

magazine

Keeping you informed about the European Credit system for Vocational Education & Training

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Edito

ECVET 2013: Taking



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2012 has been a remarkable year for ECVET. In line with what the Recommendation calls for, the Member States and relevant stakeholders set up the necessary conditions to gradually apply ECVET. A learning outcomes approach is being implemented, mostly driven by the establishment of a national qualifications framework. Further operational conditions are also required for a successful implementation like pinpointing responsibilities, overhauling the regulatory frame and enhancing capacity building. However, as CEDEFOP shows in its annual monitoring report, strategies and priorities vary greatly in this regard and a few stakeholders still stick to a 'wait and see' approach.

Yet from a different angle, training providers and practitioners increasingly familiarize themselves with the ECVET principles. They can rely on the ECVET Users' Guide and when it comes to organising geographic mobility hands-on, guidelines from national initiatives or contact points are available in some countries. In addition, VET

schools and professionals can build on concrete best practice solutions, mostly developed under the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP). This was emphasised at the final conference of the ECVET pilot projects of the first generation in February in Brussels where the participants discussed the valuable results of the projects but also spelled out the challenges. One of the conclusions was that there is a need to further strengthen the common European features of the credit system while adopting it to the national or sectorial environment, instead of merely picking up those elements that seem to easily fit. It was with this in mind that the Commission circulates draft versions of a European Template for a 'Memorandum of Understanding' and a 'Learning Agreement' for wider testing with a view to approving the European templates in spring 2013. These instruments serve to create a common understanding and trust for cross-border cooperation and thus help facilitate the validation and recognition of learning outcomes acquired abroad.

But of course quality assurance can help to create mutual trust to best effect. Although ambitious, it is specifically for this reason that we updated the guide *Using ECVET for Geographical Mobility* (2012) by describing how to quality assure ECVET mobility. Referring to the EQAVET quality circle, this example also highlights the efforts for a more coherent approach to the

the next level

interrelated European tools EQF, EQA-VET, ECVET and ECTS. To this end, the ECVET Team hosted the 2nd joint seminar on the European tools in October in Paris. National authorities, social partners, branches, Cedefop, National Agencies, the Council of Europe and stakeholders from VET and higher education institutions from 28 countries and the European Commission discussed the guiding question *How can units of learning outcomes support learners?* You will find more details in the article included in this issue of the magazine and the upcoming report. But let me state that the participants seek more dialogue and peer learning activities like these. Indeed, complementary to the policy debate that will be triggered by the recent Communication from the Commission "Rethinking Education" we consider an intense connection of the different communities crucial to exploit the respective strengths of the educational sub-systems in order to best serve the learners.

Finally 2012 also saw the launch of the ECVET Community of practice at the 3rd annual forum in Brussels. You can follow the rationale, the different contributions and the outcomes of the inspiring discussions in the published report.

While all these activities decisively contribute to the implementation of ECVET we need further efforts in 2013 to make the credit system a success

story. Which is why the Users' Group just agreed on priorities 2013 that address the following challenges:

a To streamline on-going activities with a view to optimising resources, generating synergies and exploiting instruments and project results systematically. The activities of 27 national ECVET coordination points, Teams of Experts and LLP Agencies' "NetECVET" are partly overlapping and need coordinated action. Thus the final NetECVET conference on 22-23 Oct 2013 in Brussels is being planned jointly with COM and EACEA to invite also the approximately 200 national ECVET experts. The 8 ECVET pilot projects under the call 2010 will join the event too.

b To further develop an ECVET Community of Practice. It is the objective to feed the activities of the various stakeholders (training providers, companies, sector associations, chambers and VET schools) into the community of practice. The web site of the ECVET Team will be re-vamped as an interactive portal and the ECVET logo serves the purpose of expressing commitment.

c To support a coherent approach of the interrelated European tools and to address specifically the compatibility and complementarity of ECVET and ECTS.

There are mainly two topics which enable stakeholders working at the cross-roads of the different tools to share best practice, solutions, and

methodologies: *how to write units of learning outcomes and quality or quality assurance?* Peer learning activities and joint seminars are planned to meet the needs of the stakeholders involved.

d 2013 will also see the launching of the ECVET evaluation in line with what the Recommendation asks for. The Commission informs in detail the Users' Group in its spring meeting and ensures a structured dialogue with the stakeholders.

Given the promising level of the various activities under way, I am confident that we all can take the ECVET process to the next level in 2013. ■

- European Commission, Using ECVET for Geographical Mobility (2012). PART II OF THE ECVET USERS' GUIDE http://www.ecvet-projects.eu/Documents/ECVET_Mobility_Web.pdf
- Communication from the Commission; Rethinking education: investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/rethinking/com669_en.pdf
- CEDEFOP (2012), Necessary conditions for ECVET implementation <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/19848.aspx>
- CEDEFOP (2012), The development of ECVET in Europe (2012), upcoming

THE NETWORK

Keith Brumfitt, Education Consultant (brumfittk@hotmail.com)

Using units within professional qualifications



In early October, colleagues from the ECVET network joined representatives from the EQF and EQAVET networks and the higher education sector to discuss how units which are based on learning outcomes can support learners.

The seminar focused on synergies between the European instruments and identified how participants could learn from each other's experiences. It aimed to find a shared approach to using units and to identify common questions for each European network to consider. The full report of the seminar will be available from ECVET's website at www.ecvet-team.eu

The seminar was based on three case studies which looked at how units are being used to support learners' mobility; progression to VET and higher education; and employability and access to the labour market. Each case study illustrates current practice and demonstrates how VET providers work with employers, national and regional par-

tners, and the higher education sector to design qualifications which meet the needs of learners and employers.

The case studies illustrate how learners use the flexibility offered by units to benefit from mobility (by completing units in different countries or at different VET or higher education providers), progression to other sectors (by using credit from completed units) or progression to higher level VET qualifications or learning.

In the first case study, Michela Vecchia from Fondazione CEFASS in Italy highlighted how experienced staff in the personal care and social work sector are being supported to be more mobile across Europe. The ICARE project (www.icareproject.eu) has designed a new approach to recognising competences that individuals gain in other contexts (countries, institutions or systems) and learning settings (formal, non-formal, or informal contexts). The team developed a competence matrix for each profession, allocated ECVET points to units within each qualification, designed a standardised approach to assessing learning outcomes, and produced a Memorandum of Understanding between the participants. Through a series of assessments, the ICARE project is helping experienced staff to move across Europe and have their skills and competences fully recognised.

In the second case study, Sylvie Bonichon from the Ministère de l'enseignement supérieur in France explained how a two-year higher VET qualification (EQF Level 5.) had been redesigned to accommodate the ECVET and the ECTS credit systems. This has allowed students to transfer between this higher VET course and universities and have their prior learning recognised. This enables students who, after their first year at university, fail or simply want to change direction to join a professional course to train for a specific job. It also enables VET students who decide to take a longer course to move to a university. The national initiative (www.ecvet-projects.eu) began in 2011 and covers five different subject areas. In 2015, following the completion of the evaluation, the new approach to the Diploma could be implemented in every vocational sector.

In the third case study Dorien Krassenberg and John Bres from the Branche Bureau Mode in the Netherlands demonstrated how employers' organisations have been actively involved in designing vocational qualifications. A Level 3 qualification for sales specialists (www.ecvet-team.eu) was used to illustrate how three parts of the retail sector – fashion, supermarkets and electrical retailing – had been able to adjust the structure of the qualification to meet their needs. This had led to a qualifi-

cation which was both standardised and tailored to the needs of the labour market. Alongside the formal qualification, some employers' branches (e.g. fashion) offer students and employees a non-formal training route that leads to the award of a diploma.

The ideas and approaches outlined in each case study were developed in discussion groups with delegates from each of the EQAVET, EQF and ECVET networks as well as colleagues from the higher education sector. The case studies showed how flexibility and specialisation could be combined through the use of units. This way of designing qualifications also allowed individual units to be easily up-dated to reflect emerging labour market trends and new ways of thinking. It also facilitated:

- mobility as time abroad or in another context could focus on specific units;
- lifelong learning as experienced staff could complete only the units that they needed (this was one way of recognising prior learning);
- recognition of non-formal learning;
- specialist and/or work-based VET providers offering the units where they have expertise (it is often easier for specialist organisations to offer parts of a qualification rather than the full qualification);

- those learners who needed more time to complete the qualification, or needed to take time out of their study.

The case studies highlighted the difficulties faced by those that wish to organise mobility between countries and between the VET and higher education sectors. The case studies illustrated the importance of 'mutual trust' and the subsequent discussions considered how this could be developed and sustained. There was a strong feeling that formal agreements were needed, preferably ones that were based on learning outcomes rather than 'credits' or 'points.' Creating these agreements can be easier for the higher education sector as ECTS has been the basis for similar agreements across Europe for a number of years, and ECVET is just starting the journey. Delegates felt that local or individual agreements gave the best opportunity for progress, and EQAVET, EQF, ECVET and ECTS provide the basis for this type of agreement.

Delegates discussed the need to place learners at the centre of the system. Too often decisions appeared to focus on the organisations in the system rather than the users of the system, namely students and employers. One obvious way to emphasise the users' perspective was to focus more on high-quality work placements which meet the needs of employers and prepare students for

employment. In many ways the labour market is the driving force that is bringing the VET and higher education systems together. Given the current employment situation, there is an increasingly important role for employers and their organisations to shape the type and style of learning and training that they need.

However delegates also highlighted some of the practical constraints which can inhibit the use of units in both the higher education and VET sectors, e.g.:

- training providers often prefer to train or teach large groups of learners in order to achieve economies of scale. Offering too much choice for learners, in terms of units, can make the training provision uneconomic. A similar constraint operates for work-based learning where employers can struggle to offer training which covers the full range of units;
- sophisticated and sometimes expensive systems need to be established in order for learners' achievements to be validated and recognised, and used to inform subsequent learning. For training organisations (including higher education), the accreditation of prior learning can be technical, time-consuming and subject to learners' appeals;
- validating and recognising achievements from units provided by the informal or non-formal sector can create problems for those who award qualifications. For awarding organisations to have confidence in the learning outcomes from these units, they often require extensive quality assurance processes to be in place;



- the development and approval of units takes time and a considerable investment from stakeholders. If units are optional, their take-up is uncertain and the effort involved in their design and quality assurance may not be justified;
- if units are too specialised, learners may not gain the breadth of skills and competences they need for a career in a sector e.g. a unit which specialises in hygiene in the 'burger industry' may not provide as much breadth as a more generalised unit that covers hygiene in the catering industry. While some learners are very clear of their career intentions and are happy to specialise, others are less certain about their future.

At the end of the seminar, participants sought to identify a way forward which built on what is common in the VET and higher education sectors – the EQF, the use of learning outcomes and credit, and a commitment to quality assurance as the basis for mutual trust. For some delegates recognising the differences between VET and higher education was a necessary part of mutual learning and making progress. Developing greater alignment between the two sectors would only occur if individual institu-

tions and each sector could see advantages for themselves. In many ways this was a 'bottom-up' approach rather than a 'top-down' approach which was promoted and led by the European networks.

Each of the European instruments is well on its way to embracing units based on learning outcomes. However, there was recognition that this knowledge of units was not widely shared by VET providers, employers and learners. More needed to be done to share this knowledge which would help to quicken the pace of implementing the use of units based on learning outcomes.

The forthcoming priorities should include the need to:

- publicise, in simple language, the benefits of using units to design qualifications;
- move beyond the piloting and testing phase of development in order that progression and mobility are perceived as everyday occurrences rather than unusual or rare events;
- use the European instruments to identify the benefits of greater synergy and alignment for both the VET and higher education sectors. ■

UEAPME ECVET customised seminar

11th September - Brussels

Dedicated seminar updates UEAPME members on ECVET

"UEAPME and ECVET Team organised a customised seminar in Brussels to familiarise our education and training experts with the so-called European Credit Transfer for Vocational Education and Training. The aim was to increase our members' understanding and knowledge of the ECVET tools, to develop their capacity to use it as intermediary organisations for small and micro-companies and to enable them to participate in further ECVET activities. The agenda included sessions on the European context and on the ECVET specifications, as well as a presentation by Christian Sperle from our German member ZDH on "SME Master Plus", a pilot project to implement ECVET using the "Master craftsperson qualification" as a basis. The project showed the importance to transpose different national curricula provisions into common units of "learning outcomes", which are easily understandable and comparable by professionals and therefore very valuable to identify common denominators and competences which could be acquired and recognised in cross-border mobility projects. As ECVET will possibly be revised after 2014, our members will

keep working to provide feedback and contribute to the technical and political process."

Liliane Volozinskis

UEAPME (the European Employers' Association representing Craft and SMEs and European social partners) has strongly supported ECVET from the beginning and has actively participated in the adoption of the ECVET recommendation in 2009.

As the European SME umbrella organisation, UEAPME incorporates 84 member organisations consisting of national cross-sectoral SME federations, European branch federations and other associate members, which support the SME family.

UEAPME supports its members academically, technically and legally on all areas of EU policy, as well as on the idea of European integration, and is also contributing to European co-operation.

Approximately 22 representatives of organisations from 7 countries, all full or associated members of UEAPME, participated in the ECVET seminar which took place on 11 September 2012 in Brussels.

This one-day customised seminar on ECVET was specifically designed for UEAPME members. The primary objective was to familiarise UEAPME members, including those representing sectoral activities, with ECVET.

ECVET Team proposed tailored modules with the contents adapted to the needs and challenges of SMEs. The seminar presented an opportunity to discuss burning issues, such as: "how to use ECVET to make VET more attractive to young people?" and "How can ECVET be implemented in order to meet challenges faced by SMEs"?

In an editorial in ECVET mag n° 5 (May 2011) Liliane Volozinskis, Director for Social Affairs and Training Policy (UEAPME, Brussels) specified challenges for ECVET implementation from the perspective of SMEs and the necessary conditions for a powerful and well-recognised ECVET for the future.

"For employers, ECVET (coupled with EQF) is a tool to improve the transparency of qualifications due to learning outcomes. It should help to provide companies with missing skills. For small businesses, it might also simplify the management of competences and greatly facilitate the cross-border mobi-

lity of the apprentices they train. A new challenge for small companies in the future will be a stronger involvement in the process of evaluation, recognition and validation of competences.

If the aim is for employers, and notably small companies, to make full use of ECVET in the future, the system should be as simple as possible, avoid heavy bureaucratic procedures for assessment, validation and recognition of acquired competences, strengthen the role and involvement of intermediary bodies including social partners, further dissemination activities to develop mutual trust”.

The first part of the seminar offered the opportunity to highlight SME's considerations by positioning them in relation to European initiatives regarding vocational training (including EQF, EQAVET, Guidelines for non-formal and informal learning, and Europass) and notably in relation to ECVET.

The seminar began with a presentation of the purpose and characteristics of the LLL instruments, and synergies between those instruments and the learning outcomes approach. Following a presentation of the ECVET technical specifications that have to be implemented, facilitators developed on the theme of the added value of ECVET for mobility: integration of the mobility period in the learning pathway and recognition of the learning outcomes acquired abroad.

Subsequent group discussions allowed participants to assess the importance

of European instruments for SMEs and countries. Participants had time to understand the ECVET instrument and to discuss issues associated with the validation of learning outcomes. The main reflections from these discussions were:

- ECVET is a recommendation and its implementation in national contexts is voluntary; SMEs can develop the capacity to use ECVET and to be involved in ECVET activities.
- The most challenging issue is the introduction of new routes for the validation of learning outcomes acquired in the workplace at national level, for people unable to participate in mainstream programmes or people looking for a job, in order for them to obtain a formal qualification.
- Different types of objectives can be associated with ECVET implementation: mobility, permeability of VET systems, and successful validation in the workplace.

“ For employers to make full use of ECVET in the future, the system should be as simple as possible and avoid heavy bureaucratic procedures for assessment. ”

The seminar participants could then develop their capacities to use ECVET in the SME context by using the learning outcomes approach:

- Although there is a diversity of learning outcomes approaches at national level, a common understanding of learning outcomes in the education sector is still possible.

- A learning outcomes approach bridges national standards used for qualification definition with VET processes.
- It is possible to recognise learning outcomes acquired in a workplace.
- Partnership instruments such as the Memorandum of Understanding and Learning Agreement reduce the subjective measure of learning outcomes acquired abroad and ensure recognition and accumulation of learning outcomes acquired abroad.

The second part of the seminar offered an opportunity to reflect on testing ECVET and specify benefits of applying the ECVET technical framework.

As a consequence of UEAPME's activities on ECVET, UEAPME members APCMA (France), IBW (Austria) and OZS (Slovenia) were involved in ECVET experimentation with projects such as “SME Master Plus”, aiming at the implementation of an international network of training providers of master crafts people.

By testing ECVET, its potential benefits become clear. One available output of SME Master Plus is the identification and assessment of common units of learning outcomes for master crafts-person qualifications in bakery, floristry, hairdressing, and joinery/cabinetmaking.

One of the greatest strengths of this project is the approach developed for ensuring transparency of learning outcomes acquired. In order not to stick too much to training regulations and curricula content, which differ from one

country to another, the project focused on the rationale behind the learning: typical work and business processes. The 10-18 units of learning outcomes created correspond to the activity fields of master crafts.

“ Participants were invited to reflect on the benefits to apply the ECVET technical framework in their country and to see some joint benefits related to employability and salaries. ”

As it was rather difficult for an expert to design learning outcomes, and especially to distinguish skills and competences, the project defined the successive steps (3-4 steps) to acquire learning outcomes and required competences at the final stage.

As project manager, Christian Sperle expressed the specific challenges SMEs face for continuing with a practical approach:

- VET practitioners are not very familiar with the learning outcomes approach, so after establishing a learning outcomes matrix, the international partnership has to deal with intense matching of learning outcomes to organise mobility periods.
- No partners were using credit points. Assessment of learning outcomes is not particularly easy for short-term mobility.
- For example, in Germany, ECVET

implementation clashes with national regulations of exams and funding (assessment is paid by companies).

- Learning agreements and personal transcripts overlap with Leonardo templates.
- In the context of Germany, Christian Sperle underlined another important point: the need for a more flexible ECVET recommendation that would not require the implementation of all elements, but rather allowing for some elements to be adapted to the national context of Germany. *“Assessment as quality assurance can be done by companies but the final exam should be done by the Chambers of Commerce”.*

It was clear that the contexts and VET systems are very different among the participants. Although the vision on how to implement ECVET in their national contexts might differ, participants were invited to reflect on the benefits to apply the ECVET technical framework in their country and to see some joint benefits related to employability and salaries.

Following this, the discussion on ECVET was put in the perspective of understanding qualification systems in a national context (including identification of key actors and different functions) and specifying the role of social partners in ECVET projects and ECVET implementation.

There was willingness amongst most participants who are intermediate competent bodies to define their specific role in terms of dissemination, responsibility to enhance employability and mo-

bility. Intermediate competent bodies are also seriously concerned about the role of sectors at European level and about the key role of craft chambers in some countries (Germany).

As a conclusion to this seminar, Liliane Volozinskis emphasised the need to more precisely define the role of intermediate bodies in ECVET implementation as well as their institutional role with regard to training centres. ●



Thierry Lefeuvre, ECVET Team

Customised seminar: ECVET for the nuclear energy sector



The ECVET Team ran around a dozen customised seminars in 2012, covering a wide range of topics and formats. Highlights included a day-long seminar in Paris attended by 130 representatives from various economic sectors, a three-day seminar in Warsaw for the main vocational education and training actors, and a two-day seminar for the nuclear energy sector.

The nuclear energy's sector's willingness to rapidly implement ECVET for its high-level qualifications (from Bachelor's to Ph.D. level) reflects the potential benefits that the professional world can take from this EU initiative.

This customised seminar requires some clarifications

A customized seminar entitled "ECVET for the nuclear energy's sector" was held in Brussels on 25–26 September 2012. The seminar was jointly developed and facilitated by the requester and ECVET Team. More precisely, it was a work session organised on the Institute for Energy and Transport's initiative, one of the seven institutes of the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission. The IET's role is to provide scientific and technological input for the design, development, and monitoring of EU policies relating to energy. Being a leader on energy security issues, the IET aims at developing transparency of qualifications in this field, in order to facilitate professional mobility at European scale.

In his speech at the beginning of the seminar, IET Director Georges Van Goethem was very clear on his intents in terms of qualifications: the idea is to move from a theoretical knowledge process to an approach focused on the

development of competences. In this regard, he wishes to use ECVET and available European tools to improve qualifications transparency and staff mobility.

In the field of nuclear security, issues are complex and involve many stakeholders, making discussions long and arduous. Many EU member states have developed specific qualifications, which are overseen by national accreditation organisations. Each country has its own strong nuclear security culture and cross-border cooperation is difficult. In this context, ECVET represents an opportunity to build bridges between the different national certifications, and could ultimately lead to mutual recognition.

17 people attended the seminar, all specialists in radiation and nuclear security and either high profile professors or heads of European Qualifications Framework Level 6 to Level 8 training programmes. First, key ECVET concepts and technical specifications were presented to them. The participants, although very familiar with ECTS but new to ECVET, wished to discuss the following points:

- The relationship between vocational profile and certifications;

- The structuring of qualifications in learning outcomes units;
- The definition of credit points and the positioning of ECVET points, notably in comparison with ECTS points.

In addition to the classic benefits of ECVET – transparency of qualifications, better communication between VET providers and employers, and easier mobility for both students and employees – the participants raised other potential benefits such as the preservation or the underlying improvement of the quality of qualifications thanks to increased transparency.

The second part of the seminar was devoted to practice, with a case study from the IET. Starting from two nuclear power plant vocational profiles – system/process engineer and security engineer, participants were asked to check whether the corresponding qualifications were compatible with ECVET principles. Since units did not appear in the job descriptions, the group quickly began thinking in terms of how a qualification could be divided into units. They also realised the need for a specific vocabulary to clearly and accurately describe learning outcomes. Of course, the goal of the case study was to raise

participants' awareness of these issues and propose a new Human Resources approach for future exploration – not to produce on-the-spot usable results.

The high level of certifications in the nuclear security field does not appear to be an obstacle to using ECVET, especially considering ECVET's expected benefits in terms of mutual trust and

mobility. ECVET testing is considered at first with a EQF level 6 qualification for an occupation with limited exposure to country-specific safety accreditations. In addition, upcoming projects using ECVET will be undertaken very shortly, for example ENETRAP III (European Network on Education and Training in Radiological Protection) which is being prepared. ■



**5 - Implementation of ECVET in the nuclear sector:
Eight FP-7 Euratom coordination actions until now
("Euratom Fission Training Schemes" / EFTS /)**

*Euratom co-funding of training schemes and qualification processes at EU level,
in areas of nuclear fission and radiation protection
(each EFTS: Euratom FP-7 "coordination action", 3 years, total budget of circa 1 000 000 Euros)*

- (1) TRASNUSAFE: health physics sector (e.g., ALARA principle)
- (2) ENEN III Training schemes: nuclear systems suppliers
- (3) ENETRAP II: nuclear safety authorities (e.g., Radiation Protection Expert)
- (4) PETRUS II: radwaste agencies (e.g., repository and engineered systems)
- (5) CINCH: nuclear and radio-chemistry (e.g., chemistry of nuclear fuel cycle)
- (6) CORONA: Regional Center of Competence for VVER Technology
- (7) EURECA!: Cooperation between EU and Canada on Super-Critical Water Reactors
- (8) GENTLE: Graduate and Executive Nuclear Training and Lifelong Education

<http://www.enen-assoc.org/en/training/for-nuclear-community/efts-fp7.1>



Case study from the IET : two nuclear power plant vocational profiles

SYSTEM AND PROCESS ENGINEER

Main function of the job

The future employee will be responsible for the development of system and process functional specifications for NPP systems (planning, design and operation) within specified rules and guidelines. The work essentially consists of process engineering requirements regarding mechanical components as well as electrical and instrumentation and control.

Detailed job task

- Concept development with respect to system configuration of the nuclear reactor plant (development within the scope of the contract)
- Design of systems/systems parts with appropriate validation/analysis through evaluation or plausibility inspection
- Requirements specifications of other assembly sections and/or project phases (e.g. control and regulatory functions, loading capacity, system operation mode, mechanical component specifications, commissioning)
- Technical bid development with cost and time schedule for scope of supply and services for the specific engineering activities. Activities are coordinated with the executive manager
- Documentation of work results and development of presentation material and interview with customers as well as appropriate authorities where necessary
- Additional duties: technical coordination in teams

SAFETY ANALYSIS EVALUATION ENGINEER

Main function of the job

He/She will be responsible for the qualified implementation of safety analyses (e.g. transient analyses, emergency coolant analyses, probabilistic and deterministic analyses, accident analyses, analyses concerning radiation protection and neutron fluency). The main focus is on routine implementation and analyses evaluation.

Detailed job task

- Compilation of relevant input data for the construction of safety analyses for NPP
- Implementation, evaluation, appraisal and documentation of the appropriate analyses using complex computer programs (e.g. NLOOP, S-RELAP, MERLCOR, GASFLOW, MCNP,...)
- Maintenance and redevelopment resp. verification and validation of computer programs, evaluation and simulator models
- Development of technical measures, methods and concepts (e.g. determination of program uncertainties, mitigation of severe accidents, radiation protection and neutron fluency)
- Examination of results reports, documentation etc... on formal regulations and plausibility (quality check), and where necessary implementing corrections
- Compilation of licensing documentation for submitting to regulators and expert organizations
- Development of presentation material and interviews with customers, experts, regulators and external auditors for the individual task assignment

ECVET team calendar of activities 2013

2013

February	
21-22	Customized Seminar for French Community of Belgium
March	
14-15	Customized Seminar for ECVET national experts team (Amsterdam)
April	
10-12 (To be confirmed)	ECVET Seminar for Mobility
May	
14-15	Users ' Group Members meeting and workshop activities
(To be confirmed)	Customized Seminar for Kosovo
June	
13-14	ECVET annual Forum 2013 (Prague)
September	
24-25	ECVET Seminar for VET qualification designer
October	
10-11 (To be confirmed)	3 rd Joint seminar EQAVET/ECVET/EQF and HE
To be fixed	Customized Seminar for Croatia
November	
4-5 (To be confirmed)	PLA Seminar writing learning outcomes
14-15	ECVET Seminar for Mobility
To be fixed	Customized Seminar for Trade Unions
December	
3-4	Users ' Group Members meeting and workshop activities

SAVE THE DATE

ECVET ANNUAL FORUM 2013 will be held in Prague the 13th and 14th of June 2013.

THANK YOU FOR SAVING THE DATES NOW

PROJECTS HIGHLIGHTS

Anette Curth and Xavier Platteau, ICF GHK

The ECVET pilot projects' approach of units of learning outcomes a

This article gives an overview on how the current ECVET pilot projects are working with units of learning outcomes and their assessment. It presents how the projects designed, structured and formulated learning outcomes; how they envisaged the assessment of the learning outcomes and in what context. The different approaches are highlighted with several examples collected from the projects' work.



The projects gathered in Ljubljana to discuss learning outcomes.

Design/composition of units

The experience of the ECVET pilot projects shows that using occupational activities or work processes/tasks for which a qualification prepares as a basis for designing units of learning outcomes, is useful. It makes qualifications more easily comparable than looking at qualifications standards or curricula; and the content of a unit is more transparent and easily understandable by all the different actors (employers, training providers and learners). Moreover, projects designed units in such a way that they can be completed (assessed) as independently as possible of other units. The size and content of a unit was

reflected in view of the purpose of the envisaged credit transfer.

Six projects (**2get1care**, **CO.L.O.R**, **CPU-Europe**, **EASYMetal**, **ESyCQ**, **ICARE**) use occupational activities or work processes/tasks to determine units. For instance, in the **EASYMetal** project, each unit describes complete work tasks. They represent a working process beginning with the subtask 'Information and Planning' followed by 'Execution of Work' and ending with 'Control and Evaluation'. Concrete learning outcomes were allocated to all of these sub-tasks. The learning outcomes also refer to the relevant training regulations applied at company level and the

Approaches to the definition and their assessment

relevant curricula in order to facilitate recognition. In the **VET-CCS** project, units are more or less grouped around the school 'subjects' a qualification consisted of before the reform.

Several methods and sources were used by the projects to identify occupational activities or work processes/tasks: information was taken from qualifications standards or official training regulations and empirical methods such as analysing work processes or consulting experts were used.

The ECVET Recommendation suggests that units of learning outcomes should include all necessary learning outcomes, i.e. they should describe the intended professional competences as well as the key competences and necessary social and personal competences in this context. However, it is up to the projects to decide on whether transversal or key competences should be grouped into separate units or be integrated into the descriptions of learning outcomes related to the specific profession/vocation.

Two projects address qualifications from the range of health and social care qualifications (**ICARE**, **2get1care**). For these qualifications, personal attitudes and social competences play a particularly important role. In the **ICARE**

project, 'global competences' (such as personal or social competences or dispositions – e.g. 'showing passion', 'being creative') are included in the learning outcomes descriptions, but not uncoupled from the work tasks. In the **2get1care** project, aspects of key competences (for instance, 'interdisciplinary communication in a team') were, as was the case for other, more cognitive learning outcomes, also defined as learning outcomes and described in terms of knowledge, skills and competences.

Structure of learning outcomes

All projects use the elements of knowledge, skills and competence to describe learning outcomes. In projects where the lead partner comes from a country that does have national standards in place, naturally the structure of the learning outcomes descriptions of course follows those standards (**VET-CCS**, **CPU-Europe**). In projects that have been implemented to test and experiment, the structure is up to the projects to decide. In total, five of those pilot projects (**2get1care**, **CO.L.O.R**, **EASY-Metal**, **ESyCQ**, **ICARE**) - adopted the approach of differentiating between knowledge, skills and competence (KSC). They highlight that such differentiation creates further clarity and trans-

parency on the content of the unit and enables a better comparison between systems.

However, the differentiation is not necessarily done in that sequence. For instance, the **CO.L.O.R** project changed the order starting from the descriptor 'competence', followed by skills and knowledge (CSK). The project states that this organisation preserves the system used in the national agreements and conforms to the fact that 'competence' represents the central descriptive element of qualification systems in Italy.

Furthermore, the categories: knowledge, skills and competence are not the only ones that could be used for structuring learning outcomes descriptions. For example, the aim of the **VET-CCS** project is to converse all Maltese qualifications into the ECVET system. In Malta's system, the learning outcomes are based on knowledge, skills and competence which are sub-divided into six elements: Knowledge and Understanding; Applying Knowledge and Understanding; Communication Skills; Judgmental Skills; Learning Skills; Autonomy and Responsibility.

The **MEN-ECVET** project aims to examine how VET qualifications of the French

(1) Bloom B. S. (1956). *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, Handbook I: The Cognitive Domain*. New York: David McKay Co Inc.; Dave, R. H. (1975). *Developing and Writing Behavioral Objectives* (R. J. Armstrong, ed.), Tucson, Arizona: Educational Innovators Press.

Ministry of National Education compare with principles of ECVET. Therefore, the French concepts and terminology need to be taken into account. The French descriptions do not distinguish between the terms knowledge, skills and competence, but instead use the terminology of competences, aptitudes and capacities, as well as associated knowledge. However, this is not considered as constituting a major obstacle for the use of ECVET in the French context.

Principles for the formulation of learning outcomes

In order to develop transparent descriptions and agree on a shared approach between partners, the projects refer to the standard principles for the formulation of learning outcomes.

In the literature (e.g. Bloom's Taxonomy¹), the following five principles are listed:

- Use active, clearly understandable verbs describing measurable or observable actions;
 - Refer in concrete terms to the type of activity involved;
 - Avoid vague, open formulations;
 - Orientation towards minimum demands for achieving learning outcomes;
 - Use verbs and adjectives that reflect the level of qualification/competence².
- All projects follow the first three principles. CPU-Europe and ICARE also refer to principles 4 and 5.

The role of assessment in the context of the projects' aims



The projects gathered in Rome to compare their approaches to assessment.

The assessment, validation and recognition of units of learning outcomes enable credit transfer and accumulation. This may help competent institutions to develop approaches whereby learners can build on the knowledge, skills and competence they have achieved in the past, be it in formal education and training, non-formal learning, through working, leisure activity or any other learning, in order to receive a qualification. Assessment is a precondition for validation and recognition. It is hence also a pre-condition for credit transfer and accumulation:

- **Credit transfer:** What has been learnt and assessed in one context (programme/qualification) is validated and

recognised in another context. For example, the **EASYMetal** project (DE) aims at facilitating credit transfer between the prevocational and the vocational system (see above). In the **ICARE** project (IT), a person who comes to Italy and has previous experiences in working as a care operator can attend the **ICARE** tests in order to receive a certification for his or her learning outcomes. Depending on the results of the tests, the person will gain a certification that clearly states what s/he already knows, understands and is able to do. The certification will also contain a recommendation of what additional training the person should take in order to obtain the full qualification.

- **Credit accumulation:** Previously awarded credit is considered to be achieved and is not 'taught' again or assessed again. For instance, to allow for more permeability between learning paths, the **2get1care** project (DE) is aiming at facilitating the accumulation of units of learning outcomes within the common core curriculum of four health care professions. In the **CPU-Europe** project (BE), a student can acquire a full qualification by accumulating units.

In some cases, qualifications may be awarded automatically when all necessary learning outcomes have been acquired and can be proved by the assessment results connected. In other cases, national regulations may condi-

(2) Geographical Mobility in Vocational Education and Training: Guidelines for describing units of learning outcomes. National Contact Point ECVET National Agency 'Education for Europe' in the Federal Institute for Vocational Training (BIBB), Bonn, 2011.

tion the award of the qualification with a requirement that students must successfully pass a final assessment that would indicate that they are capable of combining the knowledge, skills and competence from all units.

The role of assessment in the projects depends on the projects' general aims. Assessment can be used as a means of facilitating transfer and accumulation of learning outcomes between different learning contexts or learning pathways that have previously not been sufficiently linked (all projects except **MEN-ECVET**). Assessment can also be used to ensure the recognition of non-formal and informal learning (**CO.L.O.R**, **ESyCQ**, **ICARE**, **VET-CCS**). In the **ICARE** project, a common assessment procedure for non-formal and informal learning has been developed by the international partners of the project with the aim of establishing a recognition model across countries. The method will be jointly applied and tested; a Memorandum of Understanding will be developed that guarantees recognition for learning outcomes tested by the partners according to this procedure.

Beyond that, those projects that are connected to the implementation of a national reform (**CPU-Europe**, **VET-CCS**) or the exploration of current procedures (**CO.L.O.R**, **MEN-ECVET**) also discuss the assessment procedures in place. In those projects that are part of a major reform, the initiators have to think

about how to combine and link existing practice with assessment methods that are compatible with the aim of transferring learning outcomes. In Malta (**VET-CCS**), a way of combining existing ways of assessment carried out differently in each training centre with a new standardised national approach is currently being discussed. In the French Community of Belgium (**CPU-Europe**), new assessment methods are developed that match the policy of valorising learning outcomes rather than sanctioning failure. Assessment will take place at the end of each unit, when the trainers are sure that the learner has acquired all necessary learning outcomes.

“ The transparency and quality of learning outcomes descriptions is crucial for supporting assessment ”

The projects' concrete approaches to assessment

When developing a suitable assessment procedure, the projects are required to answer four main questions:

- What will be assessed (a unit, a cluster of units, or separate learning outcomes)?
- How will it be assessed (written test, practical test or combination of both)?

- Who will assess it (the school/the training centre, the competent institution, a certified assessor etc.)?
- When will the defined content be assessed (e.g. at the end of the school year, after each unit or on demand of the learner seeking recognition for prior formal, non-formal or informal learning)?

Again, a diversity of solutions has been developed, each suitable for the defined aims and objectives of the projects.

Solutions found for the question of 'What' to assess

In the previous section, it has been outlined that most projects have defined learning outcomes according to the ECVET recommendation as containing knowledge, skills and competence and grouped them into units. The learning outcomes in a unit should be assessable through one or several assessments. When the job-situation context is used as a reference for defining learning outcomes, the use of occupational activities/working tasks as the basis of units also facilitates the assessment.

The assessment methods presented show that the transparency and quality of learning outcomes descriptions is crucial for supporting assessment. The learning outcomes description should be clearly expressing what the learners are expected to know and be able to do, so that it can be used as basis to design assessment tasks and define assessment criteria.

Previous experience shows that units are usually chosen as the reference for assessment. Assessing every learning outcome would be too stressful for the learners and too much effort for training providers and competent authorities: while assessing the entire qualification only reduces the options of transfer and/or accumulation. The projects **ICARE**, **CPU-Europe**, **CO.L.O.R**, **ESyCQ** and **EASYMetal** will follow this approach. The project **2get1care** plans to assess 'clusters of units', since the training regulations for the qualifications in question do not allow for continuous assessment.

In France (**MEN-ECVET**), regulations for a final one-off assessment are in place, while in Malta (**VET-CCS**), current procedures are being discussed.

Solutions found for the question of 'How' and 'Who' to assess

When the partners discuss assessment procedures, it is important to respect existing (national or system-level) regulations on assessment. This applies to all projects, but particularly to those who are implemented in a top-down approach by national ministries or regional bodies. For instance, in the **MEN-ECVET** project, it is important to take into account that the standards of French qualifications systematically contain assessment regulations defining content and mode of an assessment (e.g. oral, written or practical) as well

as the relative weight of each unit, assessment criteria, etc. Compared with ECVET, this means that there is a clear framework for the assessment (per unit) that leads to certification.

In the Maltese **VET-CCS** project, where a modernisation of procedures compatible with ECVET is aimed at, a survey carried out in training centres showed that a wide range of different assessment methods is currently used. To harmonise the practice, but still allow for a certain amount of independence of training centres, new procedures could be introduced. Certain, core units could be assessed by external assessors according to national standards compatible with ECVET; whilst the assessment of specific units could be carried out by training centres according to internal standards. Those projects that are intending to facilitate transfer and accumulation within a (international) partnership will have to accept that different forms of assessment can be reliable and valid. However, in order to establish trust among competent institutions, they will either establish a common assessment procedure and/or include clear descriptions of assessment procedures, indicators and criteria in their Memoranda of Understanding (**CO.L.O.R**, **ICARE**).

In the **EASYMetal** project, the assessment is envisaged as a means to enhance transparency and to create trust about learning outcomes between training providers and the competent

institutions. Knowledge, skills and competences are assessed by a written test (knowledge), a working plan (competences), a work sample (skills, competences and social behaviour), and an oral test (competences). It is also intended to introduce common quality standards as to the duration of assessment; the ratio of assessors/learners; and the criteria for the choice of a work sample which should be applied in all learning venues.

“ Those projects that are intending to facilitate transfer and accumulation within a (international) partnership will have to accept that different forms of assessment can be reliable and valid ”

In the **ESyCQ** project, assessment is carried out through a test taken in a test centre, supported by the CEMES competence database. Tests can be generated individually regarding every defined unit of learning outcomes. The test comprises open text – tasks as well as multiple choice questions and can be complemented by practical tests and personalised audits to evaluate case studies, etc. The database is renowned and recognised by the competent institutions and the test is supervised by

certified assessors. Hence, the competent institutions will recognise the outcomes within the legal boundaries.

The latter points out to the question of quality assurance: quality assured assessment procedures facilitate the establishment of mutual trust – in particular at vertical level (between providers and competent authorities at higher levels).

In the **CPU-Europe** project, assessment is carried out in relation to the individual progress of the learner. When the trainers see that the learner has achieved the learning outcomes related to the unit in question, the unit is assessed and regarded as achieved.

The project **2get1care** has not yet discussed and/or decided on this aspect. Documentation of the assessment results is essential for the validation and recognition of learning outcomes acquired abroad. In a next step, the projects will have to design learners' transcripts of records that are able to provide transparent information and support recognition.

Solutions found for the question of 'When' to assess

The following approaches to the question of when to assess have been observed:

- Assessment takes place upon the request of the learner: respectively in a

time slot offered by a test centre. This solution is chosen by those projects that address the question of recognition of non-formal and informal learning (**CO.L.O.R**, **ESyCQ**, **ICARE**).

- The assessment takes place continuously upon conclusion of the learning process related to the unit of learning outcomes (**CPU-Europe**, **EASYMetal**).
- The assessment takes place at a fixed time slot foreseen in the training regulations and/or school curricula – e.g. twice a year or once a year (**2get1care**, **VET-CCS**) or through a one-off final assessment (**MEN-ECVET**).

Assessing key competences

Three of the pilot projects are situated in the health and social care sector. In this sector, personal attitudes are an important part of a professional profile. This leads to the question of how these attitudes – which are seen as key competences – can be assessed. The projects concerned found it helpful to assess those competences that are linked to concrete work tasks (hence to learning outcomes), rather than assessing key competences as such.

The **ICARE** project decided that attitudes should be assessed in connection to work tasks. For instance, a care worker should understand the patients' situation and should be able to perform the necessary actions respecting the specific physical and psychological

conditions of the patient. The assessment takes place through a practical test related to 'almost real situations'. The associated theoretical knowledge is assessed in a short written test. The other two projects working in this sector (**2get1care**, **CO.L.O.R**) have not yet finalised a concrete procedure. ●

ECVET EXPERTS TEAMS

Irene Ntroutsas, Leonardo da Vinci coordinator and Alexandra Baka, Leonardo Mobility Action coordinator- the State Scholarships' Foundation-IKY (Greek National Agency)

Greek ECVET expert team



The last major developments in the Greek VET landscape depict the legal and institutional consolidation of the National Qualifications Framework along with a synchronized transfer of focus from the content-oriented to output-oriented approach. The design and implementation of ECVET has arisen as a top priority in Greek VET policy as a means that will ensure vertical and horizontal learning mobility, opening up learning pathways and align in a coherent manner the initial vocational training and the continuous VET sub-systems.

With the Greek ECVET system under elaboration, the aim of this project is to analyze and project the relationship between ECVET and the national VET systems and initiatives with respect to the appraisal, validation and certification processes, as well as the accumulation, capitalization and certification processes for skills gained through VET in order to identify the favourable conditions and the obstacles emerging in Greece.

The ECVET Team in Greece consists of three members being occupied and professionally active in decision-making bodies in the VET sector. The team has already started working on the promo-

tion of ECVET through events and activities with the aim of safeguarding the integration of ECVET to other national and institutional initiatives and projects in order to enhance mainstreaming. The first results that have been produced so far are the following:

- Design and production of an interim report on the policies that have been developed in Greece in connection to ECVET. The interim report focuses on the policies and initiatives taken to promote the ECVET with particular emphasis on the role of stakeholders, their maturity and acceptance degree of participation to the credit transfer system and its interoperability to the National Qualifications Framework. Undoubtedly, the enactment and implementation of the NQF constitutes the central point which will contribute to the promotion and deployment of ECVET.
- Elaboration of a national report on the state-of-the-art in VET in Greece focusing on four principal axes: i) the analysis of the institutional and legal framework, ii) the critical review of the operational and business context of VET providers, iii) the implementation of NQF, iv) the strategic planning for the promotion of ECVET.
- Design and conduction of a survey based on an on-line tool for collecting and analyzing the views, opinions and thoughts of the various VET providers, stakeholders and decision makers. The results of this survey will be concluded in the beginning of 2013.

- Organization of a focus group approach with the active participation of 20 representatives from key VET policy makers, political and institutional bodies, competent organizations and employees' unions and associations. The focus group, which achieved its expected objectives with great success, addressed the following challenging issues:

- a the activation of VET providers and stakeholders towards the development of credit transfer systems;
- b the most appropriate and effective organization of the VET sector in order to create the prosperous field for a credit transfer system;
- c analysis of the interrelation of vocational standards, job profiles, learning outcomes and skills validation;
- d the infrastructure and the preconditions required so that the Greek VET sector will be able to sustainably and constructively use the ECVET system.

The results will be qualitatively analyzed using content analysis method.

The Greek ECVET team will thoroughly examine and deliver results such as:

- Production of a handbook that will explain the role and purpose of ECVET in Greek VET system as well as provide simple examples on how to implement it successfully.
- Organization of three training workshops which will provide the necessary background for refining and enriching the ECVET concept in the Greek VET

system. During the workshops the team will apply an experimental approach called the “pilot internal evaluation” that will be conducted using tools and methodologies in line with an overall quality assurance framework.

The project will further ensure the measures required so as to promote a more integrated organization of the VET sector in Greece, orientated on the accumulation, validation, capitalization and transferability of VET outcomes, thus

enhancing the attractiveness of the VET sector.

Furthermore, it will facilitate and highlight the importance of shared responsibility of national and local government, social partners, VET providers and stakeholders and teachers, trainers and learners as well in shaping and offering VET.

The project is carried out by the State Scholarships’ Foundation-IKY (the Greek National Agency) with the support of the

Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union.

More information (in Greek):

<http://www.iky.gr/ecvet> ●

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Maltese ECVET expert team



Malta embarked on a two-year project since January 2012, with the aim to further promote the outcomes of the National ECVET pilot project – (VET) Credit Conversion System. The National Team of ECVET Experts has the role of further promoting the implementation of the policy processes required and set by the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC) which is the National Authority responsible for testing and implementing ECVET in Malta. By means of three core seminars, the industry representatives, VET providers, the National Team of Experts, together with the MQC will learn together how to develop best ways to apply ECVET methodologies.

The First Seminar in Malta was held on December 5th, 2012. Up to 70 participants were present and participated enthusiastically with their input through the organised workshops. The aim of the first seminar on ECVET was to inform public and private VET providers including management staff as well as academics and lifelong learning beneficiaries on this European-wide initiative and raise their awareness on the benefits of using such a tool for making qualifications more transparent, comparable, and transferable across Europe.

The seminar was balanced in terms of relevant information content and participation from the audience through discussions followed in different workshop groups and the feedback gained from them. Ms. Michela Vecchia, an Italian ECVET expert was also invited to speak on the subject from Italy’s perspective and thanks to her experience

upon the implementation of ECVET in her country. Different dissemination materials were distributed during the seminar. These included two ECVET booklets namely “Implementing ECVET in Malta” and “ECVET in Europe”, pen drives, pens, mugs and coasters. To date the Maltese National Agency has already participated in a number of TV slots coupled with press releases with the aim of making the public aware of ECVET and its benefits. ●

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FORMAZIONE PROFESSIONALE
DEI LAVORATORI



Framework

Dynamic institutional processes regarding the labour market and the performance of education and training system are ongoing in Italy. The recent reform of the Labour Market (Law 92/2012) approved by the Italian Parliament on July 2012 contains specific reference to lifelong learning provisions thus offering some space for a gradual implementation of ECVET: the establishment of steady local networks of VET providers to ensure lifelong learning and guidance, the recognition and validation of non formal and informal learning (NFIL), a national competence certification system and a national inventory of qualifications as well as the possibility to recognize NFIL as learning outcome credit with reference to qualifications included in the national inventory. Furthermore, in the last months Italy intensively worked on the EQF Referencing Report through a wide consultation process.

Aims

Within this framework, the Italian Team of ECVET Experts, coordinated by ISFOL – LLP - Leonardo da Vinci National Agency with the financial support of the European Commission and the Italian Ministry of Labour, aims at giving an answer to the widespread interest towards ECVET by the several actors involved in the VET context.

The team includes 13 experts : researchers in the field of VET and labour market policies, members of the ECVET Users' Group established at European level, project officers of the LLP – Leonardo da Vinci Programme, members of the National Coordination Point for EQF, Members of the National Reference Point for Quality, Members of the National Europass Centre, experts involved in ECVET pilot projects.

The main aims of the National Team of ECVET Experts are the following:

- increasing the knowledge of ECVET and its technical specifications and ensuring that the added value of ECVET is understood and perceived, in view of a progressive accumulation of learning outcomes in a lifelong learning perspective and transfer of results from one learning context to another;
- supporting the implementation and the concrete use of this tool in Italy, in coherence with the ongoing reforms in education and training as well as with labour market needs;
- promoting a more effective and widespread exploitation of the testing opportunities currently offered by the LLP – Leonardo Programme, in order to support implementation of practices on ECVET and consolidation of mutual trust among several actors involved;

- valorising the achievements of ECVET pilot experiences already carried out in Italy;
- establishing a network whose members are acting as "ECVET multipliers" and setting up the basis for a national community of practice, contributing to the European one.

Activities

In order to achieve the above-mentioned aims, the Italian Team of ECVET Experts will provide information, tailored training, guidance and counselling for relevant actors involved in the different steps of ECVET implementation as well as for the wider public through several awareness-raising activities.

So far, the following activities have been carried out:

- Peer learning sessions aimed at sharing the state of the art and needs on transparency of qualifications and competences, links among tools and ongoing reform process in Italy as well as at exploring opportunities and challenges of the ECVET implementation in Italy;
- a survey launched among 114 beneficiaries of Leonardo da Vinci Mobility projects selected in 2012, aimed at collecting their level of knowledge, practical experience, perceived added value, possible obstacles, information and support needed on ECVET as

well as their interest in implementing some steps of the ECVET process within their mobility projects;

- a first workshop focused on the implementation of ECVET in transnational mobility gathered more than 100 participants involved in Leonardo da Vinci mobility projects (VET providers and practitioners, stakeholders, social partners and other labour market actors).

Furthermore, the Italian Team of ECVET Experts has been requested to contribute to a workshop organised within the activities of the "Euromediterranean" project, coordinated by ISFOL, with the aim of providing public authorities competent on VET belonging to Mediterranean countries with information on opportunities offered by ECVET and concrete experiences already realised. Cooperation with the Team implementing the European Agenda for Adult Learning 2012-2014 in Italy, coordinated by ISFOL, has been established too. Information and guidance has been offered at the request of those actors willing to implement ECVET, mainly in the context of transnational mobility, and to benefit from the opportunities offered by the Lifelong Learning programme. ■

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Slovene ECVET expert team



European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET) is a new instrument in Slovenia for promoting of mutual trust in transnational mobility between VET schools. The purpose of ECVET is to better validate and accredit the learning outcomes that individual learner has gained during his mobility and it is to be done by creating a common language and trust among the VET providers across Europe. ECVET will support the validation and accreditation of learning outcomes gained either by national or international training, with no further delay in the education or learning path of the individual.

Mobility is becoming ever more important from the perspective of the individual as well as European educational systems. Practice-oriented learning mobility of pupils and apprentices contributes importantly to the acquisition of relevant professional, practical as well as personal skills and competences. It is a real added value for the integral part of the learning process, bringing benefits to the learner, to the employers and other stakeholders involved in international mobility process. Mobility reinforces the social partnerships and improves school-enterprise cooperation.

When implementing international mobility the quality of learning outcomes and its validation and accreditation is essential. VET schools in Slovenia validate mobility in various ways; it is mostly part of the open curricula or part of the on-the-job training. For the recognition of mobility as part of the education process there is currently no special tool available, therefore in the future special attention will be dedicated to linking education and mobility, by promoting longer term mobility focused on learning outcomes and active participation and involvement of VET teachers.

As in 26 other European countries, a special ECVET expert group was created in Slovenia in March 2012, closely linked to the European ECVET network and projects. Its task in the coming two years will be the informing and promotion of the ECVET system to schools and other social partners, involved in transnational mobility. A special national reference point for ECVET-related issues and information will be established. The planned activities of the national expert team will further involve many promotional and thematic events, dedicated to specific audiences, target groups, focusing on the use and implementation of the system in transnational mobility projects.

The Slovenian ECVET Expert team of four members is flexible and effective, since members of the team represent main three actors in the field: national authorities, VET schools and the National institute for VET – main national institution supporting VET schools and employers.

The composition of the group enables a fruitful, productive discussion and the active role of all the relevant stakeholders, needed for the implementation of the project. National Institute for VET is also part of the ECVET User's Group, involved in many ECVET-related European projects: the Velenje School centre has been involved in Leonardo da Vinci mobility projects for years and the Ministry is the national authority responsible for VET in general.

A webpage where all relevant materials will be gathered with names and contact details of the experts will be launched to have a common contact point for VET schools, users and experts. The experts will carry out a number of activities intended to train VET schools in the daily use of ECVET. In fact, credit points are already obligatory as stated in the Law on VET, but the actual use is not in practice yet. Workshops will be organised by the experts themselves, and the National Agency will launch two bigger workshops with the members of the ECVET Network team to receive their feedback and additional European perspective regarding the ECVET. ■

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VET-CCS: Vocational Education and Training Credit Conversion System in Malta



Malta Qualifications Council, First ECVET National Conference, November 2011

The Maltese VET-CCS project aims to develop a national understanding of ECVET, its elements, scope and advantages and the importance of its implementation at both national and European level.

Context

Within the VET-CCS project, 30 VET qualifications/courses from national VET institutions will be converted and used to develop and pilot a methodological tool for the conversion of ordinary qualifications to ones described in terms of ECVET.

As a second step, a guiding manual will be developed, based on the experience of the conversion process. This manual targets VET institutions and is envisaged as a national guide for the conversion process of their VET qualifications - even outside the project - according to

the standards specified for ECVET. The 30 qualifications are selected from the following areas of study: agribusiness, art and design, mechanical engineering, tourism, community services, business and commerce, ICT and computing.

National implementation

One of the most interesting aspects of the ongoing VET-CCS project is the fact that national implementation is actually going on throughout the project. Due to the structure of the VET system in Malta, it was possible to involve a high number of relevant stakeholders in

the ECVET project. One very beneficial aspect is that the Malta Qualification Council (MQC) is coordinating the VET-CCS project on the one hand and is on the other hand responsible for the development and implementation of ECVET (and other European transparency instruments like the European / National Qualification Framework - EQF / NQF or the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework - EQARF) in Malta. Secondly, the VET provider offering a high number of VET qualifications in Malta - the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) - is one of the national partners in the project. This is another rewarding aspect for the national implementation of ECVET through the VET-CCS project. Moreover, four VET providers (Clear Dimension Ltd, Institute of Tourism Studies, Employment and Training Corporation, Korporazzjoni Tax-Xoghol u Tahrig), which represent additional parts of VET in Malta, have been integrated as national partners into the project consortium. The wide spectrum of the VET system in Malta is thus quite well represented in the VET-CCS project.

Additionally the 30 qualifications which have been selected to be converted in the project represent a wide range of areas of study, wherefore very different kinds of qualifications are tested in terms of their conversion towards an ECVET system. This will generate

experience for different areas of study and different qualifications which will in turn facilitate the future overall implementation of ECVET and the full conversion of all VET qualifications.

Synergies between other transparency instruments

According to the consortium of the project which has been mentioned before, other main advantages of the VET-CCS project are the existent synergies between several ongoing implementation processes of the European transparency instruments in Malta. The MQC is thus responsible for the implementation of the European / National Qualifications Framework (EQF / NQF), the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF), EUROPASS and the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET). This provides a number of synergies in the implementation process itself, but also the possibility of combining some aspects of the transparency instruments and of constructing strong interfaces between them.

ECVET is for example, mentioned at various points in the latest update of the referencing report of the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF): 'MCAST does not have a credit system yet, but it is planned that an ECVET-based system in which every credit translates itself into 25 points will be introduced in due course. Such a credit system further facilitates permeability between VET and HE.'¹

Additionally there are certain synergies between ECVET and the NQF in Malta because the future allocation of

qualifications to the levels of the MQF will be carried out based on a revised version of the currently used template. This revised version of the template will be the same as has been used for descriptions of qualifications for ECVET, like what was required for the respective work package within the VET-CCS project, which resulted in the first and second reports². In this template learning outcomes (in terms of knowledge, skills and competence) of qualifications have to be described, which are the basis of ECVET and of the MQF. In the end it could be said that the VET-CCS project promotes the allocation of qualifications to the MQF. Another synergy between certain transparency instruments is the fact that each MQF level requires a certain number of credits (see below).

Moreover, synergies between ECVET and EQAVET can be identified when it comes to the discussion of the question of 'who is assessing learning outcomes', because the organisation of the assessment of learning outcomes will be a crucial topic - within ECVET (only assessed learning outcomes can be transferred, recognised or accumulated) and within EQARF (quality assurance of the assessment process). Furthermore, it is planned within the VET-CCS project to hold seminars on ECVET next to seminars about EQAVET to show the synergies of both instruments to users. In person, some

project partners of the VET-CCS project are even part of projects focussing on EQAVET and are working as ECVET experts within the NeTECVET network, which the National Agency for Lifelong Learning is coordinating for Malta.

ECVET Points

In previous projects the usage of ECVET points has often been discussed and sometimes little added value to the use of ECVET points (compared to the usage of learning outcomes) has been emphasised³.

In the VET-CCS project the possible use of ECVET points is discussed, although other elements of ECVET (like the assessment of learning outcomes) have yet not been examined in detail. Thus, depending on the current stage of development of the VET-CCS project, at least a preliminary view on the project's notion of ECVET points can already be mentioned: according to the usage of ECTS in Malta, one credit point⁴ will consist of 25 hours of workload. Besides, it can be said that for the allocation of a qualification to a MQF level, a certain number of credits per level is required for each qualification. So credits are used for the allocation of qualifications to the MQF as well, but they are not yet used for the recognition of learning outcomes after mobility periods. Regarding the ECTS system, it seems to be clear that both systems - ECVET and

" The main challenge around the implementation of ECVET and the learning outcomes approach in Malta is that there is a lack of curriculum designers who are well informed and trained about the new concepts, approaches and developments. "

(1) Malta Qualifications Council (2012): Referencing of the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF/EHEA). Third edition. p. 106. www.mqc.gov.mt/file.aspx?f=362. See for example, p.134 or p.137 of the referencing report for the indication of ECVET in addition to ECTS.

(2) See internet: <http://www.ecvetmalta.org.mt/content/pilot-project-courses-strength-and-weaknesses-reports/1855941/>.

ECTS - should share the same value of 25 hours of workload, but no further relations are foreseen so far.

Challenges

During the project contract period, two different kinds of challenges arose. On the one hand, three of the originally chosen qualifications had to be changed. The originally chosen qualifications became obsolete due to changes in the labour market. New qualifications had thus to be chosen. Therefore the analysis of the 30 chosen qualifications took longer than planned.

Besides - one even more challenging issue arose within the project. In Malta all education institutions are aware of the reasons and arguments for the upcoming changes within the field of education. Moreover, the majority of stakeholders are aware of the advantages of using learning outcomes in teaching and learning and the aims of ECVET (and the other transparency instruments). In addition, policy stakeholders, even teachers and learners in Malta, are in principal aware of the advantages and the necessary requirements for a successful implementation of ECVET and a learning outcomes approach: so far so good!

But the main challenge around the implementation of ECVET and the learning outcomes approach in Malta is that there is a lack of curriculum designers who are well informed and trained about the new concepts, approaches and developments. So for the moment, curriculum designers are not properly informed or trained to be able to work with the idea of a learning

outcomes approach for example. There is thus a great need for these people in the field of VET.

Consequently, one could say that the next generation of VET teachers and trainers, especially those who work as curriculum designers, could be trained. However, teacher and trainer education in Malta is conducted at higher education institutions. For the moment, students who will become the future curriculum designers do not receive enough training about new concepts and the learning outcomes approach. Moreover, they do not receive training in what VET especially needs and the special needs when it comes to the design of new curricula in the field of VET with regard to the new transparency instruments. As a result, there is actually a high demand for persons who are able to design VET-curricula with regard to the learning outcomes approach and the transparency instruments which are going to be implemented in the Maltese education system. In three to five years there will be enough well trained people who know how to deal with new instruments, but now this presents a considerable challenge. One solution on a national level is that project members try to inform teachers and trainers about new developments and approaches to give them at least some basis for their future work.

Expected outcomes and results

Several results are expected within the VET-CCS project. On the one hand, a total of 30 VET qualifications will be converted into ECVET which will serve as a piloting exercise of the ECVET

conversion system. Therefore, a national template for qualification descriptions will be developed. This template will additionally be used for the allocation of qualifications to the levels of the MQF.

Moreover, a manual for VET institutions - the so called ECVET Conversion Manual - which is intended to be used at national level, will be produced. This manual will explain step by step how the national template for descriptions of qualifications has to be completed, in a way which features all the necessary ECVET conditions. After the VET-CCS project it should be possible to use the ECVET Conversion Manual for the conversion of other courses by other VET training institutions on a national and even on a European / international level. ●

Project Data

Duration: 2011 - 2013

Leader:

Kunsill Malti Għall-Kwalifiki
(Malta Qualifications Council), MT

Partners:

Clear Dimension Ltd, (MT); Institute of Tourism Studies, (MT); Employment and Training Corporation (MT); Korporazzjoni Tax-Xogħol u Təhrig, (MT); Malta College of Arts, Science, and Technology, (MT)

Universita degli Studi di Firenze-
Dipartimento di Scienze dell'
'Educazione e dei Processi Culturali
e Formativi (IT); Centrul National de
Dezvoltare a Invatamantului Profesional
si Tehnic, (RO); Center Republike
Slovenije za Poklicno Izobrazevanje (SL)

(3) See for example, GHK (2012): We have tried ECVET: Lessons from the first generation of ECVET pilot projects. Synthesis of results and project portraits.p.12. Available at: http://www.ecvet-projects.eu/Documents/ECVET_Brochure_singlepages_allthesame.pdf

(4) The term used is 'credit point' or 'credits', 'ECVET point' as a term has not been used so far.

Anette Curth, ICF GHK

The CO.L.O.R project: Competence and learning outcome recognition and mobile workers within Italy

In Italy, striking differences among regional qualification sub-systems have been identified.

To improve quality and flexibility of the national VET System and to guarantee opportunities for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, a set of challenging reforms are currently being designed.

To support workers – especially ‘migrant’ workers – in obtaining a qualification, the CO.L.O.R project tests how ECVET can be used to support the recognition of learning outcomes from prior learning. Specifically, the project aims at facilitating transfer and accumulation of one or more units of learning outcomes of workers in the construction and health care sector across Italian regions and across borders. It also aims at setting up a stable network between regions, stakeholders and practitioners to ensure that the work will be taken forward beyond the project's life cycle.



Projects aims and objectives

The project CO.L.O.R (COmpetency and Learning Outcomes Recognition for migrants) tests ECVET mechanisms and procedures together with local stakeholders and practitioners in the construction and health care sector. Its objective is to help workers – and especially ‘migrant’ workers – to get their competences recognised and obtain a qualification (or part of a qualification). CO.L.O.R also sees the potential added value of ECVET-related procedures to structure networks of local actors in the targeted sectors which may introduce significant changes in the regional qualification systems - ultimately contributing to redesign the training provision accordingly.

Hence, the project pursues a two-fold objective:

- It aims at setting up a sustainable network of regional authorities, stakeholders and practitioners;

- It undertakes pilot testing of ECVET procedures for the assessment and recognition of learning outcomes of ‘migrant workers’ facilitating the acquisition of a qualification.

The CO.L.O.R project - with the support of ISFOL (National Research Institute on VET) - addresses primarily five Italian regions (Campania, Latium, Piedmont and Tuscany, as well as Basilicata and Calabria as associated partners), as well as Formedil (National Agency for VET in the construction sector). The competent authorities in the field of assessment and recognition of qualifications have committed to pilot test ECVET-oriented mechanisms in the construction and healthcare sectors.

From a technical point of view, CO.L.O.R aims at building two ‘frameworks’ of units of learning outcomes, one in each sector. These frameworks will have to function within the requirements at national level, while at the same time complying with ECVET technical specifications. The final aim is to build units that are transferable to facilitate the mobility of workers and the formal recognition of competences acquired through experience. Striking differences among regional qualification sub-systems have been identified. Across the regions, there is a range from highly regulated sub-systems with repertoires of

Learning outcomes valorisation on for migrants

learning outcomes based qualifications and transparent assessment systems to scarcely regulated systems. The project aims at moving towards greater convergence of the regional vocational qualification sub-systems by using EQF-ECVET processes.

Transfer and accumulation of learning outcomes between different learning contexts or learning pathways - The current situation in Italy

Currently, in Italy, a greater adherence to the learning outcome approach is becoming gradually acknowledged in different areas of the Italian system of qualifications.

“ CO.L.O.R decided to work with units based on knowledge, skills and competences with regard to the learning outcomes (KSC) – but used in a different order (CSK). ”

In 2011, a National Repertory for Vocational Education and Training was developed. It contains 22 vocational profiles associated with three-year training schemes for the acquisition of a vocational qualification (EQF Level 3 - Operator) and 21 vocational profiles related

to four-year training schemes for the acquisition of a vocational qualification (EQF Level 4 – Technician). The repertory is consistent with EU requirements (in particular EQF descriptors) and is characterised by a language coherent with the learning outcomes approach; and a modular frame suitable for transferable units.

Some Italian regions initiated a process to adapt regional qualifications to the new national scheme. These regional modifications aim to make the system more homogeneous. This might be seen as a first step towards transferable units. To support this development, national pilot projects are under way.

Additionally, there is a lively debate ongoing with regard to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning in Italy. In the context of the recent Reform of the Labour market (L.92/2012), a specific regulation will be issued for a national system for the certification of competences (including non-formal and informal learning).

CO.L.O.R procedures for the assessment and recognition of learning outcomes of migrant workers

For the construction sector and the health sector, background analysis and reports on qualifications have been produced to help stakeholders understand the extent to which the different sys-

tems are compatible with ECVET. In the construction sector, a working group has been established. In this sector, the definition of units of learning outcomes and the assessment procedure developed build on the inputs from two sources:

- The first source is the description of learning outcomes related to the qualification of ‘construction operator’ as it is included in the National Repertory of VET qualifications;
- The second source is the repertory of competences developed by Formedil, the National Organization responsible for training in the construction sector. The competence repertory also provided an observation matrix for assessment; based on the expected result and the performance. Formedil’s repertory is ECVET compatible, and has been found suitable to support the assessment of units and partial qualifications.

CO.L.O.R decided to define units of learning outcomes on the basis of work processes and tasks which are typical for the particular profession, and in compliance with national regulations – e.g. the National Repertory. The units are based on knowledge, skills and competences with regard to the learning outcomes (KSC) – but used in a different order (CSK).

Below is an example of how the CO.L.O.R project defined learning outcomes in the unit 'Construction Work: Masonry'.

Example of a unit of learning outcomes

Reference qualification: 'Construction Operator'

EQF level: 3

Reference labour process: Construction Work: Masonry Work

Learning Outcomes



Competence

Implement masonry work for development of constructions based on indications and specific project details and respect of standard sector safety requirements.

Skills

- Identify elements in the technical plans;
- Apply marking techniques;
- Apply mortar preparation techniques;
- Apply masonry work techniques;
- Apply techniques for creation of support structures;
- Apply techniques for the demolition and removal of waste material;
- Apply (flat and inclined) roofing work techniques.

Knowledge

- Characteristics of inert and binding materials;
- Safety regulations for work site injury prevention;
- Knowledge of marking techniques;
- Cement preparation process;
- Masonry techniques;
- Propping techniques;
- Types of brickwork;
- Types and construction techniques for masonry facings.

Similar to the Construction sector, a working group has also been established in the Health Care sector. Here, the definition of units of learning outcomes and the assessment procedure developed build on the inputs from two sources:

- The State-Regions Agreement 2001 for the qualification of Healthcare Operator (as the general reference); and
- The regional qualifications related to that national regulation.

In the Health Care sector, the National Regulation – established in 2001 – is less compatible with ECVET than the one concerning the Construction Sector from 2011. However, the working group took this as an opportunity to reflect on the changes of the last decade and the gradual progress towards the learning outcomes approach.

The assessment of these learning outcomes will be carried out in several steps. To assess competence and skills, a direct observation during the practice will take place; the assessors will use observation and assessment grids. To assess knowledge, an IT-based multiple-choice-test will be carried out. Mandatory assessment terms have been formulated - the assessment should take place under working conditions; or conditions similar to the work context; either at the work place or in a training centre.

CO.L.O.R assumes that an assessment approach which is consequently linked to learning outcomes can support the recognition of such units in a range of contexts (formal, non-formal, informal). This is particularly significant since it can support workers in acquiring a qualifi-

cation in a non-traditional (non-formal) manner through a series of rigorous assessment procedures. Hence, 'ECVET Units' could support a significant part of the NFIL recognition process and can surely promote the validation of LOs against predefined standards.

However, the assessment of units is not sufficient for the entire process of identifying prior learning and collecting evidence for it. Therefore, CO.L.O.R finds it important to create synergy between ECVET and other (national) tools. For instance, the Italian tool 'Portfolio of personal achievement' (Libretto formativo del cittadino) is based on the latest national regulation concerning a standard process for recognition of competences acquired in different learning contexts; and is seen as fully complementary with the CO.L.O.R objectives.

Regional authorities, stakeholders and practitioners signing a Memorandum of Understanding

It has been mentioned above that one of the key objectives of the project is to establish a stable network of regional authorities and stakeholders. So far the project has been successful in launching this networking process via a range of web-tools and meetings at local and (trans-) national level.

The Calabria Region has joined the partnership, and the Lombardy Region has taken part in a web-based learning exchange. Formedil, the National Agency for VET in construction sector, has joined the partnership. To achieve sustainability here and ensure that regional authorities and stakeholders continue to play an active role, the CO.L.O.R project aims at formalising the partnership.

Therefore, the projects designed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which will be signed by all partners at the end of the testing phase. The MoU is envisaged as a strategic multilateral agreement, describing the conditions under which the partners recognise a selection of successfully tested ECVET units of learning outcomes in the construction and/or healthcare sectors.

The Memorandum of Understanding will contain the following information:

- An Introduction, providing information about the context and the definitions;
- A section stating the objective of the MoU;
- A description of competent bodies;

- An identification of organisations signing;
- A list of VET providers able to operate in the framework of the MoU Qualification(s) concerned;
- General principles for assessment;
- Information on how the units of LOs will be validated and recognised;
- The period of validity;
- The list of signatures; and
- Annexes.

The MoU builds upon existing practices, like the examples developed by the first generation of pilot projects. It has been developed in consultation with the partner regions and national ECVET experts, but also in consultation with legal experts in a multi-step process.

In a first step, a proposal was drafted, submitted to the partners and revised, based on their feedback. Subsequently, a meeting with Italian regions to agree on overall objective and framework was held. The partner regions were asked to identify parties entitled to sign. Technical Working Groups were built to evaluate the findings of the testing phase and inform the MoU contents by making a selection of the learning outcomes and drafting the technical annexes. The transnational partners of the project (Malta, Scotland, Romania) provided technical advice on the draft MoU. A follow-up meeting will be held to validate the Final MoU. Lastly, the MoU will be signed by the partner regions and entered into force.

Next steps

The project ends in April 2013, with the final conference taking place in Rome on 19 April 2013.

In its final months, the project will finalise the development process of the units of learning outcomes and the testing of the units. The definite mechanisms of mutual recognition will be agreed between the partner regions and the Memorandum of Understanding will be signed - to ensure the regions pursue the work beyond the pilot project.

To disseminate its results, COLOR will develop an ECVET information kit, including distributing successful practices to the different target groups. ■

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An ECVET-solution to the recognition of learning outcomes in Germany – The ESyCQ project

The project ESyCQ (European Credit System for Commercial Qualifications) aims at establishing a procedure for the validation and recognition of formal, non-formal and informal learning for individuals.

Six professions/qualifications were selected in which lateral entry on the basis of informal and non-formal learning are typical (commerce and IT training); and overlaps regarding the learning outcomes related to those professions were identified.

Subsequently, the project developed a way of assessing those learning outcomes using the CEMES-database – an instrument previously developed by the lead project partner. The project also aims to establish a procedure for validation and recognition of those learning outcomes with the regional competent institution.

The ESyCQ project aims at establishing a procedure for the validation and recognition of formal, non-formal and informal learning for individuals in a selected area of vocational training in Germany.

The project deals with six qualifications from the field of IT and commerce:

- Salesman for logistic and transport services (a IVET qualification comprising three years of studies);
- Office clerk (IVET, three years of studies);
- IT management assistant (IVET, three years of studies)
- Commercial assistant, main focus: office economics (IVET, two years of studies);
- Commercial assistant, main focus: data processing (IVET, two years of studies);
- Network administrator (CVET, certified by the Chamber of Commerce).

Typically, these qualifications are acquired through formal initial vocational training (IVET) or continuing vocational training (C-VET) in the dual system or in school based-VET. A learner completes a two- or three-year learning period, dividing his/her time between school-based and work-based learning. However, many of these qualifications are typical for side-entry and for learning-on-the-job. Many employees working in jobs related to the qualifications above have acquired the knowledge, skills and competences they need through formal learning paths concerning other qualifications, leading to similar learning outcomes. Yet others have acquired the necessary learning outcomes through

non-formal or informal learning. Hence, although both groups may do a perfect job and possess all the skills and competences they need; they have never acquired a formal qualification for their current job. This may have a negative effect on their employability.

Consequently, ESyCQ aims at enabling the validation and recognition of units of learning outcomes relating to the six professions above. The idea is to enable the recognition of learning outcomes acquired in other formal learning paths (I-VET and C-VET) as well as the recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

Describing existing qualifications in terms of units of learning outcomes

All of these qualifications are based on nationally regulated training curricula, which do not yet work with learning outcomes. So the project conducted the pilot work to reformulate the learning content and the curricula and break it down into units of learning of outcomes; closely involving experts, such as experienced trainers, training consultants, representatives from the competent institutions regulating these professions as well as national ECVET experts from the Federal Institute for Research in Vocational Education and Training (BIBB).

gnition of prior learning

Assessing learning outcomes using the CEMES method and database



ESYQ found it most useful to describe the learning outcomes as a set of knowledge, skills and competences – as suggested by the ECVET Recommendation – and group them in units related to work tasks. The units defined for all qualifications were compared in a matrix. It has been found that many of these units can be identified in several of the qualifications; competences overlap. The core part of the project is the design of a specific method of assessment of the acquired units of learning outcomes by using the CEMES competence database. The database has been developed earlier and provides a suitable instrument to test and assess acquired units of learning outcomes. The tool helps to assess the knowledge, skills and competences of the learner, including non-formally and informally acquired (complex) knowledge.

ESYQ transferred the CEMES database into a tool that can support the assessment of units of learning outcomes. In addition to formal learning, non-formal and informal learning can also be assessed. Tests were generated regarding every defined unit of learning outcome related to the six qualifications. Subsequently, groups of units are built which are necessary to pass a test which proves that a person has acquired a set of competences that are related to a specific qualification - in line with a specific qualification profile defined by the German training regulation. The assessment is based on the CEMES method and consists of a three-level mix of methods for a comprehensive assessment of learning outcomes. The objective is to elaborate the 'profile of learning outcomes' of a candidate.

The assessment is being conducted in a three-step-process:

- 1 Computer aided multiple-choice-test with immediate evaluation to assess knowledge;
- 2 Computer-aided test with complex text questions, evaluated by certified assessors to assess complex knowledge ('competences');
- 3 Personalised audit based on complex case studies/practical tests to assess and evaluate professional competences ('skills').

The first two steps of the method are based on a multiple-choice-test and a set of open questions. Professionals can take the test under supervision in an official test centre. The results of the first two steps serve as an 'entry ticket' to the third step: the personal assessment,

evaluated by certified assessors. Each step is valid separately or in combination according to requirements.

The training centre of competent institution in the region where the project operates (Chamber of Industry and Commerce Training Centre Cottbus) is already familiar with and uses the test platform in other contexts. Therefore, there is a high amount of trust among the partners that can be built on. The Training Centre supports the project

in finding ways to use the test results as a precondition for validation and recognition within the boundaries set by the official German training regulations. For instance, the assessment of

whether a person has acquired the necessary learning outcomes could serve as a proof that the person is ready to take the official final exam. However, it is important to note that the assessment cannot replace the final exam.

The ESyCQ approach to the recognition and transfer of learning outcomes

Following the German Vocational Training Act, a profession in Germany is seen and evaluated as an overall decision-making competence of a qualification. So far, the law does not foresee an accumulation or transfer of training units to the overall qualification. A final qualification is only issued if the person has passed a final exam.

However, the German Vocational Training Act¹ allows for the recognition of previously completed training for the current period of training. Federal governments may decide that a training course completed at another institution may be recognised partially or fully, thus reducing the current period of training. The competent authority – for these qualifications it is the Chamber of Industry and Commerce – can grant this recognition. Trainee and training institutions are required to submit a joint appli-

cation - which may refer to the highest possible period of recognition.

ESyCQ will research the practical application of this regulation in its home region, the land of Brandenburg.

Its aim is to elaborate a respective recommendation, also considering the regulations in other German 'Laender'. Hence, the project aims at developing a procedure of formally recognising the units of learning outcomes which have been assessed using the CEMES-platform.

Next steps

In the field of I-VET in Germany, no formal qualification below the level of a two- or three-year training is currently possible; and the concept of holistic vocations does not yet allow for the transfer and accumulation of units of learning outcomes.

However, ESyCQ currently discusses whether it would be possible to utilise

the results of the assessment as a basis for a 'formative' recognition (shortening the training period) or as a statement on what learning outcomes have been acquired through non-formal or informal learning – laid down in a learner's personal transcript.

Beyond that, the project has set up cooperation with the local competent institution, the Chamber of Commerce (IHK Cottbus). It is currently discussed whether the Chamber is ready to validate the passing of the exam and recognise it as preparation to the official (final) exam. This would allow for a categorisation of the professional experience and competence of the learner.

The project aims to promote the methods developed and communicate its benefits; hence, the benefits of ECVET-procedures for the recognition of prior learning in different learning contexts. Furthermore, the project will issue a recommendation for the development of a common internet-based platform (based on the CEMES model) that can be used by all European project partners. ●

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(1) German Vocational Training Act, Section 7: Recognition of previous training to the current period of training

MEN-ECVET – Analysing alternatives for recognised mobility in France

MEN-ECVET is a pilot project led by the French Ministry of National Education which analyses how ECVET can be introduced into the existing framework for the design and award of qualifications under the responsibility of this ministry. The project works with five qualifications, all of the same type and level (vocational leaving certificates *Baccalauréat Professionnel* EQF level 4), but covering different sectors (manufacturing and services).

The project will result in recommendations on how to proceed with further implementation of ECVET in France for the qualifications under the responsibility of the Ministry of National Education.

In the first stage, the project analysed the compatibility between ECVET technical specifications and the national regulatory framework, in particular the rules and practices for designing and describing qualifications. The results of this first stage of analysis were presented in an earlier version of the ECVET Magazine (number 7, 2012).

In the second stage, the project partners analysed the practical feasibility of recognised mobility as part of the exist-

ing system. In the context of this project recognised mobility is about:

- **Transnational mobility of learners in initial VET;**
- Recognition takes the form of **award of a full unit or part of a unit** which will be part of the full qualification. The unit (or part of the unit) is assessed abroad and validated and recognised upon return.

This second stage of the project is discussed in this article.

Identifying the possibilities

The work of the project identified two possible options for introducing recognised mobility to France. The feasibility

of these options is being analysed. The options are:

- **Option 1** - Achieving **part of an existing unit abroad;**
- **Option 2** - Designing and recognising an **optional unit** which would certify the acquisition of competences specific to mobility.

In initial VET, it is already possible for VET providers to break down the final assessment into several continuous assessments. This rule is the basis for the first option. It means that each unit in a given qualification can be achieved either via a final assessment (upon completion of the full programme – hence not compatible with mobility) or via continuous assessment. Continuous assessment means that the learner undergoes several assessments (the number and nature of these is defined in the qualification standard) during his/her pathway. When all the assessments are validated the unit is achieved and there is no final assessment. While final assessment has to be undertaken in strictly defined conditions, in particular when it comes to the composition of the jury, continuous assessment is more flexible and can be carried out by an external assessor (namely the in-company trainer). This is notably used when

the continuous assessment concerns competences achieved as part of work-based learning. Theoretically, it would hence be possible to delegate one of the continuous assessments to a foreign partner institution, even though this would require adjustments in the current regulations.

The second option would introduce a new element to VET qualifications of the Ministry of National Education. The possibility of 'optional units' already exists. It is relatively wide-spread in the general education leaving certificate (Baccalauréat Général) where students take an optional subject (and related assessment) in addition to those subjects that are required for this qualification. Though also possible in VET, in practice the use of optional units in this sector of education is rare. Via the introduction of an optional unit, the MEN-ECVET project aims to recognise explicitly the competence achieved through international mobility. It would be a transversal unit (not specific to any given qualification) on international competence which would certify that the person has achieved the capacity to orientate himself/herself in a foreign professional environment.

Method followed

To identify and further fine-tune these two options the project followed this method:

- The project core team interviewed practitioners who took part in earlier ECVET experimentations in France and who were also working within the framework of the Ministry of National Education¹;
- These people were interviewed about their methods of testing ECVET, the

solutions as well as difficulties. Based on these interviews the two above described options were fine-tuned;

- Two working groups were successively set up, one for each of the above options. Each of the groups had a different sectoral focus. They worked on the basis of the five qualifications chosen for the MEN-ECVET project, each covering different sectors: manufacturing and services.

Results of the analysis

Both groups were able to develop hypothetical examples of processes where mobility would be recognised.

Regarding the first option, the group reviewed the qualifications standards and identified which of the units contain knowledge, skills and competence that could be achieved abroad. The reflection took into account the feasibility for students to develop the required skills and competence abroad, in a foreign environment, and also in a limited period of time. The group also took into consideration the added value mobility would have for the development of those competences. As a result, for each qualification chosen for the project, a set of competences which is part of one larger unit from the French qualification standard concerned was recommended for mobility. The group also discussed how the competences would be assessed and validated. The group concluded that this approach to recognised mobility would be feasible. The main challenge for further development of this option is that the host organisation needs to provide learning that corresponds to the competences defined in the French national qualification standard for the given part of a unit.

The second group analysed, based on existing research and experience, the possibility to define and describe transversal competence linked to international experience. The group also analysed how such a unit could be assessed. The group concluded that the development of this option needed further analysis and fine-tuning: The main challenge being the need to identify a clear and unambiguous set of competences corresponding to the international experience, which can be assessed rigorously and in an objective manner.

Next steps

In the next steps, the project is going to:

- Refine the analysis of the second option to assess whether it is truly feasible to define and assess (in an objective manner) the set of competences expected; and
- Analyse the possibilities for using ECVET points in the context of qualifications of the Ministry of National Education.

The project is expected to conclude in the summer of 2013. The final report will include, among other aspects, recommendations regarding the two options discussed above. It will contain suggestions for regulatory amendments that will be submitted for decision at the ministry level. ●

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http://www.ciep.fr/expert_educ/professionnel/Leo_men-ecvet.php

(1) Some of the earlier ECVET projects worked on qualifications of other awarding bodies – such as other ministries or sectoral organisations – which have their own rules on the design and award of qualifications.

Promoting ECVET to practitioners: The NetECVET network

The NetECVET network promotes ECVET in the context of transnational mobility and supports the implementation process in the Member States through a bottom-up approach. It addresses VET providers and actors in VET and supports and guides them in the application of ECVET.

Practitioners have the opportunity to exchange experiences in a series of seminars across Europe. As a result, there will be an ECVET toolkit with templates and other instruments to support VET providers in using ECVET. NetECVET is an excellent example practitioners can be included in the process of developing and implementing ECVET. Since the tools developed build on the work done by the ECVET pilot projects, NetECVET also shows how the testing and development done by the previous projects is being used and feeds into the further development of tools and guidelines at the European level.

Since 2010 the European Commission has been funding networks of national programme agencies for the LLP with a focus on different thematic priorities (quality, new skills, inclusion, teachers and trainers). The main objective of thematic networking activities is to analyse and disseminate good practices which have been developed in LLP projects. Thematic networking also improves synergies and co-operation between

projects by exchanging information and knowledge across national boundaries. Co-operation and networking are one way to mainstream results and findings into national and European policies on education and training.

The NetECVET network consists of National Agencies from 14 countries: Austria, Germany, Finland, Italy, The Netherlands, Denmark, France, Hungary, Norway, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Turkey and United Kingdom.

Link ECVET principles and mobility practice

To link ECVET principles and mobility practice and thus bringing mobility forward is the big challenge NetECVET is facing. In practice, this means linking the supply side (pilot projects and [transfer of] innovation projects) and the demand side (mobility projects and practice).

In 2012, seven workshops with practitioners, stakeholders, competent bodies and national authorities took place



in Amstelveen, Paris, Copenhagen, Warsaw, Birmingham, Rome and Stockholm. In these workshops, NetECVET brought together 'developers', i.e. projects that have developed models, instruments and solutions (for example, for the definition and description of units of learning outcomes and their assessment) on the one hand and VET practitioners on the other hand. Methodologies, instruments and approaches developed by the projects were discussed and tested for their practical suitability. Starting from these workshops, NetECVET will continue defining guidelines and building models for the use of ECVET, with the aim of improving the quality of mobility projects.

Turning mobility into high-quality mobility using ECVET principles and approaches means above all working with learning outcomes on a practical level, providing guidelines for the definition, description and assessment of (units of) learning outcomes as well as providing examples for basic documents like Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) or Learning Agreements.

The workshop concept

Participants in the workshops are 'developers' on the one hand and 'users' on the other hand. The developers are represented through altogether 40 good practice projects which have been identified by the National Agencies and which can contribute to the building of the toolkit with their products. These products have been classified according to the different mobility phases 'before, during and after the mobility'. They can for example be helpful in the phase 'before mobility' which means that they can support either the description of qualifications based on ECVET principles (units, learning outcomes, ECTS points), or network building through a model for a Memorandum of Understanding or the preparation of concrete mobility through a template for a Learning Agreement. Other products target the phase 'during mobility' and address learning arrangements, assessment and the documentation of Learning Agreements. Others address questions of validation and recognition for which in the timeline is 'after mobility'.



These 'developers' discuss and work together with experienced mobility practitioners who are 'ECVET-ready' and who are interested in applying ECVET in order to improve their mobility projects. The mobility projects are nominated by the National Agencies.

Furthermore, there is a third group which consists of stakeholders, competent bodies, regional or national authorities or researchers, who can introduce and express their point of view.

Why a toolkit?

There is still a large demand for information, examples, and models in the ECVET implementation process. A recent survey in Germany showed that out of 257 responding VET providers, about 60% have heard about ECVET, but that their level of knowledge is very basic and that only very few have practical experience.

In order to meet these challenges NetECVET will develop an ECVET toolkit

which will support and guide VET practitioners through the process of applying ECVET. This toolkit will offer a broad variety of solutions starting with tailor-made approaches and ending with concrete examples and models.

The toolkit will contain information on national preconditions, existing mobility units, activities at sectoral level and required partnership functions and it will provide templates for MoUs or for the Learning Agreements. In addition to the development of the toolkit, NetECVET will also prepare and train VET professionals by providing training material in order to support the self-tutoring of VET schools or companies in how to use the toolkit.

What will the toolkit look like?

The toolkit will be an interactive web-based platform. The project is currently in the final conceptual phase; which will be followed by technical realisation and testing. Maintaining the success-

ful concept pursued so far, NetECVET will conduct a separate workshop with practitioners and future users. The tool-kit is expected to be ready in autumn 2013.

Feedback from practitioners so far

During the workshops, it became obvious that practitioners developed a positive attitude towards ECVET and the use of units of learning outcomes in learners' mobility. A large majority of participants are interested in attending further workshops or networking activities; and becoming a part of the ECVET Community of Practice. They have realised that transparency and comparability of qualifications are

a precondition for a common European education area.

They see the added value of ECVET and its potential for achieving standardised mobility units or common European training standards - especially since the diversity of VET systems so far is perceived as an obstacle for European cooperation. For VET-providers, it is particularly challenging to deal with different training contents and different priorities, different methods and practices in assessment and certification or a missing 'common language' in terms of a common terminology.

For many practitioners, the workshops provided an excellent opportunity to overcome their

concern that ECVET might bring additional formal administrative burdens or make mobility projects more complicated. The added value of ECVET is supporting mobility partners in identifying and agreeing on mobility phases and contents. It provides guidelines to the partners to enter into a more in-depth dialogue. It is an instrument for quality assurance and quality improvement; the results are high quality mobility projects with better chances for recognition and transferability of learning outcomes. In practitioners' views, this will contribute to a change in attitudes towards learning mobility and will lead to a better appreciation.

In short, high quality mobility projects are a very good promotion for mobility in general and for the idea of integrating standard mobility phases into training programs in particular. ECVET can contribute to achieving this. ●

“ ECVET is an instrument for quality assurance and quality improvement; the results are high quality mobility projects with better chances for recognition and transferability of learning outcomes ”



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“PEP goes local”

Different examples of regional collaboration in the field of ECVET implementation.

About the initiative

In 2009, the European Vocational Training Association (EVTA) launched “PEP” (“Partnership for Experimenting with ECVET in a Practical Context”), a partnership project under the Lifelong Learning Programme. The project was an experiment to explore what ECVET could do for the members of the EVTA network. With the inclusion of 10 members from different countries, it soon became clear that all the national contexts were different, both in terms of educational systems and in terms of how the members wanted to apply ECVET.

As a result of this partnership, some of the partners set up bilateral projects and initiatives to continue the work, or to transfer the work to another sector or context. In other words, an atmosphere was created for collaboration at European level. However, the partners felt that they had “to go back home” with the results. In order to go one step further in ECVET implementation the partners expressed the need to set up a dialog with the relevant stakeholders in their own context.

“Within the partnership the benefits of ECVET were clear, but what about the awareness and commitment of stakeholders in our own context?”

This is why the follow up project “PEP goes local” has been set up: it is all about organising workshops at regional, local or sectoral level, involving the most relevant partners, in order to discuss the opportunities for ECVET in their context and to see how they can work together on the next steps forward for ECVET implementation.

Commonalities and specificities between the regional workshops

Within the “PEP goes local” project, nine regional ECVET workshops have taken place between June and November 2012: two each in the Netherlands and France, and one each in Sweden, Greece, Spain, Italy and Hungary.

It was clear from the start that the national contexts and VET systems are very different among the partners. Although the vision on how to implement ECVET in each context also differs, there are some strong commonalities leading to similar and common challenges for the future.

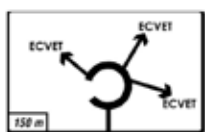
In general it can be said that the workshops were received very positively by

the stakeholders. There is a general commitment and willingness to continue. However, a clear roadmap with concrete next steps is necessary. The vision on how to use and implement ECVET in each context has to be made concrete in steps and actions!

In a lot of workshops, the discussions on ECVET were put in a broader context than only mobility and technical specifications. The main principles behind ECVET (for example, a learning outcomes based approach, lifelong learning and transparency of qualifications) and how they could be used to improve national VET systems were at the centre of discussions.

It seemed that discussions on the technical specifications often led to confusion. Additionally, detailed technical discussions were preventing the partners in setting up a dialog with their stakeholders in order to create a vision on ECVET in their own context.

The partners also expressed a strong need for continuing with practical approaches, especially in cases where legislation and regulations have to be adapted for a fully operational ECVET system. There is an overall agreement that “policy will not easily change, as long as we can’t show that it works!” In other words, there is a belief that policy will follow practice.



The strengths of this approach

One of the great “wins” in this project was the involvement of relevant stakeholders at regional, local or sector level, both in terms of quality and quantity. The workshops strengthened relationships with the partner organisations and their stakeholders for further activities in the near future.

“It was a good opportunity to bring together our stakeholders and to have a dialog on how European tools and developments can be used to improve our own VET system.”

Another important strength was that ECVET was seen from a broader perspective and not only in the context of mobility. Mobility is often a logical consequence, but not the first priority, in working on ECVET. If there is more transparency of qualifications and openness of VET systems with the help of ECVET, there will already be a great win at European level.

Examples that were used during the workshops looked at specific ECVET target groups, such as people looking for work or (working) adults willing to enter the educational system again. In this perspective, it helped the workshop participants to think in terms of learning outcomes, instead of educational programmes.

“The workshops forced us to think about what we really wanted to achieve with ECVET.”

ECVET is also seen by the partners as an opportunity to open up their own VET systems to others, not only from abroad but also from the perspective of “how transparent is our VET system for people in our own country?”

Examples include job-seekers with no formal qualifications but extensive work experience, or people who would like to continue training because they already know that they will have to work longer - examples in which it is important that educational systems are more open and flexible. This is exactly the basic idea behind ECVET and the starting point for the workshops!

“We were given a ‘blank page’ and we were forced to think about ECVET in our own situation.”



“ECVET-Information market” during the workshop in the Netherlands, organised by KCH International

About EVTA

The aim of the EVTA network is to set up a sustainable environment for exchange of knowledge and experiences and to work on shared issues in the field of human capital development at European level. In this sense, EVTA feels it has a “duty” to bring European policy closer to its members, “translate” it to the context of the members, and let members see how different European initiatives can be of benefit and use for their own context.

EVTA sees ECVET as an example of one of these European initiatives which cannot only be of great use in the different contexts of the member countries, but can also help Europe in creating a strong European environment in which education and employment are more closely connected between the Member States.

The next step forward

The need to continue on a practical level will be translated in a follow-up proposal. In this new proposal, the partnership will work on a common methodology for ECVET, from beginning to end, with the contexts and sectors of the partners as the practical background. It is important from this perspective that more relevant stakeholders will be on board from each country, in order to create more commitment and impact at strategic level.



Group discussion during the workshop in Greece, organised by the National Institute of Labour and Human Resources

“The project will be successful in our context when training centres or employers accept the learning outcomes achieved in other (formal, or non/informal) contexts, thanks to our common methodology.”

An ambitious project, but not impossible as long as we have a clear vision on where to head and as long as we work with a partnership which is motivated and committed in our mission to make people more employable with ECVET. ●

Some highlights of “ECVET in the context of the partners”:

National Institute for Labour and Human Resources (Greece)

“...In these economic times, we are not in the position to think that ECVET is NOT relevant for Greece. We see a clear added value, especially in making people more employable with ECVET. The only question is “how do we proceed?” We need a roadmap to start and European practices can help us...”

ENAIPI Lazio (Italy)

“...ECVET can help us in making qualifications more transparent between the regions. For us, ECVET is not only about mobility, but about opening up our qualification systems towards each other and to create more transparency and employability...”

KCHandel (The Netherlands)

“...Actually, in the Netherlands, there is no legislation which prevents organisations from implementing ECVET. However, ECVET is not yet implemented widely. The main reason is often (a lack of) mutual trust and quality assurance when it comes to summative assessments abroad...”

AFPA (France)

“...We have to deal with national rules and legislation, which prevent us from implementing a fully operational ECVET system. However, rules can be adapted, but only if we can show that ECVET works and is of benefit for people. Therefore, the bottom-up approach and working on ECVET from the beginning to the end is so important...”

The “PEP goes local” project is carried out with the following partners:

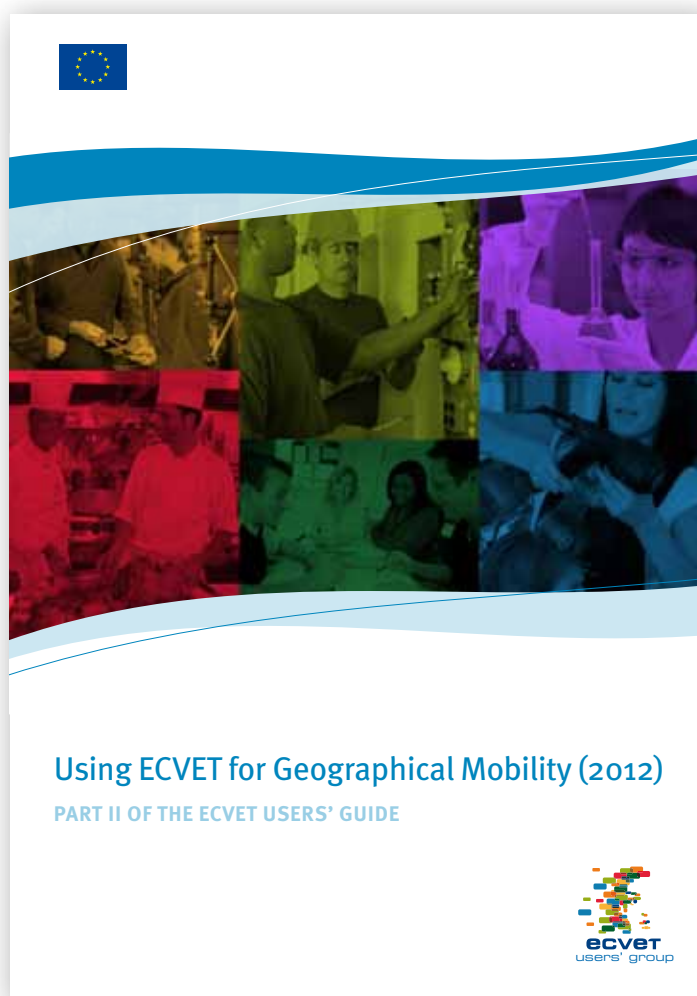


ECVET Mobility Guide 2012 Update

A revised version of the guide 'Using ECVET for Geographical Mobility' is now available. The first version of this document was prepared by the ECVET Users' Group in May 2011. In this 2012 version, considerations about quality assurance when using ECVET for geographical mobility were added.

The 2012 version includes key issues for quality assurance when using ECVET for mobility. By emphasising the quality assurance aspect the guide reflects the growing need for a coherent use of European tools that facilitate the transparency and recognition of skills and competences, notably the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the EUROPASS and the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQAVET).

The updated document was also prepared by the ECVET Users' Group and is part of the series of guidance documents and notes which constitute the ECVET Users' Guide. ■





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