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Quality Assurance in VET: the EQAVET network's experience with implementing the European Peer Review methodology at system level

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Laura Evangelista, Concetta Fonzo and Marianna Forleo



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BACKGROUND



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Since the last decade, the European Commission has strongly urged Member States to implement national policies that consider **education and training systems as key instruments of social and cultural cohesion, as well as a valuable investment in Europe's future.**

Improving the quality of VET, by optimizing the match between resources and needs to face the imbalance between the supply and demand for skills, is the main driver of development for the future of Europe and plays an important role in promoting active citizenship, equal opportunities, and social cohesion.





The EQAVET quality assurance framework

The **European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET)** emerged from the **2009 Recommendation *on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training***, as a European wide framework to support quality assurance in Vocational Education and Training (VET) across Europe.

EQAVET does not prescribe a particular quality assurance system or approach but provides a **framework of common principles, indicative descriptors and indicators** that may help in assessing and improving the quality of VET systems and provision.



The EQAVET Quality Assurance Cycle

EQAVET supports quality assurance in Vocational Education and Training across Europe.

Through a continuous improvement cycle, it helps systems and providers enhance education and training.

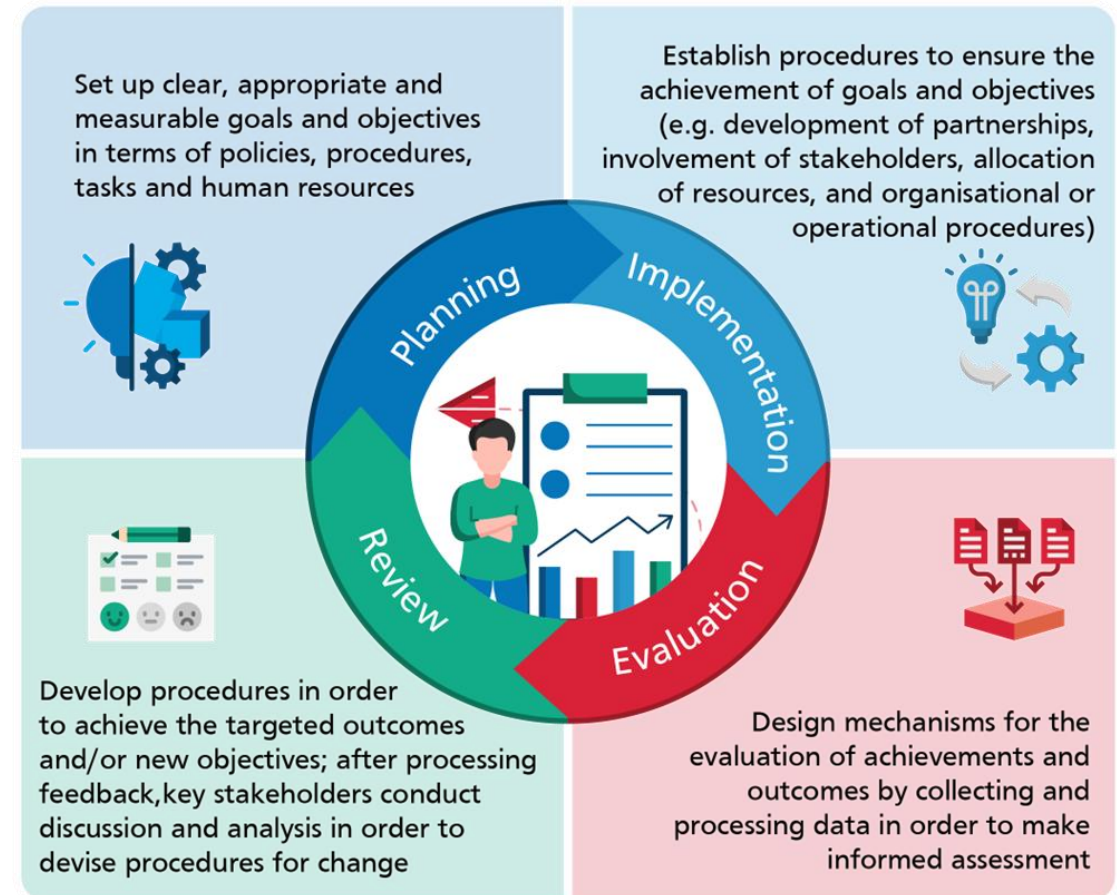
It provides a flexible framework based on a quality assurance and improvement cycle-planning, implementation, evaluation/assessment, and review/revision-along with and a **selection of quality descriptors and indicators** applicable to quality management at both VET system and provider levels.



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The Quality Assurance Cycle





The **2009 Recommendation of the EU Parliament and Council** launched the **European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET)** as a European wide framework to support quality assurance in vocational education and training (VET) across Europe.

On November 2020, the European Council edits the **2020 Recommendation on vocational education and training for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness, and resilience** in order to modernize EU VET policy.





The 2020 Recommendation calls on Member States to promote measures to equip youth and adults with the knowledge, skills and competencies needed in the labor market for green and digital transitions, **promotes inclusiveness and equal opportunities and builds on a culture of quality assurance.**

In particular, the Recommendation and **presents the complete EQAVET Framework** and describes how EQAVET can be used to strengthen the quality of initial and continuing VET.



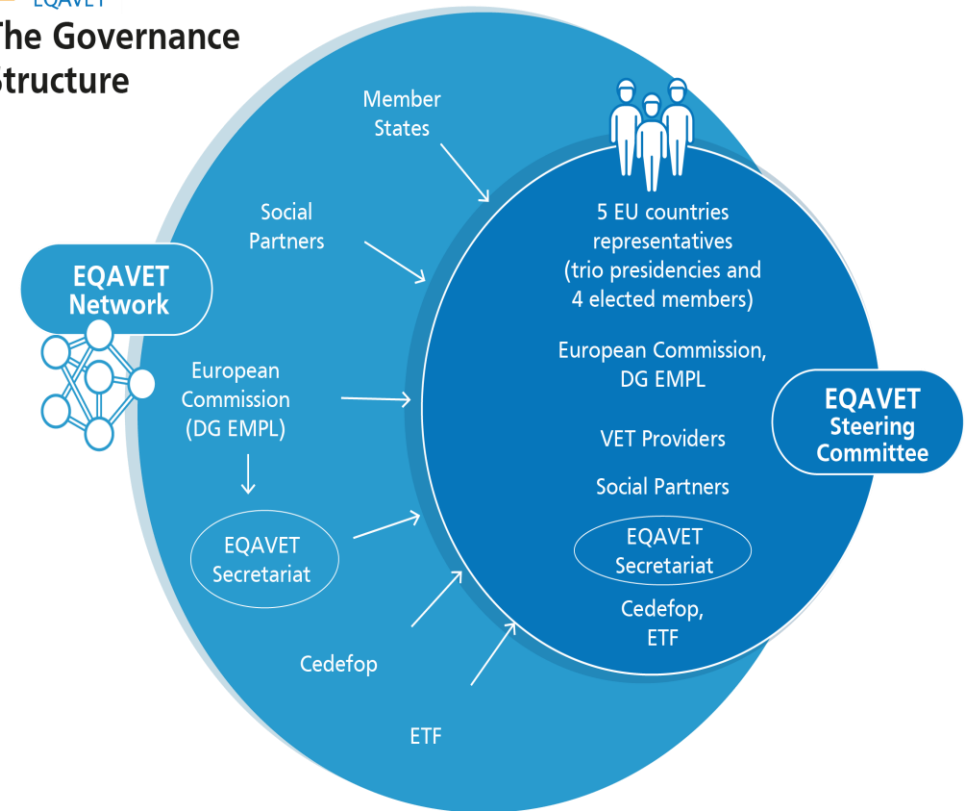


The EQAVET structure

In 2020, with the **Recommendation on vocational education and training for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience**, the EQAVET framework was extended from IVET to CVET. The EQAVET Framework can be used by providers and in systems to support the quality assurance of:

- **all learning environments** (e.g., school-based provision, work-based learning, apprenticeships, formal, informal and nonformal provision);
- **all types of learning contexts** (e.g., digital, face-to-face and blended);
- **all public and private sectors;**
- **awards and qualifications at all levels of EQF.**

The Governance Structure



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In particular, the Recommendation underlines the **strategic role of the National Reference Points (NRPs) for the dissemination of self -assessment and peer review**. The National Reference Points of the **EU member states** and candidate countries, **European Social Partner organizations**, and the **European Commission**, jointly cooperate in the development and improvement of VET systems, in order to implement the Recommendations (2009, 2020) and European Vet quality guidelines.

In particular, the Eqavet network:

- ❖ - promotes the use and development of the **EQAVET criteria, indicative descriptors and indicators**;
- ❖ - supports **the improvement of quality assurance systems** at the national level;
 - develops a **culture of quality**, supporting evaluation and self-assessment;
- ❖ - promotes a **European dimension of quality assurance**.



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In accordance to national legislations, **NRPs** bring together relevant key stakeholders at the national and regional levels to **support, implement and disseminate** the implementation of the network's activities, in particular:

- **Take concrete initiatives to implement and further develop the EQAVET framework**
- Inform and mobilize a range of stakeholders, including Centers of Vocational Excellence, to contribute to implementing the EQAVET framework
- Support self-evaluation as a complementary and effective means of quality assurance to allow the measurement of success and the identification of areas for improvement, including digital readiness of VET systems and institutions
- Actively participate in the EQAVET network
- Provide an updated description of the national quality assurance arrangements based on the EQAVET framework
- **Engage in EU level peer reviews of quality assurance** to enhance the transparency and consistency of quality assurance arrangements and reinforce trust between Member States.



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The **Italian EQAVET National Reference Point (NRP)** was established in 2006 and is placed in **INAPP**, in Rome. It promotes a **National Board** which includes delegates from the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education, the Regions and the Autonomous Provinces, the Social Partners as well as training experts and representatives of the Italian Vocational Education and Training providers.

The Italian **NRP** encourages the application of the **EU Recommendations** and supports the national process for the implementation and **development of a National QA strategy in VET**, through the dissemination of a technical-scientific Quality Assurance culture and of practices and tools for the adoption of a continuous improvement process.



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The **2020 VET Recommendation** defines a peer review as *‘a type of voluntary mutual learning activity with the objective to support the improvement and transparency of quality assurance arrangements at system level not leading to accreditation procedures, based on a specific methodology to be developed by the European Network for quality assurance in vocational education and training.*

It involves a combination of internal and external evaluation: quality control and continuous improvement, as a flexible tool to be adopted in different contexts.

Peer Review at VET providers level	Peer Review at system level
It is based on the combination of the self-evaluation of VET institutions or centers and the peers external evaluation, and support providers in reviewing their approach to quality assurance in order to improve their provision.	It gives the countries involved an opportunity to analyze and recalibrate their system and ensure the quality of vocational education and training, critically reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of quality assurance systems and measuring ongoing progress.



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A **Peer review** is carried out by **Peers**, who are colleagues working in similar institutions or environments. Peers will act as “**critical friends**” by encouraging a process of mutual trust, confidence and learning among the participants, institutions and systems involved.

Before the Peer Review visit, the evaluated organization sends a **Self-Assessment Report** to the Peers, as a fundamental document for the evaluation, and appoints a "facilitator" as an internal contact person for the Peer Review.

A Peer Review lasts an average of 2.5 days and at the end of the visit Peers draw up a final report, as a result of their reflections on the organization weaknesses and strengths.



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The **4 phases** of the Peer Review :

1. In the **preparatory phase** the organization drafts a **Self-Assessment Report**, identifies Peers, plans dates and location of the assessment, and organizes the Peers visit.
2. The Peers visit the organization and conduct an evaluation, by organizing focus groups, carry out interviews with different stakeholder groups, and collecting data; **at the end of the visit, they give a first verbal feedback.**
3. In the following days Peers edit and deliver the final **Peer Review Report.**
4. As the final report is delivered, the organization evaluated must **put into practice the outcomes and recommendations** as concrete improvement actions to plan and implement.



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Peers' responsibilities

Preparation Phase of the Peer Review	Visit	Peer Reporting and Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Self-nomination or selectionReceipt of the Peer Review contractReceipt and analysis of the self-reportIdentification of areas to be examined in the assessmentExchange of opinions on the self-report among the PeersPreparation of clarification questions on the topics to be addressedDefinition of shared criteria among the PeersParticipation in preparatory meetings prior to the visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Inspection of the premisesData collectionConducting interviewsBrainstormingDiscussionsFocus groupsAnalysis of resultsSharing of opinionsVerbal feedback to the organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Drafting of the Peer Review evaluation report and presentation to the organizationOrganization's feedback on the report



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EQAVET PEER REVIEW 2025

- ‘Methodology and indicators for monitoring and evaluating public policies in the field of initial professional training’: Romania, 19-20 March
- ‘VET graduate tracking’: Hungary, 26-27 March
- ‘Developing a culture of quality in schools through effective organisational strategies and leadership’: Serbia, 3-4 April
- ‘Quality culture in VET institutions, QA in CVET and strengthening the competences of VET teachers’: Lithuania, 15-16 April
- ‘QA arrangements and measures in VET: regional policies and strategies’: Italy, 22-23 May
- ‘Training and skills needs of the labour market and link with EQAVET indicators’: Belgium-fr, 25-26 September
- ‘Modularisation in VET’: Czechia, 23-24 October
- ‘Improving access to lifelong learning for all’: Finland, 26-27 November





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Point *Italy*

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l.evangelista@inapp.gov.it

c.fonzo@inapp.gov.it

m.forleo@inapp.gov.it

www.inapp.gov.it

