Launch

of the

European Network on Quality Assurance in VET

3 October 2005

Information Note

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Shared ambitions for 2010

For the benefit of citizens and the European Union as a whole

On 14 February 2002 the ministers in charge of education and training in EU Countries and the European Commission set themselves the following goals to be achieved by 2010 'for the benefit of citizens and the European Union as a whole':

- the highest quality will be achieved in education and training and Europe will be recognised as a worldwide reference for the quality and relevance of its education and training systems and institutions
- education and training systems in Europe will be compatible enough to allow citizens to move between them and take advantage of their diversity
- holders of qualifications, knowledge and skills acquired anywhere in the EU will be able to get the effectively validated throughout the Union for the purpose of career and further learning
- Europeans, at all ages, will have access to lifelong learning
- Europe will be open to cooperation for mutual benefits with all other regions and should be the most-favoured destination of students, scholars and researchers from other world regions.

These are ambitions, but realistic goals. They mark the beginning of a new phase in the development of education and training in the European Union context, based on diverse systems sharing common goals. These shared goals will guide and inspire reforms and foster progress within each country as well as action at the level of the European Union as a whole. It is expected that they will also be shared by the countries joining the European Union as new Member States in the course of the decade.

Extract from 'Education and Training in Europe: diverse systems, shared goals for 2010. European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture, 2002.

1.   **Introduction**

European cooperation in the field of Quality Assurance (QA) in Vocational Education and Training (VET) aims at increasing effective progress towards achieving the Lisbon goals and the target set by the Barcelona European Council in March 2002 of making Europe's education and training systems a world quality reference by 2010.

However, achieving the Lisbon goals and the target set by the Barcelona European Council requires greater synergy between initiative's at European level and effective commitment of Member States and participating countries, not only to the process of implementing a coherent approach to quality assurance, but also to the process of encouraging and supporting each other's endeavours to achieve common goals.

Member States and national stakeholders need to be motivated and supported, while concrete actions need to be planned, implemented, coordinated, and monitored at a national, regional and local level to ensure maximum coherence and consistency.

The process of European cooperation which was initiated by the Council Resolution of December 2002, has been acting as a lever to improve Quality Assurance of national VET systems, through exchange of experience, debate and consensus building towards the development of common principles and guidelines, as well as the emergence of pilot initiatives at both national and European level.

Appropriate and effective mechanisms and tools are required to blend and connect developments at both the national and the European level.

2.   **Context**

Copenhagen Process

The Copenhagen Declaration (November 2002), involving Member States, the EEA-EFTA countries, candidate countries and the Social Partners, and the Council Resolution (December 2002), on 'Enhanced Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training' gives priority to:

> 'Promoting cooperation in quality assurance with particular focus on exchange of models and methods, as well as common criteria and principles for quality in vocational education and training.'

The Resolution invited the Member States and the Commission to take the appropriate steps necessary to implement this priority, building on and adapting relevant structures and instruments.

Technical Working Group on QA in VET

In 2002 the European Commission as part of the Copenhagen Process established a Technical Working Group (TWG) on Quality Assurance in VET.

The Group consisted of representatives from Member States, associated/candidate countries and Social Partners. CEDEFOP provided technical and scientific support with regard to the implementation of the TWGs Work Programme including the assignment of external experts. The European Training Foundation (ETF) assisted the Group by liaising with and supporting the then candidate countries.

The mandate of the Group included the following:
- to examine existing national and international standards and norms, their application, strengths and weaknesses
- to identify a common core of criteria for quality development at European level
- to outline a proposal for a co-operation framework in order to develop common activities between countries on specific issues, to promote the exchange of good practice and the use of voluntary peer review.

Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF)

In 2003 the Group conducted an inventory of QA systems in the EU. Based on the findings, and with the intention to help and assist Member States/Countries in improving Quality Assurance at systems and provider level, the Technical Working Group developed a Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF).

In May 2004 the Education Council endorsed the principles and approach of the Common Quality Assurance Framework.

The CQAF constitutes a common and systematic approach to quality assurance. It can help policy makers and practitioner to share best practice and to improve quality systems.

The Council invited Member States and the Commission, within their respective competencies, to promote the CQAF on a voluntary basis and together with relevant stakeholders to introduce practical initiatives, and encouraged coordination of activities at a national and regional level to ensure overall coherence.

The Council also invited the promotion of cooperative and voluntary networks on an experimental basis, to enable the trans-national exchange of best practice.

Having fulfilled its mandate the Technical Working Group is being phased out in 2005. In parallel a sustainable means of ensuring European cooperation on Quality Assurance has been sought.

3   **European Network on Quality Assurance in VET**

At its meeting in June 2005 the Advisory Committee for Vocational Training (ACVT), **following a proposal from the Commission**, agreed to the establishment of a Europe Network on Quality Assurance in VET.

The European Network will be launched today (3 October 2005) in Dublin, at the Conference **Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (VET): Building Sustainable European Co-operation** hosted by the Irish Authorities - the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) with the support of the Department of Education and Science and the European Commission.

A Steering Group was established by the European Commission in early 2005 to assist with both the planning for the Launch of the Network and the Dublin Conference. See Appendix 1.

4.   **Purpose**

The European Network in Quality Assurance in VET will build sustainable co-operation in the field of Quality Assurance in VET across Member States, in order to make and ensure effective progress towards achieving the Lisbon goals and the targets set by the Barcelona Council in March 2002.

The Network will provide a cooperative platform at European level for structured exchange of information and experience, debate, mutual learning, consensus building and maximising of output and results, including from a range of education and training European programmes. The Network will also serve as a bridge linking Higher Education to VET.

While fully respecting Member State competencies and the diversity of Quality Assurance systems, the Network will foster transparency and consistency of initiatives across Europe and bring added value to National and International initiatives and assist in the development and improvement of the quality of VET structures at national, regional and local levels.

It will also contribute to raising awareness among the relevant stakeholders by incorporating and reflecting the interest of all sections of VET including initial, continuing, adult, public and private, as appropriate to the national context.

It will promote and enhance the status of VET within and across Member States/Countries.

5.   **Membership**

In July 2005, the Commission invited the members of the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training (ACVT) to make the necessary arrangements in order to ensure a consensus-based proposal **from each country and European Social Partners group** concerning the membership of the network. Nominees were to be sent to the Commission by **mid September.**

This was to include two representatives from each Member States/Country and three representatives from both Social Partner Groups.

To ensure appropriate and effective participation the following criteria for membership was devised:
▪ members must combine effective expertise and institutional capacity both to contribute to the activities of the network and to disseminate its achievements to the relevant national stakeholders in VET.
▪ members can represent (i) ministries responsible for quality assurance in VET; and/or (ii) inspection, approval, evaluation and accreditation bodies;
▪ members must be able to relay the work and outcomes of the network to competent structures/organisations at national level.

It is anticipated that the profile of the members will vary according to national contexts

It is noted that additional, occasional participants can and will be associated to the Network when appropriate to the thematic activities, as may be outlined in the Work Programme.

The current membership list as designed by Member States/Countries and Social Partners is outlined in Appendix 2. The membership will grow over time, as more Member States/Countries nominate representatives.

The Commission and CEDEFOP will also be members of the Network.

It is further proposed to include the involvement of representatives from higher education.

6.   **Network Structure/Governance**

General Assembly

It is proposed that the current list of Network members be referred to as the Networks General Assembly.

The General Assembly will be the main policy and decision making body of the Network. The initial responsibilities of the General Assembly are to:
a.   elect the members of the Board as well as the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson from among its members
b.   agree a Terms of Reference
c.   agree a Work Programme

The General Assembly will meet twice a year.

Board

From today - the Launch of the Network – a number of Member States have volunteered to work with the Commission to form a Provisional Board.

The volunteers comprises: Ireland (Presidency 2004), UK (Current Presidency), Austria (Presidency: January – June 2005) and Finland (Presidency: July- December 2006).

It is hoped to have a maximum of 8 members on the Provisional Board including the above Member States, the Social Partners, the Commission and CEDEFOP.

It is further proposed that by 22 November 2005, a more permanent Board of 10 members will be elected and appointed by the General Assembly.

The proposed composition of the Board will be:
6 Member States
2 Social Partners
1 Commission representative
1 CEDEFOP representative

The Board will elect a Chairperson and Vice–Chairperson.

In order to commence the process the Provisional Board will contact all Member States/Countries in late October / early November to initiate/ ascertain interest to partake in the Board as and from 22 November.

The Board will be the executive arm of the Network. It will meet at least four times a year.

The initial responsibilities of the Board will be to:
- prepare a two year Work Programme 2006-7
- prepare draft Terms of Reference (to clarify its role)
- clarify appropriate funding arrangements
- coordinate the Membership

CEDEFOP

In addition to being members of the Network, CEDEFOP may provide technical and scientific support to the Network, in accordance with its own mandate and following adoption of its own annual Work Programme.

European Training Foundation (ETF)

The ETF will also be invited to be a member of the Network and contribute to its activities, within the sphere of its competencies.

Reporting

In addition to reporting to the General Assembly a representative of the Networks Board will regularly report to the Director Generals of Vocational Training (DGVT) and ACVT on progress and results including with regard to the Work Programme.

7.   **National Nodal Points**

The European Network will be anchored on national nodal (contact) points. This will ensure national stakeholder coordination and efficient dissemination of information.

Establishing and promoting a contact point(s) in each Member State/Country is a key condition in striving to achieve greater transparency, coherence, progress, innovation and sustainability of QA developments in VET and is central to the success of the Network.

It is anticipated that over time each Member States/Countries will designate a nodal (contact) point for the purpose of the Network and ongoing dissemination activities.

The designation of nodal points is voluntary and the arrangement will vary according to national contexts.

The Commission will contact each Member State/Country inviting them to identify appropriate nodal points.

8. **Outline Work Programme**

To stimulate debate at the Dublin Conference an outline Work Programme was drafted by the Steering Group. See Appendix 2.

The programme takes cognisance of the need for
(i)   further discussions with Member States/Countries, Social Partners and the General Assembly and
(ii)   Technical and Scientific support.

9. **Funding**

Funding arrangements require further discussion and clarification both up to 2007 and beyond.

It is anticipated that financial contributions will be required from multiple sources including: the European Commission, CEDEFOP and individual Member States/Countries. In addition, existing funding instruments e.g. Leonardo da Vinci, Socrates and other European programmes, including specific grants will be explored and fully maximised.

From 2007 new, innovative and more stable and formal funding streams will be explored with the support of the Commission.

Obviously, formal funding arrangements will be dependent on an agreed Work Programme.

It is also anticipated that affiliated Member States/Countries and or organisations will bear some expense and over time may be subject to a membership fee.

10   **Communications**

It is imperative that Member States/Countries who so wish, have access to and links with the Network - both in terms of inputting to its work and benefiting from the outcome/ materials developed.

To this end CEDEFOPs Virtual Community on Quality Assurance in VET, set up to support the process of European co-operation in this field, will act as a storehouse i.e. a dissemination point for the Network, storing details including membership, contact points and the Work Programme.

It is also anticipated that Member States and Social Partners will proactively promote their involvement with the Network.

11.   **Way Forward**

The first meeting of the Networks General Assembly will take place in Brussels on 21/22 November. The travel expenses will be financed by the Commission up to one participant per country and three representatives from each group of European Social Partners.

The Terms of Reference, objectives/goals and the Work Programme will be discussed at the November meeting. An election will take place to appoint a Board. The Board will elect a Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson.

The Board will have its first meeting following the General Assembly.

The Network will be represented at the Conference hosted by the Austrian Presidency in May 2006 in Graz. This Conference aims to bridge Quality Assurance in VET and Higher Education.

12.   **Contact Point**

If you wish to contact the **European Network on Quality Assurance in VET**, between now and 22 November, please contact:

Barbara Kelly
FETAC
bkelly@fetac.ie

If you wish to contact the European Commission on the issue of Quality Assurance in VET, please contact:

Fernanda Oliveria-Reis
Fernanda.Oliveira-Reis@cec.eu.int

If you wish to contact CEDEFOP on the issue of Quality Assurance in VET, please contact:

Tina Bertzeletou
TB@cedefop.eu.int

13.   **Useful information points:**

European Commission

Policy areas
Education and Training 2010
http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010

CEDEFOP - Virtual Community

http://communities.trainingvillage.gr/quality

Appendix 1   **Steering Group**

Austria	Jurgen Horschinegg	Bundesministerium fur Bildung, Wissenschaft und Kultur
Finland	Leena Koski	National Board of Education
Ireland	Barbara Kelly	Further Education and Training Awards Council
Italy	Giogio Allolli	Ministry of Labour
Commission	Fernanda Oliveria Reis	DG EAC/A3
	Peter van der Hijden	DG EAC/A2
CEDEFOP	Tina Bertzeletou	CEDEFOP, Thessalonika
Technical Experts	Prof Erwin Seyfried	FHVR Berlin – University of Applied Sciences
	Kim Faurschou	FACO

Appendix 2   List of Designated Network Members - as at 28 September

COUNTRY	NAME	FUNCTION & ORGANISATION	TEL / FAX / EMAIL
AT	**1. Jürgen Horschinegg**	Coordinator of quality development and quality assurance within the Ministry for Education Science and Culture	Tel: +43 1 53120 4424 Fax: +43 1 53120 814424 Email juergen.horschinegg@bmbwk.gv.at
	2. Franz Reithuber	Head of College for Engineering in Steyr	Tel:+43 725272914-13 Fax:+43 725272914-25 Email: franz.reithuber@htl-steyr.ac.at
	1. Karin Hainz-Sator (alternative)	Federal Ministry for Education Science and Culture	Tel: 43 53120 4494 Fax: +43 1 531420 814494 Email:Karin.hainz-sator@bmbwk.gv.at
	2. Johann Wiedlack (alternative)	Principal of the HTBLVA St. Pölten	Tel: +43 2742 75051-213 Email : johann.wiedlack@htlstb.ac.at
BG	**1. Valentina Deikova**	Director of Directorate Policy in Vocational Education and Continuous Training	Tel : Email : v.deikova@minedu.government.bg
	2. Lora Todorava Deneva		Tel: +359 29217 678 Fax: +359 29217 596 Email: L.Deneva@minedu.government.bg
CY	**1. Demetrios Englezakis**	Chief Education Officer – ACVT member - Ministry of Education and Culture, Cyprus	Tel: +357 2800645 Fax: +357 22428273 Email : denglez@cytanet.com.cy
	2. Panikos Lasettas	Senior Human Resource Officer, Training Directorate - Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus	Tel: +357 22390234 Fax: +357 22428332 Email: p.lasettas@hrdauth.org.cy

CZ	Michek Stanislav	Expert – NUOV – Ministry of Education	Email: michek@nuov.cz
DE	Bent Paulsen	Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung	Tel: +49 228 107-13 32 Fax: +49 228 107-29 73 Email: paulsen@bibb.de
DK	Philip Pedersen	Undervisningskonsulent - Ministry of Education	Tel: + 3392 5709 Fax:+ 3392 5666 Email:Philip.Pedersen@uvm.dk
EE	Kalle Toom	Head of Vocational Education Division - Vocational and Adult Education Department – Ministry of Education and Research	Tel: +372 735 0285 Fax: +372 735 0220 Email: kale.toom@hm.ee
ES	1. Maria Isabel Lopez Mascaraque	Educational Technical Advisor - Ministry of Education and Science, Deputy-Directorate for Vocational Education Training	Tel: 34 91 701 84 63 Fax: 34 91 701 86 24 Email: soledad.iglesias@mec.es
	2. Ana Carreras Béjar	Occupational Training Technician - Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs	Tel: 34 91 585 97 57 Fax: 34 91 585 97 61 Email: subdireccion.formacion@inem.es
FI	1. Mika Tammilehto	Counsellor of Education - Ministry of Education	Tel: +358 9 160 77316 Fax: +358 9 160 77006 Email: mika.tammilehto@minedu.fi
	2. Leena Koski	Counsellor of Education - National Board of Education	Tel: +358 9 7747 7769 Fax: +358 9 7747 7117 Email: leena.koski@oph.fi
FR	Daniel Allard	Inspecteur pédagogique régional de Sciences et techniques industrielles – Inspecteur d'académie dans l'académie de Créteil - Région Ile-de-France	Tel : 00 33 6 88 69 67 28 Email : daniel.allard@ac-creteil.fr

HU	1. Katalin Molnar-Stadler	National Institute of Vocational Education – PMU Development Programme for Vocational Schools	Tel: 00 361 434 5772 Fax: 00 361 434 5790 Email: Katalin.stadler@axelero.hu
	2. Zsolt Bartus	Deputy Director-General - National Institute of Vocational Education	Email: bartus.zsolt@nszi.hu
IE	Barbara Kelly	Director of Awards and Standards - Education and Training Awards Council	Tel: 00 353 1 8659500 Fax: 00 353 1 865067 Email: bkelly@fetac.ie
IS	Olafur Grétar Kristjansson	Expert - Ministry of Education, Science and Culture	Tel: +354 545 9500 Fax: +354 562 3068 Email:olafur.g.kristjansson@mrn.stjr.is
IT	Giorgio Allulli	Expert - ISFOL	Tel: +39 06 4459 0295 Fax: +39 06 4429 1871 Email: g.allulli@isfol.it
LT	Giedre Beleckiene	Director of Methodological Centre for VET	Tel: + 350 5 212 35 23 Fax:+370 5 249 81 83 Email: giedre@pmmc.lt
NL	1. Thea van den Boom	Policy officer – Department for Vocational and Adult Education – Ministry of Education, Culture and Science	Tel: +31 70 4123118 Fax: +31 70 4124192 Email: t.b.m.vandenboom@minocw.nl
	2. Petra Velthuysen	Policy Advisor – Bve Raad – Dutch Council for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education	Tel: +31 30 2219861 Fax: +31 30 2202506 Email: p.velthuysen@bveraad.nl
PT	Teresa Paixao	President of the IQF - Instituto para a Qualidade da Formaçao	Tel: +351 21 8107092/93 Email: Teresa.paixao@iqf.gov.pt

RO	**1. Adela Rogojinaru**	Expert - National Centre for the Development of Vocational & Technical Education	Email: adela@tvet.ro
	2. Ion Hogan	Vice-president - Employees Confederation UGIR 1903 and Expert in quality management	Email: cnfpa@cnfpa.ro
SE	**1. Stefan Skimutis**	Head of the Education Department – Swedish Agency for Advanced Vocational Education	Email : Stefan.skimutis@skolverket.se
	2. Staffan Bolin	Expert – Swedish National Agency for Education – Director of Education	Email: staffan.bolin@ky.se
SK	**1. Maria Jozsova**	General Counsellor – VET department, Ministry of Education	Tel: + 4212 593 74 278 Fax: + 421 2 59374 458 Email: maria.jozsova@minedu.sk
	2. Juraj Vantuch	Director – Slovak National Observatory on VET	Tel:+421 2 6241 0678 Fax:+421 2 6241 0678 Email: sno@netax.sk
UK	**1. Jenny Burnette**	Director, curriculum and Quality, Learning and Skills Development Agency	Tel:44 207 2979012 Fax: Email : jburnette@lsda.org.uk
	2. Kate Anderson	Director, Research, Learning and Skills Development Agency	Tel:44 207 2979006 Fax: Email: kanderson@lsda.org.uk

		SOCIAL PARTNERS	
UNICE	**Julia Gocke**	Bundesvereinigung der Deutschen Arbeitgeberverbände	Tel: +49 30 2033-1711 Fax +49 30 2033-1705 Email: J. gocke@bda-online.de
UEAPME	**Jaja Meglic**	Adviser of Secretary General of Chamber of Craft of Slovenia	Tel: 0038-615830-527 Email: janja.meglic@ozs.si
CES/ETUC	**1. Petri Lempinen**	Finnish Conf. of Salaried Employees ETUC	Tel: +358 913152228/407667805 Fax:+358 9 652 367 Email: Petri.lempinen@sttk.fi
	2. Herrman Nehls	DGB-Bundesvorstand	Tel: + 30 24 060 647 Fax: + 30 24 060 410 Email: Hermann.nehls@dgb.de

Appendix 3   Draft Outline Work Programme 2006/7

1.   Promoting European Exchange through Peer Learning Activities

2.   Promoting the Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF) and encouraging initiatives that will assist Member States to apply the CQAF eg pilot projects.

3.   Supporting the establishment of nodal points in all Member States/Countries.

4.   Developing new knowledge at European level through initiating studies and cross analysis of systems.

5.   Promoting trans-national quality assurance projects, analysis and stock taking of project results.

6.   Developing and promoting visible and accessible dissemination tool(s) for materials and information. The Virtual Community will be used as the main dissemination tool.

7.   Organising two General Assembly meetings per year

8.   Hosting an Annual Conference

9.   Linking with the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)

10.   Developing an annual report of activities and projects.