

Keeping you informed about European Credit system for Vocational Education & Training

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Editorial

Stefano Di Giusto

Education, Audiovisual
and Culture Executive
Agency



In 2011, a number of new actions will start being implemented through the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) to support the development and testing of ECVET at European level. The pool of ECVET pilot projects will be enhanced and the implementation of ECVET technical specifications is also a priority of the recently launched LLP call for proposals under the Leonardo da Vinci sub-programme. We all hope that these initiatives will contribute to further raising the understanding of ECVET and strengthen the pool of methodologies and tools available to implement this still rather new initiative. We also hope that more and more stakeholders will take the opportunity to get involved in using ECVET.

New projects to support the implementation of the ECVET system

Eight new ECVET pilot projects have been recently selected by the Executive Agency Education, Audiovisual and Culture.

Applications were submitted to the Executive Agency in July 2011 in the framework of the call for proposals "Support to national projects to test and develop the credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET)" (EA-CEA/2010/08).

The objective of this call was to award grants to projects aiming at setting up or consolidating partnerships between competent institutions to apply and implement in concrete terms the ECVET system, as set out in the technical specifications annexed to the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council.

Projects are expected to help putting the ECVET system into practice and preparing the measures required for its adoption by the Member States. Although each project has been submitted by a multinational consortium, their focus is mainly national. However, the international partners

play an important role as advisors and testers that provide feedback and check the possibilities to transfer the project outcomes to their own context.

Project coordinators are from Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Malta, with in total 43 partners coming from 16 countries participating to the LLP programme. Projects will start their work between January and March 2011 and will last from 24 to 36 months.

Project summaries will shortly be available on the Executive Agency website on the page http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/results_projects/project_compendia_en.php

It is foreseen that the new projects will also be shortly presented on the ECVET website <http://www.ecvet-projects.eu>

ECVET in the general LLP call for proposals 2011

This year, the development of ECVET will be further encouraged by projects that will be selected in the framework of the general call for proposals 2011 of the Lifelong Learning Programme. In fact, ECVET features as a priority in two actions of the Leonardo da Vinci programme in the 2011 call:

- Multilateral projects for Transfer of innovation (ToI) (priority 3.2.5 “ECVET for transparency and recognition of learning outcomes and Qualifications”) and
- Multilateral projects for Development of innovation (DoI) (priority 3.3.1 “Implementing ECVET for transparency and recognition of learning outcomes and qualifications”).

In addition, the development and implementation of ECVET elements (description of learning outcomes, assessment and recognition of learning outcomes) is also encouraged under Leonardo da Vinci Mobility and Partnership projects.

The general LLP call for proposals has been published in October 2010; deadline for submission of applications is:

- 4 February 2011 for Leonardo da Vinci Mobility,
- 21 February 2011 for Leonardo da Vinci Partnerships; and
- 28 February 2011 for Leonardo da Vinci Multilateral

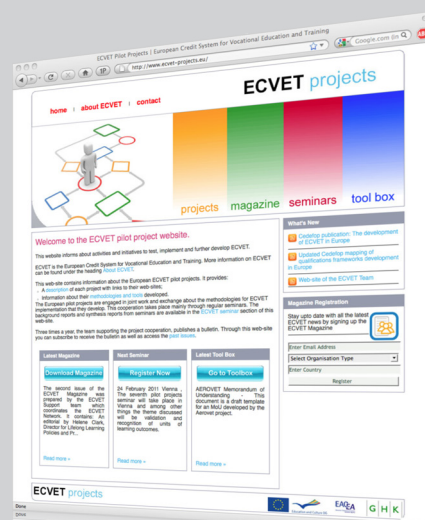
projects (ToI and DoI).

For further information on the call see the European Commission – DG Education and Culture webpage: http://ec.europa.eu/education/llp/doc848_en.htm

A description of the various actions (or types of projects) of the Leonardo da Vinci programme can be found on the webpage: http://ec.europa.eu/education/llp/doc1943_en.htm

Please note that Leonardo da Vinci Multilateral projects for Development of Innovation (DoI) is a centralised action, for which the assessment and selection procedure is managed by the Executive Agency, to which applications are to be submitted. All information on application submission for the centralised actions and all documentation, including application form, instructions for applicants, etc. are available on this webpage on the Executive Agency website: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/funding/2011/call_lifelong_learning_2011.php

Leonardo da Vinci Multilateral projects for Transfer of innovation (ToI), Mobility and Partnership are decentralised actions, managed by the LLP National Agencies, which are responsible for the selection procedure; information on the application procedure and all documentation are available on each National Agency’s website, a list of which can be found on this webpage: http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc1208_en.htm



FOCUS

Article written by Juliette Panisset (GHK Consulting) based on an ASSET project partnership meeting which took place on 8 and 9 June 2010 in Espoo (Finland)

Fostering the mobility of learners in initial training in the Automobile Services Sector : ASSET project

Context

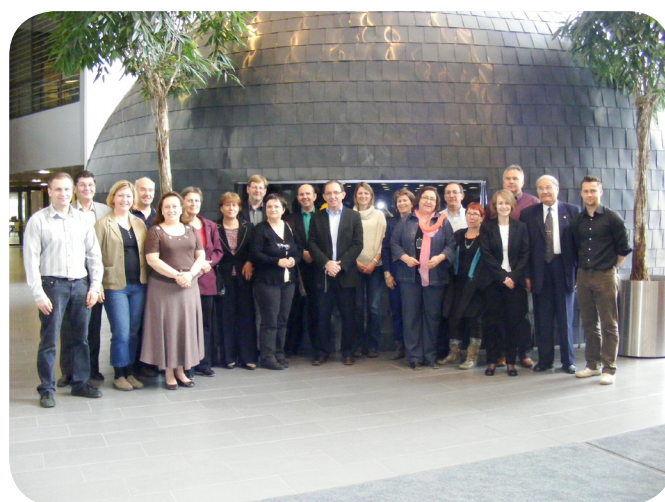
The ASSET project focuses on the automobile services sector and aims at using ECVET to recognise mobility as an integrated part of vocational education and training in this particular sector.

The nature of the automobile services sector appears particularly suitable for the testing of ECVET. Professions in this sector concern a large number of enterprises, mainly SMEs, the products are very similar across Europe and so are the job tasks. At the same time the professions undergo constant technological changes, requiring a regular update of persons' qualifications.

ASSET's main objective is to offer the possibility for learners in initial training to undertake some of their training abroad through a recognised mobility experience, involving the validation, transfer and accumulation of acquired units of learning outcomes. As part of ECVET testing, the ASSET project aims at developing a limited number of units of learning outcomes that learners can acquire during a mobility programme and at testing them through the organisation of mobility experiences among the different ASSET partners. These units are commonly referred to in the ASSET project as 'unit of learning outcomes open to mobility'.

To this end, the ASSET project chose to work on the profession of 'Car Electrician electronics technician', which is a common job profile in the field of car maintenance in the four ASSET partners' countries. The common units of learning outcomes open to mobility derive from the qualifications corresponding to this job profile in the respective partners' countries.

To maximise the workability and acceptance of the tools developed by the ASSET project, the ASSET partnership brings together training centres, competent authorities and representatives of the automobile industry. Each of the dif-



ferent stakeholders plays a key role in the development of the ASSET project's methodology.

ECVET Technical specifications

Units of learning outcomes and assessment

In June 2010, the ASSET project finalised the development and writing of the four units of learning outcomes that are to become open to mobility between the ASSET partners. The development of these four units of learning outcomes followed different stages.

Initially, the training centres of the four ASSET partners' countries (i.e. Finland, France, Hungary and Romania) started identifying, in collaboration with representatives of the automobile industry, which key competences were considered as essential in the automobile services sector. Technicians possessing both mechanical and electrical competences and able to work on systems using relatively standard techniques appeared to be particularly valued by professionals of the automobile services sector. Con-

sequently, the ASSET partners selected and wrote a job profile for the ‘car electrician electronics technician’ which corresponds to these core competences and that was common to the four partners’ countries. In order to ensure that they were referring to the same professional profile, the ASSET partners wrote an accurate definition of the selected job profile (see Table 1).

Table 1: Common definition of the job profile in the ASSET project

The ‘car electrician electronics technician’ has been selected as a common job profile in the ASSET project. The ‘car electrician electronics technician’ can perform all preventative and corrective maintenance on combustion engines and auxiliary equipment, the mechanical systems and the electrical /electronic /pneumatic /hydraulic /optical systems concerned with the driving, comfort and safety of the vehicle. In order to perform these maintenance tasks, the technician knows the procedures and steps necessary to establish a diagnosis and to undertake the checks, adjustments and tests.

Following the selection of the job profile, the ASSET partners identified, in each of their national contexts, a qualification corresponding to this job profile, undertook an analysis of the respective national qualifications and identified the key occupational activities: the aim of this process was to map which areas were common to the qualifications in the different partners’ system. On this basis, converging occupational activities were highlighted and those that were particularly suitable for mobility were selected.

Common occupational activities suitable for mobility were grouped to form units of learning outcomes. The ASSET partners agreed to build units so that learners can master the learning outcomes during a three-week mobility period. They also agreed that the mobility would take part in the second part of the training programme (equivalent to the second year in some of the national systems). This means that the learners will all have achieved the necessary pre-requisites to be able to master the given learning outcomes during a relatively short period.

The four units of learning outcomes built by the ASSET project have been defined according to a similar methodology. As illustrated by Table 2, for each unit, representatives of the automobile sector and training centres listed the key competences that constituted the core of the unit and linked these competences to the necessary skills and knowledge to acquire these competences. In reality, the partners begun by describing the competences and on basis of these they identified the necessary knowledge and skills.

In addition to the description of the units of learning outcomes in knowledge, skills and competences, the ASSET partners developed accompanying documents related to:

- the conditions for ‘accessing’ the unit (i.e. a description of the technical and methodological pre-requisites that learners need to master before mobility); and
- the validation of the unit (assessment grid and guidelines).

Table 2: Unit of learning outcome 3 defined by the ASSET project > Wheel alignment

Knowledge	Skills	Competences
<p>K1: General description</p> <p>K1.1. Mathematics measures and values</p> <p>K.1.2. Trigonometry</p> <p>K.1.3. Mapping on a axis or a plane</p> <p>K.1.4. 2D and 3D Geometry</p> <p>K.2 Wheel alignment</p> <p>K2.1: Angles of wheel alignment</p> <p>K2.2: Variation of the angles depending on the movement of the vehicle</p> <p>K2.3: Testing conditions depending on manufacturers’ recommendations</p> <p>K2.4: Diagnostic angles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • swivel axis inclination • king pin offset • camber and caster • over steer and under steer • left and right offset • rear and front offset <p>K2.5: Geometry of the vehicle</p> <p>K2.6: Height of the vehicle</p> <p>K2.7: Dish of the wheel</p>	<p>S1: Explain the use of angles</p> <p>S2: Put the vehicle into position and condition</p> <p>S3: Establish a diagnosis procedure</p> <p>S4: Check the geometry of the wheel alignment</p> <p>S5: Establish the relationship between the behaviour of the vehicle and the wheel alignment</p> <p>S6: Analyse the test report</p> <p>S7: Adjust the geometry of the wheel alignment</p> <p>S8: Identify the faulty parts</p>	<p>C1: Complete a diagnostic and maintenance on the wheel alignment</p> <p>C1.1: Complete all of the preliminary test</p> <p>C1.2: Check the geometry of the wheel alignment</p> <p>C1.3: Analyse and justify orally the test bench report</p> <p>C1.4: Adjust the wheel alignment</p> <p>C1.5: Respect the methods and schedule</p> <p>C2: Organise the work respecting health and safety rules</p>

In line with the ECVET specifications, the assessment of learning outcomes acquired by the learner during the mobility period is carried out by the host institution (e.g. teachers, trainers, employers, etc). Therefore, to ensure that the competences listed for each unit will be assessed similarly by each partner when a learner is undertaking a mobility programme on the said unit, assessment grids and assessment guidelines were developed. The assessment

grid is composed of two elements: first, it provides the person in charge of evaluating the learner, guidelines on when and how the assessment of the specific unit should be performed. It also describes the objective of the assessment, the context in which the assessment should take place and the material necessary for the assessment. Table 3 below presents an example of the first part of the assessment grid.

Table 3: Assessment of Unit 3 > Wheel alignment > First part of the assessment grid template

Moment of the assessment: At the end of the training period corresponding to Unit 3	
Time limit: 2 hours 30	
Nature of the assessment: Practical assessment in real situation	
<p>Objective: Complete a verification and adjustment of the geometry of the wheel alignment and adjust the alignment of the wheels.</p> <p>Context: A vehicle which has had its angular values modified</p>	<p>Material necessary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written information about the problem; • A vehicle presenting a malfunction on the wheel alignment; • A job sheet; • All useful technical documents relative to the vehicle; • Equipped work station; • 4-wheel alignment testing equipment.

Secondly, the assessment grid defines the assessment criteria that should be used to assess whether the learner has acquired each competence of the said unit. For each competence, the learner can be granted a mark from 0 to 3. The ASSET partners decided to adopt a marking system from 0 to 3 in order to overcome national differences: this marking system is to be used only for the assessment of the unit open for mobility and ASSET partners will

respectively interpret the mark obtained by the learner in mobility in their national system. Furthermore, each competence has been granted a coefficient. The allocation of a coefficient for each competence of the unit was agreed among the partners and depends on the relative importance of the competence to fully master the unit. Table 4 below provides an extract of the template of assessment grid for Unit 3.

Table 4: Assessment of Unit 3 > Wheel alignment > Second part of the assessment grid template (extract)

Competence	Assessment Criteria	Mark (0,1,2,3)	Coefficient	Total
Complete all the preliminary tests	Preliminary testing of the wheel alignment allows possible malfunctions to be detected		2	
Check the geometry of the wheel alignment	The testing equipment is correctly positioned. The chosen operating procedures are respected		2	
Respect health and safety regulations	The safety of the candidate and the vehicle are respected throughout the regulation		1	

Furthermore, assessment guidelines were developed to ensure a transparent and consistent use of the assessment grid by the different ASSET partners. Assessment guidelines should be used by the teachers in charge of the evaluation to interpret in a similar way the assessment

criteria and make sure that the learners from the different ASSET partners are assessed on an equal footing. Table 5 provides an example of how the evaluator should interpret the assessment criteria for one of the competences of Unit 3:

Table 5: Assessment of Unit 3 – Wheel alignment – Assessment guidelines (extract)

Diagnostic and maintenance on the wheel alignment		
Competence	Assessment criteria	Marks
Complete all of the preliminary test	For preliminary testing, in order to obtain correct results, the check conditions are not respected and the possible malfunctions are not validated.	0
	For preliminary testing, in order to obtain correct results, some check conditions are respected but the possible malfunctions are not validated.	1
	For preliminary testing, in order to obtain correct results, all check conditions are respected but some possible malfunctions are not validated	2
	For preliminary testing, in order to obtain correct results, all check conditions are respected but possible malfunctions are validated	3

Setting up a first mobility experience to test the units of learning outcomes and their related assessment

At the beginning of 2010, the ASSET project organised a first mobility experience in order to test the developed units of learning outcomes and their related assessment tools. Exchange of learners respectively took place between the Finnish and Hungarian training centres and the French and Romanian ones. These first mobility experiences did not cover the same unit of learning outcomes which enabled to test the methodology developed by ASSET to the larger extent possible. ASSET partners decided that the theoretical part of the unit of learning outcome open to mobility would be taught in the learners’ language during the mobility period while the practical part of the unit would be delivered by the host training centre. Therefore, learners in mobility were accompanied by teachers from the sending training centre who were responsible for teaching the theoretical part of the unit and observed how teachers of the host training centres delivered the practical part of the unit and carried out the assessment. In the approach developed by ASSET, teachers of the host institution are responsible for assessing both theoretical and practical part of the unit that is taught in mobility. The theoretical part is not assessed separately but considered through its application by the learner in the practical aspects during the final evaluation test organised by the host institution.

This first mobility test enabled to foster trust between the ASSET partners and to validate the developed tools. ASSET partners also realised that the practical part of the units could be delivered in different settings: while the learners received their practical training and were evaluated in the workshops’ of the training centres in France, this was carried out in private garages working in cooperation with the training centre in Romania. This illustrated the

level of flexibility and mutual trust that each training centre should have when working with a partner’s training centre. ASSET partners also realised that additional tools should be developed for the next mobility test in order to maximise learners’ experience, such as a glossary of technical terms and a practical guide describing the living conditions and cultural habits of the host country. The added-value of the mobility test was also recognised by the respective accompanying teachers, who highlighted the opportunity for learners to familiarise themselves with different mechanical equipment and ways of working.¹

This first mobility experience confirmed the feasibility of the methodology developed by the ASSET partners. However, at that time it was not possible to formally recognise the units of learning outcomes acquired and validated by the learners in mobility because the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and the Learning Agreement (LA) were not formally in place in early 2010.

Developing the Memorandum of Understanding and Learning Agreement of the ASSET project to prepare the real mobility test

During the meeting held on 8 and 9 June 2010 in Espoo (Finland), the ASSET partners continued developing the draft Memorandum of Understanding and Learning Agreement to be used during the second mobility test in 2011. Whereas the training centres and the representatives of the automobile services sector had an active role in the construction of the units of learning outcomes open to mobility, the responsibility for elaborating the MoU and LA principally lies in the hands of competent institutions of the four ASSET partners’ countries. In order to prepare the drafting of the MoU and LA, a document was circulated among the ASSET partners to identify key aspects, such as the legal framework in which the competent institutions oper-

1 For more information on the feedback received by students and accompanying teachers regarding the first mobility test, please refer to the second edition of the ASSET Newsletter: <http://www.ecvet-projects.eu/Projects/ProjectDetail.aspx?id=9>



ate and the functions of the competent institutions in the different countries². Taking into account ECVET technical specifications and templates elaborated by other ECVET pilot projects³, the ASSET partners agreed on the elements that should be included in the MoU, namely:

- the objective of the MoU;
- the identification of the competent bodies involved;
- the identification of the qualifications concerned;
- the identification of the accredited VET providers involved in the MoU;
- the description of the units that could be used during the mobility period; and
- the conditions concerning the LA between the VET providers.

The template of LA developed by ASSET refers to the MoU signed between the competent institutions. In addition to the identification of the learner, the host VET provider and the home VET provider, the LA elaborated by ASSET refers to the conditions and obligations of the VET provider, the dates and place of the mobility period and the commitments of the learner.⁴

Several questions arose during the elaboration of the MoU and the LA. ASSET partners first discussed whether the

MoU should be signed between two competent institutions (i.e. bilaterally) or whether all competent institutions involved in the ASSET project should be bound by the same MoU. ASSET partners opted for the signature of the MoU at bilateral level as it answered better to the needs and reality of the VET providers: usually, exchange of learners only takes place between two partners at the same time. ASSET partners also examined whether the MoU should include reference to the duration of validity of the assessment of the unit of learning outcome acquired abroad. Taking into account the different level of flexibility of the competent institutions in the different partners' countries, ASSET partners decided that the MoU would only mention that each competent institution might decide on the duration of the validity of the assessment and should inform the learner.

More information

You can read more information about the ASSET project on their website: <http://www.assetecvet.eu/>. ASSET website describes the project and the different work packages and presents the finalised tools elaborated within the ASSET project, including the final version of the Units of Learning Outcomes and their respective assessment grid and guidelines as well as the Learning Agreement and the Memorandum of Understanding models to be used by the project's partners.

ASSET project will be running until the end of 2011. Further work on the allocation of the ECVET points to the identified units of learning outcomes and preparation of the second round of mobility tests will be carried out in the following months. The second round of mobility test will enable to test all tools developed by the ASSET project and experiment for the first time the acquisition, transfer, recognition and accumulation of assessed learning outcomes of learners who participate in a mobility programme to achieve part of their qualification abroad, in one of the ASSET partners' training centre.

² Functions related to the description and validation of the qualification as well as the assessment and awarding procedures were particularly analysed.

³ To elaborate a MoU which corresponds to ASSET project's needs, the ASSET partners used the MoU developed in the framework on the 'European Class in Trucks Maintenance' as a basis.

⁴ ASSET LA also includes annexes related to: A) the Units of Learning Outcomes concerned by the mobility period (including a complete description), B) details regarding the organisation of the mobility period, C) a description of the cultural and linguistic conditions, D) Assessment procedures, E) Personal transcript delivered to the learner, F) a description of the administrative and legal rules and regulations, G) a description of the financial conditions, and H) guidelines about the final report to be produced by each VET provider after the mobility period.

Recognising learning outcomes of mobile people in the 'Grande Région' - VALOGREG project

Context

The "Grande Région" is at the junction of four different countries (Belgium, France, Germany and Luxembourg) and is formed of the following regions: Saar-Lorraine, Luxembourg, Rheinland-Pfalz and Wallonie. The region is marked by significant cross-border working population: around 180.000 people cross the border daily in order to work in another region. Many enterprises settled in this area are active in the whole Grande Région. In addition many people cross the border for learning purposes.

There is currently no formal framework for recognition, with the exception of certain regulated professions. The existence of four different training systems and two different languages presents an additional challenge to the recognition process.

This is the context in which the project "Value Learning Outcomes in the Grande Région" (VaLOGReg) is working to test and provide solutions to real-life learning situations in this region by facilitating the recognition of learning outcomes, without prolonging the training period.

Unlike other projects, VaLOGREG looks at ECVET from a different point of view by concentrating on the issue of life-long learning. Moving away from the strategy focused on developing units as adopted by many projects, this project focuses on facilitating the recognition of the learning outcomes that young adults or adults have obtained in varied contexts (different countries, institutions or systems, as well as formal, non-formal, or informal kinds of learning).



Because it does not seek to design and cut out common units into the national qualifications, the experimentation carried out by VaLOGReg somehow reflects what would happen with large scale mobility taking place outside transnational networks and learning agreements and how ECVET could be used in this context.

Technical specifications

VaLOGReg focuses on two professional qualifications in the fields of Electronics in energy and building technology and Car mechanics. Looking at qualifications in these two sectors, the project is developing tools to ensure the transparency of the corresponding qualifications so that the recognition processes developed by each partner will become much easier, faster and less costly.

In order to support recognition, it is important to develop mutual trust and understanding between the different actors of vocational training in the five regions involved. To es-

establish partners' mutual trust, the VaLOGREeg consortium worked in cooperation with experts in electronics and auto-mechanics, to carry out a thorough review of the national qualifications systems.

As a result of this review the experts agreed on not using units for the transfer of competences acquired in another context, but rather using learning outcomes. Indeed all the countries in the partnership have some form of units in their qualification such as 'modules' or 'lernfelder' but these cannot really be compared or matched between two countries. Also each system has a different understanding of units. Therefore, what is transferred in the project are learning outcomes. These will be validated and recognised towards nationally existing units or modules. In other words, the mobile individual achieves certain knowledge, skills and competences abroad and these are assessed. When arriving to another country, these learning outcomes will be compared with the learning outcomes of units in the country where s/he seeks recognition and they will be validated and recognised meaning the person can achieve a full unit, several units or a part of the unit that exists in the national system.

This is why the project differs from the other ECVET projects: it does not seek to design and cut out common units into the national qualifications, but focuses on identifying equivalent learning outcomes. The advantage of the approach is that there is no need to adopt identical approaches for the creation of units, harmonise the methodology which underlies the qualifications or structure the national qualification in units. It also better reflects "real-life" mobility situations between the regions.

Whilst other ECVET projects are working on testing specific units for mobility, the ambition of VaLOGReg is to facilitate mobility in the Grande-region as if the learning outcomes were recognised within the same country. In a long-term perspective, the idea is that any part of the qualification could be subject to mobility and recognition.

Transfer and recognition

As a consequence of the approach chosen by VaLOGReg, what will be transferred from one context to another is not one or several units but a 'bundle' of learning outcomes. The use of the word "unit" in this context is avoided on purpose, to avoid confusion with the units existing in national qualifications and which have a very specific meaning in each system.

Home and host institutions will determine, when drafting the learning agreement, what will be validated and transferred at the end of the mobility period (i.e. which learning outcomes). These learning outcomes will not be identified a priori by the steering group and the experts.

Nevertheless partners will work within a broad framework providing a basis for mutual trust and cooperation.

During their review exercise the experts identified key activities for the qualifications concerned and corresponding "learning fields". For car mechanics qualifications for instance there are seven broad learning fields common to all qualifications. They constitute a framework within which recognition and transfer will be possible. It will be the role of the 'pairs' (home/host institutions) to identify, within this framework, the learning outcomes that can be the basis for mobility. Each pair will therefore validate, transfer and recognise different learning outcomes.

However, the recognition of the learning outcomes acquired and validated in other systems will depend on the efficiency of the tools designed to insure transparency.

It will also require a certain degree of autonomy of training providers so that they are entitled to make a judgement about the equivalence of learning outcomes and have the possibility to validate and recognise these learning outcomes even though they have been assessed abroad.

Learning fields within which mobility can be organised - Car mechanics

1. Carry out various punctual and preventive maintenance operations of a vehicle
2. Replace or repair defective parts
3. Carry out the necessary adjustments for the good functioning of the vehicle
4. Diagnose a failure or fault due to mechanical, electrical, electronic, hydraulic or pneumatic problem
5. Set up and organise one's working station
6. Communicate with the clients
7. Integrate in the professional environment

Memorandum of Understanding: a broad framework for cooperation

At the time of writing of this article (early autumn 2010) VaLOGReg was working on the finalisation of the Memorandum of Understanding to be signed by the competent authorities in the three countries.

The definition of competent institution varies from one country to the next. In Luxembourg this is the Ministry of education for the delivery of certification. In Belgium IFAPME is competent to deliver certification, but occupation standards are the competence of the Ministry of Education. In Germany the situation is even more specific because of the dual system.

The Memorandum of Understanding will define the general 'framework' within which the mobility between schools/training centres will be possible, leaving room for flexibility, as it will not identify specific learning outcomes for transfer and recognition, but only broad 'learning fields' (and not units). This means that the Memorandum of Understanding must acknowledge that training providers do have sufficient autonomy to decide which learning outcomes acquired abroad they will recognise (as long as they are part of the 'learning fields' agreed upon at the level of MoU). These learning outcomes will be taken into account in the training pathway (i.e. there will be no repetition of the learning activity).

At a later stage the learning agreements between the training centres hosting the learners will be finalised. These learning agreements will be the key operational documents for the mobility of learners, whereby the 'pairs' identify the learning outcomes that will be transferred and validated at the end of the mobility period. This approach entails that training providers in the three regions have a sufficient degree of autonomy that enables them to make decisions on issues such as validation, recognition, assessment etc.

One of the effect of the Memorandum will be to clearly set out that training providers (e.g. schools) which will sign learning agreements have sufficient autonomy to decide which learning outcomes they will recognise and transfer from another context or institution. At the political level this autonomy needs to be clearly acknowledged.

A testing mobility phase is take place at the end of 2010/early-mid 2011, and lasting two to three to five weeks. Given the short mobility period, partners cannot organise mobility on all the common fields and will only work within one learning field.

Challenges

Given the important role that is given to the training providers in the project, in particular their responsibility in drafting the key operational document of the mobility (learning agreement), there are a number of issues that will need to be addressed by the actors on the ground. The home and host institutions need to meet and agree on what exactly will be the subject of mobility. Mobility partners might encounter challenges when identifying the learning outcomes on which they can establish mobility, but also when discussing the basis on which these will be assessed (e.g. assessment indicators). Work still remains to be done on "refining" the description of the learning fields so that competences can be clearly identified (and thereby assessed).

The consequence of the approach chosen by VaLOGReg is also that mobility will not be facilitated by a quasi-automatic transfer and recognition of learning achievements. The way learning outcomes will be recognised will depend on the logic of each national system – bearing in mind that recognition entails a minima the fact that the learning activity will not be repeated in the home country.

Recognition in VaLOGReg is driven by the fact that partners do not transfer units. If the 'bundle' of learning outcomes assessed and validated in the host country corresponds to a whole module or unit at home, then the home institution will not assess this unit/module a second time. If the learning outcomes correspond to part of a module or unit, these will be fully assessed in the home country, but the learner will be exempted from the learning activity corresponding to these learning outcomes.

In Germany and Luxembourg where learning outcomes correspond to part of the training pathway and not part of the qualification (because the qualification is only awarded after the final exam and not acquired progressively), it is anticipated that the learning outcomes will be assessed again as part of the final assessment.

More information

The project has still over one year to finalise their methodology and test mobility in practice. Through the publication of a Newsletter (once every semester), VaLOGReg informs the public in the Grande Region about the progress made by the project. The second Newsletter for instance presents the results of the expert group who worked on comparing the qualifications of the partnership. The Newsletter can be downloaded on the ECVET pilot projects web-site part dedicated to information about VaLOGReg: <http://www.ecvet-projects.eu/Projects/ProjectDetail.aspx?id=16>

FOCUS

GHK Consulting team based on the seminar held in Prague on 18 and 19 November 2010

Sixth ECVET pilot projects SEMINAR - synthesis of results

Eleven ECVET pilot projects started their work in 2009. They now have two years of work on designing and testing ECVET technical specifications behind them. Many of them are starting to see the preliminary results of their work as well as the limitations of some of the approaches originally envisaged. Two of the projects (M.O.T.O and OPIR) are completing their work this winter and will make their results and recommendations public shortly.

Given the experience accumulated by the projects in putting the ECVET concepts into practice, the sixth seminar of the pilot projects gave rise to enlightening discussions and exchanges on these topics:

- Development of ECVET related documentation (Memorandum of Understanding - MoU, Learning Agreement - LA and Transcript of record);
- Assessment of learning outcomes in the context of geographical mobility; and
- Validation and recognition of units of learning outcomes.

The two projects which are completing their work this year presented their findings and these were discussed and reflected upon by the other projects.

This article will briefly summarise some of the key messages from this seminar.

Documentation supporting ECVET implementation

Prior to the seminar, most projects sent examples of their MoUs and Learning agreements to GHK who organised and facilitated the seminar. Based on these examples a number of similarities between the templates were identi-

fied. Table 1 opposite shows the items that occur in all (or many) MoUs and learning agreements as well as some additional items that are present in some templates.

A large part of the discussion on the topic of ECVET documentation revolved around differences in the understanding of Who should sign a MoU. Indeed the ECVET Recommendation is not explicit on this point. In general, there are two possible understandings of the role of the MoU in the use of ECVET. Based on these two alternatives different approaches to signing a MoU can be distinguished:

- One alternative is to envisage the MoU as a very broad framework for cooperation at a high level, between the authorities in charge of the qualification (for example the ministries or sectoral bodies). In this case the MoU would be less specific than in the second case. It would contain the main principles for using ECVET for mobility, identify in broad terms the possibilities for validation and recognition of credit from partner systems and designate the types of actors entitled to operate within the framework of the MoU. It would most likely not give detailed information about the content of qualifications or the detail of mobility arrangement but only information about the type and level of qualifications. Given the 'high level' nature of such agreements, the MoUs could cover a range of qualifications (or types of qualifications) and be signed by networks of authorities to avoid multiplications of agreements.
- Another alternative is to use the MoU as a more operational framework for mobility exchanges (for example among a group of regional authorities or a network of VET providers). In this case it is likely to contain more detailed information about the qualifications con-

Table 1: Items included in pilot projects' MoUs and Learning Agreements

Note: This table was developed based on draft information in some cases

Items present in MoUs of most projects	Comment	Items present in the LAs of most projects	Comment
Introduction – What is the MoU about and what is its status		Introduction – what is the LA and how to use it	
Identification of competent authorities that are signing the MoU (name of institution, address, etc.)	Some projects also identify the role of the person signing	Identification of the learner concerned by the LA (name and other details)	
Description of the competent authority signing the MoU (what is their competence within the qualifications system)	Some projects use a textual description; some refer to the functions of competent authorities as described in the ECVET Questions and Answers	Identification of the home and host institutions (name of institution, etc.)	A few LAs also include a description of their roles
The qualifications concerned by the MoU	The level of detail in which the qualifications are actually described in the MoU varies: some only mention the titles in the partner countries others also include the description of units that will be the subject of mobility in an Annex	Qualification being prepared by the learner	
Units of learning outcomes	Some projects mention only the titles of units identified as common, others include the description of learning outcomes in an Annex. A few MoUs do not refer to units (this figures only in the LAs)	Titles and descriptions of unit(s) of learning outcomes that are concerned by the specific mobility exchange (what the learner will learn during mobility) and the related ECVET points*	This information is sometimes in an Annex
Duration of the validity of the MoU		Information about the assessment procedure for the specific learner (who will assess, when and how)	Several projects include an assessment grid to be used by the assessor in the LA
Signatures and formulae through which the institutions accept the conditions in the MoU		Basic information about the mobility period: when will it takes place, who is the contact person	The nature of information on this point varies
Additional items present in some MoUs	Projects which mention this aspect	Signatures of the three parties (host and home institution and the learner)	
Identification of VET providers who are entitled to run mobility using ECVET within the framework of the MoU	ASSET VaLOGReg (the type of providers not necessarily the exact names of institutions)	Additional items present in some LAs	Projects which mention this aspect
Information about the nature and/or duration of mobility exchanges	Aerovet M.O.T.O	The learning activities the learner will take part in during the mobility	M.O.T.O Recomfor
The division of responsibilities with regard to mobility between the home and the host organisation (who does what)	Aerovet M.O.T.O	Practical aspects concerning the mobility such as: language requirements, costs, housing, insurance, etc.	ASSET VaLOGReg Recomfor
Commitment to certain quality principles for different aspects of mobility	Aerovet M.O.T.O Recomfor	Overview of who does what (home and host institution)	Credchem Recomfor
Information about who will assess and possibly how	Aerovet – also the information about different levels of performance to be used by assessors M.O.T.O	Obligations of the different parties	ASSET Recomfor
Information about how learning outcomes will be validated and recognised	Aerovet – indicates who is responsible for this aspect Recomfor – indicates how reference units relate to national certifications	*Depending on the way ECVET points are used in the projects	

cerned, the mobility exchanges and the conditions for assessment, validation and recognition of credit. It is not feasible to envisage that such operational agreements would be signed by high level authorities such as ministries. Consequently, they would need to be signed at another level. However, the decision on who needs to sign such an agreement would also depend on the responsibilities of different actors within the qualifications system. It is necessary that those authorities that decide on whether credit can be validated and recognised agree with the conditions described in the MoU.

Furthermore, pilot projects generally agreed on the following points in relation to MoUs and Learning Agreements:

- The MoU is an umbrella agreement and therefore it should be able to cover a range of situations over a certain duration (several years). It should not be expected to be modified each time the detailed arrangements for a given mobility exchange are adapted. The nature of information included and the level of detail should be in line with these expectations.
- The way the responsibilities over the functions¹ involved in ECVET implementation are distributed among actors in qualifications systems differs greatly from country to country/system to system. Sometimes the responsibilities are highly centralised while in other cases they are highly decentralised. It is unlikely to see ministries from one country signing a multiplicity of agreements directly with VET providers from another country. Therefore it is important, in view of implementing ECVET at large scale, to find arrangements that would enable the creation of networks according to the needs on the ground, without imposing administrative burden on the different actors in the systems.
- The fact that ECVET can only be operational if it is used in an environment where there is trust among the different parties is highlighted in all policy statements and documents about this instrument. In general, trust is understood as horizontal trust between authorities with equivalent competencies from different countries. However, there is also a need for vertical trust between the national/sectoral authorities and the VET providers, including all other parties that intervene in the processes related to ECVET. Unless certain responsibilities can be managed at local level (by the VET providers possibly in cooperation with local/regional authorities) there is a risk that the development and signing of ECVET related agreements would create unnecessary bureaucracy.

Assessment, validation and recognition of learning outcomes

The discussion on assessment in ECVET started in the seminar held in Barcelona in June 2010. In that seminar all projects presented their approach to assessment and the issues they are facing with regard to this aspect of ECVET. During this seminar a series of messages was identified. These messages were further discussed in Prague.

ECVET Recommendation about assessment:

- During mobility periods, the assessment is carried out abroad, by the host institution;
- Assessment concerns the learning outcomes that form the unit(s) which the learner should achieve during mobility;
- Positive assessment is the basis of validation and recognition of credit.

The following points were highlighted in the discussions in Barcelona and Prague:

- In the mobility context, partnerships should reflect on the feasibility and suitability of the assessment they envisage. This implies taking into account constraints such as time and resources available or the language skills of learners and assessors;
- The ECVET partnerships bring in partners from different qualifications systems, each of which has its own practices and traditions in using assessment methods. It is important to accept that the same learning outcomes can be assessed using different approaches/methods or that the profile of assessors may differ from one country to another. Otherwise there is a risk of imposing too much burden and changes on the partner institutions which will in the end constrain the possibilities for organising exchanges.
- When grouping learning outcomes into units that are to be used in transnational mobility, partnerships should reflect on the implications for assessment. Some units can be too large to be assessed during a mobility period or they may require an assessment that is too complex to be carried out abroad (possibly in a foreign language).
- The learning outcomes description is an important basis for assessment. The description should be clear and contain the necessary information (for example about context or autonomy). When the learning outcomes descriptions are unambiguous the understanding of assessment criteria and the choice of assessment methods is facilitated.

¹ For a better understanding of what these functions are refer to the section B of the ECVET Questions and Answers: <http://www.ecvet-projects.eu/About/UsefulSources.aspx>

- The assessment procedures/methods and criteria used in the partner systems to assess the units of learning outcomes concerned by the mobility exchange should be transparent (for example described in a Learning Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding).
- The results of each learner's assessment need to be documented so that when the learner returns to his/her home institution s/he brings with him/her the evidence on the assessment results that is sufficient to validate and recognise his or her credit. This can be done using simple grids or templates that are based on learning outcomes descriptions.
- Given that partnerships are likely to use different approaches and methods for assessment, the mechanisms to ensure the quality of assessment and of its result should be clear. This is expected to stimulate trust among partner systems. Pilot projects have put in place different solutions to this issue, for example: agreeing some common principles (e.g. range of methods to use), sharing common documentation (e.g. assessment grids), organising joint assessment (with the home and host institution) in the initial phases of the partnership.

The issue of validation and recognition will be further discussed in the upcoming seminar in Vienna, but some initial ideas were gathered during the seminar in Prague. It is clear from these discussions that there are different understandings of how the two concepts (validation and recognition) translate into practice.

The ECVET Recommendation defines validation and recognition as follows:

'Validation of learning outcomes' means the process of confirming that certain assessed learning outcomes achieved by a learner correspond to specific outcomes which may be required for a unit or a qualification.

In other words: the knowledge, skills and competences that have been assessed and the assessment confirmed that the learner has achieved them are compared with the required/expected learning outcomes. If they correspond, meaning the learner has indeed achieved what s/he was expected to, the assessed learning outcomes are validated.

'Recognition of learning outcomes' means the process of attesting officially achieved learning outcomes through the awarding of units or qualifications.

In other words: recognition results in an official document which states that the learner has achieved the expected learning outcomes to award the unit or the qualification.

The differences in the understanding of validation and recognition among the pilot projects stem from the fact that these processes are not always explicit in the qualifications systems in which they operate (even though they are nearly always present implicitly).

The following points were raised in Prague:

- In some systems it is currently not possible to validate learning outcomes: it is only possible to validate the learning pathway (in other words avoid duplication of learning activities). However, even in these systems there is added value in identifying the learning outcomes the learner achieved abroad as this makes the added value of mobility clearer;
- There is no contradiction between the concept of accumulation and the use of a final assessment. The final assessment typically concerns the way learners are capable to combine all the knowledge, skills and competence they have acquired in more complex tasks. The learning outcomes achieved abroad can be validated for the purpose of learners' progression in the learning pathway and recognised once the final assessment is successfully completed;
- The validation is often done at the level of the VET provider, while recognition can include other type of authorities (national, regional or sectoral). They carry out recognition based on certain type of evidence about the fact that the assessment and validation were carried out in line with the overall qualification requirements. That is why the issue of vertical trust (see above) is important for the use of ECVET;
- There is also a need (possibly at a later stage) to reflect on the solutions that could be put in place in case the learner achieves abroad only a part of the expected learning outcomes. How could these be validated?
- The question of how a learner will know that his/her learning outcomes are validated and recognised and what it means for him/her, was also raised and will be discussed in the next steps of pilot projects exchanges.

The outcomes of the pilot projects seminar in Prague will be shortly made available on the ECVET pilot projects web-site: <http://www.ecvet-projects.eu/Seminars/Default.aspx>

FOCUS

Marie Azuelos, Paris Chamber of Commerce and Industry,
Be-TWIN project coordinator



Testing a joint ECVET-ECTS Implementation: Be-TWIN project

The Be-TWIN project tackles the issue of the connexion between ECVET and the ECTS system, which is being used in higher education since 1989. The project involves a very diverse partnership from 8 EU countries representing stakeholders and education and training institutions in both, higher education and the VET sector¹. This article presents the basics of the methodology to link ECVET and ECTS which has now been published as one of the project outcomes².

Roughly the first half of the project's duration has been dedicated to putting in place a methodological device linking the two credit systems. Both the ECTS and the ECVET system pursue the same objectives of credit transfer, accumulation and recognition, mobility of learners and workers, lifelong learning and transparency of national systems within a common European Education Area. However, the ways they intend to achieve these purposes differ. Indeed, the two credit systems have developed in different historical, institutional and methodological backgrounds. To start with, one, the ECTS, is 20 years older than the second, ECVET. The ECTS, although it has been reshaped in 2009 and now includes the learning outcomes approach, is historically an input based system which takes into account the learning content and the student's workload to allocate credit points to courses and modules. The ECVET system, on the other hand, was shaped according to an output based model and consequently it allocates credit points to the results of the training process, namely the learning outcomes.

Whereas the ECTS is a quantitative mean of expressing an amount of time invested to obtain defined outcomes, ECVET is a qualitative mean of defining the relative importance of units of learning outcomes within a given qualification.

Regarding their technical specifications, the workload for ECTS and the relative importance of the units of learning outcomes within the qualification for ECVET have been identified as the main inconsistencies between the two credit systems. Having acknowledged this, the challenge remained to build a common matrix, which would enable recognition of credit from one system to another, despite the fact that the methodological ground of the two credit systems differ. Thus, **learning outcomes have been identified as the only possible translation device between the two credit systems:** they are the driving force behind contemporary higher education reform and constitute the very core of the VET philosophy.

The result of these considerations is to be found in the Methodological Guide, "ECVET-ECTS: Building bridges and overcoming differences", which was finalised in July 2010 and strives to suggest a possible approach to coordinate ECVET and ECTS.

The main innovation of the guide is a double entry table, the "matrix", whose common denominator is the learning outcomes. **The matrix is meant to serve as a transparency tool and a translation device.** It enables to link

1 You can find more information about the Be-TWIN project and the partnership on this web-site: <http://www.ecvet-projects.eu/Projects/ProjectDetail.aspx?id=12>

2 This methodological guide can be downloaded here: <http://www.ecvet-projects.eu/ToolBox/ToolBoxList.aspx?id=20&type=1>

learning outcomes and learning activities and in this way it facilitates translation from an output based system to an outcome based system (and vice-versa). As a common interface, it emphasises learning outcomes and the systems' secondary layers of information, namely the workload and the relative importance of the units of learning outcomes within the qualification (as expressed in credit points).

The Be-TWIN matrix proposes to training providers using either the ECTS or the ECVET systems to present their training offer more transparently. Both the learning outcomes (grouped into units) and the corresponding learning activities must be filled in the matrix. This should enable training providers using ECVET to better link the learning outcomes with the training offer they propose, and higher education institutions using ECTS to reshape their training offer according to an output based system.

Overall, the idea is to build bridges between the two segments of education and training and to favour the vertical mobility of learners from one system to another. The model is indeed expected to benefit mainly the learners wishing to have their previous learning recognised when shifting from one learning context to another (from VET to higher education or vice versa). A condition for that is that the training providers present the training offer and the quali-

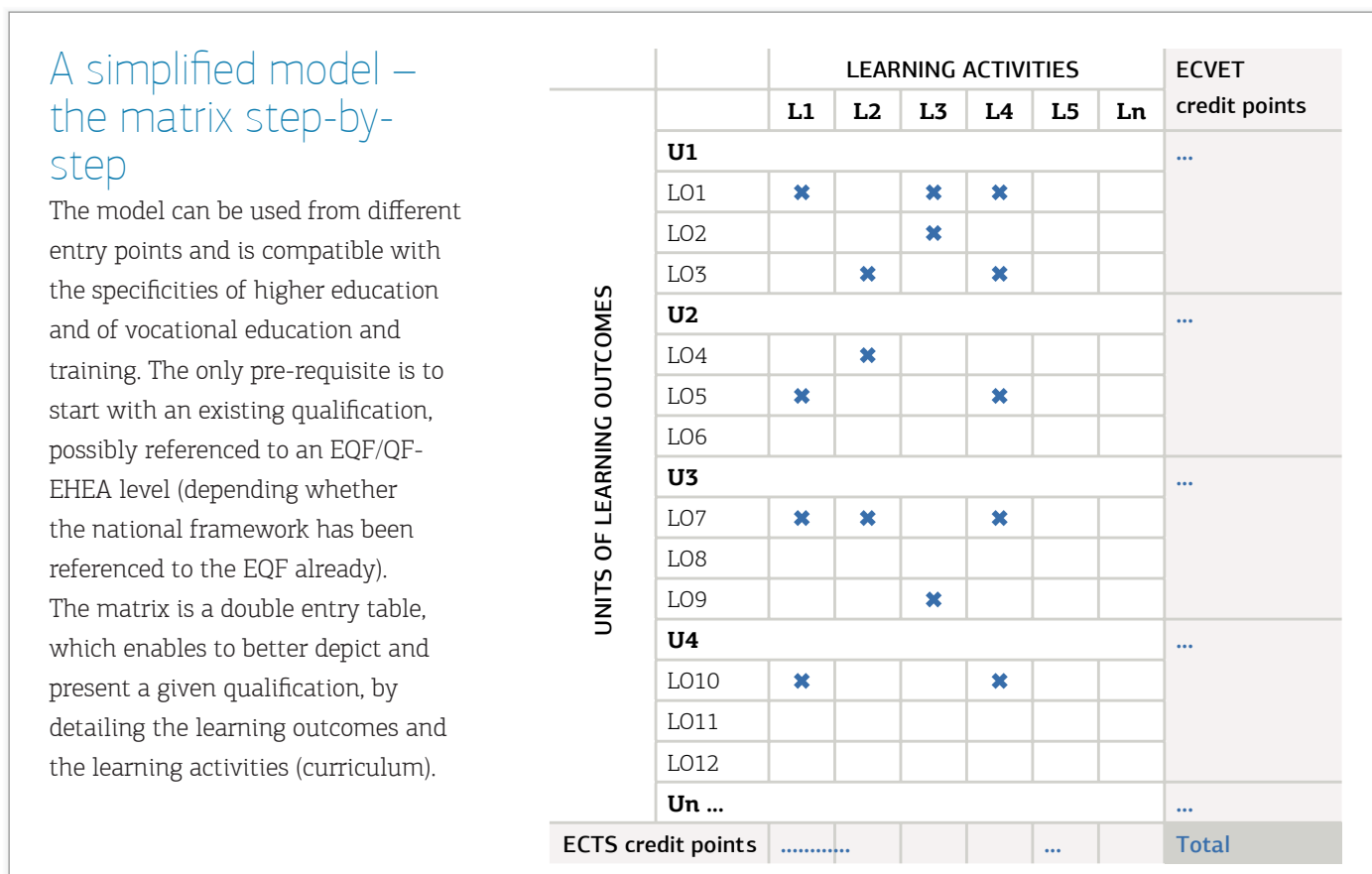
fications more transparently, thus favouring recognition of prior learning.

In order to use the matrix, training providers have to follow four steps:

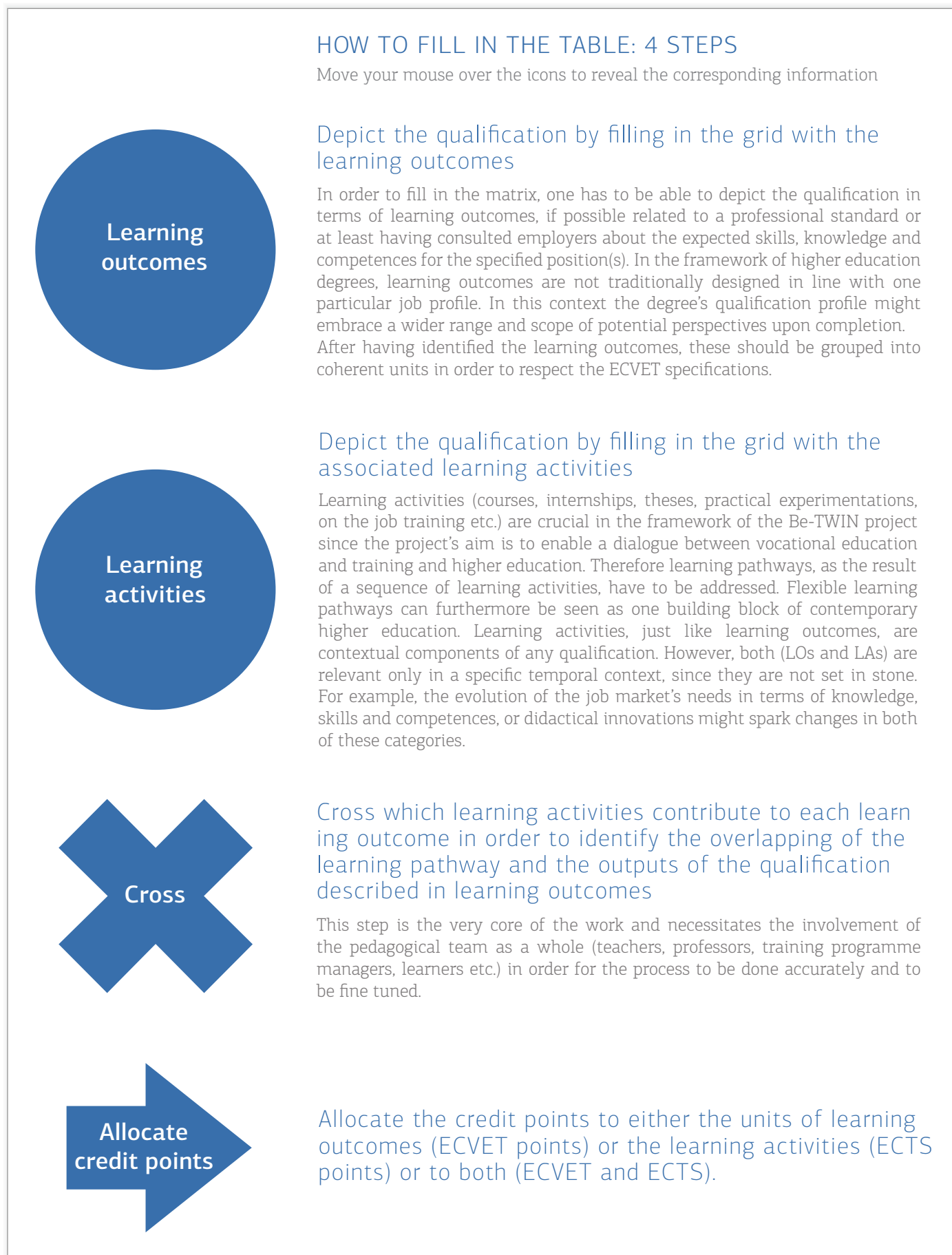
- First, depict the qualification by filling in the grid with the single learning outcomes corresponding to the occupational profile and then by grouping these into units,
- Secondly, depict the qualification by filling in the grid with the associated learning activities,
- Thirdly, cross which learning activities contribute to which learning outcomes in order to identify the **overlapping of the training pathway and of the outputs of the qualifications expressed in learning outcomes**,
- Lastly, allocate the ECVET points to the units of learning outcomes respecting the ECVET specifications, or allocate ECTS credit points to the learning activities, taking into account the workload, or, in some cases, allocate both types of credit points within one training programme.

The methodology developed is currently being tested on three training programmes in France, the UK and Italy in the field of plastics industry, hospitality management and training of trainers. The Figures 1 and 2 present extracts from this methodological guide.

Figure 1: A simplified model of linking ECVET and ECTS



Source: Extract from the Be-TWIN Methodological guide: ECVET-ECTS: Building bridges and overcoming differences

Figure 2: Four steps for filling in the matrix

Source: Extract from the Be-TWIN Methodological guide: ECVET-ECTS: Building bridges and overcoming differences

Cedefop workshop: Permeability in education and Training, a wishful thinking approach?

Since 2009 Cedefop has been regularly running expert workshops on the theme of permeability. The January 2011 workshop continues the dialogue between policy, practice and research. Under the headline of 'permeability, a wishful thinking approach to education and training?' experts in higher education and vocational training (HE and VET) are invited to consider permeability from three different perspectives:

1. national policies and initiatives: from credit systems to validation;
2. individual perspective and choices;
3. institutional networking within a changing relationship between VET and HE.

We meet to reflect on the push factors and the obstacles to permeability, and elaborate possible proposals to take forward this issue in policy and practice. Recent and on-going research studies, European projects (notably related to qualifications frameworks and credits systems), as well as Cedefop studies (such as the studies on vocationally-oriented education and training at higher qualifications levels or on credits and permeability) will provide the basis for discussion.

The workshop is taking place at Cedefop premises on 27 and 28 January 2011.

For further information please contact Isabelle Le Mouillour and Vicky Oraipoulou.

Isabelle.le-mouillour@cedefop.europa.eu

vasiliki.oraipoulou@cedefop.europa.eu

Cedefop publication: The development of ECVET in Europe

In December 2010, Cedefop has published the first overview of the development of a ECVET in Europe. The mapping confirms the uptake of ECVET in Europe in strategic terms, but also reveals a landscape of multiple players and perspectives that are attached to credit systems in VET in Europe. The report relates ECVET to learning outcomes approach, validation, education and training standards and regulations, and the development of qualifications frameworks. It also looks at the changing roles of different stakeholders, from qualifications authorities to social partners and training providers.

This mapping of ECVET developments will be regularly updated.

The publication can be downloaded from the Cedefop web-site:

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/17445.aspx>

OPIR project - final conference

The OPIR project will officially present the final results of their work during a dissemination conference on 18 February 2010 in Brussels. If you wish to learn more about the methodology put in place by this project please refer to the 1st issue of the ECVET Magazine (June 2010). Since then, the OPIR project has tested the methodology and the tools during two mobility periods in autumn 2010. The conclusions and lessons learnt from this testing will be communicated during the Brussels conference and will be summarised in a next issue of the ECVET Magazine.

If you wish to learn more about the conference please contact the project leader Farid Gammar:

farid.gammar@cfwb.be



The ECVET Magazine is published five times per year and informs about the latest developments related to ECVET, the ECVET Network and the pilot projects.

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