



CEDEFOP

European Centre for the Development
of Vocational Training

Principles and Indicators for quality.

Continuity, Consolidation and Change

Towards a European era of Vocational Education and Training.

16-17 March, 2009 – Thessaloniki, Greece

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The EU strategy for Quality in VET

Quality in vocational education and training has been on the agenda for many years in all the Member States.

- Copenhagen Declaration (30 Nov 2002): promoting quality assurance as a priority to enhance cooperation in VET;
- Copenhagen Process: Technical Working Group on Quality in VET;
- The Maastricht Communiqué (14 Dec 2004): emphasis on the implementation of the European tools developed so far;
- The Helsinki Communiqué (5 Dec 2006): emphasis on the attractiveness and quality of VET further development, testing, implementation of common tools and mutual learning;

This focus on quality is in line with the target set by the Barcelona European Council in 2002 of making Europe's education and training systems a world quality reference by



What is quality?

Quality is a construction and not a clearly and well defined concept.

In general terms a service or a product is considered of high quality, if it fulfils or even surpasses our expectations.

Different stakeholders with different interests and expectations perceive quality in a different way.

At EU level, quality is considered a modernisation factor of the VET systems while rendering them more accountable on their effectiveness. QA ensures the transparency of processes and procedures facilitating mutual understanding and trust between highly diverse and complex systems. QA can serve as a common reference to ensure consistency between actions/actors at all levels, especially with reference to the EU



Quality and the EU VET Package

Quality assurance in VET should play a pivotal role in responding to the demand for high level qualifications. Workers, learners and trainers should be able to accumulate their formal, non-formal and informal learning outcomes and benefit from their recognition in whatever country and system they acquired them on the basis of the EU tools:

EQARF, EQF, Europass, ECVET, EU common principles for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, the Mobility Quality Charter and human resources development issues.

The implementation of those tools entails the use of QA



The European approach to quality in VET

One policy tool:

- Recommendation of the E.P. and the Council on the establishment of an European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (proposal presented in 2008, co-decision process, adoption: mid 2009) EQARF (COM (2008) 179 final).

Four complementing pillars:

- A systematic framework for quality assurance (CQAF);
- A European network for sustainable cooperation on QA in VET of voluntary nature with 23 Member States (ENQA-VET);
- Quality assurance national reference points;
- A virtual community: <http://communities.cedefop.europa.eu/quality>



What is EQARF?

It is a Framework to serve as a reference instrument to help Member States to support and monitor continuous improvement of their VET systems. It is to be used as a *translation device* for facilitating the transparency of VET systems and provision throughout Europe. Its use is voluntary.

It is based on a «quality cycle» that includes: planning, implementation, evaluation/assessment, feedback and review.

It provides a systemic approach to quality, covering and interrelating all VET levels and actors. It gives strong emphasis to monitoring, combining internal and external evaluation supported by measurement/indicators. It is a basis for further developments to be made through cooperation at European, national, regional and local levels.



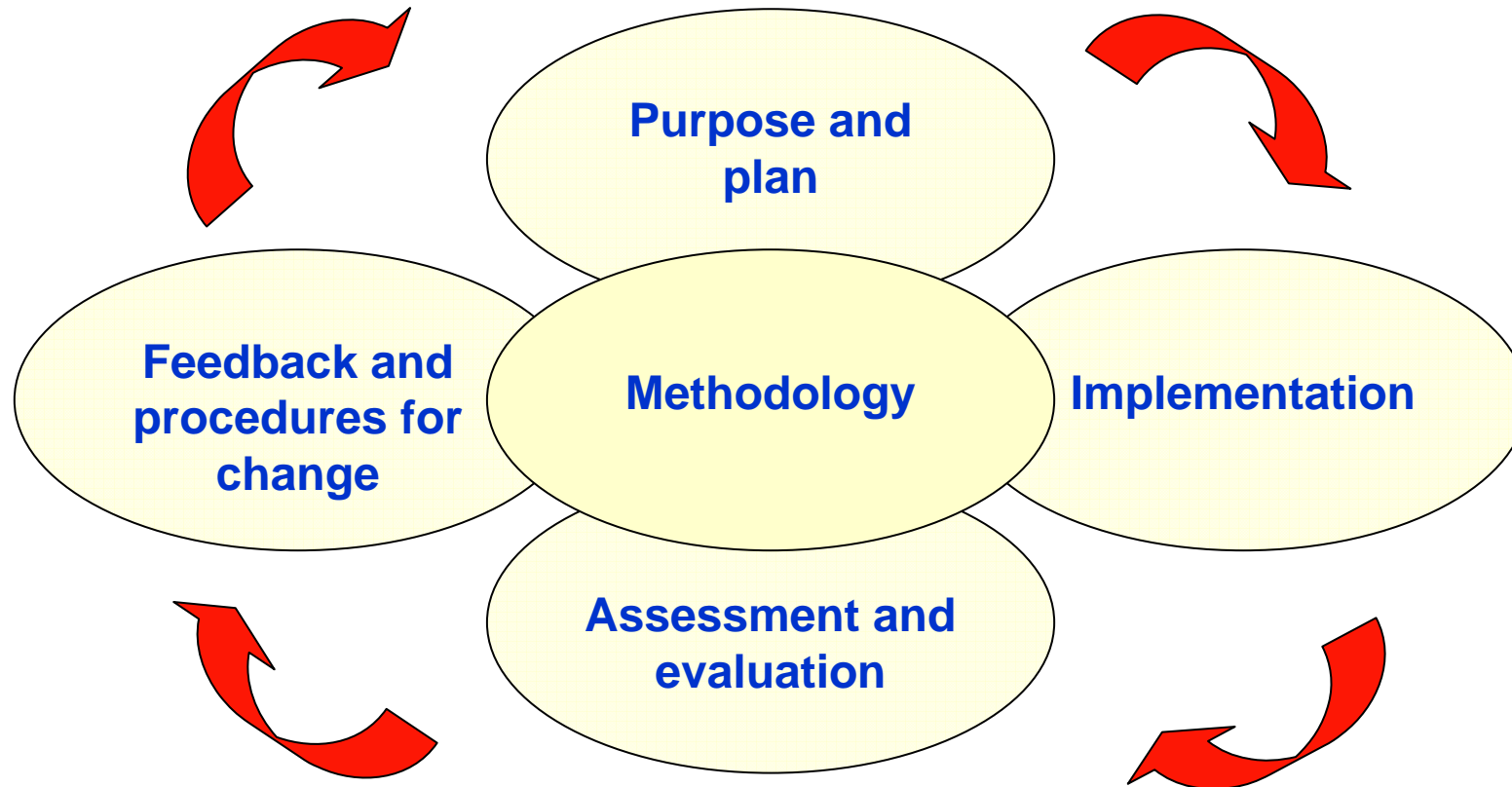
EQARF: Why a Framework?

The diversity of developments across countries entails a growing need for common European references aimed at increasing transparency and consistency between Member States' policy initiatives, while fully respecting their responsibility for the governance of the systems.

- 4 years reporting period possible revision after this period;
- participation of government representatives in future European network;
- voluntary character;
- aggregation of indicators at national level to be used as a tool box, descriptors and indicators for self-evaluation of VET providers and not for comparison between Member States.



The EQARF: a systematic framework for QA





The EQARF tools

- **Guide** for self-assessment of VET providers (available in English, Italian, Bulgarian and Romanian);
- A coherent **set of 10 inter-related quality indicators**;
- **Quality criteria** for implementing the model;
- **Glossary** EN/FR.



EQARF 4 Quality criteria

- *Planning* reflects a strategic vision shared by the relevant stakeholders and includes explicit goals/objectives, actions and indicators;
- *Implementation* plans are devised in consultation with stakeholders and include explicit principles;
- *Evaluation* of outcomes and processes is regularly carried out and supported by measurement;
- *Review*.

43 Indicative descriptors at system and VET provider levels facilitate the implementation of the Framework.



EQARF: the indicators

- Relevance of quality assurance systems for VET providers (% with internal QA systems and % of accredited VET providers);
- Investment in training of teachers and trainers (% participating in further training and amount of funds invested);
- Participation rate in VET programmes (no of participants according to type of programme and individual criteria: age, gender and social criteria: early school leavers; disabled; short/long-term unemployed, higher + education achievement);
- Completion rate in VET programmes (no of successfully completed/abandoned according to type of programme and individual criteria) ;
- Placement rate in VET programmes (destination of VET learners and share of employed learners in 6,12,36 months after completion of training);
- Utilisation of acquired skills at the workplace (including satisfaction rate of individuals/employers with acquired skills/competences);
- Unemployment rate (ILO and OECD: individuals 15/74 without work for one year or more actively seeking employment and ready to start work);
- Prevalence of vulnerable groups (% of participation and success rate according to age and gender, success rate of disadvantaged group according to age and gender);
- Mechanisms to identify training needs in labour market;
- Schemes used to promote better access to VET (and evidence of their usefulness).



A coherent set of quality indicators (EQARF proposal)

All apply to both VET-systems and VET providers.

The first 8 can be based on quantified data which means they can be linked to objectives and to their achievement.

The last 2 are soft indicators to collect qualitative information on the achievement of certain policy objectives.

A certain focus has been given towards measurement of outcomes and outputs.



Use of the Quality Indicators

A review in 2007 among 12 countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Romania, UK) revealed that:

- ✓ most indicators are already in use;
- ✓ the definitions used are quite close;
- ✓ the methods and time of data collection vary considerably;

- ✓ above all, the interpretation of data is complex due to regional/local etc. preconditions and differences.



Indicator n°1: share of VET providers applying QM systems

General agreement on its relevance (internal QA assurance system required by law).

Differences on its implementation (descriptive approach; certification ISO-standards; EFQM, other recognized quality labels, ...).



Indicator n°2: investment in training of teachers / trainers

A widespread indicator with a variety of definitions

- *financial*: amount of funds invested in teachers/trainers' training;
- *human resources approach*: the share of teachers/trainers in a given training organization completing further training or the number of days / hours spent in training per capita and year; *formal*
- *qualification approach*: share of pedagogical staff with formal qualifications requirements.



Indicator n°3: participation rates in VET (according to profiles of training programmes and specific groups)

A widely used indicator by the 12 countries surveyed, with a variety of definitions.

Important divide: initial VET or CVT (for initial, the number of participants is used; for CVT, the share of the population involved).

Indicator n°4: completion rates (according to profiles of training programmes and specific groups)

A widespread indicator in all surveyed countries, often with a non-standardised data collection even at national level (the number of annual graduates is mostly used; sometimes in combination with the achieved marks, sometimes in connection with the normative duration).



Indicator n°5: destination after graduation from training

An indicator used by all surveyed countries, related to the integration of the graduates into employment mostly (but some countries include the entry into HE). Biggest variations concerning the time of measurement after graduation (starting from 2-4 months up to 6, 12, 18 months).



Indicator n°6: utilization of acquired skills

An important but difficult to operationalise indicator (some countries use proxies: CZ number of partners cooperating with VET-schools; others collect-opinion polls from former students on the usability of the received training).



Indicator n°7: unemployment according to specific groups of people (as context variable)

An in all countries available indicator used mainly as background information for data interpretation. Often available at regional level, too.

The use of this indicator for VET steering and monitoring is rare.



Indicator n°8: prevalence of vulnerable groups (as context variable)

The same remark as for indicator n°7 applies here. Big variations concerning the classification of the groups. The most frequent criteria used: gender; early school-leavers; young unemployed; long-term unemployed; older people; people with disabilities. Roma people mentioned exceptionally. Migrants often qualified as a priority group.



Definition of vulnerable groups

Some vulnerable groups are clearly defined at EU level:

- Early school leavers (drop-outs);
- The young unemployed (under 25 years old);
- Long term unemployed (over a year);
- Older people (over 55 years old);
- People with disabilities.

Comparable data is available at EU level.

Indicator n°9: responsiveness of VET-system to adapt to changing demands in the labour market and

Indicator n°10: schemes to promote better access to VET, in particular for the vulnerable groups

Both are descriptors and as such they can be defined only softly. Difficult to implement them at provider level but efforts are made. Some countries ask VET providers to demonstrate evidence of customised programmes meeting employers needs (indicator n°9) or to report on their efforts to increase accessibility to training programmes for the vulnerable groups (indicator no 10).



Conclusions

New Member States implement many of the indicators in relation to VET reforms and to support development strategies;

Many countries use them for planning, target setting and monitoring purposes;

The use of indicators for measuring effectiveness is quite rare;

Finland uses them as a basis for performance based funding to improve the quality of VET;

The current increasing applications of indicators can be considered part of an external framework to improve the quality of VET provision.



EQARF and the Social Partners

1. Quality in VET is a shared priority;

All indicators considered as generally acceptable on a voluntary basis whereby countries could choose among the 10 according to possibilities.

2. Social Partners welcome the strengthening and improvement of the effectiveness of education and VET systems through the implementation of EQF and EQARF, implementation which should not undermine existing QA practices but ameliorating them. The quality of skills and competences is a shared priority.



EQARF and the Social Partners

3. Employers:

indicator 5 (placement rate in VET programmes);

Indicator 6 (utilisation of acquired skills at the workplace) as particularly important.

4. Trade Unions: all 10 indicators should be a minimum requirement and serve as a template to monitor the success of QA and VET.

Indicator 3 (participation rate in VET programmes);

Indicator 4 (completion rate in VET programmes);

Indicator 6 (utilisation of acquired skills at the workplace).



Tendencies

In many countries the steering of VET-systems moves from control and inspection towards self-guided management using quality indicators to measure progress;

Indicators n°4: completion of training, n°5: destination of former students after graduation and n°6: usage of acquired skills at workplace can be seen as the common area of the European set of indicators, which forms Annex 2 of the Recommendation proposal.



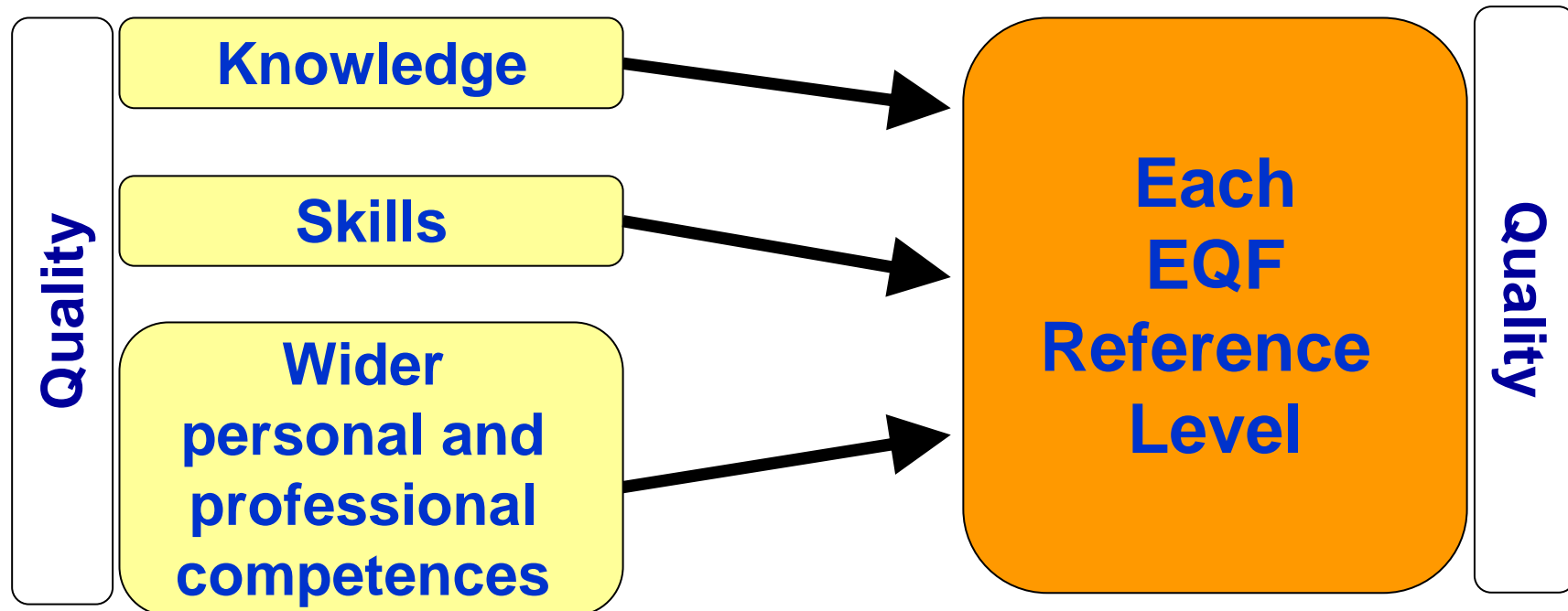
What is EQF?

- It is a meta-framework for increasing transparency and mutual trust, enabling existing qualifications frameworks and systems at national/sectoral level to be related to each other, thereby facilitating the transfer and recognition of the qualifications of individual citizens;
- It encourages the geographical and occupational mobility of workers and learners and reduces barriers to the functioning of the European labour market. The implementation of the EQF by the Member States is voluntary;
- Structure of 8 levels, descriptors;
- Recommendation officially adopted on 23 April 2008 (2008/C 111/01).



Quality in the EU VET priorities - EQF

European Qualifications Framework (EQF) – meta framework to make comparison and transfer of qualifications easier with 8 reference levels.





Seven general principles to underpin all levels of EQF (Annex 3):

- QA should include regular evaluation of institutions, their programmes or their QA systems by external monitoring bodies or agencies.
- External monitoring bodies or agencies carrying out QA should be subject to regular review.
- QA should include context, input, process and output dimensions, while giving emphasis to outputs and learning outcomes.
- QA systems should include the following elements:
 - ✓ clear and measurable objectives and standards;
 - ✓ guidelines for implementation, including stakeholder involvement;
 - ✓ appropriate resources;
 - ✓ consistent evaluation methods, associating self assessment and external review;
 - ✓ feedback mechanisms and procedures for improvement;
 - ✓ widely accessible evaluation results.
- QA initiatives at international, national and regional level should be coordinated in order to ensure overview, coherence, synergy and system wide analysis.
- QA should be a cooperative process across education and training levels and systems, involving all relevant stakeholders, within Member States and across the Community.
- QA orientation at Community level may provide reference points for evaluations and peer learning.



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