

VaLOGReg

Value Learning Outcomes in the Grande Region



N°1

Newsletter of the VaLOGReg project

1st edition

This is the first newsletter which addresses the progress made in the context of the VaLOGReg project.

Newsletters will be published once every semester over the next three years, which encompasses the whole duration of the project.

This first edition presents the background, the approach, the final objectives and the partners of the project.

To allow for a greater understanding of the European political context in which the project takes place, this edition also contains a presentation of ECVET, the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training.

In the editorial of this first edition, Mr Nic ALFF, Director of Vocational Training in Luxembourg, highlights the importance of this pilot project, which should not only contribute to the practical implementation of ECVET in general, but also create a learning environment in the Grande Région.

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Lifelong Learning Programme



Education and Culture DG



Preface

The Grande Région (Lorraine, Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg, Saarland, Rhineland-Palatinate, Wallonia, German-speaking community of Belgium) constitutes a territory of 65,400 km² with 11.4 million inhabitants. It is characterised by two elements: linguistic and cultural diversity as well as a strong interdependence.

This interdependence can mostly be found on a socio-economic level, which can be summed up with the following observations:

- the penury of labour in certain regions and sectors,
- the constant increase in the flux of cross-border commuters,
- the appeal of the economic centre of the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg,
- the decline of traditional sectors of production, and the expansion of innovative sectors,
- the key role of the service sector.

These elements can also be found in two aspects of cross-border learning:

1. cross-border apprenticeships
2. cross-border work experience

The first aspect, cross-border apprenticeships¹, can again be subdivided into two categories:

- young people of the Grande Région come to Luxembourg for the whole of their apprenticeship or for their practical training within a company.
- young people from Luxembourg pursue their vocational training abroad.

This kind of cross-border training allows for a better reaction to inadequacies between offer and demand in the different regions, forms the basis for a possible harmonisation of training syllabuses and contributes to the transparency of certificates and diplomas.

The second aspect, cross-border work experience, concerns young people who pursue one part of their vocational training in the Grande Région. These periods of work experience do not only facilitate contact with a different culture and population or personal development, but they also help to perfect professional knowledge and know-how. At the same time, the transition to work life is facilitated.

Thus, the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) in general, and the VaLOGReg project in particular, can hardly fail to provide a stimulus to the learning environment in the Grande Région.

Nic Alff

¹ Apprenticeship

Systematic, long-term training alternating periods at the workplace and in an educational institution or training centre. The apprentice is contractually linked to the employer and receives remuneration (wage or allowance). The employer assumes responsibility for providing the trainee with training leading to a specific occupation. (Terminology of European education and training policy. A selection of 100 key terms. Cedefop 2008)



What is ECVET?

It is a new European instrument which is meant to promote mutual trust and mobility within the context of vocational education and training. Developed by the Member States in cooperation with the European Commission, ECVET was adopted by the Council and the European Parliament on 18th June 2009.

It is recommended that the Member States use ECVET on a voluntary basis from 2012 onwards.

To prepare for the implementation of ECVET, all the stakeholders in vocational education and training across Europe are invited to test this system over the next few years.

ECVET: an instrument for mobility and recognition

The goal of ECVET is to facilitate the recognition of skills – irrespective of whether the learning process

took place on a national, regional or international level – without prolonging the training period.

To achieve this, ECVET offers a framework whose objective is to stimulate exchanges as well as mutual trust among the providers of vocational education and training all across Europe by using a shared terminology.

ECVET promotes lifelong learning

ECVET supports the flexibility of programmes and educational paths to achieve qualifications, thereby increasing the opportunities for lifelong learning. It facilitates the recognition of learning achievements that young adults or adults have obtained in more varied contexts, i.e. different countries, institutions or systems (for example initial or continuous training), but also formal, non-formal, or informal kinds of learning.



The VaLOGReg project

The project is one of 10 pilot projects adopted in 2008 and co-financed by the European Commission. All these projects aim at testing the ECVET specifications. They are set in diverse professional sectors, such as the performing arts, mechanics or tourism. A description of all these projects can be found on the *ECVET Projects* internet site:

<http://www.ecvet-projects.eu>

What does the acronym VaLOGReg mean?

This designation, which is pronounced like an ordinary word, stands for “**Value Learning Outcomes in the Grande Région**”, which translates into French as “Valoriser les acquis d’apprentissage dans la Grande Région” and into German as “Lernergebnisse in der Großregion valorisieren”.

VaLOGReg – a different angle on ECVET

In the preceding article, the objectives and the specificities of the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training were briefly described. At first glance, this system might seem to primarily target mobility all across Europe. This is incidentally how most of the projects have conceived it. Thus, the OPIR project, a partnership between different European regions, aims to identify common learning achievements in two domains, hairdressing and mechanics. These achievements, taken together, constitute common units as a basis for learner mobility. The RECOMFOR project is the follow-up to the COMINTER project, which developed a common European diploma in international commerce. RECOMFOR aims to create a platform where mobility constitutes an integral part of education and training. This project, like the above-mentioned one, looks for shared elements on which mobility

can be based.

The advantage of this approach is that mobility is facilitated by a quasi-automatic transfer and recognition of learning achievements. What is less convenient, however, is the amount of work this involves for the different partners. Thus, it will be necessary to adopt an identical approach to the creation of units in order to structure the certifications and to establish and maintain the networks that guarantee the agreements.

VaLOGReg looks at the text from a different point of view by concentrating on the issue of lifelong learning. This approach is superior in so far that it uses a “common units” strategy to facilitate the recognition of learning achievements that young adults or adults have obtained in more varied contexts (different countries, institutions or systems, as well as formal, non-formal, or informal kinds of learning). Once the certifications that belong to one particular professional domain have been identified, it will be necessary to construct tools which will insure the transparency of the above-mentioned certifications so that the recognition processes developed by each partner will become much easier, faster and less costly.

The advantage of this approach over those mentioned above is that there is no need to harmonise the methodology which underlies the certifications. At the same time, mobility becomes more extensive without setting up transnational networks. However, the recognition of units acquired and validated in other systems depends on the efficiency of the tools designed to insure transparency.

Why this project?

The project “Value Learning Outcomes in the Grande Région” aims at providing solutions to real-life learning situations in this region.

The large number of cross-border commuters is a characteristic of the Grande Région: each day, 180,000 people cross a regional border, while some 160,000 of those commuters even cross a national border.

Besides this politically well-known – and statistically-documented – situation, another phenomenon is less-known and studied: the people who leave their regional context for their studies. Those involved in education and training know that some students do part of their education and training, e.g. work experience or cross-border apprenticeships, in a different region.

Apart from a few institutionalised situations, this form of learning is hardly ever – if at all – recognised in the learner’s home region.

Given this situation, it is highly important to develop mutual trust among those involved in vocational education and training, as this will allow the recognition of learning outcomes from other contexts, with a view to the labour market of the Grande Région.

The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) can be a catalyst for this mutual trust.

The objective and the different stages of the project

The project aims at testing if the principles and technical specifications of ECVET can provide the basis for mutual trust among those involved in vocational education and training in view of the recognition of learning outcomes in the learner’s interest. The testing process will focus on two qualifications: industrial electronics and car mechanics.

The two qualifications will be analysed regarding their relevance within the context of the technical specifications of ECVET. This analysis will be conducted by experts in the respective fields. At the end of this first stage, these experts will discuss the comparability of the qualifications in order to determine if the learning outcomes are the same.

These conclusions will allow the partners of the project to devise a partnership agreement which will outline the general framework of cooperation and work. It will also describe the procedures and criteria for quality control, assessment, as well as the comparability of the certifications in view of credit transfers, etc.

To see if this partnership agreement can be used, testing will be conducted on two distinct levels.

On the one hand, there will be a “pedagogical contract” between the participating institutions and the learner. This contract will specify the terms of this regional mobility, its duration, the expected learning outcomes as well as their recognition in the learner’s country of origin.

On the other hand, there will be real mobility of learners in vocational education and training. It goes without saying that this mobility will encompass all the elements listed in the “pedagogical contract”.

If this stage is validated, the partners will propose a definitive model for partnership agreements which will contain a recommendation for the pedagogical contract as well as a user’s guide for future mobility.

Partners :

Lycée technique d'Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg

Ministère de l'Education nationale et de la Formation professionnelle, Luxembourg

Ministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft, Jugend und Kultur, Rheinland Pfalz

Ministerium für Bildung, Saarland

Goupement d'intérêt public Formation Tout au Long de la Vie, France

Institut wallon de formation en alternance et des indépendants et petites et moyennes entreprises, Belgique



LE GOUVERNEMENT
DU GRAND-DUCHÉ DE LUXEMBOURG
Ministère de l'Éducation nationale
et de la Formation professionnelle



Saarland

Ministerium für Bildung

