

# EQAVET Peer Review on ‘National system of support to VET schools in their internal QA’ – Flash Report

## EQAVET Peer Review in Slovenia

The 20<sup>th</sup> EQAVET Peer Review took on 1 and 2. June 2023 in Ljubljana, hosted by the National Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for VET (Center RS za poklicno izobraževanje – CPI). 7 EQAVET Network members, from Austria, Croatia, Germany, Greece, Ireland and the Netherlands, acted as peers. The host invited the peers to reflect on national system of support to VET schools in their internal Quality Assurance (QA) systems on the level of VET providers (focussing on formal vocational education offered by public VET schools for students aged 15-19 and leading to qualifications at EQF levels 3 and 4). The output of the peer review will serve as an important input for the preparation of the plan for the further development of the QA system in education on system level in Slovenia, especially for the VET-related part.

## QA system at the level of VET providers

To kick-off the meeting, the Slovenian host presented the VET system in Slovenia and relevant QA arrangements, including legislation and the national framework.

The legislation on VET (the Act on VET, 2006; the Act on Organization and Financing in Education, 2007) requires VET providers to establish internal QA systems. They are relatively free to design and set up these systems, but must meet certain QA standards, such as:

- ❖ setting up an **internal QA system** in line with TQM principles and the EQAVET Framework;
- ❖ the establishment of a **school quality commission** consisting of a minimum of a chairperson plus five members, from representatives of teachers and other professional members of school staff, employers, students and parents);
- ❖ carrying out an **annual self-evaluation process** addressing 11 national (including 10 EQAVET) indicators;
- ❖ the **publication of an annual quality report** on the provider’s website.

The peer reviewers gained insights into various recommendations, models and instruments for QA at the level of individual VET schools and had the opportunity to discuss this topic with representatives of several schools. The Slovenian host invited the peers to reflect on national systemic support for VET schools and to share feedback and suggestions for improvement. In this reflection, the following three levels were to be considered:

- ❖ national: the mechanisms in place to support the internal QA of VET providers (especially VET schools);
- ❖ National Institute for VET - CPI /NRP EQAVET: the support and counselling services offered to VET providers;
- ❖ VET schools: to better understand why many of them are still reluctant to establish appropriate internal QA systems and follow the philosophy of a systematic and regular QA process.

## National recommendations, models and tools for QA at VET school level

### National educational system level

In addition to the legislative framework for QA at VET provider level (including VET schools – see above) a **national framework for QA in education** is in place which defines a model for QA in kindergartens and schools (primary school, general and professional gymnasia and VET schools). The booklet '**Quality in kindergartens and schools**', structured by seven manuals, provides guidance for kindergartens and schools in their internal systematic QA efforts. The first manual is a summary of the whole model and its English translation was shared with the peers. The model represents quality standards with indicators on **five quality areas**, which are learning achievements, professional learning and performance of teachers, safe and facilitating learning environment, QA with self-evaluation and leadership of kindergartens and schools. EQAVET indicators are integrated into the model and are only mandatory for VET schools.

In addition, based on the initiative '**Networking among schools for quality**', long-term support has been offered to new kindergartens and schools in recent years to help them set up their internal QA systems and guide them through the QA process. This support is offered by two national institutes: School of leadership in Education at the National Education Institute and EQAVET NRP at the National Institute for VET (CPI). The National Examination Centre supports VET schools with an **instrument to analyse students' performance in the vocational Matura**; the results can be used as one of the sources for self-evaluation.

An **operational group set up by the Ministry of Education**, consisting of representatives of the Analytical Centre (Ministry of Education) and the two institutes (School of leadership and CPI) as well as the National Examination Centre, has been **coordinating support** for kindergartens and schools at national level since 2023 and discussing open issues.

VET schools that also offer adult education or short-cycle higher VET programmes must also meet the quality assurance requirements for these types of provision. At national level, there is no essence-based external assessment or accreditation procedure for upper secondary VET schools, unless the school provides higher VET at EQF level 5. The School Inspection and Accreditation Commission at the Ministry of Education use administrative criteria for external assessment and/or accreditation of VET providers.

### National Institute for VET - CPI /NRP EQAVET

Besides 'Networking among schools for quality', the **NRP EQAVET at CPI offers** the following forms of **support**:

- ❖ Guided E-self-evaluation;
- ❖ Peer review for VET schools with transnational teams of peers;
- ❖ Trainings for individual VET providers to establish and/or upgrade internal QA systems;
- ❖ National Conference on QA in VET.

Moreover, the CPI offers support to VET schools on following areas: school curriculum planning and didactics, final examinations, updating professional modules in VET programmes, counselling adults in VET. VET schools are also involved in various Erasmus+ projects and national projects, supported by European funds.

## Planned improvements of the national support for QA systems of VET schools

In order to create **better coordinated, coherent, and comprehensive support services** at all levels for systematic QA processes, improvements at national level are planned. For example, in addition to the above-mentioned operational group, the Ministry of Education has set up a working group in 2023 to prepare a Proposal for the National Education Programme for the period 2023-2033. This working group includes various stakeholders (Ministry of Education, national institutes in the field of education, universities of education sciences, trade unions in the field of education and representatives of kindergartens and schools) and is divided into six subgroups. One of the groups deals with the system of QA in education and is chaired by the Ministry of Education. The group meets regularly, assesses the national framework for QA in education and the current support for kindergartens and schools, and will prepare a proposal for the further development of the national framework for QA in education.

## Peer discussion

The discussion between hosts and peers addressed the question of how to establish a coherent and comprehensive internal quality assurance system at the level of individual VET providers, given the different QA models offered by supporting agencies at national level. They also discussed whether the autonomy given to VET providers to set up internal QA systems is adequate and to what extent some VET providers need more support and/or other incentives to set up relevant internal QA systems. In addition, consideration was given to how to strengthen the system support and incentives for VET providers offered by the Ministry and national public institutions.

A comprehensive feedback report will be drafted and shared with the Slovenian hosts. The feedback in the peer reviewers' report will help to inform the national stakeholders on further improvements.

### 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 Slovenian Peer Review was the eleventh out of twelve Peer Reviews that are scheduled to take place in 2023, following nine peer reviews in 2022.