



**Qualification as a Way to Quality: Certification of
Persons Holding Functions in Quality
Management Systems in Initial VET and in Adult
Education (VET-CERT)**

Progress Report

Public Part

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VET-CERT

Qualification as a way to quality: Certification of persons holding functions in quality management systems in initial VET and in adult education.



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Executive Summary

VET-CERT (Qualification as way to quality: Certifications of the persons holding functions in the quality management system in initial VET and in adult education) is a Leonardo da Vinci project developed and coordinated by ARQA-VET in the OeAD in cooperation with 4 national, 3 international and 5 associated project partners. With the VET-CERT project the competence development of persons in quality management functions in initial VET and in adult education will be fostered. This will support the professional implementation of the Quality Initiative VET (QIBB) and the implementation of the Ö-CERT framework in adult education as well as the implementation of the European reference framework for quality assurance in VET (EQARF) in both sectors. Professionally qualified and certified persons (principals, school quality process managers, regional quality process managers, quality managers in adult education etc.) should receive a comprehensive understanding of quality management tools and the possibilities they offer.

The two main aims thus are: 1) to guarantee that persons dealing with quality management in VET institutions have the necessary competencies 2) to make these competencies visible through a certification process. The following main products will be developed within VET-CERT: a) competence profiles for persons holding functions in QM systems at the different system levels, b) proposals for a curricular framework (training contents, training methods, training institutions) and c) a concept for the certification which takes into consideration the validation of non-formal and informal competences and learning.

During the first year of the project the work has been concentrated firstly, to build up the supportive structure for the project (incl. website, Kick-off Conference, QA plan, dissemination plan, dissemination materials, Midterm Conference) and secondly, to produce the two planned products: Stocktaking Report and the Competence Profiles. The summaries of the Stocktaking Report, in German and in English, were published in November 2011 and the final version of the Competence Profiles for four function groups (SQPM, LQPM, SL and LSI) in the QM in VET will be published in German by the end of February 2011.

Dissemination has an important role in the VET-CERT project. It has been understood that for the successful project the involvement of different interest groups is vital. Through the use of various means of media, the VET-CERT project has informed its stakeholders and target groups and opened up possibilities to participate in the work of the project. Kick-off Conference in the 17th of March 2011 in Vienna, Midterm Conference in the 12th of January 2012 with all partners and representatives from all target groups, stakeholders and other interest groups, are two examples of successful events organized by the project consortium where the project was not only presented but also the products were processed further with the participants following the principle - Involvement by Working.

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1. Project Objectives

In the project application the following aims and objectives are defined for the VET-CERT project:

- 1) to ensure that those who are responsible for quality management in VET institutions have the required competences and
- 2) to make these competences visible through a certification process.

As a consequence, competence development of those who hold functions in quality management (QM), the image of QM in VET itself, and mutual trust within different sectors of VET will increase.

With the VET-CERT project the competence development of persons in quality management functions in initial VET and in adult education will be fostered. This will support the professional implementation of the Quality Initiative VET (QIBB) and the implementation of the Ö-CERT framework in adult education as well as the implementation of the European reference framework for quality assurance in VET (EQARF) in both sectors. Professionally qualified and certified persons (principals, school quality process managers, regional quality process managers, quality managers in adult education etc.) should receive a comprehensive understanding of quality management tools and the possibilities they offer.

From the beginning of the project the involvement of different target groups, stakeholders and other interest groups has been a key issue. Used research methods are based on the close involvement and active participation of the different groups. For example, for the development of the Stocktaking Report several interviews with key stakeholders were conducted, for developing the Competence Profiles six group interviews were conducted whereby the groups were composed from representatives from all target and future beneficiary groups representing all different VET school types in Austria. For dissemination purposes various methods were and are used which are also aimed to enhance the involvement of the target user groups as well as other interests groups. Project website, Newsletter and two Conferences, Kick-off in March 2011 and Midterm Conference in January 2012, have been so far the main tools for the dissemination activities together with project presentations directly to the target groups.

2. Project Approach

VET-CERT is aiming to develop new tools for the use of QM in Austrian VET. We are aiming to truly concrete products which are to be implemented in the future on the field of Austrian VET. In order to achieve the set aims and produce the planned products and results, appropriate approaches and methods are necessary.

Development of the key products

As a general approach, the division of work inside the project consortium has been done in a way that the various skills and competencies of different partners are put in the use of the project in the best possible way. To develop the Stocktaking Report both desk research and research interviews were carried out by the partner 2/öibf. For the research work an analytic framework were developed at the beginning of the project. Based on the results of stocktaking the development work on the competence profiles was started. With the help of desk research and 6 group interviews a survey on competence requirements and training and qualification needs among persons holding quality functions were conducted. The analysis and reporting of the results are currently been done and the results are to expected by the end of February 2012. Partner 2/öibf is acting as a leading partner. After the completion of the WP2, we will start with the development of the Curricular Framework and of the Concept for Certification whereby the use of established Development Team plays a key role.

In all development and research activities the focus has been in the involvement of all target and stakeholder groups from all levels (policy-practise-research) as well as the project consortium. Active and participating workshops have been organised within in the project consortium as well as with the different target groups and stakeholders.

Quality Assurance

For VET-CERT an own Quality assurance plan has been created which has the aim to ensure the quality assurance of the VET-CERT project's procedures, results, and products. The leading partner for QA/WP4 is the University of Graz, which will not undertake any other tasks within the VET-CERT project in order to maintain appropriate independence and to avoid conflicts of interest concerning the quality assurance of the project. Quality assurance will be an accompanying activity within all project phases and work packages. The leading partner has developed criteria and indicators to measure process and output quality of the VET-CERT project and will also provide appropriate methods for the use of project evaluation. Evaluation will be undertaken in all project phases. The leading partner will analyse the results and give feedback to all project partners. The consortium will plan improvement measures out of these results. An interim and a final quality assurance report will be produced. The reports will refer to the defined quality criteria and/or indicators and give an overview about the evaluation results. The undertaken improvement measures out of evaluation results will be described and discussed in the reports. So far we have evaluation results concerning the Kick-off conference, project website

(part 1), project intern process (part 1) and preliminary results from the Midterm conference. All results are or will be published also on the project website.

Dissemination

Generally, as defined in the project application, the dissemination strategy is based on appropriate information material and on concrete dissemination plan. Dissemination activities are based on well established ICT-strategies (homepage www.vet-cert.at, project newsletter with 4 issues during the project), presentations in workshops and conferences, and by means of direct target group addressing with the help of project folders and poster. The main part of the national dissemination will be done via the coordinators tools and instruments (e.g. www.arqa-vet.at). The EQAVET network and its homepage (www.eqavet.eu) will also be used for the European dissemination of the VET-CERT project results. All partners will present the VET-CERT project and its results as often as possible in adequate workshops, conferences, or stakeholder meetings of any kind (for example expert conferences, principals' conferences, school inspectorates' conferences, meetings of policy decision makers).

During the first year several dissemination activities have been conducted. Project website was opened in February and they are kept updated and maintained on daily basis www.vet-cert.at. The Kick-off Conference was held on the 17th of March 2011 in Vienna with approx. 60 participants whereby the introduction of the project, project partner and the forthcoming work was on spotlight. Midterm Conference, which was decided to be necessary to further enhance dissemination, the involvement and interest of the various interests and target groups, was organised in January 2012 in Vienna with around 65 participants. It also served as an international workshop for the further processing of the Competence Profiles. In addition 4 national or international partner workshops have been organised during the first project year.

VET-CERT did also participate in the 16th Hochschultagen in Osnabrück, Germany in March 2011 and took part in the Poster Exhibition. In the coming year it is also planned to take part in scientific conference where the products and results will be presented.

The first issue of the project Newsletter was published in Decemeber 2011 and further 3 issues are planned to be published during the second year of the project. Also we have published articles about VET-CERT on other Newsletters and digital forums e.g. EQAVET Newsletter 12/11, OeAD i-news, OeAD News, Cedefop website. VET-CERT uses also the means of social media. On the VET-CERT Facebook account numerous posting about current issues concerning the project has been published and by using the Twitter account of ARQA-VET, wider audience has been kept informed about the latest activities of the project. Cooperation with the other EQAVET projects serves also as a forum for dissemination, especially in the European level. VET-CERT has also used the possibilities for further communication and dissemination of the project which have been made possible through the "Promotion and development of the use of EQAVET framework" Unit and MENON, e.g. the project website www.eqavetprojects.eu/.

More information about the VET-CERT dissemination activities are to be found in the Annexes of the Confidential Part.

3. Project Outcomes & Results

Through the work of the project partnership, the following main products will be developed:

- 1) **Stocktaking Report/ WP2:** stocktaking of the current situation regarding the proposed topic in the different educational sectors (IVET in schools and colleges, company training within the dual system, adult education,) in Austria. In order to get an overview an analytic framework has been developed at the beginning by interviewing key stakeholders and groups.
- 2) **Competence Profiles/ WP2:** development of module based and comprehensive competence profiles for persons holding functions in QM systems in IVET and CVET, considering the following functions: principals, school quality process managers, regional quality process managers, regional school inspectorate, QIBB steering group members, trainers of apprentices, peers, peer review facilitators, trainers for peer review, quality managers in adult education. With the help of group and individual interviews with persons who are holding different quality functions in different sectors, questionnaires for different target groups concerning competence and qualification needs and desk top research on the situation in other countries the collected data will be analysed and processed and the competence profiles will be defined by the end of February 2012.
- 3) **Curricular Framework/ WP3:** development of a framework curriculum for the training of the different target groups, taking into account the following aspects:
 - training contents
 - training methods
 - training institutions

Through the workshops with a development team and bringing together the results of the stocktaking and the competence profiles, desktop research, comparison with other concepts in other countries, especially partner countries, the proposal for Curricular Framework will be made.
- 4) **Concept for Certification/ WP3:** Development of a concept for the certification of persons holding quality functions after finishing the proposed trainings:
 - certification procedures
 - validation of prior learning
 - certifying organisations
 - duration of the certification
 - rules for re-certification.

Using expert interviews, analysis and comparison with implemented certification methods in different countries and sectors, a Concept for Certification will be produced.

Because of the very different current situation in VET in Austria not all products will be developed for all VET sectors. The framework curriculum will be developed for VET schools and colleges; for the company-based part of the dual system and for adult education the decision whether to go on with the framework curriculum has to be taken after a discussion of the deliverables of WP 2 – both with the project partners and with policy makers (feedback loop). An analogue process will follow

after the development of the framework curriculum before going on with the concept for certification.

In addition to the above mentioned main products, VET-CERT project will produce following supporting products:

- 5) **Quality assurance plan/ WP 4:** see more in Chapter 2,
- 6) **Project website, www.vet-cert.at/ WP5:** see more in Chapter 2,
- 7) **Project folders in German and in English/ WP5:** see more in Chapter 2,
- 8) **Project poster in German/ WP 5,**
- 9) **VET-CERT Conferences / WP 5:** see more in the Chapter 2,
- 10) **Recommendations for VET-CERT Implementation/ WP 6:** an implementation plan at national level include: timeline, responsibilities, implementation proposals for different VET sectors, considerations about piloting projects etc. These recommendations will be proposed and discussed within the final public conference about the VET-CERT results, which aims at reaching all the relevant national stakeholders as well as all the partner organisations,
- 11) **Recommendations for VET-CERT Transfer/ WP 6:** to assure the transfer of the developed procedures, products, and outcomes to the partner countries involved in the project.

The main task of the final project phase is to bring together the main products in an implementation and transfer plan.

All VET-CERT project products and publications are or will be available at the project website: www.vet-cert.at.

4. Partnerships

The project aims, products and results will be achieved and produced by an international project consortium that brings together various skills and competencies at different levels.

All the international partners in the consortium are entrusted with the EQAVET framework implementation in their countries and due to their active participation in the former network ENQA-VET as well as through their national expertise, thus being also important partners on the policy level. International partners will also have a key role in producing the recommendations for the VET-CERT transfer as well as performing a constant source of feedback concerning the developed products. The social partner organisations, which are part of the consortium, form part of this group, too.

The consortium consists also of national VET provider representatives, whom it is crucial to have on board, as the practicability of the tools that will be developed needs to be tested and looked at from a practical point of view.

In addition to the policy and practitioner level, there are two partner institutions responsible for developing quality tools and qualification procedures for VET from a theoretical and research point of view (öibf, 3s). University of Graz has the lead of the QA of the project. These three dimensions: policy – practice – research should prove an effective combination in order to develop, disseminate, and implement the outputs of the project.

Subcontracting is foreseen only for translation (at conferences and of some of the outcomes and the project flyer), for the design and layout of the webpage and the flyer and finally for the desktop research done in WP1: stocktaking concerning the Austrian dual system. All other work will be performed by the project partners themselves. The project coordinator (OeAD/ARQA-VET) has the main responsibility for the whole project.

The project consortium has vast experience in working various European partnerships. During the project all partners will meet during the conferences, workshops and working meetings according to the project work plan. Good and continuous communication is one key issue for the success of the project consortium.

Table of partners:

Partner number	Country	Legal name
P1	AT	OeAD (Österreichische Austauschdienst)-Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung - Austrian Agency for International Cooperation in Education and Research (OeAD-GmbH)
P2	AT	The Austrian Institute for Research on Vocational Training (öibf)
P3	AT	3s research laboratory
P4	AT	Higher secondary college of engineering Steyr, Austria
P5	AT	University of Graz, Department of Business Education and Development
P6	DE	BIBB – Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training
P7	IE	FETAC – Further Education and Training Awards Council
P8	SI	CPI - National Institute for VET

Table of associated partners:

Country	Organisation name
AT	Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture, General Directorate II for Vocational Education and Training, Adult Education and School Sport
AT	University College of Teacher Education, Burgenland
AT	Austrian Chamber of Labour, Vienna
AT	Austrian Federal Economic Chamber
AT	BFI (Berufsförderungsinstitut Österreich) – Institute for the Promotion of Trainings

5. Plans for the Future

During the second project year, the VET-CERT project will be finished with the aim of achieving all the set aims and goals. At the moment we are finishing the completion of the Competence Profiles which will be ready by the end of February 2012 (WP2). Accordingly we have already started the work on the WP3 and this work will continue until the end of November 2012 by which we will have the Curricular Framework and also the Concept for Certification.

The last part of the project year will be devoted to the development of the recommendations for implementations of the VET-CERT project products and results both in Austria and participating countries (WP6).

Dissemination work (WP5) will continue to play a major role among the project activities. The project website will be regularly updated and maintained and it will serve as the main forum for the project communication. 3 new issues of project newsletter will be published during the second year of the project.

Project workshop will be organized, at least 2 national and 1 international, beside the workshops with the development team for Curricular Framework and Certification Concept. When needed, project intern work meetings and consultations will be organised.

In December 2012, the Final Conference will be organized in Vienna where all the products and results as well as the concept for the recommendations of implementation will be presented and discussed.

The QA plan (WP4) will be implemented accordingly and the results will be taken into account when planning the further steps and interventions of the project.

VET-CERT project will further continue to take active part in the EQAVET Projects seminar organised by the "Promotion and development of the use of EQAVET framework" Unit and MENON consortium together with specific project host.

In the end of the project activities, the coordinator will produce the final report of the project and submit it to the EACEA according to the given deadline defined in the Grant Agreement.

The project coordination and management (WP1) will support and guide all above mentioned activities with the aim of successful achievement of all the set aims and goals.

6. Contribution to EU policies

VET-CERT project will contribute to the further EQAVET framework implementation in Austria and refers strongly to the Reference Framework, explicitly to:

- Indicative descriptors (implementation plans include specific support towards the training of teachers and trainers)
- Indicator No. 2 (investment in training of teachers and trainers) within the overarching indicators for quality assurance. The purpose of the policy in relation to the indicator (for example, promotion of ownership of teachers and trainers in the process of quality development in VET) is crucial for the whole project.

In the long term, VET-CERT will help to bring together the EQF/NQF, ECVET, and EQAVET framework implementation at national level: Well trained and certified persons holding quality management functions in VET will improve the implementation of quality management in VET. This will finally lead to better results of the whole VET system, and mutual trust and transparency will increase at national and European level.

The goals of the project are to support the following crucial objectives as expressed in the EQAVET Framework Recommendation:

- “developing concrete means to support a quality-improvement culture” (paragraph 12), “promoting ownership of teachers and trainers in the process of quality of training”, “promote a quality improvement culture at VET-provider level” (Annex 2, purpose no 1): this will be realised through developing standardised training courses and contents for the persons in charge of QM, and thus also in charge of implementing the recommendation.

- “responsibilities in quality management and development have been explicitly allocated”, “implementation plans include specific support towards the training of teachers and trainers”, “the strategic plan for staff competence development specifies the need for training for teachers and trainers” (Annex 1, indicative descriptors): this will be realised through developing proposals for equipping all main functions that deal with QM in Austrian schools and colleges of IVET with qualification profiles, training designs, and certification procedures. Adult education has a special role, due to its particular structures regarding QM. Here, the aim will be to explore how far the Ö-Cert proposal can be integrated into the overall design.

The VET-CERT project contributes to the above mentioned objectives because we are developing and producing tools for the further certification and qualification of the persons who are holding functions in QM initial VET and in Adult education in Austria. By achieving the end product, training programme, we are contributing to the development of concrete means to support quality-improvement culture.

