



## The Issue

### Editorial ..... p.1

Tellervo Tarko, European Providers of Vocational Education and Training

### The European Commission answers questions posed by EQAVET network members and key actors ..... p.2

In relation to the implementation of the EQAVET reference framework in the national context

By João Delgado

### Recommendations from the European Forum of Technical & Vocational Education & Training (EfVET) ..... p.5

to the European Commission at its 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference

By EfVET

### Case Study on a VET provider in Slovenia –

#### A focus on employability ..... p.6

The Biotechnology educational centre, Ljubljana  
An interview by Simona Knavs

### Focus on: 3<sup>rd</sup> EQAVET, Elsinore, Denmark 2012 ..... p.9

Supporting quality assurance of VET

### Publications overview ..... p.11

### What's new? ..... p.12

### What's new on the web? ..... p.13

FETAC, East Point Plaza,  
East Point Business Park,  
Dublin 3, Ireland  
[www.eqavet.eu](http://www.eqavet.eu)

T: 00-353-1865-9546

F: 00-353-1865-0067

## Editorial:

### Tellervo Tarko, European Providers of Vocational Education and Training

According to a global vision for vocational education and training, European VET systems should be, by 2020, more attractive, relevant and efficient than they are today. To achieve this strategic objective participating countries need to pursue excellence and quality in VET. Achieving excellence is hard enough at the best of times. Strengthening and maintaining it in today's economic situation in Europe is even harder. The cooperation towards shared vision and responsibility should be intensified in all respects at all levels.

One step towards achieving these strategic objectives is to improve the quality of VET provision. High quality, in turn, is a prerequisite for attractiveness. In order to guarantee improved quality and mutual trust, participating countries should, as one of the short time deliverables of Bruges Communiqué – by the end of 2015 – establish at national level a common quality assurance framework for VET providers, which is compatible with the EQAVET framework. National Reference Points have been appointed to lead and support the challenging implementation of the EQAVET recommendation.

VET is based on effective partnership, and the building blocks of quality at VET provider level are based on strong involvement of stakeholders, on shared vision and strategic objectives based on that vision, on strategic competent staff and on both processes and procedures which ensure the desired results. Good quality assurance at VET provider level relies mainly on appropriate management processes and systems.

To ensure a management culture that is committed to quality assurance, the commitment of VET leaders and managers is crucial. This means that the objectives of the Bruges Communiqué should be more strongly communicated at VET provider level to ensure commitment and to ensure that they know the purpose of the EQAVET framework.

The next phase of the EQAVET work programme will focus on

ensuring effective implementation of the recommendation at national and VET provider level. VET providers, especially those with long experience in quality management and quality assurance, should be strongly involved in this work and in the work of the National Reference Points.

Tellervo Tarko

European Providers of VET representative



VET providers are ready for this cooperation. To ensure excellent and sustainable results, this cooperation needs more systematic and more structured involvement of VET provider representatives. One way to motivate VET providers to take action towards QA and the EQAVET framework is to encourage peer learning and benchmarking. According to Cedefop’s recommendations, VET providers should be encouraged to exchange experiences on effective internal quality management systems.

In adopting the procedures of quality assurance, more advanced VET providers could share their best practices through Peer Learning Activities and in a variety of joint seminars. Identifying best practice and guiding principles with respect to managing quality improvement and quality assurance at VET provider level at these kinds of mutual events and the exchange of good practices help to create a sense of ownership of the process for VET providers. There is a need for systematic forums for this work and for creating a community of good practice of quality management among VET providers at European level. This development could be achieved through existing networks of VET providers and supported by European VET provider associations.

The challenge of a smarter, more sustainable and more inclusive Europe is common target. To face this challenge we will need high quality vocational education and training. The quality of European VET provision is based on cooperation as is the effective and sustainable implementation of VET quality assurance.

The Bruges Communiqué calls for enhanced European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training. Let’s make it a reality at all levels!

**Tellervo Tarko**  
*Development Manager  
 European Providers of Vocational Education and Training &  
 Finnish Association for the Development of Vocational  
 Education and Training*

## The European Commission answers questions posed by EQAVET network members and key actors in relation to the implementation of the EQAVET reference framework in the national context



**By Mr João Delgado,**  
**Head of unit**  
**Vocational Education**  
**and Training Policy;**  
**Leonardo da Vinci**  
**Programme, DG**  
**Education and Culture,**  
**European Commission**

**Some EQAVET network members and key actors were invited to put questions to the European Commission’s representative on the EQAVET network, João Delgado, in relation to the development of a culture of quality assurance of VET and the support the European Commission could provide.**

**Vassilis Karavitis** (national reference point in Greece) asked how quality assurance objectives might be expanded in order to address LLL issues. He also raised the sensitive issue of how EQAVET could support equal access, and the relevance of skills and competences in the labour market



**Vassilis Karavitis**



**Rasa Zygmontaite**

**Rasa Zygmontaite** from EfVET asked the Commission how Member States could promote VET as an attractive option for learners and how the Commission intends to encourage VET providers in each Member State to promote EQAVET.



**Nele Muys**



**Nele Muys** (social partners' representative in EQAVET and steering committee member) asked how quality assurance could take into account the needs of small enterprises regarding the training of its own employees.

**Jürgen Horschinegg**



**Jürgen Horschinegg** (network member from Austria and EQAVET steering committee member),  
**Serban Iosifescu** (network member from Romania and expert supporting the work of the reflection group on building synergies in EQAVET, EQF and ECVET)

**Serban Iosifescu**



and **Rhona Dempsey** (national reference point in Ireland) asked how the Commission could support National Reference Points, taking into consideration their scarce resources, their specificities and different needs and the fact that they have to address a wide spectrum of stakeholders.

**Rhona Dempsey**



These questions gave Mr João Delgado the opportunity to offer a perspective on the work of the Commission in relation to the implementation process where collaboration among the Commission, the Member States and the social partners is essential.

**See the responses below.**

**ANSWER**

EQAVET is the European reference framework for quality assurance in Vocational Education and Training (VET) based on a Recommendation of the European Parliament

and the Council. It is part of the set of tools that have been adopted in the framework for enhanced cooperation in education and training in order to develop transparency and mutual recognition of qualifications between countries and education sectors in order to improve quality of VET systems and to render European labour market more fluid and its workers more mobile.

The vision of VET for 2020, shared by the participating countries in the enhanced cooperation process in education and training and particularly in VET (the so-called Copenhagen process) and enshrined in the Bruges Communiqué, is of a flexible VET offering pathways to other education sectors. By that is meant the possibility of following a VET pathway to higher education or a CVET path after some work experience or education experience. The participating countries are currently elaborating strategies to enable these pathways to be developed and quality assurance issues will also be taken on board in the process.

At European level coordination has been growing between sectors for some years now following a first conference on quality assurance between VET and higher education in Graz in 2006. Now a reflection group has been established at European level to enhance the synergies among sectors in the field of quality assurance. A first peer learning activity involving actors from the various education sectors took place in April 2012 in Brussels. It discussed the qualifications existing at EQF level 5 and how their comparability could be established in the most appropriate way knowing that some qualifications are from VET and some from the higher education sector. The issue of a common approach to quality assurance among sectors was discussed and this issue is slowly but steadily gaining importance in the European arena.

The links with the adult learning sector are also on the agenda and cross fertilisation with the recently developed thematic working group on quality in adult learning is ensured.

Thus I would say that the conditions are in place to have quality assurance issues not only taken into account within education and training at all levels but also for a coordinated approach among the levels. I recognise though that we are at the beginning of the process. It is also to be noted that support will be needed from the participating countries to develop this approach since they remain the main actors for change. The participating countries also remain the main actors for ensuring that the skills mismatch between VET graduates is reduced to a minimum and that demand from the labour market is met. Quality assurance for VET can help reduce this mismatch.





EQAVET recommendation emphasises the need to reduce the skills mismatch and is offering participating countries through its indicator 9, the possibility of developing their mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market.

EQAVET also places an emphasis on developing and maintaining equal access to VET through its indicators 8 (prevalence of vulnerable groups in VET programmes) and 10 (schemes used to propose better access to VET). Equal access to VET was also one of the underpinning objectives of the ten indicators of the recommendation together with having VET respond to labour market demand and enhance the employability of VET graduates.

Within the EQAVET network, discussions and the exchange of best practice and information should help participating countries find solutions to these challenges of VET. The recently adopted IT tool to assist the development of EQAVET at system and VET provider levels offers case studies that present solutions found by individual countries on the development of the above indicators.

In order to raise the attractiveness of VET in the participating countries, the Bruges Communiqué proposes a precise roadmap which was endorsed by the participating countries in December 2010. Among the short term deliverables to which participating countries have committed themselves at national level are to “organise activities aimed at promoting VET attractiveness and excellence, which may include campaigns and skills competitions; support activities, which enable young pupils in compulsory education to become acquainted with vocational trades and career possibilities; ”Governments, social partners and VET providers should make the necessary arrangements to: “maximise work-based learning, including apprenticeships, in order to contribute to increasing the number of apprentices in Europe by 2012; and create opportunities for enhanced cooperation between VET institutions and enterprises (profit and non-profit); provide VET institutions with feedback on the employability of VET graduates”.

At EU level, and in line with the Bruges Communiqué, the European Commission launched a Eurobarometer on VET attractiveness<sup>1</sup> as well as a VET promotion campaign on what the lifelong learning programme could offer in terms of apprenticeships<sup>2</sup>. It will produce shortly a policy document on the role of vocational excellence for smart and sustainable growth and encourages skills competitions at European and/or global levels. Reaching VET providers at national level, though, is a more delicate issue as VET providers might be more easily reached by the national/regional authorities. The European Commission has engaged in a structured dialogue with

the VET provider associations at European level and meets them on a regular basis. The VET provider associations also participate regularly in meetings of the EQAVET network. The Commission, together with Cedefop, also monitors the implementation of the short term deliverables contained in the Bruges Communiqué. Another important issue is how quality assurance could take into account the needs of small enterprises for the continuous training of their workers, as a balance needs to be struck between the need for further training of the employee and the difficulty of involving workers of small and medium enterprises in CVET. For this reason it is important for the EQAVET network to maintain dialogue with social partners and in particular with representatives of SMEs. The last EQAVET annual forum identified as a priority the need for enhanced dialogue with social partners and for their involvement to the greatest extent possible in the work dimensions of EQAVET. It is by listening to them, learning their needs and listening to their suggestions that appropriate measures can be put in place at EU level but also and more importantly at national level by the participating countries and that a culture of quality will be able to be spread in the SMEs.

Regarding the implementation of EQAVET and the Bruges Communiqué by the national reference points<sup>1</sup>, the Recommendation foresees a national reference point linked to the structures of each Member State and which brings together all relevant stakeholders to ensure follow-up initiatives. As such this envisages a strong national reference point which would receive strong political support from the authorities, or even have a political role of its own and be able to engage with the IVET and CVET sectors also. It would ideally have a comprehensive national approach designed to reach all VET sectors and be adopted at the highest level possible (e.g. through legislation). However the current economic crisis and the situations in certain countries make such a situation difficult to realise. Observation and monitoring of actions taken by member States to implement EQAVET show that some member States and other participating countries in the Bruges Communiqué have on occasion adopted very good practices regarding quality assurance in VET. In Romania, for example, EQAVET is quoted in the new legislation regarding VET. Finland has adopted a national strategy for quality that builds on EQAVET. Quality has to be seen as an investment rather than a cost especially in time of crisis and lack of resources.

Engaging a wide spectrum of stakeholders<sup>1</sup> is clearly a challenging task and appropriate means must be made available by member States to the national reference points to enable them to adopt the roadmap set up by the Bruges Communiqué and the EQAVET recommendation. The European Commission tries also to facilitate the national reference points in facing these challenges through the financing of the EQAVET network, organising



national reference point meetings and making financial support available whenever possible, the possibility of applying for additional support through the lifelong learning programme and the opportunity soon to apply through the new Erasmus for all programme.

The EQAVET network, in which the Commission is actively involved through the EQAVET secretariat, has also identified the huge variations that exist from country to country, as Mr Serban Iosifescu points out. That is why the network has tried to develop a menu approach in its new work programme. The information seminars try to supply this need for a differentiated approach and the further clustering of participating countries according to common areas of development in one of the follow-up actions. The EQAVET secretariat survey has also identified areas of work common to certain countries. Reflection is currently underway on how best to meet this need for a differentiated approach.

### End notes

- <sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/20110930\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/20110930_en.htm)
- <sup>2</sup> <http://we-mean-business.europa.eu/en>

## **Towards ET2020: positive action to enhance vocational education and training within a lifelong learning agenda**

**Recommendations to the European Commission from the 20th EfVET Annual Conference in Malta October 2011**

### Rationale

During events to launch the Bruges Communiqué in December 2010, Stelios Mavromoustakos, Vice-President of EfVET, presented the *Declaration of the joint Vocational Education and Training providers on the contribution of Vocational Education and Training to the EU 2020 strategy*. This document was compiled by four European VET associations working in cooperation – EfVET, EUproVET, EVTA and EVBB.

In January 2011, members of the policy group from each of these four VET organisations met with officials from DG EAC primarily to examine and discuss the short-term objectives outlined in the Bruges Communiqué, but also to offer constructive assistance to the European Commission from thousands of practitioners and learners in these associations' member institutions throughout the European Union and beyond.

These four associations would serve as a two-way conduit to stage consultation exercises and gather examples of proven good practice and innovative initiatives and developments. They could tap into the expertise and experience of the whole range of VET specialists, appropriate national, regional and local agencies, employer and employee representative bodies as well as companies served by their member institutions.

It was further decided that EfVET, in organising its twentieth annual conference in Malta in October 2011, would adopt as its theme:

***The EU Bruges Communiqué on enhanced European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training setting out the future priorities of Vocational Education and Training to meet the policy objectives of the EU Strategy 2020.***

There were several keynote speeches on this theme, but of equal importance was the programme of workshops, in which the 200+ VET stakeholders analysed, discussed and made recommendations on the Bruges Communiqué's strategic objectives and priorities for 2011-2014.

Five workshops covering the five priority areas were organised and the full lists of recommendations appear as an Appendix.

One of the themes of the *Bruges Communiqué* was **"Improving the quality and efficiency of VET and enhancing its attractiveness and relevance"**

### Here are recommendations of EfVET members on this issue

EfVET, which is closely related to EQAVET, is a Europe-wide system to improve VET:

- There is an urgent need to discuss whether the present VET systems are sufficient to meet future training needs, some of which have yet to be identified
- It should be made easier for VET teachers and trainers to undertake continuing professional development (CPD) placements in companies in order to update teaching and learning methodologies and the skills and competences of VET professionals
- A structure of peer evaluation of the quality of a VET institution's course provision should be universal and complement any existing or future national inspection regime. The application of the EQAVET criteria would ensure consistency of performance
- More collaboration and consultation is necessary between VET trainers and employers so that VET professionals can become aware of labour market needs and employers can advise on course revisions and developments. Companies should be encouraged to offer practical experience to all trainees by way of work placements

## Case Study on a VET provider in Slovenia – A focus on employability

An interview by **Simona Knavs**, EQAVET working group member on 'developing guidelines to support national reference points'

The Biotechnical Educational Centre, Ljubljana, Slovenia, is a publicly-funded school offering upper secondary VET courses, higher VET courses and adult education. Two of the school's most important objectives are employability and enabling learners to acquire the skills they need for the workplace and to continue their education. For more information on this case study, visit the EQAVET quality cycle on-line tool [here](#).

In the last fifteen years Slovenia has focused its efforts on quality assurance, which has been supported by many projects, which in turn has increased development at VET provider level and in relation to educational policy at national level.

**At the Biotechnical Educational Centre, we talked about their development of quality assurance with a director, Jasna Kržin Stepišnik, B.Sc. and with school quality manager, Mr. Boštjan Ozimek.**



**We were interested in how they have developed quality assurance and in what experiences they could share. Considering Slovenian circumstances, you started with quality assurance very early. How do you remember those first steps?**

**Director:** That's true. Our first experiences with intentional development of quality assurance came in a project conducted

by the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (SIAE) called Offering Quality Education to Adults (OQEA), in which we have collaborated since 2001. We started with adult education because it was clear that as a VET provider we needed to be responsive to the needs of stakeholders,





especially students and employers. In that period we set up adult education in our centre. Competition was increasing every day and student expectations were increasing and becoming clearer. We had already tried quality assurance methods before, but OQEA enabled us to adopt a more systematic approach, where we exchanged experiences and obtained expert support.

### What is going on in the OQEA project?

**Quality manager:** Mostly we are learning how to implement self-evaluation, what data to collect and how to collect it, then how to analyse and use the data. Project experts have led us systematically through the phases; that's how we taught the basics of quality assurance to VET providers, and self-evaluation is now a regular activity in our school centre.



**Boštjan Ozimek**

### What about concrete results of quality assurance and self-evaluation? Is it really possible to raise the quality of education by quality assurance methods?

**Director:** Absolutely! Self-evaluation demands much knowledge and understanding, many skills and a lot of time. The benefits are not evident immediately, one must wait years sometimes, but they come eventually. For example, in adult education programmes we have used self-evaluation results to improve study material and design, especially for adults, and to develop an e-classroom for distance learning. I consider it very important that we introduced regular monitoring of learner satisfaction. Students can express their opinion in questionnaires at the end of every module. We also prepare a personal education plan for each adult which we adjust if needs change. That's how we find out relatively soon if something is going wrong so that we can take action in time. The monitoring of satisfaction among adult students is a regular activity in our school centre today.

### What have these first steps meant for the future development of quality assurance in the school centre, and how is it organised today?

**Quality manager:** We are now following a legislative framework in VET area, of course, which means that we have formed a Quality Commission; we implement self-evaluation annually and publish a annual report. Based on the conclusions we prepare an action plan of

improvements. Previous experiences have helped us to adjust our situation to the legislative framework. Since collaborating in OQEA we have participated in many quality assurance projects. We gained precious experience in a project called Quality Advisor. The Director has been an external evaluator of quality in Slovenian higher education since 2006. In 2010 we achieved a quality label in the area of adult education and an award in the area of higher professional education (for maintaining a system of quality). In the VET area, where projects are taking place in a consortium of biotechnical schools, we consider it an acknowledgment of our work the fact that we have been chosen to lead activities about quality assurance for the whole consortium.

**Director:** We consider it important that all stakeholders are gradually being integrated into quality assurance activities. Some collaborate more, some less, but our Quality Commission assures us that our partners are made aware regularly of activities in the school centre. And most importantly, their voices are heard. Traditionally, in our culture, during meetings of school councils, meetings with parents, students and employers school information is simply presented without sufficient time to get the suggestions of stakeholders. But in quality assurance activities we involve the stakeholders in school life throughout the process – from planning to action and onwards. Actually, we invite them to work with us on the most important areas of school life and that's how we develop better relationships and enable equal responsibility. Of course, this is a long-term process.

**Quality manager:** The awareness of school employees, teachers and trainers has changed thoroughly as a result of those processes. They are more involved in the development of the school centre now than a few years ago. We are more courageous about integrating quality assurance into many national and international projects and we have become more self-confident in everyday activities. We have a greater understanding of why certain activities in the school centre are required and because of that our loyalty has grown.

### What does the Quality Commission pay most attention to?

**Director:** The Quality Commission, at the level of the school centre, is a central working group; it contains representatives of parents, students, employers and members of the quality commission of each unit (they are teachers and other employees) who collaborate. I'm also a member of this Quality Commission which is managed by Boštjan. Headmasters of centre schools also collaborate. We are particularly glad that this working group gives us the opportunity to talk about development activities. Every year we make a plan, implement self-evaluation activities, define future steps and with the evaluation of the previous year's action plan we close one quality circle. We monitor the success of our students

regularly and we find out empirically what factors are affecting the results of final assessments.

**Quality manager:** One of the most important self-evaluation activities is the monitoring of employability. In Slovenia on the system level it is difficult to estimate how successful we are in that regard. Final external assessment is academic, practical final assessment is internal. Even though the final assessment is important, the main goal of our work is still employability, the usefulness of knowledge and further career development.

**Director:** It's true; this was one of our most important decisions. First we tried with written questionnaires, then e-questionnaires, then we shortened them, but in the end live contact is the most effective. We couldn't analyse the opinions of a whole generation, but interviewing a small sample by telephone is not a problem. On the contrary, Ms. Vidmar, who has been conducting these interviews for years, tells that former students are excited to be asked their opinion and their future plans. They often give detailed answers and Ms. Vidmar takes notes of everything they say.

### How exactly do the telephone interviews work, what do you usually ask your former students?

**Quality manager:** Actually, the questions are normal questions that teachers would ask their students if they met them later in life. Are they employed, did they continue their studies in other faculties... How do they remember VET school, what do they think about the quality of what they learnt. If they are employed, we ask them how they got the job and what kind of work it is, their opinion of the usefulness of what they learnt at school in the job they are doing now and of their further education.

**Director:** Every year we choose approx. 30 former students and we call them 6 months after they finish their studies. Of course, we ask for their telephone numbers and permission first while they are still at school. The response rate is 90%, and that would be impossible to achieve with postal questionnaires.

### Can you give us some concrete results of this evaluation, and would you recommend it to other schools?

**Director:** Yes, I would recommend it. Of course, each school team has to judge its usefulness for their own school. In our school much of the work falls on Ms. Vidmar. Her approach is excellent, she is an experienced and devoted teacher, and I think that many students really like to talk to her, they trust her friendly approach. It takes a lot of time to conduct 30 interviews that last almost 30 minutes each. In the end she sums up the answers and presents

them to colleagues in the Quality Commission.



**Quality manager:** I would like to say something about the results of these interviews. For us the most important new data was the fact that many of our former students got jobs with employers with whom they did their practical education. This made us realise the importance of collaboration with employers. After reaching these findings we put a lot of effort into improving our collaboration with employers, and we would

like constant improvement. This means that we began regular meetings with employers, expanded the number of employers we cooperate with and developed our relationship with them (from contacts to relationship).

We help employers to get state funds to implement practical education, we invite them to open days, to exhibitions of student work and to work as guest teachers. They collaborate also as reviewers of our study material and most importantly we devise the school curriculum (20% of the entire curriculum) each year in close cooperation with them. We did all this in just few years and yes, we were influenced by many different factors but I don't think we would have achieved this if we had not found out for ourselves how important practical education in the workplace is for the future employment of our students. That was the power of first hand data!

**Thank you very much for your time, for sharing your experience and this valuable information!**

The history of veterinarian education in Ljubljana goes back to the 18th century. In 1850 a school in the Slovenian language was established. Today the Educational Centre of Biotechnology Ljubljana offers upper-secondary VET programs for young people and adults, higher vocational programmes and individually tailored programmes for companies in the neighborhood. [www.bic-lj.si](http://www.bic-lj.si)

Slovenian Act for VET is defining quality assurance in VET in line with EQAVET. The National Reference Points is active in monitoring indicators at system level and supporting VET providers to develop their internal approaches. You can find more information on Slovenian case studies at system level at: <http://www.eqavet.eu/qa/gns/case-studies/all-case-studies/slovenia.aspx>

Quality Commission is a working group composed of students, parents, employers, teachers and trainers. Its task is to work intensively on quality assurance of VET providers. The Director or headmaster of the VET provider is responsible for annual self-evaluation and online published report, [here](#)



# FOCUS ON:

## 3<sup>rd</sup> EQAVET Annual Forum, Helsingør 2012



Twenty-four EU countries were represented at the 3<sup>rd</sup> EQAVET Annual Forum

The third EQAVET Annual Forum took place in Denmark on 29-30 March 2012. It was hosted by the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions. Twenty-four countries were represented at

the Annual Forum as were social partners at EU level, namely ETUC, CEEP, UEAPME and Business Europe. Of particular interest

was the participation of Eurochambres, European Providers of Vocational Education and Training (EUproVET) and the European Forum of Education and Training (EFVET), and the European Quality Assurance Register for

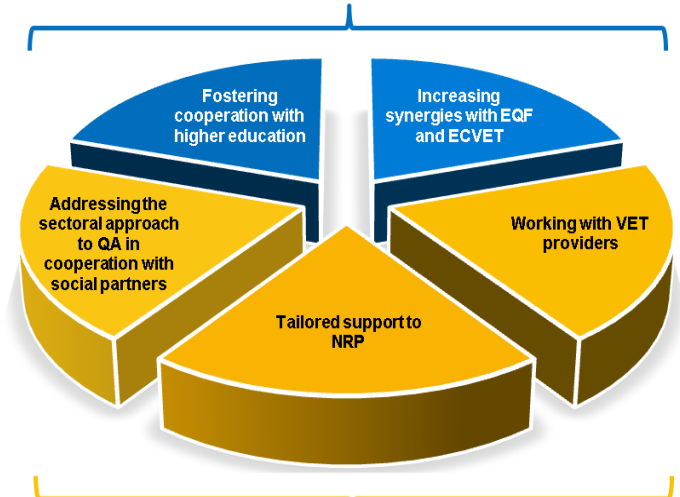
Higher Education (EQAR). The European Development Centre for Vocational Education and Training (Cedefop) and the European Training Foundation (ETF) were also represented.

the importance of the EQAVET Recommendation as a means of focusing on quality assurance as a way of responding to the current socio-economic challenges. The Annual Forum was an opportunity for the EQAVET Network to discuss and agree on the priorities/thematic areas and actions to be undertaken by the Network up to 2015. EQAVET members agreed that the focus should be on encouraging and supporting the use and implementation of the Recommendation in national contexts, which will contribute to advancing EQAVET-related strategic objectives and short-term deliverables of the Bruges Communiqué. This would require EQAVET to:

- ➡ **Support actions at national level encouraging the developing of a culture of QA by focusing on national reference points, system level authorities/policymakers, VET providers representatives and social partners;**
- ➡ **Support actions at EU level contributing to the overall EU goal of 'Making LLL and mobility a reality' focusing on increasing cooperation with higher education and synergies with ECVET and EQF.**

Based on these priorities, the work of the EQAVET Network will be centred on five thematic areas:

SUPPORT ACTIONS AT EU LEVEL CONTRIBUTING TO THE OVERALL EU GOAL OF 'MAKING LLL AND MOBILITY A REALITY'



SUPPORT ACTIONS AT NATIONAL LEVEL



Erik Nexelmann (the National Agency for Quality and Supervision in Denmark); and Morten Smistrup (Danish Confederation of Trade Unions).

The Annual Forum was officially opened by the European Commission represented by Mr Joào Delgado (Head of the Vocational Education and Training Policy Unit; Leonardo da Vinci Programme, DG Education and Culture);

Erik Nexelmann (on behalf of Per Hansen, Director General, the National Agency for Quality and Supervision in Denmark); and Morten Smistrup (on behalf of Ejner K. Holst, Secretary, Danish Confederation of Trade Unions). All three emphasised



EQAVET members' discussion at the workshops

These five thematic areas encompass the principles which Member States agreed to be of crucial importance for supporting, encouraging and stimulating national implementation processes. These principles are:

- 1. National reference points are recognised by the Recommendation as key actors in the process of its implementation. Within their own national policy contexts they adapt and/or develop an approach to the Recommendation which is fit for purpose and tailored to national needs and requirements, promoting the development of a culture of quality improvement.**
- 2. The new impetus provided by the Bruges Communiqué, in particular in relation to the strategic objective 2a and 2b<sup>1</sup>; and short-term deliverables 3, 12 and 20<sup>2</sup>.**
- 3. The need to support the EU agenda in relation to ‘making LLL and mobility a reality’, which calls for a strong role for QA in the area of increasing learning mobility in its various forms, i.e. transversal mobility (facilitating access to higher education) and transnational mobility which is facilitated by the *transparency* tools developed in the Copenhagen process. All of which improves the image of VET and makes it more attractive.**
- 4. The need for a systematic, structured and permanent dialogue with social partners, who can make an important contribution to improving the responsiveness of VET systems. There is also a need for a closer relationship with industry sectors in order to become aware of their diverse needs. This sector is crucial for the delivery of continuing vocational education (CVET) and workplace learning.**

## End notes

<sup>1</sup> *Establishing at national level a) QA frameworks in accordance with the EQAVET Recommendation; and b) a common QA framework for VET providers compatible with the EQAVET framework which will also apply to workplace learning by 2015, will require systematic and sustained interaction between National Reference Points and VET providers in the national context.*

<sup>2</sup> *Number 3: Taking adequate measures to implement the EQAVET Recommendation and making progress towards national QA frameworks for VET by 2014. Number 12: making optimal use of other EU tools (e.g; EQF, EQAVET, Europass) for enhancing the mutual recognition of qualifications and competences. Number 20: establishing communication strategies for different stakeholder groups, focused on implementation and the added value of the tools (ECVET, EQF, EQAVET).*

Discussions and presentations at the [Annual Forum](#) are now available to view on **YouTube**

Click here to download the [report](#) or to view the videos



### [EQAVET Annual Forum:](#)

Uploaded by eqavet  
[youtube.com](#)

# Publications overview



## The Secretariat has published a brochure on the on-line tool

which was prepared on the basis of the work undertaken in the EQAVET working groups in 2010-2012. The brochure encapsulates its various components (i.e. the EQAVET quality cycle and criteria, working with indicative descriptors, indicators and building blocks, case studies and glossary of terms) and provides an interactive navigation and user-friendly experience to users of the software.

**The report and policy brief on the EQAVET, EQF and ECVET Joint Seminar 'Assuring the quality of VET qualifications – The contribution of EU tools to the definition and re-definition of learning outcomes-based standards'** (Nov 2011, Bonn) are now available on the web.

The format of the brochure reflects the dual nature of the IT tool and the EQAVET Recommendation, which offer guidelines and advice on quality assurance issues at system and provider levels.

## The policy briefs summarising the discussions which took place at the EQAVET Sectoral Seminars are also available [here](#).

Two Sectoral Seminars were organised in 2010 and 2011 focusing on quality assurance issues of continuing VET and healthcare apprenticeship (Stavanger, Norway, Nov. 2010) and on the catering & tourism sectors (Dortmund, Germany, Dec. 2011). The third Sectoral Seminar will take place in Rome, June 21-22, 2012, and will focus on the construction sector. It will be hosted by the Italian national organisation for training in the construction sector (Formediil) organised with the support of the Italian National Reference Point (Isfol). For more information on the EQAVET Sectoral Seminar visit: <http://www.eqavet.eu/gns/what-we-do/sectoral-seminars.aspx>

The brochure is available [here](#)





## What's New

### **EQAVET Information Seminar for National Reference Points, May 2012, Athens, Greece**

The first EQAVET Information Seminar for National Reference Points was held in Athens on 10-11 May 2012. This meeting inaugurated a cycle of information seminars with a view to disseminating EQAVET work in order to promote a culture of quality assurance in vocational education and training in member states and to provide an opportunity for participants to share ideas and networking. It was hosted by the Greek National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP) which is also the national reference point.

The seminar brought together representatives from national reference points (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, United Kingdom) and key actors such as VET providers and quality assurance specialists from a number of EU member states.



The seminar engaged participants in training simulation activities using the material developed within the EQAVET quality cycle online tool which provided an interactive “hands on” learning experience. It proved to be a valuable opportunity for reflection, and encouraged participants to use the IT tool in building a national quality assurance culture and in communicating the added value that participation in EQAVET brings to this process.

For more information on the seminar click [here](#)  
To download the material used at the seminar click [here](#)

### **“The Impact of Quality Assurance on Stakeholders” (NLQAVET project): the fourth Seminar of the five selected EQAVET projects**

The fourth Seminar of the five selected EQAVET projects coordinated by the *Promotion and Knowledge Management Unit – MENON*– will take place in Utrecht, The Netherlands, on June 25-26, 2012. The theme of the seminar will be “*The Impact of Quality Assurance on Stakeholders*” and it will examine quality assurance from a stakeholder perspective. In this context, quality assurance should be seen as a tool to improve provision and as one process of many within a VET institution.

The Seminar will address the following interesting questions: “How do VET providers use quality assurance at institutional level?” and “How do VET providers experience the impact of quality assurance at institutional level?” The impact of quality assurance is expressed in terms of “return on investment”, but how would this return on investment be quantified and could it be improved? Much of this seminar will be based on research carried out as part of the [NLQAVET](#) project (the National Reference Point in The Netherlands), at which 27 VET providers in the Netherlands were questioned and interviewed on “the impact of quality assurance in your institution” and “the impact and return on investment at institutional level”.

More information on the seminar visit:  
<http://www.eqavetprojects.eu/>

### **OBESSU conducted a survey among its**



**members to gather information about the conditions of students in VET**

The Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU) conducted in January 2012 a survey among its members to gather information about the conditions of students in Vocational Education and Training (VET) throughout Europe (14 Member States participated in the survey. The results were:

# The biggest problems:

## LACK OF INFORMATION



73% say VET students DO NOT receive enough information

## BAD REPUTATION



73% say VET students DO NOT enjoy the same status as others

## BAD EQUIPMENT



66% say VET students DO NOT have necessary equipment

## BAD TEACHERS



53% say VET teachers ARE NOT given necessary training

## LACK OF APPRENTICESHIPS



46% say VET students HAVE PROBLEMS finding apprenticeships

# Choosing VET education

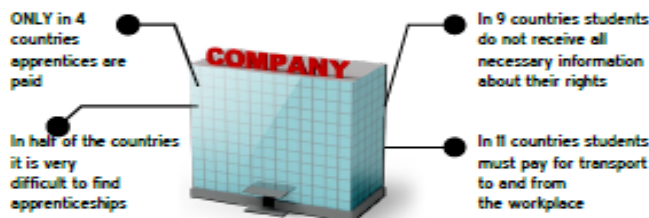
the choice of education is still influenced by social and economic background

in 12 countries

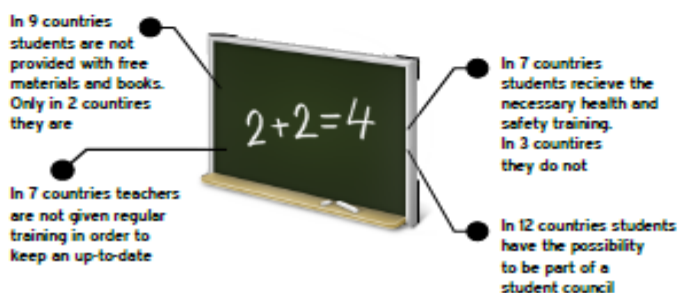
& Students are not informed about their choices from an early age in 11 countries



# At the workplace



# At School



For more information visit: <http://www.obessu.org/>

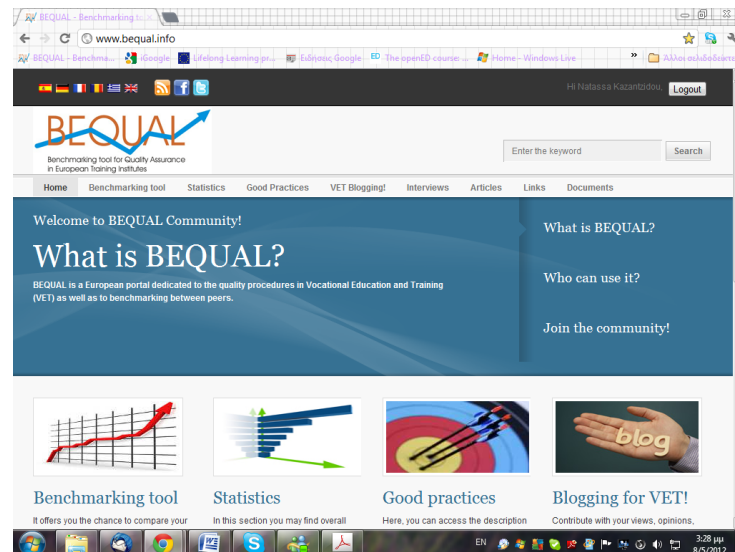
# What's New on the web



## BEQUAL Benchmarking tool for Quality Assurance in European Training Institutes

Natassa Kazantzidou, IDEC SA.

BEQUAL is a thematic portal dealing with Quality Assurance in VET, with the objective of promoting EQAVET at VET provider level, becoming a point of reference for quality assurance and building a community of practice among VET providers in different types of education and training and in different countries. The main features of the portal are the benchmarking tool and a collection of good practices at VET provider level. It also contains articles, blogs, interviews, documents and links.



BEQUAL portal <http://www.bequal.info>

### The benchmarking tool

The on-line benchmarking tool aims to support European VET providers in their attempt to develop quality assurance systems following the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework.

The benchmarking tool provides VET institutions with an opportunity to assess their performance based on core quality criteria and at the same time to benchmark their quality processes against their peers nationally or in other countries.

BEQUAL targets VET providers in all types of institutes, initial VET, continuing VET, non-formal / informal training, adult training, etc. The users of the tool are quality managers and / or general managers of organisations who have a thorough knowledge of their own quality

processes.

The core of the benchmarking tool is a grid with quality criteria for each stage of EQAVET (planning, implementation, evaluation, review). The quality criteria have been operationalised on the basis of both the indicative descriptors contained in the EQAVET Recommendation and the EFQM excellence model. The quality criteria are accompanied by concrete examples, to facilitate quality assessment by VET providers. The users assess the performance of the VET institute against these criteria, using a four level assessment scale.

The benchmarking tool has been used by over 200 VET providers as a means of self-assessment for quality processes. In the session statistics, one can see the results of benchmarking among all users and filter the results according to the country and/or the type of institute. Registered users have access as well to personalised reports and may conduct self-assessment annually and thus monitor the progress of their quality assurance system.

### Good practices

BEQUAL presents a collection of good practices classified under the four stages of the quality cycle. The good practices come from VET institutes and are documented in a consistent way, describing the quality approach, the baseline/problem, the good practice implemented including measures, instruments, criteria and indicators, problems and constraints encountered and solutions found.

### Community of Practice

There are a number of good reasons to join the BEQUAL Community of Practice. The BEQUAL portal provides updated information and resources in the field of quality assurance in VET. The benchmarking tool is a reliable tool for the self-assessment of quality processes at VET institute level, and the critical mass of responses already received provides a sound basis for benchmarking, exchange of practices and continuous improvement. There is a large collection of good practices and it is growing.

Members of the BEQUAL Community can:

- Use the benchmarking tool for the self-assessment of their own quality assurance system and at the same time enrich the benchmarking data and make the tool more reliable.
- Provide a good practice example and/or consult the collection of good practices from other VET institutes.
- Access information on developments and resources in the field of quality assurance in VET.
- Offer resources from their own projects and tools in this field and thus create a culture of exchange.

Membership of the BEQUAL Community is free of charge.

Visit BEQUAL at: <http://www.bequal.info>

The BEQUAL portal has been developed as part of the framework of the BEQUAL project, by a consortium led by the Greek company IDEC with the support of Lifelong Learning Programme. It was launched in 2009 in six languages (English, French, Greek, German, Romanian and Spanish).

The new Leonardo da Vinci transfer of innovation project BEQUAL+ aims to expand the portal in three more countries: Bulgaria, Italy and Turkey. The new language versions of the portal will be launched in September 2012.