

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

Enhancing the quality of VET-learner mobility in Europe

- 02** Editorial
- 04** Developing mobility support tools and services - ECVET Peer Learning Activity in March 2017
- 09** A mobility unit for the French « baccalauréat professionnel »
- 12** THEME Smart Mobility Tool
- 15** QUAKE - QUALification Knowledge ECVET
- 17** Music & Creativity - connecting people: The Musiccreates project
- 19** The ECVET-Secretariat met the 'VECTOR-Tourism' Sector Skills Alliance Project
- 21** Identifying principles for flexible vocational pathways



The ECVET Magazine is produced with support from the European Commission's DG for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion. The views expressed in it do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the European Commission, which cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of this information.

Editorialby the
European Commission**Dana-Carmen
Bachman**

The Communication “A New Skills Agenda for Europe - Working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness”, published in 2016 sets an ambitious vision for empowering people in the EU to acquire, strengthen or further develop their skills and qualifications to fulfil their potential, engage actively and successfully in society and pursue motivating and rewarding careers.

The new Skills Agenda invites Member States, social partners, the industry and other stakeholders to work together to deliver on this vision by improving the quality and relevance of skills formation; making skills more visible and comparable and improving skills intelligence and information for better career choices.

In this framework the mobility of VET learners has a crucial role. Mobility is currently one of the most known European “trademarks” within the Erasmus+ programme.

As announced in the Communication on “Investing in Europe’s Youth”, the Commission proposes to boost further the potential of mobility in VET by enhancing the support for long duration mobility through the set up of a new activity labelled “ErasmusPRO” within the mobility action in the Erasmus+ programme.

This initiative seeks to contribute to the employability of young people through the acquisition of job specific vocational skills, and transversal skills, as well as language of the host country. At the

Developing mobility support tools and services – ECVET Peer Learning Activity in March 2017

Anette Curth, ECVET Secretariat

In March 2017, the ECVET Secretariat organised a peer learning activity (PLA) to discuss ‘Developing support tools and services for learner mobility in VET’. During the PLA, 32 participants from 11 countries reflected on the experience gained with tools and services developed in the framework of the ECVET and Europass initiatives. In particular, they discussed the opportunity for a coordinated framework which would support thorough preparation, structured implementation and appropriate follow-up to insure both the quality and impact of the mobility experience. The ECVET Learning Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding are already broadly recognised as effective tools for supporting the preparation and implementation of VET mobility, and Europass Mobility is already widely used to document the results of all such experiences. Options of joining forces to improve existing tools were explored, with the aim to provide better mobility experiences to VET learners.

With the December 2016 launch of the ‘Investing in Europe’s Youth’ initiative, the topic of learner mobility was given a central position on the VET policy agenda. As part of this initiative, the Commission will launch several activities, including the proposal on ‘ErasmusPRO’, a quality framework for apprenticeships, apprenticeship support services, and a strategy for tracking VET graduates. The key purpose of ErasmusPRO is to increase the number of long-duration mobility (6 to 12 months) VET learners/apprentices in work placements abroad (target 50,000 *new* mobility opportunities under Erasmus+ VET KA1, in addition to the existing Erasmus+ target figures). This increase in long-term mobility of VET learners shall be achieved in part through improved E+ support/incentives, a dedicated budget, and improved support structures for mo-



bility preparation, implementation and follow-up.

In the host country Cyprus, ECVET is considered as one of the most valuable European initiatives in education

and training, and a key component to enhance mobility across different VET programmes and levels. The Cypriot Ministry is currently in the process of revising curricula for secondary technical qualifications, based on ECVET

units of learning outcomes. The ‘unitisation’ of programmes at technical schools aims to provide individuals in second-chance VET programmes with the opportunity to work and learn at the same time (part-time programmes). Furthermore, Cyprus is working to improve the permeability between its apprenticeship system and VET technical schools, allowing graduates to complete secondary VET schools in one or two years instead of four or five years.

Tools and services for learner mobility

In its function as a credit transfer system for learning mobility, ECVET suggests tools that were designed to support and promote validation and recognition of learning mobility (*Memorandum of Understanding* (MoU), *Learning Agreement* (LA), and *Personal Transcript*). These documents are not new. They existed at the European level before the ECVET-launch and have been used for learning mobility activities, albeit under different names. For example, the *Letter of Intent* required for Leonardo da Vinci-funded mobility (for the Memorandum of Understanding), the *Learning Plan* from the 2006 European Quality Charter for Mobility (for the Learning Agreement) and *Europass* (for the Personal Transcript, to document the outcomes of Learner Mobility).

What is new in ECVET is the requirement to present learning objectives and outcomes in terms of *units of learning outcomes* referring to the *knowledge, skills and competences* contained in them to create a ‘mutual language’ to communicate effectively about learning and qualifications in Europe. What is also new in ECVET is the ambition to develop a coherent set of documents and procedures at the European level that can act as a common quality assurance method for ensuring learning



and recognition in transnational mobility projects.

VET-mobility practice shows that a broad range of tools and services is currently in use. A pre-event survey among the participants to the PLA confirmed the importance of the **Memorandum of Understanding** and the **Learning Agreement**. The European templates that were developed in 2013 by a Working Group consisting of ECVET Users’ group members and other stakeholders are frequently used by the mobility ‘community of practice’. There is however no ‘European’ template for the Personal Transcript. **Europass Mobility** seems very popular as Personal Transcript. Those who use it appreciate that Europass is a standardised instrument which is very well-known across Europe, and easy to use.

However, as Europass does not belong to the ‘family’ of ECVET related documents there is currently no coherent set of documents to support the entire mobility experience (before, during, and after mobility). Some respondents to the survey mentioned that they developed their own instruments, which cover all stages of the process.

The PLA offered an opportunity to explore current practice and potential for further development in more depth. The discussions focused on the following questions:

- What kinds of mobility support tools and services are currently in use?
- How efficient and effective are the mobility support tools and services currently in use? What works well, and what works not so well?
- What is needed to further improve the efficiency and effectiveness of mobility support tools and services, in view of maximising the benefits of mobility experiences for the learner?

The following sections give an overview on the key discussions points.

Experiences with current mobility support tools and services

- VET learner mobility across Europe works quite well already. Several European tools have been developed and are in use. To a large extent, there is a common language and understanding. Mobility in the context of Erasmus+ is monitored, assessed and quite often recognised as a part of a learner’s pathway and European

collaboration related to VET learner mobility is quite well-developed. However, there is room for improvement in certain areas, especially digitalisation, modernisation and accessibility.

- All info should be digital, and easily accessible for all parties involved, especially the learner. Ultimately, learners should be able to pull together their digital skills portfolio.
- ECVET is very useful to quality assure VET learner mobility. However, tools and templates are not sufficient: more is needed to quality assure VET learner mobility.
- Companies tend to accept the Learning Agreement. The learning outcomes approach is usually well-accepted, provided it can be translated to concrete work tasks for the mobility phase.
- For VET providers, there would be merit in merging LA and Europass and having a one-stop shop. If information were stored digitally, it could be carried forward more easily throughout the entire process and the related documentation. However, developing elaborate digital platforms is only worthwhile for providers dealing with large numbers of mobile learners.
- Regardless of what types of tools are used, economy of scale can be observed: the bigger the numbers of learners going on mobility, the smaller the bureaucracy.
- Mobility providers should continue sharing their experiences. Yet, sharing empty templates is not sufficient - questions often occur only while filling in the forms and templates.
- In countries that do not have a tradition of employer engagement in VET, companies tend to be less clear about the value of taking on learners for a short placement. Employer representatives like chambers and sec-

toral organisations have an important role to play in raising awareness.

- Companies often complain about excessive bureaucracy – the paperwork related to mobility needs to be as minimal as possible.
- Mobility in the framework of apprenticeships needs specific attention. Companies may object to mobility - especially if it is long-term - as they cannot lose the apprentices (who are employees). In addition, specific quality criteria need to be developed for long-term placements (e.g. in the framework of ErasmusPRO).

What works well, what works not so well? Benefits and constraints of current tools and services

The table below gives an overview on the benefits and constraints discussed, in relation to each of the key tools used in ECVET mobility.

The main points raised can be summarised as follows:

- **Awareness:** All three instruments have achieved a high level of aware-

Benefits	Constraints
Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)	
+ Important in the context of quality assurance	- Need for competent authorities to sign
+ Ensures a well-documented process	- Not required and not commonly used in Erasmus+
+ Helps to clarify roles	
+ Helps to formalise commitment	
Learning Agreement (LA)	
+ Constitutes a multi-party commitment (learner, sending and hosting organisation)	- Limited learner involvement observed
+ Can be individualised for each learner/mobility case	- Great variety in practice of completion (guidelines needed)
+ Supports tracking and follow-up	- Need to be realistic in terms of what LOs are actually possible to achieve at the placement (need to adapt LO targets)
+ Creates transparency and learner reassurance	- Can be time consuming to fill in; needs simplification
+ Can include aspects of workplace security/insurance, hence protects all parties	- Assessment and documentation not always obvious or specified in the LA
Personal Transcript (PT)	
+ Can record achieved LOs and more	- Lack of connectivity with other tools (no data transfer possible)
+ Has an empowering character as it shows the learner what s/he has achieved in view of their employability	- Needs to be simpler (open text boxes may be a deterrent)
+ There is increasing awareness that Europass Mobility can be utilised as PT, as no ECVET template has been developed	- No single identity: many varieties of a PT are currently in use

ness among VET providers and mobility promoters and are broadly used.

- **Quality:** All instruments have an important role to play as part of the quality assurance process related to VET learner mobility.
- **Range:** There is currently a broad variety of MoU, LA, and PT in use, all of them tailored to a specific context, hence with a limited range.
- **Accessibility:** In many cases, accessibility of the instruments could be improved by integrating them into a digital platform.
- **Connectivity:** There is lack of connectivity between the instruments used before, during and after mobility, which hampers data transfer and coherence.
- **Simplicity:** Tools should be user-friendly: easy and quick to fill in. For instance, information could be carried forward throughout the different phases of mobility to enable companies to tick boxes rather than having to write long text in open text boxes.

No differences were observed in relation to the main target groups of tools and services (learners, sending and hosting institutions); the benefits and constraints apply to all of them in equal measure. Yet, companies – as sending or hosting institution – need special attention as they are expected to have particularly high demands in terms of simplicity and user-friendliness.

Building on the benefits, addressing the challenges

During the last part of the PLA, participants discussed how to move forward. Concrete ideas in relation to greater range, connectivity, simplicity and accessibility of tools and services included the following:

- Tools should serve administrative as well as pedagogical purposes. For

example, the same tool could allow learners to apply for mobility, indicate their interests, suggest LO to be achieved, and agree on LO with the teacher/trainer.

- A database of learning outcomes related to qualifications would support tools; for example, for presenting the host organisation with a 'requested' set of learning outcomes to be achieved during mobility. However, there are concerns about the feasibility of European-level databases with standardised learning outcomes descriptions (e.g. how and by whom would they be developed and updated).
- Tools should be a combination of software tools and mobile apps with the following technical features:
 - Allow storage and transfer of data throughout the process;
 - Allow simple collaboration on learning outcomes for mobility related to a qualification/professional profile, and which are feasible to be achieved within the host institution;
 - Allow Learning Agreements to generate automatically through an online system;
 - Allow for continuous monitoring of the learners' progress throughout the process, and for regular dialogue between the sending and host institutions;
 - Allow for shared assessment (between the host/company and the sending institution, and involving the learner), possibly in connection with a Skype interview;
 - Allow for the documentation of the learning outcomes achieved, including 'unplanned' learning outcomes, even if they cannot be recognised.
- Learners, host and sending institution should have access to the system throughout the entire process.
- At the end of the process, the learner should receive an easy-to-use one-page document providing evidence

of the learning outcomes gained during mobility, for use in applications to jobs or learning programmes.

- This one-pager should be easily understood by firms, for instance LO descriptions should be based on work tasks.
- Such a system should be the backbone of VET mobility, ensuring that information can be transferred from stage to stage, and that outcomes are recorded.

What follows? Points for further discussion

The following key points for further discussion can be summarised as follows:

- **If MoUs and LAs did not exist, they would need to be invented.** The ECVET mobility tools can be considered as a logical extension of the mobility process and will continue to play a pivotal role.
- **National or project-level mobility tools are an important source of inspiration for European level activities:** 15 years ago, Europass was developed in a similar manner.
- **There is support for a common approach at EU level, while leaving room for differences.** A common set of tools has many advantages. It would clear confusion and entail better options for promotion to stakeholders. There should also be room for flexibility, allowing adaptation to national and local needs. It is possible (although not necessarily the preferred option) that different groups of countries progress at different speeds.
- **European tools must be broadly accessible and ready to use in various contexts.** Many current initiatives are more or less 'gated communities', designed for specific contexts and with restricted accessibility. Any possible European initiative in this context must go beyond that.
- **Use existing platforms and tools as an inspiration and link with**

them: In many countries, platforms and tools are already in place. Also in higher education, many different tools and solutions for learner mobility exist. They could be investigated and analysed as a source for inspiration. Interfaces to other systems (student databases, etc.) must be taken into consideration from the beginning.

- **Enterprises are key.** 75% of VET mobility carried out in Erasmus+ have enterprises as hosting institutions. Enterprises are the key element in VET mobility. Enterprises demand flexibility: in particular, short-term mobility makes it difficult for them to accommodate very specific demands in terms of LO to be achieved. Enterprises also demand simplicity: information needs to be presented in a simple and condensed form.
- **Ambitions must go beyond Erasmus+.** The use of ECVET for VET learner mobility still seems to be confined to E+ funded mobility. Tools should be conceived to cater to other mobility opportunities too.
- **ErasmusPRO is a game changer.** ErasmusPRO is the first activity that specifically targets long-term VET learner mobility. In that context, recognition at home of learning outcomes acquired abroad will gain higher importance. While learners can catch up easily on learning outcomes they missed at home during a short-term mobility of 2-4 weeks, this will not be possible for a mobility experience of 6-12 months.

The guiding principle for any further activity should be that transnational mobility for learners should be just as simple to achieve and implement as a traineeship in their own country. It is important to keep in mind that the key objective of all these efforts is to help learners acquire the knowledge, skills and competences they need as citizens and workers.



Guiding principle for further work on VET learner mobility support tools and services:

Sending a learner on a transnational mobility should be just as simple as sending a learner on a work placement or traineeship in their own country.

Indeed, the same tool could be used in both cases.

It is too early to be specific about the measure(s) that will be taken at EU level in this particular context. As an immediate next step, DG EMPL suggested discussing possible action to be taken at European level with a small follow-up group. This group is to develop and form a clearer picture about the action to be taken, particularly concerning which services are better provided at EU level and which at national level. Depending on the outcome of this discussion, this could then lead to a technical working group with the mandate to develop a European platform for mobility support.

Participants of the PLA

The PLA was attended by 34 representatives from 11 countries: AT, BE-fr, DE, FI, FR, HU, IT, PT, NL, NO, and the host country Cyprus. The group included representatives of VET providers, National Agencies, National Europass Centres, social partners (Business Europe and ETUC), Cedefop, the ECVET Secretariat and the European Commission (DG EAC and DG EMPL).

Please note: This article is based on the summary report to the PLA which is available **here** on the **ECVET Secretariat website**. The presentations given at the meeting can be found in the same place.

If you are interested in using ECVET for VET learner mobility and would like to explore the available tools and services, please visit the **'ECVET toolkit' webpage**.

A mobility unit for the French « baccalauréat professionnel »

Martine Paty and Brigitte Trocmé, Directorate General for School Education, French Ministry for National Education, and Patrick Bet, member of the team of ECVET experts France

The *baccalauréat professionnel* is a vocational high-school diploma awarded by the French Ministry of Education for about 90 different specialities. Situated at level 4 of the French National Qualification Framework (EQF level 4), these qualifications are composed of units of learning outcomes.

Context

In the context of MEN ECVET, a European pilot project which ran from 2011 to 2013 in collaboration with the *Centre international d'études pédagogiques* and three European partners (Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Autonomous Community of Catalonia), the French Ministry for National Education has made regulatory provisions to facilitate recognition of learning outcomes in the context of international mobility for the vocational baccalaureate.

These provisions are as follows:

- part of the obligatory workplace training – 22 weeks for the professional baccalaureate – may be completed in a business in a country belonging to the European Union (EU), European Economic Area (EEA) or the European Free Trade Association (EFTA);
- part of the training in a vocational training school may be delegated to a similar school in one of those countries.

They also clarify the conditions under which assessment of learning outcomes during exchanges may be delegated to a partner [institution]. Under certain conditions, assessments of training periods that form part of the obligatory training in the vocational

baccalaureate programme may be carried out abroad.

Lastly, in 2014, a new optional unit for mobility was created to raise the attractiveness of these mobility periods in Europe and recognise them.

Optional 'mobility' unit

School pupils as well as apprentices and adults undertaking CPD may choose to take this optional unit.

This unit serves a number of purposes. First, candidates will not be penalised as only pass marks will be recorded (10 out of 20 or above). Second, it facilitates recognition of two types of skills and knowledge: intercultural and vocational.

Content of the unit:

The content of the unit is set out in Appendix I of the 'arrêté' (order) creating the unit (see page 10).

Description of the assessment:

The purpose of the assessment is to assess learning outcomes from a stay in a member state of the European Union, the European Economic Area or the European Free Trade Association, as part of a vocational baccalaureate (*baccalauréat professionnel*) course. It



Liberté • Égalité • Fraternité

RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

takes into account the vocational and cultural aspects of situations faced by the candidate.

The competences assessed are those described in Appendix I, the framework of the 'arrêté' describing the unit (see above). A second Appendix provides the assessment grid.

The assessment has two parts:

- The candidate sits the first part in the foreign country at the end of the period of mobility;
- The candidate sits the second part in France, no more than three months after their return.

Part 1: Assessment abroad

The assessment covers competences C1 and C3. It is held in a company or on the premises of a vocational training provider with which the French vocational training provider has signed an agreement. It is delivered by one or more representatives of the company or training provider in the host country.

Vocational discovery and mobility

Reference	Competences	Description of competences	Expected outcomes
C 1	Understanding and making oneself understood in a vocational setting overseas	Ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> research, collect and analyse data and information identify verbal and written instructions use a range of appropriate means of communication (gestures, written material computer materials, graphics etc.) 	<p>Conveys information and communicates using different media/means</p> <p>Follows verbal and written instructions</p>
C 2	Describing the vocational setting overseas	Ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> describe the host organisation, in terms of geographical location, status, size, organisational structure, purpose and activities, key performance indicators describe the organisation's operating procedures (business hours, organisation structure, confidentiality restrictions etc.) identify exactly where the host department in the organisational structure identify the organisation's internal and external partners 	<p>Presents the organisation and working environment, the organisational chart, the department</p> <p>Lists and explains the organisation's operating procedures, verbal and written instructions</p> <p>Lists and identifies the organisation's internal and external partners</p>
C 3	Partially performing an occupation, under supervision, in a vocational setting overseas	Ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify and perform the necessary operations to perform the tasks assigned follow instructions identify occupational hazards related to the assigned tasks observe safety rules 	<p>Adequately performs occupational tasks assigned in accordance with instructions and safety rules</p>
C 4	Comparing similar occupations performed or observed overseas and in France	Ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> describe an occupation performed or observed in a foreign setting: tasks, context and conditions, methods, expected outcomes 	<p>Identifies similarities and differences between occupations of the same type performed or observed overseas and in France</p>

Cultural discovery and mobility

Reference	Competences	Description of competences	Expected outcomes
C 5	Familiarisation with a new environment	Ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> locate the host organisation spatially in relation to bearings describe the area in which the host organisation is located: urban area, suburban area, rural, degree of accessibility, modes of transport etc. 	<p>Locates the place of learning overseas in relation to public places</p> <p>Describes the area where the host organisation is located</p> <p>Lists four geographical characteristics of the host country (population, climate, relief etc.)</p>
C 6	Identifying the cultural characteristics of the host environment	Ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify cultural characteristics in a foreign environment (family, school or workplace): eating habits, way of life, pace, timetables etc. present a cultural aspect/event observed: monument, festival, cultural event etc. present a local or national news item/event that occurred during the stay 	<p>Describes cultural aspects that are characteristic of the foreign environment (family, school or workplace)</p> <p>Presents similarities and differences between the French and foreign environments</p>

The assessment grid in the appendix of this definition is used. This grid includes a text in French and its translation into the language of the host country. It is completed by the foreign assessor(s) and sent to the candidate's training provider in France as set out in the agreement.

Part 2: Assessment in France

The assessment covers competences C2, C4, C5 and C6 of the framework. It takes place at the premises of the French training provider. It consists of a 20-minute interview with a board made up of two teachers; one of the discipline in the vocational baccalaureate speciality the pupil is studying, and the other of a general discipline taught as part of the course. The assessors may or may not be the candidate's own teachers.

The assessment includes a presentation by the candidate of the workplace environment and a cultural aspect experienced or observed during their stay overseas. This 10-minute presentation should include visual aids produced by the candidate, either in the form of printed handouts (containing no more than 10 pages including appendices) or a computer presentation (slide show containing no more than 10 slides).

At the end of the presentation, the assessors discuss with the candidate any comparisons they may draw between the practices discussed in the presentation and the French practices in the same areas.

Questions may be extended to include other vocational and cultural activities encountered by the candidate.

The assessment criteria are as follows:

- accuracy of the description of the cultural and workplace aspects presented:

- the aptness of the comparison between foreign and French practices;
- detachment from the situations experienced and observed overseas in relation to own vocational and cultural practices.

The assessment is marked by the assessors appointed for part 2 described above:

- part one is marked out of 8 points based on the assessment grid filled in by the assessors in the other country;
- part two of the assessment is marked out of 12 points.

Pupils who successfully complete this unit receive a baccalaureate certificate and a "Euromobipro" certificate conferred by the rector.

Figures on the 'mobility' unit: constant rise in the number of candidates since the first exam session in 2015

6690 candidates currently registered for the 2017 exam session:

6431	School pupils
252	Apprentices
7	CPD

5686 candidates registered for the 2016 exam session and 4736 candidates successfully completed the unit:

Candidates	Successful candidates	
5 388	4 485	School pupils
284	245	Apprentices
14	6	CPD
5 686	4 736	Total

4193 candidates for the 2015 exam session, with 2715 successful candidates:

Candidates	Successful candidates	
4 040	2 664	School pupils
138	49	Apprentices
15	2	CPD
4 193	2 715	Total

A study on the implementation of this optional unit will be undertaken in 2017, with a view to permanent adoption and possible extension to other vocational qualifications.

Links:

Regulatory texts on the vocational baccalaureate:

- French Education Code: Articles **D. 337-54, D. 337-55, D.337-64, D.337-69**
- **Arrêté (order) of 27 June 2014** creating an optional mobility unit as part of the vocational baccalaureate qualification published in the Official Journal of the French Republic of 29-6-2014 and the Official National Education Bulletin of 28 August 2014. It includes two annexes:
 - Appendix 1: Framework for the optional 'mobility' unit

- Appendix 2: Optional mobility assessment (and assessment grid)
- **Arrêté (order) of 13 April 2015 on the establishment of a Euromobipro certificate for the vocational baccalaureate**, published in the Official National Education Bulletin on 21 May 2015

See also:

<http://eduscol.education.fr/cid59312/diplomes-professionnels-et-europe.html>

At the bottom of this page, you can access a **vade mecum for training**

institutes relating to these provisions, which specifies the arrangements for implementing the optional 'mobility' unit. This also provides information on the assessment grid and the framework for assessment in various languages.

Testimonials:

students from the Lycée Saint-Exupéry complete their internship in Spain

6 students from the Lycée Prévert set for a 4-week internship in Carlow (Ireland) and Malaga (Spain)

THEME Smart Mobility Tool: Facilitating the practical organisation and management of learner mobility in VET¹

Monika Auzinger, ECVET Secretariat

The THEME project started out in 2013 with an ambitious goal: making the implementation of learner mobility in vocational education and training as straightforward and simple as possible. This led to the development and launch of the THEME Smart Mobility Tool (TSMT), a smart web-based tool to help organise and manage VET learner mobility more efficiently.

About the THEME project

The numerous benefits of learner mobility in VET are undisputed; it helps develop their vocational competences and improve their opportunities in the European labour market, strengthens their personality and supports the development of their European identity. Yet, the management, organisation

and quality assurance of learner mobility is often a time-consuming and burdensome process – often taken on by teachers and trainers as an extra duty.

The THEME project partnership (THEME stands for 'Transfer of ECVET Instruments into the Fields of Trade, Hospitality, Electrical Engineering/Electronics and Mechatronics') thus set out



to create tools to facilitate the operational management of VET learner mo-

¹ ECVET Secretariat would like to thank Folene Nannen-Gethmann and Thorsten Noelle for their support and information provided to prepare this article.

bility, to improve the quality assurance of internships and placements, and to improve the recognition of learning outcomes achieved abroad.

Led by the European Agency for Vocational Education and Training within the Cologne Government Regional Office (Germany), the THEME partnership brought together twelve partners from seven different countries (see Fact Box below). Together, they developed the THEME Smart Mobility Tool, a database which combines ECVET instruments, assessment tools and competence matrices for use in transnational learner mobility. Instead of starting from scratch, THEME built on the outcomes and experience from several earlier projects, by developing them further and combining them: VQTS I and II (competence matrices in the sectors of electronics/electrical engineering and mechatronics), ECMO (hospitality), TRIFT (trade) and E.R.M.E.S. (mobility database).

Using the SMART Mobility Tool for more efficient planning and management of VET learner mobility

The **THEME SMART Mobility Tool (TSMT)** is the key outcome of the THEME project. In short, it is an online database designed to facilitate the practical organisation and management of VET learner mobilities. The database provides mobility tools in an easy-to-use online format, thus allowing VET learners, host and sending organisations to quickly and easily agree on and document the most relevant information for organising and managing mobility experiences abroad. TSMT allows the migration of the data to all mobility-related documents, which can be automatically generated through the system.

TSMT combines ECVET documents (Learning Agreement - LA, Memorandum of Understanding - MoU), assess-

ment tools, competence matrices and Europass Mobility (see Info Box below for details):

Competence Matrices in the fields of trade, hospitality, electronics/electrical engineering and mechatronics with learning outcome descriptions as common reference point for VET programmes from different countries, and as a basis for the completion of the LA and MoU.

Automated generation of **ECVET documents (Memorandum of Understanding, Learning Agreement) and Europass Mobility** through the database.

Outcome-based assessment tools for use in the assessment of work-related competences, social, personal and language competences.

One of the key strengths of the TSMT is the use of **competence matrices** as a 'language' that speaks to both VET institutions and companies. THEME uses these competence matrices² to

support the comparison of qualifications and training programmes in the different partner countries. They are based on and describe the core work tasks of the respective professional field and the steps of competence development for each competence area. Within the THEME project, each competence matrix was supplemented by so-called 'partial competences'; more detailed learning outcome statements which can be used to define the learning outcomes to be achieved during learner mobility, and which will then be directly inserted into the MoU and LA documents.

Based on the information entered into the system, the mobility tool will automatically generate MoU, LA and Europass Mobility documents, for printing or download.

The database can be accessed by learners, sending and host organisations (usually teachers and companies), with different access rights granted to different user types.

Extract taken from the competence matrix for Hospitality/Cook:
http://www.theme-eu.net/sides/results/results_matrices.html



THEME Competence Matrix – Hospitality/Cook with Partial competences/ Learning outcomes



COMPETENCE AREAS	STEPS OF COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT			
1. Purchasing, costing and stocking	He/She is able to identify basic products.	He/She is able to work applying the economic and environmental aspects of kitchen costs and purchasing.	He/She is able to purchase the respective seasonal food independently, compare different offers and identify the best offer according to price and quality.	He/She is able to contact the regional food suppliers and to bargain/negotiate for product quality and prices independently.
	He/She is able to check incoming products in matters of quality and store them properly.			He/She is able to plan the short and long term requirement of food for an establishment with the help of special computer programs and is able to stay within budgetary limits.
	He/She is able to follow the hygienic standards regarding the purchase and storage of all kinds of food.			He/She is able to instruct and manage the purchasing and costing process.
	Partial competences/ Learning outcomes:			
	He/She is able to identify the products belonging to the dry storage.			
	He/She is able to identify how to store refrigerated foods (separate storage: meat, fruits and vegetables).			
	He/She is able to identify how to store deep-frozen foods.			
	He/She is able to assist in checking the documents and the products by the type, quantity, quality and traceability, based on the rules of purchasing.			
	He/She is able to apply the hygienic rules e.g. correct storage, first in first out etc. (HACCP).			
	He/She is able to apply the safety rules at work.			

2 They are based on the works carried out by the VQTS projects: www.vocationalqualification.net

Generating a Learning Agreement using THEME:

<http://smart.theme-eu.net/login/auth> (registration required)

Throughout its development, the TSMT mobility tool was tested in the implementation of 128 VET learner mobilities. Based on the feedback received from the parties involved, the tool was further developed and its features refined. Since its launch in September 2015, the **network** has grown to include 64 institutions from across Europe. While the TSMT is a valuable tool for mobility projects of various durations, from a couple of weeks to several months, it realizes its full potential with VET mobilities of longer duration.

What's ahead?

Even though the THEME project has officially ended, the coordinators strive to further extend the network of institutions and to promote the use of the mobility tool. Through the addition of further competence matrices, the tool could be extended to other professional fields relatively easily.

Info Box: Getting started with THEME Smart Mobility Tool

The mobility tool is available for use free of charge to organisers of VET mobility upon registration. Registered institutions will then be able to independently use the platform, invite other institutions to the database and to set up sub-networks with other mobility partners.

To get new users started on the platform, five different tutorial videos are available, providing an introduction into the different features of the mobility tool.

Smart Mobility tool: <http://smart.theme-eu.net/login/auth>

Registration required for first-time users - by e-mail to:
thorsten.noelle@brk.nrw.de

Fact Box: THEME project

Title: THEME – Transfer of ECVET Instruments into the Fields of Trade, Hospitality, Electrical Engineering/Electronics and Mechatronics

Duration: 2 years (2013 – 2015)

Funding: Lifelong Learning Programme

Partnership: Project partners from seven countries: Cologne Government Regional Office European Agency for Vocational Education and Training (DE), Salpaus Further Education Lahti Region Educational Consortium (FI), City of Kouvola, Kouvola Region Vocational College (FI), Area Formazione Fondazione Centro Produttività Veneto (IT), APRO Formazione s.c.a.r.l. (IT), Vytautas Magnus University (LT), ROC Leeuwenborgh (NL), KCH International (NL), Endurance / Kenwerk (NL), Chamber of Commerce & Industry of Slovenia (SI), Asociación Catalana Internacionalización del Talento (ACIT) (ES), Centro Integrado de Formación Profesional Número Uno (ES). In addition, eight vocational training institutions from Germany participated in the project.

Objective: Making learner mobility in VET as straightforward as for university students. Creation of the THEME SMART Mobility Tool and network of institutions.

Target: VET institutions, learners and companies interested in getting engaged in VET learner mobility

Outcomes: Development of the THEME Smart Mobility Tool, a database which combines ECVET instruments, assessment tools and competence matrices as well as the setup of a VET mobility network.

Project website:
<http://www.theme-eu.net>

QUAKE - QUALification Knowledge ECVET

ECVET : de la conception pour les apprenants, à la professionnalisation des enseignants¹

Cathal de Paor, Mary Immaculate College, Ireland

QUAKE, the acronym for this Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership between seven partners from five European countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Ireland, and Spain), was chosen to reflect an attempt to 'shake things up a bit' in the world of horticulture qualifications. Yet, the official project title (*ECVET: from the design for learners, to the professionalisation of teachers*) conveys more fully what the project has been trying to do, and with whom. It refers to both learners and teachers in the sector. While ECVET focuses on the learner, the professional practice of teachers is key to realising its potential. In fact, while QUAKE has involved the mobility of both learners and teachers, the project put a particular emphasis on the 'mobilisation', and not just the mobility, of teachers.

Learner mobilities organised by the QUAKE project

In total, QUAKE Learner organised mobilities for 25 learners, providing the basis not just for an exciting learning experience for the learners, but also for the professional development of over 30 teachers who participated in separate professional development events. Collaboration in the project has led to the production of a number of documents, including a guide for teachers on how to set up an ECVET partnership, thereby bringing the learning to a wider audience. Such a focus on the professional development of teachers reflects the realisation that, apart from the need for the necessary policies at a system level, the use of ECVET depends on the knowledge, skill and attitudes of teachers who will ultimately be the people who drive it and make it happen.

Opting to confine the project activities to one vocational domain only – horticulture – and one level – EQF level 4 – helped to ensure the involvement of a

sufficient number of teachers working in similar contexts, thereby raising the possibility of mobilities getting off the ground. This also explains the composition of the partnership, which includes partners from ministries of agriculture, ministries of education, higher education institutions involved in the preparation of VET teachers and other horticultural professionals, as well as a VET provider with access to schools/colleges and enterprises involved in horticulture.

Activities

The project included a range of activities over three years, beginning in September 2014 and continuing up until the end of August 2017. The first activity was to establish a better view on the state of play of ECVET adoption and VET teacher education within each country of the partnership. An analysis of teachers' professional development needs showed that the levels of awareness about ECVET varied greatly among teachers. This analysis informed the design of the first programme of continuing professional development (CPD). In



November 2015, a pilot training was delivered in Orléans, France to 25 teachers (five teachers from each country of the partnership). During this training, teachers were also able to identify possible partners for the mobility of their learners later on in the project. The online training programme which followed built on the initial training, enabling teachers to continue exploring possibilities and developing relationships. Most learner mobilities took place in spring 2017, as the return of the growing season offered more scope for learners and teachers to match practical activities to the learning outcomes being targeted. The participating teachers reconvened for a second face-to-face week of CPD in March 2017, this time in Brussels.

Some reflections

While the project has not yet finished its work, it is already possible to iden-

¹ ECVET: from the design for learners, to the professionalisation of teachers

tify a number of important insights. QUAKE has provided the participating teachers and schools with the knowledge and support required for using ECVET mobilities in their teaching of horticulture. This enabled teachers to deepen their knowledge about teaching, learning and assessment, more generally, particularly with regard to the alignment between what is taught or practised, what is learned and what is assessed.

Some of the mobilities involved a graded assessment of the learners' achievements against particular LOs or criteria, while for others, the learning was assessed in a more holistic way, i.e., successful/unsuccessful. Some mobilities were also based on units of LOs that corresponded to a placement or practice module from the learner's home programme, while other mobilities attempted to also target LOs taken from taught modules. Supporting teachers in designing learning agreements that target LOs from more than one unit or module is something that the project team would like to focus on in the future. The way in which assessment results are incorporated with the learners' other results in their home institution also emerged as an important issue.

The project results also highlight the importance of local autonomy in determining the nature and extent of ECVET use. As shown in the recent CEDEFOP monitoring report (CEDEFOP, 2016), four of the partner countries from QUAKE have credit systems that are compatible with ECVET – France, Spain, Belgium and Ireland, while it is being developed in Bulgaria. And yet there was still great diversity of approaches even between the first four countries.

Part 2 of the ECVET user's guide "Using ECVET for Geographical Mobility"

emphasizes the need for trust between teachers and institutions (sending and receiving) in preparing the ground for a successful ECVET mobility. A key focus in the CPD course therefore related to the assessment of learning outcomes (LOs), and the importance of having evidence that demonstrates achievement in a transparent way. The CPD meetings were invaluable in creating the professional relationships that allowed discussion on these issues possible.

As summer 2017 approaches, the project team is busy preparing a methodological guide which will form the basis for a series of national dissemination events in each of the five countries.

Conclusion

There is so much about ECVET that is congruent with other trends in education in the 21st century; for example, greater integration between learning across multiple sites, and greater scope for teachers to create engaging learning pathways that take into account the individual learning needs of learners. There is also the added benefit for teachers that learning about practice in other countries prompts them to reflect more deeply on what they are already doing at home.

Overall, the project results show that the implementation of ECVET depends on teachers 'on the ground' having the knowledge, inclination and support to embark upon partnerships with colleagues in other countries. As in the world of horticulture itself, future growth depends on action from the ground up, as well as from the top down. Support for relatively small-scale projects such as QUAKE is therefore crucial – helping to break new ground for those involved, and to cultivate it for greater returns in the future.



Project Factbox: QUAKE

QUAKE involves seven partners from five European countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, France Ireland, and Spain) aiming to develop the capacity of VET teachers and their schools/colleges in the use of ECVET. The project brings together national and regional ministries, higher education institutions, and a VET provider:

- Mary Immaculate College, Ireland (project coordinator)
- Direction générale de l'enseignement obligatoire, Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, Belgium
- Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Bulgaria
- Departamento de Educación, Gobierno de Navarra, Spain
- Institut National Supérieur des sciences agronomiques, de l'alimentation, et de l'environnement, AgroSup, Dijon, France

Ministère de l'Agriculture, de l'Agroalimentaire et de la Forêt (through Etablissement Public Local du Loiret, Lycée du Chesnoy), France

Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board, Ireland

For more on QUAKE, see <http://www.quakeprojet.eu/>

References

CEDEFOP (2016) ECVET in Europe, Monitoring report 2015, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/5556>

Music & Creativity – connecting people: The Musiccreates project

Karin Luomi-Messerer, ECVET Secretariat

ECVET live on stage: The ‘project weeks’ were one of the highlights of the Musiccreates project. ECVET Secretariat was invited to take part in the band sessions in Tallinn (Estonia), which included lots of live music, great stage atmosphere and a great learning experience for aspiring young musicians.

Aims & objectives

The Musiccreates project aims at improving the quality and internationalisation of music education. It specifically seeks to enhance the professional skills of participants by improving their understanding of the various roles, responsibilities, risks and rewards involved in being a musician, and by increasing their awareness and understanding of different cultural approaches. Professional and intercultural competence are crucial for musicians who want to make a living in the creative industries on an international stage. The project organises and implements student mobility, and the partnership is composed of training providers and industry representatives. They provide the students with advice on how to promote their work and organise events where they can perform their own music.

Applying ECVET in Musiccreates

The project is based on ECVET principles and includes work experience and assessment abroad (carried out by tutors from the partner schools) as well as transfer of the assessed learning outcomes (‘credits’). One key result of the project is the creation and piloting of a study or mobility unit of learning outcomes called ‘*Industry experience whilst abroad*’. Although the project is music-based, the unit was developed

in a subject-independent way and thus the mobility unit can be used by learners taking part in exchange projects in different areas. It supports the recognition of the experience gained abroad and gives learners a portfolio that provides evidence of competences obtained. This can improve their employability on a European level. The unit was even credit rated against the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) by Glasgow Kelvin College. This was necessary to provide the opportunity for UK students to have their learning outcomes obtained abroad validated and recognised.

For example, the following learning outcomes are included in this unit:

The student is able to

- *identify, plan, liaise and undertake an activity with a partner organization;*
- *make comparisons between home and host professional techniques;*
- *work independently, demonstrating effective teamwork within the agreed activity structures;*
- *demonstrate effective use of equipment, tools and materials;*
- *reflect on and coherently discuss the mobility experience and to evaluate the effectiveness of his/her contribution.*



The learning outcomes, the assessment requirements and the procedures for validation and recognition are laid down in **Learning Agreements**. At the Kainuu Vocational College, the ‘WILMA’ student management programme is used to create Learning Agreements (LA) online (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Preparing Learning Agreements via an online platform at the Kainuu Vocational College (Finland)

The WILMA platform is used for transnational mobility as well as for domestic training placements. Learners can make applications online. WILMA enables learners to search for open placements, by country, based on a register that includes more than 2000 institutions. Memoranda of Understanding, Learning Agreements and assessment forms can all be prepared using WILMA. When completing the online Learning Agreement, the learner and the responsible teacher specify the learner's current skills and the learning outcomes to be achieved during mobility. Practical information related to health & safety, dietary requirements or insurance protection is also recorded. The online completion of the documents helps to save time, and keeps the learner's personal information secure.



The project weeks in 2017

Twenty-five students participated in the project in the first half of 2017, beginning in February. Five bands were set up to create their own music. Each band usually consisted of a mixed group of students from different training providers who were at different stages in their education. Their task was to create music in a cooperative manner, beginning from composing and writing lyrics. First, they worked remotely using modern music technologies and applications for storing and sharing ideas and products (e.g. they used Dropbox, cloud storage, social media apps, digital recording - audio



& video). The online collaboration process across borders was supported by guidelines and a toolkit developed by the partnership, including information on how to record songs and store and share both audio and video files.

After this initial preparatory phase, the bands came together in March for a project week in Kajaani (Finland) to participate in workshops to further develop their songs. They were supported by tutors with current industry experience; these tutors played their songs with them as well. Each band performed some of their new songs for the first time at a live event. The second project week was organised in Tallinn (Estonia) in May. During this week, the songs were further improved and the bands had the opportunity to record some of them in a studio. As a *grande finale* of the second project week, a gig was organised in a jazz club. Each band presented four of the songs they had developed together at this event.

Both students and tutors emphasised that these project weeks were very successful and created rich learning experiences. Students worked in teams but also independently, and managed to plan their preparatory work, rehearsals, recording and performing sessions in an efficient way within the given time structures. Furthermore, students at different levels of mastering their instruments supported each other in further improving their techniques, they respected and valued different ideas, and they encouraged and inspired each other in their creative work. The five bands created music of different styles and their team spirit was reflected in their performances. The different per-



sonalities of each band member were visible in an authentic way, too.

The final results of the Musiccreates project

The study unit as well as the guidelines for the online collaboration were piloted during these project weeks and will be improved based on students' feedback. These results as well as the music created by the students will be published at the project website. The project weeks in 2017 were documented by media students from Kajaani; thanks to this, photos and videos showing the 'making off' will be also available via the [project website](#).

Project factbox: Musiccreates project

Funding: Erasmus+ programme (2 years)

Partnership: Colleges and conservatories from four countries: Kainuun Ammattiopisto (Kajaani, Finland – coordinator), Keski-Pohjanmaan Konservatorio (Kokkola, Finland), Otsakool (Tallinn, Estonia), North West Regional College (Derry, Northern Ireland), Glasgow Kelvin College (Glasgow, Scotland), and Connect Entertainment (Glasgow, Scotland – as 'working-life partner').

Target group: IVET students and staff in vocational education in the fields of music performance (classical, pop, jazz and folk music) and music technology.

Participants: 90 tutors and students.

Links: www.musiccreates.eu; www.facebook.com/musiccreates

The ECVET-Secretariat met the 'VECTOR-Tourism' Sector Skills Alliance Project

Michela Vecchia, ECVET Secretariat

The **VECTOR-Tourism project** is a **Sector Skills Alliances** project funded under Erasmus+ - Key Action 2. In international partnerships, Sector Skills Alliances work together to tackle skills gaps relating to one or more occupational profiles in a specific sector across Europe.

Specifically, Vector-Tourism aims to define the professional profile of 'Destination Manager', an EQF level 5 qualification. 'Destination managers' are professionals capable of proposing strategies of how to manage, enhance and promote the tourism value of destinations in an integrated perspective. The profile includes multidisciplinary skills (economic, marketing, entrepreneurship and information technology areas). A learner also needs to acquire communication and relational skills to interact with a plurality of stakeholders both locally and internationally. Furthermore, the Destination Manager needs to have a vision of the international market and of social/tourism trends.

The main project outcome will be an Open Education Resource offering a complete training curriculum that can be adapted to the training/educational requirements of the tourism industries in the partner countries Italy, Spain and Portugal. To be able to do so, the project partners used the concept of units of learning outcomes and the ECVET principles.

The ECVET Secretariat meets the VECTOR-Tourism project

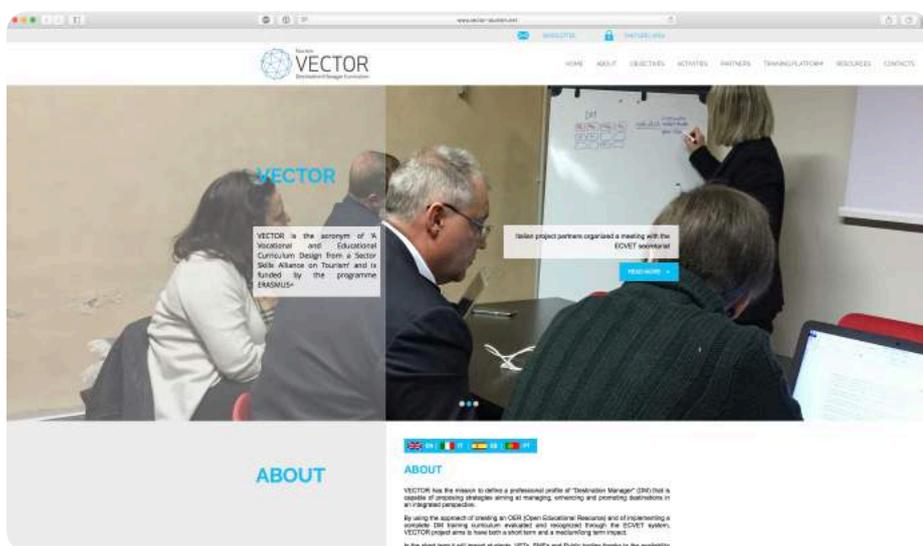
How can a learning outcome-based approach boost the quality of VET? How can the curriculum relating to an innovative professional profile (EQF lev-



el 5) be structured according to ECVET principles and technical specifications? How can the international mobility of workers in the tourism sector and their employability be enhanced through ECVET? These and other questions were discussed during a meeting in January 2017 between the VECTOR-Tourism project team and the ECVET Secretariat.

The working meeting was organised by the project coordinator of the VECTOR Tourism project, Marco Scerbo, from Foundation for Research and Innovation (Italy). His role is to support the project partners in developing and defining the Destination Manager professional profile (led by TÜV Thüringen Italia) and the relevant curriculum (led by University of Florence) in terms of Units of Learning Outcomes. How to apply the ECVET principles and technical specifications to the identified profile in order to develop an ECVET-coherent training curriculum at EQF level 5 was thus the main focus of the meeting.

The discussions focused on two main points. First, the process of identifying



1 See also VECTOR-Tourism website: <http://www.vector-tourism.net/single-post/2017/01/31/Italian-project-partners-organized-a-meeting-with-ECVET>

the relevant learning outcomes and grouping them in units to structure the curriculum. Second, ensuring coherence between the identified Learning Outcomes and the EQF level 5, thus allowing learners to move easily between different types of education and levels (e.g. VET and HE).

The ECVET Secretariat contributed to the meeting by providing examples of

how a learning outcome-based approach can boost the quality of VET provision, and which principles should underpin the structure of the curriculum while taking into account working life requirements/standards. Finally, particular attention was paid to the choice of project partners to align the new professional profile at EQF level 5. VECTOR-Tourism is keen to offer learners the chance for vertical and horizontal

permeability between different education and training subsystems. The actual opportunities provided by national education and training systems need to be further explored.

Using the ECVET principles for Sector Skills Alliances projects: Discussion between Michela Vecchia, ECVET Secretariat, and Marco Scerbo, VECTOR-Tourism Project Coordinator, Italy.

Q Considering that your project needs to respond to sector-based skill needs, what are the difficulties encountered when using the ECVET principles and technical specifications in responding to the identified needs and perspective developments?

A According to me, it was only a matter of time. The VECTOR's consortium includes, indeed, a variety of organisations (research centres, HEIs, national and regional public bodies, training providers, chamber of commerce, national agency for qualification and VET, sectoral association of employees, etc.) acting at the national and European level for the development of the VET system and the enhancement/promotion of the tourism sector. Given the diversity of their backgrounds, at the beginning of project activities, it was not so clear to the partners how to adapt the methodology described by the ECVET technical specifications with their daily work. However, we were strongly convinced that the 'Destination Manager' profile would benefit from a harmonisation with the ECVET principles to achieve the required flexibility. The support offered by the ECVET Secretariat has eased the situation: in a dedicated training session, we developed reliable and useful learning outcomes for the 'Destination Manager' profile. We trust they will be appreciated by local stakeholders who will, in the end, decide on the employability of learners with this new professional profile.

Q From your experience, how well do the ECVET principles match the sectoral requirements of education and training in the VECTOR-Tourism partner countries? For instance, how well do they help to bridge differences between national training systems?

A The ECVET principles match quite well with the reality of education and training practice in the tourism sector. Yet, sometimes we had to discuss similarities and differences of various concepts. For example, some of the partners were used to work with the concept of 'Area of Competence' instead of 'Unit of Learning Outcomes'; some others were more acquainted to the different national PLAR methodologies (Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition) than to the 'Validation of Learning Outcomes' process.

Moreover, training providers were keen to structure the new profile according to their local tourism industry's needs, which vary from country to country. The ECVET principles helped us to ensure the 'Destination Manager' profile can be adapted to local needs: it contains basic modules that are common across partner countries, which can be combined with additional modules that are consistent with different European countries' specifications.

Q Do you think that the support received from the ECVET Secretariat brought added value to the project development process?

A The ECVET Secretariat reacted promptly, organising a tailored meeting in less than a month from our request. The expert was able not only to explain crystal clear how to adapt our work to the ECVET principles and specifications, but also to solve 'theoretical' conflicts that can occur during the implementation of projects carried out by a huge variety of partners. Transforming the differences to added values was the main asset gained from the meeting with the ECVET Secretariat expert.

Project Partners

The partnership implementing the project covers three EU countries (Italy, Spain, and Portugal), and gathers a variety of organisations (including national authorities, social partners, universities, chambers of commerce, and research foundations).



ITALY

- Fondazione per la Ricerca e l'Innovazione [project coordinator]
- Università degli Studi di Firenze
- Regione Toscana
- TÜV Thüringen Italia srl



SPAIN

- Cámara Oficial de Comercio e Industria de Valladolid
- Agencia de Innovación y Financiación Empresarial de Castilla y León
- Enclave Formación sl
- Servicio Público de Empleo de Castilla y León



PORTUGAL

- Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional
- Universidade do Algarve
- Associação para o Ensino Profissional em Transportes e Logística
- Sindicato de Marinha Mercante Agencias de Viagens Trasitarios e Pesca

Identifying principles for flexible vocational pathways

Outcomes of the ECVET Working Group 2016 - 2017

The ECVET Recommendation was issued in 2009¹ and was evaluated in 2014². The external evaluation of ECVET had concluded that ECVET helps to enhance the quality of mobility, and supports reforms towards flexible pathways. It can be clearly observed that the predominant use of ECVET is not as a European 'credit system', but rather as a framework to support the flexibility of VET provision (including mobility). From June 2016 to February 2017, an ECVET Working Group consisting of ECVET Users' Group members from 11 countries (AT, CZ, DE, FI, FR, IE, NO, NL, PL, SE, UK) and European stakeholders (Cedefop, EfVET, ETUC, UEAPME) worked together to discuss principles for flexible vocational pathways.

The discussions on these principles did not specifically refer to the ECVET Recommendation. The objective was rather to get a clearer picture on the conditions that need to be - at least partially - in place in national education and training systems to ensure vocational pathways can become more flexible across Europe.

As a basis for further debate, the ECVET Working Group identified the following principles that support flexible vocational pathways:

Qualifications should be composed of clearly defined groups of learning outcomes.

This principle refers to the design of qualifications. The term 'groups' is used instead of 'units' of learning outcomes, to reflect a broader notion.

Groups of learning outcomes within a qualification should be capable of independent assessment.

This principle refers to the design of groups of learning outcomes. It underlines that groups of learning outcomes can be assessed separately from the whole qualification.

The assessment of each group of learning outcomes should be properly documented.

This aspect emphasises the need for documentation; if groups of learning outcomes are assessed but the results of the assessment is not followed by documentation, then it might not be possible to transfer assessed groups of learning outcomes (e.g. to another programme) or to use them in the labour market.

1 [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32009H0708\(02\)](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32009H0708(02))

2 http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/more_info/evaluations/docs/education/ecvet14_en.pdf

Provision of learning opportunities should be arranged to facilitate individuals to achieve groups of learning outcomes.

This principle refers to the arrangements that are to be put in place to enable individuals to achieve groups of learning outcomes (components of qualifications). For instance, flexibility is supported when programmes are delivered in modules based on coherent groups of learning outcomes that can be completed separately from each other.

‘Provision’ encompasses all the different aspects of offering learning opportunities (such as the organisation of training offers, financial arrangements, duration/time aspects etc.). Furthermore, specific individual situations - such as adult or older learners, learners working part-time, parents - should be taken into account. Sufficient flexibility and support needs to be ensured.

It should be noted that the term ‘Learning opportunities’ was chosen to include traditional courses as well as on-line resources and any other form of delivering learning.

Individuals should have the opportunity to have their learning outcomes validated, irrespective of how and where they have acquired them.

This principle refers to learning outcomes from all learning contexts, including formal, non-formal and informal. ‘Validated’ here is understood to imply assessment.

Individuals should have the opportunity to accumulate their assessed groups of learning outcomes towards a qualification.

Accumulation of assessed groups of learning outcomes is one of the most important ways to facilitate flexible learning pathways in practice. Assessed groups of learning outcomes should be recorded.

Individuals should have the opportunity to transfer their groups of learning outcomes validated in one context to other contexts (such as programmes, qualifications, national/regional systems or countries).

Transfer of assessed groups of learning outcomes is another important manner of facilitating flexible learning pathways.

In practice, validation is carried out in different ways, depending on the context. For instance, in a learner mobility context, learning outcomes can be assessed abroad (i.e. in another learning context) and validated and recognised by the sending institution. In other learning contexts (e.g. learning outcomes from work-based learning or previous work experience), learning outcomes can be assessed and validated in one context and transferred to another. In the new context, assessment does not have to be repeated, but learning outcomes need to be validated in view of the requirements in this context. Most formal learning contexts foresee a ‘gatekeeper’ - an agent that checks whether the learning outcomes to be transferred match the learning outcomes required in the new context.

As for accumulation, assessed groups of learning outcomes should be recorded.

Processes for development, assessment, validation and recognition of sets of learning outcomes should be transparent and underpinned by quality assurance.

Quality assurance should be a transversal principle and considered in all processes, from development/design of qualifications and groups of learning outcomes (including assessment criteria) to the provision of flexible learning opportunities, from transfer and accumulation of learning outcomes to certification.

The outcomes of the ECVET Working Groups’ discussions constitute a valuable basis for further debate. However, the list above is by no means final or complete. The principles and conditions identified so far might be complemented by others, therefore their description needs to be improved, and their implications analysed more thoroughly.

The discussion will be continued and brought forward during the Annual ECVET Forum 2017 in Malta (see page 23). The final outcomes will be an interesting factor to consider for the future development of ECVET; which will be discussed in the context of the wider development of the EU VET policy after 2020, along the lines that were announced in the **New Skills Agenda for Europe**.

Save the date!

Annual ECVET Forum 2017: The role of ECVET to further promote flexible vocational pathways

19-20 October 2017, Qawra, Malta

The Annual ECVET Forum 2017 is a two-day event that will take place on 19-20 October 2017 in Malta. The objective of the event will be to further discuss how ECVET can inspire further reforms towards more flexible vocational pathways, and hence support the modernisation of national VET qualification systems to meet Labour Market demands. The outcomes of the event will feed into the ongoing debate about the future development of ECVET; which will be discussed in the context of the wider development of EU VET policy after 2020.

The target group of the event is the ECVET Network (ECVET Users Group and National Coordinators of ECEVT experts) as well as national stakeholders (VET providers, companies, intermediary bodies or other labour market representatives).

Please note that the event is **invitation only**. The ECVET Secretariat will send more detailed information and registration details to invitees in the upcoming weeks.





The ECVET Magazine is published three times per year and informs about the latest ECVET developments. Previous issues of the ECVET Magazine are available for download on the website of the ECVET Secretariat: <http://www.ecvet-secretariat.eu>

Any comments or suggestions regarding this or future issues can be submitted to the following address: ECVET-Secretariat@icfi.com

