

INFORM

NEWS AND VIEWS TO KEEP YOU IN THE KNOW FROM THE ETF COMMUNITY

MONITORING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING QUALITY IN ETF PARTNER COUNTRIES



Improving quality is a key objective for vocational education and training (VET) systems in the ETF's partner countries. Achieving it entails putting various processes and procedures in place and monitoring them to ensure that the VET delivered meets expectations in terms of the objectives set.

What we mean by quality differs from country to country. In some countries it refers exclusively to the relevance of VET to labour market needs, while in others it also includes its capacity to respond to the needs of the learners and/or societies. At the ETF, we believe that quality VET should meet the needs of the labour market, individuals and society as a whole. In addition, it must be attractive, inclusive, accessible and open the door to further learning. Hence, quality is about characteristics and functioning of systems.

However we define quality, there must be processes and procedures in place to ensure it and measures to verify their effectiveness. These include quality standards with underlying principles, criteria and indicators aimed at monitoring and improving systems on a continuous basis.

- Why is quality in VET important?
- EQAVET indicators – what for?
- What are the conclusions of the mapping exercise?



WHICH INDICATORS AND WHAT FOR?

In 2017, the ETF established the Forum for Quality Assurance in VET, a collaborative network of national-level institutions responsible for VET and/or VET quality assurance in 16 partner countries in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean and South Eastern Europe.

One activity of the ETF Forum was a mapping exercise carried out by members on the use of indicators. The main purpose was to collect basic information on the understanding, coverage, usage and data collection

characteristics of 10 quality indicators or their proxies.

The Forum used 10 indicators recommended by the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training¹ (EQAVET). They were selected because they are an internationally agreed set of core indicators aligned with a Plan, Do, Check and Act framework. This is a four-stage approach to the continuous improvement of processes, with quality criteria and descriptors. Within EQAVET, knowledge is available on their relevance

and use. In addition, they can be exploited for international benchmarking of quality assurance systems in VET. The indicators are a mix of input, process, output, outcome and context indicators.

The initial mapping looked only at the initial VET system. In the process, the members of the Forum deepened their knowledge of their own VET systems and the quality assurance mechanisms in place.

¹ EU Recommendation (2009) European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET

EQAVET 10 INDICATORS

INDICATOR	SUB-INDICATOR	TYPE
1. Relevance of quality assurance systems for VET providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Share of VET providers applying internal quality assurance systems (1) defined by law (2) at own initiative ■ Share of accredited VET providers 	Context/input indicator
2. Investment in training of teachers and trainers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Share of VET teachers and trainers participating in further training ■ Amount of funds invested in the further training of VET teachers and trainers 	Input/process indicator
3. Participation rate in VET programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Participation rate in VET programmes 	Input/process/output indicator
4. Completion rate in VET programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Completion rate in VET programmes. 	Process/output/outcome indicator
5. Placement rate in VET programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Destination of VET learners at designated point in time after completion of training, according to the type of programme and the individual criteria ■ Share of employed VET learners at designated point in time after completion of training, according to the type of programme and the individual criteria 	Outcome indicator
6. Utilisation of acquired skills at the workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Information on occupation obtained by individuals after completion of VET training, according to type of training and individual criteria ■ Satisfaction rate of individuals and employers with acquired skills/competences 	Outcome indicator (mix of qualitative and quantitative data)
7. Unemployment rate according to individual criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Unemployment rate (age group 15–74) 	Context indicator
8. Prevalence of vulnerable groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Percentage of participants in VET classified as disadvantaged groups (in a defined region or catchment area) according to age and gender ■ Success rate of disadvantaged groups (from VET) according to age and gender 	Context indicator
9. Mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Information on mechanisms set up to identify changing demands at different levels ■ Evidence of their effectiveness 	Context/input indicator (qualitative information)
10. Schemes used to promote better access to VET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Information on existing schemes at different levels ■ Evidence of their effectiveness 	Process indicator (qualitative information)

OUTCOMES OF THE MAPPING

The mapping focused on the understanding, relevance, usage, and coverage of quality indicators in each country. The members of the Forum carried out the assessment and consultations with other relevant institutions, such as the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour or VET providers. In this way, learning about quality indicators extended to a larger group that play a role in improving quality of the VET systems. The key conclusions of the exercise are summarised below.



Understanding of quality indicators

The understanding of indicators and their definitions is relatively high across all 10 quality indicators. While about two thirds of Forum members expressed a full understanding of most indicators, one third had difficulty understanding about half the indicators, mainly the outcome indicators. Difficulties have been identified with the indicators on the participation of disadvantaged groups, and the schemes used to promote better access to initial VET.



Coverage of indicators across countries

Most countries collect data on participation, completion and unemployment rates. More than half have evidence on the participation of disadvantaged groups, qualitative indicators on the schemes used to promote access to education and to identify training needs as well as the participation of teachers in further training.

The biggest gaps concern indicators providing detailed information on the destination of graduates, and the rate of satisfaction with acquired skills and competences. Where such data exist, they may be limited to the number of graduates employed.



Clarity on the use of some indicators

In general, there was clarity about the use of indicators of inputs, processes and outputs of the education system (which are collected to a large extent in most of the countries surveyed). In contrast, there was less clarity about use of the outcome indicators on labour market performance of graduates.

Two thirds of country representatives had difficulty understanding how to use about half or more of the quality indicators, namely those related to outcomes.



Usage and characteristics of data collection

Most data are collected through regular data collection processes and embedded in the monitoring of VET systems. Only some indicators (outcomes, mechanisms to identify training needs) are collected in a few participating countries or in an irregular/ad-hoc way, which does not enable systematic monitoring of VET quality.

While most countries do collect data on these indicators, the main challenge remains the proper analysis and use of such data, including making results publicly available.



Relevance of indicators of VET system outputs and outcomes

In the countries surveyed, the 10 quality indicators are generally considered relevant for improving the quality of VET provision. The most important ones are felt to be participation and completion rates, further training of teachers, placement rate and the mechanisms for access to initial VET and the identification of training needs in the labour market.

CONCLUSION

It is crucial for any quality assurance system to have indicators to monitor VET processes. A wide range of indicators can be used, but the important thing is consensus between all stakeholders about these indicators, their policy rationale and usefulness.

A mix of input, process, output and outcome indicators should be used. The mapping shows that many countries do quite well with input and process indicators, but less so with outcome indicators. However, these are vital in evaluating the final results of inputs and processes within the VET system.

Indicators are meaningless if they are not analysed and shared with stakeholders. Information on the utilisation of skills acquired is important not only for policy makers, who need to identify areas of the system in need of improvement, but also for learners and their families, who need to make informed choices about future career pathways. It is no less important for public employment services and training providers in order to increase the quality of their programmes, strengthen links with businesses and adapt to changes in the labour market.



KEY PUBLICATIONS

Cedefop, *Assuring quality in vocational education and training: The role of accrediting VET providers*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2011.

Cedefop, *Glossary: Quality in education and training*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2011.

Cedefop, *Handbook for VET providers: Supporting internal quality management and quality culture*, Reference series No 99, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2015.

Deane, C. & Watters, E., *Towards 2010: Common themes and approaches across higher education and vocational education and training in Europe*, National Qualifications Authority of Ireland, 2004.

ETF, *Quality assurance in vocational education and training: A collection of articles*, ETF, Turin, 2014.

ETF, 'Quality indicators for vocational education and training: An instrument for mapping the understanding, relevance, coverage, usage and characteristics of data collection', ETF, Turin, 2019.

ETF, Watters, E., 'Higher quality VET – Better chances for young people: Challenges and policy responses in the Arab Mediterranean countries', ETF, Turin, 2013.

ETF, Watters, E., *Promoting quality assurance in vocational education and training: The ETF approach*, ETF, Turin, 2015.

European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, *Assuring quality in education: Policies and approaches to school evaluation in Europe*, Eurydice Report, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2015.

USEFUL LINK

For further reading on the ETF approach to quality assurance in VET, see:

www.etf.europa.eu/en/practice-areas/assuring-quality-vocational-training

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