

European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training

2008/0069(COD) - 18/12/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 561 votes to 16 with 10 abstentions, a legislative resolution amending the proposal for a recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training. The report had been tabled for consideration in plenary by Jan **ANDERSON** (PES, SE), on behalf of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs. The amendments were the result of a compromise between the Council and the Parliament. The main amendments - adopted under the 1st reading of the codecision procedure - were as follows:

- an introductory text to the Annexes asserts the voluntary character of the recommendation;
- a new recital notes that the reference indicators proposed in Annex 2 to the Recommendation are intended to support the evaluation and quality improvement of VET systems and/or providers in accordance with national legislation and practice, and to serve as a "toolbox" from which the various users may choose the indicators they consider most relevant to the requirements of their particular quality assurance system. In terms of their nature and purpose, they should be distinguished from the indicators and benchmarks referred to in the Council conclusions of 25 May 2007 on a coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks for monitoring progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training ;
- the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework, if used and further developed by the Member States, could help them to further improve and develop their VET systems, support lifelong learning strategies, further European labour market integration and the implementation of the EQF and promote a culture of quality improvement at all levels, while respecting the rich diversity of national education systems;
- the Recommendation should contribute to modernising education and training systems, improving the effectiveness of training by seeking to ensure that people do not leave without qualifications, improving the interrelationship of education, training and employment, building bridges between formal, non-formal and informal learning and expanding the awarding of qualifications on the basis of experience acquired.

With regard to the Recommendations, Parliament stated the following:

Recommendation 1 : this must refer to the European Quality Charter for Mobility and extra emphasis should be placed on the transition from vocational education and training to higher education;

Recommendation 2 : Members States should each devise, **not later than 24 months after the adoption of the Recommendation**, an approach aimed at improving quality assurance systems at national level, where appropriate, and making best use of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework, involving inter alia, **regional and local authorities**;

Recommendation 4: the reference points should, amongst others : keep a wide range of stakeholders informed about the activities of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework network ; provide active support to the implementation of the work programme of the European Quality Assurance

Reference Framework network; **support self-evaluation** as a complementary and effective means of quality assurance which allows the measurement of success and the identification of areas for improvement in respect of the implementation of the European Network's Work Programme; ensure that information is disseminated to stakeholders effectively;

Recommendation 5 : Member States should undertake a review of the implementation process every 4 years (rather than 3 years as the Commission had proposed) – such review to be incorporated into alternate national progress reports drawn up within the context of the future strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training – on the basis of reference criteria to be defined under the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework network in cooperation with the Commission and the Member States;

Intention 2: this is amended to state the Commission intends to promote and participate together with the Member States in the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework network, contributing to policy development in this area through concrete proposals and initiatives, as needed;

Intention 3: the Commission will ensure follow-up to the implementation of this Recommendation by presenting a report every four years to the European Parliament and the Council on the experience gained and implications for the future, including, if necessary, a review of this Recommendation conducted in cooperation with the Member States and involving the various stakeholders;

Intention 4: the Commission will undertake, on the basis of the report and in cooperation with the Member States, an evaluation of the implementation of this Recommendation and, if necessary, its revision.

Annexes: a new introduction to the Annexes reads as follows: the Recommendation proposes the adoption of a VET quality assurance and improvement cycle (planning, implementation, evaluation/assessment, review or revision) based on a selection of quality criteria, descriptors and indicators applicable to quality management at the level of both systems and training providers. The aim is not to introduce new standards, but to support Member States' efforts, whilst preserving the diversity of their approaches.

The Quality Framework should be regarded rather as a "toolbox", from which the various users may choose those descriptors and indicators they consider most relevant to the requirements of their particular quality assurance system.

The proposed descriptors (Annex 1) and indicators (Annex 2) are provided for guidance only and may be selected and applied by users of the Quality Assurance Reference Framework in accordance with all or part of their requirements and existing settings.

They may be applied to initial vocational training (IVT) and/or continuous vocational training (CVT), depending on the relevant individual characteristics of each Member State 's VET system and the type of VET providers.

They are to be used on a purely voluntary basis, taking account of their potential added value and in accordance with national legislation and practice. They should be considered neither as benchmarks, nor as a means of reporting on, or drawing comparisons between, the quality and efficiency of different national systems. The responsibility for monitoring the quality of these systems remains entirely with the Member States.

Annex 1: some amendments were made to this Annex on quality criteria and descriptive indicators.

Annex 2: the title is changed to a reference set of selected quality indicators for assessing quality in VET. The introduction notes that in terms of their nature and purpose, they should be distinguished from the

indicators and benchmarks referred to in the Council conclusions of 25 May 2007 on a coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks for monitoring progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training. Furthermore, the table of indicators does not include aggregated indicators at national level in cases where these do not exist or are difficult to obtain. The aggregation of such indicators at national level can be carried out at a later stage on the basis of a joint agreement between the Member States, the Commission and the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework network. Parliament made some amendments to Annex 2.

Lastly, it should be noted that this proposal is closely linked to the proposal on the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET). (Please see [COD/2008/0070](#)).