

ECVET BULLETIN

April 2010



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Editorial

João Delgado, European Commission DG Education and Culture
Head of Unit - Professional training and Leonardo da Vinci

The year 2010 is crucial for ECVET. While 2009 was marked by the key milestones that included the adoption of the Recommendation by the European Parliament and the Council in addition to two major conferences in Prague and in Brussels, 2010 is fully dedicated to the first phase of ECVET implementation. Subsequently, the European Commission has prepared a full range of coordinated and complementary initiatives to accompany Member States in their adoption and application of ECVET.

Firstly, the support structure for the European cooperation and governance of ECVET implementation is now in place. This structure, described in the previous issue of the ECVET Bulletin (November 2009), comprises of an ECVET network open to a wide range of parties engaged in vocational education and training and interested in the adoption and development of ECVET. Member State representatives in this network have already been nominated. The procedure to register other VET stakeholders is being prepared and will be based on a call for an expression of interest in participation in the network which shall be launched by the European Commission in the near future. Particular attention will be paid to the representativeness of candidates for the network membership. Since ECVET is designed to facilitate validation and recognition of learning outcomes, in view of geographical mobility in particular, members of the ECVET network will be representatives of institutions, organisations, networks not only concerned with VET but also directly involved, in one way or another, in questions regarding the certification process in VET (assessment, validation and recognition). The first forum of this network will take place in Paris at the end of June 2010.

Resources are allocated to supporting operational aspects of the network and, most importantly, serv-

ices are proposed to its members. It is for this reason why a support team has been appointed and will, by the summer 2010, start providing a variety of services and activities, such as advice, information, seminars and workshops. The support team has been assigned the name of 'ECVET Synergie' and will be active as from May 2010. Its work programme will be largely disseminated towards VET stakeholders.

The quality and coherence of cooperation regarding ECVET will be ensured by a Users' Group, a body bringing together Member State representatives as well as various organisations and European social partners. This group will be in charge of following the actions and processes in the countries as well as at the European level with a view to providing advice and opinions to improve cooperation mechanism. This Users' Group will meet for the first time in Brussels at the end of May 2010.

Another initiative that is running is the launch of the call for proposals specifically dedicated to ECVET implementation. Its goal is to support institutions in the effort necessary to adopt and apply the principles and technical specifications of ECVET. The focus of the new projects will be on the necessary technical work that has to be undertaken, at the level of an organisation or a competent institution, in order to structure qualifications in units of learning outcomes, to apply the most suitable approach of allocating ECVET points to qualifications and units and finally to design or adapt the process and procedures that enable assessment, validation and recognition of learning outcomes. This call is therefore aimed at actors who are involved in VET and have responsibilities in the field of certification and of qualifications. The selected projects will join the already existing pilot projects and will participate in their cooperation in view of sharing experiences and results and formulating common responses.

And finally a third initiative is imminent. It concerns the follow up of ECVET as a priority theme of the Lifelong Learning Programme and will involve actors directly associated with the programme and its development on the ground – namely the national agencies. This project aims at establishing a dedicated thematic follow up to ECVET mainly in the framework of geographical mobility of young people, apprentices and adults enrolled in VET.

To create, by 2012, the necessary conditions for ECVET implementation is, by all means, a major challenge for many players in VET. The ongoing ECVET projects continuously show that this challenge is worth pursuing. Their work is valued and projects are encouraged to pursue their reflections even further with the same level of quality and engagement. The wish of the Commission is to strengthen the accompanying efforts and support to all ideas and projects who participate in addressing this challenge. The goal is for all of us to be ready for the implementation of ECVET in 2012.

João Delgado,
European Commission
DG Education and
Culture



Useful Guidelines on Units of Learning Outcomes for ECVET in the context of geographical mobility in the framework of partnerships

The third seminar of the ECVET pilot projects organised in Berlin in October 2009 was dedicated to the topic of the design and description of units of learning outcomes. During this seminar the work of the eleven pilot project representatives focused on formulating guidelines on designing and describing units of learning outcomes. These guidelines are intended to provide useful hints and ideas for those who will engage in implementing ECVET in the context of geographical mobility of learners.

It is important to highlight that these guidelines were formulated by projects whose main concern is enabling credit transfer and accumulation as part of organised international mobility. As discussed in the previous issue of the ECVET Bulletin, credit transfer and accumulation can also be envisaged in other contexts (e.g. permeability, VET/higher education, adult learning). Some of the guidelines formulated here (e.g. regarding the transparency of qualifications systems) may be less relevant for these contexts. As such, important concerns specific to these issues are unlikely to be captured in this document.

Furthermore, these guidelines were formulated by projects whose work is still ongoing. Therefore as the project work progresses, the guidelines will be further enriched and possibly refined.

Projects participating in formulation of these guidelines:

Aerovet, Be-TWIN, CAPE-SV, Credchem, ECVET Asset, M.O.T.O., N.E.T.Work, OPIR, Recomfor, SME Master Plus, VaLOGreg

Looking at the text of the ECVET Recommendation the three main functions of units (discussed in the previous issue of the ECVET Bulletin) can be recognised:

- They structure the content of the qualification
- They facilitate the communication of the qualification content
- They enable learners to progressively achieve qualifications

It is around these three functions that the ECVET pilot projects have formulated their guidelines on units of learning outcomes presented here.

What does the Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council on ECVET say on units?

A unit is a component of a qualification, consisting of a coherent set of knowledge, skills and competence that can be assessed and validated with a number of associated ECVET points.....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), while respecting national legislation relating to the accumulation of units and the recognition of learning outcomes.

The units that make up a qualification should be:

- described in legible and understandable terms by referring to the knowledge, skills and competences contained in them,
- constructed and organised in a coherent way with regard to the overall qualification,
- constructed in a way that enables discrete assessment and validation of learning outcomes contained in the unit.

The expected learning outcomes defining a unit may be achieved irrespective of where or how these have been achieved. Thus, a unit is not to be confused with a component of a formal learning programme or training provision.

The full text can be found here: http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc50_en.htm

1 Transparency of the qualifications systems in the partner countries

Guideline:

Provide partner institutions from other countries/systems with a short explanation/description of the qualifications system in your country/context.

Further information:

For the qualification concerned (i.e. the one being prepared by the learners who will undergo a mobility period) provide your partners with information concerning:

Reference to the EQF level of the qualification

- A translation of the title
- The core activities/tasks the qualification typically prepares for
- The labour market context (in terms of functions/positions/occupations) in which the qualification is typically used

For the qualifications system concerned, Provide your partners with:

- Information about how qualifications in your system are structured – are they designed in terms of units or not? Are qualifications based on programmes/curricula or are they independent of a programme/curriculum and based on standards?

If the qualification is already described in terms of units, provide your partners with:

- The list of titles of units in the qualification
- Information about what forms the basis of each unit: Is each unit related to an activity/set of tasks on the work place? Is it based on a set of learning activities?

2 Identifying units to be used in the context of geographical mobility

Guideline:

To use ECVET for mobility it is not necessary to structure the whole qualification in terms of units ex-ante. Similarly it is not necessary that the partnership agrees on comparability or equivalence of all units. It may be sufficient to reach an agreement on one or a few units, those that will be achieved abroad during the geographical mobility.

Explanation:

Depending on the needs and ambitions of the partnership, credit transfer agreement using ECVET can be put in place regarding one, several or all units of a qualification.

While some ECVET pilot projects are working on agreeing only a smaller set of units (e.g. ECVET Asset) others are working on units for the whole qualification (e.g. Recomfor, OPIR).

The argument of those promoting the first approach is that:

- In the context of mobility, learners can only achieve a limited number of learning outcomes (one or a few units) and hence it is not necessary to more.
- Some learning outcomes are not suitable for being achieved abroad where the rules may differ (e.g. those related to security) but also where learners may not perfectly master the language of the country (which does not prevent them from learning other practical aspects)

The argument for those promoting the second type of approach is that:

- Once the comparability/equivalence of several/all units has been agreed the training centres have the freedom to decide/agree on which units will they use for the mobility period.

3 The content of units – how do units structure the qualification?

Guideline:

The use of occupational activities/working tasks as the basis for agreeing on the comparability or equivalence of units, or the design of common units, has a number of advantages (see below) and makes reaching an agreement among partners easier.

Explanation:

Different qualifications systems use different vocabulary and approaches to designing and describing their qualifications. Experience from the ECVET pilot projects show that discussing the occupational activities/working tasks for which the qualification prepares, rather than the qualification standard or the curriculum, makes it easier to identify commonalities among the systems.

This approach also provides more detail about the profile of the person holding the qualification than the occupational profile, for which the qualification prepares.

The ECVET pilot projects use different methods to identify these activities/tasks: the experts extract this information from the qualification standard (if it already exists) or they can use empirical methods such as the analysis of work processes or expert workshop interviews.

Related observation:

The use of occupational activities/working tasks as the basis for units also makes it easier to agree/define the **assessment criteria**.

When a unit is linked to an activity/set of tasks, its content is transparent and easily understood by a variety of **stakeholders** – such as employers but also learners.

By being able to carry out a new activity/set of tasks when they have completed the unit, **learners** can fully appreciate what they have learnt abroad.

4 The size of units in the context of geographical mobility

Guideline:

Partnerships that wish to use ECVET for geographical mobility need to reflect on the feasibility of achieving a unit in the context of a limited duration – that of the mobility period.

Explanation:

The ECVET Recommendation gives no indication about the size of units. This can vary greatly from one qualification system to another.

However, when preparing units/agreeing their equivalence in view of a mobility exchange, the size of the unit(s) needs to fit the duration of the mobility period. This means that it has to be feasible for a learner to achieve the learning outcomes during a given period.

Therefore units that are too big (i.e. they contain a very large or complex set of learning outcomes) may be difficult to use in the context of transnational mobility – unless the duration of the mobility is adapted.

Depending on the rules in the qualifications system, it may still be possible to validate learners' learning outcomes achieved during a mobility period even if these do not correspond to a full unit in the home system: for example through exemption from the corresponding continuing assessment examination.

5 Units and assessment

Guideline:

The use of occupational activities/working tasks as the basis of units facilitates the assessment abroad.

Explanation:

Referring to activities/tasks makes the assessment criteria easily understood to assessors from different backgrounds and countries.

It also makes it easier to design assessment approaches based on methods such as observation or simulation which can be more adapted to assessment abroad where the learner does not always master (fully) the language of the country or the language of instruction.

Finally, it facilitates assessment in the workplace which may be one context for a mobility period.

Guideline:

The size of a unit (the number of learning outcomes) is related to the complexity of assessment and vice-versa. Therefore the partnerships working in the context of geographical mobility should bear in mind the feasibility of the assessment abroad when thinking about the content and size of the unit(s).

Explanation:

If the unit is too big or contains a large number of learning outcomes, it may be necessary to assess them in a complex assessment approach or through more than one assessment means. Depending on the duration of the mobility period the feasibility of a more complex assessment approach needs to be considered.

6 Validation and recognition of units

Guideline:

Each partner needs to reflect, from the beginning, on how the unit will be validated and recognised in the context of their qualifications system. For example, what form will the validation and recognition take? How will this impact on the learner's pathway?

In the context of geographical mobility, validation can take the form of:

- Exemption from an assessment in the home system; or
- Exemption from a part of the training programme in the home system

The unit can be recognised as equivalent to a unit in the home system; as equivalent to a part of the qualification in the home system, or as part of optional choices (if the qualifications standard provides this possibility).

Explanation:

To ensure validation and recognition of the unit, a link between the unit designed/described in the partnership and the standards in the different qualifications systems has to be made.

The content of the unit that will be achieved during the geographical mobility period should either be equivalent to parts of the qualification standard in the home system or it should be possible that the unit is recognised as part of the options (if the system enables the use of options).

7 Describing units in view of transnational transparency

Guideline:

Ensure the title of the unit is clear and reflects the content of the unit.

When designing common units, ensure their description is understandable to a range of actors from different countries who are familiar with the specific occupational context.

Explanation:

Several ECVET projects are working on designing common units rather than agreeing equivalence between units existing in their national contexts.

In such a case they should ensure the unit description will be understandable to a range of actors – especially to the institutions who will be in charge of recognising the unit but also to learners and employers.

A quality assurance process could be put in place whereby the partnership asks experts/persons from outside the partnership (these could be teachers or employers) to read the unit and confirm that its content is clearly expressed. This could also provide the partners with an indication of the amount of detail required.

Guideline:

The description of the unit should reflect these elements: knowledge, skills and competence. This does not mean that the format of describing knowledge separately from skills and separately from competence needs to be adopted. This is up to the partnership to decide.

Explanation:

Some ECVET projects adopt the approach of differentiating between knowledge, skills and competence (e.g. OPIR) while others do not make this difference explicit (e.g. SME Master Plus).

Those in favour of the first approach highlight that such differentiation creates further clarity and transparency on the content of the unit.

Those in favour of the second approach suggest that describing knowledge, skills and competence separately leads to an overlap in the descriptions. They also note that this distinction is somewhat artificial and that what is necessary, from the point of view of assessment, is the combination of all three elements.

FINECVET 3 – The Finnish initiative to test ECVET for the purpose of geographical mobility of VET learners

This article is based on presentations made during the FINECVET 3 launching seminar held on 9 February 2010 in Helsinki.

Background information:

International mobility of VET students in Finland has been growing in the last decade. Today, more than 5300 Finnish students each year have the possibility to experience a learning period in a foreign country (nearly half of these students experience a longer (more than two weeks) learning period). This represents 11% of Finnish newly-enrolled VET students in a year. At the same time more than 2500 students come to spend a learning mobility period in Finland. Overall, this means that nearly all Finnish VET providers are, in one way or another, engaged in organising learning mobility.

Mobility of learners (both in VET and higher education) is among the priorities of Finnish education and training policy. The Finnish education and research development plan for 2007–2012 aims to increase mobility of learners by 30% for each year covered by the plan. The Finnish government together with the Finnish education and training institutions (who often fund mobility exchanges through their own means) have thus committed to enhance the potential of young people through a learning experience abroad.

**For more information see:
CIMO (2009) Facts and Figures¹.**

In this context, ECVET is considered as a means to improve the recognition of learning outcomes achieved abroad. The level of recognition of learning mobility is already good in Finland – few students are required to undergo additional education and training because of their stay abroad. However recognition could be improved and ‘what is recognised’ could become clearer and more consistent from one institution to another. For example, sometimes only the foreign language-related learning outcomes are recognised while the vocational learning outcomes are only assessed in the home institution. Trust in the assessment abroad can be improved. Furthermore, transparency of what learners are expected to gain during mobility is also expected to get better. Therefore Finland very quickly expressed their interest in testing ECVET. The third phase of the FINECVET project has now been launched (the first begun in 2004) and is further described in this short article.

The Finnish VET qualifications system has a number of features that facilitate introduction of ECVET

Finnish qualifications are already based on units of learning outcomes. Units are based on functions of the workplace. They are named according to occupational activities. Units combine both theoretical and practical learning activities. Theory and practice is studied and assessed jointly. Hence units in the Finnish system are independent of the studied subjects. For each unit, assessment criteria (called assessment targets in the Finnish context) are explicitly defined and cover these aspects:

- Mastering of the work process/activity;
- Mastering of necessary methods and tools;
- Application and demonstration of required knowledge;
- Use of key competences for lifelong learning.

Units are defined at national level and providers have the possibility to define sub-units, however, it is more and more frequent that they use directly the units defined at national level. The providers plan and organise the assessment. They are consequently also in charge of validating and recognising learning that takes place abroad. Finally the Finnish system is using the credit points to quantify the volume of learning in a unit.

The Finnish VET qualifications are based on broadband occupational profiles (i.e. they prepare for more than one profession). Furthermore, they enable learners and providers to design individualised learning pathways by enabling the use of different combinations of units. The share of individual choice and compulsory units can vary across qualifications. For example, for a Vocational Qualification in Hotel, Restaurant and Catering Services, the vocational units account for 90 credit points of which 30 are chosen by the learner. Learners can choose from a pre-defined range of units an equivalent of 20 credit points and the remaining 10 credit points correspond to units of free choice. This proportion can be different for other qualifications.

The units of learners’ choice can concern both vocationally oriented as well as generic learning outcomes. In other words an optional unit can concern, for example, the foreign language choice but also a unit called “reservation function in accommodation”.



¹ Centre for International Mobility – CIMO (2009) International mobility in Finnish Vocational and Higher Education Institutions 2008 https://www.cimo.fi/dman/Document.phx/~public/Julkaisut+ja+tilastot/English/faktaa_3c_2009e.pdf

FINECVET

One of the interesting aspects of FINECVET (which makes this experience somewhat different from, for example, the work of the EU funded ECVET pilot projects) is the possibility to recognise credit for learning outcomes achieved abroad that are not part of the Finnish qualifications standard. This is enabled through the existence of optional units in the Finnish system.

As often noted by the promoters of the FINECVET project: learning mobility is also interesting because learners have the opportunity to achieve what they would not have been able to learn at home.

As noted above, the FINECVET project started in 2004. In its first phase the project focused on the clarification of concepts that had not yet been agreed at European level at that time. The commonalities and compatibilities between the concepts being used in the Finnish VET system and those being proposed at European level were studied.

In the second phase, the main project partners were VET providers, who are the competent authorities for awarding qualifications in Finland. All partners worked in international partnerships and focused on one or several aspects of testing ECVET such as:

- Description of qualifications in terms of units of learning outcomes and the comparison with qualifications of foreign partners to identify compatibility;
- Use of assessment criteria, as defined by the Finnish targets of assessment in the National Requirements for vocational qualifications. Design of templates for learning agreements and the memorandum of understanding.

In the third phase (2009–2011) the project is also based on work carried out by actors on the ground. Six VET providers were selected as coordinating organisations² each having partners in Finland and abroad. The main emphasis of the third phase of FINECVET is to work on quality assurance, assessment and mutual trust. Good practice on assessment, validation and recognition using ECVET is being collected. Furthermore, important emphasis is placed on communicating ECVET to teachers and VET providers. The FINECVET 3 project also tests ECVET on qualifications other than upper-secondary VET qualifications: three further vocational qualifications and three specialist vocational qualifications (both types are mainly targeted at adult learners) are also examined. The following sectors are engaged in the experimentation:

- Technology and Transport
- Business and Administration
- Health and Social Services
- Culture

The outcomes of the FINECVET 3 project are expected at the end of 2011. These will be: a ECVET handbook for Finnish VET providers and a national information and guidance plan. More information will be available from the FINECVET web-site <http://www.finecvet.fi> as from April 2010.



² The Joint Authority of Espoo Region, Helsinki Business College, Kainuu Vocational College, City of Vantaa – Vantaa Vocational College Varia, Salpaus Further Education, The Federation of Swedish Ostrobothnia for Education and Culture – YA! Vocational Education and Training

ECVET – a strategic priority for the National Agencies of the Lifelong Learning Programme

**Klaus Fahle, Managing director of the National Agency “Education for Europe”,
Federal Institute for Vocational Training (BIBB)**

Alongside the European Qualification Framework (EQF), the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) is the most ambitious European initiative in vocational education and training. ECVET and EQF are both linked to key questions of Europe’s future:

- How do we create an efficient European labour market?
- How can we overcome difficulties resulting from a lack of common understanding of qualifications throughout Europe?
- How can we implement a common approach to using learning outcomes?

National Agencies for the Lifelong Learning Programme are in a unique position to support the implementation of this agenda. The following article describes our strategy and provides an insight into our activities.

Article 1 of the Decision (1720/2006/EC) establishing the Lifelong Learning Programme states:

“The general objective of the Lifelong Learning Programme is to contribute through lifelong learning to the development of the Community as an advanced knowledge-based society (...). In particular it aims to foster inter-exchange, cooperation and mobility between education and training systems within the Community so that they become a world quality reference”.

The Lifelong Learning Programme is therefore directly linked to the implementation of the Lisbon agenda and in particular for supporting initiatives such as the EQF and ECVET. With its funding possibilities the programme represents the operational level of European education and training policy and complements legal and political instruments such as the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on ECVET. Since more than 80% of the Lifelong Learning Programme budget is spent on decentralised actions through the National Agencies, it is reasonable that they should be actively supporting these political targets in close cooperation with the European Commission.

ECVET and Geographical Mobility

The Leonardo da Vinci sub-programme and specifically its part supporting mobility actions have the potential to support ECVET development and implementation for transnational mobility. In the context of vocational education and training, Leonardo da Vinci is the most important publicly funded mobility action in Europe (when it comes to resources allocated) and it is also the most innovative one. The programme could become of the same importance for ECVET implementation for geographical mobility as the Erasmus programme was for the launch of ECTS for higher education students’ mobility. Furthermore, the Leonardo da Vinci programme offers the unique option to develop instruments and tools for ECVET through innovative activities that include pilot projects (such as the eleven ECVET pilot projects currently underway), innovation projects managed by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency of the Commission (EACEA) and transfer of innovation projects which is managed by the National Agencies.

Thematic Networking of National Agencies

In 2008 the Commission launched an initiative to support the thematic networking of National Agencies at European Level. The basic idea of the initiative is to valorise decentralised projects at European level and to link them to key political issues such as quality, teachers and trainers for example.

From the very beginning, it was clear that the National Agencies were committed to ECVET and that it should become a topic of thematic networking. In 2006 the National Agencies of the Leonardo da

Klaus Fahle



Vinci programme were working together in a network on the transparency of qualifications led by the Italian National Agency which is part of ISFOL¹. A result of this work was a first compendium which listed around 200 projects funded through the decentralised actions that were monitored by the National Agencies and which were related to ECVET.

On their own initiative, sixteen National Agencies started to cooperate in order to pool together the experience and lessons they and the projects they fund have started to accumulate on ECVET. Nowadays, this European Network is collecting the experience of mobility projects working with ECVET and related issues and is creating a Toolbox. The main audience of this Toolbox will be project promoters and their partners who wish to further strengthen their (existing or new) mobility actions by using ECVET, but also teachers and trainers who will deal with ECVET in the context of mobility on a very practical basis. This Network cooperates with the European Commission and could be formalised in 2010.

Challenges for using ECVET for transnational mobility

The implementation of ECVET will take place in the framework of rules and practices of the different vocational education and training systems existing across Europe. Nevertheless, ECVET is a European approach with common principles. In practice, a common understanding of these principles will need to be developed. The projects implementing ECVET are faced with some specific issues which are:

- Not all vocational education and training systems have already adopted and implemented the approach of learning outcomes.
- ECVET requires a common (transnational) understanding of the learning outcomes that will be the object of credit transfer

- These learning outcomes have to be assessed in a way that can be trusted in view of validation and recognition

The National Agencies have an important function in guiding applicants for project funding and selecting mobility projects. Hence having a common understanding is crucial for their work as well as for all future mobility projects wishing to use ECVET. The Toolbox currently being developed by the National Agencies Network will contain methods and guidance for the definition and description of units of learning outcomes as well as for the assessment of learning outcomes linked to the purpose of geographical mobility. Furthermore a “Train the trainer” module will be developed for teachers who are to work with ECVET on day to day basis. The Toolbox will be developed together with projects, promoters and vocational education and training experts and populated by tested examples. The ongoing ECVET pilot projects are also an important source for this ambitious work.

Furthermore, good practice and practical experiences in addressing these issues should be shared broadly. It is planned that the already existing database ADAM² will be adapted to the needs of ECVET pilot projects, who in turn are also invited to use ADAM.

In conclusion, implementing ECVET is a challenge for all actors in vocational education and training in Europe. It is part of a new paradigm: an outcome based qualification system. National Agencies are committed to this process and will support the European Commission, Member States and stakeholders in developing a common understanding of what this process implies.

1 The Italian Institute for Development of Vocational Training

2 Advanced Data Archive and Management System <http://www.adam-europe.eu/>

What's New

From credit systems to permeability in education and training

The need for permeability in education and training results from the necessity to cope with demographic changes, the complexity of career changes and the shift to a knowledge or service society model. Starting from an analysis of credit systems in use in vocational education and training and in higher education, a two-year Cedefop study aims to provide a structured and critical overview of existing devices, tools and arrangements to support permeability and progression.

It will, in particular, focus on institutional settings, governance patterns, individualisation and the role of qualifications. In addition to desk research and experts' interviews, the study will build on case studies of existing mechanisms. It will also provide case studies concerning a selection of EQF level 5 qualifications which represent transition points in learners' pathways. This study will cover the 32 countries taking part in the Education and Training 2020 cooperation.

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What's New

News from the French speaking community of Belgium

Alain BULTOT, Advisor, Cabinet of the Minister Education of the French Speaking Community of Belgium

In September 2009 an institution was created with responsibility for defining the common occupational and training profiles (or standards) for all providers of vocational education and training in the French speaking community of Belgium. As from 2011, the institution will start producing profiles that are designed in terms of units of learning outcomes. The method used for this purpose will be directly based on the experience and methods of the ECVET pilot projects. For the French speaking Community of Belgium, the OPIR project provides a means to test future methodological tools. Furthermore, we will also capitalise on the experience of other projects such as RECOMFOR, ASSET, SME Master Plus and VALOGREG. The French speaking community of Belgium is among the very first competent authorities to have integrated elements of the ECVET technical specifications into its legislation.

As from September 2011, we will take an important step in view of ECVET implementation. We will launch an experimentation of unit-based qualifications which will concern all our upper-secondary VET schools delivering programmes preparing young people for qualifications concerning three selected occupations.

More information on this reform in the French speaking Community of Belgium will be communicated in the fifth issue of the ECVET Bulletin in June 2010.

A new call for proposals to support national projects to test and develop ECVET

The Education Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) has recently launched a new call for proposal concerning ECVET. This call is somewhat different from the previous call which took place in 2008. In this 2010 round, ECVET pilot projects should concentrate on the implementation of ECVET principles in a VET system or sub-system rather than their testing in a transnational perspective for geographical mobility.

The following specific objectives of future ECVET pilot projects are underlined:

- Design or adaptation of vocational qualifications, in whole or in part, and their description in terms of units of learning outcomes in order to make them comply with the ECVET technical specifications;
- Design or adaptation of learning outcomes transfer processes, which must include assessment, validation, accumulation and recognition of learning outcomes for the purpose of awarding qualifications, whatever the learning context (formal, non-formal and informal);
- Design, formalisation and application of methods for assigning ECVET points to qualifications and units as well as methods and procedures for utilising points;
- Design and application of the procedures, materials and tools required to implement ECVET in concrete terms, for example to extend or generalise the methods developed as part of the project;
- Design and implementation of inter-institutional actions in the field of transnational cooperation.

All five specific objectives outlined above must be addressed.

The full text for the call for proposals can be found on the EACEA web-site: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/funding/2010/call_ecvet_en.php

The deadline for submission of proposals is 16 July 2010.

News from the ECVET project web-site

During their fourth ECVET pilot projects' seminar which took place in Rome in February 2010, the projects presented their approaches to testing the different elements of the ECVET technical specifications (units, assessment, validation and recognition, points, partnerships) as developed during their first year of work. All presentations have now been uploaded on the project web-site and can be found next to the individual project descriptions <http://www.ecvet-projects.eu/Projects/Default.aspx>. Based on these presentations, the project descriptions are now being updated and more information will be uploaded shortly. Furthermore, the Toolbox of the web-site is progressively being populated and some methodological guidelines and examples from past projects which have completed their work are now available <http://www.ecvet-projects.eu/Toolbox/Default.aspx>.

The ECVET Bulletin presents news and articles on ECVET developments. It is published quarterly, 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.

The next issue of the ECVET Bulletin will be published at the end of June 2010. If you want to subscribe to the electronic version of the Bulletin, you can register following the instructions here:

<http://www.ecvet-projects.eu/Bulletins/registration.aspx>

Any comments or suggestions regarding the ECVET Bulletin should be submitted to the following address: contact@ecvet-projects.eu

If you are involved in an ECVET pilot project or a related initiative and interested in sharing your experience and achievements, we would be very pleased to publish an article about your work.

