
EQAVET Work Programme 2018-2019



EQAVET Network

*Collaboration – the key to
improvement and success*

*Developing, disseminating and promoting best European practice in
the field of quality assurance in VET at system and provider levels by
supporting the implementation of the EQAVET Recommendation and
fostering sustainable and inclusive activities*



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COLLABORATION – THE KEY TO IMPROVEMENT AND SUCCESS

Successive EQAVET programmes since 2010 (and before as ENQA-VET) have defined the **EQAVET mission** as one which seeks: to develop, disseminate and promote best European practice in the field of quality assurance in VET at system and provider levels by supporting the implementation of the EQAVET Recommendation and fostering sustainable and inclusive activities - task oriented cooperation among relevant stakeholders at different levels.

Similarly, the **vision of EQAVET** has been defined as one which is: to support the implementation of the EQAVET Recommendation by working collectively to build a shared understanding of quality assurance and development among member countries and social partners through exchanging experiences and generating new insights that can influence policy and practice at national and local levels.

In keeping with this vision and mission and in response to current EU policy, this work programme sets out the work of the EQAVET Network in 2018-2019.

New Skills Agenda - the context for change

Socio-economical context and challenges*

70 million Europeans

lack adequate reading, writing skills, numeracy and digital skills, putting them at risk of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion

More than half of the 12 million

long-term unemployed are considered as low-skilled

40% of European employers

have difficulty finding people with the skills they need to grow and innovate

*[The New Skills Agenda for Europa](#) - Working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness

The introduction and use of the EQAVET Recommendation in EU Member States

The flexible approach of EQAVET

has facilitated its use but at the same time has reduced its potential as a common language and conceptual framework across countries, limiting its contribution to transparency *

While the school-based aspects of QA in VET are well covered by EQAVET, the Framework does not provide specific guidance for QA of work-based learning**

On average VET systems and providers in the EU-28 are less systematically using the EQAVET descriptors for the evaluation and review phases than for the planning and implementation phases ***

*[The Report of the Commission on the implementation of EQAVET to the EU Parliament and Council](#) in 2014

**[The external evaluation of EQAVET](#) undertaken by ICF-GHK in 2013

***[The results of the Secretariat survey 2016](#)

The European Commission adopted a [New Skills Agenda for Europe](#) (NSA) in June 2016. This proposes ten actions to help equip people in Europe with better skills. It seeks to ensure that people develop a broad set of skills from early on in life and make the most of Europe's human capital which will ultimately boost employability, competitiveness and growth in Europe. The aim is to ensure that the right training, the right skills and the right support is available to people in the European Union. This will be achieved by increasing skill levels, promoting transversal skills and finding ways to better anticipate the labour market's needs, including approaches based on dialogue with industry.

The ten actions are grouped in three strands and the Commission invites Member States, social partners, industry and other stakeholders to work together to:

- improve the quality and relevance of skills formation;
- make skills more visible and comparable;
- improve skills intelligence and information for better career choices.

As part of the first strand, the Commission calls for 'Making VET a first choice' by supporting VET modernisation, such as the possible revision of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET)¹.

What is happening?

The EQAVET Recommendation was approved by the EU Council and Parliament in 2009. It is based on the work developed through a long process of European cooperation in quality assurance in VET that began in 2001 (with the establishment of the European Forum for QA in VET) and the development of the CQAF in 2004².

This long process has been characterised as one that seeks to improve the quality of VET and thereby provide an effective service to EU societies and economies, and others with an interest in the quality assurance of VET

In 2015 the Network developed a work plan designed to improve the quality of VET and its relevance for the labour market. The establishment of a working group to [complement EQAVET](#) considered seven priorities which the Network felt were not sufficiently addressed by the EQAVET Framework. This work (the development of new and revised indicative descriptors – often referred to as EQAVET+) provides a strong signal that the Network wishes to ensure its work continues to contribute to the important strategic priority of ensuring VET contributes to increased employability and social inclusion of citizens.

Therefore, in the context provided by the New Skills Agenda, the Commission has suggested a possible revision of EQAVET. While it is too early to determine the shape of any such revision it is important that the Network responds proactively and position EQAVET to respond to any major reform of VET policy at EU level. This approach builds on the Network's experience since the beginning of the Copenhagen Process.

Bringing together expertise, knowledge and best practices

The proposed work programme is built on using the materials and resources, expertise and knowledge developed over the years while producing new information that supports the development of quality assurance processes. This should help the Network respond to the needs of the emerging policy context and possible changes.

¹ [The New Skills Agenda for Europe](#) - Working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness

² For further information on the history of EU cooperation in VET visit: <http://www.eqavet.eu/gns/policy-context/european-policy/key-milstones.aspx>

The proposed approach enables the Network to provide flexible and targeted responses to member state priorities and reflect on emerging developments relating to quality assurance in VET. This is combined with the more traditional support provided by the Network, based on developing guidelines through the organisation of activities that provide opportunities for sharing and exchanging knowledge and good practice.

Underpinning the plan is the need to maintain high levels of transparency and accountability while providing opportunities for learning, reflection and sharing.

The focus of the work in 2018-2019

2018-2019 will be an important transition period to possible new ways of addressing VET at the EU level in which the role of quality assurance should continue to be an important focus. In this transition period, the EQAVET Network has an important role to play in contributing to emerging policy developments.

The work programme will provide a new boost for EQAVET and enable the Network to develop its evidence base for feeding into the developing policy context and any associated changes in governance, methodology and focus which are agreed by the Council.

During 2018-2019 we will build on the context provided by the New Skills Agenda for Europe to better understand the current priorities for national improvement and the QA support required by Member States and National Reference Points (NRPs).

Work programme 2018-2019

The work programme combines the use of well-established methodologies for communication and sharing of practices with a new a more strategic approach to our work which will position EQAVET clearly in relation to emerging policy needs. This will create an evidence base that is capable of contributing to the broader policy development context and any revision of legislative instruments which may be proposed.

The work programme has been organised under three main headings:

- 1. support the on-going reflection on the key role of QA in VET in the EU policy context and initiatives**

- 2. support the work of NRPs in order to design QA systems, services and processes for VET in key areas**

- 3. support the deepening of a culture of continuous QA improvement by addressing the needs of countries**

All three areas are interlinked and the actions in either of three will feed and have an impact on the other. This close relationship will be acknowledged and reflected in the organisation of the Network's major plenary events, namely:

- an annual EQAVET Forum organised within the *EU VET Skills Week* initiative. The Forum is designed to enable policy makers, VET practitioners, associations of VET providers, social partners and EQAVET users to reflect on how their approaches and experience of working with quality assurance systems

based on EQAVET could contribute to the development of excellence in VET. It provides an opportunity to disseminate the work of the Network to a wider audience;

- an Annual EQAVET Network Meeting which is designed to bring together all members of the Network in order to foster networking; and agree and reflect on progress made and assess results and outcomes of the ongoing work undertaken;
- exploiting the information provided by the EQAVET Secretariat 2016 survey to support ongoing work and contributions to the evolving EU policy process and preparing for the survey exercise to be launched in 2018;
- two meetings per annum of the EQAVET Steering Committee.

The following overview of actions to address these three main headings:

1. Reflect strategically on the key role of QA in VET in the EU policy context

<p>Rationale</p> <p>Key terms: <i>strategic thinking, cooperation, synergy</i></p>	<p>Establish a working group to reflect strategically on how EQAVET can contribute to emerging policy developments in order to ensure that the QA of VET across the ET2020 process and its successors is strengthened.</p> <p>This group will take account of existing European developments (e.g. the Quality and Effectiveness Framework for Apprenticeships, the EQF etc.) and new developments in Member States e.g. higher level apprenticeships.</p> <p>It will also review the existing evidence of implementation to prepare early ideas on any revised EQAVET Recommendation.</p> <p>The working group will meet up to four occasions between late 2017 and mid 2018 in a Member State. Member States are responsible for covering the expenses of their participation.</p> <p>Stakeholders from other related EU initiatives will be invited to participate.</p>
<p>We will aim to address this objective by:</p>	<p>As quality assurance plays a crucial role in actions aiming at improving and reforming VET EQAVET has a major contribution to make when VET initiatives and policies are developed.</p> <p>The reflections and material developed by the EQAVET Network have addressed many areas which have been identified as a priority at EU and national level. It will be important to ensure that we capitalise on this work particularly in relation to the areas covered in EQAVET+, on work based learning, adult learning etc.</p> <p>The work to be developed in this area should <u>focus on a strategic reflection</u> on how quality assurance of VET could be strengthened at a European level.</p>
<p>We will further this objective by:</p>	<p>It is important that the Network provides the expertise and a new boost that ensures that EQAVET is feeding into the developing policy context and any associated future changes in governance, methodology and focus.</p>

2. Support the work of NRPs in order to design QA systems, services and processes for VET in key areas

<p>Rationale</p> <p>Key terms: <i>New Skills Agenda, enhancing QA, VET providers</i></p>	<p>To develop and organise 'enhanced peer learning activities'.</p> <p>Peer learning activities (PLA) have proven a valuable means of enabling the exchange and development of new knowledge.</p> <p>The objectives of a peer learning activity are three fold:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ contribute to strengthening NRPs and ensuring they are supported to fulfil their role in a wide diversity of contexts; ▪ enhance cooperative work between NRPs and stakeholders, including social partners and those providing VET; ▪ provide NRPs with an appropriate environment where they can cooperate and learn from each other's experiences and expertise. <p>Based on feedback on PLAs collected by the Secretariat over the years (the survey of NRPs on the identification of topics for PLAs and the so called 'post-activity questionnaire' completed by participants of PLAs) it is proposed that EQAVET <u>PLAs should be enhanced</u> by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - extending the time of the activity up to two full working days; - including a 'site visit' linked to the topic of the PLA, organised by the host country and integrated into the programme (participants visit a VET school, training centre, company etc. - preferably in the afternoon of day 1. This allows for: presentations of the case studies in the morning of day 1, followed by the site visit and time for plenary reflection. The activity continues in day 2 with further presentations and discussions based on informed insights provided in day 1). The site visits would enable a direct engagement with practitioners and learners and enable a comprehensive reflection on how policy is implemented. <p>Two PLAs will be organised in each year of the 2018-2019 work plan.</p>
<p>We will aim to address this objective by:</p>	<p>The <u>thematic areas</u> proposed for the PLAs are based on those identified by NRPs through the questionnaire issued by the Secretariat in early 2017 and other sources of information³.</p> <p>The proposed topics for PLAs in 2018-2019 are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Quality assurance procedures for work-based learning (WBL) at provider level in line with EQAVET focusing on developing national guidelines for self-assessment – <u>key element</u>: increase engagement with employers.

³ New EU policy context provided by the EU New Skills Agenda (NSA); The 1st year implementation of the Strategic plan 2016-2017 and work of the working group on 'Complementing EQAVET'; ore-initial results of Secretariat survey 2016; reflections of NRPs at events organised within the ERASMUS+ grant 2015-2016 at which the Secretariat was present; ad hoc expert meeting and Commission on 28/02/2017

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Involving teachers and trainers; and learners in the QA processes – <u>key outcomes</u>: guidelines at provider level, IVET and CVET sectors. ▪ How quality assurance processes can be used to make VET more attractive. ▪ Higher VET and the role of quality assurance– <u>key focus</u>: level 5 to 7 of EQF provided outside the HE sector/provision.
We will further develop this objective by:	<p>PLAs should focus on the review phase relevant to the topic of each PLA (rather than how to do and implement measures in each area. The focus should be on how these measures are used to improve provision including an effective the use of data).</p> <p>Each PLA should support the development of VET which focuses on the learning outcomes approach; and promotes greater visibility of good labour market outcomes of VET.</p> <p>The reflection at the PLA should be undertaken from the perspective of practitioners (in VET schools and businesses) or people working on the ground rather than those at the system level; and the impact that actions have on end-users/actors or front-line personnel within the work of VET providers – the inclusion of a ‘site visit’ in each PLA supports this objective.</p> <p>From the perspective of these actors, the key areas are accreditation, assessment, the teaching and learning processes, establishing partnerships etc. These are particularly important in the day to day work of VET providers.</p> <p>Intermediary bodies –such as regional institutions connected to VET providers should be involved.</p>
We will achieve this objective by:	The new methodology for organising PLAs ensures that for each thematic area there is an in-depth reflection and sharing of knowledge. In addition each PLA considers the views and perspectives of all relevant stakeholders, particularly by ensuring the participation and involvement of front-line actors.

3. Support the development of a culture of continuous QA improvement by addressing the needs of countries

Rationale	To develop and organise activities by a host country with the support of peer countries and/or an EU expert.
Key terms: <i>transparency, accountability, national approach to QA, toolbox</i>	<p>In spite of common features, the challenges in QA in VET are in many cases dependent on the national or regional circumstances and conditions. Given this context, it can be useful to develop activities which focus on the specific local conditions. In these activities, peer countries or a EU expert can provide feedback and external input. At the same time, lessons learned from such country specific cases can be shared within the EQAVET Network.</p> <p>These activities can be financed within the framework of the ERASMUS+ grants for EQAVET NRPs.</p>

We will aim to address this objective by:	<p>An NRP support methodology could be developed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ by offering expert input by EQAVET members and/or experts with expertise in certain topic to NRPs undertaking their ERASMUS + work programme on the basis of their needs;▪ such support could include advice, meetings with or peer visits to the NRP (or other activities which meet the needs of the member state);▪ the EQAVET Secretariat facilitates the organisation of the support; but it is not in a position to finance the activity.
We will further this objective by:	<p>This approach will enable expertise in the Network to be used for targeted support based on specific country needs. In addition the reflection and discussion between peers and the host country making the offer could serve as an opportunity to reflect on how the EQAVET Framework has supported and continues to support policy development while respecting the flexible nature of EQAVET.</p>
