



Lifelong
Learning
Programme



HOCHSCHULE
FÜR ANGEWANDTE
WISSENSCHAFTEN
MÜNCHEN

The EAGLE Methodology and Toolkit – The Bridge ECVET and ECTS for Learners



Àngels Font
Segundo González
Anne Gwinner
Dr. Heidi Harju-Luukainen
Drs. Gerrit Janssen
Carina Kiukas
Kati Laine
Elisabeth Manneck-Reichert
Jane Newby
Päivi Nuutinen
Taina Räikkönen
Ellinor Silius-Ahonen
Drs. Karin Sillen
Nathalia Siren
Prof. Dr. Claudia M. Ueffing

ZU
YD



gildeopleidingen



Generalitat
de Catalunya



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication [communication] reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

This EAGLE Toolkit is produced in the framework of the EAGLE project:

527205 – LLP – 1 – 2012 – 1 – DE – LEONARDO – LMP. The content of this expertise is the result of the common work of the EAGLE partners. The article represents the view of the authors. Each partner is responsible for his/her own text.

Edition notice:

Hochschule München – Fakultät 11
Prof. Dr. Claudia M. Ueffing
Am Stadtpark 20
81243 München
Tel.: 0049 89 1265 2369
Mail: claudia.ueffing@hm.edu
<http://www.sw.hm.edu/>

Title/Logo: Suzanne Wiesmeier

Layout: Anne Gwinner, Lisa Tomesch, Claudia M. Ueffing

Contents

List of Figures.....	4
List of Abbreviations*	4
1. Overview of Preconditions	5
1.1 The Intention of the Toolkit.....	5
1.2 The Intention and the Process of Designing the EAGLE Methodology and Toolkit at a Glance	6
1.3 The Foundation and the Reference Points of the EAGLE Methodology and Toolkit ...	8
2. The Transition Process – a NEW Standard to Bridge ECVET and ECTS in ECEC	11
2.1 Overview over Preconditions for a Common Approach	12
2.2 The EAGLE RPFL Process in VET	14
2.3 The Digital EAGLE Toolkit for Transparency and Orientation.....	15
2.4 Starting the EAGLE RPFL Process in VET – Entering the Bridge	16
2.5 Finalising the RPFL Process in HEI	18
3. Conclusions	19
3.1 The EAGLE Methodology and Toolkit at a Glance	20
3.2 Recommendations	21

List of Figures

Figure 1: The intention of the EAGLE Toolkit.....	7
Figure 2: The process of designing the EAGLE Toolkit.....	7
Figure 3: The EAGLE approach	9
Figure 4: The EAGLE bridge	11
Figure 5: Preconditions for the RPFL process as a common approach	13
Figure 6: The EAGLE approach of the application process for RPFL	14
Figure 7: The EAGLE RPFL process in VET	16
Figure 8: Finalising the RPFL process in HEI	18
Figure 9: The EAGLE general approach.....	20
Figure 10: Possible transfers within ECEC	21

List of Abbreviations*

cr:	credits
ECEC:	Early Childhood Education and Care
ECTS:	European Credit Transfer System
ECVET:	European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training
EQF:	European Qualification Framework
HE:	Higher Education
HEI:	Higher Education Institute
IMPAECT:	Intercultural educations by means of partners working with ECVET transfer, project lead by Claudia M. Ueffing (2010-2012)
KSC:	Knowledge, Skills and Competency
LLL:	Lifelong Learning
LO:	Learning Outcome
RPFL:	Recognition of Prior Formal Learning
RPL:	Recognition of Prior Learning

*For further information:

<http://www.eucen.eu/EQFpro/GeneralDocs/FilesFeb09/GLOSSARY.pdf>

1. Overview of Preconditions

In Europe the state of the art concerning the implementation of ECVET as well as the Recognition of Formal Prior Learning (RFPL) is still highly diverse. The results of the findings based on previous research are as follows:

- There is no common standard throughout Europe for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) with regards to either the area of staff training for ECEC or in terms of a shared core curriculum for day care staff (2011/C 175/03, Nesse 2009: 36, OECD 2006).
- A common currency does not exist to bridge ECVET and ECTS and the testing phase of ECVET has come to its end. Big steps forward have been made, but the end-user has to continue to be at the centre of the process and of any future developments.
- The highly diverse situation throughout Europe seems to be quite confusing for the individual learner who might not be an expert in ECVET, but just wants to carry on with his or her individual Lifelong Learning (LLL) process. For him or her it is hard to dig the way through all information available.

Therefore the EAGLE Methodology and Toolkit for Transition supports ECEC students who have taken a Vocational Education and Training (VET) route in the continuation of their Lifelong Learning process by enhancing transparency, by acknowledging their achievements and by facilitating the recognition of prior formal learning (RPFL) for entry into Higher Education (HE) institutions throughout the EU.

1.1 The Intention of the Toolkit

First of all the EAGLE project aims to contribute to the students' Lifelong Learning process by bridging VET and HE making use of the ECVET principles. The user groups who will benefit from the outcomes of this project are those supporting students within the field of VET and HE and staff working within the ECEC sector. Secondly the EAGLE partner consortium strives to raise quality in ECEC by means of professionalisation of staff in ECEC and by contributing to innovation and a European dimension in national educational systems. As the education of future ECEC staff is

still highly diverse within Europe and covers both VET and HE (EQF levels 3 to 8) permeability can still be a challenge for learners in their LLL process. Huge steps have been taken in Europe, but still the recognition of learning outcomes remains an issue on European, national or even institutional level. As the state of play differs greatly among the European member states, students cannot rely on recognition of their learning outcomes especially if the students leave vocational education and go to university to do their Bachelor degree. It is here that the EAGLE Toolkit can make a difference by facilitating the transition from VET to HE for ECEC learners!

In addition EAGLE wants to improve and increase co-operation between VET and HE including their staff. The EAGLE Toolkit provides institutions as well as members of staff or most importantly the students with relevant information and best practise guidance about the transition phase from VET to HE (see figure 1 below). This background information facilitates the transition process for everybody who is involved – students, institutions, stakeholders, teachers and even tutors in work placements. Furthermore the common agreements within the partner consortium set the ground for a growth of Mutual Trust and it forms a best practise example throughout Europe in VET and HE in the sector of ECEC to increase the cooperation between VET and HE in general. This approach also extends beyond VET and HE cooperation to include partners from the employment sector (working life): enterprises providing day-care, social partners and other relevant bodies were strongly involved to build up this common understanding. They contribute to the education of staff via work placements and are the employers of future staff being educated around Europe.

1.2 The Intention and the Process of Designing the EAGLE Methodology and Toolkit at a Glance

As stated before good reasons spoke for involving all relevant partner groups, but at the same time the consortium's ***INTENTION and AIM*** was to serve all target groups with the products and outcomes of the EAGLE project:

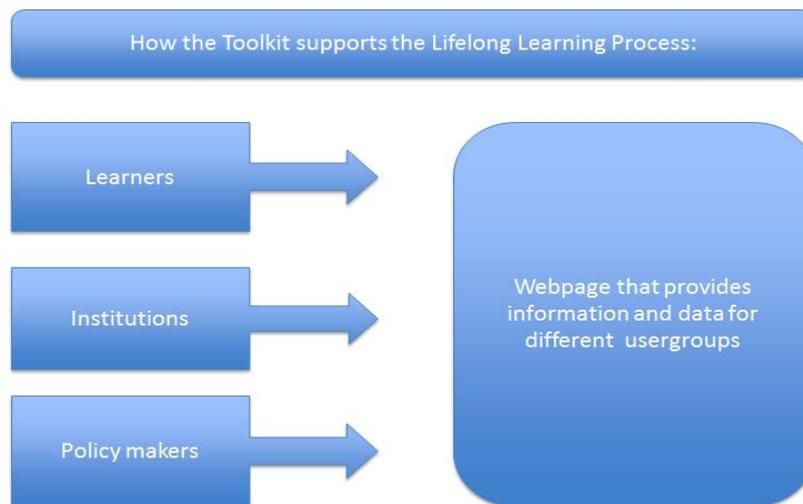


Figure 1: The intention of the EAGLE Toolkit (designed by Heidi Harju-Luukkainen)

The **PROCESS** of designing the EAGLE Methodology and Toolkit comprises the following steps: research, development of innovation, testing and piloting plus revision (see figure 2 below). This multi-part approach of methods has already directed, but will further lead to the following core outcomes:

- the EAGLE Expertise
- a scientific background paper about the Process of Designing the EAGLE Methodology and Toolkit
- and the EAGLE methodology and Toolkit in a digital version which allows user friendliness, dissemination and exploitation

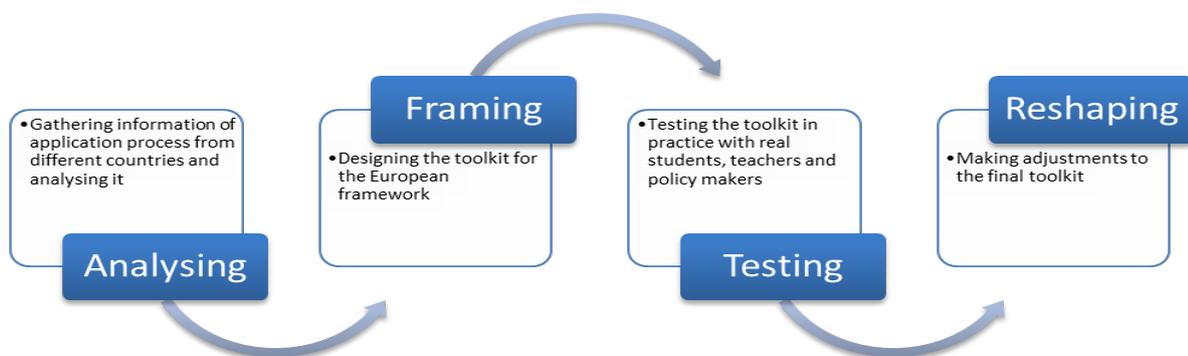


Figure 2: The process of designing the EAGLE Toolkit (designed by Heidi Harju-Luukkainen)

1.3 The Foundation and the Reference Points of the EAGLE Methodology and Toolkit

The EAGLE Methodology and Toolkit combines the best of ECVET principles¹ EQF, ECTS and ECVET as well as LOs as a reference system:

- EQF and NQFs are reference points for the validation of learning outcomes.
- Learning Outcomes exist both in VET and HE; although they are not exactly the same, they are very similar and therefore comparable.
- Curricula are increasingly learning outcome based which in consequence allows for consistency of validation and recognition.
- A very strict learner orientated approach towards the individual transition phase enhances Lifelong Learning.

This combination and the strict learner orientation are **INNOVATIVE!** It helps to overcome the discussion about credit points and avoids confusion around the question of which system – ECTS or ECVET – is the best.

The EAGLE Methodology and Toolkit answers the questions: What are the benefits of this combination? Who benefits?

The focus lies on the **INDIVIDUAL LEARNER** and his/her needs. He or she can continue within his or her career whilst at the same time accessing career and professional progression via the most time effective and financially efficient route. The transition tool allows the learner to identify the most appropriate and efficient route through which he or she can continue with his or her studies/professional development. The EAGLE Methodology and Toolkit will support the identification and recognition of prior learning within the field of VET through an orientation appropriate to their needs:

¹ The ECVET principles may be found here: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/de/events-and-projects/projects/ecvet-european-credit-system-vocational-education-and-training>.

Description of LOs in Terms of KSC– especially in Curricula

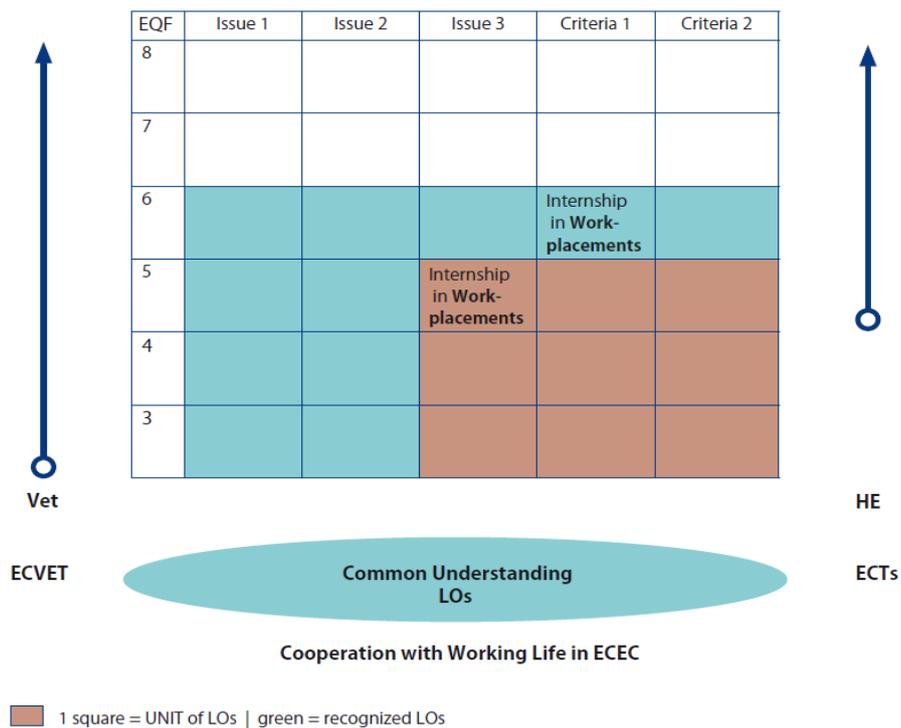


Figure 3: The EAGLE approach (designed by Claudia M. Ueffing)

The EAGLE consortium also agreed upon the fact that a new assessment procedure is NOT necessary in the receiving HE institution. All partner countries in this consortium have institutions in charge, e.g. ministries who guarantee high standards of education in VET in ECEC. All countries have standardised exam procedures as well as assessment methods and have implemented quality systems. The EAGLE consortium considers them as valid and reliable and negates the efforts of a second testing of the students. ***The LOs that students show e.g. in a portfolio are valid!***

2. The Transition Process – a NEW Standard to Bridge ECVET and ECTS in ECEC

The **SHIFT OF PARADIGM** towards the individual learner is crucial alongside the need to take all the differing education systems within each of the EU member countries into consideration. This seems to be important when considering both the incompatibility of ECTS and ECVET in some aspects as well as respecting and valuing the existing diversity in VET systems in Europe.

The individual learner is the one who faces challenges in transition phases of his or her career:



Figure 4: The EAGLE bridge (designed by Claudia M. Ueffing)

For these reasons a twofold demand can be identified: first and foremost the need for tailor made guidance and counselling – paving the way for the learner. And secondly the economic situation in Europe is asking for a low cost policy and the need of clear, easy going and efficient common standards.

This raises the question: How could these two sides of a coin be combined? In a first step some preconditions have to be considered.

2.1 Overview over Preconditions for a Common Approach

The intended aim of the EAGLE project was to support and encourage mobility and enhance transparency within the area of ECEC across Europe. By drawing upon a number of case studies from each of the consortium members, the project was able to identify both commonalities and differences within a range of ***practises and systems***. By examining our understanding of a 'qualification' (in support of ECVET and ECTS), the consortium was able to unpick the issues and challenges surrounding qualification transfer. In providing a tool which makes a qualification more 'transparent', practitioners and academics have a clear reference point from which they can make sense of the knowledge, skills and competencies (KSC) owned by the learner. It is intended that this clear understanding of the qualification 'content' (learning outcomes) will then facilitate the opportunity to transfer the accrued KSC's and promote greater mobility within the European Union. This in turn not only supports the needs of the LLL, but enhances the ECEC sector as a profession which is able to share and disseminate a range of good practises. To allow transition for the individual learner, some preconditions regarding transparency, validation and recognition have to be fulfilled. In Finland, the precondition for students to go on to HE studies is to pass entrance exams. There are examples of how VET students can include (10 study weeks) studies from HE in their VET exam. When they later on are HE students these studies can be recognised as such. The issues which have been agreed upon in the EAGLE project prior to commencing the Recognition of Prior Formal Learning (RPFL) process are clustered in the following figure:

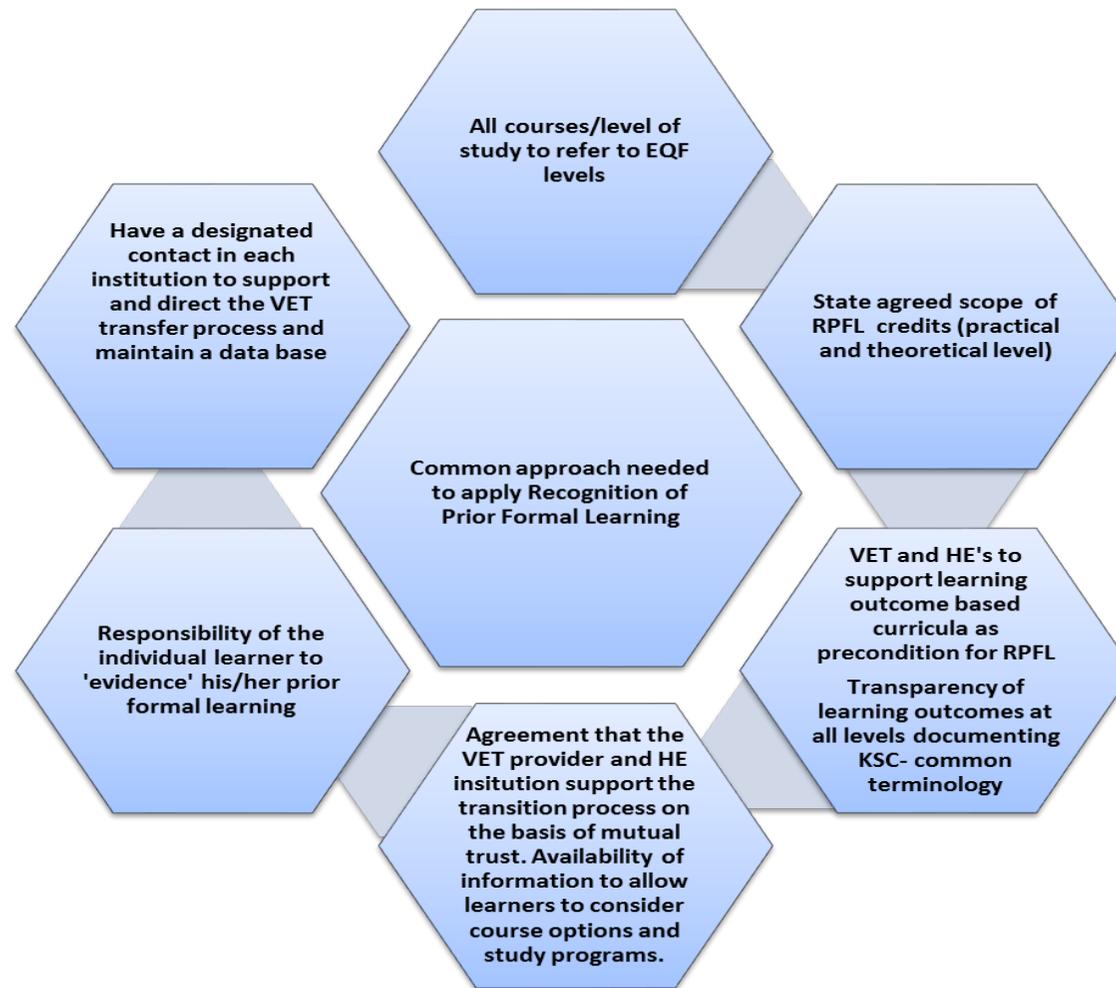


Figure 5: Preconditions for the RPFL process as a common approach (designed by Jane Newby)

2.2 The EAGLE RPFL Process in VET

As stated before students' pathway from VET to HE is often lined with obstacles. The goal is to facilitate the transition procedure from both angles – VET and HE. The recognition of prior formal learning is based on LOs – a foundation both ECVET and ECTS share. The steps that were taken before the initiation of the Recognition of Prior Formal Learning process are represented in figure 5 above. Beyond the question of access the recognition will also allow for a shortening of the study programme, as long as it is officially approved.

Therefore the EAGLE Toolkit would like to facilitate the transition process (see figure 6 below).



Figure 6: The EAGLE approach of the application process for RPFL (designed by Heidi Harju-Luukainen)

The starting point of the transition process is clearly anchored in VET. In the first phase of the EAGLE Methodology and Toolkit – the final phase in VET for a student – he/she is provided with all the necessary information to be able to cross the bridge from VET to HE both internationally within Europe as well as within his/her home country. Institutions and their teachers as well as tutors in the work placements hold a crucial role. In the second phase the student as an active learner is responsible to collate all documents and certificates, e.g. diplomas and Euro-pass to give evidence to the HEI he or she applies to. In the third phase – the entrance phase into HE – students need to know where to go to and who to address. HEIs need to implement a welcoming culture, clear entrance procedures and have to be equipped for reception.

2.3 The Digital EAGLE Toolkit for Transparency and Orientation

One problem the consortium had to overcome while designing the toolkit has been the enormous quantity of information available. This raised the question whether students could be successful in getting the right message, given that it is hard even for a group of experts wading through a jungle of information. Furthermore the consortium faced the challenge to develop a common language including definitions of specific terms. For the sector of ECEC a common information point or website did not exist at that point of time. For example the Euro-passes are clustered under the nations and if you do not know the name of the profession e.g. in Hungarian it is hard for the learner to access information. Therefore requirements could be identified and the consortium decided to design the EAGLE Website-Toolkit.

With regard to all information available, the digital Toolkit – as a first step – provides the relevant target groups in ECEC with the necessary information about the five EAGLE consortium countries to enable learners to successfully cross the bridge between VET and HE and to get prior formal learning recognised. The EAGLE Toolkit is split into the following categories: students, institution, students' case studies, institutional best practise and stakeholders' perspective. In addition, further information is provided about the following countries: Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain – Catalonia, United Kingdom – Wales. For further Information see: <http://www.eagle-ecec.eu/toolkit/>



The screenshot shows the homepage of the EAGLE Toolkit website. At the top, there is a banner with the EAGLE logo (eagle cvet ects) and the text "Growing Links in European Education". The logo is blue and white. To the right of the banner, it says "LLP LEONARDO DOI". Below the banner is a navigation menu with links: Home, About US, Project, Toolkit (highlighted), Contact, and Legals. Below the navigation menu is the heading "Toolkit". There are three language selection buttons: English (highlighted), Deutsch, and Français. Below the language buttons is a paragraph of text: "First of all the EAGLE project aims to contribute to students' Lifelong Learning (LLL) process by bridging Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Higher Education (HE) making use of the ECET principles. The action undertaken within the project is in the sectors of VET and HE, for staff in the sector of ECEC. Secondly the EAGLE partner consortium strives to raise quality in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) by contributing to innovation and a European dimension in national educational systems and professionalisation of staff in ECEC. As the education of future ECEC staff is still". To the right of this text is the European Union flag and the text "Lifelong Learning Programme". Below this is a disclaimer: "This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication (communication) reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein." At the bottom right, there is a "Contact" link.

2.4 Starting the EAGLE RPFL Process in VET – Entering the Bridge

After the more general first orientation phase where the EAGLE IT-Toolkit provides relevant information for students, teachers and stakeholders or tutors in work placements the student can make a decision, why and where he or she wants to study in Europe. Then the next step to prepare the application for an HEI in Europe can be taken. The institutions or rather their representatives are responsible for support and should accompany the student. This phase in a student's life has to be closely supported by his/her teachers, tutor or mentors. They have to inform, encourage and support the learner. Some institutions have already implemented sustainable structures. For example, one Dutch partner in the EAGLE consortium has developed a digital portfolio to provide the students with a structure and a tool to process the collation of relevant documents to allow recognition of RPFL. Hence in an uncountable number of cases it also is the responsibility of dedicated teachers or tutors.

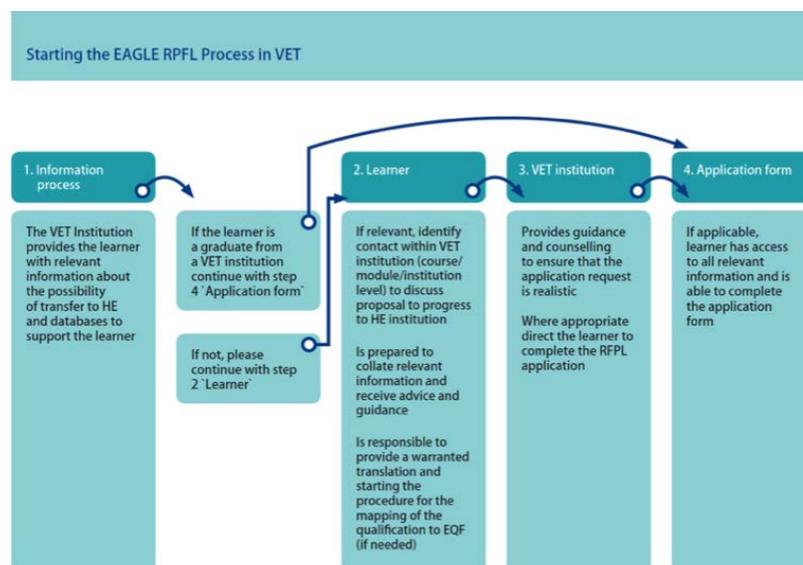


Figure 7: The EAGLE RPFL process in VET
(designed by Jane Newby, Lisa Tomesch, Claudia M. Ueffing)

To pave the learner's way also speaks for implementing networks throughout Europe. To know somebody and to share a common understanding of ECVET, ECTS and RPFL helps the student to cross the bridge. It is human to be social!

2.5 Finalising the RPFL Process in HEI

One of the EAGLE project objectives was to find solutions for assessing learning outcomes as a basis of recognition; however one of the outstanding results gained by the EAGLE consortium is the conclusion that there is no need for a second assessment in HE institutes. VET assessment procedures plus methods and didactics are absolutely reliable and of a sufficiently high standard, guaranteed by governmental institutions in all five EAGLE consortium countries. Therefore it is rather a question of Mutual Trust, transparency and collaboration than doing a second assessment – a burden for students as well as for HE institutes.

Here the EAGLE project would like to provide institutions with all necessary information to enable students to cross the bridge from VET to HE both internationally within Europe as well as within their home country. The process from the receipt of an application until the notification of acceptance is illustrated in figure 8 below.

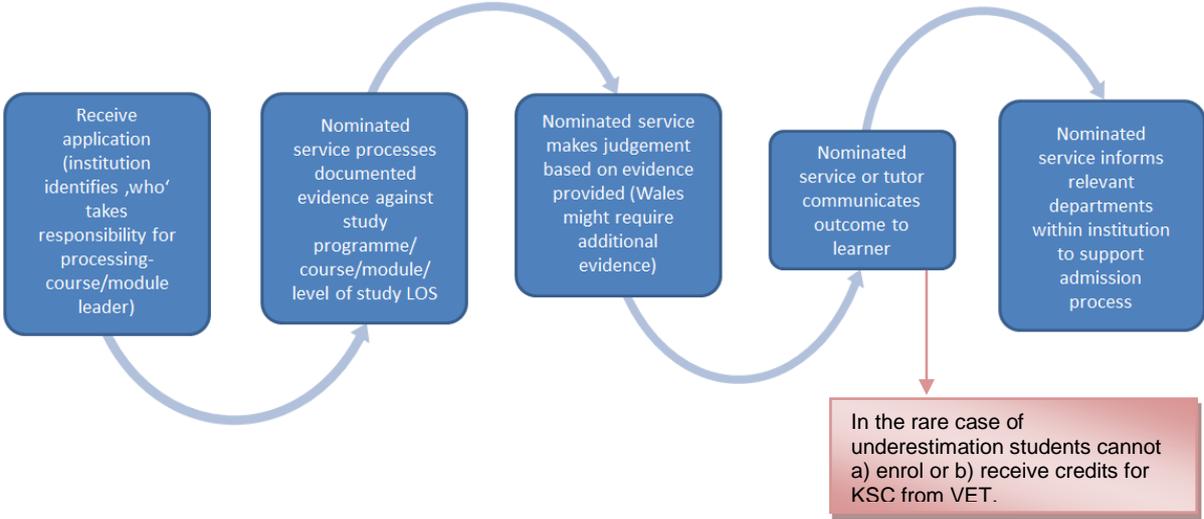


Figure 8: Finalising the RPFL process in HEI (designed by Jane Newby, Claudia M. Ueffing)

3. Conclusions

The recognition of competences gained in VET for a study programme in Europe provides staff in ECEC with problems that are inherent in the two systems: ECTS and ECVET as the European reference systems do not provide parity and currency in terms of a quantitative measurability of previously acquired competences. The discussion about the challenges identified to date, not only in the ECEC sector, offer no obvious way out of the dilemma for Lifelong Learning.

Consideration was given to what can be progressed out of the dilemma, what brings the systems together, what do they share and how could orientation be offered to staff in ECEC who are keen to carry on with their qualifying journey? This was ultimately the question posed by the project consortium LLL DOI EAGLE project. The solution presented lies in a radical shift towards considering the requirements that a learner has if he/she wants to study in another member state of the European Union.

The EAGLE conclusion and solutions are the following²:

- The basis for recognition are learning outcome oriented curricula (illustrated in figure 3) with reference to EQF and NQFs.
- A multi-level transition model was designed which covers the process from the starting point of the VET institution to the host institution in HE (illustrated in figure 6, 7 and 8 above).
- Learner-centred process descriptions allow standardising the transition process and ensuring transparency and reliability.
- Knowledge Management – the EAGLE digital Toolkit – is a first step to provide information and best practise from multiple perspectives of identified target groups ready to make the transition towards further education smooth and successful.

² The following statements are applicable for most partners! A variety of national regulations and requirements especially in the UK - Wales cause restrictions in some aspects.

3.1 The EAGLE Methodology and Toolkit at a Glance

As a consequence it is the shift of paradigm towards the individual learner and the development of a more informed understanding between ECVET and ECTS, utilising best practice approaches from each system. The EAGLE Methodology and Toolkit was developed based on the common ground of European and national educational strategies. Furthermore the methodology strives to satisfy the following guidelines:

- Be learner focused!
- Keep it small and simple and reduce information to the necessary!
- Strive for Mutual Trust!
- Invest into a strategic and sector specific network!

The following figure demonstrates the general approach and comprises the core outcomes of the EAGLE project:

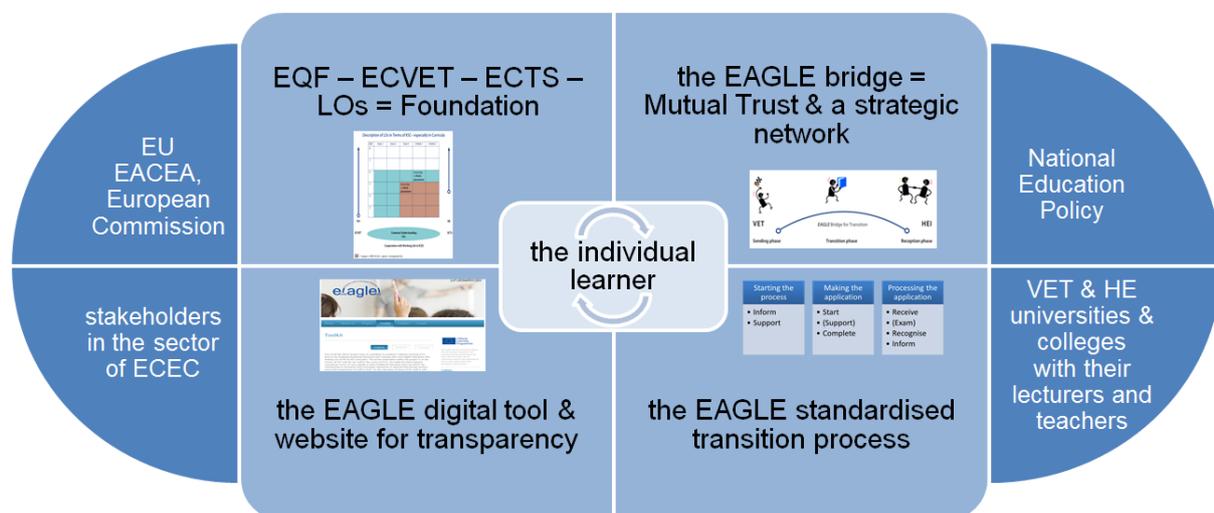


Figure 9: The EAGLE general approach (designed by Claudia M. Ueffing)

3.2 Recommendations

One of the long-term goals of the EU policies is to increase permeability for staff. The EAGLE project played a trigger function for the sector of ECEC as the goal was to improve the transition process from VET to HE. In the course of the project, a written agreement was established for example between the Munich University of Applied Sciences (a HE institute) and a VET institute in Ravensburg. Likewise in the United Kingdom, HE and VET institutions have established mutual arrangements and students and staff work closely together (agreed under Strategic Alliance partnerships). It is also a strategy of the Welsh Government to ‚widen access‘ for non-traditional learners wishing to progress into HE. Furthermore transnational alliances have been implemented, e.g. between Finland and Germany to increase transnational mobility. Within VET and HE it is already working very well. The EAGLE findings now allow taking the next step so that students might progress in LLL in another European member state. The following figure illustrates the correlations between the institutions that are involved in the transition process.

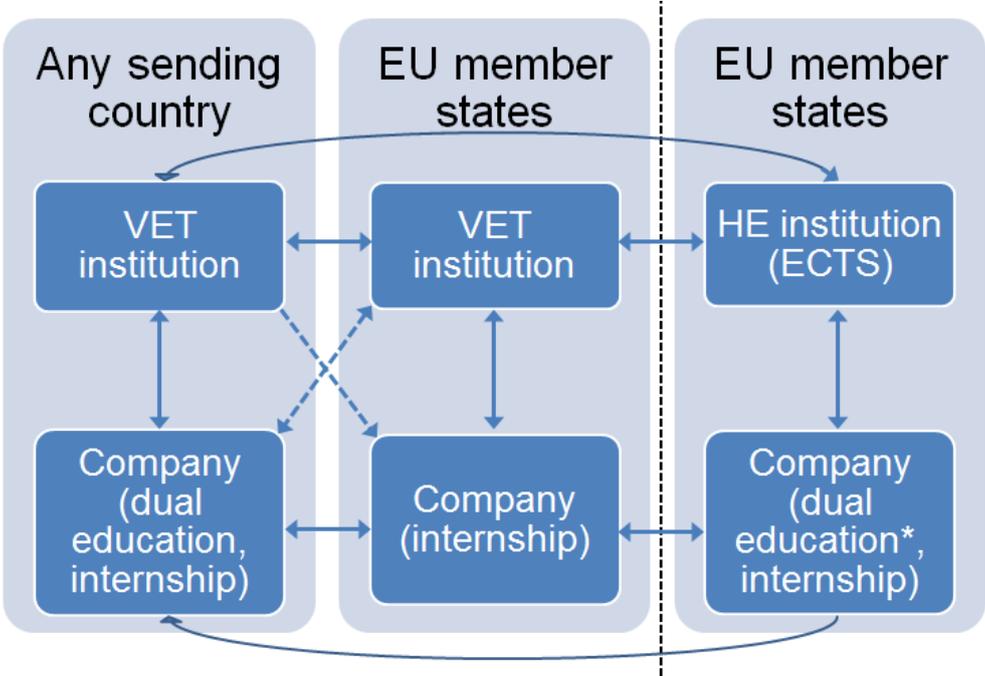


Figure 10: Possible transfers within ECEC (designed by Claudia M. Ueffing)

Transnational mobility within VET institutions, represented by the middle and left hand boxes, is well established and approved. Thanks to the ECVET credit system, VET students are able to easily switch between VET-institutions within Europe and acquired competences are recognised in the same way by companies. The right hand box shows that there is room for expansion regarding the inner-European transition from VET institutions to HE institutions and companies. Strengthened links between VET and HE institutions may then lead to a transfer to a VET institution after the successful completion of a study programme at a HE institution.

The common ground for the RPFL process are Learning Outcome based curricula. The guide on how to write Learning Outcomes needs to comprise the information on where the balance between the concrete and lacking content is considering RPFL in HEI. This has to be fostered in the future, because in some cases the interfaces and gaps cannot clearly be identified. It is crucial to gain a reliable and realistic picture. Some manipulations of VET institutes to just copy and paste from published HE curricula do not really support the learner but are quite threatening for mutual trust between partners.

Furthermore the gap in the Lifelong Learning Process for staff in ECEC is formed by the lack of a bridge from VET to HE and vice versa. The ECVET Toolkit – a key contribution in the context – was established in the course of the Europass Mobility and the focus lies on the increase of mobility by means of strengthened partnerships. The EAGLE project, by contrast, is learner focused and processes and knowledge management are in the spotlight. Over the years, the project built an elaborated new standard for transition from VET to HE for the individual learner. This would support educating quality staff for ECEC and increase the quality of ECEC provision in Europe in general because as the OECD stated staff in ECEC plays a key role.

Besides, one achievement was that the receiving institute does not need to conduct a quality control in RPFL because it is already completed by the sending institute. This idea puts the responsibility on the institutional level of the sending institute which in consequence could lead to a structural approach on a European and on a national level.

If the tension between the systems relating to credit, credits or a common currency continues, Europe will not be able to encourage young people to carry on with their

qualification in transnational contexts. If we as European citizens want to strive for the European idea in education it is crucial to remember the core target group – the individual learner involved in Lifelong Learning and in mobility in Europe. The following aspects need to be considered to smooth the transition process:

- Support the learner – take his or her demands in consideration on all levels of education policy and education in praxis!
- Recognise internship 1 to 1 in HE if certain quality standards are fulfilled!
- Invest into knowledge management and e.g. link relevant platforms and projects!
- Cluster information on EU level into commonly agreed sectors which need to be learner-focused!
- Keep in mind: national legislations of different EU-countries are not homogeneous! Strive for more involvement of all EU-countries into EU policy and projects!

In the future, it would be interesting to apply the EAGLE approach for the sector of ECEC to other sectors. This would contribute to a systematic approach to the validation and recognition of previously acquired knowledge, skills and competences. Furthermore the structure developed in EAGLE for the transition process and validation and recognition plus the idea of implementing sustainable networks could also be valuable for the new strategy of the EU Commission to bring disadvantaged people into education and labor market.

References

- European Policy Paper (2008), Proposal for key principles of a Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care (http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/archive/documents/ecec-quality-framework_en.pdf, last consulted on June 25th, 2015)
- Nesse (2009), Early Childhood Education and Care - key lessons from research for policy makers (<http://www.nesse.fr/nesse/activities/reports/activities/reports/ecec-report-pdf>, last consulted on June 24th, 2015)
- OECD (2006), Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care, OECD, Paris.