

NEWSLETTER

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Editorial

Welcome to the Project “Quality Assurance in Lifelong Learning with a Focus on Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education”

Dear Reader,

We welcome you to get acquainted with the Leonardo da Vinci and Grundtvig programmes' thematic work on quality assurance. Our thematic work concentrates on the already existing number of results and outcomes dealing with quality assurance in vocational education and training (VET) and adult education.

The thematic activities take place within a network of 17 National Agencies and are coordinated by the Austrian National Agency for Lifelong Learning. The QALLL project lasts three years and is funded by the European Commission.

The QALLL team facilitates networking and mainstreaming of results and outcomes of projects that deal with quality assurance. Our target projects have been funded under Leonardo da Vinci or Grundtvig programmes, mainly from the year 2006 onwards.

One of our aims is to foster discussion of quality assurance related topics amongst experts and stakeholders in the field of vocational education and training and adult education. During the lifetime of the project we will develop recommendations for relevant policy makers, social partners, stake holders and national authorities. We will also develop recommendations for project promoters, their partners, National Agencies as well as the European Commission for increasing the effectiveness and sustainability of their work.

For more information please link to the QALLL website <http://www.qalll.eu>.

In our very first newsletter you find an interview with João Delgado of the European Commission on his views on thematic networking in general and especially on quality assurance, but also information on the state of the art of the QALLL project and its dissemination activities.

On behalf of the QALLL team,
Katriina Lammi-Rajapuro
Programme Manager, CIMO, Finland
Member of the QALLL Steering Group

Interview with

João Delgado, Head of Unit: Vocational Education and Training Policy, LdV Programme, EC DG Education and Culture

The QALLL project is one of the ‘Thematic Networking’ projects within the Lifelong Learning Programme. Could you, Mr Delgado, give us an overview of the background and strategic objectives of this kind of project?

‘Thematic networking’ was an initiative launched in 2002. It was called ‘thematic monitoring’ in those days. The aim was to increase the impact of the Leonardo da Vinci Programme and enhance the exploitation of results of innovative projects in line with the priorities of the European cooperation in Vocational and Training policy.

In 2009, thematic networking was extended to cover the entire Lifelong Learning programme. The aim now was to exploit complementarities, share expertise and knowledge between projects funded through the Comenius, Leonardo da Vinci, Erasmus and Grundtvig programmes, while reflecting an integrated approach on transversal priorities.

The interest of the education and training sector in cooperation on issues of quality assurance has been steadily growing in Europe. Following the recent EU recommendation on quality assurance in vocational education and training (EQAVET)¹ and the action plan on adult learning², we decided to launch a thematic networking on 'quality assurance in VET and adult education'. The aim is to boost cooperation on quality issues.

How do you see this happening in practice, and how will the network help?

Thematic networking can help us address common issues or challenges that arise when quality assurance is put in place. It will also help us take stock of different approaches and thus lead to cross-fertilisation.

Above all, the QALLL network will create a learning community dedicated to implementing quality assurance in VET and adult learning — using the principles and indicators set out in the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework. Since the network covers adult learning, it would also identify synergies between Grundtvig and Leonardo da Vinci projects.

What will be the main focus of the network's activities?

There are three main priorities.

- First, the network will look at what is being done in different European countries and identify which projects are best suited to establishing quality assurance. The National Agencies and the Executive Agency will help as they are responsible for managing projects of the Lifelong Learning Programme. Their involvement will stimulate cooperation between Member States while genuinely taking account of the needs on the ground.

¹ The 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 helps Member States further improve and develop their systems based on common European quality reference criteria and principles.

² Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Action Plan on Adult learning — 'It's always a good time to learn' — EC 2007.

- Second, the network will establish a comprehensive approach to best practices by creating an inventory of projects financed under the Lifelong Learning Programme. The inventory should also describe the scope and results of these projects.

- Third, networking activities such as conferences, seminars, training sessions and virtual communities. The aim here is to foster an exchange of experience between project coordinators, policymakers and practitioners, in order to learn lessons from one another's concrete actions. It's all about fostering a 'culture of quality'.

The objective is to build on what has already been achieved and to mainstream the project results.

Finally, the QALLL network will draw up a report highlighting practical lessons that we have learnt from the projects and practical solutions which can be further exploited. The report will also contain recommendations for the LLP programme and for policy-making.

Quality assurance is currently high on the agenda of policymakers in Europe. What other European initiatives are being taken in this field, and how do you see the QALLL project being linked to them?

European cooperation on quality assurance in VET started in the 1980s. It became a priority through European cooperation initiatives dealing with education and training, the 'Copenhagen process' for example. This is a European initiative for cooperation on vocational education and training. It aims to improve the quality of VET and make it more attractive. One of the key priorities of the Copenhagen process is to promote mutual trust and transparency between countries so that they recognise each other's competences and qualifications and increase the mobility of learners and workers.

I think QALLL could have quite an impact on the qualification process, since quality assurance underpins all other European initiatives in the field of vocational education and training. I'm thinking, for example, of the European Qualifications

Framework, the European credit transfer system (ECVET), and the validation of non-formal and informal learning, including the quality aspects of mobility and guidance.

One of the main objectives of the QALLL project is to develop recommendations for policymakers, social partners, stakeholders and national authorities involved in VET & adult education — but also for project partnerships, National Agencies and the European Commission. What impact could these outcomes have on the next-generation LLP programme which will start in 2014?

There are three ways in which I think the QALLL project could have an impact on the next LLP programme.

- First, by proposing a more widespread use of networks of successful projects, thus improving the dissemination and exploitation of their results.
- Second, by ensuring that projects are more effectively monitored and their outcomes better used. That would ensure that projects are more closely aligned with policy priorities.
- Third, by helping to establish better frameworks for calls for proposals, and thus ensuring that future projects are even more relevant.

The Member States are obviously the key players in the field of education and training. In your opinion, what could the Member States do to ensure that all lifelong learning quality assurance initiatives and the QALLL project in particular, are effectively implemented?

The main way in which EU Member States cooperate on quality assurance in VET is through the EQAVET network. (That stands for 'European quality assurance in vocational education and training'). This network was set up after the EQAVET recommendation was adopted. It builds on the work of the former ENQAVET — the European network for quality assurance in VET — which, over the years, had built up a useful set of

tools to help Member States develop their quality assurance systems.

The new EQAVET network is developing this 'building block' approach further. It is also developing a toolkit for the indicators set out in Annex 2 of the EQAVET recommendation. In addition, the EQAVET network provides good opportunities for exchange of information, mutual learning and collaboration via its meetings and its web platform.

So I look forward to seeing QALLL and EQAVET working together. Their activities are complementary, and they offer Member States important opportunities to cooperate more closely and effectively.

On behalf of the QALLL team,
Elisabeth Augustin
Valorisation and Impact Assessment
National Agency for Lifelong Learning, Austria

Project Activities

QALLL State of the Art

During the kick off meeting of the project in Vienna (11-12 February 2010) the QALLL partner agencies agreed on the detailed roadmap of their thematic work. A working group developed selection criteria for the projects on quality assurance. Based on these criteria an expert carried out a pre-test on a small number of projects - already identified by the European Commission - in order to test the proposed mapping criteria.

The first phase of the selection of projects in all countries of the Lifelong Learning Programme was completed by the end of June, over 100 projects on the topic were identified. The QALLL steering group (AT, DE, FI, SI, SK) nominated a small group of external experts who will analyse, assess and map the projects in September.

In the meantime ADAM, the Projects and Products Portal for Leonardo da Vinci <http://www.adam->

europe.eu is being enhanced to label the good practice projects identified within the thematic work and to present a selection of them. The first results of the thematic work will be presented at the next large QALLL event which will be the **thematic conference in Slovenia (20 January 2011)**.

More information on the QALLL project, its objectives, events, publications (e.g. the QALLL folder) and expected outputs can be found on the QALLL website <http://www.qalll.eu> which was launched in June.

Susanne Krischanitz
QALLL project co-ordinator
National Agency for Lifelong Learning, Austria

Dissemination Activity I

EQAVET Annual Forum (Madrid, 29-30 April 2010)

EQAVET stands for European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training and is a community of practice bringing together Member States, Social Partners and the European Commission to promote European collaboration in developing and improving quality assurance in VET by using the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework.

The Austrian National Agency who coordinates the QALLL network was invited to participate in the annual EQAVET forum. The presentation of the QALLL project, its aims and expected outcomes was on the agenda of this important policy network meeting.

This was a unique occasion to inform vocational education and training experts and national reference points for quality assurance in VET from all over Europe about the QALLL project and to pave the way for future cooperation.

QALLL can offer the EQAVET network more than basic dates and facts: A bridge between policy

and practice, which can be built by the thematic networks of the national agencies (NAs). The NAs act as facilitators between the EU policy and its implementation at the level of project promoters.

More information on the first annual EQAVET forum: <http://www.eqavet.eu/gns/what-we-do/annual-forum.aspx>

Carin Dániel Ramírez-Schiller
Head of Transversal Programmes, Europass & Euroguidance
National Agency for Lifelong Learning, Austria

Dissemination Activity II

Leonardo da Vinci Contact Seminar on Tools for Quality Assurance in VET (Hämeenlinna, 8-10 June 2010)

92 participants from 21 countries came together to this contact seminar, organised by the Finnish national agency, to network and to develop project ideas on quality assurance. By the end of the seminar six concrete project ideas were presented. The themes were on e.g. social and cultural aspects of quality assurance, co-operation of quality managers and teachers, and quality assurance of mobility.

The contact seminar linked directly to the European Commission's recommendation on quality assurance reference framework EQARF: http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc1134_en.htm

Visit the event's website for all materials: <http://www.cimo.fi/Resource.phx/cimo/elinikainen-oppiminen/leonardo-da-vinci/tilaisuudet2010/leonardo-contact-seminar-08-100610.htx>

Peer Review to enhance quality assurance

In a "first ever" training of peers for Leonardo TOI projects 13 participants learned and practiced how to be a peer. Peer review is a form of

external evaluation. It can be successfully used as part of quality assurance also on a project level. After the training two Finnish TOI projects will carry out a peer visit to each others projects during fall 2010. Their experiences will be used to further develop the concept.

The pilot training was developed by National Board of Education and CIMO in Finland. It was based on "Peer Review in initial VET" -project's outcomes: <http://www.peer-review-education.net/index.php?language=EN>.

Katriina Lammi-Rajapuro
Programme Manager,
CIMO, Finland

Dissemination Activity III

Workshop "Improving Quality in the Adult Learning Sector" (Brussels, 30 June-01 July 2010)

Within the Adult Learning Action Plan (http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/lifelong_learning/c11102_en.htm) the European Commission organised a workshop on "Improving quality in the adult learning sector".

In line with one of the priorities of the Action Plan, the workshop provided a forum to enable participating countries and European organisations to share, reflect on and learn from European and national experiences of quality in education and training and consider ways forward in relation to quality in adult learning.

The QALLL project has a transversal approach, that means despite the fact that the majority of quality assurance projects identified so far, has been implemented in VET, projects implemented in the adult learning sector are of the same importance. Getting the opportunity to present the QALLL project at this EC workshop with participants from all over Europe, provided an

opportunity to strengthen at European level the cooperation with the adult learning sector. The presentation of the QALLL project aimed at stressing the mutual benefit: for the QALLL project on the one hand and the European Commission and the experts, policy makers and project promoters on the other hand.

The QALLL project could lead to new insights concerning similarities and differences between the two sectors, which have to be seen in a political context. That means, for the QALLL project it is of particular interest, to keep in close contact with European and national policy developments, while for the policy level it could be interesting to get via the QALLL thematic network in closer contact with the level of implementation, to know more about projects in the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Commission.

Carin Dániel Ramírez-Schiller
Head of Transversal Programmes, Europass & Euroguidance
National Agency for Lifelong Learning, Austria

Next Issue of the Newsletter

The next issue of the QALLL newsletter will be published by February 2011. If you want to subscribe or unsubscribe to the newsletter, please register here:

<http://www.qalll.eu/newsletter/>

You are welcome to submit your comments.

<mailto:qalll@oead.at>

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**oead**
Nationalagentur
Lebenslanges Lernen
National Agency for
Lifelong Learning

Austrian National Agency Lifelong Learning
Schreyvogelgasse 2 | 1010 Vienna | Austria
www.life-long-learning.at