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ECVET and ECTS – Growing Links in European Education

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Executive Summary

The Council's conclusions on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) support the need to provide all children with the best start for the world of tomorrow. This identifies huge demands within the sector, because the state of the art differs enormously in the EU member states from high quality to really poor provision. In addition a lack of well trained staff has been stated. At the same time research has proven a high return of investment if money is spent on ECEC facilities. So the European Commission and the OECD decided to promote high quality provision in ECEC to provide a wide range of short- and long-term benefits for both individuals and society in large (2011/C 175/03). A quantitative increase of day care provision has been the first step to provide each and every child with a chance to attend ECEC. As a follow up initiative targets have been set up to increase quality in day-care provision. This is due to the fact that only good or excellent day care provides positive effects on children's' start in education. In this context staff in ECEC plays a key role.

In Europe, education for future staff in ECEC is located both in vocational education and training (VET) as well as in higher education (HE). Therefore the EAGLE project was guided by the following question: How can the gap between the two main pillars of education – namely VET and HE – be bridged for the individual learner to allow Lifelong Learning? Linking ECVET and ECTS, fostering permeability in EQF and NQFs plus addressing the need for qualified professionals in ECEC are major objectives. 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:

- There is no common standard for 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 in the European context. For the learner it is therefore hard to get through all information available.

ECVET principles as a reference system have been the starting point from which to develop innovation. A three part approach of methods (research, development, revision) has led to the following outcomes:

- 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.
 - The bases for recognition are learning outcome oriented curricula with reference to EQF and NQFs. 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. Learner-centred process descriptions allow standardising the transition process and ensuring transparency and reliability.
 - 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
 - A digital Toolkit as part of the EAGLE webpage fill the gap of learner focused information.
- Therefore one main impact of EAGLE is a greater transparency in the qualification system underlying ECEC staff education. Furthermore EAGLE contributes to improve co-operation among relevant stakeholders in the sector of education for ECEC staff on national as well as on cross national level between different EU member states.

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1. Project Objectives

The education of future ECEC staff is highly diverse within Europe and covers both VET and HE (EQF levels 3 to 8). Permeability still is a challenge in formal education, both in VET and HE for learners in their LLL. Recognition of learning outcomes is mainly a national or even an institutional question rather than a European one. Students cannot rely on recognition of their learning outcomes, especially if they leave VET and go to university to do their Bachelor degree. Here EAGLE wants to make a change and strives to facilitate the transition for learners.

The main goal of the EAGLE project is to introduce a consistent recognition system for competences that a learner acquired during VET within Europe. In doing so, this project aims at contributing to:

- a growth of Mutual Trust throughout Europe in VET and HE in the sector of ECEC,
- the facilitation of transfer from VET to Higher Education for ECEC staff/teachers,
- the reduction of the study programme,
- an easier access to study programmes at a foreign institution within Europe,
- an increased proportion of highly qualified staff in the sector of Early Childhood Education and Care
- and by this a higher quality in ECEC

EAGLE strived to establish Mutual Trust throughout Europe between the vocational and academic field as well as other core organisations providing learning opportunities in working life: enterprises providing day-care, social partners and other relevant bodies. The fields of education like the academic and vocational fields have led a parallel life for many years. To build up a common understanding of education throughout Europe takes time, but in a project like EAGLE a positive atmosphere was created where new products could grow in a climate of confidence. The consortium has been successful in implementing a transversal network and will be a role model and best practise example for other actors both in the field of ECEC as well as in other sectors.

As an ECVET project EAGLE aimed to develop a method or tool to allow validation and recognition of learning outcomes in a very practical way and at the same time safeguarding the required extent of quality assurance. This will then contribute to an ongoing LLL process of each student and his/her easy transition from VET to HE. Bridging ECVET and ECTS in a practical way will be easier by the use of a prototype. This new solution – the EAGLE Methodology and Toolkit – has not been designed solely for ECEC use, but it is transferable to other sectors within Europe as well. The action undertaken within the project is in the sector of Vocational (VET) and Higher Education (HE), for staff in the sector of ECEC. But in the future the EAGLE project will hopefully by exploitation contribute to the improvement of quality in Lifelong Learning (LLL) and to the promotion of high performance, innovation and a European dimension in systems and practises in the field. This will be fostered by the dissemination activities of the EAGLE partner consortium.

2. Project Approach

Divided in a series of work packages implemented during the three years of cycle life of the project, EAGLE's activities have covered the following:

1. The management of the project split up into two sections/workpackages:
 - a. Administration and finances: cooperation with the partner institutions and with the funding body.
 - b. coordination of roles and tasks, management of consortium, organisation project meetings.
2. The implementation of a research phase with the scope of defining a new approach towards transition from VET to HE in ECEC.
3. The implementation of a development phase on the basis of the EAGLE expertise partners design a standardised transition process accompanied by a methodology and digital toolkit.
4. The implementation of a pilot testing of the developed EAGLE Methodology and Toolkit: all 13 partners organised the testing phase in their own countries followed by a revision of the digital toolkit.
5. The dissemination and communication: for dissemination and exploitation of the results a twofold dissemination strategy was and still is the foundation for individual partner activities: IT facilities on the one hand and networking by members of the consortium on the other. A huge number of dissemination activities on different levels were carried out by the partners: tasks necessary to spread the project results and provide information to key beneficiaries on the quality, relevance and effectiveness of the EAGLE outcomes through different means: project website, member websites, internet dissemination, brochures, presentations and poster presentations at conferences etc..
6. The exploitation of results: activities centred on mainstreaming and multiplying the benefits of EAGLE and aimed at involving decision makers at several political levels from VET and HE by conferences at national and European levels and addressing new potential users beyond EAGLE's direct beneficiaries.
7. The quality assurance: Quality management in the EAGLE project is on two levels
 - a. the internal evaluation carried out along the EAGLE process and following the EQUARF principles: planning, performing, evaluation and revision; internal supervision and evaluation of the progress of project, checking whether the targets have been met, the results achieved, problems overcome, solutions implemented in the respect of the partnership
 - b. the implementation of an external advisory board in the role of a 'critical friends'; meeting with the external experts.

The following figure shows all steps the EAGLE consortium took to achieve the aims: research, development of innovation, testing and piloting as well as revision:

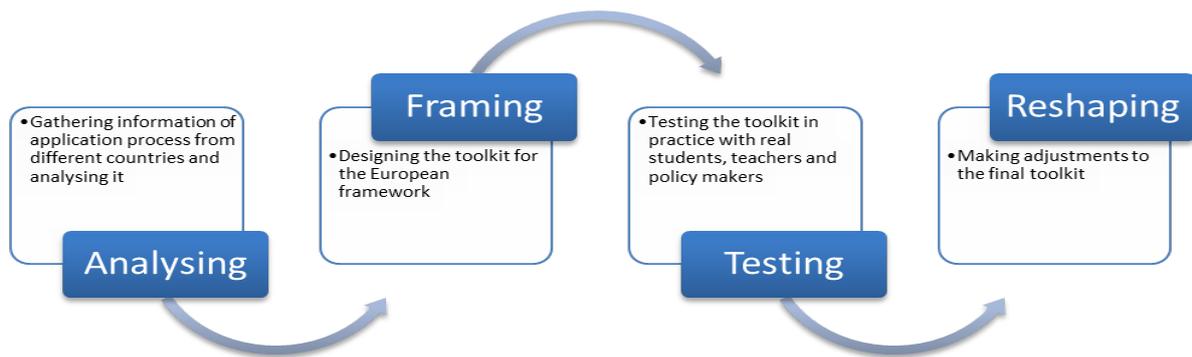


Figure 1: The process of designing the EAGLE Toolkit (designed by Heidi Harju-Luukainen)

The EAGLE research on ECVET and ECTS in ECEC both on recent projects and on national levels as well as on EU level stated a highly diverse situation all over Europe. Education of staff and supply of day-care provision differ substantially. Therefore the EAGLE-partners carried out the following actions to introduce a common transition process in the sector of ECEC:

1. To illustrate the skills acquired in vocational training in a system that can be recognised throughout Europe, there was a need to create some common guidelines and a clear definition of the processes undertaken. To prepare the EAGLE expertise investigation of the sector as a problem based research approach, desk research and research of best practise examples was carried out.
2. The European Qualification Framework is used as a reference to make the acquired skills clear and transparent throughout Europe, taking into account the national VET contexts. At the beginning of the project, the learning outcomes of VET and HE were matched to the EQF-levels. To make the acquired skills optimally transparent, the partners from VET-institutions and from HE-institutions decided that acquired skills are measured in terms of learning outcomes. A learning outcome-oriented approach can serve as a basis for the curricula, as it is compatible with both the structures of VET (ECVET with Copenhagen process) and those of HE (ECTS, Bologna process). Learning outcomes provide the opportunity to be combined into units, given that certain relationships exist. A learning outcome unit consists of a set of knowledge, skills and competencies that is necessary for the completion of a learning process. Those knowledge, skills and competencies that are necessary for the successful completion of a unit should be easily comprehensible and rateable. An advantage is that skills acquired by training courses abroad can also be detained on the basis of units of learning outcomes, which promotes the exchange of skilled workers in Europe. Each unit thus forms part of a qualification that fulfils a formal standard (<http://www.ecvet-info.de/de/249.php>).
3. In the next step the partners agreed which study units are covered by the competences acquired in theory and practise. The conclusion was that VET- and HE-institutions support the transition process through Mutual Trust. Finally, the partners decided that the transition process could best be supported if there is a single point of contact at each HE-institute to provide information and to gather experience. We agreed that partial responsibility for a successful transition to HE lies in the hands of the learner who is interested in a study programme. He or she is responsible to initiate the recognition and validation process and to submit the respective evidence:



Figure 2: the EAGLE Bridge (designed by Claudia M. Ueffing)

4. During the development process unforeseen demands occurred. The partner consortium identified a huge demand for a shift of paradigm towards the individual learner and in consequence a huge need of knowledge management to serve him or her. Therefore not only a booklet with the EAGLE outcomes – as promised – has been designed, but in addition a digital information tool has been developed and integrated into the EAGLE website. It addresses all relevant target groups and also covers best practise examples from each and every partner country.
5. Then for the testing and piloting phase a digital tool has been used to assess the approach and the products developed, followed by a decent discussion and revision of the EAGLE Methodology and Toolkit.



EAGLE partners in discussion

3. Project Outcomes & Results

The EAGLE conclusion and solutions in terms of development of innovation are the following:

- Organisational Innovation: an increased cooperation and Mutual Trust between the VET and HE institutes including their staff
- Pedagogical Innovation: the EAGLE Methodology for Transition from VET to HE in ECEC – Process & Toolkit
- Product Innovation: the EAGLE Methodology and Toolkit

The outcomes and products are the following:

1. The Eagle Expertise
2. The EAGLE Methodology and Toolkit designed and revised after testing and piloting
3. The EAGLE digital Toolkit –
an additional product not foreseen and promised in the application!
4. The EAGLE Methodology and Toolkit (print version in EN, DE, FR)
5. The EAGLE website, permanent update of the adam platform,
6. Information and dissemination material (print version): leaflets, posters plus a variety of presentations
7. The Concluding dissemination and exploitation conference in September 2015 in Munich
8. The Quality report and a meeting with the advisory board carried out in Barcelona

The EAGLE Methodology including detailed descriptions and clear figures may be downloaded from our website: <http://www.eagle-ecec.eu/project/products/>.

The EAGLE Methodology and Toolkit is the core product of the project. It illustrates the steps towards a standardised transition process for learners from VET to HE. The outset of the standardised transition process is the finding that the basis for the recognition of previously acquired competences is formed by learning outcome oriented curricula. To consider both European as well as national guidelines, both the EQF and NQFs are used as reference points for the validation of Learning Outcomes. The advantage is that Learning Outcomes exist both in VET and HE. Although they are not identical, but close to one and another and therefore comparable. Curricula are more and more learning outcome based which allows validation and recognition. As a result, the transition phase is learner-oriented and individual. The first assessment of acquired competences conducted by VET-institutes meets standardised requirements. Therefore, there is no need for a second assessment in HE-institutes.

The second part of the EAGLE Methodology is devoted to a multi-level transition model covering the process from the starting point of the VET institution to the host institution in HE. It is described how the learner can initiate the information process and which role the VET institution has. In a next step, the learner can fill in the application form and finally, it is explained how the HE institute handles the application.

In sum, the shift of paradigm towards the individual learner is crucial alongside the need to recognise that the education systems within each of the EU member countries equally need to be respected. 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 following figure comprises the puzzle pieces of the new approach:

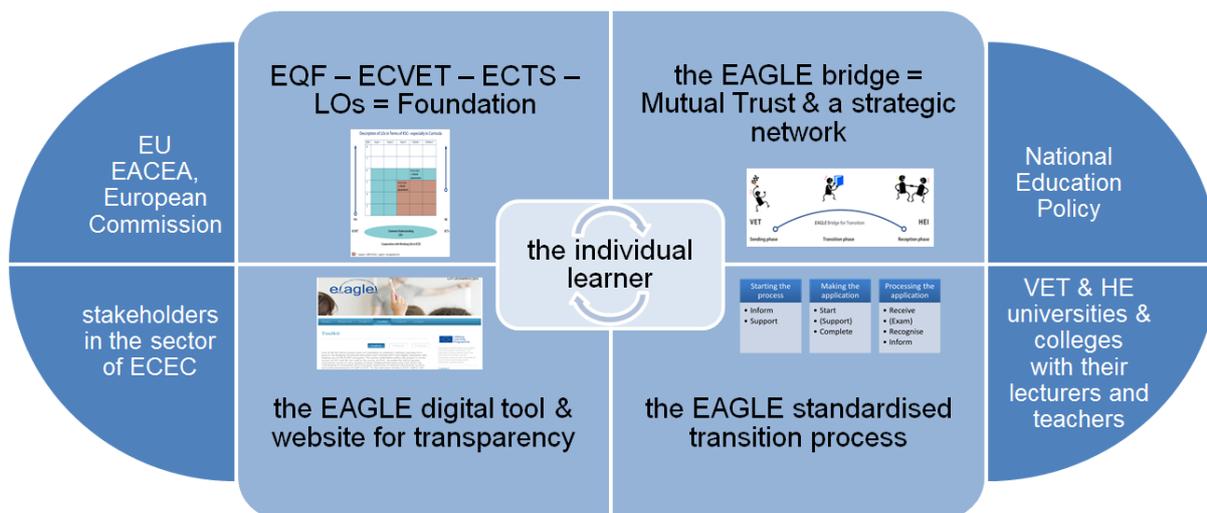


Figure 3: The EAGLE general approach (designed by Claudia M. Ueffing)

In the course of the EAGLE project the partners decided to develop an IT-Toolkit because the need was identified to bundle all the information required for the transition process and for everybody and all institutions that are involved. The IT-Toolkit provides relevant information and best practise about the transition phase from VET to HE. Everybody who is interested has access to the steps that need to be taken to process from VET to HE. Moreover, the EAGLE IT-Toolkit provides details about each of the five partner countries and their standardised exam procedures as well as assessment methods (Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain – Catalonia and the United Kingdom – Wales). Thereby, the transition process is facilitated for everybody who is involved: students, stakeholders, teachers and even tutors in work placements.



For further information see: <http://www.eagle-ecec.eu/toolkit/>

4. Partnerships

The EAGLE-Consortium consists in 13 partners from five different EU-countries to introduce a validation and recognition process that is applicable within Europe. The partners have been selected for three reasons: the first reason is constituted in the representation of all the key institutions active in the sector of ECEC on different levels in Europe:

- VET-providers of different size and status (small ones, private, church-run focusing specifically on ECEC (P7), public in status (P10) and large, half-public (P8 & P9) VET providers covering different sectors of VET)
- Universities of applied sciences (P1, P5, P 6) as well as traditional universities (P2, P3 & P4) are all involved in the academic teaching of ECEC and in research in the field.
- The sector's specific labour market is represented by private (P12 & P13) as well as public (P11) enterprises.
- Further, two policy-makers in two different countries are involved: one regional ministry (P4) and one local authority/municipality (P12).

The second reason is that each partner regularly deals with the issue of permeability and transition from VET to HE and strives for highly qualified ECEC staff on a vocational and academic level. What stands out is their multitude of perspectives on these key-questions. Hence they have a common interest to solve problems in this sector – e.g. get more academically trained staff in ECEC – and are striving for innovative solutions. Furthermore this interdisciplinary team is skilled in different ways each skill complementing the others by supporting an array of competencies, essential ingredients of a project: research, best practise, recognising demands of the working field and political strategies plus political experience. This partner consortium is strongly dedicated to approximate the two pillars of education in Europe: VET and HE. By working together in this project it strives to give clues for future options of collaboration.

The last reason is to ensure sustainability for this project. Therefore partners have only been selected on the basis of being able to contribute to the development of an extensive network. This is to guarantee a maximum of dissemination and exploitation of the envisioned results and to warrant European added value.

Three years of collaboration in the consortium have identified the enormity of diverse approaches at a number of levels:

- educational systems vary
- steering in European member states differs
- law regulations are not the same as well as salaries and funding
- ECEC is located in VET and HE
- ECEC professions are being located on different levels of the EQF/NQF
- different 'currencies' like ECVET credits and ECTS or even a national one (for example in Wales) are used
- recognition and validation varies both within nations as well as between European member states, etc.

Due to this cluster of challenges strive for good communication has been important. Therefore face to face meetings have been of most importance in order to commit each partners to a common language and a common understanding of the shared issue. In addition shared responsibility has a been necessary method in order to cope with the workload. In addition uncountable numbers of phone calls have been made and several telephone conferences have been carried out to foster a good partnership and excellent performance in the EAGLE project.

The following provides the reader with a variety of individual partner's perspectives towards the partnership:

P1: Munich University of Applied Sciences

The coordinator considers a European partnership the most important value to participate in development of innovation in Europe. In this project MUAS has been proud to develop innovation for future staff in ECEC and enhance permeability for new target groups in ECE. This project fits well into the strategic agenda: opening the university for new target groups and fostering internationalisation.

Within previous projects as well as in EAGLE also students at MUAS benefit from the European partnership. They do their internship in European mobility or write their theses about European topics and approaches in ECEC. From a previous project a new internship process could be implemented as a standard. MUAS hopes to benefit from the EAGLE results in terms of bridging VET and HE even beyond the measures they take so far.

P 2: University of Jyväskylä

European partnership is a very valuable form of activity. The educational systems in the European countries differ a lot especially in relation to the forms and implementation of vocational education and the permeability of the educational systems. These differences make learning from each other a very fruitful and useful process. The multinational collaboration helps to understand the educational, societal and cultural realities of the other countries and helps to proportion the state of affairs of the own country to the situations of others. The collaborative working process promotes finding solutions both to the mutual and country specific problems together with the other project partners.

At this stage, the project has established a solid base which helps us to continue to build useful tools for the purposes of the target users. At the moment, we highlight the importance of focusing to helping the individual learner to precede with his/her studies and career. Through finding tools to fill in the needs of the individual students we can develop tools which are useful also from the viewpoint of education providers, policy makers, representatives of EU institutions and national agencies, and working life.

P3: University of South Wales

Working with colleagues across Europe, has enabled me to develop a more informed awareness of the systems and approaches to VET and ECTS which are applied within other countries. Working within the field of 'early years education', I have been able to apply this 'awareness' to situations which have required that I provide advice and support to students from the University of South Wales who wish to apply for Erasmus study abroad (which modules to apply for, the importance of considering the mode of learning /pathway). Equally, for students from Europe who attend USW also on Erasmus study, I have been able to extend a more informed understanding of the cultural and social implications for working within ECEC and therefore ensuring that 'contextual content' is provided as background information to specific module content. An example of this in relation to a module which explores learning disorders, where there is a need to consider terminology (disability, learning disorder, learning need).

Within my current role within the USW, I am also involved in developing the curriculum and planning for the validation of new programmes of study. My awareness of European mobility issues (VET and ECTS) will inform the specific module developments at the point of writing the curriculum (learning outcomes).

Although the location of the USW and Coleg Gwent is in close geographical proximity, there are limited opportunities presented for Heads/Associate Heads of the respective Schools to work together and have a clear understanding of ECEC programmes within both FE and HE. Therefore the collaborative work undertaken to date, has provided a valuable opportunity to engage with a 'local' partner, therefore allowing the project to have a truly informed representation from a vocational and higher education perspective.

P4: Generalitat de Catalunya

The main tasks that have been carried out so far in the project are the submission of information that has allowed the comparison of systems and learning significantly about each other. A diversity of opinions and perspectives has been made clear, as well as a different understanding about whether the bridge should be bi-directional or uni-directional (i.e. allowing the transition only from VET towards higher education, or in both directions). We consider the concept of the tool to be developed needs to be discussed more deeply. Also the experimentation to be carried out in the frame of the project needs to be clarified for the partners to have a better idea of the developments to come.

The feeling so far is that the collaboration is fruitful, the work and deliverables have arrived on time as a rule, the mutual trust among the partners is now very significant, and the work done in groups is of high quality.

P5: Arcada – University of Applied Sciences

Working in a project with other European partners gives you a perspective on the strengths and shortages of your own countries educational system. The European regulations and commitments are understood and put into practise in different ways. Best practise examples give ideas about how to go on in the continuous development work being done in your own context. In the EAGLE project there has been an open minded atmosphere that encourage to “new thinking” and creativity. The need for flexible European movement and structures for lifelong learning processes is obvious. On an individual level it is important that we find sustainable solutions that also work in practise.

To be a partner in this kind of projects gives you the opportunity to put the lights on important topics that otherwise might not be given priority to. The contact with the working field is important to a university of applied sciences. Through presenting the project we are able to give an insight to the field in what kind of pedagogical development work the university is doing, what the bigger picture is and why. It is rewarding to be forerunner in your own field. Presenting the project gives you an opportunity to prepare for further cooperation.

P6: Stichting ZUYD Hogeschool

The value of the multi- country partnership is a shared vision/a sense of mission to build a better educational system for lifelong learning in the EU.

In my opinion Eagle members effectively and fluidly exchanged needed information, research and ideas on a consistent basis. The Eagle team is flexible and developing new and better ways of bridging between educational systems. Individuals are creative, continually changing and growing to achieve goals and meet the needs of the student. We also learned a lot during the process. In the partnership we established an environment of mutual trust and understanding between the EU consortium partners, which provides benefit for education, training, and empowerment for all our students.

I had the great task to manage the quality in this project. It enabled me to systematically and continuously improve the quality and effectiveness of the efforts.

The accreditation of the EAGLE project as a research input in the Research Group of the Zuyd University, named “Opleiden in de School” got the mark ‘Excellent’ for the process and the product of this international EAGLE project and its quality system. I’m proud of this result!

P7: Fachakademie für Sozialpädagogik der christlichen Jugendhilfe Kempten

In the project training centres for educational staff in child care centres and child care centres in different European countries participate (Finland, the Netherlands, Spain, United Kingdom). The consortium works on an intense examination of the competence expectations and the possibilities of performance assessment at different levels of the EQF in the training of educational personnel held in child care centres.

The partners compare examination formats, they explain, reflect and evaluate their own and others assessment concepts, and develop modern approaches (tools) that can be mutually recognized. Benefits we gain for Fachakademie as VET provider: raising awareness and

developing our own test formats. Benefits gained for the exchange of the students: recognition of learning outcomes gained abroad.

P8: Savo Consortium for Education

Sotenet-network consists of eight Finnish colleges (Seurakuntaopisto – Church Training College/Pieksämäki, Forssa Institute of Vocational Education/ Forssa, Keuda Vocational College/Tuusula, Savo Vocational College/ Kuopio, Iisalmi, Varkaus, TREDU Tampere Vocational College, Tampere, TAVASTIA Vocational College/Hämeenlinna, Vantaa Vocational College VARIA/Vantaa, RASEKO, Naantali Vocational College/Naantali) offering Vocational Qualification in social and health care. Savo Vocational College is coordinating the network which is working intensively with European colleges in LLP IVT and VET projects. During MNCDEC-T and Eurocom VET-projects the European network (BE, DE, DK, FI, GR, NL) has created mutual trust and ECVET practices as well as defined a matrix of common learning outcomes of the curricula for social and health care students. The creating process will continue in K1 staff mobility project if the application will be accepted.

Contacts with Finnish working life support the development of curriculum:

Feedback from the working life will give information of learning outcomes needed at work. When the student evaluation has been carried out in cooperation with the educational providers and working life, the learning outcomes have been recognized and validated by both parties. The close cooperation with working life ensures that also the working life is aware of the skills, knowledge and competences which the students should reach during their studies and on which national level (NQF) the students should be. The requirements of the work place are clear.

1. Network of Social and Health Care Colleges in Eastern Finland gives a possibility to spread information during annual meetings.
2. Cooperation with regional university of applied sciences (SAVONIA) which is educating social workers in Iisalmi.
3. Taina Räikkönen is a member of Educational committee of social field in Finland (Sosiaalialan koulutustoimikunta) nominated by National Ministry of Education and Culture.

P9: ROC Gilde Opleidingen

Being one of the project partners in the EAGLE project entails a number of challenges and carries a definite added value in several respects. Firstly, in this particular project setting two worlds meet: Vocational Education and Training and Higher Education. In the context of National Qualification Frameworks and the EQF, levels 3-6 are covered. An additional role is played by partners from working life/the labour market. As a result expertise has been made available from domains that are relevant or essential rather, for achieving the objectives set for this project. Secondly, building upon previous partnerships, notably on the IMPAECT consortium, and making use of individual partner's high-quality networks, has ensured the high level of mutual trust required among the partners and sustainable cooperation between stakeholders. Thirdly, partners in the EAGLE project, even though for the greater part being experienced in particular fields and working in European settings and at levels such as TOI or DOI projects, are in a position to take full advantage of sharing expertise and commitment. Fourthly, aspects of intercultural exchanges and approaches leading to e.g. culturally-determined solutions for problem areas encountered are an extra dimension that tends to have an inspiring side-effect.

Finally, working in the EAGLE project brings the staff members from this partner organisation an extra level of motivation and drive to support implementation of innovations in their own organisation.

P10: Coleg Gwent

The benefits of partnerships is that it enables practitioners to maintain the widest possible approach to their teaching and allows us to stimulate interest in our learners in relation to

statutory regulation, diversity and inclusivity. It assists us in the 'citizenship' area of post 16 education and allows us to share experiences and best practice in the widest arena.

P11: Markt Holkirchen / Kindergarten Frühlingsdorf & P12: Katholische Kindertageseinrichtung St. Josef

It is very interesting to get a lot of new information about apprenticeship in other countries to see other Kindergartens and to see the difference in teaching methods. Furthermore it is good to get to know people from other countries and to learn from their culture and their experiences. And it is a good feeling to move something together with a group of people who have the same interests.

The project supports us in networking so that we can get trainees from other countries and it is also interesting to benefit from other teachers' teaching methods. And also the connections give the possibility to send staff members to other European countries to learn about the culture and the teaching methods.

In addition it is very interesting too to see that everyone has the same problems of for example the low salary for Kindergarten teachers. And last but not least: If we present EAGLE in our home teams and in Kindergarten teacher meetings it is a good opportunity to discuss in our own country and reflect the quality in our professional academy or nursery nurse schools and to talk about the difference to the other European countries.

P13: Stiftelsen Sedmigradsky Daycare

From the labour markets point of view the benefits would mean to increase the understanding about the different systems in Europe and therefore we would have a better opportunity to guide employees to apply for example to an education within the early childhood education or within a higher education pedagogics.

The labour markets benefits would also be to get competent personnel to their working placements in maybe a shorter time because of different practices within the benefits of earlier work during the employee/students studies. Also recognising earlier experience from the field of work or validating earlier studies from different levels of studies/education shows respect towards the students and their knowledge. Recognising earlier studies is a good practise and shows respect, acknowledgment and trust towards the adult learner/ student.

Employees that want to work abroad can become competent within the European countries with better success and within a respect and trust towards the standard of the earlier education that the employee received in their country. This would help to increase the labour market within different countries and also better possibilities in "bridging" between different levels of education within the students own county and also between educations in different countries, would be a benefit to the student, to the institutions/ educations, the labour market in European countries.



To summarize:

The partners had to overcome a number of challenges due to the high diversity at different levels and regarding several issues but the cooperation between the EAGLE partners was excellent and very productive. Not only were the partners able to strengthen the links among the partners stemming from a VET institute and those from a HE institute but we also established new contacts with institutions that initially did not form part of the consortium (e.g. Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences). Considering the different types of institutions involved, the EAGLE consortium ensures that the results of the project are spread to a wide audience across Europe and beyond the consortium borders and the span of the project. This will also increase the probability that the project results are applied by the target groups beyond the project life cycle and will be promoted in connection with the dissemination activities.

5. Plans for the Future

With a view to the future and the exploitation of the results of the EAGLE Project, all partners exchanged views on the respective specific needs, expectations and plans of each organization concerning future actions to be taken with respect to the general theme of innovative transition from VET to HE and the specific theme of ECEC. Though formal follow-up agreements could not be stipulated – huge efforts have been taken by partners though - proposals for a follow-up of the project have been made on national level. Unfortunately the issue of implementing ECVET and bridging ECVET principles with the ECTS structure and system is politically not that relevant as it has been 5 or even 2 years ago. The European economic crises and youth unemployment is showing effects on targets for education and European member states do not all seem to be convinced with the benefit of ECVET.

The EAGLE Methodology and toolkit however could be linked to other outcomes, e.g. to the ECVET-Toolkit (<http://www.ecvet-toolkit.eu/>) and the webpage will either be transferred to one partner or be kept open for a couple of years so that the results can be exploited. The focus of exploitation will certainly lie on the transition process from VET to HE but will also contain the research based background paper on the EAGLE Methodology and Toolkit. In this way, a learner who is interested in continuing with his or her Lifelong Learning process has access to the guidance needed to cross the bridge from VET to HE. Another plan for the future could be to widen the IT-Toolkit. Initiated by students who tested the digital toolkit it has been discussed to add information about the transition process from VET to a HE institute in a country of destination other than the five countries we already provided information about. It is therefore important to keep in mind that this toolkit has a lot of potential and it can be developed further, so that it can work within the whole EU on the ECEC sector. This means that some effort should be put into developing this idea forward as well as several new countries should be involved.

For European added value the partner consortium has started to be a role model in an Erasmus+ 'common house of education' and brings together the separated cultures of existing pillars in education. Being role models in that sense further vocational and higher education institutes in other sectors will actively be contacted to learn about the EAGLE objectives. All sorts of meetings and events on EU, national, regional and local level have been used so far and will be used in the future to promote the idea to an extended number of potential users. Policy and decision makers, representatives of communes and ministries will be addressed. This allows a step by step transfer into the structure of education systems both on regional, national and European level after the expiration of the project.

6. Contribution to EU policies

The EAGLE project contributed to the following EU policies: European Council, Europe 2020, Copenhagen, and Erasmus+. Further details are provided in the following paragraphs.

The Council's conclusions on early childhood education and care (ECEC) support the need to provide all children with the best start for the world of tomorrow. This causes huge demands within the sector and in VET, because the situation in the EU differs and a lack of well trained staff has been stated by recent research. So the Commission and the OECD decided to boost high quality in early childhood education and care to provide a wide range of short- and long-term benefits for both individuals and society at large (2011/C 175/03). By facilitating the transition process from VET to HE, a follow-up study programme becomes more attractive which raises quality in the sector of ECEC.

Core issue of the EUROPE 2020 strategy is to raise the number of graduates from an HEI or an equivalent VET to at least 40% of all students per year (see Europe 2020, Agenda for new skills and jobs: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=958>). This strategy aims at an increase of academically trained staff in ECEC as well as a raise of quality in ECEC provision. Moreover, Europe 2020 campaigns for more social inclusion and against poverty. Both of these objectives are pursued by the EAGLE project. The EAGLE project has contributed and will continue to more staff in ECEC being trained in higher education by easy transition from VET (see EU 2020, EU Commission, News 20120124: Commission and OECD boost cooperation). To follow the second aim the EAGLE project guarantees that the sector of ECEC – representing the youngest citizens – is always addressed first, because it ensures sustainable growth (see OECD findings).

Furthermore the state of play shows different ways of implementing ECVET, a diversity of national qualification frameworks and education for ECEC on different levels of EQF. According to the Copenhagen process “VET providers, authorities and enterprises should foster creativity and innovation” (COM (2010) 296). The EAGLE project corresponds to the core issues of the Copenhagen and Bologna process as it strives for strong implementation of ECVET as basis of validation and recognition of learning outcomes to link ECVET and ECTS.

One of the goals that was formulated in the opening conference of Erasmus+ in Berlin is to promote permeability between the education sectors by creating innovative educational and youth projects as well as transnational partnerships for example between HE-institutes and enterprises („Darüber hinaus fördert das Programm die Durchlässigkeit zwischen den Bildungsbereichen, indem innovative Bildungs- und Jugendprojekte sowie länderübergreifende Partnerschaften; z. B. zwischen Hochschulen und Unternehmen, gefördert werden.“ <http://www.bmbf.de/press/3596.php>). This goal was addressed by the EAGLE project and the benefits on the European level are:

- a boost of implementation of ECVET in the sector of ECEC
- a new cornerstone bridging ECVET and ECTS
- a contribution to easy vertical or horizontal transition from VET to HE.
- a methodology and tool VET-providers and universities or universities of applied sciences can use to ease transition processes of individual learners and promote permeability.

Considering the new target of the EU Commission to bring unemployed youth into education and employment the EAGLE findings: structure, standardised process methodology and IT-Toolkit could be transferred to other parts of the EQF scale and be useful for new target groups to facilitate recognition of prior informal learning.