

euVETsupport



International



Report on ECVET application in a mobility context

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Summary

This report considers the results of a research amongst the partners of the euVETsupport project which was conducted to gather more background information of ECVET projects (previous, existing and starting projects) and their practical implementation. The research was done in the framework of work package 2 of the euVETsupport project.

The intention was to gather inside information such as changes made to usual procedures, supportive or hindering procedures or elements, problem solving practices that goes beyond the organisations' own interests/procedures in order to support ECVET mobility.

Basis for the research is the ECVET quality cycle for mobility. The report expresses best practices, critical points and finally recommendations for each phase of the cycle.

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1 Introduction

ECVET is the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training. ECVET is a technical framework for the transfer, recognition and where appropriate, accumulation of individuals' learning outcomes with a view to achieve a qualification. The ECVET tools and methodology comprise the description of qualifications in terms of units of learning outcomes with associated points, a transfer and accumulation process and complementary documents such as *memorandum of understanding*, *Learning Agreement*, *transcript of records*.

The LdV project *euVETsupport* is a project that facilitates the ECVET implementation by providing support structures for the practical application of EQF and ECVET principles. The project promotes and facilitates the integration of EQF and ECVET into the work of VET providers and enterprises, lays ground for European cooperation based on practical application of EQF and ECVET principles in VET praxis. The focus of *euVETsupport* is on the transport and logistic sector. In order to be able to reach this aim it is necessary to analyse ECVET (pilot) projects and the way these projects handle the key requirements of ECVET. Therefore, information on experiences with the requirements of ECVET in mobility are assembled in projects to collect good practices and to draw conclusions for the application of ECVET principles by VET practitioners.

This report considers the results of a research amongst the partners of the project which was conducted to gather more background information of ECVET projects (previous, existing and starting projects). The research was done in the framework of work package 2 of the project.

1.1 Aim of WP2

The aim of this work package is to summarise and explore requirements on key education elements such as occupational profiles, curricula, course designs, study programmes or assessment procedures when preparing them for ECVET application in order to facilitate VET mobility and the recognition of in- and non-formal learning within the different European education systems represented in the project. From these findings conclusions are drawn for the application of ECVET principles by VET practitioners in their daily VET practice. These conclusions serve as the basis for the development of the *euVETsupport* support structures materials and facilities.

1.2 Method of research

Amongst the partners a questionnaire was distributed to gather the information of case studies. The aim of this questionnaire was to gather information on difficulties and strengths of ECVET related projects to gain more inside information regarding the key requirements and obstacles. The questions were based on the ECVET-quality circle that summarises the crucial phases, elements and activities in the ECVET process.

The questionnaire is divided in 4 tables to be filled in per project.

Table I	assembles general information about the (context of) the ECVET project
Table II	assembles information regarding the planning phase of mobility
Table III	contains questions about the implementation phase of mobility
Table IV	contains questions about the evaluation phase of mobility

2 Background information

Students, employees and entrepreneurs, and therefore companies and the labour market, are influenced by globalization, considering the rapid communication techniques or the enlargement of the European Union to 27 Member States. We live and work in Europe where freedom of movement is a right - the right to learn, work and live in another country within the European Union. This raises the subject of learning mobility in education.

2.1 Mobility and VET

In education more and more international components are observable. These are indeed important for the everyday professional practice and it is possible to follow part of the study or do a work placement abroad as a learning mobility. In the past that was an exceptional step, but for several years at European level various programmes have been developed and offered to motivate students. For the higher education (HE) such initiatives run at full speed, for vocational education and training (VET) this area is in development. To achieve a better promotion and involvement, the council of the European Union invites the member states to adopt measures at both national and European level which are aimed at increasing learning mobility and promote the implementation and use of EU programmes and tools designed to support learning mobility¹.

Student learning mobility advances the personal and professional development of students and enhances their employability through the acquisition of new skills and competences. Knowledge, language, intercultural dialogue and a better understanding of other education systems are also important elements. Within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) promoting student mobility is a priority. Student mobility contributes to the objective of 'lifelong learning' and is therefore financed within the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) of the European Commission.

Within this Lifelong Learning Programme tools are designed to promote and ensure the quality of learning mobility.

2.2 ECVET in mobility

One of those tools is the '*European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training*' (ECVET). ECVET is a recommendation of the European Union and dates from 2009. Education traditionally looks for knowledge and skills, while the labour market is based on competencies. The look at learning outcomes depends on the country and even the region. ECVET is a technical framework for the transfer, recognition and, where appropriate, accumulation of Individuals' learning outcomes with a view to achieving a qualification. Ultimately it is about validating learning performance. In short, this means that a competent institution (host organisation) in one country assesses the student's achievement and provides evidence of the results of the assessment, so that the home institution (sending organisation) can validate and recognises the credits.

The implementation of ECVET has two broad objectives:

1. To support mobility of European citizens
2. To facilitate lifelong learning

ECVET is based on a set of technical components that are all underpinned by the use of '*learning outcomes*'.

Learning outcomes

Learning outcomes means statements of what a student knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process and which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence.

ECVET recommendations

¹Council of the European Commission: Council conclusions on a benchmark for learning mobility, 2012.

In order to ensure quality in the process of learning mobility with ECVET, a quality circle helps to accomplish the realisation. The quality circle consists of four processes (figure 1), based on three phases:

- Planning (refers to the phase 'ECVET before mobility')
- Implementation (refers to the phase 'ECVET during mobility')
- Evaluation (refers to the phase 'ECVET after mobility')
- Review (based on the evaluation process, an action plan can be developed)

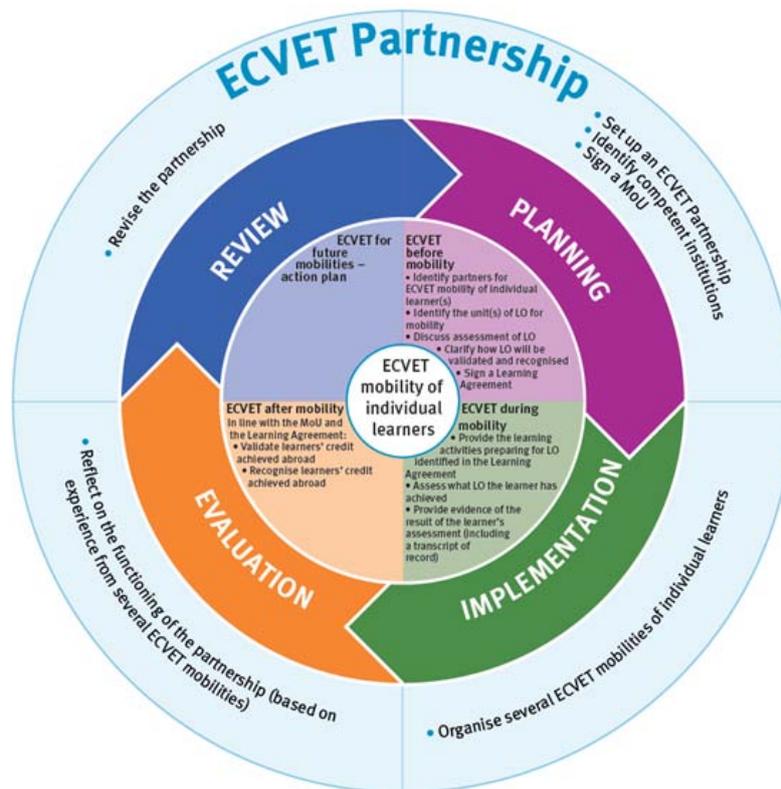


Figure 1: Quality circle: using ECVET for transnational mobility²

² ECVET users' group: Using ECVET for Geographical Mobility (2012). http://www.ecvet-team.eu/sites/default/files/ecvet_mobility_guide_2012.pdf.

3 Results

The results in this paragraph are based on the questionnaire developed for work package 2. Aim of the questionnaire was to gather more background information of ECVET (logistic) projects (previous, existing and starting projects). It intended to gather the inside information such as changes made to usual procedures, supportive or hindering procedures or elements, problem solving practices that go beyond the organisations' own interests/procedures in order to support ECVET in mobility. The questionnaire asked to share weaknesses (and how the project has overcome these weaknesses), practical hints supporting ECVET practices, strengths and opportunities.

The questionnaire was used as described in the method of research in paragraph 1.2. Four tables were used to gather the information:

Table I	assembles general information about the (context of) the ECVET project
Table II	assembles information regarding the planning phase of mobility
Table III	contains questions about the implementation phase of mobility
Table IV	contains questions about the evaluation phase of mobility

The results are presented along this structure. Paragraph 3.1 gives an overview of the case studies of the projects collected through the questionnaire. Paragraph 3.2 describes the case studies of the projects collected and analysed by the project partners. Paragraph 3.3 gives a description per phase and highlights especially the difficulties, pitfalls and the recommendations that derive from the experiences. Reporting on the results and in advising euVETsupport on the key elements the focus is on the ECVET recommendations and the ECVET quality circle.

3.1 Overview of the case studies (projects)

The euVETsupport partners brought in 8 mobility related practices. The euVETsupport project has 12 project partners from 7 different countries, namely Germany, Austria, Italy, Spain, France, Ireland (United Kingdom) and the Netherlands. Some of the euVETsupport partners have a specific project task, such as 'communication' or 'the portal'. And therefore did not contribute to this specific research. The main scope of the project is the logistic and transport sector. Amongst the euVETsupport partners only some of the partners have direct relationships with the logistic and or transport sector.

The questionnaire was filled in for 8 case studies of which 4 projects are related to trade and logistics.

1. CENTRAL - www.logisticsqualifications.eu (Julie Murat, AFT-IFTIM, FR)
2. VIA ECVET- no website- (Jan Muijs, Aventus, NL)
3. Your Ecvet - www.your-ecvet.eu (FLM, ES)
4. NETINVET - www.netinvet.eu (Rob van Wezel, KCH, Elly van 't Hof, Albeda, NL)
5. Wulfrunians Abroad - www.wolvcollabroad.tumblr.com (Roberta Hill, TKF, IT)
6. M.O.T.O. - <http://ecvet-moto.isfol.it> (3S, AT)
7. TRIFT - www.trift.eu (Dekra)
8. Veria - www.veria.gr (TKF, IT)

3.2 Characteristics of the case studies (projects)

Those 8 case studies cover 20 countries. The projects related to logistics, transport and/or (international) trade cover 14 of these countries. Looking at the project period of the projects (scheme 1) a division in time is visible. Some projects ended some years ago, other projects being on the edge of ending and the last category of projects are projects that started recently.

The projects that have already ended are able to review the total partnership and its achievements. For these projects it is possible to reflect on the complete process, and all the key elements.

The recently started projects are still in the phase of starting and implementing. For those projects it is impossible to reflect on all stages of mobility, such as the strength and weaknesses of the composition of the partnership, the pitfalls of a mobility process and cycle.

Scheme 1 gives some general information on these projects: the project period, the countries involved and the sectors that are included. Three of the projects relate to the logistic sector, one to foreign trade, others to tourism, engineering, automotive sector, children's education. As said before some of these projects were run some years ago, others recently started. This gives a variety of information.

Some projects are transfer projects that build on and disseminate previous project results. As a result of this, different projects refer to the same underlying project. For instance: the logistic sector in the NETINVET partnership builds on the Eurotranslog results, so does the project Central.

M.O.T.O. and NETINVET are presented in the brochure 'We've tried ECVET: lessons from the first generation of ECVET pilot projects'. A brochure which was prepared for the final conference of the ECVET pilot projects 2008-2012. This brochure describes projects and their strengths, draws conclusions and points out the lessons learnt. The import and export sales assistant of NETINVET and the competence matrix foreign trade of TRIFT bare similarity.

Information on the ECVET projects				
	Project period	Countries involved	Sector	website
NETINVET	2008 -2010 Since 2012 the network is established as a legal entity under the French law. In each country competent authorities are associated as members.	Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, and Spain	Trade sector Logistic sector (since 2012)	www.netinvet.eu
M.O.T.O.	2009-2011	Italy, Austria, Finland, Iceland	Tourism and catering	http://ecvet-moto.isfol.it
TRIFT	2010-2012	Germany, France, Bulgaria, Sweden, United Kingdom	Foreign/international trade	www.trift.eu
Central	2010-2012	France, Germany, United Kingdom, Italy, Hungary, Belgium, Romania	Logistics	www.logisticsqualifications.eu
Your-ecvet.eu	2011-2013	Finland, the Netherlands, Spain, Slovenia	Automotive	www.your-ecvet.eu
Wulfrunians abroad	2012-2014	United Kingdom, Italy, Germany	Creative arts engineering	www.wolvcollabroad.tumblr.com
Via ECVET	2012-2014	France, Norway, Portugal, Spain, United Kingdom, the Netherlands	Economics, Trade and Transport and Logistics	No website
Veria	2012-2014	Greece, Italy, Malta, Spain	Tourism	www.veria.gr

Scheme 1: General information on the projects

Countries	Sectors			
	Logistics/ (international) trade	Tourism	Technical (Automotive Engineering)	'Remaining' category: Children's education; Creative arts
Italy	Logistics, transport trade sector	Tourism, catering	Engineering	Creative arts
France	Logistics, Trade and transport, Foreign/international trade Economics,			
United kingdom	Foreign/international trade Transport, logistics		Engineering	Creative arts
Germany	Logistics, Transport Foreign/international trade		Engineering	Creative arts
Austria		Tourism, catering		
The Netherlands	Logistics, transport Foreign/ International trade		Automotive,	Children education
Spain	Trade and transport, logistics (Catalonia) Foreign/international trade, Economics		Automotive	Children's education
Sweden	Foreign/international trade			
Romania	Transport and Logistics, International trade			
Bulgaria	Foreign/international trade			
Greece		Tourism		
Malta		Tourism		
Finland		Tourism, catering	Automotive	Children education
Iceland		Tourism, catering		
Portugal	Trade and transport, logistics, Economics			
Slovenia	International Trade, transport and logistics		Automotive	Children education
The Czech Republic				
Hungary	Transport and logistics			
Belgium	Transport and logistics			

Scheme 2: overview of countries and sectors

3.3 Case studies in the ECVET cycle

This part describes the results subdivided into planning, implementation, evaluation and review.

3.3.1 Planning

This part of the research addressed the experiences of the case studies in the planning phase and highlights the problems that had to be solved and what are the lessons learnt?

Subjects were:

- Finding and involving partners (competent bodies) to fulfil a significant role in the process of learning
- Procedures to identify units of learning outcomes and the validation and recognition of LO

- Bridging differences and solving problems between involved educational systems or different procedures
- Elements of the Learning Agreement
- Identifying and describing units of learning outcomes
- Allocating ECVET points
- Deciding on the assessment procedures and the assessor
- The quality insurance of the partnership
- The way of recording of the results of the assessment
- Ensuring the recognition of the units at home

Finding and involving partners (competent bodies) to fulfil a significant role in the process of learning

In a partnership you have to deal with different elements: structure, processes, procedures and systems. A partnership has to be set up and has a formal function. It has to establish the basis for the recognition of achieved learning outcomes which is not only formal, but it is also a process. A process in which the basis for mutual trust is formed. This mutual trust is built on exchange of relevant information on getting to know each other and getting to know the different educational systems.

Starting a partnership, a preliminary visit or a VETPro mobility project are good ways to build a partnership and to get acquainted with a country, its educational system, the important elements of the work placement and the assessment procedures. It is also a way to experience some of the intercultural aspects. It is a way to explore the possibilities of mobility.

Finding partners and involving partners was mentioned as a difficulty to realise mobility. Networks and using the help of partners to expand the network was therefore mentioned to be important. Databases, or an interactive platform can support this.

Planning

The planning phase includes all quality assurance measures related to the activities in the phase 'ECVET before mobility'. A crucial point is setting clear goals for the mobility period. In case the specific mobility is organised in the frame of an already established partnership (formalised by a MoU), the already agreed aspects need to be taken into account, but do not need to be laid down or changed for each individual mobility.

ECVET recommendations

Procedures to identify units of learning outcomes and the validation and recognition of LO

As an obstacle in defining units of learning outcomes and validation and recognition of learning outcomes the different VET systems were mentioned.

In order to overcome the difficulties related with this issue it is important to communicate well, and take time and attention to agree on the process, the products and the procedures. It is a process you need to take time for in order to build up mutual trust. Involvement of different parties can be useful. Competent bodies are important partners in the planning phase. Competent institutions fulfill a function in identifying the unit(s) of learning outcomes suitable for mobility.

One project used a matrix for defining learning outcomes. The given advice was to use a matrix that is suitable for defining LO and for validating the LO.

- well-define tasks/activities/processes etc., so that everybody speaks the same 'language'
- take the time and attention to agree on the documents, procedures etc. (Learning Agreement)
- need of negotiation
- use of European reference profiles that can be used in every European country
- build up mutual trust
- involve competent bodies

- close involvement of the tutor in the company
- sufficient information about the stage of learning (K,S,C) in order to attune the educational objectives and tasks with the level of competence
- involve the student in defining the status quo of K,S,C and the related learning during mobility

The diversity of qualification systems in Europe is a fact to deal with in ECVET implementation. This also concerns the different possibilities and options for interpreting and using ECVET concepts per European country. When a network is lacking or not adequate you should be able to access an interactive platform at an European level that has detailed information about involved institutions/companies.

Bridging differences and solving problems between involved educational systems or different procedures

Different systems and different procedures are common issues of (European) educational projects. The analyses of commonalities among qualifications and so defining units of learning outcomes is a part of the process. It is a process that takes time. But the identification is important. The advices given on this subject were: organise a preliminary visit or a VETPro mobility project in order to be able to inform and learn from each other, use reference profiles, involve competent institutions and be aware of the differences between countries. One of these differences is the subject that validated learning outcomes can not be recognized in all countries. This is a difficulty you might have to deal with.

Identifying and describing units of learning outcomes

Each new project has to find its own way in identifying and describing units of learning outcomes. Newcomers like to use an existing common format to describe units of learning outcomes. One of the projects remarked that it is not possible to cover all learning outcomes in a unit. Related to this, the project advised to leave space in the Learning Agreement to cover additionally acquired learning outcomes. Leave space for the unforeseen – situation related - learning outcomes.

The given advices are mainly directed on transparency, clear terms, detailed descriptions in order to avoid misunderstandings and misinterpretation. The use of a reference profile was advised because of the neutrality, not influencing the national standards.

Regarding the mobility itself it was advised to provide the hosting partner with background information (of the students course as a whole, etc.) and the advise to document the additionally acquired LO (additional benefits).

Allocating ECVET points

A point to deal with allocating ECVET points is finding a consensus in relevant topics (level of effort, complexity, extent of LO, inclusion in labour market and society). The differences between partner countries, different systems and related different rules form an obstacle in allocating ECVET points. It was also remarked that ECVET points do not reflect the special circumstances and conditions for the learning outcomes and the contents of the internships.

In order to be successful partners advised to use relative values, a transparent and simple system and to involve both training experts and job/employment experts of the related sector. A way to keep it simple is to integrate documents in the Learning Agreement and leave space for additional acquired knowledge, skills and competences an additional information.

Deciding on the assessment procedure and the assessor

Agreeing on a suitable procedure congruous with all existing country specific procedures is not always easy. Basically the aim is to determine common assessment procedures that contain elements from the national assessment procedures while also being consistent with European quality insurance tools (EQARF, EQAVET). In order to find reliable assessors (practice tutors) within training companies abroad, cooperation with partners is important. Projects do have positive experiences with partner schools abroad that fulfil a role in the assessment, being the assessor.

Just as in previous subjects discussion, good communication, regular meetings are important ingredients. In order to decide on procedures a discussion on assessment is positive and necessary. One of the projects has developed a set of assessment methods and procedures which assesses the learning outcomes out of the perspective of the student, the company and the teacher. The used instrument is an ePortfolio of the student. Partners mentioned the importance of

- agreements within European networks on assessment procedures.
- making good agreements before the assessment and select students
- good communication within the company with tutor and accompanying staff
- regular meetings between the host organisation and participant and by participant the enterprise of the work placement
- structured evaluation by the participant on several stages of the programme.

The quality insurance of the partnership

Mutual trust, the Memorandum of Understanding, the reference frame, working with European networks and partnership agreements are elements that were mentioned as a subject of quality insurance.

One of the projects mentioned as a positive element a standardized document including all commitments and responsibilities supplied by the National Agency. Another projects advised on expanding the project, the partnership and the vocational areas. When expanding it is important that at least one partner stays on board in order to strengthen the project.

The way of recording of the results of the assessment

The European transparency tools (i.e. Europass) are instruments to record the results. Some projects designed their own tool. Therefore, one example is to provide the hosting organisation with the final evaluation reports, including a report by the tutor, and all the necessary documents to the sending partner, as well as a Europass Mobility Certificate, a reference letter and an evaluation sheet for each participant. Another example is to explore as many roads as possible in the recording of results.

Ensuring recognition of the unit at home

Official recognition of achieved learning outcomes is mostly the responsibility of the relevant competent authorities in the country of the 'home' institution. In some countries it is not possible to recognise the achieved learning outcome. In that case the acquired competences can be seen as additional competences that might enhance the chances of finding a job after graduation, or it might be possible to replace the compulsory work placement that is part of the training programme in the country. For example, in Italy students receive national credit points for their work experience and in Austria it forms a part of the overall score at the final examination.

Elements that are related are:

- the finding of reliable assessors in the companies abroad,
- proper communication,
- well-defined MoU,
- Learning Agreement,
- frequent bilateral visits between parties involved,
- involvement of competent bodies from the involved countries,

- specific training provided to practice tutors in the companies, and with specific trainings,
- in case of workplacement: a transparent description of the level of K,S,C to be acquired.

With the overall set up of the network try to make a circle of the Learning Agreement, the acquired learning outcomes, the transcript of record, the validation and recognition. NETINVET is a good example that could be used for setting up a network that is ECVET proof.

A crucial difficulty of this subject is that validated learning outcomes can not be recognized in all countries. This is a difficulty you might have to deal with.

3.3.2 Implementation

This part of the research addressed the experiences of the ECVET project in the implementation phase. The key questions were 'What arrangements were made, in order to assure the learning activities en to ensure that the student achieves the learning outcomes? What were the experiences with these arrangements, how did partners overcome difficulties and problems?'

The subjects were

- Maintaining of the criteria set up in the Learning Agreement
- Persistence of the mutual trust among the partners
- Solving problems and overcoming obstacles
- Giving guidance to the student
- Assessing the student
- Important key elements

Maintaining of the criteria set up in the Learning Agreement

Giving accurate information prior to the students' mobility is important. The projects advise to have a clear Learning Agreement and a well developed program in order to reach positive experiences. Furthermore the sending organisation has to ensure that accompanying staff (tutor) reads the agreements prior to arrival of the student and fully understands the criteria. This means that they have to communicate prior to the mobility. The projects that work with a reference profile experience that this profile opens the discussion on learning abroad, directly related to the qualification profile.

During the mobility it is important that the tutor within the company accompanies the student and that the studentship continuously is evaluated together with all partners concerned.

Persistence of the mutual trust among partners

Building mutual trust is difficult but it is a must. Proper communication is important. Partners should be precise in describing the mobility, the assessment procedures, the expectations. Preparatory meetings, such as a preliminary visit or a VETPro mobility project, give a nice opportunity to build on mutual trust between partners. It gives the opportunity to discuss on demands, needs, expectations with all partners involved. The intermediary organisations that support companies should also be included. International relations and continuous communication throughout the project life cycle needs to be encouraged.

Solving problems and overcoming obstacles

Mutual trust is important as it can ensure a proper way of solving problems. A well working means of communication is also important. One of the projects used moodle and that platform did not work well. To foster positive experiences between partners it was also stressed out that the importance to see each other as international colleagues rather than contract partners with a formal agreement. This means working close together and communication with host partners and encouraging your accompanying staff to meet and work alongside them. Encourage international relations and continuous communication throughout the project life cycle, and sometimes even beyond this. Related to the mobility it was pointed out that assessing the knowledge, skills and competences (LO) at the start of the mobility abroad, for instance by observing the

student, helps to understand the level of the already acquired learning outcomes. This can help to support the concrete planning of the mobility and the acquiring of competence.

Giving guidance to the student

Preparatory meetings can fulfil a role at this subject, discussing the way partners like to cooperate with organising work placements and what the mutual expectations are as to guidance of the students. It is important to be aware of different cultures and systems and the way it effects the mobility. The project M.O.T.O. has good experiences with formative ways of assessments supporting the learning process. They advise to use formative ways of assessment and not just summative assessment at the end of the training period abroad. Final assessment would be sufficient for the purpose of ECVET but is not always sufficient for supporting the learning process. Particularly in those cases in which it is not possible to recognise units of learning outcomes acquired abroad, so that the student would not have to be assessed again in the home country. For instance in the case of Austria, the Austrian apprenticeship students cannot be exempted from any part of the holistic final apprenticeship exam, it is really important to support the learning process by constantly giving feedback to the students and ensure therefore the quality of the learning process abroad.

Students should be encouraged to carry out self-assessment and to reflect on their learning process. Therefore, it is recommended that they write learning diaries, document their activities and their learning progress. This also helps identifying and documenting those learning outcomes that were not explicitly stated in the Learning Agreement as targeted learning outcomes for the mobility period. Related to this it is pointed out that it is also important that the student has a proper overview of his/her duties.

Assessing the student

A problem in assessing the student can be finding reliable assessors (practice tutors) in the company. Various methods are used to assess students, such as the use of an assignment letter, using an e-portfolio (360° feedback from the student him-/herself, the company and the teacher), assessments together with foreign partners. Assessment is also an important subject of preparatory meetings. In these meeting partners can discuss the way they would like to do the assessment, the methods, procedures and criteria. Nevertheless, you should be aware of intercultural misunderstandings influencing the assessment procedures or results. A certain amount of flexibility is needed and you should use and accept different kinds of assessment methods. The assessment methods, procedures and criteria need to be carefully prepared and transparent for the students.

3.3.3 *Evaluation and review*

This part of the questionnaire inquired after the evaluation and review of the mobility and the partnership within the ECVET cycle.

Subjects were:

- Validation and recognition procedure of the students credits
- Reflection on the functioning of the partnership (evaluation)
- Revision of the partnership (review)
- Transferability and re-use of procedures to other projects (what elements?)

Validation and recognition procedure of the students credits

ECVET points are not used in all cases studies and the national regulations and legislation can be an obstacle in this which has to be taken into account. For instance how knowledge, skills and competences acquired abroad will be documented and taken into account for the award of a qualification. Creating a valid evaluation takes time, but then both companies and students are very satisfied.

The most important issue for students going abroad is that they will have guarantee that the knowledge, skills and competence acquired during the work placement abroad will be recognised and that they will not have to be tested again. However, in some cases there is no assessment during the training programme, but just a final assessment (for example, in the case of the Austrian apprenticeship training). In these cases, the student cannot be exempted from this examination or from parts of it.

The possible scenarios include:

- The learning outcomes achieved abroad are recognised as part of the qualification that is being acquired in the home country.
- The learning outcomes achieved abroad are not recognised as part of the qualification that is being acquired in the home country, but are seen as additionally acquired competences that might enhance the chances of finding a job after graduation.
- The learning experience abroad realized as internship can replace the compulsory work placement that is part of the training programme in the country. For example, in the Italian case, students received national credit points for their work experience in Austria, and that will form part of the overall score at the final examination.

One project points out the importance of learning outcomes, transparent descriptors and an initial assessment at the beginning of the mobility period: the most important aspects ensuring validation and recognition are transparent descriptions of targeted knowledge, skills and competence and the assurance that they have actually been acquired abroad. If possible, also the levels of knowledge, skills and competence achieved at home and to be achieved during mobility should be identified in order to assess properly the added value of the learning process abroad. An initial assessment made at the beginning of the mobility period could support this process. This is of particular importance to ensure the quality of the whole mobility project and to establish mutual trust

Learning mobility using ECVET

ECVET supports the valorisation of learning mobility because:

The learning outcomes approach ensures a better understanding and comparability of qualifications and learning achievements across countries. When using ECVET for learning mobility, the learning outcomes that the learner is expected to achieve abroad are clearly agreed by the partner institutions and stated in a Learning Agreement. Consequently everyone, including the home institution, the host institution and the learner; have a shared understanding of the objectives of the mobility. Following the participation in appropriate learning activities, learners acquire the expected knowledge, skills and competence and they are assessed on what they have achieved. The learning outcomes that they have achieved abroad are documented in a transcript of record and thus made visible.

ECVET recommendations

Reflection on the functioning of the partnership (evaluation)

Europe is hard work. Therefore it is fruitful to work with existing (network) partners and communicate with each other (reciprocal). You should be able to share critics in order to improve the process on both sides, sending and hosting.

Revision of the partnership (review)

Not many comments were given on this subject. Partners of the network NETINVET name the importance of the network and welcome the expansion due to the integration of logistics. Continuous evaluation is important for the improvement of the quality of the partnership. NETINVET has a steering committee which meets regularly to discuss daily tasks.

Transferability and re-use of procedures to other projects

Transferability is not always easy. It is time-consuming and transfer is not always easy. The creation of reference profiles was named to be helpful for all other sectors. And testing developed instruments in other situations.

4 Conclusions and recommendations

In this section the conclusions are summarised based on the critical points per stage. Furthermore, recommendations are formulated.

4.1 Critical points per stage of the project

Planning

In the first stage, before starting the project, the elements that were mentioned to be critical were:

- Finding partners: being able to find competent bodies, companies, lack of well updated catalogues with detailed information on possible partners.
- Different VET systems
- Reliance on host partners
- No standard procedures or framework
- Differences between countries, legislation and validation
- Impossibility of validating Learning outcomes

Implementation

In the implementation stage the elements the most important subjects are:

- Communication and information. Share information – get to know each other
- Organisation: tutor – assessor; assessment methods, procedures and criteria; transparency
- Importance of feedback by the tutor
- System: structural differences – recognition problems – different scenario's

Evaluation & review

Regarding evaluation and review the elements of interest are:

- Continuous evaluation
- Visit each other
- Sustainable network and partnership
- Difficult to transfer project ideas / processes to new partners

4.2 Recommendations

The most general recommendation is to use the expertise of previous ECVET projects. Best practices are assembled and spread. Another general recommendation is to be communicative.

More specific general recommendations are the following:

1. At an European level the ECVET support team is set up in 2010. Communication on ECVET and support ECVET implementation are key tasks of the support team. One of the many instruments is a website containing information and supporting documentation. For each stage of ECVET it is possible to use the expertise of assembled information of the first ECVET projects.

Use the developed instruments and tools developed by ECVET projects and assembled by the ECVET team. For instance:

www.ecvet-projects.eu

www.ecvet-team.eu

These sites give information on all kind of subjects regarding ECVET. A toolbox offers examples of documents written by ECVET pilot projects and related sources on methodological approaches to ECVET implementation examples that can be found, such as: Memorandum of Understanding, describing qualifications, comparing qualifications, designing learning units, Learning Agreements, etc.

2. A group of 14 National Agencies for the Lifelong Learning Programme (Netecvet), coordinated by the German National Agency aims to support practitioners of transnational mobility who are beginning to work with ECVET. In 2013 this group will have a toolbox available that will help mobility projects in applying ECVET. See: <http://netecvet.com/>
3. Communication, transparent information are key elements in the whole process. Communication is an essential part of each stage. It is necessary to bridge differences, to understand each other, the educational system and related procedures, and the cultural background. It is important to keep this in mind during all phases. Especially when things are not going well, communication could be the key to solve the problems.
4. Several ECVET projects were directed at the transport and logistic sector. Results of these projects were brought together within the NETINVET network, www.netinvet.eu. NETINVET is a network promoting European mobility for learners completing vocational education in international trade and transport and logistics. Partners of this network have experience with ECVET and mobility. Several ECVET tools, such as Memorandum of Understanding or reference profiles, are available. NETINVET could be recommended as a step in finding partners for projects in the transport and logistic sector.
A general advice directed at the transport and logistics sector: use the NETINVET network and their expertise on mobility in the transport and logistics sector and related the developed tools.

In the next paragraph some specific recommendations are given related to planning, implementation and evaluation and review. At first these recommendations are given in key words or remarks. In most cases some further explanation follows or some direction is given as a kind of further guideline. Some of recommendations are also mentioned above as a more general recommendation, such as 'communication' or 'use reference profiles'.

4.2.1 Recommendations per phase

Planning

The first stage of the partnership is of major concern. It's laying the foundation of the following process. The recommendations of the implementation and evaluation and review rely partly on those recommendations.

Starting a partnership

- European database, or interactive platform at a European level that enables the formation of effective partnerships
- Networks – to join and to take part in
- Reference profiles

For newcomers it could be advised to join an existing network or partnership in order to learn from the partners and share the already developed procedures and tools. It enriches the network/partnership adding new information and the perspective of the 'newcomer'. In case of transport or logistics the advice could be to connect with the the NETINVET network, www.netinvet.eu.

Another place to start is Adam. Adam is the project and product portal for Leonardo da Vinci. Adam is the database where information on projects and partners is assembled. By using Adam one can obtain a full picture of the many products and results produced by the Leonardo da Vinci Programme. It's possible to use keywords, like logistics, to search for projects or products. Projects that deal with ECVET are labeled 'ECVET' and can thus be found, see www.adam-europe.eu.

Procedures to identify units of learning outcomes

- Take time and attention to speak the same language, to see into the different VET systems, making/using European reference profiles and define tasks, activities and processes well
- Use existing examples to identify units of learning outcomes or use already identified units
- Use the ECVET instruments and documents (questions & answers, toolbox) as an example
- Have a look at NETINVET (www.netinvet.eu) and the developed units

Bridging differences

- Use reference profiles/ frameworks and be aware of differences between countries
- Deal with the differences between systems and try to find a way it works for all partners
- Inform each other, keep in contact, continuous communication, be transparent
- Have a look at NETINVET (www.netinvet.eu) and the developed units. Decide if it can help you to bridge differences

Learning outcomes

- Use reference profiles, use clear definitions – avoid misunderstanding/interpretation
- At the level of students: provide background information and make it possible to add additional attained K,S,C and to describe them in the documents.

Implementation

- Transparent information
- Assessment at the beginning of the mobility
- Formative assessment
- 360° feedback
- E-portfolio
- Frequent communication
- Frequent visits – VETPro mobility projects

During the implementation communication can be seen as the mean to keep everything ongoing. Recommendations as: transparent information, frequent communication and frequent visits refer to communication. This communication is important to build the mutual trust, to steer the process, to be able to give feedback. Feedback among the student and the company/VET school during the period of mobility, feedback among the sending and hosting institution regarding the mobility. Feedback is one of the bases of mutual trust.

At the level of the support of the learning process: close involvement of the tutor, sufficient information about the stage of learning of the student and involvement of the student in the defining of learning outcomes are recommended. 360° feedback and the E-portfolio are instruments in this communication process. It also documents the process. The assessment at the beginning of the mobility is an instrument to mark the starting point of the student and thus have a reference point in the process of coaching to the aim of the mobility.

Mutual trust is an important issue in relation to assessment. The quality of the assessment must be assured. The Member States and the European Commission are establishing a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQAVET) to promote and monitor continuous improvement of national systems of vocational education and training (VET). The EQAVET recommendation supports this. EQAVET forms part of a series of European initiatives aiming at to better recognise skills and competencies acquired by learners in different countries or learning environments, including Europass, the European principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning, ECVET and the European Qualification Framework for lifelong learning (EQF). For detailed information see:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/eqavet_en.htm. Especially the EQAVET leaflet and the EQAVET Descriptors' Guide could give more background information.

Evaluation and Review

- Open communication
- Networks and sustainable partnerships
- Reference profiles as an instrument

Evaluation and review are taken together. In the stage of evaluation the learners' achievements must be validated and recognised in line with the Memorandum of Understanding and the Learning Agreement. The reference documents are part of the Learning Agreement and are an instrument in the process of describing units and linking the units to qualifications.

The evaluation concentrates on the functioning of the partnership implementing mobilities. In the phase of review the steps are taken based on the evaluation. It can be necessary to expand the partnership, or to change the partnership for future mobilities. But it's also a possibility that the partnership remains unchanged. After that the cycle starts again. And again all steps will be taken, expansion to other profiles or refining instruments, agreements, processes e.g. can be part of it.

5 EU definitions

ECVET glossary

The basic ECVET concepts are defined in the ECVET recommendation adopted by the European Parliament on 18 December 2008 and by the Council on 17 April 2009.

Qualification

a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent institution determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards.

Learning outcomes

statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process and which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence

Unit of learning outcomes (unit)

a component of a qualification, consisting of a coherent set of knowledge, skills and competence, that can be assessed and validated

Credit for learning outcomes (credit)

a set of individuals' learning outcomes which have been assessed and which can be accumulated towards a qualification or transferred to other learning programmes or qualifications

Competent institution

institution which is responsible for designing and awarding qualification or recognising units or other functions linked to ECVET, such as allocation of ECVET points to qualifications and units, assessment, validation and recognition of learning outcomes, under the rules and practices of participating countries

Assessment of learning outcomes

methods and processes used to establish the extent to which a learner has in fact attained particular knowledge, skills and competence

Validation of learning outcomes

the process of confirming that certain assessed learning outcomes achieved by a learner correspond to specific outcomes which may be required for a unit or a qualification

Recognition of learning outcomes

the process of attesting officially achieved learning outcomes through the awarding of units or qualifications

ECVET points

a numerical representation of the overall weight of learning outcomes in a qualification and of the relative weight of units in relation to the qualification

List of references:

- Council of the European Commission: Council conclusions on a benchmark for learning mobility, 2012
- ECVET users' group: Using ECVET for Geographical Mobility (2012). http://www.ecvet-team.eu/sites/default/files/ecvet_mobility_guide_2012.pdf

Annexes:

- Guide to collect good practices

For further information on the project please consult:

www.euVETsupport.eu

For further information on the paper please contact:

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Annexes

euVETsupport – WP 2 ECVET in mobility - guide to collect good practices -

Introduction

ECVET is the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training. ECVET is a technical framework for the transfer, recognition and where appropriate, accumulation of individuals' learning outcomes with a view to achieving a qualification. The ECVET tools and methodology comprise the description of qualifications in terms of units of learning outcomes with associated points, a transfer and accumulation process and complementary documents such as Learning agreements, transcripts or records and ECVET users' guides.

euVETsupport is a project that facilitates ECVET implementation by providing support structures for the practical application of EQF and ECVET principles. It will promote and facilitate the integration of EQF and ECVET into the work of VET providers and enterprises, it will lay ground for European cooperation based on practical application of EQF and ECVET principles in VET praxis. The focus of euVETsupport is on the transport and logistic sector.

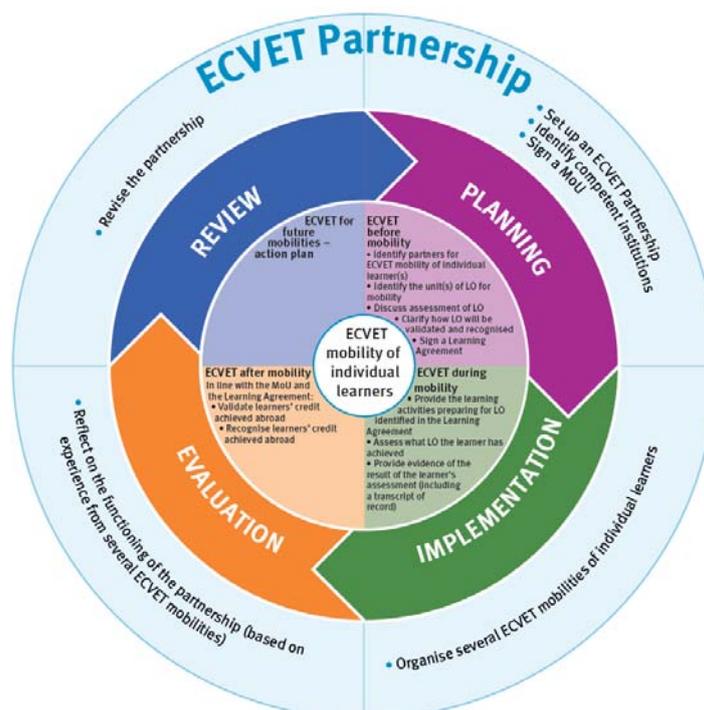
In order to be able to reach this aim it is necessary to analyse ECVET projects and the way these projects handle the key requirements of ECVET. Therefore, information on experiences with the requirements of ECVET in mobility projects are assembled through a questionnaire to collect good practices and draw conclusions for the application of ECVET principles by VET practitioners.

This questionnaire is developed to gather more background information of ECVET projects (previous, existing and starting projects). The intention is to gather the inside information such as changes made to usual procedures, supportive or hindering procedures or elements, problem solving practices that go beyond the organisations' own interests/procedures in order to support the ECVET mobility. Therefore it is necessary to share practical hints supporting ECVET practices, weaknesses (and how the project has overcome these weaknesses), strengths and opportunities.

The questionnaire is divided in 4 tables to be filled in per project.

Table I	assembles general information about the (context of) the ECVET project
Table II	assembles information regarding the planning phase of mobility
Table III	contains questions about the implementation phase of mobility
Table IV	contains questions about the evaluation phase of mobility

The next figure summarises the ECVET process, the phases, the elements and activities which are the crucial elements. Please consider this figure and the corresponding link before filling in the questionnaire.



http://www.ecvet-team.eu/sites/default/files/ecvet_mobility_guide_2012.pdf

Table I Context information

General description of the project	
What is the name of the ECVET project, is there a website?	
Do you and/or your organization participate in this ECVET project? If not, what and/or who is your source of information?	
What is the project duration (dd.mm.yy – dd.mm.yy)?	
Which sectors are involved?	
Which qualifications are involved?	
Which NQF/EQF levels are attributed to those qualifications?	
Which countries are involved?	
Which documents and agreements are made?	
• Memorandum of Understanding	Yes / No
• Learning agreement	Yes / No
• Description of units of learning outcomes	Yes / No
• Assessment procedures	Yes / No
• Transcript of records	Yes / No
Who is the contact person (organisation, name, (mail)address in case of additional questions or clarifying questions)?	

Table II Before mobility planning phase

What were the experiences of the ECVET project in the planning phase. What problems were faced and how were these problems solved? Proved it to be appropriate in the next phases of the mobility project?

	What difficulties, pitfalls or missing information did the ECVET project encounter, were they country specific?	What positive experiences did the ECVET project experience, were they country-specific?	What advice would the ECVET project give others in order to overcome difficulties and foster positive experiences?
Finding and involving partners (competent bodies) to fulfil a significant role in the process of learning			
Procedures to identify units of learning outcomes and the validation and recognition of LO			
Bridging differences and solving problems between involved educational systems or different procedures			

Elements of the Learning Agreement	What difficulties, pitfalls or missing information did the ECVET project encounter, were they country specific?	What positive experiences did the ECVET project experience, were they country-specific?	What advice would the ECVET project give others in order to overcome difficulties and foster positive experiences?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identifying and describing units of learning outcomes 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> allocating ECVET points 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> deciding on the assessment procedures and the assessor 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the quality insurance of the partnership 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the way of recording of the results of the assessment 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensuring the recognition of the unit at home 			

Table III **During mobility** **implementation phase**

What arrangements were made in order to assure the learning activities insure that the learner achieves the learning outcomes and what were the experiences with these arrangements, how did the partners overcome difficulties or problems?

	What difficulties, pitfalls or missing information did the ECVET project encounter, were they country specific?	What positive experiences did the ECVET project experience, were they country-specific?	What advice would the ECVET project give others in order to overcome difficulties and foster positive experiences?
Maintaining of the criteria set up in the learning agreement			
Persistence of the mutual trust among the partners			
Solving problems and overcoming obstacles (which?)			
Giving guidance to the student			
Assessing the student			

Table IV **After mobility** **evaluation and review**

	What difficulties, pitfalls or missing information did the ECVET project encounter, were they country specific?	What positive experiences did the ECVET project experience, were they country-specific?	What advice would the ECVET project give others in order to overcome difficulties and foster positive experiences?
Validation and recognition procedure of the learners credits			
Reflection on the functioning of the partnership (evaluation)			
Revision of the partnership (review)			
Transferability and re-use of procedures to other projects (what elements?)			

Is it possible to share documentation on essential documents (such as memorandum of understanding, learning agreement, description of learning outcomes, assessment procedures, et cetera)?	Yes / No If so, please add the documents.
Does the ECVET project agree on sharing information at the euVETsupport portal (under construction)?	Yes /No