



ECVET system for No borders in tourism hospitality European Training and WORK

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Final Report

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Executive Summary

This report on the work of the project “N.E.T.WORK - ECVET system for No borders in tourism hospitality European Training and WORK” is aimed at those interested in ECVET (European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training), the new European instrument to promote mutual trust and mobility in vocational education and training.

N.E.T.WORK is an ECVET pilot project selected through the 2008 call for proposals “Projects to test and develop the credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET)”; its users are public and private training operators and the beneficiaries of vocational training pathways and/or eventual mobility projects, in the sector of tourism and hospitality management with a particular focus on the **reception area in hotel and alternative lodging structures**. The project pursued the following general objectives:

- to realise experimental interventions within the ECVET system with reference to the specific target of beneficiaries of vocational training pathways and eventual mobility projects, in the above-mentioned sector;
- to define and implement specific ECVET techniques and produce methodologies, specifications, guidelines and a handbook for project follow-up and for widening the expected impact of the experimentation/testing;
- to realise system mainstreaming interventions.

The project was conceived by a qualified and multi-skilled trans-national consortium (Italy-France-Slovenia-Portugal) with consolidated previous cooperation in the development of projects and interventions strongly related either to the area of VET strategies, or to the productive sector of tourism and hospitality management, the related labour market and vocational training. The Consortium followed an approach based on the integration of all the Partners’ contributions and experiences with training credits and the ECVET system. This led to the development, thanks also to the contribution of exponents of the target groups and stakeholders, of a shared ECVET model that was tested in the national contexts of the Partnership.

The main results obtained include:

- a research (both desk and field) to analyse the existing national repertoires of training profiles in the Hospitality Reception sector and the related credit systems;
- a selection and description of the training profiles that were then tested in the experimentation phase, declined by Learning Outcomes and Units (in terms of knowledge, skills and competences);
- the definition and quantification of credit points, in order to articulate their weight in function of their possible transfer into the various national standards;
- correlation of Units to the corresponding EQF levels,
- Guidelines for the verification and evaluation of Learning Outcomes
- Descriptive outline of credit points for the analysed qualifications and the related units

- Formal agreements

(Output 9 Experimentation results and impact analysis: Final Evaluation Report
(Deliverable nr. 9.4)

The model that emerged from all of this work was tested in the four national contexts of the Partnership and Guidelines of the ECVET system (Vademecum of the ECVET management system) were created, validated and disseminated on the basis of the results of these tests. More information can be found at the dedicated project website www.ecvet-network.eu

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1. Project Objectives

The N.E.T.WORK project had the following general objectives:

- to constitute and consolidate a partnership among organisations able to create and share a common operational framework for the development and testing of the ECVET system;
- to carry out experimental interventions within the ECVET system with reference to the specific target of beneficiaries of vocational training pathways and eventual mobility projects, in the sector of tourism and hospitality management with a particular focus on the reception area in hotel and alternative lodging structures;
- to define and implement specific ECVET techniques and produce methodologies, specifications, guidelines and a handbook;
- to empower systems mainstreaming interventions in order to contribute to strengthening the results of the general ECVET system in a wider EU context.

The specific objectives pursued by the ECVET system and the N.E.T.WORK project were:

to create the necessary conditions and, if necessary, to adopt measures so that as of 2012, in conformity with national legislation and accepted practice and in light of the experimentation and tests, the ECVET system can be gradually applied to the qualifications of vocational education and training at all EQF levels and used to transfer, recognise and accumulate the results of learning acquired by a person in formal contexts and, if the case, non-formal and informal ones;

to promote the development of national and European networks and partnerships, in which the authorities and institutions responsible for qualifications and diplomas, the subjects providing professional education and training, the trade unions and employers' associations and other interested parties participate, with the purpose of testing, applying and promoting the ECVET system;

to propose an approach through which the learning outcomes acquired abroad can be considered for the awarding of a qualification in the student's country of origin ;

to define, validate and recognise – within the specific diversified characteristics of the training pathways that can effectively be identified in the chosen area of the qualification - congruent and measurable “modules” (learning outcome units), valid for all the partners' countries;

to stipulate agreements/conventions to allow the competent organisations which are part of the partnership validity and continuity with the recognition/certification defined through the ECVET methods, and to amplify as much as possible the area of applicability;

to create and test common tools for the definition, implementation, validation and recognition of modular training paths, already existing in the partner countries, under the ECVET system (including the processes of support, validation and recognition of the Lifelong Learning LLL and Lifewide Learning LWL training experiences) with the double objective of facilitating mobility in various training phases and situations and

of allowing the “accumulation” of potentially recognisable credits, for employment purposes, throughout the European Community;

to create a tool for suppliers, professionals and competent bodies, to allow them to more easily compare the learning outcomes acquired in the various countries, and to validate and recognise these;

to define a device to respond to the needs of the final user and therefore a way to allow persons to follow their own training pathway by building on the learning outcomes when they move from one learning context to another, in particular in the framework of mobility;

to create a methodological framework, agreements and common principles to reinforce dialogue among training providers;

to propose tools to develop partnerships among the actors involved (competent bodies, training suppliers, etc.).

to apply the ECVET system and instruments, according to national legislation and usage on the topic of vocational education and training;

to promote and participate with the stakeholders and competent national institutions with the objective of disseminating and supporting ECVET among the project partners and of establishing a sustainable platform for the exchange of information and experiences among the partners.

2. Project Approach

The N.E.T.WORK project, in line with what is provided for in the Community Recommendations, therefore, has not called for the determination of procedures and tools which require a modification of the VET systems applied in each partner country nor does it require the design of a new training pathway or a “new” qualification. Its aim, instead, is to identify, beginning with an analysis of the reference context, and share tools and methods for the application of the ECVET principles within already existing pathways and practices in the partner countries. These tools were tested first of all in the pathways existing in the reference territory and, following a philosophy of agreement, rules and methods for the application of the ECVET system were shared in the case of individual mobility.

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

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

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

In the ECVET context a clear terminological differentiation has been made between “units” and “modules”.

The term “module” belongs to the area of the pathways, that is, to that of the organisation and conduction of vocational training programmes. A vocational training programme structured in modules is composed of elements which, from an organisational point of view, differ from one another, that is, which must be verified and evaluated separately. In a corresponding way an “entire” vocational training programme is constituted by the accumulation of individual modules.

When we speak of “units”, instead, we refer to the area of outcomes, in the sense of parts of qualifications, which could be defined on the basis of knowledge, skills and competences. The “units” can be certified. The identification of training outcomes (even partial) does not exclude non-modular but holistic training programmes,

although for practical reasons it needs a similar structure for formal comparison of learning processes.

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

The project was directed to short-term target groups, represented by:

- a) Users of the training paths and of mobility in the area in which the testing should take place. These were meant to benefit from the model of ECVET prepared experimentally especially for the tourism sector and from the products intended to foster the use of instruments in support of the transparency and certification of the competences currently available.
- b) The project partners as active subjects in the professional training systems and of interface between labour supply and demand. The partners involved represented important organisations in the area of national training supply and trans-national mobility programmes; moreover the promoter also participates in the definition and realisation of a university curriculum dedicated to the tourism sector, the members of the partnership have worked for years on certification systems and offer similar services, but this project provided them with the opportunity of setting in motion a trans-national system.

Long term target groups of the project were defined as:

- a) Potential users of the final product: subjects active in the definition of national and community training policies, training agencies and bodies, as well as the trade unions and employers' associations since they are involved in the strategy for the construction and activation of systems of credit transfer: in fact the output of this proposal will be useful instruments in the planning and programming of training initiatives.
- b) users, real or potential, of training activities for the tourism industry and sector workers: these will benefit from the ECVET model tested specially for the tourism industry and from the products aimed at fostering the use of instruments in support of the transparency and certification of the competences currently available.

3. Project Outcomes & Results

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

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

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

In this prospective, the project has realised this set of products:

- ✓ **Trans-national comparative matrix**, which is the output of an analysis process carried out on the results of two researches (desk and field) conducted by partners in their national contexts; it provides, for each national training profile tested in the experimentation, the area of activity (macro competences). From these results a common shared framework of these macro-competences was chosen.
- ✓ **Analytical description of the training profiles to be tested in the experimentation**, where each common macro-competence has been described in terms of Knowledge, Skills and Competences (Framework KSC), according to the document “ECVET — Principles and Technical Specifications” annexed to the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009.
- ✓ **Operational guidelines for the construction of Learning Outcomes and Units**, a report containing guidelines (procedures, tools, elements, etc) for the construction, identification and approval of Learning Outcomes and Units in function of their evaluation, validation and recognition at certification.
- ✓ **Specifications for the description of selected training profiles**, that contain a grid to attribute training modules (contained within the selected training paths) to Units and to indicate the generic title of the unit, the EQF reference level (which may or may not correspond to that of the qualification), and a list of the Learning Outcomes.

- ✓ **Descriptive outline of credits points for the analysed qualifications and the related units**, a report in which the partnership has:
 - assigned CPs (credit points) to the Units identified within the different training pathways of the various countries and subordinately – within these Units - assigned CPs to the Learning Outcomes identified therein;
 - assigned EQF levels to the Units identified
 - identified Unit descriptors that represent the “minimum common denominator” – they would serve as a “guide” and reference for the experimentation.
- ✓ **Guidelines for the verification and evaluation of Learning Outcomes**: this product called for an approach and instruments that allow flexible recognition, in function of certification and verification, of the "products" of learning (in the specific case going beyond a strictly quantitative approach). The information provided in the guidelines made constant reference to the existing national systems of verification and evaluation with an eye to the sustainability and transferability of the methodological approach and of the instruments proposed by the partnership, guaranteeing in any case the trans-national approval of the elements;
- ✓ **Descriptive outline of credit points for the analysed qualifications and the related units**: Credit points, expressed in numbers, were associated with each unit referring to a qualification; these points supply information in relation to the value represented by the unit itself in relation to a qualification. A different number may be assigned to the same unit afferent to two figures chosen for testing according to the Learning outcomes that compose the unit of reference. In the descriptive outline, which represented the indispensable work basis for the shared application of the expected project results, the partnership specified that the characteristic features of the professional qualifications and related units and credit points assigned them, would not depend on the differences existing in the learning methodologies;
- ✓ **Formal agreements**: agreements have been reached using the models and instruments made available by the European ECVET system. In the agreements, besides citing the instruments and operational methods constructed by the partnership and described in the guidelines, the details of the testing have also been defined as well as the roles of each partner organisation. Parallel to the agreements among members of the partnership the formulation of agreement protocols extended to other institutional subjects and training agencies of the territories involved were hypothesised;
- ✓ **N.E.T.WORK experimentation plan**: containing detailed information on: the training pathways chosen for testing and their structuring in units and Learning Outcomes; the expected results; the organisation (timing, resources, targets, etc.); the subjects (learners, students, structures, pathways, etc.) involved and their related roles; support and monitoring activities;
- ✓ **Guidelines for the application of ECVET**: the experimentation was structured according to the guidelines in such a way that all the methods and instruments defined by the partnership in the preceding WPs were fully respected. In fact, the fields of application, roles, timing, expected results and direct and indirect target

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

- ✓ **Experimentation’s analysis Report: Interim results and impact:** a collection of each partner country’s related monitoring report and a synthetic trans-national analysis. The contents were structured as follows:
 - Interim results of testing in terms of efficacy and efficiency
 - SWOT analysis of the system
 - Hints and suggestions for a fine-tuning of the experimentation, and eventual problem setting and solving
 - Short term impact (first indications for planning, using Learning outcomes and Units)
 - Forecast of medium term impact
 - Suggestions concerning inputs for transferability of the model to other geographic contexts

Each partner nation prepared a report; partners P1 and P3 had the task of structuring and drawing up a comparative synthesis.

- ✓ **Experimentation results and impact analysis: Final Evaluation Report:** qualitative and quantitative analysis of results and impact of the experimentation, also through comparative analysis between partners. The contents of the Report include:
 - Results of testing in terms of efficacy and efficiency
 - SWOT analysis of the system
 - guidelines for the use of the fine-tuned and tested system
 - Impact and definition of new approaches in the planning and programming of training interventions (indications for planning using Learning outcomes and Units)
 - Indicators of the transferability of the model to other geographic contexts
- ✓ **Vademecum of the ECVET management system:** The Vademecum, besides being a detailed description of the procedures and methodological models of the ECVET system tested, was intended to report the procedure followed by the partnership for the development of the operational instruments of the ECVET N.E.T.WORK management system: from the way of constructing training pathways to tools & instruments for the evaluation and certification (and registration) of credits, as well as the models of the network agreements for the mutual recognition of credits. Since there was a need shared by the partnership to make constant reference to the guidelines and instruments provided by the EU Commission under the ECVET system, the final structure decided for this product imposed: a first section (Chapter 1 ECVET) introducing the general reference framework of ECVET; a second section (Chapter 2 - Designing the pathway for implementing an ECVET experimentation: Step by Step) presenting a sort of “road-map” which designs an “an ideal scenario” per each element and step of the process of implementing an ECVET experimentation, therefore based on general considerations and constant references to EU guidelines and

achievements, but presented also in the light of the experience gained in the project development and thus structured as an annotated and experienced presentation; a third section (Chapter 3 – a CASE STUDY: THE PROPOSALS OF THE Network project) with a narrative and operative structure, taking in consideration the “life” of the N.E.T.WORK project as the main example and critically analysing the various steps according to a problem-setting/problem-solving approach.

Beside these main products, we carried out a strong project valorisation activity with:

- ✓ a **Project website**, which serves as a partnership coordination tool, as well as a privileged channel for project dissemination and valorisation activities, filing and storage of all documentation produced within the project development, advertising events and connections with the EU institutional stakeholders, the Executive Agency and other EU project partnerships involved in similar activities and initiatives (www.ecvet-network.eu).
- ✓ **Trans-national start-up workshops** and transnational meeting
- ✓ **Four trans-national thematic workshops** to share and discuss various specific issues emerging during the realisation of project activities with national hotel sector operators, trainers and stakeholders.
- ✓ **Two Dissemination thematic seminars** with experts in SLOVENIA and FRANCE
- ✓ A **Final Dissemination thematic seminar** was held in Italy to share and discuss the different issues emerging from the experimentations conducted, comparative and SWOT Analyses of the various results of the testing, dissemination and mainstreaming.
- ✓ **Newsletters**, containing the project presentation, developments, thematic discussions and focus, news on events, project milestones, etc.
- ✓ **Presentation of the project and its output** in other EU project meetings.
- ✓ **Press and internet communications.**
- ✓ **Participation in five ECVET pilot project seminars**, organised to stimulate exchanges and to identify transferable practices and methods.

The project outcomes appear on the project website (www.ecvet-network.eu). For further details, please contact Stefano Poeta, the N.E.T.WORK project manager (tel 0039 075 8044805; s.poeta@cstassisi.eu).

4. Partnership

N.E.T.WORK benefits from the consolidated expertise and experience of the partners on such issues as VET strategies for the promotion and implementation of Lifelong Learning devices in formal and informal contexts, tourism and hospitality management and the related labour market, certification systems, educational/vocational training. In fact:

- **Centro Italiano di Studi Superiori sul Turismo e sulla Promozione Turistica (Italy)**, the applicant and coordinator, is the leading Italian research centre for training in the tourism sector; it has already produced numerous researches and interventions of national and European dimensions in the supply of training services for tourism, acquiring broad competence especially in the analysis and trans-national testing of competences in the sector.
- **Provincia di Perugia (Italy)** is a Local Authority with statutory, normative, organisational, administrative and financial autonomy; it has a complex organisation divided in areas coordinated by a General Direction, including "Training and Education" with competence in organisation and management of public services for employment, planning training and educational policies for the unemployed, employed, young people and adults, with private and public resources obtained especially from the European Social Funds transferred through the Umbrian Region, Managing Authority of the ESF.
- **Sviluppo & Competenze (Italy)** is an organisation which operates in various sectors of the research, consultancy, planning and programming fields, in particular focusing its attention on VET systems problems; its area of intervention is centred on the EU strategies for the development of a "Learning Society", and, in this context on the problems related to the creation of a Lifelong Learning System.
- **Federazione delle Associazioni Italiane Alberghi e Turismo (Italy)** is most representative of Italian hoteliers and represents the needs and proposals of hotel businesses with institutions and political, economic and trade union organisations; it has participated in EU projects regarding issues such as competences and work mobility.
- **France Europea (France)** is connected with the General Direction of training and education of the French Ministry of Agriculture to promote public agrarian education (specifically, in the area of rural tourism); it is an association that includes 52 vocational training and technology institutions in the field of agriculture and agricultural tourism; it is an "association structure" which operates as a network with logistical support from the French Ministry of Agriculture.
- **National Institute for Vocational Education and Training (Slovenia)** is a public institution and performs research, developmental and advisory activities and is the focal point where interests of the state and social partners in vocational and technical education converge, coordinate and connect; the Centre is also the National Reference Point for national vocational qualifications; it has developed and is implementing, as part of its institutional activities, the generalisation in the national context of processes of training validation in the

light of European indications on school training, non formal and informal learning, LLL and LWL.

- **Consultis (Portugal)** is a private limited company which works in the field of entrepreneurship consultancy, innovation and specialised research, especially within education and training areas; it has developed many research and vocational training and Lifelong Learning interventions with the ISESP – ISTITUTO SUPERIOR DE ESPINHO – for the definition of the elements for the recognition and institutional certification of learning outcomes.

Two organisations participate in the project as associated partners: **Consorzio Nazionale per la Formazione, l'Aggiornamento e l'Orientamento** (Italy) and **Istituto Superior de Espinho** (Portugal). The first represents a network of many different Italian higher secondary education institutions and vocational training centres and it is an actor presenting key-subjects beneficiaries of the ECVET experimental model in order to support both dissemination and testing activities in the Italian territory. Instituto Superior de Espinho is an institution of Cooperative and Private higher education; among its VET supply ISEP has Hotel Management and offered its structure as a key-subject beneficiary of the ECVET experimental model in order to support both dissemination and testing activities in the regional and national territory.

The presence in the partnership of organisations with different missions and operating in countries that represent a variety of qualification systems and are at different stages regarding the coordination of their systems with ECVET (or in other words “ECVET readiness”), has given great added value to the project since it was characterised by a methodological and operational prospective based on the systemic integration into ECVET of various experiences matured or underway in the partner countries.

N.E.T.WORK has developed partnerships with groups outside the direct consortium from the earliest planning phases, involving two important organisations such as the Consorzio Nazionale per la Formazione, l'Aggiornamento e l'Orientamento and Instituto Superior de Espinho which held a key role and was an important reference both for the target users and for the Consortium itself during the testing and validation of the refined ECVET model. Moreover it should be emphasised that the consortium has been committed to the pro-active involvement, from the beginning of the project, of the final users and to raising their awareness of the topics of the transparency and recognition of competences and of work and study mobility, calling for an *in itinere* confrontation with these during the thematic seminars conducted in Italy, Portugal and Slovenia.

5. Plans for the Future

During the experimentation it was possible to “simulate” what would happen in a phase of full reception of the ECVET system, that is a “clear commitment on the part of the competent Bodies and of the institutions that provide the service, formalised in each country on various levels”.

This involvement has already been amply demonstrated in the Bologna process for Higher Education (HE), in which explicit voluntary commitment fostered the implementation of the ECTS system which, following a pilot phase conducted by the European Commission, is by now an integral component of the higher education systems the majority of European countries.

As called for in the European Recommendations, the methodological process defined for the experimentation along with the instruments have been constructed and later applied complying with a series of principles, rules and conventions essential for their implementation, yet at the same time they have been characterised by the maximum flexibility in their application.

In their definition, the methodology and instruments of the N.E.T.WORK project, besides having flexibility and sustainability as a strongpoint, were conceived in such a way as to render ECVET simple for people to use and suitable for their real needs so that people effectively use them.

The experimentation has allowed us to identify strengths and weaknesses with direct reference to both the tool kit and to the ECVET system in its more general setup.

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

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

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

The testing has allowed us to identify strengths and weaknesses with direct

reference both to the tool kit and to the ECVET system in its more general structure. Some considerations have been indicated below which offer ideas for the improvement of project output and indications about the conditions necessary for a real application of the ECVET system.

STRENGTHS:

- The dimension and specific field of expertise of the partner
- Availability of institutional and/or operational networks of the involved partners
- The set of guidelines, grids and tools to implement the testing phase emerged as being suitable, easy to use, clear and, to some extent, innovative
- A very good commitment of responsible partners in accompanying and supporting the experimentation
- The high total number of beneficiaries involved
- Availability of homogeneous EQF levels of the VET pathways
- Systems start to be adapted to ECVET rules, such as in the case of the Province of Perugia
- Comparison and sharing of the methodologies for the definition of competences.
- Reinforcement of common elements among different systems for the description of qualifications and learning pathways
- Construction of a network among subjects operating on analogous systems in different territorial contexts which share the methodology and tools proposed in the testing

WEAKNESSES:

- Teaching/training staff not prepared to deal with the key issues of the ECVET system (LOs, EQF levels, NQF, competences based training, etc.)
- Lack of incentives to motivate the teaching staff in their involvement in the testing implementation
- The lack of funding available to support the testing phase
- The small number of institution/pathways involved
- The inexistence of actual mobility experiences in progress or that may be activated during the testing phase.
- Complexity of the passage from a system based on the recognition of entry credits through the assessment of competences to one based on “learning outcomes”
- Difficult comparison of professional standards, training standards, evaluation standards and recognition/certification standards among systems
- Difficulty establishing common procedural standards and univocal methods for the recognition of credits
- Difficulty of application in contexts not based on learning outcomes
- Difficulty in linking up systems with other countries
- Complexity of the processes of verification, recognition and validation of learning and the variety of validation systems
- Difficulty getting the competent institutions involved to amplify the impact on a system-wide level
- Testing applied only in the delivery phase and not in the design and planning of training pathways
- Application and testing only of competences gained in a formal way

OPPORTUNITIES:

- Strong opportunity to validate the experimentation results and integrate it at VET System level
- Wide opportunity to disseminate the ECVET outcomes
- Up-grading of teaching/training skills of the VET operators and teaching/training staff involved
- Rich heterogeneousness of the education and training systems
- Opportunity to learn about different cultural and professional contexts, for support of the promotion of “mutual trust” necessary to facilitate the transition/integration between different systems and training contexts
- Opportunity for discussion among the institutional actors and those actually working in the field of validation of learning outcomes
- Occasion for the promotion of a shared culture of transparency of learning outcomes and competences
- Improvement in the quality of education and training systems and support in systems innovation
- Opportunity for recognition of learning outcomes on a national and transnational level
- Laying foundations for geographical, and professional mobility and mobility between training systems
- If “mainstreamed”, the application of the tools in the medium-long range could be less costly
- Capitalisation and exchange of the ECVET project testing (sharing, possibility of transferring the work methods and competence analysis tools to different sectors and professional profiles, MoU format and Learning Agreements)
- Testing the project results in mobility pathways
- Development of up-dating pathways for IFP operators on competence based training planning for ECVET purposes

THREATS

ON AN OPERATIONAL LEVEL:

- The risk of VET institutions and teachers/trainers/operators remaining outside of the ECVET system and its opportunities
- The recent low attractiveness of the specific elective training module for reception work, and consequently the shortage of VET courses available for the experimentation (only in Slovenia)
- Application limited to the LdV Mobility experience (mobility not included in institutionalised pathways, diversity in the procedures for managing mobility)
- Costs of the operation, organisational and logistical problems, complexity of procedures
- Experimental level of the project not yet able to impact the organisational and system orders

ON A LEVEL OF VET SYSTEMS GOVERNANCE

- Different development levels of the national qualification systems
- In some national contexts work on the national qualifications framework and on adaptation to EQF standards and levels is still in the planning phase and has not been assimilated at an operational level
- Difficulty integrating the operational plan with the system plan

- Difficulty with the recognition of individual competences, especially those acquired in informal/non formal contexts
- Legislative limitations which do not make LO validation easy

The partnership both jointly and in the area of the mission and strategic activities of each individual partner intends, starting with the elements evidenced in the experimentation phase, to transfer the tools that are the output of the N.E.T.WORK project to another economic sector in order to:

- Demonstrate the sustainability of the products
- Broaden the network of subjects involved
- Strengthen the networks involving competent institutions, authorities, social partners, sectors, providers and learners.

The transfer of the tools produced through the realisation of the N.E.T.WORK project and their mainstreaming in a wider system also to other subjects outside the partnership will be done taking the opportunities for development which will be conceded on a national and international level in the next programming. The partners nonetheless are ensuring the maximum diffusion and dissemination of the results reached by promoting them in their ordinary activities.

6. Contribution to EU policies

The project refers to the LLP objective indicated in the specification of the correlated operational objective (*To support policy development and cooperation at European level in lifelong learning, notably in the context of the Lisbon process 'Education and Training 2010', as well as the Bologna and Copenhagen processes and their successors*) and in the explicit connection with the area of Key Activity 1 (*...to support transparency and recognition of qualifications and competences including those acquired through non formal and informal learning, information and guidance on mobility for learning purposes, and cooperation in quality assurance...*).

The project was constructed with close reference both to the two general objectives of the ECVET Call (experimental interventions; partnership) and to the three specific objectives which logically result from these:

1. Implementation of the ECVET technical specification

- identification of the professional qualifications afferent to the chosen area
- selection of the professional figures to test
- planning and testing of the instruments for the concrete realisation of ECVET

2. Establishment of a lasting operational partnership

- Definition of formalised agreements among the project partners for testing and certification
- Formalisation of the trans-national collaboration regarding the modelling and mainstreaming of project results

3. Assistance with pooling and consolidating the work and outcomes of all the proposals funded: a primary objective of the project is to broaden the concrete realisation of the two preceding objectives to wider community areas than that of the specific partnership.

The project, oriented toward the application of the ECVET system in the dual prospective of the promotion and recognition of mobility on a training level and that of shared training results aimed at employment mobility, has a fundamental reference – methodological and operational - with two of the articulations under the Education and Training 2010 Work programme: the former relating to the LLP system (and to programme LdV), to which this project is connected; the latter, to the Europass system to which this project can offer a functional contribution through convergence with the analytical definition, approved and recognised, of training results (learning outcomes→unit→ qualifications) according to the ECVET system.

As part of the N.E.T.WORK project's testing it has been possible to “simulate” what should take place in a phase of full assimilation of the ECVET system, that is, a “clear commitment on the part of the competent Bodies and institutions which provide the service, formalised in every country at various levels”.

This involvement has already been amply demonstrated in the Bologna process for higher education (HE), in which explicit voluntary commitment has fostered the implementation of the ECTS system which, following a pilot phase conducted by the European Commission, is by now an integrated component of the higher education system of the majority of European nations.

As provided in the European Recommendations, the methodological process defined for the testing as well as the tools, have been constructed and later applied in compliance with a series of principles, rules and conventions essential for their implementation, but at the same time characterised by the greatest flexibility in their application.

The N.E.T.WORK project methodologies and tools were conceived in such a way that, besides being essentially flexible and sustainable, they render the ECVET system user-friendly and, since they respond to the real needs of real people, they will be used.

