



In-company Learning Mobility and Quality Assurance Guidelines

The concept of Quality

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What is quality in “In-company Learning Mobility”?

Quality in mobility is achieved when the mobility experience meets the needs and expectations of the mobility beneficiaries by accomplishing the mobility requirements.

(Definition of quality in mobility, Q- placements handbook, BE)

When looking at the different tools and documents available for the organisation of mobility in general (online), it is important to realise that they are mainly EU oriented, meaning that the EU commission funds them and influences the aims of mobility, vocational education, work place training etc. Furthermore, many existing tools are also written from the perspective of a school community. Nevertheless, most of the existing approaches aim at improving and enhancing the quality of mobility projects via the same activities and tools:

- Organisational procedures: check lists (before, during and after placements) including preparation of participants
- Monitoring procedures: there are differences in approaches here from simple tools focusing more on the students (the term apprentice is not often used) to procedures for mentors-/-tutors. Training centres seem to play a major role in the monitoring process.
- Follow-up and evaluation procedures

Most of the existing projects and networks follow a **before- during – and after scheme combined with a thematic approach**. Indeed, mobility experience are structured in three phases: before the actual experience takes place, the time spent in the hosting organisation, and finally the procedures for the capitalisation of the experience, financial report (if necessary), etc.

The www.euroapprenticeship.eu platform aims to promote of material developed through numerous pilot and mobility projects and therefore proposes a **tool database¹ following this scheme**. The database enables **knowledge sharing and** is a resource repository where members can retrieve or contribute tools that are useful in any of the defined phases or sub-phases.

We can also highlight some projects that developed tools for one phase or one organisational step in particular such as **PREMO²** for the preparation phase, **PERFECT MATCH³** for the matching and assessment, **Q Mentor⁴** for the monitoring. In general, however, it is commonly admitted that planning ahead and taking into account **ALL** phases **AND** the different aspects of the organisation of mobility (logistical, administrative, financial and pedagogical aspects ...) is essential and the best way to organise a successful project ensuring benefits for all the actors and participants involved.

¹ <http://www.euroapprenticeship.eu/en/home.html>,

² <http://preparalamobilita.eu/>

³ <http://www.perfectmatch.fi/>

⁴ <http://www.q-mentor.eu/?lang=en>

When it comes to tools related to **quality assurance** in particular, we can highlight some approaches (not only for mobility):

1/ EQAVET quality assurance guidelines from the EU commission.⁵ In particular regarding **work-based learning**, the EQAVET working group has identified six Building Blocks that could support work-based learning. These identified the need to

- **Design** - work with partner organisations to ensure the relevance of learners' training during periods of work based learning
- **Improve** - agree with partner organisations when the quality of training will be monitored and how improvements will be made
- **Respond** - continue to be aware of the specific needs of learners throughout their work based learning
- **Communicate** - ensure learners and partner organisations are kept well informed and receive frequent updates on all aspects of training
- **Train** - ensure staff are well prepared for their training role which includes quality assurance
- **Assess** - work with partner organisations to review the work-based training program, assess and certify individual learner's achievement where appropriate.

These statements (which are not strictly speaking part of the EQAVET recommendation) provide a set of simple and straightforward actions that support quality assurance in work-based learning.

2/ The European Quality Charter for Mobility⁶

Following a recommendation (EC) No 2006/961 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on transnational mobility within the Community for education and training purposes, the charter is attached to all mobility training agreements and signed by all actors involved. It consists of **ten principles** that can be adapted to the specific nature and peculiarities of each stay. These principles are:

- *Information and guidance*
- *Learning plan*
- *Personalisation*
- *General preparation*
- *Linguistic aspects*
- *Logistical support*
- *Mentoring*
- *Recognition*
- *Reintegration and evaluation*
- *Commitments and responsibilities*

3/ ECVET Tools

Recently, ECVET and ECVET tools were and still are in the focus of the preparation, valorisation and recognition processes of learning mobility. The ECVET system is a framework for transfer and recognition of individuals' learning outcomes with the aim of achieving a qualification. The ECVET toolkit⁷ summarizes clear definitions of what ECVET is, describes in which context ECVET is to be used and gives a clear overview of existing and recommended tools and how to use them. The most important tools in the context of apprenticeship or In-company Learning Mobility are:

⁵ <http://www.eqavet.eu/gns/home.aspx> <http://www.eqavet.eu/workbasedlearning/GNS/Home.aspx>

⁶ http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/lifelong_learning/c11085_en.htm

⁷ <http://www.ecvet-toolkit.eu>

- “Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)” – an agreement among the institutional partners involved concerning their tasks and obligations as well as monitoring and validation
- “Learning Agreement” – an individual document signed by the participant, the sending and the hosting company that contains learning outcomes already achieved, expected learning outcomes during-/after the placement abroad
- “Personal Transcript” – the confirmation of the achieved outcomes that should lead to the recognition of the learning outcomes in the home country. The use of ECVET and ECVET documents are highly recommended in almost all EU countries in order to make qualifications and learning outcomes visible and comparable in all countries and learning environments.

4/ Other tools and networks

Q-Placement⁸: The project developed an easy-to-use quality assurance handbook in twelve European languages that aims at facilitating the management of international workplace training for IVET teachers and tutors, mobility coordinating organisations, IVET students, apprentices and host companies. By using this handbook, companies, students and teachers will find it easier to take part in the existing mobility programs, as their expectations are aligned, thus enhancing the quality of international workplace training experience.

Europemobility Network⁹ has developed quality standards and procedures for different stakeholders to ensure successful transnational mobility. The Thematic “Commission on Quality Assurance” collected good practices from every educational sectors and they produced a “Quality Observatory & Toolbox”.

The project gives a “Quality Label of Mobility Coordinators for educators” who implement learning mobility schemes according to a structured approach. The quality of transnational learning mobility initiatives is ensured by documented actions and specific solutions adopted for all relevant phases: Preparation and Planning, Implementation, Evaluation and Action of improvement. A **Europemobility Network Quality Label for Host Organisations** certifies that the host organisation provides the foreign mobile learners with a safe, relevant and stimulating learning environment. The focus is on the educational process and therefore the Quality Label issued when the host organisation makes an internal tutor available who is capable of providing the appropriate induction and on-going mentoring/tutoring/coaching support. As a prerequisite, a written Training/Learning Agreement is produced before the start of the practical experience or work placement, detailing the learning outcomes to be attained and assessed within the mobility period.

NETinVET¹⁰, with a focus on International trade and transport & logistic, implements a quality approach certified by the “NETINVET” label. The quality approach is based on a requirements charter validated by each of the mobility stakeholders: training centers, companies and learners. All phases related to mobility are taken into consideration in a process that monitors the recommendations from the various quality charters on a step-by-step basis. Mobility operation quality control is based on feedback gathered systematically from the different players involved in each mobility operation. Mobility in “NETINVET” terms includes hosting activities, facilitating the search of accommodations and ensuring the cultural immersion of the learners.

⁸ <http://www.q-placements.eu/>

⁹ <http://www.europemobility.eu>

¹⁰ <http://www.netinvet.eu/?lg=en>

Conclusions

The list of inspiring approaches and tools are long. To assure quality, most of them follow a logical phasing combined with some thematic priorities. These approaches inspired EQAMOB of course when we develop our quality approach focusing on acknowledgement and visibility of the involvement of companies in **In-company Learning Mobility**.

Euro Apprenticeship network shares the same challenges as other networks: motivating sending companies and enhancing the quality of hosting in the company is an essential element and, in some way, a bottleneck, of quantity and quality of existing mobility projects and schemes. Indeed, as a network, we have experienced a shortage of sending and hosting companies getting involved in apprenticeships and internships. One reason is also the inexplicit, still low or non-structured coordination between actors in this field. Boosting the network and members in the sense of developing their potential to implement high quality transnational work-based learning is one answer.

The first generation of the Euro Apprenticeship "label" focused explicitly on the valorisation of the engagement of companies. With EQAMOB&CO, we want to take a step further and address at the same time measures to improve the coordination between actors.