

# ETF FORUM FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN VET

## STRATEGY AND WORK PLAN

### INTRODUCTION

The European Training Foundation (**ETF**) established a Forum for quality assurance in vocational education and training (VET) with a launch event in November 2017.

The Forum is a transnational collaboration initiative between national institutions with VET and/or VET quality assurance mandates in ETF's partner countries.

Whilst participation in the Forum is voluntary, membership will require a commitment to the strategy and work plan as set out in this note.

### THE FORUM IN SUMMARY

The aim of the Forum is to support member countries to modernise and improve quality assurance in VET by providing the context and means for peer learning through multinational co-operation.

The Forum comprises the national institutions in partner countries nominated, normally by Ministers, as the National Reference Points for the ETF Forum. These nominated institutions each appoints a member of staff to represent it in the Forum as the National Contact Person.

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 and disseminating good examples of policy and practice.

The ETF has the executive role and provides resources. The ETF, together with the member institutions, plan, implement, monitor and review the Forum strategy and work plans.

To facilitate communication across partner countries, the working language of the Forum is English.

## QUALITY ASSURANCE IN VET AND THE ETF APPROACH

Modernising vocational education and training (VET) is crucial for it to maintain its relevance to today's fast-changing labour markets. Transforming VET also means updating the approaches and mechanisms that safeguard VET quality. This calls for new and different thinking about quality assurance. The ETF defines quality assurance in VET as *the measures established to verify that processes and procedures are in place, which aim to ensure the quality of VET. The measures relate to quality standards with underlying principles, criteria and indicators.*

The ETF advocates a systemic and systematic approach to quality assurance in VET that comprises the policy approach, a framework that includes quality indicators for monitoring and evaluation and a quality cycle methodology<sup>1</sup>. The holistic approach addresses key areas of VET and their inter-connectedness: governance; qualifications standards, including those for teachers and trainers; provision; assessment and certification as well as demand/supply data and knowledge creation. The approach aims for quality culture development and VET improvement.

The ETF supports partner countries to develop their own visions for quality assurance in VET modernisation, in line with the development of their VET systems and their own existing policies and practices. The ETF focuses on quality assurance in the formal VET system, but aims to be relevant for all VET and takes account of the need to ensure coherence between VET quality assurance approaches and those of other education and training sub-systems.

Transnational co-operation can help to steer and speed up quality assurance in VET modernisation. It can be a powerful way to encourage those responsible for quality assurance to make policies and practices more visible and understandable for the outside world, to exchange good practice, find innovative solutions for new challenges and work together to tackle common issues. The ETF encourages collaboration between partner countries and supports them in using European Union (EU) policies and processes, expertise, instruments and resources to strengthen their quality assurance systems.

The ETF approach to promoting quality assurance in VET underpins the work of the Forum. The Forum is inspired by the European Union's (EU) EQAVET Network. The EU Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET serves as an instrument to guide the work of the ETF Forum.



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<sup>1</sup> ETF (2015) The ETF approach to promoting quality assurance in VET. Working Paper. Author: Elizabeth Watters

# FORUM STRATEGY PLAN

## Purpose

The purpose of the Forum is to support its member partner countries to modernise and improve quality assurance in VET by providing the context and means for peer learning through transnational co-operation. To harness the potential of this partnership, clear membership guidelines and criteria have been developed. Membership is conditional on being agreeable and responsive to the principles, objectives and activities of the Forum and making a commitment to its development and sustainability. The ETF plays a proactive role in fostering partners' networking.

## Membership

The ETF invites the partner country to nominate a national institution that meets the eligibility criteria for the Forum for Quality Assurance in VET. The nominated institution should:

- have national level responsibilities for VET and/or quality assurance in VET;
- be a key stakeholder in policy-level, decision-making processes related to quality assurance in VET and a key stakeholder in policy implementation;
- be influential and in a position to disseminate the outcomes of participation in the Forum.

The nominated institution is the Forum's **National Reference Point (NRP)** for quality assurance in VET. The nominated NRP appoints a suitable member of staff to participate in the Forum and supports their engagement in the Forum activities. The person is known as the **National Contact Person (NCP)**. The NCP should have a good knowledge of the national quality assurance in VET approach and practice, international skills, including proficiency in English<sup>2</sup> and good communication and networking skills. The institution may also nominate an alternate NCP with a similar profile.

The NRP/NCP acts as a channel of communication between the Forum and key stakeholders at national level. The NRP/NCP is expected to have the support of a national level group for VET and/or quality assurance in VET (e.g. a committee, an advisory group, a focus group, a network etc.) to fulfil the key functions of monitoring and evaluating quality assurance developments in the country and disseminating the outcomes of transnational co-operation at the national level.

## Management arrangements

The ETF has the executive role and provides resources. To support the Forum, the ETF will:

- provide expertise and create the instruments and guidance for core activities;
- organise an Annual Forum Meeting for planning, evaluating and disseminating Forum activities (travel, accommodation costs are covered by the ETF);
- set up an e-platform to support virtual collaboration;
- support peer-learning activities, subject to available resources.

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<sup>2</sup> Level C1 or C2. See [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework\\_en.pdf#page=8](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_en.pdf#page=8)

Management arrangements will include:

- a) principles for engagement with and between members;
- b) procedures for the selection of a Forum member, the renewal of membership, and eventual disengagement from the Forum;
- c) a framework for the development, implementation and assessment of the Forum;
- d) methods for joint planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of results;
- e) rules for the use of the Forum's name and logo.

## Principles

The Forum has the following underlying principles:

- a) Relevance: members define/agree to a common purpose with mutual benefit;
- b) Equality: members have equal status;
- c) Clarity: members have clearly defined responsibilities and roles;
- d) Transparency: members agree to be open and share information and experience;
- e) Sustainability: members commit to the development of the Forum and ensuring that the outcomes of transnational co-operation are beneficial for end-beneficiaries.

## Strategic objectives

The Forum has the following strategic objectives:

- a) To collaborate on matters related to the advancement of quality assurance in VET;
- b) To identify and share quality assurance expertise, methods and instruments;
- c) To promote networking with relevant stakeholders at all levels as a means to improve the relevance, quality and visibility of quality assurance in VET;
- d) To support national efforts for quality assurance in VET advancement.

## Core activities

Core activities will be undertaken by all Forum members and include:

- a) Monitoring and reporting on national developments for quality assurance in VET;
- b) Collecting, analysing, using information related to quality assurance indicators;
- c) Collaborating on the development of solutions to common challenges;
- d) Engaging in the e-platform co-operation context;
- e) Participating in the annual meeting of the Forum;
- f) Contributing to peer learning activities that may be organised, subject to resources.

## Thematic areas for co-operation

Selecting areas for co-operation is the task of the Forum members. The Forum members identified the following priority areas to address through transnational collaboration:

- To gain inspiration from European Union policies and frameworks for quality assurance in VET, and EU good practice, to support national efforts to improve approaches and mechanisms and make them more transparent internationally.
- To explore methods to develop a holistic national quality assurance in VET approach.
- To address quality assurance in VET modernisation in areas of interest and with current priority, identified as: qualifications/qualifications systems, teacher/trainer continuing professional development, provision and provider institutions.

## Forum - quality assurance measures

The quality cycle approach: plan, implement, monitor and evaluate, review will be applied to the Forum work plan execution. Quality assurance mechanisms are integral to all Forum activities.