



BRUSSELS, 23 NOVEMBER 2004

**PRINCIPLES AND ESSENTIAL RULES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF A EUROPEAN CREDIT  
TRANSFER SYSTEM FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (ECVET)**

**INTERIM REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP**

**1. CONTEXT**

**1.1.** The Copenhagen declaration of 30 November 2002 set the priority of developing a credit transfer system for VET.

**1.2.** A mandate was therefore given to a working group to explore possible options for the design, implementation and development of a credit transfer system, compatible with specificities of vocational education and training. This technical working group is composed of experts nominated by participating countries and social partners. It has faced the challenge of laying the foundations of an ECVET system which allows dialogue and exchange between VET systems, which are quite very different from one another both in terms of conceptual and pedagogical organisation. The interim report presents the main conclusions of the working group in autumn 2004 and complements the preliminary report from November 2003.

**1.3.** An ECVET system requires first a basic agreement at European level on the objectives, principles, scope and field of application of the system, as well as on the essential rules and procedures for its implementation. These elements are set out in this note, which aims provide a basis for the policy document to be presented to the ministerial meeting at Maastricht. As a result of its investigations, the technical working group (TWG) on credit transfer in vocational education and training has developed its proposals for the principles and rules of a European credit transfer system for VET (ECVET), which should ensure its effective implementation within a variety of mobility exchange initiatives, individual or institutional, while involving national authorities and VET providers. Because of the need to ensure an effective application of ECVET, the TWG is proposing solutions for a short term application and possible longer term development. This basic approach has been tested in a limited number of case studies. The future system, however, should be based on experiments and an in-depth consultation of the stakeholders as well as on further testing through pilot projects or joint actions for instance in the context of the Leonardo da Vinci programme.

**1.4.** In addition the ECVET principles should be accompanied by a real “tool box”, simple in its operation and universal, for VET providers and learners. ECVET has to be open, flexible and evolutionary enough to allow for progressive implementation at national level on the short term and on the long term, depending on the choices countries make, even those which do not (yet) have a national credit system.

**1.5.** The countries will have a free hand to implement either the short term or the long term solutions/schemes applicable to:

- formal and/or non-formal systems
- young people and/or adults in training
- in the case of mobility from one training level to another
- in the case of national or trans-national, bilateral or multilateral mobility
- in the case of professional mobility

**1.6.** ECVET should be “a converter” in which different national and sectoral systems can operate.

**1.7.** At European level, the priority of the implementation should be given to the formal system in the trans-national mobility context. This priority should allow for obtaining information and data about ECVET for a first evaluation in terms of its applicability and added value for the participating VET systems.

## **2. A EUROPEAN CREDIT TRANSFER SYSTEM FOR VET**

### **2.1. Aims and objectives of ECVET**

**2.1.1.** The overall aim of ECVET is to contribute concretely to lifelong learning. ECVET should facilitate, on the one hand, horizontal and vertical mobility of learners within their individual VET pathway within and between different national systems, and encourage and promote, on the other hand, individual geographic and professional mobility as well as career development. It should therefore support individual development and employability. ECVET should thus also include in its principles and organisation all formal, non-formal and informal training/education/learning processes. In the first stage of its implementation, ECVET will concern primarily formal VET systems.

**2.1.2.** This aim can be broken down into two objectives:

**i)-** In the perspective of allowing everyone to create and follow individual learning pathways, ECVET should improve transparency, validation, portability and transferability of achieved learning outcomes (be they acquired through formal, non-formal or informal learning activities), while in same time facilitating their accumulation and transfer within and between various VET systems.

**ii)-** In the perspective of management and organisation of VET systems, ECVET should encourage cooperation between respective authorities through the development of mutual trust between the stakeholders of national VET systems, VET providers, teachers, trainers and learners, within and beyond national frontiers. ECVET should thus contribute to the increasing of the quality and attractiveness of VET systems.

### **2.1.3.** ECVET at once requires and promotes transparency of:

- qualifications and learning outcomes which are expected at the end of a VET programme or a learning pathway. These objectives ought to be expressed in terms of knowledge, skills and competences)
- procedures (i.e. quality insurance, assessment or recognition procedures)
- learning processes (i.e. formal, non-formal and informal learning processes and pathways)
- structures (i.e. organisation of the VET systems, institutional responsibility of the stakeholders/practitioners).

ECVET is based on the establishment of mutual trust between VET authorities on the one hand and providers and learners on the other hand especially in terms of the quality insured, anticipation and assessment of the knowledge, skills and competences acquired and of the real achievement level of the mobile learners.

## **2.2. Principles of ECVET: Functions and scope**

**2.2.1.** ECVET comprises a mechanism, the two operational functions of which ought to allow individuals:

- to accumulate and have valued learning outcomes along their individual VET learning pathway.
- to move from one national, formal VET system to another; from one level to another ; to access the formal VET system from a non-formal learning context; to transfer learning outcomes between such systems and learning contexts

**2.2.2.** ECVET as such allows individuals to convert their achieved learning outcomes to achieve a mobility pathway within one system, or from one system to another, in a regional, national or European mobility dimension.

- i)-** ECVET is centred on the learner (trainee, pupil or student) in the European context where mobility and free circulation of persons are individual rights.
- ii)-** ECVET is a European decentralised system based on voluntary participation of Member states and of the respective VET stakeholders according to the national legislation and regulations on assessment, recognition, certification and quality assurance.
- iii)-** ECVET will be linked to the new Europass, the development and implementation of which should support and make more efficient its application and the diffusion of ECVET among stakeholders
- iv)-** The implementation of ECVET will be supported by a common reference levels framework and the European Qualification Framework (EQF)
- v)-** ECVET will be supported by the Common Quality Assurance Framework and the common European principles for identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning.

**vi)-** ECVET will in the medium term be compatible and in an integrated approach with the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) in use in higher education.

**2.2.3.** The scope and field of application of ECVET at national and European levels are defined as follows:

**i)-** ECVET is designed for VET systems as a whole (formal and non-formal systems, initial and continuing VET). It has to be at first implemented within the formal system.

**ii)-** ECVET is aimed at learners of the formal and non-formal learning systems at any level, whether their learning pathways include workplace and/or school-based learning experiences.

**iii)-** ECVET should make it possible to link and to combine the learner's individual job or learning experience, and enable access to formal VET systems on the basis of non-formal and informal learning.

**iv)-** ECVET should always be related to or associated with recognition, validation, or certification of achieved learning outcomes described in terms of knowledge, skill and competences. ECVET is not designed to provide for the allocation or use of credit free from usual formal quality control.

**v)-** ECVET should be used in case of bi- or multilateral mobility, in particular in the context of EU mobility programmes.

**vi)-** ECVET is designed to be used by any VET provider irrespective of its size, status, degree of autonomy, or the legislative and regulatory framework of the respective VET system in view of the quality standards in use and quality assurance principles.

**vii)-** It is up to each country to establish the rules for the authorisation of the VET providers who can implement ECVET and do guarantee credibility of the system and reliability of its implementation.

**viii)-** ECVET can be applied in a regional, national, European or even international context.

### **2.3. Essential rules for implementation of ECVET**

**2.3.1.** ECVET in its basic design rests on four essential rules, which are the pillars of its effective implementation:

**i)-** The objectives of a learning pathway, a VET programme or elements of a qualification are expressed as learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills and competences to be acquired and mastered at a given reference level. They are agreed formally, assembled and organised in units, each unit can be validated and/or recognised separately.

**ii)-** By a system for allocating credit points to be agreed in a convention at European level, a number of credit points will be allocated to a complete learning pathway, VET programme or qualification. This number of credit points is related to the set of units corresponding to a complete learning pathway, VET programme or qualification. The transfer/exchange value of a single unit will thus be defined in terms of credit points according to its relative weight. The

credit points allocated to each unit are assigned separately. Several types of mechanisms or methodologies to allocate the points of credit are possible and must be examined.

iii)- Each ECVET credit transfer arrangement is based on an agreement to be documented in a ‘Memorandum of Understanding’, or “partnership agreement” which is concluded by authorities, institutions, VET providers or bodies/organisations which are involved in VET and which contribute to the implementation of a learner mobility experience based on the ECVET mechanism. This Memorandum formalises the zone of mutual trust between the providers, i.e. the Memorandum comprises all the providers’ information on the one hand, the set of units which are the subject of learning in one VET system and in the other, and on the other hand on the characteristics of the training modules, the programme or traineeship in which the learners will take part during the mobility experience. This Memorandum, along with other documents (as for instance those in the Europass framework) describes the expected learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competences to be acquired) and gives precisions about the effort required of the learner to achieve the learning outcomes. It secures the transparency of the individual mobility process.

iv)- The credit points are granted to the learners who effectively achieve the objectives or after proof of mastery and proficiency of the corresponding knowledge, skills and competences.

#### **2.4. Provisional calendar of the steps in the ECVET project since October 2004**

- 5 October 2004: presentation of the project to the Directors General for vocational training;
- 12-13 October 2004: European seminar on ECVET in Bonn, Germany;
- 04-05 November 2004: TWG meeting in Brussels;
- 25 November 2004: presentation of the working document to the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training;
- 14 December 2004: observations from ministers responsible for VET and explicit reference of the proposed ECVET approach in the Maastricht Communiqué, which will presumably be adopted by the Ministers of vocational training;
- First semester 2005: finalisation of conceptual work and continuing of work on typology of KSC’s, toolbox and glossary, preparing experimental phase;
- End of first semester 2005 : blueprint of ECVET system to be tested;
- Second semester 2005: test phase for ECVET (stakeholders’ consultation process and experimental period with priority for formal VET system and trans-national mobility);
- End of 2005: formal proposal from the Commission on the ECVET system framework (i.e. the principles, essential rules for implementation of ECVET);
- Year 2006: “toolbox” publication, preparation and experimental implementation of ECVET.