



European guidelines on quality assurance in tertiary VET

For several years, European institutions have stressed the importance of vocational education and training (VET) for the employability of (young) people and the economic competitiveness and growth as well as for broader social challenges, in particular for social cohesion. In many member states, however, strategies to foster VET focus largely on initial VET. Higher VET (HiVET), that is: VET leading to qualifications on levels 5 to 8 of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), is often neglected or underestimated in such policies. This is largely due to the heterogeneity of HiVET with its great variety of providers, assessment procedures, quality standards, etc. This distinguishes HiVET from higher academic/science-oriented education, which thanks to the Bologna process is characterised by a largely uniform qualification structure (bachelor, master, PhD) and common standards of quality assurance (QA). Although QA mechanisms are in place in HiVET as well, there are no European reference guidelines nor are the mechanisms uniformly defined and applied on national levels. The absence of such common QA guidelines has become evident, in particular, during the implementation of national qualifications frameworks (NQFs). The NQF allocation frequently underrates HiVET qualifications, which means that there is a lack of parity of esteem between qualifications from higher academic education and higher VET.

The main objective of the Erasmus Plus project “Promoting and Implementing European Principles of Quality Assurance in Higher Vocational Education and Training” (QA HiVETnet, 2014-1-AT-01-KA202-000951), which was launched in September 2014 and has a planned duration of three years, is to promote more parity of esteem between these “education segments”, which complement each other. This objective will be reached by defining “European Guidelines and Principles on Quality Assurance in Higher VET”, which will be drawn up by the six project partners from Austria, Germany, Belgium, Greece, France and a European organisation. These guidelines will serve as a European reference for all HiVET providers and qualification awarding bodies. In order to strengthen cooperation between these institutions, a European Network on Quality Assurance in Higher VET will be established which will keep the subject matter on the political agenda also beyond the project and develop the guidelines further.

Project website: www.qa-hivet.net