



Cedefop expert workshop
The role of credit transfer systems in
opening access, admission and exemption between
vocational education and training (VET) and higher education (HE)

Thessaloniki, 22-23 May 2014

Background

The European agenda for education and training addresses both vocational education and training (VET) and higher education (HE) from a lifelong learning angle: the policy goal is to ensure that learners may easily move between VET and HE in terms of [access, admission, and exemption] (i.e. ensure permeability between VET and HE in support of flexible learning pathways). In the Bruges Communiqué of December 2010 ⁽¹⁾ this is a key priority. The communique calls more generally for national education and training systems which allow people to move easily between education and training sectors (school education, VET, HE, adult education). This is referred to as “permeability”. In practice, this means that learners’ performance and learning outcomes can be recognised and credited between education and training sectors. Permeability is about mutual acceptance of learning outcomes, credits, degrees, diplomas, or certificates.

Permeability between education and training sectors (extending also to non- formal and informal learning) is also a key principle of the European Area of Skills and Qualifications. The European Commission is currently exploring possibilities for the creation of such an Area ⁽²⁾, with the objective to enable learners and workers to have their skills and qualifications quickly and easily recognised when moving to a new job or to further learning, whether within or across borders. In this context, existing European instruments and principles (e.g. qualifications frameworks, quality assurance arrangements, credit systems, etc.) should be made more coherent to increase levels of trust and understanding between the different education and training sectors.

For the specific purpose of the workshop, permeability is about supporting learners move between VET and HE by means of:

- Access (formal eligibility of applicants with certain learning outcomes for entry into a learning opportunity – a necessary but not sufficient condition;
- Admission (applicants with certain learning outcomes are not only formally eligible but are selected for entry on the basis of these learning outcomes);
- Exemption or partial equivalence (applicants with certain learning outcomes are allowed to omit certain parts of the target programme).

⁽¹⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/vocational/bruges_en.pdf

⁽²⁾ The European Commission has recently carried out a public consultation on the European Area of Skills and Qualifications and a political initiative may follow in 2015. A conference presenting the results of the public consultation will be held in Brussels on 17 June 2014.

Current developments of qualifications frameworks, credit transfer systems and validation arrangements prompt European countries to develop and implement corresponding mechanisms to ensure that learners may move between VET and HE.

Two European instruments are expected to play a central role for permeability between VET and HE: the European Credit System for VET (ECVET) and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) for HE. One of the aims of the ECVET recommendation (2009) is to “facilitate the **compatibility, comparability and complementarity** of credit transfer systems used in VET and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (‘ECTS’), which is used in the higher education sector, and thus should contribute to greater **permeability between levels of education and training**, in accordance with national legislation and practice”.

The workshop will investigate, from a technical and conceptual perspective, first, the role of credit transfer systems for VET and HE in opening access, admission and exemption between VET and HE (i.e. permeability) and what complementary and alternative solutions can be found; secondly, to what extent achieving ‘compatibility, comparability, complementarity’ of the two credit transfer systems is necessary and feasible. The workshop will also address how credit transfer systems interact with validation mechanisms for non-formal and informal learning in opening access, admission and exemption between VET and higher education (HE).

The workshop

The workshop is part of Cedefop’s work on the common EU instruments and principles and on permeability between VET and HE. The findings will complement the ECVET evaluation (expected to be concluded in April 2014). They will also offer Member States the possibility to test new solutions.

The workshop will invite 30 to 35 European experts in VET and HE to discuss the role of credit transfer systems in opening access, admission, and exemption between vocational education and training (VET) and higher education (HE), in three sessions:

Part I – The role of credit transfer systems in opening access, admission and exemption between VET and HE at higher levels (i.e. EQF levels 5 and 6)

Part II – The role of credit transfer systems in opening access, admission, exemption between VET at upper-secondary level (i.e. EQF level 4) and higher levels (i.e. EQF levels 5 and 6)

Parts I and II will address common questions, albeit from different perspectives:

- Which are the main obstacles (related to different purposes, contents, and institutional settings/roles, etc.) to permeability (access, admission, exemption)?
- How can credit transfer systems remove these obstacles between VET and HE? What complementary and alternative solutions can be found?
- To what extent is it necessary and feasible to achieve compatibility, comparability and complementarity between the two credit transfer systems for VET and for HE? Should two systems co-exist or should we target the use of one credit transfer system for both VET and HE?

Part III – The role of credit transfer systems and mechanisms for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in opening access, admission and exemption between VET and HE

- How do credit transfer systems relate to the validation of non-formal and informal learning to facilitate access, admission, and exemption between VET and HE? To what extent do we need two credit systems or should we target the use for one credit transfer system for both VET and HE?

Cedefop expert workshop

The role of credit transfer systems in opening access, admission, exemption between vocational education and training (VET) and higher education (HE)

Workshop venue: Cedefop, Montessori room
Participants' profile: Experts from higher education and vocational education and training
Working language: English

Agenda

Thursday, 22 May 2014

09.00 - 09.30	<i>Registration</i>
09.30 - 09.45	Welcome speech and presentation of the workshop's concept and objectives James Calleja, Director of Cedefop
09.45 - 11.00	Setting the scene <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Permeability between VET and HE: a way of enabling learners to move across different educational and training sectors <i>Georg Spöttl, University of Bremen, Germany</i> – ECVET and ECTS - the two credit transfer systems for education and training <i>Robert Wagenaar, University of Groningen, the Netherlands</i> Chair: <i>Ramona David, Cedefop</i>
11.00 - 11.15	<i>Coffee break</i>
11.15 - 12.15	Part I - The role of credit transfer systems in opening access, admission, and exemption between VET and HE at higher levels (i.e. EQF levels 5 and 6)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Blurring Distinctions in Tertiary Education? <i>John Reilly, University of Kent, United Kingdom</i> – Qualifications at EQF level 5: progressing to higher education and in career <i>Slava Pevec Grm, Cedefop</i> – Malta - an example of compatibility, comparability and complementarity of the credit transfer systems for VET and HE for the purpose of permeability <i>Ronald Curmi, Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology</i> – Austria - alternative approaches and arrangements <i>Lore Schmid, Cedefop</i> Chair: <i>Ioanna Nezi, Cedefop</i>

12.15 - 13.30	<p>Part I - Round table discussions</p> <p><u>Questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How can credit transfer systems remove the obstacles to permeability between VET and HE? - What complementary and alternative solutions can be found? - To what extent is it necessary and feasible to achieve compatibility, comparability and complementarity between the two credit transfer systems for VET and for HE? Should two systems co-exist or should we target the use of one credit transfer system for both VET and HE? <p>Chair: <i>Ioanna Nezi, Cedefop</i></p>
13.30 - 15.00	Lunch break
15.00 - 16.00	<p>Part II - The role of credit transfer systems in opening access, admission, exemption between VET at upper-secondary level (i.e. EQF level 4) and higher levels (i.e. EQF levels 5 and 6)</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Obstacles (related to different purposes, contents, and institutional settings/roles, etc.) to permeability from EQF level 4 qualifications to higher levels <i>Karen Evans, University of London, United Kingdom</i> - Scotland - Transitions between qualifications at EQF levels 4 and 5 in Scotland: tales of recognition of prior learning for access and exemption in the SCQF <i>John Lewis, Scottish Qualifications Authority, United Kingdom</i> - Slovenia - an example of permeability where the credit transfer systems for VET and HE live side by side <i>Darko Mali, CPI - Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training</i> - Denmark - reforming the VET system to enhance permeability <i>Rasmus Helleberg Frimodt, Metropolitan University College, Denmark</i> <p>Chair: <i>Loukas Zahilas, Cedefop</i></p>
16.00 - 16.15	Coffee break
16.15 - 17.30	<p>Part II - Round table discussions</p> <p><u>Questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How can credit transfer systems remove the obstacles to permeability between VET and HE? - What complementary and alternative solutions can be found? - To what extent is it necessary and feasible to achieve compatibility, comparability and complementarity between the two credit transfer systems for VET and for HE? Should two systems co-exist or should we target the use of one credit transfer system for both VET and HE? <p>Chair: <i>Loukas Zahilas, Cedefop</i></p>
17.30	End of day 1

Friday, 23 May 2014

09.00 - 10.00	Part III - The role of credit transfer systems and validation of non-formal and informal learning in opening access, admission, exemption between VET and HE
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A right time to take the next step: a shift to assessment mechanisms urgently needed <i>Juraj Vantuch, Slovak National Observatory of VET, Slovak Republic</i> - Can ECVET and ECTS go together on EQF level 6 in HE? - the added value <i>Tomasz Saryusz-Wolski, Lodz University of Technology, Poland</i> - France - an example of use of ECTS in support of validation of non-formal and informal learning <i>Sophie Chassaigne, Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour, France</i> <p>Chair: <i>Ernesto Villalba-Garcia, Cedefop</i></p>
10.00 - 11.15	Part III - Round table discussions <u>Questions</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How do credit transfer systems relate to the validation of non-formal and informal learning to facilitate access, admission, and exemption between VET and HE? To what extent do we need two credit systems or should we target the use for one credit transfer system for both VET and HE? <p>Chair: <i>Ernesto Villalba-Garcia, Cedefop</i></p>
11.15 - 11.45	<i>Coffee break</i>
11.45 - 12.30	Wrap-up: Reporting on the round table discussions <i>Ramona David, Cedefop</i>
12.30 - 12.45	Concluding remarks <i>Loukas Zahilas, Cedefop</i>
12.45	End of day 2
