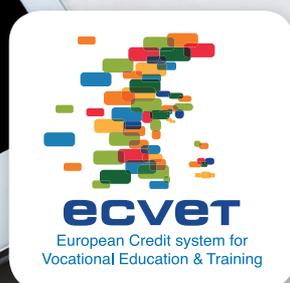


# magazine

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

- 02** Editorial
- 04** The ECVET Users' Group visits Finland and learns about the Finnish VET reform
- 07** Mutual recognition in the construction sector: Lessons from the EU's BUILD UP Skills initiative
- 10** ECVET goes Business "From push to pull: modern human resource management with European transparency instruments"
- 14** RUECVET: Piloting ECVET to the national VET system of Russia and Uzbekistan
- 18** Successes and challenges of the first national consortium in Slovakia

STUDY  
ABROAD



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**Editorial**by the  
European Commission**Miguel B. Santos****Using ECVET for  
Long Duration Mobility**

ECVET is a framework used in full or partial mode in 24 Member States. Four more countries are planning to progress on it in the next few years. In this our 9th year of implementation some insights, lessons and constraints were identified, but we can envisage clear ways to spread and boost the usefulness of this tool. Due to the arrival of ErasmusPRO activity within Erasmus+ this year, the ECVET Community (users, group members, national experts, trainers, VET providers, stakeholders and companies) has a precise

responsibility in the implementation of ECVET principles and instruments.

The preliminary results of the last Erasmus+ call are quite encouraging. Applicants requesting ErasmusPRO increased to 12.7% (of projects for learner's mobility). The applications to Advanced Planning Visits (APV) for administrative and organizational purposes increased to 45%. These ErasmusPRO APV (for staff from sending to hosting organisations) look to be a big suc-

cess with an average of one APV for each group of twenty learners in mobility. This would seem to be a very reasonable use of this new facility.

In general, the long duration mobility (90-366 days) increased by 34% and short duration mobility (10-89 days) increased by 10% when compared with previous calls. In total, the demand for VET learner's mobility were increased by 12%.

Per host type, the learner's mobility abroad raised 16% for companies while schools decreased 0.4%.

Regarding the share of Erasmus-PRO in requested learner mobilities per National Agency, NL, ES, IT, AT and PT are above 15%, while MT and NO were between 10-15%.

Between 5-10% there are FR, IS, LV, UK and LT.

So, in absolute figures, Erasmus-PRO had a total of 27 932 applications, but we must keep in mind that the figures are not definitive. This reading of the figures should be cautious; there are still many unknown factors that may change this breakdown. A more substantiated analysis will only be possible once all applications have been fully evaluated by the Erasmus+ National Agencies.

We are expecting that the first ErasmusPRO mobilities will start as of September 2018.

With these figures in mind we should assume very busy upcoming months for the ECVET users and ex-

perts: giving expertise and sharing know-how to facilitate the design of the period abroad; and the recognition and certification of learning outcomes. It is a renewed boost for the ECVET implementation process.

From the European Commission side, we are planning the 2018 ECVET Forum (14th & 15th June in Sofia-Bulgaria) focused on the topic "Using ECVET for Long Duration Mobility". This is meant to help and encourage VET Centres, schools, intermediary bodies and companies to use and manage ECVET principles and tools in long duration mobility. National delegations to the Forum will include those actors that already deal with ErasmusPRO activities or that intend to apply in future calls. We wait for you in Sofia! ■

**Miguel B. Santos**

ECVET Coordinator

Policy Officer at Directorate

General for Employment,

Social Affairs and Inclusion

Unit E3 – VET, Apprenticeships

and Adult Learning

# The ECVET Users' Group visits Finland and learns about the Finnish VET reform

An article by Monika Auzinger and Anette Curth, ECVET Secretariat

On 8-9 March 2018, history was made when the 21st ECVET Users' Group meeting was held in Finland. This "field trip" for national representatives to the ECVET Users' Group took place in response to the recent Finnish VET-reform. It is one of the most comprehensive reforms in Europe, ensuring fully flexible VET pathways and compatibility with ECVET principles. The reform has now entered its implementation phase: providers have begun to work with the new legislation and are implementing the reform processes. The programme included a presentation from the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture and a site visit to Omnia Espoo Education Consortium, one of the biggest VET providers in Finland.

## The Finnish VET reform

Mika Tammilehto, Director General in the Department for Vocational Education and Training within the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, presented the key elements of the **VET reform in Finland** (#amisreformi).

Vocational education and training in Finland comprises initial and further training (IVET and CVET) and has multiple target groups, including young people, adults, and people in working life who need upskilling, re-skilling, or are unemployed. The number of VET students amounts to approximately 280,000 per year (200,000 in IVET and 80,000 in CVET; NB: total population size 5.5 million). VET in Finland is available in institutions or as apprenticeship training. There are 165 VET providers, including municipalities, joint federations of municipalities and private organisations. The City of Helsinki can be considered the biggest VET provider in Finland. VET in Finland is an attractive study choice, with 44%

of comprehensive school-leavers continuing in IVET.

Increasing demands towards VET along with decreasing financial resources triggered the need for a VET reform. The key elements of the reform are fully compatible with the ideas of transfer and accumulation of learning outcomes that lies at the core of ECVET, and with its key principles, e.g. the recognition of prior learning from different learning contexts (including non-formal and informal learning):

- A **single act on VET** (with VET now being fully under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education);
- Flexible application and admission system (with enrolment based on a **year-round admission** system);
- A clearer range of qualifications that better meets the needs of working life (**fewer but broader qualifications**; total number reduced from 351 to 164; qualifications consist of compulsory and optional modules);

- A single **competence-based method** of completing qualifications;
- Competence-based, **individual study paths for all**. Objectives for competence development will be written down in a **personal competence development plan**, drawn up by a teacher together with the student;
- **More versatile learning environments** and more studying at workplaces (including the use of simulators, digital learning platforms);
- A single licence to provide education and award qualifications (All vocational education and training will in future be governed by a **single licence to provide education**. Qualifications are awarded by education providers.);
- **Funding system** that encourages effectiveness and outcomes: Funding consists of four elements: core funding, performance-based funding, effectiveness-based funding and strategy funding. In core and performance-based funding, the weight of a certain performance indicator is

determined in relation to all performance indicators that form the basis for funding (awarded qualifications, completed modules). This new approach to funding aims to provide a strengthened incentive for VET providers to recognise prior learning, and to make sure that learners obtain the right (rather than any) qualification;

- **Labour policy education becomes part of the VET system.**

Finland has had a competence-based system for years, but it is the increased emphasis on individual study paths that is new to the system. Vocational skills are primarily demonstrated in practical work situations at workplaces (competence demonstrations). Competences are assessed as per module of a qualification or preparatory education. In a competence demonstration, the student's competence is assessed by a teacher and a representative of working life together, including student's self-assessment. Individual study paths will increase the importance of the guidance and support provided for students, i.e. teachers will assume a guiding and coaching approach in their

work and have active cooperation with working life.

### Implementation of the VET reform at Omnia Espoo Education Consortium

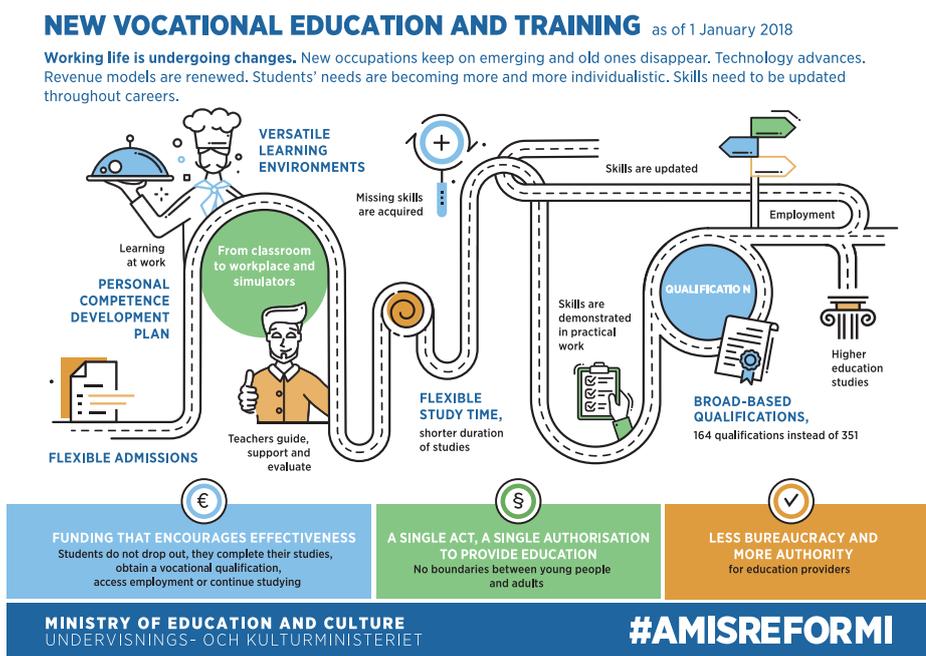
Omnia is a multidisciplinary education provider and regional development centre located in the greater Helsinki metropolitan area. It emerged from six vocational schools that were merged into one. Espoo is Finland's second largest city. The courses and qualifications provided range from the equivalent of EQF levels 3 to 6.

Approximately 50,000 people study at Omnia. Besides 9,000 learners studying for an initial VET qualification, this also includes learners in continuing VET and liberal adult education courses (e.g. hobby courses, language courses, etc), young people participating in youth workshops, or general upper secondary students. Omnia has a staff of 850 including 600 teachers. Omnia maintains a network of 4,000 companies. All education and training in Finland is free.

The VET reform is based on the idea that all students should have the opportunity to follow their own individual learning pathways. This means that the individual course plans need to be tailored to students' prior learning and experiences. In practice, this requires a lot of flexibility from the VET provider. For instance, Omnia ensures the year-round admission system by making sure that students can work together in flexible learning groups rather than in fixed classes, where everybody follows the same schedule.

The key element for any learner's learning pathway is their personal study plan (personal competence development plan) which takes the form of an agreement that will be updated throughout their time at Omnia. Through a counselling process at the beginning, the learner's goals and ambitions will be identified ('respecting students' future dreams'). Based on documentary evidence, interviews, and (if needed) input from previous employers or a skills demonstration, the learner's skills needs will be identified. This is also when competences that can already be recognised are identified. Based on this, an individually appropriate learning path will be developed. The personal study plan has many contributors but is owned by the learner. It is stored in electronic format, in Finnish and Swedish. There will be a national system introduced soon.

The VET reform brings about profound changes to the role of teachers, with increased focus on support and guidance. Each student is assigned to a teacher, and the duo then develops, monitors and updates the personal study plan together. One teacher may be responsible for 20 to 50 students. Teachers are expected to be team players, as there is now an increased focus on cooperation: the concept of a teacher at the head of 'his/her class' is gone. While many teachers have actively called for this change, peer



Source: <http://minedu.fi>

support is considered hugely important to prepare them for their new and changed role.

The VET reform also aims to provide more opportunities for studying at the work place. Work-based learning can also take the form of a simulated working environment, but Omnia makes the effort to give as many students as possible the opportunity to learn in real-life situations. To facilitate this, Omnia maintains a large network and works together with many enterprises in the area. In addition, there are approximately 40 micro-enterprises are located on-site at Omnia, ranging from a shop to a driving school, from nutritionists to speech therapists. Yet, the search for companies that are willing to take on students is still an ongoing task.

In a system that focuses on multiple learning environments and sends so many learners to enterprises, it is important that the roles and responsibilities are clear: here, it is the education provider who is responsible for education and training. Enterprises play a key role as clients and partners. VET providers need to make sure that a workplace is suitable and allows the student to acquire the needed competences. This also implies the need to accept that not all workplaces are suitable as a learning environment. Workplace instructors receive training on guidance and assessment.

The ultimate goal in cooperating with enterprises is to create a win-win situation for all parties:

- Learners: real-life learning environment, work experience;
- Enterprises: the possibility to influence the education, part of recruiting process;
- VET providers: knowledge what competences are needed in the labour market, being able to offer multiple options for attractive learning environments.

Finland also works with another feature of ECVET: credit points. The system of competence points for two years. Yet, above all, the points give an indication on the learning already achieved. For matters of recognition, they are an additional element of information. Recognition at higher education institutions is primarily based on competences and falls into the realm of the higher education autonomy.

The ECVET Users' Group showed a lot of interest in the Finnish VET reform and the work of Omnia. Users' Group members raised a lot of questions and highlighted some aspects of particular interest:

- **How do you organise the recognition of prior learning upon admission into VET programmes?** The VET providers are responsible for recognition of prior learning. The incentive comes through the funding: if an individual who has already acquired most of the learning outcomes required for a specific qualification appears, the funding system has been designed in a way that makes it beneficial for VET providers to recognise this prior learning. The system certainly needs to be waterproof in that it must not lead to providers awarding qualifications 'too easily'.
- **Will the broader qualifications include a larger share of transversal learning outcomes?** Yes. Qualifications now consist of approximately 80% vocational learning outcomes and 20% key competences. Many learners have insufficient ICT skills, for instance – the new system, through the selection of modules, will allow them to have a larger share of key competences.
- **What were the main challenges for stakeholders?** The funding, but also the personal competence development plans and concerns on the number of participating workplaces. The concept of personal competence development plans is not entirely new to the Finnish system, but there were concerns whether there would be sufficient resources available.
- **Are qualifications governed by national curricula?** Finland has a national framework of skills requirements (under the responsibility of the Finnish National Agency for Education), which seeks to provide sufficient flexibility to allow for regional adjustments. VET providers need to respect the skills requirements, but still have great autonomy in organising their education and training. ■

# Mutual recognition in the construction sector:

## Lessons from the EU's BUILD UP Skills initiative

An article by Andrew McCoshan, Expert with the UK National ECVET Team

BUILD UP Skills is an EU initiative designed to address the education and training challenges posed by the introduction of energy efficient buildings that have an important role to play in helping Europe meet its climate and energy targets (<http://www.buildup.eu/en/skills>). A key issue to be addressed is the mutual recognition of skills and qualifications across EU Member States. One of the initiative's Technical Working Groups was dedicated to the topic and its work provides valuable insights into the types of challenges that can confront those seeking solutions to the challenge of mutual recognition.

Over two years, the Technical Working Group analysed how to ensure that skills and qualifications recognised in one Member State are recognised in another. The Group undertook a range of activities including desk research, surveys and discussions as part of EU Exchange Meetings to unpack the issues involved with the ultimate goal of identifying mechanisms or proposals for tools that could be used to achieve mutual recognition. The group scoped out a range of professions (including plasterer, roofer, tinsmith, floorers, bricklayer, insulator, lighting systems operator, machine operator) before focusing on one profession, thermal insulation, for detailed examination.

### Scoping the field

One of the first tasks of the Group was to scope out the field. An initial desk review highlighted a number of existing features of education and training systems that represent important challenges to recognition, as shown in the box.

#### Key challenges to mutual recognition for energy efficiency

- Different countries have different responsible authorities, although the Ministry of Education seems to be predominantly involved
- Not all countries have national qualification frameworks and rather depend on regional references of qualifications, which makes collection of such information difficult and very complex
- Some countries develop qualifications based on learning outcomes, others do not (they should have nationally recognised occupational standards, but this might also not be the case)
- Within countries, some occupations are covered, some are not, hence gaps exist for the selected professions
- Reporting on this information is often inconsistent (between and within countries), sometimes difficult to interpret due to its availability only in the local language, or is sometimes out of date.

The Group highlighted the difficulties in making different qualifications systems comparable, especially when it comes to dealing with numerous professions related to energy efficiency. At the same time, the work of the group highlighted the need for a methodology for European workers for self-evaluation that would help them to understand which, if any, new competencies might be required when moving from one country

to another. Using learning outcomes as the basis for this methodology would offer the potential to compare the competencies required.

It was therefore proposed to take the role of a thermal insulator as a case study and to devise a methodology to examine in some detail the competencies required in different countries. Thermal insulator was chosen because

it is a professional skill needed in any country but, at the same time, practices may differ substantially between Southern and Northern Europe because of the contrasting requirements in different climatic zones.

## Focusing in on learning outcomes

A spreadsheet was devised, taking the learning outcomes in the thermal insulation qualification in Italy as a reference point and asking group members to indicate, where possible, whether the same or different learning outcomes exist in their countries. Information was also gathered about the structure of qualifications/competence profiles, learning outcomes and the ways in which knowledge, skills and competences are dealt with. Additional data was collected to ascertain if any key differences existed between the country concerned and the reference country (Italy), and if any major learning outcomes, skills or competencies could be shared between nations. This comparison would also assist in comparing the hours required for subunit completion, allowing trainers to garner an understanding of training depth and hours required to gain certification.

The spreadsheet lists nearly 200 learning outcomes and therefore is comprehensive in its coverage of the competences required in thermal insulation. The spreadsheet indicates whether a learning outcome concerns knowledge, skills or competences, using definitions from the European Qualifications Framework.

## Analysis

Four countries were able to complete the spreadsheet comparing learning outcomes to the Italian reference point: Cyprus, Bulgaria, Lithuania and Estonia. Analysis of the spreadsheet shows that a large number of the learning outcomes are common across the

five countries, having either a direct or indirect correspondence with one another. Interestingly, cross-country correspondence is strongest in what might be regarded as “core” thermal insulation learning outcomes covering thermal insulation materials, coating techniques, and installation procedures. In the areas of basic knowledge of building envelope energy efficiency and of efficient plant in building services, correspondence is more inconsistent.

Other countries indicated that it would not be possible to make the comparison due to asymmetry in developing competencies in relation to thermal insulation, or due to contrasting approaches regarding learning outcomes. For example, Portugal indicated that a qualification or competence profile had not yet been defined although training under the BUILD UP Skills Initiative (FORESEE) has as its title “Installer of thermal insulation in construction – initiation”.

## Results

The case study of thermal insulation highlighted a number of challenges in developing an understanding of the knowledge, skills and competencies required for the same role/profession in different countries that will be familiar to people involved in ECVET. They are centred around cross-country variations across several dimensions:

- in the emphasis placed on theoretical knowledge versus practical skills
- in understanding differences in technical terms between countries - English was used in the spreadsheet but this first required translation from Italian and despite the care taken it was sometimes difficult for terms to be understood across borders
- in how learning outcomes are dealt with, with variation in the level of detail (or “granularity”) of learning outcomes

- in where relevant qualifications are positioned on National Qualification Levels, corresponding to different EQF levels
- in the relevance of knowing the number of hours needed to acquire the skills/ competences – some group members held the opinion that it is not relevant to know how many hours of training are needed to gain particular competences, as the worker could also gain the competence in an informal manner. Others noted that it was impossible to estimate the number of hours due to the differences in how thermal insulation is defined in their national framework (a very short description without giving too many details on learning outcomes, e.g. Croatia, Slovakia).

The case study also showed that countries have different approaches to setting learning outcomes:

1. A “profession-based” approach followed by a general structure of learning outcomes (e.g. thermal insulator). This seems to be the approach taken in most countries; however, this approach also creates the most difficulties when trying to compare different countries as different names of professions and structures in practice are set in different countries. This could be due to different practices, climate, technologies, or even country size, taxes and the economic situation.
2. A “technological process” approach that involves identifying relevant technologies (e.g. ventilated facades), setting competence requirements to cover each one, and finally mapping professions against them using a general structure of learning outcomes, grouped to professions.

## A way forward – towards European standards?

These findings pointed the Group towards a number of conclusions and recommendations about how to address the mutual recognition challenges they had identified:

- The case study took the Italian learning outcomes as a reference point. The next step could be to elaborate a common set of knowledge, skills and competences based on the responses from all five countries and use these as a reference point. This could be the basis for the develop-

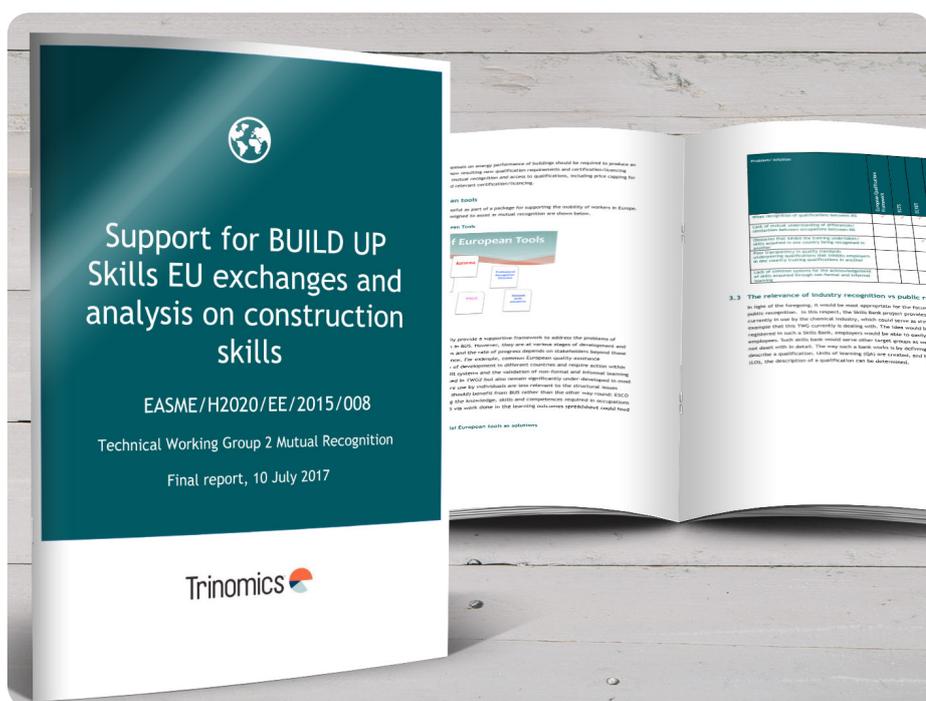
ment of European standards around a common “core” of knowledge, skills and competences. In such a way a worker who wants to move between countries could, for example, certify his competences following the international standard for personnel certification (ISO 17024) in order to be recognized in any European country or beyond. This progressive method of standards development could be used by any profession, however domain experts should evaluate the robustness and accuracy of the vocabulary used.

- A minimum standard could be established at EU level for each profession,

i.e. a kind of ‘driving licence’ for a key set of competences that would be the minimum requirements to do the job.

- New regulatory proposals on the energy performance of buildings should be required to produce an impact analysis of how the resulting new qualification requirements and certification/licencing schemes will affect mutual recognition and access to qualifications.

Although these conclusions and recommendations were devised for a specific set of occupations, they are likely to be relevant to other industries and professions as well. ■



Andrew McCoshan provided support to the BUILD UP Skills Technical Working Group covering mutual recognition. This article is based on the **Final Report of the TWG** and focuses on aspects relevant to ECVET.

Andrew has worked in education and training for over 30 years. For more than 15 years he has conducted studies and evaluations for the EU, and before that was a consultant in the UK. Andrew is currently an independent researcher and consultant, an ECVET Expert for the UK, and Senior Research Associate at the Educational Disadvantage Centre at Dublin City University in Ireland.

# ECVET goes Business “From push to pull: modern human resource management with European transparency instruments”

An article by Georg Müllner and Carina Maas, Auxilium, Austria

European Transparency Instruments like ECVET ensure the comparability and visibility of qualifications across Europe, therefore they are important and useful – everyone knows that, right? Unfortunately, the reality shows that this is only clear from one perspective: the educational point of view. Companies and businesses are still not as convinced to use these instruments in a broad way and to invest valuable time in getting familiar with them. But why wouldn't they? The partnership of the ECVET goes Business project accepted the challenge and investigated this discrepancy more closely.

## Why does ECVET need to 'go business'?

The components of ECVET are already well established in educational institutions and systems across Europe, but to achieve its full potential it also needs to be broadly adopted by the corporate world. Unfortunately, ECVET and other European transparency instruments (ETI) are still not used as widely as intended, even though they are fully developed and ready to implement.

Right now, the success of ECVET depends on a necessary paradigm shift in the implementation process. It needs to switch from a 'push' approach to a 'pull' process where businesses understand the benefits of these transparency instruments and ask for them knowing these ECVET tools will save time and increase efficiency.

The main challenge is to overcome the language barrier between the worlds of education and business. Their histories and traditions shaped different





objectives, values, principles, and even vocabulary. The theoretical educational concept needs to be translated into the language of the corporate world, using a practical approach that highlights the benefits of ECVET in terms of efficiency. This is why ECVET needs to ‘go business’ and what the project team set as the main goal for the **ECVET goes Business** project.

### Our approach in a nutshell

To achieve this pull process, the strategic partnership of the ECVET goes Business project decided to develop both a practical handbook for HR managers and a complementary training course based on a research study among the target groups. By changing the focus to the business perspective, the added value of ECVET and European transparency instruments is emphasised for companies and specifically their HR personnel.

### Changing perspective

In January 2016 national focus groups were set up to investigate the key processes of HR management in all seven partner countries: Austria, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Germany, Slovenia, and Spain. 76 representatives of businesses, social partners and public bodies

were asked how they assess skills and competences of their employees and job candidates; how they recruit and train employees; how their current pay policy is determined; how they cope with challenges concerning the use of smart technology; and finally if they are already using European transparency instruments in their organisation. As expected, representatives of small and large businesses reported different perspectives in regards of their key processes, but they had one thing in common: hardly any of them had even heard much of ECVET and transparency instruments in general, much less using them regularly in their day-to-day processes.

Three main conclusions could be drawn from the focus groups. They were documented in a research study which can be downloaded from the project website, and were the basis of the following guidelines for the development of the handbook and the training course:

1. The main goal should be raising awareness about the nature and the field of application in HR processes, answering the questions: what are European transparency instruments and how can they be useful?

2. The information presented needs to be practical and free from jargon and the theoretical language of the educational world and policy makers.
3. The benefits of European transparency instruments need to be presented in direct context with common HR practices and processes.

Despite the low awareness of ECVET among the target group, the project team realised that there is definitely a strong need for transparency tools. HR managers today are under increasing pressure, facing contemporary challenges like globalisation and digitalisation with declining budgets and limited time resources. Innumerable instruments designed to tackle these issues are on the market, each promising to make their professional life easier; in the end, these tools are only compatible with other very specific components and comparability between different systems is almost impossible. With comparability a key factor when it comes to filtering relevant information that can be utilized in HR processes, e.g. when it is necessary to assess qualifications of foreign job applicants, there is definitely a demand for instruments that simplify these tasks and help to save precious time resources.



## Overcoming the language barrier

Keeping in mind the three deductions of the research study, the next step was to start developing a comprehensive reference handbook for HR managers. The partnership defined the following six fields of HR management (key processes) where European transparency instruments could be adopted and integrated to improve efficiency and transparency:

- Personnel planning
- Recruitment and selection
- Motivation and development of company staff
- Retaining company staff
- Performance management
- Leadership management

Each of these fields of action was presented and linked to the most suitable

transparency tools using many practical case studies and exercises for self-study. During the development the partnership reflected carefully on the language they used, always looking at it from the corporate perspective while presenting information in direct context of HR processes and refraining from abstract or too-theoretical terms.

In early 2017 and after completing several internal and external feedback loops, the elaborated reference handbook was finally published. It was supplied as print versions to all partners and their close stakeholders as well as participants of the national pilots of the training course and the final conference. It is also available as a free download in all six partner languages (AT, DE, EN, ES, IT, SL) on our website!

## Ready for take-off

Taking the efforts of the ECVET goes Business project to the next level, a complementary training course was developed. Its aim was to further educate HR managers, job stewards, line managers, supervisors, and anyone involved in personnel processes of businesses in using EU transparency tools in their daily tasks such as recruitment procedures, employee career planning and development as well as general processes of personnel planning and HR. The training course addresses the same fields as the handbook, but is designed to use an even more practical approach by introducing hands-on activities.

In spring 2017, the training course was tested in the form of national pilots in all partner countries; 78 persons from all target groups as well as 14 trainers in the field of adult education participated. After completing the course, they were asked to answer questionnaires containing 11 closed and open-ended questions on their perception of the training course in terms of quality, structure, content, duration and their overall satisfaction. The feedback was outstandingly positive and the results of the evaluation were documented in a comprehensive evaluation report which showed that participants consider the ECVET goes Business training course as valuable and substantial.

One valuable lesson was learnt during the pilot phase. Despite the fact that the partnership was eager to consider the business perspective by keeping the training as brief as possible while still discussing all aspects, the course was designed with 8 units or 16 hours, meaning 2 full work days of training. Business representatives were not too fond of this schedule as they consider it simply too time consuming. The partnership reacted quickly and decided to adapt the training course to be more open and flexible, allowing a modular



implementation of units according to the individual needs of each group of future participants.

### Sharing the accomplishments of ECVET goes Business

After two years of intense efforts while developing the three core products of the ECVET project as well as implementing four transnational meetings, the partnership came together once more in Graz, Austria, to attend the final meeting and conference on October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017. Local, regional and international representatives of small and large businesses as well as social partners and public bodies were present and learned about the project and its products. They even participated in a practical workshop. Furthermore, two keynote speakers were invited to share their practices in validating and recognising qualifications and how they are using transparency tools in their daily work.

The dissemination activities of the strategic partnership did not stop with the final conference. On October 10<sup>th</sup> 2017

the ECVET goes business project and its pull approach was presented at the Peer Learning Seminar of 7 Erasmus+ National Agencies in Bratislava, Slovakia. Just one month later, ECVET goes Business was awarded part of the ECVET success story by the Austrian Education Ministry and invited to share its success story during the third national ECVET conference in Austria on November 6<sup>th</sup> 2017. As the project's duration reached its finish line, the ECVET goes Business project as well as its results and products were introduced once more during the ECVET National Seminar organised by the National Commission of Further and Higher Education in Malta on December 6<sup>th</sup> 2017.

Now we, the strategic partnership of ECVET goes Business, look back on a successful and fruitful project. But we know one thing for sure: this is not the end. This is just the beginning and we are eager to keep up the efforts to make ECVET and European transparency instruments even more relevant to the corporate world.

## FACT BOX

**Title:** ECVET goes Business

**Duration:** 2 years (2015-2017)

**Funding:** Erasmus+ Key Action 2: Strategic Partnership for vocational education and training

**Partnership:** Auxilium pro Regionibus Europae in Rebus Culturalibus (AT), Austrian Trade Union Federation (AT), Fachhochschule des Mittelstandes (DE), Fondo Formacion Euskadi (ES), Meath Partnership (IE), ARES (IT), TREBAG (HU), Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia (SL)

**Objective:** Translate the benefits of ECVET and other European Transparency Instruments in the language of the corporate world and show how they can be applied in their everyday processes of human resource management

**Target:** HR managers, personnel managers, job stewards, business representatives

**Outcomes:** 1) Research Study with national focus groups 2) Practical Handbook for HR Managers in all partner languages 3) Training course for HR Managers

**Websites:**

[www.ecvetgoesbusiness.eu](http://www.ecvetgoesbusiness.eu)

[www.facebook.com/ecvetgoesbusiness](https://www.facebook.com/ecvetgoesbusiness)

# RUECVET: Piloting ECVET to the national VET system of Russia and Uzbekistan

An article by Vitaly Kopnov, Russian State Vocational Pedagogical University, and Louiza Papaloizou, Intercollege and University of Nicosia

The RUECVET project aims to pilot the ECVET implementation in the national HE & VET system of Russia and Uzbekistan by creating a long-term platform of collaboration between leading HEIs engaged in the training of VET teachers for post-secondary non-tertiary education level. The basis of the project is to focus on the transfer and adaptation of the ECVET technical framework, utilizing the expertise of three HEIs from European Countries in order to explore the applicability of ECVET in Russia and Uzbekistan and ultimately creating a compatible, comparable VET system that serves both horizontally (within VET) and vertically (from VET to HE) at national and transnational level.

## Introduction

The drive for a flexible and adaptable educational system to address the challenges of increased internationalization is behind the educational reforms implemented in Russia and Uzbekistan over the last few years. The application of EU instruments promoting quality, transparency and mobility (such as ECTS and ECVET) within and across EU borders is at the epicenter of the respective national strategies for educational reform. According to the main priorities of the “State Programme for the Development of Education” of the Russian Federation for 2013–2020 and the “State Programme for the Republic of Uzbekistan” for 2001-2020, introducing ECVET to the national VET system is considered a key step toward enhancing the flexibility and comparability of the VET system both at national and international level.

## About the RUECVET project

The RUECVET project is a CBHE project funded under Erasmus+. The overall aim of the project is to create



a Higher Education and Vocational Education & Training platform for piloting ECVET to the national educational systems of Russia and Uzbekistan to promote and facilitate compatibility, comparability and complementarity of VET qualifications.

Whereas ECTS for Higher Education has been adapted at a national and institutional level in both the Russian Fed-

eration and the Republic of Uzbekistan (Partner Countries), the respective European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) has still not been transferred at either level. The lack of a transparent and comparable credit system in the VET sector creates a roadblock in the mobility of people moving from one learning context to another - either horizontally or vertically, and transnationally.

The project was first initiated by key HE institutions engaged in VET teacher training in Russia and Uzbekistan in consultation with the relevant Ministries of Education and Science in the two Partner Countries. The Russian State Vocational Pedagogical University (RSVPU), the noted university for VET teacher training in Russia, and the University of Nicosia in collaboration with Intercollege in Cyprus undertook the leading role in developing the proposal and forming a transnational consortium.

For the implementation of the RUECVET project a transnational consortium has been developed between 11 key HE and VET institutions (see Fact Box below), from 3 European Member States (Cyprus, Malta and Latvia) and two Partner Countries (Russia and Uzbekistan). All consortium members are strategically positioned to facilitate and promote the piloting of ECVET in the national VET system of Russia and Uzbekistan while capitalizing on the previously acquired experience of HEIs in the application of EU instruments for transparency and mobility (ECTS).

Given the interlinked structures between HE and VET in the two Partner Countries, developing a cooperation between the two sectors in order to test and implement ECVET in the national context of Russia and Uzbekistan is considered by the consortium as a highly recommended approach. The expected benefits of strong coop-

eration between HE and VET sectors for implementing the project's detailed work programme are as follows:

- To pave the way for the adaptation and implementation of ECVET in the VET system of Russia and Uzbekistan while capitalizing on existing experience and expertise collected through the implementation of the ECTS system;
- To ensure a synergy and establish a structural link between ECVET and ECTS – facilitating transparency and comparability between the two systems; and
- To facilitate and enhance lifelong learning through the development of flexible pathways and improve the learners' mobility both horizontally (within VET) and vertically (from VET to HE).

The project's main proposal for pilot testing the ECVET system in post-secondary non-tertiary education level, through the cooperation of HE and VET institutions is considered as a key structural measure for facilitating the flexibility and internationalization of VET in Russia and Uzbekistan. At the same time, this will contribute to the development of a common educational area, encompassing both the VET & HE sector between Europe and neighboring countries.

### The key outputs

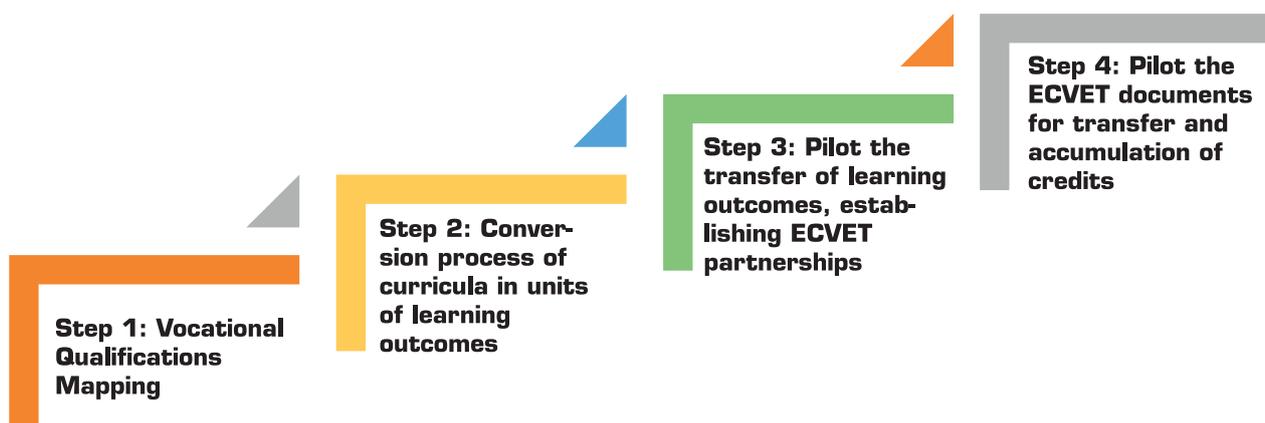
The project activities regarding the pilot testing of the credit transfer will

culminate in several outputs. The key outputs regarding the RUECVET methodology are listed below. All outputs will be posted on the project website and will be available to the public for free.

1. ECVET Master Guide for VET Instructors in Russia and Uzbekistan (EN, RU, UZ)
2. RUECVET – e-Training Manual for VET Instructors in Russia and Uzbekistan (RU & UZ)
3. Samples of 48 units described in learning outcomes covering 24 vocational qualifications from 8 different HE & VET institutions (EN, RU, UZ)
4. Four Training Centres (2 in Russia and 2 in Uzbekistan) offering off-line and on-line learning on ECVET and ECVET workshops as well
5. Multidimensional Roadmap of VET evolution (Policy Recommendation Report) on how to implement ECVET in the VET system in Russia and Uzbekistan (EN, RU, UZ)
6. A network of 30 ECVET contact points in all 5 consortium countries with expertise on ECVET available for guidance and support

### RUECVET operating methodology

The RUECVET operating methodology for Credit Transfer is based on ECVET principles achieved in formal context settings. The RUECVET operating methodology can be seen in the following diagram.





### Functional analysis for identifying units of learning outcomes

One of the peculiarities of the national learning environment of ECVET implementation in Russia and Uzbekistan is the existence of two sets of state educational and occupational standards which need to be considered when implementing the technical framework of ECVET in any VET study programme. Often, these educational and occupational standards for a chosen qualification are not aligned. All experts engaged in developing VET study programmes inevitably face the challenge of the accurate identification and description of the training programme in building blocks (courses, modules or units etc.) of learning outcomes, which correspond to the qualification (skill level) within a specific occupational area. In this context, when developing a vocational study programme a team of developers should proceed not so much from the provisions of the available educational standards but rather from the sector/occupational area needs – which qualifications are in demand within a particular sector and what functions make up the essence

**A detailed functional map makes it possible to establish the unique character of each occupation for the appropriate level of qualification and to realize in what ways the considered qualification is different from all the others.**

of a specific qualification. When combined with labour market research and direct contact with employers, the expertise of the study programme developers will allow them to identify and relate market demands to the existing restrictions as to the content and form of study programme delivery. These restrictions are: 1) educational standards representing the aggregated experience and understanding of the educational community; and 2)

occupational standards representing the aggregated experience and understanding of employers and professional associations.

When implementing the ECVET system for a VET study programme, developers should take several actions to correctly describe the units of learning outcomes. The latter are both constituent parts of the qualification and the results of the educational process: what the learner must know and be able to do by the end of the programme. The actions to be taken are based on the universal method - functional analysis of the chosen qualification within a specific occupational area. The final step of the analysis is developing a functional map.

Functional analysis is the main tool used to determine the nature of an industry sector and the work functions performed in it. In addition, functional analysis is an important process for identifying vocational competencies and establishing boundaries between different qualifications. A detailed functional map makes it possible to establish the unique character of each occupation for the appropriate level of qualification and to realize in what ways the considered qualification is different from all the others. Functional comparison of various work actions also contributes to identifying the work functions necessary to achieve a certain level of specific activity, thus enabling definition of occupational competency through the creation or adoption of new and existing national occupational standards. Functional analysis may serve as a tool of seeking a “consensus” between the requirements of occupational and educational standards. It also provides a clear understanding of the list and content of work functions within the qualification required by the real employer or employers’ associations (Skill Advisory Bodies).

### What's ahead

The ECVET Master Guide and E-learning Tutorial reflecting the specifics of the Russian and Uzbekistan education systems are under construction. Despite the technical challenges and complexities which arise from the effort to transfer and adapt the ECVET technical framework to the national context of the two Partner Countries,

the project is making sufficient progress. A number of valuable and innovative tools developed such as the Functional Analysis Map are creating added value in the field of ECVET methodology, not only nationally but at European level as well.

For more information visit our project website at [www.ruecvet.uz](http://www.ruecvet.uz)



### FACT BOX

**Title:** RUECVET – Piloting ECVET to the national VET system of Russia and Uzbekistan

**Duration:** 3 years (2016 – 2019)

**Funding:** Erasmus+ Key Action 2: Capacity building in the field of higher education

**Partnership:** Project partners from three European countries: University of Nicosia & Intercollege (CY), Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MT), University of Liepaja (LV). In addition, eight universities and vocational training institutions from Russia and Uzbekistan participate in the project. Russia: Russian State Vocational Pedagogical University, Tver State University, Voronezh State University, Novosibirsk College of Chemical Technologies named after D.I. Mendeleev, Moscow State University of Geodesy and Cartography. Uzbekistan: Kokand State Pedagogical Institute, Nukus State Pedagogical Institute, Navoi State Pedagogical Institute

**Objective:** To create to create a Higher Education and Vocational Education & Training platform for piloting ECVET to the national educational system of Russia and Uzbekistan, in order to promote and facilitate compatibility, comparability and complementarity of VET qualifications

**Target:** Universities engaged in VET teacher training, VET institutions, learners and companies interested in getting engaged in VET learner mobility

**Outcomes:** Development of a network of national and transnational key HE & VET institutions for facilitating and supporting the implementation of the ECVET, a collection of resources and training materials intended to support the National Training Centres and stakeholders for the transfer and implementation of the ECVET, a multi-dimensional roadmap of ECVET evolution in Russia and Uzbekistan

**Website:** <http://www.ruecvet.uz/en/>

T | Russia  
Uzbekistan

# Successes and challenges of the first national consortium in Slovakia

## “Turiec to Europe, Europe to Turiec” – Bridge between education and labour market

An article by Dušana Lajčiaková and Martin Kubiš, K.A.B.A. Slovensko

“Erasmus+ Turiec” is the first consortium of VET schools in Slovakia. It is based in the Turiec region of northern Slovakia. Its members are Stredná odborná škola Obchodu a služieb (Secondary Vocational School of Trade and Services), Obchodná akadémia (Business Academy), Stredná priemyselná škola (Secondary Technical School) and coordinator K.A.B.A. Slovensko, a pioneer organization in career guidance in Slovakia active in education for more than 20 years. The consortium is now sending students and staff of the 4<sup>th</sup> project through Erasmus+.

The motivation for creating the consortium was and still is to constantly improve the quality of VET in the region while reflecting the current state of the labour market including employer requirements. Members prepared a European plan for school development and the foundations were built for implementing a strategy of internationalization. Based on years of experience we can conclude that it is mutual cooperation that leads to better understanding of up-to-date trends and situations on local as well as international labour markets, searching for solutions, understanding and implementation of ECVET elements, reacting to actual opportunities and facing threats.

More than 300 participants including students, teachers, specialists and school administrators have taken part in completed mobility projects between 2014 – 2017. More than 100 participants are involved in projects currently underway for school year 2017/2018.



One of the priorities is to involve students with social or other disadvantages; this currently applies to 10% of participants. Our long-term goal is to increase involvement of VET teachers and instructors. In the process of planning, realizing activities, disseminating and spreading impact from participat-

ing pedagogical employees and school management we cooperate with domestic and foreign experts in ECVET. Cooperation with regional stakeholders is also very important. Employers, workplace trainers, governing officials as well as other organisations and media must all have input in order to se-



cure mutual synergy and achieve the greatest impact.

One of the most important factors to fulfil the set goals of the consortium is the selection of suitable partners abroad. Since our consortium is not only sending but also hosting participants of Erasmus+ we have rich experience with preparing vocational programmes, cooperation on defining of learning outcomes and following the principles of ECVET. This is the basis for planning and realizing mobilities in a way that fulfils the requirements of ECVET in practice. Despite differences in implementation of this system across EU member countries (e.g. the use of credits) we always discuss with partners planned learning outcomes, creation of learning units, evaluation system of achieving learning outcomes, monitoring, mentoring and process of recognition of achieved learning outcomes by the sending organization. We select project partners based primarily on experience but also on former cooperation, recommendations, and added value to participants. We appreciate organizations who help us place students in companies that were not previously

accessible for the students either from lack of will, experience with international project or being afraid to use ECVET. Thanks to them we can overcome various barriers.

For the mobility to fulfil the set goals and reflect the requirements of the labour market we solicited feedback from participants and employers. In January 2017 we distributed questionnaires among 17 significant employers in our region. We asked how satisfied they are with the quality of graduates of secondary schools with a specific focus on their readiness for the labour market, vocational skills and knowledge. We concentrated on potential employers in areas with schools from the consortium.

One of the questions was if employers are satisfied with the quality of graduates of secondary schools in our region. 53% were not satisfied and 47% were satisfied. Further to the above question we asked if there is a sufficient number of suitable employees on the labour market. 82% stated they cannot find a suitable number of employees in the current labour market.

Next we asked what is missing in the secondary school graduates when starting their job. More than half stated that graduates are missing applied knowledge, skills and competencies in practice. The next most common answer pointed to inadequate language skills and work ethic; graduates are lacking motivation, struggle to learn good work habits or are unable to work independently. Inadequate IT skills were stated as least important.

Despite what was stated above, more than 75% are willing to cooperate more with VET schools. The remaining 25% have their own training centre already at their disposal.

In order to have a more complete picture from learners and participants of mobilities we did another questionnaire-based survey at the end of 2017. This time it was focused on mapping of mobility impact over a longer period of time. The questionnaire was anonymous, and we received answers from 102 respondents.

98% would take part in international mobility again; a very positive result. To the question if they enhanced their vocational knowledge and skills, almost 88% stated "yes" or "mostly yes". Other options were "mostly no" and "no".

However, the impact of mobilities is much more than vocational. Recognizing this we asked what impact their mobility experience had on their view of the world, the environment and their opinions. The answers were mostly repetitive; respondents reported getting to know other cultural environments, learned about tolerance and overcame prejudices and barriers.

Following the previous question we also asked if the mobility participation was their motivation for further professional development. 78% responded positively.



Next question was related to the sending school and what students would welcome as part of the curriculum of the domestic educational school system. Most of the answers focused on more practice and less theory, followed by more effective foreign language education. Very interesting were answers mentioning more communication and interactive cooperation among students and teachers; getting to know other cultures; and more studies of ethics.

Around 65% of participants stated they would like for mobilities to be longer than 2 weeks (we have already responded by including longer mobilities in our project). More than 20% would not change anything about their mobility experience.

We consider getting feedback as a very important tool of monitoring and a check of mobility organization. This gives us the opportunity to be informed about the immediate impact it has while giving us areas to focus on into the future.

Since we formed the consortium in 2013 and thanks to Erasmus+ was

have been able to take a huge leap forward on vocational, professional and personal level in internationalization and cooperation across Europe. In the beginning, everybody was focused on their work and solving operational problems. There was not much international involvement or time to think how to develop the schools, not to mention cooperation with employers. Thanks to mobilities of students and staff in those first years we helped to make the shift from thinking “my office/cabinet” and “my school” to “our consortium” and “our region”.

We actively implemented first elements of ECVET in practice since 2015. It was quite a challenge to find experts to help us with the practical side of implementation: to learn and explain to our partners the difference in mobility with and without ECVET. We had to become experts ourselves. Thanks to Mgr. Dušana Lajčiaková; with the help of SAAIC (Slovak National Agency) as well as other project beneficiaries and more experienced partners we progressed in using the system in practice. The next challenge was to introduce ECVET and motivate VET teachers to help us set the learning outcomes and replace old

thinking of hourly schedule/programme and aspects (to see, to hear, to try) with focus on 1-2 topics in depth; how to define learning units and learning outcomes, set up evaluation criteria and so on. And finally, when schools knew what they wanted, it was important that their foreign partners also understood the meaning and appropriate use of the system during mobilities of students, such as how to assess participants and work with the responsible mentor/tutor.

We also consider it a success that thanks to creating teams on the schools we shifted the direct communication from project managers only to involve VET teaching professionals on both sides. This helped to change the attitude of teachers who sometimes thought “it’s just a trip/vacation”, helping them to appreciate real learning and development during evaluation and recognition of mobility.

Lastly, as a consortium we are successful not only in sending 100 students and teachers, but also receiving around 30 students and teachers per year. Thanks to this experience we have found minor differences in implementation of ECVET in practice in other countries.





The ECVET Magazine is published three times per year and informs about the latest ECVET developments. Previous issues of the ECVET Magazine are available for download on the website of the ECVET Secretariat: <http://www.ecvet-secretariat.eu>

Any comments or suggestions regarding this or future issues can be submitted to the following address: [ECVET-Secretariat@icfi.com](mailto:ECVET-Secretariat@icfi.com)

