

magazine

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European Credit system for
Vocational Education & Training

Editorial

**Hanna Autere**

The European Vocational Skills Week 2019 - VET for All and for the World

The European Vocational Skills Week (14 – 18 October) welcomed more than 1,000 participants from Europe and around the world to the iconic Finlandia hall in Helsinki. Finland hosted the fourth European Vocational Skills Week with a special focus on fostering continuous learning and promoting future-oriented learning, which are the education and training priorities of the Finnish EU Presidency.

The participants representing the global VET community had the possibility to participate in a number of meetings, working groups, site visits and dialogues during the week. However, the two main events of the European Vocation-

al Skills Week 2019 were the two conferences: “VET for ALL – Skills for Life” and “VET in and for the World”. The “VET for ALL” conference discussed how VET systems can deliver excellent and future-proof education and training to all individuals throughout their careers. In the “VET in and for the World” conference the participants from Europe and all over the world shared experiences and discussed common solutions and approaches for the future.

One of the parallel workshops was dedicated to international mobility of learners and staff. This session introduced the new Erasmus+ programme Pilot VET



mobility scheme, which will provide funding not only for VET co-operation between the EU Member States but also with countries outside the European Union. This is great news to the Finnish VET providers' global networks as well. Finland has a long history of global cooperation in VET. Although the focus of international student and staff exchanges has clearly been on Europe, cooperation with countries outside of Europe has increased over the last few years. The Finnish global networks have also tested the ECVET tools in mobility to China, India, Japan, Canada and Uganda. The ECVET documentation, such as Learning Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding have proven to be useful tools to make the learning outcomes visible, transferable and recognised also in mobility outside the EU. The ECVET principles and particularly using the common language of learning outcomes have proven to work globally.

As I am a true believer in ECVET principles I was happy to see that the two goals of the ECVET Recommendation - *geographical mobility and lifelong learning* - were high on the agenda for the Vocational Skills Week programme. The benefits of ECVET can be easily recognised in mobility, but ECVET principles for flexible learning pathways apply also for continuous learning, as evidenced by the Finnish VET reform.

For decades, all VET reforms in Finland have aimed to strengthen a learning-outcomes-based approach and work-based learning. With the latest reform the number of qualifications was decreased, and qualification content was broadened to support individual learning pathways and to enable more rapid responses to the changing competence needs in working life. The key principles are flexibility and continuous competence development. The modular qualification structure makes the Finnish VET system flexible and offers opportunities for all individuals also for upskilling and reskilling. The system allows individuals to flexibly utilise units of the qualifications and smaller parts corresponding to their own needs. They can return later to continue their studies and complete their qualification or update their skills. Prior learning is recognised and only the missing skills need to be acquired.

In the discussion about the future of ECVET, it is important to remember that the same principles for flexible individual learning pathways work for both mobility and continuous learning. In a global world there is no such thing as one size fits all, but we need modularised opportunities for initial training, upskilling and reskilling. The key question is how we are preparing people for future work and how we ensure that everyone has access to lifelong learning. VET is for all and VET is for life.

Hanna Autere

Counsellor of Education,
Vocational Education and Training,
Finnish National Agency
for Education

Quality in mobility

By Søren Kristensen, PhD, ECVET Expert in Denmark and ECVET Secretariat Senior Expert

A Handbook on quality in learning mobility was produced by the EU-Council of Europe youth partnership in the framework of the European Platform of Learning Mobility (EPLM) and published in April 2019. Its intention is to be an immediate reference document and to provide support to organisers of learning mobility projects in the youth field.

The contribution of ECVET to quality in VET mobility is widely recognised. Historically the value of mobility was often measured mainly in terms of numbers; instead, the ECVET approach has been to focus not on the quantity of participants, but on the learning outcomes of the experience - what the learners bring home with them in terms of knowledge, skills and competences, and how this is assessed, validated and recognised. This is a crucial change of perspective and has consequences for the way in which mobility programmes are planned and implemented all over Europe.

Quality has also been a concern in other areas where mobility is used as a pedagogical tool, and the lessons from the ECVET experience are not only of relevance to VET but may be of relevance elsewhere, too. Furthermore, research and development on the use of mobility in areas outside of VET may hold important messages that are transferable to a VET context.

A handbook on quality in learning mobility

A case in point is a four-year project undertaken within the framework of the European Platform for Learning Mobility (EPLM) in the youth field, resulting in the recent publication of the **Handbook of Quality in Learning Mobility**. The aim of this endeavour has been to reach a clear and shared understanding of what this elusive concept of “quality in mobility” actually is, and to develop concrete guidelines and definitions that can bring about even higher quality in projects.



View and download the publication [here](#)

The “youth field” is generally concerned with non-formal learning and voluntary youth organisations outside of the education and training system. There are overlaps in target groups with ECVET, as some activities may take place within a VET context even though they are classified

as “youth mobility”. More importantly, the forms of mobility that are relevant in ECVET mobility activities – school stays and placements – may also occur in a youth context, and therefore many of the points raised in the handbook are directly applicable also in transnational VET activities. The Handbook also deals with aspects of quality which are not specifically covered by ECVET.

A 360-degree perspective of quality

The handbook adopts a holistic outlook on quality, where learning outcomes is one of several factors that come into play (and yes, ECVET is mentioned). Drawing on the outcomes of research and development activities on learning mobility both inside and outside of a youth context, the handbook has identified 119 indicators which are divided into the following dimensions that reflect specific aspects of learning mobility activities:

- **Rationale:** Aims, methods, target groups
- **Organisation:** Hosting organisation, time frame, programme, responsibilities, risk and conflict management, evaluation
- **Formal framework:** Agreements, insurance, visa
- **Resources:** Financing, logistical requirements, team

The EPLM is an initiative to bring together representatives of all the important actors and stakeholders in the field of mobility in Europe, notably the “Holy Trinity” of policy makers, researchers and practitioners. It has existed since 2011 and is managed by the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth (EU-Council of Europe youth partnership).

- **Participants:** Dissemination of information, selection, preparation, accompaniment and support, learning process, debriefing, outcomes

With approximately one page of text on each indicator, this is not a brief pamphlet or “light reading”. It is intended for use as a reference publication (a “telephone directory” for quality in mobility) where it is possible to look up and get more extensive information on individual indicators. This means that users do not necessarily have to read the entire handbook. If they have a specific question concerning quality in learning mobility that needs an answer, they can locate it by means of the index and read what they need. Besides explanatory text, the handbook also contains references to examples from practice that can illustrate how the principles can be implemented in real project environments.

Quality, however, is not an absolute concept, and our perception of it may change over time in tandem with new developments in the aims and the forms of learning mobility. The ambition behind the handbook has not been to deliver once and for all the ultimate guide for use in a field that is constantly expanding and evolving. It is intended to be a living document that encapsulates the current knowledge base and makes it available to actors and stakeholders across Europe. This will hopefully prevent them from making the same mistake as others or wasting precious resources on reinventing the wheel. The handbook can always be taken up and revised in the future according to new insights gained.

Spreading the message

Launched in April 2019, the “Handbook of Quality in Learning Mobility” has been one of the fastest-selling publications by Council of Europe, and is currently being reprinted in a second edition. It is also available online from the secretariat of the Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth, as the number of printed copies can never cover the number of potential beneficiaries. There have been concerns that the analytical approach and bulky format of the printed version will act as a deterrent for some readers, so the EPLM has also developed an app version for use on smartphones – known as Q!App – which can be downloaded for free. Building on the contents of the handbook, the app uses a more intuitive project management approach, allowing users to construct and rate their project via the app while giving them access to information and examples of good practice. The printed handbook is only available in English, but the app is currently being translated into a number of European languages.

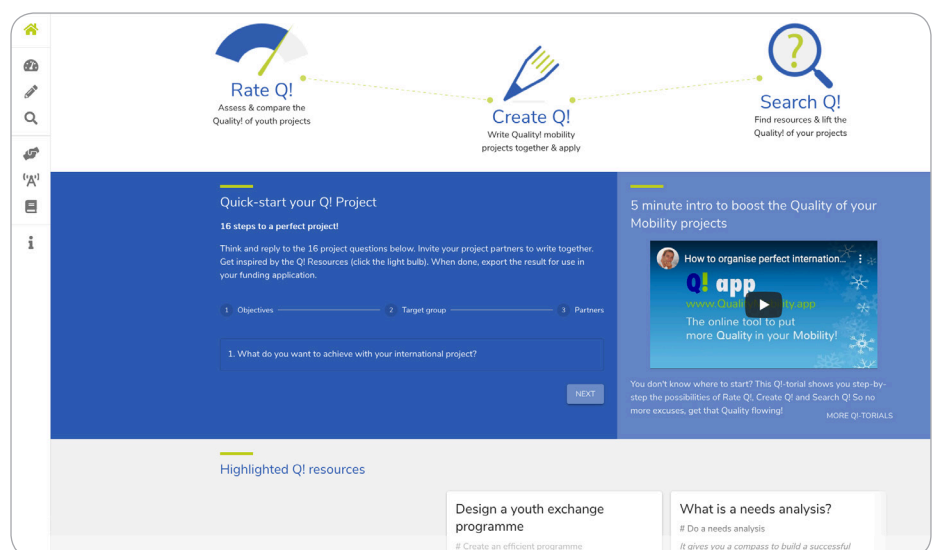
New Cedefop study under way: The necessary conditions for long-term cross-country mobility in apprenticeships

In early 2019, Cedefop launched a **study on long-term cross-country mobility in apprenticeships**. The focus of the study is to identify and formulate the necessary conditions and actions enabling or hindering long-term cross-country mobility of apprentices.

The main outcomes of the study will be six country case studies on current practices in Austria, Denmark, France, Hungary, Ireland and the Netherlands; and three project case studies analysing existing projects that are sending apprentices abroad for long-term mobility (3 months or more).

Additionally, a guidance paper will be developed that could be used to reform apprenticeship schemes or systems (to make them readier for mobility); and design mobility projects for apprentices.

The study is expected to be published in the second half of 2020.



National ECVET seminar in Latvia, September 2019

By Søren Kristensen, PhD, ECVET Expert in Denmark and ECVET Secretariat Senior Expert

On September 25th, Riga's national ECVET seminar attracted a total of 85 participants from across Latvia to listen to presentations and discuss implementation of ECVET in the Latvian context. The participants were primarily practitioners from VET institutions, but representatives from higher education as well as the Ministry of Education, state bodies and social partner organisations came to the event. Titled **"ECVET and Geographical Mobility: step by step"**, the seminar focused mainly – but not exclusively - on the practical implementation of ECVET tools and procedures in connection with transnational mobility.

The seminar catered to a diverse group of participants with varying levels of knowledge and experience with ECVET. Mr. Søren Kristensen of the ECVET Secretariat gave a presentation on the development of mobility as a pedagogical tool in the EU and on the role of ECVET in relation to quality assurance. He also described the timeline of ECVET implementation in the context of a concrete mobility project. In a workshop organized by Latvian ECVET experts on the use of ECVET tools (the templates for Memorandum of Understanding and the Learning Agreement) and procedures (assessment, validation and recognition), practical examples were distributed and discussed in light of the participants' own practice.

The seminar also covered the present reform of the Latvian VET system which, inspired by ECVET, is currently being restructured along the lines of a modular approach. Ms. Rūta Gintaute-Marihina from the Ministry of Education and Science and Ms. Sarmīte Valaine from the National Centre for Education told how 12 Sectoral Experts' Councils had been set up in cooperation with the social partners within the framework of an ESF-funded project aiming to develop a sectoral qualification system and increase the effectiveness and quality of VET. Based on studies carried out with-



in this project, new standards for core occupations have been developed, and VET qualifications have been modularised and described in terms of learning outcomes. This pioneering work is now being rolled out to cover the entire VET system, and so far, 135 vocational qualifications have been updated along these principles. This work is ongoing within the scope of another ESF project (2016-2021). After the presentations, Latvian ECVET experts led a workshop to help participants familiarize themselves with the concept of learning outcomes and the use of this approach in a reform context.

Despite the wide variation in the level of prior knowledge of ECVET and ECVET tools and principles, the seminar was very well received by the participants, and the comments as well as the written evaluations were overwhelmingly positive. The combination of general presentations followed by workshops that allowed participants to come to grips with the terms and concepts in a more hands-on and practical way ensured that practitioners were able to apply their new knowledge directly to their specific situations.

VET for ALL - SKILLS for LIFE

EU-level conference held during the 4th European Vocational Skills Week 2019 in Helsinki

By Julia Fellingner & Karin Luomi-Messerer, ECVET Secretariat Senior Experts

One of the main events of the European Vocational Skills Week, the “VET for ALL – Skills for Life” conference in Helsinki from 16-17th October 2019 welcomed more than 500 participants from Europe and beyond. The conference focused on VET as a smart choice for both young people and adults, and discussed a multitude of topics around skills development through VET. This article focuses on the Workshop on ‘Lifelong guidance and validation’, as this plays an important role in the implementation of the ECVET principles for supporting flexible VET pathways¹.

The link between ECVET and validation or recognition of prior learning was addressed in several recent events organised by the ECVET Secretariat², including

- 21st meeting of the ECVET Users’ Group: ‘The role of ECVET to inspire national VET reforms: the Finnish practice’ on 8-9 March 2018, in Helsinki, FI;
- Peer learning activity on ‘The role of ECVET in validation of non-formal and informal learning’ on 17-18 May 2018, in Roskilde, DK;
- Peer learning activity on ‘ECVET, NQFs and Upskilling Pathways’ on 18-19 September 2018, in Glasgow, UK;
- Annual ECVET Forum 2019 on ‘Using the ECVET principles to connect learning and working in tomorrow’s labour market’ - European, national, local and sectoral policies and initiatives’ on 20-21 June 2019, in Rotterdam, NL.

Day 1: Setting the scene

The conference was opened by **Dana-Carmen Bachmann**, Head of Unit for VET, Apprenticeships & Adult learning at European Commission’s DG Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion (DG EMPL), who emphasised the importance of making VET accessible for all, and a change of mindset towards

lifelong learning. **Mika Tammilehto**, Director General of the Department for VET at the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture introduced the Finnish Council Presidency’s three priorities for education and training: strengthening lifelong learning, creating a European Education and Training area by 2025, and emphasising effectiveness, efficiency and quality of education.



© DG EMPL: Mika Tammilehto and Dana-Carmen Bachmann

¹ <http://www.ecvet-secretariat.eu/en/principles-supporting-flexible-vet-pathways>

² Reports and presentations are available here: http://www.ecvet-secretariat.eu/en/training-and-events_



© DG EMPL: panel discussion on 'Excellence, inclusion and career-long learning in VET'

A panel discussion on the role of VET in addressing global challenges, such as the growing importance of *services, ICT and digitalization*, was followed by a contribution from **Jürgen Siebel**, Director of European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop). He stressed that the most important skill for the future will be the ability to adapt to change. In addition, sound digital and technological literacy will be crucial for both economic and social participation.

The second part of the plenary session was devoted to 'Excellence, inclusion and career-long learning in VET' and started with contributions by **Craig Robertson**, Chair of World Federation of colleges and polytechnics, and **Margaret Reilly**, Entrepreneur and VET Skills Week ambassador. A panel discussed the role of VET and lifelong learning in closing skills gaps. Options for learner mobility – where both occupational competences and soft skills can be developed for a global world – will play a role, as will the promotion of 'intrapreneurship' in enterprises. Learning in the workplace will have to be organised in such a way that employees can be quickly skilled and reskilled.

Day 2: Workshop discussions

On the second day, six workshops on a variety of topics were organized: vocational excellence; upskilling and reskilling; lifelong guidance and validation; future-oriented policy-making; the changing role of teachers and trainers; and entrepreneurship on VET.

Workshop on 'Lifelong guidance and validation'

The session was dedicated to discussing how high-quality opportunities for career guidance and validation of skills and competences can support people throughout their lives, to develop the right skills in the best way and put them to good use.

Pedro Moreno Da Fonseca, Expert, Department for Learning and Employability, Cedefop, presented the outcomes of a recent study on 'Validation of non-formal and informal learning and career guidance'. The fundamental aspect of successful coordination of career guidance and validation is the existence of guidelines – whether a formal or informal arrangement – simply a framework to establish relationships, responsibilities and outputs. Usually successful coordination also includes the use of shared standards and tools and an overarching multi-level strategy – based on consensus – and a clear allocation of resources. Another success factor is the cumulative generation of output along an integrated process: the output of one step is directly used in the following step. Regarding guidance, the best scenario would be flexible and free of charge guidance before, during and after the validation process. This leads to well-informed participants who can clarify options such as complementary training and who are also followed up with for integration into the job or further trainings. A sensitive issue is a careful definition of the practitioners' roles. There are overlaps, for example, regarding the identification of skills, and it is crucial to have the right people in the right place; qualified assessors for assessment, qualified practitioners for guidance and so on.



© DG EMPL: Alison Crabb (DG EMPL) introduces the theme of the workshop

Carlo Scatoli, Senior Expert in Unit for Skills and qualifications at DG EMPL gave a brief overview on the 2018 Update of the European Inventory on the validation of non-formal and informal learning. There have been improvements regarding validation since 2018 as all countries have *some* form of validation arrangement, but very rarely is there a mainstreamed strategy. Most countries offer validation in the field of education and training, but a lower number of countries offer validation relevant for the labour market or have validation arrangements regarding the 'third sector', which includes mainly youth and volunteer work. There is still a lot of room for improvement, especially regarding accessibility of validation for all citizens.

Following these introductory inputs, **four case studies** on different forms of co-operation between career guidance and validation services were presented:

- The **Nordic Network of Adult Learning** published a study carried out in 2015 on how guidance is embedded in the validation process. It became clear that the aims of lifelong guidance and the aims of validation of non-formal and informal learning are very similar. Furthermore, the study highlighted that the 'information stage' is crucial and guidance counsellors play an important role in this phase as few people know how to access validation. After the assessment and certification phase, a follow-up by guidance counsellors was again seen as important. The financing of guidance throughout validation posed a problem for many of the countries, as guidance in some countries is offered by external bodies. Another finding was that competence development for guidance counsellors with a link to validation was still lacking in some countries, and that career management tools should be used much more.



© KLM: Julia Fellinginger presents the project 'Du kannst was!' / 'Yes, you can!'

- The **Learning and Working desks** offer career and study advice to people of all ages and educational backgrounds in the **Netherlands**. Set up as a network, they link education, training, and the labour market through regional partnerships between the Public Employment Services, municipalities, knowledge centres, the business community and training providers. They do not house all services in one location but make use of the knowledge of the network to give job- or learning opportunity-seekers the information and services they need.
- **Qualifica**³ is the **Portuguese** national programme for validation, aimed at unskilled adults. It was established in its current form in 2016. It is managed centrally by ANQEP but implemented regionally through municipalities. Qualifica uses an integrated model of guidance and validation: after the reception (signing up and receiving general information about the work of the centre), a 'diagnosis' follows with evidence of work and other experience collected in an electronic portfolio. Information and guidance are offered afterwards, to assess career development options. Depending on the outcome, clients are referred to education and training or to partial or complete recognition or

validation of certificates and competences (RVCC), with complementary compulsory training on the side. Additionally, a methodological guide on lifelong learning is offered to support the work of practitioners.

- **Du kannst was! / Yes you can!** from **Austria** is a regional initiative by the social partners and adult learning providers in the Federal Province of Upper Austria. It offers an alternative pathway to obtaining an Apprenticeship Certificate (qualification corresponding to EQF level 4) in a wide number of occupations through validation of prior work experience. Guidance is offered independently of the validation process, by the guidance and career counselling services of the Chambers of Labour and Economy. In a series of group workshops, the participants create portfolios through a guided self-evaluation in order to document the competences already acquired. This is followed by a first official 'Competence Check' through an assessor appointed by the Chamber of Economy. The skills and competences missing for the Apprenticeship Certificate can then be acquired through semi-individualized trainings and self-study. After a successful second 'Competence Check', participants receive the Apprenticeship Certificate.

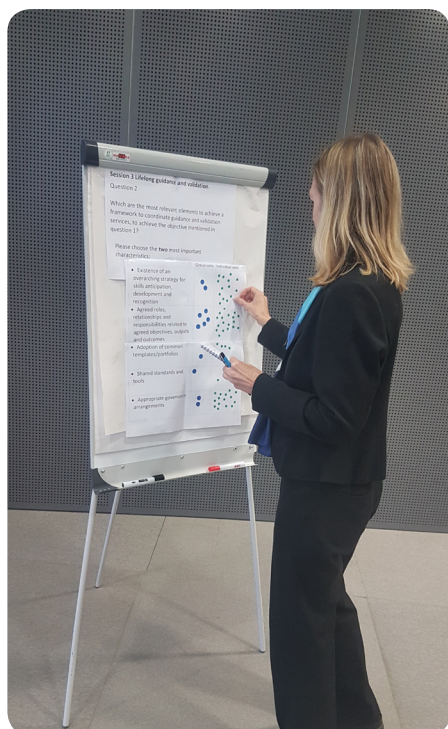
3 Qualifica and Du Kannst Was! are described in more detail as part of the ECVET case studies illustrating how initiatives have used ECVET principles – see: <http://www.ecvet-secretariat.eu/en/ECVET-Case-Studies>



© DG EMPL: Workshop discussion

In the **discussion following the case study presentations**, workshop participants were invited to address the following questions:

- Which are the most relevant elements to ensure that the services made available to individuals are coordinated and/or integrated?
- Which are the most relevant elements to achieve a framework to coordinate guidance and validation services, to achieve the objective mentioned in question 1?
- Which are the most relevant elements to ensure that staff involved in guidance and validation have the competences to provide properly coordinated quality services?



© JF: Workshop participants were asked to select the main elements from a range of options for better coordination of career guidance and validation services

Participants concluded that agreed roles, relationships and responsibilities across services are the major success factors to ensure coordinated and integrated services, followed by shared tools and standards to facilitate the process.

Apart from agreed roles and relationships, agreement on objectives, outputs and outcomes was seen as most relevant for establishing well-working frameworks. The existence of an overarching strategy for skills anticipation, development and recognition was also considered important.

Participants agreed that staff need to have the necessary competences to perform the specific activities and roles, but that all staff should also have a clear overview of both processes. The provision of holistic service in coordination with other stakeholders was considered second most important. Another crucial element mentioned was the impartiality of guidance services when offering different validation options.



© KLM: Julia Fellingner and Paul Guest summarise the workshop discussions

Upskilling Pathways - new opportunities for adults

By Andreea Hrimiuc, Consultant, ICF

The Upskilling Pathways is an initiative at European level which aims to help adults acquire a minimum level of literacy, numeracy and digital skills and/or acquire a broader set of skills by progressing towards an upper secondary qualification or equivalent (level 3 or 4 in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) depending on national circumstances).

Background

Close to 59 million Europeans do not have an upper secondary qualification (EQF level 3 or 4) and may struggle with basic skills such as numeracy, literacy or digital skills. Evidence shows that people without these qualifications and skills are at higher risk of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion. They are also vulnerable to higher health risks and have a shorter life expectancy⁴.

In response to these issues, the European Council adopted a **Recommendation** in December 2016, calling on Member States to offer 'upskilling pathways' to adults with low level of skills, knowledge and competences.

The Recommendation invited Member States to outline the measures they have in place to deliver Upskilling Pathways by mid-2018. In February 2019 the European Commission then took stock of the measures outlined by Member States⁵. The Council's conclusions on the implementation of the Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults were adopted in June 2019⁶.

What are 'Upskilling Pathways'?

An upskilling pathway is a smooth three-step process:

- **Step 1: Skills Assessment** – this step is meant to identify the individual's existing skills and any skills gaps. This could take the format of a 'skills audit', such as the development of a statement of the individual's skills that can be used to plan tailored learning. This step could make use of available validation arrangements, to identify, document, assess or grant a certificate for the skills they already have.
- **Step 2: Tailored learning** – through this step the individual should be offered flexible, quality, tailored education or training to help address the skills gaps identified through the skills assessment. The learning offer should focus on addressing gaps in basic skills (literacy, numeracy, digital skills) or allow progress towards EQF/NVQ⁷ level 3 or 4 qualification, aligned to labour market needs.
- **Step 3: Validation and Recognition** – the individuals should have the skills acquired through tailored

learning, and other prior learning, validated and recognised for use on the labour market or to support tailored learning. This final step could lead to a (partial) qualification or to credits which can be used towards a qualification at EQF level 3 or 4.

The **three-step process is in line with the ECVET principles**, which could be used to facilitate implementation of the Upskilling Pathways initiative.

Who is it for?

The Upskilling Pathways initiative is intended to support **low-skilled adults** (who are not eligible for support under the Youth Guarantee). Upskilling Pathways span multiple policy areas including education and training as well as employment, and the field of adult learning is particularly fragmented. For this reason, close cooperation between all actors involved is key. This includes, for example, social partners, education and training providers, third sector organisations and local and regional authorities. At both policy and implementation level, it is important to ensure effective coordination and partnership.

⁴ Council Recommendation of 19 December 2016 on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults.

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/implementation-report-upskilling-pathways_en

⁶ [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52019XG0605\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52019XG0605(01))

⁷ National Vocational Qualification

Support provided at European level

The European Commission is leading various support actions, such as **mutual learning workshops**, to support countries in successfully implementing this new initiative. There are also many **complementary European policy initiatives**, including for example the 2012 Recommendation on Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning⁸, the EQF⁹, and the 2018 Recommendation on Key Competences for lifelong learning¹⁰.

The mutual learning workshops

The mutual learning workshops are a series of two capacity-building events to support Member States in the implementation of the Upskilling Pathways Recommendation. The workshops aim to create small national networks, led by Government representatives, and support them to plan, design, implement and monitor initiatives using the three Upskilling Pathways steps.

Two cycles of mutual learning workshops took place to date. The first edition was held in 2017/2018 with the participation of Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Poland, Romania and Spain. The second edition was held in 2018/2019 and was attended by Belgium (French-speaking community and Flanders), the Czech Republic, Finland, the Netherlands, Portugal and Slovakia.

The two workshops within each cycle were designed to be complementary. The first workshop focused on **enabling countries to map their existing provision for low skilled adults and learn from other countries about practical approaches to implementing Upskilling Pathways**, which could be used to develop

a 'To Do list' of first actions to undertake. The second workshop explored the **early implementation of these 'To Do lists' and effective practice that could support countries to overcome implementation challenges**. Each workshop lasted for 2.5 days.

Each delegation was led by representatives of Education and/or Employment ministries and composed of other key stakeholders such as adult learning providers, public employment services, social partners and European Social Funds managing authorities and supported by an independent country expert.

During the workshops, delegates had the opportunity to learn about different practices, success stories and approaches used by different countries to support the three steps of implementing Upskilling Pathways. Examples included:

Skills assessment

- The **Belgium-fr online skills screening tools on DOCIMO and the 'My Profile', and 'Seeking a candidate' tools**. These provide tests of mathematical and literacy

competences, knowledge and cognitive skills for up to 50 occupations, and matching of job seekers with job offers, based on their skills.

- The **Netherlands online literacy screener** which can identify possible literacy problems in only 12 minutes. The instrument is valid, objective and reliable and is designed for organisations that wish to have a quick indication of the literacy level of their customers, clients or employees.
- The **Evald online assessment tool in the Czech Republic** assesses the level of transferable digital competencies of users, mapped against the levels of the Czech NQF. Individuals are then signposted to appropriate digital training based on their score.
- A **structured approach to skills assessments employed in Slovakia**, which examines two types of skills – career management skills and vocational skills. Career management skills are identified by counsellors at registration through a survey. Vocational skills are identified through a four-stage process – classification, description, synthesis and assessment.



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⁸ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32012H1222%2801%29>

⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/search/site?f%5b0%5d=im_field_entity_type%3A97

¹⁰ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32006H0962>

¹¹ European Regional Development Fund

Tailored learning

- The **Folk schools network in Poland**, which provides adult learning provision in mostly rural areas. The courses delivered cover four main areas: personal development; arts and craftsmanship; health and ecology; and ICT.
- The **Aula Mentor programme in Spain**, which provides ICT courses both online and in the classroom. The programme was first delivered 26 years ago through ERDF¹¹ funding, and in 2017 was estimated to support nearly 300,000 adults.
- A **pilot training and certification programme in Greece**, which provides skills training for individuals wanting to enter growth sectors. The programme includes theoretical and on-the-job training as well as counselling and mentoring.
- The **Qualifica programme in Portugal**, which signposts low-skilled adults to up to 50 hours of complementary training. A key strength of the service is that it is based on close collaboration between local organisations. Qualifica centres cooperate with a wide range of local actors, such as social services, employers, third sector organisations and local employability networks.
- The development of an **online portal and learner accounts in the**

Netherlands. The online portal will provide users with individualised learning possibilities, based on a person's educational background, work experience and ambition. In time, the online portal will also include financial opportunities to fund education and training. In addition, the Netherlands will initiate learning budgets for adults who do not receive student grants and/or loans to help them fund education and training.

- In **Belgium-fr**, the Public Employment Service 'Forem' has developed, through the Step4-sfc.eu project, a **methodology to identify learners' professional behaviours** and produced a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on behavioural skills.
- The **Gardeners programme in Slovakia** aimed to develop Roma communities' basic and social skills through a gardening course. The use of gardening was felt to encourage participation while also ensuring that participants learn to respect their environment at the same time as beautifying the local landscape.

Validation

- An **integrated approach to validation in Belgium-nl**. A decree was developed which regulates the conditions required for validating bodies to certify learning outcomes and stated

that these bodies should also measure competences against occupational standards. Eleven occupational standards have been developed.

- **The Finnish validation system.** In Finland a student has the right to apply for recognition of previously completed studies or otherwise acquired knowledge, if it is relevant to their future course. This knowledge recognition forms the basis for the development of personal goals, which then leads to potential guidance and counselling, and a targeted, tailored curriculum.
- In the **Czech Republic, the 'Upskilling CZ' project** aims to enlarge and support a network of authorised entities that can validate prior learning, whilst also supporting these bodies through e-learning courses, guidebooks and other methodology materials. The project started in Q2 2019.

The second cycle of workshops also included a presentation of a study mapping skills audits conducted for the European Commission in 2018-2019. The study found a **wide range of skills audits available across the EU**, which were used for four purposes: self-development; educational advancement; labour market integration; and talent management in industry.

ECVET Seminar 2019 in Cyprus:

Successful ECVET Projects in the Spotlight

By Monika Auzinger, ECVET Secretariat Senior Expert

On 27 September 2019, the **Foundation for the Management of European Lifelong Learning Programmes for Cyprus** organised its annual ECVET Seminar in Nicosia, Cyprus. This time, the seminar put into the spotlight four successful Erasmus+ projects that all applied ECVET principles:

- The **RUECVET** project focused on capacity building for the implementation of ECVET in Russia and Uzbekistan: <https://www.ruecvet.uz/>
- The **'Partnership for ECVET'** (PECVET) project develops units of learning outcomes based on ECVET principles, focusing on the areas of chemistry/pharmacy, cosmetics, car mechanics, gastronomy and health-care. The key objective is to contribute to achieving better linkages between NQFs and ECVET, and to an increased quality and transparency of VET: <http://pecvet.wordpress.com/>
- The **ECVET PERMIT project**, finalised in 2016, aimed to implement ECVET principles in the non-formal and formal VET system to increase the permeability and transferability of learning outcomes achieved within different learning contexts. With partners from Cyprus, Malta and Greece, the project focused on three technical specialisations: Electrician; Plumber; Automotive Mechanic: <https://www.intercollege.ac.cy/euro-affairs/european-projects/ecvet-permit/>
- The **EUPA_NEXT** project, in turn, focused on the specific occupation of office administration. The key objective was to develop a formal cer-

tification for administration personnel at EQF levels 2,3, 4 and 5 - based on ECVET principles, and in accordance with ISO standard 17024: <http://eupanext.projectsgallery.eu/>

Besides providing participants with the opportunity to learn more about these four projects, this half-day event was an excellent occasion for the VET community of Cyprus to get together and share their experiences.

The ECVET Secretariat, represented by Monika Auzinger, informed participants about current developments related to ECVET, focusing on examples from selected countries that show a variety



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of approaches chosen to implement ECVET principles. The event culminated in a panel discussion on how to make the Cypriot VET system more attractive and more responsive to societal and labour market needs.



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Skillman International Forum: Skills for the Future in Advanced Manufacturing

By Monika Auzinger, ECVET Secretariat Senior Expert

The Skillman network held its 5th International Forum on 10 – 11 October 2019. It was hosted in Florence, Italy, at the DIDACTA national fair on education and promoted by INDIRE, the National Institute for Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research of the Italian Ministry of Education.

Skillman is a worldwide network dedicated to promoting skills, competences and innovative curricula for the advanced manufacturing sector. The Skillman network was launched in 2014, as a Sector Skills Alliance project for advanced manufacturing in the transport sector and has grown into an international network with 350 members.

This year's event took place under the banner of **'Curriculum design, Sectoral skills development and Ethical issues on Advanced Manufacturing sector'**, with a thematic focus on the following four dimensions:

- An action-driven model for Centres of Vocational Excellence in advanced manufacturing
- Innovative curriculum design
- Collaboration and synergies for ethics and inclusion
- Exchange of good practice in transnational mobility

Besides many contributions from European countries, speakers from Australia, Bangladesh, the Philippines, and many more made the event a truly international affair. The programme was equally varied and allowed participants to reflect on the topic of education and training in advanced manufacturing in relation to various dimensions.



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The importance of 're-engineering VET for change'

One very interesting point of discussion was the question of what is required of VET in order to meet the needs of the workforce and wider societal concerns. This raises the question whether a 're-engineering of VET for change' is necessary, together with adopting a holistic approach to VET that includes an ethical dimension.

One of the recurring topics throughout the event was the topic of skills for the future in advanced manufacturing. The need for upskilling opportunities for individuals was particularly emphasised in this context, in order to meet the demands raised by technological advancement. The quality of VET as well as the responsiveness to change of skills systems plays an important role in this regard.

ECVET principles in advanced manufacturing

The ECVET Secretariat, represented by Monika Auzinger, hosted a **workshop focusing on the use of ECVET principles to support qualification/curriculum design**. The Skillman project partnership developed a series of units of learning outcomes in various fields related to advanced manufacturing and based on ECVET principles. This workshop discussed how the use of ECVET principles, and in particular the structuring of qualifications into units of learning outcomes that are capable of being assessed and validated independently, can contribute towards creating flexible and adaptable VET pathways that are fit for the future.

Find out more about the event at <https://skillman.eu/skillman-eu-international-forum-2019/>

ECVET Thematic Seminar: Tools for VET-learner mobility

3-4 October 2019, Brussels, Belgium

By the ECVET Secretariat

The ECVET work programme 2019 included a 'Thematic Seminar' to discuss 'Tools for VET learner mobility'. The seminar took place in Brussels on 3 - 4 October 2019 and brought together 40 participants from 22 countries¹². The discussions at the seminar built on earlier debates on the future use of the ECVET tools for learner mobility, including ideas from the ECVET community ([summary report from a PLA in Cyprus 2016](#)), and thoughts of the Advisory Committee for Vocational Training (ACVT).

Key objective of the Thematic Seminar

Research has shown that the main impact of ECVET is related to improving the VET learner mobility experience, and the ECVET tools Learning Agreement (LA) and Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) are frequently used. The key objective of the seminar was to discuss lessons learned from ten years of using the ECVET tools for VET learner mobility (LA, MoU and Personal Transcript), to help DG EMPL gather information for further discussion of these options and other ideas.

An ad hoc working group of the Advisory Committee for Vocational Training (ACVT) has mapped out possible options for the further development of the ECVET mobility tools (transforming current tools into one VET mobility tool supporting the new Erasmus programme, use the functions of ECVET within other EU instruments like Europass). In addition, there are other aspects to consider, e.g. a possible digitalisation of the workflow, and an expansion of the use of European mobility tools to mobility programmes

that use funding sources other than the Erasmus programme.

Consequently, the seminar focused on four main topics:

1. Similarities and differences across several LA templates in use;
2. The requirements of a LA template for the use in mobility outside of Erasmus+;
3. Digitalised workflow: Erasmus without paper in VET;
4. The new Europass, and how it can potentially support VET learner mobility.

Key messages from the discussions related to each of these topics are presented below.

Similarities and differences across several Learning Agreement templates

It emerged from the discussions that the LA template is broadly used and generally considered indispensable. However, in practice users must solve a couple of dilemmas and take deci-

sions on seven different aspects that will have an impact on the form they want to use:

- Purpose of the LA: pedagogical and/or administrative;
- Target group: education professionals vs. non-education professionals (learners, employers, parents);
- Nature of mobility: school stays vs. work placements;
- Learning environment: dedicated vs. non-dedicated (how much control do you have over the learning process in an enterprise?);
- Duration: short-term vs. long-term;
- Rationale: recognition of required learning outcomes in the context of the national qualification vs. added value;
- Outcomes: intended outcomes vs. non-intended outcomes.

It can be concluded that it is difficult to develop a one-size-fits-all template – adaptations depending on the context are almost unavoidable and will need to be factored in.

¹² The following countries were represented: AT, BG, CY, CZ, EE, FI, FR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LV, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, TR and UK, as well as representatives from Cedefop, EfVET, the European Commission and the ECVET Secretariat.

Requirements of a Learning Agreement template for the use in mobility outside of Erasmus+

Some countries already use the ECVET tools and templates for mobility outside of Erasmus+, for instance for sectoral programmes, or for mobility outside of the EU. Enhanced flexibility of the LA template could theoretically help to promote further use of the LA in a context outside of Erasmus+. However:

- most funding programmes come with a requirement to use programme-specific tools and templates, so there is a risk of duplicating work;

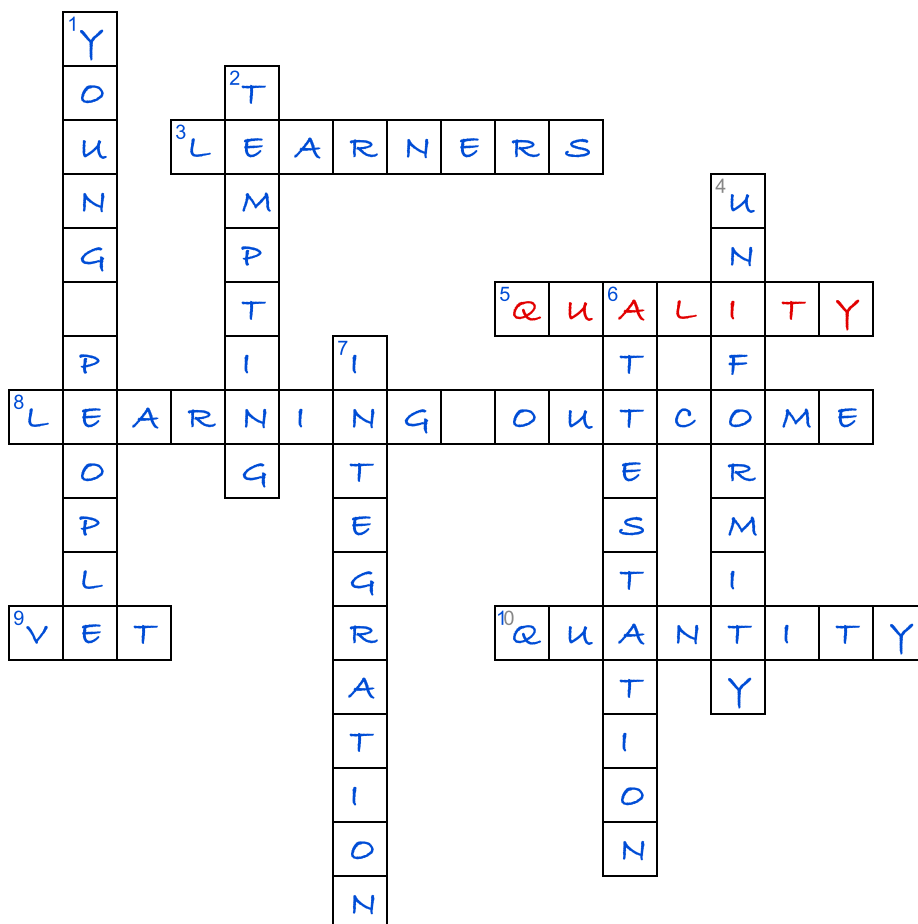
- the development of one integrated (digital) VET mobility tool supporting the new Erasmus programme would potentially make life easier for Erasmus mobility, but would probably not be accessible for mobility stakeholders outside Erasmus.

Digitalised workflow: Erasmus without paper in VET

There was a general agreement that a digitalised workflow is a 'natural' next step for VET learner mobility, especially as the VET sector seems to be lagging behind the Higher Education sector, where Erasmus without paper has already been introduced. Therefore, a digital mobility platform would be a good idea, particularly to ensure

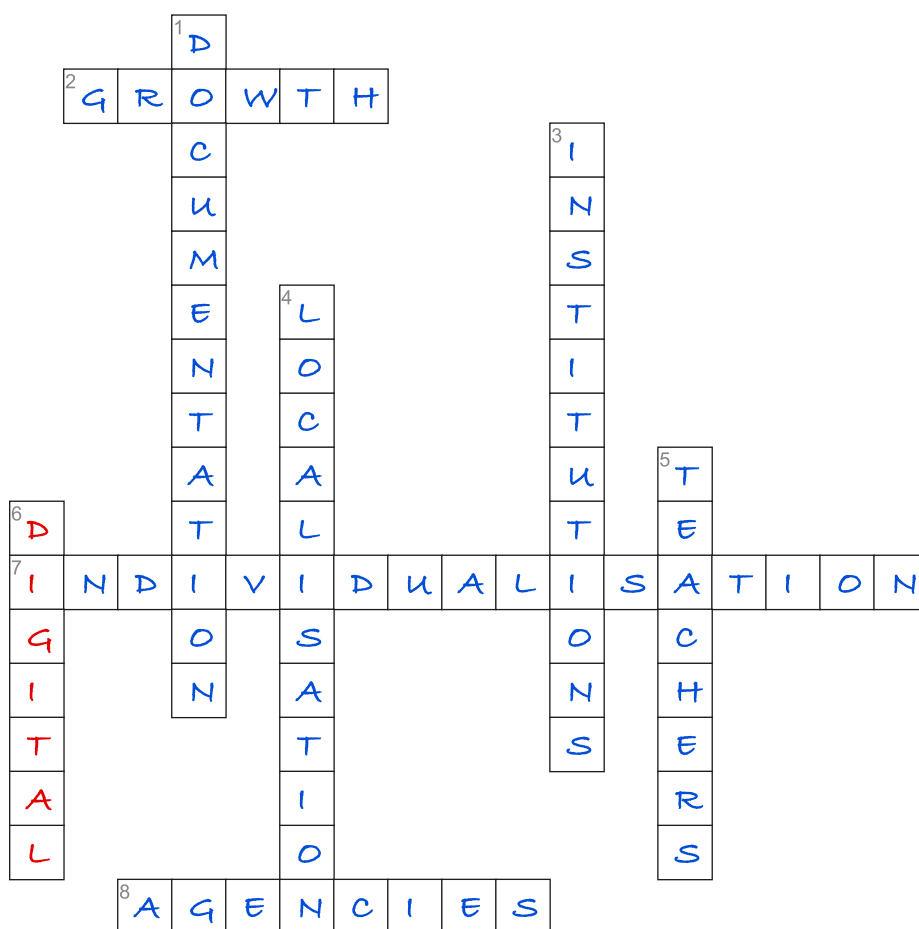
data transfer between the various documents (e.g. MoU, LA and Personal Transcript), as this will save a lot of time. The key messages from the discussions can be summarised as follows:

- Currently, there is a lot of paperwork involved in organizing and implementing a mobility project, and for this reason alone, digitalisation is a worthwhile investment. ECVET components like the MoU and the LA could be integrated into a more comprehensive mobility tool used for Erasmus+ projects. However, such a solution should also cover the **Online Linguistic Support (OLS)**, as this is used in the assessment of improvements in foreign language proficiency during the stay abroad.
- Technically, it is perfectly feasible to construct a digital platform for mobility. Yet, for any digital solution usability and interoperability should be of paramount concern: a digital platform should serve to make life easier for the users, not more complicated. However, mobility providers cannot rely entirely on devices – the procedures of assessment, validation and recognition still need to be closely monitored, and quality must always be maintained. If digitalisation comes at the cost of this, it is not a positive development, even if it saves time and paper.
- The requirements of the **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)** must be included into every step of the process. In some countries, the introduction of electronic signatures can be a problem as it entails costs for the user. There are, however, other ways of protecting data and living up to the demands of the GDPR (e.g. using passwords). Electronic signatures should therefore not be the main issue in the discussion about digital platforms.



The new Europass concept and how it can potentially support VET learner mobility

The new Europass (to be launched in Spring 2020) is much broader than the current Europass and will contain a strand on Digitally-Signed-Credentials, in addition to an E-profile, information related to skills and qualifications, and interoperability. A Europass digital credential can describe learning outcomes whether obtained through formal, non-formal and informal learning. A digital signature will guarantee the origin and integrity of the credential. In many ways, the information in the credentials would be similar to the information currently contained in a Learning Agreement, incl. validation/recognition by a competent institution. The participants agreed that these modernisations constitute a significant improvement for Europass as a tool to store credentials in the context of VET-learner mobility, but not a tool to organise the mobility process.



Note: the full length Synthesis report of the Thematic Seminar is available on the **ECVET Secretariat webpage**, together with further information material (background paper, presentations held at the seminar, etc.)



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Any comments or suggestions regarding this or future issues can be submitted to the following address: ECVET-Secretariat@icf-consult.com

