Keeping you informed about European Credit System for Vocational Education & Training

- **02** VET Skills week
- **04** Annual ECVET Forum 2016: Flexible pathways to vocational skills
- **12** ECVET Experts Conference: ‘Validation of non-formal & informal learning - Exchange of countries’ experiences’
- **14** ETL4ALL project - European transparent Transport and Logistics EQF level 4 qualifications for All

The ECVET Magazine is produced with support from the European Commission’s DG for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion. The views expressed in it do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the European Commission, which cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of this information.
The first European Vocational Skills Week (5 - 9 December 2016) is taking place. An action of the New Skills Agenda for Europe, it is organised by the European Commission in response to a call from Vocational Education and Training (VET) providers and the need for better VET communication expressed in the Riga Conclusions.

European Vocational Skills Week aims to improve the attractiveness and image of VET by showcasing excellence and raising awareness of the wide range of opportunities provided by good quality VET. The event brings together education and training providers, civil society organisations, public authorities, business organisations, social partners and the broader public to raise the profile of VET across Europe.

Activities and events will take place all over Europe before and during the main week (5 – 9 December). More than 750 activities and events are being organised by stakeholders at local, regional and national levels in all the Member States, EFTA, EU candidate and EU neighbour countries. These include thematic conferences, campaigns on initial and continuing vocational training, information on guidance and counselling, seminars, roadshows, “Open Days” for learners and their families, Profession fairs, and more. CEDEFOP and the ETF are taking an active role in this initiative, organising conferences and an online photo competition, and identifying examples of excellence in VET. The European Commission is cooperating with EuroSkills through the 2016
The European Commission’s Skills Week 2016 is going to take place in Gothenburg, Sweden (30 November – 4 December), and the winner of this skills competition will be invited to Brussels for the closing event of the Vocational Skills Week on 9 December.

Ambassadors to the initiative have been appointed. These ambassadors help to promote the European Vocational Skills Week and are highly vocal about the importance of VET. They also encourage others to pursue vocational opportunities.

This event also recognises that through well-trained staff with up-to-date skills, European companies and organisations can reinforce their competitiveness and innovative potential. Around half of Europe’s workforce has benefited from VET.

Tailored courses, work-based learning, traineeships, apprenticeships, on-the-job training and mobility aim to unlock everyone’s professional potential by combining theory and practice. VET provides opportunities for both employers and their workforce. It is available in every field from science and engineering to healthcare and finance, in both private and public sectors.

Working together, we can raise the attractiveness of VET by showing the opportunities it provides for everyone to pursue their personal and professional objectives.

I wish us all a very fruitful and successful VET Skills Week 2016!

João Santos
Deputy Head of Unit for VET, Apprenticeships and Adult learning
DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
European Commission

Find events near you!

More information on the European Vocational Skills Week is available on the European Commission’s website: http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1261#

Here you will find an interactive map of all the events and activities organised across Europe and beyond. By searching the map, you will be able to find events near you, descriptions of these activities and the contact details of the organiser.
Annual ECVET Forum 2016: Flexible pathways to vocational skills

Anette Curth, ECVET Secretariat

The Annual ECVET Forum 2016 took place on 11 October 2016 in Rome and explored the role of ECVET in facilitating flexible pathways to vocational skills. About 200 participants from 31 countries discussed the benefits of using ECVET principles in that regard. They also discussed necessary developments to make even more progress with establishing flexible pathways to vocational skills and qualifications, in relation to ECVET and beyond. The delegates agreed on several key messages.

The delegates agreed that there is a need to design qualifications in terms of units of learning outcomes to better address the challenges of rapidly-changing labour markets. This should present more opportunities to validate non-formal and informal learning, and easier equal treatment of outcomes of formal, informal and non-formal learning contexts. Learning outcomes should be written in a way appropriate to this purpose.

The focus on learning outcomes and their transfer and recognition across different settings also has the potential to support dialogue between education and business. Ultimately, ECVET principles should be used to implement a system to recognise and acknowledge acquired skills and competences, regardless of the learning context.

The delegates also agreed that using ECVET principles and tools to prepare and follow-up cross-border mobility of VET learners will make mobility experiences more cost-effective.

To support a flexible education system, legal frameworks at national level that regulate transfer and accumulation of learning outcomes were seen as useful. Such frameworks help to increase transparency and coherence and avoid piecemeal solutions.

Annual ECVET Forum 2016: The programme

ECVET has a role to play in facilitating flexible pathways to vocational skills and qualifications. Therefore it was an objective of the Annual ECVET Forum 2016 to discuss how this can be done in three different contexts:

1. Work-based learning and apprenticeships
2. Upskilling of adults
3. Cross-border mobility of learners

On the morning of the Forum day, project examples were presented, and participants discussed key enablers and obstacles, and how the ECVET technical components – together with other instruments – can help to overcome these. In the afternoon, the discussions focussed on developing strategic solutions to make progress in six specific areas:
What do we mean by flexible pathways to vocational skills?

To start discussions, participants to the Forum discussed their understanding of ‘flexible pathways’. Concretely, ‘flexible pathways to vocational skills’ means many different things:

• Qualifications broken down in smaller components (units of learning outcomes, modules, partial qualifications);
• Open access to education and training with options to build on prior learning;
• Possibilities to change/switch tracks, and progress to further opportunities;
• Opportunities for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning;
• Tailor-made, not standardised content of training modules; and
• Opportunities for transnational (cross-border) mobility.

ECVET has an important contribution to make to achieve the above: it offers principles and tools for the transfer and accumulation of learning outcomes from different learning contexts.

Experiences with using the ECVET technical specifications in three different contexts

The three topics discussed in the morning (work-based learning and apprenticeships, upskilling of adults, and cross-border mobility of learners) were each illustrated by two exemplary projects that developed solutions based on ECVET principles.

Using ECVET for work-based learning and apprenticeships: ProjectX (ES) and TWAINE (DE)

ProjectX (ES), an Erasmus+ project, had three goals: 1) to introduce an alternance model to training programmes to ensure the training complies with the needs of the companies; 2) to improve the manner of teaching; and 3) to enhance opportunities for learner mobility. In the first stage, the project partners identified common learning outcomes and created a transnational database. In the second stage, the teachers in the participating institutions worked on developing common units of learning outcomes. This was an important step to ensure buy-in from teachers. During that phase, the VET-providers also worked closely with companies to ensure the learning outcomes complied with their actual skills needs.

The units of learning outcomes developed are based on the idea of alternance between school-based and work-based learning. They comprise learning outcomes that should be acquired through work-based learning during a training phase in a company, as well as learning outcomes that are taught during a school-based learning phase. In total, about 50 common learning outcomes were developed between the transnational project partners which will be used for mobility. Validation and recognition will be discussed and agreed before the mobility takes place, and ECVET tools (learning agreement, transcript of records) will be used to document the results of the mobility.

During the project, the partners also developed methodological guides for the learners on how to carry out a concrete activity, and a manual for teachers and trainers to facilitate monitoring and assessment.

The project TWAINE (DE) was a Leonardo da Vinci “Transfer of Innovation” project, completed in 2014. It developed a so-called ‘third way approach’ into VET, to help disadvantaged young people re-enter the education and training system after a period of unemployment. TWAINE combined work-based learning and educational coaching ensuring individual support to the learner. The project developed units of learning outcomes for students in hospitality services that can be accumulated to acquire ‘training modules’ as part of the ‘Specialist in Hospitality Services’ qualification. These units are acquired at the work place.

Another important feature of the project is the individual educational coaching, which implies changes to the role of trainers and teachers. A ‘feedback culture’ between trainees and teachers was introduced, which implies that teachers and trainers are rather perceived as facilitators.
Using ECVET for upskilling adults: AMAP (PT) and ECVET PerMit (CY)

The project AMAP (PT), Age Management in Practice, was funded under the LLP Leonardo network and tackled the challenge of an ageing population that lives longer and works for a longer period of time than previous generations. Keeping skills and qualifications up to date over decades can be challenging, especially for workers older than 50 years in sectors that have known a rapid technological development. Therefore, AMAP aimed to increase older workers’ access to and participation in CVET by prioritising their needs. To facilitate the recognition of prior learning, AMAP developed a mapping system titled ‘My Skills, My Future’ that uses ECVET principles. A toolkit of methods was developed to identify older workers’ knowledge, skills and competences, and strengths and areas for development. The workers who participated in the mapping exercise reported an increase of their motivation to learn, as they felt more confident about their existing skills and had a better understanding of any gaps and how to fill them.

Following the project, all partners signed a Memorandum of Understanding to agree on the further use of the main principles of skills assessment AMAP has developed. The project also consulted employers to hear their views on the needs of an ageing workforce and to promote the implementation of age management practices in companies. AMAP considers the project’s success in increasing the awareness of employers about older workers’ learning and development needs as one of its main achievements.

The Erasmus+ project ECVET PerMit (CY) is working to increase the permeability and transferability of learning outcomes between the non-formal and formal VET sectors. Specifically, the project aims to use learning outcomes to create a common ‘language’ to facilitate understanding between both sectors.

The project helped to promote the use of learning outcomes for qualification design among VET providers in Cyprus. The project developed a manual that sets out a number of principles to follow to facilitate the process of transferability. This is a significant achievement given that CY does not yet have in place a NQF nor mechanisms for the validation of non-formal and in-formal learning.

Using ECVET for cross-border mobility of learners: NETINVET (FR) and EMEU (NL)

NETINVET (FR) is a European network of training centres and companies created in 2011 as a follow-up to several European pilot projects. The partners used ECVET principles to establish mutual trust and provide young people with mobility opportunities during their training pathway. NETINVET is a sectoral network that pertains to training programmes in the field of international trade, transport and logistics, but it is inclined to extend to other training courses within the trade and services sector. The network’s coverage today extends to 9 countries: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, and Spain. For each of these countries, competent authorities (Ministries, National Agencies, professional/trade organisations) have been associated to encourage and support the network setup. The network consist of about 70 VET providers and over 150 related companies, and is actively supported by three professional organisations.

ECVET principles are at the core of NETINVET: members use ECVET documents and tools to facilitate the process of recognition of learning outcomes. In a first step, the partners work on shared references for professional profiles to provide a common

---

2. For more information about the ECVET PerMit project, please see ECVET Magazine No 26
Participants to the Annual ECVET Forum 2016 were asked to discuss their experiences with using ECVET in the context of these three topics in workshops, and to decide which ECVET principles are most useful to facilitate flexible VET pathways. They were then asked to formulate key messages on what follows from this. The following sections present key points from the workshop discussions.

**Using ECVET for work-based learning (WBL) and apprenticeships**

The key messages from the workshop regarding the utility of the ECVET Recommendation and its technical specifications for WBL and apprenticeships were:

- **The use of learning outcomes, units of learning outcomes and recognition procedures are very useful in facilitating dialogue between the world of business and the world of education.**
  Learning outcomes – stating what a person knows, understands and is able to do – are useful to employers. When learning outcomes are grouped in units, it is even more transparent for an employer what tasks a learner is supposed to acquire during a work-based learning period or an apprenticeship. Moreover, units help VET providers to clearly define what can be recognised as part of the qualification.
  
- **ECVET points can be useful to clarify the value of learning outcomes from WBL.**
  While ECVET points have not been useful to recognise mobility outcomes, they have proven more useful to clarify the value of learning from WBL in relation to a full qualification (namely in countries that do not have their own point system). This may both contribute to – and be reinforced by – closer collaboration between labour market stakeholders and the education and training sector.

**Validation needs to be based on clear and common standards.**

In WBL, validation can be done by either the training institution or the industry. Both types of organisations could be ‘competent institutions’ (in the sense of the ECVET Recommendations) and therefore they could be responsible for validation of learning.

---

3 For more information about NETINVET, see [ECVET Magazine No 26](#), and the article on the project EUR4All in this issue.

4 For more information about the EMEU project, please see [ECVET Magazine No 26](#)
outcomes. Both types of competent institutions need to agree on clear and common standards.

**Using ECVET for upskilling adults**

The key messages from the workshop regarding the utility of ECVET Recommendation and its technical specifications to facilitate the upskilling adults were:

**Units of learning outcomes and learning outcomes descriptions help make competences of low-skilled adults visible and show what is missing in terms of acquiring units or qualifications.**

Units of learning outcomes are seen as a very important instrument for upskilling of adults as they make learning visible and transparent. They also help to keep the focus on the learner and to motivate learners - which is particularly important with low-skilled adults who may have prior negative experiences with learning. While it may be important for low-skilled adults to acquire a qualification, documented (units of) learning outcomes are a great help to get them back to a job. Partial qualifications should therefore not be treated as a shortcoming, but rather as a basis to build on.

**There is a need for tailor-made educational systems and pathways as well as a legal framework for a flexible education system.**

Countries should put in place a systematic framework that allows assessment, validation and recognition of learning outcomes, together with opportunities for transfer and accumulation.

**These frameworks need to be supported by individual guidance, support mechanisms and supporting documents.**

Frameworks alone do not work: they need to be supported by a guidance system. The ECVET tools (transcript of record, Memorandum of Understanding, Learning Agreement) may not always be useful on national level; they are often replaced by specific national documents, agreements and regulations.

**Using ECVET for cross-border mobility of learners**

The key messages from the workshop regarding the utility of the ECVET Recommendation and its technical specifications in the context of cross-border mobility of learners were:

**Implementing ECVET in mobility will make mobility more cost-effective**

By implementing the use of ECVET in all VET mobility, quality (in terms of learning outcomes) is increased. The professionalisation that this entails will also, in the long run, make it possible to lower the ‘unit costs’ of mobility projects.

**Teachers are an important factor of VET-mobility**

Teachers are key actors in initiating and implementing mobility projects at local level. It is essential that they have the necessary skills – including operational knowledge of ECVET principles and tools – to be able to organise and carry out quality mobility projects.

**Mutual trust is indispensable for successful learning mobility**

In mobility projects, the unexpected often happens. It is necessary that partners have a common framework of understanding and are willing to place trust in each other and in the ability to deal with unforeseen happenings. When the hosting partner assesses whether the stipulated learning objectives have been met, the sending partner must trust that this is an accurate measurement of the outcomes.

**How to step up the efforts, using ECVET?**

During the afternoon workshops, participants were asked to discuss concrete ways to ‘step up the efforts’ with regard to six different topics. The following sections present key points resulting from the discussions in each workshop.
Designing qualifications – How to ensure flexible and individualised pathways?

In the context of fast-changing labour markets there is a need to design all qualifications into units of learning outcomes. In order to have flexible individualised pathways, it will be helpful to use the same basic principles in qualification design (e.g. units of learning outcomes) across all types of qualifications and segments of the qualifications system; for example, VET, general education and higher education.

A variety of stakeholders need to be involved in the process of designing qualifications, and the process should be evidence-based. Qualification design should be a collaborative process involving a range of stakeholders: policy makers, industry, employers, social partners, and VET providers.

Flexible learning pathways need to be underpinned by a legal framework. Legal frameworks enhance transparency and coherence of practices, prevent piecemeal solutions and ensure fast procedures in terms of developing and enforcing relevant laws.

Re-qualification of workers - How to support adult workers (re)qualify for a different job, possibly in another sector?

The use of an approach like ECVET units of learning outcomes can help to (re)qualify adult workers involving employers. Communication about ECVET principles to companies needs to be enhanced and better targeted to the audience. For companies, it is important to make the business case and promote the advantages of training opportunities using ECVET principles (e.g. assessing existing learning outcomes and providing targeted training to help workers acquire the skills and qualifications they need for certain work tasks). Good practice examples of companies using ECVET principles successfully are needed.

Validating non-formal and informal learning – How to ensure this in practice?

Increasing employability is at the core of governmental priority actions. Many low skilled workers would be keen to work, but fail to enter or progress on the labour market as they are missing required qualifications. Validation of non-formal and informal learning processes must be further supported. For instance, learning outcomes related to a qualification should be written in a way that ensures they can be acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning.

ECVET has the potential to play a key role in supporting the recognition and validation of prior learning and allowing flexibility and motivation for learning. For instance, the principle of assessing units of learning outcomes separately can be a key supporting instrument in validating the skills that adults have acquired outside formal training, possibly leading to the award of full or partial qualifications.

Reintegration into formal VET – How to facilitate return of early school leavers into VET?

Greater opportunities for the recognition of prior learning are needed – this could help to bring young people back to education. Assessment of prior learning should cover young people’s summer jobs or any other employment/work-based experiences. This would allow young people to map their skills, knowledge and competences and it may give them the confidence to try a new course.

Greater effort should be made to communicate opportunities for the recognition of prior learning to the youth work and guidance sector. Social workers, family care workers, psychologists, youth workers, and guidance counsellors need to be aware of the benefits of ECVET for their target group in order to promote their implementation.
Transitions within the education and training system – How to ensure that prior formal learning is appropriately valued and taken into account?

The value and attractiveness of VET will be enhanced by designing curricula and qualifications that are flexible and open to all sides – including tertiary education.

This can be achieved if the different educational sectors - general education, VET, higher education - work together. It should be valued when a learner is awarded a unit or a partial qualification in order to motivate the learner to continue learning; the glass should be seen as half full, not half empty.

Learner mobility – How to enhance the quality of transnational mobility projects in VET?

Assessment of learning outcomes is a key challenge.

The assessment of learning outcomes in host institutions and recognition in home institutions are still major stumbling blocks in many countries. The concept of learning outcomes must stand at the centre of mobility activities. A tool like the ECVET Learning Agreement can help assess the achievements of the agreed learning outcomes. It is very important that communication and guidance are precise and descriptors (including sizing of units and assessment criteria) accurate, so that all actors both at the sending and the receiving end are clear about what constitutes the objectives at the beginning and what was actually achieved at the end.

Effective communication with employers as host institutions is crucial for successful learning mobility in VET.

There is a need to have specific communication tools on ECVET for employers so different ways of communicating with them is needed.

More emphasis should be given to the recognition of soft skills acquired during cross-border mobility.

The acquisition of soft skills is an important learning outcome of transnational mobility projects in VET, but often the focus is on concrete, vocational skills. It is necessary to identify and recognise learning outcomes that lie outside the curriculum.

Moreover, not all learning is intended; sometimes participants also learn something that was not envisaged from the beginning. Often the question is: what to do with learning outcomes that are achieved and which are not (formally) part of a qualification? How much flexibility does the educational institute have when it comes to the validation of such learning outcomes?

Transnational learning mobility should move from project level to strategic level.

Both at national and institutional levels it is necessary that learning mobility as a pedagogical tool becomes embedded in a strategy rather than being driven by opportunities for funding and interests of individuals. Otherwise it becomes too vulnerable, and risks being scrapped in times of economic recession or when significant individuals driving the efforts leave the project.

Validation and recognition are most effective when they are regulated on systemic level rather than on provider level.

Through projects, pilots, and networks, many VET providers agree on regulations for validation and recognition on provider level with partners abroad; however, the learner will benefit more if a regulatory framework for validation and recognition is in place as part of the education and training system - as in Finland, for example - or as a sectoral regulation.

Panel discussion with stakeholders

The Annual ECVET Forum was concluded by a panel discussion chaired by Søren Kristensen from the ECVET Secretariat. The six panellists represented learners, VET organisations, teachers and trainers, employers, and researchers (national/international level). Laetitia Beckers (UEAPME), Viktoria Kis (OECD), Stylianos Mavromoustakos (EFVET), Ruta Porniece (ETUC), Agnesa Qerimi (OBESSU), and Claudia Villante (ISFOL) provided their views on the proceedings of the day and what follows.

The key messages that emerged were:

- Ensuring effective communication with employers is key for moving forward ECVET implementation: more than ever, supporting employability has become a hot topic on the national and EU agenda – especially in the context of WBL and apprenticeships. The topic cannot be discussed without closely involving the business sector as they are best placed to apprehend labour market needs. Companies could also act as real
facilitators if they were made better aware of the potential of transferring and accrediting learning outcomes.

- **Paying more attention to students’ voices** - particularly to help enhance the quality of individual mobility in VET. Students are best placed to know what their needs are. Policy makers and practitioners should thus consider associating them in ECVET-related decision making (e.g. consulting them when designing or developing Learning Agreements).

- **Effectively involving other key stakeholders** (e.g. staff and education and training institutions’ representatives) is crucial (starting at national level where those can also act valuable channels for information and facilitators).

- **Let’s focus on the essence, the learner, and effectively put in practice the different tools associated to ECVET**: though more communication is still needed, the level of knowledge on ECVET (and its technicalities) so as the perception of its (potential) value have improved over the years. Networking opportunities have flourished. For instance, very recently, EU4VET6 was established, a network of EU-level organisations of VET providers6.

In the view of the panellists, some challenges however remain:

- The ‘family’ of EU transparency and recognition tools (EQF, ECTS, ECVET, EQAVET, Europass, validation of NFIL) was seen as too big, resulting in different degrees of understanding and practices across the EU Member States;

- Issues persist relating to learning outcomes’ definition and implementation (including ultimate recognition and validation) at national level;

- Unresolved permeability issues (for instance, between VET and higher education) were identified.

For the panellists, evidence-based research (at national and international level) is key to inform decision making; research was mentioned as a valuable means to inform policy development and evaluate practices’ outputs (i.e. what works well / less well). Research can also help identify areas where ECVET could play a role (including those where more strategic-oriented outputs are worth being considered) in the future. The following areas where ECVET could be valuable should be explored:

- Validation and recognition of learning outcomes related to key competences;

- Emerging economic sectors (e.g. green economy). In emerging sectors, the ECVET principles for transfer and accumulation could support the development of new qualifications;

- Activating potential workforce, in particular among the most hard-to-reach groups of learners (NEETs, low-skilled adults, etc.).

**Great interest from European Member States and beyond**

The Annual ECVET Forum 2016 was attended by about 200 participants, representing 31 countries. Of the 28 Member States, only Greece was not represented. In addition to the 27 Member States present, delegates from two candidate countries (Turkey, Macedonia), and two EFTA countries (Iceland, Norway) also participated. The largest delegation was Italy with 30 participants. Other big countries like France and the UK were also well represented (FR: 15 delegates, UK: 8 delegates), while Germany (3 delegates) and Spain (2 delegates) had lower representation. Among the small countries there was great interest from the Baltic States: Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were represented by 20 Delegates (EE: 9, LV: 8, LT: 3 delegates).

The next edition of the Annual ECVET Forum will take place 19-20 October 2017 in Malta.

---

5 The VET4EU2 group is formed by 6 European Associations (EfVET, EUproVET, EVBB, EVTA, EUCEN and EURASHE) that have decided to join forces in order to influence the European policies content on Vocational Education and Training issues. VET4EU2 has joint objective of assuring quality in VET and Higher Education. They participate in ECVET-related meetings.

6 The panelist e.g. mentioned an upcoming event which main topic for discussion was to be: ‘How to improve the delivery and effectiveness of the VET systems and how VET practitioners can contribute to this improvement’.
The Austrian ECVET strategy stresses the importance of international exchange and networking. To this end, every two years the Austrian National Agency for Erasmus+ Education in cooperation with the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education organises a conference of international ECVET experts. This conference gives experts an opportunity to discuss issues that are of burning importance for them, and allows them to learn from other countries’ approaches and experiences. This years’ conference was held in Vienna on November 9th and focussed on the use of ECVET principles for supporting the validation of non-formal and informal learning. This topic was chosen because it is highlighted in the ECVET strategy and fits the current policy process related to the development of a national strategy for validation. The conference attracted 84 representatives from 24 European countries, including non-EU Member States Turkey, Switzerland, and the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia.

Common challenges across countries
To kick off discussions on this issue, the agenda included contributions describing national approaches and experiences from 5 European countries. A clear, overall message in all presentations – also underlined by Søren Kristensen from the ECVET Secretariat in his introductory key note speech – was the importance of this theme across Europe, where we are witnessing unemployment alongside a serious lack of skilled labour due to rapid technological development and globalisation. This means not only a pressing need for up-skilling those with few or no formal qualifications, but also the necessity of re-skilling workers whose qualifications are obsolete or no longer relevant due to industrial relocation and the introduction of new technology. A further issue that figured as a central element in the discussions was the use of validation of non-formal and informal learning as a tool for the integration of immigrants and refugees into national labour markets.

The Austrian strategy for validation of non-formal and informal learning
Stephanie Mayer from the Federal Ministry of Education gave the second key note address of the day, describing the current work ongoing in Austria to develop and implement a concerted, national strategy for validation of non-formal and informal learning. She described the present ‘fragmented validation landscape’ in Austria, with a lack of overall regulation as well as a low awareness of the possibilities among the target groups. Over the past two years, the corner stones for a national strategy have been developed and implementation has begun. Starting with an on-line portal for validation, initiatives are being launched to secure the quality of validation processes, develop the competences of involved staff (counsellors and assessors), and to ensure a platform for coordination, networking and cooperation among actors and stakeholders. Her presentation was complemented by presentations of four country examples that illustrated practices and lessons learned in relation to ECVET and validation.

Switzerland
Furio Bednarz from Switzerland gave an overview of validation policies and practices in his country. He underlined that even though Switzerland preferred a holistic approach to VET rather than a competence-based system with qualifications divided into units, the main characteristics of ECVET – with the exception of credit points – were still reflected in the Swiss validation-context. His presentation demonstrated that, even though the country does not belong to the European Union, national practices as to validation are closely related to ECVET principles.

Finland
As an example of a country with a fully ECVET-compatible system, Aira Rajamäki from the Finnish National Board of Education presented Finland’s experiences with validation in a competence-based VET system. She described how validation is integrated into the system not only as a theoretical possibility in relevant legislation, but also reflected in practical aspects such as assessment procedures, where skills demonstrations (rather than e.g. written and oral exams) have been introduced to accommodate all kinds of learners. Even the language used has been changed to underline that learning/competence does not only imply school-based activities: “programmes” are now called “competence areas”, and “credits” are known as “competence points”.

The Netherlands
Diane de Vries in her presentation of validation and ECVET in the Netherlands focused on the labour market perspective and outlined the results of two pilot projects in the health care sector. These projects focused on adult learners with a varied range of prior experience, which was assessed, validated and recognised in individualised learning pathways and enables all of the participants to finish with a qualification. A key message was that learners must not be encouraged to think that the achievement of a qualification is the only and the final goal: the labour market is not static, and to be successful, learners must constantly look for opportunities to enhance their knowledge, skills and competences in a lifelong process, even after they have passed their assessments.

France
The final presentation was given by Brigitte Trocmé from the Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research in France, which arguably is European country with the longest experience of incorporating validation of non-formal and informal learning in education and training policies. Despite over 20 years of experience, there are still important challenges that need to be tackled or issues that need to be further explored. Trocmé emphasised the length and complexity of the process and the need to attach adequate information and guidance processes for each step, especially for disadvantaged target groups. Also, with individualised pathways, it is often a problem for learners to find exactly the complementary training they need in order to achieve their qualification. Finally, it must be acknowledged that validation processes are costly, and that any developments of the system must come equipped with adequate budgets.

Exchange of experience and mutual learning
In the afternoon, the presenters went to separate workshops where participants had the opportunity to have further discussions with each of them to elucidate specific points or relate it to developments in their own context. These discussions were facilitated by members of the team of Austrian ECVET experts. Eduard Staudecker from the Austrian Ministry of Education in his closing remarks drew attention to the richness of the discussions due to the diversity of approaches that had been presented during the day. The opportunity to learn from such different examples and experiences was also very much welcomed by the participants. This approach will be continued by the Austrian colleagues who are planning to organise their next international ECVET experts’ conference in 2018.

Documentation online
The conference programme, all presentations and further documents as well as photos from the event are available online: https://www.bildung.erasmusplus.at/ecvet-experts-conference2016
ETL4ALL project - European transparent Transport and Logistics EQF level 4 qualifications for All

Stephanie Oberheidt, ECVET Secretariat

The ETL4ALL project, co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme (September 2014 - October 2016), held its final conference on 5 October 2016 in Paris. The event attracted over 80 participants. Representatives of the European Commission (DG EMPL) and of the ECVET Secretariat attended the morning session to hear presentations on the project outputs as well as relevant policy developments in France, Spain (Catalonia), Belgium and Italy. The NETINVET network for supporting recognised learner mobility in the sectors above also gave a presentation.

The afternoon session was dedicated to offer networking opportunities. This was addressed to practitioners (schools and training centres) that had been selected by the project partners for their interest in participating in a first round of mobility and in testing the documents and tools developed within the framework of the ETL4ALL project.

The information set out below concentrates on the project’s objectives and main outputs. For details on the other points discussed in the morning session, please see https://etl4all-project.eu/en/page/dissemination-events

The objectives of the project

ETL4ALL originates from NETINVET, a European mobility network of training centres, schools and professional organisations from several European countries aimed at fostering mutual learning and learner mobility in the sectors of International Trade and Transport and Logistics.

Prior to ETL4ALL, the key achievements of the network had resulted in supporting mobility at EQF level 5 in the sectors mentioned above. Over time, the need to enable mobility at EQF level 4 had been increasingly called for by both network’s members and other interested parties (e.g. training centres). As a means to address this and open up the network, the ETL4ALL project was designed and ultimately retained for Erasmus+ funding.

In practice, the project has been led by the Association pour le développement de la Formation Professionnelle dans les Transports (AFT) and drew upon a consortium of five partner organisations’ spread over four countries: Belgium, France, Italy and Spain. Its main purpose was to undertake preparatory work to make EQF level 4 qualifications in Transport and Logistics available in the four partner countries and ultimately to allow European mobility at this level.

1 i.e. French Ministry of Education, Federation Wallonia-Brussels (Department of the General Directorate for compulsory education of the Ministry of the French Community), Le Forem (Wallonia’s Public Service for Employment and Training), Government of Catalonia (Regional Ministry of Education) and the Institute for Transport and Logistics Foundation (ITL).
Rationale for ETL4ALL

The project drew on the need to further support developments in the Transport and Logistics sector(s) where the demand for jobs requires ever increasing levels of qualification. The following national dynamics tend to extend to the European level and were also considered by the project consortium: standardisation and certification, cooperation and coordination through social dialogue and exchange of common approaches, tools, and standards across different fields and Member States.

The ETL4ALL project responds to these developments by ensuring that Transport and Logistics EQF level 4 qualifications are compatible with ECVET and available first in the four partner countries (France, Belgium, Italy and Spain) and subsequently in other European countries.

The main objectives of the project were:

- To develop shared references for qualifications in Transport and Logistics at EQF level 4 of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF);
- To provide tools to promote and facilitate mobility, and;
- To create a mobility network at EQF level 4.

The achievement of these objectives was expected to enable recognised mobility at EQF level 4 in the sectors above, building on commonly shared principles including use of the ECVET methodology.

The approach followed by the project partners has first consisted of mapping existing national situations (in the four partner countries) and then defining and agreeing upon shared references in the form of: common job profiles, occupational standards and competence standards.

This was complemented with the drafting of concrete mobility tools to support learner mobility including: quality charters for training centres and companies hosting learners; a list of potential training centres and a template for the description of their organisation; and a learning agreement template.

The final step, which will continue after the end of the project contractual period, is taking the form of a mobility network building on the existing EQF level 5 mobility network NETINVET.

Key outputs

In line with the above, the core outputs of the project have taken the form of common:

- Job profiles at EQF level 4 - two common job profiles have been drafted by the consortium including one for Transport and Logistics and another one for the Road freight driver;
- Occupational standards at EQF level 4 - those draw on the occupation previously described in the common job profiles (listing the concrete activities and tasks the holders of the qualifications should undertake and giving more information about the work environment and the expected outcomes);
- Competence standards for EQF level 4 qualifications in transport and logistics - the project partners have produced a transcript of their national competence standards using the ECVET methodology. Doing so enabled the project partners to design and organise the competence standards in units of learning outcomes. Each learning outcome details what the learner needs to know and apply in a practical way, and how to behave in specific professional situations. This was further supported by a complementary output called ‘Knowledge limits’.

The project has also encouraged the development of several mobility support-related tools including:

- Quality charters for training centres and for companies hosting trainees - defining the conditions to become either a member of the mobility network (fitting the eligibility and training quality criteria from NETINVET) or a NETINVET hosting company for EQF level 4 trainees; and,
- A learning agreement template to support mobility - The Learning Agreement defines the detailed conditions for the mobility of each individual learner.

The ETL4ALL project’s final expected result is the opening up of the existing NETINVET network to support mobility at EQF level 4 (in the sectors targeted by the project), and to expand in scope to include new members.

For more information about the project and to access the project’s outputs please visit: https://etl4all-project.eu/en/page/home
The ECVET Magazine is published three times per year and informs about the latest ECVET developments. Previous issues of the ECVET Magazine are available for download on the website of the ECVET Secretariat: http://www.ecvet-secretariat.eu

Any comments or suggestions regarding this or future issues can be submitted to the following address: ECVET-Secretariat@icfi.com