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ECVET in Europe

Monitoring report 2015



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Foreword

The European credit system for VET (ECVET) is one of the important common European tools to support and increase European mobility. ECVET is also meant to support learners on their career and learning paths to a recognised vocational qualification, through transfer and accumulation of their assessed learning outcomes acquired in different national, cultural and education and training contexts. In a broader sense, ECVET should contribute to promoting lifelong learning and increasing the employability of Europeans. ECVET calls for better transparency and mutual trust between education systems and providers, as well as more efficient and readable recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

ECVET can make vocational education and training more attractive to various groups of learners by ensuring flexibility of pathways and recognising all learning. It can contribute to fighting social exclusion and increasing the employability of the low-skilled by making it possible for them to have their competences recognised and to get a qualification.

Since 2010, following the adoption by the European Parliament and the Council of the ECVET recommendation (European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2009), Cedefop has been regularly monitoring the implementation of ECVET. This is the fifth monitoring report, in which we have tried to capture whether vocational education and training systems provide opportunities for individuals to have their learning outcomes transferred or accumulated towards vocational qualifications. It also looked into how countries promote ECVET and inform all stakeholders about these opportunities.

Although there is still a long way to go to the moment that we can speak about a European credit system in VET, the monitoring shows that many steps have been taken and quite a lot has been accomplished in the Member States, with their different starting points and different educational practices and cultures.

It is sometimes difficult to separate the development and implementation of ECVET principles from the developments of national qualification frameworks. Based on learning outcomes, NQFs have made significant progress. The same could be said for the validation of non-formal and informal learning and the modularisation of training programmes. ECVET-related developments go hand-in-hand with, and result from, reforms aimed at transparency and permeability of education and training systems, better employability processes and employment or re-employment.

This publication shows the stage of implementation of ECVET components in the Member States and EFTA countries. The monitoring helped identify some

interesting examples of guidance tools and support materials developed through the EU-funded projects that we find useful to share and we invite the reader to learn from those and adapt and adopt those relevant to their countries.

There is no doubt that the implementation of a credit system for VET could be the turning point in making VET more attractive and will enable learners to experience mobility as well as permeability with higher education. Progress has been achieved (as can be evidenced from this fifth report) but more commitment towards establishing a credit system for VET that is transparent across all Member States is increasingly becoming the next step in a quality VET system. More Member States need to link credits in VET to the common platform of ECVET.

I hope this report will serve as a catalyst to encourage more policy-makers to spearhead a new wave of targeted initiatives that will see credits being attached to VET programmes, to education and training qualifications, and to certification and Europass supplements. In a world in which fast track solutions frequently achieve higher visibility and value-added, a credit system for VET will certainly contribute to making lifelong learning a currency that can transform skills and competences into new job opportunities, higher skills and a better quality of life for European citizens.

ECVET-related systems could well provide the missing link to a higher esteemed profile for vocational education and training.

Joachim James Calleja
Cedefop Director

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Cedefop is grateful to the members of the ECVET users' group from the Member States and EFTA countries, who actively participated and responded to the questionnaire, involving national stakeholders to support their answers.

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Preface

This publication is the fifth report on monitoring the implementation of the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) recommendation (European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2009) that Cedefop has been regularly conducting since 2010.

The ECVET is one of the common EU tools, aiming to support the transfer, recognition and accumulation of assessed learning outcomes of individuals working to achieve a qualification and to promote lifelong learning through flexible and individualised learning pathways (European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2009). The creation and implementation of main ECVET principles should lead to better understanding of citizens' learning outcomes (LO), their transparency, transnational mobility, and portability across and within Member States (MS).

Based on the responses from 28 Member States and four EFTA countries, the publication offers a snapshot (Chapter 2) of current implementation of ECVET principles and tools as defined in the ECVET recommendation (European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2009). It also focuses on the ways that countries promote ECVET and support main actors and beneficiaries (Chapter 3) and takes into account Cedefop's work on monitoring the implementation of NQFs and validation of non-formal and informal learning (Cedefop, 2015a and b; European Commission, Cedefop and ICF International, 2014).

Given the diversity of the contexts, the analysis distinguishes three main groups of countries which are further analysed by group:

- (a) group 1: countries that have credit systems compatible with ECVET (Section 2.2.1.);
- (b) group 2: countries that are working towards ECVET-compatible systems; this group is subdivided into two:
 - (i) group 2a: countries that are developing a credit system to be compatible with ECVET principles (Section 2.2.2.);
 - (ii) group 2b: countries that are currently testing ECVET technical components (Section 2.2.3.);
- (c) group 3: countries without credit systems and without system-level ECVET initiatives. These are countries where activities at the system level have not started or have been put on hold for various reasons (Section 2.2.4.).

Promotion and dissemination activities are analysed for all the countries together as these activities are equally important for all.

Chapter 1 presents the aims and objectives of ECVET and the methodology and scope of the monitoring. Chapter 2 discusses the current state and directions of development in the four groups of countries, plus the reported benefits from ECVET implementation. Chapter 3 looks into how the countries inform the stakeholders and disseminate information about ECVET and what networks exist to support it; the chapter also provides some examples of guidance and support materials developed in the countries, including through EU-funded projects, which can be of value to all countries. Conclusions summarise the overall progress and point to the remaining challenges as well as suggesting areas for further research and future monitoring. Annex 1 presents short summaries on the countries (except for Liechtenstein and Switzerland) that highlight the developments in the areas of geographic mobility, NQFs and support for ECVET activities, including the existence of the national contact points. Annex 2 provides a list of websites where information on ECVET is available in selected countries.

The publication addresses education and training policy- and decision-makers, social partner organisations, ECVET national experts and networks, VET providers and all those interested in use of principles that can help individuals to have their learning from all contexts accumulated or transferred towards recognised qualifications.

CHAPTER 1.

Introduction

1.1. ECVET aims and objectives

The European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET) is one of the common EU tools. It is intended to aid the transfer, recognition and accumulation of assessed learning outcomes of individuals aiming to achieve a qualification and to promote lifelong learning through flexible and individualised learning pathways (European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2009). The creation and implementation of main principles of ECVET should lead to better understanding of citizens' learning outcomes (LO), their transparency, transnational mobility and portability across and within Member States (MS). It should contribute to European cooperation in education and training in a more coherent and integrated way and link it with the developments of national qualification frameworks (NQFs), validation of non-formal and informal learning, quality assurance in VET and Europass (Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union and European Commission, 2015).

The ECVET recommendation (European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2009) invited the MS to create necessary conditions and adopt measures to make it possible that, as from 2012, ECVET is gradually applied to vocational education and training (VET) qualifications at all levels of the European qualifications framework (EQF). ECVET should be applied in accordance with national legislation and practice and on the basis of trial and testing.

To be operational, the credit system should be underpinned by the following ECVET principles and technical components:

- (a) qualifications should be described in units of LO, a central concept of ECVET principles, with associated points (ECVET points). The ECVET recommendation (European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2009) makes a clear distinction between the components of VET qualifications defined as units of learning outcomes and the components of formal learning programmes or training provision commonly known as modules (Cedefop, 2014a);
- (b) there should be a process for units of LO to be assessed, validated and recognised, and for their transfer and accumulation;
- (c) ECVET partnerships are supported by complementary documents, such as memorandum of understanding (MoU), learning agreements (LA), personal transcripts of records (henceforth, complementary documents).

ECVET is meant for individual learners to be able to accumulate, transfer and use their learning in units as they are achieved; to build a qualification at their own pace from LO acquired in formal, non-formal and informal contexts in their own country and/or abroad.

1.2. Purpose, methodology and scope of monitoring

Cedefop has been monitoring ECVET implementation since 2010. The purpose of the 2015 monitoring is to take stock of the situation in the MS and EFTA countries and to capture progress since 2013. The monitoring tries to capture whether, and to what extent, existing systems provide conditions for transfer and accumulation of learning outcomes acquired by individuals in all contexts.

The 2015 monitoring also looked into how countries promote ECVET and inform stakeholders; low demand from potential users and low awareness of actors about ECVET were referred to as obstacles in the 2013 monitoring.

The monitoring covered the following areas:

- (a) the current situation and development direction;
- (b) regulatory provisions supporting ECVET;
- (c) the implementation of ECVET principles and technical components (units of LO, ECVET points; assessment, validation and recognition of units of LO; MoU, LA and transcript of record);
- (d) informing stakeholders and promotion of ECVET (activities to promote ECVET and increase participation; target groups; networks for trial, implementation and promotion; ECVET-related projects; examples of practice to share);
- (e) obstacles to implementing ECVET.

Countries were asked whether they had a credit system that allows accumulating and/or transferring LO of individuals; if they had, they were asked whether those systems were compatible with the ECVET principles. If the systems were not compatible, countries were asked about the direction of development: whether they were adjusting their system to the ECVET principles, were developing a new compatible credit system, or were testing some ECVET technical components (see Table 1 for the summary of responses).

The questions were asked separately about the implementation of ECVET principles in initial vocational education and training (IVET) and continuing vocational education and training (CVET). For the purpose of the report, IVET refers to VET aimed at equipping people with knowledge, skills and competences necessary to enter a particular occupation or, more broadly, the labour market,

while CVET is education and training after initial education and training or after the entry to the labour market.

In analysing responses, national contexts were taken into consideration as well as progress in developing NQFs, implementation of the learning outcomes approach, and validation of non-formal and informal learning (Cedefop, 2015a and 2015b; European Commission et al.; 2014). These potentially support implementation of ECVET principles by creating favourable policy environment and operational frameworks.

The survey was implemented through the users' group (UG) ⁽¹⁾ members in two steps:

- (a) in step 1, the UG members were asked to validate and update the information compiled by Cedefop by 2014: MS, Iceland and Norway took part (see Annex 1 for country summaries);
- (b) in step 2, Cedefop invited the countries to fill an online questionnaire; one input per country was sought. The UG members were invited to organise national input by involving all relevant stakeholders in discussion. Various stakeholders have been consulted (Box 1).

In total, 32 countries (the EU-28, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland) responded; separate answers were received from the French and Flemish Communities of Belgium and from England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales of the UK. A total of 36 responses are analysed in this report: henceforth, when the report refers to 'countries', it covers the relevant countries and regions.

Box 1. Stakeholders consulted in preparing national responses

Ministries responsible for education, labour, economy
 National contact points ECVET
 National ECVET experts
 VET providers and schools
 National agencies (VET, Erasmus+, adult learning)
 Social partners
 Certification bodies

Source: Cedefop.

⁽¹⁾ The users' group has been established from the European ECVET network to contribute to the updating of the users' guide and to the quality and overall coherence of cooperation in ECVET implementation (European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2009). The users' group has since been acting as an ECVET policy group.

CHAPTER 2.

ECVET implementation: the findings

2.1. ECVET in 2015: overall progress

One of the main purposes of the ECVET is to allow individuals to have their learning accumulated and recognised and use it to achieve or upgrade their qualification; having a credit system in place aids this process.

Findings from the 2015 responses indicate some progress since 2013 and the situation in IVET looks as follows:

- (a) 17 countries report that they have a credit system (not necessarily ECVET) in IVET in 2015, compared ⁽²⁾ to nine countries in 2013 ⁽³⁾; seven countries use credits in some qualifications;
- (b) out of eight countries that did not have a credit system in 2013 but had units or modules, two (Estonia and France) report having credit systems in IVET in 2015;
- (c) in 2013, 17 countries did not have units or modules. In 2015, three countries (Belgium-French Community, Denmark, and Malta) have credit systems; two of these (Belgium-French Community and Malta) are ECVET compatible. Five countries (Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Lithuania and Norway) use credits in some qualifications;
- (d) 12 countries do not have a system that allows accumulating and transferring learning outcomes of individuals. Of these, seven (Belgium-Flemish Community, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Liechtenstein, Slovakia, and Switzerland) report no initiatives on ECVET implementation at system level;
- (e) 31 countries have national ECVET contact points, many of which also act as contact points for NQF and EQAVET.

Table 1 summarises the current situation in the countries (see Section 1.2. for the methodology).

⁽²⁾ Only countries covered by the 2015 monitoring are used for comparison from 2013.

⁽³⁾ Four countries of the UK were counted as one entry in 2013. In 2015, the responses from the UK countries were counted separately as differences were observed on some questionnaire items.

Table 1. **Credit systems for transfer and accumulation of learning outcomes and ECVET development in 2015, by country**

Country	Direction of ECVET development	Do the answers apply to CVET?
Countries with a credit system in IVET that allows accumulating and/or transferring learning outcomes of individuals		
Belgium-French Community	The system is ECVET-compatible.	No
Denmark	Some ECVET technical components are tested	Yes
Estonia	The system is ECVET-compatible.	Yes
Finland	The system is ECVET-compatible.	Yes
France	The system is ECVET-compatible.	Yes
Iceland	The system is ECVET-compatible.	No
Ireland	It may be possible to map elements of the well-established credit system to ECVET principles.	Yes
Luxembourg	The system is ECVET-compatible.	Yes
Malta	The system is ECVET-compatible.	Yes
Romania	Some ECVET technical components are tested.	No
Slovenia	The system is ECVET-compatible.	No
Spain	The system is ECVET-compatible.	No
Sweden	The system is ECVET-compatible.	No
UK-England	The system is ECVET-compatible.	Yes
UK-Northern Ireland	The system is ECVET-compatible.	Yes
UK-Scotland	The system is ECVET-compatible.	Yes
UK-Wales	The system is ECVET-compatible.	Yes
Countries where credits are used in some qualifications		
Austria	Some ECVET technical components are tested.	Yes
Bulgaria	A credit system compatible with ECVET is being developed.	Yes
Croatia	A credit system compatible with ECVET is being developed.	Yes
Czech Republic	A credit system compatible with ECVET is being developed.	No
Italy	Some ECVET technical components are tested.	Yes
Lithuania	Some ECVET technical components are tested.	Yes
Norway	Some ECVET technical components are tested.	Yes
Countries with no credit system		
Belgium-Flemish Community	Any initiative on ECVET implementation at system level is on hold.	Yes
Cyprus	A credit system compatible with ECVET is being developed.	No
Germany (*)	Some ECVET technical components are tested.	Yes
Greece	Any initiative on ECVET implementation at system level is on hold.	Yes
Hungary	Any initiative on ECVET implementation at system level is on hold.	Yes
Latvia	Some ECVET technical components are tested.	Yes
Liechtenstein	Any initiative on ECVET implementation at system level is on hold.	Yes
Netherlands	Some ECVET technical components are tested.	No

Country	Direction of ECVET development	Do the answers apply to CVET?
Poland	Some ECVET technical components are tested.	No
Portugal	Some ECVET technical components are tested.	Yes
Slovakia	Any initiative on ECVET implementation at system level is on hold.	Yes
Switzerland	Any initiative on ECVET implementation at system level is on hold.	Yes

(*) In Germany, there is no initiative related to ECVET at system level; however, technical components have been tested both in IVET and CVET at provider level (see also Box 4 and country summary in Annex 1).

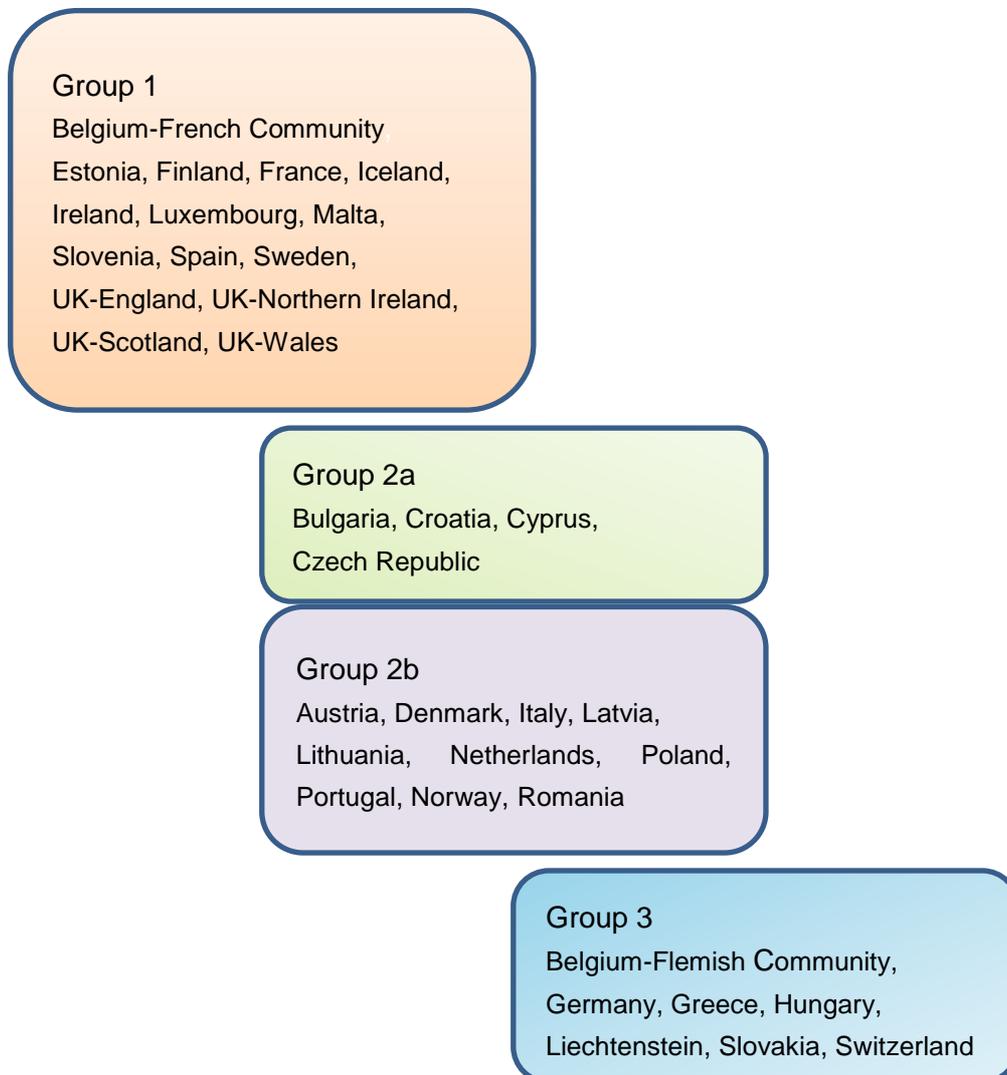
Source: Cedefop.

Further analysis of implementation of ECVET principles in three groups of the countries shows that the groups are not homogeneous and are only conditional (Figure 1):

- (a) group 1: countries that have credit systems compatible with ECVET (Section 2.2.1.);
- (b) group 2: countries that are working towards ECVET-compatible systems; this group is subdivided into two:
 - (i) group 2a: countries that are developing a credit system to be compatible with ECVET principles (Section 2.2.2.);
 - (ii) group 2b: countries that are currently testing ECVET technical components (Section 2.2.3.).

There is a further dimension to the current situation. While Cyprus, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, and Portugal act in the absence of credit systems, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Italy, Lithuania, and Norway have credits used in some qualifications. Denmark and Romania are testing ECVET components alongside existing credit systems;

- (c) group 3: countries without credit systems and without system-level ECVET initiatives. These are the countries where activities at the system level have not started or have been put on hold for various reasons (Section 2.2.4.).

Figure 1. **Groups of countries by current status and direction of development**

2.2. ECVET principles and components: implementation and application

Since 2013, more countries have moved towards applying ECVET principles to support geographic mobility and recognition and transfer of learning outcomes within their own education and training systems. This section looks at ECVET technical components, (units of learning outcomes in qualifications and ECVET points, assessment, validation and recognition of units of LO and complementary documents), whether and how they are applied and whether there are any similarities and differences among and in the groups of countries (Figure 1).

2.2.1. Group 1: countries with an ECVET-compatible credit system

In 15 countries, existing credit systems are compatible with ECVET (in IVET); in nine of these the system is compatible also for CVET. However, the situation varies: most have fully operational ECVET-based systems; some need further development to make their systems operational; and in some only particular technical components exist (see Table 2 for more details).

Table 2. Credit systems in group 1

Status	Countries
Fully operational ECVET-based system	Estonia; Finland; France; Ireland (*); Malta; Spain; Sweden; UK (England, Northern Ireland and Wales)
Compatible but needs further development to operate	Belgium (French Community); Iceland; Slovenia
Only some ECVET technical components exist	Luxembourg; UK-Scotland

(*) In Ireland, it may be possible to map elements of their well-established credit system to ECVET principles.

Source: Cedefop.

In all these countries IVET qualifications are designed in units of LO, while ECVET points exist only in six.

In almost all countries, units of LO can be assessed, validated and recognised, as well as accumulated and transferred within the country; to do the same with the LO acquired abroad is possible only in 11 countries (out of 15). It is possible in all countries for an individual to have LO assessed, validated, recognised, accumulated and transferred by unit, if these are acquired through formal learning, but only in two thirds it is possible for the LO acquired through non-formal learning or informally (Table 3).

Use of the ECVET complementary documents (MoU, LA, and transcript of record) varies. Most countries have learning agreements and transcripts of records, yet MoU covering all qualifications is reported by only four countries and in another four it does not exist. This might be linked to the fact that recognition of LO acquired abroad does not take place in all of these countries, so there are no agreements between institutions.

Although their credit systems are ECVET-compatible and two countries (Finland and Malta) report that there are no barriers, most countries still face some obstacles to making ECVET principles work for individuals to use the provided opportunities (see Box 2 for the example of coordination among the EU tools in Sweden). The reports suggest there are more obstacles in relation to recognising LO acquired abroad; mostly, these obstacles (low demand from potential users, low awareness and lack of trust among actors) point to the need

for more information and promotion of ECVET. Another set of obstacles refers to the technicalities of implementation, such as differences in unit design and complexity of procedures; these can be addressed by strengthening guidance (for example, providing guidelines or handbooks).

Table 3. **Use of learning outcomes in units in different contexts (group 1)**

Country	Assessed	Validated	Recognised	Accumulated	Transferred
Belgium-French Community	LLL, GM, FL, NFL, IL				
Estonia	LLL, GM, FL				
Finland	LLL, GM, FL, NFL, IL				
France	LLL, GM, FL, NFL, IL	LLL, FL, NFL, IL			
Iceland	LLL, GM, FL, NFL, IL				
Ireland	LLL, GM, FL, NFL, IL				
Luxembourg	LLL, FL				
Malta	LLL, FL, NFL, IL	LLL, FL, FL	LLL, FL, NFL	LLL, FL	FL
Slovenia	LLL, GM, FL	LLL, GM, FL	GM, FL	LLL, GM, FL	LLL, GM, FL
Spain	LLL, GM, FL, NFL, IL				
Sweden	LLL, GM, FL, IL				
UK-England	LLL, GM, FL, NFL, IL				
UK-Northern Ireland	LLL, GM, FL, NFL, IL				
UK-Scotland	LLL, FL, NFL, IL				
UK-Wales	LLL, FL				

NB: Applies to LO acquired in: LLL – within the country; GM – through geographic mobility; FL – through formal learning; NFL – through non-formal learning; IL – informally.

Source: Cedefop.

Seven countries (France, Ireland, Spain, Sweden, UK-England, UK-Northern Ireland, and UK-Wales) evaluated their ECVET-compatible credit systems, revealing concerns that might affect implementing ECVET principles. One example is tension (need for equilibrium) between too much focus on units or unitisation and achieving overall objectives of the qualification, both in the process of learning and in assessment (Sweden, UK-England, UK-Northern Ireland, UK-Wales).

In Ireland, Malta, Spain, UK-Scotland and UK-Wales, the credit systems in VET (IVET and CVET) are linked to ECTS.

Box 2. Coordinating the synergy among EU tools in Sweden

In Sweden, different agencies are responsible for implementing European tools (EQF, Europass, ECVET, EQAVET, ESCO and EURES) according to their area of expertise. In the opinion of the respondents, national developments are better taken into account, both in education in general and VET in particular, and dissemination of the tools about education policy-makers and experts is facilitated.

It is important, however, to ensure synergies between these activities. The Swedish National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*) has a coordinating role with a clear mandate to initiate cooperation and exchange of information and experiences among the agencies. The representatives of the agencies meet regularly, discuss issues, identify and plan common activities. As a result of such cooperation, several joint conferences took place where different tools were presented and relations among them were discussed.

The Swedish National Agency for Education:

<http://www.skolverket.se/om-skolverket/andra-sprak-och-lattlast/in-english>

Source: Cedefop.

2.2.2. Group 2a: countries developing a credit system compatible with ECVET principles

In creating their national credit system, four countries look at the components that already exist (such as having some qualifications described in units of LO); then they can decide to take some of them on board, adapt or discard some and develop new ones.

There is no homogeneity among the countries in terms of steps taken toward individual ECVET components, which can be explained by the differences in their current situation (Table 1). Croatia will continue to use units of LO and ECVET points as they already exist but will work on assessment, validation and recognition of LO. The Czech Republic is in the process of testing most components. Cyprus and Bulgaria will mainly adapt existing elements to the new system (Table 4).

Bulgaria and the Czech Republic do not have ECVET points and do not foresee them in their new systems, regardless of the fact that they are either adapting or creating other missing components (Table 4).

All four countries foresee the use of the ECVET tools (MoU, LA, and transcript of record). Bulgaria will take the transcript of record as it exists while Cyprus will adapt it: both plan to adapt MoU and LA to the new system. Croatia and the Czech Republic are testing MoU and LA and will create the transcript of record (Table 4).

Table 4. **ECVET technical components for new credit systems**

	In place and will be used as it is	In place but will be adapted	Will be created	Currently in testing	Not foreseen in the new system
Units of LO	Croatia	Cyprus	Bulgaria	Czech Republic	
ECVET points	Croatia	Cyprus			Bulgaria, Czech Republic
Assessment of LO		Bulgaria, Cyprus	Croatia	Czech Republic	
Validation of LO	Bulgaria	Cyprus	Croatia	Czech Republic	
Recognition of LO		Bulgaria, Cyprus	Croatia	Czech Republic	
Learning agreement		Bulgaria, Cyprus		Croatia, Czech Republic	
Memorandum of understanding		Bulgaria, Cyprus		Croatia, Czech Republic	
Transcript of record (personal transcript)	Bulgaria	Cyprus	Croatia, Czech Republic		

Source: Cedefop.

All newly-developed credit systems foresee that it will be possible for learners to have their learning outcomes acquired within the country ('LLL' in Table 5) and in formal programmes (at least in IVET) recognised, accumulated and transferred. The Czech Republic also plans to allow this for geographic mobility and for LO acquired in non-formal and informal ways while Bulgaria

foresees that it will be also possible to validate LO acquired abroad, and non-formally and informally (Table 5).

Table 5. **Use of learning outcomes in units in different contexts (group 2a)**

Country	Assessed	Validated	Recognised	Accumulated	Transferred
Bulgaria	LLL, FL	LLL, GM, FL, NFL, IL	LLL, FL	LLL, FL	LLL, FL
Croatia	GM, FL, IL	LLL	LLL	LLL	LLL
Cyprus	LLL, FL	LLL, FL	LLL, FL	LLL, FL	LLL, FL
Czech Republic	LLL, GM, FL, NFL, IL				

NB: Applies to LO acquired in: LLL – within the country; GM – through geographic mobility; FL – through formal learning; NFL – through non-formal learning; IL – informally.

Source: Cedefop.

The creation of credit systems in these countries is guided by the VET laws in Bulgaria and Croatia, with Croatia and the Czech Republic relying on national strategies for LLL and targeted documents on the implementation of ECVET. As an example, the government of the Czech Republic monitors the implementation of ECVET conditions within the framework of the national strategy for LLL (2009-15). Croatia and Cyprus also have documents that support the implementation of some ECVET-related elements, such as modular and learning outcomes-based curricula and qualifications and credit points (in Croatia). These processes are managed by ministries responsible for education; national agencies and institutes responsible for VET, adult education and qualifications test and put them into practice, working with VET providers. National Erasmus+ agencies support the activities of the national teams of ECVET experts. Box 3 illustrates the structured and systematic approach that Croatia took to develop and implement ECVET.

Obstacles to faster implementation of ECVET in these countries include low demand from potential users and low awareness among actors of ECVET, echoing those reported by group 1. Other obstacles (NQFs do not cover all qualifications; not all qualifications are described in units of LO and clear procedures are lacking) possibly reflects the evolving stage of development of these countries, including the developments of NQFs and LO approaches; these obstacles refer to transfer of LO in the national context. There are fewer obstacles identified for cross-border mobility but this can be linked to the fact that, as they develop systems, most countries focus on creating conditions in the context of LLL within the country.

Box 3. ECVET in Croatia

Croatia took a structured and systematic approach to developing and implementing ECVET. With the help of the EU funding, a national team of ECVET experts was created and their expertise built by familiarising them with all aspects of ECVET and learning from European experiences (2012).

Since then, the national ECVET experts have gradually accomplished a significant amount of work at national level:

- analysing existing legislative and financial regulations in VET as regards curriculum, qualification standards, VET and general subjects, assessment and validation, and determining conditions for implementing ECVET. The team prepared a report, *Analysis of the normative acts relevant to the mobility in VET in the Republic of Croatia* that will be used to present proposals to integrate ECVET into the education system;
- preparing guidelines for decision-makers and VET providers on piloting, implementation and promotion of ECVET in the country;
- conducting a survey on mobility experiences of VET schools to determine their readiness to embrace ECVET in their practice;
- informing teachers of ECVET national developments;
- promoting ECVET among stakeholders, including the social partners, and general public;
- cooperating with national authorities working in the Croatian qualifications framework;
- organising workshops and seminars for VET teachers and principals on using ECVET in mobility projects and setting up pilot mobility projects with VET providers, e.g. the Zagreb Secondary School of Agriculture.

Such a comprehensive approach created a positive perception of ECVET among Croatian schools and increased demand for more advice and for information about national and European examples of practice.

Source: Cedefop.

2.2.3. Group 2b: countries testing ECVET technical components

According to the recommendation (European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2009), the ECVET was to be gradually applied to VET qualifications at all levels of the EQF and used for transfer, recognition and accumulation of LO as from 2012. However, various reasons prevented rapid progress: lack of clarity of the ECVET concept and technical specifications and incompleteness of the testing phase seem to hinder most of this group, followed by ECVET not being a priority, missing components and lack of capacity or resources.

Ten countries are still in the process of testing ECVET technical components but they have different starting points:

- (a) Denmark and Romania have their own credit systems in IVET that allow accumulating and transferring LO;
- (b) Austria, Italy, Lithuania and Norway currently use credits in some qualifications;

- (c) Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland and Portugal do not have credit systems in VET but they are testing some ECVET components.

The countries also report having different ECVET plans:

- (a) Romania and Portugal have worked on a draft proposal ⁽⁴⁾;
- (b) Austria, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Norway are discussing the conceptual framework;
- (c) Latvia is waiting for the results of the testing phase;
- (d) Denmark has implemented ECVET for IVET without ECVET points.

Most of the countries already have units of LO in place while four are testing the approach (Table 6). This is most probably linked to the fact that all these countries have developed national qualifications based on learning outcomes (Cedefop, 2015b). However, the prospects for ECVET points are not very optimistic: they do not exist in any of the countries, seven out of 10 do not even foresee them and the only country planning to develop ECVET points is Romania.

The objective of the ECVET is to aid transfer, recognition and accumulation of LO, which are assessed and validated in units by a competent institution.

In seven of the countries, learning outcomes can be assessed; the Netherlands, Norway and Portugal are testing assessment. The situation with the validation and recognition of LO is somewhat different, with Austria, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands and Norway testing approaches to validating and recognising the assessed LO of individuals in IVET while Portugal is only planning to develop it. This might be related to the fact that, in these countries, validation and recognition of learning outcomes from non-formal and informal learning takes place under multiple frameworks that apply to different sectors (VET, HE, general education, adult learning) (European Commission; Cedefop; ICF International, 2014). Although Portugal and Norway have advanced systems of validation of non-formal and informal learning, they report testing their approaches in IVET. As a result, more work is needed to ensure better permeability among the sectors.

⁽⁴⁾ Portugal reported submitting a draft proposal for a national credit system to be applied to the short-term training units of the training standards, its approval is pending.

Table 6. ECVET technical components (group 2b)

	Currently in testing	Already exists	Planned to be developed	Not foreseen
Units of LO	Austria, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands	Denmark, Latvia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania		
ECVET points	Austria, Lithuania		Romania	Denmark, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal
Assessment of LO	Netherlands, Norway, Portugal	Austria, Denmark, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania		
Validation of LO	Austria, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, Norway	Denmark, Lithuania, Poland, Romania	Portugal	
Recognition of LO	Austria, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, Norway	Denmark, Lithuania, Poland, Romania	Portugal	
Learning agreement	Austria, Denmark, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, Poland	Lithuania, Norway, Portugal, Romania		
Memorandum of understanding	Austria, Denmark, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, Poland	Lithuania, Norway, Portugal, Romania		
Transcript of record (personal transcript)	Austria, Denmark, Italy, Latvia, Poland	Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Romania		

Source: Cedefop.

In terms of approach to the complementary documents (MoU, LA and transcript of record), the countries split into two distinct groups (Table 6):

- (a) the ones where they exist;
- (b) the ones testing all of them.

Two commonalities are worth noting:

- (a) Austria, Italy, and the Netherlands are currently testing almost all of the ECVET components;
- (b) Denmark and Romania stand out due to the similar starting point.

As they have credit systems, such components as units of LO, possibility for assessment, validation and recognition of LO are already in place. Romania also has MoU, LA and transcript of record while Denmark is testing them.

2.2.4. Group 3: countries with neither credit system nor system-level ECVET initiatives

Seven countries in group 3 have not engaged, for various reasons, with any initiative at system level to implement ECVET. Belgium (Flemish Community), Hungary, Liechtenstein and Switzerland report satisfaction with their current systems and the ECVET technical specifications are unclear to them; therefore, they do not see developing ECVET as priority. Slovakia concentrated on developing the national qualifications register first and links ECVET-related developments to the next phase of their work on qualifications. Greece, in its turn, already has a law that foresees the development of a credit system in line with ECVET and compatible with the NQF; to implement the law, further ministerial decisions are needed but, current political challenges put them on hold. Germany is uncertain about the feasibility of ECVET decision due to scepticism of some stakeholders.

However, having no initiatives at system level does not mean that there are no ECVET-related activities at all. Some countries provide information to stakeholders; some have networks that promote ECVET, organise seminars and events, and test. In others, institutions and experts engage in projects. For example, in Germany and Hungary all these activities take place and there are national teams of ECVET experts that support and promote them. Box 4 presents the multifaceted approach in Germany (see also country summary in Annex 1).

Box 4. ECVET in Germany

The national coordination point for ECVET (established in 2010) has promoted ECVET in many ways. Activities have developed to be comprehensive and regular.

In close cooperation with the national team of ECVET experts, they:

- inform about ECVET developments at European and national levels through websites and a newsletter (two-three times per year);
- develop and provide materials to support actors who plan to implement ECVET in their practice:
 - guidelines for describing, assessing and documenting LO;
 - examples of good practice;
 - video tutorials;
 - brochures;
- organise regional and sectoral workshops and further training courses on ECVET;
- hold an annual ECVET conference.

They have also compiled a list of more than 1 100 units of LO from European and national projects (*).

In 2015, the German national team of ECVET experts drafted a policy paper, *Establishing ECVET in German vocational education and training: facilitating mobility – easing transfer – supporting innovation* (**). The paper contains recommendations to medium-level policy-makers and decision-makers in industry on how to implement ECVET for mobility, innovation and transfer of learning.

(*) The list is available online; some units are also available in English and French.

(**) http://www.ecvet-info.de/_media/Recommendations_of_Team_of_ECVET_Experts_2015.pdf

Source: Cedefop and ECVET Germany <http://www.ecvet-info.de/>.

2.2.5. Positive feedback from ECVET implementation

Despite obstacles to ECVET, countries report positive feedback from its promoters and implementers, indicating multiple benefits their work on developing ECVET brings ⁽⁵⁾:

- (a) learning outcomes make learning easier to compare, make qualification more transparent. Units, in their turn, help to describe learning outcomes more precisely and coherently. Units of LO increase the flexibility of learning pathways as well as flexibility of VET to adapt to the changing requirements of the labour market. Teachers, in particular, see use of LO in teaching as more valuable than traditional approaches and motivating to learners (reported from Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Latvia, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, and Slovenia);
- (b) ECVET encourages and supports mobility and contributes to its quality. According to promoters, ECVET components provide structure to complex

⁽⁵⁾ Not all countries responded to this question.

- processes in organising traineeships and mobility. ECVET complementary documents are seen positively as user-friendly and helpful, for example the MoU helps clarify the learning outcomes that can be achieved while LA helps to set objectives understood by all (reported from Austria, Croatia, Denmark, Latvia, Malta, and Norway);
- (c) ECVET contributes to better recognition of learning outcomes acquired abroad or in another setting, including recognition of intermediate results of learning (reported from the Czech Republic, Denmark, Norway, and Slovenia);
 - (d) enhanced possibilities of recognition of learning outcomes support inclusion by making it easier for the low-skilled, for example, to enter VET and get a qualification (reported from the Netherlands).

In a similar key, the peer learning activity of the ECVET users' group examined the value of assessed and validated units of LO; confirming the above benefits, added that they:

- (a) help build a qualification (from mandatory and optional units) that best fits the needs of the learners and their potential employers;
- (b) are a means to avoid duplication and repetition of learning (ECVET users' group, 2015).

2.3. ECVET in CVET

ECVET was conceived as a framework for the transfer, recognition and accumulation of individuals' LO acquired in formal, non-formal and informal contexts towards a vocational qualification. Therefore, it might be assumed that the need and potential for application of ECVET in adult learning and continuing training might be stronger. However, the survey did not show that.

The survey looked into whether the situation as the countries described for IVET applied also for CVET. For most this was the case.

Several countries reported differences. For example, Iceland, Slovenia and Sweden have ECVET-compatible systems in IVET but not in CVET. In Sweden, CVET qualifications are provided in formal and non-formal education systems which differ significantly and ECVET components (units of LO, assessment and validation of LO and transcript of record) can be found within some formal provision. Slovenia is testing some elements in CVET; for example, their ECVET experts developed a short manual on how to plan and assess LO in CVET programmes. In Iceland, CVET caters for labour market needs in terms of keeping competences up to date and does not grant credits. Cyprus and Romania have no ECVET developments in CVET.

CHAPTER 3.

Promoting ECVET in Europe

One of the conditions of successful implementation of credit transfer in Europe is well-informed users who know that it exists, how it works, who is in charge, who is responsible for what and who can help. As the recommendation (European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2009) stressed, it is important that:

- (a) individuals and stakeholders have access to information and guidance for using ECVET;
- (b) authorities responsible for qualifications and diplomas, VET providers, social partners and other stakeholders work in partnerships and networks nationally and across Europe to test, implement and promote ECVET;
- (c) the Member States support such activities and exchange information.

The following sections look specifically at dissemination activities, networks and projects implemented in the countries to inform about and promote ECVET principles. Some of the solutions can address the concerns identified during the ECVET user group's peer learning meeting: how to support providers to apply the unit-based approach to organising learning and assessment and how to inform stakeholders (including labour market actors) to get them on board (Levreux, 2015).

3.1. Information and dissemination

Most countries disseminate information on ECVET to (potential) users, both to institutions and individuals, and provide support to main actors in the form of guidelines, networking, and peer learning. More countries do this to aid transnational mobility than for recognition and transfer of LO in their countries. This also holds true for providing incentives for ECVET implementation, but incentives are reported in fewer countries⁽⁶⁾. For example, Croatia, France, Hungary, Luxembourg, Norway, Switzerland, and the UK (except Scotland) provide information on ECVET only for transnational mobility; Austria, France, Germany, Ireland, Switzerland, and the UK (except Scotland) (see Box 5 for the example from the UK) support main actors only for this purpose.

⁽⁶⁾ Further research might investigate what kind of incentives the countries use.

Box 5. Building capacity for using ECVET in mobility projects in the UK

In the UK, national ECVET experts promote ECVET and support practitioners in implementing ECVET in their transnational mobility projects through workshops and resource materials. During one-day workshops, experts explain how ECVET can be used in mobility and cooperation projects and practitioners get inspiration from networking and sharing their experiences. Resource materials prepared for these workshops include:

- guides to different target groups, e.g. *Getting the credit your learners deserve* (October 2015) (*), is designed to help practitioners ensure that learners get the credit for their achievements abroad;
- case studies;
- templates of the memorandum of understanding and learning agreement with an accompanying note.

Web portal for UK ECVET experts: <http://www.ecvetexperts.org.uk/getting-started/>

(*) British Council; Ecorys; Erasmus + (2015). *Getting the credit your learners deserve: how to recognise achievements during European mobility periods*. <http://www.ecvetexperts.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/ECVET-Getting-the-credit-they-deserve-v5-October-2015.pdf>

Source: Cedefop.

Fewer countries (by one third) provide information to individuals than to institutions and stakeholders in general for recognition and transfer of LO within the country, with smaller differences for cross-border mobility.

The information is usually available through various channels and in various formats. The most typical channels for ECVET-related information are websites: either fully dedicated websites or targeted sections on the websites of ministries of education, national agencies for VET or for Erasmus+, of national ECVET contact points or national ECVET experts' teams, and VET institutions (Annex 1). Some countries also use printed materials, such as information leaflets and booklets, guides and manuals, and newsletters. National experts inform stakeholders through lectures and presentations at conferences, seminars and during school visits (see Box 6 for an example from Latvia). The information provided in such ways concerns ECVET principles and specifications and their application (such as through tutorials and guides), ECVET-related projects, examples of good practice, and links to other EU transparency tools (EQF/NQFs, EQAVET, Europass).

It is reported that, following the information and training activities, more VET institutions, and sometimes companies, express their willingness to participate in testing and application of ECVET.

Box 6. Reflecting on practical application of ECVET to improve mobility in Latvia

In 2015, the State Education Development Agency (VIAA) in Latvia in cooperation with the EU ECVET team organised a two-day training seminar for practitioners from 14 VET competence centres and national stakeholders, *Improving mobility with ECVET*. For the first time in Latvia a practical simulation of ECVET principles for mobility was applied; the participants worked in small groups on two topics, unit-based qualifications and learning agreement in practice. During interactive question-answer sessions, discussions and exchanges, the participants shared their experiences, expressed their views and concerns and proposed suggestions for the future. The international experts provided their feedback and explained most complicated ECVET aspects, e.g. defining units of LO (*).

State Education Development Agency:

http://viaa.gov.lv/lat/ek_izgl_programmas_iniciativas/erasmusplus/ecvet_aktivitate/ecvet_pasakumi/

(*) ECVET Team EU; European Commission (2015). A customised seminar and implementing ECVET in Latvia. *ECVET Magazine*, No 23, pp.8-9. <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/ecvet-magazine-no-23-october-2015>

Source: Cedefop.

3.2. Supporting networks for ECVET

Two-thirds of the countries (24 out of 36) have networks for testing, implementation and promotion of ECVET. In 19 of these 24, the main focus of the networks' activities is dissemination, followed by promotion in 16. Networks deal mainly with testing or implementing ECVET in half of the countries. In the French Community of Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Lithuania and the UK (England and Northern Ireland), all groups of activities are covered by networks; in others, a specific ECVET-related aspect is in focus, as in networks in the Netherlands and Switzerland which concentrate on testing, in Portugal and Sweden on implementation, and in Hungary on promotion.

Led mainly by ministries of education or by national teams of ECVET experts (coordinated by national Erasmus+ agencies), these networks involve VET providers, national or regional authorities, national VET agencies, and, to a lesser extent so far, certification bodies, social partners and companies.

Networks seem to have strong support from the ministries of education and national authorities responsible for qualifications and development of standards and curricula. Another strong player is national teams of ECVET experts, reported to be heavily involved in networks' activities, often taking the lead and fulfilling their intended role of national pools of expertise on ECVET. The creation and operation of these teams have been funded with the support of EU education programmes, currently the Erasmus+ programme.

3.3. Using projects for ECVET

EU-funded projects have so far been a significant driver for development, trial and implementation of ECVET principles and components and its promotion in the Member States, including support to national ECVET experts' teams. In 2015, 28 countries report running projects related to ECVET; these are both national projects and those from individual promoters (institutions, organisations, etc.). Some countries do not have projects now, but they had them previously.

Projects reach down to practitioner level, supporting the implementation of principles and tools, mostly in transnational mobility and in specific sectors or occupations (see Boxes 7 and 8 for examples).

Box 7. ECVET projects for sectors and occupations

- Led by Czech promoters, the project *Innovative qualifications framework for development of ECVET*, aimed at applying ECVET principles to five qualifications in furniture and textile industries: cabinet-maker, upholsterer, floorer, textile maker and tailor. The project partners from the Czech Republic, Germany, Ireland, Poland, and Romania compared the learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competences) in these qualifications and developed matrices that help detect similarities and differences in learning outcomes needed to get a qualification in each country. The project also developed interactive materials: animations about accumulating learning outcomes in various countries, games and quizzes based on the learning outcomes in the covered qualifications.

IQ for ECVET: <http://www.iqforecvet.info/>

- Led by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia, partners from Croatia, Latvia and Slovakia joined in the project *Enhancing competences in the metal and electro industries throughout Europe (SkillME)* aiming to address skills gaps in these industries. The project partners have identified skill shortages and grouped them into units of LO with ECVET points to feed into developing curricula. The curricula are being developed and will be piloted in the next stage of the project. The project is based involvement from the industry; the Association of Electro-technical Industry of the Slovak Republic, the Association of Mechanical Engineering and Metalworking Industries of Latvia, the Croatian Employers' Association and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia, plus VET institutes and providers.

Skill ME project: <https://www.gzs.si/skill-me/vsebina/O-nas>

Source Cedefop.

Projects are used both to develop and implement ECVET principles in countries, and for cooperation between them (learning from one another, developing common understanding and tools, harmonising learning outcomes). Many projects work on broader issues than ECVET, such as developing the learning outcome approach to qualifications, standards, training programmes,

validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning, and VET quality assurance. They concentrate on various aspects:

- (a) national capacity building, more specifically, developing national teams of ECVET experts (as in Croatia, Finland, Lithuania, Slovenia);
- (b) describing qualifications in units of LO and developing modular programmes (as in Bulgaria, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Slovakia, Slovenia);
- (c) developing support materials and tools for stakeholders to implement ECVET, such as:
 - (i) guidelines and manuals, process maps, checklists (as in Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, the UK);
 - (ii) online platforms, interactive tutorials and multimedia tools (as in Belgium (Flemish Community), the Czech Republic, Germany);
- (d) gathering knowledge and analysing the existing situation with a view to applying ECVET principles, such as conducting surveys among stakeholders (as in Austria, Croatia, Latvia, Slovakia);
- (e) organising transnational mobility for VET students, using the memoranda of understanding, learning agreements and transcripts of record (Hungary, Norway, Romania);
- (f) training various stakeholders on the benefits and use of ECVET:
 - (i) school principals and teachers on applying units of learning outcomes, assessing learning outcomes;
 - (ii) mobility project promoters to apply ECVET technical components to set clear expectations for host and sending partners and learners; to agree on learning outcomes and their assessment and to aid recognition of the LO acquired during the mobility period abroad. In some countries, such training led to the use of ECVET in most mobility projects (the Czech Republic, Ireland, Hungary, Slovenia, and the UK);
- (g) addressing the needs of specific sectors with the help of ECVET components (as in Croatia, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia);
- (h) working together in cooperation and partnerships among the countries to understand better and compare the systems and exchange experience in implementing learning outcomes approach and ECVET, in particular. This helps build trust in other systems and leads potentially to easier recognition of learning outcomes acquired in other countries. It also leads to improving tools taking into account the experiences of others and good practice (as in Belgium (French Community), Ireland, Luxembourg, Spain, the UK);

- (i) involving the world of work in defining learning outcomes, shaping standards and programmes, assessment of learning outcomes, mobility projects (as in Croatia, Germany, Norway, Slovakia, Slovenia, Latvia, the UK);
- (j) using units of LO to aid validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning (as in Cyprus, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland).

Box 8. ECVET for transnational mobility in the construction sector in Norway

A regional project in Norway organised an exchange for Norwegian apprentices from the construction sector, specialising in work with concrete, to go on 13-week placements to Germany.

The structured ECVET principles supported cooperation between the German hosts and Norwegian competent bodies provided for the project's success.

The parties used a learning agreement to specify the expected learning outcomes, activities that learners would experience during their period abroad, and assessment criteria. The learning outcomes were defined based on the Norwegian national curriculum while the German standards in working with concrete were used as a basis for assessment.

The key to recognition of the learning outcomes acquired abroad was the fact that the competent bodies on both sides agreed on the criteria and process of assessing and validating the learners' outcomes. The agreed process was as follows.

- What is assessed? A learner is assessed on the quality of work, performance and conformity to regulations.
- How and when is the learner assessed? The learner is assessed continuously on the construction site. Progress is recorded twice, after three weeks and at the end of the placement.
- Who assesses? A skilled worker assigned by the host company assesses the learner's performance.
- Who records the assessment results? The hosting organisation records them in the learner's transcript of record.
- How are the assessed LO recognised? The Norwegian competent body issues a statement to certify that the learner has achieved the agreed LO and the placement is recognised as part of his/her in-company training programme.

Another key factor was that the objectives, processes and procedures were shared not only among partner organisations, but more importantly, among the learners, in-company instructors and the sending company.

ECVET principles and tools contributed to more precise documenting of LO, and, thus, supported the recognition of work-based learning abroad.

Source: Cedefop.

CHAPTER 4.

Conclusions

Countries have been moving gradually towards applying and implementing ECVET principles in their education and training systems, taking into account their national contexts and credit arrangements, and applying ECVET principles both in IVET and CVET.

More countries have credit systems in place and more have moved to testing and implementing ECVET principles and components. Countries are characterised by different stages of development but the movement towards organising LO in units in their qualifications is obvious: 23 countries out of 36 already have units of LO in their systems and five others are testing them. Often this process follows the description of qualifications in LO within NQF development.

Possibilities for validation and recognition of individual units provided in many countries show that the value of learning of all kinds, and from all contexts, is increasingly acknowledged as a growing need of today's reality; therefore, despite reported obstacles, solutions are being found and progress made. As the users' group found out, many countries see the importance of assessing and recognising parts of learning without immediate acquisition of qualification but working towards one at a speed that meets learners' aspirations and circumstances (Levreux, 2015).

ECVET complementary documents are well-used and appreciated by stakeholders, compared to the 2013 monitoring which found that MoU and LA were not used to the full potential (Cedefop, 2014a).

The key challenge remains with ECVET points, also identified in the previous monitoring (Cedefop, 2014a) and in the evaluation of ECVET (European Commission, 2014). The need for ECVET points as a precondition for ECVET and applicability requires further reflection.

The findings suggest that ECVET-related developments are often part and result of the broader reform processes aimed at strengthening learning outcomes approach, permeability of education and training systems, transparency of qualifications, and better employability and employment. It is sometimes difficult to separate the developments of ECVET principles from those of NQFs, validation of non-formal and informal learning, and modularisation of training programmes. Some countries pointed out that they could start working on and testing ECVET principles after the work on NQFs had been accomplished as a

basis; some indicated that the work on ECVET goes hand-in-hand with the development of NQF. It can be assumed that progress made in developing NQFs, especially establishing a learning-outcomes-based approach, means that obstacles related to lack of NQFs and learning-outcomes-based qualifications are no longer reported compared to 2013. Therefore, further implementation of ECVET principles is needed, taking into account NQFs development in the countries as a new baseline and enabler for ECVET.

Another factor that can take the development of ECVET principles further is providing more information and guidance, sharing the knowledge and experiences gained, putting the tools and materials developed in projects and initiatives (see Boxes 4, 5 and 7 as examples) to use by stakeholders and partners in the countries and elsewhere. While national ECVET experts are aware of the work done in other countries, usually by their partners in projects, there is still a need to step up the effort and spread the results more widely. Better dissemination can clarify the ECVET concept and procedures to beneficiaries, VET providers and social partners and, consequently, increase demand from potential users and actors as well as support from policy-makers. It takes time and effort to change the way of thinking but this can definitely help overcome many of the obstacles still reported.

The EU plays a role in stimulating ECVET-related developments, not only financially through funding projects (such as LLP, Erasmus+) and national ECVET experts teams, but also through expertise and advice (such as from the experts of ECVET team ⁽⁷⁾). However, overreliance on EU funding and uncoordinated effort raises the issue of its sustainability, with some valuable initiatives discontinued once the funding stops. Successful projects that produce useful materials and guidelines should be identified and their results mainstreamed into the national policies.

The following can be examined in future monitoring and research:

- (a) how the ECVET technical components actually work in practice;
- (b) under what conditions unitisation of qualifications and/or modularisation of training programmes lead to the transfer and accumulation of learning outcomes;
- (c) taking into account that ECVET points seem least applied of all technical components, how the credit is expressed in the existing credit arrangements;

⁽⁷⁾ The ECVET team was a body providing technical support for the European Commission and to the stakeholders involved in ECVET implementation till 2015.

- (d) the impact of the learning-outcomes-based NQF and validation advancement on ECVET developments;
- (e) how testing results are dealt with, whether any components are discarded after testing;
- (f) how the implementation of ECVET principles affects individuals, teachers, institutions, VET systems and labour market.

ECVET principles and components work in many countries and it is time to move forward and explore how they benefit individuals in engaging in lifelong learning and progression.

List of abbreviations

CVET	continuing vocational education and training
ECTS	European credit transfer and accumulation system
ECVET	European credit system for vocational education and training
ECVET UG	ECVET users' group
EQAVET	European quality assurance in vocational education and training
EQF	European qualification framework
ESCO	European skills/competences, qualifications and occupations
ET	education and training
EU	European Union
EURES	European employment services
FL	formal learning
GM	geographic mobility
HE	higher education
IL	informal learning
IVET	initial vocational education and training
LA	learning agreement
LLL	lifelong learning
LLP	lifelong learning programme
LO	learning outcomes
MoU	memorandum of understanding
MS	Member States
NFL	non-formal learning
NQF	national qualification framework
VET	vocational education and training

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Glossary

Assessment of learning outcomes	Methods and processes used to establish the extent to which a learner has in fact attained particular knowledge, skills and competence (European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2009).
Credit system	An instrument designed to enable accumulation of learning outcomes gained in formal, non-formal and/or informal settings, and ease their transfer from one setting to another for validation. A credit system can be designed by describing: an education or training programme and attaching points (credits) to its components (modules, courses, placements, dissertation work, etc.); or a qualification using units of learning outcomes and attaching credit points to every unit (Cedefop, 2014b).
ECVET points	A numerical representation of the overall weight of learning outcomes in a qualification and of the relative weight of units in relation to the qualification (European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2009).
Formal learning	Learning which takes place in an organised and structured environment, specifically dedicated to learning, and typically leads to the award of a qualification, usually in the form of a certificate or a diploma; it includes systems of general education, initial vocational training and higher education (Council of the EU, 2012).
Informal learning	Learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure and is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support; it may be unintentional from the learner's perspective; examples of learning outcomes acquired through informal learning are skills acquired through life and work experiences, project management skills or ICT skills acquired at work, languages learned and intercultural skills acquired during a stay in another country, ICT skills acquired outside work, skills acquired through volunteering, cultural activities, sports, youth work and through activities at home (e.g. taking care of a child) (Council of the EU, 2012).
Learning agreement	An individualised document which sets out the conditions for a specific mobility period. It specifies, for a particular learner, which learning outcomes and units should be achieved together with the associated ECVET points. The learning agreement also lays down that, if the learner achieves the expected learning outcomes and these are positively assessed by the 'hosting' institution, the 'home' institution will validate and recognise them as part of the requirements for a qualification (European Commission, 2011).
Learning outcomes	Statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence (Cedefop, 2014b).
Memorandum of understanding	An agreement between competent institutions which sets the framework for credit transfer. It formalises the ECVET partnership by stating the mutual acceptance of the status and procedures of competent institutions involved. It also establishes partnerships' procedures for cooperation (European Commission, 2011).
Non-formal learning	Learning which takes place through planned activities (in terms of learning objectives, learning time) where some form of learning support is present (e.g. student-teacher relationships); it may cover programmes to impart work skills, adult literacy and basic education for early school leavers; very common cases of non-formal learning include in-company training, through which companies update and improve the skills of their workers such as ICT skills, structured online learning (e.g. by making use of open educational resources), and courses organised by civil society organisations for their members, their target group or the general public (Council of the EU, 2012).

Recognition of learning outcomes	The process of attesting officially achieved learning outcomes through the awarding of units or qualifications (European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2009).
Validation of learning outcomes	The process of confirming that certain assessed learning outcomes achieved by a learner correspond to specific outcomes which may be required for a unit or a qualification (European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2009).
Vocational education and training	Education and training which aims to equip people with knowledge, know-how, skills and/or competences required in particular occupations or more broadly on the labour market (Cedefop, 2014b).

ANNEX 1.

Country summaries

Austria



Before 2013, ECVET implementation focused largely on EU/mobility projects. Legislation allows recognition of learning/work placement periods abroad (time apprentices can spend abroad increased in 2010). However, there is no automatic validation and recognition of learning outcomes, but reassessment at national level (double assessment) takes place.

In 2013, a comprehensive national ECVET implementation strategy was presented that aims to employ the added value of ECVET beyond mobility projects to foster permeability and transparency within the national qualifications system. The strategy is subdivided into partial strategies that focus on specific aspects of the ET system. These partial strategies include, for example, a pilot project aimed at fostering quality of mandatory work placements in school-based VET by using ECVET components (results expected in 2014), or fostering permeability between VET and HE. Transfer of learning within VET and from VET to HE is possible in certain cases. Use of ECVET documents such as MOUs and LAs together with coherent learning outcomes descriptions is aimed at fostering and facilitating transfer and mutual recognition between the two sectors.

The NQF has been referenced to the EQF and was formally adopted in 2016. A formal basis for the NQF is currently under development, which defines the procedure of including qualifications into the NQF.

Most formal qualifications (except HE degrees) can also be obtained through validation. A national validation strategy is being developed and is expected to become operational at the beginning of 2016.

All social partners have been involved since 2006 on all levels and occasions (meetings, conferences, consultations, international expert meetings).

A national working group on ECVET was founded in 2014.

There is no NCP-ECVET officially appointed but a contact point is in (previous) LLL agency. A community of practice exists through the team of experts, which provides advice and training to people involved in preparing curricula and training plans for VET and for institutions/companies which make learners mobile.

Belgium



Flemish Community

ECVET initiatives are currently on hold. ECVET has been studied in the context of the LLL strategy, but not in the context of international mobility in VET. The added value of ECVET is questioned by stakeholders as it may be bureaucratic and there is scepticism over whether a point system is adequate.

The Flemish NQF adopted in 2009 and linked to EQF in 2011 is considered a necessary tool for describing of and assigning levels to the learning outcomes of educational and professional qualifications. It is considered that this work should be done before starting to implement ECVET.

IVET is traditionally based on a close fit between learning outcomes and learning processes and the final examinations. There is no common approach to the transfer of assessed learning outcomes between education and training providers and programmes. Some providers may grant exemptions to students who move to another programme. Though not common, transfer of learning outcomes acquired abroad is also possible case by case. For CVET, training programmes are modularised, with certificates for assessed and validated modules (partial VET-certificates).

There is no comprehensive approach to the validation of non-formal and informal learning (no standardised procedures) but validation is possible in some areas.

The Department of Education and Training acts as NCP-ECVET.

French Community

A formal decision was taken (2009) to develop a credit system for lifelong learning and geographic mobility. ECVET has been implemented in parallel with NQF development. ECVET is seen as a chance to improve VET by addressing the needs of practitioners, providers, labour market and other stakeholders.

The legislation was updated in 2011 leading to the revision of standards, which started in 2011. Training profiles describe the expected learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competence) and are based on units with credit points, a direct result of the ECVET recommendation. Modularisation is a basic principle in VET (in place before 2010).

Validation of learning outcomes is possible. Certification of units has been in place since 2011 and the number of qualifications organised into units increases every year.

Though not common, transfer of learning outcomes acquired abroad is possible case by case.

Gradual implementation and testing are being run in parallel through ECVET-related projects in which stakeholders are involved.

An NCP-ECVET, the National Agency for Education and Training (AEF-Europe), and a community of practice are in place.

Bulgaria



There have been significant developments to support the implementation of ECVET. The national lifelong learning strategy 2014-20 and the VET development strategy 2015-20 serve as strategic documents for ECVET by promoting learning mobility and the use of the European tools to support it.

ECVET is considered to be closely linked to NQF (adopted in 2012). In 2014, the law on VET made units of learning outcomes part of state educational requirements (SER) for acquiring qualifications. SERs are now being updated. An ordinance by the Minister of Education and Science is about to be published that will define the terms and conditions for awarding, acquiring and transfer of credits. Another ordinance for the validation of professional knowledge, skills and competences has been in effect since the beginning of 2015, both for whole qualifications and part qualifications. There are modular training programmes in some sectors and qualifications.

There are no specific regulations allowing recognition of cross-border mobility.

VET providers define units of learning outcomes for learner mobility. Work placement in a VET school abroad can be recognised as an obligatory placement within a training programme. Learning outcomes from such placements are assessed as part of the overall assessment done by the provider (home institution) for successful graduation of learners.

An NCP-ECVET, the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training, and a community of practice are in place.

Croatia



Croatia has been generally committed to implementing ECVET: the decision has been taken to develop a credit system for IVET and CVET compatible with ECVET to aid transfer, validation and accumulation within the national and international context (VET Act 2009; VET development strategy 2008-13; Croatian Qualifications Framework Act 2013). A common framework for the transfer of assessed learning outcomes within the Croatian qualifications framework (CROQF) is foreseen.

A learning outcomes approach was introduced in the context of national VET reform. Qualifications and VET curricula are developed and structured according to the ECVET philosophy and are learning outcome oriented. The VET system development strategy (2008-13) introduced modularised IVET programmes. The Agency for VET and Adult Education (AVETA), the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports (MoSES) and the Education and Teacher Training Agency (ETTA) have developed new modularised VET curricula; 22 VET curricula have been piloted in VET schools since 2013.

The national team of ECVET experts was established in 2011 and since then has been working to prepare the grounds for efficient ECVET implementation and promotion. The team:

- (a) developed guidelines for use of ECVET in the context of geographic mobility, mainly intended to support decision-makers and VET providers in piloting ECVET;
- (b) published a national ECVET leaflet and brochure;
- (c) conducted a survey about mobility experience to determine the readiness of VET schools to integrate ECVET in their procedures;
- (d) held training workshops for VET teachers and directors on ECVET.

Cyprus



There is no strategy or provision for recognising cross-country geographic mobility in VET. However, mobility is promoted through EU programmes coordinated by the Cyprus National Agency (CY NA).

The NQF has been designed but it is not yet operational. Common structures and elements, which will offer opportunities for combining and transferring credits, are being discussed (Cedefop, 2015, NQF). The Ministry of Education and Culture is investigating potential adaptation of a learning outcomes (LOs) approach in VET curricula. Education and training providers are being informed about ECVET and how to define units of LOs.

There is no ECVET policy. The CY NA and ECVET experts promote ECVET among teachers to improve VET quality. Efforts are also being made to include ECVET in post-secondary education. Decisions have been taken to establish bodies for evaluation and accreditation of formal, informal and non-formal learning. The CY NA is promoting adoption of a LOs approach among education and training providers. There are ECVET-related EU projects. The national team of ECVET experts has been created by the CY NA and the community of practice is in place.

The Secondary Technical and Vocational Education Directorate of the Ministry of Education and Culture acts as NCP-ECVET.

Czech Republic



There is no national strategy for European mobility in VET. International mobility has been sufficiently enabled through the LLL strategy (2007) and is promoted and supported through Erasmus+ projects.

Learning outcomes are used in current VET curricula. The national register of qualifications (Národní soustava kvalifikací, NSK) developed since 2005 includes vocational and 'comprehensive' vocational qualifications and relevant assessment standards. There is no comprehensive NQF, but part of the NSK forms a system of eight qualification levels, which correspond to the eight levels of the EQF. In 2014, a fundamental proposal of methods intended for mutual interlinking of the NSK and ECVET was elaborated. The proposal will enable preparation of a sample of about 100 units of LO at the end of the year.

There is horizontal permeability between programmes. The law enables qualifications acquisition and taking final exams without attending a course.

There are activities aimed at developing ECVET. The Ministry of Education approved in 2012 a paper, *Implementation of the European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET) in the Czech Republic*. In IVET, the use of ECVET is encouraged at education and training provider level to enable international cooperation. Increased efforts were directed to promote ECVET among teachers as an instrument for enhancing the quality of VET. ECVET schemes have been tested in projects: units have been developed in the national mobility framework (the POSPOLU – 'together' - project promoting partnerships among schools and enterprises) and international mobility projects under the ERASMUS+ programme. Actions in CVET and in recognition of learning outcomes are focused on linking the NSK to ECVET. However, no actions leading to substantial modification of the existing system are foreseen.

An NCP-ECVET, the National Institute for Education (NÚV), and a community of practice are in place.

Denmark



There is a formal decision for using ECVET for geographic mobility actions in VET-schools. A work placement abroad scheme includes recognition as part qualification. Guidelines for implementing ECVET have been developed.

A NQF is in place and operational. A qualifications system and its design are adaptable to ECVET as the same approach and terms are used. Partial qualifications are available in some programmes. Validation is possible; each learner's prior non-formal or informal learning is assessed on entry to all VET programmes. Transfer of learning outcomes is possible case by case.

No specific credit system at national level in VET is considered, as the current system is considered to work well. A national ECVET team and a community of practice exist.

The Ministry for Children and Education is an NCP-ECVET.

Estonia



The NQF is being implemented. It includes all state-recognised qualifications described in learning outcomes; it is also possible to include qualifications acquired through validation (regulated by VET legislation and standard). Since 2006, VET legislation has provided for modules. The first set of modular national curricula had been developed by 2009; a new set 2010-14 is based on new occupational standards at respective NQF levels, specifying learning outcomes thresholds and with an integrated unit-based credit system.

The ECVET principle was included in the new VET legislation of 2013 (VET institutions act and vocational education standard). Learning outcomes are expressed through credit points (EKAP) in VET curricula. National and schools curricula are also revised to reflect changes.

The NCP-ECVET works jointly with the qualifications authority; a community of practice has been established and is being developed. The national ECVET network (launched in 2012) has surveyed people's awareness and examined possible obstacles to ECVET. Currently, the network is focused on supporting the implementation of ECVET (EKAP) in VET institutions. There are LLP and Erasmus+-funded projects in the country.

An NCP-ECVET, the Foundation Innove, is in place.

Finland



The implementation of ECVET will take place as part of the current reform of the qualification system and revision of the national qualification requirements from August 2015, though the decision on NQF is still pending.

All qualifications (both IVET and CVET) are divided into units of learning outcomes. The ET system allows accumulation and transfer of LO, with validation of non-formal and informal learning also in place.

Credit points for IVET in the current credit system will be replaced with competence points as of 1 August 2015. Competence points will be calculated on the basis of the relative scope of the unit of learning outcomes to the overall qualification (for example, relevance for the labour market and social integration, as well as complexity, scope and volume of the unit of learning outcomes). Individual units of learning outcomes in upper secondary vocational qualifications are assessed separately; there is no final test at the end of the studies for a qualification.

Internationalisation is seen as a means of improving the quality and attractiveness of VET. Cross-country mobility is part of the development plan for education in IVET. Approximately 90% of learning outcomes acquired abroad are recognised by home institutions.

A community of practice is in place. The Finnish National Board of Education takes care of the information and cooperation tasks related to ECVET.

France



The current legislation and practice are supportive of the ECVET principles. Some important developments have taken place recently (2014-15).

Cross-country VET mobility is possible and practised. Following the implementation of the European ECVET project (MEN-ECVET, 2011-13), there were developments in vocational baccalaureates (EQF4, around 90 such programmes exist). A decree (*décret*) of June 2014 states that part of the training can take place in a European country. Assessment of the LO achieved abroad can be recognised following validation by a jury. A corresponding ministerial decree (*arrêté*) of June 2014 creates an optional mobility unit transversal for all vocational baccalaureates. The unit covers professional and general LO which should be achieved through a training period abroad. Those LO are described and assessment specifications are also defined: the professional LO must be assessed abroad while the general ones are assessed in France. In 2015, a new certificate (*attestation*) will be introduced to issue to graduates of vocational baccalaureates who will have passed/validated the mobility unit. This will be a new way to recognise mobility training periods achieved in the European space.

Vocational qualifications (EQF levels 3 and 4) awarded by the Ministry of Education are included in the national registry of VET qualifications. They are based on units of LO and include professional units and general units. These qualifications can be obtained in IVET, CVET or through the validation of non-formal and informal learning (*Validation des acquis de l'expérience*, VAE). They are assigned a level of the NQF, which has been linked to the EQF since 2010.

All the units in a VET qualification must be assessed to award the whole qualification; the assessment obtained for a unit is valid for five years. Transfer of units of LO between different diplomas/qualifications delivered by different awarding bodies is possible based on agreements between awarding bodies. For validation, a jury examines all the assessment results obtained for all the units composing a qualification. Learners in CVET or those who undertake VAE can accumulate the assessed units progressively over five years.

The ECVET experts team designs information materials to inform education actors, sectors and support the use of the ECVET. A community of practice is in place.

Germany



The 2011 legislation entitles anyone to have qualifications obtained abroad assessed. VET providers define units of learning outcomes for geographic mobility.

The NQF is operational with VET qualifications extended up to Level 7. Since 2013, 'anchor qualifications' (those from the non-formal sector) have been included into the GQF. VET qualifications do not have a modular/unit structure. There are qualification modules in programmes that act as bridge to VET: pre-VET for the socially disadvantaged and those with learning difficulties, and competence-based modules for those unable to find an apprenticeship and low-skilled adults. Qualifications gained under the dual system are becoming more outcome-oriented but not in the ECVET sense. Progress within VET and from VET to (academic) HE has been legally possible but in practice it varies.

It is uncertain whether a policy decision on ECVET implementation will be taken. Many stakeholders are sceptical over whether ECVET could be compatible with Germany's holistic approach to VET. Nevertheless, different ECVET technical components have been tested for IVET and CVET (for example, a credit system, units, credit/unit transfer, assessment, documentation or partnerships) through EU and national projects (DECVET, job-starter Connect). ECVET is mainly tested by VET providers. There is an ECVET steering group with social partners. Since 2012, a team of experts have provided advice on ECVET. A community of practice is in place but still under development.

An NCP-ECVET, the National Agency Education for Europe at the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (NA beim BIBB), is in place.

Greece



Cross-country mobility has been supported by the (former) lifelong learning programme and Erasmus+. Learning abroad is included in assessment of the overall programme by the home institution. VET providers are engaged in defining units of learning outcomes for mobility purposes.

The NQF has been designed by the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (Eoppep). The qualifications register is being developed to include qualifications from formal education, with the emphasis on learning outcomes. However, the learning outcomes approach has not been fully adopted by the education and training system; the process has been gradual, so far. IVET has been mainly input-oriented but analysis of IVET qualifications according to a learning outcomes approach has been completed.

There is no legislation that foresees the development of a credit system in line with ECVET (units of learning outcomes, credit points and partnerships) and compatible with the NQF, creating the necessary legal and regulatory framework. Currently, there is no framework to support the transfer of assessed learning outcomes between qualifications or institutions, yet in some cases learning (i.e. semesters) can be recognised and validated to avoid double assessment. The existing legal framework for validation of non-formal and informal learning has not been implemented but validation is possible for professionals in private security services, in some technical occupations (including plumbers, technical works machinery operators, liquid and gas fuel installation and welding) and for teaching competence of adult trainers in non-formal learning. There have been EU-funded projects related to ECVET and a national team of ECVET experts has been set up.

An NCP-ECVET, Eoppep, is in place.

Hungary



ECVET has been tested in EU mobility projects. There is no regulated procedure for validation and recognition of learning outcomes obtained in other countries. Transfer of learning outcomes acquired abroad is possible case by case, where partners agree on recognition of training units.

A learning-outcomes based NQF was adopted in 2012 and referenced to the EQF in February 2015. Qualifications, programmes and exams are unitised and modularised and based on learning outcomes (core and optional, since 2006). Learning outcomes can be transferred from one qualification to another. In adult learning, each module is assessed. However, in all cases to acquire a qualification, learners need to take a complex exam at the end of the programme. In some HE qualifications, credit points can be awarded to students who have a secondary qualification, which can be linked directly to the HE qualification they aim for. Transfer and accumulation of credits are being developed between secondary VET and HE. Validation of non-formal and informal learning is limited and there are no detailed procedures and standards for this.

The national ECVET expert team (established in 2011) has been working on promotion of ECVET. They organised seminars to support VET providers in the context of geographic mobility and developed an ECVET leaflet.

An NCP-ECVET, the VET and Adult Education Directorate of the National Labour Office, is in place.

Iceland



No formal ECVET policy memorandum has yet been adopted, yet all the provisions are already there.

Cross-border mobility is well known and practised in all major VET schools. Learning acquired abroad is validated in credit points at home.

The legislative shift to learning outcomes has already taken place and a comprehensive LLL strategy and legislation provide a framework for validation of prior learning. Mechanisms do not yet exist in some occupations, but there is gradual progress. The Upper secondary school act (2008) promotes credit units which are associated with credit points. Transfer of learning outcomes between education and training providers and qualifications can easily be included in any form of VET, but it is not done under the ECVET label. Principals of upper secondary schools decide case by case which assessed learning outcomes are transferred. For learners, therefore, it is difficult to understand which credits they can transfer. To acquire a qualification, learners in IVET may accumulate units/modules that are assessed and certified separately or, where a more holistic approach applies, based on a final exam.

The country participates in the ECVET network but there is no community of practice yet.

An NCP-ECVET, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, is in place.

Ireland



Cross-country mobility initiatives are part of VET and HE curricula. Transfer of learning outcomes acquired abroad is possible on a case-by-case basis; the Europass mobility document is requested and used to record such learning. Recognition is possible.

An NQF and a national credit transfer system for VET are in place. Full awards and programme exemption can be gained by recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

For the moment, ECVET tends to operate at provider level and for mobility experiences only. Policy papers on enabling ECVET credits to be granted, alongside achievement of national credits have not been developed.

The NCP-ECVET is Leargas, the Erasmus+ national agency for schools, VET, adult education and youth (as of 2014).

Italy



VET providers actively participate in mobility actions funded by EU programmes. Within these, learning abroad can be recognised by the home institution. Education and training providers define units of learning outcomes for mobility actions.

VET and HE structures are compatible with ECVET principles. Most reforms included designing learning outcomes-based curricula and units. The Ministry of Education, University and Research issued guidelines for ET providers that include learning outcomes. Higher technical education and training is organised in modules and units; training credits are recognised by HE institutions and are ECTS-compatible. In principle, the ET system enables switching between learning pathways. Legislation on certification and validation of competences was introduced in 2012 (Legge Fornero) and in 2013 the Decree 13/2013 defined the standards.

Studies point to a growing interest to ECVET. A recent formal decision (the State-region agreement, January 2015) defines indicators and procedures to certify competences and to develop a credit system for IVET and CVET compatible with ECVET. This decision has to be implemented by the regions even if in some (seven regions), certification and validation system has already been set up.

A team of experts and a community of practice exist, but the latter needs to be developed.

An NCP-ECVET has not yet been officially nominated.

Latvia



Learning periods abroad were included in the overall assessment of the programme before 2010. Education and training providers define units of learning outcomes for mobility.

The NQF, based on learning outcomes, has been formally adopted and was linked to the EQF in 2011. The amendments to the VET law adopted in May 2015 will enhance the modularisation of training programmes and potentially the transfer of qualifications and learning outcomes. A modular system is being developed by the National Education Centre (NEC) with support from the ESF. Also, through an ESF project, basic qualifications and related occupational standards of 12 sectors have been analysed to see equivalences and how to work towards allocation of credit. Validation of learning outcomes legislation is in place for VET (2011) and HE (2012) and the system is operational.

Specific activities of the MES in cooperation with the social partners are planned for 2015-20 to support implementation of the sector qualification system and development of the methodology for evaluation of the content and learning outcomes of the professional qualifications exams, in compliance with the Latvian qualifications framework and with links to ECVET and EQAVET. A national team of experts has been formed (nominated by the Ministry of Education and Science). The team's activities are coordinated by the State Education Development Agency (SEDA).

There is no NCP-ECVET.

Lithuania



The focus of VET transnational mobility actions is IVET, mainly financed through EU and Nordic countries' support. The existing legal basis allows recognition of cross-border mobility. Upper secondary education and HE acquired abroad is recognised.

The NQF, based on learning outcomes, was adopted in 2010. Legislation (2009, amended in 2015) set up a structure of occupational standards which are LO-based. The commitment for introducing a credit system has been formalised in the 'concept of modular VET' and the methodology for developing modular programmes, which describe how to define the volume of VET programmes in ECVET credit points. Measures to modularise VET were included in the 2007 development programme and in the 2010 legislation (amended in 2015): 17 modular VET programmes were finalised in 2014 and 23 will be finalised in 2015. Validation of VET level qualifications is organised according to the Order on the evaluation of person's acquired competences (2012) and is implemented by accredited competence assessment institutions.

A measure for implementation of the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET) (2009/C 155/02) is included in the *Action plan on VET development 2014-16* (2014). A community of practice started to be developed in 2014. A national team of ECVET experts was established in 2014.

The NCP-ECVET is the Qualifications and VET Development Centre (QVETDC).

Luxembourg



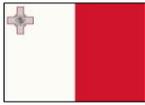
Legislation foresees the possibility to recognise units obtained during a mobility period in a foreign country but it still depends on the respective learning provider whether they are finally recognised.

The NQF is in early operational stage. Validation is in place. Following the 2008 VET reform, IVET has been structured in modules (core, supplementary and preparatory) and the qualification system is linked to standards. Learning outcomes are assessed on completion of the modules. A credit system, which includes the central elements of ECVET, has been in place since 2010 (without credit points).

The country is technically ready to introduce ECVET.

The NCP-ECVET is the Department of Vocational training of the Ministry of Education, Children and Youth.

Malta



The ECVET system is in line with the Malta qualifications framework, which is linked to EQF and operational.

In 2014, Malta published its manual for conversion of qualifications into the ECVET system; it provides guidelines for VET institutions who wish to convert their qualifications. The European Union Programmes Agency (EUPA) is responsible for the overall management of ECVET, with a team of employees designated for specific tasks. They also provide monitoring and support to the work of the ECVET national experts team via regular meetings and promote national outcomes. It is planned to bring together more stakeholders from industry, VET providers, the national team of experts, and the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) to sustain the work in progress on the best ways to apply ECVET methodologies.

The NCP-ECVET is the European Union Programmes Agency (EUPA).

Netherlands



International mobility is a part of the VET system, though not compulsory. ECVET has been piloted in mobility projects where learning outcomes acquired abroad are transferred between the participating countries.

The NQF, based on learning outcomes, has been adopted (2012). Qualifications are based on core tasks (can be regarded as equivalent of modules), all of which should be completed to achieve a qualification. There are no partial qualifications. Providers can certify individual core tasks but they are not linked to credits or recognised in the labour market. Transfer is largely at the discretion of ET providers. Transfer of learning outcomes between different training programmes and providers is made more complicated by funding issues. Validation is carried out against national standards, but varies with certification bodies.

There is no official document on whether or how to implement ECVET; however, recent national pilot projects contributed to reopening the national discussion on certification of units in formal qualifications. Currently, 10 pilot projects are running with the objective to support adult transition from work to work, reintegration into the labour market, and/or updating skills and competences in an efficient and cost-effective way. The projects are implemented in health care, social services, pedicure, the technical sector and the army. The pilots are based on NQF/EQF as a basis for learning outcomes, ECVET for dividing qualifications into units, validation of non-formal and informal learning, and development of tailor-made training programmes.

A national team of ECVET experts has also been established and a community of practice is in place. Experts are trained to promote ECVET for LLL and for mobility.

An NCP-ECVET, part of the Dutch partnership for lifelong learning, one of the public programmes of CINOP (as of 1 January 2015), is in place.

Norway



Cross-country mobility for VET is not a policy priority. Transfer of learning outcomes acquired abroad is possible on a case to case basis. There is no framework that makes transfer automatic.

An outcome-based NQF has been adopted (linked to EQF in 2014) and curricula are learning-outcome-based. VET is not modularised. Those who leave VET before completion can get certificates of competence. There is a credit point system for tertiary level VET (2013 regulation) and conversion to ECTS and ECVET is possible. Units of learning outcomes and credits may be devised at local/provider level rather than nationally. Legislation supports transfer of LO within the same area/qualification; transfer to other areas/qualifications is possible for specific programmes and regulated. Legislation gives people the right to have their non-formal/informal learning validated at all levels within the education system.

There has been no national decision on the implementation of ECVET. In 2015, a public hearing assessing possible implementation of ECVET was concluded. The summary results pointed to a number of possible actions, for example, piloting for mobility or validation of skills, creating a forum for users to discuss and reach common understanding of EU tools. However, no proposed measures have been confirmed so far. The social partners were actively involved in preparing the hearing and providing feedback.

There is no NCP-ECVET.

Poland



Cross-country geographic mobility for IVET is not a national priority but there is growing interest among stakeholders in using ECVET as a tool to support it. Transfer of learning outcomes and periods of employment abroad are recognised case by case.

The NQF was linked to the EQF in 2013. The IVET qualifications and core curricula are based on units of learning outcomes, which are in line with principles of ECVET. Qualifications are awarded based on the assessment of LO conducted by external validation and certification bodies. Vocational diplomas (compound qualifications) and vocational certificates (single qualifications) can be awarded, also based on LO acquired through non-formal or informal learning. The implementation of ECVET principles for CVET is prepared and tested. It is expected that ECVET will be implemented in all contexts following the adoption of the Polish qualification framework and modernised qualification system.

No decision has yet been taken on use of ECVET credit points. The national team of ECVET experts is promoting ECVET through workshops focused on how to implement ECVET during international mobility. In addition, site visits in institutions implementing ECVET in mobility projects are being carried out.

An NCP-ECVET has not yet been appointed.

Portugal



Learning acquired abroad is transferred between selected countries as part of pilot projects.

An NQF, based on learning outcomes and linked to the EQF, is in place as well as a validation system linked to NQF. A methodological guide on designing qualifications based on learning outcomes was published in January 2015, following public consultation. It is being applied to the qualifications included in the national catalogue of qualifications and for new ones. The national qualifications system introduced modularisation. Transfer has not been fully implemented. In most programmes, the diploma is awarded on successful completion of all modules and a final practical exam/project. Qualifications at level 5 of the NQF/EQF can be linked to ECTS, but there is no specific mention of ECVET.

Different ECVET technical components for IVET and CVET are being tested. A community of practice is in place but needs further development.

The NCP-ECVET is the National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training (ANQEP).

Romania



Cross-country mobility in VET takes place mainly through EU-funded mobility projects. A methodology for recognising cross-border mobility for IVET students is in place (since 2008). Since 2009, learners have been able to transfer learning outcomes achieved during cross-border mobility and get them recognised; responsibility lies with the sending VET schools. 83% of IVET participants in mobility declared that, upon return, their learning outcomes were recognised by the sending institution and transferred towards a qualification.

The NQF was adopted in 2013. In IVET, all programmes are modularised; the qualification standards are described in terms of units of learning outcomes, with credits for each unit and qualification. In CVET, the occupational standards describing qualifications are also divided into units of competences. A recognition and transfer system is in place. The credit system for IVET, which is compatible with ECVET (2011), and the transfer of learning outcomes are not fully operational until the NQF is completely developed. A methodology for the transfer and recognition of the learning outcomes achieved during on-the-job training in IVET is available. The national law of education sets general rules relating to the validation of non-formal and informal learning, but there is no concrete methodology in place due to unclear second-level regulations. 2011 legislation provides for integration of NQF and validation.

Specific methodology for the use of ECVET in IVET and CVET is under development. More than 30% of Romanian IVET mobility projects used ECVET technical components. Since 2012, the national ECVET expert team has focused on promoting and discussing the implementation of ECVET technical components in geographic mobility and in LLL. A website on ECVET is available and a community of practice is in place.

The National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development, is the NCP-ECVET.

Slovakia



Cross-country learner mobility comes under the framework of regional development strategies. Learning abroad is included in the overall assessment of the training programme by the home institution. Education and training providers are engaged in defining units of learning outcomes for mobility.

A comprehensive qualifications framework, the Slovak qualifications framework (SKKR), was revised and adopted by the Slovak Government in October 2015. The development of national qualifications register was expected to have been finished in 2015. The register will contain information on 1 000 qualifications in the form of qualifications and assessment standards. The VET curricula (2008 reform) introduced competence-based curricula and corresponding standards but it is not unitised or modularised. The LLL legislation (2009, amended 2012) provides a framework for validation; however, the delay in the work on the qualifications system and the NQF has also affected progress on validation.

The ECVET feasibility study (2012) strongly supported the learning outcomes approach and advocated validation of learning outcomes, but it stood back from using credit points and did not suggest expanding ECVET to all mobility initiatives. It is expected that, following the establishment of the SKKR, some ECVET components (such as units of learning outcomes, credit points) will be tested in selected qualifications awarded outside the school system, also aiming at the validation of non-formal and informal learning. The national team of ECVET experts has been created and is active while the community of practice is under development.

An NCP-ECVET, the State Institute for Vocational Education (SIOV), is in place.

Slovenia



There is no regulation for cross-country mobility, which is mostly implemented through EU-funded projects. In most cases, learners get have experiences recognised, with most schools using it as an alternative to students' practical training.

The NQF was formally adopted in December 2015 and is referenced to the EQF. The occupation-related parts of VET are outcome-oriented. All IVET programmes were modularised between 2004 and 2010 and their curricula are linked with credits. A credit transfer system is in place for IVET. VET and HE use the same credit point convention.

Linking the credit system with validation has been a challenge. Providers have to validate prior learning and grant exemptions, but there is no single national strategy. There are two routes for validation of competences, especially for adults with work experience. They can either participate in formal VET or obtain a vocational qualification certificate within the national system (NVQ).

An advanced stage of ECVET readiness has been reached (in 2010) and a national ECVET experts' team has been set up. The team prepared a manual and provide advice and training to people involved in preparing learning units for mobility.

An NCP-ECVET, the Institute of Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training (CPI), is in place.

Spain



Learning outcomes acquired and assessed during work placement periods abroad, and related to the workplace training module, are recognised subject to a learning agreement among teachers. Learning outcomes acquired and assessed abroad, related to other training modules of IVET, are validated and recognised by a specific department of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport.

The VET system has implemented all ECVET principles, except credit points. All VET qualifications are expressed in learning outcomes and most IVET qualifications have been updated since 2013. All VET programmes (leading to certificates and diplomas) are designed as learning units and modules. Learning units (acquired either in the VET system or through validation of non-formal learning) are individually assessed and certified and may be accumulated towards a full qualification in IVET and CVET.

The General Directorate for Guidance and Vocational Training of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport is the NCP-ECVET.

Sweden



Cross-country mobility is part of national strategies, emphasised in upper secondary VET curricula. Learners receive credit for their placements and studies abroad, which are integrated into their programmes. As many cross-country mobility periods are relatively short and do not cover entire modules or courses, the home institutions assesses the learning outcomes acquired abroad in the overall assessment of the module/course. ECVET principles and tools such as learnings agreements are increasingly being used and developed within EU projects.

Many conditions for implementing ECVET are already in place, with more to come following the introduction of a national qualifications framework, planned to be adopted in June 2015. Secondary vocational education is designed in courses and modules. Curricula are outcomes-based. Recently, learning outcomes have been defined nationally for modules/courses in some vocational areas. Each formal education sector has its own credit system: one for IVET at upper secondary level (both in upper secondary school and adult education) and one for higher VET (credits allocated to each course). Award on accumulation of units/modules is possible, also making use of credit points. Learners can transfer credits (credit points), between IVET qualifications, from VET to general education and vice versa and from upper secondary school to adult education. Transfer of modules/courses is regulated by law but limited, as learners receive the lowest pass grade; for a higher grade the module/course needs to be reassessed. Transfer between programmes and institutions at ISCED levels 4 and 5 (higher vocational education) can be difficult, as the learning content is decided by the institutions. It is also proposed to use ECVET principles in the context of non-formal/informal qualifications to the NQF.

The NCP-ECVET, the National Agency for Education, analysed the ECVET-readiness of state-regulated VET qualifications, including changes in national regulations needed to accommodate ECVET principles better and suggesting a model for conversion of national credit points to ECVET points (the National Agency for Education and the National Agency for Higher Vocational Education reported to the government in September 2012). The NCP-ECVET also worked to increase visibility and understanding of ECVET among stakeholders. The NCP-ECVET works in close cooperation with the team of ECVET experts under the leadership of the Swedish Council for Higher Education. For example, the

NCP-ECVET and ECVET expert team regularly offer workshops on ECVET in practice in transnational mobility. In implementing ECVET, the Swedish National Agency for Education has a clear mandate to ensure synergy with the work on all common European tools (EQF, EQAVET, Europass, ESCO, Euroguidance, Eures and validation) through cooperation, exchange of experience and common information activities among all responsible agencies.

An NCP-ECVET, the National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*), is in place.

United Kingdom



England

Cross-country international geographic mobility for VET is supported predominantly through EU-funded projects. There is no legislative framework to enable automatic recognition of learning outcomes obtained abroad: awarding organisations (regulated by Ofqual, the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation) recognise learning outcomes achieved outside their own programmes at organisational discretion, and in accordance with any applicable regulatory requirements for the qualification or sector. Europass mobility can be used to record learning periods spent abroad.

The VET system is based on learning outcomes that are combined to establish units, which are allocated credits via a national credit system. There are clear procedures for accumulation, recognition and transfer of credit. Units in VET programmes are assessed independently within qualifications, and are linked to credits.

No formal decision has been taken to apply ECVET to the current national system, though, in theory, legislation/regulation is compatible with ECVET. The government has taken the decision to encourage the use of ECVET for international mobility purposes and as such supports the UK ECVET experts team to promote the use of ECVET to VET providers. The UK ECVET experts develop guidance, advice and resources for increased understanding and use of ECVET.

An NCP-ECVET, ECCTIS Ltd, is in place.

Northern Ireland

Learning outcomes assessed abroad can be recognised as part of pilot projects between the participating countries when satisfying the specifications set by qualifications awarding organisations. Europass mobility can be used to record learning periods spent abroad.

The QCF (qualifications and credit framework) was introduced across England, Wales and Northern Ireland (EWNI) in 2008 for VET qualifications. The QCF regulations set out how QCF units and qualifications should be designed (based on learning outcomes and credit) and the procedures for accumulation (rules of combination), recognition and transfer. Credit-based units of learning outcomes can be assessed independently within these qualifications. An NQF

also exists in EWNl alongside the QCF mainly for the school/general (academic) qualifications (GCSEs and GCEs). These frameworks are currently under review to bring the two together into a single framework. Validation of non-formal and informal learning varies with certification bodies and sectors and is limited by the discretion of the awarding organisation. This is due to the lack of agreement between competent institutions, and the range of learning experiences which need to be recognised.

The UK ECVET experts' team develop guidance, advice and resources for increased understanding and use of ECVET for transnational mobility.

An NCP-ECVET, the Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), is in place.

Scotland

Cross-country geographic mobility for VET is not a specific national priority. All achieved learning outcomes abroad are reassessed at national level (double assessment) due to national quality assurance measures. Europass mobility can be used to recognise learning periods spent abroad, while complete qualifications gained can be recognised through a UK NARIC comparability statement.

There are no plans to devise legislation related to ECVET although the main building blocks to support it are in place. A credit and qualifications framework has been in place for more than 10 years. Credit-based units of learning outcomes are already developed and strongly embedded in the VET system. Units are assessed independently within qualifications, and are linked to credits. Validation of non-formal and informal learning varies with certification bodies and sectors and is limited by the discretion of the awarding body. This is due to the lack of agreement between competent institutions, and the range of learning experiences which need to be recognised.

A UK-wide ECVET expert team continues to work to develop guidance, advice and resources for increased understanding and future use of ECVET. Periodic workshops and events are held for information and staff development, particularly for the tertiary college sector.

An NCP-ECVET, the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership (SCQFP), is in place.

Wales

Cross-country mobility for VET is not a specific national priority for VET. However, CollegesWales, the national membership organisation for further education colleges in Wales, coordinates a pan-Wales consortium application for Erasmus+ on behalf of the sector in Wales. All learning outcomes achieved abroad are reassessed at national level (double assessment) due to national

quality assurance measures. Europass mobility is used to recognise learning periods spent abroad, while complete qualifications gained can be recognised through a UK NARIC comparability statement.

There are no plans to devise legislation for ECVET; in theory, a credit and qualifications framework (CQFW) which has been in place for more than 10 years is compatible. Credit-based units of learning outcomes are already developed and strongly embedded in the VET system. Units are assessed independently within qualifications, and are linked to credits. Validation of non-formal and informal learning varies with certification bodies and sectors and is limited by the discretion of the awarding body. This is due to the lack of agreement between competent institutions, and the range of learning experiences which need to be recognised.

The UK ECVET experts develop guidance, advice and resources for increased understanding and future use of ECVET.

An NCP-ECVET, CollegesWales/ColegauCymru, is in place.

ANNEX 2.

Websites with ECVET information, by country

Country	Website
Austria	http://www.ecvet-info.at/
Belgium (French Community)	http://www.aef-europe.be/index.php?Rub=ecvet
Bulgaria	http://www.navet.government.bg/en/european-credit-system-for-vocational-education-and-training/
Cyprus	http://www.erasmusplus.cy/uploadfiles/ecvet/experts.html http://www.moec.gov.cy/mtee/en/ecvet.html
Czech Republic	http://www.nuv.cz/projekty/ecvet
Denmark	http://ufm.dk
Estonia	http://www.innove.ee/et/kutseharidus/ecvet http://archimedes.ee/
Finland	http://www.oph.fi/ http://www.cimo.fi/
France	http://www.agence-erasmus.fr/page/ecvet http://eduscol.education.fr
Germany	http://www.ecvet-info.de/
Greece	https://www.iky.gr
Ireland	http://www.leargas.ie/
Italy	http://www.isfol.it/ecvet
Latvia	http://www.viaa.gov.lv/lat http://www.viaa.gov.lv/lat/ek_izgl_programmas_iniciativas/erasmusplus/ecvet_aktivitate/par_ecvet/
Lithuania	http://www.smpf.lt/
Luxembourg	http://www.anefore.lu/
Malta	http://llp.eupa.org.mt/ecvet-malta/
Netherlands	http://www.ecvet.nl/
Norway	http://siu.no/
Poland	http://www.frse.org.pl
Portugal	http://www.anqep.gov.pt/
Romania	http://www.anpcdefp.ro/anpcdefp.php?link=59
Slovakia	http://siov.sk/index.php/sk/europske-iniciativy/ecvet http://web.saaic.sk/llp/sk/_main.cfm?obsah=m_ECVET.cfm&sw_prog=4
Slovenia	http://www.cmepius.si
Sweden	http://www.skolverket.se/
Switzerland	http://www.sbf.admin.ch/themen/01369/02115/02116/index.html?lang=de http://www.ch-go.ch/de
UK-England	www.ecvetexperts.org.uk
UK-Northern Ireland	www.ecvetexperts.org.uk
UK-Scotland	http://scqf.org.uk/ecvet/
UK-Wales	www.ecvetexperts.org.uk

ECVET in Europe

Monitoring report 2015

Cedefop has been conducting monitoring of ECVET implementation since 2010; this report covers developments from mid-2013 till 2015. It is based on national responses provided by the ECVET users' group from 28 EU Member States and four EFTA countries. The report examines whether existing credit systems provide conditions for individuals to have their learning accumulated or transferred towards a qualification. It examines key aspects: whether qualifications are based on learning outcomes and organised in units; whether individual units are assessed and validated for further transfer and accumulation; whether units are assigned credit points; and whether VET providers use memoranda of understanding and learning agreements to understand better the learning outcomes they provide. The report also focuses on the ways ECVET is promoted among stakeholders and beneficiaries and on examples of support materials that can be useful to ECVET promoters throughout Europe.

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