



**CEDEFOP Expert Workshop on
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BACKGROUND PAPER

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1. MAIN DRIVERS TO THE INVOLVEMENT OF PRACTITIONERS IN ECVET IMPLEMENTATION

a) Connection with the governance level

- ✓ The application of ECVET is undoubtedly linked to the implementation of other transparency processes (NQFs, referencing to EQF, establishment of institutional systems for validation of non-formal and informal learning), but can also take place through bilateral agreements between institutions
- ✓ ECVET therefore allows a combination between top down and bottom up approaches to the recognition of competences (national strategies and on the ground practices)
- ✓ The implementation of ECVET has less constraints at system, methodological and operational levels and therefore its application can be smoother with respect to more complex and slower political processes: as such ECVET can be in itself a driver and a support to such processes and initiatives (NQFs/EQF/EQAVET, Recommendation on validation of non formal and informal learning, Youth on the move, etc.)
- ✓ ECVET fosters the voluntary cooperation and networking between VET institutions / providers and labour market actors, thus enhancing the social dialogue among the different stakeholders
- ✓ In a way, ECVET can force “resistant” actors to such a cooperation
- ✓ ECVET supports the concrete implementation of lifelong learning strategies
- ✓ Together with other devices, it can facilitate a more objective evaluation of the Return of Investment (ROI) of education and training policies and provision
- ✓ An ECVET-based training provision contributes to enhancing the overall quality of VET systems and their comparability across borders
- ✓ An ECVET-based training provision is more flexible and targeted to individual needs
- ✓ The application of ECVET can have an impact not only on the design of training provision but also on the contents of employment contracts (thus improving the matching between VET and the labour market)
- ✓ The application of ECVET can contribute to the establishment / consolidation of transition/integration mechanisms between different contexts (different VET segments, VET and the labour market, different geographical areas across countries or within countries)
- ✓ The testing of ECVET within established partnerships can contribute to enhance the “trust building” process
- ✓ The application of ECVET should be linked to the implementation of European / national measures to hinder the economic crisis

b) Methodological level

- ✓ The application of ECVET can promote orientation to learning achievements and performance, especially in those systems where an output-based approach to learning is not yet consolidated
- ✓ ECVET allows valorisation of modular (unit-based) approaches to learning
- ✓ ECVET promotes a shared culture of evaluation
- ✓ ECVET can support the bottom-up development of common (cross-country) units of learning outcomes, thus allowing to overcome existing differences among qualification systems
- ✓ In a wider perspective, ECVET can also help the construction of common sectoral qualifications
- ✓ ECVET can be quite easily applied in those contexts where a shared international certification system already exists (e.g.: foreign languages, ICT)
- ✓ The application of ECVET (in particular in a lifelong learning perspective) can contribute to the recognition of “experience” as a key learning factor and of on-the-job competences as a fundamental asset of individuals
- ✓ ECVET recognizes equal dignity to learning outcomes achieved in non-formal and informal learning contexts

c) Operational / individual level

- ✓ ECVET supports the qualification of individuals as well as the “qualification”/ competitiveness of enterprises, thus fostering a better matching between supply and demand and a more effective placement / career development
- ✓ An ECVET-compatible training provision (which can offer credits) is more attractive to individual learners
- ✓ A credit-based training provision can also contribute to foster reintegration into education / training pathways and to reduce the rate of drop-outs (see Europe 2020 target on early school leaving)
- ✓ ECVET can support social and professional integration, in particular of disadvantaged groups (immigrants, drop-outs, low-qualified workers, workers at risk of exclusion by the labour market)
- ✓ The application of ECVET fosters the motivation and empowerment of learners, the concrete exercise of active citizenship, as well as of the right to professional identity
- ✓ The consolidated use of ECVET (therefore a well established credit-awarding training provision) can contribute to improve the relation between citizens and institutions

2. POSSIBLE OBSTACLES TO ECVET IMPLEMENTATION

a) Connection with the governance level

- ✓ The different levels of development of NQFs and of referencing process to EQF among Member States outline the picture of a Europe at least at 3 different speeds (which might generate also an uneven distribution of mutual trust)
- ✓ Institutional mechanisms which should allow permanent synergies and mainstreaming between national strategies / policies and on the ground practices are substantially weak
- ✓ There is a concrete difficulty to establish / maintain institutional networks involving all relevant actors, thus hindering the switch from bilateral experiences to generalized practices
- ✓ If competent bodies are not themselves the promoters of ECVET testing initiatives, it is difficult to get their endorsement at the start up of specific pilot experiences and even more difficult to involve them in valorizing / mainstreaming the results of such experiences
- ✓ The involvement of labour market actors in ECVET implementation is uneven across countries, territories and sectors and it is yet a precondition for the success of the device
- ✓ Contractual and wage-related implications of ECVET are a hinder to its implementation
- ✓ The multiplication (and in some cases “competition”) of European transparency devices might be an obstacle to their widespread application; the possible synergies /juxtaposition between existing devices and the forthcoming European Skills Passport are still unclear

b) Methodological level

- ✓ ECVET is a lifelong learning tool or is it rather the VET equivalent of ECTS?
- ✓ The switch from input to output based VET systems is long, complex and not homogenous in the different countries
- ✓ The switch from recognition of credits at the beginning of a learning pathway to recognition upon completion of a pathway is also complex
- ✓ The concept of “qualification” is sometimes confused with curriculum / training pathway; the units of a qualification do not necessarily correspond to modules / units of a training pathway
- ✓ While the unit-based approach to VET pathways is already achieved in most contexts, a unit-based approach to qualifications still needs be consolidated
- ✓ There is a concrete difficulty (from a methodological but also from an operational point of view) to attribute credits to single units of a qualification

- ✓ The process of designing curricula / training pathways is very often different (in terms of methodology, contents, outcomes) with respect to the process leading to the definition / description of professions
- ✓ VET systems and labour market systems often show very little mutual permeability
- ✓ There is a concrete difficulty to compare the titles and contents of qualifications across countries
- ✓ Mutual trust is not automatic: it is long to establish and requires consolidated cooperation among institutions; the comparability / similarity of their respective systems is often a pre-condition for such a trust
- ✓ ECVET evaluation mechanisms are in most cases not compatible neither with the performance assessment systems implemented within some enterprises nor with the lack of an assessment culture within other working environments
- ✓ The achievement of an agreement on evaluation procedures, standards and outcomes is a complex process
- ✓ An “institutionalized” geographical mobility (as the Leonardo da Vinci Mobility) yet requires some pre-conditions for applying ECVET (sufficient duration of the experience, integration of the experience into an institutional learning pathway, quality-assured management procedures, competence-assessment processes), which are not always met by current projects

c) Operational / individual level

- ✓ The language and technical features of ECVET are somehow distant from on-the-ground practices
- ✓ “Burocratisation” of procedures might be an obstacle to the concrete application of the tools by providers
- ✓ The user-friendliness of the device should be improved (through testing and practices) , in particular for the benefit of non-expert potential users
- ✓ The implementation of ECVET is costly (in terms of preliminary agreements, procedures and logistics, human and financial resources needed, time needed), while its benefits are not always fully perceived by all the actors involved; the costs-benefits ratio should be improved
- ✓ The preparation of an ECVET-compatible Leonardo da Vinci mobility experience cannot rely upon adequate funding for preparatory measures by the Programme (resources need be found under other Programme actions such as preparatory visits, VETPRO or TOI/ DOI)

- ✓ ECVET community risks being considered as a “cultural circle”, unless it fully integrates labour market actors
- ✓ In some contexts, there is a cultural resistance to giving value to a mobility experience
- ✓ ECVET for mobility at the moment is a tool for a small élite of learners (for instance participants to Leonardo mobility); the real challenge is applying it as a tool for lifelong learning by encompassing the dimension of non-formal and informal
- ✓ Individual needs for qualification are diversified: ECVET should target first those groups with a higher need (non or low-qualified subjects)

This paper reflects the views expressed by the participants to the seminar “Apply ECVET in the Leonardo da Vinci Programme: the actors, the experiences, the perspectives” organised by the Italian LLP – LdV National Agency (Rome April 29, 2011). The seminar gathered around 65 attendants, including representatives from competent institutions, VET providers and other stakeholders from the labour market.