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EU Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-13
Subprogramme Leonardo da Vinci - Call for proposal 2011 EAC/49/10
Priority "ECVET for transparency and recognition of learning outcomes and
qualifications (LEO-TraInno-11)"
Action "Transfer of Innovation"
Protocol Code LLP-LdV-TOI-11-IT-685
Project Unique Code (CUP – Codice Unico di progetto): G92F11000080006



European Nature System - ENS:

An ECVET process to put in transparency and recognise across Europe the learning outcomes and the qualifications of the professional figures in the nature-based tourism sector

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WP 6 - Pilot test on the enforcement of the Memorandum of Understanding - MoU ECVET for the professional figures in nature-based and rural tourism

Report on ECVET for European qualification in the sector of nature-based and rural tourism:

Final release of the whole ECVET pilot test

September 2013

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Premise : aims, activities and products of the ENS WP 6 pilot test

The aim of the workpackage 6 of the ENS project was to put in practice, in order to evaluate its efficacy, correspondence to users' requirements and compliance with national/regional sectoral VET systems, the Memorandum of Understanding - MoU ECVET for the European qualification in the nature-based and rural tourism sector, establishing the European correspondence for the assessment, transfer, and accumulation processes of learning outcomes achieved in formal, informal and non formal contexts by professional figures of nature-based and rural tourism sector (*Environmental educator, the Nature- and Rural Tourism Guide, and the Rural and Agro-Tourism Accommodation Manager*) included in the common European perimeter shared by partners. The MoU was officially signed in Vienna (AT), the 29/02/2013 and 01/03/2013, by project partners and associated organisations: representative and VET organisations, and also SMEs, of nature-based tourism sector at national, regional and local level (in Italy, *Aris Formazione e Ricerca Società Cooperativa* and *Consorzio Itaca*; in Spain, *Koan Consulting SL* and *Fundacion Ecoagroturismo*; in Germany, *KATE-Kontaktstelle für Umwelt & Entwicklung*; in Latvia, *Latvijas lauku turisma asociacija "Lauku celotajs"*; in Austria, *BEST Institut für berufsbezogene Weiterbildung und Personaltraining GmbH*), public institutions competent in VET and tourism matter at regional level (in particular, the Italian *Regione Umbria*), and European communication specialised organisations like the Belgian *Diesis Coop scrl-fs*..

The experimentation, starting from the MoU definition and signature (ECVET 1st step) has begun the implementation of the whole ECVET process:

- Learning Agreements ECVET: definition and signature (by workers and trainees interested to the recognition of professional qualifications established by the MoU, by concerned VET providers and, when requested by national/regional rules on VET, by public institutions having competence on putting in transparency and recognition of learning outcomes and qualifications) of the individual Learning Agreements ECVET describing, in compliance with the MoU and national/regional rules on VET, the learning process in formal, informal and non formal contexts, and the related ECVET credits to be obtained to gain the qualification (ECVET 2nd step);
- ECVET Credits Awarding: at the end of putting in transparency and recognition of learning outcomes processes, awarding to involved workers and trainees, by concerned VET providers (and, when requested by national/regional rules on VET, by public institutions having competence on putting in transparency and recognition of learning outcomes/qualifications), of ECVET credits related to verified learning outcomes, utilising Europass Certificate Supplement (ECVET 3rd step);
- Transfer, validation and accumulation of the awarded ECVET credits in the sectoral and territorial VET systems involved in the MoU, in compliance with national and regional rules on certification ways and procedures, formal, non-formal and informal learning validation, qualification bodies (ECVET 4th step).

These experimentation has involved 104 workers and trainees, in all participating

countries (41 in Italy, 15 in Germany, 15 in Austria, 18 in Spain, 15 in Latvia), whom have also signed the Learning Agreement ECVET.

The pilot test process had two intermediate results, represented by the definition of a Learning Agreements ECVET European common model, and of an ECVET Credit Awarding European common model, based on Europass Certificate Supplement.

The whole ECVET pilot test on the enforcement at national/regional level of the MoU ECVET for the European qualifications in the nature-based and rural tourism sector *Environmental educator, Nature- and Rural Tourism Guide, and Rural and Agro-Tourism Accommodation Manager* realised within workpackage 6 of the ENS project is described by this report: beyond a description of the above mentioned common models, this final release on the ECVET pilot test is articulated in several parts, each one specific for every participating country.

The common tools for the ENS WP 6 pilot test activities

The common European model for Learning Agreements ECVET

The common European Model for Learning Agreements ECVET has been defined by the ENS partners as a prototype to be concretely utilised during the pilot test for the enforcement at territorial level of the Memorandum of Understanding - MoU ECVET for the European qualification in the nature-based and rural tourism sector, at the aim of the definition and signature of the individual agreements among the VET workers and trainees of the nature-based and rural tourism sector interested to the recognition of learning outcomes and professional qualifications established by the MoU, the concerned VET providers and, when requested by national/regional rules on VET, the public institutions having competence on putting in transparency and recognition of learning outcomes and qualifications, to describe and formalise, in compliance with the MoU and national/regional rules on transparency and recognition of learning outcomes and qualifications in force in territories concerned by pilot test, the learning process in formal, informal and non formal contexts, and the related ECVET credits to be obtained to gain the professional qualification.

The common European Model for Learning Agreements ECVET defined and applied by ENS is composed by a common European part relating to the MoU, and by different territorial integrating parts relating to legislation on professional qualification applicable in these territories (one specific version was defined in Italy, for Umbria region, since the regional competence on VET established by Italian Constitution; one in Spain; one in Austria; one in Germany; one in Latvia).

In effect, the characteristics of the processes of putting in transparency/recognition of learning outcomes, even if based on the same MoU, are different in each ENS country (and in Italy, in each region, considering the regional competence on VET matter, which reproduce at national level the same VET fragmentation existing among the European countries), in compliance with national and/or regional laws in VET matter. Thus, the ENS partners have worked on the common model for the Learning Agreement ECVET also considering the necessity of its adaptation to each territorial context (and rules), defining it with a "common part", strictly relating to the MoU and valid for every application territory, and with a territorial part adapted to each specific national and/or regional legislation context, with significant differences.

All the territorial versions defined and utilised within ENS pilot test are downloadable in the public open area of the ENS website (www.europeannaturesystem.eu).

The common European model for ECVET credits awarding

The common European Model for ECVET Credits Awarding has been defined by the ENS partners as a prototype to be concretely utilised at the end of processes and procedures (started within the pilot test on the enforcement at territorial level of the Memorandum of Understanding - MoU ECVET for the European qualification in the nature-based and rural tourism sector) aimed to put in transparency and recognise the learning outcomes achieved in formal, informal and non formal contexts by VET workers and trainees operating in the nature-based and rural tourism sector interested to gain the ECVET credits and professional qualifications established at European level by the MoU.

Like the common European Model for Learning Agreements ECVET (and for the same reasons), also the ECVET Credits Awarding model contains common European parts, relating to the description of the new European qualifications in the nature-based and rural tourism sector *Environmental educator, Nature- and Rural Tourism Guide, and Rural and Agro-Tourism Accommodation Manager* established by the MoU, and also different territorial integrating parts (one for Italy, for Umbria region, since the regional competence on VET established by Italian Constitution; one in Spain; one in Austria; one in Germany; one in Latvia) for each territory engaged in the MoU enforcement, relating to the specific legislation on professional qualification applicable in these territories, to the related competent bodies awarding the certificate, and to national/regional authorities providing accreditation/recognition of the certificate.

The common European Model for ECVET Credits Awarding is articulated in a initial part, containing the models defined by the national/regional laws at the aim of training credits awarding, for each territory engaged in the MoU enforcement, and in a following common part, defined on the basis of the Europass Certificate Supplement structure, evidencing in English language, and in each language of concerned territories (IT, DE, ES, LV, and also FR), the title of the certificate, the profile of skills and competences, the range of occupations accessible to the holder of the certificate, the official basis of the certificate for each concerned territory, the officially recognised ways of acquiring the certificate.

The full version of common European Model for ECVET Credits Awarding defined within ENS pilot test is downloadable in the public open area of the ENS website (www.europeannaturesystem.eu).

The ENS WP 6 pilot test in the participating countries : ITALY

In Italy, in which the pilot test was realised in the region Umbria (Italian regions have exclusive legislative competence on vocational education and training – VET, and are responsible for developing and setting VET curricula), the Italian consortium and associated partners have sustained:

- firstly, the starting of the process of adaptation of the professional figures defined and formalised by the MoU at the aim of the formal insertion of them within the regional qualification frameworks of the Umbria Region (*Repertorio dei Profili Professionali della Regione Umbria*), to allow the recognition of concerned learning outcomes, professional qualification and related ECVET credits, in compliance with regional enforceable rules on professional qualification (particularly, in Umbria Region, DGR 1429/2007 also called "Credits Directive" and its later modifications and integrations). At the aim of the adaptation/insertion of the professional figures *Environmental educator, Nature- and Rural Tourism Guide, and Rural and Agro-Tourism Accommodation Manager*, established by the MoU, within the Umbrian regional qualification framework, the Italian consortium and associated partners have started a dialogue for the integration of the competences characterising the already existing regional figures "*Guida ambientale escursionistica con eventuali specializzazioni equestre, speleologica, cicloturismo*" (Hiking guide with eventual horse trial, speleological, bicycle touring specialisations)" and "*Sistema di competenze necessarie a svolgere l'attività di educazione ambientale alla sostenibilità*" (Competences system needed to carry out environmental education for sustainability), and for a new regional professional figure corresponding to the "*Rural and Agro-Tourism Accommodation Manager*" established by the MoU;
- secondly, in parallel, the mobilisation at regional level of public institutions and VET providers having competence, in compliance with territorial rules on professional qualification, to activate and sustain the learning outcomes and qualifications recognition processes for interested Umbrian workers and trainees;
- finally and especially, the concrete activation, for 40 Umbrian workers and trainees operating in the nature-based and rural tourism sector interested to gain the ECVET credits and professional qualifications established at European level by the MoU, of the processes and formal procedures (in particular, starting from the signature of the Learning Agreements ECVET, activities aimed to put in transparency and recognise the already acquired learning outcomes and to attribute training credits for expressly designed flexible VET programmes to get the qualification) in compliance with the MoU contents and with the territorial enforceable rules on professional qualification.

The above mentioned documents, and particularly the signed Learning Agreements ECVET, are downloadable in the public open area of the ENS website, www.europeannaturesystem.eu¹.

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In the website, the signed Learning Agreements are showed, due to the rules on privacy matter, without the name and surname of concerned workers and trainees. Instead, the name and surname of these persons will be specified in the final report on the ENS project, addressed to the LdV Italian National Agency.

The ENS WP 6 pilot test in the participating countries : SPAIN

In Spain, the pilot test will be done with professionals from all the country, in association with VET providers, such as the Centro de Referencia Nacional para Agroturismo (Mérida) or the Escuela Internacional de Turismo Rural (Granada, Andalucía). The Spanish associated partners have sustained:

- firstly, the starting of the process of adaptation of the professional figures defined and formalised by the MoU at the aim of the formal insertion of them within the national qualification framework of Spain, to allow the recognition of concerned learning outcomes, professional qualification and related ECVET credits, in compliance with national rules on professional qualification. At the aim of the adaptation/insertion of the professional figures *Environmental educator*, *Nature- and Rural Tourism Guide*, and *Rural and Agro-Tourism Accommodation Manager*, established by the MoU, within the Spanish national qualification framework, the Spanish associated partners (KOAN Consulting y Fundación Ecoagroturismo) have started a dialogue for the integration of the competences from the three professional figures established by the MoU according to the INCUAL (National Institute of Qualifications) criteria, in order to be incorporated into the Spanish National System for Professional Qualifications;
- secondly, in parallel, the mobilisation at regional level of VET providers having competence, focused and specialized on nature-based tourism or rural and agro tourism sector (Escuela Superior de Hostelería y Agroturismo and Centro de Referencia nacional de Agroturismo in Mérida-Extremadura and Escuela internacional de Turismo Rural in Guadix-Andalucía), in compliance with territorial rules on professional qualification, to activate and sustain the learning outcomes and qualifications recognition processes for interested Spanish workers. This procedure to involve regional institutions of qualifications, according to the results of the ENS project and the update of sectoral demands in nature-based and rural tourism, has been a little complicated and too much bureaucratic. The Spanish partners have finally received a support letter from the Escuela internacional de Turismo Rural in Guadix-Andalucía, but not from the one in Mérida. In this case, anyway, the director of the school, Lucía Muñoz Nieto, is interested to explore a way to collaborate, in case of including the professional figures defined by the MoU in the Spanish National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications.
- finally and especially, the concrete activation for 18 Spanish workers operating in the nature-based and rural tourism sector interested to gain the ECVET credits and professional qualifications established at European level by the MoU, of the processes and formal procedures (in particular, starting from the signature of the Learning Agreements ECVET, activities aimed to put in transparency and recognise the already acquired learning outcomes and to attribute training credits for expressly designed flexible VET programmes to get the qualification) in compliance with the MoU contents and with the Spanish national rules on professional qualification.

The above mentioned documents, and particularly the signed Learning Agreements ECVET, are downloadable in the public open area of the ENS website, www.europeannaturesystem.eu ².

The ENS WP 6 pilot test in the participating countries : GERMANY

In Germany the pilot test was undertaken in the federal state of Baden-Wuerttemberg with Natural- and Rural Guides, which are all organized under the so called BANU organisation. BANU is a supra regional, nationwide umbrella organization for state supported environmental education institutes. Subsequently several education institutes are united within the BANU group.

So far the following has been achieved:

Learning outcomes of the professional qualification of the Natural-and Rural guides has been defined within the European Nature System project together with all project partners. This has formed the basis to then apply ECVET and to assign ECVET credit points accordingly. To demonstrate that all project partners have agreed on the same method to describe and define learning outcomes a so called Memorandum of Understanding has been signed by all project partners.

During the life cycle of the project the above mentioned German umbrella organisation for state supported environmental education institutes as well as several Natural- and Rural Guides have been informed about the European funded project European Nature System and have been offered to participate in the pilot test phase with the aim to recognize the qualification of the Natural- and Rural guides applying ECVET. Several Natural- and Rural Guides will sign a Learning Agreement stating that they are interested to obtain a formal recognition of their qualifications defining learning outcomes through ECVET. As the German legislation to formally recognize VET is different than in Italy kate can only announce that the VET provider in form of the above stated umbrella organisation BANU has been informed about the project and is still trying to obtain a formal recognition about the project contents and results from their part. In addition to a document stating the application of ECVET to the Natural- and Rural Guide Qualification the workers will be provided with a so called Europass CV supplement to increase attractiveness of the qualification and to foster transparency on a European level.

The above mentioned documents such as the Memorandum of Understanding is shown under the website: www.kate-stuttgart.org and under the project website: www.europeannaturesystem.eu. Please note that due to privacy regulations the signed learning agreements by Natural-and Rural guides will not be shown on the kate website.

The ENS WP 6 pilot test in the participating countries : AUSTRIA

Current status of ECVET in Austria (Sept. 30th, 2013)

Since October 7th, 2013 a consultation process (start of project) has been inaugurated in Austria for the national implementation of ECVET in the non-formal education. The overall objective is to focus in the adult education curricula on the use of learning outcomes and to enable the transmissibility towards formal and non-formal education.

The ibw shall, on behalf of the BMUKK, manage to make the ECVET idea known in Austrian adult education institutions, to stimulate interest and to discuss possible opportunities. Furthermore, the ECVET compatibility will be tested by selected qualifications (qualifications can be suggested by 17th October 2013).

In the next project phase, 5 example projects will be organised in an ECVET pilot phase. The focus of this pilot phase is to test qualifications that are not regulated by law. There will be an ECVET compatibility test: the qualifications will be divided into units/ blocks; learning outcomes will be formulated. In case of overlaps with other qualifications from other VET institutions / contexts there is potential for transmission / transfer of learning outcomes.

January 2014: Key questions from the project will be discussed in a workshop with representatives of the "Test-Qualifications" as well as with representatives of the "Interface-Qualifications ":

- Result-oriented process
- laboratory situation
- Learning for policy level and training providers

End of project: February 2014

The results will be published by BMUKK.

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The ENS WP 6 pilot test in the participating countries : LATVIA

Pilot test in Latvia was conducted on September 4, 2013, with Juris Smaļinskis, representative from the Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences Life-long learning center and 15 persons employed or self-employed in rural tourism and nature tourism. All of them have acquired their skills and knowledge at workplace and are interested to formalise them in order to obtain internationally recognised qualifications.

Testing against skills and knowledge contained in MoU revealed gaps and areas of necessary improvement in all 15 participants. At present, Professional profiles *Environmental educator*, *Nature- and Rural Tourism Guide*, and *Rural and Agro-Tourism Accommodation Manager* do not exist in the National Register of Professions and respective VET programs are not available. The labour market and experience based qualifications of the testing participants prove the necessity to initiate the process of recognition of the new professional profiles and corresponding training programs.