



ATTRACT-VET

## O1 – Good Practices @Catalogue on EQF-ECVET-EQAVET

*Executive Summary*

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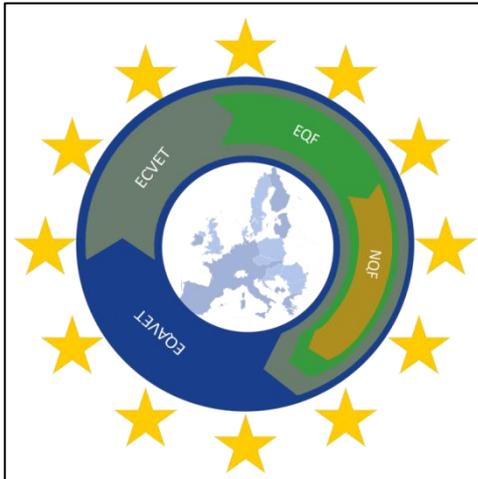


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## Introduction



This document acts as an Executive Summary to the Good Practices @Catalogue on EQF-ECVET-EQAVET. The Catalogue is the first Intellectual Output to be produced for the Erasmus+ project, “Practical implementation of main transparency tools – EQF, ECVET, EQAVET – in European VET organisations” [Acronym: ATTRACT-VET]. The ATTRACT-VET project aims to develop a new, innovative and multidisciplinary approach in order to empower VET providers across Europe to use the existing European transparency tools. It is envisaged that by the end of this project, European VET providers and tutors will be better equipped and informed to use these transparency tools for qualification (EQF), for attributing credits to VET learners (ECVET) and for quality assurance standards in the provision of VET (EQAVET).

ATTRACT VET project partners are currently working towards achieving these aims in order to modernise and improve the level of quality, excellence and attractiveness of Europe’s VET organisations to European learners and so to enhance the European mobility of skilled labour force. The ATTRACT VET project, which has been funded directly by the Swedish National Agency through the Erasmus+ Programme and is being developed and delivered by a consortium of partner organisations from Austria, Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Portugal and Sweden. The project will run until August 2017.

This output, the ‘O1 – Good Practices @Catalogue on EQF-ECVET-EQAVET’, acts as a handbook for all project consortium members to ensure that each partner and their respective local stakeholders involved in the implementation of the project, are aware of, and will become familiar with, the European tools which promote the qualification, transferability and quality of



vocational and further education across all EU Member States. The Catalogue will act as the basis for the development of subsequent Outputs, namely the (O3) ATTRACT-VET ECVET Curriculum and Toolkit, the (O4) ATTRACT-VET Training Programme and (O5) the ATTRACT-VET Operational Guidelines for Practical Implementation in European VET Organisations.

To produce this Catalogue document, a research process was undertaken by each project partner to gather information and gain an understanding of their National Qualifications Framework, and the use of the following transparency instruments in their countries; EQF, ECVET and EQAVET. The scope of the individual research reports aimed to provide an account of the use of these instruments in each of the following partner countries; namely, Austria, Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Portugal and Sweden. The Catalogue provides an overview of these findings. This Executive Summary provides a brief overview of the main discussion points from the Catalogue desk-based research process.

## European Qualifications Framework (EQF)



The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) “*is a common European reference framework which links countries' qualifications systems together, acting as a translation device to make qualifications more readable and understandable across different countries and systems in Europe*” (European Commission, 2008). It is a translation tool that helps communication and comparison between qualifications systems in Europe.

The EQF was established to support one of the primary goals of the European Union; the free movement of people in Europe. The interpretation and recognition of diplomas and certificates issued in the different national education and training systems of the 28 Member States of the EU acted as a barrier to achieving this goal. For this reason, the EU developed a translation device to make national qualifications more readable in order to promote workers' and



learners' mobility and facilitate their lifelong learning across Europe. This is the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (European Commission, 2016).

Implementing the EQF requires that all qualifications that are related to the EQF, via national qualifications frameworks, are described in terms of learning outcomes. All participating countries - Member States, candidate countries and Liechtenstein and Norway - are voluntarily developing or implementing their own National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) based on learning outcomes.

### **Implementing the EQF on a national and EU level**

When implementing Education and Training 2020 countries identify how the national qualifications levels relate to the eight European reference levels of the EQF. This is done through a national referencing process, which is based on a set of criteria agreed at European level. Following extensive national consultations with stakeholders, countries present the results of this referencing process to the EQF Advisory Group and publish their referencing report on the European Commission's portal (European Commission, 2016).

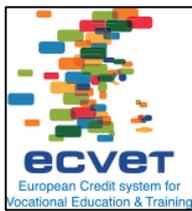
As well as being a framework or series of frameworks, the European Qualification Framework offers a wide range of transparency instruments, supporting tools and initiatives that all aim to foster the mobility of people and facilitate the comparability of skills, knowledge and competences. These tools include ECVET and EQAVET which will also be introduced; but they also include the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), Europass, Euroguidance, and a range of other tools aimed at enhancing the mobility of a wide cohort of people. It is important to stress, that while there are a range of tools and resources which target different people with different skills from different countries, and aims to allow them to travel, study and work freely across Europe, the European Qualifications Framework is the blueprint for the development of these tools. It is the primary reference tool for education in Europe as it represents all levels of education in all countries which use it. It is the fulcrum for relating qualifications



across countries borders, and therefore, it is perhaps the most important and most commonly utilised of these tools which partners should familiarise themselves with.

From the seven partner countries where the research process was implemented, Portugal, Latvia and Ireland have fully implemented their National Qualification Frameworks. While the National Qualification Framework structure has only been fully implemented in Latvia, Ireland and Portugal, the European Qualification Framework has been recognised by 38 countries in total, and work is underway in all other partner countries to develop a National Qualification Framework in reference to the EQF. Additional information on the implementation of NQFs in each of the partner countries can be viewed from pages 13 to 21 of the Catalogue.

## European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training



The European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) helps individuals who are trying to acquire a VET qualification to move between countries and gain access to lifelong learning. It does so by making it easier to transfer, to have recognised and to accumulate assessed learning outcomes (CEDEFOP, 2015).

ECVET achieves this transfer and recognition of VET by describing units of learning outcomes as parts of qualifications that can be assessed and validated. It gives an indication of the size of units and qualifications in ECVET points. ECVET also offers a framework for making learners more mobile and qualifications more portable. It does so by laying down principles and technical specifications and by making use of existing national legislation and regulations.

The central criteria to assess and validate skills, competences and qualifications are an individual's learning outcomes. Learners get credit points for their learning outcomes which can be transferred from one qualifications system to another and can also be accumulated over time, in different countries or in



different situations. The system allows the possibility to develop common references for VET qualifications and is fully compatible with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS).

## Understanding ECVET Learning Outcomes, Points and Credits

### ❖ Learning Outcomes in ECVET

To implement ECVET it is necessary that qualifications are described using learning outcomes. Learning outcomes can then be grouped to create *units*. *A unit is a component of a qualification, consisting of a coherent set of knowledge, skills and competence that can be assessed and validated.* Assessed learning outcomes constitute credit; credit is the basis for enabling the transfer between learning contexts and for the accumulation of learning outcomes. In ECVET, learning outcomes are used as a basis for credit transfer and accumulation.

### ❖ ECVET Points

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. Together with the descriptions of learning outcomes and information about the level of qualifications, ECVET points can support the understanding of a qualification. The number of ECVET points allocated to a qualification, together with other specifications, can indicate for example, that the scope of the qualification is narrow or broad.

### ❖ ECVET Credits, Credit Transfer and Accumulation

Credit for learning outcomes (i.e. credit) designates individuals' learning outcomes which have been assessed and which can be accumulated towards a qualification or transferred to other learning programmes or qualifications. Credit refers to the fact that the learner has achieved the expected learning outcomes which have been assessed positively and the outcome of the assessment was documented in a personal transcript. Based on this documentation, other institutions can recognise learners' credit. Credit is a different concept than ECVET points.



### **Implementation of ECVET Structure in the EU**

Depending on education and national priorities the implementation of ECVET in EU Member States fulfils different purposes. In many countries ECVET acts as an aid or guide to defining and documenting learning which takes place in an exchange or as part of a period of study spent abroad, whereas in other countries ECVET is being used as a tool to reform the vocational education and training system, by benchmarking awards and qualifications to the ECVET framework. Despite the different approaches taken to ECVET across the project consortium, the implementation of ECVET is still relatively underdeveloped.

Across Europe, only fifteen education and training systems have already set up an ECVET national coordination point (NCP) and officially appointed an institution. In nine additional systems, the mandate is still pending, although an organisation has already been selected and in some cases proposed to relevant ministries for official mandating. This is the case in the following countries and regions: Belgium/Wallonia, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Spain, Italy, Latvia, Austria, Poland, and Sweden. Eight systems have so far not taken any official decision to implement the ECVET or to introduce VET policy which is benchmarked to ECVET; these include: Belgium/Flanders, Denmark, France, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Romania, and Slovakia.

For more information on the adoption of the ECVET model to VET systems in the ATTRACT-VET partner countries, please view pages 31 to 37 of the Catalogue. Case studies of pilot projects and best practices associated with the implementation of ECVET across the consortium are also presented in the Catalogue.



## European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training



The EU Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) tool is based on the 2009 Recommendation from the European Parliament and Council. The Recommendation invites Member States to use a series of indicative descriptors and indicators to support and develop their VET systems. This tool provides guidance on how to develop a quality assurance system and contains examples of different approaches used by Member States.

EQAVET (European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training) is a European Quality Assurance Framework for vocational training. EQAVET adopted by EU member states in June 2009. The framework is based on a cycle of quality assurance and improvement that consists of four phases;

1. planning
2. implementation
3. assessment and evaluation
4. review and revision

EQAVET includes a range of indicators which are intended to support the evaluation and quality improvement of a country's vocational training. The indicators can also be used at regional and local level and should be used as a "toolbox" from which users can select the indicators that are considered most relevant to their quality assurance systems. The framework can also be connected to other European tools EQF and ECVET.

When developing the learning resources to up-skill VET professionals in the use and implementation of EQAVET, it could be useful for partner organisations to review and analyse the quality indicators for VET provision which are currently in use in all partner countries. For this reason, these indicators have been presented in the Catalogue (pages 58 to 65), for each partner country.



## Conclusions and Recommendations

The aim of the Catalogue is to guarantee that all partners and stakeholders involved in delivering the ATTRACT-VET project will have a similar understanding of the European mobility tools, EQF, ECVET and EQAVET; and are better informed and able to understand the various strategies being employed across Europe to implement these tools. The purpose of the Catalogue document is to introduce the basic definitions and characteristics of these tools, to discuss the stages at which all partner countries are implementing these tools and to identify certain challenges which have been faced during this implementation phase.

The Catalogue acts as a guide to partners and stakeholders and will inform the subsequent development of the ATTRACT-VET Curriculum and Toolkit. As such, it is important to reflect on the content of the Catalogue and to identify certain points which partners should keep in mind when developing the content of the Training Programme, Curriculum and Toolkit.

1. While there are a range of tools and resources which target different people with different skills from different countries, and aims to allow them to travel, study and work freely across Europe, the European Qualifications Framework is the blueprint for the development of these tools. It is the primary reference tool for education in Europe as it represents all levels of education in all countries which use it. It is, therefore, perhaps the most important and most commonly utilised of these tools. It is important to stress this point when promoting the use of EQF in the curriculum.
2. The most important principle of the EQF is the learning outcomes approach. The learning outcomes approach shifts focus to what knowledge, skills and competences the learner has acquired by the end of the learning process. Based on the EQF, all levels of education in Europe are shifting to a learning outcomes approach. This will help the tutors completing the training programme and using the toolkit and curriculum to understand the importance of the EQF and the learning outcomes.



3. ECVET is a new enough tool for VET providers and practitioners across Europe. It is only in an early stage of implementation across Europe, and as such, it is important to understand that VET tutors may be sceptical of it when it is first introduced in the ATTRACT-VET training programme, curriculum and toolkit. Training institutions still tend to focus on their exclusivity, not so much on how their services can be combined with other's institutions. This is in conflict with the ECVET model, and it may take some work to convince VET practitioners of the value of using ECVET.

4. Similarly, there is often a resistance to change, cooperation and partnership within the VET sector. Therefore, when designing the ATTRACT-VET training programme, it is important to develop activities and mechanisms which empower VET providers to implement ECVET and to feel comfortable and confident in using the ECVET model.

5. When developing the content for the ATTRACT-VET Training Programme, Curriculum and Toolkit, partners should include some information on the quality indicators for VET which are in use in each partner country. It is important for VET providers and practitioners to understand the quality indicators which are currently in use in their countries and how these relate to EQAVET. This will make the EQAVET model seem more relevant to their work. These indicators have been included in the Catalogue but should also be referenced in the training resources to be developed.

## Glossary



- ❖ **European Qualifications Framework:** The European Qualifications Framework is a common European reference framework which links countries' qualifications systems together, acting as a translation device to make qualifications more readable and understandable across different countries and systems in Europe.
- ❖ **European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training:** ECVET is designed to facilitate the transfer, accumulation and recognition of people's learning outcomes, from one VET system to another, or from an informal learning situation to a formal learning context. It is based on the division of qualifications into units and on the description of learning outcomes of each unit using the three descriptors of EQF; knowledge, skills, and competences, making clear the EQF level of reference.
- ❖ **European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training:** EQAVET is a community of practice bringing together Member States, Social Partners and the European Commission to promote European collaboration in developing and improving quality assurance in VET by using the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework.
- ❖ **Europass:** Europass is a new initiative which aims to help people make their skills and qualifications clearly and easily understood in Europe, thus facilitating the mobility of both learners and workers.
- ❖ **Learning Outcomes:** Learning outcomes are statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process
- ❖ **Credit:** Credit for learning outcomes (i.e. credit) designates individuals' learning outcomes which have been assessed and which can be



accumulated towards a qualification or transferred to other learning programmes or qualifications.

- ❖ **Unit:** A unit is a component of a qualification, consisting of a coherent set of knowledge, skills and competence that can be assessed and validated
  
- ❖ **Memorandum of Understanding:** A Memorandum of Understanding 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.
  
- ❖ **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.