

European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training

2008/0069(COD) - 09/04/2008 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to establish a “European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training”.

PROPOSED ACT: Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council.

BACKGROUND: several initiatives already exist in this area (e.g. [Recommendation on further European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education](#) which provides standards and guidelines for quality assurance and the [Recommendation on the European Quality Charter for Mobility](#) which introduced quality assurance concepts in developing and implementing actions in support of mobility).

Vocational Education and Training (VET) is an important element of the EU’s drive to become more competitive and socially cohesive. The creation of a knowledge-based society underpinning the Lisbon strategy needs to be based on investment in, and improvement of, the quality of human resources. Across the EU VET is organised at a national and regional level with different standards leading to different qualifications. This diversity means that there is huge scope for mutual learning and for an EU-wide reflection about future organisation. And it also means that Europe requires common points of reference to ensure transparency, consistency and portability between the many streams of development across Europe. All of this should happen without infringing the Member States' autonomy in the governance of VET systems.

In 2003 the EU adopted a “Common Quality Assurance Framework for VET” or CQAF. However, the quality criteria, indicative descriptors and indicators supporting implementation of the CQAF are insufficient and make the instrument difficult to generalise. Indeed, many EU Member States have underlined the need to strengthen the status of the CQAF.

The Framework forms part of a series of measures designed to support continuous improvement in the quality and governance of VET systems. These include the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF – see [COD/2006/0163](#)), the European Credit System for VET (ECVET- see [COD/2008/0070](#)), and the common European principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning.

CONTENT: the Framework should be a means of giving new impetus to the continuous improvement of quality management practices and, ultimately, of VET systems. The Framework fully respects the competence of the Member States. It seeks to stimulate:

- the creation of more developed and consistent quality assurance and improvement systems across countries;
- increased transparency of quality assurance and improvement systems and approaches in VET, to improve mutual trust and facilitate mobility;
- co-operation and mutual learning, to foster stakeholder involvement in a culture of quality improvement and accountability at all levels.

Recommendations to the Member States:

- use and further develop the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework, quality criteria, indicative descriptors and reference indicators as set out in Annexes 1 and 2, to further improve, reform and develop their VET systems, support lifelong learning strategies and the implementation of the EQF and promote a culture of quality improvement at all levels;
- devise a national approach for implementing the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework not later than 2010, involving the social partners and all other relevant stakeholders in accordance with national legislation and practice. This should include the identification of a number of common indicators to assess and monitor progress and to support review;
- participate actively in the ENQA-VET as a basis for further development of common principles, reference criteria and indicators, guidelines and tools for quality improvement in VET at national, regional and local levels, as appropriate;
- designate a Quality Assurance National Reference Point (hereinafter QANRP) for VET that brings together existing relevant bodies and involves the social partners and all stakeholders concerned at national and regional levels, in order to ensure the follow-up of initiatives and efficient dissemination of information. The reference points should: i) keep a wide range of stakeholders informed about the European Network's activities; ii) provide active support to the implementation of the European Network's Work Programme; iii) take concrete initiatives to promote further development of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework in the national context;
- undertake a review of the implementation process every three years. The national reviews will contribute to a European review to be organised by the Commission.

Recommendations to the Commission:

- support Member States in carrying out the above tasks, in particular by facilitating cooperation and mutual learning, testing and developing guidance material, and providing information on quality developments in VET across EU countries;
- develop the role of ENQAVET in contributing to policy development in this area through concrete proposals and initiatives;
- monitor the action taken by the Member States in response to this Recommendation and report, three years after its adoption, to the European Parliament and the Council on the experience gained and implications for the future, including, if necessary, a review of this Recommendation.

Use of the Framework will be voluntary. Its main users will be public authorities and the bodies charged with quality assurance and improvement.

Annexes: the Framework comprises: a quality assurance and improvement cycle of planning, implementation, evaluation/assessment and review of VET, supported by common quality criteria (annex 1 to the proposal), indicative descriptors and indicators (annex 2 to the proposal). The set of indicators will be further developed through European cooperation on a bilateral and/or multilateral basis, building on European data and national registers.