



ECVET Peer Learning Seminar in Slovakia

Using ECVET Principles in Work Based Learning with Special Focus on Involvement of all relevant Stakeholders

October 9 – 10, 2017

Mercure Bratislava Centrum Hotel, Žabotova street 2, Bratislava

Participating countries: AT, BG, CZ, DE, HR, HU, PL, RO, SI, SK

Summary of presentations

DAY 1 – Monday, October 9, 2017

Introductory speeches:

European Policy in ECVET implementation – Update and conclusions from the ECVET Network meeting in June 2017 (*Anette Curth, ECVET-Secretariat, Brussels*)

In most policy processes of the European Union, 2020 is a milestone. ECVET, being part of the ET2020 policy framework, is no exception. Continuing with its policy for the development of human capital, the EU is now starting to reflect about the period 2021-2027. The ‘New Skills Agenda for Europe’, launched in 2016, entailed a review and possible revision of the whole batch of VET, Adult Learning (AL) and lifelong learning instruments (e.g. EQF, Europass, EQAVET, ECVET). The revision of the EQF was adopted by the Council, while the Commission proposal to revise Europass is still under debate.

A possible revision of EQAVET and ECVET is at an earlier stage of debate. Preliminary exchanges seem to suggest a need to revise the ECVET legal basis, to clarify a persistent misunderstanding on the real added value of ECVET. The Recommendation established ECVET as a European credit point system, which is de facto not applied. Yet, some elements of ECVET are applied and have proven highly useful to support the flexibility of learning pathways.

How to proceed on the possible revision is still an open issue. Meanwhile, the years 2018-2020 will be a very busy period and the launch of projects and initiatives VET and AL will be as intense as ever.

Compact Report on ECVET implementation in the participating countries (AT, BG, CZ, DE, HR, HU, PL, RO, SI, SK) and activities of their national ECVET experts teams (*Alexandra Junášková, SAAIC - National Agency for Erasmus+ Programme for Education and Training Sectors, National ECVET Expert SK*)

WBL represents grounds which change the understanding of the opportunities to use ECVET. The term “VET provider” has changed its understanding as a “school” because employers have gained

the position of “educators” as well. Thus, employers are not only “VET consumers” when they hire the VET graduates.

However, we can observe the “*dis*-orientation” of employers in this area and therefore we have tried to collect the experience and state-of-play of participating countries.

The presentation aimed at the questions regarding three aspects of ECVET implementation – participation of stakeholders, qualifications and forms of WBL provided in participating countries.

The results of the survey show high variability of national approaches towards role of stakeholders (participation on development of national/school curricula, level of ECVET implementation and usability of qualifications and forms of WBL).

The most important conclusion is that it is the priority to find sustainable ways how to increase interest in and engage the stakeholders (e. g. employers, policy makers, regional authorities, but also pupils/apprentices) into the use of ECVET – either parts or ECVET as a whole.

Topic 1:

Promoting the LO approach in WBL – communication techniques on how to involve different stakeholder groups (how to facilitate involvement of different stakeholder groups, especially employers):

a) Using LO approach to promote WBL and facilitate cooperation between different stakeholders (*Éva Farkas, University of Szeged, National ECVET Expert, Hungary*)

Work-based learning is an umbrella term and three main models can be distinguished:

1. apprenticeships
2. school-based VET with on-the-job training periods
3. WBL that is integrated in a school-based programme.

Based on wide experience of the European Member States practices the following conditions can be highlighted as success factors of effective WBL:

1. National governance, legal framework, quality assurance.
There is a need for a specific regulatory framework that clarifies the responsibilities, rights and obligations of each party.
2. Securing enterprises’ commitment.
Enterprises need to be convinced of the return on investment that the WBL can deliver.
3. Structured and continuous dialogue and systematic collaboration between stakeholders.
In all models of WBL, VET schools need to operate in networks with local businesses.
4. Guidance and support to learners, VET providers, enterprises.
Providing start-up information and tool kits can help companies, VET providers and learners to ensure the quality of WBL.
5. Using learning outcomes approach.
All WBL process even short ones, should have a clear pedagogical purpose, defined learning outcomes and specified objectives.

b) Enhancing outcomes of WBL through transparent structures and organized feedback and evaluation (*Matthias Döbler, BIBB, National ECVET Expert, Germany*)

Based on the current practice at a Vocational College and the results of the innovation transfer project “Skills4Work”, the presentation supported the idea that work based learning requires a didactical approach at school, which brings realistic work processes already at an early stage of VET to the attention of the student and forms the basis of teaching and learning. The gap between work and school can only be minimized if the learning tasks and arrangements reflect

the actual demands and operational procedures, which happen “outside” school. The model of the complete professional action cycle at the level of the company should be adapted to develop learning situations and outcomes correspondingly. As an example, the three phases of preparation, performance and evaluation after placement were elaborated, emphasizing the need for a cooperative, structured and assessed WBL throughout the learning process.

- c) **The new legislative framework in Bulgaria and the development of state educational standards based on ECVET principles - sharing of good practices** (*Ivanka Mihaylova, National ECVET team Coordinator, Human Resource Development Centre; Evgenia Pekaj, National ECVET Expert, Epsilon HR; Penka Nikolova, National ECVET Expert, NA VET, Bulgaria*)

The presentation underlined substantial changes made to the legal framework that allows formal use of work-based learning and in particular those in the Labor Code.

Two new labor contracts have been introduced in the labor legislation - **Employment contract with condition for apprenticeship and Employment contract with condition for traineeship**. These changes in the Labor Code were made in 2014 and 2015. They have led to:

- Legalization of apprenticeships and traineeships in enterprises (previously every company used different forms with certain risk or worries);
- Clarifying obligations of the parties - employer, trainee, mentor, vocational school;
- Clarifying who is eligible to participate.

This, in turn, encouraged businesses to start using these opportunities much more often and on a larger scale.

Several good practices have been presented.

An interesting fact of the Bulgarian presentation is that according to the Commercial Act, **the provision of training for companies is free of value added tax**.

- d) **ECVET without ECVET** (*Jaromír Coufalík, Centre for International Cooperation in Education, National ECVET Expert, the Czech Republic*)

Sectors of education, industry and employment support are the main areas for ECVET exploitation. VET concerns also job seekers. About two thirds of job seekers in the Czech Republic are people with the low or no qualification. According to the Employment Law they can participate in retraining as one of instruments of pro-active employment policy. So called selected retraining is one type of retraining. The job seekers can select a part of professional qualification from the National Register of Qualifications, select a VET provider who is authorized to organise the examinations leading to qualification and ask the contact department of Labour Office for support. After approval his/her application the training of the job seeker is carried out and closed by an examination. If the job seeker is successful, he/she receives the certification on achieving selected part of qualification.

The learning outcomes of selected retraining are specified by the respective qualification standard. The assessment procedure is clearly specified by the evaluation standard. The acquired learning outcomes are recognized through the certificate. The ECVET principles are used within selected retraining of job seekers without formal ECVET exploitation.

- e) **A new TVET form of professional training in Romania. Dual-education.** (*Mihaela Stefanescu, National Centre for TVET Development, Romania*)

In April 2016, Romania adopted a National VET Strategy structured around four key objectives: 1) improving labour market relevance; 2) increasing participation in VET; 3) improving quality; 4) developing innovation and national/international cooperation in VET.

The legal framework for dual education has been also established.

Dual education:

- is defined as an **organizational form of the professional and technical education**, carried out at the initiative of the interested *economic operators*, as *potential employers* and *apprenticeship partners*;
- is based on a *partnership contract* and on *individual contracts* for apprenticeship;
- the economic operators cover the *additional scholarships for students*, conditioned by students frequency;
- its implementation started in the school year 2017-2018;
- its implementation in Romania is the consequence of a growing demand for *specialised workforce* and gives the possibility to reduce *youth unemployment* and *early school leaving rates* by offering alternative ways of vocational education.

DAY 2 – Thursday, October 10, 2017

Topic 2:

ECVET elements in WBL in geographical mobility, cross-border co-operation – exchange of experience

a) Role of geographic mobility in enhancing WBL in initial VET. The Romanian experience. (Ioana Sticea-Mera, Romanian National Agency for Community Programs in the Field of Education and Vocational Training)

The presentation tackled the questions of the role of the work-based learning in the framework of cross-border mobility offering the Romanian experience. Mobility has become the part of the strategic framework ET 2020. Geographical mobility has become the natural part of demographical shifts in Europe; on the other hand the migration is unevenly distributed across Europe. Romanian NA has been conducting the research aimed at the impact of mobility experience. From statistical point of view, 93.39% of students participating in vocational training mobility are those from VET schools (2014). 92.96% of the participants suggested that their motivation was to develop their vocational competences. Thus, work-based learning supports the smooth transition from education to the labour market and brings benefits also to other stakeholders.

b) Successes and challenges of the first national consortium in Slovakia - using ECVET elements in geographical mobility (Martin Kubiš & Dušana Lajčiaková, K.A.B.A. Slovensko, Slovakia)

K.A.B.A. Slovensko (as coordinator) represents the 1st national consortium of secondary VET schools from Slovakia. Thanks to 4 years of experience with Erasmus+ KA1 projects in practice, many ECVET elements are used in practice, such as development of units of learning outcomes, MoU, evaluation forms and forms of validation of achieved LUs by sending schools. In addition to more than 250 students, 25 teachers and other staff mobilities realized since 2014, we act also as hosting consortium, hosting the students and teachers of VET and Higher education from other EU countries (in total over 40 students and teachers and 70 graduates), thus expanding the international activities of schools and cooperation with local companies - after all they are future employers of the schools' graduates. 17 companies from various sectors joined small research among employers from Turiec Region, the most interesting findings are: Half of the companies are „mostly satisfied“ with quality of graduates



from VET schools, but 82% cannot find sufficiently qualified and suitable employees on the labor market (reasons: moving to other regions, countries and job searching in other sectors than those for which they have achieved qualification). Organizations value the „international experience during studies“ as beneficial in 75% and 70% of them would like to cooperate with VET schools in developing the curricula, because they lack in graduates: using knowledge, skills and competencies in practice (56%), language skills (31%), motivation, working habits and independence (10%).

c) Cooperation between schools and companies in mobility projects in Croatia – examples of good practice (*Tamara Hudolin, Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education & Josip Luša, Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes, Croatia*)

The presentation gave a brief overview of Croatian experience when it comes to ECVET elements in mobility projects, with special emphasis on involvement of employers. All programs related to secondary VET in Croatia contain some form of WBL, during which students are supervised and mentored by teachers or in-company trainers. When it comes to curriculum design, the involvement of employers in defining learning outcomes for all types of WBL is mostly indirect. Based on analysis of examples of good practice in cooperation between schools and companies in mobility projects in Croatia, it can be concluded that certain aspects do imply potential for implementation of ECVET (joint efforts in the process of definition, validation and recognition of learning outcomes). Space for improvement has been identified in the segment of mutual trust (grading usually done jointly by a mentor from the receiving organization and a teacher from the sending institution), in order for the validation and recognition to be done fully in line with ECVET principles.

d) Creating new curriculum – NET – ENT, Networking for Entrepreneurship (*Rosana Pahor, School Center Nova Gorica, Slovenia*)

School centre Nova Gorica, Slovenia, has a long-standing practice of exchange pupils from several EU countries on Work Based Learning. Since the School centre has 6 schools, 36 different programs and more than 9 countries of exchange, its main challenges are: mutual understanding of NQF and EQF in different school systems; defining learning outcomes understandable in the school sphere and in companies, nationally and internationally, and recognition of knowledge acquired abroad. It wanted to solve this professionally and it now works on E+ K2 project - Networking for Entrepreneurship. One of the project goals is to design new interdisciplinary and international curriculum between partnership, taking into account ECVET principles. The project partnership will establish recognizable long-term cooperation. Pupils in the future can achieve the same knowledge, regardless of where they have passed the module – in Slovenia, Finland, Spain or United Kingdom. The project partners will actively include companies in the definition of learning outcomes.

Topic 3:

ECVET in in-company training: how employers can use ECVET tools in training of their employees. Overcoming the distaste of employers for new innovative systems.

a) Overcoming the Babylonian language barrier - ECVET tools in standard HR processes in companies (approaches, experiences and instruments), (*Georg Müllner, Auxilium, Austria*)

As an introduction into the problem background, the challenge of the Babylonian language dilemma was presented to visualise the issue of different languages between the world of education and the world of business. Based on short analysis of the reasons for this different language and thinking of these two worlds, the need was deduced for a better and clearer



understanding and the need for changing the system from a push of tools from education to the world of work into a pull situation of companies requiring and using education world tools in their processes. The “ECVET goes Business” project was presented as a solution. It is a two year Erasmus+ Strategic partnership project in VET which developed, based on an intense research, a handbook which describes ECVET and other European transparency instruments and their potential use in standard HR processes like personnel planning, staff recruitment, corporate training planning, internal career planning, leadership development, motivation of employees etc. The handbook is available in the languages EN, DE, IT, SI, HU and ES. Moreover, the project developed a concise 2 day training programme for HR managers, line managers, supervisors, job stewards etc. on how to use ECVET and other transparency instruments and tools in their daily HR work. More information on the project including the download of all outputs may be found on www.ecvetgoesbusiness.eu.

b) How to impart ECVET to the employee? The Austrian Federation of Trade Unions as a Multiplier: Obstacles - Possibilities – Objectives (*Ute Sonnleitner, ÖGB - Austrian Federation of Trade Unions*)

Austrian Federation of Trade Unions (ÖGB) as a member of the project “ECVET Goes Business” aims spreading ECVET-knowledge among employees. In order to do so a wide range of steps was set: the project and ECVET itself were presented in different media; Facebook-postings illustrated the project-work; reports on the homepage informed about intermediate results; reports in the “Solidarität” (membership magazine) accompanied the whole process; a conference and seminars were organised to inform employees about ECVET-basics.

One of the advantages of ÖGB as a multiplier may become an obstacle as well: various heterogeneous players have to be reached. But responses to the events that already took place were encouraging. Evaluation showed that attendants appreciated their newly gained knowledge and therefore may function as multipliers. The activities of ÖGB to impart ECVET – basing on the strategy to inform constantly on different levels and through different channels – will be continued.

c) Guidelines for employers for promoting the LO approach in the WBL (*Eszter Csepe-Bannert, CorEdu, Germany*)

Vocational teachers are more and more recognizing and using the learning outcomes (LO) approach in the transnational mobility. Following a simple formula of defining LOs according to *what, how, in which context and on which level the apprentice is able to do*, LOs become clear, transparent and assessable.

Employers play a crucial role in the transnational mobility as promoters of the WBL. To ensure the visibility and sustainability of LOs after the WBL took place, the competences have to be set, assessed, documented and recognized. Employers need simple solutions to reach these aims with the minimum effort.

As first, employers are asked to describe the activities the apprentice aims to carry out in the WBL. Afterwards, activities are transformed to LO by using the formula of defining LO (see above). Finally, the level of independency based on whether the apprentice is able to do the work *under supervision or independently in the same or also in different context* is determined and assessed.

d) University vs. industry OR University and industry - attracting companies to participate in Continuous Professional Development courses using ECVET elements (*Nowak Paweł, Warsaw University of Technology, Civil Engineering Faculty, Poland*)



EU funded projects realized at CEF WUT for over 20 years were (and still are) related to education of construction personnel, recognition of qualifications and facilitation of mobility. The standard procedures for the EU funded projects organization and sustainability is as follows: recognition of industry needs, curricula development, linguistic support, preparation of books/manuals; distance learning/ didactic materials preparation, creation of courses logistics and ECTS evaluation, organisation of training (pilot and after project's end); international recognition. CEF WUT always tries to have mixture of Partners: Universities (science, methodology); VET providers (logistics); Companies (practical aspects/training beneficiaries); Social Partners/non governmental bodies (opinions, policy, training dissemination). Continuous Professional Development is an important element of company life, related to Corporate Social Responsibility and company code of ethics. As a summary it is worth to mention that: co-operation of Universities and industry is necessary and can be useful for both parties; EU co-funded projects are the proper tool for development of modern formal and informal education: WBL, AR, distance learning; necessity for raising awareness of informal CPD training among companies. EU funded projects examples can be found in the presentation, which is available here: <http://www.erasmusplus.sk/ecvet/index.php?sw=12&log=0>.