



ECVET system for no borders in the Green Economy sector
 supporting Employability, Adaptability and European Mobility in VET systems and Labour Market

ANALYSIS REPORT OF THE N.E.T.WORK METHOD - EN
R.4.2

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ECoVET

**ECVET SYSTEM FOR NO BORDERS IN THE GREEN ECONOMY SECTOR, SUPPORTING
EMPLOYABILITY, ADAPTABILITY AND EUROPEAN MOBILITY IN VET SYSTEMS AND
LABOUR MARKET**

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1. The method developed in the selected best practice

1.1. The N.E.T. WORK Project

The innovative aspect of the selected best practice, related to the final output of the N.E.T.WORK project, lay in the idea of producing an analysis of the different professional profiles agreed on by the partnership for the experimentation and in its declination:

- in Learning Outcomes, in function of their evaluation, validation and recognition during the "certification" processes;
- in Learning Units in terms of the knowledge, skills and competences to be acquired (qualitative dimension);
- and in the provision and application of credits, both to the L.O. and to units in order to articulate their weight in function of its possible transfer into the various national standards (quantitative dimension).

Therefore the credits has been derived, in the development process, as the proportion that the unit represents in relation to the qualification, facilitating in this way the transfer of learning outcomes and establishing a reference point that is common to the qualification systems.

To this end the partnership was involved in work to identify and produce specific procedures both for the actuation of the subsequent testing and for the definition of appropriate tools for the registration of the credit recognised for each learning outcome. The partnership therefore proceeded in the parallel correlation of the units for the capitalisation and accumulation of credits with the levels indicated by the EQF.

In this sense, the N.E.T.WORK project, in line with what is provided for in the Community Recommendations, has not called for the determination of procedures and tools which require a modification of the VET systems applied in each partner country nor does it require the design of a new training pathway or a "new" qualification.

Its aim, instead, was **to identify, beginning with an analysis of the reference context, and share tools and methods for the application of the ECVET principles within already existing pathways and practices in the partner countries.** These tools were tested first of all in the pathways existing in the reference territory and, following a philosophy of agreement, rules and methods for the application of the ECVET system were shared in the

case of individual mobility.

The work of the partnership began with an analysis of the training contexts in the partner countries, with specific focus on pathways providing the training qualifications of hotel hospitality, and of the ways of assimilating and activating the ECVET system. Thanks to this analysis, the heterogeneousness of the descriptive elements and of the contents emerged with such force that the Learning Outcomes are seen as common elements .

The focus of the ECVET system on learning outcomes was decided, because it allows comparison not only with a vast variety of European training and specialization systems , but also with the most important reference systems for vocational training – the education system and the labour market. According to the evolution of the European training framework, learning outcomes are “declarations about what a student knows, understands and knows how to do, after completing a determined training pathway. These are defined as knowledge, skills and competences.”

The ECVET system is directed towards the individual, that is, it is based on the recognition of knowledge, skills and competences (KSC) acquired by individual students. The learning outcomes are grouped into modules - Units-, with different characteristics according to the various training systems. The various Units determine the knowledge, skills and competences (KSC), which must be acquired to attain a certain qualification (qualitative dimension) and the importance of the various knowledge, skills and competences (KSC) in relation to the overall/final qualification to be attained (quantitative dimension).

When speaking of “units”,we have been referring to the area of outcomes, in the sense of parts of qualifications, which could be defined on the basis of knowledge, skills and competences. The “units” can be certified.

A unit is a component of a qualification, which is a coherent complex of knowledge, skills and competences that can be evaluated and made valid with a series of associated ECVET points. In principle a qualification includes different units and is formed of a set of units.

In the N.E.T.WORK project, as a first step to support the development of the ECVET system, the partners found it necessary **to examine the design and organisation of qualifications in the various countries in order to try and find the elements common to all the programmes. Based on these common elements, the partners identified common learning outcomes.**

In a second step, **at least one partner in each of the countries involved tested the ECVET model by integrating new or modified training modules - based on the defined common units of learning outcomes – as part of an existing training pathway or active mobility project.**

The partners settled on a professional profile which is quite common in all tourism and hospitality management sectors of the partner countries; since all types of hotels, bed and breakfasts or alternative lodging structures need a reception area, the professional profile of a receptionist is a common training pathway and/or professional profile in all countries.

To be able to describe the content of specific sections of the training pathway for receptionists in the four countries in terms of learning outcomes, the partners gathered national data, agreed on **a common descriptive matrix**, on learning outcome descriptors and common units for the testing phase.

This happened in consecutive phases. In the first phase, the partners analysed the elements characterising the training pathways in the national contexts of each country in two steps and by two different research methods. Each partner carried out:

- Desk research by analysing the existing national repertoires (IFTS systems, EU repertoires, V.A.E. system, etc.), with special focus on the vocational training system;
- and Field research, by conducting field observations and interviews of at least five operators filling these roles (according to hotel classifications identified and shared in the previous desk research).

The analysis was followed by a comparison of the design and organisation of the specific training connected to the qualification profile of a receptionist in Italy, France, Portugal and Slovenia according to the following criteria:

- planning and realisation;
- contents (in terms of knowledge, skills and competence);
- evaluation of learning outcomes;
- validation of learning.

Finally, training profiles were chosen that are equivalent both in terms of formal EQF level (IV-V) and in the number of months of education/training (12-15).

For each profile, the macro competences were identified by the partners, on the basis of a common shared framework. This framework defined the least common denominator, or in other words, the minimum shared elements and was organized methodologically in the form of a Matrix providing a first overview on the key learning outcomes of the selected training profiles.

In the next step, a common shared framework of macro-competences was constructed, selecting the elements common to all the profiles.

In a final step, each macro-competence was described in terms of knowledge, skills

and competence (Framework KSC), according to the technical specifications annexed to the ECVET-Recommendation which defines learning outcomes as statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do upon completion of a learning process and which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence.

A comparative chart was produced to provide an overview of the concordance of the units selected with the chosen training pathway in the respective countries. It is obvious that not all learning outcomes summarised in a unit and defined in the KSC matrix, were always present in the respective qualification as offered in the four countries. Since it was not the objective of the project to draw up new and more similar qualifications, this meant that in the experimentation phase only the acquired knowledge, skills and competences foreseen in the respective qualification pathway could be assessed and validated.

Then on the basis of this work, **a proposal was set up for the construction of a framework of learning outcomes structured in units with related ECVET credit points – based on the relative weight of the unit.**

Based on the results and outputs of the previous steps, the partners organised a coordinated phase of “observed” experimentation to be carried out in the countries of the partnership. The aim of the experimentation phase was to find out how far the students had acquired the defined skills, knowledge and competences in their respective training pathway and to test how these can be assessed and validated.

The experimentation was intended to measure the extent to which learning outcomes are acquired in the respective training system.

At least one partner in each of the countries involved tested the developed model as part of a training pathway or an active mobility project.

An experimentation plan was developed together with a guideline proposing experimentation methods which, on the one hand, corresponded to the ECVET technical specifications and on the other hand, responded to the situations and needs in each partner country. Experimentation instruments were offered that allowed each partner to carry out an action in conformity with his/her own institutional mission and with the effective areas and typologies of the training processes existing in his/her own context. For instance, an assessment chart was provided, which made it possible to assess the acquired skills, knowledge and competences according to a common grid and templates for the collection of comparable data about the experimentations.

1.2. The operational tools developed

The N.E.T.WORK project intended to coordinate, redirect and integrate within the ECVET framework those processes, procedures and tools which, in the current situation of the partner countries, have been recognised as effectively testable and which can be attributed to that system. The partnership has been able to bring about:

- a systemic, shared and coordinated reference framework for the development and testing of ECVET;
- the definition, validation and recognition – within the diversified specific features of training paths (formal and informal) effectively existing in the chosen areas of qualification – of congruent and measurable “modules” (learning outcomes and units), valid for all the partner countries
- the congruence of certifications related to the ECVET system and their recognition within the formalised systems.

The core of the project, which was centred on a methodological and operational prospective based on the systemic integration into ECVET of experiences matured or underway in the partner countries, was therefore the **design of specific operational tools able to facilitate, within the ECVET system, the common definition, delivery, recognition and validation of modular training pathways**. These have been tested in order to identify their strengths and weaknesses in supporting credit transfer and accumulation as well as mobility and employability.

With this in mind, the project has realised this set of products:

Guidelines for the verification and evaluation of Learning Outcomes: this product called for an approach and instruments that allow flexible recognition, in function of certification and verification, of the “products” of learning (in the specific case going beyond a strictly quantitative approach).

Credit recognition systems substantially fulfill two tasks:

- A. they measure quantities, for example in relation to the entire training programme (a sort of “accumulation function”) or in relation to the units and learning outcomes that compose the qualification;
- B. they facilitate quantitative exchanges among the parties (exchange or transfer function)

The measure of a credit depends on how the credits are defined and certified, for example in accordance:

- with the types/themes or disciplinary areas;
- with learning outcomes;
- with the training place;
- with the learning methods.

The most important aspect, going beyond the type of approach, is that the objectives of certification are declined in terms of acquired competences.

Therefore the guidelines call for an approach and instruments that allow flexible recognition, in function of certification and verification, of the "products" of learning (in the specific case going beyond a strictly quantitative approach).

The information provided in the guidelines made constant reference to the existing national systems of verification and evaluation with an eye to the sustainability and transferability of the methodological approach and of the instruments proposed by the partnership, guaranteeing in any case the trans-national approval of the elements.

The direct users of these guidelines are the partners' experts/researchers and final users are:

- VET institutions and operators
- potential learners/students;
- learners/students involved in the experimentation.

Descriptive outline of credit points for the analysed qualifications and the related units: Credit points, expressed in number form, were associated with each unit referring to a qualification; these points supply information in relation to the value represented by the unit itself in relation to a qualification. A different number may be assigned to the same unit afferent to two figures chosen for testing according to the Learning outcomes that compose the unit of reference. In the descriptive outline, which represented the indispensable work basis for the shared application of projects expected results, the partnership specified that the characteristic features of the professional qualifications and related units and credit points assigned them, would not depend on the differences existing in the learning methodologies.

The direct users of these descriptive outlines were the partners' experts/researchers and final users are:

- VET institutions and operators
- potential learners/students;
- learners/students involved in the experimentation.

Formal agreements: the agreements were confirmed using the models and instruments made available by the European ECVET system. In the agreements, besides citing the instruments and operational methods constructed by the partnership and described in the guidelines, the details of the testing were also defined as well as the roles of each partner organisation. Parallel to the agreements among members of the partnership we hypothesised the formulation of agreement protocols extended to other institutional subjects and training agencies of the territories involved.

Specifically, the agreements were formally produced in the partnership working language (ENG) as well as in the four partner languages.

N.E.T.WORK experimentation plan: The experimentation plan of the ECVET system of the “N.E.T. WORK” project contains detailed information on:

- the training pathways chosen for testing and their structuring in units and Learning Outcomes;
- the expected results;
- the organisation (timing, resources, targets, etc.);
- the subjects (learners, students, structures, pathways, etc.) involved and their related roles;
- support activities;
- monitoring activities.

The partners’ experts/researchers were the direct users of the experimentation plan and final users of the model are:

- VET institutions and operators
- potential learners/students;
- learners/students involved in the experimentation;
- tourism and hospitality sector operators and institutions.

Guidelines for the application of ECVET: The experimentation was structured according to the guidelines in such a way that all the methods and instruments defined by the partnership in the preceding WPs were fully respected. In fact, the fields of application, roles, timing, expected results and direct and indirect target groups have all been outlined in the guidelines.

The structure of the guidelines and the variables contained therein were drawn up in order to constitute a “work-tool” for the partnership that is also useful for the extension of testing to other subjects, territories, sectors.

The direct users of the guidelines were the partners’ experts/researchers and final users are:

- VET institutions and operators
- potential learners/students;
- learners/students involved in the experimentation;
- tourism and hospitality sector operators and institutions.

Vademecum of the ECVET management system: the Vademecum, besides a detailed description of the procedures and methodological models of the ECVET system tested, was meant to report the procedure followed by the partnership for the development of the operational instruments of the ECVET N.E.T.WORK management system: from the way of constructing training pathways to tools & instruments for the evaluation and certification (and registration) of credits as well as the models of the network agreements for the mutual recognition of credits.

Since the partnership shared a need to make constant reference to the guidelines and instruments provided by the EU Commission under the ECVET system, the final structure for the Vademecum has been set up as follows:

- a first section (Chapter 1 ECVET) introducing the general reference framework of ECVET
- a second section (Chapter 2 - Designing the pathway for implementing an ECVET experimentation: Step by Step) presenting a sort of “road-map” which designs an “ideal scenario” for each element and step of the process of implementing an ECVET experimentation, based on general considerations and constant references to EU guidelines and achievements, but presented also in the light of the experience gained in the project development and therefore structured as an annotated and experienced presentation;
- a third section (Chapter 3 – a CASE STUDY: THE PROPOSALS OF THE Network project) following a narrative and operative structure, taking in consideration the “life” of the N.E.T.WORK project as the main example and analysing critically the different steps according to a problem-setting/problem-solving approach.

2. The analysis of the method developed in the selected best practice

2.1. The ECoVET Project

The ECoVET project proposes the application and development of the ECVET system in the green economy sector. Specifically, since this is a "Transfer of Innovation" (TOI) project, the goal of the project is to use the methodology and tools developed within the project NETWORK - previously funded by the European Commission under the Lifelong Learning Programme, Leonardo da Vinci sub-program, Call EACEA/14/08 "Projects to test and develop the credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET)" - in order to adapt and transfer them into a different sectoral contexts of experimentation and in order to support the transparency and sharing at European level of the peculiarities of a professional profile working in the field of the green economy: the TECHNICIAN FOR THE DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT OF ENERGY-SAVING SYSTEMS

The project, therefore, intends:

- to compare the qualifications of the identified sector existing in the partner countries, focusing our attention on the equivalent Regional profile;
- to identify parts of the educational pathways and qualifications which are "ECVET-compatible" and therefore able to dialogue with each other;
- to identify processes and protocols of understanding suitable to facilitate the mutual recognition
- to propose to competent bodies (key actors of VET systems and related systems of transparency and certification of qualifications), and in particular in Tuscany with whom the national partnership have shared the ECoVET planning phase, any changes and / or implementations to be taken on the basis of European experiences .

This for the benefit of the commissioning transparency of competences and qualifications and above all of employability in a the European labour market, in the specific sector and in the contexts identified.

2.2. The ECoVETdevelopment

Based on the main output of the N.E.T.WORK Project, the **Vademecum of the ECVET management system**, which is the best practice selected for the process of adaptation and transfer foreseen by the ECoVET Project, the partnership proceeded following the steps, and using/adapting the related tools, which were implemented in the best practice selected, applying these to the new contexts and sector chosen for the project development, the green economy sector.

Similarly to what characterized the first steps of the N.E.T.WORK Project, it emerges of primary importance, especially in the phase of setting up and organising the work among the partners, of **acquiring a common reference framework, through the collection, organisation and sharing of indispensable background information.**

From this information has began the construction and application of common instruments for the definition, actuation, validation and recognition of modular training paths, already existing in the partner countries, within the ECVET system (including among these also the processes of support, validation and recognition of Life Long Learning and Life Wide Learning training experiences) with the double purpose of facilitating eventual mobility in the various training phases and situations and of allowing the "accumulation" of tendentially recognisable credits, to improve employability and mobility, in the entire European context.

On an operational level, the partners are called upon to describe and select professional profiles using indicators and charts pre-defined by the partnership, based on the example provided by the selected best practice, in order to represent a context framework from which to begin, in the first place to make a comparison of the existing profiles and certification methods and later, to identify the characterising elements indispensable to homogenise the representations

The starting point and the first operational phase of the project, was the WP3 of Context research and analysis. This phase was carried out with the same approaches and tools defined by the selected best practice, that is to say:

- DESK RESEARCH, which called for the analysis of the national repertoires of professional profiles (for example REGIONAL VET Systems, repertoires of learning units, any existing systems for the validation of Learning from Experience, etc.) in the green economy sector, specifically as much as possible related to the characteristics of the selected Regional profile, in each partner country, with particular attention to vocational

education and training systems. This part of the research was carried out using: a working paper containing some questions related to the system descriptions, a **"Synthetic outline of VET training systems (vocational education and training)"** and a table for classifying the level of integration of the ECVET device in each country, that each partner had completed by the time of the first transnational meeting; a Tool-kit containing an **"Analysis grid of the REGULATORY AND CONTRACT SITUATION"** related to the sector and the specific profile selected; a **"PROFESSIONAL PROFILE ANALYSIS CHART"**, where, on the basis of the related professional profiles selected by the partners, the information contained in the different repertories were rationalized in a framework of KSC; a **"CERTIFICATION SYSTEM ANALYSIS CHART"**;

- FIELD RESEARCH: which calls for field observations, with at least 5 interviews for each partner nation with operators in the green economy sector and, specifically, in different types of related structures and productive units, and validated within the research desk. The field survey will be carried out through the use of search tools such as semi-structured interviews and check lists for the direct field observation, etc...This part of the research was carried out using an interview grid for the comparison, with experts of the sector, the Italian selected professional profile with the corresponding national one selected by each partner.

Given the frameworks derived from WP3 and the first transnational comparative matrix, the main objective of the next project step WP4, was to take charge of the methodologies and tools for the implementation and management of ECVET compatible experimentations described in the "Handbook for the ECVET management system" (output of the selected best practice) and to propose a first hypothesis of adaptation to be shared and implemented with the project partners, which is object of this report.

3. The results of the analysis of the N.E.T.WORK method

As mentioned before, in WP4, partners were called to:

- analyze the methodology of the NETWORK project with a first adaptation proposed by CONFAO / EBTS, highlighting critical issues and strengths in relation to the national / regional contexts of reference;
- to analyze the methodological-operational kit, and specifically the tools and guidelines developed by the NETWORK project, in relation to their transfer to the green economy sector, highlighting any gaps to be filled;
- to contextualize the methodology and the process of adaptation in the contexts of the partner countries;
- to share the results of this analysis in order to determine the possible adaptation framework;
- to identify elements of sustainability of the methodology and tools for a possible system implementation within specific experimentations.

The results of this analysis have highlighted these elements:

- the structure of the Vademecum, is thoroughly exhaustive, especially in the first chapters dedicated to the introduction of the ECVET device. In a possible adaptation of the Vademecum and tools for the ECoVET project, partners agreed that there will be no need to report this part in such analytical way, but just report a summary of the characteristic of the ECVET device;
- in the processing of the research tools, which were used in the ECoVET Project for the development of the research phase, most of the ones used in the previous project were used ("**Synthetic outline of VET training systems (vocational education and training)**"; "**Analysis grid of the REGULATORY AND CONTRACT SITUATION**"; "**PROFESSIONAL PROFILE ANALYSIS CHART**", "**CERTIFICATION SYSTEM ANALYSIS CHART**"). Nevertheless, it was chosen to add a table for classifying the level of integration of the ECVET device in each country, derived from an interesting table reported on page 52 of the Vademecum¹, and processed in the form of an evaluation table;

¹"TABLE 1 – Elements to assess the conditions at system level" – Source: Elaboration from ECVET Connexions "Study on the feasibility of an ECVET system for apprenticeship (test phase) – Final Report" 2007

- in the approach to the field analysis phase, the ECoVET partnership decided to introduce the first deviation from the model adopted by the N.E.T.WORK Project, where the field analysis was conducted at a later stage and resulted to be not so relevant for the project development. In the case of the ECoVET Project, due the complexity and relatively innovative sector selected (the green economy) and the higher heterogeneity of the profiles selected at country level, there was a necessity to realize a confrontation with experts to acquire more insights on the characteristics of the profession and the related profiles identified;
- one of the main issue of diversification from the previous project, stands right in the complexity of the selected profile, which rises more complications at operational level because it has been interpreted, in the different partners county and in the related profiles identified, with some differentiation in the tasks and levels of autonomy expected by the professional profile. While, in the previous project, the field of "hospitality and reception" had a lower level of diversification of the profiles identified in the different country partner but had an issue in the different EQF levels, in the case of the ECoVET Project we found profiles placed all at level 5 of the EQF, but with substantial differences in the tasks expected to be performed by the professional profiles;
- as far as concern the steps for referencing the profiles identified, the N.E.T.WORK project has been followed step by step, proceeding first with a comparison at the level of MACRO-COMPETENCES, than it will be processed at the level of detailed KSC dimensions. The only deviation from the tools adopted by the N.E.T.WORK Project, was that, due to the complexity of the profiles selected, partners will use an additional matrix which, for each macro competence, will be referencing the skills, before coming up to an outline of units which has been reported in the same structure used by the N.E.T.WORK Project.

In conclusion, the partnership has positively evaluated the N.E.T.WORK method, as following the necessary step to attain an output ECVET compatible, and in line with what is really present in the national profiles that can be object of possible ECVET structured mobility experimentations.

The few deviations adopted in the ECoVET Project are strictly related to the higher complexity of the profile, and to the innovative sector in which it is inserted.