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 co-ordinated 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 this newsletter you find information on the state of the art of the QALLL project and its dissemination activities and European development regarding quality assurance.

On behalf of the QALLL team,
Ellen Hanselman
CINOP International Agency, the Netherlands

Announcement
1st QALLL Conference

Quality Assurance in Vocational Education & Training and Adult Education, March 24th 2011, Bled, Slovenia

The spring event for education professionals and experts, project contractors of the European Lifelong Learning Programmes Leonardo da Vinci and Grundtvig, policy makers, national authorities, social partner representatives and other stakeholders interested in quality assurance in VET and AE.

The conference will take place in the beautiful Slovenian alpine resort Bled. We invite you to join us for hands-on interactive working groups and cutting-edge sessions highlighting the latest trends in the field. Network your way around the QALLL market place and connect with your European colleagues during our social event. We would be very happy to welcome you at the QALLL spring conference in Bled, Slovenia. Registration will also be possible through QALLL website (www.qalll.eu).

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Synopsis of the first QALLL assessment and mapping of projects

The aim of the first assessment and mapping of projects — carried out by a team of seven international experts - was to identify high quality projects for further dissemination and transfer and — ultimately to obtain an overview of the features of these projects and to possibly deduct recommendations at a later stage.

80 projects on quality assurance in vocational education & training and adult education were pre-selected by the project partners for the first assessment. Only about half of the projects in the pre-selected sample were fully-fledged "quality assurance" projects according to the QA definition of the project team and made it - together with those that partly deal with QA - into the actual mapping. Hence a main conclusion of this first assessment and mapping was that it still remains a challenge to reach a common understanding of "quality assurance" in the QALLL project. To enhance a precise and shared understanding of "quality assurance" among all stakeholders involved and in the public can be considered one of the "side-aims" and future challenges of the QALLL project.

Level of education system targeted

From the 42 projects mapped, almost all projects (93 %) directly targeted the *institutional level*, i.e. the providers of (vocational) education and training. In 30 cases (72%) the key process of *"learning and teaching"* was also at the core of the project which shows that quality assurance in European projects is not only concerned with organisational and administrative support processes, but aims at the heart of the educational process.

Given the institutional structure of promoters of Leonardo da Vinci and Grundtvig projects, a surprisingly high number of projects also at least partly endeavoured to target the *system level* of education and training (18 or 43 %, 9 of which even directly target the system level) — which is an ambitious goal given the bottom-up approach and the conditions under which these projects are carried out.

Product categories

On average more than four different categories of products were developed per project. Products that supported *self-evaluation/self-assessment* were developed in a little more than half of the projects, which means that a strong focus was laid on these kind of quality assurance activities. In one third of the projects, *also external evaluation* was tackled. Products supporting *accreditation and certification* were the outcome of about one fifth of the projects. This is in line with many national and the European policies that for a long period have put a primary emphasis on self-assessment, in quite a number of countries external evaluation and assessment have only gained ground in the past years. External evaluation, moreover, is more closely related with regulations on the system level, which again make it less likely to be chosen as a topic for a bottom up development project. In this light, the number of projects targeting external evaluation, accreditation and certification actually seems quite high.

Projects selected for further dissemination and transfer

Of the 42 projects dealing with quality assurance, 30 (~70% of the projects) are recommended for further dissemination and transfer. In this newsletter we would like to present to you one of these projects: Peer Review. For six projects, dissemination and transfer is recommended conditionally, their products need to undergo improvements before they are put to further use.

Excerpted from: Gutknecht-Gmeiner, M., QALLL Thematic Monitoring Assessment and Mapping of Projects. Report of first analysis. Vienna, 12/2010.

Next steps

Since the assessment and mapping exercise primarily focused on the products, in a next step those projects recommended for further dissemination will be questioned on their efforts to transfer and exploit the results of their projects in order to maximize the impact of project results. Well planned and well executed dissemination and exploitation ensure that project results have a reach beyond those directly involved in the project consortium as well as an impact that is sustained beyond the project lifetime. The results of this survey will be incorporated in a publication on recommendations for project promoters, National Agencies as well as the European Commission for increasing the effectiveness and sustainability of their work. With the QALLL newsletter you will be among the first to be informed about the release of that publication!

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EQAVET – promoting a culture of quality assurance in VET

Since the launch of the Copenhagen Process in 2002 the quality of VET has been an important policy priority in the wider context of European cooperation in education. The challenges facing VET systems are considerable, with an increased emphasis on the need to deliver jobs and personal satisfaction to individuals and learners in a context of lifelong learning and an employment world characterised by increasing levels of uncertainty.

The challenges of promoting mobility, ensuring recognition of qualifications and supporting career progression in a European employment space continue to underlie VET policy developments at European level. The work in the quality assurance of VET is an important component of the process of building mutual trust between systems which is necessary if mobility and transparency of qualifications are to become a reality for much larger numbers of young people and workers.

Recommendation on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET

The Recommendation on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (Reference Framework) will make a major contribution to mainstreaming quality assurance within VET systems and providing the necessary confidence building in quality assurance processes, which are an essential underpinning of the other EU recognition and transfer instruments supporting mobility and the development of a single employment market, notably the EQF and ECVET. With the establishment of EQAVET to support the implementation of the Reference Framework there is a considerable strengthening and formalisation of the work in quality assurance at European level.

The major challenge is to ensure the engagement of key stakeholders and social partners in the Member States, the development of a sense of ownership of quality assurance processes in VET, the mobilisation of VET providers around the principles of the Reference Framework, and the dissemination of information and policy practice within the Member States.

Building a community of practice

EQAVET provides a basis for deepening the work on quality assurance in VET at European level by bringing together the Member States of the European Union, the Social Partners and the European Commission in a community of practice to develop a culture of quality assurance both within national VET systems and at a European level.

However structures alone do not bring about progress. Therefore the opportunity provided by initiatives such as the QALLL project and other LEONARDO projects dealing with the issue of quality assurance must be capitalised on. It is essential to ensure a coming together of the work on quality assurance in schools and training centres, sectors, the places where VET is experienced by the learner, and the considerable progress which has been made in strengthening the sharing of experience and expertise at European level in EQAVET and its predecessor ENQA-VET.

As a first step it will be important to ensure that the results of the projects which have been analysed in the QALLL context feed into the policy reflection at European level. Such a contribution can play an important role in supporting VET providers as they address the challenge of using the Reference Framework to support the quality assurance of their curricula, delivery of learning outcomes, and evaluation processes.

The quality assurance national reference points which have been established in a significant number of countries and which play a key role in supporting countries in the development and implementation of their national approaches to the EQAVET Recommendation will also be important interlocutors in this process.

Progress to date

In 2010 the Secretariat has been anxious to ensure that EQAVET strengthens its capacity to support the Member States in the development of their national approaches to the implementation of the Recommendation. This process has informed the strategic reflection of the experts, the steering committee and the working groups which advance the content of the work in EQAVET particularly in terms of its relevance among stakeholders in general and at system level within Member States, and its coherence EU VET policy objectives.

This first year of activity has been characterised by progress on a number of fronts:

- the participation of 33 countries in the annual forum in 2010;
- the establishment of over 20 national reference points;
- preparation of guidance material to support Member States in developing their national implementation approaches;
- the successful launch of the EQAVET website as a tool to support cooperation and its increasing usage as a reference for work on quality assurance of VET;
- concrete measures to increase cooperation with a broad range of stakeholders with an interest in the quality assurance of VET and in particular with the QALLL Project;
- publication of a range of communication materials in all the EU languages. All this material and information is available on our website at www.eqavet.eu.

We look forward to the coming year where we will address the issues which Member States will face as they begin to implement their strategies and approaches for using the Reference Framework. In this context we look forward to the considerable insights which QALLL can provide from its analysis of the quality assurance projects which have been funded by the Leonardo da Vinci programme over the years.

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Education and Culture DG
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Project in the spotlight

With this column we would like to share with you the results of (former) Quality Assurance projects. In this newsletter the peer review projects are being introduced. These projects have been funded within the Leonardo da Vinci programme.

European Peer Review projects

Peer Review is an innovative and promising qualitative external evaluation methodology involving Peers, i.e. colleagues from other institutions, as evaluators.

Transferring Peer Review from HE to VET

While Peer Review has a long tradition in higher education, its use in vocational education and training has been marginal. In the European Peer Review projects, Peer Review has been transferred and adapted for VET in 15 European countries.

The European Peer Review Manual

A standard procedure for Peer Review is described in the European Peer Review Manual, the main product of the projects, which also won the "Lifelong Learning Award" as best product in 2009.

Supporting tools for VET institutions and peers include:

- a tool-box with various forms, checklists and recommendations;
- a set of quality areas with quality criteria and indicators;
- a peer training programme;
- best practices from the projects.

National Quality Systems
The European Peer Review is suitable for use in the 15 project countries. In Austria, Finland, Hungary, Italy and Catalonia it is currently implemented in the national/provincial quality systems.

European Peer Review Network

On the European level, the establishment of a sustainable European Peer Review network has been recommended. Interested in joining the network? Then please contact the Peer Review coordinator, Maria Gutknecht-Gmeiner.

Comprehensive information on the three projects:

- Peer Review in initial VET (2004-2007);
- Peer Review Extended (2007);
- Peer Review Extended II (2007-2009).

All project products are available from the project website: www.peer-review-education.net.

Award Certificates Pecs 2007

The European Peer Review Initiative – Overview

Peer Review in initial VET	Peer Review Extended	Peer Review Extended II
Aims • Development and testing of Peer Review procedure for initial VET • Build-up of Peer Review Network	**Aims** • Further development and testing of European Peer Review procedure • Contribution of Peer Review to CQAF • Expansion of Network	**Aims** • Adaptation of Peer Review to → new countries → continuing VET • Expansion of Network
Products • European Peer Review Manual for initial VET • Peer Training Programme (web-based)	**Products** • Peer Review Tool-box • Scenarios for Peer Review implementation on national/regional level • Peer Review and the CQAF	**Products** • European Peer Review Manual for continuing VET • Peer Training (face-to-face) • Peer Review Reader
• 15 Pilots (2006) • Oct. 2004 – Sept. 2007 • 25 partners from 11 countries	• 4 Pilots (2007) • Jan. 2007 – Dec. 2007 • 9 partners from 6 countries	• 6 Pilots (2008/2009) • Nov. 2007 – Oct. 2009 • 14 partners from 9 countries

Participating countries: Austria, Germany, Czech Republic, Denmark, Spain, Finland, Italy, Hungary, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Turkey, United Kingdom, Switzerland
Participation in Pilot Peer Reviews: Austria, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Finland, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, United Kingdom

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Next Issue of the Newsletter

The next issue of the QALLL newsletter will be published by May 2011. If you want to subscribe or unsubsribe to the newsletter, please register here: http://www.qalll.eu/newsletter/

You are welcome to submit your comments.
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