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Monitoring ECVET implementation strategies in Europe



Monitoring ECVET implementation strategies in Europe

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Foreword

ECVET, the European credit system for vocational education and training (VET) promotes borderless mobility and lifelong learning. It creates the potential to recognise, accumulate and transfer work-related skills and knowledge acquired during a stay in another country or in different situations, so that these experiences contribute to building up recognised vocational qualifications.

ECVET is one of several European tools launched the last decade as an integral part of the 'education and training 2010-20' and Copenhagen processes. Their impact depends on their consistency and interaction but their implementation will increase transparency of qualifications, support mobility and benefit citizens by providing a systematic and transparent way to present, document and validate their knowledge, skills and competence.

The ECVET recommendation invites Member States to start progressive implementation from 2012 onwards. The first preparatory phase, from 2009 to 2012, during which countries were asked to create the necessary conditions for ECVET, is coming to an end. It is time to start gradual introduction prior to evaluation in 2014.

As part of its direct support to the EU political and institutional process underpinning ECVET, Cedefop monitors and analyses progress made in establishing ECVET at national, regional and project levels and points to the key challenges countries are facing.

This year's ECVET monitoring report – the third from Cedefop – focuses on the necessary conditions Member States should create for its implementation. The report shows that Member States are progressing and are increasingly committed to ECVET implementation, although Europe is still far from a fully operational credit system in VET and developments are heterogeneous. It is necessary to mainstream efforts and work on synergies with other European tools, especially the national qualifications frameworks and their referencing to the European qualifications framework that are also contributing to creating those necessary conditions.

This Cedefop report will contribute directly to the 2014 evaluation of ECVET and to the monitoring of the strategic objectives and short-term deliverables set out in the Bruges communiqué that Cedefop is mandated to carry out.

Christian F. Lettmayr
Acting Director

Acknowledgements

This working paper is based on analysis of policy and research documents and the results of 44 interviews conducted between August and October 2012, gathering views of more than 70 experts and members of the ECVET users' group. Cedefop is grateful to them for their availability and input in reviewing the draft document as well as to the European Commission for its support and feedback.

The report was drafted by Cedefop experts Ernesto Villalba and Loukas Zahilas who also conducted the interviews and undertook the analysis on which it is based. Special thanks go to Slava Pevec (Cedefop) for her valuable comments and to Mara Brugia (Head of Area, Cedefop) who supervised the work and provided feedback throughout the process.

Thanks go to Vicky Oraiopoulou (Cedefop) who coordinated the interviews and to Yvonne Noutsia (Cedefop) who provided technical support in preparing this publication.

Executive Summary

The development of ECVET began in 2002 after the Copenhagen Process emphasised the need for a credit system for VET. The system has been developed by the Member States and the social partners in cooperation with the European Commission and has been adopted through a recommendation by the European Parliament and the Council in 2009.

The timetable for ECVET implementation, which is a voluntary process, as foreseen in the ECVET recommendation, includes a preparatory period running until 2012, during which the Member States are asked to create the necessary conditions and to adopt measures with a view to introducing ECVET. During that period, each Member State may adopt and introduce ECVET (and also carry out tests and experiments, for which support may be provided under the lifelong education and training programme) without waiting until 2012. Then there is a period for the gradual introduction of ECVET, running until 2014 with a possible revision of the European recommendation in 2014.

This report is the third in the Cedefop monitoring exercise that analyses developments in ECVET. Its main objective is to provide an overview of how countries are progressing towards putting into place the necessary conditions for ECVET. The analysis aims at contributing both to the ECVET evaluation scheduled for 2014 and to the review of achievements of the strategic objectives and short-term deliverables of the Bruges communiqué.

The technical components for ECVET can be classified in three main categories: qualification design (qualifications, units of learning outcomes and credit points); the process of accumulation of learning outcomes (assessment, validation and recognition of learning outcomes); and the transfer process (memoranda of understanding, learning agreements and learners' transcripts of records).

These technical components are framed within an institutional and political context that shapes them. In 2012 Cedefop (2012a) identified 15 necessary conditions that create the ECVET implementation framework, grouped into six areas: argumentation, commitment, capacity-building, understanding qualifications, ensuring transfer of learning outcomes, and cross-border cooperation.

For ECVET, the creation of these conditions is being carried out in two main ways. There are top-down approaches, in which policy and regulations are being revised or developed and policy-makers are committed to further implementing

ECVET, and a bottom-up approach in which VET providers or specific sectors are engaged in developing ECVET for their own interest.

This report is based mainly on the results of interviews with the ECVET users' group members but it also draws evidence from information from project reports, the ECVET Magazine, web pages, the European qualifications framework (EQF) 'referencing reports' and Cedefop publications. The interviews were conducted from July 2012 to September 2012 using a questionnaire shaped by Cedefop; the period covered is June 2011 to September 2012. It covers the 27 Member States, the EFTA countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland) Croatia and Turkey and a total of 37 different education systems (two in Belgium, and four in the UK).

The analysis shows lack of readiness for full-scale implementation but that countries have progressed in creating the conditions to accommodate to ECVET principles. One marked area of progress is the designation of national contact points (NCP) for ECVET and the 'national teams of ECVET experts', drawing on ECVET-related projects already in place. A total of 187 experts will organise various activities for adoption and use of ECVET in their own countries for the next 24 months. Also, in line with the ECVET recommendation that calls on countries to adapt their legislation for better ECVET accommodation, more than half the education systems analysed link to, or are discussing how to include, ECVET into their VET legislation.

Countries also seem to be moving toward implementation, increasingly involving practitioners. One of the most common activities is the 'marketing' of ECVET to relevant stakeholders, with several reports of activities directed to the promoting ECVET during 2012.

The outlook for ECVET governance reflects the complexity of VET systems and the need to involve stakeholders. Membership of the ECVET network is voluntary and includes around 350 institutions. Ministries of education play a role in ECVET in all countries, either as national contact points or through their relationship with government agencies, expert bodies or other institutions that are more involved.

Most funding for ECVET implementation comes from the EU, although countries also contribute, providing human resources and, in some cases, specific budget allocation for activities.

A crucial condition for ECVET implementation is a clear and explicit added value that can be transmitted and communicated to interested partners. Approximately 70% of the respondents mentioned supporting (cross-border) mobility as the main added value of ECVET and an increasing number of them (48%) see it also as a tool to align qualifications better with the learning outcomes

approach. Use of ECVET as a tool for improving recognition and validation processes and permeability within different educational sectors is also reported (38%). However it is important to note that several respondents (20%) mentioned difficulties in finding a clear specific added value for ECVET and are also concerned about the administrative burden and workload linked to it.

The implementation of EU tools and principles is part of the necessary conditions for adequate ECVET implementation. Readiness requires that qualifications are described in terms of learning outcomes, grouped into units, that might provide credits (and points) to create individual learning paths.

Development of NQFs tends to include discussion on aspects related to ECVET, such as modularisation or transferability of learning outcomes; in many instances, interviewees see these two processes (ECVET and NQF) as serving a similar purpose in making learning outcomes part of qualifications. The monitoring confirmed a trend observed in the last monitoring that countries increasingly see ECVET as a tool for reform and align qualifications to the learning outcomes, as well as a tool to engage stakeholders further in the development and design of VET.

The relationship between NQF and the ECVET depends heavily on the existence of credit arrangements. As was also the case in 2010 and 2011, countries can be divided into three groups: those with existing credit systems or credit arrangements; those with no credit systems or credit arrangements but proximity to ECVET (learning outcomes approach to education and training, units or modules, etc.); and systems without such mechanisms. Although this distinction remains stable, more countries are moving towards considering how to reference or relate their credit system to ECVET.

There is a general agreement on the importance of the principles underlying ECVET, namely the unitisation (or modularisation) of educational systems, and the description of qualifications in terms of learning outcomes, as well as the importance of easing the recognition and transferability of learning outcomes acquired within mobility.

Although readiness and commitment to apply ECVET has increased, most countries are giving priority to national qualifications frameworks (NQF) and have focused on putting these in place.

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CHAPTER 1.

Introduction

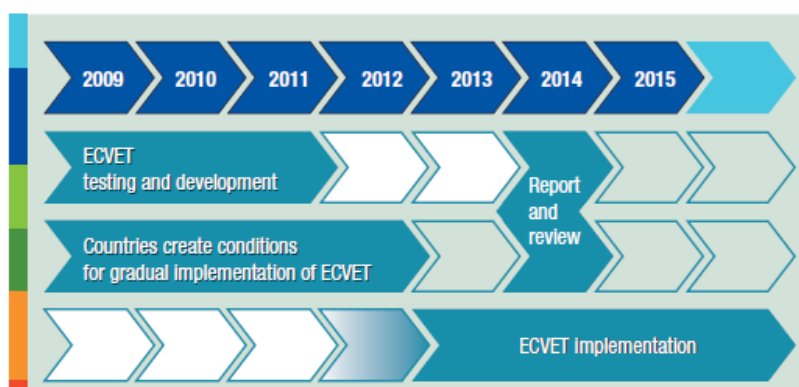
1.1. ECVET in context

The European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET) recommendation (Council of the EU; European Parliament, 2009) calls on Member States to 'create the necessary conditions and adopt measures so that as from 2012 it is possible for ECVET to be gradually applied to VET qualifications at all levels of the EQF' (ibid. p. C115/13). The recommendation also endorses the European Commission intention to support Member States 'by facilitating testing, cooperation, mutual learning, promotion' (ibid. p. C115/13).

This report is the third in the Cedefop monitoring exercise that analyses developments in ECVET. Its main objective is to provide an overview of how countries are progressing towards putting the necessary conditions in place. These conditions were described in the annex of the recommendation and have been further developed in Cedefop (2012a).

The analysis aims to contribute both to the ECVET evaluation, scheduled for 2014 (see Figure 1), and to the review of achievements of the strategic objectives and short-term deliverables of the Bruges communiqué. More specifically, short-term deliverable 11 for 2011-14 calls for actions at national level that should include, 'Progress towards ECVET implementation in line with the recommendation and participate in testing ECVET for mobility' (European Ministers for Vocational Education and Training, European Social Partners; European Commission, 2010, p. 12).

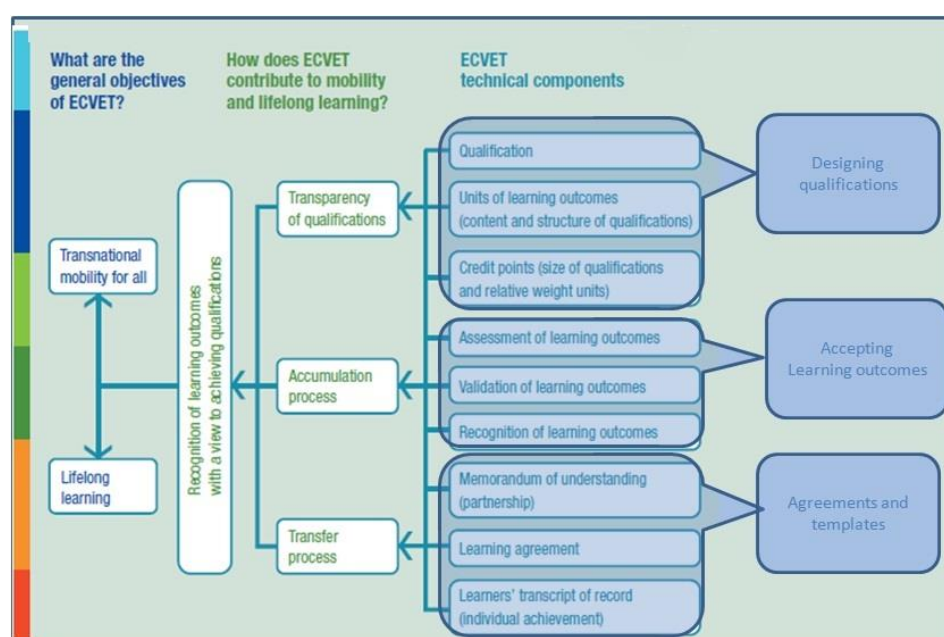
Figure 1. Time line for the implementation of ECVET



Source: Cedefop, 2012a, p. 5.

ECVET is a tool designed to aid the transfer, recognition and accumulation of learning outcomes of individuals on their way to achieving a qualification (Council of the EU; European Parliament, 2009, p. C155/12). It is meant to operate in coordination with other European tools. A well-functioning European credit system requires to be embedded in a qualifications framework (see e.g. Cedefop, 2012b). National qualifications, to follow ECVET principles, need to be described in terms of units of learning outcomes, defined as ‘a coherent set of knowledge, skills and competence that can be assessed and validated with a number of associated ECVET points’ (Council of the EU; European Parliament, 2009, p. 155/15). Equally important is that the learning outcomes acquired in different countries, regions or education sectors are recognised, so people can accumulate units of learning outcomes building individual career paths. This requires a well-developed process of validation, with quality assured assessment and recognition procedures (e.g. following European Quality Assurance in VET (EQAVET)). ECVET is supported by agreements and templates, such as those provided by Europass for mobility.

Figure 2. **ECVET objectives and technical components**



Source: Adapted from Cedefop, 2012a, p. 11.

Figure 2 shows these aspects, usually referred to as the technical components for ECVET. These components can be further classified in three main categories in relation to:

- (a) qualification design: qualifications, units of learning outcomes and credit points all imply that learning outcomes are the key element for the description and design of qualifications;
- (b) the process of accumulation of learning outcomes: assessment, validation and recognition of learning outcomes;
- (c) agreements and templates: memorandum of understanding, learning agreement and learner transcripts.

These technical components are framed within an institutional and political context that shapes them. Cedefop (2012a) identified 15 necessary conditions (see Figure 3) that can be grouped into six areas (including the technical components):

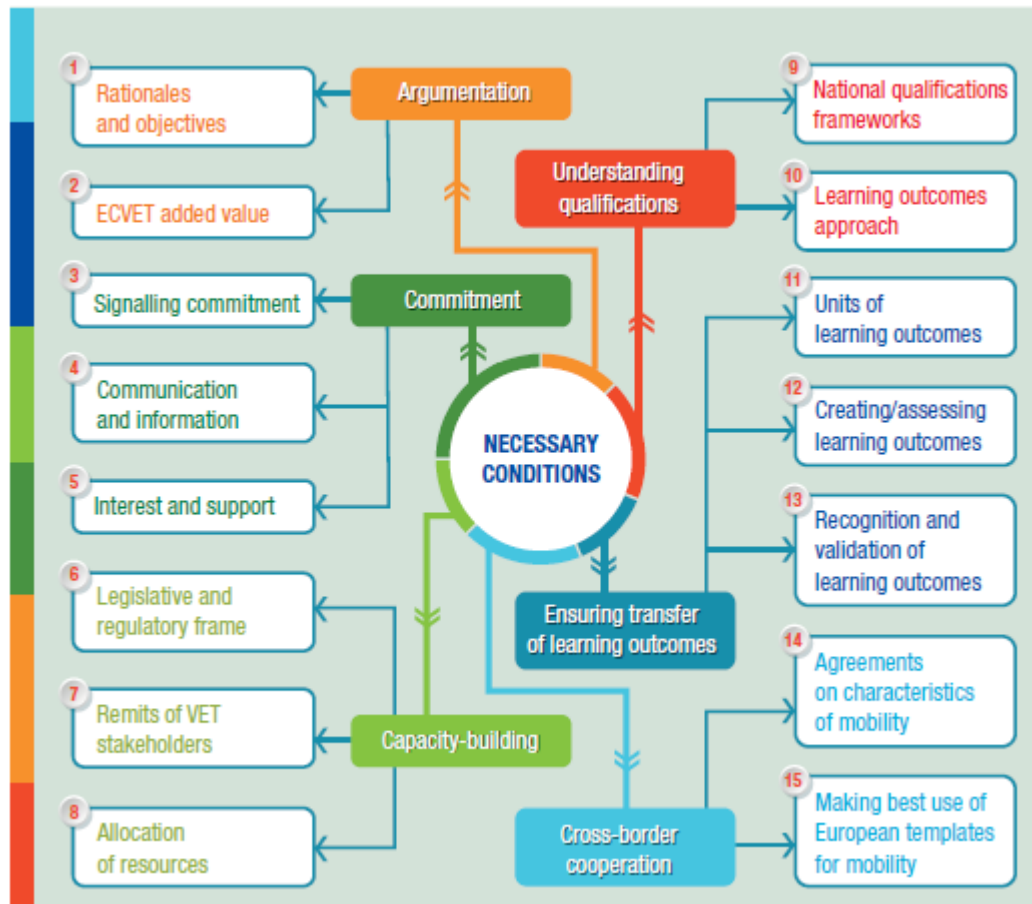
- (a) argumentation;
- (b) commitment;
- (c) capacity-building;
- (d) understanding qualifications;
- (e) ensuring transfer of learning outcomes;
- (f) cross-border cooperation.

Argumentation refers to the need for clear and evidence-based statements of the objectives and specific value-added for the implementation of ECVET. Commitment relates to the importance of countries signalling their intention to implement ECVET, and build interest and support from other stakeholders. Capacity-building refers to the need to involve different stakeholders in the process: this requires clarifying remits and, in some cases, developing new legislation or a regulatory frame. The last three, understanding qualifications, ensuring transfer of learning outcomes, and cross-border cooperation, relate mainly to the technical aspects described in Figure 2.

Annex 2 presents country fiches that provide a small summary for each of these six areas in each country under study.

The approach and current realisation of these conditions is adapted to each country and its education and training specificities. ECVET pilot projects carried out since 2008 have shown that there is a wide spectrum of possible valid solutions its use (Curth et al., 2012). In creating these conditions there are top-down approaches, in which policy and regulations are being revised or developed and policy-makers are committed to the process, and a bottom-up approach, in which VET providers or specific sectors are engaged in developing ECVET for their own interest.

Figure 3. Necessary conditions



Source: Cedefop, 2012a, p. 12.

These two approaches make it complicated to fully understand the scope and impact of some of the ECVET-related initiatives and particularly difficult to tackle the ECVET monitoring; government or official representatives (interviewed in this report) might not be fully aware of all bottom-up approaches being carried out within their countries. This was observed in the 2011 monitoring (Cedefop, 2012c). Documentation and web pages from projects were also reviewed for this years' monitoring to ameliorate this possible bias. The following section presents the data collection approach.

1.2. Data collection and reporting

Cedefop monitoring relies mainly on the results of interviews with users' group members. It also uses information from other sources, including project reports, the ECVET Magazine, web pages and EQF 'referencing reports' ⁽¹⁾ and Cedefop publications. The interviews were conducted from July 2012 to September 2012 using a questionnaire shaped by Cedefop (see Annex 3). The period covered by the monitoring expands from the previous monitoring (June 2011) to September 2012 and covers the 27 Member States, the EFTA countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland) Croatia and Turkey. This translates into 37 different education systems (two in Belgium, and four in the UK).

A total of 44 questionnaires were completed (25 through telephone conversation with the representatives and 19 written), involving 70 members of the users' group. Information on Cyprus and Switzerland is not complete (they were not included in several of the figures) since the interviews were possible only at a later stage. The draft report and the underlying tables for the figures were validated by the users' group members.

This report gives first an overview of the changes that occurred during the last year in ECVET capacity-building (Chapter 2). Chapter 3 focuses on ECVET governance and allocation of resources. Chapter 4 presents findings on ECVET value-added. Chapter 5 looks into the different strategies that countries are putting in place for ECVET implementation and their activities in communicating with stakeholders, as well as the developments in legislation. Chapter 6 explores the way in which ECVET relates to other EU tools and principles and Chapter 7 provides conclusions and reflections on the way ahead.

⁽¹⁾ Referencing reports relate a country national qualifications framework (NQF) to the European qualifications framework (EQF): a national coordination point has been designated for this purpose in each country.

CHAPTER 2.

Capacity-building in ECVET

In 2011, several ECVET projects came to an end and published their final reports ⁽²⁾. In February 2012 a conference brought together the 11 pioneer projects that started in 2008 (the so-called first generation of ECVET projects). As indicated by Haller-Block (2012, pp. 2-3), head of unit in the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) involved in ECVET, 'the partnerships which have been established in the projects have reached for most of them the goal of sustainability and will continue to cooperate after the end of the projects'. She continues saying: 'although competent bodies were involved in the projects, the real commitment from the national authorities was still not fully visible. The driving force currently appears to remain at the level of implementing bodies, like VET providers, mobility organisers or international enterprises with concrete needs linked to international exchanges' (ibid.).

Findings from these projects have shown that the ECVET recommendation provides a general framework that is interpreted in different ways, depending on the needs and conditions of the system and the specific cases or contexts where it is applied. For example, in the project ASSET (Automobile service sector ECVET testing) the project partners developed a common assessment method, while in the project OPIR the partners left the choice of the method for assessing to the hosting training centre. This diversity is not necessarily bad but, as indicated by Ulicna (2012), there is still a need to clarify system level aspects at European level for ECVET to be mainstreamed.

Despite this apparent lack of readiness for full-scale implementation, countries have progressed in creating the conditions to accommodate to ECVET principles during last year. One marked area of progress is the designation of national contact points (NCP) for ECVET. This is important because it contributes to capacity-building and provides a good starting point for clarifying roles and responsibilities of the different bodies involved in ECVET implementation. It is also important that the ECVET recommendation, contrary to those on EQF and EQAVET, does not invite Member States to set up national coordination points, so this progress shows a certain level of commitment at political and institutional level. Countries that officially designated a NCP for ECVET increased from 15 in

⁽²⁾ See <http://www.ecvet-projects.eu> [accessed 4.3.2013].

2011 to 26 in 2012 in the 35 country systems monitored (see Figure 4). In Denmark, Italy, Latvia, Austria, Poland and Finland official nomination is still pending, although the users' group representatives and other bodies have taken specific responsibilities normally linked with NCPs. National coordination points tend to be located within qualifications authorities or national institutes with VET responsibilities. Except for Estonia and Poland, the NCP is also a member of the ECVET users' group.

Figure 4. NCP officially nominated (in green)



Source: Cedefop users' group interviews.

The NCPs are usually in charge of coordinating ECVET implementation in their countries. They are also responsible for disseminating information on ECVET through organisation and participation in events and providing support to

VET providers and stakeholders on the use of ECVET in a transnational mobility framework (see, e.g. Table 1). NCPs are often also in charge of the implementation and maintenance of the ECVET web page in their country (60% of the systems interviewed have a webpage or are planning to have one, specifically directed to ECVET).

Table 1. **ECVET national coordination point in Germany**

The task of the NCP is to provide VET-stakeholders and practitioners with information, guidance and support. Their functions include:

- providing information at the ECVET-website www.ecvet-info.de (this includes general basic information about ECVET principles and instruments as well as information about good practice and documents and links to other relevant websites);
- organising workshops for VET-providers and people organising transnational mobility to discuss the use of ECVET-principles and instruments with practical examples;
- delivering presentations about ECVET at conferences and seminars;
- writing articles in Fachzeitschriften to promote the use of ECVET;
- delivering practical material for documenting learning outcomes, 'guidelines for describing units of learning outcomes', ECVET and Europass mobility;
- consulting stakeholders and VET-providers with regard to the use of ECVET in LdV-projects;
- cooperating with other institutions and national networks promoting transnational mobility and transparency of qualifications.

Source: DE interview.

In some cases the national coordination points for the different European tools are based at the same institutions. This could be an indication that countries attempt to create synergies between the tools, at least at an institutional level. In Germany, Ireland, Hungary and Slovakia, for example, the same institution deals with ECVET and EQAVET. In the Czech Republic, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Finland, ECVET, EQF and EQAVET national points are under the same organisation. In Portugal, EQF and ECVET national points are under the same organisation, the National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training (ANQEP), and its director is also the national representative in the EQAVET network (Portuguese interview).

Sweden has opted for a different approach and has assigned EQF, EQAVET and ECVET to three different agencies. This aims at integrating European tools as much as possible into national developments (Swedish interview).

Table 2. **ECVET coordination points, EQF coordination points, EQAVET national reference points**

Country	ECVET coordination points	EQF coordination points	EQAVET national reference points
AT	tbc	NKS coordination point for the NQF in Austria – OEAD/National Agency for Lifelong Learning	ARQA-VET the Austrian reference point for quality assurance in vocational education within OeAD- GmbH
BE-FL	Flemish Ministry of Education and Training	Flemish Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training	Flemish Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training
BE-FR	AEF (European Agency – Education and Training) Agence francophone pour l'éducation et la formation tout au long de la vie	Service Francophone des Métiers et des Qualifications	To be appointed
BG	National Agency for Vocational Education and Training	Ministry of Education, Youth and Science	Ministry of Education, Youth and Science
CH		Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology OPET	
CY	Ministry of Education and Culture Secondary Technical and Vocational Education Directorate	Ministry of Education and Culture	Ministry of Education and Culture
CZ	National Institute for Education (NÚV)	National Institute for Education (NÚV)	National Institute for Education (NÚV), together with the Czech School Inspectorate
DE	National Agency Education for Europe at the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training/ Nationale Agentur Bildung für Europa beim Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung (NA beim BIBB)	tbc Joint initiative of the Federal Government and the <i>Länder</i>	The German reference point for quality assurance in vocational education and training (DEQA-VET) in BIBB/Deutsche Referenzstelle für Qualitätssicherung in der beruflichen Bildung – DEQA-VET

Country	ECVET coordination points	EQF coordination points	EQAVET national reference points
DK	tbc	Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation/Styrelsen for Universiteter og Internationalisering	Ministry of Children and Education
EE	Foundation Innove	Estonian Qualifications Authority	To be appointed
EL	National Organisation for the Accreditation of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (Eoppep)	Eoppep (National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance)	National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (Eoppep/Ε.Ο.Π.Π.Ε.Π.)
ES	Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports/Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte Subdirección General de Orientación y Formación Profesional del Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte	Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports/Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte	Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports/Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte
FI	tbc	Finnish National Board of Education	Finnish National Board of Education
FR	Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale and Chamber of Commerce	Commission Nationale de Certification Professionnelle	To be appointed
HR		Ministry of Science, Education and Sports	
HU	National Labour Office, VET and Adult Education Directorate	Educational Authority	National Labour Office, VET and Adult Education Directorate
IE ⁽³⁾	QQI – Quality and Qualifications Ireland	QQI – Quality and Qualifications Ireland	QQI – Quality and Qualifications Ireland
IS	Ministry of Education, Science and Culture	Ministry of Education, Science and Culture	To be appointed
IT	tbc	National Institute for Development of Vocational Training – ISFOL	National Institute for Development of Vocational Training – ISFOL

Country	ECVET coordination points	EQF coordination points	EQAVET national reference points
LT ⁽³⁾	QVETDC – Qualifications and VET Development Centre/Kvalifikacijų ir profesinio mokymo plėtros centras	QVETDC – Qualifications and VET Development Centre/Kvalifikacijų ir profesinio mokymo plėtros	QVETDC – Qualifications and VET Development Centre/Kvalifikacijų ir profesinio mokymo plėtros centras
LU	Ministry of Education and Vocational Training/Ministere de l'Education nationale et de la Formation professionnelle Service de la Formation professionnelle	Ministry of Education and Vocational Training/Ministere de l'Education nationale et de la Formation professionnelle	Ministry of Education and Vocational Training/Ministere de l'Education nationale et de la Formation professionnelle
LV	tbc	Academic Information Centre	To be appointed
MT	National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE)/Ministry of Education and Employment	Malta Qualifications Council/Ministry of Education and Employment	Malta Qualifications Council
NL	Centre for Innovation in Education and Training (CINOP)	Knowledge Centre on RPL under Centre for Innovation in Education and Training (CINOP)	International Agency under the Centre for Innovation in Education and Training (CINOP)
NO	tbc	NOKUT – Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education	Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training/Department for Vocational Education and Training
PL	data not available through the interviews	Bureau for Academic Recognition and International Exchange	To be appointed
PT	National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training (ANQEP)	National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training (ANQEP)	Ministry of Economy and Employment
RO	National centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development	National Qualifications Authority	National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development
SE	National Agency for Education (Skolverket)	Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education	Swedish Schools Inspectorate

⁽³⁾ Due to recent changes in the organisation of the different ministries, Ireland and Lithuania have changed or will change their national contact point shortly.

Country	ECVET coordination points	EQF coordination points	EQAVET national reference points
SI	Institute of Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training (CPI)	Institute of Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training (CPI)	Institute of Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training (CPI)
SK	State Institute for Vocational Education – SIOV Unit for research in VET	National Lifelong Learning Institute	State Vocational Education Institute – SIOV
TR		Vocational Qualifications Authority	
UK-Wales	CollegesWales/ ColegauCymru	Welsh Government	Welsh Government
UK-England	ECCTIS	Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual)	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)
UK-Northern Ireland	CCEA – Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment	CCEA – Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment	Department for Employment and Learning
UK-Scotland	SCQFP – Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership	SCQFP – Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership	Scottish Qualifications Authority

Source: Author.

In addition to setting up the national contact points, in December 2011 EACEA closed a call for proposals that contributed to creating the capacity necessary for implementing ECVET in Europe. The call provided financing to national agencies in charge of lifelong learning, to create 'national teams of ECVET experts', drawing on ECVET-related projects already in place: 25 applications were selected for funding. A total of 187 ECVET experts will organise various activities for adoption and use of ECVET in their own countries for the next 24 months (EACEA, 2012). The key tasks of the national teams of ECVET experts include: providing training and advice on ECVET to staff working at vocational education and training competent bodies, relevant stakeholders, institutions, companies, VET schools and training providers; assisting in policy-making by developing strategies with different stakeholders involved in VET, such as companies, branches, sectors; participating in promotional and awareness-raising activities, complementing the activities undertaken by the National Agencies and translation/linguistic adaptation of documents and guides provided by the European ECVET governance; and contributing to the development of a network of different players at national, sector or regional levels aimed at putting ECVET into practice (EACEA 2012).

In the interviews carried out for this monitoring this was signalled as an important change in ECVET governance by 10 of the 35 systems reviewed (Belgium-French speaking community, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Austria, Slovenia and Finland).

The increased number of NCPs and the setting up of national expert groups during the last year have reshaped ECVET governance in some Member States (see Chapter 3).

CHAPTER 3.

Organisation and allocation of resources

3.1. ECVET Governance

One of the crucial points for successful implementation of ECVET, as for any VET reform, is the active involvement of relevant stakeholders. The form of this involvement depends on the structure, tradition and organisation of VET in each country.

3.1.1. European ECVET governance

At EU level, ECVET governance includes stakeholders dealing with VET and ECVET. Figure 5 shows the structure of the European ECVET governance, as updated with the recent inclusion of country experts' network. All organisations that might have an interest in ECVET are included in a European ECVET network: membership is voluntary. There are around 350 institutions registered in the network (Hess, 2012).

It can be argued that ECVET is guided by two complementary approaches. There is a bottom-up approach where practitioners and VET providers involved (mainly) in international mobility use and develop ECVET to aid student exchange and recognition of learning abroad. There is also, from the European Commission and national governments, a top-down approach that steers the ECVET network, providing the institutional conditions for its implementation. Although both are necessary and have proved to be useful in recent years, increased synergy and mutual coordination between the two are necessary.

The ECVET recommendation supports the establishment within this network of an 'ECVET users' group' to contribute to the updating of the users' guide and to the quality and overall coherence of the cooperation process, for the implementation of ECVET' (Council of the EU, European Parliament, 2009, p. C155/13). The ECVET users' group is formed by three representatives per EU State: two from national ministries responsible for VET and a third being a relevant stakeholder involved in ECVET implementation. Members of the users' group include Member States, EEA and candidate countries, representatives from employer organisations and social partners, from national agencies for education and lifelong learning and the European Commission, Cedefop and the

ETF ⁽⁴⁾. A steering committee prepares the group meetings and the work programme. Cedefop provides support to the steering committee and technical advice to the group by producing relevant studies and publications, as well as input to different events.

From 2012, the national agencies in charge of the lifelong learning programme obtained financing to create national teams of ECVET experts. This added another set of actors to the governance. National experts will support relevant competent bodies and institutions in creating the conditions and measures for ECVET; they will also contribute to providing technical specifications in the national context and in their area of expertise.

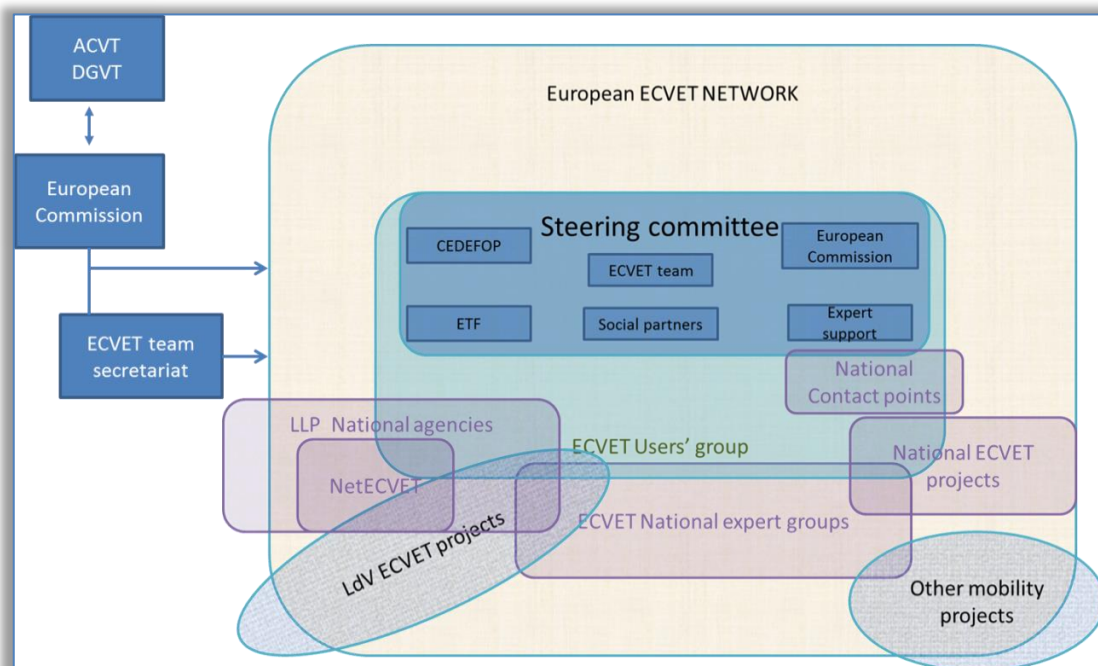
Agencies in charge of lifelong learning were also involved in recent developments. At European level, EACEA brings the coordinators together twice a year in order for them to exchange views and challenges (EACEA, 2012). The agencies can promote the use of ECVET for learners geographic mobility. From 2007 several Leonardo da Vinci projects have experimented with ECVET (LdV ECVET projects in Figure 5).

Several national agencies (14) within the frame of the lifelong learning programme have created NetECVET, a thematic working network that promotes ECVET in the context of transnational mobility. This network addresses ECVET practitioners and actors, supporting and guiding them. It is jointly financed through the EU lifelong learning programme and coordinated by the German National Agency (<http://netecvet.com/>). In 2013, this network will create a tool kit for ECVET that will assist practitioners in using ECVET for mobility.

Figure 5 shows a simplified schema of ECVET governance at European level. The different shapes illustrate the different groups that overlap in many cases but often work in an independent way. For example, the national agencies in charge of the lifelong learning programme are in charge of Leonardo da Vinci (LdV) projects as well as of the ECVET national expert teams. In many cases, the experts will be people involved on LdV projects (hence the overlap) but in other cases are not. The European Commission, with the assistance of the ECVET team secretariat, ensures overall network function. They consult and coordinate with the Advisory Committee in Vocational training (ACVT) and the Group of Directors General for VET (DGVTs). For 2013, the Commission work programme on ECVET aims, among other things, at bringing together and promoting synergies between these different actors in a more structured way.

⁽⁴⁾ <http://www.ecvet-team.eu> [accessed 4.3.2013].

Figure 5. Structure of the European ECVET governance



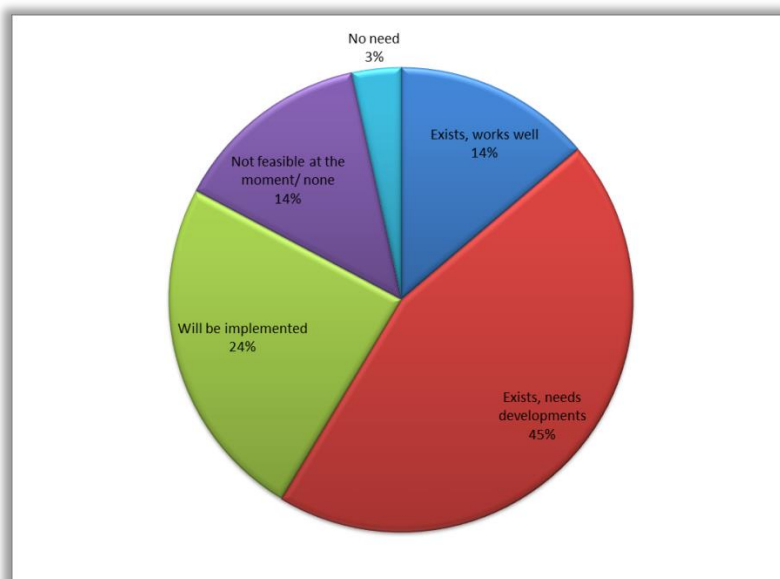
Source: Own elaboration from Cedefop ECVET interviews and Hess, 2012.

The Commission has proposed to create and support a community of practice (CoP) for ECVET (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). This idea was introduced in the ECVET annual forum in May 2012 that Cedefop and the European Commission organised jointly. A CoP is defined as ‘group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly’ (Wenger, 1996). In the context of ECVET a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Le Mouillour and Gelibert, 2012).

The users’ group interviews showed that this community of practice exists in some countries (14%); it normally comprises experts dealing with ECVET (e.g. Belgium-French speaking community). In the Netherlands the CoP is reaching a mature stage of development (Dutch interview). In Ireland the CoP is not specific for ECVET but operates in relation to the whole VET system; in Denmark, it could be argued that there is a well-functioning CoP composed of VET colleges and ECVET experts and the ministry, who are writing the guidelines for implementing ECVET (Denmark interview). In other countries (13%), users’ group members considered it not yet feasible to establish a community of practice: Belgium-Flemish speaking community, Greece, Iceland and Liechtenstein. Spain considered that the national context made this unnecessary. In most cases

(45%), there is a community of practice in place, but it needs to be developed further (Bulgaria, Germany, Estonia, Italy, Hungary Malta, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Finland, United Kingdom). France, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, Sweden, and Slovenia are planning such a community within the next year.

Figure 6. **Country situation regarding communities of practice (% of countries)**



Source: Cedefop survey with ECVET users' group, Q12 (N=29), % of systems by (inductively codified, exclusive) category.

3.1.2. ECVET national governance

National interviews carried out for this report revealed that ministries of education play a role in ECVET in all countries (see Figure 7). Their involvement might be direct, as a national contact point (see Table 2), or indirect, through their relationship with government agencies, expert bodies or other institutions that are more involved in ECVET. In more than 60% of the education systems, (24 out of 35) a national agency is involved in ECVET governance: Belgium-Flemish speaking community, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Sweden, Slovakia, UK England, UK Northern Ireland, UK Scotland.

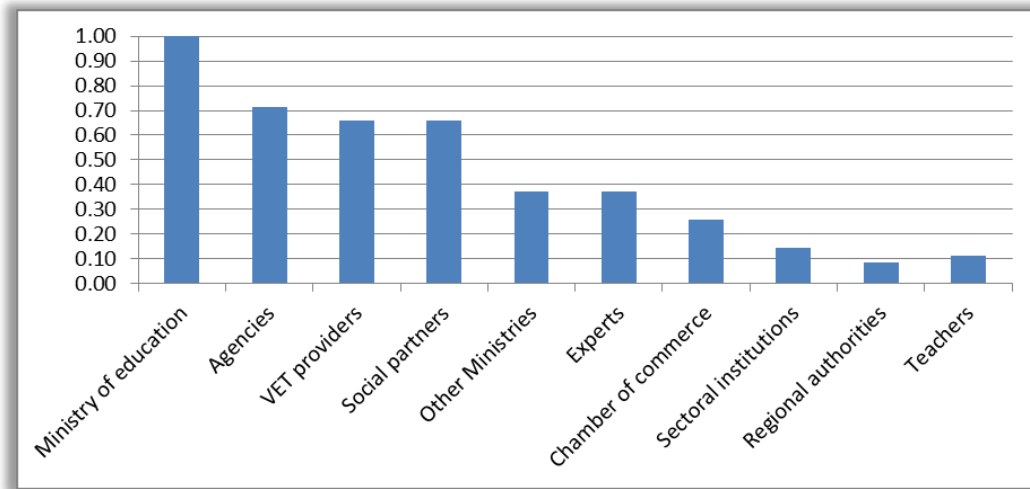
In addition to the Ministry of Education, 37% of the education systems analysed report involvement of other ministries (Belgium-French speaking community, Belgium-Flemish speaking community, the Czech Republic,

Denmark, Spain, France, Italy, Latvia, Hungary, Malta, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania). In most cases, the Ministry of Education collaborates with the Ministry of Labour or Youth (the Czech Republic, Spain, France, Italy, Latvia, Hungary, Malta, Austria, Portugal, Romania), although other ministries might also be involved. In France, ECVET is discussed in a biannual meeting of the ministries involved in VET, dealing with agriculture, labour, health and social work, as well as higher education. The Ministry of Higher Education is also involved in Denmark, the Czech Republic and Poland. In some cases, the main responsibility for implementing ECVET is not within education but in other ministries, as in the case of the Ministry of Economy in Hungary.

VET providers are also crucial to ECVET implementation. As ECVET projects have shown, many developments have occurred from a bottom-up perspective, in which VET providers and organisations involved in specific mobility projects have developed ECVET within a particular area (Curth et al., 2012). Survey respondents considered them involved in the ECVET implementation in around 66% of the cases (23/35) (Austria, Belgium-French speaking community, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia, Sweden, UK Scotland, UK Northern Ireland). In Austria, one interviewee considered that ECVET implementation is mainly driven by VET providers, attributing the lack of full implementation to the absence of government officials.

A total of 66% of countries (23 out of 36) reported involvement of the social partners (both employee and employer organisations) in ECVET governance (Austria, Belgium-French speaking community, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Spain, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Sweden, Turkey, UK Northern Ireland). In Hungary, the social partners have a counselling role in establishing operational mechanisms for the necessary legal framework for the system. In Finland, from 2012 to 2014, there is a steering committee for ECVET led by the Ministry of Education and Culture and representatives from the Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE), social partners and other stakeholders. Social partners are represented in the ECVET steering committee, but governance is with the national coordination point FNBE and the Ministry of Education and Culture (Finnish interview).

Figure 7. Stakeholder commitment to ECVET



Source: Cedefop survey with ECVET users' group, Q5 (N=35); multiple responses possible.

Experts or research bodies were mentioned as part of the governing structure of ECVET in 13 (37%) of the systems (Austria, the Czech Republic, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Poland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, UK-Wales). Only Finland, the Netherlands and Norway explicitly reported on teacher involvement in ECVET developments, although it is likely that, through VET provider representatives, teachers are somehow involved. For example, in Lithuania, VET teachers and employers will participate in the development of 40 modular VET programmes within the project Formation of qualifications and development of modular VET system.

The mode of involvement depends on the type of VET system in the country and how ECVET has been organised. While some countries involve social partners in specific projects or ECVET development, others do it at a general level for all VET developments or through their involvement in the development of the NQF (Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Sweden, UK Northern Ireland).

In Portugal, for example, governance of ECVET implementation is under the responsibility of the ANQEP. The process includes other stakeholders, such as the sectoral councils for qualification (CSQ), which include representatives of education and training institutions, trade unions, employers' associations, enterprises, technological centres and experts in specific areas. The CSQ members know the sector and the qualifications associated with it, so their contribution is essential for defining units of learning outcomes.

In Italy, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Ministry of Education, University and Research, and the regional authorities are in charge of ECVET as

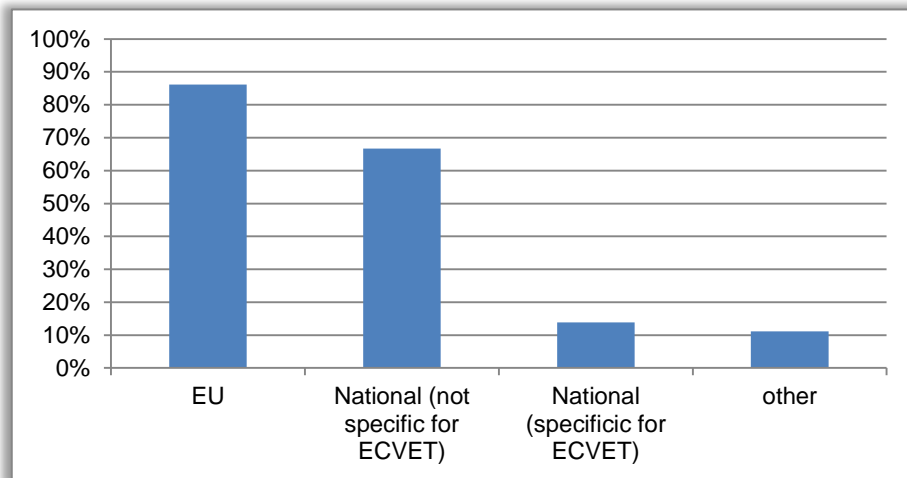
all three are involved in the policy and management of VET and HE. The Ministry of Education, University and Research is responsible at national level for the rules, curricula and governance of education and HE. Regions are responsible at their own level for the vocational training system and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies is in charge of coordinating VET policies and funding, also from a European perspective. The social partners and sector representatives are usually involved in relevant processes and are usually partners in Leonardo da Vinci ECVET projects' (Italian interview).

3.2. Financing ECVET

Most ECVET funding comes from the EU, although it usually jointly financed from national budgets. One example is the financing of the 2011 EACEA projects on the National team of ECVET experts. In the 25 projects approved, the average amount financed by the EU was 89% of the total budget. The remaining 11% is provided by national budgets (EACEA, 2012).

Only the Czech Republic, Germany, France Malta and Finland reported specific national budgets (in addition to EU funding) for ECVET. Belgium-Flanders, Cyprus, Ireland, Liechtenstein, and Norway reported no EU funding for ECVET. In Germany, testing of ECVET through pilot projects is funded through the EU programme for lifelong learning, while the NCP is funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research that also jointly founded the DECVET initiative. In France, the Ministry of Education provides funding for ECVET projects and in some cases, as in metallurgy, the private sector has contributed financially to reengineering certifications into competence-based units (French interview). This has also happened in Italy, where some initiatives close to the ECVET framework have been funded by sector or inter-professional funds managed by bilateral social partner organisations, although the initiatives most explicitly linked to ECVET have been financed through the lifelong learning programme. In some countries, as in Bulgaria, Estonia or Finland, some of the EU funding comes from the Structural Funds.

Figure 8. **ECVET source of funding (% of respondents by source of funding)**



Source: Cedefop survey with ECVET users' group, Q6; multiple responses possible.

In the remaining countries, allocation of resources for ECVET normally corresponds to the salaries of staff in the national contact points, or other stakeholders involved. Only Belgium-Flanders and Ireland reported no financed activities in relation to ECVET, since they had chosen other priorities to be the focus.

CHAPTER 4.

ECVET added value

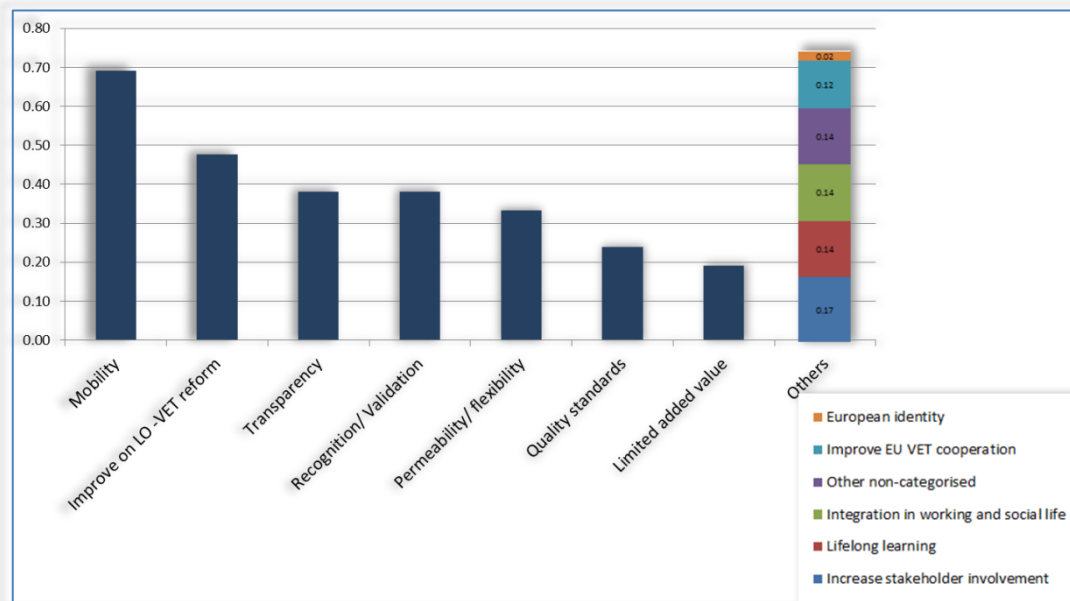
One necessary condition for ECVET implementation is clear and explicit added value that can be transmitted and communicated to interested partners. Without a clear value-added, ECVET efforts will remain unfocused and limited.

The Cedefop survey asked 'which would you consider the ECVET specific added value?' It was an open-ended question analysed based on two assumptions. First, in a system of ideas a more prominent aspect should be made explicit more easily (see, e.g. Mednick, 1962), so respondents to the survey will more likely indicate added value that is more relevant to them. Second, it is possible to derive exclusive categories from responses through content analysis. The responses were analysed in relation to the categories already in place from previous monitoring.

Approximately 70% of the 42 (valid) respondents mentioned enhancing (cross-border) mobility as the main added value of ECVET (in a total of 35 educational systems). An increasing number of respondents (48%) also see ECVET as a tool to align qualifications better with the learning outcomes approach. Transparency of qualifications is mentioned by 16 respondents (38%), and a similar proportion refers to permeability (33%), where ECVET can aid mobility between different education sectors. ECVET is also seen as a tool for improving recognition and validation processes (38%). 24% of respondents mentioned contribution to improving qualifications and 17% increasing stakeholder involvement in designing qualifications, providing a better match between needs and the provision of training and qualifications (see Figure 9).

Several respondents (20%) mentioned difficulties in finding a clear specific value added for ECVET and are also concerned about the administrative burden and workload linked to it. Austria, for example, considers ECVET more relevant for qualifications/programmes at EQF levels 4 and 5 than for those at levels 1-3, and reported difficulties in making employers see ECVET specific added value. Several respondents mentioned that most of the objectives that ECVET pursues in terms of mobility and validation can be achieved without it. This is in line with Ireland's opinion that although the conditions for ECVET implementation are in place, execution has not yet been decided due to difficulties in providing concrete added value (Irish interview).

Figure 9. ECVET added value (% of the respondents)

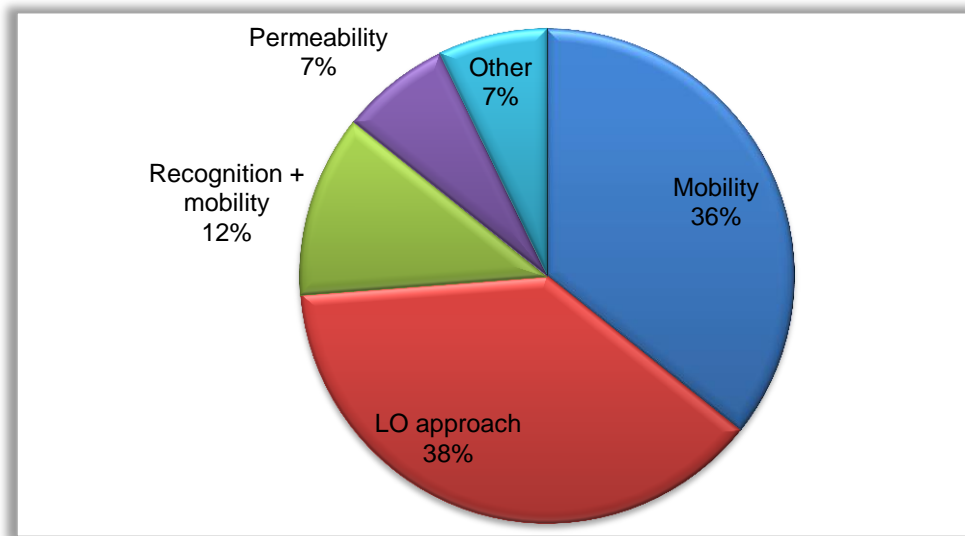


Source: Cedefop survey with ECVET users' group (N=42), Q3; multiple responses possible.

Responses were codified further depending on their main focus. Four (+'other') possible exclusive categories emerged from the responses: mobility, learning outcomes, recognition, permeability and other (see Figure 10). The categories grasp, according to Cedefop analysis, the main focus of the respondents' answers. If the main argument in the response related to ECVET as aid to mobility, the response was ascribed to category 'mobility'. If the response might mention mobility, but was more focused on the idea that through ECVET it is possible to align the VET systems with the learning outcomes approach, or that it can be seen as a tool for VET reform, the response was assigned to the 'LO' category. Recognition + mobility was used when the main argument in the answer could have related to either of those two. Permeability refers to the responses that emphasise the transferability of learning outcomes between VET subsectors.

This analysis shows mobility as specific value-added for ECVET as the most frequent argument when considering multiple responses (see Figure 9), when considering exclusive categories (one response per respondent), mobility and alignment to learning outcomes are seen as similarly important. 38% of respondents in the analysis see ECVET mainly as a tool for reform, while 36% consider it more a tool for mobility. 12% related to recognition and mobility, while 7% focused on permeability. This supports the idea that ECVET is increasingly seen as a tool for assisting in the introduction of learning outcomes.

Figure 10. **Main ECVET added value**

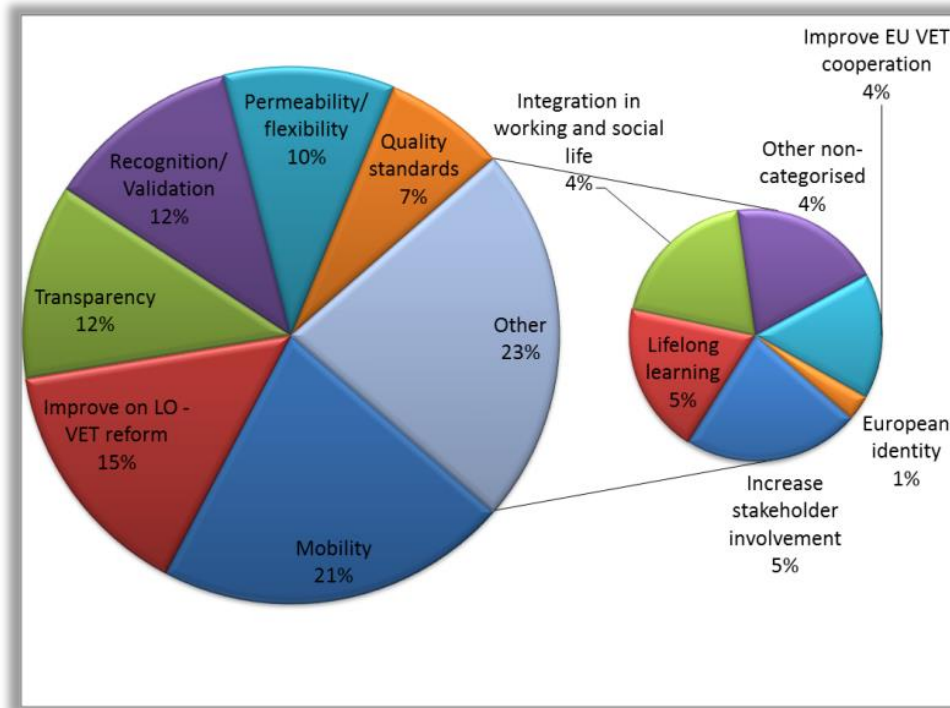


Source: ECVET survey with users' group (N=42), own interpretation, exclusive categories.

Figure 9 shows the percentage of respondents (of the 42 questionnaires with valid answers) that mentioned each of the value added, while Figure 11 shows the same information but in relation to the total number of reasons given for ECVET (N=130). This shows the relative importance of the different reasons for ECVET (in the whole universe of possible reasons given). The figure shows great heterogeneity in terms of added value, which could be interpreted as a reflection of the variety of approaches to ECVET. Mobility remains as the most 'popular' added value for (21%), alignment into learning outcomes (15%) seems increasingly important, followed by transparency (12%), recognition (12%) and permeability (10%). Below the 10% threshold, quality assurance accounts for 8% and increasing the stakeholder involvement for 4%.

The three different types of analysis yield similar results; ECVET is seen as a support to VET reform and to aligning qualifications to the learning outcomes principle, although the purpose of mobility, both internationally and within countries (permeability), remains important. A contributing factor to this might have been the results of pilot projects that have clearly shown that learning outcomes principles are crucial to ECVET. Accordingly, it can be argued that ECVET is contributing to better understanding of the role of learning outcomes in qualifications.

Figure 11. **Added value incidence (% of the total number of added value incidences)**



Source: Cedefop survey with ECVET users' group, Q3 (N=136), specific added value categorised by author.

This might also explain some of the difficulties identifying a specific added value for ECVET. Since the development of learning outcomes in qualifications is very much driven by the developments of NQFs and the linking of national qualifications to the EQF, ECVET might be seen as a complementary approach with limited specific added value.

CHAPTER 5.

ECVET strategies and activities

5.1. Strategies in place

Cedefop 2010 monitoring identified eight strategies for implementing ECVET in Europe. In the three years of the monitoring, respondents were asked to indicate what strategies of these eight they were using, including:

- (a) setting up broad range testing initiatives;
- (b) measuring impact (theoretical and methodological approaches);
- (c) updating VET legislations and regulations;
- (d) adapting qualifications systems;
- (e) 'wait and see' strategy;
- (f) combining ECVET with NQF development;
- (g) learning by working in ECVET European projects;
- (h) marketing ECVET to stakeholders.

Table 3 shows the reported strategy for each country, indicating the year in which they reported the strategy to have started (if known). In 2012, 83% of countries reported to be (or have been) involved in ECVET projects, except Belgium (FL), Ireland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania and Spain. Portugal and Turkey reported only to be involved in ECVET through European projects. In 2010-12, only Cyprus and Liechtenstein never reported any involvement in ECVET projects; all other countries have included the strategy of 'learning by working in ECVET European projects' in at least one of the years, with 19 countries having been involved in projects during all the three last years. Involvement in projects might occur in different forms: through the Leonardo da Vinci programme, through the involvement in the first and second generation of the projects specifically dealing with ECVET, or through those dealing mainly with EQF implementation.

The second most common strategy relates to marketing ECVET, with 24 (69%) educational systems reporting involvement in this way, an increase compared to 2011 (18) and 2010 (9). This is an indication of countries increasingly promoting ECVET, which in turn could point to increased readiness. Findings from pilot projects have also been indicative, since ECVET has now some concrete examples that can be presented in the national and international context to exemplify its value added. The 2009 recommendation is clear in this respect, with Member States ensuring 'that stakeholders and individuals in the area of VET have access to information and guidance for using ECVET [...]

Further, ensure that the application of ECVET to qualifications is properly publicised by the competent authorities' (Council of the EU; European Parliament, 2009, p. 155/13). Marketing and promoting ECVET is important to establish a critical mass of practitioners and to involve stakeholders, as well as for citizens to make full use of ECVET advantages.

In 23 countries (66%) ECVET implementation is linked to EQF developments (Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Sweden, Slovakia, UK England, UK Wales, UK Northern Ireland, UK Scotland). Most countries see EQF as a prerequisite for ECVET and so are giving priority to establishing national qualifications frameworks. Several countries are updating or planning to update their qualifications (23 countries, 66%) or their VET regulation (19 countries, 54%) to make them more ECVET compatible. Of these, 17 countries are updating their national qualifications frameworks and their VET regulations together; 12 reported carrying out ECVET implementation together with EQF referencing.

Austria, Germany, Denmark, Liechtenstein, the Netherlands, Portugal and the four systems in the UK have not reported updating of the regulations as part of their ECVET implementation in any of the three years of monitoring. This is normally because these systems are already prepared for ECVET or do not need to develop new regulations for it. Estonia, Italy, Lithuania and Slovenia reported accordingly all three years. In Italy, new regulations were introduced in 2005, Lithuania in 2010, and Slovenia and Hungary in 2006. Introduction took place in Spain in 2007, in Luxembourg in 2008, in Bulgaria and Lithuania in 2010, in Norway and Romania in 2011 and is planned for 2012 within Belgium (Fr). In Sweden, a proposal for changing regulations has been made to the government, which is currently reviewing it.

Some type of broad testing initiatives have taken place in 16 countries. This, however, might be at different stages of development; they might have committed themselves to broad implementation but, for the time being, ECVET is only implemented in a fraction of the systems, or through pilot projects.

The 'wait and see strategy' was reported only for, Iceland, Ireland, Liechtenstein and Spain but this does not mean that these countries are not carrying out ECVET-related initiatives Spain, for example, has already updated its regulations to meet ECVET in 2007, while Ireland and Iceland adapted their qualifications systems in 2008.

Table 3. Strategies for ECVET implementation in place (by year, if known)

Country	Broad testing strategy	Impact assessment	Updating VET legislation	Adapting qualifications	Wait and see	EQF also	EU projects	Marketing
AT	X (2007)	x2008		x2011			x	x2011
BE-FL								
BE-FR	X (2010)	x2012	x2012	x			x	x
BG	x2010		x2010	x2012		x2012	x2009	x2010
CY								
CZ	x2008					x2012	x2009	x2007
DE	x2007			x			x2008	x2012
DK				x			x2009	x2012
EE	x2010	x	x	x		x	x	x
ES			x2007	2007	x			
FI	x2004	x	x	x		x	x	x
FR	x2011	planned					x	x
EL			x2010	x2011		x2011	x2012	
HR	x2012		x	x		x	x	
HU			x2006	x2006		x2012	x2008	x2011
IE				x2008	x			
IS				x2008	x		x2009	x2012
IT	X2011		x2005	x2008			x2007	x2011
LI					x	x		
LT			x2010			x2010		
LU		x	x2008	x2011			x2008	x2010
LV			planned	x2010		x		
MT	x2011	x2011-13	x2005	x		x2011	x2011	x2010
NL						x	x	x
NO			x2011			x2012	x	x
PL	x		x	x		x2011	x2011	
PT						x2012	x2012	
RO			x2011	x2012		x2012	x2012	x2012
SE			x2012			x2012	X	
SI	x2011	x2012	x2006	x2006			X	x2012
SK		x2014	x	X		x	X	x
TR							X	
UK	x					x2012	X	x2012

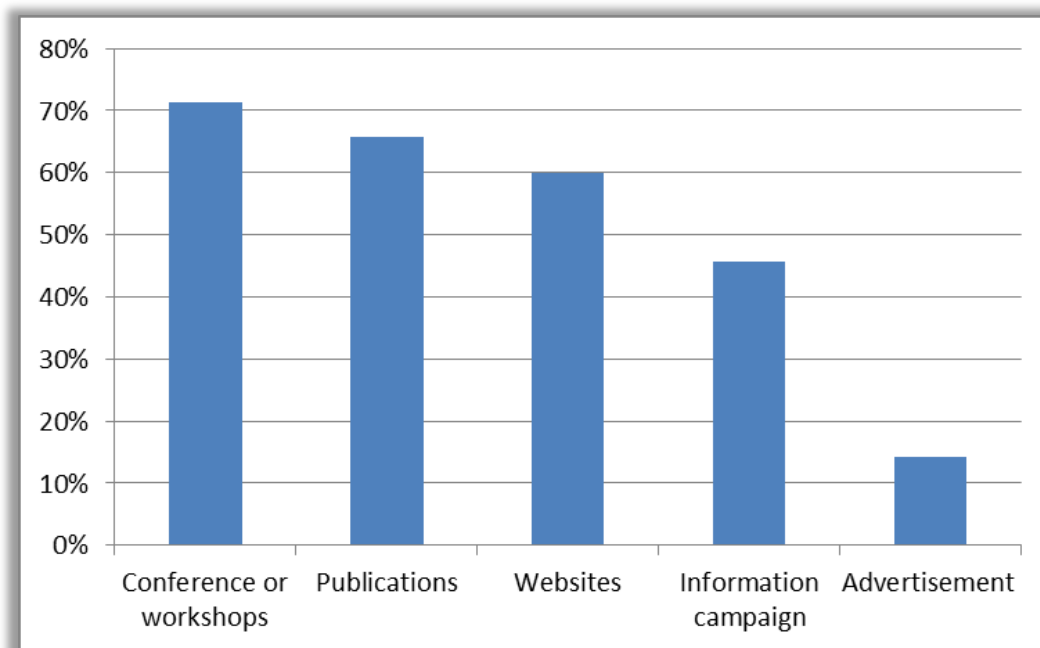
Source: ECVET survey with users' group, Q8, Cedefop (2011, 2012c). Years indicate the year the strategy started, if known.

5.2. ECVET communication and information

A common ECVET activity is the ‘marketing’ of ECVET to relevant stakeholders. All countries except Ireland, Liechtenstein and Spain reported activities of this kind in 2012. They involve organising events (25 countries, 71%), producing publications related to ECVET (23 countries, 66%), creating web pages (21 countries, 60%) or promoting advertisements and information campaigns (16 countries, 46%) (see Figure 12). Conferences and workshops are normally accompanied by publications.

Websites specific to ECVET are also becoming increasingly common. Advertising campaigns are less common (14% of the systems: Bulgaria, Italy, Malta, Slovenia and Finland) which could be linked to the usually high cost of such activities.

Figure 12. **Communication activities on ECVET (% of systems per activity)**



Source: Cedefop monitoring interviews 2012, N=35, Q11; multiple responses possible.

Several conferences and seminars are associated with the finalisation or development of ECVET pilot projects. In Finland, for instance, FINECVET had its final conference in December 2011, in Iceland the MOTO project final conference took place in June 2011, and in Luxembourg, the VaLOGReg final conference was held in 2012. In Germany the joint final Conferences of SME Master Plus, CREDCHEM, AEROVET were held in January 2012 in Berlin.

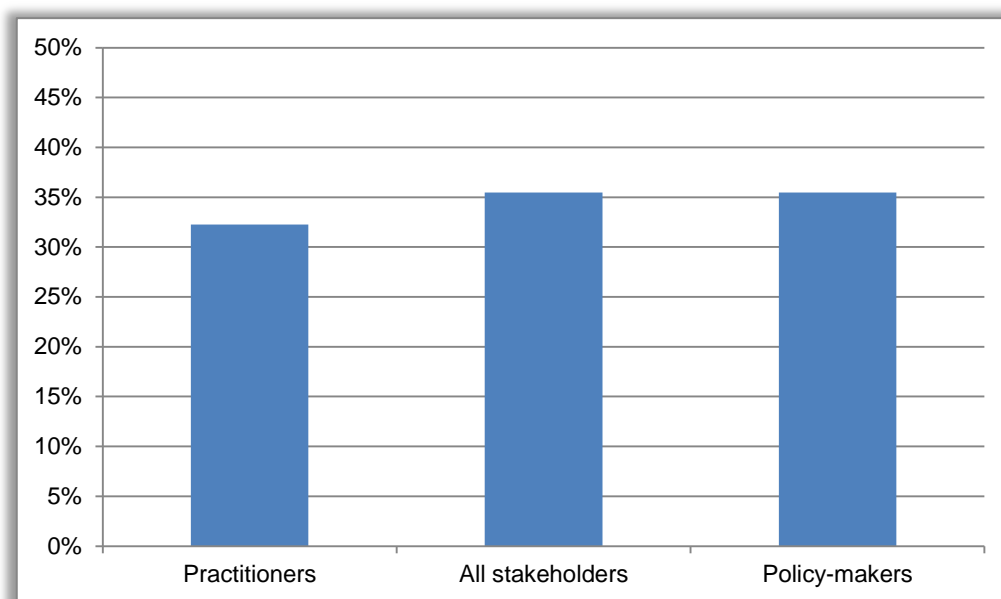
Other events have been organised within the planned activities of the ECVET national experts. In Italy, the newly developed team of ECVET experts organised a conference aimed at providing VET stakeholders, social partners, employers and other labour market actors, plus VET managers, providers, and practitioners with specific information on ECVET and training interventions. The purpose was to increase the knowledge of ECVET and its technical specifications and support its active use in the country.

Other events are more targeted towards supporting ECVET-related VET reform. In Belgium (FR) there have been several workshops and seminars, since VET is undergoing major reform, which requires significant exchange between VET providers, employers and employee organisations (Belgium (FR) interview). Two regional conferences were held in Bulgaria to inform and discuss the reference framework ET 2020, national priorities in LLL strategy, ECVET and EQARF, and the synergy in their implementation under the project Raising of national awareness and policy coherence in the field of education and training. In Latvia, although not specifically related to ECVET, a project launched to develop a modularised NQF (that should be ECVET-compatible) has led to the setting up of 12 expert sectoral councils that are reforming approximately 100 basic professions. Expert sectoral councils meet every two months to discuss VET issues and send one representative to the secretariat that monitors and steers the overall process. This, according to the interviewee, proved to be a very productive way of working (Latvian interview).

In Denmark, Estonia, Poland and Slovenia the main focus of the activities has been VET providers and their involvement in ECVET. In France they have focused on inter-ministerial collaboration; in Latvia, Lithuania and Finland seminars were mainly targeted at sectoral bodies. The increasing amount of ECVET promotional activity shows the commitment of Member States and contributes to raising support and interest from stakeholders.

Figure 13 shows the two main target groups of the ECVET activities organised during last year: practitioners and policy-makers.

Figure 13. **Main target group of activities (% of respondents indicating target group)**

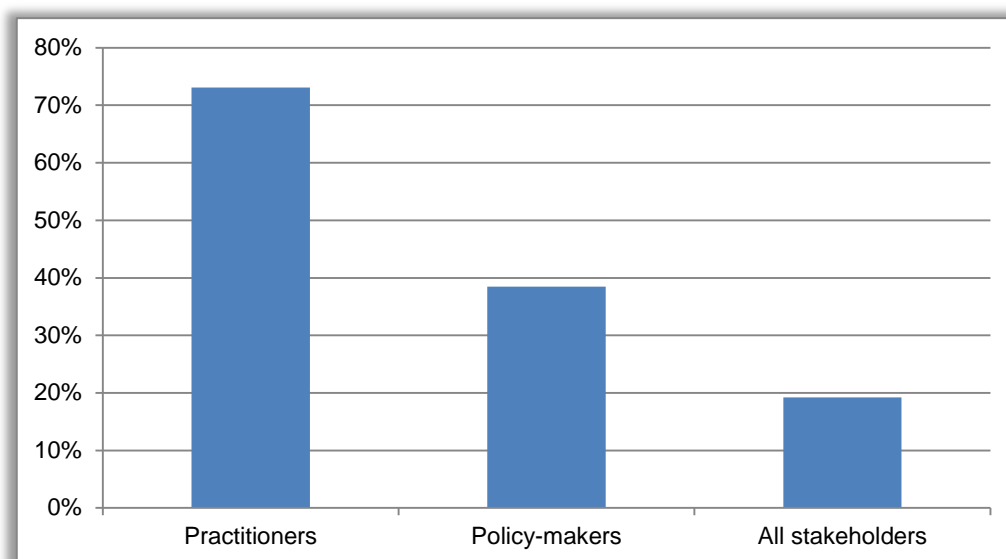


Source: Cedefop users' group interviews (N=31, Q 11; multiple responses possible).

In plans for 2013, there is a move from policy to a practitioner level, raising further awareness and providing guidance and information for mobility projects in a broader spectrum. A respondent from Germany illustrates this well: 'to motivate VET providers, especially teachers, to use ECVET for transnational mobility it is necessary to provide more practical information and examples of good practice that could be transferred and used; therefore it is necessary to provide easy access to such information'. In France, in contrast, the focus is more at ministerial level. MENEVET, a project led by the Ministry of Education, will conclude in February 2013 and be followed by experimentation with real mobility periods, exploiting the findings from the project. Only then will there be more involvement of VET providers. In Liechtenstein, Norway and Poland the ECVET process is not considered to be mature enough to be presented to practitioners. In Norway for example, the priority for 2013 is to establish 'a common understanding of the added value of implementing ECVET and decided on common objectives and actions'.

Some 71% of respondents reported planning ECVET-specific targeting for practitioners for 2013, while 38% will mainly focus on policy-makers, sectoral councils, chamber of commerce or other institutional bodies, leaving the focus on practitioners for the following year (see Figure 14). This shows that an increasing number of countries is providing information to practitioners and maybe signalling a shift from policy to actual implementation.

Figure 14. **Main target group of ECVET activities planned for 2013 (% of respondents indicating target group)**



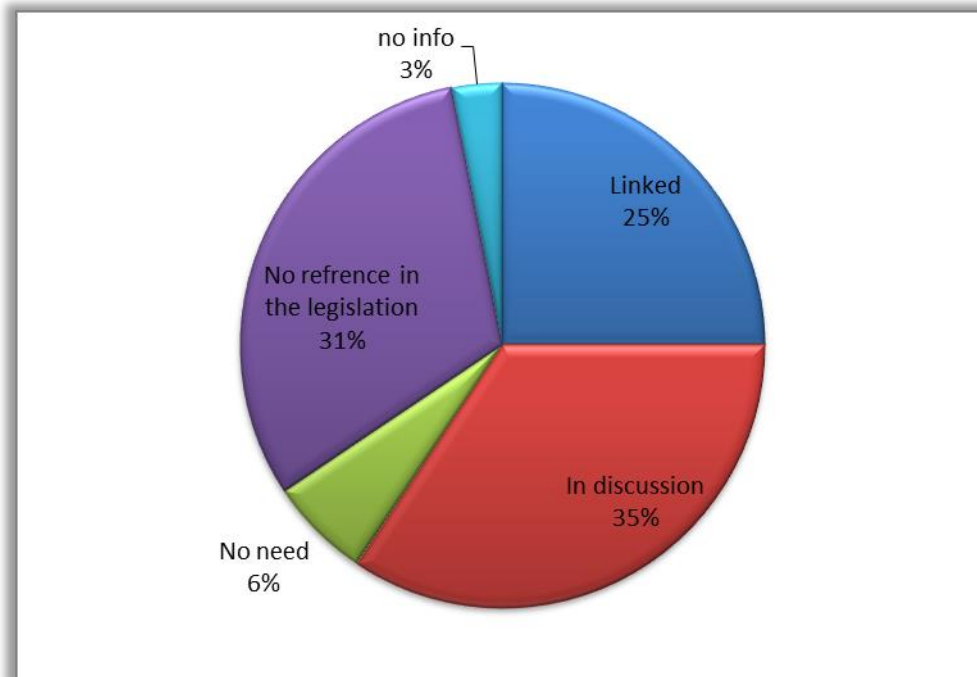
Source: Cedefop's users' group interviews reporting activities (N=26), Q12; multiple responses possible.

5.3. Legislation

The ECVET recommendation calls on countries to adapt their legislation to implement ECVET better. More than half of the educational systems reported a link to ECVET or are discussing how to include it into their legislation. In Slovenia (2007) and Iceland (2008), legislation is already in line with ECVET and its principles. In Estonia, the new VET Act explicitly mentions ECVET for recognition of non-formal learning and competence-based professional standards in curricula. In Greece, the Law 3879/2010 on lifelong learning foresees ECVET implementation as a tool supporting mobility and permeability. In Malta, ECVET is linked to three recently launched legal notices: Malta qualifications framework; licensing, accreditation and quality assurance; and validation of informal and non-formal learning. These legal notices prevent education institutions of having their training programmes accredited and level rated to the MQF, without indicating the ECVET number for each training module. Apprenticeship, that is part of the programme in state VET providers, also allocates ECVET points. Malta also plans to have policy processes for validating non-formal and informal learning in line with ECVET specifications (Malta interview). In Norway, the post-secondary vocational training law was amended in December 2011 and the ministry has given the mandate to the national agency for education of developing regulations on credit systems. In Italy, most recent VET reforms, both at national and regional level, envisage the introduction of the learning outcomes and units in curriculum design. The Law 92/2012 'Reform of the labour market' and the EQF

referencing process created important links between the lifelong learning strategy in Italy and ECVET features, such as credit recognition in VET (Italian interview).

Figure 15. % of respondents reporting legislation connected to ECVET



Source: Users' group interviews (N=32), Q9.

Several countries (11 out of 32 – 35%) reported continuing discussions on the possibility of integrating ECVET in their legislative framework. In Bulgaria, the new draft Act for the Amendment of the VET Act foresees creating the conditions necessary for all EU instruments (ECVET, EQF, EQAVET and validation mechanisms) and to provide support in reforming the national VET system. Estonia expects a new VET Law to be in force in 2013. In Finland, changes are planned to accommodate work converting the existing credit system to ECVET points in upper secondary vocational qualifications, and developing a compatible credit system for 'competence-based qualifications'. ECVET points will be introduced in all VET qualifications in 2014. In Sweden, the National agency for education has put forward a proposal to the ministry in which certain regulations should be changed to accommodate and align with ECVET. In France, the results of the project MENECEVET that is currently testing ECVET will provide guidelines on how to change the legislation. In Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary and Slovakia the introduction of ECVET in legislation accompanies development of the NQFs and EQF referencing. The Czech Republic and Spain report that there is no need to update their legislation, since it is already in line with ECVET.

CHAPTER 6.

ECVET and other common European tools and principles

Common European tools have been developing at different speeds and in parallel from the beginning of the Copenhagen process. It is important that they work together to contribute to lifelong learning and to create more flexible education systems, more permeable and transparent. Having these EU tools in place is part of the necessary conditions for adequate ECVET implementation. ECVET readiness requires that qualifications are described in terms of learning outcomes, and that these are grouped into units, that might provide credits (and points) to create individual learning paths.

6.1. ECVET and EQF

Both ECVET and EQF are based on learning outcomes which make it easier to understand what the holder of a certificate or diploma knows, understands and is able to do. The description of qualifications in terms of learning outcomes has been, in many cases, triggered by the European qualifications framework, and developments in devising and implementing a national qualifications framework. All countries studied are developing national qualifications frameworks and 16 countries (Austria, Belgium-Flemish speaking community, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal and UK) have completed their referencing to the EQF (Cedefop, 2013) ⁽⁵⁾.

NQF developments contribute to using learning outcomes at different levels and so create the conditions for ECVET. The readiness of qualifications systems for ECVET, however, depends on the national point of departure. Countries with a long tradition of national qualifications based on learning outcomes or credit arrangements will accommodate ECVET principles in different ways from those without such characteristics. Some countries have developed their qualifications systems already, fully prepared to accommodate ECVET. A number of countries has decided to link explicitly NQFs and credit systems, e.g. Croatia, Malta, UK

⁽⁵⁾ Cedefop (2013). *Analysis and overview of NQF developments in European countries* [forthcoming].

countries; there is a clear criterion, that a qualification to be included in the framework has to carry credit points exemplifying the volume of learning. In Ireland, the common awards system is part of the national awards system of the NFQ; ECVET can be mapped and linked to the credit system operated within common awards (Ireland interview). This is also the case for Malta, where the credit system is fully reflected in the MQF (Malta qualifications framework) which was established in 2007 (Malta interview). Slovenia has also a system fully compatible and ready for ECVET. In the Netherlands and Turkey the linkage between NQF and ECVET is addressed through the experiences of pilot projects that link national qualifications to credits.

Most countries have given priority to NQFs which are often seen as a prerequisite for introducing ECVET, e.g. Belgium Flanders, Bulgaria, Latvia. Some countries explicitly say that, for the time being, there is no plan to link NQFs and credit systems, e.g. Germany and Austria (Germany interview; Cedefop ReferNet Austria, 2011, p. 109).

Development of NQFs generally strengthens the learning outcomes orientation by developing learning outcomes-based qualification standards in line with EQF and NQF concepts, e.g. Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Malta, and Romania, or by introducing education standards, e.g. Austria, or by reforming education standards and curricula, e. g. Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland.

Reforms of qualifications systems and curricula very often includes discussion on aspects related to ECVET, such as modularisation or transferability of learning outcomes; many interviewees see these two processes (ECVET and reforms in qualifications) as similar or complementary (see Chapter 3). In Romania, for example, ECVET is included as a main instrument to be used for transferring learning outcomes between the different levels, contexts and training pathways. These regulations are pending approval from the Government (Romanian interview). There is a similar situation in Sweden, where the two national agencies dealing with ECVET have concluded a report for the Ministry responsible, proposing ways forward in integrating ECVET into national context.

In Norway work has not properly started, but there are discussions on connecting ECVET to the national qualifications framework, as well as in Slovakia and in the four UK systems, with ECVET work planned for 2012 include working on this connection. Lithuania is currently developing qualification standards in specific sectors that should be piloted in the energy sector later in autumn 2013. It is foreseen that standards will indicate duration of training in hours and credit points. In the Netherlands and Turkey the linkage between NQF and ECVET is also done through the experiences of pilot projects that link national qualifications to credits.

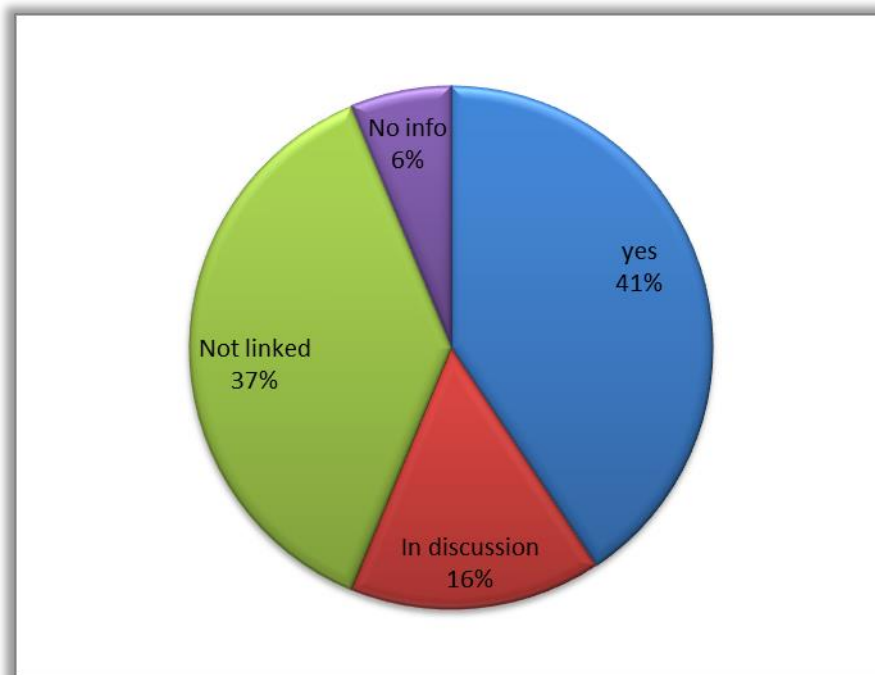
6.2. ECVET and existing credit arrangements in VET

The relationship between NQF and the ECVET depends on the existence of national credit arrangements. Credit arrangement here 'is used to indicate solutions to support accumulation, transfer, validation, and recognition of credits in general' (Cedefop 2011, p. 51). As was the case in 2010 and 2011, countries can be divided into groups: those with credit systems or credit arrangements; those with no credit systems or credit arrangements but proximity to ECVET (learning outcomes approach to education and training, units or modules, etc.); and systems without such mechanisms. This distinction remains stable, though more countries are moving towards considering how to reference or relate their credit system to ECVET.

A total of 41% (13) of the countries reported a link between ECVET and existing credit systems in their countries (see Figure 16). In Ireland, Finland and Malta, credit arrangements for VET are being developed; Slovenia reported credit systems that are developed and fully compatible with ECVET in most of the system (in contrast with Finnish competence base qualifications which are not organised in credits). Turkey reported no information on credit systems. In Belgium-French speaking community, Lithuania and Slovakia, credit arrangements for VET are being developed. Sweden, UK-England and Estonia are discussing correspondence between existing credit systems and ECVET. In England, for example, the NCP has conducted a pilot project with an awarding body (VTCT) to establish possible links and possibilities of a conversion mechanism between QCF credits and ECVET points. Estonia uses a credit point system based on a study week and the new legal act foresees transition to a credit point system for VET that conforms to the ECVET (Referencing Estonia report, p. 10) ⁽⁶⁾. In Norway the decision on how credit systems will function is still pending. In Romania credits are in place only for initial VET, but when the NQF is finalised, credits, compatible with ECVET will also be part of continuous VET. In Sweden there is a proposal for conversion between existing points and ECVET points, while in Croatia and Greece ECVET conversion is legally and theoretically possible but not applied. Denmark has credits but the interviewee indicates strong opposition to the conversion of credits into points; in France qualifications are organised in units, but there are no correspondence with credits points.

⁽⁶⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/eqf/estonia_en.pdf [accessed 4.3.2013].

Figure 16. Is ECVET related to credit arrangements in your country?



Source: Users' group interviews (N=35).

The ECVET recommendation foresees credit points allocated in two phases: first to a qualification as a whole, and, second, to its units. According to the recommendation, 60 points are allocated to the learning outcomes expected to be achieved in one year. The relative importance of the unit within a qualification depends on the complexity and scope of the unit and the effort needed from the learner to acquire the knowledge, skills and competences described in the unit.

This translates into relative weight of ECVET points. Similar units of learning outcomes might provide different points in different countries, even though they might have exactly the same learning outcomes (i.e. content). In a similar way, if a unit has different learning outcomes but a similar weight in one country the different learning outcomes will result in a similar number of points. Because of this difficulty, some respondents have indicated the need not to consider ECVET points, and refer only to crediting units of learning outcomes. Similar findings have been found in several projects, where crediting points to the learners was not seen as very useful.

The interviews confirmed the growing concern already observed in previous monitoring (Cedefop, 2012c) on the compatibility of existing credit arrangements and ECVET. Some countries functioning with their own credit arrangements (Denmark, Ireland) prioritise how learning outcomes can be recognised and not

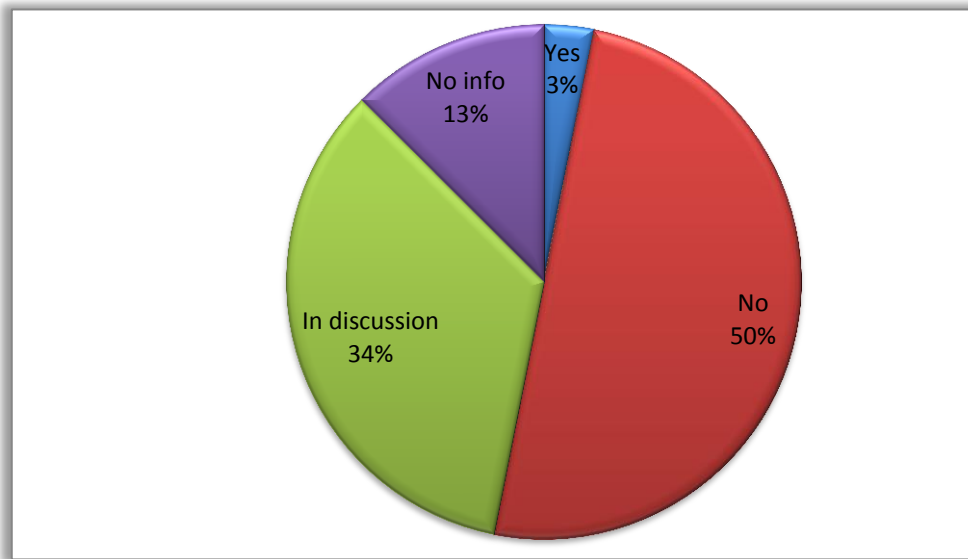
the number of points that this should be translated into. As indicated by an interviewee from Denmark: 'ECVET should concern recognising, not harmonising learning outcomes' (Denmark interview). In other words, periods of learning should have clear learning outcomes that are accepted and credited (accordingly) in other education systems or in other sectors within the system. Respondents from Denmark indicated that ECVET should not provide points per qualification, but accredit partial (or full) qualifications according to the learning outcomes obtained, i.e. what has been learned. A similar view is shared by the French respondent. In France, qualifications are structured in units of learning outcomes that can be partially or fully accredited depending on learning outcomes acquired, but no point system exists. However, some interviewees support the existence of credit points and consider it a necessary aspect if ECVET is to be fully implemented.

To sum up, while there is clear agreement on the benefit of a learning outcome approach for VET, concerns were also expressed and ECVET needs a decisive conclusion on the issue of ECVET points. As indicated in one interview: 'the biggest obstacle is the difficulty [for ECVET implementation] to apply the criteria established for the allocation of ECVET points. Before reaching a decision on ECVET, it is necessary know the purpose and effects, but the ambiguity around this issue and the lack of concretion is hindering its implementation' (Spanish interview). The Belgium-Flemish speaking community interviewee focused on the referencing of one nominal study or training year to 60 ECVET points. He considers this global reference as a necessary condition for having more synergy with the European credit transfer and accumulation system (ECTS). To this end, a letter from the Ministry of Education of Belgium-Flanders to the Commissioners on education and internal markets asked for the inclusion of ECVET in the European Directive on professional qualifications, and specifically referencing to one year accounting for 60 ECVET points. The relationship with ECTS is briefly outlined in the next section.

6.3. ECTS

The European credit system for VET (ECVET) recommendation proposes to the Member States to apply ECVET to VET qualifications at all levels of the EQF. Most respondents indicated that higher education is governed by other agreements and rules, making it difficult to relate to ECVET, or there is opposition from academic qualifications to use the same system used in VET qualifications. 50% of the countries reported no connection between ECVET and ECTS (see Figure 17).

Figure 17. Is ECVET related to credit arrangements in your country?



Source: Users' group interviews (N=35).

The ECVET users' group, however, acknowledged the theoretical connection between the two tools, and in several countries a debate on how to connect them is taking place (Bulgaria, Finland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Sweden). The project Be-Twin, for example, looked into how to make this connection in three different sectors with partners from eight countries. They identified learning outcomes as the 'only possible translation device between the two credit systems' (Azuelos, 2011). In addition, among other findings, the project concludes that 'there is a need to invest in long-term dialogue between VET and HE organisations to favour the establishment of transparent procedures for the recognition of credit in the context of progression to higher education through vocational routes' (Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 2011, p. 18).

ECTS seems successfully implemented in many countries subscribed to the Bologna process. The ECTS base is on time spent in courses, where the courses have different amount of ECTS depending on the amount of hours. The latest ECTS guide is focused on providing credits associated with learning outcomes ⁽⁷⁾. This might open up a door for further synergies between the two.

⁽⁷⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/ects/guide_en.pdf [accessed 21.1.2013].

6.4. Europass

One of the technical requirements for ECVET to be fully implemented is the existence of agreements and templates. The technical components of ECVET include memoranda of understanding (MoU) between the partners, a learning agreement and the personal transcript. Cedefop monitoring in 2011 showed that most countries did not see it as a priority to develop templates, since much is expected from the European projects and their coordinated supervision.

The ECVET recommendation proposes that Member States 'ensure that the application of ECVET to qualifications is properly publicised by the competent authorities and that associated Europass documents issued by the competent authorities contain explicit relevant information' (Council of the EU; European Parliament, 2009, p. C155/13).

Europass aims at helping citizens to present their qualifications and knowledge. It consists of five documents. Europass curriculum vitae (CV) and language passport are self-declaratory documents filled in by individuals. Europass certificate supplement (CS), Europass diploma supplement (DS) and Europass mobility (EM) are completed by competent bodies (education and training providers, enterprises, etc.).

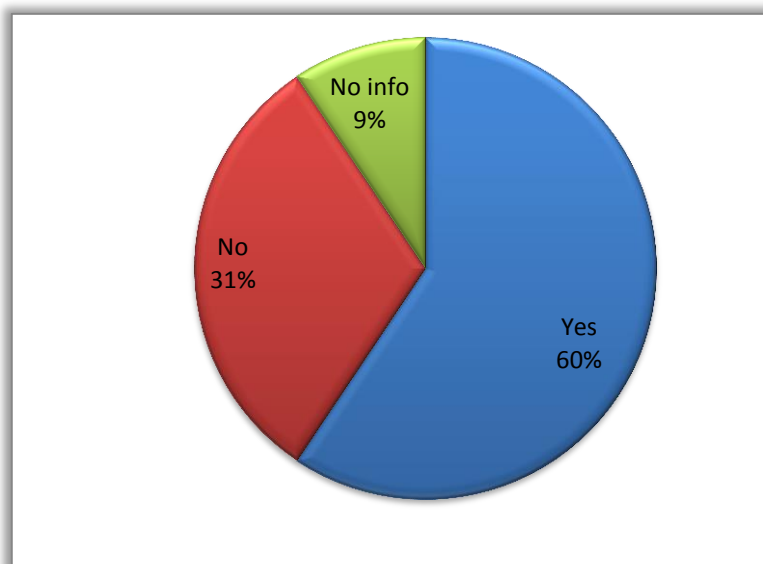
The Europass CV, Europass language passport and Europass mobility address the whole range of education and training, while diploma supplement addresses students of higher education and certificate supplement addresses VET trainees.

For ECVET, the most relevant Europass documents are the Europass CS and the Europass mobility. The Europass CS briefly describes the learning outcomes acquired by the holders of a VET certificate. The Europass mobility is a record of a 'European learning pathway', which is an organised period of time that a person spends in another European country for the purpose of learning (for instance, a work placement in a company or in volunteer work, or an academic term as part of an exchange programme). Europass mobility is usually used within Leonardo Da Vinci projects. In Romania, for example, all the participants in a LdV mobility are asked to fill in the training agreement in terms of ECVET and to use the Europass mobility document to certify the learning outcomes during the LdV placements.

The CS complements information on the official degree by providing a description of the learning outcomes, the range of occupations accessible to the holder of the certificate as well as the official bases of the certificate (awarding

body, level of the certificate (EQF reference if available), access to next level of education, etc.) ⁽⁸⁾.

Figure 18. **Is ECVET related to Europass in your country?**



Source: Users' group interviews (N=35).

Table 4 shows the mapping of ECVET requirements with existing fields in the Europass documents. The table shows that important elements of ECVET are missing from the current Europass CS and Europass mobility templates.

⁽⁸⁾ For examples of CS, see <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en/documents/european-skills-passport/certificate-supplement/examples> [accessed 4.3.2013].

Table 4. Mapping the existing Europass templates against ECVET requirements

	Elements needed for ECVET	To be found in Europass certificate supplement	To be found in Europass mobility
Units of learning outcomes	Generic title of the unit		Table 5.b includes (31b) title of course units
	Generic title of the qualification	Box 1, title of the certificate	Table 4 (25) Qualification
	EQF level of qualification	Box 5, level of the certificate	
	NQF level of qualification	Box 5, level of the certificate (national or international)	
	Learning outcomes contained in the unit	Box 3 might provide learning outcomes, but not necessarily divided in units	
	Procedures and criteria for assessment of learning outcomes		
	ECVET points associated with unit		Table 5.b includes (35b) ECVET credits associated to course units
	Validity in time of unit		
	Competent institutions	Box 5, body awarding the certificate, national/regional authority providing accreditation/recognition of the certificate	Table 2, (8) issuing organisation Table 3, (11 to 22) sending and host partners
Memorandum of understanding	Quality assurance criteria and procedures		Quality criteria already established for Leonardo da Vinci projects
	Assessment procedure and criteria		
	Validation criteria and procedures		
	Recognition criteria and procedures		
	Conditions for operation of partnership (objective, duration, review of MoU)		Table 4, (23) objective and (27 to 28) duration of mobility
	Comparability of qualifications		
	Identification of actors and competent institutions possibly involved in transfer process		
	Partners (home, host		Table 1, (1 to 7) learner

	Elements needed for ECVET	To be found in Europass certificate supplement	To be found in Europass mobility
	institutions and learner)		Table 3, (11 to 22) sending and host partners
Learning Agreement	Identity of learner		Table 1, (1 to 7) learner
	Duration of mobility		Table 4, (27 to 28) duration
	Learning outcomes expected to be achieved		Table 5.a, (29 to 35) learning outcomes achieved
	ECVET points associated to learning outcomes		
	Declaration of home institution about readiness for validation/recognition of positively assessed learning outcomes		
Personal transcript	Results of assessment of learning outcomes by host institution		
	Credit awarding by host institution		Table 5.b, (35b) includes credit for course units
	ECVET points corresponding to learning outcomes achieved		Table 5.b, (35b) include ECVET credits for course units

Source: European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2009; existing CS and EM templates.

Cedefop monitoring shows that 10 countries (31%) – Belgium-French speaking community, Belgium-Flemish speaking community, Bulgaria, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland and Spain reported not yet using ECVET in connection with Europass (see Figure 18). In most cases, they are waiting for the certificate supplement to become more accommodated to ECVET requirements. The Europass decision is under review and during 2013 dialogue is planned on how to integrate ECVET further with Europass. New Europass developments, concerning the creation of a European skills passport and the creation of a document for documentation of non-formal learning (working title Europass experience) are likely to influence this relationship.

However, completed pilot projects provide several examples of how to document and use the template for ECVET. Based on this, the Commission has distributed among the users' group templates for MoU and learning agreements to be tested. It will be necessary to explore how these templates relate to Europass.

6.5. Validation and guidance

The recent consultation showed that for validation to move forward, around 80% of the respondents considered important or very important the need for greater synergies between existing European instruments that support it (Europass, Youthpass, EQF, ECVET, ECTS).

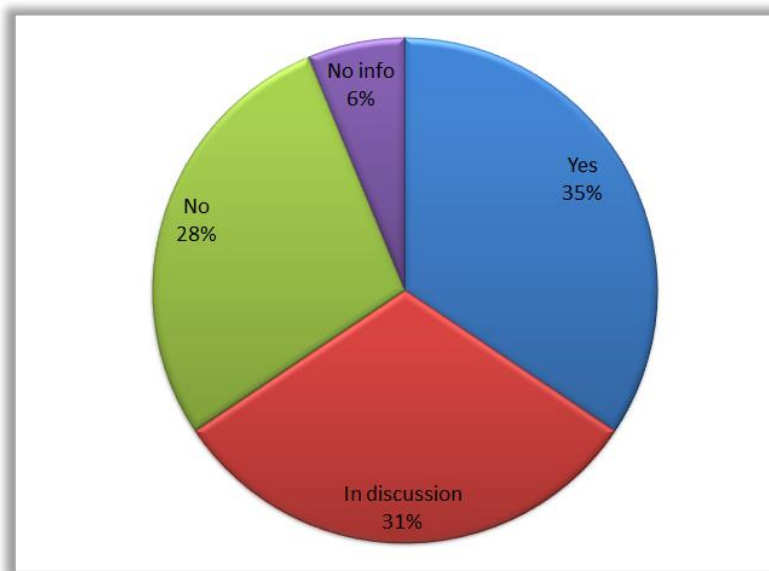
This gives ECVET a role in promoting and supporting validation processes. However, validation has a broader scope as it also relates to recognition of non-formal learning, without necessarily relating to ECVET. As an indication, the word 'credit' is not used at all in the report of the final results of the consultation (European Commission; DG EAC, 2011).

In the proposal for a Council recommendation on validating non-formal and informal learning (European Commission, 2012) however, there is an explicit connection to ECVET: 'European level tools and frameworks (European qualifications framework, Europass, European credit systems, etc.) could be used to promote validation and to improve comparability and transparency of the outcomes of validation processes and so build trust across national boundaries' (ibid, p. 18). The proposed actions include practical recommendations to Member States to provide by 2018 every citizen with the opportunity to have his/her skills acquired outside formal education and training validated and to use this validation for working and learning purposes throughout Europe. On a more concrete level, the recommendation asks Member States to ensure the '[c]ertification of the results of the assessment of learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal learning in the form of a qualification, as credits leading to a qualification or in another form, as appropriate'. (Council of the EU, 2012, p. C 398/3). It also calls on the Member States to ensure that '[s]ynergies exist between validation arrangements and credit systems applicable in the formal education and training system, such as ECTS and ECVET' (Ibid, p. C 398/4)

The monitoring showed that 31% of the countries (Belgium-French speaking community, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Sweden and the UK) are discussing how to better connect ECVET with the existing validation processes in the country. 35% of respondents considered that their validation system is related to ECVET (see Figure 19). For example, in Portugal, the standards for recognition, validation and certification of competences are organised in competence units, that are fully compatible with ECVET. In Romania, prior to ECVET implementation there was a validation mechanism for learning outcomes acquired at the workplace, and validation has also been tested during practical student training in companies abroad. ECVET implementation in Romania builds on and is supported by these prior processes.

28% of respondents indicated that there is no connection between the two at this point. In Hungary, for example, validation is only possible for full qualifications, so validation processes are not ready for ECVET.

Figure 19. **Is ECVET related to validation in your country?**



Source: Users' group interviews (N=35).

Respondents were also asked to relate ECVET to systems of guidance. Most did not provide an answer or indicated no actual relationship. Guidance principles and distribution of information on this should be made more apparent to the people dealing with ECVET. It seems that this will be required later on in the process of implementation.

CHAPTER 7.

Conclusions

7.1. ECVET readiness

The ECVET recommendation states that progressive implementation of ECVET should commence from 2012 onwards. In the period covered by this report (June 2011 to September 2012) there has been an increase in ECVET readiness and most countries have progressed in putting in place the conditions necessary to implementation. However, full and systemic implementation is still far off in most Member States, despite agreement with main ECVET principles and an overall commitment.

There is agreement on the importance of the principles underlying ECVET, namely the unitisation (or modularisation) of educational systems, and the description of qualifications in terms of learning outcomes. This also extends to the importance of easing the recognition and transferability of learning outcomes.

NQFs and EQF are given priority over ECVET. NQF developments have contributed to preparing the ground for ECVET, through the description of qualifications in terms of learning outcomes. In some cases, these developments have been carried out together with a system of credits and/or units specifically driven by ECVET developments.

This report confirms that countries increasingly see ECVET as a tool for reform and for aligning qualifications to learning outcomes, as well as for engaging stakeholders further in VET development and design. It is clear that ECVET needs to be aligned and work together with the other European principles and tools.

Work is needed on the synergies between the tools, making them work together and under similar principles. Especially relevant for ECVET is the relationship with ECTS, since two different types of credit arrangements might cause confusion to the citizen that should be the ultimate user and beneficiary. Having two types also goes against increasing flexibility and permeability in the system.

This shows another tension observed in the monitoring, the difficulty in dealing with credit points: there seems to be no agreement on their usefulness. However, not considering a points accumulation system might hinder the benefits of the transferability and portability of the learning outcomes, since the validation process might require more work than if points were automatically transferred.

7.2. Pilot projects: showing the way forward?

During the period evaluated by the monitoring, most first generation of ECVET projects were completed. The lessons learned from these projects have served to understand better the challenges and difficulties that full-scale ECVET implementation faces. They have also contributed significantly to 'spread the word' and disseminate possible ways of working. National efforts to promote and disseminate ECVET principles have continued.

At institutional level, however, there is a problem of heterogeneity. Since each of the projects has chosen a specific path that better adapts to their specific needs, ECVET implementation suffers lack of 'consistency'. The general framework of the ECVET recommendation can be adapted in many different ways. This means that there is no one single way of implementing ECVET and this seems to be causing confusion at European level. However, the flexibility of the arrangements permits its adaptability to the diverse nature of VET systems in Europe.

There is a need to explore further what aspects might be crucial for ECVET implementation and which ones desirable. Revision of the necessary conditions might be adequate, since ECVET might be able to function without some of these conditions in place, but others, especially technical requirements such as description in terms of learning outcomes, are fundamental if ECVET is to be implemented.

Agreements and documentation have been developed within the projects, but administrative burden and paperwork has to be kept to a minimum to aid usability. There is tension between documentation that can meet all the necessary requirements for building trust and quality assurance, while also maintaining a degree of simplicity. Further connection to Europass needs to be explored.

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Annex 1

Acronyms and definitions

Institutions and organisations	
ACVT	Advisory Committee in Vocational training
AEF	European Agency – Education and Training Agence francophone pour l'éducation et la formation tout au long de la vie
AEROVET	project title – Development and piloting of learning outcomes oriented units in the aeronautic sector
ANQEP	National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training Agência Nacional para a Qualificação e o Ensino Profissional, IP
ARQA-VET	the Austrian reference point for quality assurance in vocational education within OeAD- GmbH
ASSET	project title – Automobile service sector ECVET testing
AT	Austria
BE-FL	Belgium Flanders
BE-FR	Belgium-French speaking community
Be-Twin	project title – The project deals with the issue of the compatibility between ECVET and ECTS
BG	Bulgaria
BIBB	Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung
CCEA	Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment
Cedefop	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CIEP	Centre International d'Etudes Pédagogiques [International Centre for Pedagogical Studies]
CINOP	Centre for Innovation in Education and Training (Netherlands) Centrum van Innovatie voor Opleidingen
COM	Commission [acronym used for preparatory acts prepared by the European Commission available in Euro-Lex]
CoP	Community of practice
CPI	Institute of Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training Center RS za poklicno izobraževanje
CREDCHEM	project title – The project aims to foster mobility in the chemical sector by creating lasting partnerships

CS	certificate supplement
CSQ	Councils for Qualification
CV	curriculum vitae
CVET	continuing vocational education and training
CH	Switzerland
DE	Germany
DECVET	German pilot initiative: development of a credit system for vocational education and training in Germany – Leistungspunktesystem für die berufliche Bildung
DEQA-VET	The German reference point for quality assurance in vocational education and training in BIBB Deutsche Referenzstelle für Qualitätssicherung in der beruflichen Bildung
DG EAC	Directorate General Education and Culture
DK	Denmark
Eopep	National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance Εθνικός Οργανισμός Πιστοποίησης Προσόντων και Επαγγελματικού Προσανατολισμού
EACEA	Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency
ECTS	European credit transfer and accumulation system
ECVET	European credit system for VET
EE	Estonia
EEA	European Economic Area
EL	Greece
EQAVET	European quality assurance in VET
EQF	European qualifications framework
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
FI	Finland
FINECVET	Finnish national initiative: development of a credit system for vocational education and training in Finland
FR	France
HE	higher education
HR	Croatia
HU	Hungary
IE	Ireland
IS	Iceland

ISFOL	National Institute for Development of Vocational Training Istituto per lo sviluppo della formazione professionale dei lavoratori
IT	Italy
LdV-projects	Leonardo Da Vinci projects
LO	learning outcomes
LT	Lithuania
LU	Luxembourg
LV	Latvia
M.O.T.O.	project title – Model of transferability of learning outcome units among different ECVET systems
MEN-ECVET	project title – The project examines in depth the regulatory and organisational provisions in force of the French ‘vocational baccalaureate’ in relation to the ECVET technical specifications
MoU	memorandum of understanding
MT	Malta
NA beim BIBB	Nationale Agentur Bildung für Europa beim BIBB National Agency – ‘Education for Europe’ at BIBB
NCFHE	National Commission for Further and Higher Education
NCP	national contact point
NetECVET	thematic network consisting of 14 national agencies of the lifelong learning programme
NL	The Netherlands
NO	Norway
NOKUT	Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education Nasjonalt Organ for kvalitet i utdanningen
NQFs	national qualifications frameworks
NÚV	National Institute for Education Národní ústav pro vzdělávání
OeAD- GmbH	Austrian Agency for International Cooperation in Education and Research Österreichische Austauschdienst-Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung
Ofqual	Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation
OPET	Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology
OPIR	project title – Practical inter-regional tools for ECVET Outils Pratiques Inter-Régionaux
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal

QCF	qualifications and credit framework
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
QVETDC	Qualifications and VET Development Centre Kvalifikacijų ir profesinio mokymo plėtros centras
RO	Romania
RPL	recognition of prior learning
SCQFP	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership
SE	Sweden
Skolverket	National Agency for Education (Sweden)
SI	Slovenia
SK	Slovakia
SME MASTER Plus	project title – The project aims at implementing ECVET using the Master craftsperson qualification as sample qualification
TR	Turkey
UK	United Kingdom
VaLOGReg	project title – Value learning outcomes in the Grande Région
VET	vocational education and training
VTCT	awarding organisation in UK-England for the hairdressing and beauty sector
Youthpass	Tool developed under the youth in action programme aiming to visualise and to validate learning outcomes gained in 'youth in action' projects

Annex 2

Interview guideline (2012) Strategies for ECVET implementation

General approach to ECVET

1. Have there been any new developments regarding the implementation of ECVET in your country since 2011?
2. If yes, How far are you in the policy decision on ECVET (please provide some political context)?
3. Which would you consider the ECVET specific added value?

Governance

4. Regarding ECVET governance, have there been any changes in the period 2011-12?
5. Which stakeholders are involved in relation to ECVET governance? Could you briefly describe how the governance is organised and specify the role for each stakeholder?
6. How are the developments of ECVET in your country financed?
7. Which are the developments and the role of the ECVET national coordination or contact point (NCP) in your country?

Strategy

8. The Cedefop 2011 monitoring ⁽⁹⁾ identified eight strategic lines of actions for ECVET implementation. Which are the lines of actions undertaken in your country? please indicate their starting date

⁽⁹⁾ <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/19523.aspx> [accessed 21.1.2013].

(multiple reply possible)	Yes/No	Date
1. Setting up broad range testing initiatives		
2. Measuring impact (theoretical and methodological approaches)		
3. Updating VET legislations and regulations		
4. Adapting qualifications systems		
5. 'Wait and see' strategy		
6. Combining ECVET with NQF development		
7. Learning by working in ECVET European projects		
8. Marketing ECVET to stakeholders		

9. How does ECVET implementation link to existing legislation or legislation in development?

10. How is ECVET related to the following tools and principles in your country?

Tool/principle	Link/relation of ECVET implementation
(a) Existence of credit systems in VET	
(b) ECTS	
(c) National qualifications framework	
(d) Europass	
(e) Validation mechanisms	
(f) Guidance principles	

INTERACTING WITH EDUCATION AND TRAINING STAKEHOLDERS

11. Which activities have been undertaken (from June 211 to now) to increase visibility and inform national stakeholders and the wider public on ECVET?

Activity	Brief description and target groups, dates
(g) Conferences/workshops	
(h) Publications, leaflets, etc.	
(i) Websites	
(j) Advertisement	
(k) Information campaign	
(l) Additional NCP promotional activities	
(m) Others (please specify)	

12. Please specify which activities have been foreseen for 2013? Could you indicate the target groups and briefly explain the rationale behind the activity? E.g. information session, conference, interview, publications, leaflets, website.

13. This year the ECVET annual forum ⁽¹⁰⁾ promoted the idea of further supporting ECVET implementation by setting up communities of practice? Which is the situation in your country?

14. Which are the obstacles for ECVET implementation in your country? Which possible solutions could overcome them?

15. Did anything exceptional/outstanding promoting the ECVET implementation happened in your country in the period 2011-12?

16. Is there any other comment/issue you would like to address?

Please provide documentation (preferably in English) on your ECVET activities concerning any testing, initiative or official decision for ECVET implementation.

Thank you for your time

⁽¹⁰⁾ <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/events/19618.aspx> [accessed 21.1.2013].

Annex 3

Country fiches

The information that follows is elaborated from the interviews carried out by Loukas Zahilas and Ernesto Villalba, Cedefop experts, between August and October 2012. It also draws on EQF referencing reports and other official documents. It was validated by the ECVET users' group in December 2012. The information depicts the situation as for November 2012.

Country Fiche – Austria	
Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)	The added value is still not entirely visible. There is a strong focus on the mobility projects and it is expected that ECVET can improve the quality of the European learners' mobility and the transparency of qualifications. It also should contribute to VET reform.
Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)	Austria has still not officially appointed the NCP. The political dimension of ECVET is under the responsibility of the Austrian Ministry of Education (BMUKK). The Ministry of Economic Affairs also has an active role in developments. The stakeholders involved are experts, social partners and governmental representatives.
Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)	At the moment there are no legislation developments as they consider that the existing framework is adequate for ECVET. The network of experts plays an important role with the support of the National Agency for LLL.
Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)	The development of the NQF is the main priority in Austria alongside work on the LO approach.
Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)	Current changes focus on the learning outcomes approach but not directly linked to ECVET. Changes in the curricula using the learning outcomes approach and the work on standards indirectly influence the work on ECVET.
Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)	Pilot projects have a tradition in Austrian developments. Templates for the memorandum of understanding, learner agreements and transcripts of record for mobility periods already exist.

Country fiche – Belgium FL

Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)

Belgium Flanders has placed ECVET within strategies for lifelong learning and less into the idea of international mobility, as the main added value is considered the potential for moving from one learning path to another. Flanders is still looking for evidence showing that the technical issues of ECVET can support this transition in a simple and user-friendly manner.

Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)

Belgium Flanders is closely following European developments related to ECVET but has not undertaken formal initiatives to implement the system. No real ECVET governance is yet in place. The Ministry of Education and Training has the main responsibilities but other stakeholders are also involved in discussing credit issues.

Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)

The department of education and training of the Flemish Ministry of education and training is the NCP and the main driver.

Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)

In 2009 the Flemish qualifications framework was approved by the Flemish parliament as part of the Act on the Flemish qualifications structure within which two concepts are used which are mutually exchangeable: learning outcomes and competences. Learning outcomes and competences are the result of a learning process that can occur in several situations. Work on common qualification standards continues.

Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)

A process of recognising acquired competences has been developed in Flanders.

Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)

Participation of some Flemish organisations in Leonardo da Vinci pilot projects.

Country fiche – Belgium FR

Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)

ECVET added value is linked to the increase of permeability between the subsystems of Education and Vocational training and also the increase of the rate of certification and employability of citizens.

Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)

ECVET implementation is continuing in secondary education and training and in initial vocational training (IFAPME/SFPME). Other related initiatives are carried out by other vocational training providers (for example: Recaf in Le FOREM for Reconnaissance des Compétences Acquisées en Formation), in partnership with Bruxelles Formation (Certificats de Compétences acquises en formation) and IFAPME. The three Belgian French speaking governments, the social partners and the VET providers are involved in the process.

Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)

SFMQ (Service francophone des métiers et des Qualifications) agreement (2009) and the Decree of July 2012 which introduces the CPU in the Educational system. The European Agency – Education and Training (AEF) has coordinated the ECVET national contact point since January 2012.

Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)

The work on NQF is in progress. This is in parallel to ECVET developments.

Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)

Since the adoption of the new legal framework, adult or continuing education in the French Community has been progressively restructured to create a more coherent, modular structure with transferable credit units and more flexible timetables. For each module or 'training unit/**unité de formation**', teaching and learning outcomes have been established, together with prerequisite levels of knowledge or experience for individuals.

Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)

Participation in LdV projects.

Country fiche – Bulgaria

Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)

In Bulgaria ECVET is considered to contribute to the reform of VET by applying the LO approach, improving the transparency and readability of qualifications, the relevance of qualifications to the labour market requirements, permeability between the VET and HE, and the transparency of LO for a qualification in a specific economic sector in different Member States. Additionally ECVET supports the creation of sustainable cooperation structures between VET providers in different Member States.

Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)

The strategic national documents for ECVET implementation are the National LLL Strategy (2008-13) and the governmental 'programme for development of education, science and youth policies in Republic of Bulgaria' (2009-13).

Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)

The new draft Act for amending and supplementing the VET Act is foreseen to create the necessary conditions for the implementation of ECVET, EQF, EQAVET and the validation mechanisms for the recognition of LO from prior learning, and to provide synergy in reforming the VET system. The National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET) was been appointed the national coordination point (NCP) in June 2012.

Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)

There is a close link between ECVET and NQF. Every profession from the list of professions corresponds to a certain NQF and EQF level. NQF was adopted by decision No 96 of the Council of Ministers in February 2012. A draft model of a new VET-Standard (SER), including assessment criteria, was elaborated in line with the EQF/NQF principles and ECVET characteristics on a project base. The LO approach and the 'unitisation' of qualifications were introduced in the VET-Standard (SER) elaboration process.

Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)

Work has started on introducing integrated modules of entrepreneurship in the training programmes for general education subjects. Some good practices exist for the recognition of LO from secondary vocational schools in HE institutions. Ensuring the transfer of learning outcomes is at a preparatory phase.

Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)

The main transnational mobility scheme in VET in Bulgaria is offered by the Human Resource Development Centre (HRDC) within the Leonardo da Vinci sectoral programme. The main trait of this scheme is that it offers a limited number of places to the respective company, depending on the content of the national call for proposals for the respective selection year.

Country fiche – Croatia

Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)

The added value is connected to mobility, transparency and trust between providers.

Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)

The existing Act on Vocational Education and Training (2009) introduced credit points in relation to qualifications and curricula. The new Act on Croatian qualifications framework will reaffirm this even more.

Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)

An Act on the NQF is under preparation and expected to be approved by early 2013. It mentions ECVET as a national credit point system for VET. The main actors are the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, the Agency for VET and Adult Education and the Education and Teacher Training Agency. The NCP has not been appointed yet.

Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)

The Croatian NQF has been referenced to the EQF but the final version of the referencing report is still in preparation. The Agency for VET and Adult Education has developed an online database of VET qualifications containing occupational standards, qualification standards, units of LO and curricula. The Act on VET (2009) introduced the learning outcomes approach in the development VET qualifications and curricula and the new Act on the NQF will extend the LO approach at all levels of education.

Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)

The Agency for VET and Adult Education has developed more than 30 new LO-based VET qualifications and curricula. NQF developments include the establishment of credit arrangements, units of LO and recognition and validation of LO processes.

Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)

Croatia has participated in LdV projects.

Country fiche – Cyprus

Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)

Mobility is the main added value.

Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)

ECVET is part of the overall project to develop European cooperation in VET and is one of its operational tools. Cyprus is committed to EU tools.

Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)

A working committee on ECVET development and implementation in Cyprus was set up in September 2011. It comprises stakeholders from the public and the private sectors, such as the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, the Planning Bureau, the Human Resources Development Agency, the Cyprus Productivity Centre, the Foundation for the management of the European lifelong learning programmes in Cyprus and private providers of VET.

Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)

In Cyprus there has been limited implementation of frameworks and mechanisms on the transparency of qualifications and systems for the recognition of competences and qualifications. The development of NQF is a priority.

Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)

Cyprus is working towards making qualifications more LO oriented.

Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)

Pilot projects have been undertaken.

Country fiche – Czech Republic

Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)

ECVET supports fulfilment of the European priorities, transparency of qualifications and improvement the quality of vocational education, support to domestic and international learning mobility, growth of common trust and development of cooperation among organisations involved.

Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MSMT) approved in April 2012 a proposal on implementing ECVET in the Czech Republic. According to the proposal, ECVET will be connected to the policy of enhancing access to qualifications. A new national project called Pospolu aims to support cooperation between secondary technical/vocational schools and companies in vocational education and verify models of cooperation using elements of ECVET. Representatives of ministries and agencies, education providers, employer organisations, regional authorities, and schools are involved in ECVET coordination.

Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)

The national coordination centre was established in April 2012 as the Czech NCP by decision of the MSMT.

Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)

One of the features of curriculum reform in secondary vocational education and training is the focus on learning outcomes. Assessment of learning outcomes and allocation of marks to them are supported by assessment regulations designed by each school, that have to be in line with the relevant legislation and approved by the MSMT.

Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)

In 2008 NÚOV (National Institute for Education, former National Institute of Vocational Education) made an analysis and a study on ECVET implementation. Educational modules are only exceptionally used in secondary education.

Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)

The Leonardo da Vinci (LdV) and Comenius subprogrammes of the lifelong learning programme are most frequently used for mobility in VET. In 2010 NÚOV took part in two Leonardo da Vinci pilot projects testing ECVET in international trade and chemistry.

Country fiche – Denmark

Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)

Since 1993 Denmark has been involved in transnational mobility projects and so has solid experience with systematising validation and recognition of learning outcomes acquired abroad. Nonetheless the value of ECVET for Denmark is considered the standardisation of international mobility requirements through learning outcome descriptors. ECVET is a tool for recognising not harmonising and the LO approaches might contribute to improving the alignment of qualifications.

Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)

The process of implementing ECVET is still under development. The national qualifications framework has been implemented. The plan for implementing ECVET has been approved by social partners through a hearing in the Advisory Council for Initial Vocational Education and Training.

Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)

The NCP has not yet been appointed. ECVET is integrated within the general VET governance that involves the Ministry of Children and Education, the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Higher Education and other stakeholders (VET providers, social partners, etc.). ECVET implementation occurs primarily at national level in cooperation with VET colleges inspired by projects at EU level. The Ministry of Children and Education finances ECVET combined with Leonardo funding administered by the Ministry of Science, innovation and higher education. Denmark is currently developing guidelines for using ECVET.

Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)

Denmark presented the referencing of the NQF to the EQF in 2011. The overall objective of the NQF is to support transparency in the Danish qualifications system and to further the possibilities for mobility and lifelong learning. Qualifications are described in terms of learning outcomes.

Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)

The education system is based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes. There is also a shift in IVET towards greater focus on competences and learning outcomes, and a system for assessing prior learning. In connection with ECVET the description of LO will be done ad hoc for the particular mobility. Transfer is ensured through the existing system for assessment of prior learning.

Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)

The work placement abroad scheme, where expenses are largely covered by the employers' reimbursement scheme (AER), and EU-funded mobility schemes such as Leonardo mobility and Leonardo partnership, are the main programmes for promoting transnational mobility.

Country fiche – Estonia

Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)

The main added value for ECVET is considered the recognition of prior learning, the use of unit-module-based curricula for qualifications and mobility.

Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)

The Ministry of Education has overall responsibility and will implement the Legal Act that modernises VET in Estonia. The political decision is not yet ready although the VET Act has undergone the first reading to the Parliament. A unit-based credit system will be implemented and ECVET will be incorporated into the modules, in parallel with renewing the qualification standards, where different skills and competences will be described in LO. The principles of ECVET application will be used while introducing Estonian VET credit points (EstVETCP). Stakeholders have been involved in this process, including schools and chambers of commerce.

Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)

The new VET legislation explicitly mentions ECVET, validation of non-formal/informal learning and competence-based occupational standards in curricula. Foundation INNOVE is the Estonian NCP and is the body responsible for grading qualifications (curricula) and also the dissemination of information. The national agency for the lifelong learning programme (Archimedes foundation) has been granted funding to create a national ECVET expert group.

Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)

A systematic shift towards learning outcomes-based curriculum development is underway. An NQF linked to the EQF and QF-EHEA was referenced to the EQF in 2011. It brings together four subframeworks: higher education, formal VET, formal general education, and qualifications awarded outside formal education and training. All state recognised qualifications which are described as learning outcomes are included.

Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)

In VET, a credit point system based on a study week is used, and transition to a credit point system for VET that conforms to the ECVET is planned. The content of vocational training established by a school curriculum is planned in the form of modules.

Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)

The main and biggest VET mobility programme in Estonia is the Leonardo da Vinci programme, financed by the EU through the national agency.

Country fiche – Finland

Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)

Finland has a long experience with ECVET and the main added value was considered international mobility. After extensive piloting and implementation it is seen that the ECVET supports already existing learning outcomes and working life approaches. It also fosters quality and transparency and supports national mobility. ECVET will not change the system but it will strengthen it and will support the objectives of VET.

Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)

The Finnish Government Education and Research development plan 2011-16 confirmed the competence perspective and ECVET should be implemented in all vocational qualifications by 2014. A working group has been established for implementation of the plan and ECVET is also part of the mandate of the steering group on vocational qualifications. A political decision regarding ECVET points is expected.

Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)

Finland has not yet officially nominated a national coordination point for ECVET, because the ECVET recommendation does not include it. The Finnish National Board of Education has coordinated the ECVET activities, but partly also CIMO (LLL Agency).

Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)

The use of a learning outcomes-based approach is not new in Finland. VET, for example, has used a competence-based approach since the early 1990s. Finnish qualifications are described in terms of learning outcomes such as vocational skills requirements. National qualification requirements also show the related assessment criteria. Decisions on recognition are made in relation to vocational skills requirements, assessment targets and qualification requirement assessment criteria.

Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)

Credit systems exist in upper secondary vocational qualifications (study weeks for a number of qualifications). Finland's vocational qualifications are based on a modular approach, though the term 'unit' is more commonly used. Qualifications are made up of a variety of modules, or 'study units', some of which are compulsory, and others which are selected by the student. Despite the fact that the Finnish Government Education and Research development plan outlines that the ECVET will be implemented in all vocational qualifications in 2014, the plan does not refer particularly to the use of ECVET points. At present it seems that the use of ECVET points will begin with the upper secondary vocational qualifications.

Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)

There is a long tradition in working in ECVET projects, mainly focused on learning mobility.

Country fiche – France

Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)

ECVET is considered to support the learning outcomes approach and contributes to the transparency of educational provision, the design of diplomas and quality assurance. It is also closely linked to validation and recognition processes and supports permeability between EQF levels 5 and 6.

Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)

The Ministry of Education has the leading role and other ministries are also involved (Ministries of Agriculture, Labour, Health and Social Work, Higher Education). Sectoral bodies are also involved and informed, as part of the national committee for professional certification (CNCP).

Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)

The French NCP is allocated to the two members of the ECVET user's group: one from the Ministry of Education and one from the Chamber of commerce. No additional organisation/structure is in charge.

Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)

France has an NQF in place. The French national framework consists of the national register of vocational qualifications, in conformity with the provisions set out in the French education code and the French labour code. From elementary school to the end of compulsory school, all student progress is recorded by teachers through staff skills booklet (*livret personnel de compétences*, LPC).

Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)

Diplomas, having a unitised structure, possibly lead to ECVET. However, the discussion is still open as there is also the issue of 'autonomous' units which could create problems. Diplomas are considered very important from a social dimension but the unitised form could create problems in sectors. The advanced State diploma of youth, popular education and sports (DESJEPS) is organised in units that can be capitalised. Each of them is made up of a coherent set of competences, knowledge and abilities that state which are the required vocational tasks and in which context. The register of vocational activities is the starting point for building up the units that can be capitalised.

Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)

France has a leading role in many transnational ECVET pilot projects.

Country fiche – Germany

Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)

As in the NQF, the main added value of ECVET is considered the shift to learning outcomes. Although they are not used specifically for ECVET, this competence orientation is further strengthened through ECVET. Other important points are the growing understanding between stakeholders, national and European, and transnational mobility and permeability, although this should clearly be linked to sectors.

Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)

ECVET is tested within the framework of the ten guidelines for the modernisation and structural improvement of VET (from 2007). Guideline eight focuses on improving mobility and recognition and includes the testing of a national credit point system in VET (DECVET) as well as supporting the establishment of a European credit system for VET in the context of transnational mobility. Stakeholders and the public are informed and supported by the national contact point for ECVET.

Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)

Existing legislation covers all aspects. Learning outcomes and units are possible and other elements like validation and recognition procedures can still be compatible due to the great flexibility of the legal framework. The National LLP Agency has been nominated the NCP and a national steering committee exists. The steering committee includes Ministries, social partners, chambers (through umbrella organisations), **Länder**, the national LLL agency and trade unions. There is a constant mechanism of provision of information to sector organisations in the skills and crafts sectors. The **Länder**, the Federal Ministry of Education, the ministries and the NCP are involved.

Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)

The work on NQF has demonstrated that learning outcomes are the *lingua franca*. This need is part of the experimentation through projects. The DECVET project showed that by recognising prior learning using the LO approach, the quality and attractiveness of VET could be improved. Germany works in building up programmes in a LO format with which ECVET is compatible although ECVET points are not considered yet.

Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)

Qualification modules (**Qualifizierungs- und Ausbildungsbausteine**) are designed to make it easier for young people to enter training. They are particularly helpful for socially disadvantaged young people and those who find learning difficult. Qualification modules in pre-vocational training contain vocational elements of recognised training occupations. These modules could also be used when moving within different subsystems of VET (e.g. moving from full-time vocational training to dual training) or entering higher education.

Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)

Cross-border mobility is important for the acquisition of skills through the Leonardo da Vinci programme. There also exist bilateral exchange programmes of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) with France, Great Britain, the Netherlands and Norway. Transnational mobility can also be ascribed to programmes offered by various donors.

Country fiche – Greece

Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)

The added value of ECVET is connected to mobility, transparency of qualifications, the reform of VET and the changes in recognition and validation processes.

Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)

Although there is a political decision on the establishment of ECVET the implementation is still missing. Communication to stakeholders and the public is still not visible.

Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)

Law 3879/2010 on LLL foresees the establishment of ECVET. The Ministry of Education and Religions, Culture and Sports is in charge of ECVET developments through EOPPEP which is the NCP for Greece.

Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)

The learning outcomes approach is not applied in Greek education and training. There are some steps in this direction through the establishment of a register of professional profiles describing a number of qualifications in IVET and CVET (continuing vocational education and training) in terms of learning outcomes.

Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)

There is no credit system in Greece. A number of pilots have worked on units and credits but nothing exists officially. The new LLL Law foresees recognition and validation processes but is still under preparation.

Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)

There is a tradition of working in LdV projects.

Country fiche – Hungary

Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)

The condition for the ECVET implementation is a permeable VET system based on learning units (modules). Through ECVET the structure of VET becomes more transparent and its features will contribute to the establishment of various learning paths and will enhance career building. In addition it will contribute to improving the mobility of European learners.

Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)

ECVET is planned to be part of the VET reform that will be applied to evaluation and assessment. At present, government decree stipulates the preparation of the NQF implementation and ECVET can be part of its follow up. The National Ministry of the Economy and the Ministry of Human Resources are responsible for ECVET implementation. The National Labour Office, Vocational and Adult Training Directorate is involved in the development of professional work and information dissemination.

Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)

At present there is no decree introducing ECVET in Hungary, however ECVET can be related to the legislation concerning the NQF and the EQF. The Hungarian Parliament redrafted basic education laws, excluding the Act on Adult Education; new implementation decrees were published in 2012. The modular character of the new national qualifications register remained, which can be a good starting point to build the ECVET. The National Institute of VET and Adult Education (NIVE) was nominated the national coordination point in June, 2011. At the beginning of 2012 NIVE merged with the National Labour Office and remained the Hungarian NCP.

Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)

The national qualifications register and the vocational and examination requirements of qualifications included are outcome-oriented. The VET system is modularised.

Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)

In the current VET system credit points are allocated to advanced level VET qualifications. These points are documented in the vocational examinations. Credit points can be recognised by the HE institutions when applying to HE programmes.

Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)

Participation in LdV projects.

Country fiche – Iceland

Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)

There is an consultation among stakeholders linking European and national policy priorities. They see ECVET mainly as valuable to student mobility as it might support European mobility and transparency of qualifications.

Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)

The ECVET recommendation is part of the European Economic Area Agreement in relation to Iceland of April 2010. Iceland considers possible changes to the VET system following ECVET implementation The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is in charge of the process and the social partners have still not been involved.

Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)

The Upper Secondary School Act allows credits which are on par with ECVET credits. The Ministry of Education was appointed in 2007 as the authority responsible for ECVET implementation and is the NCP. Iceland also obtained financing for its National Agency for Lifelong Learning, to build a network of ECVET experts.

Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)

The development of a comprehensive NQF based on learning outcomes, including qualifications at all levels, has reached a final stage. While there is currently no single act or decree introducing the Icelandic qualifications framework, its role and mandate is explicitly stated through a series of acts and decrees introduced between 2006 and 2012: the Act on Higher Education and, subsequently, acts on pre-school education, compulsory education, upper secondary education, teacher training and adult education. A sufficiently strong formal basis thus exists for the framework to be able to move into an early operational stage during 2013.

Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)

Credits have been part of the legislation for many years. The new Act includes the credits that are fully compatible with the ECVET. The main difference between the old and new Icelandic credits (they still coexist) is that the old 32 points correspond to 60 new. Credits exist for all courses (modules) at upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary level of VET.

Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)

Iceland has participated in pilot projects and the results have been evaluated.

Country fiche – Ireland

Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)

At policy level a decision has not yet been taken to implement ECVET; therefore the specific added value cannot be measured.

Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)

Stakeholders are involved on a national consultative basis within the Copenhagen Implementation Group, which includes representatives from education and training providers, both public and private, learners, government departments and other state agencies. ECVET is discussed by this group within a broader policy context, though they do not have an ECVET governance role.

Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)

Within Ireland the conditions for ECVET implementation are in place. Currently the national contact point for ECVET is Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI).

Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)

The national framework of qualifications has 10 levels; qualifications based on units or components, and units expressed in learning outcomes within what is called the common awards system exist in Ireland.

Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)

A credit system at national level has also been implemented within the common awards system. A new national system for awards in further education and training was introduced in 2008; the common awards system is based on units expressed as learning outcomes, supporting ECVET.

Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)

Experience in pilot projects

Country fiche – Italy

Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)

ECVET is widely considered a relevant device to face some historical weakness in national VET. Due to the 21 regional authorities, the recognition of qualifications and learning outcomes from one region to another is still critical, although national standards exist. The latest regulations are moving to a more efficient and homogeneous national qualifications system based on LO, more flexible qualifications and assessment standards. ECVET can support European mobility which is now increasing for students and workers and can also aid networking among training providers, communication between VET and the labour market and recognition of learning outcomes from non-formal and informal learning.

Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Ministry of Education, University and Research, and regional authorities are in charge of ECVET as the three of them are competent in the policy and management of VET and HE. The social partners and sector representatives are usually involved in relevant processes and can also be found as partners in the Leonardo da Vinci ECVET projects. Even if there has been no specific and explicit adoption of ECVET in Italy, there are quite a number of developments that are, in a way, 'approaching' this goal.

Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)

The Law 92/2012 Reform of the labour market was approved by Parliament in July 2012. It explicitly refers to lifelong learning provisions that can be considered an important pre-requisite for ECVET implementation. Still there is no formal national coordination or contact point for ECVET, but ECVET-related activities are managed by ISFOL.

Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)

The learning outcomes approach has been implemented in different areas of the Italian qualifications system, although differences, mainly terminological, still remain among different subsystems. The LOs approach will be extended in the near future with reference to the second phase of the referencing process of the national qualifications system to EQF and the implementation of the latest national regulations on VET.

Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)

A system based on modular qualifications (ECVET model) is partially adopted. Some subsystems can give citizens the opportunities to achieve partial qualifications after the assessment of prior learning or accumulating the units and related value in terms of credit, changing from one pathway to another. With the implementation of the latest national regulations on VET, the LOs approach and the transfer opportunities will be further developed.

Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)

Under the 2012 Leonardo da Vinci Call for Proposals, four transfer of innovation projects have been approved under the priority ECVET for transparency and recognition of learning outcomes and qualifications. Several mobility projects with possible testing of ECVET have been selected. Participation in pilots has a long history in Italy.

Country fiche – Latvia

Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)

Accumulation of credits of learning outcomes is considered positive, as it helps mobility and transfer of credits. This is in line with the national priorities set in the process of developing an NQF. It also contributes to the national priority of promoting VET attractiveness and reducing early school leaving, thus increasing chances for employment.

Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)

The Ministries of Education and Science, and Economy and Employment are actively involved in the implementation of EU tools, although VET providers still are not directly engaged due to lack of corresponding mechanisms put in place. The move to a modular system within the frame of NQF developments will foster the inclusion of ECVET as part of the modularisation process which is being implemented in close cooperation with social partners with subsequent awareness raising activities among VET providers.

Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)

In 2014 a new VET law is due that might provide the legal basis for ECVET. No NCP has yet been appointed or agency involved. The Ministry of Education and Science acts as the coordinator.

Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)

The learning outcomes approach is being developed in the process of creating occupational standards as part of the classification of professions. They define the basic tasks and obligations for the respective professional activities, the basic requirements of professional qualifications, and the general and professional knowledge, skills, attitudes and competences needed to fulfil them.

Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)

The European Social Fund project Development of sectoral qualifications system and increasing the efficiency and quality of vocational education aims at improving the quality of VET and its efficiency regarding the needs of economic sectors. This is based on a LO approach. In February 2011 the adoption of respective legislative framework started the implementation of validation of informal and non-formal learning, through the quality assurance agency.

Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)

Latvia has been involved in some European projects through the Leonardo Da Vinci programme.

Country fiche – Liechtenstein

Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)

The VET system is closely linked to the Swiss system. Because of that, Liechtenstein has to go along with the developments in Switzerland.

Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)

ECVET is not a policy priority although the developments are closely followed. Stakeholders are regularly updated on developments.

Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)

In charge for the ECVET governance is the Ministry of Education which is a closely linked to stakeholders. ECVET is not connected to VET legislation at the moment.

Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)

There is an interest in NQF developments and work on this has been launched. All qualifications are described in terms of learning outcomes.

Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)

All professional qualifications are written in terms of LO, however, no link of ECVET to validation is yet in place.

Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)

Liechtenstein mainly cooperates with Switzerland. There is no report on ECVET project involvement.

Country fiche – Lithuania

Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)

ECVET implementation should support international mobility of VET students, flexibility of VET system, bridges between VET, and higher education, and IVET and CVET.

Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)

ECVET implementation in VET has only begun. Implementation at national level is linked to the national project Formation of qualifications and development of modular VET system. Currently the work within the project focuses on developing and piloting of the concept of modular VET system.

Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)

The Ministry of Education and Science shapes national VET policy. The Qualifications and VET Development Centre coordinates the national project Formation of qualifications and development of modular VET system that also examines the development of a credit system in VET. National and international experts are involved in developing the modular VET system concept. Lithuania did not participate in the EACEA call for tender on national experts.

Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)

The NQF was referenced to the EQF in 2011. Development of VET modular programmes is one of the priority actions of VET curriculum reform. It is recommended that qualification development programmes consist of competence-based modules. Currently a methodology for sectoral qualifications standards is being developed. It is foreseen that qualifications listed in sectoral qualification standards will indicate duration of training in hours and credit points.

Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)

Since 2002 VET curricula in Lithuania are competence-based, with clearly defined competences and training objectives. The current reform of VET curricula focuses on the transition to modular training. At national level 40 modular VET programmes will be developed by VET teachers and employers within the project Formation of qualifications and development of modular VET system. Credits will be attributed to specific modules thus facilitating flexibility of the system.

Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)

The main tools for geographical mobility are projects in the framework of the lifelong learning programme Leonardo da Vinci subprogramme.

Country fiche – Luxembourg

Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)

ECVET is relevant for mobility and recognition of learning, especially in a small country where it is important to control how part of the curriculum can take place somewhere else while still maintaining the standards and quality of training.

Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)

The Ministry of Education is in charge of ECVET with the participation of providers and companies, social partners as consultative bodies and the Lifelong Learning Agency. Technically Luxembourg is ready for ECVET but the main interest is to continue the work on modularisation and see how the modular system can be compatible with ECVET.

Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)

The ValOReg pilot ECVET project has just finished and will lead to a publication, guidelines and a report to policy-makers to increase interest in ECVET. The Ministry of Education is the NCP.

Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)

While the move towards the competence-based approach has already been made in formal education and vocational training, it is currently being introduced in a more segmented form in other areas.

Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)

The modular structure has already been in place since 2010. The module is valid for five years. The credit system in VET has been fully functional (95%) since 2011. In vocational training, the introduction of units and training modules incorporates the notion of alternative paths leading to a vocational qualification.

Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)

Participation in pilot projects.

Country fiche – Malta

Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)

The specific value added of ECVET in Malta is the valorisation of mobility and the support of flexibility of programmes and pathways to achieving qualifications, resulting in better opportunities for lifelong learning and making VET more attractive,

Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)

The decision to use ECVET has been based on the aspirations of adopting European developments into the national context with the aim of improving the overall employability of European citizens leading to better quality of life. There is commitment to the ECVET European recommendation. All private and public VET institutions will be encouraged to start using ECVET when promoting their training programmes.

Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)

ECVET is linked to the recently launched three legal notices which include the Malta qualifications framework, licensing, accreditation and quality assurance, and the validation of informal and non-formal learning. The ECVET NCP falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Employment through the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE), and its role is to coordinate the ECVET implementation.

Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)

The Malta NQF is already established. The ideology of describing qualifications in terms of units of learning outcomes has so far been properly understood and carried out. Through the legal notices, education institutions developing training programmes need to adhere to stipulated criteria established by the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) to have their training programmes accredited and level rated to the MQF. These include indicating the number of ECVET for each training module. Apprenticeship for students enrolled within state VET providers is included as part of the curriculum; being part of the curriculum in terms of learning outcomes, it is also allocated ECVET points. In the future, the policy processes of the validation of non-formal and informal learning will also be in line with ECVET specifications.

Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)

The credit system is fully reflected in the MQF (Malta qualifications framework) which was established in 2007 whereby a full qualification at MQF level 1 has to have at least a minimum of 40 credits (1 000 hours) per year and at MQF levels 2 to 7 need to have at least a minimum of 60 credits (1 500 hours) per year. For MQF level 8 qualifications which represent the third cycle of the Bologna tertiary level of education, no ECTS have been assigned.

Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)

Within the national context, several projects addressing VET have been put into action to adhere to European wide initiatives for VET suggested by the European Commission.

Country fiche – The Netherlands

Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)

ECVET can be an instrument to support student and worker mobility.

Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)

In 2011, the Minister and the Government approved the national qualifications framework (NLQF) and the referencing of levels to the EQF, including relevant arrangements as maintenance and evaluation. ECVET is starting to be developed.

Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)

The national Centre for the Innovation of Education and Training (CINOP) is the NCP, funded by the Ministry of Education Culture and Science.

Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)

VET qualifications are based on learning outcomes. The NLQF regulated qualifications have an EQF and NLQF level; non-regulated qualifications can ask for an EQF/NIQF level and only then can be registered.

Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)

There is no credit system though there is a system for valuation of prior learning (VPL).

Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)

Pilot projects extensive experimentation. Almost all the Dutch VET institutions are taking part in the Leonardo da Vinci programme.

Country fiche – Norway

Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)

It is difficult to identify clearly the added value of ECVET. It is considered a tool for mobility of learners in VET and not as for reform, since Norwegian qualifications have been based on LO since 2004. ECVET is seen as a way of documenting workload for students and it should complement the LO approach. The development of ECVET should contribute to the clarification and coherence of European tools.

Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)

Norwegian authorities and the social partners are positive about the rationale and the overall purpose of ECVET but implementation of a credit system is still in planning for upper secondary, although all relevant stakeholders are informed.

Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)

A legal amendment to the law of December 2011 committed Norway to developing regulations on a credit point system for post-secondary VET (**fagskole**). This project will be established along the lines of the Norwegian EQF/NQF project. The NCP has not yet been formally established. However, the plan is that the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training will assume this role. They are already members of the ECVET user-group.

Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)

Norway has had qualifications described in terms of learning outcomes since 2004. These outcomes exist in curricula and study-plans, both in general and in vocational education and training. However, the use of units will be an important issue for future developments.

Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)

It is planned to introduce credits in post-secondary education (still to decide how). Norway was one of the first countries to establish ECTS within HE, where there is extensive experience of using credits. The study credit system is based on the workload for full-time studies. Norway will probably not construct units of learning outcomes at national level and allocate each unit credits: this should be a responsibility at local level (the providers).

Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)

There is experience on transnational pilot projects. The LLL programme is used as a scheme for transnational mobility within upper secondary VET.

Country fiche – Poland

Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)

The main ECVET added value is considered support to the shift to LO oriented education systems and better orientation of LO towards skills needed in the labour market. It is not only about formulating standards, but also influencing the teachers' work with students and helping to reach better qualifications system transparency.

Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)

ECVET is still in a preparatory phase. It is in the agenda and discussed but there is no formal decision yet. The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, the Institute of Educational Research, the National Centre for Supporting Vocational and Continuing Education and the team of ECVET experts (financed by the EC) are involved. It should also be noted that the issue of ECVET is considered as an important part of the Polish qualifications framework.

Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)

There is no officially nominated NCP but this role is temporarily fulfilled by the Polish representatives in the ECVET users' group.

Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)

The Polish qualifications framework (PQF) defines eight levels of qualifications and has two layers of generic descriptors of levels: first universal and at the second layer separate descriptors for general education, VET and higher education. All the qualifications based on the Polish NQF will be based on the learning outcomes approach. Today all qualifications in general education and the VET school system have been defined using the learning outcomes approach.

Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)

Starting from September 2012 the occupations accessible through VET are divided into qualifications (252), each is composed of several units of learning outcomes. This ECVET friendly approach allows the accumulation of units especially by adults in the framework of vocational courses. It is also directly linked to the validation system introduced by the 2012 VET reform. Starting from October 2012 all the curricula in higher education will be based on learning outcomes and the qualifications framework for HE is in place. The transfer of learning outcomes between sectors and the introduction of validation and recognition of learning outcomes in HE are under discussion. The concept of a credit system for the whole education system is also being discussed.

Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)

Participation in the LLP programme.

Country fiche – Portugal

Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)

Mobility between different education and training systems, permeability within a national education and training system, recognition of informal and non-formal learning, flexibility and Lifelong Learning, progressive completion of qualifications are considered the added value of ECVET implementation.

Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)

Portugal is working on the implementation of ECVET but the necessary conditions are not yet in place. Governance of the ECVET implementation process is under the competences of the National Agency for Qualification and Professional Education (ANQEP). The process includes other stakeholders, such as the sectoral councils for qualification (CSQ), which comprise representatives of education and training institutions, trade unions, employers' associations, enterprises, technological centres, and experts in specific areas.

Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)

The legislation that establishes the national qualifications system (SNQ) refers to the design of qualifications in terms of learning outcomes. However, VET legislation has not yet been changed accordingly. The organisation in charge is ANQEP. This body is also in charge of the NQF and is the national representative in the EQAVET network.

Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)

There is an NQF in place in Portugal. The legislation that establishes it refers to the design of qualifications in terms of learning outcomes. Work now is focused on learning outcomes in specific areas (e.g. tourism and commerce). The national catalogue of qualifications (CNQ), which is part of the national qualifications system, has been regularly updated with new qualifications. This catalogue includes non-higher education qualifications. The CNQ will be a major tool for the implementation of ECVET in Portugal.

Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)

The CNQ already integrates standards for recognition, validation and certification of competences, which are organised in competence units.

Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)

Participation in LdV pilot projects.

Country fiche – Romania

Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)

The main ECVET added value will be its contribution to the modernisation of VET. The involvement of stakeholders and link with (European or national) policy priorities, the support of national and European partnerships and networks, and the involvement of competent authorities in the exercise of linking national qualifications frameworks and systems to ECVET are also considered important.

Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)

The use of ECVET is foreseen in the LLL developments and is also in the proposal for the NQF regulation, to be approved at the end of 2012 or early in 2013. Therefore, ECVET is part of the policy documents governing VET.

Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)

The use of ECVET for transfer and recognition of achieved LO is stipulated in the new Law for education, since January 2011. The organisation in charge of ECVET is the Ministry of Education through the National Centre for TVET Development (NCTVETD), since November 2011. NCTVETD has been appointed the Romanian NCP.

Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)

ECVET, as ECTS, is included as main instrument to be used for credit transfer of LO between the different levels, contexts and training pathways. These regulations are included in the proposal for the Government Decision on NQF.

Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)

A strategic framework for recognition and transfer of LO between different contexts and learning pathways is in place, based on the previous existing mechanisms for recognition of non-formal and informal learning. A credit system with credit points is used only in initial VET but the recognition of LO achieved during IVET when moving to CVT is in place. Starting with the NQF the use of credit system will cover also CVT, and the use of ECVET credit points may be adopted. Prior to ECVET implementation, a validation mechanism for LO achieved in workplace was in place. A methodology for recognition and transfer of the LO achieved during practical training of the students in companies abroad has been used.

Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)

There is a long tradition in working in LdV projects.

Country fiche – Slovakia

Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)

ECVET will support progressive change and reform of VET, promote life-long learning and the 'readability' of qualifications. A qualifications system based on ECVET credits might also aid mobility of students and workforce as the systems awarding ECVET credits/points among different countries are compatible.

Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)

The political priority is the development of the NQF and NQS. ECVET will represent a constituent part of both and will be clearly linked to other LLL tools.

Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)

The national coordination point is the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of Slovak Republic ('MESRS SR').

Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)

Initial and continuing VET is under reform concerning learning outcomes orientation and outcome-oriented methods of qualification awarding, and development of a NQF and associated system). Once the qualifications are determined and described in terms of LO it will be possible to include ECVET into these two systems.

Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)

ECVET is directly interconnected with qualifications. Given that qualifications are not described in terms of learning outcomes it is not possible currently to award ECVET points/credits.

Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)

Participation in LdV pilot projects.

Country fiche – Slovenia

Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)

Validation of non-formal and informal learning, transparency of mobility and its promotion, improving learning autonomy in schools and use of credits are considered added value of ECVET implementation.

Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)

The progress of the NQF is crucial to continuing with the ECVET implementation. The Ministry of Education, the Institute for Vocational Education and Training (CPI) and VET schools are in charge of the process.

Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)

Legislation exists and is compatible with future ECVET implementation. CPI has been nominated the NCP.

Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)

Work is focused on NQF developments and in the past there have been innovative learning approaches such as the learning outcomes portfolio.

Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)

In 2006, the Vocational Education Act established the legal framework for the Slovenian credit system. Since then, the system has been a credit-transfer system designed for (formal) vocational education and training. It enables systematic description of educational programmes and their units. The vocational matura comprises four units, with the possibility of adding a fifth unit from the general matura.

Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)

The main transnational mobility programme in Slovenia for VET is the Leonardo da Vinci mobility programme.

Country fiche – Spain

Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)

ECVET added value is linked to increasing trust between systems, as the use of learning outcomes adds transparency and supports mobility. However, much depends on the transparency of the learning programmes of the host and receiving countries. There is doubt regarding the specific added value of credit points.

Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)

The first priority is full development of the NQF. It is essential to have the framework ready before making any decision on ECVET. The technical Committee for VET, the General Council on VET, the State School Council and the Sectoral Conference on Education are dealing with ECVET developments.

Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport will be responsible for ECVET arrangements concerning IVET, and the Ministry of Labour and Immigration for CVET. The NCP is the Subdirectorate General on VET of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport.

Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)

All diplomas, intermediate and higher, are expressed in terms of learning outcomes and permit achievement of professional competences following established standards that have been developed in response to the needs of the sectors.

Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)

Learning programmes in VET are modular and include a system to assess and accredit the competences acquired through work experience and other learning pathways. The learning outcomes approach is implemented in diplomas structured in professional modules.

Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)

There have been projects under the Leonardo da Vinci programme through which promoters and institutions have acquired experience on ECVET. The programmes are coordinated by the Spanish National Agency OAPEE. Memoranda of understanding and agreements for mobility are under development.

Country fiche – Sweden

Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)

Transnational mobility is considered the main added value.

Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)

The Ministry of Education and three national agencies are involved in governance: the national agency for education, the national agency for higher vocational education and the agency in charge of the lifelong learning programme. These three cooperate in exploring synergies between the tools. VET providers and experts are also involved in developing proposals.

Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)

The National Agency for Education has been appointed as the NCP with a clear mandate to analyse the changes needed on national regulations, how to change those regulations to meet ECVET, and propose a model for conversion. The national agency for higher vocational education has had a similar task within its area of competence. In September 2012 two studies were finalised, with a proposal on ways to move forward in the ECVET implementation to be decided by the Ministry.

Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)

All qualifications are described in terms of learning outcomes. There is close cooperation on EQF developments. The initial development of the NQF focuses on the public VET system but all stakeholders are involved and it will ultimately cover all types of VET.

Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)

Efforts to move to the LO approach. Both the theoretical and vocationally oriented programmes at upper secondary school are modular. There are two types of credit, one for general education and IVET and one for CVET. The system is organised in courses (it can be considered a modularised system). Students in secondary school achieve credits for every course they complete, making it possible to transfer credits from general education to vocational training and vice versa. Municipal adult education at upper secondary level provides (with few exceptions) the same courses, and this means that students can build further on their earlier studies.

Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)

There is experience on transnational pilot projects, but not necessarily EU-funded. Employers are usually involved through international projects and mobility actions although there are no specific arrangements or measures targeted to them.

Country fiche – Turkey

Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)

ECVET implementation will help to change VET assessment and validation. Also as all qualifications will be credited, they will be transferable.

Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)

ECVET is planned to be the part of VET reform linked to the changes in assessment and validation.

Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)

The DG for LLL (lifelong learning) is in charge of ECVET and the Confederation of Tradesmen and Craftsmen, the Chambers of Trade, the Chambers of Tradesmen and the Craftsmen Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchange participate. ECVET national coordination is handled by the DG for VET of Ministry of National Education.

Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)

The 'strengthening vocational qualifications' authority (VQA) and national qualifications system (NQS) in Turkey project (UYEP) is leading developments. Project activities were initiated in October 2010 with a view to offering consultancy for project management and policy-making on development of an NQF and support VQA to ensure that VET is in line with labour market needs. This will strengthen the link between education and employment and aid compliance with the EQF. UYEP also aims at enhancing the knowledge and awareness of stakeholders.

Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)

There is an interest in a shift to the learning outcomes approach.

Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)

Leonardo da Vinci projects.

Country fiche – UK-England

Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)

The main added value is the way of working with stakeholders who are interested in engaging in ECVET but unsure how to make it work within an existing credit system. Second, ECVET can explain more in the wider sense about how the range of EC initiatives and tools can work together. In its drive to engage stakeholders in cross-border mobility, ECVET provides an incentive to improve quality assurance, transparency and permeability within the national system.

Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)

There exist longstanding and working credit systems in all countries of the UK that can support ECVET implementation.

Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)

Existing VET legislation and regulations in England, Wales and NI are, in theory, highly compatible with ECVET as they are based on a learning outcomes approach and contain clear and transparent procedures for accumulation, recognition and transfer of learning outcomes. However, currently these regulations only cover QCF qualifications; there is no specific legislation being developed to accommodate cross-border mobility and ECVET. The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) appointed ECCTIS Ltd to manage the contact point for ECVET. ECCTIS runs several other government agencies including the National Europass Centre, the NCP for Directive 2005/36 on professional recognition, ReferNet and UK NARIC. The ECVET NCP reports to the government on its activities and ECVET developments on semi-annual basis.

Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)

The QCF was introduced in 2008 with the intention that it will include all qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland other than higher education qualifications, which are covered by the framework for higher education qualifications (FHEQ), and the qualified status granted by professional bodies. It introduces a standard currency for achievement in the form of a framework of levels based on learning outcomes, as well as a system of credit and principles for recognising previous certificated and uncertificated learning.

Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)

The QCF is explicitly based on a system of units, specified in terms of learning outcomes assembled into qualifications through rules of combination. Achievement of single or multiple units is recognised by the award of credit. Learners who achieve credits are entitled to have them recognised towards any qualification that includes the relevant units within its rules of combination. VET has an established credit system; the English NCP has conducted a pilot project with an awarding body (VTCT) to establish possible links and possibilities of a conversion mechanism between QCF credits and ECVET points (this is still at a theoretical stage to date).

Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)

Experience in pilot projects.

Country fiche – UK-Northern Ireland

Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)

The main added value is the way of working with stakeholders who are interested in engaging in ECVET but unsure how to make it work within an existing credit system. Second, ECVET can explain more in the wider sense about how the range of EC initiatives and tools can work together. In its drive to engage stakeholders in cross-border mobility, ECVET provides an incentive to improve quality assurance, transparency and permeability within the national system.

Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)

There exist longstanding and working credit systems in all countries of the UK that can support the implementation of ECVET.

Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)

Existing VET legislation and regulations in England, Wales and NI are, in theory, highly compatible with ECVET as they are based on a learning outcomes approach and contain clear and transparent procedures for accumulation, recognition and transfer of learning outcomes. However, currently these regulations only cover QCF qualifications; we are not aware of any specific legislation being developed to accommodate cross-border mobility and ECVET. The Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) confirmed CCEA Accreditation as the ECVET NCP for Northern Ireland. CCEA Accreditation is also the NCP for the EQF. CCEA reports to DEL on all European developments including ECVET. The NI EU coordination group was established in 2012 to oversee the implementation of all European VET Initiatives in Northern Ireland and has representation from government departments and key stakeholders from across the VET system.

Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)

The QCF was introduced in 2008 with the intention that it will include all qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland other than higher education qualifications, which are covered by the framework for higher education qualifications (FHEQ), and the qualified status granted by professional bodies. It introduces a standard currency for achievement in the form of a framework of levels based on learning outcomes, as well as a unit-based credit system and principles for recognising previous certificated and uncertificated learning.

Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)

The QCF is explicitly based on a system of units, specified in terms of learning outcomes assembled into qualifications through rules of combination. Achievement of single or multiple units is recognised by the award of credit. Learners who achieve credits are entitled to have them recognised towards any qualification that includes the relevant units within its rules of combination.

Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)

Experience in pilot projects.

Country fiche – UK-Scotland

Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)

The main added value is the way of working with stakeholders who are interested in engaging in ECVET but unsure how to make it work within an existing credit system. Second, ECVET can explain more in the wider sense about how the range of EC initiatives and tools can work together. In its drive to engage stakeholders in cross-border mobility, ECVET provides an incentive to improve quality assurance, transparency and permeability within the national system.

Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)

The view in the UK remains unchanged. There exist longstanding and working credit systems in all countries of the UK that can support the implementation of ECVET.

Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)

Existing VET legislation and regulations are in, theory, highly compatible with ECVET as they are based on a learning outcomes approach and contain clear and transparent procedures for accumulation, recognition and transfer of learning outcomes. However, currently these regulations only cover QCF qualifications; there is no specific legislation being developed to accommodate cross-border mobility and ECVET. The NCP for ECVET is the SCQF Partnership. The Board of the Partnership comprises the Government, the main qualifications body and representative bodies for further and higher education.

Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)

In Scotland, the SCQF was introduced in its current form in 2001 as an integrative framework to cover all qualifications, including those awarded by higher education institutions. The QCF is designed as an inclusive and flexible regulated framework of units and qualifications that is capable of recognising the widest possible range of quality assured learner achievements.

Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)

The SCQF enables credit links to be made between qualifications or learning programmes so as to assist learners to build on previous successes.

Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)

Pilot projects experience.

Country fiche – UK-Wales

Argumentation (clear rationales, clear identification of added value)

The main added value is the way of working with stakeholders who are interested in engaging in ECVET but unsure how to make it work within an existing credit system. Second, ECVET can explain more in the wider sense about how the range of EC initiatives and tools can work together. In its drive to engage stakeholders in cross-border mobility, ECVET provides an incentive to improve quality assurance, transparency and permeability within the national system.

Commitment (policy- and decision-makers, communication and information to stakeholders and the public)

The view in the UK remains unchanged. There exist longstanding and working credit systems in all countries of the UK that can support the implementation of ECVET.

Capacity building (legislative and regulative framework, remits and allocation of responsibilities, allocation of resources)

Existing VET legislation and regulations in England, Wales and are, in theory, highly compatible with ECVET as they are based on a learning outcomes approach and contain clear and transparent procedures for accumulation, recognition and transfer of learning outcomes. However, currently these regulations only cover QCF qualifications; we are not aware of any specific legislation being developed to accommodate cross-border mobility and ECVET. The NCP for ECVET is CollegesWales/ColegauCymru, the national organisation that represents all of the FEIs in Wales. However, this is a pilot only for the duration of the ECVET experts' project and will be reviewed by the Welsh Government at the end of the project.

Understanding qualifications (NQFs or registers, LO approach to all processes)

The credit and qualifications framework for Wales is a comprehensive framework that incorporates the QCF/NQF and FHEQ within it.

Ensuring transfer of learning outcomes (units of LO including credits, crediting/assessing LO, recognition and validation of LO)

The CQFW brings all recognised learning into a single unifying structure and embraces all credit-based learning recognised within it. It enables the credit value of a unit or qualification to be recognised for awarding purposes, used as a comparator with other learning and facilitate recognition of achievement and progression to the benefit of learners, providers, employers and other stakeholders.

Cross-border cooperation (agreements on learning mobility, use of European templates)

Experience in pilot projects.



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European Centre for the Development
of Vocational Training

Monitoring ECVET implementation strategies in Europe

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Monitoring ECVET implementation strategies in Europe

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The European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET) Council recommendation calls on Member States to 'create the necessary conditions and adopt measures so that as from 2012 it is possible for ECVET to be gradually applied to VET qualifications at all levels of the EQF'. This report is the third Cedefop monitoring exercise and analyses developments in ECVET from June 2011 to September 2012. Its main objective is to provide an overview of the situation regarding the necessary conditions for ECVET in 32 countries. The results are varied: although most countries are committed to ECVET implementation and are progressing in developing necessary conditions, there is still progress to be made. The report shows that it is necessary to mainstream efforts, bringing together different developments and working on synergies with other European tools.



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