years). The output of the initial audit is an audit report about the extent to which the VET providers comply with the standards or criteria.
- Labels: Labels often rely on self-assessment, i.e. training providers commit to comply with the requirements listed in a quality charter.

Requirements, assessment and validation of learners

Requirements regarding certification, assessment and validation of learners vary greatly from a quality measure to another. Some barely mention the assessment or validation of learners. Others go as far as

Stakeholder involvement

Most quality systems for CVET providers involve a wide range of stakeholders, including national authorities and social partners. Some include beneficiaries and peers (other CVET providers. For instance, the accreditation committee of the OPQF includes the Ministry in charge of labour, employers, higher education institutions, clients, training providers.

Reforms of quality assurance in CVET at provider level in 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008 and since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)

The main reforms in quality assurance in CVET delivered by the ministry of Education were the introduction of the GretaPlus label in 2000 and its reform in 2009. The reform was undertaken with the support of the national standardisation body, which defined tailored standards in line with the objectives and missions of the Greta network.
Part 2 – Interaction between national quality assurance and EQAVET

National Reference Point

The French NRP has not been appointed, due to a lack of resources to undertake this task. The French member of the EQAVET network follows-up on activities of the NRP but does not formally have this role.

National approach to enhance quality assurance

National quality approaches to quality assurance exist in IVET (Label Lycée des Métiers) and CVET (Label GretaPlus) have been initiated before the European developments of EQARF and EQAVET.

The CVET approach has been introduced in the Ministry of Education in 2000 and reformed in 2009. The reform was carried out in partnership with the standardisation organisation, which developed standards and criteria in line with the Deming quality cycle (plan, do, check, and act). The IVET approach is currently under consideration. The possible evolutions will be influenced by the outcomes of an EQAVET project in partnership with other EU countries and co-funded by the Lifelong Learning Programme.

Both approaches are based on a label managed by the Ministry in charge of education. Both labels are voluntary. While the IVET label focuses on VET provider, the CVET label is open to networks of VET providers.

The objective behind the development of these labels is to introduce a quality culture at provider level, thus contributing to the provision of quality training. In the CVET label, there is also the idea of mutualisation of resources dedicated to ensure quality.

Implementation of the labels and impact on quality has not been evaluated. In terms of take up, 20% of IVET providers had been awarded the label in 2010 (the objective if the Ministry is to reach 50%). The same share of CVET providers has been awarded the GretaPlus label.

The limited take up of the label is due to the fact that the labels are not widely known amongst providers. Regarding the IVET label, its initial design is not entirely in line with the objectives of VET as outlined in the 2009 VET reform concerning the IVET pathways. This is the main reason why the Ministry decided to re-examine this label, taking into account also the EQAVET Recommendation.

Success factors of quality measures in ‘private’ CVET provision are its voluntary basis and the fact that VET providers may chose the quality system that is relevant to their needs. However the CVET quality assurance landscape has greatly developed in the last years and it has become difficult for VET provider to understand the differences among quality assurance tools and operators.

Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance

The influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance has been limited in France. This is due to the fact that both public quality labels have been developed before the European developments of EQAVET.

Beyond the quality measures managed by the ministry of education, private quality measures in CVET have not been influenced by EQAVET. EQAVET is barely known among actors of quality assurance in CVET.

However, two important influences can be mentioned:

- EQAVET was taken into account in the reform of the CVET label delivered by the ministry of Education in 2009. The national standardisation body, which led the technical aspect of the reform (design of the standards and criteria) used the EQAVET Recommendation (rather than other tools), in particular the criteria and indicators, to ensure that the new framework was in line with EQAVET.
- France ministry of Education is currently re-examining its IVET label so that it is more in line with the 2009 VET reform. To do so, France explored practices in other EU
countries, under the framework of an EQAVET project co-funded by the LLP dealing with self-evaluation.

EQAVET is taken into account and used to some extent in VET reforms relating to quality assurance. However the influence of EQAVET seems to be limited to the Ministry level.

**Synergies with other EU level instruments**

Synergies in the implementation of the different EU instruments highly depend on national priorities and on actors involved.

EQAVET in France is dealt with at national level (ministry and its representatives in regions). Synergies are important between EQAVET and ECVET, ECVET being considered a priority for the Ministry in charge of education. EQAVET and ECVET matters are the responsibility of the same team at the Ministry and quality in VET is considered key to successful implementation of ECVET.

Synergies with implementation of EQF are more limited. EQF-related activities are the responsibility of the National Committee for Vocational Qualifications Committee (CNCP). Although the Ministry has been involved in activities of the CNCP, the synergies between EQF and EQAVET are limited.

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Code de l'éducation

Loi pour l'avenir de l'École du 23 Avril 2005
A1.12  Country report – Germany

Author: Florian Berger (Technopolis)

Part 1 – Description of quality assurance arrangements and of recent developments

- Germany launched DEQA-VET as its NRP for quality assurance in initial and continuous VET in 2008.
- The reform of the Vocational Training Act (BBig) in 2005 introduced specifications on quality assurance in initial VET.
- A number of Länder have independently introduced QA frameworks for initial VET over the last decade.

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in initial VET

National Framework for initial VET

Due to Germany’s federal structure, quality assurance for VET in Germany is developing at different speeds. QA in Germany is characterised by a wide range of stakeholders and a multitude of decision-making levels.

There is no national quality assurance institution for VET in Germany, however, there are many efforts at different levels. As education is a responsibility of the Länder, they form the legal basis for school-based VET. They are in charge for vocational schools and therefore also responsible for QA. On the employer side, the professional bodies such as the Chambers of Industry and Commerce (IHK) are responsible for company-based VET.

However, national vocational training regulations (Ausbildungsordnungen) are issued by the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) and recognised and by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) as well as the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology (BMWi).

The main statutory basis of the Dual System and therefore the general framework for initial VET is the Vocational Education and Training Act (Berufsbildungsgesetz, BBiG). Regarding QA, the BBiG addresses required standards for training facilities and trainers, training curricula as well as examinations. Regulations concerning training facilities and trainers are usually monitored by the local Chambers of Industry and Commerce. QA at vocational schools depends of the local regulation in the Länder (BiBB, 2010). Another legal framework that is relevant for quality assurance is the crafts act (Handwerksordnung, HWO).

Statutory stakeholders and planning at VET system level

As stated above, the German VET system draws on the partnership between employers, professional bodies, unions and the federal as well as the Länder governments. VET policy is developed in boards where all the stakeholders participate.

At the national level, the Main Board (Hauptausschuss) is the principal advisory body of the Federal Government concerning VET. It consists of representatives of the Federal Ministries and the Länder as well as of employer and worker associations. The Vocational Education and Training Act (BBiG) states that the Main Board advises the Federal Government on all VET issues and contributes for example to questions regarding standard setting and designing training regulations (Hippach-Schneider, Hensen, & Schober, 2011).

There are similar Länder Boards (Landesausschuss) on the state level. They advise the Länder governments on VET policy, especially in questions concerning QA. Here too, the aforementioned stakeholders participate in the Board activities.

The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in Federal Republic of Germany (KMK) issues framework curricula for vocational education at vocational schools which are harmonised with the Federal Government’s training regulations. The KMK is an important actor for education policy in Germany, as it provides a crucial platform for increasing uniformity and comparability between the federal states (Hippach-Schneider et al., 2011).
As company-based VET constitutes a core part of the German Dual System, employers are important stakeholders in QA in initial VET, as apprentices spend significant time in companies. The Federal Association of German Employer Associations (BDA) represents the German business and industry sectors. BDA assumes a crucial role regarding VET policy and the development and modernisation of training regulations. As training regulations represent the minimum standards of company-based initial VET, they are highly relevant for QA.

However, on the “ground level”, the professional bodies are the most relevant stakeholders for company-based VET. They mainly consist of the 80 Chambers of Industry and Commerce and the 53 Chambers of Crafts and Trades. The former are organised in the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (DIHK), while the latter form the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (ZDH). Both DIHK as well as ZDH participate in developing training regulations and are responsible for providing examination regulations. In addition to the DIHK and ZDH Chambers and Crafts, 335 other bodies (such as bar associations, for example) are also relevant.

At the regional level, the Vocational Training Board (Berufsbildungsausschuss) support and advise the professional bodies. They are to be consulted in matters regarding the implementation of training regulations as well as of recommendations by the Länder boards. Here too, employer associations, apprentices and trade unions as well as vocational teachers take part.

Finally, employees/apprentices are represented in the VET policy process by unions such as the Industrial metal workers’ trade union (IG Metall) or rather the overarching German Confederation of Trade Unions (DGB). They provide information on QA to workers’ councils, apprentices and training staff. In addition, they support the employee representatives on VET committees and examination boards at the Chambers.

**Who can deliver VET and under what conditions**

The main path to acquire initial VET in Germany is via the Dual System. It provides basic vocational training and competences for about 350 recognized occupations. Apprentices acquire their vocational qualifications both at a company as well as at a part-time vocational school (Berufsschulen). For up to two days a week, apprentices attend vocational school where theoretical knowledge as well as technical skills are provided.

The completion of compulsory education is sufficient for entering the Dual System. However, initial VET is also offered at full-time vocational schools, where initial VET is largely school-based. Furthermore, senior technical schools (Fachoberschulen) and senior vocational schools (Berufsoberschulen) offer two-year training courses, which enable students to attend universities of applied science (Fachhochschulen). Finally, vocational grammar schools (berufliche Gymnasien and Fachgymnasien) also offer vocational qualification (BiBB, 2010). All vocational schools have to comply with the Länder education and school laws, which, however, generally do not affect VET, as this is regulated by the BBiG.

Company-based initial VET is the second pillar of the Dual system. In order for a company to be allowed to host apprentices, they have to dispose of at least one certified instructor (Ausbilder). Instructors are generally certified according to the Instructor Aptitude Ordinance (AEVO), which regulates the minimum standards in order to work as an instructor. The certification as an instructor includes an examination at a vocational college (Berufsakademie) or alternatively an academic degree in Business and Human Resource Education (Wirtschaftspädagogik).

A further condition is represented by the training regulations. They stipulate the qualifications, the structure of the vocational training as well as the requirements for companies to provide initial VET. The process of designing training regulations is an important part of quality assurance, because it assures employability of a new or amended apprenticeship.
Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators

The German Parliament has made clear in its decision on the amendment of the BBiG, that both the BBiG as well as the HWO shall make sure that initial VET enables apprentices to work in a range of occupational activities. This so-called occupational principle (Berufsprinzip) stipulates high requirements regarding QA. The amended BBiG therefore specifies several criteria and descriptors regarding initial VET, which are relevant for QA.

The BBiG stipulates that initial VET for adolescents is provided according to the training regulations, which generally have a duration of at least two years. This legislation is therefore a crucial part of QA in German initial VET, as it regulates the minimum duration of initial VET (Kremer, 2005). Furthermore, the amended BBiG requires training regulations to gradually adapt training contents in order to raise the prospect of employability.

The Vocational Training Boards are important monitoring structures in initial VET. As stated at the beginning of this section, they oversee the initial VET process at the professional bodies. They are a core pillar in further developing quality assurance in company-based initial VET. Together with employer associations, trade unions and vocational teachers, the Vocational Training Boards are consulted by the professional bodies in a range of topics. These include the implementation of general administrative principles regarding the eligibility of instructing companies as well as performing examinations and implementing recommendations of the Main and Länder Boards.

In respect to EQAVET indicators, several programmes were launched on the federal level in order to collect relevant data. For instance, the FreQueNz initiative financed by BMBF aims at early identification of skills needs (relevant for EQAVET indicator 9). Furthermore, the BIBB collects data on indicators such as participation rates in VET programmes, completion and placement rates in VET programmes, which are provided by the Federal Employment Agency.

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)

With the establishment of DEQA-VET, a platform for discussion on QA in VET between the stakeholders both on the national as well as on the Länder level was created.

The recently adopted German Qualification Framework DQR (Deutscher Qualifikationsrahmen) is seen by many to be an important step towards a more harmonised QA framework in Germany, because a large number of stakeholder agreed on a common concept of competence.

In 2009, the Instructor Aptitude Ordinance (AEVO) was amended. As stipulated in the amendment of the BBiG in 2005 (see below), instructors now have to provide proof regarding their vocational skills as well as their personal suitability.

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008

In 2005, the Vocational Training Act (BBiG) was substantially amended through the Vocational Training Reform Act, as stated above. The amended BBiG stipulated the goal of quality assurance in initial VET as obtaining, preserving and adapting professional competence. It

Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in initial VET

As stated in the previous section, education policy is constitutionally assigned to the Länder. Therefore, the task of QA in initial VET is a matter for the Länder, as they are in charge for all types of vocational schools. Similar to other domains in education policy (for example, final secondary-school examinations differ in most of the 16 Länder), the majority of the Länder have independently implemented QA-systems for initial school-based VET.

Requirements VET providers have to comply with and Planning at VET provider level

At the Länder level, the ministries of education are in charge for school-based initial VET. The Länder are therefore the main actors for QA in school-based initial VET in Germany. A
number of Länder have implemented QA-systems, which are based on the quality cycle. Overall, six Länder have adopted comprehensive QA-systems: Lower Saxony, Baden-Württemberg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Saarland, Hamburg and Bremen.

The following table provides an overview on the stipulated QA requirements for school-based VET in the Länder:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land</th>
<th>Stipulated QA requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baden-Württemberg</td>
<td>School law obligates schools to conduct self-evaluation. In addition, the state-level institute for school development (LfS) carries out external evaluations based on the OES and Q2E quality management concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bavaria</td>
<td>The project “Quality management in vocational schools in Bavaria” (QmbS) works towards an integrated QA-system. It is based on the Q2E concept and aims at gradually implementing quality management in all vocational schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berlin</td>
<td>Operated by Humboldt University, the project “Systematic development of classroom teaching in vocational schools through integrative quality management” (SUE), Berlin provided 10 vocational schools with support to formulate individual quality development strategies. In addition, workshops, working groups and VET conferences have been held.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandenburg</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bremen</td>
<td>Bremen has introduced a QA system based on the Q2E concept in all of its vocational schools. It draws on the individual responsibility of the schools, by formulating agreements on objectives and performances between the schools and the Bremen school authority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamburg</td>
<td>The “Framework concept on QA and development for vocational schools in Hamburg introduced a mandatory QA system for all vocational schools. It defines a set of six elements with corresponding standards, which the schools must introduce. The project is steered by the Hamburg Institute for Vocational Education and Training (HIBB).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hessen</td>
<td>Based on the Q2E concept, Hessen introduced a Pilot Project at 17 vocational schools. In addition, there are school inspections by the Institute for Quality Development at all schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mecklenburg-Vorpommern</td>
<td>The Q2E system is being implemented in all vocational schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Saxony</td>
<td>All vocational schools are obligated to establish a QA system based on the EFQM process since 2005.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Rhine-Westphalia</td>
<td>There is an external evaluation procedure regarding QA in place for all schools since 2006. There is no specific system for vocational schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhineland-Palatinate</td>
<td>Since 2007, Rhineland-Palatinate has a “School Quality Guidance Framework” in place, applicable for all schools. In addition, there a Pilot Project aims at introducing QA systems in some vocational schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saarland</td>
<td>A QA system based on the ISO 9001 ff. standards is mandatory for all vocational schools since 2004. Audits are performed by an</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DEQA-VET Overview map of QA-systems in the German federal states (January 2012): http://www.deqa-vet.de/de/2770.php
Land                  Stipulated QA requirements

Saxony               The Saxony Institute for Education (SBI) has developed a quality cycle, where each vocational school may set an agreement on objectives regarding QA with the school authorities.

Saxony-Anhalt       The Saxony-Anhalt State Institute for School Quality and Teacher Training (LISA) is currently implementing a QA system based on the Q2E concept, called the “Holistic Quality Management at Vocational Schools in Saxony-Anhalt” (GQM). All vocational schools are to be integrated.

Schleswig-Holstein  -

Thuringia            The Thuringian Institute for Advanced Teacher Training, Curriculum Development and Media (ThILLM) is piloting a QA system called Q-Thübbs, based on ISO 9001 ff., EFQM, QZS and Q2E since 2009.

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Although QA-systems are not based on a common national strategy or approach, some of them make use of similar frameworks. For instance, Baden-Württemberg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Hamburg and Bremen have state-wide adopted the Q2E-System or a modified form of it. The Swiss Q2E-system promotes the development of a school-specific quality understanding, which is subsequently assessed using internal evaluation, individual feedback, process management, as well as external evaluation. It identifies several areas of activities, such as educational design, school and staff management, regional cooperation relations, school administration as well as extended self-dependence. In 2005, the state government of Lower Saxony obligated vocational schools to implement QA based on the EFQM-Model.238

Requirements for monitoring and review

If a Land decides to introduce a comprehensive QA-system, regulations are always codified in the state’s school law.239 Adherence to QA requirements by initial VET providers is usually monitored by the local school authorities. In some cases, such as in Baden-Württemberg (Landesinstitut für Schulentwicklung), specialised agencies for quality development are in charge of supervising the vocational schools.

Stakeholder involvement

Committees for vocational training exist in most of the Länder. They bring together the relevant actors, such as the professional bodies. These include chambers of industry and commerce (IHK) as well as chambers of crafts and other professional boards (Hippach-Schneider et al., 2011).

As described in the previous section, the local chambers of industry and commerce are important stakeholders in initial VET. Besides their contribution to the recognition of occupations requiring formal training, they are also in charge of executing the final examinations. The chambers therefore assure quality management (such as examination regulations and evaluation standards) in respect to final examinations at the national level.

In 2011, BiBB was commissioned to carry out the Leonardo da Vinci project “Europeanisation of the National Pilot Initiative for Quality Development and Assurance in Company-Based Vocational Education and Training” (ENIQAB) together with partners from

238 http://www.mk.niedersachsen.de/portal/live.php?navigation_id=1914&article_id=5817&_psmand=8
239 http://www.deqa-vet.de/de/1198.php
Austria, Poland and Portugal. ENIQAB aims at enhancing the European culture of QA in VET. For this purpose, ten Pilot Projects have been established which relate to the development of instruments of in-company QA as well as to the development of communication and cooperation structures, in order to adapt QA to specific SME needs and to improve the collaboration between the different stakeholders. In addition, several Pilot Projects aim at the development of a qualification concept for the training personnel (ENIQAB/BiBB, 2012).

ENIQAB supports the transmission of EQAVET into the national Pilot Projects. Through the cooperation with other European partners, ENIQAB enhances the diffusion of resulting know-how. BMBF funds ENIQAB with €4,3m.

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in continuous VET

National Framework for CVET and statutory stakeholder involvement

Continuous VET in Germany is mainly provided by commercial and non-profit private institutions. Public vocational schools and higher education establishments account only for 10 % of continuous VET in Germany. However, the Federal Employment Agency funds an important share of CVET activities.

The German Vocational Education Act (BBiG) defines continuous CVET as either “further vocational training” or “vocational retraining”. Further vocational training is offered mainly by public VET providers, which also offer initial VET and therefore adhere to regulation described in the previous sections. Vocational retraining, however, is largely offered by private continuous VET providers.

All Länder have adopted Laws on Further Training. They define the requirements for obtaining official recognition by the state and stipulate the basics for the granting of subsidies for continuous VET.

In recent years, BMBF has pushed for more professionalism and transparency in the continuous VET sector. Although it did not introduce legislative reforms, it has funded several projects aiming at improving overall quality, such as an initiative to promote the qualification of elderly people to work in political education.

Transparency is a concern for policy makers, as there now exist more than a hundred, very heterogenous databases for continuous VET courses. BMBF therefore funded the creation of a search engine for continuous VET called “InfoWeb Weiterbildung”. The project also contributed to the creation of a DIN-standard, which specifies types of contents for databases for continuous VET in order to increase overall transparency.

Requirements for evaluation and review

Training regulations described in the previous sections may also include evaluation and review procedures that apply for some CVET providers. In addition, BMBF funds regular tests of CVET providers by Stiftung Warentest, an independent foundation involved in investigating and comparing goods and services. BMBF pays for 15 tests of continuous VET providers every year.

Furthermore, BIBB together with the German Institute for Adult Education (DIE) operate the online platform wbmonitor, which is dedicated to enhance the exchange on continuous VET in Germany. It conducts a yearly survey of public and private continuous VET providers and monitors changes and developments of the market.

Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on CVET providers

Although vocational retraining providers are generally private, accreditation by public bodies or accreditation agencies is important for continuous VET providers. Roughly half of them
are accredited according to the Accreditation and Certification in Further Training Ordinance (Anerkennungs- und Zulassungsverordnung Weiterbildung, AZWV) (Hippach-Schneider et al., 2011). The AZWV was introduced in 2004 in order to improve competition and transparency in CVET financed by the Federal Employment Agency. The AZWV requires certification of CVET providers in order to offer courses. The Employment Agency entrusts external certification bodies to inspect CVET providers and attendees only receive financial support if they attend approved providers (Hippach-Schneider et al., 2011).

**Reforms of quality assurance in CVET since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)**

In 2012, the AZWV was replaced by the AZAV, which now provides the Employment Agency with the power of veto in case training measures exceed pre-specified cost rates.

**Quality assurance arrangements in continuous VET at provider level**

CVET providers are not required to have specific QA measures in place. However, they are very much interested in introducing QA systems, as this allows them to distinguish themselves from other private competitors. In addition, the introduction of a QA system increases their chances of accreditation for subsidised CVET. According to a recent study, about 80 % of German CVET providers have introduced QA systems (Weiland, 2011).

**Requirements CVET providers have to comply with (if not described in 1st section)**

As stated in the previous section, accreditation by public bodies or accreditation agencies is crucial for CVET providers, because it allows them to offer courses, which are subsidised by the Federal Employment Agency. In contrast to the voluntary adoption of QA systems, formal accreditation is therefore much more important for CVET providers. Accordingly, 85 % of CVET providers dispose of at least one type of formal accreditation (Weiland, 2011). AZWV accreditation by the Federal Employment Agency is held by 43 %, whereas accreditation in respect to Länder legislation amounts to 39 %.

Private CVET providers also often aim at obtaining certificates from non-governmental stakeholders such as employer associations or large companies. These certificates, which often include requirements regarding QA, allow CVET providers to obtain access to other sources of income, besides offering courses subsidised by the Employment Agency (Ambos, Koscheck, Schade, & Weiland, 2010).

**Certification, assessment and validation of learners**

Almost 40 % of the German CVET providers are voluntarily certified according to the ISO 9000 QA frameworks (Weiland, 2011). More than 20 % opt for self-evaluation and around 10 % have implemented specific CVET QA systems, which are offered by regional associations of CVET providers. Only one fifth of CVET providers have not implemented any kind of QA framework (Ambos et al., 2010).

The Umbrella Association of the Continuing Training Organisations (DVWO), which is also part of DEQA-VET, has introduced its own quality model for member organisations. The DVWO quality model is based on the ISO 9001 ff. standard.

**Part 2 – Interaction between national quality assurance and EQAVET**

**National Reference Point**

The NRP in Germany, DEQA-VET, is hosted at the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB). As of 2012, DEQA-VET has a staff of four (three FTE) and a budget of 320k per year. DEQA-VET sees itself as the main contributor to the development of the EQAVET process and the establishment of a “QA culture” in Germany.

The host organisation, BIBB, is an institution mandated by the federal government in regard to policy, research and practice in the field of VET. It is subject to the legal supervision of the BMBF and receives funding from the federal government budget. BIBB aims at developing new solutions for both initial and continuous VET.
BMBF established the German NRP already in 2008. Because of the diverse field of actors in VET (especially the competent bodies) and the crucial role of the Länder in education policy, BMBF aimed at introducing the EQAVET process on the national level.

There is a national advisory group for DEQA-VET consisting of representatives from BMBF, Länder governments, employer associations and unions. The national advisory group monitors and supports the NRP in its activities.

Among the central activities of DEQA-VET are its yearly conferences, where the main actors in VET gather to discuss recent developments and concepts related to QA in initial and continuous VET. DEQA-VET also informs about the EQAVET process and the important stakeholders regarding QA on its website.

As the competent bodies (such as the Chambers of Industry and Commerce) are important stakeholders in VET in Germany, there have been initial concerns regarding the acceptance of a EQAVET NRP. Because most of the competent bodies are also providers of initial VET in the framework of the Dual System, policy makers worried that they might oppose the introduction of a QA process in Germany.

However, as stated above, DEQA-VETs relatively independent role in the German VET landscape allows for the inclusion of a number of different actors. Launching a substantial discussion in Germany on QA in VET on the federal level would have been difficult, if only BMBF and the Länder governments would have been included. Through the DEQA-VET platform, important stakeholders such as the competent bodies, employer associations as well as unions are able to contribute to the development of a QA framework, according to several interviewees.

National approach to enhance quality assurance

In Germany, there is no coherent national approach in place to enhance quality assurance. As education is the responsibility of the Länder, they form the legal basis for school education, including vocational schools and are therefore also responsible for QA.

BMBF is therefore not able to introduce unilaterally a national QA strategy based on EQAVET indicators.

In view of the autonomy of the Länder, policy makers rather aim at raising awareness and providing information on the advantages of QA in VET. DEQA-VET therefore tries to induce stakeholders of the Länder and other stakeholders to adopt EQAVET indicators in their QA frameworks.

However, interviewees note that although there is no legally required QA framework on the national level, a number of Länder governments and institutions already use similar QA systems, such as EQFM or ISO 9000, which frequently make us of EQAVET indicators.

Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance

As stated in the previous section, the Länder are independent in their choice of QA frameworks. Thus, although quality assurance in VET is high on the national policy agenda, no national strategy is foreseen regarding QA in VET. German policy makers on the national level prefer to keep this status quo, but nevertheless aim at providing guidance and advise Länder governments regarding their QA frameworks.

Since 2003, there were no significant changes in overall QA in VET. A number of Länder already had QA frameworks in place and further developed them over the years. Most of the

\[ \text{http://www.deq-vet.de/en/} \]
QA frameworks in use by the Länder already contained indicators similar to those of EQAVET.

However, according to interviewees, the establishment of DEQA-VET contributed to the kick-off of a discussion on QA on a national scale. Furthermore, EQAVET has certainly reinforced the (already existing) NRP by introducing a European platform on QA in VET.

The EQAVET Recommendation in 2009 triggered developments at the national policy level. For instance, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in Federal Republic of Germany (KMK) held a conference on QA in VET early 2012. As the KMK has the potential to adopt policies across all Länder governments, the introduction of QA to the KMK’s agenda represents an important achievement. In addition, the KMK’s subcommittee on VET has recently advanced discussion on QA frameworks in VET, according to DEQA-VET.

Thus, on the system level, EQAVET has been important regarding the establishment of a national discussion on QA in VET. Concerning the provider level, EQAVET has not yet engaged a significant number of stakeholders, as the VET landscape remains fragmented. However, DEQA-VET representatives are confident that QA will become more important on the Länder level and therefore the demand for standardised indicators such as EQAVETs will rise in the near future.

Finally, developments in QA of VET systems have been generally skewed towards providers of initial VET. However, the focus on continuous VET has become wider in recent years. In 2010, a representative of a national association of private and public CVET providers was admitted to DEQA-VETs national advisory group. DEQA-VET has triggered a lot of interest by private providers of continuous VET, who are interested in a EU-QA framework, as this would probably increase their standing and reputation.

**Synergies with other EU level instruments**

The interviewees have mixed views concerning the synergies in Germany between EQAVET and other EU level instruments. One interviewee notes that the EU did not make sufficiently clear the interdependence and the same underlying strategy of EQAVET and instruments such as EQF and ECVET. Although most of the stakeholders are active both in EQAVET and EQF or ECVET, the approach was not sufficiently integrated. A better link between the instruments would contribute to the overall effectiveness of the instruments as this would save stakeholders time and increase their willingness to participate.

Interviewees note the important relationship between EQAVET and EQF. In the context of the work on the German NQF there are currently activities on establishing skill assessment tools. QA is a crucial factor for the development of such tools, as it allows determining the actual level of knowledge. One interviewee therefore explicitly called for a better synchronisation between EQF and EQAVET.

**Sources**


Country report – Greece
Author: Stelina Chatzichristou (ICF GHK)

Part 1 – Description of quality assurance arrangements and of recent developments

Greece joined the EQAVET network in 2010, and significant steps have been taken towards the enforcement of quality assurance in IVET and CVET. The Lifelong Learning Act of 2010 and subsequent legal changes set a detailed framework regarding criteria that providers must comply with, monitoring and certification of curricula, and special requirements about building infrastructure. Given that under the LLL Act both IVET and CVET fall under the LLL National Strategy the greatest development on quality assurance concerns the π³ framework of the Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs, Culture & Sports that is currently under its second pilot phase (anticipated to conclude in February 2013). π³ quality assurance framework is inspired by and explicitly endorses the 2009 EQAVET Recommendation, thus paves the way for an upgrade of the quality of IVET and CVET provided in the country.

Given the constant developments in the relevant legislation, this country fiche aims at depicting the relevant status quo as of 16/12/12.

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in initial VET

Context

The governing institution in the Greek education system is the Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs, Culture & Sports (MinEdu). Regarding IVET, the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance (MLSI) also plays a significant role. The two Ministries have been cooperating since 2004 in VET issues.

- IVET in Greece is available both in upper secondary (non-compulsory) education and in post-secondary (non-compulsory) level. Upper secondary VET comprises of:
  - Vocational Lyceums (EPAL) and Vocational Schools (EPAS), run by MinEdu. The Manpower Employment Organisation (OAED) also runs apprenticeship EPAS that are supervised by the MLSI.
- Post-secondary (non-compulsory):
  - Institutes of Vocational Training (Institouta Epanalmitikis Katartisis, IEKs - ISCED level 4). The vast majority of IEKs function under MinEdu. However, MLSI and other Ministries run IEKs, specialised on each Ministry's field. IEKs also operate by private providers. Over the past two years there have been significant developments regarding IEK, under the latest Act on Lifelong Learning (LLL Act) (2010) and the 4093/2012 Law. Although not all provisions of the Act have been implemented yet, the novelties it has brought about and the impact on vocational training in Greece are considered of great significance.

EPAL attendance lasts for three years and combines general and technical/vocational education along with training. EPAS, on the other hand, provide technical/vocational education and training. Establishing public EPAL, modifications in the curricula and other elements of their operation are jointly decided by the MinEdu and the Ministry of Finance. County Education Councils are also involved, since they provide their consultation on those issues, based on the recommendation of the prefectural education committee.

Apprenticeship vocational schools (Apprenticeship EPAS – EPAS Mathiteias), on the other hand, operate under the Manpower Employment Organisation (OAED) of the Ministry of Employment and Social Protection.

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241 Act 3369/2005 on “Lifelong Learning”
242 Law 3475/2006
Until 2010, IEKs were supervised by the Organisation for Vocational Education and Training (Organismos Epangelmatikis Ekpaidefsis kai Katartisis, OEEK), which was responsible for the organisation and operation of the public IEKs under MinEdu, the supervision and control of private IEKs and the development of the regulatory framework for the operation IEK of other public bodies, in relation to matters of training.

However, under the LLL Act on the Development of Lifelong Learning IEKs are recognised as providers of lifelong learning services. OEEK was abolished and public IEKs fall since under the Secretariat of Lifelong Learning (G.G.D.V.M.). G.G.D.V.M commissioned the operation and management of public IEKs at the Youth and Lifelong Learning Foundation (INEDIVIM) (Idryma Neolaioas kai Dia Viou Mathisis). IEKs that function under Ministries under than MinEdu will be monitored regarding their education framework from G.G.D.V.M, and by the respective Ministry on administration and organisation issues.

The 4093/2012 Law underlines the responsibility of organising and operating IEKs fall under the Ministry or Region (Periphereia) or the public entity that runs them.

**Statutory stakeholder involvement in initial VET systems**

Social Partners participate in a considerable number of institutes, decision-making bodies, managerial committees, and other committees by monitoring programmes funded by the EU.

More specifically, the 3879/2010 Act identified institutes/research bodies of the most significant social partners as institutes providing lifelong learning services, thus including them in the National Lifelong Learning System:

- The Institute of Labour (IN.E.)
- The Centre for Education Policy Development (K.AN.E.P.) at the Confederation of Greek Workers in Greece (G.S.E.E.)
- The Small Business Institute (I.M.E.) at the General Confederation of Professional Craftsmen and Tradesmen in Greece (G.S.E.V.E.E.)
- The Social Multi-Centre and Trans-Balkan Institute for Public Administration Senior Management Associations of Civil Servants (A.D.E.D.Y.)

Overall, it is underlined that the provisions of the Act aim at safeguarding the relations between LLL institutions/providers and social partners, primarily:

- The A.D.E.D.Y.,
- The Federation of Enterprises and Industry (S.E.V.),
- The National Confederation of Greek Commerce (E.S.E.E.),
- The General Confederation of Professional Craftsmen and Tradesmen in Greece (G.S.E.V.E.E.)
- The National Confederation of Persons with Disabilities (E.S.A.meA.).

The Lifelong Learning and Connection to Employment Council is summoned by the MinEdu at least once a year. The Council coordinates the social debate relating to the development directions and social needs, as well as the lifelong learning policy measures in Greece. The members of this collective body are representatives of MinEdu and other Ministries, relevant public authorities and representatives from all major social partners: the presidents of the employer trade union organisations (S.E.V., G.S.E.V.E.E.,

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243 Act 3099/2011 and Law 4093/2012
Representatives from social partners are also members of the Central Examination Committee for the Accreditation of IVET (Kentriki Exetastiki Epitropi Pistopoiisis Epangelmatikis Katartisis, KEEPEK), as well as of committees that develop curricula.

Planning at VET system level and Identification of training needs

- Since OAED specialises on employment/labour market issues, the vocational training provided by its EPAS are considered relevant to labour market needs.
- The National System for Connection of Vocational Education and Training with Employment (ESSEEKA) was introduced in 2003. ESSEEKA’s objective was to operate as a framework within which labour market needs will be fed into initial and continuous VET curricula. Thus, it provided for a system of planning and coordinating all relevant public policy to VET and its link to employment.
- Relative is the role of the Lifelong learning and the Connection to Employment Council: One of its responsibilities concerns the connection of the systems for vocational training and their certification with the needs of the labour market (specialisations, professions, qualifications). The requirement to address labour markets at regional and local level is explicitly underlined.

Requirements for evaluation and review

- The LLL Act (2010) explicitly links the provision of state funding to the positive evaluation of the training providers. More specifically, LLL providers (that is, IVET providers, as well) are evaluated for the attainment of pre-set targets and are funded according to their effectiveness and efficiency.
- Another system that indirectly fosters the provider’s conform to specific quality criteria is the one that grants beneficiaries/learners with training vouchers for services received professional training and certification. This system is run by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security.
  Training Voucher enables the direct beneficiaries/learners to receive training services from certified training providers. Simultaneously, this is a motive for providers to seek certification, since only certified providers (of either IVET or CVET) are included in the register that learners can choose from.

Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on VET providers

Regarding private EPAL/EPAS, there are very specific criteria that the private provider must meet: Private Vocational Schools fall under the jurisdiction of MinEdu, which exercises its statutory authority to regional offices. They must comply with the provisions of the respective legislation. The private Vocational Schools must have the same set-up as the corresponding public ones and follow the same syllabus and schedule of operation. In order for a private vocational school to be established, the Regional Director of Education must decide positively and evaluate the suitability of the building facilities.

The LLL Act specifically mentions the constitution of a system that will safeguard the quality of the overall learning provided, through the continuous education and evaluation of the educators of training institutions/centres. More specifically, it is predicted that “from 1.1.2013, teaching proficiency is a precondition for an educator to participate in an informal education programme that is funded by public resources” (article 19).

EOPPEP has developed and implements an Educational Attainment Certification System for Trainers in Non-Formal Adult Education on which a relevant register will be based. There

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244 Law 3191/2003
245 “Integrated System Management, Assessment, Monitoring and Control of vocational training” (Gov. 915/V/20.5. 2011),
246 http://www.voucher.gov.gr/, cited on 14/12/12
247 682/1977 Law (GG 244 A’)

161
are specific criteria that must be met, in order for the “Train the Trainer” programme to be certified and thus, the relevant learners to be certified as Adult Trainers. EOPPEP controls and supervises the scientific efficiency, as well as other elements of the relevant training programmes. Moreover, the educational efficiency of Adult Trainers must comply with specifications pertinent to each Vocational Qualification. Each Adult Trainer is certified for ten years.

EOPPEP will also make sure that the “Train the Trainers” programmes have a modular structure and each module corresponds to ECVET measures.

Public and private IEK providers have to comply with set specific criteria, in order to acquire an operation licence. Private IEKs operate under the control of MinEdu that monitors their compliance with the relevant legal framework (for more detailed analysis, please see “Requirements VET providers have to comply with”).

**Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)**

- **Upper secondary VET:** Students that follow Vocational Lyceums (EPAL) receive, at the end of their studies, a certificate (*apolythrio*) that is equivalent to that of the general education Lyceum. EPAL graduates can have access to tertiary education since they can participate in the relevant exams. At the end of their training, EPAS students hold specific professional rights.

- **OAED EPAS graduates** receive a certification of professional rights. Successful completion of the apprenticeship is of great importance, so the results of the inspection and the feedback of the host company play a significant role in the achievement of certification.

Moreover, OAED (EPAS) have long-standing rules and criteria both for the way their apprentices will be assessed and the criteria that hosting employers must comply with. The prospective employers are sent an internship manual with instructions and guidelines for participation in the internship programme. The student or his/her guardian (in case of a minor) shall sign a contract with the employer Apprenticeship, which was subsequently endorsed by the Director of EPAS. Beyond the contract, the company that hosts students must apply the programme of internships must have, during the implementation of the programme, the necessary staff and appropriate facilities for the smooth implementation of the programme. Assuring the quality of the training provided falls under the EPAS inspectors, who perform regular checks of programme implementation. Finally, the company must comply with the conditions prescribed regarding safety and security of students.

- **IEKs:** According to the latest legislative developments, MinEdu and the Ministry of Finance determine the certification system of IEKs, which is implemented by EOPPEP. The Central Examination Board for the Certification Vocational Training (KEEPEK) was also established in November 2012. KEEPEK will be consisted of members of EOPPEP, a representative of MinEdu, a representative of the Confederation of Greek Workers (G.S.E.E.) and a common representative of employers' organisations. KEEPEK will be responsible for the content, organisation and smooth completion of certification exams. The quality of the examinations will be assured by on-site inspections. This new body and the relevant procedures start operating on January, 2013. The certification examination is common for public and private IEKs and IEKs of other entities. IEK graduates that wish to be certified for a specific occupation/specialisation can sit the relevant certification exams. The certification of IEK graduates is based on theoretical examinations and a practical part. In order to achieve certification, one must successfully pass both parts of the examination. Each specialty bears a Certification Regulation, where details on final examinations and general rules are provided. Successful completion of the examination leads to the Certification Diploma. EOPPEP, based upon accredited occupational profiles, is in the process of developing standards and

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248 As described in the 3879/2010 Act and the Law 4093/2012
249 [http://www.oaed.gr/el/component/content/category/86-2012-05-30-14-03-38, cited 10/1/2013](http://www.oaed.gr/el/component/content/category/86-2012-05-30-14-03-38)
specifications for modularised curricula with credits, through the adoption of ECVET framework. In order for this transition to be realised smoothly and effectively in learning terms, EOPPEP will collaborate with the General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning in order to revise curricula, as part of a Project that runs under the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF). For all courses, examinations take place at the end of each semester. The final grade for each course is calculated based on the average progress and the final examination (scale one to twenty). Trainees of public and private IEKs who successfully complete all semesters receive a training certificate (TC). After obtaining the TC, graduates are entitled to participate in the Certification Examinations, in order to obtain the Diploma. The latter is awarded on completion of four semesters in IEK.

Another element regarding IEKs refers to the practical training students can realise. The six-month practical training can be initiated only after the approval of the Head of IEK, who checks the relevance of the employer selected with the learner’s specialisation.

**Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators**

There is no systematic monitoring mechanism in place, nor are indicators collected. Inspection is only taking place in order to decide if a private provider will be allowed to found an IEK (please see “Requirements VET providers have to comply with”).

However, ad-hoc inspections, monitoring of progress and evaluations based on indicators reportedly took place at IEKs that were running training programmes co-funded by ESF/Operational Programme "Education and Initial Vocational Training" (EPEAEK)\(^{251}\). Monitoring and evaluation based on specific indicators also took place for all activities/projects that were co-funded by the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF 2007-2013)\(^{252}\).

**Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)**

As far as the upper secondary vocational education is concerned, MinEdu issued a proposal on the creation of the Technological Lyceum (Technologiko Lykeio). The proposal discusses a significant reform in the vocational education, through the merge of EPAL and EPAS, the addition of an extra year of study to facilitate access to tertiary education, insert curricula and qualifications expressed in learning outcomes and linked to ECVET, making apprenticeship obligatory and overall, address more flexible education pathways. In this context, the need to evaluate the quality of all structures and elements of the education process in vocational education is stressed. The Technological Lyceum Proposal has not been legally validated yet as a law.

Regarding IEKs, the most significant reforms in quality assurance since 2009 refer to the relevant predictions of LLL Act, as analysed earlier. Most importantly, the National Framework for Quality Assurance in LLL (\(\pi^3\)), as analysed in the CVET section.

**Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in initial VET**

**Requirements VET providers have to comply with**

In order to operate a private IEK, an individual or legal entity has to comply with specific requirements\(^{253}\). Prerequisites also hold for public entities, too. The criteria regard the financial and legal solvency of the owners, as well as the building infrastructure. In order to successfully pass the evaluation phase, on-site inspections are realised by EOPPEP employees or by inspectors held in the EOPPEP registries. When a provider submits an approval application, EOPPEP delivers its opinion to the Minister of Education regarding the compliance of the provider to the set criteria. If alterations to the building infrastructure are

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\(^{251}\) http://www.epeaek.gr/epeaek/el/home.jsp, cited on 4/03/13


\(^{253}\) Ministerial Decision 10136/A, issued 18/11/2012 and Law 4093/2012
asked from the provider, the latter must conform within 15 days. The operating permit is
under yearly control, regarding any changes on the former situation of the provider. Private
IEKs also have to submit in the application for authorisation the curricula and other elements
of the vocational training they propose (number of students, teaching material, laboratory
equipment etc.). The proposed curricula from the private provider must also be certified by
MinEdu\textsuperscript{254}. It is important to note that, private IEKs can choose to offer vocational training on
approved specialisations and corresponding study guides from the General Secretariat for
Lifelong Learning (GGDVM). The operating licence of a private IEK is under revocation, if
certain operation prerequisites seize to hold.

Specific requirements hold regarding educational attainment of IEK trainers. A tertiary
education degree is mandatory for those teaching theoretical subjects. Graduates of
Secondary Vocational Education may teach practical subjects in laboratories or work as
assistants of the formal trainers. Besides formal qualifications, the recruitment of trainers
highly depends upon professional experience, which is considered to be an important factor
for admission. The number of years of prior professional experience is usually correlated
with formal qualifications and the training subject. There is a list specifying the trainers'
qualifications, included in each curriculum\textsuperscript{255}. More recent developments on the restrictions
for trainers are analysed in the “Who can deliver VET” in the system-level part of this
analysis.

\textbf{Certification, assessment and validation of learners}

EOPPEP, following the work of EKEPIS, has designed and certified Qualification
Frameworks for vocational professions/specialties. Thus, all vocational training programmes
offered by IEKs, both public and private, lead to credit accumulation via ECVET and thus,
lead to the certification of the relevant specialisation.

\textbf{Quality assurance arrangements at system level in continuous VET}

\textbf{Context}

CVET in Greece is not part of the formal education. Until 2010, the organisation responsible
for evaluation and accreditation of CVET was EKEPIS, supervised by the Ministry of
Employment and Social Protection.

CVET was provided by Vocational Training Centres (\textit{Kentra Epanelmatikis Katartisis, KEK}),
Centres of Post-secondary Studies (\textit{Kentra metalykeiakh ekaideyshs ekspeideyshs-KEME}), Free
Studies Workshops (\textit{Ergasthria Eleyftherwn Spoudwn-EES}), Special Centres for
disadvantaged groups, as well as Second Chance Schools (\textit{Sxoleia Deyterhs Eykairias}).

The latest regulation on Lifelong Learning has shifted the responsibility to the MinEdu.
Additionally, EES were renamed to LLL Centres Level 1 and KEK to LLL Centres Level 2\textsuperscript{256}.
The discrimination regards building infrastructure criteria. Furthermore, the General
Secretariat of Adult Education (Geniki Grammateia Ekpaidefsis Enilikon, GGEE) through 200
Adult Education Centres (Kento Ekpedeisis Enilikon, KEE) and Prefectural Committees of
Adult Education (Nomarchiaki Epitropi Ekpedeisis Enilikon, NELE) provide educational
services in adult training\textsuperscript{257}.

Given these recent changes, the CVET field in Greece is currently under reform. This
country fiche will focus on former KEK, LLL Centres Level 2, due to their central role in the
CVET field.

LLL Centres Level 2 can operate under the Manpower Employment Organization
(\textit{Organismos Apascholiseos Ergatikou Dynamikou, OAED}), as well as prefectures and
municipalities. These Centres are run by social partners that are also considered to provide
publicly promoted CVET, given that many of their training programmes are subsidised by

\textsuperscript{254} Law 4093/2012
\textsuperscript{255} Cedefop, 2009
\textsuperscript{256} Law 4093/2012
\textsuperscript{257} http://www.gsae.edu.gr/index.php/nele, cited 14/12/12
OAED or receive funding from NSFP programmes. Moreover, there is a significant number of private LLL Centres Level 2.

Prior to the LLL Act, the responsibility for the quality assurance of (former) KEKs bore the "National Centre for Certifying Lifelong Learning Structures" under E.KE.PIS. The latter has been merged into EOPPEP, which is therefore the responsible organisation.

The responsibilities of the Centre are:

"i) To accredit/licence the inputs of non-formal education and more specifically: aa) to accredit and licence the structures, occupational profiles, programmes and trainers of the institutions for initial and continuing vocational training and more generally ,non-formal education, inclusive of adult education in general; bb) to accredit and licence the institutions that provide counselling services and counselling professionals; and cc) to supply the permit for the operation of these institutions, wherever it is required”.

Statutory stakeholder involvement in CVET systems

Most of the social partners operate vocational training centres, all of them accredited by the (former) EKEPIS. These LLL Centres Level 2 provide training to practitioners from the relevant sector/occupation (e.g. tradesmen/craftsmen, workers etc.).

Planning at CVET system level

LLL Centres Level 2 plan, organise and offer CVET programmes for employees, unemployed and graduates of all education levels in various fields (environment, health, education, agriculture, finance, services etc.). More specifically, LLL Centres Level 2 run by social partners design the provided training programmes after consultation with the relevant trade unions or employee representatives and based on results of labour market/specific sector surveys. Moreover, training is provided to unemployed that seek to get retrained on the sector-specific skills that the social partners relate to.

Requirements for evaluation and review

As for IVET providers, CVET ones must comply with certain quality criteria, on which the provision of public funding depends (LLL Act, 2010).

Requirements for Trainers are the same as for IVET.

Identification of training needs

LLL Centres Level 2 operating under social partners’ institutes/research centres run training needs surveys, special studies on topics of interest to their participants on training and employment.

Private LLL Centres Level 2 usually formulate their training programme by responding to Calls from NSFP funded programmes or Calls from Ministries.

Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on CVET providers

The former EKEPIS (former National Accreditation Centre for LLL providers) had developed a coherent and rigorous certification system for structures, trainers and occupational profiles. Regarding private LLL Centres Level 2 (then KEK), compliance with the EKEPIS quality criteria was assured by the fact that only accredited LLL Centres Level 2 could be included to Registries of OAED- which were the only pool for providers that would be financed to realise a programme. However, EKEPIS did not proceed with the formulation of a framework for the certification of knowledge, skills and competences, which is the output of CVET. This

LLL Act, 2010

According to the MD 20082/ 2012, GG 2844 B’

For example, GSEVEE’s KEK, available at:
gap has been covered by EOPPEP, by the development of the National Certification System for Qualifications, i.e. the certification of learning outputs.

EOPPEP is the organisation responsible for licensing and monitoring of qualification certification bodies, which refer to qualifications obtained through non-formal (and informal) learning. Given that EOPPEP is simultaneously in charge of certifying qualifications, the use of common directives and requirements throughout the National Certification System for outputs serves as a quality framework for all elements and participants.

EOPPEP has also completed the new Occupational Profile for the Trainer of Adults and instituted the new Certification System for the Teaching Competence of Trainers for Adults of Non-Formal Education. For the first time, the certification of qualifications is harmonised with European practices.

The same law states specific criteria also for individuals and public entities that can operate LLL Centres of Level 2, which are the same as for IEK providers, as analysed earlier.

The same provisions for Trainers stand for IEKs and LLL Centres Level 2, as elements of the national LLL system.

**Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)**

LLL Centres Level 2 implement trainee assessment systems on the basis of the training curriculum. On successful completion of their courses, trainees receive a certificate of attendance. The Common Ministerial Decision n. 113708/2005 (Official Journal 1814/ Issue B’30-12-2005), entitled ‘System for the Accreditation of Programmes, Knowledge, Skills and Competences’ instructed the development of procedures and tools for certifying knowledge, skills and competences, which contribute to the recognition of professional qualifications that are acquired in the framework of LLL. It also defines the procedures for the certification of knowledge, skills and competences of trainees.

However, the Greek education system was traditionally based on inputs. A milestone in the route to adoption of learning outcomes was the establishment of the National System for Linking Vocational Education and Training with Employment (ESSEEKA). Through ESSEEKA, numerous systems were connected, such as the System of Initial Vocational Training, the System of Technical Vocational Training, the System of Continuous Vocational Training, the Systems for Certification of Vocational Training and Qualifications and as well as the System of Counselling, Vocational Guidance and linking to the Labour Market. The mission of ESSEEKA was to provide the opportunity to citizens to certify their qualifications and vocational skills, even if those were acquired outside of the formal education system. Therefore, ESSEEKA recognised learning outcomes and not specific learning paths. Nowadays, the development of occupational standards (started in 2007 from EKEPIS and concluded by EOPPEP), and especially the development and implementation of the National Certification System for qualifications (outputs) will allow for the recognition of learning outcomes, irrespectively of the learning path followed or the way acquired.

**Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators**

Under prior legislation, EKEPIS was the responsible body for supervising the CVET providers. EOPPEP has taken upon this role as well. Licencing, monitoring and evaluation of (former) KEK, depends on specific criteria/indicators:

- Compliance with the accreditation criteria and standards and accreditation procedures - annual rate
- Monitoring and Evaluation of accredited LLL Centres Level 2
- Renewal of certification
- EOPPEP monitors compliance with the accreditation criteria and standards of LLL Centres Level 2 on an annual basis and conducts on-site validation checks adjusting their rating.

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261 According to the LLL Act and the 4093/2012 Law.
262 MD 20082/2012, GG 2844 B
The ratings are communicated to the institution on an annual basis.

If changes have taken place regarding staff, infrastructure, type of legal entity etc., it is obliged to report the change to EOPPEP. The respective LLL Centres Level 2 bears the responsibility to initiate the change management process.

EOPPEP may approve or reject the change.

The assessment of LLL Centres Level 2 is based on qualitative and quantitative criteria that are organised into three pillars:

- "Organisation and Function" which includes business planning, associated activities and mechanisms for dissemination and promotion of products and services.
- "Provided training" which includes systems for planning, monitoring and evaluation, training and measurement experience of the LLL Centres Level 2.
- "Promoting employment" which includes the monitoring of the trainees after the training, support mechanisms and promoting employment and integration of trainees into employment and the labour market.

Every two years LLL Centres Level 2 are obliged to fill in a specific form that concerns collection of data. This data is used as a basis for the evaluation of the above criteria. This procedure can be assessed as an obligatory self-evaluation.

EOPPEP has created software that keeps track of the necessary assessment data. This e-system and all the relevant information for providers are available on the EOPPEP website.

After the assessment is complete, EOPPEP calculates specific evaluation indicators based on quantitative data. All relevant indicators are included in Annex A of the Ministerial Decision (JMD 9.16031/Oik.3.2815/15-9-2009) which introduces this system of monitoring and evaluation.

Reforms of quality assurance in CVET since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)

The Act on LLL placed quality assurance at the core of the new system. The proposal for the establishment of a "National Framework for Quality Assurance in LLL (π³)" was introduced in July 2011 by the MinEdu. The framework underlines the importance of quality assurance in all levels of education (from primary to lifelong learning) and is explicitly linked to the EQAVET Framework and the 2009 EQAVET Recommendation. π³ builds on the quality indices, the criteria and the descriptors of the Recommendation, so as to come up with a framework that can suit vocational training, as part of LLL, in Greece. It stands for quality in:

- Inputs, i.e. provision of education and training: providers, teachers & trainers, curricula, material
- Processes, i.e. teaching methods and practice
- Outcomes, i.e. learning outcomes: knowledge, skills and competences acquired through learning paths

π³, through the adoption of the EQAVET framework, introduces major new elements to the quality assessment of the Greek LLL system: Quality Principles (towards an “attractive, effective, responsive to labour market’s needs” system) and indicators are introduced, while all five stages of the quality circle are presented.

π³ calls all LLL institutions to adopt their systems and processes to the principles of quality assurance, as stated in the Framework, embrace the quality indicators and adjust them to their specific needs and processes. Moreover, LLL providers/institutions are asked to

264 www.eoppep.gr., cited on 12/12/12
implement measurement and evaluation methods, revise systems and processes through the quality cycle of LLL. Also, data must be provided to the G.G.D.V.M., in order for the latter to monitor and evaluate the National LLL System.

A significant motive for providers is predicted, that of π³ label: that will be an acknowledgment awarded to those LLL institutions/providers that demonstrably implement the quality framework.

π³ is currently under pilot implementation.

Reforms of quality assurance in CVET since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008

In 2003, the implementation of the Monitoring and Evaluation of Vocational Training Centres (now LLL Centres Level 2) System was decided\(^{267}\). This was an “integrated system of methods, procedures, criteria and actions designed to monitor compliance with the criteria, conditions of certification and monitoring; also, the evaluation of the operation of Centres and the effectiveness of implemented actions.” One of its aims was the introduction of quantitative and qualitative evaluation criteria by Vocational Training Centres in their training programmes and structures. Only pre-certified providers could apply to take part in the System. However, evaluation from EKEPIS was necessary. Specific qualitative and quantitative indices should have been met, such as the completion rate of the training programmes and the absorption of trainees in the labour market. Evaluation also concerned all elements of training, such as the content. The evaluation took place every two years with on-site inspections and the assessment of a portfolio that each Vocational Training Centre completed (self-evaluation) and submitted to EKEPIS.

Other significant bodies of legislation, besides the most recent ones, that have indirectly addressed and improved the quality of the provided CVET, concerned (Cedefop, 2009):

- The 3369/2005 law, “Systematisation of Lifelong Learning and other Regulations”. The law regulated the provision of lifelong training and most importantly, predicted that trainees will receive types of training certificates according to the length of the training programmes.
- The Common Ministerial Decision 110327/2005 ‘System for the Accreditation of Vocational Training Centres (KEK)
- The Common Ministerial Decision 113708/2005 “System for the Accreditation of Programmes, Knowledge, Skills and Competences”: It required the development of procedures and tools for certifying knowledge, skills and competences which contribute to the recognition of professional qualifications that are acquired in the framework of LLL. It also defined the procedures for the certification of knowledge, skills and competences of trainees.
- The Common Ministerial Decision 110998/2006 ‘Accreditation of Occupational Profiles’. This MD underlined the importance of revising the occupational profiles, so as to accordingly adjust CVET training.
- The Common Ministerial Decision 113616/2006 ‘System of Accreditation of Adult Trainers’ that set the institutional framework (terms, criteria and the process) for the enrolment and accreditation of adult trainers. It abolished the former distinction between instructors and trainers and introduced six sub-registers, according to occupational specialisations.

Quality assurance arrangements in continuous VET at provider level

Requirements CVET providers have to comply with (if not described in 1st section)

As stated earlier, CVET providers and LLL Centres Level 2 in particular were motivated to go through an accreditation process, so as to be included in the relevant register of EKEPIS-and thus, be eligible to apply for public/EU funded projects. The specific requirements and

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\(^{267}\) 111384 Joint Ministerial Decision of Ministries of Finance and Labour and Social Insurance (issued on 13/05/2003)
the relevant procedure that trainers had to go through are thoroughly described in the Common Ministerial Decision 113613 B 1700/21.11.2006 that set the Accreditation System of Adult Trainers.

The latest framework has been modified268, clearly setting the criteria for the certification of a trainer that provides access to the relative register. The Management Process of Modifications in Qualification Portfolio (e-Portfolio) has been also introduced; it is anticipated to function as a feedback mechanism to the existing database, regarding changes in trainers’ qualifications, experience etc.

Planning at CVET provider level (including identification of training needs)

Many private LLL Centres Level 2 claim to provide holistic approach to training: assessment of the training needs of the client (private company, sector, local labour market etc.) and plan targeted training.

Requirements for monitoring and review (self-assessment)

Many private providers use quality assurance systems, such as ISO, but they are not required to do so.

Certification, assessment and validation of learners

As described in system-level analysis.

Reforms of quality assurance in CVET at provider level since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)

As described in system-level part.

Reforms of quality assurance in CVET at provider level since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008

As described in system-level part.

Part 2 – Interaction between national quality assurance and EQAVET

National Reference Point

The NRP has been in place since the country’s involvement in the network, in 2010. EOPPEP (National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance) is the NRP and represents Greece in EQAVET. EOPPEP operates under the supervision of the Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs, Culture & Sports.

EOPPEP was appointed NRP as the consequent organisation of EOPP269. Guaranteeing quality assurance in inputs, outputs and vocational guidance/counselling is one of the main objectives of EOPPEP. The mandate of the NRP was based on the EQAVET Recommendation, as the latter was used as a compass. EOPPEP has a strategic plan and a roadmap with milestones etc. where all pillars of its work are described. However, given that it has been operating for only a year, it has not been yet evaluated.

Prior to the NRP, there was no other organisation leading the quality assurance in all levels and types of lifelong learning. There were, of course, quality assurance mechanisms/processes in facets of VET, but not an overall approach.

According to the interviewees, the greatest challenge was not setting up the NRP, although organisational merges are always a challenge: the most significant difficulties in quality assurance concern the overall transition from inputs to outputs in the national VET system. Moreover, the VET field in Greece was so fragmented (IVET and CVET offered from various ministries and organisations). Thus, the challenge was of local, structural nature and not of setting up the NRP per se.

268 Ministerial Decision (MD /20082 23-10-2012)
269 EOPPEP was created from the merge of three organisations, in November 2011. A more detailed analysis is provided in Part 1, section A1.1
EOPPEP’s Action Plan is expressed in Axes. One of them specifically refers to quality assurance. This Axis holds three parts:

i involvement in the adoption of national framework for quality assurance in LLL
ii certification of EOPPEP as an agency (ISO-EFQM)
iii its role as NRP in the EQAVET network.

The NRP follows exactly the activities set in the Recommendation: create the website, disseminate information to citizens/learners/trainees and to providers. As far as citizens are concerned, the collaboration with SYEP (Guidance) is assessed as very important, since the latter has tools and systems in place that facilitate the design of a database that will be useful to trainees.

The NRP aims at fulfilling the predictions of the Recommendation. More specifically, its objectives are:

- Complete the development of π³ quality assurance framework.
- Set up and implement the award of π³ label to providers/organisations that comply with the framework.
- Launch an on-line tool that will create EQAVET indicators: providers will be able to feed the tool with relevant data. This tool is currently under development.

High priority has been attributed to the involvement and engagement of stakeholders. All the major social partners, both from employers and employee side, as well as representatives of relevant agencies and departments of EOPPEP and MinEdu have been included until now. In specialised dissemination days, as well as within other events, the NRP provides information on the EQAVET developments and the national approach to organisations, agencies, providers etc.

As part of the pilot phase of implementation of the national approach (π³), VET providers were included in the consultation and their feedback was asked. Thus, representatives from public and private IEK, Free Studies Workshops, KEK, (now LLL Centres Level 1 and 2) and Second Chance Schools were informed. Adult education centres have been informed by GGDVM, given that they fall under its jurisdiction.

It was underlined that representatives from SYEP (Consulting and Vocational Guidance) that used to belong to EKEP were also involved in the π³ formulation, although they use the ELGPN framework.

However, the LLL Act (2010) raises the responsibility for LLL training to regional and local authorities. The decentralisation foreseen in the Act is about to take place, so the NRP must inform and support regional and municipality education councils.

**National approach to enhance quality assurance**

π³ is the Greek approach to quality assurance, triggered by the 2009 EQAVET Recommendation and the involvement of the country in the network. It concerns only VET structures under the Ministry of Education. Thus, it refers to all types of IVET (but not secondary vocational education) and CVET of MinEdu.

Following the Recommendation’s request towards the Member States, regarding the adoption of a national approach, Greece presented its national approach (π³) on 1/7/2011. π³ is completely based on the EQAVET framework, but adjusted to local specificities. For example, the EQAVET framework does not include Guidance in the elements of the quality circle. However, Guidance has always been a part of VET-related policies in Greece (probably the main reason why EOPPEP engulfed EKEP, the former organisation responsible for vocational guidance).

The Greek approach to quality assurance was formulated under the auspices of the General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning (GGDVM), from an external consultant. During the first phase that concerned consultation, the opinion and perspective of all social partners were taken into consideration. Social partners had submitted a report with their suggestions and also participated in the relevant meetings. The level of their information is high, since they were heavily included in the process (especially the Confederation of Greek Workers in Greece (G.S.E.E.), and the General Confederation of Professional Craftsmen and
Tradesmen in Greece (G.S.E.V.E.E.). So π³ was initially designed based on feedback from and consultation with the Ministry of Education, representatives from all organisations that comprised EOPPEP and the social partners. The consultant was asked to take into consideration all the other EU tools when designing the framework.

As of mid-December 2012, the consultation on the framework was been completed, as well as its first pilot implementation. However, π³ has not been formalised as an official law yet.

The Working Group that develops π³ is comprised by the NRP and the national representative, representatives from SYEP, GGDVM, MinEdu (specifically, the Quality Department that monitors EQARF) and the Qualifications Department of EOPPEP. All relevant stakeholders were informed and included in the first pilot phase, which was completed in February 2012. The Working Group had very often meetings in order to promote the development of the second/revised version of π³, but also to incorporate the swiftly changing circumstances in the country.

Currently, the second version has been developed (although not publicly available). The second version includes a label-attributing mechanism. That is, providers that adopt the national quality assurance framework will be able to apply and request for receiving a “π³ label”, which will prove their compliance with the relevant processes. Moreover, version two has finalised the self-assessment tools, as well as an additional toolkit that provides the possibility to extract even more indices. A detailed User Guide is also ready, including all necessary forms, explaining processes etc. to providers. GGDVM has agreed with the external technical consultant to conclude the second pilot at the end of February 2013. The second pilot phase will include a) Design of the management system registry of evaluators, b) Design of the π³ application through a methodological tool for LLL providers, c) Training of evaluators, and d) Application of π³ in LLL providers (pilot).

As a next step, the finalised version of π³ will be uploaded on EOPPEP website and publicly available.

In the second pilot phase the following stakeholders have been invited to contribute: 16 public IEK, 16 Second Chance Schools, as well as Centres of LLL level 1 and 2 (former KEK and EES, as explained in Part 1 of this country report).

Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance

The EQAVET framework had a catalytic effect on the development of the national approach: according to the interviewees, the EQAVET Recommendation led to the increase of political commitment and relevant resources, attributed to quality assurance. There were previous studies underlying the need to rearrange existing systems, place all policies under the same “umbrella” and update the quality assurance system- so, the EQAVET Recommendation provided the mean to initiate the relevant processes and organise the fragmented field of non-formal education. Moreover, π³ is mainly based on the EQAVET framework.

As far as the elements of the framework are concerned, all interviewees argued that they have been very useful and all were included in the π³ framework. In some cases, the latter predicts more than one indicator that comprises one of the EQAVET indicators. This was done only because EQAVET indicators are core ones that give the possibility to the country to correspond further sub-indicators to them, so as local needs are better suited. For example, focusing on vulnerable teams is of great importance. However, the definition of vulnerable teams/groups differs from country to country. As far as the descriptors are concerned, π³ incorporates the principles descriptors are based on and not the descriptors per se.

The EQAVET framework is also considered to have promoted the quality assurance culture to providers. According to the interviewees, there are numerous providers that seek to get constantly informed and participate in the process, seem to be intrigued by the new developments and look forward to the official launch of π³: most probably, the establishment of a quality assurance system in the country is perceived to enhance transparency in the national training programmes offered, increase the credibility of Greek providers across borders and so, contribute to collaborations with providers from other Member States.
The developments up to 2009 created a complex setting for quality assurance: from 2003-2009, IEKs (IVET) were monitored by an organisation of the MinEdu, regarding examinations, certification, structures etc. On the other hand, other Ministries that provided IVET and CVET determined internal ways of monitoring, evaluation and certification. However, in IVET, curricula and certification examinations were under the auspices of MinEdu, regardless of the Ministry organising the programme.

KEKs (CVET) were monitored by EKEPIS from 2000 to 2008. KEKs were ranked, based on an Evaluation System. State and ESF funding was delivered based on that ranking. That System also included indices for all aspects of quality assurance.

However, the quality circle for both IVET and CVET did not “close”, in the sense that, although data was collected and indices were produced, no corrective actions were taking regarding the evaluation system itself- no self-assessment took place.

So, this is the gap that π³ aims at bridging, according to the interviewees. Another overall target is to connect quality assurance to qualification systems, regardless of the way the qualification was awarded.

Synergies with other EU level instruments

EOPPEP incorporates the national representatives/NRPs for other EU tools: it is the National Coordination Point for EQF, the National Reference Point for ECVET, the National Centre for EUROPASS, as well as the National delegate in the European Lifelong Learning Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN). So, the dissemination of knowledge among the different agencies is institutionalised and takes place simultaneously for all. That was one of the reasons for creating an “umbrella”-organisation like EOPPEP: having all relevant EU tools responsible people under the same “roof”. As departments/pillars of the same organisation, their strategies are developed concurrently. Human resources capacity is shared for all EU tools/departments; however the people in charge/high in the hierarchy are not the same.

Departmental representatives/NRPs participate in information-dissemination events of all other departments. For example, in an event for qualifications, there will be a presentation regarding quality assurance. So, all departments under EOPPEP receive information on developments in the rest of the organisation, which is believed to promote understanding and developing a holistic view of all related tools/processes in the country.

Another significant institution in the field of quality assurance is the Hellenic Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency (ADIP), which concerns tertiary education. No collaboration has taken place with ADIP, but it is one of the NRP’s goals for the near future. Interviewees also underlined that collaboration with the tertiary education structures are sought after by the EQAVET network.

The NRP aims at disseminating relative information to the whole spectrum of VET. Thus, all the major social partners and representatives of other state agencies (for example, EOPPEP officers that used to work for EKEPIS, OEEK), the LLL national system and the Ministry of Education are invited to their activities and are simultaneously the target group for information/awareness activities.

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**A1.14 Country report – Hungary**

Author: Edina Ocsko (external expert to ICF GHK)

**Part 1 – Description of quality assurance arrangements and of recent developments**

The most relevant quality assurance measures since 2003 include:

- The 2003 modification of the Education Law of 1993 formalised the previously set requirements for quality assurance by requiring educational institutions to develop Institutional Quality Management Programmes (IQMPs).
- Between 2005 and 2007, national programmes were initiated in order to introduce the CQAF requirements into the national context of both IVET and CVET. Among others, a national CQAF Coordination Committee was set up.
- Between 2008 and 2011, the national Common Quality Management Framework (CQMF) was developed for the whole VET sector in the framework of the ‘Improving the quality and content of training’ project, supported by EU Funds. The project aimed to integrate existing QA methods into a common framework for both IVET and CVET. CQMF is fully in line with the EQAVET Recommendation.
- In 2012 and 2013 new legislative acts on public education, VET and adult training are introduced. Among others there will be a stronger focus on external monitoring (through the ‘inspector system’). The use of the recently developed and piloted CQMF model is still uncertain.

**Quality assurance arrangements at system level in initial VET**

The government change in 2010 initiated the restructuring of the Hungarian VET system and the elaboration and amendment of the relevant legislation. New legislation (public education as a whole, and on VET specifically) was adopted in 2011 and introduced in 2012. The various provisions of the new legislations are introduced gradually (e.g. some provisions entered into force during the second half of 2012, while others are introduced in 2013). Some parts of the planned legislation are piloted before their nation-wide implementation. This means that changes are ongoing, and at this point of time it is difficult to assess the impact and efficiency of the new legislative acts with certainty.

**National Framework for IVET**

All levels and types of formal education and training, from pre-primary to post-secondary, are covered by ‘The Public Education Act of 1993’. County and municipal governments provide education, but other institutions, such as the church and business entities and foundations can also set up their own educational institutions. All education providers are eligible to receive financial support from the central government budget based on the number of students and type of tasks carried out. As of 1 January 2013, important changes have been introduced, with regard to the maintainers of schools: most institutions are now maintained by the state, at least as far as their professional supervision is concerned.

Bodies involved in the decision-making in IVET include the central government, county governments and various national, regional and local advisory and decision-making bodies involving the social-partners. Since 2010, the Ministry for the National Economy is responsible for regulating the provisions of IVET, but it shares responsibility with other

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270 CEDEFOP, 2011, p.23
272 Idem.
273 Idem.
274 CEDEFOP, 2011, p.24
Ministries that require VET, such as Health, Tourism and the Minister for National Resources for defining framework curricula and learning outcomes.\(^{275}\)

Initial VET in Hungary is primarily offered in upper-secondary, post-secondary and higher education and is regulated by the VET Act of 1993\(^{276}\). As for all schools, VET schools are run by the state, instead of being maintained by local municipalities, according to the new legislation, effective from the 1st of January 2013. In order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency, VET schools had to join into regional integrated vocational training centres (TISZKs). The process of setting up TISZKs stared in 2004 and was completed around 2008. The new legislations introduced in 2012 and 2013 also had an influence on the ownership and functioning of TISZKs: according to the new legislation on VET, from 2013 the former TISZK system will be restructured. In each of the 19 counties and in Budapest one or two large VET centres will be established (with more than 10,000 students at each) and will carry out the tasks of TISZKs.

After completing IVET programmes, learners can acquire vocational qualifications that are listed in the national qualifications register (NQR, OKJ in Hungarian).\(^{277}\)

**Planning and stakeholder involvement in IVET systems**

The county and capital city governments have been in charge of medium-term planning and coordination tasks of ‘public education’ (i.e. schools and programmes that function under the Public Education Act, where IVET is primarily offered)\(^{278}\). Social partners have also been involved in the policy- and decision-making process of IVET through various advisory councils, such as the National Interest Reconciliation Council and the National Vocational and Adult Training Council\(^{279}\) and the County Development and Training Committees (CDTCs). Since October 2012, 19 CTDCs have been established. One of their main tasks is the alignment of labour market needs and developments in both IVET and CVET. Prior to CTDSs, the regional development training committees played a similar role. The National Institute of Vocational and Adult Education (NIVE)\(^{280}\) is responsible to assist the Ministry in the development, coordination, research, information and counselling with regard to IVET (and CVET).\(^{281}\) NIVE is a background institution of the Ministry, however in many of its activities (e.g. advisory role, suggestions and professional advice) it acts autonomously. NIVE manages registers of vocational examinations and regional integrated vocational training centres (TISZKs)\(^{282}\). Other national agencies engaged in implementation of IVET include the Educational Authority and its county offices that is involved, among others, in national examinations, surveys, and quality assurance (QA) activities; the Hungarian Chambers of Commerce & Industry and the Hungarian Chamber of Agriculture (involved among others in defining learning outcomes, the organisation of IVET examinations, and QA functions). The Chambers play an increasingly important role in the development of the new dual training system (i.e. school-based and company-based).

**Identification of training needs**

For the past years, one of the main VET policy priorities has been the anticipation of skill needs, with the aim to ensure that training supply better corresponds to regional and labour

\(^{275}\) Idem.

\(^{276}\) VET Act No LXXVI of 1993. Note that the new VET Act (No CLXXXVII) has been approved in 2011, and has entered into force between the second half of 2012 and in 2013.

\(^{277}\) CEDEFOP, 2011, p.29

\(^{278}\) Idem. As noted earlier, according to the new legislation, from the 1st of January 2013 the VET schools will be owned by the state instead of being maintained by local municipalities.

\(^{279}\) The National Interest Reconciliation Council and the National Vocational and Adult Training Council are active both in IVET and CVET (CEDEFOP, p.24).

\(^{280}\) The new government elected in 2010, merged NIVE into the National Labour Office and renamed it into Vocational Training and Adult Education Directorate of the National Labour Office.

\(^{281}\) CEDEFOP, 2011, p.25

\(^{282}\) Idem. p.20.
market demands. A range of short-term and longer-term labour market forecasts are carried out in Hungary and EU-funded projects have also focused on the issue. However, according to CEDEFOP, the reliability and validity of these methods has often been questioned. The CDTCs also play an important role in aligning the labour-market demand to the content of IVET and CVET systems. Aiming to satisfy the labour market regarding the structure, quantity and quality of training, the latest government (elected in 2010) reformed the module-based National Qualifications Register (OKJ). The objective of this reform was to create better synergies between the requirements of similar professions. As a result, the number of primary qualifications was reduced (while the number of sub-qualifications within each category was increased).

**Requirements for evaluation and review**

The Hungarian quality assurance (QA) system has been primarily self-assessment based. Educational institutions have been required to submit self-assessment reports and core indicators and these had to be approved by their operators (i.e. mostly local municipalities until 2012). Institutions who took part in the VET School Development Programme had to submit a set of key and benchmarking indicators each year in addition to self-assessment reports. After 2011, some important changes (new approach and legislation) were introduced by the newly government. One of the main changes is the reintroduction of the ‘school inspection’ system from 2013, which means emphasis will be placed on external assessment of the work of teachers, rather than on self-assessment of institutions.

**Reforms and quality assurance in initial VET from 2003 until 2008**

The quality assurance system in public education institutions in Hungary has evolved through a range of legislative actions, decisions and initiatives from the end of the 1990s. It was the 2003 modification of the Education Law of 1993 that formalised the previously set requirements for quality assurance by requiring educational institutions at all levels, both general education and VET, to develop Institutional Quality Management Programmes (IQMP, IMIP in Hungarian) until 31 March 2004.

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283 CEDEFOP, 2011, p.55  
284 Idem.  
285 2011, p.55-56  
286 Source: http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/articles/19185.aspx (last accessed 11/02/13)  
287 The module-based system aims to support individual training paths, and as such to contribute to the possibility of life-long learning. The strong cooperation and synergies between school-based VET and adult training is an important pre-condition of the efficient functioning of the system.  
288 It has to be noted that in line with the new legislation higher level/advanced adult training that is carried out by higher vocational education is now part of higher education, and as such it is not part of the NQR (as it was before).  
289 The programme was running between 2003 and 2009 with the participation of some 160 VET schools and aimed amongst others to assist the adaptation of the CQAF system in national VET schools.  
290 Interviewees emphasised the importance of using expertise and knowledge accumulated to date when the details of the new inspector system (and VET QA in general) are developed, in order to ensure that the best use is made of previous work on the national CQMF system.  
291 This section was developed on the basis of interviews carried out for the purpose of this study, and information provided in EQAVET Survey Annexes (2011, 2012).  
292 No LXXIX  
293 The 1999 modification of the Education Law required public institutions to have an assessment, control and quality assurance system. In 2000 the government introduced the COMENIUS 2000 Programme (a highly innovative and successful initiative involving a large number of public institutions) that aimed to improve the quality assessment and management systems of public education institutions. Decree No 3/2002 of the Minister of Education called for continuous self-assessment in public education institutions. The same Decree established the Public Education Quality Award (PEQA), which was considered a groundbreaking and highly innovative initiative not only in the Hungarian, but also in the European context.  
294 It has to be noted that according to the new legislation introduced in 2011 it is no more a formal requirement to develop an IMIP.
After 2004, Hungary became particularly committed to bringing its QA system in line with European developments and actively took part in the adaptation of the CQAF and EQAVET systems to the national context (see further details in section A1.5). In 2005 and 2006 national programmes were initiated in order to introduce the CQAF in both IVET and CVET (i.e. to show how existing QA systems can be brought in line with CQAF requirements). Furthermore, a major EU-funded project took off in 2007 in order to integrate existing QA systems into a common quality management framework in both VET and adult training, in line with the EQAVET Recommendation.

Reforms of quality assurance since 2009

The Common Quality Management Framework covering the whole VET sector (CQMF, ESZMK in Hungarian) was developed in the framework of the ‘Improving the quality and content of training’ project supported by the Social Renewal Operational Programme. This was a highly important cornerstone in the development of the VET quality assurance system in Hungary. The project started in 2008 (and was running until 2011) and, among others, aimed at improving the VET quality assurance system, covering both IVET and CVET (i.e. integrating existing QA methods into a common framework in both IVET and CVET, while making best use of the EQAVET Framework). NIVE was responsible for the management of the project. During 2009-2011, a Common Quality Management Framework study (referred to hereafter as CQMF Study) and Handbook were prepared and some 60 experts (mentors) and 1,100 institutions were trained in line with the new EQAVET requirements. As a result, by 2011 a practically-focused and ‘ready-to-use’ new concept and methodology have been developed. It is important to note that the CQMF is not a completely new concept, but rather builds on previously used QA models.

The provisions on IVET by the new government are introduced gradually and some of them are still in the piloting phase- so, exact results and potential need for revision will become apparent at a later stage. The government aims to introduce changes to the content of the CQMF for IVET, based on the initial pilot experiences (related among others to the dual training system and the inspector system) before the nation-wide implementation of the new system.

Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in initial VET

Requirements for VET providers and planning at VET provider level

As specified above, the 2003 legislation introduced the Institutional Quality Management Programmes (IQMP) that made quality assurance methods obligatory in VET institutions. As a result, most of the educational institutions integrated QA methods in their practices. Among others, the IQMP should describe:

■ the long-term philosophy of the institution’s operation and the way they plan to ‘operationalise’ this;
■ the process of the institution’s operation including planning, management, control, measurement and assessment tasks;
■ the criteria and procedures for the performance assessment of leaders and teachers within the institution;
■ the cycle of the self-assessment and its methods;
■ the relationship between the institutional self-assessment and the quality management system of the operator;
■ the results of the national surveys and evaluations.

295 Among others, a Hungarian CQAF Coordination Committee was also set up (including representatives of the relevant ministries, higher education institutions, NIVE and social partners).

296 This section was developed on the basis of interviews carried out for the purpose of this study, and information provided in EQAVET Survey Annexes (2011, 2012).

297 According to some interviewees it would be highly important to adjust the requirements of this new system to the recently developed national CQMF model. The two systems have possible synergies, e.g. both emphasise the relevance of external evaluation.

298 CQMF Study, 2009, p.35
Requirements for monitoring and review (self-assessment)

According to Ministry of Education,

According to Ministry of Education, public institutions need to carry out continuous quality improvement actions, based on institutional self-assessment, with the aim to provide services that are in line with the social and local stakeholder needs. Moreover, institutions are required to identify key partners and regularly assess the needs and satisfaction from the education/training provided. On the basis of the results of assessments, institutions need to define their strategic objectives and develop their services further. They prepare action plans, in line with these objectives. As a next step, they evaluate the implementation of these plans and use evaluation results for the purpose of continuous improvement.

Certification, assessment and validation of learners

In both ‘vocational’ and ‘secondary vocational’ schools, OKJ qualifications are awarded after the vocational examination. The examination is carried out by an independent examination committee. OKJ lead to partial vocational qualifications (ISCED 2C), that can be complemented at a later stage with the additional/missing modules, so as to obtain a complete vocational qualification (either within the school-system or in adult training). A secondary school-leaving examination (ISCED 3A) is only conducted in ‘secondary vocational’ schools (but not in ‘vocational’ schools) and is awarded at the end of the last ‘general education grade’.

The main changes in quality assurance in IVET at provider level until 2008

IVET institutions (including the public sector) apply a wide range of general quality assurance models (such as Total Quality Management or ISO 9001). However, possibly the most influential of all models has been the one developed in the framework of the COMENIUS 2000 Public Education Quality Improvement Programme. The QA method developed emphasised the gradual improvement of quality and of the organisational culture based on continuous self-assessment. More than 1,700 educational institutions participated in the programme (some 20% of all institutions in the country), which was considered a very high participation rate. About one third of the participating institutions were VET institutions.

The main changes in quality assurance in initial VET at provider level since 2009

The national CQMF was developed between 2008 and 2011 in order to integrate existing systems and approaches with regard to IVET (and CVET), at the same time taking into account the specificities of the Hungarian system. CQMF was not a completely new system, but it strongly built on existing QA systems and approaches. CQMF has already been adopted by some providers, but since it is not mandatory for providers to apply, it has not yet been adopted by a significant number of educational institutions. The adoption of CQMF is considered of great importance from experts in the field since it coincides with the current restructuring of VET and adult training systems.

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in continuous VET (adult training)

General framework

The policy framework in Hungary does not make clear distinction between CVET and adult education and training. So, in the Hungarian context, CVET is most often used as a synonym for adult training.

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300 Idem.
301 CEDEFOP, 2011, p.38
302 Idem.
303 Idem.
304 This section was developed on the basis of interviews carried out for the purpose of this study, and information provided in the CQMF (2009) study.
The concept of adult training and its administrative and institutional system is defined in the Act on Adult Training. The Act outlines requirements for accreditation of institutions and programmes and adult training contracts, and sets out state-support schemes. A new legislative Act on Adult Training is currently being developed.

**Planning and stakeholder involvement in CVET systems**

CVET decision-making bodies include the central government and various advisory councils, which involve social partners. Advisory councils (that operate in both IVET and CVET contexts) include the National Interest Reconciliation Council and the National Vocational and Adult Training Council. Regional labour councils serve as tripartite forums to reconcile different interests related to training the unemployed and other specific target groups. Social partners are also involved in the Adult Training Accreditation Body (please see below).

**Institutions involved in the delivery of CVET, accreditation and certification**

Bodies implementing CVET, which comes under the Adult Training Act, include the Adult Training Accreditation Body (that involves social partners), the county labour centres of the National Employment Service, and two economic chambers.

Adult training offered outside the school system often leads to the award of a state-recognised vocational qualification, listed in the national qualifications register (OKJ).

**Reforms of quality assurance in CVET until 2008**

As stated in the 2012 EQAVET Secretariat Survey, in 2005, the Minister of Employment took the initiative to invite a group of experts, regarding the development of proposal on the way CQAF could be adapted to an implemented in the Hungarian adult training sector. In January 2007, a large-scale preparatory project was launched, based on the recommendations of the experts. The project had a six-month horizon and aimed at designing the development activities, necessary for the adaptation and implementation of CQAF. This project promoted the improvement of the Hungarian adult training sector (and as part of this, the adult training accreditation system), in line with the European requirements.

**Reforms of quality assurance in CVET since 2009**

The developments with regard to the national CQMF framework described in the IVET context (and described in section A1.2) also apply for CVET.

**Quality assurance arrangements in continuous VET at provider level**

**Requirements CVET providers have to comply with**

If registered at the county labour centre, providers are free to develop their training programmes. Accreditation of adult training institutions and programmes may not be mandatory, but it is a prerequisite for receiving public funds. The main criteria for accreditation of adult training providers are: (i) at least one of the training programmes

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305 The CEDEFOP Study on VET in Hungary (2011) also discusses ‘adult education’ under CVET. This includes school-based adult education within secondary, post-secondary and higher education. This is financially supported by the State and participants are considered students in terms of their legal status.

306 Act CI of 2001

307 CEDEFOP, 2011, p.23

308 CEDEFOP, 2011, p.26

309 CEDEFOP, 2011, p.26

310 CEDEFOP, 2011, p.42

311 Annex to EQAVET Survey 2012, p.3

312 CEDEFOP, 2011, p.27

313 CEDEFOP, 2011, p.47
implemented must be accredited; (ii) they should have a human resource development plan and descriptions of training processes; (iii) should have a quality assurance policy, quality objectives, quality management system and a self-assessment system in place.

Requirements for monitoring and review (self-assessment)

The Adult Training Accreditation Body is awarding the accreditation and is also responsible for monitoring whether the activities of the adult training provider are carried out in line with the accreditation requirements. The accreditation can be withdrawn, if the provider does not comply with the requirements. Accredited CVET institutions also have to carry out annual self-assessments. Until the development of the national CQMF, there was no common model or methods applied for self-assessment in CVET institutions.

It has to be noted that according to the planned legislative changes, accredited adult training providers would need to comply with new data provision requirements, and there is stronger emphasis on the timely implementation of planned training activities.

Certification, assessment and validation

As far as prior non-formal/informal learning is concerned, assessment and recognition is a common practice only in few areas of adult training. The Adult Training Act refers to the possibility of validating and recognising prior learning. However, assessment and recognition of prior learning are not regulated, allowing for the use of very diverse assessment methods. The most typical adult training programmes are further training, courses awarding an OKJ qualification (typically at ISCED 3C level) and qualification required for a job/occupation, but not listed in the OKJ.

Quality assurance in CVET at provider level until 2008

Quality assurance in adult training is defined by the Adult Training Law that entered into force in 2002. This legislation introduced the accreditation process of adult training providers and (since 2003) that of adult training programmes. A Government Decree of 2004, and its later amendments, defined the rules of accreditation of institutional adult training providers and adult training programmes. As analysed earlier, the Adult Training Accreditation Council (an independent body) is responsible for the accreditation. The aim of the accreditation is to ensure that the training provider implements training activities in line with high quality requirements set out in the accreditation legislation. According to interviewees, the strong focus on quality requirements during the Hungarian accreditation process has been considered as a good practice in Europe.

Part 2 – Interaction between national quality assurance and EQAVET

National Reference Point

The Hungarian NRP fulfils several tasks that are suggested by the EQAVET Recommendation, including:

- representation of Hungary in EQAVET and related tasks;
- (contact with those involved in (and influenced by) quality assurance and quality development;

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314 Adult Training Accreditation Council
315 Annex to EQAVET Survey 2012, p.3
316 CEDEFOP, 2011, p.43
317 22/2004 (II.16.)
318 This practice has been in place for longer term and refined continuously over time.
319 It has been included as a good practice example in the publication entitled ‘Assuring quality in vocational education and training. The role of accrediting VET providers’ (Cedefop Reference series; 90, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2011)
collection, structuring and dissemination of information concerning quality assurance and quality development;
regular information provision to national stakeholders about the activities of the European Network and developments with regard to EQAVET;
regular information provision to European Commission and members of the European Network about the national developments;
coordination of the national and European action plans through the involvement of the relevant stakeholders;
coordination of various activities with regard to the QA and quality development of VET, with special focus on the national developments concerning EQAVET;
cooperation and contact with the NRPs of other Member States;
contact with other professional organisations and working groups (such as EUROPASS, EQF, ECVET and the European Higher Education Quality Assurance Network).

The QA NRP is operated within the VET and Adult Education Directorate of the National Labour Office. The role of the NRP is run by one permanent staff member, who is supported by an external expert. The same reference point and person is responsible for the overall coordination of ECVET and EUROPASS.

National approach to enhance quality assurance

As specified above, the major cornerstone in the development of VET QA was the project entitled ‘Improving the quality and content of training’ that started in 2008 and was supported in the framework of the Social Renewal Operational Programme (2007-2013), and its sub-project (No 2) on quality assurance. The main purpose of the quality assurance sub-project was to develop a common approach to QA covering both IVET and CVET based on existing QA models. In the framework of the project a study titled the ‘Introduction of a Common Quality Management Framework’ (i.e. the CQMF Study) was prepared. Among others, the study includes information on: (i) QA and self-assessment models currently used in VET and adult education; (ii) the CQMF model that is developed and is suggested to be introduced in Hungary with the aim of developing a common approach for VET and adult training QA (based on existing models); (iv) the support systems attached to the CQMF, such as mentoring network, QA database, organisational background; and (v) the necessary legislative changes in order to apply the new model.

As specified above, the overall aim of the project (and CQMF Study) was to develop a common framework to QA both IVET and CVET. This model has been developed fully in line with the EQAVET Recommendation. Among others, the CQMF Study suggests that the institutional objectives (for both IVET and CVET) are defined in accordance with sectoral objectives. The national CQMF system fully integrates the indicative descriptors suggested by the EQAVET Recommendation at VET-provider level, and argues that the institutional objectives should be in line with these. The EQAVET study also argues that a common IVET-CVET self-assessment system should be defined based on the criteria and descriptors suggested by the EQAVET Recommendation (the details of the proposed model are also set out in the Study). The Study also suggests the use of the ten indicators recommended by EQAVET (to reflect European-level objectives) as well as indicators at sectoral level (based on the objectives set out by the VET-development Strategy), at regional level in line with the regional objectives, and at provider and institutional level (using already existent assessment models and indicators). Furthermore the CQMF Study argues that both IVET

Source: http://www.eqavet.nive.hu/index.php?m=3 (last accessed: 11/02/13)

The most important QA models applied by VET and adult training institutions (that fall under the Education Act, including schools maintained by the church, foundations, etc.) in Hungary have been Total Quality Management (TQM), QA based on ISO 9001, QA linked to the COMENIUS 2000 Public Education Quality Improvement Programme, the ICMP introduced in Hungary in 2003-2004 (see above), and QA with regard to adult training accreditation. The CQMF Study shows how the various models applied by VET and adult training institutions use self-assessment models, external assessments and evaluations (including monitoring, inspector system, peer review and accreditation), and apply indicators and operate supporting databases.

Self-assessment was already an obligation for both IVET and CVET institutions; however, in CVET there were no concrete models or methods to be applied when carrying out self-assessments.
and CVET should be subject to the same external evaluation system\textsuperscript{323}, which is also a precondition for the authorisation of their operation. The key elements of the proposed external evaluation are the (i) ‘benchmarking database’ (developed on the basis of the one developed through the VET development programme); (ii) a ‘peer review’ external evaluation system; (iii) an external inspection system. It is argued that there is also a need for an external evaluation with the objective of providing institutions with the relevant formal qualifications (in addition to the evaluation carried out with the aim of developing institutions’ performance)\textsuperscript{324}.

Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance

According to the interviewees, EQAVET (and previous European QA systems such as CQAF) had considerable impact on the Hungarian IVET and CVET quality assurance system development. Hungary has actively taken part in the work of the EQAVET Network and fully harmonised its QA system with the European Recommendation. Most importantly, the EQAVET system had an agenda-setting influence in Hungary. This means that national stakeholders and experts involved in the process made good use of the European-level Recommendation when designing the Hungarian QA framework. At the same time they also integrated the QA elements that were specific to the Hungarian system. The most prominent example for the agenda-setting power of EQAVET is the national CQMF model (developed by 2011) that fully integrates the various elements (criteria, indicative descriptors, indicators, self-assessment methods) suggested by the EQAVET Recommendation; at the same time creating a link with existing national quality criteria, indicators, and self-assessment and external assessment frameworks.

However, it has to be noted that both IVET and CVET are going through considerable changes, in particular due to the new legislation on vocational education and adult training (to be) introduced by the new government. The recently developed CQMF model has strong potentials for complementing these recent developments. For instance, the importance of external evaluation has long been stressed by the developers of the national CQMF model, who also highlighted the weaknesses of the current QA system in this regard. Therefore, the CQMF integrates external evaluation as a core element of VET and adult training QA (in line with the EQAVET Recommendation). Although the ‘inspector system’ (to be introduced by the new legislation) has a slightly different focus (i.e. there is likely to be more emphasis on the assessment of the quality of the work of teachers/trainers rather than institutions); it has a common ground with the CQMF model as far as the importance attached to the role of external surveillance is concerned.

Similarly, the better integration of IVET and CVET (through the module-based National Training Register) makes it possible to explore the possibilities of the use of a joint QA system (such as the CQMF model). How far the CQMF model will become a common practice among VET stakeholders depends on a number of factors (including political commitment).

Synergies with other EU level instruments

According to the interviewees, developments of other EU-level instruments, such as the European Quality Framework (EQF) or European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) were also taken on board when developing the national QA framework. The synergies with other frameworks are also insured through the national institutional structure and responsibilities. The coordinator of EQAVET in the NRP is also responsible for the coordination of other initiatives (namely ECVET and EUROPASS).

\textsuperscript{323} It is argued that while all aspects of the suggested self-assessment system has been applied already, the ‘weakest link’ has been the external evaluation.

\textsuperscript{324} The CQMF Study describes various options for the institutions who could fulfill the ‘accreditation’ function, together with the potential advantages and disadvantages of these options.
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EQAVET Hungary website: www.eqavet.nive.hu
A1.15 Country report – Ireland

Author: Ilona Murphy (ICF GHK)

Part 1 – Description of quality assurance arrangements and of recent developments

The amalgamations of State agencies involved in the quality assurance of education and training is currently taking place. This follows the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Bill that was introduced in 2011. This legislation will merge the existing national qualifications and quality assurance bodies (NQAI, HETAC, FETAC and the Irish University Quality Board) into one new agency - Quality and Qualification Ireland (QQI), which will be responsible for a wide range of functions, and will provide a more integrated, efficient and coherent range of services across the further and higher education and training sectors.

At the time of writing this country report the amalgamation has very recently occurred and roles and responsibilities are in the process of being established. This also means that policies and procedures in relation to quality assurance are also in the process of being developed. The current legislation makes clear that the QQI shall issue guidelines in relation to provider quality assurance procedures and will consult with relevant stakeholders before establishing effectiveness review procedures. As such, this report can only reflect on the approaches to quality assurance that were previously in place prior to the amalgamation taking place.

The wider landscape of further education and training is also undergoing a period of significant transformation. On 22 July, 2011, the Government announced its intention to establish a new authority to coordinate and fund further education and training in Ireland called SOLAS. As part of the change, the FAS Training Division is set to transfer to the VECs and those VECs will report to the new authority SOLAS in respect of further education and training. Furthermore, the existing 33 VECs are being rationalised into 16 Local Education and Training Boards (LETBs).

In terms of how this impacts on quality assurance arrangements, within CVET the main approach to quality assurance is through provider accreditation and programme validation. These functions were carried out by FETAC and have now been transferred to QQI.

In relation to IVET, the main developments to highlight in respect of school based quality assurance arrangements are the increased focus on school-self-evaluation and external inspection. Here there is greater emphasis on school management, leadership and learning in post-primary schools.

Given the constant developments in the relevant legislation, this country fiche aims at depicting the relevant status quo as of 15/2/13.

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in initial VET

For the purpose of this study and by way of setting the context, there are five levels of IVET in Ireland. These include lower secondary, upper secondary, apprenticeship training, other youth programmes and alternative pathways, post-secondary (non-tertiary). As such, IVET within the context of post-primary education primarily takes place in state-funded secondary, vocational, community and comprehensive schools. It also includes Youthreach centres for education also provides IVET. These centres are a state-funded alternative education provision for students who drop out of school early and provide the equivalent of second-level education and are managed under the auspices of the Vocational Education Committees.

The administration and implementation of government policy for IVET falls within the remit of the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE), with the former being the most significant player in the area of IVET.

The DES also has overall responsibility for policy related to curriculum, assessment and qualifications. In addition, the National Council for Curriculum Assessment (NCCA) advises the DES on developments, specifications and standards in these areas; and the State Examinations Commission (SEC) runs the State examinations and acts as the awarding body for schools awards/qualifications which are accommodated in the National Framework of Qualifications.

For the purpose of clarity and to avoid duplication, this first section of the report will focus primarily on IVET within the context of upper secondary school though it should be noted there is some overlap in terms of the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders involved in CVET.

Statutory stakeholder involvement in initial VET systems

Responsibility for the delivery of IVET has been devolved to 33 Vocational Education Committees (VECs) that are statutory local education bodies. In addition, the responsibility for the implementation of initial vocational training programmes (IVET and CVET) for young entrants into the workforce, unemployed persons and early school-leavers is devolved from the DES to State funded bodies which include:

- FÁS, which provides training for new entrants into the workforce and in co-operation with the Institutes of Technology, for apprentices
- Fáilte Ireland which trains new entrants for the tourism, catering and hospitality industries, either directly, or in cooperation with Institutes of Technology
- Irish Fisheries Board which provides initial training for the fishing and marine industries;
- Teagasc, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority, which trains new entrants into the agricultural and horticultural sectors

More broadly, stakeholder involvement in VET takes place through a system of National Partnership Agreements, involving the government and the social partners. Every three years these partners agree a national programme for social and economic development which has also included policies relating to VET. The current programme ‘Towards 2016’ runs from 2006-2016. The social partners are represented on the Boards and/or Advisory Committees of FÁS, Fáilte Ireland and Teagasc, and had a representative role on the former awarding bodies Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) and the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC). They also have a consultative role in the allocation of funds for training schemes and programmes under the employer-levied National Training Fund.

More specifically in relation to quality assurance in school based upper-secondary level, the main stakeholders involved include the NCCA, State Examinations Commission, the Teaching Council, providers of initial and continuing education for teachers, the Department’s (DES) Schools Division, as well as management authorities, teacher unions and bodies representing parents and students. Another statutory stakeholder in the achievement of standards and accountability in schools is the school Boards of Management – the roles and responsibilities of BOMs are specified in Section 15 of the Education Act 1998.

Planning at VET system level

The DES sets down a broad regulatory framework within which schools in receipt of state funding are required to operate. The regulatory framework includes the curriculum to be followed by schools, the governance structures for individual schools and the timeframe within which, schools are required to operate.

The Teacher Education Section (TES) of the DES has official responsibility for the provision of support for national priorities such as school development planning, school leadership and management. It also has overall responsibility for the introduction of new and revised curricula and syllabi and particular projects and initiatives related to priority areas such as disadvantage and inclusion, education for students with special educational needs, positive behaviour management and language support for newcomer students.

**Requirements for evaluation and review**

Ireland’s approach to quality assurance in schools takes place through external inspection by the DES Inspectorate, supported by school self-evaluation. This is discussed further below.

**Identification of training needs**

As indicated above, responsibility for the provision of initial vocational education and training is devolved from the DES to 33 Vocational Education Committees (VECs) who have statutory autonomy to identify and meet local needs for IVET. These bodies comprise representatives of local authorities.

**Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on VET providers**

For IVET providers outside of mainstream schooling the former Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) and the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) were responsible for the certification and accreditation of all IVET and CVET programmes leading to their awards. Responsibility for the accreditation of VET providers outside mainstream schooling has since transferred to the QQI.

Within the context of upper-secondary IVET, provision is largely delivered through community and comprehensive schools. They are managed by boards of management, which are representative of local interests. The schools are financed entirely by the DES.

**Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)**

At system level, the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit (QCAP) of the Department for Education and Skills is responsible for leading policy development in respect of curriculum and assessment issues, including the setting of standards via the curriculum.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment provides advice to the Minister on curriculum and assessment issues that is subsequently considered by the policy unit.

Decisions regarding the curriculum standards to be adopted, the timing of curricular change, and the types of assessment to be used in schools are finalised by the QCAP unit for Ministerial consideration and approval.

National externally set and marked examinations run by the State Examinations

Commission apply to all students at the end of lower second level education and on completion of upper second level education. The Commission is responsible for the provision and quality of all aspects of the established Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, Leaving Certificate Applied and Junior Certificate Examinations.

**Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators**

The Inspectorate Division of the DES has a statutory quality assurance and support obligation in relation to educational provision as set out in Section 13 of the Education Act 1998. Under this legislation, all state primary and post-primary schools in Ireland must be inspected by DES. The purpose of inspection is to ensure that high standards are maintained and that there is continuing development of the educational system. The range of approaches that the Inspectorate use to promote quality assurance in the Irish educational system include:
The promotion of school self-evaluation.
Support for school development and planning.
Teacher in-career development and support in the context of ongoing curricular/syllabus change and development.
External evaluation of schools by the Inspectorate.
Programme evaluations by the Inspectorate focusing on aspects of curricular provision.
System evaluation through participation in international studies such as TIMMs, PISA, etc. and periodic national surveys of attainment.
The State Certificate examinations, which are organised by the State Examinations Commission, a body independent of the DES.

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)
In 2012 the School Self-Evaluation Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools were published. This sets out robust procedures, together with detailed evaluation criteria and quality statements to support schools in the self-evaluation.

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008
In terms of the school system, until March 2003 much of the work of the post-primary inspectors was the organisation of the Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations. This work is now being done by the State Examinations Commission, which publishes the Chief Examiners’ reports on the outcomes of the examinations in a number of subjects.

Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in initial VET
Requirements for monitoring and review (self-assessment)
As noted above, the quality assurance of Irish schools is through external inspection and school-based self-evaluation. Over the past decade, schools have had to undertake a process of self-evaluation known as Looking at Our School (LAOS), which sets out a framework against which both primary and post-primary schools are measured and reviewed.

The LAOS framework was designed to support self-evaluation in schools, and so was not intended to be prescriptive. In November 2012 the DES published the School Self-Evaluation Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools. This sets out detailed evaluation criteria and quality statements in relation to three key themes: Learner outcomes, student’s learning experiences and teachers practice.

The DES also launched a Whole School Evaluation (WSE) initiative in 1996, which was eventually introduced into schools in 2003/4, following a number of years of negotiation. WSE is a process of external evaluation of the work of a school carried out by the DES Inspectorate Division. A school evaluation under WSE includes a range of activities and meetings involving the school principal, teachers, members of parent’s councils/associations and members of the school’s Boards of Management. It also comprises school and classroom visits by the inspector during which they observe in classrooms and interact with students and their teachers.

At post-primary level, incidental unannounced inspections; subject inspections which look at the work of individual subject departments in addition to a relatively short and intense model of whole-school evaluation called WSE-MLL (Management, Leadership and Learning) also takes place. To support the role of inspection, a detailed set of criteria covering the various aspects of the school to be evaluated by inspectors during whole-school evaluations and other inspections have been developed. These criteria have formed the basis of inspectors’ professional development and they continue to be a major contributor in helping to ensure consistency among inspection teams as set out in the 2012 School Self-Evaluation Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools.
In recent years there has been an overall greater emphasis on school management, leadership and learning in post-primary schools. It also interesting to note that the Education Act 1998 places a duty on inspectors to report the outcome of their evaluation of schools to the Minister, the Board of Management of the school, teachers, parents and the school patron. Since 2006, WSE inspection reports have been published on the DES website.

**Certification, assessment and validation of learners**

At the end of compulsory schooling, the majority of students proceed to upper secondary education (or the Senior Cycle). This consists of an (optional) Transition Year followed by one of three versions of the two-year Leaving Certificate programme although not all versions are offered in every school.

There are three, two-year, ring-fenced, full-time Leaving Certificate programmes - the Leaving Certificate (established), the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP).

The focus of the established Leaving Certificate is primarily academic and its main emphasis is on providing students with the necessary education required for entry into third-level and higher education. The Leaving Certificate established is followed by the majority (nearly three-quarters) of Irish students in the senior cycle. The LCA is structured around three elements – Vocational Preparation, Vocational Education and General Education. On completion of the programme, participants generally proceed to Post-Leaving Certificate vocational education and training courses or directly to the labour market.

The LCVP is vocational in nature and its objective is to prepare learners for further and continuing education and for the world of work. The LCVP is based on combinations of Leaving Certificate (established) subjects (two of which must be vocational) and students must take three Link Modules in Enterprise Education, Preparation for the World of Work and Work Experience.

On completion of the senior cycle, students sit for the established Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme or the Leaving Certificate Applied examinations. In the main, students are assessed by a terminal examination although some subjects (such as art and music) have a practical dimension. Languages include an oral as well as a written test. Students who participate in the LCA accumulate some credit over the two years of study as well as completing a terminal examination. The examinations are organised by the State Examinations Commission.

In specific relation to IVET programmes that are ran through FÁS, FÁS develops curricula for all its courses, including apprenticeship training. It is also responsible for the quality assurance and conformance of its training materials with the requirements of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and FETAC.

**Quality assurance arrangements at system level in continuous VET**

**Context**

At present, the quality assurance of further education and training programmes and awards is regulated by the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (education and training) Act, 2012 through Quality and Qualifications Ireland, established in November 2012. Policies in relation to quality are currently being devised by the QQI and will be subject to wide-spread consultation. They will build on a range of previous policies that were previously in place in relation to quality assurance such as FETACs programme validation, monitoring policy and provider accreditation.

**National Framework for CVET – who is in charge of what?**

In relation to CVET, the administrative responsibility for funding and policy for publicly provided CVET falls mainly within the Department for Education and Skills (DES) and the
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE). Other government departments make provision for CVET in their own specific sectoral areas but as the majority of CVET is delivered through DES, the remainder of this report will focus on quality assurance arrangements associated with CVET within the DES remit.

In summary, the DES supervises and funds further vocational education colleges and adult education centres. The newly established QQI is responsible for the certification and accreditation of all CVET courses leading to QQI Awards – assuming responsibility for its predecessor organisations HETAC and FETAC.

As set out on the QQI website, the new agency will facilitate the achievement of a coherent and consistently applied system of qualifications and quality assurance in education and training nationally. It will maintain, promote and develop the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), working with Institutions and providers to ensure that greater opportunities will be available to learners nationally for participation in high quality education and training.

Statutory stakeholder involvement in CVET systems

There are a number of key organisations involved in CVET in Ireland. As indicated above, at government level, the main government department responsible for CVET is the DES. Having previously acknowledged structural changes currently underway, this section provides a brief overview of the main actors involved, though the exact nature of their respective roles and responsibilities are pending due to the current amalgamation and wider changes taking place within the further education and training landscape.

At present key stakeholders typically include the new QQI, FAS, the Irish Vocational Education Association328 and VECs.

As mentioned above publically funded CVET provision is largely delivered through FÁS who typically provides training for adults who wish to enter or re-enter the workforce or to generally update their skills within it. Publically funded CVET is also delivered through a wide range of sector representative bodies such as Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM), the Irish Sea Fisheries Board, Coillte, the Irish Forestry Board, Teagasc, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority, Fáilte Ireland, the National Tourism Development Authority, The Crafts Council of Ireland (CCI), Údarás Na Gaeltachta is the state agency with responsibility for the economic, social and cultural development of the indigenous Irish speaking regions called the Gaeltacht and Bord Altranais, the regulatory body for the Irish nursing profession.

As indicated above, the social partners have always played a role in VET in Ireland. The National Social Partnership Agreement ‘Towards 2016’, the ‘National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016’ and the current Programme for Government 2011, have all re-emphasised the government’s commitment to lifelong learning.

As discussed in more detail below, in Ireland, an Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) is a body appointed by the Irish Government to advise it on aspects of education and training related to the future skills requirements of the enterprise sector of the Irish economy. The Expert Group represents a key platform to engage a range of key stakeholders in CVET. For example, employers and unions are represented on the Board and sub-Boards of the main vocational training providers and both employers and unions are represented on the EGFSN329 to assist in the identification of specific skill and qualification needs.

Employers and unions are also represented on board of the QQI.

328 www.ivea.ie
329 http://www.skillsireland.ie/
Planning at CVET system level

The 2011 ‘Programme for Government’ sets the agenda in terms of planning for CVET. The report states that with regard to adult and further education, lifelong learning, community education and vocational training for jobseekers will be a high priority. The intention is to expand training options for jobseekers and for the further and higher education sectors to facilitate the upskilling of the labour force.

Requirements for evaluation and review

At system level the new QQI is responsible reviewing and monitoring the effectiveness of providers’ quality assurance procedures. This is done through programme accreditation and provider recognition – discussed in more detail below.

Identification of training needs

As indicated above, the EGFSN advises government on aspects of education and training related to the future skills requirements of the enterprise sector of the Irish economy.

Emerging and New Skills

In July 2005, the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment asked the EGFSN to identify the skills required for Ireland to become a competitive, innovation-driven, knowledge-based, participative and inclusive economy by 2020. In response, the EGFSN carried out a detailed programme of research, which resulted in the publication in 2007 of the report Tomorrow’s Skills – Towards a National Skills Strategy.

The National Skills Strategy (NSS) sets out the potential skills needs of the economy up to 2020, the likely supply and demand for skilled labour and the key policy issues required to address these skills needs, as well as the existing provision of training and the benefits of investment in training for individuals, employers and the nation as a whole. It details specific targets to achieve a significantly improved educational and skills profile for the Irish labour force FÁS has a Planning and Research Department, which undertakes studies of employment trends and skills needs in order to inform VET provision, for example, the FÁS Quarterly Labour Market Commentary.

Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on CVET providers

One of the main providers of CVET is the vocational schools and community colleges, owned by the local VECs and managed through boards of management. Membership of the boards includes VEC representatives and parent, teacher and community representatives. Vocational schools and community colleges are largely funded by DES.

The main conditions in terms of who can deliver CVET is based on provider accreditation through QQI. As QQI policies and procedures are under development, it may be helpful to reflect on the accreditation of providers previously carried out by FETAC. Through this policy approach, FETAC previously developed a Common Framework for Quality Assurance that set out the requirement for providers seeking FETAC registration in relation to processes and procedures for a range of different components. This included communications, equity, staff recruitment and development, access, transfer and progression, programme development, delivery and review, fair and consistent assessment of learners, protection for learners, sub-contracting, procuring programme delivery and self-evaluation of programmes and services. Provider accreditation against these nine areas was a mandatory requirement for all providers delivering FETAC awards.

Through the former FETACs provider quality assurance policy, all providers were required to have in place robust quality assurance systems with concrete measures in place to identify and phase out poor performing providers.

In terms of the current situation, the QQI became fully established in November 2012 and FETAC as an organisation has since been dissolved. In preparing for the dissolution of FETAC, the transition of functions to the new agency and the reassignment of resources
across the new organisation, FETAC Provider Registration has closed and a number of other services such as programme validation have been suspended. It is the intention that QQAI will implement integrated policies on provider registration across further and higher education and training.

**Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)**

At national level the QQI is responsible for determining the national standards for awards, and validates programmes, which provide learners with the opportunities to meet the required standards. Learners’ achievements are locally assessed by providers according to quality assured assessment practices. Providers are responsible for implementing fair and consistent assessment of learners.

**Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators**

In the past the awards councils were required to monitor and evaluate the quality of programmes and to validate programmes leading to awards. These functions have now been subsumed by the QQI in relation to CVET.

**Reforms of quality assurance in CVET since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)**

The creation of QQI is the most significant reform to report in relation to quality assurance following publication of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Bill in July 2011. The Bill provides for the amalgamation of the National Qualifications of Ireland (NQAI), the Higher Education and Awards Council (HETAC) and the Further Education and Awards Council (FETAC) into the QQI.

As indicated above, in July 2011, the Minister for Education and Skills also announced additional key organisational changes in relation to the further education sector in Ireland. The first being the creation of a new authority called SOLAS to replace FÁS and the second key change is that VECs will ultimately deliver all publicly funded further education and training programmes, and FÁS will be disbanded.

**Reforms of quality assurance in CVET since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008**

FETAC introduced its policy on Programme Validation in March 2006 with the aim of ensuring that all programmes are evaluated by FETAC to verify compliance with quality assurance procedures and standards for awards. Since 2005, all providers who wanted to register with FETAC for the first time were required to do so through the agreement of their quality assurance procedures with FETAC. These developments followed the publication of the Qualifications Act in 1999 that required all providers of further education and training programmes leading to FETAC awards to establish procedures to quality assure their programmes were in line with FETAC.

**Quality assurance arrangements in continuous VET at provider level**

**Requirements CVET providers have to comply with**

As indicated above, in the past providers delivering state funded provision were required to be accredited by FETAC who had in place a specific quality assurance policy for provider accreditation. All VET providers offering FETAC awards were required to demonstrate their capacity to monitor, evaluate and improve programme and service quality to learners. Successful providers who were registered with FETAC could offer awards from the national qualifications framework (levels 1 to 6). FETAC’s validation process examined how programmes met the specifications for an award. This previously involved an evaluation and review by FETAC of VET providers’ published quality assessment criteria and procedures.

It is however noted that responsibility of quality assurance in CVET at provider level has been transferred to the QQI.
Requirements for monitoring and review (self-assessment)

In the past FETAC monitored programmes to assure continuous improvement across the system. Agreement by FETAC on the potential efficacy of a provider’s quality assurance procedures was a prerequisite for gaining and retaining registration to offer FETAC awards. As part of FETAC’s quality assurance procedures, providers were required to evaluate and review their own internal quality assurance procedures and programmes.

Certification, assessment and validation of learners

QQI’s role is to determine national standards for qualification awards, validate providers’ learning programmes, monitor the quality of programmes and ensure providers operate fair and consistent assessment of learners. In the past, registered providers who had agreed quality assurance systems with FETAC designed and offered programmes leading to the new Common Awards System.

Stakeholder involvement and identification of training needs

At CVET level a very wide range of courses are provided through the VECs and FÁS including a range of adult and community education courses which cater for the literacy, numeracy and ICT needs of adults. On an annual basis, with advice from its Skills and Labour Market Research Unit, and inputs from the EGFSN (see above), FÁS arranges for the provision of a range of courses and in recent years FÁS has developed new courses to meet emerging labour market and skills needs in the areas of services, ICT, medical devices, food, biopharma occupations and green energy.

Part 2 – Interaction between national quality assurance and EQAVET

Basic information

The NRP in Ireland was established in 2008 – this follows Ireland’s historical involvement in European approaches to quality assurance. FETAC was represented on the National Forum, Quality Assurance National Reference Point (QANRP) and the Working Group on Indicators.

A further point to note is that the EQAVET Secretariat previously hosted by FETAC.

National Reference Point

The National Reference Point for Ireland was previously located in FETAC. Given the structural changes discussed in the first section of this report, FETEC together with the NRP are being transferred to the newly formed QQI.

In terms of the main activity, the main role of the NRP is the dissemination of information at national level and to ensure that key players are involved in meeting quality standards aligned to EQAVET.

The NRP does not have a mandate as such, though the main role and responsibility of the NRP and its activities are embedded within the terms of reference for a group that was established to implement European activity in Ireland. This group is known as the Copenhagen Group. Establishing this group was seen to be the most appropriate way to engage stakeholders in the European agenda and is supported by regular briefings to stakeholders. Through the establishment and activities of the Copenhagen Group, the NRP succeeded in engaging a wide range of stakeholders to participate in broad and strategic discussion about quality assurance across the Irish education system.

In terms of other implemented activities the NRP has participated in European conferences and delivered presentations during EQAVET meetings. In addition, the NRP selected two Irish case studies to add to the pool of on-line materials available on the EQAVET website. In this case, the NRP invited members of the Copenhagen Group to identify two providers to take part in and develop case studies for wider publication and use.
The NRP also nominated providers (from construction and tourism) and other representatives – typically those working on the ground to attend relevant EQAVET meetings/events. For example, Léargas, the National Agency in Ireland for the management of national and international exchange and cooperation programmes in education, youth and community work, and vocational education and training has played a key role in the EQAVET qualification seminars. This type of involvement is considered to reflect the success of the networking effect of EQAVET.

There are no additional resources set aside for the NRP in Ireland. The work of the NRP is deeply embedded within FETAC and it is therefore difficult to disentangle work separately carried out in relation to EQAVET and work carried out in relation to FETAC. All of the work led by FETAC in relation to quality assurance has very much been informed and shaped by EQAVET.

National approach to enhance quality assurance

A clear priority for Ireland was the mobility of Irish learners. At the peak of the economic boom, there was significant potential for the mobility of learners in certain sectors, especially in construction. As such, there was a need to ensure that qualifications had the capacity to be recognised elsewhere and that they were surrounded and supported by robust quality assurance arrangements. Ensuring that there was a capacity to recognise quality education provision was an important policy priority for Ireland, not least because of the number of young people emigrating but also because of the number of young foreign nationals entering Ireland in recent years.

There was a very clear message from the interviewees that the national approach to improving quality assurance systems at national level has made best use of EQAVET in accordance with national legislation and practice.

The content of the EQAVET framework – use and usefulness

It was noted that the indicators were never fully implemented but were and continue to be helpful in assisting Member States in the analysis and review aspects of quality assurance. EQAVET has succeeded in engaging a broader range of stakeholders – particularly those who have an important role to play in exploring/driving the bigger picture in terms of quality assurance. For example, engaging DES who have an inherent interest in quality assurance at the heart of their remit. As such, one of the key advantages of the indicators is that they enabled the NRP to work in close partnership with DES to develop a methodology in order to consider and explore a wide range of issues relation to quality assurance. Whilst it was noted that the indicators themselves are difficult to untangle, they have succeeded in generating greater interest in quality from across a broader range of stakeholders.

In terms of the EQAVET framework, it was noted that the framework is appropriate and serves as a sound reference tool, applicable to a range of key stakeholders. It was also noted that the framework was not designed to be prescriptive and given that VET is so diverse in its scope, the EQAVET framework is designed in a way that successfully captures the different layers/characteristics of quality assurance.

In summary it was pointed out that the indicators are helpful particularly in relation to the implementation of quality assurance measures but must be considered in the context of the framework itself. As such EQAVET serves as a sound reference tool with excellent sources of background information and tools to support further improvement in quality.

Partner organisations involvement

There was a view that there is always room for the involvement of more employers who have a key role play in terms of ensuring qualifications are of high quality and fit for purpose. Engaging employers in a conversation concerning quality creates wider opportunities for employers to be engaged in broader aspects of education and training. As such
communication with partner organisations is highly important. Here the building blocks can be used to demonstrate to employers the value of quality improvement.

**Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance**

In Ireland, quality assurance in VET is high on the national policy agenda in education and training. This largely reflects Ireland’s historic involvement in European policy in relation to quality assurance. Given that FETAC is also the organisation that hosts the EQAVET Secretariat there has always been a strong commitment to quality assurance. The development and implementation of EQAVET has clearly influenced and complemented the commitment to quality assurance at system and provider level. As such EQAVET has always and continues to have an agenda setting effect. This has manifested itself in the development of a national approach that aspires to reflect the quality cycle principal of which the EQAVET framework is based.

Developments that were triggered as a result of the EQAVET Recommendation at national level include an enhanced understanding of the importance of quality assurance. The amalgamation of the existing bodies responsible for FE (FETAC) and HE (HETAC) now means that even greater focus on ensuring continuity of quality assurance approaches from FE provision/providers to HE provision and providers can be further reinforced.

It was noted that the scope of the EQAVET frameworks creates a sound platform for discussions across FE and HE to take place. This is important as most providers offer both FE and HE provision and continue to strive for recognition in terms of a quality system and quality assurance arrangements. Because Ireland is a relatively small country in close proximity to the UK (as another English speaking country for potential international HE students), competition with the UK has driven the need for robust quality assurance across FE and HE in Ireland.

A key influence EQAVET has had on the involvement of new/different stakeholder is the creation of a National Copenhagen Group set up in 2010 meeting approximately 2-3 times yearly.

In terms of the extent to which EQAVET has influenced the development of policy, when FETAC was developing its own programmes and policies it was keen to ensure compliance at the highest level with European standards in relation to quality. This manifested itself through the engagement of European activities in order to be aware of the technical requirements of standards at a European level. There was a long-standing view that FETACs involvement with EQAVET would help drive and shape FETACs mission in relation to quality assurance. As such, FETACs interest in European standards of quality assurance strongly influenced the role of the organisation, its mission and priorities in relation to quality.

In terms of how EQAVET has influenced the development of quality assurance at provider level, EQAVET has had a key role to play in shaping FETACs quality assurance of provider processes. Providers continue to have a key interest in quality, particular in the broader context of the mobility of learners within the Irish perspective. It was further noted that providers are therefore keen to understand the European context and are committed to ensuring their provision is of high profile. Providers have a vested interest and advertise it as such.

**Synergies with other EU level instruments**

In terms of synergies with other EU level instruments, it was noted that quality assurance is an end product and is not an outcome itself; as such it is highly important that EU level instruments (and indeed national measures) are linked up at national level. Here it was noted that the thematic approach employed by the network helps to join up thinking at a national level.

Ireland has the added advantage that the national leads for various EU instruments are located within the same office. As such there is considered to be good communication and efforts to ensure synergy between the EU instruments. It was however noted that the difficulty in successfully achieving greater synergy between the EU instruments is at EU
level. In order to achieve synergy across the EU level instruments there is a greater need to communicate how such instruments facilitate greater forms of mobility. The existing instruments each have an important role to play in contributing to the possibility of mobility, though it was felt that ECVET has not been as successful as initially hoped or perceived to be. This in turn has consequences for achieving the overall notion and goal of mobility but also means that synergy between the EU level instruments is lacking.

Sources


A1.16 Country report – Italy

Author: Michela Vecchia (external expert to ICF GHK)

The main developments in quality assurance in Italy over the last decade are:

- The revision of the regional accreditation systems for VET agencies
- The National Plan for Quality Assurance for VET

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in initial VET

Context

The current report discusses initial vocational education and training, and IVET at upper secondary and post-upper secondary level.

Compulsory education in Italy has a duration of ten years (from 6 to 16) and it includes the first cycle of education and the first two years of upper secondary school, or the three-/four-years paths of vocational education and training for which Regions have competences. All the young people having accomplished compulsory education and training (16 years old), cannot abandon the education system as they have a right/duty (diritto/dovere) to education and training for at least 12 years (from 6 to 18 years old) either in the upper secondary school ruled by the Ministry of Education or until they have gained a professional qualification through the three-/four-years training paths managed by the Regions and/or Autonomous Provinces.

Initial vocational training (formazione professionale iniziale) is managed by the Regions and provided by recognised training agencies operating nationwide. IVET includes:

- First-level training addressed to those who have completed the first cycle of education.
  The training has a three-year length and leads to the obtainment of a regional qualification certificate or to a qualification diploma
- Second-level training pathways addressed to those having completed the upper secondary level of education or who have obtained a first-level vocational qualification
- Apprenticeship 330 (which is currently organised in different strands) aimed at the fulfillment of the diritto/dovere (right/duty) to education and training.

Vocational upper secondary education 331 includes technical education (istituto tecnico) and vocational education (istituto professionale) both targeted at young people aged 14-19.

Technical education aims at preparing students to carry out technical and administrative functions, and some professions in the fields of trade, services, industry, building and agriculture.

The recent regulations foresee two types of technical institutes divided into two main sectors 332: technical studies 333 and economic studies 334. Vocational education is currently divided into two macro-sectors comprising six branches 335. Vocational upper secondary education is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, University and Research.

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330 The new Legislative Decree 28 July 2011 foresees apprenticeship as a permanent employment contract (http://www.governo.it/Governo/Provvedimenti/dettaglio.asp?id=64499) and was then followed by a Consolidated Act (Legislative Decree nr. 167/2011 - http://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:decretolegisl:2011-09-11;167@originale)


332 Before the reform, 10 sectors and 39 branches were available

333 Nine branches: mechanics and energy; transportation and logistics; electronics; ICT; graphics and communication; chemical and biotechnologies; fashion; agriculture; food processing and agro-industry; building and environment

334 Two branches: administration, finance and marketing; tourism

335 Services (four branches: agriculture; health and social care; food and wine and hospitality; trade), and industry & handicraft (two branches: industrial and handicraft productions; maintenance and technical assistance)
Post-secondary (non-tertiary) education and training\textsuperscript{336} is organised both in the higher technical education and training system and in the second-level vocational training courses managed by the Regions.

The higher technical education and training system includes two different training pathways available at post-secondary non-tertiary level offered by Higher Technical Institutes (ITS - Istituti Tecnici Superiori) and by Higher Technical Education and Training (IFTS Istruzione e Formazione Tecnica Superiore).

The second level of initial vocational training is managed by the Regions and aims at providing students with specialised training. Curricula are based on vocational skills having a theoretical, technical, technological and managerial content, and they also include on-the-job training periods. Access to the post-secondary training is foreseen for those having an upper secondary school-leaving certificate or an upper secondary education level, and wishing to obtain a certificate or a vocational qualification valid on the labour market.

National Framework for initial VET – who is in charge of what?

The overall responsibility of the accomplishment of the right/duty (diritto/dovere) to education in the school system is of the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research that operates at central level. Regional School Offices (Uffici Scolastici Regionali)\textsuperscript{337} and Provincial School Offices (Uffici Scolastici Provinciali)\textsuperscript{338} operate at the local level. Regions and Autonomous Provinces are responsible for planning education and training, planning school networks on the basis of provincial plans, implementing the school calendar and managing financial contributions to private schools. Schools have didactic, organisational/research, experimentation and development autonomy, while they do not have any financial autonomy.

In relation to the VET system, a constitutional law\textsuperscript{339} revising the Italian Constitution, assigns to the State the responsibility for ruling and defining the minimum levels of services (standards). The field of VET is co-administered by the State and the Regions, however the Regions have the exclusive competence in the field of vocational education and training. The training agencies providing vocational training are accredited by the Regions and should meet the requirements set by both the State and the Regions.

The role of the actors involved in the framework of the education and training system in Italy can be summarised as follows:

- The Ministry of Education, Universities and Research defines overall principles and the essential levels of performance of the education and training system (with particular regard to school-based training)
- The Ministry of Labour defines and guarantees the essential levels of services of the education and training system (with particular regard to vocational training)
- The Regions and Autonomous Provinces have exclusive jurisdiction on vocational education and training, in relation to both the planning and supply of the training offer
- The Social Partners contribute to the design and implementation of active labour market policies, with particular regard to vocational training

The general framework for quality assurance

In terms of quality assurance mechanisms, the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research established the National Evaluation System\textsuperscript{340} with the aim of assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of the national education and training system, with particular regard to the school system. Within this system operates the National Institute of Evaluation (Invalsi – Istituto Nazionale di Valutazione) which is in charge of assessing, on a regular

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\textsuperscript{336} These pathways have been reformed through Decree of the President of the Council of Ministers dated 25 January 2008 (http://archivio.pubblica.istruzione.it/dg_post_secondaria/ifts_org.shtml)

\textsuperscript{337} http://hubmiur.pubblica.istruzione.it/web/istruzione/usr_index

\textsuperscript{338} http://hubmiur.pubblica.istruzione.it/web/istruzione/siti_csa

\textsuperscript{339} Constitutional Law 18 October 2001, nr. 3 ‘Modifications to Title V of Second Part of the Constitution’ http://www.parlamento.it/parlam/leggi/01003lc.htm

basis, the knowledge and skills acquired by pupils/students and the quality of the education offer, as well as education and training providers (schools), and of studying the reasons for failure and dropping-out. The priorities for Invalsi are fixed annually by the Ministry through a directive\textsuperscript{341}.

A relevant role for increasing the overall quality of the system is played by the National Institute of Educational Documentation, Innovation and Research (\textit{Indire – Istituto Nazionale di Documentazione, Innovazione e Ricerca Educativa})\textsuperscript{342}, whose mission is to support school autonomy and innovation and education research, also in relation to the European dimension. The work programme of the Institute is drafted annually by the Ministry of Education\textsuperscript{343} and it fixes the main priorities (which, among others, include monitoring activities of the Italian school system, the identification of innovative processes and experiences, the identification of good practices in the field of pedagogical innovation and research at both the national and international level).

In relation to vocational upper secondary education, which is centrally managed by the Ministry of Education, University and Research, the main quality assurance measures/activities are included in:

- The regulations relating to the school-based vocational education (\textit{istituti tecnici} and \textit{istituti professionali}) which refer directly to the EQARF. The pathways of technical and vocational education are to be constantly monitored with the technical assistance of Invalsi\textsuperscript{344}, Indire\textsuperscript{345}, Isfol\textsuperscript{346}, Italia Lavoro\textsuperscript{347} and Ipi
- The regulation relating to the re-organisation of the Higher Technical Education and Training (\textit{IFTS Istruzione e Formazione Tecnica Superiore}) where it is stated that the Ministry of Education, in agreement with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, implements a monitoring and evaluation system of the intervention plans. At the end of each three-years cycle, the Ministry of Education is supposed to submit a report to the Parliament providing monitoring and evaluation results.

Finally, the National Evaluation Service (Invalsi) is in charge of verifying the essential levels of performance of the three-/four-years pathways linked to the duty/right to education and training.

A crucial role for enhancing the overall quality assurance of the school system is played by the initiatives implemented at the local level (through the Regional School Offices and individual schools), which aim at verifying and promoting quality of the education/training offer. In addition to this, it has to be noticed that a number of schools have adopted the ISO 9000 and EFQM\textsuperscript{348} certification in the last years.

As for the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Regions and Autonomous Provinces, a number of initiatives have been initiated both at the system and VET providers level, which are strictly linked to the EQARF Recommendation.

The regional training offer planning makes reference to a defined set of training standards. As for the three-/four-years vocational training paths, the \textit{minimal training standards} for respectively 22 and 21 vocational qualifications have been agreed by the State (Ministry of Labour and Social Policies) and the Regions. The professional profiles description have been structured around competences, skills and knowledge in coherence with the EQF. The

\textsuperscript{341} http://www.invalsi.it/snvpn2013/documenti/normativa/DIRETT_INVALSI_2012.pdf

\textsuperscript{342} Previously called National Agency for the Enhancement of School Autonomy (\textit{Agenzia Nazionale per lo Sviluppo dell'Autonomia Scolastica}), was re-established with the law nr. 111 of 15 July 2011, http://www.lavoro.gov.it/NR/rdonlyres/995DC7F3-81B5-49C9-B4BC-49D0234397F9/0/20110715_L_111.pdf

\textsuperscript{343} http://hubmiur.pubblica.istruzione.it/alfresco/d/d/workspace/SpacesStore/04910a45-30c7-4d88-b58f-d85a3236f23f/atto_di_indirizzo89_11.pdf

\textsuperscript{344} http://www.invalsi.it/invalsi/index.php

\textsuperscript{345} http://www.indire.it/

\textsuperscript{346} http://www.isfol.it/

\textsuperscript{347} http://www.italialavoro.it/wps/portal/italialavoro/

\textsuperscript{348} http://www.efqm.org/en/tabid/108/default.aspx
same training standards apply to the apprenticeship aimed at the fulfilment of the diritto/dovere (right/duty) to education and training, while professional standards relating to the profession-oriented apprenticeship are agreed with the social partners in order to ensure full coherence between those standards identified by the Regions and those required by the labour market.

When it comes to vocational training initiatives funded through the European Social Fund, the procedures for the use of structural funds are applied, thus ensuring a strong planning linked to local needs and contexts, and the use of a set of monitoring and evaluation tools. In addition to this, all the Italian administrative bodies managing a ESF OP chose to use open selection procedures for the assignment of available funds, thus increasing competition among providers which ensures a constant and progressive improvement of quality of the vocational training system and its offer.

Another relevant quality assurance mechanism included in the regional training system is the accreditation of VET providers. This implies that Regions and Autonomous Provinces set standards relating to both services and expected results, which have to be respected by all those training agencies accessing public funding. The system has been conceived as a quality assurance mechanism ex ante (minimal requirements are assessed beforehand), in itinere (requirements have to be maintained during the performance), and ex post (expected results have to be achieved and measured). In 2008, the accreditation system was further enhanced through an agreement between the State and the Regions349, whose primary objectives are those of the promotion and valorisation of accreditation as a tool for quality assurance, with particular regard to the evaluation of effectiveness and efficiency of training services in terms of employability and learning outcomes.

Vocational training agencies, on a voluntary basis, undertook quality certification processes (i.e. ISO 9000, EFQM, ...) and are using self-assessment tools such as the Self-Assessment Guide for School and Training Providers (Guida all’Autovalutazione per le Strutture Scolastiche e Formative)350, for guaranteeing quality assurance in their performance.

**Stakeholder involvement and identification of training needs**

Both in relation to the centrally (school-based) and the regionally (vocational training) managed training paths, stakeholders are involved in the analysis of training needs, which are the basis for the programming of the vocational education and training offer.

The regional VET programming is based on training and vocational needs, which are analysed in co-operation with the social partners. Since a number of years the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies is supporting (financially through the ESF) a project implemented by the Union of the Chambers of Commerce (Unioncamere) called Excelsior (Sistema informativo per l’occupazione e la formazione)351, which takes into account a wide sample of enterprises and provides forecast data on labour market trends and on occupational needs of enterprises on an annual basis. A quarterly forecast providing statistics on recruitment planned by enterprises is also edited. Data are available at the national, regional and provincial levels.

In addition to this, and to further ensure a better information from the labour market and a full consistency between the analyses undertaken and the training offer, a Classification of Professional Units (Nomenclatura e Classificazione delle Unità Professionali)352 has been established jointly by Isfol and Istat (the Italian Statistics Institute). The NUP allows the use

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351 For further details on the information service for employment and training Excelsior: http://excelsior.unioncamere.net/en/
of a common language for classifying professions by all the different actors involved (at technical and governance level) and to ensure the quality of the needs analysis results.

Stakeholders are also actively involved in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of the vocational training initiatives funded by the ESF (and managed by the Regions).

**Who can deliver VET and under what conditions**

The regional authorities are responsible for the accreditation of VET providers, except for IVET in the area of compulsory education, where the Regions are required to take into account the minimum standards established at the national level. Schools providing upper secondary technical and vocational education, on the contrary, do not need to be accredited as they are full part of the Italian education system (thus automatically accredited by the Ministry of Education, University and Research).

With particular regard to vocational training managed by the Regions, the accreditation system was firstly established in 2001 by the ministerial decree nr. 166\(^{353}\) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policies) and updated/revised with the subsequent agreement between the State, the Regions and Autonomous Provinces reached in March 2008\(^{354}\), which defines the minimum standards of the new accreditation system of VET providers and the quality of services.

The new national accreditation system is structured around five criteria, which provide specific instructions to regional authorities for defining their respective regional accreditation systems. The five criteria are the following:

- **Criterion A** – infrastructural and logistic resources
- **Criterion B** – economic and financial reliability
- **Criterion C** – managerial capacity and professional resources
- **Criterion D** – efficiency and effectiveness
- **Criterion E** – relationship/link with the regional territory.

Some of the above-mentioned criteria correspond to the EQAVET Recommendation, although a stronger consistency between the two quality assurance mechanisms could be further enhanced. For the time being, the comparison between the EQAVET indicators and the regional criteria highlight what follows:

- **Criterion C** (managerial capacity and professional resources) matches with indicator 1 (relevance of quality assurance systems for VET providers), indicator 2 (investment in training of teachers and trainers) and indicator 10 (schemes used to promote better access to VET)
- **Criterion D** (efficiency and effectiveness) matches with indicator 3 (participation rate in VET programmes), indicator 4 (completion rate in VET programmes), indicator 5 (placement rate in VET programmes), indicator 6 (utilisation of acquired skills at the workplace), and indicator 7 (unemployment rate according to individual criteria)
- **Criterion E** (relationship/link with the regional territory) matches with indicator 9 (mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market), indicator 10 (schemes used to promote better access to VET), and partially with indicator 1 (relevance of quality assurance systems for VET providers).

Each Region and Autonomous Province issued its own law regulating the regional accreditation system.

In addition to the accreditation system, a number of initiatives have been implemented by the Regions for reinforcing quality assurance in the training offer. These, among others, relate to the use of an awarding and sanctioning system for enhancing the quality of the accredited bodies, the request of a ISO:9000 certification as a compulsory requirement to access the accreditation process, the implementation of qualitative surveys focusing on the employment rates after the completion of the training paths, the introduction of formalised procedures guaranteeing the operational standards in each phase of the training process, a sort of

\(^{353}\) [http://old.istruzione.lombardia.it/forter/forminteg/accreditam/dm166.htm]  
contract signed by VET providers where they engage themselves to implement the EQAVET Recommendation.\(^\text{355}\)

**Certification, assessment and validation of learning (system level)**

As for vocational upper secondary education, which includes technical education (*istituto tecnico*) and vocational education (*istituto professionale*), at the end of the five years students take a state examination leading to a diploma, which allows successful students to continue their studies at higher level. The **Ministry of Education, Universities and Research** is fully responsible for the delivering of this kind of diploma.

As far as the courses promoted by higher technical institutes (*ITS*) are concerned, a final certification issued by the technical or vocational institute which the ITS refers to is obtained. The courses end with a final assessment of the competences acquired which is carried out by examination boards made up of representatives of schools, universities, vocational training institutions, and experts from the labour market. For the issue of the relevant certification, *IFTS* (higher technical education and training) courses end up with the final assessment of competences acquired by students. Assessments are carried out by boards of examiners (composed of representatives of schools, universities, vocational training institutions and experts from the labour market), and the certification is issued by the Regions. Regions also define how the examination boards have to be set up, and issue general indications relating to the final assessment of the acquired competences. Titles/qualifications issued by the Regions are recognised at the national and European level.

The **Regions** and **Autonomous Provinces** have exclusive legislative power on vocational education and training for delivering vocational qualifications, with the exception of IVET in the area of compulsory education, where the Regions must comply with minimum standards and rules established at the national level.

**Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)**

As described in previous sections, a number of quality assurance mechanisms were gradually introduced in Italy over the last years. Of these, some were included in the regulatory framework of the IVET system and others were experimented/implemented (mainly on a voluntary basis) by vocational education and training providers.

However, one of the most consistent effect of the adoption of the EQAVET Recommendation was the work undertaken for drafting the National Plan for Quality Assurance for VET, which involved all relevant stakeholders (Ministry of Education, University and Research, Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, Regions and Autonomous Provinces, social partners, schools and VET providers) and it is currently in its final validation phase. The National Plan follows the model proposed by the European recommendation and implies a systemic approach to quality assurance where the role of the different actors, their interaction, and the monitoring, measurement, and evaluation measures are described.

**Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008**

The issue of quality assurance was gradually introduced in the VET Italian system and the policy making on this is still on-going. Among the main measures, the following have to be mentioned:

- **In 2001** a ministerial decree\(^\text{356}\) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policies) established the first regulation relating to the **accreditation** of vocational education and training providers, thus setting a framework of minimal standards to be respected by all those VET providers publicly funded. The decree clarified the application context, the actors having to respect accreditation principles, the accreditation typologies, the bodies responsible for accreditation, the accreditation process, and period of validity of the accreditation. Quality, mentioned in article 7 of the decree, makes mainly reference to

\(^{355}\) This last initiative makes reference to the Autonomous Province of Trento

\(^{356}\) Ministerial Decree nr. 166/2001 http://old.istruzione.lombardia.it/forter/forminteg/accreditam/dm166.htm
quality certification models (i.e. ISO 9001). Regions are the authorities responsible for the accreditation.

- In **2007**, an interdepartmental decree[^357] (the Ministry of Education, University and Research and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies) established general criteria for the accreditation of the VET bodies allowed to provide training within the framework of the right/duty to education and training.
- In **2008**, the accreditation system initially established in 2001 was further enhanced through an agreement between the State and the Regions, whose primary objectives are those of the promotion and valorisation of accreditation as a tool for quality assurance, with particular regard to the evaluation of effectiveness and efficiency of training services in terms of employability and learning outcomes.

**Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in initial VET**

**Requirements VET providers have to comply with**

As explained above, the regional authorities are responsible for the accreditation of VET providers, except for IVET in the area of compulsory education, where the Regions are required to take into account the minimum standards established at the national level. Schools providing upper secondary technical and vocational education do not need to be accredited as they are full part of the Italian education system (thus automatically accredited by the Ministry of Education, University and Research).

All those VET providers not being successful in the accreditation process (thus not respecting the set requirements in their region) are unable to issue recognised qualifications/certifications.

**Planning at VET provider level, including identification of training needs and stakeholder involvement**

The Italian vocational education and training system has strong bounds with the labour market, and its programming and offer are strongly based on the analysis of training needs. Along with stakeholders (in particular social partners) and institutional governing bodies (State, Regions and Autonomous Provinces), VET providers are deeply involved in steady needs analysis relating to their territory (labour market, economical situation, enterprises’ needs, etc.).

**Requirements for monitoring and review (self-assessment)**

Providers of vocational education and training have to respect all the quality assurance mechanisms which are set in the governing system (both centrally and regionally), thus undertaking specific actions which are compulsory according to the existing regulatory framework.

In the last years, however, vocational training agencies undertook, on a voluntary basis, a number of additional actions for guaranteeing quality assurance in their performance.

A large number of VET providers undertook quality certification processes (i.e. ISO 9000, EFQM, AIQF...). Some (still few) started using self-assessment tools such as the Self-Assessment Guide for School and Training Providers (Guida all’Autovalutazione per le Strutture Scolastiche e Formative) adapted to the Italian context by Isfol - EQAVET NRP and based on the European Guide on Self-assessment developed by the Technical Working Group on Quality of Education and Vocational Training of the European Commission, or self-assessment models focusing on the quality of the services provided/developed/promoted by their umbrella/national organisation (this is the case of a number of vocational training agencies having a nationwide network).

Furthermore, a piloting project is being conducted (with the coordination of the NRP) relating to the use of peer reviewing in schools and vocational training centres. The project aims at

[^357]: Interdepartmental Decree nr. 139/2007 http://www.lavoro.gov.it/NR/rdonlyres/56347E64-1DF0-4D6D-A491-389FEAD1AC08/0/D_I_29_11_07.pdf
disseminating operational quality assurance tools among schools and vocational training centres/agencies\textsuperscript{358}. To this aim, a manual for peer reviewing in IVET (\textit{Manuale di Peer Review per l’Istruzione e la Formazione Professionale iniziale}) was also published.

As for the school system, aside the Self-Assessment Guide for School and Training Providers (mentioned above), guidelines for self-assessment were recently published by \textit{Invalsi} (National Institute of Evaluation)\textsuperscript{359}, and aimed at supporting self-assessment process of those schools participating in the Vales pilot project\textsuperscript{360}, whose objective is the one of identifying criteria, tools and methodologies for the external assessment/evaluation of schools and school managers.

\textbf{Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET at provider level since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)}

On this point, the same information as provided in the section relating to system level is valid.

\textbf{Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET at provider level since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008}

On this point, the same information as provided in the section relating to system level is valid.

\textbf{Quality assurance arrangements at system level in continuous VET}

\textbf{Context}

In Italy, the concept of continuous vocational education and training comprises all those education and training activities aimed at increasing knowledge and competences of participants after the initial training.

Two main typologies of education and training activities can be identified:

- Adult education addressed to all citizens, which implies the acquisition of basic and general skills, including pre-vocational job-related skills
- Continuous Vocational Training, including both vocational retraining and updating of workers’ skills.

Only continuous vocational education and training initiatives (retraining and skills updating) will be discussed in this report.

\textbf{National Framework for CVET – who is in charge of what?}

In the last years a number of changes were made to promote a consistent system for funding and managing continuous vocational education and training and general adult education initiatives in Italy. The aim was to establish a more consistent offer able to increase employability, active citizenship, social inclusion and personal development. The continuous vocational education and training system in Italy is rather complex and fragmented, as it is based on a variety of instruments referring to a policy and legislative scenario in constant evolution.

A consolidated law regulating continuous vocational education and training does not exist in Italy. However a law entered into force in 2000\textsuperscript{361} where article 6 (leave for continuous training) clearly states the right of workers (employed and unemployed) to continue their training in a lifelong perspective, and the duty of the State, the Regions and local authorities to ensure a wide and accredited training offer.

\textsuperscript{358} In 2012, the network involved eight schools and eight vocational training centres which undertook peer reviewing activities (peer visits). The schools/VET providers involved are based in five Italian regions (Sicilia, Puglia, Veneto, Campania, Lazio). Each institution will be assessed by four peers from the same region.

\textsuperscript{359} \url{http://www.invalsi.it/invalsi/ri/vales/documenti/Linee_guida_autovalutazione.pdf}

\textsuperscript{360} \url{http://hubmiur.pubblica.istruzione.it/alfresco/d/d/workspace/SpacesStore/cc11ba91-1832-4bfe-ac80-69f87e516fc2/slide_progetto_vales.pdf}

\textsuperscript{361} Law nr. 53 of 8 March 2000 (http://www.parlamento.it/parlam/leggi/00053I.htm)
The governance of continuous VET is guaranteed by the following authorities/bodies:

- The Ministry of Education, University and Research and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (national level)
- The Regions, the Autonomous Provinces and the social partners (regional level)
- The Provincial administrations (local level).

Continuous vocational education and training is generally addressed to employees. The national policies supporting continuous training (comprising those funded by the European Social Fund) are centrally managed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and implemented/coordinated locally by the Regions and the Provinces.

However, a number of other training paths have to be briefly described.

The Fondi Paritetici Interprofessionali per la Formazione Continua (sectoral training funds) managed exclusively and directly by the social partners under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (in charge of their overall monitoring) are also aimed at the continuous training of workers, with particular regard to enterprise/sectoral needs. These bilateral funds were established by law in 2000\(^{362}\) and became operational starting from 2004. They are promoted at national level by the central employers’ organisations along with the trade unions, but they can be articulated at the local level as well. In the recent years, the sectoral training funds contributed to the development of anti-crisis strategies broadening the audience of the beneficiaries and funding specific actions targeted at companies in critical conditions.

Particular relevance in the recent years had the initiatives of continuous training initiated/funded by the Regions. An interesting example is the innovation introduced by Lombardia and Veneto Regions consisting in an individual account (the so called ‘dote\(^{363}\)’ through which individuals can access both training activities (which can be chosen through a training catalogue including a wide range of training opportunities) and employment services (such as skills assessment, vocational and occupational guidance).

Adults that have no previous background in VET, can enter the Higher Technical Education and Training system - IFTS (already mentioned and explained within the IVET section) which aims at allowing employed/unemployed adults to broaden general knowledge along with an extensive and deep technical and vocational training.

Regarding the education system, adult education is provided through Adult Education Centres hosted within public schools. They are autonomous educational institutions, organised in local networks, carrying out training programmes aimed at the achievement of educational qualifications and certifications related to the first and second education cycle, in relation to the paths of the technical schools, vocational schools and schools of art. The training paths are organised on an individual basis according to an individual training agreement.

As for non-formal learning, continuous vocational education and training is mostly self-funded and provided by the companies. For the so called ‘employer-provided vocational training’, the training provider is the company itself (in case of internal courses or other forms of work-based training such as training-on-the-job, quality circles, etc.) or its suppliers (in the case of courses held externally).

**The general framework for quality assurance, including monitoring and use of indicators**

In Italy, one of the most relevant ways to assure quality in continuous VET provision is the accreditation system for providers. All providers, whether public or private, in fact, must...
be accredited to deliver publicly-funded training and guidance. The accreditation process is implemented by the Regions and the Autonomous Provinces in coherence with the national criteria outlined in the legislation.

In 2002, the legislation was further extended to cover minimum standards relating to both vocational qualifications and operational training structures. Accreditation is needed for providers willing to deliver continuous training to employed and unemployed workers. For being accredited, providers must have management and logistical capacities, teachers/trainers with appropriate vocational skills, proven record of effectiveness and efficiency, links with local groups and enterprises.

The agreement for the definition of the minimum standards of the new accreditation system of the VET institutions for the quality of services, signed on the 20th of March 2008 by the State-Regions Conference, is the most recent measure adopted in this field. It aims at guaranteeing a homogeneous level of quality of the training offered nation-wide, also taking into account the EQARF Recommendation. In this agreement, a clear distinction is maintained between the process control and the role of the organisational and managerial capacity of the VET providers.

In relation to the Fondi Paritetici Interprofessionali per la Formazione Continua (sectoral training funds), in 2004 guidelines for the monitoring of sectoral training funds were published by the Ministry of Labour where a set of indicators are listed, although they do not appear to have a strong link with any quality assurance mechanism.

Regarding the use of operational tools for the evaluation and self-evaluation by training providers, the Italian guide for the self-evaluation of schools and training institutions and the peer review methodology, complementary to self-evaluation mechanism, was published and disseminated by Isfol – EQAVET NRP and experimented/implemented by individual training centres and schools (as already mentioned within the section relating to IVET).

In relation to Adult Education Centres (Centri per l’Istruzione degli Adulti), the educational paths provided are constantly monitored by the Ministry of Education, and the learning results/outcomes are regularly assessed.

It is worth mentioning that the health sector is an interesting example on how the quality assurance framework can be developed both in terms of providers accreditation and quality of services provided in continuous vocational training.

In January 2012, the National Commission for Continuous Training (in medicine) was settled again coherently with the legislative decree nr. 502 of 30 December 1992 and following modifications. The Commission, which is in charge for three years, includes representatives of the Ministry of Health, the Regions and Autonomous Provinces and the professional associations.

According to the decree, the Commission is in charge of defining the number of learning units to be reached by professionals within a certain period of time, of outlining the main rules for organising regional training programmes, of setting the criteria and tools for recognising and assessing the results of training actions, of defining the requirements for the accreditation of training providers (both public and private). The Regions, on their turn, cooperate in identifying the national training objectives, planning the training offer at the regional level, approving and accrediting regional training programmes, producing an annual report.
report focusing on the activities implemented, with particular regard to monitoring aspects (the report is presented to the National Commission).

A specific department for quality and accreditation exists within the Commission, whose aim is the monitoring, analysis and evaluation of accreditation programmes, and the evaluation and the promotion of quality systems implemented at the regional level.

In April 2012 an agreement between the State, the Regions and the Autonomous Provinces was signed having as a focus the establishment of an integrated system where actors having different institutional mandates cooperate for settling a shared governance of continuous training.

The agreement defines: the minimum criteria (to be adopted at the national, regional and local level) for the accreditation of VET providers; the process for establishing a national register of accredited VET providers (where eventual criticisms observed during monitoring and assessment activities should be signalled in order to guarantee a steady quality of the training offer); the role of all professional associations involved; the quality inspection, control and monitoring systems; the broadening of the training offer to freelance in the health sector.

**Statutory stakeholder involvement in CVET systems and identification of needs**

Social partners have a central role in continuous vocational education and training in Italy and they also participate in all the actions aimed at identifying the training needs on which the programming of the continuous vocational and education training is based.

As stated above, social partners are exclusively and directly managing Sectoral Training Funds (Fondi Paritetici Interprofessionali per la Formazione Continua) under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour.

They also participate in the joint committee (either at national, regional or local level) which include representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and of the Committee of the Regions (gathering representatives of each Italian region and the local authorities) linked to the National Committee for Higher Technical Education and Training (IFTS) which aims at setting strategic priorities, defining general guidelines, setting criteria for the allocation of resources, defining the guidelines for setting the standards, monitoring and evaluation procedures, and defining the arrangements for the certification and recognition of the credits awarded.

**Planning at CVET system level**

The planning at system level is the main responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Regions and Autonomous Provinces with the co-operation of social partners and enterprises (depending on the typology of training paths).

Starting from 2007, some Regions promoted initiatives for integrating their planning in the field of continuous VET with the one of the Sectoral Joint Funds. These initiatives can be summed up in two main groups:

- General agreements between the Regions and the social partners, in accordance with the principles settled within a tripartite agreement (accordo tripartito) signed in 2007, aimed to a common planning of training activities. Within this framework, some Regions established specific committees and observatories to facilitate the sharing of information and experience, with particular regard to those training initiatives not included in common plans.

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368 Accordo, ai sensi dell’articolo 4 del decreto legislativo 28 agosto 1997, n. 281, tra il Governo, le Regioni e le Province Autonome di Trento e Bolzano sul documento recante “Il nuovo sistema di formazione continua in medicina – Linee guida per i Manuali di accreditamento dei provider, albo nazionale dei provider, crediti formativi triennio 2011-2013, federazioni, ordini, collegi e associazioni professionali, sistema di verifiche, controlli e monitoraggio della qualità, liberi professionisti”


Experimental agreements between the Regions and Sectoral Joint Funds where financial resources available are shared in order to promote training plans which can be addressed to a wider target of workers. As an example, it can be mentioned that Tuscany and Lombardy regional authorities, as well as the Province of Genoa, funded training plans targeted at employers and autonomous workers, while the Sectoral Joint Funds (in the same areas) supported financially the same training plans but targeted at employees only.

**Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on CVET providers**

In Italy, the main continuous vocational education and training providers, depending on the typology of education/training activity, are:

- Training agencies accredited by the Regions
- Employers and trade associations, as well as professional associations
- Non-accredited training/vocational guidance structures (who cannot release formal certifications)
- Universities and research institutes
- Upper secondary schools, in collaboration with other training bodies
- Job centres
- Non-governmental organisations and voluntary associations.

Making reference to the training provision described above (section National framework for CVET), the conditions under which VET can be delivered are the following:

- **All training agencies/centres** providing continuous VET has to be accredited by the Regions according to standards settled by each individual Region in coherence with the nationally identified minimum standards
- **Employers** do not need to have an accreditation to provide employees with training as this is considered as ‘employer-provided vocational training’ and does not lead to any certification/formal recognition. However, employers usually make reference to accredited VET providers in case the training is undertaken externally
- **Social partners** and professional associations can provide training through the Sectoral Training Funds and have to respect a number of criteria which are set and agreed with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies
- **Adult Education Centres**, which are hosted by public schools, are under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, University and Research. The AEC system is constantly monitored, and the results of learning are periodically assessed.

**Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)**

Formal certifications can be issued at completion of continuous VET paths, and they are generally ruled by the same criteria adopted for IVET (this is the case, for instance, of training provided by accredited vocational centres, IFTS, adult education centres, etc.).

As for non-formal learning (usually the training provided directly by enterprises or acquired in the professional life), there is an overall delay in the adoption of specific tools needed for the development and institutionalisation of a national system for the validation and certification of competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning.

However, national and regional institutions (among which the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the social partners and employers’ associations, the representatives of the Regions and Autonomous Provinces) are trying to establish a set of professional standards of reference for the promotion of initiatives on validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Some attempts to develop shared tools to this aim at the national level were done over the years, and an interesting example is the one of the *Libretto Formativo del Cittadino* (citizens’ training portfolio). This tool was launched by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies in 2005, with the aim of documenting those competences and experiences acquired in non-
formal and informal contexts, as well as through continuous and professional training. The portfolio was tested from 2006 and 2009 in thirteen Italian regions, and the results of the piloting phase were monitored and assessed. The tool does not provide the assessment and formal validation of competences, however it provides with all the preparatory work needed to finalise/achieve the validation.

Up to now, the design, formalisation and implementation of institutional systems and devices aimed at validating non-formal and informal learning has only been fully developed at the regional level. However, in December 2012 an agreement between the State and the Regions was reached on the outline of a legislative decree aiming at defining the general rules and minimum performance standards for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning, and the minimum service standards of the national system for competence certification.

Reforms of quality assurance in CVET since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)

The adoption of the National Plan for Quality Assurance for VET, also concerns further developments in quality assurance mechanisms for continuous vocational training and education.

Reforms of quality assurance in CVET since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008

As for initial vocational education and training, the accreditation system for VET providers remain one of the main instruments for assuring quality in continuous vocational education and training.

Quality assurance arrangements in continuous VET at provider level

As describe above, the quality assurance in continuous VET is mainly based on accreditation mechanisms and a steady monitoring of learning achievements. In addition to this, as the majority of continuous VET providers in Italy are accredited VET centres and education agencies hosted by schools, self-assessment initiatives and quality certifications can be applied as well.

As for the social partners, some quality assurance mechanisms are embedded in the legislation ruling their role in providing continuous VET.

Part 2 – Interaction between national quality assurance and EQAVET

National Reference Point

Italy has a National Reference Point in place since 2006. The NRP is hosted by ISFOL (Istituto per lo sviluppo della formazione professionale dei lavoratori) and it is part of the Department for Methodologies and Tools for Competences and Transitions.

ISFOL is a national research institute supervised by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, which was established in 1972 with a presidential decree. It undertakes studies and research in the field of training, labour and social policies, as well as experimentation, information and evaluation activities. ISFOL provides technical/scientific support to the State administrations, the Regions and the local authorities. It has a role of methodological and scientific assistance for the implementation of the ESF system actions, and hosts the Lifelong Learning Programme – Leonardo da Vinci Sectoral Programme National Agency. It is also part of the National Statistics System (Sistan) and co-operates with the European institutions.

372 http://www.isfol.it/
The NRP is governed by a board that establishes and plans its activities at the national level, as well as the dissemination of achieved results and it promotes the link with both national and European initiatives in the field of quality assurance. The members of the board, which is coordinated by ISFOL, are the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Ministry of Education, University and Research, the Regions, the social partners, the training providers, and the school institutions. NRP functioning and activities are funded through the European Social Fund. Currently two human resources are dedicated to the NRP.

The core activities of the NRP are the following:

- To inform national and regional stakeholders on the European activities concerning quality assurance in vocational education and training systems and support the implementation of the EQAVET work programme
- To support the implementation of the national approach for quality assurance
- To raise awareness and spread information about the activities implemented by the European EQAVET Network
- To promote initiatives aiming at reinforcing the use of methodologies and tools for quality assurance
- To promote the achievement of a quality assurance culture, and the benefits linked to the application of tools for quality improvement
- To create synergies between all the activities/initiatives relating to quality assurance set up by different stakeholders
- To coordinate the national activities undertaken within the framework of the participation in the European EQAVET Network.

It has to be noticed that the overall NRP strategy is twofold: on the one hand its activities are aimed at promoting a top down approach governed by responsible authorities through the input of quality assurance tools at the system level via regulation issuing and other measures, on the other hand, by supporting a bottom up approach supporting those schools and training agencies that, on a voluntary basis, adopt quality assurance models and tools.

The activities implemented by the NRP thus far include:

- The development of dedicated webpages[^374] (within the ISFOL website) where information on the activities of the NRP, the EQAVET Recommendations and European strategy referring to quality assurance, and national and transnational networking activities are provided. The webpage provides also with a library where the most recent publications (both at the national and European level) are available and downloadable
- The publication of a regular newsletter on its activities
- The development of tools aimed at embedding quality assurance mechanisms in vocational education and training. This is the case, for instance, of the self-assessment guide for school and training providers ([Guida all’Autovalutazione per le Strutture Scolastiche e Formative][^375]) which is an adaptation (to the Italian context) of the European Guide on Self-assessment developed by the Technical Working Group on Quality of Education and Vocational Training of the European Commission or the manual for peer reviewing in IVET (Manuale di Peer Review per l’Istruzione e la Formazione Professionale iniziale[^376])
- The publication of comparative studies on quality assurance models. The most recent one is the study published in 2011 and focusing on a comparative analysis of the French, Spanish, British and Dutch quality assurance models in vocational education and training systems[^377]

[^374]: http://www.rpnqualita.isfol.it/
[^376]: http://www.rpnqualita.isfol.it/indexdfa7.html?view=cmsdoc&id=15&option=com_cmsdoc&lang=it
The implementation of activities aimed at the experimentation of quality assurance models, as for instance the national peer-review network between schools and VET providers.\(^{378}\)

The participation in transnational projects focusing on quality assurance and EQAVET (i.e. EQAVET-Malta\(^{379}\), QUALVET@RO – Quality Assurance Tool for VET Institutions \(^{380}\))

The participation in the transnational EQAVET working groups

The organisation of events and conferences focusing on EQAVET. For instance, in December 2010 an international conference on quality assurance in VET, attended by Ministries, Regions, Provinces, social partners, VET providers and national stakeholders, was the starting point for formally defining the national approach to quality assurance in the vocational education and training system. In June 2012 a sectoral conference on quality assurance in the building sector training was organised in cooperation with Formedil\(^{381}\)

The coordination of the technical group (involving the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Ministry of Education, University and Research, the Regions and the social partners) engaged in the development of the National Plan for Quality Assurance in the Vocational Education and Training System

A structured monitoring plan for the activities implemented by the NRP does not exist yet.

Within the quality assurance context, and in line with the EQAVET Recommendation, the Italian NRP has promoted its added value, in terms of knowledge, tools and methodology. The NRP is being supporting and involving all relevant stakeholders (national and regional institutions, social partners, schools and VET providers) in a continuous exchange on initiatives and practices focusing on quality assurance, thus allowing a stricter link between the national and the European level (through its activities aimed at informing stakeholders on European developments in the field of quality assurance).

In Italy a huge variety of initiatives/contributions for increasing the quality of the training offer exist, however these are usually isolated actions with a limited impact, which determined an heterogeneous level of quality in different areas of the country, and among individual schools and VET providers. The NRP represents, thus, an instrument (opportunity) for tracing effective tools/practices at the system level.

Furthermore, the NRP by providing technical assistance to all those bodies engaged in implementing, adopting and experimenting quality assurance mechanisms deriving from the EQAVET Recommendation, ensures a steady development of a quality assurance culture at the national level.

The main challenges for the NRP remain the following:

- The implementation of the National Plan with a step by step approach in coherence with already existing models and tools
- The development of a system integrating school education and VET paths
- The drafting of a Quality Chart for the Vocational Education and Training System able to point out (in an integrated way) all the approaches and methodologies for quality assurance currently used at the national level
- A greater connection between governance and assessment for the achievement of a continuous quality improvement
- A greater integration of EQAVET with other European frameworks such as EQF, ECVET, Europass.


\(^{381}\) [http://www.formedil.it/](http://www.formedil.it/)
National approach to enhance quality assurance

Since 2011, the Italian National Reference Point for Quality is being supporting the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Ministry of Education, University and Research, the Regions and Autonomous Provinces, and the social partners in the definition of the National Plan for Quality Assurance for VET.

The National Plan has been validated by the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education and the Regions and Autonomous Provinces; but the final overall validation is still under way. The National Plan has thus not yet been officially adopted/implemented, and only its main features can be described at the moment.

The National Plan, which follows the model proposed by the European recommendation, implies a systemic approach to quality assurance where the role of the different actors, their interaction, and the monitoring, measurement, and evaluation measures are described. For each of the four main components of the quality assurance and improvement cycle (planning, implementation, evaluation, and review) actions already in place and to be undertaken for conforming to the European framework are specified.

As for planning and implementation, aside the already existing practices for identifying the training needs and implementing consistent training actions at the system level (both at the national and regional level), a number of additional actions are listed aiming at reinforcing mechanisms and procedures for defining training needs, and links with European objectives; at defining and monitoring objectives through the use of specific indicators; at developing regulations and guidelines for the recognition, validation and certification of individual competences. In relation to individual schools and VET providers, the planning mechanisms should be revised and implemented according to a precise list of procedures and actions.

In relation to monitoring and evaluation, the National Plan distinguishes between those actions assigned to the Ministry of Education, University and Research, and those attributed to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and the Regions/Autonomous Provinces, and how they respectively should be continued, revised or enhanced in order to increase quality assurance in both the education and training system. Some of the activities described in relation to the Ministry of Labour and the Regions already have a clear connection with those established by the EQAVET Recommendation.

As far as the review component is concerned, currently the follow up actions are attributed to the specific structures of the involved Ministries (Labour and Education), the Regions and Autonomous Provinces with an active involvement of the social partners. According to the Plan, a common/shared annual report on achieved results, strengths and weaknesses and improvement measures at the system level should be drafted.

A specific section of the Plan (to which individual schedules are annexed) describes the schedule for implementing and monitoring what outlined. Due to the high level of complexity of the Plan, a progressive implementation process is planned.

The implementation of the Plan will be supported by the National Reference Point and the monitoring of the implementation process will be the responsibility of the Ministries, the Regions and Autonomous Provinces who will regularly meet within the board of the NRP (which, as specified earlier, is composed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Ministry of Education, University and Research, the Regions, the social partners, the training providers, and the school institutions) and discuss eventual corrective measures and actions for improvement.

Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance

The introduction of quality assurance mechanisms in the Italian VET system is since long a priority on the policy agenda, and big efforts were made to progressively embed quality assurance measures at all levels of education and training (both at the system and providers level). However, due to the complexity of the education and training provision in Italy (both IVET and CVET), a systematic and overarching framework is not yet available.
There are no doubts, also according to the interviewees, that the issuing of the European Recommendation in 2009 pushed this process and contributed to a further development in the field at the national level (the drafting and validation of the Italian National Plan for Quality Assurance for VET is an example). Furthermore, the Recommendation has also acted as a stimulus for some Regions who autonomously implemented some initiatives in the field of quality assurance. The activities (of dissemination and experimentation) of the NRP further favoured the process at the policy/decision making: the dissemination of practices such as the peer review and other models for self-assessment of education and training providers, laid the basis for a better definition of the quality assurance concept, thus increasing consensus around its use in the education and training sector.

The EQAVET process is becoming, from the point of view of the interviewees, a reference point for quality assurance in the Italian system, also in relation to the need for aligning it to those European countries where external evaluation systems are extensively used, and thus enhancing the implementation to those European directives concerning the recognition and transparency of qualifications.

Although the Recommendation has a non-binding nature, it was able to further legitimate all the efforts made for developing a single approach to quality assurance in VET. Its existence, in a way, allowed all relevant institutional stakeholders (ministries, regions, provinces) to engage a steady discussion on quality assurance and to start mentioning it in a number of prescribing acts, thus starting a deeper action for the acknowledgment of its principles in the Italian VET system.

As a consequence, all the actors of the VET system (mainly the school system and the vocational training agencies/providers) were further encouraged to continue the voluntary work started in the field of quality assurance and saw their efforts recognised and used as an example. In addition to this, the action of NRP in terms of experimentation and implementation of quality assurance-related methodologies and tools was reinforced and allowed to create a more effective interaction with practitioners in the field of VET. Although there are good results achieved in this area, according to one of the interviewees, the active engagement of practitioners should be further encouraged and additional efforts to raise their awareness should still be made.

Synergies with other EU level instruments

As previously stressed, the NRP is hosted by ISFOL within the Department for Methodologies and Tools for Competences and Transitions, which includes among its objectives the development of actions aimed at the integrated implementation of the European frameworks such as EQF, ECVET, EQAVET, Euroguidance, European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network, and Europass.

This represents a strong starting point for making all these frameworks have a synergic development/implementation at the national level, and for making the interaction with all relevant stakeholders fruitful for raising their awareness on all of them, and build up an overarching view of their potential for the national system and its further development.

The institutional stakeholders (Ministries, Regions, Autonomous Provinces, social partners) and the practitioners involved in the use/implementation of the European frameworks correspond, thus favouring a common discussion and line of action.

It is for instance interesting to point out that, within the framework of ECVET, the recently established Italian ECVET Expert Group includes ISFOL staff in charge of the implementation of other European frameworks (EQAVET, EQF, Europass, …). This represents a way for enhancing synergies among the different tools and for favouring the identification of common strategies.

Due to the complexity of the Italian system, the acknowledgement of European frameworks in the Italian system is currently at different stages.
As for EQF for instance, last December the Conference State-Regions validated the agreement on the referencing of the Italian VET system to EQF, thus finalising the process. The technical group who guided the referencing process and drafted the report included representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, of the Ministry of Education, University and Research, of the Department for European Policies, and of ISFOL (within which the EQF National Coordination Point is hosted since 2008). The report is also the result of a continuous interaction/discussion with the Regions, the social partners and the practitioners (for this last group an online consultation was launched last year). The development of a NQF (not yet available) should gain impetus from this.

As far as ECVET is concerned, a number of initiatives has been initiated in this field, and ISFOL is actively participating both in the on-going policy debate and in the development of activities aimed at the implementation of the framework (i.e. implementation of piloting transnational projects, networking activities through the LLP-Leonardo da Vinci Sectoral Programme National Agency).

In relation to Europass, ISFOL manages the Italian National Europass Centre, which coordinates all the activities deemed at the use of the Europass portfolio and ensures that all Europass documents are accessible to citizens and issued according to the Decision and the national rules. Europass is largely used in Italy.

Sources


ISFOL, Qualità della formazione e accreditamento sulla base delle rilevazioni periodiche dell’Isfol, 27 novembre 2011 (Appunti)


ISFOL, L’attuazione del nuovo modello nazionale di accreditamento per la qualità dei servizi formativi, Report, 2009

383 C.O.L.O.R. Project
384 NetECVET
ISFOL, Quality Charter for Initial Vocational Training Targeted to 14-18 Year-olds, 2003


Part 1 – Description of quality assurance arrangements and of recent developments

The main developments related to quality assurance requirements and measures at system or provider level since 2009:

- A unified system for quality assurance in general and vocational education was introduced in 2009 (the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 852 of September 2010).
- Criteria for the assessment of higher education institutions and colleges as well as study directions have been adopted very recently (the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 668 of September 2012).
- ESF project (2010-2013) will review vocational education and continuing education programmes based on modules approach. 12 Sectoral Expert Councils have been created in the framework of this project and their increased role (potentially to be formalised in the new Vocational Education Law) is expected to speed up the vocational education response to labour market needs as well as to improve the system of ensuring quality of vocational education.
- Regulation for validation of professional competences acquired outside formal education system on basic and secondary education levels came into force in February 2011 (it covers the Latvian vocational qualifications levels 1-3, currently corresponding to the EQF levels 3-4).
- Referencing of the five Latvian vocational qualifications levels to the EQF has been formally done, but may have to be reviewed in the period 2013-2015, and will potentially be formalised in the new Vocational Education Law (to be developed by 1 January 2014).

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in initial VET

National Framework for initial VET

The organisations involved in the delivery of VET in Latvia and their competences are established by the Vocational Education Law (1999) as well as the Education Law (1999) and the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (1995), which, among other, provides the legal basis for the operation of colleges. In addition, the Law on Crafts (1993) specifies how crafts education is organised, establishes craftsman qualification levels as well as procedures for developing crafts, traineeship and qualification programmes.

The Vocational Education Law covers both IVET and CVET. This Law regulates the delivery of vocational initial education, vocational secondary education and also touches upon the first level higher vocational education as well as the corresponding qualifications (the implementation of higher vocational education is regulated by the Law On Institutions of Higher Education).

The vocational education system is managed by the following centralised state institutions:

- The Cabinet of Ministers determines the national policy and strategy direction in vocational education, funds vocational education providers as well as sets procedures for issuing state recognised qualifications and the recognition of foreign qualifications.

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385 ESF project Development of sectoral qualifications system and increasing the efficiency and quality of vocational education (further information in Latvian only)
386 The referencing to the EQF levels may be reviewed
387 The Cabinet of Ministers Order No. 629 of 16.09.2009 On the concept “Raising attractiveness of vocational education and involvement of social partners within vocational education quality assurance”
The Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) develops regulation for vocational education, makes proposals about the allocation of funds from the state budget (other Ministries finance vocational education institutions under their supervision), supervises vocational education providers and participates in tripartite consultations with social partners concerning the development of vocational education.

The National Centre for Education (Valsts izglītības satura centrs), an institution under the supervision of the MoES, ensures:
- The development of education content for vocational basic education, vocational education, vocational secondary, continuing vocational education, professional improvement and professionally orientated education in compliance with the state standards;
- The development and implementation of a uniform content of vocational education state examinations;
- The coordination of the development of study aids complying with the vocational education standards; and
- The coordination and delivery of teachers’ in-service training and professional improvement.

The State Service of Education Quality (Izglītības kvalitātes valsts dienests), an institution under the supervision of the MoES, has the following functions:
- The maintenance of registers of licensed education programmes, accredited education institutions and programmes;
- The licensing of education programmes (except informal, leisure and higher education);
- The organisation of quality assessment of education establishments (except pre-school, HEIs and colleges) and education programmes (except pre-school, professional improvement, professionally orientated education, informal and professional higher education), as well as accreditation process of examination centres;
- The monitoring of the implementation of accreditation recommendations by VET providers;
- The coordination of the validation of professional competences obtained outside formal education system by delegating this task to accredited education establishments or examination centres.

According to the Education Law the local governments in Latvia have the right, in coordination with the relevant sectoral ministry and the MoES, to establish, reorganise and dissolve professional educational institutions. They are also responsible for the professional guidance of children and youth as well as the professional development of teachers.

In line with the Vocational Education Law, the initial VET is currently organised in five levels of vocational qualifications in Latvia. The vocational education corresponding to the levels 1-3 (currently EQF levels 3-4) is delivered by vocational education institutions (vocational basic schools, vocational secondary schools, vocational schools vocational gymnasiums). Also some colleges offer vocational education programmes on these levels. Specialised secondary education institutions (polytechnics or colleges) offer qualifications on the Latvian vocational qualifications level 4 (EQF level 5) and professional higher education institutions on level 5 (currently EQF levels 6 and 7).

A large majority of all the vocational education establishments in 2010/2011 were state owned (73 state schools, six schools of local governments and four private schools). The number of vocational schools was considerably reduced due to the optimisation of the school network in mid-90s. In line with the VET optimisation Guidelines for 2010 – 2015, the number of VET institutions under the supervision of MoES will be further reduced to 30. The MoES plans to invest more than 90 million LVL (of which over 43 million ERDF co-funding) until the end of 2014 in the development of infrastructure and full equipment of 11 vocational education institutions, selected according to the state economic priorities in consultation with the Sectoral Expert Councils.

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Statutory stakeholder involvement in initial VET systems

The rights and involvement of social partners in the development of vocational education are stipulated by the Vocational Education Law (Section 12). According to the law the social partners are consulted in the development of regulation, policy and planning in the field of vocational education as well as in the development of profession standards, education programmes, final qualification exams and traineeship conditions.

The social dialogue takes place in the National Tripartite Sub-Council for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment, technically supported by the MoES, the relevant regional sub-councils and Sectoral Expert Councils. The decisions taken in the Sub-Council take into consideration recommendations of the Sectoral Expert Councils.

The Sectoral Expert Councils have been set up relatively recently in the framework of the ESF co-funded project (started in 2010). The Sectoral Expert Councils consist of social partners, various line ministries and the State Employment Agency (SEA). The Councils meet at least once each two months. Currently there are 12 Sectoral Expert Councils, including 83 organisations representing employers, 35 institutions representing employees, 14 professional organisations and 10 independent experts – in addition to the various line ministries and the SEA.

The aim of the Sectoral Expert Councils is provide support and to speed up the development and review of vocational education standards and exams, which in turn would lead to better quality vocational education programmes. With the help of the Sectoral Expert Councils the above mentioned ESF project will introduce modular approach to VET programmes to improve their quality and to encourage greater flexibility in taking on board changing labour market requirements. The project will also pilot the system for validation and recognition of knowledge, skills and competence acquired outside the formal education.

Planning at VET system level

In line with Section 15 of the Education Law, the MoES develops policy planning document and drafts legislation in the field of education. Furthermore, as already mentioned the Vocational Education Law stipulates that the social partners have the right to participate in the drawing up of conceptual issues and to draft regulatory enactments in the field of vocational education, create and implement vocational education strategy and policy, planning of the State remit and the direction of development of the sector as well as to perform market intelligence and planning of the direction of development of vocational education in co-operation with State and local government institutions (Section 12).

More general and specific objectives in relation to the development and quality of vocational education are stipulated in a number of national level policy documents:

- Conception of the educational development 2007 – 2013 (Izglītības attīstības pamatnostādnes 2007.-2013.gadam), plans to review the content of vocational education programmes in Latvian qualification levels 1-3 based on the review of education standards and the system of centralised exams, in cooperation with education institutions and employers.

- Guidelines for the Optimisation of the Network of Vocational Education Institutions 2010-2015 (Profesionālās izglītības iestāžu tīkla optimizācijas pamatnostādnes 2010. – 2015. gadam) aims, among other, to improve the quality and accessibility of vocational education, mostly by developing the network of vocational education institutions based on demographic needs, balanced offer of vocational education programmes and improved cooperation with the relevant stakeholder to allow faster reaction to labour market needs.

389 The method for involvement of social partners in raising the quality of vocational education was developed during another ESF project implemented during the period 2005-2007.
391 http://www.aip.lv/kocept_doc_att-kocep.htm
The 2009 concept for Raising attractiveness of vocational education and involvement of social partners within vocational education quality assurance (Profesionālās izglītības pievienības paaugstināšana un sociālo partneru līdzdalība profesionālās izglītības kvalitātes nodrošināšanā), developed by the MoES, lists the major current obstacles to delivering quality vocational education and proposes, among other to improve the equipment and premises of vocational education institutions, improve the planning of vocational education offer in regions through cooperation of Sub-Council regional education and employment councils and accreditation of education institutions, examining the quality of education programmes specifically and the operation of institutions in general. The concept also lists the legislative acts requiring amendments to implement the measures foreseen this policy document.

With regard to planning, the above mentioned Sectoral Expert Councils review the content of the vocational education in the light of the labour market requirements, the quality of vocational education, the number of specialists who needed to be admitted to vocational education institutions in all core professions, sub-professions and related professions as well as the number of traineeship places in each sector and the number of individuals who require validation of their qualifications obtained outside the formal education.

**Requirements for evaluation and review**

Vocational education programmes on basic and secondary level are licensed and vocational education institutions registered and accredited in accordance with the procedures specified by the Cabinet of Ministers regulations No. 852.\(^{393}\)

The education establishments that offer basic and secondary level educational programmes are accredited for six years. The accreditation is a service offered for a fee, determined by the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations \(^{394}\), and delivered by the State Education Quality Service.

The accreditation of universities, colleges and study directions takes place in line with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 668.\(^{395}\)

**Identification of training needs**

According to the Vocational Education Law, Section 8(6) it is the competence of the MoES to organise vocational career counselling and to conduct research of the labour market and labour demand. In this process the MoES cooperates with social partners and also takes into consideration the labour market forecasts of the Ministry of Economics.

As mentioned, currently training needs are assessed through cooperation with the Sectoral Expert Councils, which, inter alia, inform the government of the sectoral training needs and review plans for intake numbers in the government-funded vocational education programmes.

**Who can deliver VET and under what conditions**

According to the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 852 only accredited education institutions are entitled to implement licensed general and secondary vocational education programmes (currently EQF levels 1-4) and to issue a State-recognised document certifying vocational education or a vocational qualification. The education institutions that offer basic and secondary level educational programmes are typically accredited for an indefinite period of time, while programmes are accredited for six years (or two years, in case of education institutions that only offer vocational in-service training, vocational oriented education and vocational further education programmes).

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\(^{393}\) Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 852 of 14.09.2010. Procedure for accreditation of education and training programs, educational institutions and examination centres, issued in accordance with the Education Law and Vocational Education Law

\(^{394}\) Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 851 of 14.09.2010 Regulations on State Education Quality Service fees, issued in accordance with the Law on Budget and Financial Management Section 5, paragraph 9.

\(^{395}\) Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 668 of 25.09.2012. Procedure for accreditation of universities, colleges and study directions, issued following the Law On Institutions of Higher Education.
In the accreditation process programmes are evaluated in terms of their correspondence to the state education standards, occupational standards, occupational register as well as in terms of implementation and allocation of resources to ensure that they deliver the necessary knowledge, skills and competences. Education establishments and programmes are assessed on the basis of an integrated list of criteria, including education content, quality of teaching and learning, support to student and their achievements, education environment, resources of the establishment as well as the organisation of work, management and quality assurance in the establishment.

As indicated above, the assessment of the quality of higher education institutions, colleges and the study directions is done through accreditation, according to the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 668. The use of criteria for the assessment of higher education institutions and colleges is required by Section 12, while the criteria are listed in Annex 2 of the Regulations. These include the organisation and management of studies, qualification of personnel, management and resources of the institution as well as quality assurance, including inner quality assurance system, its development, regular long-term planning, the perspectives of the graduates in the labour market and possibilities for continuing education.

Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)

Currently the Vocational Education Law, Section 5, stipulates that there are five levels of vocational qualifications in the education system of Latvia. This Law regulates implementation of vocational initial education, vocational secondary education and first level higher vocational education and the award of corresponding vocational qualifications. According to the Law, the following State recognised vocational education documents are issued to students who have completed an accredited vocational education programme and passed the vocational qualification final examinations:

- A certificate of vocational initial education (apliecība par profesionālo pamatizglītību) issued by schools that implement vocational initial education programmes and corresponding to the Latvian vocational qualifications level 1 – EQF level 3);
- A certificate of vocational basic (lower secondary) education (atestāts par arodizglītību) issued by trade schools (arodskola) and corresponding to the Latvian vocational qualifications level 2 – EQF level 4);
- A diploma of vocational secondary education (diploms par profesionālo vidējo izglītību) issued by vocational secondary schools or technical schools (tehnikums) and corresponding to the Latvian vocational qualifications level 3 – EQF level 4); and
- A diploma of first level higher vocational education (diploms par pirmā profesionālo augstāko izglītību) issued by the education institutions that implement college education programmes, corresponding to the Latvian vocational qualifications level 4 – EQF level 5).

The students who have completed only a part of an accredited education programme and have not passed the qualification examinations receive a document acknowledging the acquisition of part of the relevant vocational education programme from the educational institution, in accordance with the procedures specified by the Cabinet of Ministers.

The development of the vocational qualifications system (including the revision of the content of qualification examinations) is currently undertaken by the ESF project 396. Already now, the Sectoral Expert Councils, established in the framework of this project, appoint sectoral exerts for participation in the accreditation process. On the basis of the project results, expected by the end of 2013, the five Latvian vocational qualification levels will be further linked to the EQF levels.

Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators

The State Education Quality Service organises quality assessment of education establishments (except pre-school, HEIs and colleges) and education programmes (except pre-school, professional improvement, professionally orientated education, informal and
professional higher education) and monitors the implementation of accreditation recommendations.

As mentioned before the same set of criteria (included in the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 852) are used to assess general and vocation education programmes on basic and secondary education stages. These regulations establish a uniform accreditation procedure and a common set of quality assessment requirements in general and vocational education (for education programmes on the EQF levels 1-4). The unified system was introduced with the aims to provide a better overview of the education quality in the country and to fight the fragmentation of VET in terms of access, contemporary requirements and quality across all regions.

The standardised education quality assessment system ensures that the uniform quality assessment methodology is used across seven operational fields of education establishment or examination centre: education content, teaching and learning, students’ achievements, support to students, environment at the establishment, resources of establishment, work organisation of establishment, management and development planning. The assessment of these fields is based on 19 criteria for education establishments and 12 criteria for examination centres across four levels (insufficient, sufficient, good and very good).

Internal and external assessments are performed during the accreditation process. The internal assessment is performed by the education establishment, which is preparing its self-assessment report. The self-assessment report is a mandatory precondition for the accreditation of institutions and programmes. It is the basis for initiating the accreditation procedure in an institution. Accreditation of education establishments and programmes is further based upon the report provided by an external expert commission and its recommendations to the accreditation commission on granting or denying accreditation.

The expert commission consists of representatives from various institutions. It is organised by the State Service of Education Quality and is independent from the particular education establishment. Representatives of MoES, the National Centre for Education or the State Service of Education Quality, education specialists of local governments, representatives of other institutions, including representatives of other ministries, local governments, non-governmental organisations, employers, craftsmen and trade unions as well as representatives from education establishments (except from the one undergoing accreditation) can be included in expert commission. The vocational education accreditation expert commissions always includes the representatives of the respective supervising institution, as well as sectoral associations and employers’ representatives delegated by the Latvian Chamber of Crafts, ensuring their regular and mandatory participation.

Criteria are also used the Evaluation Commission in assessment of higher education institutions and colleges as well as study directions (provided in the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 668).

The criteria provided in the Regulations No. 852 and Regulations No. 668 relate to the assessment of the vocational education institutions, study directions and programmes, rather than the VET system as a whole. As such, they indirectly relate to the EQAVET quality indicators (as outlined in the table below). It can therefore be concluded that while the EQAVET quality indicators may correspond to some areas of quality assessment in Latvia, they are not directly used to assess and monitor the VET quality in the country.397

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EQAVET indicators</th>
<th>Latvian quality assessment criteria (as in Regulations No. 852, Section 19) closest to the EQAVET indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicator No 1: VET providers quality assurance systems</td>
<td>No corresponding QA area or criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator No 2: Investment in</td>
<td>No corresponding criteria specifically, but Criteria 6 “provider’s resources” include the assessment of staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

397 http://www.eqavet.eu/Libraries/EQARF_Indicators/EQARF_Indicators_Latvia.sflb.ashx
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator No</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Corresponding QA area or criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Participation rate in VET programmes</td>
<td>No corresponding QA area or criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Completion rate of VET programmes</td>
<td>No corresponding criteria specifically, but Criteria 2 “teaching and learning” relate to assessment of teaching quality, learning quality and examination as a part of the education process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Placement rate in VET programmes</td>
<td>No corresponding QA area or criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Utilisation of acquired skills in the workplace</td>
<td>No corresponding QA area or criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Unemployment rate</td>
<td>No corresponding QA area or criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Prevalence of vulnerable groups</td>
<td>No corresponding criteria specifically, but Criteria 4.5 “support to the educated” include the assessment of the support to the educated with special needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Mechanisms to identify training needs</td>
<td>No corresponding criteria specifically, but Criteria 7 “provider work organisation, management and quality assurance” include provider self-assessment and development planning as well as provider cooperation with other institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Schemes to promote access to VET</td>
<td>No corresponding criteria specifically, but Criteria 5 “provider environment” include the assessment of provider’s microclimate and physical environment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: the State Education Quality Service and ICF GHK analysis

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) - 2008

In 2005 Regulations\textsuperscript{399} were adopted that improved the procedure for licensing vocational education programmes and institutions by developing a common methodology for quality assessment. The Regulation introduced 10 criteria for evaluation of vocational education programme implementation and 20 criteria for the assessment of the operation of vocational education establishments as well as 11 criteria to assess the quality of examination centres’ operations.

ESF project (2005-2007) Development of a Unified Methodology for the Quality Improvement of Vocational Education and Involvement and Education of Social Partners implemented by the Vocational Education Administration (i.e. the National Centre for Education since 1 July 2009) developed methodology system for increasing the quality of vocational education that included various methodological materials, among these, a mechanism for involving social partners in increasing the quality of vocational education.

\textsuperscript{398} Although increasing the attractiveness of initial vocational education and the number of youth who participate and receive VET qualifications is one of the aims of the ESF project “Promoting the Attractiveness of Initial Vocational Education” (in Latvian only)

\textsuperscript{399} Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No.613 of 16.08.2005 “Procedure how vocational education programmes, education establishments and examination centres are accredited and heads of vocational education establishments are certified” (expired 18.09.2010)
Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)

In 2009 the National Centre for Education and the State Education Quality Service were established, under the supervision of the MoES.

In 2010 the State Education Quality Service joined the working group of EQAVET, with the aim to ensure the improvement of the vocational education quality assessment system.

Before 2010 two national education quality assessment systems existed in Latvia – one for general and one for vocational education. To improve the State ability to provide accessible and quality education system as well as to reduce the threat of fragmentation in terms of education content and quality across regions, a uniform approach to quality assurance was developed for both general and vocational education. These changes were enacted by the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 852 (2010) for general and secondary vocation education programmes and the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 668 (2012) for the assessment of higher education institutions, colleges and study directions.

ESF project (2010-2013) Development of sectoral qualifications system and increasing the efficiency and quality of vocational education is currently implemented by the State Education Development Agency (SEDA) in cooperation with four partners – the Employers’ Confederation of Latvia (LDDK), Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia (LBAS) National Centre for Education and State Education Quality Service. The project will carry out a number of tasks, among these, revise vocational education standards, exams and programmes as well as reinforce the role of the Sectoral Expert Councils in ensuring the quality and relevance of vocational education.

Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in initial VET

Requirements VET providers have to comply with

Initial VET is provided on basic, lower and upper secondary levels in Latvia and the quality is mostly ensured through the accreditation process.

The accreditation of vocational education establishments and programmes on the basic and secondary levels is undertaken based on the procedure and criteria specified in the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 852. The procedure includes both internal and external assessment.

The internal assessment is undertaken by the education establishment through a self-assessment report, which is mandatory in order to initiate the accreditation procedure. The self-assessment report then is reviewed and evaluated by independent external expert commission, organised by the State Education Quality Service and consisting of representatives of the Service, the MoES, the National Centre for Education, education experts from local governments and other education establishments as well as the relevant sectoral authorities and organisations. The accreditation experts also typically visit the education institution under review for three days on average, assessing its operations according to the criteria predefined in the Regulations. An accreditation commission, involving social partners, then examines the report of the expert commission and submits a proposal to the State Education Quality Service regarding the accreditation or grounds for its denial.

Planning at VET provider level

The content of the vocational education on basic and secondary education levels is established by the State vocational education standards (i.e. the vocational education standard, the vocational secondary education standard and the first level higher vocational education standard) and profession standards (knowledge, skills and competences for each

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400 IVET is also provided on post-secondary non-tertiary level (pēcvidējā izglītība) described in the CVET section. These include vocational further education programmes (profesionālās tālākizglītības programmas) with the duration of 1-3 years or vocational in-service training programmes (profesionālās pilnveides programmas). In Latvia such programmes qualify as secondary education.
profession), which are mandatory for the education institutions that draw up and implements vocational education programmes. As indicated, the research into labour market and planning of the vocational education development is the responsibility of state and municipalities. The employers are also involved in this process through tripartite dialogue and Sectoral Expert Councils.

**Requirements for monitoring and review (self-assessment)**

As outlined above, the general and vocational education institutions and programmes are required to produce self-assessment reports in which their performance is assessed based on a range of criteria. The State Education Quality Service undertakes the assessment of the self-assessment reports and the monitoring of the implementation of the Accreditation Commission recommendations. In each self-assessment report, the institution under review needs to outline how it has implemented the recommendations of the previous assessment as well as to indicate pathways for future development based on the conclusions of the self-assessment report.

The requirements for self-assessment of HEIs or colleges include a point that requests information on the inner quality assurance system. The criteria for the evaluation of self-assessment reports only require the improvement of the inner quality assurance, but are not more specific on how this should be achieved.

**Stakeholder involvement**

Social partners play a significant role in the work of VET schools and colleges as they are involved in the development of their curricula. Among other, they provide information about new technologies, equipment, materials, etc. to ensure the curricula correspond to the requirements of the labour market.

Social partners are also involved in the process of developing the content of qualification examinations, in evaluating examination performance, in the process of organising work-based training and in the organisation of vocational skills competitions on national and international levels.

Cooperation partners of VET schools (representatives of employers from the relevant economic sectors and local authorities) are also involved in the delivery of the external evaluation.

The Sectoral Expert Councils also play a significant role as they unite representatives from professional associations and sectoral crafts unions in a common effort to determine the requirements of labour market and to introduce them into vocational education. Companies are also involved in the definition and validation of professional skills through the Sectoral Expert Councils.

The main tasks of Sectoral Experts Council are to ensure that providers of vocational education in a particular sector are supplied with the latest information on the field, know the demands for vocational qualifications and learning outcomes. Sectoral Experts Councils also promote collaboration between enterprises and vocational education institutions in the organisation of qualification practices, in particular, by delegating experts for developing vocational qualification exam contents and procedure.

The Sectoral Experts Councils also organise research and assessment of competences and skills necessary for their sectors, develop sectoral qualification structures corresponding to the NQF/EQF, provide recommendations about basic professions and the specialisations necessary for the sector as well as organise the development and update of sectoral occupational standards.

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401 Section 4.2 of the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 623 of 27.07.2004 State Education Quality Service Regulations, issued in accordance with Section 16 of the Public Administration Law
Outputs from quality assurance at provider level

The education establishments providing general and secondary vocational education publish their self-assessment reports and the State Education Quality Service – the accreditation experts’ reports on their websites.

HEIs and colleges are required to publish a part of their self-assessment report on their websites.

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET at provider level since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008


Quality assurance arrangements at system level in continuous VET

National Framework for CVET

The same legislation in Latvia governs the implementation of CVET as for IVET. The Education Law defines the objectives of adult education and defines the right to learn throughout life.

CVET is provided by a number of organisations, including ministries, employers’ associations, trade unions, continuous education departments and distance learning centres at universities, the School of Public Administration, regional training centres, centres of adult education, the SEA and private providers.

It is the responsibility of enterprises to ensure learning opportunities for their employees.

As for IVET, cooperation with social partners on CVET takes place in the National Tripartite Sub-Council for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment and the regional sub-councils.

Local governments, in line with the law On Local Governments (Section 15(4)), are obliged to support the education of their residents. In the mid-90s the local governments established a network of adult education centres.

CVET is also provided by ESF supported SEA projects, overseen by the Ministry of Welfare, and a number of private education centres located across the whole country that provide both continuing vocational education and informal education programmes. The private providers also cooperate with SEA in providing the training to unemployed in the regions.

Formal learning in CVET

The Vocational Education Law (Section 26) lists three types of formal CVET – vocational further education programmes (profesionālās tālākizglītības), vocational in-service training programmes (profesionālās pilnveides) and vocational oriented (profesionālās ievirzes) educational programmes. The Law defines:

- Vocational further education as a special kind of vocational education which provides an opportunity for adults with previous education and professional experience to acquire a specific level vocational qualification.
- Vocational in-service training as a special kind of vocational education which provides an opportunity for persons, irrespective of their age and previous education or vocational qualification, to acquire systematic vocational knowledge and skills corresponding to the requirements of the labour market.
- Vocational further education includes enterprise staff training, training of unemployed people by SEA, education provided by adult education centres, eventing schools and

supported by local governments. The vocational further education programme belong to the basic, secondary and higher education stages, and must include at least 30% of the mandatory vocational content specified by the State education standard.

The duration of acquisition and the content of vocational in-service training and vocational oriented education are determined by the relevant education programme. Vocational oriented education is not defined by the law, but it includes programmes offered by music, arts and sports schools that children and youth can follow in addition to the general or secondary education.

**Statutory stakeholder involvement in CVET systems**

The State curriculum standards, which form a mandatory (30%) part of the vocational further education programmes, are designed by working groups, including social partners. The rest of the content depends on the needs of clients (including employers) and the specialisation of the providers. In the training for unemployed, the SEA organises regular employer surveys to assess occupations in demand.

**Planning at CVET system level**

The Guidelines for Lifelong Learning Policy 2007-2013 (Mūžizglītības politikas pamatnostādnes 2007.-2013. gadam) and the programme for their implementation outline the main national priorities for lifelong learning including, among other, promotion of accessibility, quality and diversity of the education offer to various groups. The documents analyse the current and future education needs of these groups, and propose legislative and administrative measures to develop a quality adult education offer, which is also sustainable and inclusive.

**Requirements for evaluation and review**

Due to the unified system and regulation (the Cabinet of Ministers regulations No. 852 and No. 668) of accreditation for academic and vocational programmes and institutions, the procedures and requirements as well as the accreditation periods are almost identical for IVET and CVET.

**Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on CVET providers**

In line with the Vocational Education Law (Section 30) vocational education programmes, vocational in-service training and vocational oriented education programmes, must be accredited. According to the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 852 (Section 20) the quality of further education and vocational in-service training programmes and institutions is assessed according to the same criteria as for general and secondary vocational education, excluding such criteria as support in developing personality, support in carrier education, support in teaching differentiation and cooperation with the family of trainee. Accredited local government and private vocational education and vocational oriented education institutions are entitled (in accordance with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations) to claim State financing for the implementation of vocational further education, vocational in-service training and vocational oriented education programmes.

**Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)**

A vocational qualification certificate is issued to a student who has passed the vocational qualification examination after completing an accredited further vocational education programme, a part of an accredited programme or has acquired the relevant vocational education programme in the form of self-education.

A certificate regarding the acquisition of vocational in-service training is issued to a student who has acquired a vocational in-service training programme. And a certificate regarding the acquisition of a vocational oriented education is issued to a student who has acquired a vocational oriented training programme.

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In 2011 the Cabinet of Ministers issued Regulations No. 146 establishing a formal process for the validation of professional competences obtained outside formal education for Latvian vocational qualification levels 1-3 (currently EQF levels 3-4). The validation of professional competences is undertaken based on the requirements of the relevant vocational standard. Professional competences gained outside the formal education system can be validated by education establishments or examination centres – a right that is delegated to these institutions by the State Education Quality Service. The State Education Quality Service also keeps a list of the institutions that may undertake the validation.

In the beginning of 2012 the Cabinet of Ministers also issued the Regulations No. 36 setting the procedures for the assessment and recognition of learning outcomes of previous education or professional experience in the higher education level (including colleges). Both academic and vocational experience can be validated and this is done by higher education institutions.

The validation of professional experience is for a fee (the consultation process is free up to the exams) and, if the person passes the examination, s/he receives a corresponding level professional qualification document.

**Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators**

The monitoring and criteria for self-assessment are the same for institutions offering IVET and CVET programmes, as long as these form a part of formal education system.

**Reforms of quality assurance in CVET since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)**

On 1 July 2010, the Amendments to the Vocational Education Law came into force establishing the rights of a person to obtain knowledge and skills assessment with the aim of obtaining a vocational qualification document. The Law defines the term “professional competence”, which includes the totality of knowledge, skills and responsibility for performing professional activities in a concrete working situation. The Law stipulates that the responsible body for the process is the MoES, and delegates to the government to adopt the procedure for assessing the knowledge and skills obtained outside formal education.

On 22 February 2011, CoM Regulations No.146 “Procedure how professional competence obtained outside formal education system is assessed” were approved. The Regulations stipulate the procedure how professional competence (except regulated professions) that corresponds to the Latvian professional qualification level 1-3, i.e. the LQF level 3-4, obtained outside formal education is assessed. The institutions assessing professional competence may be accredited education establishments or examination centres, which have been assigned by the State Education Quality Service.

Regarding the HE level, on 10 January 2012, the CoM approved Regulations No.36 “Regulations of recognizing the learning outcomes acquired in the previous education and professional experience” (issued in line with the Law on Higher Education Institutions). These Regulations determine the procedures for the assessment and recognition of learning outcomes (for higher education level) obtained during the previous education or professional experience, as well as criteria for recognition.

**Reforms of quality assurance in CVET since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008**

In 2008 a working group was established at the MoES with the aim to reach an agreement regarding the definition, aims and principal scheme of knowledge and skills acquired outside formal education, the practical aim and basic principles for developing the system, as well as to define the approaches, methods, levels affected by the system, responsible institutions, as

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404 Republic of Latvia, Cabinet Regulation No.146, adopted 22 February 2011, Procedure for the Validation of the Professional Competence Acquired Outside Formal Education System (in Latvian and English), issued pursuant to Section 29.1, Paragraph three of the Vocational Education Law.

405 Republic of Latvia, Cabinet Regulation No 36, adopted 10 January 2012, Regulations of recognizing the learning outcomes acquired in the previous education and professional experience (in Latvian only), issued in accordance with Section 59.2, Clause 5 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.
well as to prepare recommendations on the necessary amendments to the laws and regulations. Quality assurance arrangements in continuous VET at provider level
As above – as quality assurance in formal CVET is ensured through accreditation and licensing of institutions and programmes also delivering IVET.

Part 2 – Interaction between national quality assurance and EQAVET

Basic information
Currently there is no NRP for EQAVET in Latvia.
The MoES had worked with EQAVET since 2004. However, due to restructuring and related personnel changes in the Ministry (after the 2008 financial crisis) the link between the MoES and the EQAVET has been lost. Currently there is no person responsible for the EQAVET in the MoES.
The State Service of Education Quality has been involved in some EQAVET activities since 2010. The representatives of the Service were not informed and involved in any EQAVET predecessors’ activities.
A national approach to enhancing quality assurance in VET exists in Latvia. It partially overlaps with EQAVET Recommendation, but still needs to be fully aligned.

National Reference Point
While Latvia has accepted the Bruges Communiqué on enhanced European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training for the period 2011-2020 and the Regulation No. 623 stipulates that the State Service of Education Quality is responsible for quality assurance in general and vocational education (except the HE), there is currently no regulation that would assign the responsibility to manage and implement the EQAVET Recommendation to a particular institution. According to the interviewees, amendments to the State Service of Education Quality Regulations broadening the mandate of the Service to include tasks related to EQAVET are currently with the MoES.
The MoES has undergone a major restructuring, involving reduction and rotation of staff that has led to discontinuation of its work on EQAVET. Plans are now underway to reorganise all the institutions under the supervision of the MoES (i.e. the institutions that could potentially take up the responsibilities of the NRP). The deadline for taking a political decision on the organisation that could undertake the tasks of the EQAVET NRP is fixed in the Action Plan of the current Government. The Action Plan, approved in February 2012, foresees the creation of an integrated Education management and practical research centre by 1 June 2014 (Point 10.4). This integrated centre should improve planning and quality of education. Considering the imminent reorganisation of institutions subordinate to the MoES, and in order to avoid repeated redistribution of tasks once such reorganisation has been completed, the decision on the NRP will be taken after the institutional reforms have been undertaken.
On its own initiative, and with the aim to ensure the improvement of the vocational education quality assessment system, the State Service of Education Quality has participated in the EQAVET first cycle working groups (2010-2012) on (1) developing guidelines and tools to support the development of national implementation approaches for using the Reference Framework and to improve the quality assurance of VET provision and (2) considering the use of indicators for measuring quality in order to support the preparation of the national

407 Quality assurance in HE is the responsibility of the Higher Education Quality Evaluation Centre (HEQEC)
408 Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 623 of 27 July 2004, State Education Quality Service Regulations, issued in accordance with the State Administration Structure Law, Section 16(1).
409 Republic of Latvia, Cabinet Regulation No.84 of 16 February 2012, On the Government’s action plan for the implementation of the Declaration of the Intended Activities of the Cabinet of Ministers led by Valdis Dombrovskis (in Latvian only)
reviews of the implementation of the Reference Framework and to develop a culture of using indicators to self-monitor the quality assurance processes of VET provision. The Service also took part in the EQAVET annual forum. The representatives of the Service noted that no additional resources (funds or staff) have been allocated for their participation in EQAVET activities.

Currently the restructuring of the institutions under the supervision of the MoES is the main obstacle identified in the process of setting up a NRP in Latvia. The stakeholders consulted also underlined that there is a great deal of uncertainty on how the NRP should be set up, staffed and funded – and guidelines from the side of the EC on these issues would be welcome. It is also anticipated, based on previous experience that new functions and tasks related to the application of EQAVET will probably have to be undertaken with the existing staff and budget resources, which may entail some limitations. Also when regulation allocating the functions of the NRP will be developed, some delays may be expected due to the standard process of consulting all the relevant stakeholders on the draft legislation.

**National approach to enhance quality assurance**

According to the Action Plan of the current Government quality assurance and monitoring, alongside the review of the qualifications framework, professional standards, vocational education programmes, a school reform aimed to integrate general and vocation education, involvement of social partners in raising the attractiveness of vocational education, as well as the transition to learning outcomes and modules based education system are among the action points of the current Government, aimed at increasing the participation in vocational education. However, the Government Action Plan does not specifically refer to EQAVET as a tool that could assist in the development and monitoring of the quality assurance in VET.

Currently two main policy documents provide the framework for VET development in Latvia – the concept *Raising attractiveness of vocational education and involvement of social partners within vocational education quality assurance* (2009) and the *Guidelines for the Optimisation of the Network of Vocational Education Institutions 2010-2015* (2009). The contents of both documents have been summarised above. While these do not explicitly refer to EQAVET as an instrument that should be used to improve the quality assurance in Latvian VET, improving the quality, attractiveness and openness of VET are central concerns in these documents, which also reflect some of the key aspects of the EQAVET Recommendation (e.g. involving and improving cooperation with social partners). Nevertheless, the scope of these policy documents is much broader than the quality assurance in VET (including, among other, the development of national qualification system, modernising of vocational education institutions, development and diversification of VET programmes, balancing general and vocational education provision) and as such they do not constitute an approach aimed specifically at improving the quality assurance systems on the national level.

As outlined above the quality assurance and monitoring are currently undertaken predominantly through the accreditation and licensing of education programmes and institutions – based on criteria specified in the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 852. Regulations for the accreditation of vocational training programs, educational institutions (except HE) and examination centres exist since 2005. As opposed to the policy documents mentioned above, which are too general to provide a specific approach to national quality assurance in VET, these regulations are too narrow – as they mostly focus on providing criteria for the assessment of a specific provider and its programme(s) (rather than an integrated system for continuous improvement of quality assurance on system and provider level). This may be illustrated by the fact that the national assessment criteria fail to cover most of the EQAVET indicators (as outlined in the table above). While a unified system for licensing and accreditation of general and vocational education institutions and programmes entered into force relatively recently (Regulation from 2010 for basic and secondary education and from 2012 – for higher education), this has contributed little to the
development of a more specific system for quality assurance in VET. As outlined in the
beginning of the next section, the “unified approach” may have in fact shifted the focus away
from VET to general education, by setting uniform assessment criteria for both education
streams.

The development of the current national quality assessment system was to a large extent
driven by the constraints of the recent crisis, which has led to liquidation of the Quality
Assessment Stage Agency and the Vocational Education Administration and the integration
of their functions under the State Service of Education Quality. A working group was created,
including the representatives of social partners, the MoES and other ministries (Ministry of
Culture and Ministry of Health) as well as general and vocational education experts who
developed the unified assessment approach for the assessment of quality in general and
vocational education. This process of developing licensing and accreditation methodology
took 1.5 years and resulted in the current Regulations No. 852.

The current national approach to quality assessment provided by the Regulations No. 852 is
similar to the EQAVET Recommendation as it provides an integrated system for quality
assessment in vocational education. As described above, the current approach foresees that
the accreditation of education establishments and programmes is based on their assessment
in seven areas, based on an integrated list of criteria for both general and vocational
education. Individual criteria may be used across all assessment areas and in separate
areas several criteria for assessment are provided by the Regulations. According to the
stakeholders interviewed, already now the national assessment criteria and EQAVET
indicators overlap in a few broad areas. However, the current Latvian system is more
oriented towards evaluating the provider’s education and management processes, while
EQAVET is more learning outcomes based (e.g. employment and placement rates) and
output oriented (share of providers with quality systems, share of trained teachers, number
of participants in VET programmes). Hence the national approach differs from EQAVET in
terms of methodology used in quality assessment process. It is planned to review this
methodology to take the EQAVET Recommendation into account. This will be done by
reviewing the self-assessment and external assessment methods and amending the current
Regulations No. 852 to add EQAVET indicators to the existing criteria.

According to the stakeholders consulted, in some other respects, the national approach for
quality assessment is wider than the EQAVET, because it also includes experts’ assessment
of education programmes as well as the material and technical infrastructure of VET schools.
The assessment is delegated to schools that have relatively high control over how they
spend their sources. The process of accreditation of education establishments and programmes is also how sector representatives assess the relevance of the education offer and the adequacy of the material and technical infrastructure of VET schools. On the other hand, the EQAVET indicators such as finding work after studies, the level of unemployment as well as the use of the skills and competences learned in workplaces are currently less of a focus in schools’ self-assessment (i.e. these are not among the formal assessment criteria). These indicators are to some extent already used by schools, but have less of importance in the accreditation process. Overall, according to the interviewees all EQAVET indicators are relevant and will be eventually covered by the Latvian regulation. One additional field that the stakeholders suggested to include was the assessment of VET programmes and the material and technical infrastructure of the VET providers.

It has to be noted that most developments regarding the application of the EQAVET are
planned at the system level in Latvia (i.e. the revision of regulation to introduce new
competences of state institutions and to integrate the EQAVET indicators) – and will apply
equally to IVET and CVET. No work so far has been done on the provider level and none is
expected until the previously mentioned regulation (aligning the Latvian system criteria with
EQAVET indicators) is in place. Considering the central and more active role of education
providers in ensuring the quality of VET through planning, implementation, self-assessment
and review required by the EQAVET indicators (e.g. in gathering data on how many of their
graduates have found a job) – these developments may encounter some opposition from the
side of VET providers and require time to create general awareness and understanding.
Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance

Overall, the interviewees underlined the positive impetus created by EQAVET Recommendation in drawing the national stockholder attention to developing quality assurance in VET specifically. It was pointed out that the unified system of quality assessment in licensing and accreditation of education establishments and programmes is more oriented towards general education. In a sense, currently the basic education provision is assessed according to very similar criteria as vocational further education for adults. Thanks to Bruges Communiqué and EQAVET, the stakeholders now are rethinking the unified approach – a methodology that gained consensus before – and considering that VET may have to strive towards different outcomes (than general education) and hence – needs different quality assurance approach.

At this stage it is generally too early to assess the impact of the EQAVET Recommendation on the quality assurance in Latvian VET (aside the “softer” influences underlined above), as the EQAVET indicators are not yet formally introduced in regulation and consequently – are not used in implementation, assessment, monitoring and review. This assessment should be possible in a couple of years after the regulation will be introduced. However, the stakeholders interviewed underlined that the adoption of the EQAVET Recommendation in 2009 did steer the work of the national actors towards the development of an integrated system for ensuring the quality of VET in the country. It is expected that in the future EQAVET will also contribute to a better understanding of VET quality indicators among the labour market participants as well as to promoting mobility.

On a broader scale, the quality assurance in VET is a national priority, at least as much as the education policy planning documents are concerned. This is attested by the above mentioned concept for Raising attractiveness of vocational education and involvement of social partners within vocational education quality assurance and the Guidelines for the Optimisation of the Network of Vocational Education Institutions 2010-2015, which foresee considerable investment in increasing the attractiveness and quality of the vocational education. To some extent also the reforms that created unified system for assessment of general and vocational education programmes indicate that the quality of education is a national concern. Due to the crisis and other factors, however, concrete activities have been mostly limited to the last couple of years and further financial investments in VET schools are only being planned.

As mentioned, EQAVET system together with the EQF are also more geared towards the assessment of learning outcomes (rather than the learning process) and the results of learning – the ability of an individual to find a job after education, to integrate in work environment, take up further education and entrepreneurship opportunities. Hence, EQAVET has prompted a rethinking of the quality assurance in VET from the learning outcomes perspective.

As outlined above, the State Service of Education Quality is one of the partners involved in the delivery of the ESF project Development of sectoral qualifications system and increasing the efficiency and quality of vocational education. The representatives of the Service have promoted EQAVET activities in the framework of this project to the members of Sectoral Expert Councils. Information on EQAVET was also distributed through the Vocational education and employment tripartite cooperation council’s sub-committee, under the National Tripartite Cooperation Council (including representatives of the MoES and social partners).

According to the interviewees, social partners are generally on board with the use of EQAVET in developing the national quality assurance. The interviewees also noted that the employer interest and activity has considerably increased during the past couple of years, but this is only partially due to EQAVET as well as the referencing to the EQF and more the result of the above mentioned ESF project. In this period the employer understanding, responsibility and involvement in the delivery of VET, but also in planning and quality assurance, has increased substantially. Sectoral associations currently nominate their experts, through employer confederation (LDDK), who participate in quality assessment. Employers also actively participate in the development of vocational standards (undertaken
in the framework of the ESF project). Already for the second year in a row, employers also revise the admission plans to the vocational education institutions funded by the State.

**Synergies with other EU level instruments**

There are currently no direct links between the EQAVET and the other EU instruments to report.

Indirectly, the link between EQAVET and the referencing to the EQF could be ensured by the ESF project mentioned above. The project will develop the sectoral qualifications framework according to the five levels of the Latvian vocational qualification system, which will be later linked to the EQF.

According to the regulation the State Service of Education Quality is currently the only institution responsible for the quality assurance, aside the funders of VET providers (the State and private) on general and secondary education stages. As outlined above, to date the Service is primarily engaged social partners.

The State Service of Education Quality has no cooperation with the non-profit foundation Higher Education Quality Evaluation Centre (HEQEC) responsible for the organisation of the assessment of higher educational establishment and study programmes. According to an interviewee, the tasks of the HEQEC are likely to be outsourced to an international organisation providing HE quality assessment. The State Service of Education Quality, although also scheduled to undergo reorganisation, will seek cooperation with the institution that will replace the HEQEC.

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412 Development of sectoral qualifications system and increasing the efficiency and quality of vocational education


Republic of Latvia, Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.146, of 22.02.2011, Procedure for the Validation of the Professional Competence Acquired Outside Formal Education System, issued pursuant to Section 29.1, Paragraph three of the Vocational Education Law

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A1.18 Country report – Lithuania

Author: Toms Feifs (ICF GHK)

Part 1 – Description of quality assurance arrangements and of recent developments

Summary of recent changes to quality assurance requirements and measures at provider or system level since 2009:

- On-going reform of initial and continuing VET providers’ network: integration of IVET and labour market training for unemployed, merging of smaller IVET providers.
- On-going decentralisation of VET management by transforming VET schools into self-governing institutions with the aim of increasing the attractiveness of VET.
- The establishment of the sectoral practical training centres (SPTC) to promote the use of the latest technologies, equipment and better skills matching to the labour market needs.
- In 2010 the national qualifications framework was approved and the referencing to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) started.
- On-going VET curriculum reform, including the development of modular VET system and its use in reorganisation of existing VET programmes into modules, linking to the EQF, the European Credit System for VET (ECVET) and EQAVET.
- Introduction of internal quality management tools for VET as well as external VET quality assessment are on-going.

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in initial VET

National Framework for initial VET – who is in charge of what?

The main legislation relating to the IVET system in Lithuania includes:

- Law on Education (2003) setting the framework for the education system, responsible institutions and the education stages. The Law stipulates that the educational system is comprised of formal (primary, basic and secondary education, VET and higher education), non-formal children and adult education, as well as informal education and educational assistance.
- Law on Vocational Education and Training (2007) establishes the structure and management of the VET system. The VET system in Lithuania covers initial VET, continuing VET and vocational guidance. VET may be provided in parallel with general lower or upper secondary education. The Law, among other, establishes the legal preconditions for the integration of the initial and continuing vocational education and training systems and shapes provisions for quality assurance.

The VET policy in Lithuania is developed and implemented on the national level by the MoES. The MoES is also responsible for the management of VET on the national level, with structures responsible for vocational training and CVET. Other Ministries participate in shaping the policy in their respective fields of responsibility.

The Ministry and its authorised institutions monitor the quality of education and oversee the development of formal education programmes as well as ensure complementarities across programmes of different levels.

The Vocational Education and Training Council is an advisory body for the MoES and other governmental institutions in strategic decisions regarding VET. The Council is composed of state and municipalities and social partners’ representatives.

The Qualifications and VET Development Centre (QVETDC), under the supervision of MoES, provides methodological support for VET institutions and is also responsible for the preparation of VET standards, evaluation of training programmes, analysis and
dissemination of information about VET and human resources development. The QVETDC also assesses and develops VET quality and performs functions of Quality Assurance National Reference Point (NRP) for VET and EQF National Coordination Point (NCP).

The Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (CQAHE), under the MoES, monitors and ensures the quality of higher education through external assessment and accreditation. The Centre also acts as the ENIC/NARIC Information Centre, undertaking the assessment and recognition of higher education qualifications acquired in foreign countries.

Municipalities are involved in VET management by developing VET provider networks according to their specific needs, participating in the admission of persons to the state funded VET programmes as well as planning and implementing vocational guidance.

Furthermore, during the period 2004-2008 some 700 Vocational Information Points were established in the education system. The aim of the Vocational Information Points is to provide vocational information services, disseminate publications and give access to the internet and to the education and labour market databases. The Vocational Information Points are mostly located in general education schools and at some VET institutions. Some of the Vocational Information Points are functioning at libraries, education centres, territorial labour exchange offices and other institutions. Since 2012 the system of vocational guidance services is being reorganised with all general education schools and VET institutions being responsible for the vocational information, counselling and career education provision to their students.

**Statutory stakeholder involvement in initial VET systems**

The national approach to improving quality assurance systems is developed by the MoES in cooperation with the QVETDC and other experts (VET providers, social partners, other ministries and regional authorities as well as representatives of basic, secondary and higher education institutions).

From 2012 accreditation of competences assessment institutions is carried out and social partners, enterprises, employers’ associations may apply for accreditation.

Representatives of employers participate in setting up and assessing VET programmes with regard to their correspondence to the needs of the labour market and in the organisation of students’ practical training.

**Planning at VET system level**

The preparation of vocational education and training programmes is delegated to the providers of vocational education and training. The relevant employer representatives need to be consulted in the development of each new programme.

Social partners participate in development of new qualifications, education standards, VET curricula and training programs.

The above mentioned QVETDC also undertakes research on qualifications demand on the labour market, accumulates and analyses information on VET and human resources development as well as designs methodologies for the development of VET.

The Lithuanian VET Council is a national advisory body that deals with strategic VET issues, including development of qualifications (e.g. it provides suggestion to the amendments of legislation required for vocational training and endorses the structure of a VET standard). The Council comprises equal number of the national and local government authorities as well as social partner organisations.

Each VET provider plans enrolment of students to state funded VET programmes on the basis of local labour market needs and submits applications for student enrolment to state funded VET programmes to the Minister for education and science. Each year the annual student enrolment plans are discussed in the VET Council and after that approved by the Minister for education and science.

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413 CEDEFOP REFERNET Lithuania, VET in Europe – Country Report Lithuania, 2011
In 2011-2012 Central Professional Committee (CPC) and 17 sectoral professional committees (SPC) have been established at QVETDC. The CPC coordinates strategic issues pertaining to the development of the qualifications system, whereas SPC is responsible for qualification formation issues in concrete sectors of the economy.

Requirements for evaluation and review

The requirements for quality assurance in VET education are provided by the Law on Education. The Law stipulates that ensuring the quality of education is the responsibility of the education provider and the owner of the education establishment (either State of private). The State is responsible for ensuring the quality of formal education and partly the quality of non-formal education, including the quality of teaching.

According to the Law, to improve the quality of education a performance review based on learning outcomes, education monitoring, research, self-evaluation and external evaluation of activities in schools, performance review of school principals and teachers must be carried out.

In broad lines the VET quality assurance in Lithuania consists of internal quality assurance systems implemented by all formal VET providers and external VET quality assessment. However, both components are currently in the process of development.

The Law stipulates that self-assessments of school’s activities and a method of carrying-out of the self-evaluation should be chosen by the School Council. The Council should analyse the self-evaluation results and take decisions regarding the improvement of activities.

In 2008 a national ESF project “Development and Implementation of a Single System for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training” was finalized. Results of the project cover the quality assurance concept and model for both initial VET and continuing training, a set of vocational education and training quality criteria and indicators (Quality standard), methodologies and recommendations for self-assessment and external quality assessment.

Further implementation of VET quality assurance system is implemented through the Programme for Practical Training Resources Development (2007).

Until the quality assurance system based on self-assessment and external assessment is introduced, the quality of VET on the state level is ensured through:

- Preparation and approval of VET standards, and corresponding updates to VET programmes
- Preparation, registration and licensing of VET programmes
- Supervision of the VET programmes’ implementation and audits of VET institutions
- Independent assessment of qualifications

Identification of training needs

The preparation of vocational education and training programmes is delegated to the providers of vocational education and training. The relevant employer representatives need to be consulted in the development of each new programme. Programmes are developed in accordance with VET standards and general requirements approved by the Minister for Education and Science. A programme may include additional competences to satisfy local needs.

Currently a transition to national modular VET programmes is on its way in Lithuania and based on these school level programmes will be prepared. It is foreseen that QVETDC will organise the preparation or amendment of national modular training programmes. Qualifications standards or, in case of their absence, VET standards, will be used for developing VET curricula. VET providers and enterprises will have the possibility to initiate and design programmes as well.

Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on VET providers

According to the Law on Education, formal vocational training curricula may be implemented by vocational schools, gymnasiums or other education providers who are licensed to deliver this kind of training.

Vocational schools provide both vocational and general education. In some regions vocational schools have been merged together to create regional vocational training centres. Around one fourth of vocational schools have been reorganised to become self-governing institutions to increase their administrative and budget independence and sustain their cooperation with regional actors.

The quality of all new VET programmes is evaluated by employer representatives and education experts, and upon approval by MoES entered into the Register of Study and Training Programmes and Qualifications.

If during the procedure of expert evaluation a provider has proved to have the necessary resources for teaching theory and practice (i.e. material and human resources – suitable premises and equipment as well as qualified vocational teachers) to implement the VET programme, a license is issued to the VET provider by MoES to implement the registered programme.

The assessment of training programmes and necessary resources for their provision is organised by QVETDC.

Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)

Until 2013 competence of students in VET was assessed by the qualification examination commission during the final exam taken at the end of the programme. The commission consisted of at least three representatives of employers, trade unions and VET providers (VET teachers).

From 2013 the final assessment of competence is organised and carried out by accredited competence assessment institutions. Social partners organisations, enterprises, employers’ associations may apply for accreditation and become the competence assessment institutions. In 2012 eight competence assessment institutions were accredited.

Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators

The implementation of VET programmes is supervised by the relevant divisions of the MoES and covers the teaching process as well as activities. The State Audit Office performs random checks of the management of education institutions. QVETDC is currently implementing a project to pilot system of external assessment of programmes implementation.

As indicated above, the CQAHE monitors and ensures the quality of higher education through external assessment and accreditation.

For monitoring of education policy measures, the state education monitoring system was launched in 2005. A list of State education monitoring indicators is constructed (revised and readopted in 2012), where indicators are grouped into the following sections: education context, input, processes, output and education system monitoring. The statistics related to indicators are published in Education Management Information System (http://www.svis.smm.lt).

According to the 2012 EQAVET Secretariat survey, most indicators proposed by the EQAVET EQARF Recommendation are used in Lithuania (Indicators 3-5, 7-10 are sometimes or always used). Currently only Indicators 1, 2 and 6 are not used for IVET. The indicator 1 is set in the Practical VET Resources Development Programme, according to which, VET providers are currently implementing ESF projects for introduction of internal

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415 EQAVET Secretariat survey 2012: update on national approaches to implementation
VET quality assurance systems. The usage of indicator 1 is foreseen after the end of these projects.

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008

An external quality assessment model was developed in 2003-2005 as an outcome of the PHARE 2001 project “Framework of Qualifications Standards” and subsequently tested in vocational schools.

In the period 2005-2008 the Concept of VET Quality Assurance System in Lithuania was developed in the framework of the national level ESF project “Development and Implementation of a Common Quality Assurance System in Vocational Education and Training”\(^{416}\). The Concept was elaborated on the basis of the “Study of Quality Assurance in VET in Lithuania and Other Countries” (2007) and takes the EQAVET into consideration. The Concept covers IVET and CVET (including the non-formal education) and aims at continuous VET quality insurance, preparation of instruments and human resources for this process.

In 2007 the “Practical VET Resources Development Programme” was initiated to implement measures devised in the Concept, namely internal quality assurance mechanisms and external assessment of VET provision.

Also in the period 2005-2008 a number of national projects were implemented in the field of VET in Lithuania:

- Creation of the National Qualifications System
- Further Development of National VET Standards System
- Development and implementation of vocational guidance system
- Creation and development of vocational knowledge and skills assessment system\(^{417}\)

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)

A national project for improvement of VET teachers’ technological (subject) competences was started in 2010.

In 2010 a project “Formation of qualifications and the development of modular VET system” was started, aiming to update the methodology for the development of qualifications standards and to prepare qualifications standards in five sectors. The project will also develop modular VET system and pilot its use in reorganisation of VET programmes—the development of the ECVET and EQAVET.

Starting from 2010, the network of sectoral practical training centres (SPTCs) is being created. SPTC is a part of VET institution equipped with modern practical training facilities from one or several areas. The main aim of the SPTC is to assure that learners, using the latest technologies and equipment, gain practical skills matching the needs of the labour market. These centres are open to students from VET, higher education institutions, general education schools, employees from sector enterprises, vocational teachers, etc. It is anticipated that 42 SPTCs will open until 2014.

In 2012 projects were launched to introduce internal VET quality assurance mechanisms in VET institutions and to develop and pilot external assessment of VET programmes implementation – a process that is to be completed until 2014. To certify internal quality assurance systems of VET providers peer review will be organised in 2013.

Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in initial VET

Currently the main IVET providers are vocational schools and colleges. Vocational schools implement vocational training programmes at ISCED 2, 3 and 4 levels. Colleges implement study programmes oriented towards practical activity (ISCED 5B). Some colleges also provide vocational training programmes.

\(^{416}\) http://projektai.pmmc.lt/index.php?id=446

The majority of VET providers are in the public sector. In 2012 only three of 77 vocational schools were non-public.

Requirements VET providers have to comply with (if not described in 1st section)

According to the Law on VET, VET can be provided by any VET institution, a freelance teacher or any other provider (general education school, enterprise, organisation whose main activity is other than VET) that is entitled to develop and implement VET programmes. VET providers may accept students and start implementing formal VET programmes after receiving a licence from the MoES.

Planning at VET provider level (including identification of training needs)

Each school has a Teachers’ Council and a School Council jointly addressing self-governance issues, including school activities, funding issues and management of a school. Teachers’ Council consists of the school management, all the teachers and other school personnel, while School Council unites teachers, representatives of school administration, pupils, parents and the head of the school.

Requirements for monitoring and review (self-assessment)

According to the Law on Education, to improve the quality of education a performance review based on learning outcomes, education monitoring, research, self-evaluation and external evaluation of activities in schools, performance review of school principals and teachers must be carried out. The Law stipulates that self-assessments of school’s activities and a method of carrying-out of the self-evaluation are chosen by the School Council.


Certification, assessment and validation of learners

A qualification is awarded to a person who has obtained all the competences required for the qualification and set out in the relevant VET standard or the sectoral qualifications standard or in the absence of these, in a VET programme registered in the Register of Study, Training Programmes and Qualifications.

The evaluation of the competences acquired by IVET graduates is separated from the training process and is organised by accredited competence assessment institutions.

Qualifications are awarded by the VET provider after obtaining the results of the evaluation of competences. Graduates are issued qualification certificates.

The possibility to evaluate and recognise learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal learning is legitimised by the law. According to the existing procedure, individuals with work experience of at least one year and those over 18 can apply to VET institutions for the recognition of their competences. The assessment would be organised by accredited competence assessment institution.

Stakeholder involvement

Social partners participate in shaping the content of new qualifications, qualification standards and VET programmes, in assessing that VET programmes correspond to the labour market needs and in organising practical training. They also take part in organising and implementing assessment of qualifications.

Outputs from quality assurance at provider level

Please see above.
Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET at provider level since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)

Please see above.

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET at provider level since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008

Please see above.

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in continuous VET

National Framework for CVET – who is in charge of what?

In Lithuania CVET encompasses both formal vocational training and non-formal adult education. According to the EQAVET website, the development of new educational services in recent years and the promotion of lifelong learning, the number of adults participating in non-formal education and further education are increasing. Adults may pursue formal CVET at vocational schools, colleges, universities, labour market training centres or courses organised by enterprises. The State ensures CVET for civil servants, unemployed people, those facing redundancy and, to some extent, for SME employees.

Non-formal education of adults may be provided by all education providers, i.e. an education institution, a freelance teacher, an enterprise or organisation whose main activity is other than education, which is entitled to provide educational services.

The Provisions of the National Education Strategy 2003-2012 and the Strategy for Assuring Lifelong Learning (2008) constitute national policy guidelines for developing lifelong learning. In addition, the following legislation is particularly relevant for CVET:

- The Law on Education (2011) and the Law on VET (2007) define the aims and purpose of CVET and establish the rights to non-formal education validation and recognition
- The Law on Non-formal Adult Education (1998) regulates the provision of non-formal adult education
- The Law on Support for Employment (2006) sets out the aims and the institutional framework for delivering support system for jobseekers

Conditions for acquiring an occupation, developing of qualifications and re-qualification are also covered by national, sectoral, territorial and enterprise level collective agreements – in line with the provisions of the Labour Code.

The institutions responsible for development and implementation of CVET policy are largely the same as for IVET. In addition:

- The Lithuanian Association of Adult Education works on improving the perception of adult education and encouraging adult participation
- The Education Development Centre, under the MoES, among other develops non-formal adult education content as well as organises and performs assessment and accreditation of programmes to develop teachers’ qualifications
- The Centre of Information Technologies of Education, under MoES manages Register of Qualification Improvement Programmes and Events
- The Lithuanian Labour Exchange, LLE under Ministry of Social Security and Labour is responsible for the implementation of active labour market policy measures and the organisation of vocational training for the unemployed

Statutory stakeholder involvement in CVET systems

As for IVET, also in CVET employers are involved in shaping the education and training offer according to the needs of the labour market, for example by participation in the development of VET standards.

**Planning at CVET system level**

There is no single system for planning CVET in Lithuania.

**Requirements for evaluation and review**

Responsibilities in the field of quality assurance are defined by the Law on Education and the Law on VET. In line with this regulation formal VET providers are subject to external and internal quality assessment and monitoring. The main responsibility for VET quality assurance lies with the VET provider, who:

- Together with other stakeholders is responsible for ensuring that the necessary material and technical basis is available for the provision of training
- Organises the development of training programmes in correspondence with the needs of economy and the relevant VET standards
- Implements internal assessment of management and training provided

There are no specific requirements for non-formal education providers, with the exception of these set by their potential clients in terms of demonstrating the relevant experience of their staff and availability of required resources.

**Identification of training needs**

Formal CVET curriculum is competence-based with strong emphasis on practical training. Formal CVET is based on national curricula that take into account VET standards.

The requirements of non-formal CVET programmes are set by the stakeholder that orders or funds these programmes. The objectives, admission criteria and the length of these programmes are very different.

**Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on CVET providers**

In line with the Law on VET only licensed providers have the right to deliver formal VET programmes, which are designed for acquisition of qualification registered in the Register of Study and Training Programmes. According to the data from the Register, licenses to deliver formal CVET has been acquired by a number of different types of institutions – universities, colleges, vocational schools, enterprises, labour market training centres, etc.

Non-formal VET programmes are designed for acquisition of new competences or to improve them. Non-formal training providers may register prepared programmes in the Register of Qualification Development Programmes and Events the data of which is published in Open information, counselling and guidance system (AIKOS). Some 9,000 non-formal training programmes were published in 2010 by various institutions, most of these related to the development of teacher qualifications.

**Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)**

Formal vocational training programmes are designed for the acquisition of vocational qualification or gaining competences to implement specific jobs as regulated in legal acts. The participants have to be 18 years old to participate in these programmes. And after graduation they are awarded a qualification certificate or a certificate providing a right to do the specific job.

**Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators**

There are no specific requirements for non-formal education providers, with the exception of these set by their potential clients. Non-formal CVET situation is monitored in specific sectors, e.g. for civil servants, health sector, etc.

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419 CEDEFOP REFERNET Lithuania, VET in Europe – Country Report Lithuania, 2011
Reforms of quality assurance in CVET since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)

Education Development Centre within the project “The Development of Adult Education System to Provide Key Competencies to Adults” has prepared a model for non-formal adult education quality assurance. The description of procedure for non-formal adult education quality assurance is submitted to the Ministry of Education and Science for further discussions. The suggested model includes on-line tool for self-assessment of CVET providers (available at http://www.suaugusiujuvietimas.lt/?id=14&did=57).

After self-assessment the institutions would receive information about assessment results and areas for further improvement and quality certificate.

Reforms of quality assurance in CVET since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008.

A part of formal CVET providers (labour market training) are introducing internal quality assurance systems together with formal IVET providers (see A1.2. for formal CVET provision).

Quality assurance arrangements in continuous VET at provider level

Please see above.

Part 2 – Interaction between national quality assurance and EQAVET

Basic information

The Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre operates as the National Reference Point (NRP) in Lithuania.

The Centre has been involved in EQAVET related activities since 2007 and since December 2009 a new Regulation has formally delegated the role of the NRP to it.

The national approach to enhancing quality in VET exists. It was developed in the period 2005-2008 (before the EQAVET Recommendation) in the form of the “Concept of VET Quality Assurance System”.

National Reference Point

The NRP for VET was established in 2007 and is managed by the above-mentioned Centre. The Centre has been traditionally the main institution dealing with quality of VET issues. The Centre has a special Unit of VET Quality in which two persons are working part time on EQAVET. Additionally one person from VET Information Unit contributes part-time to EQAVET dissemination, information and networking activities.

The Lithuanian NRP is informing the stakeholders about the activities of the EQAVET network, implements the EQAVET network’s work programme, promotes EQAVET on the national level, disseminates information to stakeholders, supports training providers in improving their quality assurance systems in line with the EQAVET Recommendation and in the introduction of self-evaluation systems.

The representatives of the Centre also participate in EQAVET (and its predecessor’s) meetings, annual fora and other information exchanges.

There were no major problems or barriers identified with the set-up and effective operation of the NRP. The availability of staff and their ability to work in English were mentioned as the main challenges in EQAVET related activities.

The Centre is an institution under the supervision of the MoES. The Unit of VET Quality is responsible for the assessment of the potential VET providers – their organisational resources and programmes, in order for the providers to receive licenses. As such the Centre and the MoES are key institutional partners of potential and actual VET providers.

In terms of added value the Centre is providing direct access to European initiatives (EQAVET and the EQF) to institutional stakeholders and VET providers. It also mainstreams ideas from EQAVET to national level projects that further implements these.

**National approach to enhance quality assurance**

As mentioned above, the national approach to enhancing the quality assurance in VET is implemented through the Concept that was developed by the Centre. The Concept was developed prior to 2008, in line with the existing Quality Assurance Framework, before the EQAVET Recommendation was approved.

The Concept laid down how the quality in VET is to be assured, the institutions involved and their responsibilities as well as future/following activities.

The Concept proposed measures in four principal areas of activity:

- Prior to licensing assessment of VET providers (institutions and programmes) – an area where the Centre was active already before the Concept was developed.
- Assessment of VET programmes’ implementation – a new area of activity currently implemented (the Centre is currently coordinating a project that will provide external assessment of the quality of 90 VET programmes by 2014).
- Assessment of VET institutions’ activities – this step is not yet in implementation (the process is currently under discussion in the MoES).
- Ensuring the State monitoring of VET indicators – a national (formal) list of indicators has been approved, partially covering the EQAVET indicators.

The Concept also provides recommendations on how the government and ESF funds should be assigned to the action areas (two of the mentioned actions are co-funded by the ESF).

The Centre is also supporting VET providers in development and implementation of their internal quality assurance processes (e.g. ISO standard). These have been introduced by most providers and the Centre will organise a peer review in 2013 to review these systems.

The Concept was developed by the Centre in cooperation with experts from general and higher education institutions as well as VET providers. The development of the Concept and a model for quality assurance in VET was a complicated process, involving agreement between the main institutions and providers as well as on further areas of action (at least two of which are already implemented). The Concept was presented to VET providers in 2008.

The main reason for developing the Concept was the absence of the national approach/document for quality assurance.

According to the stakeholders consulted, the national approach to quality assurance in VET is sufficiently comprehensive for ensuring quality of VET on system and provider levels as well as monitoring of VET quality. Naturally, however, further success of the approach will depend on the quality of implementation, political will and available funding.

**Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance**

Quality of VET is increasingly a priority in Lithuania (as signalled by the 2008 Concept and the current and future work to implement the activities foreseen in it). However, this is only partially due to the influence of EQAVET (as the national approach was developed before the Recommendation) and mostly relates to the development of the national Concept. According to the stakeholders, EQAVET framework and products are currently used in the work with VET providers. However, the bulk of the system level alignment with EQAVET is planned for the future.

The 2009 Recommendation was perceived as important by the stakeholders interviewed as it raised the status of quality assurance in VET on the national education policy agenda. Before the Recommendation there was no such focus on VET quality issues – instead the national policy strategy was more focused on increasing the accessibility of VET. Now, in the

new Government programme (2013-2017) and the draft National strategy on Education 2013-2022 the focus has shifted to the quality in all fields of education (including VET).

Overall the EQAVET approach to enhancing quality of VET was assessed as suitable and relevant – on the background of the current national developments – by the Lithuanian stakeholders consulted. EQAVET has contributed to promoting discussion on quality issues. It has helped to illustrate how other countries are addressing VET quality assurance challenges and defining their own indicators. The participation in EQAVET has also introduced EU ideas and quality cycle as well as prompted updating of national tools in line with the Recommendation (planned for the future).

On the system level Lithuania is not following all EQAVET indicators and has its own list of indicators, which can be partially linked to those of EQAVET. In the future, it is planned to review the methodology for external review of VET programmes to take into account the EQAVET Recommendation and products. However, the stakeholders consulted were reserved regarding the suitability of all EQAVET indictors (and more generally EU objectives) in the national context. Monitoring of indicators is currently a weaker link in the Lithuanian system.

On the provider level, EQAVET Recommendation and products are presented to providers in introduction seminars on the development of their own internal quality assurance systems. The Centre invites providers to ensure that their quality systems reflect the EQAVET quality cycle (and the peer review next year will assess how this cycle is used by the providers). The Centre has also prepared recommendation type quality standards, taking into account the EQAVET recommendation and other products, intended for VET providers that are undertaking internal quality assessment. Also other tools and guidance material provided by the Centre/NCP is very much in line with the EQAVET Recommendation.

According to the stakeholders consulted, CVET is a less regulated area in Lithuania and hence the providers enjoy greater independence in this sector. Due to this absence of direct regulation, EQAVET has had a very limited influence on CVET.

**Synergies with other EU level instruments**

The Centre/NRP cooperates with the MoES and the VET providers, which according to the legislation are the main responsible for quality development and assurance. With the MoES the Centre has consulting and exchange of information functions. Vis-à-vis providers (who are otherwise independent) the Centre offers assistance (e.g. consultations and manuals) and monitors how their internal quality assurance systems are implemented (hence the peer review in 2013). There are no other organisations involved in the activities of the NRP.

Information is also distributed through the Centre’s/NRP’s newsletter to various institutions and published on the Centre’s websites. Aside these, there is no direct distribution of information to other organisations.

Otherwise the interviewees reported insufficient use of possible synergies between EQAVET and other EU initiatives (the Centre/NRP is also responsible for the referencing to the EQF and the ECVET). The work on these other initiatives, according to the stakeholders interviewed, could be more integrated with EQAVET (both on the national and EU levels).

Also there could be more communication and direct involvement of the institutions responsible for quality assurance in higher education and adult learning. Cooperation with these institutions could be improved. Finally, EQAVET currently is mostly linked with IVET and CVET adult and further education have to be taken more into account.

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The Methodological Centre for Vocational Education and Training, Concept of VET Quality Assurance System in Lithuania, 2008

CEDEFOP REFERNET Lithuania and Qualifications and VET Development Centre, Vocational education and training: European priorities and their implementation in Lithuania in 2002–2010


Lithuanian Government programme 2013-2017
Luxembourg has implemented major changes in its VET system as a consequence of the 2008 VET reform (Law of 19 December 2008) with the overall aim of better matching the new labour market needs in terms of qualifications. EQAVET principles were taken into account when reforming the VET system.

All major elements of the framework are implemented concerning IVET. Concerning CVET, as the implication and the responsibility of public authorities is more limited, only parts of the system can be covered by a national framework. In both areas there is an on-going process of improvement of policies and mechanisms in place.

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in initial VET

**Context and VET planning**

The Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (Ministère de l’éducation nationale et de la formation professionnelle) is responsible for all types of education including VET (however, excluding Higher Education). It is responsible for legislation and policy developments for all types of education – from nursery to VET secondary education – and lifelong learning. The Ministry is also responsible for promoting and implementing measures to counter unemployment.

Regarding the educational system, there are two types of secondary systems available in the public system in Luxembourg:

- General secondary education, which lasts seven years and upon successful completion, a secondary school-leaving certificate prepares students for university.
- Technical secondary education, which is composed by an IVET system and a general technical system. Note that in Luxembourg there are no school which only provide VET education.

Initial vocational training includes either an apprenticeship path, where students spend 1 or 3 days at school and the rest of the week in the workplace, or a more technical IVET path which is school-based with shorter (minimum 12 weeks) work placements. Every IVET qualification has thus a school and enterprise aspect.

**The national framework for quality assurance**

All the IVET training leading to national recognised qualifications is under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training. All major elements of the framework concerning IVET are implemented through the national agency for quality development in schools, through the professional chambers, and the department of VET. The EQAVET framework is not implemented per se but it is rather used as a guidance to reflect upon the quality assurance mechanisms already in place or that need to be improved.

In 2008, a major reform (Law of 19 December 2008) was implemented in order to reform all the VET system in Luxembourg. The main goal of this reform was to set up a VET system, which will comply with the new labour market needs in accordance with the European strategic goals. Indeed, the overall objectives of the reform are to:

- Facilitate the integration of young people into the labour market through better qualification.
- Give them access to lifelong learning opportunities.
- Reduce the failure rate (which was quite high in the IVET system in Luxembourg) and the number of young people leaving school without certification.

The main approach of the reform was to introduce a competence-based VET system – instead of the former content-based approach – as well as a system for validation of formal
and informal learning. New VET programmes were created and defined according to a job profile described in terms of tasks and learning outcomes. A modular VET system was also introduced with the possibility to accumulate units of learning throughout the training process. Besides, more comprehensive internship and apprenticeships opportunities were developed. In addition, an IT tool was developed in order to administrate the new VET system, which enables to draw statistics and evaluate the performance of learners and trainers of all VET programmes.

Quality assurance was not the main priority of the reform although many of the developments presented above comply with the EQAVET indicators which reflect the quality criteria of planning, implementation, evaluation and review.

Statutory stakeholder involvement and identification of training needs

Social partners are strongly involved in the Luxembourgish system. The four Professional Chambers (of commerce, trades, agriculture, and of employees) are directly involved in the legislative procedures in Luxembourg. They act as independent think tanks and are officially consulted on law and regulations on economic, financial and social policy. They are present at both national and European level.

Regarding IVET, there is a long tradition of the involvement of the Chambers. They are, for instance, allowed by law to organise VET training courses. The 2008 reform of the VET system specifically introduced a stronger partnership between the state and social partners. Both schools and social partners were involved in the working groups on curriculum development where new training programmes were being conceived and took part in the implementation.

A Tripartite Advisory Committee on Vocational Training was also created in 2011 in order to monitor the labour market needs in terms of qualifications and consequently introduce changes to the VET education accordingly.

Requirements for evaluation and review – monitoring processes

The 2008 reform of VET complies with the EQAVET quality criteria of evaluation and review (as well as with those of planning and implementation).

The Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training is responsible for monitoring all the publicly funded education in Luxembourg, including IVET, via its Educational and Technological Research and Innovation Coordination Service (SCRIPT). In particular, SCRIPT is responsible for:

- Education and technological innovation and research
- The quality assurance of teaching in schools and secondary schools
- The continuing training of teachers and trainers staff in schools and secondary schools.

External evaluations of training requirements and outcomes are performed. Schools have also to perform a self-assessment based on the School Quality Action Protocol, an evaluation and support system developed by the SCRIPT, which is based on the quality criteria of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Evaluation.

In addition, the national Agency for Quality of teaching (Agence pour le développement de la qualité scolaire) is an entity belonging to SCRIPT which monitors quality assurance of teaching in all public schools, according to the quality cycle. It is responsible for:

- Scientific and methodological support to schools in the assessment of their educational environment.
- Support for primary and secondary schools in developing quality assurance.
- Collaboration with various government, European and international bodies to improve the performance of the educational system in Luxembourg.

For the primary level, comprehensive quality assurance mechanisms are already in place. Luxembourg is currently implementing quality assurance mechanisms for secondary schools (including secondary technical schools).

Finally, the Statistics department of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training monitors the system via the national database of students and teachers.
**Who can deliver IVET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on VET providers**

Initial vocational training can be delivered by different organisations, namely:
- Colleges and technical schools public and private
- Training organisations
- Training centres, public and private

Official schools are under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training. Therefore all schools set up by public authorities do not have to be accredited. Other organisations delivering IVET education that leads to the same national certification are integrated into the public IVET system under the supervision of the Ministry.

**Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)**

Formal national certifications are issued at completion of IVET paths under the national assessment criteria defined by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning is delivered by the Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training. An individual must have at least three years (5000 hours) of practice in the work he or she wants to validate, in order to be able to apply for validation. An evaluation committee constituted of two employers’ representatives, two employees’ representatives and two school representatives of the school compares the applicant’s skills with those required for the qualification requested. Depending on the conditions it satisfies, the applicant might obtain a certificate, a diploma of technical secondary education or a certificate of master craftsmanship, in whole or in part.

**Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)**

On-going implementation of the quality framework in secondary schools. Special adaptations have been introduced to fit to the VET system and EQAVET.

**Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008**

As mentioned above, the main reform in IVET is the 2008 VET reform (Law of 19 December 2008).

**Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in initial VET**

**Planning, Requirements VET providers have to comply with, and monitoring**

IVET providers are under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, which regulates the national public educational system. The Ministry, with the participation of social partners, is responsible for defining legislation regarding IVET (at system and provider level). It is also in charge of monitoring all the publicly funded education in Luxembourg, namely via its Educational and Technological Research and Innovation Coordination Service (SCRIPT) and the Agency for Quality of teaching.

VET providers who deliver official IVET diplomas – which are therefore part of the national public IVET system – must comply with certain requirements defined by law (e.g. organisation of the learning, final examinations, etc.). Schools have also to perform a self-assessment based on the School Quality Action Protocol, an evaluation and support system developed by the SCRIPT which is based on the quality criteria of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Evaluation. Each school has to write a quality annual plan which is assessed by the national Agency for Quality of teaching (Agence pour le développement de la qualité scolaire) which monitors quality assurance of teaching in all public schools, according to the (EQAVET) quality cycle. External evaluations of training requirements and outcomes are also undertaken.
Certification, assessment and validation of learners

Each IVET school or organisation delivering IVET has to comply with the national assessment criteria defined by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training. National IVET certifications are only issued by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training.

Stakeholder involvement

As previously mentioned, there is a strong participation of stakeholders in Luxembourgish legislative decision process. When developing the 2008 Reform, both schools and social partners were involved in the working groups on curriculum development and took part in the implementation.

In order to ensure the quality of the working groups, training on curriculum development was provided to stakeholders.

Training of trainers and teachers

In order to ensure a smooth implementation of the 2008 Reform, there was an intensive phase of training of trainers/teachers regarding the teaching process. As new curricula were developed, there was a strong demand from teachers and school staff for training as well as from tutors in the enterprises.

Training of trainers and teachers will continue although in different intensity.

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET at provider level since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)

On-going implementation of the quality framework in secondary schools. Special adaptations have been introduced to fit to the VET system and EQAVET.

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET at provider level since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008

As mentioned beforehand, the main reform in IVET is the 2008 VET reform (Law of 19 December 2008).

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in continuous VET

Context and CVET planning

CVET is not centrally administered in Luxembourg. Only state funding CVET is monitored and regulated to some extent by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training. Various laws govern and define state funding CVET: Law of 4 September 1990, which reformed technical secondary education and continuing training; and Law of 22 June 1999 which aims to support and develop CVET. The 2008 Reform (Law of 19 November) also includes some provisions for CVET, such as the quality label for CVET providers. The general aim of CVET legislation is to further develop the CVET opportunities in Luxembourg and to better match the labour market qualifications needs.

CVET in Luxembourg encompasses:

- Re-training paths (targeted at unemployed people), which is mainly financed by the Labour Ministry. The Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, in some cases, might be involved in the pedagogical content part of the training. However, it does not have much leverage in this part of CVET.
- Second chance education, which leads to the same national certifications as IVET. In this case, this part of CVET is embedded in the public IVET system described in the first part of this report.
- Non-formal CVET which takes place within the enterprise. Luxembourgish government might provide grants to some enterprises after submission of a training plan. In this case, the Ministry is responsible for assessing the training plan and for an overall monitoring the enterprise training activities (i.e. accountability, management).
- 80 legal days for training: employees are entitled by law to have 30 days of training leave during their career. In order to benefit from the leave, they must submit an application to
the Ministry of Education. The Ministry ensures that the training is provided by state accredited providers.

**Identification of training needs and monitoring**

The national Training Observatory is responsible for identifying the training needs in the CVET sector. In addition, there is in place a monitoring system for public co financed CVET under the responsibility of the National Institute for the development of CVET (INFPC).

**Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on CVET providers**

CVET can be delivered by:
- Publicly funded secondary schools and technical secondary schools
- Publicly funded training centres
- The professional chambers
- Private secondary schools and technical secondary schools, foundations, commercial companies and associations individually approved for this purpose by Grand-Ducal regulation.

Regarding accreditation, there are no specific criteria in terms of quality assurance providers must comply with. Private providers must ask to the Ministry of Middle classes for a Business license. Enterprises, NGOs or Associations applying for public funding must submit a training plan to the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training. However, there are no specific quality assurance criteria either in this case. Finally, training centres of Professional Chambers are automatically accredited by law and are totally autonomous in terms of the pedagogical content and management of their training.

The 2008 law reforming vocational training has created a quality label for CVET providers under its article 44. The quality label acts as a proof of accreditation from the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training. CVET providers that want to obtain the label must submit an application describing:
- The purposes and objectives of the training programmes
- Their programmes and methods
- Guidance and support measures for learners
- The evaluation criteria and methods
- The professional qualifications of the trainers
- The practical organisation of the training programmes.

The quality label is awarded for a period of three years and can be renewed or withdrawn if the organisation fails to comply with the conditions for obtaining it.

**The CVET quality assurance framework**

There are no quality assurance mechanisms in place for CVET. CVET providers are most of the time privately managed. The government does not have much leverage in influencing CVET or quality assurance practices. In addition, the government is not competent for monitoring CVET that does not lead to official national diplomas. It encourages enterprises to develop CVET by providing grants; however, it does not interfere with the content.

Nonetheless, quality assurance is a topic of interest for CVET providers at the national level. A working group (‘Quality in Continuing Vocational Training’) is discussing the creation of standards, quality charter, training and certificates for trainers, etc. In its National Lifelong Strategy, Luxembourg has expressed the aim of developing a recognition system of specific CVET courses, providing them with an accreditation (based on quality criteria) and linking them to a recognised national qualification of the National Qualifications Framework.

**Statutory stakeholder involvement in CVET systems**

As mentioned in the first section of this fiche, stakeholders are strongly involved for what regards VET decisions, especially since the adoption of the 2008 Reform (see section A18.1).
In addition, as noted above, stakeholders are discussing possible developments in terms of quality assurance for the future.

Reforms of quality assurance in CVET since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation) NA.

Reforms of quality assurance in CVET since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008

As mentioned beforehand, the main reform in IVET is the 2008 VET reform (Law of 19 December 2008).

Quality assurance arrangements in continuous VET at provider level

Requirements CVET providers have to comply with

As noted above (in section A18.3.), there are no specific quality assurance arrangements CVET providers must comply with. Nevertheless, they can apply for a national quality label, which acts as a proof of accreditation from the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training. In Luxembourg, CVET providers are most of the time privately managed. The government does not have ample leverage in influencing CVET or quality assurance practices.

Part 2 – Interaction between national quality assurance and EQAVET

National Reference Point

Luxembourg has a person nominated as the NRF within the VET department of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training. As previously described, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training is responsible for all types of education including VET (however, excluding Higher Education). It is responsible for legislation and policy developments for all types of education – from nursery to VET secondary education – and lifelong learning. The Ministry is also responsible for promoting and implementing measures to counter unemployment.

The main responsibility of the NRP is to raise awareness on quality assurance among stakeholders in Luxembourg. The nominated person is also responsible for VET developments at the national level, therefore at the centre of VET issues.

Presentation of EQAVET at official VET stakeholders meetings (e.g. at the advisory committee of IVET, the LLL Programme meeting, etc.) were organised by the NRP. Professional chambers as well as IVET/CVET providers were also invited to participate to specific EQAVET seminars.

Note that as Luxembourg is a small country, stakeholders know each other; information is therefore easily disseminated.

National approach to enhance quality assurance

As described in the first part of this report, the main priority these last four years has been the implementation of the 2008 VET reform. As mentioned by interviewees, there is strong collaboration with German and Swiss VET stakeholders – Luxembourg has for instance implemented the school evaluation quality criteria of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Evaluation and has drawn on German and Swiss expertise for developing its VET reform. The developments implemented with the 2008 Reform were in accordance with the EQAVET indicators and quality cycle.

Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance

According to interviewees, Luxembourg was to a great extent influenced by the Copenhagen process overall. It was the basis for developing the 2008 VET reform, to further develop learners mobility and to institutionalise the involvement of social partners into the VET legislation process.

As noted by interviewees, the main priority of Luxembourg these past four year, has principally been the reformation of its VET system in order to comply with the European goals of increasing competitiveness by developing qualifications which better match the
labour market needs. EQAVET principles were taken into account when developing the reform.

It is the aim of Luxembourg to comply with EU recommendations and further develop its quality assurance instruments. Interviewees see EQAVET as a coherent guidance used as a basis for reflecting upon the quality assurance mechanisms already in place or that need to be improved.

Synergies with other EU level instruments

Synergies were said to have taken place with EQF colleagues and with the LLL Programme staff. The NRP has collaborated with the EQF colleague for a seminar. Cooperation with the Higher Education sector was said to be scarce as they work on different types of education. As Luxembourg is a small country, dissemination happens relatively easily; stakeholders regularly meet on a formal or informal basis. No obstacles were mentioned.

Sources


Cedefop Refernet (2010), A bridge to the future European policy for vocational education and training 2002-10, National policy report – Luxembourg, February 2010


Websites consulted


Country report – Malta

Author: Naomi Williamson (ICF GHK)

Part 1 – Description of quality assurance arrangements and of recent developments

The main developments in quality assurance in Malta over the last decade are:

- Establishing the Malta Qualifications Framework (NQF) for Lifelong Learning \(^{423}\) in line with the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF).
- Recognition of the challenges involved in engaging stakeholders with quality assurance, and the launch of a Leonardo da Vinci project to support the implementation of quality assurance in VET.
- Movement towards learning outcomes being added to national framework indicators;
- Introduction of new laws on quality assurance in VET detailing the responsibilities for accreditation, evaluation and review;
- Introduction of self-assessment at provider level and related to that the willingness to enhance quality assurance culture at provider level;

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in initial VET

National Framework for initial VET – who is in charge of what?

Due to the small size of the country, the Ministry for Education and Employment has overall responsibility for education in Malta. The Ministry works through its agencies and departments to lead, coordinate and monitor the provision of VET as well as developing the curricula, teaching and training methods and certification.

IVET is provided at both secondary and post-secondary level. The new National Curriculum Framework emphasises employability by widening the spectrum of educational opportunities for secondary school students by introducing a vocational dimension to the secondary curriculum.

The National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) was established in 2012 as an amalgamation of the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC) and the National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE). NCFHE has responsibility for implementing the NQF, carrying out Further and Higher Education provider and programme accreditation, issuing licenses for Further and Higher Education Institutions and carrying out quality assurance audits.

Planning at VET system level

The former Malta Qualification Council (now NCFHE) developed a series of policy documents on vocational education qualifications known collectively as Valuing all Learning. These are:

- Volume 1 – A National Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning
- Volume 2 - Guidelines for a Vocational Education and Training System for Malta’s National Qualifications Framework
- Volume 3 - A Quality Assurance Policy for Vocational Education and Training
- Volume 4 - Frameworks for the validation of informal and non-formal learning in Malta

These documents outline MQC’s objective of providing the standards, criteria and proposed regulatory frameworks necessary to assess all Formal, Informal and Non-Formal learning within the parameters established by Legal Notice 347 of 2005 (now LN 294 of 2012). The working documents reflect the discussions carried out within MQC and with key stakeholders and international consultants commissioned to critically review these documents.

The former MQC also published the Referencing Report on the Referencing of the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF/EHEA). Malta's NQF includes formal, informal and non-formal learning in a single credit system which includes descriptors of levels based on learning outcomes (based on Legal Notice 347 of 2005 (now LN 294 of 2012).

In April 2009, the former National Commission for Higher Education published the ‘Further and Higher Education Strategy 2020’⁴²⁴, which detailed recommendations for development of quality assurance, such as:

- Promoting a ‘quality culture’ across the further and higher education sectors;
- Establishing a quality assurance agency and providing for independent evaluation;
- Monitoring the performance and quality of outcomes for all private provision and safeguarding quality standards.

These recommendations were worked upon and in August 2012 LN 296 came into force and NCFHE became the competent authority for the licensing, accreditation and quality assurance all Further and Higher education institutions operating in or from Malta.

NCFHE is also working on a Leonardo da Vinci project (2011-2013) to help implement EQAVET principles into the Maltese system (QA-VET) – Quality Assurance Tool for Vet Institutions. This project has involved the creation of a quality assurance Manual for VET providers on establishing an internal quality assurance system, which is compliant with the EQAVET recommendation.

**Requirements for evaluation and review**

Malta has developed its National Qualifications Framework alongside the principles of the EQF, which has meant that it has incorporated elements of evaluation and review in VET as a result. For instance, according to LN 296 of 2012, for a VET institution to be able to operate it needs to have a license which is based on various requirements including an internal quality assurance system based on the planning, implementation, evaluation and review cycle.

The NCFHE monitors, reviews and analyses the outcomes of periodic quality audits of providers and programmes and produces periodic system-wide summary reports describing and analysing the general findings of its quality audit and accreditation procedures.

**Identification of training needs and stakeholder involvement**

The Ministry has overall responsibility for the identification of training needs among young people entering the IVET system. However, there is no specific institutional framework for anticipation of skills needs in Malta. Labour market statistics are produced by the National Statistics Office (NSO) in Malta, NSO also publishes employment related administrative data collected by ETC. The forecasting of labour market needs in various sectors is based on one off and ad hoc studies, which occasionally come about as a result of new policies.

Predictions about future VET training needs are made alongside social partners (employer organisations and trade unions) and the main state VET providers (the Malta College of Arts, Science & Technology –MCAST; the Institute of Tourism Studies - ITS; and the Employment and Training Corporation – ETC).

**Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on VET providers**

According to LN 296 of 2012 on the Licensing, Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Further and Higher Education, only licensed institutions can provide vocational education and training in or from Malta. Before applying for a license to operate in or from Malta the
provider needs to apply with NCFHE for a provider quality audit and a programme quality audit. Providers seeking accreditation also need to have in place an internal quality assurance system, which must be designed specifically to ensure the provider, and their programmes are fit for purpose.

Provider Accreditation is granted by the Commission upon application by the provider in one or more of the following categories:

- University
- Higher Education Institution
- Further Education Institution
- Further Education Centre

Programme accreditation is granted by NCFHE upon application by the provider, in one of the following categories:

- Further Education Programme
- Further Education Module
- Higher Education Programme
- Further Education Module
- Approved Foreign Further Education Programme
- Approved Foreign Higher Education Programme

**Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)**

The Malta Qualifications Recognition and Information Centre (MQRIC) was established in 2002 as the official national body to deal with the recognition and comparability of academic and vocational qualifications. MQRIC coordinates the agencies and authorities which are entitled to evaluate and award credentials and licenses.

MQRIC was established to satisfy the requirements established in Act XVIII of 2002 of the Reciprocal Recognition of Qualifications, as well as the convention on the recognition of qualifications related to Higher Education in Europe. The Act lists the Centre’s following functions:

- evaluation of diplomas;
- provision of help to mentioned authorities, educational institutions and individuals, similar entities and others interested in a comparative analysis and qualification evaluation;
- the collation and dissemination of information related to professional and vocational qualifications;
- the promotion of qualification recognition of Maltese qualifications abroad;
- the enforcement and facilitation of the application of articles on the comparison of Higher Education qualifications with professional and vocational qualifications;
- the facilitation of academic mobility;
- the promotion of qualification transparency.

Malta QRIC works in close collaboration with the University of Malta, the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology as well as with other designated bodies and authorities. Malta QRIC also forms part of various networks, notably:

- National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC)
- European Network of Information Centres (ENIC)
- National Reference Point (NRP).

In the case of qualifications, which lead to a national qualification, all programmes and modules go through an accreditation process. Programme accreditation is based on a programme quality audit. In a programme quality audit the NCFHE, with the assistance of external expert evaluators in various fields, assesses whether the content and structure of the programme achieves the national/international and European standards. This is done through a thorough analysis of the:

- Overall learning outcomes of the programme and the modular learning outcomes;
- Breakdown of the hours of learning;
- Target group of the programme;
Entry requirements to the programme;
Certification and experience required by the person delivering the programme/module;
Internal quality assurance of the programme.

At the end of the programme quality audit the Commission classifies the qualification at a level of the Malta Qualifications Framework and includes such qualification in the Register of Regulated Qualifications.

**Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators**

NCFHE carries out periodic external quality assurance of all further and higher education institutions operating in or from Malta, including VET institutions. External Quality Assurance takes one of the following forms:

- provider quality audit conducted for the purpose of first-time provider accreditation;
- a programme quality audit conducted for the purpose of first time accreditation of programmes;
- periodic provider and programme quality audits conducted for the purpose of confirming or revoking the accreditation previously granted.

In making arrangements for quality audits, the NCFHE adheres to the following procedures:

- it requires the provider to undertake a self-assessment, internal evaluation or comparable procedure at the provider or programme level;
- it appoints external experts to carry out quality audits, including, as appropriate, one or more students, ensuring that experts are chosen on the basis of their expertise and on the requirement that there is no conflict of interest;
- a site visit by the external experts, which involves the governing bodies, staff and students of the provider, as appropriate;
- it publishes the report of the quality audit, including any decisions, recommendations, conditions or other formal outcomes; and
- it establishes with the provider a follow-up procedure to review actions to be taken by the provider for the implementation of recommendations and conditions made upon the provider.

In making arrangements for quality audits, the NCFHE adheres to the following Standards:

- quality audits are designed specifically to ensure the fitness and properness for purpose of providers or programmes and to assess whether they achieve the aims and objectives set for them;
- quality audits examine the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes used by the provider, including an examination of the system’s structure, the documentation it produces and the evaluations of quality conducted by the provider;
- quality audits examine the compliance by providers with obligations of licence holders under these regulations, where applicable, as well as any conditions or restrictions imposed by the NCFHE on the licensee under these regulations;
- terms of reference, aims and objectives of any quality audit are determined before the undertaking of any quality audit and are published with a description of the procedures to be used;
- providers are allowed to comment on the composition of the panel of external experts which undertake the quality audit and the NCFHE considers such comments before a final decision on the expert panel is made;
- quality audits apply the relevant European and international Standards, guidelines and criteria for external quality assurance applicable to the subject of the evaluation and are based on written material and discussion with proponents of the provider; and
- provider quality audits include appropriate investigatory mechanisms to ensure financial probity, and where the provider is a corporate entity, ensure that the members, the legal representative and the persons occupying a headship position are fit and proper persons to establish a provider of Further or Higher education and deliver Further or Higher education programmes. The NCFHE may also seek additional expert advice to assess the financial capacity of the provider.
After every Quality Audit the NCFHE will publish a report in accordance with the following standards:

- the report is published and written in a style which is clear to the intended reader in terms of any decisions, commendations or recommendations made;
- in the report, the experts indicate areas where the provider should further develop its system and advise as to whether the system as a whole is satisfactory;
- reports containing recommendations for action or which require a subsequent action plan, determine a follow-up procedure which is to be implemented consistently; and
- the NCFHE sends the report to the provider, which is be allowed a time limit of six weeks to submit its views.

If, from the report of the quality audit and after the provider has submitted its views, the NCFHE finds fundamental defects concerning the provider or the programme, the provider will be allowed a reasonable time period, as determined by the NCFHE, to undertake measures to rectify such defects. The NCFHE monitors, reviews and analyses the outcomes of periodic quality audits of providers and programmes and produces periodic system-wide summary reports describing and analysing the general findings of its quality audit and accreditation procedures.

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)

Through Legal Notice 296 of 2012, the NCFHE became the competent authority for the licensing, accreditation and quality assurance of all Further and Higher education institutions operating in or from Malta. Manuals and guidelines on the implementation of the above mentioned law are in development and will be published in 2013.

Malta did not participate in EQAVET activities in 2010. In 2011, NCFHE embarked on a Leonardo da Vinci project finalised in March 2013 EQAVET Malta – Quality Assurance Tool for VET Providers. The project aimed to develop a Quality Assurance tool to help vocational education and training institutions in Malta implement Quality Assurance systems which are compliant with National and European Standards and the EQAVET Recommendation. The NCFHE is one of four partners, representing both IVET and CVET. The Partners in the Project were four local VET institutions in Malta, the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC), the Institution for Tourism Studies (ITS) and Clear Dimension Limited (CDL).

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008

Legal Notice 347 of 2005 (Malta Qualifications Council Regulations 2005) provided the foundations for Malta’s Qualification Framework and established the principle of level descriptors for nationally recognised qualifications. In June 2007 the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) was launched. The MQF consists of an eight-level qualifications framework and level descriptors.

The National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE) was established in 2006. Its main functions in accordance with the Education Act Cap. 327 of the Laws of Malta, included:

- ascertaining the needs and the aspirations of further and higher education institutions;
- informing the public of issues connected with sustainable development of further and higher education sectors in Malta in order to meet the needs of society; and
- providing advice to Government on any matter which is connected with the further and higher education sectors.

The Malta Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning was launched in 2007 and one of the focus areas was that of achieving a ‘parity of esteem’ between academic and vocational qualifications.

In the Education (Amendment) Act, 2012, the functions of the Malta Qualifications Council passed on to the NCFHE. The responsibilities for NCFHE are detailed in the following Legal Notices:
Legal Notice 294/2012: Malta Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning Regulations;
Legal Notice 295/2012: Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning Regulations;

In April 2009, the former National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE) launched a Strategy document “Further and Higher Education Strategy 2020”. The four strategic objectives outlined in the strategy were to:

- attract more young students and adults to further and higher education;
- ensure fair access to all students willing to continue their studies;
- transform Malta into a centre of excellence in education and research; and
- sustain public responsibility to secure an inclusive, high quality and responsive education outcomes.

The Strategy document aimed to develop Malta as a centre of excellence in education. To this end the NCHE urged for reforms to put in place the necessary systems required for achieving these targets. Amongst the recommendations, NCHE urged for the establishment of a quality assurance agency, further development of Malta’s Qualification Framework, a review of the current governance and funding systems for state institutions, and a synchronised external policy to link efforts of Malta with ongoing developments on a European and International level.

The Strategy document also contained a number of recommendations as to the future role of the NCHE as a Quality Assurance agency as well as an advisory body to provide evidence based research and information on the sector, its progress towards targets being set, existing and future skills mismatches, and reviews of funding requirements and three year financial plans to inform policy makers.

Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in initial VET

Planning at VET provider level (including identification of training needs)

MCAST consults with industry in relation to the effectiveness of its programmes. The Quality Assurance Office has also implemented an online employer satisfaction survey, which seeks to obtain information from employers about MCAST graduates. Employers also have the opportunity to highlight their needs. This is initially followed up by the Quality Assurance Office to determine the necessary course of action required. Institute directors also hold regular meetings in their respective sector. This feedback is channelled towards the improvement of courses to ensure that these are effective and that industry standards are being met. These inputs apply both at IVET and CVET level.

According to stakeholders, there are a number of EQAVET indicators which VET institutions use to help them with the planning of their courses and which ensure that they are planning quality training. The training needs to be relevant to the sector targeted and the learners must acquire those skills, which are required by the sector. Institutions must also have and keep evidence of how they ensure this quality training.

With regards to the identification of training needs, local methods have been adopted by VET Institutions. For instance, Clear Dimension Limited (a private VET provider) has developed a form, which it distributes to employers. This form asks about training needs which employers believe that they may need in the near future.

Requirements for monitoring and review (self-assessment)

NCFHE encourages VET providers to evaluate the outcomes of training provided. This can be carried out during or after the training. The following aspects are examined as a part of the quality assurance process:

- Is periodic evaluation (internal and external) within an agreed framework carried out and does it identify where improvements can be made?
- Does the evaluation and review take account of a full range of views including learners’ satisfaction and staff performance?
Does it gather the views of both internal and external stakeholders?
Is there a system(s) to predict problems or issues?

Continual improvement, including actions to remedy issues identified in the process of evaluation, is also strongly encouraged by NCFHE in all VET Internal Quality Assurance systems. This includes:

- How is learners' feedback on their individual learning experience and on the learning and teaching environment collected? How is this information, together with teachers' feedback used to take further action?
- Are the outcomes of any review made public?
- Are reviews planned and how are they used to improve training provision?
- Are the outcomes of the reviews shared widely in order to have appropriate action plans to be put in place?

The EQAVET indicators are also used, with related processes and initiatives that aim to generate primary and secondary data in relation to each indicator.

**Certification, assessment and validation of learners**

VET qualifications are offered at Levels 1, 2, 3 and VET Diploma and Higher Diploma. These are compatible with the EQF 8 tier system. The NQF enables users to accredit programmes and institutions and ensure quality within the educational process. Most assessment is formative through project work and other hands-on activities. There is little in the way of formal examination. All qualifications are linked to the NQF, which helps facilitate the recognition of the level of qualification achieved in vocational institutions.

External verifiers review the internal quality assurance policies in line with the NCFHE policy document on quality assurance.

The NCFHE system (Legal Notice 294 of 2012) is replacing the trade-testing carried out by ETC where the knowledge, skills and competences of an individual were validated in relation to a number of occupations. Individuals who successfully completed this “trade test” were awarded with a Certificate of Competence.

**Stakeholder involvement**

VET institutions are required to ensure that VET is based on the involvement of external and internal stakeholders. Internal and external stakeholders include teachers, management, employers, students, trade unions, sectoral representatives. Stakeholder involvement at provider level is institutionalised. Institutions ensure cooperation at local level between the VET institutions and the labour market.

In some institutions employers are engaged in the examination of students.

**Outputs from quality assurance at provider level**

At provider level, students are able to complete anonymised online student feedback on the content, method and assessment of provision.

**Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET at provider level since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)**

In August 2012 LN 296 came into force and NCFHE became the competent authority for the licensing, accrediting and quality assurance of all Further and Higher education institutions operating in or from Malta.

**Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET at provider level since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008**

Since the reopening of the MCAST in 2001, nine provider institutes have been developed, with support from the European Training Foundation. Some of these have achieved quality management accreditations. Continuing professional development of the sector has been a key issue in this time.
Quality assurance arrangements at system level in continuous VET

National Framework for CVET – who is in charge of what?

The National Reform Programme (linked to EU2020) provides the key objectives in raising the general qualification level through CVET. A strategy for Lifelong learning is also in development by the Ministry’s Directorate for Lifelong Learning. With regards to CVET, the main law relating to this is the Employment and Training Services Act 1990, which provides the legal framework for the National Employment Authority to establish the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) which provides training to those registering unemployed, employed persons and inactive persons.

The ETC is the main provider of CVET in Malta. As a CVET provider, ETC uses different sources of information so as to collect data in relation to labour skills shortages. The sources of information used include: vacancies received by ETC from employers, skills profile of jobseekers, labour and skills surveys and feedback received from stakeholders during both formal and non-formal meetings.

CVET is also offered by various private vocational education and training institutions. Private providers are covered under the recent Legal Notice 296 of 2012.

Statutory stakeholder involvement in CVET systems

Social partners are represented through unions and employment Boards of the ETC as well as the governors of MCAST. Direct employer support for CVET has been difficult to quantify in the past but support has been provided by the government through the ETC.

Among employers, there is a high level of awareness of the need for CVET and continuous updating of skills and competencies. The main challenge is that, as yet, CVET programmes are not accessed by all categories of workers. This issue seems however to be being addressed by social partners through collective agreements about granting rights for CVET to workers. Also see ‘who can deliver CVET’ below.

Requirements for evaluation and review

The same principles that are applicable for IVET around evaluation and review are also applicable for CVET. In accordance with the Legal Notice 296 of 2012, the NCFHE acts as the external verifier for VET providers.

Who can deliver CVET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on CVET providers

CVET is provided by both public and private institutions. MCAST and ITS are mainly state Initial Vocational Education and Training (IVET) institutions, but both also offer VET courses as evening classes, supporting Continuous Vocational Education and Training (CVET). There are also a number of Local Councils, parishes, Church organisations and NGOs, which offer basic skills training.

CVET is also provided at the initiative of enterprises and social partners. For instance, the two largest unions in Malta, the General Workers’ Union (GWU) and Union of United Workers (Union Ħaddiema Magħqudin, UĦM) have training foundations, which provide courses to the general public.

With regard to the private sector there is the emerging trend of providing training and Customised Awards to employees and of rewarding employees for learning and for using new skills.

Academic and vocational further and higher education providers need a license issued by the NCFHE to be able to provide education and training in or from Malta.

http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/studies/tn0804048s/mi0804049q.htm
Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)

Validation of learning in CVET is still a work in progress. Through Legal Notice 294 of 2012, NCFHE was entrusted with the Validation of Informal and Non-Formal Learning. The new NCFHE system will replace the trade-testing carried out by ETC wherein the knowledge, skills and competences of an individuals were validated in relation to a number of occupations. Individuals who successfully completed this “trade test” were awarded with a Certificate of Competence.

The Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre (MQRIC) is responsible for the issue of statements of recognition for qualifications obtained nationally and internationally. Such statements of recognition specify whether the qualification obtained by the applicant is recognised in Malta and its level on the Malta Qualifications Framework.

MCAST has also secured ESF funding and will be implementing project ESF2139 titled “Increasing Accessibility, Flexibility and Innovation to MCAST Life-Long learning Course Offer”. This project aims to introduce new learning options that encourage more adults to continue learning. It will introduce:

- Accreditation of Prior Learning: MCAST will be giving those engaged in employment the possibility of facilitating further education opportunities by identifying any previous qualifications they may have acquired and assessing whether these can serve to exempt the prospective student from certain modules within a programme.
- E-Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning: A system that awards prospective students credit for learning based on prior experience.

Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators

As covered in IVET

Reforms of quality assurance in CVET since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation)

As covered in IVET

Quality assurance arrangements in continuous VET at provider level

Planning at CVET provider level (including identification of training needs)

In terms of identification of training needs at CVET level, ETC carries out research following specific requests from employers and responds to their needs by providing, where appropriate, relevant training to address the skill shortage. The provision of funding programmes to support industry in the upskilling and reskilling of the labour force is also a key element in this system.

Please also see IVET as in the case of MCAST, the initiatives taken at IVET level also apply at CVET level and thus the same mechanism provide feedback for CVET.

In addition, specifically for CVET, MCAST is also a partner in an ESF project titled ‘Linking Industrial Needs and Vocational Education & Training (VET) to Optimise Human Capital’ (ESF 2.85). The overall objective is to increase the number of persons trained with the aim of addressing emerging trends and developments in the labour market in Malta. This project is meant to address Government’s policy of targeting investment by providing appropriate and flexible skills to enable human resources to shift from declining to expanding sectors, by improving the adaptability potential hence ensuring better employability.427

Requirements for monitoring and review (self-assessment)

Self-assessment is a requirement on learning providers in the CVET. At ETC, the Training Programme Design and Quality Assurance Unit is responsible for the development of new courses and updating of current courses, applies with NCFHE to obtain programme accreditation, and performs quality checks on the training delivery. ETC outsources some

427 http://e3i.mcast.edu.mt/esf2_85/
training delivery and applies the same quality assurance standards, which it applies to ETC to the subcontracted providers.

Quality assurance is undertaken by the Quality Assurance Executives within ETC, which includes:

- establish the eligibility of teacher trainers before, during and after training, if required;
- evaluate the feedback obtained from teacher trainers through progress reports, and learners through evaluation sheets;
- desk-based documentary checks.

**Certification, assessment and validation of learners**

Please see corresponding answer for IVET

**Outputs from quality assurance at provider level**

ETC has the responsibility for checking the quality of the training provided. Since it cannot impose QA mechanisms beyond a certain extent among the Education and Training providers to whom delivery of training courses is outsourced, ETC has developed its own methods to ensure that the providers deliver quality education and training.

First of all, ETC asks all learners to fill in an evaluation questionnaire at the end of every training course. In addition, ETC, mainly through its QA staff, carries out an evaluation of the outsourced education and training provided. This includes

- Analysing feedback reports drawn up by the QA staff. These reports provide information about teaching staff effectiveness within the classroom setting;
- Adjusting courses following feedback obtained (if possible).
- Introducing penalty clauses when training service providers fail to deliver or rectify identified issues. For instance, should training providers fail to take action with respect to lack of quality in particular aspects of the training provided, ETC can take legal action and remove the particular provider from the list of approved training providers.

**Reforms of quality assurance in CVET at provider level since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation)**

Please see corresponding answer for IVET.

**Part 2 – Interaction between national quality assurance and EQAVET**

The NRP in Malta is a shared responsibility with two individuals – Vince Maione (Quality Assurance Director of 10 institutions delivering VET) and Horace Caruana (Principal of Secondary Schools in Malta providing VET). They have participated in EQAVET activities due to a personal interest and hands-on experience. As such, there is currently no Ministry representative involved in EQAVET.

Malta did not participate in EQAVET activities in 2010. However, in 2011, they began a Leonardo da Vinci project in Malta (finishing soon), which was exploring how EQAVET would be implemented in Malta. The NCFHE is one of four partners, representing both IVET and CVET. With this project, they have created a tool to review their quality assurance systems and have published reports on the strengths and weaknesses of the system, including to what extent the EQAVET indicators and other mechanisms are used in Malta. The manual on this will be available later in 2013.

**National Reference Point**

The two NRPs represent the Ministry and attend meetings with the EQAVET secretariat. However, a representative from the National Centre for Further and Higher Education also attends these meetings. The NCFHE is due to take over the responsibility of the NRP in the near future, hence why they also attend these meetings. There is no written mandate per se for the role of the NRP, however there are plans in place to develop these by the end of the year alongside other regulations and policy development.
The responsibility of the NCFHE is to implement the NQF and EQF. They also provide accreditation of quality assurance in FE and HE. As an information centre, they also recognise foreign qualifications and collect statistics on FE and HE in Malta.

There were no major issues in establishing the NRPR, and there is close collaboration between the institutions. The main perceived added value of the NRPR is to support informing the general public about quality assurance activities, and being a single point of contact. At present many people would assume that the NCFHE is the NRPR so clarification to the public is needed.

**National approach to enhance quality assurance**

At present, there are plans in place to develop a national approach to enhance quality assurance in which there will be a law, which places an obligation on providers to quality assure their activities. In the meantime, there is a new law on VET, which makes some reference to quality assurance. In addition, a national strategy is in development, which follows the EQAVET structure in terms of its principles.

In addition, Malta is involved with a LdV project (QA-VET) for which they have organised a range of information seminars for teachers and academics, industry representatives and the general public to inform them about quality assurance developments. This has been a positive programme of information, which has been well received.

There are no issues with EQAVET as a system, however, one interviewee feels that the NRPR should have a stronger, legal basis in which to operate, with some powers of enforcement.

**Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance**

EQAVET, its related predecessors, and quality assurance in general have been on the national agenda since 2003. The EQAVET Recommendation “helped to trigger more awareness raising”. The new law on vocational and education training (2012) has helped to cement the importance of quality assurance at the national and provider level. The EQAVET framework is considered to have been very useful and has been used in the development of strategies as mentioned above. However, understanding the terminology, to begin with, was quite difficult. Descriptors were simplified for the local context and for local providers. The indicators have not just been adopted, but have been added to as necessary, for instance suggesting that the learning outcomes should be added to the indicator framework.

The Recommendation is also considered to have provided some good guidelines about where to start regarding QA in VET. For the NCFHE, the first stage was to use the indicators to examine progress in Malta, which provided their level of progress (i.e. fully or partially implemented). After this, providers began implementing recommendations where appropriate. This process has been “very useful”.

The law does not make specific reference for providers to comply with EQARF or EQAVET but this has been included in the National Standards.

**Synergies with other EU level instruments**

Malta is working towards implementation of ECVET but is still not fully compliant. However, since the merger of the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC) and the National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE), there are likely to be many benefits of having the organisations under one roof.

**Sources**

Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education

Employment and Training Corporation

http://e3i.mcast.edu.mt/esf2.85/

http://enic-naric.net/index.aspx?c=Malta
http://www.eqavetmalta.org.mt/content/project-information/438382/
http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/studies/tn0804048s/mt0804049q.htm

Malta’s National Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (NQF), Legal Notice 347 of October 2005

MCAST

National Commission for Further and Higher Education
A1.21 The Netherlands

Author: Eliza Kritikos (external expert to ICF GHK)

Part 1 – Description of quality assurance arrangements and of recent developments

The main developments in the quality assurance in the Netherlands over the last years are:

- The renewed Inspection Framework of 1 January 2012;
- The set up of the Foundation for Cooperation on Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market (SBB) in 2012;
- The measures set out in the Action Plan “Focus on Skills 2011-2015”: Renewal qualifications framework, professionalisation of teachers and managers, improvement of quality management, intensifying coaching and education time while at the same time shortening education tracks, a new financial system, and programmes that are more efficiency oriented (not offering all courses at each regional training centre);
- Specific developments for involvement of students in governance in 2010, central telephone number to reach the ‘Ombudsman’ to address complaints (will be replaced in the future by legislation on complaints);
- Quality Assurance impulse programme targeted at auditing, examinations, management and educational teams (January 2012);
- National Satisfaction Measurement will be added to the Inspection control framework for the following three categories companies: VET providers, staff and VET students. Every VET provider will be measured on the basis of how satisfied companies, teachers and students are. This measurement will take place at the national level and the results will be published for each VET provider as well as for the whole country (this is currently under development).
- The development of a national benchmark in VET in 2012 (by the Association of VET Colleges or ‘MBO Raad’);
- The monitoring of Early School Leavers (special project directorate on Early School leaving or ‘VSV’ which started in 2010);
- The JOB Monitor, providing student feedback for VET. Run by the VET Student Organisation JOB. The Job Monitor has been undertaken for the 7th time in 2012.
- The development of the Practical Vocational Training (BPV) Protocol in 2009.

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in VET428

Context

The VET system in the Netherlands consists of publicly funded or private vocational education and lacks a clear distinction between IVET and CVET. IVET programmes can function as CVET programmes and as a consequence, IVET and CVET students attend the same course. Programmes can be provided to both young people and adults even though they rarely sit together in the same classroom or training session. In line with the lack of a clear distinction between IVET and CVET, the quality assurance framework in place does not distinguish between IVET and CVET and thus it applies to the VET sector as a whole.429

For the above-mentioned reasons, this country report will neither make the distinction between IVET and CVET but instead focus on the VET sector as a whole.

The education system in the Netherlands is divided into two educational streams, the general education and the vocational. VET can start at the initial education level with

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428 Note that the descriptive part of this country report uses information from the Country Report on the Netherlands produced for the study on use of quality assurance in CVET.

429 The presence of one quality assurance system applying to the whole of the VET sector was confirmed by the responses to the EQAVET Secretariat survey 2012. Moreover, the survey mentions that CVET is mainly provided by private training companies for official recognised training courses which are part of the CREBO register (central register for vocational programmes) for which quality assurance is one of the requirements and are under the same law and regulations as public funded VET providers.
vocational lower secondary education (VMBO430) or general secondary education431 (VWO or HAVO) through higher professional education (HBO432). In between lies the MBO433 or Middelbaar Beroepsonderwijs the Vocational upper secondary education which prepares students for both work and further education. The MBO is mainly perceived as the end of initial education, leading to an initial qualification434. It is also more popular than the general education stream, attracting 68% of the school population versus 32% for general education435.

VET targeting adults, and aiming at qualifying them for work or preparing them for further training, is considered to be a broad field with many options. Overall, a distinction can be made between:

- Adult education and general secondary education for adults (voortgezet algemeen volwassen onderwijs or VAVO). The VET programmes under this category fall under the Act on Adult Education and Vocational Education (WEB)436 and are provided at the ROCs (the regional training centres which are further explained in 1.1.2 below).
- Training for the unemployed (aimed at people who are long-term unemployed or with difficulties to access the job market).
- Training for the employed (corporate training, privately funded training437 and part-time vocational education).438

The Act on Adult and Vocational Education (WEB) of 31 October 1995 governs the adult and vocational education and training institutions. These institutions are required to provide tailor-made training for jobseekers, people in employment and young people with no work experience. Furthermore, the WEB provides institutions with the opportunity to devise special learning pathways for educationally disadvantaged students.

**National framework for VET**

Three organisational levels characterise the Dutch vocational/professional education system: the national, sectoral (especially in upper secondary VET level) and the regional level. A regional VET college may consist of a number of schools or locations at local level. In the Dutch VET system the following areas are regulated: legislation and financing, development of qualifications, development of curricula, examinations, internal and external quality assurance and promotion of interests439.

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science lays down the general conditions for secondary education whereas the administration and management of schools as well as vocational education is regionally organised. Since the introduction of the WEB in 1995, municipalities have been responsible for planning and funding adult education.

About ten years ago, the provision of VET programmes was decentralised to MBO institutions, due to their strong regional orientation of the MBO. From then onwards publicly

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430 Voortgezet middelbaar onderwijs. This is from 12 to 14 or 16 years old and is regulated under the Act on Secondary Education of 1963, http://www.wetboek-online.nl/wet/Wet%20op%20voortgezet%20onderwijs.html
431 Algemeen voortgezet onderwijs.
432 Hoger beroepsonderwijs.
433 Middelbaar Beroepsonderwijs or vocational upper secondary education.
436 Wet van 31 oktober 1995, houdende bepalingen mbt de educatie en het beroepsonderwijs.
437 These are not recognised by the government and thus do not fall under the quality assurance framework described in this report.
funded MBO institutions determine themselves, within the legal requirements and in mutual competition, which programmes they offer.\textsuperscript{440}

The MBO Council (Raad) (the Dutch Association of VET colleges) is the umbrella organisation representing the VET sector. The association represents all government-funded colleges for secondary vocational education and training and adult education in the Netherlands. On behalf of its members, the MBO Raad promotes the collective interests of the VET sector, supports common activities of the colleges and acts as an employers’ organisation. The association negotiates labour conditions for the sector with the trade unions and signs collective labour agreements. \textsuperscript{441}

Since 1 January 1998, adult education and VET institutions have been incorporated in regional training centres (ROCs\textsuperscript{442}). There are currently 43 regional, multi-sectoral ROCs. The ROCs provide programmes in engineering and technology, economics and health and social care. In addition to the ROC’s, 12 specialist trade colleges, which are branch or industry specific, receive government funding\textsuperscript{443}. Furthermore, in terms of adult and vocational institutions there are the 11 agricultural training centres (AOC)\textsuperscript{444} which provide for courses in agriculture, natural environment and food technology\textsuperscript{445}. There are furthermore some private providers of VET in all different economic sectors.

The private VET providers are responsible for determining the curricula and the teaching methods. However, they are subject to monitoring by the Inspectorate of Education: the latter makes sure that providers deliver formally recognised training courses/programmes and that the provider, the course, and the location where the training course/programme takes place are registered in CREBO (Central Register for Vocational Training Programmes). CREBO contains systematically collected data on vocational training programmes and associated training and examination institutions. This register is set annually\textsuperscript{446}.

\textit{The general framework for quality assurance}

Ensuring quality assurance in VET is a legal requirement for VET providers. The WEB stipulates\textsuperscript{447} that VET providers are obliged to set up a quality assurance system for their institution and they have to ensure that, in as much cooperation as possible with other institutions, a regular assessment of education is undertaken including measures and instruments to safeguard that the teaching staff maintains their competences\textsuperscript{448}.

Overall, the main actors in charge of quality assurance are the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science through the Inspectorate of Education, as well as the VET providers themselves. Dutch VET providers hold a high level of independency in the design and implementation of their individual quality assurance system. However, they are evaluated externally by the Dutch Inspectorate of Education.

There are furthermore a number of other stakeholders involved in the quality assurance processes such as: the social partners, including companies; the teaching staff and the


\textsuperscript{441} http://www.mboraad.nl/?page=530112/About+us.aspx

\textsuperscript{442} Regionale Opleidingscentra.

\textsuperscript{443} These are called “vakscholen” in Dutch.

\textsuperscript{444} Agrarische Opleidingscentra.


\textsuperscript{446} CREBO-vocational courses are recognised by the Ministries of Education, Culture and Science and of Economic Affairs (for agricultural education).

\textsuperscript{447} Article 1.3.6

\textsuperscript{448} Wet van 31 oktober 1995, houdende bepalingen mbt de educatie en het beroepsonderwijs.
students. These stakeholders are taken into account as part of Inspection Framework, the qualifications dossiers (further described in 1.1.5) and the BPV protocol\(^\text{449}\).

Generally, the Dutch quality assurance arrangements are largely based on the following three pillars:

- The role of the Inspectorate of Education and the Inspection Framework;
- The role of the VET providers;
- And the role of the stakeholders.

**Planning at VET system level and requirements for evaluation and review**

The Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science regularly issues policy documents (beleidsbrief) in which it gives an overview of the measures to be taken in the different education policy areas. The policy letter of 2 April 2012 concerns the provision of VET programmes\(^\text{450}\). More specifically, measures are presented aiming at strengthening the effective and accessible provision of VET programmes. These measures are considered to reflect the “Focus on Skills 2011-2015” action plan, in which the intention to improve the macro-efficiency in the MBO was underlined\(^\text{451}\). A few measures have already been implemented, these are:

- The revision of the national qualifications structure for the MBO. The SBB has been asked to provide before 1 January 2013 a proposition on a revised, flexible qualifications structure with significantly less qualifications than the existing one. This is work in progress.
- The intensification and shortening of programmes: the introduction of an entry programme on VET level 1 (see 1.1.6 below) which can be entered without a diploma; and modernisation of the funding (contained in a legislative proposal and very recently sent for debate to parliament).
- Conferences targeted at Good Governance, (“Code Goed Bestuur”), because of the poor financial situation of some VET colleges.
- Quality Assurance is being reassessed based on advices and round table discussions with students, teachers, Board Members, other sectors representatives, politicians, etc;
- The project “Focus on Standards in Examination”. This project, which is funded by the government, is targeted at quality improvement of the examination system through improving the quality assurance in the examination procedures.

A specific quality assurance measure in the Action plan “Focus on Skills 2011-2015” concerns the internal supervision of the institutions, which should be strengthened by the supervision councils\(^\text{452}\) as a condition to a limited supervision by the Inspectorate. Therefore, close cooperation with the Platform of Supervision Councils\(^\text{453}\) is necessary. Moreover, the “Good Governance in the VET-sector” code was evaluated in 2011\(^\text{454}\). The VET sector agreed on the renewed Governance code recently.

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science works with government agreements (bestuursakkoord) which set out the priorities/ focus areas for the coming governing period. For example, the government agreement 2011-2015 between the MBO employers organised in the MBO Council and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science focuses on the further professionalisation of MBO staff during the designated period. In order to achieve

\(^{449}\) This is the Practical Vocational Training Protocol and which is further explained in 1.1.9.


\(^{452}\) These are responsible for the internal supervision of the institutions and more specifically on the management board.

\(^{453}\) This Platform exists since 2005 within the MBO and is an open network with alternating participation of the institutions.

this, five priority areas have been agreed upon: professionalisation of education staff; competency of the management; quality improvement of HR policy; entry routes for staff and performance pay. Interim evaluations as part of the MBO-15 Quality Plan will monitor implementation\textsuperscript{455}.

An important aspect of education policy, and thus planning at VET system, is the working programme\textsuperscript{456} of the Education Council. The Education Council is an independent advisory board which advises on the broad aspects of policy and legislation in the field of education.

**Stakeholder involvement and identification of training needs**

Overall, the VET sector in the Netherlands is characterised by strong partnerships, which include educational institutions and the social partners. Both the institutions and social partners can take the initiative to introduce, within a dialogue between parties, new occupations or qualifications or renew existing qualifications\textsuperscript{457}. The importance that is attached to stakeholder input in the quality assurance system is demonstrated by the fact that one of the indicators in the Inspection Framework assesses the opinion of stakeholders vis-à-vis the VET institution, their involvement in the design of the Practical Vocational Training Protocol (BPV-Protocol which is further described in 1.1.9) and the educational programmes. Moreover, the stakeholders are also involved in the design of the “qualification files”\textsuperscript{458}. A qualification file stipulates the learning outcomes and competences, which VET students need to acquire by the end of their training programme. Essential to the design of such qualification files is the high stakeholder involvement, even though the VET providers are fully autonomous in its implementation\textsuperscript{459}.

The WEB comprises measures to further align the provision of education and training with the demands on the labour market. The Kenniscentra Beroepsonderwijs bedrijfsleven (KKBs) are national centres of expertise on VET and the labour market and therefore form the link between VET and the business sector. These expertise centres (17 in total) are organised by sectors and their managing boards consist of social partner representatives as well as, in most cases, educational institutions. The KKBs have the responsibility to develop a clear qualification structure in which the knowledge and the skills required by businesses are set out. Another of their tasks regards deciding, on the basis of specific criteria, which companies or organisations are qualified to offer training places for students. If an employer meets the specific criteria, it receives official recognition and is included on the centre’s register. Furthermore, employers have to ensure a sufficient supply of work placements. The umbrella organisation for the KKBs used to be the COLO (i.e. “Centraal Orgaan van Landelijke Opleidingsorganen van het Bedrijfsleven” unifying 17 sectoral knowledge centres) which has been replaced by the Foundation for the Cooperation Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market (SBB\textsuperscript{460}) from January 2012 onwards. The SBB works with the MBO Council\textsuperscript{461} and industrial organisations\textsuperscript{462}. Moreover, the association for private VET providers is also involved as a stakeholder in the identification of training needs.

**Certification, assessment and validation of learning**

In Dutch VET there are four training levels of different duration (six months to four years) and two learning pathways.

\textsuperscript{455} Bestuursakkoord tussen de werkgevers in het MBO, verenigd in de MBO Raad en het Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2011-2015.

\textsuperscript{456} The latest version is the "Werkprogramma 2012", Onderwijsraad, September 2011, Den Haag.


\textsuperscript{458} Country Report on the Netherlands produced for the study on use of quality assurance in CVET.

\textsuperscript{459} www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/beroepsonderwijs/mbo/mbo-examens

\textsuperscript{460} Stichting Samenwerking Beroepsonderwijs Bedrijfsleven.

\textsuperscript{461} Council on Vocational Secondary Education.

The four training levels are the following:

- **VET level 1**: training for simple practical work and for entry to the labour market as an assistant worker. There are no formal requirements for entry to this level. The level 1 diploma also gives admission to VET level 2. Programmes in this category last six months to one year.

- **VET level 2**: basic vocational training to carry out practical work. The level 2 diploma is an entry qualification for the labour market and also gives admission to VET level 3. Programmes last two to three years.

- **VET level 3**: training to become an independent practitioner able to work independently across a range of activities related to the occupational area. The level 3 diploma gives admission to VET level 4. It is also an entry qualification for the labour market. Programmes last two to four years.

- **VET level 4**: middle-management and specialist training able to execute work independently, as a generalist or specialist in an occupational area. The diploma gives access to higher professional education. It is also an entry qualification to the labour market. Programmes last three to four years.

In the Netherlands, a VET student can choose between two learning pathways: The first one is the school-based pathway (BOL-pathway), which is full-time and college-based, but also includes work placements. The second one is the on-the-job-training pathway (BBL-pathway), a part-time work-based pathway combining part-time education with an apprenticeship in a firm. Both pathways lead to the same level of qualification and diploma.

VET courses are furthermore divided into four fields: health and welfare; engineering, economy and agriculture.

The MBO system does not include the Central Exam, which is used in secondary education. At the end of their VET education, students have to do examinations which, at present, are developed by the VET schools. The content of the programmes, in terms of attainments ("eindtermen") or competences is however determined at national level.

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science wishes to standardise the examinations in the future. A commonly used type of examination is the aptitude test, which can use employment tests, simulations and observations of work activities to see whether the students possess the necessary competences. Also commonly used are practical assessments in which students prepare a project or complete a practical assignment. In order to avoid significant differences in the end level achieved, the Inspectorate of Education monitors the education programme and the examination system.

**Who can deliver VET and under what conditions - accreditation or other requirements on VET providers**

Both the ROCs and specialist craftsmanship colleges are subsidised by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, whereas the agricultural training centres are financed by the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation. Besides these publicly funded institutions there are numerous private, non-subsidised providers who offer vocational education and training. However, the programmes they offer have to be recognised by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

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464 Beroepsopleidende Leerweg
465 Beroepsbegleidende Leerweg
467 www.mboraad.nl
468 Use can also be made of exams provided by national organisations.
The KBBs or Centres of Expertise are organised according to the different branches of industry and function as sector councils for VET. Although there are significant differences between the branches they represent, the KBBs are connected amongst them by their central role in the labour market. They support over 220,000 accredited firms that offer work placements to over 500,000 students of senior secondary VET.

Moreover, the KBBs are carrying out the following tasks for the Ministry of Education:

- Accreditation and assistance of work placement companies.
- Development and maintenance of the qualifications structure.
- Labour market research.

**Monitoring inspection and use of indicators**

Both public and private VET institutions are monitored by the Inspectorate of Education, which is responsible for the external assessment of the quality assurance of the VET providers.

Each education sector has its own Inspection Framework, which is the Inspectorate’s main assessment tool. Different aspects of quality are worked out in the inspection frameworks. The frameworks are drawn up by the Inspector-general for education, subject to the approval of the Minister.

The Education Inspection Act does not list aspects of quality for the adult and vocational education sector, given the autonomy enjoyed by institutions and the tasks they are required to fulfil under the Adult and Vocational Education Act. Instead, the Inspectorate has drawn up an assessment framework elaborating these tasks. When risk analyses reveal that an institution is at risk or failing, its quality will be checked on the basis of this assessment framework.

The renewed Inspection Framework for VET entered into force on 1 January 2012 (Toezichtkader bve 2012), which aims to assess the quality of VET providers and programmes and supports the institutions to comply with the minimum quality standards. It applies to publicly funded VET institutions, private VET institutions providing VET recognised programmes and examination institutions.

This Inspection Framework consists of the following seven assessment areas:

- Educational processes
- Examination
- Return/yields
- Quality assurance
- Compliance with legal requirements
- Quality of teaching staff
- Financial stability

These seven assessment areas are sub-divided into aspects and indicators against which the inspectorate measures the quality of the VET provider, its programming and teaching staff. Table 1 below gives an overview of the Inspection Framework divided by assessment areas, aspects and indicators.

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470 www.s-bb.nl
471 The Education Inspection Act (WOT) came into force on 1 September 2002.
473 This table has been taken from the Country Report on the Netherlands produced for the study on use of quality assurance in CVET.
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1.1.2 Programming |
| 1.2 Tailor-made approach | 1.2.1 Differentiation |
| **Learning in the educational institution** | |
| 1.3 Didactics | 1.3.1 Interactions  
1.3.2 Support and guidance of learning activities  
1.3.3 Feedback on learning activities and results |
| 1.4 Duration of learning | 1.4.1 Utilisation  
1.4.2 Workload |
| 1.5 Learning environment | 1.5.1 Internal environment  
1.5.2 Facilities |
| **Guidance** | |
| 1.6 Intake and placement | 1.6.1 Provision of information  
1.6.2 Intake and placement |
| 1.7 Student counselling | 1.7.1 Provision of information  
1.7.2 Student counselling |
| 1.8 Care | 1.8.1 First and second degree care  
1.8.2 Third degree care |
| 1.9 Practical Vocational Training | 1.9.1 Preparation students and companies  
1.9.2 Placement  
1.9.3 Guidance by training company  
1.9.4 Guidance by VET institution |
| **Assessment area 2: examination** | |
| 2.1 Examination | 2.1.1 Distinction development-based tests and examination  
2.1.2 Coverage of qualification dossier  
2.1.3 Caesura  
2.1.4 Assessment  
2.1.5 Transparency |
| 2.2 Assessment | 2.2.1 Assessment  
2.2.2 Reliability |
| 2.3 Certification | 2.3.1 Decision-making on certification  
2.3.2 Responsibilities exam committee |
| **Assessment area 3: return** | |
| 3.1 Profitability | NA |
| **Assessment area 4: quality assurance** | |
| 4.1 Steering | 4.1.1 Planning  
4.1.2 Information  
4.1.3 Continuity |
| 4.2 Assessment | 4.2.1 Monitoring  
4.2.2 Evaluation |
| 4.3 Improvement and anchoring | 4.3.1 Improvement measures  
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| 4.4 Dialogue and liability | 4.4.1 Internal  
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<td>6.2 Teacher involvement 6.2.1 Autonomy teachers 6.2.2 Implementation of teaching 6.2.3 Monitoring and improvement</td>
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<td>6.3 Professionalization 6.3.1 Professionalisation 6.3.2 Quality 6.3.3 Training needs of teachers 6.3.4 Competent and qualified teachers 6.3.5 Improvement and assurance of quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment area 7: financial stability</td>
<td>7.1 Financial position 7.1.1 Solvability 7.1.2 Fluid assets 7.1.3 Profitability 7.1.4 Quality annual account</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.2 Financial management 7.2.1 Annual and multiple-annual budget 7.2.2 Quality of financial management</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


Generally, the Inspectorate carries out inspection visits every three years to assess the quality assurance processes of VET providers. If their quality assurance processes are at risk, supplementary ad-hoc inspection visits may be undertaken. A report is issued based on the inspection visit. This report should be used by the institution to make amendments to its quality assurance system or to set new objectives for future development. If the assessed institution has an unsatisfactory or weak quality assurance system in place, the Inspectorate will carry out a follow-up visit in the subsequent year. The provider is then expected to show remarkable improvements and have a satisfactory system in place. The Ministry has the possibility to:

- Give financial sanctions like recovery or freezing of funds
- Issue official warnings
- As a last resort, to withdraw the licence to provide education or exams

**The main changes to quality assurance at system level introduced since 2009**

The Practical Vocational Training Protocol or BPV Protocol, launched in 2009, is an agreement between the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the MBO Raad (Netherlands Association of VET Colleges), COLO (i.e. “Centraal Orgaan van Landelijke Opleidingsorganen van het Bedrijfsleven” which unites 17 sectoral knowledge centres and is now replaced by the SBB), MKB Netherlands (i.e. Dutch Federation of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises), and VNO-NCW (the Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers). The protocol lays down agreements on work placements, outlining the roles and responsibilities for the students, training company, VET providers and the knowledge centres. Its aim is to ensure that the practical vocational training period for VET students is quality assured.

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475 http://www.mboraad.nl/?page=1342272/Bpv-protocol.aspx
The protocol was developed as a response to studies, run from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, from the Audit Office and JOB Monitor. According to these studies, the quality of the practical vocational training (i.e. work placements in companies) was unsatisfactory and there had been no signs of improvement over the years.

On 1 January 2012, the renewed Inspection Framework was implemented, introducing three main changes compared to the previous frameworks:

- There is an increased emphasis on quality assurance, i.e. quality assurance is now one of the seven main assessment areas.
- Quality assurance is assessed at institutional level as opposed to programme level.
- Triennial inspections as opposed to annual inspections.
- Intensive monitoring of unsatisfactory or weak performing schools.

The rationale behind the renewed framework was that under the previous framework the Inspectorate had fewer competences in the field of quality assurance. The shift from quality assurance assessment at programme level to institutional level allows the Inspectorate to now hold the institution as a whole responsible for unsatisfactory or weak quality assurance. However, it is the institution (and not the Inspectorate) that decides the approach adopted to improve the quality. The Inspectorate carries out a follow-up inspection to assess whether the quality assurance system has been improved.

The Framework also includes “Quality of teaching staff” as an indicator for quality assessment.

Besides the triennial inspections of VET providers, on-going monitoring is also in place, such as through the media, complaints received from students, as well as through ad-hoc inspections visits, if this is judged as necessary. In such cases, the school is given a one-year period to make the necessary improvements. If however, the quality assurance of a specific provider continues to be at risk, the Inspectorate is allowed to undertake further measures such as for example meetings with the Board of Governors, issuing fines or even closing-down the institution.

Furthermore, the Ministry now concludes performance agreements with individual institutions, to allow for extra funding if the performance is good.

**Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in VET**

**Context**

VET institutions are obliged by law to set up a quality assurance system. They have however a great deal of autonomy to design it. They undertake internal evaluations, which are then assessed by the Inspectorate of Education as part of the external review of the quality assurance system. Moreover, VET colleges can perform audits between themselves.

In addition, the VET institutions have a number of other tools available to evaluate their quality assurance system, such as the Job Monitor and the ROA monitor (see part 1.1.11).

Overall, institutions that have been assessed as having a well-developed quality system are monitored less intensively.

**Monitoring and evaluation – Self assessment**

The JOB Monitor is an internal quality assurance assessment tool and is coordinated by “Jongeren Organisatie Beroepsonderwijs (JOB)”, a national interest organisation for VET students. This organisation coordinates a student satisfaction survey called the “JOB Monitor” that measures the level of satisfaction among VET students regarding VET education.

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476 The BPV protocol has no legal grounds and VET providers are not obliged to enforce it.


education. On the basis of the JOB Monitor, JOB issues a report and makes suggestions on how to improve the quality of education. More specifically, some of the themes covered by the survey in terms of student satisfaction are the following: competences acquired; information provided; provision of career guidance; traineeship; school facilities. The information can be used by both VET providers as well as the Inspectorate. Both the VET providers and the Inspectorate attach great importance to the JOB Monitor 479.

Another self-assessment tool used by the VET providers is the ROA monitor, which is undertaken by the Research Centre for Education and the Labour market. The ROA monitor monitors the number of students finding a job after their graduation in VET.

**Monitoring and evaluations – External reviews**

The monitoring process of the Inspectorate of Education comprises three phases:

1. Phase 1: review of the institutions is undertaken to identify potential shortcomings in the quality of education or the management of the institute.
2. Phase 2: Where difficulties have been identified in Phase 1, the Inspectorate carries out further investigations into quality issues.
3. Phase 3: Where deficiencies have been identified in the previous phase, for example insufficient quality in the delivery of programmes, insufficient quality of examinations, financial risks or non-compliance of legal requirements including those concerning quality assurance, action is taken to address them as soon as possible on the basis of agreements reached with the institution concerned 480.

The Inspectorate reviews the results of the agreed programme of quality improvement after one year. If there is no evidence of improvement in the institution, the Inspectorate informs the Minister of Education of the situation, which, as a result, may withdraw the institution’s licence to deliver courses 481.

Furthermore, the Inspectorate monitors the quality of the examinations independently of the quality of education. This assessment is conducted annually based on a sample of programmes of each publicly funded provider in order to judge whether the examination instruments meet the national requirements. Central to this assessment is the appropriate level of examination and the reliability of the examination 482.

The Inspectorate regularly issues monitoring reports as well as the report “State of Play of Education in the Netherlands”.

**Planning at VET provider level and stakeholder involvement**

As defined in the WEB, the development of the curricula is realised at school level in cooperation with training firms and based on qualification profiles.

Schools are primarily responsible for the modernisation of their curricula. Learning arrangements have been assigned to them by law and most ‘how’ questions are answered by the VET schools. The modernisation of the curricula is realised in close cooperation with companies in the region. The national government has furthermore a role in this process, in that it can stimulate those developments and innovations that have consequences for the modernisation of curricula.

Important aspects in the modernisation of curricula are:

- A turn towards competence-based learning in multiple forms.
- More active forms of work, which call for greater levels of independence and self-regulation amongst participants in vocational education programmes.

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479 [http://www.job-site.nl/](http://www.job-site.nl/)


The introduction of a greater variety in practical learning with the emphasis on the practical applicability of knowledge: workplace learning; simulation companies; carrying out assignments for companies, etc.

The development of longitudinal learning strands that transcend the different types of vocational education.

The introduction of different forms of supporting participants: coaching, mentoring (also peer mentoring), career guidance, etc.

And the introduction of more varied means of assessment, including the simulation of an aptitude test.

Schools providing vocational education make their own choices when it comes to the finer points of modernisation, VET schools provide their own choices. According to the WEB, VET institutions are required to provide annual reports on the evaluation of examination procedures.

Part 2 – Interaction between national quality assurance and EQAVET

Basic information

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the MBO Council have been involved in the EQAVET developments since 2004, including preparing ENQA-VET that ran from 2005 until 2009. CINOP has been involved, also since 2004, through membership of the Ministerial steering group “Internationalisation of VET” that acted as the national node for ENQA-VET. In 2010 the Ministry officially assigned CINOP as the National Reference Point for EQAVET since CINOP is a non-for-profit organisation with expertise on European Affairs and quality assurance topics in VET and was entrusted to act as Programme management for VET in the LLP.

National Reference Point

The mandate of the NRP consists of the following tasks:

- To stimulate the implementation of the EQAVET Framework at the national and the provider level;
- Involving stakeholders including social partners;
- Dissemination of information from European developments, working groups etc.;
- Participation in surveys, research, working groups and peer learning activities at national and European level;

Preparation of the Dutch representation in formal networks:

- CINOP, the organisation which hosts the NRP, acts furthermore as:
  - The National Agency LLP for European programme management
  - The NCP for ECVET,
  - EQF/NLQF
  - The Euroguidance centre.

The setting up of the NRP followed the EQAVET Recommendation in 2009 after which the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science arranged the designation of the NRP and the involvement of all stakeholders in an Advisory Group for the NRP and EQAVET. According to the interviewees, no specific issues were encountered in the set up of the NRP.

The NRP undertakes a wide range of activities including the following:

- Organisation of an EQAVET advisory group of stakeholders

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484 Act of 31 October 1995, that set detailed rules concerning the education and vocational training.

485 CINOP is an independent (inter-)national advice bureau in the area of training and development.
Organisation of the National EQAVET conference
Survey of VET providers
Pilot projects at VET providers for the culture of quality assurance
Participation in the QANRP meetings
Issue of a Newsletter
Participation in seminars
Participation in working groups
Participation in the EQAVET annual forum
Organisation of the joint seminar of EQAVET, ECVET and EQF

The NRP works on the basis of a work programme. This work programme describes all the activities listed above, taking into account the priorities of the Netherlands- for example, working on the culture of quality assurance. It furthermore describes the way in which the NRP/NCP in the Netherlands is organised.

In terms of resources available at the disposal of the NRP, this totals to 100,000 Euro and a 0.36 FTE (around 20,000 Euro is spent on operational costs for travel, subsistence and communication).

The interviewees agreed that the added value of having an NRP in place compared to previously existing national bodies lies in the fact that the NRP forms a bridge between the European and national developments and the specific focus it brings on quality assurance. This is attested by the fact that the NRP EQAVET Advisory Group meetings bring together stakeholders to discuss quality assurance and work together on national level on this topic. During these meetings, the Inspectorate also discusses with stakeholders about the further development of the inspection framework. At the moment, quality and quality assurance in VET is high on the Dutch agenda.

National approach to enhance quality assurance

The Netherlands had and still has a national strategy in use for quality assurance that is in line with the EQAVET Recommendation. Quality and quality assurance are in the first place the responsibility of the VET providers. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science sets out the framework and the schools are responsible for meeting these demands. They can choose the way they organise quality assurance. The inspectorate of education evaluates if the VET providers meet the demands. The framework of the Ministry and the framework of the inspectorate show many similarities with the EQAVET framework. All schools use the PDCA-cycle as a basic instrument for quality assurance- some schools use it in an advanced way, others in a less advanced way.

The Dutch approach towards quality assurance has been into practice since more than a decade and its main characteristics can be found in the law regulating VET, i.e. the WEB of 1996. All relevant stakeholders had been involved in the development of the approach. According to interviewees, the most important trigger for the development of the approach was the goal to improve the quality of VET. Furthermore, enhancing schools to take responsibility for the quality of education also contributed to the adoption of the national approach.

The main priorities and objectives of the approach are the following:
- Achieving a high success rate of students finishing their education
- Achieving financial healthiness of the school organisations
- Providing sufficient hours of educations at school
- Improving the way in which the school organisations have organised their quality assurance

There is a push approach to stress “Plan and Control” and “Quality Management”. Different stakeholders each give a different impulse to the approach. At national level, monitoring takes place of: student, teacher and companies’ satisfaction; the professionalization of staff; the quality and quality assurance of examinations and the nominal educational time. Other important priorities of the approach are: the Practical Vocational Training component in
companies (BPV); management competences; educational leadership and financial competences.

Furthermore, according to the interviewees, the Dutch EQAVET Advisory group agreed on the following priorities: a) Teams of teachers/trainers as the key actors for quality improvement b) Completing the PDCA cycle on VET provider level, c) Peer learning between VET providers at national level and where possible at European level.

Within the approach, an important change to the quality assurance process was the increased emphasis on the role and responsibility of schools to work on quality and quality assurance. The interviewees explained that the focus of the Inspectorate changed from assessing the quality assurance at programme level to assessing it at institutional level. Also the focus changed from a focus on the quality and output to the way quality assurance is organised in the schools. Quality assurance and being in control are now the first focus point for the supervision strategy according to the interviewees.

Overall, it is felt by the interviewees that the national approach is sufficiently comprehensive to ensure the basic quality of education. However, over time the demands put on education are changing and therefore so are the demands on the quality assurance approach.

The content of the EQAVET framework – use and usefulness

The way the VET providers organise their quality assurance in the Netherlands shows many similarities with the EQAVET framework. For example, the PDCA-cycle is an important instrument for quality assurance. Another example of similarities with the EQAVET framework is the importance of the involvement of all stakeholders.

According to the interviewees, the framework in itself is pointing at the right topics. However, for the national approach, the European framework is not leading in the sense that the national development would continue, even without the existence of the EQAVET framework. The framework can create a common language in quality assurance and in this way improves the communication about quality assurance between countries as well as its transparency. Moreover, it stimulates the dialogue about quality assurance in the Netherlands.

A useful aspect of the EQAVET framework is the involvement of companies in the PDCA cycle, which is one of the new topics to put on the national agenda. The interviewees deemed the framework to be coherent and well understood. The framework also fulfils the needs to stimulate quality assurance as well as the dialogue about quality assurance. The Dutch stakeholders view the EQAVET framework as usable only when it is adapted to national needs. On the other hand, the EQAVET framework itself should be open to further development, for example it could include the indicator on satisfaction of students. The interviewees do not view the framework as essential because it will never be able to address the different national needs. However, it is helpful for countries that have just started to build their own system since in this case there is an articulated need for peer learning.

The interviewees found however that within the standards, the satisfaction of students, teachers and employers should be taken on board. Overall, in terms of reaching the objectives of enhancing quality assurance at national level, it was found that the added value of the EQAVET framework was rather limited.

Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance

The interviewees report that in the Netherlands, the issue of quality in VET started gaining attention in 1996 with the WEB. There was a high level of attention in the beginning because of the new responsibility VET schools had acquired. EQAVET assisted in broadening the focus from quality to both quality and quality assurance.

The existence of EQAVET previous initiatives, as well as the involvement in ENQA-VET since 2005, increased national attention paid to the topic of quality assurance. Furthermore, the adoption of the EQAVET Recommendation in 2009 triggered the policy debate on quality
assurance and quality in the EQAVET advisory group with all stakeholders as well as it increased the focus on a culture of quality assurance.

At system level, EQAVET had only a limited impact on the development of quality assurance in VET, since the national approach for quality assurance was already in place. However, comparing and learning from other countries is always valuable according to the interviewees. The interviewees found that more focus should be put on peer learning and tailor made learning for advanced countries. Also at provider level the influence of EQAVET is judged as of minor importance. Interviewees believe that this may attributed to the fact that, even though EQAVET can contribute to better quality assurance at provider level, most VET providers have already their own approach. Moreover, not all VET providers have the necessary knowledge and are able to assess the potential benefits brought by EQAVET. Nonetheless, interviewees support that EQAVET has definitely been important in increasing transparency and consistency of VET developments between Member States since systems are now comparable.

A1.21.1 Partner organisations involvement

The NRP works as a facilitator between the other institutions in charge of quality assurance engaged in EQAVET. This means, according to the, that the NRP tries to work as much as possible with all relevant stakeholders in the field of quality assurance. For example, an advisory group with important stakeholders was set up by the NRP. This advisory group is part of the quality assurance approach at system level and it has an influence on the developments in quality assurance. Furthermore, it plays an important role in making decisions about EQAVET and quality assurance.

Other organisations involved or targeted by information/awareness raising activities include the following:

- Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
- The Inspectorate of Education
- JOB (student union)
- Social partners including the AOB (teachers’ union)
- SBB (Foundation for the Cooperation in Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market)
- MBO Raad and the association of VET providers, quality assurance network of schools coordinated by the MBO Raad
- MBO Services
- MBO15 (Programme management in liaison with MBO Raad)
- NRTO (association of private funded training providers)
- Several self-organised networks of VET provider for quality assurance.

Information about the activities of the EQAVET network is disseminated via newsletters, the website and workshops. Overall, the interviewees find that all the right actors have been involved in the formulation of the national approach regarding enhancement of quality assurance and in its implementation.

Synergies with other EU level instruments

In terms of synergies of EQAVET in the Netherlands with other EU level instruments, the National Coordination Points for NQF, EQAVET and ECVET, together with the National Expertise Centre for Validation of Prior Learning (Kenniscentrum EVC) meet regularly to explore the synergy possibilities. A Dutch matrix of EU instruments has been drawn up by CINOP to give an overview of these synergies in terms of their instruments used, their organisation and policy context. In terms of policy context this concerns: the role of the Ministry, the objective, organisational placing, phase of development and scope. With regard to organisation this includes mission, most important duties, stakeholders, financing, capacity, running time and knowledge sharing. The dialogue with developments in higher education on national and European level only started recently.
More specifically with regard to synergies in governance, the policy advisors from the Ministry for the different EU instruments work together and the MBO Raad are always involved in the governance around all three instruments (i.e. NLQF, EQAVET and ECVET). The ECVET governance is less developed at the moment and the idea is to bring the governance for this instrument in line with the governance of the other EU tools. On the other hand, the implementation strategies are different because for example, the NLQF stretches outside VET towards the whole educational system. ECVET is in a different development stage, i.e. projects and practices are explored and focus is placed on technical aspects, while policy development is less of a priority than for the other two tools at the moment.

In terms of synergies in sharing of resources, CINOP is the host organisation of all NCP’s enabling the sharing of expertise and finding synergies. All the staff involved is working on more than one EU instrument. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science will decide in the autumn of 2013 on how to continue with the NCP with the aim of structural synergies starting from 2014 onwards.

Involvement of stakeholders across the different EU instruments is high on the agenda for the near future but first the governance for the three EU tools in the Netherlands should be brought in line and integrated in 2014. Furthermore, initial discussions have started with regard to involving stakeholders in charge of other quality assurance measures (higher education, adult learning, etc.).

Sources

Act of 31 October 1995

Country Report on the Netherlands produced for the study on use of quality assurance in CVET.

Education Inspection Act of 1 September 2002.


Part 1 – Description of quality assurance arrangements and of recent developments

The Polish system of quality assurance in IVET and CVET is based on external and internal pedagogical supervision. The model of supervision is based on measuring the school work quality against quality standards and indexes which are developed for the whole country by the Minister of National Education. The school or educational institution’s work quality is measured internally by the school principal. External measurements are carried out by the school superintendents. Another form of quality assurance is external vocational exam (conducted by the Regional Examination Boards), aimed at confirming vocational qualifications acquired during the course of school education.

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in initial VET

In Poland provision of initial VET is a shared responsibility between the national administration, the regional administration and VET providers.

At national level, the responsibility for the administration of the school education system rests with the Minister of National Education. The Minister coordinates and pursues the national education policy, co-operates in this respect with regional authorities and other organisational units responsible for the school education system. By way of regulation, the Minister lays down:

- Requirements and procedures for admission to schools and for transfers between schools.
- Rules for the provision of education to polish citizens’ children temporarily staying abroad.
- The range of services and allowances provided to polish teachers working abroad,
- Outline timetables, core curricula for pre-school education, general education and general vocational education for specific occupations rules for assessing and promoting pupils, and for conducting tests and examinations.
- Record-keeping methods concerning the teaching process and educational activities,
- Organisational arrangements for the school year.
- Requirement standards for the examination confirming vocational qualifications.
- Arrangements for counselling and guidance in schools, rules and conditions for the remuneration of examiners and teachers.

On the 6 of March 2008, the Minister of National Education established the National Education Council, which has an advisory capacity only and is the support body to the minister. Apart from the Ministry of National Education as far as VET is concerned, the National Centre for Supporting Vocational and Continuing Education (Krajowy Ośrodek Wspierania Edukacji Zawodowej i Ustawicznej - KOWEZiU) is a public national-level institution providing professional development services for VET teachers. The National In-Service Teacher Training Center (NTTC) is a public agency, whose mission is to support the development of a national system of teacher training in line with state educational policies.

The main institutional platform for social partner’s involvement in VET at national level is the Tripartite Commission on Socio-Economic Issues, established by resolution of the Council of Ministers of 15th February 1994. This commission is composed of representatives of government, employers’ organisations and trade unions. All these organisations are both consultative bodies and initiators of legal measures.

At regional level (voivodeship), the responsibility for the administration of the school education system rests with the education superintendents (kurator oświaty), who are chief pedagogical supervision officers at the regional level. They are responsible for the implementation of tasks defined in the School Education Act and in the regulations relevant to particular voivodeships. The most important task is pedagogical supervision over public
IVET in Poland is integrated with the national educational system where two levels of vocational schools exist:

- Basic vocational schools offering three-year programmes giving only vocational qualifications.
- Vocational secondary schools offering four-year programmes, giving general and vocational secondary education with the possibility of gaining a matriculation certificate.

In the public system of vocational education (both IVET and CVET), the pedagogical supervision is performed by school headmasters and school superintendents. The model of supervision is based on the concept of measuring the schoolwork quality, which, in turn, is based on quality standards and indexes, which are developed for the whole country by the Minister of National Education. The school or educational institution’s work quality is measured internally by the school principal every year. External measurements are carried out by the school superintendents at least once in 5 years.

External vocational exam is aimed at confirming vocational qualifications acquired during the course of school education. They are based on examination requirement standards established by the Central Examination Board and conducted by the Regional Examination Boards.

Pedagogical supervision is regulated by the Regulation by the Minister of National Education of 7 October 2009 on pedagogical supervision and the Act of 7 September 1991 on the education system. Pedagogical comprises of:

- Assessing the status and conditions of teaching activities of schools and teachers.
- Analysing and evaluating the outcomes of teaching and other statutory activities of schools and educational institutions.
- Helping schools, educational institutions and teachers in their work.
- Inspiring teachers to pedagogical, methodological and organizational innovation.

Pedagogical supervision is exercised by the Minister of National Education. The Minister of Justice and the subordinate authorities exercise pedagogic supervision of correction centres, juvenile hospice, diagnostic consultative centres and the schools in these institutions, as well as the schools and centres at prisons and detention centres, with the exception of supervision of teaching general subjects, which is carried out by the school superintendent. The Minister responsible for culture and national heritage exercises pedagogical supervision for art schools, art educational institutions and institutes for teachers of art schools. The Minister responsible for agriculture supervises agricultural teaching standards in schools, agricultural institutes and centres for vocational teachers who teach in agricultural schools. The Minister responsible for the environment supervises public schools teaching in the field of forestry and environment. In the case of schools providing training in the area of sea and inland navigation a school superintendent carries out pedagogical supervision in cooperation with the Minister responsible for maritime affairs and the Minister for transport. Tasks related to pedagogical supervision over public and non-public schools and educational institutions and teacher training institutions, including the non-public nationwide teacher training institutions are carried out by the regional superintendents on behalf of the voivode.

Pedagogical supervision is carried out on planned or ad-hoc basis in the form of:

- Evaluation
- Control and
- Support.

The external evaluation is carried out by a team designated by the educational superintendents. The evaluation is conducted in areas such as:
Effects of teaching, education and care and other activities of the school or educational institution.

Processes occurring in a school or educational institution.

Functioning of the school in the local environment.

Management of the school or educational institution.

External evaluation can be comprehensive and address all the above issues or problems, or focus only on selected areas. For each of these areas, five levels of reference have been established:

- Level A indicating a very high degree of fulfilment of the requirements by the school.
- Level B indicating a high degree of fulfilment of the requirements by the school.
- Level C denoting the average degree of fulfilment of the requirements by the school.
- Level D indicating fulfilment of the basic requirements by the school.
- Level E indicating a low degree of fulfilment of the requirements by the school.

External evaluation includes collecting and analysing information in the above-mentioned areas and determining the level of compliance of the school or educational institution with the standards. Within 7 days from the date of completion of the evaluation, the results and conclusions are presented during the meeting of the school board. Then within 7 days, a report containing the results of the evaluation determines the level of compliance with the requirements and the findings of the evaluation are prepared. This report is then forwarded to the head of the evaluated school and the body conducting the external evaluation. Within 7 days, the director may raise an objection to the report, which the educational superintendents must address within 14 days. In the case of the validity of objection, the report is amended accordingly. Then the report is sent back to the head of the evaluated school and the authority conducting the external evaluation.

The control is taken by the educational superintendent under the planned action. After the control, the report is prepared containing amongst other things, established facts, including any identified deficiencies and recommendations, conclusions and observations.

The supporting role of the educational supervisor consists of:

- Preparation and presentation on the authority's website analysis and the results of the pedagogical supervision, including the conclusions of the external evaluation and control.
- Disseminating examples of good practice.
- Promoting the use of evaluation in the process of improving the quality of teaching, education and care and other activities of the schools or educational institutions.
- Organizing conferences and meetings for heads of schools and educational institutions.

The main changes to QA at system level introduced since 2009 (Adoption of the EQAVET Recommendation)

The amendment to the School Education Act of 19 August 2011 and the Regulation by the Minister of National Education of 23 December 2011 on the classification of occupations for vocational education introduced a number of significant changes to the system of vocational education and training in Poland. The most important reason behind the introduction of the reform was the need to improve the effectiveness and relevance of VET system and adjust it to better meet the current needs of employers and the labour market. The main changes include:

- Modified classification of occupations.
- New core curriculum for training for occupations.
- Restructuring of the system of external exams confirming qualifications.

The legislation has introduced common quality assurance system in early childhood and school education. These include the following three main elements aimed at improving the quality of education:

- System of pedagogical supervision, including inspiring teachers to introduce educational, methodological and organizational innovations.
- Internal teacher appraisal, including two types of assessment: assessment of the teacher's performance, carried out by the school head as part of internal pedagogical...
supervision; it serves directly the purpose of quality improvement and is one of the mechanisms of internal quality assurance and assessment of the teacher’s professional achievements carried out by the school head in case a teacher applies for the promotion to a higher professional grade.

- Students’ external assessment (external examination).

These changes are aimed at simplifying the acquisition of vocational education, enabling completion of chosen qualifications and making attainment of a new occupation much easier. The new regulation introduces the possibility to obtain separate qualifications required in specific occupations. Exams confirming qualifications can be held not only upon completion of education at school but also at different stages of education or after completion of each qualification. A pupil will receive a certificate on passing an exam for a single qualification, and after passing exams for all the qualifications required for a given occupation (and having required level of general education), he/she will receive a diploma for the full occupation. The new measures came into force on 1 September 2012.

The Regulation of Minister of National Education of 7 October 2009 introduced in polish schools new standards for pedagogical supervision. The system of pedagogical supervision is defined by the activity of assessing the state and conditions of teaching, education and care carried out in schools, educational institutions and by teachers. Pedagogical supervision is to be exercised transparently (explicitly), in cooperation with the supervisory authorities of the school (principal, teachers, pedagogical councils). The effects of the pedagogical supervision are used to create conditions for the development of schools and educational institutions, as well as to obtain information that will enable the formulation of objective and comprehensive evaluations of teaching, education and care in schools and educational institutions.

**The main changes introduced since 2003 (beginning of the EU cooperation that led to EQAVET adoption)**

Use of EQAVET descriptors at system level in initial VET

**Use of EQAVET descriptors at system level in initial VET**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goals/objectives of VET are described for the medium and long terms, and linked to European goals</td>
<td>Establish</td>
<td>School Education Act of 7 September 1991 (with further amendments)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The relevant stakeholders participate in setting VET goals and objectives at the different levels</td>
<td>Monitored</td>
<td>Strategy for the Development of Education System for the years 2007-2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targets are established and monitored through specific indicators (success criteria)</td>
<td>Establish</td>
<td>Strategy for the Development of Education System for the years 2007-2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanisms and procedures have been established to identify training needs</td>
<td></td>
<td>School Education Act of 7 September 1991 (with further amendments)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An information policy has been devised to ensure optimum disclosure of quality results/outcomes subject to national/regional data protection requirements</td>
<td></td>
<td>According to the School Education Act – access to inspection reports and public availability of strategic planning documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptor</td>
<td>Use</td>
<td>Comment</td>
</tr>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards and guidelines for recognition, validation and certification of competences of individuals have been defined</td>
<td>School Education Act of 7 September 1991 (with further amendments)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation plans are established in cooperation with social partners, VET providers and other relevant stakeholders at the different levels</td>
<td>School Education Act of 7 September 1991 (with further amendments)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation plans include consideration of the resources required, the capacity of the users and the tools and guidelines needed for support</td>
<td>School Education Act of 7 September 1991 (with further amendments) Regulation by the Minister of National Education of 7 October 2009 on pedagogical supervision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidelines and standards have been devised for implementation at different levels</td>
<td>School Education Act of 7 September 1991 (with further amendments) Regulation by the Minister of National Education of 7 October 2009 on pedagogical supervision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation plans include specific support towards the training of teachers and trainers</td>
<td>School Education Act of 7 September 1991 (with further amendments)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET providers’ responsibilities in the implementation process are explicitly described and made transparent</td>
<td>School Education Act of 7 September 1991 (with further amendments) Regulation by the Minister of National Education of 7 October 2009 on pedagogical supervision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A national and/or regional quality assurance framework has been devised and includes guidelines and quality standards at VET-provider level to promote continuous improvement and self-regulation</td>
<td>School Education Act of 7 September 1991 (with further amendments) Regulation by the Minister of National Education of 7 October 2009 on pedagogical supervision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A methodology for evaluation has been devised, covering internal and external evaluation</td>
<td>School Education Act of 7 September 1991 (with further amendments) Regulation by the Minister of National Education of 7 October 2009 on pedagogical supervision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholder involvement in the monitoring and evaluation process is agreed and clearly described</td>
<td>School Education Act of 7 September 1991 (with further amendments) Regulation by the Minister of National Education of 7 October 2009 on pedagogical supervision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptor</td>
<td>Use</td>
<td>Comment</td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The national/regional standards and processes for improving and ensuring quality are relevant and proportionate to the needs of the sector</td>
<td>School Education Act of 7 September 1991 (with further amendments) Regulation by the Minister of National Education of 7 October 2009 on pedagogical supervision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems are subject to self-evaluation, internal and external review, as appropriate</td>
<td>School Education Act of 7 September 1991 (with further amendments) Regulation by the Minister of National Education of 7 October 2009 on pedagogical supervision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early warning systems are implemented</td>
<td>School Education Act of 7 September 1991 (with further amendments) Regulation by the Minister of National Education of 7 October 2009 on pedagogical supervision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance indicators are applied</td>
<td>School Education Act of 7 September 1991 (with further amendments) Regulation by the Minister of National Education of 7 October 2009 on pedagogical supervision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant, regular and coherent data collection takes place, in order to measure success and identify areas for improvement. Appropriate data collection methodologies have been devised, e.g. questionnaires and indicators/metrics</td>
<td>Educational Information system Act of 15 April 2011</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures, mechanisms and instruments for undertaking reviews are defined at all levels</td>
<td>School Education Act of 7 September 1991 (with further amendments) Regulation by the Minister of National Education of 7 October 2009 on pedagogical supervision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processes are regularly reviewed and action plans for change devised. Systems are adjusted accordingly</td>
<td>School Education Act of 7 September 1991 (with further amendments) Regulation by the Minister of National Education of 7 October 2009 on pedagogical supervision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information on the outcomes of evaluation is made publicly available</td>
<td>School Education Act of 7 September 1991 (with further amendments) Regulation by the Minister of National Education of 7 October 2009 on pedagogical supervision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptor</td>
<td>Use</td>
<td>Comment</td>
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<td>------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legend</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always used</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometime used</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never used</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EQAVET 2012 survey**

**Use of EQAVET indicators at system level in initial VET**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Share of VET providers applying internal quality assurance systems defined by law/at own initiative</td>
<td></td>
<td>School Education Act of 7 September 1991 (with further amendments) Regulation by the Minister of National Education of 7 October 2009 on pedagogical supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of accredited VET providers</td>
<td></td>
<td>School Education Act of 7 September 1991 (with further amendments)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of teachers and trainers participating in further training</td>
<td></td>
<td>School Education Act of 7 September 1991 (with further amendments)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of funds invested in training of teachers and trainers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of participants in VET programmes, according to the type of programme and the individual criteria</td>
<td></td>
<td>School Education Act of 7 September 1991 (with further amendments)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of persons having successfully completed/abandoned VET programmes, according to the type of programme and the individual criteria</td>
<td></td>
<td>School Education Act of 7 September 1991 (with further amendments)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destination of VET learners at a designated point in time after completion of training, according to the type of programme and the individual criteria</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of employed learners at a designated point in time after completion of training, according to the type of programme and the individual criteria</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information on occupation obtained by individuals after completion of training, according to type of training and individual criteria</td>
<td></td>
<td>School Education Act of 7 September 1991 (with further amendments)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction rate of individuals and employers with acquired skills/competences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment rate according to individual criteria</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of participants in VET classified as disadvantaged groups (in a defined region or catchment area) according to age and gender</td>
<td></td>
<td>School Education Act of 7 September 1991 (with further amendments)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success rate of disadvantaged groups according to age and gender</td>
<td></td>
<td>School Education Act of 7 September 1991 (with further amendments)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information on mechanisms set up to identify changing labour market demands at different levels</td>
<td></td>
<td>School Education Act of 7 September 1991 (with further amendments)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evidence of the effectiveness of these mechanisms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information on existing schemes to promote better access to VET at different levels</td>
<td>Sometimes used</td>
<td>School Education Act of 7 September 1991 (with further amendments) Strategy for the Development of Education System for the years 2007-2013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend
- Always used
- Sometimes used
- Never used

EQAVET 2012 survey

Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in initial VET

At institutional level (schools and educational institutions) in IVET the responsibility for the administration of the school rests with the school head. Responsibilities of the school head include in particular:

- Managing and representing the school
- Exercising pedagogical supervision over the school
- Taking care of pupils and creating conditions for their harmonious psychological and physical development through various activities
- Implementing the resolutions of the school council or the teachers’ council
- Being in charge of funding and responsible for its proper use
- Organising practical teaching placements for higher education students
- Being responsible for the proper organisation and conduct of tests and exams in the school
- Creating conditions for activities to be undertaken by volunteers

A teachers’ council should be established in every school and another related educational institution employing at least 3 teachers. This council is a collegial body concerned with the implementation of statutory tasks related to education and care. The school head is the head of the school’s teachers’ council. The decision-making powers of the teachers’ council include in particular:

- Approving school activity plans
- Adopting resolutions on the results of pupils’ assessment and promotion
- Adopting resolutions on teaching innovations and experiments in the school
- Adopting organisational arrangements for in-service training of teachers in the school

The teachers’ council drafts the school statutes or any amendments to statutes and presents them to the school council. The teachers’ council can apply for dismissal of a teacher from the post of a school head, or any other managerial position in that school.

School heads and teachers who hold managerial positions exercise pedagogical supervision over the teachers working in these schools. In case of schools, educational institutions and employers who are organizing apprenticeship vocational training, the pedagogical supervision includes also instructors of the practical vocational training.

Internal evaluation is the responsibility of the school head, which is performed in collaboration with teachers and managers once a year. The results of the internal evaluation are presented to the teachers’ council. Internal evaluation is carried out taking into account in particular the areas that have been designated for the external evaluation with particular emphasis on teaching, education and care, and other activities resulting from the activities of the school. The internal evaluation is designed to improve the overall quality of the schools’ activities. Internal evaluation provides reliable and comparable data to facilitate decision-making and contribute to the effective functioning of the whole education system.
The main changes to QA at system level introduced since 2009 (Adoption of the EQAVET Recommendation)

The internal evaluation has been introduced in 2009 by the provision of the Regulation of Minister of National Education of 7 October 2009.

The main changes introduced since 2003 (beginning of the EU cooperation that led to EQAVET adoption)

Use of EQAVET descriptors at system level in initial VET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European, national and regional VET policy goals/objectives are reflected in the local targets set by the VET providers</td>
<td>EU Nat Reg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit goals/objectives and targets are set and monitored</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing consultation with relevant stakeholders takes place to identify specific local/individual needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibilities in quality management and development have been explicitly allocated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is an early involvement of staff in planning, including with regard to quality development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providers plan cooperative initiatives with other VET providers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The relevant stakeholders participate in the process of analysing local needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET providers have an explicit and transparent quality assurance system in place</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources are appropriately internally aligned/assigned with a view to achieving the targets set in the implementation plans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant and inclusive partnerships are explicitly supported to implement the actions planned</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The strategic plan for staff competence development specifies the need for training for teachers and trainers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff undertake regular training and develop cooperation with relevant external stakeholders to support capacity building and quality improvement, and to enhance performance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-assessment/self-evaluation is periodically carried out under national and regional regulations/frameworks or at the initiative of VET providers</td>
<td>Nat Reg Prov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation and review covers processes and results/outcomes of education including the assessment of learner satisfaction as well as staff performance and satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Review</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation and review includes adequate and effective mechanisms to involve internal and external stakeholders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early warning systems are implemented</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learners’ feedback is gathered on their individual learning experience and on the learning and teaching environment. Together with teachers’ feedback this is used to inform further actions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information on the outcomes of the review is widely and publicly available</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures on feedback and review are part of a strategic learning process in the organisation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results/outcomes of the evaluation process are discussed with relevant stakeholders and appropriate action plans are put in place</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EQAVET 2012**

**Quality assurance arrangements at system level in continuous VET**

In Poland C-VET is provided in two settings, school and non-school settings as well as in the form of non-degree postgraduate programmes offered by higher education institutions and research institutions. The goal of the C-VET is to enable adults to acquire and broaden general knowledge and to acquire vocational qualifications and skills, which are necessary to work in a given occupation or hold a given post.

Continuous VET in the school settings is provided for the level of basic vocational and upper secondary vocational schools. Adult education is also provided by post-secondary schools. Adults may also gain and develop general knowledge and acquire vocational or professional qualifications and skills in non-school settings created by various public and non-public institutions. The responsibility for the establishment and administration of such institutions rests with local government bodies at the level of district or at regional level. Non-public schools and educational institutions can undertake vocational education and training activities once they are included in the register kept by the local government body, which is responsible for administering a given type of school or educational institution.

Substantial part of the C-VET is organized by the Public employment services and employment agencies, which provide training for the unemployed aimed at quick response to current needs of the local labour market and adjust the skills or qualifications of the unemployed to such needs. The regulations also envisage other forms of upgrading and changing qualifications or skills and broadening knowledge, which are offered by district-level labour offices. These include practical placements and vocational training for adults.

Higher education institutions offer non-degree postgraduate programmes. Non-degree postgraduate programmes are provided by public and non-public higher education institutions, research institutions and the Polish Academy of Science.


The quality assurance measures in C-VET in the case of public schools (and non-public schools and educational institutions) are similar to the external assessment system in IVET. Both public and non-public institutions can apply for accreditation, which will refer to the whole or a part of the education activities. Accreditation is awarded by the educational superintendent competent for the given institution. Accreditation has been introduced in 2003 and is voluntary. This means, that non-school educational institutions that provide vocational education in compliance with the principles of free business activity are not obliged to be...
subject to any kind of external quality assurance provisions and can comply only with their own standards of educational services.

**Main changes since 2003**

Introduction of the accreditation, awarded to the educational institutions by the competent educational superintendent.

**Quality assurance arrangements in continuous VET at provider level**

In case of public schools and educational institutions quality assurance arrangements in continuous VET are the same as in case of IVET.

**Part 2 – Interaction between national quality assurance and EQAVET**

**National Reference Point**

Poland has started the process of organizing EQAVET National Reference Point. It is going to be set up within the National Centre for Supporting Vocational and Continuing Education (Krajowy Ośrodek Wspierania Edukacji Zawodowej i Ustawicznej - KOWEZiU). According to the plan, National Reference Point is going to be composed of representatives from different institutions (including educational institutions). This should facilitate taking decisions, taking into account different levels of management in education sector and different perspectives of stakeholders. According to the plan, in the first half of 2013 on the KOWEZiU website, the EQAVET portal is to be made accessible. This portal is going to contain, inter alia, educational standards, a variety of reports and studies relevant to the topic of quality of education. Also search engine for training and conferences should be the part of the portal.

The Reference Point has not been established yet and it has been decided that the first step should be the development of quality standards for VET. The next step is to create the NRP, which among other tasks, is going to be responsible for the promotion of quality standards. At the moment, the first steps are taken to prepare a new regulation on the educational supervision. The new regulation will implement the assumptions of EQAVET to the Polish system of quality assurance. Among other issues, the regulation is going to contain already developed, but still not implemented, quality standards.

According to one of the respondents, the lack of clear progress in implementing the EQAVET in Poland, is mainly caused due to the fact that so far there is no common conviction that implementation of a European measure will bring benefits to Polish stakeholders. Another reason is rudimentary knowledge on EQAVET among stakeholders. An example of this situation is the rather little involvement of Polish institutions in the EQAVET network.

**National approach to enhance quality assurance**

Polish pedagogical supervision is not entirely consistent with the assumptions of EQAVET. In 2011, quality standards in education have been developed, but eventually, they will have to be changed in order to better align them to the EQAVET descriptors. Mainly for this reason they have not been implemented yet. These quality assurance solutions were prepared on behalf of the Department of Vocational and Continuing Education of the Ministry of National Education (the initiator of the project). In order to prepare the standards, consultations have been conducted with the representatives of vocational educational institutions and with representatives of other institutions and organizations (including employers’ organizations). Ultimately, the goal of these activities is the adoption of new quality assurance standards, which should be consistent both with the assumptions of EQAVET and stakeholders’ expectations. Along with the development of the Polish Qualifications Framework, a quality assurance system is prepared. This system should be compatible with the national and European approach, but it is going to focus mainly on the quality of validation process.

One of the respondents pointed out that the current system of quality assurance for vocational education is functioning in the sector of formal education. However, the sector of non-formal education is highly fragmented. In this “system”, quality assurance measures are often only institution-specific. There are no common actions and quality assurance measures
in non-formal education. Current activities in this area are aimed at increasing the transparency of vocational training, which takes place outside the school system. But these are rather individual initiatives and there are no system initiatives in this area. In one of the respondent’s view, the non-formal vocational education market is highly fragmented and it consists of a very large number of small entities. In the case of EQAVET implementation, it is possible, that some of these entities will not be able to meet new requirements, mainly due to insufficient organizational and financial resources.

Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance

According to the respondents, EQAVET is very little known in Poland. For example, during preparation of documents and reports on quality assurance in VET, there is very little use of the assumptions of EQAVET. However, as far as formal education is concerned, substantial part of the reference framework has been translated into existing measures and into not yet implemented quality standards. In the case of non-formal education, the use of reference framework is rather minimal. Examples of such initiatives in non-formal education in Poland include the Małopolskie voivodeship partnership organized by the Voivodeship Employment Office, aimed at introducing quality standards in vocational training as well as quality standards set by the Polish Chamber of Training Companies. However, such initiatives are according to the respondents, very fragmented and of rather local or regional scale. Most of these initiatives are in the early stages of organization. Among the institutions that support implementation of quality standards in VET, the following should be mentioned: the Ministry of Education, the National Centre for Supporting Vocational and Continuing Education (which promotes quality measures based on EQARF and idea of quality assurance in vocational education and training) and the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development, involved primarily in supporting local initiatives of education institutions and entrepreneurs.

According to the respondents, EQAVET principles are internally consistent, but the criteria, descriptors and indicators are formulated in a way that is sometimes hard to understand. The wording is not always clear and it is often difficult to find out what the specific term exactly means. Descriptors sometimes overlap and in such cases it is difficult to separate them. In addition, representation of validation in reference framework is insufficient, which is, according to one of the respondents, one of the main shortcomings of the EQAVET.

The institutions of the respondents are disseminating information on activities undertaken within the EQAVET Network on a rather limited scale. This situation is going to change after launch of the EQAVET portal. The portal aims to pass the information to the wide audience on topics like: what EQAVET is, what purpose does it serve, etc. It is planned to publish on the portal, among other things, quality standards developed under EQAVET principles. The Educational Research Institute is engaged in developing a system of quality assurance of qualifications, which is going to be referred to the EQAVET (this is one of the tools associated with the Qualification Framework). As a result, the Institute promotes EQAVET, although in an indirect way, through ongoing research projects.

According to some respondents, in the case of Poland, the relevant institutions are involved in the development and implementation of a national approach to the system of quality assurance in VET. These are the same institutions that are competent for the education sector and they have appropriate legal powers to carry out these tasks.

According to the respondents, the issue of quality assurance in VET has not been perceived as a top priority so far. It is despite this fact, that all previous initiatives and reforms of vocational education were formally aimed, amongst others, at the improvement of quality. However, previous reforms have not changed much in this respect; also quality assurance has not been promoted in a special way. It was not until the last reform in 2011, when this situation changed. The current reform created the basis for real change in the quality assurance in vocational education. Among other things, great emphasis has been given on collaboration between vocational schools and employers. It is expected that the new curricula and training programs will be developed in cooperation with employers. Another objective is to ensure that apprenticeships are held with employers whenever possible. Cooperation with employers in the field of equipping schools in teaching aids is promoted. Employer sponsorship of the fields of study in vocational schools has been allowed.
However, at the moment it is too early to find out, whether these measures have an impact on quality of outcomes.

**Synergies with other EU level instruments**

Initiatives such as the Polish Qualifications Framework or ECVET are still not implemented in Poland, so it is difficult to assess their consistency with EQAVET. According to the respondents, the measures connected with the design of the Polish Qualifications Framework will be introduced first, among them, measures regarding quality assurance. However, at the level of educational institutions, the implementation of PQF is expected to take a long time, so it is hard to predict its effects. According to some respondents, PQF, EQAVET and ECVET must be coordinated and linked with one another, otherwise these initiatives will not be able to function properly. Currently, the institutions responsible for different initiatives are trying to coordinate their actions with each other, which according to the respondents, is successful and brings good results.

Certain problems are created by the involvement of stakeholders. Respondents feel, that stakeholders knowledge on EQAVET principles is very limited, yet they are happy to take part in activities aimed at the development of a quality assurance system. This situation sometimes creates problems. For example, stakeholders’ participation is not always constructive. Experiences and expectations of stakeholders are not always consistent with European guidelines. They are sometimes hard to reconcile. Moreover, stakeholders are willing to take part in initiatives, provided that they do not have to incur any significant costs connected with their participation. Otherwise, costs create a significant barrier for the participation of stakeholders in the initiatives.

**Sources**

The System of Education in Poland, Foundation for the Development of the Education System, 2012

The School Education Act of 7 September 1991 (with further amendments)

The Act on the Implementation of the Education System Reform of 8 January 1999 (with further amendments)

The Act on Educational Information System of 15 April 2011

The Act on the Promotion of Employment and Labour Market Institutions of 20 April 2004

Strategy for the Development of Education System for the years 2007-2013, Ministry of National Education

Regulation by the Minister of National Education of 7 October 2009 on pedagogical supervision

Regulation by the Minister of National Education of 23 December 2011 on the classification of occupations for vocational education

Regulation by the Minister of National Education of 7 February 2012 on outline timetables in public schools


EQARF Indicators, http://www.eqavet.eu/Libraries/eqarf_indicators/eqarf_indicators_poland.sflb.ashx
A1.23 Country report – Portugal

Author: Sarah Fleury (ICF GHK)

Part 1 – Description of quality assurance arrangements and of recent developments

Although the EQAVET principles are widely accepted among stakeholders in Portugal, EQAVET is not yet implemented in practical terms.

Nevertheless, major reforms occurred in the VET system since 2007, namely the National Qualifications System Reform. These reforms were aimed at improving the (low) qualification levels of the Portuguese population. Although not directly focused on quality assurance per se, the reforms were also intended to improve the quality of VET courses overall and to ensure the development of quality assurance mechanisms.

It is the aim of Portugal to develop, in the near future, harmonised practices and principles for quality assurance for its VET system via the implementation of EQAVET.

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in initial VET

Context - National Framework for initial VET

Both initial and continuous vocational education and training in Portugal is centrally governed – i.e. curricula, teaching and financial decisions are taken at a central level for all types of education including IVET and CVET. Although centrally governed, there are two types of VET systems. One associated with the national education system under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. Another associated to other VET providers under the supervision of the Ministry of Economy and Employment. As centrally governed, both systems are important and are regulated by the National Qualifications System (introduced in 2007), a national reform aiming at improving the qualification levels of the Portuguese population.

IVET in Portugal encompasses vocational courses (cursos profissionais), apprenticeship courses (cursos de aprendizagem), education and training courses for young people (cursos de educação e formação para jovens), specialised art courses (cursos artísticos especializados), adult education and training courses (cursos de educação e formação para adultos). These courses qualify the person to enter the labour market or to continuing a study pathway as they confer a double certification qualification (school-based and vocational).

The provision of IVET and CVET and quality assurance of VET is a shared responsibility between various bodies, namely:

- The Ministry of Economy and Employment (previously Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity), which is responsible for the definition, promotion and evaluation of VET programmes and policies, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. Under its supervision, there are:
  - The Directorate-General for Employment and Industrial Relations (DGERT); which is responsible for developing employment, IVET and CVET policy and legislative measures. It is also responsible for the evaluation and accreditation of VET providers that fall outside the national education system.
  - The Institute for Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP), which is responsible for implementing active employment policies related to IVET and CVET.
- The Ministry of Education and Science, which is responsible for the coordination and integration of the national education and national vocational training policies. Under its supervision, there is:
  - The Directorate-General for Innovation and Curriculum Development (DGIDC), which is responsible for translating education policies into curricular developments.

The National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training (ANQ), created in 2012 under the Decree-law nº36/2012, which aims is to coordinate and centralise the implementation of policies regarding VET (IVET and CVET) for young people and adults as well as to ensure the development and management of the National System for the Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences. The ANQ is a public body under the joint supervision of the Ministry of Economy and Employment, the Ministry for Education and Science in articulation with the Ministry of Solidarity and Social Security. It is also the National Reference Point for EQAVET.

**Planning at VET system level**

Since 2007, following the European Commission and OECD’s recommendations for Portugal to implement measures aiming at improving the attainment levels of young people and increasing the productivity of the workforce, the Portuguese vocational education and training system has undergone major changes.

Two major reforms were implementing at the end of 2007, namely the Vocational Training Reform and the National Qualifications System (SNQ), which in turns created the National Qualification Framework and the National Qualification Catalogue. Overarching aims of these reforms were to facilitate the access to IVET and CVET, to raise the attainment levels of the Portuguese population, to improve the quality of VET and to ensure that VET qualifications better match the labour market needs.

Quality assurance is not the main focus of these reforms. Nevertheless, they intend to improve the quality of VET courses overall and to ensure the development of quality assurance mechanisms.

**The national framework for quality assurance**

**General overview**

As previously mentioned, although centrally governed, there are two types VET systems: one associated with the national education system under the supervision of the Ministry of Education which is responsible for school-based IVET/CVET and another under the supervision of the Ministry of Economy and Employment responsible for other types of training providers of both IVET and CVET.

As centrally governed, both systems are important and were both parts of the national reforms – i.e. the Vocational Training Reform and the National Qualifications System – which ensured the development of some quality assurance mechanisms.

Quality assurance mechanisms slightly differ among these two systems. Nevertheless, as stated in the Portuguese EQF Referencing Report, there is a common set of principles that underpin quality assurance methodologies in Portugal. Indeed, quality assurance mechanisms are developed under the common cycle logic of planning, monitoring, assessing and improving the mechanisms. In both systems, quality assurance mechanisms include: the definition of accreditation standards for licensing VET providers; a regular monitoring and assessment of the work and results achieved by respective training providers.

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487 Decree Law nº36/2012, of 15 February is available at http://dre.pt/pdf1sdip/2012/02/03300/0076300766.pdf
488 European Commission (2006), A year of delivery, Annual Progress Report on Growth and Jobs
489 OECD (2005), Economic Policy Reforms — Going for Growth
providers; a control of the quality of the qualifications produced by the system (efficiency achieved in drawing up the curriculum); and a strategic planning for curricular innovation.

It is the aim in Portugal to actively promote the use of EQAVET criteria and indicators. At the moment, consensus is established about EQAVET usefulness and principles. Nevertheless, there is still the need to practically implement it among VET education providers.

**Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators – VET school-based system**

Within the Ministry of Education, the General Inspectorate for Education (GIE) has the responsibility to monitor the quality of education and training provision of Portuguese schools – from pre-primary to upper-secondary. It aims for all types of schools, at monitoring pedagogical and management practices/results; the services provided; and to analyse to what extent educational policies are implemented and objectives are met (i.e. rate of students entering the labour market after school degree).

Another instrument used is the National Qualifications Catalogue, implemented in 2007 via the National Qualifications System, which references all the national qualifications – and the skills/knowledge/attitudes associated to these – awarded via the VET system. It also defines the indicators for the recognition, validation and certification of competences. With the participation of the Sectorial Qualifications Councils, the Catalogue is constantly revised and updated according to the labour market needs and situation, meaning that qualifications – and consequently VET courses – can be added or withdrawn depending on the economic situation. In addition, learning outcomes and curricular objectives are defined and regularly updated for each type of qualification. For updating of changing the Catalogue, an official proposal must be send to the ANQ. The ANQ provides guidelines on how drafting a proposal for revising the Catalogue.

**Monitoring, use of indicators and identification of training needs – other VET providers**

In the case of the VET education system falling into the supervision of the Ministry of Economy and Employment, quality assurance mechanisms reflect the EQAVET cycle principle (planning, implementation, assessment and review/updating) although not yet implemented in practical terms among VET providers.

Inspection and monitoring of the pedagogical and management practices and results of VET providers are regularly performed via external audits under the supervision of the General Directorate for Employment and Labour Relations (DGERT).

The National Qualifications Catalogue, implemented in 2007 via the National Qualifications System, is also used by the other VET providers.

**Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation on VET providers**

VET schools falling into the national education system are accredited by the Ministry of Education the same way as other type of public schools.

The accreditation system for other training providers acts as a quality assurance mechanism of the National Qualifications System reform in Portugal. The accreditation certificate is a necessary requirement for VET training providers to access public funding. Since September 2010, a new framework for the accreditation of training providers is in place which aims at

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494 Sectorial Qualifications Councils are working groups with technical and advisory competences, created by the National Agency for Qualification to participate in the updating and development of the National Qualifications Catalogue.

495 All the entities of the training network belonging to the National Qualifications System such as state and private schools, training centres from the Ministry of Economy and Employment, New Opportunities Centres, private training entities, etc. can submit a proposal for revision of the Catalogue. Competent bodies responsible for the access to regulated professions and associations of employers and trade unions can also submit a proposal.

496 The Catalogue might be accessed at http://www.catalogo.anqep.gov.pt/Home/MAC.

reinforcing the quality criteria for providing the certificate. Quality criteria that providers should comply with are clearly stated in the legislation. Pedagogical and management practices and results of VET providers are also regularly monitored and assessed via external audits by the DGERT. In case a provider does not comply anymore with the quality criteria, the certificate can be withdrawn.

Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)

There are three main qualification types in VET (including both IVET and CVET):

■ Qualifications at NQF/EQF level 2 – lower secondary education diploma obtained in basic education or via IVET, CVET or the System for the Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competencies (RVCC).

■ Qualifications at NQF/EQF level 4 – Secondary education diploma obtained via double certification path (i.e. IVET), or via on-the-job training of minimum six months, via CVET or the RVCC.

■ Qualifications at NQF/EQF level 5 – these are post-secondary non-tertiary VET qualifications giving credits to pursue higher level studies obtained via, for instance, technical courses (CET).

Criteria for validation of learning at each level are centrally defined.

Statutory stakeholder involvement in initial VET systems and Identification of training needs

In Portugal, the governance system ensures that social partners are consulted when developing reforms and policies. For what concerns the VET system, social partners have an active advisory role in national policy making, especially when trying to adapt the offer of VET courses to the labour market demands. Social partners in the area of VET are divided in different advisory groups. Namely:

■ The Economic and Social Council (Conselho Económico e Social – CES) which is responsible for providing consultation on overall economic and social policies;

■ The National Vocational Training Council (Conselho Nacional da Formação Profissional), which monitors the execution of vocational education and training policies, inserted either in the education system or in the labour market.

■ The National Education Council (Conselho Nacional de Educação) which is responsible for providing consultation on draft legislation concerning the education system.

Stakeholders also have a seat on the main councils and monitoring committees of the bodies involved in VET issues, such as:

■ The IEFP’s Administrative Board, Audit Commissions, Regional advisory boards and Vocational training centres’ advisory boards.

■ The General Council of the ANQ.

■ The Sectorial Qualifications Councils, which are working groups with technical and advisory competences, created by the National Agency for Qualification to participate in the updating and development of the National Qualifications Catalogue.

■ The Commission for the Follow-up of the New Opportunities Initiative and National Qualifications System.

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)

As mentioned above, since 2009, various reforms were introduced. Although not directly focused on quality assurance, they encompass quality assurance improvements in VET:

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499 The New Opportunity Initiative aims at giving the chance for adult to validate their non-formal or informal learning via the validation and recognition system that Portugal has developed. Assessment and validation of non-formal/informal learning takes place at the New Opportunity Centres.
- Portaria nº 781/2009, of 23 July - reorganises the National Qualifications Catalogue in terms of competences and learning outcomes;
- Portaria nº 782/2009, of 23 July - Defines the National Qualification Framework and the descriptors associated to each national qualification levels;
- Portaria nº 851/2010, of 6 September - Regulates the new system for the certification of training providers (outside the national education system);
- Despacho nº 978/2011, of 12 January – Implements the qualification levels of the National Qualifications Framework.
- Portaria nº 214/2011, of 30 May - Establishes the legislative framework for training and pedagogical certification of trainers that develop their activity within the National Qualifications System.

Main drivers for the introduction of these changes were mainly the European Qualification Framework developments but also the EQAVET developments.

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) - 2008

In 2007, as mentioned, two major reforms were implementing, namely the Vocational Training Reform and the creation of the National Qualifications System (SNQ) which in turn created the National Qualification Framework, the National Qualifications Catalogue.

Main drivers were the European Commission's and OECD's recommendations for Portugal to implement measures aiming at improving the attainment levels of young people and increasing the productivity of the workforce as well as the EQAVET developments.

Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in initial VET

Planning at VET provider level

Planning is centrally organised as mentioned in the above section Context - National Framework for initial VET. According to interviewees, it is the aim to implement the EQAVET principles in the near future at the national level in order to harmonise and systematise quality assurance mechanisms.

Monitoring and evaluation – VET school-based system

The quality assurance at the level of VET schools in Portugal comprises:

- Schools inspection and assessment

As previously mentioned, the General Inspectorate for Education (GIE) under the supervision of Ministry of Education has the responsibility to monitor and assess the quality of education and training provision of Portuguese schools – from pre-primary to upper-

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507 European Commission (2006), A year of delivery, Annual Progress Report on Growth and Jobs
508 OECD, Economic Policy Reforms — Going for Growth, 2005
secondary. Various aspects are evaluated during the assessment process. Such as: results, educational services provided, school organisation and management, leadership and the capacity to self-regulate and improve the school\(^{509}\).

- **Required self-assessment**
  Self-assessment is a required procedure since 2002 for all schools from pre-school level to secondary education. Self-assessment is regulated by the law, which also states the set of criteria that need to be assessed\(^{510}\) (e.g. degree to which the educational project was implemented, efficiency of the school management, use of pedagogical material, etc.). The Common Assessment Framework (CAF), which is an European guideline, is the one promoted at the national level for schools to conduct the self-assessment\(^{511}\).

**Monitoring and evaluation – other VET providers**

- **Inspection and assessment**
  Inspection and monitoring of the pedagogical and management practices and results of other VET providers are regularly performed via external audits under the supervision of the General Directorate for Employment and Labour Relations (DGERT).

- **Required self-assessment**
  VET providers also need to perform an annual self-assessment. Aspects that need to be assessed relate to\(^{512}\):
    - Internal management. Criteria are for instance: efficiency of the allocation of financial and human resources, satisfaction with the facilities, etc.
    - Quality of the training provided. Criteria are for instance: planning practices, management of the training activities, quality of the design of training, etc.
    - Results of the training. Criteria are, for instance: entrance into the labour market after the training, satisfaction with the acquired skills, improvement of the job performance after the training, etc.

**Training of teachers and trainers**

Continuing training for teachers and trainers is another mechanism aiming at ensuring the improvement of the quality of teaching/training. Continuing training for teachers (school-based education) is regulated by a specific framework\(^{513}\) and is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. Continuing training for trainers of other VET providers is regulated by another legislative framework\(^{514}\) and is the responsibility of the IEPF.

**Individual Skills Handbook**

The individual skills handbook\(^{515}\) is an instrument implemented via the National System of Qualifications that registers all the competences and training acquired throughout the individual’s life. It therefore creates more transparency to the system of qualifications, allowing individuals to present and communicate their training and competences acquired.

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\(^{511}\) The information leaflet of the application of the CAF to a public teaching establishment may be accessed at [http://www.a-e-s-c.info/folheto_aval_interna.pdf](http://www.a-e-s-c.info/folheto_aval_interna.pdf)

\(^{512}\) Portaria nº 851/2010, of 6 September – which regulates the new system for the certification of training providers (outside the national education system).


throughout their lives in a more effective way. It also enables employers to realize in a more effective way the appropriateness of the candidate’s competences.

**Stakeholder involvement**

Main stakeholders involved at the VET provider level are:

- The National Education Council which is involved via its role of providing recommendations regarding the standards used in the self-assessment of schools, the annual external assessment plan and the results of both internal and external assessment processes.
- The monitoring board of the accreditation of VET providers (Regulated by Portaria nº 851/2010, of 6 September) which provides recommendations on how to improve the quality of training and management of VET providers (outside the school-based system). It integrates representatives from the ANQ, the IEPF, experts from social partner’s confederations and experts from patronal confederations.

**Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET at provider level since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)**

The main reform (already mentioned in the first section of the report) introduced after 2009 is the Portaria nº 851/2010, of 6 September which Regulates the new system for the certification of training providers (outside the national education system) and regulates their self-assessment processes.

**Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET at provider level since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008**

The compulsory self-assessment for schools regulation was introduced by Law 31/2002, of the 20th of December.

**Quality assurance arrangements at system level in continuous VET**

**National Framework and Planning at CVET system level**

The national framework for CVET is the same than for IVET – they are both centrally administrated. Training providers of CVET can be the same as those providing IVET. Government bodies involved in the definition of policy, curricular and teaching decisions are the same as for IVET. The main governmental body responsible for monitoring and coordinating the CVET provision is the ANQ.

CVET in Portugal encompasses:

- Adult education and training courses (cursos de educação e formação de adultos – EFA), which are targeted at adults (over 18) who have inadequate or insufficient competences to enter the labour market.
- Modular training courses, which give the possibility to adults and workers to obtain new qualifications and competences in a flexible way. Indeed, they can accumulate short-term training units (Unidades de formação de curta duração – UFCD) which in turn can be ‘exchanged’ to a specific qualification of the National Catalogue (i.e. each qualification of the National Catalogue of Qualifications is defined not only in terms of skills/knowledge but also in terms of number/types of UFCD).
- Technical courses for specific sectors (Cursos de Especialização Tecnológica), which aim at giving an upper-secondary non tertiary education for adults wishing to gain specific technological skills. Usually, technical courses are often delivered by sectorial

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516 Regulated by Portaria nº 851/2010, of 6 September - which regulates the new system for the certification of training providers.


centres that target the training according to the economic needs of the sector. They are
delivered under the supervision and prior agreement of the IEFP.

- Validation and Recognition of non-formal/informal learning. Portugal introduced the New
  Opportunity Initiative, which is aimed at giving the chance to adults to validate their non-
  formal or informal learning via the System for the Recognition, Validation and
  Certification of Competencies (RVCC). An extensive network of centres, called the New
  Opportunity Centres (Centros Novas Oportunidades) was created. These Centres are
  aimed at recognising, validating and certifying non-formal or informal learning of the adult
  population. Adults can validate their professional/technical skills or their school-based
  skills, therefore obtaining a qualification between EQF level 2 and 4.

**Statutory stakeholder involvement in CVET systems and Identification of training needs**

Stakeholders involved in CVET systems are the same than under the IVET system.
Decisions about training needs are decided at the central level for both IVET and CVET.

**The national framework for quality assurance**

As beforehand mentioned, there is not a particular framework for quality assurance in VET in
Portugal although some quality assurance mechanisms exist. As VET is centrally governed
in Portugal, quality assurance mechanisms for CVET are the same than for IVET. It is the
aim of Portugal to start implementing EQAVET in the future.

**Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on
CVET providers**

CVET can be delivered by:

- Vocational schools and other organisations providing training for trainees and
  scholarship-holders.
- Business, professional or labour organisations.
- Non-profit organisations, if training activities are included in their social mission;
- Enterprises or business organisations provided they develop training actions for the
  labour market and the respective training centres are accredited.
- Public and private organisations, which promote the creation of New Opportunity Centres
  at inter-municipal level.
- Public and private organisations promoting EFA courses, if accredited by competent
  authorities.
- Joint-management vocational training and vocational rehabilitation centres;
- Accredited VET providers.

Requirements and regulation for delivering VET are common to IVET and CVET providers,
as described above. In case of labour/sectorial organisations delivering VET, an official
protocol must be signed with the IEFP for the provider to obtain an accreditation. Finally,
New Opportunity Centres are accredited by the ANQ. The ANQ is also responsible for the
monitoring and coordination of the CVET provision of training.

**Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)**

As previously noted, there are three main qualification types in VET (including both IVET and
CVET):

- Qualifications at NQF/EQF level 2 - lower secondary education diploma obtained in basic
  education or via IVET, CVET or the System for the Recognition, Validation and
  Certification of Competencies (RVCC).
- Qualifications at NQF/EQF level 4 – Secondary education diploma obtained via double
  certification path (i.e. IVET), or via on-the-job training of minimum six months, via CVET
  or the RVCC.
- Qualifications at NQF/EQF level 5 – these are post-secondary non-tertiary VET
  qualifications giving credits to pursue higher level studies obtained via, for instance, the
  technical courses (CET).

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Criteria for validation of learning at each level are centrally defined.

**Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators**

Monitoring and inspection procedures of the quality of training are centrally organised for all the VET national system. There is thus no difference from the monitoring instruments described above.

**Reforms of quality assurance in CVET since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)**

Reforms are the same for all the VET system in Portugal. These were already described in the first section of this report.

**Reforms of quality assurance in CVET since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) - 2008**

Reforms are the same for all the VET system in Portugal. These were already described in the first section of this report. In addition to those:

The New Opportunity Initiative was created in 2007 via the Resolution nº 173/2007, in Diário da República, serie 1, N.º 214, of 7 November 2007.\(^{520}\)

**Quality assurance arrangements in continuous VET at provider level**

Quality assurance mechanism and arrangements for all VET providers are defined at the central level. Thus, quality assurance arrangements for CVET providers are the same than those for IVET providers (see section A25.2).

Nevertheless, in addition of the quality mechanisms described in the first section, specific mechanisms are in place for the New Opportunities Centres.

**Monitoring, inspection and the Quality Charter of the New Opportunities Centres**

Supervisory visits and external assessments of the New Opportunity centres are regularly performed by the ANQ in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their performance and to provide recommendations for improvement. In addition, the Centres have to perform an annual self-assessment, measuring and analysing their performance.

New Opportunity centres have also to comply with the Quality Charter which is an instrument aiming at guaranteeing a harmonised practice of the System for the Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competencies (RVCC) between all types of centres. The Charter defines the mission, the guiding principles, the working methods, and the different stages of work.\(^{521}\) It also stipulates the results that centres need to achieve at each stage of work. Indicators and quality references standards used in the Quality Charter are, for instance:

- Clarity and applicability of information given (indicator) and 70% of adults surveyed give positive responses (reference standards).
- Percentage of individual information sessions vs. total number of sessions (indicator) and 25% to 50% of the information sessions about the RVCC system are individual-based.

**Part 2 – Interaction between national quality assurance and EQAVET**

**National Reference Point**

Portugal has an EQAVET National Reference Point in place. It is led by the National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training (ANQ). The Decree-law nº 36/2012 sets up the Agency and establishes that the Agency, as described in the first part of this report, is the public body responsible for the coordination and implementation of policies.

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related to VET addressed to young people and adults. Through this decree-law, the Agency aims to improve the relevance and quality of VET, thus contributing to the national competitiveness as well as to the increasing of employability. The ANQ is also responsible for developing cooperation agreements at the national and European level. In terms of quality assurance in VET, the ANQ is responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of the supply of VET addressed to young people and adults as well as of the System for the Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competencies (RVCC).

Although consensus among stakeholders on EQAVET exists and some instruments based on it are in place, EQAVET per se is not yet implemented. In 2011 and 2012, activities in the scope of EQAVET were included in the Activity Plan of the ANQ but due to several reasons including financial ones it was not possible to implement the framework. Nonetheless, the ANQ together with the IEPF are active and work in close collaboration to develop quality assurance instruments. Planned activities for the near future include, among others, the development of a quality framework for the auto-evaluation of public and private trainers and the identification of key employment sectors in order to better match the supply of VET with the labour demand.

For 2013, it is the aim of the ANQ to implement a quality assurance model based on EQAVET, through the design and the harmonization of procedures. The first priority will be to disseminate in wider scale information about EU instruments (EQF, EQAVET, etc.).

National approach to enhance quality assurance

There is no separate national document that would be dedicated to EQAVET implementation as such. Nevertheless, national policies are to some extent embedded by the EQAVET objectives to enhance quality assurance. As detailed in the first section of this report, there are various tools in Portugal to assure the quality of VET, such as:

- The National Qualification System
- The National Catalogue of Qualifications
- VET providers’ accreditation
- The identification of training needs at the national level, with the participation of national stakeholders (e.g. The Sectorial Councils for Qualification)
- The Quality Charter for the New Opportunities Centre
- Self-required assessment of VET providers
- External evaluations/schools inspection

It is the aim of the NRF to implement, during 2013, a quality assurance model based on EQAVET, through the design and the harmonization of procedures.

The content of the EQAVET Framework – use and usefulness

The existence of EQAVET and EU level activities enabled to open the debate between stakeholders about quality assurance at the national level. It helped thinking the National Qualification System Reform in 2007 and reinforced the importance of quality assurance at providers’ level. EQAVET also introduced, for instance, the question of the measurement of the performance and outputs of VET. The major contribution up to date of EQAVET, although it is not yet implemented totally, is that it brought a systematisation of practices and tools. Indeed, EQAVET principles influenced the introduction of the cycle logic of planning, monitoring, assessing and improving the mechanisms. The approach of the quality cycle was said to be essential to set up adequate objectives in terms of policy, procedures, tasks and human resources. Moreover, through this cycle Portugal is able to identify the obstacles in order to improve the national quality assurance framework. It also provided more transparency to the assessment procedures – i.e. defining clearer evaluation criteria.

Interviewees consider EQAVET more as a guideline to assess what Portugal still needs to develop in order to fully implement a coherent quality assurance framework. It is seen as a coherent framework, which nevertheless should be adapted to each country’s national context. It is therefore not considered by interviewees as an instrument that can directly be
transferred to the national practices – the implementation of EQAVET needs to be adjusted
to the national context and specificities.

Partner organisations involvement

As described in the first section of this report, social partners’ involvement in the definition of
VET policies is high. They are engaged as advisors in the national policy making. It is
especially the aim of involving stakeholders when trying to adapt the offer of VET courses to
the labour market demand and to update the National Qualifications Catalogue.

The ANQ (the NRF) promotes a continuous dialogue with social partners (enterprises and
trade unions) that are part of ANQ’s General Board. The Agency also intends to involve
social partners in the assessment of quality in VET. In addition, the ANQ is represented at
the Board of Directors of the Institute for Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP).

Next year, when implementing a quality assurance framework based on EQAVET, the ANQ
intends to involve more directly providers such as the Institute for Employment and
Vocational Training (IEFP), and representatives from private and public schools providing
VET.

Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance

Following EU and OECD’s recommendations, national policies in the area of education and
training have been concentrated on enhancing the low qualification levels of the Portuguese
population. Consequently, the improvement of quality of VET and the development of quality
assurance instruments were part of the national objective of enhancing young people and
adults’ levels of qualification. As described in the first section of this report, the main reform
was the implementation of the National Qualification System in 2007 with its related quality
assurance instruments (e.g. the National Qualification Catalogue, etc.). It overall enabled
more systematic quality assurance mechanisms at system and providers level, which reflect
the cycle approach of planning, implementation, evaluation and review.

It is believed that the adoption of the recommendation has promoted the development of
systematic approaches concerning quality assurance. Interviewees reported that EQAVET
principles have influenced the developments of the National Qualification System and its
related quality assurance instruments. EQAVET has brought theoretical consensus at the
national level that a framework for quality assurance in VET was needed. EQAVET has thus
given authority to the question of quality assurance at the national level. According to
interviewees, it has also enabled to raise the question of the measurement of VET courses’
output to the national agenda setting, which was not really present in Portugal.

Interviewees consider that having a European framework on VET quality assurance will
increase transparency and harmonisation at the European level.

Synergies with other EU level instruments

The various stakeholders involved in the VET system in Portugal – namely the ANQ, the
IEFP and the DGERT –closely cooperate with each other. Each stakeholder shares ideas
and thoughts about the various EU instruments with the others. Documents are usually
produced together, taking into account each stakeholder views. The information is mainly
disseminated via the ANQ with is the EQAVET and EQF reference point. There were no
obstacles reported regarding the synergies.

Sources


Agência Nacional para a Qualificação (2011), Report on the Referencing of the National
Qualifications Framework to the European Qualifications Framework, available at
Legislation:


Decree Law nº36/2012 (which creates the ANQ), of 15 February, available at http://dre.pt/pdf1sdip/2012/02/03300/0076300766.pdf

Website:

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in initial VET

**Context**

Initial VET in Romania refers to school based training provision that ensures the acquisition of professional qualifications and comprises: professional schools, VET strand of upper secondary education level (VET high schools), and post-secondary education (VET post-secondary school). The regulations for school administration and finance in VET in Romania are the same as those for pre-primary, primary and secondary education.

The initial VET provision comprises three main parts: 1) common core curriculum decided at the national level; 2) differentiated curriculum decided also at the national level but more linked with a specific qualification and 3) local development curriculum decided at the school level in partnership with local stakeholders (employers, local authorities). Final assessment that leads to the award of the qualification should respect the national standards and requirements. In IVET social partners representatives are part of the local assessment commissions.

Decisions on developing new qualifications or updating existing qualifications are shared between multilevel stakeholders at national, regional and local level, based on a systematic planning process and tools. The recruitment of teachers in IVET follows the national regulations and the decision for new teacher appointment is the responsibility of county school inspectorates.

**National Framework for initial VET**

The general national framework for quality assurance in education and training is established by Law 87/2006 and is applicable for all secondary and higher education levels. The national quality assurance in IVET is regulated by provisions of Law 87/2006, using additionally specific methodologies related to vocational and technical education.

The responsibility for quality assurance in IVET in Romania is shared between the following institutions:

- **The Ministry of Education** is responsible for ensuring quality at the system level, drafting the general policies and monitoring the overall processes and results at the
system level. At the county level, the County School Inspectorates are in charge with implementing the general policies and methodologies of quality assurance.

- The Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-university Education is in charge of provisional authorization, accreditation and external evaluation of quality for all schools in pre-university education, including IVET schools. The agency develops standards, benchmarks and performance indicators for quality assurance and institutional assessment methodology and accreditation of new schools. The agency is in charge of implementing the assessment and evaluation tools in all schools.

- National Centre for Development of Technical and Vocational Education with responsibility to develop specific methodologies on quality assurance in vocational and technical education, develop self-evaluation manuals and external monitoring guidance, complementing the methodologies developed by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-university Education.

Stakeholders have a specific role especially in planning, monitoring and assessment phases of the general quality assurance methodologies. The National Group for Quality Assurance (GNAC), established in 2006 based on Inter-institutional Agreement between Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour, Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-university Education, National Centre for Development of Technical and Vocational Education and National Qualification Authority has also a consultative role in the view of coordinating all the quality assurance systems in initial and continuous education and training in Romania. GNAC has, according to the Law of National Education, the role of the National Reference Point of the EQAVET Network.

Planning at VET system level and stakeholders involvement

A strategic planning model was developed and implemented by the National Centre for Development of Technical and Vocational Education in the recent years in Romania. The last plan was drafted for 2007-2013 and the next one will refer up to the year 2020. In the planning process different advisory management structures are involved at national, sector, regional, county and local levels. Those structures are in charge of decision on future qualifications, skills and schools network and provision. The main advisory structures involved in the planning process are the following:

- Regional Consortia in charge of drawing up the Regional Action Plans for Education and monitoring the implementation of Local Action Plans for Education;
- Local Committees for Social Partnership Development develops Local Action Plans for Education and monitor implementation of the Action Plans at the school level.
- School Administration Councils develop the School Development Plan.

All above structures are organized with the involvement of different stakeholders and relevant institutions at the regional and local level. In the last years, National Centre for Development of Technical and Vocational Education updated the planning methodology and tools in order to improve the process and to better support the activities of all actors in charge.

Identification of training needs

According to the strategic planning model presented above, the first step in the planning process is the phase of early identification of training needs. The planning is based on a medium-term forecast of 5-7 years in order to ensure a relevant delivery for the expected needs of the labour market and take into account a quantitative and also qualitative approach. The planning is drafted at the regional, local and school level, based on a specific methodology and tools. The planning tools were recently updated in the framework of the ESF project - Linking the offer of vocational and technical education and training with labor market needs, managed by National Centre for Development of Technical and Vocational Education. The last forecast study on the future training needs was drafted in 2005 in the perspective of the year 2013 and new forecast study up to 2020 is under preparation.

http://ofertaipt.tvet.ro/
Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on VET providers

According to the law on quality assurance any public or private legal entities delivering education and training programs can set up a school, receiving from the Ministry of Education a provisory functioning authorization. A school can apply for a full accreditation only 1 to 2 years after the first graduate’s cohort. The authorization process is based on self-evaluation report and an external evaluation carried out by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-university Education. After the first accreditation, new schools have to be periodically evaluated (once every 5 years).

Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)

Until 2011, the IVET system in Romania provided 3 levels of qualification:

- **Qualifications at level I** for graduates of School for Arts and Trades or the Apprenticeship School (corresponding EQF level 2)
- **Qualifications at level II** for graduates of School for Arts and Trades that followed also 1 complimentary year as an alternative route in the view of continuing their studies in high school (EQF level 3)
- **Qualifications at level III** for graduates of the upper secondary education (level 4 EQF) or for graduates of technical post-high schools (level 5 EQF).

The qualifications are subject to change due to the recent restructuring of the educational system based on the Law 1/2011 on National Education. Most probably, qualification level 1 will not be provided anymore by the IVET system and also the complimentary year will be eliminated as alternative path for qualification. The new qualification methodology is now under elaboration and the key step forward is also the adoption of the National Qualification Framework currently under debate.

Qualification exams are coordinated at the national level by the National Assessment and Certification Commission constituted annually under approval of the Ministry of Education. In each county an Assessment and Certification Commission is constituted annually. The County Assessment and Certification Commission authorizes schools to organize qualification and certification exam, appointing schools to become Examination Centres.

For all types of qualifications, the composition of the assessment committee for the final examination that leads to certification is defined at the national level. In all cases, the vice-president of the examination commission is representative of employers. Other stakeholders involved in the assessment committee might be: representatives of a certain profession or of professional associations, local labour market experts (from the county employment agency) and members of the local authorities.

General education components of qualifications at level II are assessed using centralised external examinations (**bacalaureat**). The assessment system for level III of qualification is now under debate, one of the options being a centralised external examination - professional bacalaureat.

A new National Qualification Framework is now under debate and most probably the actual national qualification levels provided in IVET system will be changed in the view of harmonising with the EQF.

All examinations comprise an oral assessment and a practical assessment. The content of the assessment is based on pre-defined standards established in accordance with the curriculum training standards for each level of qualification.

Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators

County School Inspectorates and Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-university Education are in charge with the external monitoring of all aspects of quality in VET schools. County School Inspectorates are in charge of external monitoring visits and validation of the

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525 Romania didn’t adopted yet the Referencing Report on the correspondence between national qualifications provided by the educational system and European Qualifications Framework
self-evaluation report drafted by each school. Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-university Education is responsible for conducting regularly (once every 5 years), an institutional assessment and accreditation. The criteria and groups of indicators for quality assurance at the school level are the following:

- Institutional capacity
  - Institutional, administrative and managerial structures
  - Material resources
  - Human resources
- Educational Effectiveness
  - Curriculum
  - Learning outcomes
  - Teachers participation to methodical or scientific research
  - Financial activity of the organization
- Quality management
  - Strategies and procedures for quality assurance
  - Procedures for initiating, monitoring and periodically reviewing the programs and activities
  - Objective and transparent procedure for learning outcomes assessment
  - Procedures for periodical assessment of teaching quality
  - Availability of adequate learning resources
  - Systematically updated database relating to internal quality assurance
  - Transparency of public information on programs, certificates, diplomas and qualifications
  - Functionality of quality assurance structures, according to the law

According to the Law on Quality Assurance approved in 2006 each school should meet a set of compulsory minimum standards, approved by Government decision. In 2008, the Government approved a set of optimal performance standards and performance descriptors, based on the same domains and criteria.

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)

In the recent years the set of criteria and indicators for quality assurance has been revised in view of compatibility with EQAVET. Also the methodologies for planning and forecasting needs have been revised and updated version of guides, good practice collection and tools were made available for the end users. An updated curriculum for IVET is also under development.

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008

As mentioned before, the main reforms implemented in the period 2005-2008 were the followings:

- The Law on Quality Assurance (2005-2006)
- The development of National Quality Assurance Framework in IVET;
- Monitoring the piloting phase of the self-assessment in schools and then the implementation at the system level;
- Drafting methodologies, tools, guides and best practice examples for quality assurance

Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in initial VET

The IVET system in Romania comprises: school for Arts and Trades, technical and professional high schools and technical post-secondary schools. The quality assurance at the IVET schools comprises the following activities:

- Self-assessment
- Validation and monitoring visits of the School Inspectorates
- Periodic compulsory institutional assessment and accreditation carried out by Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-university Education
Planning at VET provider level

According to the planning methodology elaborated by the National Centre for Development of Technical and Vocational Education, each school has to prepare periodically a School Development Plan, according to the profile of the institution but also according to the local or regional socio-economic context. According to the methodology, the School Development Plan should involve all school actors but also other stakeholders at the local level. National Centre for Development of Technical and Vocational Education provided updated Guide for drafting the School Development Plan available as guidance for all IVET schools.

Requirements for monitoring and review (self-assessment) and stakeholders involvement

Each IVET school should follow the same requirements for self-assessment as general education schools. According to the Self-evaluation Handbook drafted by the National Centre for Development of Technical and Vocational Education, schools are responsible for improving the quality of education, based on their self-evaluation and the outcomes of other external evaluations followed by a review process and planning of changes at the school level for a better school performance. According to the handbook, schools should annually evaluate all sets of indicators and quality assurance principles, according to their specific school development objectives and socio-economic context. The recommendation is that each school conducts annually a self-evaluation report, although according to the quality assurance legislation a compulsory external evaluation is done once in 5 years.

Annual cycle of self-assessment at the level of IVET provider should follow 4 steps:

- Planning
- Implementing and monitoring the level of achievements against planned targets
- Evaluation of school performance and drafting the self-evaluation report;
- Reviewing and drafting the action plan for performance improvement.

In each school, a Quality Assurance Commission is appointed to supervise all the quality assurance processes and activities.

There are no specific legislative requirements on stakeholder’s involvement in self-evaluation procedures at the provider level, although according to Self-evaluation Handbook schools are encouraged in involving stakeholders at the local level, especially on the issues on planning, practical training in companies or assessment of students skills in final examinations.

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET at provider level since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)

Main measures on quality assurance at IVET provider level were focused on supporting the schools in drafting their planning, self-evaluation and monitoring activities based on a revised set of indicators and quality assurance principles, guides for a better planning at the local level, collections of good practices of schools in quality assurance, handbooks and other informative support on carrying out the self-evaluation report.

A recent initiative developed under an ESF projects Improving quality in IVET through partnership networks aims also to support the schools to implement the European Common Framework on Quality Assurance, by developing methodologies to support the EQARF implementation in the national context and by creating networks of schools in order to share good practices in quality assurance and providing training to teachers, managers and school inspectors.

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528 http://parteneriatpentruocalitate.tvet.ro
Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET at provider level since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008

Starting with 2003, following the involvement of Romanian experts in the Technical Group on Common Quality Assurance Framework at the European level, the first pilot of self-evaluation procedure at the provider level was implemented. The piloting phase took place with financial support of a Phare Project. After the piloting phase, the set of indicators and quality principles were revised and also correlate with those drafted by the law on quality assurance. The self-evaluation procedures of IVET providers was harmonised with the national quality assurance tools for self-assessment implemented for all schools in pre-university education.

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in continuous VET

Context

The continuous VET offer in Romania is rather fragmented and shared between public and private CVT providers, licensed and non-licensed programs. Any institution can offer continues training programs on the free market, but only those who are authorized are allowed to offer national recognized certificates.

The current public offer of CVT is focused on long term training programs offering full qualifications, while demand from labour market training is often oriented on shorter term and narrower qualifications. The private offer is more flexible and diverse, but not many of the private providers are interested to become authorized especially because of the bureaucratic and sometimes not trusted authorization procedures. Some of the private providers opt to implement other quality assurance systems (ISO for example).

The CVT providers market includes:

- **Publicly funded CVET providers.** Main programs are addressed to unemployed adults, providing qualifications or re-qualifications. Most of the public funded programs are developed under the National Agency for Employment co-ordination and are implemented by Regional and Local Training Centres. Other institutions that may offer publicly funded CVT are higher education institutions (such as teacher training) and units of vocational and technical education - subordinated to the Ministry of Education. Publicly funded programs are offered based on tender procedure and private CVT providers could also apply.

- **Other sector or employers training centres** - operating on the basis of the specific legislation, such as training centres in specific fields organized by different ministries or other public Institutions.

- **Private training organizations:**
  - Training business companies providing training based on fees from employers or individuals.
  - Organisations of employers, chambers of commerce, and trade unions, NGO-s providing training for different types of beneficiaries, according to their target groups in different programs.
  - Folk Universities, providing adult education based on a fees paid by individuals or companies.

Investment in training and education remains still weak in the majority of Romanian companies.

An important resource for funding CVET activities in Romania in the last years were the EU funds. Phare Programs for Human Resources Development and starting with 2007 structural funds allocated important amount of money on training activities.

The following sections will refer to the quality assurance system at the level of authorised training providers, regulated by the law and other methodologies and tools.
National Framework for CVET – who is in charge of what?

The last regulation on quality assurance in CVT is the Ordinance No 129/2000 on adult training. In the recent years this regulation was under debate and an updated version is expected to be approved soon. The need for changes on the regulation is due to the institutional re-organization at the central level in CVET system in Romania starting with 2011, but also due to the fact that quality assurance is now limited only to the accreditation procedure of training providers.

According to Ordinance No 129/2000, the quality assurance in CVET in Romania is a rather decentralised, **County Authorization Commissions** being in charge with assessing the training programs and providing a national authorization. At the central level, the former Adult Training Board was in charge of coordinating the activity of the county commission. Starting with 2011, a new established institution - National Authority for Qualifications (under the co-ordination of Ministry of Education) - took this responsibility, although its focus is on developing and implementing the National Qualification Framework.

According to the Government Decision no. 556/2011, **National Qualifications Authority (NQA)** took over a set of responsibilities regarding the quality of CVET:

- Develops strategic CVET plans and programs of national interest.
- Ensure technical implementation, management and updating National Register of Adult Training Providers and National Register of Assessors.

At the moment, the **Service for CVET provider’s authorization** under the NQA has the following responsibilities regarding quality assurance in CVET:

- Develop methodologies, regulations and guidelines at national level for the authorization process of training providers.
- Coordinates and controls the activity of the county authorization commissions and their technical secretariats.
- Participate in developing the methodology for implementing the principles of quality assurance in vocational training of adults.
- Monitor the activity of authorized training providers.

Statutory stakeholder involvement in CVET systems

According to the Law no. 132/1999, Sector committees are social dialogue institutions of public benefit organised at the level of different economic activities and with national representation. As representatives of various stakeholders, Sector Committees are involved in drafting national and sectoral continuous training policies and strategies, playing an important role in identifying training needs based and defining new qualifications and occupations. Sector Committees are involved also in defining the assessment and accreditations standards for training providers. At the moment, 15 Sector Committees are established at the national level, but their involvement in CVET planning, implementing or evaluation is rather sinuous and differs in intensity from sector to sector. In the recent years, Sector Committees were partners of NQA in different strategic projects on institutional and capacity building of stakeholders in CVET.

Planning at CVET system level and identification of training needs

As mentioned before, National Qualifications Authority has the responsibility at the national level to develop strategic CVET plans and programs of national interest. At the moment, the planning and identification of continuous training needs methodologies are under development.

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529 National Qualifications Authority is acting as National Coordination Point for European Qualifications Framework as well as National Coordinator for European Adult Learning Agenda Implementation.

530 http://www.anc.gov.ro
Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on CVET providers

According to the Ordinance No 129/2000 on adult training, any public or private institution can offer continues training programs on the free market, but only those who are authorized are allowed to offer national recognized certificates. Employers may also organize continuous training for their employees, but they can’t offer national recognised certificates unless they are legally licensed for each specific program. An authorisation on a specific qualification is valid 4 years.

In order to be authorized a training providers must demonstrate that the training programs are conducted by trainers who have appropriate specialization in the field of the training program but also a specific pedagogical background in adult learning methodologies.

The authorization may be withdrawn by the County Authorization Commission if the provider is not complying with the authorization regulation or, repeatedly the learning results of trainees on the final examination are unsatisfactory. The training provider whose authorization has been withdrawn may request a new authorization only after one year from the date of withdrawal or even can lose the right to organize training in a specific qualification in case its authorization was withdrawn twice.

Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)

The certification and assessment process is stated in the legislation and is based on a set of assessment standards for each qualification described in the National Register of Qualifications, which currently aims at becoming compatible with the National Qualification Framework. The assessment is organised by the provider. In the examination commission are nominated two representatives of the County Authorization Commissions. Most of the qualification programs are offering a full qualification certificate. The learning acquired in non-formal or informal context could also be assessed and validated by Local Centres for Assessment of Competences. Their number tends to increase, due to a rise in service demand by beneficiaries. The Centres for Assessment of Competences are accredited by the NQA based on the Ordinance 129/2000 and the subsequent methodologies.

Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators

At the central level, National Authority for Qualifications is in charge of monitoring the activity of County Authorization Commissions but also of the training providers. The National Register of Training Providers is collecting regularly basic information on the authorized training programs.

The monitoring process follows the authorization criteria and is focused on:

- General quality of the curriculum
- Former experience of the training provider and outcomes of learning processes
- Human and physical resources available for the training program

A recently implemented ESF strategic project lead by National Authority for Qualifications – CALISIS531 aimed to improve the actual quality assurance system in CVET, drafting new monitoring methodologies and assessment standards, proposing profiles and training pathways for assessors involved in evaluation and monitoring process.

Reforms of quality assurance in CVET since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)

In 2011 National Qualification Authority was established. The NQA was appointed the Ministry of Education as the National Coordination Point for European Qualification Framework as well as National Coordinator for European Adult Learning Agenda Implementation. CALISIS ESF strategic project was implemented in the view of improving the current quality assurance system in CVT.

Reforms of quality assurance in CVET since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008

In 2003 the authorization policy of training providers was already implemented. National Council for Adult Training Board, a tripartite body with representatives of government, employers and trade unions was in charge for policy and strategies on CVT in Romania, including identification of training needs on the labour market. In 2007 the National Register of Adult Training Providers becomes functional. In parallel, the first Centres for Assessment of Competences acquired in non-formal and informal learning were established.

Sector Committees started to function and institution building activities for social partnership were supported by ETF in Romania. Phare projects on Human Resources Development and other pre-ESF projects were implemented in order to increase participation in CVET. A multiannual Phare project supported the establishing of the National Qualifications Authority by institution building activities and drafting methodologies for qualification.

Quality assurance arrangements in continuous VET at provider level

The only regulations at the provider level are those regarding the licensing, described above. At the present, CVET providers are not required to have specific quality assurance measures in place. In the above mentioned ESF strategic project CALISIS a guide on implementing the system of quality assurance at the CVT provider level has been drafted, but not yet implemented.

Part 2 – Interaction between national quality assurance and EQAVET

National Reference Point

National Group for Quality Assurance (GNAC) acts as EQAVET National Reference Point in Romania. The GNAC was established in 2006 based on an association agreement signed by: the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour, Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education, National Council for Vocational Training of Adults, National Centre for Development of Technical and Vocational Education and the National Centre to Train Pre-University Education Staff. Each partner institution delegates a representative as a member of the board of GNAC.

According to the statutory act, the National Group for Quality Assurance in education and training is an advisory inter-institution coordinating body, without legal personality, operating at national level in the field of quality assurance in vocational training.

The main responsibilities of GNAC are the following:

- Facilitates inter-institutional coordination of an integrated approach to vocational training system.
- Drafts proposals and recommendations on quality assurance in vocational training;
- Informs relevant stakeholders on EQAVET network activity.
- Provides national support for implementing the work program of EQAVET Network.
- Supports the implementation of the EQAVET in the national context.
- Increases awareness of stakeholders on the benefits of using the principles, criteria and indicators as proposed by the EQAVET.
- Strengthens the cooperation (including through peer learning, peer review and benchmarking) between training at European and national level.

534 National Council for Vocational Training of Adults was institutionally integrated in 2009 under the new established National Qualifications Authority
535 National Centre to Train Pre-University Education Staff becomes in 2010 a department in the framework of Ministry of Education.
 GNAC secretary is shared between the National Centre for Development of Technical and Vocational Education and Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education and have no other financial support for the activity, than one person in each institution taking the responsibility without extra pay.

The main GNAC activities implemented so far consist of board meetings at the request of its members, when a common decision on different quality assurance issues is necessary. Taking into account that there is no financial support for GNAC activities, most of the GNAC activities were developed by its members in the framework of different projects implemented by the institutions that are part of GNAC (the National Centre for Development of Technical and Vocational Education in partnership with Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education):

The main activities developed in the projects related to GNAC mission were the following:

- Outcomes and results of the project QUALVET@RO Promoting Quality! Capacity Development of NRP for EQAVET in Romania:
  - Drafting a communication strategy for GNAC in order to strengthen the cooperation between relevant institutions and social partners in the view of building a common culture of quality in Romania.
  - Developing the GNAC website (www.gnac.ro).
  - 1,000 pages of documents translated into Romanian (European and national policies on quality in education and training, best practices, specific tools etc.).
  - 2000 of leaflets, newsletters and three booklets of best practices developed by foreign partners distributed to key stakeholders.
  - Eight regional workshops and two conferences, which enable debate on communication strategy and materials developed.

- Outcomes and results of the project Improving quality in IVET trough partnership networks
  - Development and testing the methodology for implementing EQARF / EQAVET in IVET in Romania.
  - Develop the implementation strategy EQARF / EQAVET in IVET at the system and the provider level, using partnership networks.

It is reported that the main added value of the NRP is the fact that it promoted the EQAVET principles and European experiences and good practices to a large number of stakeholders and also provided the opportunity to open the dialog between the main responsible institutions on quality assurance in Romania. The activities of GNAC also increase the awareness of its members for the need for a more coherent vision and interlinks of different European instruments at the national level.

The National Qualifications Authority – the National Coordination Point for EQF is also member of GNAC and one of the representatives of the National Centre for Development of Technical and Vocational Education is member of the ECVET expert group. Two other members of GNAC are also very active in the ECVET European Groups. Therefore the EQAVET NRP is interlinked with those in charge of these two instruments.

There is no explicit outcomes-monitoring strategy for NRP, but the plan is to continue the activities in the future, although the extra work for the secretariat of GNAC is seen as being a challenge under the institutional and financial regulation. Short term proposed activities are the followings:

- To propose to the responsible ministries and other high-level decision makers the policy recommendation document on the activity of GNAC and quality assurance in Romania.
- Update regularly the web site of GNAC (translations, projects, policy documents etc.).
- Active participation of GNAC members to European networks and working groups.
- Drafting a Ministry Order on the Implementation Strategy for EQARF and EQAVET in Romania.

537 Project QUALVET @ EN Promote quality! Developing institutional capacity of the National Reference Point of EQAVET in Romania
National approach to enhance quality assurance

In spite of GNAC awareness campaign on European quality assurance approaches, processes and instruments, the EQAVET (but also other European instruments on quality assurance) is still not explicitly present on the policy agenda. Although quality is one of the most important priorities in all educational policy documents, there is no policy commitment at the high-level decision towards a more coherent and strategic approach. Even at the level of experts that are familiar with the quality approaches at the European level there are still different understandings on concepts, principles and specific tools. A more coherent vision would be needed in order to link the quality approaches between different systems as initial and continuing training, pre-university education and universities, the education world and the world of work. Little interest is also noticed at the level of main stakeholders: companies, professional associations or trade unions.

In December 2012 GNAC launched the Communication Strategy of the National Reference Point (GNAC)\(^\text{538}\). The main objectives of the strategy are the following:

- Informing and consulting key stakeholders on European tools.
- Developing a framework for national dialogue to ensure that all stakeholders take part in the debate on the implementation of European instruments in education and training.
- Promoting the principles of common approach, consistency and coherency in implementing European instruments
- Involving stakeholders and using the already acquired expertise and good practices.

The strategy was presented in a national conference in 2012. Based on the feedback received the member of GNAC drafted a policy recommendation to be presented to the main policy decision makers in Romania. The policy recommendation documents called “Towards an integrated EU policy implementation in education and training”\(^\text{539}\)

Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance and challenges for the future implementation

EQAVET has a direct influence more on the level of IVET and general education quality assurance systems. Actually, all the principles and descriptors of EQAVET were harmonised and reviewed at the national quality assurance system level. EQAVET has less influence on CVET quality assurance national policy proposals, some of the interviewees believing that the new proposals for CVET quality assurance guidelines are more likely to follow an ISO model.

The main contribution of the EQAVET framework to Romanian developments on quality assurance was the following:

- European activities created an opportunity for different relevant national stakeholders to engage in a discussion on quality assurance and to participate in debates.
- It also created the awareness on the need for more systematic data collections system, which is seen at the moment as the weakest point that needs to be addressed for a more evidence informed policy. In the view of the interviewed experts, data collection systems in Romania and also the forecasts on education and training have to be improved in order to strengthen the planning and system evaluation processes.
- The examples provided from other countries with a longer history in quality assurance were a great opportunity for learning. A lot of important projects implemented in Romania in the recent years in quality assurance were developed within valuable European partnerships born in the EQAVET networks, meetings and informal events.

According to the persons interviewed, the EQAVET recommendation and tools are very useful and easy to be adapted to the Romanian context, especially because Romania started only in the last years to develop the quality assurance system and had the opportunity to synchronize the developments with those at the European level. The main


challenge remains the data collection for some indicators, the interviewed experts expressing comments on the following:

- **Indicator 1** (share of VET providers applying internal quality assurance) – in IVET system all the providers are obliged to use internal quality assurance, while CVET providers are not likely to introduce internal quality assurance unless requested to do so by legislation.
- **Indicator 2** (share of teachers and trainers participating to complementary training activities) – needs to be defined more clearly in the Romanian context (what types of training? what type of providers? what type of certification?).
- **Indicator 3a and 3b** – might be assimilated with some other relative available indicators (e.g. for IVET - transition rate in upper secondary education and training), if not the national collection system should be developed.
- **Indicator 4a and 4b** might be assimilated with some other relative available indicators (e.g. for IVET – dropout rate and success rate in upper secondary education and training), if not the national collection system should be developed.
- **Indicator 5 and 6** – data collection was initiated under several pilot projects implemented at local and regional level, but there is no national data collection available at the moment.

The National Centre for Development of Technical and Vocational Training drafted a *Strategy for Implementing EQAVET in IVET quality assurance system*. The strategy is based on a systematic analysis of the EQAVET recommendations on principles and indicators, identifying also the main strategic objectives for the next years. The main strategic goals are the following:

- Revising the quality assurance methodologies at the national level and at the provider level.
- Strengthening inter-institutional and national partnerships between institutions with responsibilities in quality assurance in training.
- Strengthening GNAC responsibilities (expanding membership, creating working groups and advisory councils for specific types of issues).
- Developing the data collection procedures in order to better respond to the national planning and monitoring procedures and tools.
- Improving the quality assurance systems on certification of learning outcomes
- Improving the methodology for recognition of competences acquired in non-formal and informal.

It was also reported in the interviews that urgent issues in implementing EQAVET in Romania for the near future are:

- Harmonising the quality assurance systems between IVET and CVT, but also with the quality assurance system in university education.
- Improving the data collection system (especially core indicators at system level)
- Developing tools for quality assurance regarding the certification of learning outcomes, including non-formal and informal learning.

The interviewed experts mentioned also that the above strategic goals could become a reality only with the political support of decision makers because those measures require changes in legislation but also additional responsibilities for all institutions involved.

**Synergies with other EU level instruments**

A coherent vision was developed on the school inspection (external evaluation) and self-evaluation approach at pre-university level, including VET and post-secondary VET, but this however is not enough for assuring a vertical coherence since CVET and university quality assurance systems still use a different approach.

As far as horizontal approach is concerned, all persons interviewed expressed the opinion of a limited synergy of EQAVET with other EU level tools. At the expert level the need for synergy is clearly expressed but the major challenge is to bring this need to the policy
agenda. Even at the expert level there is a need for more clarification on definitions on some key concepts in quality assurance process.

The NQF debates took into consideration the issue of quality assurance but there is not yet a clear and common understanding of the approach. Drafting the NQF faced the same fragmented vision between IVET, CVT and university system. University quality assurance system is seen as being very different than all other approaches, especially because this is mainly based on input indicators and is focused mainly on formal learning.

Validation and certification of informal and non-formal learning outcomes is an important challenge for all the EU instruments and the future developments on this issue might create an opportunity for a common framework of discussion in the near future.

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**Technical reports**


Country report - Slovak Republic

Author: Daniela Ulicna (ICF GHK)

Part 1 – Description of quality assurance arrangements and of recent developments

The quality assurance in initial VET is based on:

- External evaluation of VET providers by inspection;
- External evaluation of the education system by inspection as well as standardised assessments;
- System-level involvement of stakeholders in the design of VET policies and qualifications – this was reformed in 2009 to support stronger stakeholder involvement but implementation is still under way;
- Internal planning at provider level is related to the requirement for schools to develop school-level curricula and assessment plans. There is no requirement for internal quality assurance.

In CVET the main developments in the past decade are:

- Reform of the accreditation procedure for publicly funded CVET courses which will link programmes to nationally defined qualifications standards – this work is currently in early stages but already underpinned in legislation since 2009;
- Development of an information system in CVET.

The planned development of qualifications system and framework will affect quality assurance of qualifications design and award in both IVET and CVET.

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in initial VET

Context

Initial VET in Slovakia is school-based. Schools are thus main providers of VET when it comes to education and training at upper-secondary as well as post-secondary level. Quality assurance in VET is to a certain extent identical to quality assurance in general education, in particular when it comes to the QA requirements for schools and teaching staff. However, there are certain aspects that are specific to VET and regulated by specific legislation (see below).

The governance of VET has three levels:

- National level
- Regional level
- School level

The bodies involved in VET governance at national level are:

- Mainly the Ministries of Education, Home Affairs, and Health Care. Other ministries (labor, industry, development, transports and infrastructure, agriculture, culture and environment) contribute to the definition of needs for VET
- Regions
- Representatives of employers and of sectors/professions
- Trade unions

National level decisions concern the overall conception of the education system, strategies of education policy and preparation of legislation. VET framework programmes are also defined nationally (see below).

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540 The Education Act (245/2008 Z.z) and the Act on pedagogical staff and professionals in education (317/2009 Z.z) cover pre-primary, primary, secondary and post-secondary education.

541 The Act on vocational education and training (184/2009 Z.z)
Those involved at **regional level** are:

- The regional education office and public employment office (these are regional branches of national institutions)
- The regional governing body
- Regional education council (advisory body at regional level)
- Employers representatives and trade unions

Regions make suggestions to the Ministry regarding changes in the education infrastructure, opening and closing of schools and of programmes. They also make decisions regarding funding allocations to schools and funding of buildings and equipment. Regions also have other responsibilities related to quality assurance such as nominations of examination committees or gathering of statistics.

**School councils** (at the level of the individual school) are set up by those organisations that set up the school. The composition and responsibilities of school councils are defined at national level\(^{542}\).

**The general framework for quality assurance**

At national level, the main institutions in charge of quality assurance are the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports (the Ministry of education later in the report), the Slovak State School Inspectorate (Inspectorate later in the report) and the National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements (NUCEM). Other national agencies involved are:

- State Vocational Education Institute (SIOV) which among other things defines national curricula
- The National pedagogical institute (SPU) which defined the national curricula for general education subjects
- The methodological and pedagogical centre (MPC) that provides in-service teacher training and supports the quality of teaching and learning
- The Institute for information and prognosis in education (UIPV) which carries out statistical analysis of the education and training system

There is also an advisory body at national level called Government Council for VET\(^{543}\) which brings together representatives of the State, employers/ professions and employees. Its role is to advise the government and the Ministry of education on VET policy. It has a number of sectoral working groups.

Stakeholders have a role in the national QA process regarding definition of qualifications and framework VET programmes.

Overall rules for quality assurance are embedded in several legislations:

- The School Act (245/2008 Z.z) defines the principles, rules and requirements for education and training in schools. It contains a section on monitoring and measurement of quality of education and training
- The Act on vocational education and training (184/2009 Z.z) complements the above by defining certain specificities of VET, in particular the roles of stakeholders;
- The Act on pedagogical staff and professional employees in education (317/2009 Z.z) defines the requirements for teachers’ qualifications and continuous development
- The Act on public administration in education (596/2003 Z.z) defines the responsibilities of the education governance structures at different levels (national, regional and school level)

**Planning at VET system level and requirements for evaluation and review**

The Act on public administration in education (596/2003) sets that the Ministry has the responsibility for the overall conception and strategy of the education and training system in Slovakia. There are no formal requirements for regular review of conception documents and

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542 Act on public administration in education and education governance (596/2003 Z.z)
there is for the moment not an established tradition of issuing and reviewing strategic plans in education and training policy.

The same legislation defines that regions have to set up investment plans and plans for resource allocation to schools (including VET schools).

When it comes to ensuring that the supply of VET graduates meets the demands of the labour market the following requirements for planning are defined in the Act on VET (184/2009):

- The Ministry of education together with representatives of employers and professions identifies those VET programmes which provide too high numbers of graduates compared to the demands of the labour market (note that in Slovakia the current problem of VET is that some programmes have very high graduates’ unemployment rates) but also those where there is insufficient supply of graduates.
- Representatives of professions and employers develop forecasts of labour market needs.
- These are presented to the regional education councils.

Regions are required to collect statistical information. NUCEM carries out national testing of students but this concerns only general education subjects (see also below).

The Inspection monitors the quality of education and training using a set of defined indicators (see below). The Inspection prepares a report on the state and level of education and training on annual basis. This summarises the results of the inspections in the year under review and presents the data against some of the indicators (but not all). There is a separate section on upper-secondary schools but not on VET as such. The report presents some of the data distinguishing general education subjects and vocational subjects.

Due to rather high unemployment rates of certain VET programmes, the ministry of education has relatively recently paid particular attention to the analysis and publication of information on unemployment rates of VET graduates. 

**Stakeholder involvement, identification of training needs**

Stakeholders are involved in VET at system level in the following manner:

- The above mentioned Government Council on VET comprises more than one third of representatives of employers, sectors and employees. The remaining seats are shared between representatives of regions and ministries.
- The representatives of employers and professions issue forecasts of labour market needs, develop materials which serve as basis for describing competences and skills for carrying out professions in line with labour market needs, participate in development of graduates’ profiles in terms of knowledge, skills and competence but also material and technical equipment of schools.
- They are also expected to cooperate with VET schools in development of VET school curricula, comment on the design of examinations from vocational subjects which are part of the upper-secondary certificate.
- Employers and employees’ should also be represented in governance structures at regional level. Their participation in governance of VET schools is not required by legislation (which defines the rules for both general education and VET). However, it is possible that those organisations which set up school councils invite representatives from the labour market to be members of school councils. Parents are always members of school councils.

**Certification, assessment and validation of learning**

There are different types of VET programmes in Slovakia but in general they lead to.

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545 The Act on vocational education and training (184/2009 Z.z)

546 Education act (245/2008 Z.z)
A final examination (does not give access to higher education) and achievement of the ‘professional certificate’ which qualifies for an occupation.

The upper-secondary leaving examination (maturita – which gives access to higher education) and the achievement of the ‘professional certificate’.

Graduate examination and achievement of the title ‘qualified specialist’ for post-secondary VET programmes.

VET qualifications at secondary level are based on national curricula defined at national level. The national curricula contain a section called ‘graduate’s profile’ which define the expected knowledge, skills and competence from a graduate. They also provide guidelines for the teaching process in terms of objectives, numbers of taught hours for different groups of subjects, recommended sources and equipment needed.

The final examination (which does not give access to higher education) has to be composed of a written, oral and practical part. Schools define the content of this examination.

For the upper-secondary leaving examination (maturita) this has three parts:

- An external assessment that concerns certain general education subjects, namely mathematics, Slovak language and foreign languages.
- Internal assessment that concerns other general education subjects or vocational education subjects
- A practical part.

The national curriculum also contains:

- Guidance for schools on how to define the upper-secondary leaving certificate final examination for the vocational part of the assessment; and
- A generic set of assessment criteria to be applied by the school.

These guidelines are rather generic – applying to a full set of qualifications/programmes of the same type - and not specific to a given field of study.

These should be translated into a more detailed and specific plan at the level of the school.

Final assessment for vocational subjects is defined by the school in line with the above guidance. The assessment has to be carried out in front of a committee the composition of which is defined by legislation (School Act). The committee for vocational subjects should comprise a representative of the relevant professional organisation or sector if they are nominated by the relevant body representing employers or professions.

**Who can deliver VET and under what conditions**

Schools can be set up by public or private legal entities. The conditions for setting up a school are clearly defined in the Act on public administration in education (596/2003 Z.z).

Among a range of documents regarding the capacity of the institution to deliver educational activities, the legal entity concerned has to provide a statement of the region about the setting up of the school. In case of VET schools the related national administration (for those fields of study where the administration is a key stakeholder such as health care) or the employers’ representative need to issue a positive statement on setting up of the school.

Private, public as well as church schools comply with the same requirements as defined in the School Act and other acts listed above.

**Monitoring inspection and use of indicators**

The improvement of quality of education and training is among the key roles of the school inspection. The results of inspections are expected to be used by schools to improve the quality of education and training, school management, education outcomes and conditions for education and training. The results are also expected to be used by those setting up schools and by the regional education councils in the management of education and training provision.\(^{547}\)

\(^{547}\) Skolska Statne Inspekcia (2011) Vyrocna sprava
The Inspection monitors the performance of the education system based on the results of school inspection visits. The inspection monitoring is based on a defined set of indicators. The indicators for VET used in 2012/2013 cover the following areas:

- **School management:**
  - School curriculum
  - Pedagogical process
  - School management and internal quality assurance
  - School climate and culture
  - School services
- **Conditions for education and training:**
  - Human resources
  - Facilities
  - Equipment
  - Use of facilities and equipment
  - Health and safety
- **Teaching process and outcomes:**
  - Teaching by teachers
  - Learning by students

The results of this monitoring are compiled into a thematic annual report on the state of education in Slovakia which is publicly available.

The inspection also monitors and reports on the conditions in which VET schools carry out final assessment and the school-based part of the upper-secondary leaving examination (maturita).

*The main changes to QA at system level introduced since 2009 (Adoption of the EQAVET Recommendation)*

A key issue for quality assurance in VET, since the adoption of the 2009 act on VET, is strengthening participation of VET stakeholders. Though the legal basis is in place in practice the involvement of stakeholders remains patchy. Two major national level projects (ESF funded) are currently being prepared:

- Development of the national qualifications framework and system (underpinned by a register of qualifications). As will be discussed below the qualifications system is already defined in the Lifelong learning Act but is for the moment not operational. The planned project will develop the qualifications and assessment standards for VET (some of these are already drafted), which will serve as basis for definition of VET national curricula as well as for recognition of non-formal and informal learning (see below) and CVET programmes. This project will be implemented as of 2013 and will start with initial VET qualifications.
- Development of upper-secondary VET. This project (also to be implemented as of 2013) will assess the quality of teaching and training materials in VET, pilot the introduction of work-based programmes in VET, develop vocational career guidance and design and implement a method for analysis of graduates’ unemployment. This project is expected to support quality of VET and its responsiveness to labour market needs.

*The main changes introduced since 2003 (beginning of the EU cooperation that led to EQAVET adoption)*

The main changes in IVET quality assurance since 2003 are:

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Greater autonomy of schools in defining school curricula as introduced by the School Act (there is now a more general national curriculum and the detailed school curriculum is for each school to define). This requires a completely new approach to planning education provision at school level (see also below).

The adoption of the Act on vocational education and training in 2009. This legislation in particular set the legal basis to strengthen the role of stakeholder representatives in defining VET priorities and VET programmes.

Over the last decade the approach of the school inspection has changed and a new monitoring indicator framework was introduced covering both general education (different levels) and VET.

Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in initial VET

Quality assurance at provider level in Slovakia is based on:

- Regular school visits of the state school inspection.
- Requirement for headmasters to issue a strategy for school development and to present to the school council its evaluation.
- Activities supporting self-evaluation at school level.

As described above, the school inspection visits follow a defined set of indicators (see above). The inspection can result in a set of recommendations for the school, if the findings are more serious the school needs to develop an official plan to address the recommendations. In most serious cases the inspection report can lead to sanctions. The individual school-level inspection reports are not publicly available in Slovakia. The results of inspections are discussed by the governance structures of the school. There is currently a certain willingness among academics and school inspection officials to bridge external evaluation done by school inspection with internal evaluation but this is not yet common practice.  

The school director is required to provide the school council with an activity report of the school. The report is for approval of the school council and therefore it remains a rather formal act. The director is also required to present a school development programme when s/he takes the function of headmaster and to report on its implementation. However, there are no further requirements regarding how the information on progress and on the state of the school should be collected.

Self-assessment at school level is not required in Slovakia but schools’ directors can decide to do it. There is currently no information about the extent to which schools (of any kind including VET schools) are using this possibility but one person interviewed noted that it is likely to be a low proportion.

At the same time there are activities that aim to support the development of self-assessment by schools (all schools not just VET schools) in Slovakia. Namely:

- The school inspection currently runs a project called *External school assessment supporting self-assessment and development of schools*. This ESF funded national project has two objectives:
  - To train external assessors (inspectors) to use new methods and approaches to external evaluation aimed at continuous improvement rather than the more traditional approach to control.
  - To develop a self-assessment model for schools and to pilot it with a sample of schools.
- The national methodological and pedagogical centre (MPC) offers courses on school self-assessment to pedagogical staff and school headmasters.

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551 Novak (2011) *Prehľad klúčových javov, vlastností, posuzovanych činností vrátane tvorby inštrukčných a meracích nástrojov merania kvality školy*

552 Idem


The above-mentioned project of the inspection refers to the cooperation in quality assurance in school education as part of the standing international conference of inspectorate.

The State Vocational institute (SIOV) is also developing a methodology/guidance for self-assessment of providers. This will be a tool for voluntary use at provider level. The document is being designed but it is expected to be clearly based on the EQAVET cycle of planning-implementation – evaluation and review.

**Quality assurance arrangements at system level in continuous VET**

**Context**

In Slovakia further education is defined as follows (note that the text below is not an exact translation):

Further education builds on school education or higher education and gives the learner the possibility to acquire a partial or full qualification or to complement, update, broaden or deepen an existing qualification...

It covers CVET but also other forms of adult learning. The term used in Slovak legislation is lifelong learning (though it does not cover any aspects of initial education and training). For clarity, this text uses the term further education.

This field of education is governed by a relatively recent Act on Lifelong learning (568/2009 Z.z) which entered into force progressively as from 2010 and its implementation is still work in progress.

This legislation brings several major developments into the process of quality assurance in CVET in Slovakia (but also the rest of adult learning). It builds on the previously existing system of accreditations that is currently being phased out. However, due to the fact that the system introduced by the 2009 legislation is not yet fully implemented the accreditation system from the period before 2009 remains still partly in application.

The law on lifelong learning combines the following pillars:

- Accreditation of programmes and the requirements for accredited programmes.
- Recognition of non-formal and informal learning.
- Qualifications register and related information system.

Accreditation is one of the requirements for the programme to be eligible for funding from public employment services.\(^{555}\)

**National framework: who is in charge of what**

According to the legal text, full and partial qualifications that can be achieved through further education will be registered in the national register of qualifications. The development of these qualification descriptions was in early stages at the time of writing this report. The maintenance and updating of the register is the shared responsibility between the ministry of education, employers and employees’ representatives, representatives of regions, representatives of further education providers and other ministries.

The ministry of education together with other relevant ministries and in particular the ministry of labour define the framework conditions for accreditation of programmes and for the other pillars of the Act on lifelong learning.

Most publicly funded further education is funded as part of support measures to employability for unemployed. Public employment services tender for provision of training activities. They are required to fund only accredited courses with a few exceptions.

Employers can receive a reimbursement for part of the training costs when it comes to training for people in employment. There are no conditions regarding the quality assurance of such training in the relevant legal framework (the Act on employment services - 5/2004).

\(^{555}\) Act on employment services (5/2004 Z.z)
Planning at CVET system level

The main planning document for reforms and policy development in further education in Slovakia is the Lifelong learning strategy, first adopted in 2007 and then updated in 2011. The Strategy defines the main areas for action when it comes to government intervention in the area of CVET. The 2011 update of the strategy is supported by an action plan that defines concrete measures to be implemented by 2015.

One of the key areas for action identified is the need to ensure better matching between labour markets needs and the supply of further education, currently judged insufficient.556

Stakeholder involvement

The above mentioned Lifelong learning strategy intends to strengthen the role of stakeholders in defining the needs for further education. This will take place through the work of sectoral councils. A number of sectoral councils is already operational557 and a number of examples of good practice in cooperation between stakeholders and further education providers have been identified558. The main challenge for the years to come is to make this cooperation systematic.

Who can deliver CVET

Further education in Slovakia can be delivered by a range of public and private organisations. It can be delivered by schools, universities, NGOs as well as private companies.

Only organisations accredited to carry out a given training programme recognised as ‘further education’ under the Act on further education, can issue certificates/qualifications linked to these programmes.

Certification, assessment and validation

The Act on lifelong learning defines:

- That all accredited further education programmes have to be completed by a final assessment (which is accessible to candidates who took part in at least 75% of the training programme); that the final assessment focuses on knowledge, skills and competence regarding the professional activities targeted by the programme; that for those programmes that lead to full or partial qualifications have to be assessed in front of a jury. To be accredited, education institutions have to demonstrate how these conditions are satisfied for the given programme.

- The conditions under which individuals can get recognition for knowledge, skills and competence gained through other forms of learning than formal education or completion of accredited programmes. This form of assessment can only be carried out by entitled organisations and under defined conditions. In practice the intention is that these organisations will be VET schools or in some cases professional chambers (in cooperation with VET schools). The assessment has to follow the assessment standard, it is carried out by a jury and has a theoretical and practical part.

A major change in quality assurance of CVET in the years to come is expected to arise from the implementation of the national qualifications system. This will define national standards for qualifications as well as the related assessment standards which will have to be followed by all CVET providers.

Monitoring and evaluation

Until recently the monitoring of CVET in Slovakia was insufficient. The act on lifelong learning created the information system for further education. This comprises:

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556 See for example Barosova, Kosta, Dovalova and Keselova (2011) Vzdelavanie a priprava pre trh práce
557 See http://www.sustavapovolani.sk/sekterove-rady
558 See http://www.sustavapovolani.sk/priklady-dobrej-praxe-partnerstva-zamestnavatelov-skol-uspech-buducnosti
A register of further education institutions that deliver accredited programmes.
A register of accredited programmes.
A register of persons participating in further education.
A system for assessment of further education needs.

The Act introduced the obligation for further education institutions to provide data on a number of aspects regarding the programmes they deliver, such as participation and completion.

Main changes since 2009

The Act on Lifelong learning which brought in the vast majority of the aspects described above was adopted in 2009 and is being progressively implemented since 2010.

Quality assurance arrangements in continuous VET at provider level

The accreditation of the programme is the main quality assurance instrument in further education that defines the conditions CVET providers have to comply with. The Act on lifelong learning which regulates the accreditation process defines a number of programme design and delivery characteristics that providers have to comply with, such as:
- Definition of the programme target group.
- Entry conditions.
- Graduate profile (in terms of knowledge, skills and competence and relationship with professional activities).
- Education methods.
- Scope of the programme in terms of hours of training.
- Education programme and curriculum description.
- Final examination.
- Material and technical equipment.

Key aspects of the requirements defined in the accreditation process are:

- The nomination of a professional grantee who guarantees the quality of the programme. The conditions for who can be a grantee are defined in the accreditation manual.
- The profile of lecturers/ trainers is also defined in the accreditation manual. These have to combine professional competence in the programme area as well as the competence to design and deliver training.

The accreditation process does not require further education institutions to demonstrate that they have a system for internal quality assurance. However, the act on further education defines the requirements for documentation of accredited programmes, including the requirement for the institution to collect learners’ feedback in form of quality assessment.

Part 2 – Interaction between national quality assurance and EQAVET

National Reference Point

The National Reference Point is located within the State Vocational Education Institute (SIOV). As noted above SIOV is the main ministry agency in charge of VET development. It designs national curricula in VET and also has an advisory role in defining VET policies and practice. The institute also has a leading role in defining and implementing projects that support the development of VET and VET schools in Slovakia.

The NRP does not have a clearly defined mandate in terms of its activities. The NRP was nominated by the ministry of education based on the previous involvement of SIOV in the process of EQAVET. The NRP was formally nominated in 2011. The institution in which the NRP is located has for mission to carry out analytical/ research activities on quality assurance and quality.
The NRP does not have any specific budget. The unit in which the NRP is located (3 people) is also in charge of EQF (NCP) and also ECVET (membership in the users' group). Until now, all activities of the NRP are funded from the existing budget of SIOV.

Currently the main activities of the NRP are:

- Participation in national events and presentation of the topic of quality assurance and EQAVET.
- Participation in European activities.
- Advisory role - responding to queries from other institutions about EQAVET and quality assurance in VET more generally.

SIOV, and more concretely the person in charge of the NRP, is currently also working on developing a guidance tool/ methodology for self-assessment of VET providers adapted to the Slovak context (see below).

**National approach to enhance quality assurance**

There is no explicit strategic document that would define the steps/ measures to improve quality assurance in VET in Slovakia. There is no on-going work on such a document.

The main developments in the field of quality assurance in IVET are linked to the school reform and the introduction of school curricula and school-level planning of not only the curricula but also teacher training and assessment. These measures were embedded in the 2008 legislation and schools are still in the process of familiarising themselves with these. One interviewee noted that it is necessary to first ensure that schools gain an understanding of the reform first before moving ahead with further changes in the regulatory framework in terms of quality assurance.

In CVET the main changes related to quality assurance are embedded in the 2009 legislation on Lifelong Learning. The main current issue for this field is to fully implement these measures on the ground. As explained in the part one of this report a number of elements are still missing.

**The content of the EQAVET Framework – use and usefulness**

The recent legislations cited in section one of this report all carry elements that strengthen quality assurance in IVET and CVET. However, these are not always explicitly designated as quality assurance as such.

The main concern of the school reform (which covers also VET) was to enhance quality and to give schools the possibility to adjust their programmes and activities in a more flexible manner. Internal quality assurance is expected to be the next step that will need to be tackled in this context.

At the same time the theme of external quality assurance was paid quite a lot of attention in recent policy developments in Slovakia. A key development in this direction is the development of a system of external examinations/ assessments for different age groups (age of 10-11, 14-15 and 18-19). The objective of this project is to develop a system of external evaluation and monitoring of education achievement across all levels. The project also aims to training teachers and pedagogical staff on how to define assessment instruments and carry out assessment and it also plans to develop a system of indicators for monitoring of education and training. Though these assessments concern only general education subjects they also concern initial VET.

Quality assurance in CVET was also strengthened via the reformed accreditation procedure. Quality assurance was one of the key concerns behind the legislation on lifelong learning.

At this stage of development EQAVET did not affect the national regulatory framework for quality assurance nor the system of indicators used for external evaluation by the inspection.

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560 http://www.nucem.sk/sk/projekt_esf/project/13

561 main focus being mathematics, Slovak language and foreign language at higher levels
The European quality assurance framework is considered having had a stronger effect than EQAVET on national developments in terms of qualifications design and award. At the same time EQAVET is currently being used as inspiration for the development of a guidance/methodology for self-assessment at provider level. Though the interviewees considered the EQAVET framework as overall coherent, one highlighted that it does not refer to a key step in quality assurance and that is the identification of a problem(s) or gaps, which will be the basis for planning.

**Partner organisations involvement**

The main organisations towards which the NRP communicates about EQAVET are the ministry of education, the different agencies noted in part 1 of this document as well as the national agency of the lifelong learning programme, and the VET providers (see below). Given that the activities of the NRP are for the moment mainly based on communication during workshops and events there is no formal plan for engagement with stakeholders. The NRP is sometimes contacted by one of the ministry agencies to provide advice on the directions to take to ensure a given document/ action is aligned (or not contradictory) to EQAVET.

**Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance**

The direct influence of EQAVET on national developments is the fact that the already several times mentioned guidance/methodology for VET providers' self-assessment will bear clear references to and similarities with EQAVET. The NRP is also planning to carry out a comparison of how different countries tackle the issue of provider self-assessment. One interviewee also mentioned that the fact that EQAVET was included in the lifelong learning programme calls created some awareness and curiosity among VET providers. There are currently more people informed about EQAVET than a few years ago. However, according to the interviewees the awareness remains low. There are now some attempts to design projects, which deal with the issue of quality and quality assurance.

**Synergies with other EU level instruments**

The development of the qualifications system and framework was an important vehicle for strengthening quality assurance of VET qualifications, in particular in CVET. However, the synergies were rather about quality assurance in general than about EQAVET specifically (i.e. the people and documents do not refer to EQAVET in this context). When it comes to synergies between EQAVET and EQF, ECVET these remain mainly about communication and exchange of information at inter-personal level. This is facilitated by the fact that all are handled in the same organisation and the same unit.

No clear links with quality assurance in higher education were described by the interviewees.

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Country report – Slovenia

Author: Naomi Williamson (ICF GHK)

Part 1 – Description of quality assurance arrangements and of recent developments

The main developments in quality assurance in Slovenia over the last decade are:

- Introduction of elements of a monitoring and quality assurance framework;
- Systematic stakeholder involvement in qualification design and efforts to strengthen their involvement in assessment and certification;
- Legislation for VET introduced under the Vocational and Technical Education Act 2006;
- Introduction of self-assessment at provider level, and a significant increase in the implementation of this at provider level; and,
- Introduction of national quality indicators for VET and gradual development of a system of methodologies for VET quality assurance.

Accredited CVET follows the same quality assurance measures as in IVET. Non-formal or non-accredited CVET has a less explicit quality assurance framework and quality assurance is less systematic than in initial VET. However, one of the current aims in the national approach is to ensure that by 2013 all VET providers will have a quality development and assurance system in place. This is still a work in progress.

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in initial VET

National approach for initial VET - responsibilities

Initial VET in Slovenia is school-based. There is no VET available for the first nine years of compulsory education. Responsibility for VET is at the national level through the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport (formerly the Ministry of Education and Sport until early 2012), which looks after the majority of financial, administrative and expert tasks relating to VET. The Inspectorate for Education is an affiliated body of the Ministry, which oversees the implementation of legislation in pre-university institutions. There is currently no national quality assurance framework for VET at either IVET or CVET – this is currently in development as a part of a wider national framework, which will cover the whole education system.

The Slovenian Institute for Vocational Education and Training and the Institute for Adult Education have been developing a system of quality assurance in IVET and CVET, supported by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport. This system that traditionally includes existing curricula, qualifications and teacher training, accreditation of schools, final examinations and vocational matura, has begun to be developed (at system level) to include: a methodology for collecting data on quality indicators and annual quality reporting; and, (at the provider level) compulsory self-evaluation and establishment of quality management groups in schools, and annual reporting on progress.

Stakeholder involvement in initial VET system

Social partners (chambers, business services, trade unions) are required by law to consult with ministries to devise proposals for occupational standards, to fine-tune the framework of qualifications for each industry, to appoint members to final examination committees, to organise practical training in a work environment, to cooperate with schools in vocational orientation programmes, to determine the enrolment numbers, and to help support the definitions of curricula. They are a part of The Council of Experts for Vocational Education and Training, a body established by Government to support expert decision-making in pre-tertiary education.

The Chambers (The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia and the Chamber of Craft and Small Business of Slovenia), business associations and companies authorised by the ministry can conduct master-craftsman examinations, accredit employers to provide
practical training, and facilitate the practical part of the final examinations and of the vocational Matura in partnership with schools.

Trade unions ensure that pupils’ rights in practical training are respected in accordance with the relevant act, collective agreements, and apprenticeship contracts. Trade unions also nominate representatives to examination bodies.

Employers and parents are involved in quality management groups in schools.

**Planning at VET system level**

Major changes in the VET system were launched in 2001 when the modernisation of VET in Slovenia began.

In January 2007, Slovenia prepared a Lifelong Learning strategy[^562], which was presented for public discussion. In spring 2007, it was discussed by three expert government bodies in education, the Council of Experts for General Education, the Council of Experts for Vocational Education and Training and the Council of Experts for Adult Education. The following measures for lifelong learning were agreed:

- Improving the quality of education and training by modernising programmes, curricula and catalogues of knowledge from a lifelong learning perspective, developing educational and teaching strategies and providing quality training for professional staff;
- Developing various forms, methods and pathways of learning and suitable systems for recognising knowledge.
- Improving access to education and learning.
- Creating a suitable normative environment.
- Strengthening research and development and the non-governmental sector as a partner of the State.
- Creating suitable infrastructure, securing financial resources, preparing operational programmes to implement measures and promoting the strategy.

The CPI (Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training) is gradually developing a methodology for collecting data on quality indicators and they also prepare an annual quality report.

**Requirements for evaluation and review**

Evaluation of VET (including programmes and curricula) is directed by the Evaluation Council and is undertaken by the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training (CPI or Slovenian Institute for VET – Center RS za poklicno izobraževanje) and other public professional institutions[^563] such as the NSLE (National School for Leadership in Education[^564], NEIS (National Education Institute - Zavod RS za šolstvo), ERI (Educational Research Institute - Pedagoški inštitut[^565]), SIAE (Slovenian Institute for Adult Education – Andragoški center Slovenije) and RIC (National Examinations Centre – Državni izpitni center).

**Identification of training needs**

The CPI coordinates the procedure for examining the employer demand for an occupation and databases relating to labour demand. Data is drawn from the data collected by the Employment Service of Slovenia and other sources including sectoral economic strategies and future trends. The Council of Experts for VET confirms the occupational standard. This represents the order to draft an educational programme to meet the specifications of the occupational standard. These standards are revised every five years.

[^562]: Strategija Vseživljenjskosti Učenja V Slovenij, Ministrstvo za šolstvo in šport Republike Slovenije, 2007
[^564]: http://en.solazaravnatelje.si/
**Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on VET providers**

Educational programmes, based on vocational standards and which lead to vocational qualifications, are provided by upper secondary schools. It is also now possible to obtain a vocational qualification in higher education programmes (in faculties and higher professional schools). VET can be delivered by state and private schools. In Slovenia, an institution can only become an education provider if it is certified by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport. Only these certified providers can award valid diplomas.

Accreditation for the implementation of formal education programmes is based on the education of staff as well as the working environment of the institutions. There are a number of statutory provisions as well, all of which are the responsibility of the Schools Inspectorate.

**Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)**

Initial VET is delivered at upper secondary level through three routes:

- Technical upper secondary education from the ages 15 to 19 which lasts four years.
- Vocational upper secondary training from the ages of 15 to 18 and then have a plus two option (vocational technical upper secondary education which lasts two years from the ages of 18 to 20).
- Short-term vocational upper secondary training from the ages of 15 to 17 and which lasts two and a half to three years.

Around 30 per cent of students who continue into upper secondary education go onto the first option of vocational training. The second (short-term) is primarily for those who have failed basic education.

The National Qualifications Framework levels of education are defined in terms of outcome criteria: knowledge, skills and competences. These are currently being mapped to the EQF levels - a referencing report is in development.

Education programmes are verified by the Council of Experts for Vocational Education. Implementation of maturity exams and technical education is the responsibility of the National Examination Centre. It is also the main body responsible for monitoring the work of the examination bodies for validation and assessment of national vocational qualifications.

The VET provider is generally responsible for assessment and final examination (see below).

The other institutes mentioned above also contribute to the preparation of state-wide examinations in relation to their field of speciality.

**Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators**

The Vocational and Technical Education Act (OG. RS, no.79/2006) established quality indicators for the national VET system which are determined by the Council of Experts for VET. Quality monitoring indicators were adopted in October 2007 by the Council of Experts for Vocational and Technical Education. The Council of Experts defined quality indicators in line with the EQARF. These are intended to cover ‘most’ of the EQAVET recommendations and are as follows:

- Indicator 1 supports the establishment of quality systems in schools. In the first year of implementation, schools would focus on the following elements: establish a commission for quality assessment, design quality assessment instruments and prepare a report on the quality of the proposed measures for improvement.
- Indicators 2 and 3 focus on teachers as important agents of development quality. This includes monitoring: the proportion of teachers with the appropriate level of formal education (working conditions in the workplace teacher); the percentage of teachers who participate in continuing professional education, training and service training; and, the proportion of money invested.

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566 [http://www.siqa-vet.si/](http://www.siqa-vet.si/)
Indicators 4 and 5 focus on educational outcomes and monitor: the proportion of learners who have successfully completed training on time; and performance on the final exam and professional baccalaureate.

Indicator 6 monitors the effects of education, namely: learner destinations after six months / one year after completion of education (students in further education, employment or unemployed).

Indicator 7 is a contextual indicator and monitors the placement of schools in the local environment, namely: share of funds generated by developing and implementing seminars on behalf of the economy.

**Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)**

Since the adoption of the EQAVET Recommendation, most VET schools have taken part in a series of four consortia projects to implement the reforms of VET which, since the introduction of the 2006 Vocational and Technical Education Act, also include quality assurance. The national approach has not changed as its elements already are in alignment with the EQAVET Recommendation (prepared on the basis of CQAF).

**Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) - 2008**

In July 2006 Slovenia introduced the new Vocational and Technical Education Act which included provision for quality assurance at provider and national level. Each VET provider is required to assure the quality of their provision based on the principles of total quality management, which consider the Common Quality Assurance Framework for VET (CQAF/EQAVET Framework). The legislation also established quality indicators for the national system, which are determined by the Council of Experts for VET.

Differences in quality assurance in Slovenia still exist between formal education and training (which results in a national certificate or diploma), publicly accredited non-formal training courses and non-formal training without public accreditation. While some quality indicators were adopted in October 2007 by the Council of Experts for VET, the following distinctions are made:

- **Formal education and training:** Must meet guidelines set out in legislation and is based on a self-evaluation model, thought the use of external assessments, amongst other methods.
- **Publicly accredited programmes:** Must meet guidelines set out in legislation, as well as the accreditation of providers, granted by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, combined with an element of self-evaluation.
- **Non-formal training:** Quality assurance is linked to public funding and often based on public tenders.

In April 2008 Slovenia changed the Act of Organisation and Funding Education to assign new responsibility for headmasters (for all pre-university education and training) to complete an annual self-evaluation, which is used to report the school’s performance to the Constitutional school council.

**Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in initial VET**

**Requirements VET providers have to comply with, planning, requirements for monitoring and review (self-assessment)**

As described above, all schools are required under the Vocational Education Act to have a quality assurance committee. Self-evaluation is the main method for quality assurance. In 2011, approximately 78 per cent of VET providers were developing quality assurance systems.

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567 Cedefop, 2011, Slovenia VET in Europe – Country Report
The Slovenian Institute for VET has prepared recommendations for VET providers to evaluate their own performance. This suggests self-evaluation should cover the following areas:

- School management
- Quality assurance system
- Education plans
- Learning and teaching
- Testing and assessment
- Meeting educational objectives
- Work-based practical training
- Counselling and support to students
- Professional development of teachers and other practitioners
- The school as the centre of life-long learning
- Development projects

Each area has defined a set of quality indicators (which are generally in line with EQAVET (but were not specifically based on them due to when they were developed)), guidelines for improving quality and what quality looks like at a basic level. The guidelines for improving quality define optimal objectives that schools should strive to attain, while the basic quality level is seen as the lowest level that schools need to achieve without compromising their quality. This self-evaluation provides schools with a system to design their own assessment and develop improvement measures. Each school is asked to evaluate two or three areas in their first year of using the system with more areas being added over time.

**Certification, assessment and validation of learners**

The National Vocational Qualifications Act 2007 defines that a vocational qualification may be acquired through the formal education system or through validation of non-formal learning. The Act also determines the possibility of obtaining national vocational qualifications in parts. The VET provider is generally responsible for the final examination. The final examination certificate enables students to enter the labour market or to continue education in two-year vocational-technical programmes, which end with a poklicna matura (vocational matura examination), leading to a qualification at the level of a secondary technical school.

The Vocational and Technical Education Act enables individuals to have their previously acquired knowledge and skills validated. However in practice these mechanisms are still quite rigid, since the types of appropriate documents, (i.e. those that are issued by educational institutions and can therefore be considered), are proscribed in detail. For instance, students are required to produce a document portfolio, which consists of formal and non-formal education evidence and informal or occasional learning evidence. Assessment in VET (at NQF levels 4 and 5) is normally undertaken in the form of project work, testing practical skills and underpinning knowledge; written tests are also used at level 5 to test theoretical professional knowledge and knowledge of general subjects.

**Stakeholder involvement**

Part of the educational programme is determined by schools (by law) in consultation with social partners through a school council system which appoints a quality-assurance committee of teachers and representatives of employers, students and parents.

**Outputs from quality assurance at provider level**

The Slovenian Institute for VET produces and publishes a yearly report on the quality of VET based on the quality indicators, which are used at the national level. The self-evaluation should ultimately create the following outcomes:

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569 [http://www.eqf-pin.eu/slovenia](http://www.eqf-pin.eu/slovenia)
Provide a systematic and comprehensive insight into all school activities
Identify priority areas for improvement
Ensure continuity (evaluation is an integral part of the design and operation)
Increase the efficiency of labour
Development of assured results
Adaptable to the needs of the local school environment

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET at provider level since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)

No reform has been implemented, but the development of quality assurance is planned in the whole pre-university education (see White paper 2011 and development project at NSLE).

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET at provider level since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008

In July 2006 Slovenia introduced the new Vocational and Technical Education Act, which included provision for quality assurance at provider and national level. Each training provider or school is required to assure the quality of their provision based on the principles of total quality management, which consider the Common Quality Assurance Framework for VET (CQAF/EQAVET Framework). The legislation also established quality indicators for the national system, which are determined by the National Council of Experts for VET.

In April 2008 Slovenia changed the Act of Organisation and Funding Education to assign new responsibility for headmasters (for all pre-university education and training) to complete an annual self-evaluation, which is used to report the school’s performance to the school council.

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in continuous VET

National approach for CVET – responsibilities

As with IVET, there is no national framework for quality assurance in CVET – this is in development as a part of a wider national quality assurance framework on education. Responsibility for the management of CVET is shared by:

- The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, which is responsible for pre-university education
- The Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, which is co-responsible for vocational education and training
- As well as social partners (see below)

In addition, the Council of Experts for Adult Education monitors and evaluates the development of adult education. It prepares proposals for the minister of education on which adult education programmes should be accredited, and addresses other relevant questions in the field of adult education.

The SIAE is an independent research institute that conducts developmental and research projects related to the development of adult education theory and practice. It provides expertise for decision-making under the authority of the Council of Experts for Adult Education, and is an advisory service for organisations involved in adult education.

Statutory stakeholder involvement in CVET systems

The role of social partners (chambers, business services, trade unions) in CVET and adult education is co-ordinated by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs. The chambers are employers’ organisations that represent employers in social dialogue and carry out technical, developmental and counselling work in vocational education. They prepare the standards of knowledge, skills and competences for the certification system. Master-

571 http://en.solazaravnatelje.si/whole-school-approaches/training-for-self-evaluation/
craftsmen, foreman and managerial exams, which represent the most common forms of CVET, take place under their authority. They organise testing and certification of qualifications for craft-related activities that do not require a master-craftsmen examination. Both chambers (The Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Chamber of Crafts) also function as organisers and providers of non-formal vocational education and training, which do not offer nationally valid certificates.

Trade unions are legally limited to being a partner in the procedure of certification of national vocational qualifications. They independently organise and provide education and training for trade-union activists. With the introduction of the social partnerships in vocational education and training, the representatives of employers and employees play an increasingly important role, and they are also represented in national bodies.

**Planning at CVET system level**

Adults can obtain qualifications through the traditional/formal school system and through a national certificate system (National Vocational Qualification system) designed specifically for adults. The two systems (school and certificate) have not yet been merged. There are significant differences in the quality assurance systems between formal education and training (which results in a national certificate or diploma), publicly accredited non-formal training courses and non-formal training without public accreditation. Formal systems to assure the quality of formal CVET do not differ from those in IVET.

The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport’s Resolution on Adult Education Master Plan\(^572\) remains the key document setting out the main objectives of non-formal learning in CVET. Four main aim of this are to:

- Improve access to education and training
- Improve the quality of education and training by modernising programmes, curricula and catalogues of knowledge from the ‘lifelong learning’ strategic cores
- Develop the education levels of the elderly
- Provide accreditation of prior learning by adults, allowing them to gain national vocational qualifications (see for instance the National Qualifications Act of 2006)

These objectives are pursued through the Annual Adult Education Plan\(^573\), which sets out the programmes, infrastructure and funding, as well as priorities for that year.

**Requirements for evaluation and review**

Recent adult education projects, supported by the European Social Fund, have focused on self-evaluation by providers. A special award for organisations and individuals for achievements in adult education quality assurance was established. For non-formal training, which is not publicly accredited, quality assurance is often linked to public funding. The relevant ministries determine the conditions for implementation and supervise their fulfilment. Usually providers of publicly funded non-formal training are selected based on public tenders.

**Identification of training needs**

As for IVET, the CPI coordinates the procedure for examining the employer demand for an occupation and databases relating to labour demand. Data is drawn from the data collected by the Employment Service of Slovenia and other sources including sectoral economic strategies and future trends.

However, there are no specific training funds provided by social partners in Slovenia to support education and training of employees. Neither is there any State-provided tax or other incentive to encourage employers to increase investment in education and training of their employees.

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employees. The exception is the Craft Educational Fund, which supports education and training of employees in the craft sector.

**Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on CVET providers**

Publicly accredited programmes of CVET (formal and non-formal) have to meet guidelines laid out by legislation and specific guidelines of the minister. Providers of these programmes must be accredited by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport. To be accredited, the providers need to demonstrate their capacity (teachers, premises) to implement the programmes.

The largest share of adult and continuing vocational education and training is provided in non-formal programmes or courses and training and learning activities. About one third of non-formal training consists of training programmes publicly accredited through authorised national bodies, composed of social partners and representatives of the State. The rest are programmes and courses of various length often tailored to specific target groups. Non-formal education and training carried out as part of the active employment policy represents an important part of CVET directed at the needs of the labour market.

**Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)**

The National Vocational Qualifications Act of 2006 allows adults to gain national vocational qualifications also by accreditation of prior learning.

Assessment and progression in both CVET and IVET programmes are regulated by regulations, which are adapted to the needs of adult participants by the Ministry of Education and Science.

**Quality assurance arrangements in continuous VET at provider level**

**Requirements CVET providers have to comply with**

The largest share of adult and continuing vocational education and training is provided in non-formal programmes or courses and training and learning activities. About one third of non-formal training consists of training programmes publicly accredited through authorised national bodies, composed of social partners and representatives of the State. The rest are programmes and courses of various length often tailored to specific target groups. Non-formal education and training carried out as part of the active employment policy represents an important part of CVET directed at the needs of the labour market.

Publicly accredited programmes have to meet guidelines laid out by legislation and specific guidelines of the minister. Providers of these programmes must be accredited and enlisted in the national register, and managed by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport. To be accredited, they need to prove their capacity (teachers, premises) to implement the programmes. In addition recent adult education projects, supported by the European Social Fund, have focused on self-evaluation by providers. A special award for organisations and individuals for extraordinary achievements in adult education quality assurance was established. For non-formal training which is not publicly accredited, quality assurance is often linked to public funding. The relevant ministries determine the conditions for implementation and supervise their fulfilment. Usually providers of publicly-funded non-formal training are selected based on public tenders.

**Planning at CVET provider level (including identification of training needs)**

There are significant differences in the quality assurance systems between formal education and training (which results in a national certificate or diploma), publicly accredited non-formal training courses and non-formal training without public accreditation. Formal systems to assure the quality of formal CVET do not differ from those in IVET.

**Requirements for monitoring and review (self-assessment)**

Recent adult education projects, particularly those supported by European Social Funding, has required providers to conduct self-evaluation. An award has been developed to
recognise outstanding individual or organisational approaches to quality assurance in adult education.

**Certification, assessment and validation of learners**

Examination, completion and assessment in formal CVET programmes are the same as for CVET as in IVET (see above). The exception is the *Matura* examination where adults can sit the test in two parts (rather than one).

As such, the programme provider determines the conditions, modes and procedures of assessment and progression within the programme (within the regulations decided by the Ministry of Education and Science). However, there are two requirements that adults are required to complete, namely, the initial interview (*uvodni intervju*) and the individual learning plan (*osebni izobraževalni načrt*).

**Outputs from quality assurance at provider level**

Accredited providers must complete an annual report on their quality assurance (as for IVET).

**Part 2 – Interaction between national quality assurance and EQAVET**

In 2008, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport (formerly the Ministry of Education and Sport), charged the Slovenian Institute for VET with the responsibility of being the National Reference Point. The Institute for VET had already begun some involvement with quality assurance through European projects such as Leonardo da Vinci.

The NRP is situated in the Slovenian Institute for VET within the Department of research and development strategies but is not solely dedicated to EQAVET or NRP activities.

Through the 2006 Act on Vocational and Technical Education, responsibilities and information in relation to quality assurance in VET has been defined. Some documents relating to participation in the EU cooperation in the field of VET education have been prepared but there is no national quality assurance framework for VET.

Work began on quality assurance in VET through different pilot projects even before Slovenia joined the EU in 2004 and the introduction of EQAVET. Other Institutes (e.g. higher and adult education) were also exploring quality assurance measures at the time.

Cooperation with the industry sector had also support the development of the quality assurance in VET.

**National Reference Point**

There is no specific mandate for the activities and role of the NRP. Within the National Institute for VET, it was ‘an obvious choice’ that the department would be responsible for these European co-operation activities, including the role of the NRP – this is because the original recommendation to the Ministry around European co-operation in quality assurance in VET came from the Institute. The Institute for VET, which was established in 1995, has its own mandate, provided by the Ministry.

There were some difficulties in establishing the NRP, which included a lack of system level support and resources. The role of NRP has been taken on by an individual within the Institute as a part of their own ‘professional development’, and while the commitment to the role is strong within the individual and the department, it is unclear whether quality assurance and European cooperation on this issue is considered a priority at the Ministerial level. This is partially evidenced by the absence of additional funding or support for activities (with the exception of some support and finance to attend EQAVET Network meetings). The absence of a clear national Ministerial support means longer term planning (including budgetary planning for the department) is difficult. Personal development is also at risk (due to the fact that employment contracts are short term). Other support is provided through the European projects (LdV) but there is no statutory funding or a regular budget. The NRP states that there could be more steps taken to develop quality assurance (e.g. through cooperation with EU neighbours, like Austria) and engaging providers and the Ministry in this developmental process. At this stage however, the NRP predicts that there may not be a role
for quality assurance in VET in Slovenia in the next five years without additional support for resourcing and planning.

An internal plan for action, guidance and ideas exists but there is no detailed formalised plan or strategy for actions in relation to EQAVET in their quality assurance. There is an agreement with the experts to do more work with VET providers, despite lacking a National quality assurance Framework. Other priorities include educating and developing awareness of quality assurance, especially with providers' head teachers and school quality managers. They are also trying to disseminate the results of the work within the EQAVET network – however, this is not very regular.

After the development of the 2006 Act (but before the EQAVET Recommendation), a recommendation went to VET schools to implement self-evaluation. Indicators were developed in line with the EQARF. They also worked on cooperation with some LdV projects (e.g. RECALL, QUALIVET and others). Recently, they have explored peer reviewing (three year projects developing methods with European Social Fund support) and produce an annual report that is based on the national indicators for quality assurance. At the moment, they are developing a proposal for an LdV project to develop the quality assurance field further.

The NRP is stated as adding value to their work through cooperation with other institutions and with other European countries – this provides good opportunities for learning. At the national level, it is also useful to be involved in the European Network, which provides the Slovenian NRP with credibility among peers and stakeholders. The Network is perceived as being useful due to its flexibility and learning, which is derived from attending meetings and working on different documents.

National approach to enhance quality assurance

As stated above, there is no national framework for quality assurance in VET. Some basis for the whole pre-university education system of quality assurance is determined in a government White paper (2011)\(^\text{574}\). At present, there is a project being run by the National School for Leadership in Education, which is trying to develop the National Framework for Quality Assurance (financed by ESF until 2014). The results will most likely include a proposal for the development of a national framework, which will then be presented to experts for public discussion.

At the moment, it is unclear what form the approach to quality assurance will be, but the main priorities are thought to include:

- Explore self-, and external evaluation and quality indicators; and for the whole education system for VET to be in line with this overall framework.
- To further develop know-how, methodologies and expertise for conducting national reports based on quality indicators in VET. They are already trialling this, including three EQAVET indicators, for the moment focusing on developing a methodology for data collection on placement rates (EQAVET Indicator 5).
- To work with schools to support them in developing their own quality assurance approach through self-evaluation and training teachers, quality managers and principals to better understand and use quality assurance. This will include supporting them with tools, exchanging experiences, international cooperation and information support in general.

The main obstacle in developing this is the lack of budget.

Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance

EQAVET is considered to have been useful in the current developments of their national approach to this stage. The main developments and the key approaches have been developed in line with EQAVET. When EQAVET presented the official recommendation in 2009, it was clear that the message had become more widespread than in government

\(^{574}\) http://www.belaknjiga2011.si/indexen.php
departments – for instance, professors at University, different policy makers etc. have become more aware of the Recommendation, which has then provided some impetus and weight to decisions and support provided by the Institutes. However, the NRP states that in Slovenia quality assurance in VET is still not a priority, and there is no designated organisation or individual driving it to become a priority, as the structures and funding do not exist to support this type of development. For instance, providers are obliged to engage with quality assurance activities, but they too lack the financial resources to commit time to enhancing provision. In addition, as most are publically funded, they also lack the autonomy to develop their own approaches to quality assurance. In terms of the clarity of the messages provided by EQAVET, official documents are considered ‘useful’ although some sentences are quite vague – this is understandable as an EU level document. However, some of the terminology is considered to be quite complex and requires more detailed explanation – in some instances, the NRP has had to consult reference books and articles for the meaning of some of the terms used (e.g. context and process indicators. While the NRP reflected that it would have been better to set out these definitions when the documents were published, and while some EQAVET Network and CEDEFOP documents do provide some support, it would still be useful to have more user-friendly (jargon-free) versions of documents.

**Synergies with other EU level instruments**

Officially, there are movements to make more systematic synergies between EU and national level instruments. However, the NRP states that there are few concrete examples at national level in terms of synergy with other EU level instruments in quality assurance, because the detail and ‘life’ of these tends to be developed at the national level and can take some time.

**Sources**


http://www.siqa-vet.si/


Resolution on the Master Plan for Adult Education in the Republic of Slovenia until 2010 (http://zakonodaja.gov.si/rpsi/r04/predpis_RESO34.html)

Slovenia Case Studies (http://www.eqavet.eu/qa/gns/case-studies/all-case-studies/slovenia.aspx)

### Country report – Spain

Author: Natalia Alvarez (ICF GHK)

**Part 1 – Description of quality assurance arrangements and of recent developments**

- Spain has a participative approach designing qualifications, where employers, trade unions and public administrations are involved.
- From the very beginning, 1990, Spain has formally adopted a competence-oriented approach to VET and modularised its Diplomas. European policy seems to have played an important role in the conception of the reforms, which aims at making VET in the education system compatible with the EQF, ECVET and validation of non-formal and informal learning\(^575\).
- However, in practice, the Spanish Qualifications Framework has not been approved yet and the Spanish quality assurance framework for VET is still under construction.

#### Quality assurance arrangements at system level in initial VET

**Context**

Initial VET in the Spanish education system is mainly school based. Initial VET is divided into two educational levels: middle level (for the award of the Technician Diploma) and upper level (for the award of the Advanced Technician Diploma). Vocational training centres may be private or public.

Being school based, Quality assurance in initial VET is similar as quality assurance in general education\(^576\). Nevertheless, VET has its own regulation\(^577\).

In Spain, the provision of initial VET is a shared responsibility between the national administration, the regional administrations (as competences in education are decentralised) and VET schools. The national administration has a coordinating and regulating role with regards to nationally recognised qualifications and training\(^578\). The National Institute of Qualifications (INCUAL), within the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport; is the responsible body for the design and adjustments of VET\(^579\) occupational standards used as a reference for the design of training of Diplomas. Education funding comes both from the central administration and the Autonomous Communities\(^580\).

The Government is responsible for the development of the basic curriculum of the Diplomas, which Autonomous Communities further develop\(^581\), according to the needs of the production sector of their territory\(^582\). In this sense, they take decisions about the creation and closure of Initial VET schools, as well as about staff management, amongst other aspects. They also decide on the offer of Initial VET programmes, and organise their own inspection and quality assurance arrangements.

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assurance systems. VET schools have to meet minimum requirements to be established and they are subject to inspection, but they also have autonomy to develop their educational offer and in their own management, adapting to the needs of their students and to local/ regional needs.

National framework for quality assurance in initial VET

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, and the Education Departments of the Autonomous Communities are in charge of quality assurance and the certification processes. The National Institute for Evaluation of Education (INEE) carries out the general evaluation of the education system. This general evaluation is based on the National System of Education Indicators, which has three main categories: schooling and educational environment, educational funding and educational results. The INEE publishes an annual report on the state of the education system based on those indicators.

At regional level, each Autonomous Community has its own evaluation body responsible for the evaluation of the education system in its territory. Autonomous Communities also collaborate with the National Institute for Evaluation of Education. There are differences in the structure of the evaluation amongst the Autonomous Communities; because some have created a specific body for this evaluation, while others carry out the evaluation through bodies that were already in existence.

The main legislation regulating quality assurance is:

- The Organic Act 2/2006 on Education. Its first fundamental principle is the provision of a quality education to all citizens, at all levels of the education system. In this sense, it stresses the importance of evaluation and inspection carried out by the INEE and the Education inspectorate to guarantee the quality of education.
- The Royal Decree 1147/2011 sets out the general plan for the Spanish VET system. It elaborates further, based on the previous act, aspects relating specifically to VET and has the objective of guaranteeing and ameliorating the quality of VET at both system and provider levels. It establishes the development of the National Quality Assurance Framework for VET and the Spanish Reference Quality Network for VET (developed in the next point).

Planning at VET system level and requirements for evaluation and review

- Thus, the evaluation of the National System for Qualifications and VET (SNCFP) aims to assure the effectiveness of its actions and its adaptation to the needs of the labour market. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport and the Ministry of Employment and Social Security are responsible for the establishment of the SNCFP and the coordination of its assessment following consultation with the General Council of VET.
- The National Institute for Evaluation of Education (INEE) is responsible for the actual monitoring of the performance of the educational system as a whole. Autonomous Communities carry out evaluations and inspections and collaborate in decision-making and evaluations at national level.

The Royal Decree 1147/2011 establishes specific quality assurance instruments:

- The National Quality Assurance Framework for VET, which is in coherence with EQAVET. The framework is to be established as a reference instrument to help and supervise the permanent improvement of IVET in the Spanish educational system. The framework is to be defined by common instruments, descriptors and indicators, such as the ones proposed by the EQAVET recommendation. The directorate general of VET is the responsible body for the elaboration of the descriptors and indicators, in collaboration with the education administrations and the most representative social agents through the National Quality Network.

- The Quality Network for VET is composed of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport and the Autonomous Communities. Its aim is to support Autonomous Communities and to transform VET into a benchmark of quality by proposing strategies and coordinate actions and measures of planning, development and evaluation. It is also responsible for the dissemination of information concerning events and strategies at the EU level.

While these instruments are envisaged, they are not yet effective. During the interviews it was mentioned that the Quality Assurance Framework is still under development and the Quality Network is still to be further developed, because meetings are rare—with no meetings having taken place since 2011.

**Statutory stakeholder involvement, identification of training needs**

Stakeholders have the role of collaborating with education administrations and local corporations in elaborating the definition and content of occupational standards and training included in Diplomas.

At national level, social partners participate in the General Council of VET (explained in the previous section). Regional councils for vocational training operate in the same way at the level of the Autonomous Communities.

Employers, trade unions and public administrations have been involved in the process of elaboration of Occupational Standards, designed through the National Institute of Qualifications (INCUAL). These occupational standards are approved by the Government, after consultation to the General Council of Vocational Education and Training. They permit to adjust training to the needs of the labour market.

**Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)**

As previously stated, in Spain there are two main qualification types in initial VET:

- Middle level: for the award of technician. Provides direct access to Bachillerato (upper secondary education)
- Upper level: for the award of advanced technician. It provides direct access to university studies.

The IVET curriculum is organised into professional modules. These modules are based on occupational and educational standards; directed towards the acquisition of professional, personal and social competences, which should be related to existing labour market needs and to those in the society as a whole. One of these modules is training in the workplace, which consists of an internship in a business or company. To obtain an initial VET diploma, students must pass all the modules.

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Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements, are VET providers subjected?

According to the Royal Decree\(^{592}\) 1147/2011 Initial VET providers can be:

- State and private educational establishments. It is the responsibility of the government and the Autonomous Communities the creation and withdrawal of state schools in the scope of their competences.
- Private schools will be authorized provided that they meet the same minimum requirements demanded to state schools and the authorization will be revoked in case they stop complying with these legal minimum requirements.
- Private schools that offer education declared free of charge by Law and which satisfy the schooling requirements, as stipulated there, may become publicly funded under the legally established terms. Schools that access this system of funding must formalise the corresponding agreement with the appropriate Education Authority.
- National reference centres, specialised in the different production sectors; responsible for innovation and experimentation in VET. These centres are very important for quality assurance, because they observe the labour market needs and then put in practice innovative teacher training and pedagogical resources. The network of national reference centres acts as a nexus point between providers, business and the professional qualifications system\(^{593}\).
- Vocational training ‘integrated VET centres’, which are institutions offering all types of vocational training provision (IVET and CVET) referred to the National Catalogue of Occupational Standards. In this way, both the education and employment administrations work together to respond to the needs of the production sector. Besides, stakeholders are involved in these VET centres management.

All VET educational establishments have to be registered and they must meet certain minimum requirements established in the 1147/2011 Decree. These refer to teachers’ qualifications, student to teacher ratio; teaching and sport facilities and number of school units. Autonomous Communities can further develop these requirements and can decide on the creation and closure of VET schools.

Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators

As explained above, the National Institute for Evaluation of Education (INEE) has the responsibility of conducting the general evaluation of the education system, which is based on the National System of Education Indicators, composed of the next categories:

- Schooling and educational environment: including indicators such as school taxes, number of foreign students or students per class and teacher.
- Educational Funding: related to resources and expenditure on education, both private and public.
- Educational results: including indicators such as early school leaving, graduation levels, employment and income levels in relation to education level or linguistic competence.

In relation to inspection, the 2/2006 Act on Education establishes that all providers are under the inspections carried out by the public authorities. At national level the Spanish Educational Inspectorate has the functions of using a good system of control and assessment and supporting the educational community\(^{594}\). For this, the Educational Inspectorate is organised into 17 separate inspectorates, one for each Autonomous Community. In this way the Educational Inspectorate makes sure that all Autonomous


Communities implement the core curriculum and the minimum requirements established at national level.

Autonomous Communities have to organise, regulate and conduct the inspection of non-university education in their territories. Each Autonomous Community has its own inspectorate model. Inspections are carried out by specialist civil servants, who mainly inspect the educational centres focusing on aspects such as teachers’ performance, student:teacher ratio, teaching and sport facilities, the number of school units, as well as education planning. As part of education planning, schools' education project is also examined, looking at its adaptation of the general educational objectives to the socio-economic environment of the school and to the students’ characteristics; criteria for promotion and qualification; plan and measures for attention to diversity; evaluation of the teaching process; evaluation of the school performance; plan of academic and professional guidance and others such as school organization and running.

Looking at the indicators proposed by the EQARF, at the moment, Spain is using them for monitoring, planning or target setting. However, they are not officially expressed in legislation, national frameworks or a quality plan yet. During the interviews it was also mentioned that Spain has developed two additional indicators:

- Evaluation of the performance of the Quality Management: looking at the improvement in the VET system and its effectiveness.
- National and international mobility for teachers and students: observing the rate of participation and the satisfaction degree of the learners.

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008


In 2008 the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Labour and Immigration established the “road map” to modernise VET, promote it and increase its quality VET. The reform applies to both IVET and CVET, covering the following aspects:

- Excellence in VET would be promoted by the National Reference Centres (see section Who can deliver VET and under what conditions in point 1.1. above), as they develop innovative training activities both at IVET and CVET levels.
- There would also be more courses offered adapting to the labour market needs and giving priority to the innovative sectors of the economy.
- Students’ mobility within Europe would be promoted to increase their employment opportunities.
- Increasing financial support to make sure that programmes have the right quality.
- The validation of non-formal or informal learning and work experience in the National Catalogue of Occupational Qualifications.
- Establishing a National Qualifications Framework. This was planned and discussed between 2008 and 2009. However, due to political and technical restructuration and a change of priorities, the NQF is still under development but is expected to be approved in 2013.

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)

The 1147/2011 Royal Decree emphasises the importance of quality assurance in VET and establishes the National Quality Assurance Framework for VET and the Quality Network for

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VET, that are still under development, as previously described on the section on planning at VET system level in this report.

Reforms have been formally taken since the approval of the Law 5/2002 on Qualifications and Vocational Training that are affecting the development of quality assurance instruments. These instruments will be integrated in the final development of the Spanish framework for quality assurance in line with the EQAVET recommendation.

**Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in initial VET**

**Requirements VET providers have to comply with**

In Spain, Initial VET providers are education establishments: schools and VET centres. As previously mentioned, all Initial VET providers have to be registered and they must meet certain minimum requirements—see section “monitoring, inspection and the use of indicators” above in this report. Furthermore, for each diploma, the Government establishes the minimum conditions for facilities such as workshops, classrooms and others and for the equipment necessary for the correct acquisition of the professional competences. All VET establishments are under inspection, but self-assessment is voluntary.

Moreover, teachers in these establishments must comply with the following requirements:

Initial training for teachers is adapted to the qualification requirements of the general education system. The contents ensure that future teachers acquire the necessary capacities to face the challenges of working in the education system and are adapted to new training requirements.

To teach vocational education and training in the education system, teachers must be Graduates, Engineers or Architects, or have an equivalent qualification. In addition they must have completed the corresponding post-graduate training in pedagogy and didactics, without prejudice to the entitlement of other university qualifications which, for teaching purposes, the government may establish for certain areas, after consultation with the Autonomous Communities.

Exceptionally, for certain modules, professionals who work in the relevant field and who do not necessarily hold a degree, may be brought in as specialist teachers, depending on their qualifications and the requirements of the education system. In this case, they will be contracted according to the corresponding labour regulations.

**Monitoring and evaluation—Inspection**

Inspection of VET educational institutions is under the general criteria for all kinds of school education. The Spanish Educational Inspectorate establishes general requirements and the Autonomous Communities create their evaluation and inspection plans. Inspectors, who are civil servants, carry out educational inspection. They are considered public authorities that can have free access to the centres and examine their internal documentation. Their main duties are to supervise and monitor the work and programmes of the educational centres, as well as the teaching performance. They also make sure that educational centres follow the legal requirements and provide support and advice to educational centres and the educational community in general.

**Monitoring and evaluation—Self-assessment**

Educational centres self-assessment is not required. However, the Organic Act 2/2006 establishes that education authorities of the Autonomous Communities must help and encourage school self-assessment with the purpose of improving their practice. They also provide advice and “analyse information from schools and VET centres in relation to the design, analysis and interpretation of results.”

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Although Autonomous Communities have developed their own self-assessment plans and differences can be found among them; in all Autonomous Communities, educational centres that carry out self-assessment are required to write an annual report with the conclusions of their self-assessment and an improvement plan.601

Planning at VET provider level (including identification of training needs)

Education centres apply the curricula that public administrations establish, taking into account the characteristics and needs of their students, the characteristics of that productive sector, the training and employment opportunities of the area602, through contact and consultation with the main economic actors.

Certification and assessment of learners

Training providers are responsible for the assessment of learning outcomes. The criteria are established by the Government in the design of each diploma and are specified in the curricula of the didactic departments of each educational establishment and in the general school programme. The criteria are supervised by the Autonomous Communities’ education inspectorates. The workplace training module “is assessed by the course teacher from the education establishment once all the other professional modules have been successfully completed, and considering the report issued by the tutor from the company or real work environment”603.

Stakeholder involvement

Both schools and employers collaborate in the development and application of the curriculum. Furthermore, in accordance with the Royal Decree 1147/2011, local corporations, professional associations, NGOs and other organisations and trade unions can offer specific professional modules as in the manner prescribed by the educational authorities.

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET at provider level since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008

VET National Reference Centres are officially regulated by the Royal decree 229/2008. Each centre develops an annual plan with clear indicators and instruments to evaluate it. There is a Network of National Reference Centres to observe and analyse, at national level, the evolution of productive sectors and adequate the training plans to the labour market needs.604

VET integrated centres are officially regulated by the Royal decree 1558/2005.605 Each centre develops an annual programme and measures the quality and satisfaction of students and users, as well as the rates of employment of the beneficiaries of the training.

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in continuous VET

Context

Continuous VET in Spain can be divided into:

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Adult Education, depending on the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport and the Autonomous Communities. Quality assurance in formal adult education is regulated in the same way as quality assurance in Initial VET (described above).

Vocational training for employment (CVET), which falls under the competence of the Ministry of Employment and Social Security and the Autonomous Communities. It comprises both vocational training for the unemployed and continuing training for employed workers CVET leads to “partial or full completion of a professional certificate” in Spain, continuous VET is regulated by the Organic Act 5/2002 on Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training and by the Royal Decree 395/2007 on vocational training for employment.

The rest of this section concentrates only on vocational training for employment (CVET later on the report) and not on adult education.

**National Framework for CVET – who is in charge of what?**

Vocational training for employment (CVET) is administered jointly between the Ministry of Employment and Social Security and the Autonomous Communities. The Tripartite Foundation for Training and Employment (TFRE) makes up the organisational and institutional structure for participation in CVET. The TFRE belongs to the State Public Sector and is formed by the Public Administration and the most representative employers and trade union organisations.

To summarise, Table 1 shows the institutional structure of CVET:

**Table 0.1 The institutional structure of CVET**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regulation and planning</th>
<th>Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>■ Ministry of Employment and Social Security</td>
<td>■ National Public Employment Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Autonomous Communities</td>
<td>■ Autonomous Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Social partners</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ministry of Education & Ministry of Labour in RefNet Spain (2011)**

CVET is funded by companies and workers (0.7%), the European Social Fund and the National Public Employment Service (NPES). Autonomous Communities can also fund CVET in their territories.

**Statutory stakeholder involvement in CVET systems**

Stakeholder involvement in CVET has been very strong and this has been fundamental in the developments of CVET in Spain. Since 1993 CVET has been regulated through National Agreements between public administration, the most representative employers and trade union organisations. The Tripartite Foundation for Training for Employment (TFRE) is the main body of participation for social agents and it partners with the National Public Education Service Spain. Hacia la sociedad del conocimiento [VET in Spain. Towards the knowledge society]. Barcelona: Fundacion LaCaixa.
Employment Service in managing public subsidies for CVET programmes and decides the design and the implementation of CVET\textsuperscript{612}.

There are also a number of consultative bodies where stakeholders are represented:

- The General Council of the National Employment System, formed by representatives of the public administrations (the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, the Ministry of Employment and Social Security and Autonomous Communities) and the social partners. It is the main consultative body for CVET.
- The General Council for Vocational Education and Training (also covering IVET) is formed by representatives of the public administrations (the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, the Ministry of Employment and Social Security and Autonomous Communities) and the social partners.
- Joint Sectorial Committees; created in the framework of the sectorial collective negotiation at national level. Some of their functions are to mediate in case of discrepancies during negotiations; to establish the training criteria and priorities for employers; to acknowledge businesses in their sector or to elaborate an annual report on the training developed in their areas\textsuperscript{613}.

**Planning at CVET system level**

The Ministry of Employment and Social Security is responsible for planning and determining the priorities, general objectives and recommendations for CVET training courses. The structure of the training courses is based on the competence units in the National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications managed by INCUAL. Autonomous Communities and social partners’ suggestions are taken into account in the planning process. The National Public Employment Service, within the Ministry of Employment and Social Security, is responsible for:

- Programming and managing the training plans for employed workers. These plans can be inter-sectoral or sectorial. Inter-sectoral plans can be directed to various economic sectors with the purpose of learning transversal competences, or with the purpose of teaching specific competences of a sector for the recycling and requalification of workers from other sectors. Sectorial plans are directed to workers of a specific productive sector, with the purpose of covering specific needs of that sector\textsuperscript{614}.
- “The National Plan for Workshop Schools, Craft Centres and Employment Workshops”\textsuperscript{615}; a public training programme to favour the integration of young people under twenty-five into the labour market through their qualifications or through professional practice\textsuperscript{616}.
- The training plans for people with particular training requirements or who have trouble finding employment.
- Agreements for the unemployed and immigrant workers in their countries of origin\textsuperscript{617}.
- The Autonomous Communities:
  - Programme, organise, manage, and inspect CVET in their territory.


\textsuperscript{616}http://www.sepe.es/contenido/empleo_formacion/formacion/formacion_para_el_empleo/formacion_profesional_para_el_empleo/pdf/referNet/form_profesional_espana.pdf [Accessed on 4 December 2012].

Select learners taking into account the established needs.

Authorise and validate the courses organised by CVET centres (elaborated in the next point).

“Register the partner centres; and issue professional certificates”.618

Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on CVET providers

The Royal Decree 395/2007 establishes that CVET can be delivered by:

- Public administrations through public centres or by means of agreements with private entities.
- Business or trade union organisations mainly directed to employed workers.
- Businesses that develop training for their employees or the unemployed with an aim to hire them.
- VET integrated centres or training entities (public or private) that provide professional certifications.
- Other training entities that do not train with the objective of delivering a certificate.

To be registered, these centres must ask the National Public Employment Service (NPES) for their inspection and accreditation. The requirements they have to fulfil in order to be registered are established in the Resolution of 29 July of the NPES619 for the inscription and accreditation of CVET centres or entities. These requirements refer to qualified staff, student teacher ratio; teaching facilities and number of school units. CVET centres are under quality control and inspections are carried out by the NPES620. Autonomous Communities can also create a registry where the centres and entities that provide training in their territories have to be inscribed to provide transparency and information to citizens and stakeholders on the provision of VET.

Identification of training needs

Spain had 620 professional certificates by 2011 trying to cover the training needs both of workers and employers. The needs for those certificates are identified through:

- “A study of training needs
- Experimental training and employment plans
- Requests for the recognition of new qualifications by professional organisations from the different sectors of the economy
- Constantly updating the list of specialities”621

The National Public Employment Service (NPES) and the National Reference Centres are responsible for preparing and updating these professional certificates. These are then

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619 Resolution 29th July 2010, by the Public Service of State Employment, on the registration and, where applicable, accreditation of centres and training entities delivering training for employment in the area managed by the Public Service for State Employment. Available at: http://www.sepe.es/contenido/empleo_formacion/formacion/formacion_para_el_empleo/formacion_profesional_para_el_empleo/pdf/resolucion_inscripcion_centros.pdf [Accessed on 6 January 2013].

620 According to article 6.3, of the Resolution 29th July 2010, by the Public Service of State Employment, on the registration and, where applicable, accreditation of centres and training entities delivering training for employment in the area managed by the Public Service for State Employment. Initial verification on requirement fulfilment and then on their maintenance and adaptation are carried out by technical staff from the Public Service of State Employment. This does not apply to training supervision and should not be confused with the inspectorate in centres depending on the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport. Available at: http://www.sepe.es/contenido/empleo_formacion/formacion/formacion_para_el_empleo/formacion_profesional_para_el_empleo/pdf/resolucion_inscripcion_centros.pdf [Accessed on 6 January 2013].

submitted to the General Council for Vocational Training and the General Council of the National Employment System for discussion and approval\(^{622}\).

**Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)**

For formal learning in CVET, the curriculum is referred to the National Catalogue of Occupational Standards, where training contents are built in accordance to the necessary professional competences to meet the needs of the labour market. Autonomous Communities are responsible for issuing professional certificates, in accordance with the regulations and the training providers.

Since 2009 it is possible, under CVET and IVET, to gain qualifications by the recognition of work experience or non-formal/informal learning. Autonomous Communities have regulated calls/ tenders for the procedure of evaluation and accreditation of professional competences\(^{623}\).

**Monitoring and evaluation**

The evaluation of CVET is carried out in two complementary levels\(^{624}\):

- Through specific evaluations carried out by the European, national and regional administrations.
- Through a general evaluation of the whole CVET system. The National Public Employment Service (NPES) annually elaborates an Annual Plan for the evaluation of the quality, impact, efficacy and efficiency of the CVET system. This is the basis to improve the function of the CVET system. The indicators used in the last evaluation carried out (year 2010) were:
  - Indicators of quality: satisfaction of learners and coverage of accredited centres that impart training for obtaining Certificates of Professional Standards.
  - Indicators of effectiveness: looking at the number of learners trained in public CVET programmes, the financial execution, duration of training for employers and non-labour professional training, distribution of the different training models, early leaving tax and causes or coverage tax of employed and unemployed workers.
  - Indicators of efficiency: cost by learner and training hour.
  - Indicators of impact: maintenance of employment, proportion of students that find a job\(^{625}\).
- The NPES also elaborates plans for the teaching staff, for improving their performance and for a better equipment of the training centres\(^{626}\).
- Through the NPES webpage, learners of CVET complement an online satisfaction questionnaire.

**Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)**

In 2009, the recognition of professional competences developed through non-formal education or work experience were regulated (Royal Decree 1224/2009). This recognises the equal importance of learning through formal and non-formal pathways in the establishment

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\(^{626}\) http://www.eqavet.eu/Libraries/EQARF_Indicators/EQARF_Indicators_Spain.sflb.ashx
of a knowledge based society. It also helps to increasing confidence and the probability to undertake further training by the workforce.\(^{627}\)

**Reforms of quality assurance in CVET since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008**

With the Agreement on Vocational Training for Employment in 2006, it was decided to integrate occupational and continuing training into one single system to make it easier, more credible and attractive, increasing CVET quality by “promoting and extending training in companies and among employed and unemployed workers”\(^{628}\). In this way workers would be more employable and flexible for the necessary changes.

As previously mentioned in the section of “reforms in IVET”, in 2008, the Ministries of Education, Culture and Sport and the Ministry of Employment and Social Security presented an initiative (“road map”) with measures to promote VET and increase its quality.

**Quality assurance arrangements in continuous VET at provider level**

The main quality assurance instrument at provider level is their registration in the National Public Employment Service for their inscription and their accreditation. As explained previously, the requisites centres have to accomplish mainly refer to the need of having qualified staff, acceptable student: teacher ratio; teaching facilities and number of school units. CVET centres are under quality control and inspections by the national authority.

**Part 2 – Interaction between national quality assurance and EQAVET**

**National Reference Point**

In Spain the EQAVET National Reference Point was created in 2006 and it was formally established by the Royal Decree 1147/2011. The Spanish NRP is the Sub-directorate General for Guidance and Vocational Education and Training, under the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport.

The process leading to setting up of the NRP began when discussions around quality assurance started at the EU level. The Sub-directorate of Guidance and Vocational Education and Training took part in the working groups. From the beginning it was clear that the NRP should be the Sub-directorate of Guidance and Vocational Education and Training because it was the body responsible for the VET of the education system in Spain. Interviewees agreed that there has been political commitment with quality assurance. However, the decentralised Spanish education system forces the 17 Autonomous Communities and the 2 cities of Ceuta and Melilla to reach agreements for common solutions. Furthermore, although no obstacles have been encountered, the current economic crisis and the government change have slowed down the process of developing the national quality assurance framework.

The NRP does not have its own human and financial resources or specific tasks. People working in the NRP were civil servants already working for the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport. There is not a yearly work plan as such for the NRP, but the functions of the Spanish NRP are mentioned in the 2009 EU recommendation\(^{629}\) and the Royal Decree

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627 [http://www.mutual-learning-employment.net/index.php?mact=PeerReviews,cntnt01,detail,0&cntnt01options=21&cntnt01orderby=start_date%20DESC&cntnt01returnid=59&cntnt01item_id=51&cntnt01returnid=59](http://www.mutual-learning-employment.net/index.php?mact=PeerReviews,cntnt01,detail,0&cntnt01options=21&cntnt01orderby=start_date%20DESC&cntnt01returnid=59&cntnt01item_id=51&cntnt01returnid=59) [Accessed on 7 January 2013].


257/2012 that regulates the basic organic structure of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport. The Spanish NRP:

- Elaborates the National Framework for Quality Assurance in VET in collaboration with the Autonomous Communities.
- Coordinates the quality assurance systems of the different Autonomous Communities by fostering the cooperation between them through meetings and providing information to all of them.
- Takes part in the EQAVET activities organised at EU level: annual forums, conferences, study visits.
- Organised the EQAVET 2010 annual forum in Madrid.
- Coordinates the National Quality Network for VET. As explained in the first part of the report, the National Quality Network for VET was created to support Autonomous Communities and to transform VET into a benchmark of quality; propose strategies and coordinate actions and measures of planning, development and evaluation. It was also created to disseminate information on the events and strategies at the EU level. However, and as stated before, working in a decentralised system sometimes makes things a bit slower than expected. This, together with the election of a new Spanish government in November 2011, which needs time to update, are the reasons that the members of the network have not met as often as desired. It is expected that once the framework has been discussed, finalised and implemented, the network will also be formalised and will meet more regularly.

There is no monitoring strategy in place to assess the work of the NRP. However, a quality plan is under preparation and once it is established the NRP’s work will also be assessed.

**National approach to enhance quality assurance**

The Royal Decree 1147/2011 established the development of the National Framework for Quality Assurance in VET. However, the framework is not ready and more time is needed before it can be adopted. The discussion on the descriptors and indicators has already taken place in partnership with the Autonomous Communities. A draft framework is currently under preparation. Once written, it will be presented to the directorate general of VET and once approved, it will be presented to the General Council for VET –see section “Statutory stakeholder involvement in CVET systems” above in this report.

This national approach towards quality was motivated by the recommendation of the European parliament and of the council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of EQAVET and the compromise of The Minister of Education, Culture and Sport to adopt it in Spain. Given the decentralisation in education in Spain, the intention is to elaborate a framework that respects and is compatible with the different Autonomous Communities’ education quality assurance systems. Here it is important to mention that there are important differences amongst the Autonomous Communities in relation to quality assurance. Some, such as the Basque Country, have very developed systems and dedicated agencies while others are still starting to develop their quality assurance systems.

According to one of the interviewees, the main objectives of the Spanish approach to QA are “to improve VET and employability, as well as to make VET education centres a reference for employers and Europe”. Another interviewee mentioned that the objectives are to “accomplish the European objectives towards quality assurance, as well to increase efficiency, effectiveness and give citizens a quality VET service that will fulfil the training needs of both individuals and businesses”. It is expected that the national framework will cover both system and provider levels. There will also be an inspectorate to assure the right functioning of the framework, but the budget for this is still to be defined, as well as who will carry out the inspections and how the inspections will be carried out.

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The content of the EQAVET Framework – use and usefulness

EQAVET has been useful in the development of the national quality assurance approach, according to those stakeholders interviewed. One of the interviewees explained that EQAVET was designed in such a way that makes it very useful and simple to use. Furthermore, EQAVET is also in line with the Autonomous Communities education regulations and so it was accepted for all. As said above, although the framework is under development, indicators have already been discussed. These indicators are all the indicators proposed by EQAVET and two additional ones:

- Evaluation of the performance of the Quality Management.
- National and international mobility for teachers and students.

EQAVET has been considered coherent and fundamental in the development of the national framework for QA. However, interviewees have explained that although EQAVET is known at system level, EQAVET instruments are unknown at provider level and therefore, this is an important area for development.

Partner organisations involvement

The NRP has contacts with the Ministry of Employment and Social Security, the Autonomous Communities and the Spanish General Council for VET. For instance, the NRP disseminates information to the Autonomous Communities in meetings or through the National Quality Network. However and as previously mentioned, no meetings have taken place since 2011.

In the formulation of the national approach to QA, only the Autonomous Communities have been involved. One of the interviewees indicated that Autonomous Communities have been receptive and have shown a strong compromise towards quality assurance. Once the framework has been approved, consultation with the other stakeholders (trade-unions and employers organisations) represented in the General Council for VET will be carried out.

Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance

In Spain, the term quality in VET has had a prominent role in the different Education Acts and interviewees believe that it has been a political priority. The existence of EQAVET has raised Autonomous Communities' awareness of the importance of quality assurance, as only some had already quality assurance in place.

In Spain, at system level, EQAVET has provided the stimulus needed to decide on the elaboration of a national framework for quality assurance in VET. Furthermore, working with the EQAVET team has allowed the implementation of European ideas in Spain that have helped to improve the quality assurance systems at the Autonomous Communities level.

EQAVET has also helped to increase quality assurance at provider level, because some Autonomous Communities have taken EQAVET as reference point and providers follow Autonomous Communities’ guidelines because they are under inspection.

The attention has been focused on IVET from the NRP, as it is the main competence of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport. As one interviewee stated, “in relation to the framework, we are currently working on IVET, but we do not know if we will also focus on CVET afterwards”. It seems that being VET a competence of two different ministries makes it complicated to treat VET as a whole.

Synergies with other EU level instruments and other country specific issues of importance to the implementation of EQAVET

The Sub-directorate general for VET is also the responsible body for the implementation of the EQF and ECVET in Spain. The National Qualifications Framework has been drafted and is now under discussion with stakeholders. It is expected to be approved this year (2013). For higher education (from the perspective of the Process of Bologna), the Royal Decree 1027/2011, of 15 July, establishes the Spanish Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, in which Higher VET of the education system (expressed in ECTS credits) has a reference. This framework will be compatible with the National Qualifications
Framework for Lifelong Learning. ECVET is contemplated and the relevant principles and ideas of this recommendation are embedded in the regulation that governs IVET, especially as regards learning outcomes and accumulating units subject to recognition. However, it is necessary that the European Commission specifies more objective criteria for the attribution of ECVET credit points. Regarding quality assurance measures in higher education; this is a more developed terrain and universities are controlled and supervised by an agency for quality matters.

The National Framework for Quality Assurance in VET will be aligned with EQAVET. As previously mentioned, the National Framework will use the same indicators than EQAVET, with the addition of two indicators: the evaluation of the performance of the quality management and the national and international mobility for teachers and students.

Stakeholders in charge of these instruments are involved at national and regional (AC) level. The complexity of quality assurance in VET in Spain is the division of competences between the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (responsible for IVET) and the Ministry of Employment and Social Security (responsible for CVET). Furthermore, Autonomous Communities have their own competences in VET so their collaboration is also fundamental when establishing national policies. Sometimes the lack of agreement amongst the different public administrations, as well as the change in political priorities slows the development of quality assurance measures.

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Websites


http://www.mutual-learning-employment.net/index.php?mact=PeerReviews.cntnt01.detail,0&cntnt01options=21&cntnt01orderby=start_date%20DESC&cntnt01returnid=59&cntnt01item_id=51&cntnt01returnid=59 [Accessed on 7 January 2013].


A1.28  Country report – Sweden

Author: Eila Heikkilä (external expert to ICF GHK)

Part 1 – Description of quality assurance arrangements and of recent developments

In recent years the Swedish Ministry of Education and Research has introduced a number of significant reforms and measures designed to increase the quality of both IVET and higher VET.

- Sweden has appointed the Swedish School Inspectorate to be the Quality National Reference Point to assist in implementing the national strategy together with other relevant national government agencies, such as the National Agency for Education and the Swedish Agency for Higher Vocational Education.

- A new Education Act and new curricula entered into force on July 1, 2011 (July, 1, 2012 for adult education), regulating responsibility for quality assurance and quality development at the school, local and national levels.

However, challenges remain and there is on-going discussion among policy makers on potential further measures to meet the most important challenges in the future years.

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in initial VET (IVET)

Context and review of the latest developments in IVET

IVET for Young People

Regarding initial vocational education and training (IVET), there is little distinction between VET and the general school system in Sweden. Upper secondary education in Sweden entails three years of full-time study, typically for students aged 16 to 19 years. An extensive reform of upper secondary IVET with the aim of increasing quality and relevance, and increasing the completion rate, was introduced in the autumn of 2011. According the European requirements for quality in VET, the new vocational programmes in upper secondary school reflect better the skills needs in the labour market by having more vocational content compared with vocationally oriented programmes offered until school year 2010/11. Overall, there is a greater emphasis on vocational education in the new IVET programmes at upper secondary school.

IVET for Adults

There have been significant measures in recent years to support IVET in municipal upper secondary adult education with €600 million in earmarked state funds supporting 54 000 full-time spaces in adult education between 2009 and 2011. Apprenticeship training in municipal adult IVET was introduced in 2011 and features at least 70 per cent work-based training and a strong emphasis on the validation of prior learning and experience. The Government has also earmarked state funds to support 5 900 apprenticeship-training spaces within upper secondary adult education between 2011 and 2014. Adult education takes into account the knowledge and skills acquired by adults through the validation of knowledge and skills. Each learner develops an individual study plan based on his/her abilities, life situation and goals. Adult education activities must therefore be accessible and flexible in terms of time and location. It is important to note that Sweden offers a generous system of student financial support in the form of loans and grants to cover living expenses of those enrolled in education and training. It is also possible to receive study support, including extra support if there are tuition fees, for studies abroad.

Smaller forms of IVET

In addition, there is also some IVET available (approximately 3000 spaces) at folk high schools, often linked to craft skills. Vocational training can also be offered as an active labour
market policy measure for employed individuals registered with the Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen), but this is non-formal training outside the formal education system and is typically organised in short programmes or modules offering specific skills designed to lead directly to employment.

**National framework for quality assurance in IVET**

The vast majority of vocational education and training system in Sweden falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Research. The Ministry is the body responsible for legal, policy and programme definition aspects of VET (both IVET and CVET) at national level. As regards to other actors in the VET system, it should be noted that the municipalities have a high level of authority due to the decentralised, goal-based system operating in Sweden.

The Swedish government created the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket) as the central administrative authority for the Swedish public school system. The Agency is responsible for children, young people and adults, as well as for pre-school activities and childcare for school children.

Sweden has a decentralised school system, of which initial VET is an integrated part, where responsibilities are shared between the Parliament, the Government and the municipalities. Many responsibilities, including for quality assurance and development, also rests with the principals/head masters and the individual teachers. Education and training policy and practice from pre-school up to upper secondary adult education, including municipal adult education, is governed by the Education Act (Skollagen). Education Act outlines the responsibilities of national and local actors for quality assurance and development. Responsibilities for principals and teachers are also laid down in the curriculum for upper secondary education.

**Planning at VET system level and requirements for evaluation and review**

The Swedish Parliament and Government sets out national goals in the Education Act (1985) and subsequent regulations. The recent reforms have concerned regulations on secondary apprenticeship (2007:1349), assignment for teacher training (2007:223) and on state teacher training (2007:222). Regulations on municipal adult education were defined prior to this under regulation no. 2002:1012.

In 2006, a new Government was elected and stated its intention to reform the current integrated upper secondary education into these three components 1) general/academic programmes; 2) vocationally-oriented programmes; and 3) upper secondary apprenticeship programmes. The Swedish government created an Upper Secondary Commission (Gymnasieutredningen), which elaborated plans for a three-track upper secondary system, introducing new apprenticeship system alongside updated forms of the current academic and vocational tracks. A national system for strengthened quality has been outlined in the new legislation since autumn 2011 (Education Act, curricula, syllabi etc.).

The new Education Act outlines requirements for inspection, quality assurance and review/evaluation of education and training at the national level. The Ministry of Education and Research develops legislation, policy, ordinances and annual steering documents for government agencies that are responsible for vocational education and training at the national level: the Swedish National Agency for Education (high quality steering documents, monitoring and evaluation, national VET programme councils and specific tasks to develop IVET quality in Sweden) and the Swedish Schools Inspectorate (inspection and quality review). In essence, the Ministry develops the broad policy guidelines for the quality assurance and development of VET, but the agencies implement the policies and develop more detailed mechanisms to support, implement, review and evaluate quality assurance and development. Therefore, the role of the three government agencies is very important in the Swedish context.

**Statutory stakeholder involvement in initial VET systems**

Other actors and stakeholders involved in developing the national approach in quality are for example, Employer Associations, Employee Associations, Public Authorities, Regional and
local authorities, Higher education sector etc. In Sweden stakeholders have the opportunity to respond to proposals of policy reforms, which means that the National Agencies, social partners, and organisations, have a possibility to influence the decision-making. Before the Government presents the bill, a basis for the decisions is normally suggested by a commission (appointed by the Government), who makes in-depth investigations on different suggestions. The commission presents its proposals in a report, which is then sent out for reactions to a wide range of actors concerned. The government bill is then developed on the basis of the commission's suggestions, taking into account the views manifested by the actors concerned. In addition, a variety of other stakeholder involvement exists, such as national programme councils for each of the IVET vocational programmes.

The new system of upper secondary IVET and IVET in municipal adult education includes robust National Programme Councils (Programråd), composed largely of business and labour representatives from sectors. The National Programme Councils advise and support the Swedish National Agency for Education in developing the content in the programmes as well as requirements for qualifications and tasks for the upper secondary certificate project. Programme Councils also contribute with data in the follow up of students' establishment in the labour market and enhance cooperation between school and the business sector in order to ensure that the education is relevant for current industry/sector skill needs. Apprenticeship Councils play a similar role for apprenticeship training in upper secondary IVET and IVET in adult education. Programme- and Apprenticeship Councils operate at both the national and local levels.

Certification, assessment and validation of learning

The vast majority of IVET in both upper secondary schools and via municipal upper secondary adult education is fully publicly funded. In order to receive funding, IVET providers must either be municipalities, which are automatically accredited, or apply to the Swedish Schools Inspectorate for accreditation. Therefore, virtually all IVET providers are accredited.

The new system of upper secondary school features 18 programmes, 12 of which are vocational and which can be completed in either mainly school-based form (with at least 15 per cent work-based training) or in apprenticeship-like form (with at least 50 weeks work-based training).

The time devoted to vocational subjects in vocational programmes has increased from 1 350 credits to 1 600 credits, and the time allocated for theoretical foundation subjects in vocational programmes was reduced from 750 to 600 credits. A full three-year programme corresponds to 2 500 upper secondary credits.

Who can deliver VET and under what conditions

The largest form of VET in Sweden is vocationally oriented upper secondary initial vocational education and training with approximately 40 per cent of upper secondary students enrolled in vocational programmes (lower for the school year 2011/12, but too early to say if it is a trend).

In line with European lifelong learning policies, IVET for adult learners is provided through municipal upper secondary adult education in Sweden.

Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators

The Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket) is the central administrative authority for the Swedish public school system for children, young people and adults. It steers, supports, follows up and evaluates the work of municipalities and schools with the purpose of improving quality and the result of activities to ensure that all pupils have access to equal education. In regard to quality, on its website, The Swedish National Agency for Education gathers and publishes statistics and reports the numbers of pupils and their performance at a provider, municipal, and national level depending on the data and also provides analytical reports as well as guidance documents that contribute to quality assurance.
In the Swedish context, the four stages of the quality cycle: Planning, Implementation, Evaluation and Review are in operation through the regulations of the Education Act and the ordinances, but arguably the evaluation and review stages need to be more robust and, especially, more systematic in order to better inform and impact the planning and implementation stages. A number of ambitious initiatives are under implementation that will address strengthening capacity of quality assessment and development at the provider and national level. This will, in turn, strengthen the synergy achieved in the four stages of the VET quality cycle. In the state budget for 2012 funding was earmarked for activities by the Swedish National Agency for Education and the Swedish Schools Inspectorate aiming at quality improvement in IVET. The funding is intended to increase the agencies’ capacity to work together with stakeholders to meet the challenges of ensuring high quality IVET at upper secondary school and in adult education. The extra funding to the Schools Inspectorate is permanent and earmarked for inspection of upper secondary level IVET. An important feature of the inspection scheme is to ensure that a systematic approach to quality assurance and development is in place at provider level. The extra funding allocated to the National Agency for Education is intended for 2012-2013.

**The main changes to QA at system level introduced since 2009 (Adoption of the EQAVET Recommendation)**

The new Education Act entered into force on July 1, 2011 (July 1, 2012 for adult education) and lays out several principles vis-à-vis quality assurance and development for the actors at the different levels. Also, in 2012 the Ministry of Education and Research introduced several measures to support the development of a more robust, systematic national support structure for quality in VET. These included, as outlined above, special earmarked funding for the Swedish Schools Inspectorate and the Swedish National Agency for Education with the purpose of adapting measures to ensure systematic approach to quality assurance at provider level.

**Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in initial VET**

As noted earlier, Sweden has a decentralised school system, of which initial VET is an integrated part, where responsibilities are shared between the Parliament, the Government and the municipalities. In this regard, quality assurance and development, rests also with the principals/head masters and the individual teachers in IVET.

**Requirements for IVET providers**

At the administrative level (i.e. for municipalities and independent schools) the Education Act outlines the requirements for systematic and continuous planning, review/evaluation and development of education and training, including documentation of all quality assurance and development efforts. At the school level, the Act stipulates that quality assurance and development should be conducted in consultation with the teacher, other staff and students with the overall responsibility of the principal/head master. The guiding principle with such work is that national learning goals, set out in the subject syllabi, should be met. The Act also requires that quality assurance and development be documented and that routines be established to address weaknesses identified in education and training through complaints from e.g. parents. The administrative entity responsible for an independent school has the same responsibilities as a municipality when it comes to reaching of national objectives, quality assurance and development.

By regulation, municipalities and schools must submit quality reports to The Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket) for which content guidelines are provided. Skolverket have also developed a tool “BRUK” to support the assessment and development of quality that uses indicators. Furthermore an award for school quality has been developed to encourage quality improvement.

Quality VET should also recognise learners’ skills and competence, especially VET for adults. All assessment methods presented in the European guidelines on validation are present in the Swedish context. An initial assessment is usually a key step in all validation processes. Self-evaluation as well as written tests identifying an individual’s area and level of
knowledge and skills are used. Declarative methods are present in all validation situations and enable the assessor or guidance counsellor to decide whether validation should be conducted or not. Observation and simulation is mainly used when assessing an individual's knowledge, skills and competences within a certain trade or occupation. Sweden also has a well-established tradition whereby individuals may "challenge" a course (i.e. take an exam to receive credit for a course instead of attending the course). The agency has established a national forum for validation and a steering group for the assessment of foreign vocational education and training; developed guidelines for quality assurance and documentation of validation; developed a validation document database; and launched a validation portal.

The main features and measures of quality assurance at provider level (EQARF Indictors)

The following section summarises evidence identified that relates any indicators used at national level in Sweden to the ten indicators proposed in the EQARF recommendation.

There are no evidence-based findings on the relevance of quality assurance systems at provider level. However, in its yearly analysis, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate summarises that almost half of the upper secondary schools (of which many offer IVET programmes) are criticised for lacking a systematic approach to quality assurance and development. A more specific report on upper secondary VET, also by the Swedish Schools Inspectorate, in 2011 identified the lack of systematic quality assurance procedures in initial vocational education and training when it comes to work-based learning.

The new Education Act outlines more clearly articulated requirements for inspection, quality assurance and review/evaluation of education and training at the national level. At the administrative level (i.e. for municipalities and independent schools) the Education Act outlines requirements for systematic and continuous planning, review/evaluation and development of education and training. At the school level, the Act stipulates that quality assurance and development should be conducted in consultation with the teacher, other staff and students with the main responsibility of the school head/principal. With the introduction of apprenticeship training in upper secondary school and in municipal upper secondary adult education the role of workplaces will be of increasing importance. Consequently, it will be important to analyse the role of employers, in their role as VET providers, vis-à-vis quality assurance and vocational training.

Investment in training of teachers and trainers

Regarding investment in training of teachers and trainers, the administration of upper secondary school and adult education are devolved to the municipalities. Therefore, national data on the proportion of teachers participating in continuing education are only published irregularly after the completion of ad hoc surveys. However, overall, it can be noted that the participation rate of adults in lifelong learning in Sweden (32.4%) is more than triple the aggregated participation rate of the EU-27 (9.5%).

Although it is difficult to measure the investment in the continuing education of teachers by municipalities, there is a large national initiative (Lärarlyftet) with earmarked state funds to support the further training/competence development of teachers. Between 2007 and 2011 approximately EUR 300 million was invested to support up to 30 000 teachers acquire further training. While in training, teachers retained 80 per cent of their salary. A second phase of the teacher competence initiative launches in 2012 with an additional EUR 80 million of state funding available. This second phase, 2012-2015, the initiative aims at increasing the number of qualified teachers and the number of subject teachers to become qualified to teach. This is in addition to the funds municipalities invest in the training of IVET teachers in upper secondary school and in municipal adult education.

Sweden, like many countries, faces a challenge regarding VET teachers and trainers. Many countries face a choice between qualified teachers or qualified people with up-to-date vocational skills. There have been a number of initiatives to reconcile this but it is still difficult to recruit an adequate number of vocationally competent individuals with teacher education. Further initiatives are being considered to both shorten the length of time it takes for individuals with high vocational skills to complete teacher training, and to make it more attractive for those vocational teachers without formal teacher training to acquire a teaching
degree. From 2012 funding has been allocated to support vocational teacher’s placements at workplaces in order to keep their vocational skills up-to-date. The lack of qualified vocational trainers in the workplace has also been identified as a serious challenge in Sweden. Therefore, the National Agency for Education has been assigned the task to develop and promote supporting material that can be used by trainers in the workplace to develop the quality in the work-based learning and also by school representatives with the task to train trainers.

**Participation rate in VET programmes**

Sweden has detailed information on the number of participants by programme as well as data on individual characteristics. This is published annually on the website of the Swedish Agency for National Education (www.skolverket.se) for upper secondary IVET students and for IVET students in adult education. Statistics on Higher VET students are published annually by the Swedish Agency for Higher Vocational Education (www.yh-myndigheten.se). For example, approximately 40 per cent of upper secondary students are enrolled in vocational programmes in 2010/2011. There are also ad hoc studies that further explore the relationship between individual criteria and upper secondary IVET, IVET in adult education and post-secondary VET through higher vocational education.

**Completion rates in VET programmes**

Sweden has detailed information on completion rates by IVET programme as well as data on individual characteristics. This is published annually on the website of the Swedish Agency for National Education (www.skolverket.se) for upper secondary IVET students and for IVET students in adult education. For new students in upper secondary VET programmes who started in the autumn of 2007, the completion rate after three years was between 68 and 83 per cent depending on the programme. The corresponding overall figure for upper secondary school was 68 per cent (including student on individual programmes). Eurostat will analyse the proportion of those aged 18-24 who do not have an upper secondary education within the framework of EU2020 and the Swedish Government has committed to also analyse the situation among “risk groups” such as young men and newly arrived immigrants.

In Sweden the problem with early school leaving has not been so acute but, rather, the proportion that leave upper secondary school without attaining knowledge goals (i.e., passing grades in all courses). Five new introductory programmes replaced the previous individual programme from 2011 and are individually adapted to students who are not eligible for upper secondary school. The new introductory programmes enhance and stimulate opportunities to carry on to national programmes in school as well as preparing them for their establishment on the labour market. With a higher quality education for those who are not eligible for national programmes, the completion rate should increase in upper secondary school.

**Placement rate in VET programmes**

There is access to comprehensive, high-quality data on individuals in Sweden. The data have facilitated detailed studies into the destination of learners after IVET and higher VET in Sweden. Virtually all studies are disaggregated by gender and most also investigate other variables such as whether or not the learner has a foreign background, parental educational background, etc. However, reports on the destination of VET learners have so far been published on an ad hoc basis. The last major study into the destination of IVET learners was published in 2006. In the beginning of 2012 the Government delivered assignments to relevant government agencies to ensure more systematic, regular reporting and analysis of the destination of VET learners after completion of their training.

**Utilisation of acquired skills at the workplace**

There are regular surveys into labour market trends and skills needs conducted by the Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen) and Statistics Sweden (SCB). There have been a number of measures since 2009 to ensure more structured cooperation between VET and the public employment service. These measures are especially sharp vis-à-vis vocational education and apprenticeship training in municipal upper secondary education for adults and
higher vocational education, both of which have a clear mandate to ensure that training outputs more clearly reflect labour market skills needs. The Government has also launched an initiative called regional competence platforms to ensure that all relevant actors cooperate to meet labour market skills needs at the regional level. This initiative involved five national government agencies under different Ministries. An example of a more detailed report into employer satisfaction with the skills of individuals who had completed an upper secondary IVET programme was published in 2005. The study titled “Well prepared” (Väl förberedd) was published by the Swedish National Agency for Education in 2005 and provides an in-depth analysis of how well upper secondary IVET completers meet industry skill needs. In the beginning of 2012 the Government delivered a series of assignments to relevant government agencies to ensure more systematic, regular reporting and analysis of how well IVET completers meet industry skill needs. The National Agency for Education has been asked to design a model for following up of the destination of former IVET learners.

The challenge of VET – employer cooperation and school-to-work transitions

This is more of a cultural challenge than a specific policy area but it impacts the aforementioned challenges concerning teachers and trainers as well as ensuring quality work-based training. To improve school/VET-employer cooperation, the Swedish National Agency for Education has established national programme councils for all VET programmes at upper secondary level. The councils provide advice to the Agency, for example about labour market demand, employability and quality issues. There is also a requirement for local VET- programme councils at the local level as of 2011.

School-to-work transition will be followed more closely after 2011 as the Swedish National Agency for Education will work with the aforementioned national programme councils to follow up the transition from IVET to the labour market. The Agency also publishes a range of other statistics indicating, for example, the proportion of 20-year olds with an upper secondary education, including the proportion with an education that meets higher education entrance requirements.

Unemployment rate

Sweden publishes a wealth of data regularly on unemployment rates according to individual criteria. These are available at the websites of Statistics Sweden (www.scb.se) and the Public employment Service (www.arbetsformedlingen.se). In May 2012 the overall unemployment rate was 8.1 per cent in Sweden. Youth unemployment has traditionally been much higher in Sweden and still is, especially among young people without completed upper secondary education. According to UNRIC, the highest ratio of youth unemployment vs unemployment in general in the OECD is in Sweden: 24.2 per cent, or four times the average unemployment rate of 8 per cent.

Prevalence of vulnerable groups

The challenge for Sweden is to make better use of, and more systematic analysis of, the wealth of data available on the proportion of vulnerable groups in VET. The Swedish National Agency for Education has responsibility for national education statistics, including information on completion rates, for IVET at upper secondary school and in municipal adult education. These are presented at the national, regional, municipal and even at the individual school level in the database SIRIS. Information on disabilities is not collected in Sweden for integrity reasons, but information can be separated for students with Swedish or foreign background (the individual or an individual’s both parents born outside of Sweden). Upper secondary education for students with learning disabilities is currently being reformed. From the autumn of 2013 a number of measures will be taken with the aim of increasing quality of this school form and make the students better prepared for the labour market and/or further studies and give good life skills. The nine new training programmes are mainly vocationally oriented. Data are available on, for example, completion rates and how they

vary by age, gender and other background variables such as foreign background and parent’s educational background, but not disabilities.

**Mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market**

From the autumn of 2011 upper secondary IVET has been guided by Programme Councils, which involve the social partners at the sector level. This should ensure that upper secondary IVET more closely meets industry skills needs on a sectoral level. There is no direct evidence at this point on the effectiveness of mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market. In the coming years, IVET completers will be tracked more systematically and this will contribute to Sweden’s understanding of how well mechanisms (i.e. intelligence from programme councils) to identify labour market skills needs function.

By tradition, Swedish upper secondary IVET is largely school-based but should contain about 15 weeks of workplace learning. From 2011 the requirement to provide work-based learning as part of a vocational programme is sharper with fewer exemptions. Also, in 2011 apprenticeship was introduced as an alternative pathway in upper secondary education. Earmarked state grants were also introduced in 2011 to support apprenticeship in municipal upper adult education. Therefore, the role of work-based training in Swedish VET is increasing significantly and upper secondary vocational education has become more closely linked to working life and companies.

These developments are positive but also raise challenges related to quality assurance and development of work-based training (WBT). Indeed, a report in 2011 from the Swedish Schools Inspectorate identify problems with WBT and the lack of structured links between schools and the labour market as key challenges. The Inspectorate concludes that only one-fifth of schools deliver work-based training of a sufficiently high quality, largely due to a lack of vocational teacher engagement in WBT, difficulties reconciling WBT with national curricula and insufficient information in order to assign grades to students for the WBT position of their education. The initiatives, outlined above, to support the training of vocational trainers in the workplace will address some of the concern related to the quality of WBT. Increased resources to the Swedish Agency for Education and the Schools Inspectorate earmarked to support quality in VET will also address concerns about the quality of work-based training in Sweden.

**Schemes used to promote better access to VET**

Sweden has a wide range of measures to ensure access to VET for all. Upper secondary school, where the IVET programmes is an integrated part, is free of charge and open to all young people upon completion of compulsory education. For students who are not eligible for upper secondary national programmes a new set of introduction programmes have been in place since the autumn of 2011, aiming at either qualifying the students for national programmes or for the labour market. The use of targeted measures for disadvantaged groups is limited in Sweden due to universally high levels of support for individuals from different groups (e.g. immigrants, people with disabilities, etc.). However, the government appointed in the spring of 2012 a commissioner to look further into opportunities to find young people who are not in the education system and not in the labour market and provide suitable activities for them, e.g. VET. One task for the commissioner is to suggest how municipalities can improve their work to meet their legal obligation to gather information on all young school drop-outs up to the age of 20, in order to be able to suggest suitable activities.

In the broader European context, Sweden’s well-developed and fully funded system of adult education gives adults who either did not complete compulsory or upper secondary school, or who wish to acquire new skills and competences, an opportunity to do so via municipal adult education. There is also a universal system of student financial support to provide grants and loans to cover living expenses in association with adult education.

**Further measures**

There have also been several targeted measures since 2010 including an Ordinance passed in December 2010 to extend opportunities via the Adult VET Initiative adult learners with
disabilities. During 2010 measures were also announced to support folk high schools address the needs of youth and young adults who do not have a complete compulsory of upper secondary education. There are also special earmarked funds to provide extra support to those aged 20-24 years in municipal adult education if they do not have a complete upper secondary education. One example could be the latest evaluation on the municipal duty to keep informed about school drop-outs under the age of 20. As mentioned, municipalities are obliged to gather information on unemployed school drop-outs under the age of 20 in order to be able to suggest suitable activities for them, e.g. VET. A number of evaluations have been done on how the municipalities take this responsibility. The latest evaluation done by the National Agency for Education in 2011 shows that municipalities are getting better at following the group concerned and two out of three have an action plan to this end. However, there are still challenges finding and getting in contact with the young people and finding good models of cooperation between different local social services concerned, such as education, social services and employment services. The five new introduction programmes for ineligible students to national upper secondary programmes are too new to analyse. Data on completion rates will be available from 2015.

In addition, the issue of career guidance has been identified as an area in need of improvement in recent years in Sweden and there are several proposals under consideration that would support increased quality of career and vocational guidance, especially as related to vocation education and training. Higher quality career guidance would give young people and adults better information on which to make decisions concerning their studies and, possibly, support an increase in the status of vocational education and training. Career guidance can also help address the mismatch problem by giving learners up-to-date information on labour market skills needs.

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in continuous VET (CVET)

Overview of the latest developments in CVET

In general, CVET is provided in Sweden either in education institutions like higher vocational education, or in companies.

Higher vocational education

In July 2009 the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education was established to develop and oversee publicly funded vocational education at the post-upper secondary level – higher vocational education. There are now over 40 000 students in this form of post-secondary VET focused on acquiring advanced vocational education tailored to the needs of the labour market. Higher vocational education often features 25 per cent work-based training and is dynamic in that programmes must demonstrate current labour market need every two years in order to maintain state funding. Higher vocational education is provided also for adults under the Swedish Agency for Higher Vocational Education.

Sector-based apprenticeship

Another form of VET in Sweden is sector-based apprenticeship. These learners are employed. The business and trade unions at the sectoral level organise apprenticeship and the certification of certain occupations (Yrkesbevis) after satisfactory completion of an apprenticeship. The majority of the learners have completed an upper secondary VET programme before enrolling in this type of apprenticeship and falls therefore under continuous VET.

National Framework for CVET

The vast majority of vocational education and training system in Sweden falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Research. The Ministry is the body responsible for legal, policy and programme definition aspects of VET (both IVET and CVET) at national level. As regards to other actors in the VET system, it should be noted that the municipalities have a high level of authority due to the decentralised, goal-based system operating in Sweden.
The Swedish government created the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket) as the central administrative authority for the Swedish public school system. The Authority for qualified Training is responsible for Advanced Vocational Education.

Higher VET in Sweden is governed by separate regulations. Regulations aiming at ensuring the quality of higher VET, e.g. criteria for the selection of training providers, competence of trainers, quality assurance of training providers and training providers’ quality assurance systems, are found in the Higher VET Act (lag om yrkeshögskolan), the Higher VET ordinance (förordning om yrkeshögskolan) and the ordinance regulating the operations of the Agency for Higher Vocational Education (förordning med instruktion för Myndigheten för yrkeshögskolan). At advanced level the Authority for Advanced Vocational Education (KY) has the task of securing the quality of the qualified training. For advanced vocational education, KY has published its approach to quality assurance in December 2007. It does not contain indicators, but rather offers advice on the different important aspects to be included in a quality assurance system.

Quality assurance arrangements in continuous VET at provider level

The following section refers to the EQARF indicators and systems of IVET presented in the previous paragraphs, and summarises indicators used in higher VET in Sweden regarding the EQARF recommendation.

According to the HVE Act, Higher VET providers also play a role in quality assurance and development of higher VET and each provider must establish a steering group for each VET programme to ensure that each higher VET programme meets the relevance requirements and quality standards. As indicated above, the approach to quality assurance for advanced vocational education, adopted in 2007, does not contain indicators, but outlines important aspects of a quality assurance system.

Statistics on participation and completion rates in CVET programmes

As in IVET, statistics of participation in Higher VET are published by the Swedish Agency for Higher Vocational Education (www.yh-myndigheten.se). The completion data for Higher VET students are also published annually on the website of the National Agency for Higher VET (www.yh-myndigheten.se). In 2010 the overall completion rate in Higher VET was 66 per cent. There are also ad hoc studies that further explore the relationship between individual criteria and upper secondary IVET, IVET in adult education and post-secondary VET through higher vocational education.

There is access to comprehensive, high-quality data on individuals in CVET in Sweden. The data have facilitated detailed studies into the destination of learners in Higher VET in Sweden. The Swedish Agency for Higher Vocational Education reports on the destination of all higher VET completers six months, one year and three years after the completion of their studies.

Utilisation of acquired skills at work place in CVET

Regarding utilisation of acquired skills at work place, there have been a number of measures since 2009 to ensure more structured cooperation between VET and the public employment service. These measures are especially sharp vis-à-vis vocational education and apprenticeship training in municipal upper secondary education for adults and higher vocational education, both of which have a clear mandate to ensure that training outputs more clearly reflect labour market skills needs.

Prevalence of vulnerable groups

In terms of prevalence of vulnerable groups, In 2011 the Government instructed the Swedish Agency for Higher Vocational Education to fund VET provider costs for occupation-related Swedish language training, partly to ensure that more students with a foreign background participate in higher vocational education. The Agency was also assigned the task to analyse the participation rate of individuals born outside of Sweden in higher vocation education, and recommend measures to increase their participation rate. Finally, the agency has also been instructed to work with the Swedish Agency for Disability Policy Coordination to analyse
which VET programmes could be most likely be made more accessible for individuals with a physical or mental disability. The Agency currently (2012) has the task to develop pilot higher VET programmes for people with disabilities. Higher vocational education offers those with a completed upper secondary education an opportunity to pursue vocational education and training at a higher level and therefore opens to door to VET for groups previously excluded from VET.

**Mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market**

Higher Vocational Education is designed mainly to meet changing labour market needs. In fact, higher VET programmes may not be offered unless there is a documented labour market need for the skills conferred and these needs must be re-confirmed every two years or the programme is cancelled. Moreover, the Agency for Higher VET has a skills forecasting capacity and Labour Market Council composed of experts for government agencies and the social partners, in terms of sector councils for higher vocational education and regional platforms for competency supply. Studies indicate that 80-90 per cent of those who complete higher vocational education find employment related to their field of studies.

In Higher Vocational Education there is a requirement that at least 25 per cent of two-year higher vocational education programmes consist of work-based training. There are no imminent plans for large-scale investments to improve the quality of work-based training in higher VET, but both the Government and the Swedish Agency for Higher VET will monitor quality closely in the coming years. Higher Vocational Education, where theoretical learning is often integrated and blended with vocational practice at the workplace is planned and carried out in close cooperation with the working life. The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education analyses and assesses needs for skilled competence and the development of the labour market in order to make informed decisions regarding public funding to higher VET providers. The Agency also assesses and audits quality and outcomes of VET programmes under its jurisdiction, and follows up on the transition from higher VET programmes to work, both in terms of numbers and in terms of how many students that have successfully transitioned to the work area within which they have studied.

The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education has a mandate from the Government to coordinate and support a national structure for validation in Sweden. The agency has established a national forum for validation and a steering group for the assessment of foreign vocational education and training; developed guidelines for quality assurance and documentation of validation; developed a validation document database; and launched a validation portal.

**Part 2 – Interaction between national quality assurance and EQAVET**

**National Reference Point**

The National Reference Point (NRP) has been operational since 2010, with the assignment from the Ministry of Education for the School Inspectorate to function as a quality reference point in Sweden, according the EQAVET recommendation. It has been a natural selection for School Inspectorate to represent Sweden as a NRP and scrutinising quality assurance approaches in education. The work of the NRP includes collecting data on quality in education in close collaboration with other Institutions and departments, to produce reports, which are provided publicly available on the website. However, the human and financial resources are limited; the project leader works in NRP part-time with two colleagues assisting in the work. There are some financial resources reserved to cover, e.g. travel expenses. The Ministry of Education has aimed to bring the different institutions and departments responsible for quality in close cooperation in Sweden. The Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket) develops quality standards for schools and has a supporting role, but the NRP (Skolinspektionen) is responsible for quality assurance monitoring in education in Sweden.

Since 50 years, there have been some references to quality in Swedish law on education and there has been awareness of quality issues, but they have not been fully implemented. Since the municipalities are entitled to organise the work of schools independently, the Government cannot interfere into their operations as long as the municipalities are
organising education according to the law. For example, while EQAVET and the ten indicators are important, but the School Inspectorate cannot demand the municipalities or independent schools to use for example the EQAVET cycle. EQAVET indicators cannot be forced, since they are not part of the law of education. At present the EQAVET and indicators are only recommended.

The NRP undertakes different kinds of activities, but mainly publishing reports on the website as well as developing specific issues in European projects. The NRP meets regularly with four other national agencies and departments, which deal with European initiatives, for example ECVET, EQF and Europass, to discuss common issues together. It organises an annual conference for VET policy-makers and key actors. The first one was organised in 2012 and next one will be in autumn 2013. The added value of having an NPR in place is that quality in VET has become a more prominent part of the school system in Sweden. Since the NRP is functioning under the Ministry of Education, it is also reporting to the Ministry about its activities.

National approach to enhance quality assurance

Sweden has a national approach to enhance quality assurance ensured by Ministry of Education. The law on education stipulates that schools need to document quality issues systematically. The Government cannot impose any other national strategy to enhance quality assurance. The municipalities implement the law independently. The Swedish National Agency for Education publishes supporting documents for the schools to implement the law. There are also reports on quality published on the website of the NRP. There are also different kinds of quality assessment projects both in IVET and higher VET.

At present, EQAVET is a complementing system regarding quality assurance in education in Sweden. In comparison, there is more intensive work on EQF, which is something new for all, than in EQAVET. The EQAVET Recommendation asks countries to draw up a national strategy to enhance quality assurance. In Sweden, the national approach to EQAVET quality assurance is drafted by the Ministry of Education and sent to different national agencies, school inspectorate etc. for consultation and commenting. It is a working document aimed to describe the current situation regarding quality development in Sweden, but its status is not clear, as it is not bound by a governmental decision. The use of the content of EQAVET framework has been quite limited so far, some parts of it are used, but the framework itself is used very little.

Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance

The EQAVET framework has been the driver in quality development in a very limited way and with very limited resources in Sweden. However, the criteria and descriptors etc. are relevant and some of them were used already before the framework was established.

At present, EQAVET is mainly known by and targeted at policy-makers at system level. However, it is not certain to what extent municipalities and VET schools at practice level know about EQAVET and are aware of the EQAVET indicators. It is argued that municipalities and independent schools do not use quality approaches sufficiently and that EQAVET is not fully implemented yet. The framework will be used when a sufficient number of people have knowledge about it. The NRP aims to inform the schools about EQAVET approaches in this respect.

The NRP sees the potential of EQAVET to promote systematic quality work at school level, e.g. the possibility of VET students taking part of their education in another country could be one interesting development. Therefore, more stakeholders should be involved into quality work of VET schools in municipalities compared what is taking place now. The EQAVET framework could be much more useful for municipalities and VET schools than can be imagined. Municipalities and VET schools should take up the EQAVET indicators and progress to another professional level in quality assurance. Professionalism and quality work in schools could be a further incentive for a rewarding work in schools. In addition to the national agencies, the Association of Swedish Local and Regional Authorities, which is a statutory stakeholder, is engaged with the School Inspectorate in EQAVET process.
NRP tries to encourage the stakeholders to take part in EQAVET, but there is no system to force the stakeholders to take up the data regarding e.g. how useful are the skills students have learnt at school in the employment, how many of the graduates are employed etc. The municipalities and schools should be the key stakeholders of the quality data, but at present the policy-makers are the ones using it. Overall, Sweden aims to refer to EQAVET framework when making future changes in quality assurance, since the framework was developed at EU level and can be used as background material.

Quality assurance in VET as such has been on the agenda to a very large extent in Sweden since 2003. This has been the reason for the changes in education that were introduced since 2011. A very important reason was that the Government wanted to develop the quality of IVET in order to meet the needs of the labour market and to work in close collaboration with the stakeholders, as recommended by OECD. Now there is a national council for each education programme, and also local programme councils. These developments had a lot to do with quality assurance in VET, and with the need to be able to follow education closely and to make the necessary changes. As part of the reform, in 2008 the School Inspectorate was removed from the national agency of education and started to work as a national agency for quality assurance, which itself is a token of the political will to stress quality assurance in VET. The agency has a special mandate from the Government to develop quality in VET, which indicates that quality assurance has been high on the agenda in Sweden over the last few years.

**Synergies with other EU level instruments**

There is an on-going discussion at policy making level in Sweden on how to increase inter-agency and stakeholder cooperation regarding the implementation of European tools such as EVCET, EQF/NQF etc. Discussions are also underway about how to improve Sweden’s engagement on the aforementioned European tools and initiatives. At present, the NRP meets regularly with four other departments under the Ministry, which deal with European instruments, for example ECVET, EQF/NQF and Europass, to discuss common issues together. In Sweden, there is a practice to publish the different European instruments and tools together, so that actors can see the different parts of the development of the same system. There are frequent meetings with other national agencies responsible for other EU instruments. The Inspectorate organises an annual conference and event together with other national agencies to describe and develop the different approaches of EU instruments. The national agencies have managed to create a good basis for keeping the stakeholders updated and to develop common competences in education and quality development.

Sweden will implement the EQF and establish a national qualifications framework. The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education was appointed national coordination point (NCP). The Swedish NQF will only include qualifications within the formal education and training system in the initial phase. The Government has stated that it would be of value to include qualifications from sectors (e.g. sector-based apprenticeship) and private actors in a second phase – provided that a trustworthy mechanism for quality assurance can be established. The NCP was commissioned to develop a comprehensive NQF covering all parts of the formal education and training system. According to the instructions, the descriptors should be developed broadly in order to make possible a second phase. Exploratory work is being made regarding ECVET and the focus is at present on how to best implement the tools in Sweden. The International Programme Office is coordinating a Leonardo da Vinci project on ECVET implementation in Sweden, in which several national authorities are involved.
A1.29 **Draft Country report – United Kingdom**

**Author:** Ilona Murphy (ICF GHK)

**Part 1 – Description of quality assurance arrangements and of recent developments**

### England

In England, the Wolf Review of Vocational Education for 14-19 year olds raised concerns about the quality of vocational qualification.

New quality and funding arrangements are being introduced for FE colleges enrolling full-time 14- and 15-year-olds from September 2013.

In England, the government is increasing the age to which all young people must continue in education and training, requiring them to continue until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17 from 2013 and until their 18th birthday from 2015.

### Northern Ireland

The new Northern Ireland skills strategy, *Success through Skills – Transforming Futures*, has been launched and implementation is underway. The strategy is supported by a number of other strategic documents and projects to take forward the further development of the skills base in Northern Ireland.

### Wales

The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Bill was introduced in April 2012 and sets out proposals to strengthen school standards, enhance local determination and reduce complexity.

The Welsh Government commissioned an independent Review of Qualifications taken by 14-19 year olds.

### Scotland

Post-16 education reform led by the Scottish Government aims to improve the quality of qualifications for young people and employers.

### Quality assurance arrangements at system level in initial VET

**Context**

In the UK, initial VET (IVET) is undertaken within the secondary school system and the FE sector. Lower secondary IVET typically refers to provision offered to 14-16 year olds (though some variation exists across the UK nations, IVET is primarily school based; however, some IVET includes elements of work experience with an employer). Upper secondary IVET typically refers to provision offered to 16-19 year olds (though again slight variations to age brackets exist across the UK nations) and can be undertaken at secondary school, FE college or a training provider.

Across the UK nations, 14-16 IVET is regulated by the same legislation as primary and secondary general education.

This report is primarily concerned with initial VET at upper-secondary level and post-secondary level.

In the UK, no single piece of legislation provides for an education and training legal framework with government and institutional frameworks differing between England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. This means that there is no single quality assurance framework.
mechanism in place in the UK as approaches vary according to the requirements of the autonomous UK nations.

Additionally, quality systems are typically governed by a mixture of over-arching legislative powers of departments and other agencies in each nation, and conditions of funding – a number of funded programmes are delivered by private, non-statutory, bodies, for example, where quality arrangements are controlled by contract.

Within each UK nation, provision of IVET is a shared responsibility between the national administration, the regional administration (in Wales) and providers. Decisions on the development of new qualifications or updating existing qualifications are national.

The curricula for most VET qualifications delivered by FE are shaped by qualification specifications developed by awarding bodies in conjunction with employers (often through SSCs) where National Occupational Standards underpin the development of vocational qualifications.

**National Framework for initial VET – who is in charge of what?**

The national framework for upper-secondary and post-secondary IVET differs between England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. Across all UK nations upper secondary IVET is delivered in both the secondary education system and within the further education (FE) system. Table one below broadly shows who is in charge of what in relation to school based upper-secondary IVET across the UK nations and table two below shows who is in charge in relation to upper-secondary IVET within the FE sector. In summary however, at national level the Government department and inspectorate are the two main organisations responsible for quality assurance.

**Authorities responsible for school based upper-secondary IVET, UK nations**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>England</th>
<th>Wales</th>
<th>Northern Ireland</th>
<th>Scotland</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall schools-based IVET policy</td>
<td>Department for Education</td>
<td>Department for Education and Skills</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
<td>Scottish Government</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government department</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government agencies</td>
<td>Teaching Agency, Education Funding Agency</td>
<td>UKCES, LSIS</td>
<td>NI Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)</td>
<td>Education Scotland, Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulator</td>
<td>Ofqual</td>
<td>DfES</td>
<td>Ofqual</td>
<td>SQA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualifications development</td>
<td>Awarding bodies</td>
<td>Awarding bodies</td>
<td>Awarding bodies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>Local Authorities</td>
<td>DfES</td>
<td>Education and Library Boards</td>
<td>Local Authorities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Institutional framework for upper-secondary IVET and CVET within the FE sector**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>England</th>
<th>Wales</th>
<th>Northern Ireland</th>
<th>Scotland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall upper secondary IVET and CVET policy</td>
<td>Department for Education</td>
<td>Department for</td>
<td>Department for</td>
<td>Scottish</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

633 LSIS will cease to exist outside England in 2013.
Across all UK nations, the majority of upper-secondary IVET provision is delivered within the FE sector. As such, the focus of this report from hereon is focused on upper-secondary IVET provision delivered within the FE sector.

**Planning at VET system level and requirements for evaluation and review**

In Northern Ireland, the Programme for Government 2011-2015 sets out the strategic priorities for all government departments and recognises the contribution of education and skills to growing a sustainable economy and investing in the future. This is reflected in the targets set for increasing uptake in STEM subjects, up-skilling the working age population, combating economic inactivity and supporting employment through skills development.

The Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) recognises that measuring and benchmarking quality of provision is an essential step towards improving quality, and it monitors and reports progress towards these objectives, along with a range of other relevant data, to the NI Assembly, and publishes annual analyses of the quality and performance of its programmes and provision (see www.delni.gov.uk/qualityperformanceanalysis).

At a provider level, the Department's quality improvement strategy, *Success through Excellence*, sets out steps towards improving quality and improving quality assurance for its programmes, and is the over-arching strategy for VET quality assurance in Northern Ireland.

Quality assurance is also closely linked to funding arrangements for the further education sector in Northern Ireland. Bilateral meetings are held annually with each FE college to discuss their college development plans. These discussions are informed by reports from the Education and Training Inspectorate, and by the college’s own annual self-evaluation process. Budgets are agreed on the basis of progress against priority objectives and overall quality of provision.

In England, upper secondary IVET has been the subject of much debate following the recent publication of the Wolf Review of vocational education for 14-19 year olds. Since then, the Secretary of State for Education announced a review of the National Curriculum. The new National Curriculum is intended to set out the essential knowledge that all children should acquire, and give schools and teachers more freedom to decide how to teach this most effectively and to design a wider school curriculum that best meets the needs of their pupils.

In Wales, the Programme for Government sets out the plan of action for education in Wales with the main aim of ensuring that everyone reaches their potential, reduce inequality and improve economic and social well-being. The Programme for Government and the recently published School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Bill reinforces the need to enhance
local determination and reduce complexity. As such, the planning, funding and management of state-maintained schools is the responsibility of each local authority. The Welsh Government provides funding to local authority for pre-16 provision in schools through local government revenue settlement – they also provide funding to improve the quality of the learning environment.

**Statutory stakeholder involvement, identification of training needs**

As illustrated in the table above, there are a number of organisations involved in national policy making on upper-secondary IVET and are typically involved in all consultations relating to the strategic planning of education and training reforms.

Across all UK nations, Sector Skill Councils operate in IVET. Together with their umbrella organisation, UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES), SSCs are seen as the formation of a strategic partnership of major stakeholders to strengthen the employers’ voice, identify training needs and ensure vocational qualifications are fit for purpose.

In England, their involvement is endorsed in the government’s policy for economic growth, set out in the Plan for Growth. Other key stakeholders involved in IVET in England include Ofsted and Ofqual who is the regulator of qualifications and awarding organisations. Ofqual is a statutory agency established in 2009, with a range of duties, which apply to academic as well as vocational awards.

The Scottish government’s approach to stakeholder involvement in IVET is set out in the refreshed Skills for Scotland strategy and builds on a key priority theme based on supporting employers and ensuring that the supply of skills, training and qualifications can be responsive. A further priority is to strengthening partnerships to improve skills and the contribution they make towards achieving Scotland’s social and economic aspirations. More specifically, Education Scotland, established in February 2011 as a key national body supporting quality and improvement in Scottish Education, is also responsible for the inspection of pre-school, primary, secondary and further education.

In Wales, a number of organisations are involved in VET policy – DfES, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate for education and training (Estyn), Higher Education Funding Wales, Colegau Cymru (Colleges Wales), National Training Federation, Association of Directors of Education, NIACE Dysgu Cymru, Council for Voluntary Action Care Council for Wales (CCW), Council for Voluntary Action and Careers Wales.

In Northern Ireland, the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), CCEA and Ofqual are the key statutory stakeholders in IVET and quality assurance, ETI as the quality inspectorate, Ofqual as the regulator of vocational qualifications. In terms of identifying skills needs, DEL funding is weighted to reflect economic priorities and areas of skill needs, which have been identified following analysis of relevant LMI data and longer-term economic trends. 95% of funding for FE covers provision leading to a regulated qualification; all vocational qualifications require evidence of demand by employers, typically through the SSC network, before they are placed on the regulated framework. The Department for Employment and Learning’s strategy document, ‘FE Means Business’ underlines the importance of collaboration and partnership between the statutory FE sector and local employers, as well as with voluntary and community organisations. The sector, whether individually or through its representative body, Colleges NI, is increasingly geared towards working with employers to ensure that the supply of skilled VET graduates is aligned to demand in the local labour market.

The Department, through CCEA and the local SSC network also promotes opportunities for employers to have their existing training recognised through the use of regulated qualifications.

Increasingly across all of the UK nations, learners are involved in a range of initiatives and have an important contribution to make in the development and implementation of IVET policy.
Who can deliver VET and under what conditions — accreditation or other requirements on VET providers

In England, providers delivering upper-secondary school-based provision must register with the Department for Education and be established as public or private entities. These providers are subject to the school-based inspection carried out by Ofsted. In line with Ofqual’s General Conditions of Recognition, all Awarding Organisations are required to approve centres to offer their qualifications. In addition, providers delivering upper-secondary FE based provision must be accredited by the Skills Funding Agency and comply with their requirements of funding. Following the Wolf Review FE colleges who have been rated good or above in their last Ofsted Inspection will be able to enrol and receive Government funding for 14-16 year olds. Generally speaking however, all providers are subject to Ofsted inspection, though a different inspection framework applies to school-based provision and a separate inspection framework applies to the further education system.

In Wales, providers delivering IVET must also be registered with the associated government department, be established as public or private entities and are subject to school-based inspection. In Scotland, providers delivering upper secondary VET must be accredited to deliver Scottish Qualification Association qualifications.

In Northern Ireland, no register as such is kept, but mainstream further education funding is only distributed to recognised (statutory) further education colleges. The remainder of DEL’s funding for VET is made available through contracts with either individual providers or consortia to deliver specific programmes. In both cases, providers must be open to inspection by the ETI and to the Department’s quality assurance arrangements, including minimum qualification requirements for VET teachers. For a provider to deliver any regulated VET qualification it must also meet the centre recognition criteria set out by the qualification awarding organisation, which is regulated by Ofqual.

In Scotland, England and in Wales, state schools are owned and operated by the local authorities; in Northern Ireland, grant maintained schools are owned and overseen by the five education and library boards.

Certification — assessment and validation of learning (system level)

There are a number of qualification types in upper-secondary IVET. The following provides a broad summary across the UK nations. Generally speaking however, across the UK, VET qualifications are designed by Awarding Organisations in consultation with Sector Skills Councils, schools and colleges.

At the school level, in Northern Ireland the new Entitlement Framework will become operational from September 2013. The Entitlement Framework falls under the responsibility of the Department of Education and ensures that learners have access to a number of courses at Key Stage 4 (14-16) and post 16, of which at least one third must be general and one third applied. A general qualification is one where knowledge, understanding and skills are developed within a subject context, whereas with an applied qualification, the knowledge, understanding and skills can be developed through practical demonstration and/or within a context related to employability. The ‘applied’ designation also includes a number of vocational qualifications appropriate for the age group.

The vast majority of vocational qualifications in Northern Ireland are delivered in a further education setting to over-16s, as well as through the ApprenticeshipsNL and other programmes. Most vocational qualifications delivered in NI are on the qualifications and credit framework (QCF), which supports flexible delivery models and makes regulated learning accessible to a wider range of users. All vocational qualifications on the QCF are based on national occupational standards, which reflect the standards required in the modern workplace, and are based on assessable learning outcomes in the domains of knowledge, skills and competence.

Apprenticeship programmes and further education provision for learners 16 years and over sit under the responsibility of the Department for Employment and Learning that is responsible for all vocational curriculum and qualifications below degree level. The
Education and Training Inspectorate provides for inspections of FE colleges and providers delivering other DEL programmes in relation to the quality of teaching and learning.

In Scotland, the Scottish Qualification Authority offers a range of vocational qualifications for 14-19 learners. These include: Scottish Progression Awards, Skills for Work, National Certificates, Scottish Vocational Qualifications, Higher National Certificates and Diplomas.

In Wales, a range of IVET qualifications also exist – these include vocational qualifications, vocational CSEs and the Essential Skills Wales suite of qualifications, which includes wider key skills – these are the component parts of the Welsh Baccalaureate. Under the new proposed Welsh Baccalaureate model, vocational qualifications may constitute up to 40 per cent of the external qualifications at 14 – 16, up to 100 per cent of the external supporting qualifications for the National post-16 and for the Advanced level. The recent Review of qualifications has recommended that the Welsh Government should adopt the European convention of categorising vocational qualifications as either IVET or CVET. Of the two categories it is recommended that only IVET ones should be available to learners at 14 to 16, with either category available post-16.

In England, vocational GCSEs are part of IVET at lower secondary level. Vocational GCSEs and A Level qualifications are available, as well as a mix of vocationally-related certificates and Diplomas. The Diploma is a qualification for students aged 14 to 19 that combines academic and vocational learning and has been developed in conjunction with employers, universities, schools and colleges, and provides students with the skills and knowledge they need to progress to further/higher education and employment. Fourteen Diplomas are available to schools and colleges. The Diploma is made up of a number of different components, including sector-related learning, Functional Skills in mathematics, English and ICT, work experience. In England, the Young Apprenticeship (introduced in 2004) is also available to 14-16 year olds and combines practical application of skills and knowledge with studying for vocational qualifications.

In terms of IVET at upper secondary, there is the vocational certificate of education and a range of vocational qualifications on the Qualifications and Credit Framework available for this age range. Apprenticeships also exist across all UK nations, though there are slight variations in their framework structure, but are typically provided by FE colleges and independent providers. Apprenticeships and Pathways to Apprenticeships (in Wales) can be considered in the context of both IVET and CVET.

The content and assessment arrangements for VET qualifications across all UK nations are subject to the accreditation requirements of the regulatory body.

**Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators**

Across the different UK nations the following organisations are responsible for monitoring the quality of education and training provision of education providers. In summary, inspection of IVET in state maintained schools and colleges are carried out by Ofsted in England, HM Inspectorate of Education in Scotland, the Education and Training Inspectorate in Northern Ireland and Estyn in Wales.

In Northern Ireland, the activities of the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) are conducted on the basis of Improving Quality: Raising Standards, which sets out its approach to inspection using a quality cycle, the indicators it uses as part of its monitoring activities, and what providers need to do in response to an inspection report. It also stresses the importance of self-evaluation by providers, the process which itself is also inspected, with a focus on the use of an iterative quality cycle and appropriate indicators. Indicators used by the ETI fall under three broad headings:

- Leadership and management
- Quality of learning provision
- Quality of achievements and standards

In Wales, the Common Inspection Framework from September 2010 is used. It is comprised of a set of 10 quality indicators across three broad areas – outcomes, provision and leadership.
In England, the Common Inspection Framework for further education and skills 2012 sets out the criteria that inspectors make judgements against when they inspect i) education and training in England for learners between 14–16 years old, attending a college course or learning programme and ii) all learners over the age of 16, except for those in school sixth forms or higher education participating in publically funded provision. Inspectors will make three key aspect judgements:

1. Outcomes for learners
2. Quality of teaching, learning and assessment
3. Effectiveness of leadership and management.

In Scotland, Education Scotland is responsible for the inspection of all the different sectors of education – from pre-school centres through to secondary schools, and colleges. The approach to school inspection has recently been reviewed leading to the school inspection framework document, published in August 2011. Here, the arrangements for inspection are set out in a key document called ‘External quality arrangements for Scotland’s colleges (updated August 2012)’ and is seen to provide the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and other stakeholders with key assurances about the quality of the learner experience in Scotland’s colleges. The Scottish Qualifications Authority also applies quality assurance processes through the accreditation of qualification and awarding organisations.

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)

In England, the Common Inspection Framework is a specific measure focused on quality assurance. The framework sets out the statutory basis for inspections conducted under the Education Act of 2005 and was amended in September 2012.

At a broader level, there are national reforms taking place across all UK nations that will have an inevitable impact on quality assurance and quality improvement both at system and provider level. Given that reforms are currently underway – particularly in Wales, the real impact on quality assurance processes is not yet clear. For example, in Wales, a Review of Qualifications for 14 to 19-year-olds was launched in September 2011. The aim of the review was to identify the qualifications that are most relevant, valued and understood and to ensure they are available to learners. The review also considered issues related to assessment and measurement of performance. The Report was published 28th November 2012 and is awaiting a full government response early 2013. Importantly, the Review recommended the establishment of a new Qualifications Body responsible for both awarding general qualifications and regulating all qualifications. The Welsh Minister for Education and Skills accepted this recommendation and Welsh Government will move towards establishing this new body, “Qualifications Wales”, to regulate and assure the quality of all relevant qualifications other than degrees in Wales.

In Northern Ireland, the quality assurance system is continuously monitored and, where appropriate, improved. For example, revised and rigorous standards for teaching in the FE sector have been developed. The Department of Education and the Department for Employment and Learning are also working co-jointly to bring forward a programme of provision for 14-19 year olds. This approach builds on existing work within the Vocational Enhancement Programme and the on-going implementation of the Entitlement Framework described above. There has been increased emphasis on skills and applied and general qualifications. Similar to that in Great Britain, there is a need to consider the funding implementation of future provision for 14-19 year olds.

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008

Within the context of IVET, the main focus of reforms to initial VET during the late 90’s into the 00’s was in relation to increased flexibility within the national curriculum. This marks the introduction of the Increased Flexibility for 14-16 year olds Programme (IFP) in 2002 by the then Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in order to ‘create enhanced vocational and work-related learning opportunities for 14-16 year olds who can benefit most’. It also
represents the on-going reform to Apprenticeship programmes – largely reflecting the introduction of Level 2 Apprenticeships and improvements to the continuous content and delivery of Apprenticeship frameworks.

In addition, the 2000 Learning and Skills Act extended the remit of Ofsted to include provision delivered by institutions in the further education sector and further education provided by local authorities for people in England under the age of 19.

Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in initial VET

Requirements VET providers have to comply with

- Initial VET providers in the UK are secondary schools, FE colleges and training providers. Quality assurance at provider level in IVET comprise of:
  - Self-assessment
  - Inspection
- Generally speaking, national quality standards for VET providers are used as a condition of accreditation across the UK and as a condition of funding in IVET. In Wales quality standards are required as part of legislation.

Requirements for monitoring and review (self-assessment)

- Across all UK nations, self-evaluation is a requirement and is considered to be the starting point of inspection. In relation to post-16 in Wales, self-assessment is also at the core of the Quality and Effectiveness Framework of the Welsh Government for post-16 providers.
- In England, school self-evaluation is well-established and provides the basis for planning for development and improvement. Inspection takes account of and contributes to, a school’s self-evaluation.

Requirements for monitoring and review (school inspection)

- In England, Ofsted has established a Common Inspection Framework for school inspection covering upper secondary IVET. Ofsted use a separate common inspection framework for post-16 VET and is covered by the common inspection framework for the further education sector (discussed further below).
- In Wales quality standards are used for monitoring purposes by the Department of Education and Skills for both IVET and CVET. In addition, Northern Ireland uses quality standards to report outcomes to the NI Executive for both IVET and CVET; details of quality assurance processes are set out in Improving Quality: Raising Standards. As set out in previous sections, quality processes in providers are also closely aligned to their annual funding arrangements.

Planning at VET provider level (including identification of training needs), Stakeholder involvement

Across the UK nations schools and FE colleges develop school level curricula, on the basis of qualification specifications. FE colleges in Wales also build regional plans. The FE sector primarily work in partnership with local employers and through Sector Skills Councils. In recent years, there has been increased focus on the role FE colleges in terms of their capacity to respond to employer and learner needs.

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in continuous VET

Context

Continued education and training in the UK has traditionally been voluntary on the part of employers rather than regulated by the state. There is little obligation for employers to train staff, except where licensing of organisations or individuals is a requirement of a regulatory framework. For example, continuous training for health care professions and teachers for example are required by legislation. Except in the construction and engineering industries, employers do not pay training levies.
In most cases, quality assurance is ensured through programme accreditation and provider accreditation as a condition of public funding. National Occupational standards (NOS) are used as the method for standardising skills, knowledge and understanding across all UK nations. The rest of this section refers to the quality assurance of CVET delivered through the further education sectors across the UK nations.

**National Framework for CVET – who is in charge of what?**

The national framework for CVET is presented in table two as above. In summary, in Northern Ireland, the main CVET system falls under the responsibility of the Department for Employment and Learning and is articulated through its skills strategy. Up-skilling the existing workforce is seen as a current priority. Within the further education sector, the quality assurance agenda is driven by a quality improvement strategy – called Success Through Excellence: A Quality Improvement Strategy for the Further Education and Training System. Although this was published in 2007 it continues to drive the approach to quality assurance arrangements at system level in relation to FE and training. Here it is important to note that the key quality relationship is with awarding and professional bodies and regulators, particularly where regulated qualifications are used. The focus on quality and performance is reflected in the implementation of the Skills Strategy: Success Through Skills – Transforming Futures, Further Education Means Business and the Welfare to Work Reform Agenda.

In England, CVET primarily falls to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills with some responsibility falling to the Department for Education where some aspects of 16-19 provision is concerned. In England, the government’s policy document ‘New challenges, new chances – further education and skills system reforming plan’ sets out a focused approach to improving quality assurance.

In Scotland, CVET falls under the responsibility of the Scottish Government with key roles and responsibilities for quality assurance (particularly in terms of inspection) assigned to Education Scotland and Scotland’s Colleges which is a network organisation supporting FE colleges in Scotland. Significantly, a regional approach (through 12 newly-created regions) has been introduced with the aim of making the sector more efficient and responsive to the needs of students and local economies.

In Wales, the Welsh Government published its Quality and Effectiveness Framework for post-16 learning in Wales setting out the government’s commitment to continued improvements in post-16 learning. Building on the Quality and Effectiveness Framework and the Sector Priority Fund Phase 2, the Investing in Quality Programme supports post-16 providers to improve quality with greater emphasis on partnership working and on innovative activities that will increase effectiveness such as benchmarking, active involvement of learners, peer review and action research projects.

**Statutory stakeholder involvement in CVET systems**

In relation to CVET, trade unions have a key role to play in education and training and workplace skills development. For example, in England, Union Learning Representatives support workers engage in education and training opportunities, particularly workers with poor basic literacy and numeracy skills.

In Wales, a number of initiatives are in place to encourage stakeholder involvement in CVET – these include the Wales Union Learning Funding, Basic Skills Employer Pledge that specifically helps employers to improve basic skills in the workplace.

In Scotland as with all UK nations, colleges are expected to play a key role in local partnerships focusing on community learning and development. Through Scotland’s Colleges, there is a ‘Quality Development Network’. This network was established in 2011 with the view to providing a forum for staff operating in colleges across Scotland. The forum enables college staff to meet on a formal and informal basis as professionals to exchange information, network, provide a specialist perspective and undertake professional debate on a range of issues which impact on the themes of quality.
As with IVET, across all of the UK nations, learner engagement is increasingly seen as a key principle of quality assurance. In Scotland for example, colleges are devising and implementing ways of involving learners in decision-making processes at programme and college levels.

Sector Skills Council, Standard Setting Organisations, Awarding Organisations, Professional Bodies, the Inspectorate and respective Regulatory bodies also have a key role to play in CVET.

Planning CVET at system level

Across the UK there is a strong tradition of stakeholder consultation in the policy design and development of CVET. This applies to national consultation on programme reforms and to the involvement of stakeholders in defining national occupational standards through the SSCs.

For England and Wales, the main quality assurance arrangements at system level associated with CVET include:

Ofsted inspection – Common Inspection Framework: Ofsted regulate and inspect a variety of education providers in England. Those that are in receipt of funding from the Skills Funding Agency for post-19 education and training, apprenticeships or adult learning in prisons are subject to Ofsted inspection. Ofsted inspect this provision using the Common Inspection Framework and make the findings of their inspections available to the public through publishing inspection reports on their website. The SFA takes note of the outcomes of the Ofsted inspection and where a provider is judged ‘inadequate’ for overall effectiveness it will intervene.

In England, Skills Funding Agency use Minimum Levels of Performance that is based on a methodology that provides an analysis of a provider’s qualification success rates. They show the volume of provision which falls below a particular threshold that has been set by the Agency and that has been compared to the national average success rates. Thresholds vary according to level, duration and funding type. Minimum Levels of Performance represent the absolute minimum success rate performance. If a provider falls below the minimum level, the Agency will intervene.

It should be noted that the current Minimum Levels of Performance are being revised to make them more transparent and less complex. Changes to the Minimum Levels of Performance are intended to give providers more autonomy to manage their overall offer.

The SFA has also developed a process to address provider risk assessment and management through an intervention policy. The starting point for the Agency is an assessment of the risk of a provider failing to deliver post-19 provision that makes efficient and effective use of public funds. There are a range of factors that are considered as part of this assessment (e.g. quality of provision, delivery of provision, financial stability, control of public funds). The Agency will however intervene when:

- A provider receives an ‘inadequate’ Ofsted Inspection judgement for overall effectiveness
- Provision falls below the post-19 minimum levels of performance
- A provider is rated as ‘inadequate’ by the Agency for financial health and financial control.

Identification of training needs

As indicated above, Sector Skills Councils and Standard Setting Organisations are UK-wide organisations. They have a key goal to raise employment engagement, demand and investment in skills; reduce skills gaps and shortages; ensure labour market information is produced for their sectors and develop national occupational standards and ensure qualifications meet employers’ needs. Government Departments in each nation also identify needs through Sector Priorities.
**Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on CVET providers**

Across all of the UK nations there are specific requirements in place for education providers to deliver publicly funded education and training provisions. In line with Ofqual’s General Conditions of Recognition, all Awarding Organisations are required to approve centres to offer their qualifications. In England, all education providers delivering post-19 provision are required to register on the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) Register of Training Organisations. As part of the funding contractual arrangements between the SFA and education providers, a series of quality assurance measures and standards that providers are expected to meet. These include the SFA Minimum Levels of Performance, and the Intervention Policy (discussed further in the detailed fiches). In addition, in England it is common practice to publish provider performance data with the intention that access to comparable data in relation to success rates, learner satisfaction and employer satisfaction.

**Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)**

Across the UK, VET qualifications are designed by Awarding Organisations in consultation with Sector Skills Councils and are based on National Occupational Standards. In recent years a small number of employers have also been able to award nationally recognised vocational qualifications to their employees.

As indicated above, Ofqual is responsible for regulating awarding organisations and their qualifications in England (and vocational qualifications in Northern Ireland) whilst the Welsh Government is responsible for this function in Wales. Before awarding organisations can be recognised to develop and award qualifications they must demonstrate that they meet the Criteria for Recognition and that they are capable of complying with the General Conditions of Recognition. In short, the Criteria for Recognition is an assessment to determine the suitability of the identity, constitution, governance, integrity of the applicant and its resources/financing arrangements are appropriate and determining that the applicant is competent in the development, delivery and award of qualifications. The General Conditions of Recognition set out a range of requirements that an awarding organisation must demonstrate that they are able to comply with. These are set out in two parts and concern (part one) the awarding organisation and (part two) the regulated qualification. Importantly, each awarding organisation is accountable for the quality and standards of its qualifications. It also has in place a range of quality assurance requirements that providers of their qualifications must meet. This is set out in the awarding organisations centre approval requirements.

In Scotland, SQA Accreditation quality assures qualifications offered in Scotland by approving awarding bodies and accrediting their qualifications. For this regulatory principals and accreditation criteria are used. There are a number of documents available to support this process but in summary, the criteria for accredited qualifications require that awarding bodies must have a process for:

- Identifying the need/demand for a qualification
- The design and development of qualifications
- Maintaining and reviewing qualifications
- Designing assessment methods
- Designing quality assurance system that ensure the quality and consistency of assessment is monitored and maintained

**Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators**

In England, Ofsted’s Common Inspection Framework is used to inspect providers of publicly funded provision. Ofsted regulate and inspect a variety of education providers in England. Those that are in receipt of funding from the Skills Funding Agency for post-19 education and training, apprenticeships or adult learning in prisons are subject to Ofsted
inspection. Ofsted inspect this provision using the Common Inspection Framework and make the findings of their inspections available to the public through publishing inspection reports on their website. The SFA takes note of the outcomes of the Ofsted inspection and where a provider is judged ‘inadequate’ for overall effectiveness they will intervene.

In conjunction with Ofsted’s Common Inspection Framework, the SFA use Minimum Levels of Performance that is based on a methodology that provides an analysis of a provider’s qualification success rates. They show the volume of provision which falls below a particular threshold that has been set by the Agency and that has been compared to the national average success rates. Thresholds vary according to level, duration and funding type. Minimum Levels of Performance represent the absolute minimum success rate performance, if a provider falls below the minimum level, the Agency will intervene.

In Wales, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) has developed a new Quality and Effectiveness Framework (QEF) in close partnership with Estyn, provider representative bodies and other stakeholders. The aim of the QEF is to challenge providers to keep improving their performance and the quality of their provision. The Quality and Effectiveness Framework (QEF) is based on a small number of core indicators. As well as the core indicators, there are a number of other aspects of providers’ performance which are not necessarily quantifiable, but which remain important to determining overall effectiveness. It is anticipated that these will be measured primarily through providers’ annual self-assessments.

In Scotland, the External Quality Arrangements for Scotland’s colleges (updated 2012) was published in August 2012. This framework is based on a set of reference quality indicators to enable Education Scotland to reach a judgement of the extent to which high quality learning, learner engagement and a quality culture are being delivered in Scotland’s colleges. Reference quality indicators are assigned to 9 key elements and include:

- Key performance outcomes (achievement of educational aims, objectives and targets etc.)
- Impact on learners and other users of college services
- Impact on employers and communities
- Education, training and lifelong learning
- Providing direction and facilitating change
- Management and support of staff
- Partnerships and resources
- Educational leadership and direction

Reforms of quality assurance in CVET since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)

The further education system within each of the UK nations has undergone significant developments/reform in recent years. This largely reflects changes in political parties/circumstances relevant to the individual nation. The main emphasis has been on improving the quality of provision and of the provider base.

Other key developments include:

- The introduction of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) which is a national credit transfer system for education qualification in England, Northern Ireland and Wales (Scotland operates under the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
- New Ofsted inspection framework for further education and skills (2012)
- Publication of Skills for Sustainable Growth in 2010, setting out a vision for a user-focused further education and skills system. This was shortly followed by the publication of the New Challenges, New Chances by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills in 2011 confirming a greater focus on the quality of the system.

Reforms of quality assurance in CVET since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation) -2008

In England, the Learning and Skills Act 2000 represented a significant reform to the further education sector in England and Wales. In relation to quality, this Act confirmed the introduction of a new inspectorate body for quality in relation to post 16 learning funded by
the then Learning and Skills Council. The new body was called the Adult Learning secondary education Inspectorate. The Act also extended the remit of Ofsted to include for example, provided by institutions in the further education section and further education provided by local authorities for people in England under the age of 19.

In addition, the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) was established in 2006. The QIA was a non-departmental public body of the United Kingdom government whose remit was to support those institutions that provide education, but which are not schools or universities. This covers a broad range of institutions, ranging from further education colleges, prison education to workplace training and various other types of education and training. The majority of the assets and liabilities of the Quality Improvement Agency were transferred to the Learning and Skills Improvement Service, a new not for profit, sector owned improvement body for the Further Education sector on 1 October 2008.

Quality assurance arrangements in continuous VET at provider level

In relation to CVET, quality standards for VET providers are also used as a condition of accreditation, funding and in Wales and Northern Ireland, quality standards are required as part of legislation.

Across the UK, the quality assurance of CVET takes place through programme validation and provider accreditation.

In England, the Skills Funding Agency has in place what is known as the SFA Register of providers. In order to be included on the Register, FE colleges and independent training providers wishing to enter the market are required to pass a Due Diligence Assurance Gateway (which can be described as an online tendering portal).

Organisations need to complete the Due Diligence Assurance Gateway if one or more of the following apply:

- They have an existing funding agreement with the Chief Executive of the SFA for the delivery of education and training
- They want to be selected to be invited to tender for education and training provision being commissioned by the Chief Executive of the SFA
- They are a subcontractor holding contracts with an aggregate value of £100,000 or above per annum.

It is intended to ensure that all providers involved in the delivery of publicly funded training have the capacity and capability to manage public money and deliver high-quality learning services.

Planning at CVET provider level (including identification of training needs)

In Scotland, colleges are encouraged to be flexible in their approach to adapt to a renewed focus on vocational education and training. For example, with targets to deliver high number of Apprenticeships (known as modern Apprenticeships in Scotland), colleges are urged to develop stronger links and collaboration with employers.

Requirements for monitoring and review (self-assessment)

A key requirement for colleges in Scotland is the need for consistent monitoring in terms of accurate forecasting of provision. In Wales, the new common inspection framework will be designed to include a useful set of quality indicators for post-16 providers to use in self-assessment as well as being the basis for inspection.

Part 2 – Interaction between national quality assurance and EQAVET

National Reference Point

The NRP for the UK was established in 2009 – England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Scotland later became involved in 2010. The arrangement in the context of the UK is that England holds the UK NRP seat but Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland act as the NRP in their respective Devolved Administrations (DAs). The NRP representatives across the four UK nations are:
Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), England
Department for Education and Skills (DfES), Welsh Government
Department for Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland (DEL NI)
Lifelong Learning Directorate, Scottish Government

It was agreed that England would hold the UK NRP mainly because MP John Hayes – the then Minister of State for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning jointly at BIS and the Department for Education signed EQAVET off as part of Bruges Communiqué. Given that the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) hold the policy lead for further and higher education in England and post 16/19 quality, it was agreed the lead NRP would sit with BIS. Since BIS commenced its participation in EQAVET a UK EQAVET Devolved Administration Representative Group has been established, serving as a platform to exchange information, discuss what is happening in each of the DAs in line with the EQAVET recommendation.

It is clear from some of the people interviewed for the purpose of this study that there was no prior awareness of EQAVET prior to participation in 2009.

There is no mandate in place and there is no monitoring plan or strategy for the work of the NRP across any of the UK nations. Each of the three nations interviewed confirmed that there are no additional resources or funding to support the implementation of EQAVET. EQAVET is an addition to current portfolios and represents a very small proportion of the overall portfolio of respective UK nation. A key reason why there are no additional resources or funding allocated to EQAVET is that there is a firm view that across the nations of the UK, that there already exists developed quality assurance systems that serves as an end-end process covering all aspects of quality.

In terms of the implemented activities of the NRP and the planned activities for the future, to date the UK NRP (and its respective NRPs) has been in attendance of all main EQAVET network events. There is a UK European Co-ordination Group for VET and the UK NRP for EQAVET is represented on this group. This provides a structured platform to report key developments in relation to EQAVET, report on progress and share experiences for wider dissemination across the UK. Examples of activities include: attending and being part of the EQAVET network, maintaining contacts across the membership and using this as a peer reference/learning method. Activities at European level are useful in that it enables participants to remain abreast of what is happening in practice across MS and take lessons back to those working in the field of QA across the UK. As a result of all NRP representatives in the UK, there is a shared view that they are now better placed to take the QA agenda forward in line with EQAVET.

There was a general consensus from all interviewees that the added value of the NRP compared to existing national structures from the national perspective is that EQAVET provides a direct link to Europe specifically in relation to quality assurance that did not exist before. It does this by creating a platform to exchange of practice and information. In terms of real value – being able to attend meetings, look at other systems and how the indicators are being used and to learn from other practices. The real value of EQAVET is that it creates a framework to shape and focus discussions on quality.

The main actors engaged by the NRP mainly include the UK Commission for Employment and Skills representing employment and skills, Alliance of Sector Skills Councils representing employers, Federation of Awarding Organisations (FAB) and Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ). This is mainly through the UK European Co-ordination Group for VET. Given that EQAVET is a recommendation and not a Directive, there is little scope or push for greater engagement of actors or involvement in EQAVET over and above what is already in place.

The main issue in relation to setting up the UK NRP is that there was a distinct lack of prior knowledge of EQAVET at the time EQAVET became known to the UK. As such, quality assurance systems have been developed separate to EQAVET and that a great deal of EQAVET activity to date has been mapping comparability’s and similarities reflectively. Despite the potential to come up against an obstacle in setting up the NRP due to the tradition of the four nations in the UK, it is reported that there were no real issues in relation
to setting up and working through the administration of the UK NRP. Given that education is a devolved policy there is not a single picture to present and therefore representation on the NRP from across each of the four nations ensures a collective approach. There was a shared view from all interviewees that the arrangements in the UK work well – largely because there are well-established relationships and coordinating arrangements within the group.

National approach to enhance quality assurance

The extent to which there is a national approach to enhance quality assurance varies across each of the UK nations. Given that the majority of vocational education and training takes place in the post 16 sector across the UK, the NRP representatives are the organisations with lead responsibility for VET and associated quality assurance policy leads.

In England there is no national strategy for quality assurance as such, though BIS’s New Challenges for New Changes policy sets out BIS’s commitment to quality assurance with a key focus to work with SSCs and the Inspectorate to ensure that the quality of provision is of the highest order.

In Wales, the Quality and Effectiveness Framework aims to ensure that the funded education and training is of high quality and meets the needs of learners. It is based on a small number of core indicators.

In Northern Ireland, the Quality Improvement Strategy for Further Education and Training has been in place since 2007. This very much drives the quality agenda and was in place before Northern Ireland’s involvement in EQAVET.

Across all UK nations, the national approach to quality assurance of VET is typically the responsibility for the respective governmental department responsible for post 16 education and training that are developed in consultation with the learning and skills sector.

The content of the EQAVET Framework – use and usefulness

In terms of the framework there is a general view that the framework offers broad guidelines that serve to support the NRP in its approach to continuous improvement and serve as a good means of addressing and approaching quality assurance. The framework is considered coherent and relatively clear. In isolation, the indicators, descriptors and criteria are not strong enough to translate the real value or meaning of EQAVET in practice. Whilst the building blocks, website materials and network activities supplement the framework, a much stronger communication strategy is needed together with more evidence of the benefits of EQAVET in practice.

There was a clear view that the framework in its totality covers a number of key important aspects particularly for Member State who are in a position where they are building a system from scratch. Here there was a general view that the framework provides a helpful tool to address broad aspects of quality, the indicators, descriptors and criteria are not strong enough to translate the real value or meaning of EQAVET in practice. Whilst the building blocks, website materials and network activities supplement the framework, a much stronger communication strategy is needed together with more evidence of the benefits of EQAVET in practice.

The indicators are relatively dry – especially on their own. When used in conjunction with the material on the website then they become more real and can be very helpful. In making a reality of EQAVET on the ground more is needed than just directing providers to the EQAVET website. Conducting one-ones with providers and talking to them about how EQAVET can be helpful to them is the best way forward. The language of EQAVET is challenging to providers and awarding organisations.

In terms of the usefulness of the framework and the extent to which it is used by Member States and the appropriateness of the issues that are addressed, there was a common view that given every country is at different stages of their quality assurance – many countries already have quality assurance systems/measures in place, whilst others use it to build a system. Northern Ireland does not look at EQAVET as a system and does not believe it is
intended as system, but rather as a tool kit to support continuous improvement. There was a view by one interviewee that there is a potential risk that some countries will only use EQAVET because it is politically seen as the right thing to do, rather than what might necessarily be best for the system.

It is reported that the NRPs have taken the indicators and looked at how they can be used within the FE sector and have carried out a mapping of the indicators to what is happening in practice. Given that each UK nation had in place its own approach to quality assurance prior to engagement with EQAVET, interviewees expressed their concern that there is a risk of Member State engagement becoming a tick box exercise. To avoid this more emphasis needs to be on demonstrating best practice that has power and value in itself. The descriptors, indicators and criteria on their own do not fully encourage NRPs to really understand the purpose of collecting this data and then not know what to do with it. A further point is that communicating the usefulness of the EQAVET framework needs to be presented in a way that encourages NRPs and key stakeholders to recognise what happens at the end of the quality cycle in order to determine and act upon what improvements can be made.

It was also noted that whilst it is easy to compare similarities between the indicators and national approaches, there was a view that this is what is typically occurring – particularly in Member States that have well-established quality assurance systems prior to the EQAVET Recommendation being published. As such, it was suggested that when considering the coherence and usefulness of the EQAVET framework in relation to national approaches, it should not be just about identifying what can be mapped but should be more about understanding the dynamic nature of the system itself and how EQAVET can be used to support the further development of the system.

The Recommendation in itself is not seen as being particularly dynamic and should be used in a way that encourages MS to think about the broad aspects of quality assurance, though there was a feeling that it being bureaucratic. Here it was suggested that the Commission has an important role to play in encouraging the use of the Recommendation in a way that is meaningful and required at country level.

**Partner organisations involvement**

Each UK nation has its own approach to involving partner organisations. Across some nations this is more formal than others. For example, in NI, a Scoping Group was set up to oversee the first mapping exercise between EQAVET and the NI approach. Although limited to the FE sector, representatives include Ofqual, the Inspectorate, CCEA, a SSC representative and officials from within the Department for Employment and Learning and the Department of Education with responsibility for funding education and training. The scope of this group has now been extended to also include ECVET and EQF that are perceived to be the instruments that are key to mobility.

In England, communication with stakeholders is relatively informal. Given that stakeholders in the UK are independent organisations, and that EQAVET is a Recommendation and not a Directive, there is a view that the NRP is limited in its capacity to promote the take up of EQAVET. At a time when national budgets are stretched, there remains a question about how relevant the impact of EQAVET is for England and Member States – particularly those who have relatively well-established quality assurance systems in place.

There was a consistent view that employer involvement is limited. In addition SSCs need to be more involved. To facilitate partnership involvement, EQAVET is considered as a way of explaining and demonstrating evidence of quality. In that sense, EQAVET is seen as a transparency tool that partners and institutions from across different Member States can overcome barriers – EQAVET serves to facilitate mutual trust and transparency. Achieving and working towards transparency using EQAVET terminology.

**Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance**

It was reported by all interviewees that quality assurance in VET is high on the national policy agenda in education and training. It is considered a priority by policy makers and is
deeply embedded in national strategies for development of education and training and in particular VET.

The extent to which the existence of EQAVET has increased national attention paid to the topic of quality assurance appears relatively limited. All interviewees reported that quality assurance is high on the policy agenda without or without the existence of EQAVET. There are no reported developments that were triggered as a direct result of the EQAVET Recommendation. EQAVET has had an agenda setting effect in relation to the UK EU Coordination Group for VET but not in relation to national policy agenda setting.

A concrete example of how EQAVET has influenced and enhanced understanding of the importance of quality assurance is provided by Wales. It was noted by the interviewees that EQAVET has influenced thinking at national level particularly in relation to the review and evaluation aspects of the quality cycle. Specific reference was made to how EQAVET has enlarged the scope of quality assurance by influencing the way in which the Welsh Government as an organisation look at quality in general but also in relation to education and training policy. For example, where key responsibilities for quality assurance are distributed across the department and across different aspects of the system, e.g. through inspection, self-improvement plans, EQAVET in its totality provides for a fresh look at how quality assurance from across the system can be brought together and to a degree, reflected within an organisational setting. It serves as a tool to understand the bigger picture of quality improvement, bringing different experts/departments and functions together.

It was noted that EQAVET has been most helpful in raising attention for the need and use of good statistical data – particularly in relation to learner destination. It was noted that this area of data collection is always challenge even where specific measures in relation to certain learning programmes are in place. The main influence EQAVET has had is generating awareness about the need to explore data matching. EQAVET has shown that data collection has an important role to play in planning for education and training provision that in reality is not always done in practice. Here it was argued by the interviewees that planning is not always carried out on an evidence base and data for planning purposes is not used as well as it could or should be in the FE sector. In that sense, the EQAVET indicators have generated a sharpened attention to the importance of data.

In terms of the review and evaluation aspects of the EQAVET cycle, the Welsh Government also noted that the review and evaluation supports the notion of continuous improvement that the Welsh Government wishes to reflect within their own organisation. This notion has come from EQAVET.

In terms of how important EQAVET has been for the development of quality assurance at different levels, the main feedback is that EQAVET has been more useful at system level than at provider level. There is a consistent view that at provider level, there has not been sufficient input to support providers in their understanding and use of EQAVET. To encourage provider use of EQAVET more concrete examples of EQAVET in practice is required. It was also noted that if providers are not funding in their activity to engage with EQAVET, in the current climate it is unlikely they will be involved. More attractive ways of engaging providers are necessary given that providers are already committed to self-assessment. EQAVET should not be simply viewed as an add on – as such, the presentation of EQAVET needs to be attractive to providers – for example, showing providers how they can meet the requirement of quality assurance at a European level to enable/support their engagement with Europe.

Synergies with other EU level instruments

Generally speaking there was a consistent view that there were limited synergies between EQAVET and other EU level instruments. Two interviewees in particular visualise the relationship between the different EU instruments as a larger package concerned with mobility – particularly in the UK where learners need to be supported to cross boarders and increase the employability of learners. It was asserted that whilst the synergies are potentially there, in the truest sense of mobility, it is yet to be realised. This is because structures are not in place to facilitate synergy, sharing of resources and as such, at a
European level, it is difficult to see how the network is working collectively at the moment. Here it was suggested that synergies should be about policy rather than delivery.

Interviewees shared the view that more exploration of how EQAVET sits with other initiatives that support mobility is required. There was a strong view that there is a lack of understanding on the ground about how and why QA systems can be benchmarked to a European framework and what the synergies are with other EU instruments.

Whilst genuine attempts are made to disseminate UK European activity across each of the UK nations and to their respective organisations, there remains the issue of limited funding to support stakeholder engagement with the instruments.

One suggestion is to remove the titles of the different EU instruments and look at a common set of issues relating to quality – teaching and learning, qualifications, providers, learning managers. There should be a cross-pollination between the different EU level instruments.
NON- EU countries
Part 1 – Description of quality assurance arrangements and of recent developments

The main developments of quality assurance in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia over the last decade are:

- National Programme for Development of Education in the Republic of Macedonia 2005 – 2015 (Chapter 7 – Programme for Assurance and Quality Control of Education) is setting the foundation for quality assurance and is based on the analysis / evaluation of the current situation, planning activities, implementing planned activities, monitoring / control of the implementation, repeating the evaluation / self-evaluation and other elements of the cycle.
- National approach to enhance quality assurance in VET is developed to a certain extent. It is securing solid ground for its further development that ensures implementation and compliance with the EQAVET Recommendation.
- The Rulebook for Licensing Institutions Delivering Adult Education Programmes and the Rulebook for Verification of Special Adult Education Programmes were developed in 2011.
- In 2010, Social Partnership Protocol in the Area of Vocational Education and Training in the Republic of Macedonia was signed between social partners and VET stakeholders.
- State Educational Inspectorate is monitoring and evaluating the quality of work in schools by using set of indicators used for integral evaluation clustered in 7 key areas starting from year 2006.
- In 2006, schools commenced self-evaluation of their work in (up-to 2 years) cycles.
- External examination (State Matura) was introduced in the system: piloting commenced in academic year 2005/2006; full capacity implementation commenced in academic year 2007/2008.
- EQAVET NRP is still to be designated.
- Finalisation of NQF development in undergoing – working group in the Ministry is tasked with the assignment.

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in initial VET

Context

In the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (The FYR of Macedonia later in the report), the provision of IVET is the responsibility of the national administration – Ministry of Education and Science (the Ministry later in the report).

There are 78 IVET public secondary schools (municipal and state) in the FYR of Macedonia: 40 municipal schools providing only IVET, 32 secondary schools providing both IVET and general secondary education (gymnasium) and 4 IVET state schools for students with special education needs; Additionally, there are 2 private secondary IVET schools, increasing the total IVET providers to 78. Private secondary school can be established by domestic or foreign legal or private entity. Approval is issued by the Government on recommendation of the Ministry. Criteria for establishing private IVET provider are the same as for public IVET provider.

Since 2008, education is compulsory (starting from academic year 2008) up to secondary education degree (IVET, secondary general, artistic schools) is earned. Graduates can

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635 As will be further analysed in the CVET section of this report, CVET is not used as a term in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. What is perceived as CVET is included in Adult Education, which the used term in the country.

636 Criteria for establish IVET provider, or a school in broad term, are described in: ‘Who can deliver VET ad under what conditions’ section at system level.
acquire State Matura (students from general, artistic and four-year vocational education),
School Matura (students from general and artistic schools) and Final Exam (students from
vocational three-year or four-year education).

IVET is encompasses two-year, three-year, and four-year education programmes. Two-year
IVET programmes are not part of the compulsory education; however, they lead to a
certificate. Three-year and four-year education programmes are leading to a diploma and are
compulsory. Vertical permeability of three-year education programmes is enabled. Namely,
three-year education programme graduate (with special education needs, or not) can take
additional exams and continue on fourth year of four-year education programmes.

Decentralisation of education commenced in spring 2005 as an integral part of the
decentralisation processes of the whole governing system. Ever since, municipalities are
founders (owners) of municipal secondary IVET institutions.

The Ministry is supervising the work of the organs of the municipality and, if needed, advises
them how to govern schools. If regardless of the advice the organs of the municipality fail to
govern educational institutions according to the Law637 and fulfil their responsibilities, the
Ministry can relief respective municipality from its responsibility for educational institutions for
a limited period (up to a year).

**The general framework for quality assurance**

The Ministry is the responsible body for legal arrangements and policy-making aspects of
IVET in the FYR of Macedonia.

The development of the Draft VET Strategy was secured through an ETF tender638 in 2012
and outsourced to an expert group. The current quality assurance system for VET partially
addresses the aspects of increased transparency, mutual trust, mobility of workers and
learners and lifelong learning. The development of a comprehensive system for quality
assurance of VET in accordance with the EQAVET Recommendation is subject to the
National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training. The Ministry established a Council
for the Development of VET Strategy that is further refining the VET Strategy document
devised by the expert group. The development of the VET Strategy is in its final phase;
public discussion is expected to be initiated soon. The VET Strategy is anticipated to be
adopted by the Parliament in spring/summer 2013, according to the interviewee.

The institution responsible for programme definitions and curriculum development for
general subjects in IVET is the Bureau for Development of Education (BDE) – a subsidiary
institution of the Ministry. The Vocational Education and Training Centre639 (VETC) is
responsible for profiling the vocational domain of the programmes and curriculum
development in IVET. Currently, VETC is an organisation with a limited autonomy from the
Ministry with a tendency to become fully autonomous.

IVET schools can propose to VETC updates and revisions of the curricula for vocational
subjects. Also, IVET schools can propose introduction of new educational programmes to
VETC. State Educational Inspectorate (SEI), a subsidiary institution of the Ministry, is
responsible for monitoring and evaluating the quality of work in schools. SEI is
commissioning its responsibility via a process named ‘integral evaluation’, regulated by the
Law on Education Inspectorate640 and Rulebook on Conducting Inspection Supervision of
the Educational Inspectorate641.

A school is informed by the SEI about the dates on which SEI will perform integral
evaluation. On the announced date, a team of education inspectors is coming to school and
depending on the school size can stay 2-3 days in the school. During the visit, inspectors are
examining documentation, visiting classes and talking to the school board, parents, students,

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637 Law for Secondary Education and Law for Primary Education.
638 ETF tender number: CFT/12/ETF/0002.
639 VETC was established by the Government in 2006.
640 Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 52/05.
641 Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 86/06.
school administration personnel, and other potentially interested parties/actors. SEI prepares written report on the conducted integral evaluation of the school and submits it to the school and the SEC.

In 2009, SEI published indicators\textsuperscript{642} used for integral evaluation clustered in 7 key areas covering main aspects of schoolwork. Currently, there is on-going work, with the support of USAID, on further improvement of the indicators in light of incorporating the latest legal adjustments introduced.

**Planning at VET system level**

On the proposal of the Ministry (2005), the National Assembly adopted the National Programme for Development of Education in the Republic of Macedonia 2005 – 2015 (NPDE). The NPDE addresses programmes for seven areas, as developed in respective chapters\textsuperscript{643}.

Chapter 7 of the NPDE, “Programme for Assurance and Quality Control of Education”, determines areas to be evaluated in the work of all education institutions (including IVET institutions). As a result, areas targeted by the integral evaluation are exactly matching the areas determined in this chapter of the NPDE.

Regarding the way enrolment of students in IVET schools is assessed (the enrolment policy), a bottom-up approach is applied. Namely, enrolment policy is initially discussed in IVET institutions by the management team, the teachers’ council, and the School Board. In principle, stakeholders are also involved in this process. A relevant proposal is conveyed to the municipality to be discussed and harmonised with the priorities and developmental plans of the municipality\textsuperscript{644}. Municipalities are forwarding their proposals to the Ministry. The Ministry announces the Call for Enrolment in Secondary Schools, including IVET schools, for the following academic year, by the end of March, at the latest.

**Requirements for evaluation and review**

Chapter 7 of the NPDE discusses several domains of quality evaluation: self-evaluation of schools, external assessments and examinations and external evaluation. External assessments and examinations (e.g. State Matura) are organised and conducted by the SEC once a year. The broad term ‘external evaluation’ in NPDE is operationalized through a process of integral evaluation conducted by the SEI. There is no legal arrangement stating min/max time period on which integral evaluation of a school is to be conducted.

Based on the self-evaluation / evaluation findings as well as findings from the external assessments and examinations, written reports are to be submitted to the institutions targeted, to the founders of the institutions and to the Ministry. Concretely, provided the success of students on State Matura, and findings of the SEI during integral evaluation, SEC is collating an Annual report on performance of teachers and professional associates.

Recommendations listed in the reports are to be implemented by the target institutions in order to increase the quality of education provision. The quality assurance cycle that should be followed regards: analysis / evaluation of the current situation, planning activities, implementing planned activities, monitoring / control of the implementation, and repeating the evaluation / self-evaluation.

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\textsuperscript{642} SEI (2009), Indicators for measuring the quality of work in schools.


\textsuperscript{644} Each municipality prepares: an Annual Plan of the Municipality, and a Local Economical Development Plan (mid or long-term plan).
According to the Amendment to the Law for Secondary Education⁶⁴⁵, secondary schools (including IVET), are obliged to conduct school self-evaluation within a period of 2 years. Areas for self-evaluation are the same with the areas that were listed in NPDE and areas that are used by the State Educational Inspectorate for integral evaluation.

**Stakeholder involvement**

In the composition of the Council for Vocational Education and Training (VET Council later in the report) various stakeholders are represented. Namely, the VET Council is comprised of:

- 3 members from the Ministry, out of which 1 member is from the BDE
- And one member from
  - The Chamber of Commerce
  - The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
  - The Ministry of Economy
  - The Ministry of Finance
  - The Trade Union
  - The Employment Service Agency of Republic of Macedonia (ESA)
  - The Association of the Units of Local Self-government

The VET Council has an advisory role in the process of adoption of the strategic documents concerning VET policies. It proposes national qualifications and occupational standards to the Ministry; advises the Ministry on the development of a cooperation network between local government and training providers; and provides opinions on the VET system strategy.

Stakeholders are involved in the programmatic activities of the VETC, starting from development and update of occupational standards, development and update of qualifications, curriculum development and update, planning and introduction of new vocational programmes.

In 2012, VETC developed Standards for Conducting Practical Training of Students at Employer’s Premises and distributed to all chambers in the country.

On initiative of VETC, Social Partnership Protocol in the Area of Vocational Education and Training in the Republic of Macedonia was signed in 2010 between social partners and VET stakeholders⁶⁴⁶. The overall objective of the protocol was to ensure that the VET system enables the current and future workforce to gain the skills and knowledge needed by the labour market, thus reducing levels of unemployment and increasing the international competitiveness of the labour force.

**Identification of training needs**

ESA started to conduct labour market surveys since 2007 as a part of its regular activities⁶⁴⁷. As a result, national reports on skills needs in the enterprises (‘demand’ side) were issued on annual basis. These reports are used by actors in the VET system to tailor their activities.

However, in the recent years, in numerous evaluation reports on skills system in the country data validity and availability is challenged and concern is expressed that relevant data on labour market are still lacking⁶⁴⁸.

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⁶⁴⁶ Signatory parties were: Ministry, VETC, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Service Agency of Macedonia, Chambers of Commerce of Macedonia, Union of Chambers of Commerce of Macedonia, Chamber of Commerce of North-west Macedonia, Craftsmen Chamber of Macedonia, Employers’ Association of Macedonia, Business Confederation of Macedonia, Union of Self-government Units, Education, Science and Culture Trade Union.

⁶⁴⁷ In the frame of the CARDS project, “Technical Assistance to Institution Building as a Support to Employment Policy (phase II)” Component 2 “Further Upgrading the Capacity of the Employment Service Agency and its Local Employment Offices”, skill needs analysis was piloted in 2006 on methodology that was adapted from a Swedish labour market survey.

Law for Vocational Education and Training (VET Law) defines the responsibilities of municipalities as: ‘Conducting analysis of labour market needs on the local level and transfers findings to the VETC and institutions for VET’.

**Certification, assessment and validation of learning**

In 2010, in the frame of the project ‘Technical Assistance to the Ministry of Education and Science on Lifelong Learning’, proposal for National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was developed.

In the frame of the TEMPUS project ‘Designing and implementing of the NQF National Qualification Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in Republic of Macedonia’ NQF section for Higher Education Qualifications (including short Bologna cycles) was developed and integrated in the NQF. This section of the NQF was legally approved in a capacity of Decree (Decree for the National Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in the ‘Official Gazette’ No.154 from 30/11/2010).

According to the proposed NQF, the following main qualification types for IVET are foreseen:

- Qualifications at level 2 equalling EQF level 2. In principle, 2-year education programmes leading to a certificate.
- Qualifications at level 3 (Secondary education programmes on 2\textsuperscript{nd} level from the VET Law), equalling EQF level 3. In principle, 3-year education programmes leading to a diploma, or VET graduates that have successfully completed Final Exam.
- Qualifications at level 4 (Secondary education programmes on 3\textsuperscript{rd} level from the VET Law), equalling EQF level 4. In principle, 4-year education programmes leading to a diploma, or VET graduates that have successfully completed State Matura and/or School Matura.
- Qualifications at level 5 (Post-secondary programmes on 4\textsuperscript{th} level from the VET Law), equalling EQF level 5. In principle, programmes leading to Diploma for Specialist Studies, Diploma for Expert Worker Exam.

The Ministry has tasked a working group with the finalisation of the NQF development on non-academic levels for all types of learning (up to and including part of level 5). This is expected to be concluded by spring/summer 2013.

Currently, qualifications are predominantly awarded through formal education programmes leading to a diploma approved by the Ministry. Active programmes are offered in four-year VET and three-year VET according to old VET concepts. Twelve three-year programmes and one two-year programme, according to new concepts developed by VETC and approved by the Ministry in 2012 (in two-years, three-years and post-secondary), are prepared for implementation.

The ‘Support to the Modernisation of the Educational and Training System' project, under the auspices of the Ministry, aims at the development of a Methodology regarding the preparation of standards for vocational qualifications based on a learning outcomes approach. The personnel of the VETC in cooperation with the VET stakeholders are actively working on the Methodology. These new standards are expected to foster functionality of the qualifications system, and to further strengthen horizontal and vertical transfers of learners.

The preparation, organisation, implementation and assessment of Final Exam, School Matura and State Matura are conducted according to a relevant national framework that provides detailed guidelines. State Matura (general areas like mother tongue, foreign language, and mathematics) is prepared, organised, implemented and assessed by the State Examination Centre (SEC), while Final Exam and School Matura are entirely conducted by the IVET institutions.

**Who can deliver VET and under what conditions**

Education institutions have to be registered in the Register of Secondary Schools kept by the Ministry in order to be entitled to provide educational services. Prerequisites that should be presented are:

- Demand for a particular type of graduates
the resources required for functioning to be provided

Curricula for educational programmes to be adopted

Equipment, space, competent teaching personnel for all subjects and sufficient number of students according to pedagogical standards and norms to be secured

The School Director Exam (Exam later in the report) was introduced as part of the decentralisation of education in 2005 and applies to all schools, including VET providers. A school director candidate should pass the Exam in order to become a school director, and current director should pass the Exam within a year to maintain their directorship. The Exam was designed and prepared by the Director Certification Programme Component of the project ‘Secondary Education Activity’ supported by USAID Macedonia. The State Examination Centre (SEC), as accredited institution for Exam implementation by the Ministry, took over the implementation of the Exam in 2010.

According to the Law for Secondary Education, a secondary VET school may be established by the municipality. The Municipality Council decides on the establishment of a secondary school, after receiving the positive consultation from the government. Secondary public school is established by the Government.

A VET secondary school can be established by private providers, (national or foreign legal and physical entities) that have to receive approval. Private providers have to comply with the same criteria as public schools, according to the Law for Secondary Education.

The same law regulates the terms and conditions under which of the activities of a school can be terminated.

**Monitoring inspection and use of indicators**

According to the Rulebook on Conducting Inspection Supervision of the Educational Inspectorate, State Educational Inspectorate (SEI) is mandated to monitor and evaluate the quality of education and training provision ranging from primary to secondary education, IVET included.

In 2009, the set of indicators used to assess school work are determined by the SEI. Indicators are clustered in the following seven key areas:

1. Curriculum
2. Students Achievements
3. Learning and Teaching
4. Support to Students
5. School Climate and Relations in School
6. Resources
7. Governance, Management, Policy

Each of the areas contains certain number of quality indicators.

Additionally to the operations of SEI, starting from 2005, municipalities can appoint Authorised Educational Inspectors. An Authorised Educational Inspector is overseeing the

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649 The Exam is composed of 6 modules related to the work of a school director. Volume of direct learning interaction is 120 hours of learning followed by a presentation of seminar paper for each of the modules. Exam culminates with a final presentation in front of the panel established by the Minister of Education and Science. Accredited providers by the Ministry were organising the Exam until spring 2010. Ever since, State Examination Centre (SEC) commenced implementation of the Exam.

650 Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 86/06.

651 For example, area 3: Learning and Teaching has the following quality indicators:

1. Teachers Planning
2. Teaching Process
3. Students Experiences from Learning
4. Meeting Education Needs of Students
5. Assessment as a Part of Teaching
6. Reporting on Students’ Achievements
application of legal arrangements in municipal schools that are within the scope of the responsibility of the municipality as a school founder.

The main changes to QA at system level introduced since 2009 (Adoption of the EQAVET Recommendation)

Social Partnership Protocol in the Area of Vocational Education and Training in the Republic of Macedonia was signed in 2010 in order to decrease unemployment and reflect the needs of the labour market for skilful current and future workforce.

Standards for Conducting Practical Training of Students at Employer’s Premises were devised in 2012.

The main changes introduced since 2003 (beginning of the EU cooperation that led to EQAVET adoption)

The National Programme for Development of Education in the Republic of Macedonia 2005 – 2015 (NPDE) was adopted by the National Assembly. In this document whole chapter was dedicated to quality assurance and quality control (Chapter 7). Several quality assurance processes were introduced in this document:

- SEI commenced integral evaluation of work in schools
- Schools commenced self-evaluation of their work in (up-to 2 years) cycles
- External examination (State Matura) commenced its pilot implementation from school year 2005/2006 and was implemented to full capacity starting from school year 2007/2008
- Authorised Educational Inspector was introduced in 2005

Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in initial VET

IVET providers in the FYR of Macedonia are VET schools (public: municipal, state; and private).

Quality assurance at the level of VET schools comprises of:

- Self-evaluation of school work entirely conducted by schools
- Integral evaluation conducted by the SEI

Monitoring and evaluation

Schools are legally obliged to conduct self-evaluation in cycles, maximum every two years. The findings of the self-evaluation reports are reported to the School Board and constitute the basis for the annual work programme of the school. According to the findings of the self-evaluation, schools are supposed to develop a 4-year developmental plan and a one-year action plan, in order to improve their performance.

Areas and indicators that are used for school self-evaluation are exactly matching the indicators and areas for the integral evaluation that is conducted by the SEI. These areas and indicators are in common for all primary and secondary education and IVET providers.

Planning at VET provider level and stakeholder involvement

The governing body of each school is the School Board. According to the Law for Secondary Education, the Board is comprised of the representatives of teachers, parents/guardians, and of the founder, as well as one representative of the Ministry, and one representative...

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652 According to the Law on State Education Inspectorate.
653 Law on State Education Inspectorate.
654 As described in the Monitoring inspection and use of indicators section, p.7.
655 Law for Secondary Education.
656 As described in the Monitoring inspection and use of indicators’ section at system level.
657 In FYR of Macedonia, every entity establishing a school is called founder or owner: private, municipal and state.
of the business community. The school director manages the school and reports to the School Board.

Among other duties, the School Board: ‘[...]proposes annual work programme and reports on the school performance to the founder; proposes school development plan; proposes annual financial plan to the founder; proposes annual statement of accounts to the Founder; ... proposes to the mayor of the municipality a candidate for school director out of the candidates who applied at the public announcement.’

School development plan, enacted on 4-year cycles, suggests corrective actions regarding issues addressed by the findings from the school self-evaluation, in cooperation with BDE, VETC, the integral evaluation performed by SEI, as well as findings from the external evaluation listed in the Annual report on performance of teachers and professional associates prepared by the SEC.

IVET providers are required to inform VETC on the introduction of a new education programme. Documentation supporting the proposal should elaborate: rationale, findings from the labour market analysis, profiling of the new education programme, framework curriculum (for all years of education), subject curricula (for all vocational subjects), resources needed for the implementation, and anticipated benefits. The proposed new programme is submitted to the VETC for approval, discussed with the VETC and the Ministry and other IVET providers offering similar programmes. Once the proposal is approved (if at all), the revised version of the new education programme is disseminated to all IVET providers for potential implementation.

Based on experiences in implementing of a vocational subject and on feedback received from stakeholders, IVET providers can propose updates / adjustments in the curriculum. The proposal should describe: rationale, description of proposed update/adjustments, the future version of the curriculum, and anticipated benefits of adoption of the new curriculum. Proposal is submitted to the VETC for approval. Once updates are approved (if at all), the new subject curriculum is disseminated to all IVET providers for possible implementation.

Due to the continuous developmental activities of IVET providers and VETC, for the past 10 years, the 4-year VET programmes increased from 32 to 43. Those programmes cover 14 vocational fields, and offered in 78 IVET schools.

**The main changes introduced since 2003 (beginning of the EU cooperation that led to EQAVET adoption)**

Self-evaluation, as legal requirement to IVET providers, was introduced in 2006.

**Quality assurance arrangements at system level in continuous VET**

**Context**

The education and training community in FYR of Macedonia does not make use of the term CVET, hence legislative acts do not reflect that terminology. The term adult education (AE) is used instead of CVET.


Prior to the adoption of this law, AE was incorporated in and regulated by the laws on primary, secondary and higher education. In that period, IVET schools could act as AE providers on the basis of direct agreements with the interested parties.

The AE Law distinguishes between formal and non-formal adult education. Formal AE includes:

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658 Law for Secondary Education.

Primary education for adults
Secondary education for adults, vocational education for 2-year programme, vocational education for 3-year and 4-year programmes, post-secondary education for adults, as well as education geared towards re-qualification and completing full qualification
Higher adult education

Non-formal AE refers to organised learning processes aimed towards enabling of adults for work, different social activities or personal development.

Although AE is not synonymous with CVET, the legal framework regarding QA does not make distinctions between the various elements of AE. Thus, in the following analysis, provisions attributed to AE, include and relate to CVET. Adult education, according to AE Law, can be conducted by ‘public and private adult education establishments, adult education institutions, centres for development, employers and social partners, associations of citizens or individual trainers who fulfil the conditions stipulated in this Law’.

Currently, the following institutions are offering AE courses in professional studies and vocational skills at different levels by bodies such as Civil Society Organisations (SCOs), SEC (License for Directors), the Chambers, the Workers’ University, Ministries (e.g. the Ministry of the Interior funds the Police Academy), the Employment Service Agency (funded by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy – various possibilities, or donor organisations – e.g. British Council, USAID), employers (in-company trainings), the Agency for Promotion of Entrepreneurship, the Macedonian Training Association and private training providers.

**National framework: who is in charge of what**

In the AE Law, the establishment of Adult Education Centre (AEC) was stipulated within the period of three months following AE Law adoption. The mission of the AEC is: ‘to promote a system of adult education that will be functional, modern and in line with EU standards, a system that will provide high-quality learning opportunities for gaining qualifications in accordance with the needs of the population, will increase employment and develop entrepreneurship, will meet the needs of the labour market and contribute to economic, social and personal development.’

In 2010, AEC has developed the Adult Education Strategy (AE Strategy) for the period 2010 – 2015. It has five strategic objectives: The first four are borrowed from the Council conclusions on a Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training:

- Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality
- Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training
- Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship
- Enhancing adult education and learning culture through active approach to education and training of adults

and one (fifth)strategic objective developed by AEC

- Improvement of adult education system through development of IT system for monitoring educational mobility of adults
- Plan for overseeing AE activities, as well as quality assurance processes of AE are still to be developed and embedded in the AE Strategy.

In 2011, AEC published the Rulebook for Licensing Institutions Delivering Adult Education Programmes and the Rulebook for Verification of Special Adult Education Programmes. These rulebooks, in broad terms, are setting the framework for monitoring and quality assurance in the area of AE provision, as well as, procedures for licensing providers and verifying programmes.

Licensing of an AE provider is a prerequisite for the verification of AE programmes. Specific requirements stand for infrastructure and other resources. The Commission for Licensing of

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660 AEC Statute, 2009
661 May 12th, 2009
AE Institutions, established at the Ministry, has 60 days to ask clarification questions to approve or reject the application. The license is valid for 5 years. Licensed AE institutions can propose AE programmes for verification to the AEC. The application form requires detailed description of the programme that should be expressed in learning outcomes and should describe procedures for internal evaluation. It should be noted that, learning outcomes as a term was first used in the AE programmes. The Verification Commission, established at the AEC, has 30 days to ask for clarification and approve or reject the submitted programmes. The verification of programmes is valid for 3 years.

**Planning at CVET system level**

The AEC is the authority responsible for planning the provision of adult education. The main objectives of the AEC are: “To contribute to the achievement of socio-economic needs of Macedonia, to meet the needs of the labour market and to assist individuals in their personal development”. The responsibilities of AEC in the area of planning AE are:

- Provide support to social partnership at all levels and planning phases, development and implementation of adult education
- Prepares concept paper for adult education
- Prepares yearly reports on the realisation of yearly action plans for the Strategy of Adult Education
- Prepares yearly report regarding the distribution of funding for the realisation of adult education programmes

**Stakeholder involvement**

The Adult Education Council (AE Council) has the responsibility to propose to the Ministry the development of a strategy for AE in the context of lifelong learning. The AE Council also monitors the implementation of the (annual) action plans of the strategy. It can propose to the Ministry: national qualifications and occupational standards in the area of AE; financing of adult education programmes from the budget; strategic topics concerning the development of adult education. It also advises the Ministry on the development of a cooperation network between local authorities and training providers.

The AE Council consists of 13 members:

- Adult education experts
- Ministry
- BDE
- VETC
- Ministry of Finance
- Trade Unions
- Employment Service Agency
- Association of the Units of Local Self-government
- Agency for Development of Small and Medium Enterprises
- Representatives from each of the: Chamber of Commerce of Macedonia, Association of Chambers and Craftsmen Chambers

**Certification, assessment and validation**

According to the AE Law, adult learners should undertake an exam in order to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, know-how and competences. Examinations are organised and conducted by the AE institutions that implemented the programme. Successful adult learners are awarded certificates for AE programme completion.

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662 The Commission for Licensing of AE Institutions consist of: 1 member from the Ministry, 1 member from the AEC, 1 member from the SEI, 1 member from VETC depending on the occupational area institution in covering.
663 The Verification Commission is consist of: 1 member from the AEC, 1 member from VETC, or school, or university and 1 expert member experienced in the area.
664 AEC Statute.
665 Excerpts from AEC’s Statute.
The notion of learning outcomes commenced its implementation with the AE programmes according to the requirements set in the legislative arrangements in the AE domain. Yet, system of recognition of prior learning remains to be introduced.

Monitoring and evaluation

The criteria according to which SEI inspects the licensed institutions AE remain to be determined by the Ministry.

The Department for Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation of the AEC is responsible for overseeing and evaluating AE programme implementation. Criteria and procedures for monitoring and evaluation, as well as self-evaluation are in the final phase of development by the AEC in the frame of the IPA project ‘Support for capacity building of the Adult Education Centre, development of programs for adult education and literacy programs and completion of primary education of the excluded’. Monitoring reports for AE programme implementation are prepared by AEC given the external and internal evaluation reports and AEC visits to the AE training provider.

Reforms of QA in CVET at system level introduced since 2003 (beginning of the EU cooperation that led to EQAVET adoption)

As described in the Context section of the A1.3 Chapter, AE activities incorporated in and regulated by the laws on primary, secondary and higher education were pulled into the Law on Adult Education adopted in 2008. AE Law is linked with Chapter 10: ‘Programme for Adult Education in the Republic of Macedonia in Context of Lifelong Learning Perspective’, which is an integral part of the NPDE 2005-2015.

Quality assurance arrangements in continuous VET at provider level

Planning at CVET provider level

AE providers are not required to have specific quality assurance measures in place, adjust provision to local needs, undertake comparative evaluation, or disseminate information. The quality assurance in AE takes mainly the form of provider and programme verification.

Stakeholder involvement

The AE Law provides social stakeholders with numerous possibilities regarding their involvement in adult learning. More specifically, the Law allows:

Professional chambers to:
- Submit proposals to AEC for new programmes, or innovation of existing programmes
- Submit proposals to the AEC for development of new occupational standards
- Develop programmes financed from chambers

Trade unions to:
- Submit proposals for improvement of conditions for practical training of learners at employers
- Can establish AE institution, according to the regulations in the Law
- Develop programmes financed from trade union

Municipalities to:
- Conduct labour market analysis on local level and expresses the findings from the analysis for the needs of the AEC and AE institutions
- Establish AE institutions, according to the regulations in the Law
- Submit proposals to the Ministry and the AEC for development of AE programme
- Develop AE programmes financed from municipality
- Secure resources for AE institutions founded
- Submit proposals for AE enrolment policy to the Ministry
Certification, assessment and validation

AE providers organise and implement examinations for their learners according to the procedures proposed in the AE programme application.

Monitoring and evaluation

According to the Rulebook for Verification of Special Adult Education Programmes, AE providers, in the proposals for AE programmes describe the procedures they will apply for internal evaluation (self-evaluation). These procedures must be aligned with the criteria devised by the AEC. Proposed AE programme should contain measures to act upon internal evaluation results.

AE providers prepare internal evaluation report regarding the implementation of AE programme.

Reforms of QA in CVET at provider level introduced since 2009 (Adoption of the EQAVET Recommendation)

AE programmes include detailed description of the programme expressed in learning outcomes and procedures for internal evaluation, based on the AE Law.

Part 2 – Interaction between national quality assurance and EQAVET

Basic information

No EQAVET NRP has been appointed in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Comprehensive work on quality assurance processes in IVET and AE was completed as described in previous sections: NPDE was devised, followed by legal arrangements that were institutionalised by various institutions and actors in VET system. Completed actions are securing solid ground for further development of national approach to enhance quality assurance in VET.

Participation in the EQAVET activities is limited and indirect – via EQAVET dissemination activities organised by ETF.

National Reference Point

In the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia NRP has not yet been devised, although, according to the interviewee, there is a need, interest and readiness among the participants of EQAVET dissemination activities organised by ETF.

Numerous actors are controlling and assuring quality (Ministry, VETC, AEC, SEI, SEC, BDE, and authorised educational inspectors) on system level. This is one of the main obstacles for establishing NRP since responsibility of QA is shared and leveraging of responsibilities is complicated.

National approach to enhance quality assurance

Since 2005, policy initiatives regarding quality assurance in IVET and CVET on system and provider level have intensified. Foundations for a national approach to quality assurance, at large, were elaborated in the NPDE. Activities towards the development of a national approach have been supported by legislative arrangements on national and institutional level.

The implementation of the EQAVET Recommendation is perceived by an interviewee as a mean to secure the development of national approach to enhance quality assurance in VET. Namely, by following EQAVET recommendation national approach will be implemented in a way: that embeds a culture of quality assurance; requires bottom-up approach for the development and ownership of quality processes in VET system; that will contain sufficient openness to allow it to respond flexibly to emerging needs identified by the stakeholders; that enables Bruges Communiqué implementation.
Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance

According to an interviewee, the EQAVET Recommendation has not had significant influence on the development of a national quality assurance approach in VET.

On the contrary, previous initiatives (e.g. EQARF) are believed to have significantly impacted the development of relevant activities on all levels (system, provider, and for both IVET/CVET). Especially during the period 2005-2009 (thus, prior to the EQAVET Recommendation), most of the strategic documents and legal acts were devised. Significant actions relevant to the quality assurance commenced during this period: external evaluations of schools, internal evaluation of schools, self-evaluation of schools, and numerous actions in the area of AE.

Synergies with other EU level instruments

Regarding other EU level instruments, their development is still pending: the NQF is yet to be finalised; the introduction of learning outcomes in the education/training system is underway, as well as the introduction of ECVET and other EU level instruments.

Therefore, such synergies cannot be currently assessed.

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Country report – Iceland

Author: Naomi Williamson (ICF GHK)

Part 1 – Description of quality assurance arrangements and of recent developments

The main developments in quality assurance in Iceland over the last decade are:

- New laws on Upper secondary education and Teacher education were adopted in 2008, however, no major changes to quality assurance arrangements were introduced.
- The law on Adult Education was introduced in 2010.

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in initial VET

National approach and planning for initial VET – who is in charge of what?

Vocational education is offered in upper secondary schools, industrial-vocational schools and specialised vocational schools. All education at this level is under the administration of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. Municipalities bear the responsibility of compulsory education but overall guidelines are issued by the Ministry.

Upper secondary education is governed by the Upper Secondary School Act No. 92/2008. The act applies to the entire upper secondary level, including initial vocational education. It primarily defines the framework for education at this level, its objectives, the role and responsibilities of the State and local authorities, individual institutions and their staff, as well as other parties that are involved in providing and administrating education at this level. In general terms the aim is to strengthen vocational education to be on a level with academic learning. This is a key issue in Iceland, where the general education system has a ‘higher social esteem’ than VET\(^{666}\). Post-secondary IVET is limited - some courses provide certification for well-defined professions, such as the certified trades, nurses, marine engineers, tour guides, industrial technicians and some agricultural professions\(^{667}\).

Statutory stakeholder involvement in initial VET systems

The Upper Secondary School Act of 2008 makes provision for the involvement and responsibilities of industry in initial vocational education. A regulation on Occupational Councils was issued in 2009 on the basis of the Upper Secondary School Act of 2008, and constitutes a renewal of mandate and a clearer description of the roles of Occupational Councils appointed for all branches of VET in Iceland. Members of the Occupational Councils are nominated by social partners.

The main work of the Occupational Councils started in February 2010; at the same time, an Occupational Committee, composed of the chairmen of the Occupational Councils, was established, which serves as a forum of coordination and cooperation between the different sectors of VET. Furthermore, the Upper Secondary School Act provides for the possibility for each Occupational Council to form Professional Councils to define, more directly and in more detail, the needs of each profession for education.

Requirements for evaluation and review

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is responsible for evaluation and supervision of education at all educational levels. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture administers surveys, analyses and research that aim at ensuring the quality of adult education. There is no national inspectorate.

The objectives of internal evaluation and quality control in pre-primary, compulsory and upper secondary schools are:

- To provide information about school activities, school achievements and development to educational authorities, school personnel, receiving schools, parents and pupils.

\(^{666}\) Refernet, 2011, VET in Europe – Country Report

\(^{667}\) Euroguidance Centre Iceland, 2008, Educational and Vocational Guidance in Iceland
To ensure that school activities are according to law, regulations and the national curriculum guides for pre-primary, compulsory and upper secondary schools.
To increase the quality of education and school activities and encourage developmental work.
To ensure that pupils’ rights are respected and that they receive the services they are entitled to according to law.  

The internal evaluation methods may be subject to external evaluation by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. External evaluation is conducted by evaluators whom the Ministry hires for each task. The purpose of evaluating schools externally is to obtain an overall picture of each school’s activities or of specific aspects there at any given time. Attention is directed towards various features of the school’s internal activities, such as administration, teaching, development work, cooperation and communications within the school, study achievements and the connection between the school and society.

The OECD claims that these evaluations have tended to have been carried out ad-hoc and that the results of these evaluations are not widely diffused and are insufficiently taken into account in the design of new measures. In addition, they state that evaluation, and more specifically research and development programme evaluation, as a fully-fledged part of the policy cycle, has so far ‘not received sufficient attention in Iceland’.

**Identification of training needs**

The Ministry is responsible for defining skill needs and relevant education and training. In doing this, the Ministry cooperates with Occupational Councils appointed by the Ministry according to nominations by the social partners. The Councils are formally responsible for providing forecasts on skill needs and the need for relevant education and training in each profession. Based on these, the Councils make proposals to the Ministry on how the relevant vocational education should be structured in the National Curriculum Guide, what students are to master (both in general skills and in specific technical skills) and what rights to further education each education and training programme of study grants. The Occupational Councils work with the Ministry in planning, development and analysis of changes in skills needs.

So far no systematic efforts/studies have been carried out to analyse future labour force needs and their skills.

**Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on VET providers**

All publicly recognised VET schools can offer VET programmes. According to the Act on Upper Secondary Education, schools are considered recognised through their inclusion in the State Budget. Further to this, their programmes need to be mentioned in a special agreement with the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.

The main providers of VET are schools which offer a combination of general and vocational education. In VET, according to the Act on Teachers’ Education, all teachers are required to have a master's degree in teaching or in a certified trade and pedagogy. Other requirements are detailed below.

**Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)**

Initial vocational education can be divided into two main categories: vocational education and training which confers legally certified qualifications, and education which does not lead

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670 Ibid.
to certified qualifications. Initial vocational education that is formally recognised but does not confer certification differs in structure to that of certified trades.

General study assessment in the vocational and technical upper secondary schools is in the hands of teachers, with examinations at the end of every semester, regardless of the type of school.

According to the law, occupational councils make proposals concerning assessment in vocational training.

Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2003 (beginning of EU cooperation)
The Upper Secondary School Act of 2008 is being implemented over a period until 2015.

Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in initial VET

Requirements VET providers have to comply with

The main providers of VET are schools which offer a combination of general and vocational education and training. Vocational education and training is organised in different ways depending on subjects. It is generally divided between the school and the workplace but may in some cases only take place at school.

Legislation on pre-primary, compulsory and upper secondary education suggests that schools are required to systematically internally evaluate the results and quality of school activities with active participation by school personnel, pupils and parents, as appropriate. This evaluation includes, among other things, teaching, administration and communication within the school. The schools are required to publicly issue information on the internal evaluation, conformity with the school curriculum guide and plans for improvement. Each school's methods of self-evaluation are expected to be assessed externally every five years.

Certification, assessment and validation of learners

Nationally co-ordinated examinations in upper secondary education have not been practised. Examinations have been the responsibility of each school. Assessment in IVET (as defined in the Upper Secondary Education Act 2008) is carried out by individual teachers in a final examination. Continuous assessment is increasingly being used however, and either the schools or the workplace are responsible for assessing their part in the education process.

Examinations are conducted at the end of every semester, regardless of the type of school. Pupil assessment is carried out both by continuous assessment and final assessment. Each course in the education of master craftsmen ends with a formal assessment according to educational objectives of the course. Examinations are the responsibility of each individual school and are supervised by the head of the department in question.

The examination committee (nominated by the Occupational Councils and appointed by the Ministry) is responsible for designing and supervising the final exams.

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in continuous VET

National Framework for CVET – who is in charge of what?

New law on adult education was passed by the Parliament of Iceland in 2010. The law is intended to be the fifth pillar supporting the education system in Iceland. The law forms a framework for the work performed by the Education and Training Service Centre (ETSC). The law presumes that the Federation of Public Employees (BSRB) and their employers, the Association of Municipalities in Iceland and the Ministry of Finance, are partners of the ETSC in addition to the Icelandic Federation of Labour and the Confederation of Icelandic Employers. There are various issues that the law clarifies. Firstly it stipulates the responsibility of the state treasury in funding adult education and in the confirmation of credits and also sets criteria for accrediting providers of adult education, their curricula, information duties and success factors. The law ensures that adults have various possibilities to study in order to re-enter upper secondary schools and have their
competences validated and documented, as well as having access to guidance and counselling.

Curricula or course descriptions must be certified by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture or by a body assigned the task by the Minister. This certification confirms that the course fulfils the format and quality requirements set by the Ministry. Accreditations may be revoked if an education or training provider no longer fulfils the conditions of the Adult Education Act.

Two forms of criteria have been developed to quality assure adult and continuing education: the Accreditation for Lifelong Learning (ALL) and the Recognition of Quality in Lifelong Learning (RECALL).

Planning at CVET system level

In Iceland, adult education policy is part of a comprehensive Lifelong Learning Strategy that stresses co-operation and continuity and sees the education system as a whole, from pre-school to university and continuing education. The Lifelong Learning Strategy aims to improve governance, increase decentralisation and autonomy and improve quality assurance and evaluation, at all educational sectors, including adult education. The overall objective to enhance and improve vocational education and training is particularly relevant, as although VET is aimed at both younger students and adults, the average age of VET students is considerably higher than in general education and training.

The Ministry has produced a Framework of Learning Outcomes to help the schools plan their range of study programmes, including academic programmes leading to matriculation, vocational programmes, artistic programmes, general programmes of study or special education.

In structuring new curricula for CVET, a learning outcome based approach is now used. This makes it easier to use a varied form of assessment and to formulate accreditation standards.

Requirements for evaluation and review

The Adult Education Act states that education and training providers should make an effort to ensure that courses are compatible with other studies, and that studies can be evaluated and validated in order to receive credits within the formal education system.

The objectives of evaluation and quality control for adult education are as defined in the Adult Education Act:

- To ensure that education and training providers operate according to provisions of the act, related rules that may be issued and curricula.
- To increase the quality of education and training according to the act.
- To ensure that the rights of individuals who use the services provided on the basis of the act are respected.

Under the Adult Education Act, accredited providers of adult education and training are obliged to provide the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and the Board of the Education and Training Fund with information regarding their education and training activities, results and development, financial provisions, statistics, and any other information that is considered necessary. Education and training providers must also carry out a systematic evaluation of the quality of their activities and are obliged to publish information about their quality control process, results and plans for improvement. Additionally, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture carries out surveys, analyses and research in order to ensure the quality of adult education.

Identification of training needs

The National Statistical Institute of Iceland (Statistics Iceland) is responsible for collecting information about the schools system in Iceland. Through its web site statistics about all school levels in the formal system are accessible, but there is nothing about other kinds of education, such as adult education, nor is there any information about lifelong learning centres or about other forms of adult education.
**Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on CVET providers**

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture provides accreditation to adult education and training providers based on an evaluation of:

- Teaching and learning facilities
- Organisation and supervision of studies
- Curricula or course descriptions
- Competences of education providers, with regard to their knowledge and experience
- Financial issues and insurance
- The existence of a quality control system

Lifelong Learning Centres hire both qualified teachers and teachers without formal qualifications. Not all teachers teaching basic skills courses at the compulsory school level for adults are fully qualified, as some of them are employed by municipality schools which do not necessarily demand formal qualifications. The same applies for training courses in continuing vocational education.

**Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators**

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture administers surveys, analyses and research that aim at ensuring the general quality of adult education and a general understanding and knowledge of related issues.

**Reforms of quality assurance in CVET since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)**

New law on adult education was passed in the Parliament in Iceland in 2010.

**Quality assurance arrangements in continuous VET at provider level**

**Requirements CVET providers have to comply with including identification of training needs**

Education and training providers that have received accreditation and support must carry out a systematic internal evaluation of the quality of their activities and are obliged to publish information about their quality control process, results and plans for improvement. Additionally, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture carries out surveys, analyses and research in order to ensure the quality of adult education.

The Ministry may also make an agreement to assign the tasks stipulated to another body. In the case of such an arrangement, education and training providers are obliged to provide the requested information to the relevant body.671

**Requirements for monitoring and review (self-assessment)**

Education and training providers are required to carry out a systematic evaluation of the quality and results of their activities and publish information about their internal quality control and subsequent plans for improvement.

**Certification, assessment and validation of learners**

Recognition of prior (non-formal learning) is now commonly used when planning learning pathways. This has meant that assessment in CVET is undergoing change to become more flexible and less exam-oriented than in general schooling.

**Part 2 – Interaction between national quality assurance and EQAVET**

There is no National Reference Point in place in Iceland. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is at present developing a national framework for quality assurance in VET. However, there has been little in the way of European cooperation in this regard.
Iceland, through the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (Department of Education) participated in a 2002 European forum on quality in VET and they were also involved in EQAVET activities from 2005 until 2007. However, after 2007, there were no resources to commit to continuing engagement with EQAVET activities. Despite this, a future commitment has been demonstrated through the adoption of the EQAVET Recommendation in the EEA agreement.

National Reference Point

As stated above, there is no National Reference Point in place in Iceland. This is due to the lack of resource to commit to taking a more extensive role in EQAVET network activities. A meeting of the Directorate Generals in Iceland in 2012 also posed the question as to why there was not further engagement in EQAVET, and indicating at least a willingness at the higher level for future engagement with EQAVET, although no firm decisions have been made to this stage.

National approach to enhance quality assurance

The national approach to quality assurance is ‘reflected in the legislation’. However, Iceland does not require providers to work on quality assurance – the requirement is for providers to inform the Ministry when quality assurance activities occur. For instance, some providers have informed the Ministry that they have implemented an ISO system which requires the commitment of the entire school to quality assurance. One interviewee considers the ISO system as possibly not being appropriate for all providers, particularly smaller, subject focused providers of VET (for instance Mariner training), which may not have the resources or capacity to commit to ISO standards.

An interviewee noted that there is a necessity for quality assurance and that Iceland would benefit from having a more in depth discussion with other EU countries on quality assurance - but this has not yet happened.

Within CVET, there are lifelong learning centres around the country, which support quality assurance. However, there is also recognition at the Ministry level that there is a need for specific measures for quality assurance at the adult education level.

Providers of VET need to be accredited by the Ministry. There is no social partner interaction in terms of decisions around quality assurance in Iceland.

Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance

The two most recent developments in terms of legislation are the 2010 Act on Adult Education and the 2008 Act on Upper Secondary Education. They did not look to the EQAVET Recommendation, or other activities in order to develop these Acts. It was also discussed that there are likely to be shortcomings at the system level where the Ministry is involved heavily in quality assurance. However, it is stated that as quality assurance is “a way of thinking and doing things” that there “would be no problem in adopting EQAVET in the future”.

The EQAVET framework content (including criteria, descriptors and indicators) has not been explored in depth or been through in a detailed manner. According to the Ministry, there are no other organisations at system level in Iceland with involvement in EQAVET.

One of the stakeholders also states that if there is a high level of examination failures within the system then they would expect the system to respond to this by adapting quality assurance measures – this is not appropriate at the moment as the levels of failure are not high. They could foresee that if there were final exams with low pass rates, then the examiners would inform the Ministry and that there would need to be a review of quality assurance, but at the moment, the Ministry has no responsibility in order to make these types of changes. This is in development (early stage) at the moment and will require new methods of working which could take some time to develop.
Synergies with other EU level instruments

The Icelandic qualification framework has recently been revised to include reference to the European Qualification Framework. This has already been applied at the higher education level with the National Framework of Higher Education, developed within the new Higher Education Act from 2006. In addition, all Icelandic universities operate in line with the Bologna process. The Upper Secondary School Act also stipulates that such a framework will also be adopted to cover the upper secondary level. Social partners have been encouraged to provide continuous feedback through a process, which is called the ‘open method of coordination’, and they will be given ample opportunity to comment on a final version of the National Qualification Framework.

Other participation in EU instruments has also been limited, but they have attended a meeting in November 2012 on adult education (in Vienna) and they are trying to maintain a position in terms of attending meetings and conferences. The value of this is gaining knowledge about other countries’ activities, which will be useful in terms of any future participation in EQAVET or other EU level instruments.

For instance, there is already a credit system in place for VET in Iceland (since 2008) that is designed in a similar way to the ECVET credit system – there has been some participation with these working groups, especially in terms of providers and other stakeholders who have a responsibility in this.

Sources


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Refernet, 2011, VET in Europe – Country Report
Quality assurance arrangements at system level in initial VET

The most important institution in the area of VET in Liechtenstein is the Office for Vocational Education and Vocational Counselling (Amt für Berufsbildung und Berufsberatung, ABB). According to the Vocational Education Act (Berufsbildungsgesetz), the ABB is the controlling authority for VET. Its main tasks are (among others):
- Counselling for students, teachers and VET providers
- Approving apprenticeship contracts and ensuring legal and contractual rules are met
- Organising exams
- Issuing qualification certifications
- Securing the financing of VET
- Cooperating with schools and VET providers
- Cooperating in various regional and international committees
- Advising the government in the area of VET

The Liechtenstein Vocational Education Act from 2008 addresses quality assurance in VET in general. It stipulates that VET providers ensure quality development and that the state promotes quality development, defines quality standards and secures compliance with the standards (Article 6, Vocational Education Act).

However, Liechtenstein does not have own vocational schools (Berufsfachschulen) in VET. It is cooperating with Switzerland and its school system within the dual vocational education system. To this end, Liechtenstein and Switzerland have the “Inter-provincial agreement on vocational schools” (Interkantonale Berufsfachschulvereinbarung).

Since Liechtenstein does not have own vocational schools, it does establish own quality assurance measures for vocational schools.

Correspondingly, Liechtenstein is closely following developments within EQAVET, but is not active itself.

Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in initial VET

Since Liechtenstein does not have own vocational schools (Berufsfachschulen) in VET, this section is not applicable for the Liechtenstein country report.

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in continuous VET

Continuous education in Liechtenstein can be separated into general adult education and continuous VET. For this report, the focus is on the latter form. However, both forms will be briefly described since quality assurance measures partly are the same for both groups.

General adult education is regulated by the Adult Education Promotion Act (Gesetz über die Forderung der Erwachsenenbildung) and the Law establishing the Foundation for adult education (Stiftung Erwachsenenbildung Liechtenstein (EbLG). This foundation is an umbrella organisation responsible for adult education in Liechtenstein. Its activities aim to supporting professional structures in adult education. This covers also quality assurance issues. An example of the quality assurance activities of Stiftung Erwachsenenbildung Liechtenstein is the accreditation activity concerning education providers that want to receive...
funding from the Stiftung. These institutions are obligated to conduct a regular evaluation of their programmes. Planning, provision, evaluation and development of the education programmes are evaluated according to rules set by *Stiftung Erwachsenenbildung*. Both teachers and students are involved in the evaluation.\(^{672}\) The foundation explicitly supports the implementation of established quality assurance systems like ISO 9001 or ISO 29990. If an education provider is certified to a established quality management system, additional accreditation requirements set by *Stiftung Erwachsenenbildung* are less strict.

In **vocational continuing education** the formal and non-formal sector can be distinguished.

In the formal sector, the most important institution is University of Liechtenstein. However, since this institution belongs to the tertiary sector, laws on higher education regulate quality assurance. This involves, accreditation, for example, the requirement of using internal quality management approaches and an external evaluation every 6 years (European Commission, 2009). Involved accreditation institutions are from Switzerland.

In the nonformal sector the main CVET provider is the Vocational Education Institute (*BWI Stiftung, Berufliches Weiterbildungsinstitut*). It was founded in 1995 by the Chamber of Commerce (Wirtschaftskammer Liechtenstein). It offers 70 courses in various areas from occupational security to financial controlling and coachings for executives. In general, quality assurance rules in the nonformal CVET sector are similar to the ones for general adult education described above. The use of established quality management systems is common. The *Berufliche Weiterbildungsinstitut*, for example, is certified to ISO 90001.

**Quality assurance arrangements in continuous VET at provider level**

Quality assurance arrangements in CVET at the provider level are described above. In general, the use of established quality management systems is common (for example the *Berufliche Weiterbildungsinstitut* or the IT education provider Marvo is certified to ISO 9001, the CVET providers *Stein Egerta* or *Haus Gutenberg* to EDUQUA). Institutions without a quality management system and which apply for public funding from *Stiftung Erwachsenenbildung Liechtenstein* have to demonstrate quality assurance activities concerning all stages education provision (planning, implementation, evaluation, revision).

**Part 2 – Interaction between national quality assurance and EQAVET**

**National Reference Point**

In Liechtenstein the *Agentur für Internationale Bildungsangelegenheiten* as well as the Office for Vocational Education and Vocational Counselling (*Amt für Berufsbildung und Berufsberatung, ABB*) are active in the three EU initiatives ECVET, EQF and EQAVET. At the moment, most activity in Liechtenstein is focused on work on the National Qualification Framework. Interest from stakeholders from business is high on this topic, since Liechtenstein, due to the size of the country and the high numbers of commuters to firms in Liechtenstein, crucially depends on transparent qualification systems between the country and its neighbours.

Concerning EQAVET, Liechtenstein is taking a rather passive role. It is observing the developments in EQAVET and participates workshops, fora etc. but is not actively involved itself. This strategy is due to the fact that Liechtenstein does not have vocational schools itself. Almost all students in VET visit schools in Switzerland, in some cases also in Germany or Austria. Most activities promoted by EQAVET do therefore not fit to the Liechtenstein situation. EQAVET project, for example, are out of scope for a small country like Liechtenstein, according to one interviewee.

**National approach to enhance quality assurance**

According to one interviewee in Liechtenstein there is no national approach to quality assurance in VET. The reason for this is that – as stated above – VET for Liechtenstein

\(^{672}\) All regulations are defined in the „Reglement über die Förderung von Erwachsenenbildung“ available on [http://www.erwachsenenbildung.li/images/assets/Regl001FoerderungAuszgabe3.pdf](http://www.erwachsenenbildung.li/images/assets/Regl001FoerderungAuszgabe3.pdf)
students is organised in Switzerland and not in Liechtenstein itself. However, there are single instruments of quality assurance used by the Office for Vocational Education and Vocational Counselling such as counselling offers for students, teachers and VET providers, the review and approval of apprenticeship contracts ensuring, training for staff in companies responsible for the firm-based training within the dual or trial apprenticeships.

Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance

In Liechtenstein developments in quality assurance in VET that are directly influenced by EQAVET cannot be identified. Because of the specific situation in the country (all students in VET visit schools in Switzerland), at the moment there seems to be no need for this. Liechtenstein is in this respect dependent on quality assurance reforms in Switzerland. However, Liechtenstein has representatives in the relevant boards or committees responsible for QA in VET in Switzerland and can to a certain extent influence developments there. The interviewee was not sure whether EQAVET has any influence on quality assurance in VET in Switzerland. Judging from document analysis, Switzerland does not regard EQAVET activities as a priority for the country.  

Synergies with other EU level instruments

Stakeholder involvement in the three EU transparency initiatives ECVET, EQAVET and EQF is highest in the work on the National Qualification Framework. The stakeholders support the NQF, since they regard the instrument of the EQF as essential for the competitiveness of a small country like Liechtenstein with its manifold relations to Switzerland, Austria, Germany and other countries. The level of involvement is high, involved institutions include the Office for Vocational Training and Career Counselling, the Ministry of Education (section higher education), the University of Liechtenstein, Chamber of Industry and Trade and the Chamber of Commerce. The “Agentur für Internationale Bildungsangelegenheiten” (Agency for International Educational Affairs) coordinates and supports the work.

The involvement in EQAVET is lower. Of course, stakeholders from industry or commerce regard quality in VET as a crucial topic. However, since Liechtenstein EQAVET is at the moment not a priority in national policy making and no concrete actions/reforms are being executed, the option to be involved in activities related to EQAVET for stakeholders outside the Office for Vocational Education and Vocational Counselling (ABB) as NRP basically not given.

Sources


See „Der Europäische Bezugsrahmen für Qualitätssicherung in der beruflichen Aus- und Weiterbildung (EQAVET) – in Kürze“ on

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Country report – Norway

Author: Astrid Henningsen (ICF GHK)

Part 1 – Description of quality assurance arrangements and of recent developments

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in initial VET

Context

Initial VET (IVET) covers higher secondary education. No qualifying VET is provided at lower secondary level. VET delivery at upper-secondary level is regulated by the same legislation as primary and secondary general education. In Norway, provision of initial VET is a shared responsibility between the national administration and VET providers (school based VET providers being typically the regional county authorities and training enterprises).

Decisions on developing new qualifications or updating existing qualifications are national and the state provides the national financial framework. The regional county authorities (Fylkeskommunene) finance IVET provision in their respective geographical territories, plan organise all aspects of delivery of IVET, ensures quality assurance and decide on which programmes to deliver – within the framework of the Educational Act 675.

IVET in the Norway is based on the principle of school VET training followed by formalised apprenticeship training in an enterprise. The general model is one of 2 years + 2 years leading to pass the general journeyman’s exam (NQF level 4A/ISCED3). The general framework for quality assurance

At system level, the institutions in charge of quality assurance is the Ministry of Education and Research (Kunnskapsdepartementet), the Directorate for Education and Training (Utdanningsdirektoratet) and state’s representative at county level the county governors (Fylkesmannen).

The Educational Act lay down the basic principles for quality assurance covering notably compliance with the national legal framework; systems for monitoring and assessment of compliance and systems for follow up at county level; control and supervision by the state representative (Fylkesmannen); systems for evaluation at provider level and systems and requirements for approval of providers.

The regional county authorities are required by law to have an adequate quality system. The Knowledge Promotion Reform of 2006 lay down the national core and subject curricular, the structure of delivery of compulsory education and set out the framework for content delivery. Key competences, such as learning strategies, social and cultural competence and pupil participation form part of the framework. With the Knowledge Promotion Reform an outcome learning approach has been implemented, leaving greater flexibility to VET providers as regards the detailed curricular development at county level.

In the Norwegian context, the Knowledge Promotion Reform and the defined national curricularis regarded as the main instrument for quality assurance and development at system level. The VET system is “trust based” and there is generally little focus on control and inspection at system level.

Planning at VET system level

As outlined the Educational Act and the Knowledge Promotion Reform of 2006 provides the overall framework for VET provision in Norway. The overall framework is complemented by

674 Educational Act of 17 July 1998, with latest amendments August 2012
675 Educational Act of 17 July 1998, with latest amendments August 2012
676 Kunnskapsløftet, see http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/kd/tema/grunnopplaring/kunnskapsloeftet.html?id=1411
policy documents setting out strategies and lines of development. In the late 2000’s the government published two main documents articulating the policy priorities and strategies for development of VET in the subsequent years: The White paper on the \textit{Education Strategy} \textsuperscript{678} and the Green Paper \textit{Vocational education for the future} \textsuperscript{679}. Among other, the reports focus on quality development issues and internationalization in VET.

\textbf{Statutory stakeholder involvement in initial VET at system level}

Educational authorities in Norway acknowledge the importance of private sector for VET development and adaptation to meet labour market needs and social partners play an institutionalised and significant role in the definition of qualifications, the development of curricular and in the conceptualisation of the framework for VET programmes in Norway.

The Educational Act (Chapter 12) lay down formalised procedures for representation and engagement build on the tripartite cooperation principle. The Act foresees the set up of two types of councils at system level:

- The National Council for Vocational Education and Training (Samarbeidsrådet for yrkesopplæring) appointed by the Ministry of Education and Research and composed by social partners, representatives of the Ministry and other appointed stakeholders. The Council provides advice on the general legislative and policy framework and takes initiatives within VET.
- The Advisory Councils for Vocational Education and Training (Fagligråd) - which exist for each of the nine main vocational education programmes. The Advisory Councils are composed by social partners representing specific trades or trade area and other key stakeholders. They provide advice on the content of VET programmes and future skill needs.

In view of the recognised importance the social partners hold the majority of seats in each of these councils.

Apart from the legal framework, the active involvement and cooperation on VET is institutionalised through the formal agreements between the social partners that set the framework for working life. Both the quadrennial national collective labour agreements and the 2-year wage agreements include sections on objectives, rights, obligations and procedures regarding cooperation on training of staff in member enterprises, including apprentices.

\textbf{Identification of training needs}

There is no institutional framework for the anticipation of skills needs in Norway\textsuperscript{680}. Skills needs are primarily identified by the employers, but also by employees, schools and authorities. Other systems however contribute to the identification of skill needs\textsuperscript{681}.

Suggestions for new qualifications put forward by employers are to be documented by stakeholders. The National Council for Vocational Education and Training as well as the advisory Councils for Vocational Education and Training plays an important role in the translation of skill needs into national curricular and definition of study subjects.

Once a skill need has been defined a tripartite group is mandated to write a competence description – which forms the basis for the development of the subject curricular. The teams appointed to develop curricular consist of professionals, typically suggested by social partners, VET teachers and representatives of the Agency for Education and training under the Ministry.

\textsuperscript{678}UttanningslinjaSt.meld.nr. 44 2008-2009
\textsuperscript{679}Fagopplæring for framtida, NOU 2008:18
\textsuperscript{680}VET in Europe Country Report Norway, 2010, Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training
\textsuperscript{681}However, there are a number of systems in place or being developed aiding the identification of skill needs, notably forecasts for the number of unemployed and total employment for the present year and the next year, the macroeconomic model MODAG – which us currently being piloted for analysis of the long-term development of the labour market and the bi-annual surveys among enterprises to estimate the overall problem of bottle-necks in the labour market
Certification and validation of learning

IVET in the Norway is based on the principle of school VET training followed by formalised apprenticeship training in an enterprise. The general model is one of 2 years + 2 years leading to pass the general journeyman’s exam (NQF level 4A/ISCED3). Some trades, however, deviate from this model with longer or shorter periods of school training. In addition there are other alternative learning systems – including notably: “Praksiskandidat” (NQF level 4A) “Laerekandidatorden” (NQF Level 3) and Praksisbrevorden” (NQF level 3). The Praksiskandidat system is a model for validation of non-formal learning allowing learners to pass the general journeyman’s exam.

Learners in Norway have a statutory right to at least 3 years of education following competition of lower secondary education. If it is impossible to provide an enough training places the country authorities are obliged by law to provide a third year in in school, leading to the same final craft and journey man examination as for apprentices. IVET learners may also after the two first years of IVET School based training undertake a third year of supplementary education providing access to higher education.

The structure and specifications for examination is laid down in the Regulation related to the Educational Act (Forskrift tilopplæringslova). Furthermore, each of VET programmes (currently 52 basis programmes for the first two years – and 176 programmes for the last two years of VET) are governed by a specific regulation (laereplan) under the The Knowledge Promotion Reform. These regulations set out IVET programme objectives, stipulating duration, content, subjects, contents and competence levels. These regulations also specify requirements for the final exam under each programme. For the final exam, assessment is undertaken with independent assessors typically drawn from local enterprises.

Who can deliver VET and under what conditions

According to the Education Act, Chapter 13, public and private school owners are responsible for ensuring compliance with the requirements of the Education Act and associated regulations. To this end providers are to have a satisfactory system for assessing compliance to the Act, as well as a satisfactory system for following up the results.

Other training establishments – including enterprises - that assume the responsibility for training one or more learners must be approved by the county authority. Before approval is given, the training establishments must have been professionally assessed by the county vocational training board. All training establishments are obliged to organise learning so that the apprentice can achieve the objectives of the curriculum.

Teacher development

Professional development of teachers and trainers forms an important part of the Norwegian system for quality assurance and development. Supporting the professional development of VET teachers and trainers has been high on the policy agenda in Norway for many years, and is seen as vital for improving the quality of VET. In the Norwegian case teacher and trainer development covers not only VET schools but also training establishments – which today is seen as equally important as those of teachers and trainers in schools.

As a consequence of the knowledge promotion reform substantial resources have been invested in competence development and training of teachers and trainers in order to meet

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682 Deviations include notably 3+0, 1+3 and 3+2 – for a full overview see TilbudsstruktureniKunnskapsloftet pr. 06.07.2012 (http://www.udir.no/Upload/Rundskriv/2012/Udir-1-2012-vedlegg_2.pdf)
683 model for validation of non-formal learning. This model allows learners, able to prove comprehensive practice which is at least 25% longer then the learning period within the general model to pass the general journeyman’s exam
684 an individual learning process – leading to a proof of competence – but not to the general journeyman’s exam
685 in this system learners after two years in an enterprise, completed by additional school based training in core subjects (Norwegian, maths and social studies), may obtain after an end exam a “letter of practice” allowing them subsequently to undertake further studies with the aim to complete a full IVET training
686 http://www.lovdata.no/for/sf/kd/20060623-0724.html
the objectives of the reform and to address the challenges related to content and structure brought by the reform.

Teacher and training development in the 2000’s has been guided by the *Competence for Development strategy (2005-2008)* and subsequently by the White Paper *Quality in Schools (2007-2008)* and the *Competence for Quality - Strategy for Continuing Education of Teachers (2009-2012)*.

The objective of the latter is to set the framework to strengthen pupil learning and motivation at primary and lower secondary level by raising the teachers’ academic, subject, didactic and teaching competence and qualifications through a goal-oriented and nationwide implementation of the continuing education plan.

The strategy is expected to contribute to improving the status of the teaching profession and strengthen confidence in educational and training quality. For the period 2009-2012, the further education programmes offered in selected vocational programme subjects are among the most prioritised areas.

**Inspection**

A system for inspection is in place at national level. The state representative (Fylkesmannen) is responsible and will do it as a part of his inspections if the Directorate for education and training initiate it.

There are however no requirements for the nature of inspection to be undertaken by the country governor – and up to now, VET has not been prioritized. Consequently, the nature of inspection differs across counties.

The approach to inspection reflect the Norwegian largely “trust based” approach to delivery, and the focus on quality development and evaluation – rather than quality assurance as a control mechanism.

**Monitoring and use of indicators**

As presented below, Norway is currently working on the development and implementation of a quality assessment system based on quality indicators.

Since 2004 (when “Skoleporten.no” was released) systematic work has been done work on quantity indicators for VET (focus on the school part). Within this framework indicators on students on VET, apprenticeship contract numbers of journeyman’s examination and other quantitative aspects have been created, and published yearly. These indicators have been used both in the quality work in VET in the counties (*Fylkeskommunene*) and at national level (creating policy and activities).

The current work relates to the development of new indicators in order to collect information from the learning environment in the enterprises and data concerning what happen with the students and the apprentices when they have completed VET.

Some 6 of the indicators are similar to those defined in EQAVET

**Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2003 – and recent developments**

Ensuring quality in VET has for long been on the national agenda. Already in 1994 the social partners agreed on a common proposal for a programme for quality assurance in VET, as a part of the *Reform 94 process*. Also, quality in all basic education, including VET, has been a national priority, underpinned by the work of an appointed national quality committee (*Kvalitetssutvalget*) that started its work in 2001. However, due to the integration of VET into general education, VET was during the 2000’s not very visible in the Norwegian system for quality assurance at system level.

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687 Ministry of Education and Research *Kompetanse for utvikling 2005-2008*

688 Ministry of Education and Research White Paper no. 31 (2007-2008) to the Storting *Kvalitet I skolerne*

689 Ministry of Education and Research *Kompetanse for kvalitet - Strategi for videreutdannigavlærerere 2009-2012*

690 REFERNET, VET in Europe – Country Report, Norway 2011
Quality assurance in VET and its organisation reflects the overall decentralised system for VET provision. Beyond normative legislative requirement and teacher training measures much quality assurance takes place at county level. With the reforms implemented in 2000’s the distribution of responsibility for quality assurance has been clarified.

Notable changes, impacting systems for quality assurance in the 2003-2008 period include:

- Reform of the model for stakeholder engagement – with set up of Advisory Councils at system and providers level with enhanced focus on quality development
- Reinforced focus on teacher and trainer development (including in trainers in enterprises) – as a basis for delivery of quality in VET
- Enhanced responsibility local VET providers for quality development – within the framework of the Knowledge Promotion Reform

During the 2000’s national and international actors have highlighted the need for an integrated framework for quality assessment in VET. Recommendations to develop a framework were followed up by the Norwegian Government – and the development of an overarching quality assurance approach for VET was made a priority with the 2008 Educational Strategy.

The Directorate for Education and Training is currently working on a strategy for the development of a comprehensive strategy for Quality assurance building on procedures and practices in place. The strategy is expected to be ready early 2013. Main elements relate to the enhanced and systematic use of indicators. The focus is on the third level of the quality assurance cycle (evaluation) and the approach is considered different to that of EQAVET.

More specifically the quality assurance system is to comprise:

- Development of a statistical base for assessment of students and apprentices completion. It is anticipated that work on development of statistics will comprise indicator development at national and county level – and where appropriate at school level.
- Development of a knowledge base on the VET learning environment through surveys among students, trainees and VET instructors. While a survey system covering trainees and VET instructors is currently in place at county, it is voluntary and little used. With the implementation of the strategy the completion of the surveys will be mandatory. Surveys will cover all students, trainees and VET instructors (not sample based).
- Part of the quality assurance approach to be implemented will cover measures to enhance the use of surveys. Furthermore the use of small scale sample surveys is foreseen.
- Evaluations of the quality of apprentices learning at enterprises.
- Evaluations of the employment situation for vocational graduates and evaluation of the competences of graduates by employers. Data on the employment situation of recent graduates is to form part of the national indicator system.

### Quality assurance arrangements at providers level in initial VET

#### Requirements VET providers have to comply with

The Educational Act stipulates that VET providers are to ensure:

- Assessment of compliance and follow up (self-assessment)
- Stakeholder involvement

#### Assessment of compliance and follow up (self-assessment)

School owners (which are mostly the counties) are to have a satisfactory system for assessing compliance to the Educational Act, as well as a satisfactory system for following up the result of these assessments and, where appropriate, national quality assessments conducted by the Ministry.

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691 Karlsenutvalget, 2008, Uplæringen Fagopplæring for framtida, NOU 2008: 18
692 OECD 2008 Vocational Education and Training in Norway Strengths, Challenges and Recommendations
693 Norwegian Ministry of Education, Utdanningslinja, TirådingfraKunnskapsdepartementetav 12. juni 2009,
694 Only 7 of 19 counties used the system in 2007/2008 and response rates were low
There are no requirements for the nature of the systems to be put in place – and the approach and systems in place varies. Inspection and control is of the school owners are, as outlined above, decentralised to the county governor.

In addition other VET providers that assume the responsibility for training (e.g. enterprises) must be approved by the county authority as outlined above – and must to this end have been professionally assessed by the county vocational training board. The training establishments must in addition:

- Prepare an internal plan for the training of the apprentice
- Have internal quality assurance systems so that the apprentice receives training in accordance with the Educational Act.

The counties provide advice and follow the enterprises – and ensure that these meet the requirements for approval.

**Stakeholder involvement and identification of training needs**

The Educational Act stipulates that each county is to appoint a county vocational training board (Yrkesopplæringsnemnder). Each board is appointed by the county parliament and is composed by representatives for employers’ organizations and unions, at least one pupil or apprentice and in some cases representatives of teachers’ unions. Social partners are to represent more than half of the board. The secretariat is integrated with the county education department

The boards have specify advisory tasks as stated in the Education Act, and play an important role at the county level for responsiveness of VET to labour market and for quality in VET provision at regional level.

In 2008 the County Vocational Training Boards’ responsibilities were altered, involving a change from a decision-making body to an advisory body. The new legislation demands of the boards that they give advice on matters concerning the entire upper secondary IVET model, thus advising directly on the dimensioning of the offer.

With the change to advisory body, quality in VET provision has become one of the main tasks for the county vocational training boards. They are expected to place stronger focus on quality issues leading to a reinforcement of VET quality policy at regional level overall.

**Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET since 2003**

As outlined above reforms of quality assurance of VET in the period 2003-2008 at provider level, is first and foremost characterised by a change in the system for stakeholder engagement, and associated an increased focus on responsiveness of VET to labour market needs and quality development and in VET.

**Reforms of quality assurance in initial VET at provider level since 2009 (adoption of EQAVET Recommendation)**

The main development since 2009 is as outlined above the development of quality assessment system for IVET at system level. While developed at system level, it is expected that the system will first and foremost have and impact at providers levels – providing the basis for quality development – informed by evaluation results (aggregated at national level – but also disaggregated at county level).

Other developments have included the pilot project of peer learning implemented across providers and based on the EQAVET. As presented further below – this project was “partially successful”. It has not been continued.
Quality assurance arrangements at system level in Continued VET

Context

Compared to most European states Norway has a slightly different and narrower definition of VET than other countries. VET in Norway is referred to as the upper secondary education level (i.e. IVET). There is no separate system of VET at the tertiary level in Norway.

CVET is consequently also managed by other actors – and has its own quality assurance system. Other forms of adult learning (beyond the IVET which is also available for mature learners) are not considered as VET in Norway.

The Norwegian definition of VET has been respected in this report. This needs to be seen in a context where quality assurance development in relation to EQAVET only relates to IVET.

Consequently, this report does not cover CVET in any detail.

The following points may nevertheless be noted:

Post-secondary vocational colleges (fagskoler)

Post-secondary vocational colleges (fagskoler) provide VET leading to qualifications at the ISCED 4 level. The Act relating to Post-secondary Vocational Education and Training regulates public and private post-secondary vocational education and training provided by vocational colleges.

The organisation of colleges differs significantly with private and public providers – at both county and state level.

Courses and programmes provided are of a period of 6 months to two years. The colleges obliged by law to have a plan for the content of training and for its implementation. A final assessment of qualifications and documentation of qualifications is stipulated by law.

The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance (NOKUT) ensures accreditation of vocational colleges as well as quality assurance. NOKUT’s operational tools for quality control include notably:

■ Accreditation – and recognition of new provision
■ Controlling the provider’s internal quality assurance system (Assessment of the institution’s quality assurance system)
■ Controlling that specific provision complies with national quality standards (controlling of established provision)

Futhermore, NOKUT undertakes external evaluation and assessment of the provision with the aim to improve quality development of vocational training.

In 2008 the Ministry of Education passed a new regulation demanding all post-secondary vocational colleges to have an internal quality assurance system in place. NOKUT amended their criteria for quality control, as illustrated above. Since January 2010 all tertiary vocational colleges are obliged to have an internal quality assurance system in place.

NOKUT was set up in 2003.

Master craftsman certificate

The master Craftsman certificate is regulated by the Act relating to Master Craftsman Certificates in Craft and other Industries. The scheme operates independently. The Ministry of Trade and Industry appoints the Master Craftsman Committee (mesterbrevnemnda), which develops policy and legislation, and administrates the scheme.

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695 A bridge to the future European policy for vocational education and training 2002-10 National policy report – Norway, Refernet
696 Lovomfagskoleutdanning 2003, latest amendment 2010
697 NOKUT http://www.nokut.no/
698 Lovommesterbrev, last amended 2009
The Master Craftsman Committee also determines which subjects shall be included in the scheme and the requirements that shall be made to training and practice for obtaining a master craftsman certificate. The Master Craftsman Committee also awards the certificate.

Part 2 – Interaction between national quality assurance and EQAVET

National Reference Point

Norway has an EQAVET National Reference Point in place since the early 2000’s when it was informally appointed by the Ministry of Education.

Host

Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, Department for VET is hosting the NRP. The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training is the Executive Agency for the Ministry of Education and Research. It is responsible for the development of primary and secondary education and has as aim to “ensure that all pupils and apprentices receive the high quality education they are entitled to”. To this end the Agency:

- Has the responsibility for supervising education and the governance of the education sector and the implementation of Acts of Parliament and regulations
- Is responsible for managing the Norwegian Support System for Special Education, state-owned schools and the educational direction of the National Education Centres
- Is responsible for all national statistics concerning primary and secondary education. On the basis of these statistics initiates, the agency develops and monitors research and development.

Mandate of the NRP

The NRP does not have a specific mandate; the appointed NRP is the head of the Department for VET. All activities are integrated in the Department general activities – and form an integrated part of the Departments activities on the development of VET. Consequently, a no specific budget – or specific HR has been allocated to the NRP. Also, the NRP does not have work plan, nor does it monitor the implementation of specific activities.

Formal NRP activities may in this respect be seen mainly as participation in the EQAVET activities. However, this should be seen in a context where the Directorate overall works on quality development of VET – and the foreseen NRP activities (including stakeholder engagement) are integrated in general activities.

The NRP is engaged in the development of a national system for quality assessment (kvalitet fagudanning) – led by the Department for Research and International Relations (see discussion below).

It is not considered that having a designated NRP adds value per se – as activities in all cases in all cases would take place.

National approach to enhance quality assurance

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training is currently developing a national approach to quality assessment/evaluation. The first draft is expected in February 2013.

The approach covers upper secondary VET (IVET, but also upper secondary VET provided to adults – which in substance is not different from the IVET qualification) – but not other forms of adult education or higher education with a vocational education orientation (as higher education – not VET).

The approach covers both what is in place and which are not currently covered to develop a whole system for quality assessment. The system is developed for all levels and for all actors involved within VET.

The aim of the approach is strategic – to develop systems for quality assessment. The focus is on evaluation of quality (step 3 of the quality cycle). The system aims at evaluating quality in VET (process of delivery and outcome/results) – to provide a basis for VET providers to develop quality at provider level. To this end the approach covers indicator development,
feeding of indicators though data collection and assessment. More specifically 4 areas are to be covered:

- Students ‘and apprentices’ completion of vocational training
- Knowledge about the learning environment (student, trainee and instructor survey)
- Assessments of the quality of training in apprenticeships (student, trainee and instructor surveys)
- Employment situation for newly graduates skilled workers and assessment of their qualifications by employers (employers’ surveys).

The goal is to establish common indicators at national and regional level, and, where applicable, at the provider level. The system is intended to make all information (data) available and easy to use for people on all levels; national, county (Fylkeskommunene), schools, enterprises, teachers and instructors and to inform quality development at providers’ level. There is an internet portal where all statistics and indicators are published (“Skoleporten.no”).

In the selection of indicators, the EQAVET indicators have been carefully considered in setting the national indicators. However, the processes have been driven by a national policy agenda.

The approach does not promote and ensure “national” requirements for quality assurance pr “national standards” – and is not intended to do so.

Furthermore, while it can be envisaged that the results may impact on normative development at national level, this is not the main aim of the system.

Once this system has been put in place and is fully operational, further development is envisaged.

“Second stage” activities may include organisation of meetings and exchange (possibly peer learning type of activities).

As a part of implementation it is planned to build a structure of “local reference points” – with inspiration from EQAVET. It is planned to build a network where the counties (Fylkeskommunene) have their own person responsible for promoting the system for quality assessment and relevant activities. As in EQAVET the “local reference points” will meet regularly to exchange and learning.

To support this development, guidelines and user guides on how to use the system for quality assessment, how to understand and use the indicators and statistics and how to make changes will be made. Currently, a tool is under construction that will be a user guide how to work with quality in VET. It is expected to be released around midyear 2013.

In contrast there are no intentions of setting national standards.

**Background of the approach**

The development of the national system for quality assessment is formally the result of the Educational strategy of the Government, as laid down in the White paper 44 (2008-2009) and which call for the development of a quality assessment system for VET. The development of the strategy, however, is the result of a longer process and has been influenced by several factors – notably:

- The Karlsen Committee report noted that the national quality assurance system is too school focused, and not sufficiently oriented towards VET. It also noted the need for research and documentation in order to strengthen a knowledge-based development of VET.

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699 This is yearly full scale (to all) survey answered by all students, all apprentices learning at enterprises and to all enterprises with apprentices

700 St.meld. nr. 44 (2008-2009), Utdanningslinja, Tilråding fra Kunnskapsdepartementetav 12. juni 2009,

701 Karlsenutvalget, 2008, Upplæringen Fagopplæring for framtida, NOU 2008: 18
OECD Recommendations as regards to the development a system for evaluation of quality.
Nordic cooperation on quality development in VET.
National engagement in ENQA-VET.

Development and stakeholder involvement
The development of the approach is managed by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. A working group has been set up to this end.

The project is led by a steering group composed by representatives from the National Council for VET (Samarbeidsrådet for yrkesopplæring), the Ministry of Education and Research, Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training and the National association of counties (Fylkeskommunene).

A reference group has been associated to the development of the approach. The reference group is composed by:
- Representatives from the employer’s organisations
- Representatives from the Unions (also from the students union)
- Representatives from the Vocational Training Council (Faglig råd)
- Representative from schools
- Representative from the enterprises (instructor and apprenticeship training office)

Implementation and results
The overall framework of the system is established and the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training together with the steering group is currently operationalizing the quality factors indicators.

The system is still in its development phase. The development of the system has currently mainly impacted operational aspects (changes in surveys implemented to inform indicators, requirements for survey completion etc.).

The system is expected to have an impact on system level, on providers level and on the operators (teacher, trainers, student, and trainee).

Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance

Impact overall on national developments
EQAVET - and the open method of coordination on quality assurance - is one of the sources of inspiration for development of the national approach, and more broadly for considerations for development of quality assurance. However,

The EU work on quality assurance has over the last decade contributed in putting quality assurance on the national agenda. However, the development of the strategy has been clearly driven by a national agenda – and many factors have impacted on the development of the approach presented above and EQAVET is only one factor.

It is the EU’s work on quality assurance (EQAVET process), in general, which is reported to have had some impact. The Recommendation did not have an agenda setting effect. By the time the Recommendation was adopted quality assurance development was already a priority. The development in Norway would not have been different without the Recommendation.

As regards stakeholder involvement, the Recommendation is perceived to have had some impact in terms enhanced stakeholder engagement. EU related issues in Norway are however politicised and therefore any call to take up new activity will be dependent on the organisations view of the EU process. This said, the objective to ensure that qualifications can be recognised is perceived important across all stakeholders and EQAVET is considered a step in forward.

Use and usefulness of EQVET framework
The Recommendation is seen and considered as a “philosophy” and a framework from which countries can choose elements, in view of their VET system and quality assurance
mechanisms in place (toolbox understanding). The general principles are considered broad – and not directly implementable.

The EQAVET approach has generally been seen as a source of inspiration. Indicators in contrast are considered useful as tools – and have been closely considered.

Descriptors have been used to review quality assurance mechanisms in place – and to identify areas in which more work could potentially be undertaken at system level (“check list” approach).

Indicators have been reviewed quite carefully. The choice of indicators used in the approach have been made carefully considering – and taking into account - indicators defined in the EQAVET Recommendation – and explicit links have been made in the selection of indicators to the EQAVET indicators.

However, as also highlighted above, EQAVET is not the only source of inspiration. When considering and developing the national approach other sources have been used as inspiration also. Such sources are notably:

- ISO and EFQM
- Systems in place on other countries (study trips have been organised and bi-lateral cooperation/exchange)

**Synergies with other EU level instruments**

All EU instruments and activities are centralised within the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training.

In order to ensure coordination, pre-meetings are organised within the ministry for those engaged in other EU level activities (ECVET – which is currently being considered and EQF, others?) and debriefing is ensured.

Furthermore, the Agency cooperation with the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education which coordinates national measures according to official Norwegian policy within the field of internationalisation (management of LLP & Erasmus Mundus management among other)

The directorate is currently working on ensuring closer cooperation and synergy within the Ministry.

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- Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, VET in Europe Country Report Norway, 2010,
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A1.34 Country report – Turkey

Author: Jove Jankulovski (external expert of ICF GHK)

Part 1 – Description of quality assurance arrangements and of recent developments

The main developments in quality assurance in Turkey are in the period from 2009 are:

- Turkish Qualifications Framework (TQF) is in the process of development. It is expected that in spring 2013 it will be accepted. TQF is aligned with EQF.
- The role of NRP is assigned to the General Directorate for TVET, Ministry of National Education in December 2012.
- The Strategic Plan 2010 – 2014 of the Ministry of National Education states that quality assurance in education will be established. Strategic Objective 15.3 says that a quality management system will be established at all levels of the Ministry.
- In 2009 ToR for the project: Technical Assistance for Improving the Quality of Vocational Education and Training in Turkey – 1 was developed. Implementation of the project began in spring 2012. The establishment of National Quality Assurance System is foreseen in the frame of the project.
- In 2012, The Ministry issued document called Quality Framework on National (Public) Education. However, national approach to quality assurance is still to be built since the document is not treating forms/types of education/training that are out of the scope of public education.

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in initial VET

Context

In Turkey, the provision of IVET is the responsibility of the national administration – Ministry of National Education (the Ministry later in the report). IVET includes at least 14 different kinds of public schools, in addition to special private schools. The Ministry is responsible for supervision / control of all IVET schools regardless of whether they are under its jurisdiction, or not. Provision of IVET is offered in the below IVET schools:

- Anatolian Technical High Schools
- Technical High Schools
- Anatolian Vocational High Schools
- Industrial Vocational High Schools and Multi-Programs High Schools
- Agricultural Vocational High Schools
- Anatolian Meteorological Vocational High School
- Anatolian Cadastral Vocational High School
- Commercial Vocational High Schools
- Anatolian Commercial Vocational High Schools
- Health Vocational High Schools
- Anatolian Hotel Management and Tourism Vocational High Schools
- Anatolian Mass Communications Vocational Schools
- Multi-Programs High Schools
- Justice Vocational High School

Duration of all programmes is 4 academic (school) years, leading to a diploma.

Higher Vocational Schools are offering higher vocational educational programmes leading to a diploma – a qualification on level 5 in the future TQF. These educational institutions are providing IVET (formal VET) including workplace practice. Each school is linked to a university under the scope of Council of Higher Education (CoHE). CoHE is legally a body of

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702 Development and adoption of TQF is on-going. Consultation process is in its final phase. It is expected that it will be endorsed by the institutions in the first half of 2013.

703 Author’s comment: IVET as a term is not used in Turkey. Term used is: formal.
the Ministry, which is exercising certain level of autonomy, fully covering the area of higher education in Turkey.

Having in mind the above, this report will focus on the four year education programmes that are under the direct scope of the Ministry.

The provision of IVET is centralised. Framework curricula are determined at national level, and are to be approved by the National Board of Education. Provincial Directorates of the Ministry are overseeing the IVET provision in each of the province and informing the Ministry. Given the feedback and changing needs of the labour market, the Ministry has been developing modular VET curricula since 1993 (approximately 7000 module booklets covering 62 job families and 228 branches).

It is important to note that restructuring of the Ministry was announced in the Official Gazette, number 28054, published on September 14th, 2011. According to this act, major structural and staffing changes in the Ministry commenced. Before the restructuring of the Ministry vocational and technical education for boys and girls was separated. After the restructuring, schools are mixed - boys and girls are attending schools together. Most of the restructuring processes were completed. Still, some of the change transition processes are to be completed in the following period.

**The general framework for quality assurance**

The Ministry is the body responsible for legal, policy and programme definition aspects of IVET in Turkey. It is responsible for approving the educational institutions that are to provide any of the types of IVET as mentioned above, excluding MYO’s.

The institution in charge of quality assurance in IVET at national level is the Ministry, or more concretely, General Directorate for Technical and Vocational Education (DG for TVET) and the Presidency of Guidance and Supervision (Rehberlik ve Denetim Başkanlığı) of the Ministry.

In Turkey there are no legal acts defining quality assurance as such, but legal acts defining Total Quality Management (TQM). TQM is a structured approach to organisational management that seeks to improve the quality of products and services through ongoing refinements in response to continuous feedback. This approach is not developed specifically for managing quality of education and is not aiming at quality management at system level. Concretely, the following acts are used by the Ministry:


Of central significance to the national VET system is the Law number 6287 enacted on March 30th, 2012. It is addressing quality assurance from a new perspective. In it, secondary education is defined as compulsory, meaning that IVET education is also becoming compulsory starting from academic year 2012/2013.

**Planning at VET system level and requirements for evaluation and review**

Key strategic long-term document is the 9th National Development Plan (2007-2013). Paragraph 589 of this Plan reads: “With the aim of increasing quality in education, curricula based on innovativeness and research will be extended throughout the country, and students will be encouraged to engage in scientific research as well as entrepreneurship.”

The Strategic Plan 2010 – 2014 of the Ministry of National Education states that QA in education will be established. Strategic Objective 15.3 says that a quality management system will be established at all levels of the Ministry.
Another key long-term development plan is the Strategy Paper for Lifelong Learning in Turkey (2009-2013) and the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Lifelong Learning Strategy. In this Strategy, there are 16 priorities. One of the priorities (Priority 11: Establishing a Quality Assurance System by Activating Vocational Adequacy System) is touching upon the quality assurance in VET.

In the Regulation on Vocational and Technical Education (the TVET Act later in the report), published in the Official Gazette number 24804 on July 3rd, 2002, Vocational Education Council (national level) and Provincial Vocational Education Councils were introduced. Article 6 of this Regulation reads: “A Vocational Education Council shall be established in the Ministry in order to make decisions on the planning, development and evaluation of any kind and degree of formal, apprenticeship and non-formal programs where vocational and technical education programmes are being implemented and vocational training carried out in institutions and enterprises as well as to make recommendations to the Ministry”. While Article 9 reads: “Provincial Vocational Education Councils shall be established in provinces to take decision on the planning, development, evaluation of vocational education and training to be carried out in institutions and enterprises within the coverage of the law and to make recommendations to the Governor.”

This legal act regulates overall principles of vocational technical education, as well as the framework for delivery and certification, including:

- Vocational Education Councils
- Vocational and Technical Education Centres
- Training-Education (programmes, access/admission, apprenticeships/internships, courses, assessment,
- Vocational Education at institution and enterprises
- Establishment, Procedures and Working Routine of Training Units in Enterprises
- Accreditation of Documents, Certificates and Diplomas in Vocational and Technical Education
- Vocational Education and Employment
- Duties, Authorities, and Responsibilities of the staff of educational and training institutions
- Inspection of Vocational Education in Enterprises

In Turkey the notion of learning outcomes has been introduced with the recent development of TQF concept as described in the TQF Consultation Paper. In education system at large, learning outcomes are still not introduced.

**Stakeholder involvement and identification of training needs**

On the national level stakeholders are represented in the Vocational Education Council.\(^{704}\)

In parallel to the existence of the Provincial Vocational Education Councils, Provincial Employment Councils were established by law in 2006 in order to ensure active participation of social partners in establishing coherence and employment and education from LLL perspective. These two institutions (Provincial Vocational Education Councils and Provincial Employment Councils) have been combined into one institution called Provincial Employment and Vocational Education Council (PEVEC)\(^{705}\) under regulation declared in Official Gazette number 27031, dated October 21st, 2008.

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\(^{704}\)Representatives of stakeholders in the Vocational Education Council:
- President or high ranking representative of Confederation of Turkish Craftsmen and Tradesmen (TESK),
- President or high ranking representative of Union of Trade, Industry, Maritime Trade Chambers and Trade Exchanges (TOBB),
- President or high ranking representative of Confederation of Turkish Employers’ Associations (TİSK),
- President or high ranking representative of a confederation of employee union which has the highest number of members.

\(^{705}\)Author’s note: In some documents and some of the institutions the Provincial Employment and Vocational Education Council (PEVEC) can be found under different name: Provincial Employment and Vocational Training Boards (PEVTB).
The PEVEC is chaired by the provincial governor and mandated to:

- set up provincial policies for employment and vocational education;
- carry out labour market analyses to identify training needs;
- set up and run provincial systems for labour market data collection and monitoring and evaluation using expert commissions for this purpose when needed;
- evaluate and publish the data and submit reports to the relevant authorities and Ministries;
- submit comments and suggestions on vocational education programmes prepared by the Ministry in line with the needs of the province;
- play an intermediary role to overcome disagreements stemming from the implementation of vocational and technical education;
- evaluate and comment on the proposals of relevant institutions on vocational education, employment and labour force issues and act upon these;
- approve training activities for the labour force;
- submit opinions to the Ministry on implementation of, and investment in, vocational and technical training.

EC funded project Technical Assistance in Improving Quality in Public Employment Services in Turkey is going to work (is working) on strengthening the capacities of the PEVECs.

**Certification, assessment and validation of learning**

In the TQF Consultation Paper (2012) three qualifications awarding bodies are foreseen: Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA), the Ministry, CoHE. VQA is anticipated of having coordination role of all awarding bodies.

The following qualification types are proposed in IVET:

- Vocational and Technical Secondary Education Diploma, qualification on level 4 (equals level 4 in EQF), awarding body is the Ministry.
- Associate Degree (Vocational), qualification on level 5 (equals level 5 in EQF), awarding body is CoHE.

In parallel to the above qualification types, in the TQF Consultation Paper are proposed other qualification types:

- VQA Level 3 Vocational Qualification Certificate, qualification on level 3 (equals level 3 in EQF), awarding body is VQA.
- Skilled Worker Certificate, qualification on level 3 (equals level 3 in EQF), awarding body is the Ministry. This qualification can be gained through apprenticeship schemes in non-formal education/training institutions.
- VQA Level 4 Vocational Qualification Certificate, qualification on level 4 (equals level 4 in EQF), awarding body is VQA.
- Skilled Instructor Certificate, qualification on level 4 (equals level 4 in EQF), awarding body is the Ministry. This qualification can be gained through apprenticeship schemes in non-formal education/training institutions.
- VQA Level 5 Vocational Qualification Certificate, qualification on level 5 (equals level 5 in EQF), awarding body is VQA.

There is obvious need of a policy on qualifications that the Ministry, as awarding body, should build in order to regulate the linkages between qualifications in its scope of work, assessment frames (standards) and framework curricula in order to facilitate horizontal and vertical transfers of learners.

Currently, for the qualification types under the Ministry, leading to a diploma, formative and summative assessment is done by teachers in schools. There is no final exam organised and assessed externally.

There exists a university entrance exam – Student Selection and Placement Exam (ÖSYS) implemented nation-wide and used by universities to create their enrolment policy. Subjects that are assessed in this exam are general academic knowledge measured by first stage exam which is named Entrance to Higher Education Exam (YGS – Yükseköğretim Girış Sınavı) followed by Licence Enrolling Exam (LYS – Lisans Yerleştirme Sınavı). All students,
including secondary VET students, can take this exam without any restrictions as many times as they need/wish.

**Who can deliver VET and under what conditions**

In the Section Three of the Regulation on Vocational and Technical Education are listed provisions of who can deliver VET and under which conditions. In principle, PEVEC is providing information and data regarding the schools or institutions that can became IVET providers (IVET schools). Opinion of the PEVEC, together with the views of governor’s office is submitted to the Ministry.

Establishment of new IVET school or determining the structure of institutions as such is decided pending the evaluation by a commission formed by responsible persons in the Ministry under the leadership of the relevant deputy undersecretary of the Ministry.

**Monitoring inspection and use of indicators**

Presidency of Guidance and Supervision of the Ministry has the responsibility to monitor the education and training provision starting with elementary education through secondary education, to provide guidance for staff of the Ministry, public and private schools and guidance at institutional level. The central unit is responsible for legal issues. There is Guidance and Inspection body in the Provincial Directorates of the Ministry. These units are also responsible for legal issues and in addition for pedagogical issues and are supervising:

- Provincial and Sub Provincial Directorates
- Schools
- Teachers
- School Directors and Deputy Directors

**The main changes to QA at system level introduced since 2009 (Adoption of the EQAVET Recommendation)**

In the recent years quality assurance is gaining importance in the operations of educational institutions. In 2012, The Ministry issued document called Quality Framework on National (Public) Education.

EC-funded project: Technical Assistance for Improving the Quality of Vocational Education and Training in Turkey – 1 commenced its implementation since spring 2012. In the ToR of the project is foreseen the establishment of National Quality Assurance System, as well as establishing and approval of the National Quality Assurance Centre for VET.

Most importantly, National Reference Point has been established under the DG for TVET in the Ministry in December 2012.

**The main changes to QA as system level introduced since 2003 (beginning of the EU cooperation that led to EQAVET adoption)**

The Law (no. 5544) for Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA / MYK – Mesleki Yeterlilik Kurumu) has been accepted by the Turkish Grand National Assembly in September 2006 and has been published on the Official Gazette on 07 October 2006. Under this Law, VQA as institution was established with the main intention to introduce in the Turkish VET system outcome-related mechanisms that are considered everywhere as landmarks of modern governance. By the end of year 2011 over 215 occupational standards have been prepared in cooperation with social partners and sector representatives.

**Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in initial VET**

**Planning at VET provider level, stakeholder involvement**

The TVET Act stipulates that the principal is managing and governing the school in cooperation with the boards (school employees), committees (school employees) and teams (3 potential teams according to the TVET Act – development management team, quality improvement team, civil defence teams).
The institutional development management team has a managerial role and ensures necessary internal and external coordination. It is composed of six representatives of employees, one representative from school-family association, head or representative of safeguard association or of foundation if any, one representative from the union, one representative from enterprises (where training/internship is conducted), university and school representative, three students elected by the boards of students. This team is elected on annual basis.

This team, among others, prepares, implements and evaluates annual development plan of the institution, prepares development report and submits it to the Ministry.

Establishment and functioning of quality development team is done in accordance with the provisions of Regulation on Implementing Total Quality Management of the Ministry.

These teams are surveying parents, staff, students, and other institutions. Each year the team publishes a report reflecting feedback received from the survey and shares it with the staff meeting/s.

In the Regulation for Awarding on Implementation of TQM of the Ministry, last addition/revision published in Communiques Journal no.2619 from April 2009 (Annex 2) are listed: Criteria for Quality Schools of the Year.

1. Leadership
2. School or Institution Plan
3. Human Resources Management
4. Management of Financial Resources, Accumulation of Knowledge and Collaborations
5. Process Management
6. 
   a. Outcomes of Student Satisfaction from School
   b. Outcomes of Parental Satisfaction from School
6. 
   a. Performance Outcomes of the Beneficiary
   
7. 
   a. Outcomes of Staff Satisfaction
   b. Performance Outcomes of Staff
8. Performance Outcomes of Communal-Social Responsibility
9. 
   a. Financial Outcomes
   b. Other Outcomes of Basic Performance

Principal ensures the implementation of development plan of the institutions and other relevant documents developed by institutional development management team and other teams.

**Monitoring and evaluation**

Schools implement national curriculum, therefore the Presidency of Guidance and Supervision of the Ministry is carrying out inspection in schools. Areas that are inspected in schools are the following:

1. Educational Environments
2. Management Work
3. Teachers’ Councils’ Work
4. Teaching Activities\(^{706}\)
5. Education Activities\(^{707}\)

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\(^{706}\) Teaching activities are encompassing: preparation and implementation of teaching, assessment of students, professional development.

\(^{707}\) Education activities are encompassing: guidance activities; activities in the area of School-Student Award and Discipline Committee; participation in: Honour Committee, School and/or Student Council; social events.
The institutional development management team at the beginning of its functioning is electing work groups (of at least three people). According to the TVET Act, these working groups are to: "... carry out studies on determining local educational needs, preparing education programs, advising, measuring and evaluating occupations, total quality management and on other issues."

The main changes to QA at provider level introduced since 2009 (Adoption of the EQAVET Recommendation)

The Regulation for Awarding on Implementation of TQM of the Ministry was passed, introducing Criteria for Quality Schools of the Year.

The main changes to QA at provider level introduced since 2003 (beginning of the EU cooperation that led to EQAVET adoption)

Changes implemented (legal acts on TQM), as described in the above sections. These changes cannot be attributed to EQAVET, CQAF, or other EU QA initiatives.

Quality assurance arrangements at system level in continuous VET

Context

Existing practices in Turkey do not make use of terms such as CVET and IVET; hence legislative acts are not reflecting that terminology. Consequently, educational and training community is not applying such terminology. Currently, instead of CVET, the term non-formal training is used.

In Turkey there are two major education / training paths. Formal education system (Örgün Eğitim), is organised and managed by the state. It is centralised, school-based and leading to a diploma. It is ranging from kindergarten to universities and is inclusive of both: vocational and general.

Training / education for people out of formal education is known as non-formal training (Yaygın Eğitim) nation-wide. People who did not stay in the compulsory levels of the formal system, people that have not completed certain level of the formal education system, or adults can join this pathway at any age. Open Learning System (vocational or general), Vocational Education Centre – VEC (Mesleki Eğitim Merkezi), Public Education Centre – PEC (Halk Eğitim Merkezi), are forms of non-formal education / training that are leading to diploma or certificate and are governed, managed and financed by the Ministry. Trainings provided by the Public Employment Service (trainings for unemployed), and apprenticeship training are directly linked with the Ministry too. VECs are also an institution where apprenticeship schemes can be applied.

PECs and VECs provide mostly training linked and comparable with IVET. Target audience can be learners that left IVET earlier, or adults. Certificates earned through the above CVET provision are comparable / compatible with the IVET system.

Trainings provided by municipalities, universities (in their Continuous Education Centres – CEC – Sürekli Eğitim Merkezi), other stakeholders, unions, NGOs, associations / chambers of employers, craftsmen; civil society organisations; in-house enterprise trainings; private training providers are leading to certificate too and are not under the scope of the Ministry. These trainings are not structurally organised and can be sporadic, or on demand. Certificates that are earned through these types of CVET are not directly comparable / compatible with the IVET system. This training provision is increasingly exercised in the frame of EU grant schemes launched in Turkey.

In the TQF Consultation Paper the following qualification types in CVET are proposed:

- Skilled Worker Certificate, qualification on level 3 (equals level 3 in EQF), awarding body is the Ministry
- Skilled Instructor Certificate, qualification on level 4 (equals level 4 in EQF), awarding body is the Ministry
The above qualifications types can be gained through apprenticeship schemes. The other types of CVET are not directly leading to a qualification.

Apprenticeship training has duration of 2 to 4 years. Those who complete this training can enter the journeyman examination. Candidates who get the right to receive a journeyman certificate may enter the masters’ examination after three years of work experience provided that they continue mastership training.

Those who do not receive a mastership certificate cannot open an independent workplace and cannot work as a master. Those who work at a workplace included in the vocations within the scope of the law and who have signed an apprenticeship contract, can benefit from full student rights, and their insurance premiums during their training are paid by the Ministry.

The approaches of apprenticeship schemes that are practiced in the country include some elements of recognition of prior informal and non-formal learning (RPL). Still, the system of RPL is to be further developed and strengthened. These processes are currently implemented within the EC-funded project Technical Assistance for Promotion of Lifelong Learning in Turkey.

National framework: who is in charge of what

The Ministry is preparing apprenticeship framework curriculum, as well as training programmes. Also, the Ministry is determining the conditions under which CVET provision can receive public funding. In TVET Act are listed the objectives of the apprenticeship training programmes, their implementation and duration (between two and four years). Also, modalities of entering apprenticeship training are in the scope of the Ministry: “...Duration of training for those who start apprenticeship training after having general education in high school or after having a higher-level education may be reduced by half of the duration of apprenticeship training. To what extent this duration may be reduced is determined by the Ministry, considering the views of relevant occupational agency and upon the approval of Vocational education council.”

Within the scope of other types of CVET, local programmes, prepared by the institutions in accordance with the demands, needs and conditions of the region are implemented upon the approval of PEVEC and governor’s office.

Planning at CVET system level, stakeholder involvement

As described in the section Planning at VET system level and requirements for evaluation and review, the TVET act regulates the area of CVET too: “A Vocational Education Council shall be established in the Ministry in order to make decisions on the planning, development and evaluation of any kind and degree of formal, apprenticeship and non-formal programs where vocational and technical education programmes are being implemented and vocational training carried out in institutions and enterprises as well as to make recommendations to the Ministry”.

Stakeholders are represented in the Vocational Education Council and PEVECs as described in the section: Planning at VET system level and requirements for evaluation and review for IVET.

Certification, assessment and validation

Assessment of apprenticeship training in regulated in the TVET Act. It is performed according to the provisions of the Ministry in the “Regulation on Grade Passing at Secondary Education Institutions” are applied in marking. Assessment of achievement in theoretical instruction is done by written, oral or practical tests prepared by course teachers.

Practical training of apprenticeship candidates and apprentices are evaluated by master trainers considering the apprentices’ actions in the workplace, aptitudes vis-à-vis the occupation, attendance in the work, attitudes and behaviours.

The Ministry is preparing frame curriculum for secondary vocational and technical education programmes.
Journeyman and master craftsman exams are offered for those who want to be journeyman or master. Dates and locations of the exams, formation of boards to organise these exams and method of implementing the exams (written, oral or both written and oral) are determined by the governor’s office on the advice of PEVEC.

After successful completion of the journeymanship and mastership exams candidates are awarded certificates for a full qualification of master or journeyman on level 3 or level4 as noted in the section Context (A41.3).

Journeymen and masters cannot directly continue their education to a higher education institution due to the existence of Student Selection and Placement Exam (ÖSYS) (as described in section Certification, assessment and validation of learning (A1.1) that is filtering out such candidates from the exam.

**Monitoring and evaluation**

Existing practice mostly implies written and theoretical exams in PECs and VECs for journeyman and master. Assessment of performance is not being conducted since it is considered that it is achieved during practical work in the workplace. These exams are not monitored unless there is no appeal (complaint about the implementation of the exam/s). These types of certificate are recognised in society and their quality is under discussion.

**Reforms of QA in CVET at system level introduced since 2009 (Adoption of the EQAVET Recommendation)**

As a part of the Ministry restructuring in September 2011, among other changes, a DG for Lifelong Learning was established (replaced former DG for apprenticeship and non-formal education). DG for LLL is responsible for the CVET (non-formal education) in Turkey.

**Reforms of QA in CVET at system level introduced since 2003 (beginning of the EU cooperation that led to EQAVET adoption)**

Open Learning System (vocational or general), VECs, and PECs, are governed, managed and financed by the Ministry. These forms of CVET fall under the scope of legislative arrangements in the area of TVET.

Therefore, establishment of PEVECs (regulation declared in Official Gazette number 27031, dated October 21st, 2008), and more prominent involvement of stakeholders in education / training, can be considered as one of the aspects of QA of CVET.

**Quality assurance arrangements in continuous VET at provider level**

**Planning at CVET system level, stakeholder involvement**

VECs are non-formal training providers offering apprenticeships and other vocational education and training services. These institutions are publicly owned and are governed and managed in a similar manner as described in the same section in IVET.

**Certification, assessment and validation**

Described in the respective section of chapter A41.3.

**Monitoring and evaluation**

Described in the respective section of chapter A41.3.

**Reforms of QA in CVET at provider level introduced since 2009 (Adoption of the EQAVET Recommendation)**

Similar to provider level in IVET section.

**Reforms of QA in CVET at provider level introduced since 2003 (beginning of the EU cooperation that led to EQAVET adoption)**

Similar to provider level in IVET section.
Part 2 – Interaction between national quality assurance and EQAVET

Basic information

EQAVET NRP was established in December 2012. NRP is Directorate General for Technical and Vocational Education and Training in the Ministry of National Education (the Ministry).

There is still no national approach to enhance QA.

Participation in EQAVET activities was sporadic in the last 3-4 years (starting from 2009-2010). A limited number of different participants from the Ministry were attending various events within the frame of EQAVET network.

National Reference Point

National Reference Point is newly designated (December 2012). Expert to the General Director) in the Directorate General for Technical and Vocational Education and Training in the Ministry is going to have leading role in quality assurance activities.

NRP has human and financial resources and motivation to perform quality assurance activities in the forthcoming period. Its activities are in the planning phase. Development of web site is foreseen, as well as, information dissemination activities.

National approach to enhance quality assurance

In 2012, The Ministry issued a document called Quality Framework on National (Public) Education. It contains: quality monitoring and evaluation fields in education (and sub-areas), quality monitoring fields and standards in education management (sub-fields and sub-field components), monitoring and evaluation of quality in education governance. However, this document is treating only the public education area and not other types of training and learning. Therefore, it can be said that there is still no national approach to enhancing quality assurance.

It is expected that EC-funded project Technical Assistance for Improving the Quality of Vocational Education and Training in Turkey – 1 will secure establishment of National Quality Assurance System, as well as establishing and approval of the National Quality Assurance Centre for VET.

Awareness raising activities for stakeholders about quality assurance and EQAVET will be performed in the framework of the Project.

Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance

EQAVET Recommendation had limited influence on national development of quality assurance in VET.

Given the provisions of EQAVET Recommendation, in year 2009 it was a trigger for designing the project Technical Assistance for Improving the Quality of Vocational Education and Training in Turkey – 1.

Synergies with other EU level instruments

National approach to enhancing quality assurance, EQAVET implementation strategy, or other similar document is still to be developed.

All interviewees have stressed that the Turkish Qualifications Framework is directly drawing on EQF and is in its final, intensive phase of development. The Ministry is having good cooperation with Vocational Qualifications Authority. The level of synergy between EQAVET and other EU level instruments can be discussed and materialised after establishing National Quality Assurance System.

Sources


Quality Framework on National (Public) Education, Ministry of National Education.


