

ECVET in Europe

*A New European Tool for Promoting, Facilitating
and Enhancing Lifelong Learning and Mobility*



What does the term VET mean?

The term VET refers to Vocational Education and Training.

What does the term ECVET refer to?

The term ECVET refers to the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training.

What does it imply?

In simple terms, ECVET is a system which translates learning experiences in VET into units of learning outcomes that build up to a qualification based on ECVET points. This system enhances permeability between education strands as it may be put in parallel to its counterpart ECTS system in Higher Education. The ECVET is a new European instrument for promoting lifelong learning. It should facilitate the recognition and transferability of full vocational qualifications, and awards, or partial vocational qualifications across-borders, hence enhancing and facilitating student mobility across Europe within the VET sector. The whole process is coordinated by tools and a methodological technical framework which should present a systematic way of establishing a common understanding, as well as a user-friendly language for transparency during the transfer and recognition of learning outcomes of study units.

What are the main objectives of ECVET?

- To support student and ultimately employee mobility for European citizens through the recognition of units of learning outcomes across Europe;
- To encourage and facilitate lifelong learning through the flexibility of programmes and pathways to achieve qualifications;
- To encourage more attractiveness to VET.

What are the set of Key features of the ECVET?

- Learning Outcomes
- Units
- ECVET Points
- Credit Transfer and Accumulation
- ECVET and non-formal and informal learning
- Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)
- Learning Agreement
- Personal Transcript

Definition of each Key Feature

Learning Outcomes (LO)

Learning Outcomes are statements of what a learner knows, understands, and is able to do on completion of a learning process defined in terms of knowledge, skills, and competences. Learning Outcomes can be used to establish descriptors of qualifications frameworks, define qualifications, design curricula, to guide assessment based on knowledge, skills, and competences, etc. For each level of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the learning outcomes are established in line with the respective level according to the level descriptors for each level within the EQF. A set of learning outcomes make up a study unit, and a collation of study units make a full qualification. To implement ECVET, it is necessary that qualifications are described using units of learning outcomes so as to be able to relate the outcomes of assessed or validated learning experiences in a common methodology.



Units

A Unit / Study Unit is a component of a qualification, consisting of a coherent set of knowledge, skills, and competence of the established learning outcomes that can be assessed, validated, and recognised. The assessment should verify and record that the learner has or has not achieved the learning outcomes expected. Once a Unit is assessed, proving that a learner has achieved the learning outcomes established for that Unit, the learner acquires credit for this achievement. The credit achieved for each Unit can then be transferred. Hence once a Unit is assessed, validated, given credit for and recognised, these contribute to the accumulation of credits and can form a full qualification. Thus Units enable progressive achievement of qualifications through the recognition, transfer and accumulation of learning outcomes. The recognition of units also enables learners to obtain recognition of the learning outcomes achieved in different contexts without the need of re-assessment.

ECVET Points

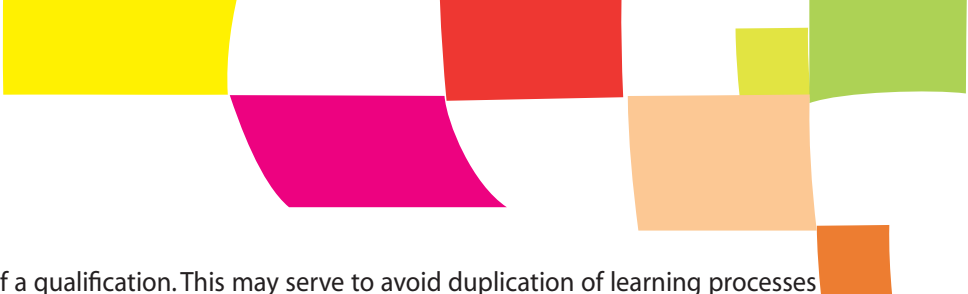
ECVET points provide additional information about units and qualifications in a numerical form. The ECVET points are a numerical representation of the overall weight of learning outcomes in a qualification and of the relative weight of units in relation to the qualification. The number of ECVET points allocated to a qualification, together with other specifications such as descriptions of study units in learning outcomes, and information about the level of qualifications, can indicate the scope of the qualification. From the total number of ECVET points allocated to a qualification, each Unit has a relative weight within that qualification. This is thus reflected in the number of ECVET points which are allocated to each unit in order to contribute towards achieving the qualification. When a learner satisfies the criteria for a Unit or a qualification, meaning that s/he has achieved the expected learning outcomes and these are assessed and validated, s/he is awarded the corresponding ECVET points. These are recorded together with the learning outcomes of each study unit in the person's personal transcript. ECVET points are linked to the qualification structure and description irrespective of whether someone has achieved the qualification or not. This implies that ECVET points which are allocated to a study unit describe the weight of that unit in a numerical form. Therefore, there is recognition of the ECVET points achieved through completed units, even if the learner has not successfully completed the full number of units needed to obtain the full qualification.

Credit Transfer and Accumulation

Credit refers to the fact that a learner has achieved the expected learning outcomes, which have been assessed and which can be accumulated towards a qualification or transferred to other learning programmes or qualifications. Credit is not to be confused with ECVET points. Credit does not exist on its own without someone having achieved it. In other words, while credit is related to a person and his/her personal achievement, ECVET points are linked to the qualification structure and description independent of whether someone has achieved the qualification or not. ECVET points provide information about the qualification and the units. In simpler terms, when a person proves to have achieved the set of learning outcomes expected for a particular study unit, the person would have gained the ECVET points allocated to that study unit, and hence would have obtained credits. Therefore ECVET points are numerical representations of the weight of a particular unit in the framework of a qualification. Credit is what a learner obtains for the learning outcomes s/he has proven to acquire. Credit Transfer then refers to the process through which learning outcomes achieved in one context can be taken into another context. In order to be transferred, learning outcomes have to be assessed. The outcome of the assessment is recorded in a learner's personal transcript and constitutes credit. On the basis of the assessed outcomes, the credit can then be validated and recognised by another competent institution. Credit accumulation is a process through which learners can acquire qualifications progressively by successive assessments and validation of learning outcomes. In the framework of ECVET partnerships, credit transfer is foreseen in the learning agreement. This learning agreement specifies which learning outcomes are to be achieved during the mobility and how these will be assessed.

ECVET and informal and non-formal learning

ECVET shall facilitate the development of flexible and individualised pathways and also the recognition of those learning outcomes which are acquired through informal and non-formal learning. For applying ECVET to learning outcomes achieved in a informal and non-formal learning contexts or outside the framework of a MoU, the competent institution which is empowered to award units/qualifications or to give credit should establish procedures and mechanisms for the identification, validation, and recognition of these learning outcomes through the award of the corresponding units and the associated ECVET points. ECVET facilitates the validation of informal and non-formal learning because it describes the knowledge, skills, and competences required for a qualification and the associated units. This makes it easier for the competent institution to identify what learners have already achieved in comparison




to what is required in view of a qualification. This may serve to avoid duplication of learning processes where a learner might have already achieved a set of learning outcomes from an external context. Moreover, it can also be used to enable learners to achieve some units through validation of informal and non-formal learning and others through formal learning, as well as facilitates the documentation of learning outcomes achieved through the use of tools such as personal transcripts.

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

Credit transfer is supported by mutual trust between the competent institutions involved. A MoU is an agreement between competent institutions which sets the framework for credit transfer. It formalises the ECVET partnership by stating the mutual acceptance of the status and procedures of competent institutions involved. It also establishes the partnership's procedures for cooperation. MoU are conducted by competent institutions, each of which is empowered, in their own setting, to award qualifications or units or to give credit for achieved learning outcomes for transfer and validation. By setting up a MoU, competent institutions should acknowledge their partners' approaches to designing units, assessment, validation, and recognition as well as quality assurance. Through this process, they make informed judgements about the conditions under which they can recognise credit achieved in partner systems. Therefore, a MoU contains statements through which the parties concerned accept each other's status as competent institutions; accept each other's quality assurance, assessment, validation and recognition criteria and procedures as satisfactory for the purposes of credit transfer. The MoU also expresses the agreement on the conditions for the operation of the partnership, such as objectives, duration and arrangements for review of the MoU, as well as the agreement on the comparability of qualifications concerned for the purposes of credit transfer, using the reference levels established by EQF. It also identifies other actors and competent institutions that may be involved in the process concerned, together with their functions.

Learning Agreement

A Learning Agreement is an individualised document which sets out the conditions for a specific mobility period. It specifies, for a particular learner, which learning outcomes and units should be achieved together with the associated ECVET points. The learning agreement also lays down that, if the learner achieves the expected learning outcomes and these are positively assessed by the "hosting" institution, the "home" institution will validate and recognise them as part of the requirements for a qualification. Therefore, the learning agreement constitutes a commitment to the learner that his/her achievement, if in line with the expectations, will be recognised upon return. This is done without additional assessment or examination



of the learning covered during the mobility period. The learning agreement is signed by the following three parties: the home institution which will validate and recognise learning outcomes achieved by the learner; the hosting institution that delivers training for the learning outcomes concerned and assesses the achieved learning outcomes; and the learner to be aware of the forthcoming learning process and to commit oneself to the agreement. The learning agreement should then contain information on the identity of the learner, the duration of the mobility period, information on the learning outcomes to be achieved by the learner and the associated ECVET points corresponding to the relative weight of the unit in the home system. A Learning Agreement should not be mistaken for a MoU. A MoU is a framework document that defines the conditions under which credit achieved in partner systems can be recognised. It can concern a group or even a large number of qualifications. The Learning Agreement is a more specific document. It is written for a particular case of mobility and describes the learning outcomes concerned as well as how these will be assessed.

Personal Transcript

A Personal Transcript is a document that belongs to the learner. While the learning agreement describes what the learner is expected to achieve, the personal transcript documents what s/he has achieved. It is a record of learning achievements that contains information on learner's assessed learning outcomes, units, and ECVET points awarded. It also specifies the identity of the learner and the competent institution/s that assessed, validated and recognised the learner's credit.

The Essential actions that can make the ECVET credit transfer process happen include the **Development of Learning Outcomes (which are the backbone of the whole system)**, **Assessment (which should be done using the proper tools and methods for assessment which are quality assured)**, **Recognition (which should be lined with a framework)**, **Transparency (where all actions and processes should be transparent)**, **Transferability (which is vital if it is to allow mobility and accumulation of credits)**, and **Mobility (which is after all one of the aims of this project)**.



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Information has been retrieved from the European Commission documentation: *The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training ECVET - Get to know ECVET better- Questions and Answers*; Revised February 2011
For further information on the ECVET Project in Malta kindly visit the website on: www.ecvetmalta.org.mt





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