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DEVELOPMENT 

# Quality Assurance in Romanian Technical and Vocational Education and Training



MINISTRY OF NATIONAL EDUCATION



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Abbreviations

Introduction

**Quality** of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

Benefits of the quality assurance in TVET

National Quality Assurance Framework in TVET

Quality principles

Performance descriptors

Processes to assure quality in TVET

TVET provider's internal processes

TVET provider's external processes

National Quality Assurance Framework in TVET instruments

Self-assessment Manual

Inspection Manual

Roles and responsibilities in quality assurance in TVET

Inter-institutional assistance networks

National Group for Quality Assurance

Challenges / Future Approaches

Conclusions

Bibliography

# Quality Assurance in Romanian Technical and Vocational Education and Training



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## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ARACIP</b>	Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-university Education
<b>CNDIPT</b>	National Center for the Development of Vocational and Technical Education
<b>GNAC</b>	National Quality Assurance Group
<b>CNAC</b>	National Quality Assurance Framework
<b>TVET</b>	Technical and Vocational Education Training
<b>CQAF</b>	European Quality Assurance Framework for Training professional
<b>SAP</b>	School Action Plan
<b>CEAC</b>	Evaluation and Quality Assurance Committee

## INTRODUCTION

The processes of transforming society in the last years, as well as the transition towards post-industrialism and a knowledge-based society represent challenges for the TVET system. Altogether, with ensuring access to education and achieving a high level of qualification, the relevance and the quality of training become significant. In this context, quality assurance (QA) in the TVET system gains new meaning and implies new institutional roles. The measures taken at European level in this field have inspired the developments in Romania, determining in 2003 the experimental implementation of new QA elements at provider level, the school unit.

In 2006, the national QA framework was validated by law; and for pre-university education the Romanian Agency for QA in Pre-university Education (ARACIP) became the institution having a key role in creating a culture of quality and in improving the learning outcomes. The National Centre for TVET Development (CNDIPT) ensures the particularization of the national framework to the specific requirements of the TVET system and assists the TVET providers and the school inspectorates in the institutional building process.

The national quality assurance system for education, according to the Education Law no.1 / 2011, includes the quality assurance system in pre-university education, the quality assurance system in higher education, the quality assurance system in the initial vocational training and the quality assurance system in continuing vocational training. In order to harmonize and correlate all the components of the national quality assurance system, the National Quality Assurance Group (GNAC) was established; it is, according to art. 355 of the National Education Law no.1 / 2011, an "informal structure functioning as a national reference point for quality assurance in education and vocational training, coordinates the harmonization of quality assurance systems in education and training." The GNAC Secretariat is assured by CNDIPT.

## WHAT IS THE QUALITY OF TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING?

"The quality of education is the set of characteristics of a vocational education program or a qualification program and its supplier, which fulfils the quality standards as well as the expectations of the beneficiaries" (extract from the National Education Law no.1 / 2011)

The quality of technical vocational education and training (TVET) , in the Romanian education system, is defined as the totality of characteristics of a learning programme and of its provider, through which the expectations of the beneficiaries and the quality standards are met (QA in education Law).

In TVET, quality is directly related to the achievement of the learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competence achieved at the end of the learning process) that fulfil the key stakeholders' expectations:

- students
- parents
- employers
- community, in general.





## WHICH ARE THE BENEFITS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN TVET?

### for students:

- student-centred teaching and learning process;
- equal opportunities;
- good information about educational and training offer;
- responsibility regarding own academic and professional evolution;
- learning programmes that meet their expectations (mainly as a result of their active involvement in the self-assessment process at school level);
- increased capacity of employment.

### for employers:

- confidence in the quality of vocational education and training, and in the validity of the professional certificates;
- correlation of the provision of initial vocational training to the demand of the employers;
- adjusting the content of the training provision to the needs of the employers.

### for TVET providers:

- higher legitimacy and acknowledgment;
- confidence in own offer of vocational education and training;
- increased satisfaction of beneficiaries (students, employers, parents);
- higher chances of employment for graduates;
- development of a culture of reflection and of continuous improvement for all staff members;
- responsibility and greater autonomy (by emphasising the importance of the self-assessment process);
- facilitation of inter institutional cooperation and dissemination of good practice between TVET providers;
- access to information about good practices and experiences of success

### for community:

- transparency of the TVET programmes' quality;
- responsibility of TVET providers as key element in TVET quality assurance;



- supporting the decentralisation process in technical and vocational education and training;
- greater public responsibility of TVET providers;
- increasing TVET programmes' attractiveness

## WHAT IS THE NATIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK IN TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING?

The National Quality Assurance Framework in TVET (NQAF in TVET) consists of the totality of principles, methodologies, actions, measures and instruments through which quality in TVET is assured, at system and provider level.

In Romania, the general framework for quality assurance in education, applicable for all levels of pre-university (including TVET) and higher education is set up by the Quality Assurance (QA) in Education Law (2006).

The National Quality Assurance Framework in TVET fully complies with the provisions of the QA in Education Law and with the methodologies and instruments developed by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education (ARACIP), adding the specific requirements of initial vocational training.

The National Quality Assurance Framework in TVET has been developed on the basis of the European Common Quality Assurance Framework in VET (CQAF), to which it is perfectly compatible in terms of principles, methodology and instruments.

### WHY IS THE NATIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK IN TVET NECESSARY?

In the general context of the pre-university education system, the technical vocational education and training is specific because it provides both academic education and initial vocational training. This implies certain specific requirements in quality assurance, which are detailed in the National Quality Assurance Framework in TVET.

Actively involving all stakeholders and particularly employers in the quality assurance process, the National Quality Assurance Framework in TVET has a crucial role in achieving the major objectives regarding VET, set up at European level:

- the match between demand and supply
- employability of the workforce
- access to training and lifelong learning, especially for vulnerable groups

The National Quality Assurance Framework in TVET includes all the quality criteria of the European Common Quality Assurance Framework, thus creating the premises of assuring a quality level in initial vocational training that meets the European requirements.

### WHAT ARE THE QUALITY PRINCIPLES?

The aspects focusing on the performance of the TVET providers and of their learning programmes are structured in 7 areas, called quality principles. The quality principles are based on the European Common Quality Assurance Framework in VET model, presented in fig.2:

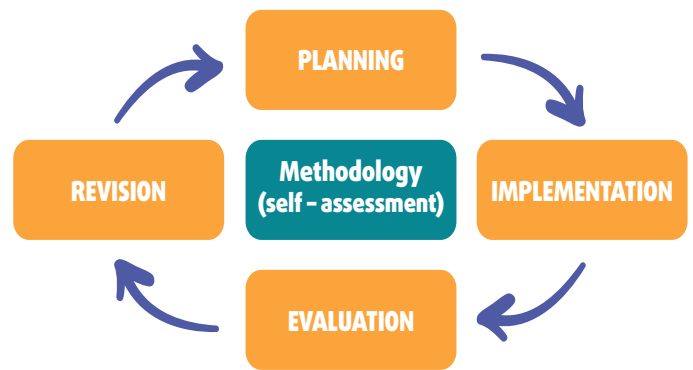


fig.2 Quality diagram of CQAF model

#### Elements of the European Common Quality Assurance Framework

#### Quality Principles within the National Quality Assurance Framework in vocational education and training

Methodology	1. Quality management
Planning	2. Management responsibilities 3. Resource management 4. Design, development and revision of learning programme
Implementation	5. Teaching, training and learning 6. Assessment and certification of learning
Evaluation	7. Evaluation and improvement of quality
Revision	1. Quality management 7. Evaluation and improvement of quality





## THE QUALITY PRINCIPLES ARE:

### Quality management

the management develops the mission, vision and values of the organization following consultative processes. The Commission for Evaluation and Quality Assurance develops the quality manual (the sum of all policies and procedures, strategic and operational plans and documentation regarding quality assurance) and monitors the implementation of the procedures.

### Management responsibilities

the management gets actively involved in quality assurance of learning programmes. Partnerships with stakeholders are developed and maintained. Relevant information is collected, stored and analyzed regularly and communicated to stakeholders. There is an effective financial management.

### Resource management (physical and human)

the organization provides students with a safe and supportive environment. The learning spaces are properly equipped and meet the collective and individual needs of students. The resources, teaching methods and the related premises allow the access and active participation of all students. Staff is employed according to clear criteria (minimum standards regarding qualifications and experience) of recruitment and selection, the organization defines job descriptions, evaluation of staff performance is transparent; there is a staff policy, that includes induction procedure and continuous training programmes.

### Design, development and revision of learning programmes

the organization is permanently concerned with the improvement of learning programmes, to meet the needs of students and staff (internal stakeholders) and of employers and the community (external stakeholders). The learning programmes are centred on the student.



### Teaching, training and learning

the organization provides equal access to learning programmes and supports all students, preventing any form of discrimination. Students receive complete information about the training provision and benefit from effective counselling and career guidance. Students' rights and responsibilities are clearly defined. Student-centred teaching and training methods are mainly used. Students are encouraged to assume responsibility for their own learning process.

### Assessment and certification of learning

the organization develops and uses effective processes of assessment and monitoring of learning, in order to support students' progress. Teachers participate regularly in activities of standardization of assessment. Assessment and certification meet national standards and legislation requirements.

### Evaluation and improvement of quality

the performance of the organization is evaluated and monitored. Following the identification of weaknesses through the self-evaluation and external evaluation processes, improvement measures are developed. These are implemented and monitored, as part of a new cycle of quality assurance.



**WHAT ARE THE PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTORS?**

Each quality principle is made up of a number of performance descriptors, based on quality criteria within the European Common Quality Assurance Framework.

**THAT LEAD TO QUALITY ASSURANCE AND IMPROVEMENT OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING.**

The quality (reference) standards provide the requirements aimed at the achievement of the optimum degree of conducting activities by TVET providers. These standards are developed at national level for all educational and training providers in the pre-university system.

The performance descriptors are correlated with the indicators of the quality standards (the table below presents a correlation example). Each indicator is assigned to a number of performance descriptors which describe the activities to be carried out by TVET provider.

Quality standards  
Indicator

NATIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK IN TVET  
Performance descriptors

Partnerships development

Effective partnerships and networks with external stakeholders are developed, maintained and regularly reviewed

Information about internal and external stakeholders (especially employers) and their needs and expectations for the future is systematically gathered

Partnerships with other VET providers are developed and monitored

Liaison with other partners and local government departments makes programmes and learning more accessible (e.g. transport, child care)

Partnership projects and learning programmes contribute to local, regional, and where possible to national and European development in learning participation and employment





## WHICH ARE THE PROCESSES TO ASSURE QUALITY IN TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (TVET)?

### A. TVET provider's internal processes

Internal processes to assure quality at TVET provider level are presented in fig.1:

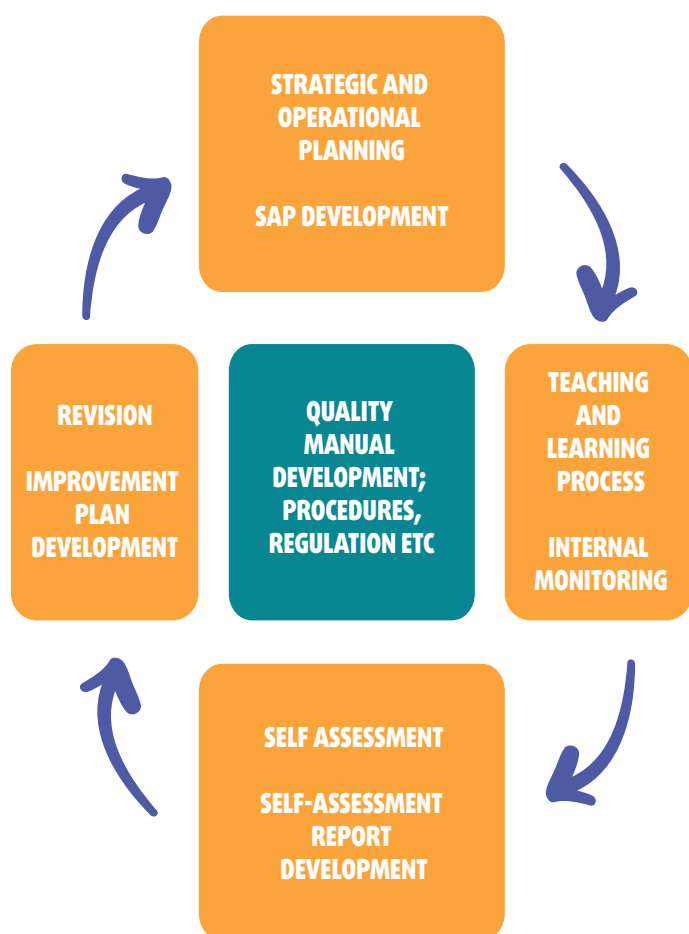


Fig.1: quality diagram for the internal processes at TVET provider level

- **Planning** - all activities to establish the main objectives in quality of TVET offer, as well as the necessary resources and means, through:
  - ✓ strategic planning: setting up general objectives regarding QA;
  - ✓ operational planning: setting up of activities, of necessary resources and means, allocation of terms and responsibilities

In Romanian TVET, quality planning results are included in the School Action Plan (SAP). SAP is a strategic planning document, developed at TVET provider level as a response in terms of institutional development to the regional and local priorities, for a period of 3-5 years;

- **internal monitoring** – verifies whether the planned activities are carried out according to the agreed terms and responsibilities, and evaluates the teaching and learning process through lessons observations. Internal monitoring evaluates the school's difficulties in attaining the established objectives, in the teaching and learning process, and in identifying appropriate solutions;
- **self-assessment: the main process in quality assurance, through which TVET providers evaluate their performance based on evidence and produce the self-assessment Report;**
- **identifying necessary revisions and developing the improvement plan;**
- **developing the Quality Manual**, that includes the quality policy, the procedures for quality assurance, The Commission for Quality Assurance and Evaluation documentation, decisions to allocate roles and responsibilities etc



## B. TVET provider's external processes:

Processes coordinated by school inspectorates:

- **external monitoring of TVET providers' and programmes' quality** – offering guidance and support to TVET providers in the quality assurance process, quality control to verify the fulfilment of the quality requirements, and proposals for quality improvement measures;
- **validation** of TVET providers' self-assessment reports;
- **approval** of TVET providers' improvement plans



### Processes coordinated by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education (ARACIP

– established on the basis of the QA in Education Law, to promote and to apply QA policies in the pre-university education system):

- **authorization and accreditation** - certifying that a TVET provider and its training programmes have met predetermined standards. Accreditation is compulsory for each training programme, on the basis of the QA in Education Law. Accreditation is granted by order of the Ministry of Education, based on the approval of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education, by complying with the accreditation procedure of the QA in Education Law.

Accreditation requires going through two successive stages:

- ✓ **provisional authorization**, that grants the right to carry out the education process and to organize the admission to education and training programmes, as the case may be;
- ✓ **accreditation**, that also grants the right to issue diplomas, certificates and other study documents recognized by the Ministry of Education, and to organize graduation / certification exams.

- **external evaluation of TVET providers' and programmes' quality** - the multi-criteria examination of the extent to which a TVET provider and its programmes meet the quality standards; it is carried out by independent experts, under the coordination of ARACIP, every 5 years.





## WHAT ARE THE NATIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK IN TVET INSTRUMENTS?

In order to assist TVET providers in better managing the quality of their learning and training provision and to guide the inspectorates in the external monitoring activities, 2 instruments: a Self-Assessment Manual and an Inspection Manual were developed, based on The European Guide on Self-assessment of VET providers. The manuals are being used by all TVET providers since the 2006-2007 school year, due to the positive results of the piloting period (2003-2006, when the manuals were piloted in 122 TVET providers).

## I. SELF-ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK WHAT IS SELF-ASSESSMENT?

The National Quality Assurance Framework in TVET is based on self-assessment, a process through which TVET providers evaluate their performance, after collecting and analyzing evidences.

Self-assessment:

- ✓ is results-oriented;
- ✓ refers to all aspects of the activity of TVET providers, but is focused mainly on the quality of vocational education and training;
- ✓ is carried out with the participation of all beneficiaries (TVET provider's staff, students, employers, parents);
- ✓ leads to the appreciation of performance through reference to the impact that vocational education and training has on students and other stakeholders;
- ✓ identifies weaknesses and strengths of the TVET provider and allows for setting the necessary improvements

The purpose of self-assessment is to lead to the improvement of the entire activity of the TVET provider and mainly of the learning outcomes.

The self-assessment process represents an action of collective responsibility at the level of TVET providers. The Commission for Quality Assurance and Evaluation (CEAC) has the role of coordination of the self-assessment process. The self-evaluation process is finalised by the preparation of the Self-evaluation report which is made public, starting with the school year 2013/2014, by posting on the electronic platform <http://beta.aracip.eu/>

## WHEN IS SELF-ASSESSMENT PERFORMED?

Self-assessment is a cyclic process, with the results being outlined in an annual self-assessment report. The judgment of performance is based on solid evidence collected by TVET providers throughout the year. In order for the evidence to be considered solid, it must be valid, quantifiable, sufficient, actual, and reliable.



## HOW ARE THE SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT AND THE IMPROVEMENT PLAN DEVELOPED?

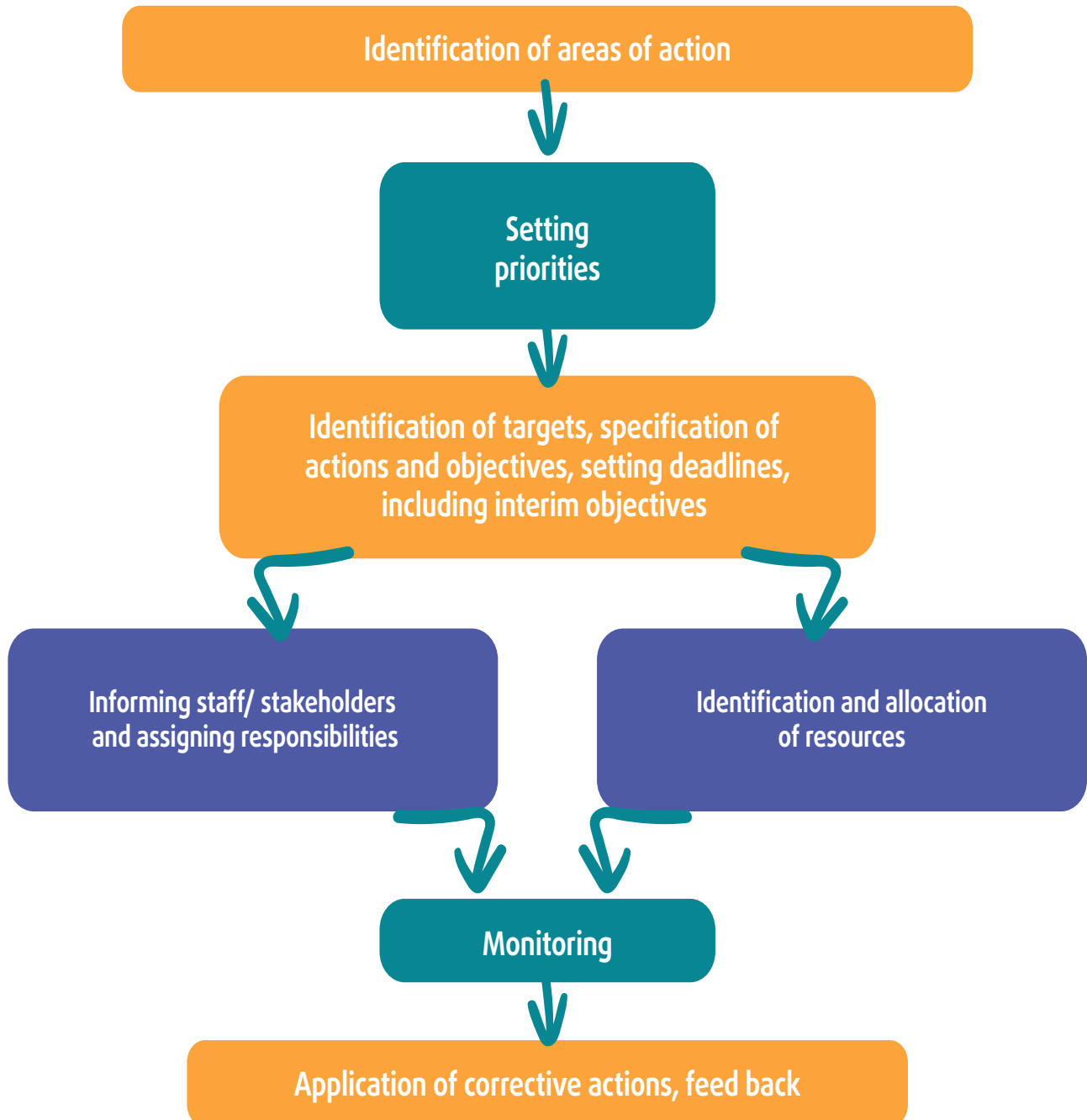
The Commission for Quality Assurance and Evaluation draws up the self-assessment report and formulates the proposals for the improvement of quality of vocational education and training at the level of the TVET provider, with the support of all stakeholders involved in the educational act (teachers, students, representatives of companies, social partners, etc).

The best practice (especially for large TVET providers) is to set up teams to perform the self-assessment of their activity area. These can be:

- ✓ teams per subjects of education / curricula areas;
- ✓ teams for specialized services, such as students' assistance.



Self-assessment is not a purpose in itself, but a starting point for a continuous improvement:





## II. INSPECTION FRAMEWORK

### WHAT IS THE ROLE OF INSPECTION?

Inspection is an essential component of the National Quality Assurance Framework in TVET, ensuring guidance and support to TVET providers in the self-assessment process and TVET quality control of vocational education and training.

Throughout the annual cycle of self-assessment, external monitoring visits of vocational education and training quality of TVET providers are carried out, the self-assessment report is validated, and the improvement plan proposed by TVET providers is approved by inspectors.

Inspectors must get a general view of the efficiency of the provision of vocational education and training and of the extent to which it satisfies the needs of students. To that end, inspectors must first analyze the learning outcomes and evaluate the quality of the teaching – training – learning process.

### WHO PERFORMS THE INSPECTION?

Inspection is performed by the representatives of the school inspectorates under the coordination of the deputy general inspector responsible for quality assurance. For strengthening the inter-institutional cooperation between TVET providers, it is useful and recommended to include in the teams performing the external monitoring visits, managers and coordinators of the Commission for Quality Assurance and Evaluation of TVET providers with good practice in quality assurance.

Inspection must be performed in cooperation with a representative of the management or of the Commission for Quality Assurance and Evaluation of the TVET provider.

This is the main link of the TVET provider with inspectors, ensuring that the team of inspectors has access to all significant evidence and that inspection is performed effectively.

### WHAT ARE THE MAIN OBJECTIVES OF INSPECTION?

- ✓ to formulate an objective opinion about the quality of vocational education and training provision, achieved standards and the effectiveness of resources administration;
- ✓ to contribute to the improvement of the quality of vocational education and training by emphasizing and disseminating good practice at local, regional and national level;
- ✓ to support TVET providers in the self-assessment process;
- ✓ to validate TVET providers' self-assessment report and to approve the improvement plan;
- ✓ to promote a culture of quality that will lead to continuous improvement.



### WHAT ACTIVITIES DO INSPECTORS PERFORM?

- ✓ observe the teaching-learning process;
- ✓ observe the training process and discuss with employers and with work-based learning trainers;
- ✓ evaluate the data on rates of retention, progression and achievement;
- ✓ discuss with representatives of students, teachers and trainers, management, Commission for Quality Assurance and Evaluation, employers and parents

## HOW DO THE MAIN ACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO QUALITY ASSURANCE IN TVET?

### Teachers:

- ✓ use of student-centred teaching methods;
- ✓ improvement of the quality of the teaching process after regular evaluation (at least annually) of students' satisfaction;
- ✓ team planning, at least at curriculum level, of teaching and assessment activities;
- ✓ offering individual support, at students' request;
- ✓ knowing and applying the quality assurance measures established at school level.

### The Commission for Quality Assurance and Evaluation:

- ✓ internal monitoring of TVET quality;
- ✓ coordination of TVET quality assurance and evaluation processes.

### School management:

- ✓ development of the School Action Plan, following consultative processes with all stakeholders and taking into account regional and local priorities;
- ✓ promoting a quality culture at school level;
- ✓ permanent communication with students, parents and employers;
- ✓ efficient and effective maintenance of teaching and learning resources.

### Employers:

- ✓ involvement in the identification of training needs, and in the planning of vocational education and training offer;
- ✓ involvement in the design of locally developed curricula;
- ✓ Involvement in training of professional competences at the workplace;
- ✓ participation in the certification of vocational competences acquired by students;
- ✓ formulating proposals for the improvement of vocational education and training.

### School inspectorates:

- ✓ guidance and support the schools in the quality assurance process;
- ✓ quality control and formulation of quality improvement proposals;
- ✓ support for the professional development of teachers;
- ✓ dissemination of good practice in quality assurance.

### Community:

- ✓ support the school's institutional development;
- ✓ pro-active participation in the school's Administration Council;
- ✓ assurance of the necessary resources for the teaching and learning process.

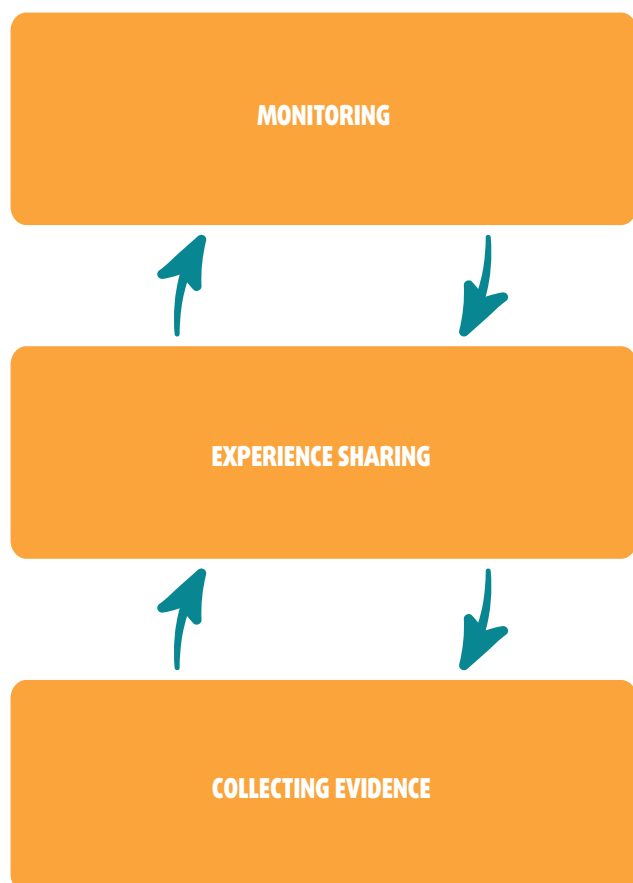






## WHAT ARE THE INTER – INSTITUTIONAL ASSISTANCE NETWORKS?

All TVET providers are associated in inter-institutional assistance networks, so that they could cooperate in activities such as monitoring, collecting evidence, sharing experience, or staff training.



Within the Phare TVET programmes, inter-assistance networks comprising 172 TVET providers were established between 2004 -2006. Due to the encouraging results of these networks, starting with the 2006 – 2007 school year, all (1376) TVET providers were associated in inter-institutional cooperation networks.

A significant number of TVET providers initiated local networks with general education schools and with higher education institutions, in order to facilitate exchange of information and good practices.



Through the POSDRU project Improving the Quality of Vocational Education and Training through Partner Networks, implemented between July 2010 - June 2013, 16 partner networks were set up for 11 sectors:

1. Agriculture
2. Industrial Chemistry and Environmental Protection
3. Economic Trade
4. Construction , Installations and Works Public
5. Electric and electromechanical
6. Automation electronics
7. Food industry
8. Textile and leather industry
9. Mechanics
10. Tourism and food
11. Forestry and wood products manufacturing

The main objective of the project was to improve the education and training system by developing tools and methodologies for the implementation of the European Reference Framework for Quality Assurance in Vocational Training, using partnership networks between schools. ([Http://parteneriatpentrucalitate.tvet.ro/](http://parteneriatpentrucalitate.tvet.ro/))

Peer learning is also an important tool used by TVET providers to foster mutual learning, mainly at local level, but also at national and European level.

## WHAT IS THE NATIONAL GROUP FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE?

The National Group for Quality Assurance, acting as National QA Reference Point in vocational education and training, was constituted at national level in 2006, in compliance with the recommendations of the European Network for Quality Assurance in VET (ENQA-VET), founded by the European Commission.

The National Group for Quality Assurance (GNAC) is an inter-institutional coordination structure with the role of applying in a coherent way the European and national measures for quality assurance in vocational education and training. The National Group for Quality Assurance includes experts of national institutions who have certain attributions regarding QA for initial and continuing VET:

- ✓ the Ministry of National Education
- ✓ the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice
- ✓ the Romanian Agency for QA in Pre-university Education
- ✓ the National Authority of Qualifications
- ✓ the National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development.

In 2006, GNAC coordinated the development of a Guide of institutional practices in quality assurance of vocational education and training programmes. The guide is accessible on the National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development site: [www.tvet.ro](http://www.tvet.ro) and GNAC site [www.gnac.ro](http://www.gnac.ro)

Through the ERASMUS + „European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training - National Reference Points” project, carried out between 2016-2017 and 2017-2019, the European Union supports the national reference points for the implementation of the tasks assigned to them in the EQAVET Recommendation , on the establishment of information loops and continuous feedback in initial and continuous learning based on learning outcomes. Within this project, CNDIPT experts developed, with the support of the school units and the economic agents involved in the initial vocational training:

✓ 2 Compendia of Good Practices in Promoting Vocational and Technical Education - **Success Stories, Volume I and II**

✓ **A Guide to institutional good practice** in quality assurance in initial vocational training

✓ **A Study** on the quality of education and training services in Romania available on the GNAC website [www.gnac.ro](http://www.gnac.ro) and on the website [www.alegetidrumul.ro](http://www.alegetidrumul.ro)

## CHALLENGES / FUTURE APPROACHES

- Starting with the 2017-2018 school year, the dual education system was introduced in Romanian VET, organized according to the Methodology for organizing and functioning of dual education approved by OMEN no. 3554 / 29.03.2017.

This type of education has a strong learning component in the workplace that requires the development of specific quality assurance tools.

Starting from this and from the need to develop a culture of quality among vocational training providers, CNDIPT proposes for the 2018-2022 horizon the development of the following quality assurance mechanisms and tools:

✓ **The quality assurance mechanism in work based learning (WBL)**

✓ **The mechanism of recognition of excellence in the provision of initial vocational training programs**

✓ **Methodology for systematic monitoring, evaluation and review of the quality of VET providers, at system level**

✓ **Guide to quality assurance and monitoring work based learning (WBL)**

✓ **TVET Quality Barometer in 2020**



- In order to support the actual implementation of the quality system and the development of quality educational services centred on progress and performance, ARACIP has revised the national evaluation standards.

The new standards proposed are in line with the priorities of European policies and strategies, redefining the process of self-evaluation and optimization carried out at the school level as well as the external evaluation process. From a technical point of view, the new standards will provide a more nuanced assessment of school by:

- decreasing the number of performance descriptors
- strong increase in the share of general standards - in order to be able to compare the performance of different levels of education and types of schools more easily
- increasing the requirement in the assessment and in the certification of the quality level - by increasing the number of requirements that an educational institution will have to fulfill, at each of the 43 performance indicators, to receive the "Very good" and "Excellent" ratings and by simultaneously decreasing the number of conditions required to receive the "Good" rating.

The new proposed format will facilitate the use of both internal evaluation and external evaluation by bringing together, for each performance indicator, the authorization / accreditation standards and reference standards as well as the common and specific standards. For VET schools, specific standards are centred on:

- correlation of the educational offer with the requirements of the labour market;
- school-company relationship;
- designing the locally developed curriculum in partnership with the companies;
- evaluation of learning outcomes at school and at workplace, as defined in the Vocational Training Standards;
- defining clearly the role of the practice tutor;
- feedback collected from students / tutors / employers;
- teacher training within companies;
- psycho-pedagogical training of practitioners.

## CONCLUSIONS

The presented approaches were meant to emphasize:

- ✓ the coherence of methods in the initial and continuous vocational education training system;
- ✓ the transparency and motivation of trust in the vocational education and training

No matter how coherent are the adopted mechanisms, the role of the teacher remains crucial.

This is why we insist on improving teaching methods.

Students' and employers' trust in the TVET system, as well as the trust of higher education in the technological high school education still represent a challenge.











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