

NEWSLETTER

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Welcome to the 4th 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 have a look at several activities happening in the field of Quality Assurance (QA) throughout the European Union and beyond.

To start with read the interview with DEQA-VET expert Thomas Gruber and learn about the role and tasks of the German Reference Point for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training.

In this issue's column 'Project in the Spotlight' we present the QALLL project '*WBL-TOI Manual – Transfer of good work-based learning practices*', which focuses on work-based learning, presents methods of transfer of WBL practices and which developed a WBL manual.

What's more? Get information about past and future events in the field of QA:

- an ETF meeting that dealt with Quality Assurance in initial vocational education (Budva, Montenegro, Sep. 27th – 30th, 2011),
- a conference that focussed on "Developing Cooperation between VET, Higher Education and Adult Learning in Response to Challenges of Lifelong Learning" (Warsaw, Sept. 23rd, 2011)
- a training for peers in Finland (Oct. 20th – 21st, 2011) and
- the contact seminar 'Quality Professionals in VET' in the Netherlands (Nov. 2nd – 5th, 2011).

This edition of the QALLL newsletter will also inform you about developments of the New Skills Network.

Do not miss the announcement of the 2nd QALLL conference at the very end of this newsletter!

Last but not least we would like to inform you that the QALLL Project Compendium comprising all good practice QALLL projects of the first mapping is now available on the [QALLL website](#).

Wishing you an informative read!

On behalf of the QALLL team,
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Interview ...

... with Thomas Gruber from DEQA-VET – the German Reference Point for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training



Thomas Gruber, DEQA-VET

What is the role and are the tasks of the Quality Assurance National Reference Point in Germany?

DEQA-VET is the German Quality Assurance National Reference Point for VET that is linked to the

particular structures and requirements of the Federal Republic of Germany and that, in accordance with national practice, brings together existing relevant bodies and involves the social partners and all stakeholders concerned at national and regional levels in order to ensure the follow-up of initiatives.



Deutsche Referenzstelle für Qualitätssicherung in der beruflichen Bildung

DEQA-VET keeps a wide range of stakeholders informed about the activities of the EQAVET network. A second task of DEQA-VET is to provide active support for the implementation of the work programme of the EQAVET network. Another one is to take concrete initiatives to promote further development of the framework in the national context as well as to support self-evaluation as a complementary and effective means of quality assurance, which allows the measurement of success and the identification of areas for improvement in respect of the implementation of the work programme of the EQAVET network. Last but not least DEQA-VET ensures that information is disseminated to stakeholders effectively.

Can you tell us something about your experiences with EQAVET in Germany?

In the history of the Federal Republic several discussions about quality and quality assurance took place. These were rarely discussions with a national approach. Mostly these discussions had a regional or sectoral character. EQAVET provides the opportunity for a 'national approach' of these discussions with all stakeholders. The EQAVET-framework is something like the basis for communication and understanding in Germany. All sys-

tems which are already used in the federal states to assure the quality of the vocational schools and their process of teaching fit to the quality cycle of the EQAVET process. And it is also an instrument for communication on all levels (local, regional, national). In this way the EQAVET process is a useful instrument for the German reference point: it helps to create a sense of ownership of a culture of quality assurance among the competent authorities and to collect, exchange and review case studies about the state of play of quality assurance in Germany through appropriate stock-taking processes.

This QALLL newsletter edition's 'project in the spotlight' focuses on work-based learning. What particular challenges do you see when it comes to assuring the quality of work-based learning?

Work-based learning is the central element for the IVET in Germany (Dual system) as well as for the CVET. The dual system is the largest provider of education at upper secondary level. In 2009 64.8 percent of the school leavers from general education opted for a dual system apprenticeship. On August 1st, 2009 there were a total of 349 state-recognised training occupations. After completing their training in the dual system the majority of participants take up employment as skilled workers – later on, many of them make use of the opportunities for continuing vocational training. Under certain conditions, however, those who have qualified may also obtain the academic standard required for entrance to a 'Fachhochschule' in one year at school full-time and go on to higher education. Successful participants in continuing vocational training are also increasingly permitted to study at colleges.

Training places are offered in both private and public enterprises, in practices of the liberal professions and, to a very limited extent, also in private households. Enterprises enter into a contract with trainees, in which they undertake to provide them with the professional competences in the occupation provided for in the training regulation for the relevant training occupation. The binding requirements of the training regulations guarantee a uniform national standard which corre-

sponds to the requirements in the relevant occupation. Training may take place only in training enterprises in which the skills required by the training regulation can be imparted by training personnel who are appropriate both personally and in terms of specialised knowledge. The suitability of training enterprises and in company training personnel is monitored by the relevant autonomous bodies (Chambers: Commerce and Industry as well as skilled craft). Proper provision of the training itself is also monitored by the Chambers.

In IVET more than 60 percent of an age cohort will be educated and trained in the dual system. Small and medium-sized companies are very important in this system. The problem or challenge is NOT to convince the enterprises which are offering training places to assure the quality of their vocational training but to provide them with an instrument which fits to the nearly 350 training regulations as well as to the needs of those companies. Companies will only use the QA instrument provided, if they see an added value in using it at first view and if no further costs will incur related to its utilization.

What is the added value of QALLL for the Quality Assurance National Reference Points?

In a lot of projects of the Leonardo da Vinci programme referred to the topic of quality assurance in vocational education and training. QALLL ensures the sustainability of the results of those projects. The database ADAM collects all these projects and in that way provides a good overview of the projects of the past as well as of the present.

Could you briefly tell us about interesting future activities or events of DEQA-VET?

In cooperation with the EQAVET secretariat DEQA-VET hosts the second EQAVET sector seminar about quality assurance in vocational education and training in the tourism and catering industry in December 2011. The first of three seminars planned took place in Stavanger at the end of May for the healthcare sector. This event has been a great success. Until the end of this year

we want to translate our website from German into English to provide the collected information about the German system to assure the quality of its vocational education and training for the European partners.

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QALLL Project in the spotlight

WBL-TOI Manual – Transfer of good work-based learning practices



WBL-TOI MANUAL

Numerous good practices of work-based learning (WBL) have been created within VET. Although the results are known and published in compendia volumes or databases, they are only marginally exploited both nationally and internationally.

As one should not re-invent the wheel, the adaptation of good practices of work-based learning to circumstances in other countries was the core idea of our WBL-TOI Manual project, funded within the Leonardo da Vinci programme.

Good practices are considered to be very much dependent on their context, and transferring them is not an easy task. In our project special focus was placed on the planning of work-based learning. Tools and methods that reveal and share the tacit knowledge associated with good practices

and their transfer process were developed and described in a manual. The process 'how to transfer good work-based learning practices' was drawn up using the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF) as a framework. In the course of the project the manual was piloted and validated in practical situations by partners and other vocational education and training (VET) organizations.

About work-based learning

Of all the different education/training systems WBL is most directly connected to the labour market. WBL fosters the development of students' workplace awareness and helps young people to gain:

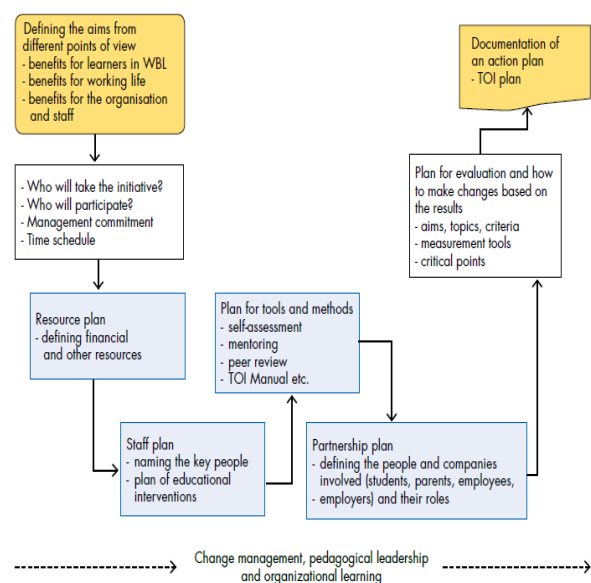
- basic workplace skills including teamwork, communication, problem solving, customer service and social etiquette skills
- knowledge of specific occupational skills
- an understanding of different industries in order to make informed career choices

Employers value WBL because the competencies acquired by students are those that are specifically needed in the workplace. The merit of WBL is widely recognised. When properly designed and supported, WBL can help schools to prepare students better for an economy that demands workers to have strong academic and career knowledge and skills, to be able to adapt to change and to be prepared for lifelong learning.

Transfer of innovative good practices of WBL

Transfer of innovation means implementing and applying an innovation in other organizations than the one it has been developed in. Transfer of innovation is always a learning process. The transfer will be more successful if it is done systematically.

In terms of the needs for change previously analysed within the organization it is necessary to define the aims of the innovation and to make practical plans. There are several milestones and questions to be discussed and resolved when making plans for the transfer of good WBL practices:



It is not the practice itself but rather the knowledge about it that can be transferred. If a practice is to be applied elsewhere, this should take place in a context that is sufficiently similar to the context where the practice originally proved to be functional and effective.

The manual

The manual was piloted in every partner country. The experiences and results were reported to the team and described in detail for the manual. Examples of tools and methods outlined in the manual are SWOT analysis, mind map, peer review, action plan and several tools for process planning. Internal and external audits and self-assessment are examples of methods used to identify the needs for changes; benchmarking can be used to find good WBL practices. The WBL-TOI Manual has been published online and is available in six languages: [English](#), [Finnish](#), [Dutch](#), [German](#), [Italian](#)

and [Romanian](#). Moreover, printed versions of the manual are available in English, Finnish, German and Romanian.

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Conference in Warsaw

Developing Cooperation between VET, Higher Education and Adult Learning in Response to Challenges of Lifelong Learning

September 23rd, 2011



Can VET be attractive? How can the cooperation between VET institutions and HEIs be enhanced, how do employers engage in education and training processes and how can adult education be supported? Polish and foreign experts in the area of HE, VET and adult education tried to answer these and many other questions during a conference that took place on September 23rd, 2011.

The conference underlined the importance of the cooperation between different sectors of education, not forgetting the educational needs of youths and adults.

The event was also a summary of a study visit organized under the Study Visits programme (LLP) "[Raising quality of VET in cooperation with employers and higher education](#)", which took place during the week preceding the conference.

The conference consisted of a plenary session – during which the participants were also informed about the thematic network QALLL – followed by two parallel workshops.

Each workshop topic was related to cooperation of specific fields of education: cooperation between IVET and higher education as well as cooperation between CVET and higher education.



Anna Atlas, FRSE

The organizer of the event was the Foundation for the Development of the Education System (which also supports QALLL) in partnership with the Ministry of National Education in Poland and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education in Poland supported by the European Commission.

Find more details of the event (presentations, picture gallery, etc.) on the [conference website](#).

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ETF Meeting on Quality and Quality Assurance

Quality and Quality Assurance in VET shifts gear in the enlargement region

September 27th - 30th, 2011, Budva, Montenegro



The 4th meeting of the ETF Community of Practice¹ in Quality and Quality Assurance took place from September 27th to 30th, 2011 in Budva, Montenegro. It was the last meeting of the Community in the framework of the 3-year ETF mutual learning programme. The objectives of the meeting were to discuss with relevant institutions in Montenegro the issues of external evaluation, VET school self-assessment; the role of key indicators in quality development in VET; and to explore further strategies and actions that can be useful for VET schools and policies in the enlargement region as an approach to quality development in VET systems.

External evaluation is well developed as a procedure in Montenegro and takes place in a cycle of 2 to 4 years in each school. A change in legisla-

¹ ETF has supported the development of the Community of Practice in Quality and Quality Assurance in the enlargement region since 2009. Members of the ETF Community of Practice in Quality and Quality Assurance are colleagues from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo* (*under UNSCR 1244/1999), Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey – representatives from the ministries for education, VET schools, education inspectors as well as social partners.

tion in Montenegro, which has taken effect in August 2010, has introduced self-assessment as an obligatory exercise for all VET schools. The primary objective is to ensure that schools are better prepared for external evaluation. The piloting process for the introduction of school self-assessment started in March 2011 in six VET schools. What is the experience and what challenges do VET schools face? How are external evaluation and VET school self-assessment linked? What type of data have VET schools collected? Which key indicators are used in external evaluation? These are key questions that the participants discussed during the 4th meeting of the ETF Community of Practice in Quality and Quality Assurance.

The quality of VET provision is not new in education and training reform agendas within the EU enlargement region. The overall tendency towards a greater autonomy of VET schools is moving the responsibility for quality towards internal processes, requiring a new positioning in a common structure for external and internal quality assurance. There are a number of developments in the enlargement countries which are similar in nature and which to a great extent integrate VET schools self-assessment and external evaluation as part of the education and training policy in the countries. Discussions during the 4th meeting of the Community confirmed that both VET schools self-assessment as well as external evaluation play an important role in improving the quality of VET provision.



Why VET schools self-assessment? The first and maybe the most important feature of VET schools

self-assessment is the fact that it is based on dialogue among the staff within the school. The second important feature is that it helps the school planning process. In more practical terms, VET schools self-assessment follows a similar logic, regardless in which school it has been implemented. It is a process of looking at specific areas and collecting evidence about how the quality of performance in these areas is being achieved. From a simplified perspective, it is a three-step process along the following questions

1. What are the challenges and opportunities our VET school is facing?
2. How well are we doing in providing our services?
3. How can we improve our services?

The visits of the schools confirmed that VET schools self-assessment is quite a challenging and demanding exercise. The major challenge is how to introduce it in the right way in a VET school and how to engage leadership, teachers, and school staff. Discussions also confirmed that for a VET school which is considering VET school self-assessment as an opportunity for improved performance there are a number of questions which need to be taken into account, such as: How to start and with whom? Is it an exercise for the whole school or only for a team which has to be appointed? How much time will it take? How much resources are needed?

VET schools self-assessment puts a strong emphasis on the change that comes from within schools. Factors that influence the quality lead to school development. There can be internal but also external factors that influence the school performance. They can be due to the environment, the education policy, etc. Nevertheless, the art of school development is to balance enthusiastic school improvement and adequate monitoring of progress. This is where an external project or government steering can play an invaluable role. In this respect it is important to point out that the major conclusion from the 4th meeting is that the VET schools self-assessment in itself is not sufficient and some kind of external monitoring of the institutional performance is necessary. An increas-

ing trend is setting the policies for external evaluation of school performance. This approach will better link top-down policy steering with more bottom-up implementation at school level.

During the conference's final session "Quality and Quality Assurance: Developments in EU and what is next" both EQAVET and the thematic network QALLL have been presented, giving EU accession countries an idea of what lies ahead of them.

For more information about the 4th meeting of the ETF Community of Practice in Quality and Quality Assurance in VET, 'External evaluation and VET schools self-assessment: Learning from experience and practices in quality and quality assurance in Montenegro', which took place from September 27th – 30th, 2011 see the [ETF Web page](#).

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European Thematic Networks

The New Skills Network

New Skills for New Jobs is Europe's flagship initiative which aims at enhancing human capital and increasing employability in order to improve the match between education, training and skills development and the needs of the labour market.



The New Skills Network (NSN), just like QALLL, is one of the five European thematic networks. NSN and QALLL are similar as to working method, lifecycle and project resources. Moreover, both networks deal with the same key

issue, **skills**; while QALLL is about assuring the quality of skills, NSN is all about future skills needed and so both networks complement each other.

The **NSN** is **coordinated** by the **Icelandic national agency** and brings together national agencies from **14 countries** responsible for the implementation of the Lifelong Learning Programme.

The main aims of the New Skills Network are:

- to help ensure that the Lifelong Learning Programme supports member states adequately in skills upgrading and skills matching through the mobilisation of existing Community policies and funds,
- to facilitate the development of more projects aimed at developing processes, methods and tools aimed at helping Europe closing the current skills gap and facilitating the upgrade of skills and
- to have an impact on new policy developments and on setting long-term strategic priorities at Community and member state level.

To reach these aims, the New Skills Network

- collected 300 LLP projects and **identified 20 good or best practice projects** which were judged in terms of multiplier potential (transferability, accessibility and potential impact) and
- **organised seminars and conferences** bringing together project coordinators, experts and political decisionmakers.

As the **third** in a series of **NSN events**, the NSN-seminar in Budapest - **Bridging the Skills Gap** (June 9th – 10th, 2011) brought together 70 European key stakeholders and experts from the LLP National Agencies as well as employer and employee organisations, education and training providers, sectoral bodies, institutions, policy makers and the European Commission.

They met to **share knowledge and experience**, to **build partnerships and to develop solutions relevant to changing sectoral skills needs** to ensure that future education and training provision is targeted, responsive, and relevant.



During the two-day seminar **key questions** such as **"how to match learning and education with the needs of the labour market"** have been discussed.

A **fresh and innovative working method** was used to facilitate the workshops at the seminar; the **"Open Space Technique"**, organized and moderated by Futour, an Italian concept company that applied creative techniques and participatory methods.

Find all reports with the results of the seminar and pictures from the event at the [NSN website](#).

Detailed information about **past and future events**, especially about **the final conference** of the NSN that will take place in **Copenhagen on May 9th, 2012** is also available on the [NSN website](#).

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What's happening now

Training for Peers

The Finnish National Agency for the LLP programme, CIMO, has developed a peer review for LdV Transfer of Innovation projects (TOI) to enhance their quality, impact and sustainability. The Finnish National Board of Education (NBE) has been a partner in the development work.

16 participants, both NA staff as well as TOI projects selected in 2010 or 2011, take part in the Training for Peers in Finland on October 20th to 21st, 2011. The training, piloted in 2010, is also suitable for development of innovation projects.

Attendance in the training session will prepare the participants to function as peers in Leonardo da Vinci TOI and DOI projects. Experienced trainers will guide the participants through the training; an active participation including submitting of pre-tasks, however, will be a prerequisite for attendance. Further information is available on the [CIMO website](#).

The training for peers is an event organised in the framework of the European Thematic Network for Quality Assurance in Lifelong Learning QALLL.

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Contact Seminar

Quality Professionals in VET

Professionalization of teachers in relation to Quality Assurance, November 2nd to 5th, 2011, Groningen, the Netherlands.

Teacher quality is the backbone of the quality of education. Professionalization of teachers and trainers is of key importance for VET. This includes professional and didactical development of teachers. It also involves including them in quality assurance (QA) practices to continually improve practices and aim for excellent education. Professionalization of teachers is a joint responsibility for different levels in VET including HRM, QA, management and the teachers themselves.

This networking event brings together people from organizations which share common interests and would like to develop European cooperation projects / partnerships in the field of vocational education and training.

For more information and registration please visit this [website](#).

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Announcement - 2nd QALLL Conference

Reaching mutual trust - Quality assurance that works

November 28th 2011, Berlin

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

The conference will take place in Germany's bustling capital Berlin. We invite you to join us for

interactive working groups and sessions highlighting the latest trends in the field. Network your way around the QALLL market place and get in touch with your European colleagues. We would be very happy to welcome you at the second QALLL conference in Berlin. Registration is open: Please go to the [QALLL website](#).

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Next Issue of the Newsletter

The next issue of the QALLL newsletter will be published in January 2012. If you want to subscribe or unsubscribe to the newsletter, please visit this [weblink](#).

You are very welcome to submit your comments!
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