



Poland

“Europeanisation of the National Pilot Initiative for Quality Development and Assurance in Company-Based Vocational Education and Training”

Country profiles for quality assurance



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## **Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training in Poland**

### **1. How is quality assurance in Vocational Education and Training implemented in Poland?**

Challenges faced by modern states and their citizens related to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, including the demand for higher employment, to a large extent are subject to the quality of human capital. And the quality of human capital is influenced by the level of citizens' competencies and qualifications, which has been emphasised in the document published by the Polish government entitled „*Perspektywa uczenia się przez całe życie...*”<sup>1</sup> (*The lifelong learning perspective*). The document sets the directions and objectives for measures to be taken in the scope of lifelong learning in Poland up to 2020. It also provides for the obligations resulting from the establishment of the European Lifelong Learning Area, including European Qualifications Framework, and determinants specific for our country. Activities aimed at the development of lifelong learning and the achievement of its main objectives, i.e. competences and qualifications, have been included in all major development strategies: Strategy for the development of human capital, Strategy for the development of social capital, Strategy for innovative and effective economy, Strategy for the development of transport, Strategy for environmental and power safety, ‘Efficient Country’ strategy, National strategy for regional development, Strategy for national security of the Republic of Poland, and Strategy for sustainable development of rural areas and agriculture. Based on these documents, Strategy for Poland’s development 2020 was adopted by the government in September 2012. According to the document, improved quality of human capital is a situation where the citizens from the youngest to the oldest age acquire competences and qualifications that meet social and economic requirements and personal development needs by following different paths, including learning at schools and other formal education institutions, attending various courses, and by acquiring competences at work and during their social activity, as well as by learning individually and from one another.

These changes stand for making new, more effective investments in education and training, such as organising and developing a system for recognition of competences acquired outside formal education (a validation system), implementing systems for the accumulation and transfer of credits, which is consistent with other European systems, implementation of national qualifications frameworks, introducing mechanisms for personalising education and course offer so that they can meet specific needs of learners at all ages and employers’ needs; wider application of ICT in education and training; development of distance learning and training; development of VET guidance; reforming the system of examinations and transforming it into a system for evaluation of competences; promoting modern forms of adult education based on a validation system. Also Vocational competences standards developed by the Ministry of Labour and Social policy aim at promoting the quality of vocational education and training.

New investments in vocational education and training will be supported by the planned implementation of a Poland-wide system for forecasting demand for labour, which will be integrated with a system informing about the offer and quality of schools, HEIs and courses, and a career guidance system, so that learners can make informed choices about their investments in education. Without such a system, taking effective anticipatory and immediate

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<sup>1</sup> *Perspektywa uczenia się przez całe życie*, Komitet Stały Rady Ministrów, marzec 2011.

measures to make the labour market more sustainable is not possible<sup>2</sup>. Measures aimed at the improvement of human capital quality will respond to the challenges related to regional labour markets, their specificity and needs. Improving the quality of schools offering vocational education and training and promoting VET among the young people and other stakeholders are of paramount importance. Streamlining the selection of educational path leads closer to striking a balance between supply and demand, and boosts the developmental potential of economy. In the context of the changing demand in the labour market, bridging educational gap at all stages of education and training and improving the quality of educational services is a top priority for the country<sup>3</sup>.

The current modernisation of vocational education and training aims at improving the quality and effectiveness in order to meet the demands of knowledge-based economy. Support provided in this area contributes to effective management of the system of education, improving curricula and supplementing them with innovative elements, and to improving the effectiveness of the system of teacher training and in-service training. At the same time, teacher assessment, remuneration and promotion system will be transformed, which will be conducive for promoting and motivating the best teachers and will result in boosting the attractiveness of the teaching profession among the young people.

The new model of VET is based to a greater extent on practical learning and flexible learning paths, and on promotion of vocational education. The main objective of the reform introduced by the Ministry of National Education in the school year 2012/2013 is improving the effectiveness and efficiency of vocational education and training and continuing education system in the context of the labour market expectations, which will be achieved thanks to:

- systemic linking of VET and the labour market, including the introduction of a mechanism that makes schools adapt their educational offer to the needs of regional labour markets and employers' expectations; making VET and qualifications recognition systems more flexible;
- making VET more accessible and effective; and ensuring external recognition of its results, and including VET schools in a system of continuing education by the introduction of vocational qualifications courses.

Ensuring higher efficiency and effectiveness of vocational education and training system and harmonising it with the labour market will be possible thanks to the introduction of the following solutions:

- a new classification of vocational education trades, which provides for dividing trades into individual qualifications, which can be certified throughout the learning process;
- new core curricula for trades described with the use of learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competences);
- adapting the system of education to a new model of VET and continuing education, including streamlining the educational cycle at vocational schools to a three year course; consolidation of vocational and continuing education at vocational and continuing education centres; offering vocational qualification courses to adults;

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<sup>2</sup> *Strategia Rozwoju Kraju 2020. Aktywne społeczeństwo, konkurencyjna gospodarka, sprawne państwo*. Załącznik do uchwały nr 157 Rady Ministrów z dnia 25 września 2012 r.

<sup>3</sup> MPiPS - Ekspertyza. Rynek Pracy – Wyzwania strategiczne 2007-2015

- streamlining the system of examinations leading to the certification of vocational qualifications and opening it to credits earned as part of formal, informal and non-formal education;
- including schools offering vocational education in the continuing education system;
- strengthening the role of pedagogical supervision as an important link leading to improved quality of vocational education.

**The introduction of European reference tools will contribute to improving the quality of vocational education and training in Poland. These tools will include:** National Qualifications Framework consistent with European Qualifications Framework and a validation system, the European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET), the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), and systems for the classification and forecasting of skills supply in the labour market (ESCO, Skills Panorama).

“Raising the quality of education offered by upper secondary schools”<sup>4</sup> is one of three basic directions for the implementation of educational policy announced by the Minister of National Education for the school year 2012/2013 and addressed to secondary technical schools (offering education in 92 trades), basic vocational schools (offering education in 76 trades) and other secondary schools for youth and adults.

## 2. What are the basic mechanisms and instruments for assuring the quality of vocational education and training in Poland?

**VET quality assurance** is implemented as part of the system of formal education in Poland in accordance with the following laws (and executive orders):

- the School Education Act of 7 September 1991 (OJ of 2004 No. 256 item 2572, as amended) oraz act of 19 August 2011 amending the School Education Act and other Acts (OJ No. 205 item 1206).
- Act of 26 January 1982 – Teachers’ Charter (OJ of 2006 No. 97, item 674, as amended). Act of 19 November 2009 amending the Teacher’s Charter Act (OJ No. 2009 No. 213, item 1650).

Quality assurance in VET can be analysed from two angles; from the perspective of schools and in the context of external evaluation by pedagogical supervision bodies and accreditation by boards of education.

School headmasters are responsible for **quality assurance at the school level**. Studies conducted as part of a systemic project entitled „*Szkoła zawodowa szkołą pozytywnego wyboru*” (*Vocational schools - Schools of positive choice*) show that there is growing awareness among school headmasters of the fact that schools and educational institutions operate in an increasingly competitive environment. Therefore, the importance of providing valuable qualifications and professional experience is growing. The quality of vocational

<sup>4</sup> Podstawowe kierunki realizacji polityki oświatowej państwa w roku szkolnym 2012/2013. MEN, Warszawa 22 sierpnia 2012 r.

education is assured by the existence of the following factors: curriculum meeting the expectations of employers; qualifications of the teaching staff; school facilities, ICT supporting the teaching process, and cooperation with employers and labour market institutions. Almost two third of schools offering vocational education (3868 schools participated in the study) have a quality assurance system in place<sup>5</sup>. This phenomenon is related with taking steps aimed at improving the quality of education, and is mainly observed in technical schools offering modular courses, which introduce innovations and/or pedagogical experiments, use and provide to students Internet technology, cooperate with external institutions (employers, research institutes and labour market institutions) and at the same time work as examination centres. Providing education in accordance with a quality assurance system is correlated with the level of autonomy of a given school. This means that such systems are implemented mainly by schools which operate as independent units, and rarely by schools which form a part of larger compounds. As for geographical distribution, mainly schools operating in the Kujawsko-Pomorskie, Małopolskie and Pomorskie Province implement quality assurance systems; these schools operate in the regions where local authorities place large emphasis in their development strategies on innovations, development of advanced technologies, and supporting science and knowledge-based economy. Quality assurance systems adopted by the schools are largely based on internal procedures and regulations, which are based on binding legal regulations. Every fifth school follows the procedures and regulations developed by other institutions, and one in 10 observes ISO standards. Certificates and quality standards other than ISO are not popular and are of minor importance. It should be remembered that the observance of quality assurance procedures developed by individual schools may stand for the application of different measures, and implementing a quality assurance system does not guarantee the achievement of the results that can be comparable or that can be considered as meeting the acknowledged standards, especially in the eyes of employers.

The quality of vocational education in Poland is correlated with the existing model for pedagogical supervision, which governs the staging of **external assessment of the quality of work done by schools**. In the school year 2009/2010, a new regulation to this end was adopted<sup>6</sup>.

The introduced solutions aim at strengthening the system of pedagogical supervision and place special emphasis on the analysis and assessment of educational services provided by schools and educational institutions. The main objective of pedagogical supervision is improvement of the system of education, which in accordance with the act on the system of education consists in:

- the assessment of determinants and conditions for providing educational services and care by schools, educational institutions and teachers;
- the analysis and assessment of the results of educational services and care provided, and of other statutory operations conducted by schools and educational institutions;
- providing assistance to schools, educational institutions and teachers in the performance of their educational and care-related tasks;

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<sup>5</sup> *Badanie funkcjonowania systemu kształcenia zawodowego w Polsce*. Raport z badania wśród dyrektorów szkół kształcących w zawodzie i CKP metodą wywiadów wspomaganych komputerowo (CAWI lub CAPI). Projekt PO KL „Szkoła zawodowa szkołą pozytywnego wyboru”. MEN – DKiU, Warszawa, luty 2011 r.

<sup>6</sup> Regulation on pedagogical supervision published in the Official Journal No. 168, item 1324 was adopted on 7 October 2009 and has constituted the discharge of a mandate provided for in art. 35 clause 6 of the School Education Act of 7 September 1991(OJ of 2004 No. 256, item. 2572, as amended).

- inspiring teachers to the introduction of pedagogical, methodological and organisational innovations.

Pedagogical supervision is a planned process, which can be also introduced on short-term basis. It ensures the transparency of requirements. Information about a school or an educational institution is collected from various sources, including data gathered in the process of staging supervision by a school headmaster or an institution's director.

The main objectives of pedagogical supervision include: providing teaching staff (headmasters and teachers) with conditions for effective work on improving the quality of work done by schools and educational institutions by: providing information on the required quality; providing information and tools for verifying if the schools and institutions meet the requirements stipulated in the regulation; facilitating the staging of analysis of the quality of work done by schools and institutions.

The main premise behind the new regulation on pedagogical supervision is defining and dividing three supervisory tasks implemented by supervisory bodies, including boards of education, i.e.

- assessment of educational services provided by schools and educational institutions;
- control over the observance of legal regulations on teaching, educational and care services provided by schools, educational institutions and teachers;
- supporting schools, educational institutions and teachers in the teaching, educational work and providing care, as well as in the staging of other statutory operations.

The assessment of educational services provided by schools and educational institutions is a practical assessment exercise, which aims to establish the level at which a school or an institution meets the requirements set by the state based on the assessment of processes and results of teaching, educational and care measures taken and the operations of a school or an institution, as well as the quality of its management and operations in immediate environment. External assessment is the evaluation staged by a body responsible for pedagogical supervision (a board of education), and internal assessment consists in the evaluation made by a school headmaster or a director of a given institution. In accordance with the regulation, internal assessment is a team activity, which allows for a dialogue between all the stakeholders interested in the quality of work conducted by schools and educational institutions. Internal assessment includes new and important task to be performed by a school headmaster; forming teams of teachers who are responsible for joint performance of specific tasks.

External assessment involves: collecting and analysing information on educational activity of a school or an educational institution; determining the level at which a school or an institution meets the requirements set in a regulation adopted by the minister responsible for education.

External assessment aims at determining the level at which the requirements of the regulations are met, where:

Level A stands for a very high degree of meeting the requirements by a school or an educational institution;

Level B stands for a high degree of meeting the requirements by a school or an educational institution;

Level C stands for a moderate degree of meeting the requirements by a school or an educational institution;

Level D stands for a small degree of meeting the requirements by a school or an educational institution;

Level E stands for a little degree of meeting the requirements by a school or an educational institution.

Comprehensive external assessment covers all the areas of a school's or institution's operations, and problematic assessment covers only selected, problematic areas of such operations.

As a result of the assessment staged at a school or an educational institution, a supervisory body prepares a report, which stipulates the levels of meeting each requirement by a school or an educational institution. The report includes the assessment of the level of meeting each requirement subject to the assessment. It should be added that the Ministry of National Education stages social consultations concerning the amendment of the regulation on pedagogical supervision<sup>7</sup>.

In order to improve quality assurance of educational services, especially in the out of school sector, the Ministry of National Education has introduced a **system of accreditation for institutions offering out of school forms of education**<sup>8</sup>. Accreditation is one of external methods for assuring the quality of education and its results. If an institution starts an accreditation process, it means that it focuses on quality. Accreditation is not obligatory, and it is a voluntary decision taken by an institution, which subjects itself to external assessment. In accordance with the school education act, chief educational officer in a given region is authorised to award accreditation<sup>9</sup>. The regulation stipulates in detail the rules concerning accreditation, including detailed conditions and methods of awarding and withdrawing accreditation of continuing education institutions, institutions offering practical training, and in-service training centres, which offer out of school initial vocational education, and of educational institutions run in accordance with the provisions concerning commercial activity. Accreditation may include all or a part of educational services provided. An institution, which for at least one year has offered out of school education courses in the scope included in the application may apply for starting the accreditation process. Such courses should have included at least 30 contact hours. The institution should implement and promote innovative curricula, teaching and organisational solutions, which aim at improving the quality of education on offer. An institution may be awarded accreditation if it has adequate teaching facilities, employs qualified staff, develops methodological and teaching materials, and makes them available to others<sup>10</sup>.

The work of teams responsible for the assessment of operations of an institution applying for the accreditation is an important element of the accreditation process. Such a team is composed of representatives of a board of education, employers and employment agencies, thanks to which such teams are more objective and impartial and allow for a better correlation of the education process with labour market needs and employers' requirements. Therefore, an accreditation team is an element of external assessment and a source of recommendation for an educational officer. The successful accreditation of a given institution should result in improved quality of services provided, bigger trust in a training institution, higher

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<sup>7</sup> Draft regulation amending regulation on pedagogical supervision 2012.

[http://www1.men.gov.pl/rap\\_download/index.php?param=RapDownload\\_getFile\\_8733eb388cb98e9e598584b34a644666\\_7dcc97361a94e58e582bb89c8ece6797\\_pdf](http://www1.men.gov.pl/rap_download/index.php?param=RapDownload_getFile_8733eb388cb98e9e598584b34a644666_7dcc97361a94e58e582bb89c8ece6797_pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Detailed conditions and methods for awarding and withdrawing accreditation are stipulated in the regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sports of 20 December 2003 on accreditation of out of school continuing education institutions and centres (OJ No. 227, item 2247).

<sup>9</sup> School Education Act of 7 September 1991(OJ of 2004 No. 256, item. 2572, as amended) act act of 19 August 2011 amending the School Education Act and other Acts (OJ No. 205 item 1206).

<sup>10</sup> Information brochure on the accreditation of continuing education institutions (in Polish): [www.koweziu.edu.pl/pliki/akredytacja.doc](http://www.koweziu.edu.pl/pliki/akredytacja.doc)

competitiveness in the educational services market, higher marketing value and increased motivation of staff to raise their qualifications, as well as focus of a given institution on meeting specific standards, increased prestige of a given institution and broader educational offer. The benefits to the customers of accredited institutions include mainly: possibility of obtaining credits for completed vocational courses when starting education at vocational schools for adults, using high level educational services, boosted employability, being awarded a certificate confirming completed education issued by a reliable institution, possibility to use out of school forms of learning.

Launching the accreditation process results in obtaining by boards of education detailed information on the type and quality of educational services offered by continuing education institutions. A centralised database of accredited institutions run by the Ministry of Education is available at: <http://akredytacje.men.gov.pl/bamen/placowkipub.do?reqCode=lista&sort=nazwa&dir=d>

At present, one of the methods of verifying the level of graduates' preparedness for entering the labour market is an examination leading to the certification of vocational qualifications, which assesses the level at which graduates of vocational schools acquired knowledge and skills required for a given trade. The results of examination confirming vocational qualifications are one of key ratios indicating the quality of vocational education. The results of examinations taken in a given year are published by the Central Examination Board, which cooperates with eight regional examination boards<sup>11</sup>. After a few years of vocational examinations being in place, the Ministry of Education has taken measures aimed at modernising the system of external examinations to confirm vocational qualifications.

It is the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and public employment services (employment agencies) who are mainly responsible for **assuring the quality of vocational training in the labour market** in Poland. This obligation results from the following legal regulations:

- Act of 20 April 2004 on employment promotion and labour market institutions, art. 4 clause 7 (OJ 2008, No. 69, item 415, as amended);
- Regulation of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy of 27 April 2010 on the classification of professions and specialisations for the needs of the labour market and the scope of its application (OJ. No. 82, item 537).

In order to ensure a high quality of training for the unemployed and people in the labour market, the act on the employment promotion and labour market institutions stipulates that the Minister responsible for labour develops national vocational qualifications standards based on the requirements for individual work positions and these set by employers. The Minister is also responsible for the development of modular vocational training programmes. The vocational qualifications standards consistently developed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (their official name has been changed into 'vocational competences standards') and training modules are uploaded into a widely accessible database, which can be accessed for free and applied by all the institutions<sup>12</sup>. Curricula for vocational education and training

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<sup>11</sup> Information on the results of examinations leading to the certification of vocational qualifications (in Polish): <http://www.cke.edu.pl/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=142&Itemid=123>

<sup>12</sup> Database vocational qualifications standards and modular training for the labour market (in Polish): [www.kwalifikacje.prac.gov.pl](http://www.kwalifikacje.prac.gov.pl)

aimed at confirming vocational qualifications acquired as part of formal and non-formal education can be developed based on vocational competences standards.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy has also introduced new labour market instruments allowing for controlling the quality of training for the unemployed and people in the labour market: financial awards for training institutions who offer quality services proven by a large number of graduates who found employment after having completed training, and the registration of training institutions by provincial employment agencies.

When selecting institutions offering training, employment agencies take into consideration the fact if such institutions are accredited by a board of education or not. In particular, continuing education institutions accredited by chief educational officer can be entered in the register run by a provincial employment agency. Such registration is obligatory for training institutions soliciting orders paid by the Labour Fund and the State Fund for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled and willing to offer training for the unemployed and people in the labour pursuant to article 20 of the act on employment promotion and labour market institutions.

Employers wishing to offer training to their employees will be guaranteed that they commission training with accredited institutions offering quality services. Also, out of school training completed at accredited institutions will be an asset for future employees.

Polish Chamber of Training Companies (Polska Izba Firm Szkoleniowych (PIFS)), which since 2005 has conducted operations aimed at consistent improving competencies by adults, promotion of lifelong learning and these focusing on the development of training services market that observes fair competition rules, makes an important contribution to improving the quality of training in Poland. Nearly 350 companies representing a range of forms and areas of education are associated in the chamber, thanks to which the chamber represents diversified training institutions, can make opinions and take a stand on various issues, including quality assurance system for the development of services provided by educational institutions. As part of their daily operations, members of PIFS observe Code of Good Practice, which is a tool thanks to which parties to a training agreement can control the training process and ensure that it is an effective investment, which contributes to training quality assurance<sup>13</sup>. PIFS also develops training service standards<sup>14</sup>. However, training service standards developed by PIFS do not aim at unifying training services or limiting access to the market. They will not be used for certification, accreditation, validation, licensing, regulation, self-regulation or any other form of limiting access to the training market. The observance of these standards is voluntary.

The so-called local accreditation of institutions and modular training offers, which is conducted by Polish Modular Education Network (Polska Sieć Kształcenia Modułowego (PSKM)) operating at the Institute for Sustainable Technologies – National Research Institute in Radom has been designed to improve quality assurance in vocational education and training. PSKM has operated since 2002 and resulted from the implementation of a Leonardo da Vinci project entitled „*European Bank for the Development of Modular Curricula and Educational Technologies*”<sup>15</sup>.

Many VET centres, to mention continuing education centres, practical education centres and network of in-service training centres, have obtained certificates confirming the provision of educational services in accordance with ISO standard, which has greatly affected quality

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<sup>13</sup> Code of Good Practice developed by Polish Chamber of Training Companies (PIFS) (in Polish) at:

<http://www.pifs.org.pl/strona/kodeks-dobrych-praktyk.html>

<sup>14</sup> Training Service Standards developed by PIFS (in Polish) at: [http://www.sus.pifs.org.pl/pliki/SUS%20PIFS\\_2013.pdf](http://www.sus.pifs.org.pl/pliki/SUS%20PIFS_2013.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Information on Polish Modular Education Network (in Polish) at: [http://www.emcet.net/pl/polish\\_networks.html](http://www.emcet.net/pl/polish_networks.html)

assurance of these services. These institutions can be called centres of excellence in a given field, e.g. welding, automated machining, mechatronics, car diagnostics and other.

Some centres offering vocational education and training have developed individual training quality models and standards. A good example here is VCC (Vocational Competence Certificate) developed by HUMANEO Association.<sup>16</sup>

### 3. What national VET quality assurance projects or initiatives are implemented in Poland?

The development of modern vocational education and training, which meets labour market needs is a big challenge in Poland. For many years, this area has seen a lot of negligence, as investments were scarce, and the quality of educational services was poor and incompatible with the requirements and expectations of the customers and knowledge-based economy.

The funds earmarked for improving the quality of VET mainly originate from European institutions (ESF), namely Human Capital Operational Programme (HC OP) 2007-2013, Priority 3. High quality of the education system<sup>17</sup>.

HC OP systemic projects commissioned by the Ministry of National Education focus on improving the quality of VET, and major ones include:

- **The development of terms of reference for the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework and the National Qualifications Register for lifelong learning** (2010-2013). The project is implemented by Educational Research Institute (IBE) <http://kwalifikacje.org.pl/pl/>.

The project is fundamental to the creation of quality assurance system for qualifications awarded in Poland and is consistent with quality assurance rules proposed by the European Union. Issues related to qualifications quality assurance are analysed from the point of view of qualifications awarded to individuals. As a result of discussions held by experts and public debate, it has been agreed that three main groups of qualifications quality factors should be distinguished. These are:

quality of qualifications ‘as such’; quality of the validation process, and quality of teaching and learning process. In order to expand the empirical basis of works on the qualifications quality assurance rules, studies and research on various aspects related to the quality of qualifications was conducted and included:

- Study on procedures for the recognition of credits obtained as part of non-formal and informal education.
- Study on qualifications quality assurance outside the formal system of education. The analysis was made from the perspective of the establishment of a national qualifications system,
- study on various aspects of the recognition of credits acquired in the course of formal education at schools of higher education and recognition of learning outcomes acquired outside the formal system of education.

<sup>16</sup> Vocational competence certification standard (in Polish) at: [http://www.vcci.pl/pl/modul\\_acr.html](http://www.vcci.pl/pl/modul_acr.html)

<sup>17</sup> Fundusze unijne dla oświaty. Kształcenie zawodowe. Poradnik beneficjenta. Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej, Warszawa, maj 2009.

Guidelines for qualifications quality assurance were adopted and provided for:

- The universality of rules - the award of all qualifications included in the national register is subject to general rules for qualifications quality assurance.
- Cooperation by stakeholders - quality assurance should be based on cooperation by interested parties.
- Diversified solutions - qualifications quality assurance rules do not provide for detailed quality assurance solutions.
- Diversified bodies - tasks related to qualifications quality assurance can be implemented by state, private and social bodies.
- Supervision by public authorities - all entities responsible for external monitoring are directly or indirectly subject to supervision by a relevant public authority<sup>18</sup>.

The national qualifications register will include all qualifications awarded in accordance with legal regulations by public authorities, HEIs, and other schools and institutions. The register will obligatorily include qualifications, which are related to the performance of tasks related to risk to human life and health. Other qualifications will be included in the register on voluntary basis. It is assumed that due to the registration procedure, the following qualifications groups will be distinguished:

- qualifications awarded pursuant to regulations on education,
  - qualifications awarded pursuant to regulations on higher education,
  - qualifications awarded pursuant to regulations on institutions operating outside the system of education and higher education,
  - other qualifications.
- **Developing national vocational competences standards required by employers** (HC OP Priority I - Employment and social integration). The project has been implemented in the years 2012-2013 by the Consortium: Doradca Consultants Ltd., Instytut Technologii Eksploatacji – PIB, WYG International, Instytut Pracy i Spraw Socjalnych, Łódzkie Centrum Doskonalenia Nauczycieli i Kształcenia Praktycznego. Vocational competences standards describe vocational competences indispensable for performing tasks included in a given trade that are accepted by representatives of trade and sector organizations, employers, employees and other key social partners. The aim of the project is preparing new information related to individual trades in order to improve the quality and efficiency of labour market services and to better adapt educational offer to the needs of the labour market, including:
    - improving the methodology for describing vocational competences standards (including European and national qualifications frameworks and users' needs)

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<sup>18</sup> Referencja Polskiej Ramy Kwalifikacji na rzecz uczenia się przez całe życie do Europejskiej Ramy Kwalifikacji. Projekt Raportu (wersja do konsultacji) IBE, Warszawa, listopad 2012.

- expanding information on individual trades for the needs of the labour market and education by developing 300 vocational competences standards and promoting them.

The project aims at modifying the methodology for the development of vocational competences standards, developing 300 descriptions of standards that are pivotal for employment and entering them to a modified database at [www.kwalifikacje.praca.gov.pl](http://www.kwalifikacje.praca.gov.pl) which is administered by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. Vocational competences standards are developed for trades and specialisations in accordance with the classification of trades for the labour market<sup>19</sup>.

Existing and new vocational competences standards form the benchmark for the descriptions of qualifications and a reliable source of information, which can be used in National Qualifications Framework. Vocational competences standards will:

- describe competences required in a given trade divided into the following categories: knowledge, skills and social competencies;
- provide descriptions which help determine the level of qualification built based on a standard, in accordance with EQF/PQF descriptors;
- place a given trade among other trades and types of activity (e.g. describe the place of a trade in the classification of trades and classification of business activity)
- describe the required predispositions and contraindications for performing a given trade and conditions for performing typical professional tasks;
- provide additional information on education and qualifications preferred by employers, which are indispensable for performing a given trade at a level acceptable by employers<sup>20</sup>.

- **Improving core curricula as a key for modernising vocational education and training (2008-2013)** The project is implemented by the National Centre for Supporting Vocational and Continuing Education (NCFSVCE) <http://pokl.koweziu.edu.pl/>.

The project aims at improving the quality of vocational education and training by modernising and verifying core curricula for vocational education from the perspective of adapting them to the requirements of knowledge-based economy and in accordance with the planned curricula and organisational reforms of vocational education and training.

As part of the project, core curricula for vocational education<sup>21</sup> described in terms of learning outcomes for 200 trades included in the new classification of vocational education trades<sup>22</sup> and new study programmes (for individual subjects and modules) for a given trade were developed along with teaching plans for providing education in a given trade<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> Regulation of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy of 27 April 2010 on the classification of trades and specialisations for the needs of the labour market and the scope of its application (OJ No. 82, item. 537).

<sup>20</sup> Website of a project devoted to vocational competences standards (in Polish): <http://standardykompetencji.pl/index.html>

<sup>21</sup> Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 7 February 2012 on core curricula for vocational education trades (OJ of 2012 no. 0 item 184).

<sup>22</sup> Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 23 December 2011 on the classification of vocational education trades (OJ of 2012, no. 0, item 7).

<sup>23</sup> Examples of vocational school curricula for vocational education trades (in Polish): [http://www.koweziu.edu.pl/index.php?id=programy\\_nauczania](http://www.koweziu.edu.pl/index.php?id=programy_nauczania)

- **A system for supporting schools and educational institutions that implement modular VET programmes.** (2009-2013). The project is implemented by the National Centre for Supporting Vocational and Continuing Education (NCFSVCE).

The project aims at developing a system for supporting vocational schools and educational institutions, which prepare for the implementation of modular study programmes. 17 regional conferences attended by teachers, headmasters and representatives of supervisory and managing bodies were held in order to promote modular education and training. More than 200 schools were invited to participate in the project. As a result, nearly 30% of schools participating in the project introduced modular education and training in September 2011. The remaining schools declared their readiness to introduce such programs in school year 2012/2013.

As part of the project performance, 21 guides on the implementation of modular VET study programmes were published. The guides are addressed to supervisory and managing bodies, school headmasters, directors of practical training centres, teachers-consultants and methodology counsellors. Moreover, 16 guides for individual industry sectors were published as practical teaching materials to be used at schools. A website has been launched in order to disseminate and promote modular education and to provide space, in which theorists and practitioners and others stakeholders looking for new solutions and information can meet.

- **Vocational schools - schools of positive choice** (2010-2012). The project was implemented by the National Centre for Supporting Vocational and Continuing Education (NCFSVCE).

The project aimed at preparing and disseminating solutions designed to improve the quality of work and attractiveness of vocational schools prior to school year 2012/2013 and ultimately to boost interest on the part of lower secondary schools graduates to continue education at vocational schools. The goal has been achieved thanks to the implementation of the following detailed goals:

- the assessment of public VET in Poland, including the level of schools' preparedness for providing vocational education in trades;
- preparing the managerial and teaching staff at schools and continuing education centres to implement solutions resulting from the modernisation of VET;
- strengthening and promoting cooperation between vocational schools and employers;
- improving the image of VET.

As part of the project, a competition entitled "Schools for the labour market" was organized. The competition aimed to identify and promote schools and employers who boast top quality and effectiveness of cooperation in the scope of VET. Ten vocational education schools were distinguished in the competition. The Ministry of National Education has staged a competition entitled "Leader of Vocational Education and Training".

- **Modernisation of vocational qualifications examinations** (2010-2014). The project is implemented by the Central Examination Board (CKE).

<http://www.cke-efs.pl/course/view.php?id=67>



assessment of the quality of educational and training services, and a proposal for the methods of implementing the system and ensuring high quality of educational and training services in the Małopolska Region. The model standard for educational and training services includes 20 standards divided into four thematic groups: education and training services; competencies and development of training staff; infrastructure, organisation and providing services to customers; training institution management. Each standard is accompanied by relevant indicators, which clarify it and describe specific tasks related with its implementation. These standards are defined on two levels; the average standard, which guarantees good quality, and above the average standard, which shows developmental perspectives. The model for the assessment of the quality of educational and training services includes the rules for the award of quality labels, quantity and quality indicators for the assessment of the quality of services (in accordance with service quality standards), description of the organisations awarding quality labels and a mechanism for appointing them, and accreditation rules procedures and mechanisms. Also a mechanism for the monitoring of the quality of training service market and a mechanism for the assessment of the operations of an accreditation agency have been proposed<sup>27</sup>.

- Also the **Lifelong Learning Programme**, and especially the **Leonardo da Vinci Programme (mobility projects – VET professionals (VETPRO))** provides for ensuring top quality of vocational education and training. In the Leonardo da Vinci programme, the term ‘exchange’ relates to the transfer of knowledge, experiences or innovative methods and practices concerning vocational education and training. Projects focusing on the exchange of experiences are visits abroad by VET professionals responsible for the development of VET and VET staff. Such projects aim at the transfer of interesting solutions and the improvement and modernisation of VET methods. Thanks to VETPRO projects, the participants have many opportunities for personal development and VET systems are improved thanks to the introduction of new solutions by sending institutions<sup>28</sup>.

**LdV Transfer of innovation projects**, which are based on multilateral cooperation and consist in the transfer of innovative solutions and products, also aim at improving the quality of VET. In the course of international cooperation, partners adapt successful ideas from abroad to local needs, language, culture and legal requirements and implement them in different countries, sectors and among new target groups<sup>29</sup>.

- Last but not least, Poland participates in international studies coordinated by OECD and focusing on the diagnosing of competences of students and adults:
  - **PISA**: (*Programme for International Student Assessment*), which aims at obtaining comparable data on the skills of 15-year old students in order to improve the quality of teaching and organisation of the system of education<sup>30</sup>.
  - **PIAAC**: (International Assessment of Adult Competencies – PIAAC)<sup>31</sup>. PIAAC programme responds to the interest in adult competencies. It is common knowledge that economic growth of a given country is impacted by the level of knowledge and skills

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<sup>27</sup> Description of a project implemented by WUP (in Polish): [http://wup-krakow.pl/projekty-wup/broszura\\_interaktywna.pdf](http://wup-krakow.pl/projekty-wup/broszura_interaktywna.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> Leonardo da Vinci - Mobility Projects (in Polish):

<http://www.leonardo.org.pl/projekty-mobilnosci-dla-zainteresowanych/o-projektach-mobilnosci>

<sup>29</sup> Leonardo da Vinci – Transfer of Innovations Projects (in Polish): <http://www.leonardo.org.pl/akcje/transfer-innowacji>

<sup>30</sup> Information of the fifth OECD/PISA programme (in Polish):

[http://www.ifispan.waw.pl/index.php?lang=pl&m=page&pg\\_id=98](http://www.ifispan.waw.pl/index.php?lang=pl&m=page&pg_id=98)

<sup>31</sup> PIAAC Programme in Poland: [http://www.piaac.pl/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=48&Itemid=60](http://www.piaac.pl/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=48&Itemid=60)

and not by the level of formal education. Therefore, new methods for improving the quality of education and training in the context of study results, which will be available at the end of 2013, are sought.

**A new mechanism for training services quality assurance** is being developed and consulted by the Ministry for Regional Development in cooperation with Polish Agency for Enterprise Development. The proposed solutions aim at ensuring uniform training service quality standards in the new programming period 2014-2020, and at developing an active training policy, which is consistent with changes observed in the labour market<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> Detailed description of the priorities of HC OP 2007-2013 (in Polish):  
[http://www.efs.gov.pl/Dokumenty/Lists/Dokumenty%20programowe/Attachments/89/SzOPPOKL\\_1%20stycznia2013.pdf](http://www.efs.gov.pl/Dokumenty/Lists/Dokumenty%20programowe/Attachments/89/SzOPPOKL_1%20stycznia2013.pdf)