EQAVET NEWSLETTER

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EQAVET

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Editorial: Joao Santos

In December 2013, the EU adopted the European structural and investment funds (ESIF) regulation for 2014 - 2020. The reformed cohesion policy proposes overall objectives for investment in Europe's regions, cities and economies, and provides up to €351.8 billion of support for member states to achieve the Europe 2020 goals, by:

1.   creating growth and jobs,

2.   tackling climate change and energy dependence,

3.   reducing poverty and social exclusion.

Education is prominent among these priorities, as one of the 10 thematic objectives. This objective looks in particular at the lifelong learning dimension, and the labour market relevance of education and training, the strengthening of vocational education and training (VET) systems and their quality.

Among the interesting novelties of ESIF 2014-2020 is a result-based approach with clear targets, set at the beginning, and monitoring of programme performance. In order to ensure a solid policy basis for the programming instruments, specific ex-ante conditionalities are required.

For instance, for objective 10 – "investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning" – one of the ex-ante conditionalities linked to VET in particular (10.4) requires the existence of a national or regional strategic policy framework for increasing the quality and efficiency of VET systems.

The establishment of a national approach for quality assurance in VET, in line with the EQAVET framework, for example, could fulfil such conditionality. This could be an excellent opportunity to mainstream quality assurance for VET, and to develop common European tools and practices further for good management of VET systems.

The definition of the strategic policy framework (Art. 2(2) of regulation N°1303/2013) is precise and requires the existence of a document or a set of documents established at national or

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regional level, setting out a limited number of coherent priorities established on the basis of evidence, together with a timeframe for the implementation of those priorities, that may include a monitoring mechanism. A strategic policy framework is more than a collection of measures. Where measures are contained in different policy documents, they need to be embedded in a strategic approach towards the overall objective.

In the case of VET, a strategic policy framework is a document (or set of complementary documents) setting out quality and efficiency objectives, based on the EQAVET approach, that focus on labour market relevance, work-based learning, efficiency, attractiveness and excellence as well as inclusion and equity. It would include both initial and continuing VET systems in a flexible way, and be based on learning outcomes with opportunities for international cooperation (e.g. mobility of students and VET professionals).

The ESIF also requires a mapping of the infrastructure necessary for this purpose, as would be expected in a national approach, and as mentioned in the EQAVET Recommendation. The fact that the European social and investment funds feature this results-based approach and conditionality supports our efforts to increase the quality and efficiency of VET systems.

Best wishes in your new job!

After working with us for more than five years, Sophie Weisswange, former policy officer responsible for EQAVET in the European Commission, is leaving us to take up new responsibilities in the Directorate General for Internal Market and Services (DG MARKT).

We appreciate all she did to implement our successive work programmes and we will miss collaborating with her. We know that she will bring her experience of quality assurance of VET to her new job where she will be dealing with the professional services directive. We wish her every success in her new job.

EQAVET and its contribution to increasing transparency – synergies with other transparency tools (Europass, ECVET and EQF) in three Member States

Quality, transparency, mobility and networking

An article by Ismene Tramontano, Isfol (Coordinator of the Italian Quality Assurance Reference Point, Coordinator of National Europass Centre, Coordinator of Euroguidance), Italy

According to the overall objective of the Europe 2020 strategy, the education and training systems have to become more attractive, effective and efficient.

The principal way of achieving this objective is to pursue higher quality and excellence in education.

Clearly, the achievement of quality and excellence is hampered by our present economic and social crisis. In this scenario cooperation and networking become the only possible way, which has led to a growth in networking at national and European levels. We aim to promote integration between networks and tools for training and information. The first step of this journey is to improve quality, in order to ensure the reliability of systems and VET providers and to foster mutual trust.

Mutual trust is considered to be a necessary requisite for mutual recognition of "learning outcomes" achieved in other training systems, and for the promotion of geographical mobility.

In fact, in our reflection at European level , mobility is acknowledged as a key factor in learning, skills development and the promotion of employability.

An experience of studying or working abroad helps improve
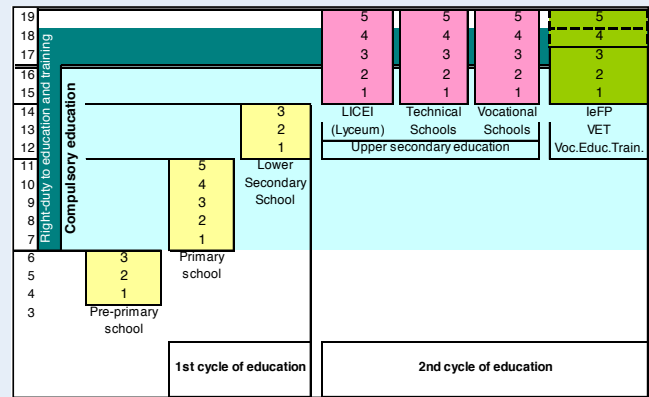
Ismene Tramontano

language and intercultural skills, fosters cultural enrichment, and encourages adaptation to a flexible and global labour market that is in continuous evolution. In addition, geographical mobility can also promote balance, encouraging the movement of workers to labor markets where their skills and qualifications are needed. Transnational mobility, therefore, becomes important as an instrument to create new job opportunities, promote a deeper sense of European identity and citizenship and stimulate the movement of "cultures and knowledge" leading to the creation of a Europe of knowledge. To this end, the EU has always supported mobility through various programmes and initiatives, in particular through the Erasmus Plus Programme, beginning in 2014, alongside the promotion of information networks, such as Euroguidance, which supports mobility through information and training activities for both guidance operators and end users, and EURES, which provides information, advice and recruitment/placement (job-matching) services for the benefit of workers and employers as well as citizens wishing to benefit from the principle of the free movement of persons.

Moreover, the European Commission has contributed to the development of a set of "tools" – EQAVET, EQF, Europass and ECVET – and insists on their integration in order to improve individual skills and transparency, leading to the eventual creation of the European Area for Skills and Qualifications. EQAVET believes this common Area will be crucial and could:

VET system in Italy

- help minimise the mismatch between the skills needed by employers and those acquired by learners during their training,

- help VET providers and VET systems respond more quickly and more effectively to the current and future needs of the labor market;

- offer quality assurance, based on learning outcomes, to the assessment process.

Clearly, the development of quality assurance in lifelong learning services should not be an isolated process, but an integral crosscutting theme in a national lifelong learning system that encompasses education and training, employment and social inclusion.

Quality assurance methodologies and quality standards for VET should be linked to policies in the worlds of education and training and of employment.

Above all, we want to show that the above objectives can only be achieved by cooperation between various tools and European networks culminating in the European Area of Skills and Qualifications.

ECVET and EQAVET: How to work with both tools
An article by Juliette Plutus Plateau, Ministry of National Education, France

France is heavily involved in work relating to the Copenhagen process and is taking part in several expert groups set up to identify common issues and national best practices and to enable greater transparency in vocational and training systems.

France's national qualification framework (NQF) has been linked to the European Qualification Framework (EQF) since 2010.

Juliette Plutus Plateau

The Ministry of National Education was also involved in two European projects related to the ECVET and EQAVET Recommendations.

MEN-ECVET
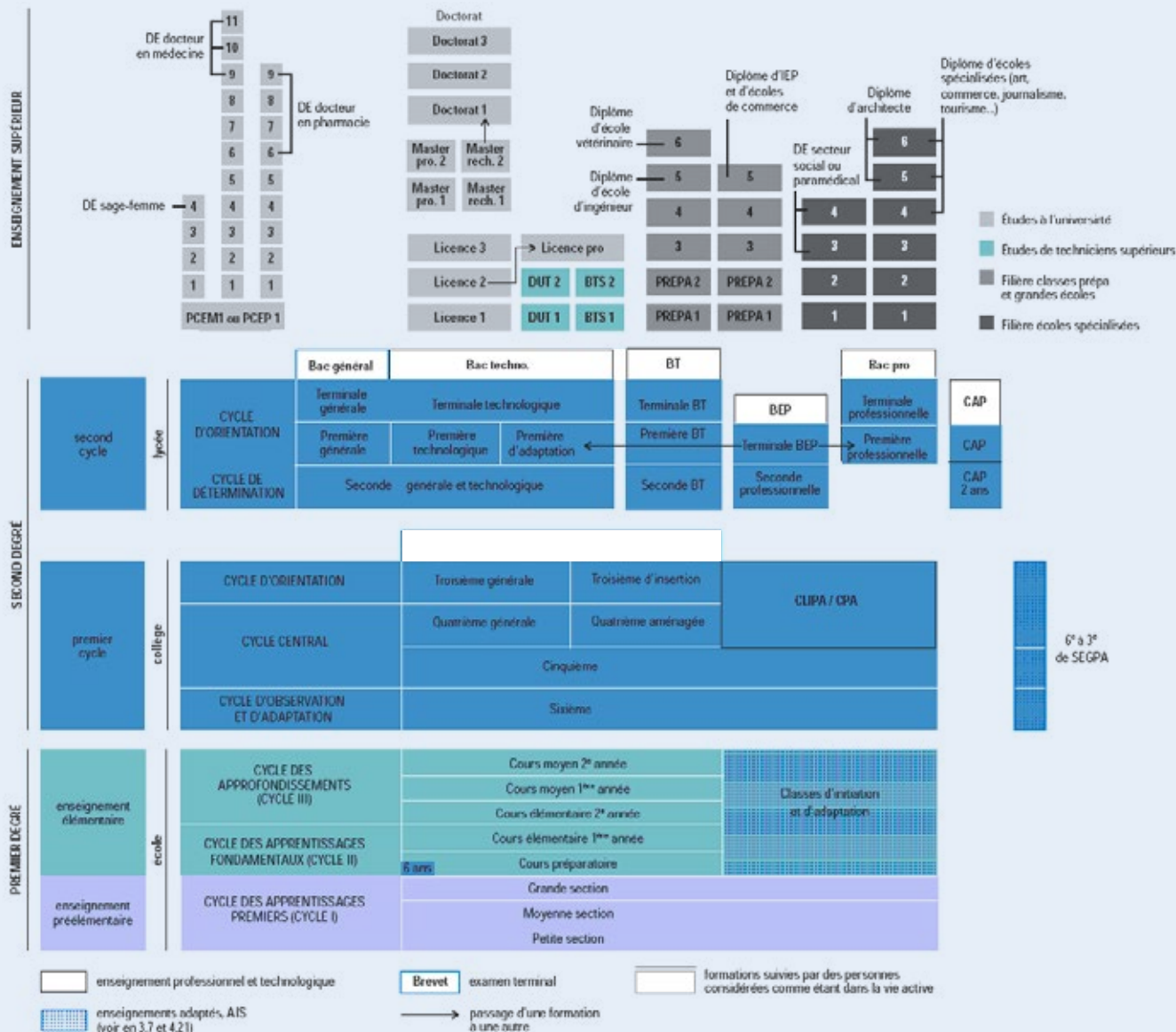
The first project, called MEN-ECVET, was launched in 2010 and is directly linked to the ECVET Recommendation. The two main objectives were to:

- Improve the mobility of young people in initial vocational education and training, as it represents a major European issue in both quantitative and qualitative terms

- Allow recognition of learning outcomes achieved and assessed abroad as part of a vocational qualification

After three years of work which sought to make compatible the French vocational diplomas framework and the European ECVET Recommendation, two regulatory texts on "the vocational baccalaureate" (level 4 EQF) are in the process of being validated:

The first one addresses the possibility of recognising part
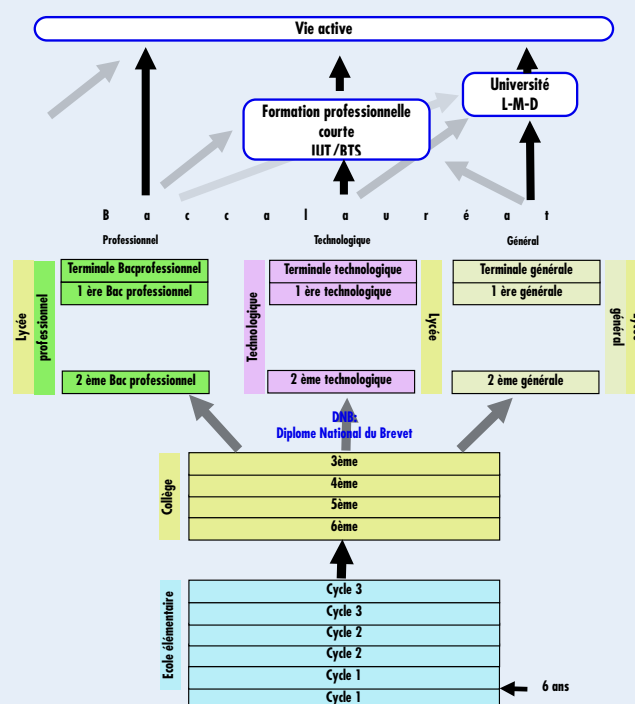
of a compulsory unit (learning outcomes) assessed abroad, whether the mobility takes place in the workplace or in a training centre.

The second one creates an optional mobility unit, which will apply to all "vocational baccalaureates" and will cover professional and general knowledge, skills and competence acquired through mobility.

QALEP

The second project, called QALEP, was launched in 2011 and takes into account the EQAVET Recommendation to enhance the quality of initial vocational and training and to develop a quality assurance culture for IVET providers (French vocational schools) through a self-assessment approach. The result is a guide that was designed to be used as a toolbox. This guide should enable IVET schools to base self-assessment on the quality assurance cycle and to take into account different issues such as learners at school – learners and workplace and quality management.

The Ministry of National Education has decided to disseminate the quality assurance approach at national level through this guide and through a training plan on quality assurance for school management staff. This national transposition is called the QualEduc project.

VET system in France

Synergies

For France, the question of synergy between the EQAVET and ECVET Recommendations conflicts with the objectives of those two instruments: the ECVET Recommendation deals with vocational qualifications and assessment of learning outcomes whereas the EQAVET Recommendation deals with quality assurance of schools and trainings but does not deal with learning outcomes, assessment or qualifications.

However, the French provision created a result of two European projects (MEN-ECVET and QALEP), can support a certain kind of interaction. Indeed, even if the self-assessment guide designed in the QALEP project is not related to the transfer and recognition of learning outcomes, it does support the quality and continuous improvement of topics such as work-based learning (training periods in the workplace) and learner mobility, which are, in turn, linked to the French ECVET developments.

The use made of EQF and EQAVET in the national context and the way in which tools interact
An article by Jelena Letica, Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education, Croatia

Even though Croatia did not become an EU Member State until July 2013 it was very active in following up all relevant EU developments, policies and tools especially in VET, i.e. EQF, EQAVET, ECVET, etc. Here we will look at EQF and EQAVET.

The European Qualifications Framework was introduced into the Croatian education system for the first time in July 2007, when the document "Baseline of the Croatian Qualifications Framework" was developed, which paved the way for the development of CROQF. It was introduced into the Croatian strategic and legislative framework in July 2008 as part of "VET System Development Strategy 2008 – 2013". One of the goals of VET reform was to develop VET qualifications with reference to EQF level. The Croatian Qualifications Framework Act was finally adopted in February 2013, stipulating referencing of the CROQF to the EQF. In the Act, all CROQF qualification levels were referenced to EQF levels. The Act states that entry into the Register of CROQF would involve rights resulting from the referencing of CROQF to the EQF, meaning that all qualifications entered in the Register will be labelled CROQF and EQF as signs of quality. The process of referencing CROQF and EQF began before the CROQF Act came into force. In line with the European Commission's recommendations, international and national experts participated in the drafting of the Referencing Report, which was presented in October 2011. The Draft Referencing and Self-certification Report was presented to the EQF Advisory Board in 2012.
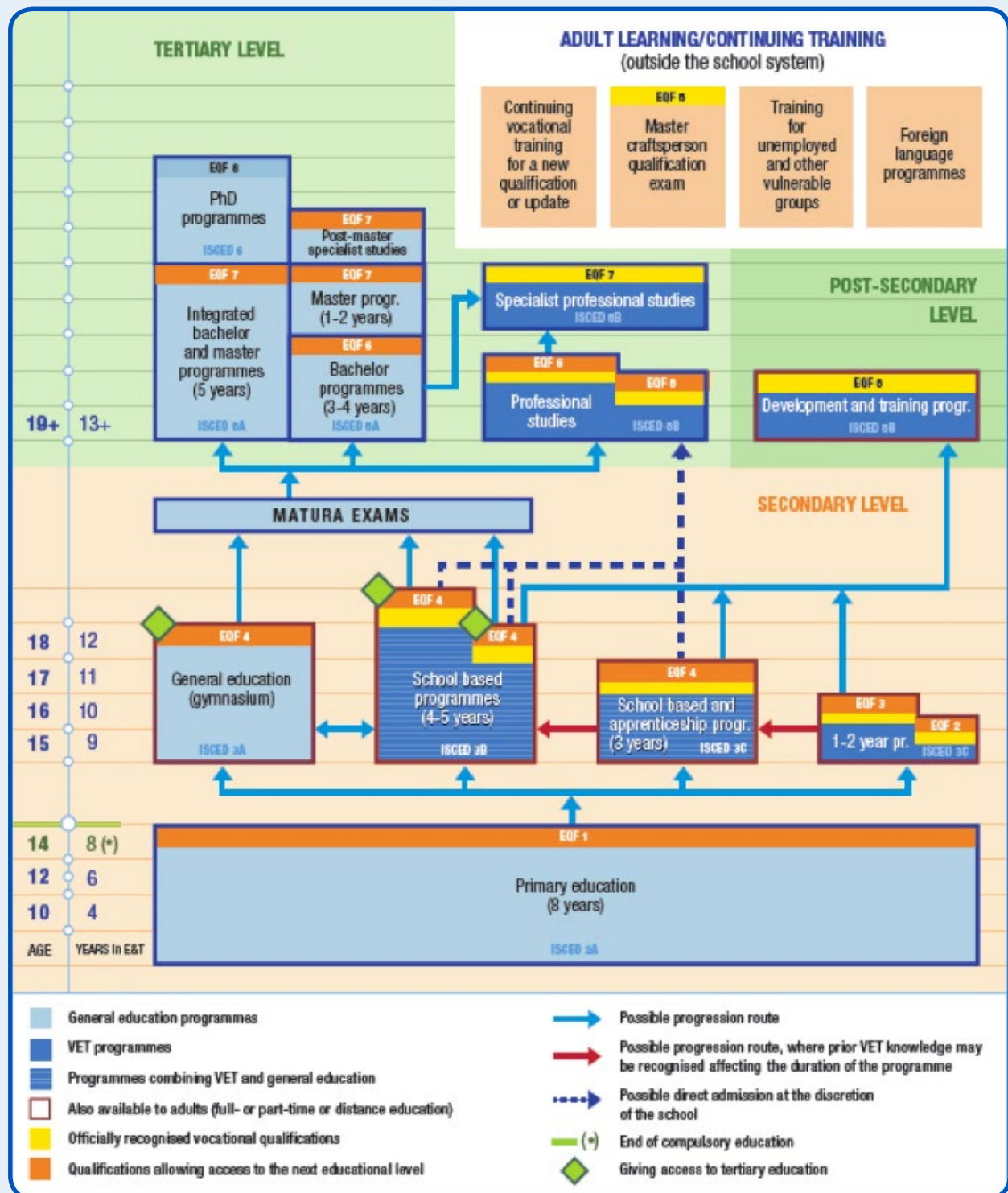
Jelena Letica

Quality Assurance in VET systems has become one of the priorities of the "VET System Development Strategy 2008 – 2013", in which establishing a quality assurance system was one of the main objectives. Under the Vocational Education and Training Act, adopted in 2009, the VET quality assurance system features continuous evaluation of participants, VET institutions and the VET process, aligned to the EQAVET quality cycle, indicative descriptors and EQAVET indicators. Beginning in March 2010, the EQARF was adapted to the national context and a proposal for a National Quality Assurance Framework in VET (NQAFVET) was developed together with quality assurance instruments for the VET system. Arising from these changes, Croatia, in 2010, began work on a new approach to quality assurance in VET, based on the principle that VET schools should take the lead by assessing themselves. NQAFVET breaks the work of schools down into six areas for assessment: planning and programming of work; teaching and support to learning; learning outcomes; material and human resources including CPD of staff; cooperation both within the VET school and with other stakeholders; and finally administration and management. Each is broken down further into quality areas, which are described by individual criteria. All are applied to initial VET. In 2011, schools started with self-assessment and the first annual reports were produced and analysed. To help schools, the Agency for VET and Adult Education developed a manual and an online tool called E-kvaliteta (http://e-kvaliteta.asso.hr) to help schools input their self-assessment data and plans for improvements. Both of these are evidence-based. The process enables schools to measure their performance against qualitative indicators and to generate reports. Once complete, schools can compare their results with those of other schools and use the tool to show which areas need to be improved.

A comprehensive national approach is now being refined further with a view to facilitating improvements to the different QA indicators and to establishing and ensuring correlation among some of the indicators (for example self-assessment and external evaluations). The Rulebook on Quality Assurance in VET is being prepared and implementation is envisaged in mid-2014. This Rulebook will encompass QA indicators and all of the measures to follow, and is expected to improve quality in the I-VET system.

VET in Croatia's education and training system

TERTIARY LEVEL

ADULT LEARNING/CONTINUING TRAINING
(outside the school system)

Continuing vocational training for a new qualification or update

EQF 5
Master craftsperson qualification exam

Training for unemployed and other vulnerable groups

Foreign language programmes

EQF 8
PhD programmes
ISCED 6

EQF 7
Post-master specialist studies

EQF 7
Integrated bachelor and master programmes (5 years)
ISCED 5A

EQF 7
Master progr. (1-2 years)

EQF 6
Bachelor programmes (3-4 years)
ISCED 5A

EQF 7
Specialist professional studies
ISCED 5B

POST-SECONDARY LEVEL

EQF 6
Professional studies

EQF 5
ISCED 5B

EQF 5
Development and training progr.
ISCED 5B

19+   13+

SECONDARY LEVEL

MATURA EXAMS

18   12
17   11
16   10
15   9

EQF 4
General education (gymnasium)
ISCED 3A

EQF 4 / EQF 4
School based programmes (4-5 years)
ISCED 3B

EQF 4
School based and apprenticeship progr. (3 years)
ISCED 3C

EQF 3
1-2 year pr.
EQF 2
ISCED 3C

14   8 (*)
12   6
10   4

EQF 1
Primary education (8 years)
ISCED 2A

AGE   YEARS in E&T

General education programmes	Possible progression route
VET programmes	Possible progression route, where prior VET knowledge may be recognised affecting the duration of the programme
Programmes combining VET and general education	Possible direct admission at the discretion of the school
Also available to adults (full- or part-time or distance education)	(*) End of compulsory education
Officially recognised vocational qualifications	Giving access to tertiary education
Qualifications allowing access to the next educational level	

NB: Conversion from ISCED to 2011 is ongoing.
Source: Cedefop and Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports

VET system in Croatia

Focus on: EQAVET Annual Forum 2014

The fifth EQAVET Annual Forum took place in Athens on March 26-27, 2014 and was hosted by The National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Orientation (EOPPEP) in Greece.

Twenty-five EU countries were represented at the Annual Forum. The Social Partners were represented by the European Trade Union confederation (ETUC), the European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (UEAPME) and the European Centre of Employers and Enterprises (CEEP). Observers from the European Credit system for VET (ECVET) network, Eurochambres, European Providers of Vocational Education and Training (EUproVET), the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe were also present. The European Development Centre for Vocational Education and Training (CEDEFOP) and the European Training Foundation (ETF) were also represented.

The Annual Forum was chaired by the European Commission, represented by Ms Dana Carmen Bachmann, Head of the Vocational Education and Training Policy Unit; Leonardo da Vinci Programme, DG Education and Culture, and Joan Santos, who was recently appointed deputy head of unit. It was opened by Antonios Glaros from EOPPEP. All three emphasised the importance of the EQAVET Recommendation and quality assurance as a means of responding to the current socio-economic challenges for education and training in the EU.

The Annual Forum was an opportunity for EQAVET members to discuss the priorities which the Network will consider when responding to the emerging policy needs at both EU and national levels. In this respect, the Annual Forum provided an opportunity for discussing, agreeing and drafting an input paper from EQAVET in relation to the public consultation process on the European Commission initiative, which aims Towards a European Area of Skills and Qualifications (EASQ). The aim of the public consultation is to collect views on the adequacy of the related European policies and instruments and on the potential benefits of developing an EASQ. The initiative aims to respond to the insufficiencies in the recognition and transparency of skills and qualifications, which are hindering the development of the right mix of skills and qualifications as well as the mobility needed to achieve a better match between skills and jobs in the European labour market. In addition, the initiative reflects the rapid socio-economic and technological changes which require flexible learning pathways, and the opportunities offered by technological development and internationalisation. This initiative has been developed within the context of the European Commission's communication 'Rethinking Education'.

Members of the Network agreed that the feedback to be submitted to the public consultation should be seen as the collective view of the Network and no particular comment should be attributed to any individual, member state or stakeholder group. They welcomed the EASQ proposal since it could increase the visibility and importance of VET and provide a new impetus for reforms in VET and quality assurance (and a need for increasing transparency and mutual understanding); and make progress towards greater coherence with the other European transparency tools and initiatives. This should be pursued for the benefit of learners and employers. The EASQ should be learner-centred. However, it was noted that the main challenges will be in relation to the implementation process in the national context, and to engaging with all relevant stakeholders. Both will require time and funding. In order to alleviate some of this burden, we need to ensure a clear methodology, timescale and "road-map" for implementation. The implementation issues need to be considered and developed at the beginning of the process rather than later.

Members agreed on five main messages of the EQAVET Network input on the EASQ:

1. the priority is to simplify and explain existing instruments rather than create new ones;

2. there is a need to quality assure the assessment process, based on learning outcomes;

3. it is more important to strengthen the quality assurance culture than create new indicators;

4. the implementation of the EASQ should include marketing and communication;

5. the EASQ needs to be built on what already works, with improved links between the existing European instruments.

The final draft of the EQAVET input on public consultation can be found on our website here:

http://eqavet.eu/gns/news/latest-news/14-04-10/The_EQAVET_network_s_feedback_to_the_public_consultation_on_the_European_Area_for_Skills_and_Qualifications.aspx

In addition, members had the opportunity to provide updates about current developments in the area of quality assurance in VET in their countries/organisations and **EXPRESS THEIR VIEWS ON HOW THE NETWORK CAN SUPPORT THIS WORK**. Here are some of the main messages from this session:

- EQAVET has been a catalyst for reform and modernisation of VET in many countries. Some countries are in the process of mapping their approach with the EQAVET indicative descriptors and indicators. Countries value the generic and tool-box aspect of the EQAVET Framework.

- The quality assurance processes related to and involved in the development of the learning outcomes approach for VET seem to be a priority in many countries (in particular in relation to the assessment process). The Network needs to reflect and address this area of concern.

- There is a need to clarify the work on quality assurance in relation to EQAVET and Annex 3 of EQF, at both EU and national levels, within the progress towards establishing NQFs.

- The above points call for greater cooperation and synergies with EQF and ECVET.

- There is a need to shift some of the focus and efforts from IVET to CVET and work-based learning as countries are making this move and need support. In these areas, the quality assurance of assessment, certification and the accreditation of providers, and the quality of teachers and trainers, are of key importance.

- These matters highlight the importance of focusing on flexible VET that providers can adjust to suit regional/local and labour market needs, realising a bottom-up approach that SMEs can benefit from.

- Member States value the cooperation and sharing of practices and knowledge developed during the years by the Network (peer-learning activities and working groups are considered to be of great value). This has contributed to increased mutual understanding, trust, transparency and mobility in VET across the EU. Participants commented that in some instances/activities it is important to cluster countries around areas of similar interest.

- One important focus is on quality assured effective transition pathways (school to work and vice versa) including to higher education.

- There is a need to reflect on the quality assurance elements that can successfully contribute to the recognition of prior learning and informal and non-formal learning.

- A priority is to work towards increasing the status and positive image of VET.

- There is a need to use available EU funds to develop support for Members States.

In addition, members discussed the Secretariat proposal on working groups for 2014-2015, which resulted in the agreement of the following:

- A Working Group will be established on 'EQAVET and the quality assurance approach in adult education in the context of Continuing VET'. The group will foster a common understanding of the principles/criteria and quality indicators relevant to CVET by building on the work developed by the EQAVET Network and the Thematic Group on Adult Learning (2011-2013); and will support the National Reference Points and other relevant stakeholders in addressing quality assurance issues relevant to CVET.

- A joint Working Group will be established on 'Integrating EQAVET and ECVET to strengthen the use of learning outcomes to increase mobility and the labour relevance of VET qualifications' with membership from the ECVET and EQAVET networks. The group will explore the issue of using learning outcomes to increase mobility and the labour relevance of VET qualifications, producing guidance on quality assurance that supports the design and recognition of learning outcomes and qualifications based on the ECVET principles. In addition, the group will produce a background paper to support peer-learning activity on "how VET providers address the issue of quality assurance of assessment procedures and transnational mobility", to be organised 2015.

Discussions and presentations at the Annual Forum are now available to view here:

http://www.eqavet.eu/gns/what-we-do/annual-forum.aspx

Click here to download or to view the videos:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CyClXE-6r8Q&feature=youtu.be

Uploaded by EQAVET to youtube.com

Sophie Weisswnage, Dana Carmen Bachmann, Sean Feerick, Antonios Glaros

EQAVET members enjoying a coffee break

EQAVET members in working groups discussion

The work of EQAVET Working Groups 2013: Results

Two working groups were established in 2013 in order to address the needs of national reference points (NRPs) on:

• Facilitating the development of a quality assurance (QA) approach to work-based learning (WBL) in line with EQAVET.

• Supporting VET systems to address the interrelation between EQAVET and existing quality management systems/tools.

EQAVET

European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training

An online guidance resource has been developed as a result, and is accessible from the homepage of the EQAVET website at www.eqavet.eu. The work achieved by the working groups in 2013 should be framed within the mid-term plan of the Bruges Communiqué in relation to EQAVET. This plan invites countries to

1. establish QA frameworks in accordance with EQAVET by 2014

2. establish – by the end of 2015 – common QA frameworks for VET providers, which also applies to WBL, which is compatible with the EQAVET Framework.

The new resource offers guidance in relation to these two issues, in order to support the efforts of NRPs and other relevant stakeholders to improve and implement their quality assurance systems in line with EQAVET. The new resource is similar in appearance and approach to the Online Quality Cycle tool developed by the working groups in 2012, i.e. it is a tool designed to provide user-friendly and interactive guidance, and can be further developed in order to respond to needs of policy context or members states as they develop their national approaches to the implementation of the Recommendation.

Visitors to Aligning a QA approach with EQAVET are offered an overview of the four modules or steps needed for the alignment process, together with practical support, advice and tools. There is an introduction to the guidance, a contextualisation and a statement of the rationale for undertaking the alignment exercise, and an explanation for users of how the guidance actually works. Mapping tables at system and provider levels were also developed by the working group, providing a methodology for those in the process of aligning a quality assurance approach with the general framework of EQAVET if they are using an approach based on either the EFQM Excellence Model or the ISO 9001 Standard.

The online guidance resource on QA for work based-learning in line with EQAVET presents the six building blocks for WBL. The building blocks are a set of simple 'calls for action' which can be undertaken by VET systems and providers in order to improve the quality assurance of WBL. These are based on an analysis of 25 case studies from 14 countries.

Events

EQAVET peer learning activity on the impact of quality assurance in IVET, 19-20 May 2014, Vienna

The EQAVET Secretariat and ARQA-VET (the National Reference Point for quality assurance in VET in Austria) organised this peer learning activity (PLA) which focused on measuring the impact of a quality assurance system that is compatible with the EQAVET Framework. The PLA did not look at how EQAVET operates and whether it is succeeding; rather the focus was on the lessons that could be learned by those considering how to evaluate the impact of quality assurance approaches used in initial VET.

The PLA provided an opportunity for discussion, reflection, and the sharing of knowledge and experience among participants and hosts. Contributions were made by the Austrian hosts, and by colleagues in Germany, the UK (Wales), Sweden and the Netherlands, describing their experiences of monitoring the impact of a VET quality assurance system. The PLA include a series of short presentations that provided a stimulus for discussion, and participants were encouraged to reflect on the policy and practice implications for their own approach to monitoring impact.

Here are some of the interesting issues/questions raised:

- what is effective practice in measuring the impact of quality assurance?

- what aspects of quality assurance have changed at the system level?

- what impact have these changes had on quality assurance?

- how have learners benefited from quality assurance?

The PLA's focus was at the system level though many questions arose at the VET provider level. As changes arising from the measurement of impact at the system level have implications at the VET provider level, it can be difficult to separate clearly these two aspects of provision. This is particularly the case when the measurement of impact affects how individual VET providers lead and manage their quality assurance processes. Before starting the process of measuring the impact of quality assurance, it is worth thinking about how the data will subsequently be used at both system and provider levels.

View the background paper, presentations at the PLA and the policy brief prepared as a result of the discussions that took place at the activity here.

http://eqavet.eu/gns/what-we-do/peer-learning-activities.aspx

Participants at the peer learning activity

Participants enjoying dinner offered by the Hertha Firnberg Schulen –School and College for Economy and Tourism

Sector Skills Alliances – Meeting skills needs through vocational education and training (VET) reform, stakeholder conference – 15 April 2014, Brussels

Addressing skills mismatches is one of the most urgent issues facing Europe today, with repercussions not only for economic growth and competitiveness, but also for social cohesion.

As underlined in the Commission's Rethinking Education Communication, European education and training systems continue to fall short of providing the right skills for employability, and are not working adequately with business or employers to bring the learning experience closer to the reality of the working environment. These skills mismatches are a growing concern for the competitiveness of European industry. The Bruges Communiqué for European cooperation in VET recognises that part of the solution may be found in high quality VET systems, in which the active participation of employers and a strong element of work-based learning facilitate young people's transition to work.

To support stakeholder efforts to respond to the skills challenge through VET reform, the European Commission in 2012 provided funding for four pilot Sector Skills Alliances. The Alliances build on the experience of the Leonardo da Vinci programme for European VET cooperation and are working to develop training in four economic sectors: automotive manufacturing, elderly care, sustainable construction and tourism. Sector Skills Alliances are now one of the actions supported by the Erasmus+ programme

for cooperation on education, training, youth and sport; around 175 projects of this type will be supported between now and 2020.

On 15 April 2014, the European Commission organised a conference in order to share the results achieved so far by the four pilot Alliances. The conference brought together project coordinators of Sector Skills Alliances, European and national associations in the sectors of automotive manufacturing, elderly care, sustainable construction and tourism, European and national networks of VET providers, bodies with regulatory functions in member states' VET systems, experts who work on the European transparency and recognition tools for VET (EQF, EQAVET and ECVET) and national and European policymakers concerned with sectoral policies.

Participants were invited to discuss and evaluate the progress of the pilot Sector Skills Alliances, identify gaps that could be filled by Erasmus+, and draw conclusions for European sector policies.

Conference programme and presentations are available here:

https://skills-alliances-conference.teamwork.fr/en/programme

What's New

A study on quality assurance in continuous VET and on the future development of EQAVET is now available

The study, which was commissioned by the EU Commission and carried out by GHK, maps the quality assurance instruments in continuous VET (CVET) in ten selected European Member States and compares them with the EQAVET Framework. The study describes how 10 selected countries (Austria, Belgium-fr, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, The Netherlands, and UK-England) carry out quality assurance at system and provider level in CVET. The study is based on a review of 33 specific quality assurance measures or instruments, and is supplemented by 10 country reports (Annexes 1-10) and six case studies (Annexes 11-16). In addition, the study analyses possible options for the future development of EQAVET.

The study also provides an analysis of possible future directions for EQAVET and gives a range of options to strengthen the implementation of the EQAVET Framework. The analysis identifies options that imply changes to the current framework as embedded in the Annexes of the EQAVET Recommendation.

The analysis of future scenarios for EQAVET produced the following possible uses of the EQAVET framework:

• Continue mutual learning and exchange in its current form (status quo);

• Use the EQAVET indicators as a framework to collect data on performance of VET systems;

- Use the framework to conduct peer reviews of quality assurance systems;

- Use the framework to conduct peer reviews of VET providers;

- Issue a label on compliance with EQAVET to VET providers, using the descriptors as a standard/criteria;

- Organise a prize for quality assurance using the EQAVET provider-level descriptors as a standard;

- Make use of EQAVET as a requirement for participation in the future programme replacing the lifelong learning programme.

It also discusses the possibility of evolving the EQAVET Framework. Two options were considered:

1. Making EQAVET and the European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance in higher education more convergent; or

2. Developing EQAVET into a meta-framework which contains fewer key principles than the current descriptors and indicators but distinguishes more clearly between aspects of quality assurance that are comparable to the way in which quality assurance is structured nationally. It should be noted that the different scenarios are not mutually exclusive and could be combined.

For each scenario, the report discusses possible implications and likelihood. Feedback to the scenarios showed that interviewees thought it important that EQAVET would adhere to its main principles and remain a voluntary instrument with a 'toolbox' character.

Scenarios based on peer review, peer learning and the creation of awareness of quality and quality standards (e.g. prizes for excellence in VET) received positive feedback.

Scenarios that would give the instrument a de facto prescriptive character (e.g. data collection on the EQAVET indicators across Europe) did not receive positive feedback.

Study on quality assurance in continuous VET and on future development of EQAVET

Final Report

July 2013

EQAVET

European Quality Assurance
in Vocational Education and Training