



EQAVET online peer review - VET graduate tracking in Hungary

26 and 27 March 2025

Feedback report

25 April 2025

EQAVET peer review on graduate tracking in Hungary

Introduction to the peer review

The online peer review took place on 26 and 27 March 2025. It was hosted by the National Office for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Learning (NOVETAL) which manages the work of the EQAVET National Reference Point in Hungary. EQAVET Network members from Austria, the Czech Republic, Finland, the Netherlands and Slovakia acted as peer reviewers.

The peer review focused on Hungary's graduate tracking system for initial VET. In particular the focus was on the connections between graduate tracking, improving the quality of VET provision and helping learners to make informed decisions about further education and training to enable them to move from school to the labour market.

Introduction to the graduate tracking system

The national graduate tracking system was established by NOVETAL in 2021. The plan is to track graduates for nine years through a combination of administrative data and data from learner/graduate surveys:

- the administrative part of the graduate tracking system connects anonymised individual records from many national organisations, and tracks learners over nine years. This administrative data is integrated every six months. The first dataset was created in early 2022 based on data from eight organisations. The data provides information on learners, their training, educational success, transition to higher education and the labour market, and the situation of job seekers;
- the survey part of the graduate tracking system collects information on learners' expectations, plans, and career goals. The survey has three sub-sections which are designed for: new entrants to VET programmes (typically learners aged 14/15), learners who are mid-way through their programme (aged 16) and final-year learners who are aged 18/19. Adult learners on VET programmes could be any age. The survey is issued each spring, via a questionnaire on the national online central information system for VET (KRÉTA). In spring 2024, the system received 37,000 valid responses (approximately 19% of learners). The learners' response rates to the survey varied significantly between the VET centres, ranging from 5% to 63%. For the graduate surveys, each learner has to give prior permission to be contacted and provide an up-to-date email address. It is proving difficult to encourage learners to agree to participate in a national graduate survey.

Information from the administrative and survey parts of the graduate tracking system is used to prepare an annual national report and reports for each of the VET centres. In these reports the administrative and survey data is separated, as the two samples are different and GDPR regulations prevent these two sources of data from being connected (the survey is anonymous). Each of the 40+ VET centres, and the individual VET schools which are part of each VET centre, use these reports to inform their self-assessment process which is part of their quality management system. The national report is used to inform policy developments.

In addition to the national graduate tracking system, individual VET centres (and VET schools) collect data from their learners and graduates. This peer review focused on the national

approach to graduate tracking, and only commented on the provider-level approach when it could have an impact on the national system.

Observations on the VET graduate tracking system

The national graduate tracking system provides a sophisticated and comprehensive approach to collecting and using data from graduates and learners. The combination of administrative and survey data provides many opportunities to enhance local data collection activities, monitor and review the effectiveness of VET provision, and provides the basis for the long-term tracking of VET graduates. The peer reviewers noted that the availability of administrative data, brought together from many existing data-bases, offers a significant amount of information on VET provision. This administrative data covers the whole student/graduate population rather than the sample of respondents choosing to engage with the online surveys organised through KRÉTA.

The peer reviewers' discussions, in addition to addressing the specific questions set by the hosts, considered the following issues:

- what approaches can be used to quality assure graduate tracking data, both in the administrative and survey parts of the system. As the provider and system-level analysis is dependent on accurate, valid and reliable data, it is important that the authorities are confident about the quality of the data;
- what flexibility do VET providers have when they use data to improve the quality of their provision. In this context, the peer reviewers reflected on the extent to which VET providers rely on the national approach as opposed to the initiatives undertaken by individual VET centres/schools. It is important to find the best balance between the value of the data produced by the local and the national systems;
- how can individual VET centres and schools be supported and encouraged to promote further the learners' completion of the national surveys. The peer reviewers wondered whether more targeted support for a sample of VET providers would help to promote the importance of the national survey and identify activities which increase the learners' response rates;
- the peer reviewers noted the different ways in which employers and representatives of the labour market engage with the graduate tracking and forecasting systems e.g. the annual national forecasting survey of 6,000 employers, the work of local Chambers of Commerce, and VET providers' surveys which ask employers to identify their levels of satisfaction. The peer reviewers reflected on the extent to which these approaches focused on the needs of large employers rather than the whole of the labour market;
- the importance of ensuring that the data from the national graduate tracking system is presented in a user-friendly way to assist VET centres and schools to make full use of the information e.g. with graphs and tables which show the responses from individual centres and schools compared to the national and/or regional averages;
- the centralised graduate tracking system's sophistication has the potential to supply individual VET providers with most of the information they need. However, the local

approach can significantly enhance the providers' analysis of their provision and support their approach to quality assurance. Supporting VET providers' engagement with the national graduate tracking surveys would encourage a 'bottom-up' approach and greater ownership of the initiative by individual VET centres/schools and teachers/trainers. This greater involvement from individual schools could be encouraged by selecting a sample of VET centres/schools where specific initiatives could be tested and evaluated to identify how best to motivate staff to become more involved.

Questions considered by the peer reviewers

As part of their review of the VET graduate tracking system, the peer reviewers were asked to consider the following three questions:

1. What are the problems associated with individual tracking of students' career path and what are the possible solutions?
2. How can an effective graduate tracking system be built up (administrative or/and survey)?
3. How can we use graduate tracking as a focus of policy making?

Question 1 - What are the problems associated with individual tracking of students' career path and what are the possible solutions?

The most significant challenge arises from maintaining contact with graduates and persuading learners and graduates to complete surveys. Once VET graduates have left their VET institution, they can become unreachable and particularly difficult for VET centres to keep-in-touch. Alumni associations, and local employer associations may be helpful in collecting more up-to-date contact data as well as offering support to new employees. With significant differences in VET centre completion rates, it appears that there is further scope for encouraging greater participation. However, this is dependent on the support which is offered to individual VET centres and their belief that the national survey will enable them and their students to benefit from the information produced at the national level. If there is any sense that the national survey duplicates questions already asked by the VET centres or the information that is available through administrative data, then it will be a significant challenge to increase participants' motivation. In this context, it may be useful to seek more information from VET centres on why their students and graduates have been reluctant to respond to the national survey. It may be worth reflecting on whether, and how, the individual VET centre survey and the national surveys could be combined - this would help to reduce 'survey fatigue'. One approach could be the creation of a modular questionnaire with the national survey presented as a set of core questions which are supplemented by more bespoke questions from each VET centre.

Tracking learners and graduates over nine years is ambitious. While it is possible to use administrative data for this purpose, the connections between the quality of the VET programme and graduate outcomes diminish over such a long period of time.

The design of the surveys needs to emphasise how completion of the questions benefits learners, graduates and VET centres. There is a risk that those completing the questionnaire

feel their response is unimportant and their views will not lead to change, or support future students. It is worth reflecting on whether changes to the questionnaire, including the merger of the national and local approaches, can more explicitly show how the completion of the surveys benefit both the quality of the local and the national VET system. It is also worth considering whether examples or case studies can be produced to demonstrate changes that have been made to VET provision as a consequence of learners completing the local or national surveys.

The graduate tracking system appears to be sufficiently robust when it collects and uses data from learners in the VET system. The challenges appear to relate to the graduate surveys. In this context, it may be worth reflecting on whether it is possible to:

- develop, in line with GDPR and national regulations, a comprehensive graduate contact data-base;
- strengthen the work with alumni and student organisations;
- increase the number of communication channels which are used to remind graduates of the benefits of completing the surveys. It is also worth ensuring that these benefits are illustrated by examples of how responding to the survey leads to positive changes;
- reviewing the incentives which are used for VET graduates to complete surveys - these incentives are likely to differ from those used for VET learners;
- work with employers' organisations to encourage their support for the completion of the graduate surveys;
- strengthen the support offered to VET centres in order for them to promote further the graduate surveys. (e.g. through methodological support (training, webinars), targeted data analysis and recommendations based on survey results, materials to support the promotion of surveys a help-line for VET centres etc.)

The speed of change within the labour market is significant, and many employers need to respond rapidly to emerging national and international trends and developments. In this environment, many employers need the VET centres to adapt their VET provision. However, this can be difficult as VET organisations are rarely able to respond at the pace that is needed by the labour market. Collecting information on employers' perceptions on the learners' skills and competences acquired during their training, and the extent to which they match the need of employers, is one way for VET centres to get more timely information.

Question 2 - How can an effective graduate tracking system be built up (administrative or/and survey)?

There are effectively three parts to the graduate tracking system:

- the administrative data;
- the national survey;
- surveys from the VET centres and schools.

Each part of the system seeks to meet a different set of objectives, and to a large extent they are independent of each other. The three parts only come together when individual VET centres (and schools) use the information and data to improve the quality of their provision.

The peer reviewers felt that the first part of the system, the use of administrative data, was successfully combining data from many different sources. This data can be updated regularly and could be shared with potential users through an interactive platform. This data is the most likely source of information about the social backgrounds of VET learners. As such for those quality assurance indicators which take account of learners' socio-economic background, they are particularly important for providing information to VET centres on learners' achievement. However, the second part of the system needed to increase participation in order for the results of the survey to inform policy making at the national and local level. The peer reviewers recognised that the national survey had the potential to complement the other parts of the system by generating information on students' perceptions of their programmes, the skills and competences they have developed and the relevance of these skills and competences to the labour market. The third part of the system, VET centre surveys, is most often used for supporting institutions' quality assurance procedures. This is particularly the situation in Hungary because of the mandatory nature of the self-assessment and quality assurance processes which align with the EQAVET framework.

Strengthening the second and third parts of the graduate tracking system could be achieved by:

- establishing agreed quality standards for data collection with guidance to VET centres on the ways in which they might analyse the data;
- reflecting on the value of producing comparable data on the achievement of individual VET centre/schools and regions;
- creating more personalised survey links based on students' educational IDs (with strict anonymity) to enable data-collection organisations to know who has (and has not) responded to the surveys;
- reflecting on whether data from administrative sources can be used to 'pre-fill' the surveys to both reduce the time to complete the survey and to make learners more aware that their response is important
- reflecting on whether survey data beyond five years after graduation is particularly valuable in analysing the quality and relevance of individual learners' VET programmes;
- considering the frequency and format of the reports which are produced from survey data. A range of timely, easy-to-read, visually-attractive, and stakeholder-relevant reports and summaries are needed to enhance the value of the graduate tracking process. In addition, reports and dashboards for each VET centre (and VET school) needs to include sufficient detail to meet the needs of individual institutions. There can be a risk of producing generalised reports which lack specificity and are not designed to meet the needs of institutions that use the data to develop their quality assurance strategies. Existing software tools such as Power Bi and QlikSense can be helpful in presenting user-friendly data to support VET Centres;
- creating a development process with many opportunities for data users to comment and improve the implementation of the surveys. This should include the involvement of alumni associations, local employer organisations and VET centres;
- considering, as mentioned earlier, whether the second and third parts of the graduate tracking system can be amalgamated.

Question 3 - How can we use graduate tracking as a focus of policy-making?

The analysis of graduate tracking data can contribute to policy development at the national, regional and local levels. Graduate tracking provides one of many sources of information, and its real value depends on its comprehensiveness, the extent to which it accurately reflects objective and subjective indicators of quality, and whether it is produced in an easy-to-use and timely manner. Typically, yearly and three or five yearly trend data from graduate tracking systems are being used to inform:

- curriculum and skills development, including decisions on which programmes to expand and contract;
- the quality assurance of VET provision; the allocation and re-allocation of resources to enable the expansion of programmes which are needed, or likely to be needed, by the labour market;
- careers advice for parents and potential learners;
- the achievement of social goals such as inclusion, equal opportunities, reducing social inequalities, supporting disadvantaged groups of learners etc.;
- the forecasting of emerging trends in the labour market;
- changes to teaching and learning in order to better respond to learners' needs e.g. the provision of weekend, evening, on-line and blended learning;
- a greater emphasis on individualised learning, the development of micro-credentials, changes to the amount of time learners devote to work-based learning etc.;
- policies which encourage and enhance employers' involvement in the provision of VET;
- the accountability of VET providers;
- the analysis and identification of existing VET policies which have been particularly successful.

It is also possible to use data from graduate tracking systems to monitor and review policies relating to preventing VET students dropping-out of their programmes and policies which relate to the promotion of mobile learners. The effective use of graduate tracking data for these purposes may require changes to the national system and an explicit acknowledgement of these policy objectives. Graduate tracking systems work best when there are agreed purposes and aims which are transparent and agreed before data is collected.

Conclusions and next steps

The peer reviewers identified a **number of strengths** associated with the VET graduate tracking system. These included:

1. the approach is comprehensive and sophisticated. It combines local information with national data from surveys and administrative systems;
2. the system is ambitious as it seeks to gain a detailed understanding of learners' and graduates' preferences;

3. there is a clear distinction between the roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders and users of the graduate tracking system;
4. there are explicit and welcome connections between the VET quality assurance system and the graduate tracking system;
5. the cost-effective use of a national app to contact learners to invite them to participate in the national survey;
6. the design and use of the administrative part of the graduate tracking system;
7. the graduate tracking system is transparent and information is published to support further improvements at the provider and system level.

The peer reviewers suggested there were some **areas where further reflection** could enhance the development and use of the VET graduate tracking system:

- how best to support VET centres to strengthen learners' participation in the national surveys;
- how can the authorities best assure themselves of the quality of the data which is provided through the administrative and survey parts of the national system;
- whether it is possible to strengthen the employers' views on the quality of VET provision through greater involvement in the collection of data in the national survey and in the analysis of the survey and administrative data;
- continuing to assess, in the light of planned changes to the GDPR regulations at a European level, whether it is possible to combine administrative and anonymised survey data in order to create one harmonised national data-base;
- how best to support the development of a 'bottom-up' approach to the surveys in order than individual VET institutions and teaching teams take on more responsibility for learners' and graduates' completion of the surveys;
- how can mobile learners' and graduates' information be included in the graduate tracking system;
- how best to provide VET centres with information as soon as it is available;
- consider whether to commission an independent evaluation of the whole system after five years of data has been produced.

The peer reviewers and the EQAVET Secretariat thanked the Hungarian organisers and the presenters for all their work, and the clarity of their presentations and explanations.

Context

The [2020 Council Recommendation on VET](#) called upon the EQAVET Network to develop a specific methodology for EQAVET peer reviews, with the objective to support the improvement and transparency of quality assurance arrangements at system level in Member States. Over the course of 2021, with the support of DG EMPL and the EQAVET Secretariat, the EQAVET Network agreed on a joint methodology and prepared a Peer Review Manual. A first cycle of peer reviews took place in 2022-2023. Quality Assurance

National Reference Points (EQAVET NRPs) from 21 countries took part in this EQAVET Network's peer review initiative.

Following a review of the Peer Review Manual, a second cycle of peer reviews has been planned for 2024-26 with 20 participating NRPs. The peer review in Hungary was one of nine peer reviews taking place in 2025. A further six peer reviews are planned to take in 2026.