

# magazine

Keeping you informed about European Credit System for Vocational Education & Training



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European Vocational Skills Week  
2016

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## editorial

by the  
European Commission

Detlef Eckert

## Doing things differently

"European cooperation in education and training started with the Erasmus programme". It's a quote, but not from any individual writer, politician or otherwise famous person I can identify. You are more likely to overhear this statement, maybe in a slightly different form, in a shareholder meeting of the local saving bank ("We plan to make available top-up grants for Erasmus students. Erasmus is the programme that started European cooperation in education"). You may have read a variant on the free newspaper for suburban commuters, close to the real estate ads ("How Erasmus invented European education – and how you can lose 20 kilos in 10 weeks"). Squeezed between students on a bus to the campus, you may have seen a text version appear on

a smartphone ("u should really do an erasmus, *w dut?* erasmus was the first real big thing in eu, *duk?*"). Well, there are such solid everyday certainties that we do not bother questioning and we may be guilty of stating at least once in our life: "As Einstein said, everything is relative", "95% of what you read in internet is not true", "All football matches are fixed [I read it on the internet]".

We can leave further investigation into this fascinating phenomenon to professional sociologists and lampoon comedians, and go back to prosaic European cooperation. Some facts. As concerns education, cooperation started in the mid-1970s. The first resolution on **cooperation in the field of education** was signed by Minis-

1 All actions are presented on the [dedicated website](#)

ters of Education (of EUR-9) on 6 June 1974, and in 1976 the first **action programme in the field of education** saw the light. You were probably too young at the time, and if the news already reached you don't be surprised if it didn't register with your mind and heart. Back then, action programmes came with no name, no logo and, crucially, no billion attached. Money was made available through "appropriations" in the EC budget, decided year by year - this programme never had more than three million ECU per year.

That's cooperation in education. As concerns vocational education and training, no cooperation was started, because cooperation was not enough: the 1957 Treaty called for a common vocational training policy. Accordingly, in 1963 the Council of the European Economic Community (EUR-6) adopted a **decision "laying down general principles for implementing a common vocational training policy"**. In 1964 the first joint **programme to encourage the exchange of young workers** was launched and would be renewed several times. Participants grew from 100 in the beginning to 2 500 in 1991. Small numbers, true - but far from the limelight the ball was set rolling.

After all, our anonymous texting student was closer to the truth than the bank manager and the free newspaper: Erasmus has been the first "big thing" in education in Europe (*duk*). Adopted in 1987, it was the first ma-

## **Preparing for the future is what education and training are there for.**

For learning mobility programme with its own budget, rather than yearly appropriations. Though quite short of a billion, 85 million ECU for two years could kick the ball further, and they did it. Then came Petra, Force, Leonardo da Vinci, Youth in action - and the billions, that in 2014 moved 600 000 learners and staff around Europe.

That's the past, and "the past is a foreign country: they do things differently there". It's also a quote - a literary one: this sentence that also appears on T-shirts opens the novel *The go-between* (L.P. Hartley 1953). Well, we who sing the praise of mobility should not be afraid to tread in foreign countries, such as the past - and the future. Because in the future too, they will do things differently there. One lesson from mobility actions is that preparation is crucial. Preparing for the future is what education and training are there for. We may not be able to complete an ECVET Learning Agreement to better organize our move to the future, but we can work for education and training systems to enable us to do things differently tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow.

In the ECVET Forum on the 10<sup>th</sup> of October in Rome, the scope will be limited to vocational training, and the focus will be on flexible pathways to vocation-

al skill development, and how ECVET principles can contribute to achieve them. Quite a specialised subject. But the purpose is not to agree on a work programme for 2018 - that is a necessary tool that will be addressed by the ECVET users' group on the following day. The purpose of the Forum is to debate how to provide people with better opportunities to engage in open, individualised paths to develop, and get recognition for, their vocational skills. The skills to do, adjust and create the jobs of the future. Indeed, it is less about moving to the future, than about shaping it.

I started with a refresher course in four paragraphs on foreign country Past, to acknowledge that we come from a long way and we need to engage in a long term perspective. We need to bring our small contribution to making our own country Future, where we shall not do the same things as now. We shall need "to do different things and to do things differently". That's also a quote, but in spite of the close word similarity it doesn't come from the same novel. It comes from - and defines the approach of - the **2016 work programme** of the European Commission, which in line with this approach also announced the **New Skills Agenda for Europe** launched in June and presented in the previous Magazine.

The ball was set rolling long ago. You can contribute to the next, different kick. ■

**Detlef Eckert**

Director of Skills

DG Employment, Social Affairs and

Inclusion

European Commission

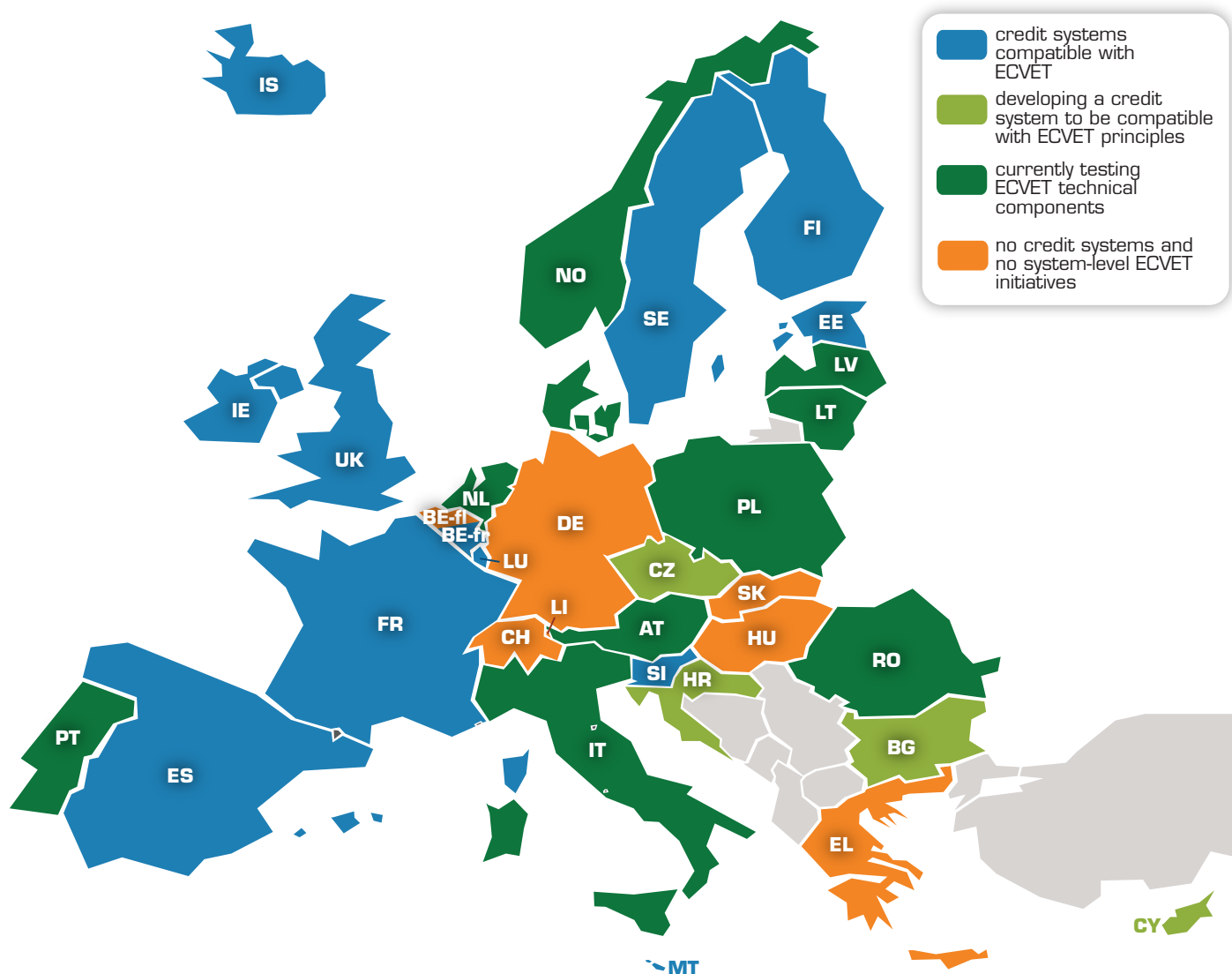


# Monitoring ECVET implementation - progress since 2013

An article by H  l  ne Hamers and Irina Jemeljanova, Cedefop

## 2013-2015: main developments

The **latest Cedefop's monitoring** shows that the Member States have taken many steps and accomplished quite a lot towards implementing ECVET principles, when their different starting points, educational practices and cultures are taken into account (see infographic below).



Countries are at different stages of development but the movement towards organising learning outcomes (LO) in units in their qualifications is obvious: 23 of 36 countries already have units of LO in their systems and five others are testing them. Often this process follows the description of qualifications in LO within NQF development.

Possibilities for validation and recognition of individual units provided in many countries show that learning of all kinds, and from all contexts, is increasingly acknowledged as a growing need of today's reality. Many countries see the importance of assessing and recognising parts of learning without immediate

acquisition of a qualification but working towards one at a speed that meets learners' aspirations and circumstances<sup>1</sup>.

There are seven countries that have reported no initiative at the system level to implement ECVET. Belgium (Flemish Community), Hungary, Liechtenstein and Switzerland report satisfaction with their current systems and do not see developing ECVET as a priority. Slovakia concentrated on developing the national qualifications register first and links ECVET-related developments to the next phase of their work on qualifications. Greece, in turn, already has a law that foresees the development of a credit system in line with ECVET; to im-

plement the law, further ministerial decisions are needed but current political challenges put them on hold. Germany is uncertain about the feasibility of implementing ECVET due to stakeholder scepticism. These countries do not ignore ECVET-related activities; some provide information to stakeholders while others have networks that promote ECVET, organise seminars and events, and/or test technical components.

### Benefits from ECVET

Despite obstacles to ECVET implementation, countries report positive feedback from its promoters and implementers, indicating multiple benefits brought by their work. A few examples:

ECVET encourages and supports mobility and contributes to its quality. ECVET components provide structure to complex processes in organising traineeships and mobility. ECVET complementary documents are seen positively as user-friendly and helpful; for example, the MoU helps clarify the learning outcomes that can be achieved while LA helps to set objectives understood by all.

*Austria, Croatia, Denmark, Latvia, Malta, and Norway*

ECVET contributes to better recognition of learning outcomes acquired abroad or in another setting, including recognition of intermediate results of learning.

*Czech Republic, Denmark, Norway, and Slovenia*

ECVET helps build a qualification (from mandatory and optional units) that best fits the needs of the learners and their potential employers. It is a means to avoid duplication and repetition of learning.

*ECVET users' group, 2015\**

Enhanced possibilities of recognition of learning outcomes support inclusion by making it easier for the low-skilled, for example, to enter VET and get a qualification.

*The Netherlands*

Learning outcomes make learning easier to compare **and** make qualifications more transparent.“ Units, in turn, help to describe learning outcomes more precisely and coherently. Units of LO increase the flexibility of learning pathways **and** VET to adapt to the changing requirements of the labour market. Teachers, in particular, see use of LO in teaching as more valuable than traditional approaches and more motivating to learners.

*Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Latvia, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, and Slovenia*

\* The users' group contributes to the quality and overall coherence of cooperation in ECVET implementation (European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2009).

There is a long way to go before we can say there is a European credit system in VET, but we can say that ECVET principles and components are working in many countries. It is time to move forward and explore how they benefit individuals in engaging in lifelong learning and in their progression.

### More information needed

Although some have ECVET-compatible credit systems, most countries face obstacles to making ECVET principles work for individuals, including low demand from potential users, low awareness, lack of trust among actors, differences in unit design and complexity of procedures. In general, these obstacles ask for more information and guidance. They point to a need for sharing the knowledge and experiences gained and putting the tools and materials developed in projects and initiatives to use by stakeholders and partners in the countries. Cedefop could be of assistance to countries needing technical support to contextualise ECVET into their self-regulating education and training systems.

Better dissemination of information can clarify the ECVET concept and procedures to beneficiaries, VET providers and social partners and, consequently, increase demand from potential users and actors as well as support from policy-makers. This could take the development of ECVET principles further. ■



Irina Jemeljanova and Hélène Hamers, Cedefop

Based on the responses from 28 Member States and four EFTA countries, the **2015 monitoring report** (the fifth report published by Cedefop since 2010) examines whether existing credit systems provide conditions for individuals to have their learning accumulated or transferred towards a qualification. It looks into whether qualifications are based on learning outcomes<sup>2</sup> and organised in units; whether individual units are assessed and validated for further transfer and accumulation; whether units are assigned credit points; and whether VET providers use memoranda of understanding and learning agreements to better understand the learning outcomes they provide. It also focuses on the ways that countries promote ECVET and support main actors and beneficiaries. Some interesting examples of guidance tools and support materials developed through the EU-funded projects which can be of value to all countries are also presented.

Cedefop (2016). ECVET in Europe: Monitoring report 2015. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop research paper No 56, available at <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/5556>

<sup>2</sup> Consult also Cedefop's comparative study on Application of learning outcomes approaches across Europe. Forthcoming: Cedefop is organising the second policy learning forum on writing learning outcomes in VET on 13-14 October in Thessaloniki.

# ECVET in Italy:

## implementation process, experiences and practices

An article by Claudia Villante and Michela Volpi, ISFOL, Italy

*“Transparency Of Competences And Qualifications: Testing And Practices Of Ecvet Implementation - Update 2016”*. This is a forthcoming publication prepared by the Italian Team of ECVET Experts, coordinated by the Erasmus+ National Agency ISFOL. The publication summarises the state of the debate on the issue of transparency of competences and qualifications at both the European and Italian levels, and the implementation of ECVET in Italy, particularly within the Erasmus+ Programme.

In Italy the years 2012-2014 have been marked by significant reforms, both of lifelong learning policies (e.g. the reform of centres for adult education) and systems and tools for transparency of qualifications (through the legislative decree 13/13 focused on drafting the framework for the validation and certification of competences acquired from experience). Current policy initiatives focus on developing the institutional and organisational structures and mechanisms needed to implement the above-mentioned reforms, in line with the approach of the ECVET Recommendation.

### Paradigm shift in education and training

In recent years the paradigms of education and training in Italy have changed incrementally. Learning is now more and more conceived as a “broad competence” of human beings. Learning can be acquired in several contexts, only one of which is formal schooling. The relevance of key and life competences as vital factors (for both young people and adults) to become more “attractive” for the labour

market is now broadly acknowledged. Consequently, Italian stakeholders are now more interested in assessment methods and tools as well as in validation and recognition of competences acquired in non-formal and informal contexts. Interest in these topics is not limited to academics and experts of social research, but has spread out to practitioners from the education and training sector, employers, and other labour market representatives.

Enhanced interest in the transparency of competences by a broad range of stakeholders leads to a need for deeper knowledge of European and national frameworks and stimulates the use of *ad hoc* tools.

In recent years, stakeholders tend to agree that enhanced transparency of competences, regardless of where they were acquired, can help balance the mismatch between supply and demand on the labour market.

This new climate led to an increased interest in the transparency of competences, and generated a need for more



guidance and information regarding the European and national transparency instruments. An analysis of the objectives of EU-funded projects and initiatives (especially under the Erasmus+ Programme) show that there is strong interest to develop and test tailored *ad hoc* tools. As the ECVET Recommendation already offers this set of tools, this development has also led to increased knowledge about and interest in ECVET.

### ECVET for mobility

A survey carried out by the Italian Erasmus+ National Agency among the beneficiaries of Erasmus+ projects funded in 2014 and 2015 shows that there is an increased level of testing of ECVET

tools and principles in projects. This applies in particular to transnational mobility: 25.9% of Italian organisations involved in mobility projects declared to have a practical experience with ECVET (further to the use of the Learning Agreement which is now a standard step of an Erasmus+ mobility project in the VET field).

The survey also revealed that the learning outcomes approach as a common denominator has in some cases led to the involvement of enterprises in the *ex-ante* definition of learning outcomes to be achieved during the mobility phase. This helps students to capitalise on mobility experiences, even short-term ones. Such efforts of direct involvement of enterprises in this process are still very limited, yet they represent an innovative and key element that, in the future, may facilitate the “reading” and understanding of learning outcomes acquired by students. This will afford ECVET the role of a ‘bridge’ between the world of education and vocational training on one side, and the world of work on the other.

The survey also revealed some cases of fruitful synergies established by beneficiaries of Erasmus+ projects with system activities at national level aimed at encouraging youth employment (e.g. Youth Guarantee), thus enlarging the testing context offered by ECVET.

### ECVET and adult learning

As for adults, the training rate in Italy is among the lowest in Europe. As highlighted in the latest OECD report:

- a reduced percentage – 41% – of people between 25 and 64 years old holds at least a secondary school diploma (ISCED 3), compared to 48% EU average;

- of these, only 15% of Italians aged 25-64 completed the third level education (ISCED 4 and 5) compared to 32% OECD average;
- a fifth of the population aged 15-19 has left school without fulfilling the education and training obligation;
- In Italy, more than one young man out of five aged 15-29 (23.2%) is unemployed, and is “Not (engaged) in Education, Employment or Training” (so-called NEETs). Italy is sixth in this age group compared to all OECD countries (15.8% OECD average).

**As one of the European tools for transparency, ECVET holds a rich potential for testing on the ground, and supporting bottom-up institutional reforms.**

As recently reaffirmed by the Eurydice report 2016, offering transparent, visible and transferable learning outcomes makes lifelong learning more attractive and motivates both young people and adults to attend training courses.

### Evidence-based analysis

With the support of the National Team of ECVET Experts, the Erasmus+ Programme has helped address such challenges by funding projects and innovative initiatives. To this purpose, some Erasmus+ projects have been described in the publication “*Transparency Of Competences And Qualifications: Testing And Practices Of Ecvet Implementation - Update 2016*”.

The practices analysed revealed the added value of the “ECVET approach”, namely:

- Better understanding between the education and training sector and labour market stakeholders;
- Access to training or qualifications that is better suited to the learner’s needs;
- Easier acquisition of credits for previously acquired competences or the reduction of a course duration, mainly in those areas not covered by institutional intervention.

The latter is particularly important for emerging economic sectors (white, blue and green economy) where the definition of new professional profiles or the renewal of existing ones (in terms of new skills and expertise) reveal a training gap.

The analysis of the projects shows that there is a need to better align education and training systems with individual needs on one side, and with labour market needs on the other. Only efforts that address both needs will be successful in filling the gap between skills demands in the fastest growing employment sectors, and qualifications and professional profiles used in the education and training sector.

As one of the European tools for transparency, ECVET holds a rich potential for testing on the ground, and supporting bottom-up institutional reforms. However, there is still a long way to go. Building and consolidating the mutual trust between stakeholders in education and vocational training and a simplification of tools related to ECVET will be key.

### More information:

The **2014 version of the document can be found online (in Italian language)**. The 2016 update is forthcoming. ■



# ECVET PERMIT:

## Creating a bridge between non-formal and formal VET sectors

Partners from three European countries are working together to apply ECVET methodology to increase and test the permeability and transferability between non-formal and formal VET systems on a national and European level.

The ECVET for Permeability and Transferability between the Non-Formal and Formal VET System (ECVET PERMIT) project aims to test whether ECVET, particularly the use of learning outcomes, could help to create a common language for VET programmes between the non-formal and formal education sectors. It targets three non-formal technical vocations: electrician, plumber and automotive mechanic. The objective is to improve the recognition of learning outcomes acquired between the non-formal and formal sectors and the transferability and permeability between the non-formal and formal VET institutions.

The project brings together three partners from Cyprus (Intercollege, Cyprus Productivity Centre and Human Resource Development Authority in Cyprus – an appointed body for the development of VET qualifications standards); two VET providers from Greece (IDEC and IIEK DELTA); and a VET provider from Malta (MCAST). Work began on the project in January 2015 and is due to end in December 2016. It builds on existing work undertaken by Intercollege to test ECVET in geographical mobility, with the emphasis this time on testing ECVET within the national VET system.

ECVET PERMIT targets VET practitioners and trainers who are involved in curriculum development. It is expected that at least 30-40 VET instructors in total from the three partner countries will receive training in the National ECVET workshops taking place between October and December 2016.

The National ECVET workshops will be the culmination of the project. The National ECVET workshops will take place in Cyprus, Greece and Malta and each National Workshop is expected to be two days long – each taking into consideration the special needs of the VET sector in the country. Workshops will offer practical guidance on how to use ECVET for permeability between the non-formal VET sectors and will particularly target VET instructors. The workshops will focus on what the project partners feel is the most important step in the ECVET process – rewriting VET curriculums based on learning outcomes.

In order to get to this point, the project partners took part in a five-day training session in Cyprus in April 2015. The training targeted those people internal to the ECVET PERMIT team and those individuals who are involved in the implementation of ECVET PERMIT within the consortium. A total of 15 VET instructors from Cyprus, Greece and Malta took part in the training. They will



subsequently pass on their knowledge to other VET trainers in the National ECVET workshops.

The project has also produced a set of ECVET PERMIT methodological guidelines (in English) for the implementation of ECVET within the non-formal and formal VET system and a training manual for curriculum conversion within the non-formal and formal VET system (in English and Greek). In addition, they have converted eight VET study programmes (two from each VET provider) from the non-formal and formal VET system into the ECVET system (included in the table opposite).

ECVET PERMIT partners have worked together to rewrite the core units of the selected study programmes using the learning outcome approach and the ECVET principles. Two units of each study programme were then tested for transferability. On the project website you can find samples of study programme units rewritten according to ECVET specifications in English and Greek. In addition, the training manual includes a complete methodology for how to do this and a complete set of templates will be available shortly.

VET study programme title and characteristics		VET provider
<b>Diploma in Automotive Engineering</b>	EQF 5, 2 years – full time	Intercollege
<b>Automotive Technician</b>	EQF 4, 6 months acceleration programme	CPC
<b>Mechatronics Technician</b>	EQF 5, 2 years – full time plus 6 months practical training	IIEK DELTA
<b>Advanced Diploma in Light Vehicle Maintenance</b>	EQF 4, 2 years – full time	MCAST
<b>Diploma in Mechanical Installations and Technology</b>	EQF 5, 2 years – full time	Intercollege
<b>Plumbing and Heating Technician</b>	EQF 4, 6 months acceleration programme	CPC
<b>Domestic Electrical Installations Technician</b>	EQF 5, 2 years – full time plus 6 months practical training	IIEK DELTA
<b>Advance Diploma in Electrical Systems</b>	EQF 4, 2 years – full time	MCAST

The project has also produced four newsletters detailing the ECVET PERMIT process and also promoting and informing key stakeholders about the project developments in English, Greek and Maltese.

The project's biggest success has been the immediate involvement of key VET providers in the implementation of ECVET. The project and the developed methodology has helped clarify the steps needed to implement the ECVET system, especially within the context of creating a bridge between the non-formal and formal VET sectors.

However, ECVET PERMIT has also faced a number of challenges since the project began in 2015. The greatest challenge at the start was for all partners to fully understand the ECVET approach and methodology, including the technical specifications and components. Adapting to a learning outcome approach for curriculum development has been especially challenging for VET institutions whose curriculums have traditionally been based on an input approach.

In addition, in some partner countries (such as Cyprus) the National Quali-

**“Based on the experience and lessons learned through ECVET PERMIT, and recognizing the benefits of the implementation of ECVET, the management of the Cyprus Productivity Centre has decided to proceed with the conversion of all of its vocational training programmes according to the learning outcomes structure. This process is expected to start and to be completed in 2017.”**

**Dr George Horattas**  
Cyprus Productivity Centre  
– a non-formal VET provider in Cyprus

cation Framework (NQF) has not been adapted or fully deployed yet while the mechanism for the validation of non-formal and in formal education has not been developed. The project

partners found it difficult to implement ECVET in the absence of the tools and instruments to support and validate the changes. Also the absence of professional qualifications made it more difficult to design units based on learning outcomes. To overcome this last barrier, each VET provider established a National Advisory Group (for each study programme) with key stakeholders such as industry representatives, professionals, VET instructors and students. The absence of a clear national framework and approach regarding the implementation of ECVET in the VET sector has created a lot of ambiguity and ambivalence among VET instructors about the effectiveness of the ECVET tools.

Despite the challenges ECVET PERMIT has encountered the ECVET methodology has helped to create a lasting foundation for bridging the gap between non-formal and formal sectors. ■

For more information about the project and to access the project's outputs please visit: <http://www.intercollege.ac.cy/research/european-projects/ecvet-permit/>

# Engineering Mobility in Europe

An article by Frans Van Schaik, Horizon College, The Netherlands

Access for young VET students to teaching and training methods and work experiences in other countries will help to improve their employability in a global economy. Member states have increased their efforts to create opportunities for 16-29 year-olds to gain accredited skills in cross-border mobility projects, helping them become competitive in an increasingly international job market. The European Commission and the Council have defined ambitious aims for learner mobility: by 2020, an EU average of at least 6% of 18-34 year olds with an initial vocational education and training qualification should have had an initial VET-related study or training period abroad (including work placements) lasting a minimum of two weeks.<sup>1</sup> The actual numbers of students taking part in mobility projects are much lower in most countries. For instance, in the Netherlands, the number of secondary VET students involved in mobility programmes is between just 1-2 %.

## **Aims of the project: Increasing opportunities for mobility for VET students**

The Engineering Mobility in Europe (EMEU) project therefore focuses on providing a variety of mobility opportunities for VET students in the form of modules. EMEU is a 2-year project run by the EMEU Network. Horizon College, a Dutch VET provider, leads the project, collaborating with partners from Denmark, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK.

Young learners can opt to take certain modules that are part of their training in the form of theoretical and practical lessons abroad. The modules are on EQF level 3 or 4 and offered by VET providers in other countries which are part of the EMEU network. EMEU offers both physical mobility projects and

virtual mobility activities where staff and students work together at a distance. Virtual mobility through online modules is a new concept that is so far not very well developed in VET – even if activities are offered, they are usually not embedded in the curricula of VET colleges and therefore not validated. EMEU believes that virtual mobility activities may be the only way to give non-mobile students (students with family responsibilities, child care duties or disabilities, etc.) the opportunity to participate in such a project. Online modules are also an option for students who lack confidence, have prejudices or are unsure what advantages a work or study experience abroad would have to offer them. This is where virtual mobility has enormous potential. Starting international cooperation early on will help youngsters to overcome personal barriers, to set aside prejudices about other nations,

# EMEU

*Engineering Mobility In Europe*

cultures and ways of working, and to learn the basics of another language.

To physically and/or virtually mobilise students, the EMEU partnership has created an open and sustainable network for learning, working opportunities and validation - using ECVET - for engineering students in VET. The project 'formula' consists of the development of mobility modules in several sectors which are agreed upon by the partners - such as electrical engineering, ICT, and construction - and are embedded in vocational programmes in all partner institutions.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/126380.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/126380.pdf)

The modules are offered online on the **EMEU website** and students are invited to enrol with the help of a teacher. Prior to enrolling, it will be discussed between the partner institutions whether the student can do a work placement for a certain period of time before or after the module.

In addition to physical mobility the partner network has also created a number of virtual mobility and collaboration activities. Many modules related to IT qualifications, for example, can be easily rolled out through online learning. This additional opportunity increases considerably the number of students that are internationally active.

### Using ECVET for better quality and transparency

To create the highest level of transparency for both teachers and students, EMEU applied the ECVET principles. Most partners were not familiar with ECVET, but saw the added value of applying the principles: all learning outcomes related to the physical and virtual mobilities are described in terms of Knowledge, Skills and Competences. This makes it possible for the partners to understand how they can embed the modules into their own vocational programs. All partners showed great flexibility in this, which contributed significantly to the success of the project: as they found ways to integrate the modules into their programmes, it was possible to have their students' achievements tested and assessed abroad, and to have the results validated at home.

Working with ECVET has contributed significantly to the success of the project: EMEU developed and offered online more than 60 modules that were taken up by more than 100 students in about 1.5 years.



In the Netherlands, the project was a runner-up in the prestigious Orange Carpet Award and was selected Best Practice project in 2016.

### The EMEU Network

The success of the project is mainly due to the enthusiasm of the network partners and their dedication to internationalisation, quality (of the contents of all activities) and quantity (offering a wide array of different modules).

Perhaps the greatest achievement of EMEU is the continuation of the partner network. The partners will commit themselves to the aims of the project through a cooperation agreement which will be signed at the final project conference on 9 November 2016. The majority of the partners have known each other for many years and therefore communicate regularly within an international context. New internal teams and external partners are guided by the "Roadmap for New Partners". In this way, the project format rapidly expands within and across the partner colleges and externally to more European countries.

### Expanding the formula to additional sectors

The success of the EMEU project has strengthened the project partners' belief that the project formula will work in other VET sectors as well. A follow-up KA2 project was awarded to the EMEU partner network in September 2016.

This successor project, EMEU4ALL, will expand its activities to five more vocational areas: Health Care, Social Care, Business, Sports and International Trade and Services (Catering and Retail).

In the current project (EMEU) the role of industry has focused more on offering students a work placement before, during and/or after participating in the module. In the new project phase (EMEU4ALL), the partner network aims at a stronger integration of industry. In their view, businesses should play a more active role. Education and industry should work together more closely in developing the learning outcomes of the modules and virtual mobility activities.

In addition, the partners would appreciate if national VET systems would better support validation and recognition of learning outcomes acquired abroad. Taking the initiative from provider level to system level would further enhance the quality and impact of the work done within networks such as EMEU.

### More information:

For more information, see the **EMEU website**.

The EMEU has prepared a **short video** on its activities, which features project representatives as well as learners, reporting on the benefits of the project. ■



# NETINVET

## European Network for recognised vocational learner mobility in the sectors of International Trade and Transport & Logistics

An article by Sarah Köneke, NETINVET coordinator

NETINVET is a European network of schools, training centres and professional organisations. It promotes recognised mobility in Europe for learners in vocational training programmes in the sectors of International Trade and Transport & Logistics by establishing mutual trust between the members and developing various tools to facilitate organisation of the mobility.

### Continuous development of the network

Initiated in May 2011 by the CGI (French Confederation of Wholesale and International Trade), the NETINVET network has already come a long way.

The network is the result of two previous European projects, RECOMFOR and COMINTER. Created by the CGI, these projects primarily provided support for the creation of the common professional profile “*International Trade assistant*” and the implementation of a network to develop and support learner and teacher mobility at level 5 of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). The RECOMFOR project also contributed to the constitution of the quality process within the network (see **ECVET Magazine No 6 from 2011**).

One year later, the network continues to expand thanks to the Euro Trans Log project. Coordinated by the AFT (French association for the development of vocational training in transport and logistics), it aims to enable and facilitate learner mobility at EQF level 5

in the Transport and Logistics sector in Europe. The creation and the implementation of shared references allows for mutual recognition of national professional qualifications by applying an approach identical to that used for the two previous projects.

The number of members has been constantly increasing. The network is currently composed of more than seventy schools and training centres from eight European countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Spain) conducting over 600 mobility operations a year within the NETINVET network. NETINVET is actively supported by three professional organisations: CGI, AFT and S-BB (Cooperation Organisation for Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market, Netherlands).

### Encourage recognised mobility in Europe

By integrating the ECVET process (European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training), NETINVET favours and encourages recognised



mobility. The implementation of shared references, integrated and approved by the network members, enables the transfer and validation of units of learning outcomes accomplished within the framework of study mobility and/or a work placement abroad. The learner will thus not need to validate the knowledge and the skills acquired during his/her mobility experience a second time.

The mutual trust established between the members since the creation of NETINVET is a powerful driver of these efforts. The network also applies a quality approach as another key element, allowing for the integration of new members and ensuring consistent quality based on quality charters.

### At the service of its members

To earn this European recognition, each mobility operation involves a number of administrative documents which aim to ensure smooth functioning and compliance with the network quality charter. To support its members in these potentially time-consuming administrative duties, the network is re-working its website to develop online tools facilitating and accelerating this process.

Other tools have been developed to promote the work of the different participants within the network. Teachers and trainers can assign the “*NETINVET International Trainer certificate*” to companies strongly involved in the network. As well, the “*NETINVET Mobility prize*” for learners has been created and will be awarded for the first time at the next annual NETINVET forum in March 2017.

### Extending the network for greater openness

Thanks to its quality and its mobility offerings, the objective of the NETINVET network is expanding. Always in touch with schools interested in joining the network, it also aims to extend to new countries. Contact with member schools located in countries outside the network represent a crucial factor in this initiative.

The network does not foresee only geographical expansion; it also plans to extend the level of qualifications concerned. Currently enabling mobility at EQF level 5, the AFT has proposed establishing the link with another project following from Euro Trans Log: ET-L4ALL, in response to a widespread demand from training centres offering Transport & Logistics courses at the level 4 of the EQF. The development of new shared references will make it possible to extend the network to this level. ■



NETINVET is open for new members and interested in expanding the network into new countries.

To become a member, VET providers have to conform to the network's quality requirements and propose a training programme which is compatible with the shared references: 'International Trade Assistant' and/or 'Transport & Logistics services', both at EQF level 5 (all these documents can be downloaded at the website [www.netinvet.eu](http://www.netinvet.eu)). To insure the quality of the network, decisions on membership requests are taken by the Steering Committee on the basis of an evaluation realised by the Scientific Committee.

For more information please contact the NETINVET coordinators:

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# The project TWAINE:

## Using ECVET principles to develop a 'third way' into VET

Werner Fuhrmann, National ECVET expert, Germany

The transnational project TWAINE ran from 2013 to 2014 with six partners from five countries: France, Italy, Poland, Malta, and Germany (lead partner). TWAINE used ECVET principles to help disadvantaged young people re-enter the education and training system after a period of unemployment. The German lead project partner, Gewerkstatt, developed units of learning outcomes for students in hospitality services that can be accumulated to acquire 'training modules' as part of the 'Specialist in Hospitality Services' course. Training is work-based, which ensures real-life work tasks and autonomous working and learning experiences. The 'learning units' were tested in a pilot phase in all of the participating countries. The outcomes of the pilot phase were very positive and showed a high potential for transferability of the units to other contexts. The project was funded by the European Lifelong Learning Programme.

Young adults can face many obstacles on the road to employment. The modern labour market demands a variety of technical skills and client-oriented key competences, which school-based learning doesn't always deliver. In countries with a strong apprenticeship system, where initial VET takes place in companies, learners are faced with real-life work situations from day one. Without good preparation this can be overwhelming. As a consequence, students can get demotivated and withdraw from the chosen learning path.

This is especially the case with young people from a disadvantaged background or with a difficult learning history, and can lead to the so-called 'scarring effect'. Bad experiences with entering the labour market combine with bad experiences in school, which leaves disadvantaged youth even more vulnerable; in turn they are less willing to take on new challenges and thus pushed even further away from potential employment.



### A flexible pathway to re-enter the formal education and training system

Since 2007 the North-Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) Region in Germany has tackled this issue through an initiative called "Third Way into Vocational Training". The initiative targets young adults

who are currently unemployed and have little chance to find an apprenticeship place with a company. The initiative offers the possibility to re-enter the education and training system by attending modularised vocational training programmes that are flexible and can be individually tailored. VET-providers offer these modules as work-based



learning taking place at their premises. The training programmes are neither school-based learning, nor full apprenticeships with a company – in the German dual system, they represent a ‘third way’.

Gewerkstatt, the lead partner in the project TWAINÉ, is a regional VET-provider who took part in the NRW initiative. For TWAINÉ, Gewerkstatt developed units of learning outcomes related to a VET-course called ‘Specialist in Hospitality Services’. The course consists of five training modules:

- Training module 1: Working in service
- Training module 2: Working in the kitchen
- Training module 3: Work in magazine/commodities management
- Training module 4: Housekeeping
- Training module 5: Consulting and selling in restaurant/marketing

Young people taking part in the initiative choose which modules they would like to take. They are responsible for the implementation of the work tasks related to the module, broken down in units of learning outcomes. Upon completion, each unit of learning outcome is assessed, and the learners move on to the next tasks/units.

For Gewerkstatt, the added value of the project TWAINÉ was to get the opportunity to roll out a testing phase for the implementation of the training modules on a broad basis, and to discuss and compare experiences with VET-providers from other countries. The aim was to gain a better understanding of the approach, and determine if it was sound and flexible enough to be transferrable to a variety of different contexts.



The project included transnational workshops that focussed on developing material for teachers and trainers on how best to use the modules as a tool for individual support. The material contains recommendations on how to adapt the given units, or develop new units according to the users' own requirements<sup>1</sup>.

### Developing units of learning outcomes and working with them

For each training module several units of learning outcomes were developed. Units are acquired through real work and business processes. They are based on a task, an order, a problem to be solved or a small project to prepare. For instance, this could be the setting up of a table for a three-course menu, the preparation and serving of hot drinks, or the preparation of different egg dishes.

A six-step process is put in place:

1. Information: The learners get all information they need to carry out the tasks

2. Planning: The learners use the information to plan their work steps. Depending on the task, this can happen alone or with a team.
3. Decide: The learners decide on their approach
4. Implementation: The learners carry out the work tasks.
5. Control: The learners check the quality of their work and the results, and undertake amendments where necessary.
6. Evaluation: The trainers carry out an evaluation of both work process and work results.

Learners have room to decide on an individual approach to a required action, and proceed independently. The learning outcomes from these tasks or projects combine technical and methodological knowledge and skills as well as social and personal competences.

The matrix of units of learning outcomes is very clearly stated – this makes it easier for new trainers to work with it. The description of the learning outcomes also provides support for trainers new to the concept. Informa-

<sup>1</sup> The training materials are available on the TWAINÉ website <http://www.twaine.eu/index.php/en/documents>



tion is given on how and for what purpose the learning and working tasks are to be used and what to consider.

Working with the ‘third way’ approach often requires the trainer to rethink; to move away from traditional instructor-led teaching towards facilitation and support of the students’ learning process. For some trainers, this means that they have to take on a different role in the process: while the learners undertake the work tasks, trainers observe and reflect in the background.

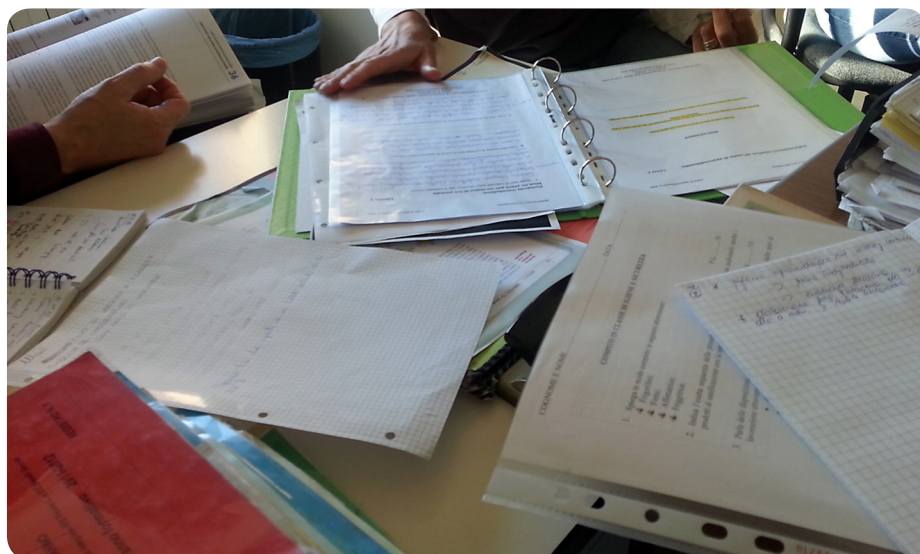
### **Evaluation discussion about the outcomes of the work task**

As stated above, the evaluation refers to the quality of the product as well as the quality of the procedure. Assessment by the teachers and trainers and self-assessment can be discussed together, according to the following structure:

- Underlining what was implemented particularly well;
- Discussing challenges and (possible) solutions;
- Giving tips on what the learners need to pay special attention to, or how they can improve.

The evaluation discussion is documented.

Given the previous experiences of the target group, TWAINÉ emphasizes that it is particularly important to underline good performances, e.g. by stating progress compared to former tasks, good reactions, own initiative, etc.. Moreover, in the evaluation discussion, it is important to raise awareness to real-life working demands: timeliness, communication skills, customer satisfaction and efficient use of resources.



### **Principles for working with TWAINÉ units of learning outcomes**

TWAINÉ units of learning outcomes are designed to be flexible. They can be adapted to different learning requirements of the young people, and to different learning environments. Every teacher or trainer can adapt the TWAINÉ units to the individual needs of his/her trainees by adding additional information or key questions adapted to different learner levels: simple questions for beginners, and complex questions for learners with more experience. Complex action situations can be worked out simply by adding more complex practical tasks. Consequently, the approach allows for differentiation in groups with different learning levels. Individual tasks can be assigned to respective levels of experience. Advanced learners support those who execute the task for the first time.

Another TWAINÉ principle is to ensure that trainees can be as autonomous as possible when executing the work tasks. Teachers and trainers are acting as facilitators of the learning process.

Learners are responsible for the processing of information, and for planning and executing the work tasks. This supports the TWAINÉ aim of developing technical and methodological skills as well as transversal personal competences and problem-solving skills. Testimonials show that this ‘third way’ into VET corresponds very well with the needs of disadvantaged young people, as it allows for positive learning experiences.

At the same time, the units of learning outcomes are a great way to demonstrate to potential employers or companies providing apprenticeship places what a young person has already learned, and how they can be used.

The TWAINÉ units of learning outcomes were tested in a pilot phase – in the lead partner country Germany, as well as by VET providers in the project partner countries France, Italy, Poland, and Malta. The outcomes of the testing were very positive; thanks to the principle of flexibility, the units demonstrated a high potential for transferability to other learning contexts<sup>2</sup>. ■

<sup>2</sup> Results of the project are described on the website [www.twaine.eu](http://www.twaine.eu)

# ECVET News

## Annual ECVET Forum 2016: Flexible pathways to vocational skills

The Annual ECVET Forum 2016 will take place in Rome on 11 October 2016. This year's Forum is the place to gather information and exchange views and experiences on how ECVET principles can help to provide people with opportunities for open, flexible and individualised pathways to develop vocational skills and to get recognition for them.

To facilitate active participation and open discussions, the Forum is divided into three thematic sessions:

- Session 1 provides background information to meet the **challenges** that ECVET helps address.
- Session 2 provides the opportunity to **take stock** on what solutions are there already, and what solutions still need to be developed using the ECVET principles.
- Session 3 discusses how we can **step up the efforts**, and how ECVET can help to ensure success.

Each participant is invited to attend two different workshops during the Forum. The workshops focus on discussing how ECVET can help to develop open and flexible pathways. What are the challenges? What are key enablers and obstacles? How can the ECVET technical components – together with other components - help to overcome these?

The Annual ECVET Forum 2016 is organised by the European Commission with the support of the ECVET Secretariat. The ECVET Users' group will meet on the following day to discuss how to take the debate into account when defining operational proposals for ECVET developments to better support flexible pathways to vocational skills.

The next ECVET Magazine (issue 27) will contain a summary of the discussion and conclusions from the Annual ECVET Forum.

## 2nd Cedefop policy learning forum on defining and writing learning outcomes for VET qualifications

The second Cedefop policy learning forum (PLF) on defining and writing learning outcomes for VET qualifications will take place in Thessaloniki on 13-14 October 2016. The PLF provides a platform for European cooperation on the application of learning outcomes; allowing for the identification of common challenges as well as solutions.

Building on the positive outcomes of the first PLF organised in 2015, the aim is to strengthen the exchange of experiences related to the writing and use of learning outcomes in VET. While the learning outcomes approaches are now firmly embedded in the majority of European VET systems, mutual learning across national and institutional borders is still limited. The first PLF emphasised the need for a more permanent 'community of practitioners' that will act as a platform of exchange and will be supported by research. In the same vein, the second PLF will require active participation from participants before, during and after the event.

The PLF will take into account the findings of the ongoing comparative study of learning outcomes based VET qualifications (carried out in a cooperation between Cedefop, ETF and UNESCO) and will be invited to discuss the first draft of the new Cedefop '*Handbook on writing learning outcomes*'. Participants will be invited to reflect on it and provide examples and experiences.

Results – particularly the new handbook, once finalised - will be available on the **Cedefop website**.

## The European Vocational Skills Week

This first European Vocational Skills Week will take place from 5 - 9 December 2016 with events in Brussels and parallel activities in Member States, EFTA and EU candidate countries at national, regional and local levels. These events will showcase excellence and quality in VET across Europe and raise awareness of the wide range of opportunities VET offers, to demonstrate that:

- Every single person is talented. Some talents may be obvious, some still hidden.
- Vocational education and training is a smart choice, is fun, and leads to excellence in education, high-quality jobs and increased employability.
- There are great vocational training opportunities that successfully prepare you for interesting and challenging careers, as well as active engagement in society.
- Vocational education and training is a desirable option for people of all ages, and prepares people for jobs the world over.
- Quality training develops the creative and innovative potential of learners.
- Upskilling and reskilling throughout life is key to improved job opportunities and better integration in society.
- Lifelong learning enhances social inclusion, diversity, and active citizenship.

The VET Skills Week is initiated by the European Commission, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL). VET Skills Week will unfold through a series of events and activities taking place in Brussels (press conference, conference, workshops, closing event with award-giving) and across Europe.



**DISCOVER  
YOUR TALENT!**

European Vocational Skills Week  
2016

All stakeholders: learners, parents, companies, business organisations, social partners, education and training providers, adult learning organisations, researchers, career counsellors, public authorities, and society at large are invited to get involved.

VET Skills Week is supported by a sustained communication campaign which provides posters, leaflets, a logo, a video and other material to anyone who wants to participate.

For more information, please **send a message** to the organisers of the European Vocational Skills Week, or visit the **DG EMPL website**.



The ECVET Magazine is published three times per year and informs about the latest ECVET developments. Previous issues of the ECVET Magazine are available for download on the website of the ECVET Secretariat: <http://www.ecvet-secretariat.eu>

Any comments or suggestions regarding this or future issues can be submitted to the following address: [ECVET-Secretariat@icfi.com](mailto:ECVET-Secretariat@icfi.com)

