ENHANCED EUROPEAN COOPERATION IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

THE COPENHAGEN PROCESS

First report of the Technical Working Group

CREDIT TRANSFER IN VET
NOVEMBER 2002 – OCTOBER 2003

First Report of the Technical Working Group on
Credit Transfer in VET

October 2003

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For more information please visit the Virtual Community on Credit Transfer in VET

http://cedefop.communityzero.com/credittransfer

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The European policy agenda on transfer of qualifications and competences

Transfer of qualifications and competences is an increasingly important priority for European cooperation in the field of education and training, receiving attention in several separate but related policy contexts[i]. Relating to the objective of promoting mobility and making a reality of the right to free movement in the European Union, transfer refers to the portability of qualifications and/or competences between learning contexts (formal, non-formal etc.), levels of education and training (initial, continuing, higher etc.), and settings (national, sectoral, regional, local). In effect, the aim of policies supporting transfer of qualifications and competences is to link together different contexts, levels and settings of education and training, enabling individuals to build on and combine learning outcomes.

Some Member States have introduced, or are in the process of introducing, credit systems and qualifications frameworks, responding for example to the need within the national context to promote more flexible learning pathways, or to enhance the attractiveness of the vocational route. A key role for the European level is to provide a framework in which such initiatives can interact with each other, thus facilitating transfer across national borders. As stated in the Treaty, Community action in this field shall encourage cooperation between the Member States, supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content and organisation of their education and training systems. Community action shall, *inter alia*, facilitate access to education and training by promoting mobility of students and trainees[ii].

The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) in the field of higher education has been successfully tested and used at European level. ECTS was introduced in 1989, within the framework of Erasmus, now part of the Socrates programme. The system facilitates the recognition of periods of study abroad and thus enhances the quality and volume of student mobility in Europe. Recently ECTS is developing into an accumulation system to be implemented at institutional, regional, national and European level. This is one of the key objectives of the Bologna Declaration of June 1999.

As part of the Bologna process, the Berlin communiqué was adopted on 18-19 September 2003. In the communiqué Ministers encourage the Member States to elaborate a framework of comparable and compatible qualifications for their higher education systems, which should seek to describe qualifications in terms of workload, level, learning outcomes, competences and profile. They also undertake to elaborate an overarching framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area. Ministers call those working on qualifications frameworks to encompass the wide range of flexible learning paths, opportunities and techniques and to make appropriate use of credits. These developments must also serve as a reference point for the development of a European credit (transfer) system for VET.

1.2. The Copenhagen process

To date, European initiatives have not addressed in a concrete and systematic way the particular needs of vocational education and training (VET). In view of the strategic objectives of the Union declared at Lisbon and subsequent European Councils, the

profile of VET has been substantially raised. The Copenhagen declaration in November 2002 reflects a recognition of and growing concern for these issues among the key actors in the field.

The Copenhagen declaration was adopted by the Ministers responsible for vocational education and training (VET) of 31 European countries and the European Commission, and was endorsed by the Social Partners' representatives at European level[iii]. The declaration sets out a strategy for improving the overall performance, quality and attractiveness of VET in Europe. Its adoption followed the request from the Barcelona European Council (March 2002) for closer cooperation in the field of vocational training, in parallel to cooperation already underway in higher education within the Bologna process[iv].

The declaration gives a mandate to strengthen bottom-up and voluntary cooperation between the Commission, the Member States, the EEA-EFTA and candidate countries and the social partners. This cooperation is aimed at harnessing the rich diversity of VET systems throughout Europe; on improving the standing of vocational qualifications and competences; and on facilitating individual learning pathways, including by promoting occupational and geographic mobility.

The full participation of the Social Partners is crucial. Strategies to develop competences and qualifications are adopted by enterprises and industry sectors, often acting autonomously, for example, in order to respond to the pressures of globalisation and the changing organisation of work. The Social Partners therefore share ownership of the development of VET, and the responsibility for reaching the 2010 goals in this field.

A strong emphasis is placed in the implementation of the Copenhagen process on the need to maintain a dual perspective between the lifelong learning context on the one hand, and the specificities of VET on the other. From the outset the aim of the Copenhagen process has been to produce concrete and tangible results which can be of real and direct benefit in terms of helping the Member States (and participating countries) to develop their own policies, systems and practices within a European perspective, and in terms of providing the tools with which training providers and individuals themselves can better confront socio-economic challenges.

1.3.   The technical working group on credit transfer in VET

The declaration gives priority to:

> *"investigating how transparency, comparability, transferability and recognition of competences and/or qualifications, between different countries and at different levels, could be promoted by developing reference levels, common principles for certification, and common measures, including a credit transfer system for vocational education and training."*

The technical working group (TWG) on credit transfer in VET was set up in November 2002 to address this priority. The Commission selected experts on the basis of suggestions from relevant ministries (EU Member States, EEA-EFTA countries, candidate countries), and the Social Partners' representatives at European level (UNICE, ETUC). The TWG is chaired by the Commission and supported by CEDEFOP[v].

The mandate of the TWG is to investigate, taking account of experiences in higher education and relevant projects working in this field[vi], options for the development of a

system of credit transfer for VET at European level and, in parallel to this, to investigate the role and character of common reference levels for competences and qualifications, as well as common principles for certification. The TWG reports systematically to the Copenhagen Coordination Group (CCG) and the Advisory Committee for Vocational Training, and must present a report to the Commission outlining a basis for concrete action in this field. No deadline has so far been set for this final report. Proposals from the Commission will be submitted to the ACVT for opinion. The present report updates on progress made during the period November 2002 – October 2003.

The TWG is tackling the question of how to reach agreement on the design of such a system, following a bottom-up approach. A basic consideration is that the receivers of mobile VET learners (foreign VET organisations, employers, higher education institutions etc.) need guidance to help them decide on the recognition of whole- or part VET qualifications. The TWG is working in a medium-term perspective on strategy development, and in a short-term perspective on the design of small, practical steps, which can easily be monitored and evaluated. This dual perspective has guided the formulation of the TWG's work programme, and the proposal for a medium-term strategy accompanied by short-term, concrete steps, in section 4 of this report.

In addition to developing a credit transfer system for VET, common reference levels for VET, and common principles for certification, which are within the scope of the TWG, the Copenhagen declaration identifies several other priorities, which are relevant to promoting transfer of qualifications and competences. A mandate is also given to develop a single framework for transparency of qualifications and competences; promoting cooperation in quality assurance, including common principles and criteria for quality in VET; developing common principles for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Separate groups are dealing with these specific issues. The Commission and CEDEFOP both work actively to ensure that the work of different groups is effectively coordinated, in order to avoid duplication of effort and to facilitate cooperation between groups where necessary. The CCG has a crucial role in identifying where coordination issues arise, and giving advice on how to promote synergies, as well as issues of content.

1.4. Virtual community on credit transfer in VET

The CEDEFOP virtual communities (VCs) [http://cedefop.communityzero.com/] have been set up to support the implementation of the Copenhagen declaration. They are inter-active electronic platforms designed to facilitate communication and exchange between actors responsible for taking forward the priorities of the declaration. VCs enable members to post and share information, and take part in online discussions, thus enabling groups to work more efficiently between meetings.

The VC on credit transfer in VET complements the work of the TWG by increasing the number and range of stakeholders, including representatives of those countries which participate in the Copenhagen process but are not on the TWG. The Virtual Community on Credit Transfer has over 170 members from over 20 countries, as well as European Social Partners (ETUC, UNICE) and the European Economic & Social Committee. The VC is supported on behalf of CEDEFOP in terms of animation and moderation by the Research Centre on Higher Education and Work of the University of Kassel, Germany.

VC members can consult and comment on online documents about recent developments at European and national levels in relation to credit systems and qualifications

frameworks. The VC contains a rich documentation on surveys and outcomes of studies, national and international approaches to the questions at stake. This *information* aspect appears to be for the members the most important function of the VC.

The VC is also an interactive *communication* platform, enabling members to chat, and take part in online discussions. As a communication tool the VC is combined with different instruments such as teleconferencing. Members have the opportunity to evaluate the work of the TWG – for example the development of innovative concepts, schemes and implementation approaches – against the background of their national VET settings, and to involve or give feedback to their own colleagues via the VC. At present communication tends to be rather one-way – from the VC to the members, and from members to others, although the discussion and chat functions are becoming more widely used.

The VC also promotes the development of individual members' own computer literacy competences and a new work and learning culture. The ongoing development of the VC will depend on the continuous updating of its content and design, and the moderation and animation process that keeps the attention of the members on the work of the TWG. Obstacles to the wider usage of the VC include the technical requirements for accessing the VC, language, and the time needed to consult, comment upon and contribute to the VC.

2. A EUROPEAN CREDIT SYSTEM FOR VET: CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

A main focus of the work of the TWG has been on developing the conceptual basis for a European credit system for VET (ECVET). Firstly, in section 2.1, the purpose of ECVET is defined, on the basis of stakeholder requirements. Secondly, section 2.2 gives an overview of how credit systems operate in terms of their main components and characteristics. Here an effort has been made to explain the operational logic of credit systems in VET, in a way which is independent of any particular national context. The reason for this is to determine the main areas of commonality between the diverse range of credit systems in Europe, and thus provide a basis for linking them together via ECVET. A particular challenge is posed by the fact that the same terms and concepts are often used very differently in national systems. These semantic differences reflect important differences in systems, structures and cultural approaches. The formulation of a glossary of agreed terms for ECVET should therefore be a priority for the TWG in the next phase of its work. In this report explanations and tentative definitions are given where possible, as a basis for this glossary work, and to clarify the sense in which they are being used by the TWG.

Following on from the general analysis of credit systems a number of key issues for the development of ECVET arise, which are set out according to thematic topic in section 2.3. The presentation of these key issues reflects the current state of play in the TWG, in terms of preliminary conclusions as well as open questions, which in turn point to elements of a future work programme. Finally, and bearing in mind the need to propose practical and experimental steps forward in parallel to this important conceptual work, section 2.4 presents a first outline for an operational scheme for ECVET. This scheme is intended to focus the work of the TWG on implementation, and provide the basis for a practical tool that can be used in promoting credit transfer in VET between cooperation partners.

A study has been launched by CEDEFOP (September 2003) in order to provide an assessment, drawing from experience made at all levels, and relevant mapping exercises, of how far and under which conditions existing approaches may be relevant to the development of a European Credit System for VET (ECVET), for example by enabling and increasing use of credits and credit systems within international and European mobility action programmes. Close links are being ensured between this study and the ongoing conceptual work of the TWG.

2.1. The purpose of ECVET

The TWG is aiming at developing a European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) that should offer a flexible architecture to promote mobility between various national VET systems throughout Europe for students, trainees and adult learners in VET programmes, apprenticeships and work experience schemes. The purpose and functions of ECVET are defined from a bottom-up perspective, i.e. according to the needs of the stakeholders.

A credit system in VET should fulfil the following functions:

➢ Facilitating the transfer of learning outputs/outcomes within and between various national VET systems and between formal, non-formal and informal VET;

➢ Facilitating the accumulation of training/education/learning activities (modules), or qualification units/programmes towards a partial or a complete qualification, by contributing to the definition, assessment and certification of parts;

➢ Facilitating the transparency of learning processes and outcomes;

➢ Facilitating mobility within training/education/learning processes and professional mobility by improving the description of complete qualifications.

Mobility should always be understood as having two dimensions, i.e. the acquisition of a higher level of professional proficiency in a specific vocational field (vertical dimension), and the widening of the scope of one's proficiency through different regions, cultures, educational provisions and professional practices (horizontal dimension). Furthermore, it is important to take into consideration, in the perspective of lifelong learning, mobility and permeability between the formal VET systems, higher education institutions and individuals' work and life experience (non-formal learning). Central elements for the development of ECVET, therefore, are mutual trust, flexibility in accepting different methods and pathways of learning, and a clear definition of (outcome-based) knowledge, skills and competences.

There are several different approaches to credits and credit transfer in VET throughout Europe. Drawing from these it can be ascertained that credit systems support mobility by enabling the accumulation and transfer of learning results and competences acquired through various learning activities and pathways, by promoting transparency of, and comparability between, education and training programmes, curricula and systems. They provide a way of measuring and comparing learning achievements (from a course, training or work experience) and transferring them from one institution/pathway to another.

The TWG has defined the purpose of ECVET from the perspective of the various target groups and stakeholders. Target groups and stakeholders can be split between those who

directly benefit from ECVET, and those who are involved in defining and delivering qualifications, competences, or courses. Individuals are at the centre of a credit system for VET. In the first instance this means young people, generally within the school or initial training systems, who would benefit from a training period abroad. Participants in upper secondary school and initial training programmes should be given priority within an initial experimentation stage for ECVET. The institutions enabling the mobility experience for learners are the next most directly concerned. The VET providers (including teachers, workplace instructors) are central to the system as they organise, offer and assess the modules. The development of mutual trust (in reference levels, units or modules and certification etc.) between institutions participating in a mobility experience is a crucial variable.

Where the individual wishing to undertake a mobility experience is an apprentice or an employee, enterprises are also primary stakeholders. Consequently, the social partners have a strong interest in the development of ECVET, and themselves address questions of transfer within their own strategies for competence and qualifications development. Alongside these actors, the State (at different levels: local, regional and national) and European Union Institutions or Community bodies, as developers of political and practical frameworks for education and training, are also regarded as important stakeholders. Finally, other actors may be involved in a lifelong learning perspective such as HE institutions, those outside formal systems or indeed outside the labour market, the broader scientific community and non-governmental organisations, associations etc.

2.2.   The logic of the credit system in VET

The TWG is following a pragmatic and operational approach for the development of ECVET. Its reflections on credits in VET take into account the development of credits in higher education (HE) and the parallel work of other relevant groups dealing for example with the issues of transparency, quality and the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

In HE, ECTS credits are values allocated to course units or modules to describe the student workload required to complete these courses or parts of courses. They reflect the quantity of work each course unit requires in relation to the total quantity of work necessary to complete a full year of academic study at the institution (e.g. lectures, practical work, seminars, tutorials, fieldwork, private study – in home or library – and examinations or other activities to be assessed).

Within VET, the key components of a credit transfer system have been identified as units, modules and curricula. Unit is intended to mean the elementary (or smallest) part of a curriculum, and is outcome-oriented; module is understood to mean the elementary (or smallest) part of a learning pathway, and is process-oriented; curriculum refers - for the purposes of the present report - to process, content and outcome. At this stage of the discussion the relationship between these three elements can be illustrated as set out in chart 1.

Chart 1: Draft scheme illustrating the relationships between the basic components of a credit system in VET
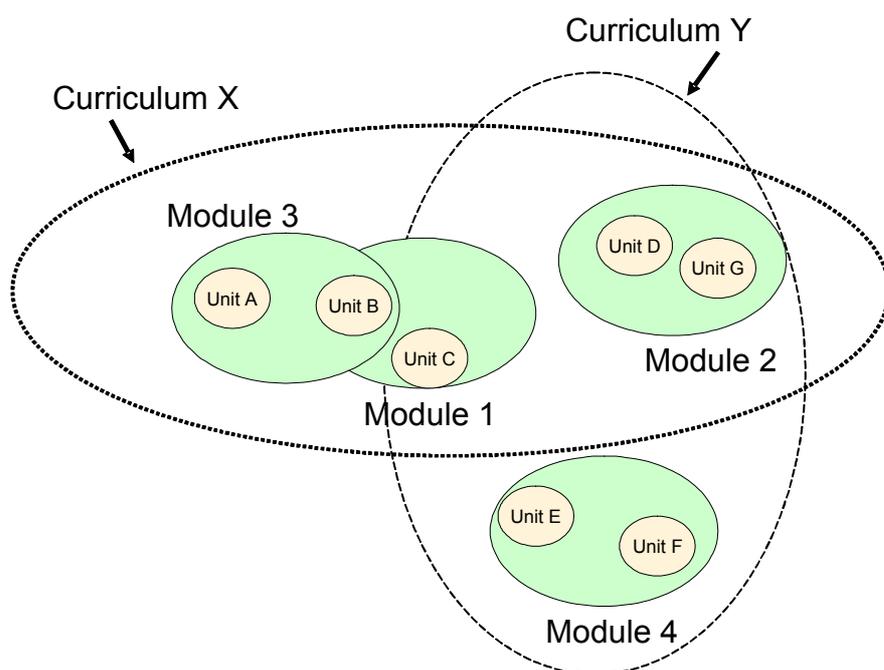
The development of ECVET is thus located at the crossroad of four operational logics which have been identified as follows:

(1)   A curriculum focused on outcomes/outputs combining units;

(2)   A process or organisational logic of a learning pathway based on modules;

(3)   A measurement logic (giving a value to units and learning pathways by attributing credits);

(4)   An institutional recognition logic (by certification procedures).

Details of those four logics are still to be worked out, especially as regards the definition of qualification, the variety of learning activities and the assessment/evaluation schemes. The following chart presents a systematic overview of the issues tackled so far by the TWG in an operational perspective.

Chart 2: Operational typology for the emerging ECVET, illustrating how units, modules, and credits combine to define a qualification.

		A	B	C	D
1	Logic	Learning outputs / outcomes	Organisation of the learning pathway / process	Valuing part or the full learning pathway	Institutional recognition
2	Central terms	Units	Module	Credits	Certification / qualification
3	Tentative definition	Elementary / smallest part of a curriculum	Elementary / smallest part of a learning pathway	European currency, common to all ECVET partners that can give information about the value of -a unit or set of units -a module or set of modules -a part or full qualification	Device or system under the responsibility of an accredited institution aiming at the official recognition of a part or total qualification
4	Characteristics	Units can be characterised by -reference level -a coherent set of knowledge, competences, capabilities, skills -a set of activities, tasks linked to a qualification -evaluation modalities -validation modalities	Modules can be characterised: -as part of a syllabus -by type of module (practical, work based, theoretical, mixed etc.) -by training or learning objectives, interest -by duration of the training that can be varied -by delivery mode	Credits have -A nominal value a priori fixed by the provider -an exchange value based on concrete and comparable parameters -a use value guaranteed by arranged transfer procedures	Certification systems are characterised by: -legal framework -procedure -Measures to guarantee the quality of the device/system.
5	Operational aspects	Units can be achieved by formal, non-formal or informal learning activities or a combination of these learning activities	Modules may be autonomous but belong to a coherent structure (study programme for instance.)	Credit transfer procedures between VET systems are based on principles of mutual trust and mutual recognition -of the quality of a single unit or a certain number of units or modules -of certification procedures	Certification occurs: -either after an evaluation procedure of prior learning experiences (via exam, tests, observation at workplace) and after a validation procedure (comparison between evaluation results and reference framework) -or: after an assessment of attendance to a study programme, modules, etc.
6	Link to the next step	Units can be joined and added together. They are conceived to build part or the totality of a qualification on the basis of a coherent combination	Modules may be accumulated in order to build the optimum pathway for the learner aiming at a qualification	Credit accumulation conducted to the maximum corresponds to a full learning pathway in a learning field or for a given qualification	As certification applies to units (partial certification), a full certification can be obtained by addition of partial certifications
7	Potentials	Each unit or number of units can -be certified -be awarded credits -lead to exemption from a module	Each module and sum of modules can -lead to the acquisition of a number of units -be certified -be awarded credits	Credit accumulation can lead to recognition by: -Exemption from units -exemption from modules -certification of a part or full qualification -possibility to bridge two study programmes	Each partial or full certification can lead to: -the award of credits -exemption from modules -exemption from units

Central to the credit transfer system is the definition of the characteristics of credits in terms of:

➢ Determining units which will be assessed;

➢ Determining the value of these units by allocating a number of credits;

➢ Determining what type of process or what type of output equals one credit;

➢ Determining the rules for credit accumulation.

For the time being, the work of the TWG allows to state the following preliminary results:

➢ Credits can be considered first as a measurement allocated to qualification units and/or modules and/or to part or full qualifications. More specifically credit is an instrument for quantitative measurement. Credit transfer systems, however, do not necessarily determine *qualitative equivalence* in themselves. Additional efforts are necessary e.g. to build mutual trust (see also 2.3.1. below). Credits in VET could be defined and awarded according, for example to type/areas of learning (theoretical, practical, transversal/basic skills, general education); learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, competences); learning location (in class, in apprenticeship, in an enterprise, at home); learning context (formal/non-formal/informal); learning duration (years, months, semesters). It is important, whatever the approach, that the objectives of provisions are also defined in terms of (outcome based) acquired competences. The measurement basis is part of the on-going discussion among the TWG members. The TWG is examining different bases for measurement using the concepts of notional learning time, of learning density, of workload, or a balance of these concepts (see also 2.3.2. below).

➢ Secondly, credits can be considered as a basis for certification of (part) qualifications, or whole qualifications, linked to corresponding reference levels and sub-levels which should as far as possible be organised within a coherent qualifications framework (see section 3 below). When defining the value of credits it is important to take into account the marks allocated to the student, the notional learning time as well as the methods for valuing work-based learning activities and prior learning experiences within the VET courses/programmes. It is also important to mirror these elements against the expected knowledge, skills and competences required for a specific qualification profile.

2.3. Key issues for the development of ECVET

Bearing in mind the complexity of the task of developing and implementing a credit transfer system for VET, the TWG has focused during the first phase of its work on four key issues for the development of an infrastructure for ECVET. Hereafter some of the preliminary conclusions and open questions are presented around four main topics: 1) The definition of qualification and zones of mutual trust, 2) Unitisation/Modularisation, 3) Assessment and 4) Certification.

2.3.1. *The definition of qualification and zones of mutual trust*

According to one approach, qualification can be considered as a sum of courses made up of units and modules and consequently a certain number of credits. Another approach

sees qualification or vocational programmes as the result of the student learning activities which are based on modules, corresponding to areas and competences of working life. A third group sees qualifications as certificates or diplomas or other evidence linked to the delivery and assessment of training received. The discussion on qualifications is closely linked to the on-going work on qualification frameworks as presented below (see also section 3).

Qualifications systems include all activities that result in the delivery or recognition of all types of learning. These systems include legal frameworks, curricula, institutional arrangements, quality assurance processes, assessment and awarding processes, skills recognition and other mechanisms that may refer to the labour market and/or education and training.

A qualifications framework is an instrument for the classification and definition of qualifications according to a set of criteria for levels of learning and/or skills. This set of criteria may be implicit in the qualifications descriptors themselves or made explicit in the form of a set of levels descriptors. The scope of frameworks may be comprehensive of all learning achievements and pathways, or may be confined to a particular sector or area, e.g. higher education, initial education or adult education and continuing training. Some frameworks may be based in legislation whereas others are based on consensus with links to regulations. All qualifications frameworks, however, establish a basis for information on quality, accessibility, linkages and public or labour market recognition of qualifications within a country and internationally[vii].

One central element within the development of ECVET is the establishment of trust between (the stakeholders of) different national VET systems. The TWG is working on with the notion of 'zones of mutual trust' or 'qualitative zones' which determine the acceptance of differences between national qualification systems at different levels. These zones have a vertical (between levels) and a horizontal (between study programmes) dimension as described in more detail below.

2.3.2. Assessment

The introduction of a credit system should be facilitated by the structuring of an educational course/qualification programme in a large number of modules which can be assessed individually, whereby the overall assessment of a partial or full qualification profile is cumulative. Even within a modularised system, specific ways of ascribing value to training acquired abroad are necessary, because modules are related to national or regional training contexts and specific legal frameworks.

Individual parts (units, modules etc.) are viewed as equivalent and can be substituted or accumulated only within so-called 'qualitative zones' in which they are interpreted as being equivalent (see 2.3.1 above). Improving quantitative accounting of achievement is therefore only one element likely to enable transfer. The wider (and fewer) the qualitative zones, the higher the chances are of recognition of prior learning achievements or of the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning. The output/outcome of the individual learning process is formulated in terms of vocational competences. This requires a specific focus on the development of competence assessment procedures. Accumulation within horizontal zones (or in other words, transfer of competences between study programmes) depends on the decision of the receiving institution. These zones therefore operate according to networks of institutions determining acceptance.

'Notional learning time' and 'density of learning' are important concepts relating to assessment. One of the challenges is to come to a common understanding of notional learning time. It is generally agreed that duration by the provider is too limiting as a basis for defining credit allocation and that the demand on the learner, similar to the workload in HE, should be included. This should be moderated by a professional judgement of experts in relation to the relevant occupational standards. The representation by time is therefore a notional construct of size for the 'average' candidate/learner.

Arriving at such a common understanding also relies on being able to identify where differences in learning density occur, and where the measurement of density occurs. The acceptance of differing densities of learning (make it possible to bridge formal and non-formal learning) is a qualitative (trust) issue, which is resolved in the process of transfer, but not as part of the credit system per se. This probably needs to be resolved at the macro-level, for example by linking the debate to learning outcomes, the development of competences assessment methods and occupational profiles. However, differences must be respected and equivalently valued.

If this issue cannot be resolved in VET, it would be necessary to maintain different classes of learning (formal/non-formal/informal). The model for assessing has an influence on the flexibility of the system. If there were a broad model for assessment, valid changes to assessment approaches and instruments could still be accommodated. Nevertheless further clarity is needed on the assessment procedures and grading systems.

2.3.3. Unitisation and modularisation

Credits are fundamental for the accumulation of knowledge and competences. Unitisation is the process of breaking down a qualification into small units, and study programmes, courses or curricula as presented in chart 1 (see 2.2 above). Modules can be constructed out of a set of units. Units can be tied together into modules. This process increases the flexibility of the VET system and supports mobility and permeability between national systems. The value of a module expressed in credits can vary between the national VET systems. Modularisation is being developed or has been implemented in various European countries (across individual countries in the UK, Belgium, Finland, Hungary, Spain etc.). A main difficulty in implementing a modularised approach in many countries has been the need for coordination and collaboration between the stakeholders and training providers involved. The issue of quality control is also a crucial consideration, for example when it comes to ensuring that modularised skill profiles can be accepted on the labour market.

A potential disadvantage of modularisation is the increased load of learner assessment and examination, which may result in an 'over-crowding' of assessment exercises. This risk is related to the size of the modules. The approach in HE is to pull together small units into modules whereas, for instance, in-company training calls for the assessment of larger units. Experiences in HE, particularly in relation to promoting mobility, have shown that a range of different sized modules should be considered, depending on the length of the programme in question.

Besides supporting lifelong learning by offering a single structure from VET to HE, modularisation allows for:

➢ *flexibility* – in terms of a higher responsiveness to the changes in skills needs (via the definition of new units within a module for instance); full-time, part-time and

special VET study programmes as well as different teaching/learning methods; better co-ordination and integration of school-based and enterprise-based learning;

➢ *transparency and permeability* – in that the educational provision is based on modules, which can be accumulated within horizontal, vertical and geographical mobility processes;

➢ *motivation* – learners are stimulated through successful experiences i.e. certification of part achievements during the learning career.

Modular systems substantially facilitate the validation of learning and the identification and allocation of credits for learning achievements in terms of competences. It should also be possible to allocate credit points to on-the-job or company-based training that is related to modules or to a qualification programme, which are in turn linked to occupational profiles.

The extent of the modularisation process and the variety of possible modules are important considerations. One can distinguish between two kinds of modularisation: 'low-key' modularisation with no flexibility in terms of sequence and substance, and 'deluxe' modularisation, which does have such flexibility. There is also a level dimension or a 'sequence' of modules that should be considered, for example basic, applied and conceptual. In some national schemes there are elementary and further VET modules. Different kinds of modules include core general modules, core occupation specific modules, task specific modules or trans-sectoral modules that can be achieved through different routes. Although modularisation is not a pre-requisite to developing credit systems at national or at European levels, credit systems can more easily be applied with modularised programmes, curricula and courses.

2.3.4. Certification

The TWG has started to work on the issue of certification with the aim of addressing its mandate to develop common principles for certification. The initial approach consists in defining the scope of the work of the TWG, particularly taking into account the achievements of parallel working groups, e.g. the Technical Working Groups on Transparency and on Quality and the former Forum on Quality of VET. A main issue is the link between the development of a credit transfer system for VET and certification procedures and patterns. Another aspect is the acceptance of the certification procedures and results by the stakeholder which is linked to the issue of mutual trust.

Assessment and certification should be linked to learning outcomes with a view to bridging formal and non-formal learning, bearing in mind that there is no automatic link between the training system and the amount of work. If the aim is to promote mobility of students and trainees between formal VET systems, then a focus on workload and formal learning outcomes is desirable.

2.4.   Outline of an operational scheme for ECVET

To test the conceptual basis for ECVET, and to facilitate a practical and experimental approach, the TWG has developed a first outline for a practical 'operational scheme for ECVET', based on different national approaches towards credit systems and credit transfer. *This scheme is work in progress*. It represents the individual learning pathway in terms of the interactions between the accumulation of credits (y axis), the reference levels (x axis, provisionally based on the ISCED levels) and the measurement of the

student's learning activities (z axis). The operational scheme relates primarily to the formal VET systems, while leaving open the possibility to incorporate at a later stage learning acquired outside these formal systems, through to continuing training and work-based learning.

The scheme is intended to be the basis of a tool, for use by cooperation or project partners, to facilitate the transfer of credits from one national system to another, for example by making it possible to chart the point at which a foreign student should enter the system. The scheme has been developed in order to be able to accommodate different national curricula (and not to reform them). The operational scheme relates to column 3 ('valuing the learning pathway') of the operational typology given in section 2.2 (see chart 2). The relationship between the operational scheme and the typology should be further explored during the next phase of work.

Chart 3: Operational scheme for ECVET
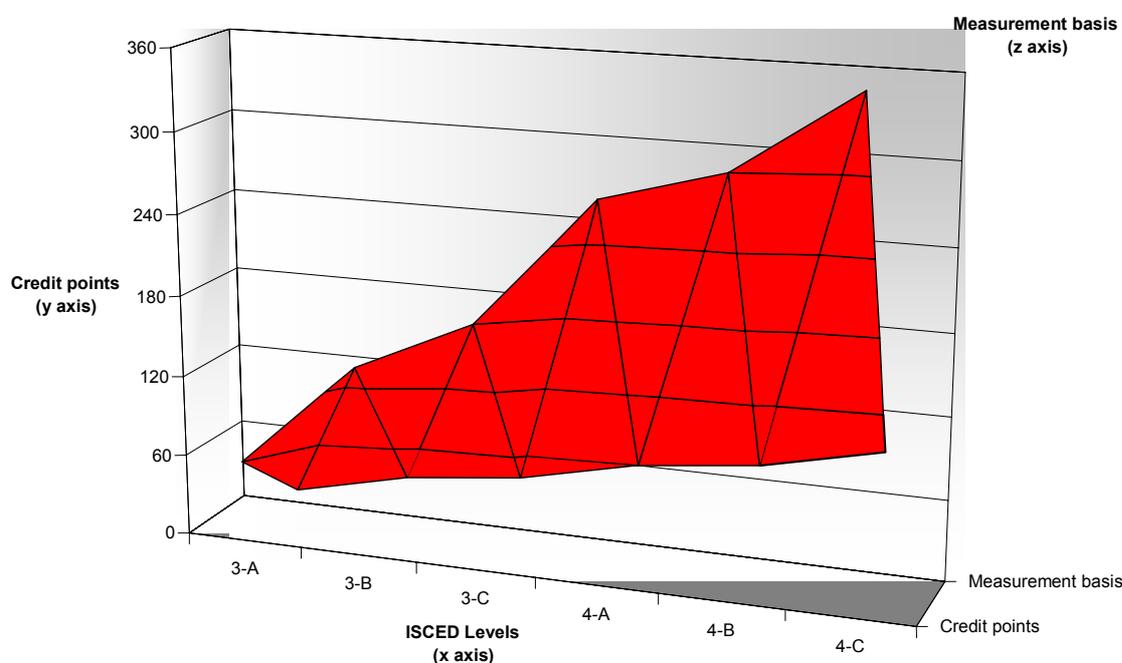
In this graphic, a VET learner starts at level 3-A, he accumulates credits through his studying. Once a certain amount of credit is accumulated he could negotiate entry into the next level and to continue with his learning path. A learner entering the VET system from another national educational/working background would be able to come into the system after an assessment of his prior learning/working activities.

The numbers on the y and z axis are fictitious. ISCED levels 3 and 4 come after the compulsory education phase. According to the ISCED list these levels are subdivided into A, B and C. It is, of course, in reality, not compulsory to have a linear development and there is a qualitative and quantitative leap between the ISCED levels 3 and 4.

Transfer can occur through exemption from courses or adaptation/modulation of the duration of the study programme; through definition of a preliminary necessary level at which to integrate a study programme; or through recognition of equivalence with whole or part of a qualification. This perspective is that of a *vertical transfer* of credits. There should also be the possibility to allow for a *horizontal transfer* of credits. The discussion is going on within the TWG to define the measurement basis. Some preliminary discussions allow to identify both time and workload – noting that workload includes aspects of level (or in reality, intra-level) as constitutive elements of this measurement basis. Further elements could be introduced linked to a weighting between different learning modi, acquired competences etc. (see also 2.3.2 above).

3. **DEVELOPING COMMON REFERENCE LEVELS / QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORKS FOR VET: CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS**

The TWG has focused on developing new approaches to qualifications frameworks at both national and European level. National systems vary according to the criteria by which qualifications levels are defined, and the extent to which qualifications frameworks are coherent and comprehensive. Few Member States have so far introduced single frameworks combining initial, further and higher education as well as lifelong learning[viii]. Frameworks tend to be adapted to the specificities of national situations, and are linked to patterns of education, training and lifelong learning[ix].

There are four international classifications developed for statistical or recognition/comparability purposes (EU-levels from 1985, ISCO from 1988, ISCED from 1997 and EU-levels from the 2002 draft directive on professional recognition) each having different functions, whilst only ISCO and ISCED are in use and widely recognised.

Following the Bologna process a wide consensus has developed concerning levels or degree structures within higher education (bachelor, masters and doctorate degrees). A comparable consensus in the field of VET will provide a crucial reference at national and European levels and provide an important step forwards in promoting transparency, comparability, transferability and recognition in VET. In this context, the TWG considers that the development of common reference levels / qualifications frameworks for VET is a necessary condition for enabling the sustainable development of credit (transfer) systems both at national and European or international level, and for supporting their introduction in those environments where they do not yet exist (for example in the new Member States).

A European framework however, cannot mirror all different regional, sectoral or occupation-specific situations. A European qualifications framework must be understood as a 'meta-framework', which avoids too much detail. The aim of such a meta-framework must be to satisfy the need develop so-called 'zones of mutual trust' (see 2.3. above).

3.1. **Analysis of different approaches and exchange of experience**

The TWG, informed by previous and current work from CEDEFOP, OECD and ILO, as well as on a review by the Irish National Qualifications Authority on qualification systems and frameworks[x], has identified the following key issues:

➢ How may current and forthcoming national qualification frameworks be made more compatible and coherent with one another?

➢ What kind of typologies and classifications are needed of academic subjects, knowledge, skills and competences, as well as of (generic) skill or job profiles and more detailed job roles or levels?

➢ Should qualification systems and frameworks from the outset refer to credits (along the lines, for example, being implemented in Ireland, Scotland and Wales)? If so, should a European 'credits and qualifications meta-framework' be envisaged?

➢ How many levels should be defined within such a meta-framework?

➢ What other zones of mutual trust can contribute to mobility and increased cooperation within VET on the one hand, and between VET and the world of work on the other?

It was generally agreed that an additional effort is needed to clarify the issues and consult stakeholders and experts on possible approaches and solutions. A study was therefore launched in September 2003 to advise the TWG on how to cope with this question of further developing qualification frameworks throughout Europe, as well as to identify how to develop other zones mutual trust. This study will draw on experiences in a number of countries and at international/European level. Issues papers will be presented and a seminar will take place as part of the process of consulting stakeholders. Clear and realistic recommendations will be presented in Spring 2004. Close links will also be ensured with the parallel study on credit systems mentioned in section 2.

3.2. Developing common reference levels/qualification frameworks for VET

The TWG considers that existing international classifications such as ISCED and ISCO do not adequately reflect the amount and level of knowledge, skills and competences acquired during a VET programme, through work experience and/or on-the-job learning. These classifications should be further refined and complemented in terms of acquired knowledge, skills and competences, differentiated according to level.

It is therefore necessary to work towards a coherent European credits and qualifications meta-framework, specified according to a typology of knowledge, skills/tasks and competences[xi]. The proposed typology could be based on existing classifications and glossaries, and would need to be flexible and evolutionary. The basic characteristics of the meta-framework ought to be defined as a set of common principles, guiding its development over the medium- and long-term[xii].

A coherent and transparent classification could be developed and applied in a flexible way in Member States and regions or sectors or even for specific occupations and professions. It could be continuously updated and adapted to meet new needs and challenges. The meta-framework would take into account both quantitative and qualitative elements. It would facilitate placement and guidance efforts within national and European labour offices; the setting of clear targets and respective policy priorities for investment in education and training; as well as promoting economic (regional and local) support structures.

Such an approach, once agreed, would however demand significant medium- and longer-term engagement: it demands significant investment not only in terms of initial research

and consultancy, but also in terms of setting up arrangements for continuously observing job and skills developments and adapting the typologies as and when needed. Enhanced institutional cooperation at European level would be necessary in order to develop such arrangements.

As a first step, a European network of appropriate bodies such as qualification authorities or research bodies, or an appropriate existing network, could have the objective of promoting mutual learning and exchange around the specific issue of the development of a typology of knowledge, skills and competences. Mutual learning and exchange could possibly be combined with peer review. The network could eventually take on the functions of some kind of European 'learning and skills observatory'. Close cooperation between the European Commission (notably DGs EAC, ENTR and EMPL), Eurostat, CEDEFOP and ETF would also be important in such an endeavour.

4. A STRATEGY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ECVET

The purpose of ECVET is to combine units and / or modules acquired within different national and/or sectoral contexts. The development of ECVET must allow for the flexible assessment of learning outcomes. Flexibility is linked to the issues of validation, certification and assessment.

> **The TWG recommends the development, by 2010, of a coherent European credits and qualifications meta-framework, specified according to a 'typology' of knowledge, skills/tasks and competences, in order to facilitate the assessment and recognition of learning outcomes across national and sectoral borders, and contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon goals. The development of such a framework at European level would be the cornerstone of a European area of lifelong learning and a true European labour market. This should now be set as a key objective for European cooperation in education and training.**

The fixing at the highest political level of such an objective would provide a common rationale for ongoing parallel developments in the fields of vocational education and training and higher education, in relation to the development of credit transfer and qualifications frameworks at European level. Increased cooperation and synergy between the Copenhagen and Bologna processes within the strategic framework of the Education and Training 2010 work programme (the Objectives process) is essential if coherent arrangements are to be developed in this field.

The TWG stresses nonetheless that the specificities of each field must be addressed in a systematic way. The development of ECVET is still in its early stages. A clear vision of the medium term aim must be accompanied by a coherent strategy of how to get there. The following steps are proposed as a means of taking forward the development and implementation of ECVET.

(1)   **Continue to build up the conceptual basis of ECVET.** The TWG on credit transfer in VET should deepen the exchange of experience and best practice, as well as the analysis and assessment of previous experiences (for example under national or international programmes and pilot projects). The TWG should aim to build consensus around such issues as zones of trust, the links between credits and outcome, the definition of levels and their permeability. The development of a shared terminology is an essential part of this work. In accomplishing this work

the group must build appropriate synergies with other groups set up under the Copenhagen process, such as those on transparency, quality, non-formal learning and guidance. The virtual communities will be an essential tool for achieving this aim.

(2) **Develop a set of principles**. The development of a coherent European credit and qualifications framework must be guided by a set of principles, in order to support the acceptance and trust of such a framework in participating countries. Such a set of principles should be based on best practice and could guide the development of credit systems and qualifications frameworks at national, sectoral and European levels, by specifying, for example, basic characteristics, purpose and benefits. This would in turn contribute to a better mutual understanding of different national qualification systems.

(3) **Test (in parallel) different approaches to credit transfer in initial (ISCED levels 3 and 4) VET, including apprenticeships, with the aim of promoting transnational mobility**. Drawing on the findings and proposals of the TWG, as well as the experiences of relevant projects[xiii] and best practices in this field, such approaches should focus on areas where a particular demand for mobility and / or credit transfer is identified.

An experimental phase should be supported by the Leonardo da Vinci programme. **Credit transfer in VET should be prioritised under the next call for proposals (2005-6).** Pilot projects could in particular focus on the **testing and further development of the operational scheme for ECVET.** Priority should also be given to the further definition and testing of credits for VET at European level, particularly taking into account the key issues and concepts set out in this report.

(4) **Promote enhanced institutional cooperation at European level,** with the objective of initiating a systematic exchange of experience regarding credit systems and qualifications frameworks, and in order to prepare the development of a European typology of knowledge, skills and competences, within a suitable structure of levels for VET. Such cooperation could be realised through the networking of appropriate bodies such as qualifications authorities / research and development agencies, or through existing networks. Such a network should be moderated at European level and could possibly be combined with peer review arrangements in order to further promote mutual trust and learning. The Social Partners should also be involved. Participation in the network would be on a voluntary basis. Synergy must be ensured with the proposed network of quality assurance bodies as part of the cooperation framework for quality assurance in VET[xiv].

The setting up of transnational networks in this field can be supported by the Community Education and Training programmes. A first pilot could be launched, for example via the Joint Actions, between those countries most interested in taking part, in close cooperation with the Commission, CEDEFOP and ETF.

(5) Based on the findings of the TWG, the draft stocktaking report of the Copenhagen Coordination Group calls on Member States and participating countries, in cooperation with the social partners:

to unitise VET qualifications and modularise VET programmes, curricula and courses, and to further develop or establish national qualifications frameworks in accordance with labour market needs and the demand for lifelong learning[xv].

The TWG considers that this is a crucial recommendation to be taken forward at the national level with a view to promoting individualised learning pathways, enhancing the attractiveness of VET, and enabling the development of ECVET.

5. CONCLUSION

The mandate of the Copenhagen declaration to promote transparency, comparability, transferability and recognition of competences and/or qualifications, between different countries and at different levels, must be approached in a voluntary, bottom-up, and step-by-step way, with a strong emphasis on quality assurance and the promotion of mutual trust. The continued inclusion of the social partners in the development of ECVET is essential if its creation and implementation is to be acceptable to all users - individuals and enterprises included.

A single European credit system for VET is a medium-term aim, but in the short-term small steps can be taken, and practical solutions can be tested in different contexts. The main achievements of the TWG so far are:

➢ A systematic exchange of information, experience and good practice, enabling a better mutual understanding of credit (transfer) systems and qualifications systems and frameworks at national and international level.

➢ The identification of key concepts and issues at stake in the development of ECVET. The experience of mutual learning and exchange around these issues and concepts has contributed to the development of transparency and mutual trust in VET, and the foundation of a conceptual basis for ECVET.

➢ The formulation of a strategy for the development and implementation of ECVET comprising both medium-term goals and short term practical steps, which can easily be monitored and evaluated.

➢ The initiation of further research and consultation of stakeholders around the key issues at stake. The results of the studies launched recently by CEDEFOP[xvi], building on the work and further advice of the TWG, will provide a main context for further developing, refining and testing the strategy for ECVET.

A strong emphasis is now needed in the Copenhagen process on fostering political commitment and action, in order to ensure a sustainable follow-up and the further development of ECVET at national and European level. The proposed strategy for developing and implementing ECVET both at national and European levels should now be discussed in relevant fora, notably the ACVT, CCG and DGVT, with a view to agreeing priorities for a work programme of the TWG for 2004.

ANNEX I

Declaration of the European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training, and the European Commission,

convened in Copenhagen on 29 and 30 November 2002,

on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training

"The Copenhagen Declaration"

Over the years co-operation at European level within education and training has come to play a decisive role in creating the future European society.

Economic and social developments in Europe over the last decade have increasingly underlined the need for a European dimension to education and training. Furthermore, the transition towards a knowledge based economy capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion brings new challenges to the development of human resources.

The enlargement of the European Union adds a new dimension and a number of challenges, opportunities and requirements to the work in the field of education and training. It is particularly important that acceding member states should be integrated as partners in future cooperation on education and training initiatives at European level from the very beginning.

The successive development of the European education and training programmes has been a key factor for improving cooperation at European level.

The Bologna declaration on higher education in June 1999 marked the introduction of a new enhanced European cooperation in this area.

The Lisbon European Council in March 2000 recognised the important role of education as an integral part of economic and social policies, as an instrument for strengthening Europe's competitive power worldwide, and as a guarantee for ensuring the cohesion of our societies and the full development of its citizens. The European Council set the strategic objective for the European Union to become the world's most dynamic knowledge-based economy. The development of high quality vocational education and training is a crucial and integral part of this strategy, notably in terms of promoting social inclusion, cohesion, mobility, employability and competitiveness.

The report on the 'Concrete Future Objectives of Education and Training Systems', endorsed by the Stockholm European Council in March 2001, identified new areas for joint actions at European level in order to achieve the goals set at the Lisbon European Council. These areas are based on the three strategic objectives of the report; i.e. improving the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems in the European Union, facilitating access for all to education and training systems, and opening up education and training systems to the wider world.

In Barcelona, in March 2002 the European Council endorsed the Work Programme on the follow-up of the Objectives Report calling for European education and training to

become a world quality reference by 2010. Furthermore, it called for further action to introduce instruments to ensure the transparency of diplomas and qualifications, including promoting action similar to the Bologna-process, but adapted to the field of vocational education and training.

In response to the Barcelona mandate, the Council of the European Union (Education, Youth and Culture) adopted on 12 November 2002 a Resolution on enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training. This resolution invites the Member States, and the Commission, within the framework of their responsibilities, to involve the candidate countries and the EFTA-EEA countries, as well as the social partners, in promoting an increased cooperation in vocational education and training.

Strategies for lifelong learning and mobility are essential to promote employability, active citizenship, social inclusion and personal development[1]. Developing a knowledge based Europe and ensuring that the European labour market is open to all is a major challenge to the vocational educational and training systems in Europe and to all actors involved. The same is true of the need for these systems to continuously adapt to new developments and changing demands of society. An enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training will be an important contribution towards ensuring a successful enlargement of the European Union and fulfilling the objectives identified by the European Council in Lisbon. Cedefop and the European Training Foundation are important bodies for supporting this cooperation.

The vital role of the social partners in the socio-economic development is reflected both in the context of the European social dialogue and the European Social Partners framework of actions for the lifelong development of competences and qualifications, agreed in March 2002. The social partners play an indispensable role in the development, validation and recognition of vocational competences and qualifications at all levels and are partners in the promotion of an enhanced cooperation in this area.

The following main priorities will be pursued through enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training: [2]

On the basis of these priorities we aim to increase voluntary cooperation in vocational education and training, in order to promote mutual trust, transparency and recognition of competences and qualifications, and thereby establishing a basis for increasing mobility and facilitating access to lifelong learning.

European dimension

- Strengthening the European dimension in vocational education and training with the aim of improving closer cooperation in order to facilitate and promote mobility and the development of inter-institutional cooperation, partnerships and other transnational initiatives, all in order to raise the profile of the European education and training area in an international context so that Europe will be recognised as a world-wide reference for learners.

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[1] Priorities identified in the Resolution on lifelong learning adopted by the Council of the European Union (Education and Youth) on 27 June 2002

[2] Priorities identified in the Resolution on the promotion of enhanced European co-operation on vocational education and training approved by the Council of the European Union (Education, Youth and Culture) on 12 November 2002

Transparency, information and guidance

- Increasing transparency in vocational education and training through the implementation and rationalization of information tools and networks, including the integration of existing instruments such as the European CV, certificate and diploma supplements, the Common European framework of reference for languages and the EUROPASS into one single framework.

- Strengthening policies, systems and practices that support information, guidance and counselling in the Member States, at all levels of education, training and employment, particularly on issues concerning access to learning, vocational education and training, and the transferability and recognition of competences and qualifications, in order to support occupational and geographical mobility of citizens in Europe.

Recognition of competences and qualifications

- Investigating how transparency, comparability, transferability and recognition of competences and/or qualifications, between different countries and at different levels, could be promoted by developing reference levels, common principles for certification, and common measures, including a credit transfer system for vocational education and training

- Increasing support to the development of competences and qualifications at sectoral level, by reinforcing cooperation and co-ordination especially involving the social partners. Several initiatives on a Community, bilateral and multilateral basis, including those already identified in various sectors aiming at mutually recognised qualifications, illustrate this approach.

- Developing a set of common principles regarding validation of non-formal and informal learning with the aim of ensuring greater compatibility between approaches in different countries and at different levels.

Quality assurance

- Promoting cooperation in quality assurance with particular focus on exchange of models and methods, as well as common criteria and principles for quality in vocational education and training.

- Giving attention to the learning needs of teachers and trainers within all forms of vocational education and training.

The following principles will underpin enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training:

- Cooperation should be based on the target of 2010, set by the European Council in accordance with the detailed work programme and the follow-up of the Objectives report in order to ensure coherence with the objectives set by the Council of the European Union (Education, Youth and Culture).

- Measures should be voluntary and principally developed through bottom-up cooperation.

- Initiatives must be focused on the needs of citizens and user organisations.

- Cooperation should be inclusive and involve Member States, the Commission, candidate countries, EFTA-EEA countries and the social partners.

The follow-up of this declaration should be pursued as follows to ensure an effective and successful implementation of an enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training:

1. Implementation of the enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training shall be a gradually integrated part of the follow-up of the objectives report. The Commission will reflect this integrated approach in its reporting to the Council of the European Union (Education, Youth and Culture) within the timetable already decided for the work of the objectives report. The ambition is to fully integrate the follow-up work of the enhanced co-operation in vocational education and training in the follow-up of the objectives report.

2. The existing Commission working group, which will be given a similar status to that of the working groups within the follow-up of the objectives report, in future including Member States, EFTA-EEA countries, candidate countries and the European social partners, will continue to work in order to ensure effective implementation and coordination of the enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training. The informal meetings of the Directors General for Vocational Training, which contributed to launching this initiative in Bruges 2001, will play an important role in focusing and animating the follow-up work.

3. Within this framework the initial focus between now and 2004 will be on concrete areas where work is already in progress, i.e. development of a single transparency framework, credit transfer in vocational education and training and development of quality tools. Other areas, which will be immediately included as a fully integrated part of the work of the follow-up of the objectives report organised in eight working groups and an indicator group, will be lifelong guidance, non-formal learning and training of teachers and trainers in vocational education and training. The Commission will include progress on these actions in its report mentioned in paragraph 1.

The ministers responsible for vocational education and training and the European Commission have confirmed the necessity to undertake the objectives and priorities for actions set out in this declaration and to participate in the framework for an enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training, including the social partners. A meeting in two years time will be held to review progress and give advice on priorities and strategies.

The Copenhagen Declaration was adopted 30 November 2002 by the following European Countries and the EU Commission:

Austria, Belgium (French community), Belgium (Flemish community), Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom and the European Commission.

The Declaration was furthermore endorsed by the following social partners at European level:

The European Center of Enterprises with Public Participation and of Enterprises of General Economic Interest (CEEP), the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe (UNICE) and the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC).

The following observers were present:

The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), the European Training Foundation (ETF), the European Parliament and the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union.

ANNEX II

Membership of the technical working group on credit transfer in VET

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Endnotes

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[i] For example the Education and Training 2010 work programme (the follow-up to the objectives of education and training systems in Europe); the lifelong learning Commission Communication (November 2001) and Council Resolution (June 2002); the Skills and Mobility Commission Action Plan (February 2002) and Council Resolution (June 2002); the Copenhagen declaration (November 2002).

[ii] See articles 149 and 150 TEC.

[iii] See Annex I: "Declaration of the European Ministers of vocational education and training, and the European Commission, convened in Copenhagen on 29 and 30 November 2002, on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training".

[iv] See Presidency conclusions, Barcelona European Council, 15-16 March 2002, paras 43-45.

[v] See Annex II, membership of the TWG.

[vi] For example the 2003 joint actions on 'building qualifications bridges'. These are now being followed up by small scale experimental pilot projects, aimed at testing approaches to credits for lifelong learning.

[vii] The latter working definitions were developed in the framework of the current OECD activity on national qualification systems and the promotion of LLL, in which both the Commission and Cedefop are involved

[viii] See CEDEFOP study on European structures of qualification levels (three volumes 2001/2002).

[ix] The future development of this work on qualifications levels/frameworks will take into account the ongoing work of the OECD on the role of qualifications frameworks in promoting lifelong learning.

[x] See the credit transfer virtual community for more details
http://cedefop.communityzero.com/credittransfer .

[xi] Experiences exist relating to the development of such a typology, crossing economic and societal sectors, for instance within ISCO and NACE. Pilot experiments could draw from the experience of certain sectors and professions, e.g. in the context of *professionalisation durable*, the 'Career Space' Consortium on ICT skill profiles and curricula, CEDEFOP's work on comparability and transparency. The work of Eurostat on learning fields and subjects can also be used and further developed for this purpose.

[xii] The question of the number and character of levels to be included in such a European framework should be addressed in parallel at the political level, on the basis of options to be developed by the TWG. Three levels: basic, applied and conceptual levels of skill and competences (or lower, intermediate and higher) could be considered as a point of departure for the TWG discussions.

[xiii] E.g. Studies on credit systems and qualifications frameworks launched by CEDEFOP September 2003; the Joint Action projects on building qualification bridges; professionalisation durable; Career-Space Consortium and other experiences in relation to ICT-skills and curricula; relevant projects under Leonardo da Vinci.

[xiv] See progress report of the technical working group on quality in VET (October 2003)
http://cedefop.communityzero.com/quality.

[xv] See the Stocktaking report of the CCG, October 2003. This recommendation also corresponds to a recommendation Group H of the objectives process (Making learning more attractive, and strengthening links to working life, research and society at large), particularly in terms of promoting flexibility in formal education and training institutions and systems. See draft interim report on the activities of working group H (July 2003).

[xvi] See the credit transfer virtual community for more details
http://cedefop.communityzero.com/credittransfer