



ECVET TC NET

ECVET network for Tourism and Catering

Progress Report

Public Part

Project information

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Executive Summary

The Leonardo da Vinci ECVET TC NET (European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training – Tourism and Catering Network) is a project for the development of an ECVET system for the tourism and hospitality industry in Europe (www.ecvet-tc.net).

Tourism and hospitality is of the most important economic sectors in Europe and provides more than 7 million jobs. This sector relies heavily on a flexible and mobile workforce.

This is the rationale for the development of an ECVET model in order to establish the basis for the mutual recognition and transparency of competences in measuring learning outcomes.

The ECVET TC NET consortium aims to reflect the characteristics of vocational education and training in the tourism and hospitality industry, where a significant proportion of training programmes are held at the workplace, through corporate training and apprenticeship systems. Thus, the consortium includes hospitality and tourism schools, VET providers, colleges, universities, hotels, cruise ship companies, staffing agencies and industry related professional associations.

One of the main activities of this project is to investigate the competences and associated learning outcomes needed in the hospitality and tourism industry. This will be used as the basis for the development of a competence grid, which forms the cornerstone of the ECVET model.

A detailed handbook details the procedure on how to implement the ECVET model along with supporting documents, such as a Memorandum of Mutual Trust and a specimen of the ECVET Certificate.

All the project activities are embedded in a comprehensive quality management strategy and are supported by a sustainable dissemination and exploitation strategy.

The Network actively pursues an enlargement strategy throughout the duration of the project, and it also develops a detailed and realistic sustainability strategy to ensure the continuation of the ECVET TC NET project well beyond the European funding period.

The greatest impact will be on training providers, in t hospitality and tourism schools and colleges, companies and staff agencies. The end result will be the production of a working model for the mutual recognition and accreditation of vocational education and training.

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1. Project Objectives

The European Parliament and the Council recommend that Member States create the necessary conditions and adopt measures so that ECVET can gradually be applied to Vocational Education and Training qualifications at all levels of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF) and used for the transfer, recognition and accumulation of individuals' learning outcomes achieved in a formal, non-formal and informal context.

The European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), which is aimed to facilitate the accumulation, transfer and recognition of knowledge, skills and competences gained by individuals towards a qualification, is applicable to learning outcomes gained in different learning environments or through periods of vocational education and training abroad.

ECVET TC NET is one of the current projects embedded in the design of concrete responses to the questions of developing ECVET in the European member states. Its main objective is developing an ECVET based model for mutual recognition and transparency of learning outcomes and competences in the tourism and catering sector in Europe, which is particularly reliant on a flexible and mobile workforce and on the transparency and recognition of the individuals' learning outcomes.

The European tourism and hospitality industry is increasingly being faced with the demand for high quality tourism, which is closely related to mobile workers and high quality employees with excellent competencies and skills. There is hardly any other economic sector where the flexibility and mobility of the workforce has is so important. At this stage, mobility is still heavily hindered by the lack of transparent and recognisable qualifications and competences and throughout Europe there is a need for programmes to allow the mutual recognition of competences and skills. For the first time the ECVET TC NET provides a system for transparency of learning outcomes together with an approach for the concrete implementation of ECVET in the tourism sector and tourism industry.

ECVET TC NET is a multi-stakeholder ECVET network for tourism and catering, involving tourism schools and colleges, vocational training centres, universities as well as tourism organizations, hotels, cruise ship companies, spas and other relevant institutions to achieve well conceived and accepted results. The ECVET TC network should be established as long term target as reference network for ECVET in the tourism and catering sector in Europe.

The main target groups of this project are tourism and catering colleges in Europe and vocational education providers in tourism and catering. The tourism sector and industry have some peculiarities, which must be taken into account: vocational education and training in the tourism sector is to a large extent also provided by tourism companies such as hotels, spas, clubs etc. Therefore the main target group has to take into account tourism companies as well as other institutions that are part of the target group and also potential stakeholders.

On a long term perspective, the beneficiaries are the people working in the tourist and catering sector and the tourists themselves.

2. Project Approach

During its three year funding period the network consortium is implementing the above mentioned objectives and outputs on the basis of matrix organisations allowing four horizontal key projects and five thematic phases.

Horizontal network actions:

1. Network management and sustainability: the key action for network management and sustainability allows the whole management of the network activities of all partner organisations, the implementation of the network meetings, including agenda and minutes, development of an enlargement and sustainability strategy for the network. The network management is carried out by the co-ordinating organisation (bfi Steiermark).
2. Quality management and assurance: The quality of the outputs and the whole network process is of crucial relevance to the final success and the acceptance of the outputs and the whole network. Therefore quality assurance is important for all thematic network phases. It is also steered and controlled by the co-ordinating organisation (bfi Steiermark).
3. Dissemination: The network is in the fortunate position to encompass a number of organisations, training institutions and companies in the tourism and catering industry which have a large valorisation and dissemination potential throughout Europe and beyond. A set of materials (folder, poster, giveaways), as well as the planning and implementation of two major conference events on ECVET in the tourism and catering sector in Europe support this horizontal key action.
4. Exploitation: The exploitation goes hand in hand with the activities for dissemination and ensures the use of the outputs in the sense of valorisation. The phase contains concrete activities for the short term target group so that the outputs can be used in a direct and practical way by the target group.

Thematic project phases:

1. European survey: The planning and implementation of the European survey, investigating competences and skills in the tourism and catering sector in Europe, was the thematic starting phase of the network. During the survey with training organisations, schools, companies and service providers in the tourism and catering sector in Europe, the relevant and necessary competences have been identified. The competences are presented in a competence grid to allow comparability and transparency.
2. Based on the principles of the ECVET documents and the competences deducted from the European survey (presented in the competence grid), the ECVET model for tourism and catering in Europe is developed and described in a comprehensive model description document.

3. The network works in parallel to the model development on the development of the memorandum of mutual trust. The memorandum of mutual trust should be used as the basic document for all organisations wanting to apply the ECEVT model and allow mutual recognition. Furthermore the draft of the ECVET certificate will be discussed and developed in the next transnational meeting in Maribor, in July 2010.
4. Test implementation: the materials and outputs, as well as the ECVET model as such, will be implemented by the participating organisations, testing the functionalities and feasibility of the approaches in practice. A detailed test report containing clear feedback and recommendations for adaptation and improvement will be written at the end of this project phase.
5. The model and the single components and outputs will be adapted according to the instructions and recommendations of the test report. Simultaneously the network will develop a policy document and give recommendations for strengthening the tourism and catering industry in Europe.

3. Project Outcomes & Results

As its main aim ECVET TC NET develops an ECVET based model for the mutual recognition and transparency of learning outcomes and competences in the tourism and catering sector in Europe. Within the three years of the network activities ECVET TC NET envisages the following detailed aims:

- Development of a competence description grid: the competence description grid provides a basis for all the competences in the tourism and catering sector in Europe to get a detailed perspective of the different competences and job profiles needed as a basis for the development of the ECVET model.
- Elaboration of the ECVET model for the tourism and catering sector in Europe: out of a multi-stakeholder perspective the ECVET model for the sector is developed and documented in a comprehensive way, with a strong focus on the companies and service providers included in the partnership.
- Development of the ECVET model handbook for the European tourism and catering sector: The handbook describes the ECVET model for the tourism and catering sector on the basis of the ECVET regulation and the competences deducted from the European survey. The handbook provides the necessary information about the model as such, definition of learning units, learning outcomes in tourism and catering, allocation of credit points to learning outcomes, etc. It also contains concrete guidelines on how to work with ECVET in the practice of tourism and catering training, especially in corporate training.
- Development of guidelines on how to develop ECVET compliant training programmes: It is important to have proper guidelines for the training organizations in the tourism and catering field on how to develop ECVET compliant training programmes in the future.
- A draft model for an ECVET certificate will be developed especially for the tourism and catering sector. The certificate will present the competences and learning outcomes together with the corresponding ECVET credits and will be the basic document for mutual recognition and transparency.
- Mutual trust is the most important principle in the use of ECVET. To establish this core factor a memorandum of mutual trust will be developed as the basic document for all participating organisations in the ECVET model for the tourism and catering sector in Europe. By signing this memorandum of mutual trust, all participating organisations in the network and beyond declare that they guarantee to accept and respect the principles and rules of ECVET in the tourism and catering sector.
- Test implementation of the ECVET model: Training organizations and companies involved in the ECVET TC NET will test the developed approaches and instruments to receive feedback on the practical implementation and feasibility for the sector.

- Policy development: the ECVET TC NET will also further develop the VET policy for the tourism and catering sector from a multi-stakeholder perspective by developing a policy recommendation paper for vocational education and training in the tourism and catering industry in Europe.
- Network website: www.ecvet-tc.net is the reference domain for the network and contains all outputs in electronic format for download, as well as reference documents, links and a public discussion forum.
- Public relations, dissemination and valorisation materials: A set of materials for public presentation, dissemination and valorisation of the outputs and the network has been developed (folders in every partner language, posters and a box of coffee beans as giveaway). One of the two major conferences, the start conference, has already been planned and implemented; the second is planned at the end of the network funding period.

All these outcomes and results are embedded in a multi-stakeholder approach ensuring the highest possible relevance for all the parties involved in the sector. The network as such follows an elaborated network development strategy allowing a sustainable network development in the tourism and catering sector in Europe.

4. Partnerships

The prerequisites for a successful project partnership are mutual trust and intercultural understanding, which both form the basis of communication and cooperation. From the beginning of the project we have achieved an excellent climate as all partner organizations agreed on that form of cooperative work. This is based on an innovative approach to the development and implementation of the ECVET system for the tourism and hospitality industry.

The partnership consists of the following institutional categories:

- a) Tourism and hospitality schools and colleges
- b) VET providers in tourism and catering
- c) Universities and university colleges
- d) Enterprises in tourism and catering: hotels, spas and cruise ship companies, tourism organisations
- e) Labour force providers, staffing agencies
- f) Industry related professional associations

The partnership can be subdivided in two main groups: enterprises in tourism and hospitality (hotels and spas, cruise ship companies, tourism organisations, staffing agencies) and education and training providers. We can identify different levels amongst the education and training providers (tourism and hospitality schools and colleges, universities and university colleges, VET providers in tourism and catering). This mixture of different social and cultural characteristics and of different levels of training and education providers with enterprises in tourism and hospitality across Europe offers an opportunity to benefit from the experience requested by the tourism and hospitality industry carried out in different European countries and at different levels of training and education.

Another aspect of the project's success is tied to cross-cultural European issues. If the project was divided into national, or even local projects, it would miss its cross-European target, which is important for the mutual recognition of skills and learning outcomes, and the mobility of workers.

All the project team members of our European partnership work harmoniously together. To maintain an effective cooperation and communication, the project group uses transnational and bilateral meetings and e-mail as well as telephone communication. At the kick-off meeting in Bad Gleichenberg in November 2008 the project partners confirmed these methods of communication, moreover the project partnership agreed on working with the work package plan, the quality management plan and the dissemination plan.

Basic project decisions, respectively work package changes, have been consensual decisions (e.g. Partner 8 is not the leading partner for work package 6 of the ECVET model handbook development. As this organisation has too little experience within this specific field, work package 6 was divided in more chapters with more leading partners).

All partners worked together on work package 5 and 6: after comparing and discussing the most important job profiles in the tourism and catering industry (cook, cook assistant, waiter, waiter assistant, bartender, sales and marketing assistant, guest relations assistant, receptionist, chamber maid), after discussing the competences in the respective fields and establishing indicators for these competences to be used, the partners worked together on the European Survey. The content of the European Survey was analysed in a critical perspective by allocating credit points to the competences and learning outcomes. At the same time all the partners were active in undertaking outputs useful for dissemination (meetings, conferences, press releases, newsletters, dissemination via the internet, etc).

All partners are aware of the next steps to fulfil the project: the continuous dissemination of the project, the elaboration of the Memorandum of Mutual Trust and the ECVET certificate, the testing period and test report and the Policy Paper – VET in Tourism and Catering.

Moreover the www.ecvet-tc.net webpage is used as document storage (description of the project's aims and objectives, outcomes; presentation of the partner's organisations, dissemination activity-collections, meetings, documents, logotypes, flyers, templates...); the webpage will also be used as a discussion-forum.

With the experiences gained in the first period of the ECVET TC NET project, we see the project as an opportunity to allow mutual recognition of competences and skills and to upgrade skills in the tourism industry in Europe. The ECVET based model will, for the first time, provide a system for transparency of learning outcomes together with an approach for the concrete implementation in the tourism sector where flexibility and mobility of workforce has an importance greater than in any other economic sector in Europe.

5. Plans for the Future

At the time of the Progress Report this project is in time. As outlined before, all partners responsible are aware of the next steps to fulfil the short term targets (the Memorandum of Mutual Trust, the ECVET certificate the testing period and test report and the Policy Paper – VET in Tourism and Catering).

Two ECVET TC NET newsletters will be published to inform the national, regional and local networks of the partners. One has already been published at the time of the progress report. The ECVET poster and folder (in all partners' languages versions) will also be used for the dissemination activities of the partner organizations. The project website (www.ecvet-tc.net) gives information on the main objectives of the project and will be regularly updated. The final conference will be organized in Turkey in October 2012 with the aim to spread information on the project.

During the last years the demand and the expected standards regarding tourism and hospitality have changed dramatically. Tourists are demanding high quality destinations and services which have significant consequences for the qualifications of the employees in this sector. Especially the new member countries have too few highly qualified tourism workers.

The ECVET TC NET is developing a set of approaches and an ECVET model for the tourism and catering industry in Europe. This will have, as a long term target, clear effects on the workforce mobility and on the transparency of qualifications gained in vocational training and especially also in corporate training which is at very high importance in this sector. By providing highly qualified and flexible staff and human resources for this sector there will be an obvious impact on the services offered which has a direct impact on the long term target group.

The network itself follows a clear enlargement and sustainability strategy. These strategies allow the permanent network development during and also after the funding period, which furthermore should support the effects of the impact in a long term perspective. Through the planned and implemented activities of valorisation the final long term target group will also be reached by the improvement of service quality and workforce mobility.

With the knowledge gained on the topic of recognition of skills and competences, the ECVET TC network will be an open and sustainable platform for cooperation which supports ECVET within the partners in the future. It should enable exchanges, develop dissemination, networking and promotion and give advice to the European member states to apply the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training.

6. Contribution to EU policies

The development of ECVET began in 2002 after the Copenhagen Process emphasized the need for a credit transfer system for VET.

The European Parliament and the Council recommend that Member States create the necessary conditions and adopt measures, so that ECVET can be gradually applied to VET qualifications at all levels of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF) and used for the transfer, recognition and accumulation of individuals' learning outcomes achieved in formal, non-formal and informal context.

ECVET TC NET is one of the current projects based on the concrete responses to the questions of developing ECVET in the European member states and corresponding to the recommendations on the establishment of the European Credit system for VET formally entered into force in June 2009 (cf. the Official Journal of the European Union, Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the Establishment of a European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training).

A European area for lifelong learning is only possible if there is the possibility of transparency and recognition of learning outputs and competences throughout Europe. In the tourism and hospitality sector the need for these systems becomes more evident due to seasonality and tourist fluctuation.

ECVET TC NET is applicable for learning outcomes in the field of tourism and hospitality which are achievable through the levels of the European Qualifications Framework with the objective to facilitate the mobility, transfer, recognition and transparency of assessed learning outcomes in a lifelong learning Europe without frontiers.

7. Extra Heading/Section

At the time of the Progress Report, the ECVET TC NET project is on track and will provide a Memorandum of Mutual Trust, an ECVET Certificate and a Policy Paper for VET in Tourism and Catering at the end of the project.

The project partnership is fully aware of the upcoming tasks both on an individual level as well as within the project partnership.