

**CEDEFOP EXPERT WORKSHOP
"MAINSTREAMING ECVET TO PRACTITIONERS"****Thessaloniki, Greece, 30-31 May 2011****FIRST INFORMATION NOTE ⁽¹⁾****Background to the workshop**

The European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) is aiming at enabling learning mobility for young and adult learners, as well as supporting lifelong learning and recognition of prior learning in Europe. It builds upon further European tools and principles such as the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET), or the European principles for validation of learning outcomes. Core elements to those tools are the learning outcomes approach and a strong role given to qualifications as ultimate goal for individual learners.

In a large majority of countries, ECVET is meanwhile taken forward ⁽²⁾. Preparing for ECVET implementation encompasses activities ranging from legal and regulatory updates to broad range test initiatives. The implementation of ECVET is not occurring on its own but is strongly related to policies on enhancing international learning mobility, to VET reforms at national, regional or local levels towards more permeability within and between systems and to the development of qualifications frameworks. ECVET is expected to be gradually implemented by learning from projects, experimentations and tests. The transfer of good practices and knowledge of difficulties from tests and pilots to policy-making is part of the European framework for ECVET and stated as such in the European ECVET Recommendation.

The European database on the ECVET projects ⁽³⁾ reveals that 23% of the 110 registered projects deal with integrating ECVET in education and training, and that 32% are coordinated by VET providers. ECVET is being developed for qualifications located at EQF levels 3 to 6 in different fields of activities covering for instance construction and building, health care or transport and logistics. Further characteristics of ECVET testing are the involvement of a large range of stakeholders and the regional dimension as support for mobility. This, of course, implies dedicated human and financial resources.

⁽¹⁾ as of 31/3/2011

⁽²⁾ For more details on ECVET implementation in Europe, see Cedefop (2010). The development of ECVET in Europe. Working paper, No 10. http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/6110_en.pdf

⁽³⁾ Meanwhile the ADAM database proposes a specific list for ECVET projects: <http://www.adam-europe.eu/adam/thematicgroup/ECVET>

On that basis organising a Cedefop workshop to ECVET and practitioners might not be astonishing. The institutional environment in which ECVET operates is undergoing changes which lead to new definitions of responsibilities, of autonomy in decision making and practices, and decentralisation/regionalisation and mergers. In some countries, institutional autonomy also involves funding (Bulgaria, Germany, Austria) where VET providers can increasingly take independent budgetary decisions. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Slovakia have merged state-owned VET schools to optimise financial and human resources as well as increasing quality of, and accessibility to, VET (Cedefop 2010). The first ECVET surveys (ECVET Connexion, ECVET Reflector) underlined the importance of providers for ECVET implementation and their need for autonomy to experiment and develop ECVET. This autonomy while embedded into national laws and regulations and observing standards and quality assurance requirements would enable providers in taking responsibility for the training process (including design of learning process, assessment procedures, awarding qualifications, participating to the definition of standards) as well as for entering into partnerships for mobility.

Currently the tests and experimentations are focusing on the technical features of ECVET (writing the learning outcomes, defining the learning units, ascribing ECVET points, developing partnerships in using Memorandum of Understanding and Learning Agreements). First lessons from European ECVET pilot projects confirm the essential role of VET providers (as mentioned for instance in the preliminary final reports of the M.O.T.O.⁽⁴⁾ or OPIR projects). More generally, (too) little attention has been paid until now to providers and their administrative or teaching/training staff at European policy level.

Objectives of the workshop

The Cedefop workshop is embedded into the European ECVET agenda of activities led by the European Commission. It aims at:

1. Informing on progress in ECVET implementation. A session will be dedicated to the European ECVET state of play; challenges and implementation strategies.

Following reports on ECVET implementation in Europe, tentative questions for contributions are:

- How far has been ECVET (or credit system) communicated to providers and practitioners?
- How far ECVET has been or might be an issue for practitioners and VET providers?
- Which information is still needed?
- Which information channel could be used?

⁽⁴⁾ http://www.ecvet-projects.eu/Documents/MOTO_model_final.pdf

2. Identifying the drivers (and obstacles) to the involvement of providers and practitioners to ECVET implementation.
 - What are the drivers for testing and implementing ECVET (e.g. mobility, changes in VET provision)?
 - Who takes the decision?
 - What is the added value for practitioners and for providers?
 - Which are the ECVET features more likely to be dealt with at the level of practitioners (ex. defining units for mobility, recognition, ECVET points, assessment, memorandum of understanding, learning agreements)?
 - Which degree and form of autonomy might be needed for ECVET testing and implementing?
3. Better understanding the needs of VET practitioners for ECVET testing and implementing:
 - Which elements of ECVET relate more prominently to current developments of provisions and curricula?
 - Which are the ways to involve practitioners in ECVET implementation (European ECVET projects, participation to national or regional initiatives, development of mobility projects, etc.)?
 - Which support is needed to take action with ECVET in terms of capacity-building and training for practitioners for instance?

The ultimate objective is to integrate the views of VET providers and practitioners into implementation strategies and further development of ECVET. Workshop contributions will be set on Cedefop ECVET homepage. Its outcomes will be disseminated to ECVET Users' group.

Participation and contributions

The European Commission and the ECVET team support this event by inputs on ECVET features and implementation (information session on ECVET implementation). Participants are representatives of VET providers (schools, enterprises, training centres, private or public organisations set for the purpose of providing and delivering education or training services at all levels of the EQF) and VET practitioners (teachers, trainers, counsellors, tutors, coaches, etc.).

The discussions and reflections should be supported by contributions by European ECVET pilot projects, selected projects addressing issues linked to the objectives of the workshop and spontaneous contributions elaborating on the questions listed above.

We invite spontaneous contributors to contact us on possible contributions as soon as possible. By 26 April 2011 at the latest, an abstract (maximum two pages) should be sent to us. Abstracts should contain a clear and concise description of a problem statement, interim or final results of project, practice examples and/or research questions and findings. Contributors will be informed about the selection results. PowerPoint presentations shall be made available to Cedefop prior to the workshop.

Timetable

The workshop will start on 30 May 2011 at 9:30 (with the registration session from 9h30 to 10h00, ending at 18h00) and will continue on 31 May 2011 until 13:00. Opportunity for gathering on the evening of 30 May 2011 will be given.

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