

Written by Natassa Kazantzidou  
Friday, 02 September 2016 00:00

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**Latvian Society for Quality hosted a conference “Quality management and leadership in educational institution” on August 25th, 2016 in Riga aiming to promote an exchange of experience and co-operation among VET institutions.**

Conference was opened with a welcome speech given by Dzintars Putnis - Chairman of the Board at Latvian Society for Quality. Different approaches and tools for quality assurance were discussed during the course of the conference. C.-Andreas Dalluege, licensed EFQM trainer and EFQM senior evaluator, presented the importance of leadership in quality assurance processes. He also introduced EFQM Excellence module that consists of 4 pillars – Plan, Take action, Evaluate and Improve.

Vanda Vaschenkova, licensed EFQM trainer and evaluator, presented various approaches in quality assurance management. Audience was introduced with a study that has been carried out in Latvia and in Spain, and indicates the benefits and potential risks of implementing the Excellence module.

During her presentation, international speaker and trainer from the UK- Jozefa Fawcett, pointed out that none of the quality management frameworks are successful if people are not willing to participate and implement them. Jozefa shared valuable information regarding the importance of creativity and how a creative approach can promote a growth and development of an organization. She also explained what factors are challenging the creativity within an organization.

A special section of the conference was designated to the introduction of BEQUAL.net - Transfer of BEQUAL tool and development of a Community of Practice for Quality Assurance in VET- project co-funded by European Union Erasmus+ program. Audience was introduced to the project goals, transnational co-operation and the outcomes. Representatives of the project partnerships from Finland, Greece and Czech Republic were also present in the conference.

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Lila Anthopoulou from Greece, a member of the organization that originally developed the project idea 9 years ago, explained the origins of the idea and how it has carried across Europe throughout the years.

Diana Venera represented Latvian State Education Quality Service and shared information regarding EQAVET indicators and their implementation in the national quality assurance system. And finally Guntars Zvejnieks, director of Sigulda Arts School “Baltais Fligelis”, shared an enthusiastic presentation about his own experience with implementing quality management tools in his organization and the insights that resulted from this process.

A workshop was held during the second part of the conference where all interested participants had an opportunity to utilize the tool that has been developed during the BEQUAL.net project. Workshop participants were guided through the registration and completion of the benchmarking tool. The developed tool is based on the 4 phases of EQAVET framework and provides data comparison with similar institutions in Latvia and with institutions in project partner countries Finland and Czech Republic. The evaluation provides an overview of the operations in an organization and encourages the implementation of further developments.

The conference organizing team would like to thank all of the people who came to conference for their attentive participation and for providing a positive and encouraging feedback. As one of the participants stated “It is extremely important for educational institutions to constantly learn and seek new information about quality assurance tools. Numerous presentations in the conference were very encouraging and motivating, especially the message of Jozefa Fawcett’s presentation and the personal experience shared by Guntars Zvejnieks”.

Vanda Vaschenkova, the organizer of the conference, agrees that “The conference has been very successful. It is encouraging to see the growing interest in quality assurance in the field of education and the interest in the various tools for quality implementation, including the Benchmarking tool developed during project BEQUAL.net. In order to continue the motion started during this conference, all participants received the materials shared during the conference in their e-mails while the conference organizing team is evaluating feedback and identifying areas for improvement. Thank you to everyone who participated and good luck in all the future endeavors!”

# Successful completion of project BEQUAL.net in the final conference “Quality management and leadership”

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