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Integrating Quality Assurance and Qualifications Framework to Improve Education and Training

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*Qualifications across boundaries: Perspectives of Hong Kong Qualifications Framework and European Qualifications Framework
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Systems of quality assurance

- Higher Education (Bologna Process)
- Vocational Education and Training (Copenhagen Process)
- Links in the context of qualifications frameworks



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Bologna Process

- Bologna is not a treaty, but a voluntary commitment at political level since 1999 to coordinate HE reforms
European Higher Education Area (EHEA) launched 2010
- QA is one of 10 action lines
- QA is closely linked to Qualifications Framework (QF-EHEA) which specifies the learning outcomes shared by higher education programmes



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EHEA



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Origins

- “Promotion of **European co-operation in quality assurance** with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies” (Bologna declaration *1999*)
- “Ministers call upon ENQA through its members, in co-operation with the EUA, EURASHE and ESIB, to develop an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance, to explore ways of ensuring an adequate peer review system for quality assurance and/or accreditation agencies or bodies” (Berlin communiqué *2003*)
- European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) adopted by ministers at Bergen *2005*



Three layers of standards

- Part 1: Internal quality assurance
- Part 2: External quality assurance
- Part 3: External quality assurance agencies



Internal quality assurance

1. Policy for quality assurance
2. Design and approval of programmes
3. Student –centred learning, teaching and assessment
4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification
5. Teaching staff
6. Learning resources and student support
7. Information management
8. Public information
9. On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes
10. Cyclical external quality assurance



External quality assurance

1. Consideration of internal quality assurance procedures
2. Designing methodologies fit for purpose
3. Implementing processes
4. Peer-review experts
5. Criteria for outcomes
6. Reporting
7. Complaints and appeals



Quality assurance agencies

1. Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance
2. Official status
3. Independence
4. Thematic analysis
5. Resources
6. Internal quality assurance and professional conduct
7. Cyclical external review of agencies



1.1 Policy for quality assurance

- “Institutions should have policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes while involving external stakeholders”



External QA

- Accreditation of programmes *or*
- Accreditation/audit of institutions *or*
- Combination of both



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Status of ESG

- Well established and well received
- Standards and guidelines – not laws!
- Basis for membership of the European Association for QA in HE (ENQA)
- Basis for membership of European QA Register (EQAR)
- Revised in September 2014
- To be presented for ministerial approval in May 2015
- Pace of national implementation varies

eqar

ENQA

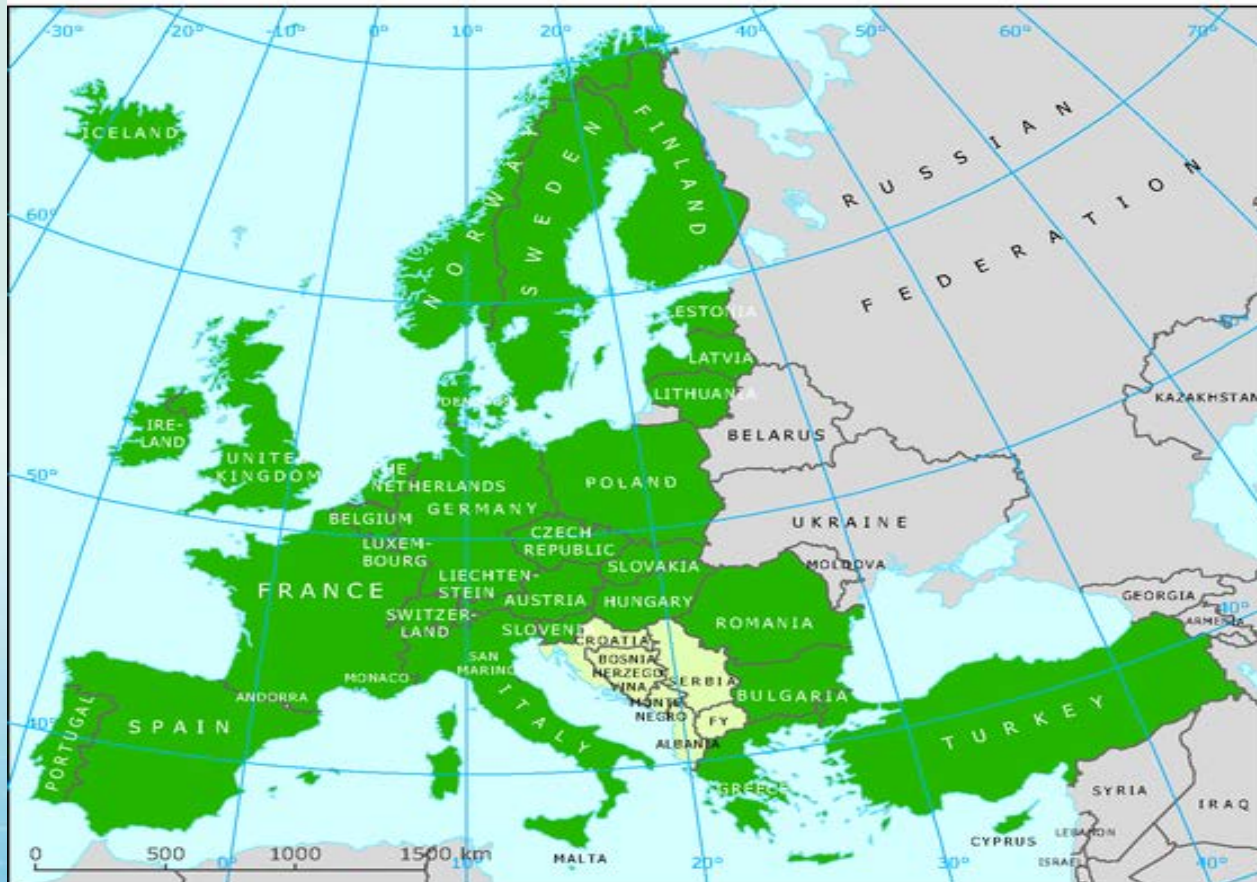


Copenhagen Process

- European Union led process using the Open Method of Coordination since 2002 to improve the quality of VET
- 36 countries
- Falls within the strategic cooperation for European Education and Training (ET2020)



European Economic Area + EU Candidates (+Switzerland)



EEA coverage

- Member countries
- Cooperating countries



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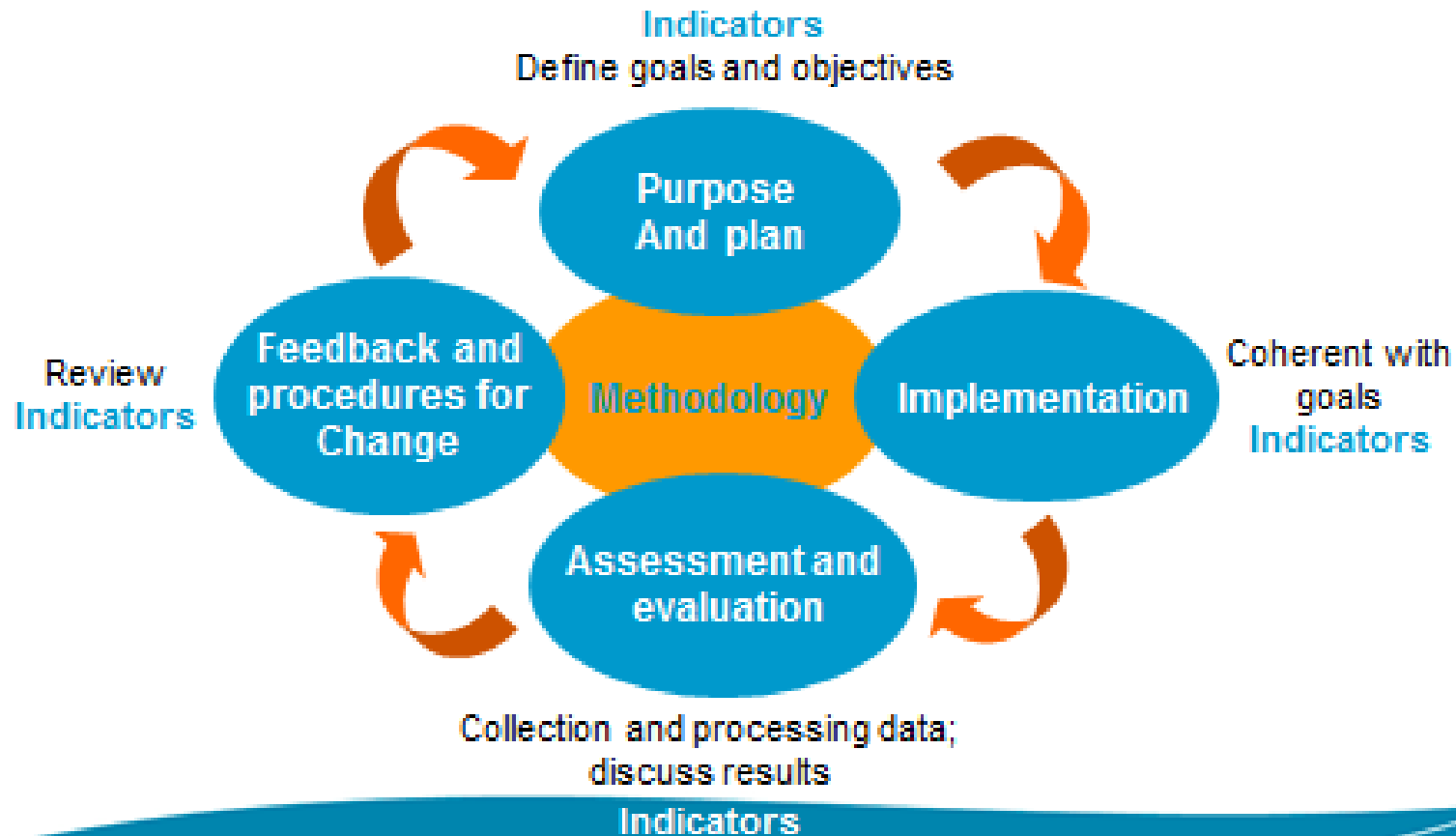
EQAVET

- European Reference Framework for quality assurance in VET (EQAVET) (EU Recommendation, 2009)
- Closely related to the VET element of European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF)
- EQAVET network: representatives of Member States, National Reference Points and Social Partners





The Quality Cycle and Indicators





Annex 1 – Example

- **Planning phase**

- **Quality descriptors at System level**

- Goals/objectives of VET are described for the medium and long terms, and linked to European goals
 - The relevant stakeholders participate in setting VET goals and objectives at the different levels

- **Quality descriptors at providers' level**

- Explicit goals/objectives and targets are set and monitored
 - There is an early involvement of staff in planning, including with regard to quality development



Annex 2 - List of indicators

- No 1 Relevance of quality assurance systems for VET providers
- No 2 Investment in training of teachers and trainers
- No 3 Participation rate in VET programmes
- No 4 Completion rate in VET programmes
- No 5 Placement rate in VET programmes
- No 6 Utilisation of acquired skills at the workplace
- No 7 Unemployment rate
- No 8 Prevalence of vulnerable groups
- No 9 Mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market
- No 10 Schemes used to promote better access to VET



Status of EQAVET

- VET QA systems are much more diverse than those of HE, with different ranges of actors in different countries
- EQAVET (and related instruments, eg European Credit system for VET - ECVET) evaluated in 2014



Other sub-systems of education

- Quality assurance in adult education
 - More diversity, less formal
- Quality assurance in schools
 - Guarded as a national prerogative
 - Sharing of information and practice at European level
- Documented in the national EQF referencing reports



Qualifications Frameworks

- QF-EHEA (Bologna) is compatible with levels 5-8 of EQF-LLL
- Both are based on learning outcomes
- National qualifications frameworks are being developed in all countries
- Tuning project has worked on learning outcomes for disciplines within QF-EHEA

EQF levels**EHEA Framework
(Bologna)****1****2****3****4****5****Short Cycle within First
Cycle****6****First Cycle****7****Second Cycle****8****Third cycle**



Issues arising

- “Providers in the VET and HE sectors and their respective public authorities are urged to make their quality assurance arrangements mutually intelligible, to share good practices across sectors and to learn about each other’s approaches to implementing learning outcomes”
 - Conclusion from Irish EU Presidency Conference on Quality Assurance in Qualifications Frameworks, 2013
- Both VET and HE QA arrangements are fairly new at European level
- Might the review of EQAVET bring it closer to the HE model?
- Are the national systems of VET too diverse to bring about the similarity of structure found in HE?
- How can trust be increased even if diversity of QA systems remains?
- Is there trust between systems at national level?
- Does this have implications for recognition?
- How can systems outside Europe relate to these approaches?
- How do the Chiba principles compare to the European Standards and Guidelines?



Contacts

- Learning Opportunities and Qualifications in Europe <http://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/>
- Bologna Process: European Higher Education Area <http://www.ehea.info/>
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