The reform of the education and vocational training (VET) system focused on the measures for young people as well as adults, so measures for monitoring and assessing dual certification provision are geared towards these people.

As part of its responsibilities, the National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education [1] (ANQEP, IP) developed and implemented a series of measures to ensure the quality of the system, including:

- the Quality Charter of the New Opportunities centres, which defines the indicators and quality standards of the organisation and functioning of the centres;
- training programmes for trainers and staff from the New Opportunities centres, in order to prepare the professionals involved with developing the recognition, validation and certification of competences processes, as well as analysis and referral officers;
- local monitoring plans, annually defined at national and local level, involving central and regional structures of the Ministry of Education [2] and the Ministry of Economy [3], as well as the body responsible for European Social Fund [4] management;
- the implementation of the self-evaluation process of the New Opportunities Centres, through the CAF model, with the creation of functional clusters of centres that help improve performance, promoting excellence and encouraging networking;
- the progressive development of the Information and Management System of the Education and Training Provision (Sistema de Informação e Gestão da Oferta Educativa e Formativa - SIGO), which allowed the simultaneous monitoring of New Opportunities Centres activities, co and self-regulate institutions in the field and speed up decision making. The analysis of SIGO indicators was extensively used to ensure the improvement of centre activity, highlighting strengths and overcoming weaknesses on a professional, institutional and organisational level;
- the setting up of the National Qualifications System [5] (Sistema Nacional de Qualificações - SNQ) and the New Opportunities Initiative Monitoring Committee which employed external experts and representatives of the social partners;
- setting up Follow-Up Committees to vouch for the work undertaken by the New Opportunities Initiative and the National Qualifications System;
- external national evaluation study of vocational courses;
- external national and international evaluation study of New Opportunities Initiative – adults;
- external national evaluation study of Education and Training Courses and Specialised Artistic courses.

External studies have contributed to improving the system by providing data that allowed on-going and continuous evaluation of the suitability of the New Opportunities Initiative.
External evaluation (education and training of young people)

Considering the extension of dual certification provision for young people, particularly in public upper-secondary schools, which now involves 140,000 pupils, which is around 50% of learners attending upper-secondary education, it became necessary to assess the impact of the consolidation of this qualifying provision.

External evaluation studies have been conducted since 2009 by teams of experts from higher education institutions in order to analyse:

- The results of vocational courses against the background of an expansion of the network of provision and the reform of upper-secondary education;
- the balance and imbalances of the network of vocational courses in vocational schools and in public upper-secondary schools;
- the mechanisms of the organisation of the network, considering the physical and material resources, the pedagogical models, the training and vocational guidance teams;
- the partnerships established by schools with local authorities, enterprises and other institutions;
- school provision taking into account training and work needs at local level;
- preliminary results regarding employability and further study.

External evaluation (adult education and training)

As part of the implementation of the New Opportunities Initiative, a review of the adult sector was commissioned by National Qualification Agency I. P. (ANQ, I.P.) and entrusted to a team of researchers from the Universidade Católica Portuguesa (from 2009 to 2010), focussing on two major fields of current adult education and training policies:

- The first assessment area was geared towards the production, processing and analysis of indicators regarding the achievement of strategic objectives for adults and operation of New Opportunities centres;
- the second assessment area includes the monitoring and self-evaluation of the network and the performance and degree of organisational maturity of the New Opportunities centres and the adult qualification system as a whole.

The study highlights recommendations to address future challenges related to the New Opportunities centres, such as:

- Reducing waiting times between enrolment and first reception action of receiving and referral and then until the beginning of the qualification process;
- streamline referral procedures for training provision outside centres via coordination between supply and demand;
- maintaining high standards in qualification processes, considering the Charter of Quality, Key-competences reference framework and existing technical and methodological guidelines for the different phases of the competence acquisition and certification process.

In 2012, a study was conducted on the performance of adult graduates in the employment market. Split into two studies, this evaluation, which was conducted by Instituto Superior Técnico (IST) in response to a request from the ANQEP, IP, sought to assess the performance of adults in the process of Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences (RVCC), on adult education and training courses (EFA Courses) and certified modular training in the employment market, considering two
aspects, employability and salaries.

Since 2018, the Inspectorate-General of Education and Science (Inspeção-Geral da Educação e Ciência - IGEC) has been involved with the Adult Education and Training Control Programme, which focusses on adult education and training provided by public basic and upper secondary schools, which are part of the National Qualifications System.

This programme has the following aims:

- To ensure the legality of the operationalisation and implementation of adult education and training provision in public schools;
- To examine the match between adult education and training types and the adult student’s profile;
- To assess the monitoring and evaluation of results procedure to assess the impact of the training options on adults’ professional and social integration in the organisation and community;
- To assess the planning, development and evaluation of educational policies in adult education and training, as well as the coordination between school clusters and non-clustered schools and the Qualifica Centres of the region.

External evaluation - School Association Training Centres (continuous training of teachers)

The legal diplomas related to the continuous training of teachers and with the tasks of the School Association Training Centres (Centros de Formação de Associação de Escolas - CFAE) establish that the external evaluation of these training facilities is the responsibility of the Inspectorate-General of Education and Science (IGEC).

The improvement of the quality of teaching is associated to the improvement of the quality of teachers’ performance, and so continuous training has an essential role on their professional development.

With the deployment of the external evaluation of CFAE, IGEC aims to:

1. To promote the quality of continuous training, identifying strengths and priority areas to improve the work of the CFAE;
2. To instigate the articulation of continuous training with the goals of local and national educational policies, allowing the teachers’ professional development and the improvement of the teaching quality;
3. To potentiate the CFAE and schools’ endogenous resources in the production of quality training, based on the identified priorities;
4. To contribute to continuous training regulation, endowing those responsible for the education publication policies and for the CFAE’s administration with pertinent information.

Monitoring of education and training provision (young people and adults)

Between 2016 and 2017, ANQEP, IP created and implemented an integrated monitoring model for training bodies, which include:

- bodies offering dual certification for young people at upper secondary education level;
• bodies with provision for adults, namely adult education and training courses (EFA Courses) and certified modular training (Formação Modular Certificada - FMC);
• Qualifica Centres.

The geographical area of monitoring included Intermunicipal Communities (CIM) and Metropolitan Areas (AM). There were 25 monitoring meetings held on the mainland (one meeting in each of the 21 CIM and two meetings in each of the Lisbon and Porto Metropolitan Areas). Representatives of the CIM/AM in question and the regional branches of the Directorate-General for Schools and the Institute for Employment and Vocational Training were also invited to attend.

Based on direct contact with representatives of the training bodies’ technical-pedagogical teams and Qualification and Vocational Education Centres/Qualifica Centres (Centros para a Qualificação e o Ensino Profissional/Centros Qualifica – CQEP/CQ) (by sampling method), the monitoring aimed to:

- Conduct a preliminary assessment of the participating bodies’ organisation and operation that facilitates further reflection and proposed solutions for the identified constraints.
- Provide a description of the training bodies and CQEP/CQs present at the meeting regarding provision/processes, target groups and outcomes, based on data collected from SIGO, placing them in the SNQ as a system which provides information and guidance, RVCC and dual certification education and training provision for young people and adults.
- Clarify doubts and provide information on the issues proposed for discussion, giving technical support for representatives of the technical-pedagogical teams.
- Identify negative and positive aspects of work by participating training providers and Qualifica Centres.
- Identify areas and proposals for improvement as a means of overcoming negative aspects and improving training bodies’ level of performance.
- Provide opportunities for sharing and integrated reflection among the representatives of the different technical and pedagogical teams, regarding the analysis of the results and aspects highlighted in the management of the respective processes.
- Organise the sharing of practices/experiences, as well as communication and networking in the local community.
- Encourage work focused on the end beneficiary, on the assumption that they may require the intervention of more than one training body during their study.
- Consolidate coordination with the Intermunicipal Communities (CIM)/Metropolitan Areas (AM) in education, training and employment.
- Facilitate the joint responsibility of each type of participating body (local, regional, central) regarding the implementation of improvement proposals submitted.

For each meeting, training bodies located in the CIM/AM visited (job centres and vocational training centres, vocational schools and upper secondary schools/school clusters) were invited, to ensure an average number of 45 participants.

The following members of the training body were invited to participate:

- From Qualifica Centres: the coordinator, one or two guidance, recognition and validation of competences professionals (Técnicos de Orientação, Reconhecimento e Validação de Competências - TORVC); two or three trainers.
- From the training provider: the training coordinator; a course director (or similar); a class tutor (or similar); a teacher/trainer of the general/sociocultural training component; a teacher/trainer of the scientific training component; a teacher/trainer of technical/technological training component; a member of the Psychology and Guidance Service (Serviço de Psicologia e
As part of monitoring visits, debates were organised in different groups according to the duties performed by the participants (coordinators group, teachers/trainers group and counselling/guidance staff group). Specific topics were proposed for each group to debate. To maximise the sharing of constraints, "solutions" and suggestions during monitoring visits, participants were asked to previously fill in the analysis grids with these issues.

In addition to the comprehensive monitoring of qualifying bodies, the Qualifica Centres network also has monitoring of regional teams in each NUTS II. These teams include members of the ANQEP (coordinating body), regional services of the Directorate-General for Schools and the Institute for Employment and Vocational Training, which monitor via training sessions, visits and networking. With the regional monitoring, the aim is to help the Qualifica Centres teams to meet the goals established in the Qualifica programme.

**EQAVET - European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training**

Established by Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council, 18th June 2009, the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET Framework) is designed to improve vocational education and training in Europe by providing authorities with common quality management tools in line with national legislation and practice. Using the framework allows authorities and Member-States to:

- Document, develop and monitor the effectiveness of VET and the quality of management practices;
- Assess and improve the results of VET, both in terms of suitability of VET provision for young people/adults and employers, and the attractiveness and better access to VET for young people and adults, employability and/or further training by VET graduates;
- Implement regular self-assessment and monitoring processes, involving internal and external evaluation mechanisms and continuous improvement processes, supported by the involvement of internal and external stakeholders in VET management;
- Ensure greater transparency and consistency between the measures adopted by Member States in VET;
- Promote mutual trust, mobility of workers and trainees and lifelong learning.

**National context**

Due to Decree-Law No. 92/2014, 20th June, currently, only vocational schools are obliged to implement quality assurance systems in line with the EQAVET Framework.

The same Decree-Law determines that ANQEP, I.P. is responsible for promoting, monitoring and supporting the implementation of quality assurance systems of training processes and the results achieved by students in vocational schools and to certify them like the EQAVET systems.

To this end, a national model was created and is being implemented which recognises the implementation of quality assurance systems aligned with the EQAVET Framework by VET providers.
This model represents an opportunity to establish a culture of continuous improvement that is strategic for the National Qualification System. As such, the model created by ANQEP, I.P. covers not only vocational schools but also VET providers implementing Level 4 provision, who can apply to this model through voluntary membership.

The model includes the creation of a system that verifies the alignment of the quality assurance systems implemented by VET providers, leading to an EQAVET Seal.

The EQAVET Seal certifies that the quality assurance model used by VET providers complies with the EQAVET Framework, meeting the quality standards agreed between Member States.

**Overview of the situation in 2018**

At the end of 2016, the pilot experience of model alignment and verification of compliance with 8 VET providers - 6 vocational schools and 2 upper secondary schools - was concluded, resulting in the assessment that shaped the design of the models, instruments and tools currently available.

The various components of the national quality assurance model are defined:

1. Guidelines for the alignment process of quality assurance systems implemented by VET providers with the EQAVET Framework;
2. Guidelines for the EQAVET framework compliance verification process, to be developed by external experts;
3. EQAVET platform - a platform to support the operationalisation of the national quality assurance model, which operates as a monitoring interface between ANQEP, providers and external experts;
4. National pool of external experts from higher education institutions (universities and polytechnics) who have signed a protocol with ANQEP. These experts were trained by ANQEP to develop EQAVET compliance verification processes.

The HCOP "Quality and efficiency of the VET system for the promotion of school success" type of operation is currently being developed, which will allow VET providers that offer vocational courses and/or courses with specific curriculum to align their quality assurance systems with the EQAVET Framework from 2019.

**National Model - level 4 National Qualifications Framework provision**

The national approach to quality assurance focusses on VET quality and improvement.

The model is applicable to all VET National Qualifications Framework (Quadro Nacional de Qualificações - QNQ) level 4 training, regardless of their type, safeguarding future extension of implementation to different types of VET provision and providers.

Considering VET providers’ characteristics at national level, the model emphasises aspects considered key to continuous improvement of VET quality:

The Quality Cycle and its phases applied to management practices:

- Planning;
- Implementation;
• Review;
• Evaluation.

Quality criteria principles, which guide management practices in each phase of the cycle:

1. Strategic vision and visibility of processes and results in VET management;
2. Involvement of internal and external stakeholders;
3. Continuous improvement of VET using selected indicators;
4. Use of the four phases of the quality cycle: planning, implementation, review, evaluation.

The EQAVET compliance verification criteria - verification of VET providers by external experts:

1. Strategic vision and visibility of processes and results in VET management;
2. Involvement of internal and external stakeholders;
3. Continuous improvement of VET using selected indicators;
4. Use of the four stages of the quality cycle: planning, implementation, review, evaluation;
5. Institutional dialogue for continuous improvement of VET provision;
6. Applying the guarantee cycle and improving the quality of VET provision.

Once the above criteria have been met, according to the results of compliance verification by external experts, ANQEP I.P awards the EQAVET SEAL, which certifies conformity to the EQAVET Framework.

With the awarding of the SEAL, providers continue the improvement process with reference to the EQAVET Framework. Management practices are subject to periodic monitoring and review to ensure SEAL standards and continuous quality improvement remain.
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