

# FOCUS ON VET QUALITY ASSURANCE



## EVENT REPORT FEBRUARY 2017

---

### INTRODUCTION

Government nominated specialists from Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine<sup>1</sup>, Morocco and Tunisia participated in the ETF Quality Assurance Event in Dublin, Ireland, 20 – 22 February 2017, organised in co-operation with Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI).

The three-day event comprised a peer learning activity focused on quality assurance mechanisms related to VET qualifications and a focus group session on the Forum for VET Quality Assurance that the ETF intends to launch towards the end of 2017.

The Irish comprehensive approach to quality assurance and qualifications set the scene for the peer learning activity. Of particular interest was the multi-actor,

multi-level approach to developing, implementing, monitoring, evaluating and revising VET quality assurance mechanisms in Ireland and how VET provider autonomy can be maximised through supportive steerage, effective co-operation, transparency, responsibility and trust.

The importance to Ireland of contributing to and learning from EU policy developments, engaging in multi-national co-operation to support national endeavours to improve VET quality assurance and aligning national approaches with the EQAVET Reference Framework was explained. The focus group session reflected on the Irish experience in relation to the goals of the proposed ETF Forum.



---

<sup>1</sup> This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual position of the EU Member States on this issue.

---

# QUALITY ASSURANCE AND QUALIFICATIONS

## Quality assurance of qualifications - international context

Improving the effectiveness and visibility of VET quality assurance<sup>2</sup> is increasing in importance globally. Drivers include: rapidly evolving labour markets; the need to demonstrate internationally the quality of the national skills base, growing autonomy of VET providers; the introduction of national qualifications frameworks based on a learning outcomes approach; and the need for transnational recognition of the qualifications of increasingly mobile workers/learners.

Since 2002, EU co-operation to enhance the transparency and comparability of VET has intensified in the context of the EU Copenhagen Process and Education and Training 2020. In 2009, a Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council established the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET and the Quality Assurance National Reference Points. The EQAVET Network, a community of practice bringing together quality assurance specialists from EU Member States and candidate countries and EEA countries as well as social partners, scientific advisers and the European Commission, collaborates on the improvement of VET quality assurance.

The European Qualifications Framework (EQF), with its general principles of quality assurance that underpins its implementation, is an influential EU initiative. The 2016 European Skills Agenda prioritises the visibility of skills and qualifications. The updates of the EQF places stronger emphasis on quality assurance to enhance mutual trust in qualifications and support cross-border recognition.

In this EU context, the Irish experience is primarily represented by QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland), a state agency established by the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012. Its mission is to promote quality in Ireland's further and higher education and training and develop the qualifications system. QQI engages in EQAVET to support VET quality assurance developments in Ireland and at EU level.

<sup>2</sup> The ETF defines quality assurance in VET as the measures established to verify that processes and procedures are in place to ensure VET quality. The measures relate to quality standards with underlying principles, criteria and indicators. ETF (2015), *The ETF Approach to Promoting Quality Assurance in VET*. Author: Elizabeth Watters.

## AN INTRODUCTION TO QUALITY ASSURANCE AND QUALIFICATIONS IN IRELAND

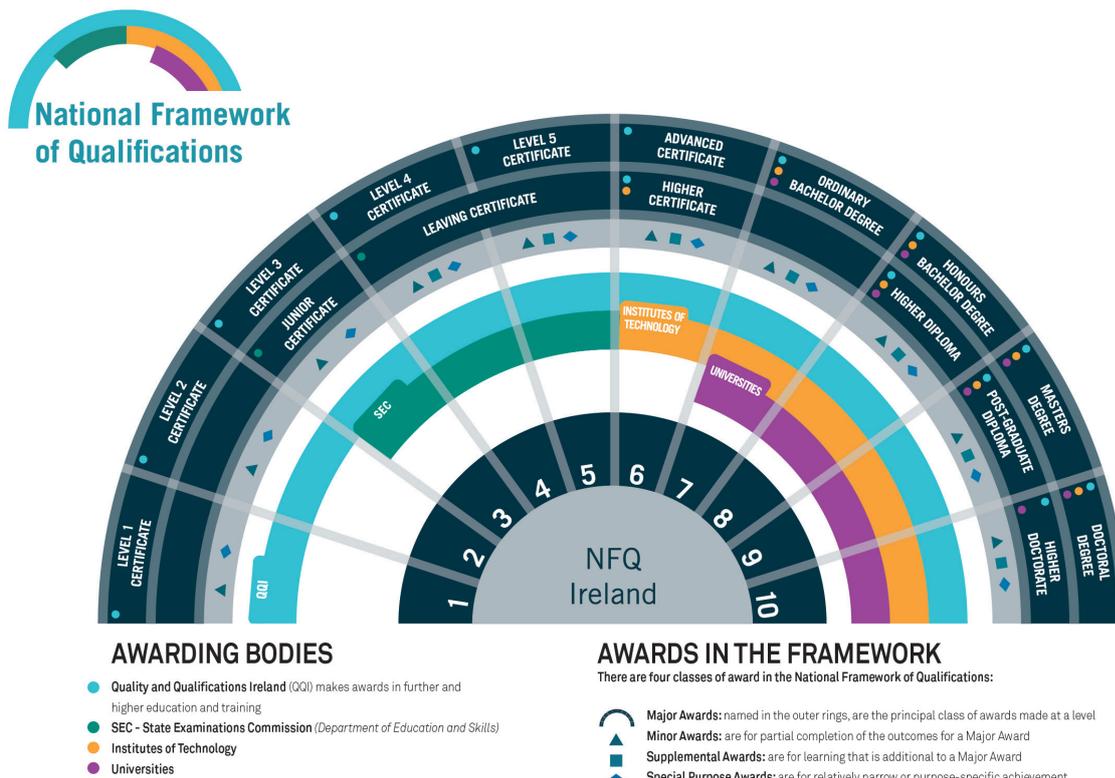
1. **Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)** (Padraig Walsh, CEO, QQI)
2. **Quality assurance policy and the National Framework for Qualifications** (Bryan Maguire, Director of Quality Assurance, QQI)
3. **VET qualifications and quality assurance** (Barbara Kelly, Director of Qualifications, QQI)
4. **Governance and management of VET and VET quality assurance - SOLAS, The Skills and Labour Market Research Unit, The National Apprenticeship System, Education and Training Boards.** (Mary-Liz Trant, Executive Director for Skills Development, and John McGrath, Manager-Skills and Labour Market Research, SOLAS)
5. **Apprenticeships in Ireland, pathways, qualifications and quality assurance mechanisms.** (Mark Deegan, Head of Apprenticeship and Engagement, Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT))
6. **Aircraft Maintenance Technician and Aircraft Technician Apprenticeship and quality assurance mechanisms.** (Ivan Sheridan, Training and Examinations Manager, DIT.)
7. **A VET graduate's perspectives on quality assurance and qualifications.** (Ros Wynne, Apprentice graduate, now employed in the Aviation industry and 2015 Worldskills Gold Medallist.)
8. **EU co-operation supporting the development of VET quality assurance with reference to VET qualifications. The role of the EU Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET and the EQAVET Network.** (Sean Feerick, Director EQAVET Secretariat.)
9. **Stimulating quality assurance development at national and local level in line with the EU Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET.** (Andrina Wafer the EQAVET NRP (QQI) and manager of the IQAVET network. Marie Gould Project Manager of the Education and Training Boards, Quality Assurance Framework.)
10. **Site visit to the DIT Aviation Technology Centre**



## Quality assurance of qualifications in Ireland

VET quality assurance supports the attainment of relevant qualifications and ensures adherence to national standards that safeguard reliability. Quality assurance mechanisms must underpin all phases of the qualifications cycle. National governance of the quality assurance of VET qualifications requires the existence

of a competent regulatory body (bodies) with capacity to maintain relevant institutional arrangements and processes. In Ireland, QQI, with its legislative basis and operational independence within the broad framework of government policy, is such a body. In partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, it maintains the National Framework of Qualifications NQF<sup>3</sup>; develops quality assurance, awards and standards; validates programmes; reviews providers; and makes awards.



## Quality assurance of the development of qualifications

The relevance of VET qualifications standards depends on the extent to which they are: developed jointly by education and labour market stakeholders; based on reliable evidence; inclusive of occupational, educational and assessment standards; expressed in terms of learning outcomes; part of verified programmes/curricula; systematically reviewed/revised and subject to procedures to verify that these criteria have been met. National qualifications frameworks/associated registers set requirements for the validation/approval of qualifications against qualifications standards.

QQI in partnership with a wide range of national stakeholders determines standards and awards for NQF Levels 1–6 and quality assures their development<sup>4</sup>. Standards groups draft standards that are subject to public scrutiny. When approved by QQI, they are published for use by providers to develop programmes. QQI validation of a programme signals its capacity to enable students to meet the standard to achieve the target qualification<sup>5</sup>.

Labour market data are essential for the development of qualifications standards and programmes. The collection, analysis and use of data processes must be subject to quality assurance measures. In Ireland,

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.nfq-qqi.com>

<sup>4</sup> QQI (2014) Policy for Determining Awards Standards 2014/QR:12 . <http://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Policy%20for%20Determining%20Award%20Standards.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> QQI (2013) Policy And Criteria For The Validation of Further Education And Training Programmes Leading To QQI CAS Awards. Revised 2013. [http://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Policy and Criteria for validation of FET programmes leading to CAS awards revised Oct 2013.pdf](http://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Policy%20and%20Criteria%20for%20validation%20of%20FET%20programmes%20leading%20to%20CAS%20awards%20revised%20Oct%202013.pdf)

the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit of SOLAS, the state agency for further education and training<sup>6</sup>, integrates all existing labour market and related data from a wide range of public and private sources in the National Skills Database. A regional dimension has recently been added. These data are available to VET providers to support VET programme development. The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs<sup>7</sup>, a tripartite committee comprising education/training supply and demand, has a central role in ensuring that labour market needs for skilled workers are anticipated and met.

### Quality assurance of the delivery of programmes leading to qualifications

Quality assurance of VET qualifications delivery aims to verify that programmes/curricula are based on qualifications standards and that learner attainment is supported by suitable didactics/learning contexts. To maintain qualification standards at the delivery stage, system-level quality standards for provider institutions are needed, including standards for teacher

qualifications and continuing professional development; teaching methodologies/resources and links to local stakeholders. System-level quality assurance measures to verify adherence to quality standards for VET provision vary across VET system typologies. The most common has been the traditional state and/or competent body evaluation of providers, but there is a growing requirement for provider developmental self-evaluation.

In Ireland, primary responsibility for quality assurance of programmes leading to Irish NFQ Levels 1–6 awards lies with providers<sup>8</sup>. Internal monitoring and self-evaluation are key components of a provider quality assurance system agreed with QQI as a condition of programme validation. Every seven years QQI carries out a statutory review of providers' implementation of their agreed quality assurance<sup>9</sup>. Currently, a common quality assurance framework is being developed for and by the Education and Training Boards providers. Adhering to international quality assurance standards may also be a pre-requisite for providers as illustrated in the Aircraft Maintenance case study (see below).

## QUALITY ASSURANCE OF AN AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE APPRENTICESHIP IN IRELAND

Rigorous quality assurance mechanisms are in place for the off-the-job phases of the Aircraft Maintenance Apprenticeship provided by Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT)<sup>10</sup>. The apprenticeship is delivered in 7 phases, including on-the-job (in the company) and off-the-job (in DIT) phases, normally over four years. It currently leads to Level 6 Advanced Certificate (NFQ), and to the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) Part 66 Aircraft Maintenance Licence in Cat A, B1 or B2.

A Standards Development Group (SDG) develops and endorses the apprenticeship standard and ensures its relevance to the skills, knowledge and competence required. The standards are EASA<sup>11</sup> European Standards for curriculum, organisation and assessment. The current Rev 2.4 of the training programme complies fully with EASA Part 66 (COMMISSION REGULATION (EU) No 1321/2014)<sup>12</sup>. The Project Steering Group (PSG) reviews the apprenticeship programme to ensure that the statutory requirements of apprenticeship reflect current industry requirements, and that any curriculum/assessment materials developed/updated are relevant to the standard of skills, knowledge and competence required.

To monitor and ensure compliance with EASA Part 147 and EASA Part 66 requirements, DIT's extensive Training System Quality Procedures mandates the following procedures: audit of training (training quality policy; audit plan; quality audit procedures); audit of examinations; analysis of examination results; audit and analysis remedial action (corrective actions; findings/level definitions; tracking/follow-up/closure of audit findings; Irish aviation authority audit findings; independent audit of QA system); accountable manager annual review; qualifying the lecturers; qualifying the examiners / assessors; and records of qualified instructors and examiners. Implementation is subject to internal monitoring and external monitoring by Irish Aviation Authority which, in turn, is audited by EASA. There is generally a three-month period to close non-compliance.

The graduation of the first cohort of students under the new EASA accredited apprentice curriculum demonstrates the benefit of aligning national with international apprentice education standards. The standard of the apprenticeship programme is attested by the achievements of four gold medal winners in a row at World Skills competitions and two 2016 Aviation Industry Awards.

6 <http://www.solas.ie/Pages/ResearchAndPublications.aspx>

7 <http://www.skillsireland.ie>

8 <http://www.qqi.ie/Website%20Images/Picture2.jpg>; QQI (2016) Policy On Quality Assurance Guidelines, April 2016/QP10-V3; <http://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Policy%20on%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf>.

9 <http://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/Institutional-Reviews07.aspx>

10 <http://steep.dit.ie/transport-engineering/aviation/apprenticeship-general-aircraft-maintenance/>

11 <https://www.easa.europa.eu/the-agency>

12 <https://www.easa.europa.eu/document-library/regulations/commission-regulation-eu-no-13212014>

## Quality assurance of certification of learning outcomes

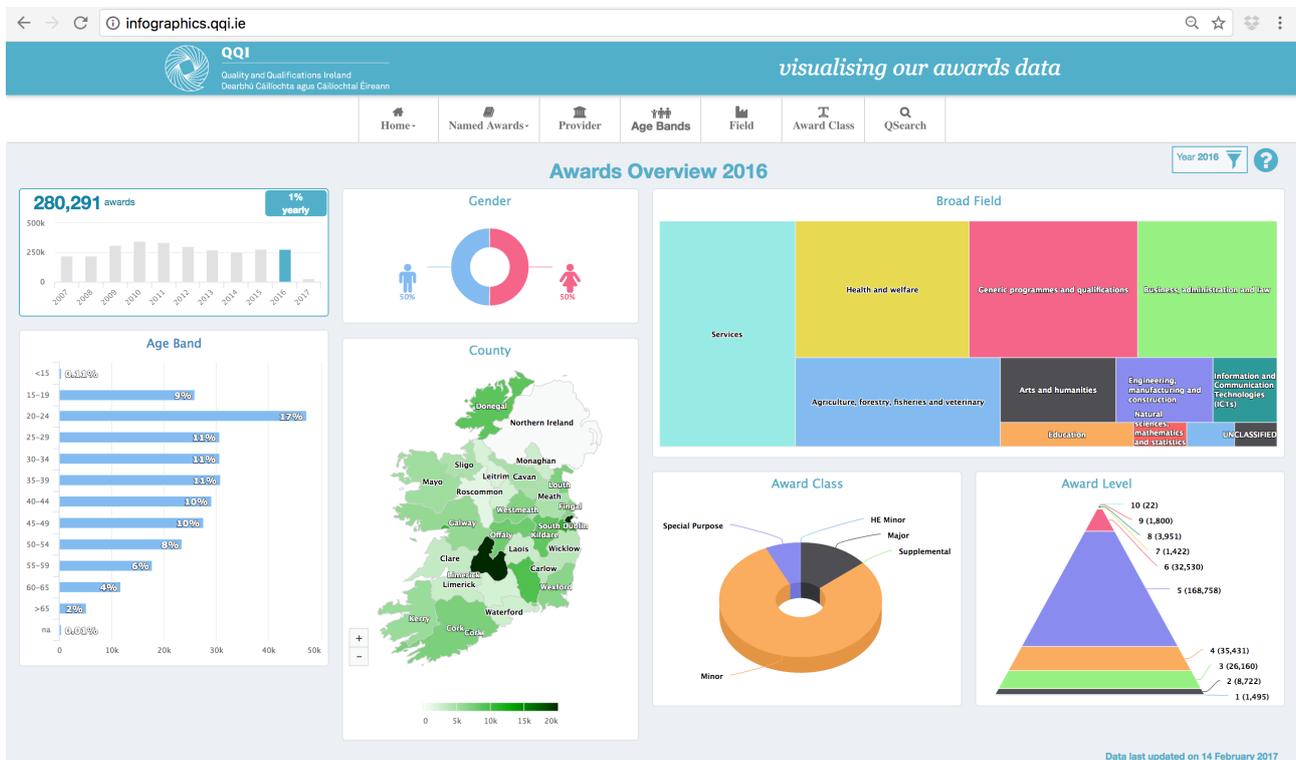
Certification comprises the multiple processes of assessment, validation and recognition of learning outcomes that lead to a qualification. Related quality assurance practices are designed to ensure that when learners are awarded a qualification, they have attained the required level of knowledge, skills and competence. The criteria for effective certification processes specify that they should be: based on standards; executed by appropriate stakeholders; supported by reliable mechanisms; and recognised by employers<sup>13</sup>. Systematic quality assurance arrangements include: policies, standards, guidelines and methods for assuring the quality of assessment methods and the processes/practices of key individuals; and for improving the overall reliability, validity and credibility of certificates.

Quality assurance of assessment seeks to ensure that assessment is accurately and consistently applied. Methods include: use of centrally defined assessment criteria/methods/ specifications; use of external examination centres/examiners; use of assessment committees or multiple assessors and

systematic training of assessors. Mechanisms for the quality assurance of validation include: making validation independent of assessment; use of centrally set grids/keys to grade performances and of multi-sector validation committees to moderate judgements. Mechanisms for the quality assurance of recognition mainly involve the appointment of one or more competent awarding bodies approved by a regulatory body, or regulatory body/bodies themselves.

In Ireland, QQI facilitates the recognition of certification, makes awards<sup>14</sup> and publishes data. Providers carry out the assessment according to QQI standards and hire external moderators to validate assessment outcomes. They are trusted to do this within a framework of monitoring and verification against overall data. Trust and provider capacity have evolved over years and build on previous centralised and subsequently partially devolved assessment and validation practices. Tried and tested, and ever-evolving, quality assurance mechanisms are agreed and implemented by stakeholders.

## QQI Infographics – Awards Overview<sup>15</sup>



13 ETF (2016) ETF Approach to Quality Assurance in VET. Author: Elizabeth Watters, p24

14 <http://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/Certification-and-Parchments07.aspx>

15 <http://infographics.qqi.ie>



## The role of transnational co-operation in the quality assurance of VET qualifications

International co-operation in the quality assurance of VET qualifications supports innovation, exchange of best practice and collaboration to address common issues. EQAVET promotes use of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework to improve VET quality assurance through a range of activities characterised by their flexibility and responsiveness

to emerging policy needs and the needs of EQAVET members. In 2016 the EQAVET+ Working Group developed a number of new EQAVET+ Indicative Descriptors at system and provider levels to complement the Reference Framework, including for the design, assessment and certification of qualifications using a learning outcomes approach. In Ireland the IQAVET Network, the National Reference Point for EQAVET hosted within QQI, promotes national best practice in VET quality assurance through stakeholder collaboration and learning.

### KEY POLICY LESSONS FOR PARTNER COUNTRIES IN THE SOUTHERN AND EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

The following ten key policy lessons relating to the quality assurance of VET qualifications emerged from the peer learning activity for the seven partner countries from the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean (SEMED) region:

**1. A shared understanding of the quality assurance of VET qualifications needs to be subscribed to by all stakeholders.**

To date, the focus in quality assurance of VET qualifications in the majority of partner countries has been on quality control of providers, often through accreditation and/or inspection. However, quality assurance of VET qualifications requires quality assurance of the whole qualification process, as part of holistic quality assurance of the VET system.

**2. Development of national qualifications frameworks (NQF) can act as a catalyst for the development of suitable quality assurance mechanisms for VET qualifications.**

NQFs are at various stages of elaboration in most partner countries and parallel development/revision of occupational and assessment standards and curricula are underway. However, partner countries face difficulty in operationalising / implementing their NQF. Obstacles that need to be addressed include: poorly targeted legislation; lack of stakeholder engagement or of social dialogue platforms; weak co-ordination of institutions or insufficient clarity regarding their roles and quality assurance approaches more aimed at providers than qualifications and seeking to control rather than empower.

**3. Reliable data on labour market requirements and on the VET system are indispensable to the quality assurance of VET qualifications.**

Partner countries employ a range of data sources and are developing relevant capabilities, but coherence and usability of such data are limited and their collection and analysis remain a challenge in practice. The prominence of small family businesses is an added complication. Partner countries need to develop sustainable partnerships, strategies and capacities for data collection/analyses /usage at all levels. Reliable information/evidence for review of the VET system performance is central to the quality assurance of VET qualifications. All countries are improving data collection in this regard and some use indicators that complement the EQAVET set. However, an integrated management information system is needed in the majority of the partner countries.



**4. The degree of relevance of qualifications depends on the extent to which VET qualifications standards are responsive to labour market needs and developed jointly by education/labour market stakeholders; comprise occupational, educational and assessment standards; are expressed in terms of learning outcomes; underpin curricula and are systematically revised.**

To increase the relevance of VET qualification, partner countries need to address their many challenges in relation to the development and review of qualifications standards, ranging from: lack of technical capacity for some or all of the required stages; failure to incorporate the standards in qualifications; patchy stakeholder involvement; limited/incoherent labour market data; limited use of standards to plan curricula, learning and assessment and limited systematic revision of standards.

**5. All stages of the VET qualifications process require quality assurance mechanisms/procedures.**

The partner countries face many challenges to the quality assurance of qualifications. To make qualifications trustworthy and acceptable to education/training institutions and employers, they need to put in place a qualifications quality assurance chain that is robust, up-to-date, and fit-for-purpose and relates to all stages of the qualifications process. Moreover, the quality assurance of qualifications must form part of an overall approach to quality assurance of the VET system. Overarching policies/strategies for VET quality improvement/assurance are in place in some countries but implementation can be sporadic due to lack of capacity, lack of resources and/or lack of political will.

**6. Governance is critical for the quality assurance of qualifications and a regulatory competent body using a multi-sector, multi-level approach has a key role to play in this regard.**

Social partner engagement in quality assurance of the VET system, and of VET qualifications in particular, is generally patchy in the partner countries. The fact that monitoring of VET qualifications is hampered by lack of coherent demand/supply data needs to be addressed.

**7. VET provider autonomy can be maximised through a climate of supportive steerage, effective co-operation, transparency, responsibility and trust.**

Increasing provider autonomy presents an on-going challenge in the partner countries. Public VET institutions, the main VET providers in the partner countries, have limited autonomy. Their governance is generally centralised and involvement of the social partners varies. Quality assurance of providers and qualifications generally takes the form of centralised quality control, including mandatory rules; centralised design of curricula; mandatory textbooks; and external examinations. Mechanisms to monitor compliance with standards/guidelines include: licensing; accreditation; external audit/evaluation; inspection and ISO quality labels. More developmental external evaluation and internal evaluation/self-evaluation with the aim of enhancing quality culture is needed. Overall, then, the institutional or social trust to support co-operative or self-regulating approaches to provider quality assurance appears to be lacking in the partner countries, especially in relation to quality assurance of various qualifications processes. Such trust generally evolves over a lengthy period of provider confidence- and capacity-building and increasing devolution of responsibility. Reliable data play a central role in this evolution.

**8. Local, national and transnational networking enhances innovation and the mainstreaming of good quality assurance practice for VET qualifications.**

Local and national networking for the development of quality assurance for VET is challenging for the partner countries. The majority of the partner countries were unable to identify an existing VET national network that could support a National Reference Point as part of the proposed ETF Forum for Quality Assurance of VET to be launched in 2017. Engagement in the ETF Forum should encourage local and national as well as transnational networking in participating countries.



## 9. An on-going cycle of review of the quality assurance of VET qualifications is essential.

Such review is not a once-off process. Limitation in or the absence at all levels of, systems, processes and capacities to carry out such on-going review need to be addressed and the required processes must be systematic and built into quality assurance systems from the development stage.

## 10. Significant technical knowledge and skills are required for the quality assurance of VET qualifications and capacity building at all levels is essential.

A lack of capacity at all levels is frequently cited as an obstacle to the quality assurance of VET qualifications in the partner countries. Local, national and international measures are attempting to address these capacity deficits. Measures need to be evaluated and best practice mainstreamed.

## FOCUS GROUP SESSIONS ON THE PROPOSED ETF FORUM FOR VET QUALITY ASSURANCE

### Introduction

The event provided the opportunity for Focus Group sessions to further discuss and develop the concept of the Forum for VET quality assurance, proposed by ETF as a basis for transnational co-operation. The aim of the Focus Group sessions was to explore in depth the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean (SEMED) Region's view of the proposal.

In brief, the ETF Forum aims to support the responsible bodies for VET quality assurance in partner countries. The government in each partner country will be invited to nominate one responsible body to take part in the ETF Forum that will be known as the National Reference Point (NRP) for VET quality assurance. Each NRP will select a specialist to represent it, who will be named as the National Contact Person (NCP). The ETF Forum will be informed by the ETF approach to promoting VET quality assurance. It will be inspired by the EU's EQAVET Network and the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET will be employed as a tool for co-operation.

In March 2016 the proposal for the ETF Forum was first discussed with representatives from partner countries in two Regions, South Eastern Europe and Turkey (SEE T) and SEMED, in the context of two seminars. There was agreement in both Regions that the proposal should be developed further, and there should be an opportunity for country representatives to discuss the ideas in more detail, particularly in relation to developing a 'Region' view. The February 2017 event in Dublin provided this opportunity for SEMED countries.



## THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

### Objectives

The Focus Group aimed to enable participants to reflect on transnational co-operation, through the ETF Forum, as a means of providing access to innovation in VET quality assurance, supporting development and building trust. Specifically the Focus Group aimed to engage participants to:

- increase the relevance of the ETF Forum for the national context;
- address issues related to national engagement in the ETF Forum and
- assess the value of the core tasks of the ETF Forum and plans to support national, intra- and inter-region co-operation.

Participants' individual learning objectives for the Focus Group were consistent with the overall objectives, relating mainly to learning about the operation of the ETF Forum and activities; the personnel and financial support available for the Forum; and the challenges of organising the Forum in a context of diverse VET legislation, structures and organisations in partner countries.

### Assessing the value of transnational co-operation

Key messages emerging from the discussions, in relation to transnational co-operation in VET quality assurance are the following:

- Transnational co-operation is a powerful tool to improve VET quality assurance through enhancing innovation and supporting the mainstreaming of good quality assurance practice.
- Governance is critical to ensure that the priorities of participating countries are to the forefront and to ensure their ownership of the initiative. Engagement of stakeholders is a key transnational co-operation principle.
- Strengthening mutual co-operation between National Reference Points will be an ongoing challenge. National level collaboration requires policy, infrastructural and financial support.
- A 'one-size-fits-all' approach does not work. There is no 'recipe' for VET quality assurance because each country has or is developing, its own approaches.



## Assessing the value of the Forum's core tasks

The Forum will implement a work-programme of core activities and short-term activities agreed by consensus. Core activities will include: monitoring/reporting on national VET quality assurance; collecting/analysing/using data related to quality indicators; and collaborating on solutions to common challenges. Special purpose activities may include activities such as focus groups, thematic working groups, peer learning/review activities and/or study visits. The Forum's e-Platform will be an information repository.

The participants appreciated the set of country fiches setting out the quality assurance approach and mechanisms for each country in a comparable way. They endorsed the need to keep the information up to date and agreed that such information would facilitate transnational co-operation and at the same time the process would enhance national level monitoring of developments.

An exercise to assess the clarity of a quality indicator in terms of definition and its use for VET quality assurance, underscored (for participants) the significance of evidence for VET quality assurance and the role of indicators in enabling comparability

and information sharing within and between VET systems. Indicators enable VET authorities to dig deep into a VET system to provide information on what is happening and to monitor, analyse and improve/reform VET provision. Thus, information on how VET systems are performing on a range of indicators is at the heart of VET quality assurance. All SEMED countries are working to improve VET information gathering but it is costly and requires a legislative underpinning. The issue of information gathering and use could form a theme for collaboration within the ETF Forum.

## Endorsement of the ETF Forum for VET quality assurance

Participation in the ETF Forum was considered important as it would provide opportunities for: regional co-operation; exchange of experience and good practice; enhancement of transparency; mutual trust and recognition of qualifications; and for dissemination of the outcomes of transnational co-operation at national level. Challenges to participation included: domestic legislation; countries' differing priorities and levels of progress and commitment to implementation at the national level; and the level of the NCP's authority.



## Key messages

Key messages that emerged from the focus group evaluation and the discussion are the following:

	Very important	Important	Not important	Not sure
1. How important is it to your country to nominate and support a national contact person for the ETF Quality Assurance Forum?	8	2	0	0
2. How important is it to your country to co-operate within the SEMED Region in the context of the ETF Forum for QA?	4	4	0	2
3. How important is it to your country to co-operate inter-regionally in the ETF Forum for QA for the 28 partner countries?	5	5	0	0
4. How important is it to your country to strengthen collaborative networking at the national level for the development of quality assurance?	10	0	0	0

1. Virtually all participants considered activities related to the ETF Forum to be 'very important' or 'important' to their country:
2. On the question of which of the proposed activities of the ETF Forum would be particularly useful for the national context, participants referred to: sharing good experience; the (use of) EQAVET Reference Framework criteria; capacity building activities and support to develop national VET quality assurance approaches; improving VET quality assurance mechanisms and supporting networking for VET quality assurance.
3. Participants identified the support that ETF could provide in relation to the National Reference Point, including:
  - Present a policy paper with the rationale for the ETF Forum with suggestions for nominating the National Reference Point.
  - Provide advice on how to present the Forum/the need for related national structures to national authorities;
  - Offer opportunities for learning from other countries on how to create such a body;
  - Support capacity building on this issue;
  - Organise courses for relevant persons who could transfer expertise to their institutions.

## Next steps

Participants indicated that they would disseminate the information/understandings they had gained on the ETF Forum at country-level through a range of approaches including:

- Meet with colleagues to present the Forum, arrive at a decision about participation in the Forum, look at the role of the NRP and discuss ETF support for the Forum.
- Make a presentation to the NQF Working Group and to the multi-sector High Level Committee with responsibility for TVET and the NQF.
- Prepare a report for management with the request that VET-related bodies be informed.
- Circulate information on VET quality assurance to raise awareness.
- Present a report on the ETF Forum to colleagues.
- Table a technical report at the first meeting of the new thematic group on quality assurance in the partner country.
- Place a report on the Ministry website; present EQAVET, the Irish experience and the Forum to management/colleagues.

The main outcome of the focus group session was the participants' endorsement of the ETF Forum for VET Quality Assurance proposal agreeing that international co-operation, to support national efforts to improve VET quality assurance, was 'very important'.



The ETF would like to thank the Quality and Qualifications Ireland colleagues, especially Andrina Wafer, for their co-operation in organizing the event and the EQAVET Secretariat. We wish to express our gratitude to the Irish colleagues listed below for their excellent presentations on VET Quality Assurance in Ireland. We would also like to say a special thank you to the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) colleagues for hosting the study visit at the DIT Aviation Technology Centre. Thanks also go to the event rapporteur and evaluator, Helen Keogh, and most importantly to the participants from the countries of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean.

**PADRAIG WALSH**

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)  
Chief Executive

**BARBARA KELLY**

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)  
Director of Qualifications

**BRYAN MAGUIRE**

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)  
Director of Quality Assurance

**ANDRINA WAFER**

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)  
Head of Access and Lifelong Learning,  
Quality Assurance Department

**MARY-LIZ TRANT**

SOLAS  
Executive Director for Skills Development

**JOHN MCGRATH**

SOLAS  
Manager of the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit

**MARIE GOULD**

Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI)  
Project Manager ETB QA Framework

**SEAN FEERICK**

EQAVET Secretariat  
Director

**MARK DEEGAN**

Dublin Institute of Technology, DIT  
College of Engineering and Built Environment  
Head of Apprenticeship and Engagement

**IVAN SHERIDAN**

Dublin Institute of Technology, DIT  
College of Engineering and Built Environment  
Training and Examinations Manager

**ROS WYNNNE**

2015 WorldSkills gold medallist in aircraft maintenance  
Ryanair  
Aircraft Maintenance Engineer

## PARTICIPANTS

**DALIA TAHA,**

National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of  
Education, EGYPT

**YAAKOV SHEINBAUM,**

Ministry of Education, ISRAEL

**YARON DOPPELT,**

Ministry of Education, ISRAEL

**ZEID AL BASHAIREH,**

Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission for Higher  
Education, JORDAN

**HOSN HADDAD,**

Ministry of Education and Higher Education, General Directorate  
of TVET, LEBANON

**TONY RACHED,**

Ministry of Education and Higher Education, General Directorate  
of TVET, LEBANON

**ABDELJALIL DARIF**

Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, MOROCCO

**OSAMA HAMADNA**

Ministry of Education/ Deir Debwan School, PALESTINE

**MOHAMMED THEEB**

Ministry of Labour, PALESTINE

**EZZEDINE BOUGHDIRI**

Tunisian Agency for Vocational Training, TUNISIA

For information on our activities, job  
and tendering opportunities, please  
visit our website,  
[www.etf.europa.eu](http://www.etf.europa.eu)

For other enquiries, please contact:  
ETF Communication Department  
E [info@etf.europa.eu](mailto:info@etf.europa.eu)  
T +39 011 6302222  
F +39 011 6302200

Elizabeth Watters, ETF expert  
© European Training Foundation, 2017  
Reproduction is authorised provided  
the source is acknowledged.  
© Photos: ETF