



ECVET
Malta

VET Credit Conversion System (VETC)

Progress Report

Public Part

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Executive Summary

Following the establishment of the Bruges Communiqué, Malta, through the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC) embarked on a two year project since March 2011, with the aim of testing and implementing the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) at a national level. This will eventually lead Malta to establish methodologies based on experiences on how ECVET can be implemented amongst the various forms of VET institutions and contexts in Malta.

Malta has in fact a number of VET qualifications which have not yet been converted into the ECVET system. In view of the establishment of the eight tier framework of the Malta Qualifications Framework and its level descriptors, the next step is to now convert national VET qualifications into the ECVET system by helping institutions identify and adhere to the necessary conditions that must be in place beforehand to implement this transparent credit system, and make it as affective as the ECTS system that exists within the Bologna process. In fact, ECVET is about creating a common European Credit System for vocational education and training. In simple terms, just like within the Bologna Process there is the system of ECTS that add up to an academic qualification, within the Copenhagen Process there is the system of ECVET points that add up to a vocational qualification. Hence, it is about creating a system where we could develop qualifications which are transparent, comparable, and transferable in order to improve the flexibility of learning pathways and student mobility both locally and abroad.

However, several necessary conditions must be in place for such a system to be affective. These include the need for institutions to start describing their qualifications in terms of units of learning outcomes, written in accordance to the level descriptors of the National Qualifications Framework, the allocation of ECVET points based on a transparent system also as suggested in the Malta Referencing Report (2nd Revised Edition; December 2010), to introduce mechanisms to also validate informal and non-formal learning where such assessed knowledge, skills, and competences should also be allocated ECVET points, the provision of sound, transparent assessment systems that would enable the validation and recognition of learning allowing credit transfer and accumulation, mechanisms that allow the preparation of Memorandum of Understanding agreement documents between partnerships, and mechanisms in place for institutions to provide individualised learning agreements for students undergoing student mobility programmes, and personal transcripts for each student after the end of their learning process at a given institution.

The main problem with training institutions is that they often do not have enough understanding or background knowledge of the proposed ECVET system to be able to convert and align their courses on their own. This is one of the great obstacles which needs to be overcome to ensure the successful implementation of ECVET.

Malta's engagement in this project is therefore aimed at providing the necessary information to the key stakeholders and the general public using examples that stem out from the pilot project experience itself. However, the involvement in this project is also part of the broader goal to keep up with European developments in the

education and training sector aiming to improve the overall employability of European citizens leading to a better quality of life.

The pilot project in Malta: *Vocational Education and Training (VET) Credit Conversion System*, is supported by European Union funds. It falls under the Leonardo da Vinci project for Lifelong Learning of the European Commission.

The main outputs of the project will include: a total of 30 VET qualifications/courses converted into ECVET stemming from a piloting exercise of the ECVET conversion system; a National template for qualifications description to ultimately be used also as the template for level rating of courses; and a manual for VET institutions which is intended to be used at a national level. This manual should explain step by step how to fill in the national template for describing qualifications, in a way which features all the ECVET necessary conditions. Thus, in terms of impact, this project will have a multiplier effect. Not only will it ensure the conversion of the 30 qualifications/courses involved in the project, but the main output will include the development of a manual to be used at a national level for the conversion methodology (ECVET Conversion Manual); which can then be used for the conversion of other courses by other VET training institutions, nationally as well as at European level.

This European project involves the partnership of eight partners across Europe all sharing their expertise. The coordinating partner is the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC). Five partners represent local institutions, one of them being the MQC and the other four being local VET providers; three of which are public institutions, and the other partner institution represents the private sector. The other three partners represent foreign institutions namely from Italy, Romania, and Slovenia.

The areas of study tackled for this project through the thirty selected courses include Agribusiness, Art and Design, Mechanical Engineering, Tourism, Community Services, Business and Commerce, and ICT and Computing. All qualifications vary from levels 1 to 5 of the Malta Qualifications Framework. The target audience of this report includes the key stakeholders, such as key public officers and policy makers, public and private VET providers licensed in Malta, teachers and trainers, students at all age groups willing to pursue vocational studies at further or higher levels at both IVET or CVET levels in the different areas of studies available. Nonetheless, this report is also intended to other key stakeholders including the industry; where input from the industry is extremely important keeping in mind that qualifications/courses must be designed in a way that bridge the skills gap addressing the ongoing scientific developments, hence addressing current and future needs of the dynamic industry environment. Other stakeholders include trade unions, employers' associations, teachers, trainers, guidance teachers, and career advisors from the compulsory education sector, parents, and none the least the general public.

Regarding project deliverables, apart from this Interim report, other ten deliverables have already been successfully developed and implemented as outcomes of this pilot-project including a project logo, website, two public reports, draft template, 1st and 2nd Project Meetings, ECVET Dissemination National Conference, dissemination material, interim internal project evaluation report, and External Evaluation Report. The information CD about ECVET, although should have been developed in month

nine, will be developed at a later stage in order to provide wider background information on the project other than that provided in the set of two booklets as for dissemination material designed. It is envisaged that the ECVET CD will essentially include the ECVET Manual in an interactive manner.

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1. Project Objectives

This project is a sub-project of a wider European Union level project called ECVET-European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training. The project is all about creating a common European credit system for vocational education and training (VET) where one could develop vocational qualifications which are transparent, comparable, and transferable in order to improve the flexibility of learning pathways and encourage student mobility both locally and abroad. Just like the ECTS system featured in the Bologna Process for study units that add up to academic qualifications, the ECVET through ECVET points will feature in the Copenhagen Process for study units that add up to vocational qualifications.

The ECVET methodological framework is all about describing qualifications in terms of units of learning outcomes with associated points (ECVET points), a transfer and accumulation process, and complementary documents such as student learning agreements, and the issuing of personal transcripts.

The main objectives and benefits of the ECVET new European tool are to support student and ultimately employee mobility across Europe through the recognition of the units of learning outcomes that add up to a full qualification, to facilitate life long learning through the flexibility of programmes and pathways to achieve qualifications, to encourage more attractiveness to VET, to ensure quality in the provision of VET qualifications, and to facilitate permeability between vocational and academic higher education pathways.

The current VET provision in Malta consists of a mix of courses. Part of the courses are accredited by the U.K based BTEC system. There are also a number of national home-grown courses. The Malta Qualifications Framework is in place, and the referencing process for local qualifications to both MQF and the EQF offer many opportunities. However, if local institutions want to enable their students to be able to obtain recognition of their qualifications within the EU, as well as to allow students from Member States to obtain qualifications in Malta, which have value within the European labour market, the implementation of ECVET in these VET qualifications gains importance. The three main state VET providers for both IVET and CVET levels are part of this project. This project will thus support the implementation of ECVET in Malta at a National level. The private sector is also involved in this project, where one of the local partners is a private institution intending to organize a seminar to further disseminate information and guidance specifically targeting private entities providing VET for various areas of study.

There are two different types of partners involved in the project: VET providers at National level, and VET related institutions at European level. At National level, there are the three state partners and one private VET provider. These VET providers include two partners providing mainly IVET, while the other two partners provide CVET. This way these institutions represent a good proportion of VET provision in Malta. This partnership is considered strategic. Since the piloting is carried out for a variety of VET qualifications in these institutions, then the manual which results would surely be adapted to the realities at National level and can be used over practically the whole sector. There is also the political dimension in that if the main VET providers are involved in developing the ECVET conversion system, then they

can learn to understand better not only the need for such reform but also to realize that they have the capacity to actually implement it. With respect to the international partners, these were chosen to represent mainly public structures involved in VET in their countries. These partners were chosen strategically so that they can provide a European perspective to the project. The European partners thus ensure that the European dimension is not lost compared to the National needs.

More specifically, the main objectives of the ECVET Malta project: VET Credit Conversion System are therefore to:

- Develop an understanding of what ECVET is and the importance of its implementation at both national and European level. This is to be achieved through the conferences which are to be organised by both the Coordinating institution at National level, as well as the seminars which each of the local partners are to organize about the process to their academic staff or sector;
- Report on the status quo and strengths and weaknesses of the existing VET qualifications to be converted as part of the ECVET conversion testing process;
- Development of templates for the description of the curriculum plan and the individual course descriptions in terms of ECVET;
- Report on the testing exercise of the conversion system developed to convert existing courses into ECVET;
- ECVET Conversion Manual drawn up to guide VET training institutions on how to convert their vocational training courses and qualifications into ECVET. This manual is envisaged to include step by step guide for all users on how to fill in each question asked in the template. The manual will include flowcharts, tables, references to relevant publications, and sufficient examples, clear enough for a reader to know how to fill in correctly the template as stipulated by the ECVET system.

This main output, through the production of the **ECVET Conversion Manual** is to be used by the Malta Qualifications Council beyond the project lifecycle to promote and encourage as many VET training providers in Malta in converting their courses in ECVET.

Moreover, the template for the curriculum plans and the individual credit descriptions will also be adopted at National level and will be the ones which MQC will be promoting and requesting VET institutions to use when presenting their courses for level rating and accreditation.

Regarding Impact and Sustainability, the short term target groups reached and involved during the life of the project are:

- The MQC, through this project will develop knowledge, understanding, & expertise on the ECVET conversion process, and thus through the ECVET Manual it will be able to provide assistance to all VET providers in Malta.
- The other partners: MCAST, ITS, ETC, CDL
- Academic staff of VET institutions, who will benefit through seminars organized specifically about the conversion process of their courses into the ECVET system.
- Other VET institutions who will participate in the various dissemination and promotional seminars.
- Trade Unions, Employers' associations and other key players who will be reached through the different dissemination activities, the dissemination of leaflets, an information CD on ECVET etc...
- The European Partners, who will not only provide input, but also gain experience on the conversion of credit in another country. Such an expertise can be utilized in their home country.

Regarding Impact and Sustainability, the Long term target groups reached after project is finished are:

- All Maltese state-run and private VET providers. This is because the MQC will use the VET Conversion Manual as the only national source for the ECVET Conversion process.
- Students in the vocational sector are to ultimately benefit from this project. The system will facilitate the recognition of VET qualifications at a European level. It will also facilitate studying abroad in other European institutions providing VET.
- Through this project Malta will be in a better position to achieve part of the vision 2015 for Malta: to become a Centre for Excellence in Education.

2. Project Approach

Malta is to implement this initiative through developing and pilot-testing a conversion process of a number of VET courses provided locally. Thirty courses are selected for the project from different VET providers. The courses represent a variety of areas and fields of study at different MQF levels from both the public and private sector, featuring a variety of Initial VET (IVET) courses and Continuous VET (CVET) courses targeted for all ages of the population. The project intends to allow the testing of the conversion process on the 30 selected courses, changing them from their traditional format to one which uses ECVET. Based on the templates and methodologies developed and tested on the 30 VET courses, a manual will be developed to provide background knowledge, guidelines, flowcharts, and checklists which would enable any VET provider in Malta, and potentially also across Europe, to use as a supporting tool in converting their courses into the ECVET system according to the specifications for ECVET.

Regarding project deliverables, apart from this Interim report, other ten deliverables have already been successfully developed and implemented as outcomes of this pilot-project. A project logo has been created that directly symbolises the scope of ECVET; that of student progression and mobility across Europe, a project website has also been developed. Two partners' meetings have been organised together with a successful ECVET Dissemination National Conference launching the project and introducing the ECVET tool in Malta. The National Conference did not only serve as an information for a, but it essentially focused on consultation with stakeholders through the five 1 hour workshops that were organised. A set of two concise yet very informative booklets have been designed and published specifically for this project as part of the project dissemination material, namely: ECVET in Europe – A New European Tool for Promoting, Facilitating, and Enhancing Lifelong Learning and Mobility; and Implementing ECVET in Malta - A New European Tool for Promoting, Facilitating, and Enhancing Lifelong Learning and Mobility. One of the booklets provides a background introduction of the ECVET ideology in Europe, explaining the aim of such a tool and highlighting its main features as part of the necessary conditions that must be in place to fully adhere to such EU system. The other booklet provides an overall profile of the ECVET Malta project, highlighting the project consortium, its main objectives and deliverables, and how will the project be implemented. The set of two booklets were launched and distributed on the day of the National Conference. The two booklets together with all public documents and presentations provided during the meetings and National conference organised have all been uploaded on the ECVET website at www.ecvetmalta.org.mt. Since then, the MQC/NCHE have been receiving requests for more information and guidance on ECVET. The ECVET Questions and Answers User Guide document published by the European Commission have also been distributed and made available on the ECVET Malta website.

So far, a template has been designed in order to gather data from the four VET institutions. The institutions had to provide a profile of the selected courses in the format suggested by the template. The template was structured into two parts. Part one of the template was structured into three parts namely capturing: Institution Details, Qualification Details, and Profile for each Study Unit; addressing issues

relating to level rating, course outline, duration, learning outcomes, credit systems, teaching and assessment methods. It also includes the details for each study unit within the courses. Part two of the template focused on the other necessary conditions of ECVET such as on the validation of informal and non-formal learning, Memorandum of Understanding, personalised learning agreements, and personal transcripts. Several informal meetings with MCAST (being the task leader) have been organised in view of designing the template. The template was then validated by all local and international partners. This template was only aimed at allowing institutions to describe their qualifications in the way which they currently document it. The objective of this was to uncover how institutions currently document their courses profile.

The partnership sub-contracted an external researcher to work on two reports based on information provided in the 30 filled in templates. One of which provided an analysis in brief of the situation of the courses profile vis-à-vis the ECVET necessary conditions as stemmed from the 30 filled in templates. The other report focused on highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the current situation as presented in report one vis-à-vis the ECVET necessary conditions. In this way, the institutions can identify their strengths and turn them into opportunities, as well as identify the weaknesses and turn them into strengths. An external evaluator 1 has also been sub-contracted. The methodologies used so far were analysed. After the completion of the two reports, which are also publicly available on the ECVET Malta website, the way forward is to work on designing a National Template for describing qualifications vis-à-vis ECVET necessary conditions and other relevant information which would be needed for assessing qualifications for the purpose of level rating and accreditation. The reason being that the template developed through this project is to be used at a National level replacing the current application form for level rating. This approach ensures the widespread knowledge on the ECVET necessary conditions and ensures that qualifications are designed in line with the necessary conditions of the transparent system of ECVET. The MQC also holds the responsibility for the interim internal evaluation report on the internal quality assurance aspects of the partnership. This report includes feedback so far on the 1st and 2nd project Partners' Meetings and the First Dissemination Conference. Feedback was gathered through various Internal Project Monitoring Questionnaires.

The way forward stems from the outcomes of the first two reports based on the information provided in the 1st drafted template. Discussions are underway to refine the template, which would ultimately lead to the development of a National template –Template for New Qualification Description in terms of ECVET. As already explained above, the template would be detailed enough that can be used as an application form for level rating of courses, so that institutions will only have one type of template to use for describing their courses for level rating and accreditation. This process leads to the development of the ECVET Manual. All experiences stemming from the actual conversion exercise will be documented in the **Report on the Conversion Exercise**. The ECVET Conversion Manual will be based upon the refined New Qualification Template. The Manual is envisaged to firstly provide the readers with a road-map of the project explaining the current systems and situations and where we are expecting to end up. Then the Manual is to serve as a guiding document explaining in detail and explicitly how one should fill in properly the template. Therefore, examples, guidelines, flow charts, and background literature

will be provided for each question of the template. For simple general questions the guidelines provided will be quite straight forward and concise. For other questions requiring more detailed, complex answers such as that on learning outcomes and credit systems, the guidelines might require long detailed chapters encompassing all information available for guidelines. This is to be further discussed as from the month of April. In the same month four seminars are to be organised by the local partners specifically for their academic staff, and in the case of the private VET provider, the seminar will also target other VET providers. The information CD about ECVET, although should have been developed in month nine, will be developed at a later stage in order to provide wider background information on the project other than that provided in the set of two booklets. It is envisaged that the ECVET CD will essentially include the ECVET Manual in an interactive manner. The targets so far have been successfully reached through consultation meetings between partners and stakeholders via, formal and informal meetings and other means of communication, and the dissemination and consultation initial ECVET Malta National Conference.

In brief, approach to be adopted by the Coordinator (MQC) & Role of Partners:

Milestone 1: Report describing qualifications to be converted; report highlighting strengths and weaknesses of the VET qualifications chosen.

Milestone 2: Development of the National templates for curricula plan and course descriptions – Template for New Qualification Description in terms of ECVET.

Milestone 3: Implementation of conversion exercise and report on experience.

Milestone 4: ECVET Conversion Manual

Milestone 5: (throughout the project life cycle): Initial and final National Conferences; 3 Project Partners' Meetings; website and logo; CD on ECVET; dissemination material; 3 seminars for academic staff of the partner public institutions; 1 seminar for private providers organised by the private partner institution; publication in journal about the conversion exercise in Malta; project Interim and Final Reports.

Note: The **VET Credit Conversion System** project will be backed up by both internal Quality Assurance through the provision of Internal project monitoring questionnaires and documentation of outcomes by producing an Interim and Final internal evaluation reports, and external Quality Assurance through sub-contracting two independent External Evaluators.

3. Project Outcomes & Results

Throughout the two year project, the consortium has to carry out twenty-four deliverables. Eleven of which had to be delivered within the first twelve months of the project, i.e. after the first year of the project until the Progress Report, the other thirteen are to be implemented throughout the next phase of the project i.e. during the next twelve months of the second year of the project.

Hence, as for the first term of the project, the 11 deliverables delivered so far are listed below:

- **First Project Meeting:** The First Partners' Meeting (Deliverable No: 5) was organised in the second month of the 24-month period of the project. All project partners including the foreign partners attended to this meeting. It was a two full-day meeting held at the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST); which is one of the local project partners. The institutions involved in the consortium introduced themselves and their functions in terms of courses and services provided to learners, vis-à-vis ECVET. The ECVET concept and tool was introduced. The concepts and necessary conditions were deeply discussed. The template to be developed as the backbone of this project was discussed. Decisions were taken on the way forward in terms of workload responsibility and the delivery of deliverables of the assigned work packages. The partners were also briefed on financial aspects of the project, so that all partners could start keeping records of time allocated to working on the project, keeping copies of receipts, etc. The way forward was discussed.

- **Second Project Meeting:** The Second Partners' Meeting (Deliverable No: 6) was organised in month nine of the project. All partners including the foreign partners attended the two full-day meetings. The meeting on day one was organised at the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS); being one of the local project partners. Update on the necessary conditions of ECVET was given. The partners discussed the outcomes that have been produced as at that date. They put forward their concerns and discussed the way forward. They also discussed the ECVET first dissemination National Conference which had to be organised the day after. Day two of the partners' meeting was organised at the Westin Dragonara Hotel. It was held after the National Conference. The outcomes and feedback from public on the National Conference were discussed. During the two-day second partners' meeting several dissemination material was disseminated as guiding documents to the partners. The two reports as part of the project deliverables, one of which providing a picture of the current situation and the other on the strengths and weaknesses of the current systems of the 30 selected courses for the pilot-project were presented and discussed. An external Evaluator was also invited to comment on the two reports and methodologies used so far. The external evaluator 1 was also present to the two-day partners' meeting and gave a presentation on his views. An official from the GHK/3s Research Laboratory was also present for the two-day meeting. The official was sent on behalf of the European Commission to monitor the pilot project. The second monitoring

will be done in April during the ECVET pilot project meeting for all pilot projects selected in 2010 (second generation pilot-projects) in Rome.

- **Project Website and Logo:** The Website and Logo (Deliverable No: 10) were designed specifically for the ECVET Malta project. The logo was designed in a way which symbolises the scope of the project – a globe with ascending footsteps representing the idea of student mobility across Europe, facilitating flexible learning pathways for life long learning and success. The logo for the VET Credit Conversion System project also kept the same colour scheme of the EU ECVET mother logo as to represent a connection between the two logos. The logo was used for all purposes of project dissemination material. The website was developed and launched during the National Conference on November 8th 2011. It includes a home page, project information, news section, diary of events, project partners, links, and a contact page option for the general public. The partners also have access to a private login portal, having access to upload and view all project private documents. All dissemination material produced for this project and project results have been uploaded on the website, together with links to other relevant ECVET dissemination material produced by the Commission. The website is updated frequently and includes also information on activities organised so far. Work is also in progress for the translation of the website to be also available in the Maltase Language.

- **First Dissemination National Conference:** The ECVET-Malta first dissemination National Conference (Deliverable No: 8) was organised in month nine of the project. The aim of this full-day National Conference was firstly to launch the **VET Credit Conversion System** project and to introduce for the first time the concept of ECVET in Malta to the general public. The aim was to also inform the key stakeholders of VET about the ongoing LLP-LDV pilot project VET Credit Conversion System. The conference served as an information forum as well as a consultation activity with the interested stakeholders. The project dissemination material was distributed to the general public on the day, together with other relevant material already produced for other projects but which directly relate to issues on the ECVET necessary conditions such as the Malta Referencing Report and Learning Outcomes Report. The project website was also launched on the day. The conference included an introductory speech from the CEO of the MQC/NCHE, a presentation from the Project Coordinator on the ECVET ideology, the necessary conditions/features of ECVET, and on the Implementation of the ECVET project in Malta through the pilot project VET Credit Conversion System. Another presentation was provided by CEDEFOP through live teleconferencing. The MQC also provided a presentation on the project road-map and project deliverables. The sub-contracted researcher, Outlook Coop provided a presentation on the two reports that have been developed so far from information that have been gained from the template of the 30 selected courses for the pilot project. The National Conference also featured five workshops whereby the discussions were based upon the main thematic issues of ECVET. The Workshops were all chaired and moderated by the project partners. The website was also launched. Promotion was also given to the EQAVET project in Malta which also targets the quality of VET provision

in Europe, also satisfying one of the targets set by the EU in the Bruges Communiqué policy document.

- **Project Dissemination Material:** Project Dissemination Material (Deliverable No: 11) was designed specifically for the ECVET Malta project. A set of two booklets were designed to provide information on the ECVET project, namely: **ECVET in Europe - A New European Tool for Promoting, Facilitating and Enhancing Lifelong Learning and Mobility**; and **Implementing ECVET in Malta - A New European Tool for Promoting, Facilitating and Enhancing Lifelong Learning and Mobility**. The former provides background information on the ECVET ideology in Europe. The latter provides background information on the implementation of the Malta pilot-project VET Credit Conversion System. An ECVET folder was also designed for the scope of project meetings and conferences; in order to distribute to the general public as a package together with the dissemination material.

- **Report 1: Description of the Courses which are to be Converted:** Report 1 (Deliverable No: 1), specifically designed to collate information on the 30 selected courses and to provide an overall picture of the status quo of the 30 courses selected vis-à-vis the ECVET necessary conditions was written and made available to the general public via the ECVET Malta website. This report complements the compilation of the profile templates of the various VET courses and therefore focuses on the results stemming from the 30 questionnaires/template which were filled in by the institutions.

- **Report 2: Review of VET – Qualifications for Conversion- Strengths and Weaknesses:** Report 2 (Deliverable No: 2), complementing report 1 was then designed. The aim was to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the current situation as presented in report one, keeping in mind the ECVET necessary conditions. Hence, this report looks at the current strengths and weaknesses of the courses submitted for evaluation as part of this project. The analysis is based on the learning outcomes, level rating and accreditation of the courses, credit systems, the assessment methodologies used, and the teaching methodologies used. A brief analysis is also included regarding the mechanisms to establish MoU and Learning agreements and Personal Transcripts.

- **External Evaluator 1:** The project requires the services of two external evaluators. As at this stage, external evaluator 1 (Deliverable No: 16) was sub-contracted. He was entrusted to comment on the methodologies used so far. The sub-contracted external evaluator 1 so far examined the initial template drafted and the two reports above mentioned, and will analyse the final draft of the template once it will be refined to be used at a national level for the purposes of level rating and all such documentation will be documented in one report. The external evaluator participated in the second partners' meeting and in the National Conference. Hence, for the time being, part of the Template for New Qualification Description in terms of ECVET report was analysed, thus the two reports above mentioned and the draft template which was used so far to obtain information on the 30 qualifications selected. A presentation was prepared for the second partners' meeting highlighting the

external evaluator's views and comments about the methodology used so far. The final comments of the external evaluator 1 on the over all activities above mentioned will be documented and presented in a report.

- **Interim Internal Evaluation Report (1st & 2nd Project Partners' Meetings, 1st Dissemination conference):** The interim internal monitoring and evaluation of the project partnership and activities delivered so far falls under the responsibility of the MQC. An Interim Internal Evaluation Report (Deliverable No: 22) has been prepared. It collates information gathered from the two Internal Project Monitoring Questionnaires which were distributed to the partners after both the 1st and 2nd partners meeting, and from the feedback forms which were distributed to the general public after the National Conference.
- **Template for New Qualification Description in terms of ECVET:** A template has been designed (Deliverable No: 21) and distributed to all partners. It has been validated by all partners. The aim of this template was to be used by the partner institutions to describe the profile of their qualifications which were selected for the project. The MQC gathered a total of 30 filled in templates, for the 30 courses selected for the project. The template was designed in a way in which the ECVET necessary conditions can all be documented. This includes information on the course description and curricula description in terms of units of learning outcomes, information on credit systems, the course level rating, teaching and assessment methods, information on any mechanisms that the institutions might already have in place to prepare Memorandum of Understanding, validation of informal and non-formal learning, individualised learning agreements, and personal transcripts. Work is in progress to refine the template to make it also sensitive to issues of level rating and accreditation of courses. Hence, the refined template will be the template to be used by the Malta Qualifications Council at a national level for the purposes of level rating and accreditation of courses.
- **Project Progress Report:** The project Progress/Interim Report (Deliverable No: 19) has been developed in month 11/12 of the project. It covers the first twelve months of the project until February 2012. The project interim/progress report is characterised by a public and a private part. The public part provides information on the project, its aims, objectives, deliverables produced so far and those yet to be achieved. It also provides information on the project consortium, specifically who is involved as partners, and who will be the short-term and long-term beneficiaries of this project. It also highlights plans for the future, and its overall contributions to EU policies. The technical part is more specifically on the financial aspects of the projects, including proofs of all transactions and activities organised. The private and financial and technical part of the report has to include all proofs of project deliverables and their related documents as attached or enclosed as annexes.

Note: The project information CD about ECVET and its advantages (Deliverable No: 12) although was supposed to be produced by month nine, will be delivered at a later stage. The reason being that all partners have agreed that this could be

more useful in terms of information provided if it had to also include information on the conversion process itself, and the actual ECVET Conversion Manual which could be made interactive. Hence, the CD will be delivered at a later stage in order to provide wider background information on the project other than that provided in the set of two booklets as for dissemination material designed. It is envisaged that the ECVET CD will essentially include the ECVET Manual in an interactive manner.

Another deliverable where originally, according to the project application and agreement, had to be delivered by month thirteen, after the interim report, has been already delivered since the second/third month of the project, hence also listed as part of the deliverables implemented so far listed above. This template has been used to gather information on the 30 selected courses and to prepare the two reports which have been prepared so far on the current situation of the 30 selected courses and on the strengths and weaknesses of these courses. However, as already explained this will be refined in order to be used at a National level by the MQC for the level rating and accreditation of courses.

4. Partnerships

This European project involves the partnership of eight partners across Europe all sharing their expertise. The coordinating partner is the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC). Five partners represent local institutions, one of them being the MQC and the other four being local VET providers; three of which are public institutions namely the Malta College of Arts, Science, and Technology (MCAST), the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS), and Malta's Employment and Training Corporation (ETC), and the other partner institution represents the private sector, namely, Clear Dimension Ltd.

The other three partners represent foreign institutions namely from Italy (University of Florence – UNIFI), Romania (The National Centre for TVET Development – CNDIPT), and Slovenia (National Institute for VET – CPI), all of which are to provide their contribution to the ECVET conversion process in Malta. The local partners act as the leading partners due to the fact that the 30 courses are selected from the respective institutions. The foreign partners serve as a consultative team of foreign experts which will also contribute to the conversion process and to oversee that the ECVET Conversion Manual is also sensitive to other EU countries.

Each partner within the consortium is acquainted with diversity and thus more open to intercultural issues. In fact, working within a multi-cultural team has contributed towards the transfer of knowledge and skills and eventually has led towards the project's product developments so far, and also towards sharing the best practices as to come up with the best possible outcome. The project has also established other partnerships with groups outside the consortium. Partnerships are being built with the target groups of the project, namely, the trade unions, employers' associations, training institutions, and the industry. This is being done through consultation via workshops or meetings.

Other indirect partnerships are the contacts which have been made during the organisation of ECVET events organised by the Commission, where different ECVET project representatives across Europe meet up in seminars, workshops, and meetings organised abroad by the Commission to share good practices with each other. ECVET representatives from the Commission are also very flexible in terms of guidance and consultation. It is also very likely that partnership agreements for student mobility will be more easily made between the involved project partners within the project.

5. Plans for the Future

Project Website and Logo: It is foreseen that the Malta Qualifications Council will continue to maintain the ECVET Malta website even after the end of the project. The ECVET logo is envisaged to be also possibly used on student mobility certificates, to indicate both a community of practise and the correct use of ECVET. The ECVET Malta website will also be translated in the Maltese language.

ECVET New Template for Qualifications Description: The current template which has been designed as at this date is envisaged to be refined to be used at a national level by the Malta Qualifications Council for the purposes of level rating and accreditation of qualifications.

ECVET Conversion Manual: The ECVET Conversion Manual, the main output of this project is envisaged to describe in detail how one can fill in correctly the ECVET New Template for Qualifications Description. It is envisaged to firstly present the readers with a road-map, then to guide them step by step how to convert their qualifications into the ECVET system by following guidelines and examples on how to fill in each question asked within the template.

Information CD about ECVET and its advantages: The CD is envisaged to provide a wide area of information on ECVET, both from an ideology point of view and from a technical point of view. It is envisaged that all dissemination material and examples will be available on the CD, more importantly the interactive ECVET Conversion manual.

Publication in Journal about the conversion exercise in Malta: By the end of the project, after the ECVET Conversion Manual is developed, it is envisaged that as part of the last deliverable, the MQC will publish an article in an academic journal about the conversion exercise in Malta.

Permeability between the Vocational and Academic educational pathways: It is envisaged that this project, through the transparency of the ECVET system, will facilitate mechanisms for permeability for students to be able to shift from the vocational field to the academic field and vice versa.

Seminars on ECVET Conversion by all local project partners: It is envisaged that in April 2012 all the four local partners will be holding a seminar specifically for their academic staff. Such seminars will also be co-ordinated by the Malta Qualifications Council, however tailored for the specific institution needs. The institutions will be able to set their agenda and workshop questions, allowing them to communicate better with their academic staff. Such seminars will ensure that the ECVET concept and tool is widely disseminated to all the academic staff of the partner institutions. The private partner, Clear Dimension Ltd., an institution offering ICT courses, which has been specifically selected for the project to also represent the needs of the private sector, will in fact be organising a seminar not only specifically to its academic staff, but also to the private institutions offering various ICT courses or any other courses provided by private institutions.

6. Contribution to EU policies

The Copenhagen Process, running in parallel with the Bologna Process, has set VET as a priority on a European level. The most recent strategy document in this process is the Bruges Communiqué which highlights the vision for VET for this decade (2011-2020). This vision acknowledges the key priorities for enhancing VET provision in Europe. This policy document at European level further ties in with the need for improvement in employment rates across Europe.

Several European wide projects and initiatives have been taking place in order to address the key objectives defined by the Bruges Communiqué to make VET more attractive and inclusive, to ensure the provision of high quality initial I-VET, to ensure easily accessible and career-oriented continuing C-VET, to ensure flexible systems of VET based on a learning outcomes approach supporting flexible learning pathways, to ensure validation of informal and non-formal learning, to create a European education and training area with transparent qualification systems, ensuring transnational mobility, and access to high quality teaching, guidance, and counselling services .

Within the National context, several projects addressing VET have been put into action to adhere to European wide initiatives for VET suggested by the European Commission. Two key projects undertaken also by Malta, which tackle most of the targets specified in the Bruges Communiqué, are the ECVET and EQAVET projects. These are major European tools together with the EQF-NQF and Europass which Malta will also ensure to apply. The ECVET and EQAVET are measures for life long learning, also ensuring and enhancing affective student mobility across Europe. The ECVET in particular tackles most of the key policy areas highlighted in the Bruges Communiqué, such as the creation of a European educational and training area characterised by transparent qualifications that can be comparable and transferable from one country to another. In view of the Bruges Communiqué Policy document, the ECVET also tackles other key priorities highlighted in the Bruges document such as ensuring opportunities for transnational mobility of VET students, flexible systems of VET based on a learning outcomes approach, and ensuring career-oriented high quality I-VET and C-VET provision. In the long run, such initiatives will strengthen employee mobility and after all improving their employability across Europe.

