



CEDEFOP

European Centre for the Development
of Vocational Training

Assuring Quality in VET through Accreditation

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**“Raising quality of VET in cooperation with employers and higher
education”**

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Some preliminary remarks

Focus 1: **accreditations** of education and training providers and programmes carried out by a **public body and/or in the name of-a public authority**.

In the accreditations mandated by a public authority and often carried out by another public organisation, some **public objectives**, like the adequacy of the programmes to the **needs of the national/local labour market** or the implementation of the EU education agenda like, for instance EQF, are –or should be- taken into consideration.

(No accreditations/certifications defined by international standards such as ISO 9000ff, sectoral accreditations no accreditation of persons usually called certification).

Quality assurance and accreditation will soon become an integral part of the learning sector which is major value-producing sector and one that still expands rapidly.

Focus 2: **VET**



Some definitions

By **quality assurance** we mean all planned and systematic activities undertaken within the quality system, and demonstrated as needed, to provide adequate assurance that an entity will fulfil quality requirements (CEDEFOP, Glossary on Quality in VET, 2010).

External quality assurance is a binding concept that involves an external body to control the adequacy of processes and performance.

Accreditation is the formal recognition that a body is competent to carry out specific tasks (CEDEFOP, Glossary on Quality in VET, 2010).

Accreditation is an **assessment tool**.



Accreditation in IVET and CVET

- At VET-level, less authorities performing accreditation than in Higher Education;
- Refers to providers or programmes or to both, as in Denmark;
- Often understood as approval, licensing, certification, registration or authorisation of VET providers to run certain programmes;
- Conducted by the Ministry of Labour or the Ministry of Education or by inspection bodies directly attached to them;
- Difference in role and degree of involvement of the state authorities concerning public or private VET providers and IVET or CVET;
- Voluntary initiative or mandatory.



Types of Accreditation

3 objects in focus :

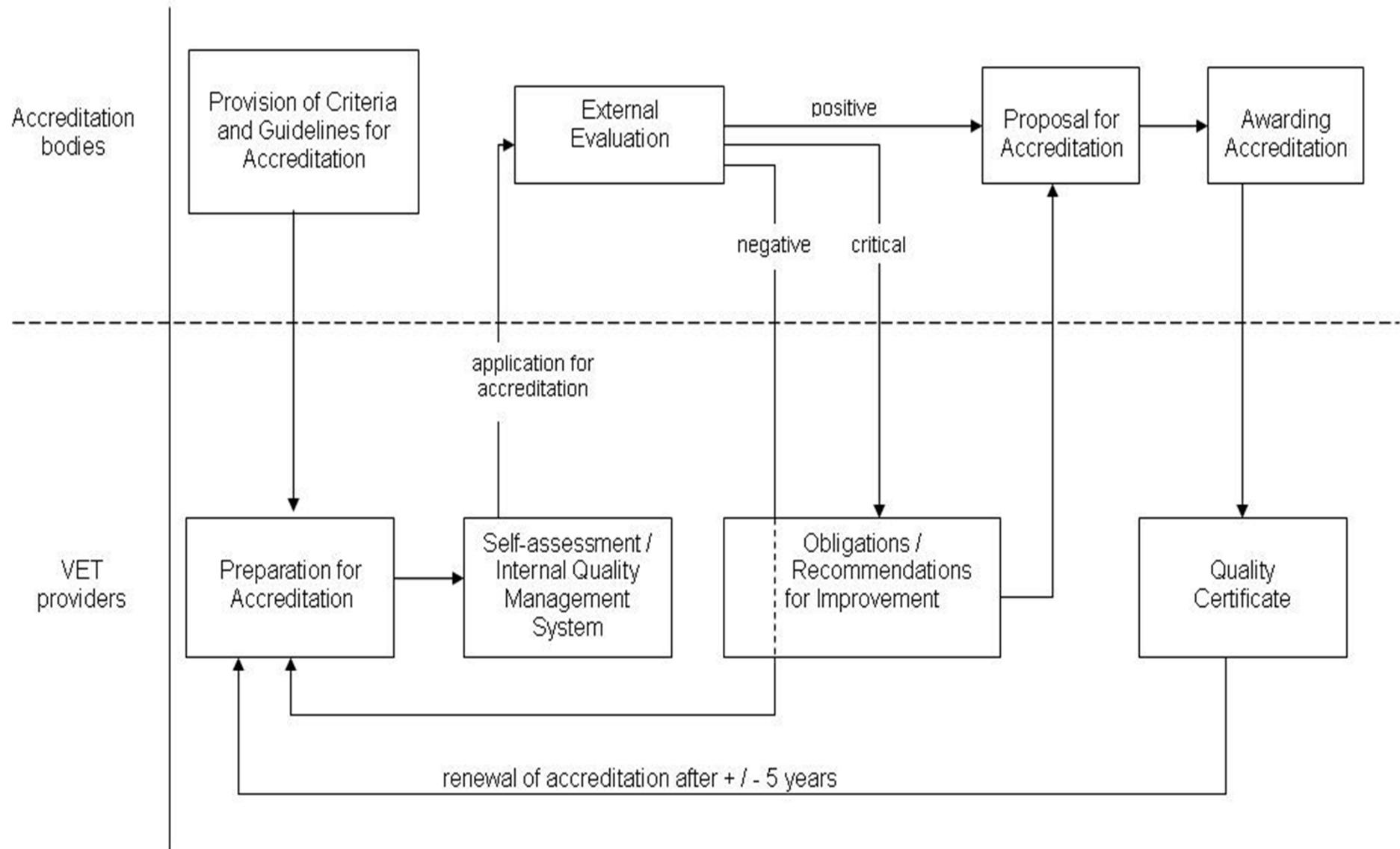
- ✓ infrastructure and technical equipment;
- ✓ qualifications of professors, teachers, trainers
- ✓ curricula.

Most refer to the verification of administrative/infrastructure when applied for first time.

The actors

2 different parties : the **education/VET provider** and an **external body** recognised to perform the external assessment and to award accreditation as a result of positive evaluation.

Accreditation Process





Principles to gear accreditation

- Impartiality, competence, reliability and freedom from commercial interests;
- Those in charge of, whether auditors, assessors, evaluators or inspectors be properly trained, credible and use valid tools and methods;
- Nowadays, inspectorates see their role changing and from a clear control function they are asked to provide **counselling** and **guidance** as well;
- **Support** to Education and Training providers is considered more effective than prescription;
- **Internal self-assessment** and a **self-assessment report** are prerequisites to any external evaluation. The Quality Rules in the Danish VET System are explicit on their importance.



Quality rules in VET

A: The VET college must have a quality system

B: The VET college must have a procedure for self-evaluation and quality development on 8 specific areas

C: The VET college must have a follow up plan based on the self evaluation, and publish it

Source: Danish Ministry of Education: The Danish Approach to Quality, 2008



Common characteristics

All accreditations share a set of common characteristics:

- They are concerned with the quality of Education/VET organisations or programmes to be accredited;
- They follow transparent standards, regulations and rules;
- They use external quality review to scrutinize Education/VET organisations for quality assurance and quality improvement;
- They imply clearly defined consequences resulting from the formal decision on accreditation which if positive leads to formal recognition (including a label or the right to award recognised qualifications).



The Accreditation process

- It starts with the request for accreditation on the basis of relevant documentation available by several services and end up with the decision made by the accreditation authority on the basis of the final evaluation report drafted by the agency entrusted with the external assessment of the organisation/ programme against predefined requirements.
- The procedure may take several months and comprises:
 - ✓ a self-assessment report,
 - ✓ an evaluation on site to check;
 - ✓ a follow-up evaluation to verify overall conformity to suggestions for change made .



Criteria for Accreditation

- Management of the institution;
- Financial situation of the provider;
- Quality characteristics of teaching and administrative staff;
- Efficiency and effectiveness of previous education/training activities;
- Links and contacts at local, regional, national or international level, depending on whether the institution operates within the Education or VET system.



Impacts of Accreditation on Education and Training providers

1) Clearing the market and assuring a minimum standard of quality:

- In **Ireland**, all Education and Training providers, wishing to offer the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) 'awards' (another term for graduation certificates), must be FETAC registered;
- In **Romania, Ireland and UK/England**, private VET providers, have to be accredited by public authorities to deliver state recognised qualifications and diplomas at national level;
- In **Italy** where the 21 Regions are responsible for VET, both IVET and CVET private providers applying for public funding must be accredited each year and figure on the regional registries in order to be able to tender.

2) Enhancing the image of VET providers with their 'customers'.

Accreditation helps in particular CVET institutions to better positioning themselves within the training 'market';



3) Positive impact on the **whole organisation**. **Developmental work** and **communication** become better structured and activities more **quality related**;

4) **Goal and customer oriented:**

- In Germany for instance, providers in the context of AZWV, the Regulation on Recognition and Approval of Further Education and Training that applies nation-wide, must elaborate the methods for supporting placement of their trainees who evaluate the training program and its usefulness with regard to their job opportunities. The German Federal Employment Agency conducts audits on labour market services through sample-tests to scrutinise the quality of training programs.

5) **Bridge between education and VET:**

- **Romania** adopted a unique set of standards for accreditation in (pre-university) General Education and IVET and has a unique state authority in charge of their elaboration and of coordinating the accreditation process, the ARACIP.
- In **Hungary and the UK/England**, a common framework for accreditation applies to both VET and Higher Education bringing them closer.



- 6) **Management tool** to promote a **greater ownership** and **institutional independency**;
- 7) **Easier mobilisation**: the added value of accreditation is that it creates internal dynamics related to concrete objectives and timetable quicker than more theoretical approaches;
- 8) **A lever** to introduce quality at a large scale and the **first step** to introduce a **culture of quality**;
- 9) **Time and effort consuming** activity that renders programs more expensive, so one should not expect to make economies through it. Only a small % of providers get accredited with the first attempt.



Labels

- ❖ National accreditations rarely lead to quality labels which is a practice in sectoral accreditations.

However, in **France** a positively concluded accreditation ends up with the awarding of a quality label:

- ✦ “Greta Plus” to state-owned CVT providers
- ✦ “Lycée des Metiers” to state-owned IVET institutions

Quality labels could reinforce the international perspective of VET systems and attract VET students from abroad, an objective of the Lisbon process. Their marketing potential remains unexploited.



Conclusions and recommendations

VET providers

- Shape own individual quality objectives
- Make use of monitoring, regular review and evaluation
- Organize change and improve towards better quality
- Exchange experiences with internal quality management systems

Member States and accreditation bodies

- Strengthen the involvement of stakeholders
- Give VET providers a voice in the board of accreditation bodies
- Give more weight to output and outcome criteria
- Reward VET providers having demonstrated outstanding performance
- Improve the attractiveness of VET by giving more visibility to good quality
- Enable providers to seek accreditation from foreign agencies.



To render accreditation a quality culture drive

Develop accreditation into a driving force for the improvement of quality in VET

- Put more emphasis on output and outcome criteria
- Make use of the European set of quality indicators
- Strengthen relations between VET and HE: A common framework for accreditation in the perspective of lifelong learning could be envisaged
- Strengthen mutual recognition of accreditations between European Member States
- Put stronger emphasis on the effective operation of internal quality management systems
- Complement accreditation by an approach supporting excellence in VET provision.

**Thank you
for your attention !**



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