

## *PLA on Promoting a Culture of Quality*

**Dubrovnik, Croatia**

**11 and 12 June 2018**

Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education organised a Peer Learning Activity (PLA) on Promoting Culture of Quality as a part of the Erasmus+ project Support to European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training: National Reference Points (EQAVET NRP). The PLA took place in Dubrovnik on 11 and 12 June and brought together 21 representative of the National Reference Points (NRP) for EQAVET, VET providers and other bodies responsible for VET from nine countries.

The PLA was divided in sessions consisted of keynote lessons, presentations from VET system and provider level, group work and discussion as well as the school visit. Colleagues from Austria, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Malta, Netherlands, Slovakia, Slovenia and the host country, Croatia, discussed on the following topics: what is the meaning/definition of culture of quality; how can culture of quality be dealt with at provider and at system level; are there ways to influence culture of quality at both levels; is there a connection between school/VET provider culture and quality management, and are there different approaches in different countries when it comes to the culture of quality?

Prior the PLA, a pre-activity assignment was sent to all the participants, consisting of the article “Quality Culture in schools: How to identify, change and design it” (Jonach and Gramlinger 2017) and questions related to the article, participants’ definition of Quality Culture in VET and the operationalisation of the term in national VET contexts. Inputs gained by the participants were used in the

On the first day of the PLA, after the welcoming words of AVETAE’s representatives and introduction of the participants, Michaela Jonach, an external expert from ARQA-VET gave an introduction to the PLA followed by the keynote on the terms, definition and concepts related to the Culture of Quality. The concept originates from business environment, with a theoretical background taken from Ed Schein’s model of organisational culture, and is adapted for the VET and education in general based on the recognition of its importance for the success of Quality Management and referred to in the EQAVET Recommendation (1, 12 and 17).

Participants were introduced to the Q-KULT instrument (<https://www.q-kult.eu/>) developed in cooperation between Austria, Germany and Switzerland as a diagnostic tool to identify relevant dimensions of culture of quality in IVET organisations. It is recognized that a specific culture of a school/VET provider has on the implementation and further development of a quality management system.

After the theoretical background, three case studies from two countries (Croatia and Finland) were presented. The first case study about Croatian QA on system level was presented by Tamara Hudolin from the national Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education. Introduction into the national VET system and the QA-approach was presented, with a special emphasis on the survey conducted on self-assessment. The second case study, presented by Leena Koski from Finnish National Agency for VET, introduced Finnish VET system and QA

approach, with a special focus on the ongoing educational reform the participants showed the most interest in. Presentations were followed by a Q&A sessions related to the implementation of QA and support to VET providers. Third case study offered VET provider perspective. The presenter was Ana Vlahov from High School Andrija Kačić Miošić from Ploče, Croatia. Presentation showed the process of QA implementation and the use of self-assessment results for the improvement, especially in the forms of projects related to the challenges detected.

For the afternoon session, the participants were divided in the teams. First activity was an experiment that showed how in less than 15 minutes the culture can be created, hard to grasp for the outsiders due to underlying assumptions and values, and resistant to change. The experiment triggered better understanding of how quality in school can support but also hinder the quality assurance processes. After the experiment, group work continued in Q-KULT instrument exercise where the participants were to define ideal culture and decide on its key features, and prerequisites for support from both provider and system level.

Day two of the PLA started with a visit to High School for Economy and Trade Dubrovnik. After the welcoming speech and presentations by headmaster Suzana Đurđević and her Quality Team, the participants visited the school premises and observed the mathematics class and a trade practical class where they had the opportunity to talk with students. The visit ended with a fruitful Q&A session. After the school visit, Marloes van Bussel from Netherlands EQAVET NRP and Kees Stenkamer from ROC Mondriaan, Amersfoort, gave an interesting presentation from both system and provider level in Netherlands, presenting their VET system and unique QA approach and interconnection between the system and provider related to the quality culture.

The PLA concluded with the recognition of importance of culture of quality for the QM implementation, ideal culture of quality values and attitudes, and support on VET provider and system level. The activity contributed to the shared understanding of the culture of quality and its meaning for QA processes, and fostered mutual learning from experiences and best practice exchange.