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# ECVET: From Principles to Practice Synthesis Report 4-5 December 2008 - Paris

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# 1 FOREWORD

The seminar entitled “ECVET: From Principles to Practice” brought together 70 stakeholders from across Europe representing VET policy makers, competent institutions and providers. It was organised by the European Commission in cooperation with the European Centre for Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop). This seminar was a first occasion to discuss the practical aspects of ECVET (European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training) on basis of the ECVET proposal for a recommendation. This recommendation will set the basic principles of ECVET. It is currently undergoing the co-decision process between the Council and the European Parliament.

The seminar has been conceived as an exploratory event which enabled to move from the debate on ECVET objectives and key characteristics to the discussion of concrete issues that competent institutions will be facing when testing and implementing ECVET. It opened up the discussion on the implementation of ECVET technical aspects and explored options for using ECVET in the different European VET systems settings. In this respect, the ECVET national initiatives and European pilot projects delivered very valuable inputs to this seminar. The options and examples highlighted during the seminar will feed into the ECVET users’ guides.

This synthesis report first briefly describes the seminar proceedings and related inputs. It then summarises the thematic workshops, also outlining the key inputs from the presentations. Finally, the key messages and suggestions are presented.

All contributions are available on: <http://ecvet.teamwork.fr/docs/>

## 2 LATEST NEWS ON ECVET

### 2.1 Update on ECVET developments

During the seminar, an update on ECVET developments was delivered by DG EAC and Cedefop. Both European-level organisations are working closely together on the testing and implementation of ECVET in Europe.

At the time of the seminar, the ECVET proposal had already undergone an agreement in the Education Committee, the Culture Committee of the European Parliament and the Employment Committee of the European Parliament. An agreement of the Parliament on the proposal was expected in mid-December 2008.<sup>1</sup>

The provisional ECVET timetable for 2009 includes its formal agreement by the Council and European Parliament during the first semester of 2009. Participants were also informed that a political conference on ECVET and the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF) will be organised by the Czech Presidency in Prague (on 20 May 2009). The technical launching conference on ECVET is foreseen for the second semester of 2009.

The current revised version of the proposal for the recommendation on ECVET underlines:

- The voluntary character of ECVET;
- The links between the labour market and education and training systems that ECVET can contribute to;
- The complementarity between ECVET and ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System);
- The fact that ECVET has the potential to be applicable to all levels of EQF (European Qualifications Framework) since VET qualifications can be referenced at all levels of EQF;
- The important role testing and pilot projects will play in ECVET implementation and the fact that the proposal should be reviewed after five years;
- The implementation of ECVET will be accompanied by development of networks and followed by an ECVET users' group to be established by the Commission.

The contributions during the plenary session underlined the links between ECVET and other European initiatives, namely the EQF, Europass, validation of non-formal and informal learning and the EQARF (the European Quality Assurance Reference

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<sup>1</sup> Since then the European Parliament approved the proposal for recommendation in first reading on 18 December 2008. The updated text of the recommendation can be found here:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/FindByProcnum.do?lang=en&procnum=COD/2008/0070>

framework for Vocational Education and Training). Specific aspects of ECVET are obviously related to VET developments and implementation of lifelong learning strategies at national levels. The Cedefop preparatory work to the Bordeaux Communiqué<sup>2</sup> revealed that trends supporting implementation of ECVET are already embedded in current national developments. These include:

- Increasingly linking initial VET, continuing VET and higher education;
- Improving equity and access for all to VET and education more generally;
- Expanding of post-secondary and tertiary VET;
- Improving flexibility of training pathways, including focus on learning outcomes and development of recognition practices.

Cedefop is currently carrying out a series of studies which analyse issues related to the role of qualifications in Europe, relationships between learning outcomes based approaches and VET curricula & pedagogies, or between credit systems and qualifications frameworks.<sup>3</sup> Cedefop also maps the developments of national qualifications frameworks and of credit systems across Europe.

Finally, the plenary presentations highlighted that several Member States are already exploring and developing approaches related to the use of credits in VET (using the ECVET principles) such as:

- DECVET (Germany) which aims at increasing permeability within national VET context and at developing recognition procedures;
- FINECVET (Finland) which considers using ECVET in transnational mobility context in selected sectors;
- Updating national regulations in order to accommodate credit transfer and accumulation (Belgium fr, Luxembourg, Latvia, Spain – Catalonia).

## **2.2 The 2008 ECVET pilot projects**

During a round table, the representatives of ten ECVET pilot projects briefly outlined their approaches to testing ECVET and answered questions regarding their projects. It is interesting to note that the ECVET testing in the framework of the European pilot projects includes approaches focusing on:

- Regions with important cross-border mobility;
- Adult education and training in sectors where mobility is important;
- Economic sectors where internationalisation is very present (e.g. automobile industry);

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<sup>2</sup> Cedefop. In the finishing straight: From Copenhagen to Bordeaux. 2008. Available on: [http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Information\\_resources/Bookshop/publication\\_details.asp?pub\\_id=515](http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Information_resources/Bookshop/publication_details.asp?pub_id=515)

<sup>3</sup> For more information on Cedefop publication see : [http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Information\\_resources/](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Information_resources/)

- SMEs with strong requirements for transversal skills.

All projects are characterised by a strong involvement of the relevant stakeholders as required in the technical specifications<sup>4</sup> for proposals. They concern a wide range of professions and VET traditions as presented in the table 1 below.

**Table 1 – 2008 ECVET pilot projects**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Sector/ qualifications</b>	<b>Leading country</b>	<b>Partner countries</b>
Outils pratiques interrégionaux pour ECVET / Practical and interregional tools for ECVET	Hairdressing Automation	Belgium	IT, RO, FR, ES
Development and Testing of a Credit Transfer System to Improve Mobility within the Chemical Sector	Chemical sector	Germany	IT, RO, FR, ES, BE, FR
Capitalisation des Acquis Professionnels dans l'Europe du Spectacle Vivant /Promotion of Professional Skills and Competences in Performing Arts in Europe	Performing Arts	France	IT, UK, ES, CZ
ECVET Fitness on the Move - Putting Theory into Practice	Fitness	Belgium (EU- wide organisation)	NL, UK, SE, ES, DE, NO, IT
ECVET Automobile Service Sector ECVET Testing	Automotive Service	France	FI, RO, HU
Skilled Mobile-European MASTER PLUS	Craftsperson qualification (SMEs)	Germany	FR, AT, NO, SI, NL
Identification of sector-related qualifications according to the common demands of being employed by enterprises of the European Aeronautic and Space Industry	Aeronautic and Space Industry	Germany	FR, UK, ES
Model Of Transferability of learning Outcome units (M.O.T.O)	Tourism	Italy/ Luxembourg	AT, FI, IS
Testing a Joint ECVET-ECTS Implementation	Coordinating ECTS and ECVET to better link Higher Education (HE) and VET.	France	DE, HU, GR, IT, BE, UK, BG, PL
ECVET System for No borders in tourism hospitality European Training and Work	Tourism and hospitality	Italy	FR, SI, PT
Value the learning outcomes in the "Grande Région"	Electronics in energy and building technology and Car mechanics	Luxembourg	FR, BE, DE
Recomfor	Trade	France	BE, ES, EL, IT, NL, PT, RO, SI, CH

<sup>4</sup> Details about the 2008 call for proposals to test ECVET can be found here: [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/lip/ecvet/2008/funding\\_en.html](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/lip/ecvet/2008/funding_en.html)

The range and scope of the pilot projects in terms of sectors, promoters as well as target groups is very promising for ECVET future developments. It shows that there is already interest in ECVET at different levels and that in the upcoming years a variety of methods and approaches can be expected. The projects are lasting two to three years. They will be coordinated by the European Commission with an external contractor. This initiative will be accompanied by Cedefop.

### 3 THEMATIC WORKSHOPS

Two workshop sessions were held during the first day of the seminar. During each session, three thematic workshops took place. The themes of the workshops were chosen so as to stimulate discussion on how the technical specifications of ECVET (such as units, credit transfer) can contribute to the main objectives of ECVET and the characteristics and practices required to achieve the added value of ECVET. The discussions during the workshops mainly focused on using ECVET for mobility purposes among countries but also potentially among the different systems within a country.

The workshops' themes were:

- ECVET and transparency of qualifications,
- ECVET and progressive achievement of qualifications,
- ECVET partnerships and recognised mobility.

Each workshop discussion was stimulated by two presentations of national contexts. These presentations outlined the characteristics of their VET systems reflecting on how these are compatible with ECVET, but also on how these can support transnational cooperation using ECVET.

The presentations were followed by discussions, guided by the workshop questions as presented in the background paper for the seminar. The seminar agenda allowed discussion so as to enable participants to express their views and to reflect on a variety of VET contexts. The evaluation of the seminar revealed the time for discussion was very much appreciated by the participants.

Lessons from workshops regarding each theme were presented during the second day of the workshop by rapporteurs. Their presentations were followed by further discussion and fine-tuning of messages.

#### 3.1 Workshop A: Transparency of qualifications

The issue was introduced by two presentations – from the Netherlands and France. Following a brief introduction of the respective VET systems, the speakers reflected upon the compatibility of their national VET systems with ECVET in terms of qualifications design (such as the role of various stakeholders and their autonomy, use of units, notion of competence). Whilst each system viewed separately seems self-evident, transparent as well as a priori compatible with ECVET (e.g. legible units), the

discussion later revealed that the legibility between systems was not so straightforward.

In the Dutch VET system, the design of a qualification starts with the *Professional Competence Profile* (set up by the social partners), which describes the activities and the professional competences of the skilled professional worker. To this Profile corresponds a *Qualification Profile* and a *Qualification File* (containing the whole qualification profile plus all referential documents). The *Qualification Profile* describes the competences of a beginner professional worker and the activities in the professional context. Finally, the *Competence Matrix* describes the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for each of the competences defined. In the Dutch context, competence is the ability of a person to act properly, purposefully, motivated, process- and result-oriented, in particular situations.

This approach is based upon knowledge, skills and competences (KSC), expressing learning outcomes as defined in ECVET and EQF. There are currently no units as such in the Dutch system. However, all competences in the *Qualification Profile* are accompanied by performance indicators which are used as basis for assessment. The *Qualification Profiles* are the basis on which the Dutch VET providers design their own training programmes as well as assessment procedures. The speaker highlighted the high degree of autonomy of the Dutch providers.

The French National Education system of qualifications<sup>5</sup> is based on the 650 qualifications (*diplômes*) that are referenced in the national qualifications framework (at five levels). Designing qualifications starts, as in the Dutch VET system, with a description of types of professional activities. This sets the basis for specifying the *occupational standards* (specified in functions and tasks), and the *qualifications standards* (defined in terms of capacities, competences, knowledge).

In the French system the term “*compétences*” refers to general and vocational competences. A balance between both fields of competence is required for all VET qualifications. The field of Vocational Competences includes 1) technical, technological, scientific knowledge, 2) skills (*savoir faire* such as gestures, techniques, methods), and 3) attitudes and behaviour. Competences are grouped into units of two types: the units with general competences and those with vocational ones. Vocational units have to be related to on-the-job situations and meaningful for the labour market. Because of this characteristic of units, these tend to be rather “big” and the number of them within a qualification is low (e.g. the *Brevet de Technicien Supérieur* contains between six and eight units).

In the French system, there is already a way to express the relative weight of units within a qualification. This is done through the use of weighting (*pondération*) which results in coefficients. However, these coefficients are not credit points and their main function is to determine the weighted average of all marks received by the candidate, which is the basis for a decision on a pass or fail, regarding the achievement of a qualification.

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<sup>5</sup> Outside the national education system, there are many other VET qualifications in the qualifications framework – e.g. qualifications of other ministries or qualifications of sectoral organisations.

### 3.1.1 Discussion

In relation to the issue of ECVET as a tool to enhance the transparency of qualifications (use of units, points) in order to facilitate mobility, the following points were discussed:

- Within a single VET system, transparency is self-evident because all stakeholders are sharing terminology and processes. However, transparency at the transnational level is more complex. It is not only a matter of making sure that written documentation is available, but also of ensuring a common understanding. Therefore, it is important to overcome the differences in terminology and processes to design and deliver qualifications.
- A starting point to overcome these differences, in a transnational perspective, is the common understanding of occupations that underlie qualifications: Two qualifications with a very similar label can correspond to different or similar occupations. More precisely, qualifications levels and units (in terms of learning outcomes) are a very useful tool to clarify whether two qualifications are comparable. They enable to find a common language between various stakeholders and traditions of describing qualifications. The approach through occupations enables also to overcome differences in terminology (e.g. some systems use the word competence as the overarching terminology rather than the term learning outcomes).
- There are differences across countries regarding the level of flexibility enabled by the VET system(s): In some systems, the qualification design and the training programme can accommodate differences (for example, because of the local requirements or because of providers' specialisation). It is important that systems are transparent in relation to the flexibility they enable and the implications this has for transnational mobility (e.g. in some cases the system requires learners to achieve exactly the same learning outcomes abroad as they would have had achieved in the home system; in others the added value of mobility is perceived mainly because learners can acquire learning outcomes that are not delivered within the home system). Consequently, there will be different approaches to using ECVET in transnational mobility perspective and partnerships will have to take this into account.
- A key issue that was discussed in relation to transparency was the question of delivering assessment and validation, i.e. who assesses, when, following which procedures? It was agreed that processes and methods would have to be transparent, to allow mutual trust between different systems. The role of accreditation of providers may be important for this purpose, especially when assessment methods vary greatly from what is being done at home. The fact that the provider is accredited – or otherwise authorised to design and undertake assessment – in the home system can stimulate trust abroad. Such guarantees (quality assurance) will be needed, at least in the first stages of the ECVET implementation.
- Regarding assessment and validation, it may also be necessary to document (describe) the assessment process to ensure the credibility of assessment criteria

and methods. Therefore, a framework established beforehand, will be the key element to the mutual trust (e.g. Memorandum of Understanding).

- Finally, it was noted that the transparency to be stimulated by ECVET can have an added value beyond the mere geographical mobility - within countries with the different education and training systems. Indeed, the lack of understanding and trust that currently hinders recognition of learning outcomes for learners coming from abroad also exists within countries with the different systems of education and training (HE and VET, CVET and IVET). The ECVET influence on mobility can demonstrate that the differences in training pathways, assessment processes and traditions in relation to the design of qualifications can be overcome.

### **3.2 Workshop B: Progressive achievement of qualifications**

The debate on this topic was stimulated by two presentations: from Romania and from the French speaking Community of Belgium (BE FR). The two speakers discussed different approaches regarding the immediate use of ECVET in their VET systems. The speaker from Belgium (FR) underlined the role of ECVET as a tool to facilitate mobility within the country across the different education and training systems (namely, to come back from CVET towards a system that delivers IVET qualifications). The Romanian speaker considered using ECVET for transnational mobility.

In Belgium (FR) the debate on ECVET is triggered by the fact that the national system(s) currently do not enable sufficient progression pathways for individuals to pass from one system to another (e.g. from the system of the Regions Wallonia or Brussels to the system of the French Community). Drop-outs from the initial VET system of the French speaking Community of Belgium are important: those persons would often undergo further training and obtain certificates at the regional level. Returning to the initial VET system for achieving their IVET qualifications (which give legal rights that CVET qualifications do not give) often means for them starting their training from the beginning. This is demotivating for the individuals and not cost-efficient. Therefore, ECVET is seen as a tool that will support transfer and thus contribute to reducing the number of drop-outs from the VET system.

In Romania, the current debate linked to ECVET concentrates on ensuring that mobility of learners in VET, mainly in initial VET, is recognised and valued so that learners do not have to undergo additional assessments when they return to their home institutions. Mobility can therefore be integrated into the training pathways of individuals.

The main common points between the two national systems presented were:

- Job profiles are the point of departure for definition of qualifications:
  - o In Romania – working groups involving social partners define the learning outcomes that a qualification should lead to.

- In Belgium (FR) – the system is being reformed so as to make the different qualifications offered more coherent<sup>6</sup>. In the future, chambers of trade will define job profiles, including competence requirements, and these will serve as basis to define training profiles.
- Qualifications are based on units of learning outcomes (LO):
  - In Romania three “types” of units are distinguished: “key units” which encompass general LO or key competences; “general units of vocational LO” which contain LO common to several qualifications within the same domain/sector; “specialised units of LO” which contain LO specific to that particular qualification.
  - In Belgium (FR) training profiles will be described in terms of units of LO and these will be designed by chambers of education and training. The training profiles are broader than qualifications. On basis of the training profile, VET providers can design their qualifications and specific training pathways using some or all of the units in the training profile. In this way, the freedom of providers to design specific training pathways and qualifications targeted at different target groups is maintained, while at the same time, the qualifications are built on common basis (units) and therefore become more coherent.
- The assessment leading to achievement of the qualification is a combination of continuous assessment (for each unit) and final assessment (concerning the whole qualification, confirming that the LO from different units have been integrated and the person is able to perform job tasks).

In addition to these common points, some differences exist:

- While in Romania the training programme is developed at a central level by a working group and approved by the Ministry of Education, which is the awarding body, in Belgium (FR) the programme is developed by recognised providers and there is no centralised approval of these programmes.
- In Romania, the assessment criteria (so-called performance criteria) and the assessment requirements (methods etc.) are set centrally as part of the qualification standard. In Belgium (FR) an assessment profile will be developed centrally, together with the training profile. This will provide guidelines for providers but it will not be prescriptive or binding and providers maintain their autonomy regarding assessment.

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<sup>6</sup> Currently qualifications are designed by different types of actors (sometimes VET providers – e.g. for CVET) and there is little coordination among the different qualifications offered.

### 3.2.1 Discussion

Regarding the topic of ECVET as a tool to facilitate progressive achievement of qualifications the following issues were discussed:

- To enable credit transfer across countries but also across VET systems, trust and the possibility for those responsible for transfer to easily identify what can be transferred are important.

Regarding the building of trust, on one hand, it is important that certain quality assurance (QA) underpins the assessment process so that it can be trusted as valid and reliable. But at the same time, countries have different QA approaches. While in some countries accredited providers are fully trusted as capable of designing and undertaking assessment, in others external participation to assessment or other QA mechanisms are required. The use of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework may enable countries to overcome this diversity and be accepted as the minimum QA requirement.

Concerning the transfer, the use of units will obviously facilitate transfer because those in charge will no longer have to analyse for each learner what has been achieved and can be validated and what remains to be achieved in view of a qualification. Agreements on transfer, in form of Memorandum of Understanding, will make this task easier. However, it was underlined that if units are too big, there is a risk that the possibility to transfer learning achievements in other contexts and the flexibility units enable may be hindered. Therefore, it was recommended that, while maintaining units that are meaningful (for example, for the labour market), they should also be compatible with the training pathway requirements. The possibility of using sub-units for mobility purposes was also considered. However, in such case it is important to ensure that learners' assessment for the sub-unit can be taken in the assessment for the full unit into account to avoid assessing him/her twice.

- One possibility to facilitate transnational mobility using ECVET is the development of common standards in sectors or for qualifications where transnational mobility is needed. Experience from previous pilot projects shows that in most cases such common standards can be developed when stakeholders focus on analysing job profiles (rather than the education and training pathways). This can lead to definition of broad learning outcomes that can be used as references for explaining (potentially also for designing) qualifications and/or units of learning outcomes. This approach enables to bring coherence, while at the same time it accommodates VET diversity.
- In relation to the validation of assessment that took place in another context, the following topics were discussed:
  - o It is crucial that the assessment (i.e. method and content) is clearly relevant for the learning outcomes to be assessed. There are various possibilities how the competent institutions can agree on this, e.g. on basis

of trust and the description of the assessment provided by the other institution, visit to the other institution during the assessment process, establishment of joint examination committees. Depending on the requirements and the context of the partnership, this aspect may be more or less formal.

- In cases where providers are responsible for assessment of units, they will also be in charge of validation. Therefore, the assessment and validation arrangements will often depend on an agreement between two providers.
- Where there is a final “holistic” assessment (as in the case of Belgium (FR) or Romania), this final assessment constitutes a guarantee that a person who has not achieved the learning outcomes required to practice the profession, cannot obtain the qualification.

### **3.3 Workshop C: ECVET Partnerships and recognised mobility**

The debate on this topic was supported by two presentations describing contrasting qualifications systems: in Austria and in the England, Wales and Northern Ireland regions of the United Kingdom (EWNI). The presentations set out how the qualifications systems operate and considered how these systems would be challenged in meeting the need to support ECVET partnerships and recognised mobility for learners. The Austrian system is firmly based on providing recognition for well-established programmes of learning in initial VET. In EWNI, a regulated credit-based qualification framework (QCF) is now being introduced, very much oriented towards lifelong learning.

The Austrian VET qualifications system has parallel arrangements for apprenticeship-based and for school-based learning. In either arrangement, a range of stakeholders is involved and the functions of each are established in statute. The system is very much focused on initial VET, with clearly regulated pathways for learners, albeit with some bridges between the pathways. While there are ways of transferring learning achievement from one setting to another, these are not systematic. Processes for the recognition of foreign qualifications or for learning achieved abroad are worked out on a case-by-case basis. There is no tradition of use of credit in this system and the concept of credit points is generally seen as subversive to the cohesion and reliability of the VET qualifications.

The UK qualifications systems have been organised in qualifications frameworks for many years. In the England, Wales and Northern Ireland regions, the first generation of frameworks is now being replaced by the QCF. This is a credit-based framework, designed to accommodate recognition for all learning achievements, focused on the learner as the key beneficiary and on lifelong learning as the key context.

There is a range of awarding bodies who design and award their qualifications, but these are regulated by an independent statutory authority. In the QCF, units of learning outcomes are the building blocks of qualifications. Units are described in terms of required learning outcomes, in accordance with rules and guidelines for how units are specified, rules of combination<sup>7</sup> etc. The QCF has an in-built, fully integrated system of

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<sup>7</sup> These specify towards which qualifications can a unit contribute and on what conditions.

accumulation and transfer, so that learners can achieve qualifications in various different ways.

A fundamental feature of the QCF is that credit is understood as an award made to the learner. All awarding bodies wishing to participate in QCF are required, through regulation, to recognise credit awarded by other awarding bodies in the system. It is the right of the learner to accumulate this credit towards qualifications that are enabled by the rules of combination. In this context, credit transfer is a right of the learner that does not require further negotiation or agreement. Therefore, within the QCF system, there is no need for mobility partnerships between awarding bodies. In terms of mobility between QCF and other qualifications systems, the integrated credit approach enables global articulation agreements to be established rather than individual partnerships or mobility agreements.

### **3.3.1 Discussion**

The discussion on ECVET partnerships and recognised mobility developed in the context of an understanding that ECVET has multiple target groups, as it is designed to be used in relation to the recognition of learning achieved in initial VET, in continuing professional development and in the non-formal and informal contexts. The focus of discussion was on the needs of learners in a lifelong learning context and on future labour market needs, including the need for retraining and up-skilling. It is anticipated that workers in the labour market of the future may have several different occupations in the course of a work career and may need to adapt or build on their initial qualifications.

Recognising that ECVET partnerships and arrangements for recognised mobility can be effective only where trust can be established between the stakeholders involved, and stimulated by the contrast between the examples presented by the speakers, the workshop explored what preparation is required for countries to use ECVET, develop partnerships and provide for recognised mobility for learners.

It was underlined that, in order for ECVET to be fully implemented, preparatory work will be required at country and European levels.

At national level, it is necessary to ensure that the requirements specified in ECVET technical specifications are in place, mainly regarding the fact that qualifications for which ECVET is to be used are:

- described in terms of learning outcomes,
- referenced to an EQF level,
- 'unitised'.

To enable these pre-requisites to be fulfilled, some countries will need to undertake changes in their national qualifications arrangements, at least for the qualifications concerned by ECVET. The extent of the change required will vary: for example, some countries already have VET qualifications described in units of learning outcomes whereas others would need to begin this task.

The message from the workshop was that it is not realistic to expect that the preparation for ECVET can emerge entirely as a bottom-up process. There is a need for top-down and bottom-up actions to be coordinated: this should begin with decisions at the national level that will in most instances require the following political initiatives:

- To define criteria for the description of qualifications in terms of learning outcomes – in countries where NQFs are being developed, this decision will be made as part of this process.
- To establish the referencing of VET qualifications to EQF in order to make sure that the credit transfer is at the appropriate level. In other words, it is not sufficient to say that a qualification is on EQF level 4 – this has to be demonstrated through the referencing process.
- To identify the 'Competent Bodies' for ECVET – in other words, to be transparent on who within the system is responsible for what tasks related to ECVET (assessment, validation, recognition, signing an Memorandum of Understanding, etc.)

In relation to the need for communication of ECVET, the key messages and information should centre on explaining the benefits of using credit in VET qualifications and what ECVET can do to add value to the use of credit at the national level, as well as outlining the technical aspects of ECVET operation. Only if these are clear to the potential partners, will they buy-in to the ECVET implementation process and engage in ECVET partnerships that will lead to recognised mobility.

In relation to ECVET partnerships, the workshop adopted a broad understanding of this concept, realising that the introduction of ECVET requires the development of a range of partnerships at various system levels:

- Partnerships to drive policy change,
- Partnerships to develop systems,
- Partnerships for mobility at the national level,
- Partnerships for international mobility.

In relation to mobility partnerships, while acknowledging that these will be a necessary feature of ECVET, it was suggested that other approaches may be possible: for example, mobility may be better achieved through one general alignment between systems than via multiple bilateral agreements.

## 4 KEY MESSAGES FOR TESTING AND IMPLEMENTING ECVET

The seminar revealed that what might have been considered as impossible four years ago, - credit transfer in VET - is now being progressively accepted and stakeholders are looking for identifying concrete solutions on how to use ECVET principles in practice. At the same time, the seminar was a demonstration of the fact that ECVET is only in the very first stage of implementation and 2009 is likely to be the start of a much longer process. Practical solutions and good practices are still to be found, even though some approaches to ECVET exist already.

### 4.1 Think small but useful

It was very strongly underlined during all the discussions that ECVET testing and implementation should, in the short term, focus on areas and sectors where the needs are obvious. This may be the case for example in:

- Trans-border areas;
- Sectors of activity with important mobility of workers;
- Sectors where trans-national learning experience is highly valued,;
- Areas where up-skilling of workers is required urgently.

If attention is paid to invest into testing and implementing ECVET in these areas, it is more likely that solutions to the technical obstacles that might arise, will be found and will be sustainable in the long run (e.g. beyond the European funding).

### 4.2 Emphasise complementarity with other European tools

Many questions and obstacles that arise when seeing ECVET as an isolated tool can be countered with existing EU tools. For example:

- The EQF and the process of referencing to EQF will, on one hand, ensure that credit transfer within ECVET can operate at the appropriate level (i.e. only if qualifications are at the same level is the transfer meaningful) and, on the other hand, it will provide references/guidelines for the description of learning outcomes at the national level.
- The EQARF will provide common references regarding quality assurance that are also applicable to the design of qualifications and assessment.
- The developments regarding validation of non-formal and informal learning provide guidelines on how to recognise from other contexts that formal education and training systems.
- Europass helps to document learning.

The complementarity between these should be stressed at European but also at national levels; countries should avoid engaging in parallel processes without ensuring proper communication and exchange. Coordination and information between respective implementations at national levels will create synergies that will strengthen their added value.

#### **4.3 Accept that different solutions fit different needs**

In the first stage of ECVET implementation, systems will face differences regarding:

- The extent to which the ECVET principles (learning outcomes, units, etc.) are already in place in their systems;
- The objectives linked to implementing ECVET, e.g. transnational mobility (on a large scale, for certain sectors, etc.) and/or mobility within a VET system (geographical, occupational mobility);
- The flexibility their systems enable.

Therefore, it is necessary to accept that, using the ECVET principles, alternative approaches may be developed that will fit one purpose/ situation but not another. For example, while certain sectors may desire to engage in using common European references for their qualifications, others may desire to create specific units for mobility.

#### **4.4 Maintain clarity and simplicity to stay user-friendly**

The ECVET mechanisms/ principles are clear and this clarity should not be obscured by lengthy theoretical discussion of difficulties and *a priori* solutions. In many cases, solutions will have to be found on the ground and will be fit for purpose. Stakeholders (be it policy makers or providers) may become overwhelmed if they are presented with long technical obstacles or difficulties. At this stage, it is crucial to motivate them to engage with ECVET and therefore to communicate to them the added value it provides.

#### **4.5 Communicate at appropriate level**

In line with the above statement, it is important the Commission communicates at the appropriate level. Messages and information on ECVET need to be communicated to many different groups of stakeholders, not just to the qualifications specialists:

- To various learner groups,
- To employers,
- To education and training providers,
- To policy-makers.

Different modes of communication and tailored materials should be developed for these various groups. It is not adequate to develop a single guidebook or users' guide.

#### **4.6 Share and use existing practice**

Finally, the seminar stressed the need to share and use existing and upcoming tools, approaches, methods and experience. These should be documented and made accessible (e.g. an online platform<sup>8</sup>).

In addition to tools and material produced by ECVET pilot projects, the sharing of knowledge should go beyond this circle and look into what is produced elsewhere, for example:

- EQF test and pilot projects regarding the descriptions of learning outcomes and referencing to EQF;
- National experiences and practices;
- Experience from the higher education sector and ECTS.

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<sup>8</sup> As for instance the Cedefop Virtual Community on European Qualifications Framework - Credit Transfer In VET, <http://communities.trainingvillage.gr/credittransfer-eqf>

## 5 AGENDA OF THE SEMINAR

Day 1	Thursday, 04 December 2008
9.15 – 10.00	Registration and coffee
10.00 – 10.30	Plenary session: Welcome and Introduction Update on latest ECVET developments. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mr. Michel Aribaud - European Commission</li> <li>- Ms. Isabelle Le Mouillour - Cedefop</li> </ul>
10.30 – 13.00	Three Parallel Workshops (three groups): Workshop A: ECVET: transparency of qualifications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Moderator: Ms. Isabelle Le Mouillour – Cedefop</li> <li>- Speakers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mr. Pasqualino Mare – Kenniscentrum Handel (NL)</li> <li>Mr. Richard Maniak – French Ministry of National Education (FR)</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Rapporteur: Ms. Cecile Mathou – GHK Consulting</li> </ul> Workshop B: ECVET: progressive achievement of qualifications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Moderator: Mr. Didier Gelibert – ANFA-AUTO</li> <li>- Speakers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mr. Alain Bultot – Council of Education and Training of the Belgian French Community (BE fr)</li> <li>Ms. Gabriella Ciobanu – National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education Development (RO)</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Rapporteur: Daniela Uličná – GHK Consulting</li> </ul> Workshop C: ECVET partnerships and recognised mobility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Moderator: Marijke Dashorst – European Commission</li> <li>- Speakers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mr. Nick Juba – Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (UK)</li> <li>Ms. Sabine Tritscher-Archan – IBW (AT)</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Rapporteur: Edwin Mernagh – Independent consultant for GHK Consulting</li> </ul>
13.00 – 14.30	Lunch
14.30 -15.00	Plenary session: Update on parallel European developments (e.g.EQF) and how these are supported by Cedefop. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ms. Isabelle Le Mouillour - Cedefop</li> </ul>
15.00 – 18.00 (short break at 16.00- 16.30)	Three Parallel Workshops (three groups – participants change): Workshop A: ECVET: transparency of qualifications

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Moderator: Ms. Isabelle Le Mouillour – Cedefop</li> <li>- Speakers: Mr. Pasqualino Mare – Kenniscentrum Handel (NL) Mr. Richard Maniak – French Ministry of National Education (FR)</li> <li>- Rapporteur: Ms. Cécile Mathou – GHK Consulting</li> </ul> <p>Workshop B: ECVET: progressive achievement of qualifications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Moderator: Mr. Didier Gelibert – ANFA-AUTO</li> <li>- Speakers: Mr. Alain Bultot – Council of Education and Training of the Belgian French Community (BE fr) Ms. Gabriella Ciobanu – National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education Development (RO)</li> <li>- Rapporteur: Daniela Uličná – GHK Consulting</li> </ul> <p>Workshop C: ECVET partnerships and recognised mobility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Moderator: Marijke Dashorst – European Commission</li> <li>- Speakers: Mr. Nick Juba – Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (UK) Ms. Sabine Tritscher-Archan – IBW (AT)</li> <li>- Rapporteur: Edwin Mernagh – Independent consultant for GHK Consulting</li> </ul>
18.30	Cocktail
Evening	Free time
<b>Day 2</b>	<b>Friday, 05 December 2008</b>
9.30 – 11.00	<p>Plenary session : Feedback from workshops</p> <p>Rapporteurs' present the conclusions and discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ms. Cécile Mathou – GHK Consulting</li> <li>- Ms. Daniela Uličná – GHK Consulting</li> <li>- Mr. Edwin Mernagh - Independent consultant for GHK Consulting</li> </ul>
11.00 – 11.20	Coffee
11.20 – 12.30	<p>Round table of ECVET pilot projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Moderator: Mr. Michel Aribaud – European Commission</li> <li>- Project representatives</li> </ul>
12.30- 13.00	<p>Conclusions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mr. Michel Aribaud – European Commission</li> </ul>