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EVALUATING EUROPEAN EDUCATION POLICIES IN TERMS OF QUALITY, SKILLS AND REGIONAL SUSTAINABILITY: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF EQAVET AND UNION OF SKILLS

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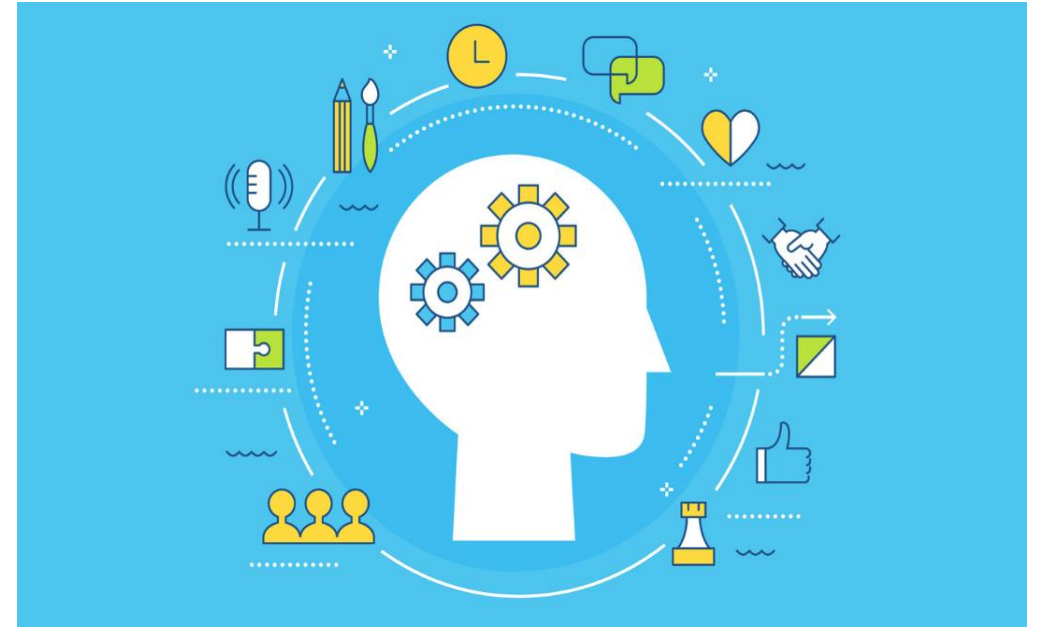
METHODOLOGY AND INTRODUCTION

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The research is a **comparative analysis** of the EQAVET framework and the European Union of Skills Strategy as models for evaluating European policies on education, training and skills.

It is based on a **documentary analysis** of the two initiatives, drawing on:

- ✓ EU documents
- ✓ scientific literature
- ✓ EQAVET documentation

The analysis deals with four dimensions:

- ❖ **subject of the evaluation;**
- ❖ **purpose of the evaluation;**
- ❖ **indicators used;**
- ❖ **territorial development.**

The aim is to highlight the similarities and differences between a process-oriented approach and an approach focused on the outcomes and impacts of skills policies.



Current global transformations have altered the relationship between education systems, labor market, innovation and economic and regional development.

Key challenges

digital transition
green transition
artificial intelligence
ageing population
regional inequalities



Competences are now meant as a **relational and social construct** apt to participate to economic and community life, and are becoming a **strategic resource for competitiveness, resilience and social inclusion.**



QUALITY-BASED EVALUATION: EQAVET



Cofinanziato
dall'Unione europea



EQAVET is the main European reference framework for quality assurance in vocational education and training and **promotes quality as a continuous process of planning, implementation, evaluation and review.**

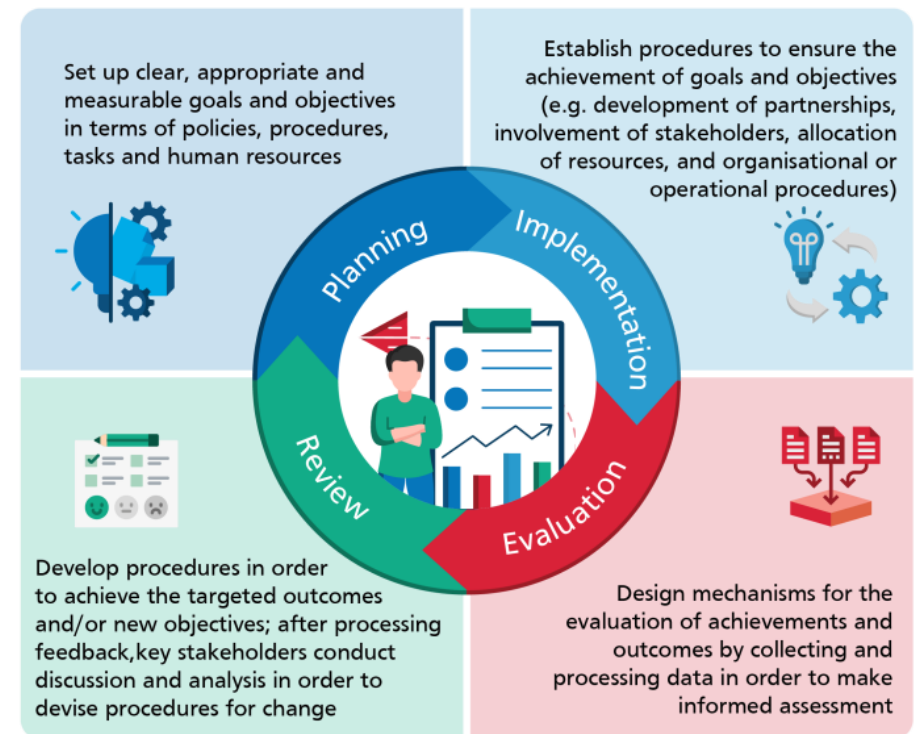
The framework is based on the use of:

- **shared indicators**
- **self-assessment**
- **continuous improvement**
- **mutual learning processes between Member States** (peer learning and peer review).

The focus is on reliable, transparent procedures geared towards continuous improvement.



The Quality Assurance Cycle



EQAVET: strengths and limitations

Strengths

- ❖ transparency
- ❖ shared responsibility
- ❖ continuous monitoring
- ❖ European comparability

Limitations

- ❖ employability
- ❖ regional development
- ❖ socio-economic impacts



In 2025, the European Commission published the **Union of Skills** introducing an integrated approach to skills policies.

Competences are now meant as a **collective strategic resource** for tackling economic, technological and environmental transitions and for underpinning Europe's long-term competitiveness.



Key focus areas

- ❖ skills intelligence
- ❖ anticipating skills needs
- ❖ multi-level governance
- ❖ social inclusion
- ❖ territorial development



The innovative aspect of the strategy lies in **broadening the evaluation perspective.**

New evaluation questions:

- ❖ **Do skills improve employability?**
- ❖ **Do they contribute to economic growth?**
- ❖ **Do they reduce inequalities?**
- ❖ **Do they strengthen the competitiveness of Regions?**



Focus on policy outcomes and impacts, evaluation examines the effects the VET systems have on Regions, labor market, and the opportunities available to citizens.



A COMPARISON OF EVALUATION APPROACHES



EQAVET and the Union of Skills are based on different evaluation approaches:

Dimension	EQAVET	UNION OF SKILLS
Evaluation subject	Training Process and systems	Policies' results and impacts
Main Focus	Quality	Competences and development
Main Indicators	Systems Performance	Outcomes e socioeconomic impacts
Governance	VET system	Local ecosystem
Goal	Continuous improvement	Competitivity, inclusion and resilience



A COMPARISON OF EVALUATION APPROACHES

A comparison of the two instruments highlights both areas of common ground and areas of concern:

Areas of common ground

- ❖ the centrality of skills
- ❖ an evidence-based approach
- ❖ social inclusion
- ❖ European cooperation

Areas of concern

- ❖ the relationship between quality and impact
- ❖ measuring territorial effects
- ❖ multi-level governance



A COMPARISON OF EVALUATION APPROACHES



Micro-credentials are a particularly significant example of the integration of these two perspectives.

EQAVET	Union of Skills
quality	flessibility
trasparency	occupability
recognition	continuous update



Italy has incorporated microcredentials into its national qualifications framework through **Ministerial Decree 115/2024**, which is regarded internationally as **a best practice in terms of integrating formal learning, vocational training and the certification of skills.**



CONCLUSIONS



The transformations taking place across Europe call for a rethinking of the ways in which vocational education and training policies are designed, implemented and evaluated.

The analysis highlights how the evolution of European policies is gradually broadening the very concept of evaluation:

- ❖ **EQAVET has helped to consolidate the quality of training systems**
- ❖ **the Union of Skills extends evaluation to include the impact of policies.**

The challenge for the future lies in **integrating these two dimensions** by developing evaluation models capable of linking the quality of training processes, learning outcomes and socio-economic impacts, in which **evaluation is a strategic** tool not only for improving education systems, but also for **supporting regional sustainability, social inclusion and Europe's long-term competitiveness.**



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