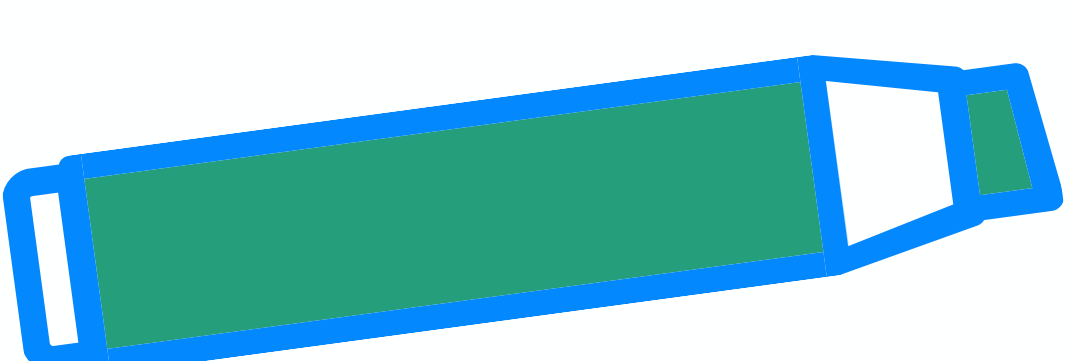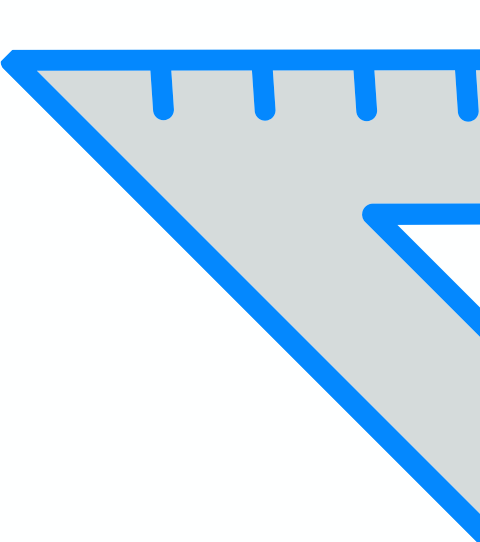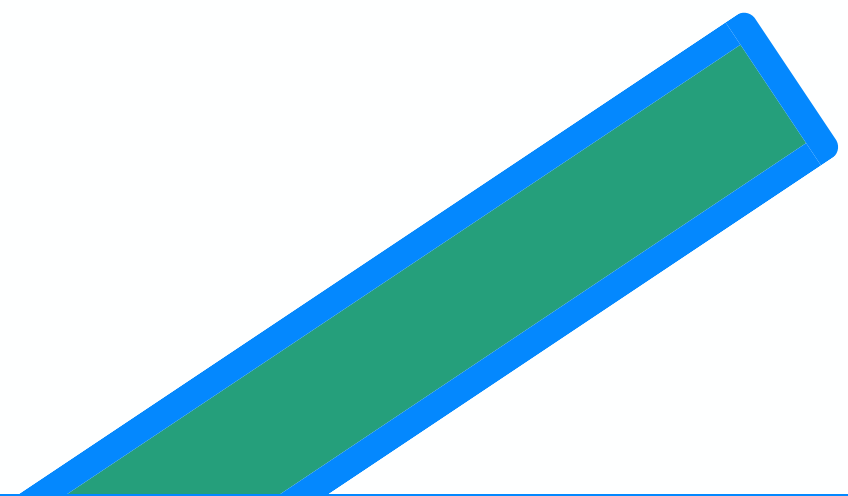# Tools and Guidelines

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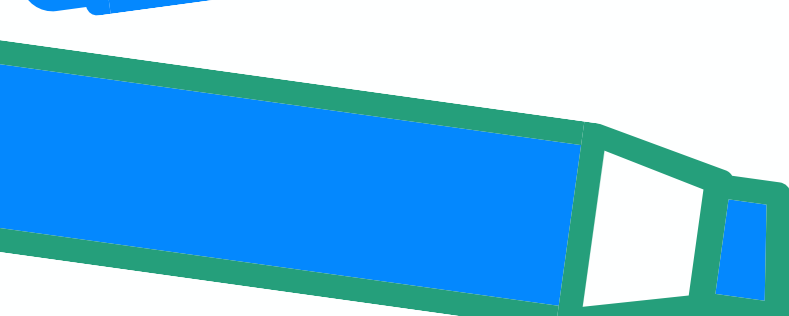
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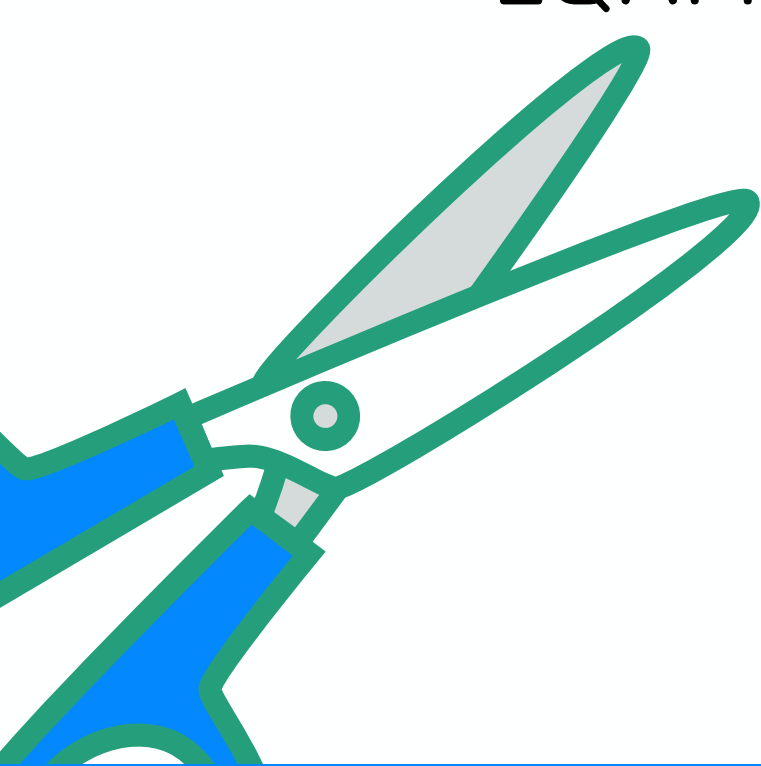
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EQAFIT Activity 4: Tools and Guidelines helps VET Providers and stakeholders in the Financial Service Sector (FSS) to easily find suggestions and recommendations on how to improve different aspects of their Quality Assurance systems.

The FSS is a fast-paced area, where new skills and competences become essential requirements in a short period of time. It is therefore extremely important to constantly look for data and indicators that can point out whether or not the institution is managing to stay up to date with current trends.

EQAFIT Tools and Guidelines aim is to support VET Providers and stakeholders in this process of review of their training programmes, and to assist them while they navigate various options available to tackle different issues.

Each Guideline is composed of a descriptive part and of a practical part, so that readers can deepen their knowledge on a theme first, and then learn more about how they can implement strategies to change it.
In conclusion, the Tools and Guidelines offer both an in-depth explanation of diverse aspects of the review phase in the PDCA cycle, and also concrete instruments to apply to improve their programming.

1. INTRODUCTION

Enhanced Quality Assurance in Financial Training- EQAFIT- is a 26 months long project funded by the European Commission under the Erasmus + programme, specifically within the Key Action 2- Strategic Partnership grants. The project started in December 2020 and it will be completed at the end of February 2023.

The inspiration for EQAFIT stemmed from several discussions among Partners on the European Recommendations about the need of establishing a continuous flow of information on graduate progress in the FSS labour market.

1.1. EQAFIT project: aim, objectives, and results

The project **aim** is to support Vocational Education and Training (VET) Providers from the Financial Services Sector (FSS), in setting up and enhancing Quality Assurance systems. Specifically, EQAFIT focuses on the Act/Review phase and on feedback loops, as preconditions for continuous improvement of the training offer.

Moreover, EQAFIT's **objective** is to develop an online service to support the Quality system in the aforementioned phase, which will be a customized and user-friendly product that will comprise of both updated tools and guidelines developed in previous EU Projects, and new specifically designed ones.

It foresees the possibility to identify the VET Provider profile in respect to specific quality indicators, it will give personalized support, and a feedback system that will allow the improvement of the service itself.

As for the **results**, the EQAFIT project is based on three *Intellectual Outputs (IO)* that were established in order to reach the aim and objective set by the Partnership. The three Outputs are:

Intellectual Output 1 (IO1)- Quality Assurance Tools and Guidelines: development of concrete guidelines and tools for supporting VET providers in improving and setting up Quality Assurance systems, especially in relation to the fourth phase of the PDCA cycle. The guidelines will be based on sectoral quality criteria (A1) and existing experiences (A2-A3) among the Partners and other stakeholders, and will be developed in cooperation with different organizations and integrated in an ICT-based online service.

Intellectual Output 2 (IO2)- Graduate Tracking System: in support of VET Providers in enhancing their capacity of managing the Review phase as a precondition for guaranteeing quality and relevance of training programmes. Partners will define a graduate tracking system (method and tools) and a model for collecting and using the feedback received in order to improve the quality of programmes. The graduate tracking system will collect quantitative and qualitative data.

Intellectual Output 3 (IO3)-Online Quality Service: creation of an online service for VET Providers that will allow them to conduct self-assessment to better understand their level of compliance

with EQAVET. QA Tools and Guidelines (already existing and newly developed) and the Graduate tracking system will be integrated into the online service. VET Providers will also have the possibility to use this service, when necessary, to enhance the quality of their VET programs, in particular regarding the Review phase of the Deming cycle.

1.2 The EQAFIT Partnership

EQAFIT sees the collaboration of seven organizations from seven different European countries: European Banking & Financial Services Training Association (supported by Frankfurt School, with members coming from over 20 European countries), Scify (Greece), Finance & Banking- Associazione per lo Sviluppo Organizzativo e delle Risorse Umane (Italy), Colegiul Economic Emanuil Gojdu (Romania), Ekonomická Univerzita V Bratislave (Slovakia), Asociación Española de Asesores y Planificadores Financieros (Spain), and Stiftelsen Kursverksamheten Vid U-Aauniversitet (Sweden).

Each Partner was selected and involved in EQAFIT because of their experience in implementing EQAVET indicators in the banking and financial sector.
In the following table, it is possible to find the roles, names, and countries of origin of the members of the Partnership:

	Role	Name	Country
1	Coordinator	Folkuniversitetet	SE
2	Partner	EBTN (Frankfurt School)	BE (DE)
3	Partner	EFPA España	ES
4	Partner	EFFEBI Association	IT
5	Partner	EUBA (Univ. Econ. of Bratislava)	SK
6	Partner	Colegiul Economic Emanuil Gojdu	RO
7	Partner	SCIFY (Online Quality Service)	EL

1.3 The Tools and Guidelines methodology

The Tools and Guidelines represent the final step of the research process and of the first Intellectual Output of the EQAFIT project. Using the results found during the previous activities, this Partnership has developed and curated concrete Guidelines and Tools to support VET Providers in setting up or improving Quality Assurance systems.

As for the other research efforts stemming from Intellectual Output 1, a set of criteria were established in order to obtain easy to use and consistent resources. The criteria chosen are the following:

- Effective and successful practices;
- Feasible;
- Replicable;
- Adaptable;
- Taken from practices implemented in Partner Countries (via Compendium of Good Practices);
- Related to the set up or implementation of a QA system.

Both the methodological criteria and the Tools and Guidelines were chosen with a collaborative approach, as the Partners believe that pulling together the cumulative knowledge, experiences, and networks ensures the representation of a variety of points of views on future planning in VET.

Finally, the methodology elaborated for the Tools and Guidelines has taken into account both qualitative and quantitative aspects of the points considered, in order to create a well-rounded analysis.

2. TOOLS AND GUIDELINES FOR STRENGTHENING VET PROVIDERS PERFORMANCE

The Tools and Guidelines represents the conclusive step of the desk and field research for the first Intellectual Output of the EQAFIT project. As it will be explained in this chapter, the main purpose of this document is to help VET Providers setting up or improving their Quality Assurance system.

2.1 Background information

To ensure all learners pertinent and up to date education, public and private VET Providers are recommended to set up a Quality Assurance system. This consists in the "systematic review of educational provision to maintain and improve its quality, equity and efficiency. It encompasses school self-evaluation, external evaluation, the evaluation of teachers and school leaders, and

student assessments[1]".

Therefore, Quality Assurance also plays a fundamental role in promoting mutual recognition of upper secondary qualifications (EQF Levels), and promoting a harmonization of competences across the European Union.

To employ its full potential, it is highly recommended to establish a feedback loop, which is defined as "a system for improving a product, process, etc. by collecting and reacting to users' comments." [2] For our purpose, which is to determine what a feedback loop is in the context of educational programmes in the Financial Service Sector (FSS), it typically refers to activities carried out among various stakeholders to collect suggestions and comments on different aspects of the training programmes.

Students, teachers/trainers, staff, employers and graduates are involved and engaged in the process in order to collect their opinions about courses, study programmes or relevance of the skills taught. Finally, these Guidelines address in particular the review phase of the Deming management cycle, considered to be more complex because it requires "acting on information received through these feedback mechanisms and, importantly, informing those who contributed to generating that information (respondents) about the actions taken (or not taken) based on their feedback"[3].

In this light, it is easy to understand why feedback loops in the FSS are fundamental in improving the match between skills taught and skills needed. This sector is, because of its nature, in constant evolution, and new trends usually emerge and become relevant quickly. As a consequence, it is extremely important for Providers that want to offer to their learners high quality and pertinent education, to have a direct line with the labour market needs and requests.

2.2 Target Groups of the Tools and Guidelines

The EQAFIT Tools and Guidelines is the result of a thorough desk and field research about all stakeholders involved in the FSS Quality Assurance cycle. The analysis of good practices, that are the foundation of these tools and guidelines, has been conducted to develop practical suggestions and recommendations for specific groups and institutions responsible for the construction and the implementation of the training curricula. In particular, the guidelines are addressed to:

- FSS **VET Providers**;
- **Teachers-Trainers** in VET;
- **FSS Institutions**;
- **National** and **European education authorities** and **institutions**.

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[1] https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/school/quality-assurance_en

[2] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/feedback-loop

[3] https://eua.eu/resources/expert-voices/213:why-%E2%80%9Cclosing-the-feedback-loop%E2%80%9D-matters-now-even-more-than-ever.html

These groups were identified as the most suitable target for our research because they supervise the skills and competences that are taught because they are considered fundamental for students in order to be adequately prepared for the labour market.

The EQAFIT Partnership believes that the aforementioned groups are the right target for these Tools and Guidelines because they will be able to find new ideas and inspirations from these practical suggestions. In particular, they will become familiar with how to implement EQARF Indicator 5, 6, and 9, and improve their Quality Assurance systems.

3. TOOLS AND GUIDELINES DIVIDED BY INDICATORS

The goal of this chapter is to explain what themes were chosen for the guidelines and the decision to divide them by EQARF Indicators. Moreover, later in the chapter the reader will be able to find the Guidelines conveniently categorized by a short and clear title that will immediately describe the subject matter, and a more in-depth description of the issue, of the benefits of applying the recommendation, and of examples of practical steps to be taken in order to implement it.

3.1 Navigating the Guidelines: purpose of the document

The structure of EQAFIT's Tools and Guidelines has been thought out with the goal of creating an appealing and ready-to-use guide for those looking to set up or improve the QA system in their FSS VET programming.

Thanks to the themes index, readers will be able to effortlessly find a particular topic or issue they are interested in knowing more about. The guidelines themselves are purposefully kept short and simple, and give suggestions on what readers can do to apply them in a few practical steps.

3.2 Themes analysis and overview

As mentioned before, the guidelines part of this document has been divided following their relation to EQARF Indicators. But what are these?

The European Quality Assurance Reference Framework was created in 2009 with the idea that it should contribute to the improvement of quality in VET, build mutual trust among Member States' VET systems, and promote and strengthen a European lifelong learning area.

EQARF is composed of ten Indicators that measure and compare different characteristics of the phases of the Quality Cycle (Planning, Implementation, Evaluation, Review).

Thus, the EQAFIT project targets in particular three Indicators that concern the Evaluation (5,6) and Review (9) phases, related to the objective of finding guidelines and recommendations to set up and improve VET Providers Quality Assurance systems.

The reason why EQAFIT Tools and Guidelines have been divided using the three EQARF Indicators as reference point is that in: this way, readers will be able to search for the phase of the Quality Assurance cycle they want to improve, and then will find guidelines addressing different aspects of the same issue.

Below, the complete index of guidelines divided by Indicators and topics can be found:

Indicator 5, "Placement rate in VET programmes":

- I. Tracking system of employment rate
- II. Data collection in labour market
- III. Demand and supply matching
- IV. Programme participation

Indicator 6, "Utilization of acquired skills at the workplace":

- V. Student satisfaction
- VI. Employer satisfaction
- VII. Schools' expectations
- VIII. Data processing and presenting
- IX. Evaluation of professional skills in VET

Indicator 9, "Mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market":

- X. Updating the programmes
- XI. Facilitation of dialogue VET-labour market
- XII. Stakeholders' involvement
- XIII. Skills mismatch and curriculum revision
- XIV. Teachers/trainers involvement
- XV. Evaluation process

3.1.1 Indicator 5 (Guidelines I-IV)

EQARF Indicator 5 is titled «Placement rate in VET programmes», and it measures the proportion of VET graduates who are employed at different points after the completion of training, according to criteria typical of the programme design and other specific factors.

In this section, Guidelines referring to this topic can be found, in particular referring to the establishment of a tracking system for the employment rate (I), on how to collect data in the labour market (II), on demand and supply matching (III), and about programme participation (IV).

 Guideline I

"Tracking learning and career paths of VET graduates to improve quality of VET provision."

Description- To fill one of the main gaps in the implementation of EQAVET, it is necessary to track the post-graduation path of VET students. Moreover, to improve Quality Assurance systems of VET Providers, it is significant to ask graduates for feedback through surveys and questionnaires.

Relevance and Benefits- Gathering data related to further education, employment, career paths, skills, and competencies required in the labor market brings many ideas and ways to offer high quality VET programmes. Tracking surveys can be developed and adapted to the specific needs of each VET provider, and are easy to implement and to disseminate.

Instruments, Tools, and Activities- For VET Providers and, in general, Higher Education Institutes that are interested in establishing a tracking system to improve the quality of their programmes, it is possible to refer to the guide "Establishing a VET Graduates tracking system", developed for the European project "On Track". It is possible to find it and download it for free on the project's website.

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Guideline II

> "Data collection in labour demand as a way to determine employers' real needs and to establish accurate educational programmes."

Description- In order for VET Providers to have a clear picture of market needs they need to establish a 5-step Data Collection system. This includes research and interaction with representatives of the labor market.

Relevance and Benefits- By applying this system VET Providers identify the specific needs of the FSS labor market in an accurate way. This will lead to the creation of proper educational programs and to training suitable people for positions in the FSS. Moreover, the benefits are: a structured system, open to configurations, easy to use, efficient & time efficient, and transferable.

Instruments, Tools, and Activities- First Phase: Pre-preparation and Data Gathering

1. Conduction of desk research (National Statistics for the FSS sector, EU publications of data collections, Industry statistics deducted by leaders in the field.
2. Implement market monitoring for competitive analysis & cross checking the data from the desk research by examining and monitoring (Economic agents, Existing programmes offered by leaders in the field, FSS education market in Local, Regional, National and EU Level).

Second Phase: Interaction with Stakeholders & Data Confirmation

Set up a marketing intelligence system to control the data collected from the 1st phase (ask FSS representatives to state labour needs in letters of intent, send out questionnaires, conduct consulting sessions with regional and local employment agencies). Establish direct dialogue to be in line with labour market needs and spot the leaders on the field (establish a direct and strong relation with economic entities analyzing their needs and expectations, and organize formal and informal talks with the economic entities (especially field leaders). Participate or Create committees to stay up to date with all the latest needs and be part of the community (working committees or groups to assess the situation and give feedback on the 1st phase, member of council with FSS educators or/and are FFS professionals, create a special committee with representatives of the academia and FSS executives, network on related events or conferences with banks and banking associations).

Guideline III

> "Demand and supply for VET courses should be matched to avoid over- or undersupply. "

Description- Collaboration between the industry and the education side to match demand and supply is of vital importance and to ensure VET programmes correspond to the specific needs of the labor market.

Relevance and Benefits- There should be regular needs assessments for courses: analyzing the market will allow providers to offer the courses only in the quantity needed, by identifying relevant trainings and their respective demand. Successful demand and supply matching will also reduce unnecessary costs for offering courses that will not be taken.

Instruments, Tools, and Activities- Comprehensive curriculum review process for VET programmes means combining learning outcome assessments, conformity checks and audits collaborating with external peers. Learning outcome assessment is a continuous review process of VET programmes' goals and objectives to ensure that standards for qualifications and competencies are met. Conformity checks help to ensure that all national and European standards for VET programmes are met. Programme audits and integrating external peers help ensure that the needs of recipients and prospective employers are met. Opinions from different stakeholders -both from the demand and the supply side- should be included.

Guideline IV

> "Actively measure programme participation to evaluate if it is successful and relevant for the institutions and the learners."

Description- VET Providers and institutions should keep track of their courses in order to decide if they have to be modified or substituted with more up to date programmes. Programme participation is a fundamental indicator top understand whether or not the skill taught are relevant for the current labour market needs.

Relevance and Benefits- Measuring programme participation is important to judge the need and the relevance of the respective programme. The information is valuable for the continuous development of and adaptation of the programmes of a VET institute.

Instruments, Tools, and Activities- For each of the courses the number of participants should be registered. Also, information of the participants' background should be registered and why they are participating. This will enable Providers to know their audience and judge the relevance of their courses for the respective segment of participants. Developments over time will also show which segment of participants is growing and which is declining.

3.1.2 Indicator 6 (*Guidelines V-IX*)

"Utilisation of acquired skills at the workplace", or EQARF Indicator 6, is used to get a picture of how many graduates from VET programmes consider the training they received to be relevant for jobs in the same sector. This Indicator also offers an idea of the satisfaction rate of graduates and employers with acquired skills and competences.

The Guidelines in this paragraph give practical advice on how to assess both student (V) and employer (VI) satisfaction, how to measure and identify schools' expectations (VII), methods to process and present data (VIII), and tools for evaluation of professional skills in VET (IX).

Guideline V

"Measure students' satisfaction during and after the training programme is completed to finetune the courses offer."

Description- Results obtained by interrogating students are a fundamental source of information to understand whether or not VET Providers are meeting their targets in delivering relevant programmes. For this reason, it is important to reach out and keep in contact with current and former learners.

Relevance and Benefits- Student's satisfaction is an important measurement in relation to the knowledge being taught. It gives an indication on the programmes quality and the overall satisfaction of the education provided.

Advantages of register learners' on their education

- Good overview on the quality from the student's point of view;
- Possibility to improve the programmes.

Instruments, Tools, and Activities- Good practices and tools applicable:

- Frequent evaluation questionnaires throughout the duration of the programme, both on induvial courses and the overall programme;
- Direct dialogue with the students;
- Involvement in advisory group;
- Follow up on evaluations.

Guideline VI

> "Seek out evaluation of graduates through employer satisfaction to assess the level of professional training reached."

Description- Set up periodic assessments to consider the degree of employer satisfaction regarding the professional performance of employees who graduated from VET programmes.

Relevance and Benefits- Employers' opinion must be taken into account, in relation to various topics: theoretical training of employees, their ability to perform duties, their adaptability to the workplace (integration and teamwork), and their attitude towards professional development. It is important to determine to what extent there is a direct relation between the theoretical training of VET graduates, and their employment. It is fundamental to understand the extent employers are able to hire VET graduates with specializations compatible with their requirements. It is also relevant to identify how much employers believe that employees can apply their theoretical knowledge in the workplace.

Instruments, Tools, and Activities- In order to determine the degree of employer satisfaction in connection with the professional training of employees,the quickest and easiest tools to use are surveys and questionnaires. It is also possible to acquire this information through the media.

Guideline VII

> "Evaluate the performance of the whole institution, as well as the individual educational programs, on a regular basis."

Description- Carry out regular evaluation of educational programmes and of the whole istitution in order to understand the level of accordance between skills taught and skills needed by employers.

Relevance and Benefits- It is essential to make periodical evaluations of the performance of the individual educational programmes. As time goes by, labor market needs keep changing and the educational programmes may get obsolete. Therefore, regularly evaluate the outcomes of the educational programmes and the success rate of the graduates, especially their ability to succeed in the labor market. Besides the evaluation of the individual educational programmes, it is also important to evaluate the performance of the whole institution, as even well-prepared educational programmes may suffer due to some issues and inefficiencies on the institutional level.

Instruments, Tools, and Activities- Organize regular evaluations of the performance and quality of the educational programs and the whole institution. The evaluation should be based on data provided by questionnaires and interviews with current students, graduates, teachers/trainers, and employers.

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Guideline VIII

"Use visual presentation tools to better deliver the results of the data collected and processed."

Description- Make statistical evaluations and subsequent easy to understand visual presentations of data provided by questionnaires and interviews with current students, graduates, and employers.

Relevance and Benefits- Statistical evaluation of collected data should help to better understand the needs of interested parties, as well as the quality of educational programmes graduates, and to identify weaknesses and strengths of the educational programmes and possibly of the whole institution.

Instruments, Tools, and Activities- The statistical evaluation may be made using some statistical software, however Excel should be more than sufficient too. After the data is processed, the results should be transformed into the form of charts and tables, to enable a better and easier understanding of the presented results for all relevant parties.

Guideline IX

"Evaluate learners' skills to ensure the delivery of relevant VET programmes."

Description- Carefully evaluate students in order to make sure their knowledge and skills are up to par with the ones required by employers who are going to hire them.

Relevance and Benefits- The competency assessment provides a guarantee that a person has the knowledge and skills necessary to perform the activities described in the standard. The standard is the document that provides clear, qualitative guidelines on the proper performance of work-specific activities. Following the passing of the certification exam, graduates receive a professional qualification certificate and the descriptive supplement of the certificate in Europass format. Evaluating learners with this type of assessment allows the establishment of qualitative standards relevant for the position they aspire to apply for.

Instruments, Tools, and Activities- Certification exams for graduates may consist in:

- practical tests that aim to demonstrate the acquisition of competencies/ learning outcomes that are relevant for the respective qualification;
- creating and supporting projects that highlight the units of specialized technical skills and core skills, significant for demonstrating qualification acquisition;
- written tests involving conceptual knowledge, high-level skills and cross-curricular skills.

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3.1.3 Indicator 9 (Guidelines X-XV)

Lastly, Indicator 9 "Mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market" illustrates the systems used by VET Providers and institutions to update their training offer to future labour market needs, and, at the same time, highlights evidence of their effectiveness.

The topics related to Indicator 9 in this section are the following: updating of the programmes (X), facilitation of dialogue VET-labour market (XI), how to involve stakeholders (XII) and teachers-trainers (XIV), how to avoid skills mismatch plus suggestions on how to revise curricula (XIII), and managing the evaluation process (XV).

Guideline X

"Updating the programmes by communicating with employers and students"

Description- In order to properly update the training programs, two basic steps must be taken by VET Providers: 1. communicating with FSS representatives and 2. gathering the opinions of former trainees who now are working in the FSS field.

Relevance and Benefits- If you establish this system efficiently, the benefits of implementing this 2-step system are:

- it is easy to set up, use and update;
- it is flexible to adapt to an organization's own needs;
- it can be standardized and semi-automated.

Instruments, Tools, and Activities-

Determine how often the program update will take place (proposed: annual basis).

Determine which are the involved parties:

- VET Providers (educators, program directors, etc);
- FSS representatives (industry bodies, field professionals, FSS executives, specialized recruitment agencies);
- Former trainees who are already working in the FSS field.

Communication of VET Providers with FSS representatives through:

- Open/structured discussions;
- Workshops, focus groups, and public advocacy;
- Consultation sessions;

To present the current educational programme and the changes considered to be made and then discuss it with FSS experts.

Collecting feedback from former students on FSS by:

- polling the students;
- personal interviews or focus groups (if it is necessary) to further understand what must be updated or changed.

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Guideline XI

> "To facilitate dialogue between VET and Labour Market pursue constant communication, by using formal and informal methods. "

Description- Set up communication with labour market representatives to create a continuous dialogue. While formal occasions are fundamental to obtain official standards, informal meetings can be crucial to have a more in-depth understanding of employers' needs.

Relevance and Benefits- Opening a line of communication with labour market representatives allows for identification of core skills and competences. Informal meetings could help educators in countries where VET Providers have to follow national guidelines to set up curricula. This represents a good occasion to network and involve employers to fill in the gaps left by national standards. As a consequence, it is possible to obtain curricula that are closer to employers' needs, especially for local labour markets' demands.

Instruments, Tools, and Activities- Suggested activities:

- Organize or attend focus groups, meetings, networking events, etc.;
- Send out questionnaires, surveys, or polls to employers;
- Conduct needs assessment with employers and discuss findings;
- Ask labour market representatives to write letters of intent to estimate their needs.

Guideline XII

> "Stakeholders' involvement: aim for early engagement through the analysis of local and national context."

Description- Analyze organizations, institutions, and labour market representatives to identify potential partners. Reach out to local and national stakeholders to build a network willing and able to support the planning and implementation of training programmes.

Relevance and Benefits- Early involvement is fundamental to deliver high quality trainings adaptable to students' and employers' needs. Ensuring that sectoral stakeholders are able to express their demands from the beginning is an effective way to develop new ideas on work-based projects. Having stakeholders bring their different points of view is an asset because it allows to gain a complete overview of both the sectoral education and labour market.

Instruments, Tools, and Activities- Here are some ideas to engage stakeholders:

- Contact local, regional, national sectoral employers or employment agencies;
- Ask representatives from the sector to be educators for courses;
- Organize or attend focus groups, meetings, networking events, and committees;
- Promote the benefits stemmed from involvement.

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Guideline XIII

> "Practice curriculum revision to keep up with emerging trends and avoid skills mismatch."

Description- To stay updated with emerging trends and develop relevant programmes it is necessary to build internal and external capacity to foster flexibility. Different countries have to follow different procedures to update programmes, but there are methods that can be adapted to distinctive national situations.

Relevance and Benefits- Making sure that the curriculum is up to date enables VET Providers to offer trainings for emerging skills before competitors do. Updating the curriculum is also a way to ensure that programmes respond to the latest labour market requests. Finally, updating the curriculum allows better matches between skills requested and skills taught, which helps to reduce training times once a new graduate has found employment.

Instruments, Tools, and Activities-   Option for curriculum revision:

- Insert practical activities in the programme so students learn how to apply skills;
- Offer work-based learning as form of filling in the gaps left by textbook lessons;
- Poll students on preparedness of the staff and on the learning environment;
- Create committees or groups able to discuss data collected from employers, students, graduates, and stakeholders in order to identify emerging trends and needs.

Guideline XIV

> "Involve certified advisors or other professionals as teachers or trainers for your educational programmes."

Description- An effective way to stay updated on employers' needs is to hire professionals from the FSS field. Doing this, learners are able to get first hand information on skills and competences needed.

Relevance and Benefits- Acquire updated information from certified professionals about current market needs is one of the fundamental benefits from this practice. Moreover, students profit from their expertise because are able to understand the more practical aspects of the job, and are made aware of what type of competences are required to work in the FSS. Finally, VET Providers are able to offer relevant and up to date trainings, increasing their competitiveness on the market.

Instruments, Tools, and Activities- Use professional networks to find specialists willing to be involved in training. It is possible to trailor their participation in the programmes to the different needs, from short lectures to full-time trainers. In order to make the process easier, it is possible to find certified professionals using specific online tools like this one developed by EFPA, available following the link or with a Google search.

"Decide and implement quality indicators and assessment processes to monitor how programmes are evaluated."

Description- VET Providers are constantly engaged in checking the quality of the trainings they offer. However, it is also as important to set up clear indicators and processes in order to make sure that the evaluation procedures are up to date and relevant. This will allow Providers to develop and maintain high standards for the quality of the whole institution.

Relevance and Benefits- Evaluation is a significant part of Quality Assurance systems. It is important that the evaluation process is also assessed and monitored, to ensure that targeted and effective actions are being taken in terms of improvement.

Advantages of monitoring the evaluation process:

• Better overview of the overall quality;

• Making sure you are measuring the right indicators;

• Possibility to further improve programmes.

Instruments, Tools, and Activities- Examples of good practices and tools:

- Half year and year monitoring of evaluations;

- Quality goals tied to evaluation;

- Implementation plan in regards to half year and year evaluations.

4. CONCLUSION

EQAFIT's Activity 4- Tools and Guidelines- has been researched and drafted in line with the project's overall objectives: improve QA systems in VET programmes and develop an Online Service for VET Providers.

The first goal has, in our opinion, been achieved: the EQAFIT Partnership has collected practical suggestions and recommendations related to different aspects of the QA system and feedback loops. Each theme has been selected because it has been deemed an important part of the process that needed to be included to make sure the guidelines are representative of the issues one might encounter. In particular, we developed the Guidelines as suggestions or recommendations while also providing Tools to help navigate problems and put into practice these pieces of advice with concrete solutions.

In regards to the creation of an Online Service for VET Providers, the Tools and Guidelines produced will be used as a base for the upcoming result of Intellectual Output 3. Please stay tuned and follow our social media channels to learn more on that!

We believe that we made available high-quality guidelines and tools that highlight the importance that Quality Assurance holds in the PDCA cycle. The idea of ensuring that VET programming in the FSS is constantly up to date and relevant is, in our opinion, the central pillar when it comes to providing learners with prime education. In fact, Quality Assurance systems are of benefit not only for Providers looking to improve their organizations procedures, but also for learners that are given the guarantee of receiving a high-quality education or training.

The quality of education is a European priority and, in this Partnership's shared opinion, is in line with the ultimate goal of EQAFIT's project: developing open-source materials that will improve and harmonize education for all students, reducing barriers that represent a hindrance in this sector. Ultimately, enhancing Quality Assurance in the Financial training brings benefits that allow to strengthen students' rights to high quality programmes and training in VET.