

magazine

- 02** **2010: a bundle of initiatives and events for VET and ECVET**
- 03** **Enhancing transnational mobility for master craftsperson trainees - SME Master Plus**
- 06** **The OPIR project - ready for recognised mobility in 2010**
- 10** **Identifying transferable competences in the field of performing arts - CAPE-SV project**
- 13** **ECVET and the French Community of Belgium reform of vocational education and training**
- 14** **Using ECVET for recognising knowledge, skills and competence**
- 20** **What's New**



The views expressed in this Bulletin do not necessarily reflect the opinion or position of the European Commission neither of the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency. The Commission and the Agency cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained herein.

Editorial

2010: a bundle of initiatives and events for VET and ECVET

João Delgado, European Commission, Head of Unit Vocational Training and Leonardo da Vinci

Welcome to the ECVET Magazine which associates the successful ECVET Bulletin published as a result of the pilot project co-operation and the newsletter of the ECVET Network. This two-in-one new magazine will propose to experts and all readers interested in ECVET, information and in depth articles on the development of the European credit system for vocational education and training. The new ECVET Magazine materializes the enhanced synergy between the different initiatives and activities developed in the field of ECVET, at European and national level.

The first semester of 2010 has been of crucial importance, not only for ECVET but also for VET as a whole.

In a moment of crisis, the European Commission recently presented its new vision for the future of vocational education and training in the perspective of 2020¹. Vocational education and training is chosen by an average of around 50% of all learners in upper secondary education. However, the sector needs to be modernised to make it a more attractive and high-quality option, so that it provides young people with the right skills to find a suitable job and adults with an opportunity to update skills throughout their working life. Therefore, the Commission wants to encourage more people to take up vocational education and in parallel to improve the quality of the training on offer and to make it easier to move between jobs and countries.

These plans outline several possible ways to give vocational education and training a new impetus. Ensuring that access to training and qualifications is flexible and open at all stages of life, promoting mobility to make it easier to gain experience abroad, or in a different sector of the economy are among the policies to be promoted. The plans also stress the importance of ensuring the highest possible

quality of education and training and providing more opportunities for disadvantaged groups such as school drop-outs, the low-skilled and unemployed, people with migrant backgrounds and the disabled.

The Commission's plans build on the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart and inclusive growth, and will also link in with the upcoming 'Youth on the Move' initiative which will support wider learning and mobility opportunities for all young people.

The Copenhagen Process on enhanced European co-operation in vocational education and training was launched in 2002 and is reviewed every two years. It has boosted the development of a common approach to evaluation based on learning outcomes and ECVET is one of the major instruments which make concrete and tangible this common approach.

In relation to ECVET, the European governance and cooperation system agreed by the directors general for vocational training and by the advisory committee for VET has been materialised. The users' group was established and met for the first time on 27 and 28 May. On this occasion, the ECVET work program for the next two years was discussed and benefited from the comments expressed by Member States and European social partners' representatives. The initial work program will be finalised at the steering committee meeting at the end of June.

Another significant milestone was reached with the ECVET call for proposals launched in March and whose deadline for application is 16 of July 2010. This call is intended to support national development of ECVET for reaching the goals as set up in the Recommendation deadlines and we hope to receive high-quality proposals.



The important spring event is the launch of the European ECVET network, as specified in the ECVET Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council. The institutional members of the network have been appointed by the Member States, the European Social partners and the national Lifelong Learning Programme agencies. Very soon, a call will be launched towards those acting in vocational education and training, inviting operators to participate in this network.

The next few steps in the development of ECVET will be crucial if we want to respect the rendezvous in 2012, as recommended by the European Parliament and by the Council. Therefore, it is necessary to combine all the efforts of all stakeholders in the framework of the European ECVET network.

ECVET Magazine - One information source for all European activities concerning ECVET

This first issue of the ECVET Magazine is a joint activity between the team in charge of ECVET pilot projects' cooperation, who used to publish the ECVET Bulletin, and the ECVET Network support team. It informs, in a single periodical publication, about all European level activities in the area of ECVET.

The Magazine will be published five times a year. All five issues will have a common section giving the latest news on policy developments at European and national level. Two issues (in summer and winter) will focus more specifically on the activities of the ECVET Network. The additional three issues will provide information on the work and outcomes of the ECVET pilot projects.

¹ European Commission (2010) A new impetus for European cooperation in Vocational Education and Training to support the Europe 2020 strategy http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/news2388_en.htm

Enhancing transnational mobility for master craftsperson trainees - SME Master Plus

Article written by Karin Luomi Messerer (3s) based on interviews with project promoter and partners

The SME MASTER Plus¹ project aims at enhancing and consolidating cross-border mobility of master craftsperson trainees. The partners involved in the project expect that this will also have a positive effect on transnational mobility of apprentices: A master craftsperson who spent some time during the training abroad might also be motivated to send apprentices abroad. The target groups of the project are training centres and competent institutions dealing with mobility of master craftsperson trainees and skilled people who wish to acquire this qualification. One of the main aims of the project is the implementation of an international network of training providers in master craftsperson training on the basis of mutual trust. ECVET is seen as a means for supporting the establishment of mutual trust in order to foster mobility.

“We see a lot of interest from the side of our member organisations in Germany in increasing mobility and people believe ECVET can help this purpose. For example we have requests from other economic sectors to use our approach but at this stage we have to tell them to wait as we need to test the tools first”.

-Christian Sperle,
project leader, ZDH – German
Chamber of Skilled Crafts

The SME MASTER Plus project focuses on the following crafts sectors: bakery, floristry, hairdressing and woodworking (joinery). It is being undertaken in two stages:

- The first (and current) stage focuses on the implementation of ECVET principles such as formulation of learning outcomes, design of units, templates for the memorandum of understanding (MoU) and the learning agreement (LA) for the master baker qualification. Partners are also reflecting upon the requirements for assessment, validation and recognition of units in the context of transnational mobility.
- The second stage concerns the methodology-transfer to the three other sectors mentioned above. Furthermore, the different tools (e.g. learning outcomes matrices, MoU, LA) will be tested through concrete mobility experiences (from autumn 2010 to spring 2011). The feedback of the learners / people involved in these exchanges will help fine-tune and improve the “ECVET toolboxes” in all sectors.



Description of units of learning outcomes in learning outcomes matrices

The methodical basis underlying the approach of SME MASTER Plus is the learning outcomes matrix which displays – as a kind of common reference “grid” - the learning outcomes acquired upon receiving the master craftsperson qualification, grouped into units, and described with ECVET points. In terms of methodology, SME Master Plus adapted the VQTS model², which provides a structured description of work-related competences in a vocational field by means of a competence matrix, to continuing VET. Although the structure of the master craftsperson training programmes in the partner countries is different, the job specifications of master craftsperson are rather similar. Therefore - to overcome system specificities - the learning outcomes matrix is focussing on the working process in order to facilitate comparison of qualifications.

1 <http://sme-master.schnittsteller.de/>

2 <http://www.vocationalqualification.net/>

Three main steps for developing a learning outcomes matrix as used by SME Master Plus

In a first step, the major areas of activity (core tasks or core activities) of a holder of a master craftsperson qualification in the specific field are identified. Each core task or core activity is at the same time understood as title of the respective unit. Additionally, some cross sectional learning outcomes have also been identified.

In a second step, learning outcomes which are required for the implementation of core work tasks in a particular area of activity of the master craftsperson are allocated to particular units. Learning outcomes are described in a comprehensive manner and, when appropriate, they are represented in steps of learning outcomes that build on one another. The units and the learning outcomes allocated to each unit are identified based on analysing training regulations and curricula as well as on consultation of professional experts. They are first described for one national context and then discussed, modified and fine tuned on bi- or trilateral basis. The final matrix includes common units which can be found in qualifications of all partner systems (listed at the beginning) as well as units that are only relevant for one country ("country specific units"). It is on purpose that the description of learning outcomes does not explicitly distinguish between knowledge, skills and competence. The partnership considers that too detailed descriptions would not improve the understanding of commonalities across qualifications and would on contrary create the impression of a process that is too heavy.

Note: For some countries, the amount of detail given in the matrix descriptions is not sufficient. Therefore the SME MASTER Plus partnership decided to provide the possibility to include further specifications in an annex to the learning outcomes' descriptions, if required. For example, in the learning outcomes matrix for the master baker craftsperson, such specifications could refer to working techniques and methods, tools, machines, materials.

In a third step, ECVET points are allocated to each unit. The SME MASTER Plus partnership has decided to work on basis of percentage. This is more feasible for experts than using a "60 points per year" convention, especially given that in some of the partner countries no formal training programme for a master craftsperson exists. According to the project, the whole master craftsperson qualification represents 100 ECVET points (= 100%). ECVET points are then allocated to units reflecting the proportional/ relative weight of a unit in relation to the whole qualification. It is accepted that the relative weight differs from system to system and hence ECVET points will be allocated individually by each project partner based on consultations with national experts.

Figure 1: Learning Outcomes Matrix Master Baker Craftsperson - Overview³

Title of the Qualification	Master Baker Craftsperson				
Total ECVET Points	100				
EQF Level					
NQF Level	AT	DE	FR	NO	SI
Units of Learning outcomes	U1	Accounting and Controlling			
	U2	Budgeting, Calculation and Financing			
	U3	Entrepreneurship			
	U4	Human Resources Management			
	U5	Tutoring			
	U6	Marketing and Sales Management			
	U7	Production of bread, small breads and rolls			
	U8	Production of cakes, pastries and cookies			
	U9	Hygiene, Food-Safety and Food Quality			
	U10	Quality and Security Management			
	U11	Vocationally-specific Business Administration			
	U12	Production of snacks and sandwiches (country specific unit)			
	U13	Communication in an international context (country specific unit)			
Cross sectional Learning Outcomes	To acquire the learning outcomes properly the following qualifications are essential: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • s/he is able to act with social and ecological responsibility, • s/he is able to adopt a quality management, • s/he is able to use information and communication technology. 				

³ The learning outcomes matrix should also include the EQF level. So far, they have not been included because the respective NQF/EQF levels of the Master craftsperson qualifications in the partner countries have not been defined yet and the EQF referencing processes have not been completed.

Figure 2: Learning Outcomes Matrix Master Baker Craftsperson - Unit 7

Title of the Qualification	Master Baker Craftsperson			<h1>U7</h1>	
EQF Level					
Generic Title of the Unit	Production of bread, small breads and rolls				
ECVET points / Relative Weight	AT	DE	FR	NO	SI
Learning outcomes					
<p>S/he is able to choose ingredients, production methods and techniques for various types of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • white, brown and mixed bread, • traditional, specific, dietary and organic bread, • small breads and rolls. • S/he is able to apply the recipes. 	<p>S/he is able to demonstrate mastery in the production of these various types of bread, small breads and rolls.</p>			<p>S/he is able to design, decorate and present these various types of bread, small breads and rolls according to customers' orders.</p>	
				<p>S/he is able to modify existing recipes and production methods of bread, small breads and rolls.</p>	
				<p>S/he is able to develop innovative recipes and production methods of bread, small breads and rolls.</p>	

Partnership agreements, MoU

The SME MASTER Plus partnership has already established and discussed draft templates for a MoU and a LA (including the personal transcript template). The learning outcomes matrix is the central element of the MoU. The MoU can be concluded between two or more partners, in this case chambers of crafts in charge of designing and awarding the qualifications concerned, and it will specify which units of learning outcomes can in principle be achieved during transnational mobility periods. Experience shows that not only common units might be interesting for mobility but also those which are not offered in the home country. For example, during their mobility period in France, German master craftsperson trainees in bakery might be interested to learn to make products that they cannot master at home (due to equipment, products, traditions, etc.). Such additional learning outcomes are not part of their qualification but their acquisition could be made visible in the personal transcript or in the Europass mobility pass.

With regard to assessment, the partnership has decided to provide a list of possible assessment methods in the MoU. But it is not the aim of the project to introduce common assessment methods for the units of learning outcomes that have been drawn up. Each country/each institution has

its own assessment method(s) that will also be used in the context of ECVET. For example, in some cases interviews or expert talks might be used, in others skills demonstrations or observations. In the MoU the sending country accepts the assessment methods of the hosting country and agrees to recognise the learning outcomes once the learner returns. The assessment criteria will be formulated by the hosting institution according to the existing qualifications system.

Challenges

Some of the challenges encountered and to which the partnership has provided responses are already outlined above. For example the fact that some partners desire to use more detailed descriptions of learning outcomes and their inclusion in the annex. Or the use of percentage to scales to decide on ECVET points allocation which seems more adapted to continuing VET.

Further challenges are related to the transfer process and will need to be addressed in the concrete mobility projects. Obviously one of the challenges lies in the fact that the units in the learning outcomes matrix correspond only in a very limited way to the modules that are structuring the national qualifications or to the subjects of the curricula at master craftsperson training institutions.

For example, in Germany the project sees quite some challenges in bridging ECVET and the national approach to assessment. ECVET requires the assessment of each unit separately whereas the final examination for acquiring the master craftsperson qualification in Germany is designed in a rather holistic way: candidates need to fulfil complex project tasks that simulate real working processes. Exemption of one part of this exam does not make sense. However, the advantage of using ECVET could be that mobile learners receive certificates for learning outcomes acquired abroad that have been "officially accepted" in the MoU by the competent institution in the home country. Such a certificate could be seen as added value of a person's competence profile and could therefore be profitable when applying for a job.

The master craftsperson training in Austria is quite similar to the one in Germany: no compulsory training programme for master craftsperson trainees exists. In Austria, the only requirement for taking the final exam (which is composed of five modules) is to be 18 years old. Up to now there are very limited possibilities for exemptions from one or more modules of this exam. Therefore, a mobile learner returning back to Austria will usually not

continued over...

receive recognition for the learning outcomes acquired abroad. The transparent descriptions in the learning outcomes matrix might only help to reflect one's own learning progress: What have I achieved so far? What do I still need to learn? However, in case the partnership will be able to convince the competent institutions that the SME MASTER Plus approach is successful it might be possible in the future that mobile learners will be exempted from corresponding modules of the final exam.

Main products: ECVET toolboxes

AS final outcomes, the project is intending to produce ECVET toolboxes for master craftsperson in bakery, hairdressing, woodworking/joinery and floristry. These toolboxes will include the learning outcome matrices, models for MoU and LA. The toolboxes will also contain guidelines on the practical use of those instru-

ments, on the stepwise establishment of international partnerships as well as on the implementation of transnational mobility projects. The feasibility of those tools will be tested in real mobility exchanges. On the basis of the feedback gained by the sending/receiving organisations and the participants the toolboxes will be adjusted and finalised.

The OPIR project – ready for recognised mobility in 2010

Article written by Cecile Mathou (GHK Consulting) based on project partnership meeting discussions which took place on 11-12 May 2010

The OPIR project¹ builds on the earlier experience of a European working group which aimed at strengthening the role of regions in the mobility of learners and young people undertaking professional training. The group concluded that mobility should become an integral part of young learners' training curriculum.

OPIR's main objective is to enable learners preparing for professions of hairdresser and automation to validate, transfer and accumulate units of learning outcomes while doing part of their training abroad. The project

does not aim to create a common qualification, but to ensure full transparency of all qualifications within the scope of these two occupations.

Several reasons underlie the choice of these two sectors. First they have a clear European dimension. Hairdressing is a quickly evolving sector, with the emergence of new trends and new groups opening branches in various countries. As for the automation sector, there have been important technological developments in this sector and systems have been developed everywhere in Europe.



It was also important to choose occupations in different sectors to test if the practical tools being developed can be transferred from one trade to another. This is the reason why the project is based on professions that differ in terms of traditions, products and systems of production.

¹ Outils pratiques interrégionaux pour ECVET (Practical Interregional Tools for ECVET). For more information about the project see <http://www.ecvet-projects.eu/Projects/>

OPIR has now entered the preparation phase before testing the mobility of students. A seminar organised in Barcelona in May 2010 was dedicated to the finalisation of the mobility arrangements and documentation, through exchanges and small working groups between the partners who will send and host mobile learners. In October 2010, young Belgians, Italians, French, Spaniards, Romanians and, Swiss will spend three weeks learning in a VET institution in another country with the objective to validate, at the end of their stay, one unit of learning outcome.

1.1 Testing the ECVET technical specifications

The project has now entered a phase of consolidation through the establishment of Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) that will be signed by the competent institutions in each partner country. The type of institution who will sign the MoU will vary from country to country. Whilst, for instance, in France the competent authority will be the regional education authority (rectorat), in Spain the relevant body is the Department of Education of Cataluña, at the regional level. MoU will be signed before the mobility starts, on the basis on bilateral partnerships for mobility.

Learning Agreements are the key documents which set out the conditions for a specific mobility period. Signed by the home and host institution² as well as the learner, the agreement specifies, for a particular learner, what learning outcomes s/he should achieve and how they will be assessed, validated and recognised.

The template for learning agreements developed by OPIR goes

beyond the basic information mentioned in the ECVET Recommendation such as the duration of the mobility period, the learning outcomes to be achieved by the learner and the associated ECVET points. It provides additional information in relation to assessment, learning activities, the pre-requisites necessary before undertaking the mobility period, and the commitment and obligations of the learner (e.g. respect of the rules of the host institution), which are documented in Annexes of the learning agreement.

In the OPIR project the Annexes to the agreement are binding and must be negotiated by the two sides of a mobility exchange (sending and hosting institution).

Organisation of the learning pathway during the mobility period

The Unit chosen for mobility purposes in the occupation "Hairdresser" is the Unit "Making Temporary Hair Styles for women", which integrates the preparation and clean up of the workstation as well as the implementation of hygiene, security, environmental protection and ergonomics techniques. The advantage of choosing this activity for mobility is that it consists in applying a relatively simple technique, which is usually planned to be learnt after one year of training, and does not need more than three or four weeks to acquire.

Home institutions will be responsible for making sure that learners who will take part in the mobility (limited to three weeks) have the necessary prerequisites which make it feasible for them to achieve the expected learning outcomes in the time given. Concretely this means that they must ensure that the selected unit

is partly covered by the learning at home, before the mobility. These "pre-requisite" are shown in white in table 1 on page 8. This choice was driven by two considerations: the short duration of the mobility period (too short to cover a whole unit), and the language issue. Given that the project works with five different languages (French, Catalan, Italian, Romanian and Spanish), the partners decided that the 'theoretical' parts of the unit should be taught in the home country.

The more 'practical' part of the unit will be taught in the host institution. Host institutions are therefore responsible for organising the learning pathway in order to ensure that the elements of the units to be acquired during mobility (in regular text in the table below) are covered by the three weeks programme. Each school can decide how to organise this three-weeks programme, provided they respect that learners are learning to achieve the agreed outcomes. This preparation entails a certain amount of work for the training centres. Depending on the mobility partners and the level of autonomy of their students, the share of learning outcomes prepared at home and those prepared abroad will differ.

Partners have started to work on designing these mobility learning pathways. Some training centres have for instance described the organisation of the programme day per day, hour per hour, whilst others have broadly indicated the type of activities that will be done during the week. The important thing is for the partner institution to see clearly that the programme will adequately cover the learning outcomes to be acquired abroad. Overall, a large degree of flexibility was given to the partners in the way they could design and organise the learning pathway.

2 The home institution (the institution which will validate and recognise learning outcomes achieved by the learner)

(Qualification: Hairdresser)

Key Activity - Making Temporary Hair Styles (OPIR)		
• Home institution (before mobility) - BELGIUM		• Host institution (during mobility) - ROMANIA
Knowledge	Skills	Competence
• Hair properties (tensile strength, elasticity, porosity, reaction to water, electrical properties,...)	• Identify hair properties • Suggest and adapted hair style to the client	• Advise a new or established client in a responsible and autonomous manner in order to agree an adapted hairstyle taking into account her wishes and characteristics (morphology, hair type etc.) • Taking into account the chosen hairstyle, determine the techniques necessary for its realisation
• Types of hair cuts in relation to morphology and hair types	• Choose the hair style technique in line with the chosen hair cut	
• Communication	• Ask the client about his/her expectations and wishes • Suggest and adapted hair style to the client	
• Techniques of hair styles: straighten, curl, brushing, etc.		
• Criteria for positioning of a client (adapted and comfortable). • Protection equipment (apron, cape...)	• Position the client. • Choose the protection equipment for the client • Place the protection equipment for the client	• Appropriately prepare the client for the realisation of the hair style, taking into account hygiene, health and safety rules and procedures
• Protection elements for the hairdresser. • Instruments (brushes, combs, hair grips...) • Devices (hair dryer, curling iron, straightening iron,...) • Controls necessary to ensure the good functioning of the equipment. • Organisation of the work station. • Hygiene rules (disinfection of devices...) and security rules for the client and the hairdresser.	• Protect the hairdresser • Select the necessary tools and devices • Verify the functioning of the devices • Set out the products and the devices on the work station	• Undertake the preparation necessary for the chosen hair style, the devices, materials, products, respecting the hygiene, health and safety rules, in full autonomy
• Hair style techniques: hair straightening, hair curling, brushing,... • Hair drying techniques: manual hair dryer, helmet hair dryer, ... • Brushing techniques: using combs, brushes, hands • Quality criteria for a good hair style • Distributing the volume according to the morphology • Brushing and finishing products • Notions of ergonomics for the hairdresser (position, operating devices...)	• Use the instruments and devices. • Put the hair in the form according to the chosen technique (straighten, curl, brush...) • Dry the hair • Realise the hair style • Choose the hairdressing and finishing products • Apply these products • Apply hygiene and security rules • Adopt ergonomic attitudes	• Autonomously realise the hairstyle using the adapted techniques, material and products adapted to the agreed hairstyle
• Advice to the client: maintenance of the hair style at home.	• Advise the client for follow-up at home	• Autonomously advise on the practices and the products in order to maintain the obtained hairstyle

- The hosting institution (that delivers training for the learning outcomes concerned and assesses the achieved learning outcomes)

Clarity and transparency are key aspects of the learning agreement, to ensure that sending institutions are well aware of the techniques that will be acquired abroad. Indeed, in addition to organisational and practical differences, the content of the training itself will also vary depending on the host institution. This is especially true for occupations such as hairdressing where notable differences exist across countries, whilst qualifications in the field of automation are more standardised and structured around international norms. In the learning programme presented by the Belgian partner to their Romanian counterparts, curling iron techniques feature prominently as

it is a commonly used technique in Belgium. This is not the case in Romania where other techniques such as curl paper are used when making temporary hairstyle. When partners became aware of these differences while discussing the learning programme, it was felt that this would be an added value for the young learners. As a partner of the project remarked *"In the perspective of increasing workers' mobility in the EU, learning new techniques abroad is a real added value that the learner will put on his or her CV. This will increase chances to find a job, abroad or even at home. This idea of mobility in our project is not to repeat exactly what would done at home."*

Assessment

Most importantly, the host institution will be responsible for assessing not only the parts of the units that will be taught during mobility, but the *whole* unit, including the more 'theoretical' parts that were taught at home. The idea is that the theoretical part is not assessed apart but it is assessed through its application in the practical aspects. Though the knowledge is described explicitly in the unit description, not each element is assessed and it is not assessed separately from the skills and competence elements.

Assessment of the learners was discussed at length between partners,

as assessment methods vary across countries. A key aspect of the project's approach is that it does not attempt to harmonise assessment methods. However partners need to be clear and transparent about the "protocol" that will be set up for the assessment of learners, covering every issue from the location (training centre, salon), the people taking part (e.g. real cli-

ent), the type of exercise (real life situation), under which instructions etc. While it is not necessary to use the same assessment methods and criteria/indicators it is important that the methods and assessment criteria are fully transparent.

However, all partners will use the same assessment grid. Through this

assessment grid, the idea is to assess if the learner has acquired the necessary learning outcomes to carry out the job profile's activity, taking into account the relative importance of a competence to carry out the activity. The unit is considered validated when the learner obtains at least 60% of the score.

Table 2: Abstract from the OPIR project assessment grid for unit Making Temporary Hair Styles

Competence	Criteria	Indicator	Weighing	Comments	
Advise a new or established client in a responsible and autonomous manner in order to agree an adapted hairstyle taking into account her wishes and characteristics (morphology, hair type etc.)	Adequate choice of hair style to make	Operations aimed at identifying hair characteristics are carried out	10/100		
		Questions asked allow to understand the taste and wishes of the client			
		Proposals take into account the needs and characteristics of the client			

This assessment grid will help ensure mutual trust between partners. In addition, OPIR partners decided to send teachers from the home country to the host country to attend the assessment sessions at the end of the mobility period, and observe how the assessment is done. The teacher will not co-assess the mobile learner, but ensure that the assessment is carried out according to the assessment grid. It is also a learning experience for the observer who will learn about assessment methods in another country.

1.2 Challenges

A concrete difficulty encountered by the OPIR partners is due to the fact that the qualifications concerned are at different EQF levels among the partner countries – though they prepare for the same profession. This mainly means that the mobile learners will not have the same level of autonomy, depending on whether they study at EQF level 3, level 4 or level 5. However some partners felt assessing these students with the same assessment grid (using the same criteria) in all the partnerships would not be fair.

Solutions envisaged include the possibility to adapt the training pathway of students with lower level of achievement before their mobility period so that they acquire sufficient level of autonomy when they go abroad to validate this specific unit. However this might entail substantial changes for the home institution. Another way would be to 'adapt' the assessment grid to the level of autonomy of the student, allowing the assessors to use the grid more flexibly.

When implementing ECVET on a broader scale, it is likely that mobility partnerships will involve learners who are not necessarily preparing for qualifications at the same EQF level (as common units in two countries may correspond to different stages of the learning pathway). It may be difficult to find common units which are at the same EQF level in different countries. The consequences in terms of assessment will have to be carefully thought through at the stage of partnership consolidation.

The challenges to address will also depend on the occupation concerned. In the automation sector the use of international norms, which work as a common language, facilitates the understanding and comparison of qualifications. The level of autonomy of the learners is also easier to determine (from 'elementary' to 'advanced' maintenance techniques aligned along international standards), thus making assessment easier.

1.3 Outcomes and results expected

OPIR partners have already finalised a number of tools such as an instruction manual to present qualifications in terms of units of learning outcomes. During the summer, the partnership documentation will be finalised and signed by the partners to ensure that mobility can be effectively implemented in November. These documents will be made progressively available on the pilot projects web-site³.

Identifying transferable competences in the field of performing arts - CAPE-SV project

Article written by Daniela Ulicna (GHK Consulting) based on discussions during the project partnership meeting which took place on 6-8 May 2010

Unlike most of the other ECVET pilot projects, the project CAPE-SV¹ operates in an economic sector that is highly fragmented, where qualifications differ enormously in their focus and where the volume of learners enrolled in formal pathways is relatively low – the sector of performing arts. But it is also a sector where people are very mobile both geographically (the international dimension is a “must” in this sector) and professionally (moving across professions or having multiple occupations is not rare).

In this sector, the CAPE-SV project only works with professions and related qualifications concerning technicians and administrative staff. But even within this type of occupations the variety is great, ranging from costume designers to producers, including light or sound engineers. Many of these professionals have rather broad profiles in terms of knowledge, skills and competence, combining specific technical and vocational aspects with more artistic ones. Furthermore, on the job, these people are expected to be very versatile given the limited size of the teams in which they operate. They often carry out a combination of tasks that covers elementary activities (such as building the scaffolding for the scene) with highly creative and innovative productions.

Another difficulty the project has to deal with are the differences according to which this sector, and more specifically the technical and administrative occupations, are professionalised across the partner countries. For example, in some countries the people operating in this area are qualified in vocationally oriented schools and colleges (often post-secondary education and training) while elsewhere the only qualifications in this area are delivered by universities. It is also not unlikely that in some countries there are simply no formal qualifications corresponding to these professions. For example in the Czech Republic there is no qualification for sound or light engineers in performance arts. Many people first enter these occupations through leisure activities, learn and acquire knowledge and skills on the job and one day decide to make a living out of this activity. Where qualifications exist, they differ in scope: some are more technical and others more artistic. For example, the sound engineer qualification in the Spanish partner organisation is rather technical and requires a good level of technical knowledge and skills (electronics, physics, etc.). A similar qualification of the UK partner institution, on the other hand, is much more focused on the creative aspect of this profession.

These characteristics mean that credit transfer and accumulation will be operationalised differently, compared to qualifications preparing, for example, for car mechanics where the product and processes are highly standardised across Europe.

The assumption of the CAPE-SV project is, that despite all these differences, the people working in these professions share some common competences that can be transferred if they need to re-qualify or if they seek recognition of their qualifications abroad. That is the reason why the partner institutions embarked on the adventure of testing ECVET in their area.

1.1 Testing the ECVET specifications

The starting point of the CAPE SV project in testing ECVET is to explore how a unit-based structure of qualifications will enhance the transparency of what people have achieved in order to support decisions on validation and recognition by the partner institutions.

The CAPE-SV project is not concerned with preparing the conditions for organised geographical mobility of students (though such exchanges

¹ Capitalisation des acquis professionnels dans le spectacle vivant – Capitalisation of learning outcomes in Europe's life performing arts
<http://www.cfpts.fr/capesv>

take place among some of the partners). Its main emphasis is on enhancing transparency of learning outcomes so that learners have the possibility to pursue their learning pathways abroad while making it easier to recognise what they have already achieved.

The core of the project work is to identify an approach to describing qualifications through units of learning outcomes which will be shared among the partners. Most of the partner institutions involved are also the competent institutions for the following ECVET functions (sometimes in cooperation with other partners such as regions or social partners in the sector):

- Design of qualifications;
- Design and delivery of learning programmes;
- Assessment and validation; and
- Recognition and award of qualification.

However they also operate within national qualifications system that have certain requirements regarding qualifications design. For example the Spanish partners are currently preparing their qualifications to be registered in the national register of qualifications which imposes a certain way of structuring and describing the qualification. Therefore the objective is not to adopt a common approach to structuring qualifications but only for their description.



The starting point for the project work is the identification of five common phases of work processes that are shared by all the professions in the area discussed. These are:

- Conception
- Planning
- Production
- Marketing
- Evaluation (feedback)

On the basis of these phases used as the main structure, the project partners are able to describe their qualifications in units of learning outcomes. The feasibility of this approach has now been tested in three transnational juries, where education and training professionals from the sectors concerned were asked to use the grid

developed by CAPE-SV to describe their qualifications. These are professionals who have not been involved in the development of the grid and the project work more generally. For each phase it is possible to identify several activities which can be described by a rather general statement of learning outcomes (see example below). These activities constitute the units of learning outcomes. The choice of maintaining rather general and holistic (i.e. combining knowledge, skills and competence) formulations of learning outcomes has been made in order not to overburden the partner institutions with paper work. This level of detail is considered sufficient for making the content of the qualification transparent and understandable to the partners.

CAPE-SV example of units of learning outcomes for sound technicians as defined by the French partner institution (STAFF)

Phase	Unit of learning outcomes	Learning outcomes description
Conceive	Analysis of the demand for sound design, choice of installation and adaptation	Synthesise the technical demand by understanding and analysing the technical data and artistic choices and taking into account the setting in order to finalise the necessary technical documentation.
Planning	Preparation and organisation of sound equipment	Prepare the cabling equipment according to the implantation plan and the technical fiche for repartition on the given exploitation space

Although these generic statements are considered sufficient, the partners agreed on the necessity to specify the level of autonomy and responsibility of learners. Therefore each learning outcome has an associated "level indicator". EQF levels are used as a proxy for these indicators, mainly looking at the column of competence.

Assessment and validation

Assessment and validation for purposes of credit transfer and accumulation is one area where the CAPE-SV project has an easier task than the other pilot projects. As already mentioned, the partner institutions in this sector are very often competent for all or most of the ECVET functions, including planning and carrying out of assessment and decisions on validation and recognition.

These institutions also prepare relatively small numbers of learners who in any case follow highly individual-

ised pathways. Project work in teams as well as individually constitutes a major part of their training pathway though obviously some courses are still delivered through traditional classroom lectures.

Therefore, given this very flexible organisation of learning pathways, the validation and recognition of assessment that has been carried out abroad is not a major obstacle provided that partners trust this assessment. One condition for trust is the transparency at the level of the qualification description presented above. Another condition is the transparency of assessment evidence (for example portfolio). With regard to this point the project partners are currently working on developing a sort of taxonomy which can be used to describe the assessment and the evidence learners had to produce. Nevertheless, there is a third point that is a crucial condition for any recognition in this sector and that is the direct experience of the partner institutions systems (having seen how they work),

quality of learning activities offered and of graduates (what are their career options once they have achieved the qualification). As highlighted by one of the partners "the paper can carry a lot of things including those that are not exactly true" and therefore while some documentation is needed its importance in developing trust should not be overestimated.

1.2 More information

You can read more information about the CAPE-SV approach on their web-site which among other things described the evolution of the methodological approach, the different possibilities envisaged and the reasons why these have not been maintained (see the part on Methodology): <http://www.cfpts.fr/capesv>.

Like many of the ongoing ECVET pilot projects, CPAE-SV still has over one year to finalise and fine-tune their work. The final methodology will be published on the project web-site.



ECVET and the French Community of Belgium reform of vocational education and training

Alain Bultot, Advisor, Cabinet of the Minister Marie-Dominique Simonet, Ministry of Compulsory Education and of Social Promotion

As from 1st of September 2011, the secondary vocational education and training in the French Community of Belgium will launch a large experimentation of ECVET. At the origin of this initiative is the government of the French Community of Belgium who has competence in education matters. The general design of the experimentation is developed directly in cooperation with the administration, inspection and the training providers, who have important levels of autonomy.

To begin, we have chosen to test ECVET in the context of all qualifications in three sectors (automobile, hospitality-catering and aesthetics) at a level which corresponds to the level four of the EQF. These qualifications are prepared through a school-based pathway (with traineeships in enterprises) or in the dual system. The training providers who do not fall under the authority of our government but that of regional governments, are invited, if they wish to do so, to participate in this experimentation.

Given the objectives of the experimentation and the importance of the structural changes that are necessary, the stakeholder representatives have expressed a desire for all training providers concerned by these qualifications to participate in this

testing project. The underlying idea is that it would be difficult to have two systems co-exist and that working only with schools who participate voluntarily would not grant the validity of the ECVET experimentation.

Why starting ECVET implementation as from 2011?

This is indeed one year before the date foreseen by the ECVET Recommendation and the Recommendation does not expect us to go this quickly and to impact our system this much.

In reality, the European challenge meets perfectly the national objectives identified in the French Community of Belgium. In general, for the whole education system, we have the desire to increase the number of young people with an upper-secondary qualification. In line with this, we wish to review the relationships among our different sub-systems of education and training in order to foster lifelong learning. This implies offering our citizens mechanisms that ensure transfer and accumulation of their competences.

In addition, our Government wants to reform our system of initial vocational education and training:

- By offering an organisation that is based on the culture of “valorisation of achievements” rather than on the culture of “sanction of failures” and hence combat early school leaving and make repetition of courses due to failure useless;
- By giving young people education and training which is more concrete, more motivating, where they can better perceive the short and long term objectives, where they can better invest themselves and develop ownership of their learning pathway;
- By making available an education and training structure that is at the same time more demanding when it comes to the final objectives but also more flexible in its organisation, namely, in order to be able to adapt more rapidly to the evolution of techniques and competences.

We are hence building our project to implement ECVET on the vision according to which the implementation of a unit-based qualifications system should help us to meet three objectives:

- a) Enhance the permeability of our sub-systems of vocational education and training,

- b) Increase the level of qualifications of our citizens by fighting early schooling leaving and offering clearer, more accessible, motivating and concrete learning pathways,
- c) Strengthen the quality assurance mechanisms.

Implement ECVET an impossible challenge?

More precisely, as from 1st September 2011, all young people in initial vocational education and training, in the three sectors concerned, will enrol in training pathways leading to qualifications organised in terms of units. We have consequently only one school year to re-write our qualifications, reorganise the programmes, inform teachers and adopt the legislation.

The enterprise we are launching is hence enormous while we only have little time available as well as little additional resources since, as everywhere else in Europe, we are facing the consequences of the economic crisis. Thus, we cannot afford to carry out preliminary studies to progressively define the fundamental principles for ECVET implementation. We will work in a pragmatic approach that will build on the experience accumulated at European level and will use as the basis of our work the tools being currently produced in the framework of the ECVET pilot projects¹.

In the first place we will use the outcomes of projects OPIR, RECOMFOR and VALOGREG in which Belgium is a partner but we also plan to integrate in our documentation tools

developed by other projects such as SME MASTER Plus and ASSET. In this context, we will be in particular interested by all the analytical documents and synthesis produced as a result of pilot project's common meetings.

Having been inspired by the outcomes of pilot projects' work, we have already, together with the inspection and representatives of training centres, taken key decisions on fundamental principles of our future qualifications system based on units of learning outcomes. For example, the units in the future system will be all related to the key activities of the occupation for which the qualification is expected to prepare and they should all be meaningful for the learners as well as for employers.

¹ For more information see: <http://www.ecvet-projects.eu>

Using ECVET for recognising knowledge, skills and competence

Isabelle Le Mouillour (Cedefop) and Michel Aribaud (European Commission)

“ECVET is a technical framework for the transfer, recognition and, where appropriate, accumulation of individuals' learning outcomes with a view to achieving a qualification”¹.

‘The expected effect [of ECVET implementation] is further development of intra-European mobility, more significant development of individualised career paths, better recognition of informal and non-formal learning, better transparency and mutual trust between education systems’ (Bordeaux Communiqué 2008).

Placing assessment and recognition of learning outcomes in the context of ECVET involves looking at how learning outcomes and - more concretely - knowledge, skills and competence attainment can be measured if they are not embedded in one's own curricula, context or standards. The European guidelines for validation of non-formal and informal learning² acknowledge that different learning routes can exist to achieve qualifications, awards or certificates (including learning in study programmes, personal activities, civil society engagement or working activities).

This article discusses the different phases (assessment, validation, and recognition) within of the ECVET technical framework linking them to the characteristics of VET in Europe (VET provision, understanding of learning outcomes and of educational/occupational standards).

From Learning to Recognition

In the context of lifelong and life-wide learning, learning outcomes may be acquired through a variety of learning pathways, modes of delivery (school-based, in-company etc.),

¹ For sentences in italic, the source is the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of ECVET.

² Cedefop (2009a). European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities. http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Upload/Information_resources/Bookshop/533/4054_en.pdf

and in different learning contexts (formal, non-formal and informal) or settings (i.e. country, education and training system). Consequently, ECVET proposes a technical approach for facilitating recognition of learning outcomes achieved in a foreign learning system or different qualification systems. Along these lines the ECVET Recommendation stresses that “*ECVET is applicable for all learning outcomes which should in principle be achievable through a variety of education and learning paths at all levels of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning, and then transferred and recognised*”. So doing, “*ECVET facilitates the development of flexible and individualised pathways and also the recognition of those learning outcomes which are acquired through non-formal and informal learning*”.

Assessment models in vocational education and training might be increasingly considering recording learning outcomes, or demonstration of professional know-how (such as in Finland), rather than more traditional models exclusively based on classroom and textbook knowledge or on a traditional end of course examination³. The evidence is scarce, and more examples could be provided, especially in the context of piloting and experimenting ECVET. National initiatives on recognition processes, such as the “one step up” in Ireland for further education awards in the frame of the National Skills Strategy⁴, the New Opportunities Programme in Portugal (2005/2010)⁵ or the development of validation of learning through experience in France⁶, could also provide inputs for assessment and validation mechanisms to be used when implementing ECVET.

It is possible to identify some crucial factors for the proper understanding and implementation of ECVET in view of recognising achieved competences, namely:

- The use of learning outcomes approach;
- The application of a structure of units of learning outcomes and ECVET points;
- The coherent and relevant linking between assessment, validation and accumulation and the units of learning outcomes for qualification;
- The validation and recognition mechanisms allowing for integrating assessed formal and, as stressed in the Recommendation, non-formal and informal learning outcomes.

Those factors are embedded at different levels into a sequence of learning and training as shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: Education and training sequence from learning to validation and accumulation

Sequence	What is happening?	... on which basis?
Learning	The learner acquires knowledge, skills and competence (learning outcomes)	Learning route (formal, non-formal or informal)
Assessment	The learner's learning outcomes are identified and assessed against requirements for the assessment standards.	Methods and processes used to establish the extent to which a learner has in fact attained particular knowledge, skills and competence.
Validation	Confirming that certain assessed learning outcomes achieved by the learner correspond to specific outcomes required for a unit or a qualification	Tools for comparing achieved learning outcomes against standards/"référentiels" or requirements.
Recognition	Attesting officially achieved outcomes through the awarding of units or qualifications.	Rules, procedures and documents for the recording of achieved units of learning outcomes and the award of partial qualifications and/or units..
Accumulation	Taking the validated units of learning outcomes into account in the process of awarding the qualification.	Rules, procedures and documents for the record of the units achieved

The use of ECVET has an impact on all these phases. For example the principle of recognition and accumulation of learning outcomes has

impact on assessment in terms of its content (which are the learning outcomes to be assessed?), organisation (at what moment should learning

outcomes be assessed?), documentation and valorisation of assessment results (units? parts of units? partial or intermediary certification?).

³ Cedefop (2009). The shift to learning outcomes. Policies and practices in Europe. Cedefop reference series; 72. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2009.

⁴ <http://www.deti.ie/publications/science/innovationpolicystatement.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.novasoportunidades.gov.pt/>

⁶ <http://www.vae.gouv.fr/>

The learning outcomes approach

Today, the definition of learning outcomes used in EQF is accepted in Europe as a good compromise enabling a common general understanding of this concept. Learning outcomes are defined “as statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence”⁷. However, the clarity, legibility and universality of this definition are challenged by⁸:

- differences in countries’ cultures and usage;
- uncertainties surrounding the understanding and use of the three components (knowledge, skills and competence);
- diversity of acceptance and understanding of (for instance):
 - the separation between learning process and learning outcomes;
 - the distinction between training results, learning goals or objectives and learning outcomes;
- the link, which is more or less explicit, between learning outcomes and job requirements.
- diversity of concepts, methods, typologies and standards used to describe learning outcomes.

The current diversity of descriptors in use for describing learning outcomes may be illustrated as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Some categories used for describing learning outcomes

Country/model	Learning to know	Learning to do	Learning to live together	Learning to be
France	Savoir(s)	Savoir faire		Savoir être
France (socle commun)	Connaissances	Capacités	Attitude	Attitude
Ireland	Knowledge (breadth and kind)	Know-how and skills (range and selectivity)		Competence (context, role, learning to learn and insight)
Malta (Bloom’s taxonomy)	Knowledge	Skills		Attitudes
Portugal (Secondary education)	Competências cognitivas	Competências funcionais	Competências sociais	Competências sociais
Cyprus	Cognitive (Proficiency)			Affective, transfer
Tuning project	Independent	Interpersonal		Systemic
EQF	Knowledge	Skills		Competence (EN); Competences (FR)
EU key competences	Knowledge	Skills		Attitudes

Cedefop 2009⁹. The categories of the model refer to the UNESCO four pillars of learning

This diversity of understanding of the concept of learning outcomes impacts directly the implementation of ECVET. For example each qualifications system interprets the concept of units by specifically defining the nature of outcomes which constitute the qualification, the hierarchy of these outcomes as well as the terminology to be used when describing qualifications and the requirements for assessment of learning outcomes.

The units for validation and accumulation of learning outcomes

ECVET is a learning outcomes-based, unit-based credit system. The Recommendation indicates that “*ECVET tools and methodology comprise the description of qualifications in terms of units of learning outcomes*”. In that context, a unit is understood as “*a component of a qualification, consisting of a coherent set of knowledge, skills and competence that can be assessed and validated*”.

In some countries, the concept of units, as parts of qualifications **associated** with the principle of accumulation, is relatively new. The principle of accumulation of learning outcomes based on units that are separately assessed and validated (possibly including the validation of non-formal and informal learning) does already underpin qualifications frameworks or systems. Several existing qualifications frameworks or systems include units as elements of qualifications, for instance:

⁷ Official Journal of the European Union. Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (Text with EEA relevance) (2008/C 111/01) 6.5.2008.

⁸ EQF network Testing project, <http://www.eqfnet-testing.eu/>

⁹ Cedefop (2009b). The dynamics of qualifications: defining and renewing occupational and educational standards. Cedefop panorama series. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2009. http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Upload/Information_resources/Bookshop/556/5195_en.pdf.

- In the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) in England, a unit is defined as “a coherent and explicit set of learning outcomes and assessment criteria with a title, credit value and level”. Units form the building blocks of all qualifications in the QCF;
- In the Belgian decree issued by the French-speaking service for trades and qualifications (SFMQ), the unit (“unité d’apprentissage”) is defined as a “set of knowledge, skills and attitudes which constitute a coherent part of a qualification. It may be assessed and validated separately” (own translation);
- In the Spanish National Qualification and Vocational Training system (SNCFP), the concept of “unit of competence” (unidad de competencia) is defined as the minimum set of professional competences which can be partially recognised and accredited (El agregado mínimo de competencias profesionales, susceptible de reconocimiento y acreditación parcial);
- In Finland, all vocational qualifications consist of units (parts of qualifications). Vocational units are composed on the basis of functions in working life, so that the units within a vocational qualification are formed in order to produce a competence for a set of tasks in working life. The units can be assessed and demonstrated independently;

- In France, vocational diplomas are structured in units. Each unit consists of a coherent set of competences with associated knowledge. The content of each unit is closely linked to the activities and tasks in the working life.

Implementing ECVET entails the development of both **the learning outcomes approach** and **the unit structure approach, more than a simple development of a credit points’ metrics**. In ECVET, the accumulation process concerns validation and recognition of **assessed** learning outcomes. In this process, ECVET points are not the core subject of accumulation. However, ECVET points contribute to the understanding of the transfer and accumulation process by providing information on the weight of achieved learning outcomes compared to the whole qualification. Furthermore, “usually, the transfer of a unit entails the transfer of the corresponding ECVET points so that they are included when the transferred learning outcomes are recognised [...]”.

When a learner satisfies the criteria for the award of a unit or a qualification, s/he is awarded the corresponding ECVET points. “ECVET points means a numerical representation

of the overall weight of learning outcomes through the awarding of units or qualifications”. These points are recorded, together with the learning outcomes and units, as stated in the Recommendation: “The successful achievement of a qualification or of a unit triggers the award of the associated points, independently of the actual time required to achieve them.”

The ECVET Recommendation underlines that the accumulation process respects the “national legislation relating to the accumulation of units and the recognition of learning outcomes” and that “the rules and procedures for defining characteristics of units of learning outcomes and for combining and accumulating units for a given qualification are defined by competent institutions and partners involved in the training process according to the national or regional rules”. However in ECVET, **assessment** and **accumulation** of units of learning outcomes are closely related: “[...] a learner can achieve a qualification by accumulating the required units, achieved in different countries and different contexts (formal and, where appropriate, non-formal and informal)”. Units are crucial to ECVET as they fulfil specific functions in the context of the assessment, validation and accumulation (see Table 3).

Table 3: Functions attributed to units

Sequence	Functions attributed to units
Assessment	Units facilitate legibility and understanding of learning outcomes, and thus the establishment of assessment processes;
	Learning outcomes which constitute each unit are supposed to be assessed
Validation	Units enable the award of partial qualifications or of a part of a qualification
	Units as a tool for transferring learning outcomes corresponding to a part of a qualification
Accumulation	Units can be accumulated, in accordance with the rules in practice for combining the units

Following this multi-function perspective, one has to consider that “in ECVET, units of learning outcomes achieved in one setting are assessed

and then, after successful assessment, transferred to another setting. In this second context, they are validated and recognised by the compe-

tent institution as part of the requirements for the qualification that the person is aiming to achieve”.

ECVET could thus integrate existing formal qualifications systems, offering a specifically organised route “from learning to certification” as described in the European guidelines for validation of non-formal and informal learning¹⁰.

In a number of countries, the accumulation of assessed learning outcomes and/or units of learning outcomes is not considered in itself as a means for awarding qualifications. The achievement of a qualification is only possible if the learner passes a final examination. One might think this fact questions the idea of accumulation. It indeed requires a distinction between the as-

essment procedures and methods (final exam, continuing assessment, external/internal assessment etc.) and the validation mechanisms.

ECVET, validation and accumulation of VET competences achieved in non-formal and informal learning

The Common European principles on validation of non-formal and informal learning are articulated around the issues of quality, respect and mutual support of stakeholders¹¹.

The cornerstone of the relationships between transfer, validation and rec-

ognition of learning outcomes acquired in an informal or non-formal context are the standards in use in the different qualifications systems. For validation purposes, it is crucial that these standards are formulated in terms of learning outcomes; an overview of the progress in implementing the outcomes approach by standards is presented below. If they are too closely embedded in a particular education and training provision, their relevance as reference points for non-formal and informal learning may be reduced. This issue is partly reflected in the combination of education (learning) and occupational standards in different countries¹².

Table 4: Progress in implementing outcome based qualifications standards

Qualifications standards are outcome-oriented	The introduction of outcome-oriented standards under-going	No formulation of outcome-oriented standards/no information
Belgium Denmark Estonia Finland France Germany Hungary Iceland Ireland Latvia	Lithuania Malta Netherlands Norway Poland Portugal Slovenia Spain Sweden Switzerland United Kingdom	Austria Bulgaria Czech Republic Italy Luxembourg Romania Turkey
		Cyprus Greece Liechtenstein Slovakia

ECVET facilitates the process of validation and recognition of learning outcomes achieved in non-formal and informal learning because it:

- Describes the knowledge, skills and competence required for a qualification and the associated units. This makes it easier for the competent institution to identify what learners’ have already achieved as compared to what is required in view of a qualification.

- Supports progressive achievement of qualifications by accumulation of units and through transfer and recognition of learning outcomes.
- Facilitates the documentation of learning outcomes achieved through the use of tools such as personal transcripts¹³.

Standards expressed in learning outcomes standards are considered to be independent of any kind of learn-

ing path or training and educational programme. They represent the reference points for **organised geographical mobility** when learners are passing from a VET provider (the sending institution) to another abroad (the hosting institution)¹⁴. In most cases the standards would be linked to formal learning (and consequently to formal VET programme).

10 See the section 1.5 “Routes from learning to certification” in: Cedefop (2009a)

11 Cedefop (2009a).

12 Cedefop (2009b).

13 European Commission (2009). Get to know ECVET better: Questions and Answers. http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/ecvet/faq_en.pdf

14 In this case, the learning outcomes standards should be mentioned in the mobility learning agreement between the two providers and the learner. This reference makes it possible to identify the learning outcomes that form the core of the mobility project.

For applying ECVET to learning outcomes **achieved in a non-formal and informal learning context or outside the framework of an MoU**, the competent institution which is empowered to award qualifications or units or to give credit should establish procedures and mechanisms for the identification, validation and recognition of these learning outcomes through the award of the corresponding units and the associated ECVET points. Achieving a qualification through validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning would typically follow these phases identified in the European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning:

1. Identification of knowledge, skills and competences developed during personal activities, while living in a community or working, etc.
2. Documentation of these learning outcomes through the collection of evidence such as descriptions of previous working activities, etc.

3. Assessment of these learning outcomes against standards, referential or list of expected learning outcomes.
4. Award of a qualification or part of a qualification.

Consequently, ECVET is a technical instrument which enables, under certain conditions of its application, the effective implementation of approaches to validate and recognise of non-formal and informal learning. The preliminary condition for using ECVET for this purpose is the adoption of the principle of validation of learning outcomes, meaning the opening of the qualifications system to recognition of learning which has taken place outside the formal learning context.

Conclusions and ... questions

Using ECVET for accumulation and assessment of learning outcomes - knowledge, skills and competence(s) - involves enabling, first the identification of learning outcomes, then the validation and the recognition of those learning outcomes which are acquired through non-formal and in-

formal learning. The ultimate goal is to facilitate individuals' access to the qualifications – to quote just some of the steps and challenges. This raises the following questions, to which current pilot project already provide answers and operational solutions:

How should the qualifications standards be adapted to respond to the highly diverse learning experiences and outcomes of individuals? How should the assessment standards have to be adapted? and how should the assessment process be organised?

How could ECVET, as a unit-based credit system using points metric, be used in practice or combined with the validation arrangements and recognition mechanisms that are already in place or being developed?

Which quality assurance measures and provisions should be taken by institutions which are competent for ECVET, in order to ensure quality assurance in establishing the rules and procedures for assessment, validation and recognition of learning outcomes?



Expert workshop on higher VET qualifications (12/13 July 2010)

Cedefop is holding an expert workshop on the development of vocationally oriented education and training at higher qualifications levels (EQF 6 to 8). This workshop is based on an on-going Cedefop European comparative study considering 13 countries. The workshop will focus on changes in the education and training landscape from providers (VET and Higher Education), and labour market perspective (sectoral analysis, and recruitment practices). For further information contact Isabelle Le Mouillour (isabelle.le-mouillour@cedefop.europa.eu).

EQF Newsletter

If you are interested in keeping informed about latest EQF developments such as which countries have referenced to the EQF, which ones are developing qualifications frameworks or the views and expectations of countries outside the EU with regard to the EQF, you can now subscribe to the EQF Newsletter (published quarterly by the European Commission) by writing to this e-mail address: eac-eqf-newsletter@ec.europa.eu. You can also download the first issue of the Newsletter on DG EAC web-site: http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc44_en.htm

Publication: Second NQF Mapping

The second overview on the development of national qualifications frameworks (NQF) prepared by Cedefop will be available on the Cedefop's website in August 2010. The report pays particular attention to the relationships between NQFs for lifelong learning (developed in response to the EQF) and the qualifications frameworks for Higher Education (developed in response to the Qualifications Framework for European Higher Education Area) as this relationship is at the core of the development of comprehensive frameworks currently being developed in most countries.

Publication: Cedefop (2010) Linking credit systems and qualifications frameworks An international comparative analysis. Research paper No 5.

Credit systems and qualifications frameworks are pivotal to modernising education and qualifications systems. This study reviews the development of those tools in Higher Education and VET, across a sample of European and non-European countries (Australia, Finland, France, Germany, Scotland, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, the UK-EWNI (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) and the UK-Scotland. It analyses initiatives with credit systems and qualifications frameworks, and the articulation between both tools to support development of learning pathways (transfer and progression), governance of education and training systems, and qualifications policies. Available at http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/5505_en.pdf



The ECVET Magazine is published five times per year and informs about the latest developments related to ECVET, the ECVET Network and the pilot projects.

This issue of the ECVET Magazine is published by GHK Consulting, as part of the contract to Support testing and development of ECVET, commissioned by the European Education Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency.

If you want to subscribe to the electronic version of the Magazine, you can register following the instructions here: <http://www.ecvet-projects.eu/Bulletins/registration.aspx>
Any comments or suggestions regarding this or future issues should be submitted to the following address: contact@ecvet-projects.eu

