ECVET Thematic Seminar: Tools for VET-learner mobility
3 and 4 October 2019, Brussels

Synthesis Report

The ECVET work programme 2019 included a 'Thematic Seminar' to discuss 'Tools for VET learner mobility'. The seminar took place in Brussels on 3 and 4 October 2019 and brought together 40 participants from 22 countries[1].

EU level policy updates related to ECVET

To kick off the discussions, the European Commission presented an EU level policy update.

Jan Varchola (Team leader at DG EMPL, Unit E3) welcomed the participants. He reminded them that the funding period of Erasmus+ will end in 2020. Regarding the new Erasmus programme, negotiations are proceeding well. Commission President-elect Ursula von der Leyen supports the idea of the European Parliament tripling the current Erasmus+ budget in the new funding period. However, the final decision has not yet been taken.

In his recent Parliament hearing, Commissioner-designate Nicolas Schmit from Luxembourg, highlighted the importance of VET for school-work transitions of young people, stressed the role of dual VET and work-based-learning, and the relevance of VET for labour market needs. He also recalled that wherever VET systems are strong, youth unemployment is low. The new funding period will put a focus on high quality VET, flexible learning pathways (possibly supported through individual learning accounts) and upskilling and reskilling of adults. Regarding ECVET, this means that all the topics addressed by ECVET are still very much in the focus.

In her mission letter to Commissioner-designate Schmit, Commission President-elect Ursula von der Leyen referred explicitly to the implementation and update of the Skills Agenda. An overarching policy framework for the area of VET and lifelong learning is currently discussed; going together with a joint governance structure and monitoring framework. This would be in line with stakeholders' views for the post-2020 period: Member States, social partners and others have called for a simplification and streamlining of tools already on earlier occasions.

In his welcoming words, **Koen Bois d'Enghien (DG EMPL, Unit E3)** summarised progress with ECVET implementation according to a recent study[2].

The following trends have been observed:

- An increase from 15 to 21 countries with unit-based or modular VET systems,
- An increase from 8 to 17 countries with credit systems, and
- Progress in the use of Learning Outcomes.

However, ECVET did not result in the development of a European credit system for VET (in the same way as ECTS for HE). This is a lesson to take on board for further development. According to the research, the main impact of ECVET is related to improving the VET learner

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[1] The following countries were represented: AT, BG, CY, CZ, EE, FI, FR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LV, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, TR and UK, as well as representatives from Cedefop, EfVET, the European Commission and the ECVET Secretariat.
[2] Study on EU VET instruments (EQAVET and ECVET), DG EMPL 2019.

mobility experience. The ECVET tools LA and MoU are used by almost all countries: 25 out of 28 countries are using these tools to support their mobility programmes.

Koen Bois d'Enghien further referred to the work undertaken by an ad hoc working group of the ACVT[3], to discuss options for the future of ECVET. In the first semester of 2019 the Working Group developed the following two options (which are not mutually exclusive):

- Option 1: develop ECVET as a tool supporting mobility to be mainstreamed in the new Erasmus Programme
- Option 2: Embed the functions of ECVET within other EU instruments: EQF, Europass, Erasmus programme, a possible overarching VET Recommendation

DG EMPL will further discuss with the Member States which options should be proposed as follow-up to the work that has been achieved already. However, it should be borne in mind that ECVET objectives and principles will remain relevant and it can be expected that these issues will be further discussed at EU level, independent of the 'form' that ECVET will have in the future.

Carlo Scatoli (DG EMPL, Unit E2) provided an overview on recent developments in the field of Validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL). He stated that the 2012 Council Recommendation is currently under evaluation and invited the participants to contribute to the ongoing 'Open consultation'-process.[4]

In general, it can be said already that compared to the situation in 2012, there is a lot of progress, but also still room for improvement. Not all Member States have a reasonable spectrum of validation opportunities available, in a few these are still very limited, or only on offer for a limited segment of the population. For example, in many countries, validation requires 1-2 years of prior work experience, which leaves out everyone who has gained skills through youth work, youth experience etc. While any further development will only start after the evaluation, it will certainly bring forward the current position that validation opportunities should be available to all and promote mainstreaming of validation into general lifelong learning policy. Validation developments at EU level would also take into account the link to individual learning accounts, though they do not exist in many countries yet.

Public Employment Services (PES) who are a major actor in career guidance, could also become a key stakeholder in validation – there is strong interest from the PES side as well as from the VET side to collaborate more closely.

Introduction to the topic

From the beginning, transnational learning mobility has been at the heart of ECVET. Whilst ECVET principles, such as the use of units of learning outcomes and mechanisms to facilitate transfer and recognition, in some cases extend to wider VET systems and provision, ECVET's greatest success has been in facilitating the design, development and implementation of vocational learning mobility.

Notably, however, the primary impact of ECVET has not been as an EU system for credit transfer - it never came to assume this function along the lines of the ECTS due (among other

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[3] Advisory Committee on Vocational Training
[4] Final beneficiaries of validation and other specialist audience (e.g. institutions involved or interested in VNIL) are invited to give feedback: https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/initiatives/ares-2018-5123386/public-consultation_en

things) to the diversity and heterogeneity of European VET systems. Rather, ECVET has been conducive to improving the quality in VET mobility; creating a common language for VET mobility practitioners; and the adoption of a common language (the learning outcomes approach) together with common tools and templates. Research[5] showed that according to stakeholders, the ECVET tools LA and MoU are frequently used. Sources to obtain them are the [ECVET toolkit website](), National Agencies, national websites and others – yet no precise numbers are available as the tools can be shared and copied offline as well.

Therefore, the key objective of the seminar was to discuss lessons learnt from ten years of using the ECVET tools for VET learner mobility (Learning Agreement (LA), Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), and Personal Transcript), to help DG EMPL gather information for further discussion of these options and other ideas.

The ACVT has lined out possible options for the further development of the ECVET mobility tools (transforming current tools into one VET mobility tool supporting the new Erasmus programme, use the functions of ECVET within other EU instruments like Europass). Moreover, there are other aspects to consider, e.g. an expansion of the use of European mobility tools to mobility programmes that use other funding sources than the Erasmus programme and a possible digitalisation of the workflow. Consequently, the seminar focused on four main topics:

1. Similarities and differences across several Learning Agreement templates in use;
2. The requirements of a Learning Agreement template for the use in mobility outside of Erasmus+;
3. Digitalised workflow: Erasmus without paper in VET;
4. The new Europass, and how it can potentially support VET learner mobility.

Discussion and key messages from the Thematic Seminar

Key messages from the discussions related to each of the four topics are presented below.

1. Similarities and differences across several Learning Agreement templates

The Learning Agreement

The ECVET Recommendation states that … '*For applying credit transfer involving two partners and a specific mobile learner, a learning agreement is concluded by the two competent institutions involved in the training and validation process and the learner, in the framework of an MoU. It should:*

- *distinguish between competent 'home' and 'hosting' institutions*
- *specify the particular conditions for a period of mobility, such as the identity of the learner, the duration of the mobility period, learning outcomes expected to be achieved and the associated ECVET points.*

The learning agreement should lay down that, if the learner has achieved the expected learning outcomes and these have been positively assessed by the 'hosting' institution, the 'home' institution should validate and recognise them as part of the requirements for a qualification, according to the rules and procedures established by the competent institution.'

The European templates for the Learning Agreement and the Memorandum of Understanding were launched in 2013, however similar predecessor templates exist for almost two decades

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[5] European Commission/Directorate General of Employment and Social Affairs: Study on VET Instruments (EQAVET and ECVET). Final report. Luxembourg, 2019

already. Now, six years on, what are the experiences? Are the templates broadly used, and are they still fit for purpose? These key questions were up for discussion.

It quickly emerged that the Learning Agreement template is indeed broadly used and generally considered indispensable. However, practice shows that the core European templates are used as a starting point that is adapted for specific purposes. The first in-depth discussions therefore evolved around similarities and differences between the different templates. What types of amendments are being made and what do they show? Are they pointing out certain gaps and shortcomings in the templates?

In several sub-groups, the participants worked together to add information about their own templates to the comparative analysis that was provided by the background paper.[6] Ten additional templates were added to the analysis. As per their content, the picture below shows that the different Learning Agreement templates used across the different participants cover a lot of common ground. In line with the ECVET Recommendation, the templates provide information about

- the learner
- home and host institution
- duration of mobility
- targeted learning outcomes, and
- assessment and monitoring of the learning.

Almost all templates are signed by the participating parties (including employers, in case of apprenticeships or work placements). The examples discussed showed variations, e.g. as to whether any intermediary organisations would also sign. Many, but not all templates lay out the preconditions of validation and recognition. As not all countries work with credit points (or are able to compare their national credits to use used in other countries), credit points are not often covered by the templates. An important difference was also made between short-term and long-term mobility. For short-term mobilities of two to four weeks, the Learning Agreement is seen difficult to fill in, as it is not easy to anticipate a set of Learning Outcomes that can be achieved in such a short period. For longer-term mobility, completing a Learning Agreement is quite work-intensive, especially the sections on assessment, validation and recognition. Yet in the context of long-term mobility it becomes even more important to ensure that credit transfer can take place, as a period of absence for 3-6 months' time cannot be compensated easily upon return.

Participants also pointed out that VET mobility is a tool to promote VET as a high-quality learning pathway. Therefore, learning mobility should be as easy as possible for the parties involved. When using Erasmus funding, there are many administrative requirements, and many documents, which can make the process onerous. VET learners are often of young age, they request simpler tools. Any further developments should try to find a way to reduce the workload, e.g. through a further integration. Some potential was seen in merging the ECVET and Erasmus+ Learning Agreement. In some cases, additional information is provided, such as clarifications on the (units of) learning outcomes, quality criteria or personal responsibilities during the mobility period.

The two pictures below show the Learning Agreement comparative matrix as completed by two discussion groups.

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[6] Cf. http://www.ecvet-secretariat.eu/en/training-and-events/3-4-october-thematic-seminar-tools-vet-learner-mobility-brussels-belgium

Group 1

CONTENT	ECVET LA Template (VET)	LA Template (HE)	DECVIP Project	EURIAC Project	Vocational Training Worldwide	ÜLLE ESTONIA	Pernilla Sweden	ISABEL TEUBER GONZALEZ	AGATA POLAND	HASAN ORHAN TURKEY	Cilia Nunes Portugal
1. Information about the Participants (home-host-learner)	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	X	X	X	X	X	X
2. Duration/Timing of Mobility	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	X	X	X	X	X	X
3. Existing Qualification / Components	❖	❖	❖				X	X	X	X	X
4. Targeted Units / LOs / Components	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	X	X		X	X	X
5. Assessment / Monitoring	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	X	X	X	X	X	X
6. Validation / Recognition / Credits	❖	❖	❖		❖		X	X	X	X	X
7. Signatures	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	X	X		X	X	X
8. Additional Information (e.g. language)	❖	❖	❖						X	X	X
9. Annexes	❖		❖		❖	X		X	X	X	X
10. Amendments to Learning Objectives		❖							X		
11. Achievement of Learning Objectives		❖					X	X	X		

Quality criteria from other Quality Commitment

Responsibilities (Before / During / After Mob)

Group 2

CONTENT	ECVET LA Template (VET)	LA Template (HE)	DECVIP Project	EURIAC Project	Vocational Training Worldwide	FINLAND	Austria FD	ICELAND IS	NL
1. Information about the Participants (home-host-learner)	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	X	X	X	X
2. Duration/Timing of Mobility	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	X	X	X	X
3. Existing Qualification / Components	❖	❖	❖			X	X	X	X
4. Targeted Units / LOs / Components	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	X	X	X	+ program tasks X
5. Assessment / Monitoring	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	(X)	respons. (X)	X	X
6. Validation / Recognition / Credits	❖	❖	❖		❖	(X)	(X)	X	X
7. Signatures	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	X	X	X	On 1 page X
8. Additional Information (e.g. language)	❖	❖	❖			X	special requis. etc X	literacy X (facts) X qual. skills	personal language skills X
9. Annexes	❖		❖		❖	ex a LO	logbook X	X	X
10. Amendments to Learning Objectives		❖							
11. Achievement of Learning Objectives		❖							Quality commitment X as annex
12.									

As a conclusion from the discussions it can be said that, while the Learning Agreement template was considered to be indispensable for VET learner mobility, users must solve a

couple of practical dilemmas. Depending on their context, they have to take decisions on seven aspects that will have an impact on the form they want to use:

1. **Purpose of the LA: Pedagogical and/or administrative?** While some providers use the LA as a purely administrative tool, others also consider it useful for pedagogical purposes, e.g. to help define the monitoring and assessment process.
2. **Target group: Education professionals vs. non-education professionals?** Many practitioners stated that the templates would need to be drafted differently for different target groups. Education professionals use different language and need different information than non-education professionals (learners, employers, and parents).
3. **Nature of mobility: School stays vs. work placements**? Employers play a crucial role for work placements. Experience shows that learning outcomes need to be formulated in terms of work tasks to be understandable for them.
4. **Learning environment: Dedicated vs. non-dedicated (how much control do you have over the learning process in an enterprise?)** A certain flexibility is needed as companies' operational procedures cannot be adapted to the needs of learner mobility. Hence alternatives need to be clear, to make sure certain learning outcomes can be achieved.
5. **Duration: Short-term vs. long-term?** Long-duration mobility and short duration mobility are following a different logic. While short-duration mobility often places a lot of emphasis on transversal skills or language skills, long-duration mobility clearly focuses on learning outcomes related to a profession/qualification.
6. **Rationale: Recognition of required LO in the context of the national qualification vs. added value**? Some mobility projects do not focus on learning outcomes that are part of the qualification or VET course. They rather aim to provide an added value for the learner in terms of experiences they could not have made at home.
7. **Outcomes: intended outcomes vs. non-intended outcomes.** Some mobility projects bring about 'unexpected' outcomes, as learners seized certain ad-hoc learning opportunities that presented themselves on site. While such opportunities cannot be foreseen, planned, and described in the LA, there should be enough flexibility nonetheless to validate and recognise them upon return.

What emerges from the discussions is that while on one hand, practitioners call for simplification, there is also a need for target-group specific information. Hence it can be concluded that it is difficult to develop a one-size-fits-all template – adaptations depending on the context are almost unavoidable and will need to be factored in.

2. Requirements of a Learning Agreement template for the use in mobility outside of Erasmus+

The ECVET tools and templates have predominantly been used in the context of the Erasmus+ programme. Yet, VET mobility is clearly more than those activities financed through the Erasmus+ programme, with an undergrowth of schemes and initiatives that promote cross-border VET-mobility at national, bi-national and multinational level. Relatively few of these schemes make use of ECVET tools and templates. One case from Finland was mentioned, where providers use ECVET tools for mobility with third countries (Asia, Canada), because in these cases solid Quality Assurance is needed, in particular when setting up new partnerships.

Arguably, non-Erasmus+ mobility promoters might simply be unaware of the existence of the ECVET tools, but this may only be part of the explanation. Particular projects may also have developed their own procedures and templates for assessment, recognition and validation, or they may operate in contexts (e.g. company internal mobility) where this is not considered a major issue.

Enhanced flexibility of the ECVET templates (Learning Agreement template and Memorandum of Understanding) could theoretically help to enhance their use in a context outside of Erasmus+. However, this may need to be further explored. A comparative analysis of wider tools and templates, including those used in other fields of educational activity (e.g. higher education) and those developed by frontline VET mobility practitioners operating within and beyond Erasmus+, might provide useful indications in this respect.

At the seminar, participants discussed tools and templates across broader user perspectives and landscapes, confirming those elements which are perceived to be necessary (=core) and other elements which are "nice to have" (=more).

It emerged from the discussions that

- In some countries, VET learner mobility outside of Erasmus+ plays a very marginal role, and any investment in that sector would need to be carefully examined as to its benefits;
- So far this has not been reported as an issue by practitioners;
- Some mobility programmes outside of Erasmus+ come with their own requirement of using programme-specific tools and templates, so there is a risk of duplicating work;
- The development of one integrated (digital) VET mobility tool supporting the new Erasmus programme would potentially make life easier for Erasmus mobility, but would probably not be accessible for mobility stakeholders outside Erasmus.

3. Digitalised workflow: Erasmus without paper in VET

The ECVET Recommendation was adopted in 2009. Consequently, the ECVET tools were also developed about a decade ago. Since then, technology has significantly advanced: practitioners and users have called for improvements regarding digitalisation.

To discuss this aspect, it might be useful to distinguish between digitisation (process of converting information into a digital format) and digitalisation (transformation of work processes as a consequence of digitisation).

For example, it could be argued that by having the templates available for download is digitisation yet there are many degrees of sophistication in digitisation. Digitalisation, on the other hand, would in its ultimate form mean that all necessary documentation can be accessed - and all administrative procedures handled - from a single electronic platform. Digitised data would allow for automatic transfer between documents and would ease any updating or review processes. Within the context of past mobility programmes and initiatives (most notably, the Lifelong Learning Programme and Erasmus+), systems and procedures have undergone digitalisation through introducing electronic platforms for application and reporting and through allowing for data transfer therein. However, when it comes to the different steps in delivering VET mobility (i.e. before, during and after mobility), significantly less progress has been made.

Harpa Sif Arnarsdottir, European Commission DG EAC, presented the state of play related to the **European Student Card Initiative in Higher Education**. This initiative has two core objectives: to digitise and streamline student mobility administration processes both for students and staff; and to roll out the 'European Student Card', a pilot project finalised in 2018, funded by the French National Agency.

The European Student Card Initiative circumscribes a set of four different projects, which are being brought together to create a single-entry point for students and mobility coordinators for various matters related to student mobility, including electronic applications and nominations, but also support for arriving on campus. These four projects all started out as bottom-up initiatives, launched by universities:

- **Erasmus Without Paper:** digitising administrative processes, secure data transfer between higher education institutions, and single-entry point for administrators
- **Erasmus+ Mobile App:** single entry point for students
- **MyAcademicID:** developing unique student identity numbers and secure online authentication services
- **European Student Card:** turning existing student cards into European Student Cards

One of the key features of this new single-entry point for mobility coordinators will be that it allows automatic export of data to Mobility Tool+. Furthermore, it will be able to manage inter-institutional agreements and online learning agreements, as well as nominations and transcript of records. The initiative also cooperates with the Europass initiative dedicated to digitally signed credentials.

The existing Erasmus+ Mobile App is being redeveloped (for relaunch end of 2021) as a single-entry point for students, intended to take students through their mobility experience in a step-by-step approach. It will allow students to manage their online learning agreements and host the Virtual European Student Card on mobile device, but will also provide a number of additional services, such as: online information and services for students before, during and after their mobilities; access to online linguistic support, research for partnering universities and courses. While the app is owned by the European Commission, data ownership will remain with the users, and data remains stored with the universities.

Erasmus Without Paper (EWP) seeks to facilitate the secure transfer of data between home and host universities and students. Universities can connect to it either through their in-house mobility management system, through a third-party provider, or through the free EWP Dashboard. Students can connect to it through the Erasmus+ Mobile App and its associated web-responsive websites. The use of EWP data transfer will be mandatory for the next Erasmus programming period starting in 2021. With already more than 1,000 universities using elements of the Erasmus Without Papers system, it is quickly progressing from its concept phase to a full roll out across Europe.

This state of play presentations was met with high interest from participants of the seminar. While the initiative currently focuses on the Higher Education sector only, participants expressed the hope that it will provide impetus for similar developments in vocational education and training.

Guillaume Jagle, European Commission DG EAC, provided a brief update on the ongoing work related to updating the **Erasmus+ Learning Agreement template**. With the project being in early stage of conception, it was not possible to share specific plans or specifications with the group yet. However, the European Commission expressed a clear need for simplification, digitalisation and modernisation of the template. Digitalisation entails a re-thinking of the entire process, and definitely must go beyond providing a template in digital format. The template will also have to be adapted to the new Erasmus programme (as of 2021). Flexibility and ease of use are key aspects to take into account in this work.

To inspire the discussion, it will be interesting to look at 'trailblazer' projects implemented at national level or through international collaboration. These projects have piloted innovative digital solutions for VET learner mobility using ECVET, including a digital workflow.

Two examples -EURspace and VETExpress- were presented at the seminar.

Using digital tools for VET learner mobility: Project examples

As the first of two examples of digital platforms for VET mobility, the European Initial Vocational Training Recognition Gateway (EURspace) platform was delivered, in 2018, following three years of Erasmus+ funding and involving eight partners from seven European countries. Recognising the importance of VET without borders, and the contribution of mobility opportunities in the delivery of modern VET programmes, partners worked together to develop, test and deliver a methodological framework and digital platform for VET mobility practitioners.

Methodologically-speaking, EURspace worked to deliver a series of guidelines and tools through which both theoretical understanding and the practical delivery of future mobility programmes could be enhanced. The resultant platform provides guides in which ECVET and its principles are introduced to key beneficiary audiences (learners; professionals) as well as a dedicated pedagogical resource for those involved in defining, grouping and managing learning outcomes, as part of a mobility programme, as well as processes centred on facilitating learning recognition. The concept of a matching matrix was also introduced as a means of identifying and mapping learning outcomes across different programmes and qualifications and registered organisations have the option of full registration to facilitate future exchanges. EURspace clearly demonstrates the value of digital technology in helping to build knowledge and understanding of the key principles of ECVET, as well as capacity for delivering future VET mobility programmes, yet represents only the first step towards full digital reliance, having a focus on tools and templates rather than full systems-level digitalisation.

As the second example of digital platforms for VET mobility, the Express VET Mobility Database and Guides for ECVET Cluster of Countries (VETExpress) platform was delivered, in 2019, with a view to promoting the value of ECVET and its principles as well as facilitating the process of delivering VET mobility programmes. Bringing together seven partners from four countries, under the coordination of the Turkish Ministry of National Education, and involving partners at different stages of readiness in terms of adopting and facilitating the use of ECVET, ambitions centred on the delivery of a series of intellectual outputs, including guides, templates policy papers and a digital mobility platform.

Beyond promoting the principles and benefits of ECVET, the digital platform provides a partner search function, as well as a means of preparing and signing core documents, such as the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and Learning Agreement (LA), and recording progress in the signing and upload of all such documents. A step-by-step process is prompted, which positively reflects the core steps required to be followed by those delivering a VET mobility programme, relying on partner identification, MoU signing, the assignment of learners and mobility flows and steps towards learning evaluation or assessment. The digitisation of core documents, including the use of electronic (scanned) signatures, and the use of a digital process to prompt, initiate, host and monitor the use of these documents confirms the inherent value of the VETExpress digital platform. Whilst not achieving full digital exchange, in which data on (targeted and achieved) learning outcomes is passed from one phase of mobility to the next, the VETExpress is a positive example of digitalisation of mobility processes, confirming the potential of digital technologies for the delivery of VET mobility programmes in the future.

There was a general agreement that a digitalised workflow is a 'natural' next step for VET learner mobility, especially as the VET-sector seems to be lagging behind the Higher Education

Sector, where Erasmus without paper has already been introduced. Therefore, a digital mobility platform would be a good idea, in particular to ensure data transfer between the various documents (e.g. MoU, LA and PT), as this will save a lot of time. Moreover, data storage needs to move on from physical storage to electronic storage. A representative of a VET college reported that they have 500 learners going on work placement each year. If MoUs and LA need to be stored as original documents for each learner, these are several thousand pages of paper per year. An option for electronic signatures is therefore a must.

The **key messages** from the discussions can be summarised as follows:

■ Practice shows that the ECVET tools facilitate good communication between sending and hosting organisation. While the use of the documents could be simplified and made more user-friendly, it should be noted that they have an important function which should not be diminished in the process.

■ Currently, there is a lot of paperwork involved in organising and implementing a mobility project, and alone for this reason, digitalisation is a worthwhile investment. ECVET components like the MoU and the LA could be integrated into a more comprehensive mobility Tool used for Erasmus+ projects. However, such a solution should also cover the [Online Linguistic Support (OLS)](), as this is used in the assessment of improvements in foreign language proficiency during the stay abroad.

■ ECVET has always claimed that it puts the learner in the centre. All efforts made have the aim to support learners in achieving their goals. Yet, in practice, students are not always aware of the intended learning outcomes related to the mobility period. If student cannot see a connection between the mobility and their study programme, then this is a problem. The Learning Agreement can help in this regard, especially if the learner 'owns' the LA. This can be achieved by involving students in the process of completing the LA, ensuring they understand the content and the learning outcomes. A situation must be avoided where they just receive the LA in an envelope with the request to have it signed by their parents and the host institution.

■ In the current Erasmus+ funding period, the use of the ECVET tools and templates is just a suggestion. As using ECVET for mobility helps to ensure the quality of mobility, it would be useful to make the use obligatory in the new funding period.

■ Technically, it is perfectly feasible to construct a digital platform for mobility, but in any digital solution, usability and interoperability must be the paramount concerns – it should serve to make life easier for the users. However, we also need to be conscious of the fact that we cannot rely entirely on devices – the procedures of assessment, validation and recognition still need to be closely monitored, and quality must be maintained at all times. If digitalisation comes at the cost of this, it is not a positive development, even if it saves time and paper.

■ We must include a GDPR-perspective into every step of the process. In some countries, there are costs for the user related to electronic signatures. There are, however, other ways of protecting data and living up to the demands of the GDPR (e.g. by the use of passwords). Electronic signatures should therefore not be the main issue in the discussion about digital platforms.

4. The new Europass and how it can potentially support VET learner mobility

As previous discussions (for instance, at an ECVET PLA 2016 in Cyprus) have shown, Europass mobility and ECVET are already quite often used together. As no European template for the Personal Transcript exists, many projects and initiatives have tested the use of

Europass mobility for the purpose of documenting learning outcomes from mobility. Other initiatives have developed ways of linking the tools. An example from the Czech Republic was presented.

> **Linking ECVET documents and Europass documents: The Green Wheels project**
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> Green Wheels is a Sector Skills Alliance project that addresses the challenge that many secondary VET schools are not sufficiently prepared for one of the key trends in the automotive industry: electromobility, i.e. the production and development of electric vehicles. 14 partner organisations from four countries (CZ, SK, HU, UK) cooperate in the Green Wheels project, which is set to be finalised by end October.
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> Green Wheels provides VET schools with a set of innovative teaching, methodological and training materials for maintenance, servicing and repair of electric and hybrid vehicles. These tools have been developed based on ECVET principles; units and related materials were pilot-tested in partner schools.
>
> A set of seven units of learning outcomes (each complemented by a set of assessment criteria) related to maintenance, servicing and repair of electric and hybrid vehicles form the core of the project outputs. Further outputs include 82 student worksheets and methodological guidelines for teachers that are directly linked with the units of learning outcomes. Furthermore, the partnership has developed 15 educational videos related to these student worksheets.
>
> Green Wheels has made use of the templates for Memorandum of Understanding and Learning Agreement. For the documentation purposes, both a Personal Transcript and Europass Mobility are used. While the benefits of Europass Mobility are acknowledged, its section 'Skills acquired during the mobility experience' was not considered very well suited for documenting the learning outcomes from mobility, hence the development of a separate Personal Transcript template.

As shown by the example of the Green Wheel project, many ECVET users currently utilise both Europass and the ECVET Personal Transcript. Obviously, a streamlining of templates would ease the workload for mobility providers. Yet it is an open question whether and how the new Europass platform lends itself to fulfil the functions now performed by the ECVET Personal Transcript. For instance, among young learners Europass Mobility is often perceived as too complex, if they are asked to complete it by themselves they are rather overwhelmed.

Koen Nomden, European Commission **(DG EMPL, Unit E2)** presented the ongoing developments related to the implementation of the 2018 Europass Decision, which replaces the repealed Europass Decision dating back to 2004. The new Europass platform (to be launched in spring 2020) is set up in a much broader way and is understood as **a tool for lifelong learning and career management**. It consists of three main elements:

■ **Digitally-Signed Credentials** are a key feature of the new Europass. A Europass learning credential states that that the owner has certain skills or has achieved certain learning outcomes through formal, non-formal or informal learning. A digital signature (e-Seal) guarantees the origin and integrity of the document. A Digital Credential consists of four components: information about metadata (data about the credential), issuer, subject (e.g. claims related to activities, assessment, achievement of a person) and an e-Seal. The e-Seal, i.e. digital signature, guarantees the origin, integrity and authenticity of the document. Digital Credential may include qualification awards, Europass Supplements, Certificates of Attendance, Certificates of Enrolment, Letters of Recommendation, Transcripts of Records

and Professional Licences. The infrastructure is set up in a flexible way, to allow for stacking and combining credentials and concepts, and to open to any credential which arises form formal, non-formal or informal learning achievements. Piloting of the Digital Credentials with Member States will take place until the end of 2020, with phase 1 of the Digital Credentials to be launched in April 2020.

- **E-Portfolio:** To make full use of the new portal, users can create a user account and develop their personal e-portfolio. However, they may continue to build their CV without an account too.

- **Information related to skills and qualifications:** The Europass platform will contain reliable and transparent information on education, training, learning opportunities and skills needs. In this sense, the new Europass portal will bring together information currently stored in different locations.

One of the key transversal features of the new Europass is **interoperability**. Based on interoperability with EURES (EURopean Employment Services), Europass can be used for job matching, making use of the ESCO classification, i.e. allowing users to get job offers through Europass. The European Commission has recently started a piloting phase for the new Europass e-portfolio, with 16 countries on board.

With the Digital Credentials too, interoperability is a key aspect. The system is designed in a way that any system which stores student data can be coded to export its data as Europass xml, and be fully compatible across the Europass 'ecosystem'. For the development of Digital Credentials, Europass makes use of CEF (Connecting Europe Facility) building blocks for digital credentials (e-Sign, eID), with the support of CNECT & DIGIT entities within the European Commission. Much emphasis is placed on secure mechanisms for verification of identity and authenticity.

While the Decision does not include a reference to current key Europass documents (such as Europass Mobility, Certificate Supplement and Diploma Supplement), they continue to remain key elements of the initiative. **Europass Mobility** is not in the focus in the current phase of implementation of the new Europass. However, there is an ongoing working group of National Europass Centres focusing on the Europass Mobility, which is due to present its results in late November. While learning mobility is not in the focus of current Europass developments, it would certainly be possible to consider its integration in the Digital Credentials at a later stage.

There is a newly set up Europass Advisory Group to accompany the implementation process. It includes representatives from Member States, social partners, VET providers and civil society. At national level, National Europass Centres will support the implementation. There is close coordination with the European Student Card initiative.

Many participants found that the information in the credentials seems similar to the information currently contained in a Learning Agreement, incl. validation/recognition by a competent institution. Therefore the participants agreed that these modernisations constitute a significant improvement for Europass in the context of its potential use for VET learner mobility. Collaboration with Erasmus Without Paper should be continued in view of VET learner mobility.

However, there is still a need for tools and templates to support the organisation of the mobility process. As discussed, ECVET has proven to have an added value in streamlining and quality assuring the process before, during and after mobility, and clarify the roles of the participating individuals and organisations. As this requirement remains, interoperability between mobility process tools and tools used for the documentation of outcomes should be ensured.

Next steps

The results from the seminar are valuable contributions to feed into ongoing discussions at DG EMPL on tools and templates supporting mobility to the new Erasmus programme (as of 2021). Moreover, the discussions brought up many interesting points that will help to ensure that the new Europass platform is equally interesting for persons with VET skills as it is for persons with Higher Education qualifications.

Note: The presentations held at the event are available on the ECVET Secretariat webpage, together with further information material (background paper, Agenda, etc.)