



NATIONAL AGENCY  
for European Educational  
Programmes and Mobility



# Analysis of the ECVET principles implementation



**LOCAL  
COMMUNITY  
DEVELOPMENT  
FOUNDATION**



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## WHY ECVET?

The development of citizens' knowledge, skills and competences has always been priority to the European community. Therefore the recognition of that knowledge, skills and competences is a very important issue for the development of competitiveness, employment and social cohesion in the European community. As the European labor market developed, there was a real need for transnational mobility for workers and learners that had to be encouraged and promoted by the very own community.

As a result, on 18 June 2009 the European Parliament and Council issued a recommendation on the establishment of a European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET).

As it was noted in the recommendation "The purpose of this Recommendation is to create a European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training ('ECVET') intended to facilitate the transfer, recognition and accumulation of assessed learning outcomes of individuals who are aiming to achieve a qualification. This will improve the general understanding of citizens' learning outcomes and their transparency, transnational mobility and portability across and, where appropriate, within Member States in a borderless lifelong learning area, and will also improve the mobility and portability of qualifications at national level between various sectors of the economy and within the labour market; furthermore, it will contribute to the development and expansion of European cooperation in education and



## What is ECVET?

The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) is European instrument for transfer, recognition and accumulation of learning outcomes of individuals with a goal to achieve a qualification.

European Parliament and Council have defined ECVET as follows: “ECVET is a technical framework for the transfer, recognition and, where appropriate, accumulation of individuals’ learning outcomes with a view to achieving a qualification. ECVET tools and methodology comprise the description of qualifications in terms of units of learning outcomes with associated points, a transfer and accumulation process and complementary documents such as learning agreements, transcripts of records and ECVET users’ guides.”

The whole concept of ECVET is based on the idea for better mobility of European citizens with the purpose to facilitate lifelong learning that is achieved in formal, non-formal and informal settings. Therefore, ECVET is intended to establish a systematic approach to the vocational education and training in the whole Europe, thus to achieve better compatibility between the different vocational education and training systems and their qualification.\* Even though ECVET is encouraged by the European legislation, implementation of its principles is voluntary and each county can apply it in accordance with the national legislation and regulations.

According to the European-level Recommendation, the application of a given qualification is in accordance with the legislation, rules and regulations applicable in the Member States. Nevertheless, the application has to be based on the following principles and technical specifications:

- ⇒ Unit of learning outcomes
- ⇒ Transfer and accumulation of learning outcomes, ECVET partnerships
- ⇒ Learning agreement and personal transcript
- ⇒ ECVET points

\* [...ECVET is intended to facilitate the recognition of learning outcomes in accordance with national legislation, in the framework of mobility, for the purpose of achieving a qualification. It should be noted that ECVET does not imply any new entitlement for citizens to obtain the automatic recognition of either learning outcomes or points. Its application for a given qualification is in accordance with the legislation, rules and regulations applicable in the Member States...]

# Learning outcomes

## What are learning outcomes?

Learning outcomes are statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process.

Usually, qualifications frameworks indicate the overall level of learning outcomes in a qualification. For ECVET purposes the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is used as a reference for levels.

Learning outcomes may be acquired through a variety of learning pathways, modes of delivery (school-based, in-company, workplaces etc.), in different learning contexts (formal, non-formal and informal) or settings (i.e. country, education and training system ...).

## How are learning outcomes described?

Learning outcomes are described using the terminology and descriptors existing in the different qualifications systems. The European definition of learning outcomes, which uses the terms of knowledge, skills and competences is the common denominator that fits with the diversity of approaches to describing learning outcomes.

However, it is essential in implementing ECVET, to ensure that learning outcomes for qualifications and units are clearly identified and described to enable mutual understanding of qualifications and judgments on:

Whether the qualifications covered in the framework of an partnership for mobility lead to the same or similar occupation;

Whether learning outcomes as described in one setting or context are comparable with those in another setting or context.

To implement ECVET it is necessary that qualifications are described using learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are grouped to create Units.

Assessed learning outcomes constitute credit. Credit is the basis for enabling the transfer between learning contexts and for the accumulation of learning outcomes.

In ECVET, learning outcomes are used as a basis for credit transfer and accumulation. Learning outcomes are not dependent on the learning process or the learning context in which they have been achieved and therefore it is possible to use them to identify whether what the learner has achieved in one learning setting or context is comparable to what s/he is expected to have achieved in another setting or context.

## UNIT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

A unit is a component of a qualification, consisting of a coherent set of knowledge, skills and competence that can be assessed and validated.

Units enable progressive achievement of qualifications through transfer and accumulation of learning outcomes. They are subject to assessment and validation which verify and record that the learner has achieved the learning outcomes expected.

Depending on the existing regulations, units may be common to several qualifications or specific to one particular qualification. Units are accumulated based on the requirements to achieve qualifications .

## HOW CAN ECVET BE USED IN A QUALIFICATION SYSTEM THAT DOES NOT USE UNITS?

In countries where qualifications are not designed in terms of units or where they do not allow for the accumulation of units, it is possible to use ECVET for mobility purposes by creating units used only for mobility.

The credit achieved for these units can then be transferred.

The learning outcomes will be validated by exempting the learner from the corresponding part of the education and training pathway in the home institution (meaning she/he will not have to undergo the learning process again). However, these learning outcomes will only be recognized when the final assessment, leading to the award of the qualification, is successfully completed by the learner.

# HOW CAN LEARNING OUTCOMES BE GROUPED TO CLUSTERED TO CREATE UNITS?

To group the learning outcomes into units it is necessary to identify those outcomes that relate to each other. There are different criteria according to which learning outcomes can be grouped into units and the choice of which criteria to use depends on the qualifications system.

Examples include:

- ⇒ The fact that the learning outcomes relate to the same set of occupational activities/tasks (for example the learning outcomes in a unit entitled “shampooing and hair treatment”);
- ⇒ The fact that they are related to the same product or production technique (such as the learning outcomes in a unit entitled “prepare grilled dishes”);
- ⇒ They can also be grouped according to the stages in the production process or process of performing a service (for example the learning outcomes in a unit called “informing the client about the nature of maintenance intervention”); or
- ⇒ They can be grouped in a unit because they relate to the same field of knowledge, skills or competence (for example the competence in foreign language can form a separate unit).

As a general rule, the learning outcomes in a qualification should be assessed only once (unless the expected level of the learner’s performance is higher). Therefore the same learning outcome is normally not integrated into several different units.

## HOW SHOULD BE DESCRIBED?

Unit specifications should include:

- ⇒ the generic title of the unit (related to the exercise of specific activities/tasks or processes on the workplace, the title should be meaningful from the point of view of the labour market);
- ⇒ the reference of the qualification according to the EQF level and, where appropriate, the national qualifications framework level, with the ECVET credit points associated with the qualification;
- ⇒ the **procedures and criteria for assessment** of these learning outcomes;
- ⇒ the generic title of the qualification (or qualifications) to which the unit relates, where applicable;
- ⇒ the **learning outcomes** contained in the unit,
- ⇒ the **ECVET points associated with the unit** (for more information see the section about **ECVET points**);
- ⇒ the validity in time of the unit, where relevant;





There are two cases of credit transfer:

- ◆ Transfer in the framework of partnerships
- ◆ Transfer outside partnerships

When the credit transfer takes place in the framework of organized mobility, underpinned by a learning agreement, if the assessment is positive, credit should be validated and recognized automatically.

There are three phases of using ECVET for organized mobility:

### 1. Before mobility period

In this period, the partner institutions should do the following things:

- ⇒ Set up a partnership
- ⇒ Sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)
- ⇒ Identify the Unit(s) of learning outcomes for mobility
- ⇒ Discuss assessment of learning outcomes
- ⇒ Clarify how learning outcomes will be validated and recognized

### 2. During mobility period

During the mobility period the following things should be done:

- ⇒ Provide the learning activities preparing for learning outcomes identified in the Learning Agreement
- ⇒ Assess what learning outcomes the learner has achieved
- ⇒ Provide evidence about the result of the learner's assessment (including a transcript of record)

### 3. After mobility period

After the mobility period, in line with the Memorandum of Understanding and the Learning Agreement the partner institution should:

- ⇒ Validate learners' credit achieved abroad
- ⇒ Recognize learners' credit achieved abroad

For applying ECVET to learning outcomes achieved in a non-formal and informal learning context or outside the framework of an MoU, the competent institution which is empowered to award qualifications or units or to give credit should establish procedures and mechanisms for the identification, validation and recognition of these learning outcomes through the award of the corresponding units and the associated ECVET points.



# LEARNING AGREEMENT AND PERSONAL TRANSCRIPT

When we talk about credit transfer, there are always two competent institutions that are directly involved in the training and validation process and a specific learner in between. Therefore, a partnership between those institutions, through a learning agreement, should be made in order to apply the credit transfer.

The Learning Agreement contains the key contact information of the partner institutions involved and the mobile learner. A learning agreement is an individualized 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 recognize them as part of the requirements for a qualification. Therefore the learning agreement constitutes a commitment to the learner that his/her achievement, if in line with the expectations, will be recognized. Recognition of credit achieved during organized mobility is facilitated by the use of learning agreements. These ensure that the hosting and the home institutions as well as the learner, have information about the objectives and conditions of the mobility period as well as their roles. Compliance with the learning agreement enables automatic recognition of credit upon the learner's return. This is done without additional assessment or examination of the mobility period content.

The Learning Agreement is an instrument for concluding the partnership between two institutions, which is made in the framework of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). It should set the framework for credit transfer and formalize the ECVET partnership by stating the mutual acceptance of the status and procedures of competent institutions involved. It also establishes partnership's procedures for cooperation.



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The MoU could explain the procedure and responsibilities for the assessment, documentation, validation and recognition:

⇒ What are the procedures and methods of assessment used by the host institution;

⇒ What is the form of documentation used by the host institution (such as a learner's transcript of record, which can be enclosed as an appendix to the Learning Agreement, the Europass mobility, or form sheets specified by the sending institution);

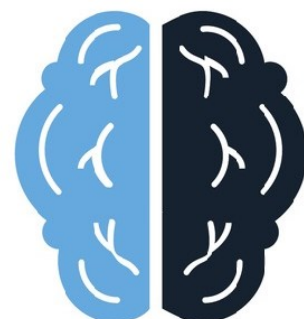
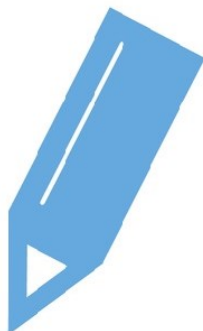
⇒ Validation: How does the home institution determine that the learning outcomes achieved abroad can be validated;

⇒ Recognition: How does the home institution officially confirm that the learning outcomes have been achieved and validated (such as by issuing a certificate).

⇒ Validity in time of the MoU: Partners specify the duration of the validity of the MoU. In some cases it can be useful to conclude the agreement with a validity of a few years; in other cases, a longer period of validity will be more appropriate. In principle, however, a period of several years is recommended.

⇒ Evaluation and review process: Partners specify the date and procedures for evaluating the functioning of the partnership and for future improvement.

⇒ Additional topics: The MoU could also include spaces for adding additional topics. For example, partners could agree to establish a partnership that is open to other organizations that would like to join the partnership at a later stage.



## ECVET POINTS

ECVET points provide additional information about units and qualifications in a numerical form. Based on a mutually agreed convention, 60 points are allocated to a learner for a full year of vocational education. The ECVET points have no value independent of the acquired learning outcomes for the particular qualification, and they reflect the achievement of units.

The allocation of ECVET points usually follows two phases. In the first phase, the points are allocated to a qualification, and in the second phase they are separated to the different units within the qualification depending of the importance of the unit to achieving the specific qualification.

The allocation of ECVET points regarding their weight follows the following criteria:

- the relative importance of the learning outcomes which constitute the unit for labour market participation, for progression to other qualification levels or for social integration;
- the complexity, scope and volume of learning outcomes in the unit;
- the effort necessary for a learner to acquire the knowledge, skills and competence required for the unit;

The relative weight of any given unit common to several qualifications, as expressed in ECVET points, may vary from one of these qualifications to another.

The allocation of the ECVET points is part of the design of the qualifications and its units. The institution responsible for the design is usually responsible for the allocation of points, in countries where national system of points exist the responsible institutions takes measures to convert the national points to ECVET points.

Usually the transfer of a unit entails the transfer of the corresponding ECVET points so that they are included when the transferred learning outcomes are recognized, in accordance with national or regional rules. With the achievement of a qualification or a unit, a learner is entitled to their ECVET points, regardless of the time necessary to achieve the points.

Any qualification acquired through non-formal or informal learning for which a formal learning pathway reference can be identified, and the corresponding units, carry the same ECVET points as the reference, since the same learning outcomes are being achieved.

# ECVET IN GERMANY

The implementation of the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Establishment of a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) of April 2008, in Germany, is made through the German Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning (DQF).

The DQR is an instrument for the alignment of qualifications in the German educational system. Its aims are to facilitate orientation in the German educational system and to assist with the comparability of German qualifications in Europe. In order to make it more transparent which competences are acquired in the German educational system, the DQR defines eight levels which can be aligned to the eight levels of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). The EQF serves as a translation instrument which helps to make national qualifications more comprehensible across Europe.

## ***Level 1:***

**Describes competences for the fulfillment of simple requirements within a clearly and well-structured field of study or work. Fulfillment of tasks takes place under supervision.**

## **Level 2:**

**Describes competences for the fulfillment of basic requirements within a clearly and well-structured field of study or work. Fulfillment of tasks takes place largely under supervision.**

## **Level 3:**

**Describes competences for the autonomous fulfillment of technical requirements within field of study or field of occupational activity which remains clear whilst being openly structured in some areas.**

## **Level 4:**

**Describes competences for the autonomous planning and processing of technical tasks assigned within a comprehensive field of study or field of occupational activity which is subject to change.**

# ECVET IN GERMANY

## **Level 5:**

**Describes competences for the autonomous planning and processing of wide-ranging technical tasks assigned within a complex and specialized field of study or field of occupational activity which is subject to change.**

## **Level 6:**

**Describes competences for the planning, processing and evaluation of comprehensive technical tasks and problems and of competences for autonomous management of processes in sub-areas of a technical specialism or in a field of occupational activity. The structure of requirements is characterized by complexity and frequent changes.**

## **Level 7:**

**Describes competences for the processing of new, complex tasks and problems and for the autonomous management of processes in a technical specialism or in a strategy oriented field of occupational activity. The requirement structure is characterized by frequent and unpredictable changes.**

## **Level 8:**

**Describes the competences for obtaining research findings in a technical specialism or for the development of innovative solutions and processes in a field of occupational activity. The requirement structure is characterized by new and unclear problem situations.**

## ECVET IN SLOVENIA

During the period 2004 – 2012, Slovenia had limited implementation of ECVET principles on national level. In the IVET reform 2004 – 2012 Slovenia aimed to get closer to the ECVET principles. Therefore, there was some progress in the curricula development – Slovenia intended to create competence based curricula that were including occupational standards, program competences and modules. It was the beginning of introducing a new learning outcomes approach. It resulted with introducing more work – based learning and “open – curricula” that aimed to achieve better employability of the final beneficiaries. As a result, a system of National Vocational Qualifications was introduced. It included a learning outcome approach, but credit points were not included.

As part of the curricula reform, a credit system was developed and included in the National Vocational Qualification system. The main goal of the credit system is:

- ⇒ to promote flexible and comparable curricula;
- ⇒ to open space for more individualization and specialization;
- ⇒ to form basis for recognition of non-formal and informal learning;
- ⇒ it places more responsibility on the learner;

Nowadays, modular structured VET secondary vocational programs are described programs are based on the starting points for using the credit points.

development of vocational educational programs (2001). The programs are prepared on the basis of occupational standards and they are modular structured and valorized with credit points. All the modules are defined as program units. There are two module types – common basic modules and elective modules. Some modules can also lead to the acquisition of a national vocational qualification.

Credit points are allocated to the entire educational programs, including modules, final work, work placement etc. The allocation of the credit points on the program components is based on their complexity in terms of workload needed for student to achieve the expected learning outcome. One credit point corresponds with 25 hours of learning activities. In the formal education, one year is equivalent to 60 credit points.

In Slovenia, the ECVET principles are incorporated in the Vocational Educational Act from 2006. It sets out the legal framework for the implementation of the credit system. Starting from 2006, all upper –

When it comes to recognition and transfer of the credits, it has to be noted that the recognition is responsibility of the providers. The credits can be accumulated progressively and transferred within the subsystem.

## ECVET IN MACEDONIA

ECVET principles in Macedonia, are clearly defined in the Macedonian Qualification Framework (MQF). MQF is an instrument for the development, classification, recognition and acknowledgement of qualifications acquired through learning results. It is based on the traditional education system, current situation in education, training and system of qualifications, development of society, needs of the labour market, needs of individuals, directions of the European Qualifications Framework and international regulations accepted by the Republic of Macedonia. The purpose of the MQF is to integrate and coordinate the education subsystems and improve the transparency, approach, advancement and quality of qualifications in relation to the labour market and civil society.

The MQF sets clear criteria for the quality of qualifications that a participant can acquire following the completion of education and training on a certain level. Qualifications that are included in the Macedonian Qualifications Framework apply to general education, formal vocational education and training, non-formal education and training and higher education.

The documents regulating ECVET principles in Macedonia, recognize achievements of qualification in vocational education and training. Vocational qualifications are acquired for part of a publicly adopted education programme (modules, courses, etc.) or by completing a special education programme, after completing an examination in accordance with the law. These qualifications represent a formally recognized capability to complete the operations within one or more occupations at a certain level of requirement. Professional qualifications provide proof that smaller groups of results of study or combinations of results of study have been achieved, which do not meet the requirements for the qualifications of an education level (level of education). Primarily, they contain professional competencies from one or more standards of occupations and they directly apply to the labour market, i.e. they enable employment. Vocational qualifications acquired in an informal manner will be evaluated and certified by a professional commission formed by a departmental committee. Professional evaluation means evaluation of the evidence and practical skills and knowledge. The evidence of an acquired professional qualification is a certificate.

Although the necessary preparations, and legal requirements for implementation of ECVET principles are all completed and compile with the European regulation and the convention. The practical implementation of ECVET principles is a weak side. The learners do not receive credits/points for their education, the programmes are not designed to include credits for qualifications or units, which disables the learners from transferring their credits.

## ECVET IN MACEDONIA

*In its scope, the MQF puts the vocational education and training in its levels of education. **Level III** applies to vocational education for professions lasting three years and the participants receive a diploma, while in informal education and training it applies to trainings to acquire qualifications or part of qualifications (level of complexity 3 in line with the standards of the profession) and the participants receive a certificate. Students with special educational needs for level III are educated for 4 years and they receive a diploma. The description of level III is:*

### KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

⇒ Possesses theoretical and systematic adopted professional knowledge, facts, principles, processes and general concepts for a certain area of work or study, while at the same time enable further studying.



### SKILLS

- ⇒ Possesses practical and creative skills that enable the solving of known (predictable) and less known (unpredictable) situations;
- ⇒ Performs work and tasks of medium complexity, less standardized and relatively transparent;
- ⇒ Uses various devices, tools, equipment and materials in the process of production and in the services;
- ⇒ Communicates and cooperates with the group;

### COMPETENCIES

⇒ Plans, prepares, organizes and values their own work, based on predetermined authorizations, within the scope of their work; Performs work that is not always defined in advance, with a certain degree of independence and responsibility.







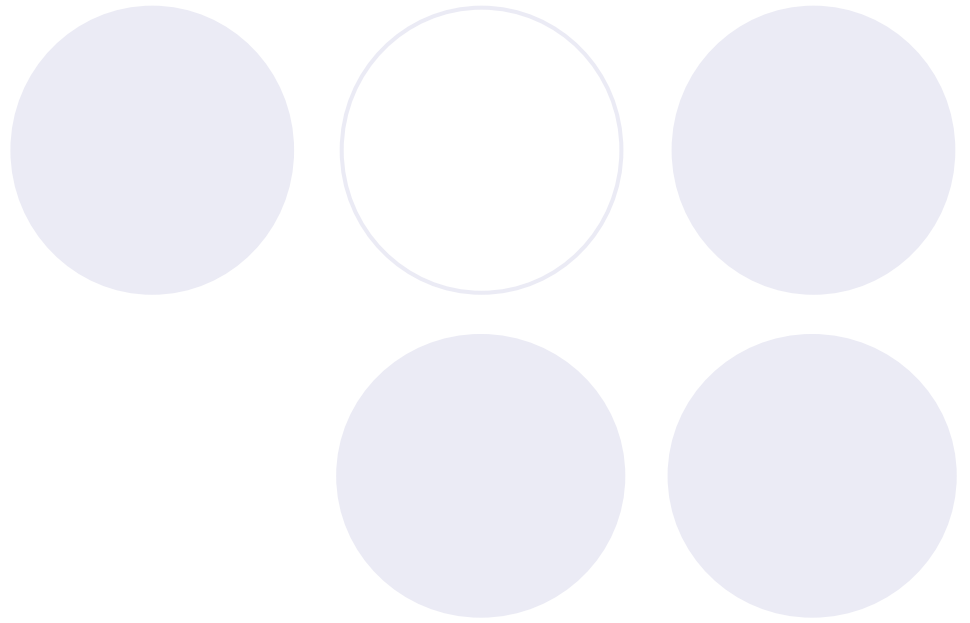
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DOCUMENT MACEDONIAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK – starting bases – , March 2013



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