

EQAVET Belgium-fr Peer Review on ‘How to better answer to the training and competence needs of the labour market’ - Flash Report

EQAVET Peer Review in Belgium-fr

The fourth EQAVET Peer Review in 2023 took place on 23-24 March in Brussels, hosted by the Erasmus National Agency AEF-Europe. Seven EQAVET Network members from Belgium-Flanders, Italy, Latvia, Romania and Slovenia acted as peers. The Peer Review focused on meeting labour market needs in terms of trainings and skills. The feedback from peers, based on experiences from their own vocational education and training (VET) systems, will help Belgium-fr to better coordinate stakeholders and processes to better answer to the training and skills needs of the labour market.

How to better respond to the training and skills needs of the labour market

To kick-off the meeting, the host introduced the VET system in Belgium-fr.

Vocational Education and Training in the French speaking part of Belgium

In Belgium, there are three language communities (Dutch- French-, and German-speaking) and three geographical regions (Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels-Capital). Governance of VET in the French speaking part of Belgium is composed of the French-speaking community, which has the competence for **education** and two regions, Wallonia and Brussels-Capital Region, that have the competence for **training**. The competence for skills validation is shared between the community and the regions.

Vocational education is divided between upper secondary education for compulsory education from age 15 and adult education for non-compulsory education from age 18. Both upper secondary education and adult education can be full time or in dual format, and lead to a Qualification Certificate, and/or a Certificate of Upper Secondary Education (after the learner has passed a group of complementary education units to the training providing a Qualification Certificate, in the case of adult education).

Upper secondary education is organised in two streams: a ‘Transition’ stream for pupils aiming to go to higher education and a ‘Qualification’ stream for pupils aiming to enter the labour market directly. There are four programmes: general, technical, artistic and vocational targeting mainstream education and specialised education for pupils with specific needs. Dual learning and vocational education are only available in the ‘Qualification’ stream while general education is only available in the ‘Transition’ stream.

Each region has several organisations responsible for **vocational training**: public training providers for full time or dual training and training providers for social and professional integration. Full time vocational training is accessible from age 18 for job seekers, workers and self-employed while dual vocational training is accessible for young people under compulsory education from age 15 and is close to the formal education system. Social and professional integration targets job seekers from age 18 that are low qualified.

Skills validation is accessible to any adult from age 18 who wants to pass a test to validate his vocation skills.

Bodies bringing together stakeholders involved in employment and in vocational education, vocational training and skills validation

The host presented two different organisations working in cooperation with education, training and employment stakeholders – hence across governance structures - to ensure that programmes are relevant to the needs of the labour market.

1. The French-speaking Service for Trades and Qualifications (SFMQ)

SFMQ is an autonomous entity resulting from a cooperation agreement between the French Community, the Walloon Region and the French Community Commission (Brussels), thus representing the trades as well as education and training. SFMQ has been created to address four main challenges:

1. Promote the geographical, social, education and occupational mobility of citizens;
2. Participate in the lifelong learning process;
3. Strengthen cooperation between education and training; and
4. Enhance the adequacy between labour market needs and training outcomes.

SFMQ is in charge of:

- Defining trade clusters, gathering trades linked by the same type of production or services,
- Creating trade profiles linked to the trade cluster with working context and other factual data, key activities and professional competences,
- Creating corresponding training profiles with units of learning outcomes, assessment profiles and equipment profiles; and
- Submitting them to the French-speaking Qualification Framework to determine the positioning of the qualifications they developed.

When there is a request for a trade profile, SFMQ assesses the request and conducts a preliminary study to propose one or several trade clusters. The Chamber of Trades and Chamber of Education and Training each appoints people to be part of a committee of development of a profile. The Trade Standard Committee develops a trade profile and, as a second step, the Training Profile Committee develops a corresponding training profile. SFMQ ensures that profiles are coherent in both commissions. The profiles are to be approved by the Chamber of Consultation and Approval before they are sent to the government to become a legal text and be put into practice by VET providers.

2. IBEFE

The IBEFE are regional consultation bodies created by a Cooperation agreement between the French Community, the Walloon Region and the French Community Commission (Brussels) about the creation of Vocational Education - Training – Employment to strengthen the links between initial VET and continuous VET providers as well as labour market stakeholders and to adjust the VET provision with the needs of the regional labour market. Ten IBEFE were created. They facilitate direct dialogue between social partners and vocational education and training stakeholders. Their concrete tasks may differ across the regions. At the peer review, the IBEFE representing the Brussels region shared their experience, including on

- Collecting data from public employment services, VET providers and social partners on the VET provision and the needs of the labour market (sector-specific, if needed);
- Analysing data;
- Proposing annual recommendations to the local/regional VET providers. VET providers are free to apply the recommendation, depending on their situation, but are required to provide annual feedback.

- Producing a list of key occupations where VET provision should be further developed to address labour shortages.

Training offer following an SFMQ profile to answer the labour market's needs

The Ministry of Education presented an example of transferring a SFMQ training profile into a training offer (curriculum) with the knowledge, skills and competencies that pupils should acquire. This is a legal obligation before schools can offer new courses.

The process includes 14 steps and can take up to three years. Once a SFMQ profile is approved by the Government, the General Council of Secondary Education (GCSE) gives its opinion, and the Minister of Education decides whether the development of a new training offer is appropriate. If the Minister approves, the Ministry of Education is mandated to do a preliminary study with experts of each profession and to develop the curriculum. The Minister of Education must agree to the proposal which is sent to the GCSE for a second opinion, which can request amendments that should be approved by the Minister and undertaken by the Ministry of Education. SFMQ should check the compliance of the training offer (curriculum) with the original training profile. The government should then approve the profile and the addition of a new training offer to the Qualification Education repertoire through two government orders. The second order should finally be approved by the Parliament before the new training offer can be put into practice.

Peer discussion

The Peers discussed questions related to the data collection across the Belgian-fr VET landscape, the participation of labour market stakeholders in the processes creating training profiles and training offers and the process for creating training offers based on the SFMQ profiles.

At the end of the meeting, the peer reviewers shared their initial feedback. A comprehensive feedback report will be drafted in the next weeks.

The EQAVET Peer Review initiative 2022 - 2023

The [2020 Council Recommendation on VET](#) called upon the EQAVET Network to develop a specific methodology for EQAVET peer reviews, with the objective to support the improvement and transparency of quality assurance arrangements at system level in the Member States. Over the course of 2021, with the support of DG EMPL and the EQAVET Secretariat, the EQAVET Network agreed on a joint methodology and prepared a Peer Review Manual.

The Quality Assurance National Reference Points (EQAVET NRPs) from 21 Member States have agreed to take part in the first phase of the EQAVET Network's peer review initiative. The Belgium-fr Peer Review was the fourth out of twelve Peer Reviews that are scheduled to take place in 2023, following nine Peer Reviews in 2022.