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1. European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET)

European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) is a European instrument to support the development of national systems for quality assurance in VET. It is a meta – framework which is underpinned by the rationale that quality assurance in VET should entail processes that embrace the whole policy – cycle as well as continuous improvement at the level of providers. EQAVET provides a common set of principles to guide countries' quality assurance systems but also to support transparency of quality assurance systems at European level ¹.

EQAVET brings together the EU Member States, the Social Partners, and the European Commission to develop and improve quality assurance in European VET systems within the context of the implementation of the European Quality Assurance Framework by:

- Assisting the Member States in developing effective approaches to support the implementation of the Reference Framework.
- Developing a culture of quality, to be embedded at European level and other levels with the help of the Quality Assurance National Reference Points and other Network members.
- Supporting the Member States and the European Commission in the monitoring and implementation of the Reference Framework within the context of the Education and Training 2020 Strategy.
- Supporting the quality assurance dimension of work in EQF and ECVET ².

¹ ICF GHK, *Evaluation of Implementation of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET)*, 2013, p. 2, available at https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/eqavet-implementation-evaluation-2013_en.pdf.

² EQAVET, <http://www.eqavet.eu/gns/about-egavet/mission.aspx>.

2. EQAVET Quality Assurance Cycle

EQAVET comprises a cycle of four phases, each supported by quality criteria and indicative descriptors, to be applied at the VET – system, provider and qualification awarding levels. It provides a systematic approach to quality and gives strong emphasis to monitoring and improving quality by combining internal and external evaluation, review and other processes for improvements, supported by measurement and qualitative analysis ³.

The Quality Assurance Cycle of EQAVET



Source: EQAVET, <http://www.eqavet.eu/index2.html>.

Stage 1 – Planning: Set up clear, appropriate and measurable goals and objectives in terms of policies, procedures, tasks and human resources.

Stage 2 – Implementation: Establish procedures to ensure the achievement of goals and objectives (e.g. involvement of stakeholders, allocation of resources and organisational/operational procedures).

Stage 3 – Evaluation: Design mechanisms for the evaluation of achievements and outcomes by collecting and processing data in order to make informed assessments.

³ European Commission, *Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the implementation of the Recommendation of the European Parliament and the of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training*, COM (2014) 30 final, p. 3, available at http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/eqavet_en.pdf.

Stage 4 – Review: Develop procedures in order to achieve the targeted outcomes and/or new objectives. After processing feedback, key stakeholders conduct discussion and analysis in order to devise procedures for change.

3. EQAVET Indicators ⁴

The EQAVET indicators are interlinked and each one impacts on all the others. So, the indicators will enable users to adopt a holistic approach in evaluating their quality assurance arrangements, while taking into consideration their own context and needs.

The EQAVET set of ten indicators is a selection from the total possible range of VET relevant indicators (≈ 200) and it is based on the underlying theoretical and political understanding of what types of VET impacts are important. Specifically, this set of indicators provides a way of characterizing and relating a significant number of aspects of the VET system to each other and allows the information provided by each one of the indicators to be greater than the sum of its parts. Those indicators are the following:

Indicator 1: Relevance of quality assurance systems for VET providers:

- a. Share of providers applying internal quality assurance systems defined by law/at own initiative.
- b. Share of accredited VET providers.

Indicator 2: Investment in training of teachers and trainers:

- a. Share of teachers and trainers participating in further training.
- b. Amount of funds invested.

⁴ EQAVET, *EQAVET Indicators' Toolkit*, available at http://www.eqavet.eu/Libraries/Working_Groups/EQAVET_Indicators_Toolkit_final.sflb.ashx.



Indicator 3: Participation rate in VET programmes: Number of participants in VET programmes (1), according to the type of programme and the individual criteria (2)

- a. (1) For IVT: a period of 6 weeks of training is needed before a learner is counted as a participant in LLL (Lifelong Learning): percentage of population admitted to formal VET programmes.
- b. (2) Besides basic information on gender and age, other social criteria might be applied, e.g. early school leavers, highest educational achievement, migrant, handicapped persons, length of unemployment, etc.

Indicator 4: Completion rate in VET programmes: Number of successfully completed/abandoned VET programmes, according to the type of programme and the individual criteria.

Indicator 5: Placement rate in VET programmes

- a. Destination of VET learners at designated point in time after completion of training according to the type of programme and the individual criteria (for IVT: including information on the destination of dropout).
- b. Share of employed learners at designated point in time after completion of training, according to the type of programme and the individual criteria.

Indicator 6: Utilisation of acquired skills at the workplace:

- a. Information on occupation obtained by individuals after completion of training, according to type of training and individual criteria
- b. Satisfaction rate of individuals and employers with acquired skills/competences

Indicator 7: Unemployment rate ⁵ according to individual criteria.

⁵ Definition according to ILO and OECD: individuals 15 – 74 without work, actively seeking employment and ready to start work.

Indicator 8: Prevalence of vulnerable groups:

- a. Percentage of participants in VET classified as disadvantaged groups (in a defined region or catchment area) according to age and gender.
- b. Success rate of disadvantaged groups according to age and gender.

Indicator 9: Mechanisms to identify training need in the labour market:

- a. Information on mechanisms set up to identify changing demands at different levels.
- b. Evidence of their effectiveness.

Indicator 10: Schemes used to promote better access to VET:

- a. Information on existing schemes at different levels.
- b. Evidence of their effectiveness.

4. EQAVET in Greece

The National Organization for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP) is the National Reference Point for Quality Assurance in VET and represents Greece in the European network for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET).

In order to align with both European and Greek law obligations, in particular with 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 (2009/C 155/1)* and *Greek Law 3879/2010 on the Development of Lifelong Learning*, the Greek Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs ⁶ designed, in 2011, the National Framework for Quality Assurance in Lifelong Learning (named “ π^3 Framework”).

⁶ Today “Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs”.

The “ π^3 Framework” sets some fundamental quality principles for lifelong learning, which lifelong learning bodies and providers are supposed to adapt according to their activities and their field of expertise. The implementation of those principles is based on the level of their integration into the systems and functions of lifelong learning bodies and is measured through 47 quality and quantitative indicators ⁷.

Some key quality indicators of the “ π^3 Framework” are the following:

1. Satisfaction of trainees’ expectations of lifelong programmes
 - Measured as an average rate in relevant question to trainees.
2. Satisfaction of trainees related to the variety and relevance of teaching methods according to the programme’ s subject
 - Measured as an average rate in relevant question to trainees.
3. Completion rate of a programme
 - Measured as a percentage of people successfully completing a programme compared to total participants of a programme.
4. Satisfaction of trainees related to the connection between theoretical and practical knowledge offered during a programme
 - Measured as an average rate in relevant question to trainees.
5. Level of response of the offered programmes to labour market needs
 - Measured as an average rate in relevant question to local employers.
6. Updating rate of programmes’ curriculums
 - Measured as a percentage of updated programmes compared to total number of programmes.
7. Rate of development of programmes in innovative specialisations/fields
 - Measured as a percentage of innovative programmes compared to total number of programmes.

⁷ Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs, π^3 : *National Framework for Quality Assurance in Lifelong Learning*, 2011, available in Greek at http://www.eoppep.gr/images/DIASFALISH_POIOTHTAS/plaisio.pdf .

8. Satisfaction of trainees related to trainers/teaching staff
 - Measured as an average rate in relevant question to trainees.
9. Satisfaction of graduates related to the certification process
 - Measured as an average rate in relevant survey.
10. Completion rate of a programme from people belonging in vulnerable groups
 - Measured as a percentage of people belonging in vulnerable groups who successfully complete a programme compared to total people belonging in vulnerable groups who participate in a programme.

5. EQAVET in Italy

In Italy, the National Reference Point for EQAVET is hosted by ISFOL (Istituto per lo Sviluppo della Formazione professionale dei Lavoratori) and it is part of the Unit Methodologies and Tools for Competencies and Transitions. It's core activities are to:

- Inform national and regional stakeholders of the European activities concerning quality assurance in vocational education and training systems and support the implementation of the EQAVET work programme,
- support the implementation of the national approach for quality assurance,
- raise awareness and spread information about the activities implemented by the European EQAVET Network,
- promote initiatives aiming at reinforcing the use of methodologies and tools for quality assurance,
- promote the achievement of a quality assurance culture, and the benefits linked to application of tools for quality improvement,
- create synergies between all the activities/initiatives relating to quality assurance set up by different stakeholders,
- coordinate the national activities undertaken within the framework of the participation in the European EQAVET Network.

The overall NRP strategy is twofold: on the one hand its activities are aimed at promoting a top – down approach governed by responsible authorities through the input of quality assurance tools at the system level via regulation issuing and other measures, on the other hand, it supports a bottom – up approach supporting those schools and training agencies that adopt quality assurance models and tools voluntarily.

The issuing of the European Recommendation in 2009 pushed the process for a quality assurance framework and contributed to a further development in the field at a national level, mainly thanks to the drafting and validation of the Italian



National Plan for Quality Assurance for VET. It has also acted as a stimulus for some Regions that have autonomously implemented some initiatives in the field of quality assurance. The activities of the NRP further favored the process at a policy/decision making level, as the dissemination of practices, such as the peer review and other models for self – assessment of education and training providers, laid the basis for a better definition of the quality assurance concept, thus increasing consensus around its use in the education and training sector ⁸.

The main quality assurance mechanism currently in force in Italy is the accreditation of VET providers. All providers (public and private) must be accredited to deliver publicly – funded training and guidance. The accreditation process is implemented by Regions and the Autonomous Provinces in coherence with the national criteria outlined in the relevant legislation. In 2008, an agreement was reached between the State and the Regions regarding the promotion and valorization of accreditation as a tool for quality assurance. On the basis of the minimum standards that this agreement set, each Region and Autonomous Province issued its own law regulating the regional accreditation system. The national accreditation system takes into account five main criteria:

1. Criterion A: Infrastructural and logistic resources
2. Criterion B: Economic and financial reliability
3. Criterion C: Managerial capacity and professional resources
4. Criterion D: Efficiency and effectiveness
5. Criterion E: Link with the regional territory.

In general, there is some level of correspondence between those criteria and the EQAVET Recommendation. Specifically:

⁸ EQAVET, *Report of Italy*, 2016, available at [http://www.eqavet.eu/Libraries/Website_Update_2016_Reports/2_IT_-_final_template_for updating info on the EQAVET website.sflb.ashx](http://www.eqavet.eu/Libraries/Website_Update_2016_Reports/2_IT_-_final_template_for Updating_info_on_the_EQAVET_website.sflb.ashx).

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- Criterion C corresponds to Indicator 1 (relevance of quality assurance systems for VET providers), Indicator 2 (investment in training of teachers and trainers), and Indicator 10 (schemes used to promote better access to VET),
 - Criterion D corresponds to Indicator 3 (participation rate in VET programmes), Indicator 4 (completion rate in VET programmes), Indicator 5 (placement rate in VET programmes), Indicator 6 (utilization of acquired skills at the workplace), and Indicator 7 (unemployment rate according to individual criteria)
 - Criterion E corresponds to Indicator 9 (mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market), Indicator 10 (schemes used to promote better access to VET), and partially with Indicator 1 (relevance of quality assurance systems for VET providers)⁹.

6. EQAVET in Portugal

In Portugal, quality assurance in VET is a transversal issue that has gathered a lot of attention the past years, not only in order to achieve important changes, like guarantee the efficiency of VET systems, make the access into VET easier, and reinforce the relation between VET and labour, but also to enhance the process of monitoring the results obtained.

Facing the complexity of the VET system, different entities are involved in the quality assurance process, either under the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity (MTSS) or under the Ministry of Education (ME). There are also entities regulated by both Ministries. Some of the most relevant entities are the following:

- The Directorate – General for Employment and Industrial Relations (DGERT) – MTSS,

⁹ ICF GHK, *Study on Quality Assurance in Continuous VET and on the Future Development of EQAVET: Final Report*, 2013, pp. 171 – 173, available at http://www.eqavet.eu/Libraries/2014_Publications/Study_on_QA_in_CVET.sflb.ashx.

- the Institute for Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP) – MTSS,
- the Cabinet for Strategy and Planning (GEP) – MTSS,
- the Observatory for Employment and Vocational Training (OEFP) – MTSS,
- the Inspectorate – General of Education (ME),
- the Cabinet for Education Statistics and Planning (GEPE) – ME,
- the Directorate – General for Innovation and Curricular Development (DGIDC) – ME,
- the National Qualifications Agency – MTSS/ME ¹⁰.

In order to align with the *Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (2008/C 111/01)*, the National Qualifications Agency of Portugal was designated as the national coordination point for implementing the EQF, with responsibility for:

- Referencing the qualification levels of the national qualifications system to the levels of the EQF,
- ensuring the transparency of the methodology used to reference national qualification levels to the EQF,
- provide interested parties with access to information and guidance on how national qualifications are referenced to EQF,
- encourage the participation of all relevant interested entities (higher education and vocational training and education establishments, social partners, sectors and experts) ¹¹.

Some key indicators used at a national level in reference with the ten aforementioned indicators proposed in the EQARF Recommendation are:

¹⁰ EQAVET – Portugal, <http://www.eqavet.eu/gns/what-we-do/implementing-the-framework/portugal.aspx>.

¹¹ National Agency for Qualifications, *Report on the Referencing of the National Qualifications Framework to the European Qualifications Framework*, 2011, p. 8, available at http://www.eqavet.eu/Libraries/EQF/PT_EQF_Referencing_Report.sflb.ashx.

1. Relevance on quality assurance systems for VET providers:
 - a. share of VET providers applying internal quality assurance systems defined by law or at own initiative,
 - b. share of accredited VET providers.
2. Investment in training of teachers and trainers:
 - a. share of teachers and trainers participating in further training,
 - b. amount of funds invested.
3. Participation rate in VET programmes: number of participants in VET programmes, according to the type of programme and the individual criteria.
4. Completion rate in VET programmes: number of persons having successfully completed/abandoned VET programmes, according to the type of programme and the individual criteria.
5. Placement rate in VET programmes:
 - a. destination of VET learners at a designated point in time after completion of training, according to the type of programme and the individual criteria,
 - b. share of employed learners at a designated point in time after completion of training, according to the type of programme and the individual criteria.
6. Utilisation of acquired skills at the workplace:
 - a. information on occupation obtained by individuals after completion of training, according to type of training and individual criteria,
 - b. satisfaction rate of individuals and employers with acquired skills/competences.
7. Unemployment rate according to individual criteria.
8. Prevalence of vulnerable groups:
 - a. percentage of participants in VET classified as disadvantaged groups (in a defined region or catchment area) according to age and gender,

- b. success rate of disadvantaged groups according to age and gender.
9. Mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market:
- a. information on mechanisms set up to identify changing demands at different levels,
 - b. evidence of their effectiveness.
10. Schemes used to promote better access to VET:
- a. information on existing schemes at different levels,
 - b. evidence of their effectiveness ¹².

¹² EQARF Indicators for Portugal, available at http://www.eqavet.eu/Libraries/EQARF_Indicators/EQARF_Indicators_Portugal.sflb.ashx.

