



VaLOGReg

Value the learning outcomes in the “Grande Région”

Final Report

Public Part

Project information

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Executive Summary

In the “Grande Région Saar-Lorraine-Luxembourg-Rheinland-Pfalz-Wallonie” beside the border working population and the enterprises developing their activities in the “Grande Région” another phenomenon is less known and analysed: people learning cross border. It is known that a certain number of learning occurs cross border and under different forms (cross border training periods, cross border apprenticeship etc.) but it is not at all or hardly recognised in the country of origin.

Considering these elements in relation to the different possible learning situations, it is important to develop mutual trust between the different actors of vocational training that will allow this recognition of learning outcomes especially regarding the economic and labour market situation in the “Grande Région”.

The goal of the VaLOGReg project was to determine how the specifications of ECVET could create conditions for this mutual trust among the partners and institutions working in different learning contexts in respecting as well the legal context and by the way the subsidiarity principle as well as the cultural background of each system.

The aim of this development was to propose at the end to the stakeholders of the Grande Région an economic (general and transferable) approach for mutual trust, approach that can be used to recognise learning outcomes obtained in a cross border learning situation.

To reach this aim, the project tried to find out on basis of 2 professional qualifications in the field of electronics in energy and car mechanics if the technical specifications of ECVET could be a tool for creating this trust.

On basis of the positive result [congruence of 90% of the learning outcomes in the qualifications of each region (VET system)] the steering group decided to develop the tools (MoU, Learning agreement and personal transcript). But the steering group took also the decision, regarding the (legal and cultural) context, not to use the principle of unit.

To see if this option (using ECVET with principles and technical specifications without using units) was practicable, the VaLOGReg project focused on an authentic learning context. This approach allowed the young learners to immerse themselves completely in their neighbouring country's educational system.

By basing themselves on the comparison of curricula (training profile) and the technical specifications of ECVET without units, the partners of the project have thus developed an approach that is both general and transferable to other trades and professions in order to build the mutual trust that is required to recognise learning outcomes acquired in another region

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1. Project Objectives

Considering that the competent authorities and the other stakeholders favour the implementation of ECVET if this credit system can meet their needs and regarding the situation in relation to cross border learning in the Grande Region the project VaLOGReg aimed at exploring the possibilities of implementing ECVET in this region.

As in the Grande Région the problem is not mainly to develop the geographical mobility of learners, but to enhance the effects of current mobility of learners and workers. The challenge is to facilitate the transfer and recognition of learning outcomes acquired during a cross border learning experience. And for this goal, the mutual trust between the different actors of VET is a crucial precondition. Our assumption is that the ECVET system can be a catalyst for building mutual trust this.

Thus the objective of the project was to analyse, by using the principles and technical specifications of ECVET, if it is possible to establish this mutual trust between the actors of vocational training in the interest of the mobile learner and the mobile worker (recognition and validation of learning outcomes).

In this context, the project VaLOGReg has not developed a methodology for changing the systems to integrate ECVET, but sought how ECVET could meet the specific needs of the Grande Région.

The first step was to analyse the unit based approach in the different systems and how they are structured. Concretely this was done by analysing and comparing 2 different professional qualifications. Based on the conclusions the conditions for transfer from one learning context to another one were developed.

The main focus in this first part was to decide how far the compatibility has to go respectively what are the absolute necessary elements for trust between all the partners and this having in mind to develop an economic way (economic means not only bilateral but general and transferable, including the linguistic aspect of the Grande Région) to deal the subject in the "Grande Région".

After having clarified this aspect the setting up of the Memorandum of understanding the learning agreement and the personal descriptor to prepare the mobility experience was undergone.

After the mobility, the last objective was the evaluation of this mobility and a final model for a Memorandum of understanding including a recommendation for the learning agreement and a guide for future users In the Grande Région was adopted.

The goal was to propose a realistic and effective model of implementation of ECVET system in relationship with the needs for the actors in the Grande Region.

2. Project Approach

2.a. Strategic considerations

The implementation of ECVET will be developed only if the competent authorities and all stakeholders consider that the European Credit system can meet their needs. In this context, the project VaLOGReg has not developed a methodology for changing the systems to integrate ECVET, but sought how ECVET could meet the specific needs of the Grande Région.

In the Grande Région the problem is not to develop the geographical mobility of learners, but also to enhance the effects of current mobility of learners and workers. The challenge is to better facilitate the transfer and recognition of learning outcomes. And for this goal, the mutual trust between the different Actors of VET is a crucial condition. Therefore a first assumption was that the ECVET system can be a catalyst for building mutual trust this.

A second hypothesis was that some principles of ECVET and some technical specifications could be implemented in the different VET systems existing in the Grande Région.

The goal was to propose a realistic and effective model of implementation of ECVET system in relationship with the needs for the actors.

After an initial study of the different VET systems, it was clear for all partners of the project that the implementation of all technical specifications of ECVET was impossible. Thus one can see in the table below that four basic conditions for a complete implementation of ECVET are not met:

Conditions for the implementation of ECVET		Comments
Each competent institution accepts the principle of transfer of LO	OK	It was a question of a minimal condition to take part in the project. But the study shows that recognition devices are different in each system. But they should evolve with the production of the MoU.
Each competent institution recognizes the evaluation process of other CI	OK	Even if each system needs specific information, the principle is acquired to recognize the quality of the assessment processes of evaluation.
Qualifications are organized into units	OK	Some partners do not build their qualifications in units. And for some stakeholders, the design of qualifications in units would be a risk for the quality of VET systems.
Each competent institution accepts the principle of developing common units of LO (to build qualifications or a part of qualification at a European level)	OK	Three VET systems organize the qualifications in units, but that does not mean that everyone accepts the principle of building common units. Each system has a specific methodology to build the units.

In the case of following strictly the ECVET recommendation the project partners could develop a theoretical model for implementing ECVET in the Grande Région, but without the guarantee to make it a short or mid term reality.

However as the objective was to develop a concrete and realisable model in a short term the partners analysed the ECVET principles and technical specifications from a pragmatic and realistic angle. This implicated the respect of the current legislations and cultural settings in the VET systems of the partners.

2.b. Methodology developed during the project¹

During a first step the experts analysed the qualification systems towards the ECVET principles and technical specifications and the conclusion were the following two strategic choices:

1. not to aim at transferring units of learning outcomes but to develop the transfer of learning outcomes,
2. to find in the ECVET principles and technical specifications a the elements that could, at this moment, be used by everyone.

Area that can be easily shared	Area strongly linked to culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • qualifications described in learning outcomes • quality standards for the qualification • a model of MoU that makes possible the transfer of learning outcomes • models of a learning agreement and a personal transcript 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • design of the qualifications as the result of the culture of each region (state) and each VET system, system that is linked to the requirements of the labour market • use of the concept unit • use of points

The focus of the VaLOGReg project was the increasing of the permeability between systems by making the qualifications more transparent and enhances the mutual trust concerning the quality standards used by each of the partners.

The next step was the analysis of the certifications². This was done by comparing the learning outcomes of the training profile and at the same time the required level of performance.

However this task of analysing the qualifications was not easy because :

- the documents were only available in their language of origin French or German,
- the way for describing the learning outcomes differ,
- the learning pathways are various [apprenticeship (dual system), courses alternating with in time variable work placement in enterprise],

¹ The phases of the methodology described in this chapter correspond to work package 2-4 of the project.

²The 2 analysed qualifications were electronics in energy and building technology and car mechanics.

- the evaluation processes are different concerning the methods used and the actors involved (teachers, enterprises, inspectors, external bodies...).

But the chosen approach (not to compare one by one each learning outcome in the curriculum, but to compare the differently designed learning outcomes in relation to what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process (qualification obtained) and this with the level autonomy and responsibility) made it possible to determine a level of compatibility between “different” qualifications with the same purpose.

With this methodology the working phase, apparently complex, was finally easy and quick (+/- 3 working days).

The step before testing this approach by a concrete mobility of learners was the drawing up of a model of the following documents: MoU, Learning agreement and Personal transcript. During the preparation, the carrying out and the evaluation of the mobility these proposals were adapted in regards to the information collected. This allows a direct use by the different actors of the Grande Région of the models developed in the project.

To guarantee this use an ECVET users guide for the Grande région was developed.

Finally during a concrete testing by a real mobility of as well of the approach (the transfer of learning outcomes based on the compatibility between the qualifications) as of the tools was carried out

To test it a mobility of learners was organised as described in the following table :

Cluster	Institution	Institution
Car mechanics		
Luxembourg - Rhénanie-Palatinat	Lycée technique - Esch/Alzette	BBS Gewerbe-Technik - Trier
Lorraine - Wallonie	CFA Charbonneaux - Marly	Centre IFAPME - Dinant
Electronics in energy and building technology		
Luxembourg - Sarre	LTAM - Luxembourg	BBZ Technik-Gewerbe - Dillingen
Lorraine - Wallonie	LP La Briquerie - Thionville	Institut Pierrard - Virton

3. Project Outcomes & Results

In view of the specific situation regarding the learning situation of the Grande Région the goal of the project was to analyse, by using the principles and technical specifications of ECVET, if it is possible to establish mutual trust between the actors of vocational training in the interest of the mobile learner.

The first step, analysing the unit based approach in the different systems and how they are structured and this by looking at qualifications coming from 2 different professional fields gave the two basic outcomes of the project.

Not to build a common mobility unit with agreed common learning outcomes

In a situation where you have either no qualification set up in units or different ways to conceive units, design an unit only for mobility includes the fact to break up this unit after the mobility to insert the learning outcomes in the home reality.

For the project this would have not only complicated but prevented the development of an economic approach or mutual trust and agreement, approach that can be used to recognise learning outcomes obtained in a cross border situation. Economic means not only bilateral but also general and transferable, including the taking in account of the linguistic aspect of the "Grande Région".

Furthermore in an lifelong learning perspective where you are not a typical and classical learning environment, because the learner has as well parts from formal learning, as from non formal learning and finally informal learning. All these learning outcomes make not up a unit, at best a part of a unit. You need an open approach to deal with this kind of learning outcomes

Compatibility versus comparability

A second element the partners discussed was the to decide how far the compatibility between learning outcomes have to go respectively what are the absolute necessary elements for trust between all the partners and this having again in mind to develop an economic way to deal the subject in the "Grande Région".

Beside the fact we had the curricula in different languages (german and french), the rules for writing them differ from one partner to the other, not speaking of allocating them to the training pathway. Instead of analysing the learning outcomes in each detail (words, formulation etc) the partners developed a flexible approach. The experts have really looked at the learning outcomes as defined in the recommendation: what a learner knows and is able to do after a learning process. They added even the level of responsibility and autonomy. This definition was very useful because it made the compatibility between the qualifications very clear. It is noteworthy to stress that the result of this exercise was a congruence of 90% of the learning outcomes in the qualifications of each region (VET system)

Beside this basic, but nevertheless important; outcomes the results of the project are more related to the testing phase.

Results of the experimentation:

- the compatibility between the certifications was not questioned by the field actors ; this validates the developed methodology ;
- the different models of the documents (MoU, Learning agreement, Personal transcript), were not only used but improved during the experimentation ; this validates the models and guarantees their use after the end of the project ;
- the learners had at their return no major problem to have the assessed learning outcomes recognised and validated to their pathway; the few difficulties were linked to the new process and a lack of time to inform all the concerned actors.

On the other side it is important to stress a certain number of not linked to ECVET but that can harm the ECVET system:

- time control of the learning pathways between the schools/training institutions,
- compatibility of security norms,
- changing of teaching staff during the project,
- diversity concerning the status of the learners (in the training system or age),
- difficulty to organise the exchange between different pedagogical systems (dual – full time),
- motivation of the learners concerning the geographical mobility,
- financing of the mobility.

The only real difficulty concerning ECVET was the signing of the MoU and learning agreement in the time frame of the project.

Further to this result and beside to the newsletters of the project that informed largely the different stakeholders as well as the information meetings in the different regions, the project produced a guide for future users In the Grande Région. This guide is to see as complementary to the future European user guide.

Regarding the development of the whole project the partners developed a specific VaLOGReg methodology (economic (general and transferable) for a possible use of ECVET in the Grande Région.

This approach (outlined in the following table) aims to recognise and validate learning outcomes obtained in an other region or learning context without impacting the design of the qualifications.

VaLOGReg methodology	Methodology developed by the others pilots projects who produced common units
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To present the qualifications in LO (respect of national rules to write in LO) • Transfer of L.O. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To present the qualifications in LO (each system accept common rules to write) • To build common units (each competent authority accept the principle of co-writing of qualifications) • Transfer of units of learning outcomes

By this way the VaLOGReg project has not only accomplished its target to set up an realistic model favouring the recognition and transfer of learning outcomes in the Grande Région but the partners of the project can submit to the stakeholders a proposal for an regional framework that will establish the foundations for mutual trust in the Grande Région, that will make possible the mobilities in this learning area; this will be a declaration were the stakeholders accept the transfer and accumulation of learning outcomes.

4. Partnerships

As the aim of the project was, considering the specific situation of the Grande Région, to develop mutual trust between the different actors of vocational training to make possible the recognition of learning outcomes. This could be done by determining how the specifications of ECVET could create the conditions for this mutual trust among the partners and institutions working in different learning contexts.

In relation to this goal it was important to get on board the responsible institutions in the field of qualification in the Grande Région. And as the objective was to respect as well the legal context and by the way the subsidiarity principle as well as the cultural background of each system, all the partners could commit them in the development of the project. By only envisaging the recognition and validation of the abroad acquired learning outcomes towards the learner's pathway neither the holistic approach nor the central certification issue were touched.

Beside this basic requirement the different partners didn't not only involve themselves in the project but could convince the experts of the chosen qualifications to participate actively in the comparison of learning outcomes of these certifications. Finally the responsible people of the training institutions, the teachers and trainers and the learners participated actively in the project. Even in the final conference the different partners, each from his region, succeeded in bringing in other stakeholders like the social partners or decision makers and other training institutions.

Further to this visible involvement, the different partners showed their adherence to the idea of the project on one side in participating actively and constructively in the discussions as well in as between the meetings and on the other side in bringing the common reflexions and conclusions (cf. chapter 3) not only up to their national discussions around ECVET but too to the European ones.

Finally the outcomes and results of the project and the plans for the future show that the partnership gathered really the competent bodies of the different regions, in the sense of the ECVET recommendation, and therefore had a first real impact concerning the initial purpose of the project i.e. to propose a realistic and effective model of implementation of ECVET system in relationship with the needs for the actors in the Grande Region.

5. Plans for the Future

The development of ECVET in the Grande Région, with its specificities, will succeed if the work done in VaLOGReg concerning two professional sectors, will spread to other sectors. Therefore there is a need for political will and a structural investment concretised by the signing of a framework agreement.

Therefore it is necessary to:

- emphasize that ECVET is a tool for the economic development of the Grande Région
- put forward a working program in the Grande Région that will encourage
 - the writing of the qualifications in learning outcomes
 - the validation of the compatibility approach (total or partial compatibility between qualifications)
 - the setting up of framework (super MoU) for experts and a budget
 - to set up a steering group that will facilitate the ECVET mobility in the Grande Région by gathering all the results from the different projects, disseminate them to potential users and bring forward the idea of the learning space Grande Région.

During the final conference of the project a first step in this direction was made by the statements of the relevant stakeholders and the minister of education and vocational training declared to bring the subject to the inter ministerial comity of the Grande region.

Furthermore a meeting was organised beginning February by the French ministry of education gathering the representatives of each ECVET project in which France was involved. High level representative of the ministry were present and the focus of the project was to learn from each project, in order to see how France will go further with ECVET, and what kind of advices the ministry could give to stakeholders, both at a national (or local) and European level. It has been a great opportunity to present in detail VaLOGReg and its results.

Finally a meeting with potential ECVET users will be organised by the LLL Agency of the French speaking community of Belgium in autumn. This meeting will mainly focus on the VaLOGReg methodology.

6. Contribution to EU policies

The VaLOGReg project is one of 10 pilot projects created in 2008 to test the specifications of ECVET. This was done in a particular area the Grande Région.

The project VaLOGReg tested ECVET as said in the recommendation “to facilitate transfer, recognition and accumulation of learning outcomes of individuals who are aiming to achieve a qualification” and this in an unique case of 5 regions of 4 countries representing not only an existing regional labour market but a possible learning space that entitles the learner to have his learning outcomes recognised

The goal of the project was to determine how the specifications of ECVET create conditions of mutual trust among the partners and institutions working in different learning contexts.

But even that the results are coming from this particular constellation some of the conclusions may be discussed on European level especially towards the principles and technical specifications of ECVET.

This becomes clear if the following conditions for implementing ECVET are taken into consideration:

- As ECVET impacts the existing VET systems (writing in learning outcomes, creating units ...) the geographical mobility of the learners is not a sufficient reason; it is important to put forward other mobilities like the social or the sectoral one. It is important to underline that ECVET is a tool for social inclusion and economic development.
- The implementation of ECVET must be an answer at the policy goals developed within each system and must respect the principles of subsidiarity
- The change must involve all stakeholders and everyone should find a benefit

These points show that the conclusions of VaLOGReg (no units, compatibility versus comparability) can be a first step to implement ECVET. It can diminish the reticence expressed by several stakeholders towards ECVET.

7. Extra Heading/Section

Quality report³ (Work package 7)

As part of the ECVET pilot project called VaLOGReg, the quality plan should:

- allow the partners to develop a reflexive view on the project process, on their interactions and on the results of the different actions,
- to give the coordinators and the steering group pertinent information for their activities.

So it was therefore to provide a monitoring / coaching of the project during which feedbacks were regularly offered to the coordinator and the project partners.

The quality feedbacks took different forms:

- a) communicating theoretical information about ECVET technical specifications,
- b) report of meeting organised by the Commission for ECVET pilot projects (highlighting issues that arise in the European field, and solutions that seem to be useful...)
- c) rewording questions and difficulties raised by some partners, ...
- d) analysis of solutions and tools designed and developed during the project in order to verify:
 - I. if they are consistent with the ECVET technical specifications,
 - II. if they achieve the objectives of the project,
 - III. if they remain compatible with the characteristics of different VET systems in the presence within the project (during the project, the coordinator asked a ECVET scientific assistance which has exceeded over 50% of the total workload),
- e) reformulation of ideas developed in assembly and design of communication tools to go further in the analytical work,
- f) production of tools for communication and dissemination of the project (writing of an article for the newsletter and production of many communication tools).

The VaLOGReg project quality plan sought to provide support to all partners so that they can participate in achieving the project goals. It is very difficult to measure the effectiveness of different stages of the coaching process, except indirectly, by assessing the implementation of project goals. In other words, check whether the pilot project produced an implementation model adapted to the specific of the Greater Region.

Simply by collecting the final conclusions of the conference, we can verify that the goal is reached. A model implementation of ECVET was developed; it is credible in the conditions prevailing in 2012 in the Greater Region.

- This model is a stage of a much longer process of reform of VET systems. It does not activate all the ECVET technical specifications, but all those that are activated, adhere to the principles of the European recommendation.

³ The quality monitoring of the VaLOGReg project was conducted by the association MédiActions 10 rue Célestin Hastir 5150 Floreffe Belgium

- This model now allows partners of the Greater Region use ECVET technical specifications to promote the transfer and validation of learning outcomes. It will therefore enable everyone to directly implement concrete projects of mobility.
- This model is politically credible because the Luxembourg Minister of Education has committed itself to putting in the work agenda of the Greater Region.

With increasing mobility projects, this model of implementation of ECVET will naturally evolve in the future, but also because it will change its promoters know that this first draft is still imperfect.

Indeed, the VaLOGReg project has to face two problems independent from its experimental design that limited the proposals for implementation of ECVET technical specifications and the validity of the proposed methodology. The first problem is related to the design of the ECVET system, and the second problem comes from the design of the tender made by the Commission.

First, note that in coherence with the principle of subsidiarity, the ECVET recommendation does not specify how the competent authorities provide their qualifications. The ECVET technical specifications offer a tool to show units that constitute the qualifications, but it remains the responsibility of the competent authority to determine if qualification is either:

- the sum of units that constitutes, in this case, the accumulation of all parties allows the granting of full qualification;
- the demonstration of the ability of a learner to use and integrate all the learning outcomes, in this case, the accumulation of units generally allows access to a final assessment that it allows the delivery of complete qualification.

Between these two positions, there are a number of possible variants in which one recognizes the project partners. Depending on the position of each partner, units may or may not be meaningful, they have different uses and transfer opportunities, recognition, validation and accumulation of learning outcomes will also be very different. The ECVET technical specifications offer a common base that is only superficial. Once we take into account the views of each VET system, we see that the understanding is still very different. The VaLOGReg project alone could not solve this problem linked to ECVET. At most, according to the current specification, the project partners could help providing a pragmatic and transitory approach of the ECVET implementation.

The tender of the Commission has strongly modelled the experimental design of ECVET pilot projects that were essentially in logic "top down". Indeed, to test ECVET seriously, pilot projects were all faced with a fundamental problem, they needed to involve the authorities responsible for qualification, assessment and validation. But then to test new tools and procedures imagined for implementing ECVET, it was necessary to involve stakeholders on the field.

At the time of testing, the project partners therefore have to face two problems that have complicated the achievement of the ECVET testing in reality:

- a) must face all the traditional difficulties that we find in organizing mobility of learners: finance - insurance - security - motivation of schools, trainers and learners - the complexity of national legislation - the difficulty of combining different learning pathways...
- b) the mobility project was imposed on schools that were designated volunteers to test a credit system and it is not part of their priorities.

In a very short period, schools have to prepare the mobility, the discovery of the ECVET system, to try to use the tools produced in the VaLOGReg project and to set up the experimental device while preserving all the chances of success of the learners and dealing with contingencies such as changes in the teams of teachers.

Of these difficulties result that all mobilities that were foreseen in the project could not be made before the official end of the project.

Basically, we will be able to check if the VaLOGReg methodology is useful only if schools use the tools to organize mobility of learners in a few months.

At the final conference, the Luxemburgish, Belgian and French National Agencies announced their intention to organize a contact seminar designed to promote mobility projects implementing the VaLOGReg methodology.