Annual ECVET Forum 2019, Rotterdam: Using the ECVET principles to connect learning and working in tomorrow’s labour market – European, national, local and sectoral policies and initiatives

Workshop input paper

WS 1: Using the ECVET principles to support qualification/curriculum design

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1. About this workshop

This workshop will discuss how ECVET principles, and the use of units or groups of learning outcomes in particular, can be used to support qualification and curriculum design, with a view to ensuring flexible and adaptable vocational education and training (VET) systems that are fit for the future.

This workshop will feature three presentations of national approaches – from Czechia, Hungary and Latvia – and one Sector Skills Alliance in the field of hybrid and electric vehicles (Green Wheels project).

2. ECVET principles for qualification/curriculum design

Today’s VET systems need to respond to a number of challenges, including to adapt better and faster to changing labour market needs, to equip learners with the right set of skills for today’s labour market and with the groundwork for a successful career, and to make VET more learner-centred, inclusive, and attractive overall.

A recent opinion of the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training (ACVT) on the future of vocational education and training post 2020 called for VET provision that ‘should embed a) stable core and b) flexible elements in order to provide learners with the skills and transversal competences that are needed on the labour market and in the society and that will empower them to lead a self-determined professional life and master numerous career transitions as well as active citizenship.’

This calls for VET provision that meets the requirements for flexibility from the labour market and individuals themselves, who are increasingly following non-traditional learning pathways, and who experience a career-spanning need for lifelong learning. Individuals want to get their learning outcomes recognised, independent of how and where it was achieved (whether through formal, non-formal or informal learning). This translates into the need for qualifications

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to be designed in a way to cater to the need for flexibility and individualisation – both for the individual learner and the labour market.

**ECVET principles** can be used to assist the design of VET qualifications and curricula by offering a way of structuring VET qualifications, with a view to addressing these requirements. To this purpose, qualifications should be composed of **units or groups of learning outcomes**, that are capable of being assessed and validated separately. Units of learning outcomes could be assigned **credit points**, as complementary information quantifying the learner’s effort needed to achieve given learning outcomes.

Structuring qualifications into smaller components is expected to make them more flexible in order to better respond to changing demands and needs. Furthermore, a close involvement of labour market stakeholders into the design of VET qualifications and curricula is key for meeting the requirements mentioned above. ECVET seeks to contribute to the development of a common language shared by all VET stakeholders, making qualifications more outcome-oriented instead of input-driven.

The concept and use of units or groups of learning outcomes have been central to **reforms of VET systems** in a variety of countries across Europe. A closer look at the approaches chosen reveals that they come in various different forms and features. They may differ in the approach towards grouping and describing learning outcomes, their possible link to credit arrangements, and in the extent to which stakeholders are involved in the process. The fact that this trend towards more flexibility and individual paths in VET is actually taking place, albeit with a high degree of variability across countries, is also shown by the study ‘Changing the nature and role of VET in Europe’ (cf. Cedefop, forthcoming).

### 3. Examples presented in the workshop

In the workshop, three national approaches and one project example will be presented:

1. **Czechia**: The current European emphasis on supporting flexibility of VET pathways and programmes has been projected into both the conception and content of the ongoing system-level project ‘Modernization of Vocational Education and Training’ (MOV, 2017 - 2020). The MOV project provides support for modularization of education and a wider use of ECVET principles in VET. Modularized provision is supported by newly created educational modules and units of learning outcomes that allow for flexibility of school curricula and qualifications. ECVET principles are being used as a tool for promoting flexible forms of teaching arrangements and deepening collaboration between educators and employers.

2. **Hungary**: According to the new VET strategy issued in 2019, qualifications will genuinely be based on learning outcomes from 2020 onwards. The Hungarian National Team of ECVET Experts with the coordination of the Tempus Public Foundation have made enormous efforts in the last few years to drive forward the implementation of learning outcomes approach by providing information to stakeholders, organising seminars and trainings, developing leaflets and handbooks. Hungary is still at the outset of this transformation, and it will take some time until this approach will permeate every form and level of VET. This progress is not becoming ever so important with respect to the internationalisation of VET only, but also for the reason of better satisfying the needs of the labour market, strengthening the relations between VET and the world of work and last, but not least, also for enhancing the quality of VET.

3. **Latvia**: Latvia has experienced significant reforms to its VET system in recent years. The reform of the development and implementation of VET content with the support of the European Social Fund was planned and implemented taking into consideration the
approaches underlying the ECVET concept. As a result, major changes have been implemented by introducing a learning outcomes-based approach and the modularisation of VET programs allowing for flexibility in various contexts. The reform has also contributed to the possibility of permeability at national and transnational contexts. The work on the development of modular VET programmes began early in 2013 and is now close to completion. As part of the comprehensive VET reform, Latvia has introduced Sector Expert Councils (SEC). The SECs role is to raise the effectiveness and quality of VET by promoting cooperation between social partners, VET providers and sectoral organisations as they develop VET that is continuously updated to meet changing labour market needs.

4. **Green Wheels** is a Sector Skills Alliance project that addresses the challenge that secondary VET schools are not sufficiently prepared for one of the key trends in the automotive industry: the production and development of electric vehicles. Green Wheels provides VET schools with a set of innovative teaching, methodological and training materials for maintenance, servicing and repair of electric and hybrid vehicles. These tools have been developed based on ECVET principles; units and related materials were pilot-tested in partner schools.

4. **Guiding questions to discuss in the workshops**

   ■ What key drivers can be identified for the use of outcome-based and unit-based/modular approaches in VET a) in the examples presented and b) in your country or institution?
   ■ What are the key success factors and barriers experienced or anticipated when transitioning to outcome-based and unit-based/modularised approaches in VET?
   ■ What is needed to make sure that these approaches lead to flexible and adaptable VET qualifications and pathways not only in theory but in practice?