

# magazine

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

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European Credit system for  
Vocational Education & Training

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# Edito



**James Calleja**

Director CEDEFOP

## To be or not to be: that is the answer

It is disheartening to think that after almost twelve years of over 300 ECVET-related projects, meetings, expert groups, report writing and colloquia at European level, the VET community has not established a credit system for VET. One can easily determine that so far actions have transformed end-users in end-losers.

Our colleagues in the higher education sector, particularly universities, managed to brand mobility through a credit system that is known almost all over the world. They have created a currency which has a value in Jyväskylä as in Lisbon, in Valletta and Nicosia as in Aberdeen and Nicosia. The argument that we frequently hear in VET is that a HE system is not as complex as vocational education and training provision. But that is not the reason why a credit system for VET is still in abeyance. Way back in 1999, no one would have imagined the enormous impact that the Bologna process would have on all European

universities and beyond. Universities were not really notorious for change and innovation but yet they managed to create a European Higher Education Area that is effective and which can be illustrated through the higher education mobility scoreboard. Changes occurred in the structure of qualifications with the adoption of the three tier system as well as in quality assurance, the credit system and certification with the more frequent use of the EUROPASS diploma and certificate supplement.

Although several projects involved VET institutions on the implementation of ECVET, yet in an overall context, VET providers have not played a leading role in the applications of European tools in VET. This is one reason why I believe that compared to the Bologna process, VET reform at a European level is falling behind schedule. Universities played an exclusively leading role in the Bologna process.

In my view, it was the credit system that started the silent revolution in higher education to the extent that even Universities of Applied Sciences normally classified as falling under Higher Vet have adopted the ECTS.

On the other hand it appears that VET policy-makers and institutions are still struggling to come to terms with a system in which content, workloads and learning outcomes could be measured through a credit system. Many are really and truly lost in translation!

The question is not whether or not a credit system is needed in VET but, when will a credit system govern VET provision.



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**"Twelve years to determine that the answer to ECVET is to be or not to be is not acceptable at all."**

The EU recommendation gave Member States a roadmap for implementing ECVET. It predicted that as from 2012 – in accordance with national legislation and practice and on the basis of trials and testing – it should be possible for ECVET to be applied gradually to VET qualifications at all levels of the EQF and used for the purpose of the transfer, recognition and accumulation of individuals' learning outcomes achieved in formal and, where appropriate, non-formal and informal contexts. According to the initial planning, 2013 should have been the year for ECVET's gradual application to VET qualifications at all levels of the EQF, following more than three years of testing and development. 2014 was also the year of ECVET external evaluation.

The current state-of-play of ECVET in relation to national VET reforms five years after the Recommendation and almost twelve years after the first ECVET-related meeting at European level is that the system is either on hold (17 countries), being tested (8 countries) or there is a policy commitment (13 countries) to implement.

But end users (which include VET institutions, learners and employers) are still waiting to see how such a system could add value to certification and learning experiences increase employability and enable individuals to embark on a lifelong learning process which can be measured and compared to other systems of further and higher education. At the end of the day, after each ECVET meeting or project, we need to

bear in mind that indecisiveness implies that end-users are being denied from achieving qualifications which are more transparent, which can be easily read by employers (at local, regional, national and European levels) and which can support the validation of informal and non-formal learning. The labour market is also being denied from assessing the profile of qualifications in a more concrete manner and across borders and economic sectors.

Twelve years to determine that the answer to ECVET is to be or not to be is not acceptable at all.

ECVET should not be seen as simply a toolbox because one is increasingly running the risk of having an empty toolbox rather than a system. It will be impossible to implement the so-called toolbox outside an agreed system of points and credits. On the other hand, one ought to build on some positive experiences in countries that have started gradual implementation of an ECVET system for instance in the French-speaking community of Belgium, Estonia, Hungary, Malta, Poland, and Finland. Romania is undergoing an experiment to make its ECVET-compatible credit system operational. Latvia and Lithuania are running pilot projects, while in Greece, Croatia, Italy and Slovakia there is no ECVET-related activity though a policy commitment has been formalised. In all countries where commitment was formalised, ECVET is being, or will be, developed in parallel with NQF developments, as part of broader reforms. But injecting doubt on whether ECVET should be based on a points system is conducive to delay in implementing this vital European tool to VET.

So far experience has shown that one of the strengths of ECVET is the learning outcomes approach and that the difficulty lies in adopting the use of

credit points. While learning outcomes are carriers of information to the labour market and among education and training providers, credit points demonstrate workloads – the breath and width of a qualification. Both are necessary and connected with one another. The ECTS is built on these two overarching pillars. I cannot agree with those who believe that a functional credit system can live without credit points. This is the same like claiming that you can create water without hydrogen or oxygen. A credit system should either give you credit or it is no credit system at all. Imagine going to a bank asking for credit and instead you are given recognition for your credit but not in a computable way!

It is time to render a service to our end users. The ECVET project cannot be expressed as to be or not to be! One acknowledges the fact that it is a challenging mission because it has to touch upon quality-assured elements of qualification systems such as assessment, validation (of theory and practice) and certification in national contexts and across diverse systems.

But the ECTS had the same complexity and yet it has established itself as the credit system that covers the qualifications in the upper zone of NQFs. It is time to adopt an ECTS version for ECVET which is clear and consistent enough to lodge all forms of learning in clusters of determined hours (more or less 25 hours for each credit) and give end-users a readable yardstick that increases transparency, parity of esteem with higher education and permeability. It is time to engage VET providers in testing ECVET using a credit system.

Not using credit points for ECVET and procrastinating implementation are not options anymore! Without computable credit in VET, end-users end up being end-losers. ■

Carlo Scatoli , policy officer at the European Commission

## The evaluation of ECVET



All European initiatives and instruments are regularly evaluated, and ECVET went through its first evaluation experience, which resulted in a report finalised in July 2014 ([http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/more\\_info/evaluations/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/more_info/evaluations/index_en.htm)).

This is not a report from the Commission. It is a report, of about 80 pages plus annexes, submitted to the Commission by external evaluators, a consortium led by the Lithuanian institute PPMI. The Commission is now preparing its own 10 page report to the European Parliament and the Council. And this is a one page article where

the main conclusions are distilled and some options are outlined as concerns the way ahead.

The ECVET Recommendation envisaged a trials and testing phase until 2012, and this was taken seriously, with 100 and more pilot projects focusing on ECVET issues. National authorities have been major promoters of pilot projects, testing interventions in their national system.

Some countries went beyond testing and did introduce wide changes in their VET systems. The French community of Belgium carried out a comprehensive reform of its VET system with certification by units of learning outcomes as a major feature. The Finnish VET qualification and credit systems, already based on units, are being brought closer to ECVET, in connection to the national qualification framework (NQF). ECVET triggered the development of a credit system for initial VET in Romania, where units were already in use. The well-established Maltese NQF has been changed to better cater for the validation of prior learning and to ensure that VET qualifications are composed of transferable units. The link to NQFs is important, and a number of countries will not take any ECVET action at system level until their NQF is well established.

Many projects supported better quality of mobility experiences, often with reference to particular sectors such as commerce or automotive. Their efforts

contributed to the good reputation of ECVET identified by the evaluators: it was widely appreciated, by policy makers as well as promoters, as a tool to support the quality of mobility and transnational cooperation, namely through its supporting documents such as the Learning Agreement.

**"The testing phase was taken seriously, with 100 and more pilot projects focusing on ECVET issues"**

This remains a largely qualitative statement: there is no systematic quantitative information on the use of ECVET in mobility projects (EU-funded or not). The Learning Agreement template can be downloaded by anybody and anybody can access the ECVET Toolkit, which assists mobility project promoters.

This free access certainly contributes to a wider use, but it doesn't allow data collection. It is particularly relevant that ECVET is also used within mobility networks beyond EU-funded mobility projects, such as NETINVET, which gathers VET providers in international commerce and logistics delivering qualifications at EQF levels 4 and 5.

Supporting mobility experiences and providing a reference for reforms have proven to be the main added value of ECVET.

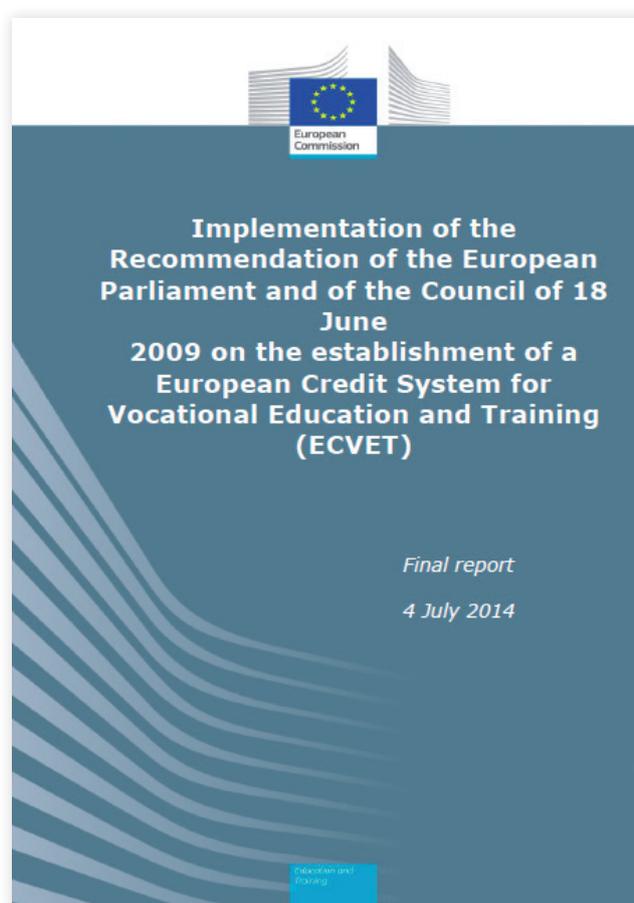
The evaluation confirmed that ECVET points are very seldom used. First, most VET mobility experiences, particularly at EQF level below 5, are short and fully integrated in the programme, so there is no need of points. Then, as ECVET points should be allocated based on their weight within a specific qualification, they are not useful for people who move to another programme. Finally, higher VET (EQF level 5 and above) more often uses ECTS points.

The ECVET Team had gained general appreciation among national bodies and other stakeholders, making available seminars, training, events and information resources. The users' guide was on the whole appreciated, but often needed to be complemented by support documents produced at national level. While the ECVET Users' Group was deemed to be appropriately playing its role of main representation and discussion body, the implementation structure as a whole was considered complex, with unclear relations between too many players.

The evaluators came up with proposals on how to address the issues identified and the Commission will take them into account in its report, which will also include some options for the way ahead. We shall also be able to take advantage of other sources, in particular the regular reports by Cedefop, but also information gathered from national authorities, stakeholders, and projects. A valuable contribution will

also come from debates which could take place in the ECVET Users' Group, the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training, the Directors General of VET, and the ECVET Forum that took place

in Vienna on 30-31 October 2014. The Commission report on ECVET should be adopted and published in February or March 2015 – stay tuned. ■



#### References

- PPMI, Final report of the external evaluation of ECVET, 2014, available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/more\\_info/evaluations/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/more_info/evaluations/index_en.htm)
- Cedefop, The development of ECVET in Europe, 2012;
- Monitoring ECVET implementation strategies in Europe, 2013;
- Monitoring ECVET implementation strategies in Europe in 2013, 2014, all available in the Cedefop website.

André Huigens, on behalf of the Dutch ECVET team

# The ECVET Experience - a way to implement ECVET in VET organisations



The Dutch team of ECVET experts developed a methodology to help VET institutions with their implementation of ECVET. Initially this was based on supporting the mobility of students travelling abroad.

The team's experience of providing workshops for one half or maybe one whole day was that it was not enough for the VET schools to be able to work with ECVET. The complexity of the move to outcome based thinking and units based on learning outcomes was simply too much. They observed that most VET schools needed more information and coaching on how to work with instruments like EQF, ECVET, and EQAVET etc.

## The idea they developed

The team organised a study trip which they called the 'ECVET Experience'. A group of Dutch teachers and coordinators from VET schools went abroad on a study trip to look at how to use the ECVET tools. The aim was to help these teachers to learn how to implement the ECVET tools for the mobility of students. For the first pilot field trip 4-5 Estonian and 4-5 Finnish teachers would join the Dutch teachers. On this trip the language they used during the working sessions was English. It was an authentic learning situation as all the ECVET tools would be used in a real context that involved staff from three countries. Besides the explanation of EQF and the meaning and use of ECVET, 'ECVET Experience' worked

with the Memorandum of Understanding, the Learning Agreement, Learning Units, Assessment and Transfer of Credit. The field trip (and training) took five working days from Monday until Friday: more than 40 hours!

The first part of the training took place in Estonia, the second part in Finland. The change of context enabled the facilitators to look from a new perspective during the trip. Two experts from the national coordination team in the Netherlands moderated and facilitated this ECVET Experience.

The trip was financed with Leonardo da Vinci Mobility money for staff – from a VETpro budget.

## The target group

The target group for this study trip were VET teachers or coordinators who were responsible or already involved in student mobility. In addition curricula developers and educational developers also participated. The participants came from eight different VET schools. In the second ECVET Experience even more countries and schools will be involved. In this second situation the ECVET Experience will focus on a network of VET schools that provide ECVET mobility experiences for their students.

### **The learning outcomes of this ECVET Experience**

Teachers are able to make steps towards using the EQF and more specific ECVET. This enables them to recognise and validate mobility within or outside their own borders.

### **The programme for this study/training week**

The following description is an overview of the programme of the group in the first pilot. The second pilot was for an existing network of VET schools, so their programme was slightly different. The programme was set up to allow participants to work in authentic learning situations and develop their own processes for using ECVET to support the mobility of their students.

The ECVET Experience aimed to give the first pilot group an opportunity to experience the same context as their students, although their time abroad would have different purposes and aims. It was an eye opener for the participants to work with colleagues from abroad. When they started the programme on Monday they had to ask themselves what they needed to know from each other. This had to happen before they could begin to take any

steps in thinking about units. They needed to know much more about the educational programmes of the countries. And many other questions arose e.g.: how much common language and understanding exists when we talk about competences, skills and knowledge? What are the pedagogic approaches and prevalent learning styles in each country?

On Wednesday the group met officials from Kotsukoda - a competent body of Estonia. This provided an opportunity to discuss the difficulties associated with a mobility process. When the group moved to Finland they were hosted by a private school organisation.

This new context had a very positive impact on the discussions. On Thursday the group was ready to build a more or less complete ECVET system using the online ECVET toolkit. For this they worked in pairs and afterwards each pair presented their progress of using ECVET. On Friday they completed their ECVET Experience by meeting a representative from the labour market of Finland. The representative's experience of using ECVET in his company enabled him to encourage the group's development of ECVET from the perspective of the labour market.

All the background papers, outcomes and pictures of the ECVET Experience were shared in a drop box account.

### **Follow up**

In response to a request from the participants, the Dutch ECVET national coordination point organised a follow up meeting. This half day session took place six months after the ECVET Experience. The ECVET Experience has had positive outcomes and all the VET schools that participated in the ECVET Experience are now working on the professionalisation and implementation of ECVET. The participants created their own Community of Practitioners and asked the facilitators to continue to organise opportunities to meet. The next meeting has been planned and will be hosted by the national coordination point. ■

For more information please contact the Dutch ECVET national coordination point:  
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or André Huigens or Ronald Kloeg who were the facilitators for the first two pilots.  
[a.huigens@wellant.nl](mailto:a.huigens@wellant.nl) or  
[rkloeg@onderwijsgroepstilburg.nl](mailto:rkloeg@onderwijsgroepstilburg.nl)

Andriana Georgieva, Coordinator of the National Team of ECVET experts 2014

# National ECVET team in Bulgaria 2012-2014: from promotion to introduction



By tradition the Bulgarian VET system has been centralised, based on the State Educational Requirements (VET standards), and organised through a list of national professions and qualifications which are divided according to their level and vocational area.

In the last ten years the role of the national VET system has completely changed in order to facilitate individuals' lifelong learning and increase their employability and social integration. In response to national and European challenges, Bulgaria introduced reforms to ensure the VET education providers could meet the increasing demand for qualifications from the Bulgarian and European labour markets.

Bulgarian VET reforms began in 2007 with improvements to the VET standards which have become outcome oriented. In 2011, based on a series of pilot projects and intensive dialogue with social partners, a new model for VET standards was proposed. This new model is based on ECVET principles; uses units of knowledge, skills and competences; is linked to the NQF/EQF Levels; and includes criteria for the quality assurance of assessment.

Further reforms to the VET system occurred in 2012 with the official adoption of the National Qualification Framework and the appointment of the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET) as the national coordination point for ECVET in Bulgaria. In the same year the national team of ECVET experts was appointed as part of the Human Resource Development Centre - the National Agency for Lifelong Learning Programme.

The main roles of the national team were to support the national authorities and NAVET's ECVET expert group in:

- promoting the use of the ECVET instruments in the Bulgarian VET community;
- introducing the ECVET principles in the national qualification system.

From 2012-2013 the national team of ECVET experts focused on coordinating the efforts and vision of different organisations in the VET sector e.g. the representatives from the Ministry of Education and Science; the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour; the National Coordination Point for ECVET - the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training; the higher education institutions; the VET schools; employers' organisations and NGOs in the VET sector. The team's focus was on promotion and improving the sector's understanding of ECVET. This was achieved through:

- counseling, advisory work and the exchange of good practice;
- the newly established ECVET website;
- the provision of five national conferences and two regional seminars for employers;
- three thematic publications and an ECVET brochure;
- four electronic newsletters;



ECVET Bulgarians experts

- more than 100 consultations on the ECVET system at international and national events.

New VET legislation has been developed and proposed for approval by the Parliament. This would ensure the introduction of the ECVET principles and tools in Bulgaria according to the national context and the characteristics of the national VET system.

To support the implementation of ECVET in a lifelong learning context, three new members joined the ECVET expert team in 2014 – they represent the human resource, youth and adult learning sectors in Bulgaria. The new ECVET team members' work is focused on increasing the awareness of non-formal and informal learning among the employers, human resource and career consultants, adult learning organisations and young people in Bulgaria. Some special ECVET events for the youth sector took place during 2014. These included:

- presentations on ECVET and the other European instruments as a way of

increasing the transparency of qualifications (this was a joint seminar with Euroguidance, Europass, Youthpass, Eurydice and the Eurodesk centres in Bulgaria;

- guidance on strengthening the capacity of youth organisations to help them to apply ECVET in their learning and work mobility programmes and in their applications for transnational youth initiatives under the Erasmus+ programme.

During 2012-13 the national ECVET team established a good basis for cooperation with the business and employers organisations. This was based on national team's project and has been also strengthened through a series of actions and initiatives in 2014. In this year there has been a focus on the ICT and tourism sectors – this included an ICT Sectoral Framework seminar and a human resource and strategy development conference for tourism in September 2014. A working group which comprises representatives from the National VET Agency; the European Software Institute – Centre East-

ern Europe; Directors and teachers of VET schools; and private VET providers in ICT sector has been created. This group is helping to develop and promote a series of changes in the design of the ICT study programmes which are now based on the EQF and ECVET principles.

By working together, the Ministry of Education and Science, NAVET – the national ECVET contact point, and the National ECVET team have introduced significant change in the national qualification and VET system. In July 2014 the National VET Act introduced a national credit system based on learning outcomes and a national system for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Considering what has already been achieved in relation to ECVET, and in the context of the ongoing reforms in the national VET system, the activities of the Bulgarian team of ECVET experts will now focus on the quality aspects of implementation. In addition in 2015 the team will work on ensuring greater synergy in the application of the European instruments e.g. ECVET, ECTS, EQF/NQF, Europass etc. ■

Fatih Tokatli, Director of External Affairs, Training and Projects - MESS Turkish Employers' Association of Metal Industries

## ECVET in Turkey



Turkey has long been in search of a quantum leap to reach the productivity and competitiveness levels of Europe. This has been so since the establishment of the Republic in 1923 but the convergence in economic terms has been gradual, though periodically progress has accelerated.

In between periods of acceleration and deceleration, the debate has consistently focused on how best to train our people and how to reform our VET system so as to create a more highly qualified workforce.

In these debates, a Western European orientation has always dominated, culminating in the official adoption of a dual system for apprenticeship training. However, a model that could provide feedback from enterprise to VET providers has been lacking - the agreed solution has been the development of occupational standards and vocational qualifications.

Through a series of reforms from the early 1990s and in the context of Turkey's EU process gaining pace, Turkey established a Vocational Qualifications Authority in 2006. This body oversees the development of occupational standards, vocational qualifications and the examination and certification system.

These changes ran in parallel to the reform of the VET curricula. This has led to the creation of a modular and more flexible structure and includes learning outcomes with competence based assessment. With the launch of ECVET by the European Commission in the first decade of the millennium, a new overarching framework was put in place that strategically informs these reform efforts. Even if this was not a function that was intended by the Commission

when it set out its thinking for ECVET, it has become a powerful stimulator for reform in Turkey. It has encouraged the move towards the reform of the VET curricula, and the development of transparent programmes which are modular and competence based.

MESS, the Turkish Employers' Association of Metal Industries and its umbrella organisation TISK, the Turkish Confederation of Employer Associations in Turkey have taken a pioneering role for ushering in this system which includes unrelenting advocacy work as well as direct investment. To date MESS has developed 72 occupational standards and 46 vocational qualifications covering the metal and automotive sectors. This is the highest number of any institution in Turkey which has engaged in this type of work. The task ahead is daunting. Potentially millions of workers will have to be certified using these qualifications and the "recognition of prior learning outcomes" can only become a reality if effective examination processes are in place.

Turkey's Department for Vocational and Technical Education and Training has recently redesigned the VET curricula using an ECVET based credit system. This has been possible due to the stimulating effect of ECVET. This means that Turkey has met another milestone in creating a more flexible VET system which allows more mobility, not only with EU countries but within the education system and between education and employment.



**"To date MESS has developed 72 occupational standards and 46 vocational qualifications covering the metal and automotive sectors"**

In line with MESS and TISK's pioneering mission in VET, we recently implemented and completed the "Mobility in the Automotive Sector through ECVET-MAS ECVET" project with support from the Leonardo da Vinci Innovation Transfer Programme and finance from the Turkish National Agency. This project focused on the application of ECVET in the automotive sector. It sought to address the evolving qualification needs of this sector while contributing to boost the employability of workers and the competitiveness of enterprises. Specifically, the project aimed at verifying and recognising learning outcomes achieved by individuals in formal,

non-formal and informal environments. In this project, we focused on piloting ECVET in all its dimensions in order to prepare the automotive sector for implementing ECVET within the national VET systems. Throughout the project we maintained close cooperation with Turkey's Ministry of National education and the results have been presented to the Ministry for their consideration.

In this project, we also tried to understand the extent to which the current legislation allows international mobility. This included the completion of simulations or case studies to test the suitability of Turkish legislation for the recognition of learning outcomes gained through short term mobility between Turkey and EU countries, namely Italy and Germany. We have seen that the basic structure and instruments for the recognition of such learning outcomes are in place but that certain restrictions still exist and need to be addressed.

As social partner organisations, we see this testing process as the most important added value we can bring to the development of VET. Working with our member enterprises; with trade union organisations as partners; with schools and national authorities; we can explore the possibilities, test ideas and help to identify the steps that need to be taken.

Reform is not easy. It is painful most of the time. ECVET, on the other hand, is a VET reform that does most of the conceptualising and justification for you. However, to implement ECVET in practice, huge efforts are needed to create awareness and raise the level of information and understanding of stakeholders. ■

Katherine Latta, Head of European Programmes - UK NARIC (home of the ECVET National Contact Point for England)

# A Transfer of Innovation Project Tests ECVET 'In Practice'



Partners in England, Finland and Austria have spent two years organising a Leonardo da Vinci – Transfer of Innovation project “Developing ECVET in Practice” (DECViP).

Starting in 2012, the project sought to develop further the use of ECVET principles and tools through testing and sharing of innovative practice between the project partners. Coordinated by the ECVET National Contact Point for England (UK NARIC), the team included VTCT (an English organisation which designs and awards vocational qualifications), Sedu (a vocational

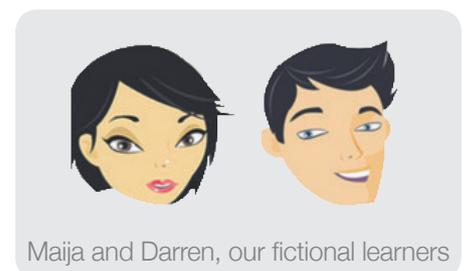
school in Finland), 3s research laboratory (an Austrian non-profit research association and authors of ‘Let’s Go Europe!’ - a 2012 guide on ECVET) and Ofqual (the English regulator of vocational qualifications).

The project’s aim was to prepare guidance, tools and examples which vocational practitioners could use as a “practical guide”. In order to accomplish this, the partners tested ECVET using a “step-by-step” approach based on geographical mobility.

In the early phase of the project, the team reviewed how ECVET points might be used, in particular in relation to existing national approaches to credit and to each other’s systems. Methods of allocating points were tested, and were applied to different units and qualifications. The outcomes were compared (in relation to units in the same system, and between the English and Finnish systems). The findings of the testing indicated that due to the differences in the way credits are assigned in national systems, the differences between qualifications, and the variation in the scope of one “full-time” year, the project would be more productive if it focused on the learning outcomes. The most practical approach was to compare learning outcomes, select appropriate outcomes to be achieved,

and then to award credit to the learner based on the credit assigned to the selected learning outcomes or units in the ‘home’ qualification. It is interesting to note that this finding was echoed in the July 2014 report on the implementation of ECVET which stated that “the implementation of ECVET should focus on credit as assessed learning outcomes and units of learning outcomes, and it should be made clear to all stakeholders that credit points are a supplementary and secondary element of ECVET rather than its main focus.”<sup>(1)</sup>

Following this first phase of the project, Sedu and VTCT collaborated closely on using ECVET for geographical mobility. Using a “step-by-step” approach they identified areas that needed further work as well as those that would prove easy to arrange. Although real-life learners could not be involved in this type of project, the team focused on “fictional” learners, hairdressing students “Maija” from Finland and “Darren” from England, to ensure the testing re-



Maija and Darren, our fictional learners

(1) [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/more\\_info/evaluations/docs/education/ecvet14\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/more_info/evaluations/docs/education/ecvet14_en.pdf)



Photos of Kirsi Lounela of Sedu and Stephen Vickers of VTCT presenting on the project at the DECVIP final dissemination event in London on 25 September 2014

tained a practical focus on how the process would operate. Throughout the work, VTCT and Sedu were supported by an English training centre, Highbury College in Portsmouth. By this phase of the project, the European templates for the Memorandum of Understanding and Learning Agreement had become available and therefore the team tested them, discussed how they would complete them and what information would be included. The project findings included a suggestion for adding a section to the document which would set out which body is responsible for practical elements such as travel logistics and insurance - as these are real considerations for practitioners. The completed template of the Learning Agreement for “Maija” is available as an example as part of the NetECVET toolkit.

The testing phase demonstrated that, in practice, a lot of time is needed for preparation and negotiation before mobility can take place. The process of comparing learning outcomes was detailed and can be time-consuming. Additionally, an area identified as potentially needing further investigation was the issue of assessor qualifica-

tions, as countries may have different requirements for the qualifications held by those individuals who are permitted to assess qualifications.

The guide, “Make It Count”, was based on the lessons learned during the project. Using the fictional learners “Maija” and “Darren” to help illustrate the practical use of ECVET, the guide includes information and advice on the use of ECVET, the use of the Memoranda of Understanding and Learner Agreements, and practical issues that are faced during learner mobility. It is as concise and ‘jargon-free’ as possible so as to appeal to practitioners seeking clear information on how ECVET can be used for their learners. It follows the “before, during, after” format, to lead practitioners through the process, emphasising the importance of the “before” phase. It also includes a section to explain “Why Use ECVET?” to show the benefits to practitioners. For example, “Maija’s” school in Finland states that “*We decided to use ECVET because ... it guides its users to keep the focus on the most essential: the learning outcomes. Step by step it offers a common language for learner mobility throughout Europe.*”

An important part of the project was the focus on sharing the outcomes with ECVET Experts in the partner countries. The project team comprises organisations which are members of national ECVET Expert groups and therefore they were well placed to discuss the findings with fellow experts at a national level.

The project finished in September 2014 with a final dissemination event in London attended by ECVET Experts, practitioners and policymakers. The team shared the outcomes of the guide and discussed how to use the guidance to support ECVET in practice. Although now concluded, the results of the project will be available to use in the future; copies of the guide have been distributed and anyone can access the electronic version of the guide online at [www.decvip.eu](http://www.decvip.eu). The ECVET NCP for England is happy to answer questions and provide additional information on the project and its findings.

While the project worked with “theoretical” learners, the partners are pleased to say that, building on this project, the first round of real students will be travelling from Sedu in Seinäjoki to Highbury College in Portsmouth for ECVET mobility placements in November 2014. ■

**Project information:**

[www.decvip.eu](http://www.decvip.eu)

**Project partners:**

ECVET NCP for England

([www.ecctis.co.uk/ecvet](http://www.ecctis.co.uk/ecvet))

VTCT ([www.vtct.org.uk](http://www.vtct.org.uk))

Sedu ([www.sedu.fi](http://www.sedu.fi))

3s ([www.3s.co.at](http://www.3s.co.at))

Ofqual ([www.ofqual.gov.uk](http://www.ofqual.gov.uk))

Claudia Ball, DEKRA Akademie GmbH

## euVETsupport



euVETsupport is an online support structure for those with an interest in the practical application of ECVET and EQF in vocational education and training in Europe.

It has a special focus on the transport and logistics sector. It provides, through the online platform, information on the EQF and ECVET. This includes practical examples of how these European instruments have been applied; opportunities for exchange and communication among VET professionals in Europe; online learning such as tutorials, courses, webinars and workshops

for those who are using the European instruments to apply the learning outcomes approach.

The main aim of the euVETsupport initiative is to make the European instruments such as the EQF and ECVET, and the learning outcomes approach that underpins these instruments, more concrete and tangible for VET practitioners in schools, companies, VET providers and other organisations. To achieve this aim the euVETsupport consortium which began in 2012, under the leadership of DEKRA Akademie (DE), has investigated and developed support structures that promote the practical implementation and the European dimension of these instruments.

The first task of the euVETsupport project was to tie up the loose ends of its predecessor project - EQF Predict ([www.project-predict.eu](http://www.project-predict.eu)). This involved investigating what are the practical issues associated with implementing the learning outcomes approach in the context of the EQF; what is necessary to apply ECVET successfully within mobility activities; and how can ECVET fit into the recognition and validation processes of prior (non-formal and informal) learning. The work emphasised the particular needs of the two major target groups of the euVETsupport project: employers within the transport and logistics sector; and VET providers in

this field. This included an investigation into their needs and interests in relation to the application of these European instruments and led to the production of three guides for the sector:

- the practical application of EQF in daily VET practice;
- the practical implementation of ECVET mobility in initial VET;
- ECVET and Prior Learning, Assessment and Recognition – their application to VET practice.

**"The main aim of the euVETsupport initiative is to make the European instruments more concrete and tangible for VET practitioners in schools, companies, VET providers and other organisations"**

These guides provided an introduction for VET professionals and they offered very valuable insights into the interest shown by the sector and the support that was needed with regard to the application of the EQF and ECVET. The completion of this work, started by EQF Predict, helped the team organising the euVETsupport project to identify clear priorities for their own work.

## The euVETsupport online portal

The heart of the euVETsupport initiative is an online portal which provides information about the EQF, ECVET and other European instruments. The online portal aims to help VET practitioners and others to understand and to use the European instruments. The euVETsupport portal includes:

- short videos on different ways of using the European instruments in a VET and human resource (HR) context. The examples are straight to the point and start with the daily challenges facing VET and HR professionals;
- general information on the EQF and ECVET. This information has been prepared and selected for VET staff and HR professionals;
- a virtual learning area with online courses and webinars on the fundamental features of the European instruments and their practical application;
- more advanced tools and services such as a thematic library, access to a pool of experts and a consultation forum which offers expert and peer support.

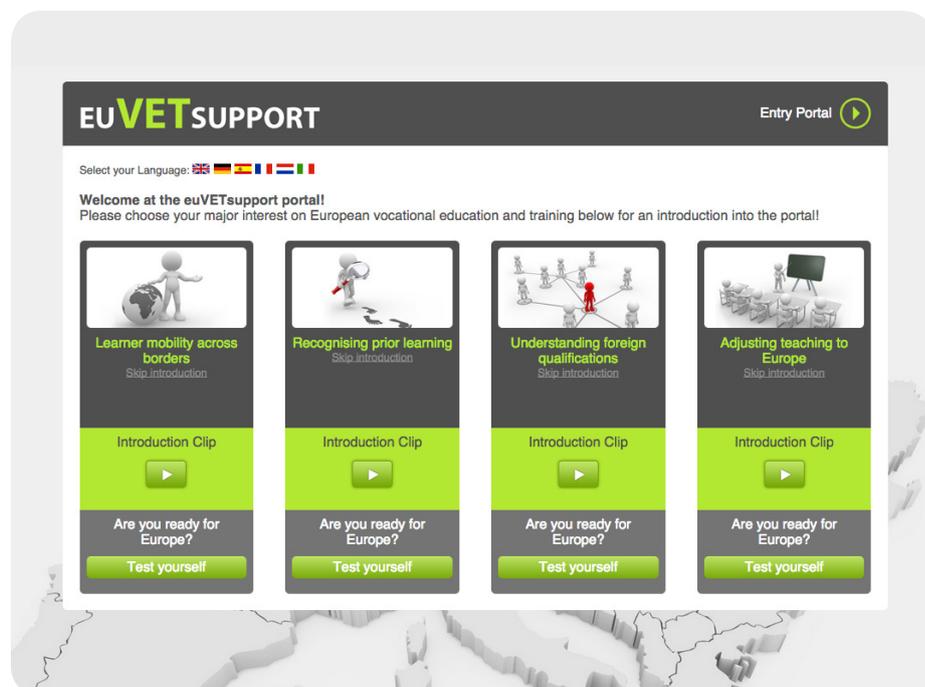
## The videos

These are for VET professionals and highlight, in a straightforward way, how practical daily challenges can be addressed by using the European instruments. All the videos tell short stories about using the European instruments

e.g. an entrepreneur who needs to fill an open position in his company; an HR professional, and an education manager at a regional training institution who are looking for ways to attract and train young people for work in transport and logistics; and two programme managers in VET providers who are looking for ways that they can benefit from applying a European approach to their work. The videos demonstrate the practical and concrete challenges professionals face in their day-to-day work which can be addressed by using the European instruments. In some cases the terms “EQF” and “ECVET” are not used in the videos – this helps to keep the focus on addressing the issues or problems facing the different target groups.

The videos are designed to be used by those who have a ‘multiplier effect’ in their system e.g. the national ECVET experts. The problem-focused nature of the videos helps to introduce VET and HR professionals to the European instruments and how they can support them in their daily practice. The videos, as well as the other euVETsupport tools, are available in different European languages. They can be accessed on the euVETsupport portal and on YouTube. The videos cover the following topics:

- learner mobility across borders;
- recognising prior learning;
- understanding foreign qualifications;
- adjusting teaching to respond to Europe;
- an introduction into how the EQF and ECVET work.



### The information and learning facilities

As well as the short videos, the euVETsupport portal provides basic information about the EQF and ECVET, and its implementation in different contexts and Member States. This section of the portal uses a clear 'target group' approach to address the specific needs and interests of HR and VET professionals.

The portal also provides virtual learning opportunities for VET and HR professionals in order for them to access more advanced and comprehensive material and training in how to work with the EQF and ECVET. This training is organised through expert webinars on topics such as "Introduction to the European instruments" or "Ensuring quality in learner mobility". These expert webinars as well as other lectures and presentations are also available in the euVETsupport learning area. In the future more videotapes relating to the European instruments and their practical implementation will be added. Finally, the euVETsupport project offers online courses on topics such as "Implementing ECVET mobility" and "Working with the learning outcomes approach". These are available for those who want to get a deeper insight into the practical application of the European instruments.

### Supporting VET professionals with different experiences of the European instruments

A key part of the euVETsupport structure is the ability to respond to the needs of VET professionals who have very different levels of prior knowledge and experience with the European instruments. While the videos primarily address the needs and interests of those who are new to the European context, it is important to also support those VET and HR professionals who have with very specific questions, concerns, interests and needs. This is achieved through the 'learning offers' such as the webinars, the tutorials and the online courses. Here the focus is on helping those who already know about the European instruments but want more detail on how to apply them in a practical context. euVETsupport has a library of information from a group of experts. This, together with the consultation forum, addresses the needs of those professionals who already have experience in the field and want to exchange practice and discuss new ideas with their peers and experts in the field. This helps them to learn even more about the practical application of the EQF and ECVET and to improve their VET practice by learning from and with their peers from abroad.

### To be continued

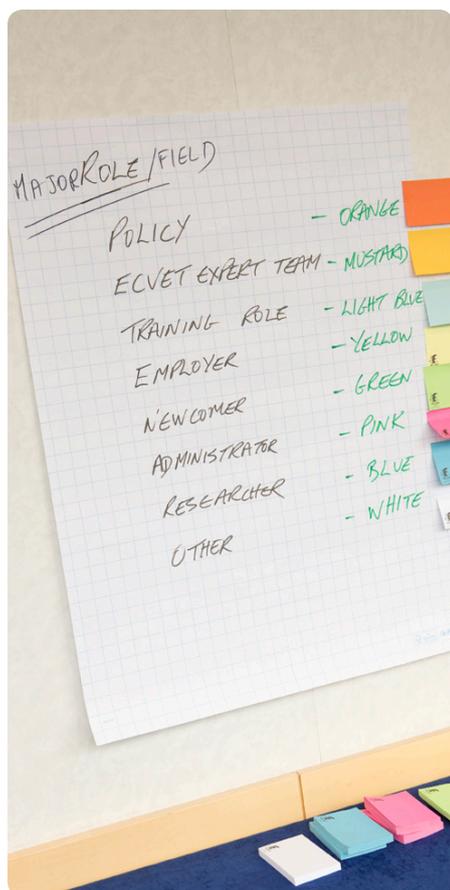
The euVETsupport project, funded by the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Commission, completed its work by organising two interesting and interactive workshop for VET professionals and those with a multiplier role in Berlin in September 2014. The work in the euVETsupport project will continue through other current and future transport and logistics projects. The first project taking over the baton is the METALOG project ([www.project-metalog.eu](http://www.project-metalog.eu)) working on a Sectoral Qualifications Framework for Transport and Logistics. Other partners have expressed their interest to join the initial consortium and the euVETsupport portal will be a supporting background structure for EQF and ECVET related projects within transport and logistics. Organisations and networks that are interested in this activity are invited to use or build on the existing euVETsupport structures. ■

The euVETsupport portal can be accessed at [www.euVETsupport.eu](http://www.euVETsupport.eu)

The project coordinator can be contacted at [registration@euVETsupport.eu](mailto:registration@euVETsupport.eu)

# ECVET team

## Work programme 2015



The first 3 years of the ECVET TEAM activities were dedicated to set up the secretariat and the structure to support the ECVET users' group members (UGM), to accompany them and network members in the first steps of the ECVET implementation, to launch cooperation activities between ECVET network members and VET actors in general and to promote networking and communication activities. The 4<sup>th</sup> year has focused on reinforcing the networking activity through launching the collaborative platform of the ECVET Communities of Practice and setting up different kinds of Workshop for UGM, PLA for coordinators of National teams of ECVET experts or dedicated to specific topic such as the linkage between VET and HE.

### The 2015 work programme will be in line with the previous year, aiming at:

- Reinforcing the PLA activities on specific issues (such as ECVET and Labor Market);
- Exploring and/or strengthening possible cooperation with other European initiatives<sup>(1)</sup>.

### The ECVET TEAM usual events are confirmed also for the 2015:

- The Annual FORUM, that gathers together all the ECVET Community, will take place at the end of October 2015;
- The catalogue seminars on Mobility and Long Life Learning will be repeated;
- ECVET MAG will update the ECVET Community with three editions;
- Interested stakeholders can ask the organization of an ECVET customized seminar.

The first appointment for 2015 will be an ECVET and Mobility Seminar that will be held in Barcelona on 28-30 January.

The full and detailed calendar for 2015 will be published on the next ECVET MAG. Stay tuned!

(1) A joint working group ECVET/EQAVET has been settled in 2014 and participants have already met twice. In 2015 the joint working group activities will continue, so to produce the final results by the end of May.



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