

Vocational Education and Training, VET: European Credit system ECVET

2008/0070(COD) - 09/04/2008 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to establish the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET).

PROPOSED ACT: Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council.

BACKGROUND: complexity and a lack of cooperation between different providers/authorities and between different national systems weaken the impact of vocational training in the EU. Vocational training is crucial for the EU's competitiveness and social cohesion. The lack of coherence also has the effect of making it difficult for citizens to move within the European Vocational Education and Training (VET) area and the European labour market and to pursue genuine lifelong learning without borders. One of the main obstacles to attracting more interest in transnational mobility as part of initial and continuing vocational training and education is the difficulty in identifying, validating and recognising learning outcomes acquired during a stay in another country. Furthermore lifelong learning is taking place increasingly in different countries and in a wide variety of contexts, formal, non-formal and informal.

In 2002, the Council emphasised that priority should be given to a system of credit transfer for Vocational education and training. In 2004, the European social partners agreed to give priority to the development and implementation of the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET). This ECVET proposal responds to the political mandate described above.

This ECVET proposal belongs to a series of European initiatives, including the European

Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), Europass (see [COD/2003/0307](#)), the European Quality Charter for Mobility (EQCM), the European Qualification Framework for lifelong learning (EQF) (see [COD/2006/0163](#)).

CONTENT: in order to enable EU citizens to pursue their learning pathway by building on their learning outcomes when moving from one learning context to another, and from one country to the other, it is necessary to find a system which offers an alternative to the diversity, even fragmentation of education, training and certification systems in Europe.

A large number of qualifications and of different competent institutions and actors may be involved.

In view of this diversity described above, **common conventions and technical principles** are required in order to ensure mutual trust and to enable the transfer and recognition of learning outcomes in the context of trans-national mobility.

In this context, the proposed Recommendation would commit the Member States to implement ECVET by 2012 on a voluntary basis. It establishes ECVET as a **methodological framework** that can be used to describe qualifications in terms of units of learning outcomes with associated points.

In summary the main elements of the proposal are as follows:

- As a **unit-based credit system**, ECVET will contribute to developing and extending European cooperation in education and training. ECVET is based on the designing of coherent and meaningful units of learning outcomes and not on fragmentation of qualifications. ECVET does not

aim for or require harmonisation of qualifications and VET systems; it aims instead for better comparability and compatibility. A unit-based approach supports flexible individual learning pathways, where learners can accumulate the required units of learning outcomes over time, in different countries, and in different learning modes. Its flexibility facilitates the process of organizing mobility experiences for VET learners. The ECVET principles and technical specifications are designed for use in a flexible but structured way. They will be further detailed in the ECVET users' guide.

- **ECVET partnerships and networks:** these shall involve competent institutions, authorities, social partners, sectors and providers are essential for the testing, development and broad implementation of ECVET. They create an environment in which mutual trust can be developed and provide a framework for ECVET credit transfer. The partnership will be formalised through an ECVET Memoranda of Understanding. In addition, proposed Learning Agreements will offer simple, convenient and systematic guidelines for practical implementation of credit transfer arrangements and procedures for an individual learner.
- **ECVET points:** these are attached to qualifications and units of learning outcomes. These are developed on the basis of common European conventions and, by enhancing the legibility of achieved learning outcomes they facilitate transfer and accumulation of learning outcomes achieved by a learner. The points provide information in terms of the overall weight of the learning outcomes required to achieve a qualification and allow the relative weight of each of its component units to be identified. As a convention, 60 points will be assigned to the learning outcomes expected to be achieved in a year of formal, full-time VET.
- **Transferability:** in ECVET, any credit obtained by a learner is an expression of the validity of his /her achieved learning outcomes. These are assessed and validated so that credit can be transferred from one VET qualifications system to another or from one learning context to another.
- **Implementation:** in order to create conditions for effective recognition and credit transfer processes, and thus promote mutual trust among the different actors, ECVET requires commitment to quality assurance criteria and procedures by all actors involved and at all the levels of the system. Implementation of ECVET should be a continuous process which requires the effective and sustainable commitment of competent institutions, authorities, social partners, sectors and providers, and will require a high degree of synergy between initiatives at the European, national and sectoral levels.
- **Commission's tasks:** the proposal invites the Commission to support Member States in carrying out the tasks set out in the recommendation and to develop an ECVET users' guide and tools. It is also required to establish a pilot ECVET users' group and to develop a European ECVET network in order to ensure the quality and overall coherence of the cooperation process for the implementation of ECVET. Moreover, the Commission will monitor and follow up the action taken in response to the Recommendation with a view to a possible review four years after its adoption.

Lastly, it should be noted that the recommendation includes two annexes containing the definitions and the main principles and technical specifications of the ECVET. This proposal is being presented alongside a related proposal on the establishment of a "European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training" (See [COD/2008/0069](#)).