

# "PEP goes local"

ECVET implementation:  
"A European challenge with  
local actions."

An interview with the  
project manager:

**"The view of a  
European network."**



Highlights from the  
regional ECVET  
workshops:

**"A common challenge,  
local actions."**

## **P.E.P:**

Partnership for  
Experimenting  
with ECVET in a  
Practical context!

Feasibility of ECVET  
implementation:

**"...more than only  
applying the technical  
specifications."**



# Colophon

## "ECVET implementation: A European challenge with local actions",

Publication of the outcomes and highlights of the regional ECVET workshops and the project in general in order to stimulate actors to start the dialog on ECVET and define the next steps in the field of ECVET implementation together with relevant stakeholders.

Developed by: EVTA – European Vocational Training Association,  
in the framework of the "PEP goes local" project, 517929-LLP-1-2011-1-BE-LEONARDO -LAM

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December 2012, Brussels

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### Disclaimer:

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### Produced and coordinated by:

Pauline van den Bosch,  
Senior advisor at the European  
Vocational Training Association



# About the Initiative.

“ECVET implementation starts with people and not with frameworks.”

The aim of the **EVTA network** is to set up a sustainable environment for exchange of knowledge and experiences and to work shared issues in the field of human capital development at European level.

The European Vocational Training Association (EVTA) started in 2009, under the Lifelong Learning Programme, a partnership project “PEP”: “Partnership for Experimenting with ECVET in a Practical context.”. It was an experiment to explore what ECVET could do for the members in the EVTA network. Taking on board 10 members from different countries, it became very soon clear that all contexts were different. Both in terms of educational system as in terms of how the members wanted to apply ECVET.

As a result of this partnership, some of the partners were setting up bilateral projects and initiatives to continue the work, or to transfer the work to another sector or context. In other words: an atmosphere was created for collaboration at European level. However, the members felt also that they had “to go back home” with the results. In order to go one step further in ECVET implementation the partners expressed the need to set up the dialog with the relevant stakeholders in their own context.

***“Within the partnership the benefits of ECVET were clear, but what about the awareness and commitment of stakeholders in our own context?”***

EVTA sees ECVET as an example of one to the **European initiatives** which cannot only be of great use in the different contexts of the member countries, but it can also help Europe in creating a strong European environment in which education and employment are closer connected between the member states.

This is why the follow up project “PEP goes local” is set up: It is all about organizing workshops at regional, local or sectoral level, involving the most relevant partners for them, in order to discuss the opportunities for ECVET in their context and to see how they can work together on a next step forward in ECVET implementation.



# 13 partners, 7 different European countries



## Belgium:

EVTA: European Vocational Training Association

[www.evta.eu](http://www.evta.eu)

## France:

Conseil Régional du Centre

[www.regioncentre.fr](http://www.regioncentre.fr)

AFPA: Association pour la Formation Professionnelle des Adultes

[www.afpa.fr](http://www.afpa.fr)

DRAAF: Direction Régionale d'Alimentation de l'Agriculture et de la Forêt

[www.draaf-centre.agriculture.gouv.fr](http://www.draaf-centre.agriculture.gouv.fr)

AFEC organisme de formation

[www.afec.fr](http://www.afec.fr)

Université de Tours

[www.univ-tours.fr](http://www.univ-tours.fr)

## Greece:

NILHR: National Institute of Labour and Human Resources

[www.eiead.gr](http://www.eiead.gr)

## Hungary:

Eurokt-akademia: VET provider

[www.eurokt.hu](http://www.eurokt.hu)

## Italy:

ENAIPLazio: Ente Nazionale Acli Istruzione Professionale

[www.enaip.it](http://www.enaip.it)

## The Netherlands:

KCHandel: Centre of expertise for the labour market and VET – trade sector

[www.kch.nl](http://www.kch.nl)

Kenwerk: Centre of expertise for the labour market and VET – hospitality sector

[www.kenwerk.nl](http://www.kenwerk.nl)

## Spain:

IMELSA, Impuls Econòmic Local S.A.

[www.imelsa.es](http://www.imelsa.es)

## Sweden:

Lernia Utbildning

[www.lernia.se](http://www.lernia.se)



## 'Face to face' with the project leader

Pauline van den Bosch, Senior Advisor  
European Vocational Training Association

*ECVET is an example of one of these European initiatives which can not only be of great use in the context for the partner countries, but it can also help Europe in creating a strong European environment in which education and employment are closer connected between the member states.*

### **What is your "passion" with ECVET?**

"We see now that there are as many VET systems as there are member states and each of the member states think their own system is the best. But if it comes to compare qualifications, or to recognize competence of students, job seekers or migrants or even to get a diploma from another country recognized, this seems a very hard job, if not impossible. ECVET and EQF can help us in this challenge."

"Although it is very hard in these times, it is now the time to think about how we can improve our educational

systems and get them better connected to the labour market. No one knows what will happen in the future, but an educational system should be able to provide skills and competences for learners and workers so that they are not only competent to do the job, but also to survive on the labour market. This means not only focusing on technical skills and knowledge, but also on competences in a professional and personal way: skills for life! Vocational education and training should provide a strong answer in time of economic depression."

**"It seems that people who are 'mobile' during their study, are less vulnerable on the labour market in a later stage"**

### **But what is the relation with ECVET in this sense?**

One of the ideas behind ECVET is the learning outcomes based approach: so no thinking in terms of input, study hours and number of pages of a book, but on what is expected from a person when he/she has finished learning, independent of where this learning has taken place! This is a big step forward in bridging education and labour market.

In the context of mobility, if we manage to send students abroad to do a part of their training abroad, this means a huge added value for the student and for the future employers. Think about the cultural, language and technical competences this person will gain in a short term abroad. This is an experience which can never be achieved within a trainin centre.

Besides, it seems that when people are mobile during their study, they are less vulnerable on the labour market in a later stage as well.

### **But ECVET is more than only mobility?**

It is all about transparency and opening our VET systems towards each other! Mobility is often a logic consequence, but for me not the first priority in working on ECVET. If we manage to create more transparency of qualifications and openness of VET systems with the help of ECVET, we already have a great win at European level.

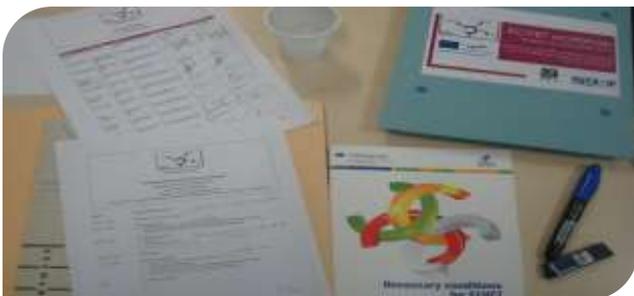
We see that people often get stuck in the technical specifications, for example the credit points! For me the credit points are not the most important issues,

we can deal with that, it is more important to make agreements between partners.

## "How 'open' is your VET system for people from your own country?"

For example the learning outcomes based approach I was talking about, this can be huge step forward in improving education. Also the opportunity to open up your VET system to other systems. And then I mean not only from abroad, but think also about "How transparent and open is our own VET system for people in your own country?" An example in which it is important that educational systems are more open and flexible. This is exactly the basic idea behind ECVET!

### **What are for you at the moment the most interesting items of ECVET to work on?**



In the first place thinking in terms of learning outcomes! This is one of the basic elements behind ECVET in order to create more transparency. Another issue in this field is setting up partnerships and mutual trust between partners at national and European level.

I am also very curious about summative assessments abroad. Often, if it comes to real transfer of learning outcomes, in other word the acceptance of the summative assessment abroad, it becomes difficult, while this is at the end of the day the real essential of ECVET.

### **What are the main challenges when implementing ECVET, according to you?**

A lot of work is already done and in progress. Member States are now working on implementation strategies for ECVET, but the most effective way of working is to work from both ways: practical experiments, supported by strategic actions for implementation at policy level. If policy and practice don't "meet" each other, implementation will be very difficult.

## "ECVET implementation is more than implementing the technical specifications."

For example, we see a lot of initiatives in which partners have worked on ECVET experminents. However, if it comes to the real transfer and recognition of learning outcomes in their own VET system, there are difficulties, due to national regulations and legislations. So in other words, people experiment with ECVET, and use ECVET, but they cant implement it. Simply because ECVET implementation is more than only working on the technical specifications.

When it comes to implementation, there is indeed a technical part, but the more political part is as much important as this is often the critical factor in implementation. Therefore it is important, again, to have the right people on board. So creating awareness, making clear the added value and commitment are essential in this stage.

### **What is your recommendation for the reader?**

Having "an open mind" and creating the right conditions for further collaboration and enriching the discussion on how we can improve vocational training with our experiences, ideas and of course, with ECVET

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"One of our objectives is to analyze labour market trends and needs and to see how we can use ECVET in the labour market as a tool for human capital development."

"We work mainly with regional partners and ECVET can be a tool for regional transparency. Our main aim is to create the dialog between the regions, starting with ECVET and EQF."

"We support the mobility of students, However, we can only speak from a successful mobility and a real added value if we are able to transfer and recognize the learning outcomes gained abroad"

## **"Two different scenarios were defined for the regional ECVET workshops"**



### **Scenario 1:**

#### **ECVET in the context of learners mobility**

A lot of training centres are active in organizing mobility actions for students in training centres or work placement companies. In this context, it is important to know what ECVET in the context of mobility really means, compared to "traditional mobility".

Topics of this workshop:

- What is the impact of ECVET in the context of "before, during and after" a mobility period.
- Quality assurance: How to ensure quality in these different phases of mobility?



### **Scenario 2:**

#### **ECVET in the context of the labour market**

ECVET is a tool to promote Lifelong learning. Expertise is mainly developed within the context of education and training systems, and we are often missing the point that ECVET is not only for learners. In this perspective it is important to address the potential use of ECVET in the world of work.

Topics of this workshop:

ECVET in the context of different cases:

- Updating workers qualifications
- Learners/ workers change of pathways
- Validation of non formal and informal learning



9 regional ECVET workshops have taken place in the Netherlands (2), France (2), Sweden, Greece, Spain, Italy and Hungary in the period from June till November 2012.

# Regional ECVET workshops for stakeholders in VET and labour market



“A clear roadmap with concrete actions is what we need now.”

*In general it can be said that the workshops were received very positively by the stakeholders. There is a general commitment and willingness to continue.*

*However a clear roadmap with concrete next steps is necessary as a next step forward. The vision on how to use and implement ECVET in each context has to be made concrete in steps and actions!*

“ECVET tools, if applied correctly, can be proved important competences for the labour market integration, increasing mobility especially for young people. However we should not loose out of sight the importance of ECVET for older workers in order to remain and progress in the labour market.”

# “We should see ECVET in a broader context and not only in the context of mobility”

In the majority of the workshops, the discussion on ECVET is put in a broader context than only mobility and technical specifications.

The main principles behind ECVET and how they could be used to improve own VET systems was put in the centre of the attention. For example: learning outcomes based approaches, lifelong learning and transparency of qualifications.

It seemed that discussions on the technical specifications often led to confusion. Detailed technical discussions were preventing the partners in setting up a dialog with their stakeholders in order to create a vision on ECVET in their own context.

The partners also expressed a strong need for continuing with practical approaches. Especially in cases where legislations and regulations have to be adapted for a fully operational ECVET system. There is an overall agreement that “policy will not easily change, as long as we can’t show that it works!”. So in other words, there is a belief that policy will follow practice.



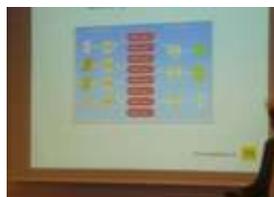
# "How transparent is our VET system for people in our own country? "

One of the great "wins" in this project was the involvement of relevant stakeholders at regional, local or sector level. Both in terms of quality as in terms of quantity. Thereby, the workshops strengthened the relation with the partner organizations and their stakeholders for further activities in the near future.

**"There was a good acceptance of ECVET by the target group. They expressed their interest, fears and 'transmission needs'. This is already a good achievement, considering the fact that the economic depression were are in at the moment, has led for so far to frustration, discouragement and general apathy."**

Examples of how ECVET could be used in own context were: ECVET for special target groups, to help people on the labour market to find a job, or for (working) adults who want to enter the educational system again. In this perspective, it helped the people to think in terms of learning outcomes, instead of educational programmes.

ECVET is also seen by the partnership as an opportunity to open their own VET system to other systems. And not only from abroad, but also in the perspective of "How transparent is our own VET system for people in our own country?" For example people who are in own country looking for a job, with no diploma but rich in working experiences, or people who like to continue training because they know already that they have to work longer... All examples in which it is important that educational systems are more open and flexible. This was the starting point for the workshops!



*"coming back after the regional workshops: a rich peer learning experience!"*

## **National Institute for Labour and Human Resources (Greece):**

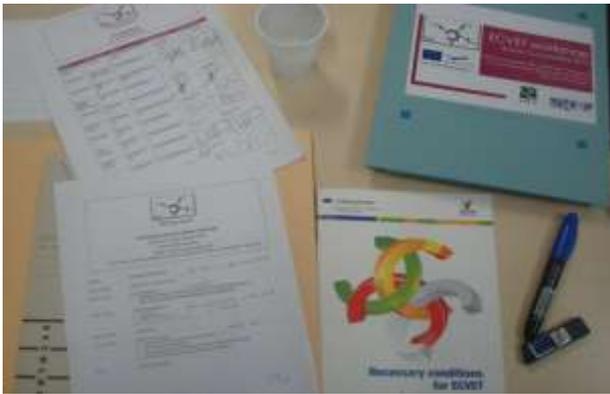
*"...In these economic times, we are not in the position to think that ECVET is NOT relevant for Greece. We see a clear added value, especially in making people more employable with ECVET. The only question is "how do we proceed?" We need a roadmap to start and European practices can help us..."*

## **ENAI Lazio (Italy):**

*"...ECVET can help us in making qualifications more transparent between the regions. For us, ECVET is not only about mobility, but about opening our qualification systems towards each other and to create more transparency and employability..."*

## **IMELSA (ES):**

*"...We see an opportunity to reduce our drop off rates in education with the help of ECVET..."*



**KCHandel (The Netherlands)**

"...In the Netherlands, there are not much legislations which prevent organizations to implement ECVET. The main obstacle is often (a lack of) mutual trust and quality assurance when it comes to summative assessments abroad...."

**AFPA (France):**

"...We have to deal with national rules and legislations, which prevent us to implement a fully operational ECVET system. But however, rules can be adapted. But only if we can show that ECVET works and is of benefit for people. Therefore, the bottom up approach and working on ECVET from the beginning till the end is so important..."

**AFEC (France):**

"...We see a real added value of mobility for people, but only if we manage to validate and recognize the learning outcomes from abroad..."

**EVTA (promoter):**

"PEP", started as a partnership for Experimenting with ECVET has evolved from a projects partnership into a sustainable peer learning network where the partners are using European practices and examples in order to set up local and regional actions for ECVET implementation."

## The next step forward.

It is clear that there is a need for more practical experiences from bottom up, involving the most relevant stakeholders. Although the conditions for ECVET implementation have to be applied at national or regional level, the project has shown that European collaboration and partnership are valuable in this sense. Peer learning, analyzing good practices from other countries can help partners considerably in convincing and influencing stakeholders in own context and in defining the next step for ECVET implementation.

One of the next steps will be the creation of a European peer learning network of actors implementing ECVET system, coordinated by EVTA, in order to highlight the practical application of the system and the dissemination of good practices at European, national and local level.

This is an initiative in which practice and policy have to go hand in hand and where the diversity at European level is not seen as a problem, but as an asset to work with and to exploit.



# “About the conditions for ECVET implementation.”

“ECVET is a tool to enhance transparency, mobility and lifelong learning. So we should ask ourselves: “Are transparency, mobility and Lifelong Learning solutions for our context?”



# How feasible is ECVET implementation in your context?

ECVET implementation is more than only working on the technical specifications.

*“Tools can easily be developed, but working on mutual trust is more difficult.”*

Different studies and projects show that there is more than only applying the ECVET technical specifications as units of learning outcomes and ecvet points.

The ECVET connexion study, 2007 show that at operational level, within training providers, the following aspects have to be taken into account as well:

**Flexibility:** does the training provides has the possibility to provide individual and flexible learning pathways?

**Authonomy:** does the training provider has the autonomy to design and provide individual learning apathways and recognize learning outcomes gained abroad?

**Permeability:** does the training provider 'accept' learning outcomes with are assessed in a summative way abroad?

However to implement a fully operation transfer and recognition system, based on ECVET, more stakeholders are involved. Both at political as on technical level.

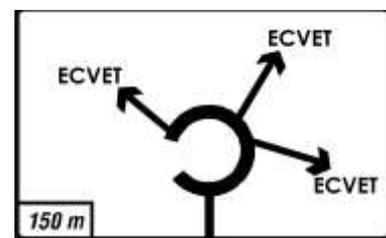


In the publication of Cedefop, “Necessary conditions for ECVET implementation”, it is stressed that for a fully implemented ECVET system, the conditions are technical and political oriented. On one hand member states have to make sure that there is an involvement, commitment and a sense of ownership among all the relevant stakeholders and on the other hand a quality based approach to transfer and validate learning outcomes. This implies also the shift towards learning outcomes based approaches in VET.



*“...One major condition for ECVET implementation is the need for ECVET to be embedded within qualifications systems and, more specifically, within national qualifications frameworks. This will significantly affect the extent to which ECVET becomes fully operational... ”*

Cedefop “Necessary conditions for ECVET implementation”, May 2012

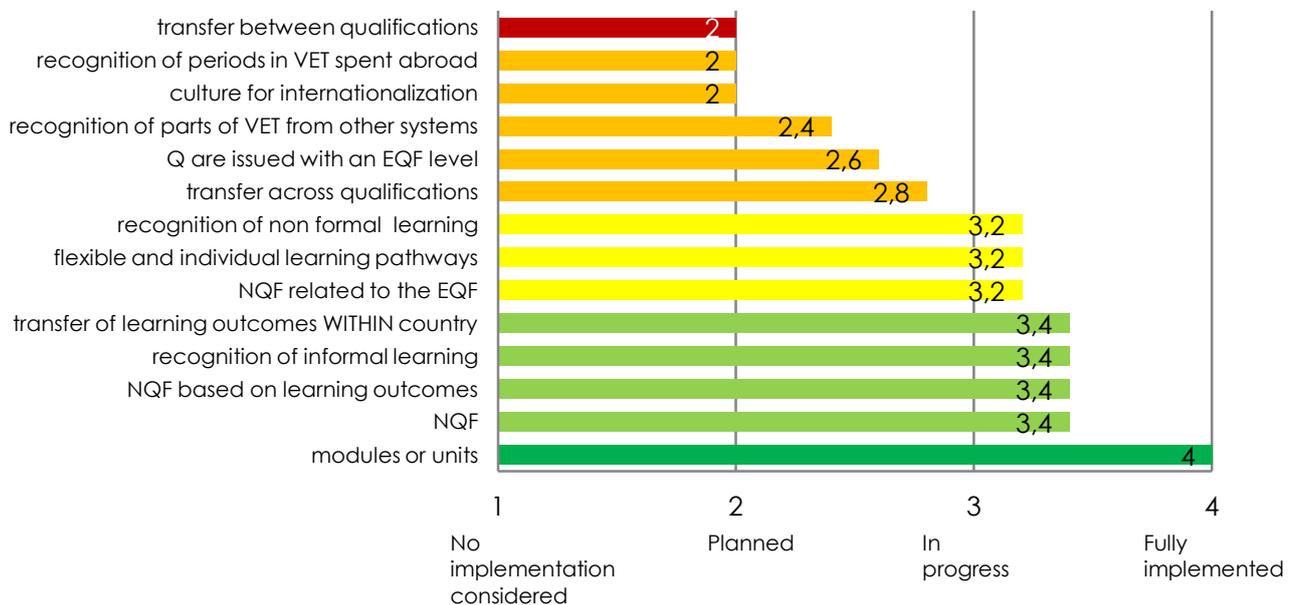


Similar results and experiences are shown by the regional ECVET workshops. Starting a dialog with relevant stakeholders in order to create commitment and ownership are a necessary first step. At the same time, practical experiences and pilots are crucial to show policy makers and stakeholders that ECVET can work and that there is a need for adaptations in the VET system in a technical and/or in a political way.

One of the conditions for ECVET implementation are the compliance with the technical specifications and to put in place measures to make sure that guarantee a transfer and recognition of learning outcomes which are achieved in another context. The partners of the "PEP goes local" initiative were asked to do find out "how ECVET proof" their VET system is. The table below show the **average scores** of the partners.

(For each criterium: 1=no implementation considered; 4 = fully implemented)

## How "ECVET -proof is your VET system?"



"We see that is it comes to technical specifications like learning outcomes and modules, most countries have implemented this or are working on it"

"Most countries have made a reference from their NQF to the EQF. However, if it comes to formalize this in the qualifications and documents, this seems often not the case...Not having formally an EQF level indicated to their national qualification systems, is seen as an obstacle for mobility and ECVET implementation."

"It seems that transfer and recognition of learning outcomes within the same context is feasible, but if it comes to transfer of learning outcomes, recognition of periods spent abroad and recognition of parts from other contexts (even between qualifications in own country), this seems more to be a problem."

"Policies and a culture for internationalization in VET are not yet widespread in Europe, in contrast with (higher) education, where mobility is actively promoted and widespread!"

"Important to note is that when a country complies with all the items, it doesn't say that ECVET is implemented! It means that the conditions for a full potential of ECVET are present, but it is all about agreements between sending and hosting countries and mutual trust between these partners."

**The table shows that the technical conditions for ECVET implementation have to be followed up by the political actions and partnerships, otherwise the impact of ECVET will remain limited in VET and labour market.**

# Recommended for further reading.

## ECVET recommendation

Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of 19 June 2009 on the establishment of a European credit system for vocational education and training, Official Journal of the European Union.



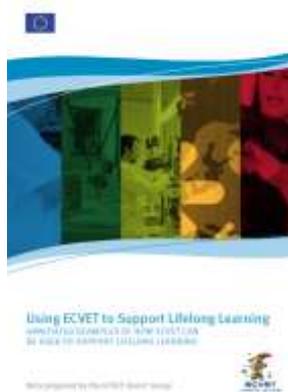
## PART I ECVET users' guide:

Get to know ECVET better, questions and answers, European Commission, revised version february 2011



## PART II ECVET users' guide :

Using ECVET for geographical mobility , European Commission 2011



## PART III ECVET users' guide:

Using ECVET to support Lifelong Learning, European. Annotated examples of how ECVET can be used to support Lifelong Learning. European Commission, 2012



## ECVET magazine

<http://www.ecvet-team.eu/en/content/magazines-ecvet>



## Using learning outcomes :

European Qualification Framework series: Note 4. European Union, Luxembourg Publications office, 2012



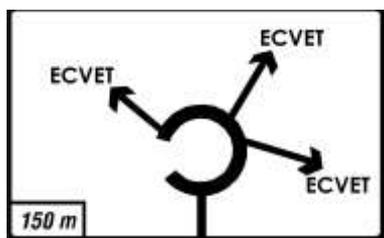
## Necessary conditions for ECVET implementation

Cedefop, Luxembourg, Publications office, 2012

# "P.E.P. goes local"

January – December 2012

*"PEP goes local": A partnership for Experimenting with ECVET has evolved from a projects partnership into a sustainable peer learning network where the partners are using European practices and examples in order to set up local and regional actions for ECVET implementation ."*



*"The idea behind credit systems is that once people have achieved certain learning outcomes these remain an acquis over a certain period of time. "*

***"Asking people to undertake learning leading to the same outcomes would be a waste of their time and resources with possible negative impacts on their motivation."***



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