



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 31.10.2006
SEC(2006) 1431

COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

**European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training
(ECVET)**

A system for the transfer, accumulation and recognition of learning outcomes in Europe

Table of contents

Summary and purpose of the consultation	3
1. Why ECVET ?	5
1.1. ECVET: the political mandate	5
1.2. ECVET for enhanced mobility.....	6
1.3. ECVET for validating the outcomes of lifelong learning	7
1.4. ECVET for increased transparency of qualifications.....	8
1.5. ECVET for mutual trust and cooperation	8
2. What is ECVET?	9
2.1. The ECVET learning outcomes transfer process	9
2.2. What does ECVET mean for individuals?	10
2.3. What does ECVET mean for competent bodies?.....	12
2.3.1. The description of qualifications in terms of units of learning outcomes.....	12
2.3.2. Allocation of ECVET Credit points.....	13
2.3.3. The decision on the adoption of ECVET	14
2.4. The implementation of ECVET	15
2.4.1. Stage 1: the establishment of partnerships.....	15
2.4.2. Stage 2: the learning agreement	15
2.4.3. Stage 3: award ECVET credits	15
2.4.4. Stage 4: Transfer, validation and accumulation of credits.....	16
3. Conclusions	16
4. The consultation	16
4.1. The consultation process	17
4.2. Questions for the consultation process.....	17
4.2.1. The purpose of and reasons for an ECVET system	17
4.2.2. The technical basis for ECVET.....	18
4.2.3. Implementing ECVET	18
4.2.4. Measures for supporting the implementation and development of ECVET	18
4.2.5. ECVET's potential for enhancing mobility	18
5. Members of the Technical working group	19

Summary and purpose of the consultation

The project entitled "European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training" (ECVET) is designed to facilitate the transfer, accumulation and recognition of people's learning outcomes. It has been developed under the aegis of the European Commission pursuant to the Education Council Resolution of 12 November 2002 and the Copenhagen Declaration of 30 November 2002. The mandate given in 2002 has been renewed and strengthened by the Maastricht Communiqué of 14 December 2004, which was agreed by the Ministers responsible for vocational education and training from 32 European countries and also by the European social partners and the Commission.

Main issues and challenges for ECVET

In Europe, many people undertake learning activities outside their own country. The appeal of this kind of mobility is nonetheless limited by various factors, in particular the absence of provisions for the transfer, validation and recognition of learning outcomes acquired abroad. The same applies to the transition from one system of vocational education and training to another, or from an informal learning situation to a formal training context.

What is therefore needed is a system whereby people can follow through the process of qualification while moving from one learning context to another. ECVET thus aspires to be an information exchange tool to help individuals take full advantage of learning acquired, in particular as a result of transnational mobility, whether the context was formal, non-formal or informal.

Within the European area, the disparate nature of vocational education and training, the large number and diversity of those involved and the differences in the national or sectoral systems of qualification, constitute one of the major challenges facing ECVET.

Principles of ECVET

ECVET is a method enabling qualifications to be described in terms of transferable and accumulable learning units (knowledge, skills and competence) to which credit points are attached.

ECVET is intended to facilitate the transfer and accumulation of learning outcomes acquired by people moving from one learning context to another, from one system of qualification to another;

ECVET will be based on the voluntary participation of the Member States and of the stakeholders in their respective qualifications systems and vocational education and training.

ECVET will be a mechanism to foster a synergy between the training providers through the support it will provide for cooperation between partner organisations, with a view to the transfer and accumulation of individual learning credits.

The consultation document

The consultation document outlines the main characteristics of ECVET.

It consists of thematic headings (supplemented for public consultation with annexes and a slide show accessible on the European Commission's¹ website) forming a coherent whole.

These documents serve as the basis for the consultation, which involves, in particular, the policy-makers, the social partners, the stakeholders and experts in qualifications systems and vocational education and training in Europe.

The results of the consultation will be analysed with a view to creating a Community instrument. They are scheduled to be discussed at a major European conference to be held in June 2007 under the German Presidency. This conference will close the consultation process and open the approval process.

Following the consultation, the Commission will decide on how best to take the project forward.

In addition, experiments, studies, further tests and pilot projects under the Leonardo da Vinci programme, whether ongoing or planned, can supplement the solutions arising from the consultation. At the end of the consultation process and during the subsequent phase, the European Commission, supported by Cedefop, will ensure that the work carried out on ECVET will be enhanced and expanded through the development of, for example, a "tool box" or a system user guide.

* * * * *

1 http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/consult/index_en.html

1. WHY ECVET ?

ECVET is part of the overall project for developing European cooperation in the field of vocational education and training and constitutes one of its operational tools. In this regard, ECVET complements the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). In fact, EQF and ECVET are based on common principles and concepts which favour approaches:

- focused on learning outcomes expressed in terms of knowledge, skills and competence;
- based on a process of qualification;
- adapted to the demands of lifelong learning and all learning contexts, on an equal footing;
- geared towards the mobility of people.

ECVET could thus be adopted whatever the training and qualifications systems. Moreover, the actual implementation of ECVET should be based on common reference levels proposed by the EQF. The European framework should thus be a powerful lever for the adoption of ECVET by the various competent bodies, responsible in the Member States for its implementation at national level, regardless of the existence of a national qualification framework.

ECVET presents some principles, rules and conventions in a coherent and rational way. It aims to facilitate:

- the mobility of people undertaking training;
- the validation of the outcomes of lifelong learning;
- the transparency of qualifications;
- mutual trust and cooperation between vocational training and education providers in Europe.

1.1. ECVET: the political mandate

The Education Council Resolution adopted on 12 November 2002² and the Copenhagen Declaration of 30 November 2002 on the future priorities for enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training (VET), emphasised that giving priority to a system of credit transfer for vocational education and training³ was one of the common measures needed to promote "*the transparency, comparability, transferability and recognition of competence and/or qualifications, between different countries and at different levels*"⁴.

2 Council Resolution on promoting enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training, OJ C 13, p. 2-4, 18.01.2003

3 Copenhagen Declaration by Ministers responsible for vocational education and training, in EU Member States, the EFTA/EEA countries and the candidate countries, the Commission and the European social partners.

4 Resolution on promoting [...] page OJ C 13, p. 4

Following up the conclusions of the Education Council of 15 November 2004⁵, the Ministers responsible for vocational training in 32 European countries, the European social partners and the Commission agreed in the Maastricht Communiqué of 14 December 2004⁶ to give top priority to the *"development and implementation of a European credit transfer system for vocational education and training (ECVET) in order to allow learners to build upon the achievements resulting from their learning pathways when moving between vocational training systems"*.

The Commission, having been invited to explore the possible options for designing, implementing and developing a credit transfer system compatible with the specificities of vocational education and training, brought together a technical working group composed of experts⁷ appointed by the Member States and the representatives of the social partners. It is on the basis of the work of this group that this document has been prepared.

1.2. ECVET for enhanced mobility

In the general context of developing a lifelong learning society in Europe, the mobility of learners is identified in the Copenhagen process as a development priority. For more than a decade, the European Union has promoted the transnational mobility of people in vocational training thanks to the "mobility" measures of the Community action programme Leonardo da Vinci⁸. Under this programme, the Union finances every year mobility projects for approximately 60 000 people, of which around 50% are young people in initial vocational training, including apprentices.

In spite of these efforts, the scale of mobility leading to a professional qualification is still small in comparison to that organised for higher education under the Erasmus programme. The mobility of young people in initial vocational training usually corresponds to the minimum period of three weeks. It is considered to be more of an "interlude" than an integral part of the training pathway. This state of affairs can be explained by the obstacles to mobility in vocational education and training: these obstacles are regulatory and administrative, economic and financial, cultural and linguistic, etc.

One of the main obstacles to attracting more interest in mobility within the framework of initial and continuing vocational training is the difficulty in identifying and validating learning outcomes acquired during a stay in another country.

5 Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on the future priorities of enhanced European cooperation in vocational training and education, 13832/04 EDUC 204 SOC 499, 29 October 2004, adopted by the Council on 15 November 2004 (http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/council13832_en.pdf)

6 Maastricht Communiqué on the future priorities of enhanced European cooperation in vocational training and education, 14 December 2004 (http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/ip/docs/maastricht_com_en.pdf)

7 See the attached list of experts

8 Council Decision 1994/819/EC of 06.12.1994, OJ L340, 29.12.1994, establishing an action programme for the implementation of a European Community vocational training policy; Council decision 1999/382/EC of 26.04.1999 establishing the second phase of the Community vocational training action programme "Leonardo da Vinci" OJ L146, 11.06.1999 (http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/leonardo/new/leonardo2_en.html)

ECVET proposes :

- an approach whereby learning outcomes acquired abroad can be taken into consideration for the purposes of issuing a qualification in a learner's country of origin;
- a tool for providers, practitioners and competent bodies, enabling them to compare more easily the learning outcomes acquired in different countries, and to validate and recognise them.

1.3. ECVET for validating the outcomes of lifelong learning

Lifelong learning may take place in a wide variety of contexts resulting in comparable learning outcomes:

- non-formal learning (programmes, modules completed outside the formal system of education and training);
- informal learning (self-teaching, on-the-job training, daily experience);
- different kinds of training programmes and modules of various durations, and involving various arrangements.

In addition, standardised training programmes may be pursued by different categories of learner (full-time, part-time, intensive or non-intensive training, ICT based learning, etc.).

In its Resolution of 27 June 2002 on lifelong learning⁹, the Council acknowledges that priority should be given to "*the effective validation and recognition of formal qualifications as well as non-formal and informal learning, across countries and educational sectors through increased transparency and better quality assurance*"

In May 2004, the Council Conclusions on common European principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning¹⁰, emphasised again that "*in the context of the principle of lifelong learning, the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning aim to make visible and to value the full range of knowledge and competence held by an individual, irrespective of where or how these have been acquired.[...] Identification and validation are key instruments in enabling the transfer and acceptance of all learning outcomes across different settings*".

What is needed therefore is a way of enabling people to pursue their learning pathway by building on their learning outcomes when moving from one learning context to another, in particular in the framework of mobility.

9 Council Resolution on lifelong learning -2002/C 163/01-27 June 2002

10 Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on common European principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning, 9175/04 EDUC 101 SOC 220 - 18 May 2004

Given that it is based on learning outcomes:

- ECVET can be implemented irrespective of the learning context. It facilitates the transfer and validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes; ECVET helps to improve access to qualifications for all, throughout their lives.

1.4. ECVET for increased transparency of qualifications

Vocational education and training in Europe encompasses a large number of qualifications, diplomas, levels, certificates, etc. Many countries have a national framework defining levels of qualifications or a classification for these levels. These tools may or may not be geared towards the organisation of education or training cycles which are based, in some cases, on the accumulation of units (with or without credit points). Moreover, depending on the system, qualifications may be obtained either after only one type of formal training programme or following several kinds of programmes, regardless of whether the learning pathway is formal, non-formal or informal.

Furthermore, depending on the country, there are many ways of using learning credits in vocational education and training. In countries where there are several sub-systems for vocational education and training, different systems for the allocation of learning credits may coexist. In other cases, there is no learning credits system at all.

Against this background of diversity, several Community initiatives have recently made significant progress, in particular concerning increasingly easy access to tools for ensuring the transparency of qualifications (Europass, the certificate supplement) and information on training opportunities (Ploteus).

Greater transparency of qualifications is nonetheless required to enable the transfer of learning outcomes to be implemented effectively in the context of mobility.

ECVET

- is in line with the initiatives taken at European level, such as the planned introduction of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), designed to improve the transparency of qualifications;
- proposes a common approach to describing qualifications in order to make them easier to understand from one system to another, and to describing the procedures for validating learning outcomes.

1.5. ECVET for mutual trust and cooperation

One of the most important challenges to be faced in the development and implementation of ECVET is the diversity, even fragmentation in certain countries, of vocational education and training systems in Europe. There may be a very large number of very different competent bodies, organisations and actors involved. Their activities may include the definition of qualifications, methods for assessing and validating learning, setting training objectives, determining the number and contents of units and the number of credits, implementing training programmes, etc. A wide range of providers may be involved: ministries (of

education, employment, agriculture, etc.), agencies, occupational sectors, companies, social partners, chambers of commerce, non-governmental organisations, and so forth. In some cases, a national authority may accredit or empower training providers or other actors to prepare and issue qualifications, credit points, etc. In other cases, these functions can be devolved to regional level, or even to the providers.

Several Community initiatives have recently made progress in developing common principles as regards this disparate pattern which creates obstacles to transnational cooperation:

- the adoption of common European principles in the field of quality assurance¹¹;
- the adoption of common European principles on the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes.¹²

However, the persisting lack of mutual trust and cooperation between the competent bodies and other actors involved in training and qualifications systems impedes and even prevents the development of initiatives to resolve the various problems posed by the transfer and validation of learning outcomes.

ECVET proposes

- a methodological framework, agreements and common principles to foster dialogue between the providers;
- instruments for developing partnerships between the actors involved (competent bodies, providers, etc.).

2. WHAT IS ECVET?

ECVET is:

- A useful and concrete device intended to facilitate transfer and accumulation (capitalisation) of learning outcomes of individuals who pass from a context of learning to another and/or from a qualifications system to another.
- A methodical way for describing a qualification in terms of units of learning outcomes which are transferable and which can be accumulated (knowledge, skills and competence), with associated credit points.

2.1. The ECVET learning outcomes transfer process

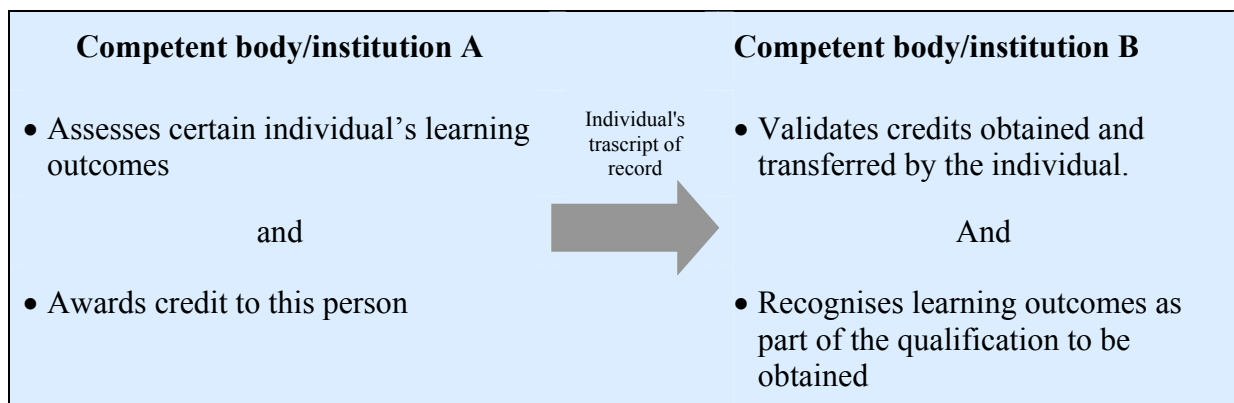
The ECVET learning outcomes transfer process can be described like a transaction between two competent bodies or institutions which are empowered to award qualifications and/or **credits for learning outcomes**¹³:

11 Council Conclusions on quality assurance in vocational education and training, 9599/04 EDUC 117 SOC 252, 18 May 2004 (http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/vetquality_en.pdf)

12 Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, within the Council, on common European principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning, 9600/04 EDUC 118 SOC 253, 18 May 2004

- One body or institution assesses certain learning outcomes achieved and awards credits to the learner, the learner's credit is registered in a **personal transcript of record**
- The second awarding body **validates** (accepts) the credits as a valid record of the learner's achievement and **recognises them** for the award of the qualification.

Thanks to this process, an individual can thus transfer and accumulate learning outcomes in order to obtain a qualification.



To facilitate the transfer process of learning outcomes, ECVET is based on:

- The description of **qualifications** in terms of **learning outcomes** (knowledge, skills and competence);
- The expression of qualifications in **units of learning outcomes** which can be transferred and accumulated.

In addition, to facilitate the understanding of qualifications and units, **ECVET credit points** are used for a numerical representation of each unit and to define its weight and its value compared to the whole qualification.

2.2. What does ECVET mean for individuals?

ECVET is a tool which benefits many people who avail of transnational mobility, in a variety of learning contexts, and supports lifelong learning pathways which can be very diverse.

This is illustrated by the following examples.

13 The credits for learning outcomes designate the totality of a person's learning achievement, which having been assessed, could be officially transferred, validated or recognised for obtaining a qualification.

The case	The ECVET solution
<p>Martin</p> <p>Martin, an apprentice cook, is taking a qualification at a training centre (i.e. in a formal learning context). He has the opportunity to spend several weeks in a partner training centre abroad. With his adviser, he draws up a training plan for the mobility period and a <i>learning agreement</i> which is signed by him and by the two training centres.</p> <p>During mobility: Martin acquires the desired knowledge, skills and competence. At the end of his mobility period, the outcomes of the learning undertaken by Martin in this formal learning context abroad are assessed by the reception training centre.</p> <p>On his return, Martin will draw maximum benefit from his mobility: his learning outcomes will be recognised because they correspond to a part of the knowledge, skills and competence required for the qualification he wants to achieve.</p>	<p>Before mobility: a description of the qualification of cook in units learning outcomes enables Martin to precisely identify the <i>knowledge, skills and competence</i> which he must acquire during his mobility so that they will be taken into account when he comes back: hence he knows which unit(s) he will be able to transfer. The <i>credit points</i> give him an idea of the weight of each of these units compared to the <i>whole qualification</i> to be achieved. This information enables him to prepare a plan for his training abroad.</p> <p><i>The partnership</i> between the two training centres means that Martin's learning outcomes are assessed by the reception training centre during the mobility period.</p> <p>When he comes back, the learning outcomes that have been assessed are <i>validated</i> and taken into account as part of Martin's qualification as cook.</p>
<p>Marie</p> <p>Marie is an adult who wishes to obtain a qualification in electronics at a training centre in her country.</p> <p>However, she already has several years' occupational experience in a company abroad.</p> <p>During this period, her job in the company widened her knowledge, skills and competence.</p>	<p>A description of the qualification in electronics in <i>units</i> of learning outcomes enables Marie to identify which parts of the <i>knowledge, skills and competence</i> she has acquired in the company can be taken into account to obtain the qualification she has chosen. The <i>associated credit points</i> give an idea of the weight of these learning outcomes compared to <i>qualification</i> as a whole.</p> <p>On the basis of the assessment of these learning outcomes, ECVET enables what Marie learned in a non-formal context to be</p>

<p>The outcomes of Marie's learning experience in the company abroad are assessed by the training centre and credits are awarded to her.</p> <p>Her learning outcomes are recognised for the qualification to be achieved.</p>	<p><i>validated</i> and <i>taken into account</i> for her qualification.</p>
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------

2.3. What does ECVET mean for competent bodies?

The kind and type of competent bodies which can have a role in the implementation of ECVET vary from one country to another, from a VET system to another or from a qualifications system to another.

In each country, according to national rules, competent bodies, at relevant levels, are responsible for:

- Design arrangements which are linked to the assessment, transfer, validation and recognition processes;
- Description of qualifications in terms of units of learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competence);
- Allocating ECVET credit points to qualifications and units.
- The decision on the adoption of ECVET

What is a competent body for ECVET?

Authority, institution or organisation at national, regional, local or sectoral level that, according to national rules and practices, is responsible for and/or involved in one or more of the functions related to the implementation of ECVET

2.3.1. The description of qualifications in terms of units of learning outcomes.

The description of qualifications in terms of units of learning outcomes makes it possible to specify knowledge, skills and competence which characterise each qualification and to improve the legibility for the individuals as well as for the competent bodies responsible for qualifications and for employers. Learning outcomes expected for the award of a qualification can be listed in a catalogue of units, a qualification standard or any other memorandum on qualification. This practice right now is already implemented in many VET systems in Europe.

What is a unit?

A set of knowledge, skills and competence which constitute a part of a qualification. A unit can be the smallest part of a qualification that can be assessed, validated and,

The definition and description of units can vary according to the qualifications system and the procedures of the competent body. However, for ECVET purposes, the specifications for a unit should typically give information such as:

- the generic title of the unit,
- the knowledge, skills and competence which are contained in a unit,

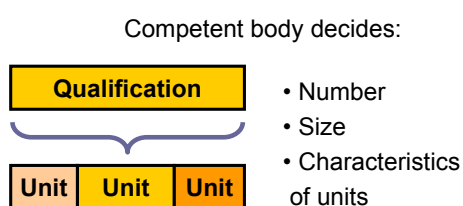
possibly, certified. A unit can be specific to a single qualification or common to several qualifications.

- the criteria for assessment of the corresponding learning outcomes.

There is a broad range of possible specifications and flexible ways of using the concept of units. However, units of learning outcomes should be:

- legible and understandable;
- built up and organised in a coherent way;
- assessable.

The heart of ECVET: Units of learning outcomes



Who defines units?

The characteristics of units composing a qualification (content, size, total number of units, etc.) are defined by the competent body responsible for the qualification at the appropriate level.

There are numerous methods for describing qualifications in terms of learning outcomes. From the moment of the adoption of ECVET, the European Commission will support the diffusion of the most suitable methodologies as well as the development of new methodologies.

2.3.2. Allocation of ECVET Credit points

ECVET credit points are suggested as an additional source of information in numerical form. Being associated both with qualifications and units, ECVET credit points have two functions:

- to give a simple representation of the relative value of a unit of learning outcomes in relation to the whole qualification. They illustrate the proportion of the unit to the qualification;
- to facilitate the transfer of learning outcomes in a concrete way by providing a common reference at European level between qualifications systems;

ECVET will enable the allocation of credit points through different approaches and instruments. ECVET credit points should be allocated on the basis of criteria such as:

- an estimation of the importance of the contents of each unit defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence;
- reference to a real or notional average length of programme;

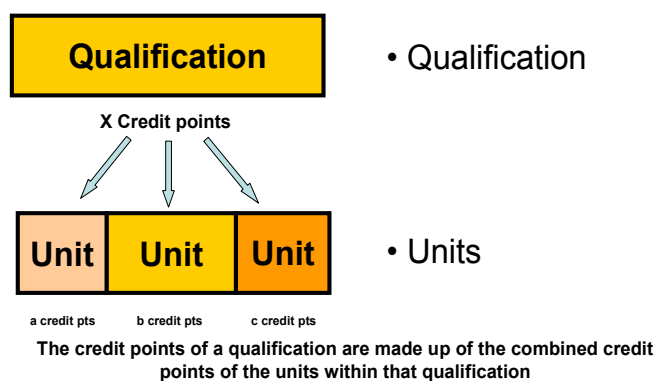
- real or notional learner workload in a formal learning context;
- real or notional learner effort in an informal learning context;
- combination of several criteria.

How are ECVET credit points allocated?

For ECVET purposes, credit points are first allocated to a whole qualification, with points from this total then allocated to units as appropriate, because credit points represent the weight of each unit relative to the full qualification.

Credit points

Competent body allocates credit points to:



Competent bodies which are empowered for the allocation of ECVET credit points might use the following convention as a practical indicator: 120 ECVET credit points on average could be associated to the learning outcomes achieved by an individual in a year in a formal full time VET context. This convention is purely indicative. It does not fix an absolute and rigid yardstick of measurement. It does not prescribe learning durations, required learning times or a mandatory learning effort. It is intended to be used as a reference for the allocation of credit points to learning outcomes, qualifications and/or to units.

There are numerous methods for allocating credit points to qualifications and units. From the moment of the adoption of ECVET, the European Commission will support the diffusion of the most suitable methodologies as well as the development of new methodologies.

2.3.3. The decision on the adoption of ECVET

Deciding on how qualifications should be linked to ECVET (notably their description in terms of units of learning outcomes and the allocation of ECVET credit points) is an important issue for the effective and sustainable implementation of ECVET. The implementation of ECVET needs clear commitments from competent bodies and providers, formalised at the relevant levels in each country. This requirement has been clearly demonstrated in the Bologna process for Higher Education where voluntary commitments have contributed to the widespread implementation of ECTS.

In order to properly implement ECVET, the competent body responsible for qualifications or units, or more generally empowered to implement ECVET should define and decide the scope of its implementation and formalise its decision at the appropriate level, according to the national rules.

2.4. The implementation of ECVET

ECVET should be applicable in various learning situations and contexts. Consequently, the application which is described below is given as an example, following the chronology of the principal stages.

2.4.1. *Stage 1: the establishment of partnerships*

In order to facilitate the implementation of ECVET, VET providers and/or competent bodies at the relevant level could establish **partnership agreements or memoranda of understanding (MoU)**. During this phase of initialization, the memoranda of understanding could contribute to creating the climate of trust which is necessary for insuring the durability of the system, its operational characteristic and the effective credit transfer.

In the MoU, partners could specify:

- Correspondence between qualifications (units and credit points) and/or learning outcomes concerned by transfer. The EQF levels could contribute to the establishment of the correspondence.
- The assessment, transfer and validation processes (units or parts of units)
- The specifications for quality assurance.

The key point of the MoU is that the learning outcomes for which credits are awarded by one or the other of the partners can be recognised irrefutably.

Partnership agreements could be established between different authorities or organisations, according to the type and desired degree of co-operation. Thus, MoU could be established between bodies responsible for qualifications (ministries, branches...) and/or networks of VET providers (Chambers of Commerce ...) and/or VET providers or other stakeholders in VET (training centres, schools, firms...).

A model memorandum of understanding could be developed at European level.

2.4.2. *Stage 2: the learning agreement*

It could be necessary to draw up an individual learning agreement for each person, notably in the formal learning context. This document would specify the learning outcomes expected at the end of a period of mobility (units or parts of units) and the associated points of credit. This individual learning agreement should be drawn up between the person and the two partners. A model learning agreement could be developed at European level.

2.4.3. *Stage 3: award ECVET credits*

ECVET credits are awarded (units or parts of units and associated ECVET credit points) after the assessment of the learning outcomes. Credits are recorded in a transcript of record which gives details on:

- knowledge, skills and competence which are acquired
- the credit points which are associated with the achieved learning outcomes.

A template of the transcript of record could be designed at European level.

Moreover, the Europass documents could be used to record credits and assure their transparency.

2.4.4. Stage 4: Transfer, validation and accumulation of credits

In accordance with the MoU and the learning agreement, credits should be transferred, then validated by the sending organisation and recognised for obtaining the qualification concerned, by accumulation, according to the rules.

3. CONCLUSIONS

ECVET should be developed and implemented gradually on a voluntary basis without any legal obligation, since it does not have a regulatory mission. When ECVET is applied in the countries which decide to implement it, national or regional legislation and/or current sectoral rules on qualifications should be taken into account.

With its modern and ambitious approach focused on learning outcomes, ECVET comprises a certain number of principles, rules and conventions essential to its implementation, but its application will nonetheless remain as flexible as possible. In the short to medium term, implementation of ECVET will need support. Indeed, time, tests and studies will be needed to gradually and effectively improve it, make it more flexible, if necessary, in order to take into account the particular features of the qualifications systems of every country and to ensure the dissemination and promotion of the most appropriate practices and methods for its implementation. Above all, it will have to be simple and adapted to the real needs of its target groups if people are to make effective use of it.

4. THE CONSULTATION

This Commission Staff Working Document puts forward arguments for the design and adoption of an ECVET system at European level and contains suggestions for its implementation. The success of an ECVET system will depend as much on its relevance and accessibility to learners as on its credibility and reliability in the eyes of the authorities responsible for qualifications, vocational education and training systems. In all the training systems of the Member States (vocational education and training and lifelong learning) those involved will have to be convinced that the ECVET system is useful and can contribute – directly and indirectly – to the promotion and development of lifelong learning leading to enhanced knowledge, skills and competence of trainees and ultimately to more stable and satisfactory careers in a given country or in Europe.

The document outlines ECVET's fundamental principles and provides pointers for its practical implementation. However, ECVET can only work if it is based on a broad consensus resulting from an extensive consultation process open to questions, proposals and suggestions on the most efficient way of pursuing its creation. This consultation is also important for gaining an appreciation of the needs of partners likely to contribute to the success of the ECVET system.

4.1. The consultation process

The consultation at European level concerns all the European countries involved in the Copenhagen process, the European social partners and professional organisations. It will take place until March 2007 with the aim of inviting all the players and experts to give their opinion what the objectives, principles and technical characteristics of the ECVET system could or should be. The different countries and social partner organisations will organise their own consultations at national level. The European Commission expects the Ministries for education, vocational training and employment, the European social partners, the sectoral and regional authorities, and also the competent authorities and qualification providers to participate.

The European social partner organisations (employers' associations and trade unions), sectoral services and industry associations, European networks for research on education and training for young people and business networks; all interested parties are invited to comment on the plan. The consultation document is also published on the Internet.

The European Commission will analyse and summarise the responses to the consultation. The latter will be available on the Internet¹⁴.

The results of the consultation will be analysed with a view to creating a Community instrument; they are scheduled to be discussed at the major European conference to be held in June 2007 under the German Presidency. This conference will close the consultation process.

The results of the consultation process will be used to prepare the formal proposal on an ECVET system which the European Commission will put forward as the most appropriate legal instrument in the course of 2007.

Following the consultation process, the European Commission will decide how best to develop the system. Financial support (and other kinds of assistance) may be granted to national and sectoral players, for example under Community programmes on the mobility of young people and adults in training. In this way, the new integrated programme on lifelong learning will be used to help implement the ECVET system.

The findings of the consultation and also of ongoing studies and tests will serve as a platform for a series of pilot projects responding to the specific needs of the competent authorities responsible for credit systems and making use of ECVET.

4.2. Questions for the consultation process

The parties consulted are invited to respond to the following questions which are considered particularly important for the development of ECVET:

4.2.1. The purpose of and reasons for an ECVET system

- Are the most important objectives and functions of a European system of credits for vocational training and education and the role of competent authorities fully outlined in the consultation document? If not, what is missing?
- What would be the main added value of the planned ECVET system?

14 http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/validation2004_en.pdf

4.2.2. *The technical basis for ECVET*

– Do some technical specifications need to be set out in greater detail with a view to the practical implementation of ECVET? If so, which ones?

– Do ECVET's technical specifications take sufficient account of the:

- evaluation,
- validation,
- recognition,
- accumulation,
- transfer

of learning outcomes whether formal, non-formal or informal? If not, please give details.

– Are the allocation of credit points to qualifications and units and using a reference figure of 120 credit points sufficient to ensure the convergence of approaches and the coherence of the system at European level? If not, what would you suggest?

4.2.3. *Implementing ECVET*

– Under what conditions could describing qualifications in terms of learning outcomes and expressing them in units effectively improve the transparency of qualifications and contribute to the development of mutual trust?

– Which criteria or combinations of criteria for allocating credit points could be selected and used?

– Are there any features in your qualifications system which would favour the introduction of ECVET? What constraints, if any, do you foresee?

– How and within what timeframe (launch, introduction, experimentation, widespread introduction) could ECVET be implemented in your country?

4.2.4. *Measures for supporting the implementation and development of ECVET*

– What kind of measures should be taken at European national and sectoral levels to facilitate the implementation of ECVET?

– What documents, manuals and guides could be developed to facilitate the implementation of ECVET?

4.2.5. *ECVET's potential for enhancing mobility*

– To what extent and how will ECVET be able to contribute to the development of transnational and even national partnerships?

– To what extent and how will ECVET be able to help improve the quality of Community programmes on mobility and participation in these programmes?

– To what extent and how do you think that ECVET and Europass could complement each other to enhance mobility?

5. MEMBERS OF THE TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP

Experts

Enrica FLAMINI Direzione Generale dell'Istruzione post-secondaria - I

then MVittoria Marini Bettolo Marconi

José Luis GARCIA MOLINA Instituto Nacional de las Cualificaciones, Ministerio de Educación, Culture y Deporte - ES

Luís IMAGINARIO Faculdade de Psicologia da Universidade do Porto - P

Françoise DIVISIA

then Edith KIRSCH Ministère de l'Education Nationale, de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche - F

Sirkka-Liisa KARKI Finnish National Board of Education Vocational Education Division - FIN

University - LT

Zsófia LUX Ministry of Education - HUN

Moira McKERRACHER Scottish Qualifications Authority - UK

Edwin MERNAGH National Qualifications Authority - IRL

Arthur SCHNEEBERGER Österreichisches Institut für Bildungsforschung

then Reinhard NOEBAUER der Wirtschaft - A

Jan REITZ JOERGENSEN Ministry of Education, National Education Authority - DK

Sten PETTERSON

then Björn SCHÉELE National Agency for Education (Skolverket) - S

Winfried HEIDEMANN European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)

Heikki SUOMALAINEN Confederation of Finnish Industry and Employers (UNICE)

Peter THIELE Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung - D

Loukas ZAHILAS O.E.E.K. - Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs - GR

Providing support to the expert group

Isabelle LE MOUILLOUR Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung (BIBB) - D

Burkart SELLIN CEDEFOP

Commission (Coordination)

Simon JONES

then Michel ARIBAUD DG EAC – A3

Contributions

Jens Bjornavold, CEDEFOP

Peter Van der Hijden DG EAC – A2