



NEW APPROACHES, NEW SKILLS FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION

A VET action plan for providers across Europe

The proposed action plan for providers has been derived to support 4 key objectives of the NANSSI project:

1. to draft a framework for future cooperation and development for the benefit of those who are socially excluded and/or have poor social mobility for nations in Europe to adopt;
2. to prepare a communiqué outlining the benefits of the project and how the outcomes can be used to inform wider trans-national cooperation and development across Europe;
3. to use the project processes and outcomes to engage other European partners;
4. to provide a timely contribution to the debate on future cooperation for vocational education and training providers developing and delivering and lifelong learning and how this can be developed across Europe

This outcome is essentially a proposal for a framework to improve the *quality* of VET. In particular it is designed to help providers to think of steps to be taken to deliver a new mix of skills and competences for the low skilled at a European level.

The principles of a VET cooperation framework are proposed as:

1. Learners, and their mobility, are at the heart of all VET activity and there is particular emphasis on those from vulnerable or disadvantaged groups;
2. Cross-Europe recognition of skills and 'portability' of qualifications is central to the cooperation framework, including those acquired in the workplace;
3. The cooperation framework emphasises the new skills and competences needed across Europe, based on ILO¹/international occupational standards;
4. Progression of learners in formal, informal and non-formal learning is encouraged and recognised;
5. The cooperation framework is founded on equivalency and credit transfer, so avoiding unnecessary repeat of learning;

¹ International Labour Occupations

6. The cooperation framework is based on designing and aligning qualifications to the EQ, including for basic employability and skills development programmes;
7. Robust and transparent assessment and quality assurance is driven forward by cooperation, using the EQARF² as the underpinning framework;
8. Teachers, trainers and assessors are trained to European standards;
9. Cooperation and collaboration is founded on making best use of social media and digital technologies and to support learning in and across VET systems.

The action plan has TWO parts intended for:

- Representative bodies – (such as AOC and MBO Raad), in order to advocate to ministers and other policy makers at national and EU level. The advocacy should emphasise encouraging flexibility in approach to employability systems for young people and adults when considering engagement and job creation
- Individual organisations (colleges) – to learn together and to develop strategies and implement at a local level

Action plan for representative bodies

The action plan is designed to engage policy makers in discussions at national/EU level to achieve demonstrable results. This should be linked to demonstration projects in colleges (see below)

What	Who to
1. Deliver messages based on NANSSI about the nature (ie small is beautiful) and cost (largely core funding) of engagement	Government departments with an interest in social inclusion and job creation At own, national and EU (eg EUproVET) events
2. Present ideas for future projects linked to new skills for new jobs and reducing youth employment, supported by the development of a curriculum for the low skilled based on the EQF as enabler	As above
3. Identify how existing funding streams can be utilised to support proposed new priority projects, at same time seeking additional funding	eg Lottery, social benefactors, charitable organisations, corporate social responsibility (especially in energy sector)

² European Quality Assurance Reference Framework

Action plan for colleges

The action plan has been designed as a checklist to enable providers to follow a process to enable recognition of their learners' skills needs, combined with an emphasis on developing employability skills contextualised to their specific interests and experiences.

Checklist item	√
1. Identify local needs with key community partners and relevant stakeholders	
2. Identify those activities which will engage those who are socially excluded, following QCF/local NQF principles and guidelines	
3. Devise and accredit short programmes to engage, incorporating employability skills where possible, based on interests of those who are excluded	
4. Apply local/national recognition of prior learning (RPL) policies to accredit prior learning and experience based on specific units in the individual national qualifications frameworks (assuming they are aligned to the EQF)	
5. Use flexibilities of the relevant national qualifications framework to deliver funded bite-sized learning for engagement	
6. Certify learners who complete engagement programmes and celebrate their success, no matter how small the volume of learning	
7. Apply diagnostic assessment at an appropriate time (probably once first programme is completed successfully rather than before the first programme commences) to evaluate future skills needs	
8. Develop further programmes leading to national qualifications and awards, but based on the EQF and focusing on developing skills for social inclusion and employability	
9. Gradually build and develop a focused, European pre-entry curriculum for low-skilled, which can be delivered locally in communities with social partners	

The two parts of the action plan are designed to be complementary. They do not make assumptions about the starting point of individual learners or specific organisations; rather the principles and the checklists are designed to provide guidance about steps that can be taken from different starting points.

The principles are also based on there being a number of different points of interaction and processes that are important at different stages when engaging. For example, engagement may be at the community level for those with no skills or who have very low levels of confidence; alternatively, they may be at a later stage for those returning to learning or in the workplace. Regardless of the point of entry, however, the stages will be similar – initial engagement to raise levels of confidence using the flexibilities of the European Qualifications Framework as the enabler.

The diagram below summarises the stages within the engagement process, indicating at which points a learner may become engaged.

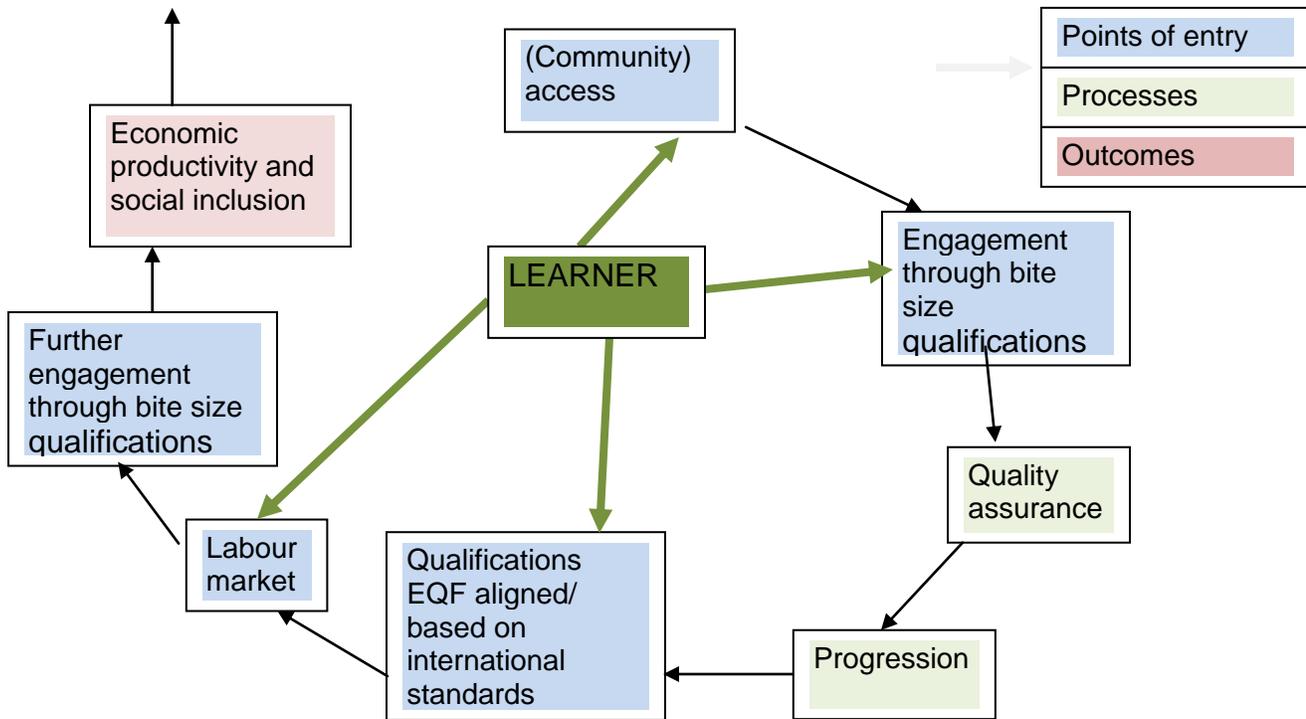


Diagram summarising the engagement points and processes for the low skilled and socially isolated