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## Executive Summary

A main objective of the NLQAVET project is to support the implementation of EQAVET in the Netherlands.

The project focuses on two main pillars:

- an inventory on the current situation of Quality Assurance (QA) in The Netherlands at VET provider level
- a 'test and taste' for VET providers stimulating a culture of quality improvement at provider level through 5 pilots at team level

Other activities include two conferences and dissemination activities. International partners cooperate and provide feedback. The project is aimed at VET Providers, stakeholders and policy makers of VET in the Netherlands (& Europe). We aim to provide our target groups with input on QA to enhance QA within their organizations, whether this is on institutional, local, regional or national level.

Quality Assurance coordinators of Dutch VET colleges were asked to fill in the questionnaire. The report was delivered in 2011, some main conclusions:

- Commitment and involvement for Quality Assurance is larger at management level than at team and 'work floor' level
- Tension between learning and development versus (internal and external) accountability as goals for Quality Assurance
- When it comes to implementing the P-D-C-A cycle the last step(s) are not always implemented, the circle is not round (yet)

We would like to stress the survey is an inventory on the current situation in those VET-institutes that took part, and conclusions cannot be generalized to all VET institutes.

For the test & taste a call for participation was sent out to all VET providers and 5 teams were selected for participation. The aims of the pilots are twofold: they focus on a quality goal aiming at concrete quality improvements within a certain area and they focus on improving the quality culture and commitment of the team towards quality assurance.

The guidance by the project team consists of 5 meetings with the team and 5 management session with management and the project coordinator. Next to the individual guidance the 5 pilots will meet for joint knowledge sharing sessions to stimulate learning and synergy between the 5 pilots. Even though culture changes are hard to measure and take a long time, we developed a scan for the team and the management to try to measure cultural changes over the pilot period. The scan is based on four orientations (open, rational, social, self-focused). Besides the scan, all observations will be written down by those who guide the team and management meetings. All experiences will be gathered and used to produce a final publication.

On dissemination several goals are reached: website, conference, newsflashes, fact sheets. ([www.eqavet.nl](http://www.eqavet.nl) → NLQAVET)

For 2012, there are two main goals. The first is finishing the pilots and capture the developments on culture of QA in describing practices and tools. The second is organizing a second conference. We have already decided on inviting the pilots for an effect-meeting in 2013 as they might be able to make better statements on culture of QA after another year has gone by. The NCP EQAVET and the steering group (stakeholders) will remain to exist for another year (2013) and therefore a great place to anchor outcomes of this project.

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## 1. Project Objectives

The European Commission published a special Call for Proposal on 31th of March 2010. The purpose of this call for proposals is to award grants to bodies responsible for the implementation of a national strategy for improving quality-assurance systems and for promoting and developing the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework in order to help these bodies in their task and in promoting the development of a quality culture among stakeholders in the field of vocational education and training. One of the 5 selected projects is NLQAVET that runs for two full years in 2011-2012.

The NLQAVET project has the following aims and objectives:

1. At national level making an inventory of quality assurance systems and knowledge sharing
2. Stimulating a culture of Quality improvement at provider level to do Test and Taste for VET providers
3. Promote the EQAVET recommendation in the Netherlands, with a focus on the descriptors (PDCA) and indicators by conferences, workshops, communication strategy, website with marketplace and forum, using social media
4. Strengthen the Dutch Quality Assurance National Reference Point by boosting the activity level and placing EQAVET in the European policy context of the Copenhagen process
5. Involve all stakeholders in QA
6. Include private VET providers and all sectors in the QA system

The main target group of this project are VET institutes and stakeholders of Dutch VET at policy and institutional level. More specific the results are especially of interest to those involved in Quality Assurance; quality coordinators in VET institutes, management. At policy level ministry and other stakeholders can use the results to adapt policy.

A steering group (advisory committee EQAVET), consisting of all relevant stakeholders (including Ministry of Education) responsible for QA in their organisations, plays an important role in monitoring and functions as a critical friend in all activities during the project. The project was started on the basis of an inventory of the needs of these stakeholders and the advisory group is therefore committed towards the project and the implementation and dissemination of project results.

Both VET providers and stakeholders can benefit from the completed inventory. This inventory provides a picture of the current state of QA in VET in 27 VET institutes. VET institutes recognize the main conclusions and get the opportunity to learn from each other. Also the results are used to further improve QA in VET.

To create sufficient grass roots the results will be used and discussed by the network of QA coordinators in VET. At policy level the results were used by the advisory group EQAVET to set priorities regarding the development of QA in the Netherlands.

Finally the results were presented and discussed during the Quality TIME field consultation event, leading to concrete recommendations for QA in VET.

The international partners took part in this conference and got acquainted with the outcomes of the inventory.

One of the priorities set by the EQAVET advisory committee is the involvement of teams in Quality Assurance; intrinsic motivation and quality awareness are important terms. The survey also showed that the commitment and involvement of teams in Quality Assurance can and should be improved.

The test and taste with five pilots on culture of QA deal with these issues. In parallel with the teams we are working with, we also involve the team management and higher management. By meeting higher management we hope to have an effect on the total institute instead of only on the involved team.

By the end of this project (12-2012) these pilots will lead to a description of interventions in these five teams to improve the culture on QA. We aim at setting an example with these practices for other VET institutes to improve their culture of QA. Stakeholders and policy makers can use the information from the inventory and pilot to better understand and adapt policy to the current situation of QA and set sharper goals.

## 2. Project Approach

In January 2011 the NCP EQAVET composed a project team with experts of both quality assurance and EQAVET. The project team was responsible for working out the survey (inventory) for VET institutions, and will also be responsible for guiding the pilots.

The survey focuses on three aspects of Quality Assurance (QA):

1. Policy of QA (written documents)
2. Execution of QA (what are true actions)
3. Impact of QA (influence on the quality of education)

The survey is a true inventory, there is no scientific justification as its purpose was to get an idea of the current situation of QA in VET institutes. Results can and should not be generalized but we were able to discover common features that led to several conclusions. The steering group, consisting of stakeholders (including policy makers) provided feedback while designing the inventory. Also our Finnish partner, with expertise in designing and sending out surveys on QA in VET at national level, was involved in the design.

In determining an approach for the pilots, the project team had several meetings with external Dutch experts on QA. These meetings provided the project team feedback on their concepts, broadened their knowledge on culture of QA and created a common understanding.

A theoretical framework was developed that frames interventions and developments within the pilots. Each pilot consists of five team sessions and five management sessions. All pilot teams started with the same team session. In order to have the opportunity to respond to the individual needs of each team, the next following steps & sessions were designed together with the team and management. In this way they own the pilot as much as we do and we can connect to their needs and current situation. So far, most pilots have started off and the participating teams have responded very positive on the first session and the method of AI.

Even though culture changes are hard to measure and take a long time, we did try to find a way to make developments measurable. A scan has been developed to measure the current culture in each team. By the end of the pilot, teams will fill in this scan again and we hope to measure effects. The scan is based on four orientations (open, rational, social, self-focused). A similar scan is developed for the management because the pilot has a focus on both team and management, at the same time and apart from each other (management meetings). The supporting consultants who guide these pilots, are asked to make notes of all observations in order to have as much information possible to describe the practices afterwards.

### Quality Assurance

During the project, an external evaluator will act as a critical friend. Dr. Ellen Verheijen from the Expertise Center on VET is our external evaluator. The project coordinator and external evaluator have composed a plan. According to the plan, several meetings between project coordinator and external evaluator have taken place. The project team also developed an internal Quality Assurance plan. Each team session will be evaluated and the results of these evaluations will be used and discussed during management sessions to plan and improve further developments and interventions.

## **Dissemination**

The project team developed a dissemination strategy. This strategy covers all project steps and for each step identifies how the results will be disseminated and to whom. This strategy furthermore identifies the goal of the dissemination and states when.

Website - On the website of the NCP EQAVET, there is a heading for NLQAVET. Here we give updates for those who are interested. Please find more information on [www.eqavet.nl](http://www.eqavet.nl).

Newsflash - In 2011, the NCP EQAVET delivered two digital newsflashes that were forwarded to those who signed up. In both newsflashes NLQAVET developments were reported .

Factsheet - A special factsheet on NLQAVET was developed for easy handing out compact information during face to face meetings.

Workshops – In October 2011, the NCP EQAVET attended the national yearly conference for VET .

Besides promoting EQAVET, NLQAVET was also promoted by a special workshop in which the results of the survey were presented.

In November 2011 the NLQAVET project was introduced at a workshop during the contact seminar in Groningen – Quality Professionals in VET.

Conference - On 28 September 2011 the NCP EQAVET organized a national conference.

During this event VET stakeholders, teachers, staff and managers of VET institutes discussed priorities in QA for the Dutch I-VET institutions. The steering committee presented their view on this and participants got the possibility to add their own ideas and there was ample opportunity to discuss in small groups. During this conference the conclusions of the survey were presented and some of the pilot schools (wp3) introduced themselves.

In the context of the support of the EQAVET projects we participated at the dissemination meetings organized by the MENON network in Vienna 14-15 July, in Brussels 12-13 December 2011.

We also participated at the meetings organized by the Executive agency for the project coordinators.

By repeatedly informing our target group, we hope to alert them to EQAVET and NLQAVET and over time broaden and deepen their knowledge more and more.

### 3. Project Outcomes & Results

The Dutch national reference point for EQAVET started off the NLQAVET project in January 2011. Together with our partners we have been able to reach the goals set for 2011. In this overview you will find all activities and results achieved in 2011.

#### Results Survey/Inventory (WP2)

1. Online survey
2. In-depth interviews (outcomes were processed in the report)
3. Report of the online survey
4. Inventory of QA systems used

([http://www.eqavet.nl/1\\_802\\_Inventarisatie\\_van\\_kwaliteitszorg\\_op\\_instellingsniveau.aspx](http://www.eqavet.nl/1_802_Inventarisatie_van_kwaliteitszorg_op_instellingsniveau.aspx))

#### Results Pilot on culture of QA (WP 3)

5. The pilots, stimulating a culture of quality improvement, started in 2011 and will finish in 2012, updates can be found at [http://www.eqavet.nl/1\\_968\\_Update\\_Pilots.aspx](http://www.eqavet.nl/1_968_Update_Pilots.aspx).
6. We have made a start on training and guiding teams on culture of QA (theoretic frame not public yet)

Number 4-5: ([http://www.eqavet.nl/1\\_803\\_Test\\_Taste.aspx](http://www.eqavet.nl/1_803_Test_Taste.aspx))

#### Results Dissemination/Evaluation

7. Website ([http://www.eqavet.nl/1\\_650\\_NLQAVET.aspx](http://www.eqavet.nl/1_650_NLQAVET.aspx))
8. EQAVET conference  
([http://www.eqavet.nl/52\\_890\\_28\\_september\\_2011\\_qualityTIME\\_event.aspx](http://www.eqavet.nl/52_890_28_september_2011_qualityTIME_event.aspx))
9. Communication plan (internal)
10. Promotion materials, leaflet in Dutch and English  
[http://www.eqavet.nl/images/user/leaflet%20NL-NLQAVET.p\\_20120127110933.pdf](http://www.eqavet.nl/images/user/leaflet%20NL-NLQAVET.p_20120127110933.pdf).  
[http://www.eqavet.nl/images/user/leaflet%20EN-NLQAVET.p\\_20120127111631.pdf](http://www.eqavet.nl/images/user/leaflet%20EN-NLQAVET.p_20120127111631.pdf)  
Leaflet EQAVET indicators at provider level (in Dutch)  
[http://www.eqavet.nl/images/user/EQAVET%20Indicatieve%20descriptoren%20voor%20aanbieders%20van%20beroepsopleidingen.p\\_20120127112454.pdf](http://www.eqavet.nl/images/user/EQAVET%20Indicatieve%20descriptoren%20voor%20aanbieders%20van%20beroepsopleidingen.p_20120127112454.pdf)
11. External evaluation report (internal)

#### Explanation Survey/Inventory

The online survey was sent out to all VET institutes of which 27 replied. The survey was set out in May 2011 to QA-staff in I-VET institutions.

After the completed surveys were collected, experts analyzed the data and draw conclusions. Part of these conclusions shows us good practices in the Netherlands. And also challenges. The outcomes of the report strengthened the NLQAVET project that has a focus on culture of quality assurance. One of the conclusions was that QA is mainly owned by managers and staff and not often by teams/teacher. The outcomes of the survey were useful for the steering group to give direction to their priorities in implementing EQAVET in the Netherlands. Furthermore, QA staff in VET institutes that completed the survey can use the results in strengthening their ideas and policy towards their managers. It also empowered the need for the pilots (WP3) as the awareness of QA turned out to be weak among teachers.

**Explanation Pilots focusing on culture of QA**

In June, right after the survey, VET institutions received a call for participating in the pilots. After receiving several applications and running interviews with these institutions to check their relevance and true commitment, five VET-institutes were selected. In July and August the project team prepared work package 3 by inviting experts on the topic of culture of QA and discussing about the right method to approach these VET college teams that will really establish a change in their culture of QA. Between September and December, most pilots have had one or two team and management meetings. Even though we have just started, we can say the first meetings with VET college teams and management were well received.

**Explanation Dissemination** (see chapter 2 Project Approach)**Events that prevented the project to achieve the expected results**

Originally both I-VET and private (mostly C-VET) were to be involved in the survey and pilots. Unfortunately due to external developments the body of private VET providers had to change priorities and decided not to participate in the survey and test and taste. They are, however, still part of the EQAVET advisory committee and in that way follow project developments.

#### **4. Partnerships**

A project team was compiled based on expertise of both QA and EQAVET. This group of six people is responsible for developing the survey and developing and guiding the pilot meetings. These people are also experienced in guiding team processes in VET and have knowledge of the Dutch system of QA.

A steering group (advisory group EQAVET), consisting of all relevant stakeholders (including Ministry of Education) that are responsible for QA in their organizations act as a monitor and critical friend in all activities during the project. Also the steering group is responsible for disseminating project results to the organizations which they represent.

Internationally, we have three partners that are all experts on QA in their countries. They participate in the two conferences and provide us with feedback on specific areas of expertise. During the conference in September 2011, all our foreign partners (FI, RO, AU) were present and in addition the representative in charge of EQAVET of the European Commission. We had a project partner meeting the day before the conference to present the state of play of the NLQAVET project. We informed our international partners about the progress and difficulties and they could reflect on our plans and developments as well. During the actual conference, all four of them gave presentations. The European Commission gave a general overview presentation about the development of EQAVET. Our three international partners presented their best practices to the audience. We received lots of positive feedback on this part of the conference, the Dutch audience was interested to hear more about these good practices.

Our external evaluator is a researcher that has done a lot of research on QA in VET, she therefore not only evaluates our processes, but is also able to reflect on the content and provide her thoughts.

## **5. Plans for the Future**

This year, 2012, we will finish the project and aim at meeting all objectives. At the moment we are midway in the test and taste pilots, having team and management meetings. We expect to wrap up these meetings in June, possibly September and will then produce a description of the actions and effects on these teams relating to culture of QA. We expect to publish this description of practices around November.

The stakeholders that are represented in the steering group, will stay involved in all actions through meetings and mails. The steering group will meet three times in 2012. Through the steering group, we also reach out to private VET-providers.

Furthermore there will be a second conference in the last quarter of 2012 that gives us the opportunity to share and disseminate these practices. The date for this conference will be picked in February 2012.

We will keep posting updates on the NLQAVET-part of the Dutch EQAVET-website and there will be two more digital newsflashes in 2012.

During 2012, the project coordinator will keep in contact with the external evaluator who will produce a final report at the end of the project.

## 6. Contribution to EU policies

Looking at the Bruges Communiqué, Quality of VET is a strategic objective for 2011-2020:

(Bruges Communiqué, pages 7-8)

### **Quality assurance**

*(a) High quality of VET provision is a prerequisite for its attractiveness. In order to guarantee improved quality, increased transparency, mutual trust, the mobility of workers and learners, and lifelong learning, participating countries should establish quality assurance frameworks in accordance with the EQAVET Recommendation;*

*(b) Participating countries should - by the end of 2015 - establish at national level a common quality assurance framework for VET providers, which also applies to associated workplace learning and which is compatible with the EQAVET framework.*

The NLQAVET project contributes to the above mentioned objectives because on the one hand, we have made a mapping of the current situation of QA in VET. This enables the policy makers and other stakeholders taking part in the steering group to set national goals and give direction to new policies. We have also determined that QA is generally speaking owned by management and staff in The Netherlands and the pilot in our project aims at developing tools to raise awareness on QA among teachers. On the other hand, the steering group mirrored the current tools for QA in The Netherlands with the EQAVET descriptors and indicators and discovered that we do already cover all aspects, nevertheless there is always room for improvements and challenges are pointed out too.