

European Network on Quality Assurance in VET

Work Programme

Final

2008 - 2009

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1 Introduction

In November 2002, the European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training meeting in Copenhagen agreed “*to increase voluntary cooperation in vocational education and training, in order to promote mutual trust, transparency and recognition of competences and qualifications, and thereby establishing a basis for increasing mobility and facilitating access to lifelong learning*”.

“Promoting cooperation in quality assurance with particular focus on exchange of models and methods, as well as common criteria and principles for quality in vocational education and training” was seen as a key priority in the Copenhagen Declaration.

The European Network on Quality Assurance in VET was established by the European Commission in October 2005 to support the implementation of the above declaration.

The main purpose of the Network is to create a structured and sustainable platform for member countries to exchange information and experience, debate, mutual learning and consensus building.

In 2007 the European Commission agreed to designate a grant of up to €2m to the Network as activity based funding. The funding is intended to enable the Network to plan, manage, organise and resource its activities for 2008 and 2009. The Grant Agreement process includes an application to be made by the Network, followed by an evaluation by the Commission. The application must include a robust and relevant Work Programme for 2008-2009.

This paper sets out a programme of work for the European Network on QA in VET for 2008 -2009. In doing so it attempts to confront the challenges and maximise the opportunities facing Europe and the Network with regard to Quality Assurance in VET within the stated timeframe. It also sets out to ensure sustainability beyond 2009.

The Work Programme is founded on the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) principle, facilitating member countries to work together towards the achievement of common priorities by establishing best practice, common principles and guidelines, and the use of indicators to evaluate their activities and monitor their progress towards fulfilling the common priorities and objectives.

It builds on existing strengths and areas of expertise and looks forward to new developments and trends and is sufficiently flexible to enable the Network to effectively respond to new priorities as they emerge.

Specifically the Work Programme will enable the Network to:

- add significant value to the development of quality assurance within VET across Europe through European cooperation
- position itself as a key player in the area of QA
- promote the development of synergies and avoid duplication of work across a range of European agencies, organisations and Networks.

2 Mission

ENQA-VET's mission is to develop, disseminate and promote best European practice and governance in the field of QA in VET at systems and provider's level by:

- working as a collective to build a shared understanding of quality assurance and development among, member countries, social partners, regulatory/national authorities and providers
- fostering sustainable and inclusive activity oriented cooperation among relevant stakeholders at different levels
- establishing a common platform, common guidelines and criteria for QA on which mutual trust can be solidly built
- involving relevant stakeholders in developing and promoting common instruments and indicators.
- working with general and higher education authorities to further develop and support entire education and training systems within and across Europe.

3 Vision

By 2010 ENQA-VET will have made a major contribution to:

- a) the development of a culture of QA and continuous improvement across the European Union and other participating countries
- b) building capacity within systems and providers
- c) improving the status and attractiveness of vocational education and training in Europe.

The Network will be an organisation of national authorities and agencies across Europe sharing a common understanding and application of QA in VET.

Providers within and across Europe will be quality assured, according to common principles and guidelines, to deliver relevant and appropriate education and training programmes for the knowledge based European economy.

Mobility will be supported and enhanced by learner and worker exchanges based on effective mutual trust.

Europe will be a world class provider of quality assured, vocational education and training programmes.

4 Methodology

The Networks operational methodology will include:

- working in partnership with member states and participating countries, the Commission, the Social Partners, CEDEFOP, the ETF and other agencies and stakeholders to achieve the stated aims and objectives (see section 5 and 6).
- systematic planning, management, and reporting on all activities.
- the establishment of Thematic groups. Thematic Groups will be established to consider and develop tools, instruments, guidelines as set out in section 8. The Thematic groups will be comprised of experts from participating countries. They will carry out their activities consistent with operational guidelines.
- the commissioning of studies and the organising of Peer Learning visits, conferences and dissemination activities

5 Aims

The Network aims to:

- actively support the Copenhagen process
- strengthen European cooperation in the area of QA in VET
- support member states and participating countries to develop and reform their own systems
- improve the mobility of learners and workers across Europe

6 Objectives

The Network has identified 5 key objectives.

- Objective 1 Build sustainable European cooperation and exchange of good practice with regard to QA in VET, within and among member countries; between VET and Higher Education; and between VET organisations/agencies and other key stakeholders
- Objective 2 Support the introduction and implementation of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework
- Objective 3 Contribute to European policy developments and reviews regarding QA
- Objective 4 Promote the effective use of communications to increase awareness and understanding of Quality Assurance, the Network and its activities
- Objective 5 Meet the expectations of member states and participating countries, the Commission, partner organisations and agencies and other stakeholders

7 Actions

Objective 1 Build sustainable European cooperation and exchange of good practice with regard to QA in VET, within and among member countries; between VET and Higher Education; and between VET organisations/agencies and other key stakeholders

Actions: Put in place appropriate processes, procedures and methodologies to ensure maximum country involvement in activities.
Agree common priorities, objectives and actions.
Establish up to 4 Thematic Groups based on common priorities and objectives and involving as many countries as possible.
Organise a range of peer learning visits (up to 4 per year).
Promote the establishment of National QA Reference Points.
Support the networking of NQARPs eg organise seminars.
Promote and support Peer Review activities.
Develop a framework/process/structure for Peer Reviews.
Compile and maintain a register of Peer Review experts.
Build links/bridges with key partners eg in Higher Education.
Organise an international Conference.
Develop a Work Programme and establish a funding stream for 2010-2012 (ie the next phase).

Objective 2 Support the introduction and implementation of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF)

Actions: Develop common guidelines, criteria, instruments and tools to support the implementation of the EQARF at national level, specifically in relation to quality assurance models, internal and external monitoring, measurement and quality improvement.
Identify and exchange models of good quality practice.
Facilitate and support dissemination at national level.
Commission a study on the application, impact, and outcomes/results of self-evaluations and reviews in VET internationally.

Objective 3 Contribute to European policy developments and reviews regarding QA

Actions: Participate in a range of national and international Conferences and working groups eg regarding EQARF, EQF, ECVET.
Contribute to national and international research papers and studies.
Contribute to existing EU and international related policy debates.
Organise an international Conference.
Initiate new policy areas for consideration eg regarding Quality Improvement or Enhancement; Quality Mark; Q Charter; Quality or results related funding.

Objective 4 Promote the effective use of communications to increase awareness and understanding of Quality Assurance, the Network and its activities

Actions: Develop a communications strategy.
Develop an interactive website.
Promote further engagement with CEDEFOP, the ETF and other partners.
Support NQARPs dissemination activities.

Objective 5 Meet the expectations of member states and participating countries, the Commission, partner organisations and agencies and other stakeholders

Actions: Establish a new secretariat/unit and introduce quality assured and effective work practices to ensure efficient management and coordination of the Work Programme.
Systematically plan the implementation of the Work Programme 2008-2009.
Develop criteria for the engagement of experts and the delivery of products.
Put in place appropriate guidelines for the operations of the networks activities including for the operations of Thematic groups, peer learning visits, the commissioning of studies etc.
Implement best practice financial guidelines.
Monitor and review progress towards the achievement of the Networks objectives and actions.

8 Deliverables (Products)

By the end of 2009 the following will be achieved:

1. Quality guidelines, criteria, instruments and tools for systems and providers
2. Three research studies
3. Eight Peer Learning visits and reports
4. Learning from Peer Learning: An Evaluation Report **(NEW)**
5. A Peer Review Framework
6. Two international conferences
7. Active participation in (and in some cases funding the transnational dimension of) approximately 10/15 national conferences on related topics eg European cooperation in QA in VET, the implementation of the EQARF.
8. Complete own Self Evaluation Report ie internal monitoring of progress against plan
9. A Work Programme and funding stream for 2010-2012

For further details see Appendix 1.

9 Resources

The financial resources of the Network comprise a Grant allocation of up to €2m from the European Commission (75%) and 600,000 euro (25%) from member states and participating countries.

10 Quality indicators

The success of the Network will be determined by the application of the following quality indicators:

Increase in the number of participating countries
Increase in the number of participants involved in the Networks activities per country
Increase awareness of the EQARF
Completion of Work the Programme 2008-2009
Operating within budget and according to best practice guidelines

11 Timelines

January – June 2008

Agree common priorities, objectives and actions.
Establish a new secretariat/unit and introduce quality assured and effective work practices.
Develop a communications strategy and a website.
Establish 4 Thematic Groups.
Systematically plan the implementation of the Work Programme 2008-2009.
Develop criteria for the engagement of experts and the delivery of products.
Put in place appropriate guidelines for the operations of the networks activities including for the operations of Thematic groups, peer learning visits, the commissioning of studies etc.
Put in place best practice financial guidelines.
Put in place best practice governance arrangements.
Commission a range of studies.
Organise two peer learning visits and publish reports.
Draft the Networks first Progress Report.

July – December 2008

Commence the establishment of a process and structure for Peer Reviews.
Develop a process for own Self evaluation.
Establish a Work Programme Committee 2010-2012.
Organise a meeting of National QARPs.
Participate in a range of national conferences.
Organise two peer learning visits and publish reports.
Organise an international Conference.
Draft the Networks second Progress Report.

January – June 2009

Publication of Interim Reports including draft Guidelines, draft report on Studies etc
Publish a register of Peer Review experts
Organise two peer learning visits and publish reports
Draft the Networks third Progress Report
Prepare own Self Evaluation Report

July – December 2009

Publish Quality guidelines, criteria, instruments and tools for VET systems and providers
Organise a meeting of National QARPs.
Organise two Peer Learning visits and publish reports.
Organise an international Conference.
Publish *Learning from Peer Learning: Evaluation Report*
Draft the Networks final Progress Report.
Publish own Self Evaluation Report.
Finalise a Work Programme for 2010-2012.

Annex 1 Main deliverables/products

Quality guidelines, criteria, instruments and tools for VET systems and providers: Overview

The guidelines will assist participating countries at systems and providers level when implementing the new European Quality Assurance Reference Framework. They will reference best practice with regard to the main components of the EQARF ie models, monitoring (internal and external) and measurement (indicators). They will be prepared in a generic format (ie non prescriptive) and can be applied by participating countries to initial, continuing, adult education and training, apprenticeship, work-based systems as appropriate to the member countries system and provision. The guidelines may also incorporate a Q Charter.

The guidelines will be further enhanced with the development of criteria, instruments and tools to support the EQARF.

Learning from Peer Learning: Evaluation Report

This evaluation report will review the Networks Peer Learning activity. It will outline the purpose and context for the activity, describe and evaluate all 8 Peer Learning case studies (undertaken during 2008-2009 – see below), identify key findings and learning points (across the 8 case studies), draw conclusions (including identify and measure impacts), explore the potential of new forms of Peer Learning activities eg online collaboration and make recommendations for the future development of Peer Learning.

Proposed list of Peer Learning topics (The aim is to organise 8 Peer Learning visits during 2008-2009)

Each Peer Learning visit will be focused on the quality assurance aspect of the activities identified below:

- Work based learning
- Recognition of Prior Learning
- Assessment of learners
- Quality linked Funding of VET systems
- Impact of the CQAF
- Peer Reviews
- External evaluations
- Accreditation
- Monitoring and evaluation systems
- Quality Management Systems (setting targets and measuring outcomes/metrics)
- Meeting labour market needs
- Assessing key competences
- Training and development of teachers
- Making VET more attractive
- Links between Higher Education and VET
- [Additional suggestions welcome]

**Proposed list of topics for Research Studies
(The aim is to commission 3 studies during 2008-2009)**

Each study will focus on the quality assurance aspect of the topics identified below:

Quality assuring work based learning
Application and impact of self evaluation in VET
External evaluations
Impacts of the CQAF
Risks and/or early warning systems
[Additional suggestions welcome]

**Proposed subjects for the establishment of Thematic Groups
(The aim is to establish 4 Thematic Groups)**

Each Group will focus on the quality assurance aspect of the subjects identified below;

Quality Guidelines for VET systems and providers
Indicators (existing indicators and the development of new quality indicators to measure the impact of quality management)
Implementing Peer Review methodologies
Recognising/rewarding good practice
Quality assured assessment procedures (including setting of examinations)
Communications/Public Relations
Incentives to improve QA in VET
Transparency and accountability
[Additional suggestions welcome]

Annex 2

Distribution of activities by number of countries leading and participating

Activities	Number of events	Number of countries leading	Number of countries directly participating per event	Number of countries benefiting from activity and output
Peer Learning	8	8	15	All
Studies	3	3	10 -15	All
Thematic Groups	4	4	12	All
Conferences	2	2	All	All
Seminars/workshops	2	2	15	All

Appendix 2

List of partner countries (23)

Austria
Cyprus
Czech Republic
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
France
Germany
Hungary
Ireland (lead partner/contractor)
Italy
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Malta
Norway
Netherlands
Portugal
Romania
Sweden
Spain
Slovenia
Slovakia
UK