



Matti Isokallio, EUproVET
– member of the EQAVET
Steering Committee and of
the platform for European
VET providers (EUproVET)

Editorial: Matti Isokallio

VET at the heart of the Bruges Communiqué

The Bruges Communiqué has been agreed by EU Member States and participating countries, the EU Social Partners and the European Commission. One section of the Communiqué focuses on the quality of VET. The topic is divided in three parts: Quality assurance; Quality of teachers, trainers and VET professionals; and Labour market relevance. The Communiqué states that all member countries should have a national level quality assurance framework by 2015 at the latest, to include workplace learning. It is also recommended that teacher and trainer training be strengthened. The third topic of the Communiqué, labour market relevance, contains several points: cooperation between schools and enterprises, partnership between schools and social partners, enterprises and public authorities. In addition, output-oriented curricula, quality and relevance of VET, work-based learning and apprenticeship-type training are also mentioned.

From the perspective of VET providers, the importance of quality assurance and the quality of teachers, trainers and other VET professionals is obvious. In effect, these two elements are prerequisites for valid labour market relevance. Quality assurance at system level, school level and individual level combined with good labour market relevance are the foundation for success in VET provision.

EUproVET is aware that VET providers strongly support the quality policy contained in the Bruges Communiqué. A Quality Assurance Framework, implementation at

VET provider level and adequate teacher and trainer knowledge are necessary for successful IVET and CVET provision. There still seems to be too much variance among the quality assurance arrangements of VET providers. More support from national or regional authorities is needed to support VET providers. On a larger scale there seems to be some sort of reverse correlation between the status of quality assurance frameworks and levels of youth unemployment and early school-leaving.

Labour market relevance is a key action which enables VET providers to confirm the adequacy of the quality and quantity of employable VET graduates. One of the main measures to guarantee this is appropriate and well organised work-based learning. Work-based learning also serves to strengthen cooperation between schools and enterprises. Enhancing apprenticeship training and apprenticeship-type training is not only an educational decision but also for public authorities, enterprises and social partners, and society as whole. Therefore, to update and upgrade apprenticeship training requires different measures in different member states and regions.

VET providers are pleased that the Commission has taken new measures to involve VET provider organisations in policymaking. High quality VET is our shared goal and VET providers favour bottom-up development. We strongly support strengthening the partnership between VET provider organisations and public authorities not only in Europe generally but also within states.



EQAVET

European Quality Assurance
in Vocational Education and Training

EQAVET Secretariat
Quality and Qualifications
Ireland (QQI)

10 Lower Mount Street
Dublin 2, Ireland

T: 00353 1 905 8144

E: info@eqavet.eu

W: www.eqavet.eu

In this Issue

P1

Editorial by Matti Isokallio, EUproVET

P2-3

Quality assurance mechanisms at VET provider level, Report of the EU Commission

P4-5

Quality Assurance in the Northern Ireland Further Education System

P5-6

EQAVET in the Netherlands

P7-8

What's new:
- The CEDEFOP Handbook
- Q-Kult project
- Stronger VET for better lives

P9

Events:
- Last meeting of the EQAVET working groups 2014-2015
- Peer Learning Activity on EQAVET indicator 2

Quality assurance mechanisms at VET provider level

“VET providers are better at delivering excellent VET also when there are strategic linkages and networking with the broader economic community at regional, national and international level”. The [Report of the EU Commission to the EU Parliament and Council, Brussels 28/1/2014](#)

This edition of the EQAVET Newsletter focuses on the progress made in the EU in relation to strategic objective 2b of the [Bruges Communiqué](#) which invites participating countries to establish at national level by 2015 a common quality assurance framework for VET providers compatible with the EQAVET framework, which also applies to workplace learning.

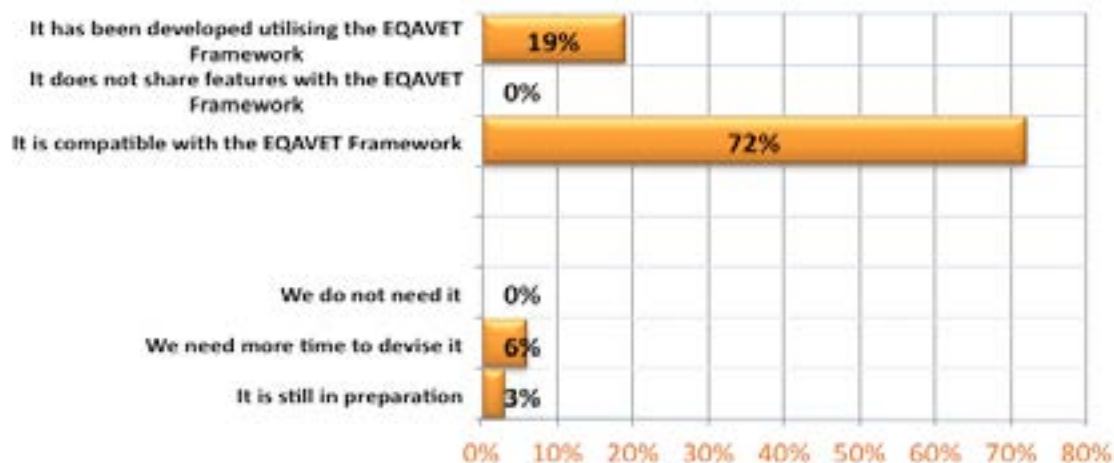
In this context, this short article presents the findings of the first [Report of the European Commission to the EU](#)

[Parliament and Council on progress on quality assurance in VET](#) in the European Union since the adoption of the EQAVET Recommendation in 2009. The report is based on the findings of the EQAVET Secretariat survey¹ and the external evaluation.² The article illustrates the findings with data from the EQAVET Secretariat survey.

Common Quality Assurance Framework for VET Providers

- Most countries have or are in the process of devising a common quality assurance (QA) framework for VET providers that will be compatible with the EQAVET Framework.

Figure 1 – Establishment of a common quality assurance approach for VET providers compatible with the EQAVET Framework to 2014 in the EU-28



EXTERNAL EVALUATION

- Almost all countries have in place statutory external evaluation of VET providers, while some countries require VET providers to have internal QA mechanisms; in other countries, this is voluntary but encouraged.
- The most frequent form of external review is inspection. In general, these are school inspection services and cover both IVET and general education. Other forms of external evaluation are used, most typically in CVET, and are less common in IVET.
- Some countries have specific QA or evaluation agencies. Many countries have legislation which requires VET providers to evaluate systematically their activities, as well as the quality and effectiveness of the training they offer.

1 All 28-EU Countries completed the survey in 2013-2014, which described 32 VET systems: Austria (AT), Belgium (BE fr, nl), Bulgaria (BG), Czech Republic (CZ), Croatia (HR), Cyprus (CY), Denmark (DK), Estonia (EE), Finland (FI), France (FR), Germany (DE), Greece (EL), Hungary (HU), Ireland (IE), Italy (IT), Latvia (LT), Lithuania (LT), Luxemburg (LU), Malta (MT), Netherlands (NL), Poland (PL), Portugal (PT), Romania (RO), Slovenia (SI), Slovakia (SK), Spain (ES), Sweden (SE), United Kingdom (UK (Eng, Nir, Sct, Wls)). Two EFTA countries – Norway (NO) and Switzerland (CH) – also took part in the survey; further information on these countries can be found at: <http://www.eqavet.eu/gns/what-we-do/statistics.aspx>

2 The European Commission's external evaluation on the implementation of the EQAVET Recommendation (published 30/1/2014); http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/eqavet_en.pdf

SELF-ASSESSMENT

- There is a great variety of practices regarding internal review among the Member States. Some countries require VET providers to focus the internal review on specific areas of activities. Others give no guidance as to how QA should be undertaken, while several countries have developed manuals, methodologies or websites to support this process.
- Some countries have in place a form of peer review/learning among VET providers, in most cases based on a European methodology developed under a Leonardo da Vinci project.
- In general, VET providers tend to make less use of the EQAVET indicative descriptors than is indicated at system level.

Figure 2 – The national approaches to QA at VET provider level compatible with the EQAVET Framework in the EU-28, 2014

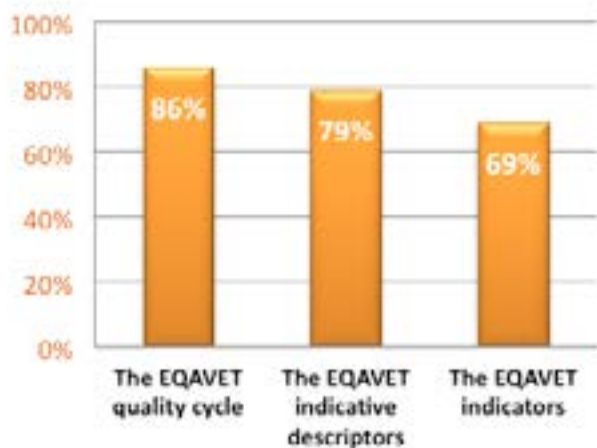
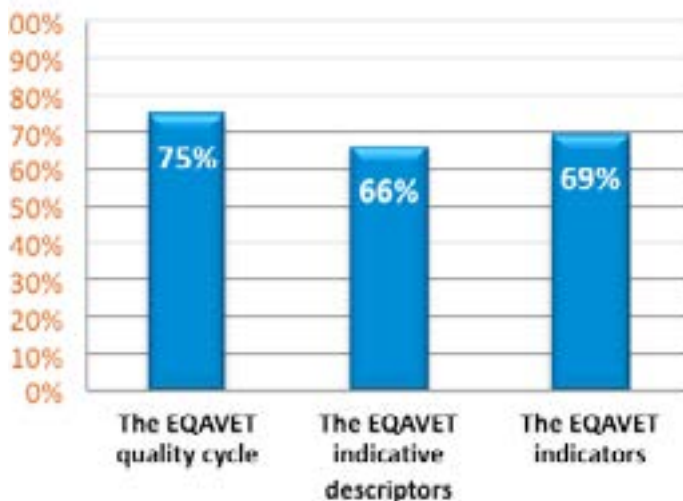


Figure 3 – The national approaches to QA at system level in-line the EQAVET Framework in the EU-28, 2014



- VET providers often undergo an accreditation and external or internal review process, but widespread use of the EQAVET cycle is not common. This shows that there is still room for improvement in reaching VET providers, notably through multipliers.

WORK-BASED LEARNING

- One significant challenge for QA is the work-based learning dimension. Training for trainers is not always guaranteed and there is often poor overview of such arrangements
- The EQAVET criteria, descriptors and indicators do not provide specific guidance on quality assurance for work-based learning. This relative weakness has been addressed at political level through the Bruges Communiqué

Figure 4 – The common approaches to QA for VET providers apply to initial, continuing VET and/or associated work-based learning in the EU-28, 2014



The report is available at

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/eqavet_en.pdf



Nicholas Gibson, Department for Employment and Learning UK (Nir)

Quality assurance in the Northern Ireland Further Education System - an article by Nicholas Gibson, Department for Employment and Learning UK (Nir)

It is a primary objective of the further education system³ in Northern Ireland to seek to improve constantly the quality and relevance of the further education funded by the Department for Employment and Learning. This involves a range of activities including inspection, data collection and analysis, and engagement with the labour market at both system and provider levels.

The Further Education System

Our system is built upon a statutory basis, whereby six regional colleges of further education are recognised and must discharge the duties set out in law, primarily the delivery of further education to 16-year-olds and over. Additionally, colleges, along with a range of private providers, operate under a contractual arrangement with the Department to deliver training programmes such as Apprenticeships NI and Training for Success. Our approach, which underpins proportionate responses to support quality improvement in this system, is based on a cyclical model compatible with the EQAVET Recommendation.

The key elements of the system are: the use of data, self-assessment and inspection, teachers and work-based learning.

The Provider Perspective

While the Department provides the overall framework within which quality improvement can take place, management of quality at the provider level is critical in delivering improvement so that learners can be increasingly confident that the vocational education and training they experience is useful and relevant in today's labour market.

The approach taken by providers to quality assurance and improvement is shaped by their own context, including their strategic direction, as well as by any contractual or statutory requirements stemming from the learning programmes they deliver. All providers funded by the Department, however, are required to operate quality assurance systems, which are themselves subject to inspection and monitoring.

Employer Engagement

A key dimension of providers' quality assurance in Northern Ireland concerns their relationships with employers, which aim to improve the relevance of the VET they provide through exposure to current industrial practice and by

creating opportunities for work placements. Commercial considerations also drive the behaviour of providers, as employers are also potential customers, primarily for continuing VET provision.

A number of economic priority sectors have been identified in the Northern Ireland Economic Strategy and these are potential areas for future economic growth. Colleges work to try to ensure that their programmes are aligned to these priorities, as well as reflecting the more immediate skills needs of employers; in other words they seek to match supply to both current demand and strategically important areas for growth.

As an illustration, the diagram reflects the approach taken by Belfast Metropolitan College; it features the use of both input and output measures as part of a holistic managed framework of engagement with a clear focus on the quality of the outcome with employers. This approach enables the college to capture information pertaining to the relevance and quality of the curriculum and of the skills acquired by learners by surveying end users (graduates and employers), as well as reflecting identified future priorities.

It could be suggested here that there is a tension between longer-term government-driven priorities and the immediate needs of running a financially sustainable college, but this is a balance that colleges seek to strike. A key area here is the focus on ensuring that college staff have the skills to respond appropriately to the pace of change in employer demands and the increasing level of sophistication of the knowledge-based industries.



3 To all intents and purposes, 'further education' can be equated to 'vocational education and training' for the purposes of this article, although the term also includes recreational and other non-vocational provision.

The challenge identified by Belfast Metropolitan College is how to respond in a flexible way to changing demands when it does not have the skills in-house in the traditional teaching team. The college is now seeking appropriate part-time staff with industry experience, but who may have less teaching experience, while still observing the requirements set out by the Department on the minimum teaching qualifications required by lecturers.



Belfast Metropolitan College

A good example of where colleges have been effective in working with employers to deliver responsive solutions that also secure jobs for participants has been in the design and delivery of the new academy model in Northern Ireland. Foreign direct investment companies considering locating in Northern Ireland often have very specific skills requirements which may not be immediately available in the local labour market – in some cases these were new requirements for cloud and data analytic solutions. The FE colleges worked with the Department to secure funding for pre-employment programmes which were tailored to the needs of a new investor, with colleges co-designing the solutions, preparing existing college staff and delivering intensive ‘boot camp’ programmes over 12 to 15 weeks for

groups of 20 learners. To date over 95% of participants in these academy programmes have gained employment and the feedback from employers has been very positive, with candidates immediately slotting into new job roles in their organisations.

The key factors in this successful outcome, linked to relevant EQAVET indicators, have been:

- responding quickly to employers (indicator 9 – having systems in place to identify training needs in the labour market)
- developing staff to meet those needs (broadly indicator 2 – use of investment in teacher training)
- measuring outcomes in terms of employer satisfaction with the skills gained (indicator 6 – utilisation of acquired skills), as well as the fact that participants gained employment as a result of the programme.
- a balance that colleges seek to strike. A key area here is the focus on ensuring that college staff have the skills to respond appropriately to the pace of change in employer demands and the increasing level of sophistication of the knowledge-based industries. The challenge identified by Belfast Metropolitan College is how to respond in a flexible way to changing demands when it does not have the skills in-house in the traditional teaching team. The college is now seeking appropriate part-time staff with industry experience, but who may have less teaching experience, while still observing the requirements set out by the Department on the minimum teaching qualifications required by lecturers.

As a further stamp of quality, the academy approach delivered by colleges has recently been awarded the 2015 Times Award for the best FE College Employer Engagement in the UK.

EQAVET in the Netherlands: in dialogue with stakeholders to strengthen the quality culture, an article by Marloes Van Bussel And Alie Kamphuis (Dutch National Reference Point NLQAVET)

Quality assurance and its impact on the training process

In 2010, the national reference point (NRP) made an application to the European Commission to conduct the NLQAVET project, which focused on how VET institutions can be supported to work towards a quality culture.

The NRP requested the input of a group of experts from Finland, Austria and Romania. A survey showed that Dutch VET institutions have established a PDCA cycle, but that it is difficult to complete the cycle at all levels of VET organisations. The results showed also a stronger focus on assurance, while the participants had indicated that they would prefer a greater focus on improving and learning. The project, implemented through pilots, focused on strengthening a culture of quality: a culture that would help bridge the gap between paper and reality, management and teachers. The pilots have yielded an approach and a conceptual framework for enhancing the quality culture and this is made available to all VET institutions on www.nlqavet.nl.

The conceptual framework, based on the metaphor of the iceberg, makes clear that quality is more than just a system. Many aspects relevant to good quality assurance are located below the water surface and are not directly visible. To achieve quality in the educational process requires a system that encourages us to strive for quality. For many people, the conceptual framework is a useful tool which opens the conversation about what else is needed to complete the PDCA-cycle. The NRP has thus contributed to the conceptualisation of a quality culture and to the ownership of quality.

These concepts, along with other ideas about quality, form a crucial input in the meetings we organise and in the dialogue with stakeholders. The ideas from NLQAVET are used and further developed in Erasmus + projects, such as DeSqual, Q-cult and QUAL4T. ROC Scalda is currently working on an application in which NLQAVET and other developments are an important part of the input. It is worth noting that a quality culture in the Netherlands and in Europe is fast becoming a means of achieving quality and the connector between developments which aim to enhance quality.

The Role of the NRP in the Netherlands

EQAVET, in the initial period, played an important role in promoting an open dialogue about quality assurance among key stakeholders in the field of quality. This was conducted through the EQAVET Advisory Group, which today plays an important role in NRP activities.

The advisory group provides a platform for the mutual sharing of developments and good practice in Europe and in the Netherlands. The group also advises on NRP activities in the Netherlands and on how the interests of the Netherlands on quality in VET in Europe can be best represented. The Advisory Group consists of the Ministry of Education, the VET Council, MBO in bedrijf (VET in operation), the VET council for private education, JOB (student representation), SB-B (an organisation in which education and labour market interests work together), the Inspectorate of Education, employee representatives (AOB and FNV) and employers (VNO-NCW and MKB Netherlands). In essence, dialogue focuses on how quality

assurance at system, institutional and educational levels (= medium) can contribute to improving quality in the education process (= target).

In recent years, collaboration with various stakeholders has intensified. The NRP EQAVET helps institutions to work on quality: we provide workshops in collaboration with



Alie Kamphuis (NLQAVET)



Marloes van Bussel (NLQAVET)

students to enhance their role in quality assurance and we work with teacher representatives to give educational teams within their institutions a greater voice in the dialogue on quality and education.

The NRP remains an important link between European policy development, national policy and educational practice.

We form new connections between countries and between European tools, in order to achieve the intended objective: higher quality of VET in Europe. An example of one of these new connections is the link between ECVET and EQAVET.

The NRP, together with a representative of the ministry of education, takes part in the European Working Group for ECVET and EQAVET. In the Netherlands we use this connection to perform quality improvement on ongoing ECVET pilots aimed at working with units within qualification areas. The core of our work continues to be promoting quality assurance and quality culture in VET from the level of educational teams to the national and European levels in order to achieve optimal VET.



The NRP is the Netherlands and its work with stakeholders

What's new

The CEDEFOP Handbook for VET providers: an article by Tina Bertzeletou



Tina Bertzeletou, CEDEFOP, quality assurance expert and member of the EQAVET Steering Committee

Quality in education and training will continue to be the focus of the EU agenda and the “Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training” (‘ET 2020’) that calls for improvements in the quality and efficiency of both⁴.

Having worked on the issue of the external quality assurance of VET providers through accreditation⁵, CEDEFOP has just published an online handbook directly addressed to VET providers and aimed at assisting them to introduce an internal quality management system or to ameliorate an existing one.

Internal quality management is considered complementary to external quality assurance and indispensable to VET providers who seek better quality and – above all – for developing a quality culture within organisations. It is a guarantee of the quality of the training offered and of the institution itself and a strategic asset in the highly competitive training market of today.

Based on empirical data from an in-depth analysis of 20 EU VET providers with functioning internal quality approaches from the public and private sectors and written in simple language, the Handbook adopts a step-by-step approach and guides readers through all steps of the “quality journey”. In 8 chapters, each of which ends with a set of questions for further reflection, readers learn how to define quality problems within their organisation, which remedial measures to take and how to implement them. The Handbook provides guidelines, advice and practical examples and contains an annex of 41 tools selected from among those offered by the VET providers analysed and covering all phases of the “quality cycle”. Reference is made regularly to the criteria, descriptors and indicators of the “Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET)”⁶ which testifies to their relevance and compatibility with the various quality approaches analysed.



The online Publication of the Handbook for VET providers is now available at:

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/3068>

- 4 European Commission: The role of education and training in the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy: http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/europe-2020-in-a-nutshell/flagship-initiatives/index_en.htm
- 5 CEDEFOP: Assuring quality in vocational education and training. The role of accrediting VET providers. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2011. CEDEFOP: Accreditation and quality assurance in vocational education and training. Selected European approaches. Publications Office of the European Union, 2009.
- 6 Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (2009/C 155/01). http://www.eqavet.eu/Libraries/Policy_Documents_2009/Recommendation_on_the_establishment_of_European_Quality_Assurance_Reference_Framework_for_VET.sflb.ashx?download=true&learning-policy/doc1134_en.htm

Quality Culture in IVET – Q-KULT an EU funded development project



coordinated by ARQA-VET: an article by Michaela Jonach & Franz Gramlinger, ARQA-VET (Austrian Reference Point for Quality Assurance in VET)

Quality management (QM) systems have been introduced in VET in various European countries over the past ten years and it has become clear that individual schools have had varying degrees of success in implementing their QM systems fully and appropriately, i.e. in accordance with the underlying QM principles, in gaining acceptance from those involved and in achieving the desired impact. Various stakeholders working on the development of the QM systems (such as education administrators, evaluators, school development advisers) have come independently to the same conclusion, namely that this situation may result from differing cultures in individual schools, which may or may not support successful implementation.

Quality culture is also a very frequent and extensively used term in the context of quality assurance of VET. The aim of the Leonardo da Vinci project Q-KULT (Quality culture in vocational schools) is to find a grounded theoretical basis for a concept of quality culture which will offer a clearer understanding of what this term could mean and, at the same time, to develop an instrument which will measure the effects of a quality culture on the implementation of quality assurance systems at provider level. This diagnostic instrument should make the influence of quality culture on the implementation of quality management systems in vocational schools more tangible. Furthermore, results gained by the use of this diagnostic instrument should enable vocational schools to implement their quality management systems sustainably and effectively (with or without consultative support). In addition to the provider level approach, the instrument is also expected to generate information for the purposes of steering the project at system level.

A set of different instruments (questionnaires as well as qualitative tools) has been developed by the project partners and is being tested by a number of IVET providers in project partner countries (Austria, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland). The interim results of the project were presented to and discussed by representatives of EQAVET National Reference Points in a workshop in March 2015 in Vienna. The feedback from the workshop participants from 11 different countries (picture 1) was very encouraging and gave us some important hints for ongoing work in Q-KULT. The first final products – a rather extensive bibliography on the topic and a first theoretical article – can be found on the homepage www.q-kult.eu.



Participants from EQAVET National Reference Points at the Q-KULT workshop, Vienna, March 2015



Franz Gramlinger and Michaela Jonach, ARQA-VET

Q-KULT in brief:

Project duration: October 2013 to March 2016

Project coordinator: ARQA-VET (AT)

Project partners: 3s research laboratory (AT), Die Senatorin für Bildung und Wissenschaft Bremen, (DE), Fachhochschule Nordwestschweiz (CH), Handelsskolen Silkeborg Business College (DK), ROC Gilde Opleidingen (NL)

Final conference: 02 & 03 March 2016 in Bremen/Germany

Website: <http://www.q-kult.eu/en/home/>

Stronger VET for better lives.



CEDEFOP's monitoring report on vocational education and training policies 2010-14

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/3067>

This report provides a comprehensive overview of what European countries (EU Member States, Norway, Iceland and candidate countries) have done to address the priorities set for VET in 2010 in the Bruges Communiqué on progress towards the strategic objectives and the short-term deliverables (STDs) of European cooperation in VET.

The report follows the structure of the Communiqué and reflects on progress towards the 22 short-term deliverables set for VET. Country examples complement detailed analysis of each STD.

EVENTS

EQAVET Working Groups (2014-2015) met for the last time in Brussels 21-22 April, 2015.

Two working groups were established in 2014 as part of the EQAVET work programme 2013-2015. The topics to be addressed by the working groups were decided at the EQAVET Annual Forum in 2013. The titles given to the working groups were:

- Working Group on EQAVET and the quality assurance approach in adult learning in the context of Continuing VET
- Joint working group for EQAVET and ECVET

The groups met on 4 occasions (Sept. and Dec. 2014; Feb. and April 2015) and each produced a report.

- Supporting adult learning, CVET and soft skills development by the use of quality assurance descriptors and indicators
- Using ECVET and EQAVET principles: some early experiences at national level

The report and other related material can be downloaded from our website at: http://www.eqavet.eu/gns/what-we-do/working-groups/working-groups_2014.aspx



Participants in the working group on EQAVET and the quality assurance approach in Adult learning in the context of Continuing VET



Participants of the Joint working group for EQAVET and ECVET in the peer learning meeting, Budapest, March 18-19, 2015

Peer learning activity on EQAVET indicator 2 - Investment in training of teachers and trainers, Athens 11-12 May 2015

EQAVET, as part of its work programme 2013-2015, organised this peer learning activity in partnership with the Greek National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Orientation (EOPPEP). Discussions at the activity were framed by current practices in three Member States (Greece, Austria and Romania). Participants reflected on the use of EQAVET indicator 2 (Investment in training of teachers and trainers): (a) share of teachers and trainers participating in further training (b) amount of funds invested.

discussions focused on:

- exploring the policy and organisational dimensions in implementing indicator 2, including its relevance for quality assurance purposes;
- sharing lessons learned in implementing indicator 2;
- identifying challenges that VET systems and providers are facing/will be facing in implementing this indicator.

You can find the peer learning activity background paper, presentations, the policy brief, which encapsulated the reflections taking place at the activity and related material on our website here:

http://www.eqavet.eu/gns/what-we-do/peer-learning-activities/PLA_2015_Athens_.aspx



EQAVET

European Quality Assurance
in Vocational Education and Training