ECVET

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

ECVET
European Credit system for Vocational Education & Training

Education and Training

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Lifelong Learning Programme

Editorial

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ECVET community of practice: the challenge ahead

During 2011, the ECVET exercise has gradually picked up full speed and a remarkable number of outcomes have been achieved, with a good level of participation of stakeholders from the Member States.

The users' guide, *Questions and Answers,* was updated and its shorter version published as an online tool in three languages (E, FR, DE). The guide, *Using ECVET for Geographical Mobility,* addresses relevant stakeholders that seek to explore the added value of ECVET in mobility and the upcoming ECVET Users' Group meeting on 30 November 2011 is expected to validate the note on *Using ECVET to Support Lifelong Learning*. This document, without being prescriptive, highlights the potential of ECVET concern-

ing the recognition of learning outcomes in a lifelong learning perspective.

Of course, there is also the additional support provided by the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP); the pilot projects under the specific ECVET call 2008 will present their convincing results at their final conference in February 2012 and the new pilot projects under the call 2010 recently started to work, involving the much needed competent institutions.

The annual calls under the LLP also continue focusing on ECVET as a priority for different actions (mobility, transfer of innovation projects, innovation projects) and we will fur-

ther highlight ECVET in the future education and training programme.

This is also the reason why the European Commission funded the network of 14 LLP National Agencies with the aim to mainstreaming and exploiting the Leonardo and LLP project results achieved so far (http://netecvet.com).

Most recently, the COM published the restricted call *National Teams of ECVET Experts*, addressing the LLP agencies. Similar to the ECTS/Bologna experts in Higher Education, the goal of the call was to set up teams that bridge the gap between policy level and practitioners on the ground by way of giving advice, providing information and seminars. With 22 LLP National Agencies having submitted applications, VET schools, training providers and companies at national and sectoral level can rely on these resources when it comes to the question of how to best put ECVET into practice.

This year also saw major efforts to politically support the implementation of ECVET. The Users' Group will discuss the document *Necessary conditions for ECVET implementation* at its next meeting. The ECVET Recommendation, as it is well known, asks the Member States to create the necessary conditions so that as from 2012 it is possible for ECVET to be gradually applied. Addressing this challenge, the discussion paper focuses specifically on both the technical conditions (learning outcomes approach) and the operational ones (responsibilities, regulatory frame, capacity building) with a view to best supporting Member States in this regard.
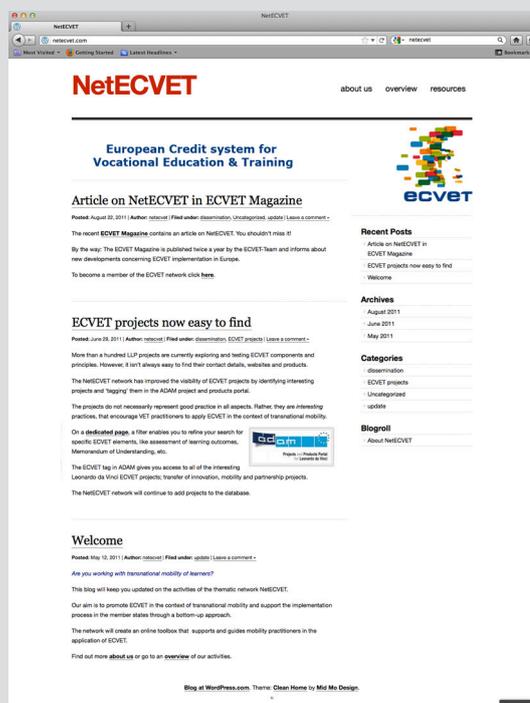
2012 will be the year to celebrate 10 years of the Copenhagen Declaration when the issue of a credit system for VET was put on the agenda as qualifications acquired abroad should be part of the individual's learning pathway.

And these days, a European benchmark for learning mobility is under discussion in the Council.

To meet an agreed benchmark underpinning quality assured procedures of how to describe qualifications in terms of units of learning outcomes and how to assess and validate them, is highly important as to generate the reliable base partners can trust.

Therefore, for the joint seminar of EQF-ECVET-EQAVET, *Assuring the quality of VET qualifications,* the discussions on the contribution of EU tools to the definition and re-definition of learning outcomes based standards that will take place in Bonn in November 2011 are a promising first step to gain synergies while using the European tools.

To further boost ECVET the Users' Group has been asked to validate the proposal *ECVET logo community of practice*. This means that the potential marketing effect to put

ECVET into practice will be used, specifically under a mobility scheme. The ECVET partnerships might not yet be able to perfectly follow all technical principles, but instead match the nature and characteristic features of ECVET. An ECVET logo as a symbol would express the engagement accordingly.

To build on what has been done successfully and intensify strategy building, it is highly important to develop ECVET partnerships that involve competent institutions to tackle the issue of recognition and start mobility projects using the existing templates and tools and help to further develop them. The challenge we face is transforming the existing projects and networking activities into a reliable, long lasting community of practice and the ECVET logo serves this purpose.

Because at the end of the day it is all about the VET learner: we have to use ECVET as a tool to facilitate the transfer, recognition and accumulation of an individual's learning outcomes on the way to achieving a full qualification.

FOCUS An article by Anette Curth, GHK

Second generation of ECVET pilot projects started in January 2011
Focus on national Implementation

In 2010, the European Commission launched a new call for proposals for a second generation of ECVET pilot projects. This specific call aimed at supporting the national development of ECVET in Member States by supporting national initiatives taken to test and develop ECVET. Eight pilot projects have been selected. In the following, their approach to the testing and development of ECVET is described.

ecveT
European Credit system for
Vocational Education & Training

The ECVET Recommendation from 2009 of the European Parliament and the Council has set up a clear time frame for national implementation. Member States are asked to 'create the necessary conditions and adopt measures, as appropriate, so that as from 2012 – in accordance with national legislation and practice, and on the basis of trials and testing – it is possible for ECVET to be gradually applied to VET qualifications at all levels of the EQF'[1].

So while the first 11 pilot projects tested ECVET in the context of geographical mobility of learners, this new generation of pilot projects concentrates on testing the ECVET principles and technical specifications in a specific aspect of their national context. The trial period should result in coordinating and creating synergies for these tests: evaluating and using the results of the tests.[2]

Eight new pilot projects with lead partners from five countries

Eight new pilot projects have been selected; the lead partners are located in five different countries: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy and Malta. All of these projects seek to help prepare the measures and conditions required for the adoption of the ECVET system in a specific (regional, sectoral,

systemic) aspect of their national qualification system. In other words, the projects aim at testing different aspects of national implementation of ECVET as a tool in the context of lifelong learning and flexible learning pathways.

Germany

For example, three German projects have been selected; all these projects address aspects of permeability. The VET-system in Germany is based on a holistic approach; the partial recognition of an educational pathway is unusual. ECVET offers an approach to facilitate the transition between different qualification systems and learning pathways.

The **EASYMetal** project aims to foster permeability between training schemes and sub-schemes at the interface between preparation for vocational training and dual vocational training in the German vocational training system by creating transparency and recognition of partial qualifications. **EASYMetal** will develop procedures to facilitate the transfer and recognition of units of learning outcomes between different training schemes and sub-schemes within the preparation system. By using units of learning outcomes as 'vehicles', learning achievements on both sides of the in-

1 ECVET Recommendation (in English): http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2009:155:0011:0018:EN:PDF
2 EACEA Call for proposals: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/funding/2010/documents/call_ecvet/ecvet_appel_propos_2010_en_final_corrected.pdf

terface become comparable and can be related to one another.

The target group of the project is students in the transition system between school and vocational education and training. The project targets occupations in the field of metals technology, e.g. plant mechanic, industrial mechanic, tools mechanic and metal worker.

EASYMetal suggests different models, describing procedures to implement ECVET at the interface between the prevocational and vocational system. The models range from schemes with high standardised features to schemes with low standardised features.

The expected outcomes are:

- Models of implementing ECVET at this interface – indicated by an increase in transparency and developed methods of recognition of learning achievements;
- Referring to the German partners: a better understanding of ECVET and related chances for young people.

The second German project, the **2get1care** project, aims at testing the European credit system for vocational education and training in health care professions in the German Region of North-Rhine Westphalia. A way of making qualification components transferable across professions and also across national borders will be developed. In the long term, the project aims at supporting the implementation of ECVET in health care professions.

The operative framework for the testing will be provided by the scientifically evaluated adaptation of the training curricula of four health care professions (occupational therapy, speech therapy, physiotherapy and geriatric care) to ECVET standards, the development of a common core curriculum and a further training concept based on ECVET principles for teaching staff, i.e. with a focus on learning outcomes.

The expected outcomes of **2get1care** include:

- The adaptation of training curricula of four professions to ECVET;
- A common core curriculum;
- A new training curriculum for continuing education of trainers;
- The evaluation of results, based on international exchange and feedback;
- A sustainable national and transnational partnership.

The target groups are students of speech therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and geriatric care as well as trainers of the four specifications.

The third German project selected is the **European Credit System for Commercial Qualifications (ESyCQ)** project. **ESyCQ** aims at the development of a recognition procedure between certified qualifications/professions from the fields of commerce and IT training and all forms of learning (formal, non-formal, informal). A transfer system based on the ECVET technical specifications will be developed for six qualifications: in a way that the overlap in training content will entail credit transfer procedures.

ESyCQ choose to work on those qualifications from the commerce and IT sector for which side-entry on the basis of informal and non-formal learning is typical. The overlap and intersection of necessary skills and proficiencies within different qualifications require and enable recognition and credit transfer. Since learning outcomes are weighed differently in different professions, competence assessment is needed, particularly with regard to the recognition of informal and non-formal learning.

For these qualifications, outcome-oriented descriptions will be broken down into competence areas, competencies, skills, and specialist knowledge; they will be based on a previously developed model of competence assessment (CEMES) and implemented in an online skills evaluation database.

The project results will feed into:

- The education and training offer of the participating training institutions;
- The discussions of competent institutions about introducing a new framework of recognition of non-formally and informally acquired learning outcomes;
- Design and implementation of inter-institutional actions in the field of transnational cooperation.

The target group of **ESyCQ** is adults in continuing training.

Italy

Two projects, for which the lead partner is located in Italy, have been selected. Both projects address a mobility issue, either in the regional or in the transnational context. In Italy, the regions are responsible for vocational education and training. So in addition to a lack of existing opportunities for transnational recognition of qualifications, the recognition of qualifications acquired in other Italian regions, might also be an issue.

The **CO.L.O.R.** (COmpetency and Learning Outcomes Recognition for migrants) project aims at satisfying specific labour market requirements related to competency valorisation and learning outcome recognition for migrants. The

project states that a failure to recognise migrants' preceding work experience and learning outcomes not only makes it difficult for employers to appreciate what migrants can offer, but also leads to an unused potential of work force and the de-valorisation of competences.

CO.L.O.R. will put ECVET mechanisms into practice to achieve:

- Adapted and tested qualifications (in terms of LO) - on the basis of shared and tested transferable methods;
- Defined assessment, validation and recognition processes;
- Testing activities (including a repertory of case studies) to assess the transferability of the recognition processes in a cross-sectoral dimension;
- A Memorandum of Understanding on ECVET-related issues among the Italian regions involved aimed at promoting a wider use of the project results and transfer of its results into mainstream policies.

The project will help to develop a framework for the effective valorisation and implementation of follow-up activities, secure the availability of tools and document results in technical journals. **CO.L.O.R.** will also support competent institutions to adopt and apply the ECVET specifications within their systems. Furthermore, the project will help to create innovative and concrete opportunities of learning outcome recognition. It aims at transferring the developed approach to other sectors/context/levels, while at the same time ensuring coherence with the overall system.

CO.L.O.R. focuses on migrants with qualifications in two specific sectors: healthcare and construction, and on 11 qualifications (based on both national and regional standards) at EQF level 3, which represents the 'basic' level of qualifications (the first 'achievement' in terms of competency) to enter the Italian labour market.

The second project located in Italy is **ICARE (Improving mobility and career paths for personal care and social workers)**, which aims at the experimental application of the ECVET system for the establishment of a recognition model for personal care and social workers.

ICARE states that a high number of personal care and social workers are currently mobile across Europe. It is hardly achievable for them to get the competences they gained in other contexts (countries, institutions or systems) and learning settings (formal, non-formal, or informal ways of learning) recognised. Common methodologies and frameworks for evaluation, transfer, validation and recognition of learning outcomes are hitherto rare; as are related flexible training solutions.

Therefore, **ICARE** will undertake an experimental application of the ECVET system for the establishment of a recognition model in the field of personal care. The aim is to establish a mutual trust area among partner countries and further develop mutual recognition of training and qualifications. The ICARE project develops a set of objectives which mainly focus on the adaptation of an already existing regional system of vocational qualifications in the specific sector in coherence with the ECVET framework.

The main impact envisaged, concerns the transparency of the qualification system underlying personal care and social work services, as well as the improvement of co-operation among partner countries. Testing and development of relevant tools for a steady application of ECVET principles and specifications will take place.

France

The French Ministry of National Education (**MEN**) has decided to become institutionally involved in a project to test and develop the credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET) for mobility, opting for a transversal approach concerning vocational qualifications produced by the Ministry of Education.

The **MEN project** (France) examines the regulatory and organisational provisions of national qualifications in relation to the ECVET technical specifications. Currently, vocational diplomas in France are already 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 working life. However, existing units of learning outcomes are not always coherent with ECVET. The project will develop recommendations for the way qualifications are designed and described in units of learning outcomes in France.

The project relates to a specific type of vocational qualification, the French 'vocational baccalaureate'; covering different specialised areas from six different sectors: reception service, secretarial, accounting, health and social work, electrical engineering and building technician. The project aims to examine in depth the regulatory and organisational provisions in force in relation to the ECVET technical specifications. A comparison of the actual practices following the national rules and the ECVET recommendation will be conducted. Working groups composed of experts will examine each qualification chosen for the project in order to develop links to learning outcomes and to identify procedures suitable for assessment, validation and recognition procedures in a national context and in a mobility context. The same approach will be pursued regarding a possible system of points. Audits of previous ECVET projects will also be conducted.

The project will result in:

- Recommendations for the design of qualifications organised into units of learning outcomes;
- Recommendations for the allocation of points;
- Organisational and operational recommendations for recognition, in the award of vocational diplomas, of learning outcomes obtained in situations of mobility.

Belgium-fr and Malta

Two projects selected (Belgium-fr and Malta) aim at supporting an already on-going comprehensive national implementation process.

The **CPU-Europe** project developed in the French-speaking community of Belgium supports the implementation of ECVET in five vocational qualifications in three sectors of secondary education (motor vehicles, hospitality-catering and beauty therapy).

With effect from the academic year 2010-11, the Minister for Compulsory Education and Social Mobility of the French-speaking community of Belgium will commence a pilot scheme for 'qualification by units' (CPU) in secondary education. The principal objective of the **CPU-Europe** project will be to support the experimental implementation of ECVET. In particular, the objectives of the CPU project are:

- To combat failure and repetition of years at school by proposing a structure for vocational training founded on the culture of 'recognition of learning' rather than on the culture of 'punishment of failure';
- To attract more young people to vocational training by offering them concrete training pathways they can commit to, enhancing motivation and fostering the process of taking control of their own learning pathway;
- To propose a qualification structure compatible with education objectives and lifelong learning, notably the implementation of the EQF and ECVET.

The project is aimed at a large number of VET-students. The implementation of the new qualifications will take place in ca. 180 secondary schools (concerning about 4000 students). In the same number of schools, a shift to new, competence-oriented approaches will take place. To support this, the project also aims to train staff.

For the **VET-Credit Conversion System** project, the lead partner is located in Malta. The project aims at the development of a manual for VET institutions to guide the further conversion of their VET qualifications according to the standards specified for ECVET.

In Malta, the conversion of all national VET qualifications into the ECVET system is seen as part of the establishment of the Malta Qualifications Framework. Training institutions – who have the status of competent institutions regarding the development of their qualifications – are in need of support and background knowledge, to be able to convert and align their courses.

The **VET-Credit Conversion System** project thus aims to convert 30 VET qualifications and courses from a number of VET institutions and use them to develop and pilot a methodological tool for the conversion of ordinary qualifications to ones described in terms of ECVET in a pilot phase. The qualifications chosen range from full VET qualifications to short courses in various sectors: engineering, art and design, agri-business, tourism, basic skills and trade training, and ICT. As a second step, a guiding manual will be developed, based on the experience of the conversion process. This manual targets VET institutions and is envisaged as a guide for the conversion process of their VET qualifications according to the standards specified for ECVET.

In terms of impact, this project will have a multiplier effect. Not only will it ensure the conversion of the 30 qualifications/courses involved in the project, but the main output will include the development of a manual for the conversion methodology (ECVET Conversion Manual), which can then be used for the conversion of other courses by other VET training institutions nationally, as well as at the European level.

The role of the international partnerships in the new generation of pilot projects

Despite their national focus, the projects selected will carry out their work in close cooperation with international partners. All projects have at least three external partners from at least three other countries. In total, roughly 50 institutions from 17 countries are involved.

To emphasise the importance of the projects' roles in supporting national implementation of ECVET and helping to create the necessary conditions, specific requirements for applicants have been set up; applicants had to be competent bodies, establishments, institutions or authorities with technical capacity and institutional legitimacy to implement ECVET at national, regional, local or sectoral level.

Consequently, most lead partners represent regional or national ministries, respectively technical institutions carry out specialised research and testing for these competent institutions. In most cases, a consortium of institutions representing the different stakeholders involved has been set up.

The international partners play an important role throughout the course of the project. They are of similarly representative nature and legitimacy as the lead partners and are expected to act in support of the project, for example as observers, advisors or peer reviewers; which may, for instance, analyse the validity of the solutions developed, design and propose improvements, compare the project achievements with their own national solutions, etc.

In concrete terms, this means that the international partners will take part in partnership meetings and will offer regular feedback to the developing process and exchange ideas with the national partners throughout the project. They will provide feedback and support to the development and adaptation of methods, tools and instruments. They are also involved in the dissemination of the project results; for in-stance, they will promote the initiatives in their respective country/region through their website and other channels.

The partners will also ensure the compatibility of project solutions at the European level in the best cases by adopting a suitable learning outcome transfer process among the partner countries.

This will ensure that the new generation of projects will not only contribute to the national implementation of ECVET, but will also help to foster sustainability of the developed cooperation between decision-makers at the European level.

More information about the projects is available on the ECVET pilot projects website: **http://www.ecvet-projects.eu/Projects/Default.aspx**

FOCUS An article by Daniela Ulicna, GHK Consulting

From RECOMFOR to NETINVET: ECVET used by a mobility network in the sector of international trade

One of the objectives of the project Recomfor was to set up a sustainable network that would continue using the tools developed through the project phase as an element of students' mobility. This network was officially launched at the end of March 2011 during the Recomfor final conference. It brings together over 40 training centres who bring in 150 associated companies in 10 countries. The network enables training centres to organise mobility with other members of the network while ensuring the quality of mobility by using ECVET. The number of members continues growing and the model of this network raises interest among other sectors.

N E T I N V E T

Why a network of training centres?

Behind Netinvet one can find two EU funded[1] projects which set the basis for this self-funded network. The Cominter project designed a methodology to define units of learning outcomes that could be used to support trans-national mobility of learners. The method[2] was designed

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1 Both projects were co-funded from the Lifelong Learning programme

2 The details of the method and the qualification description can be found in Cominter (2008) *Presentation of the « import export sales assistant » common certification* see **http://ecvet-projects.eu/ToolBox/ToolBoxList.aspx?id=12&type=1**

and used for the qualification of import-export sales assistant. The method is based on the design of 'common reference units' to which national competent authorities relate the existing national qualifications standards. The common reference units are articulated around professional activities and tasks of import-export sales assistant which are shared by the qualifications of all the countries that took part in this project. The common reference units serve to identify how parts of qualifications from different systems relate to each other.

The second project, Recomfor, worked on the conditions through which this method could be used in practice for students' mobility. Recomfor brought together competent authorities (ministries and other bodies in charge of qualifications standards) who worked together to create the conditions for students' mobility using the common reference units. They developed a form of Memorandum of Understanding (called Membership agreement) which ensures that if the conditions of mobility are satisfied, the learning outcomes achieved in training centres from other countries members of the network will be recognised. They also designed a model of learning agreement and personal transcript to be used to plan and record students' mobility. Finally, the project also prepared guidance materials for trainers and companies about the use of the ECVET-related documents[3].

The two projects set the basis for direct cooperation among training centres. Training centres are the ones who are most closely involved in organising mobility of students and it is therefore logical to develop a network on this basis. However, for the learning outcomes achieved during mobility to be recognised it was important for the competent authorities to be engaged in the preliminary phases. This is in particular true given the experimental nature and the novelty of ECVET for many qualifications systems.

How does it work?

As said earlier, Netinvet is a network of training centres. However, for the network to be operational there is a need for a body that moderates and administers the network. In the case of Netinvet, the coordination is ensured by the Steering Committee of the association created for this purpose (Steering committee composed of member representatives from different countries). The French Confederation of Wholesale and international trade – CGI (Confédération Française du Commerce Interentreprises)brings in extra support by putting at the disposal of the network a proportion of the working time of one of its staff members. The network has a legal entity (it is an association according to the French legislation), a treasurer and a governance structure.

Training centres that provide training in the professional area of export-import can join the network. By joining the network they get access to other centres in this professional area and can organise mobility among each other. When joining the network, the training centres sign a charter through which they engage themselves, among other things to use the ECVET principles, in particular:

- To use the common reference qualification profile and its units to present their training programmes in particular the parts relevant for mobility; and
- To provide transparent information about assessment.

The quality charter[4] contains also other key points that are relevant for the quality of mobility.

On the internal part of the web-site www.netinvet.eu, training centres post information about their capacity to host trainees or their wish to send out trainees. They contact each other through this media and organise mobility respecting the network rules (such as the use of learning agreements and personal transcripts).

Training centres pay a contribution to the network which differs from country to country, as decided by the governance board. This fee enables the network to be self-sustained even though other bodies (such as CGI) contribute with some additional funds to support this work.

Where is ECVET in Netinvet?

At first sight one could think that Netinvet is a standard mobility network. It is true that the main objective of Netinvet is to support learners' mobility. ECVET is a tool to support this goal. ECVET is implemented in Netinvet in the following manner:

- Mobility is expected to be structured and presented using the learning outcomes based common reference units;
- Training centres sign learning agreements with students;
- Students are assessed abroad;
- Their learning outcomes are validated on their return and, where possible, also recognised in the framework of national rules;
- Training centers have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (called Membership Agreement) through which they agree to the above operational principles of the network.

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3 All the documents can be found on the ECVET Pilot projects web-site - http://ecvet-projects.eu/ToolBox/ as well as http://www.recomfor.eu/
4 The charter can be consulted here: http://www.netinvet.eu/docs/2-quality%20charter%20for%20training%20center%20netinvet.pdf

Implementation of the above process in mobility exchanges organised by Netinvet is a progressive development. For most training centres the above steps are new and it would not be realistic to expect that everything is fully implemented from the first mobility exchange. Therefore, the first stages of Netinvet concentrate on consolidating the network and starting to use the instruments available. More emphasis on the use of ECVET will be put in place in later stages of the network development.

What are the results?

The network activities started even before the network was officially launched under the auspices of the Recomfor project. In 2010-2011 more than 150 mobility exchanges were organised. These lasted from three weeks to three months. The numbers show the strong interest training centres in the network have in developing mobility for future export-import professionals. Students are also enthusiast as they see international experience as added value for their future career in this field[5].

One could ask what difference does the network make to those training centres which were already engaged in running mobility exchanges before the network was created. As put by Gerard van den Akker from the Albeda College in the Netherlands:

Netinvet enables me to send students on mobility to partner institutions while knowing that the quality of the learning experience will be ensured. The Netinvet tools make it possible for me to send students abroad without having to send an accompanying teacher with them which represents an important economy of resources.

The success of the network can also be measured by the interest it raises among other sectors. Organisations from the transport sector have approached CGI to mutualise resources for coordination of the network and to open it to training centres from the transport sector.

FOCUS An article by Cecile Mathou, GHK

Presentation of project outcomes of CAPE-SV to French social partners

On 26 May 2011, CAPE-SV held a progress meeting gathering European partners in Paris, to take stock of the work done in the past two years and present their work to French social partners in the performing arts sector. This meeting was also an opportunity to take stock of the added value of the project, as perceived by each individual partner.

Capitalization of Learning Outcomes in Europe's Live Performing Arts

CAPITALISATION DES ACQUIS PROFESSIONNELS
CAPE SV
DANS L'EUROPE DU SPECTACLE VIVANT

CAPE-SV, unlike other ECVET pilot projects, did not aim at testing mobility on the ground, based on ECVET tools and principles. Its primary concern was to first create the conditions that would make mobility within the sector possible, by identifying common competences across occu-

5 See for example the minutes from the Recomfor final conference that capture, among other things, inputs from students:
http://www.netinvet.eu/actualites-netinvet#news_27

pations in the sector, agree on common procedures for recognition, accumulation and transfer and formalise these procedures. Ultimately, the project aims at creating tools to facilitate geographical **and** professional mobility within the sector, given the importance of occupational mobility of professionals in the sector.

The starting point of the project's approach was therefore to develop tools to enable the project partners to describe the content of their qualifications in a transparent manner using learning outcomes, focusing on technicians and administrative staff. The project team first identified the chronological phases related to work processes common to various occupations in the field. Learning outcomes were grouped according to stages of the production process in the performance arts industry: planning, designing, implementing, and evaluating.[1] More recently, the partners have been working on identifying results that could be assessed (assessable outcomes), for each learning outcome identified, as illustrated by the figure below.

**CAPE-SV comparison of assessable learning outcomes to identify commonalities –
unit 'production of transmission and information documents'**

RESULTATS EVALUES / ASSESSED OUTCOMES :
Unité de travail : « production de documents de transmission et d'information »

		RBC	CFPTS	STAFF	INSTITUT
METHODES & PROCEDURES / *METHODS & PROCEDURES*	utiliser les conventions graphiques lumière | *use lighting graphic conventions*	●	●	●	●
	décrire précisément le matériel nécessaire | *describe equipment needs*	●	●	●	●
	dessiner les éclairages | *draw the design*	●			
	définir les procédures de montage | *define fit up procedures*		●		●
	dessiner un storyboard | *draw a storyboard*	●			
	maintenir le cahier de régie à jour | *keep show report updated*				●
	déterminer les besoins en personnel et en temps | *define needs for staff & scheduling*		●		●
	collecter les plans | *collect plans*			●	
	etc …				
OUTILS & MOYENS / *TOOLS & MEANS*	logiciel DAO 2D | *CAD 2D*	●	●		●
	logiciels de bureautique (*Word, Excel*)	●	●	●	●
	logiciel bureautique *(Open Office)*			●	
	logiciel *WYSIWYG*	●	●		●
	dessin | *drawing*	●	●	●	●
	maquettes | *model*	●			
	etc ….				
COMMUNICATION – RELATION / *COMMUNICATION*	communiquer avec l'éclairagiste | *communicate with lighting designer*		●		●
	communiquer avec le régisseur | *communicate with lighting manager*	●			
	communiquer avec le régisseur général | *communicate with stage manager*		●		●
	communiquer avec les techniciens | *communicate with lighting technicians*	●			
	rendre compte au régisseur lumière | *report to lighting manager*			●	
	etc ….				
ENVIRONNEMENT – CONTEXTE / *ENVIRONMENT*	lieu de spectacle dans les murs, hors les murs, en tournée | *performing space indoors & outdoors, touring*	●	●	●	●

1 For a more detailed description of the CAPE-SV methodology see article on CAPE-SV in EVCET Magazine, Issue 1, June 2010.

CAPE-SV

The comparative grid will support the drafting of learning agreements related to mobility programmes, taking into account individuals' needs, their profiles and backgrounds.

The correspondence between learning outcomes assessed abroad and at home will be possible through the identification of common and specific elements.

Whilst common elements can be clearly validated, recognised and integrated into the qualification at home, the specific elements that are not common to the partners represent the added value of mobility. They could be recorded using Europass mobility.

The method is still to be tested concretely, to determine whether certain elements cannot be recognised at all.

Added value and impacts at the national level

Following the presentation of progress made, the different partners had the opportunity to discuss the added value of the participation in CAPE-SV and their perceptions about the application of the project's results in their country.

For the UK partner for instance, this work has led to a clear understanding of technical training in Europe in this area, and constitutes a body of knowledge that should be of real value in the future. For VET actors in the UK, understanding apprenticeship schemes in other countries is very important, in a context where important changes are taking place in VET systems. Encouraging VET students to move across Europe is also an important issue in the UK. ECVET can certainly support this.

In Spain, taking part in the project is an opportunity to introduce ECVET principles and the tools developed by CAPE-SV to the national and regional authorities in charge of reforming VET systems. In the past five years the Spanish VET system has introduced modifications increasing its flexibility and relevance to the needs of labour market. ECVET also opens new doors in terms of recognition and validation of prior experience (VNFIL), particularly in the performing arts sector.

In the Czech Republic, a national qualification framework is being set up, a law on VNFIL has just been adopted and the VET system is undergoing important developments. In this context, CAPE-SV is ideally placed to feed into the new system being set up. From the point of view of learners, mobility in the field of performing arts has real added value. In particular, students can learn something that is not taught in Czech Republic, such as 'administration du spectacle', or other technical aspects that are not part of the Czech curriculum.

As highlighted by the French partner, it is still too early to comment on the concrete impact of ECVET on mobility in this sector in particular, given that no real life mobility has been tested by the project. What is important, at this stage, is to start setting up solid partnerships that will be the basis for exchanges when mobility will be tested on the ground. Projects such as CAPE-SV can therefore play a key role in stimulating a dynamic of networking and partnership, for future mobility.

On the other hand, the impact of ECVET on national qualification systems is already being felt in France, where accreditations for VET qualifications must be renewed every five years. The French Commission nationale de la certification professionnelle (CNCP – national committee for professional certification) checks the coherence, complementarity and renewal of diplomas and qualification documents, together with their adaptation to evolution in qualifications and work organisation. The lead partner CFPTS, (Centre de Formation Professionnelle aux Techniques du Spectacle, Vocational Training Centre for Performing Arts Techniques) has started to use part of the project results when renewing two of its qualifications: 'Show manager' and 'general manager' with the CNCP. This was an opportunity to formulate training and occupational standards differently, in a way that is more ECVET friendly. More generally, as the provision of training in the sector is being reviewed, training programmes are becoming increasingly modularised. This is an illustration of the added value of the bottom-up strategy at the core of CAPE-SV.

Overall, the project outcomes are seen as the first preliminary steps toward the implementation of actual mobility on the ground. In the long term, one could imagine building modules that could be delivered in different countries in Europe, fully recognised in a national diploma or recorded in Europass.

Next steps

As part of their ambition to create the conditions favourable to mobility (professional and geographical) in the sector, the partners agreed on a general framework for the memorandum of understanding (MoU). Two templates of MoU have been elaborated and completed by the project partners, focusing on learning outcomes corresponding to occupations in the sector, such as 'scheduling time and planning work process'. The ultimate goal is to produce a clear, common framework that can be adapted to the variety of situations and occupations in the performing arts sector. It was decided for instance, that in order to find a common language, descriptions of work tools or processes will be as generic as possible (for example, it will not mention trademarks of specific software, but use generic names instead).

In the short term the next step is the testing of some of the project results during two juries in September and October organised by the CFPTS for its candidates. The results of these juries will be discussed with all the project partners to assess the applicability of the system to a programme of geographical mobility.

The signature of a MoU on the mobility of technical and administrative staff in performing arts in Europe is envisaged to take place in December 2011. This agreement would formalise the principles of a mobility programme elaborated in October.

FOCUS   An article by Anette Curth, GHK

ECVET system for European hospitality

No borders in tourism hospitality European Training and Work (N.E.T.WORK)

The tourism sector is an international field of work which requires a mobile and multilingual work force. International experience during the training phase is an important prerequisite to equip students with the necessary skills, knowledge and competences and to broaden their perspectives. To promote mobility among students in the tourism sector, the N.E.T.WORK project looked out for a way to utilise the ECVET system for better cross-border comparability of learning outcomes, competences and qualifications.

The common project work started with an analysis and comparison of four different national qualifications relating to working at the reception of a hotel. Common macro-competences were defined and - based on these results

- units of learning outcomes were developed. It was then compared how far these units are in concordance with the national, or in the case of Italy, regional, qualifications; in other words, how far the students acquired the defined skills, knowledge and competence in their respective training pathway. The partners then experimented with the assessment of these units – respectively the connected

knowledge, skills and competences within their national qualification systems.

On 4-5 May 2011, the N.E.T.WORK project held its fourth partnership meeting in Nantes, prepared and organised by the French partner France-Europea. The partners were looking forward to discussing their experiences with the testing phase. During the meeting, it was discovered that ECVET is still a relatively new and unfamiliar instrument in the different partners' home countries. Consequently, the testing and experimentation phase was confronted with several challenges related to the specifics of the respective national qualification system. All in all, interesting experiences have been made that will be systematically evaluated and will feed into the users' handbook.

Aims and objectives of the project

The N.E.T.WORK project aimed at constituting and consolidating a partnership among organisations in four countries - Italy, France, Slovenia and Portugal - which are able to create and share a common optional framework for the development and testing of the ECVET system in their home countries. In other words, the N.E.T.WORK project concentrated on testing if the specific training pathways within the qualification systems in the respective home countries of the partners are 'ECVET-ready' - or under which conditions they could become so – as a preparation for the eventual mobility phases of students, which is seen as a long-term goal.

The lead partner, the Italian Centre for Advanced Studies in Tourism and Tourism Promotion (CST) in Assisi, has brought together partners which play an important role in shaping and organizing vocational education and training in the tourism sector. For Italy, this is the Province of Perugia,[1] Federalberghi, the federation of Italy's hotels and tourist accommodation enterprises, CONFAO, the National Consortium for Vocational Education and Training and Sviluppo & Competenze (SV&CO), an agency specialising in European projects in the context of the Lifelong Learning Programme.

The international partners include the French association France-Europea from Nantes, which trains students for professions in the agricultural sector – including rural tourism; the Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training (CPI) in Ljubljana; and ISESP – Istituto Superior de Espigno in Portugal, an institute organising study visits abroad, together with CONSULTIS, a Portuguese consultancy specialising in European projects.

Description of the training profile for receptionists in the four countries

In this project, enhanced mobility in the tourism and hospitality sector is seen as a long-term goal. As a first step to support the development of the ECVET system, the partners saw it necessary to examine the design and organisation of qualifications in the different countries in order to try and find the elements common to all the programmes. Based on these common elements, the partners identified common learning outcomes. In a second step, at least one partner in each of the countries involved tested the ECVET model by integrating new or modified training modules - based on the defined common units of learning outcomes – as part of an existing training pathway or active mobility project.

The partners settled on a professional profile which is quite common in all tourism and hospitality management sectors of the partner countries; since all types of hotels, bed and breakfasts or alternative lodging structures need a reception area, the professional profile of a receptionist is a common training pathway and/or professional profile in all countries.

To be able to describe the content of specific sections of the training pathway for receptionists in the four countries in terms of learning outcomes, the partners gathered national data, agreed on a common descriptive matrix, on learning outcome descriptors and common units for the testing phase.

This happened in consecutive phases. In the first phase, the partners analysed the elements characterising the training pathways in the national contexts of each country in two steps and by two different research methods. Each partner carried out:

- Desk research by analysing the existing national repertories (IFTS systems, EU repertories, V.A.E. system, etc.), with special focus on the vocational training system; and
- Field research, by doing field observations and interviews of at least five operators filling these roles (according to hotel classification identified and shared in the previous desk research).

The analysis was followed by comparison of the design and organisation of the specific training connected to the qualification profile of a receptionist in Italy, France, Portugal and Slovenia according to the following criteria:

- planning and realisation;
- contents (in terms of knowledge, skills and competence);
- evaluation of learning outcomes;
- validation of learning.

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1 The Italian 'provinces' are important regional stakeholders in the Italian VET system, offering several qualification pathways for the design of which they are also responsible.

Finally, training profiles were chosen that are equivalent both in terms of formal EQF level (IV-V) and in the number of months of instruction/training (12-15). The following table contains the selected training profiles:

Country	Training Profile
France	Provider of Hospitality & Accommodation in Agrotourism
Italy	Tecnico superiore per l'assistenza alla direzione di strutture ricettiva
Portugal	Head Receptionist
Slovenia	Receptionist

Description of learning outcomes and definition of units

For each profile, the macro competences have been identified by the partners, on the basis of a common shared framework. This framework defines the least common denominator, or in other words, the minimum shared elements. Matrix 1, below, provides an overview on the key learning outcomes of the selected training profiles.

In the next step, a common shared framework of macro-competences (Matrix 2, next page) has been constructed, selecting five elements common to all the profiles.

Matrix 1: Key learning outcomes of the selected training profiles

EXPERIMENTATION AREA			
Provider Of Hospitality & Accomodation In Agritourism (Fr)	**Tecnico Superiore Per L'assistenza Alla Direzione Di Strutture Ricettiva (It)**	**Head Receptionist (Pt)**	**Receptionist (Si)**
is able to:	**is able to:**	**is able to:**	**is able to:**
• welcome and inform the client • keep in mind the client's motivations and expectations	• handle the operational running of the department, according to parameters of efficiency, effectiveness and quality	• develop, when necessary, the activities of the Hotel Receptionist, namely the operations of reservations, "check-in" and "check-out", the provision of information and customer support, and responding to complaints and suggestions	• welcome guests and conduct other services according to standards of good business manners • handle management of rooms and manage and keep records
• inform the clientele about the possibilities offered by the territory • adapt the services to the expectations of targeted customers			• inform and give advice to guests on services and events in the local environment
	• manage efficient relations between departments in the hotel		• maintain efficient communication with other departments in the hotel
	• manage the assigned staff • choose appropriate ways for organizing his/her and, as necessary, staff activities in the hotel reception department	• plan the activities of the hotel reception department • guide and coordinate the staff of the reception service	• analyse, plan and organize his work
• apply commercialisation techniques regarding the farm tourism sector	• develop and implement promotion and commercialisation activities, using statistical control instruments. • monitor production processes	• participate in the commercial effort of the hotel and in monitoring the results of the accommodation service	• perform financial assignments • and execute commercial activities and ensure quality control of the services and work conducted

Matrix 2: Common shared framework of macro-competences

EXPERIMENTATION AREA			
Provider Of Hospitality & Accomodation In Agritourism (Fr)	**Tecnico Superiore Per L'assistenza Alla Direzione Di Strutture Ricettiva(It)**	**Head Receptionist (Pt)**	**Receptionist (Si)**
	1) handle the operational running of the department, according to parameters of efficiency, effectiveness and quality		
			2) inform and give advice to guests on services and events in the local environment
			3) maintain efficient communication with other departments in the hotel
4) choose appropriate ways for organizing his/her and, as necessary, staff activities in the hotel reception department			
			5) perform financial assignments and execute commercial activities and ensure quality control of the services and work conducted

So on the whole, five common 'macro-competences' for the qualification profile of receptionists were defined:

1. Ability to coordinate the operational running of the reception department;
2. Ability to inform guests and advise them about services and events in the local environment;
3. Ability to maintain efficient communication and cooperation with other departments in the hotel;
4. Ability to choose appropriate ways for organising his/her own and, as necessary, staff activities in the reception department;
5. Ability to perform financial assignments, execute commercial activities and ensure quality control of the services and work conducted.

In a last step, each macro-competence has been described in terms of knowledge, skills and competence (Framework KSC), according to the technical specifications annexed to the ECVET-Recommendation which defines learning outcomes as statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do upon completion of a learning process and which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence.

Table 1 (next page) provides an example.

Table 2 (next page) provides a comparative chart which gives an overview on the concordance of the units with the chosen training pathway in the respective countries.

It is obvious that not all learning outcomes summarised in a unit and defined in the KSC matrix, will always be present in the respective qualification as offered in the four countries. Since it was not the objective of the project to draw up new and more equal qualifications, this meant that in the experimentation phase only the acquired knowledge, skills and competences could be assessed and validated, which are foreseen in the respective qualification pathway.

Descriptive outline of credit points for the analysed learning outcomes and the related units

On the basis of this work, a proposal was set up for the construction of a framework of learning outcomes structured in units with related ECVET credit points – based on the relative weight of the unit.

Table 1

Macrocompetence (2) = He/she is able to inform and give advice to guests on services and events in the local environment		
Knowledge: he/she	**Skill: he/she**	**Competence: he/she**
1. Knows the historical and cultural environment and tourist services to provide customers with information 2. Knows the sources and techniques for finding information on events	1. Gathers and records information about the cultural, environmental and gastronomic opportunities of the territory 2. Keeps the data base of opportunities up to date	1) Is able to carry out the activities of gathering information on the opportunities offered by the surrounding territory *(including car rentals, sightseeing tours, reservation and confirmation of tickets to shows, etc.)*
3. Knows the principles for constructing a tourism supply package integrated with the territory 4. Knows the principles of destination management	3. Contacts and collaborates with other operators to formulate integrated tourism supplies 4. Handles relations with intermediaries both of tourism and non-tourism-related distribution	2) Is able to integrate the tourism offer with the contribution of other public and private stakeholders of the territory
5. Knows the principles of territorial marketing	5. Informs about and promotes the cultural, natural and food & wine opportunities of the territory 6. Helps guests with transportation, reservations, gathering information on services outside the hotel and on the historical and cultural environment 7. Sells souvenirs and other promotional and contact material	3) Is able to promote the tourism destination where the structure is located

Table 2

UNIT 2 = To inform guests and advise them about services and events in the local environment			
France	**Italy**	**Portugal**	**Slovenia**
To advise clients on the opportunities offered by the territory	To organise and manage information about services in the local environment	To organise and co-ordinate the activities of the reception service and ensure the most complex activities	To acquire and evaluate tourism data from different sources, advise guests and sell services
			To prepare and offer the tourism programmes of home environment and sell tourism programmes
To manage a benefit in rural tourism	To improve the level of customer satisfaction about the services provided	To co-operate in the sales effort of the hotel	To encourage and coordinate connection among individual tourist subjects (establishments) in the area of the tourism destination, advance informational, selling and marketing services in home environment tourism, to plan packet offers
	To propose and apply measures to foster customer loyalty		

To develop benchmarks for the allocation of ECVET points, the N.E.T.WORK project partners again undertook research activities. They initiated an online-survey, asking employers about the relative importance of the defined learning outcomes for the performance of employers. On the basis of roughly 450 responses from the partner countries, it turned out that the service-oriented competence (informing and advising guests, No. 2 in matrix 2) was rated as most important while the competence related to internal coordination (No. 1 in matrix 2) was rated as least important. It must be stated, though, that the differences in the rating was very small (about a 3% difference between the highest and lowest rate). Furthermore, the size and structure of the enterprise is a decisive factor; in a little bed & breakfast or small family-owned hotel, receptionists need different skills and competences than receptionists in a big hotel which is part of an international franchise.

Consequently, the results of the research were less helpful for the task of allocating ECVET points than initially hoped for. However, the questionnaire did provide verification that the definition of the competences was clear and helped understand the level of importance assigned to the individual competences by this same production system. This is based on the conviction that the more important the competence and the greater the level of acquisition of these competencies by workers, the easier their mobility will be.

Experimentation phase

Based on the results and outputs of the previous steps, the partners organised a coordinated phase of experimentation to be carried out in the countries of the partnership.

The aim of the experimentation phase was to find out how far the students had acquired the defined skills, knowledge and competences in their respective training pathway and to test how these can be assessed and validated. The experimentation was intended to measure the extent to which learning outcomes are acquired in the respective training system.

At least one partner in each of the countries involved tested the developed model as part of a training pathway or an active mobility project.

An experimentation plan was developed which contained detailed information on:

- the training pathways chosen for the testing and their structuring into units and learning outcomes;
- the expected results;
- the organisation (timing, resources, targets, etc.);

- the subjects involved (learners, students, structures, pathways, etc.) and their related roles;
- support activities;
- monitoring activities.

Together with the experimentation plan, a guideline was provided, which proposed experimentation methods which on the one hand, corresponded to the ECVET technical specifications and on the other hand, responded to the situations and needs in each partner country. Experimentation instruments were offered that allowed for each partner to carry out an action in conformity with his/her own institutional mission and with the effective areas and typologies of the training processes existing in his/her own context. For instance, an assessment chart was provided, which made it possible to assess the acquired skills, knowledge and competences according to a common grid and templates for the collection of comparable data about the experimentations.

In **Slovenia**, the Secondary School of Catering and Tourism Maribor participated. In this school, 190 students take part in a four year program, part of which is a specialisation for aspiring receptionists. The part of the students' training programme that corresponds to the defined macro-competences was singled out and examined according to the learning outcomes approach. This experiment can be seen as a practical experience with the ECVET technical specifications which is part of the Slovenian efforts to develop a framework of how to implement ECVET mobility within the national context.

In **Italy**, VET-regulations differ from region to region. Even within Italy, the mutual recognition of qualifications between regions is not always guaranteed. Different ways of describing training pathways exist; regional, provincial and national bodies may have different requirements in their training courses. The project involves representatives of the provincial government, representatives of the most important national professional organisation in the field of tourism hospitality as well as training providers and organisations specialised in VET systems.

A formal agreement for experimentation with the developed framework of learning outcomes structured in units in the training of the selected training profile (Tecnico superiore per l'assistenza alla direzione di strutture ricettiva), has been signed and a testing phase has been carried out. The outcomes are currently being analysed. To gain additional insight into the actual comparability of the learning outcomes, the Province of Perugia, which is participating in the project, proposed a mobility period for two trainees from the training course in question. These trainees will have the opportunity to spend a period of time in one

or more enterprises in a network partnership country next summer, to improve understanding, knowledge and skills learnt in the course.

In **Portugal**, two VET schools and a total of 62 students (28 male, 34 female) were involved in the experimentation. In one school 'reception technicians' are trained (Level 4), in another school - a college – 'hotel managers' (Level 6) are educated.

First, the initiative was published in schools. In December 2010, start-up meetings with the staff took place because the teachers and operators had to be made familiar with the developed methodology and tools. A great deal of work had to be invested in this aspect of the experimentation. Since the Portuguese system is not 'ECVET ready' and the shift to learning outcomes has not been implemented yet, teachers were not familiar with the concept of 'learning outcomes'. The experimentation itself started in March 2011 and ended in June 2011, with a duration of 180 hours of lectures.

The following coordination and flanking methods had been foreseen:

- Meetings to provide initial information;
- Meetings with the testing underway;
- Direct administration;
- Distance support.

Documents with the results of the testing were collected in June and are currently in the process of being evaluated.

The testing phase will be systematically evaluated. The results will feed into a users' handbook, which will contain guidelines based on the process of testing and implementing methodologies according to the ECVET technical specifications. The handbook will be published as a result of the projects work by the end of 2011.

FOCUS   An article by Didier Gelibert, ECVET Team Board.

European ECVET Network Forum 2011

On June 9th and 10th, the yearly ECVET forum took place in Madrid at the premises of the Instituto de Formación Empresarial (Chamber of Commerce of Madrid). The Forum tackled three main issues: national strategies related to ECVET implementation in progress throughout Europe, projects' (pilot, national and mobility) outcomes and networks (for facilitating partnerships) in development. Concrete examples and illustrations provided, gave participants the opportunity to set up their own strategies, to update their knowledge and explore new ideas.

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Soledad Iglesias, Deputy Director of Educative Guidance, Vocational Education and Training of the Spanish Ministry of Education opened the forum in the name of the host country. The main objective of the forum was to highlight the major issues and challenges VET systems have to tackle in order to create, by 2012, the necessary conditions for ECVET implementation in accordance with the Recommendation. As Joao Delgado, European Commission, DG EAC, Head of Unit, Vocational Training/Leonardo da Vinci, said in his opening remarks, '2012 is almost tomorrow and we hope this forum can contribute to clarify what is needed and which actions are crucial to be taken'.

The forum gathered 129 registered participants (around 1/3 of network members). Twenty- seven countries were represented. The organisations participating included among others: the European Union, National Ministries, qualification bodies, regions, companies and professional / sectoral associations, VET providers, research centres, etc. Twenty-two members of the ECVET Users' Group attended the Forum. The variety of participating organisations ensured the richness of perspectives (different perceptions even within same systems).

According to participants, the workshops' modality and management solutions allowed the straightforward and operational exchange of views among participants.

From the workshops, the identified conditions for ECVET implementation included:

- Ensuring that the added value of ECVET is understood and perceived within systems;
- Active involvement of relevant stakeholders in the process;
- Formalised implementation strategy;
- Adjustments in the organisation, contents and delivery process of qualifications;
- Appropriate training of trainers, assessors, practitioners, and all actors.

The participants in the workshops also identified challenges and obstacles and some possible solutions. The ECVET Forum 2011 proceedings will deliver the detailed results (available on the **www.ecvet-team.eu** site from October 2011).

Erik Hess, Policy Officer ECVET at the European Commission (DG EAC), presented the 'Restricted call National Teams of ECVET Experts'. This call was published in July 2011 with a tender deadline in October 2011. The eligibility period will last from the 1st of January2012 to the 31st of December 2013.

The main objective of this call is to set up a team of ECVET experts. This team is quite similar to the ECTS Bologna experts. The call is restricted to LLP National Agencies. The national authorities will, among others, select and appoint the experts, approve the task distribution within the team(s), endorse the activity plan, and set goals and targets for the work of the experts.

The core tasks of the national teams of ECVET experts are to:

At the domestic level:

- Deliver training to staff of VET competent bodies, relevant stakeholders, institutions, companies, and VET providers

The new ECVET poster delivered during the Forum 2011

- Advise VET competent bodies, stakeholders, institutions, companies, and VET providers
- Assist in policy-making; the experts may participate in the development of ECVET. They should cooperate with EQF NCP and EQAVET NRP
- Be involved in promotional/awareness raising activities
- Assist in establishing a ECVET community of practice

At the international level:

- Take part in European events
- Support other National Agencies (on request)

Comments of participants properly summarize the 2011 ECVET Forum: *'Inspiring, concentrated, intensive environment ... A step forward towards the community of practice!'*

An article by Berthold Huebers, Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training in Germany (BIBB)

Mobility among VET-Students in Germany higher than initially assumed – enterprises and students ready to invest in mobility periods

A representative study shows that three percent of all German VET-students spend time abroad as part of their training – 50 percent more than assumed. Nearly 40 percent of stays abroad are entirely privately financed by enterprises or the participants. This is an indication that enterprises are ready to invest in apprentices' mobility. On the other hand, the study has also shown that enterprises see the recognition of these mobility periods as a problem and seek support from competent institutions. Solutions to the assessment, validation and recognition of mobility periods worked out in the framework of the testing and implementation of ECVET, can therefore serve as important assets to further promote mobility among students and enterprises.

A study commissioned by the National Agency 'Education for Europe' at the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training in Germany (BIBB) was completed in 2010 with the title 'Hidden Mobility in Initial Education and Training'; it determined for the first time how many apprentices and vocational school students in Germany had spent time abroad as part of their training. Until then only the number of participants in the LEONARDO DA VINCI mobility action and the bilateral exchange programmes of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) had been available. The number of young people whose stays abroad were connected with other programmes or were privately funded was previously unknown.

'Hidden mobility': Actual figures twice as high as previously assumed

The study indicated that between 2007 and 2009, three percent of all persons in initial vocational education and training completed practical training and other comparable measures abroad – twice as many as previously assumed. The mobility rate of vocational school students, 3.4 percent, is somewhat higher than that of apprentices, which is 2.9 percent. Almost 90 percent of mobility happens within Europe. The main destination country outside of Europe with the highest numbers is the USA (4 percent).

Vocational education and training in Germany takes place in the so-called 'dual system'. This system is based on the duality of two 'learning venues' (vocational schools and enterprises) which share the responsibility of a learner's education. Students sign a training contract with an enterprise - in most cases for a period of three years. During this training period, the enterprise dispenses the students from work for the time they spend in a vocational school. Within the dual system, both schools and enterprises have to consent to the participation of a student in a mobility phase - a structural challenge for mobility projects. Therefore, 16,000 mobile 'apprentices' each year can be regarded as successes.

A further interesting finding of the study, is that over two-thirds of all mobile apprentices (69 %) are trained in SMEs (1 to 499 employees), although enterprises of this size are less likely to be involved in mobility projects than are big enterprises. This means that many apprentices from

SMEs take part in mobility projects involving vocational schools, chambers and other service providers.

Thus, the most important result of the study is the insight that learning periods spent abroad are more common, more extended, more global and more 'dual' than previously assumed; the latter is based on the observation that vocational schools as well as enterprises, engaged in VET support for students' mobility periods.

Moreover, the results of the study may be seen as a clear signal that there is a significant interest in mobility among VET-students that should be further encouraged. The programmes promoted and co-financed by the European Union and the Federal German Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF) are the driving force of mobility. In the period between 2007 and 2009, an average of over 10,000 stays abroad was attributable to the 'Leonardo da Vinci' program and the bilateral exchange programmes of the BMBF. These programs therefore covered about 45 percent of all mobility of German VET-students.
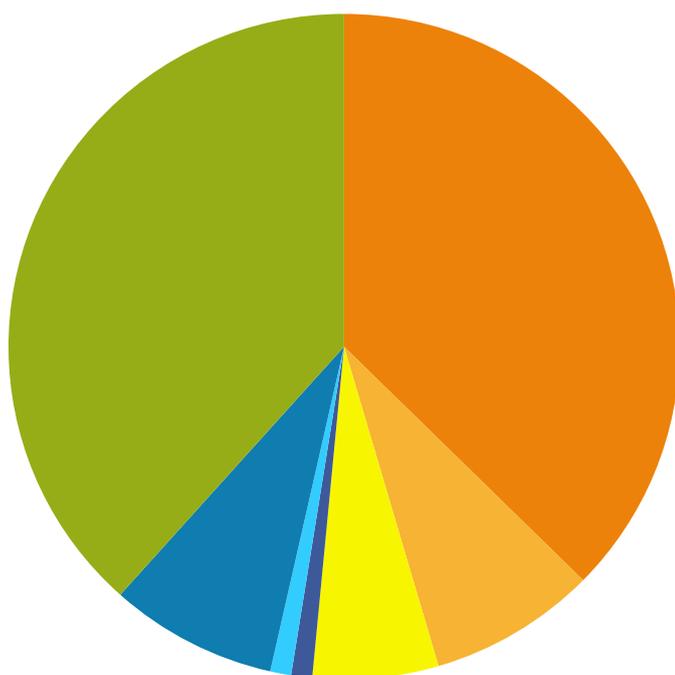
However, more than 40 percent of the stays abroad are entirely privately financed by enterprises or by the participants themselves. Moreover, the subsidised programmes generally do not provide full funding either. Two-thirds of the participants in these programmes indicated that they themselves or their companies share in the funding. These study findings not only emphasise the motivation of stu-

dents to take part in a mobility project, they also shed light on the extent to which enterprises are ready to contribute to students' mobility periods.

Increasing interest among enterprises to support mobility among VET-students

The study has shown that there is an increasing interest among enterprises to support mobility among VET students. Although at the present time only six percent of the enterprises regularly or occasionally send apprentices abroad, almost 40 percent indicate that in the future they will 'definitely' (six percent) or 'perhaps' (33 percent) allow for phases of learning abroad.

However, there is little knowledge in the enterprises about the existing possibility of recognition of the time spent learning abroad. An amendment to the German Vocational Training Act (BBiG) from 2005 states that up to nine months of a three year training period can be spent abroad; the time spent in a mobility project will be recognised as a regular part of the training. However, since the German system is holistic, usually there is no assessment of the learning outcomes of the mobility period; there is only a final examination at the end of the entire training period. This means that the actual learning outcomes of the mobility period are not assessed as such.

■	Entirely privately financed mobility	(8,900)	39%
■	Leonardo da Vinci - Mobility	(8,800)	37%
■	Chambers, foundations, other	(1,900)	8%
■	Bilateral exchange programmes conducted by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research	(1,900)	8%
■	ESF-financed programmes conducted by Germany's federal state governments	(1500)	6%
■	EQUAL/INTERREG	(300)	1%
■	Deutsch-Französisches Jugendwerk: Exchanges with trainees at vocational schools	(200)	1%

Source: Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training in Germany (BIBB).

The study on hidden mobility showed that mobility phases do indeed lead to the acquisition of important additional skills – besides the obvious benefits of a stay abroad, such as improved foreign language skills and social competencies (intercultural competencies). Mobility periods indeed seem to contribute significantly to the expansion of vocational knowledge and competencies - for instance, in the field of international technical skills. These types of skills are not separately assessed, validated and recognised – the mobile learner will only be examined on his or her overall performance and achievements in his/her final exam.

This might contribute to the fact that seventy-nine percent of the enterprises queried still view the recognition of the stay abroad as part of a training path as a problem. Procedures of assessment, validation and recognition developed in the context of the testing and implementing of ECVET might further help to promote the acceptance of mobility periods among employers and in enterprises.

ECVET as an asset to further promote mobility

Besides the issue of validation and recognition, there are three aspects that make ECVET an important asset to further promote mobility:

1. The common 'language' of describing vocational qualifications in terms of learning outcomes
2. The quality assurance facilitated
3. The provision of units of learning outcomes

The paradigm shift from a curricular description of learning units to units of learning outcomes is currently in the process of becoming more and more accepted by practitioners in Germany and all over Europe. Once the number of vocational qualifications described in units of learning outcomes grows and training staff become accustomed to looking at the acquisition of skills, attitudes and competences from that point of view, the effort of preparing and organising international mobility projects will decrease.

Until recently, institutions and funding organisations have had to take care of the quality assurance of mobility projects themselves. The study has shown that participants in the big national and European programmes display a higher degree of satisfaction than participants in projects and initiatives outside of these programmes. ECVET now provides a framework which predefines procedures, roles and standards of mobility. If these are followed, quality assurance is guaranteed, especially for entirely privately organised and financed mobility.

Moreover, the study has shown that many enterprises are generally ready to invest in and support mobility among VET students, but have hitherto been reluctant to actively engage. The growing number of pre-defined units of learning outcomes and mobility units will help those schools and enterprises to recognise the added value of mobility, which may at present be obscured by the fact that learning outcomes and benefits are not completely clear to employers and sending institutions. This might further support schools' and enterprises' decisions to engage actively.

From the view of mobility promotion, the next steps are obvious. The 23,500 students per year who take part in mobility constitute a significant figure that justifies further steps towards the national testing and implementation of ECVET for mobility. On behalf of the Federal German Ministry for Education and Research, the National Agency 'Education for Europe' has implemented a 'National Coordination Point'[1] for ECVET to serve the need for information and counselling of applicants for mobility projects within the Lifelong Learning Programme and beyond.

An expansion of national efforts to describe vocational qualifications in terms of learning outcomes, is equally important. On this basis, it would become significantly easier for mobility projects to identify and synchronise units of learning outcomes suitable for international mobility in other VET-systems in the long run. In the interest of mobility promotion, the decision of the Head Committee of the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training in Germany (BIBB), from December 2010, to put forward the further development of German training regulations in terms of competences and learning outcomes, is therefore highly appreciated.

The experience of the ECVET pilot projects and other mobility projects that currently are already working with ECVET, is of utmost importance to feed into this process.

1 Nationale Koordinierungsstelle ECVET. More information (in German) http://www.ecvet-info.de/de/250.php

'Using ECVET for Geographical Mobility': Part II of the ECVET User's Guide is now available

The second part of the ECVET User's Guide was published in June 2011. This document, prepared by the ECVET User's Group, addresses the use of ECVET for geographical mobility, in particular mobility that is organised as an element of learners' education and training pathways.

The guide was written to explain the role of ECVET in facilitating the transnational mobility of learners. It presents some possible scenarios for using ECVET in this context. It addresses the competent institutions and relevant multipliers wishing to promote ECVET for mobility in their qualification systems; and it seeks to encourage ECVET mobility through explaining the added value and the potential of using ECVET for mobility.

The document contains:

- An explanation of the benefits of using ECVET for the organised geographical mobility of learners;
- An explanation of the key issues to bear in mind when organising mobility using ECVET at different stages of the mobility process;
- A table which shows the functions of competent institutions in using ECVET;
- A check list with issues and questions to address before, during and after mobility periods, when using ECVET;
- Two examples of learners' mobility experiences and the use of ECVET in this context.

The guide can be downloaded from the ECVET Pilot projects website: **http://www.ecvet-projects.eu/Documents/ ECVET_Mobility_Web.pdf**

Selection of Leonardo projects 2011 completed

In July 2011 the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency completed the selection procedure for Leonardo da Vinci project applications submitted under the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) general call for proposals 2011. In total, 37 Multilateral Projects for the Development of Innovation, 7 Networks and 5 Accompanying Measures have been selected for EU funding.

Among the selected 'Development of Innovation' projects, 14 address the priority 'Implementing ECVET for transparency and recognition of learning outcomes and qualifications'. Under this prior-

ity, projects are intended to support the development of national and sectoral qualifications and / or qualifications systems by incorporating ECVET, according to the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the ECVET system.

The profiles of these projects will soon be available on the ADAM portal of Leonardo da Vinci projects (**http://www.adam-europe.eu**), where ECVET-related projects are being tagged under the netECVET thematic project group (**http://www.adam-europe.eu/adam/thematicgroup/ECVET**).

'We have tried ECVET: Lessons from the first generation of ECVET pilot projects'

22-23 February 2012: Final conference on the first run of ECVET pilot projects in Brussels

After three years of work, the first generation of ECVET pilot projects will have their final conference in February 2012 in Brussels. In 11 projects, 108 partners from 21 countries worked together, organising a trial implementation of the provisions laid down for ECVET.

The main aim of the conference is to take stock of what has been developed and to present the results of the project partners' common work. Key messages and lessons learnt will be elaborated. Concrete examples of the added value and the benefits provided by ECVET will be the centre of attention. The benefits of ECVET in the context of geographical mobility will be pointed out with regard to four aspects:

- In what way does ECVET help to achieve specific (European and national) lifelong learning policy goals?
- How can ECVET help to bridge differences between different VET-systems?
- In what way can ECVET foster the establishment of mutual trust between institutions and thus enhance cooperation?
- In what way can ECVET contribute to the actual learning pathway of a student?

As main target groups, European and national policy makers, European and national stakeholders and multipliers will be addressed.

More information about the conference and a link for pre-registration is available on the ECVET pilot project website (**http://www.ecvet-projects.eu/**).