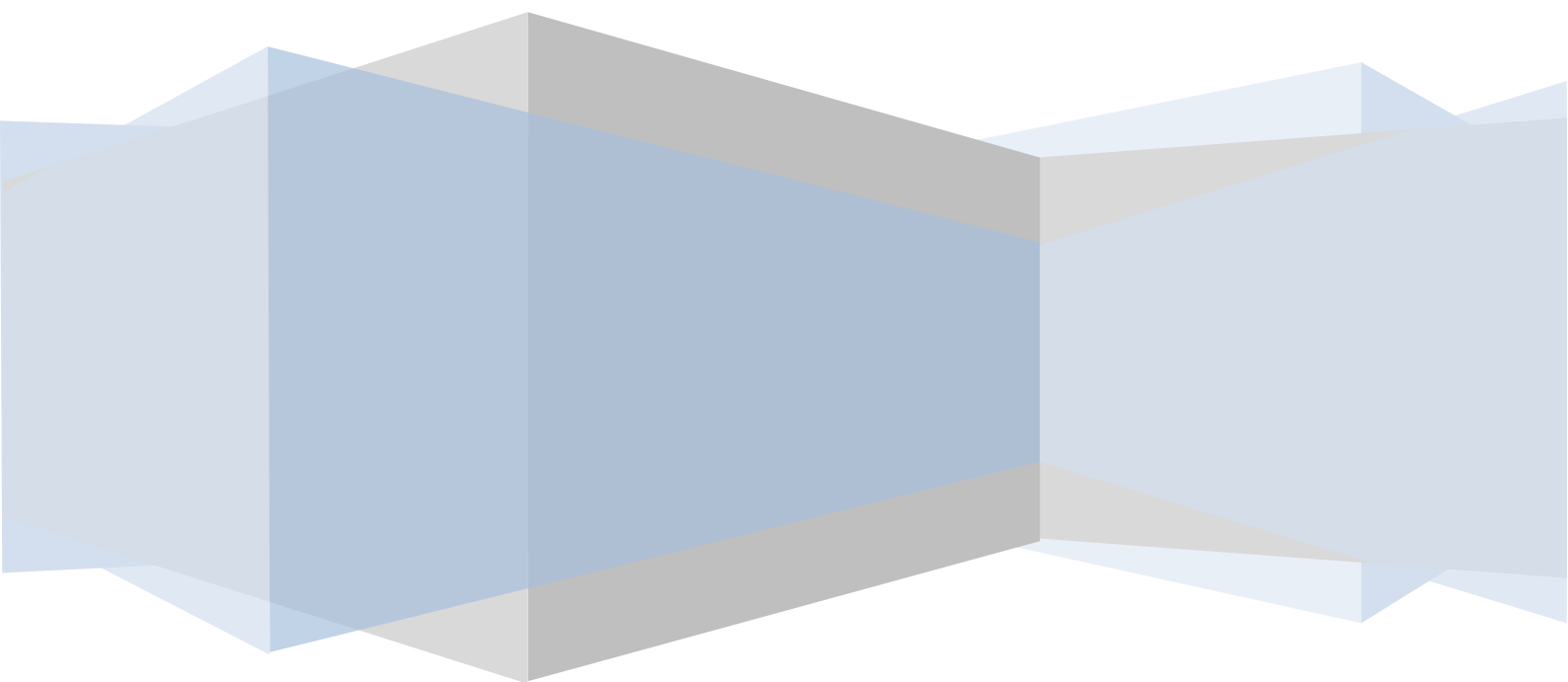


# Toolkit for Policy Impact

**Our accumulated practical expertise to improve policy through an interagency approach and co-production based on quality culture**



*“A shared commitment from everyone involved in supporting the learner experience to work together to provide the best possible service to the learner”*

**(participant attending a meeting at National level  
Northern Ireland UK)**

## **A Note from the Partners**

As partners of the NQCA project, we believe that interagency working is crucial toward ensuring quality across the entire VET journey for each individual. The NQCA project aims to achieve an improved understanding of, and commitment to quality. It is important that all of the services a client goes through or engages with during their VET journey are quality driven, and that there is a shared commitment between the different services in relation to the client.

As partners of the NQCA project, we live what we believe and have established the following principles:

- The learner should be placed at the centre of everything we do
- Effective communication must be maintained between all key stakeholders involved in the learner's VET journey.
- Knowledge and information should be shared with other key stakeholders to support good, client-centered decision-making
- Evaluation should take place into the role networking plays in supporting quality improvement
- Our learning should be shared with others

## Acknowledgements

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The “Policy-Practice Gaps” and “Recommendations” are drawn from the Case Studies carried out in the partner countries. Without the Case Studies and their generous support, our project would not have been possible.

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Erasmus+ KA2**

Erasmus+ is the European Union programme for education, training, youth and sport. Running for seven years (from 2014-2020), Erasmus+ aims to modernise education, training and youth work across Europe. The programme is open to organisations in each of these sectors including school education, further and higher education, adult education and the youth sector.

The NQCA project is funded under Erasmus+ Key Action 2: Cooperation for Innovation and Exchange of Good Practices in the field of VET. This Action is all about enabling organisations to work together in order to improve their provision of services to learners through the sharing of innovative practices.

### **1.2 The NQCA Project**

The NQCA project aims to foster and nurture an authentic Culture of Quality Assurance across the individual learner/client's journey, through the synthesis of a diverse range of organisations at European level. The NQCA project is dedicated to designing, developing, implementing and sustaining a model of interagency working which focuses on Quality Culture and Quality Assurance across the VET journey.

The eight partners from across six partner countries adapted and developed the Networking for Quality Assurance (NQA) model for the NQCA project, to ensure its relevance across a wider VET journey. For our current purposes, the VET journey can be defined as one which includes career guidance or referral into relevant VET, VET training programmes and ongoing workplace learning or placement following on from VET training. While the previous NQA project identified that quality tends to exist within the provision of services, it emphasised that quality can be significantly reduced during key transition points

throughout the client's VET journey. The proposed interagency approach aims to strengthen the link between stakeholders, particularly in relation to shared goals and trust, and develop a culture of quality which will be striven for by a range of stakeholders representing various stages of the VET journey.

The project outcomes will have been informed and achieved by a range of stakeholder organisations. Participants, including partners, local and national interagency network organisations, and, of course, learners/clients, will all contribute to the development of this project.

- **Learner impact:** quality will underpin the learner/client's entire VET journey, placing the learner at the centre of VET provision.
  - **Participating organisations:** development of interagency working and quality culture, enabling bottom-up approaches to Quality Assurance, creating geographical areas recognised by the NQA Quality Label.
  - **Policy makers:** improve channels of communications between the bottom-up approach and the top-down policy approach, to lessen the gap between policy and practice, and enable quality culture to exist within the full quality cycle.
  - The NQA evaluation identified that many partners/stakeholders were not aware of the need for a forum to discuss quality assurance and VET. NQCA aims to achieve this type of wide-scale impact through the creation of such forums and interagency networks in order to support organisations to understand/enhance quality in VET.
  - NQCA seeks to have long term enduring impact on partners and stakeholders as it will affect values, beliefs and behaviours and is a model which is transferable to many situations, contexts and other sectors.
- Improved cooperation between stakeholders will lead to improved quality

across the VET journey, ultimately impacting on the low-skilled and the unemployed.



## 2. Methodology

In NQCA, we believe that across the entire VET journey a conscious commitment to quality is needed; otherwise the good work done for the benefit of the client by the previous organisation could potentially be lost. There are a range of routes into and out of training, therefore each step along the journey needs to be driven by quality.

### Consider the following:

A guidance service wishes to know that the training they may refer their clients to has a focus on quality. The training provider wishes to know if the employer their clients may begin employment with has a focus on quality. After a course is complete, is there any continuity between services? How does the client know what step to take next

Addressing the above queries it is evident that, an experience of quality across the entire VET journey for the client is necessary. An awareness must be cultivated that a VET course is only *one* step in a longer journey. Guidance services must provide the right advice and support, training courses must contain the right content, delivered by the right trainer, and the job itself must be the right one for the individual who has come through this journey; otherwise, the client/learner could fall out of this system at any of these stages. Once the staff of all of these organisations become committed to quality, then the results will filter down through the entire organisation and ultimately to the learner/client.

This example demonstrates that the NQCA interagency network model is inspired by the concept of interagency working and by the establishment of a quality culture within the wider VET journey.

## Interagency working:

Interagency working involves more than one agency/organisation working together in a planned and formal way, rather than through informal networking (although the latter may support and develop the former). This can be at strategic or operational level (Lloyd *et al.*, 2001).

## Our understanding of Quality Culture:

*“Quality culture needed to be owned by all levels in the organisation”*

(participant attending a meeting at National level Northern Ireland UK)

Quality culture refers to an organisational culture that intends to enhance quality permanently and is characterised by two distinct elements:

1. A cultural/psychological element of shared values, beliefs, expectations and commitment toward quality.
2. A structural/managerial element with defined processes that enhance quality and aim to coordinate individual efforts.

## NQCA Interagency Network Model:

Throughout the NQCA project lifetime, the **NQCA Interagency Network Model** was worked on and tested through meetings conducted with different members of the interagency group. In total, each partner implemented:

- 6 **Local** interagency meeting with practitioners from different organisations
- 4 **Learner** meetings with clients/learners of a specific service
- 3 **National** meetings with policy makers of specific programmes

The identified policy-practice gaps and recommendations emerged as a result of this work. Furthermore the NQCA Quality Label was also developed.

### 3. Policy-Practice Gaps

Policy-practice gaps refer to the differences between policy (regulation on paper) and real-life practices. Meetings with learners throughout the NQCA project indicated that policies which do not meet the needs of learners are causing frustration, financial pressure, structural exclusion, confusion and an overall fear for the future. Typical policy-practice gaps are outlined below and examples of such cases can be seen in Appendix A.

#### 3.1 Lack of Communication:

Lack of communication is a topic of high relevance, universally discussed by learners, frontline stakeholders and policy makers alike throughout the NQCA project. Lack of communication can be divided into three different categories:

##### 3.1.1 Communication problems by cultural understanding in a geographical sense

The word “culture” has different meanings and is used in different contexts. Culture reflects a way of life and customs that are shared by those in a given society. Culture provides an individual with an awareness of his/her identity, roots, historical background, giving also a sense that one belongs to a certain society (Luka *et al.*, 2013).

Typically, a policy is developed from the country’s own cultural perspective. This does not lead to confusion or irritation as long as the policy is targeted only to those familiar with the culture the policy originates from. Difficulties arise, however, if those impacted by the policy are new to the culture from which the policy evolved. In this instance, such individuals may not be familiar with the specific rules and concepts which are well known and accepted by the given society. Experience suggests that the bigger the difference between the values of

an individual's national culture to that of the policy culture, the more likely it is that misunderstandings across communication will arise.

### 3.1.2 Communication problems among policies, governmental departments and programme implementing organisations

The NQCA project identified that different policies and governmental departments have different philosophies and values that hold them together, create their self-image and communicate this to the outside world (e.g. work first philosophy vs. education first philosophy). These differences are also evident among organisations and training providers who implement programmes, in the varying ways in which staff engage with the same target group. The NQCA project identified the negative impact emerging when different policies cannot align or harmonise their services. This makes it impossible for learners to experience the full potential of services, gained through a holistic service approach.

### 3.1.3 Communication problems among different levels (policy makers, service providers and clients)

Often, specific services are designed through policymakers, without liaising with the service provider/practitioner or with the target clients. This type of one-way communication strategy can be ineffective in capturing the needs of the clients prior to the implementation of the service. Often, these needs are only realized during the implementation of the service as this is the first time in which communication between the service provider and the policymaker takes place. In this instance, feedback is often requested by a limited means through written reports or pre-formulated questionnaires.

*“Learners reported a lack of real communication with policymakers; in details they feel a lack of active listening on the part of the policymakers about their real needs and ideas. Policymakers are seen as “showmen” pretending to listen ordinary people but actually they only arrange their own business. An example to sustain their statement: it is almost impossible for them to participate in mobility activities because the majority of learners cannot afford to anticipate costs as foreseen; they can realize such “dreams” only thanks to the VET provider”*

(Participants at the Learner Forum in Cinisello Balsamo (MI) e Cesano Maderno (MB) Italy)

*“The policies of the DSP are too rigid and lack a human element. Those who set policies are too far from the individual. This leads to harsh and unreasonable decisions causing significant problems for clients and distress for staff”*

(Interagency working group, Ballymun, Dublin).

### **3.2 Lack of relevant information**

In today’s world, we are constantly receiving huge amounts of information using varying different channels. However, according to feedback gathered through the NQCA project meetings, a lack of information was reported, particularly by clients/learners. Clients reported that it is difficult for them to find correct and up-to-date information. Typically, the modes of communication of political administrations do not correspond with those of the clients. Different organisations across the NQCA project noted that clients demonstrate a lack of knowledge about the services and opportunities available to them, as the

information they receive is not clear and can be easily misinterpreted. Clients often feel frustrated and demotivated as a result.

*“There is a lack of clarity and uniformity across provision. This leads to confusion on the part of clients”*

(Interagency working group, Ballymun, Dublin)

### **3.3 Lack of flexible funding structure and conditions**

Throughout the NQCA project, policy-practice gaps were especially discussed by service providers (interagency groups). Interagency groups report that funding does not always fit to the needs of clients, and often there is confusion surrounding the conditions of funding. This can be seen in the example of the creation of programmes without the inclusion of the training providers throughout the design phase.

*“One of the greatest policy issue challenges experienced in relation to the “live” project we are basing our NQCA project on is the opportunity to work with clients who are close to the point in their unemployment status where they are mandated to undertake the NI government Steps to Success Programme. Currently, at the discretion of the client’s Jobs and Benefits Agency officer, there is an option of a 90 day delay in the client moving to Steps to Success. This is insufficient for the programme to work meaningfully with a client who may have complex needs and barriers and need customized assistance to move from long-term unemployment to sustainable employment. The interagency meetings determined that this was an issue that would require a policy shift; i.e. access to services based on the best intervention to meet client needs- not their benefits status“.*

(Participant attending a meeting at regional level in Northern Ireland UK)



## 4. Recommendations

Below is a list of recommendations, built to avoid the traps of policy-practice gaps in a practical and efficient way:

### 4.1. Listen to your clients

There is nothing more effective in improving the quality of organisational programmes or services than truly listening to your clients. Not just “hearing” what clients say but engaging in active and concentrated listening. This is an important distinction, and a key finding of the NQCA project; that clients often feel that nobody is listening to them. Practitioners cannot *guess* or *assume* what is best for a client, the only way to determine this is to speak to them directly.

To improve the situation of a client/learner in a sustainable way, ongoing communication is necessary to determine what the client’s needs are and what barriers they are facing. Gathering feedback and listening to your client’s needs does not cost much, and will only act to improve your organisation’s programmes and services. Feedback should be acknowledged and acted on as it allows clients to feel appreciated and valued. Without being listened to, clients can feel frustrated and demotivated.

*“It is good, if you have after a consultation fresh hope“*

*“It is important to get new energy for the path ahead“*

(Refugees during a learner meeting in Berlin)

#### **4.2. Identify the right communication channels and use an appropriate language to provide your target group with up-to-date information**

Ensuring that the right communication channels are used to communicate information to clients is essential toward creating and maintaining smooth programme or service implementation. It is, perhaps, beneficial to test your communication strategy on a small group of clients, prior to its adoption in your programme, and to adapt it as necessary depending on the feedback you receive. It is also important to remember to use clear and easy-to-understand language when communicating with clients. The NQCA project identified several service-to-client communication channels which it identified as being particularly useful:

- Offering information sessions to small groups of clients at a time
- Establishing public information points
- Ensuring that organisation websites contain up-to-date information
- Providing stakeholders with relevant and well prepared information, which can be easily distributed to clients.

*“It is good, if the people speak slow and that they taking time for my questions”.*

(Refugee during a learning meeting in Berlin)

#### **4.3. Design flexible programmes and services which suit your clients' needs and living conditions**

Throughout the duration of the NQCA project, several programmes were identified which did not consider the needs of the client and were entirely based on the client's benefits status. Often, in such situations, clients are not allowed to participate in training and development courses and programmes lasting longer than a specific number of days, regardless of the potential benefits to the

client's reintegration and progress. This project, therefore strongly recommends a policy shift toward programmes which promote access to services based on the best intervention based on the client's needs, rather than services which are based on the benefits system.

The NQCA project also identified services which do not consider the living conditions of their clients. With the ultimate goal of client reintegration, services **must** consider and be flexible to the living conditions (living environment, life situation, lifestyle etc.) of their clients. In practice, this requires services (e.g. training courses) to be created in a way which accommodates the specific client group e.g. single parents require more flexibility with attendance and an understanding of childcare availability and needs.

*“People are being pulled off courses that are appropriate for them and being put on courses which are unsuitable. This is frustrating for the client, can lead to failure and set back their journey”* (Interagency working group, Ballymun, Dublin)

#### **4.4 Continuously capture feedback from your clients and frontline practitioners**

In order to develop high quality programmes and services, it is important to have an understanding of your client group. Similar to recommendation 4.1, it is recommended that regular contact is made with clients to assess their issues and barriers. Target group orientated tools (such as surveys, short feedback sessions, bilateral talks etc.) can be used to capture this information. It is further recommended that “expert hotlines” be established. These hotlines can act as a channel of communication from programme implementation practitioners, to those at policy level, sharing relevant up-to-date information and

feedback. Frontline practitioners should provide continuous feedback to improve the quality of programmes and the delivery of services.

*“There is a need to trust frontline staff and respect their professional role“*

(Interagency working group, Ballymun, Dublin)

#### **4.5 Create interagency groups when designing a programme or service**

The interagency approach (see Section 2) is, from a project perspective, the method best suited to delivering a service to people with multiple and inter-related problems. The interagency approach operates with different stakeholders (each of whom work with the target group) working together in a planned and formal way. This approach is best suited for communication and decision-making during the programme design and implementation phases. The use of the interagency approach can reduce policy and service fragmentation (an identified policy-practice gap). For best results, the approach should be imbedded into the culture of each member organisation.

## 5. NQCA Interagency Network Model tools

### NQCA Interagency Guidelines and Resource Pack:

This interagency model and resource pack, developed during the NQA project has now been adapted and developed as part of the NQCA project so as to ensure its relevance across a wider VET journey. It provides a way of working at learner, local, regional and national levels which aims to develop and encourage *quality culture*. The NQCA Interagency Guidelines and Resource Pack can be seen at [02-NQCA-IO1Guidelines-and-Resource-Pack-EN.pdf](#)

### Templates for stakeholder meetings:

In order to promote the formal and systematic running of interagency meetings, NQCA templates were devised so that information can be captured in a routine way from meeting to meeting. Samples and templates can be seen at

[03-NQCA-Agenda-Template-for-Learner-Meeting-EN.pdf](#)

[04-NQCA-Agenda-Template-Local-Interagency-Group-Meeting-EN.pdf](#)

[05-NQCA-Agenda-Template-National-Group-Meeting-EN.pdf](#)

[06-Learner-Questionnaire-Final-EN.pdf](#)

[07-Interagency-Meeting-Consultation-for-Social-Evaluation-EN.pdf](#)

[08-National-Meeting-Questions-EN.pdf](#)

In order to measure the value of the NQCA project for all stakeholders, what changed for them as a result of the project and what happened to create this change, the project developed a social impact assessment framework which can be viewed along with the questionnaires used to collect the NQCA impact data at [09-Toolkit-Social-Impact-Assessment-Framework-EN.pdf](#)

### **Quality Label:**

When we think of quality we often think of standards which can be identified by a quality mark or label. These are instantly recognizable and create a sense of acknowledgement and trust that a product or service has met a quality standard.

We want the Network QA quality label to become synonymous with networking for quality assurance and quality culture and to be recognised as demonstrating that organisations and institutions that display it are committed to networking for Quality Assurance and Quality Culture. An objective of our work is to develop and embed the Network QA as a quality label that stakeholders in our partnership countries and ultimately across Europe embrace and validate as a quality mark; having the Network QA quality label will demonstrate that organisations and institutions understand the value of embracing a culture of quality and the resulting improvement in learner outcomes in vocational education and training. You can sign up to the Quality Label via the following link [Quality Label](#)

Throughout the NQCA project, each partner country was required to carry out 2 local training workshops aimed at informing and promoting interagency working to local agencies. Training materials consisted of the modules developed as part of the Master Training programme (as seen above). The development of separate modules was intended to allow training facilitators to pick and choose the content they believed would be most relevant to their target training group based on the group's cultural needs, prior understanding/experience, or the group's purpose or services etc. For example, one learner group may benefit from Module 2 on "Interagency Working", but a group with significant experience in the area of interagency working would not. Therefore, local training content should be fine-tuned to meet the needs of each specific learner group. It is important that all training should include a strong facilitator who is aware of the group's needs, can fine-tune training materials to meet these needs, and administer an informative and engaging group learning experience. To access the training lesson and the training material please contact Martina Keogh at Ballymun Job Centre at [keoghm@bmunjib.ie](mailto:keoghm@bmunjib.ie)

## 6. Appendices

### Appendix A: Policy-Practice Gaps Case Studies

<b>Case Study</b>	<b>The Activation Process for Unemployed Learners (specifically clients on Job Seeker Transitional payments) Dublin, Ireland</b>
<b>Target Group</b>	<p>The Jobseeker's Transitional payment (JST) is a special arrangement under the Jobseeker's Allowance (JA) scheme that aims to support lone parents (i.e. those not cohabiting) into the workforce while they have young children (youngest child aged between 7 and 13 years inclusive).</p> <p>JST recipients are exempt from certain JA conditions. For example JST recipients are not required to be available/actively seeking full-time work, are exempt from the „7 in 7“ rule i.e. can work any pattern and still receive payment (subject to a means test), and can enter into education and/or employment, including part-time employment and will still receive payment (subject to a means test). All JST recipients must engage with the Department's Intreo Service.</p> <p>Source: <a href="http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Jobseekers-Transitional-Payment.aspx">http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Jobseekers-Transitional-Payment.aspx</a></p>
<b>Stakeholder Organisations involved</b>	The Department of Social Protection (Intreo), Local Employment Services/ Ballymun Job Centre, SOLAS, CDETB, Community Employment Providers, DCU in the community, SICAP, Ballymun Adult Read and Write Scheme, Ballymun Regional Youth Resource (BRYR), Whitehall College and Plunkett College.
<b>Summary</b>	<p>Learners who are in receipt of the One Parent Family Payment (OPFP) payment will be automatically changed to the JST payment by the Department of Social Protection (DSP) when their youngest child reaches the age of 7-13 years inclusive.</p> <p>Learners received a letter informing them of the payment change and were invited to a Group Information Session in their local Intreo centre, those working part-time were invited to a one-to-one meeting with a case officer to discuss financial options (e.g. Family Income Supplement payment). Unfortunately, since this time, the learners have received no further information and, therefore, have not engaged in any services unless via self-referral.</p> <p><b>From our learner meetings we learned:</b></p> <p><b>fears:</b> Learners feared that their payments would be cut under the new scheme and that they may be forced into doing something they weren't ready for.</p>



	<p><b>Communication Issues:</b> Learners didn't understand the information they received in the letters or at the Group Information Session. Information was typically shared via „word of mouth“and was often incorrect.</p> <p><b>Missed Opportunity:</b> Some learners have missed the time that they are allowed to upskill while being exempt from the JA conditions, because their youngest child has turned 14 years old.</p> <p><b>Learning:</b> JST learners are a very diverse group, often requiring much support and encouragement to re-enter training, education and employment.</p> <p><b>From the Interagency meetings, we learned:</b></p> <p>There was much confusion regarding the JST payment, the presentation delivered to learners was difficult to understand, and the interagency group did not have the necessary information needed to effectively inform/guide their clients. Some programmes run by members of the interagency group may need to be tailored to meet the needs of this new learner group.</p> <p><b>Learning:</b> The interagency group has many valuable, varied skills and works very well together, trusting that all member agencies have the learners' interests at the centre of all actions, leading the learner to a quality driven VET journey.</p>
<p><b>Recommendations</b></p>	<p>JST learners should and need to be on a priority list. Where the DSP cannot facilitate this, referral to the LES should occur.</p> <p>Prior to the introduction of new policies, learner forums should be used (alongside an experienced facilitator) to capture the queries, fears, and hopes the learners may have when payment changes occur.</p> <p>All supporting agencies should be informed of any changes to payment rules, and should be brought together at a local level to receive the same presentation that will be presented to learners, thus ensuring that the learner receives clear and correct information from all agencies they engage with.</p> <p>All agencies working with learners should have Interagency Networking and Quality as part of all staffs' Performance Indicators, therefore composing the organisation's Quality Culture.</p> <p>Learners and policy-implementing agencies should be listened to as they are the most aware of the barriers/pitfalls which may occur. Implementing clear communication strategies among all those involved in the learner's journey will help to reduce and remove potential policy-practice gaps.</p>

<b>Case Study</b>	<b>ITALY - DUL Dote Unica Lavoro (Unique Endowment for Work)</b>  <b>VET Journey that includes different services such as guidance, training activities, coaching, tutoring and employment services. It is financed by Lombardy Region.</b>
<b>Target Group</b>	<p>Non-employed, unemployed, employed citizens, including those belonging to the police, residents and/or domiciled or from production units/business which are located in Lombardy. In particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 15 to 29 years old young unemployed, resident or domiciled in Lombardy;</li> <li>• unemployed, from thirty years old regardless of the professional category possessed before the job loss,</li> <li>• citizens not immediately employable/high risk of social exclusion</li> </ul>
<b>Stakeholder Organisations involved</b>	<p>The main objective of this VET journey is to provide citizens with the accompaniment for the qualification, retraining, job search and, consequently, fostering a high-employment conducive to social and territorial cohesion. Therefore training providers, companies, employment agencies, employment centers, Public Administration/authorities (Municipalities, Provinces, Regions) are stakeholders in the whole process and contribute to the achievement of the results of the services</p>
<b>Summary</b>	<p>In order to increase employment and employability, DUL let citizens benefit from more employment and/or training services according to the endowment given and group/range of aid intensities being entered. All services are employment-oriented and/or oriented to the development of professional skills. Over the years DUL proved to be particularly effective for relocation, ensuring continuity of service in support of people seeking employment.</p> <p>Definition of the journey</p> <p>The citizens, depending on the range of aid intensities being entered, have access to an endowment that is a specific budget, within the limits of which they agree, together with an accredited operator, the services answering to their own needs of employment and/or qualification. The operator, free of charge, must provide the beneficiaries with the basic services necessary to understand the characteristics and needs of the person. The operator and the beneficiary jointly design a Personalized Intervention Plan (PIP). Beneficiaries should not financially contribute to the endowment nor the operator can receive other funding to cover the same cost units already funded by Lombardy Region. Once the requirements of the citizens verified, the operator shall also support their profiling within the information system. Such profiling is based on the characteristics of each beneficiary (employment status/distance from the labor market, education, gender, age, indicator of</p>

	<p>the economic situation) and the system automatically defines their belonging to one of the following group/range of aid intensities:</p> <p>Group/Range 1 - "low intensity of support" includes people able to re-enter themselves autonomously the labour market or requiring minimal support;</p> <p>Group/Range 2 - "medium intensity of support" includes people who need intensive services for the placement or relocation in the labour market;</p> <p>Group/Range 3 - "high intensity of support " includes people who need intensive services for medium/long period and strong individual support for the placement or relocation in the labour market;</p> <p>Group/Range 3 Plus - " high intensity of support - disadvantage" includes people with particularly weak characteristics compared to labour market and thus they require intensive services of active policy, including short and/or training comprehensive value in work experience;</p> <p>Group/Range 4- "other aid" include people in need of services aimed at professional retraining and employability</p> <p>Types of possible services to provide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Basic services - Reception and access to services such as interview with specialists, definition of the journey;</li> <li>B. Welcome and orientation such as skills assessment/analysis of the tendencies and attitudes to entrepreneurship, orientation and training to job search and continuous accompaniment;</li> <li>C. Consolidation of skills such as coaching, tutoring and support to training / work experience, certification of skills, promotion of knowledge in the management of enterprise, specific training;</li> <li>D. Job placement - Insertion and start working</li> <li>E. Self-employment (as an alternative to the labour)</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p>Engage in working tables by policy makers, all entities of the territory and start an active listening to their real needs.</p> <p>Observe the activities on-going and collect the voice of the beneficiaries.</p>

<b>Case Study</b>	<b>Berlin, Germany - A refugees VET journey</b>
<b>Target Group</b>	VET journey of refugees in Berlin
<b>Stakeholder Organisations involved</b>	TeachCom Edutainment gGmbH; Gesbit GmbH with learning shop and Job Point Neukölln; Arrivo Übungswerkstatt, Jobassistenz Berlin; Arbeit und Leben e.V.; Zgs consult GmbH; Senate Administration for Integration, Labour and Social Affairs; Bezirksamt Neukölln; Senate Administration for Education, Youth and Family – Koordination der Bildungsangebote für Neuzugewanderte
<b>Summary</b>	<p><b>Background:</b> Berlin has a long history of delegating public tasks to private (charitable) organisations. These private structures are developed and grown for years. The integration of refugees into work and/or training is done in general by private (charitable) organisations engaged by the public sector (Senate Administrations).</p> <p><b>Specific situation:</b> To provide people and/or organisations with any kind of information is something which gets very normal for refugees during their flight to Germany. And it doesn't stop once they are arrived in Germany. During the VET journey they are again asked to provide different organisations with any kind of information. Often they do not know, why they are asked these questions. They are not able to associate the questions with any experience they had before. For example "What are your strengths? What is your dreamjob". This is not a language matter but a matter of culture, as view of life's are different in the countries of origin (e.g. life is life and work is work). Furthermore they are confronted with so many organisations (which hardly noticeable differences and every organisation start to ask the same questions. And so refugees are asked to answer the same questions more than one time. This is unhelpful, time consuming and can lead to frustration and demotivation.</p> <p>Therefore, the participants of the interagency meetings, agreed that a simple document which summarizes the most important information is helpful &amp; provides orientation for the involved persons &amp; organisations.</p>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A lot of refugees arrive in Germany without any certificates. Furthermore professional titles often cannot be just translated. In general it is a large process to develop a CV which corresponds with the German minimum standards. So the most important need of the refugees is to have a CV which helps not to answer again and again the same questions.</li> <li>• Consider the different views of lifes</li> <li>• Consider the importance of prepared transitions (warme Übergänge)</li> <li>• Develop appropriate tools to support transition</li> <li>• Make sure that involved organisations know who is doing what!</li> </ul>

<b>Case Study</b>	<b>EmployAbility South</b>  <b>Belfast, Northern Ireland</b>
<b>Target Group</b>	375 People of working age who are unemployed/underemployed and reside in areas of high social and economic deprivation within South Belfast
<b>Stakeholder Organisations involved</b>	<p><b>Funding Authority:</b> EmployAbility South is funded by the Northern Ireland Executive Delivering Social Change initiative through the Social Investment Fund. The government department is Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister with support from the Strategic Investment Board.</p> <p><b>Managing Agent:</b> Belfast South Social Investment Partnership Lead Organisation for the revenue project Greater Village Regeneration Trust</p> <p><b>Delivery Organisations:</b> GEMS NI Lead Partner , Time Associates, Bryson FutureSkills, South Belfast Partnership</p> <p><b>Community Hubs:</b> Belfast South Community Resources, T.R.E.E. Project, Cromac Regeneration Initiative, Micah Centre, Mornington Community Project, Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group, Markets Community Development, Donegall Pass Community Forum</p> <p><b>Other Stakeholders:</b> Department for Employment and Learning, Employers, Business Associations</p>
<b>Summary</b>	<p>EmployAbility South – a project designed and delivered by GEMS NI and funded by the Northern Ireland Social Investment Programme. 3 Year €2Million project providing employability support and training including access to 3-6 month paid job opportunities. Eligibility to participate in EmployAbility South is restricted to people living in certain geographical locations<sup>1</sup> in South Belfast that experience deprivation in a number of zones e.g. Unemployment, health, and educational attainment. The issues experienced by the project delivery team included trying to access and engage with people living in areas of high social and economic deprivation, who were often fearful of change i.e. coming of welfare benefit dependence and entering employment; this fear related to what would happen to them if they started work and the job did not last or if their personal circumstances changed.</p>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demographically the project should be expanded outside the SOA to be open to all in the area who suffer from disadvantage in the labour market</li> <li>• Extended time for paid work placements allowing the client to fully adjust into the world of work</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> These are known as SOA – Super Output areas

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• More involvement from government departments opening up paid work placements in public offices</li><li>• Peer participants to be more involved in setting up advisory groups and buddying systems.</li><li>• To increase the number of trained mentors to for 1-1 work to allow to look at other zones i.e health, education and social inclusion</li><li>• Increase interagency work at national levels to enable an active approach to policy makers.</li></ul> |
|--|---|

<b>Title</b>	
<b>Country/Case Study</b>	United Kingdom
<b>Description of the specific situation and scope</b>	<p>In early 2017, according to Eurostat, Bureau of Labour Statistics, the UK unemployment rate is at a 11-year all-time low of 4.8% (source: at 4.8% for the three months to November 2016). In London, the unemployment rate (according to official figures) has fallen to 5.8%. However, when looking at those who are in most need of support it tends to be those with complex needs e.g. those with disabilities/on disability benefits; those from minority ethnic backgrounds, and lone parents, for example.</p> <p>The Employment Commission (in Islington) was established to understand the nature of unemployment in Islington and what could be done to reduce it to the lowest possible level and to keep it there, whilst making employment meaningful and enjoyable for all. The Commission brought together local employers, public services, the voluntary sector and residents to shine a light on employment and understand how we can work better together to bring about dramatic and long-lasting change.</p> <p>During the Inter-agency Meeting dedicated to the Policy-Practice Gaps, the summary of discussions highlighted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the impact of changes to Housing Policy in terms of benefits, rents and commercial values/rents linked to commercial market rents. <a href="https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/jan/04/end-of-council-housing-bill-secure-tenancies-pay-to-stay">https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/jan/04/end-of-council-housing-bill-secure-tenancies-pay-to-stay</a></li> <li>- Continual changes to Policy relating to childcare <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2010-to-2015-government-policy-childcare-and-early-education/2010-to-2015-government-policy-childcare-and-early-education">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2010-to-2015-government-policy-childcare-and-early-education/2010-to-2015-government-policy-childcare-and-early-education</a></li> <li>- Changes to how benefits are claimed and received and the move to the online system, and the Benefits Cap, which are changing rapidly/being piloted and therefore benefits claimants are confused about their rights/scared about their financial stability: <a href="https://www.turn2us.org.uk/Benefit-guides/Benefit-Changes/Benefit-Changes-Timetable-2017-2018">https://www.turn2us.org.uk/Benefit-guides/Benefit-Changes/Benefit-Changes-Timetable-2017-2018</a></li> </ul> <p>Therefore, it is quite evident that those already vulnerable are finding themselves in more of a vulnerable position due to confusion, lack of information and pressure in terms of financial stability.</p>
<b>Do you already have recommendations on how to approach the issue(s)?</b>	<p>The NQCA approach to inter-agency working is considered by the South Islington Employment Cluster as an approach/a way of joined-up working that could/should present the answer/a way forward for dealing with multiple and complex changes to Policy and how this is impacting upon those most vulnerable. It would appear, at the moment, that the GAP is a very topical issue – there needs to be stronger identification of NEED and a RESPONSE to the need by having a series of information events where key stakeholders provide information for Employment Practitioners/provide ‘hot lines’ to experts so that people are helped quickly (from a one-stop-shop’ type of approach), and key stakeholders should provide ‘pop-up’ specialist support at the entry points (the agencies/organisations involved in the Employment Cluster).</p>

<b>If relevant, who was/would be involved in solving the issue?</b>	<p>The Ward Profiles for Bunhill and Clerkenwell (indeed all of the Wards in Islington) provide a list of key local stakeholders, but these tend to be out of date. So, there needs to be a brand-new, flexible and easy to manage way of ensuring that the South Islington Employment Cluster is aware of / involves as many key local stakeholders as possible. Further, there needs to be better joined-up working between key Council departments – those who can provide the wrap-around support and specialist provision that our local residents need; often their needs are complex, so we need to be able to tailor services better to individual needs. Those identified so far, can include: Benefit CAP –<u>IMAX</u> - the Islington Income Maximisation Team to help residents manage benefits and payment of rent, etc; easy access to/awareness of the services/activities that are provided through Adult and Community Learning, and St Luke’s Community Hub, for example.</p> <p>There needs to be a stronger more tailored response to providing employability support to those who are in most need of support back into the workforce e.g. those on disability benefits.</p>
<b>If possible, please identify 2/3 concrete steps that would bring you closer to a solution</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue with the Employment Cluster model as a means to developing an inter-agency approach – this will facilitate joined-up working.</li> <li>2. Extract more exact information from Islington Council to better identify the most vulnerable residents and tailor a package of back to work support that meets their specific needs.</li> <li>3. Securing funding that would specifically support a pilot programme of services/activities tailored for those residents and to use this to capture effective practice in order to grow and sustain the service.</li> <li>4. Build stronger links with Islington Council and the core departments that provide access to specialist support (Income Maximisation, iWork, Adult and Community Learning, Prevent) and encourage them to provide ‘pop-up’ support via a one-stop-shop approach; and map-out a ‘timeline’ of support – setting out which organisations can provide what type of support along the journey back to work.</li> </ol>
<b>Are there elements/factors that could hinder the possible resolution of the issue?</b>	<p>For both the Employment Clusters and for Islington Council it is a time of austerity and challenges in terms of securing funding – competition for contracts and grants is becoming harder and more resource intensive. As Islington Council makes more and more cuts to services, the demand on the services that do exist increases, and fewer staff can result in the service being less flexible, thus, much more unlikely to ‘pop-up’ in various centres.</p>
<b>Did you put in practice successful strategies during the project implementation?</b>	<p>In testing the NQCA model, Islington’s Employment Cluster model has provided an excellent ‘test bed’. However, there is still some way to go in terms of fostering a meaningful joined-up approach to tackling local employability issues. Primarily, it would appear that the implementation of the Model will be a long-term investment of time and resource, and there must be a common purpose to those organisations to work in an inter-agency way. It is possible that the Kite Mark will provide the VALUES that need to be set out and which have the potential to forge a stronger relationship between diverse organisations.</p> <p>Further, in terms of the Employment Clusters in Islington, their existence provides ample opportunity for the NQCA model to be cascaded to other Employment Clusters.</p>



<b>Case Study</b>	<b>Multi-employer apprenticeship training for young people. The focus is on the transition phases between school and training periods: who gives guidance, when and what is the quality of guidance and training. (Turku, Finland)</b>
<b>Target Group</b>	Young people between the ages of 15 and 25 at the vocational training
<b>Stakeholder Organisations involved</b>	<b>Before training:</b> responsible organizations are basic education providers, career advisers at local services <b>During training:</b> VET providers, apprenticeship training offices, employers, parents (if the client is a minor), vocational teachers and the provider of the training/education <b>After training:</b> employers, graduated students
<b>Summary</b>	<p>After career guidance (e.g. study counselors in basic education, career guidance after basic education, preparatory training) the student enters secondary education program that always grants eligibility to tertiary education (vocational training).</p> <p>VET has a strong work-life focus, and it is always competence - based (i.e. credits are only granted on the basis of competence, not time spent in the training ; through demonstrated skills and competence, credits can even be acquired without study). Upon graduation: The feature that sets apprenticeship training apart from school-based VET is its secondary function as a recruitment tool - the goal is that the workplace educating the student (or in the case of the multi-employer model, the final workplace in the journey) will offer him/her a regular employment contract upon graduation. Completing a qualification or a part of a qualification through an apprenticeship contract places quality assurance is more demanding than in vocational institute. That's because working places are different and the focus is more on working than training. There are many levels and forms of support and guiding in VET that don't exist in apprenticeship training: social services, student health services (not available in apprenticeship training), Kela –the Social Insurance Institution of Finland (student support; not available in apprenticeship training), apprenticeship training office (employment contract issues; not available in school-based VET), multidisciplinary Student Support Team at the VET institution. That's why quality of guiding in apprenticeship training needs to focus more.</p> <p>In NQCA project we found out that communication is the key issue in the quality of support and guiding, and there is a clear need to create usable tools to communicate with young adults. These tools are more or less digital solutions. All the information relevant to education needs to flow between actors without obstacles (as allowed by the Act on the Openness of Government Activities).</p>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- involvement of young people is important when creating new, qualified and useful guiding models</li> <li>- teachers and guiding personnel must be trained to use new digital solution</li> <li>- students in working life (apprenticeship training) need peer students and support of teacher as much as students in schools</li> </ul>

<b>Case Study</b>	<b>Quality improvement of the apprenticeship contract system</b>  <b>Eger, Hungary</b>
<b>Target Group</b>	<p>The primary target group of local implementations are young people, studying the profession with apprenticeship contract. Another unavoidable target group for quality improvement is the schools that are the basis for the vocational training system and the practical training sites (enterprise).</p>
<b>Stakeholder Organisations involved</b>	<p>The project involved all the organizations that the student can have in contact with during training or at work. In order to jointly improve the quality of education in vocational education, such as employment center, vocational training center, pedagogical center.</p>
<b>Summary</b>	<p>Our VET system is state regulated; the schools are supervised by the representatives of the ministry and the central government. Schools follow central regulation about their QA activity. The regulations contain principles for the training period, and the theoretical part of the training as a regulation without any approaches as QA framework. During the project, we developed a questionnaire for satisfaction of all target groups. This creates feedback in the system. The questionnaire was developed with the relevant target group considering their needs and expectations. The results can support the system's shortcomings by supporting numbers. Presenting these to central policy-making organizations, it is possible to modify the regulations according to the user's expectations. During the process, we have put great emphasis on developing co-operation between actors. This will help direct the quality development of local vocational training practice.</p>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To make young people more transparent and accessible to the vocational training career.</li> <li>• Quality education of enterprises promotes the enhancement of the prestige of vocational training.</li> <li>• Schools, practical venues, and chamber co-operation will lead to a drop in the number of school-leaving graduates.</li> <li>• An annual survey of the satisfaction survey provides an opportunity to implement the PDCA principle, thus increasing satisfaction and quality.</li> </ul>

## Appendix B: Information on the project

### Website

[www.nqca.eu](http://www.nqca.eu)

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