

Quality assurance in HE and VET in the context of NQFs, EQF and QF-EHEA: promoting trust between the sectors?

Biograd na Moru, Croatia
27 June 2013

SEMINAR CONCLUSIONS

1. In order to achieve a common goal of bringing the worlds of Higher Education (HE) and Vocational Education and Training (VET) closer together, it is important to work further on implementation of Common Principles for Quality Assurance (taking into account the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) criteria and procedures) that would finally lead to more transparency, better reliability and trust in qualifications that are described in terms of learning outcomes and quality assured by the use of National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) as one of the QA supporting tools.
2. Since referencing and self-certification of the NQFs to the EQF and to the QF-EHEA, with particular emphasis on fulfilment of all criteria, procedures and principles, provide the basis for mutual trust, it is important that the countries continue and intensify their work on further development and implementation of their NQFs and on self-certification and referencing in particular.
3. The implementation of Common principles of QA such as found in Annexe III to the EQF Recommendation should be intensified. In HE, the independent review of QA bodies and European register EQAR are already being implemented while in VET the review of QA bodies needs to be further discussed.
4. The collaboration between HE and VET providers and policy makers should be additionally supported to allow for their mutually comprehensible QA systems which would additionally contribute to building trust among the sectors.
5. Since ensuring quality is an on-going process that often needs adjustments to current circumstances, QA processes and standards should reflect the need for both accountability in terms of minimal standards and improvement of quality.
6. Although the European Standards and Guidelines for QA in HE (ESG) and the Common principles for QA in the EQF differ in learning outcomes approach in a way that it is more supported by the EQF, and in the level of independence of QA bodies that is strongly emphasised by the ESG, they represent substantially coherent basis for further development of QA.
7. The implementation of the EQAVET recommendation at the national level and its further development, including networking of QA National Reference Points at the EU level should additionally be supported with the purpose of generating culture of quality throughout the EU thus contributing to an increased trust in VET qualifications.

8. The QA processes and standards should equally take into account the assessment of “Fit for purpose” aspect (e.g. employability, active citizenship).
9. Some countries already use NQFs as a support tool for QA. The implementation of such examples should be widespread as good practice among different stakeholders across Europe.
10. The use of *Recommendation on the use of Qualifications Frameworks in the recognition of foreign qualifications* which was adopted as a subsidiary text to the Lisbon Recognition Convention at the LRC Committee meeting in Split in June 2013 is highly recommended. This document, along with other emerging policy papers, promotes the use of qualifications frameworks in facilitating the recognition procedures that could eventually lead to automatic recognition of foreign qualifications. Moreover, there are already emerging examples that could pave the path to automatic recognition.
11. In order to ensure proper recognition of foreign qualifications, the main elements to be taken into account should be learning outcomes, level workload, quality and profile which stresses the role of QFs in this process. Although qualifications frameworks give only limited amount of information on profile for recognition purposes, they allow for simpler assessment of the other four elements.
12. The use of ECVET should be additionally supported. However, there are different opinions among stakeholders whether the use of ECVET should become similar to the idea of usage of ECTS and this topic needs to be further discussed.