

# EQAVET Peer Review in Budapest 2023

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## Analysis - Hungary

January 2025

## Objectives of the Peer Review

The fourteenth EQAVET Peer Review of the first Peer Review Cycle took place in Budapest (Hungary), on 28, 29 and 30 March 2023. The **event aimed to review the national quality management system (QMS) for formal VET institutions**, which is based on self-evaluation and reflects in full the EQAVET framework. Six experts from five EQAVET Network member countries (Finland, Greece, Latvia, Malta, Portugal) acted as peers in this Peer Review hosted by NOVETAL, the National Office of VET and Adult Learning.

At the time of the Peer Review, Hungary had recently introduced the requirements for the QMS and rules for the introduction of the QMS in VET institutions, through the “VET 4.0 Medium-term strategy for the renewal of VET and adult learning” and the 2019 “Act on VET and the associated Implementing Regulation 2020”. The **peers discussed the different components of the QMS and provided initial feedback**. The host invited the peers to reflect on four questions related to culture of quality improvement, data collection and use, transparency, and improvements.

Overall, the peers identified a number of **strengths of the new Hungarian QMS**, which included having set a solid foundation for ensuring quality VET provision while leaving flexibility for providers to adapt. Moreover, the peers found the QMS’ evaluation criteria to be well-developed, and that its implementation steps provided a strong support system for stakeholders. Peers also **suggested areas for further reflection which could enhance the QMS**, such as giving VET institutions more decision-making powers over their development resources, integrating procedures for updating evaluation criteria, and emphasising anticipation processes for future labour market needs. Peers also recommended enhancing stronger stakeholder involvement, particularly of VET students, and addressing inclusiveness more explicitly in the QMS components.

## Follow-up after the Peer Review

Immediately following the Peer Review, the Hungarian team in charge of organising the event agreed on **four overarching objectives**. These objectives included further expanding the support to the QMS; developing an external evaluation system framework; seeking for professional support to develop the national career tracking system; and supporting more active involvement of partners. The objectives and the planned actions were described/structured according to the Action Plan template recommended in the EQAVET Peer Review Manual, by the experts of the National EQAVET Expert Network, and in consultation with the parties involved in the implementation of the activities.

The four aforementioned objectives included the following activities and expected impact.

### 1. Further expansion of the system of professional support provided to the operation of the quality management system in formal vocational education and training institutions:

- Continue professional or in-service training for VET teachers and trainers to promote the systematic incorporation of quality management tasks in the teaching-training activities.
- Establish professional workshops to support VET institutions in the development of a set of goals and the methodology of goal/objective/target setting.
- Further develop the data content of the self-evaluation work template to include the relevant processes as well as indicators (with values), and partner surveys/measurements (with relevant questions and the related results) necessary to describe and evaluate the institutional

operational practices related to each self-evaluation criterion.

- Develop a methodological aid material in form of guidance to support institutional quality improvement based on self-evaluation, including a methodological recommendation for prioritising the areas for improvement identified in the self-evaluation process.

The activities under this first step were expected to **develop the knowledge on quality assurance (QA) and quality methodology needed for establishing a well-functioning institutional QMS**. With these steps, the Hungarian host expected to

- organically integrate the quality-oriented attitude into the organisational culture of the institutions.
- increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the institutions' quality assurance activities.
- promote a common understanding and application of the concepts used in the quality management system.

## **2. Developing the framework for an external evaluation system, with procedures, a set methodology, an expert database and necessary IT support:**

- Develop an IT system to process and analyse the evaluation results of VET institutions and to produce statistical reports at different levels of the VET system for relevant stakeholders and actors to support the decision-making and priority setting.
- Include, in the external evaluation procedure, the updated evaluation criteria and the use of lessons learned from the review of evaluation processes after the completion of each external evaluation cycle.
- Develop the concept of a criteria-based approach for certifications or qualifications, registration, selection, calibration, up- and re-skilling of external evaluators.
- Define in the feedback system for external evaluation of the content. This can be done through a legally required public summary report (available to a wider group of stakeholders) and the feedback accessible only to the evaluated institution. Encourage VET institutions to cooperate and share knowledge, with the successful institutions playing a leading role based on their quality results from external evaluations.

The second step by the Hungarian host aimed at **having a coherent approach to data collection** that would facilitate the analysis of data, as well as the comparison and sharing of results and their use by different stakeholders at different levels for decision making and priority setting. Such a coherent approach was expected to facilitate the review and continuous improvement of the QMS. In this way, the QMS would stay flexible, as noted by the peers, for adapting it to any potential challenges, needs and demands of the changing environment. Furthermore, this would also allow for fostering transparency in the external evaluation system, enhancing stakeholder confidence in the QMS.

## **3. Professional support for the development of the national VET career tracking system:**

- Provide technical support for the development and implementation of a central system for the systematic monitoring or tracking of graduates or participants in training, for the identification of new or emerging labour market needs, as well as for the review and development of the national VET policy and strategy.
- Use the system level data and the results of the surveys to make a proposal to reduce early school leaving.

By offering professional support for the development of the VET career tracking system, the Hungarian NRP had different expectations in mind. On the one hand, a tracking system would help **identify new or emerging labour market needs and ensure that training activities match these needs**. On the other hand, and linked to Step 1, the usage of a methodological guide would support the use of ordinal data not only for standard reporting but also for **exploring evidence-based policy making**. Within this step, the host also noted that an analytical study (under preparation at the time of writing), based on the results of the Labour Market Forecasting System and the VET career tracking system, is to be carried out for strengthening the further development and maintenance of a quality assurance culture in VET.

#### 4. Supporting the more active involvement of partners in the implementation of the quality management system:

- Train work-based (company) trainers to coordinate the quality management system of VET institutions and dual training providers. (This activity has started in January 2025.)

With this training-related objective, the Hungarian host expects that **the quality management systems of the VET institutions and their dual training providers will be better coordinated**. This is expected to lead to an improvement in the quality of the jointly provided vocational education and training and thus to further strengthening the quality assurance of the whole VET system.

## Impact and results

The follow up of the post-Peer Review steps was led by the Hungarian EQAVET NRP, however, more actors were involved. These included the National Office of Vocational Education and Training and Adult Learning (NSZFH), the Innovative Training Support Centre Nonprofit Plc. (IKK Nonprofit Zrt.) and the Hungarian Ministry for Culture and Innovation (KIM).

### 1. Expanding the support to the QMS

This objective was implemented by IKK Nonprofit Zrt. through its staff and quality management experts. During implementation, form and procedures for reporting on an activity will be developed, as well as IT tools to support monitoring. For this purpose, the Hungarian NRP provided expert support to meet the requirements of the EQAVET Framework

In the period ranging from September to December 2023, the quality management experts of the IKK Nonprofit Zrt. **carried out the professional review of the quality management system descriptions of 106 VET institutions**. Altogether, a total of 217 QMS descriptions were reviewed by the experts in the past period (until March 2024), which represents 40% of all Hungarian VET institutions.

Moreover, the IKK Zrt. experts held **99 thematic workshops** in the period ranging from September 2023 to February 2024. The workshops were attended by teachers and trainers, heads and deputy heads and centre managers involved in the organisation, management, implementation and monitoring of quality management activities in VET institutions. The workshops focused on institutional self-evaluation, indicators, measurement of partner needs and satisfaction, general methodology for quality improvement and setting objectives. In line with the objective, the expert group produced a number of professional aid and methodological guidance materials and templates. The templates include a new self-evaluation work template, which contains improved data content

(indicators, processes, partner measurements) to ensure the fact-based description of the institutional operational practices. (This was one of the recommendations made by the peer reviewers.)

In the period ranging from March to June 2024, IKK Zrt. experts **continued to provide professional support through face-to-face or online consultations**. During these consultations, the representatives of the VET institutions could get answers to questions that arose during the in-practice implementation of both the first comprehensive EQAVET criteria-based institutional self-evaluation and the self-evaluation of the head of the institution. The expert consultations reached almost 50% of the VET institutions.

Through this professional support, the **Hungarian NRP noted to have achieved this objective** as it follows:

- By reviewing and providing professional feedback on the quality management system descriptions and through the thematic workshops and consultations, the host NRP and involved stakeholders have facilitated the systematic integration and appearance of the quality management tasks in the education-teaching-training activities of the VET teachers and trainers.
- Through workshops and expert consultations on how to define goals, the stakeholders have supported the development of a set of institutional goals with an adequate methodology in vocational education and training institutions.

## **2. Developing an external evaluation system framework**

The external evaluation system development has been done by IKK Nonprofit Zrt. and NSZFH. These two organisations are consortium partners in the flagship project "Quality improvement in VET and the expansion of the range of continuing training", through which this second objective is being implemented. Within this objective, these actors are in charge of establishing a timetable for project implementation, defining milestones and checkpoints. The Hungarian host noted that **the framework for the external evaluation system has been developed** in line with the timetable of the flagship project until 31 December 2024. The External Evaluation Guidebook, which contains the evaluation criteria, the description of the procedure and the methodology of external evaluation, the measuring tools and work templates, was developed and is currently in the process of finalisation.

## **3. Seeking for professional support to develop the national career tracking system**

For this objective, the Hungarian NRP and NSZFH are conducting analyses and career development studies among students in VET and adult training. This is done via online surveys, as well as through the study of the destination or career path chosen by students graduating in the academic years 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 by linking different administrative databases.

The staff of NSZFH has been working along the objectives and planned actions to provide technical support for the development of the national VET career tracking system. As part of the Questionnaire Module, a **career tracking survey of VET students** was carried out in the academic year 2023/2024. The survey was coordinated by the Analysis and VET Career Tracking Unit of the NSZFH, and aimed to find out what students think about vocational education and training, what motivation they have, and what are their ideas about employment or further studies. The questionnaire was sent to all the students concerned via the electronic data registration system (KRÉTA) between 15 April and 3 May. Close to 37800 students completed the questionnaire.

In addition, 41 VET centres were sent a **summary report containing the responses of students from their institutions**, which can be supplemented with institution-level results if the number of answered questionnaire items is sufficiently high. After a brief introduction and methodological description, the main results of the questionnaire-based survey and some indicators of data integration were highlighted in the executive summary of the reports, with a national and a VET centre-specific summary.

#### 4. Supporting more active involvement of partners

Starting in 2025, this activity involved all the aforementioned stakeholders, in addition to private companies and dual training providers. All the actors will play a role in developing, organising and conducting workshops on self-evaluation with joint participation and collaboration of teachers and trainers of VET institutions and trainers participating in work-based learning. The Hungarian host understands that, in order to support the achievement of objective 1 (further expanding the support to the QMS), it was needed to extend the expectations regarding VET institutions' teachers and trainers. **This will be followed up in 2025 by the involvement of trainers from the companies - dual training providers.**

#### Improving the Peer Review methodology

Overall, the Hungarian host explained that their **expectations were met and that the EQAVET Secretariat was helpful** through the whole Peer Review process. More specifically, the host also raised several success factors, challenges encountered and potential recommendations, noted below.

##### Success factors:

- Regarding the expansion of the system of professional support, **progress has been facilitated by the alignment of objectives, cooperation among stakeholders and enhanced communication**:
  - The host ensured that the strategic objective of the VET policy regarding the Hungarian VET sector to carry out their activities is **aligned** to an EQAVET-based quality management system. By law, the IKK Zrt. is responsible for providing the methodological professional support to the development and implementation of the quality management system and for the external evaluation of the institutions.
  - A further success factor is **the close cooperation** between the National EQAVET Expert Network and the expert team of IKK Zrt. **Continuous communication** with the target group on the tasks and related actions, benefits, beneficial effects (website, online information sessions, dissemination events) and feedback collection (satisfaction surveys). Almost 80% of the vocational education and training institutions are organised in VET centres, which makes it **easier to reach them**, assess their needs and ensure the effectiveness of the forms of support.
- Regarding the professional support for the development of the national VET career tracking system, progress and success was ensured by the **close cooperation** of NSZFH's Working Group on Analysis and VET Career Tracking. It has also been helped by **policy support and an appropriate legislative environment**, which has enabled the development and operation of the national VET career tracking system.

### Challenges:

- In Hungary, the host noted that, in contrast to VET institutions organised under VET centres, VET institutions belonging to and managed by other owners are **more difficult to reach** and have **more limited resources** for quality management and quality improvement.
- Conscious and systematic quality improvement is **not yet part of the organisational culture** of most VET institutions (the hosts notes that it takes time) and is therefore considered as an added burden. As a result, the intensity of support for career guidance and counselling activities varies considerably. The gradual incorporation of career tracking results and the process of institutional culture change could change this.
- Regarding further professional support for the development of a national VET career tracking system, the identified challenge was that the NRP can only reach students through the KRÉTA electronic data administration registration and record keeping system operated by EDUDEV Zrt. (external partner). Therefore, the host has **no other way to communicate directly with students**, which limits the collected data.

### Recommendations:

- Ensure that peers devote adequate time to studying the SAR before the event. This will help them to avoid asking questions that are already answered in the document and allow for more productive discussions during the meeting.
- Schedule events to minimise conflicts and ensure full participation of peers. This will help avoid situations where peers have to leave early or are inactive during the process. The Hungarian host was considering the capacity of peers to stay on the last day of the event, as some of the peers had to leave before the end of the day and could not provide further feedback.
- Encourage peers to provide recommendations that are within the NRP's scope of action. In this way, the host will ensure that the recommendations are actionable and relevant to the host country's responsibilities, instead of giving broader policy recommendations.
- Allow host countries to specify requirements for peers' expertise during the peer nomination. This will aim at ensuring that the peers have the necessary knowledge and experience to provide relevant feedback.
- Ensure that the expert moderating the review has knowledge on the topic, so that discussions can be facilitated properly, and the review process takes place smoothly.