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European Workshop On ECVET: the Launch of the Consultation

2 October 2006, Espoo

ECVET: Draft technical specifications

EUROPEAN CREDIT SYSTEM FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (ECVET)

**THIS DOCUMENT IS INTENDED TO BE USED DURING THE
WORKSHOP.**

IT IS NOT THE CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

EN - NON REVISED

02-10-2006

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Summary

ECVET: political mandate

The proposed European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) is designed to support the international transfer, accumulation and recognition of individuals' learning outcomes. It is being developed under the aegis of the European Commission, mandated by the Education Council Resolution of 12 November 2002 and the Copenhagen Declaration of 30 November 2002. The 2002 mandate was renewed and strengthened in the Council's Maastricht Communiqué of 14 December 2004, e.g. by the Ministers responsible for VET from 32 European countries, the European social partners and the Commission.

ECVET: a coherent device

ECVET partakes of the global project for the development of co-operation in the European vocational education and training area. It constitutes one of the operational instruments. In this line, ECVET is complementary to the European qualification framework (EQF). Indeed, EQF and ECVET are based on common principles and concepts which privilege approaches:

- Focused on the learning outcomes described in terms of knowledge, skills and competences;
- Focused on qualifications;
- Adapted to all requirements of lifelong learning and all contexts of learning, with parity of value and esteem
- Directed towards mobility .

Consequently, ECVET could be adopted, whatever the vocational education and training systems and qualifications systems. In addition, the concrete implementation of ECVET should be based on the common references suggested by EQF. The European framework should thus constitute a powerful lever for the adoption of ECVET by the various competent bodies which are responsible of its implementation in each country, within or without a national qualification framework. ECVET is based on principles, rules and conventions making part of a coherent and rational device. ECVET aims at facilitating:

- the mobility of the individuals who are involved in a training pathway
- the assessment and validation of learning outcomes achieved in lifelong learning
- transparency of qualifications
- mutual trust and co-operation between the stakeholders involved in VET in Europe.

Main purposes and challenges of ECVET

VET learners (e.g. apprentices, young people in initial VET, adults learning in the workplace) in Europe already engage in trans-national learning activities; the interest of mobility, however, is limited by several factors, notably a lack of transfer arrangements enabling the validation and recognition of learning outcomes achieved abroad.

It is thus necessary to envisage a device which would make it possible each one to continue the construction of its qualification while passing from a context of training to another. ECVET has thus the ambition to be a mechanism of exchange of information aiming at helping the individuals to fully benefit of the learning outcomes resulting from period of trans-national mobility, whether the context was formal, non-formal or informal.

In Europe, the heterogeneity of vocational education and training, the multiplicity and the

diversity of the actors involved as well as the diversity of the national or sectoral systems of qualifications constitute major challenges to be taken up by ECVET.

Principles of ECVET

ECVET is a device which makes it possible to methodically describe a qualification in terms of units of learning outcomes, to be transferred and accumulated (knowledge, skills and competences), to which points of credit are associated.

ECVET is intended to facilitate the transfer and the accumulation of learning outcomes of individuals who pass from a context of training to another, from a system of professional certification for another;

ECVET will be founded on the voluntary participation of the Member States and the stakeholders of their respective systems of qualifications as well as vocational education and training.

ECVET will be a mechanism supporting synergy between VET providers by supporting the co-operation between partners for transfer and accumulation of credits.

The consultation document

This paper outlines the features of the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training.

It is made up of thematic chapters (which will be completed with annexes and a slideshow to be available on the website of the European Commission) which make up a coherent set. .

These documents constitute the basis for a wide-ranging consultation to take place with policy-makers, social partners, stakeholders and experts in qualifications systems and VET throughout Europe.

The results of the consultation process will be further analysed with regard to a Community instrument. and it is expected that they'll be discussed in a major European level conference to be organised in June 2007 in cooperation with the German EU presidency. This conference will terminate the consultation process and open the approval process.

After the consultation the Commission will decide how best to take the system forward.

Furthermore, experiments, studies, further tests and pilot projects under Leonardo da Vinci are currently being undertaken and envisaged for verifying, complementing and improving the proposed solutions. At the end of the consultation process and during the next phase of development, the Commission with the support of Cedefop, would ensure that this work is enriched and expanded for the purpose of providing, for instance, a toolbox and/or handbook for ECVET.

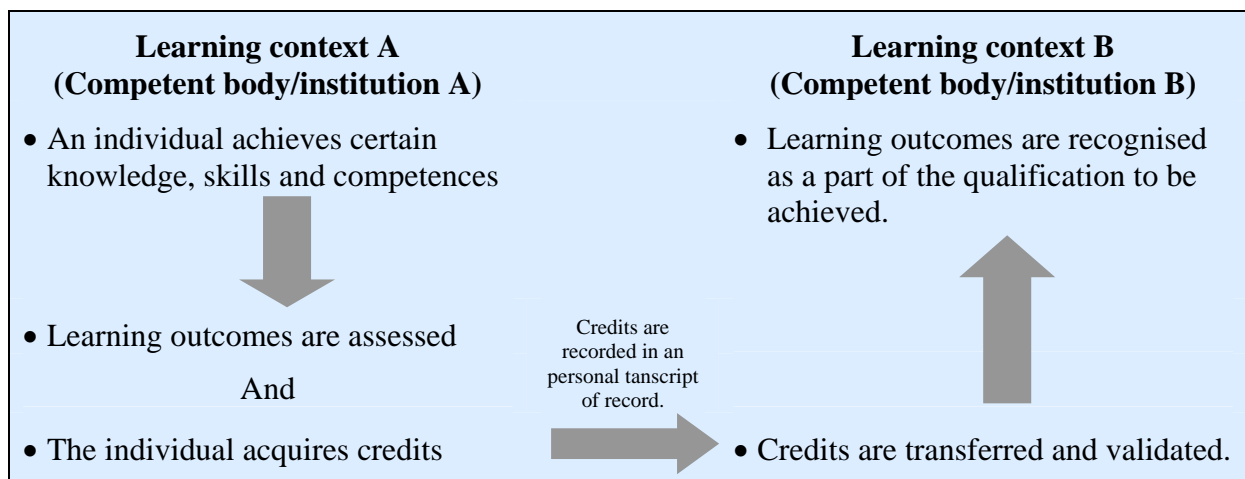
1. What is ECVET?

ECVET is:

- A useful and concrete device intended to facilitate transfer and accumulation (capitalisation) of learning outcomes of individuals who pass from a context of learning to another and/or from a qualification system to another.
- A methodical way for describing a qualification in terms of units of learning outcomes which are transferable and which can be accumulated (knowledge, skills and competences), with associated credit points.

1.1. What is ECVET for individuals?

ECVET is a solution for many people placed in a situation of trans-national mobility, in varied contexts of learning, supporting their lifelong learning path. This is illustrated by the following table.



1.2. What is ECVET for competent bodies?

The kind and type of competent bodies which can have a role in the implementation of ECVET vary from one country to another, from a VET system to another or from a qualifications system to another.

In each country, according to national rules, competent bodies, at relevant levels, are responsible for:

- Design arrangements which are linked to the assessment, transfer validation and recognition processes;
- Description of qualifications in terms of units of learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competences);

What is a competent body for ECVET?

Authority, institution or organisation at national, regional, local or sectoral level that, according to national rules and practices, is responsible for and/or involved in one or more of the functions related

- Allocate ECVET credit points to qualifications and units.

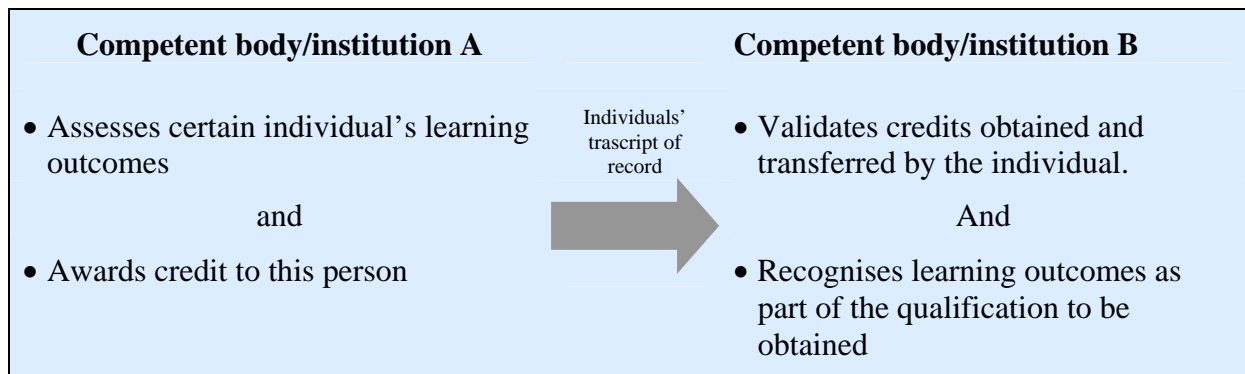
to the implementation of ECVET

1.2.1. The ECVET learning outcomes transfer process

The ECVET learning outcomes process can be described like a transaction between two competent bodies or authorities which are empowered to award qualifications and/or **credits for learning outcomes**:

- One body or institution assesses certain learning outcomes achieved and awards credits to the learner, the learner's credit is registered in an **personal transcript of record**
- The second awarding body **validates** (accepts) the credit as a valid record of the learner's achievement and **recognises them** for the award of the qualification.

Thanks to this process, an individual can thus transfer and accumulate learning outcomes in order to obtain a qualification.



To facilitate the transfer process of learning outcomes, ECVET is based on:

- The description of **qualifications** in terms of **learning outcomes** (knowledge, skills and competences);
- The expression of qualifications in **units of learning outcomes** which can be transferred and accumulated.

In addition, to facilitate the understanding of qualifications and units, **ECVET credit points** are used for a numerical representation of each unit and to define its weight and its value regarding the whole qualification.

1.2.2. The description of qualifications in terms of units of learning outcomes.

The description of qualifications in terms of units of learning outcomes makes it possible to specify knowledge, skills and competences which characterise each qualification and to improve the legibility for the individuals as well as for the competent bodies responsible for qualifications and for employers. Learning outcomes expected for the award of a qualification can be listed in a catalogue of units, a qualification standard or any other memorandum on qualification. This practice right now is already implemented in many systems of VET in Europe.

What is a unit?

A set of learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competence) which normally constitute the smallest part of a qualification that can be evaluated, validated and, possibly, certified. A unit can be specific to a single qualification or common to several qualifications.

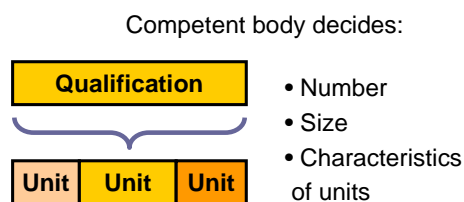
The definition and description of units can vary according to the qualification system and the procedures of the competent body. However, for ECVET purposes, the specifications for a unit should typically give information such as:

- the generic title of the unit,
- the expected learning outcomes,
- the criteria of assessment, .

There is a broad range of possible specifications and flexible ways of using the concept of units. However, units of learning outcomes should be:

- legible and understandable;
- built up and organised in a coherent way;
- assessable.

The heart of ECVET: Units of learning outcomes



Who defines units?

The characteristics of units composing a qualification (content, size, total number of units, etc.) are defined by the competent body responsible for the qualification at the appropriate level.

There are numerous methods for describing qualifications in terms of learning outcomes. For the moment of the adoption of ECVET, the European Commission will support the diffusion of the most suitable methodologies as well as the development of new methodologies.

1.2.3. Allocation of ECVET credit points

ECVET credit points are suggested as an additional source of information in numerical form. Being associated both with qualifications and units, ECVET credit points have two functions:

- to give a simple representation of the relative value of a unit of learning outcomes in relation to the full qualification. They illustrate the proportion of the unit to the qualification;
- to facilitate the transfer of learning outcomes in a concrete way by providing a common reference at European level between qualification systems;

ECVET will enable the allocation of credit points through different approaches and instruments. ECVET credit points should be allocated on the basis of criteria such as:

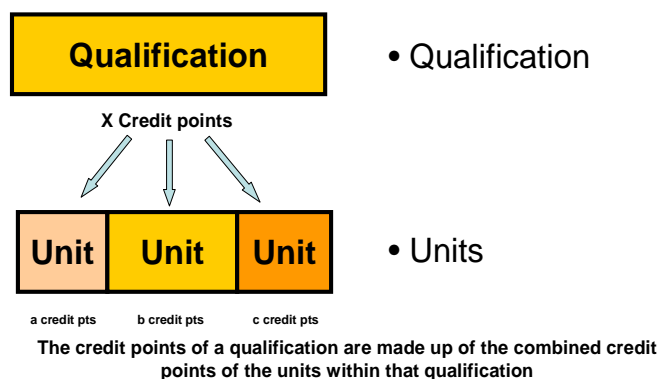
- an estimation of the importance of the contents of each unit defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences;
- reference to a real or notional average length of programme;
- real or notional learner workload in a formal learning context;
- real or notional learner effort in an informal learning context;
- combination of several criteria.

How are ECVET credit points allocated?

For ECVET purposes, credit points are first allocated to a whole qualification, with points from this total then allocated to units as appropriate, because credit points represent the weight of each unit relative to the full qualification.

Credit points

Competent body allocates credit points to:



Competent bodies which are empowered for the allocation of ECVET credit points might use the following convention as a practical indicator: 120 ECVET credit points on average could be associated to the learning outcomes achieved by an individual in a year in a formal full time VET context. This convention is purely indicative. It does not fix an absolute and rigid yardstick of measurement. It does not prescribe learning durations, required learning times or a mandatory learning effort. It is intended to be used as a reference for the allocation of credit points to learning outcomes, qualifications and/or to units.

There are numerous methods for allocating credit points to qualifications and units. For the moment of the adoption of ECVET, the European Commission will support the diffusion of the most suitable methodologies as well as the development of new methodologies.

2. The implementation of ECVET

ECVET should be applicable in various learning situations and contexts. Consequently, the application which is described below is given as an example, following the chronology of the principal stages.

2.1. Stage 1: the decision on the adoption of ECVET

Deciding on how qualifications should be linked to ECVET (notably their description in terms of units of learning outcomes and the allocation of ECVET credit points) is an important issue for the effective and sustainable implementation of ECVET. The implementation of ECVET needs clear commitments from competent bodies and providers, formalised at the relevant levels in each country. This requirement has been clearly demonstrated in the Bologna process for Higher Education where voluntary commitments have contributed to the widespread implementation of ECTS.

In order to properly implement ECVET, the competent body responsible for qualifications or units, or more generally empowered to implement ECVET should define and decide the scope of its implementation and formalise its decision at the appropriate level, according to the national rules.

2.2. Stage 2: the establishment of partnerships.

In order to facilitate the concrete implementation of ECVET, VET providers and/or competent bodies at the relevant level could establish **partnership agreements or memoranda of understanding (MoU)** which could contribute to creating the climate of trust in which credit transfer can operate.

In the MoU, partners could specify:

- Correspondence between qualifications (units and credit points) and/or learning outcomes concerned by transfer. The EQF levels could contribute to the establishment of the correspondence.
- The assessment, transfer and validation processes (units or parts of units)
- The specifications for quality assurance.

The key point of the MoU is that the learning outcomes for which credits are awarded by one or the other of the partners can be recognised irrefutably.

Partnership agreements could be established between different authorities or organisations, according to the type and desired degree of co-operation. Thus, MoU could be established between authorities responsible for qualifications (ministries, branches...) and/or networks of VET providers (Chambers of Commerce ...) and/or VET providers or other stakeholders in VET (training centres, schools, firms...). A model memorandum of understanding could be developed at European level.

2.3. Stage 3: the learning agreement

It could be necessary to draw up an individual learning agreement for each person, notably in the formal learning context. This document would specify the learning outcomes expected at the end of a period of mobility (units or parts of units) and the associated points of credit. This individual learning agreement should be drawn up between the person and the two partners. A model learning agreement could be developed at European level.

2.4. Stage 4: award ECVET credits

ECVET credits are awarded (units or, eventually, parts of units and associated ECVET credit points) after the assessment of the learning outcomes. Credits are recorded in a transcript of record which gives precisions on:

- knowledge, skills and competences which are acquired
- the credit points which are associated with the achieved learning outcomes

A template of transcript of record could be designed at European level. Moreover, the Europass documents could be used to record credits and for transparency.

2.5. Stage 5: Transfer, validation and accumulation of credits

In accordance with the MoU and the learning agreement, credits should be transferred, then validated by the sending organisation and recognised for obtaining the qualification concerned, by accumulation, according to the rules.