

ECVET-STEP NEWSLETTER 3



Project is getting ready for open publicity

The ECVET-STEP project is making its first public steps within both general and professional public.

Individual consortium members are preparing workshops and gatherings in their countries which will bring together all stakeholders in the areas of vocational training and lifelong learning (for more on identifying these shareholders, their inter-relationships and structure, see inside of this Newsletter).

Early reflections are suggestive of great depths of individuation of different countries' experience with ECVET implementation. These were suspected, but reality may yet surpass expectations.

Of course, all EU mem-

ber states have adopted ECVET as their official policy and goal, trying to create a single market for ideas not only in the sphere of university education but also in practical training, especially important in the age of technological revolution (see our March Newsletter issue).

However, preliminary consultations and comparisons during open session meetings of the consortium members reveal big differences in the degree how far ECVET is implemented in individual countries. Many stakeholders are already cooperating internationally, but this tends to be on an ad-hoc basis.

Even then, they often fear that with the rise



Strengthening Training to Employment Pathways

of ECVET system, the relationship with their foreign partners they had been nurturing over years may dissolve in a general framework.

As a result, a new challenge for ECVET-STEP and its communication is on the horizon. The particular additions to ECVET that ECVET-STEP is preparing are indeed those that should alleviate any such fears with the stakeholders.

They won't lose any particular relationships they already have, they can only gain a quality-assured platform on which they can, if they wish, start building new special relationships, from a much larger base!

Highlights

- Workshops preparation
- Early comparisons of countries' ECVETs
- Stakeholders and differences from standard education
- They also represent thei

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Unified presentations design

The fact that the Consortium spans Europe from the Netherlands all the way to Greece does not mean that consultations need to look different. The project now has a single design for presenta-



tions. Its dominant cold find our roots the presented ideas firmly in the soil and faint lines marry together ideas of ploughed fields and enlightening rays of the sun.

Stakeholders of ECVET-STEP

Under the leadership of AOC Raad, Netherlands, a framework is being prepared for evaluating level of implementation of ECVET

A project like ECVET-STEP will not be successful without incorporating directly all the stakeholders who are going to use the project's outcomes and tools.

The first meeting in January identified their basic structure. The project will address the needs and desires of all such groups specifically, and the online

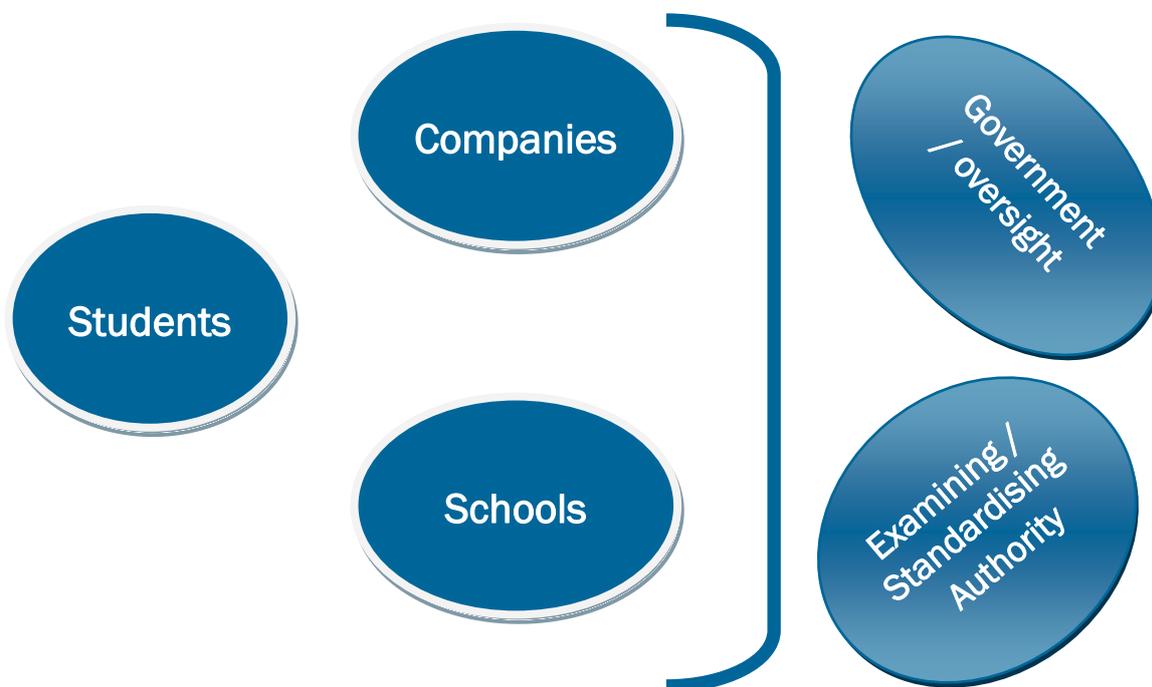
tools will cater for them, too.

As a first step, however, the status quo in individual countries is being analysed.

The inter-relationship of ECVET and national qualification systems has not really been analysed in a consistent way which would cross-compare the

levels of implementation on the same basis.

The project has, under the leadership of AOC Raad, prepared such framework for evaluating the level of implementation of ECVET across the participating countries. This can, of course, in principle be easily adapted for each country.



Two classes of ECVET stakeholders identified by ECVET-STEP

In practical training, skills and competencies follow a Brownian motion rather than a single-direction information super-highway.

ECVET-STEP provides both the navigational charts and a compass to the ECVET platform.

As with any education and training, in addition to the trained subject there is someone training them and someone making use of such training.

In a classical educational setting, this Trinity usually exists on a line School-Pupil-Business. However, in practical training the situation is more complicated and potentially circular since a firm can both

seek skills for its employees and offer (similar or different) skills to others. The line between a school and a firm is more blurred.

Tracing out skills and competencies in the system, therefore, they follow a Brownian motion more than a single-direction "information super-highway".

Understanding this key difference in the flow of

"intangibles" is crucial for the other "institutional" stakeholders - a Certification agency and the (Governmental) overseer.

Without a compass in the form of ECVET-STEP's Reusable Units of Learning Outcomes, the user can quickly get lost.

ECVET-STEP, therefore, offers not only a platform, but also keeps track of direction.

The Tools of Efficient Cooperation

Consortium work in digital age



Individual consortium members, as well as the system as a whole, are quickly getting into a good swing of work. Learning curve can be pretty steep since we all come from different backgrounds (which is absolutely crucial for the project) but thanks to efficient tools of communication it is much easier.

Initial in-person meeting in Athens was absolutely crucial. However hi-tech we may be in our work, we all grew up in a pre-social media world and therefore need to get a personal feel for what everyone else is like. (Who knows, simple digital profiles and a few status updates will

suffice for next generations' consortia members to get to know each other..)

Having gotten to know each other and laid out specific plans for further work, however, much of the communication could move on to digital platform.

The project management headquarters is developing quickly, and we are all learning how to use it efficiently. It seems to be have an answer even to questions nobody has posed. Whilst in a learning mode, emails continue to still exchange hands when we need to make sure that everyone is appraised

of something important quickly.

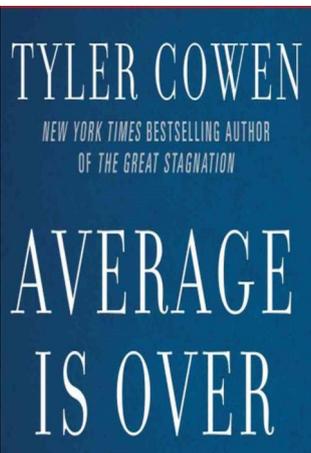
The TEIA team are proving very efficient organizers. All consortium members have other primary jobs, but TEIA sometimes appears in its diligent coordination that this is their main job! (This has the added social benefit that seeing the organized management, everybody really feels awkward when they are running a slight delay; and they try harder.)

Still, at regular intervals it is still best to meet all together at one time in one place. We do this through teleconferencing (with webcams). Read about it in the next Newsletter!

Trivia: The Gantt Chart for project management is named after one eponymous Henry, a U.S. citizen who first drew charts for ship-building for the Navy during WWI.

Gantt once said: "The general policy of the past has been to drive, but the era of force must give way to that of knowledge, and the policy of the future will be to teach and to lead, to the advantage of all concerned."

He may as well have been talking about ECVET...



Independent confirmation of the importance of international lifelong learning

The whole economics profession may be standing at a crossroads. The knowledge economy has been a buzzword in recent years and decades. People acquiring human capital has been seen as a tide which lifts all boats at the same time, both the skilled and unskilled.

However, a great movement within the mainstream of the profession is gaining strength which suggests that the nature of modern technology (and especially the internet)

means that technological progress may not be lifting everybody. As indicated in a recent book by one of the pioneers of this view, "the average is over": we are seeing early

signs of bifurcation on the labour market into much "overpaid" workers who are in touch with the latest technology, and much "underpaid" workers who do menial work. There are increasingly fewer standard "average jobs".

... "The importance of lifelong learning is increasing not linearly, but at least exponentially"...

If true (and Cowen illustrates it with data and sound economic principles), the importance of lifelong learning is increasing not linearly, but at least exponentially.

Whilst international experience may have been a "nice option" in the past, and "average jobs: served as a convenient buffer, with that option gone ECVET/style projects have become a must. .

Take the ECVET step!

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This newsletter is published monthly. If you want to receive it electronically by email, please sign up on the website. (Archive of past issues is on the website.)

ECVET-STEP aims in making the best value of the ECVET system, facilitating the transfer, accumulation and recognition of credits and learning outcomes or competence acquired otherwise between countries, thus promoting mobility and lifelong learning.

ECVET-STEP's mission is to support European citizens and industry to "take the ECVET STEP": adopt and use ECVET through a stepwise, quality-controlled framework and online services for building knowledge-based employment for the 21st century... And beyond!

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