



QualiMoVET- Quality signet for modular VET for disadvantaged young people

Progress Report

Public Part

Project information

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Executive Summary

QualiMoVET (Quality signet for modular VET for disadvantaged young people) is a project that is carried out by nine organisations from Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Austria and Spain. The partner organisations have large expertise in the field of VET, socially disadvantaged young people and quality assurance systems. They are training providers, universities, and consulting organisations.

The objective is to find and support high-quality ways of improving the integration of socially disadvantaged young people into educational systems and the labour market. The consortium is elaborating recommendations for action on how to set up a quality signet. The quality signet should be awarded to providers of training courses that offer courses that are suitable for disadvantaged young people in the partner countries.

These recommendations include a matrix of different quality dimensions and the minimum criteria they need to fulfil for the signet.

The approach of QualiMoVET comprises the elaboration of two national studies in each country about the situation of the target group and good practice projects in the partner countries. The studies have been carried out in the course of the project and serve as a basis for further work. A matrix with quality dimensions has been developed and is currently in the process of revision. Furthermore, each country organises two national workshops to discuss interim results with experts and important stakeholders in the particular countries. The partner organisations come together to at least three project meetings to analyse the results and develop a common approach. In addition, they are in regular contact via monthly Skype conferences.

Among others, results of the project are overall recommendations for action that will be available on the website www.qualimovet.eu. Moreover, national networks are built up by involving decision-makers and other experts (national workshops). These networks are provided regularly with information on the project (a newsletter that is published about every two months).

It is planned that the recommendations for action should be implemented in a follow up project. Plans for this are currently discussed.

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1. Project Objectives

The project's objective is to find and support high-quality ways of improving the integration of socially disadvantaged young people into educational systems and the labour market. Experience of the consortium partners as well as scientific studies/data show, that the high rates of unemployment among socially disadvantaged young people remain an urgent problem in most EU member states. According to EUROSTAT the average unemployment rate amongst the group of young people (age group 15-24) was 19,5% which is an increase of more than 4 % in the last two years.

Socially disadvantaged young people form a heterogeneous group. Economic, social, ideological factors often have an influence on success or failure in the field of integration into VET and the labour market. In a lot of countries, the group of the socially disadvantaged and unemployed is characterised by having low formal VET qualification or being even without a completed VET qualification.

In many EU-member countries, there is a wide range of approaches aimed at integrating the target group. For example differently structured training courses, particular learning programmes (forms of work-oriented learning and concepts of linking work and learning) and intensive support and individual promotion are present, however these are often not known beyond regional or national borders.

Furthermore, approaches for modularisation or models that take into account a validation of competences acquired outside formal education settings can play an important role to motivate the target group to enter/carry on with their VET. Recognition of such non-formally or informally acquired competences is also discussed in the development of the European Qualification Framework and National Qualification Frameworks.

Whereas it is already customary to apply quality standards and corresponding measuring instruments even transnational, there are still no overall comparable standards in the field of training of the disadvantaged. Nonetheless, there is a growing need for common standards and measuring tools in the process of intensification of efforts to include socially disadvantaged young people in EU programmes in the future. This is especially the case with regard to transnational mobility projects. Common standards also facilitate the transfer and exchange of European good practices.

QualiMoVET determines usable knowledge about quality standards of vocational training programmes for disadvantaged young people in the participating countries (Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Austria and Spain). It gathers good practice and develops common quality standards. In addition, an approach on how to measure the quality standards will be elaborated, too. Common recommendations for action will then be formulated on how a quality signet for modular VET for disadvantaged young people can be awarded to institutions that provide high quality training courses for the target group.

2. Project Approach

At the very beginning of the QualiMoVET project, all partners were asked to compile a preparatory study according to a study matrix prepared by the project management team. In this study the partners gave basic facts about their national educational systems. Besides, these studies comprise a definition on how the target group of disadvantaged young people is defined in the particular country and how the VET system is dealing with them. Finally, the partners were asked to describe relevant methods and systems of quality assurance in VET. All partners compiled the preparatory studies before the kick-off meeting in March 2009 and presented them there.

The nine partners from six countries come from different professional backgrounds (two universities, four VET training centres, one business consultancy and two institutions experienced in the setting up and in the implementation of VET programmes for the target group). All of the partners have proved experience in the field of VET and the target group.

In the course of this first meeting the experts drafted a study matrix that served as a base for further studies.

In summer 2009, all partners elaborated national studies on two or three good practice examples for high quality VET programmes for disadvantaged young people. On the basis of the matrix several quality dimensions were investigated. These were for instance:

- Entrance conditions to the VET programme
- Learning support system and infrastructure
- Process and support of validation of competences
- Methods and tools for encouraging learning
- Employability
- Pedagogical personnel

Within these case studies, the partners evaluated other studies, carried out expert interviews, analyzed programme guidelines and journals.

Towards the end of their studies they organized national workshops in their countries to present and discuss the results of this research and included the results in their studies.

At the partner meeting in Budapest in September/October 2009 the results of the studies were discussed and the matrix was revised in group sessions. It was essential carrying out the studies beforehand in order to be able to make the revisions of the matrix. The VET systems and traditions in the partner countries vary broadly. Therefore the process of revising the matrix is very time consuming however a very important step for the whole project. At the time of writing the progress report, the process of finalizing the matrix is still in progress. The matrix forms the essential part for the recommendations for action that will be drafted in spring 2010. This first draft helps to disseminate the project's results. It will include several quality

dimensions and indicators VET providers have to meet, if they want to be certified with a quality signet in VET for disadvantaged young people.

In each country a second national workshop will take place to involve as many experts from different fields (VET, disadvantaged young people, quality) in this testing phase. Besides, the recommendations for action will be tested (in some of) the partner organisations.

During the whole course of the project the partners are asked to involve further national experts into the project. The partners inform stakeholders not only at the national workshops, but also inform them constantly on activities within the project. This all contributes to a broad dissemination to ensure a certain level of sustainability of the project.

At least three partner meetings (one kick-off meeting, one partner meeting and one final conference) will have taken place in the course of the project. To ensure the progress of the project regular Skype conferences are held and the partners communicate for example by using the partner section of the website www.qualimovet.eu.

3. Project Outcomes & Results

Firstly, the project generates comprehensive knowledge about existing quality standards in the field of VET of disadvantaged young people in Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Austria and Spain. Therefore preparatory studies have been elaborated that can be found on www.qualimovet.eu.

A synopsis of the most important results of the six studies has been compiled, too.

A study matrix was drafted that will be tested in national studies of all partner countries. This forms the basis for the recommendations for action of the project. This study matrix will be revised several times in the course of the project.

Main studies of the six partner countries have been elaborated. In these studies two/three examples of good practice in the participating countries have been described according to the study matrix. These studies can also be found on the website.

In each partner country two national workshops are carried out (one in 2009, one in 2010). These workshops are important in order to discuss interim results and to include national stakeholders and decision making bodies into the project work.

A website informs about the project activities, but also contains the partner studies as well as data on the project itself.

A newsletter is published regularly, informing the public about the progress, interesting news as well as dates and introduces another partner country in each issue. The newsletter is published on the website. It is also circulated by partners to their national stakeholders.

The final product will be a common recommendation for action for drawing up a "European Signet of Quality" for modularised vocational training of socially disadvantaged young people. Besides, a description of the principal features of accreditation institutions that award such a signet will be an outcome of the project.

4. Partnerships

The consortium:

QualiMoVET is a consortium comprising nine partners from six European countries that have a wide range of experience in the field of VET as well as disadvantaged young people. They share these experiences with the other partners in the project.

BBJ Servis gGmbH (Germany) as the lead partner looks back on more than 20 years of experience in implementing modularised education and employment programmes for disadvantaged young people. It has been commissioned by the German Youth Ministry to support the integration of disadvantaged young people through special youth welfare consultation services. BBJ is the lead partner of QualiMoVET and is responsible for the project management.

The chair of Vocational and Work Pedagogic at the Helmut Schmidt University/Hamburg University (Germany) contributes its extensive expertise in the field of research on informal learning processes as well as experience learning processes for vocational and further education. Together with BBJ, the team of this chair published several studies on quality assurance and VET for disadvantaged young people. The Institute of Applied Pedagogy and Psychology of the Budapest University of Technology and Economics (Hungary) has resources for developing and evaluating the project objectives. Both Universities support the scientific steering of QualiMoVET.

Székesfehérvári Regionális Képző Központ (Hungary) is a regional training centre active in the education and vocational training sector, also in regard of the target group.

BZDZ from Bydgoski (Poland), a supra-regional vocational training organisation, also brings in its practical experience as a provider of vocational training courses. EUROED is a training provider and the national representative for European certification systems for vocational competences in Romania.

Prospect a business consultancy in Austria supports the project because it has a wide experience in the field of labour market policy. VHS Meidling from Austria is an adult education centre that provides courses for the target group of socially disadvantaged young people. Finally, the last partner, IMFE, is a regional vocational training institute in Spain.

Apart from the project management, that essentially lies in the hands of the lead partner and the scientific support, all partners contribute to the projects activities to an equal share.

Besides, the partnership of the consortium each partner is establishing/ enlarging their national networks. By inviting national stakeholders to national workshops, the partnership dealing with QualiMoVET is being enlarged beyond the consortium. Furthermore, national decision-making bodies should be regularly involved in the project steps to guarantee the sustainability of the project beyond its duration.

The BBJ advisory board on VET for socially disadvantaged young people that was preparing the idea of QualiMoVET is also part of the enlarged QualiMoVET partnership. Some of its members are involved as regular project partners; others participate at partner meetings usually for one day to discuss the project's progress with the consortium.

5. Plans for the Future

At the moment, the consortium is elaborating recommendations for action that are based on a matrix that is covering different quality dimensions.

These dimensions comprise for instance:

- Entrance conditions to the VET Programme
- Competences
- Support systems to the target group
- Pedagogical personnel
- Employability

Each dimension consists of several criteria that have to be proved by certain indicators.

In the next months, the list of indicators and sources of verification will be completed. After that, each partner country is carrying out another national workshop to discuss the recommendations for action with experts from different fields.

In autumn 2010, a final conference will take place in Brussels to present the final results of the project.

After the end of the project, it is planned to look for ways to implement the quality signet for modular VET for disadvantaged young people. Therefore, a discussion on a follow up project in the line of the Lifelong learning programme has currently started.

6. Contribution to EU policies

Youth unemployment is a substantial problem in all EU member countries and affects especially the group of socially disadvantaged young people.

The project contributes to the Lisbon Key-Competence “Learning to learn” by dealing with learning and training methods, e.g. modular approaches, which are especially accessible for the target group of the disadvantaged. Such forms of education support VET providers by splitting training and lifelong learning offers up to smaller units that are easier to handle. In addition, these new forms recognize aspects of informal learning, which enhances the motivation to learn.

QualiMoVET contributes to the objectives and targets of the new strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (“ET 2020”) adopted by the European Council in May 2009.

It supports in parts all of the four strategic objectives:

- making lifelong learning and mobility a reality:
- improving the quality and efficiency of education and training
- promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship
- enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training

The results of QualiMoVET can contribute to pave the way for a European quality signet for modular VET for socially disadvantaged young people.

This means firstly that the quality of VET programmes for the target group will be improved. Thus training courses become more efficient. The target group is usually excluded by general VET programmes due to different obstacles: entrance barriers, lack of support systems, lack of instruments to recognize prior knowledge, etc. can be included into VET. Various quality standards that are suitable for the target group are analyzed and discussed in the course of the project. Finally, indicators are defined that have to be present in VET courses that intend to get the QualiMoVET signet. (Strategic objective 2)

QualiMoVET addresses only on the second level the target group of socially disadvantaged young people.

Socially disadvantaged young people form a heterogeneous group. Economic, social, ideological factors often have an influence on success or failure in the field of integration into VET and the labour market. We have a focus on differently structured learning programmes that encourage individual learning paths and link practical learning with theoretical learning. The idea is also to take into account the training and further training of professional personnel working with the disadvantaged young people.

Thus our project contributes to the strategic objective 3.

Improved quality in VET promotes confidence in VET approaches among the member states. A quality signet or even the debate on quality in the field of disadvantaged young people helps to create a dialogue among different countries.

The signet would therefore support mobility not only of experts and knowledge, but entails the mobility of the target group in the future. It will be prevented that young people drop out of the formal education system or are integrated back into it. As a result, they will have better chances in participating in further lifelong learning activities. VET programmes and approaches that take into account the validation of non-formal and informal learning as well as individual guidance are of special interest with regard to the target group. These programmes and approaches are consequently accounted for in the project. (Strategic objective 1)

Our project also contributes to the European benchmarks:

- early leavers in education and training: as a contribution to ensuring that a maximum number of learners complete their education and training
- increasing the participation of adults in lifelong learning, particularly that of the low-skilled.

Furthermore, QualiMoVET takes the strategic priorities of the Lifelong Learning Programme 2010 into consideration:

It supports the creation of transparency as well as recognition of competences and qualifications. QualiMoVET also takes into account the latest developments of the European reference instruments EQARF, EQR and also ECVET. The project is working with its own project glossary that is based on the glossaries of these instruments.

It enhances quality and attractiveness of VET systems and practices (see above).

QualiMoVET regards labour market needs as important by supporting disadvantaged young people that have difficulties in entering VET and the labour market. Due to the demographic developments in the near future, it is essential to integrate everybody into the labour market.

Finally, another approach for improving quality in VET for the target group is to advance skills and competences of VET teachers, trainers and tutors. It is of course at the same time important to raise the need for qualified personnel. New learning models where teachers are not any longer seen as teachers, but learning *coaches* as well as close cooperations with enterprises (that is to say under real life conditions) are interesting with regard to the target group. Approaches that focus on competence play an important role, too.

