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### ***1. The European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training***

The European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) is the new European instrument to promote mutual trust and mobility in vocational education and training. Developed by Member States in cooperation with the European Commission, ECVET has been adopted by the European Parliament and the Council in 2009. The adoption and implementation of ECVET in the participating countries is voluntary. Currently, the participating countries and the Commission support a Europe-wide testing of this instrument to which all stakeholders have been invited to participate.

#### **ECVET: AN INSTRUMENT FOR MOBILITY AND RECOGNITION**

ECVET's purpose is to enable recognition of learners' achievements during periods of mobility by creating a structure, bringing a common language, and stimulating exchanges and mutual trust among VET providers and competent institutions across Europe. In the context of international mobility but also mobility within countries, ECVET aims to support recognition of learning outcomes without extending learners' education and training pathways.

#### **ECVET for valorising mobility**

ECVET contributes to making recognised mobility an integrated part of individuals' learning pathways. It makes it easier for employers to understand qualifications achieved abroad. It also improves the credibility of international education and training experience by identifying and documenting what the learner has achieved.

### **ECVET for lifelong learning**

ECVET supports flexibility of programmes and pathways to achieve qualifications, enhancing the opportunities for lifelong learning. It makes it easier to recognise the learning achievements that young people or adults have gained in other contexts - be it countries, institutions or systems (for example initial or continuous training) but also formal, non-formal, or informal ways of learning.

### **ECVET for attractiveness of VET**

By giving learners the possibility to undertake parts of their training abroad, VET providers can enrich the training provision, raise the attractiveness of training programmes and enhance their pan-European reputation. The improved possibilities for lifelong learning created by ECVET facilitate cooperation between VET providers and companies. This means that ECVET can strengthen the link between education and training and the labour market.

### **ECVET IN BRIEF**

ECVET is based on concepts and processes which are used in a systematic way to establish a common and user-friendly language for transparency, transfer and recognition of learning outcomes. Some of these concepts and processes are already embedded in many qualifications systems across Europe.

ECVET is based on:

- **Learning outcomes**, which are statements of knowledge, skills and competence that can be achieved in a variety of learning contexts.
- **Units of learning outcomes** that are components of qualifications. Units can be assessed, validated and recognised.
- **ECVET points**, which provide additional information about units and qualifications in a numerical form.
- **Credit** that is given for assessed and documented learning outcomes of a learner. Credit can be transferred to other contexts and accumulated to achieve a qualification on the basis of the qualifications standards and regulations existing in the participating countries.
- **Mutual trust and partnership among participating organisations**. These are expressed in Memoranda of Understanding and Learning Agreements.

## ***2.ECVET Implementation***

**ECVET is a voluntary instrument that will be implemented progressively.**

Since its adoption in 2009 countries and the Commission are putting important emphasis on testing and further developing this instrument. This involves launching of pilot projects funded through the Lifelong Learning Programme but also through national initiatives. It also comprises development of support tools such as the forthcoming ECVET users' guide and the possible adaptation of Europass documents. By 2012 countries are expected to have created the necessary conditions and taken measures for gradual implementation of ECVET to vocational qualifications at all levels of the European Qualifications Framework.

On the establishment of a European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) The European Parliament and the Council of 18 June 2009 gave some recommendation:

- The development and recognition of citizens' knowledge, skills and competence are crucial for their personal and professional development and for competitiveness, employment and social cohesion in the Community. In this respect, they should facilitate transnational mobility for workers and learners and contribute towards meeting the requirements of supply and demand in the European labour market. Participation in borderless lifelong learning for all, and transfer, recognition and accumulation of individuals' learning outcomes achieved in formal, non-formal and informal contexts, should therefore be promoted and improved at the Community level.
- VET schemes, one of the main areas of lifelong learning, are directly linked to general and higher education, and to the employment and social policies of each Member State. Through their cross-sectoral impact, they promote not only the competitiveness of the European economy and fulfilment of the needs of the labour market but also social cohesion, equality and the participation and involvement of citizens.
- The purpose of this Recommendation is to create a European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training ('ECVET') intended to facilitate the transfer, recognition and accumulation of assessed learning outcomes of individuals who are aiming to achieve a qualification. This will improve the general understanding of citizens' learning outcomes and their transparency, transnational mobility and portability across and, where appropriate, within Member States in a borderless lifelong learning area, and will also improve the mobility and portability of qualifications at national level between

various sectors of the economy and within the labour market; furthermore, it will contribute to the development and expansion of European cooperation in education and training.

- ECVET is applicable for all learning outcomes which should in principle be achievable through a variety of education and learning paths at all levels of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning ('EQF'), and then be transferred and recognised. This Recommendation therefore contributes to the wider objectives of promoting lifelong learning and increasing the employability, openness to mobility and social inclusion of workers and learners. It particularly facilitates the development of flexible and individualised pathways and also the recognition of those learning outcomes which are acquired through non-formal and informal learning.
- This Recommendation should facilitate the compatibility, comparability and complementarity of credit systems used in VET and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System ('ECTS'), which is used in the higher education sector, and thus should contribute to greater permeability between levels of education and training, in accordance with national legislation and practice.
- Using ECVET should not affect access to the labour market, where professional qualifications have been recognised in accordance with Directive 2005/36/EC. Moreover, ECVET does not imply any new entitlement for citizens to obtain the automatic recognition of either learning outcomes or points.
- The introduction and implementation of ECVET is voluntary, pursuant to Articles 149 and 150 of the Treaty, and can therefore be undertaken only in accordance with existing national laws and regulations.

***Definitions used in implementing ECVET:***

1. 'Qualification' means a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent institution determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards;
2. 'Learning outcomes' means statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process and which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence;

3. ‘Unit of learning outcomes’ (unit) means a component of a qualification, consisting of a coherent set of knowledge, skills and competence, that can be assessed and validated;
4. ‘Credit for learning outcomes’ (credit) means a set of learning outcomes of an individual which have been assessed and which can be accumulated towards a qualification or transferred to other learning programmes or qualifications;
5. ‘Competent institution’ means an institution which is responsible for designing and awarding qualifications or recognising units or other functions linked to ECVET, such as allocation of ECVET points to qualifications and units, assessment, validation and recognition of learning outcomes, under the rules and practices of participating countries;
6. ‘Assessment of learning outcomes’ means methods and processes used to establish the extent to which a learner has in fact attained particular knowledge, skills and competence;
7. ‘Validation of learning outcomes’ means the process of confirming that certain assessed learning outcomes achieved by a learner correspond to specific outcomes which may be required for a unit or a qualification;
8. ‘Recognition of learning outcomes’ means the process of attesting officially achieved learning outcomes through the awarding of units or qualifications;
9. ‘ECVET points’ means a numerical representation of the overall weight of learning outcomes in a qualification and of the relative weight of units in relation to the qualification.

## European Qualification Framework

| <i>Level</i>   | <i>Knowledge</i>                                    | <i>Skill</i>  | <i>Competence</i>  | <i>Degree</i>                   |
|----------------|---|---|--|---------------------------------|
| <b>Level 1</b> | Basic general knowledge                             | Basic skills required to carry out simple task  | Work or study under direct supervision in a structured context | Primary/ lower secondary school |
| <b>Level 2</b> | Basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study | Basic cognitive and practical skills required to use relevant information in order to carry out | Work or study under supervision with some autonomy             | Primary/ lower secondary school |

|                |  |   |   |   |
|----------------|--|---|---|---|
|                |  | tasks and to solve routine problems using simple rules and tools  |   |   |
| <b>Level 3</b> | Knowledge of facts, principles, process, general concepts in a field work or study                                 | A range of cognitive and practical skills required to accomplish tasks and solve problems by selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information | Take responsibility for completion of tasks in work or study; adapt own behavior to circumstances in solving problems   | General upper secondary two years/ vocational education-training                    |
| <b>Level 4</b> | Factual and theoretical knowledge in broad context within a field of work or study                                 | A range of cognitive and practical skills required to generate solutions to specific problems in a field of work or study   | Exercise self-management within the guidelines of work or study contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change; supervise the routine work of others, taking some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities | General upper secondary school three years/ abitur/ vocational education - training |
| <b>Level 5</b> | Comprehensive, specialized, factual and theoretical knowledge and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge | A comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems   | Exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities   | Academy Profession, within the adult higher education                               |

|                |   |   |   |                             |
|----------------|---|---|---|-----------------------------|
|                |   |   | where there is unpredictable change; review and develop performance of self and others  |                             |
| <b>Level 6</b> | Advanced knowledge of a field of work or study, involving a critical understanding of theories and principles                     | Advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialized field of work or study                         | Manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision-making in unpredictable work or study contexts; take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups               | Bachelor and Diploma        |
| <b>Level 7</b> | Highly specialized knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge as the basis for original thinking and / or research | Specialized problem-solving skills required in research and/or innovation in order to develop new knowledge and procedures and to integrate knowledge from different fields | Manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches; take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams | Master, Graduateship (GCGI) |

|                    |   |   |   |                                 |
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| <b>Level<br/>8</b> | Knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study and at the interface between fields | The most advanced and specialized skills and techniques, including synthesis and evaluation, required to solve critical problems in research and/or innovation and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice | Demonstrate substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly and professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes at the forefront of work or study contexts including research | PhD, Senior Awards - Fellowship |
|--------------------|---|---|---|---------------------------------|

### 3. Websites

#### European Commission:

<http://ec.europa.eu>

#### Cedefop:

*Website on European tools*

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu>

In cooperation with the European Commission, Cedefop provides technical and analytical support for the implementation of the ECVET recommendation at the EU, national and sectoral levels.

#### Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)

<http://eacea.ec.europa.eu>

#### ECVET team

<http://www.ecvet-team.eu/>

The ECVET team acts as the secretariat for the ECVET European network. Its activities include workshops and seminars for ECVET users' group and the members of the ECVET European network and the ECVET annual forum. Its website informs about new developments in the network and provides documentation such as guides (interactive or on downloading), ECVET magazine, etc. It is financed by the European Union.

#### ECVET pilot projects

<http://www.ecvet-projects.eu>

This website provides the overview of the activities, preliminary and final results of the centralised European ECVET projects. It is financed by the European Union.