

# **SUMMARY OF RESULTS - EQAVET SECRETARIAT SURVEY 2018**

**Supporting the implementation of The European Quality Assurance Framework for Vocational Education and Training**

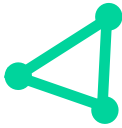


**EQAVET**

European Quality Assurance  
in Vocational Education and Training

# THE EUROPEAN QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

A lot has changed in the ten years since the introduction of the EQAVET Framework. Across the European Union, the ideas behind this quality assurance framework for VET have increasingly become part of national and regional systems. These changes are to be welcomed as the use of a common set of ideas helps to promote transparency and confidence; and strengthen mutual trust and European collaboration. These changes have been regularly measured by the EQAVET Secretariat. Their surveys, which began in 2011, collect information on how these quality assurance ideas are used in the EU-28 countries, EFTA countries and Candidate Countries.



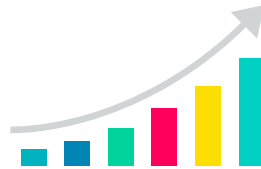
The Secretariat's surveys were developed collaboratively and the questions were devised by Member States, social partners and the European Commission. This ensures the information collected in the surveys responds to the needs of the EQAVET Network. Over the ten years of organising surveys, these needs have changed and the surveys now collect information on national developments and the implementation of new European policies (such as the Copenhagen process, Riga Conclusions, New EU Skills Agenda etc.).



The EQAVET Recommendation has enabled members of the EQAVET Network to support each other and develop a shared understanding and language to use when discussing quality assurance in VET. This emphasis on working together has led to the development of a common view of a quality assurance strategy in VET.

## Common view of quality assurance strategy in VET

A quality assurance strategy or plan should be strategic in nature and describes the steps for the improvement of national quality assurance systems or at a minimum clearly states the intention to strengthen quality assurance in VET. This strategic document can cover other issues of VET policies.



The first survey in June 2011 coincided with the deadline for Member States to establish national approaches to the quality assurance of VET in line with EQAVET. There were further surveys in 2012, 2014, 2016 and 2018. When possible the same questions were used for each survey in order to identify trends and update earlier information. When there were new questions these focused on emerging EU policy developments. As well as providing information on the implementation of the EQAVET Recommendation, the surveys helped the Network to design its work programmes and activities. The survey data is also used by the European Commission to report on progress at a European level.

The EQAVET Secretariat is grateful to all those working in the national reference points and the representatives of Member States in the EQAVET Network for completing the surveys. Their involvement, in collaboration with relevant partners in the national contexts, has ensured the usefulness of the survey data and enabled the Secretariat to highlight key changes over the last ten years.



## SURVEY 2018 – HOW MUCH HAS CHANGED?

Without doubt a great deal of progress has been made in the quality assurance of VET since the adoption of the EQAVET Recommendation in 2009. This can be seen in the way that countries have developed or are currently developing policies, structures and processes which improve quality assurance at system and provider levels. These changes have focused on the key ideas in the EQAVET Framework and increasingly national, regional and local quality assurance systems are being amended to ensure their alignment and compatibility with EQAVET.

The latest Secretariat survey illustrates the extent of these changes over the last ten years. These can be summarised as follows.

### WHAT HAS CHANGED - NATIONAL APPROCHES TO QUALITY ASSURANCE IN VET

- every Member State has a national quality assurance approach at system and provider levels which is compatible with EQAVET;
- countries are using EQAVET as the basis for measuring the quality of their provision. This is more common at system than provider level;
- every quality assurance system in the EU is aligned with the principles of EQAVET;
- at the system level EU approaches to quality assurance make use of the EQAVET indicative descriptors and indicators;
- there has been a significant increase in the use of the EQAVET indicators by VET providers in EU countries;
- quality assurance approaches cover initial VET, continuing VET and work-based learning (WBL). The number of countries addressing the quality assurance of WBL and continuing VET has continued to increase but at a slower rate since 2016, in comparison with the growth in of 2013-2015. This trend may have been a result of the support provided by the introduction of EU policies such as the Youth Guarantee Recommendation and the EU Alliance for Apprenticeship in 2013;
- while there is a great deal of variety in how the quality assurance of VET is organised, most EU countries have a national approach at the ministerial/central level. This suggests political support for quality assurance in VET and ministries taking a leadership role, which is crucial to the development of a national culture of quality assurance;
- the national approaches to quality assurance support the implementation of other EU education and training policies, such as the NQF/EQF, the validation of non-formal and informal learning, certification and to a lesser extent credit systems/ECVET and qualification design.

The most recent Secretariat survey confirms that EQAVET provides a reference for comparing, developing and assessing quality assurance. It can also be seen as an encouragement and an opportunity to critically question existing national practices. It provides a basis for building consensus on the importance of a comprehensive framework for quality assurance in VET.

# WHAT ARE THE CURRENT PRIORITIES?

Alongside the significant progress set out above, the most recent Secretariat survey identified four areas where Member States are working to strengthen their quality assurance systems. These priorities are all associated with different aspects of EQAVET and illustrate the depth and breadth of the framework.

## 1

### THE ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS

The regular and systematic sharing of information with stakeholders is an important aspect of VET provision. Providing feedback and support for VET provision are essential aspects of stakeholders' roles in developing a sustainable culture of quality assurance. Countries are creating systems where stakeholders are fully involved in consultations and contribute to decisions on quality assurance. Even though the survey data in 2018 shows that Member States involve all the relevant stakeholders in their national approaches to quality assurance, this is an increasingly an area where countries are strengthening their existing arrangements. This increased focus covers the development of a quality assurance culture, shared values, beliefs, expectations and commitments. For some countries, it takes a lot of time and commitment to fully embed more extensive partnership arrangements with stakeholders.

## 2

### STRENGTHENING THE USE OF THE QUALITY ASSURANCE CYCLE

The quality assurance cycle is based on four stages: planning; implementation; evaluation and review. The survey data shows that at the national level quality assurance is stronger during the input stages (planning and implementation) than in the evaluation and review stages. For some countries the priority is to use the EQAVET indicators (particularly those which focus on 'outcomes') to strengthen the evaluation and review stages.

The survey data from for VET providers is different. Here, quality assurance procedures are more developed in the planning and evaluation stages. This could be because VET providers are responding to external regulation/evaluation rather than embedding an internal culture of quality assurance. To encourage VET providers to use all four stages of the quality assurance cycle, countries need to promote internal quality evaluation or self-assessment in conjunction with external evaluation. Using the EQAVET Framework encourages countries to promote the use of data and evidence of quality – in combination with external evaluation – among VET providers in their review and improvement of practice.



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# 3

## LABOUR MARKET RELEVANCE OF VET

Involving the labour market in quality assurance helps VET provision to respond to the needs of employers and makes VET more relevant. Work-based learning is based on partnerships which help learners move from training to work. The importance of fully involving the labour market in all aspects of VET provision is highlighted in recent EU policy developments e.g. information from graduate tracking systems can help to improve the relevance and quality of VET and explain why graduates succeed or fail to find employment or progress to further education and training. Strengthening the voice of the labour market will help to minimise the mismatch between the supply and demand of VET graduates; it will also help to correct learners' lack of work experience and ensure the acquisition of specific skills which are sought by employers.

Tracking VET graduates is becoming an important part of quality assurance and supports closer connections between VET and the labour market. Effective tracking systems can also help policymakers and VET providers make more informed decisions which in turn increases the relevance and value of VET. The most recent Secretariat survey identifies the development of closer links with the labour market as a priority because countries do not always:

- have a systematic approach to collecting graduate information;
- have a centralised system that collects and validates graduate data from different sources;
- use the information to review and improve the quality of VET provision.

# 4

## A GREATER FOCUS ON THE LEARNER

Quality assurance needs to be learner-centred. This requires more students to become involved in the processes of quality assurance. The most recent Secretariat survey shows that for some countries learner involvement is widespread. It includes systems which encourage learners to contribute to quality assurance and the promotion of EU initiatives which seek to widen access to qualifications, support lifelong learning and foster transnational mobility. The continuing VET sector in particular would benefit from greater learner involvement in quality assurance processes.

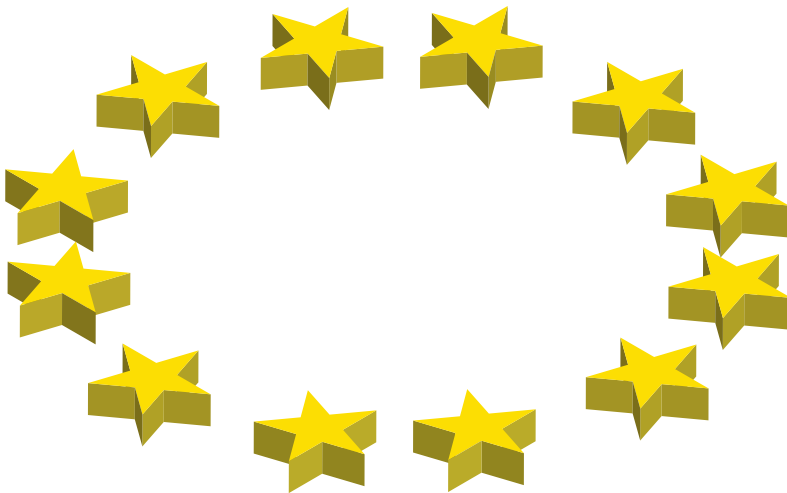
The survey data also identifies that VET providers who offer lifelong learning programmes need to work with the higher education sector. It appears that some EU-28 countries need to increase communication between the VET sector and the higher education sector.



# THE QUALITY ASSURANCE NATIONAL REFERENCE POINTS

A central part of the EQAVET Recommendation is the creation of a national reference point (NRP) in each of the EU-28 to lead and coordinate quality assurance activities. Most Member States have established a NRP and they are increasingly undertaking all the tasks and responsibilities described in the EQAVET Recommendation. Over the last five years NRPs are increasingly playing an important role in the national VET context as they:

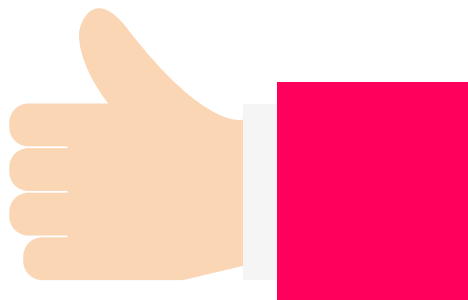
- effectively disseminate information to stakeholders;
- promote further development of the EQAVET Framework in the national context;
- support training providers to introduce or develop self-evaluation systems.



## WHAT CAN WE CONCLUDE?

The latest Secretariat survey highlights the continuing need to improve the quality assurance of VET. It also shows that Member States continue to make progress, although this is sometimes slow.

The evidence confirms that the EQAVET Recommendation is a solid basis for increased transparency, greater common understanding and the development of a culture of quality assurance in VET.



EQAVET Secretariat  
Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)

26/27 Denzille Lane,  
Dublin 2, D02 P266, Ireland.

**Tel:** 00353 1 905 81 46

**E-mail:** [info@eqavet.eu](mailto:info@eqavet.eu)

**Website:** [www.eqavet.eu](http://www.eqavet.eu)



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