

ETF FORUM FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING - PEER VISIT TO ARMENIA



YEREVAN, ARMENIA, MAY 21-23, 2024

Quality Assurance Forum

The contents of this paper reflect the views of the peer visit participants and do not necessarily represent the views of the ETF or the EU institutions. 

SUMMARY

The meeting of the ETF Forum for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (ETF QA Forum) in Yerevan, Armenia, May 21 – 23, 2024 focussed on the quality assurance of the formative assessment of learning with focus on participation of employers. ANQA (National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance of Armenia) hosted the peer visit.

The ETF QA Forum, established in 2017, is a transnational collaborative initiative composed of a network of national-level institutions with a VET quality assurance mandate, representing ETF partner countries in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean, the South-Eastern Europe regions and Turkey and the Eastern Partnership regions. ETF Forum members collaborate to improve quality assurance in VET by pooling knowledge and know-how, monitoring, and reporting on national developments in quality assurance, engaging in joint projects, including Peer Visits, and developing and disseminating good examples of policy and practice.

The ETF Forum's Peer Visits are guided by the ETF QA Forum methodology on peer visits. It foresees that a hosting country requests feedback from external peers on effectiveness of quality assurance related to a selected VET policy area.

Members of the ETF QA Forum (external peers) from Albania, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Kosovo *, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia took part in the peer visit hosted by Armenia. The European Training Foundation (ETF) coordinated the overall process and adherence to the methodology.

In the preparatory phase of the peer visit, ANQA shared with peers a detailed context information on the Armenian VET and QA system. As a quality assurance body, ANQA put in the spotlight the impact of external quality assurance of VET providers on the employers' driven formative assessment processes. ANQA stressed the importance of these processes for the relevance of competences and employability of VET graduates.

During the first 2 days of the event, peers had meetings and discussions with all key actors on the Armenian VET scene: Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport; National Centre for VET Development; Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs; Ministry of Economy; representatives of employers; experts engaged in external evaluations of VET providers; teachers and employer-teachers; directors and vice-directors of VET providers, and students. These interactions allowed to deepen the understanding of formative assessment processes and their quality assurance measures.

On the 3rd day of the event external peers prepared their feedback and delivered it to the Armenian hosts. Peers have noted a mature and holistic QA framework for VET providers steered by ANQA, encompassing all key stakeholders in the QA processes, and focused on continuous quality enhancement. It was observed that formative assessment area is included in the internal and external evaluation framework of providers. As regards possible areas of improvement, peers recommended mainstreaming the existing good practices in the QA of formative assessment through developing reference/guidance tools on formative assessment ready for usage, investing in related training for teachers and supporting exchange of good practices/networking between VET providers. Peers also suggested to make the needs of the private sector clear to all actors in VET system, so that learning outcomes and assessment standards could be aligned accordingly.

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

INTRODUCTION

This report provides an overview of the 3-day peer visit of the ETF Forum for quality assurance in vocational education and training (ETF QA Forum) in Armenia, and an insight on the quality assurance of formative assessment with engagement of employers in Armenia and other ETF QA Forum member countries. The report offers points for reflection on how quality assurance measures, especially external evaluation of providers, can lead to mainstreaming of effective formative assessment of VET providers.

Beyond the thematic focus, the report offers a comprehensive overview of the methodology systematically used by the ETF QA Forum – that of peer visits. Although the Peer visit methodology was specifically developed for the ETF QA Forum, it can be used outside of the context of the Forum. It can inspire other professionals working in the field of education, training and employment to apply it for active and effective peer learning. The report follows three phases of the four-phases approach of the ETF Forum's Peer Visit methodology: Preparation, Implementation, Feedback.



Photo: Opening session on 21.05.2024, from left to right: Mr Ruben Topchyan, Director of ANQA, Mr David Avakian, Delegation of the European Union to Armenia, Ms Larisa Avetisyan, Yerevan State Medical University, Ms Luiza Militosyan, ANQA Accreditation Committee, Mr Jora Sargsyan, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

BACKGROUND

On 21-23 May 2024 members of the ETF QA Forum convened in Yerevan, Armenia, upon invitation of the Armenian member of the ETF QA Forum - National Centre for Professional Education Quality

Assurance of Armenia (ANQA) represented by Mr Ruben Topchyan, Director of ANQA, Ms Varduhi Gyulazyn, Head of the Institutional and Programme Accreditation Division, and Ms Anahit Terteryan, Specialist at Institutional and Programme Accreditation Division. ANQA hosted the 5th peer visit of the ETF QA Forum.



Photo: Group photo on 21.05.2024 at the Opening Session at the College of Yerevan State Medical University after Mkhitar Heratsi (YSMU)

A Peer Visit is a form of external feedback from visiting peers that aims to support the host country in its quality assurance development efforts. ANQA requested external peers from other Forum member countries to provide their feedback on whether external quality assurance measures (external evaluation of providers) are effectively impacting the quality of formative assessment in Armenia. A specific focus was put on the engagement of employers in the formative assessment. ANQA also asked for peers' recommendations on how to improve the effective integration of formative assessment practices by key actors of VET system.

One of the core activities of the members ETF QA Forum is collaborating to develop solutions to common challenges. It is in this context that the Forum has adopted Peer visit as its core working method.

Peer Visits serve as catalysts for:

- Engagement of national stakeholders in an international review of VET quality assurance measures.
- Receiving of external, critical but supportive observation and feedback on quality assurance measures.
- Supporting the host country in self- reflection and self-assessment of its own quality assurance in VET approaches and measures.
- Gathering evidence with inputs from external peers for the effective reform of VET quality assurance.

The ETF Forum for Quality Assurance in VET [Peer Visit Guidance and Training Manual](#) - Working Paper was developed by ARQA-VET (Österreichische Referenzstelle für Qualität in der Berufsbildung) in collaboration with the ETF quality assurance team. The Manual provides guidance and a training concept for the implementation of Peer Visits as well as a 'toolbox' of instruments.

THE PEER VISIT – PHASE ONE, PREPARATION

- ZOOM IN ON THE REQUEST FOR PEER FEEDBACK from ANQA, CONTEXT INFORMATION
- SWOT ANALYSIS by ANQA
- SELF-REFLECTIONS BY PEERS ON NATIONAL PRACTICES

In the preparatory phase, the Peer Visit is planned and organised by the host institution with relevant stakeholders. Peers must be informed and prepared for their role and their tasks.

Peer visit methodology – PHASE 1 - PREPARATION	
Value for involved actors:	
<u>Hosts</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stimulating a national level reflection on a selected policy area with involvement of wide circle of national stakeholders, - Increasing international trust and transparency towards the national system
<u>Visiting peers:</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supporting analytical and critical thinking capacities vis a vis own country and international developments in quality assurance of VET - Stimulating a self-reflection on own country arrangements in the selected policy area

ETF QA Forum members from other countries were invited to get an in-depth familiarisation with the Armenian system. For this purpose, ANQA prepared a set of information documents. These included an analytical National Context Report (specifically drafted by ANQA for the peer visit), a SWOT analysis and a number of Armenian legislative and procedural documents.

Policy area at the centre of the peer visit: quality assurance of formative assessment with participation of employers
<p>Context for the Peer Visit:</p> <p>The Armenian VET sector is undergoing a period of reforms. They aim at enhancing the labour market relevance of education and training and improving graduates' employment rates (current target is reaching 90% by 2030). At the moment of the peer visit the revision of the Law on Primary Vocational (Craftsmanship) and Secondary Vocational Education was being under adoption by the Parliament. It is focused on the implementation of the Dual academic programmes, revision of the procedure of state academic standards development and ex- ante and ex-post accreditation of academic programmes and institutional accreditation. Institutional accreditation of VET providers is the main quality assurance measure for VET effectiveness. After a period of piloting, the process is now mainstreamed for all the VET schools (the target is for all schools to undergo accreditation by 2025) under supervision of ANQA. ANQA's findings indicate that employment-oriented formative assessment, when effectively implemented at VET institutions, enhances both the high</p>

employment rate and the acquisition of skills and competencies relevant to the needs of employers. ANQA has initiated institutional accreditation at VET institutions with a focus on motivating them refining formative assessment practices and make it employment oriented, as in some fields education tends to be more theoretical.

Interest of the hosting institution, ANQA

Receive individual comprehensive feedback on:

- whether external quality assurance measures in Armenia are effectively impacting the quality of formative assessment and how ANQA measures can be improved,
- how the effective integration of formative assessment practices by key actors of VET system can be improved, and what elements should be prioritized to support this transformation,
- provide general reflections on the Armenian Quality Assurance system.

ANQA also aimed at learning about best practices in the field of formative assessment for learning from Forum members.

In order to present its system to external peers, it is crucial that the hosting country selects and engages relevant national stakeholders in the peer visit from the very beginning. These stakeholders should be engaged in the joint national reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of the selected quality assurance measure (national SWOT analysis), in the definition of the questions to the external peers, and, finally, they should also benefit from the peer feedback. Such consistent engagement of relevant stakeholders allows to properly follow up on the feedback from external peers and their recommendations.

ANQA shared the following nationally prepared SWOT of the quality assurance in VET measure:

SWOT analysis of the quality assurance in VET measure

Selected quality assurance measure:	
Strengths (internal) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Alignment with Employer's Needs: The accreditation process emphasizes the importance of aligning VET academic programmes with the needs of employers. 2. EQA framework fosters employer involvement: ANQA VET accreditation framework promotes involvement of employers in the student assessment process. 3. EQA strong focus on formative assessment: There is a strong emphasis on formative assessment practices by experts to encourage VET institutions to properly stimulate feedback provision through the assignments. 4. Experts' recommendations promote IQA culture development in VET: Expert panel 	Weaknesses (internal) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Limited industry representatives in expert panels: The absence of the practical field employer leads to the fact that sometimes recommendations are general. 2. Theoretical assessment revealed by EQA: Assessment practices in VET institutions often lean towards theoretical approaches, lacking practical application and alignment with real-world industry demands. 3. Limited Employer Cooperation: Employers do not always express readiness to cooperate with VET institutions, reluctant to invest time in detailing their needs or collaborating effectively, hindering the relevance of education to industry requirements.

<p>recommendations are aimed at enhancing formative assessment in VET, accordingly, enhancing employer-VET communication, as well as strengthening IQA culture development in the VET.</p> <p>5. EQA emphasizes Employer-feedback oriented assessment: Expert panel emphasizes the extent to which the assignments and assessment criteria are relevant and employer feedback -oriented.</p>	<p>4. Lack of Experience in Employer Collaboration; VET institutions may lack the necessary experience and mechanisms to effectively engage with employers and establish fruitful collaborations, limiting opportunities for industry-aligned education.</p> <p>5. Inadequate mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of formative assessment; VET internal quality assurance managers sometimes lack sufficient tools, mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of formative assessment, leading to challenges in accurately measuring and improving educational outcomes.</p>
<p>Opportunities (external)</p> <p>1. Changes in the requirements for licensing requirements: The licensing requirements that reduce the necessity for permanent staff from 80% to 50% allows for greater flexibility in involving employers directly in the teaching process, which can enrich the curriculum with real-world industry insights and practices.</p> <p>Training sessions for teachers to effectively conduct formative assessment.</p> <p>2. Changes in the legislation leading to more autonomy of VET institutions: Current objectives to amend legislation giving more autonomy to VET institutions in terms of diversification of financial resources, reviewing academic programmes will enhance their ability to respond the needs of both students and the labor market more effectively.</p>	<p>Threats (external)</p> <p>1. Economic Variations: Economic downturns or instability can reduce the willingness or ability of employers to engage with VET institutions, limiting opportunities for co-creation and collaboration.</p> <p>2. Policy and Regulatory Changes: Shifts in government policies, regulations, or priorities can pose a threat to the autonomy of VET institutions and their ability to collaborate with the private sector. Changes in education or labor market policies could also impact the demand for VET and the alignment of programs with industry needs.</p> <p>3. Societal Perceptions: Despite improvements and innovations in VET, societal perceptions associated with vocational training compared to higher education can persist. This can limit the attractiveness of VET programs to potential students and undermine efforts to elevate the status of vocational education</p>

Visiting peers

Peers (representing ETF QA Forum member institutions) from Albania, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Kosovo *, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia took part in the peer visit.

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The main preparatory task for the visiting peers was to read the National Context Report prepared by ANQA, seek clarifications and further information, and consider the questions posed by ANQA for external feedback by the peers.



Photo: on 21.05.2024, arrival of peers to the College of Yerevan State Medical University after Mkhitar Heratsi

Additionally, ANQA asked the visiting peers to provide brief information about QA of formative assessment in their own countries, focusing on the following:

1. Tools applied to implement assessment for learning,
2. Ways of employers' engagement in creating assignments and assessment criteria to provide feedback to students,
3. Whether assessment for learning occurs at employer's site in work-based learning, and the segment where formative assessment is utilized in work-based learning.
4. Mechanisms to prepare teachers and employer teachers for formative assessment.

After a review of peers' national practices, ANQA asked to zoom in on two countries' cases that were: Georgia and Israel.



Photos: Mr Kakhaber Eradze, National Contact Point Georgia; Dr Yaron Doppelt, National Contact Point Israel

Synthesis of national practices in Georgia and Israel in the area of QA of formative assessment of learning

In **Georgia** TVET curriculum is structured with modules. Each module is an independent component of a program, that can be delivered as short-term course also. It is the combination of 2 to 6 learning outcomes that is relevant for performing a task relevant for a profession. Formative assessments are widely used during learning, which has no impact on summative assessment. (there are no scores or points that are transferred into grades or summed at the end). Formative assessment serves only students development purposes as well as the purpose of monitoring of module delivery. National curricula define summative assessment approach for each learning outcome. Assessment tools for a learning outcome or the group of learning outcomes are developed by schools themselves. Schools are obliged to use QA mechanisms for student assessment which is known as “verification”. Verification makes sure, that student assessment system meets 5 criteria: validity, reliability, transparency, objectivity and fairness. Students’ assessment evidences are preserved digitally for the whole period of a student studies (until qualification is awarded) and have to be presented for external QA purposes, any time. For enrollers from 2024, there are mandatory interim assessments to be introduced. All students are obliged to take this assessment in the middle of the program delivery (if duration is 2 years, this assessment is held after 1-st year of studies). It has no impact on student and cannot carry any legal results for students (like suspension or termination of the status, refusal in finances etc.). It is used as an internal QA mechanism for program delivery and school makes conclusions how successful the program delivery process is and have time to correct it, if needed.

Employers, through Sectorial Skills Organizations (SSOs) have an important stake in defining the curricula. National curricula are developed in close co-operation with private sector and education sector, and finally validated by SSO or group of private sector representatives, assessment criteria are therefore totally in hands of employers. If the program is delivered in a work-based learning mode, a school and a partner business organization split modules/learning outcomes among themselves and become responsible for achieving as well as assessing these LO-s in a co-ordinated way.

Still, formative assessment represents a challenge for Georgia TVET system. Especially meeting assessment system criteria: validity, reliability, transparency, objectivity and fairness, both, in schools and in businesses. Schools are more skilled in this, of course. They provide an assistance to partner businesses in teaching/assessing. There are numerous trainings provided by Skills agency and EQE (QA in assessment), annually. As of 2024, such courses will be institutionalised and made obligatory.

In **Israel**, formative assessment is primarily conducted by teachers throughout the three-year duration of high school. The Ministry of Education (MOE) appoints national superintendents for each subject area, who are responsible for overseeing the implementation of curriculum and assessment practices. The superintendents’ mission is to keep track of VET COLLEGES by assist them to improve, to modernize their instructional methods, and marketing their program to all high schools. These superintendents are supported by teacher leaders, who guide educators in schools on effective teaching methods, including formative assessment techniques. Furthermore, teachers are required to participate in annual in-service training programs, with a minimum of 30 hours dedicated to professional development each year. These training sessions include instruction on various assessment methods, with an increasing emphasis on assessing competencies and promoting project-based learning approaches over the past decade.

Formative assessment done by teachers in schools is compared each year to the summative assessment, if there is a gap, the superintendent take action to improve the performance of schools.

The assignments are developed during teacher professional development or nationally via development of the learning material. Both are under the supervision of the superintendent and his/her teacher leaders. Another source for assignments is the final matriculation examinations. Also, students and teachers provide feedback to improve assignments, as well as teacher leaders.

Employers typically do not play a direct role in creating assignments or determining assessment criteria for high school or technological college students in Israel. Instead, students undergo internal and external assessments administered by educational institutions. High school students pursuing technological majors dedicate a significant portion of their curriculum to these subjects and undergo testing in both internal and external assessments. Successful completion results in the attainment of a technological certificate, detailing their achievements in the subject.

In addition to traditional assessment methods, there is a growing trend in implementing system design-based learning in subjects such as system engineering. This approach integrates hands-on learning experiences and assessment of the system design process, providing students with practical skills and knowledge.

THE PEER VISIT – PHASE TWO, IMPLEMENTATION

In this phase, the Peer Visit takes place. The host institution presents its VET system-level quality assurance approach with emphasis on the selected quality assurance measure for the Peer Visit. Peers visit the host institution and relevant institutions, listen to presentations and other forms of inputs, observe, and gain a deeper understanding of the specific quality assurance measure.

Peer visit methodology – PHASE 2 - IMPLEMENTATION

Value for involved actors:

Hosts

- Obtaining an external view on national practices and procedures
- Developing capacities to present, appraise and support the sense of ownership of the national system and procedures vis a vis external peers,
- Developing a self-awareness on the importance of own role as a stakeholder in the implementation of the national system,
- Supporting the motivation of national stakeholders to collaborate and commit to the improvement of current practices and procedures.

Visiting peers:

- In-depth familiarisation with practices and procedures implemented by peer organisations in other countries
- Supporting the development of important communication competences and techniques: active and effective listening, observing and questioning
- Establishing working relationships with practitioners from peer organisations at international level

The Peer Visit started with an introductory online session led by the Armenian hosting institution – National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation (ANQA), its Director and National Contact Point, Mr Ruben Topchyan, Ms Varduhi Gyulazyn, Head of the Institutional and Programme Accreditation Division, and Ms Anahit Terteryan, Specialist at Institutional and Programme Accreditation Division, and Alternate National Contact Point.



Photo: from left to right in first line: Mr Ruben Topchyan, National Contact Point Armenia, Ms Armenuhi Poghosyan, Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, Ms Anahit Terteryan, Alternate National Contact Point Armenia, Ms Varduhi Gyulazyn, ANQA, Mr Mounir Baati, ETF

Introduction into the context - Vocational Education and Training (VET) system in Armenia

VET system in Armenia is mostly school-based and has two levels: primary and secondary VET. Primary VET (23 state institutions) is implemented in vocational (craftsmanship) schools, other professional educational institutions, educational centers, and penitentiary institutions. Graduates of Craftsmanship education is awarded the Diploma of Primary Vocational (Craftsmanship) Education and the level (type) of the qualification is “Craftsman”. The duration of the Primary education required from 6 months to 3 years.

Secondary VET (63 state institutions and 24 private) can be acquired at middle vocational educational institutions – Colleges, centers, universities and so on. Its duration depends on the level of education (basic or secondary general) and on the profession; it varies from 2 to 5 years. Graduates are awarded the Diploma of Secondary Vocational Education with the level of qualification “Specialist”.

The number of students in secondary VET programmes has increased in the course of last 4 academic years by 33%, especially in programmes on Agricultural sciences, Management and business administration, Information and communication technologies, Architecture and construction, Health care.

The governance of the sector is implemented by several institutions, whereas the **Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport** is responsible for formulation and implementation of policy priorities. It adopts state educational standards and is responsible for licensing of educational institutions and VET programmes. **The National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation (ANQA)** implements quality assurance processes through institutional accreditation in VET institutions. **The National Center for VET Development** is responsible for developing and updating of VET standards with involvement of social partners' representatives. The **Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs with its Professional Orientation and Competences Development Centre develops career guidance policies and methodologies**, and coordinates research on employability of VET graduates. **VET schools** have career centers that provide career guidance to students and collect data on the employment rates of graduates. **The Ministry of Economy** develops and implements both general industry and individual sectoral policies. It looks at the demand in the sectors and develops list of occupations in demand.

Work-based learning (WBL)

WBL as a training modality involving companies in training provision is just being introduced. It has been piloted in several VET institutions over the last years, and a concept paper and road map on WBL for 2019-2025 were approved by the NCVD in June 2019. The concept envisages a gradual enhancement, integration and development of different WBL forms in the VET system. These include improvement of learners' internship programmes (WBL 1st form); establishment of a “real” company adjacent to the primary and secondary VET Institutions (WBL 2nd form); and introduction of apprenticeship/dual education (WBL 3rd form).

Though in Armenia the traditional education mode of VET services is widespread and is supported by the Law on Vocational Education, in recent years the number of WBL pilot programmes has increased.

WBL programmes have been embedded in 20 VET institutions in 7 regions of Armenia. WBL programmes are implemented in sectors of Tourism, Precision Engineering, IT and Winemaking. Dual academic programmes are developed according to state educational standards. Students in dual academic programmes spend 50 percent of their specific module hours in an employer's environment.

Data from career centers show that graduates who were included in dual academic programmes have a higher employment rate than graduates who were included in traditional academic programmes.

Priorities and challenges

The goals and objectives for the development of the VET system are determined in the “Education development plan until 2030”. In the area of VET, the key focus is on the quality of VET programmes

and VET provision, strengthening of the quality assurance system and the institutional and human capacities of VET institutions. Along with the other objectives, the major goal outlined by the plan is to attain a professional employment rate up to 90% for graduates by the year 2030.

Despite the government's goal to boost graduate employment, VET institutions currently face challenges to equip students with the practical skills for all specializations and fields. At current stage employers' participation in the VET education is limited by engagement in internships in most cases for two months at the end of academic programme and involvement in the governing board of the VET institutions. The collaboration between teachers and employers is limited and the employers generally are not directly involved in the teaching and assessment of students. In addition to this there are lack of resources at VET institutions to align the assessment tasks with the employers' context.

Furthermore, dialogue between VET institutions and employers typically evolves around curriculum feedback rather than in-depth discussions on assessment tasks. However, there are good practices of VET institutions and employers' cooperation where employers form a part of formative assessment and closely work with teachers to formulate assignments of students, mainly in the field of culinary arts, healthcare, IT, arts, tourism, winemaking, and alternative energy, and specifically in dual academic programs that combine both practical and theoretical learning.



Photos: students at the Yerevan Regional State College N1 on 22.05.2024

Quality assurance in Vocational Education and Training in Armenia

In Armenia quality assurance culture is promoted by two basic principles: accountability and continuous quality enhancement. The aim of the external quality assurance is to bring Primary Vocational and Secondary Vocational Education into conformity with the needs of stakeholders, and society.

VET sector external quality assurance is carried out through accreditation. The external quality assurance entails two types of accreditations, institutional and programme and is based on the “fitness for purpose” principle. The accreditation process is performed by ANQA.

External quality assurance primarily focuses on the achievement of the objectives set by educational institutions and determines the level of their compliance with the quality assurance criteria and standards established by the RA Government.

Institutional accreditation

Institutional accreditation focuses on the governance of VET providers as well as management of the academic programmes and effective implementation of teaching, learning and assessment activities. Institutional accreditation is mandatory for all types of VET institutions.

The institutional accreditation criteria evolve around 10 areas:

1. Mission and purposes
2. Governance and administration

3. Academic Programmes
 4. Students
 5. Faculty and staff
 6. Research and development
 7. Infrastructure and resources
 8. Societal responsibility
 9. External relations and internationalization
 10. Internal quality assurance system
- Criteria include 56 standards.

Currently, VET institutions undergo only institutional accreditation. The accreditation process is described in the Manual for the External Review of RA's Tertiary Level Institutions.

A piloting phase preceded the institutionalisation and scaling up of the accreditation process.

In 2018, ANQA commenced institutional accreditation processes at 4 agricultural colleges, which was a condition of the EU Budget support programme "Better Skills for Better Jobs". Since 2019 state financing has been available for the implementation of institutional accreditation processes at state VET institutions. Each year the state funding for the accreditation of VET institutions has been increasing, (5 in 2020, 5 in 2021, 5 in 2022, 15 in 2023 and 20 in 2024) . It is envisioned by the Armenian Government strategy that by 2025 all the state VET institutions should have undertaken institutional accreditation.

Private VET institutions are also motivated to undergo institutional accreditation and they apply for institutional accreditation using their own financial resources.



Photos from left to the right: Mr Mounir Baati, ETF and Mr Ruben Topchyan, ANQA; Ms Ketevan Tsikhiseli, EQE Georgia and Ms Yelena Martirosyan, French-Armenian VET Centre

Programme accreditation

Programme Accreditation is the state recognition of correspondence of the academic programmes, the quality for preparing specialists with state accreditation standards and programme accreditation criteria. Programme accreditation is targeted at separate academic programmes. This process allows to periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the academic programmes as well as to monitor whether it thoroughly ensures the students' acquisition of intended learning outcomes. Programme accreditation is carried out at the initiative of the VET institutions, on a voluntary basis, except for medical academic programmes — the accreditation of which is mandatory.

Programme accreditation is conducted based on seven criteria that encompass the following areas:

1. Academic programme design and approval,
2. Teaching staff,
3. Teaching and learning practices,

4. Student assessment,
5. Research and development,
6. Learning environment,
7. Quality assurance.

Accreditation process

There are three phases in the accreditation process:

1. **Self-evaluation** is an evaluation procedure of the institution or its academic programme, which is followed by a written report based on the standards adopted by the Armenian Government.
2. **External Review** is a process whereby an expert panel carries out desk-review, which involves examining the self-evaluation report and all other important documents submitted by the institution. This is followed by a site visit, during which the expert panel members meet with institutional representatives in person: administrative and academic staff, students, graduates, employers and as an outcome, the panel prepares a written report, which includes recommendations on the areas to be improved.
3. **Decision-making** is a process of fact reviewing, decision-making and indication of areas in need of urgent solutions. The accreditation decision could be one of the following:
 - to grant institutional accreditation for a period of 4 or 6 years
 - to grant conditional accreditation for a period of two years,
 - to reject accreditation.



Photos from left to the right: Ivana Čvorović Plavšić, Agency for Qualifications Serbia; Ms Diana Xhelili and Ms Ejvis Gishti, National Agency of Vocational Education and Training and Qualifications of Albania, Ms Nadezda Solodjankina, ETF

ANQA has been promoting VET quality enhancement and continuous improvement of quality in VET institutions through implementation of institutional and programme accreditation. In addition, it provides continuous guidance to VET institutions on strategically applying the results of accreditation for their internal quality enhancement. The Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) system is currently in the development phase at VET institutions. Most of these institutions have designated managers responsible for overseeing IQA procedures. Internal quality assurance processes are an integral part of the institution's academic performance and provide a basis for its enhancement and reinforcement. Enhancing the capabilities of Quality Assurance managers remains a significant challenge. The primary mechanisms for implementing internal quality assurance processes are currently limited mainly to surveys and class observations. There is a clear and pressing need to diversify these mechanisms to enhance the system's efficacy and responsiveness. ANQA experience also reveal that VET internal quality assurance system should highlight the indicators to enhance employment-oriented assessment for learning.

VET standards and curricula

The National Center for VET Development (NCVETD) is responsible for the development of VET standards and modular curricula for formal VET. **VET standards** are developed and updated by working groups (formed by the NCVETD) comprising 5 to 7 representatives from relevant public bodies, organizations, educational institutions, social partners, and employers. Before approval, the draft educational standards are reviewed by the NCVETD and Sectoral Commissions. The NCVETD conducts a technical review, while the Sectoral Commissions evaluate the content. If the review results are positive, the standards are then officially approved by the Minister of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport.

The state **VET standard** defines:

- general characteristics of the qualification (NQF level, modes and terms of training, minimum and maximum student workloads),
- occupational characteristics (related occupational titles and main tasks and duties),
- requirements for the organization of education and training, and exemplary curricula.
- requirements for teaching staff and material resources.

VET institutions are responsible for adaptation of educational standards to their local employers' needs.

The curricula outline the yearly allocation of modules, examination types and the obligatory classroom workload, which consists of lectures, lab sessions, and practical activities.

The module specifies the aims, duration, entry requirements, intended learning outcomes (ILOs) of modules, performance criteria for each ILO, assessment methods, teaching methods, and the necessary resources.

The learning outcomes of the modules define the knowledge, skills, and abilities that a student is expected to meet upon completing the module. The number of learning outcomes depends on the size of the module, which can range from 3 to 7 or 8 specific outcomes.

For each intended learning outcome, the modules specify a set of performance criteria. These criteria detail what students must accomplish to meet the intended learning outcomes. For example, in a Nursing academic programme, the performance criteria define that "students must be able to perform immediate assistance correctly during a collapse". Based on these performance criteria, VET institutions develop assignments and checklists for assessing students' achievements.



Photos from left to right: Ms Ketevan Tsikhiseli and Mr Kakhaber Eradze, EQE Georgia; Ms Liia Kaarlõp, ETF, Mr Časlav Mitrović and Ms Ivana Čvorović Plavšić, Agency for Qualifications Serbia



Photos from left to right: Mr Arbër Salihu, National Qualification Authority Kosovo; Dr Yaron Doppelt, Ministry of Education Israel

Framing the thematic focus: formative assessment

In order to frame the thematic focus and raise awareness on the best practices in the formative assessment, the ETF expert in Innovative Teaching and Learning, Ms Jolien van Uden, presented to the QA Forum members a brand-new online tool on formative assessment, designed by the ETF: the ETF Assessment for Learning (VET) model of formative assessment. It starts by defining formative assessment, also known as “assessment for learning”, by its primary purpose, which is to further and improve learning. Rather than a separate and different activity or exercise, formative assessment is a practice running alongside and around learning, to support and enhance learning. It is continuous and iterative response, scaffold and catalyst, to the evolving and emerging needs of learners. Formative assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning, not a separate practice.

The model outlines the multidimensional nature of formative assessment and identifies its 6 key elements:

1. Developing a whole organisational ethos and culture to encourage interaction with and reflection upon wide-ranging evidence of learning,
2. Empowering learners as assessors,
3. Creating shared learning/problem-solving goals and success criteria,
4. Evaluating progress through diverse learning and assessment activities and evidence,
5. Delivering and receiving effective feedback,
6. Using feedback to adapt teaching and learning, addressing gaps and learning needs.

The model dwells on a number of recommendations for policy makers and VET providers, to help advancing formative assessment in VET. A number of these recommendations (with relevance to quality assurance measures) are listed here:

- Formative assessment should be part of a broader evaluation and assessment ecosystem, therefore needs to be covered by long-term strategies that align with the overall vision for education,
- Employers should be involved to clarify and align new assessment approaches,
- Educators should be provided with autonomy, resources and professional learning opportunities to adopt new assessment methods,
- VET providers should create a shared vision for formative assessment inside organisation and with stakeholders,
- Alignment should be ensured between standards, curricula, and assessment methods,

- Research and good practices (such as, through repository of resources, organisation of workshops and peer learning) should be disseminated on assessments that centre on equity and inclusion,
- More diverse assessment methods should be integrated in initial educator education programs.



Photos from left to right: Mr Goran Spasovski, NCP North Macedonia; Ms Ivana Čvorović Plavšić, Agency for Qualifications, Serbia and Mr Mohammad Tahseen Ali Alnawayseh, Technical and Vocational Skills Development Commission, Jordan

Focus of the peer visit – the quality assurance of formative assessment

ANQA motivates VET providers to refine formative assessment practices and make it employment oriented, as in some fields education tends to be more theoretical. Institutional accreditation process and framework are used by ANQA to enhance the focus on formative assessment, aiming to gradually improve the existing assessment systems and identify exemplary practices where employer involvement in student assessment is evident.

Through this framework, ANQA encourages external experts to thoroughly examine the formative assessment practices of VET institutions, thereby understanding their approaches and providing recommendations aimed at enhancing these practices.

ANQA motivates VET institutions to submit their assessment tasks and related materials for formative assessments to receive detailed feedback on potential improvements.

Furthermore, ANQA actively encourages employer participation in both teaching and assessment to ensure that graduates are well-prepared for specific industry contexts.

The programme accreditation, in particular, is distinguished by its focused criteria on student assessment systems. It checks if the assessment system is reliable for the evaluation of intended learning outcomes, with criteria available to teachers and students within the framework of academic programme.

Within the framework of the institutional accreditation, a thorough evaluation of three academic programmes is conducted to assess various aspects of educational delivery and effectiveness (2 academic programmes are proposed by the VET institution, one is selected by ANQA according to country strategic priorities).

The external experts review the academic programme content and the examples of assignments given to students within the core modules, evaluate their alignment with the programme's intended learning outcomes and their relevance to the real-world applications of the subject matter. They conduct class observations, visit to employers' places where students have internships, participate in the final attestation of students (depending on the curriculum plan). These observations help determine whether it is possible to evaluate the intended learning outcomes of the programme through the activities conducted by teachers as well as whether all ILOs are assessed, and the feedback given to students are timely and is based on the performance criteria.

During the site visit the expert panel conducts professional talks to discuss the issues raised from the observations of students' assignments within the scope of three academic programmes during meeting with the academic programmes' managers, teachers, and students separately.

The experts' formation and preparation

Expert panels are composed of teaching staff representatives, education management and/or quality assurance professionals, representatives and/or employers from specific field of study. The expert panels include one student representative. Head of the expert panel must have experience of participation in ANQA's accreditation processes. The experts are selected based on the field of study of three academic programmes within the institutional accreditation.

ANQA prepares the experts for evaluation through conducting training sessions for them. The trainings include activities directed to the successful implementation of the institutional accreditation framework. These training sessions include the role plays where the trainees review real assignments of the students (without name of the institution) and prepare questions and conduct a site visit where the trainees act as expert panel and ask questions to students and teachers. ANQA staff participate in the role play. The trainees are prepared to critically assess whether and how formative assessment is conducted within VET institutions, its effectiveness at various stages, and its contribution to equipping students for the workforce. The experts have discussions during the trainings, receive feedback from ANQA staff and coordinators.





Photos from left to right: Ms Anahit Terteryan, Ms Liana Alaverdyan, Ms Varduhi Gyulazyan, ANQA Armenia

Deepening the understanding of assessment process: clarifications from involved actors

A series of panel discussions were held to provide a comprehensive picture on the implementation of the quality assurance measure, and to get an insight from the implementors of the process and from its final beneficiaries. Panel discussions were facilitated by the Coordinator of the ETF Forum for QA in VET, the ETF Senior specialist, Mr Mounir Baati and Junior Specialist, Ms Nadezda Solodjankina and Georgia forum member, Mr. Kakhaber Eradze.

The following Armenian representatives shared their experience during the sessions on Day 1 and Day 2:



Photos from left to right: Mr Vladislav Koprivica, National Centre for VET Montenegro; Ms Diana Xhelili, National Agency of VET and Qualifications Albania

Professional talks (walking interviews) with teacher-employers and students engaged in academic program - Dental technology, College of Yerevan State Medical University after Mkhitar Heratsi



Photos from left to right: walking interview with teacher-employers and students of dental technology at the College of Yerevan State Medical University after Mkhitar Heratsi, 21.05.2024



Photo: in the cooking laboratory of the French-Armenian Vocational Education Centre, 22.05.2024

Panel discussion with the policy makers of VET system

Ms Armenuhi Poghosyan - Head of the Department for Preliminary (Craftsmanship) and Vocational Education and Training, Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport

Ms Tatevik Gasparyan - Director of National Centre for Vocational Education and Training Development

Ms Ruzanna Pepanyan - Head of employment division, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs

Ms Mane Khalatyan - Senior Specialist at Department of Knowledge-based Economy, Ministry of Economy



Photo: Ms Tatevik Gasparyan, Ms Armenuhi Poghosyan, Ms Ruzanna Pepanyan, Ms Mane Khalatyan

Panel discussion with the external review experts

Ms Armenuhi Mheryan - Head of the Department of Finance, European University of Armenia

Ms Kristine Hakobyan - Deputy Director at Kotayk State Regional College

Ms Asya Simonyan - Lecturer at M. Nalbandyan State University of Shirak
 Ms Yelena Martirosyan - Deputy Director at French-Armenian VET centre
 Ms Meri Sargsyan- Deputy Director at Yerevan state Base medical college
 Mr Aram Hakobyan- Student at Yerevan state Base medical college



Photo from left to right: Mr Aram Hakobyan, Ms Qristine Hakobyan, Ms Armenuhi Mheryan, Ms Asya Simonyan, Ms Yelena Martirosyan, Ms Meri Sargsyan

Panel discussion with employers and employers' associations

Mr Davit Grigoryan - Director of Tesvan IT company,
 Mr Khachik Sahakyan - Director of Ferti Cherity Center
 Mr Jora Movsisyan - Co-founder of Alex textile
 Ms Gexanush Stepanyan - Senior Nurse of Mikayelyan medical centre
 Ms Sona Eghiazaryan - Speciality at «Mari» tour agency



Photo from left to right: Mr Jora Movsisyan and Ms Gexanush Stepanyan

Panel discussion with the directors and vice-directors of VET institutions

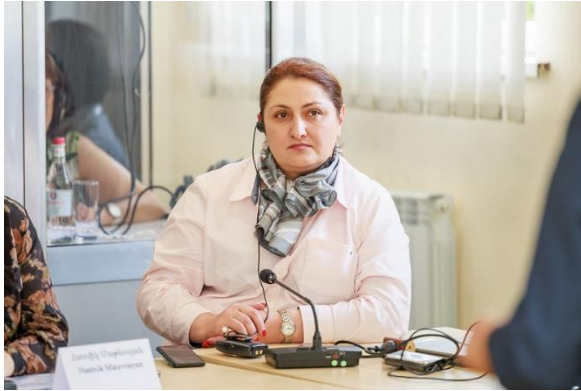
Ms Marine Hakobyan - Director's Representative, Yerevan state college of Humanities

Mr Vahe Babayan - Director of Yerevan Medical college after Mehrabyan

Mr Robert Abrahamyan - Director of Yerevan State College of Informatics

Ms Hasmik Matevosyan - Vice-director of Sevan State Multifuncional College

Ms Anush Mkrтчayn - Vice-director of Gyumri Craftsman State College N4



Photos from left to the right: Ms Marine Hakobyan from the Yerevan State College of Humanities, Mr Robert Abrahamyan, Director of the Yerevan State College of Informatics, 22.05.2024

Professional parallel talks (walking interviews) with teacher-employers and students engaged in academic programs - Dental technology, Culinary, Garment manufacturing technology, French-Armenian Vocational Education Centre



Photo: French-Armenian Vocational Education Centre students in the laboratory, 22.05.2024

Panel discussion with the teacher-employers and teachers

Mr Vladimir Bagratuni - Teacher-Employer at Gyumri Craftsman State College N4
Ms Armine Harutyunyan - Teacher-Employer at State College of Fine Arts after P. Terlemezyan
Mr Davit Shahverdyan - Teacher-Employer /doctor/ at Vanadzor Medical College
Mr Sargis Karapetyan - Teacher-Employer at College of Progress university
Mr Qajik Avetisyan - Teacher at Yerevan State College of Informatics
Ms Armine Meliksetyan - Teacher at Lori state Regional College



Photos from left to right: Mr Vahe Babayan, Director of the Yerevan Medical College After Mehrabyan with College teacher and student

Panel discussion with the academic programme directors, responsible persons of career development and internal quality assurance at VET institutions

Ms Liana Amirhanyan - Career Manager at Regional State College N2
Ms Lusik Manucharyan - Career Manager at Yerevan state Base medical college
Ms Lilit Abelyan – IQA Manager at Kotayk state Regional College
Ms Mariam Hovhannisyan- IQA Manager at Echmiadzin State College after Vardges Hamazaspyan
Mr Ashot Avetisyan - Head of Academic Program at Yerevan State College of Informatics
Ms Lusine Galoyan- Head of Academic Program at Martuni State Medical College



Photo: academic programme directors, responsible persons of career development and internal quality assurance at VET institutions: Mr Ashot Avetisyan, Ms Lusik Manucharyan, Ms Liana Amiraghyan, Ms Lilit Abelyan, Ms Mariam Hovhannisyanyan, Ms Lusine Galoyan



Photo: Peers in the garment laboratory of the French-Armenian Vocational Education Centre students, 22.05.2024

Professional parallel talks (walking interviews) with teacher-employers and students engaged in academic programs - Cooking, Art of acting, Yerevan Regional State College №1



Photo: peers at the French-Armenian VET Centre, 22.05.2024



Photo: Yerevan Regional State College N1 students in the laboratory, 22.05.2024

THE PEER VISIT – PHASE THREE, FEEDBACK

In phase 3, peers take time to prepare and then to provide feedback to the host institution during a moderated final feedback session of the Peer Visit.

Peer visit methodology – PHASE 3 – PEER FEEDBACK

Value for involved actors:

Hosts

- Getting elaborate external peer assessment on specific national practices and procedures

Visiting peers:

- Being exposed to a multitude of peer comments and analytical reflections on specific policy areas
- Being part of an international expert group and actively participating in discussions on specific policy areas

Reflection and preparing the Individual and Country Peer Feedback

The peers identified **strengths** and **areas for improvement** based on facts and evidence, taking into consideration how best to give reflective, constructive and motivating feedback to the host institution. In addition, peers were invited to provide their **ideas for improvement**. They were guided by three assessment questions, asked by the hosts of the peer visit:

- whether external quality assurance measures in Armenia are effectively impacting the quality of formative assessment and how ANQA measures can be improved,
- how the effective integration of formative assessment practices by key actors of VET system can be improved, and what elements should be prioritized to support this transformation,
- provide general reflections on the Armenian Quality Assurance system,

Key points from peers' feedback are summarized below. They represent positions of individual members of ETF QA Forum who have taken part in the peer visit.

Strengths

Related to formative assessment of learning

- There are good practices in the area of formative assessment of learners in VET schools,
- Formative assessment is integrated in the internal and external QA mechanisms as part of students' assessment.

Related to quality assurance in VET

- ANQA is implementing an experienced external quality assurance framework (covering both internal and external QA) where formative assessment is integrated as part of students' assessment. It provides freedom to motivated, sector related teachers/instructors. It is oriented on provider support and development rather than only control. Future legal framework in QA is going to pay more attention to output quality, quality of labour force

produced by VET sector. At the same time, ANQA is striving for continuous improvement of quality - its recognition of the need to further enhance QA is a matter of internal strength,

- The QA system in Armenia benefits from adopting a holistic approach that encompasses various aspects of educational quality, including curriculum development, teaching methodologies, student support services, and research activities,
- There is overall a focus on stakeholder engagement. ANQA promotes an inclusive approach based on engagement of all stakeholders in VET quality assurance: teachers, students, employers, among others. Such an approach enhances effectiveness of VET QA. The national strategy 2030 supports the engagement of employers in VET provision.
- Armenian VET providers demonstrate ownership of quality assurance processes. Each institution has a quality manager who is in charge of internal quality assurance, including planning and conducting internal evaluation,
- Quality improvement oriented “human element” is observed throughout the whole system and its key actors (teachers, learners, employers, education institution, as well as government officials).

Related to VET development

- Overall flexibility of the system: it allows companies to participate, to be involved in the process of curriculum development and also in trainings,
- There is willingness of employers to enhance their contribution to skills development,
- Armenian VET system provides a good offer in terms of duration and variety of learning paths, where different categories of learners everyone can find their paths,



Photo: Discussion with national stakeholders about the peers' feedback – led by Ms Nadezda Solodjankina, ETF, on 23.05.2024 at ANQA

Areas & ideas for improvement

Related to formative assessment of learning

- Scaling up of good practices in formative assessment to the entire VET system. This would entail a general promoting of formative assessment in policies, strategies and developing clear instruments for providers to be used.
- Developing a set of explicit standards or guidance instruments on formative assessment would help VET providers to measure the quality of processes and results of formative assessment. These instruments should cover encouraging the use of digital tools for formative assessments and provide training on their effective use. Standards and guidance instruments should encourage assessments that reflect real-world tasks and challenges relevant to the vocational field. This approach makes assessments more meaningful and practical for students. They should also encourage students to take an active role in the formative assessment process. This includes self-assessment, peer assessment, and reflection activities that promote self-regulated learning. Provision of feedback to students should be part of the approach.
However, flexibility should be allowed in assessment practices to accommodate the diverse needs of students and the varying contexts of different vocational fields.
At the national level, investing in research to explore the effectiveness of various formative assessment methods and the impact of QA on these practices, and use findings to refine QA frameworks,
- Improving the process of providing feedback to the teaching staff as regards the implementation of formative assessment, so teaching staff can be able to improve and manage further steps in terms of better formative assessment (scales, methods).
- Clarifying roles between main actors in VET for implementing formative assessment strategies and support careful planning where learners are fully engaged which is key for

success. Regulatory framework would need to further regulate the cooperation between school and businesses, in terms of clear roles and responsibilities, mechanisms and instruments to support the teaching, learning, assessment and so on in order to have common ground in which to build cooperation.

- Impacting on the effectiveness of formative assessment through QA mechanisms. There should be continuous evaluation of the effectiveness of formative assessment practices and making necessary adjustments. This can be done via collecting feedback from educators, students, and industry partners to inform improvements.
- Providing capacity building to teachers and assessors (in school and business) based on their needs and industry needs and by using varied approaches and tools to assess progress. Encouraging the development of teachers' peer networks, forums focussed on development of assessment competences. Comprehensive training programs can be developed for educators on formative assessment best practices and on how to align them with external QA standards (including modules on innovative assessment methods and data-driven decision-making). A catalogue for the professional development of teachers can be developed, including training for formative monitoring and assessment of students. VET teacher/instructor professional standards can be developed and approved with mandatory requirements for practical skills instructors to have active contact with the industry and have methodological knowledge in student assessment. Teacher-leaders could be identified across the country for prominent roles of support to other teachers, including creating modern learning materials and improving teaching methods,

Related to quality assurance in VET

- Developing clear standards identifying industry needs would help to align learning outcomes and respective assessment criteria. Assessment standards can become integral part of educational standards. It would specify satisfactory level of performance for the industry representatives. Ensure that formative assessments are clearly aligned with the learning outcomes of the VET programs. Requirements for assessment process and provision of evidences of student progress should be required by national quality standards.

Educational standards already define learning outcomes: what students will know and what they will be able to do/demonstrate after completion of the subject/module or program. In order to make sure learning outcomes are achieved, which should be prerequisite of awarding diploma, clear assessment standards should be set which guarantees uniform approach countrywide. Assessment process should be: 1. Valid- means that assessment instrument should be relevant for assessing particular learnings outcomes (for example, practical skills can't be assessed by oral or written test) 2. Trustful that means, that there are clear evidences of LO achievement, such as product produced, written tests or resign, audio or video recording etc. external evaluator, in the best case- business representative, should be convinced, that LO is actually achieved, 3. Transparency- criteria of good/satisfactory performance and conditions of assessment process should be clear in advance, for students, 4. Fairness- assessment process is organized in the way, students are able to demonstrate their competencies, there are adequate time given, appropriate materials and technical means provided during the assessment process, and 5. Objectivity, that means, all students in case of similar performance, have similar assessment.

Minimum these 5 commonly accepted criteria for student assessment should become part of QA standard and institutions should be responsible for compliance. Most of assessment requirements should be defined by assessment standard, nationwide. Such as: which learning outcomes will be assessed by testing, by practical assignment or by practical

assignment under observation. What are the criteria, for example, what should be the characteristics of satisfactory performance?

Example from Serbia illustrates that qualification standards contain learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes), but it also includes a section that defines the outcomes and types of assessment of learning outcomes, under the section "Type of assessment of learning outcomes," which relies on legal and by-law regulations governing the assessment procedure in the VET system.

- Impacting on the relevance of VET providers' offer and delivery through QA mechanisms. This can be done by requesting program delivery relevance justification as program accreditation precondition, which consists of using analysis and studies regarding skills needs in sector. Introduce some EQAVET indicators in QA framework and use these indicators in decision making about program accreditation or state financing. Especially 05 (Placement rate in VET programmes), 06 (Utilisation of acquired skills at the workplace), 09 (Mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market). This would entail establishing tracking system at provider and national level. Improving the learning materials, teaching methods and physical workshop equipment should derive from enhancing QA focus on programmes' effectiveness.
- Enhancing the capacity of external evaluators in sector specific issues. Private sector representatives would need to be involved in the process of external quality assurance (through mandatory participation).
- Utilizing digital technology to streamline the external QA process, making it more efficient and accessible



Photo: Ms Nadezda Solodjankina, ETF, Ms Armenuhi Poghosyan, Ministry of ESCS and Mr Ruben Topchyan, ANQA during the final discussion session on peers' feedback, 23.05.2024

Related to VET development

- Strengthening and formalising cooperation between industry and VET with a diversified approach to industry participation: design and drafting of occupational and educational standards, including assessment standards, quality standards, participation in QA process as experts, decision making bodies, involvement in teaching/instructing process, involvement in teachers professional development process, assessment of learners' competences, enhancing dual approaches in program delivery, give college operational management for some period of time and conditions, that colleges can be transformed as "industry training centers". This would need to cover raising awareness of businesses on benefits from cooperation with VET providers, but as well responsibilities coming from it, introducing short sessions of training to support their engagements in different components. Following a sectoral approach to industry/private sector engagement is a possibility
- Aligning QA processes with international standards and seeking accreditation from recognized international bodies for global recognition and credibility of Armenian educational institutions. For example, aligning national QA system, approaches and practices to the European Framework for QA in VET (EQAVET) cycle and indicators defining and establishment of reliable data collection system aimed at appropriate monitoring of the EQAVET indicators achievements. Performing a feasibility study on the national QA in VET context in relation to the implementation of EQAVET and development of for the implementation and monitoring of EQAVET indicators framework. Selecting at least 3 out of 10 EQVET indicators for piloting the Framework in Armenia. Development and delivery of training programmes on QA and the selected EQAVET indicators to main QA responsible institutions and VET providers.
- Introducing effective mechanisms to ensure achievement of strategic goals such as 90% of employment rate for 2030. This would require considering lots of factors have effect on quality of VET provision, such as:
 - o In order to achieve 90% employment rate of graduates, it should be clarified if self employment (starting own company or develop family business etc) will be considered as employment for this purpose,
 - o What will be the methodology to collect information about employment?
 - o Trust of the private sector towards quality of content and training. Revision of curriculums with private sector participation, more flexibility in the curriculum, when particular company can introduce their needs or specifications in the teaching/learning process, more practice oriented teaching, more site visits and more time spent in the premises of business, more dual programs, involvement of private sector representatives in student assessment and awarding qualification process will grow their trust and employment rate. TVET diploma/certificate should be the guarantee of quality workforce and 90% employment goal among graduates will be achieved.
- At the national/system level there should be prioritizing of the improvement of physical conditions and related equipment in VET schools, as well as VET offer alignment with the skills needs of the global world impacted by modern technological developments,
- Promoting internationalisation of VET institutions, including international exchange programs for students and faculty. It enriches the educational experience at the individual and institutional level,

- Enhancing innovation through incentives with grants and funding opportunities for innovative teaching and learning projects.



Photos from left to right: national stakeholders during the final feedback session on 23.05.2024 and Mr Ruben Topchyan, Director ANQA

THE PEER VISIT – PHASE FOUR, FOLLOW-UP

In the last phase of the Peer Visit procedure, the focus is on the usage of peer feedback as a source for improvements in the host country. The host institution is advised to analyse and reflect on the peer feedback and disseminate it, as appropriate, to relevant stakeholders. As an important additional learning outcome, peer visitors are also encouraged to think about if and how they might adapt/transfer good practice observed during the Peer Visit in their own countries.

Peer visit methodology – PHASE 4 – FOLLOW UP

Value for involved actors:

Hosts

- Possibility to engage in a national level discussion on the obtained peer feedback and devise a nationally shared plan to implement improvements in a specific policy area

Visiting peers:

- Possibility to disseminate the good practices observed and discussed among the national stakeholders.
- Possibility to transfer good practices in own country

In this respect, the ETF methodology for peer visit recommends a series of guidelines on this follow up phase, such as discussing the feedback with a circle of relevant stakeholders, decision on the utilisation of the feedback, setting up of an action plan and devising responsibilities for implementation.

In the National Context Report, ANQA states to provide feedback to the peers on the use of the peer feedback and/or for improvement (follow-up) by:

- Analysing the individual and joint feedback and recommendations received from the peers and discuss them within the agency;
- including relevant recommendations in the workplan of the agency;
- informing the stakeholders on the feedback received by publishing the report on its website and disseminating it via emails and social networking sites;
- using the recommendations as a basis for formulating the Roadmap on formative assessment when submitting it for Government approval;

The peer visit concluded with a feedback and reflection session between the Forum members' representatives. All praised the peer visit as an opportunity for an in depth peer learning. A series of improvements/proposals were suggested for the future peer visits:

- it is good practice to involve all key actors of VET system in the peer visit/panel discussions. However, the number of people on each panel could be limited to a number, so to give more time to each panel member,
- Time should be dedicated before the start of the peer visit, for the external peers to develop a joint hypothesis on the National Context Report, so that there is a joint position on questions asked to national stakeholders during panel discussions,

- Questions of peers asked in different sessions of the peer visit should be always focused on the topic and on the assessment questions stated by the host institution in the National Context Report),
- It is important to always act in the spirit of the QA forum peer visit methodology – peers are not there to look for mistakes in the system of the host country, but to share views.

Finally, ANQA thanked all the participating peers for their professionalism and expertise brought to continuous improvement of quality assurance in education.



Photo: Group photo on 21.05.2024

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* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

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