Good Practices of Quality Improvement in Vocational Education and Training teams, as collected during and after the QUAL4T2 pilot:

'We celebrate every goal that we reach, and write it on a flag, so that we see it every day. And this garland in our office makes us happy and keeps us going while it is getting longer and more colourful every month…'

(anonymous team member, June 2018)
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Introduction

From August 2017 till June 2018 five pilots took place in QUAL4T2 partners’ institutes in five European countries. These pilots were organised to test the products that have been developed in the QUAL4T2 project and collected valuable feedback from teachers and trainers involved.

About 13 teams and over 285 teachers/trainers from ROC Landstede (Netherlands), Politeknika Ikastegia Txorrieri (Spain), IDEC (Greece), CIOFS-FP (Italy), Køge Handelsskole (Denmark) were directly engaged in pilot activities. Thus providing the opportunity to discuss and test the materials and share learning and experiences with each other. They tested a Quality Guide and a toolkit with seventeen Quality tools within their own organizations and, in some cases, also further afield.

It is the feedback from these teacher teams combined with our facilitators’ meetings that resulted in this collection of good practices, tips and surprises. It also shows the impact of the project for the participating organisations!

This good practice guide is built up as a story book. In this book, let us travel through five Vocational Education and Training organisations in five European countries (Netherlands, Spain, Italy, Denmark and Greece) and enjoy the stories gained from teacher teams. Learn about the frustrations when something did not go as well expected… Share the euphoria when a success was reached… Enjoy these precious stories in which teams really move forward to further excellence in Vocational Education and Training!

And if – after reading – you as a teacher or trainer want to start working on a culture of ongoing and intrinsic quality improvement at your own school? Check the tools at www.qual4t-project.org and take quality improvement to the next level!

QUAL4T2 stands for ‘Further Quality Improvement for VET, guiding teacher Teams in Europe in strategic planning’: The 2,5 year project is co-funded by the Erasmus+ program of the EACEA. The project partners aim to contribute directly to the improvement of outcomes of quality systems in Europe’s institutes, by investing in teachers’ professionalisation to develop effectiveness and involvement of teachers/trainers in the strategic quality planning. The project aims to help teachers to further professionalise in this specific topic.

This story book provides - besides this introduction - five chapters with case portraits from the partner organisations and countries. Each chapter ends with a summary of successes and pitfalls. An epilogue can be found at the last page.

if you have a question, or if you need further advise, you may always contact the partners through the website.
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Good practice about REAL TEAM WORK

CASE PORTRAIT – ROC Landstede in the Netherlands

Working together made the difference!

We all know that teams in education are different, and this is where the Dutch story about teams in Vocational Education and Training starts. Different teams, different ways of working, different wishes for models and assistance... In this story we follow some of our 52 Landstede teacher teams along their path.

For instance, teachers of the Sports education team. They have their own unique culture. They are doers, direct in their feedback, and have created an open atmosphere. They don’t like long meetings when they are not needed. Five teams are involved in this Sports education.

Because of them being mostly doers, a few team members with specific expertise take care of the paper work that many colleagues don’t like too much, like the team plan. This year plan was filled with aims and activities, and although plans for evaluation were made, it did fit in the culture of the teams to evaluate the progress, but the follow up action - being the update of the team plan - did not take place in the pilot phase. So... progress was made, as a number of team members followed a workshop and understood better what to do, when writing a team plan, but further improvement was still possible.

Proud

Therefore, a new strategy was developed to really get all teachers involved and participating in delivering the input for the new team plan. The facilitators developed a poster with four quadrants saying: ‘I am proud of: , What could go better:, What needs to be improved:, My ambition for the team is:‘. Each of the five teams’ posters were put on the windows of the team offices and for an entire week all team members were invited to walk by, read and get involved.

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This by grabbing a Post-it, writing their comments on it, and put it in one of the four quadrants of the poster: More than 150 post-its were written by the team members of the five teams! Discussions were started, and coffee breaks were held next to the posters... And yet, no formal meeting had taken place.

Next step was for quality staff from the team to type out all the posters, and make them available as a Word document for each team in preparation of the first real meeting.

This meeting was set up, being a work and discussion session together with the staff with specific expertise in educational topics like program, certification, work placements, student satisfaction, early drop-out, e.g. These team members first updated the current team plan, as aims were not actually updated.

Questions were: *What has been done? What proof do we have? What needs to be implemented? Which aims are still open and why? Did things change for the better?* By making this evaluation, the old team plan was more or less finished. Where actions are still needed, deadlines have been set in teams before the summer holidays, to ensure progress.

**Prioritise**

So, how does the Dutch pilot story continue? In another mixed workshop teachers from 24 different teams were invited to group all input that targets the same topic, leading to a first proposal for aims. This activity helped to focus. The facilitator also invited the participants to reduce the number of aims to 3 to 6, depending on the length of the plan (maximal 6 aims for a two years plan). Now a first attempt was made to formulate a SMART goal and write it as a header on a poster, and below it all activities on Post-its. The activities themselves where marked to show the urgency of the activity (++, +, +-, -, --). Post-its with higher urgency were placed higher up the poster during the discussion... The next step was to place the most important goals on the left and the less important ones were moved to the right. This all was done in a dynamic atmosphere.
The team still performs a self-evaluation, where they check if all legal rules were properly implemented. When not, this needs to be taken into account too.

Now it is time to formalize the year plan, by putting all work done in a formal format. During the Dutch pilot we realized that finding the right model also depends on the culture of the team: teams like ICT or Multimedia design very much like to work with a web-model. On the other hand, there are teams that just want to get a Word-model.

Did the team plans end on the shelf? As the pilot is finished, we cannot be completely sure of course. But, if you present your plan even to the inspectorate (example 1) or to all your students (example 2), we are confident that these plans will survive. They will be the central part in team meetings and bring structure in the team work.

**PDCA-cycle**

This picture was taken during the presentation of the team year plan of the team Services & Restaurant and Catering in Harderwijk, where the PDCA-cycle was used to present the team’s aims and ambitions to the inspectorate. All team members and the management were present. The input was given by all, and all members have a share in and are responsible for activities gathered in the plan. Evaluation is done during a number of fixed team meetings. After the presentation the team members were asked how they felt about the plan that they worked on together.

One of the teachers reacted with: “Now I have the feeling that I can do the work that I want to do most; to teach my students cooking in the school kitchen. I know this plan is good and that we analysed our data well. The right targets are in the team plan and we share responsibility to complete it!”

*Picture 4: The team leader presents the plan together with two other teachers, Harderwijk*
Students involved
The pilot team Social Work in Zwolle presented their year plan to management, inspectorate and more than 100 students, during a ‘show’ that was given by the team in the theatre, but organised by… students! The picture shows the team’s leader Jeroen Zeeman talking about one of the 4 aims and rows of students listening to him. Telling your students what you are going to work on as a team, and how you evaluated the student feedback from questionnaires and panel meetings, shows the belief in yourself and the capacity to do what you promise as a team. Because: instead of hiding the team plan far away, you show confidence in yourself and in your team’s capacity to deliver according to your promises.

This team really invested in a realistic team plan, during the pilot. As they found out that it does not make any sense to develop a team plan with so many aims, that you know beforehand that you can never accomplish them. In fact, although everyone is enthusiastic in the beginning, a plan like this only frustrates. In the middle of the pilot the team decided that one aim should partly be redefined, due to the lack of time of the team members. In the end this aim was moved into the next school year, and by doing so the team Social Work even started to use the team plan in a dynamic way.

Dynamic and visible
The Education team uses a big whiteboard to map and update their activities, based on the activity plan. This offers the opportunity to group around the white board and have a short and dynamic meeting, this is more or less based on a scrum. The visibility of the actions is also a big extra plus.

One and one makes…three!
Another good practice is the way the team work café (theme A, tool 2) was piloted in the work session of Landstede’s own quality staff team. The aim that the team had was: to find as many options as possible for the 30 minutes’ pitches of educational teams towards their stakeholders.
Three tables were prepared: each with a sheet of paper, markers, and one picture in the middle showing a focus topic: How can students be involved? What are we proud of as a team? And: What proves that we are a real team? Each participant had the task to write ideas on the table, until a signal was given, then he / she had to move to the next table, read the first options and continue with new ones, and so on. Although the activity took no more than 15 minutes, the paper was completely filled with options. Even when one team member was doing a short evaluation, the others started writing ideas again. This leads us to conclude that 1+1=…3!

We also found this method very interesting when a team wants to focus on improving aims and activities: each table now focusses on one aim/ set of activities and groups of teachers move around from one to another table guided by a whistle, or just the other way around: Having music playing on the background and ask participants to change tables when the music stops. The try out got a very positive response, all members of the quality team found the activity fun to do and also felt stimulated and ready to turn plans into action. Also, when reading all the suggestions, new suggestions were considered and also written down. One more variety? Put a white board on the table and let team members write or draw on it.

Together

So, during the nine months’ Landstede pilot we found out that ‘Working together makes the difference’. In all cases where teams started together, this influenced their culture. It made the difference because teachers discussed, communicated and struggled together. Because, it is not easy to develop a good year plan and SMART aims; to identify and quantify risks, and prioritise your activities. The teachers are professionals, and when asked, they can always mention things that could be improved… However - what also made a difference, was the first question asked in each pilot team: ‘Please write down what the things are that go well. What are you proud of, in your team and the education you provide for your students?’
Successes and opportunities

Offer all teachers the opportunity to provide input for the plan. For instance, by placing empty posters on a wall in a team office, providing post-its and invite all team members to pass by any time they like and post their topic for the new year planner.

Pitfalls and difficulties

Too many aims and ideas for a year plan? Why not develop a dynamic two year plan. Prioritize you aims and activities to find out what should be done first. (tip: put all on post-it’s on a board and move them around while you discuss this in the team)

Too many aims and activities in a team plan only leads to frustration.

During the year the team will find out that the plan is not realistic and team members rather forget about the plan, placing it in a drawer for a year.

It may seem less time consuming to write a year plan by yourself, but you may need all year to convince team members that did not work on the plan, that your ideas are good...
Good practice in teamwork: TEAM OWNERSHIP AND PERFORMANCE

CASE PORTRAIT – Politeknika Txorrieri in Spain

All teams have a different evolution and performance routine. Some have existed for many years and generally work well while others function top-down. In both cases a freshfaced invitation to regroup and focus on collaborative vision, the doable and simple ways to implement and improve on what has been clearly and jointly defined as most important is a godsend which gets people engaged... voices are heard, ownership established, energies harnessed. This is the Spanish story of how different teams in VET have advanced in implication and focus. The Spanish pilot offered tools to two very different kinds of teams. One within Politeknika Txorrieri and another in HETEL.

The HETEL story is quite particular to SPANISH VET where centres are smaller and operate together in associations to maximise their resources. HETEL is an example in the Basque Region. The association groups 23 VET schools in the region to work together strategically on common issues such as Internationalisation, Dual system training, Communications, Innovation... Teams in each area meet regularly at HETEL HQ but team members from the different colleges bring their individual schools’ needs (and interests) with them. Alongside challenges any team faces, deeper team spirit is sometimes lacking - and as everywhere, time is short and there’s a lot to do.

Coming together – Shared focus

The International team for HETEL has 21 members and has existed for a long time to promote internationalisation within the association and in each individual centres. Meetings take place for a couple of hours one morning every month. Until 2017, strategic decisions had been designed and passed down by the HETEL board, with the team then responsible for carrying out actions.

Most team members as befits their role, are energetic and adventurous; they take on the role of making and maintaining international contacts, motivating students to move out of their comfort zone and take advantage of mobility opportunities for learning abroad... yet that energy somehow wasn't harnessed to full effect. Many members want to go further and develop in their role - take more responsibility etc. They took on the proposal to engage with the pilot of QUAL4T2 tools with the same enthusiasm, and the results speak for themselves.

There was a need to create space to engage and design what the newly autonomous team wished for their activities. This was the birth of a different team with the full support of HETEL. The team got together one bright morning in June 2017 for an informal but very fruitful work session. The idea was to discuss and design the objectives of the team for the next period. Classes being over
the year, the team had time to spend a longer period to explore and develop their vision. Over some coffee and cakes, the team leader introduced the QUAL4T2 project on team development and tools for clarifying mission and objectives.

The team started hammering out their vision of what the team should ideally look like, what they should be doing, what they would like to be doing etc. A large poster of a lighthouse was laid out on each table for 3-5 team members to explore and envision their future role. Members had different ideas of what their role is - with responsibilities to their own school and responsibilities to HETEL. There were very lively discussions which allowed the groups to clarify their role as HETEL Internationalisation team as separate to their own role as International Coordinators within their schools. The colourful and suggestive lighthouse allowed members to refine what they wanted to “shine” - what they wanted to offer to the whole HETEL association as their identity, with specific values, clear capacities and competences, procedures and specific areas for action.

Team members asked - what do we do? What do we want to do? How do we want to impact our schools in general? What competences do we need to do this?

Shared goals – Shared success

So, how did this carry through? Members used the lighthouse and vision generated to design and mobilise specific objectives within the next 10 months. In September the now highly motivated and more unified team, got together to create their very own first annual year plan. Using tools to group objectives and rank priorities the team selected what exactly was to be achieved over the coming year. These identified ambitions and acknowledged threats to success. These were then refined to create specific SMART goals over a three months’ period and a series of actions developed for implementation. Seeing these take
form in one large poster made the implementation easier - even inevitable!

Nine months later the team made an official follow-up (checking) on objectives. Six objectives were transformed into three for the next annual plan. The six objectives previously set were presented in large posters to check if results coincided with objectives and if any changes were necessary. All members rotated around the posters in different groups to give their feedback, experience and proposals... The result - a painless (and even jolly) planning activity carried out by a highly empowered team. Cannot be stopped? Who knows? Nevertheless, with a great toolkit of easy to mix and match tools for team planning and performance - it seems there's a way to keep team spirit at the forefront while meeting challenges. It doesn't seem so hard to become a highly focussed and effective (Quality oriented and performing) team when you own the process. A new team culture is in progress.

15 (75%) members of the team have already undertaken training towards a key objective to get more involved (collectively and individually) in European cooperation. 10 in internal training and 4 in training in Athens (June 2018).

Conversations generated in this process of team and goal setting also brought about unexpected fringe benefits. One objective aimed for all team members to have (a minimum) official dedication and recognition for their role within their centre; in the follow up process it was shared that differences in centres (for various reasons) is a reality and will likely continue to be so. One team member shared that she had managed to achieve this recognition by quantifying the TIME element required for meeting team objectives. This was developed into a tool for all members to share. Working together towards objectives, really WORKS!

**Improving performance - SELF EVALUATION and FEEDBACK**

How does the Spanish story continue? In Politeknika Txorierri, which has a long track record of Quality processes and team development, the four departments within the college got together to discuss how their annual plan for the next year could be improved. The teams decided to
incorporate the updated self-evaluation QUAL4T2 tool to really check how they’re doing in terms of technical competence, didactic and pedagogical competence, leadership, and more specifically on teamwork. Both the college director and the heads of department seized on the potential of the tool. Incorporating new methods of self-evaluation and self-team evaluation brings freshness to what can (after so many years) become a routine, powerless exercise.

IN CONTEXT: The focus on teamwork is a key priority within the new educational methodology being actively integrated in leading Basque VET Colleges. ETHAZI (learning based around complex challenges) involves students and staff collaborating in broad/changing teams to facilitate real life problem solving processes.

Being able to work better in staff and interdepartmental teams is a key objective for future educational excellence. As new interdisciplinary teams are constantly forming, teams are broader than ever before. How to improve performance through focus on how I perform in a team is essential for improving key communication.

While general staff self-evaluation in the centre takes place every two years, ETHAZI teams got together in project groups to evaluate their capacity to work together in teams with time spent openly together to discuss how to improve their collaboration skills. Peer feedback sessions followed this activity, mirroring what students are encouraged to do and dream feedback models introduced. Entering the shadowy areas of feedback is no easy matter and challenges everyone to dig deep. However, strengthening this ability for effective feedback and creating safe, respectful peer spaces for airing desires, complaints and difficulties, as well as initiating a culture of positive feedback is rationally understood as the best way to improve team achievement and reach objectives. Easy? Definitely not! However, all support in this area goes to reinforce new habits, braver and more effective teams. Precisely what is expected from students. The need for excellent team leadership reminding of the immediate benefits of professional and personal development and creating a respectful and open environment is also key.
Outcomes from these sessions naturally fed into future objectives, strategies and how to. In terms of collaboration, teams decided to establish team priorities for more effective collaboration and team training investment. Specific elements of annual training in teamwork were decided based on the outcomes - such as the real capacity to listen, be available (emotionally) etc. These again led to the creation of shared objectives and priorities for future improvement.

**Successes and opportunities**

To optimize the opportunity for an (interdisciplinary) team to develop their effectiveness and performance in supporting students to meet their own team challenges, it’s necessary for all members to really reflect on how they do that together. Is that enough? Teams require courage and tools (even training) to develop effective peer feedback.

Engage team members and their energy by inviting them to establish why they exist and what they want to be known for. Try a visual metaphor like the Lighthouse Model to inspire the team. What do they wish to shine? Ownership and engagement is fundamental for team energy and success. Especially useful for newly formed teams but equally inspiring for any team needing to reclaim their WHY (focus) or change the intensity of their light (actions).

**Pitfalls and difficulties**

Peer feedback can be emotionally threatening with many underlying currents and issues. Be aware of this and sensitive to reticence. Create a professional atmosphere and invest in respect and trust above all. Remind teams constantly of reasons for developing open teams with peer feedback and the benefits. All development work on effective feedback is empowering at all levels and leads to greater team maturity and effectiveness.

Team objectives (no matter how attractive and well formulated) are open to revision. Don’t be afraid to regroup and refine actions at key moments throughout the year. If goals and steps to achievement are set in stone people can feel that time is wasted following through on unnecessary steps. TIP: CHECK at strategic moments. Goals and actions can be combined, reordered, extended...
QUAL4T2 Tool strengthens existing quality tools

CIOFS-FP annual improvement plan is based on the three-year strategic plan by the Board of Directors of the Association. Such a strategic plan describes the mission, vision and strategic lines of the association itself. In order to connect the long term strategy and policy of the association to concrete actions, each team has the task to “translate” these lines into activities to be implemented, through analysing risks and opportunities and setting smart goals that allow to let VET be attractive and successful.

Despite CIOFS-FP teams have been accustomed to such process for years, the problem of how to manage ever-growing constraints in time and ever-increasing commitments continues to bother them and sometimes it even takes them away from their “core business”: the students. That is why they willingly welcomed the experience of piloting Q4T2 (as they renamed the project) as an opportunity to learn and improve their performance to the benefit of the students themselves.

CIOFS-FP teams started the piloting with a synopsis of the tools of its management system with those proposed by QUAL4T2 and those tools that seemed less time-consuming were selected to be piloted: it was the case of the tool no. 6 that gave input to the revision of the corresponding tool used by the teams for the assessment of human resources: some elements of tool no. 6 were inserted in CIOFS-FP tool and used for the combined assessment both by the single trainer and by the coordinator of VTC, i.e. the person in charge of assessing the performance of the individual.

The brand-new tool became the basis for the interview that takes place annually between the
headmaster and the trainer: such tool proved to be efficient and effective because it is based on objective data and not on just sensations/feelings. However, the tool that allowed a concrete, effective and fruitful management of the piloting experience was tool no. 4. It made it possible to combine time-management of the piloting experience with the working time of each team member but also, and above all, it triggered the improvement of the internal online platform www.smartciofs-fp.org.

SmartCiofs-FP platform allows all CIOFS-FP associations to manage lots of their activities such as inter-associative working and research groups, training courses, traineeships, mobility, WBL experiences, job insertion and so on.

After the kick-off workshop one of the team decided to test the tool Five elements that form a good teaching teamwork to create a cycle of team meetings and fix a focus for each of them.

At the very beginning the team thought that the tool advised to set five main topics, one for each meeting, to which each one could contribute no matter the time, meaning whenever they had something to add or debate on that topic, they just had to load their contribution on the platform. In fact, once the topics and the dates of the meetings scheduled, they arranged specific places/forum in the platform where they started to add notes, ideas, suggestions remarks not to forget to talk about when that meeting will be held. They used it such as a collection of ideas, a sort of notebook.

The first meeting they had in October was devoted to the topic quality culture and EQAVET. Despite some good and very interesting contributions presented by the members of the group, the meeting turned to be a sort of lecturing without great interaction of the participants: it was the farthest thing than a team meeting that there could be because a team meeting should be similar to a workshop more than to a lecture. The members debated on this and they understood they had missed something of the real spirit of the tool.
They analyzed the tool again and realized that what they had thought were possible “topics” for a meeting, instead were the key elements for a good teamwork: having a clear direction, sharing tasks and responsibility amongst all members, comparing experiences and know-how on the “core topic” of the team (teaching, quality, international affairs and so on), develop common competency, strengthen relationship among the team members. Therefore, they decided to keep the topics set for the already set meetings and insert in the platform, or rather in the space dedicated to each meeting, reminder of the elements to consider for each team meetings, a sort of “pentalogue” of the essential elements to the success of teamwork. During subsequent meetings, the members of the groups immediately focused on the set topics debating on the ideas they had already shared through the platform. At the same time, they were able to check whether they were performing good as a team according to the five essential elements. Basically the meetings proved to be effective because everyone had the opportunity to reflect personally and prepare in advance and in respect of their own commitments and timing.

While performing the meetings teams realized that with the division of tasks emerge the professional and social skills of each one. Those skills can be observed, taught and learned by the other components of the group to become a common heritage. When tasks and responsibilities are well defined and distributed it arises a sense of sympathy, a greater respect for one another and the ownership towards common work. The members of a team learn to solve problems they meet within the team, rather than asking for “external” help. Quality is what you are, not the tools nor any QMS you exploit.

**Adaption of the five elements of teamwork**

Having in mind all of such reflections the teams proposed to add a revise a little the five essential elements of teamworking, in a way that they can be valuable not only for teachers/trainers team but for any kind of team.

Having clear objectives - setting goals allows to know where the team is and where it is going to

Define the roles - define and respect the roles according to the competences and making them available to the team

Clear and essential communication - effectively dissemination of information to make it available to those who use it. Confidence - knowing the skills of each member, increases mutual trust and a team of trusted individuals, works best especially in critical moments.
Positivity - Positivity reduces stress and increases the pleasure of working with others; positive thinking generates enthusiasm and motivation.

**Successes and opportunities**

The difference between group and team: a group is made of members who perform something together; a team has clear goals, it has a shared method i.e. a conscious way of acting, it establishes and accepts roles and tasks and the members respect the relation amongst such roles. A good team analyses the problems, not the responsibilities nor the culprit of this problem, because an error is part of learning process.

A virtual space becomes an archive of ideas and direct experiences on a given topic: everyone can draw on this space when the topic itself is analysed in details and, above all, everybody arrive quite well prepared to the meeting and ready to focus on the topic saving a lot of time and acting efficiently.

**Pitfalls and difficulties**

Setting forum in a platform/virtual spaces asks for someone who facilitate/animate the forum itself otherwise the communication flows stop. This means an extra task to be accomplished for someone but it is important to consider the benefits from such a cooperation which become evident during the meetings when people arrive prepared to react at inputs.
CASE PORTRAIT: Koege Business College in Denmark

Helping each other out through common goals

At Koege Business College goals are set every year top-down and bottom-up. These goals are gathered in a strategic plan for the entire school each year. In principle, the framework is set for enabling all employees to become involved in goals at all levels and consequently feel a degree of ownership.

Connected

The result of the questionnaire showed that in spite of the effort to make a strategic plan for the entire organisation, not every member of the team was connected with or even aware that the organisation had these plans. Some team members did not even know about the existence of common goals. Furthermore, the questionnaire revealed big differences in the perceptions of team tasks and how a teamwork should be carried out.

Moreover, the management wanted a closer insight into the processes of the teams without controlling them.

In August we met with the management to establish the framework for the process. Since we - the project partners at this school - are also teachers at different departments, we needed to “borrow” legitimacy from the management.

Fortunately, the management gave its full endorsement and was also very curious to see what this project could lead to in the teams.

The first meeting focused on the introduction to questionnaire 1 and a general clarification of the terms in the questionnaire. Several European tools as for example SMART goals and the iceberg had not been implemented at Danish institutions before.

Game changer

Our second meeting with the teams was definitely a “game changer”. The introduction was a presentation of the results of the questionnaire. Here, the team members realized the differences between them and also the importance of finding a common ground. The members who did not feel part of the goals discovered that they were not the only ones not being stakeholders of the
goals, and the members who had set the goals were made aware of the importance of making all members take part in reaching the goals. As a matter of fact, many main goals and visions in several teams have been set in the past, and therefore new employees sometimes find it difficult to become involved in these goals.

We started out working with the lighthouse, Tool 3, as this top-down perspective is often used in our organisation. By transferring the same perspective to the team members we were already on the right track in the process of speaking the same language. During the process, all team members as well as the management have evaluated the work. Already at the first meeting the manager expressed his wish to be part of the process.

The next step for both teams was to create a year plan (Tool 8), which could provide an overview for everyone. The team agreed on setting 1-3 goals for the team per year, and both teams wished to set only a few goals from the beginning to ensure success. Furthermore, the team agreed to meet with the management twice a year in order to maintain an ongoing cooperation. The role of the management can be to make adjustments connected to the general plan of the whole school, but also to give inputs and support. (Tool 4).

Both teams continued working with ideas to support the goals (Tool 2), and a lot of good ideas were created and selected. We and the teams themselves observed that many more members played an active role in this process than previously, and this was indeed a very positive experience.

At this stage in the process, we as coordinators developed a simple and good way to communicate the vision for the project, which made it flourish.

Investigate the team’s perceptions of goals.

Questionnaire:

1. Set goals – preferably SMART. Involve all team members
2. Make a year plan with a structure for the work with the goals and the involvement of the management
3. Put these goals into practice and actions
   All team members must take part in at least one activity aiming at the goals, individually or with a buddy
4. Evaluate and set new goals

We are free...

After this, the teams were “set free”, meaning that we no longer took part in all team meetings and facilitators, allowing them to unfold their visions themselves.

One of the teams quickly went back to the old way of working and let only a few members set the agenda like before. However, this team has obtained a higher number of active team members resulting in a consensus in the team. The team in question effectively created a year plan and delegated the tasks.

The other team continued working openly following the spirit of the project. There are many new employees, and the project obviously gave them an opportunity to question the structure and framework. It is our general perception that if the goal is to keep a team open for changes, it is necessary to give it ongoing input and support to control the processes. This could be done a couple of times during the school year by running a programme facilitated by a person outside the team, and at these meetings several of the project tools could be included profitably.

The above mentioned programme has been implemented in both teams, so they will both be working with the project tools in the future. Now, they are both working on the year plan for the second time.

Our school has more departments; among others a VET department and a business college education, but the project teamwork has mainly been carried out at the VET department to begin with. However, we wanted to spread out as much new knowledge as possible, so therefore we invited the management at the business college department to a meeting to present the ideas and
portunities of the project. They quickly saw the benefits of using the tools, so they allocated resources to start up the project in two of the four teams at the department.

**Are we a team?**

Nevertheless, it turned out that there were more differences between the departments than we had foreseen. At the VET department the teams cooperate about all tasks. The VET teams meet regularly - app. once every two weeks and the members are constantly oriented towards the team. At the business college department, the cooperation is connected to the different subject to much higher degree, so colleagues teaching the same subjects meet regularly, even though they teach different classes and different lines of study.

To begin with, our main task was to persuade the management to allocate more resources to focus on the cooperation in the teams. At the first meeting, which was held in the fall of 2017, in one of the business college teams (the study line Business Mathematics), some members were surprised to find out who their fellow team members actually were, despite the fact that a couple of the team members are also previous managers of the department. This is a good example of the starting point – and definitely, we had a very good reason to implement the project in order to improve the team spirit and quality of the teamwork. It was clear that the members were not aware of the common goals of the team, already when they started filling out the questionnaire, so everyone realized right from the start that there was room for improvement. Furthermore, a challenge for the Business mathematics team is that its profile is not clearly defined to the target group – the students, so a goal of the team is to work on this – meaning to strengthen the visibility of the characteristics of this study programme.

The reason why we introduced the second business college team to the project was in fact that the team coordinator turned to us to get some help to improve the cooperation of the team. We were a bit nervous the first time we presented the ideas of the project to the team, as some of the members are very notable, idealistic and experienced teacher profiles, who have started up the study programme and shaped it from the beginning. As a natural consequence, these teachers have perfectly clear perceptions of the directions and goals of the team. Unfortunately, new team members have not been entirely included in the team or involved in the work to reach the goals – which has resulted in a divided team. On the one hand, we have the experienced “old” group that works in accordance with the primarily unsaid goals that they take for granted that all team members know about – and on the other hand, we have the new and primarily young teachers, who are trying to navigate in the team and their subjects.

**Implemented for the future**

Finally, we can conclude that in all four teams it works very well with a fixed division of labour. Furthermore, it has been important for the process that the facilitators from outside the team have taken part in the first phase as described above (1-5). The next step is to define our role in the
future. Our current plan is to visit the different teams twice a year and bring an exciting or challenging assignment, so the collection of tools will be an invaluable tool, also in the future.

Successes and opportunities

Involves management and team coordinators from the beginning. For example, framework, resources and overall goals for the organisation must be clarified.

The more people involved – the better chance to get success.

It is fantastic to start out with a common basis, for example the questionnaire. Adjust it, so it corresponds to the phrases and terms of your organisation.

Pitfalls and difficulties

Be well read in your own materials!

Make a short and clear plan from the start and make additions along the way.

Do not waste time on small talk at the meetings. Get people started from the beginning.
Use of QUAL4T2 quality guide and tools in a diverse classroom

From the 23th to the 27th of April 2018 the training course “Evaluation and Quality Assurance in education and training” took place. The course included a presentation of the QUAL4T2 project and practical activities, based on QUAL4T2 tools. The entire course was structured in order to give the participants new knowledge through an active interaction over definitions and examples from their own work experience.

The course participants had different work experiences, teach different students and trainees in compulsory education and further education, and covered different roles (trainers, teachers, management stuff). These differences allowed them to think and analyse all the evaluation process from different perspectives. Each participants could enlighten the others with their personal experience, furthermore they could also receive the others objective view, further enriching their knowledge. Jurate, Ina, and Natela are Lithuanian teachers with several years of experience. The latest is the one with more experience among them, and is now working in the managerial stuff. Adam is an ex pilot, now working as trainer/teacher in the Polish Air Force Academy. For last, Laura is an intern at IDEC, through the Erasmus+ Placement Programme.

During the workshops the participant worked together, over definitions and sharing personal experiences, but most of the exercises were accomplished through team working. Jurate represented the team of the Lithuanian teachers, while Adam worked together with Laura. The first team was able during all the activities to find a compromise among the affinities and differences of their jobs, while the latest group was focused more in Adam’s job in the Air Force...
Academy. He was able to share and explain his work, but also to receive a more objective and distant point of view over his activities.

The course aimed to provide the necessary skills and competencies to manage, administrate, and teach staff to schools, so as to ensure the quality and the effective evaluation of education at all levels. The theoretical part is supported by presentations, brainstorming, workshops, and team working over the following thematic units: quality assurance policies; quality assurance frameworks and standards; design of the evaluation framework; data collection; analysis and use of evaluation results. Below, we present the Qual4T2 tools that were used in the course.

**Setting Priorities**

The entire course focuses on planning and prioritising all the actions, goals, and risks, in order to reduce to a minimum all the costs (in terms of costs, efforts, and time) and to gain all the benefits.

All the participants worked together or in groups planning the activities, setting SMART goal, analysing risks and opportunities and their relevance, in order to take productive actions. Indeed, in all the exercises all of them aimed to accomplish more activities and achieve more goals as possible, listing them mostly without carefully though on a precise order. The same happened while listing the actions to take and the risks to prevent. Exercise after exercise, they learnt how to prioritise from the plannings to the actions for their own benefits and for the organisation as a whole.

*Picture 23: Teachers Team and facilitator*
**PDCA-cycle and SMART goals**

One of the pillars of the course involved the **PDCA** (Plan, Do, Check, Act) **cycle** which sets the foundations to design an **action plan**.

During the workshop, all the participants, divided into two groups, established a set of goals, however, without proper planning, they aimed to achieve all the goals indiscriminately, without preferences.

Through the first step in the cycle (**plan**), the participants improved their ability to set **SMART goals**: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound objectives. At the beginning of the activity they set unachievable goals: “all the students must pass the examination”, or the action proposed didn’t match the targeted goal: “apply selection criteria for the examination, in order to achieve more than 80% of students passing the exam entrance”. The participants were able to understand what is relevant and which action will facilitate the development of their activity focusing on clear objectives before taking any action, in order to not waste time, sources, and energies in something with a lower relevance.
The Lighthouse

The Lighthouse is a creative tool that allowed the participants to create a connection between the strategic visions and the concrete action oriented. This task was fulfilled by the participants while working in groups. From one side, teamwork for this was difficult due to the different experiences of the participant, however, to the other, this gave them the opportunity to have discussion leading towards a common direction and finding common goals.

Both the teams decided to start from the bottom to the top, describing the framework within they act; what they do concretely and how it is their behaviour; what their competencies are; their values; and what is their identity. All of them were able to cooperate filling all the parts together, and to present each other their own lighthouses.

Data gathering

While planning the evaluation, the participants learnt to broaden their views and to reflect not only on the final objective, but also on the entire procedure in its whole, reflecting also on the source needed, the method used to collect the data, from whom, and the deadline for each activity. They worked in groups to plan the evaluation: they selected the project, the main activities needed, and the evaluation purpose on the basis of their work experience, finding a compromise on a final choice. This represented the basis to develop key questions to answer, identify the stakeholders, the evaluation techniques, the data collection and data analysis. Thanks to these workshops, the participants had the opportunity to share their opinions and experiences. After focusing to the main goal, they had to pay attention at every detail needed to reach it.

The analysis on the data collection let the participants understand which data should be used for the evaluation and which instead should not, due to its irrelevance and poor quality. The participants were asked to exercise on data collecting planning for the performance indicators identified on the previous group work. So, after defining the performance indicator based on the information they want to achieve, they were asked to think about the data they had to collect to reach that purpose.
The participants learnt the importance of **quality data**, the necessity to collect only data that will be sufficient to answer the fundamental question, avoiding too many information that would only complicate the process. For this purpose they had to define three objective, data elements, data source(s), from whom they would have obtained the data, and the deadline for the process.

**Iceberg**

Quality oriented behaviour refers to behavior of teachers and others, aimed at improving the quality of education.

The presence of a quality system improves working on the quality of education. A system could for example be a system, such as the PDCA cycle, but could also be an instrument, such as a curriculum.

Quality awareness means striving for quality on an individual level, based on own values and intentions. These values and intentions are key to the behavior of those involved.

In a quality culture, the common aim towards quality is expressed.

The participants had the opportunity to open their minds, going beyond the surface of the activities. On one side there are the visible factors located above the surface (what is said and
what is done), which includes: **quality oriented behaviour** and **quality system**. On the other side there are those beyond the visible parts - but which represent 90% of the whole process: **quality awareness** and **quality culture**, grouped a set of purposes, identity, beliefs, values, and capabilities.

**Quality oriented behaviour**, which refers to the conduct of teachers and others focused to develop habits that instil a passion for quality in every corner of the structure: defining clear goals; collecting and analysing data; capacity to exceed the expectations; promoting talent within the structure; letting everybody know about results, successes, and giving proper recognitions.  
**Quality system**, which includes the PDCA-cycle, and also instruments like curriculum, improves the mutual work on educational quality.  
**Quality awareness**, includes individual values and intentions.  
**Quality culture**, requires support, ideas, and leadership from employees at all levels, in order to achieve a common aim. It is possible to develop a quality culture through incentives/rewards and through events, or situations that contribute to rise achievement, autonomy, responsibility, creativity, etc.

### Risk based thinking

Risks often refer to possible contingencies and/or potential consequences. The participants learnt that behind a risk there might be a hidden cost as well as an opportunity, therefore, it is necessary to analyse and prioritise thoroughly the entire process from the planning stage in order to achieve improvement, to prevent undesired consequences and to be prepared to react quickly whenever unwanted outcomes show up.

During the exchange of ideas and examples of personal experiences, all the participants reflected together over potential external and internal risks, taking as a reference scenario the activity analysed by one of the team: “Communication with parents”.

The brainstorming over the possible risks was useful to analyse and understand how to measure them (low, medium, high) and prioritize them, and therefore, the action to take in order to deal with them.

### SWOT analysis

The analysis of risks and opportunities is accompanied by the **SWOT analysis**, since it provides a simple way to assess the best way to implement a strategy.

For this workshop a main reference to Adam’s experience in the Air Force Academy was used, but all the participants contributed with examples of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and
threats of the organisation. Towards the opportunities it was possible to better analyse the opportunities and be more aware of the threats.

Best results working together
The best results can be achieved with a good harmonisation over individual and group work and establishing a peaceful and collaborative environment amongst all the members of the course.

Successes and opportunities

Offer all teachers the opportunity to enrich their knowledge, learning new skills that will be useful in their own job.

Balanced participation of all the members either individually or as a group.

Balance between theoretical and practical learning. Teachers are able to learn at theoretical level and to put it into practice, always with the support of the facilitator.

Pitfalls and difficulties

Take care of the composition of the groups, when there are the factors to allow it (number of participants, variety among the members).

Balance the relation between the entire course and each one of the topics analysed.
The end of a journey and a new start (epilogue)

For all of us that we work in education and training every new school year is a new journey. We board with our colleagues and our students for a journey, sometimes in known places and sometimes exploring new lands. Through this journey, we have good and not so good times, but always exciting and joyful.

The last school year (2017-2018) several teacher teams from five different countries, we boarded on the same ship. We explored a new land, where quality is not only methods and tools, but it is a culture.

The stories you have read occurred during our journey on the QUAL4T2 ship. These are only few stories of some of the teams that came on board. Many more stories occurred during this period, nevertheless we had to choose some of them, to illustrate our experience. You have read about how the Dutch team did that and the Spanish team did this. The Italian team and the Danish team followed their own schedule too. In Greece however, we had an international team that joined a one-week training course on quality and evaluation. All the stories were different.

Like any journey, no matter how well we planned, we faced challenges, we had to make decisions on the spot, we had to work out solutions. Finally, we reached our destination, that is to say we concluded on the pilots and we produced some very nice products. However, the journey was much more than the destination. The journey was a rich experience for all those involved; the partners, the teachers, the trainers, the team leaders, all individuals than from different positions took part in the pilots.

A huge THANK YOU to all teams involved! Because thanks to all teachers and trainers involved in the pilot, we got valuable feedback for the revision of the QUAL4T2 Quality guide and toolkit. All feedback has been discussed, leading to a list of further quality improvements of these final products, from January 2019 to be found on our website www.qual4t-project.org (QUAL4T2 products).

We all know that we have become a little wiser, a little more conscious, a little more capable, a little more motivated. Furthermore, we renew our meeting for the next school year and then the next one and the next one. Every new school year, we promise to take into our luggage the quality guide and the toolkit, we promise to improve and to keep up our teamwork.

We hope that reading our storybook, you will also get motivated to come on board and join us, as a co-traveller. We are here to support you plan your trip, help you check in and give you any guidance you need to plan your own journey into quality culture.

Please feel free to contact any of us, we will be honoured to help you!
Margrieta  Anabel  Francesca  Gitte  Natass
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