Education and Culture DG
Lifelong Learning Programme

Banking Insurance Finance Network

Multilateral Project
(504476-LLP-1-2009-1-PT-LEONARDO-LNW)

USER'S GUIDE TO ECVET

BANKING INSURANCE FINANCE (B.I.F) PROJECT

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.

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1. AIMS AND APPROACH

This User's Guide is a tool addressed to potential ECVET adopters to provide them with a comprehensive guide to the ECVET system.

The Guide is structured as follows:

- ECVET implementation in the BIF sector;
- ECVET benefits in the BIF sector;
- ECVET brief description
- The difference between ECVET certification and a Knowledge based certification;
- ECVET tool and methodology;
- ECVET interconnections with other European Instruments;
- European education and training policies;
- European Parliament and the Council's Recommendation on ECVET, explaining precisely all the concepts and processes of ECVET.

The User's Guide is one of the first deliverables of the project BIF. The aims of the project are to:

- Promote the application of ECVET among training designers, trainers, training provision users in the banking, insurance and financial services sectors; and
- Facilitate the recognition of units of learning outcomes and qualifications throughout European countries through the progressive adoption of ECVET.

The main objectives of the Project are to:

- Offer a complete overview of the ECVET system throughout Europe;
- Increase the mutual trust and cooperation among stakeholders involved in **vet** in Europe, providing:
  - A. A valid network of professional organisations in the BIF;
  - B. A Users' Guide; and
  - C. A Vademecum for training professionals and experts, presenting a methodology for assigning ECVET points to existing qualifications.

The European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) is aimed to facilitate the accumulation, transfer and recognition of knowledge, skills and competences gained by individuals who are aiming to achieve a qualification.

ECVET is applicable to learning outcomes gained in different learning environments or through periods of vocational education and training abroad.

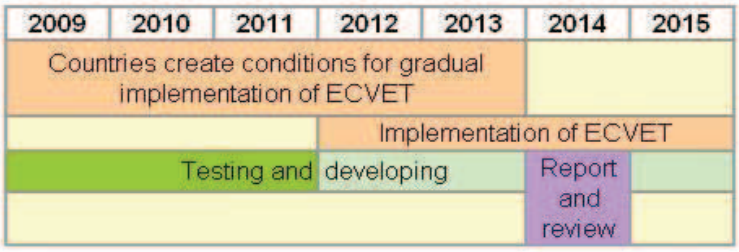
It is intended to give people greater control over their individual learning experiences and make it more attractive to move between different countries and different learning environments.

2. ECVET IMPLEMENTATION IN THE BIF SECTOR

Following the adoption by the European Parliament and by the Council (18 June 2009)1, ECVET is now in a phase of progressive implementation.

ECVET concepts and principles will be tested and introduced to ensure that conditions for the gradual application of ECVET to VET qualifications are in place across Europe by 2012.
Once in place ECVET will facilitate the transfer, recognition and accumulation of individuals learning outcomes achieved in formal and, where appropriate, in informal contexts.

- By 2012, ECVET will be tested and piloted in different contexts and systems: European, national and sectoral.
- In 2012, Member States are expected to have created the necessary conditions and measures for the gradual implementation of ECVET.
- In 2014, the European Parliament and the Council will review and evaluate the first stage of ECVET implementation and, if required, they will readjust the text of the Recommendation.



Source: European Commission

The quality of ECVET testing initiatives is crucial. All stakeholders, such as awarding bodies, providers, social partners, and companies are encouraged to engage in ECVET testing through projects and networks.

Banking, Insurance and Financial Services sector (BIF) can be one of the first sectors to implement the ECVET framework.

Why shall BIF do it?

What are the benefits for BIF?

- **Individuals/employees**: ECVET is designed to support lifelong learning, mobility and flexibility of individual development. More transparency in certification thanks to the adoption of ECVET as **a "common language"** will help them with the recognition of their learning achievements, progressive accumulation and continuous professional development. Mobility can be exercised both within an organisation, sector or internationally

♦	**Employers in the BIF sector**: ECVET is designed to foster mobility of individuals. This requires transparency to be effective and transparency will allow the BIF sector to better understand the qualification of the people they are seeking to employ (for example: understand a qualification achieved abroad by someone they employ in a foreign branch of their company).Furthermore, if the ECVET framework will be applied to the certification provided by professional training institutions. The process will be cost neutral for the BIF sectors and it will also receive a more clear training offer from the training institutions. Transparency, comparability and standardisation will help in managing human resources in international organisations by linking and integrating national solutions with EU standards. The modular approach to accumulation of qualifications should bring more efficiencies to the process personnel development.
♦	**Training and qualification providers**: 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 build trust and facilitate cooperation between VET providers and companies. Finally, this means that ECVET can strengthen the links between education and training and the labour market as the learning outcomes bring the training provision closer to the labour market needs. Add the following ideas: Transparency brings comparability which enhance competition through quality. Modular approach to training provision brings flexibility and effectiveness to training process. Common language is created between employers, employees, training providers and awarding bodies. A more transparent, open and efficient market is created.

3. ECVET BENEFITS IN THE BIF SECTOR

VET is usually defined as "Education and training which equip people with knowledge, know-how, skills and/or competences required in particular occupations or more broadly on the labour market".[1] This vocational training assists young adults in acquiring professional competences necessary for a job.

BIF companies have a long tradition of being engaged in training: more than other sectors the financial services sector was characterised by its internal vocational training and promotion possibilities.
The technological changes, product innovations, changes in the customer needs, expectations and relations, the changes in the distribution channels and confidence building with the clients make the companies in this sector the most active regarding internal training of their employees
Vocational training in the sectors is also heterogeneous across the sectors and across countries due to: the sectors unique nature, complex training requirements and development/aspirations. In the BIF sector, vocational training is very diverse and comprises: technical orientation, continuous vocational training, initial on-the-job training, professional skills developments, in-house training and training delivered by professional training providers.

The above list is not exhaustive, but provides a realistic overview of what we can call a "**grey area**" that exists in the BIF sector between the higher education and "classical" initial vocational education and training.

What is the grey area?

In the BIF Sector this area is wider and richer then in other sectors. This is due to the fact that traditionally the BIF sector stresses the importance of on going training of their employees.

Furthermore, nearly all the sector's employees has already obtained a complete secondary education.

The so called "grey area" includes the initial on-the-job training, which will not be tackled within this project, and the training delivered by professional training providers. The training delivered by external training providers is very heterogeneous and suffers from inadequate transparency .
ECVET could help in defining a more clear training offer and map of qualifications.

The situation just presented above relates only to the formal learning in the BIF sector, and includes also formal training processes not leading to a qualification.

[1] "Terminology of European education and training policy - A selection of 100 key terms" - Cedefop, avalaible online: http://www.cedefop.europa.eu and http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu).

4. WHAT IS ECVET?

The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) is a framework that facilitates the transfer, recognition and accumulation of individuals' learning outcomes with a view to achieving a **vocational qualification** or any other form of recognition.

The intention is to create a borderless European Lifelong learning area which facilitates the recognition of learning outcomes in line with each Member State's legislation.

It was developed by Member States together with the European Commission's Directorate General Education and Training. Recently, the ECVET regulatory framework was adopted by the European Parliament and the Council on 18 June 2009 through recommendation 2009/C 155/02.

The principle aims of ECVET are to:

- Create a shared backbone regulatory structure;
- Harmonise the definition and interpretation of learning pathways across the European Union;
- Ease comparability and compatibility between different national VET and qualification systems

The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) is based on concepts and processes to establish a common and user friendly language for transparency, transfer and recognition of learning outcomes.

ECVET is based on:

- **Learning outcomes** are statements of knowledge, skills and competence that can be achieved in a variety of learning contexts.
- **Knowledge** is the outcome of the assimilation of information through learning. Knowledge is the body of facts, principles, theories and practices that are related to a field of work or study.
- **Skill** is the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems.
- **Competence is** the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities in work or study situations and in professional and personal development
- **Unit of learning outcomes** is a component of a qualification, consisting of a coherent set of knowledge, skills and competence, which can be assessed and validated.
- **ECVET points** arenumerical representation of the overall weight of learning outcomes in a qualification and of the relative weight of units in relation to the qualification.
- **Credit for assessed and documented learning outcomes of a learner**can be transferred to other contexts and/or accumulated to achieve a qualification.
- **Mutual trust and partnership among participating organisations** are expressed in memoranda of understanding and learning agreements.

5. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ECVET AND KNOWLEDGE BASED CERTIFICATIONS

European countries are increasingly referring to **learning outcomes** when setting overall objectives for their education and training systems and when defining and describing qualifications.
Instead of focusing on input factors such as the duration, form and particular pedagogical method underpinning a qualification, attention is directed towards **what a learner knows and is able to do at the end of a learning process.**

Why do I need to specify Learning Outcomes?

The benefits of specifying learning outcomes include:

- specific, clear information for students on what is expected of them - students may find it helpful if you discuss learning outcomes at the start and end of a module
- a guide for assisting students in choosing optional and elective modules
- a means to ensure that assessment methods are appropriate to outcomes
- a means to ensure that teaching and learning methods are appropriate to outcomes
- a means to facilitate feedback to students
- a method of reflection for curriculum designers on what they want to achieve
- a guide for matching content to level
- clarification for external examiners, external assessors and PSBs
- a guide for the process of credit transfer and accreditation of prior learning (APL)

The evidence contained in the 2007 **CEDEFOP** study strongly suggests the need to be sensitive to the particular context in which learning outcomes are brought into use.
Notably, learning outcomes are mainly required to perform multiple functions in national education and training systems in European countries: recognition of prior learning, award of credit, quality, learning plans, key competences, as well as modernising the governance of education and training as systems are reformed to encompass lifelong learning.

Learning outcomes are prominent in developing National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs) in Europe.
Here, identification of learning outcomes can provide the organising factor to make explicit the achievements of a wide range of learners, irrespective of the types or modes or duration of learning and training that they engage in.[2]

[2] http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/12952.aspx

Launching a European qualifications framework (EQF) and a European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET) - both based on learning outcomes - has increased attention on learning outcomes which may be seen as catalysts for national reforms.

Expectations of the learning outcomes approach are thus higher than ever before and many see this shift as an opportunity to tailor education and training to individual needs, improve links to the labour market and improve the way non-formally and informally acquired learning outcomes are recognised.

6. ECVET TOOLS AND METHODOLOGY

ECVET tools and methodology comprise the description of qualifications in terms of units of learning outcomes with associated points (60 points are allocated to the learning outcomes expected to be achieved in a year of formal full time VET), a transfer and accumulation process and other documents. Some of the concepts and processes of ECVET cited above are already embedded in many qualifications systems across Europe (see the ANNEX I for definitions).

ECVET should be applicable in various learning situations and contexts. Consequently, given the diversity of qualifications systems in Europe and the different possible uses of ECVET concepts and processes, the application described below is given as an example following the chronology of the core stages.

Stage 1: the assessment of learning outcomes

To implement ECVET it is necessary that qualifications are described using learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are grouped to create units.

Assessed learning outcomes constitute credit. Credit is the basis for enabling the transfer between learning contexts and for the accumulation of learning outcomes.
In ECVET, learning outcomes are used as a basis for credit transfer and accumulation.
Learning outcomes are not dependent on the learning process, the content of teaching or the learning context in which they have been achieved and therefore it is possible to use them to identify whether what the learner has achieved in one learning setting or context is comparable to what s/he is expected to have achieved in another setting or context.

Stage 2: the establishment of partnerships

In order to facilitate the implementation of ECVET, VET providers and/or competent bodies at the relevant level could establish **partnership agreements or memoranda of understanding (MoU).** During this phase of initialization, the memoranda of understanding could contribute to creating the climate of trust which is necessary for insuring the durability of the system, its operational characteristic and the effective credit transfer.
In the MoU, partners could specify:

- Correspondence between qualifications (units and credit points) and/or learning outcomes concerned by transfer. The EQF levels could contribute to the

establishment of the correspondence.

- The assessment, transfer and validation processes (units or parts of units). The specifications for quality assurance.

The key point of the MoU is that the learning outcomes for which credits are awarded by one or the other of the partners can be recognised irrefutably. Partnership agreements could be established between different authorities or organisations, according to the type and desired degree of co-operation. Thus, MoU could be established between bodies responsible for qualifications (ministries, branches…) and/or networks of VET providers (Chambers of Commerce …) and/or VET providers or other stakeholders in VET (training centres, schools, firms…).
A model memorandum of understanding could be developed at European level.

Stage 3: the learning agreement

It could be necessary to draw up an individual learning agreement for each person, notably in the formal learning context. This document would specify the learning outcomes expected at the end of a period of mobility (units or parts of units) and the associated points of credit. This individual learning agreement should be drawn up between the person and the two partners. A model learning agreement could be developed at European level.

Stage 4: award ECVET credits

ECVET credits are awarded (units or parts of units and associated ECVET credit points) after the assessment of the learning outcomes. Credits are recorded in a transcript of record which gives details on:

- knowledge, skills and competence which are acquired,
- the credit points which are associated with the achieved learning outcomes.

A template of the transcript of record could be designed at European level. Moreover, the Europass documents could be used to record credits and assure their transparency.

Stage 5: Transfer, validation and accumulation of credits

In accordance with the MoU and the learning agreement, credits should be transferred, then validated by the sending organisation and recognised for obtaining the qualification concerned, by accumulation, according to the rules.

The following diagram shows the **Credit Transfer and Accumulation** of the ECVET framework: learning outcomes acquired by an individual in different contexts (abroad or under another system) can be easily transferred to the individual's home context for accumulation and the achievement of a qualification.

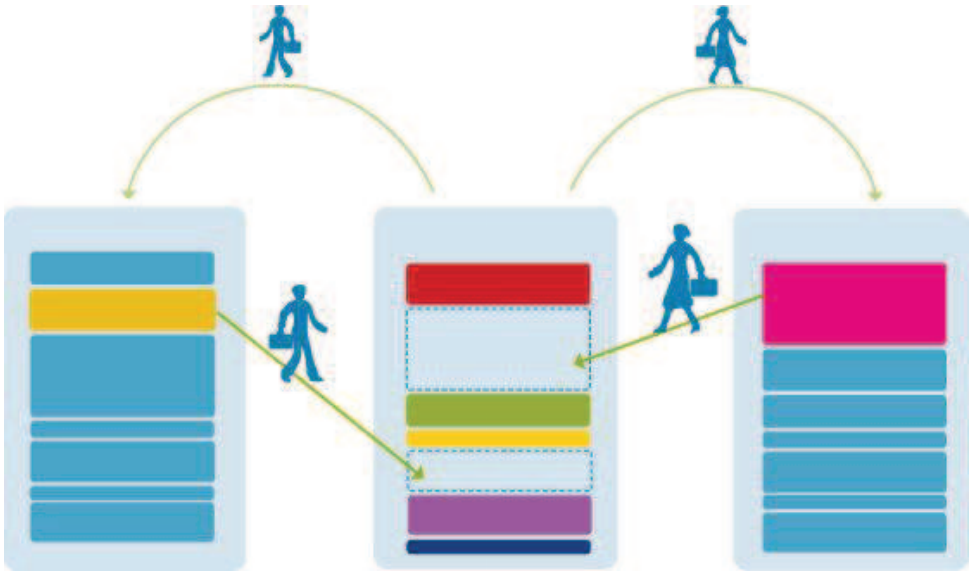
A **Credit for learning outcomes** refers to the fact that the learner has achieved the expected learning outcomes which have been assessed and documented in a personal transcript. Based on this documentation, other institutions can recognize the credit.

Credit transfer is the part of the process through which learning outcomes achieved in one context (abroad or under another system) can be taken into account into another context (abroad or under another system).

In order to be transferred **learning** outcomes have to be assessed then, on the basis of the assessed outcomes, the credit can be validated and recognised by the other competent institution.

Credit accumulation is the part of the process through which learners can acquire qualifications progressively by successive assessments and validation of learning outcomes.

In line with the ECVET Recommendation (see annex I), the transfer of credit concerns the validation and recognition of learning outcomes assessed in different contexts. The transcription of ECVET points in personal transcripts' accompanies this process but ECVET points are not the subject of credit transfer. Similarly, the process of accumulation concerns the assessed and validated learning outcomes and not the ECVET points. ECVET points contribute to informing the institution in charge of transferring learning outcomes and their recognition about the relative weight of the units/qualification the learner has already achieved.



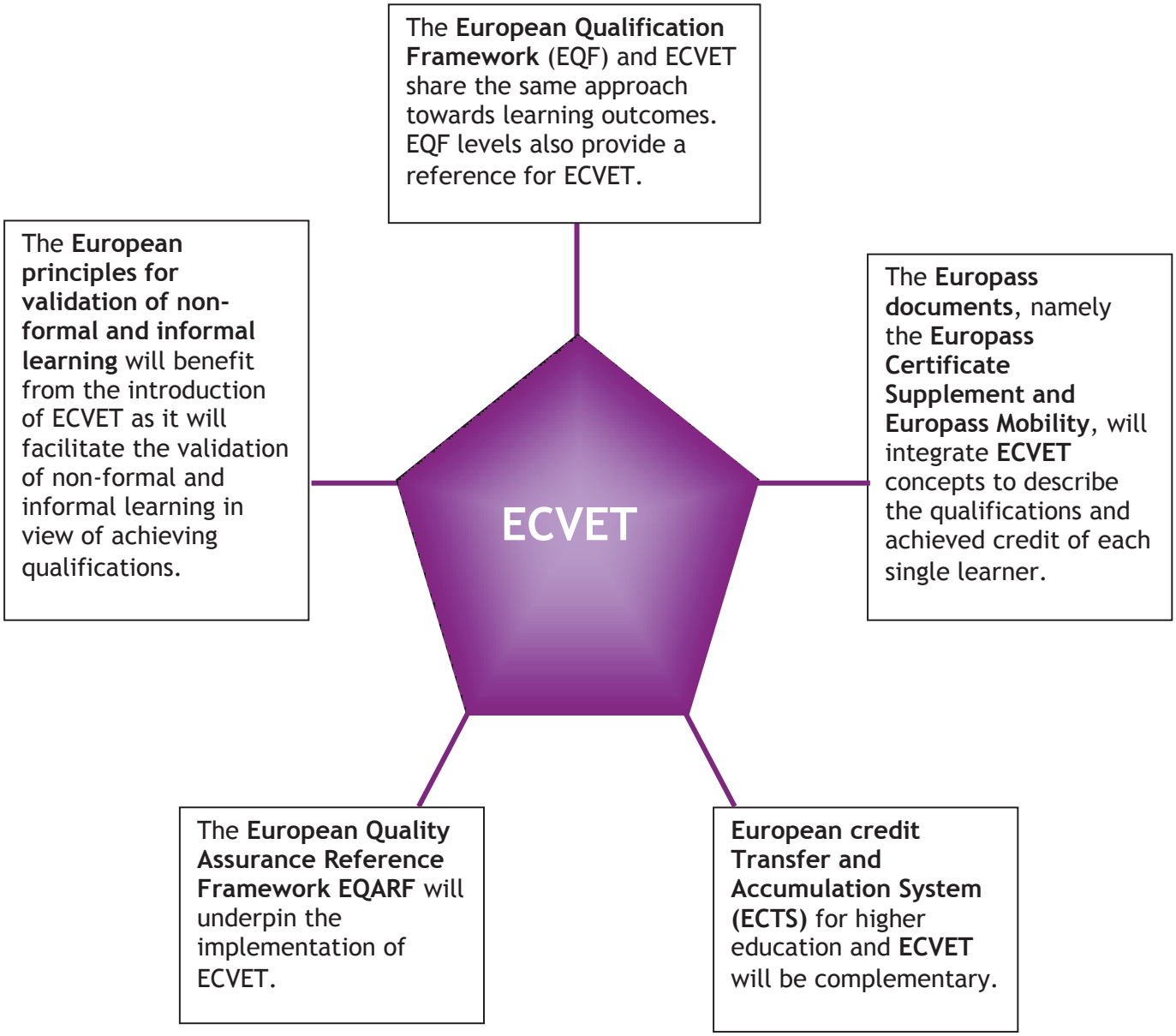
Sourc e: European Commission

7. ECVET AND OTHER EUROPEAN INSTRUMENTS

European cooperation in education and training has amongst its objectives **the development of common instruments to support lifelong learning and mobility**.

These instruments were developed and should be implemented in synergy and in a mutually-reinforcing way.

The testing and implementation of ECVET has important relationships with the following European instruments:



8. EUROPEAN EDUCATION AND TRAINING POLICIES

Economic and social developments in Europe over the last decade have increasingly underlined the need for a European dimension to education and training.
Furthermore, the transition towards a knowledge based economy capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion brings new challenges to the development of human resources.

The **Bologna** declaration on higher education in June 1999 marked the introduction of a new enhanced European cooperation in this area.

The **Lisbon** European Council in March 2000 recognised the important role of education as an integral part of economic and social policies, as an instrument for strengthening Europe's competitive power worldwide, and as a guarantee for ensuring the cohesion of our societies and the full development of its citizens. The European Council set the strategic objective for the European Union to become the world's most dynamic knowledge- based economy. The development of high quality vocational education and training is a crucial and integral part of this strategy, notably in terms of promoting social inclusion, cohesion, mobility, employability and competitiveness.

The report on the 'Concrete Future Objectives of Education and Training Systems', endorsed by the **Stockholm** European Council in March 2001, identified new areas for joint actions at European level in order to achieve the goals set at the Lisbon European Council. These areas are based on the three strategic objectives of the report; i.e. improving the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems in the European Union, facilitating access for all to education and training systems, and opening up education and training systems to the wider world.

In **Barcelona**, in March 2002 the European Council endorsed the Work Programme on the follow-up of the Objectives Report calling for European education and training to become a world quality reference by 2010.
Furthermore, it called for further action to introduce instruments to ensure the transparency of diplomas and qualifications, including promoting action similar to the Bologna-process, but adapted to the field of vocational education and training.

In response to the Barcelona mandate, the Council of the European Union (Education, Youth and Culture) adopted on 12 November 2002 a Resolution on enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training.
This resolution invites the Member States, and the Commission, within the framework of their responsibilities, to involve the candidate countries and the EFTA-EEA countries, as well as the social partners, in promoting an increased cooperation in vocational education and training.

The **Copenhagen** Declaration outlines the following main priorities to be pursued through enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training: [3]

[3] Priorities identified in the Resolution on the promotion of enhanced European co-operation on vocational education and training approved by the Council of the European Union (Education, Youth and Culture) on 12 November 2002

European dimension

- Strengthening the European dimension in vocational education and training with the aim of improving closer cooperation in order to facilitate and promote mobility and the development of inter-institutional cooperation, partnerships and other transnational initiatives, all in order to raise the profile of the European education and training area in an international context so that Europe will be recognised as a world-wide reference for learners.

Transparency, information and guidance

- Increasing transparency in vocational education and training through the implementation and rationalization of information tools and networks, including the integration of existing instruments such as the European CV, certificate and diploma supplements, the Common European framework of reference for languages and the EUROPASS into one single framework;
- Strengthening policies, systems and practices that support information, guidance and counselling in the Member States, at all levels of education, training and employment, particularly on issues concerning access to learning, vocational education and training, and the transferability and recognition of competences and qualifications, in order to support occupational and geographical mobility of citizens in Europe.

Recognition of competences and qualifications

- Investigating how transparency, comparability, transferability and recognition of competences and/or qualifications, between different countries and at different levels, could be promoted by developing reference levels, common principles for certification, and common measures, including a credit transfer system for vocational education and training;
- Increasing support to the development of competences and qualifications at sectoral level, by reinforc- ing cooperation and co-ordination especially involving the social partners. Several initiatives on a Com- munity, bilateral and multilateral basis, including those already identified in various sectors aiming at mutually recognised qualifications, illustrate this approach.

ECVET, and the other European instruments developed in recent years, has been developed on the basis of these priorities.
The aim is to create synergy and a mutually-reinforcing work among all the existing instruments.

ANNEX

RECOMMENDATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL OF 18TH JUNE 2009 ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A EUROPEAN CREDIT SYSTEM FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (ECVET)

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 (ECVET)

(Text with EEA relevance)

(2009/C 155/02)

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community, and in particular Article 149(4) and Article 150(4) thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the Commission,

Having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee [1],

Having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions [2],

Acting in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 251 of the Treaty [3],

Whereas:

(1) 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.

(2) The Lisbon European Council in 2000 concluded that increased transparency of qualifications should be one of the main components necessary to adapt education and training systems in the Community to the demands of the knowledge society. Furthermore, the Barcelona European Council in 2002 emphasised the importance of improving transparency and recognition methods in the area of vocational education and training ('VET').

(3) 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.

(4) Council Resolution of 19 December 2002 on the promotion of enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training [4] ('the Copenhagen process'), and the 2004 joint interim report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the Education and Training 2010 work programme [5], stress the importance of a credit transfer system for vocational education and training, while the 2008 joint progress report of the Council and the Commission [6] stresses the need to step up efforts to improve the quality and attractiveness of VET.

(5) The Conclusions of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council of 15 November 2004 on the Future priorities of enhanced European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training gave priority to the development and implementation of a European credit transfer system for VET in order to allow learners to build upon the achievements resulting from their learning pathways when moving between vocational training systems.

(6) 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.

[1] OJ C 100, 30.4.2009, p. 140.
[2] OJ C 325, 19.12.2008, p. 48.
[3] Position of the European Parliament of 18 December 2008 (not yet published in the Official Journal) and Council Decision of 11 May 2009.
[4] OJ C 13, 18.1.2003, p. 2.
[5] OJ C 104, 30.4.2004, p. 1.
[6] OJ C 86, 5.4.2008, p. 1.

(7) ECVET should be based on the principles and technical specifications set out in Annex II. Furthermore, it should be underpinned by the common principles for quality assurance set out in the Council conclusions of 28 May 2004 on Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training and the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training ([1]).

(8) 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.

(9) Transparent quality assurance principles, exchange of information and development of partnerships between institutions competent for qualifications, VET providers and other relevant stakeholders should help to build mutual trust and should facilitate the implementation of this Recommendation.

(10) 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.

(11) The validation of assessed non-formal and informal learning outcomes should be promoted in accordance with the Council conclusions of 28 May 2004 on common European principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning.

(12) This Recommendation complements the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning ([2]) which recommends that Member States promote close links between the EQF and existing or future European systems for credit transfer and accumulation in higher education and VET. While the main objective of the EQF is to increase the transparency, comparability and portability of acquired qualifications, ECVET is aimed at facilitating the transfer, recognition and accumulation of learning outcomes of individuals on their way to achieving a qualification.

(13) This Recommendation takes into account Decision No 2241/2004/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 December 2004 on a single Community framework for the transparency of qualifications and competences (Europass) ([3]) and Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on trans-national mobility within the Community for education and training purposes: European Quality Charter for Mobility ([4]).

(14) This Recommendation should facilitate the involvement of competent local and regional authorities in the exercise of linking national or other qualifications frameworks and systems to ECVET, where appropriate.

(15) This Recommendation should be without prejudice to Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications ([5]) which confers rights and obligations on both the relevant national authority and the migrant. 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.

(16) 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.

(17) Since the objectives of this Recommendation, namely to support and complement the activities of Member States, to facilitate cooperation between them, to increase transparency and promote mobility and lifelong learning, cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States and can therefore, by reason of the scale or effects, be better achieved at Community level, the Community may adopt measures, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity as set out in Article 5 of the Treaty. In accordance with the principle of proportionality, as set out in that Article, this Recommendation does not go beyond what is necessary in order to achieve those objectives, insofar as it does not replace or define national qualifications systems, qualifications or national credit systems, does not prescribe specific learning outcomes or an individual's competences, and does not aim at or require either the fragmentation or the harmonisation of qualifications systems,

([1]) See page 1 of this Official Journal.
([2]) OJ C 111, 6.5.2008, p. 1.
([3]) OJ L 390, 31.12.2004, p. 6.
([4]) OJ L 394, 30.12.2006, p. 5.
([5]) OJ L 255, 30.9.2005, p. 22.

HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT MEMBER STATES:

1. promote the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training ('ECVET') as set out in Annexes I and II at all levels of the EQF with reference to VET qualifications, in order to facilitate trans-national mobility and the recognition of learning outcomes in VET and borderless lifelong learning;

2. create the necessary conditions and adopt measures, as appropriate, so that as from 2012 – in accordance with national legislation and practice, and on the basis of trials and testing – it is possible for ECVET to be gradually applied to VET qualifications at all levels of the EQF, and used for the purpose of the transfer, recognition and accumulation of individuals' learning outcomes achieved in formal and, where appropriate, non-formal and informal contexts;

3. support the development of national and European partnerships and networks involving institutions and authorities responsible for qualifications and diplomas, VET providers, social partners and other relevant stakeholders dedicated to trialling, implementing and promoting ECVET;

4. ensure that stakeholders and individuals in the area of VET have access to information and guidance for using ECVET, whilst facilitating the exchange of information between the Member States. Furthermore, ensure that the application of ECVET to qualifications is properly publicised by the competent authorities and that associated 'Europass' documents issued by the competent authorities contain explicit relevant information;

5. apply, in accordance with national legislation and practice, the common principles for quality assurance in VET set out in the Council conclusions of 28 May 2004 on Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training when using ECVET, particularly in relation to the assessment, validation and recognition of learning outcomes;

6. ensure that there are functioning coordination and monitoring mechanisms at the appropriate levels, in accordance with the legislation, structures and requirements of each Member State, in order to guarantee the quality, transparency and consistency of the initiatives taken to implement ECVET.

ENDORSE THE COMMISSION'S INTENTION TO:

1. support Member States in carrying out the tasks referred to in points 1 to 6 and in using the principles and technical specifications of ECVET as set out in Annex II, in particular by facilitating testing, cooperation, mutual learning, promotion, and the launching of information and consultation exercises, whilst ensuring access to the guidance material for all interested citizens;

2. develop users' guides and tools, and adapt relevant Europass documents, in collaboration with Member States, national and European experts and users; develop expertise for enhancing the compatibility and complementarity of ECVET and ECTS used in the higher education sector, in collaboration with VET and higher education experts and users at European and national levels; and provide regular information on the developments of ECVET;

3. promote, and participate together with the Member States in, a European ECVET network involving relevant VET stakeholders and national competent institutions for the purpose of disseminating and supporting ECVET within Member States and establishing a sustainable platform for the exchange of information and experience between Member States; establish, from within this network, an ECVET users' group in order to contribute to the updating of the users' guide and to the quality and overall coherence of the cooperation process for the implementation of ECVET;

4. monitor and follow up the action taken, including the results of trials and testing, and, after the assessment and evaluation of this action carried out in cooperation with the Member States, report, by 18 June 2014, to the European Parliament and the Council on the experience gained and implications for the future, including, if necessary, a review and adaptation of this Recommendation, involving the updating of the Annexes and guidance material, in cooperation with the Member States.

Done at Brussels, 18 June 2009.

For the European Parliament	*For the Council*
The President	*The President*
H.-G. PÖTTERING	Štefan FÜLE

ANNEX I

DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this recommendation, the following definitions shall apply:

(a) '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;

(b) '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;

(c) '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;

(d) '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;

(e) '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;

(f) '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;

(g) '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;

(h) 'Recognition of learning outcomes' means the process of attesting officially achieved learning outcomes through the awarding of units or qualifications;

(i) '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.

ANNEX II

ECVET — PRINCIPLES AND TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

ECVET is a technical framework for the transfer, recognition and, where appropriate, accumulation of individuals' learning outcomes with a view to achieving a qualification. ECVET tools and methodology comprise the description of qualifications in terms of units of learning outcomes with associated points, a transfer and accumulation process and complementary documents such as learning agreements, transcripts of records and ECVET users' guides.

ECVET is intended to facilitate the recognition of learning outcomes in accordance with national legislation, in the framework of mobility, for the purpose of achieving a qualification. It should be noted that ECVET does not imply any new entitlement for citizens to obtain the automatic recognition of either learning outcomes or points. Its application for a given qualification is in accordance with the legislation, rules and regulations applicable in the Member States and is based on the following principles and technical specifications:

1. **Units of learning outcomes**

A unit is a component of a qualification, consisting of a coherent set of knowledge, skills and competence that can be assessed and validated with a number of associated ECVET points. A qualification comprises in principle several units and is made up of the whole set of units. Thus, a learner can achieve a qualification by accumulating the required units, achieved in different countries and different contexts (formal and, where appropriate, non-formal and informal), while respecting national legislation relating to the accumulation of units and the recognition of learning outcomes.

The units that make up a qualification should be:

— described in legible and understandable terms by referring to the knowledge, skills and competences contained in them,

— constructed and organised in a coherent way with regard to the overall qualification,

— constructed in a way that enables discrete assessment and validation of learning outcomes contained in the unit.

A unit may be specific to a single qualification or common to several qualifications. The expected learning outcomes defining a unit may be achieved irrespective of where or how these have been achieved. Thus, a unit is not to be confused with a component of a formal learning programme or training provision.

The rules and procedures for defining characteristics of units of learning outcomes and for combining and accumulating units for a given qualification are defined by competent institutions and partners involved in the training process according to the national or regional rules.

The specifications for a unit should include:

— the generic title of the unit,

— the generic title of the qualification (or qualifications) to which the unit relates, where applicable,

— the reference of the qualification according to the EQF level and, where appropriate, the national qualifications framework (NQF) level, with the ECVET credit points associated with the qualification,

— the learning outcomes contained in the unit,

— the procedures and criteria for assessment of these learning outcomes,

— the ECVET points associated with the unit,

— the validity in time of the unit, where relevant.

2. **Transfer and Accumulation of learning outcomes, ECVET partnerships**

In ECVET, units of learning outcomes achieved in one setting are assessed and then, after successful assessment, transferred to another setting. In this second context, they are validated and recognised by the competent institution as part of the requirements for the qualification that the person is aiming to achieve. Units of learning outcomes can then be accumulated towards this qualification, in accordance with national or regional rules. Procedures and guidelines for the assessment, validation, accumulation and recognition of units of learning outcomes are designed by the relevant competent institutions and partners involved in the training process.

Credit transfer based on ECVET and applied to learning outcomes achieved in formal learning contexts should be facilitated by establishing partnerships and networks involving competent institutions, each of which is empowered, in their own setting, to award qualifications or units or to give credit for achieved learning outcomes for transfer and validation.

The establishment of partnerships aims to:

— provide a general framework of cooperation and networking between the partners, set out in Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) through which a climate of mutual trust is established,

— assist the partners in the design of specific arrangements for credit transfer for learners.

The MoU should confirm that the partners:

— accept each other's status as competent institutions,

— accept each other's quality assurance, assessment, validation and recognition criteria and procedures as satisfactory for the purposes of credit transfer,

— agree the conditions for the operation of the partnership, such as objectives, duration and arrangements for review of the MoU,

— agree on the comparability of qualifications concerned for the purposes of credit transfer, using the reference levels established by EQF,

— identify other actors and competent institutions that may be involved in the process concerned and their functions.

For applying ECVET to learning outcomes achieved in a non-formal and informal learning context or outside the framework of an MoU, the competent institution which is empowered to award qualifications or units or to give credit should establish procedures and mechanisms for the identification, validation and recognition of these learning outcomes through the award of the corresponding units and the associated ECVET points.

3. **Learning agreement and personal transcript**

For applying credit transfer involving two partners and a specific mobile learner, a learning agreement is concluded by the two competent institutions involved in the training and validation process and the learner, in the framework of an MoU. It should:

— distinguish between competent 'home' and 'hosting' institutions ([1]),

— specify the particular conditions for a period of mobility, such as the identity of the learner, the duration of the mobility period, learning outcomes expected to be achieved and the associated ECVET points.

([1]) The 'home' institution is the institution which will validate and recognise learning outcomes achieved by the learner. The 'hosting' institution is the one that delivers training for the learning outcomes concerned and assesses the achieved learning outcomes.

The learning agreement should lay down that, if the learner has achieved the expected learning outcomes and these have been positively assessed by the 'hosting' institution, the 'home' institution should validate and recognise them as part of the requirements for a qualification, according to the rules and procedures established by the competent institution.

Transfer between partners can apply to learning outcomes achieved in formal and, where appropriate, non-formal and informal contexts. Thus, the transfer of credit for achieved learning outcomes has three stages:

— the 'hosting' institution assesses the learning outcomes achieved and awards credit to the learner; the learning outcomes achieved and the corresponding ECVET points are recorded in a learner's 'personal transcript' ([1]),

— the 'home' institution validates the credit as a suitable record of the learner's achievement,

— the 'home' institution then recognises the learning outcomes that have been acquired; this recognition gives rise to the award of the units and their corresponding ECVET points, according to the rules of the 'home' system.

Validation and recognition by the competent 'home' institution depend on the successful assessment of learning outcomes by the competent 'hosting' institution, in accordance with the agreed procedures and quality assurance criteria.

4. **ECVET points**

ECVET points provide complementary information about qualifications and units in numerical form. They have no value independent of the acquired learning outcomes for the particular qualification to which they refer and they reflect the achievement and accumulation of units. To enable a common approach for the use of ECVET points, a convention is used according to which 60 points are allocated to the learning outcomes expected to be achieved in a year of formal full time VET.

In ECVET the allocation of points usually has two phases: ECVET points are allocated first to a qualification as a whole and then to its units. For a given qualification, one formal learning context is taken as a reference and, on the basis of the convention the total number of points is assigned for that qualification. From this total, ECVET points are then allocated to each unit according to their relative weight within the qualification.

For qualifications which do not have a formal learning pathway reference, ECVET credit points can be allocated through estimation by comparison with another qualification which has a formal reference context. To establish the comparability of the qualifications, the competent institution should refer to the equivalent EQF level or, possibly, NQF level, or to the similarity of the learning outcomes in a closely related professional field.

The relative weight of a unit of learning outcomes, with regard to the qualification, should be established according to the following criteria or to a combination thereof:

— the relative importance of the learning outcomes which constitute the unit for labour market participation, for progression to other qualification levels or for social integration,

— the complexity, scope and volume of learning outcomes in the unit,

— the effort necessary for a learner to acquire the knowledge, skills and competence required for the unit.

The relative weight of any given unit common to several qualifications, as expressed in ECVET points, may vary from one of these qualifications to another.

Allocations of ECVET points are normally part of the design of qualifications and units. They are produced by the competent institution responsible for the design and maintenance of the qualification or specifically empowered for this task. In countries where there is already a national system of points, the relevant competent institutions establish arrangements for the conversion of national credit points to ECVET points.

([1]) A personal transcript is a document which details the learners' assessed learning outcomes, units and ECVET points awarded.

The successful achievement of a qualification or of a unit triggers the award of the associated ECVET points, independently of the actual time required to achieve them.

Usually the transfer of a unit entails the transfer of the corresponding ECVET points so that they are included when the transferred learning outcomes are recognised, in accordance with national or regional rules. It is up to the competent institution to reconsider, where necessary, the ECVET points to be taken into account, as long as the rules and methodologies which are laid down for this purpose are transparent and underpinned by quality assurance principles.

Any qualification acquired through non-formal or informal learning for which a formal learning pathway reference can be identified, and the corresponding units, carry the same ECVET points as the reference, since the same learning outcomes are being achieved.