

magazine

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

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ecvet toolkit

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Edito

Question time

Carlo Scatoli

Policy Officer at the European
Commission – Adult Education
and Continuing VET



other transparency tools? What is the benefit for learners and other stakeholders? Is ECVET supporting people in VET, is it helping them train abroad? Is it supporting their mobility? And many more – the terms of reference include 43 question marks.

Still, the report on ECVET that the Commission will submit in 2014 to the European legislative bodies will take advantage of further questions.

This newsletter is released still within the four month span, from mid-December 2013 to 15 April 2014, during which citizens and organisations are invited to participate in the open consultation on a European area of skills and qualifications (EA-SQ). I am sure many of you have contributed already and others will soon follow.

Just in case you have not yet received the invitation to participate in the open consultation on a European area of skills and qualifications, here is the link: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/more_info/consultations/skills_en.htm

The objective of the EA-SQ is to ensure that citizens who look for a job or further learning – anywhere in the European area – can trust that their skills and their qualifications will be appropriately understood, appreciated, recognised. This covers a great



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Questions. For us who deal with ECVET and other European instruments on skills, credits, quality and qualifications, this is the season when question marks bloom.

Blooming started earlier for Europass, EQF and EQAVET, early enough for first answers to find their way to the public debate: the external evaluation reports are available on the Europa website⁽¹⁾, as are the reports that the Commission submitted to the European Parliament and the Council⁽²⁾.

The first report on ECVET by an external evaluation team will soon be available, presenting findings, considerations, conclusions and recommendations. Five years after the adoption of its legal basis, it is the time for ECVET community to look back and reflect on itself. Is ECVET still relevant in the current policy context? Is there cooperation with

(1) Cf. http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/more_info/evaluations/index_en.htm.

(2) Cf. EQF http://ec.europa.eu/eqf/documentation_en.htm.

**"Five years
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deal of situations – from recognition of foreign qualifications to good communication between jobseekers and employers. The purpose of ECVET is to allow people who develop skills in a training environment to have those skills recorded, assessed and certified as a credit that can be cumulated and transferred. This helps people by making their learning opportunities more flexible, facilitating mobility across countries, transfer across sectors and institutions of education and training, compatibility with working life.

It looks very much like implementing ECVET in a satisfactory way does contribute to the objective of the EA-SQ, doesn't it? If the knowledge, skills and competence you have developed are packed into "units of learning outcomes" – as we say in ECVET –, do they actually become easier to be understood, appreciated, recognised? What does the ECVET experience so far tell us about that?



Such questions have been addressed in a special meeting of the ECVET Users' Group on 13 March 2014. Representatives of countries and social partners have gone through the issues raised in the open consultation, focusing on what the ECVET experience could suggest. Their considerations will be gathered in a document that will be part of the response to the consultation.

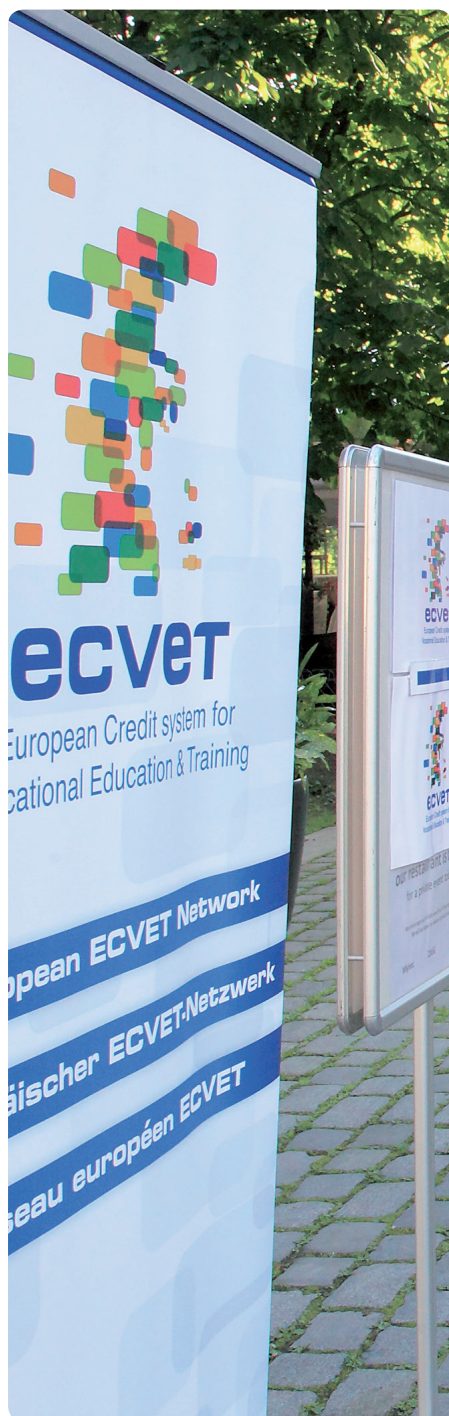
The meeting on 13 March has been the first occasion to discuss such questions, others will follow: the Users

Group meeting of 13-14 May will debate the final report of the external evaluation and the messages to convey to the European Parliament and the Council, which will also be tabled in the meeting of the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training of 3 June, on 17 June a dedicated conference will discuss the EA-SQ, and the ECVET Forum of 30-31 October will have its share of question marks on ECVET's next steps, and a few steps beyond.

That was a long introduction, now it is time for questions and answers. ■

Martine Levreux, ECVET TEAM

Customised seminar in Ljubljana



In November 2013 a two days customised seminar in Ljubljana brought together the ECVET expert team from Slovenia and representatives from Slovenia's Institute for Adult Education; Institute for VET; Ministry of Education, Sciences and Sport; Chamber of Industry and Commerce; Chamber of crafts and small business; and VET providers working in the field of mobility.

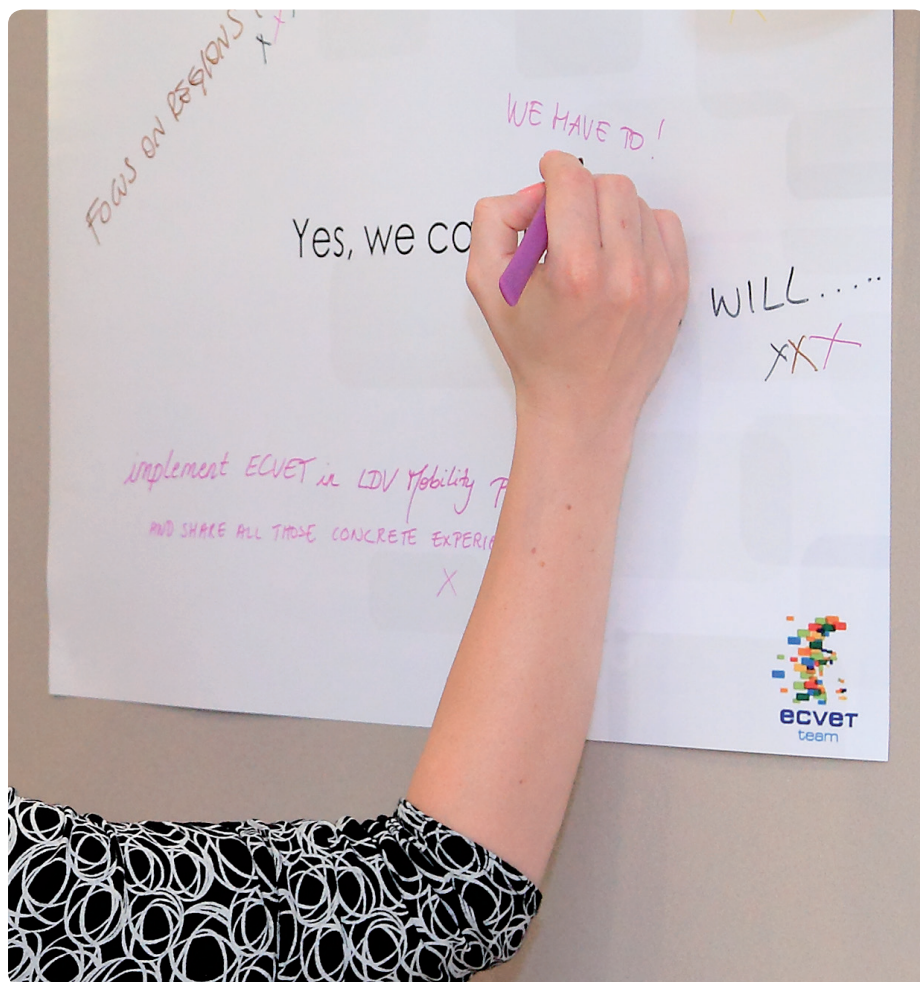
The seminar was designed to support the Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Mobility and European Educational and Training Programmes (CMEPIUS) to coordinate Slovenia's team of ECVET experts. It was an opportunity to support the ECVET Slovenian experts in their work with other stakeholders who are implementing ECVET.

The seminar began with an outline of how the Slovenian VET framework is integrating European tools based on the development of standards and competences. In Slovenia, there are two types of VET qualifications; one type that is acquired by following the school path (VET system) and the other type that can be acquired following the pathway that recognises non-formal learning. The National Professional Qualifications Act has connected both systems through the introduction of occupational standards which set out learning outcomes for each qualification in Slovenia. The learning outcomes approach is embedded in Slovenia's education system and it is well accepted. As a result education programmes have moved from a content-based to an objectives-based approach.

The European Area of Skills and Qualifications

The first working session provided an opportunity for participants to become more familiar with the European instruments (EQAVET, EQF, NFIL and ECVET), the European strategies and their relevance for the end users.

The instruments were presented as a coherent set of arrangements which support citizens in Europe. This helped the participants to clarify the connections between the instruments and how each instrument contributes to mobility, lifelong learning and transparency.



ECVET Implementation: necessary conditions to implement ECVET in the Slovenian context

The seminar included a review of the ECVET Recommendation and its technical specifications. This allowed the participants to develop their expertise on

the necessary conditions to implement ECVET in Slovenia. The necessary conditions refer to the Cedefop framework. The framework is a list of 15 conditions and measures that are necessary for the implementation of ECVET. It is intended to be a guide to a structured approach to ECVET implementation as

it provides a way to communicate with national and European vocational education and training (VET) stakeholders about the progress of ECVET.

After a presentation from the ECVET team on the political and technical conditions needed to gradually use ECVET, colleagues from the National Institute for VET (CPI) presented an outline of what has been done in Slovenia.

The current situation can be summarised as follows:

Slovenia is moving through the ECVET technical specifications and:

- a National Qualifications Framework is being implemented;
- the learning outcomes approach has been developed. This includes curricula based on units of learning outcomes, vocational standards and a new culture of assessment based on competences;
- training modules are labour market relevant;
- a new way of recognising non-formal and informal learning (the processes that are used are being debated);
- mobility templates have been adapted to the Slovenian context and are being used.

Following this presentation on the current situation, the participants looked at the necessary conditions for ECVET's implementation. Using the Cedefop framework, the participants shared their knowledge and understanding of the technical and political state of play of ECVET implementation in Slovenia. This helped to identify future actions which could be taken to make concrete steps towards implementation.

The role of stakeholders in ECVET's implementation

The second session began by looking at the key definitions (e.g. learning outcomes, units and credit points) and some illustrations from ECVET pilot projects which considered topics such as "How to describe learning outcomes? How to organise units and allocate credit points?"

This introduction was followed by a discussion on the "functions of ECVET competent institutions" (as set out in the ECVET's users guide). This enabled participants to consider how to apply the process of VET design and implementation to the Slovenian VET system. This session helped participants to gain a better understanding of the roles of different actors in ECVET's implementation and how to design an "ECVET qualification". They also became more familiar with the links between each of the elements of ECVET during the design process (for example the links between units based on learning outcomes and a training programme).

Using ECVET for lifelong learning

The last session of the first day aimed to provide participants with more knowledge on using ECVET for horizontal and vertical mobility. ECVET can be seen as a tool that reduces barriers and provides opportunities for learners to move easily between different types of education, from one system to another, and from one qualification to another within the same sector/ system. ECVET can also be seen as a tool to facilitate individuals' transition between different employment positions, companies, sectors and learning contexts (based on qualifications from either the formal sector or from the non-formal and informal sector).

"ECVET can also be seen as a tool to facilitate individuals' transition between different employment positions, companies, sectors and learning contexts"

The first day focused on the strategies for ECVET implementation (fostering geographical mobility or lifelong learning) and the relevance of ECVET for end users. It also provided information on the context and challenges of ECVET in Slovenia. On the second day participants were asked to think more about

the current state of play of ECVET in Slovenia and create an action plan. This included a brainstorming session which supported the ECVET experts and other stakeholders and led to a step-by-step implementation plan for Slovenia.

Following these discussions, one of the key conclusions was the importance of using units of learning outcomes and ECVET to:

- upgrade occupational standards and curricula;
- recognise prior learning;
- increase geographical mobility.

The participants decided to produce a concept paper to further develop these three goals. This concept paper would then be presented to the relevant stakeholders in Slovenia. And finally the participants produced a "to do list" in order to be clearer about who is doing what, including the development of a business and VET school network. ■

Tristan Reilly, ANFA / ECVET TEAM

The ECVET team's new website and its future assessment: the floor is yours



The ECVET Team's new website was presented at the 2013 ECVET Forum in Prague and launched in September. The prime objective in refreshing the website was to make it more user-friendly and simpler, with the same high quality standards for information, resources and registration to ECVET events.

The main aims of the first version of the website were to create a network, a way to register for events and promote ECVET activities. To make it more user-oriented, the website is now focusing more on the use of ECVET. This will help beginners to better understand and explain the concept to their organisation, and allows people more familiar to ECVET to improve their knowledge. It also allows easier access to many more documents.

The English version has been available since the launch of the website. The online French and German versions are expected soon.

The decision to connect the new website to the ECVET communities of practice website (launched at the 2013 ECVET Prague Forum) provides faster and easier access to the platform. This allows all ECVET users to exchange information on the following topics: ECVET for mobility; ECVET for lifelong learning; ECVET case studies and learning outcomes.

A decision was also made to connect the ECVET Team website to the NetECVET website. This will help to ensure that the ECVET Team website becomes the starting point for an ECVET journey.



www.ecvet-team.eu

Since launching the first website of the ECVET Team, the number of individual users who have registered has increased significantly (from 101 in 2010 to 1,395 in 2013) and the number of registered organisations has grown from 192 in 2010 to 634 in 2013).

The website remains very popular with over 30 000 visits between mid-2012 and September 2013 with visits to more than 140 000 pages.

The 2014 ECVET Team's work programme includes an assessment phase of the website - six months after its launch.

The assessment of the website will be open and 'bottom-up' as the ECVET Team is interested in hearing people's thoughts and remarks. The ECVET Team's website is a service for the network members and it is important that their voices are heard. The ECVET Team will produce an assessment form which will be straightforward and easy to fill in - so no-one will be discouraged by something that is too long.

A panel of users of the ECVET Team's website will be asked to take part in this assessment programme. They will be invited to answer questions and express their opinions on the content of the website, its attractiveness and its user-

The screenshot displays the ECVET website interface. On the left is a sidebar with navigation links: 'My first steps', 'ECVET for Mobility', 'ECVET to support LLL', 'ECVET Library' (with a dropdown menu showing 'CEDEFOP Working papers', 'ECVET Studies', 'EQAVET Documentation', 'EQF documentation', and 'NFIL Documentation'), and 'What's new?'. The main content area is titled 'ECVET Documentation' and includes sections for 'The ECVET Recommendation', 'Learning Outcomes (LO)', 'ECVET Leaflet', and 'ECVET Corporate identity'. A right-hand sidebar features 'Seminars & Events' with dates for March and April 2014, a 'Calendar', 'Questions & Answers', 'ECVET Videos', 'Useful Links', 'ECVET MAG', and 'All Downloads'. At the bottom right, there are buttons for 'ECVET Network' and 'Community of Practice'.

friendliness. When identifying the panel, a set of criteria will be used such as geographical diversity, type of organisation/profession (there will be a balanced sample which includes teachers, trainers, experts, national contact points, sectors, chambers of commerce, forum attendees, VET providers, competent

bodies etc.). The assessment will also consider other aspects of the website such as the ergonomics or the ease of finding information (e.g. how do I register for an event?). An external communication agency will help to set up and monitor this assessment. ■

Thierry Lefeuvre, ECVET TEAM

Thematic Seminars 'Learning Outcomes' and 'Teachers and Trainers'



The ECVET-TEAM has enriched its activities this year by offering a series of thematic seminars dedicated to learning outcomes and to taking account of the principles of ECVET in the professional practice of teachers and trainers in vocational training.

It is an opportunity for stakeholders in the field to go beyond an in-principle consensus on the use of the learning outcomes. It is also an opportunity to formalise the operational and practical suggestions of the ECVET Users Group members to facilitate and support the implementation of ECVET.

Each thematic seminar brings together more than 30 participants with representation from each of the Member countries of the European Union and associated countries (Iceland, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, Turkey), and three European organisations (UEAPME, BUSINESSEUROPE and ETUC). In 2014 each thematic seminar is divided into several sessions with specific themes.

Learning Outcomes

- **Session 1:**
Barcelona 13 & 14 February:
Capturing various scopes of VET qualifications in terms of LO in the ECVET context
- **Session 2:**
Bucarest 27 & 28 May:
Understanding of LO from different perspectives (labour market, teaching and training)
- **Session 3:**
Brussels 13 & 14 November:
Promoting mutual trust through LO in the ECVET context

Teachers and Trainers

- **Session 1:**
Budapest 16 & 17 April:
New ways of working with ECVET for teachers and trainers
- **Session 2:**
Paris 09 & 10 December:
Embedding mobility within ECVET as part of training provision and practice of teachers and trainers

The participants all have a high level of expertise in their field. Their contributions therefore help to clarify key issues concerning the understanding and use of learning outcomes by different stakeholders in the education and training field. The thematic seminars are intended to achieve concrete proposals and actions through a series of brainstorming and peer learning activities. This helps the participants and members of the ECVET Users Group facilitate the dissemination and use of ECVET.

The "learning outcomes" thematic seminar

This thematic seminar had three sessions and participants have been invited to participate in all of them. Participants will have the opportunity to gradually deepen their understanding

of learning outcomes and enrich their contributions and discussions on the issues.

The first session in Catalonia in February 2014 launched this innovative approach to the thematic seminar. It included presentations on the topics of study, brief presentations on national systems by the participants and discussions in workshops to formalise a series of conclusions. The involvement of the participants is central to the seminar and from this point of view the success was total.

Extracts from the issues discussed at the workshops

- What are the main objectives of a VET system?
- How does the learning outcomes approach contribute to these objectives?
- What are the main elements taken into account in a qualification?
- What elements are certified?
- What are the requirements to make the Learning Outcomes understandable by the users?

"National realities and cultures have an impact on the expectations of professional training systems e.g. in the training or learning assessment strategies"

From the discussions two points of agreement emerged: the agreement of supporting the employability of learners in all systems but a more balanced opinion on the objective of responding to the immediate needs of employers. One discussion point was the importance of 'soft skills' appeared. Their importance was not in doubt, but they were insufficiently taken into account in training and assessments because of the difficulty of expressing them in terms of assessable learning outcomes when they relate to individuals' behaviour.

National realities and cultures have an impact on the expectations of professional training systems e.g. in the training or learning assessment strategies. Of course, in these seminars no judgments are made on any particular system. The goal is to identify how learning can foster dialogue and understanding; and create transparent systems which are positive and encourage a lifelong process of recognition, transfer and accumulation of learning.



The second session will be in May 2014 in Bucharest. It will focus on the understanding and use of learning outcomes by different stakeholders such as those from the labour market and the training operators. The issues are challenging because only the perception of clear and real benefits by stakeholders in the field can lead to a quicker development of ECVET.

The 'teachers and trainers' thematic seminar

For this seminar there are two sessions. Each has a theme which centres on the involvement of teachers and trainers and their role in the implementation of ECVET. As the focus of each seminar differs, the profile of participants will be different.

For the first session in April in Budapest, the main focus is on the impact of ECVET on the design of curriculum and the implications for teaching. We will consider the practice of teaching and possible changes arising from the influence of ECVET. The session's outcomes are expected to include the formalisation of a series of suggestions and guidelines to emphasise and highlight the benefits of ECVET for teachers and trainers. These will be included in a leaflet for the ECVET users Group, and could possibly contain more ambitious work which will empower teachers and trainers to implement ECVET.

Participants in the April session must have sufficient experience of education and be involved in the evolution of strategies in the context of the implementation of ECVET in their VET system. Participants are likely to be involved in pedagogic supervision or be working as a training programme manager.

Participants in the first session of the thematic seminar on 'Teachers and trainers' can expect to:

- Understand the differences and commonalities in relation to the impact of ECVET's implementation in their respective training systems;
- Identify the benefits and constraints of ECVET's implementation in a training process;
- Contribute to the dissemination of ECVET to training providers, teachers and trainers;
- Clarify what could be the role and tasks of teachers and trainers in the use of ECVET, particularly relating to the use of the learning outcomes and units approach;
- Discover and explore practical approaches to the implementation of flexible training programme, individualisation and the use of units of learning outcomes from the point of view of teachers and trainers.

The attention will be practical, with a focus on building up partnerships between schools by using the tools provided by ECVET. The session will include a wider reflection on how to integrate ECVET in the everyday practice of the teachers involved in these mobility projects.

The seminars 'Learning Outcomes' and 'teachers and trainers' are ambitious in their contents. Their goals are similar and team supporting the sessions will organise and manage the dialogue between participants. The organisers will take into account the suggestions and guidelines produced by each of the groups for a future report about the discussions.

The seminars are based on the principle of the accumulation of learning outcomes - implemented through the development of a common reflection. ■

Loukas Zahilas, CEDEFOP Senior Expert - Area Enhanced Cooperation in VET and LLL

Learning outcomes are here to stay but a lot of work remains to be done



Learning outcomes – good, irrelevant, bad or nothing of the above?

In 2007 Cedefop organised a conference asking whether the shift to learning outcomes is more rhetorical than real. Developments have shown that this shift is real, reflecting systematic and rapid efforts to use learning outcomes for defining and describing qualifications and for orienting teaching, training and assessment.

Six years later Cedefop organised a follow up event on *“The shift to learning outcomes and its impact: taking stock of European policies and practices”*. This took place in Thessaloniki on 21 and 22 November 2013 and discussed the main arguments for and

against the shift to learning outcomes. While a broad consensus among policy-makers at national and European level on the benefits and importance of learning outcomes seems to exist, several researchers and practitioners have pointed to its limitations and potentially negative implications. Future developments require these different arguments to be clearly identified and understood as only then can realistic implementation take place. These interesting perspectives were clearly reflected in the panel on the first day of the conference: *“Learning outcomes – good, irrelevant, bad or nothing of the above?”* The conference title was borrowed from the 2012 thematic issue of the ‘Journal on education and work’¹.

Opening the conference, Cedefop Director James Calleja told 160 participants from 27 countries that ‘learning outcomes raise the employability profile of qualifications’. He talked about ‘an issue of paramount importance’ to European vocational education and training (VET) and lifelong learning developments, and added that ‘the chal-

lenge is how to converge diverging approaches in writing learning outcomes’.

In her keynote speech, Cedefop’s Head of Area for Enhanced Cooperation in VET and Lifelong Learning, Mara Brugia, said that ‘the learning outcomes principle can be seen as the

“The learning outcomes principle can be seen as the “glue” binding together a wide range of European initiatives taken during recent years”

“glue” binding together a wide range of European initiatives taken during recent years’. Europass, the EQF, ECVET and ESCO, to name but a few, not only build on this principle, but are active promoters of it. Learning

outcomes have moved to the centre stage of education and training policies in a way we had not seen before. The increased focus on learning outcomes in the policy agenda is linked to the need for a better connection between education, training and employment and the development of national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) has been the most visible expression of this shift’.

A combination of plenary and working group sessions allowed participants to gain an overview over recent developments and actively contribute to the discussion on how to take forward de-

(1) Souto-Otero, M. (2012). Learning outcomes: good, irrelevant, bad or none of the above? Journal of education and work, Vol. 25, No 3, pp. 249-258.



velopments in a) learning outcomes as a prerequisite for flexible lifelong and life wide learning b) governance through learning outcomes and c) learning outcomes and teaching and training.

Conference conclusions

The Conference's two days of lively discussions concluded that it seems that there is no alternative to learning outcomes and they are here to stay. However there is still a lot of work to be done and it is a question of how we apply the learning outcomes principle in a way which is fit for purpose at the relevant level. It is not enough to operate with the intended outcomes of qualifications frameworks, standards and curricula as we need to monitor, review and evaluate the impact of the learning outcomes perspective on teaching, training and learning and on the knowledge, skills and competences held by individuals. The way we monitor and review this transformation is critical and has not been sufficiently addressed in European debates so far. Two key issues have to be addressed in

relation to this challenge: the relationship between education and training and the labour market, and the link between quality assurance and learning outcomes.

The learning outcomes approach is based on a simple concept, but it is actually a very complex issue to be dealt with at several levels, by a diverse range of stakeholders and for many purposes. The conference identified some of the dangers, limitations and opportunities the learning outcomes approach has to face and deal with.

At a policy level learning outcomes should continue to be important and their development should not be distracted by other pressing issues. There is also a danger if the learning outcomes approach is applied too radically, it can overlook the critical importance of the learning process and

the learning location/situation. Therefore learning outcomes have to be contextualised. In addition intended learning outcomes should not be defi-

ned too narrowly and focus on short-term utility as this overlooks the need to support broader personal development. They must be applied with the individual at the centre.

To have any impact learning outcomes need to be taken forward with the active involvement of practitioners like teachers, trainers, assessors. Implementation needs to combine top-down and bottom-up processes and must not be treated as an issue that is solely for the education sector. It is very important to take into account the fact that learning outcomes have the potential for strengthening the dialogue between education, training and the labour market.

The Conference agreed that the way ahead required us to look more systematically and critically at the different purposes for using learning outcomes. We should gather and exchange expertise and examples in a more systematic way on governance issues, stakeholder responsibilities/opportunities and teaching and training. Finally we need to exchange experiences on the writing of learning outcomes so as to facilitate and promote active and open learning and to develop approaches for monitoring, evaluation and review which include continuous feedback.

The spirit of the Conference debates was reflected in the closing remarks of Cedefop Deputy Director Christian Lettmayr who pointed out that the learning outcomes concept is deeply human and deeply individual but also complex; and this requires a change of culture. 'There is a long road ahead', he concluded. ■

"Learning outcomes have the potential for strengthening the dialogue between education, training and the labour market"

Horacy Dębowski and Wojciech Stęchły, ECVET Experts Poland, Educational Research Institute in Warsaw

ECVET in Polish VET



Horacy Dębowski

Using ECVET within a national qualifications system can be analysed from two perspectives. Firstly, by looking at how ECVET principles apply to VET systemic solutions in a given country - these usually include the “architecture” of vocational qualifications

(e.g the formulation of learning outcomes and units based on learning outcomes), procedures for credit accumulation and transfer and for validation. Secondly, by looking at how ECVET is used to support international educational mobility. This text aims at showing how these two interconnected aspects of ECVET come together in Poland.

Until recently, credit accumulation and transfer was not widely used in the Polish VET system. However, the last two years brought significant changes in the law regulating the formal initial VET and continuing VET systems. The changes are primarily aimed at improving the link between vocational education and labour market needs, popularising vocational education for adults and creating more flexible learning pathways. In many ways, they are in line with the ECVET technical specifications.

"It can be said that from the VET system perspective, ECVET principles have already been introduced in Poland"



Wojciech Stęchły

The core curriculum for vocational education is described by using learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, personal and social competences) and units of learning outcomes. Learning outcomes in the core curriculum define the examination requirements. Procedures for credit accumulation and transfer have been implemented - this makes it possible to attain vocational diplomas without having to start the vocational education process “from the beginning”; successive, appropriately chosen qua-

lifications can be added to those that have already been attained. Individuals are able to attain vocational qualifications through non-formal paths and in the course of work. Adult learners may apply to take extramural exams conducted by the Regional Examination Boards (OKE) and after passing such exams, can achieve national vocational qualifications (the same qualifications which are awarded to VET school students). Therefore, it can be said that from the VET system perspective, ECVET principles have already been introduced in Poland.

In this context, it is also worth mentioning that solutions for credit accumulation and transfer (compatible with ECVET) are seen as an important component of the integrated qualifications system in Poland. Pilot projects have been conducted to verify the initial proposals. (see: the Polish Referencing Report at http://www.kwalifikacje.edu.pl/images/wersjaENG/Raport_Ref_GB.pdf). However, the final political decisions have not been made yet. The coming years will show to what extent it will be possible to implement the common principles of credit accumulation and transfer for the entire qualifications system in Poland.

There is also growing interest in using ECVET as a tool to support international mobility. Additionally, increasing numbers of Polish VET stakeholders are becoming aware of ECVET's added

value. Every year growing numbers of VET providers, with the financial support of the National Agency for the Lifelong learning" Programme, organise international mobility projects with ECVET. Because of the rising interest, the Agency has organised a substantial number of events (seminars, workshops) and produced informational materials aimed at promoting ECVET usage.

Using ECVET in mobility projects is also supported by the recent national VET reform. By introducing learning outcomes as the primary point of reference in developing VET qualifications and learning programmes, it is now easier for Polish VET providers to discuss and compare learning outcomes with their foreign partners. It is also easier to exempt learners from part of the training and indicate the additional credits achieved by learners in the Europass-mobility document.

However, there are some organisational arrangements in Polish VET which might pose difficulties in using ECVET for mobility projects (language and financial barriers will not be discussed). The size (volume) of units of learning outcomes defined in the core curriculum is rather "large" (requiring several months of study), whereas most of the mobility periods are short (several weeks). National VET certificates and diplomas are not awarded by VET providers but by Regional Examination

Boards (OKE). Examination boards conduct centrally governed assessment and certification. Therefore, learners cannot be exempted from the final assessment or any part of it. The exam conducted by OKE will always cover each learning outcome defined in the VET core curriculum.

One of the features of Polish school-based VET is the presence of a general education component. This means that after the mobility period, students have to catch up with the "general" part of the learning programme. Thus, international mobility cannot lead to shortening the time of learning by the host school. On the other hand, this allows pupils from VET schools to shape their educational career in a more flexible way - graduates of technical schools who have also passed the Matura exam are eligible to apply to higher education institutions.

More possibilities have developed for the recognition of non-school-based qualifications courses. These courses are dedicated to adults and lead to the same national vocational certificates awarded to VET school students. However their learning programmes do not lead to a certificate of completion at a VET school and, therefore do not require learners to take the extensive general education component at the same time. ■

Sylvie Bonichon, Bologna Expert - French team 2009-2013

From VET to higher education - the story of Victor

In April 2013, ECVET organised a peer learning activity (PLA) to look at credit in the vocational and higher education sectors. The focus was on using credit to remove barriers to students' progression. As youth unemployment is one of the biggest problems facing the European Union, responding to the learning needs of young people has to be a priority for all those involved in the education and training sector.

For individuals unemployment undermines confidence, encourages apathy and saps enthusiasm. At the system level, the waste of talent implied by high levels of youth unemployment inhibits Europe's ability to compete globally, places significant financial burdens on society, and disproportionately affects those from disadvantaged communities.

Learners know how important it is to gain relevant qualifications in the current employment market. For some learners this means completing higher vocational qualifications following graduation, for others it means continuing to learn in the higher education sector following the completion of an initial VET course. For those who are employed, it can mean continuing to learn through bespoke and standardised training programmes which meet individuals' immediate and longer term needs. In all of these situations learners are interested in knowing how they can **access** further learning, whether they will be **accepted** on a course, and whether they will gain **exemption** from those aspects of study/training which replicates their prior achievement.

The PLA looked at these uncertainties and considered how learning outcomes and credit can be used to strengthen the opportunities available to learners. One of the workshops in the PLA considered the story of Victor – a French student who had been able to use his prior learning and experiences to navigate the vocational and higher education systems. Victor is not unique – but his story provides an opportunity to discuss which barriers to progression are artificial, how credit can be used to overcome these barriers, and how the education and training systems in each Member State would respond in Victor's circumstances. The workshop began with a short presentation – this is Victor's story.

Victor's story

Victor enrolled on a Level 4 vocational diploma (a three-year course which included periods of company-based training as an intern) to become a sales representative. Although he was a full time student, he worked part-time in his second year. This employment was in a sales agency where he completed a range of tasks such as customer surveys and telephone sales. As he was doing well at the agency, he was given a fixed term contract to work one and a half days each week and during the school's holidays. In his third year, to give himself more time to prepare for his exams, he decided to reduce his workload – however he still had a job during the holidays when he worked in a hypermarket stacking shelves. At the end of his third year he passed his exams and received his Level 4 qualification. He was 19.

During the following summer he worked in a factory in the automotive industry. Victor was not sure if he wanted to enter the world of work. By the end of the summer he had made his decision, applied and was accepted to study for a Bachelor's degree in economics at university. This meant leaving home and moving to another city.

Victor's first year at university was difficult and he didn't feel really motivated. He was also working at a petrol station at the week-ends to earn some money. He failed most of his exams. Yet he still wanted to learn so he asked for guidance and transferred to a professional

bachelor's course in the same university. This course was more oriented towards sales techniques and marketing. He continued with his part time job at the petrol station, received a promotion. He was put in charge of the petrol station's shop and was trusted with managing the station when his boss was away. He liked the courses at the university but didn't feel well. He completed some modules in the first semester but ended his studies in the middle of the second semester. He was 21.

He left the city and moved closer to his family. He got a job in the automotive factory where he had previously worked. He started working on the assembly line in the night shift and then moved to the warehouse as an assistant. In this role he dealt with suppliers, customers and the logistics department. He was also asked to supervise trainees and young students on placement. This lasted for 18 months.

At nearly 23 years old, he decided he would try to gain admission to a Level 5 qualification to become an import/export assistant. He was accepted and returned to study - but he was still sometimes recalled to the warehouse when he was needed. His course normally lasted two years and included 12 weeks training in a company with a minimum four-week period abroad. He found an internship in Canada at an organisation that facilitated trade exchanges between Canadian SMEs and the USA. He stayed in Canada for three months. He passed his exams and received his Level 5 qualification.

Victor felt ready to return to his studies and complete a Level 6 professional bachelor course. He was given direct access to the third year. He studied hard, had a three month placement in Spain in an International Logistics company. He stayed for five months and passed his professional

bachelor within an academic year. Feeling well-motivated and confident, he applied and was accepted for a Master degree in International Trade Exchange in a university in another city. As part of his course he spent a semester as an intern in an international company in Dubai.

Victor will soon take his exams for the Master's degree.



The really interesting bits!

- Victor was able to use his prior learning and experience to enter the third and final year of the professional bachelor's (Level 6) degree;
- Both the Level 5 and Level 6 course included time abroad;
- Victor had some false starts but the system had been designed in a way that enabled him to succeed.

The questions for discussion

Following the presentation of Victor's story, participants at the PLA considered how their education and training systems would respond in similar circumstances. The discussions were based on the following questions:

- Victor's part-time employment included work in a factory, petrol station, hypermarket and a sales team. It included time in a supervisory and

managerial role. Would this experience, and his previous study, enable him to gain entry to the final year of a degree in your system?

- If this prior learning and experiences would allow progression to the final year of a degree, how would these achievements be recognised and validated?
- How could ECVET help Victor and other students in similar situations use their experiences and previous learning to access higher education programmes?

Reflections

During the discussions, it became clear that students such as Victor would find it difficult to make progress in some education systems – and in some systems it was impossible to gain access to the final year of a degree in this way. There were many barriers because:

- **access** was not allowed due to the rules at either the system or provider level;

- when access was possible, the competitive nature of the application process meant students who rely on previous achievement were less likely to be **accepted**;
- in some systems he would be accepted. However he would not be granted **exemption** and would not be allowed to enter the final year of a professional degree.

From these reflections it became clear that some systems provide this type of opportunity to progress and it is used by students. However in most cases where such an opportunity to progress exists; the decisions are usually made by individual providers of higher education or higher VET. There are few situations where the system has been designed to allow this type of progression. Credit, whether based on ECVET or ECTS can significantly increase the opportunity for students like Victor to access further learning. ■

Rinske Stelwagen, Dutch National Agency for LLP and Erasmus+ and Paul Guest, Expert Consultant to NetECVET

The ECVET Mobility Toolkit



Rinske Stelwagen

Practical support for integrating ECVET into new or existing mobility practice

It is almost five years since the Recommendation on the establishment of a European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) confirmed common ECVET principles, provided detailed technical specifications and recommended the wider promotion and implementation of ECVET by all Member States. In that time, a wide range of bodies and organisations has been involved in translating these core principles and technical specifications into practical processes, and tools, able to be used by vocational education and training practitioners at all levels.

"NetECVET leaves behind a successful legacy in the form of an ECVET Mobility Toolkit"

In 2011, a group of 14 National Agencies for the Lifelong Learning Programme came together, under the leadership of the German National Agency (NA BIBB), to form the thematic network NetECVET. NetECVET partners adopted a bottom-up approach in the network, targeting practical solutions for those wishing to introduce ECVET to new or existing mobility practice.

Whilst the latest phase of network activity came to a close at the end of 2013, NetECVET leaves behind a successful legacy in the form of an **ECVET Mobility Toolkit** (www.ecvet-toolkit.eu). The Toolkit provides an online platform of tools, examples, information and resources able to support the gradual introduction of ECVET into new or existing mobility practices.

ECVET assistance for education and training providers

The Toolkit was ultimately designed to assist vocational education and training providers, and others working in the field of transnational mobility, in introducing one or more of the ECVET principles to existing mobility projects and programmes. Since launching the Toolkit to a wider stakeholder audience (Brussels, October 2013), we expect that many other individuals and organisations working to increase knowledge and awareness on ECVET will begin to promote and make active use of the Toolkit - for example those working in national funding agencies and those forming part of a national ECVET team.

A common frame of reference on 'ECVET and Mobility'

The Toolkit provides a common platform for all vocational education and training actors working in the area of ECVET and Mobility in Europe. Users



Paul Guest

can access an introductory section in which the background to, and history of, ECVET is succinctly explained.

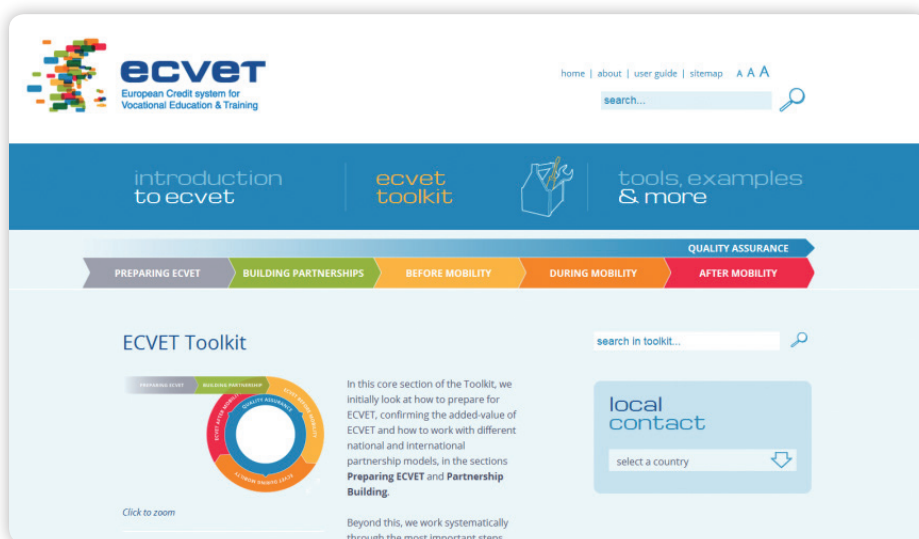
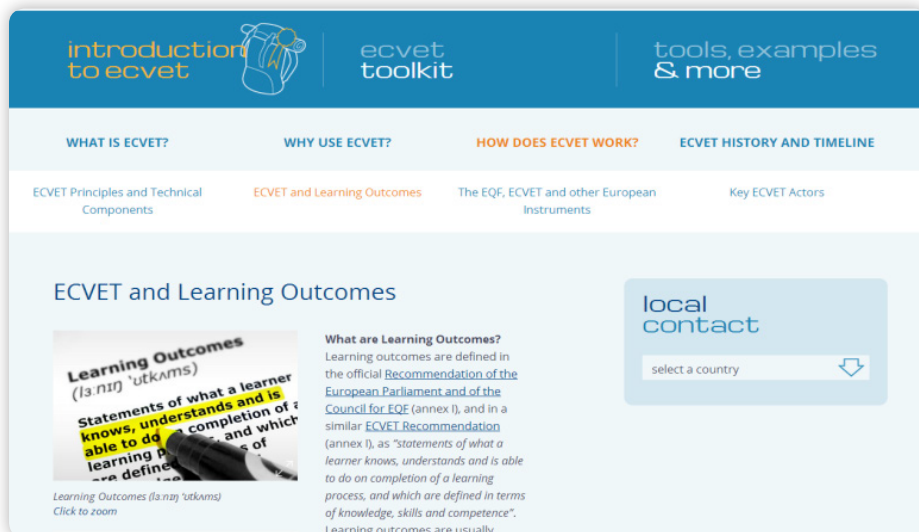
Alternatively, users can go straight to the core ECVET Toolkit: there they can access dedicated chapters on ECVET Preparation, Partnership Building and Quality Assurance. Users can also work systematically through the most important steps associated with the planning, implementation and follow-up of ECVET in Geographical Mobility (Before Mobility, During Mobility and After Mobility).

The Toolkit provides introductory texts, tools, templates, checklists and examples of how to use ECVET in practice. Additional video interviews from different countries show experienced mobility practitioners presenting their experiences of using ECVET.

As there are numerous platforms and resources covering generic mobility topics (non-ECVET) and ECVET-related developments which are not related to geographical mobility, the Toolkit does not cover these issues.

ECVET: a step-by-step process towards higher quality mobility

It is important to begin by **reflecting on existing mobility practice** - consider the importance of international mobility to your learners, what works well in existing mobility practice and how you might further develop your mobility projects and programmes.



After this, you can start to **explore the Toolkit** - a user guide is provided to help you navigate your way through and checklists are provided confirming both key actors and key actions. Ask yourself, along the way, what is new, what needs to change and what additional opportunities ECVET might provide.

In terms of **partnership development**, it is important to confirm a willingness

with (new and existing) partners to experiment with ECVET, to decide which elements of ECVET you might implement together and which other actors might need to participate. This will need to be embedded in a common agreement (Memorandum of Understanding).

From an **implementation** perspective, consider each of the mobility phases

(before, during and after mobility) and the changes that ECVET might require. Use pilot phases to test ideas with actual mobility participants (students, teachers) and make use of the many checklists, tools and examples provided in the Toolkit.

As with all quality-assured processes, it is important to **evaluate your experiences** with local, national and international partners, and mobility partici-

pants, confirming the benefits of ECVET for your mobility project or programme, recognising successes and identifying any areas for future improvement.

Quick access to tools for experienced users

Some actors have worked with ECVET in Mobility for a number of years and have started to build experience. For these users easy access is provided to

the tools, examples and further reading in the Toolkit by simply entering the **Tools, Examples and More** section. Here, users can quickly work through the different tools and materials to find what best serves their ECVET development needs. This section also provides a glossary of key terms and a searchable database of descriptors of learning outcomes, the latter building on past-funded ECVET developments in many European countries and sectors. ■



ESCO – European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations

ESCO is the multilingual classification of European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations. It identifies and categorises skills and competences, qualifications and occupations relevant for the EU labour market and education and training in 25 European languages. This facilitates cooperation between countries and supports the mobility of learners between countries and systems.

The system provides occupational profiles showing links between occupations, skills, competences and qualifications. ESCO has been developed in an open IT format and is available for everyone to use free of charge.

It is an important instrument in the VET European panorama as it bridges the gap between the world of education and training and the labour market by

introducing a standard terminology for occupations, skills, competences and qualifications.

ESCO, as a standardised terminology, will make it easier to describe how occupations, skills, competences and qualifications are linked and connect to each other.

ESCO developments reflect the on-going shift to learning outcomes taking place across Europe. The learning outcomes approach sets out what a job-seeker knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process. It offers an alternative to the traditional

emphasis on learning inputs (where a qualification is judged according to time spent in education, subjects studied and the location of the learning). These learning outcomes are commonly defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences and this creates shared basic terminological principles to underpin ESCO. This shared terminology will facilitate dialogue between labour market and education and training stakeholders. ■

To find out more about ESCO please follow this link:

<https://ec.europa.eu/esco/home>



EASQ - European Area of Skills and Qualifications

The European Commission has launched a consultation on the European Area of Skills and Qualifications. This on-line consultation contains seven groups of issues - your active collaboration will help to inform the future of the European Area of Skills and Qualifications.

This public consultation remains open until **15.04.2014** and respondents are

invited to fill the electronic questionnaire on the website: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/more_info/consultations/skills_en.htm

The European Commission is collecting perspectives from stakeholders such as governmental bodies, education and training providers, employers, federations of employers, trade unions, workers, public and private employment services, chambers of industry, commerce and skilled crafts, qualification authorities, guidance services, youth work organisations, voluntary sector organisations and individual learners, teachers, trainers and experts. This will help to identify the problems faced by learners and workers in relation to the transparency and recognition of their skills and qualifications when moving within and between EU Member States; the adequacy of the related European policies and instruments; and the potential benefits of developing a "European Area of Skills and Qualifications".

The consultation covers a broad range of topics such as:

- How to place a stronger focus on higher and more relevant skills;
- Further strengthening the links between education/training, mobility and the labour market;
- Adapting to internationalisation trends
- Ensuring overall coherence of the European instruments and policies and further implementing the learning outcomes approach;
- Ensuring clarity of rules and procedures for the recognition of skills and qualifications for further learning;
- Increasing the focus on quality assurance;
- Providing learners and workers with a single access point to obtain information and services supporting a European Area of Skills and Qualifications. ■

The screenshot shows the top part of a web form titled "Towards a European Area of Skills and Qualifications". It includes a yellow box stating "Fields marked with * are mandatory." Below this, there is a paragraph of introductory text about the consultation. A section titled "Identification of the respondent" follows, with a sub-header "You are replying:". It contains two radio button options: "In your personal capacity" and "On behalf of an organisation". Below these options is a text input field labeled "What is the name of your organisation?".

ECVET team

Work programme 2014

January	WEB platform: state of play and survey of potential users of CoP
20-21	Customised Seminar Metal Sector Turkey - Istanbul
February	Web platform: development of CoP support
12	Participation in EQAVET steering committee
13-14	ECVET Thematic Seminar Learning Outcomes session 1 - Barcelona
March	Web platform test
13	UGM extra-workshop on EASQ (organised by the Commission)
18-19	Customised seminar French National Team of ECVET experts
19-20-21	Regular ECVET seminar Mobility – Prague
	ECVET Mag
April	
11	ECVET Steering Committee - Brussels
16-17	ECVET Thematic Seminar “ECVET teachers & trainers” session 1 - Budapest
	Customised seminar 3 (Poland tbc)
May	Web platform test
13-14	UGM workshop and meeting – Brussels
27-28	ECVET Thematic Seminar Learning Outcomes session 2 - Bucharest
June	Web platform assessment results
17	EASQ conference (tbc)
	ECVET Mag
September	Customised seminar 4 (Croatia tbc)
	Joint meeting ECVET & EQAVET
	Regular ECVET seminar ECVET and NFIL - Amsterdam
October	
30-31	ECVET Forum “ECVET 2009-2020” - Vienna
	ECVET Mag
November	
6	ECVET Steering Committee - Brussels
13-14	ECVET Thematic Seminar Learning Outcomes session 3 - Brussels
	Customised seminar 5
December	
9-10 tbc	ECVET Thematic Seminar “ECVET teachers & trainers” session 2 - Paris
tbc	UGM workshop and meeting - Brussels



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Executive Agency

