

# NEWSLETTER

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Welcome to the 3<sup>rd</sup> newsletter of the thematic network **QALLL - Quality Assurance in Lifelong Learning with a Focus on Vocational Education & Training and Adult Education**

**Dear Reader,**

With this edition of the QALLL newsletter we would like to invite you to look back with us on the first QALLL conference that took place at the end of March in Bled, Slovenia. Get a glimpse of the highlights of this event! If you want to more thoroughly review the conference please check the [QALLL website](#).

In this edition's column 'Project in the Spotlight' get an idea of the QALLL project *EMPOWER – European Melting POT Wide Quality Range* which focuses on the learning needs and integration problems of immigrant students.

Read the interview we made with adult education expert Maike Koops and learn about ongoing developments and strategies in the field of quality assurance on the European level.

Find out about the new *EQAVET Quality Cycle online tool* that provides guidance on how to develop a quality assurance system and which contains examples of different approaches used by European Countries.

Last but not least do not forget to note down the date of the 2<sup>nd</sup> QALLL conference which you will find at the end of this newsletter.

Wishing you an informative read!

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## 1st QALLL Conference

**REACHING EXCELLENCE – on Quality Assurance in Vocational Education & Training and Adult Education, March 24<sup>th</sup> 2011, Bled, Slovenia**

**The conference being part of the network activities highlighted quality assurance in both sectors vocational education & training and adult education.**

The issue of quality assurance in education in general terms has been presented by Mrs. Renata Zupanc Grom from the Ministry for Education and Sport of the Republic of Slovenia. She presented the basic theory on quality assurance in education without concentrating on a specific sector of education.



European guidelines regarding quality assurance in VET and AE have been presented by representatives of the European Commission, namely by Ms. Sophie Weisswange and Ms. Maike Koops. Both have expressed the importance of quality assurance on European level which can clearly be

seen by the activities the European Commission is taking on board.

Regarding good practice of quality assurance in adult education Swiss expert Ruth Jermann presented eduQua, the first Swiss quality label geared towards adult education.

The view of quality assurance in vocational education and training from the national perspective of Austria was presented by Jürgen Horschinegg.

During the four workshops the 110 conference participants that came from 18 European countries discussed QA issues related to quality culture, the quality cycle and quality assurance in both the formal and the informal/non formal education and training.



After last year's first QALLL analysis of 80 projects - carried out by a group of external international assessors led by Dr. Maria Gutknecht-Gmeiner - some interesting topics and issues came up. 42 projects were nominated as best practice projects; several of these have been invited to present themselves during the conference workshops.

The agenda of the conference has enabled the participants to attend two different workshops. Due to the fact that participants had very diverse experience in quality assurance – some are in the beginning of the process, others have implemented the process of quality assurance already to a high degree – the discussions in the thematic workshops were multifaceted.

A special highlight of the event was the project market. Selected good practice projects had the possibility to present themselves during the whole day of the conference. The market thereby served as a sort of contact point and offered an ideal opportunity for networking. Many of the participants made valuable contacts.

From the side of the organising NA we have to express our gratefulness to the QALLL partner NAs for their support in the preparation of the conference and during the conference itself. We have a good feeling that the participants enjoyed their time in Bled and left with new ideas!

Review the QALLL Conference REACHING EXCELLENCE on the [QALLL website!](#) You now have access to the conference report, all presentations given and can also get some impressions of the event by viewing the picture gallery.

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## QALLL Project in the spotlight

### EMPOWER – European Melting POT WidE Range quality system

#### The project and the partners

EMPOWER (European Melting POT WidE Range quality system) is a pilot initiative promoted in 2006 by the I.P.S.S. Casagrande of Terni school (Italy), under the Leonardo da Vinci programme. The partnership of the project also included:

- Equipe Consulting (IT)
- LBC Institute ResCom (Language business culture network)(AT)
- European High School (AT)
- Stadtschulrat für Wien (AT)

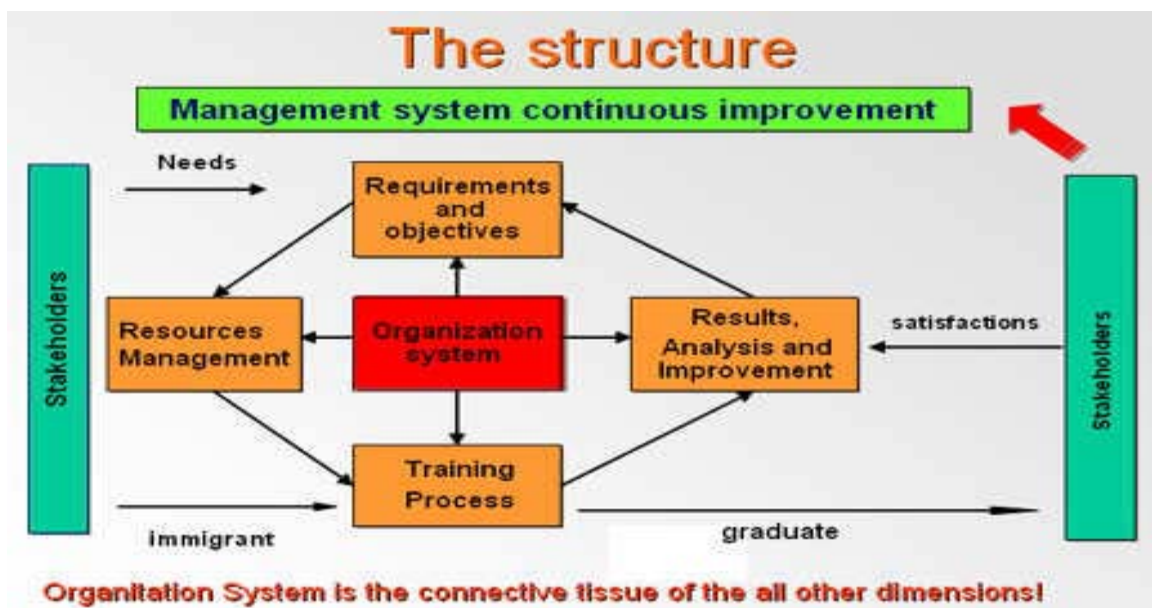
- Hellenic Regional Development Center (GR)
- Mentor Ekpedeftiki (GR)
- Federation of Industries of Peloponnese and Western Greece (GR)
- Frontiera Lavoro (IT)
- Provincia di Terni (IT)
- Istituto Alberghiero di Spoleto IPSSART (IT)

**Underlying needs and objectives of the initiative**

The aim of the project was to respond to the learning needs and integration problems of immigrant students in the schools of project partner countries.

assessing the quality of the management process and the teaching method used in the schools taking into account the intercultural aspect of modern society. The tool was built in coherence with the principles of the European Common Reference Framework on Quality (CQAF, now EQARF).

The model contains five main dimensions that focus on different aspects of the school management system and teaching methods. Its main objective is to provide evaluation implemented by using a set of specific criteria. The EMPOWER model dimensions and its elements are defined by quality excellence requirements, reference questions and factors.



Thereby the project team experimented on a large scale using an innovative approach as well as a methodology for managing foreign students, based on the principles and values of quality management.

**The EMPOWER model**

The EMPOWER model is an innovative tool for

The results of the EMPOWER project are currently the object of a Leonardo transfer of innovation project called "EMPOWER-MENT", which is adapting and transferring the model to other vulnerable groups (drop-outs, disabled youth, immigrants) and to new Italian, Austrian and Romanian schools.



**For further info:**

<http://www.empower-leonardo.net/>  
<http://www.empower-ment.net>  
<http://www.adam-europe.eu/adam/project/view.htm?prj=6299>

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**Interview**

## “It’s never too late to learn” Maike Koops, Seconded National Expert, European Commission, Unit B3, Adult Education, Grundtvig

### Why is quality assurance in adult education an important item on the European Agenda?

A key objective of adult education and training systems in all countries is to equip individuals to live and work in their home country and throughout Europe and to increase participation in learning as well as transparency and mobility between systems. Therefore the Communication on adult

learning, "It is never too late to learn" (2006) urged Member States to address the challenge of ensuring quality and in the follow-on Action Plan on adult learning (2007) "to improve the quality of provision". The Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020') will ensure that in the period until 2020 the issue of quality in education and training continues to be a major theme at European level. The second objective of the strategic framework is improving the quality and efficiency of education and training in order to ensure the acquisition of key competences by everyone. But compared with VET and HE, where we can see the main developments in relation to the quality of education and training systems quality in adult education is still at an early stage. Therefore, quality assurance in adult education remains one of the key priorities for continuing work in this area.

### What are the most important current developments?

Firstly as a part of the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) 2007-2013, a number of Grundtvig projects have specifically addressed the issue of quality in adult education. Furthermore, the international courses funded by the Grundtvig programme have been used for cross-border continuing professional development by adult educators from many countries over the past decade. In addition, your current European thematic network, Quality Assurance in Lifelong Learning (QALL), is an important step in highlighting good practice in quality assurance in lifelong learning by facilitating networking and mainstreaming of the results and outcomes of previous and existing LLP-funded centralised and decentralised projects in VET (Leonardo da Vinci) and adult education (Grundtvig).

Secondly, as part of the implementation of the Action Plan the Commission undertook a number of studies: *Adult Learning Professions in Europe* (ALPINE) 2007 and the subsequent study on key

competences for Adult Learning Professionals (ALPs) completed in 2010. Both are published and available on the Commission's website. The goal of the ALPs-study was to develop an overarching profile of competences with layers of contexts that would embrace adult learning in all its forms and all its settings. In addition to these studies a workshop on quality in adult learning organised in June 2010 by the Commission produced a number of recommendations.



Thirdly, overall approaches to quality in Member States have been developed: the accreditation of providers of adult learning opportunities according to explicit quality criteria is a key quality measure in place in at least 15 countries. In addition at least 12 countries have introduced regulations defining adult learning, implemented undergraduate courses in adult education and defined what adult learning practitioners should do for their professional development. However, in many countries a lot remains still to be done to improve quality in adult learning.

#### **Do you see common approaches and challenges within the European Member States?**

There is a common understanding about the importance of having a quality framework – but implementation as part of the governance of quality in the adult learning system is at very different stages and influenced by the cultural and political diversity not only between Member States but inside the adult learning sector itself.

The nature of Adult Learning as a deregulated, fragmented part of the Lifelong Learning System leads to challenges in all Member States in terms of legislation; governance; funding; structures; priorities; providers; provision; staffing; learning

outcomes; qualifications and quality assurance measures.

Even more fundamental than these "operational" challenges is the lack of knowledge about the market and its transparency for "customers". Another critical point is the diversity of adult learning staff in terms of initial education; continuing professional development; status; conditions of employment and remuneration. Furthermore the "sectoral-technical" challenge that is linked to the diversity of the sectors with different cultural and political backgrounds and stakeholders as well as existing quality systems in VET and HE make it difficult to follow a cross-sectoral Lifelong Learning approach – with a common understanding and common approach on "Quality Assurance". Last but not least: maintaining high quality and quality assurance mechanisms need investment. This is a bigger challenge in times of crisis – in all Member States.

#### **How would you assess the impact of ongoing reforms in adult education with regard to quality assurance?**

As already explained some Member States have implemented quality assurance systems. But the development, the implementation and the application of quality assurance need long-term planning. Quality assurance agencies for example will need to demonstrate their independence and professionalism to build mutual trust among stakeholders – this needs time. It doesn't depend necessarily on general reform processes which could also have a negative impact on quality. As analyzed in our study on "The impact of ongoing reforms", the significant trend towards deregulation of provision is indeed connected with the intention to guarantee quality by demand oriented competition. But there is currently some evidence that such reforms have not necessarily resulted in the expected benefits and that the quality of provision, and thus the quality of the learning experiences of adults, may suffer.

#### **How can both adult education and the vocational education and training sector profit**

**from one another when it comes to the improvement of quality assurance strategies and what are the next steps at the European level?**

According to recommendations from participants at our workshop on quality in adult learning in June 2010 and the final Conference on the Action Plan on adult learning, there is a big potential for cooperation and synergies between existing EU and country-level developments on quality in VET and adult learning as well as higher education. Different options have been discussed: on the one hand, it was considered that EQAVET and European Standards and Guidelines for Higher Education provide a good basis for the development of a quality assurance framework for lifelong learning, including adult learning. This would involve moving beyond a sectoral model of quality assurance to an inclusive, integrated learner-focused model of quality assurance for all learning to facilitate the smooth mobility of individuals between levels and sectors. On the other hand, due to the sectoral distinctiveness there was the opinion that quality assurance in adult learning should be considered a domain in its own right and that while EQAVET and quality in HE should be connected and linked with this effort, they should not dominate or incorporate it. A third opinion considered that there should be common objectives for a European framework for quality in lifelong learning which would cover transversal quality issues and some common objectives as well as specific objectives for each sector. In my opinion we have to sustain the dialogue between key stakeholders at European and national levels, including the social partners, practitioners and learners vital to achieving a quality assurance system that is a mix of bottom-up and top-down approaches. The European Commission will build on this discussion to take forward work on quality assurance in adult learning at European level.

**Finally we'd like to know what you would expect from the thematic network QALLL?**

Our intention is to go "one step up" in the adult learning sector. The exchange of good practice

and outcomes of previous and existing LLP-funded projects in VET (Leonardo da Vinci) and adult education (Grundtvig) can also support national approaches. QALLL allows us to identify strategies, tools, mechanisms, approaches and activities developed by LLP projects throughout Europe and to promote quality in adult learning, with a view to the mainstreaming of results and outcomes of the projects. Through QALLL we can show good example by connecting LLP outcomes with policy.

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**What's happening**

**EQAVET presented the new Quality Cycle online tool during its 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual FORUM in Budapest**

**EQAVET Quality Cycle: An online tool to support the development of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET in the national contexts**

The EQAVET Quality Cycle is an online software tool for guiding Quality Assurance National Refer-

**EU Quality Assurance**  
in Vocational & Educational Training





ence Points and other relevant stakeholders to improve and implement their quality assurance systems in line with the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQAVET Framework).

The EQAVET Quality Cycle integrates the work achieved by the [EQAVET working groups](#) (June 2010 – February 2011) and complements the work developed by ENQAVET (2008 - 2009) creating a multimedia guidance of high-quality.

The tool is accessible from the homepage of the EQAVET website at [www.eqavet.eu](http://www.eqavet.eu)

The site is structured around the 4 stages of the EQAVET Quality Cycle – i.e. Planning, Implementation, Evaluation and Review.

Each stage offers guidelines focusing on:

- How to build and improve quality assurance systems (and VET provision): *Building your system* section. This section focuses on the EQAVET indicative descriptors with access to information on case studies, which provide illustration of existing good practices in Member States.
- How a system/provider can self-monitor its system and self-assess progress against targets: *Monitoring your system* section. It offers technical, operational and practical direction or advice in relation to the application and/or implementation of ten EQAVET Indicators.

It also has an extended Glossary of Terms on quality assurance in VET, offering a list of recognised sources and electronic links to related documentation.

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## Germany Conference

### 2<sup>nd</sup> QALLL Conference in Berlin

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The next QALLL 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 will take place on November 28<sup>th</sup> 2011 in Berlin. Don't forget to make a note in your calendar! More details on the conference will soon be posted on the QALLL website.

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## Next Issue of the Newsletter

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The next issue of the QALLL newsletter will be published by October 2011. If you want to subscribe or unsubscribe to the newsletter, please go to: <http://www.qalll.eu/newsletter/>  
You are very welcome to submit your comments!  
Mail to: [qalll@oead.at](mailto:qalll@oead.at)

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