

magazine

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ecvet

European Credit system for
Vocational Education & Training

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Editorial



Liliane Volozinskis

UEAPME
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UEAPME, the European Employers' Association representing Craft and SMEs and European social partners, has strongly supported ECVET since the beginning. We firmly believe in the idea of developing a credit system for VET in order to boost cross-border mobility in Europe and lifelong learning opportunities for those benefiting from the VET pathway. ECVET offers a great opportunity for enhancing the attractiveness of VET and parity of esteem with Higher Education.

There are many good reasons for employers to support and make use of such a credit system. It is a unique opportunity to contribute

to the creation of a genuine European labour market, it will strongly support cross-border mobility of young people and adults on a vocational pathway, it will encourage citizens and workers to update and enrich their skills and competences needed in the labour market, thereby boosting productivity of companies and competitiveness of the European economy.

For employers, ECVET coupled with EQF, is a tool to improve the transparency of qualifications due to learning outcomes, a new approach that is very relevant for the labour market. 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 mobility 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.

**“Employers’ use of
ECVET will contribute
to the creation of
a genuine European
labour market”**

The adoption of the recommendation in 2009

has been a great step forward, to which UEAPME have actively participated. However, the adoption of ECVET was seen as the beginning and not the end of a long story. It was a strong political signal to launch the necessary experimentations by key users in order to develop a fully fledged European credit system. As a consequence of UEAPME’s activities on ECVET, our members decided to launch their own experimentation with projects such as “SME Master Plus”, aiming at the implementation of an international network of training providers of master craftspeople.

In fact, ECVET will not be able to work correctly without strong, sustainable and active networks of intermediary bodies able to sign agreements and memoranda of understanding. Networks are one of the key pillars of ECVET as

they create mutual trust, a value essential to achieving the

full acceptance of other systems of assessment, validation and recognition of competences.

It is clear that we will not reach a fully functional ECVET without final users being well informed and fully involved: whether it be workers, students, individuals or companies and in particular Crafts and SMEs but equally important training systems, training providers, competent institutions, professional branches, business organisations, chambers, social partners, etc...

In this context, I would like to mention the web platform Euroapprenticeship: www.euroapprenticeship.eu. Euroapprenticeship aims to create a sustainable European network of intermediary bodies active in the mobility of apprentices and young people in VET all over Europe. This is just

one of the examples of networks which will fully use the ECVET system potential.

ECVET is a highly valuable concept. However, despite the progress made since its adoption due to various projects and experimentations, exchanges of practices, creation of sustainable networks and partnerships, including the ECVET network, it still needs to be developed further.

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. These are the conditions necessary for a powerful and well recognised ECVET in the future. ■

THE NETWORK

Elena Camilletti, ECVET Team

ECVET standard seminars highlights

In the framework of its training activities, the ECVET TEAM organises different kinds of standard seminars which target specific groups and aim at specific objectives.

The three kinds of seminars are:

ECVET Essentials for all users is a seminar addressed at all users, covering the basis of the ECVET Recommendation and its European context. After the training, participants are able to:

- Confidently inform people about ECVET and its added value;
- Link their organisation context to a broader picture;
- Identify the key stakeholders and their function in implementing ECVET;
- Start to collaborate with key stakeholders.

ECVET for qualification designers is a seminar addressed at people working on the designing of qualifications (design of qualification framework, development of qualifications and design of qualifications) and willing to update their knowledge and share their experience with other experts.

Participants should have a basic knowledge and understanding of ECVET technical specifications. After the training, participants are able to:

- Confidently implement technical specifications;
- Raise awareness on the impacts of ECVET;
- Communicate on added value of ECVET;
- Link their organisation context (individual picture) to a broader picture.

ECVET for mobility is a seminar that targets a public who already has some experience in mobility (projects). Participants should have a basic knowledge of ECVET technical specifications and be willing to update and share their understanding of ECVET. The seminar will focus on ECVET as an opportunity for mobility.

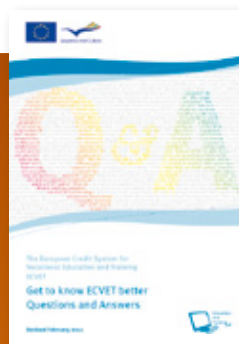
As far as the working and learning methods are concerned, during the seminar the participants will take part in interactive work sessions, having opportunities to exchange best practices and increase their expertise / knowledge through case studies and practical exercises. ■

Duration of a seminar

Each seminar is designed for 3 days (transport included), starting the 1st day of the session by 2 p.m. and ending by 4 p.m. the 3rd day.

Network activities

European ECVET network agenda for 2011



Web site news

The updated version of "All you need to know about ECVET. Questions and Answers" is available on line.

Download the pdf version or read the documents online.

2011	June		
	9-10	ECVET Annual Forum "Objective 2012: towards necessary conditions for ECVET implementation"	Madrid
	14	ECVET Working Group	Brussels
	September		
	12-14	ECVET Seminar : Essentials for all ECVET users	Amsterdam
	22	ECVET Steering Committee	Brussels
	23	ECVET Working Group	Brussels
	29	8th ECVET Pilot Projects seminar	Ljubljana
	October		
	5-7	ECVET Workshop 4 for Users' Group members	Berlin
	24-26	ECVET Seminar for mobility	Lisbon
	27	ECVET Steering Committee	Brussels
	November		
	To be confirmed	Customized ECVET Network Seminar for Scandic countries	Stockholm
	16-18	ECVET Seminar: Essentials for all ECVET users	To be defined
	22	Joint event by Cedefop and the European Parliament on the European tools	Brussels
24-25	CEDEFOP conference on European tools and social partners	Brussels	
28	ECVET Working Group	Brussels	
29	ECVET Steering Committee (to be confirmed)	Brussels	
30	ECVET Users' Group meeting	Brussels	
December			
7-9	ECVET Seminar	To be defined	
2012	February		
22	ECVET projects final conference	Brussels	

Customized seminars

Thierry Lefeuvre
ECVET TEAM



The tailored ECVET modules are the opportunity to put into perspective your mid-term vision of vocational training and the principles of the ECVET Recommendation.

In addition to the standard seminars with contents intended for homogeneous vocational training actors, the ECVET Team proposes tailored modules with contents adapted to the needs of specific applicants. It is the opportunity to highlight considerations or national or sectorial decisions by positioning them in relation to European initiatives regarding vocational training and notably in relation to ECVET. These tailored modules give a sense to national or regional decisions through external and neutral information provided.

To illustrate the particularity of tailor-made modules, let's look at one of them that was held in Wépion, Belgium, at the request of the CFB – French Community of Belgium. The objective was to present the new vocational training ministerial strategy called CPU – Qualification by Units - to various vocational training stakeholders and to show its coherence with other European initiatives working in the same area.

Monday, 28 th February	
2 pm-3 pm	Welcome speech, Objectives, Expected results Agenda
3 pm-4 pm	Teaching and Training 2020 – Role of EFP in strategic objectives European initiatives working for this strategy: the European assessment framework
4 pm-4:20 pm	Break
4:20 pm-6 pm	European initiatives (continued): EQAVET – EURO-PASS – European principles for identifying and validating non-formal and informal learning outcomes. Links between initiatives. Implementation and involvement position in CFB.

Tuesday, 1st March

9 am-9:50 am	Functions fulfilled in a vocational training system
9:50 am-10:50 am	List of actors and functions of vocational training in CFB
10:50 am-11:10 am	Break
11:10 am-12:30 pm	The major contributions of ECVET ECVET recommendations and technical specifications
12:30 pm-1 pm	Solutions for implementing ECVET in CFB
1 pm-2 pm	Lunch
2 pm-2:20 pm	Functions filled with ECVET
2:20 pm-2:45 pm	ECVET implementation by the CFB CPU approach
2:45 pm-4 pm	Work to be done: jobs in aesthetics, car repair
4 pm-4:20 pm	Break
4:20 pm-5:35 pm	Work to be done: pedagogical organisation, regulations
5:35 pm-6 pm	To be defined

Wednesday, 2 March

9 am-10 am	CPU implementation and experimentation Report on work done
10 am-10:30 am	Speech by the Minister Marie-Dominique Simonet*
10:30 am-11:50 am	Break
10:50 am-11:45 am	Programme of Future stages
11:45 am-12 pm	Closing speech, end of seminar

The choice of seminar contents, as well as coordination roles was jointly made by the French Community of Belgium and the ECVET Team. Throughout the Wépion seminar, the ECVET Team was mainly responsible for providing constructive information and explanations regarding ECVET and also for EQF, EQAVET or EUROPASS, as well as their respective synergies. The Belgium coordination team was responsible for underlining the specific context of the French Community of Belgium, identifying similarities between the CPU and European initiatives, and providing parti-

cipants with mid-term visibility regarding vocational training for which they are the key actors.

Tailored modules are attractive due to content and organisational flexibility based on the applicant's needs-analysis. Applicants may be:

- a Ministry or a region for a specific national or region – this was the case for the tailored module in Wépion;
- a group of countries wanting to join forces to implement ECVET - a request is currently in progress for the northern countries of Europe;

- a professional branch at a national or transnational level wanting to integrate ECVET into its qualification strategy - exchanges between the ECVET Team and the transport/logistics sector are currently working on this theme;
- any other groups or organisations, although it must be remembered that the applicant must prove genuine and sufficient impact on all actors of the vocational training concerned by the module.

If you want to benefit from a tailored module, the following steps need to be respected:

- join the ECVET network as only members have access to this service. Visit our site www.ecvet-team.eu to become a member;
- fill out a request form for a tailored module and send it to contact@ecvet-team.eu who will process the application and then rapidly inform you of the possibilities available depending on the impact of proposed actions;
- upon European Community's agreement of the principle, the operation is launched by the ECVET Team and will be completed within a minimum of 2 to 4 months.

Final information regarding the preparation and coordination of tailored module: the ECVET Team's participation work is free – only travel and accommodation fees are at the applicant's expense. Throughout the module, the applicant is also responsible for paying participant's fees. ■

* for Compulsory Education and Improvement Classes

Sibilla Drews and Astrid Terreng, German National Agency «Education for Europe» at BIBB (Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training)

NetECVET

Working together on understanding and implementing ECVET

The thematic network NetECVET consists of 14 National Agencies in the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP). It 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 actors, supports and guides them in the implementation of ECVET⁽¹⁾.

Linking ECVET principles and mobility and thus taking mobility to a more advanced level is the major challenge that NetECVET is facing. Turning mobility into high-quality mobility using ECVET principles and approaches means:

- working with learning outcomes at a practical level;
- providing guidelines for the definition, description and assessment of (units of) learning outcomes;
- providing examples of basic documents like the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) or Learning Agreements.

In order to meet these challenges NetECVET will develop an **ECVET toolbox** which will provide support and guidance for VET actors. This toolbox will offer a wide range of solutions from tailor-made approaches to real examples and models.

In 8 regional workshops NetECVET will reunite both VET actors and projects that have developed models and tools for the definition, description and assessment of units of learning outcomes. Methods, tools and approaches developed by the projects will be discussed and tested for their practical suitability. Based on these workshops we will be able to make further progress in the definition of guidelines and the building of models to be used to implement ECVET, thus transforming mobility projects into ECVET-proof mobility projects.

The toolbox will contain information on national entry requirements, existing mobility units, activities



(1) Financed by the European Commission, networks of national programme agencies for the LLP organise thematic monitoring and networking activities in order to make better use of the results of these projects and learn from these experiences. NetECVET consists of NAs from AT, DE, FI, IT, NL (steering group), DK, FR, HU, NO, PL, RO, SE, TR, UK (further network members).



Projects and Products Portal for Leonardo da Vinci

at a sectoral level and required partnership criteria.

Besides the development of the tool-box NetECVET will also prepare and train VET professionals by providing training material for internal training at VET schools or companies and by teaching them how to use it.

NetECVET has already identified more than a hundred projects from the Lifelong Learning Programme which are currently exploring and testing ECVET components and principles. These projects are expected to encourage VET actors to apply ECVET in the context of transnational mobility.

ADAM featuring thematic groups

Since March 2011 the European thematic networks NetECVET and QALLL (Quality Assurance in Lifelong Learning) are being featured on ADAM (see infobox). The recent improvements of the platform have made it possible to showcase projects which appear to be in one way or another relevant to the implementation of ECVET.

An info box in the links navigation provides general information on the thematic groups. Clicking on the title of one of the groups leads to both background information and a list of selected projects.

One particular section found on the individual project information pages of the ECVET-tagged projects shows the ECVET components that the pro-

“Practical tools to transform mobility projects into ECVET-proof mobility projects”

ject deals with. Users can search for specific information such as projects referring to the Assessment of Learning Outcomes by using a filter on the NetECVET page.

The advanced search function allows users to find information on specific countries or types of projects.

During the next working phase of NetECVET, the selected projects will be examined in greater detail by experts and the results will be narrowed down further allowing us to identify the best working methods.

What does ADAM have to offer?

The thematic group NetECVET in ADAM has a large variety of examples ready to be used by VET partnerships wishing to test and apply ECVET principles. For example, Omnia, a major training provider in Finland has provided a short and precise Memorandum of Understanding, which in this particular case served as an agreement in the development of a unit for a child care qualification, transferable from one country to another.

The project and product portal ADAM gives an overview of the many products and results developed within the Leonardo da Vinci programme. It offers project contractors a central platform to publish and thereby disseminate their initiatives.

ECVET projects can be found at: <http://www.adam-europe.eu/adam/thematicgroup/ECVET>

(2) EVOC: <http://www.adam-europe.eu/adam/project/view.htm?prj=3342>

(3) EURO TRANS LOG (ETL): <http://www.adam-europe.eu/adam/project/view.htm?prj=5697&page=1>

The EVOC (Ecvet Unit for Vocational Studies in Child Care)⁽²⁾ project also provides learning outcomes for units in the fields of Play, Intercultural Studies, Rehabilitation and Language. It may even encourage other training institutions within the child care sector to implement ECVET and even adopt (parts of) the unit.

A project covering a broader range of aims is the EUROTRANSLOG (ETL)⁽³⁾. This concerns the transport and logistics sector and aims at enabling mobility of students throughout Europe and acknowledging professional skills gained in one country by another through common certification. It has developed 7 units of learning outcomes at level V of the EQF as well as several tools such as learning agreements or quality charters for schools and companies. 33 training centres from 8 European countries are already partners of the Euro Trans Log network.

This is just a quick insight into the very practical tools, methods and units of learning outcomes that NetECVET can provide in ADAM. As NetECVET develops, we will be able to offer more varied and specific support for actors promoting ECVET mobility. ■



NetECVET works in close cooperation with the ECVET Pilot Projects and the ECVET Support team. It is co-financed by the European Union's Lifelong Learning Programme until December 2013. The German National Agency for Lifelong Learning is the coordinating agency and responsible for the project.

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National Agency Bildung
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PILOT PROJECTS HIGHLIGHT

Thierry Joseph, Director of EFMA

Is ECVET an asset to mobility?

This is a major question for the ASSET project (Automobile Service Sector ECVET Testing) which is principally focused on operational implementation of ECVET and facilitated by the fact that all partners involved in the project have solid previous experience in implementing classic mobility. They believe ECVET can bring added value to mobility by integrating periods of mobility into both the training pathways and the recognition of learning outcomes.

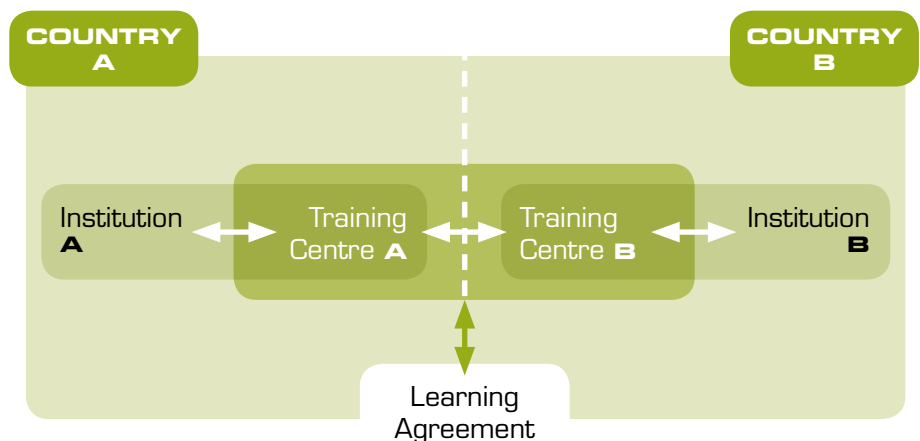
In this way, it becomes clear that success lies in adopting all of ECVET's currently available concepts and tools but also mainly depends on the quality of the relationship between the stakeholders involved (Training operators and Certifying Bodies). This relational dimension is acted out at three levels as shown in the following below:

At a transnational level:

- Between training providers, on one hand
- Between certification bodies, on the other hand

At a national level:

- Then between each provider and its competent institution



This diagram clearly indicates the need to formalise, for each of the three levels, the conditions required for this relation to work, therefore guaranteeing to the stakeholders involved that ECVET can be implemented in acceptable, quality conditions.

For levels 1 and 2, ECVET provides us with the answers necessary in order to apply the correct cooperation terms and conditions between the partners involved:

First, **a partnership agreement** to define the cooperation terms and conditions between certifying bodies. Then **a pedagogical agreement** to certify the partnership between the training providers and define the conditions for operational implementation of mobility.

However, implementing ECVET also impacts the existing relational framework within each country between a training provider and its competent institution. It is obvious that this is an important, if not essential question which mainly effects the qualification terms and conditions.

On one hand, it is undoubtedly necessary to be guaranteed that the qualification process has enough leeway to recognise learning outcomes in different training environments and, on the other hand, that a certain trust is founded between certifying bodies and training providers. This allows establishments enough autonomy for ECVET to genuinely become an asset for implementing integrated and recognised mobility. ■

Reinhard Nöbauer, Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture

ECVET for Transnational Mobility

The Austrian Approach - Could it become a Model for Europe?

According to the ECVET Recommendation Member States should start implementing ECVET in 2012. At present we can see many interesting approaches towards ECVET in different Member States, many of those aiming at national reforms such as making education and training more permeable vertically or at modularising the systems.



These different systems are not necessarily compatible with each other and the majority of these national ECVET applications will still take a long time to be completed.

Therefore we need a really European approach to ECVET which works across the very diverse training landscape in Europe and also bridges the different national ECVET

strategies. Austria is currently developing a concept for the application of ECVET in transnational mobility projects which fits the structure of the Austrian VET system and could also become a model for the implementation of ECVET mobility throughout Europe.

The main pillars of this concept are the following:

- The main focus is on transnational mobility and on the formal training system. Informal and non-formal learning could be included at a later stage.
- The agreement between the home and the host organisation plays a central role and gives the partners flexibility.
- The support of central authorities: information and advice for (potential) ECVET users, promotion of pilot projects, and development of tools (templates for memoranda of understanding, learner's agreement and transcript of records).

In order to promote this strategy the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture commissioned two research and consulting institutions (3S and IBW) with the elaboration of guidelines for using ECVET in transnational mobility and the development of templates.

These guidelines consist of a brief

“ECVET mobility: structuring exchanges between VET schools and other training institutions to improve the quality of the student's mobility period”

description of ECVET, a practical guide for the planning of mobility projects and the implementation of ECVET as well as templates (for the description of qualifications, the memoranda of understanding, the learning agreement and the transcript of record).

This model leaves a lot of freedom to the VET schools, companies and other training providers allowing them to organise mobility and apply ECVET for the recognition process according to their needs. The partners are then able to compare more easily their different education and training offers and to begin a structured dialogue on the learning outcomes to be achieved in the host organization in order to improve the quality of the mobility period. At the same time the learning agreement will give students the guarantee that the achieved learning outcomes will be recognised by the home organisation.

These documents -which at present are in a discussion and testing phase in Austria- could become the basis for the discussion of a Europe-wide implementation strategy and after some adaptations be translated into all official languages of the European Union to serve as a basis for a common understanding of ECVET.

The advantages of this proposal are because:

- It is realistic and its implementation could begin in 2012 as foreseen in the ECVET Recommendation.

- It gives potential users a lot of freedom in the application of ECVET and can therefore lead to tailor-made solutions.
- It works in different environments and between very diverse training systems and is also adaptable to different national ECVET strategies.
- The fact that the potential end-users will have the documents in their language will lead to a common understanding of ECVET and to a more structured dialogue on ECVET.
- The documents also allow for a more systematic comparison of the training offered by the partner institutions and for a better definition of the learning outcomes and thus will lead to a better quality of mobility projects.
- The learning agreement will give the mobile student a guarantee that the achieved learning outcomes will be recognized by the home institution
- The project is a first start and is open for further development. ■

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ECVET and the Catalan VET system

Introduction

During the last 5 years the Spanish VET system has introduced several modifications aimed at increasing its flexibility and adapting it to the changing needs of the social and economic sectors. Two-directional links between training and work have been created in order to give early school leavers new opportunities to rejoin the educational system and facilitate lifelong learning for adults as well as the possibility of training pathways adapted to both personal interests and to the needs of the companies. These have been some of the most significant challenges faced by the current VET system.

The Spanish VET system consists of **VET Qualifications** (at secondary¹ and tertiary² levels) and **Initial Professional Qualification Programmes** (for youngsters with low levels of qualification) delivered by the educational Authorities, and the **Professionalising Certificates**, delivered by work authorities. All of them have as common reference point the Professional Profiles Catalogue, which is organized into units of competence (list of professional profiles);

this is one of the significant tools to allow the integration of the different training offers as well as the validation and accreditation of professional competences and prior learning.

The State Authorities are the competent bodies for the creation of Qualifications and Professionalising Certificates. The Autonomous Communities (Regions) establish the curriculum, and implement, organize and manage the training offer in their respective territories.

The VET qualifications: a modular structure

All VET qualifications (both at secondary and tertiary levels) consist of 2000 hours of tuition, generally divided into two academic years. The reference professional profile is structured into units of competence. VET qualifications are organised into Professional Modules (PM), i.e. the subjects studied in the classroom are the minimum unit for assessment and certification state-wide. The trainers are responsible for assessment and the training providers issue the certificates.



Castell, human tower built traditionally in festivals at many locations within Catalonia
Credit: Els Castellers de Vilafranca

(1) Students over 16; EQF level 4

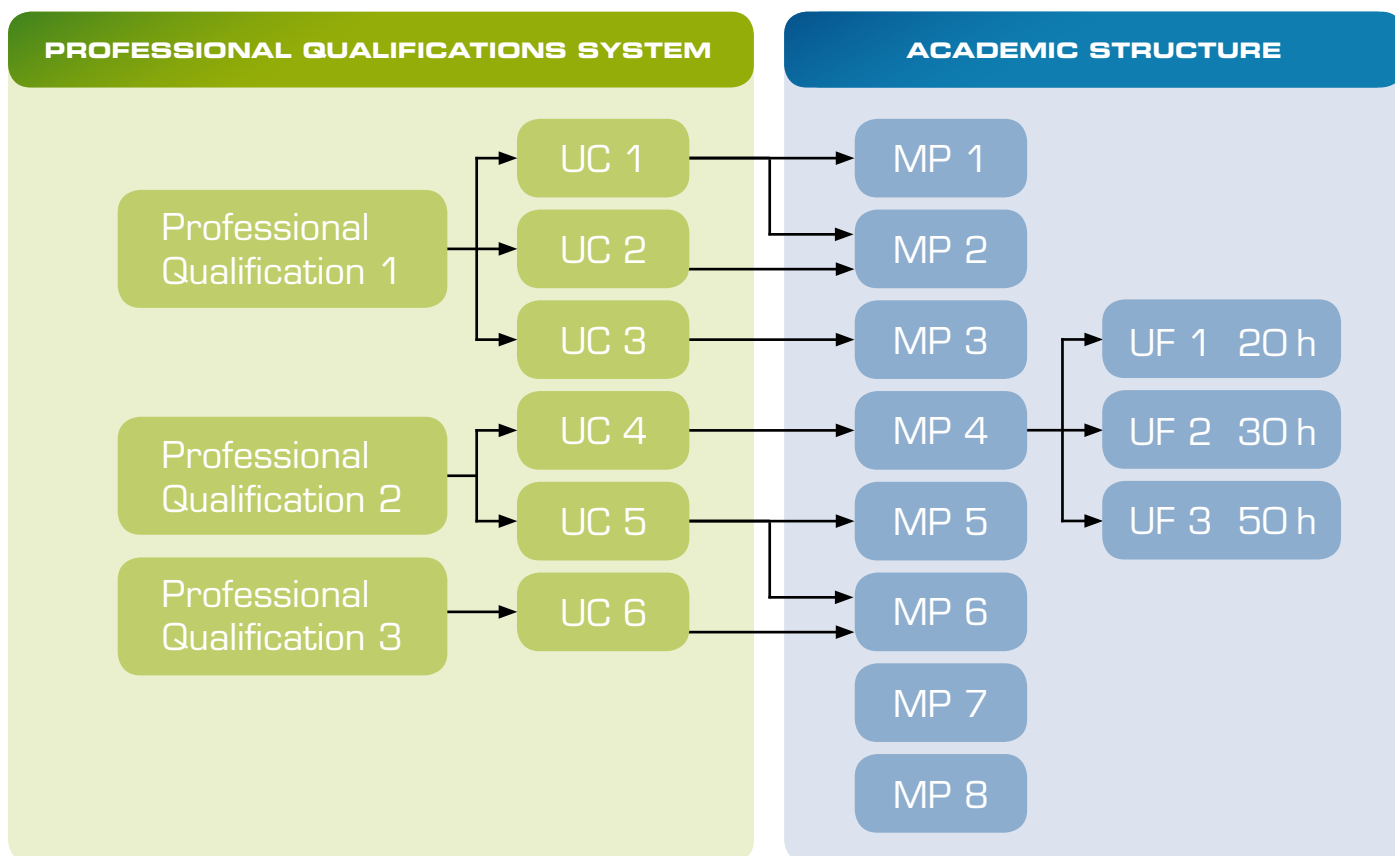
(2) Students over 18; EQF level 5

PMs belong to several different categories:

- PMs linked to one or more profession-related competences;
- Supporting PMs which contain information common to several VET qualifications (e.g. electricity or human anatomy and physiology);
- PMs which are common to all qualifications and related to guidance for work and entrepreneurship;

- Final project to put into practice many of the competences acquired during the VET course;
- In addition to the tuition hours delivered in the classrooms and workshops at the training centre, all VET students undergo in-company training of a duration ranging between 350 and 410 hours. It is formalised through a training agreement signed by the student, the school and a company within the corresponding professional sector.

“The objective: make the Catalan VET system more flexible and adapted to the labour market”



The curriculum in the VET qualifications

The modifications of the VET system have been carried out taking into account the principles that will facilitate the implementation of the ECVET system. Therefore, the elements used to build the professional modules will be:

- **Learning outcomes (LO)**

The competences acquired by the students through learning in order to carry out functions or processes so as to obtain a product or results, are expressed in terms of LOs.

Each PM typically contains between 1 and 4 LO

Since LOs will be the reference for teaching/learning and assessment activities, they are the core element of the curriculum.

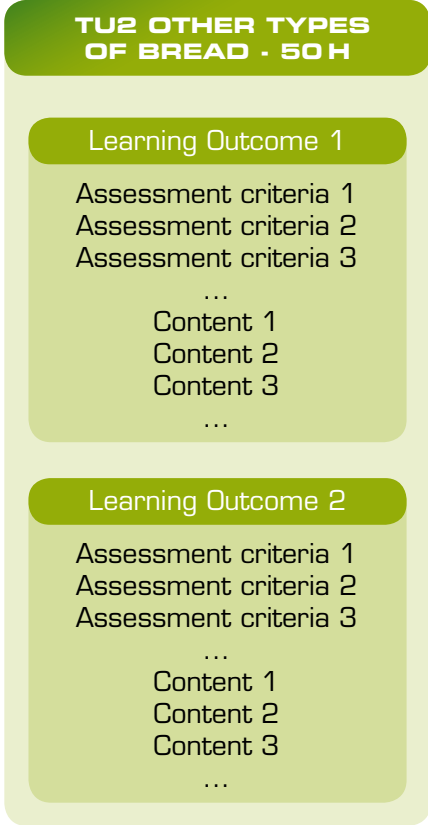
Each LO is associated to assessment criteria and contents.

- **Assessment criteria (AC)**

The AC define the actions and contents necessary for the assessment and the conditions to be met to acquire the LO.

- **Contents**

The contents are the set of basic knowledge the students need to acquire in order to attain a given professional competence; they consist of procedures (know how), concepts (knowledge) and attitudes (behaviour).



The Catalan VET system: a flexible system

Catalonia, within the limit of its competences, has progressively introduced a series of organisational and legal measures aimed at a higher degree of flexibility in both the curriculum and the VET offer; the objective is to reply to the requests and needs of the territory, the companies, the organisations and the people.

In this new scenario, VET training centres have become problem-

solving entities in their environment: they go beyond mere initial training providers for youngsters, and become active in other fields such as continuous training, professional qualifications, professional and academic guidance and support for companies.

Flexible curriculum

Professional modules take an average of 140 tuition hours. In order to make their transfer and validation easier through the different possible ways available to students or workers joining the VET system, Catalonia has designed the curricula with smaller units called Training Units (TU), generally taking between 20 and 60 hours. Each Professional Module is made up of several TUs. The breakdown of PMs into TUs is not just done by re-grouping academic contents; in fact it is quite the opposite. TUs should reflect functions or processes existing within the profession, and thus make them easier to be identified and acknowledged by people in the labour market.

“The result: a VET system that gives early school leavers new opportunities to rejoin the educational system and facilitates lifelong learning for adults”

In the case of the VET course on Cuisine and Gastronomy, the breakdown of the PM of Culinary Production is as follows:

Professional module (PM)	Hours	Training Units (TU)	Hours
PM5 Culinary production	220	TU1: Production and service procedures in catering	28
		TU2: Catalanian cooking, Spanish, regional and international cooking	80
		TU3: Creative and author's cooking	56
		TU4: Catering for people with special diets	28
		TU5: Decoration and presentation of dishes	28

A further aspect allowing qualifications to be better adapted to local needs is the existence of a quantity of hours (usually ranging between 132 and 165) that training centres are free to allocate depending on its social and economical environment; it is possible to reinforce the content already in the curriculum, introduce new ones or split them proportionally among the existing TUs.

For instance in a training centre delivering tourism-related courses in a town with high numbers of German tourists, it was decided to use this time to introduce the German language.

This structured, modular and open design allows VET courses to provide either initial or continuous training, depending on each person's approach to training, and also allows enrolment in only parts of the curriculum. In this way, most of the users' and companies' needs are met. Curricula adaptations consist in changing part of one specific curriculum in order to make it correspond better to the professional sector and show yet another way of adapting VET courses to one sector or specific

territory. One example of this can be seen with the VET course concerning maintenance of machinery which has been adapted for the maintenance of recreational boats in some training centres based in coastal towns, or for the maintenance of heavy agricultural machinery in some rural areas.

More flexible VET offer

A set of measures related to the organisation of training has allowed easier access to workers, and has represented an improvement in the VET offer; it is now possible to follow the courses not just in the traditional, two year long schedule, but also adapted to society's needs.

It is important to highlight that most of these adaptations have been developed and implemented jointly by the Catalan Ministry of Education and social partners and more specifically employers' organisations, in the frame of collaboration agreements. They have opened new ways for exploration and have made the relationship between the VET system and the productive tissue more permeable. There are currently 200 collaboration agreements throughout

the Catalan territory concerning 105 VET training centres.

To carry this out, different solutions have been devised according to the specificities of the companies, the territory and the people.

Adaptation to companies and territory

- Joint implementation of two or more VET courses as an answer to the training needs of a particular territory. An example would be the creation of a new professional profile combining Office Management and Trade skills, so that the student can get both diplomas in three years; this is of interest mainly in small populations where more multi-skilled workers are sought.
- Implementation of a VET course complemented with some professional modules and/or training units from other courses. For example in the main Catalan wine-producing region the Sales Management and Marketing VET course has been complemented with skills in grape growing and wine production.

- Experimentation with the apprenticeship system in several VET training centres.
- In Catalan regions with a low population density, blended learning is in offer so that students don't need to travel long distances or move to larger urban centres.

Adaptation to people

Other types of organisation are available for workers or people with unavoidable obligations:

- Implementation of VET courses with timetables adapted to workers. For example VET courses are offered to workers in a petrochemical complex, adapted to their timetable and in the company premises.
- Partial enrolment: In order to allow workers or people with other obligations to follow their training pathways at a different pace, partial enrolment in specific professional modules or training units is also possible.
- Blended learning allows a different methodology attending at least 50% of the lessons; the rest of the tuition will be followed outside the training centre.
- Distance learning: The IOC (Open Institute of Catalonia) offers distance learning (full VET courses or professional modules) to its more than 25,000 students in Catalonia, the rest of Spain, and indeed worldwide.

The *Qualifica't* (Get qualified!) programme: A training validation model after the ECVET principles

The *Qualifica't* programme started in 2009 as a measure established by the regional Ministry of Education of the Government of Catalonia aimed at improving both unemployed and active workers' qualifications. It provides the guidance and recognition best suited to their needs and makes use of the human and material resources found in Catalan VET training centres.

The three areas covered are:

1. Training offer for specific target groups: VET training centres can implement professional modules or training units keeping in mind workers from a company or an organisation in the limits of a collaboration agreement;
2. The validation of training delivered in companies allows the issuing of academic certificates to people having successfully undergone the established assessment procedures;
3. The validation of informal education makes access to the training system easier for people with informal training.

The whole process is jointly developed by the training centre and companies' staff. Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria are the reference points for validation.

In all cases, candidates can obtain a training certificate which may be useful for the accumulation of training units leading to the acquisition of a VET qualification.

This programme fits to ECVET principles: learning, assessment, validation, recognition and accumulation.

The programme was launched in 2009 and there are currently more than 100 participating VET centres, and about 70 companies and sectoral organisations that have signed collaboration agreements.

About 600 people have acquired validation of continuous training carried out in companies and 7,500 people validated their prior learning.

Participation in European projects

Catalonia has a long tradition in the organisation of mobility projects for students. Apart from that, and hand in hand with the evolution of the Catalan VET system explained above, the Catalan Ministry of Education has been involved in several European projects where the ECVET principles have set the guidelines for the experimentation and implementation amongst a significant number of European partners. Examples of these projects are the "ECVET Connexion", "EuroClass Trucks", "RECOMFOR", "OPIR" and "PIREFOP".

Some of the main topics dealt with within these projects are the transparency, transfer and recognition of learning outcomes, and the accumulation of credits to achieve a qualification.

The participation of the Catalan Educational authorities in these European initiatives has been possible thanks to the flexibility of the Catalan model, as well as the awareness of the positive aspects of joint work with other European partners. ■

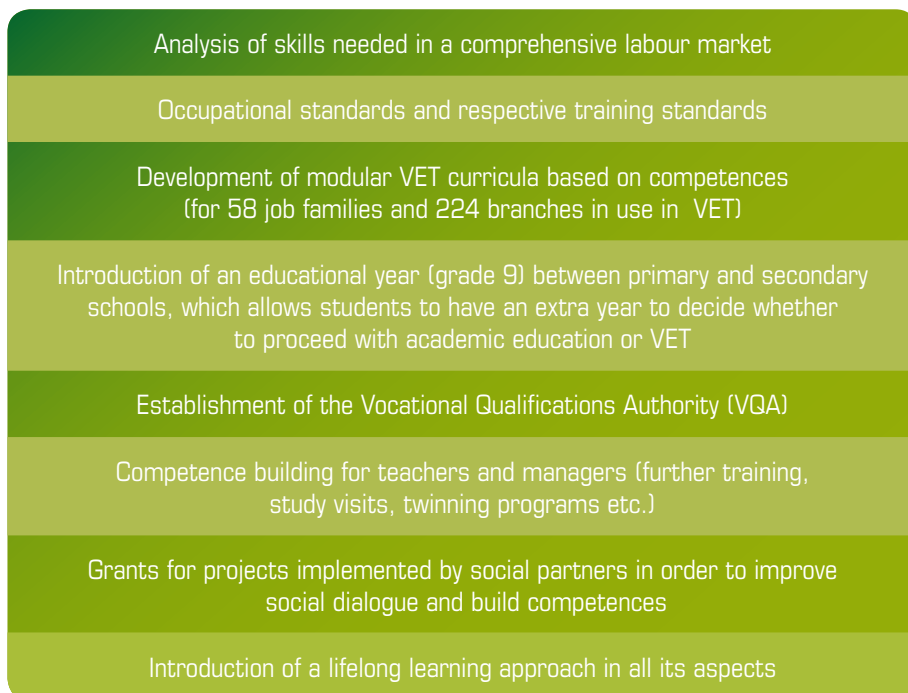
Dr Recep Altin, Deputy Director and Osman Yalçın, Project Director, Projects coordination Centre MoNE, ECVET User's group members

VET reform in Turkey: the key of ECVET

Turkey, since being formally recognised as a candidate for EU membership at the Helsinki European Council in December 1999, has been engaged in the accession process, preparing itself to fulfil all the conditions of the membership known as the «Copenhagen Criteria». For this reason the education sector, VET in particular, is one of the important areas that Turkey has been working on.

The Turkish Ministry of National Education, the responsible body for managing the overall education system, has been implementing a comprehensive reform process in all aspects of vocational education and training (VET) since 2004. The process is based on a new global understanding of VET. It particularly refers to the priorities of the Copenhagen Process of November 2002 along with national decisions set out in development plans, government programs and declarations by the Education Assembly.

Some of the milestones of the VET reform implemented since 2002 have been summarised below. Reforms were mainly achieved through some EU funded projects (via MEDA and IPA programs) under the administration of the Ministry of National Education, in close cooperation with social



partners. All the achievements outlined here were based on international approaches in the field of VET, such as the consideration of ISCO 88 and ISCED 97.

In order to successfully implement the European Credit Transfer System in Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) a viable National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is essential. Turkey is aware that the development of these two systems (NQF and ECVET) needs to be done in parallel. Therefore, before talking about

the Turkish initiatives for ECVET, let's have a brief look at the development process of the NQF in Turkey.

A major milestone towards a working NQF in Turkey was the establishment of the Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA) in 2006. This was the result of two years of intensive work on an EU funded VET project with the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) and a diverse range of relevant stakeholders, mainly social partners. The VQA acts as the EQF National Co-ordination Point in Turkey

“Working on the Turkish VET system is part of the accession process to the EU Membership”

and has the ultimate responsibility for transferring the qualification levels from the NQF to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). The system which is to be implemented will enable mobility among academic and vocational fields with appropriate assessments at all levels. The system will be based on certifications within the accepted occupational standards. It is worth noting here that Turkey has adopted 8 reference levels from the EQF for the National Qualification Framework (NQF) which are to be developed.

VQA has two major responsibilities that are crucial to strengthening the relationship between the VET system and employment. First, it is expected to develop occupational standards (OS) based on competences currently required by the labour market. These OS will shape the development of training standards to be used by all training institutions in the country. They will provide VET schools with the much needed objectives in terms of competency-based curricula. Over 150 OS have been prepared so far in cooperation with social partners and sector representatives. Providing social partners are involved in this task their commitment to the VET system will increase and the relevance of VET for employment will improve. VQA also has important responsibilities in the area of assessment and certification of learning outcomes gained by all individuals. It will contribute

to overcoming major weaknesses in the Turkish VET system, including the lack of standardised mechanisms to assess and control the quality and the rele-

vance to employment of the learning process that takes place in training institutions leading to the improvement of mobility in VET.

In Turkey, ECVET is considered as a tool for supporting mutual trust in the field of qualifications and for increasing transparency. It would thereby enable knowledge, skills and competences acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning to be accumulated, transferred and recognised.

The adoption of ECVET principles in Turkey however, is a relatively new area of interest within the Turkish VET reform. The development process started about two years ago and it

is still ongoing. Turkey has not only been working on ECVET at a national level but also participating and contributing to studies that take place in a broader EU context. Despite being a new concept, the development of ECVET in Turkey has already reached some technical milestones.

Turkey is committed to developing an ECVET system under the lifelong learning approach. This commitment was officially declared in an international meeting concerning ECVET on 28th March 2007 in Ankara. The Educational Research and Development Directorate (ERDD) of MoNE is the unit responsible for the development of ECVET in Turkey. First, in the same year, an extensive consultation process took place, with over 250 responses from a broad range of stakeholders. ERDD then prepared a Country Report on ECVET, reflecting the views of the stakeholders. The major conclusions compiled in the

- ECVET is fully supported by the Turkish stakeholders and it is considered a priority within the Turkish VET reform
- ECVET is considered as a tool for supporting and promoting LLL
- ECVET will help facilitate the recognition of non-formal and informal learning
- ECVET will promote mutual trust
- The descriptions of the units and their credit points should be updated as necessary.
- ECVET will promote the employability of individuals
- The establishment of the VQA and modular VET curricula are considered an advantage when adopting ECVET

country report are the following: MoNE then organised a series of workshops with the participation of representatives of CoHE, social partners, teachers from VET, trainers and members of the curricula working groups of MoNE. An ECVET approach specific to Turkey was discussed and based on lessons learnt from the practices of EU Member States. As a result of this development process, an ECVET Discussion Paper for Turkey - including a proposed Action Plan based on SWOT Analysis - was prepared.

“ECVET in Turkey : a tool to support mutual trust in the field of qualifications”

In keeping with the Action Plan, a multi-actor working group agreed on an approach to assigning credits to the existing VET curriculum. Following this, a national credit-allocation approach was used to allocate credit points to all learning outcomes based on knowledge, skills and competences.



The basic elements of the ECVET approach specific to the Turkish VET context are:

- Learning outcomes are credited based on total learning time.
- Learning outcomes which lead to qualifications of similar scope, content, complexity and duration are allocated the same amount of credits.
- Learning outcomes gained through one-to-one learning of up to 20 hours are equivalent to 1 ECVET credit.
- One full educational year of VET education is equivalent to 60 credits.
- 240 credits can be gained upon completion of 4 years of secondary formal VET education.

An example of ECVET conversion has been adopted to allocate credits to units of qualifications at levels 2, 3 and 4 in a selected field of training, namely: "Computer and Information Technology" (level 4 curriculum for Network Operator).

Given the studies carried out so far for ECVET, it is good to know that the Turkish VET reform, including ECVET development works, will soon be strengthened by the promotion of the Lifelong Learning Project (The LLL project). The overall objective of the project is to promote the development and implementation of coherent and comprehensive strategies for life-long learning with the purpose of establishing an institutional framework and capacities for LLL, in line with the EU practices. Projects will support individuals' access to education in order to raise employment opportunities within a system designed to value learning. It is expected to begin early March 2011 with a life-span of 24 months.

During the LLL Project, the above proposed ECVET model will be reviewed, adopted for 50 occupational areas and tested in pilot schools, with the ultimate aim of a nationwide implementation by the end of 2012 according to the ECVET Action Plan for Turkey. ■





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