



**CEDEFOP**

European Centre for the Development  
of Vocational Training



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## **ECVET annual forum**

### **Taking the next step: Building the ECVET community of practice**

#### **Background paper to the ECVET Forum workshops<sup>1</sup>**

**Final version**

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<sup>1</sup> Document coordinated by Didier Gélibert and Isabelle Le Mouillour



## Introduction:

The European Member States expressed in the Bruges Communiqué (2011<sup>2</sup>) their commitment to the development of high quality vocational education and training in Europe. This is part of the 2020 strategy for a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth<sup>3</sup>. They underline the importance of enabling individuals to gain the right skills for and during their professional life, and of substantially increasing transnational mobility of learners and teaching personnel in VET. Building upon the achievements of the Copenhagen process, they called for further progress in developing national qualifications frameworks, credit systems, validation mechanisms and the shift to learning outcomes. Meanwhile the referencing process to the European qualifications framework and the development of national frameworks are major drivers to reforms in VET<sup>4</sup>, and the learning outcomes approach is acknowledged as the binding element between different education and training systems and levels of education and training, ensuring transparency of qualifications and an improved link to the labour market.

The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) is a European instrument to support lifelong learning, the mobility of European learners and the flexibility of learning pathways to achieve qualifications<sup>5</sup>. ECVET has gained much attention and European countries have been working on its conception, development and implementation; especially developing ECVET strategies and approaches consistent with the characteristics of their education and training systems. ECVET activities are running in forms of dedicated working groups, feasibility analysis, or ECVET testing. Between 2009 and 2011, activities have intensified: a lot of efforts are put in informing and communicating on ECVET but also in setting up infrastructure and policy-making mechanisms; legislation is being prepared; experts trained in ECVET matters<sup>6</sup>.

According to the ECVET Recommendation, the key targets include: (a) a preparatory period running until 2012, during which the Member States are asked to create the necessary conditions and to adopt measures with a view to introducing ECVET. During that period, each Member State may adopt and introduce ECVET (and also carry out tests and experiments, for which support may be provided under the lifelong education and training programme) without waiting until 2012; (b) a period for the gradual introduction of ECVET, running until 2014 with a possible revision of the European Recommendation in 2014.

This ECVET annual forum takes place in 2012. This date is essential to the European ECVET project and leads the choice of workshops issues but also to the conception of the forum as a place for discussion, exchange and networking.

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<sup>2</sup> The Bruges Communiqué on enhanced European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training for the period 2011-2020. Communiqué of the European Ministers for Vocational Education and Training, the European Social Partners and the European Commission (Bruges; 7.12.2010). [http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/vocational/bruges\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/vocational/bruges_en.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> European Commission. Europe 2020. A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Communication from the Commission. COM(2010) 2020 final. Brussels, 3.3.2010.

<sup>4</sup> Cedefop (2012). Development of national qualifications frameworks in Europe: October 2011. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop working paper; No 12. [http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/6112\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/6112_en.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> European Commission (2011). The European credit system for vocational education and training: ECVET: get to know ECVET better: questions and answers: revised February 2011 (part I of the ECVET users' guide). [http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/ecvet/faq\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/ecvet/faq_en.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Cedefop (2012). The development of ECVET in Europe: 2011. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop working paper; No 14. [http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/6114\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/6114_en.pdf)



Background fiche

WORKSHOP A/F: ECVET as a Multiplier for Geographical Learning Mobility

|   |             |               |    |
|---|-------------|---------------|----|
| A | 31 May 2012 | 11:15 – 12:45 | EN |
| F | 31 May 2012 | 15:20 – 17:00 | EN |

Facilitators: Ms. Alexandra COSTA ARTUR and Mr. Segundo GONZALEZ

Illustration: Ms. Sibilla DREWS

THE WORKSHOP A/F<sup>7</sup>

The European Commission has stressed for a long time now the importance of mobility for the improvement of labour market opportunities, including the transfer of technology and the mobility of workers in an open economic space. This has led to a series of initiatives aiming at improving the quality and attractiveness of VET in general and of mobility in particular: EQAVET, Europass, EQF and ECVET. We now have a scenario where mobility is a reality and where the diversity of the VET systems has proved to be both an opportunity and a challenge in order to make the most out of the mobility experiences.

In this sense, workshop A/F is focusing on the implementation of recognized geographical mobility. There is now an important tradition in Europe about exchanges and mobility, but after all this years during which mobility has been promoted what remains?

The sustainability of the mobility projects is an important challenge for the future of the VET systems and the transparency of labour market.

We will improve, working together, our collective understanding of the issues about mobility and ECVET and will design the state of play about implementation of learning mobility approach in the VET Systems.

It is necessary to move on from the study visits, regular mobility and more structured mobility to a recognised mobility with the support of the ECVET technical specifications. ECVET is a tool to facilitate learning mobility and to support lifelong learning in Europe. This system is based on learning outcomes that permit the comparability and understanding of qualifications through Europe.

Also, ECVET aims to facilitate the assessment, the validation and recognition of learning outcomes – credit transfer - from one VET context to another, allowing accumulation in the perspective of a qualification. This aspect is particularly significant for the beneficiary, but also for the companies and institutions involved, which will be participating in the better qualification of workers.

<sup>7</sup> European Commission (2011). *Using ECVET for geographical mobility: part II of ECVET users' guide*. [http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/2011-08-02\\_ECVET\\_Users\\_Guide\\_Mobility-Final.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/2011-08-02_ECVET_Users_Guide_Mobility-Final.pdf); European Parliament; Council of the European Union (2006). Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on transnational mobility within the Community for education and training purposes: European quality charter for mobility (2006/961/EC). *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 394, p. 5-9 of 30.12.2006. [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2006/l\\_394/l\\_39420061230en00050009.pdf](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2006/l_394/l_39420061230en00050009.pdf)



Our workshop will enable an oriented discussion about this large theme that involves in a very direct way all the stakeholders: public administration, VET providers, enterprises, students and workers in mobility process.

We will be able to step forward towards a community of practise integrating our common sharing about the topic. It will be a privileged opportunity to mentoring between experienced mobility stakeholders and beginners as well ECVET users in a perspective to take this added value to the context of each participant.

## **ILLUSTRATION**

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The National Agencies for the lifelong learning programme are collaborating within the NetECVET project<sup>8</sup> to develop guidance and information for European ECVET mobility projects. They aim at setting up a toolbox that will help mobility projects in applying ECVET. The NetECVET project is on-going (2011-2013). Based upon the analysis of practitioners' needs and expectations, and her experience with European mobility issues, Ms. Sibilla Drews will introduce and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of ECVET for setting up and organizing learning mobility.

## **WHAT IS EXPECTED OF YOU AS PARTICIPANT?**

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Workshop A/F focuses on the ECVET potentials for geographical learning mobility. More precisely participants are invited to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of ECVET for organizing and running learning mobility based upon the introductory speech and their experiences with ECVET, mobility projects or while working with mobile VET students. This workshop further aims at identifying key issues to be resolved that could be integrated into the future community of practice.

## **Key Issues for debate during the workshop**

1. How does ECVET enable transparency on mobility experiences and mutual trust between involved organisations? Is this the way towards sustainability in mobility projects?
2. How to embed quality assurance tools in mobility processes? From the design / description of qualification to the assessment and organizational process
3. What are the key challenges to take forward to the Community of Practice when it comes to developing geographical learning mobility?

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<sup>8</sup> <http://netecvet.com/about-us/>



Background fiche

WORKSHOP B/G: ECVET as a Multiplier for Lifelong Learning

|   |             |               |    |
|---|-------------|---------------|----|
| B | 31 May 2012 | 11:15 – 12:45 | EN |
| G | 31 May 2012 | 15:20 – 17:00 | EN |

Facilitators: Ms. Gabriela CIOBANU and Mr. Andre HUIGENS

Illustration: Mr. Rolf Aslaksrud KRISTIANSEN

THE WORKSHOP B/G

Workshops B and G deal with the potential of ECVET for lifelong learning purposes. ECVET is one of several initiatives to enhance lifelong learning and mobility in Europe (EQF/NQF, EQAVET, Europass and guidelines on validation of non-formal/informal learning). These European tools and principles constitute an integrated framework, the impact of which depends on their consistency and how they interact. Their implementation will increase transparency of qualifications, support mobility and benefit citizens by providing a systematic way to validate and document their knowledge, skills and competence<sup>9</sup>.

ECVET is a technical framework; its objective is to *facilitate the transfer, recognition and accumulation of assessed learning outcomes of individuals who are aiming to achieve a qualification*. Its role relies upon its capacity to allow for:

- horizontal progression of learners (at the same level) between different qualifications systems – to enable learners with a qualification from one qualification system (for example for adult learning) to get recognition if they desire to obtain a similar qualification that from another qualifications system (for example a broader qualification normally prepared through initial education and training)
- vertical progression of learners (across levels) – to enable recognition of credit for learners passing from one level to another in case where the lower level qualification has some common or comparable learning outcomes with the higher level qualification. This is possible in qualifications systems where qualifications are designed in terms of pathways with multiple entry and exit points<sup>10</sup>.

Core to progression is the development of a coherent and systematic learning outcomes approach to qualifications. This will increase potentials for European comparability, national transparency and permeability, coherence of qualifications systems and validation.

<sup>9</sup> Cedefop (2011). Shaping lifelong learning: making the most of European tools and principles. Briefing note December 2011. <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/19146.aspx>. Available in several languages during the ECVET forum.

<sup>10</sup> European Commission (2011). The European credit system for vocational education and training: ECVET: get to know ECVET better: questions and answers: revised February 2011 (part I of the ECVET users' guide). [http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/ecvet/faq\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/ecvet/faq_en.pdf)



More specifically, this issue of ECVET and progression in education and training can be considered on the basis of two questions: 1) how far can ECVET support access to formal learning opportunities, thus leading to a (full or partial) qualification and 2) how far can ECVET benefit from the inclusion of non-formal and informal learning in the development of qualification systems and frameworks.

#### 1) Access to formal learning opportunities

A successful lifelong learning strategy implies that individuals have increased access to learning, be able to transfer and combine the outcomes of learning and to progress vertically as well as horizontally within systems. It is for these (individual) purposes that validation of non-formal and informal learning is important. “Providing direct ways to gain formal qualifications or ‘door openers’ to education courses and so avoid repetition and inefficiencies in the education system is a key reason for validating informal and non-formal learning” (Feutrie, 2005). Can ECVET play the role of door opener to education courses for adults or early school leavers? A successful introduction of validation depends on to which extent how standards are defined and described through learning outcomes or competences.

Learning outcomes may be acquired through a variety of learning pathways, modes of delivery (school-based, in-company, etc.), in different learning contexts (formal, non-formal and informal) or settings (i.e. country, education and training system ...). The main characteristics of ECVET, the way ECVET testing is developed is fitting with the process of validation of non-formal and informal learning. ECVET 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 in comparison to what is required in view of a qualification.

#### 2) ECVET and qualifications frameworks

The Cedefop review of national qualifications frameworks in 2011 indicates that the links between NQFs and validation of non-formal and informal learning are becoming stronger in most of the countries reviewed. This positions even more evidently NQFs as tools that support coherent lifelong learning policies. Yet very few qualifications frameworks have a built-in credit system.

On the other side, many European countries define as a major objective for the NQF development “to improve the permeability of education and training systems to aid transfer and progression; this is a key-objective of many countries (following the emphasis on EQF). Germany, Romania and Turkey pay particular attention to permeability, stressing that weaknesses and barriers in their existing qualifications systems prevent learners from making progress. This objective can also take shape in the need to link subsystems and to reduce barriers to progression”<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Cedefop (2012). Development of national qualifications frameworks in Europe. October 2011. Working paper No 12. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/19313.aspx>



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## ILLUSTRATION

The project PERMEVET<sup>12</sup> by Oslo and Akershus University College explored how the learning outcomes and the combination of the European tools (most specifically EQF, ECVET and validation) would support permeability between different qualifications levels in a selection of four occupations (automotive, ICT/electronics, construction, floristry). Its approach builds upon previous ECVET related projects in supporting mobility in Europe. The project coordinator Mr Kristiansen will in his contribution introduce the main issues related to lifelong learning in terms of learning pathways, horizontal and vertical mobility, transfer, validation, learning outcomes and the role of qualifications frameworks.

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## WHAT IS EXPECTED OF YOU AS PARTICIPANT?

Workshop B/G focuses on the potentials of ECVET for lifelong learning. More precisely participants to the workshop are invited to consider the relationships between ECVET and validation of informal and non-formal learning as well as ECVET as part of individual learning pathways. The perspective might include horizontal (from one sector to another) mobility and vertical (same sector from one level to another) mobility. This workshop further aims at identifying key issues to be resolved that could be integrated into the ECVET community of practice.

### Key Issues for debate during the workshop

1. What are the key challenges and key actions when it comes to developing ECVET for lifelong learning?
2. How could ECVET and validation come together for lifelong learning to be further developed?
3. What are the key challenges to take forward to the Community of Practice in relation to ECVET for lifelong learning purposes?

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<sup>12</sup> Kristiansen, R. A. (2011). PERMEVET: Permeability in post-secondary VET Pathways to professions? <http://www.hioa.no/index.php/content/download/11556/140201/file/2011-12-13%20RAK%20Presentation%20Permeability.pdf>



**Background fiche**

**WORKSHOP C/H: Sharing the Added Value of ECVET**

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|---|-------------|---------------|------------|
| C | 31 May 2012 | 11:15 – 12:45 | EN         |
| H | 31 May 2012 | 15:20 – 17:00 | EN, DE, FR |

Facilitators: Mr. Tormod SKJERVE and Mr. Loukas ZAHILAS

Illustration: Mr. Jean-André LASSERRE

**THE WORKSHOP C/H**

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Workshop C/H is focusing on the added value of ECVET. What are the potential benefits of a European credit transfer system? ECVET is a technical framework, and we will look into the principles and technical specifications for the transfer, validation, recognition and accumulation of individuals’ learning outcomes in the process to achieve a qualification.

The term “added value” is signalling that ECVET plays a role within a context where processes of value take place. It might be lifelong learning, validation of non-formal learning, mobility, bridging educational systems and labour market, etc. How can ECVET contribute to the achievement of policy objectives within different policy agendas, at European, national and local levels?

The workshop will look at the added value from different levels like national, sectoral, regional or local and from various stakeholders’ point of view like social partners, qualifications authorities, training providers, qualification designers, policy makers ... and not to forget the most important perspective – the individuals! This need for an ECVET added value has been identified as first of a list of 15 necessary conditions for ECVET implementation<sup>13</sup>.

ECVET is one of several initiatives to enhance lifelong learning and mobility in Europe. The workshop will therefore discuss the added value of ECVET within this “package” of instruments; EQF/NQF, EQAVET, Europass and guidelines on validation of non-formal/informal learning, all based on learning outcomes which make it easier to understand what the holder of a certificate or diploma knows, understands and is able to do.

The European ECVET recommendation gives a key role to projects and project partnerships to test and experiment the technical features of ECVET in the context of learner's mobility and support national projects to test and develop the credit system. The European Commission issued two calls for proposals in 2008 and 2010 to finance European projects under the lifelong learning action programme and a group of 19 projects have been running under a common monitoring. Meanwhile more than 260 projects have been analysing the ECVET features (learning outcomes approach, design of units of learning outcomes, memorandum of understanding and learning agreements), elaborating and sharing solutions.

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<sup>13</sup> Cedefop (2012). Necessary conditions for ECVET implementation. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2012.  
[http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4113\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4113_en.pdf)



From the experience so far there is broad confidence that ECVET provides clarity to the learning aspects of mobility periods and makes it possible for learners to flawlessly build on what they learn while being abroad. In the “lessons from the first generation of ECVET pilot projects<sup>14</sup>” five different dimensions of the added value are mentioned:

**1. Giving clear learning objectives to mobility periods**

Where ECVET is used as part of a structured exchange of learners between partner institutions, it is a useful tool to develop an agreement between partner institutions over what a learner should achieve while abroad (possibly using Europass). The definition of (units of) learning outcomes for mobility periods and their recording in a Learning Agreement support the learner as well as the host institution. All projects that tested ECVET during real student mobility used Learning Agreements for this purpose.

**2. Integrating mobility into training pathways**

ECVET also sheds light on what learners are expected to acquire abroad. Teachers and trainers in the home institution receive reliable information on what the learner has mastered during his/her stay in the host institution and they can consequently plan learning activities which build on their newly acquired knowledge and skills. Thus, the mobility period becomes integrated into the training pathway. The use of learning outcomes and their assessment also support the quality assurance of this process.

**3. Supporting individualised approaches**

The use of ECVET also supports pedagogies that enable flexibility in how learning is organised and adjusted to learners’ progression and achievements. At the same time such flexibility is partly a requirement for these benefits of ECVET to come true. The recognition they receive upon return does not have to be in the form of certification of units (if that is not possible in the home system) or exemption from assessment. From a pedagogical point of view, other forms of recognition by the teacher/ trainer that acknowledge the progress made by the learner, are likely to be encouraging. ECVET is a useful tool either linked to summative or formative assessment procedures.

**4. Putting emphasis on learning outcomes rather than the curriculum and focusing on similarities and valorising differences**

ECVET enables the comparison of qualifications and learners’ achievements. While curricula from different countries differ greatly, the expected outcomes are frequently highly comparable. While most of the projects focused their work on identifying similarities between qualifications and supporting the transfer of learning outcomes that are convergent to those one would have achieved at home, a few examples also enabled the valorisation of differences. The emphasis on learning outcomes was also appreciated by projects which were focusing on the use of ECVET in a lifelong learning perspective.

**5. Strengthening trust**

Through their engagement in these pilot projects, training providers, social partners and competent bodies at national as well as sectoral level engaged in an in-depth discussion about qualifications, learning outcomes and their assessment. Through these exchanges they improved each-others’ understanding of foreign VET systems and overcame a number of barriers.

These examples and “lessons” are based on experiences related to cross-border mobility. The workshop will also focus on added value of ECVET to development processes within countries, qualification design, learning pathways, etc.

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<sup>14</sup> GHK consulting (2012). We have tried ECVET: Lessons from the first generation of ECVET pilot projects. Synthesis of results and project portraits [http://www.ecvet-projects.eu/Documents/Seminars/ECVET\\_Brochure\\_singlepages\\_allthesame.pdf](http://www.ecvet-projects.eu/Documents/Seminars/ECVET_Brochure_singlepages_allthesame.pdf)



It seems that the most important contribution of ECVET implementation will be the promotion of the use of learning outcomes as this will improve transparency and clarify progression for individuals and other users of qualifications. It is also important to underline, however, that releasing this added value requires national processes involving all relevant stakeholders.

## ILLUSTRATION

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Mr Jean-André Lasserre has led in his organisation AFT-IFTIM<sup>15</sup> different projects dealing with ECVET and European mobility. AFT-IFTIM is the leading French organisation providing VET in the field of transport, logistics and tourism, working in European and international contexts. AFT-IFTIM provided IVET and CVET to around 200.000 persons (2010).

Mr Lasserre will share with the participants his views on the added value of ECVET from different perspectives since AFT-IFTIM is a VET provider set up by branch organisations, and a professional association gathering employers' and employees' organisations.

## WHAT IS EXPECTED OF YOU AS PARTICIPANT?

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The participants are expected to actively contribute to the discussion in the workshop focusing on the need to develop a shared understanding of the added value of ECVET and providing their national and European experiences as an input to the key issues for debate (see box below).

### Key Issues for debate during the workshop

- 1- Which is the specific added value of ECVET in the European package of instruments promoting lifelong learning<sup>16</sup>?
- 2- Which is the added value of ECVET for stakeholders in different contexts? Which elements impede taking full advantage of the added value?
- 3- What should be the main issues to work on for a Community of Practice related to potential benefits of ECVET?

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<sup>15</sup> AFT-IFTIM stands for Association pour le développement de la formation professionnelle dans le transport - Institut de Formation aux Techniques d'Implantation et de Manutention

<sup>16</sup> Cedefop (2011). Shaping lifelong learning: making the most of European tools and principles. Briefing note December 2011. <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/19146.aspx>. Available in several languages during the ECVET forum.



**Background fiche**

**WORKSHOP D/E/I/J: ECVET as a Challenge to VET and Qualification systems**

|   |             |               |            |
|---|-------------|---------------|------------|
| D | 31 may 2012 | 11:15 – 12:45 | EN         |
| E | 31 may 2012 | 11:15 – 12:45 | EN, DE, FR |
| I | 31 may 2012 | 15:20 – 17:00 | EN         |
| J | 31 may 2012 | 15:20 – 17:00 | EN         |

Facilitators: Mr. Rob VAN WEZEL and Ms. Pauline VAN DEN BOSCH

Illustration: Ms. Christiane EBERHARDT

Facilitators: Ms. Fiona BIBBY and Mr. Thierry LEFEUVRE

Illustration: Mr. Alain BULTOT

**THE WORKSHOPS D/E/J/I**

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The 2012 forum focuses on how to transform the current ECVET initiatives, projects and networking activities into a reliable, resourceful and sustainable cooperation toward 2014; letting the ECVET community of practice take shape.

Workshop **D/E/J/I** is contributing to the development of the Community of Practice, from the perspective of “ECVET as a challenge to VET and qualification systems”. It focuses on functioning, challenges and achievements as far as ECVET implementation is concerned.

As a consequence of the new education and labour market paradigm based on skills and competence rather than on traditional educational input, educational stakeholders are working towards a VET system that is more learning outcome oriented<sup>17</sup>. This shift has opened doors at European level for the lifelong learning of individuals, for example in (or entering) the labour market, formal and non-informal learning. Some of the effects are a better transparency of qualifications, a better match between education and labour market, and easier access towards education and the labour market. When learning outcomes can be achieved in other contexts, independent of the venue, it can contribute significantly to the personal and professional development of people and to the improvement (added value!) of the labour market relevance of qualifications and VET. With ECVET it should be possible to get these achieved learning outcomes recognized.

EQF and learning outcomes based approaches as prerequisites for ECVET implementation: Organizations have to realize that ECVET implementation cannot be done without using the EQF levels, the learning outcomes based approach and procedures and measures for quality assurance (EQAVET for example). Besides the fact that ECVET has a lot of potential for learners in VET, it has also a lot of consequences for VET and qualifications systems. What does this mean in concrete terms and what is the impact of these developments on qualifications in particular and on VET systems in general?

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<sup>17</sup> Cedefop (2009). The shift to learning outcomes: policies and practices in Europe. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop reference series; 72. [http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/3054\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/3054_en.pdf)



It is clear that ECVET implementation requires a qualification system that is output oriented and divided in units, but the implementation of ECVET at national and institutional level goes far beyond the compliance with technical specifications. It also puts a high pressure on the flexibility, autonomy and permeability of institutions.

How to work on the issues as described above in practice? We see that European projects are a good way to experiment and work on “evidence” that ECVET can work in practice. However, in order to create sustainability and implementation of ECVET, it will be necessary that policy and strategies are set up.

Despite the fact that there are many experiments, European projects and pilots on ECVET, there are still little examples in Europe where ECVET is fully implemented and an integral part of the VET system. What could be the reason? Possible explanations are the resistance towards any changes in the national VET systems, the lack in trust in other VET systems, the lack in knowledge on how to set up learning outcomes, the dependence on fixed and non-flexible national or regional structures etc.

If we want to work towards a pan-European VET area and contribute with VET to challenges in the economic depression, it is now the responsibility of the member states to take responsibility in the implementation of ECVET.

As described above, ECVET implementation will have consequences for the VET and qualification system. Therefore it is of utmost importance that the benefits and potential are clear, that all the relevant actors are involved and that benefits and ideas are translated in concrete actions by the responsible actors.

Awareness raising campaigns, involvement of VET professionals and other relevant stakeholders, collaboration at national and European level in combination with the experiences and outcomes from European projects can contribute to the development of strategies in ECVET implementation.

In this workshop, it is the aim to go deeper into the potential of for VET and qualifications. In the outline above several questions are raised, that will be at the heart of the workshop: What is the potential? What are the challenges we have to face? What are the key messages in order to realize ECVET implementation and how can the Community of Practice help us in the journey to ECVET implementation.

## ILLUSTRATION

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Ms Christiane Eberhardt will introduce the theme reflecting upon her experiences in the European CREDCHEM project<sup>18</sup> and its further development. She will also recall on the development of ECVET in the German VET context as she indicates in a recent publication “ECVET is not something which sells itself. ECVET-based mobility elements require general conditions to be in place which are aligned towards avoiding duplication of work and making existing ECVET approaches available for subsequent use by companies, schools or educational providers”<sup>19</sup>.

The CREDCHEM network worked on the development and provision of units of learning outcomes for the chemical sector, especially for mobility. In this way, learners are able to achieve these learning outcomes in another context, independently of the venue. The purpose of this network is to promote the integration of recognized mobility periods into formal training programmes in the chemical sector. In order to foster the

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<sup>18</sup> Eberhardt, C. (2011). CREDCHEM – Entwicklung und Erprobung eines Credit-Systems zur Verbesserung der Mobilität im Chemiesektor. [http://www.credchem.eu/downloads/about\\_project/article/eberhardt\\_ft07-ht2011.pdf](http://www.credchem.eu/downloads/about_project/article/eberhardt_ft07-ht2011.pdf); see also [http://www.ecvet-projects.eu/Documents/Seminars/ECVET\\_Brochure\\_singlepages\\_allthesame.pdf](http://www.ecvet-projects.eu/Documents/Seminars/ECVET_Brochure_singlepages_allthesame.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> [http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/F/?func=direct&local\\_base=CED01&doc\\_number=000081053](http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/F/?func=direct&local_base=CED01&doc_number=000081053)



integration and to ensure the quality (to see CREDCHEM as a “quality label”), tools and standards for mobility are developed. Why is this project successful and a good practice for the theme of the workshop?

- The CREDCHEM has set up a network, which is sustainable and the board of the network includes the involvement of different relevant stakeholders (under which social partners in the chemical industry)
- The project makes use of the learning based approaches. Even if the countries are not ready with their national systems, the partnership has worked on independent units, based on learning outcomes that can be linked and integrated into formal training pathways or which can be used as an “additional qualification”. The definition of the learning outcomes is based on professional work tasks and is a requirement of the labour market, no matter in what context the learners are trained in. This makes sure that there is transparency and recognition of these learning outcomes both in the labour market as in the educational institutes of the partner countries.
- The fact that the unit of learning outcomes are based on several EQF levels, makes that the units fits better in formal existing training programmes and in different labour market situations. The unit is accessible for learners at different levels.

This case study will function as an inspiration for the participants and invite you as a participant to share own experiences and ideas that can contribute to the value of the ECVET Community of Practice, which can help the member states in the challenge towards ECVET implementation.

The further source of inspiration will be the experiences gathered by the OPIR project presented in the parallel workshops. The project experienced with ECVET in the frame of a VET qualifications reform aiming at introducing more flexibility and improve the quality of VET in Belgium/Wallonia. This project<sup>20</sup> focused on designing units and appropriate assessment approaches that would be implemented on a larger scale. This project led in its aftermath to a national ECVET initiative (CPU) including regular training for teaching staff at schools: trainers have already received their training to be operational for the school year starting 2011.

#### **WHAT IS EXPECTED OF YOU AS PARTICIPANT?**

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Workshop D/E/J/K focuses on achievements and challenges to inform the further development of ECVET towards a functioning credit system for VET in Europe. More precisely participants to the workshop are invited to reflect on ECVET characteristics on the basis of their experiences and the characteristics of their VET systems. This workshop further aims at formulating shared statements on what is functioning and which obstacles are still to be overcome. The identified challenges and concrete proposals for actions shall feed into the ECVET community of practice.

#### **Key Issues for debate during the workshop**

1. What is the potential (opportunities) of ECVET for VET and qualification systems?
2. What are the key challenges in this field?
3. What are the key actions for the implementation of ECVET?
4. What are the key challenges to take forward to the Community of Practice?

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<sup>20</sup> [http://www.ecvet-projects.eu/Documents/Seminars/ECVET\\_Brochure\\_singlepages\\_allthesame.pdf](http://www.ecvet-projects.eu/Documents/Seminars/ECVET_Brochure_singlepages_allthesame.pdf)



## Background fiche

### WORKSHOPS of Day 2: ECVET Community of Practice: Solving, sharing, And Committing

|           |              |               |
|-----------|--------------|---------------|
| Workshops | 01 June 2012 | 10:00 – 12:30 |
|-----------|--------------|---------------|

Facilitators: Mr Rob Van Wezel, Mr Tormod Skjerve, Ms Pauline Van den Bosch,  
Mr Segundo Gonzales, Ms Gabriela Ciobanu

Back-ups: Ms Alexandra Costa Artur, Ms Isabelle Le Mouillour, Ms Hanna Autere,  
Mr Didier Gelibert, Mr Richard Maniak

Introduction during the plenary session:

Mr Soren Nielsen, Mr Didier Gélibert, Ms Isabelle Le Mouillour

## THE WORKSHOPS OF DAY 2

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The ECVET Community of practice represents a further step within the European ECVET initiative. The last few years witness the emergence of ECVET and the development of activities and engagements of a large range of organisations of different nature (public, private, education providers, ministries, sector organisations, trade unions, teachers and trainers, ...) engaging in ECVET. Issues such as transfer of best practices, information on ECVET developments, expert discussions on specific ECVET aspects are carried out in many different settings. Time has come to transform the current ECVET initiatives, projects and networking activities into a reliable, resourceful and sustainable cooperation towards 2014; letting the ECVET community of practice take shape.

The concept of 'Community of Practice' (CoP) is not new but has proven a good solution when it comes to set up and run cooperation in a different way. According to E. Wenger -who originally formalised with Jean Lave<sup>21</sup> the concept, a Community of Practice is formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavour: a tribe learning to survive, a group of engineers working on similar problems, a network of surgeons exploring new techniques (...)" .

There are many examples of CoP: Soren Nielsen discussed some of them in his keynote speech. The World Bank defines the CoPs as "informal group of practitioners that shares knowledge on common development problems while pursuing joint solution. CoPs contribute to a more informed dialogue with decision-makers, often leading to improved development outcomes. They also facilitate problem-solving among individual members, stimulate learning, promote professional development, address individual questions, and generate the type of knowledge that members need in their daily work<sup>22</sup> (...)"

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<sup>21</sup> "Situated Learning: Legitimate peripheral participation" Lave, J. and E. Wenger, 1991 New York: Cambridge University Press

<sup>22</sup> World Bank and FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) [http://www.fao.org/Participation/ft\\_more.jsp?ID=9463](http://www.fao.org/Participation/ft_more.jsp?ID=9463)



CoPs have been developed within private companies, public organisations or on ad-hoc basis as for instance by groups of students, etc. Their contexts, domains, memberships and final objectives make that the CoPs are quite different from one another. Within private sector organisations, they might be set up either to upgrade the staff level of learning and therefore to improve their performance or to build a shared learning attitude within this staff. Within public organisations, communities of practices can be focused on facilitating dialogue, promoting learning and solutions, overcoming obstacles, etc. To develop further their domains, CoPs set up different kinds of activities: exchanges of information, peer learning, common solving of problems, sharing information, bridging people, etc... Another essential element constitutive of CoPs is the commitment of members. Their motivation and involvement ensure the CoPs sustainability of and the quality of the work done. Commitment also implies setting up rules for collaboration and in some cases codes of good conduct.

Brief review of the current state-of-art and characteristics of the ECVET CoP:

- It seems that the ECVET CoP domain (s) is (are) identified. The shared objective within the CoP is the implementation of ECVET. Evidence on ECVET implementation reveals however that across European countries implementation might have different meanings (Cedefop ECVET monitoring 2011); question remains, for instance, on how to define the objectives and take on board possible differences in implementation strategies and scope.
- The members of ECVET CoP are potentially known. One can consider the members of the ECVET network as members of the larger ECVET CoP; questions remain as to whether private or public organisations interested in ECVET implementation would be member of the CoP, whether existing professional networks are automatically among the members of the CoP. In short, what makes an existing organisation or network a member of the ECVET CoP?

Examined from the perspective of building up the ECVET CoP, statements need further reflections if the ECVET CoP is to be sustainable. The sustainability relies on the CoP members, the management and the regular dialogue between members. Community of practices connects members (people) together and favour their interaction. The quality of the Cop also depends on the way the work, the interaction is piloted based upon self-organisation and/or external steering.

A second category of elements building up the ECVET CoP includes its potential activities. Extrapolating from some examples<sup>23</sup>, the ECVET CoP could focus on:

- Sharing the knowledge, practice, and tool. Sharing could mean also providing supports from one member to another or supporting learning process.
- Solving common problems that all the members face, questions commonly asked, issues about potential developments. One of this issue concerns the visibility of the ECVET initiative in different contexts (national, regional, local, sectoral, ...).

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<sup>23</sup> For instance: World Bank. Community of practice - Question/answer. [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/WBI/Resources/CoP\\_QA.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/WBI/Resources/CoP_QA.pdf);  
Wenger, E. (2006). A brief introduction on communities of practice.  
[http://www.ewenger.com/theory/communities\\_of\\_practice\\_intro\\_WRD.doc](http://www.ewenger.com/theory/communities_of_practice_intro_WRD.doc), ETF (2011). Learning from 'learn'. Horizontal learning in a community of practice in South Eastern Europe. [http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/learning\\_from\\_learn.pdf](http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/learning_from_learn.pdf)



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These issues will be introduced by Didier Gelibert and Isabelle Le Mouillour in their plenary contribution. Furthermore participants shall reflect on how to use the ECVET community of practice for optimizing and increasing the efficiency of current cooperation as well as for their own ECVET activities. Concrete proposals for organising cooperation and ensuring transfer into national, regional and local contexts shall form the outcomes of the thematic session.

#### **WHAT IS EXPECTED OF YOU AS PARTICIPANT?**

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The workshops aim at developing a common understanding of the ECVET community of practice and shall address four main issues: sharing (such as the good practices), solving (e.g. common problems), committing (members should have an active participation) and making visible (CoP also as a tool for promoting ECVET). Furthermore participants shall reflect on how to use the ECVET community of practice for optimizing and increasing the efficiency of current cooperation as well as for their own ECVET activities. The expected outcomes of the workshops and thematic session 2 are concrete proposals for organising cooperation and ensuring transfer into national, regional and local contexts.

#### **Key Issues for debate during the workshops**

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Which could be the characteristics of the European ECVET Community of practice? (Objectives, potentials, domain, expectations and added value)</li><li>2. How could different organisations be and get involved in the ECVET community of practice?</li><li>3. How will members interact, communicate, collaborate together?</li><li>4. How could the ECVET Community of practice be managed (facilitated) and sustained?</li></ol> |
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