

# POLICY BRIEF

This note summarises the results of a Peer Learning Activity, which has been prepared by an independent expert. The report is based on a peer learning activity where policymakers and practitioners from a number of countries exchanged ideas and experiences on an issue of shared policy interest. This report reflects the opinions of the participants and does not constitute an official European Commission or ENQA-VET position.

## Peer Learning Activity

## ***On Quality Assurance procedures for Work Based Learning (WBL)***

*Countries taking part: AT, CY, DK, EE, FI, IE, IT, LU, NL, NO, PT, SE, ES, SI, RO*

### SUMMARY

*This policy note is based on the PLA held in Copenhagen/Malmö in October 2008 and brings together the contributions made by 15 European countries reflecting on QA procedures for WBL at national and regional level and some of the main policy issues explored in the “Quality in work based learning - meeting demands of labour market and lifelong learning” Conference held in Wiesbaden in December 2008 (full PLA report and Conference report are available on the Network’s website at [www.enqavet.eu](http://www.enqavet.eu)).*

## POLICY CONTEXT

In Lisbon 2001, Ministers in charge of education and training in the EU agreed to make Europe “**the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion**” by 2010. Education and training are crucial to economic and social change. The flexibility and security needed to achieve more and better jobs depend on ensuring that all citizens acquire key competences and update their skills throughout their lives. Lifelong learning supports creativity and innovation and enables full economic and social participation.

## PLA OBJECTIVE

Rationale for PLA on Quality Assurance procedures for WBL

**Vocational Education and Training (VET) plays a key role in this process as a result of its direct link to employment and social cohesion.**

Within VET, **work based learning (WBL)** is grounded in enterprise. Of the different education/training systems it is the most directly connected to the labour market.

**WBL refers** to any formal VET learning that is based wholly or predominantly in a work setting. National plans and structures exist for WBL and are legislated for in all Member States.

Apprenticeship training is in many Member States an integrated part of a “dual system”, combining training in workplaces with education and training at VET- colleges.



Peer Learning Activities (PLA) provide an opportunity for policymakers and practitioners from one country to learn from the experiences of their counterparts elsewhere in Europe through direct contact and practical cooperation.

The objective is to share best practice and engage in a process of reflection on the implications for policy making. This sharing of experiences with other systems is of particular importance in **delivering quality assurance in VET.**

**The PLA on Quality Assurance procedures for WBL is expected to impact in two ways:**



It will promote and develop common quality structures, which will enhance mutual trust and possibilities for a more united European labour market.

It will upgrade WBL leading to better practical value of the training results, better employability of the skilled workforce and higher forms of social inclusion.

## EMERGING POLICY ISSUES

from the PLA on Quality Assurance procedures for WBL

**The key requirements in ensuring further development of QA in WBL are:**

- **Trust, decentralisation and empowerment of all actors** (teachers/trainers, schools/enterprises, pupils/apprentices, social partners/employers);
- Involvement of **social partners** in the development of curricula ;
- **Teachers and trainers** involved in WBL require continued professional development.

**Common problems related to QA for WBL among Member States:**

- **Lack of motivation** of enterprises in actively taking part in WBL;
- **Lack of knowledge**, monitoring, documentation of QA procedures for WBL;
- **Lack of indicators** for QA in WBL;
- **Resistance to** formalising requirements in relation to the content of training programmes in enterprises.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

At European level there is a need for:

- **Increased support for QA** in WBL and research on the role, impact, output and outcome of WBL, at economic and social levels;
- More work on the development of quality **indicators** for WBL;
- A more demand driven approach to WBL, there is a need to develop mechanisms to **predict future demand** for competences and skills;
- **More motivational enterprises** to provide student placements and an acceptance to support to such placements are quality assured;
- Increased opportunities to enhance the **skills of trainers within enterprises**;
- Increased use of the Leonardo da Vinci programmes to support innovation in WBL;
- Further **development of standards** to enhance transparency, especially in **small and medium size enterprises**.

At National level there is a need for:

- Development of national **standards** and **quality criteria** for WBL and involvement of enterprises in the process;
- Development of benchmarking **tools** for WBL;
- Development of new structures which provide **advice on future trends and competencies**;
- Involvement of local social partners in the process;
- Use of common **QA structures** in both enterprises and VET colleges.

At Enterprise level there is a need for:

- **Increased balance** between student's educational needs and enterprise's short term needs;
- Increased provision of **training of the trainers**.
- Creation of sectoral or cross-sectoral **networks** within QA for WBL.

At VET-college level there is a need for

- Contributions to the **training of enterprises' trainers**.
- Development of **teachers' knowledge** in respect of the daily work of enterprises.

## ANALYSIS: reporting according to CQAF

The PLA on quality assurance procedures for WBL provided an interesting example of the use of the Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF) as an instrument to exchange experiences and capture best practices. As follows:

Purpose and Plan

- In all Member States, **national plans** and structures exist for WBL and **are covered by legislation**;
- Reforms in VET mainly focus on the school element of VET and not always **on work based learning**.

Implementation

- In the majority of Member States apprenticeship training is an integrated part of a "**dual system**", combining training in the workplace with education/training at VET colleges;
- Short and long term labour market training is a major part of the WBL;
- **Many actors are involved** in the implementation of WBL (students, VET providers and enterprises) with roles differing between countries;
- **Social partners** are often heavily involved in curricula development;
- **Students' participation** in QA ranges from active participation in learning, teaching and contributing to evaluation and assessment processes to **very limited involvement**.

Assessment and Evaluation

- A number of **different mechanisms** are in place to evaluate WBL ranging from activities at provider level to enterprise level;
- QA procedures are generally a **matter for enterprises** and knowledge of the QA procedures are in the main quite limited;
- The use of **quality indicators** is in general **limited**.

Feedback and Procedures for Change

- Feedback and procedures for change are **organised differently**;
- Responses from participants in the feedback procedures differ in relation to involvement, responsibility and methods;
- In general, **feedback procedures are relatively unclear and not well described**.

<p><b>Methodology</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Motivation for enterprises to participate</b> actively in the many forms of WBL <b>differs</b> between Member States. The most regularly used <b>motivational tools</b> are: public financial support to enterprises, taking responsibility for the next generation of workers, access to new workers and close contacts with providers;</li> <li>• <b>Partnerships between enterprises and VET providers</b> are increasing within the Member States. These partnerships play a key role in the development of a high quality VET.</li> </ul>
<p><b>CHALLENGES for QA procedures for WBL</b></p>	<p><b>Participants identified five areas of major challenge faced by QA procedures for WBL as follows:</b></p>
<p><b>Structural Challenges</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of common structures for example national qualification frameworks, to <b>balance between economic targets and social inclusion</b>;</li> <li>• Development of structures that will improve the <b>transparency of funding</b>;</li> <li>• Organisation of <b>training for trainers</b> and mentors especially in enterprises.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Curricula Challenges</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate <b>curriculum development</b>;</li> <li>• Estimation of the <b>demand for future competencies</b> and skills;</li> <li>• Further development of <b>sectoral and cross sectoral committees</b>;</li> <li>• Continual <b>renewal</b> of all core curricula for all qualifications in VET in general and in WBL in particular.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Challenges in relation to Quality</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving QA without increasing <b>bureaucracy</b>;</li> <li>• Improving the <b>transparency</b> of quality information;</li> <li>• Development of <b>quality indicators</b>;</li> <li>• Effective and efficient <b>collection of quality information</b> from VET providers</li> </ul>
<p><b>Measurement Challenges</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measurement and <b>documentation</b> are key challenges for most Member States. Measurement of learning outcomes are necessary in order to make informally acquired skills visible and accepted to the labour market.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Current demographic &amp; economic Challenges</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The reduction in the <b>number of students</b> is a challenge in some Member States;</li> <li>• Member States face a change in the lifelong learners as a result of <b>an increase in the immigrant population</b>, cultural changes and “older” learners;</li> <li>• High drop out <b>rates</b> are a common challenge and many Member States concentrate on how to reduce them.</li> <li>• The current <b>financial crisis</b> is expected to reduce the resources for education in general and for WBL in enterprises.</li> </ul>



European Network for Quality Assurance  
in Vocational Education and Training

### FURTHER INFORMATION

Available from the Network's website at [www.enqavet.eu](http://www.enqavet.eu)  
or by contacting the Secretariat ENQA – VET

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