



Portugal

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

Country profiles for quality assurance



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training

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## How quality assurance in VET is in general realized in your country?

In 2007 a new legislative framework for education and training was published<sup>1</sup> and established the National Qualifications System (SNQ). The SNQ promotes the effective articulation of vocational training actions developed both within the educational system and the labour market. Its aim is to establish common goals and instruments in the context of a renewed institutional framework. In this framework, quality assurance is assumed as a result from the whole system, including through the National Qualifications Catalogue, the certification of training providers, the qualifications of trainers and other experts in training as well as periodic evaluation of their results. Educational and vocational information and guidance and the public funding of the vocational education and training also contribute to the quality of the SNQ.

With a view to developing good practices, the Portuguese government is engaged in building a culture of quality assurance within its institutions. In Portugal there is a significant number of private entities, some of which benefit from public grants. By signing contracts with the public administration, the most important ones are responsible for the technical, administrative and financial management of public funds, allocated by the European Social Fund (ESF) and the State budget.

Every year, these private entities promote thousands of vocational training courses, aimed not only at small and medium enterprises (SMEs), but also at unemployed, young people and adults. Their activity is a decisive contribution to the implementation of principles and standards of quality assurance required by national legislation. Quality assurance focuses on pedagogic capacity, procedures and practices along the different stages of the training cycle. These institutions are evaluated according to specific indicators and have produced some good examples of excellence.

At central level, the General Directorate for Employment and Industrial Relations (DGERT) is responsible for preparing policy measures, legislation and regulations concerning employment and vocational training, for participating in the definition of development strategies, and for defining criteria regarding quality assessment and accreditation of training providers.

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<sup>1</sup> Decree-Law nr. 396/2007 of 31<sup>st</sup> December.

**The Institute for Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP) is the national public employment service. The IEFP's role is to promote employment creation and quality, as well as fighting unemployment through the implementation of active employment policies, namely on the vocational training field.**

## **What main mechanisms or instruments exist?**

Several instruments were created within the scope of the SNQ, specifically the National Qualifications Catalogue (CNQ), a strategic instrument for the management of lower level qualifications, and the National Qualifications Framework (QNQ), an instrument that structures the qualification levels in accordance with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) for lifelong learning.

The SNQ also comprises a network of VET providers, where the New Opportunities Centres (CNO), whose network is coordinated by the National Agency for Qualification (ANQ), are included. The CNO are promoted by public and private VET providers, namely educational establishments, vocational training centres, municipalities, companies and other associations, in order to complement the current adult education and training/qualifications system by offering effective encouragement and support for the acquisition of certification and the update of new training opportunities. The CNO are expected to attract school leavers by offering them better prospects for lifelong learning and access to more highly qualified occupations. Since they serve as platforms for access to, and the coordination of, various qualification paths for adults, CNO have acquired a central, structural role. The network of CNO (currently totalling 459 centres) covers all the national territory.

In accordance with the principles identified in the Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF), the ANQ published the Quality Charter for New Opportunities Centres (*Carta de Qualidade dos Centros Novas Oportunidades*), which defines the basic structure and the orientations each centre must comply with in order to contribute to the best use of work processes, to the mobilisation of teams and to the efficient use of financial resources.

The success of the work carried out by the New Opportunities Centres is evaluated by a dynamic system of quality reference indicators, which allows the introduction of the necessary adjustments in compliance with the defined quality standards. These referential will allow the accomplishment of three different purposes:

- a) The self-regulation of the national New Opportunities Centres network, by reference to single standards and shared by all intervenient;
- b) The development of the reference system for quality of the New Opportunities Centres, which must be used for external or internal evaluation;
- c) The strengthening of ANQ's capacity for supervising and monitoring the national network of New Opportunities Centres is based on a system of joint responsibility for the results and quality standards.

Also worthy of note are the centres for vocational excellence – the Joint Management Vocational Training Centres (*CFPGP*), which result from partnerships between Public Administration (via the IEFP), employers associations and trade unions and are jointly managed by these institutions. This type of partnership has a long historical background and has enabled the establishment of a predominantly sectorial network of vocational training centres, which thus complements the public VET network. These Centres have administrative and financial autonomy and cover all the main economic activities, being also responsible for the activities of recognition, validation and certification of competences.

The CFPGP are certificated by *Associação Portuguesa de Certificação (APCER)*, within the Quality System and in accordance with the norm EN NP ISO 9001:2000 – Quality Management Systems, as regards design, development and provision of training and technical support/consulting in the areas of quality, environment and others. They are also accredited by DGERT in accordance with the former Accreditation System, currently named *Training Providers Certification (CEF)*.

A new management and cooperation tool was created for some of these centres, reflecting a set of critical dimensions, through annual and measurable contractual rights and obligations. Consequently, commitments were made in key areas such as double certification, the use of references in the National Qualifications Catalogue and an increase in the performance within eligible areas of the National Strategic Reference Framework (QREN).

Portugal has a certification of training providers system for VET since 1997, at the moment under the responsibility of General Directorate for Employment and Industrial Relations, within Ministry of Economy and Employment. The CEF aims to increase VET provider's quality and promote their external recognition, increase the credibility of the VET system and guarantee a better use of public funds for training activities. Certification is mandatory for those organisations which receive public funds and voluntary for the others.

The certification means a formal recognition of the pedagogic capacity of the VET providers and of the quality of their procedures and practices, in the different stages of training cycle, based on a quality standard. To be certified the providers must show compliance with the standard requirements, proving that their management and pedagogic practices follow the quality criteria implied.

The quality standard describes requirements related to:

- Policy and strategic planning (strategy and projects clearly defined, taking in to account territorial or sector context and training needs of the target population)
- Management and human resources (efficient management of training activities, and suitable skilled human resources, showing professional and pedagogic experience)
- Results evaluation and continuous improvement (compromise with assessment and review of their performance, adopting corrective and improvements measures to assure continuous quality of their practices)
- Rules of conduct and ethic (proper relation with all stakeholders, respecting their rights and interests)
- Specific requirements for developing each stage of the training cycle (training needs diagnosis, planning and design of courses and materials, promotion and execution of the courses, training evaluation).

The certification process begins with an application submitted to a technical evaluation, by documental analysis and sometimes audit. The renewal process implies a self-assessment exercise made by the training organisation, with the definition of an improvement action plan and an indicators scorecard, and in some cases an audit to confirm the requirements compliance. Till recently, the audits were made almost only for those providers which are under renewal process and covers 10 % of the universe of accredited providers. Within a wider reform of the Portuguese VET system, the certification process changed<sup>2</sup> and new certification system aims to make the recognition of VET provider's capacity in the different education and vocational themes, and it's an audit based model. In this model, audits will be the main tool to assess VET provider's practices, annually covering the universe of certified organisations.

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<sup>2</sup> Order nr. 851/2010 of 6th September.

## Are there current projects or national initiatives on quality assurance? What focus do they have?

Besides what has been said before, an example of a current project is the *EuroPeerGuid* project promoted by the Vocational Training Centre for the Trade (CECOA) that began in January 2011 and it will end in December 2012. Below we present the outline of the project.

The **EuroPeerGuid – “European Peer Review in Guidance and Counselling in Adult Vocational Education and Training”** Project (European Commission Lifelong Learning Program (LLL), Leonardo da Vinci sub-program) gathers 4 Countries – France, Finland, Portugal and Slovenia - which, like all European Countries nowadays, face the need to adapt their own Vocational Education and Training (VET) system and quality VET assurance and development system to integrate EQARF recommendations, and are dealing with the implementation of LLL policies and the corresponding need to address quality assurance and development in a particular field of VET operation - guidance and counselling in Adult VET.

### **COORDINATOR**

**CECOA - *Vocational Training Centre for the Trade*** - is a Vocational Training Centre for the Trade created by the IEFP and the Confederation of Trade and Services of Portugal (*CCP*). The aim of CECOA is to promote educational activities and vocational training, in particular for the trade sector. CECOA has its head-office in Lisbon and two other branches in Oporto and Coimbra. CECOA is an entity recognised under the Portuguese system of assessment and certification of VET providers, a system run by DGERT and since 2005 CECOA's Quality Management System is recognised under ISO 9001:2000. CECOA is also member of the national network of NOC - New Opportunities Centres, centres dedicated to guidance, validation, assessment and certification of skills and competences of adults.

### **PARTNER**

**Fundação Alentejo** (Alentejo Foundation - PT) is a private entity whose statutory objective and aim is the development of Education and Vocational Qualification of human resources of the Alentejo region (south of Portugal), since 1990. Registered as a Private Institution of Social Solidarity, this Foundation is the owner of the Vocational/training School of the Alentejo Region (EPRAL – 800 full time students),

which main goal is provide initial in-class vocational and training for youngsters. It also has other instruments of intervention in the process of promotion of the educational qualifications of adults, namely in its CNO - New Opportunities Centers (500 adults attending), by Recognizing, Validating and Certifying Competences, and in continuing VET in the scope of the Life Long Learning, at its branches in the cities: Évora, Estremoz and Elvas.

**Mission:** Contributing to the sustainable development of Alentejo region, through the creation of responses that aim the academic valorization and vocational school qualification (pre-university) of its human resources (youngsters and adults), in the several areas and sectors potentially more relevant for regional development.

**Strategies:** Creating mechanisms geared to the different responses / target audiences, based on organizational and innovative pedagogical models closely related to the regional reality; Establishment of a network of active partnerships with the business community and institutions; Development of a policy of benchmarking, in the European countries.

## **AIM**

To transfer the European Peer Review (PR) methodology – an innovative methodology combining external evaluation with self-assessment that supports VET Providers in their efforts to improve the quality of their provision, built on the principles and recommendations of former CQAF currently EQARF – to the Guidance and Counselling in Adult VET field.

## **STRATEGY**

The first step to achieve this general aim is to carry out an European Investigation within which the partnership describes and analyses current EQARF state of art implementation in all partner's countries and describes the VET quality assurance, monitoring and development systems in place in each partner country, both at system-level and at VET provider level, with particular focus on existent (if different) quality assurance systems applicable to guidance and counselling in Adult VET.

The next step consists in transferring and further adapting the PR methodology – tested and implemented in the Initial and Continuing VET under three previous European projects (Peer Review in Initial VET, Peer Review Extended and Peer Review Extended II) - to Guidance and Counselling in Adult VET.

The idea is to develop a methodology suitable not only for the project partners own reality, but as much as possible transferable, inclusive and European oriented, i.e., better applied to a multiply variety of national realities and stakeholders.

## **RESULTS**

- **State of the Art of EQARF implementation and Peer Review**
- **European Peer Review Manual for Guidance and Counselling in Adult VET**
- **European Peer Review Training Programme in Guidance and Counselling**
- **Database of Peers**
- **Pilot testing of the methodology in 10 Guidance Centres**

**DGERT, 9<sup>th</sup> December 2011**