



Quality Assurance within Adult Education

**Improvement of the EQM as a
quality assurance system
for non-formal learning providers**

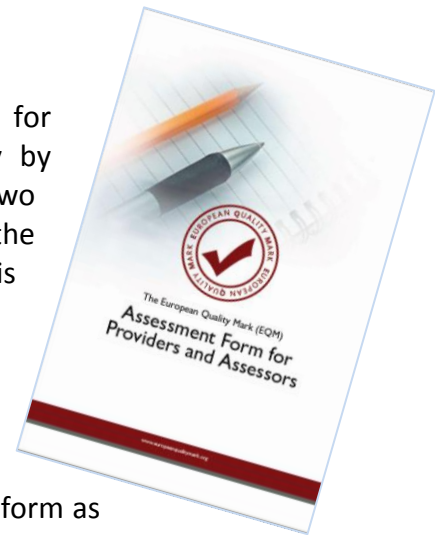
**Nordplus project 2014-2016
NPAD-2014/10035**

Autumn 2014 four partners from Nordic and Baltic countries will start a development project funded by Nordplus on improving and developing the quality accreditation system EQM, European Quality Mark, for providers of non-formal adult learning. The partners are:

- Education and Training Service Centre (Iceland, www.frae.is) coordinator
- Estonian Folk High Schools Union (Estonia, www.rahvaulikoolideliit.ee)
- Lithuanian Association of Adult Education (Lithuania, www.lssa.smm.lt)
- The Norwegian Association for Adult Learning (Norway, www.vofo.no)

What is the EQM?

The European Quality Mark (EQM) is a quality assurance system for providers of non-formal learning. The EQM was developed jointly by partners from eight European countries in 2006-2008 and in 2011 a two year partnership project was started to work towards the commercialization and dissemination of the EQM. Through this partnership it has come clear that there is a need to review and improve the EQM tools and the EQM system. The EQM for learning providers is based on an annual self-assessment verified by an external assessor, who is also an adviser for the provider during the process. Learning providers that fulfil the EQM standards are granted a mark which they can use when promoting their service. The self-assessment form as well as other EQM tools for learning providers is available in eight languages on www.europeanqualitymark.org.



Who is using the EQM now?

As for now, several Life Long Learning providers are using the EQM for improving the quality of their work. Some of them have been accredited; others are using the EQM tools to work for a better quality of their learning provision, see more on <http://www.europeanqualitymark.org/learning-providers/>.

Rationale for the project

The EQM system has been implemented in Iceland and several countries have shown interest in doing the same. But without quality improvement quality assurance does not make sense and therefore there is a need to review the system with the aim of improving parts of it that have appeared to be fragile or incomplete as well as keeping it up-to-date with the development of quality assurance of adult learning.

Improving the quality of education and training is one of the priority areas of the EU Council's European agenda for adult learning and in order to build a strong adult-learning sector, the focus should be on developing quality assurance for learning providers e.g. by using existing quality assurance system. This complies with the recommendations from the

QALLL-project group, which aimed to highlight good practice within quality assurance (see www.qalll.net). RECALL, the LdV project that produced the EQM, was chosen one of the 39 good practice projects by the QALLL-project group.

Project aim and objectives

The aim of this Nordplus project is to improve and develop the quality accreditation system EQM, European Quality Mark, for providers of non-formal adult learning. We also intend to review and improve the standards, criteria and the accreditation process so that the EQM as a whole is up-to-date with new recommendation framework on quality in adult learning, which was launched in October 2013 by a Thematic Working Group on Quality in Adult Learning working with a mandate from the EU Commission.

A part of the improvement will be to build a training course for external assessors/trainers, as their role is not only to assess the learning provision against the EQM standards and criteria but also to support the learning provider in improving the quality of their work and build a sustainable quality culture within the organisation of the learning provider.

The outcomes of this project will be:

- Renewed Guidelines for the European Quality Mark in five languages: EN, EE, IS, LT and NO, published in a printable version on www.europeanqualitymark.org
- Renewed Assessor Guidelines in five languages: EN, EE, IS, LT and NO, published in a printable version on www.europeanqualitymark.org
- Renewed Assessment Form for Providers and Assessors in five languages: EN, EE, IS, LT and NO, published in a printable version on www.europeanqualitymark.org. The Assessment Form is the core of the EQM, it contains a set of criteria, that the learning provider can assess its provision against.
- Teaching material for a training course for external assessors. This training course will be used to explain the methods of the assessment process and the minimum criteria, which have to be fulfilled to get the EQM.
- Renewed methods of assessment (EQM process).



Members from Lithuania, Iceland and Estonia promoting the EQM in Tallinn, December 2012



Members from Norway and Iceland promoting the EQM in Vienna, November 2013

Information on partner institutions

Education and Training Service Centre (ETSC) – ICELAND

The ETSC was established in December 2002 by the Icelandic Confederation of Labour (ASÍ) and the Confederation of Icelandic Employers (SA) and is since 2010 also owned by the Federation of State and Municipal Employees (BSRB), the Association of Local Authorities in Iceland and the Ministry of Finance. The role of the Centre is to be a collaborative forum of the founding parties for adult education and vocational training in cooperation with other educational bodies operating under the auspices of the member associations. The Centre targets those who have not completed the upper secondary level of education. This target group comprises 33% of the Icelandic labour force. The objective is to enable individuals from the target group to obtain an education and improve their position in the labour market. The main responsibilities of the ETSC include identifying educational needs of the target group and writing curricula and program descriptions in accordance with the need analysis, supervising the development of guidance and counseling for the target group and enhancing the quality of the provision through the development of quality standards. The ETSC is also a centre for educational consulting and the development of adult education in Iceland. In addition the ETSC hosts the Nordic Network for Adult Learning (NVL, Nordisk Nätverk för Vuxnas Lärande). The ETSC was a project manager for the LdV project RECALL 2006-2008, where the EQM was developed, and a coordinator of the EQM partnership project 2011-2013. For more information see www.frae.is or contact Mrs. Guðfinna Harðardóttir, guðfinna@frae.is.

Estonian Folk High Schools Union (EFHSU) – ESTONIA

Eesti Rahvaülikoolide Liit/Estonian Folk High Schools Union (EFHSU) was established in November 2010 with the aim of enhancing the sustainability of folk high schools through network development. EFHSU is created by Tartu Rahvaülikool/Tartu Folk High School, the biggest folk high school in Estonia (teaches 4000-5000 students each year) and Haapsalu Rahvaülikool/Haapsalu Folk high School (teaches 800 -1000 students each year). Estonian folk high schools are non-formal education providers. Estonia has taken over the Nordic model in adult education area, but Estonian's folk high schools are a little bit different from folk high schools in the Nordic countries. Estonia's folk high schools organize day and evening courses usually without lodging opportunities. Schools are self financing and therefore participation fees are quite high, but participation in European Social Fund projects gives opportunities to offer free courses. Today there is no differentiation between folk high schools who offer large scale high quality training and smaller schools who occasionally run some courses or clubs. That's why the image of folk high schools is not high among decision makers and society in general. Through the development of a new adult education act the aim has been set to regulate the provision of adult education, to assess quality of the providers and enable folk high schools providing high quality education to gain higher acceptance by learners and local government. The EFHSU acted as a partner in the EQM partnership project 2011-2013. For more information see www.rahvaulikoolideliit.ee or contact Mrs. Heli Kaldas, heli.kaldas@hru.ee.

Lithuanian Association of Adult Education (LAAE) - LITHUANIA

LAAE (since 1992) is a non-profit independent union of individuals (102 members) and organizations (38 members) from different areas of adult education. Aims of LAAE: to invite adult educators and institutions for discussing adult education issues, for joint activities to develop adults' capacities for active participation in their professional and community life; to develop adults' need for LL, to represent Lithuanian adult educators in the country and abroad, to develop learning programmes for improving the andragogical and management competencies of adult educators. LAAE implements - led and collaborated in numerous national and international projects, organises seminars, courses, conferences, internships and other activities, takes part in solving problems of evaluation and recognition of non-formal acquired competencies. Staff also have direct experience of training projects for disadvantaged groups focusing on basic adult skills (communication, self esteem etc). LAAE has been participating in creation of the main policy documents, legal acts on education (Law on Non-formal Education). LSSA is a member of EAEA, the Representative of LSSA is a member of Council of Education of LT. LAAE acted as a partner in the EQM partnership project 2011-2013. For more information see www.lssa.smm.lt or contact Mr. Arūnas Bėkšta, lssa@takas.lt.

The Norwegian association for adult learning (NAAL) – NORWAY

Voksenopplæringsforbundet - VOFO (NAAL) is the national NGO umbrella for adult learning in Norway. Our members are 19 governmentally approved adult learning associations with a member network of 464 nationwide adult learning NGOs. NAAL has a central administration in Oslo, and has autonomous regional offices covering all 19 counties of Norway. The purpose of NAAL is to: Advocate the common interests of the associations and their participants towards the Government, the Parliament and the Ministry of Education; Promote non-formal adult learning in the society in general; Counsel members and other third parties concerning laws and regulations; Advice within the field of Adult learning theory and practice; Counsel within the Educational planning; Project coordination; Advocacy and lobbying. As a result of the Norwegian Adult Education Act of 1976, the adult learning organised by the member associations of NAAL receive, through a legal system of criterias, grants from the Government, most of the counties and many municipalities. NAAL acted as a partner in the the LdV project RECALL 2006-2008, where the EQM was developed, as well as in the EQM partnership project 2011-2013. For more information see www.vofo.no or contact Mr. William Evans, william.evans@vofo.no.