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Monitoring ECVET implementation strategies in Europe in 2013

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Foreword

The aim of the European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET) is to allow individuals to gain a full vocational education and training (VET) qualification, or to update/upgrade their VET qualifications in a flexible way, by use of credits. ECVET requires qualifications to be described in terms of learning outcomes that will be then defined as units that might translate into credits. Learning outcomes recognised in form of credits may be transferred between education and training institutions, whether in the same country or abroad, and accumulated towards achieving a full or a partial qualification. If the VET system allows it, learning acquired in non-formal and informal settings may be assessed and validated as credits to be used for transfer and accumulation purposes. In this context, ECVET is more likely to reach its full potential if linked to the European qualifications framework (EQF)/national qualifications framework (NQF) developments that support the description of qualifications in terms of learning outcomes, as well as with national arrangements and practices for validating non-formal and informal learning.

This report covers ECVET developments in 38 countries and regions up to September 2013; it is the fourth since 2010, when Cedefop started its regular ECVET analysis in relation to national VET reforms. The deadlines of the ECVET recommendation set 2013 as the year for ECVET's gradual application to VET qualifications at all levels of the EQF, following more than three years of testing and development.

While there is mixed support of ECVET in relation to national VET reforms, the focus of ECVET on learning outcomes is almost unanimously welcomed. Cedefop's analysis shows that ECVET has led to actual reform at institutional and system level only in exceptional cases. Where it did, it was developed together with the NQF. So far, ECVET has, at most, triggered dialogue and analysis of the existing qualification structures: whether this will result in national policy solutions has still to be seen. Future national developments may depend on the extent to which the aims and purposes of the ECVET recommendation are streamlined, and expectations of ECVET implementation clarified.

While the reform potential of ECVET is still to be asserted, its success currently relies on the participation of education and training providers in EU-funded cross-country mobility projects. They are using it as a method to apply the learning outcomes approach in practice, accumulating a wealth of valuable experience. For the time being, however, the results of ECVET are scattered at the micro-level. Finding a way to mainstream these important experiences into

permanent solutions would benefit not only ECVET, but also other European tools and principles in education and training.

This report informs policy-making at European and national levels and contributes directly to the strategic objectives and short-term deliverables 2011-14 set out in the Bruges communiqué. With this report, Cedefop also aims to inform the ECVET external evaluation carried out by the European Commission in 2013-14.

Joachim James Calleja
Director

Acknowledgments

This report is based on analysis of the results of a survey conducted between March and September 2013 by Ramboll (*), gathering input from more than 70 representatives from social partners, ECVET experts, and education and training national and regional authorities. Cedefop is grateful to them for their availability and input in reviewing the country fiches, to the European Training Foundation (ETF) for facilitating contact with the experts and policy-makers in the acceding and candidate countries, and the European Commission for its support and feedback.

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Executive summary

The idea of a European credit (transfer) system for VET was introduced for the first time into the policy discourse in 2002 with the Council resolution on promoting better European cooperation on VET (Council of the European Union (EU), 2009) and the Copenhagen declaration of 30 November 2002. ECVET was formally launched with the 2009 recommendation (European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2009). During 2002-09, ECVET has undergone a shift in its original idea and philosophy, following technical work and a Europe-wide consultation. The initial goal, explicitly formulated in the 2004 Maastricht communiqué (Council of the EU and European Commission, 2004) was to develop and implement ECVET to 'allow learners to build upon the achievements resulting from their learning pathways when moving between vocational training systems' (Council of the EU and European Commission, 2004, p. 4), thus focusing on accumulation and transfer. In 2006 (Council of the EU and European Commission, 2006), this focus was retained but the reference to 'transfer' disappeared. ECVET's focus was broadened in the 2008 Bordeaux communiqué (Council of the EU and European Commission, 2008) where it was expected to support 'intra-European mobility', contribute to more significant 'development of individualised career paths', and improve 'recognition of non-formal and informal learning', and the 'transparency and common trust between education and training systems' (Council of the EU and European Commission, 2008, p. 3). Finally, in the ECVET recommendation, the purpose was formulated as follows: 'to facilitate the transfer, recognition and accumulation of assessed learning outcomes of the individuals who are aiming to achieve a qualification'.

The EU recommendation also gives Member States a roadmap for implementing ECVET. It foresees that as from 2012 – in accordance with national legislation and practice and on the basis of trials and testing – it should be possible for ECVET to be applied gradually to VET qualifications at all levels of the EQF and used for the purpose of the transfer, recognition and accumulation of individuals' learning outcomes achieved in formal and, where appropriate, non-formal and informal contexts.

According to the initial planning, 2013 is the year for ECVET's gradual application to VET qualifications at all levels of the EQF, following more than three years of testing and development. It is also the year of the ECVET external evaluation. In this context, the main purpose of this Cedefop report is to determine the current stage of ECVET in relation to national VET reforms, four years after the recommendation and 11 years after the first ECVET-related

meeting at European level ⁽¹⁾. More specifically, this report aims to determine whether surveyed countries/regions:

- (a) keep ECVET on hold (i.e. no testing for its use on national VET qualifications);
- (b) are testing it on VET qualifications;
- (c) have a policy commitment to apply ECVET at the level of qualifications or system level.

The report also aims to reveal possible correlations between national contexts in terms of unitisation/modularisation, transfer and accumulation and the state of ECVET developments in the countries surveyed. The report comprises a comparative analysis and fiches containing ECVET-relevant country-based information. The analysis is mainly based on the information provided by the respondents and so reflects their inputs and opinions.

This monitoring only touches on the use of ECVET in transnational mobility projects, as this is currently driven forward by education and training providers participating in the (former) lifelong learning programme (LLP) ⁽²⁾. They engage in transnational partnerships and develop units of learning outcomes and assessment criteria for the purpose of mobility periods. At this stage, there is no indication that ECVET-related developments at provider level are influencing the developments at VET qualifications/system level.

The report covers 38 countries/regions and the most important forms of formal VET provision, mainly falling under the responsibility of the national authorities (Ministry of Education, national agencies, national boards of education) involved in the survey. It reviews developments up to September 2013 and may encompass relevant developments dating 2009 or before. The total number of responses collected was 73, representing 37 national authorities, 10 social partners and 26 ECVET experts across the 38 countries/regions.

ECVET is mainly seen as a toolbox, rather than a system, and there is no single way to implement it. The concept of implementation differs across the countries surveyed and there is mixed support from the national authorities. This report tries to streamline this heterogeneity by focusing on whether, and to what extent, units of learning outcomes and credit (points) as intended by the ECVET recommendation are in place or being put in place for transfer and accumulation purposes in the national contexts (for internal use). The analysis shows that 17 countries/regions are keeping ECVET on hold, eight countries/regions are testing it, while 13 countries/regions have already formalised a commitment to implement

⁽¹⁾ The first meeting on a credit transfer system for VET took place in November 2002.

⁽²⁾ More than 300 ECVET-related projects have been carried out since 2007.

it. Most of the 13 countries with a formal commitment to implement ECVET report limited or no transfer possibilities and are predominantly school-based. Most of the countries that keep ECVET on hold (i.e. do not report ongoing testing for its use on national VET qualifications/systems) either have national credit transfer systems in place already or their initial vocational education and training (IVET) system is predominantly apprenticeship-based. The main argument why ECVET is on hold is the concern that its technical components and principles require reorganisation of a qualification system and corresponding procedures that already work well. There is also a fear that any changes towards ECVET may result in a heavier administrative burden on well-functioning systems.

Gradual implementation has started in six countries (Belgium (French-speaking community), Estonia, Hungary, Malta, Poland, and Finland). Romania needs to make its ECVET-compatible credit system operational. Latvia and Lithuania are still running pilots, while in Greece, Croatia, Italy and Slovakia ⁽³⁾ no ECVET-related activity was reported though policy commitment is formalised. In all countries where commitment was formalised, ECVET is being, or will be, developed in parallel with NQF developments, as part of broader reforms.

In countries where ECVET is tested or is planned to be tested, there is no indication of whether this will lead to a formal policy commitment in the near future. Testing is carried out in the context of non-formal and informal learning in the Czech Republic, and two other countries are considering testing ECVET for the same purpose (Austria and Sweden). Testing on formal VET qualifications is under way in seven countries (Bulgaria, France, Germany, Montenegro, Norway, Portugal and Turkey). The potential of ECVET in reforming VET qualifications/systems seems still to be low, but it may be boosted once NQFs enter in the implementation phase.

Cedefop's analysis shows a clear trend towards introduction of units/modules in national qualification systems and of systemic arrangements to support transfer that had already started before 2009. However, in IVET, this is not accompanied by a move towards awarding VET qualifications based on accumulation of certifiable units or modules and countries generally do not follow the ECVET distinction in terms of units and modules. To what extent ECVET will strengthen the 'unit' approach, improve transfer arrangements and/or determine a shift towards accumulation is still to be seen.

Current evidence shows that certification in most IVET systems is carried out at the end of a full learning cycle, after a student has gained the learning

⁽³⁾ According to the information provided by the representative of the national authority, Slovakia has already formalised its commitment to the ECVET implementation. However, this information was not confirmed by the ECVET expert.

outcomes leading to a full qualification. There is also evidence that single certified units/modules or partial qualifications may not be valued on the labour market. As a result, certification following assessment at the end of an education and training programme may be used as a way to encourage young IVET learners to work towards the full state-recognised award, before they enter the labour market. Among such countries, those with predominantly apprenticeship-based IVET seem to be the most reluctant to accept the principles of unitisation and accumulation.

On a different level, use of certifiable units or modules may be beneficial to people who are already on the labour market to help them update or upgrade their skills or to complete a qualification. This is why the role of ECVET in supporting validation of non-formal and informal learning needs to be made more explicit. Due to the relatively large scale of VET qualifications in terms of corresponding learning outcomes, it is unlikely that an individual may acquire a full qualification through the validation of his/her non-formal and informal learning. However, assessment and validation of single units of learning outcomes may improve an individual's chances making non-formal and informal learning visible for the purpose of access to formal training programmes, exemption from parts of a formal training programme, or partial certification.

While the strength of ECVET is its focus on learning outcomes, the analysis shows its weakness is related to the use of credit points. Learning outcomes are the 'carrier' of information, both on the labour market and between education and training providers; credit points have very limited value if not associated to the learning outcomes they refer to. It is not surprising that an important number of respondents do not see the usefulness of credit points and several even suggest their revision or elimination.

In many countries, VET qualifications at tertiary level fall under the remit of higher education and are compatible with the European credit transfer and accumulation system (ECTS). Most of the current national credit systems for VET are not linked to ECTS. Additional analysis and evidence are needed on the status of VET qualifications at tertiary level and the relationship with higher education, as well as on the reasons why national credit systems for VET are not linked to ECTS. This will inform policy discourse on the compatibility and complementarity between ECVET and ECTS. It will also shed light on the potential role ECVET may play in improving transferability between VET and higher education.

According to the survey respondents, ECVET can help improve trust in the quality of the assessment carried out overseas (mainly through its use of learning outcomes as a common language) and address the reluctance that a 'home institution' may have in validating and/or recognising foreign learning outcomes.

However, its potential in terms of fulfilling its credit transfer and accumulation function risks remaining limited in the near future, as the main obstacles to credit transfer are existing assessment and awarding approaches at national level (reluctance to award units and/or modules) and the short duration of VET mobility (shorter than one national unit/module). It can be expected that the priority attached to ECVET in national policy agendas will go hand-in-hand with mobility in VET and the number of VET students participating in overseas mobility.

It is fair to say that ECVET is a complex project. It touches core and established quality-assured elements of qualification systems such as assessment, validation and certification. It is not surprising that most countries have not yet taken a decision in relation to ECVET at institutional and system level. Time is needed for such decisions and for ECVET to be embedded in national contexts. Since ECVET is not regarded as a system, but as a flexible toolbox, there will not be one 'national ECVET shape'. As we can also observe in NQF developments where countries are adapting level descriptors to national specificities and priorities, ECVET will also take various national shapes that will share one common principle: the learning outcomes.

CHAPTER 1.

Introduction

1.1. ECVET intervention logic and purposes

ECVET is one of the European tools and principles launched in the past decade as an integral part of the Education and Training 2010/20 and Copenhagen processes.

According to the recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of 18 June 2009 (European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2009), the aim of ECVET is to allow individuals to gain a full VET qualification, or to update/upgrade their VET qualifications in a flexible way, by use of credits. The main structural elements of ECVET are:

- (a) VET qualifications at all EQF levels are expressed in learning outcomes and are composed of units of learning outcomes;
- (b) the units of learning outcomes can be assessed and validated as credits with or without associated ECVET credit points (the ECVET recommendation foresees assessment criteria for each unit of learning outcomes); if national legislation allows, the units can also be recognised (i.e. awarded). Once validated and/or awarded, the credits associated to the unit of learning outcomes remain valid over time. This allows:
 - (i) individuals who are already engaged in a course of study:
 - to interrupt the studies and then resume them without losing credits;
 - to transfer credits when changing the course of study or education and training provider;
 - to transfer at home credits gained abroad;
 - (ii) individuals who are not engaged in a course of study but have acquired learning at work and/or through non-formal learning:
 - to have their learning assessed against the assessment criteria of a unit of learning outcomes, validated, and, if possible, awarded as credits;
 - (iii) if national legislation allows, the credits associated to the units of learning outcomes which comprise a qualification may be accumulated until a full qualification is gained.

At system level, ECVET structural elements can help improve the transparency of VET qualifications, especially if developed in relation to the NQF. They show what (units of) learning outcomes in different VET qualifications have in common and at what level. They also allow for easier updating of qualifications

to incorporate new technologies or ways of working, by replacing or updating individual units where needed.

At individual level, ECVET structural elements can improve the readability and understanding of a VET qualification and the flexibility in terms of how it is acquired, such as flexible programme duration and provision, multiple entrance points, and transferability.

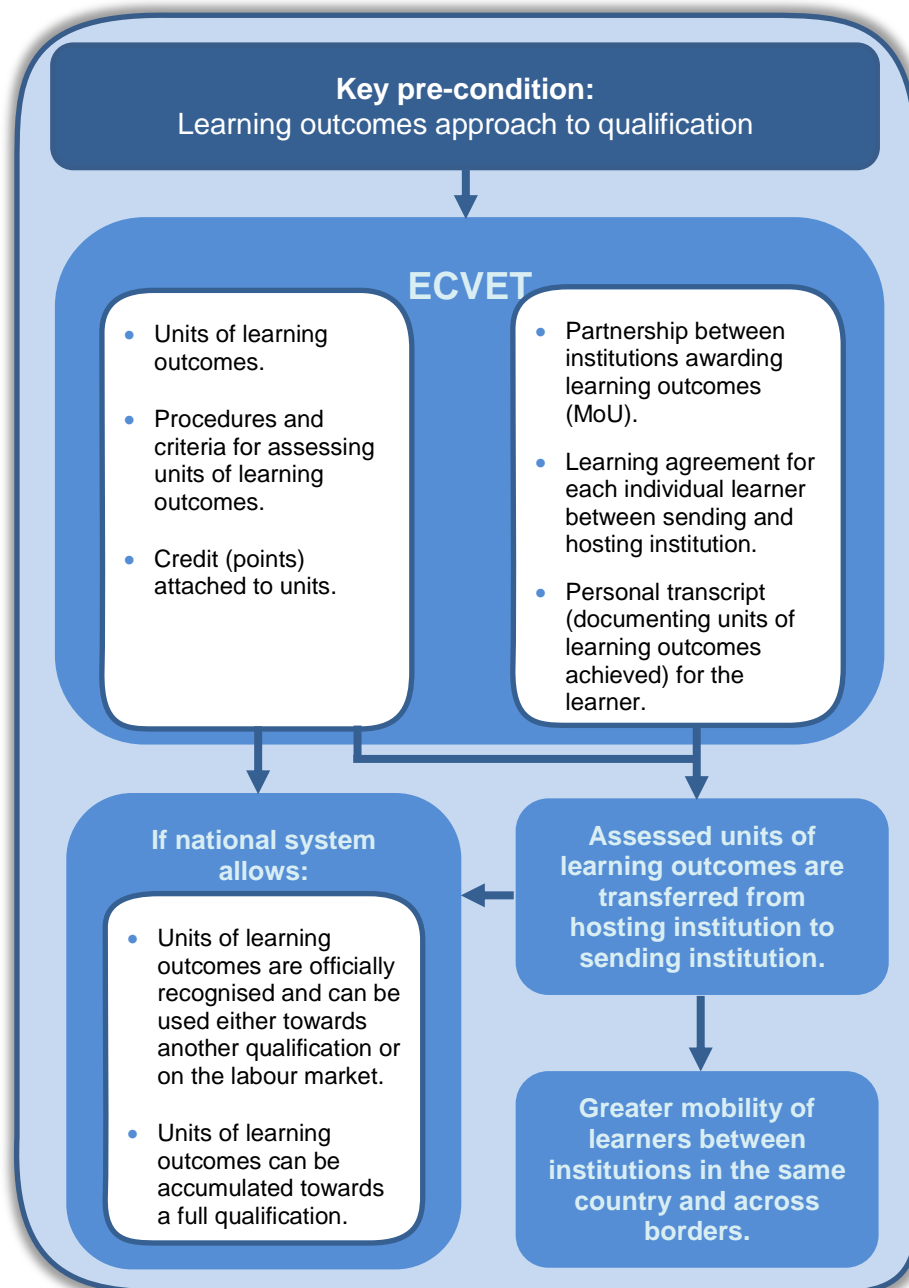
This is the lifelong learning (LLL) dimension of ECVET and it requires that it is embedded in the national reforms of the VET systems.

There is also the transnational dimension of ECVET that aids transfer of learning outcomes acquired abroad. It may be supported or not by its LLL dimension: the units of learning outcomes assessed and validated abroad may account for a national unit of a qualification, they may be validated, awarded, accumulated at home as part of a full qualification. When it is not, the education and training providers develop units of learning outcomes for the purpose of cross-country mobility only, following the advice formulated at European level (European Commission and Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), 2013b). The learning outcomes acquired by the learner abroad are taken into account in the learner's learning pathway, so he/she does not undergo the same learning again.

ECVET also includes a number of operational elements that aim to support partnerships, more common in the transnational context and are underpinned by:

- (a) memorandum of understanding (MoU), a framework partnership agreement between competent institutions empowered to award qualifications or units or to give credit;
- (b) learning agreement which specifies the 'particular conditions for a period of mobility, such as the identity of the learner, the duration of the mobility period, the learning outcomes expected to be achieved and the associated ECVET points' (European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2009);
- (c) personal transcript which records the learning outcomes achieved by the learner during the mobility period and the corresponding ECVET credits gained.

Figure 1 **What ECVET does**



Source: Cedefop, 2013c.

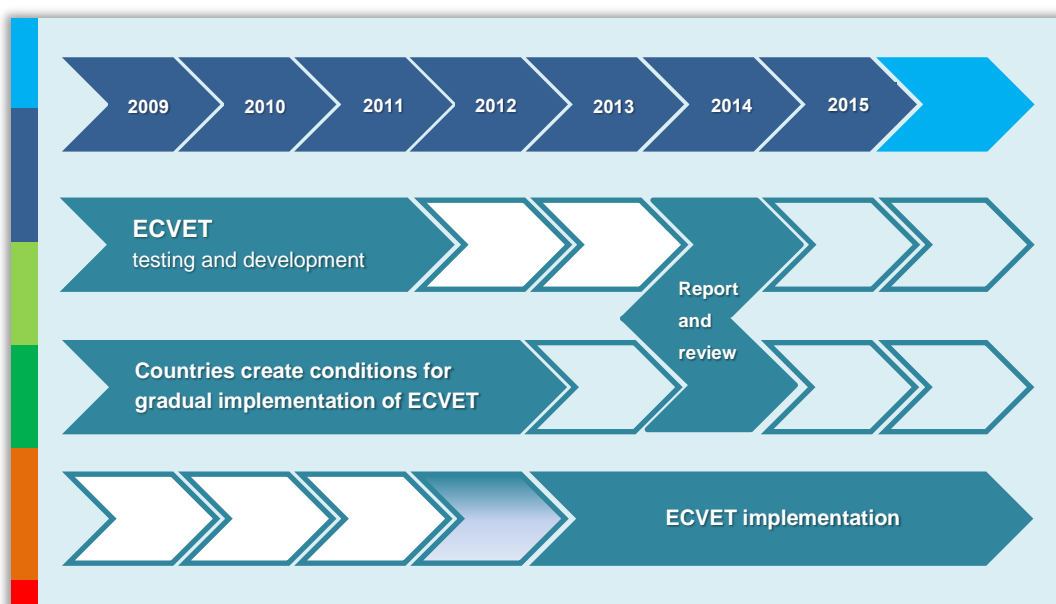
1.2. The 2013 monitoring exercise

Countries are developing ECVET following the recommendation of the European Parliament and Council in accordance with their policy priorities and the development of their qualification systems.

The EU recommendation gives Member States an implementation roadmap. This foresees that from 2012 – in accordance with national legislation and practice, and on the basis of trials and testing – it is possible for ECVET to be gradually applied to VET qualifications at all levels of the EQF, and used for the purpose of the transfer, recognition and accumulation of individuals' learning outcomes achieved in formal and, where appropriate, non-formal and informal contexts.

According to the initial planning, 2013 is the year for gradual ECVET application to VET qualifications at all levels of the EQF, following more than three years of testing and development. The same year is also planned for ECVET external evaluation.

Figure 2 Time line for the implementation of ECVET



Source: Cedefop, 2012, p. 5.

Cedefop has monitored ECVET developments in national VET reforms since 2010 and published annual comparative analyses. Starting from 2012, Cedefop's reports also include fiches containing ECVET-relevant country-based information ⁽⁴⁾. Cedefop monitoring focuses mainly on the LLL dimension of ECVET, i.e. to what extent ECVET's structural elements are taken up in the context of national

⁽⁴⁾ Previous monitoring reports are available at:
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications.aspx?project=2652>
 [accessed 26.11.2013].

VET reforms to improve transfer, validation and accumulation of learning outcomes.

The purpose of this year's monitoring was twofold:

- (a) put ECVET into the different national contexts (identifying the state of play in terms of transfer and accumulation);
- (b) determine the current stage of ECVET in relation to national VET reforms four years after the recommendation and 11 years after the first ECVET-related meeting at European level ⁽⁵⁾. The monitoring aims to determine whether surveyed countries/regions:
 - (i) keep ECVET on hold (i.e. no current trials on VET qualifications);
 - (ii) are testing it on VET qualifications;
 - (iii) have a policy commitment to use ECVET in reforming the VET systems.

The country fiches, which form the basis of the comparative analysis, summarise the input received from the respondents and provide more detailed country information on the ECVET context and its state-of-play.

This monitoring only touches on the use of ECVET in transnational mobility projects, as this is currently driven forward by education and training providers participating in the (former) LLP ⁽⁶⁾. These engage in transnational partnerships and develop units of learning outcomes and assessment criteria for the purpose of mobility periods. At this stage, there is no indication that ECVET-related developments at provider level are influencing the developments at VET qualifications/system level.

1.2.1. Timeline, geographical coverage and scope

The report covers 38 countries/regions and the most important forms of formal VET provision, mainly under the responsibility of the national and regional authorities involved in the survey. It covers the period up to September 2013 and may encompass relevant developments dating 2009 or before.

1.2.1.1. Scope of the comparative analysis

For the comparative analysis, IVET and the year 2009 were selected as a baseline for identifying the state of play in unitisation and modularisation (the use of units or modules across the surveyed countries/regions). This represents a proxy for the cluster analysis of ECVET national contexts and of ECVET developments.

⁽⁵⁾ The first meeting on a credit transfer system for VET took place in November 2002.

⁽⁶⁾ More than 300 ECVET-related projects have been carried out since 2007.

The comparative analysis starts off by identifying the baseline and the country clusters; the status in terms of transfer and accumulation is analysed from this. This sets the context for the presentation of the ECVET added value and the status of ECVET policy-making in relation to national reforms.

1.2.1.2. *Scope of the country fiches*

The report includes one country fiche for each of the 38 countries/regions. Most of the fiches were validated by the representative of the national or regional authority involved in the survey.

The fiches share a common structure with two sections. The first provides information on the structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification covering different parts of VET provision (not only IVET), on validation of non-formal and informal learning, and on cross-country geographic mobility for VET. The second section includes the status of ECVET policy-making and information on the national contact point (NCP) and community of practice (CoP) ⁽⁷⁾.

1.2.2. **Survey and respondents**

1.2.2.1. *Survey*

Most information from the countries surveyed was collected during March-September 2013.

The respondents were invited to provide ECVET contextual information: on the VET qualification structures (whether they apply units/modules) and the transfer and award arrangements; on the validation of non-formal and informal learning; and on the geographic mobility for VET. They were also asked to express their opinions on several aspects: the obstacles hampering transfer, validation of non-formal and informal learning, and cross-country geographic mobility, as well as on the added value that ECVET may bring to the introduction of units to VET qualifications; to the transfer of learning at national level and across countries; and to the validation of non-formal and informal learning. The respondents finally reported on the status of policy decisions on ECVET and the most important ECVET-related activities.

⁽⁷⁾ In the context of ECVET, a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Cedefop, 2013b).

1.2.2.2. *Respondents*

In most of the countries surveyed two stakeholders were interviewed: one representing the national and regional authorities, i.e. Ministry of Education, national agencies, national boards of education; and one representing a social partner. Both respondents were identified through the European ECVET users' group. Representatives from the acceding and candidate countries were identified with the help of the ETF.

In several countries it has been a challenge to identify appropriate respondents among the social partners. In these cases, ECVET experts were approached through the national team of ECVET experts or the ECVET projects database (European Commission and EACEA, 2013a).

In five EU Member States (Belgium, Germany, Spain, France and the UK) additional interviews have been conducted for better geographic coverage or to reach a higher number of social partners.

The total number of respondents reached is 73: 37 national authorities, 10 social partners, and 26 ECVET experts across the 38 countries/regions. A complete list of organisations involved in the survey is provided in the annex.

CHAPTER 2.

Comparative analysis

The aim of the comparative analysis was to determine the status of developments in ECVET in relation to national VET reforms and its perceived added value in the surveyed countries/regions. The analysis starts with an overview of the context in terms of unitisation/modularisation, transfer and accumulation; it then moves to analysis of ECVET developments. The comparative analysis is carried out on clusters of countries to aid identifying possible correlations between national contexts and ECVET developments.

The first step of the analysis was to allocate the countries/regions surveyed to clusters using a common baseline (Section 2.1.); the clusters were then used to review the different national contexts in terms of transfer and accumulation (Section 2.2) and for the analysis of ECVET developments within the national VET systems (Section 2.3).

The issue of heterogeneity of VET systems internationally, as well as VET diversity within a country itself, raises methodological issues for the baseline and context overview. For comparability and coherence, IVET (VET at upper secondary level) was considered central to the overview of the contexts (baseline, clusters, transfer and accumulation). IVET was given priority over continuing vocational education and training (CVET) as it is the most regulated form of VET provision across all surveyed countries, and corresponding VET qualifications are expected to be at the same EQF levels.

VET qualifications at tertiary level are not included in the analysis as respondents rarely reported on them. Where they did, it became evident that qualifications at this level fall under the remit of higher education institutions, and are ECTS rated. Further investigations using literature review, confirmed that this is the case in many countries.

2.1. The baseline and country clusters

Central to the baseline was the use of units and/or modules ⁽⁸⁾ across the countries/regions surveyed in initial VET in 2009. The baseline was defined for

⁽⁸⁾ One of the main findings of the forthcoming Cedefop study on unitisation and modularisation indicates that, in practice, it is difficult to distinguish between units and modules. The terms are often used interchangeably.

methodological purposes and it was based on the information reported by the countries surveyed, as well as on Cedefop's additional evidence. It represents a proxy for the allocation of countries to clusters and is not intended to indicate progress in terms of ECVET developments.

2.1.1. Units and modules in the countries/regions surveyed

According to the reports, there is currently widespread use of units/modules within IVET in Europe ⁽⁹⁾. In many ways, what has occurred could be described as a 'quiet revolution' in the expansion of modular structures within IVET qualifications.

Of the 38 countries/regions, 19 reported to have had units or modules in place before 2009: Belgium (German-speaking community), Croatia (units/modules were introduced in the context of the national VET reform), Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland (all VET qualifications falling under the common awards system (CAS), excluding apprenticeship), Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia (since 2002-03), Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the UK.

Among this group, the following have credit transfer systems for VET and credit points attached to the existing units/modules: Finland, Iceland, Ireland (all CAS, excluding apprenticeship), Romania, Slovenia, Sweden and the UK. Spain and Luxembourg report credit transfer systems in the absence of credit points; though they do not make use of credit points, units/modules are individually certified and may be accumulated towards a full qualification.

It is worth noting that in most of the 19 countries/regions with units or modules, IVET is predominantly school-based.

The remaining 19 countries/regions do not make use of units and/or modules and do not have credit transfer systems in place for VET: Austria ⁽¹⁰⁾, Belgium (Flanders), Belgium (French-speaking community), Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, the FYROM, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malta, Montenegro, Norway, Slovakia, and Switzerland. Of these, six are either gradually introducing units or modules or are piloting them:

- (a) Belgium (French-speaking community) and Malta are gradually introducing units;
- (b) Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania and Montenegro are piloting modules/units.

⁽⁹⁾ In CVET, the use of units/modules is even more widespread.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Around 4% of the apprenticeship training programmes have been modularised in Austria.

Unlike the countries with units or modules, several of the countries without have IVET systems which are predominantly apprenticeship-based: Austria ⁽¹¹⁾, Denmark, Germany, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

2.1.2. Country clusters

The 38 countries are divided into two main categories, according to the baseline:

- (a) those with modules/units in place: 19 countries;
- (b) those without modules/units: 19 countries.

Among the countries with modules/units in place, a further distinction may be made between those without national credit transfer systems for VET and those that report such systems. Among the countries without units or modules, a further distinction may be made between those with predominantly school-based IVET and those with predominantly apprenticeship-based IVET.

The comparative analysis uses these cluster groups:

Table 1 **Cluster of countries/regions**

Cluster I: countries with units/modules and credit systems
FI, IS, IE (all CAS, excluding apprenticeship), LU, RO, SI, ES, SE, UK
Cluster II: countries with units/modules and no credit systems
BE (DE), HR, EE, FR (all qualifications of the Ministry of Education), HU, NL, PL, PT, RS (since 2002-03), TR
Cluster III: countries without units/modules and predominantly apprenticeship-based IVET
AT, DK, DE, LI, NO, CH
Cluster IV: countries without units/modules and predominantly school-based IVET
BE (FL), BE (FR), BG, CY, CZ, MK, EL, IT, LV, LT, MT, ME, SK

Source: Cedefop.

⁽¹¹⁾ In Austria, school-based IVET also accounts for a large share of VET students. In the school year 2010/11, according to statistics Austria, apprenticeship in Austria accounted for 39.30% of the total participation rate in the 10th grade at upper secondary level. At this level, participation in general education was 20.40%, while participation in vocational school-based education and training was 38.70%.

2.2. ECVET national contexts: transfer and accumulation

This section looks at the current arrangements in transfer and accumulation, setting the context for analysing ECVET developments in national VET reforms in the countries/regions surveyed. As becomes evident, the possibilities of transfer of learning in a transnational context (transfer in the home country of learning acquired abroad) are more limited than the possibilities of transfer within a country's education and training system.

For transfer within an education and training system, respondents mainly reported on the opportunities learners have to move achieved learning between national qualifications at the same level (as when changing school/education and training provider or between different national qualifications/courses/programmes when the learning is deemed relevant within another qualification/course/programme at the same level).

For transfer across countries, respondents focused on transnational mobility periods organised by the education and training providers for their students. This gives students the opportunity to have any learning achieved abroad transferred at home as part of their education and training.

Accumulation is addressed in relation to the award of a qualification. A qualification may be awarded either through accumulation of independently validated or certified units or modules, where they are in place, or through a final assessment at the end of an education and training programme.

2.2.1. Countries with units/modules (clusters I and II)

2.2.1.1. *Units/modules in practice*

The ECVET recommendation makes a clear distinction between the components of VET qualifications defined as units of learning outcomes and the components of a formal learning programme or training provision commonly known as modules.

However, in practice countries do not generally follow the ECVET distinction. Table 2 indicates the different terms used, and where available, additional information in relation to each of them.

Table 2 Overview of the terms used for modules and units

Country	Terms used	Details
BE (DE)	Module	
HR	Unit/module	
EE	Module	A module is a comprehensive content unit within a curriculum which determines the learning outcomes conforming to the requirements of a professional standard. A module is made up of one or several subjects or topics.
FI	Study unit	IVET qualifications are made up of 'study units' which are nationally decided and defined by the Finnish National Board of Education (Opetushallitus / Utbildningsstyrelsen) (OPH), and are made up of learning outcomes which relate to skills, knowledge and competence.
FR	Certification unit	Each of the qualifications of the French Ministry of Education (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale) (MEN) has a legal reference framework. It includes the diploma reference describing the characteristics of the qualification, as well as the certification reference setting out both the skills and expertise needed for the award (broken down into certification units) and the specific conditions under which they are examined.
HU	Module	VET qualifications are made up of core and optional modules. The modules list core competences and are mainly task and competence-based (Cedefop, 2014, forthcoming).
IS	Course unit or study unit	
IE	Units of five, 10, 15, 20 or 30 credits for minor (component) awards	
LU	Module	For each module, the competences to be acquired – including the three dimensions knowledge, skills and attitudes – are defined.
NL	Core tasks	Vocational qualifications are made up of a number of core tasks (<i>kerntaken</i>) which are broken down into work processes and associated competences.
PL	Modular curricular packages	These are broken down into 'modular units'.
PT	Module	Modules are structured around subjects/components which vary according to the programmes attended. The training programmes included in the national catalogue of qualifications (NCQ) are modularised with short-term training modules of between 25 and 50 hours.

Country	Terms used	Details
RO	Units of learning outcomes	The units represent a coherent and explicit set of competences. These describe what a student needs to know, understand and perform at the end of the education and training programme, the outcomes of learning.
RS	Modular curricula	Modules are specific segments, i.e. learning packages leading to the achievement of the defined learning outcomes. Modules are either independent or a part of larger programmes, i.e. organisational units. They have been designed in accordance with congenial and complementary principles, different educational requirements and the defined subject tasks. The structure of modules is such that it enables the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences and connection between disciplines or subjects.
SI	Module	A module is understood as a comprehensive unit of an educational programme; its learning goals and content include specialised theoretical and practical knowledge and some general knowledge. The professional parts of VET programmes are outcome-oriented; general subjects are more input-oriented. Modules are linked to credits and have credit points attached.
ES	Unit of competences	Each professional qualification is formed by a set of codified units of competences developed following a common methodology which are the reference to the catalogue of VET diplomas (<i>catálogo de títulos de formación profesional</i>), developed by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports and to the national repertoire of professional certificates (<i>repertorio nacional de certificados de profesionalidad</i>) developed by the Ministry of Employment and Social Security.
SE	Module	The general structure for vocational programmes comprises 2 500 upper secondary credits, of which 600 are in foundation subjects, 1 600 are in programme specific subjects and subjects within orientation and programme specialisations, 200 are in individual options and 100 are for a diploma project.
TR	Module	
UK	Units of learning outcomes	

Source: Cedefop.

The term 'module' is more widespread than 'unit'. However, according to what respondent reports, most are 'competence'-based, so they apply a learning outcome orientation.

Table 3 **Overview of possibilities of learning transfer and obstacles: countries with units/modules and no credit transfer systems (cluster II)**

Country	Transfer	Obstacles/factors affecting transfer
BE (DE)	A system-wide framework enables transfer of assessed learning in a LLL perspective.	No institutional obstacles to transfer of learning between qualifications and learning providers.
HR	Individual awarding bodies decide on a case-by-case basis if they will accept transfer of achieved learning.	
EE	Students may transfer their achieved learning via their grades.	
FR	Transfer of learning between different diplomas/qualifications is supported by an enabling framework, where individual awarding bodies decide on a case-by-case basis if they will accept transfer.	Transfer is accepted if the learning to be transferred is similar or equivalent and if the assessment procedures are clear and transparent.
HU	Common modules between different qualifications may be transferred once the student has achieved the relevant knowledge, skills and competences making up the module.	For transfer to happen more widely, education and training providers need clear guidance on how to recognise assessed learning outcomes and avoid double assessment (processes, templates are necessary). Legislative and political support is needed.
NL	Transfer of achieved learning between different training programmes and education and training providers is largely at the discretion of education and training providers.	Transfer is made more complicated by funding issues. Also, exam committees in education and training providers do not always trust the certificates (quality of the assessment or the content of what is learned) and do not always accept the transfer.
PL	Modules are transferable, but only within the same sector (VET).	Enabling credit transfer between sectors (i.e. general, vocational and higher education) needs a change of mind-set among educational, professional and sectoral organisations.
PT	The legal framework already foresees this portability/transfer between different programmes, but it is not fully implemented. Learners may transfer modules within the same subject area.	The main obstacle to transfer of assessed learning between programmes in VET is the fact that VET programmes are organised in different ways.

Country	Transfer	Obstacles/factors affecting transfer
TR	Transfer of achieved learning is not supported by a legal framework. Therefore, transfer of achieved learning between schools and selected qualifications takes place only as part of pilot projects.	

Source: Cedefop.

2.2.1.2. *Transfer of achieved learning within systems*

Reports from countries with units/modules (clusters I and II) suggest it is usually possible for students to transfer their achieved learning between national qualifications at the same level when changing school/education and training provider, or between different national qualifications/courses/programmes when the learning is deemed relevant within another qualification/course/programme at the same level.

Among countries with units/modules and credit systems (cluster I), transfer is enabled by a credit transfer system, operational in eight out of the nine ⁽¹²⁾: (Finland, Iceland, Ireland (all CAS, excluding apprenticeship), Luxembourg, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the UK). While credit transfer is technically possible, complexity of arrangements and heterogeneity of quality of provision and assessment act as barriers. In the UK, for instance, limited demand from the learners and funding arrangements are reported among the most relevant obstacles to credit transfer. If public funding for education and training providers is based on student completion of the module and/or unit, then they may be reluctant to support students to move in and out of the system over different periods of time and with different training providers (Cedefop, 2014, forthcoming).

In nine out of 10 of those with units/modules and no credit transfer system (cluster II) ⁽¹³⁾, transfer may take the form of achieved module/unit transfer.

Except for Portugal, where modules achieved are transferrable within the same subject area only, and Turkey, where a framework has not yet been developed, transfer of achieved learning between related qualifications is generally possible. Complexity and heterogeneity of quality of provision and assessment are the main barriers to transfer; absence of a credit transfer system does not seem to be a main concern.

⁽¹²⁾ Romania reports a credit transfer system which is not yet fully operational.

⁽¹³⁾ In Serbia, information is not available.

2.2.1.3. *Accumulation and award of a VET qualification*

Award of a VET qualification for those in an IVET programme may be carried out by accumulating units/modules that are assessed and certified separately or on the basis of a final exam, where a more holistic concept of education and training is followed.

The situation in the 16 countries/regions with units/modules (clusters I and II) ⁽¹⁴⁾ is as follows:

- (a) award on accumulation of units/modules is possible in six countries/regions (Ireland, Spain, Luxembourg, Finland, Sweden, the UK) of which four make use of credit points (Ireland, Finland, Sweden, the UK) and two do not (Spain, Luxembourg);
- (b) award on final assessment takes place in 10 countries/regions (Belgium (German-speaking community), Estonia ⁽¹⁵⁾, France, Hungary, Iceland, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia). Of these, Iceland and Slovenia have an operational credit transfer system in place.

A total of 10 countries out of 16 make the award based on a final holistic assessment. The aim is always for young learners in IVET to work towards the full state-recognised award, before they enter the labour market, so a holistic concept of training is followed. This may be explained by the concern expressed by the Netherlands that learners will leave the system with only partial qualifications which are not necessarily needed or valued by the labour market.

2.2.1.4. *Transfer in the home country of learning acquired abroad*

Although all countries in clusters I and II make use of units and/or modules, most international mobility periods for VET are designed for relatively short periods and do not cover a whole unit/module. In these cases, transferability of credits or units/modules is not an issue as learning abroad will be included in overall assessment (by the home institution) of the whole module/course. The learning acquired abroad is taken into account in the learner's learning pathway at home, so avoiding repeat learning.

Where cross-country mobility periods are longer and cover a whole unit/module, the possibilities of transfer in the home country of learning acquired

⁽¹⁴⁾ Information on award was not available for Croatia, Serbia and Turkey.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Students of vocational programmes are not required to take state examinations to graduate; instead they may take a professional qualification examination. Nevertheless state examinations are obligatory for VET students wishing to continue their studies in universities. These students have an opportunity to take an additional year (up to 35 study weeks) in subjects in which they want to pass the state exam.

abroad are more limited than those available for transfer within national education and training.

In cluster I (countries with units/modules and credit transfer systems), the architecture of the systems supports credit transfer across borders in most countries. Credit transfer is thus commonly accepted if teachers and trainers trust the quality of learning achieved abroad. In Spain and the UK, credit transfer across borders is normally not possible due to national quality assurance regulations on assessment and recognition.

In cluster II (countries with units/modules and no credit transfer systems), France and Turkey report no situations of cross-border transfer: national quality assurance measures require that assessment be carried out according to national assessment criteria to ensure that learning outcomes are the same. In the remaining eight countries, cross-border transfer is possible on a case-by-case basis or as part of pilot projects.

2.2.2. Countries without units/modules (clusters III and IV)

2.2.2.1. Transfer of achieved learning within systems

Countries in these clusters are furthest from the concept of a credit transfer system. However, most report situations of transfer of achieved learning where the student applies for it.

Among the 17 countries/regions where information was reported, ⁽¹⁶⁾ only Cyprus reported no examples of transfer. In the Czech Republic, Denmark, the FYROM, Italy, Liechtenstein and Norway, flexible arrangements allow education and learning providers to accept transfer when the learner applies for it and when the learning is deemed relevant. In these countries, heterogeneity in quality and provision, as well as limited demand from the learners, are the main obstacles to transfer.

Belgium (French-speaking community), Latvia and Malta are currently developing frameworks to support transfer.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Information was not reported for Germany and Slovakia.

Table 4 Overview of possibilities of learning transfer: clusters III and IV

Cluster	Country	Is transfer of achieved learning possible?
III	AT	There are several legislative provisions supporting transfer. In the dual system, an apprenticeship period may be reduced for those who have already attended (parts of) or completed another apprenticeship or school-based VET or general education. Qualifications in the same or a similar specialist field (acquired abroad) may also be recognised as equivalent (conditions specified in the training legislation).
	DK	<p>The high degree of flexibility that characterises the Danish qualification system makes transfer of achieved learning between qualifications, learning pathways and learning providers possible on a case-by-case basis (such as from individual to individual, institution to institution).</p> <p>At an individual level, IVET students prefer staying in a class, with the social relations that this gives, and are therefore less inclined to take up different modules, or take up transfer between institutions.</p> <p>At an institutional level, the main obstacle to transfer is lack of trust between different parts of the qualification system. This is not so much an issue between IVET institutions, but it is difficult to recognise qualifications from IVET in high school, for example.</p>
	LI	The Liechtenstein vocational training system is permeable and compatible; there are no dead-end qualifications.
	NO	<p>Transfer of learning outcomes within the same learning programme/qualification is supported by the legal system.</p> <p>Transfer of learning outcomes between learning programmes/qualifications is regulated for certain learning programmes: national authorities work with social partners to decide where bridges are possible. If the bridges are not within what is regulated by the legal framework, transfer may happen on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>Transfer is particularly challenging if a learner who attended the two years of school training for one programme wants to transfer to another programme for the two years of work training.</p>
	CH	<p>It is possible for achieved learning to be transferred between education and training providers and qualifications in the same canton or between cantons.</p> <p>If transfer is possible, it stretches the learning period and often requires additional effort from the learner. When the learner who transfers from one education and training provider to another misses something that the provider has already taught, there is a gap in the personal portfolio which may prevent acquisition of the qualification in the foreseen time-span.</p>

Cluster	Country	Is transfer of achieved learning possible?
IV	BE (FL)	There is no national/Flemish common approach for the transfer of achieved learning between education and training providers and programmes. Though complicated, education and training providers may grant exemptions to students moving to a new programme.
	BE (FR)	A system-wide framework ensuring that assessed unit of learning outcomes are transferred between different VET providers and different qualifications is under development under the ECVET label.
	BG	There is no legal framework providing regulatory mechanisms for the transfer of achieved learning. However, achieved learning may be transferred between selected qualifications and training providers as part of pilot projects.
	CY	There are no situations of transfer of achieved learning between qualifications, or institutions.
	CZ (IVET)	Horizontal permeability is traditionally very high in the Czech Republic.
	MK	Students have the opportunity to switch between related qualifications. Insufficient human, financial and technical capacities hinder student transfer.
	EL	There is no framework that supports transfer of assessed learning outcomes between qualifications or institutions. However, there are cases when learning (i.e. semesters) is recognised, avoiding double assessment. This is the case with recognition by the institutes for IVET (IEK) of studies in professional lyceum (EPAL). The graduate of an EPAL similar course or specialisation moves directly to the third semester of IEK (so having two out of four semesters recognised/transferred).
	IT	There are several important systemic elements enabling students to switch to different pathways to prevent school drop-out.
	LV	A system-wide framework ensuring that assessed units of learning outcomes are transferred between different VET providers and different qualifications is under development.
	LT	Transfer of achieved learning is possible on a case-by-case basis (such as from individual to individual, institution to institution).
	ME	Transfer of achieved learning between programmes (and institutions) is at an early stage. Human resources and procedures are yet to be developed for transfer procedures to be put in place.
	MT	Different methods of assessment and the lack of a MoU between learning providers hamper the transfer of learning outcomes.

Source: Cedefop.

2.2.2.2. *Accumulation and award of a VET qualification*

In countries that do not have units/modules, accumulation is not technically possible. As a result, award of the VET qualification for learners engaged in an IVET programme is based on a final exam.

In countries without units/modules and predominantly school-based (cluster IV), future reforms may support accumulation. In Belgium (French-speaking community), a framework providing the basis for award on accumulation of units of learning outcomes is under development, in line with the ECVET recommendation. This may not be the case among the countries in cluster III (without units/modules and predominantly apprenticeship-based); Denmark explicitly indicates that the aim is always for learners in IVET to work towards the full state-recognised award, before they enter the labour market. The International Network on Innovative Apprenticeship (INAP) Commission sees one of the criteria for modern apprenticeship or dual vocational education, or its 'unique selling point', as 'the production of people with a high quality and holistic competence in an occupation which is certified through a final assessment of professional knowledge and skills' (INAP Commission, 2012, p.6).

Box 1 **Partial or 'stepped' qualifications in Denmark**

Partial, or 'stepped', qualifications known as '*trin*' are generally split in two and are available on some IVET programmes. Drawn up by trade committees and targeted mainly at low-performing students, they allow students to obtain partial qualifications that may be accumulated towards a complete qualification. Most students tend to complete the full qualification, as employers attach less value to stepped qualifications and there is concern from trade unions that they undermine the value of skilled workers' qualifications. As a result, stepped qualifications have been abandoned in some VET programmes (Cedefop, 2014, forthcoming).

2.2.2.3. *Transfer in the home country of learning acquired abroad*

VET system structures in the countries in clusters III and IV (without units/modules) do not support credit or unit/module transferability. The learning acquired abroad is included in the overall assessment (by the home institution) of the overall education and training programme.

2.2.3. **Current status across all countries/regions**

With the exception of countries with predominantly apprenticeship-based IVET, the presence of units or modules in IVET was quite important before 2009 and there are indications that it is expanding. In practice, it is difficult to distinguish between units and modules; the two terms are often used interchangeably.

However, most are 'competence'-based, applying a learning outcome approach despite the different terminology used.

In most of the countries where information was available (29 out of 35 ⁽¹⁷⁾) IVET qualifications are awarded upon successful completion of an education and training programme and a final assessment exam; accumulation is generally not supported by VET systems. Most countries tend to follow a holistic approach to education and training; this seems to be at the core of the IVET systems in countries with units/modules and no credit systems (cluster II) and in countries without units/modules and predominantly apprenticeship-based (cluster III). It is unlikely there will be a major shift of approach in the future. The same assumption may be made in the case of Iceland and Slovenia; these already make use of units/modules and have operational credit transfer systems for VET in place, but do not support accumulation. Most of the IVET systems in the countries in cluster IV (no units or modules and predominately school-based) are undergoing reform and it is still unclear whether they will lead to a shift in approach.

Transfer of achieved learning within a country's education and training system is aided by an operational credit transfer system in eight countries/regions; in 10 others, the presence of units/modules render the VET systems flexible and transfer generally possible. In 17 countries/regions without modules or units, possibilities of transfer vary among countries with flexible IVET systems (the Czech Republic, Denmark and Norway) and those where transfer is difficult or not possible (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece and Switzerland). Belgium (French-speaking community), Latvia and Malta are currently developing credit transfer systems for VET.

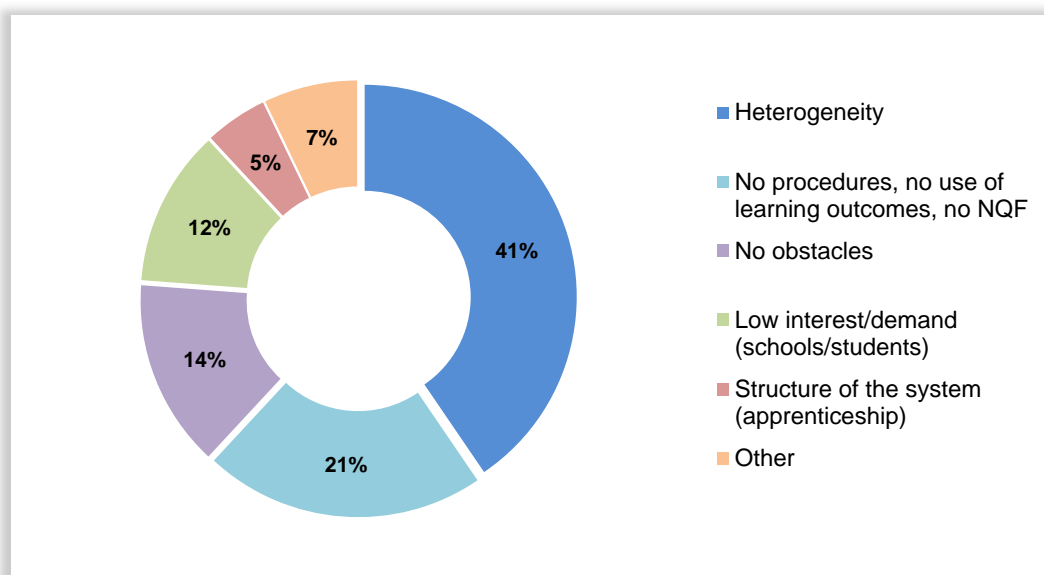
Comments from the respondents on the major obstacles to transfer of achieved learning within an education and training system pick out heterogeneity of VET provision, quality of assessment, and low interest/demand from students as major factors (more than 50% of the perceived obstacles). Lack of procedures and no use of learning outcomes account only for 21% of the total number of opinions expressed, quite a low percentage of the overall perception of obstacles. This confirms that transfer is technically possible in most of the countries surveyed, via units or modules which are competence-based, credit transfer systems and systemic arrangements supporting transfer.

The structure of apprenticeship systems is perceived as making transfer difficult. This is not surprising as the architecture of the traditional apprenticeship systems, as INAP points out, is built so that young people gain holistic

⁽¹⁷⁾ Information was not reported for Croatia, Serbia and Turkey.

competence in an occupation at the end of an apprenticeship programme. This provides a solid basis for employability and further development.

Figure 3 **Obstacles to transfer of learning at national level (% of the total number of expressed opinions: 84 opinions)**



Source: Cedefop.

Evidence shows that credit transfer in the home country of learning achieved abroad is not a reality:

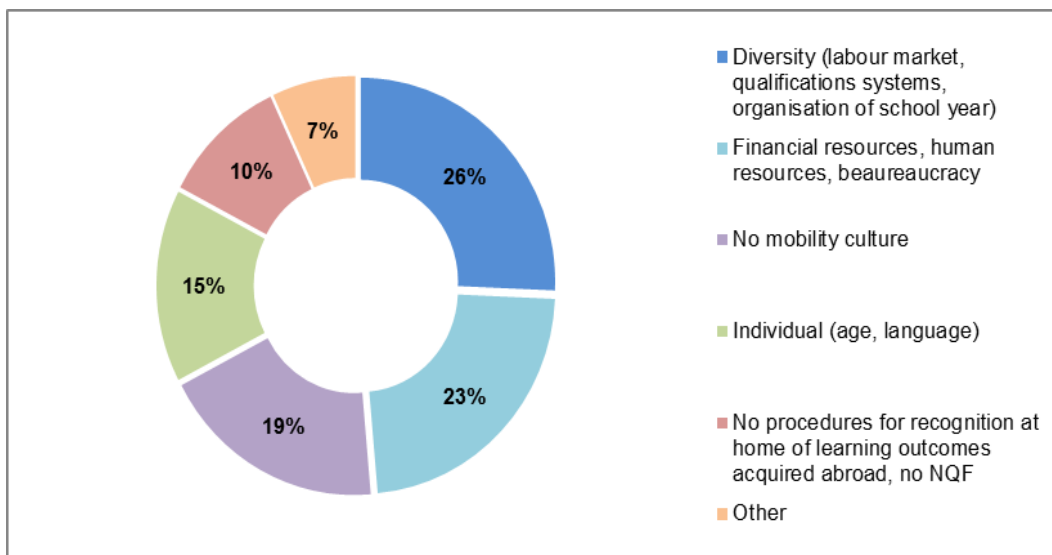
- (a) national credit transfer systems for VET exist in few countries; where they do exist they may not support credit transfer in a transnational context;
- (b) cross-country VET mobility is of relative short duration and does not usually cover a whole national unit/module;
- (c) units/modules are not awarded separately.

Currently, in most countries, the potential to transfer learning in a transnational context (transfer in the home country of learning acquired abroad) is more limited than that for transfer within an education and training system. When transfer occurs, the learning acquired abroad is included in the overall assessment (by the home institution) of the overall units/module/course or of the education and training programme. This learning is taken into account in the learner's learning pathway at home, avoiding repeating the learning. Transfer in the home country of learning acquired abroad is largely applied in this form.

Credit transfer in a transnational context still needs to be made technically possible. Issuing credit transfer across countries will most probably gain in relevance once other obstacles to geographical mobility are removed. According

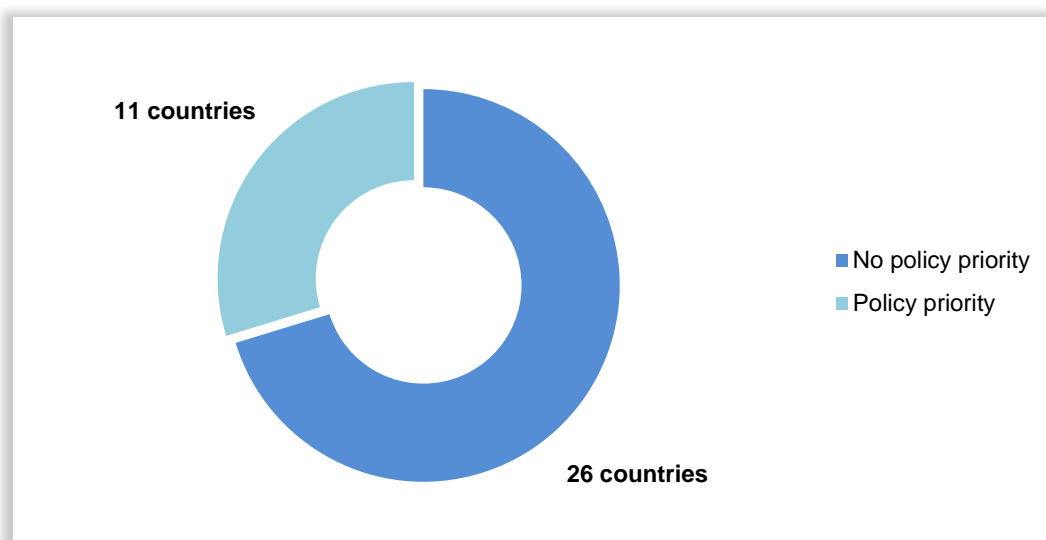
to the respondents, the biggest obstacle is the heterogeneity of VET systems, followed by limited financial resources, human resources and bureaucracy, and obstacles at the individual level (which account for 83% of perceived obstacles).

Figure 4 **Obstacles to cross-country mobility (% of the total number of expressed opinions: 144 opinions)**



Source: Cedefop.

Figure 5 **Policy status of cross-country geographical mobility for VET (number of countries)**



Source: Cedefop.

Limited financial resources and no mobility culture are among the most cited obstacles to mobility in VET, matching the priority given to this aspect. As Figure 5 shows, more than 2/3 of the countries analysed do not attach priority to cross-country mobility for VET.

2.3. ECVET in national VET systems

This section analyses the perceived added value of ECVET and the status of ECVET policy-making in relation to national VET reforms (on hold or no current testing; testing; formalised policy commitment) across the four clusters. The analysis does not include decision-making in relation to using ECVET to improve transnational mobility quality. Most countries encourage providers to use ECVET for the purposes of their cross-country mobility projects.

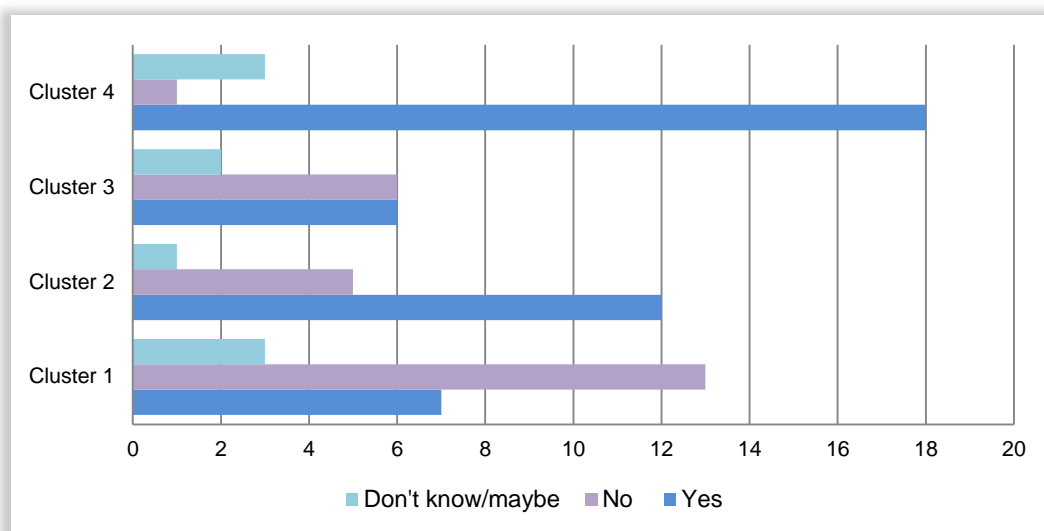
The information covers ECVET-related policies and/or activities falling under the responsibilities of national and regional authorities involved in the survey.

2.3.1. The perceived added value of ECVET

Respondents see ECVET added value in relation to the units of learning outcomes and transfer of credits within the national education and training systems, and in the context of cross-country mobility.

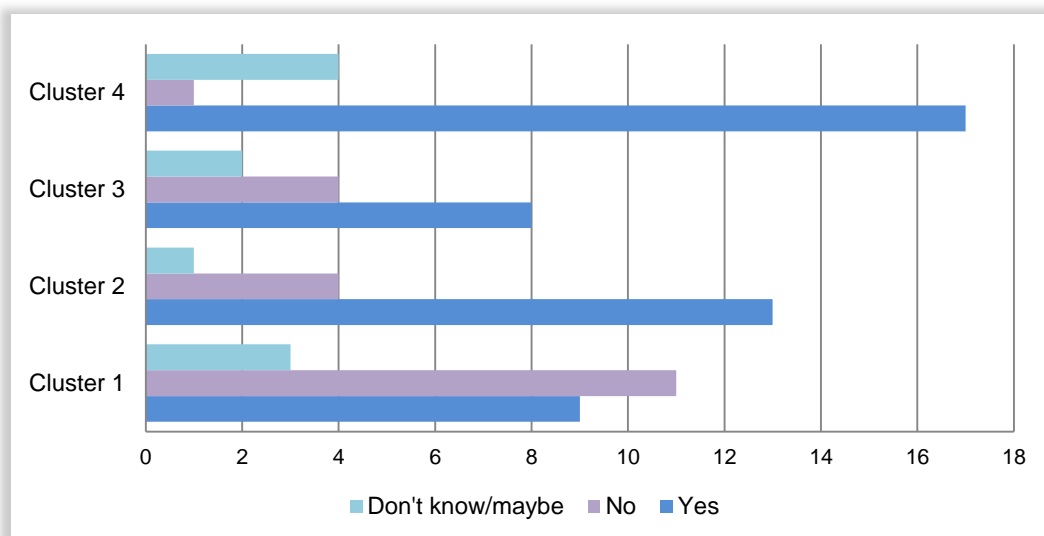
The fact that ECVET may bring added value through its units of learning outcomes is obvious to countries with units/modules and no credit transfer systems (cluster II) as a means of improving the existing units/modules. It also has value to the countries without units/modules and predominantly school-based (cluster IV) as a trigger for reform. Not surprisingly, respondents representing the countries with units/modules and credit transfer systems under cluster I are of the opinion that ECVET will not bring any added value through its units of learning outcomes. The opinions of the respondents representing the countries under cluster III (no units/modules and predominantly apprenticeship-based) reveal a tension in relation to the ECVET units, potentially explained by employer low interest in the unitisation of qualifications, while experts may see a benefit in using units/modules as a way of increasing flexibility.

Figure 6 Could ECVET bring added value through its units of learning outcomes (number of opinions)?



Source: Cedefop.

Figure 7 Could ECVET bring added value in improving transfer within the national education and training system (number of opinions)?



Source: Cedefop.

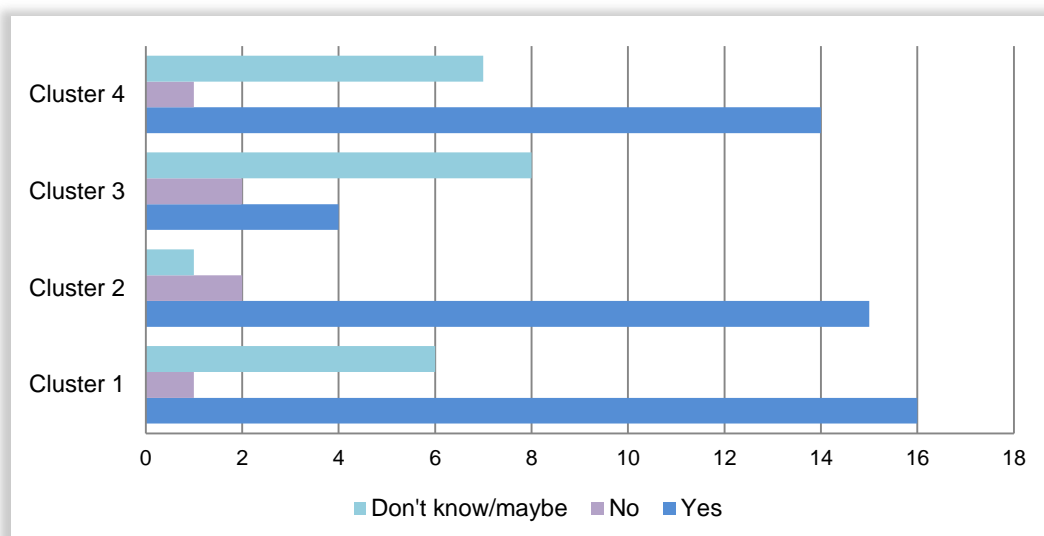
When asked about the potential of ECVET in improving transfer within national education and training systems, the respondents representing the countries in clusters I, II and IV maintained broadly the same perceptions: ECVET is less likely to bring added value in countries with credit systems in place (cluster I) and more likely to improve transfer in clusters II and IV by supporting VET reform. Among respondents in countries without units/modules and

predominantly apprenticeship-based (cluster III), ECVET seems to gain in added value, most probably due to general concern over the flexibility of the VET systems.

When asked to explain why ECVET brings added value to existing national qualification structures, the focus on learning outcomes, leading to increased transparency of qualifications and qualification structures, is the main supporting argument. Respondents also acknowledge that ECVET has triggered dialogue and analysis of the existing structures, contributing to increased awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of education and training systems.

In the context of cross-country mobility, ECVET's strength is its use of learning outcomes and its common approach to mobility periods; these lead to increased transparency and mutual trust. Figure 8 shows that there is little doubt of the role of ECVET in geographic mobility; only respondents from cluster III countries seem to question this role. The main argument is that cross-country mobility is mostly short-term and ECVET is seen as too bureaucratic for this.

Figure 8 **Could ECVET bring added value in improving transfer in the home country of learning acquired abroad (number of opinions)?**

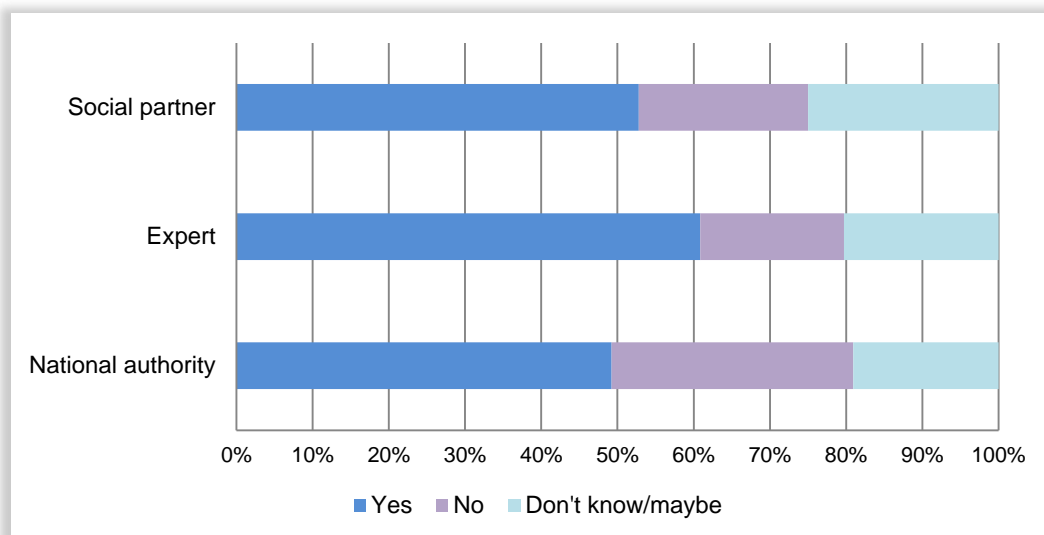


Source: Cedefop.

The responses are a clear indicator that ECVET is still associated mainly with cross-country geographical mobility. The value of ECVET within the national education and training systems varies with the structures already in place, hence the mix of perceptions and support in the different clusters. Analysis of opinions on the ECVET added value by groups of respondent (national authority, expert, social partner) shows that 61% of ECVET experts acknowledge ECVET added

value in the national contexts, followed by social partners at 53% and national authorities at 49%, as Figure 9 shows.

Figure 9 **Opinions on the ECVET added value within the national contexts by groups of respondents (% of expressed opinions)**



Source: Cedefop.

2.3.2. Status of ECVET policy decision-making

2.3.2.1. Cluster I: countries with units/modules and credit transfer systems

The status of ECVET policy decision-making cannot be analysed without looking at national credit transfer systems for VET in place (Table 5). Following this overview, the analysis covers:

- (a) compatibility with ECVET;
- (b) the way ECVET has triggered (or not) developments at national level;
- (c) the link between the national credit systems for VET and ECTS.

Table 5 **Overview of the existing credit transfer systems for VET**

Country	Overview
FI	<p>All IVET and CVET qualifications are divided into units of learning outcomes and there is a system of credits with corresponding credit points for IVET. Credit points are primarily input-based and calculated on the basis of the number of study weeks the learner takes to acquire the learning outcomes for a qualification. In August 2015, competence-based points will replace study weeks.</p> <p>Award of the VET qualification is upon accumulation of credits.</p>
IS	<p>The Upper Secondary School Act from 2008 takes its point of departure in learning outcomes and the use of credit units with associated credit points. The credit points take into account the amount of learner effort during one school year (pupils contribute at least 180 working days).</p> <p>Award of the VET qualification is upon a final assessment.</p>
IE	<p>All VET awards belonging to CAS from levels 1 to 6 of the NFQ are credit rated (except for the advanced certificate craft, at level 6, awarded to apprentices). The credit system is based on units of learning outcomes and reflects the typical amount of learner effort, including directed and self-directed.</p> <p>Award of the VET qualification is upon accumulation of credits.</p>
LU	<p>Reform of the national VET system following the law of 19 December 2008 and applied since 2010 led to the development of an IVET credit system which includes the central elements of ECVET, omitting credit points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) curricula in units subdivided into modules; (b) description of the curricula in learning outcomes/competences with the three dimensions knowledge, skills and attitudes; (c) recognition of formal and non-formal learning; (d) modules that stay valid within a period of at least five years after the learner leaves the IVET system. <p>Award of the VET qualification is upon accumulation of credits.</p>
RO	<p>Romania has a fully developed credit system for IVET. In CVET, there is a credit system which is compatible with ECVET, omitting credit points. Romania uses units of competences, described as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the unit title, (b) the qualification level, (c) number of credits, (d) list of competences. <p>Award of the VET qualification is upon final assessment (National Centre for the Development of Vocational and Technical Education (Centrul Național de Dezvoltare a Învățământului Profesional și Tehnic) (CNDIPT), 2013).</p>
SI	<p>The existing credit system uses modules applied to training programmes and associated credit points, calculated on the basis of learning outcomes and their 'weight' in terms of workload needed for students to achieve them.</p> <p>Award of the VET qualification is upon a final assessment.</p>

Country	Overview
ES	Intermediate vocational training programmes (international standard classification of education (ISCED) 3B) and CVET qualifications are unit-based ⁽¹⁸⁾ . The units of learning outcomes may be accumulated and transferred, but do not have credit points attached. Transfer of credit is carried out in the framework of a MoU. The unit-based system also supports validation of non-formal and informal learning. Award of the VET qualification is upon accumulation of credits.
SE	In upper secondary schools, the general structure for vocational programmes is composed of upper secondary credits. Award of the VET qualification is upon accumulation of credits.
UK	Although there are different credit system frameworks in the UK, they are all based on learning outcomes and units. They also use credits based on notional learning time. The credit system covers most qualifications, including apprenticeships. Award of the VET qualification is upon accumulation of credits.

Source: Cedefop.

Compatibility with ECVET

Table 5 shows that the main incompatibility between existing national credit transfer systems and ECVET that may arise relates to credit points: two countries decided not to use them while in most countries they constitute a numerical representation of the work (input) required to achieve a certain outcome, and/or provide information about the related workload or scope of studies. This may diverge from the ECVET recommendation's definition of credit points: 'a numerical representation of the overall weight of learning outcomes in a qualification and of the relative weight of units in relation to the qualification' (European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2009). Three countries built their credit transfer systems around modules applied to training programmes. Most countries use existing credit transfer systems to support validation of non-formal and informal learning and accumulation. Irrespective of these differences, all countries report credit transfer systems in line with ECVET.

⁽¹⁸⁾ In Spain, the high vocational training programmes (ISCED 5B) are aligned with the Bologna process and are ECTS compatible.

Table 6 **Matrix compatibility between the national credit transfer systems for VET and ECVET**

	Units	Modules	Credit points	Supports validation of non-formal and informal learning	Supports accumulation
FI	X		X ⁽¹⁹⁾	X	X
IS	X		X ⁽²⁰⁾	Not reported	
IE	X		X ⁽²¹⁾	X	X
LU		X	Not applicable	X	X
RO	X		X ⁽²²⁾	Not yet	X ⁽²³⁾
SI		X	X ⁽²⁴⁾		
ES	X		Not applicable	X	X
SE		X	X ⁽²⁵⁾	X	X
UK	X		X	X	X

Source: Cedefop.

ECVET and developments at national level

Romania is the only country where the development of a national credit transfer system (but not the introduction of units of learning outcomes) was triggered by ECVET. Romania is still on its way to making the system fully operational. In the

⁽¹⁹⁾ The three-year qualification for IVET at the upper secondary level totals up to 120 study weeks: 40 study weeks per year, where one study week equals 40 hours of student work. In August 2015, competence-based points will replace study weeks.

⁽²⁰⁾ One school year, measuring all of the pupil's work during that year with satisfactory results, provides 60 credit units, given that pupils contribute annually at least 180 working days.

⁽²¹⁾ The credit system in CAS is based on units of five, 10, 15, 20 or 30 credits for minor (component) awards.

⁽²²⁾ The credit value of one unit is allocated for units of competences that may be reasonably achieved by the learner in approximately 60 learning hours. A unit of competences may have between 0.5 and two credits.

⁽²³⁾ Only case by case for geographical mobility.

⁽²⁴⁾ One credit point corresponds to 25 hours of learning activities; 60 credit points per one year of formal education.

⁽²⁵⁾ Vocational programmes comprise 2 500 upper secondary credits, of which 600 are in foundation subjects, 1 600 are in programme specific subjects and subjects within orientation and programme specialisations, 200 are in individual options and 100 for a diploma project.

other eight countries credit transfer systems for VET were developed before or independent of the ECVET recommendation. Among these, only Finland has reported a policy commitment to align its credit transfer system better to ECVET by changing the Finnish credit points currently based on study weeks into (ECVET) competence points.

Box 2 **ECVET in Finland**

Since February 2012, the steering committee of the VET qualification system restructuring group has been working on proposals to amend existing legislation, for new regulations that aim to introduce elements supportive of ECVET, and to review the qualification structure. The proposals will also take into account the relationship with EQF/NQF. The group will continue its work until the end of 2014, while the legislation will come into force in 2014.

The steering committee does not plan to introduce the points system in CVET, at least in the first phase of implementation. All other elements of ECVET (except for the credit (competence points) will be introduced in all vocational qualifications in 2014.

In Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the UK, there are no indications of ECVET trials for internal use (by adjusting the existing credit transfer system for VET to improve transfer and accumulation). According to the respondents, the systems are in line with the ECVET philosophy and work well; there is no immediate need to change or adopt a new credit-point system.

ECVET will most likely be used for mobility in parallel with existing national credit transfer systems. A pilot project in the UK is currently testing the possibility of conversion between the qualification and credit framework (QCF) credits and ECVET points. Sweden has a proposal for conversion between the existing system and ECVET; similar trials are under way in Spain (Catalonia).

Sweden also has a proposal to use ECVET in the context of linking non-formal qualifications to the NQF, though no decision has been taken yet.

Compatibility with ECTS

The following countries report no links between the national credit transfer systems for VET and ECTS: Ireland, Spain, Slovenia, Sweden, and the UK (England and Northern Ireland). Ireland explains this by the perceived differences in the balance of knowledge, skill and competence and the purposes of different award types.

The UK (Scotland and Wales) reports links between the existing credit systems for VET and ECTS. Finland also reports links with the ECTS: the competence-based points (which will be put into use in 2015) and the 60 (ECVET) competence-based points (= 60 ECTS points/year) for the whole qualification per year.

This information is not reported in Iceland, Luxembourg and Romania.

Table 7 **Overview of ECVET status in cluster II countries (with modules/units and no credit transfer systems)**

Country	Summary
Testing	
FR (all qualifications of the Ministry of Education)	The Ministry of Education and the sectoral bodies and chambers of commerce are testing different ECVET technical components (units of learning outcomes, credit points, partnerships). National project: MEN-ECVET.
PT	National Agency for Qualification and VET (Agência Nacional para a Qualificação e o Ensino Profissional) (ANQEP) (the NCP for EQF and ECVET) presented a proposal for the revision of the current NCQ in a workshop in June 2013. This revision aims at conceiving qualifications centred on outputs instead of inputs, and which may allow the attribution of credits (as basis for transfer of learning outcomes in learning contexts and accumulation of learning outcomes). No ECVET specific project reported at national level.
TR	Turkey is testing different ECVET technical components for school-based VET.
Formal policy commitment to implement ECVET	
EE	The Estonian credit point system for VET (EstVETCP) was officially introduced with the new Vocational Institutions Act on 1 September 2013. The VET Act mentions ECVET explicitly. A unit-based credit system is to be introduced and EstVETCP is incorporated into the modules, in conjunction with renewing the VET curricula in which learning outcomes will be expressed through EstVETCP. Implementation has started.
HR	Croatia has a formal decision to develop a new credit system for both IVET and CVET that is compatible with ECVET. No ECVET specific project reported at national level.
HU	The main implementation papers/decisions formalising ECVET piloting/implementation are the Act on VET (2009), the strategy for the development of vocational education 2008-13, and the Act on the NQF (2013). Project No 10/2012 financed by the education and training sub-fund of the national development funds foresees the development of a credit system for vocational qualifications, based on a secondary level final examination. This credit system will help transferring credits from secondary education to higher education. Hungary is proceeding towards development of the ECVET-compatible credit system step by step and in parallel to NQF development.
PL	A comprehensive credit system framework is being developed. No decision has been taken yet on the introduction of credit points. Implementation has started.

Source: Cedefop.

2.3.2.2. *Cluster II: countries with modules/units and no credit transfer systems*

The status of ECVET policy decision-making in relation to national VET reforms varies. Some countries have ECVET on hold or report no current testing (Belgium (German-speaking community), the Netherlands and Serbia), while others are testing it on formal VET qualifications. Some countries have taken the policy decision to start using ECVET gradually with VET qualifications.

In all four countries with a formal commitment to implement ECVET as part of national VET reforms, this will be done in parallel with the development of the NQFs. In three countries implementation has gradually started and in one country credit points are not yet envisaged.

2.3.2.3. *Cluster III: countries without units/modules and predominantly apprenticeship-based*

In none of these countries is there a formal policy commitment on ECVET implementation for internal purposes. Trials are being carried out in Germany, where the 'development of a credit system for VET in Germany' (Decvet) project is being tested on a number of national VET qualifications. Norway has also established a project consisting of a working group, reference and steering committee to analyse ECVET methodology in relation to the formal VET system and its legislation. Austria may test ECVET for validation of non-formal and informal learning in the future.

2.3.2.4. *Cluster IV: countries without units/modules and predominantly school-based*

As with cluster II, the status of ECVET policy decision-making varies, as shown in Table 9.

Similar to countries in cluster II, the countries that have already committed themselves to implement ECVET are planning to develop it in parallel with the NQF developments. Only in two countries has implementation started; three countries will also make use of credit points.

Table 8 **Overview of ECVET status in cluster III countries (countries without units/modules and predominantly apprenticeship-based)**

Country	Status	Main issues
AT	<p>The main VET stakeholders at ministerial level and representatives from higher education are working on an ECVET proposal that will also clarify and operationalise the ECVET concept in the national context.</p> <p>A formal policy decision on ECVET is not expected in the near future.</p>	<p>Before a formal decision on ECVET is taken, the following main issues need to be addressed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • low interest shown by employers in the modularisation/unitisation of training programmes; • low level of long-term VET mobility.
DK	<p>Currently, there are no trials for internal use. Under Ministry of Education coordination, VET experts with experience in transnational mobility are finalising the guidelines for education and training providers that wish to use ECVET for transnational mobility purposes ⁽²⁶⁾.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no plans to develop modules. Danish VET is not modularised, except for division into a basic and main course, and any further division of the programmes is not contemplated apart from the description in learning outcomes. • ECVET technical components and principles require reorganisation of a qualification system and corresponding procedures that already work well and benefit the support of different stakeholders. • Full ECVET implementation would result in a heavier administrative burden on a well-functioning system.
DE	<p>It is uncertain when or whether a policy decision on ECVET implementation will be taken.</p>	<p>Most stakeholders regard ECVET sceptically since they hold the opinion that ECVET and the German VET system are not compatible. There is resistance to unitisation/modularisation of training programmes and qualifications.</p> <p>There are still many practical questions on the development of ECVET within the specific national context. The Decvet initiative has provided some answers, but more testing needs to be done.</p>

⁽²⁶⁾ According to the guidelines, Danish students who go abroad do not need to be awarded credit points for their learning achievements. Instead, these need to be described in terms of learning outcomes for the purpose of transfer at home. Foreign students who study in Denmark have the possibility, if required, to be awarded credit points for their achieved learning in accordance with the ECTS, i.e. 60 points for one study year, either at school or in a company.

Country	Status	Main issues
LI	Initiatives on ECVET implementation are currently on hold.	Liechtenstein is following the international ECVET process closely, especially developments in Switzerland, but the process itself has not gone as far. Priority is given to the NQF development, which is seen as a precondition for ECVET implementation.
NO (*)	A formal decision on ECVET is expected to be taken in December 2014.	Norway has established a project consisting of a working group, reference and steering committee to analyse ECVET methodology in relation to the formal VET system and its legislation. The working group consists of social partners' representatives who will consider the pros and cons of using ECVET principles, together with their networks and contacts.
CH	The national team of ECVET experts conducted a small survey addressed to those that have been involved in ECVET, to identify future needs and with a view to writing a recommendation on how to proceed with the development process.	The ECVET concept is unknown or not supported by professional organisations due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • low level of VET mobility; • policy priority given to NQF development.

(*) Norway has introduced a credit point system in advanced VET (tertiary level). The system is easy to convert to ECTS and ECVET: 60 credit points for one year full time study and outcome-oriented.

Source: Cedefop.

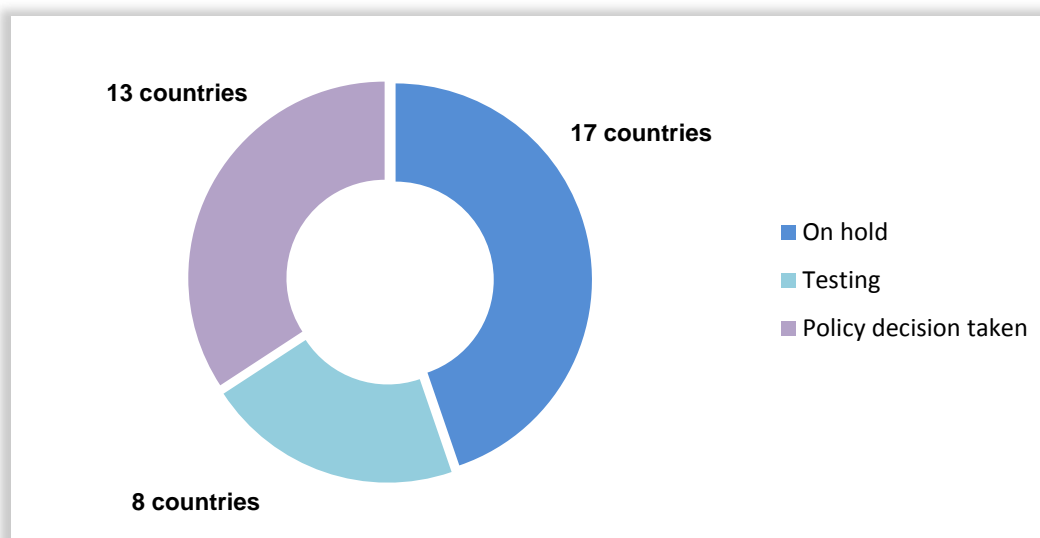
Table 9 **Overview of ECVET status in cluster IV countries (without units/modules and predominantly school-based)**

Country	Summary
On hold (no current testing)	
BE (FL)	Flanders is giving priority to developing the NQF, its own qualification structure.
CY	The national team of ECVET experts, coordinated by the LLP National Agency, have prepared several pilot projects for ECVET testing ready for its implementation. These are under consideration by the Ministry of Education and Culture as part of the continuing reform of secondary technical and vocational education curricula (Cedefop ReferNet Cyprus, 2012).
MK	No further information reported.
Testing	
BG	Five national standards for vocational qualifications were set out on a pilot project basis in accordance with ECVET principles and technical specifications for IVET in the following sectors: IT, energy, electrical engineering, catering and food. Units of learning outcomes were designed and assessment criteria developed. However, no credit points were defined.
CZ	The Czech Republic supports ECVET developments but without action leading to substantial modification of the existing system. Use of ECVET is encouraged in IVET at provider level so there is access to the opportunities offered by international cooperation; in CVET and in recognition of learning outcomes, actions are focused on linking national register of qualifications (NSK) and ECVET.
ME	During the 2013/14 school year, two training programmes (tourist technician and agriculture technician) using units of learning outcomes with credit points attached, have been piloted in schools.
Formal policy commitment to implement ECVET	
BE (FR)	Gradual implementation has started.
EL	No ECVET specific project at national level. The relevant laws have not been put into practice yet.
IT	The more recent policy reference to ECVET is the decree of January 2013, adopted within the labour market reform 92/2012. No ECVET specific project at national level.
LV	A new vocational education law is currently being drafted which supports modularisation of training programmes and potentially the transfer of qualifications and learning outcomes. It is expected that a modular system will be implemented from 2015. An ESF-funded project, development of sectoral qualification system and increasing the efficiency and quality of vocational education (2010-14), is being implemented by the State

Country	Summary
	Education Development Agency of Latvia (Valsts izglītības attīstības aģentūra) (VIAA) in cooperation with other partners ⁽²⁷⁾ , under the direction of the Ministry of Education and Science.
LT	The commitment for the introduction of a credit system is formalised in the 'concept of modular VET system' where the methodology for the development of VET programmes describes how the volume of VET programmes should be defined in ECVET credit points. At operational level, ECVET is being tested in the frame of an ESF national level project 'formation of qualifications and development of modular VET system', over 2010-14.
MT	Gradual implementation has started.
SK ⁽²⁸⁾	No ECVET specific project at national level.

Source: Cedefop.

Figure 10 **Status of ECVET: all countries**



Source: Cedefop.

⁽²⁷⁾ An important role is played by the State Education Quality Service (Izglītības kvalitātes valsts dienests), the State Education Centre (Valsts izglītības satura centrs), especially in relation to the development of standards, modular programmes, etc.

⁽²⁸⁾ According to information provided by the national authority representative, Slovakia has already formalised its commitment to the ECVET implementation; however, this information was not confirmed by the ECVET expert.

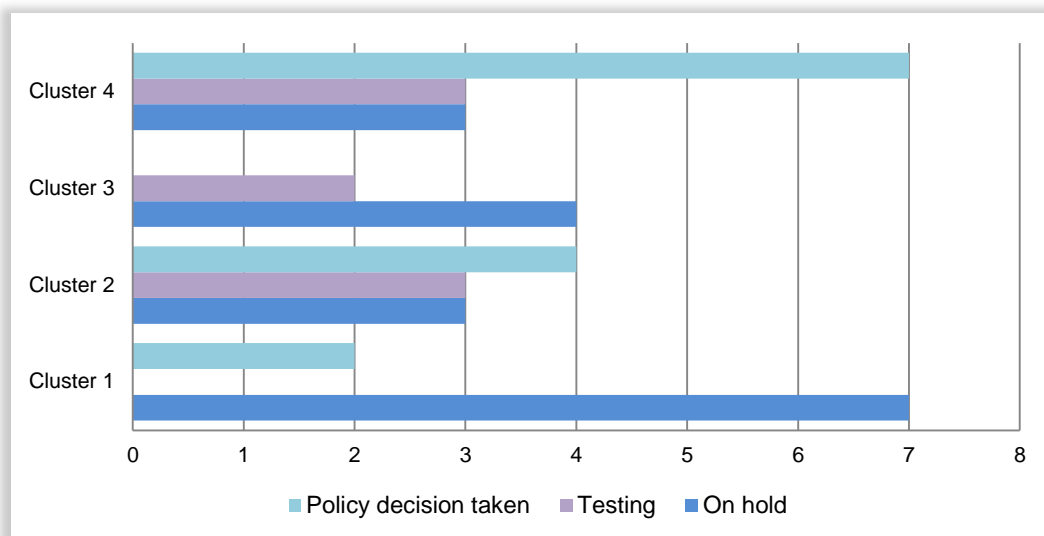
2.3.3. ECVET development overview

ECVET is on hold in 17 countries. Eight are testing it and 13 have already formalised a policy commitment to implement it as part of national VET reforms.

Figure 11 shows that 11 out of the 13 countries with a formalised commitment to implement ECVET as part of national VET reforms, are either those that already make use of units/modules but do not have credit transfer systems (clusters II), or those without units/modules and predominantly school-based (cluster IV); they number four and seven countries respectively. The countries in the former group use ECVET as a means to improve transfer within national VET systems; those in the latter group use it as a trigger for reforms (introduction of units/modules and transfer arrangements). This confirms comments by the respondents in these countries when asked for views on the added value of ECVET in the national context. The two remaining countries with a formalised commitment to implement ECVET (Romania and Finland), have units/modules and credit systems (cluster I). While the introduction of a credit transfer system in Romania was triggered by the ECVET recommendation, in Finland the ECVET recommendation triggered modifications to an already existing credit transfer system.

ECVET still has a low profile among the countries with units/modules and credit transfer systems (cluster I) and those without units/modules and predominantly apprenticeship-based (cluster III). In the first case, national credit transfer systems for VET are already in place and are broadly compatible with ECVET (less the credit points) and working well. In the second ECVET is perceived not to fit the main concept of a traditional apprenticeship-based VET. In some of the countries with credit transfer systems for VET in place, ECVET may be used in parallel to the existing national credit transfer systems for transfer in the home country of learning acquired abroad: Spain (Catalonia), Sweden and the UK are testing a conversion system between ECVET and existing credit systems for mobility.

In the 13 countries where commitment to ECVET has been formalised, gradual implementation has started in six: Belgium (French-speaking community), Estonia, Hungary, Malta, Poland and Finland. In Romania, the credit system still needs to become operational. Latvia and Lithuania are still running pilots before actual implementation. No ECVET-related activity was reported in Greece, Croatia, Italy and Slovakia. According to the national respondents, ECVET is being or will be developed in parallel with the NQF developments.

Figure 11 **Status of ECVET by cluster**

Source: Cedefop.

Table 10 **ECVET in the countries with a formal commitment to implement it**

	Has implementation gradually started?	Link with NQF?	Are credit points envisaged?
EE	Yes	Yes	Yes
HR	No	Yes	Yes
HU	Yes	Yes	Yes
PL	Yes	Yes	No
BE (FR)	Yes	Yes	Yes
EL	No	Info not reported	Info not reported
IT	No	Yes	No
LV	No (tested on pilot qualifications)	Yes	Under discussion
LT	No (tested on pilot qualifications)	Yes	Yes
MT	Yes	Yes	Yes
RO	Not yet operational	Yes	Yes
SK	Info not reported	Yes	Info not reported
FI	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: Cedefop.

Analysis of the compatibility between existing national credit systems for VET (cluster I countries) and ECVET has indicated possible incompatibility in credit point calculation between current VET credit transfer systems and ECVET. In planned and current ECVET implementation developments, there are signs that the future credit transfer systems may pose the same issue of compatibility. Two countries (IT, PL) do not yet envisage use of credit points. Estonia and – to a smaller extent – Lithuania will diverge from the original ECVET methodology, while in Belgium (French-speaking community), national credit points will be in line with ECVET.

Box 3 The future credit points

Estonia

The new VET Institutions Act has introduced a new accounting unit for the student workload – the Estonian VET credit point (*eesti kutsehariduse ainepunkt*). This shows the estimated amount of work a student has to perform to achieve learning outcomes described in the curriculum or module. One credit point equals 26 hours of student work. The principles of the ECVET (*Euroopa kutsehariduse ainepunkt*) application will be used while introducing the Estonian VET credit point.

Lithuania

At least 40 modular VET programmes for the most popular VET sector qualifications are foreseen to be developed by 2014. The preliminary agreement between developers of modular programmes is that one year of training would equal 50 credit points and not 60 as suggested in the 2009 ECVET recommendation. According to shared opinion, this would not pose a challenge if a decision is taken to transfer this value into ECVET credit (by applying a coefficient of 1.2); this is because the criterion used for credit point allocation to learning outcome units is the weight of a unit's learning outcomes in relation to the qualification as a whole.

In countries where ECVET is tested or there are plans to test it for internal use, there is no indication whether this will lead to a formal commitment in the near future. Testing is carried out:

- (a) in the context of non-formal and informal learning in the Czech Republic. Austria and Sweden are also discussing the possibility of using ECVET for this purpose. The Netherlands plans to test ECVET's potential in helping adults in career transitions. ECVET's role in supporting people on the labour market to acquire, update or upgrade a qualification needs to be further investigated;
- (b) on formal VET qualifications in seven countries (Bulgaria, France, Germany, Montenegro, Norway, Portugal, Turkey).

2.4. Future challenges

Cedefop's analysis shows mixed support for ECVET in relation to national VET reforms. Only a few countries are committed to its implementation and not all of these have actually started implementation. In most of these countries, transfer of learning outcomes was reported to be difficult, thus the role and added value of ECVET was easily acknowledged.

ECVET seems not to reach those countries that already have credit transfer systems for VET in place or transferrable units/modules and those with predominantly apprenticeship-based IVET. In these countries, the major challenges ahead of ECVET are related to what extent it will strengthen or introduce the 'unit' approach and improve transfer arrangements.

There is a clear trend towards the introduction of units/modules in national VET systems that started before 2009 and of systemic arrangements to support transfer. However, in IVET, this is not accompanied by a move towards awarding a VET qualification based on accumulation of certifiable units or modules. There is evidence that single certified units/modules or partial qualifications may not be valued on the labour market. Certification based on a final assessment at the end of an education and training programme may be used as a way to determine young learners in IVET to work towards a full state-recognised award, before they enter the labour market. Among such countries, those with predominantly apprenticeship-based IVET seem to have the lowest interest in the principles of unitisation and accumulation. As INAP points out, the architecture of traditional apprenticeship systems is built so that young people gain a holistic competence in an occupation at the end of an apprenticeship programme.

On a different level, use may be made of certifiable units or modules for those already on the labour market as a support to update, upgrade or complete a qualification. This is why the links between ECVET (mainly the units of learning outcomes) and the validation of non-formal and informal learning need to be made more explicit. Due to the relatively large scale of VET qualifications in terms of their learning outcomes, it is unlikely that an individual may acquire a full qualification through the validation of his/her non-formal and informal learning. Assessment and validation of single units of learning outcomes may improve an individual's opportunities to make non-formal and informal learning visible for the purpose of access to formal training programmes, exemption from parts of a formal training programme, or partial certification.

There is a strong indication that quality assurance concerns are among the main obstacles to transfer. If ECVET is to boost transfer, it needs to be more closely related to quality assurance arrangements on assessment and certification.

The survey respondents relate ECVET added value to its use of the learning outcomes approach, confirming one of the main findings in Cedefop's 2013 monitoring report (Cedefop, 2013b). ECVET seems to act as a catalyst for the shift to learning outcomes, together with the development of the NQF in countries where its implementation is being taken forward as part of the VET reforms. But ECVET also makes important contributions to the shift to learning outcomes through the massive investment and participation in the EU-funded mobility projects. It is used by education and training providers as a method to apply learning outcomes in practice. ECVET results are currently scattered at the micro-level; the challenge is to find the way to mainstream these important experiences into permanent solutions, to build a shared, consistent and trusted learning outcomes approach to be applied at the European level.

While the strength of ECVET relies on its focus on learning outcomes, its weakness is its use of credit points. Learning outcomes are the 'carrier' of information both on the labour market and between education and training providers. Credit points have no value independent of the learning outcomes to which they refer, so it is not surprising that some respondents do not see their usefulness and even suggest their revision or elimination.

In many countries VET qualifications at tertiary level fall under higher education and are ECTS compatible. This may be related to the substantial 'difference in the learning environment within the tertiary and secondary VET' when considering the credit points allocation (Vantuch and Jelínková, 2012). Additional analysis and evidence are needed on the status of VET qualifications at tertiary level and relations with higher education, as well as on the reasons why most of the national credit systems for VET are not linked with ECTS. This will inform the policy discourse in relation to compatibility and complementarity between ECVET and ECTS. It will also shed light on the potential role ECVET may play in improving transferability between VET and higher education.

While ECVET receives mixed support in the context of national VET reforms, its role in cross-country mobility is widely acknowledged, even though it raises concerns of bureaucracy and increased workload for education and training providers. In this context, VET providers join with partners abroad, develop units of learning outcomes and define corresponding assessment criteria for cross-country mobility only, as a means to overcome the quality concerns in provision of learning and assessment in the foreign contexts. The learning outcomes acquired by the learner abroad are taken into account in the learners' learning pathway, so they do not repeat the same learning. ECVET currently does not fulfil its credit transfer and accumulation function, and its potential risks remaining limited in the near future. The additional main obstacles hampering credit transfer are in existing assessment and award approaches at national level (reluctant to

assess and certify units and/or modules) and the short duration of VET mobility (shorter than one national unit/module). It is expected that the priority attached to ECVET in national policy agendas will go hand-in-hand with mobility in VET and the number of VET students participating in overseas mobility.

ECVET is a complex and multipurpose project. Judging from the status of policy-making in the countries surveyed, it appears that policy-makers, together with experts and social partners, need more time to understand whether and/or how ECVET may form part of the national VET systems. To support national policy-making, respondents expressed the need for more clarity of purpose and streamlining on the basis of what works or does not work in practice, plus acknowledgement that ECVET is a toolbox or concept, rather than a system containing technical specifications.

The year 2014 is a turning point for ECVET and the wealth of information and expertise accumulated at both European and national levels will show the way forward.

CHAPTER 3.

Country fiches

3.1. Austria

Respondents

- (a) Policy-maker: Austrian Federal Ministry of Education Art and Culture;
- (b) expert: Austrian Exchange Service (Österreichische Austauschdienst), National Agency for LLL (Nationalagentur Lebenslanges Lernen).

Context for ECVET**Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification: IVET school-based and apprenticeships**

Austria applies a mix of output and input to qualification and curriculum design. The learning process is very closely linked to the achievement of learning goals. As a general rule, acquiring a state-approved qualification requires successful completion of the entire training programme and a final assessment at the end representing an indirect condition for certification. At upper secondary level, different qualifications and qualifications levels can be acquired through a variety of school-based IVET programmes and apprenticeships which combine in-company and school-based training. In the school year 2010/11, according to statistics Austria, 39.30% of the learners in the 10th grade were enrolled in apprenticeships. In this grade, participation in general education was 20.40%, while participation in vocational school-based education and training was 38.70% (Cedefop ReferNet Austria, 2012, p. 16).

At upper secondary level, IVET pathways include:

- (a) pre-vocational qualifications acquired in one to three-year school-based programmes (VET schools (*berufsbildende mittlere Schulen*) (BMS)) (e.g. preparing for home economics or social and health care sector);
- (b) VET qualifications awarded upon completion of three- to four-year school-based programmes (BMS, ISCED 3B) and a final exam entitling graduates immediately to exercise relevant occupations and giving them access to specific regulated professional activities where applicable;
- (c) double qualifications (maturity and diploma certificate (*Reife- und Diplomprüfungszeugnis*) which combine higher education access with a VET diploma qualifying their holders to exercise senior level activities/occupations in the respective or related sectors. These qualifications are awarded upon completion of five-year school-based VET programmes and the respective school leaving and diploma exams, including a diploma project carried out in the past year (BMS or BHS, ISCED 3A/4A);
- (d) qualifications as 'qualified nurse' (female title: '*Diplomierte Gesundheits- und Krankenschwester*'/male title: '*Diplomierter Gesundheits- und Krankenpfleger*') for

graduates of programmes for general healthcare and nursing set up at hospitals or in connection with hospitals (health and nursing schools (*Gesundheits- und Krankenpflegeschulen*)). The qualification is awarded after preparing a paper on a subject-specific theme (*Fachbereichsarbeit*) and taking a diploma exam at the end of training;

- (e) apprenticeship completion examination diploma (*Lehrabschlussprüfungszeugnis*), qualifications that allow people immediately to exercise the relevant (regulated) occupation as skilled workers. The qualification is awarded following a practical and a theory examination at the end of the apprenticeship period (teaching, apprenticeship (*Lehre, Lehrlingsausbildung*)). There are approximately 200 legally recognised apprenticeships. The training, which lasts on average three years, combines learning in an enterprise and in a VET school ('dual' system).

At post-secondary level:

- (a) graduates of academic secondary schools (those without IVET qualification (offered by VET colleges (*berufsbildende höhere Schule*) (BHS)) have the option to get a VET diploma which gives access to regulated trades following a diploma examination (*Diplomprüfung*) on completion of post-secondary VET programmes (*Kollegs*);
- (b) apprenticeship graduates, graduates of three- and four-year upper secondary VET programmes have the option to have a *Berufsreifeprüfung* ⁽²⁹⁾ certificate and exam, which provides access to higher education. The exam consists of four parts and can be taken in modular form (general education and a specialisation from VET). Students may be exempt from certain parts of the modules but it is not possible to be exempt from a whole module. Apprentices can prepare the exam in parallel to their training or complete part of the exam during apprenticeship.

There are also IVET programmes at post-secondary non-tertiary level. These are provided within the framework of post-secondary VET colleges (*Akademien*) (ISCED 5B). The number of post-secondary VET colleges is declining because more of them are being transformed into tertiary sector educational institutions (*Fachhochschulen*) (ISCED 5A).

VET qualifications and programmes for young people at upper secondary level are not unitised or modularised. Only around 4% of the apprenticeship training programmes have been modularised. They comprise a module dedicated to the knowledge, skills and competence that are fundamental to the specific or related occupations, a main module focusing on the specific occupation and a further module leading to more specialised skills. How these different modules can be combined is determined in the training regulation for the respective occupation (Cedefop, 2014, forthcoming).

In contrast, the post-secondary VET programmes (*Kollegs*) offered by BHS are offered in a two-year day-time form with a modular design or a (mostly) three-year evening form, offering flexible arrangements for working students. Similarly, *Berufsreifeprüfung*

⁽²⁹⁾ Examination providing access to higher education for skilled workers and graduates of three- and four-year full-time VET schools.

certificate and exam, which is open to apprenticeship graduates, graduates of three- and four-year VET programmes are offered in a modular form.

VET graduates of upper secondary programmes benefit from flexible arrangements to complement their education and training and access higher education (the *Berufsreifeprüfung* certificate and exam). There are also flexible arrangements ensuring transfer of learning (such as between VET related qualifications, institutions). In the dual system, the theory part of the apprenticeship leave exam may be waived if there is evidence that the candidate has successfully completed the school-based part of the training or a respective BMS or BHS programme. An apprenticeship period may be reduced for those who have already attended (parts of) or completed another apprenticeship or school-based VET or general education. Qualifications in the same or a similar specialist field, in Austrian school-based VET or acquired abroad, may also be considered as equivalent (conditions specified in the training legislation). Admission to the apprenticeship leave exam is also possible if relevant periods of professional practice and attendance of relevant programmes are credited as a replacement for formal apprenticeship training (Cedefop ReferNet Austria, 2012).

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

There is no systemic approach to validation of non-formal and informal learning (no common framework, standardised procedures). Validation tends to be included in the legislation regulating exams or access to certain programmes.

Admission to exams that grant higher education access for people who did not attend a formal programme has been possible for a long time.

Apprenticeship legislation includes admission to the exam for people older than 22, through non-formal upskilling programmes (labour market measures). Validation of skills may form part of the exam. In the course of the NQF development, attention was increasingly directed towards non-formal qualifications, which will be made more visible. It is also planned to take informally acquired competences into account; appropriate credit transfer methods still need to be developed for this and tested (current projects) (Cedefop ReferNet Austria, 2012).

Cross-country mobility for VET

Cross-country mobility for VET has not been among the top national policy priorities. The bulk of cross-country mobility takes place under the (former) LLP.

There is no automatic validation and recognition of learning outcomes obtained in other countries. However, in apprenticeship, training within international programmes may be recognised as equivalent through ministry ordinances based on comparison of the training profiles and intended learning outcomes. Learners in school-based VET who have attended minimum five months and maximum one year in a school abroad can move on to the next grade.

Status of ECVET policy decision

Austria is currently testing ECVET partnerships for IVET via the Leonardo da Vinci projects in the context of cross-country mobility.

The main VET stakeholders at ministerial level and representatives from higher education are working on an ECVET proposal that will also clarify and operationalise the ECVET concept in the national context.

A formal policy decision on ECVET is not expected in the near future. Before such a decision is taken, the following main issues need to be addressed:

- (a) low interest shown by employers in the modularisation/unitisation of training programmes;
- (b) low level of long-term VET mobility.

In the course of the NQF development, attention was increasingly directed towards non-formal qualifications, which will be made more visible. It is also planned to take informally acquired competences into account; appropriate credit transfer methods for this still need to be developed and tested (Cedefop ReferNet Austria, 2012).

NCP and CoP ⁽³⁰⁾

NCP-2012	CoP-2012	NCP-2013	CoP-2013
N/A	N/A	Not formally appointed	Exists through the (EU-funded) national team of ECVET experts

⁽³⁰⁾ In the context of ECVET, a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Cedefop, 2013b).

3.2. Belgium (Flanders)

Respondents

Policy-maker: Flemish Ministry of Education and Training, department of education and training.

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification: IVET and CVET

IVET qualifications and programmes are not unitised or modularised. IVET has a traditional and holistic qualification structure based on a close fit between learning outcomes and learning processes and the requirement to sit examinations at the end of the programme. Successful completion of the course is a prerequisite for the award of the state-recognised VET qualification certificate or higher secondary education diploma.

For the moment, there is no national/Flemish common approach for the transfer of assessed learning outcomes between education and training providers and programmes. Education and training providers may grant exemptions to students that move to a new programme, though this is complicated.

For CVET in adult education (*volwassenenonderwijs*), training programmes are modularised and apply a mix of inputs and outputs. For each assessed and validated module the learner is given a partial VET certificate. A defined set of partial VET certificates leads to a formal VET qualification certificate. The learner is not required to sit a final assessment. VET qualification certificates are valued on the labour market. A defined set of partial VET certificates, together with a partial certificate acquired after following module(s) on general education, lead to a state-recognised higher secondary education diploma without extra examination.

IVET and CVET education and training providers are in charge of assessment, validation and certification within the Flemish education regulations.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

There is no systemic approach to the validation of non-formal and informal learning (no common framework or standardised procedures). Validation varies with certification bodies and sectors.

Cross-country mobility for VET

Cross-country mobility for VET is not a specific national priority. The following two obstacles are of particular relevance:

- (a) legal obstacles for learners below 18 in the case of IVET;
- (b) lack of sufficient knowledge of the language of the host country.

Status of ECVET policy decision

Any initiatives on ECVET implementation are currently on hold. Belgium (Flanders) gives priority to the development of the NQF, the Flemish qualification structure.

NCP and CoP ⁽³¹⁾

NCP-2012	CoP-2012	NCP-2013	CoP-2013
Flemish Ministry of Education and Training	Not yet feasible to establish a CoP	No change	No change

⁽³¹⁾ In the context of ECVET, a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Cedefop, 2013b).

3.3. Belgium (French-speaking community)

Respondents

- (a) Policy-maker: French Agency for Education and LLL (Agence francophone pour l' éducation et la formation tout au long de la vie) (AEF) and ECVET NCP for Belgium (Belgium (French-speaking community));
- (b) social partner: Institute for Dual Education and Training of Independent Professions and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) (Institut de formation en alternance des indépendants et des petites et moyennes entreprises) (IFAPME).

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification: all VET qualifications

Belgium (French-speaking community) is in a transition period towards a reformed VET system that aids transfer of learning outcomes under the new French-Belgian Service of Jobs and Qualifications (Service francophone des métiers et des qualifications) (SFMQ). The SFMQ brings together all VET providers involved in developing qualifications, as well as social partners and the government employment services in the Walloon and Brussels regions. It establishes reference professional/job profiles and translates these into common training profiles. It allows for relations to be established between:

- (a) professional/job profiles containing a job description and a description of professional competences which match labour market needs (based on the sectoral profiles of social partners and information provided by the public employment services);
- (b) training profiles describing the expected learning outcomes (expressed in knowledge, skills and competence) and based on approved learning units ⁽³²⁾ (the division into the approved learning units was a directly result of the ECVET recommendation which also dates back to 2009). This profile also contains an assessment profile and an equipment profile ⁽³³⁾ which are imposed on all training providers).

The SFMQ also issues a common terminology and references to all VET providers responsible for developing qualification profiles. The purpose of this mechanism is to provide guarantees as to the quality of profiles on which training programmes and qualification profiles will be based, in addition to the legibility and transparency of the

⁽³²⁾ The training profile is a step before and the basis for the qualification profiles which are developed by each VET operator/provider. At this level, the approved learning units do not have credit points attached.

⁽³³⁾ The equipment profile describes the minimum equipment and infrastructure a VET operator/provider needs to possess and which are necessary for the implementation of the training profile.

different parts of the VET system. It is intended to promote transparency of learning outcomes acquired by learners and the transfer of learning outcomes between different qualifications.

Since the beginning of the reform process (2009) only a few qualifications have been fully reformed (according to the set standards/profiles). These are divided into units, with credit points attached. For these qualifications the goal is to develop an enabling framework ensuring that assessed unit of learning outcomes are transferred between different VET providers and different qualifications.

Depending on the progress by the SFMQ, the mechanism will be gradually rolled out to the entire VET system where all VET providers will update their qualifications and training programmes to the new standards/profiles. In the interim, VET providers where the system has not yet been reformed continue to apply existing standards.

In Belgium (French-speaking community), VET providers have considerable autonomy in assessment and certification processes. However, they must meet the standards imposed by the competent authorities.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

The goal of the SFQM is also to provide professional/job profiles as a common reference point for the validation of learning outcomes acquired formally, non-formally and informally.

Before the SFQM, each education and training operator:

- (a) had its own business profiles;
- (b) applied different certification schemes;
- (c) did not use the learning outcomes approach.

Validation of a learner demanded a huge administrative burden for each education and training operator.

Cross-country mobility for VET

Cross-country mobility for VET is not a specific national priority. Overseas mobility is seen as a secondary benefit to the implementation of the instruments that support national mobility. However, there are no legal barriers to overseas mobility.

Though not common, transfer at home of learning outcomes acquired abroad is possible on a case-by-case basis and varies from institution to institution.

Status of ECVET policy decision

In Belgium (French-speaking community), there is a formal decision to develop a credit system for LLL and geographic mobility that will be applied within a regulatory framework (a distinct legal basis that is legislated for within a country).

The central elements of the credit system are the units of learning outcome and procedures for their assessment, credit points ⁽³⁴⁾ and partnerships.

The decision was formalised through a cooperation agreement between the three Belgian-French governments passed in 2009. Other decrees have been passed since then.

The SFMQ is the ECVET basis for the French part of Belgium. It is being rolled out gradually and will finally cover the entire qualifications spectrum: implementation and testing are being run in parallel. Testing is carried out via European and national projects that allow creation and testing of units of learning outcomes and assessment procedures on a sample basis before actual implementation.

For those parts of the system where implementation is already rolled out, the law requires all VET providers to organise their certification schemes according to the agreed units of learning outcomes, as well as meet quality assurance criteria for the assessment of learning outcomes. Units of learning outcomes are certified individually and accumulated towards a full qualification/award.

As part of the reform process, all teachers and principals participate in information sessions and training on the reasons for change and the potential use of new instruments and reference documents, as well as how to assess learning outcomes.

NCP and CoP ⁽³⁵⁾

NCP-2012	CoP-2012	NCP-2013	CoP-2013
AEF	CoP is established and is operational	No change	No change

⁽³⁴⁾ The criterion used for credit point allocation to the units of learning outcomes is the weight of the learning outcomes of a unit in relation to the job covered by the qualification. This weight is calculated on the basis of the information included in the job profile where the social partners indicate the relative weight of the key activities in relation to the entire job.

⁽³⁵⁾ In the context of ECVET, a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Cedefop, 2013b).

3.4. Belgium (German-speaking community)

Respondents

Policy-maker: Ministry of the German-speaking community in Belgium, department of education.

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification: school-based VET, apprenticeships

Qualifications and training programmes are unitised and modularised and apply a learning outcome approach. The modules are not individually certified; learners have to sit a final examination to get the diploma/qualification award. However, in some sectors for some professions, partial certification is possible (the automotive sector is an example).

Regional and national agencies are responsible for validation and certification of learning outcomes.

Assessed learning outcomes are transferred at VET system level. A system-wide framework enables transfer of assessed learning outcomes in a LLL perspective. This is an 'enabling' framework that supports transfer, but leaves individual institutions to decide on a case-by-case basis if they will transfer assessed learning outcomes.

There are no institutional obstacles to transfer of learning outcomes between qualifications and learning providers.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

There is no systemised approach to validation of non-formal and informal learning (no common framework or standardised procedures). Validation varies with certification bodies and sectors.

Cross-country mobility for VET

Cross-country mobility for VET is part of national strategies for VET; transfer of learning outcomes acquired abroad is possible on a case-by-case basis (varies from individual to individual, institution to institution).

The main obstacles to cross-country mobility are:

- (a) language barriers on the part of the individual;
- (b) national qualification systems are in many regards incompatible (e.g. input vs outcome orientation);
- (c) different learning standards between countries.

Status of ECVET policy decision

All initiatives on ECVET implementation are currently on hold. Several discussions among experts and regional authorities are going on, but no decisions have been taken yet.

NCP and CoP ⁽³⁶⁾

NCP-2013	CoP-2013
Institute for VET in SME (Institut für Aus- und Weiterbildung im Mittelstand und in kleinen und mittleren Unternehmen)	Does not exist

⁽³⁶⁾ In the context of ECVET, a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Cedefop, 2013b).

3.5. Bulgaria

Respondents

- (a) Policy-maker: Ministry of Education, Youth and Science Policy in Vocational Education and Continuous Training Directorate;
- (b) expert: vocational school Asen Zlatarov (centre for vocational training);
- (c) expert: Bulgaria gateway.

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification: IVET school-based and apprenticeship

The shift to learning outcomes is already taking place in Bulgaria; national standards for the acquisition of vocational qualifications have been structured in learning outcomes since 2007.

Modular training programmes are being applied only to some qualifications in the sectors of machinery construction, energy, electronics and automation, computer systems and technologies, transport and tourism. In most cases, Bulgaria has a traditional and holistic qualification structure based on a close fit between learning outcomes and learning processes and the requirement to sit national assessments at the end of the training programmes. Training to acquire a vocational qualification is completed by state assessments on theory and practice in the framework of national assessment programmes based on the state education requirements. The national assessment programmes are approved at ministerial level (Ministry of Education and Science; Ministry of Culture – for art schools – and Ministry of Physical Education and Sports – for sports schools) and are common for the whole qualification system (IVET and CVET). Final assessments are conducted by committees appointed by the head of the education and training provider and include representatives of education and training providers, employers and employee organisations (or representatives of the art universities for art schools and representatives of the National Sports Academy and licensed sports organisations for sports schools).

There is no legal framework providing regulatory mechanisms for the transfer of assessed learning outcomes. However, assessed learning (outcomes) may be transferred between selected qualifications, and training providers as part of pilot projects.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Work on recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning is still under way.

Currently, the VET Act, Article 40 gives unqualified employees the opportunity to achieve recognition of their learning outcomes obtained through non-formal and informal learning.

These employees have to meet the following requirements:

- (a) to have a minimum professional experience of six months;
- (b) to pass exams (theoretical and practical).

Cross-country mobility for VET

Cross-country mobility for VET is taking place via the (former) LLP. Six projects concerning ECVET were implemented by different education and training providers and social partner organisations under the LLP Leonardo da Vinci (such as 'developing and testing a credit system facilitating mobility in the chemistry sector' (Credchem) project ⁽³⁷⁾).

The learning outcomes achieved and validated abroad are not automatically recognised at home.

Status of ECVET policy decision

Bulgaria has not yet taken a formal decision on ECVET implementation.

On a pilot project basis, five national standards for vocational qualifications were elaborated in accordance with ECVET principles and technical specifications for IVET in the IT sector, electrical engineering, catering and food. Representatives of education and training providers and employers were involved in elaboration of these five national standards. Units of learning outcomes were designed and assessment criteria developed but credit points were not defined. These five standards were used in creating the draft national model for revising the national standards for vocational qualifications as a basis for the ECVET implementation.

According to the draft national model, national standards for vocational qualifications will be divided into units of learning outcomes. The assessment criteria and procedures for each unit will also be defined. This will enable validation of single units, set of units (partial qualification) or full qualifications acquired in the formal VET system. The same assessment criteria will be used for the learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal learning.

Bulgaria intends to review the national standards for vocational qualifications and curricula. It will also undertake numerous legislative changes to support the accumulation and transfer of learning outcomes in the formal qualification system, as well as the recognition of learning outcomes acquired in non-formal and informal environments, improving individuals' options to take up education and training in a LLL perspective.

⁽³⁷⁾ http://www.adam-europe.eu/prj/6173/project_6173_en.pdf [accessed 31.10.2013].

NCP and CoP ⁽³⁸⁾

NCP-2012	CoP-2012	NCP-2013	CoP-2013
National Agency for VET	CoP in place, but it needs to be developed further	No changes	No changes

⁽³⁸⁾ In the context of ECVET, a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Cedefop, 2013b).

3.6. Croatia

Respondents

- (a) Policy-maker: Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, Directorate for Education ⁽³⁹⁾;
- (b) expert: Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes.

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification: IVET and CVET

Croatia is already making use of units of learning outcomes. These were developed and introduced in the context of national VET reforms.

A common framework for the transfer of the assessed learning outcomes should be laid down at the national level, which would also define and enforce the common set of quality criteria. With the adoption of the law on the Croatian qualifications framework this process will be developed and standardised at national level.

It is expected that schools will be in charge of validation and certification of learning outcomes, and the relevant ministries and their agencies will provide the legal framework and expert support.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

The legal framework is being developed at the moment and will come into existence under the current Act on the NQF.

Cross-country mobility for VET

There are dedicated national VET mobility programmes and financial resources for cross-country mobility for IVET.

There is no standardised process for transfer of learning outcomes assessed abroad.

Status of ECVET policy decision

Croatia made a commitment to introduce ECVET, in line with the Bruges communiqué. It has already formalised the decision to develop a credit system for both IVET and CVET that is compatible with ECVET to aid transfer, validation and accumulation, both within the national context and transnationally. The main implementation papers formalising ECVET implementation are:

⁽³⁹⁾ This country fiche was not validated by the policy-maker.

- (a) the Act on VET (2009);
- (b) the strategy for the development of vocational education 2008-13;
- (c) the Act on the NQF(2013).

The credit system will be based on units of learning outcomes and credit points and will be part of a regulatory framework. So far, the specific responsibilities of different stakeholders in the development of the credit system have been defined and sources of funding identified.

On an operational level, the (EU-funded) national team of ECVET experts will develop guidelines for the use of ECVET in the context of cross-border mobility.

NCP and CoP ⁽⁴⁰⁾

NCP-2012	CoP-2012	NCP-2013	CoP-2013
Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported

⁽⁴⁰⁾ In the context of ECVET, a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Cedefop, 2013b).

3.7. Cyprus

Respondents

- (a) Policy-maker: LLP National Agency;
- (b) expert: Kyrillou Foundation, foundation for the management of European LLPs.

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification: IVET school-based and apprenticeships

The IVET system in Cyprus is mainly input-oriented and does not apply units or modules to qualifications or training programmes. School-leaving certificates (*απολυτήρια*) are awarded on successful completion of a VET programme.

IVET has a traditional and holistic qualification structure based on a close fit between learning outcomes and processes, and the requirement to sit examinations at the end of training schemes. Successful completion of the course is a prerequisite for the award of the state-recognised certificate. It is not possible to move out of the training scheme before the final assessment. A qualification is awarded to a person who has obtained all the competences required for the qualification and set out in the relevant standards.

Education and training providers validate achieved learning, while the responsible ministries and sectoral bodies validate and recognise it and issue the certificate.

There are no situations of transfer of assessed learning between qualifications, or institutions; all acquired learning is reassessed (double assessment).

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Cyprus does not have a legal framework formalising the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Cross-country mobility for VET

There is no national strategy on cross-country mobility in VET, but there are no institutional obstacles since such mobility is an inherent element of the Cyprian culture. The main obstacles that hamper VET students in going abroad to study are funding and language.

Transfer of learning outcomes acquired abroad is possible on a case-by-case basis (varies from individual to individual, institution to institution).

Status of policy ECVET decision

A working committee on the development and implementation of ECVET in Cyprus was set up in September 2011. This committee comprises stakeholders from both public and the private sectors, such as the Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, the Planning Bureau, the Human Resource Development Agency, the Cyprus Productivity Centre, the Foundation for the Management of the European LLPs and private providers of VET.

However, no measures have yet been taken towards ECVET testing/implementation.

The (EU-funded) national team of ECVET experts, coordinated by the LLP National Agency, have prepared several pilot projects for ECVET testing. They are under consideration by the Ministry of Education and Culture as part of the continuing reform of secondary technical and vocational education curricula (Cedefop ReferNet Cyprus, 2012).

The team is also trying to promote ECVET implementation among education and training providers and is seeking the support from the Ministry of Education and Culture on the issue.

NCP and CoP (2012) ⁽⁴¹⁾

NCP-2012	CoP-2012	NCP-2013	CoP-2013
Ministry of Education and Culture, Secondary Technical and Vocational Education Directorate	N/A	No change	No CoP

⁽⁴¹⁾ In the context of ECVET, a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Cedefop, 2013b).

3.8. The Czech Republic

Respondents

- (a) Policy-maker: Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, development and implementation of the national qualifications register;
- (b) social partner: Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic.

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification: IVET

IVET has been undergoing extensive reform producing a new curriculum with two levels (national and school), mainly focused on learning outcomes and key competences.

IVET has a traditional and holistic qualification structure based on a close fit between learning outcomes and learning processes and the requirement for assessment at the end of education and training programmes. At upper secondary level, vocational programmes have a duration of three years (ISCED 3C) and finish with a final assessment; technical programmes have a duration of four years (ISCED 3A) and finish with a matura examination. Since the school year 1995-96, there have been technical programmes at tertiary level (EQF level 6). Vocational schools on level 6 EQF are allowed to use ECTS, yet not all of them do so as it is optional (Cedefop ReferNet Czech Republic, 2012).

Successful completion of a course is a prerequisite for the award of the state-recognised certificate. A qualification is awarded to a person who has obtained all the specified competences and set out in the relevant standards. In most cases, it is not possible for IVET students to move out of the training scheme before assessment. However, Act 179/2006 Coll., on validation and recognition of learning outcomes, gives individuals the option of a partial qualification or a full qualification after a final assessment. This option is mainly used by adults.

All accredited education and training providers (schools, chambers of commerce, sector bodies) can assess and certify learning outcomes if they are entitled to organise final assessments. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports supervises assessment and certification processes for its qualifications. Other ministries (such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs) supervise assessment and certification of qualifications in their field of expertise.

Horizontal permeability is traditionally high in the Czech Republic.

Efforts are being made (by modifying the legislation) to create measures providing for transferability of ECTS credits between technical education at tertiary level and higher education (Cedefop ReferNet Czech Republic, 2012).

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

The system for validating non-formal and informal learning is embedded in the NSK. Qualifications in the NSK are made up of units of learning outcomes, using the term 'competences' when referring to such units. The system has been introduced in all economic sectors except for the national bank (for the moment).

The NSK is not currently linked directly to IVET but steps are being made to bring them closer.

Cross-country mobility for VET

Leonardo da Vinci under the (former) LLP provides funding for international mobility in VET. All education and training providers are encouraged to engage with the (former) LLP.

Transfer of learning outcomes acquired abroad is possible on a case-by-case basis, on the decision of the home institution.

The most relevant barriers to international mobility are:

- (a) lack of financial means on the part of the individual and the institutions/organisations involved in mobility;
- (b) language barriers on the part of the individual;
- (c) legal constraints: underage students need permission of parents, while the school is responsible for them;
- (d) lack of programmes for international mobility in CVET.

Status of ECVET policy decision

The Czech Republic is pursuing the initial phase of ECVET according to the advice formulated at European level: in countries where qualifications are not based on units of learning outcomes, or where accumulation of units is impossible, ECVET may be used for (international) mobility purposes after creating units just for this purpose (European Commission and EACEA, 2013b).

In this initial phase, the Czech Republic supports ECVET developments without action leading to substantial modification of the existing system and possible undesirable effects. In IVET, the use of ECVET is encouraged at education and training provider level to offer the possibilities given by international cooperation; in CVET and in recognition of learning outcomes, actions are focused on linking NSK and ECVET.

Following the initial phase, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports is planning an evaluation of ECVET developments in 2014 with a view to taking further steps. The Ministry will then decide on whether legislative support is needed and set further procedures for ECVET implementation. The decision will also take into account possible changes at European level, following the ECVET evaluation by the European Commission.

ECVET in IVET (2012-15)

In IVET, ECVET is being used to ensure that secondary schools, and education and training providers in general, do not encounter obstacles in participating in international projects, both under Leonardo da Vinci and 'Erasmus for all'. This is expected indirectly to make vocational education (particularly technical) more attractive and improve quality.

During 2012-15, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports is providing systemic support of ECVET learning mobility in IVET via an individual national project. The project will gather the experience gained in using ECVET for national mobility. Among the expected outputs will be a database of education and training providers with experience in the use of ECVET. The project will also deliver partial reports on each ECVET-supported mobility, where the units of learning outcomes will be defined, an agreement on assessment and validation of the achieved results prepared and all agreements necessary for proposed ECVET-based mobility (Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy (Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports) 2012).

ECVET in CVET (2012-15)

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports is preparing a national project aimed at analysing how ECVET can be used in support of awarding partial qualifications in the framework of NSK. The analysis would lead to concrete procedures and methodological guidelines on the use of credits (Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy (Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports) 2012).

NCP and CoP ⁽⁴²⁾

NCP-2012	CoP-2012	NCP-2013	CoP-2013
National Institute for Education (NÚV)	CoP in place, but it needs to be developed	NÚV	CoP in place, but it needs to be developed further

⁽⁴²⁾ In the context of ECVET, a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Cedefop, 2013b).

3.9. Denmark

Respondents

- (a) Policy-maker: Ministry of Children and Education, department of vocational training;
- (b) expert: Agency for Universities and Internationalisation (Styrelsen for Universiteter og Internationalisering).

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification: IVET

Modularisation is applied to the initial school-based, one-year, basic course of commercial and technical training programmes; the three-year main course which follows is not modularised, and has a more traditional apprenticeship model. Modularisation of the basic, one year, course took place in several stages:

- (a) beginning in 1996, a series of legislative reforms introduced competence-based curricula to commercial VET programmes;
- (b) the 'Reform 2000' introduced a modularised structure to technical VET programmes, extending it to all IVET programmes;
- (c) in 2006, legislation was intended to allow further freedom of choice, enabling students to combine, or 'pick and mix' modules, and to undertake additional, higher level, modules allowing them to progress to higher education;
- (d) in 2007, learning outcomes were introduced to the system; partial qualifications were expanded, and new, more structured, courses were introduced for weaker students.

Partial, or 'stepped', qualifications known as 'trin' are generally split in two and are available on some IVET programmes. Drawn up by trade committees and targeted mainly at weaker students, they allow trainees to obtain part qualifications which count towards a full qualification which they can complete at a later date. In practice, most trainees tend to complete the full qualification, as employers attach less value to stepped qualifications. There is also concern from trade unions that stepped qualifications undermine the value of skilled workers' qualifications and so they have been abandoned in some VET programmes (Cedefop, 2014, forthcoming).

Either schools or enterprises assess and certify the individual student's learning outcomes.

The high degree of flexibility that characterises the Danish qualification system makes transfer of learning outcomes between qualifications, learning pathways and learning providers possible on a case-by-case basis (from individual to individual, institution to institution). IVET students prefer staying in a class with the social relationships that this offers and are less inclined to take up different modules, or take up transfer between institutions. At an institutional level, the main obstacle to transfer is lack of trust between different parts of the qualification system. This is not so much an issue between IVET institutions, but it is difficult to recognise qualifications from IVET in high school, for example.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Assessment of prior non-formal and informal learning (*Realkompetencevurdering*) was introduced in 2000 in Denmark, where personal education plans were made compulsory in 2007. The 2007 Act on Recognition of informal and non-formal learning ensured that each trainee's prior non-formal or informal learning is assessed on entry to all of the VET programmes (Cedefop, 2014, forthcoming).

Cross-country mobility for IVET

Cross-country mobility is part of internationalisation strategies for IVET, but it is not a priority for CVET.

Due to a general mistrust in the quality of the learning provision and assessment carried out abroad, especially in the case of internships, transfer of learning outcomes acquired abroad is possible on a case-by-case basis (varies from individual to individual, institution to institution).

Status of ECVET policy decision

Denmark has a highly flexible qualification system that allows transfer of learning outcomes in the absence of credit points ⁽⁴³⁾ and a formal decision to use ECVET for transnational mobility on the basis of the existing qualification system. Under the Ministry of Education's coordination, VET experts with experience in transnational mobility are finalising guidelines for education and training providers that wish to use ECVET for transnational mobility purposes.

Currently, there are no trials for internal use:

- (a) there are no plans to develop modules. Danish VET is not modularised, except for division into a basic and main course, and any further division of the programmes is not contemplated apart from the description in learning outcomes;
- (b) ECVET technical components and principles require reorganisation of a qualification system and corresponding procedures that already work well and have the support of different stakeholders;
- (c) full ECVET implementation would result in a heavier administrative burden on a well-functioning system.

⁽⁴³⁾ According to the respondent, if credit points are to be used, it will be on the same principle as ECTS, i.e. one study year = 60 points no matter whether the training takes place in school or workplace.

NCP and CoP ⁽⁴⁴⁾

NCP-2012	CoP-2012	NCP-2013	CoP-2013
Not available	There is a well-functioning CoP composed of VET colleges and ECVET experts and the Ministry of Children and Education, who are writing the guidelines for implementing ECVET for transnational mobility	Ministry of Children and Education	No changes

The (EU-funded) national ECVET team has been active since autumn 2012.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ In the context of ECVET, a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Cedefop, 2013b).

3.10. Estonia

Respondents

- (a) Policy-maker: Ministry of Education and Research, vocational and adult education department ⁽⁴⁵⁾;
- (b) expert: Archimedes Foundation.

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification: IVET ⁽⁴⁶⁾

National and school curricula have been developed on the principle of modules and on the basis of vocational education standards. The new standards are competence-based and measure learning outcomes. These standards are approved by professional councils, which include representatives of the state as well as of employees, employers and professional associations of a specific area of activity or sector. Curricula are based on these standards, so they are output-based.

A module is a comprehensive content unit within a curriculum which determines the learning outcomes conforming to the requirements of a vocational education standard. A module comprises one or several subjects or topics.

The new VET Institutions Act has already introduced a new accounting unit for student workload, the Estonian VET credit point (*eesti kutsehariduse ainepunkt*). This shows the estimated amount of work a student has to perform on achieving learning outcomes described in the curriculum or module. One credit point equals 26 hours of student work. The principles of the ECVET (*Euroopa kutsehariduse ainepunkt*) application will be used while introducing the Estonian VET credit point.

Students of vocational programmes are not required to take state examinations to graduate, instead they may take a professional qualification examination. Nevertheless, state examinations are obligatory for VET students wishing to continue their studies in universities. These students have an opportunity to take an additional year (up to 35 study weeks) in subjects in which they want to pass the state exam.

Students who have interrupted their upper secondary vocational studies have the right to continue in upper secondary general school.

A student can transfer grades on presentation of a study progress sheet with the approval of the teachers' council.

⁽⁴⁵⁾ This country fiche was not validated by the policy-maker.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ Cedefop ReferNet Estonia, 2012.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

The VET Institutions Act governs validation of non-formal and informal learning for IVET, while the vocational education standard sets the terms and conditions. The procedures are set out in school rules for the organisation of studies. Non-formal and informal learning may be taken into account:

- (a) for admission to an IVET programme;
- (b) as exemptions from relevant subjects, topics or modules, but not from the final assessment;
- (c) recognition of previously passed vocational examination as equivalent to a final examination for an IVET diploma.

Cross-country mobility for VET

Cross-country mobility is not a specific national priority in Estonia.

Transfer of learning outcomes acquired abroad is possible on a case-by-case basis (varies from individual to individual, institution to institution).

Obstacles are manifold and concern both the individual (lack of financial resources and language skills) and the institutional level (lack of agreements or MoU between national authorities across EU countries regarding the recognition of qualifications, highly diverse division of institutional responsibilities across countries).

Status of ECVET policy decision

The EstVETCP was officially introduced with the new Vocational Institutions Act on 1 September 2013; the VET Act mentions ECVET explicitly. A unit-based credit system is to be implemented and EstVETCP incorporated into the modules, in conjunction with renewing the VET curricula in which learning outcomes will be expressed through EstVETCP.

VET providers have been working on the new curricula with support and resources made available by the (EU-funded) national team of experts.

EstVETCP will be used for validation of non-formal and informal learning and it is not linked with ECTS.

NCP and CoP ⁽⁴⁷⁾

NCP-2012	CoP-2012	NCP-2013	CoP-2013
Foundation Innove	CoP in place, but it needs to be developed further	No changes	No changes

⁽⁴⁷⁾ In the context of ECVET, a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Cedefop, 2013b).

3.11. Finland

Respondents

Joint contribution coordinated by the OPH.

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification: IVET and CVET

IVET and CVET qualifications are divided into units which are outcome-oriented. IVET is delivered mainly in vocational schools, but apprenticeships are also available. It is also possible to achieve initial vocational qualifications through competence-based examination (recognition of the learning outcomes acquired by an individual through non-formal and informal learning).

IVET qualifications come from 'study units' which are decided nationally and defined by the OPH; they comprise learning outcomes which relate to skills, knowledge and competence. Finnish IVET qualifications are broad, prepare learners for more than one profession, and provide students with a degree of choice and individualisation, in designing their own combination of units (Cedefop, 2014, forthcoming). Individual units of learning outcomes in upper secondary vocational qualifications are assessed separately; there is no final test at the end of the studies for a qualification. Assessment includes emphasis on formative and self-assessment, and since 2006 has included the use of skills demonstrations, or vocational skills demonstrations (*ammattiosaamisen näytöt*), which are organised at the workplace. Upon completing their studies, students are awarded a qualification certificate. In cases where students leave without finishing their studies (they studied individual or several units of the overall programme), they receive a transcript of study register.

In IVET, education and training providers are responsible for assessment and certification of the learning outcomes acquired. In CVET, education and training providers assess and validate the learning outcomes acquired and sectoral qualification committees issue the certificate.

Assessed learning outcomes are transferred at VET system level: a system-wide framework enables transfer of assessed learning outcomes in a LLL perspective between education and training providers and qualifications. Finland is working on fine-tuning the practices, but the system enabling accumulation and transfer has been in place and working for a long time.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Finland is among the first European countries to have adopted standards and legislation (both in IVET and CVET) for validation of non-formal and informal learning. In CVET, they provide a framework for the award of competence-based qualifications on common qualification criteria. The award decision is taken by sectoral qualification committees. The situation is similar in IVET (curriculum-based education and training), but validation of non-formal and informal learning is the responsibility of education and training providers.

Cross-country mobility for VET

Cross-country mobility is part of the development plan for education. This applies mainly to IVET.

Approximately 90% of learning outcomes acquired abroad are already recognised at home. Trust in the assessment of learning outcomes carried out abroad is a core issue in relation to transfer.

Status of ECVET policy decision

All qualifications (both IVET and CVET) have been divided into units of learning outcomes and there is a system of credits with corresponding credit points for IVET.

The Finnish credit points for IVET are primarily input-based and calculated from the number of study weeks the learner uses to acquire the learning outcomes composing a qualification (the three-year qualification for IVET at the upper secondary level totals 120 study weeks, at 40 study weeks per year, where one study week equals 40 hours of student work). The plans are to change the existing credit points for IVET to ECVET points: they will be calculated on the basis of the relative importance of the unit of learning outcomes to the overall qualification (such as based on relevance for the labour market and social integration as well as complexity, scope and volume of the unit of learning outcomes). The ECVET points will be implemented in August 2015.

Since February 2012, the steering committee of the VET qualification system restructuring group has been working on proposals for amending existing legislation; there will be new regulations to introduce elements supportive of ECVET, and a reshaped qualification structure. The proposals will also take into account the relation with EQF and NQF as a whole. The group will continue its work until the end of 2014, while legislation will come into force in 2014.

The steering committee does not plan to introduce the point system to CVET, at least not in the first phase of implementation. All the other elements of ECVET (except for the credit (competence) points) will be introduced in all vocational qualifications in 2014.

NCP and CoP ⁽⁴⁸⁾

NCP-2012	CoP-2012	NCP-2013	CoP-2013
Not available	CoP in place	No changes	No changes

⁽⁴⁸⁾ In the context of ECVET, a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Cedefop, 2013b).

3.12. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Respondents

Expert: VET centre.

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification: IVET

Certain qualifications and training programmes are expressed in terms of learning outcomes. In 2011-12 an EU twinning project supported the reform of VET standards and curricula based on occupational standards, prepared in cooperation with labour market actors. Outputs of this project are yet to be consolidated through training of VET practitioners (managers and teachers) (Cedefop, 2013a).

Training programmes of three or four years VET are not divided into modules. They have a traditional and holistic structure whereby successful completion of the three or four-year course is a prerequisite for the award of the state-recognised certificate. Schools assess and validate the acquired learning, while the Ministry of Education acknowledges the results and issues the awards.

Students have the option to switch between related qualifications, though insufficient human, financial and technical capacity makes transfer difficult.

Cross-country mobility for VET

Cross-country geographical mobility for VET is not a specific national priority.

Transfer of learning outcomes acquired abroad is possible on a case-by-case basis (varies from individual to individual, institution to institution).

The biggest obstacles are the lack of financial resources at an individual and institutional level. Cross-country mobility is yet to be embedded in the culture of the country.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

There is no legislative framework and/or system for recognition (validation) of non-formal and informal learning.

Status of ECVET policy decision

Any initiatives on ECVET implementation are currently on hold.

3.13. France

Respondents

- (a) Policy-maker: Ministry of Education;
- (b) social partner: French National Association for Training in the Automobile sector (association nationale pour la formation automobile) (ANFA AUTO);
- (c) social partner: Training Organisation for Trades and Crafts (Espace formation des Métiers et de l'Artisanat).

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification (the vocational diplomas of the Ministry of National Education, EQF levels 3 and 4 ⁽⁴⁹⁾)

Each of the qualifications of the MEN has a legal reference framework. It includes the diploma reference describing the characteristics of the qualification, as well as the certification reference setting out both the skills and expertise needed for the award (broken down into certification units) and the specific conditions under which they are examined. The fact that the certification reference is clustered in different sections or 'units' may create the vision of a modularised system; however, the completion of each individual unit is mandatory, units are not individually certificated, it is not possible to gain part qualifications which are recognised in the labour market, and students are not free – neither to combine different units nor in their sequential arrangement (Malicot, 2008, p.8). The aim is always for students to work towards the full state-recognised award. A holistic concept of training is followed.

Movement in and out of training schemes is possible to an extent.

The Ministry of Education is in charge of validating and recognising its diplomas.

Transfer of learning outcomes between different diplomas/qualifications is supported by an enabling framework, where the individual awarding bodies decide on a case-by-case basis if they will accept the transfer. It is accepted if the learning outcomes to be transferred are similar or equivalent and if assessment procedures are clear and transparent.

⁽⁴⁹⁾ The French VET system is complex and diverse, with qualifications/diplomas awarded by different stakeholders: ministries (education, agriculture, sports, health, culture), chambers of commerce, sectors, and private providers. The Ministry of Education is the ministry that manages the largest number of certification processes.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Since the 2002 Act, validation of non-formal and informal learning has become systematic (all vocational qualifications registered into the national register for vocational qualifications can be obtained through accreditation of prior experience). The reference frameworks (a relevant, legal document which exists for every vocational qualification and describes the characteristics of the qualification) are also the reference framework for validating non-formal and informal learning using an applicant dossier.

Cross-country mobility for VET

Cross-country mobility for VET is supported by European, regional and bilateral initiatives. There are no situations of automatic validation and recognition of learning outcomes obtained in other countries; all achieved learning outcomes are reassessed at national level (double assessment). This is due to the fact that quality assurance measures require that the assessment be carried out according with national assessment standards.

France is currently building a system in which assessment abroad will be possible under certain conditions and will allow recognition at home of the learning outcomes acquired elsewhere.

Status of ECVET policy decision

The Ministry of Education and the sectoral bodies and chambers of commerce are testing different ECVET technical components (units of learning outcomes, credit points, partnerships).

In the framework of its MEN-ECVET project, the Ministry of Education is assessing the compatibility of its EQF 4 qualifications to ECVET. The project is focused on the vocational baccalaureate (*baccalaureat professionnelle*), because it is the key level for the vocational diplomas awarded by the Ministry of Education⁽⁵⁰⁾. Since the general architecture and design of vocational diplomas are similar for all vocational diplomas awarded by the Ministry of Education, the results of testing on vocational baccalaureates might be, in the future (after assessment and political decision) extended to EQF level 3 diplomas.

The main messages from the MEN-ECVET are:

- (a) vocational diplomas of the Ministry of National Education are 'ECVET-compatible';
- (b) tools for practitioners are necessary.

⁽⁵⁰⁾ EQF level 5 diplomas (advanced technician certificate) are under the legal rules of Minister for Higher Education, therefore eligible for ECTS, not ECVET.

NCP and CoP ⁽⁵¹⁾

NCP-2012	Cop-2012	NCP-2013	CoP-2013
Ministry of National Education and Chamber of Commerce	To be implemented	No changes	CoP was launched in June 2013 on the occasion of the ECVET forum

A national team of ECVET experts (EU-funded) has been set up.

⁽⁵¹⁾ In the context of ECVET, a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Cedefop, 2013b).

3.14. Germany

Respondents

- (a) Policy-maker: Federal Ministry of Education and Research and Federal Institute for VET (Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung) (BIBB);
- (b) expert: Munich University of Applied Sciences (Hochschule für angewandte Wissenschaften München) (MUAS);
- (c) expert: Institute for Vocational Training, Labour Market and Social Policy GmbH (INBAS GmbH);
- (d) expert: IBS-CEMES Institut GmbH.

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification: the dual system

Most training occupations follow the traditional apprenticeship model. Modularisation applies to only a small proportion of the dual system, the electives (*Wahlqualifikationen*); these are available in 25 of Germany's approximately 350 training occupations, offering an element of choice within a programme of training as the lowest level or smallest part of both time and content ⁽⁵²⁾.

Most of the curricula and training regulations are currently input-oriented. Although qualifications gained under the dual system become increasingly outcome-oriented, the outcome orientation does not match with ECVET's understanding of learning outcomes. According to the training regulation, training in the company is thematically structured; skills and knowledge are formulated in an outcome approach. The part of the training regulation for schools is mostly structured into learning fields, each of which consists of a formulated target and contents to be provided.

Certification and assessment also follow the traditional German *Berufskonzept*. More specifically, individual skills units are validated only as part of the full award and form an integral part of it. Only the final assessment provides a state-approved award.

Assessment and validation of learning outcomes could be done by every education and training provider, but final decisions on recognition and certification are taken by the chambers of commerce or the federal authorities. They decide on whether a person's credentials are sufficient to shorten a training period or get the permission to participate in a final assessment.

⁽⁵²⁾ Elective programmes are an example of specialisation structures in that they allow training companies to select and combine specific skills areas, enabling them to reflect their own situation, profile and needs, and to make use of their own resources when training future employees. Trainees follow the traditional dual system, before then selecting a specified number from a range of electives halfway through their training period or in their final year. Electives may account for no more than one third of the training period and are assessed in the final examination at the end of the period (Cedefop, 2014, forthcoming).

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

There is no systemic approach to validation of non-formal and informal learning (no common framework or standardised procedures), so validation varies with certification bodies and sectors. There are several options for individuals to have their qualifications officially recognised, but those options are limited and always require examination of a person's qualification(s) by an authorised organisation.

Cross-country mobility for VET

Cross-country mobility is part of national strategies for VET. There are dedicated national VET mobility programmes and financial incentives/resources for cross-country VET mobility. This is particularly the case in IVET, apprenticeship and school-based VET.

The education and training provider validate the learning outcomes acquired abroad, but the trainee needs to pass a final examination to get his or her qualification.

Status of ECVET policy decision

Germany is testing different ECVET technical components for IVET and CVET via Leonardo da Vinci and national projects (Decvet, 'job-starter connect'). Several technical components are being tested: units, credits, partnerships; assessment; procedures to recognise learning outcomes; and documentation methods. Education and training providers are mainly involved in testing ECVET. At the moment, chambers of commerce are only marginally involved.

It is uncertain when or whether a policy decision on ECVET implementation will be taken.

Most stakeholders regard ECVET sceptically, since they believe that ECVET and the German VET system are not fully compatible. There is resistance to unitisation/modularisation of training programmes and qualifications. Stakeholders have to be convinced about the added value of ECVET, especially recognition of learning outcomes achieved in other learning contexts.

There are many practical questions regarding the development of ECVET within the specific national context. The Decvet initiative has provided some answers, but more testing needs to be done.

Lessons learned from the Decvet project

- Quality assurance plays a crucial role in the systematic assessment, transfer and recognition of units;
- it is necessary to have the learning outcomes approach as an integrated part of curricula and training regulations, which means that these need to be structured into units;
- ECVET should support transfer of learning outcomes, not enforce it;
- teachers and trainers need additional/special competences to use learning outcomes for teaching and assessing;
- ECVET points could be used to give additional information on the qualitative and quantitative weight of units of learning outcomes in relation to full qualification, but they should not be obligatory for the transfer and recognition of the learning outcomes.

The 'jobstarter connect' programme

The 'jobstarter connect' programme, funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and run by the BIBB, uses a 'training building block' approach with a view to integrating young people in Germany's 'dual' vocational training system. The current programme runs from 2008 to 2015. A total of 41 'jobstarter connect' projects offer training building blocks across the country; these run in parallel to the normal dual system. Trainees can complete the whole training via building blocks or they may switch to the dual system. Training building blocks are targeted at former applicants who have previously applied for a training post at some point, and unskilled young adults and employees who now wish to acquire vocational training. The training framework is subdivided into seven or eight building blocks, or more (depending on the training occupation) individually certified building blocks. Building blocks are output-oriented and are assessed on the basis of competences; they can be offered by a range of training providers, dependent on the mode of delivery. Training building blocks are offered in four different modes:

- (a) skills training for former applicants to prepare them for employment;
- (b) skills training with a view to equipping young people to access in-company training;
- (c) interface between initial vocational education in schools and vocational training in companies;
- (d) 'return to learn' training for young adults (refers to young adults without a vocational degree and allows them to return to vocational training) (Cedefop, 2014, forthcoming).

NCP and CoP ⁽⁵³⁾

NCP-2012	CoP-2012	NCP-2013	CoP-2013
National Agency Education for Europe at the Federal Institute for VET (Nationale Agentur Bildung für Europa beim BIBB)	In place, but it needs to be developed	No changes	No changes

⁽⁵³⁾ In the context of ECVET, a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Cedefop, 2013b).

3.15. Greece

Respondents

- (a) Policy-maker: National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (Eoppep);
- (b) independent expert.

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification: IVET

The Greek education and training system needs to be reformed to adopt the learning outcomes approach fully.

The IVET system in Greece is mainly input-oriented but there are courses in which the curriculum follows a learning outcomes format, as the corresponding national occupational standards apply a learning outcomes approach.

However, the training follows traditional modes, applying a close fit between learning outcomes and learning processes and the requirement to sit examinations at the end of training schemes.

School leaving certificates are awarded on successful completion of a VET course. A qualification is awarded to a person who has obtained all the competences required for the qualification and set out in the relevant standards, after a final assessment exam. The Ministry of Education and Religion, Culture and Sports and the national agencies are in charge of final assessment and certification. It is not possible to move out of the training scheme before the final assessment.

There is no framework that supports transfer of assessed learning outcomes between qualifications, or institutions. However, there are cases when learning (semesters) is recognised, avoiding double assessment. This is the case with recognition by the IEK of studies in professional lyceum (EPAL). The graduate of an EPAL similar course or specialisation moves directly to the third semester of IEK (having two out of four semesters recognised/transferred).

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Greece has a legal framework, which aims at treating validation of non-formal and informal learning in a systemic way; however, this framework has not yet been put in place through lack of political support. There is still a need to create the necessary conditions for validation of non-formal and informal learning, bringing together all stakeholders and agreeing on measures, terms, objectives and commitment.

Cross-country mobility for VET

Cross-country mobility is supported by the (former) LLP.

There are no situations of automatic validation and recognition of learning outcomes obtained in other countries; all learning outcomes achieved are reassessed at national level (double assessment). Learners undertaking short mobility periods abroad have the option to skip the part of the course already taken, though this is never equivalent to a whole semester/course.

Status of ECVET policy decision

Three laws foresee the development of a credit system in line with ECVET (units of learning outcomes, credit points and partnerships) and create the necessary legal and regulatory framework:

- (a) Law 3879/2010 (Official Gazette 163/A/21.9.2010, Article 11, Paragraph e);
- (b) Law 4115/2013 (Official Gazette 24/A/30.1.2013, Article 14);
- (c) Law 4186/2013 (Official Gazette 193/A/17.9.2013, Articles 13-29).

The most recent (4186/2013) considers the development of curricula for the EPAL and the IEK using the learning outcomes approach and in line with ECVET (Articles 10 and 18 respectively), taking into account the existing national occupational profiles. It also regulates all issues in relation to the management and operation of Eoppep and confirms that Eoppep will be the ECVET NCP and the body in charge of implementing a national credit system for VET.

The laws are not yet being put into practice and, in parallel, Greece is testing different ECVET technical components within Leonardo da Vinci projects for geographic mobility.

3.16. Hungary

Respondents

Joint reply coordinated by the National Labour Office, Vocational and Adult Education Directorate.

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment, and certification: qualifications under the national qualifications register (*Országos Képzési Jegyzék*) (OKJ)

Qualifications and training programmes are unitised, modularised and based on learning outcomes. Apprenticeships in Hungary are also modular in structure.

The OKJ allows for partial vocational qualifications to be obtained and students can later gain the additional modules they require for a full qualification within the school or adult training system. Partial qualifications are offered mainly by the local special needs vocational schools for those who have not completed a full VET programme but who have achieved a prescribed number of modules (Cedefop, 2014, forthcoming).

The OKJ covers 286 qualifications, 147 partial qualifications and 199 'built-on' qualifications gained by completing further modules.

IVET students do not have to take exams for modules; only the final assessment at the end of the training period brings the qualification award. A form of integrated assessment is being introduced under the new system whereby a more complex exam will cover all the topics within the modules; the exam will be oral, written and/or practical depending on the qualification (Cedefop, 2014, forthcoming). IVET students who complete only some of the total number of modules making up a qualification have the opportunity to complete the remaining ones in adult education to get the full qualification.

Learners in adult education have to sit exams after completing each module and a final assessment to obtain a full qualification.

All accredited education and training providers (schools, chambers of commerce, sectoral bodies) can assess, validate and certify learning outcomes if they are entitled to organise assessments. The responsible Ministries supervise assessment and certification.

Common modules between different qualifications may be transferred once the student has the knowledge, skills and competences making up the respective module. For transfer to happen more widely, education and training providers need clear guidance on how to recognise assessed learning outcomes and avoid double assessment (processes, templates are necessary). Legislative and political support is needed.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

There are no detailed procedures and standards to support validation of learning outcomes obtained via non-formal and informal learning. Validation varies with education and training providers in charge of assessing and validating learning outcomes, including those acquired through non-formal and informal learning.

Cross-country mobility for VET

Cross-country mobility for VET is not a specific national priority as there is no mobility strategy or other national scheme to finance it. Leonardo da Vinci under the (former) LLP provides funding for existing international mobility in VET, mostly for school-based IVET and less for practical training.

Transfer of learning outcomes acquired abroad is possible on a case-by-case basis (varies from individual to individual, institution to institution) where partners agree on the recognition of training units.

Transfer is hampered by variations in qualifications and programmes across countries, as well as lack of trust in host learning institution assessment and validation procedures.

Status of ECVET policy decision

The reform programme in Hungary recognises the need to prepare the education credit system to link with ECVET. The new credit system that will be compatible with ECVET will include units of learning outcomes and credit points, and will be used both for geographic mobility and LLL. It will be part of a regulatory/legal framework (distinct legal basis that is legislated for within a country).

There is currently no national policy paper that specifically deals with ECVET but there are related documents which contain ECVET elements:

- (a) governmental Decision 1229/2012 (Paragraph 6) on the tasks relating the development and implementation of NQF and its modifying governmental decision (No 1004/2011);
- (b) particular parts of the Act No 187 of 2011 on VET;
- (c) Decree No 230/2012 (Paragraph 28) on VET provided in higher education institutions and on certain questions related to vocational practical training in VET provided in higher education institutions.

Hungary is proceeding towards development of the ECVET-compatible credit system step by step and in parallel to NQF development. The funding sources for development of the credit system have been identified within social renewal operative programme No 2.2.1. Under this programme, work has started on developing NQF and ECVET. Relevant projects include harmonisation of the national qualification register with authority licensed qualifications, developing

frame curricula in the light of the learning outcome approach, and development of the Hungarian NQF (covering VET).

An ECVET-specific project No 10/2012 is financed by the education and training subfund of the national development funds; it foresees development of a credit system for vocational qualifications, based on a secondary level final examination. This credit system will help in transferring credits from secondary to higher education.

NCP and CoP ⁽⁵⁴⁾

NCP-2012	CoP-2012	NCP-2013	CoP-2013
National Labour Office, VET and Adult Education Directorate	CoP in place, but it needs to be developed	No changes	The development of CoP has started with the setting-up of the (EU-funded) national team of ECVET experts

There is an ECVET steering committee of the (EU-funded) national team of ECVET experts, comprising representatives of the Ministry of National Economy, Tempus Public Foundation, National Labour Office, Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and social renewal operative programme No 2.2.1., which operates as a unit in the National Labour Office.

⁽⁵⁴⁾ In the context of ECVET, a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Cedefop, 2013b).

3.17. Iceland

Respondents

- (a) Policy-maker: University of Iceland;
- (b) expert: adult training centre.

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification: VET at upper secondary level

The shift to learning outcomes has already taken place. The Upper Secondary School Act from 2008 takes its point of departure in learning outcomes and use of credit units with associated credit points ('One school year, measuring all of the pupil's work during that year with satisfactory results, provides 60 credit units, given that pupils contribute annually at least 180 working days' (Icelandic Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2008).

To achieve their qualification, students must sit a final examination after they have completed studies equivalent to 90 to 120 credit units according to a curriculum and study programme description validated by the Minister for Education, Science and Culture ⁽⁵⁵⁾.

It is usually possible to leave and return to a programme at a later date. Transfer of learning outcomes between education and training providers and qualifications can easily be included in any form of VET, but it is not done under the ECVET label (it is not mentioned in any way). The Upper Secondary School Act provides an enabling framework at VET system level by which individual education and training providers decide on a case-by-case basis which assessed learning outcomes are transferred. 'Pupils transferring between institutions that operate according to national curriculum guide for upper secondary schools have the right to have their former studies validated for course units in the receiving institution as long as those correspond to the school curriculum guide and the study programme description in question. Study units that do not correspond to the core subjects for the relevant study programme, shall be validated as elective courses' (Icelandic Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2008, Article 31).

This fragmentation makes it difficult for students to see in advance what learning outcomes they can bring with them to a new school. Therefore, students always risk losing credit points if they decide to change programme (study path).

⁽⁵⁵⁾ Education and training providers may propose a new study path with relevant subjects and the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture formally recognises any study path on offer. Providers cannot start teaching the new study path before formal approval.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Laws and regulations provide a system-wide framework for the recognition (validation) of non-formal and informal learning. However, this is still not applied and mechanisms do not exist in many of the professions, but gradual progress points to the fact that validation of non-formal and informal learning is becoming increasingly common in more professions.

Cross-country mobility for VET

Cross-country mobility for VET is not a specific national policy priority. However, at an institutional level, cross border mobility is already a fact in VET in Iceland. Education and training providers send their students abroad and recognise their credits (achieved learning outcomes) when they return. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (or other institutions) is not involved; each education and training provider can validate or recognise the credits (achieved learning outcomes) in any way it desires, such as study points (electives) or work-place training.

Transfer is enabled by a system-level framework (there is a full framework enabling cross-country mobility) and learning outcomes acquired abroad may be transferred at home (no double assessment).

Status of ECVET policy decision

Relevant provisions are already in place: the Upper Secondary School Act takes its point of departure in learning outcomes and use of credit points ⁽⁵⁶⁾, and mobility can easily be included in any form of VET, but no formal ECVET policy memorandum has yet been adopted. However, de facto, the Upper Secondary School Act lays the basis for the development of a credit system compatible with ECVET to improve transfer, recognition and accumulation of assessed learning outcomes within the qualification system, as well as the transfer at home of learning outcomes achieved abroad.

NCP and CoP ⁽⁵⁷⁾

NCP-2012	CoP-2012	NCP-2013	CoP-2013
Ministry of Education, Science and Culture	Not yet feasible to establish a CoP	No changes	No changes

⁽⁵⁶⁾ 'One school year, measuring all of the pupil's work during that year with satisfactory results, provides 60 credit units, given that pupils contribute annually at least 180 working days' (Icelandic Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2008).

⁽⁵⁷⁾ In the context of ECVET, a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Cedefop, 2013b).

3.18. Ireland

Respondents

- (a) Policy-maker: Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI);
- (b) independent expert.

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification: further education and training awards, CAS

The CAS is a new national outcomes-based awards system for further education and training. This provides awards at levels 1 to 6 of the NQF and a coherent architecture for all awards, including:

- (a) a credit system, reflecting the typical amount of learner effort, including directed and self-directed effort. The credit system enables learners to accumulate recognition over time and to navigate a range of programmes leading to awards on the NQF;
- (b) breadth and balance within the structure so that learners achieve specific vocational expertise alongside general knowledge, skill and competence, in line with the national skills strategy;
- (c) a clear relationship with other CAS awards to help plan pathways in learning: known as access, transfer and progression arrangements.

QQI ⁽⁵⁸⁾ is the national agency responsible for all awards of the NQF, including CAS. It fulfils a range of functions under legislation: development and maintenance of the NQF; establishing standards for awards, including those awards to be made by providers; advising the Minister on quality assurance and enhancement; reviewing and monitoring the effectiveness of providers' quality assurance procedures; validating programmes; monitoring implementation by providers of access, transfer and progression procedures for learners; establishing a code of practice for programmes provided for international learners, including the use of an international education mark; and provision of a database of awards within the framework, of programmes leading to those awards, and of a register of providers (Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), n.d.).

All VET awards belonging to CAS from levels 1 to 6 of the NQF allow for systematic transfer where the learning is deemed relevant within the another 'major' (an award of significant volume), supplemental or special purpose award. The single exception to this is the advanced certificate craft, at level 6, awarded to apprentices; neither the award nor the programme is unitised. This reduces its permeability both inwards and outwards. The apprenticeship system is currently being reviewed with a view to addressing these and other issues.

A 'shared space' at level 6 of the NQF between awards offered in further education and

⁽⁵⁸⁾ QQI is the successor awarding body for both the former FETAC and the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC); as such QQI makes awards at levels 1 to 10 of the NQF.

training and in higher education and training remains an area for enhanced development from a credit transfer perspective. The gaps arise because of perceived differences in the balance of knowledge, skill and competence and the purposes of different award types.

Higher education institutions are currently being surveyed for baseline information on transfer from one level 6 awards to programmes to another. An overarching review of level 6 awards and activities would assist in clarifying transfer arrangements.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Ireland is one of a few countries where awards can be gained by recognition of non-formal and informal learning, although cases where 'full' (major) awards are given are exceptional; the greatest use of recognition of prior learning is directed at entry and credits or exemptions (Cedefop ReferNet Ireland, 2011).

However, Ireland does not yet have a systematic approach to recognition of non-formal and informal learning nor an agreed national policy in this regard.

Recent new legislation and amalgamation of former quality assurance and qualifications bodies (e.g. FETAC, HETAC) under QQI have led to suspension of agreement on further quality assurance arrangements with new providers offering recognition of non-formal and informal learning leading to awards on the NQF. This affects new providers engaging in recognition of non-formal and informal learning within VET; those that had agreed quality assurance arrangements prior to amalgamation are not affected. The situation in higher education is different, as implementation is determined by individual institutional policy; terms may not be consistently understood between one institution and another; even within the same institution, one faculty or school may enable one application of process while another will not ⁽⁵⁹⁾.

Cross-country mobility for VET

Cross-country mobility initiatives are part of VET and HE curricula at provider level. Much VET includes a large generalist component, so mobility initiatives frequently fall within specialist vocational programmes often of larger duration (such as within apprenticeship, where programmes directly serve the need of a particular industry). Some mobility has been developed for apprentices where the programme is incomplete owing to economic crisis and redundancy.

Transfer of learning outcomes acquired abroad is possible on a case-by-case basis; the Europass mobility document is requested and used to record such learning.

The architecture of CAS enables straightforward recognition of learning outcomes achieved abroad. Practical issues such as making arrangements between providers, duration of programmes, and language abilities of learners affect the popularity of such initiatives.

⁽⁵⁹⁾ For information on providers offering non-formal and informal learning, see http://www.qualifax.ie/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=161&Itemid=3 [accessed 31.10.2013].

Status of ECVET policy decision

There is a fully developed credit system for further education and training – CAS – as well as one for higher education. The two systems are not currently linked.

The credit system in CAS is based on units of five, 10, 15, 20 or 30 credits for minor (component) awards and enables validation of non-formal and informal learning. Where validation occurs, it is recognised through achievement of minor awards and therefore of credits.

Credits intrinsic to minor awards may be linked to ECVET, although it is unclear technically how this can be done. For the moment, ECVET tends to operate at provider level, and currently for mobility experiences only, while CAS credits operate at the level of awards; it is systematic, transparent and consistent. Policy papers on enabling ECVET credits to be granted alongside achievement of national credits have not been developed within QQI.

QQI are considering a national approach to credit, in which aligned awards can be related to those intrinsic to the NQF. An overarching policy arising from new legislation for access, transfer and progression and for awards (including credit) is in preparation.

NCP and CoP ⁽⁶⁰⁾

NCP-2012	CoP-2012	NCP-2013	CoP-2013
QQI	CoP is not specific for ECVET but operates in relation to the whole VET system	No changes	No changes

⁽⁶⁰⁾ In the context of ECVET, a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Cedefop, 2013b).

3.19. Italy

Respondents

Joint reply (policy-maker, experts).

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification: three- and four-year vocational training courses (*istruzione e formazione professionale*) (IFPs), within the second cycle of education and post-secondary higher technical training, higher technical education and training system (*sistema di istruzione e formazione tecnica superiore*) (IFTS), leading to nationally recognised qualifications

During the past decade, all segments of the VET system have been affected by an important reform process, still not completed.

In the second cycle education reform (e.g. IFP-ISCED 3), the documents attached to the regulations of Law 53/2003 issued for each type of training offer included in the cycle, lay out the expected outcomes in terms of knowledge, abilities and skills. In particular, the 'student educational, cultural and professional profile' defined in Annex D of the regulations indicates the learning outcomes common to all pathways (set of education and training standards for basic skills), as well as the specific learning outcomes for each professional profile (set of minimum national education and training standards for specific technical and vocational skills). These are the basis on which education and training providers develop study programmes (training offer plans (*plano dell'offerta formativa*)). Specific guidelines to support education and training providers in drawing up their training offer plans according to a learning outcome approach were also provided by the Ministry of Education in cooperation with teachers, social partners, professional associations, representatives of the regions and autonomous provinces. Education and training providers develop study programmes that comprise learning modules aimed at developing basic, transversal and technical vocational skills (Cedefop ReferNet Italy, 2012).

Under the IFTS, pathways are organised in modules and capitalised units. They enable students to gain training credits valid in the university system and are ECTS-compatible (Cedefop ReferNet Italy, 2012).

Generally, second cycle education, as well as higher education, has mostly a tradition of holistic qualification structure based on a close fit between learning outcomes and learning processes, and a final assessment at the end of a programme. Successful completion of the programme is a prerequisite for the award of the nationally recognised certificate (Cedefop, 2014, forthcoming).

Over the past few years, increased cooperation between the state, the regions and the provinces has made education and training more flexible, enabling students to switch to different pathways to avoid school drop-out. There are several important systemic elements:

- (a) a set of education and training standards for basic skills to be developed in IFP (2011);

- (b) a set of minimum education and training standards (valid at national level) for technical and vocational skills in relation to the professional profiles included in the national qualifications index (*repertorio nazionale delle qualifiche*) (2011);
- (c) intermediate (after three years) and final (after four years) certifications (valid at national level) that enable students to switch from general education pathways to VET options (2011) (Cedefop ReferNet Italy, 2012).

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Italy introduced legislation on the recognition of non-formal and informal learning in 2013, with the National Legislative Decree, 16 January 2013, No 13. The decree includes:

- (a) glossary, principles, institutional duties and responsibilities within the public certification system;
- (b) process service standards: the way certification and validation must be provided;
- (c) awarding standards: what a certificate contains, what kind of information is being transferred and how it is traceable;
- (d) system standards: division of responsibilities and quality assurance;
- (e) 'national repertory of professional qualifications', which constitutes the unitary national framework for the certification of competence.

Cross-country mobility for VET

Among the activities carried out to promote a 'mobility culture' in VET is the MoU signed by the Italian and German Ministries of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministries of Education, University and Research in November 2012. The agreement envisages three-year cooperation aimed at promoting youth employment and the exchange of information and good practices in the context of the labour market and VET. Promoting the mobility of young people between the two countries is one of the main objectives of such cooperation. The MoU aims also at encouraging the creation of a network of schools and enterprises which could aid communication and cooperation between education and training and the labour market, through actions such as company visits, virtual enterprises, professional placements, and mobility experiences for young people.

Transfer of learning outcomes acquired abroad is possible on a case-by-case basis (varies from individual to individual, institution to institution).

Status of ECVET policy decision

There has been a formal decision to develop a new credit system that is compatible with ECVET (currently Italy does not have a fully developed credit system) for IVET and CVET. The more relevant and recent policy reference is the National Legislative Decree 16 January 2013, No 13, adopted within the labour market reform 92/2012. It includes concrete measures to develop a LLL system in Italy and constitutes the legal basis for a 'national public certification system' for validating and recognising knowledge, skills and competence achieved

outside formal education. The national certification system is also being designed to introduce a national credit system consistent with ECVET.

The credit system will be developed as a legal framework. It will be based on a learning outcomes approach, with qualifications articulated in minimum certifiable components consistent with units of learning outcomes. Introduction of credit points is not yet foreseen.

The specific responsibilities of different stakeholders in developing the credit system have been defined.

Participation in the Leonardo da Vinci projects generates knowledge of ECVET

Participation by education and training providers in Leonardo da Vinci mobility projects under the (former) LLP was very high. This led project promoters to be increasingly interested in ECVET. A recent analysis by the Leonardo da Vinci Italian National Agency, in cooperation with the national team of ECVET experts, has revealed growing interest in ECVET together with increased knowledge of the project. This analysis looked at the beneficiaries of Leonardo da Vinci mobility projects approved in Italy in 2011 and 2012 (about 220 projects). Organisations involved were asked about their knowledge, practical experience, perceived added value and possible obstacles of ECVET. The survey findings confirmed greater need for information on ECVET, best practice and guidelines for effective implementation of the tool within mobility experiences outside formal education and training. Nevertheless, there has been a progressive improvement of project promoters' knowledge and application of this European tool. This can be confirmed by the emerging interest in the creation of a CoP for organisations that have implemented ECVET and wish to encourage others to test the approach further based on accumulated experience.

NCP and CoP ⁽⁶¹⁾

NCP-2012	CoP-2012	NCP-2013	CoP-2013
Not appointed	CoP in place, but it needs to be developed	No change	No change

⁽⁶¹⁾ In the context of ECVET, a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Cedefop, 2013b).

3.20. Latvia

Respondents

- (a) Policy-maker: Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia, education department;
- (b) social partner: Employers' Confederation of Latvia.

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification: qualifications falling under the NQF

Latvia is yet to move to a modularised system (or even a proportion of the system). However, it is clear that current policy reform is moving in this direction with the forthcoming Vocational Education Law (Cedefop, 2014, forthcoming). Education and training programmes with a modular approach are currently under development, while a modular system is expected to be rolled out from 2015.

According to what is being planned in the forthcoming law, the award of qualifications will be stipulated in terms of assessment, validation and transfer of learning outcomes, in relation to the NQF (still under development) and the gradual implementation of modular approaches to training programmes (currently in the development phase). The use of credit points is still under discussion.

The modular system will apply to both IVET and CVET, with the possibility for individuals to take up not only a comprehensive modular programme leading to a qualification ('ready-made' modular programmes), but also acquire a separate independent module for competence update or several modules potentially leading to a qualification. The latter option is expected to be more frequent in CVET, but it may also apply to the final part of an IVET programme, when specialisation takes place. Plans are for around 100 'key professions' to have occupational standards, while the others will be relatively flexible and open to economic and labour market developments.

The qualification system is moving from an input to an output-based approach. The new Latvian qualifications framework follows the structure of the EQF and consists of eight levels. Learning outcomes are expressed in three dimensions – knowledge, skills and competence – in line with the EQF.

Currently, students are assessed against these outcomes via a final qualification assessment organised by education and training providers. Assessment commissions also include employer representatives. National agencies validate and certify acquired learning.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Regulations on recognition of non-formal and informal learning already exist and the system operates well. There are no issues that pose specific challenges. When they emerge, they are solved on a case-by-case basis.

Cross-country mobility for VET

The European social fund finances the bulk of cross-country mobility schemes in VET.

There are no situations of automatic validation and recognition of learning outcomes obtained in other countries; all learning outcomes achieved abroad are reassessed at national level.

Status of ECVET policy decision

A new vocational education law is currently being drafted which supports modularisation of training programmes and potentially the transfer of qualifications and learning outcomes.

It is expected that a modular system will be introduced from 2015. An ESF-funded project, development of sectoral qualification system and increasing the efficiency and quality of vocational education (2010-14), is being carried out by VIAA in cooperation with other partners ⁽⁶²⁾, under the direction of the Ministry of Education and Science. This led to the establishment of sectoral expert councils in 12 economic sectors in 2011 to review skills and competences and set relevant occupational standards. Part of the project is intended to support the introduction of a modular system in developing or improving both IVET and CVET programmes (European Commission et al., 2012, p.68).

At sectoral level, ECVET approaches and principles in certain contexts are already being applied for the transfer of learning outcomes achieved across countries, (such as in the maritime sector which is highly standardised) or through pilot projects or long-term cooperation platforms with strong elements of mutual trust (as in the medical sector).

⁽⁶²⁾ An important role is played by the State Education Quality Service (Izglītības kvalitātes valsts dienests) and the State Education Centre (Valsts izglītības satura centrs), especially in relation to the development of standards, modular programmes, etc.

NCP and CoP ⁽⁶³⁾

NCP-2012	CoP-2012	NCP-2013	CoP-2013
Not available	(No data available through the 2012 interview)	No changes	Several seminars were organised (some by VIAA) with a view to identifying examples of good practice, sharing experience and contributing to building a community of good practice). Small scale opinion surveys were carried out which helped policy-makers to promote ECVET better

⁽⁶³⁾ In the context of ECVET, a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Cedefop, 2013b).

3.21. Liechtenstein

Respondents

- (a) Expert 1: Agency for International Education Affairs (Agentur für internationale Bildungsangelegenheiten) (AIBA) ⁽⁶⁴⁾, office for vocational training and career guidance;
- (b) expert 2: Liechtenstein Chamber of Commerce.

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification: IVET

The IVET system follows the traditional apprenticeship model based on complete qualifications (learners have to learn everything that is included in the training programme to obtain a qualification), similar to the Swiss version. Qualifications and training programmes are learning-outcomes-oriented, but the learning process is very closely linked to learning goals.

Each apprenticeship has its own and systematic knowledge, regulated by separate VET ordinances. Chambers of commerce carry out the assessment, validation and recognition of acquired learning, and communicate the results to the Ministry of Education.

The vocational training system is permeable and compatible, so there are no dead-end qualifications.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Liechtenstein has not yet started work on validation of non-formal and informal learning. There is no common set of descriptors that could be used to assess and recognise learning outcomes acquired through such learning.

Cross-country mobility for VET

Leonardo da Vinci, under the (former) LLP, provides funding for much international mobility in VET. Transfer of learning outcomes acquired abroad is possible on a case-by-case basis (varies from individual to individual and institution to institution).

Status of ECVET policy decision

All initiatives on ECVET implementation are currently on hold. Liechtenstein is following the international ECVET process closely, especially developments in Switzerland, but the process itself has not progressed. Priority is given to NQF development, which is seen as a precondition for the ECVET implementation.

⁽⁶⁴⁾ <http://www.aiba.llv.li/> [accessed 31.10.2013].

NCP and CoP ⁽⁶⁵⁾

NCP-2013	CoP-2013
It is expected that the Ministry of Education will transfer ECVET-related responsibilities to AIBA once its location and duties are defined	Does not exist

A national team of ECVET experts (EU-funded) exists and is active in ECVET developments. The Ministry of Education is involved directly in the process (through the ECVET experts), while the chambers of commerce are informed by the Ministry.

⁽⁶⁵⁾ In the context of ECVET, a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Cedefop, 2013b).

3.22. Lithuania

Respondents

- (a) Policy-maker: Ministry of Education and Science;
- (b) expert: Marijampole VET Centre.

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification: IVET

From 2002, VET curricula have been competence-based, with clearly defined training objectives. IVET programmes are developed by VET providers in cooperation with representatives of employers. When developing programmes, the providers follow VET standards (the future sectoral qualifications standards) and the general requirements approved by the Ministry of Education and Science. As a result, the training programmes lead broadly to the same learning outcomes.

Currently, there are no modules or units in the qualification system. Lithuania has a traditional and holistic qualification structure based on a close fit between learning outcomes and learning processes, and the requirement to sit examinations at the end of training schemes. Successful completion of the course (the student achieved all the competences required for the qualification described in the relevant VET standard or, in its absence, in a VET programme included in the registry of study, training programmes and qualifications) is a prerequisite for the award of the state-recognised vocational qualification certificate. If a person decides to move out of the training scheme before final assessment, he/she receives either a vocational training certificate (if he/she completed a programme without passing the final exam) or a certificate of learning outcomes (if he/she dropped out before the end of the programme).

Since 2012 the organisation of the final qualification assessment has been the responsibility of accredited competences assessment institutions (*kompetencijų vertinimo institucijos*). In October 2013, there were 17 such institutions, including regional chambers of commerce, industry and crafts and agriculture, private companies, and employers' associations. These organise the final assessment of learning outcomes acquired by learners of formal IVET, as well as CVET programmes, and their validation (confirmation that learning outcomes achieved by a learner correspond to outcomes required for a qualification). The competence assessment institutions communicate the results of the assessment to the VET provider who award the qualification. Evaluation of the competences acquired by IVET graduates is separated from the training process.

Transfer of achieved learning outcomes is possible on a case-by-case basis (from individual to individual and institution to institution).

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

The legal basis allows validation of non-formal and informal learning. However this is limited and varies among VET providers – who are responsible for the validation of the learning outcomes gained through non-formal and informal learning – due to differences in procedures and quality.

An individual may obtain a full qualification award in recognition of non-formally and informally acquired learning outcomes, if the VET provider considers that they correspond to the ones described in the VET standards or training programmes for the desired qualification. If so, the individual is further referred to the accredited competence assessment institutions for final assessment. After successful final assessment, the VET provider issues a vocational qualification certificate.

Cross-country mobility for VET

Cross-country mobility in VET is mainly financed through the (former) LLP and Nordplus. The focus of transnational mobility actions is IVET.

Transfer of learning outcomes acquired abroad is possible on a case-by-case basis (varies from individual to individual and institution to institution).

Status of ECVET policy decision

Lithuania has a formal decision to develop a credit system that is compatible with ECVET for both IVET and CVET. The commitment for the introduction of a credit system is formalised in the 'concept of modular VET system' where the methodology for the development of VET programmes describes how the volume of VET programmes should be defined in ECVET credit points. According to the methodology, ECVET credits are to be allocated to the modules comprising the VET programme. Additionally, the government work programme action plan for 2012-16 includes a measure to modularise VET curricula.

The Qualifications and VET Development Centre (Kvalifikacijų ir profesinio mokymo plėtros centras) (QVETDC) has been delegated to develop the VET credit system. At operational level, ECVET is tested in the frame of an ESF national level project 'Formation of qualifications and development of modular VET system' (implementation period 2010-14). At least 40 modular VET programmes for the most popular VET sector qualifications are foreseen to be developed by 2014, comprising separate modules with credit points attached. The preliminary agreement between the developers of these modular programmes is that one year of training would equal 50 credit points and not 60 as suggested in the 2009 ECVET recommendation. According to shared opinion, this would not pose a challenge if a decision is taken to transfer this value into ECVET credit (by applying a coefficient of 1.2). The criterion used for credit point

allocation to learning outcome units is the weight of a unit's learning outcomes in relation to the qualification as a whole.

Operationalisation of the developed programmes will be possible after the pilot modular programmes are developed and tested by VET providers. The results of the pilot may lead to amendment of the legal basis in support of a modular training system. The Ministry of Education and Science and other stakeholders are already engaged in discussing the next steps.

Another ECVET-relevant national project is the establishment of sectoral practical training centres, such as food processing, automotive transport, tourism and hospitality, construction, and furniture. These have been created to cater for regional skill needs and provide modern facilities for formal VET programmes leading to narrow qualifications. These training programmes are divided into modules which are credit rated.

NCP and CoP ⁽⁶⁶⁾

NCP-2012	CoP-2012	NCP-2013	CoP-2013
QVETDC	To be implemented	No change	No change

The national LLL agency (the Education Exchanges Support Foundation, Švietimo mainų paramos fondas) is disseminating ECVET through its channels. It organises conferences, workshops and seminars and promotes ECVET through the Leonardo da Vinci projects. In its future work programme, it will focus on ECVET dissemination activities.

In 2013, in the framework of the Nordic-Baltic mobility programme for public administration, the agency organised two study visits to Denmark and Finland for representatives of training providers, the Ministry of Education and Science, QVETDC, and the Education Exchanges Support Foundation. The aim of the visits was for the participants to get acquainted with the ECVET experiences in the host countries.

⁽⁶⁶⁾ In the context of ECVET, a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Cedefop, 2013b).

3.23. Luxembourg

Respondents

- (a) Policy-maker: Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training, department for VET;
- (b) social partner: Chamber of Employees (Chambre des Salariés).

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification: IVET

Luxembourg already makes use of learning outcomes and has modules in place across the whole IVET system. Its vocational education system has been undergoing reforms in this direction since 2010. This reform has three main features:

- (a) teaching by modules replaces teaching by fields; each module is focused on concrete professional situations;
- (b) for each module, the competences to be acquired – including the three dimensions knowledge, skills and attitudes – are defined;
- (c) assessment and certification are based on the competences that should be acquired under the learning objectives. There is no numerical evaluation: at the end of each module, the learner is assessed on the acquisition of the module's competences. Modules are individually certified.

Introduction of this reform started with the school year 2010/11 and reached the last professions at the start of the school year 2012/13 (Cedefop ReferNet Luxembourg, 2012).

However, the learning process and learning outcome are closely interlinked in the module description. Students must complete a formal programme of study and learning, which means that there is restricted scope for training outside the formal programme. Assessment is carried out by central tripartite examinations boards (composed of representatives of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, chambers of crafts/chambers of commerce, chambers of employees) and must be passed for the student to complete the programme of study and get a qualification. Assessment immediately follows completion of a module. If a trainee fails a module, he or she is able to retake it (Cedefop, 2014, forthcoming). The National Authority of Certification (Autorité nationale de certification), which has also a tripartite composition, is in charge of the recognition of learning outcomes. The state awards the certificate/diploma.

Switching between different training courses is made easier by the fact that modules already passed can be credited and taken into account. Where a course of training has been interrupted or abandoned, it is easier to take up the course again.

There are possibilities for students to realign choice of vocation (qualification), where no more than half or two-thirds of the modules (depends on the type of training) have already been completed by the learner during the first year of training.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Recognition is integrated within the formal qualification system, including VET. The law of 19 December 2008 reforming vocational training stipulates that everyone has the right to have their prior learning and occupational experience validated with a view to obtaining professional qualifications. Individuals with at least three years (5 000 hours) of practice in a work environment may apply to the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training. The practice must be directly related to the requested certification. If the conditions are met, the candidate may obtain totally or partially a certificate or diploma (Cedefop ReferNet Luxembourg, 2012).

Cross-country mobility for VET

According to the legal framework for cross-border VET, mobility is possible according to individual demand.

Learning outcomes achieved abroad are transferred between selected countries as part of pilot projects (such as the 'Value learning outcomes in the Grande Région' (VaLoGReg) pilot project).

Status of ECVET policy decision

The reform of the national VET system following the law of 19 December 2008 and active since 2010 contains all ECVET principles:

- (a) curricula in units subdivided in modules;
- (b) description of the curricula in learning outcomes/competences with the three dimensions of knowledge, skills and attitudes;
- (c) recognition of formal and non-formal learning;
- (d) modules that stay valid within a period of at least five years after the learner leaves the IVET system.

The above reform has led to the development of a credit system for IVET which includes the central elements of ECVET, apart from credit points. MoU or learning agreements are used within Leonardo da Vinci mobility.

There are currently no other ECVET-relevant activities under way or forthcoming. A review of the current system will be launched as soon as the first cycle of the reformed system has been achieved.

For CVET, any initiatives on ECVET implementation are currently on hold as the sector prefers to wait for the credit system to be put in place in neighbouring countries.

NCP and CoP ⁽⁶⁷⁾

NCP-2012	CoP-2012	NCP-2013	CoP-2013
Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training, vocational training service	To be introduced	No changes	No changes

⁽⁶⁷⁾ In the context of ECVET, a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Cedefop, 2013b).

3.24. Malta

Respondents

Policy-maker: EU Programmes Agency (Agenzija tal-Programmi tal-Unjoni Ewropea).

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification: VET qualifications aligned to the Malta qualifications framework (MQF)

The third edition of the referencing document for Malta (Malta Qualifications Council, 2012) provides a transparent and structured overview of the knowledge, skills and competences expected to form the basis of all qualifications aligned to the MQF and referenced to the EQF and the qualifications framework of the European higher education area (EHEA). The national curriculum framework gives ample freedom to education and training providers to establish their curricula. The public ones ⁽⁶⁸⁾ already offer courses, which are outcomes-based. This also applies to a number of private providers (Cedefop ReferNet Malta, 2012).

IVET has a traditional and holistic qualification structure based on alignment between learning outcomes and learning processes and the requirement that the student be assessed at the end of a learning process. Successful completion of the course is a prerequisite for the award of the state-recognised certificate.

National agencies validate and certify students' acquired learning outcomes.

The different methods of assessment and the lack of MoU between education and training providers hamper the transfer of learning outcomes.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Legal Notice 295/2012 (Malta, Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012b) sets the regulations for validation of informal and non-formal learning. It provides the regulatory framework for the validation process and for the granting of validation awards classified within the MQF in accordance with the types of awards established within the framework. It describes the rights of the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) to establish sector skills committees and sector skills units, the members of which are to be appointed by the Commission with the approval of the Ministry of Education and Employment. The legal notice provides details on the process of validation and how the sector skills committees can regulate validation (Cedefop ReferNet Malta, 2012). However, the actual structures or operating procedures are at various stages of development.

⁽⁶⁸⁾ The main IVET provided by the state includes the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), and the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS). MCAST serves as an umbrella organisation which houses different VET institutes. Both of these institutions also offer part-time evening courses which allow opportunities for CVET for those already in work.

Many education and training providers also have maturity clause/mechanisms on how to assess learners' prior learning on entry to a course of study by using different methods such as interviews or portfolios. Providers are not obliged to assess learners' prior learning; they may carry it as a means of determining if a person is able to cope throughout the course of study. There is no accreditation of prior learning involved.

Cross-country mobility for VET

Cross-country mobility for VET is an initiative of education and training providers. In the tourism sector, the ITS operates such a mobility window where students undergo a six month period abroad.

Different methods of assessment and the lack of a MoU between education and training providers across countries are the main obstacles that hamper transfer of learning outcomes acquired abroad to the home institution.

Status of ECVET policy decision

Malta has already committed to developing a credit system that is compatible with ECVET, both for increasing the flexibility of its VET qualification system and for improving cross-country mobility. ECVET is currently being used in the courses offered by MCAST at MQF level 1 to level 4, and the system will be rolled out across IVET, as well as for CVET.

The third edition of the *Referencing document for Malta* published in 2012 already indicates the workload expressed in ECVET credit points for the VET awards on each of the MQF levels. Legal notices within the Education Act (Malta, Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012a; 2012b) also make reference to ECVET.

Until March 2013, the NCFHE had a pilot project financed under Leonardo da Vinci which focused on the conversion of both IVET and CVET full qualifications and short courses in a number of different sectors into the ECVET system. The project included the main players in IVET (MCAST and ITS) as well as CVET (employment and training corporation) and a private training provider (Clear Dimensions Limited). This has led to the development of a manual which provides support to all education and training providers in Malta on how to convert their existing courses into ECVET (Cedefop ReferNet Malta, 2012). Learning providers are already required to convert their training courses into ECVET, required for accreditation.

NCP and CoP ⁽⁶⁹⁾

NCP-2012	CoP-2012	NCP-2013	CoP-2013
NCFHE/Ministry of Education and Employment	CoP in place, but it needs to be developed	No change	No change

Change in the (EU-funded) national team of ECVET experts, mainly replacements.

⁽⁶⁹⁾ In the context of ECVET, a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Cedefop, 2013b).

3.25. Montenegro

Respondents

Expert: independent adviser for vocational education.

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification: IVET and CVET

All methodological documents necessary for the development of learning-outcomes-based qualifications have been adopted by the Council for Qualifications.

Two new IVET and CVET qualifications (tourist technician and agricultural technician) developed according to the law on the NQF, 2010, are divided into units of learning outcomes and are credit-rated. IVET school teachers, employers and CVET providers were involved in defining the units. These units and corresponding assessment standards are common for both IVET and CVET programmes, enabling transfer of units and corresponding learning outcomes and opening up different ways of achieving the specific qualifications. Transfer of learning outcomes is possible in these cases.

The key competences common to all IVET and CVET programmes are transferrable. Institutions are obliged by law to ensure their transfer at national level.

After completion of a VET programme, learners need to sit a final assessment to get a diploma.

The Ministry of Education certifies the validated learning outcomes, while the national agencies and schools assess and validate the learning outcomes acquired by the students.

Transfer of achieved learning outcomes between programmes (and institutions) is at an early stage. Human resources and procedures are yet to be developed for transfer procedures to be in place.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

There is no systemic approach to validation of non-formal and informal learning (no common framework or standardised procedures); validation varies with certification bodies and sectors. Clear procedures are yet to be defined and competent institutions appointed before individuals begin to trust the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Cross-country mobility for VET

Cross-country mobility for VET initiatives is part of VET curricula for certain qualifications/programmes only.

Transfer of learning outcomes achieved abroad is enabled by a framework applied to certain parts of the VET system.

Status of ECVET policy decision

Montenegro is currently engaged in testing different ECVET technical components, such as the units of learning outcomes with credit points within IVET. During the 2013/14 school year, two training programmes (tourist technician and agriculture technician) made up of units of learning outcomes with credit points attached, are being piloted in schools. The programmes have been developed by two working groups (one for each sector) comprising representatives of the schools where the programmes are to be piloted (teachers and principals) and representatives of the Centre for Vocational Education and Assessment. The latter also manages the pilot in schools, with the support of the Institute of Republic of Slovenia for VET (Center RS za poklicno izobraževanje) (CPI). On the basis of the pilot results, follow-up actions covering other training programmes will be taken.

Setting up rules and guidelines for the working groups in charge of developing credit values for VET qualifications and programmes was complex and time-consuming. The ECVET piloting and development process needs time.

NCP and CoP ⁽⁷⁰⁾

NCP-2013	CoP-2013
Not appointed	Not in place

⁽⁷⁰⁾ In the context of ECVET, a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Cedefop, 2013b).

3.26. The Netherlands

Respondents

- (a) Policy-maker: Centre for the Innovation of Education and Training (CINOP)/National agency LLP Leonardo da Vinci;
- (b) social partner: the Netherlands Association of VET Colleges.

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification: IVET

There is a long history of developing a modularised system and so the relative significance of the modular approach is high. While modules, as such, no longer exist at national level, having been replaced by core tasks (*kerntaken*) in the mid-2000s, the system can be considered modular.

Vocational qualifications are made up of a number of core tasks (*kerntaken*) which are broken down into work processes and associated competences. The core tasks are mandatory, with no options for the student to combine or select them differently. However, while the qualification structures themselves are binding, it is up to education and training providers to determine how to teach the core tasks and how to structure learning. There are no partial qualifications; students must complete all the core tasks to achieve their qualification. It is up to the education and training providers to determine whether individual core tasks should be individually certified; however, even where core tasks are individually certificated by education and training providers, these would not be worth anything on the labour market and they have no credit attached.

While the Dutch Ministry of Education approves new qualifications and amendments to existing ones, education and training providers are responsible for assessment, progression and mobility. It is at the learning providers' discretion as to how assessment should be conducted. Some will conduct their own assessment, while others 'buy in' exams from centres of expertise (Cedefop, 2014, forthcoming).

Movement in and out of a training programme is similarly largely at the discretion of education and training providers. It is usually possible to leave and return to a programme at a later date; however, transfer of learning outcomes between different training programmes and education and training providers is made more complicated by funding issues. Also, exam committees in education and training providers do not always trust the certificates (quality of the assessment or the content of what is learned) and do not always accept the transfer (Cedefop, 2014, forthcoming).

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Validation is systemic (carried out against national standards), but varies with certification bodies. Validation of prior, non-formal and informal learning is an instrument promoted in the Netherlands for the past 10 years. Validation of non-formal and informal learning takes place, in accordance with the national qualifications/standards in VET, at upper secondary vocational and higher professional level in particular. Validation is laid down in

the form of a diploma or a course certificate; parts of regular VET programmes are exempt. The certificate does not guarantee direct admission by schools or other education and training providers who have an important role in making use of procedures and certificates (Cedefop ReferNet Netherlands, 2012). Transfer of non-formal and informal learning to formal learning is problematic due to validation quality; this is doubted by education and training provider exam committees who are resistant to acceptance.

Cross-country mobility for VET

International mobility is a part of the VET system, though not a national policy priority or compulsory. It depends on the policy of the education and training providers and it can be made possible on an individual basis.

Learning outcomes acquired abroad are transferred between selected countries as part of pilot projects (such as ECVET pilot projects).

Status of ECVET policy decision

There is no official document from the Ministry of Education on how to implement ECVET in the Netherlands and such a decision is not expected. Currently, ECVET is being piloted and tested on a voluntary basis by the education and training providers (VET schools and knowledge sharing centres in the Netherlands, for instance for the trade unions) in the framework of the Leonardo da Vinci mobility projects under the (former) LLP. The national team of ECVET experts will inform about and disseminate the principles for ECVET in mobility and help education and training providers wherever they need help.

In addition to the mobility projects, the Netherlands plans to test ECVET on a pilot basis in the context of LLL and the role that ECVET may play to help working adults in their career transitions.

NCP and CoP ⁽⁷¹⁾

NCP-2012	CoP-2012	NCP-2013	CoP-2013
CINOP	CoP is reaching a mature stage of development	Changes since 2012: the creation of national team of ECVET experts	No changes

⁽⁷¹⁾ In the context of ECVET, a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Cedefop, 2013b).

3.27. Norway

Respondents

- (a) Policy-maker: Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training;
- (b) representative of social partners.

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment, certification: upper secondary VET

Norway has a well-developed upper secondary VET system linked to apprenticeship training. It normally includes two years at school with practical training in school workshops and short work placements in industry, followed by two years of formalised apprenticeship training and productive work in an enterprise or public institution (the 2+2 model). However, not all VET programmes follow the 2+2 model; some are entirely school-based, while another small group follow a 1+3 model (one year in school, plus three years of apprenticeship training).

Student competences are assessed continuously throughout the four years of education and training. They also take exams in individual subjects developed at local and county level, and may be randomly selected to sit for nationally arranged examinations in common core subjects. After one or two years in school, there is an interdisciplinary local practical exam that covers all the vocational subjects. After two or three years of apprenticeship training, upper secondary VET is completed by a practical-theoretical trade and journeyman's examination (*Fag- og svenneprøve*) (Cedefop ReferNet Norway, 2012).

A county-appointed ⁽⁷²⁾, trade-specific examination board, in which the social partners are represented, prepares and assesses the final assessment. In some subjects, for instance in some electrical trades and in for gunsmiths, there is an obligatory centralised written exam (marked locally) that apprentices must take prior to the trade and journeyman's examination.

Transfer of learning outcomes within the same learning programme/qualification is supported by the legal system. Transfer of learning outcomes between learning programmes/qualifications is regulated for certain learning programmes: national authorities in cooperation with social partners decide where the bridges are possible. If the bridges are not within what is regulated by the legal framework, transfer may happen on a case-by-case basis.

Transfer is particularly challenging if a learner who attended the two years of school training for one programme wants to transfer to another programme for the two years of work training.

⁽⁷²⁾ There are 19 counties in Norway.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

There is a legal basis for validation of non-formal and informal learning, whereby individuals have the right to have their non-formal and informal learning validated at all levels within the education system.

In practice, validation varies with the responsible institutions, systems and levels. Validation is normally carried out for entrance to different levels of education, but it does not reduce the duration of the learning programme, so most people are not motivated to have their non-formal and informal learning validated.

Cross-country mobility for VET

Cross-country VET mobility is part of a general policy of internationalisation of the whole training system, but cross-country mobility for VET is not a policy priority as such. Considerable international mobility in VET is financed through the Leonardo da Vinci programme; 19 counties in Norway use this opportunity, mainly for apprentices. The programme relies on committed education and training providers that work with bilateral contracts between specific institutions and there is no uniform method for describing learning outcomes. The term competent body for assessment varies in EU countries, making it difficult to rely on learning results and incorporate them in mainstream VET.

Transfer of learning outcomes acquired abroad is possible on a case-by-case basis (varies from individual to individual and institution to institution) There is no framework that makes transfer automatic.

Status of ECVET policy decision

ECVET is being tested in the Leonardo da Vinci mobility programmes for cross-country mobility.

In June 2013, a national seminar gathering representatives of the social partners, schools and counties was organised to explore whether ECVET should be implemented in Norway. This did not lead to a formal decision, though one is expected in December 2014.

Norway has established a project consisting of a working group, reference and steering committee to analyse ECVET methodology in relation to the formal VET system and its legislation. The working group comprises social partner representatives who will consider the pros and cons of using ECVET principles, together with their networks and contacts. Social partners are very interested in ECVET and want to participate in the decision-making process.

The Norwegian Directorate of Education and training, on behalf of the Ministry of Education, will also test different ECVET principles in cooperation with the social partners, student and teacher organisations, and VET experts from the counties.

Norway has introduced a credit point system in advanced VET (tertiary level). The system makes it easy to convert to ECTS and ECVET, with 60 credit points for one year full-time study and being outcome-oriented.

NCP and CoP ⁽⁷³⁾

NCP-2012	CoP-2012	NCP-2013	CoP-2013
Not available	To be implemented	No change	No change

⁽⁷³⁾ In the context of ECVET, a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Cedefop, 2013b).

3.28. Poland

Respondents

Expert: Foundation for the Development of the Education System (Fundacja Rozwoju Systemu Edukacji).

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification: IVET

Since the curriculum reform of 2009, there has been a move towards a learning-outcomes-based approach across the education system (European Commission; Polish Ministry of National Education, 2011). Core curricula for individual subjects specify learning outcomes in terms of skills to be acquired; they are set out as objectives, tasks, content and achievement.

The shift to a decentralised and modularised system has also taken place in recent years, using 'modular curriculum packages' which are broken down into 'modular units'. This shift is also intended to assist in creating integrated vocational systems in line with EU policies and standards such as ECVET or EQF (Cedefop, 2014, forthcoming). Following a final exam, the learner can attain either a vocational diploma in a given occupation (such a diploma can encompass from one to three vocational certificates) or a single vocational certificate. The former can be understood as a compound qualification, the latter as a single qualification. Each single qualification is composed of several units of learning outcomes.

The modules now cover 200 occupations, 252 qualifications and eight fields of training. It is currently up to the local education providers and schools as to whether they adopt modular curriculum programmes in IVET: such structures were in place in only 30% of schools in 2011. It is intended that these will be in place in all schools by 2013, representing an evolutionary approach to modularisation/unitisation.

The relatively low number of schools that apply modular programmes is because many teachers found the procedure for their development and approval overly complicated. As a consequence, in 2009 the Ministry of Education chose to launch an ESF-funded project supporting teachers introducing modular curricula rather than explore the impact of such reforms on learners. Examples of best practice in the use of modular curricula were identified, and 300 trainers and experts on modular education were trained to provide advice and support to schools. According to reported data, these activities were cost-intensive (Cedefop ReferNet Poland, 2010).

Students do not have free choice in either the combination of the different units, or in their sequential arrangement. The aim is always for students to work towards the full state-recognised award, following a holistic concept of training. There is the suggestion that individual modular units should be assessed, marked and certified separately (European Commission and Institute for Sustainable Technologies-National Research Institute, 2007). However, some vocational schools which have adopted modular curricula have reported problems; for example, there have been difficulties in combining general and

vocational modules due to the time differences required to cover each and the rigid exam schedules (Cedefop ReferNet Poland, 2011).

The IVET system is governed by the Ministry of Education. Examinations/assessments for 'school-origin' qualifications are conducted by regional examination boards. In apprenticeships, the examinations/assessments are conducted by the chambers of commerce, with the Ministry of Education only certifying the validated learning outcomes.

Movement in and out of training schemes is possible to an extent. Modules are transferable, but only within the same area. Enabling credit transfer between sectors (i.e. general, vocational and higher education) needs a change of mind-set among educational, professional and sectoral organisations.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

After the vocational education reforms of 1 September 2012, vocational diplomas (compound qualifications) and vocational certificates (single qualifications) can also be awarded for learning outcomes acquired through non-formal education or informally (through work experience). People who want to have their non-formal and informal learning validated have the option to sit extramural vocational examinations organised by regional examination boards. However, it is not possible in Polish VET to validate units of learning outcomes externally. These can only be accumulated during formal education.

The main obstacles to validation of non-formal and informal learning are:

- (a) large scale qualifications: vocational certificates (single qualifications) encompass large sets of knowledge, skills, competences (a large volume of learning outcomes);
- (b) few examples of tested procedures, fit for the purpose of validating informal learning;
- (c) low validation awareness;
- (d) little trust in validation;
- (e) reluctance of training/education institutions to accept validation, possibly for financing-related reasons.

Cross-country mobility for VET

Cross-country mobility for VET is not a specific national priority. Transfer of learning outcomes acquired abroad is possible on a case-by-case basis (varies from individual to individual and institution to institution).

The following obstacles hampering cross-country mobility were reported as the most relevant:

- (a) school year organisation: difficulties in combining general and vocational modules due to the time differences required to cover each, and the rigid exam schedules and the linear organisation of the school year. If students miss learning during the school year (to participate in mobility programmes) they have to catch up with the missed classes (material). It is difficult and costly to organise compensatory classes for these students. There is no possibility to transfer learning outcomes linked to general education (such as Polish language, geography);
- (b) insufficient financial resources;

- (c) lack of knowledge of foreign languages among many VET students;
- (d) administrative burden for schools to apply for UE funds to finance mobility projects.

Status of ECVET policy decision

In IVET, changes have been made in introducing most of the ECVET recommendation (qualifications, learning outcomes and units of learning outcomes). Both ECVET and NQF are part of the modernised qualification system; a comprehensive credit system framework is being developed gradually. No decision has yet been taken on introduction of credit points.

NCP and CoP ⁽⁷⁴⁾

NCP-2012	CoP-2012	NCP-2013	CoP-2013
Data not available through the interviews	To be implemented	Information not available	Information not available

⁽⁷⁴⁾ In the context of ECVET, a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Cedefop, 2013b).

3.29. Portugal

Respondents

- (a) Policy-maker: ANQEP under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Solidarity, Employment and Social Security, and in partnership with the Ministry of Economy;
- (b) social partner: Portuguese Employers' Confederation for Commerce and Services.

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification: qualifications in the NCQ

Most of the VET system is input-oriented, although it is under review at the moment. The national system of recognition, validation and certification of professional competences (accreditation of prior learning) is much more output-oriented.

In December 2007, Decree-Law No 396/2007 created a national qualification system, introducing modularisation. Training modules are present at both lower and upper secondary level, in apprenticeships and in training programmes for those aged 18 and over who want to achieve academic and vocational qualifications. As of September 2013, the NCQ includes 6 571 training modules; since 2008, 93 new qualifications have been added, 170 restructured and 30 excluded. Each vocational qualification is linked to three standards:

- (a) the occupational profile;
- (b) the training standard (organised in short-term training modules);
- (c) the standard for recognition, validation and certification of competences (organised in competence units (CUs)).

Portugal has developed a flexible system which allows students to combine modules of varying lengths. The modules are structured around subjects/components which vary according to the programmes attended. The training programmes included in the NCQ are modularised with short-term training modules of between 25 and 50 hours. Assessment is formative and continuous, with an internal summative assessment at the end of each module which is marked on a scale of 0 to 20 points in certain programmes. In most programmes the diploma is awarded upon successful completion of all modules plus a final practical exam/project. VET providers accredited by relevant ministries (education, employment) are responsible for certification.

While there is a degree of free choice, to acquire a full qualification it is necessary to complete the modules in the chosen programme as outlined in the NCQ.

It is not possible to move between different programmes, but trainees may transfer modules within the same subject area. The main obstacle to transfer of assessed learning between programmes is the fact that VET programmes are organised in different ways. The legal framework already foresees this portability/transfer, but it is not fully implemented.

One of the objectives of the Portuguese national qualification system is to strengthen the degree of integration of academic and VET pathways by means of permeability mechanisms (ANQEP, 2011), which allow students to switch between pathways should they wish.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Validation of non-formal and informal learning is part of the Portuguese education and training system and is referenced to the NQF.

The most relevant obstacles for recognition of non-formal and informal learning are:

- (a) social recognition of certification obtained through recognition of prior learning processes is not valued as much as certification obtained through other pathways (companies do not always recognise the quality/accuracy of the recognition process);
- (b) lack of awareness of the advantages of such recognition (both for individuals and employers);
- (c) the duration of the recognition process, which may be too time-consuming for the individual and/or for employer.

Cross-country mobility for VET

Leonardo da Vinci provides funding for much international mobility in VET. At company level, there are cases of specific programmes to promote mobility between the premises/factories across countries (such as Ford-Volkswagen in Palmela/Portugal).

The learning outcomes acquired abroad are transferred between selected countries as part of pilot projects, as in the network for promoting European mobility for learners completing vocational training in international trade, transport and logistics (Netinvet) ⁽⁷⁵⁾.

The major obstacle to transfer of learning outcomes acquired abroad in the Portuguese qualification system is the fact that the Portuguese qualifications are not defined in terms of learning outcomes.

Status of ECVET policy decision

Portugal is testing different ECVET technical components for IVET and CVET.

ANQEP (the national coordination point for EQF and ECVET) presented a proposal for the revision of the current NCQ in a workshop in June 2013. This revision aims at defining qualifications in terms of outcomes instead of inputs, and may allow the attribution of credits (as basis for transfer of learning outcomes in learning contexts and accumulation of learning outcomes).

ANQEP has chosen two sectors to test the components 'learning outcomes/units of learning outcomes' at EQF levels 2 to 5 for IVET and CVET.

⁽⁷⁵⁾ <http://www.netinvet.eu> [accessed 31.10.2013].

NCP and CoP ⁽⁷⁶⁾

NCP-2012	CoP-2012	NCP-2013	CoP-2013
ANQEP	CoP in place, but it needs to be developed	No change	No change

⁽⁷⁶⁾ In the context of ECVET, a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Cedefop, 2013b).

3.30. Romania

Respondents

- (a) Policy-maker: National Centre for Technical and VET Development;
- (b) expert: National Agency for Community Programmes for Education and Professional Development (Agentia Nationala pentru Programe Comunitare in Domeniul Educatie si Formarii Profesionale).

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification: IVET

IVET qualifications are described in the vocational standards. These are structured in units of competences (*unitati de competente*) that describe, in terms of learning outcomes, what the learner needs to prove at the end of a VET programme. The standards comprise:

- (a) the qualification title, its level from EQF levels 3 to 5;
- (b) short description of the occupation, the characteristics of the main activities;
- (c) the units of competences comprising the qualification and the number of credits allocated to each of them. The units of competences represent a coherent and explicit set of competences. The competences describe what a student needs to know, understand and perform at the end of the education and training programme, the outcomes of learning.

The list of units of competences is organised as follows:

- (a) key competences. These refer to the transferrable competences that support individuals' integration into the labour market, as well as social integration;
- (b) general technical competences. These comprise knowledge of the principles and context, as well as common practices, which are the basis of several qualifications. They are common to several IVET qualifications;
- (c) specialised technical competences. These comprise the specific competences for the given qualification.

The description of the units of competences comprises:

- (a) the unit title;
- (b) qualification level: a unit of competence may be at one of the EQF levels 3 to 5. EQF levels 6, 7, and 8 are associated to higher education qualifications;
- (c) number of credits: the credit value of one unit is allocated for units of competences that may be reasonably achieved by the learner in approximately 60 hours. A unit of competences may have between 0.5 and two credits;
- (d) list of competences; for each competence, the following is described:
 - (i) short description of the unit: what a student must know and/or understand and/or perform as a result of the learning process;
 - (ii) assessment criteria and context where they may be applied;
 - (iii) assessment type.

In Romania, there are three types of assessment:

- (a) continuous formative assessment that supports the students in successfully achieving their learning objectives;
- (b) summative assessment at the end of a series of learning activities leading to achievement of learning outcomes corresponding to a theme, chapter or unit. The quality of the summative assessments will determine the successful implementation of ECVET;
- (c) assessment in view of certification, which takes place at the end of the training programme. Access to the final exam is given to those students who are assessed to have successfully acquired all the units of competences comprising a qualification as described in the relevant vocational standard.

The transfer of learning outcomes is not yet fully operational due to the legislative framework not yet being updated (NQF legislative framework was approved in November 2013, but the legislative framework for the validation of non-formal and informal learning is still under approval). A methodology for the transfer and recognition of the learning outcomes is available only for those outcomes achieved by IVET students during mobility abroad and the on-the-job training, methodology approved through Ministerial Ordinance No 4931/2008 ⁽⁷⁷⁾.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

The national law of education offers general rules for validation of non-formal and informal learning, but second level regulations are not very clear: there is insufficient methodology.

Cross-country mobility for VET

The bulk of the cross-country mobility for VET takes place through the (former) LLP.

Status of ECVET policy decision

In IVET, qualification standards are described in terms of units of learning outcomes and have credits attached. However, the credit system for IVET is not fully operational, though it is expected to become operational once the secondary legislation of NQF is fully developed. The units of learning outcomes were in place before the ECVET recommendation.

Most occupational standards describing qualifications in CVET are also divided into units of competences.

⁽⁷⁷⁾ The information is available in Romanian at CNDIPT, 2013.

NCP and CoP ⁽⁷⁸⁾

Informal NCP-2012	CoP-2012	NCP-2013	CoP-2013
National Centre for Technical and VET Development	CoP in place, but it needs to be developed	No changes	No changes

⁽⁷⁸⁾ In the context of ECVET, a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Cedefop, 2013b).

3.31. Serbia

Respondents

Expert, VET centre: technical responsibility for developing the NQF for VET ⁽⁷⁹⁾.

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification: IVET

The Republic of Serbia has been modernising the structure of the VET system to ensure horizontal and vertical mobility of students since the school year 2002/03. From this date, new modular and outcomes-based educational pilot programmes were introduced in a number of educational profiles in agriculture, food production and food processing, in cooperation and agreement with social partners and interest groups. By the school year 2008/09 there were 55 active pilot profiles with new curricula in 13 fields of work, in 155 secondary vocational schools. Since 2010, additional new pilot programmes have been introduced.

The new curricula are based on:

- (a) learning objectives, outcomes and work competences;
- (b) modules ⁽⁸⁰⁾ and subjects;
- (c) compulsory and optional parts.

The new curricula were developed with the view to providing:

- (a) the opportunity for vertical and horizontal mobility within curricula in one or more sectors;
- (b) development and improvement of vocational education based on learning outcomes and modules;
- (c) establishing links with higher education paths and mobility towards them.

Cross-country mobility for VET

Cross-country mobility for VET is not a specific national priority.

In the absence of an institutional framework, learning outcomes acquired abroad may be transferred at home on a case-by-case basis. The future implementation of NQF is expected to provide a framework that will ease comparability of qualifications and transfer of learning outcomes from abroad to the home institution.

⁽⁷⁹⁾ This country fiche was not validated by the policy-maker.

⁽⁸⁰⁾ 'Modules are specific segments, i.e. learning packages leading to the achievement of the defined learning outcomes. Modules are either independent or a part of larger programmes (organisational units). They have been designed in accordance with congenial and complementary principles, different education requirements, and defined subject tasks. The structure of modules is such that it enables the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences and the connection among disciplines or subjects' (Serbian Ministry of Education (n.d.)).

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

There is no systemic approach to the validation of non-formal and informal learning (no common framework or standardised procedures) so validation varies with certification bodies and sectors.

Status of ECVET policy decision

Any initiatives on ECVET implementation are currently on hold, until the forthcoming instrument for pre-accession assistance (IPA) projects are launched.

NCP and CoP

NCP-2013	CoP-2013
Information not reported	Information not reported

3.32. Slovakia

Respondents

- (a) Policy-maker: Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania (State Institute of Vocational Education) (SIOV) (NCP) ⁽⁸¹⁾;
- (b) expert: Slovak Academic Association for International Cooperation.

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification: IVET school-based and apprenticeships

VET curricula have been reformed on the basis of Education Act No 245/2008 Coll. 2 to introduce competence-based state educational programmes. The corresponding educational standards are composed of 'content standards' (input) and the 'performance standards'. Performance standards can be seen as learning outcomes that students are supposed to attain during the programme and demonstrate upon its completion. There are also the 'assessment standards' that serve as a tool for assessing whether students achieve the performance standards. They are set down by each education and training provider within their school educational programmes.

Slovakia is currently developing the national system of occupations and national qualification systems based on learning outcomes. Progress in both will also affect education and assessment standards developed and used under the 2008 curriculum reform (Cedefop ReferNet Slovakia, 2012).

Currently, the IVET system in Slovakia applies a mix of input and output to its state educational programmes and it is not unitised and modularised. School leaving certificates are awarded on successful completion of a VET programme and a final assessment exam.

The competent ministry/ministries are fully in charge of validation, recognition and certification (in the form of certificates or diplomas) of learning outcomes.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

The Act on LLL No 568/2009 Coll., and, in particular its amendment, in force since November 2012, opened the door to acquisition of qualifications gained through informal and non-formal learning. There has been only limited implementation so far due to delay in developing the national qualification systems; certifying vocational capabilities needed to start up a number of trades is offered rather than awarding (partial) qualifications by authorised institutions (schools and, as a novelty, professional associations like chambers or guilds) according to the Act on LLL (Cedefop ReferNet Slovakia, 2012). This limitation, which will disappear as soon as the standards for the full and partial qualifications are set up in the national qualification systems.

⁽⁸¹⁾ This country fiche was not validated by the policy-maker.

Cross-country mobility for VET

Cross-country mobility of students is placed in the framework of regional development strategies, part of an overall national strategy.

The transfer at home of learning gained by an individual during mobility abroad depends on agreement between the two schools involved in the overseas mobility and on the compatibility between their education programmes.

Status of ECVET policy decision

An ECVET feasibility study for Slovakia, commissioned by the Slovak Academic Association for International Cooperation, was set out by the Slovak National Observatory of VET and published in 2012 ⁽⁸²⁾. The study put forward an ECVET national framework for Slovakia that strongly supports the ECVET approach to learning outcomes. However, it distances itself from the use of credit points, as well as from the recommendation formulated at European level to create links with the credit system applied in higher education, the ECTS. Compatibility and complementarity between ECVET and ECTS is not seen as a hot issue, nor is the interaction of the two credit systems a priority:

- (a) ECVET and ECTS are considered to be related to learning environments that are substantially different and also diverge in functionality (the former is learning-outcomes-based, while the latter is inherently also workload and content-based);
- (b) ECVET and ECTS interaction is not considered 'acute' as the decision on the relations between the post-secondary higher professional education level and the bachelor level (and if appropriate, vertical permeability between the two levels) is still pending.

While the authors of the study acknowledge that 'it is not possible to fully implement the ECVET system as envisaged and recommended by the European documents', they suggest a 'reduced ECVET implementation and broken in two phases':

- (a) phase 1: focus on cross-border mobility with bottom-up activities, predominantly within the (former) LLP (the cross-border approach);
- (b) phase 2: focus on VET system permeability through increased use of the learning outcomes approach and urgent development of the national qualification systems (the reform approach).

⁽⁸²⁾ The full study is available at:
http://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=http%3A%2F%2Fweb.saaic.sk%2Fnaforil%2Fmodules%2Fdokumenty%2FECVET_feasibility_study_for_Slovakia.doc
[accessed 11.11.2013].

It is unclear whether the relevant policy authorities have already taken a position on the proposed ECVET national framework for Slovakia, and whether they have formally decided on the way forward. According to the respondent (expert), such a decision is pending. However, according to the representative of the NCP for ECVET, a policy decision has already been taken.

NCP and CoP ⁽⁸³⁾

NCP-2012	CoP-2012	NCP-2013	CoP-2013
SIOV, unit for research in VET	CoP in place, but it needs to be developed	No change	The (EU-funded) national team of ECVET experts prepared information materials and workshops aimed at raising awareness and interest among VET programmes developers

⁽⁸³⁾ In the context of ECVET, a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Cedefop, 2013b).

3.33. Slovenia

Respondents

- (a) Policy-maker: CPI;
- (b) expert: Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Mobility and European Educational and Training Programmes.

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification: IVET

All VET programmes were modularised between 2004 and 2010 including the two- and three-year VET programmes and the four-year technical programmes. A module is understood as a comprehensive unit of an educational programme; its learning goals and learning content include specialised theoretical and practical knowledge as well as some general knowledge. The professional parts of VET programmes are outcome-oriented; general subjects are more input-oriented. Modules are linked to credits and have credit points attached.

Learning content is structured in such a way that trainees can switch between training schemes both vertically and horizontally. However, the award of a national qualification requires learners to pass basic obligatory, mandatory elective, and optional elective types of modules. Learning process and achievement of learning goals are very closely linked. Learners may not normally take final examinations until they have completed the prescribed course of study. If learners do drop-out, they have an opportunity to obtain a national vocational qualification (NVQ) on the basis of the modules they have successfully completed. However, the award of a state-approved certificate for learners under 18, without working experience, depends on having successfully completed the course of training, so there is an indirect attendance requirement. Schools are responsible for assessment and certification.

For adults over 18 with work experience, there are no attendance requirements in their path to getting a vocational certificate in the framework of the NVQ system.

It is possible to move out of the training scheme before final assessment. If learners suspend their training or drop-out, they can return to the training system at a later date, an option that is particularly popular among adult learners.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

There are two main routes to validation of non-formal and informal learning in Slovenia (especially for adults with working experience): by applying to participate in formal vocational (and general) education programmes and by obtaining a vocational certificate within the NVQ system. With the establishment of the NVQ system, validation of non-formal and informal learning has become regulated by law. The main purpose of the NVQ was to introduce a system framework for adults to get formal validation of their professional experience and so to integrate more quickly in the labour market. The law establishing NVQ was adopted in 2000 and its implementation started immediately after.

A proposal for technical criteria to be used for validation of non-formal and non-formal learning was prepared by the Institute for Adult Education and the CPI; this is currently under discussion.

The most immediate obstacles to validation of non-formal and informal learning are:

- (a) teachers are not motivated and trained enough;
- (b) high value of formal diplomas and certificates, which include years of schooling;
- (c) reluctance of formal education institutions and policy-makers for economic reasons;
- (d) lack of knowledge and experience in portfolio assessment.

Cross-country mobility for VET

Cross-country mobility for VET is not a specific national priority, though some schools use it as an alternative to student practical training. There are good examples of integrating mobility into curricula, especially in tourism, hospitality and medical care.

Transfer at home of learning outcomes acquired abroad is enabled by the system-level curriculum framework.

The following obstacles to cross-country mobility in VET were reported as the most relevant:

- (a) the duration of practical training in technical programmes is quite short;
- (b) students are not motivated to spend time abroad;
- (c) age (IVET students are minors);
- (d) lack of finance and language skills;
- (e) perception of mobility mainly as a reward for good students.

Status of ECVET policy decision

There is a fully developed credit system for IVET which includes:

- (a) modules (training programmes are composed of modules);
- (b) credit points allocated to modules (and other units of educational programmes, such as general knowledge subjects, free-choice activities, final project). Credit points are calculated on the basis of the learning outcomes and their 'weight' in terms of workload needed for students to achieve the expected learning outcomes:
 - (i) one credit point corresponds to 25 hours of learning activities;
 - (ii) 60 credit points per one year of formal education.

The existing credit system is not used either for the NVQ, or for the validation of non-formal and informal learning; it is not linked to ECTS.

Learning agreements and MoUs are not part of existing credit system in IVET. For the moment, they are tested in geographic mobility projects only, with the support of the CPI.

ECVET is reported not to be a national priority, as its added value is not acknowledged among decision-makers. As a result, an ECVET-related policy decision is not expected in the short term.

NCP and CoP ⁽⁸⁴⁾

NCP-2012	CoP-2012	NCP-2013	CoP-2013
CPI	To be implemented	No changes	No changes

⁽⁸⁴⁾ In the context of ECVET, a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Cedefop, 2013b).

3.34. Spain

Respondents

- (a) Policy-maker, national authority: Ministry of Education, Deputy-Directorate General for Guidance and VET;
- (b) policy-maker, regional authority Catalonia: education department;
- (c) independent expert;
- (d) social partner: public employment service.

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification: initial vocational training diplomas (*títulos de formación profesional*) and certificates of occupational standards (*repertorio nacional de certificados de profesionalidad*)

IVET programmes lead to the award of diplomas (*títulos de formación profesional*) and CVET programmes lead to the award of certificates of occupational standards (*repertorio nacional de certificados de profesionalidad*). IVET comprises intermediate and higher vocational training programmes (ISCED 3B and ISCED 5B respectively) named *ciclos formativos* of around 2 000 hours.

To bring VET closer to the needs of the labour market, the national catalogue of occupational standards (*catálogo nacional de cualificaciones profesionales*) (CNCP) is the reference for the elaboration of VET programmes by both the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports in IVET and the Ministry of Employment and Social Security in CVET. These standards are made up of CUs which are the basis for the VET programme modules. Modules are individually assessed and certified and may be accumulated towards a full qualification (diploma or certificate). These modules, linked to the CNCP CU, grant certification of that corresponding CU once the learner acquires the corresponding learning outcomes. It is up to the employers whether they give value to a certificated unit; in most cases, they hire candidates with a completed diploma or certificate.

The IVET certificated unit may be also used by an individual in CVET on the way to getting a certificate, but the opposite situation also exists, when a CVET certificated unit is also valid for the IVET system to complete a diploma.

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport designs the IVET diplomas (which are valid nationally), and defines the modules, their corresponding learning outcomes, and assessment criteria. For higher VET diplomas, it is also responsible for assigning ECTS credits and official validation and recognition of foreign qualifications. Regional authorities are responsible for setting up training programme for schools and teaching staff. Teachers are responsible for the assessment of learning outcomes, VET schools certify the modules, and education administrations issue/award the corresponding diplomas.

The transfer system is regulated through diplomas or professional certificates. Transferrable modules in IVET and CVET are identified, published and included in the regulation of each diploma or certificate.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

The CNCP is also the reference framework for validation of non-formal and informal learning.

In Spain, validation may take different forms:

- (a) exemption from on-the-job training modules where students prove previous work experience in the field;
- (b) access to exams to acquire an IVET diploma;
- (c) partial certification and formative assessment to acquire a full certificate or diploma.

Cross-country mobility for VET

Cross-country mobility for VET is not a national policy priority *per se*. It can be included as part of the national strategy for promoting VET quality and attractiveness or for LLL purposes. The national priorities for VET policies have a special focus on reducing the numbers of early school leavers, increasing VET participation, and improving employability.

Mobility for work placement is not unusual and is gaining importance compared to other modules.

Transfer at home of learning acquired abroad is up to the decision of the teachers.

Status of ECVET policy decision

Upper level vocational training programmes (ISCED 5B) are aligned with the Bologna process and are ECTS-compatible.

Intermediate vocational training diplomas (ISCED 3B) and professional certificates are unit-based. Units of learning outcomes may be accumulated and transferred, but do not have credit points attached. The unit-based system also supports the process of validating non-formal and informal learning, so Spain has a credit transfer system which is compatible with ECVET principles and technical specifications.

Policy initiatives on ECVET implementation within IVET are currently on hold, pending the final approval of NQF. Once the policy-decision is taken, it will be easy to bring the existing credit system closer to ECVET.

In Catalonia, regulation of the transfer of learning outcomes acquired abroad is under way.

The *Generalitat de Catalunya* has participated in several ECVET pilot projects testing the system: practical interregional tools for ECVET (*outils pratiques inter-regionaux pour ECVET*) (OPIR) and the network for VET in the trade sector (*réseau pour la formation et l'enseignement professionnels dans le secteur du commerce*) (Recomfor). One of the results of these projects is the Netinvet network that is working on recognition of classroom-based geographic

mobility (in an experimental way so far). This means that a new ECVET-based regulation of transfer of units of learning outcomes in the framework of cross-country mobility is under development in Catalonia. It is expected to be published in autumn 2014.

NCP and CoP ⁽⁸⁵⁾

NCP-2012	CoP-2012	NCP-2013	CoP-2013
Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports, General Directorate for Guidance and Vocational Training	The establishment of a CoP in Spain is unnecessary in the national context	No changes	No changes

⁽⁸⁵⁾ In the context of ECVET, a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Cedefop, 2013b).

3.35. Sweden

Respondents

- (a) Policy-maker one: Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket);
- (b) policy-maker two: Swedish Council for Higher Education.

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification (VET at upper secondary schools and higher vocational education)

The whole VET system in Sweden is learning-outcomes-oriented and has modularised training programmes.

In upper secondary schools, the general structure for vocational programmes comprises 2 500 upper secondary credits, of which 600 credits are in foundation subjects, 1 600 are in programme specific subjects and subjects within orientation and programme specialisations, 200 are in individual options and 100 are for a diploma project.

The upper secondary school's vocational programmes are intended to lead to a vocational diploma (*yrkesexamen*). A student in the upper secondary school should have grades from an education programme covering 2 500 credits. A total of 2 250 of these credits must be approved and specifically include passes in Swedish or Swedish as a second language, English, mathematics and a pass in the diploma project. There are further demands stating what courses must be passed to obtain a vocational diploma. Steering documents in the form of curricula, diploma goals and syllabuses are drawn up by the Swedish Government and by the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket), while upper secondary schools are in charge of assessment and award (Cedefop ReferNet Sweden, 2012).

Due to the modularised programmes and use of credits, students in upper secondary schools may transfer courses if they change study route.

For higher vocational education at ISCED levels 4 and 5B there are no common national curricula; education and training providers are responsible for the learning content, so transfer between programmes and institutions can be difficult. Learning outcomes are validated but not directly transferred.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Validation of non-formal and informal learning is systemic (integrated with the formal qualification system, including VET). However, the system for financing is not constructed to support validation fully, as schools risk 'losing' some of the financing if a large part of the education content is validated.

Cross-country mobility for VET

Cross-country mobility is part of the national strategies for VET at upper secondary schools where mobility is clearly emphasised in the national curricula. The strategy is not as explicit in the case of higher vocational education as there are no national curricula. However, mobility at this level is greatly supported by national funding.

Transfer of learning outcomes acquired abroad is regulated for VET at upper secondary schools and learning outcomes acquired abroad may be transferred at home. According to the law, the student may transfer at home credit acquired for a module/course, but he/she will receive the lowest grade. If the student wants a higher grade, he/she will have to repeat the assessment for the same module/course. Transfer is limited in this way, but it does not pose a great obstacle. However, many cross-country exercises are for relatively short periods and will not cover a whole module/course. In such cases, the issue of transferability does not arise as learning abroad will be included in the assessment (by the home institution) of the overall module/course.

For higher vocational education, transfer of learning outcomes acquired abroad is not as regulated as for VET at upper secondary schools, but it is possible to have the learning outcomes acquired abroad transferred as a part of a qualification.

Status of ECVET policy decision

Sweden has a credit transfer system for VET at upper secondary schools where training programmes are divided into modules with attached credit points; students may build on partial qualifications and continue elsewhere.

For higher vocational education the regulation requires that each module is expressed in learning outcomes; however, the contents are determined by the training providers, and transfer is not automatic. This makes the credit system for higher vocational education not fully compatible with ECVET. For higher vocational education, the point system is defined by time and is not directly compatible with ECTS.

- (a) The existing credit system for VET at upper secondary school has been degree of flexibility for the individual;
- (b) conflict between modularisation and the overall objectives for a programme, as it is often the case to shift focus on the module rather than the overall objective;
- (c) tension between a high degree of local freedom in the definition of learning outcomes on the one hand and the need for transparency and transferability on the other. Until 2011, upper secondary schools had the right to design modules and outcomes in addition to national ones. With the 2011 reform, this right was suspended, but the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket) designs them based on needs and suggestions from schools;

- (d) size of module/course to be assessed: whether they are too short for the students to be able to get involved in the learning process to a sufficient extent, or too big, and the flexibility issues related to these aspects.

A suggestion for a conversion rate between the existing credit transfer system and ECVET was put forward to decision-makers, but no decision has yet been taken. The conversion rate would support transfer of learning achieved during the study periods abroad.

There is a proposal to use ECVET in the context of linking non-formal qualifications to the NQF; no decision has yet been taken by the government.

NCP and CoP ⁽⁸⁶⁾

NCP-2012	CoP-2012	NCP-2013	CoP-2103
National Agency for Education	To be implemented	No change	No change

⁽⁸⁶⁾ In the context of ECVET, a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Cedefop, 2013b).

3.36. Switzerland

Respondents

Joint response: Federal department of economic affairs, education and research (EAER), State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI), international education projects.

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification: dual-track and school-based IVET

Qualifications and training programmes are learning-outcomes-oriented, but the learning process is very closely linked to the achievement of learning goals. IVET follows the traditional apprenticeship model based on complete qualifications (learners have to learn everything that is included in the training programme to receive a qualification). Only the final assessment provides a state-approved award (the two-year VET programme leads to a federal VET certificate; the three- and four-year VET programmes lead to a federal VET diploma).

Each of the 26 cantons supervises its dual-track and school-based IVET, while respecting the federal regulations. These include the Federal Vocational and Professional Education and Training Act, as well as the specific VET ordinances for each profession (which regulate assessment procedures in companies and in VET schools).

One or more professional organisations are responsible for validating and recognising a qualification. For IVET they carry out the assessment and validation of acquired learning and communicate the results to cantons, who issue the diplomas and certificates. The professional organisations define the content and objectives of IVET programmes as well as national qualification procedures and organise the inter-company courses.

It is possible for learning outcomes to be transferred between education and training providers and qualifications in the same canton or between cantons. However, if transfer is possible, it stretches the learning period and often requires additional effort from the learner. When the learner who transfers from one education and training provider to another misses something that the provider has already taught, he/she remains with a gap in his/her portfolio; this may mean an inability to acquire the qualification in the foreseen time span.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

According to the Federal Vocational and Professional Education and Training Act, there are several possible qualification procedures for demonstrating professional skills. Adults can take the regular final examinations for IVET programmes; admission to the examination requires certain prerequisites. There are other qualification procedures for specific occupational groups, regulated by specific IVET ordinances for each profession. There are also individual qualification procedures (such as validation of non-formal and informal learning) which take account of professional or non-professional practical experience acquired outside the usual VET programmes (Educa.ch, 2013).

Cross-country mobility for VET

At the 2011 annual national apprenticeship conference, professional organisations included mobility as a policy priority on their political agenda, alongside the target of increasing the number of people that can speak foreign languages. This policy priority and policy target concerns the entire VET system (IVET and tertiary level B professional education and training).

Cultural and linguistic exchange between Switzerland's linguistic regions is promoted, as is the exchange with European and non-European countries.

Status of ECVET policy decision

Education and training providers and professional organisations are testing ECVET in the context of cross-country mobility with a focus on learning outcomes, partnerships, innovation transfer, innovation development and knowledge-sharing networks.

However, there is little awareness of ECVET development and no pressure from professional organisations; only some of them are involved in mobility projects. Lack of knowledge and support supported among professional organisations results from:

- (a) low level of VET mobility;
- (b) policy priority given to the NQF development.

The national team of ECVET experts surveyed those that have been involved in ECVET, to identify future needs and with a view to writing a recommendation on how to proceed with the development.

NCP and CoP ⁽⁸⁷⁾

NCP-2013	CoP-2013
SERI (since August 2013)	It does not exist, but a national team of ECVET experts (EU-funded) exists and is active in ECVET development

⁽⁸⁷⁾ In the context of ECVET, a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Cedefop, 2013b).

3.37. Turkey

Respondents

- (a) Policy-maker one: Ministry of National Education;
- (b) policy-maker two: Ministry of National Education, Projects Coordination Centre ⁽⁸⁸⁾.

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment and certification: IVET

Since 2006, IVET is competence- and modular-based.

Transfer and accumulation of achieved learning is not supported by a legal framework takes place between schools and selected qualifications only as part of pilot projects.

The Ministry of National Education is responsible for validation and certification.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

An effective system of assessment and validation of non-formal and informal learning has not yet been established. There is a general regulation for certification, but there is no guidance on how to put it into practice.

Cross-country mobility for VET

Cross-country mobility is not a specific national priority. The Turkish National Agency supports overseas mobility in IVET through several programmes, including (the former) Leonardo da Vinci.

There is no transfer of learning outcomes obtained in other countries; all achieved learning outcomes are reassessed at national level (double assessment). The absence of a framework, as well as mistrust in the quality of overseas standards, hinders the transfer of learning acquired abroad in the home institution.

Status of ECVET policy decision

The Ministry of National Education is planning to combine the modular system with a credit system in line with ECVET. The crediting of modules is tested via the IPA-funded 'railway operation ECVET' (Railvet) project within IVET.

The outcomes of the project will be shared with the authorities, who are expected to take a policy decision in relation to ECVET in 2014. For now, ECVET is not high on the policy agenda.

⁽⁸⁸⁾ This country fiche was not validated by the policy-maker.

NCP and CoP ⁽⁸⁹⁾

NCP-2012	CoP-2012	NCP-2013	CoP-2013
Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available

⁽⁸⁹⁾ In the context of ECVET, a CoP should provide a framework to connect people involved or interested in ECVET, providing exchange between people on shared issues related to ECVET, including obstacles to overcome (Cedefop, 2013b).

3.38. The United Kingdom (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales)

Respondents

- (a) Ecorys UK;
- (b) College Wales;
- (c) ECCTIS Ltd;
- (d) NARIC;
- (e) Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment;
- (f) Scottish credit and qualifications framework (SCQF) partnership.

Context for ECVET

Structure of qualifications, transfer, assessment, certification: qualifications under the NQF

Credit-based units of learning outcomes are already developed and strongly embedded in the UK VET system. Units are assessed independently within qualifications and are linked to credits, though they often form clusters to give awards, certificates and diplomas. This structure can accommodate the recording of individual units as part of a learner's record of achievement.

The infrastructure has been put in place for transfer to be possible, as units can be quite flexible and contribute to different qualifications. Assessed units of learning outcomes are transferred at VET system level on the basis of an enabling framework (framework supports transfer but leaves individual institutions to decide on a case-by-case basis if they will transfer assessed learning).

Although there is a comprehensive architecture for a unitised framework of qualifications, evidence shows that transfer of credit only occurs on a limited basis. Reasons for this include limited demand from students and limited knowledge about the possibility for transfer, even within education and training providers. There can also be reluctance to accept transfer between institutions/education and training providers both for economic reasons (wishing to keep the student and the financial support) and for more trust-related reasons (lack of trust in the quality of other education and training providers). Many awarding bodies (over 80) and high level of autonomy may present some obstacles to transfer due to insufficient trust or different approaches to unit design by different qualifications/awarding bodies.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Validation of non-formal and informal learning varies with certification bodies and sectors and is limited by the discretion of the awarding body. This is due to the lack of agreement between competent institutions and the range of learning experiences which need to be recognised. Also the perception of validation of non-formal and informal learning is that it is resource intensive and the funding mechanisms often conflict with recognition.

Cross-country mobility for VET

Cross-country mobility for VET is not a specific national priority for the UK (England, Northern Ireland and Scotland) ⁽⁹⁰⁾. Leonardo da Vinci provides funding for much international mobility in VET. All education and training providers and schools are encouraged to engage with the LLP managed by the UK National Agency Ecorys. As part of the UK ECVET national experts' project, applicants for LLP projects are encouraged to build ECVET principles and tools into their mobility projects. Some are already doing this with some of the ECVET principles, for example detailing the learning outcomes to be achieved.

There is no automatic validation and recognition of learning outcomes obtained in other countries; all achieved learning outcomes are reassessed at national level (double assessment). This is because quality assurance measures require that the assessment be carried out by qualified assessors registered with an awarding body. In the UK, awarding bodies are responsible for quality assurance processes and recognition. They require assessment to be done by UK trained assessors, so it is unlikely that assessment can be done by the host organisation abroad.

However, in Northern Ireland, there are pilot projects, where learning outcomes are transferred between selected countries, such as the mobility excellence project lead by Foyle International in Northern Ireland.

Status of ECVET policy decision

The UK has a fully developed credit system compatible with ECVET. Although there are different frameworks in the UK, they are all based on learning outcomes and units. They also use credits and have credit transfer systems. The credit system covers most qualifications, including apprenticeships. However, there is little awareness of ECVET at the moment and resistance to change, or amendment, to allow for full ECVET implementation. The UK has a consistent basis for credit, which is notional learning time. It also has a consistent methodology as to how credit value is allocated to units. The system works well and it is therefore difficult to see the need to change it and adopt a new credit-point system.

A pilot project is currently testing the possibility of conversion between the QCF credits and ECVET points.

The UK national team of ECVET experts ⁽⁹¹⁾ is promoting ECVET with UK awarding bodies and is currently developing a guide for them as to how they can

⁽⁹⁰⁾ Except for the UK (Wales) where cross-country mobility for VET is part of national strategies and (or) internationalisation strategies for the whole VET system.

⁽⁹¹⁾ The UK national team of experts comprises representatives of the UK ECVET NCPs, representatives of VET providers and awarding bodies.

work with their centres (education and training providers) to embed ECVET principles into mobility periods. This is quite a wide consultation process involving all awarding bodies (more than 80), plus a representative number of institutions involved in mobility to ensure it answers most or all of their questions. This guidance is still in draft and it is planned to be completed for December 2013.

On an institutional level, education and training providers involved in overseas mobility are beginning to put ECVET principles into practice along with awarding bodies. UK ECVET experts have produced guidance for mobility practitioners on using ECVET for overseas mobility. These have been used with a number of institutions, both in workshops and one-to-one meetings, to explain how to get the most out of ECVET principles when applying them to overseas mobility projects.

Link between existing credit systems for VET, ECTS and validation of non-formal and informal learning

England: the credit system is not linked with ECTS, and may be used to support validation of non-formal learning.

Wales: the credit system is linked with ECTS and used to support validation of non-formal learning. All aspects of the credit and qualifications framework for Wales were evaluated in 2005 and will be evaluated again in 2013.

Northern Ireland: the credit system is not linked with ECTS, but it may be used to support validation of non-formal learning.

Scotland: the credit system is linked with ECTS, and used to support validation of non-formal learning.

Linking the existing credit systems to ECVET

- (a) The principle of 60 ECVET points per year of full-time VET is not entirely compatible with the national credit system, where credits are allocated based on notional learning time. Also, there is difficulty in determining a 'year' which differs between countries. Within the UK VET system, once a qualification unit is given a level and a credit value, this is set and, although this unit can belong to different qualifications, its level and credit value remain the same;
- (b) awarding bodies require assessment to be done by someone trained by them in the UK, or an awarding body recognised centre in a different country for validation and recognition. The problem of validating and recognising the assessment carried out by overseas partners is yet to be resolved;
- (c) there is a lack of understanding of ECVET generally and of the promotion of it as a valuable tool which must be overcome for national systems to be led towards linking with ECVET.

NCP and CoP

Country	NCP-2012	CoP-2012	NCP-2013	CoP-2013
UK (England)	ECCTIS Ltd	CoP in place, but it needs to be developed	No changes	No changes
UK (Northern Ireland)	Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment	CoP in place, but it needs to be developed	No changes	No changes
UK (Scotland)	SCQF partnership	CoP in place, but it needs to be developed	No changes	No changes
UK (Wales)	ColegauCymru/ CollegesWales	CoP in place, but it needs to be developed	No changes	

Awarding bodies are involved in the UK national team of ECVET experts as steering group members ⁽⁹²⁾ and experts; they are consulted by Leonardo projects experimenting with ECVET, and regularly approached and consulted by the NCPs in their ECVET support activities.

⁽⁹²⁾ The steering group comprises the NCPs, umbrella organisations for VET institutions, VET providers, awarding bodies and the national agency.

List of abbreviations

AEF	Agence francophone pour l'éducation et la formation tout au long de la vie [French Agency for Education and LLL]
AIBA	Agentur für internationale Bildungsangelegenheiten [Agency for International Education Affairs]
ANFA AUTO	Association nationale pour la formation automobile [French National Association for Training in the Automobile sector]
ANQEP	Agência Nacional para a Qualificação e o Ensino Profissional [National Agency for Qualification and VET]
BHS	berufsbildende höhere Schule [VET college]
BIBB	Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung [Federal Institute for VET]
BMS	berufsbildende mittlere Schulen [VET schools]
CAS	common awards system
CNDIPT	Centrul Național de Dezvoltare a Învățământului Profesional și Tehnic [National Centre for the Development of Vocational and Technical Education]
CINOP	Centre for the Innovation of Education and Training
CNCP	catálogo nacional de cualificaciones profesionales [national catalogue of occupational standards]
CoP	community of practice
CPI	Center RS za poklicno izobraževanje [Institute of Republic of Slovenia for VET]
Credchem	Developing and testing a credit system facilitating mobility in the chemistry sector
CU	competence unit
CVET	continuing vocational education and training
Decvet	development of a credit system for VET in Germany
EACEA	Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency
EAER	federal department of economic affairs, education and research
ECTS	European credit transfer and accumulation system
ECVET	European credit system for vocational education and training
EHEA	European higher education area

Eoppep	National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance
EPAL	professional lyceum
EQF	European qualifications framework
EstVETCP	Estonian credit point system for VET
ETF	European Training Foundation
FETAC	Further Education and Training Awards Council
HETAC	Higher Education and Training Awards Council
IEK	institutes for IVET
IFAPME	Institut de formation en alternance des indépendants et des petites et moyennes entreprises [Institute for Dual Education and Training of Independent Professions and Small and Medium Enterprises]
IFP	istruzione e formazione professionale [vocational training courses]
IFTS	sistema di istruzione e formazione tecnica superiore [higher technical education and training system]
INAP	international network on innovative apprenticeship
INBAS GmbH	Institute for Vocational Training, Labour Market and Social Policy
IPA	instrument for pre-accession assistance
ISCED	international standard classification of education
ITS	Institute of Tourism Studies
IVET	initial vocational education and training
LLL	lifelong learning
LLP	lifelong learning programme
MCAST	Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology
MEN	Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale [French Ministry of Education]
MoU	memorandum of understanding
MUAS	Hochschule für angewandte Wissenschaften München [Munich University of Applied Sciences]
MQF	Malta qualifications framework
NCFHE	National Commission for Further and Higher Education
NCP	national contact point
NCQ	national catalogue of qualifications
Netinvet	network for promoting European mobility for learners completing vocational training in international trade, transport and logistics

NQF	national qualifications framework
NSK	national register of qualifications
NÚV	National Institute for Education
NVQ	national vocational qualification
OKJ	Országos Képzési Jegyzék [national qualifications register]
OPH	Opetushallitus Utbildningsstyrelsen [Finnish National Board of Education]
OPIR	outils pratiques inter-régionaux pour ECVET [practical interregional tools for ECVET]
Railvet	railway operation ECVET
Recomfor	réseau pour la formation et l'enseignement professionnels dans le secteur du commerce [network for VET in the trade sector]
SCQF	Scottish credit and qualifications framework
SERI	State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation
SFMQ	Service francophone des métiers et des qualifications [French-Belgian Service of Jobs and Qualifications]
SIOV	Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania [State Institute of Vocational Education]
SME	small and medium enterprises
QCF	qualification and credit framework
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
QVETDC	Kvalifikacijų ir profesinio mokymo plėtros centras [Qualifications and VET Development Centre]
VaLoGReg	Value learning outcomes in the Grande Région
VET	vocational education and training
VIAA	Valsts izglītības attīstības aģentūra [State Education Development Agency of Latvia]

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ANNEX

List of respondents

Austria
Austrian Federal Ministry of Education Art and Culture (national authority).
Austrian Agency for International Cooperation in Education and Research (Österreichische Agentur für internationale Mobilität und Kooperation in Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung) (expert).
Belgium (Flanders)
Flemish Ministry of Education and Training, department of Education and Training (national authority).
Belgium (French-speaking community)
AEF and ECVET NCP for Belgium (national authority).
IFAPME (social partner).
Belgium (German-speaking community)
Ministry of the German-speaking community in Belgium, department of education (national authority).
Bulgaria
Ministry of Education, Youth and Science Policy in Vocational Education and Continuous Training Directorate (national authority).
Expert, vocational school 'Asen Zlatarov'/centre for vocational training (expert).
Bulgaria Gateway (expert).
Croatia
Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, Directorate for Education (national authority).
Agency for Mobility and EU programmes (expert).
Cyprus
LLP National Agency (national authority).
Kyriellou Foundation, Foundation for the Management of European LLP (expert).

Czech Republic
Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, development and implementation of the national qualifications register (national authority).
Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic (social partner).
Denmark
Ministry of Children and Education, department of vocational training (national authority).
Agency for Universities and Internationalisation (Styrelsen for Universiteter og Internationalisering) (expert).
Estonia
Ministry of Education and Research, vocational and adult education department (national authority).
Archimedes Foundation (expert).
Finland (joint response)
Coordinated by the OPH (national authority).
FYROM
VET centre (expert).
France
Ministry of Education (national authority).
ANFA AUTO (social partner).
Training Organisation for Trades and Crafts (Espace formation des Métiers et de l'Artisanat) (social partner).
Germany
Federal Ministry of Education and Research and BIBB (national authority).
MUAS (expert).
INBAS GmbH (expert).
IBS-CEMES Institute GmbH (expert).

Hungary (joint response)
Coordinated by the National Labour Office, Vocational and Adult Education Directorate (national authority).
Iceland
University of Iceland (policy-maker).
Adult training centre (expert).
Ireland
QQI (national authority).
Expert.
Italy (joint response)
Coordinated by the Institute for the Development of Vocational Training of Workers (Istituto per lo Sviluppo della Formazione Professionale dei Lavoratori) (national authority).
Latvia
Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia, education department (national authority).
Employers' Confederation of Latvia (social partner).
Liechtenstein
AIBA, office for vocational training and career guidance (expert).
Liechtenstein Chamber of Commerce (Wirtschaftskammer Liechtenstein) (expert).
Lithuania
Ministry of Education and Science (national authority).
Marijampole VET Centre (expert).
Luxembourg
Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training, department for VET (national authority).
Chamber of Employees (Chambre des Salariés) (social partner).

Malta
EU Programmes Agency (Agenzija tal-Programmi tal-Unjoni Ewropea) (national authority).
Montenegro
Independent adviser for vocational education (expert).
Netherlands
CINOP/National agency LLP Leonardo da Vinci (national authority).
The Netherlands Association of VET Colleges (social partner).
Norway
Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (national authority).
Representative of social partners (social partner).
Poland
Foundation for the Development of the Education System (Fundacja Rozwoju Systemu Edukacji) (expert).
Portugal
ANQEP under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Solidarity, Employment and Social Security in partnership with the Ministry of Economy (national authority).
Employers Confederation for Commerce and Services (Confederação do Comércio e Serviços de Portugal) (social partner).
Romania
National Centre for Technical and VET Development (policy-maker).
National Agency for Community Programmes for Education and Professional Development (Agentia Nationala pentru Programe Comunitare in Domeniul Educatie si Formarii Profesionale) (expert).
Serbia
VET centre, technical responsible for the development of the NQF for VET (expert).
Slovakia
SIOV (NCP) (national authority).
Slovak academic association for international cooperation (expert).

Slovenia
CPI (national authority).
Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Mobility and European Educational and Training Programmes (Center Republike Slovenije za Mobilnost in Evropske Programe Izobrazevanja in Usposabljanja) (expert).
Spain
Ministry of Education, Deputy-Directorate General for Guidance and VET (national authority).
Generalitat of Catalonia, department of education (Generalitat de Catalunya, departament d'ensenyament) (regional authority Catalonia).
Expert.
Public Employment Service (Servicio Público de Empleo Estatal) (social partner).
Sweden
Swedish National Agency for Education (national authority).
Swedish Council for Higher Education (national authority).
Switzerland (joint response)
EAER (national authority).
SERI, international education projects (expert).
Turkey
Ministry of National Education, Projects Coordination Centre (national authority).
UK
Ecorys UK (national authority).
College Wales (national authority).
Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (national authority).
SCQF partnership (national authority).
ECCTIS Ltd (expert).
NARIC (expert).



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Monitoring ECVET implementation strategies in Europe in 2013

Since 2010 Cedefop has been monitoring ECVET developments in relation to national VET qualification systems. This is the fourth annual report, four years after the ECVET recommendation and 11 years after the first ECVET-related meeting at European level; it covers developments up to September 2013. The report examines 38 countries and regions, using information provided by representatives of social partners, ECVET experts and national and regional authorities. The main focus is on what stage ECVET has reached in relation to national qualification systems. It asks what countries/regions have decided to keep ECVET on hold, to test it on qualifications, or have a policy commitment to apply ECVET to qualifications. A cluster analysis provides insights into current developments and key challenges.

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