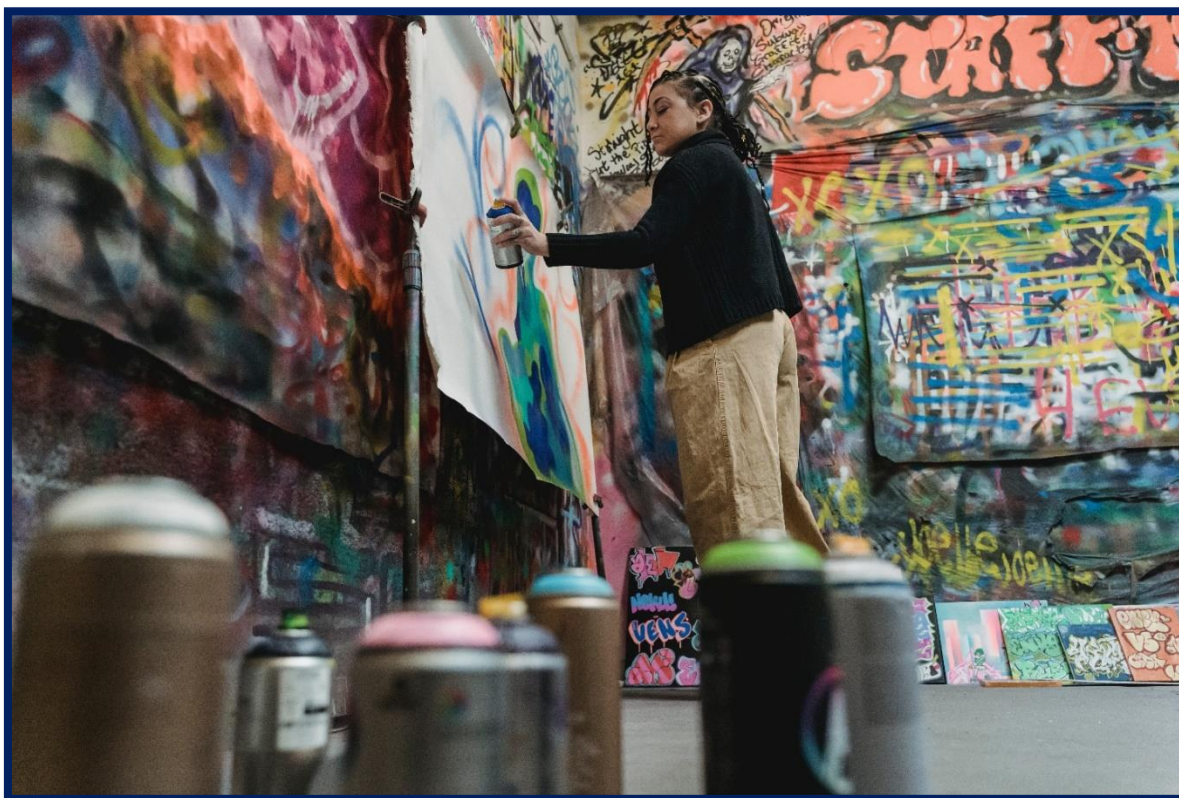


Report about training experiences on quality assurance in Europe:

Training on Capacity Building for Quality Networks Implementation and Sustainability



Source: Photo by Felicity Tai on Pexels

Project number: 2020-1-SK01-KA202-078249.

EU Programme - ERASMUS + Key Action 2: Strategic Partnerships supporting Innovation.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

| | |
|---------|---|
| A | Activity |
| EC | European Commission |
| EU | European Union |
| EQAVET | European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training |
| IO | Intellectual Output |
| PRM | Peer Review Methodology |
| QP | Quality Plan |
| QA | Quality Assurance |
| QAS | Quality Assurance System |
| QC | Qualifica Centers |
| QN | Quality Networks |
| QUANTUM | QUANTUM - QUALity Networks: fine-Tuning Monitoring systems for better performances in VET |
| VET | Vocational Education and Training |

About the QUANTUM project

The QUANTUM project aims to promote the relevance and effectiveness of **vocational education and training (VET)** and its contribution to employment in Europe. The intent of the project is to create and test a new monitoring system based on feedback loops and graduate tracking in order to strengthen quality assurance through **quality networks (QN) in Slovakia, Austria, Italy and Portugal**.

The transnational project partnership supported by the Erasmus+ programme will use **the peer review method** during the implementation of the project, which will foster cooperation between stakeholders in VET and will provide an opportunity for mutual learning and professional growth.

The **QUANTUM consortium** is led by SIOV - State Vocational Education Institute (Slovakia) with partners from Portugal (CECOA), Italy (FORMA.Azione SRL and REGIONE UMBRIA) and Austria (AK Salzburg).

QUANTUM project started in December 2020 and ends in May 2023.

For more information see <https://www.quality-networks.eu/>

Introduction

The **report about training experiences on Quality Assurance in Europe** describes the period from April 2022 to May 2023 in Slovakia, Italy, Portugal and Austria, the four (4) QUANTUM consortium European partners, bringing together the training strategy, the results achieved, and the lessons learned that can be transferable and/or adapted to other vocational education and training (VET) settings in Europe.

The training about **Capacity Building for Quality Networks Implementation and Sustainability** within QUANTUM project aims at, paving the way to the implementation of QNs at national level, by empowering VET stakeholders and favouring the professional development of VET staff, letting them acquire awareness of their role in quality assurance systems and specific competences for self and peer assessment.

The aim of a Quality Network is to strengthen trust and facilitate mutual learning and sharing of VET quality assurance practices at national and international level.

For that purpose, a common curriculum, including learning outcomes, training plan and learning materials, was developed within the QUANTUM project (Intellectual Output 2 - IO2)ⁱ, with seven (7) units described below, and adapted according to each country needs and national scenario on VET landscape. The curriculum is 30 hours long, being 10 hours similar for all partners and 20 hours of open curriculum depending on each national context and demand.

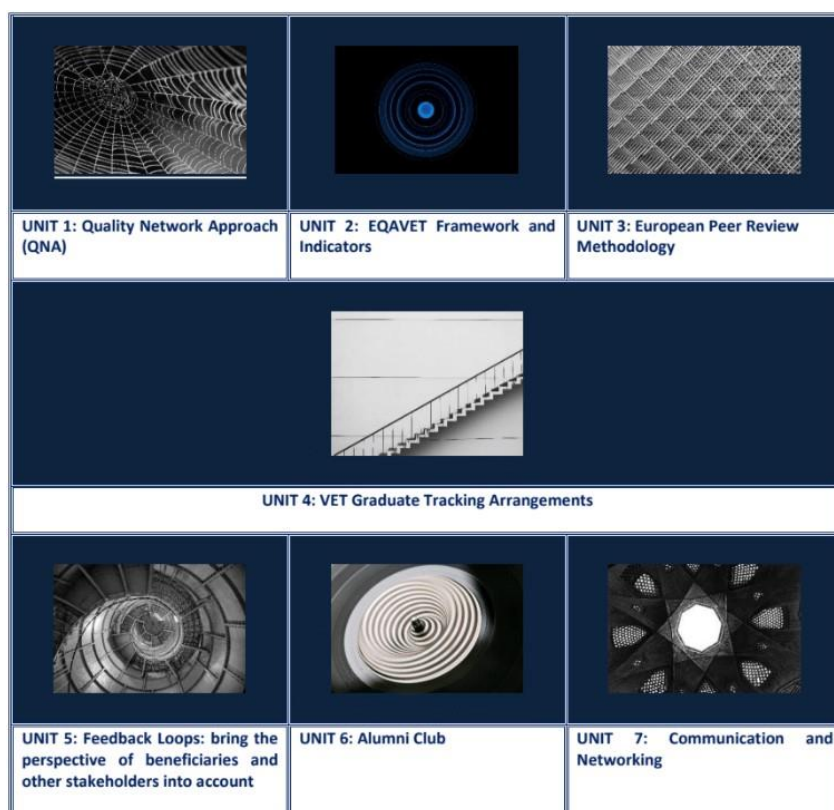


Figure 1: The seven (7) units of the QUANTUM Curriculum

The training was developed and implemented following different strategies according to each national VET landscape, aiming at specific stakeholders. Nonetheless, all QUANTUM countries implemented a common training aimed at paving the way to Quality Networks Implementation and Sustainability.

General overview

The training about **Capacity Building for Quality Networks Implementation and Sustainability** within QUANTUM project target different stakeholders in each country (i.e. Slovakia, Italy, Portugal and Austria), as following:



Figure 2: QUANTUM consortium countries in Europeⁱⁱ

- In **Slovakia**, the focus was on VET schools, school founders, school management and teachers, self-governing regions in the country for whom the training was considered to be useful and able to bring benefits to improve Quality Assurance (QA) within a Quality Network Approach (QNA).
- In **Italy**, the focus was at regional level, specifically in the Umbria Region, bringing an institutional partner into the QUANTUM training promotion and support, namely ARPAL, the Regional Agency for Active Labour Market Policies in the country. ARPAL presence required the adoption of formal processes and steps at all stages of the training programme implementation, from selection of participants to assessment, to build a system coherent with the existing regional landscape and the ongoing policymaking in VET.
- In **Portugal**, the QUANTUM training was developed at national level within the Qualifica Centers (QC), to test, implement and sustain a long-term proposal of an informal network of VET providers with a specific location in the VET Portuguese frame: validation of non-formal and informal

learning /accreditation of prior learning. The QC are state supported, being validation and qualification centres for adults. In 2016, the Portuguese government launched the QC programme, aiming at improving the qualification levels of adults and providing a better way for entrance in the labour market. The philosophy underpinning QC is based upon a lifelong learning perspective, looking at the interconnection between education, vocational training, qualification and employment of adults, one of the major challenges in Portugal, which is the second country in the EU with the highest number of persons without secondary education (52% for 22,5% EU average). Currently, there are 319 QC all around the country.

- In **Austria**, the QUANTUM training was focused on the field of elementary education and elementary pedagogy, due to the specificities of the Austrian landscape in VET, bringing together experts from all over the province of Salzburg, having politics, social partnership, teachers, professors, employers and employees in an online training approach because of the pandemic's restrictions at the time.

Regarding the implementation timeline, model of learning adopted, and units of the QUANTUM curriculum implemented, the national landscapes are compared below:

| Country | Implementation timeline/Nº hours | Model of Learning | QUANTUM Training Units developed |
|----------|---|---|----------------------------------|
| Slovakia | April to October 2022/36 hours | Seminars/training, in presence and recommendation that every registered participant engage in a self-study model of 4 hour, using materials send by email, to enhance a learning experience, empowering participants before the seminars (i.e., be familiar with terminology and having a better understanding providing mutual learning and professional growth) | Units 1,2, 3 and 4 |
| Italy | April 2022 to February 2023/30 hours | Short sessions, in presence and self-learning using resources made available in a shared Drive folder named "QUANTUM Rete per la Qualità" | Units 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7 |
| Portugal | April 2022 to May 2023/30 hours | Online training using Zoom platform with synchronous material and asynchronous with expertise/ external training, having a shared online space. Due to national needs, an asynchronous manual with the seven (7) units was developed in Portuguese to allow sustainability of the Portuguese QN, that includes a script/road map to navigate across the QUANTUM curriculum. Besides, and as a direct result of the training activities, a 1 st informal meeting of the PT QN, was held online in February 2023 as a formal kick-off of the PT QN | Unit 1, 3 and 7 |
| Austria | April 2022 to October 2022/13 hours (note: justified within the scope of the QUANTUM project reflecting Austrian VET reality) | Using BarCamp, online via Zoom due to pandemic restrictions, allowing however to reach a larger audience. The BarCamp was the kick-off practical part for implementing a Community of Practice. | Units 1, 4 and 6 |

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| | | <p>In addition, a monitoring report for the Austrian community of practice was developed to cover, among other relevant topics, the units that were not developed during the QUANTUM project timeline to guarantee sustainability of the QNA</p> | |
|--|--|--|--|

Table 1: Implementation timeline, n^o hours, model of learning and training units developed in the QUANTUM consortium countries

Framework on Quality/VET/National practices

The QUANTUM consortium countries have different VET realities, being described below by country, to allow transferability to similar contexts when planning to implement QN in the VET sector within the strategy and implementation guidelines developed and tested by the fours (4) European countries.

| Country | VET key-institutions | VET landscape description |
|----------|---|--|
| Slovakia | <p>The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (MESRS) is the key institution responsible for setting policy priorities and the framework for VET delivery. ŠIOV is an agency of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic in charge of vocational education.</p> <p>External evaluation of VET, including conditions of education and training and management is carried out by the State School Inspectorate (SSI).</p> <p>All schools are obliged to submit an annual report to the school board and the founder for approval. The report is an evaluation of the conceptual plan for the school development for at least two years, and of the educational activities, their results and conditions, but it is often only a formal fulfilment of the legal obligation without the application of feedback and other quality assurance mechanisms.</p> | <p>The Slovak economy is largely driven by manufacturing and could benefit from more diversification to make it less sensitive to economic shocks and more skill-intensive jobs, encouraging innovation. According to OECD, Slovakia is one of the most vulnerable countries to be affected by automation.</p> <p>VET has traditionally played a strong role, responsible for around two-thirds of graduates at upper secondary level. But qualifications do not always match labour market needs. A 'dual' VET scheme was introduced in 2015/16 as one way to address mismatch. First results show greater involvement of employers in VET, underlining the interest of attracting learners and deliver job-relevant training. The Strategy for Lifelong Learning and Counselling 2021-2023 sets among its goals "... to ink education and the labour market more effectively, with an emphasis on expected changes in the structure of jobs and increase the efficiency and flexibility of the Slovak qualification system".</p> |
| Italy | <p>The Italian context in VET has several institutional players at national and regional level, in addition to the important role played by the social partners. According to Title V (Article 117) of the Constitution, (i) the State defines the general rules and basic principles of education; (ii) the Regions have legislative authority over VET; (iii) education falls within the sphere of influence of both, without prejudice to the margin of autonomy left to educational institutions. Regarding the interconnection between the various policy areas, the Ministries of Education and Labour and the Regions finalise agreements within the Joint Conference of State and Regions. The aim is to define topics of common interest, albeit at different levels of responsibility. The role of</p> | <p>When looking in detail to the VET landscape in Italy, the QA systems in place for VET institutions are also depending on the regional context, namely Regions are in charge of structuring the regional Accreditation systems, in coherence with the criteria set by the State with Decree 166 of 2001 and with reference to the following requisites: (i) managerial and logistical capacity; (ii) economic situation; (iii) professional skills; (iv) levels of effectiveness and efficiency in previously implemented activities; (v) interrelationships developed with the social and productive system in the area. In 2008 in the State-Regions Conference considered necessary to intervene on the accreditation system for its due updating. It was proposed to intervene on the methods for guaranteeing the quality of the services provided to citizens/users, making accreditation a functional tool for raising the quality and effectiveness of training systems and, therefore, for favouring their integration with other systems in the various territories, in the perspective of lifelong learning. This mainly through a greater focus on indicators on the quality of the service provided, with a model responding to common minimum standards at a national level, which avoids the fragmentation of the supply in solely regional systems. When it comes to the tracking of</p> |

the social partners is crucial as they contribute to the definition and implementation of the active labour market policies, especially about VET and lifelong learning.

graduates and the performances after training completion, the monitoring of employment outcomes can take place through several instruments, such as (i) with the evaluation of employment outcomes within the ESF ROP through the independent evaluator; (ii) with the evaluation of employment outcomes carried out by the competent administration on specific public notices or by an external commissioned subject; (iii) as part of the activities of the Regional Labour Market Observatory, regional node of the national network, aimed at monitoring market needs and useful tool for the definition of training and labour policies supported by the Region; (iv) with the interoperability of information systems (data on the employment of trainees are extrapolated from the regional information system SIUL, Register of Enterprises, CCIAA, SIRU).

Portugal

VET is a shared responsibility between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour (and related bodies), underlining the difficulties to implement one single mechanism to be used by all different types of VET providers and include all variety of VET provision. The main bodies involved, at system level are DGERT (General Directorate for Employment and Industrial Relations), depending on the Ministry of Labour; ANQEP, I.P. (National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education), depending on the Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Education, in coordination with the Ministry of Economics; DGEstE (The Ministry of Education, through DGEstE - the Directorate-General for Schools certifies public schools and teachers), depending on the Ministry of Education; IEFP (Institute for Employment and Vocational Training), depending on the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security; as well sectoral public institutions, that control the provision of specific courses for regulated professions, depending on different governmental bodies. At providers level, each provider has their quality certified according to certification systems (depending on the VET provision offered), many have other quality management systems in place (ISO9001 being the most popular).

VET being a shared responsibility, make it difficult to implement one single mechanism to be used by all different types of VET providers and include all variety of VET provision. Regarding monitoring and evaluation tools for graduate tracking at system level, (i) national EQAVET model requires data collection by the VET providers on the EQAVET indicators 5 and 6; (ii) certification process run by DGERT includes a certification dimension “Results analysis, post-training evaluation and continuous improvement” that points out for the need to VET providers to track graduate pathways after the end of the training; (iii) monitoring developed within the scope of the ESF Operational Programs, but considered to be “*fragmented and incomplete*” (OECD, 2021); (iv) some DGEEC (Directorate-General for Education and Science Statistics) studies/reports that follow the transition between secondary and higher education in a limited period of time , but do not include the entire VET offer; (v) IEFP being able to cross information with Social Security data (not following the complete graduate tracking). Concerning initiatives and projects supporting QA, there are six (6) practices in place, such as (i) ISO 9001 certification; (ii) DGERT Certification; (iii) national EQAVET model developed by ANQEP; (iv) the work carried out in the area of QA in training by DGERT and ANQEP; (v) Qualifica Centers (QC) monitoring and reporting tools; and (vi) two important national and European forums for sharing and cooperation, namely the REFERNET, coordinated in Portugal by DGERT and the European cooperation network EQAVET (ANQEP is currently the National Reference Point; DGERT has an active participation over the years).

Austria

For QUANTUM purposes, focus in on the field of elementary education and elementary pedagogy. The federal government is responsible for uniformizing training of elementary teachers at the educational institutions for elementary education, as well as for all pedagogical, content-related and professional matters of the educational institutions for elementary education and the educational institutions for social pedagogy, as well as the new technical college for pedagogical assistant professions. Legislation and enforcement in matters of staffing, financial and pedagogical framework conditions are the responsibility of the nine federal states.

The federal states regulate the framework conditions for elementary educational institutions and finance them accordingly. In terms of framework conditions, the federal legislator only has a coordinating function. Since 2008, however, the federal government has been continuously investing in the expansion of elementary educational institutions and in the compulsory non-contributory kindergarten year before entry into school, as well as in early language support based on Art. 15a B-VG agreement with the federal states. About two thirds of the expenses for childcare facilities are borne by the municipalities. Most of the money goes to facilities owned by the municipalities, the rest as subsidies to private childcare facilities. In the case of pedagogical staff, there is co-financing by the federal states; only in Lower Austria is the staff provided directly by the federal state. The municipalities receive subsidies from the federal government and the provinces for additional costs incurred by the expansion of services (increase in childcare rates, language support). Thus, in elementary education, a fragmentation of the law and financing is evident. In the eyes of many educators, a uniform federal law would be desirable. Furthermore, the academisation of the professional field of elementary education would also be an important step



| | |
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| | to focus on the quality of the training and to make the study programme accessible not only to graduates of the Bafeps. |
|--|---|

Table 2: QUANTUM description of the framework on Quality/VET/National practices in Slovakia, Italy, Portugal and Austria

Description of QUANTUM training

The QUANTUM consortium countries developed the training adapted to each national needs, considering VET national landscapes.

Regarding **Slovakia**, **SIOV** did three (3) **seminars/trainings**, alongside with **self-study** sessions, with the purpose of creating a space for informal networking and cooperation in the region. Below is the description of the Slovakian training events.

| Date, place and name | Nº of participants and description | QUANTUM training units developed | Nº hours |
|--|--|--|----------|
| 5th of April 2022, Banská Bystrica, "Building a culture of quality in education" | 31 participants: teachers, employees of The Methodology and Pedagogy Centre and representatives of the "Catching up Regions" project from self-governing region in Banská Bystrica | Unit 1, 2 | 8 hours |
| 28th of June 2022, Žilina, "Supporting schools in the implementation of quality assurance processes" | 24 participants: Teachers, representatives of secondary VET schools, State School Inspection | Unit 3, 4, 5, 6 | 8 hours |
| 11-12th of October 2022, Zvolen, "Quality tools" | 27 participants (see above) | Unit 3, 4, 5, 6, | 16 hours |
| Self-study | As above | Study materials send by email with a template of self- assessment report, European Peer Review manual, presentations and materials of the "Project On Track" | 4 hours |

Table 3: Slovakia QUANTUM training description

In **Italy**, **FORMA.Azione** did **short sessions**, alongside with **self-learning**, to facilitate the participation of VET professionals and stakeholders. Below is the description of the Italian training sessions.

| Date, place and name | Nº of participants and description | QUANTUM training units developed | Nº hours |
|--|---|--|-----------|
| 20th April 2022, online/Zoom, Preliminary online meeting | 16 persons from partners, regional PAs, Chamber of Commerce, accredited VET providers and social parts. All those who could not attend, have had access to the training materials used via the shared Drive folder. | Presentation of the QUANTUM Curriculum and the capacity building process that QUANTUM project brings | 1 hour |
| 05th May 2022, venue of Regione Umbria | 20 persons from partners, regional PAs, Chamber of Commerce, accredited VET providers and social parts. All those who could not attend, have had access to the training materials used via the shared Drive folder. | Unit 1, 2, 4, 5 | 8 hours |
| 6th July 2022, venue of FORMA.Azione | 16 persons from partners, regional PAs, Chamber of Commerce, accredited VET providers and social parts. All those who could not attend, have had access to the training materials used via the shared Drive folder. | Unit 1, 4 | 4,5 hours |
| 16th September 2022, venue of FORMA.Azione | 16 persons from partners, regional PAs, Chamber of Commerce, accredited VET providers and social parts. | Unit 4 | 4 hours |

| | | | |
|---|--|---|-----------|
| | All those who could not attend, have had access to the training materials used via the shared Drive folder. | | |
| 17th January 2023, venue of FORMA.Azione | 13 persons from partners, regional PAs, Chamber of Commerce, accredited VET providers and social parts. All those who could not attend, have had access to the training materials used via the shared Drive folder. | Unit 3 | 4 hours |
| 28th February 2023, venue of FORMA.Azione | First act of the QN towards other accredited VET centres and VET stakeholders at regional level; participation to this session has been recognised by the Accreditation system of Regione Umbria as requisite for the maintenance of the accreditation of VET Centres in the category staff continuous professional development) | Unit 1, 2, 3 + “Employment outcomes questionnaire” (co-designed by the members of the Quality Networks informally established in Umbria) | 3,5 hours |
| Self-learning | N/A | Resources made available in a shared Drive folder “QUANTUM Rete per la Qualità” focusing on QN instruments, Peer Review Methodology, implementation of QN, etc. | 5 hours |

Table 4: Italy QUANTUM training description

In Portugal, CECOIA did **online synchronous and asynchronous training sessions** added by a manual developed for the seven (7) units with a script/road map to navigate across the curriculum in Portuguese and made available at CECOIA website. Also, all training sessions had a manual/guide for training purposes.

| Date, place and name | Nº of participants and description | QUANTUM training units developed | Nº hours |
|--|---|----------------------------------|-----------|
| 24th of May 2022, from 3 to 5.30 pm, online/Zoom (QC are all over the country) | 27 participants: 12 coordinators of QC from several regions of the country, 12 Technicians of Orientation, Recognition and Validation of Competences (TORVC) and 3 trainers working in the QC's | Unit 1 | 2,5 hours |
| 26th of May 2022, from 3 to 5.30 pm, online/Zoom (QC are all over the country) | 24 participants: 11 coordinators of QC from several regions of the country, 11 Technicians of Orientation, Recognition and Validation of Competences (TORVC) and 2 trainers working in the QC's | Unit 3 | 2,5 hours |
| 19th July 2022, from 3 to 5.30 pm, online/Zoom (QC are all over the country) | 14 participants: 5 coordinators of QC from several regions of the country, 8 Technicians of Orientation, Recognition and Validation of Competences (TORVC) and 1 trainer working in the QC's | Unit 3 | 2,5 hours |
| 21th July 2022, from 3 to 5.30 pm, online/Zoom (QC are all over the country) | 13 participants: 4 coordinators of QC from several regions of the country, 7 Technicians of Orientation, Recognition and Validation of Competences (TORVC) and 2 trainers working in the QC's | Unit 3 | 2,5 hours |
| 13th December 2022, from 3 to 5.30 pm, online/Zoom (QC are all over the country) | 16 participants: 8 coordinators of QC from several regions of the country, 8 Technicians of Orientation, Recognition and Validation of Competences (TORVC) and 2 of the TORVC are also trainers | Unit 7 | 2,5 hours |
| 15th December, from 3 to 5.30 pm, online/Zoom (QC are all over the country) | 11 participants: 6 coordinators of QC from several regions of the country, 5 Technicians of Orientation, Recognition and Validation of Competences (TORVC) | Unit 7 | 2,5 hours |

| | | | |
|---|-----|---|----------|
| 15th December 2022 to 15th January 2023, send by email to the participants of the above previous sessions | N/A | Asynchronous training with a manual + materials developed especially for the training, focusing the needs of the QC in Portuguese | 5 hours |
| Self-learning | N/A | Asynchronous manual available at CECOA website, with the QUANTUM seven (7) units, developed in Portuguese to allow sustainability of the Portuguese QN, includes a script/road map to navigate across the QUANTUM curriculum (link: CECOA website). Besides, a 1st informal meeting of the PT QN, was held online in February 2023 as a formal kick-off of the PT QN having an average of 62 participants that are now part of the PQ QN | 10 hours |

Table 5: Portugal QUANTUM training description

In **Austria, AK Salzburg** focused on setting up a **Community of Practice**, using the new and agile tool “BarCamp” to bring together the community and show the importance of a strong network.

| Date, place and name | Nº of participants and description | QUANTUM training units developed | Nº hours |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|----------|
| Training Part 1, Online, April 2022 | 48 experts from various fields participated in the Barcamp and became part of our community of practice | Unit 1 + having always four or five online sessions running in parallel. AK worked with David Röthler, expert on social media, education (MOOCs, webinars) and European funded projects. After the Barcamp, a summary of the most important statements and results and presented on AK website (see Ergebnisse Online-Barcamp Elementarbildung Arbeiterkammer Salzburg) | 5 hours |
| Training Part 2, Online, October 2022 | 14 participants: VET providers, employees and employees of a public authority or social partner and employers | Unit 4, 6 + having invited experts from the University of Vienna and Salzburg University of Applied Sciences | 8 hours |

Table 6: Austria QUANTUM training description

Description of the participants

QUANTUM training participants are mainly women in all four (4) QUANTUM consortium countries (i.e., Slovakia, Italy, Portugal and Austria).

Concerning **Slovakia**, the main target groups were the following:

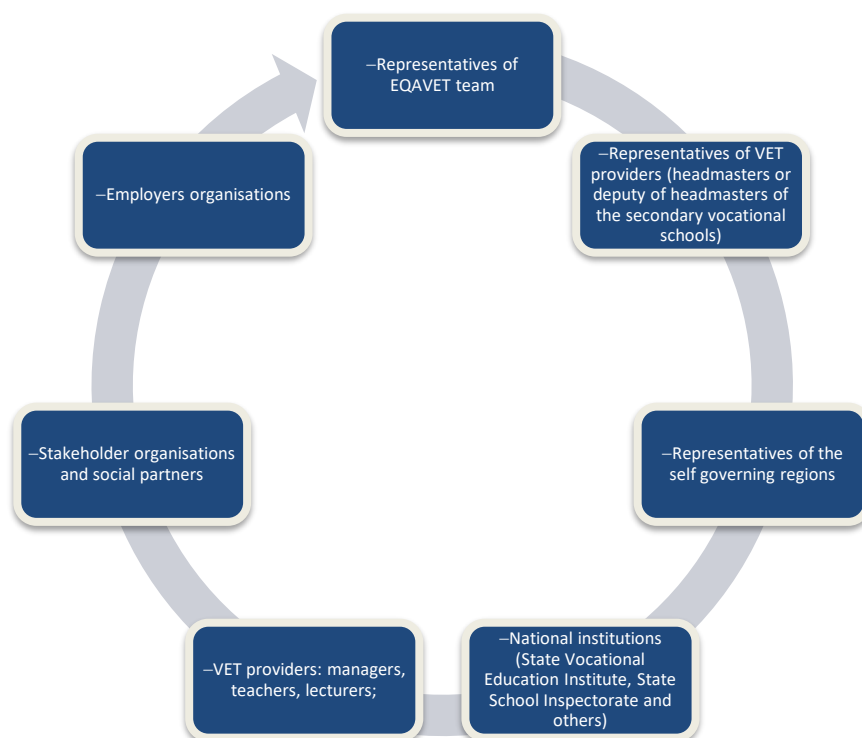


Figure 3: Slovakia QUANTUM training main target groups

Regarding participants profile, SIOV underlined that:

- 89% were VET providers
- 5% were school founders
- 5% were public authorities
- 1% others

In **Italy**, **FORMA.Azione** developed the QUANTUM training considering the specificities of the Italian VET landscape. In doing so, and to avoid possible conflicts of interest and arbitrary decisions by the involved partners, Regione Umbria has made a restricted call for participants targeting all the social partners that are usually involved in the consultation processes with the public authority. The initial call was sent to 15 organisations such as employers' associations, trade unions, relevant public bodies and VET providers. 13 out of 15 have accepted to be involved in the capacity building process.

The Italian organisations that participated in the training are illustrated as following:

| Organisation Identification | Type |
|---|--|
| Confartigianato | Employers Association (crafts sector) |
| APMI Confapi Perugia | Vet centre of the Employers Association for PMI |
| Coldiretti Umbria | Employers Association (agriculture) |
| ARPAL Umbria | Regional Agency for Active Labour Market Policies |
| Confindustria Umbria | Employers Association (industry) |
| Confagricoltura | Employers Association (agriculture) |
| Ufficio consiglieria di Parità Regione Umbria | Regional Gender Equality Counsellor / Regione Umbria |
| CIDA | Professionals' Association (Managers) |
| Associazione Italiana Formatori | Trainers' national association |
| Confcommercio | Employers Association (trade sector) |
| Cia-Agricoltori italiani dell'Umbria | Employers Association (agriculture) |
| CISL Terni | Trade Union |
| Camera di Commercio dell'Umbria | Chamber of Commerce |

Table 7: Italy QUANTUM training main target groups

In **Portugal**, the stakeholders engaged (see below) in the project allowed **CECOA** to select the best target group to develop an efficient training that ended up in the creation of an informal QN, namely with members of the QCs from all regions of the country.

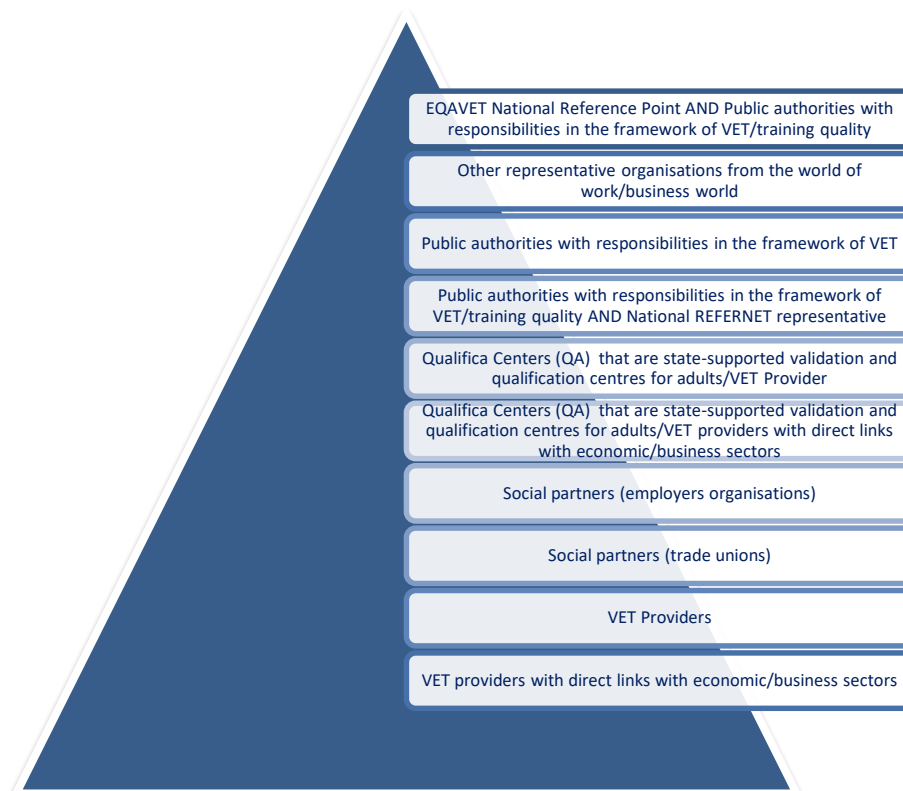


Figure 4: Portugal QUANTUM training main target groups

CECOA developed the training near coordinators, technicians and trainers of QCs around the country. The majority were also women, like in the other QUANTUM countries, but with a higher percentage of gender imbalance. 50% with 41 to 50 years old and 40,9% having a bachelor's degree.

In **Austria**, the main target groups were the following:

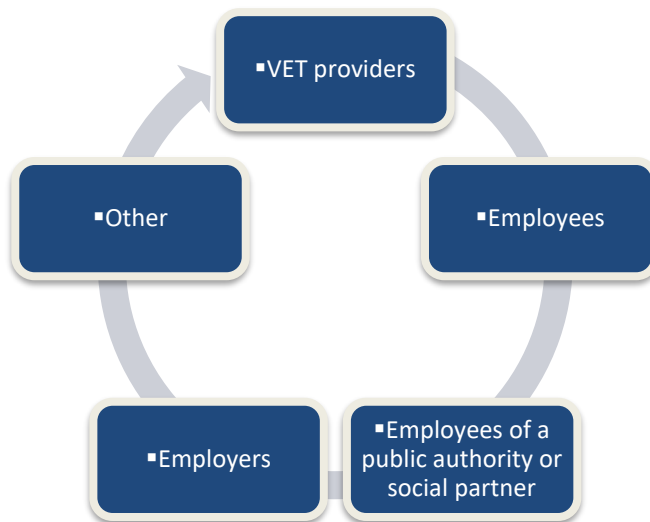


Figure 5: Austria QUANTUM training main target groups

Regarding participants profile, AK Salzburg underlines that:

- 53% were VET providers
- 33% were employees of a public authority or social partners
- 14% others

Scenarios and simulations done

In **Slovakia, SIOV** created a Quality network as an informal, safe and creative space to share best practices in bigger or smaller groups, highlighting that the evaluation questionnaires played a huge role in satisfaction. In the framework of trainings, events, conferences and mobilities, we strive to raise awareness in the field of quality assurance, quality tools and the activities of the Quantum project. Regarding scenarios and simulation done, Slovakia used various informal approaches and games such as playing card, DIXIT cards, also case studies, SWOT analyses and studies from abroad, examples of surveys for graduate tracking, among other.

In **Italy, FORMA.Azione** underline the creation of an informal learning environment as well to develop a sense of ownership for participants over the whole process. Bearing that in mind, in each session a part was dedicated to trainees sharing knowledge or their experiences on the different topics covered by the QUANTUM training units. Regarding simulations done, Italy focused on the construction of a monitoring tool integrating the good practices of VET Italian landscape. The shared Drive mentioned earlier allowed for the follow-up of the monitoring tool. The simulation exercise proved to be the first step developed later on as an activity of the QN at regional level, that started with the analysis of 5 surveys in use for monitoring graduates' destinations and employment achievements.

In **Portugal, CECOIA** created a safe and empowering sharing space as well, with a practical focus on what are the QCs concerns in Portugal VET landscape. With that aim, CECOIA used its own model of self-assessment to kick-off the training and looking at the near future (i.e., to create an informal PT QN), based upon the Quality Guidelines/QC Quality Charter in Portugal. Exercises such as picking up an animal and describe it as a logo of your QC, picking up three (3) characteristics of your QC, drawing on an imaginary QC to solve issues, a SWOT analysis on the Peer Review Methodology, an internal and external contact network list, several exercises to develop communication and network, asynchronous manual training for the seven (7) units referred earlier with several practical exercises (see [QUANTUM Training Seven Units Manual CECOIA PT](#)). During the online training sessions, the participants were divided into several sub-sessions to develop teamwork, being ascribed to smaller groups, aleatory to allow different geographical QCs to have practical knowledge of each other, with a very high level of engagement, bringing in the end to the whole group their conclusions to debate in the results and create a prospective future for an efficient QC QN. These exercises ended up with the creation of a template for the first meeting of the informal PT QN named "Qualifica em Rede" (QR) that is available in the QR shared space, focusing on (i) identity; (ii) objectives; (iii) structure, organization and operation; (iv) institutional communication; (v) activities / topics and (vi) recommendations from a bottom-up perspective (i.e. from QC to public authorities).

In **Austria, AK** used "BarCamp" creating a session plan, in which everyone could contribute with topics that were then discussed with other interested parties in online rooms, the one who introduced the session also moderated it and each individual session lasted 45 minutes. In each session there was someone who documented the most important findings, results, statements. In that sense, there were always four or five online sessions running in parallel. Everyone could participate in the session that interested them the most. The use of digital tools is part of the BarCamp logic, and despite being relatively unknown in Salzburg, the participants actively contributed right from the start. The participants came up with many session proposals and in the session rooms there was an exciting, open but appreciative exchange.

Evaluation of the training by the participants

The QUANTUM training evaluation was collected in different ways, adapted to each national experience and target groups. However, in general, all countries of the QUANTUM consortium manifested their willingness of being a QN member.

Slovakia presented the results of the evaluation done using two (2) instruments:

- (i) Anonymous questionnaire: 85 % participants consider the training was relevant for their further professional development in quality assurance; **87,5 % participants were willing to become a member of network** and 81,3% wanted to be a peer evaluator.
- (ii) A checklist about having knowledge or not regarding QA, quality culture, quality improvement, quality system, awareness of the steps of the quality cycle, working in a team, team planning, assessing context and risks internally and externally, doing a SWOT analysis, having an institutional strategic plan and action plan, knowledge of evaluation of data collection and able to develop a collection plan for feedback purposes, knowledge of peer review methodology. The checklist was used to determine the participants' current knowledge so that we could adjust the content and level of expertise provided during the training. The participants were diverse since the quality network is constantly open to new members. Below are the evaluated input data:

| QUESTION | Yes | Partly | No |
|--|--------|--------|--------|
| I understand the terms quality assurance, quality culture, quality improvement, quality system | 75,86% | 20,69% | 3,45% |
| I can distinguish the individual steps of the quality cycle | 55,17% | 36,21% | 8,62% |
| I am motivated to actively participate in the work of the team | 86,21% | 12,07% | 1,72% |
| I can motivate other team members to participate in team planning | 50,00% | 36,21% | 10,34% |
| I can assess the internal and external context of the institution and contribute to shaping its objectives | 41,38% | 46,55% | 12,07% |
| I can analyse and assess risks | 44,83% | 46,55% | 6,90% |
| I can define risk prevention measures | 39,66% | 50,00% | 10,34% |

| | | | |
|--|--------|--------|--------|
| I can perform a SWOT analysis | 67,24% | 22,41% | 10,34% |
| The institution has a defined vision/mission/strategic plan | 70,69% | 18,97% | 10,34% |
| I can create a realistic annual action plan | 48,28% | 46,55% | 3,45% |
| I can contribute to the development of the team's vision and mission | 74,14% | 22,41% | 3,45% |
| I am aware of the importance and benefits of quality assurance and quality improvement | 84,48% | 12,07% | 3,45% |
| I can create an evaluation data collection plan | 50,00% | 36,21% | 13,79% |
| I can organise, collect and use feedback from students | 82,76% | 17,24% | 1,72% |
| I carry out data collection for the purpose of feedback from students/graduates | 51,72% | 31,03% | 17,24% |
| I know the Peer Review method | 27,59% | 39,66% | 32,76% |
| I can organise peer review | 13,79% | 24,14% | 62,07% |

Italy applied an initial and final self-assessment questionnaire. The tool was the same for the 2 assessments, using Google Forms. The structure of the assessment, asking participants how confident they feel on performing the tasks described is the following:

- 1. Actively participate in setting up a Quality Network**
2. Apply the EQAVET framework in the evaluation of VET quality
3. Plan and apply the European Peer Review Methodology
4. Implement QA practices and tools for graduate tracking
5. Plan and implement graduate tracking measures
6. Collect and analyse data on VET graduates
7. Plan and put into practice feedback loops among the key stakeholders
8. Implement QA practices and tools functional to feedback loops
9. Identify tools and procedures, online and offline, for feedback loops
10. Establish contacts with the key VET stakeholders
11. Communicate effectively with other professionals in the VET sector.

In the initial assessment, the task were the participants felt more comfortable was n° 10 (i.e. Establish contacts with the key VET stakeholders) representing 83% of the answers, followed by n° 1 (i.e. **Actively participate in setting up a Quality Network), with (73%)**, alongside with n° 6 (i.e. Collect and analyse data on VET graduates) and n° 11 (i.e. Communicate effectively with other professionals in the VET sector). The participants assessed that they are not that stronger on applying the EQAVET framework in the evaluation of VET quality (n°2), with 45%. Finally, regarding implementing QA practices and tools for graduate tracking (n° 4), represents 36%. When comparing with the final assessment, the task that has a lower score increased to 64% (i.e. Implement QA practices and tools functional to feedback loops). The trend of getting to be an active part of in setting up a Quality Network continued to show the participants willingness to be part of an implementation of a QN.

Portugal used a mix of quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods, that includes the results of the exercises done, such as the SWOT analysis for example. The feedback was done using google forms to collect an evaluation after the end of each session. The questions are described below:

- The training was useful? (1 = no; 4 =very much)
- How many hours you did of training (1st part)?
- Can you describe the training in five (5) words?
- Would you recommend this training to other VET providers and actors? (1=no; 4=very much)
- What did you like most in the training? Briefly describe it, please.
- What did you not like it in the training? Briefly describe it, please.
- Participants profile: gender, age group and education.
- If you want, leave your contribution to be integrated in the final report on the online QUANTUM training in Portugal.

The results of the quantitative evaluation show that (i) 77% consider the training was useful; (ii) 100% enjoyed the online training; and 68% would recommend this training to other VET providers and actors. Concerning the qualitative evaluation, the five (5) words most used to describe the training were interesting, sharing, dynamic, reflective and useful. After the end of the 1st informal meeting of the QR, the PT QN, **72% would recommend other QC and/or other VET providers to be part of this QN.**

In **Austria**, the evaluation was done using LimeSurvey to collect quantitative results and oral feedback for qualitative purposes. 90% of the participants stated that they were "rather satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the contents and the course of the BarCamp, having also **90 % considering that a strong network as very relevant or relevant for quality improvement and quality assurance**. Regarding qualitative evaluation, it is underlined the idea expressed by one of the participants saying that "Things that were previously a 'backbox' for me have now become tangible" and "I feel very inspired by this day and go home with many ideas".

Conclusions with key findings, lessons and recommendations

The QUANTUM consortium draws on each national experience regarding the QUANTUM training and conclude the following, that can be transferable to other settings:

- The checklist is a good monitoring tool that can show the improvement of competences when it is the same training group from beginning to the end.
- Self-assessment of competences conducted reported an improvement of competences for the professionals involved who felt more equipped to deal with Quality Assurance methodologies and procedures.
- Differences in trainings at regional level demonstrate the need to adapt the training content to each regional particularity.
- Participants reacted positively and felt empowered when facing the presentations and debate around Quality Assurance methodologies and procedures, underlining the possibility of methodological support in the implementation of individual quality tools.
- The informal mutual learning sessions have proven to be effective in building a trust environment, even though there is a competition among themselves for public funds.
- QUANTUM training based in units and with context-based characteristics has proven to be effective in supporting VET professionals and stakeholders in approaching the idea of a QN and start building it in an informal way.
- The resources made available in shared spaces and websites of the QUANTUM consortium partners proved to be positive and could lead to other VET providers to join and implement a QN.
- QUANTUM training led to exploring and/or reinforcement of QA knowledge and provided a platform that enable the creation of QN in each national setting, drawing from the existing VET landscape in each country.
- The creation of informal QN and informal spaces of debate were reinforced with the QUANTUM training.

In the end, in all countries, the QUANTUM project resulted in:

- In **Slovakia**, after QUANTUM training, nine (9) VET schools engaging in writing a self-assessment report and invite peers to their schools, being one of the schools already with 1st round of peer review. During the training, there was a request from the participants for further training topics that will focus on self-assessment and data analysis. In the end, after the sessions, **Slovakia has 35 members of QN from all 8 regions of the country**. In addition, and because of the QUANTUM project, the activities of the network have become an integral part of the work of SIOV, which also acts as the National Reference Point for EQAVET and promotes the theme of quality assurance in a wide range of actions. The activities of the network have been reflected in the draft of the next NRP EQAVET work programme for 2023-2025, the support for further training activities in the field of quality assurance in Slovakia. Simultaneously, elements of the network and the knowledge acquired during the QUANTUM project will be used in the **preparation and**

implementation of a large national ESF project - Introduction of quality management in VET and adult education in the Slovak Republic, which will be carried out from **2023 to 2026**. One of the areas is about strengthening the role of tools based on the quality cycle and self-assessment procedures that were promoted in the framework of the QUANTUM project.

- In **Italy**, the final webinar has been opened to a wider number of VET professionals, allowing that accredited training agencies participated, being consistent with the **requirement for maintaining the accreditation concerning "Participation in at least one training activity** (internal or external to the organisation) to update professional skills in the last 12 months for Process Managers". The Italian experience shows that it is important to **ensure synergies across the existing QA systems and public policies to improve transparency and avoid mistrust** among relevant actors, for those using public funds for the implementation of the training courses (e.g., ESF). In addition, what the Regional Authority together with other relevant stakeholders participating in the QN found relevant for the future sustainability of both the Network and the Quality Assurance practices piloted, is the possibility to concretely **embed the network activities into the usual consulting practices planned and implemented at policy level**. That means to not add one more consultation mechanism, about how to make value out of the **QN activities and members as a flexible consultation body to be periodically asked for feedback, recommendations or any other kind of contributions**, according to the state of play of the VET and Employment policies.
- In **Portugal**, after the end of the training, the **QR, the Portuguese informal QN**, has already **72 members from different regions of the country**, having already started an informal sharing of information and solutions to sort issues that are common and allow to find suitable solutions that can bring a bottom-up empowering strategy for the near future. After the 1st meeting of the QN QR in February 2023, other meetings are being scheduled and will be debating pressing issues regarding qualification of adult education in Portugal and better strategies to overcome the Portuguese adult education landscape to match European criteria within national reality. **A bottom-up strategy was found key for the success of VET adult education in Portugal.**
- In **Austria**, it is underlined that despite of not being able to establish a formal network in the field of VET, can **still build an informal network that regularly exchanges information**. Also, besides not expecting active cooperation between the stakeholders, can provide knowledge to educational institutions in the field of quality assurance and create awareness near the stakeholders within this area of VET. In addition, one of the biggest challenges in the field of elementary education are the different interests between workers, academia and educational institutions on the one hand, and public authorities who provide the laws and financial resources on the other hand. A uniform federal law would at least ensure uniformity within Austria, due to the limiting possibilities of the system.



In a nutshell, the **QUANTUM consortium recommends** the need to:

- Use EQAVET indicators as a framework allowing to set the same/similar goals and compare achieved results between countries, regions or institutions.
- Implement the methods of quality assurance based on feedback-loops and self-assessment (such as peer review methodology, graduate tracking mechanisms, etc.) at provider, and where possible, at the system level.
- Raise awareness and knowledge related to building and developing culture of quality of VET institutions and VET systems.
- Support and develop initiatives linking communities of professionals (e.g. networks) which can amplify quality assurance efforts and drive systemic changes.

ⁱ Capacity building for Quality Networks implementation and sustainability, being the activity (A1) the development of a common curriculum, including learning outcomes, training plan and learning materials.

ⁱⁱ Source of the original map: https://european-union.europa.eu/easy-read_en