

*SMEs Qualification Handbook – SME\_QUAL*  
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## Recommendations for the definition of the 'European Handbook for the LOs based Qualifications for SMEs'



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## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>6</b>
1.1. SME-QUAL PROJECT	6
1.2 THIS REPORT	10
<b>2. SUMMARY OF RESULTS: SYNTHESIS REPORT</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE DEFINITION OF THE ‘EUROPEAN HANDBOOK FOR THE LOS BASED QUALIFICATIONS FOR SMES’</b>	<b>15</b>

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **SME-QUAL project** aims to provide quality in training systems for SMEs, by incorporating the ECVET provisions foreseen in the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the ECVET system. In particular, the project will provide operational European Guidelines and methods for the implementation of ECVET provisions in the VET programmes, for the SMEs.

The **EU Synthesis Report** comprises the results of the desk research and the analysis of the feedback provided by VET providers and SMEs HR departments to surveys and interviews that have been implemented during the period March-June 2014 in Italy and Poland to identify methodologies and good practices as well as needs and gaps for the definition of competence based qualifications for SMEs. This report also includes conclusions and recommendations for the European Handbook for the LOs based qualifications for SMEs and input for other WPs.

This **Recommendations report** is based upon the results of the Synthesis report. We have organised the recommendations according to:

- ⊕ **HRP professional description**
- ⊕ **ECVET implementation in general**
- ⊕ **Quality standards for design and implementation of ECVET-compliant inter-sectoral qualifications**

As to the **HRP professional description**:

1. It is vital **to adjust the HRP qualification description to the reality of SMEs** (specially of micro enterprises who can't afford this profile) which means that the HRP can't be promoted as a stand alone position but needs to be understood as a flexible model.
2. There is a need to **complete the description and provide more details** about contents and indicate some possible learning paths for acquiring the qualification.
3. **It is important to avoid overlapping** between the 5 Units of Competence and make sure that this qualification can be valorised irrespective of the sector and skills of the staff.
4. It would be recommendable to select a **set of minimum requirements** to become HRP from the business section or the company.
5. Some **respondents highlighted that the permanence of two years in the HR field/department is not sufficient as a pre-condition to acquire this qualification without diploma.**
6. **It is necessary to re-define or further explain some criteria** for achieving the HRP, by indicating the need for specific training programmes and/or concrete number of working experience expresses in hours in the field of HR within the SMEs and/or companies.

7. **Moreover, Improve/further describe/clarify the definition** of the following competences: be resilient (pre-required competences); National and enterprise contractual rules (these are covered in Poland by Labour Law); show openness to criticism and to auto-criticism; demonstrate active listening & proactivity; demonstrate sound work ethics and integrity (core attitudes).

With regard to **ECVET implementation in general:**

1. There is a **very strong need to raise awareness** in the field of European lifelong learning instruments and recommendations among the VET providers and SMEs.
2. It is **necessary to further describe and explain the benefits and the positive impact of ECVET implementation** can have for all types of stakeholders.
3. **Specific and customized guidance** is necessary for assisting VET providers in implementing ECVET at institutional and/or systemic level.
4. There is a **high interest on new approaches and methodologies** in the field of lifelong learning, in particular related to ECVET.
5. There are already **some good practices** in this field that can be further valorised and transferred in different contexts.
6. Stakeholders who already know and/or apply ECVET have a positive position toward its implementation and they can represent the 'engine' for further implementation of ECVET and other lifelong learning instruments.

And focusing on **Quality standards to design and implement ECVET-compliant inter-sectoral qualifications**, the following recommendations are proposed as a first basis to define the 10 QUALITY STANDARDS identified in the project proposal as a key outcome to be offered to training providers working with SMEs in view of their full adoption and implementation of ECVET in their daily praxis:

1. The clear **identification of Learning Outcomes** of each qualification and its respective elements (modules, units, etc.) **is the basis for the design and implementation of ECVET as a tool for quality, transparency and mobility.**
2. **Learning outcomes** for each ECVET-compliant qualification **should be agreed** (and maintained) in collaboration **with relevant stakeholders.**
3. The **design of teaching and learning strategies should be adapted to the specific nature of the expected learning outcomes** (knowledge, skills, competences).
4. Each **learner** should be put in the condition to have her/his **pre-existing learning outcomes recognized** in view of the new qualification to be accomplished.
5. **Work-based learning and communities of practice** should be considered as **relevant and valid learning approaches** for the training of SMEs staff;

6. Provide **easy-to-access channels and procedures for learners and their representatives to have a voice in all phases of a qualification.**
7. All learning outcomes proposed should come with an indication on **how to assess them.**
8. All learning outcomes proposed, and their related learning strategies, should **reflect awareness of possible difficulties for a diverse population of learners** and propose solutions to support learners when needed.
9. The **learning assessment strategy associated to the ECVET-compliant qualification should adequately reflect the diversity of learning outcomes.**
10. The ECVET-compliant qualification is subject to a multi-stakeholder review process at least every three years.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. SME-QUAL PROJECT**

#### **Introduction to the context**

The productive base of the Europe's economy is represented by a widespread network of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) playing a crucial role for job creation and local development. The business structure of the 27 EU countries is very clear and indicates that almost 20 million enterprises in all economic sectors are small and medium-sized ones.

In particular, there are 19.6 million SMEs accounting the 99.8% of all European enterprises, employing 85 million people (67% of the total) with an added value of more than 3 trillion euro (58% of the total).

External conditions as infrastructures and educational system, which now are binding on SMEs, have slowed down productivity. Today, the basic needs of SMEs are represented by the reaffirmation of the quality of the products, the recognition of the human factor, the consolidation of skills, through continuing training resources and effective recovery of the technological inferiority of the other European countries.

Thus, the main problems to be addressed refer to the awareness and implementation of the lifelong learning instruments, in particular to the ECVET application. These instruments (ECVET, EQF and EQAVET) are systemic instruments that depend very much on national political strategies and changes, but ECVET application, in particular, need to be strongly supported also by VET providers. These are the stakeholders who should put them into practice within VET programmes in order to make mobility and transparency happen, for the SMEs across Europe.

#### **Specific needs to be addressed**

Even if SMEs are significantly present in all EU Member States, there are some differences among the Countries. SMEs in Portugal, Greece and Italy have a share of employees that exceeds 80% of the total, whereas in United Kingdom and Germany, for example, the share of employment in SMEs is respectively 54% and 60.6%.

The existence of the national and European networks and organisation gathering SMEs and employees respectively representatives (e.g. EAMP, Eurocadres, CONFAPI), can guarantee the long-term collaboration between the project partners and stakeholders. In this context, the main need the project is addressing regards the lack of commonly shared methodologies and guidelines for designing trans-sectoral qualifications for the SMEs in terms of learning outcomes and with the allocation of ECVET points, and with quality assurance standards and related assessment tools. Within the existing networks this would highly support the qualifications' transparency and transferability, and the employees' mobility across Europe.

Moreover, the VET providers and the other stakeholders (e.g. social partners, Universities) need to understand the practical application of such methodologies in order to facilitate their implementation within the VET programmes designed for the SMEs. Having a reference point would help VET providers understand better the practical benefits and impact of designing qualifications in terms of learning outcomes, and in line with the ECVET requirements, and EQF and EQAVET provisions.

The SME-QUAL project aims to improve the quality of training systems for SMEs, by incorporating the ECVET provisions foreseen in the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the ECVET system.

In particular, the project will provide operational European Guidelines and methods for the implementation of ECVET provisions in the VET programmes, for the SMEs.

Reasons why SME-QUAL is considered to be innovative:

- ⊕ The strong collaboration between the VET actors (Universities and Training Organisations), and the employers and social partners will be concentrated on developing Methodologies and Guidelines for the definition of trans-sectoral Qualifications, in particular for raising awareness and for facilitating the application of ECVET and ECTS (and EQF & EQAVET) on the qualifications for SMEs, which will be co-owned by a variety of stakeholders.
  
- ⊕ The developed Handbook will be practically tested by designing the qualification prototype for Planning and Recruiting Experts, which will be defined in accordance with the Handbook, in order to validate it and to provide a concrete example of the benefits and impact of its implementation.
  
- ⊕ In order to support the ECVET application, the project will also provide quality standards for the ECVET implementation and related assessment methods & tools.

The project is organised in 8 work packages (WPs), as in the table below:

WP Title	Start Month*	End Month*	Results	Leader
<b>1 Project Management</b>	01/11/2013	31/10/2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner agreements</li> <li>• Progress Report</li> <li>• Final Report</li> </ul>	<b>Effebi, Roma Tre</b>
<b>2 Evaluation and Quality Assurance</b>	01/11/2013	31/10(2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• E&amp;Q Plan</li> <li>• QA Reports</li> </ul>	<b>IFB (PO)</b>
<b><u>3 Analysis on the Methodologies and GP</u></b>	<u>01/12/2012</u>	<u>01/04/2014</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>EU synthesis report</u></li> <li>• <u>Recommendations for the definition of the Handbook</u></li> </ul>	<b><u>SCIE (ES)</u></b>
<b>4 EU Handbook for the Los</b>	01/05/2014	30/09/2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU Handbook</li> <li>• Operational ECVET procedures</li> <li>• Consultation seminar</li> </ul>	<b>Confapi (IT)</b>
<b>5 Quality standards for ECVET application</b>	01/06/2014	31/11/2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality standards for the application...</li> <li>• Methodology and Tools</li> </ul>	<b>Effebi</b>
<b>6 Test the Handbook and ECVET...</b>	01/10/2014	30/09/2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Methodology tools for the testing</li> <li>• National consultation workshops</li> <li>• European consultation seminar</li> <li>• EU synthesis for the testing phase</li> <li>• Recommendations</li> </ul>	<b>Univ. Roma Tre</b>
<b>7 Dissemination</b>	01/11/2013	31/10/2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dissemination Plan</li> <li>• SM EQUAL website and social network</li> <li>• National Info days</li> <li>• Publication of the results</li> <li>• Awareness raising campaigns</li> <li>• Final conferences</li> </ul>	<b>Effebi+Scie</b>
<b>8. Exploitation and Valorisation of Results</b>	01/10/2013	31/10/2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploitation and Sustainability Plan</li> <li>• Intellectual property agreement</li> </ul>	<b>Confapi+Paiz+IFB</b>

In the frame of this WP3 “Analysis of the Methodologies and Good Practices”, three activities are mentioned:

- ⊕ Design of a **COMMON METHODOLOGY** and tools for conducting the analysis in three partner countries
  
- ⊕ **FIELD RESEARCH:** An European online questionnaire in the partner country languages was be developed for the survey in order to identify the methodologies and good practices as well as the needs and gaps for the definition of competence-based qualifications for SMEs in 3 participating countries: Italy and Poland with the aim to provide:
  - ✓ General view on the proposed HR professional qualification
  - ✓ Accuracy and relevance of the qualification description of HR Professional
  - ✓ Compatibility of the qualification model with ECVET/EQF/EQAVET instruments

plus **ANALYSIS OF RESULTS** in order to:

- provide concrete recommendations for the definition of the [“European Handbook for the LOs based Qualifications for SMEs” \(WP4\)](#)

## **1.2 THIS REPORT**

The result of the field research mentioned above is:

- ⊕ a **European Synthesis Report** (deliverable N.5) that will be based on the results of the national analysis and will include structured information about the existing trans-sectoral qualification systems in the partner countries. It will refer both to national and European qualifications and will give specific information about their correspondence with the ECVET provisions. Thus, this report will describe all activities implemented in the framework of WP3, with the aim to help the consortium identify the needs and gaps to be addressed, and to collect recommendations for designing qualifications in term of LOs and with the attribution of ECVET points.
  
- ⊕ **Recommendations for the definition of the ‘European Handbook for the LOs based Qualifications for SMEs’** (deliverable N.65) aimed at guaranteeing the practical applicability of the Handbook and also the stakeholders ‘ownership’ over these guidelines. Moreover, this will help partners to engage stakeholders in the future valorisation of the guidelines both during the testing phase and after the project completion. ECVET is very much depending on the national VET systems and therefore, these recommendations will benefit to the project development in two ways:
  - Will guarantee that the Handbook is in line with the national policies and strategies in the Partner countries
  - Will support the further implementation of the Handbook in the national frameworks with the objective to support the development of national VET systems

**DURATION:** from month 1 to month 6. However, due to the complexity of the process followed, even though the initial month to finalise the work was April, the partnership agreed to postpone the outcomes to June 2014 and update the results prior to the delivery of the interim report in November 2014.

This document presents the deliverable **Nr. 6 Recommendations for the definition of the ‘European Handbook for the LOs based Qualifications for SMEs’**.

## **2. SUMMARY OF RESULTS: SYNTHESIS REPORT**

The **methodology** adopted for the research has consisted in a 3-step exercise including the Identification of the **field of investigation**; the Issue of a final operational proposal including **the elaboration of the Human Resources Professional qualification description, survey and interviews questionnaires** that were validated by all partners during the month of March **and the completion** of the national surveys and reports by IT, PL and BE partners **with a final analysis** elaborated by Scierter España. The results obtained are all included in this final deliverable “**Nr. 5 European Synthesis Report on the methods and good practices in defining qualifications for SMEs in line with the ECVET provisions**”.

The partnership collected a **total amount of 35 inputs** obtained from:

- ⊕ **23 responses from the survey** in two participating countries: Italy (13) and Poland (10)
- ⊕ **12 responses obtained through the interviews**: Italy (8) and Poland (4).

With reference to the **SURVEY**: Out of the total number of respondents, **61% are male and 39% female. The average age is 44 years**. 12 respondents are VET providers, the same number as SME’s and 3 school training institutions.

**Only 3 out of 23 participating VET providers/SMEs have a Human Resources Department**, which clearly shows the absence of HR Department in SME’s and VET providers, being in most cases the legal representative/manager or company owner the responsible person for HR in the company.

**In general terms**, the proposed HR Professional description is considered to be **flexible and able to be adapted to the different learning paths** such as academic/vocational training and in company/dual system training (3,57 out of 4). Respondents also considered that the professional model is relatively adapted to the needs of the Small and Medium Enterprises (2,95 out of 4).

However, when it comes to reflect on whether the proposed qualification is comparable with the existent national qualification framework (NQF) the value drops to 2,7 out of 4. From 23 responses, 11 respondents couldn’t decide if the profile and the national framework were comparable and 2 respondents left their response blank.

The respondents indicated that the content of the qualification **is accurate and it matches with the HR professional profiles existing in the labor market** (2,82 out of 4). However, this rate can be further improved with the comments and suggestions collected by the respondents.

The majority of the respondents consider the identified **competence unit’s** relevant/very relevant with a slight preference for “Development” (3,48) and “Recruiting” (3,35) and less for “Management” (2,91).

With reference to the **Specific/additional competences** of the proposed model, there is a clear tendency to value higher those competences related to the administrative and legal aspects of the professional description.

According to the respondents, the mostly voted **Core attitudes** are the following:

- ⊕ **Demonstrate problem solving 3,87**
- ⊕ **Show openness to change 3,82**
- ⊕ **Maintain his/her job confidentially 3,74**

We have observed a tendency to rate less the following “soft skills”: openness to critics and auto-criticism, empathy, work ethics and integrity as well as cultural and political awareness and sensitivity.

An important outcome of the surveys is a very limited **awareness/knowledge about ECVET** and criteria to measure the Learning Outcomes based on the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences. Nearly all respondents (87%) answered **not to apply any credit system at institutional level**.

Finally, the following strengths and weaknesses of the Human Resources professional qualification have been reported:

#### **STRENGTHS:**

- ✓ Extremely flexible and easy to adapt
- ✓ Many transversal competences
- ✓ Helpful to the management activity
- ✓ The HRP has a compete vision of the enterprise
- ✓ The HRP is expected to be multitasking

#### **WEAKNESSES:**

- ⊕ Need for more descriptions about the different learning paths
- ⊕ Difficulties to find the HRP in micro and small enterprises with less than 100 employees
- ⊕ Limited knowledge of the job specificities
- ⊕ SME could find difficulties to understand the importance of having a staff management conducted by qualifies experts from the sectors concerned.

As to the outcomes gathered from the **INTERVIEWS**:

The vast majority of the organizations interviewed are currently involved or have been involved in projects in the field of ECVET, but this does not necessarily mean that ECVET is being implemented, since none of the entities interviewed **apply ECVET at institutional level**.

Despite their limited experience, **most participating organizations expressed their interest in implementing ECVET on medium and long-term basis, since all 9 ECVET technical components are considered to be useful**.

**Among the STRENGTHS identified by the interviewees:**

- ✓ Facilitate mobility for education and training
- ✓ Enhance trust between VET providers and transparency of qualifications.

**And the WEAKNESSES:**

- ⊕ Limited knowledge and experience in ECVET implementation
- ⊕ Difficult to agree upon an appropriate attribution/assessment of credits
- ⊕ In small companies it is difficult to implement ECVET components due to internal limitations and limited know-how
- ⊕ Due to limited knowledge there is a high level of uncertainty about the implementation process.

In general terms, there is a need for a better understanding of ECVET, its role, benefits and implementation process in order to convince stakeholders to start its implementation at institutional and/or systemic level.

Only one respondent in each country indicated an EQF level corresponding to an HR qualification. This again, is another evidence of the **very limited know-how in the field of European instruments for qualifications and certifications**.

Out of the **5 Units of competencies**, the interviewees mostly underlined that **“Management”** is the most relevant competence.

The respondents underlined the need to avoid overlapping between the 5 Units of competencies and **to make sure that this qualification can be valorised irrespective the sector and the technical skills of the staff.**

Another important outcome is that **micro companies cannot afford an HR Professional.** This is a reality well known by the Partnership and for this reason this qualification will not be promoted for a standalone position within an SME, but for a person already working, with specific technical skills and responsibilities, that can obtain a new role or can assume new tasks in the company. For the SMEs employees, this qualification may represent an opportunity for professional/career development, while for the company management an important occasion to enhance their policy in the HR field.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE DEFINITION OF THE ‘EUROPEAN HANDBOOK FOR THE LOS BASED QUALIFICATIONS FOR SMES’**

The Council and the European Parliament have placed a strong emphasis on the necessity to test the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training in practice and call on Member States to create the necessary conditions and adopt the necessary measures from 2012 on to gradually apply ECVET to VET qualifications at all levels of the EQF.

As it can be seen in detail in relevant CEDEFOP studies, the implementation of ECVET in practice depends on Member State legislation, policies, implementation strategies, context, etc. But there are obvious differences between countries or even regions as evidenced in our both cases: Italy and Poland.

Most organization taking part in our research who have experience with ECVET are involved or have been involved in projects dealing with ECVET but this does not necessarily means that ECVET is applied at institutional level.

A positive outcome is that most organizations taking part in our surveys/interviews expressed an overall interest in implementing ECVET at medium-long term basis, since all its components are considered to be useful.

#### **3.1. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE HR PROFESSIONAL DEFINITION**

In general terms, the feedback obtained by the users’ needs analysis on the HR Professional qualification was positive. During this survey and interview phase, participants received a brief description of the HRP qualification. Respondents underlined the need for more detailed description especially of the contents as well as the possible learning paths required for acquiring the qualification.

The proposed qualification is flexible and able to be adapted easily to the different learning paths such as academic/vocational training and company/dual training. Although the model is accurate and it matches with the HR professional profiles existing in the labour market, evidence shows that in practice a very limited number of companies can afford this profile, especially in micro companies.

The Core Competence Units are relevant/very relevant in all five cases with slight preferences of Development and Recruiting in the survey phase and Management in the interview phase. This input might be of interest for the possible distribution of ECVET credits among all five-competence units.

Here below some recommendations for improvement as highlighted by the respondents and interviewees:

- ⊕ It is vital to adjust the HRP qualification description to the reality of SMEs, especially of micro enterprises who can't afford this profile as has been mentioned above.
- ⊕ There is a need to **complete the description and provide more details** about contents and indicate some possible learning paths for acquiring the qualification.
- ⊕ **It is important to avoid overlapping** between the 5 Units of Competence and make sure that this qualification can be valorised irrespective of the sector and staff skills
- ⊕ It would be recommendable to select a **set of minimum requirements** to become HRP from the business section or the company
- ⊕ **Some respondents highlighted that the permanence of two years in the HR field/department is not sufficient as a pre-condition to acquire this qualification without diploma**
- ⊕ **It is necessary to re-define or further explain some criteria** for achieving the HRP, by indicating the need for specific training programmes and/or concrete number of working experience expresses in hours in the field of HR within the SMEs and/or companies.
- ⊕ **Moreover, improve/further describe/clarify the definition** of the following competences: be resilient (pre-required competences); National and enterprise contractual rules (these are covered in Poland by Labour Law); show openness to criticism and to auto-criticism; demonstrate active listening & proactivity; demonstrate sound work ethics and integrity (core attitudes).

### **3.1. RECOMMENDATIONS ON AWARENESS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ECVET IN PRACTICE**

The surveys and interviews provided evidence on the limited knowledge and awareness of ECVET implementation in Italy and Poland. Practically no relevant information could be obtained through the survey phase and in order to obtain quality input for this report needed to be completed by targeted interviews.

Some VET providers/SMEs refused to take part in the survey/interview phase because they did not feel confident enough to respond to questions on ECVET implementation even if they had worked on projects dealing with ECVET (Poland).

There are two possible reasons that explain this: on one hand, the lack of interest from potential stakeholders, training institutions and VET providers because they perceive the system as too complex and not useful in their daily practice. On the other, because ECVET is still at theory and policy constructing phase, in which many institutions are involved, and at this moment the theory is not yet put into practice in a form of a system, but is being experimented mostly through EC-funded projects.

There are responsible bodies for awareness raising<sup>1</sup> that have been organizing meetings and conferences at national level, **ECVET provisions need to be better focused and disseminated** to a wider audience, not only to interested partners, stakeholder but also to practitioners.

Therefore, one of the necessary conditions for the implementation of ECVET is **clear and explicit added value that can be transmitted and communicated to interested partners/stakeholders/practitioners**. Without a clear value-added, ECVET efforts will remain unfocused and limited.

A better “marketing” of ECVET to relevant stakeholders is not a new idea. More effort should be put in organizing events, conferences, seminars, workshops on ECVET implementation in practice and its benefits where stakeholders would have the possibility to exchange their experiences and ideas. There are several good practices on this, as the examples of FINECVET<sup>2</sup> held in Finland in December 2011 or SME Master Plus or AEROVET<sup>3</sup> held in Germany, in January 2012.

The actions that are planned in the framework of this SME-QUAL project are a good occasion to further explore this, particularly after respondents expressed their interest not only on new approaches and methodologies but also in taking part in these events.

#### **4.2. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE HR PROFESSIONAL DEFINITION**

In general terms, the feedback obtained by the users’ needs analysis on the HR Professional qualification was positive. During this survey and interview phase, participants received a brief description of the HRP qualification. Respondents underlined the need for more detailed description especially of the contents as well as the possible learning paths required for acquiring the qualification.

The proposed qualification is flexible and able to be adapted easily to the different learning paths such as academic/vocational training and company/dual training. Although the model is accurate and it matches with the HR professional profiles existing in the labour market, evidence shows that in practice a very limited number of companies can afford this profile, especially in micro companies.

The Core Competence Units are relevant/very relevant in all five cases with slight preferences of Development and Recruiting in the survey phase and Management in the interview phase. This input might be of interest for the possible distribution of ECVET credits among all five-competence units.

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<sup>1</sup> Need to complete the bodies responsible for awareness raising in Poland and Italy

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.finecvet.fi/pages/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=2&Itemid=6](http://www.finecvet.fi/pages/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2&Itemid=6)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ecvet-projects.eu/Seminars/SeminarDetail.aspx?id=50&>

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#### **4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE DEFINITION OF THE 'EUROPEAN HANDBOOK FOR THE LOS BASED QUALIFICATIONS FOR SMES'**

The following recommendations are proposed as a first basis to define the 10 QUALITY STANDARDS identified in the project proposal as a key outcome to be offered to training providers working with SMEs in view of their full adoption and implementation of ECVET in their daily praxis.

It must be noted that an effort has been made, in the present formulation, to cover:

- ⊕ on the one hand, **both the process and the outcomes dimensions of Quality Assurance;**
- ⊕ on the other hand, a **balance between the compliance requirements and the necessary tension towards innovation and improvement**, coherently with EU VET policy as reflected in the Bruges Communiqué.

**QS1.** The clear identification of Learning Outcomes (not only disciplinary contents) of each qualification and its respective elements (modules, units, etc.) is the basis for the design and implementation of ECVET as a tool for quality, transparency and mobility.

**QS2.** Learning outcomes for each ECVET-compliant qualification should be agreed (and maintained) in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, and notably with the representatives of those segments of the world of work towards which the qualification is directed in terms of employment opportunities.

**QS3.** The design of teaching and learning strategies should be adapted to the specific nature of the expected learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, competences).

**QS4.** Each learner should be put in the condition to have her/his pre-existing learning outcomes (however achieved, and particularly those achieved at the workplace) recognized in view of the new qualification to be accomplished.

**QS5.** Work-based learning and communities of practice should be considered as relevant and valid learning approaches for the training of SMEs staff and adequately integrated in the learning strategies proposed for the qualification;

**QS6.** Provide easy-to-access channels and procedures for learners and their representatives to have a voice in all phases of a qualification development, implementation, evaluation and maintenance.

**QS7.** All learning outcomes proposed should come with an indication on how to assess them; learning outcomes that are too difficult to assess should be, as far as possible, avoided and substituted by related but less complex ones that can be assessed more easily and precisely.

**QS8.** All learning outcomes proposed, and their related learning strategies, should reflect awareness of possible difficulties for a diverse population of learners and propose solutions to support learners when needed.

**QS9.** The learning assessment strategy associated to the ECVET-compliant qualification should adequately reflect the diversity of learning outcomes and follow transparent and documented procedures, made clear to each learner.

**QS10.** The ECVET-compliant qualification is subject to a multi-stakeholder review process at least every three years, based on users' feedback (learners and SMEs) regularly collected through a transparent process; results of the review are published and serve as a basis for the qualification maintenance and improvement.