



EVALUATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE IN A EUROPEAN DIMENSION: FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS FOR THE ACADEMIC WORLD

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BACKGROUND (1)

The **Italian EQAVET National Reference Point (NRP)** was established in 2006. The Italian NRP is located in the Training Systems Structure, in **Inapp**, in Rome.

The Italian NRP promotes a Steering Committee (National Board) which includes delegates from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Ministry of Education and Merit, the Regions and the Autonomous Provinces, the Social Partners, Anpal as well as training experts and representatives of Italian Vocational Education and Training providers.

The Italian NRP **promotes the application of the EU Recommendations and supports the national process for the implementation and development of a National QA system in VET**, through the dissemination of a technical-scientific QA culture and the circulation of practices and tools for the adoption of a continuous improvement process.



BACKGROUND (2)

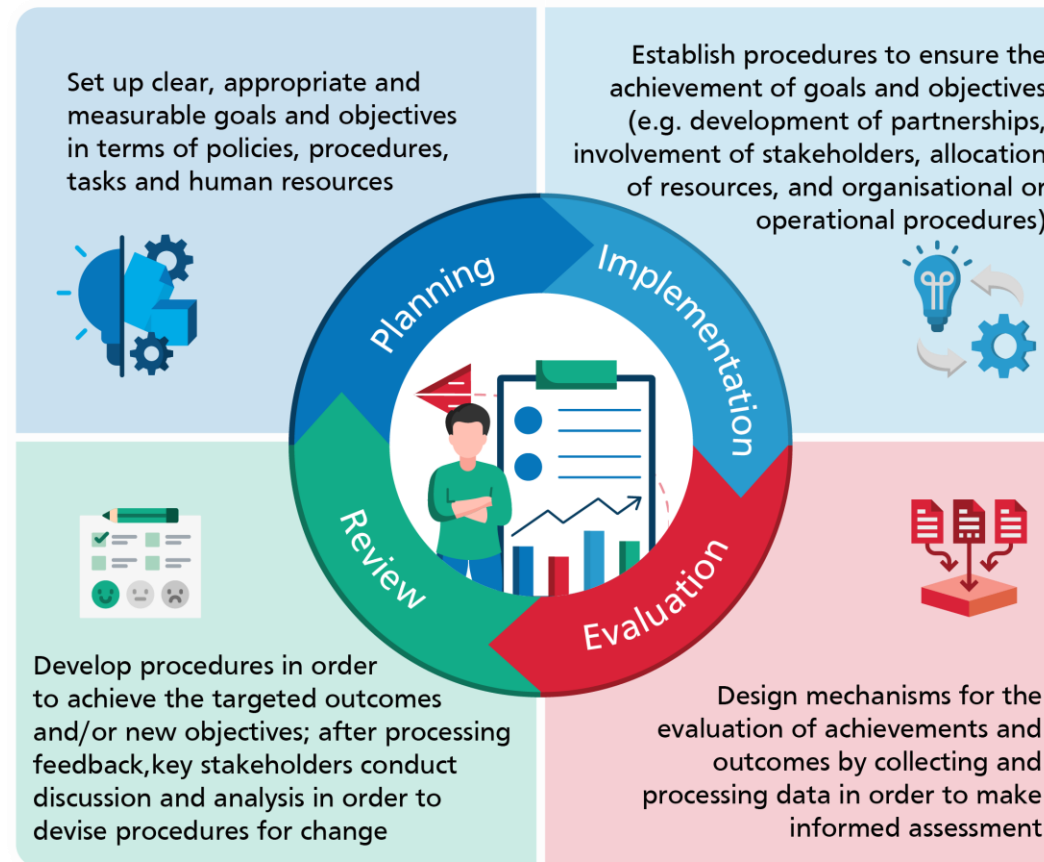
The **European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET)** emerged from the **2009 recommendation of the EU Parliament and Council**, as a European wide framework to support quality assurance in vocational education and training (VET) across Europe.

EQAVET is based on a quality assurance and improvement **cycle (planning, implementation, evaluation/ assessment, and review/revision)** and a selection of descriptors and indicators applicable to quality management at both VET system and provider levels.

EQAVET does not prescribe a particular quality assurance system or approach but provides **a framework of common principles**, indicative descriptors and indicators that may help in assessing and improving the quality of VET systems and provision.



The Quality Assurance Cycle



BACKGROUND (3)

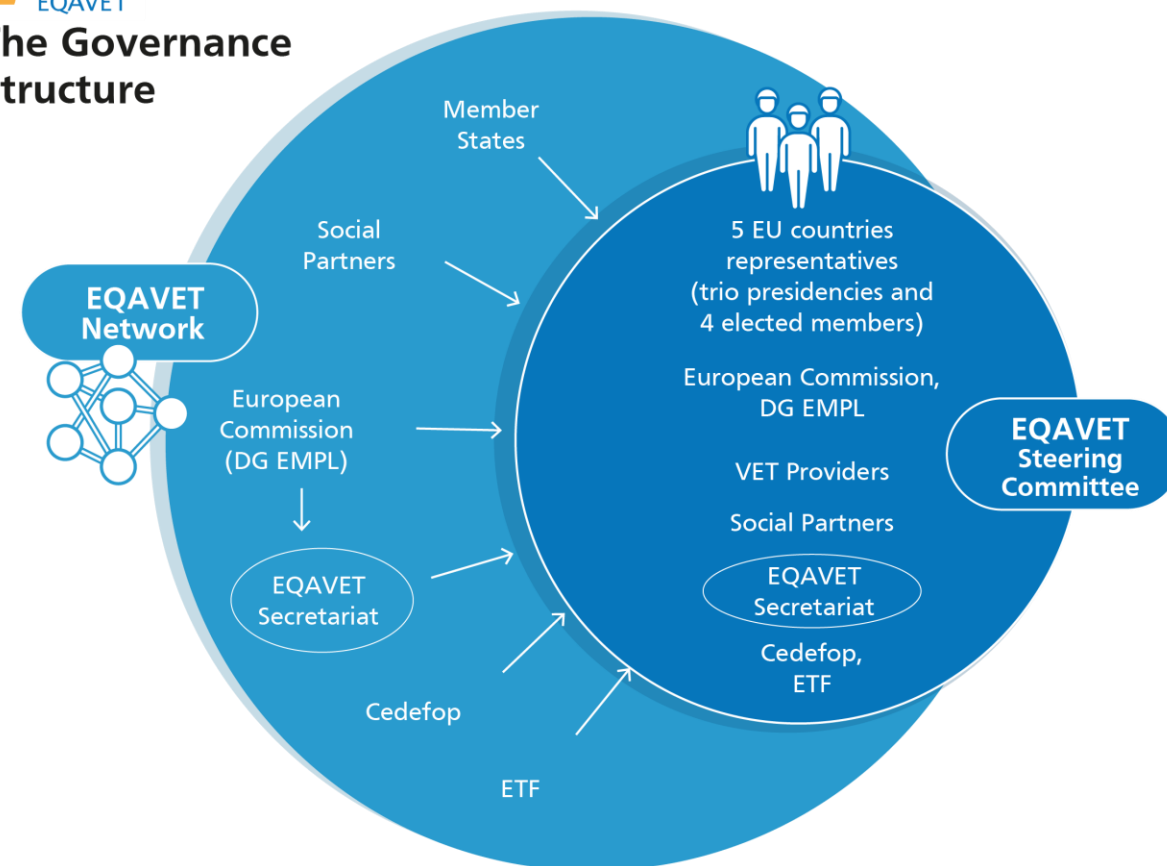
EQAVET supports the implementation of the **2020 recommendation on vocational education and training for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness, and resilience**. The VET Recommendation describes how EQAVET can be used to strengthen the quality of initial and continuing VET and presents the complete EQAVET Framework.

The EQAVET Framework can be used by providers and in systems to support the quality assurance of:

- **all learning environments** (e.g., school-based provision, work-based learning, apprenticeships, formal, informal and non-formal provision);
- **all types of learning contexts** (e.g., digital, face-to-face and blended);
- **all public and private sectors;**
- awards and **qualifications at all levels of EQF.**



The Governance Structure



TIMELINE OF THE ITALIAN EQAVET NRP



2006: the **Italian NRP** was **established** in ISFOL with the aim to support QA in VET

2009: the EU **Recommendation on EQAVET** highlights the role of the NRPs

2020: the EU **Recommendation on VET** reinforces the role of the NRPs

2021: the **Italian NRP** was **newly established** and located in INAPP

2023 end of the **first cycle** of the NRPs activities and start of the second one



NATIONAL EXPERIMENTATIONS



The National Network I phase
2010 experimentation
ESF – NOP Convergence and Competitiveness
of the MLSP in collaboration with the Ministry
of Education, University and Research

The National Network II phase
2012-2013 experimentation
ESF - NOP Convergence and
Competitiveness of the MLPS

2019-2022 Experimentation
National Operational
Programme SPAO with the
contribution of the European
Social Funds (ESF) 2014-2020



EU RECOMMENDATION 2020 – THE KEY ROLE OF PEER REVIEW



A **Quality Assurance National Reference Point** for vocational education and training brings together all relevant stakeholders at national and regional levels to:

- take concrete initiatives to implement and further develop the EQAVET Framework;
- inform and mobilise a wide range of stakeholders, including Centres of Vocational Excellence, to contribute to implementing the EQAVET framework;
- support self-evaluation as a complementary and effective means of quality assurance to allow the measurement of success and the identification of areas for improvement, including with respect to digital readiness of VET systems and institutions;
- participate actively in the European network for quality assurance in vocational education and training;
- provide an updated description of the national quality assurance arrangements based on the EQAVET Framework;
- **engage in EU level Peer Reviews of quality assurance to enhance the transparency and consistency of quality assurance arrangements, and to reinforce trust between the Member States.**



WHAT IS THE EU PEER REVIEW METHODOLOGY?



The **European Peer Review methodology** as set down in the European context of the EQAVET network is **an external procedure for quality assurance** in the Vocational Education and Training systems in various European countries (among which Italy is included).

So, a **Peer Review is an external evaluation carried out by Peers** (in total 4), i.e., colleagues working in similar institutions or environments, who participate in a Peer Review visit at the premises of Peer Review host which is the organization evaluated by the Peers.

For the Peer Review visit, the evaluated organization will prepare **a Self-Assessment Report which is the basis for the Peers evaluation** and the draft of the Final Peer Review Report.



THE FOUR PHASES OF THE EU PEER REVIEW METHODOLOGY



NATIONAL INTEGRATED EXPERIMENTATION



In 2019, **INAPP launched a pilot project related to a National network of schools and vocational training centers**, aimed at **experimenting a new Peer Review model** that involved both sectors education and training with the following objectives:

- ✓ to facilitate the relationship, comparison and integration between the education and vocational training system, among different bodies - indeed - but which deal with similar targets in terms of age and training needs with a view to mutual growth
- ✓ to verify the applicability of the model in a "mixed" context of public-private relationship
- ✓ to raise the quality of the supply of education and vocational training
- ✓ to experiment and disseminate operational tools aimed at encouraging continuous improvement of the quality of the training supply: in particular, self-assessment and external evaluation among Peers



NATIONAL INTEGRATED EXPERIMENTATION



The activities planned for achieving the goals set for the national experimentation were the following:

1. **implementation of a Network** of actors in line with an integrated education and training system;
2. **training of teachers and trainers** on the new Peer evaluation methodology (about 50 among teachers and trainers);
3. **exchange and integration** between education and training structures operating in completely different territorial contexts.



NATIONAL INTEGRATED EXPERIMENTATION



The **precondition** for the national experimentation of the Peer Review that allowed the comparison among two systems: education and training, was the **revision of the evaluation tools** used by the European Peer Review methodology.

To this end, to ensure an effective implementation of the European Peer Review methodology in different learning and teaching contexts and to **avoid duplication and redundancy between the different assessment tools** (e.g., ISO quality certification) already applied.

The assessment tools were revised, integrated and modified with the aim of making them consistent with what has already been achieved by Invalsi (National Institute for the evaluation of the education and training system).



NATIONAL INTEGRATED EXPERIMENTATION



The national experimentation included the revision of the following tools:

- gender mainstreaming – checklist
- **Self-assessment Report**
- **agenda template for the Peers visit**
- Interview Report
- fundamental rules for Peers
- Peer meta-evaluation form
- **Final Peer Review report**
- **sheet with the Quality Areas**

The work of integrating the Quality Areas/Indicators of the Peer Review, with main reference to the European methodology used in VET, with the columns of the Self-Assessment Report of the National Evaluation System, was aimed to maintain the structure of the latter in order to facilitate the adoption and dissemination in the education environment.



METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE EXPERIMENTATION



	Tools of the National Evaluation System	Tools of the European Peer Review methodology	Note
1	RAV - Self-Assessment Report	Self-Assessment Report	The two documents have similar purposes and structures that can be integrated.
2	Column	Quality Area	See above
3	External Evaluation Report	Peers Evaluation Report (Final Report)	
4	Visit Plan	Peers visit agenda	Tools that are already extremely coherent in terms of structure and purpose
5	Guidelines of the evaluator	Rules of work for Peers	
6	School questionnaire + Grid for reading the Context and Process data - before the visit + the Grid for reading the results - before the visit	Initial Disclosure + Background Data Processes disaggregated by gender (Initial Information Sheet + Gender Mainstreaming)	The School Questionnaire already includes all the elements present in the Evaluation methodology



METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE EXPERIMENTATION



	Tools of the National Evaluation System	Tools of the European Peer Review methodology	Note
7	Satisfaction questionnaires (teachers, parents, students, ATA staff)		
8	Sheet for observation in the classroom		
9	Grid for conducting the visit	Interview report + evaluation guidelines + Meta-evaluation	
10	Form for identifying improvement objectives	Peer Review Improvement Workshop (Seminar for the definition of the improvement plan)	
11		Peers' application form	
12		Peers Agreement Model	During the National experimentation, it was not considered appropriate to provide for the introduction of a contract at this stage



METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE EXPERIMENTATION



VET schools and centers were identified based on the following criteria:

- **an almost equal number among schools and vocational training centers**, identified respectively in **6 schools and 8 centers**;
- **a balanced mix of VET schools and centers** between those who have **already had experience of Peer Review** and those who are **new to it**;
- **a geographical distribution** such as to ensure the involvement of schools and centers operating **in the** northern, central and southern areas. **To this end, the following Regions were identified: Puglia, Lazio and Veneto.**

The National experimentation began in September 2019, but at the beginning of 2020 the Covid-19 emergency brought about a halt in activities.

In September 2021, upon the reopening of the school year 2021-2022, the schools and VET centers that had in the meantime withdrawn were replaced.



THE EXPERIMENTATION DATA



With the start of the National experimentation, a first training session for Peers was held on 16 and 17 December 2019, followed by 2 hours online in January 2020 (reproduced in 3 editions to facilitate participation). The second training session of the Peers took place on 4 March 2020 with a second part which, due to the closure of the schools during the lockdown, was carried out online in 2 training sessions.

The training of each Peer lasted an average of 12 hours, with a specific dedicated agenda.

At the end of all the training sessions, 69 teachers/trainers from 22 different institutions including schools and vocational training centers were involved.

The visits of the Peers of the national experimentation began in April 2021 and ended in March 2022. **A total of 14 Peer Visits took place according to a specific calendar.**

As required by the procedure, **the Peer visits took place with a daily schedule of 2.5 days.** Due to the difficulties linked to the health emergency, a Peer' visit was held entirely online as it was carried out at a time when the spread of the virus was particularly worrying.



THE EVALUATION OF PEERS



For the evaluation by the Peers, a tool was developed consisting of **a questionnaire submitted to all the Peers**. The action made it possible to identify suggestions and areas for improvement essentially relate to the following points:

- ❑ **the performance of the Quality Areas/Indicators**, the reading of which should be simplified;
- ❑ **the lack of some pre-requisites of knowledge relating to the areas of intervention** (education and training) despite the fact that the relationship between the Peers and the host was fluid and profitable;
- ❑ **the incentives for the digitization of the documents**, providing for integrated documents (to avoid transcribing the same information several times);
- ❑ **the lack, in the online mode, of some aspects of empathy** that arises from face-to-face contact and the ability to check the training environments.

However, the provision of an online Peer Review has allowed for an optimization of time and the possibility of reaching all actors in different places, making it possible to carry out the visit in all its phases.



THE EXPERIMENTATION RESULTS



The experimentation has fully highlighted the opportunities and strengths of the Peer Review methodology, which each of the Peers has directly acted and personally confirmed: **friendly approach, low costs, immediate feedback of meaningful and usable data, sharing of points of view and broadening of the horizons of the organization.**

A theme placed at the center of reflection in the conception and implementation of the project was **the possible cultural and linguistic gap between the world of education and training**, which could have forced the Peers group to a preliminary negotiation of meanings or to a tiring 'simultaneous translation'. By carrying out the activities it was possible to ascertain that this generally did not occur.

The central moment of the methodology, that of the visit on which expectations, hopes and fears are concentrated, was actually the most agile and fruitful moment. **Facilitated by the preliminary online meetings**, the visits took place within the foreseen times and methods and with the interested participation of teachers, stakeholders and students interviewed.



CONCLUSIONS



The Peer Reviews succeed in **bringing around the table people who act in different regulatory and institutional contexts** but who speak the same language and who move within the same horizon of understanding. This allows a **real evaluation, not only between institutions** (as always happens in Peer Reviews) **but also of systems** that enrich each other, in a logic of **contamination between public and private**, between training and education.

In the Plan - Do - Check - Act logic that characterized the experimentation, the next step is aimed to a possible **revision of the “Peer Review methodology at training providers’ level”**, in light of the completed action.

The working hypothesis goes in the direction of developing a new experimentation about **“An Integrated Peer Review between I-VET and H-VET (involving also Higher Education Institutions)”** that takes up the scheme of the European Peer Review (to allow for possible comparisons), but which has its own conceptual autonomy.





THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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