

Second meeting of Regional Experts in Quality Assurance in general education

8th November 2017, Zagreb

The second regional meeting on Quality Assurance in general education was attended by 29 participants, representatives of relevant institutions from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo*, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro and Serbia. (For detailed list of participating institutions and representatives please see Annex 1). The meeting was also attended by the representatives of the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre, Ms Aila Korpi and Mr Jani Goman, as well as by the representative of SoNet company, Mr Janić, expert in using IT in education. The meeting was hosted by the Croatian Centre for the External Evaluation of Education, and organized with the support of KulturKontakt Austria.

(* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence)

The purpose of the meeting was

- To present the existing practices in the quality management of QA institutions
- To discuss the benefits, challenges and recommendations for various quality management mechanism
- To present an example of an IT system supporting the implementation of quality assurance aspects
- To discuss the proposed Action plan for the Regional network of experts in QA and agree on the next steps

As the final part of the meeting, a study visit to the Croatian Centre for the External Evaluation of Education was organized.

After the welcome addresses given by Ms Maja Jukić, the director of the Croatian Centre for the External Evaluation of Education, Ms Šarić, ERI SEE Director, reminded the participants of the conclusions and priorities agreed upon during and after the first regional meeting of experts, and of the goals of the second meeting.

Finnish counsellors of evaluation, Ms Korpi and Mr Goman, from Finnish Education Evaluation Centre presented, among others, roles and responsibilities different actors play in the implementation of the QA system in Finland – Ministry, education and training providers, and education agencies; legislation that regulates it; and evaluation and self-evaluation models used in the QA system within education providers as well as in their own institution - such as European Framework for Quality Management (EFQM – more information on www.efqm.org); Quality Criterion for basic education, Common Assurance Framework (CAF – www.eipa.eu), or ISO standards (www.iso.org). Finnish colleagues presented their own pathway in the introduction and implementation of the quality management system which uses CAF as a frame of Quality management system, which is also promoted for the use in public administration in Europe. For presentation please see Annex 2.

During the peer learning session, Ms Gordana Čaprić presented the practices of the Serbian Institute for education quality and evaluation, focusing on the ISO 9001:2008 quality management principles and how ISO was introduced in their institution, and what concrete benefits it brought. She stressed out the fact that previously existing quality management system was analyzed and enhanced in order to meet the ISO criteria, which implies process orientation, monitored and measured using the Key performance indicators – KPI – methodology. According to their experiences, the use of ISO standards improves the quality of services, reduces expenditure, and increases the image of the institution, as well highly increases security levels in dealing with confidential activities such as preparing the final examinations.

Ms Jukić from the Croatian Centre for the External Evaluation of Education presented their practices and procedures, which respond to the obligation of the Centre to perform regular self-evaluation, as well as to be subject to external evaluation (yet to be implemented). The procedures, developed by the Centre, and with the purpose of ensuring the best possible performance of Centre's activities, define the quality and its indicators and ensure systematic approach to operational steps. The procedures thus regulate activities regarding human resources, security, financial services, preparation and implementation of state matura, ethical code, visual identity and communication plan of the Centre.

Mr Janić from the SoNet company presented the possibilities and solutions of an IT system for computerized delivery of national exams - from test inception to marking and reporting, and how it meets the quality requirements, such as equitable conditions for all students; similar Internet access and speed; no interruptions during the testing; cheating prevention, test results security etc. Their solutions are used in Australia, Chile, Denmark, Israel, delivering for high level security and quality requirements. Participants agreed that state exams implemented partly or completely using the IT systems are already a reality and something yet to be considered in the region, particularly having in mind the fact that the next Pisa cycle will be performed electronically, where if the students from the region have not had the opportunity to prepare for this kind of e-testing, will be disadvantaged which will influence their results.

After that the participants were divided into groups and discussed the further steps in the form of an action plan, as well as their future work on the regulation of internal processes within their institutions.

The meeting was concluded by a study visit to the Croatian Centre for the External Evaluation of Education, where participants were introduced to various security measures and organizational processes that need to be followed.

CONCLUSIONS:

As a result of the seminar, presentations and discussions, participants concluded:

- It proves to be a good practice to have experts from EU countries transferring their expertise, practices and solutions participating in regional events, and is recommended for future events
- The next topic for peer learning and exchanges should be dealing with external evaluation and evaluators
- External evaluation should also be connected with the issue of internal evaluation – how schools perform the internal evaluation
- A study visit to the Serbian Institute for Education quality and evaluation should be organized next, with the focus on external evaluation and evaluators and having in mind good practices

and evaluation cycle in this field in Serbia, as well as some new pilot activities conducted in Croatia

- It is agreed that the 3rd meeting of the Regional group of experts in QA in general education will be organized in Belgrade, end January/beginning February.
- Additionally, development of an on-line communication platform within ERI SEE possibilities for the members of the Regional group of experts is also a possibility, enabling colleagues to share the existing documents (for example internal procedures and requirements needed for efficient quality management within institutions), with limited or restricted access, open for group members.
- Participants agreed that for this purpose already existing platforms, such as Yammer, could be used, and ERI SEE will explore these possibilities.
- Some of the further activities should also deal with national exams – exchange of knowledge between participating countries, e-testing; and with the culture of quality – how to promote it, how to communicate it, how to engage schools, teachers, parents... with the view of embracing the implementation of quality standards as a benefit and not an additional burden.