

# ECVET-STEP NEWSLETTER 13



## University of Alcala



*The 3rd meeting of ECVET STEP project partners took place in Alcala and that is why we'd like to introduce this university and its role in the project to the readers.*

The University of Alcala (Spanish: Universidad de Alcalá) is a public university located in Alcalá de Henares, a city 35 km northeast of Madrid in Spain and also the third-largest city of the region. The University is especially renowned in the Spanish-speaking world for its annual presentation of the highly prestigious Cervantes Prize which is awarded annually by the King and Queen of Spain.

The University is also proud of its modern and efficient administration, which is carried out by the Administration and Services, comprising approximately 800 people.

The University of Alcala was established in the year 1499, has 15 faculties and more than twenty thousand students. It is located approximately 30 km outside of Madrid, in

the city of Alcala de Henares, recognized a World Heritage site by UNESCO in December 1998, as Alcala was the first university town, planned as such, in the world.

In the ECVET-STEP especially the Computer Science Department is involved which is located at the Polytechnic School, created in 1989, and counts with a staff of more than sixty full time employees. The Department is responsible for the Bs.C, Ms.C. and Ph.D. degrees on Computer Science and its main research areas are eLearning and interactive systems, knowledge engineering and fuzzy logic.

Due to its strong background in the field of metadata for learning resources, as well as expertise in building technical solutions and software services for

## ECVET-STEP



### Strengthening Training to Employment Pathways

similar environments the Information Engineering Research Unit is one of the active groups in the Department of Computer Science at Universidad de Alcala, and it has produced a significant research activity in the fields of learning technology and Semantic Web applications in the last 5 years.

Within the project ECVET-STEP, University of Alcala is responsible to review existing information models and metadata implementations in systems that exchange, process, use and combine various competence-related information in VET, and shall document the metadata application model that will be developed as part of the systems architecture in the project. This architecture design and the associated metadata application profile will be later transfer into a set of software components and services that will be developed as part of the project.

#### Highlights

- **Spring is coming**
- **Preparation for the Ljubljana Meeting in June in progress**
- **Work on Online services running**



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## Recognition of skills and qualifications in the European Union

*When moving to a new job or to further learning, whether within or across borders, learners and workers should see their skills and qualifications quickly and easily recognised. This is essential to raise skill levels and increase employability.*

The European Union has developed some instruments to support the transparency and recognition of knowledge, skills, and competences. The reason is to make it easier to study and work anywhere in Europe.

So far, a variety of initiatives have been launched with a view to simplifying the transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications across Europe. These include:

- The European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

It helps in comparing national qualifications systems, frameworks and their levels to make qualifications more readable and understandable across different countries and

systems in Europe.

- Validation of non-formal and informal learning

It is a way to recognise the full range of an individual's knowledge, skills and competences, regardless if acquired within or outside the formal education system. If validated (identified, documented, assessed, and/or certified) these learning experiences can be made more visible and usable for further studies or work. Member countries are invited to put the necessary arrangements for validation in place by 2018. Guidelines for implementation of these arrangements in the member countries are being developed. A European Inventory

is updated on a regular basis to provide an overview over good practices in the area of validation.

- Europass

It is a set of five standardised documents and a skills passport available for free in 26 languages, designed to enable users to present their skills, qualifications and experience across Europe.

- Quality assurance arrangements in higher education and vocational education and training

- Credit systems, ECTS for higher education and ECVET for vocational education and training.

The aim of the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) is to:

1) make it easier for people to get validation and recognition of work-related skills and knowledge acquired in different systems and countries – so that they can count towards vocational qualifications;

2) make it more attractive to move between different countries and learning environments;

3) increase the compatibility between the different vocational education and training (VET) systems in place across Europe, and the qualifications they offer;

4) increase the employability of VET graduates and the confidence of employers that each VET qualification requires specific skills and knowledge.

## Spring is coming in March

Spring is a season that follows winter and precedes summer. The length of the day increases in the northern hemisphere. The first day of astronomical spring varies between 19 and 21 March.

Many plants bloom in spring; in Europe we celebrate spring as a new beginning as nature



starts to grow and is preparing for the new generations. In some cultures, like the Czech Republic,

spring is also a symbol of a new political beginning - the Prague Spring. is its famous symbol.

We wish all our partners and supporters a lot of energy for the rest of the year!

## ECVET EQAVET Joint Working Group - Peer learning Meeting - 18-19 March 2015, Budapest

This event elaborated further on the importance of having qualifications with learning outcomes - this means having a formal competence framework.

A special support is needed for people changing jobs, especially for those with low qualifications. It is necessary to identify the gap between prior learning and what is required by the labour market.

The VET provider also has a role of helping people who need further training. What is required is individualised flexible learning pathways with quality assurance. The challenge is to have a common understanding of the learning outcomes at different levels.

If this idea is implemented it will effect general education, the financing of vocational training and organisation of teachers' time. Schools and companies should be involved. Financial support is needed and instructors need to take part in assessing the learner. Units of learn-

ing should be created jointly by the company and the learner. General Education will be effected, especially in helping to develop the 'soft' skills in school.

Resistance to change

based on learning outcomes. Individual students have to develop their competences according to their needs. This approach is likely to increase teachers' workload.

the project. Companies have an essential role in planning the curriculum.

Estonia has been developing new initiatives since 2008 including a credit system. Their

learning outcomes approach and methods of validation were integrated. The social partners were involved in the development of qualification re-

quirements.

Hungary has been developing a qualification system based on learning outcomes. The framework involves knowledge, skills, attitude, autonomy, and responsibility.

One of the key lessons from the meeting was to invest time into involving all the stakeholders. Success requires long term commitment by all the partners. The building of partnerships is also necessary.



can come from unexpected places.

Finland provided an example of what is happening in their country. New legislation has strengthened the learning outcomes approach to vocational qualifications. Students have an individual study plan which is related to recognised qualifications,

The Czech Republic is keen to have schools and companies focusing on practical training and stresses the importance to increase the quality of practical training. The learning units should be created jointly by the Company and the school and some financial support is essential to assist



Take the ECVET step!

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*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!*

# ECVET-STEP



Strengthening Training to  
Employment Pathways



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