



## **ECVET TC NET**

ECVET network for Tourism and Catering

Final Report

Public Part

## Project information

Project acronym:	ECVET TC NET
Project title:	ECVET network for Tourism and Catering
Project number:	142847-LLP-1-2008-1-AT-LEONARDO-LNW
Sub-programme or KA:	LEONARDO-LNW
Project website:	<a href="http://www.ecvet-tc.net/">http://www.ecvet-tc.net/</a>
Reporting period:	From 01 / 11 / 2008
	To 31 / 10 / 2011
Report version:	Final Report
Date of preparation:	31/10/2011 – 15 / 11 / 2011
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This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.

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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) was a three-year Leonardo da Vinci network project for the development of the ECVET system for the tourism- and hospitality industry in Europe ([www.ecvet-tc.net](http://www.ecvet-tc.net)).

Tourism and hospitality is one 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 was 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 aimed at reflecting 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 included 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 was to investigate the competences and associated learning outcomes needed in the hospitality and tourism industry. This was used as the basis for the development of a competence grid, which formed the cornerstone of the ECVET model.

A comprehensive handbook detailed the procedure on how to implement the ECVET model along with supporting documents, such as the Memorandum of Mutual Trust and the ECVET Certificate. At the final result conference in Vienna on the 13<sup>th</sup> of October 2011, the Test Report and the Policy Paper will be presented with suggestions on how to work on and implement the ECVET system in the tourism- and catering industry in Europe.

All the project activities were embedded in a comprehensive quality management strategy and were supported by a sustainable dissemination strategy. The Network actively pursued an enlargement strategy throughout the duration of the project, and it also developed a detailed and realistic exploitation and sustainability strategy to ensure the continuation of the ECVET TC NET project well beyond the European funding period.

With the experiences gained from 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 provides, for the first time, a system for the transparency of learning outcomes, together with an approach for the concrete implementation of the ECVET system in the tourism sector, where flexibility and mobility of workforce is of greater importance than in any other economic sector in Europe.

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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 at facilitating 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 was a three-year network project embedded in the design of concrete responses to the questions of developing ECVET in the European member states. Its main objective was to develop an ECVET based model for the 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 is so important. At this stage, mobility is still heavily hindered by the lack of transparent and recognizable qualifications and competences, and throughout Europe there is a need for programmes to allow the mutual recognition of competences and skills.

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

The main target groups of this project were tourism and catering colleges in Europe and vocational education providers in tourism and catering. The tourism sector and industry have some peculiarities, which have to 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.

From 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 implemented the above mentioned objectives and outputs on the basis of matrix organizations allowing five horizontal key projects and six thematic phases.

Horizontal network actions:

1. **Network management and sustainability:** the key action for network management and sustainability allowed the whole management of the network activities of all partner organizations, the implementation of the network meetings, including agenda and minutes, as well as the development of an enlargement and sustainability strategy for the network. The network management was carried out by the co-coordinating organisation (bfi Steiermark).
2. **Quality management and assurance:** The quality of the outputs and the whole network process was of crucial relevance to the final success and the acceptance of the outputs and the whole network. Therefore quality assurance was important during all thematic network phases. It was also steered and controlled by the co-coordinating organisation (bfi Steiermark).
3. **Dissemination:** The network was in the fortunate position to encompass a number of organizations, training institutions and companies in the tourism and catering industry which have a large valorization and dissemination potential throughout Europe and beyond. A set of materials (folder, poster, giveaways, newsletter), as well as the planning and implementation of two major conference events on ECVET in the tourism- and catering sector in Europe, supported this horizontal key action. The dissemination and exploitation strategy of the network project was developed with the support of all project partners and was the basis for the dissemination of the project.
4. **Exploitation:** The exploitation went hand in hand with the activities for dissemination and ensured the use of the outputs in the sense of valorization. The exploitation contained concrete activities for the short-term target group so that the outputs could be used in a direct and practical way by the target group.
5. **Evaluation:** The co-coordinating organisation (bfi Steiermark) was the main organisation responsible for the quality of the process, product and impact level and developed quality criteria in co-operation with an external quality management organisation. The four evaluation questionnaires contained questions relating to the project meetings and to the different project phases, enabled the partners to make suggestions and recommendations and to give feedback about the different project phases and outputs.

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 organizations, schools, companies and service providers in the tourism- and catering sector in Europe, the relevant and necessary competences were identified. The competences were 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 was developed and described in a comprehensive model description document.
3. The network worked parallel to the model development on the development of the **ECVET certificate** and the **Memorandum of Mutual Trust**. The Memorandum of Mutual Trust should be used as the basic document for all tourism organizations wanting to apply the ECEVT model and allow mutual recognition. A common ECVET certificate has been created by the partnership and tested in practice by the partners.
4. **Test implementation:** the materials and outputs, as well as the ECVET certificate as such, were implemented by the participating organizations, testing the functionalities and feasibility of the approaches in practice. A **detailed test report** containing clear feedback and recommendations for adaptation and improvement was written by the Tourismsschulen Bad Gleichenberg.
5. **Sustainability Strategy:** the ECVET TC NET partnership agreed on recommendations for the sustainability and further steps in the ECVET TC NET project, which can and should be taken into account after the Commission's financial assistance has been terminated. The partnership suggests a continuous communication within the project partnership, as well as meetings and conferences after the funding period to maintain and develop the network for the next years and to discuss about the progress of ECVET in tourism and catering.
6. **The Policy Paper – VET in Tourism and Catering** was developed at the end of the project's lifetime and with the experiences gained during our work. The policy paper contains recommendations for VET providers, schools and policy makers on national level and European level, having influence on the VET systems for strengthening the tourism and catering industry in Europe.

### 3. Project Outcomes & Results

As its main objective, ECVET TC NET developed 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 envisaged the following detailed goals:

- Development of a competence description grid: the competence description grid provided 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: the ECVET model for the sector was developed and documented in a comprehensive way from a multi-stakeholder perspective, 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, and especially in corporate training.
- Development of guidelines on how to develop ECVET compliant training programmes: It was 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 was developed especially for the tourism- and catering sector. The certificate presents the competences and learning outcomes together with the corresponding ECVET credits and is the basic document for mutual recognition and transparency.
- Mutual trust was the most important principle in the use of ECVET. To establish this core factor a Memorandum of Mutual Trust was developed as the basic document for all participating organizations in the ECVET model for the tourism- and catering sector in Europe. By signing this memorandum of mutual trust, all participating organizations in the network and beyond declared 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 tested the developed approaches and instruments to give and receive feedback on the mutual recognition of skills and the feasibility of the ECVET certificate.

- Policy development: the ECVET TC NET developed 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](http://www.ecvet-tc.net) is the reference domain for the network and contains all outputs in electronic format for download (the European survey, the ECVET model handbook, the ECVET certificate, the Memorandum of Understanding, the Test Report and the Policy Paper for Tourism and Catering, the dissemination and sustainability strategy and the network enlargement strategy), as well as links and a public discussion forum.
- Public relations, dissemination and valorization materials: A set of materials for public presentation, dissemination and valorization of the outputs and the network has been developed (folders in every partner language, posters and a box of coffee beans as a giveaway, three newsletters). Two major conferences, the starting conference and the final result conference, were planned and implemented.

All these outcomes and results were embedded in a multi-stakeholder approach ensuring the highest possible relevance for all the parties involved in the sector. The network as such followed 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 formed the basis of communication and cooperation in our partnership. From the beginning of the project we achieved an excellent climate as all partner organizations agreed on this form of cooperative work. This was based on an innovative approach to the development and implementation of the ECVET system for the tourism- and hospitality industry.

The partnership consisted of the following institutional categories:

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

The partnership could be subdivided into two main groups: enterprises in tourism and hospitality (hotels and spas, cruise ship companies, tourism organisations, staffing agencies) and education and training providers. We could identify different levels between 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, offered 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 was tied to cross-cultural European issues. If the project had been divided into national or even local projects, it would have missed its trans-European target, which was important for the mutual recognition of skills and learning outcomes, and the mobility of workers.

The success of a European project relies very much on the quality of the project's partnership. At this point I would like to emphasize the excellent cooperative working atmosphere with mutual trust and intercultural understanding from the beginning of the project. Every partner collaborated in the best possible way and delivered excellent contributions to the individual project phases.

All the project team members of our European partnership worked harmoniously together. To maintain an effective cooperation and communication, the project group used transnational and bilateral meetings and e-mail, as well as telephone

communication and communication via Facebook 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, were consensual decisions (e.g. Partner 8 was not the leading partner for work package 6 of the ECVET model handbook development. As this organisation had too little experience within this specific field, work package 6 was divided into more chapters with more leading partners).

All partners worked together on work packages 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 the indicators to be used for these competences, the partners worked together on the European Survey. The content of the European Survey was analyzed from 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 were always aware of their steps to fulfill the project: the continuous dissemination of the project, the elaboration of the Memorandum of Mutual Trust and the ECVET certificate, the testing period and the test report and the Policy Paper – VET in Tourism and Catering.

Moreover the [www.ecvet-tc.net](http://www.ecvet-tc.net) webpage was used as document storage (description of the project's aims and objectives, outcomes; presentation of the partner's organizations, dissemination activity-collections, meetings, documents, logotypes, flyers, templates...) and a discussion-forum. The project's webpage is going to be online for the next 5 years to sustain and exploit the outputs of this network project.

With the experiences gained from the ECVET TC NET project, we see this network project as an opportunity to allow mutual recognition of competences and skills and to upgrade skills in the tourism industry in Europe. For the first time, the ECVET based model provides a system for the 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

Project results can only be of sustainable value and use if their dissemination and exploitation were well planned and implemented at different levels to support the further use of project results. Another key factor for the sustainable use of a European project is the close cooperation between all partners. Not only the communication but also the individual use of national dissemination channels, contacts and networks has great influence on the sustainable impact of a project.

During the ECVET TC NET project's duration the network itself followed a clear enlargement, exploitation and sustainability strategy. These strategies allowed 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 by the improvement of service quality and workforce mobility.

### **Proceeding of the ECVET TC NET after the end of the funding period**

With the knowledge gained on the topic of the recognition of skills and competences, the ECVET TC network will be an open and sustainable platform for cooperation in the future which supports ECVET within the partners. It will 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.

The ECVET TC NETWORK proposes meetings and conferences after the funding period in partner countries to maintain the network for the next years, to discuss the progress of ECVET in tourism and catering and to benefit from our experiences gained in this project.

### **General recommendations for the sustainability and further steps in the ECVET TC NET project**

The ECVET TC NET partnership agreed on the following recommendations for the sustainability and further steps in the ECVET TC NET project. These are suggestions that can and should be taken into account after the Commission's financial assistance has been terminated in the project process.

- Continuous communication within the project partnership
- Continuous dissemination of existing results to other ECVET developing bodies, institutions and countries
- Continuations and updates of the ECVET website for the next 5 years for maintaining of the network's results
- Meetings and conferences within the ECVET TC NET partnership after the funding period in partner countries on annual or biannual basis to maintain the network for the next years, to discuss the progress of ECVET in tourism and catering

- Continuous enlargement of the ECVET network to promote the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training in order to facilitate transnational mobility and the recognition of learning outcomes in VET and borderless lifelong learning.
- Connecting with other European projects working in the same thematic field
- Continuation in other European projects: ECVET Vision 2020 and MobiVet
- Continuation on a national level (thematic networking – link to other ECVET projects in the partner countries, contacts to the national agencies for ECVET)
- Contacts and events with professional associations to have workshops and contributions about the project results (e.g. EURHODIP)
- Further thematic orientation of the ECVET TC NETWORK: ECVET related to the EQF; application of new ECVET TC NET projects on higher level (chef cook, chef de rang) or with new professions (animator, sommelier, barkeeper).

## 6. Contribution to EU policies

Transparency and recognition of learning outputs and competences are vital for lifelong learning throughout Europe. In the tourism and hospitality sector the need for these systems becomes more evident due to seasonality and tourist fluctuation.

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 the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training can gradually be applied to VET qualifications at all levels of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF) and used for the purpose of the transfer, recognition and accumulation of individuals' learning outcomes achieved in formal, non-formal and informal contexts.

ECVET TC NET was 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).

With the experiences gained during our three-year project, we can confirm that the ECVET system meets the requirements of a changing and internationalized hospitality industry and as such it 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 of facilitating the mobility, transfer, recognition and transparency of assessed learning outcomes

## 7. Extra Heading/Section

The ECVET TC NETwork project developed a set of approaches and recommendations during its three-year duration, which are applicable to the transparency of the achieved skills in the field of the tourism- and catering sector in Europe.

In conclusion, there is no denying the fact that lifelong learning is only possible, if the learning outputs and competences are transparent and recognized throughout Europe. With the experiences gained in this network project we can confirm that the ECVET system is optimally applicable.