

5th EQAVET Projects Seminar
12-13 September 2012, Bonn, Germany

“Commonalities and specificities”:
What can we learn?
How can we cooperate?

PART A:

“Commonalities within the 5 EQAVET initiatives: analysis for so far.”

PART B:

“Case study: How to comply existing QA systems with EQAVET”

PART C:

“How to bring together our knowledge in a Community of Practice?”

Background documents for the seminar participants for the 12th and 13th of September 2012, Bonn, Germany

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE THREE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS.

The 5 national projects are all developing original approaches to quality assurance by adopting the EQAVET framework. It is one of the cornerstones of the EQAVET implementation strategy. In that respect, it is essential for these projects to be part of the same strategic and result-oriented action, aiming at increasing their impact and their reach at the EU level.

This aim is at the heart of the “EQAVET Promotion Unit”, which is set up to support the 5 national EQAVET projects in their work of pooling and consolidating the outcomes of their projects.

For so far now, the EQAVET promotion unit has organized in collaboration with the project partners and the European Commission thematic seminars. Each of the seminars was centered around a theme which is at the heart of the national project. A brief overview of the seminars completed/planned:

- **Seminar 1, July 2011, Vienna (AT)** - Theme: “Standardisation and Consolidation”
Focusing on the existing QA system in Austria and how to strengthen it with the VET-CERT project.
- **Seminar 2, December 2011, Brussels (BE)** - Theme: “stakeholders involvement in QA”.
Focusing on the role and involvement of stakeholders and on how to keep them on board.
- **Seminar 3, February 2012, Bucharest (RO)** - Theme: “Stakeholders involvement in quality relevance and innovation”. Focusing on the Romanian experiences in this field.
- **Seminar 4, June 2012, Breukelen (NL)** - Theme: “Impact of quality assurance.”
The inventory of NLQAVET was the starting point for discussion and exchange during this seminar.
- **Seminar 5: September 2012, Bonn (DE)** - Theme: “Commonalities and Specificities”
“What can we learn for so far from each other and from other existing QA systems?”

Although all the 5 project are dealing with EQAVET in their own context and although good practices are always related to a context and not necessarily transferable, we want to avoid the ‘melancholy of good practices’: *“That works well, I wish I could do that in my organisation as well!”*

Therefore, this background document of the last thematic seminar is centred around three questions.

- “What are these common areas of interest, how are the projects dealing with this and how can we learn from each other?”
- “Are there any other initiatives which can feed our insight in QA from another perspective?”
- How do we make sure that the knowledge and experiences will not get lost, in other words, how can we bring together our expertise into a Community of Practice for EQAVET implementation.

Each part deals with one of these topics and will provide input for the discussion during the seminar.

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“Commonalities and specificities”:

**What can we learn?
How can we cooperate?**

PART A:

“Commonalities within the 5 EQAVET initiatives: analysis for so far.”

PART A: COMMONALITIES WITHIN THE 5 EQAVET INITIATIVES: ANALYSIS FOR SO FAR.

From one of the first meetings, we learned that the five national projects all have their own “challenges” in reaching their goal. These can be at macro level (at the level of national Quality Assurance systems), but also at a more micro level, targeting trainers or staff dealing with quality Assurance at organizational level.

Besides these national differences and different contexts of the five projects, there are also common challenges. Somehow, all the projects are facing these common challenges, but all from a different angle. This makes exchange and capitalization rich and useful.

The common challenges, which are of interest for all the 5 projects, are the following:

1. How to involve stakeholders (and how to keep them involved!) in quality assurance and innovation?
2. How to create a shared culture of quality assurance and improvement?
3. How to deal with existing policies and quality assurance systems?
4. How to make sure that tools, methodologies and strategies are used implemented and maintained after the project duration?

In this part (A) of the background documents for the seminar in Bonn, a brief state of the art of the 5 projects is made. What is the progress and what are the strengths for so far? What is the main challenge they are facing and what are the methods and tools to do so?

“WINS” AND “CHALLENGES” IN THE PROJECTS

The projects are now running in the second year, which means that the first results, outcomes and strengths can be defined, but also the weaknesses and the challenges which are still to tackle. As the projects are not yet finished and as this analysis is a first analysis of the outcomes for so far, we speak in terms of “wins for so far” and “challenges”, instead of strengths and weaknesses. Where relevant and where questions rise on behalf of the analysis, “opportunities” are defined as well.

QA-VET (MT)

The main deliverable of the EQAVET Malta Project will provide Maltese public and private VET providers a step by step guidance to the creation or alignment of a Quality Assurance System based on EQAVET Standards. The Quality Assurance Manual will be developed after the pilot implementation of EQAVET in Malta in 4 Partner VET Institutions. The basis of the pilot are their own QA structures and their strengths and weaknesses, structures and mechanisms. The aim is to implement the 10 indicators in the reference framework as well as non-academic indicators, eg counselors, access to library services.

WINS for so far:

Although QA is different among institutions, there will be a common standardized manual based on all the challenges, solutions and good practices encountered in the implementation process. In order to bring EQAVET closer to the stakeholders and users and in order to make it more relevant for their own context. The project worked on the adaptation of the indicators and added own indicators as well. This is an important step in creating more ownership amongst the stakeholders.

CHALLENGE/ OPPORTUNITY:

It seems that organizations are overloaded with information and it can be a threat not to provide too much information, or again, or in another way (people can get “tired” of information and changes). Information should be as close as possible to the working field of the practitioners. Here lies a major role for the National Coordination Points, to dispatch the information and to provide support at the right time.

ENIQAB (DE)

The project creates linkages between EQAVET and the 10 German pilot projects. The pilot projects are focusing on in-company training and SMEs. Until now, practical examples were not really available, but there is now more insight in the tools companies use for quality assurance for their “in-company” training.

WINS for so far:

There is a strong cooperation between the partners. Despite the fact that the national projects are both supervised and monitored by different structures and authorities, there is no resistance in collaboration. As they involve the stakeholders already from the beginning and as they are part of the DEQAVET system, there is a strong commitment.

CHALLENGE/ OPPORTUNITY:

There is some tension at the level of the timeframe, as the Eniqab project depends on the delivery of the outcomes of the 10 national projects. Besides it will be a challenge of how to convey a QA strategy at EU level and the other way around.

Another challenges is still on how to deal with the EU initiative (EQAVET) compared to the existing QA initiatives in the companies. One of the ways to deal with this issue is the constant participation of the project’s representatives in the national meetings of the DEQAVET system. Another challenge, when getting the information from the project, is how to harmonize the information?

QUALVET@RO (RO)

The project focuses on raising awareness level by means of a communication strategy plan. The strategy was discussed and consulted as much as possible with all the social partners. One of the tools is a website. The website provides all European documents and instruments translated in Romanian. Newsletters and flyers are available in Romanian regarding policies, instruments and EQAVET. Language was identified as an issue and hence the need to put all info available in Romanian to facilitate the download and active participation of local actors and providers.

WINS for so far:

The possibility of sharing experiences on the website. This seemed very functional and the number of users is increasing. The idea is that people can contribute to complete the strategy and to make it “their own”. Via 8 regional workshops, tools are promoted and tuned to the regional needs. Via the regional workshops it is possible to reach more than 200 stakeholders in QA in VET.

CHALLENGE/ OPPORTUNITY:

The promotion of EQAVET in the Romanian context is one of the first steps (and seemed to be an important one as it is the prerequisite for creating commitment of stakeholders). So the next step is “how to *use and implement* EQAVET in the Romanian context”. This is where the NQARP can and will provide support as well.

VET-CERT (AT):

The project focuses on the support for people responsible for quality management on all levels. The development and validation of competence profiles were the starting point of the development of the training and certification for staff who is dealing with QA at organizational level. The curriculum framework will be finished by November 2012. It is the aim that by 2014 the training and certification system is integrated in the national QA system for Austria.

WINS for so far:

There is a strong collaboration of all the partners. The competences profiles are already accepted and adopted by the Ministry in the quality initiative. Another strength is that the project is focusing at practitioners, people who have to work with QA in practice at VET providers level, but the impact will be national, as the training programme and certification will be part of the national QA system.

CHALLENGE/ OPPORTUNITY:

The partnership works well, they have now to make sure that the products are really used and part of the Austrian VET QA system and not just a product of a project. This is why a new pilot is set up. The other challenge was to get and keep all the partners on board.

As this project is focusing on the Austrian context, many documents are developed in German. Having partners from other European countries on board can mean that they feel left behind or that the link with their context or practices is missing.

NLQAVET (NL):

The main aim of the project is to promote the EQAVET Recommendation in general and to help VET providers to improve their culture for quality improvement in particular. The project is split up in three phases:

- An inventory among 27 VET providers on 3 aspects – Policy, Implementation and Impact¹.
- A “test & taste” session with 4 VET providers, to work via a bottom up approach on the improvement of a culture for Quality Assurance.
- The creation of a platform for exchange of experiences of VET providers in the field of QA.

WINS:

There is a good cooperation with the VET providers and the test & taste pilots are set up from a real bottom up approach: their existing system and values are the starting point and from there we build up a system for quality improvement and not for assurance or control. At the same time this is the biggest challenge; to get a grip on the quality culture. From the inventory it seems that when we look at Quality as a tool for compliance, we see limited impact of QA, in terms of quality culture and return on investment. This means that QA has to be linked to self improvement, learning and innovation, focusing on the more intrinsic value of the actors.

CHALLENGE/ OPPORTUNITY:

The main challenge during the pilots is: “how can a VET provider combine the “hard, databased and tangible” side of QA and optimize with the more “soft and dynamic” side of QA?

The other question is based on the sustainability after the pilots: “How to create a sustainable culture for quality improvement which has a real positive effect on the quality of the organization and provision of education.

The working method in the project is very intensive working method, with a result in 4 VET providers. The main challenges is therefore how to set up a strategy for transfer towards other VET providers.

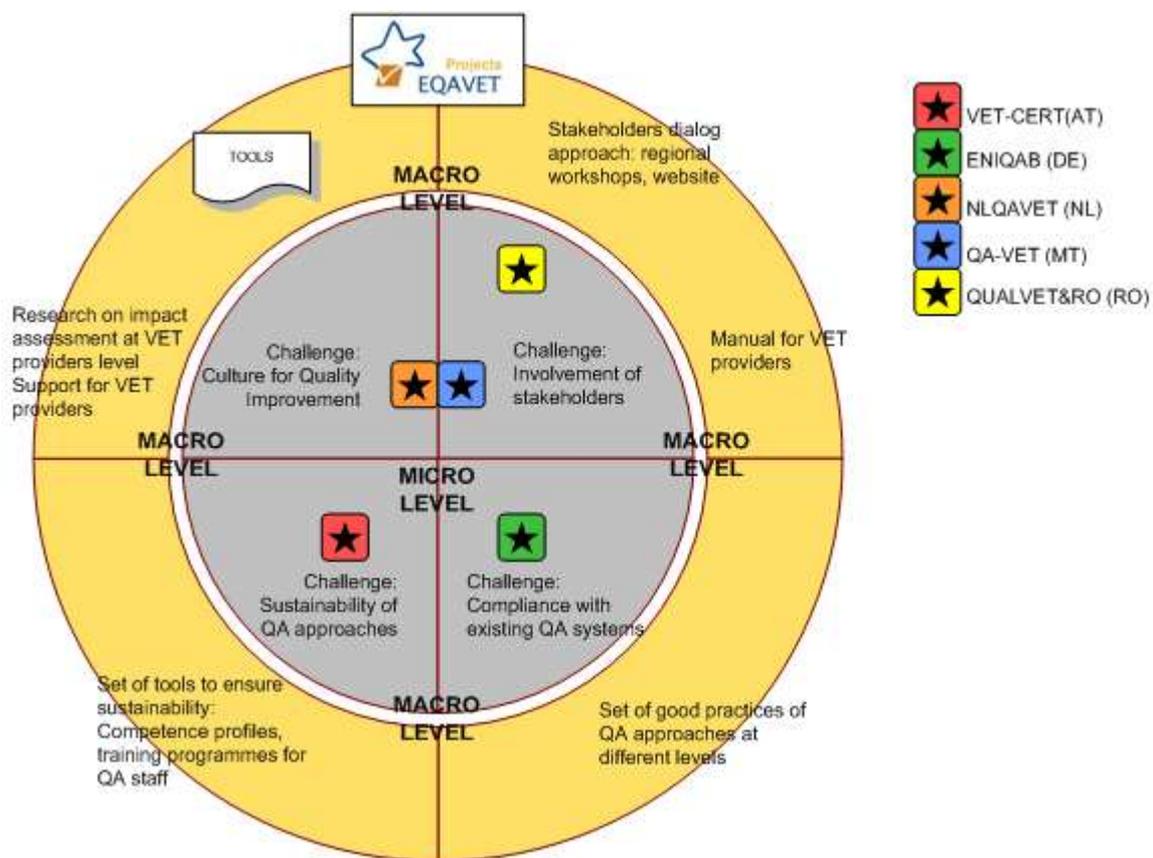
¹ “Rapportage Inventarisatie Kwaliteitszorg NLQAVET “, Inventory of Quality Assurance at institutional level, report of the inventory carried out in the framework of the NLQAVET project, NCP EQAVET, April 2012

http://www.eqavet.nl/images/user/Eqavetcompactrapportage%2017-04-2012.p_20120417102513.pdf

THE COMMONALITIES BETWEEN THE 5 PROJECTS

A schematic presentation of the 5 projects, their challenges, approaches and tools are visualized in figure 1 and annex A.

Projects at macro level are more focusing on QA systems at VET system level (QUALVET@RO), whilst project at meso and micro level are targeting respectively VET providers and trainers/ staff in QA (ENIQAB, NLQAVET, QA-VET, VET-CERT);



Although the projects have a “main challenge” where they focus on, the four defined challenges are recognizable in each of the projects and strongly interrelated to each other.

For example, in order to create a culture for quality improvement, it seems that involvement of the right persons from the beginning is essential. Another example is that it seems that sustainability and commitment is easier to achieve, when there is strong link between the EQAVET framework and QA systems already in place.

In other words: all the projects have in a more stronger or lesser way to deal with all these four challenges. In the next paragraphs a more in depth analysis is made of how the 5 projects have dealt with the 4 defined common challenges.

1 HOW TO CREATE A CULTURE FOR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT?

Annex B shows results of the workshop, held on the 26th of June, focused on culture for quality assurance and the impact within a VET providers organization.

The report in the Dutch NLQAVET projects showed, that despite the fact that many VET providers have put in place a quality handbook and procedures, the main motivation is often focused on external verification by the inspectorate and that there is no real culture for quality improvement. External verification can be an important motivation to set up a quality assurance system, as it a “mark” for the VET providers that they deliver good quality training. However, if we want to speak in terms of improvement, intrinsic motivation and self development of education, there is less or no impact.

How the projects are dealing with the issue of creating a culture for quality assurance:

VET-CERT	<p>Although there is already a well functioning QA system in Austria (ARQAVET), this project is now going deeper, with the focus on the quality of staff who are dealing with QA in their organization (EQAVET indicator 2). This step can create more value and commitment of staff in their responsibility to set up QA systems in their organization. The profiles are not developed only for one function, but for different functions in QA, with the result that commitment and understanding will be created at different levels at the same time.</p> <p>In the profiles, which are developed in terms of knowledge, skills and competences, many attention is paid to the teambuilding and involvement of people at the workplace. Example: “...organises regular meetings with colleagues about the quality activities conducted at the school.” And in terms of required competences: “openness; will to change, spirit of innovation; constructive critical attitude towards the system; positive basic attitude / solution orientation.”</p> <p>As a consequence, competence development of those who hold functions in quality management (QM), the image of QM in VET itself, and mutual trust within different sectors of VET will increase.</p>
ENIQAB	<p>The ENIQAB project makes use of existing practices of quality assurance within companies, involving practitioners at the workplace. These two issues (involvement of direct beneficiaries and bottom up approach) seem to be effective when speaking about creating culture for quality improvement. There is a strong bottom up approach, based on existing practices in 10 national projects, with evaluation at the workplace. It is</p>

not the purpose to develop new tools and instruments for in company training, but to make a synthesis of what exist, and transferring these to a more international context, creating the link to the EQAVET framework. As the people who have to work with these procedures are directly involved in the project, there is a strong link with the practice.

NLQAVET

The NLQAVET project had this challenge as the main focus. Via a questionnaire and interview, current practices and experiences could be explored and the first conclusions on impact and a culture for quality improvement could be drawn. In the pilots there is a very strong bottom up approach by using the existing QA practices as the starting point and building an improved system based on existing practices. Involving the right persons and practitioners made that the VET providers start with *creating a culture for collaboration* on quality improvement and then build a system around it.

QA-VET

The project is built on the belief of mutual trust and collaboration. The effective implementation of quality assurance procedures and specifically of the EQAVET can only be achieved through collaborative input by both the regulator and the providers: a bottom up approach. This is considered to be the best way to convince stakeholders (mainly VET training providers) about the importance of quality assurance and specifically of EQAVET; Besides, to increase the political will to take on quality assurance, there is also capacity building within VET training institutions; and there is also ownership among the stakeholders of the tool Quality Assurance Tool for VET programmes and institutions which is to be developed by both Malta Qualifications Council (MQC) and the VET training providers involved in the project. The basis of the pilot are their own QA structures and their strengths and weaknesses, structures and mechanisms.

QUALVET@RO

The Project is mainly focusing on setting up a communication strategy for relevant stakeholders and practitioners in the field of VET in order to raise awareness and to create commitment. It is the first step in creating impact and a culture for quality improvement. Stakeholders have to see the benefit for them, having a dialog on QA with other relevant stakeholders and setting up a strategy for collaboration and development and implementation of QA systems in VET. The QUALVET@RO project supports these stakeholders in their mission via national conferences, regional workshops, project website, database of relevant documents and materials published regarding the implementation of the EQAVET Recommendation and the policies and instruments. The fact that the workshops for stakeholders are focused on the regions and tuned to the needs of the region are a first step in

getting closer to a commitment of stakeholders and a culture for quality assurance.

2 HOW TO INVOLVE STAKEHOLDERS IN QUALITY ASSURANCE?

Quality assurance is not the responsibility of one single person or organization, but is an intensive interaction of different actors in VET who are policy making (ministries), provide and organize training (VET providers), who have (in)direct interest in the quality of training (stakeholders in VET, companies) and the direct beneficiaries from the training (students).

Different actors means also that they have different interest in quality assurance in VET and that they will derive different types of information from the indicators. Therefore it is of high importance that the most relevant stakeholders and actors are on board from the beginning of the QA process and that expectations (and indicators) are set from different perspectives from the beginning.

One of the conclusions of the first seminar was that it is often difficult to “close the circle”, thus to work on the phase 3 and 4 and ensure quality improvement. If stakeholders are not first involved in the phase 1, a commitment by these partners at phase 3 and 4 and thus a continuous practice of improving quality will never be reached.

How the projects are dealing with the issue of stakeholders involvement in quality assurance:

VET-CERT	In all development and research activities the focus has been the involvement of all target and stakeholder groups from all levels (policy-practice-research) as well as the project consortium. Active and participative workshops have been organized within the project consortium as well as with the different target groups (potential users and beneficiaries!) and stakeholders. Used research methods are based on the close involvement and active participation of the different groups. For example, for the development of the Stocktaking Report several interviews with key stakeholders were conducted. For developing the Competence Profiles, six group interviews were conducted whereby the groups were composed of representatives from all target and future beneficiary groups representing all different VET school types in Austria. With the help of desk research and group interviews, a survey on competence requirements and training and qualification needs among persons holding quality functions was conducted.
ENIQAB	The main focus of the ENIQAB project is put on the operational part of the vocational training: within companies (mainly SMEs). Besides the direct involvement of trainers, human resource managers, employees and mentors, also chambers, professional associations and other

relevant actors are involved. Besides the operational objectives of the project, there is also the purpose to bring the most relevant actors together and setting up a dialog and sharing knowledge and experiences around the topic of quality improvement. All relevant actors are also involved and kept involved from the beginning in the DEQAVET system and annual conferences of the DEQAVET system.

NLQAVET

Stakeholders are represented in the NLQAVET steering group. VET providers are reached through the network of quality assurance coordinators of the MBO Raad and through PAEPON, for the private sector. There is a dynamic interaction to inform VET providers and to request feedback throughout the entire project duration.

In the “research” phase, the survey has been created with the help of the stakeholders and the school network for Quality assurance. Relevant stakeholders notably the inspectorate and the “MBO raad” were involved in the development and dissemination of the questionnaire as well.

In the “pilot phase”, via a call for participation, interested training providers could show their interest. _This lead to a selection of 5 training providers who will commit themselves in an contract signed at management level in order to work on the project Culture of Quality assurance.

QA-VET

'The process will involve the participation of four vocational institutions in Malta, with the Malta Qualifications Council, who will review their own quality assurance systems in the case of 30 vocational training courses. Together with other professionals in the field from other European partners the project involves the development and piloting of the Quality Assurance tool.'²

The four partners from Malta are involved in describing their quality assurance systems for a total of 30 programmes within their institution. The scientific committee, with the help of the research support, reviews the quality assurance systems described in view of the standards identified by EQARF.

The VET institutions will have to provide details of the policies, procedures and structures which they currently have in place in their institutions for programmes.

The project worked on the adaptation of the indicators and added own indicators as well. This is an important step in creating more awareness, commitment and ownership amongst the stakeholders.

² <http://www.eqavetmalta.org.mt/default.aspx>

QUALVET@RO

The main aim is to ensure coherence and transparency and quality assurance mechanisms in vocational training developed at European and national level, to improve mutual trust and cooperation in VET and to develop a quality culture and increase accountability of all stakeholders involved. In order to fulfill these aims, to make VET more attractive and to build a common quality culture at both European and national levels, a Communication Strategy and tools aiming to improve communication with all stakeholders and the dissemination of the European policies regarding quality in VET are set up.

Website and workshops are developed and carried out, from a strong demand based approach: a regional focus. This is an important element in creating commitment, as VET providers more often have a regional scope. Therefore, expectations in the field of QA might differ from region to region. At national and regional level, professionals, experts, consultants

involved in policy development in VET, as well as in policy design regarding labour & employment are involved in the regional workshops. In total, at least 200 representatives of Ministries, governmental agencies and other public bodies at national and regional levels will be reached that way.

3 HOW TO COMPLY EXISTING QA SYSTEMS WITH EQAVET?

The EQAVET Recommendation states that EQAVET “*does not replace or define national quality assurance systems. The Framework does not prescribe a particular quality assurance system or approach, but provides common principles, quality criteria, indicative descriptors and indicators that may help in assessing and improving existing systems and provision of VET.*”³

A lot of QA systems exist, both at system as at VET providers' level and from experiences in projects it seems that the EQAVET is a tool which is broad enough to fit with existing national and organizational systems. However, in order to create more mutual trust and transparency in each VET system in Europe, it is necessary to find out whether these systems already use the EQAVET framework or (if not) how compliant these existing systems are with EQAVET.

Another interesting issue is to find out in which way the EQAVET indicators are used to create a culture for quality assurance, or whether these are adapted to own context and/ or own indicators are developed to measure quality improvement.

³ 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 (Text with EEA relevance), Official journal of the European Union, (2009/C 155/01), July 2009 http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc1134_en.htm

How the projects are dealing with the issue of compliance of existing QA systems and EQAVET:

VET-CERT	<p>With the VET-CERT project the competence development of persons in quality management functions in initial VET and in adult education should be fostered. This will support the professional implementation of the Quality Initiative VET (QIBB) and the implementation of the Ö-CERT framework in adult education as well as the implementation of the European reference framework for quality assurance in VET (EQAVET) in both sectors.</p> <p>VET-CERT project will contribute to the further EQAVET framework implementation in Austria and refers strongly to the Reference Framework, explicitly to the indicative descriptors (implementation plans include specific support towards the training of teachers and trainers) and indicator No. 2 (investment in training of teachers and trainers) within the overarching indicators for quality assurance. The purpose of the policy in relation to the indicator (for example, promotion of ownership of teachers and trainers in the process of quality development in VET) is crucial for the whole project though. Profiles and training programmes are based in the four phases of the EQAVET framework and the existing ARQA-VET quality system is based on the EQAVET framework as well.</p>
ENIQAB	<p>The ENIQAB project is focusing on the outcomes and the processes within 10 national projects. As the ENIQAB project focused on quality management in enterprises (who also work internationally!), it is important that there is a link with the European EQAVET initiative, in order to create more transparency in working and production processes. One of the ways to deal with this issue is the constant participation of the project’s representatives in the national meetings of the DEQAVET system.</p> <p>The purpose of the ENIQAB project is to see how existing national experiences and tools can be used in a more European context and how they are interrelated to the EQAVET framework.</p> <p>The project is based on the EQAVET indicators and it is the role of the National Coordination Point to make the bridge between the existing practices in QA within companies and the EQAVET framework and make this relation visible and transparent for all users.</p>
NLQAVET	<p>Most of the VET providers were already working with a QA system based on the four phases (“cycle”), but the main challenge is to do Improvement in the PDCA cycle. A gap exists between Plans on Paper and the reality in practice of a substantial number of VET providers. This is one of the conclusions from the survey with the VET providers:</p>

Actions for improvement are not always an automatic consequence of the evaluation, especially not at operational level (even if there is a quality assurance system implemented!) In other words, “closing the quality circle” and working on real quality improvement, based on data derived from the evaluation, is not (yet) a naturally imbedded process.

The entire project, the questionnaire and the pilots are based on the EQAVET indicators and the indicative descriptors as well. The link is made with the EQAVET framework by the NQARP.

QA-VET

The Quality Assurance tool will help vocational training institutions to check the different aspects and requirements for quality assurance of their institutions and their courses as indicated in the EQAVET. The manual Quality Assurance Tool for VET programmes and institutions, is based on the experience of the specific 30 programmes and use it to guide other VET training institutions to review and reform their own quality assurance standards and procedures. The EQAVET indicators at provider level will be used to review the state of the quality assurance system for programmes and institutions of the four partner VET provider institutions. The various principles included in the EQAVET are used as the basis for dividing the different sections of the report.

The manual is based on the EQAVET framework and indicators and the indicators are put in the context of the VET providers and thus tuned to their needs and expectation on quality in VET.

So there is a direct and clear link with the EQAVET framework. However, many organizations are not aware of the EQAVET framework, neither does a common culture for QA exist. By tuning the EQAVET framework to the context of the Maltese VET system it will help VET providers to improve their QA system.

QUALVET@RO

The communication strategy is focused on the EQAVET framework and its indicators. The European tools and instruments are translated in the Romanian language, in order to make the tools more accessible to the users.

Instruments developed within EQAVET and in particular some of the indicators, are necessary, having in mind the position of Romania regarding some relevant indicators (e.g. 1.5% participation of adults in Lifelong learning and 15,9% early school leavers).

4 HOW TO MAKE QA SUSTAINABLE?

All the 5 national projects are aiming at raising more awareness about Quality improvement and/or helping organizations in improving their QA systems. However, we can only speak from a successful project when the project manages to create an impact which is sustainable even after the project duration. This is one of the most critical and difficult issues in setting up a project. Despite the fact that the projects are not yet finished and we cannot measure the sustainability at this stage, there are first indicators on how the projects are working on sustainability and how they aim to achieve sustainability conform to the project implementation.

How the projects are dealing with the issue of creating sustainability in quality improvement:

<p>VET-CERT</p>	<p>For the VET-CERT project, sustainability, the use and implementation of the developed training programmes and certification framework was a key challenge from the beginning of the project. However, there a strong indicators for sustainability: VET-CERT is aiming to develop new tools for the use of QM in Austrian VET.</p> <p>The project aims to produce concrete products which are to be implemented in the future on the field of Austrian VET. Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The involvement of the direct beneficiaries and users in the development of the competence profiles, survey and the training programmes; • The validation of the competence profiles by the ministry; • The implementation of the Curricular Framework and the Concept for Certification in the Austrian QA system ARQA-VET <p>A follow up project is set up to support the national implementation and sustainability of the VET-CERT tools.</p>
<p>ENIQAB</p>	<p>In a permanent way, even after the project duration, there will be information provided via the DEQAVET platform and the results will be included in the national debate on quality via a collaboration with the DEQAVET and the ministry of education. Thereby the results of the project will not only be used in the context of in-company training but also in VET providers (transfer).</p> <p>Although the project is not finished and these aims are set up in the proposal, there is an indication of sustainability in how the project is setup, which can be exploited for a good sustainability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strong involvement of the direct beneficiaries (= users) in the project; • The approach: bottom up approach based on existing practices at the workplace; • The strong link with the national DEQAVET initiative, in which the

ministry of education and other relevant stakeholders are involved as well.

- The project is focusing not only on national context, but also on the international context: the outcomes of the national projects will be subject for discussion, further development and transfer at European level, in the European partner countries who are participating in the project.
- The other European partners provide the ENIQAB team feedback on the usability and sustainability at national and European level;

NLQAVET

Quality assurance systems are in place. Dutch VET providers work with diverse systems like the EFQM, ISO, and INK models. The challenge is now to „live“ the quality assurance system, to make sure all parties are involved and to make sure ownership and a learning and improvement process is actually taking place. Every VET training provider has an interest to have an operational excellence in quality assurance and EQAVET can guide them also on the long run.

Indication for sustainability:

- The stakeholders will learn from the project outcomes and use it in their policy development after the end of the project.
- The project is supporting 4 VET providers in setting and improving their QA system and culture for quality. This means that for these VET providers sustainability and improvement of QA will be a reality;
- The methods which are tested with the 4 pilot VET providers can be adapted and made more generic for dissemination and exploitation purposes.

QA-VET

The Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) is in place and the referencing process for local qualifications to both the MQF and the EQF offers many opportunities. However, if local institutions want to enable their students to be able to obtain recognition of their qualifications within the EU, as well as to allow students from Member States to obtain qualifications in Malta which have value within the European Labour market, it is important for all VET institutions to have a high level of QA Standards embedded in their programmes conform the EQAVET.

Indication for sustainability:

- This project supports the implementation of Quality Assurance standards for a total of 30 training courses within the four local VET training providers.
- Although QA is different among institutions, there will be a common standardized manual based on all the challenges, solutions and good practices encountered in the implementation

process. This project can have a multiplier effect in a way that the institutions involved in the project will reform their quality assurance systems for the programmes involved.

- The Malta Qualifications Council will set the manual - Quality Assurance Tool for VET programmes and institutions as the main instrument which VET providers in Malta will need to use in order to align themselves with the standards required by the Malta Qualifications Council to obtain accreditation for their institutions and programmes.

QUALVET@RO

After the project, the project partners will maintain the website with its documents. The workshops are a first start in helping the stakeholders in setting up an own QA system in their own context. The role of the National coordination point is to monitor and to support these organizations in the next step: development and implementation of the QA systems.

A first indication of sustainability is the involvement of the stakeholders, showing their commitment and will to collaborate further on QA: The fact that the stakeholders provided good feedback on the website and its tools and expressed the needs for more and other tools, information and instruments.

CONCLUSIONS AND OBSERVATIONS FOR SO FAR

Despite the fact that the 5 projects are set up and focusing within a different context, the challenges are similar and even the approaches to tackle them are more or less similar.

Related to the **culture of quality improvement** we see that in order to create a culture for quality improvement the first steps are:

- involvement of all actors;
- setting up strategies from a bottom up;
- using existing practices and QA systems as the starting point and build capacity based on these systems.

We see in all the project that *“QA starts with people, not with systems!”*. If people have the right mindset for quality improvement, focusing on development and improvement rather than quality control and if the right conditions for quality improvement are set up (which means not only involvement of management level, but also of the practitioners) a big step forward in the creation of a culture for quality assurance is made.

Another experience from the projects is that “QA is not about “selling”, it is all about “influencing” people.” Influencing means “Letting others having your way”, a positive way of moving people in the right direction, using their own experiences, practices and ideas in a

way that they see the benefits (whilst “selling” is more a ‘one-way direction’ and about convincing people from the point of view of the “seller”).

In the field of **involvement of stakeholders** at all levels we see that all the projects are using the approach to directly involve the beneficiaries and potential users in the work of the project. However, the way to do this vary:

- via transnational project meetings;
- via questionnaires;
- via interviews;
- via experts working groups;
- via workshops;

No matter which approach is used, they are all focusing on ‘expressing the needs of the direct beneficiaries in quality assurance and improvement’.

According to the **compliance of existing QA systems with EQAVET**, we see that it is not about promoting the EQAVET framework as such, but all about putting actors in the right mindset for quality improvement. Despite the fact that VET providers ‘might not even have heard about EQAVET’, they are working on quality improvement though. The widely used “Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA)” cycle is similar with the EQAVET framework. It seems that the use of such quality cycles create more understanding and awareness to how QA systems work , how they can contribute to quality improvement and how they can easily be applied to different working processes. It illustrates also clearly that an action in phase one of the cycle has consequences on the other phases. The quality assurance systems make clear the relation between what is planned, what is done and what has to be done in order to deliver a good quality VET.

The approaches used in the projects show:

- that it works the best when QA stays close to the practitioners and supports them (in relation to own context);
- that it works best when the projects use the EQAVET indicators in a way that they are relevant for their context (adaptation) or when they select only the ones which are the most suitable for their context;
- that the main challenge is to support stakeholders in “closing” the circle;
- that the NQARPs take their responsibility to make the connection between existing practices and the EQAVET framework;

On the issue on how to **create sustainability of QA systems** in VET, we see that sustainability is mainly the result of a good strategy of the issues above, which means a strong and early involvement of all actors in QA in VET at all levels, pilots based on existing practices and awareness raising strategies.

Where possible an implementation and integration is made with existing structures for QA at national level.

WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT DURING THE SEMINAR?

On day 1 a discussion will take place between the project partners of the 5 national projects (during the 'closed' session).

The main objective of this session is to report on the progress, to share approaches, outcomes and experiences, in order to learn from each other, to work on common challenges and solutions and to strengthen each other's approach.

The working session will not only look backwards on what has been achieved in the projects, but will mainly look forward to the workshops of the final conference and sustainability of the outcomes after the project duration.

Questions which will be at the heart of the discussion are:

- *What do you like in other approaches? ("What would you like to learn from other projects?")*
- *For so far, did your project helped you in reaching your goals in the field of EQAVET implementation ("Is there any result or impact measurable?");*
- *About sustainability, "How do you make sure that it gets in place?"*
- *What is your main message for the participants of the final conference? ("What would you like them to take home from your workshop?")*
- *How transferable is your approach for other countries, sectors, levels....?*

5th EQAVET Projects Seminar
12-13 September 2012, Bonn, Germany

“Commonalities and specificities”:

**What can we learn?
How can we cooperate?**

PART B:

“Case study: How to comply existing QA systems with EQAVET”

PART B: CASE STUDY: HOW TO COMPLY EXISTING QA SYSTEMS WITH EQAVET?

Part A of this background document shows the main observations from the workshop on “culture and impact on quality improvement”, held in Breukelen on the 26th of June 2012. We see that although that we think and want to have a good working system for quality improvement, the reality is often that the external verification is the main drive for quality and that these QA systems are often not integrated in the daily work of people and that the commitment and involvement of staff is limited. It seems that as long as the drive for QA is “to comply with external standards”, there is no culture for quality improvement and the impact remains limited. Therefore, we have to speak in terms of improvement, development and innovation and involve people from the beginning in order to create any impact. “Starting simple, from the bottom and start with what exists” seems often to work better than (radically) propose new systems.

This part of the background document is going deeper into this topic, but then from an “outside point of view”. A case study from an initiative outside the 5 national projects will show the challenges they had to face in order to work with quality improvement in their sector.

A case study is chosen from the social services sector, where there is already a well established QA system: EQUASS⁴. It was their challenge to see what EQAVET could do for them in terms of added value and to see how their existing QA system is compliant with the EQAVET framework, with its criteria, indicative descriptors and the indicators. Although the initiative is not yet finished, there are some interesting results to share.

Often it is refreshing, an ‘eye-opener’ and is it easier to recognize similar challenges when you are looking at an initiative from outside your own context. (“The fish in the bowl can’t see the water; you can only see it from outside”).

“PRIME” INITIATIVE: IMPLEMENTING EQAVET IN THE SOCIAL SERVICES

The instrument for implementing the requirements expressed in the EQAVET framework in the PRIME project is the EQUASS, European Quality in Social Services.

EQUASS is a sector specific certification system for VET service providers in the social sector. It certifies compliance of social services with European quality principles and criteria. The EQUASS framework is compatible with national qualification frameworks as the indicators and criteria can be translated into the national context.

EQUASS is an initiative of the EPR, the European Platform for Rehabilitation and aims to strengthen and improve the services of the services providers in the social services sector.

⁴ <http://www.equass.be>

The EQUASS system is not only promoting quality assurance, but also quality improvement. There is a EQUASS label for “assurance”, which means that the service provider can demonstrate that they comply with the quality criteria. If the service provider can demonstrate achievements and improvements on the defined quality criteria, they can achieve the “EQUASS excellence” label.

The PRIME project is set up to help European partners in implementing and improving their quality assurance system, and to make sure that they comply with the quality standards of the EQUASS (and the EQAVET!) framework. As a part of the project a cross-reference study is carried out between the EQAVET criteria and indicative descriptors and the quality assurance certification requirements of the EQUASS⁵. This was a necessary step in order to make sure that there is clear direct link between the EQUASS indicators and criteria and those of the EQAVET framework.

This means that “Meeting the EQUASS certification requirements, the organization has implemented the criteria and indicators of the EQAVET framework as well! “

Other important steps in the project⁶ will be the “self evaluation” of each partner. Based on the quality criteria, a quick scan, or self evaluation tool is developed. In this way each partner is able to map the progress in implementation of the EQUASS quality principles in their own context and to find out where the areas of improvement are. These areas of improvement will be adopted in the “implementation plans of the partners”. As there will be standardized formats for implementation used, comparison, exchange and peer learning is easier. This is one of the final steps in the project. Internal audits and peer reviews are carried out to make sure that the service provider complies with the quality principles and at the same time, partners are able to learn from each other and can exchange experiences.

Interesting to find out is the reason behind this initiative, the need of QA from a sector point of view, the experiences in the field of matching existing QA systems with the EQAVET framework and the role and importance of stakeholders’ involvement.

An interview is carried out on the 11 of July 2012, with a “PRIME” project partner and the EQUASS coordinator. The main findings and issues relevant for the EQAVET projects are included in this part B of the background document.

⁵ Cross referencing study on EQAVET: “PRIME: Project for Implementation of EQAVET”, promoted by REA College Pluryn, Nijmegen (NL), June 2012

⁶ <http://www.prime-leonardo.eu/test>

THE CHALLENGES...AND HOW THEY ARE TACKLED

As an important motivation for this initiative and the collaboration at international level, Pluryn college (the promoter), indicated that they were already working with EQUASS and from the beginning, they were interested in achieving the labels for both EQUASS “Assurance” as the award for “Excellence”. Complying with an international quality standard as EQUASS is seen as a mark of quality for the service provider. Both by the service provider itself as by the clients. The challenge in this perspective was to get other service providers in Europe on board as well to get this mark of quality and “to speak the same language”. Besides, with the European priorities focused on the implementation of the EQAVET framework, it is important to find out in which way the EQUASS framework complies with the defined criteria, indicative descriptors and indicators of the EQAVET framework. This would mean an additional added value and meaning for the EQUASS and the Service providers as well. “So we were helping people from no mark to a quality mark with EQAVET.”

As in the NLQAVET project, the project is focusing on quality assurance at VET providers’ level and not at system level. The VET service providers in the PRIME initiative are especially targeting to special services and vulnerable groups. In the project consortium, similar experiences were noticed if it comes to the culture, impact and return on investment of Quality Assurance: “There will be no quality improvement if there is no intrinsic value.” For a lot of organizations, it seems that there is still an external drive dominating. “We see in our organization a strong involvement of all actors and that ‘the net’ is closing. We keep it simple, but we connect all the loose ends. For example, there is a lot of information deriving from QA systems: reports, surveys, audits etc. and we try to bring all this information together and see what the real problem is. In this way we try to make them see that improvement is necessary and of our own benefits and that at the end of the day it will save them time.” “The strength is also that we make improvement plans together with our client boards, they are strongly involved.”

Another issues if it comes to creating a culture for quality assurance, are existing QA systems. Especially staff experience QA system as a burden when things have to be changed or adapted continuously, especially when there is a new model. “Organizations don’t need another model, but the accents in EQUASS model are different. This model is focused on the client and the services. Even with this model, it is still more than work when you don’t have a model, but it helps you to focus on the works and on the client.”

On the question about their opinion on the EQAVET framework in this perspective, the answer was very clear: “EQUASS works and we see the added value of such a European mark and if we can manage to make sure that there is a clear link with the EQAVET framework, it is an extra value for us. The starting point however is our own system and EQAVET is way to check if we are on the right track.”

One of the first activities was to make the cross reference between EQUASS and EQAVET. “We used the EQAVET indicative descriptors as the starting point and checked in which matter the indicative descriptors were covered by EQUASS. Then each partner provided feedback on behalf of their own context. This didn’t say anything about whether the partners really implemented the system; it was just the state of the art”. A next step was to find out in which way quality assurance was really implemented. This was at the same time one of the main challenges in the project: it seemed that there were a lot of differences between the countries. Both in level of implementation as in understanding and interpreting the quality assurance systems. Some of the countries did not have a system of quality assurance, other had quality assurance systems, but with a different focus.

In the PRIME project, they found a way to get everybody on the same page. “We made a breakthrough with a quick scan, to make an inventory of the state of the art in each country and to see what we have to do and what is lacking.” This quick scan is based on the EQUASS framework, with a clear link with the EQAVET indicative descriptors. “The scan helped us in finding the gaps and where partners could help each other.”

The quick scan is a self evaluation, but the innovative element is that the quick scans were filled in during the so called consensus meetings. In other words, not only the manager filled in the self evaluation, but also 10 other staff people. This gives a good average of the results and eliminates eventually “desired” outcomes or other ‘noise’. “It was a perfect way to make sure that the quality assurance system is approached by different people, from different angles and perspectives, as they all might have a different view and perception on quality assurance in their organization. Important in this sense is that ‘Nothing is wrong, but it is from another point of view’.”

The project is now in the stage that the partners develop their own implementation plan. As the partners use a standard format for this implementation plan, exchange and support by other partners can be done in an easy way. The implementation plans will be strengthened by peer learning activities.

<http://www.prime-leonardo.eu/test>

OBSERVATIONS AND FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

A lot of experiences and observations from the PRIME initiative are similar with those of the 5 national EQAVET projects.

The main challenges and recommendations can be brought back to the following:

- Goals for quality assurance and improvement have to be clear and set up from the beginning in common. This important to make the focus clear and to create understanding and commitment;
- All relevant stakeholders should be involved. As we have seen from the PRIME experience, also clients should be involved (especially in the evaluation and review phase they can play an important role!)

- EQAVET is a framework where other existing systems can comply with. It doesn't replace existing systems.
- The PRIME initiative is now especially working on the VET providers, but why not using good practices for QA at system level? The problem is that at VET system level there is a complete different range of stakeholders involved.
- The NQARP can play a role in supporting also other organizations in making a similar experience. Also the PRIME initiative has close relation with the Dutch NQARP and the other partners had set up similar collaborations.
- Involving people at all levels in the organization gives 'a good average of the perspectives of QA'. In this way one can make sure that the system is approached from different angles and perspectives. "Nothing is wrong, but it is from another point of view. "

"It is also important how you bring QA. You have to bring it closer to the staff and let them see how it can help them in improving their work in terms of quality and efficiency."

With special thanks to:

Mrs. B. Grimbergen, Pluryn College/ REA college Netherlands

Mrs. M. Dubost, EQUASS coordinator

For their input and willingness to share their experiences in the field of Quality Assurance.

WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT DURING THE SEMINAR?

This subject will be integrated in the afternoon session on the 13th of September, from 15.00-18.00 in the International forum of the DEQA-VET seminar. The programme, more precisely, foresees:

- *European demands of quality assurance*
- *Quality strategies in “in-company VET”*
 - *Development of instruments of in-company quality assurance and development*
 - *Development of communication and cooperation structures*
 - *Development of a qualification concept for the training personnel*
- *European Panel linking in-company practical approaches to system relevant strategies*

Via a case study and via exchange of experiences of the other project partners and experts, an interactive working session will be set up.

Questions which will be at the heart of the discussion are:

- *In your context, what approach is used or feasible to comply existing QA systems with EQAVET?*
- *What are/ were the main challenges (and solutions!) in this field?*
- *Where do you see (for your context) the limitations and the benefits of the EQAVET framework and the indicators and indicative descriptors in particular?*

5th EQAVET Projects Seminar
12-13 September 2012, Bonn, Germany

“Commonalities and specificities”:

What can we learn?
How can we cooperate?

PART C:

“How to bring together our knowledge in a Community of Practice?”

PART C: HOW TO SHARE OUR KNOWLEDGE IN A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE?

There are 5 national EQAVET projects, sharing the same objective, but using different focus and approaches. All of the projects are delivering tools to promote and ensure EQAVET implementation. Besides the 5 national projects, there are many other projects and initiatives in other member states, dealing with the same challenge, or there are countries who have to deal with this same challenge of EQAVET implementation, but don't know how to do this....In other words: how can we make sure that nothing gets lost, that we can transfer our knowledge and experiences to other contexts and to contribute to a sustainable implementation of the EQAVET framework at European level?

One of the solutions can be a Community of Practice (CoP).

There are many examples of Communities of Practice and it is proven from these examples that Communities of Practice contribute to a more informed dialogue with practitioners and decision-makers, often leading to improved outcomes. They also facilitate problem-solving among individual members, stimulate learning, promote professional development, address individual questions, and generate the type of knowledge that members need in their daily work⁶

It is not our purpose to create something completely new from the technology perspective, but to build further on existing infrastructures. Therefore, the online forum on the EQAVET Network website can be used to host the Community of Practice for the 5 national projects⁷.

But what is the logic and functioning behind a Community of Practice? Why are some Communities of Practice working and others not? Therefore we need to go more in depth in the critical elements and principles of a Community of Practice so that it might be possible to set it up in the field of EQAVET implementation.

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

The concept of Community of Practice is not new but has proven a good solution when it comes to set up and run cooperation in a different way. Looking at one of the definitions, Etienne Wenger has described a Community of Practice as groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly⁸.

Communities of Practice have been developed for different target groups, for different contexts. Their contexts, domains, memberships and objectives make that the Communities

⁷ <http://members.eqavet.eu/layouts/login.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2f>

⁸ Communities of practice a brief introduction, Etienne Wenger, June 2006, <http://www.ewenger.com/theory/>

of Practice are quite different from one another. Both in terms of “shared passion” as in terms of “practice”.

Examples:

EVTA, the European Vocational Training Association, one of the members of the EQAVET promotion unit is an example of a European CoP as well. The members share the same objective: “How can we implement the priorities of the Bruges Communiqué in our own context?” The members, are very diverse and have different target group, type and scope, but they all have in common that they have experiences in a shared field (“ a story to tell”) and they have committed themselves to work on this topic and they are equal (there is no hierarchy, in terms of “we are more advanced or better”). The members interact in a variety of activities, for example: meetings twice a year, communication via digital workplaces, webinars, study visits, projects etc. Within this EVTA CoP, we see that “sub-CoPs” are established, for example specific groups with experts on ECVET implementation, who share the same challenges in implementing ECVET, although their context is different. The most important challenge is to keep the engine rolling: A CoP requires a moderator and facilitator. This is the main role of the General Secretariat of EVTA.

CRITICAL BUILDING BLOCKS OF A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

What are the main elements that make a community entitled to be a Community of Practice? There are three elements which have to be taken into account. It is the combination of these three elements that constitutes a community of practice. And it is by developing these three elements in parallel that one cultivates such a community⁹

The domain:

A community of Practice has an identity defined by a shared domain of interest: a shared passion for something. The membership implies a commitment to the domain and, therefore, a shared competence that distinguishes members from other people outside the domain. *(The membership is not necessarily recognized as THE experts outside the Community of Practice)*

The community:

In achieving their objectives in the defined domain, members engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other, and share information. They build relationships that enable them to learn from each other. These relationships are based on an interaction on regular basis, but not necessarily on an everyday basis.

The practice:

A community of practice is more than a group of people with a shared interest. Members of a community of practice are practitioners. They develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems. This takes time and sustained interaction.

⁹ Communities of practice a brief introduction, Etienne Wenger, June 2006, <http://www.ewenger.com/theory/>

But why are some Communities of Practice working and others are not? Besides the three elements above there are other critical elements involved. Although every Community of Practice is unique in how it creates a sense of community among its members, they all share essential traits. They include¹⁰:

- Leaders/facilitators who are moderating the CoP. This seems to be an essential element in order to keep the “engine rolling”;
- Critical mass of active members. There are always members in terms of “observers”, but there is a number of active members necessary to make the CoP work;
- Management support/being an integral part of the organizational structure. Then the CoP becomes part of the work. “I don’t have to time to join a CoP”, becomes relative, as the CoP is part to find solutions and practices to strengthen own work.
- Topic focus, which is based on problem-solving emphasis (practical aspects).
- Passion, drive, motivation to participate. This is strongly related to the “topic focus”. If the CoP is based on problem solving (demand driven), the motivation to participate is higher than on just “sharing” practices.
- Supporting technology, which is tuned to the needs and purpose of the CoP
- Knowledge transfer and dissemination mechanisms, in order to make results visible and transferable for others.
- trust between the members, no hierarchies

Finally each of the CoP constitutes a learning community in its own particular way. People become members of a community because they share an interest, and independently of the nature of this interest (hobby, work-related, related to a shared social condition or identity) they are naturally keen to learn within the specific field addressed by the community. Interest raising and “maintenance” is the key critical factor to keep these communities alive in the long term, and the more new issues emerge to be discussed or new challenges are set for the community, the more likely is the feasibility of further growth for the community. Thus, the more curiosity is stimulated, the more learning is enhanced. The more people feel they can learn something from the community and share their experience, project, values within the community, the more they will join and stay.

Communities provide the context, resources and opportunities to expand the members’ horizons and concepts in relation to themselves and the other members. Beyond the aspects of personal development lie the measurable parameters of learning such as knowledge and skill acquisition on a personal, practical and professional level.

This very fact makes them inherently capable of thinking in a different manner and approaching the world around them from a different perspective; this in itself contributes to creativity and innovation.

¹⁰ Communities of Practice, Questions and Answers, Worldbank, ksharing@worldbank.org

THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE EQAVET PROJECTS

For the EQAVET Community of Practice, it seems that the domain (s) is (are) identified. The shared objective within the Community of Practice is the implementation of the EQAVET framework. However, across European countries EQAVET implementation might have different meanings and result in different approaches and strategies. The question remains, for instance, on how to define the specific objectives and to possibly integrate differences in implementation strategies and scope.

Also the members of the EQAVET Community of Practice are potentially known. One can consider the members of the EQAVET network as members of the larger Community of Practice and the members of the 5 national projects as a smaller Community of Practice. Questions remain as to whether other organisations interested in EQAVET implementation would/could be member of the Community of Practice. In other words, what makes an organisation a member of the EQAVET Community of Practice?

What a Community of Practice can do for the EQAVET projects? It seems that Community of Practice develops their practice through a variety of activities. The following table provides a few examples, tuned to the EQAVET context¹¹:

<i>Problem solving</i>	"The problem in our context is that VET providers don't see the return on investment and benefits of a QA system. Who can help or provide suggestions in this field?"
<i>Seeking experience</i>	"Does anyone has experiences with QA in non formal education?"
<i>Reusing assets</i>	"Is it possible to use your questionnaire for VET providers for our context as well?"
<i>Coordination and synergy</i>	"Based on our experiences we have now on EQAVET implementation, we can really contribute to the revision of the EQAVET Recommendation in 2014."
<i>Discussing developments</i>	"We have developed competence profiles for staff dealing with QA in their organization. We would like to have feedback on these profiles from your perspective as well."
<i>Documentation projects</i>	"Let's collect good practices on impact strategies which have proven to be effective."
<i>Visits</i>	"Is it possible to visit one of your VET providers, who have a well functioning QA system and culture for quality improvement, in order to see how we can learn from their experiences?"
<i>Mapping knowledge and identifying gaps</i>	"Who knows what, and what are we missing? What other groups or expertise should we connect with?"
<i>Requests for information</i>	"Could you provide me an example of an agenda of one of your regional workshops? We would like to organize one as well "

Table 2: A variety of activities on how a Community of Practice can derive their practice, based on "Communities of practice a brief introduction", Etienne Wenger, June 2006, (Adapted by the EQAVET promotion unit for the EQAVET context)

¹¹ Communities of practice a brief introduction, Etienne Wenger, June 2006, (Adapted by the EQAVET promotion unit for the EQAVET context) <http://www.ewenger.com/theory/>

THE ROLE OF THE PROMOTION UNIT

The EQAVET promotion unit will play an important role in the facilitation and moderation of the Community of Practice for the 5 national projects. Thereby it is desirable that entities such as the EQAVET secretariat and Cedefop support the Community of Practice and frequently show their interest and/ or provide feedback and input from their point of view on one hand and to make the outcomes and experiences useful for the authorities as well.

The proposal for the EQAVET Community of Practice , which will be worked out more in detail after the Bonn seminar, will be developed by the EQAVET promotion unit and comprise the following parts (based on the “critical elements” as described above):

Moderation/ facilitation	EVTA and EFQUEL will take the lead in the facilitation of the Community of Practice, by providing the structure of the Community of Practice (based on the needs of the members) and by generating questions, identifying relevant problems, etc.
Membership	The 5 projects partners are member of the Community of Practice. Is it desirable that other countries/ projects can join as well? If yes, what makes an organization a Community of Practice member? How does registration takes place (like it is now, or...)
Commitment	What can you expect when joining the Community of Practice, what do we expect from the members?
Solving/ sharing	What is our main passion? The Community of Practice should be “problem solving/demand driven” and thus based on the main challenges felt as relevant by the participants.
Interacting	How are we going to interact, There are many ways of using the Community of Practice (see examples above) what is the most useful for you? Do we need more than a platform (meetings, visits, etc.). What is the frequency of interaction?
Making visible	How can we make visible the success and outcomes of the Community of Practice. Can the Community of Practice as a tool to promote EQAVET implementation? Are results transferable to others? What about the copyrights, intellectual property etc.
Support	It is desirable that authorities as EACEA, EQAVET secretariat, Cedefop should support the Community of Practice and frequently show their interest and/ or provide feedback and input from their point of view on one hand and to make the outcomes and experiences useful for the authorities as well.
Technical support	The Community of Practice will be part of the online platform, integrated in the EQAVET website.

WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT DURING THE SEMINAR?

This topic is planned during the closed session for the 5 national projects and aims at developing a common understanding of the EQAVET community of practice and shall address the issues below: sharing (such as the good practices), solving (e.g. common problems), committing (members should have an active participation) and making visible (CoP also as a tool for promoting EQAVET).

Furthermore participants are invited to reflect on how to use the EQAVET community of practice for optimizing and increasing the efficiency of current cooperation as well as for their own EQAVET implementation activities.

Questions which will be at the heart of the discussion are:

- *Discussion on the elements: committing (who?, why?), solving/sharing (what?), interacting (how?) and making visible (for whom? How?)*
- *What would I like to feel, see, experience when participating in a CoP?*
- *What are the specific objectives and how can we include possible differences in implementation strategies and scope?*
- *What makes an organisation a member of the EQAVET CoP?*
- *What can I bring in to make the CoP for EQAVET work?*
- *How can we collaborate together in the CoP?*
- *What do you expect from the EQAVET promotion unit?*
- ...

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NLQAVET: <http://www.eqavet.nl>
QA-VET: <http://www.eqavetmalta.org.mt>
QUALVET@RO: <http://www.eqavet.ro>
VET-CERT: <http://www.vet-cert.at>

PART B: CASE STUDY

Cross referencing study on EQAVET: “PRIME: Project for Implementation of EQAVET”, promoted by REA College Pluryn, Nijmegen (NL), June 2012
<http://www.prime-leonardo.eu>

PART C: COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Communities of practice a brief introduction, Etienne Wenger, June 2006
<http://www.ewenger.com/theory/>

Communities of Practice, Questions and Answers, Worldbank, ksharing@worldbank.org

ECVET annual forum, Taking the next step: Building the ECVET community of practice. Background paper to the ECVET Forum workshops (30 May 2012 – 01 June 2012), documents coordinated by ECVET-team and CEDEFOP, May 2012.
http://www.ecvet-team.eu/sites/default/files/ecvet_forum_2012_background_papers_en.pdf

EQAVET website <http://www.eqavet.eu>

Login area for members: http://members.eqavet.eu/_layouts/login.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2f

Learning from ‘LEARN’, Horizontal learning in a community of practice in South Eastern Europe. Edited by Søren Nielsen, January, 2011. Final publication of the ETF LEARN project

“Situated Learning: Legitimate peripheral participation” Lave, J. and E. Wenger, 1991 New York: Cambridge University Press

“What is a Community of Practice”, Soeren Nielszen, ppt presentation (Slide 7) annual ECVET forum on 1st of June 2012, Brussels
http://members.eqavet.eu/_layouts/login.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2f

ANNEX A THE 5 NATIONAL PROJECTS, THEIR CHALLENGES AND APPROACHES

Project	Level ¹²	Target sectors ¹³	Direct beneficiaries	Main “challenge area”	Main outcomes	Support & tools
VET-CERT (AT)	<i>meso- micro</i>	IVET, CVET, AE School/work based	Persons holding functions in quality management in VET and AE	<i>Sustainability of approaches in institutions at national level</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stocktaking of current situation; Profile for persons holding functions in QM; Framework of curriculum for training; Concept for certification integration in the national QA system 	Training and certification system, based on a competence profile,
ENIQAB (DE)	<i>meso - micro</i>	IVET School/ work based	Actors in the national initiatives, VET providers, work placement companies	<i>Compliance of existing QA systems with EQAVET at other levels and sectors</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To link the existing national initiatives in QA to the EQAVET Framework “Europeanization of national initiatives”; To foster the dialog on QA between the different actors in VET at national level 	Guidelines Communication strategy Good practices
QA-VET (MT)	<i>meso - micro</i>	IVET, CVET Public/ private	VET providers	<i>Involvement of stakeholders and bringing EQAVET closer to the stakeholders</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of existing QA systems at VET providers level; A tool for VET providers to check the compliance of their systems to EQAVET; Awareness raising on EQAVET; 	Manual for VET providers
NLQAVET (NL)	<i>meso - micro</i>	IVET, CVET, Public/ private	VET providers	<i>Impact analysis: how to improve the culture of quality improvement?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement of a culture for QA; Strengthening the collaboration between the QANRP and stakeholders in QA; Promotion of the EQAVET Recommendation; 	Survey report & testing phase in 4 VET providers, “Market place” to exchange experiences between VET providers
QUALVET@RO	<i>macro</i>	IVET, CVET	Stakeholders in QA VET providers	<i>Involvement of stakeholders and bringing EQAVET closer to the stakeholders</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement of a culture for QA; Ensured QA systems in VET providers Strengthening the collaboration between the QANRP and stakeholders in QA; Communication strategy developed for and with stakeholders 	Communication strategy with tools and practices to implement EQAVET: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website Regional workshops

¹² i.e: the system level (macro level), the VET provider level (meso level), and learning and teaching (micro level)

¹³ i.e: Vocational education and training, in-service training, school/work based learning, adult education, higher education etc.

ANNEX B NOTES ON CULTURE AND IMPACT OF QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Notes from the workshop on the 26th of June, 4th EQAVET seminar, Breukelen (NL)

ABOUT A CULTURE THAT STIMULATES QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

What are the characteristics of a culture that supports quality improvement? And what are the conditions to achieve this?

- Commitment and involvement of teams
- Mindset: create people that want to be better, trigger them
- Culture that envisages changes (people that want to change)
- Culture of trust
- Safe environment
- Open communication
- Interconnections between the teams
- Transparency in processes and methods

What are the main challenges (or obstacles) in achieving a culture for quality improvement?

How to get to a culture that supports quality improvement?

- Do not (only) start from management with QA but start with teams
- Identification of teams with mission QA leads to motivation at all levels
- What's in it for me? Focus on added value.
- To get motivation you have to make people responsible, really involve them.
- Ask questions, for example what do you find important, what is quality for you
- Start simple
- Make culture (shared values) a topic to talk about – exchange & discuss this is where we stand for
- Leadership is crucial
- Start / look also at what can be kept when starting to change
- Include AQ in the professionalization of staff
- Define standards
- Take developments and activities (for example mobility) as a chance

ABOUT THE IMPACT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

- If we take compliance as the main factor, we see limited impact of QA.
- Linking QA to innovation and not to compliance, otherwise impact will remain limited.
- QA is about involvement of people;
- We should be able to visualize QA to make it lively and to the core;
- We should ask ourselves what are we doing, why are we doing this and how can we improve it? At all levels, also EU level. This will maximize the strategies and policies;

- QA is also to satisfy a lot of stakeholders. The learners we should not lose out of sight in this perspective.

TESTIMONIALS FROM VET PROVIDERS...

“A challenge in executing QA is the changing context. It takes a lot of time for an organisation to adapt to change, and people get tired of change. Therefore, processes are being simplified”

“...Goals for QA are set up by teams themselves, derived from central goals. At the end of year they evaluate themselves and make their own improvement plan. The impact is different per team. It is hard to make good analysis for teams, but we see that teams are more involved.”

“We have split up internal and external impact. External impact is mainly focused on creating a good image and attracting more students. With obtaining more clients (students), there is higher confidence in the provider. They’re been seen as solid, serious and performing. Internally there is more order through ‘process responsables’. A process is an important process that has input and output. We also work with internal audit, follow-up by external audits. A true ‘Quality Culture’ has been created in this way. Negative impact is the supplementary costs, a return on investment was reached at the third certification.”

“...targets of QA might be different for the provider than for their stakeholders (more students vs. employability). ...both are important, more clients but also high quality education.”

“For us the main motivation and impact is compliance and accountability, “do we as an institutional oblige to the rules of the inspectorate?”. 80% of this effort is being put in this context. In setting up a system and to maintain it.”

“We have our own quality standards with institutional goals and a system to comply with the requirements of the inspectorate.”

“The main return on investment: every year the inspectorate reports on the Quality of the VET provision classifying VET providers in different levels: in this report we are in the “green” zone. This is a good promotion for the school.”

“If it comes to a culture for quality assurance: we have a lot of reports and paper, but QA is not really integrated in the team and in the way of working, not a part of daily routine. This was one of the results of an external audit. When auditing, the team should reflect the same goals as at management level. Now the goal is to work on these aspects.”