



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

Progress Report

Public Part

Project information

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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 pursues 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 has been 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 has led to the development, thanks also to the contribution of exponents of the target groups and stakeholders, of a shared ECVET model that will be tested in the national contexts of the Partnership in the next project phases.

The main results obtained to date 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 must be 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.

The model that emerged from all of this work will be tested in the four national contexts of the Partnership and Guidelines of the ECVET system will be 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 area of application of project N.E.T.WORK is tourism-hospitality welcoming , and more specifically training profiles pertaining to the Reception area of hospitality structures with EQF level 4 competences. In this regard the project objectives are:

- the definition, validation and certification – keeping in mind the specific differences within the existing training paths – of learning outcomes and units, valid for all the partner nations;
- the design and testing of methods for assigning ECVET points to Units;
- the testing of the ECVET system in the chosen training pathways structured in Learning Outcomes and Units;
- a systemic, shared and coordinated reference framework (with the design of necessary procedures, materials and tools) for the development of the ECVET system in the Partnership countries.

These objectives translate into benefits for the users of the project, who are represented by:

- a) users of the training paths and/or mobility in the Hospitality Reception area, these benefit from the ECVET model defined experimentally and from the products in support of the transparency and certification of acquired competences and will be involved in the project as participants in the training paths that will be tested;
- b) subjects active in the definition of national and community training policies, training agencies and bodies, as well as trade unions and employers' associations involved in the strategy for the construction and activation of systems of credit transfer, who could find the project outputs to be useful instruments in the planning and programming of their training initiatives; such subjects are involved in the project through targeted initiatives to valorise the project and disseminate its results;
- c) project partners as active subjects in the professional training systems and interface between labour supply and demand, representing important organisations in the area of national training supply and trans-national mobility programmes; the members of the partnership have worked for years on certification systems and offer similar services, but this project makes it possible to share experiences and contribute to the future EU context.

2. Project Approach

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

In this context, researches were conducted to examine the specific situation of the partnership countries (existing reception-specific training supply, existing competence certification systems); this has laid the foundation for the selection of the training profiles to be tested, and therefore for the construction of a common outline of Learning Outcomes and Units which required a high level of cooperation, communication and exchange of contents and contributions. All the partners were called upon to contribute in all the work phases carried out, to participate in national, trans-national and EU events connected to the project, and to involve targets and stakeholders in the key phases of definition of the ECVET model and dissemination.

All the ECVET technical specifications annexed to the Recommendations of the European Parliament and Council have always been kept in mind, along with the results of the ECVET pilot project meetings that were held periodically throughout the project lifecycle.

The ECVET system of project N.E.T.WORK will be tested concretely in mobility programmes and/or long training and qualification pathways which include classroom training and work experience, with the aid of Guidelines which will define roles, timing and expected results.

The added value of the project lies in the fact that the project intends to propose neither new instruments nor new procedures in the reference areas of the ECVET system, but on the contrary to coordinate, redirect and integrate within the ECVET system the existing training processes which, in the current situation of the partner nations, have been identified and attributed to the system.

The first important stage of the project called for the re-defining of the training pathways chosen in the countries of the partnership, structuring these in learning units (knowledge, skills and competences) and learning outcomes.

The assigning of ECVET credits to the qualifications and to the units is based on parameters defined using common European agreements (normally 60 points are assigned to the learning outcomes expected on completion of a year of instruction or of formal full-time professional training).

The evaluation of learning outcomes takes place through the methods and processes identified by the partners in the analysis and research phases and congruent with community directives and with the recognition systems present on a national level, aimed at a shared definition of the measure in which a person has effectively attained an L.O. .

The process of validating credits assigned on the basis of tests realised within the training structure of the Partner country is based on shared reference to the learning by competences methodology, which is a common denominator of the processes of

adaptation to Community recommendations (COM (2008) 179 - Proposal for a Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training, 10-4-2008; The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning, Recommendation, 28.04.2008). Specifically, the methodology is based on:

- a) the common application by the individual partners of an evaluation grid of the L.O., inherent to the training contents of all the intended users (learners) of the project reference area and based on descriptors agreed upon and preliminarily made explicit;
- b) the adoption of an evaluation procedure within this grid, based on four levels - performance threshold, sufficiency, autonomy, excellence – predefined within the individual describers.

Therefore the validation process includes:

- verification of learning outcomes;
- recognition of learning outcomes (the process through which learning outcomes are officially certified through the assigning of credits or qualifications);
- the assigning of ECVET credits/points shared by the partnership and intended to provide a numerical representation of the overall weight of the learning outcomes in a qualification and of the relative weight of the units in relation to the qualification.

In the testing phase, each unit or set of units is open to a specific evaluation ratified and certified on the basis of existing national standards and of the partnership agreement reached thanks to the shared phases of analysis and study.

The number of intended users (learners) is indicated as an average of 30 direct targets for each partner nation, for a foreseeable total of approximately 120.

In this context, finally, the valorisation plan is inserted in an integrated way as a transversal activity conducted during the entire project life cycle. In detail, the following activities have been and will be realised:

- Organization of trans-national meetings (subjects involved: workers in the hospitality sector, European operators of education and training - direct targets of the project – Public and private stakeholders operating in the hotel sector – indirect targets
- Planning and management of the Internet website dedicated to the project
- Realization of quarterly newsletters
- Realisation of a Delphi which will precede the testing and will involve the operators of the training agencies (planners, curriculum coordinators, course teaching staff, secretarial staff)
- Presentation events/meetings in order to introduce and promote/publicise the experimentation
- Technical panels, aimed at the validation of the ECVET system and at the analysis of the test results.

3. Project Outcomes & Results

The main outcomes of N.E.T.WORK to date are:

- ✓ **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 to be 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** (*currently being evaluated by the Partnership*), a report where the partnership has:
 - assigned CPs (credit points) to the Units identified within the various 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 will be a “guide” and reference for the experimentation.
- ✓ **Guidelines for the verification and evaluation of Learning Outcomes** (*currently being evaluated by the Partnership*) to describe some verification and evaluation methods and instruments that will be contained in the partners’ agreements for the implementation of the experimentation.

Beside these main products, we have conducted 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 workshop**, held in Perugia (Italy) in May 2009, during which the project was disseminated and the ECVET theme discussed in front of education and training operators and public and private stakeholders operating in the hotel sector.
- ✓ **Two trans-national thematic workshop**, held in Oporto (Portugal) and in Ljubljana (Slovenia), to share and discuss various specific issues emerging during the realisation of project activities with national hotel sector operators, trainers and stakeholders.
- ✓ **Three quarterly 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 8052828; s.poeta@cstassisi.eu).

4. Partnerships

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 organization divided in areas coordinated by a General Direction, including "Training and Education" with competences in organization 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 organization 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 some EU projects regarding issues as competences and work mobility.
- **France Europea (France)** is connected to 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 will offer 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 is 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 will hold a key role and will be 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 thematic seminars conducted to date in Italy, Portugal and Slovenia.

5. Plans for the Future

The second part of the project will be focused mainly on ECVET testing:

- ✓ Operational activities
 - **Validation and definitive realisation** of the “Descriptive outline of credit points for the analysed qualifications and the related units” and the “Guidelines for the verification and evaluation of Learning Outcomes”
 - **Constitution of the partners’ agreements for the implementation of the experimentation**, in order to foster the systemisation of the experimentation testing the project results with the objective of transferring the results of testing, in terms of outcomes (credits) unanimously recognised and validated by the competent institutions of the partner countries, under the ECVET system framework.
 - **Fine-tuning the Experimentation Plan**, in which the partnership will organise the appropriate synergies and methods of coordinating the experimentations to be carried out in the partnership countries, with the objective of promoting trans-national mobility and of consolidating its positive effects in terms of the recognition/acknowledgment of training credits. The Experimentation Plan will contain detailed information on the training pathways selected for testing and their structuring in Units and Learning Outcomes, the expected results, the organisation (timing, resources, targets, etc.), the subjects involved (learners, students, structures, etc...) and their related roles, support activities and monitoring activities.
 - **Experimentation** in mobility programmes and/or in long training and qualification pathways which include classroom training and work experience. The testing and the impact will be monitored constantly through the surveying and analysis of qualitative and quantitative indicators; during the testing process, dissemination and valorisation activities will be conducted to involve the unions and employers’ associations, trainers as well as workers in hotel and non-traditional hospitality businesses.
 - **Realisation, validation and dissemination of the ECVET system guidelines**, besides a detailed description of the procedures and methodological models of the ECVET system tested, the operational instruments of the work will be reported: from the way of constructing training pathways to tools & instruments for the evaluation and certification (and registration) of credits and the models of the network agreements for the mutual recognition of credits.
- ✓ Valorisation activities
 - **Three quarterly newsletters**, containing the project presentation, developments, thematic discussions and focus, news on events and project milestones, etc.
 - **Participation in ECVET pilot project seminars**
 - **Project valorisation and diffusion of results** by partners in work activities regarding other European and national projects

- **Dissemination Thematic Seminar** will take place in France to disseminate, share, compare and discuss, with experts of wider networks, the project results from the preliminary research activity up to the ECVET application guidelines, and the results and achievements of the experimentation;
- A **Final Dissemination thematic seminar** will be 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.
- A **Thematic workshop** and **technical validation panels** will take place in Italy to involve the unions and employers' associations, labour market operators and training system workers as well as experts in the sector coming from other European nations not included in the partnership, and to disseminate the final products and outcomes of the project.

A **Final Monitoring and Evaluation Report** will be the overall summarizing output of the collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data afferent to the monitoring and evaluation areas considered crucial by the Quality Management Committee with the approval of the Partners.

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 is 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 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.