

**EUROPEAN CREDIT SYSTEM FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING  
CONSULTATION REPORT - MALTA**

Compiled by:

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**Introduction**

On the invitation of Commissioner Jan Figel requesting Malta's support to organise a national consultation on the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), Malta organized its national consultations process.

The objective of the planned ECVET is to create a European device which can be used on a voluntary basis and which will facilitate the transfer, validation and recognition of learning outcomes achieved by individuals, notably those who are mobile across borders, irrespective of whether their learning was obtained in a formal, non formal or informal context.

The Minister of Education Youth and Employment invited those experts and stakeholders most directly concerned by the development and implementation of the ECVET at the European, national and sectoral levels to give their views on what the aims and technical specifications should be. The relevant bodies and institutions are certainly aware of the importance that all stakeholders with a direct interest in lifelong learning – education, employment, youth, economic - participate actively and that they in turn consult all relevant sectors of employment and education.

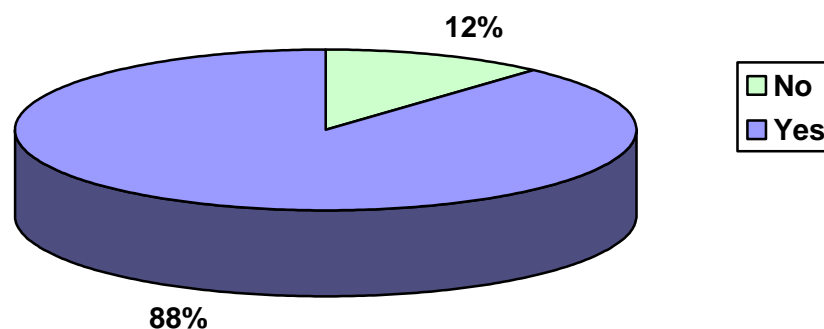
In order to facilitate the national consultation process the Department of Further Studies and Adult Education within the Education Division, devised a questionnaire based on the questions suggested in the Commission Staff Working Document on the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) (SEC (2006) 1431). The document and the questionnaire were emailed to 200 interested parties and multipliers in various spheres which included; learning institutions, employers associations, human resource managers, trade unions, national agencies, the employment placement and training agency, student bodies and youth organisations, the public service and public entities, experts and academics. The aim was two-pronged: the widest possible dissemination of the document outlining the underlying concepts of ECVET and the response that would help formulate the national response to the invitation of the Commission. To conclude the consultation process, a national Consultation Conference was organised on 16 March, 2007 bringing together with the major stakeholders and interested parties.

This report records statements made by the various stakeholders which accounts for the high variance and counter-positions in response to the same question. There is a notable under-representation of employers (excluding public entities). However, the perceptions of the private sector have been expressed in the contributions made in the Consultation National Conference.

## THE QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

### 1. The purpose of and reasons for an ECVET system

1a. Are the most important objectives and functions of a European system of credits for vocational training and education (including the role of competent authorities) fully outlined in the consultation document?



1b. If not, what is missing?

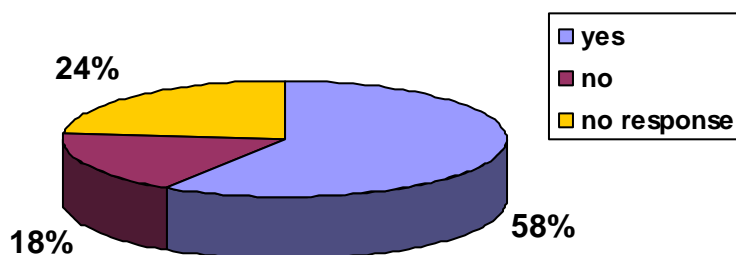
- A better outline of the remit and role of the competent authorities.

1c. What would be the main added value of the planned ECVET system?

- An increase in quality assurance of vocational courses, especially in the non formal and informal sectors.
- Provides for a convergence of institutional provision with the possibility of awarding joint qualifications.
- Facilitates cooperation between the various stakeholders involved that leads to streamlining of provisions to avoid duplication, especially in small countries with scarce resources.
- Serves as a comparative measure of student achievement and/or progression.
- Contributes towards a structured programme content.
- Promotes transparency and wider acceptance of Vocational Education and Training (VET).
- It could provide an operating structure for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning.
- Helps both interviewers and interviewees in the recruitment processes.
- Facilitates mobility of students and workers.
- Help provide wider learning experiences.
- Empowers persons in their choice of programmes of learning.
- A tool for accountability and against discrimination.
- Helps reinsert inactive persons in study programmes and work.

## 2. The technical basis for ECVET

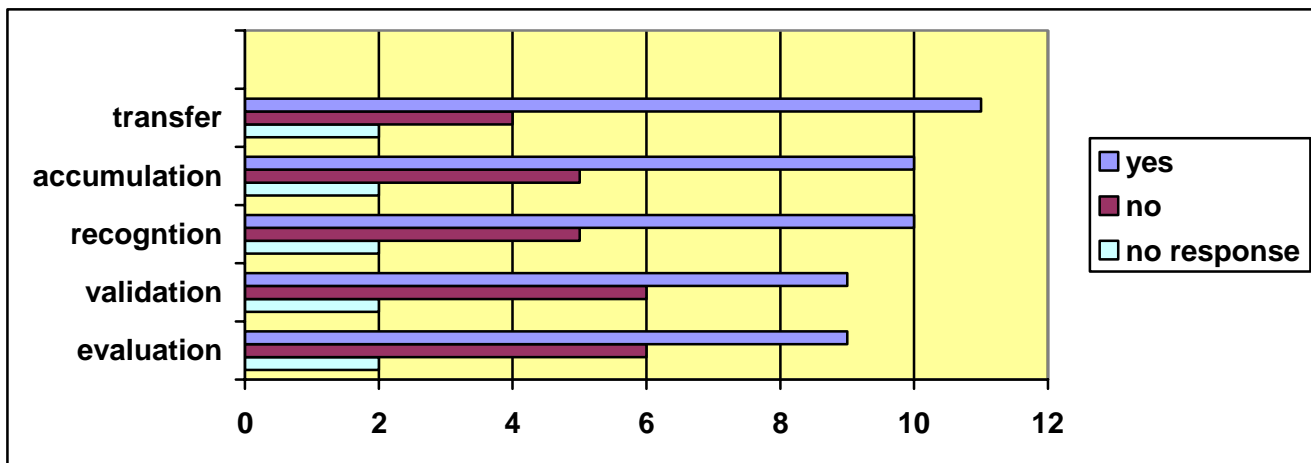
2a. Do you consider that technical specifications need to be set out in greater detail in order to ensure a better and a more practical implementation of ECVET?



2b. If so, which ones?

- The working document seems to be based mainly on formal education pathways. Therefore more work can be carried out with regard to the informal and non-formal sectors.
- More clarification on the credit points system.
- A more harmonised system needs to be developed to avoid difficulties in interpretation.
- More guidance on the shift to a competence base approach.
- European level skills panels to draw up 'harmonised' syllabi and assessment instruments.

2c. Do the ECVET's technical specifications take sufficient account of the evaluation, validation, recognition, accumulation and transfer of learning outcomes whether formal, non-formal and informal?

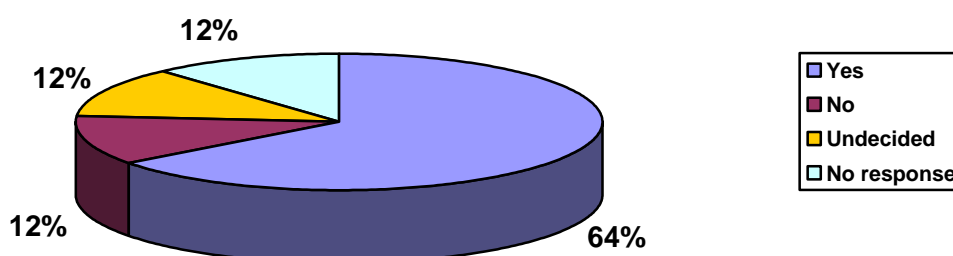


2d. If not, please give details.

- Technical specifications should result from partnerships agreements between learning institutions and other stakeholders.
- There is the need of more detailed information.
- A document parallel to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) Guidelines document is needed.
- Insufficient for contexts outside learning institutions.

- More details on the non-formal and informal learning.
- No mention of competence building programmes for curricular aspects and assessment procedures.
- The assessment criteria are not clear enough which makes them prone to different interpretations.

**2e. Are the allocation of credit points to qualifications and units sufficient to ensure the convergence of approaches and the coherence of the system at European level?**



**2 f. If not, what would you suggest?**

- One should establish what 'one credit unit' means before deciding on whether 120 credit points are sufficient.
- The reference figure of credit points should vary from level to level in VET programmes.
- Reference figure should reflect the different VET levels and thus the reference figure of 120 might be allied to a level 4 but not to a level 3 programme.
- A standard 60 ECVET credits should be applied to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) level 6 to 8 in parallel to ECTS.
- A one size fits all – a rather difficult proposition for vocational courses bearing in mind their diversity.
- One could run the risk of having a course module dissected into small bits which do not make any sense.

### **3 Implementing ECVET**

**3a. Under what conditions, describing qualifications in terms of learning outcomes and expressing them in units effectively, could improve the transparency of qualifications and contribute to the development of mutual trust?**

- Through the Participation of all stakeholders in the setting up of national frameworks.
- Through the common terms of reference, methodology, structures and terminology.
- Through the establishment of a common national framework and the harmonisation of national / sectoral systems
- Through a common 'platform' of criteria regarding evaluation, validation and accumulation of learning outcomes.
- Qualifications expressed in learning outcomes made understandable to employers and students.

- A strong quality assurance system with stringent standards is a major precondition to improve transparency and contribute to the development of mutual trust.
- The development of transparency instruments such as the Europass Certificate Supplement.
- The Development of Recognition of Non-formal and Informal mechanisms.
- Development of mechanisms for the accreditation of training providers.
- The establishment of European level standards.
- A trans-European monitoring system in place to ensure that standards are maintained across the whole of Europe.

**3b. Which criteria or combinations of criteria for allocating credit points could be selected and used?**

- Credit points may be 'allocated' or 'apportioned' in various ways which include: 'Notational Learning Time' for each unit, yearly numbers of hours and flat or equal unit rate base (assuming all units to be of equal importance).
- Established vocational standards.
- A progressive increase of the credit points is required for each successive level of VET.
- A combination of qualifications level, number of hour of direct teaching, tutor-student contact, workshop practice/practical learning and independent study as well as assessment method.
- Individual transcripts of records enabling individuals to build their own portfolio.
- Determining learning outcomes in terms of knowledge skills and competencies.
- Allocation of credit points should be based on both theoretical as well as practical components of the course.
- 'Harmonisation' with ECTS facilitates cross comparisons.
- Criteria agreed between Member States after wide consultation with stakeholders.

**3c. Are there any features in your qualifications system which would favour the introduction of ECVET? What constraints, if any, do you foresee?**

*Favouring the introduction of ECVET:*

- The fact that there are only two major formal public education institutions that provide vocational education would facilitate the introduction of such a system.
- Many vocational programmes (leading to UK qualifications) are already outcome based.
- A number of national VET programmes include industrial or work placements making it easier to develop into outcome based programmes.

*Constraints for the ECVET:*

- The fragmentation of informal and non-formal courses may hamper the introduction of such a system.
- The challenge of developing a coherent national vocational qualifications framework, streamlining national courses whilst taking into account the high dependency on foreign VET qualifications.
- Uncertainty caused by the transition especially in the assessment mechanisms and the qualifications structure.

- The management of change needed to shift from a heavy reliance on the academic orientation.
- Resources and competence building in the field.

**3d. How and within what timeframe (launch, introduction, experimentation, widespread introduction) could ECVET be implemented in Malta?**

- Following an experimental phase
- Following a transition period with two systems used concurrently
- Following an intensive communications campaign especially targeted at employers
- Up to two years
- By 2010
- 5-8 years starting with VET institutions and certificate awarding bodies and progressively addressing other stakeholders
- 'Hand in hand' with the other Member States

**4 Measures for supporting the implementation & development of ECVET**

**4a. What kind of measures should be taken at European, national and sectoral level to facilitate the implementation of ECVET?**

- Expert Support
- Funding
- Sharing of expertise among Member States
- Conferences, seminars and course at European, regional and national levels
- Guidance on the establishment of national sectoral boards composed of stakeholders and social partners
- Dissemination of information targeted at the key stakeholders including staff members, students, parents and employers
- The development of a coherent methodology agreed between the learning providers at a national level

**4b. What documents, manuals and guides could be developed to facilitate the implementation of ECVET?**

- Guidelines on transition into ECVET for both initial and continuous VET
- Reference material targeted at the different stakeholders including students, employee, educator, employer, assessor, examiner, administrator and policy maker
- Development of European Vocational Standards and model course structures
- Dissemination of case studies in transition to outcome based learning systems
- A reference manual and recognition procedures to ensure equity in the certification of workers

## **5 ECVET's potential for enhancing mobility**

### **5a. To what extent and how will ECVET be able to contribute to the development of transnational and even national partnerships?**

- Will serve as an instrument of information about student attainment
- A means for student, worker and employer to identify training needs
- A help for sending institutions to assess the nature and level of the provision of receiving institutions
- Increase mutual trust through transparency ECVET may provide
- Promotes mobility as an integral part of training programmes thus enhancing the attractiveness of VET
- Facilitates mutual recognition processes
- Facilitates selection for employment and further studies

### **5b. To what extent and how will ECVET be able to help improve the quality of Community programmes on mobility and participation in these programmes?**

- The transparency provided by ECVET promotes quality in provision and hence mutual trust between the sending and receiving institutions
- The participation of both students and workers is equally facilitated
- Higher value in study placements if adequately supported by investment in administrative capacity and student/worker information services
- Point system may eliminate difficulties in inter-institutional and transnational recognition and accreditation

### **5c. To what extent and how do you think that ECVET and Europass could complement each other to enhance mobility?**

- The Europass Mobility and Certificate supplement are necessary complements to ECVET
- The concept of the certificate supplement should be adopted by ECVET
- The Europass holistic approach of recording sectoral skills together with key competences such as language skills, ICT, and personal and interpersonal skills should be emulated also in the ECVET process
- ECVET is a parallel development to the ECTS which contributes to the mobility of students under the ERASMUS programme. So ECVET like ECTS would also contribute to an increase in mobility since students would be able to take up study units in line with their course and experience work practices in a different country if the course includes work placements.

## **Concluding Comments**

- 1) The responses indicate that there is general agreement with the idea of ECVET.
- 2) The great majority of the respondents are in agreement with the document's main aims.
- 3) On the other hand, those respondents who were in disagreement contributed the very interesting points which were listed in this report.

- 4) In general respondents from learning institutions were more concerned with initial training, course content, structures and organisation of learning, standards, quality assurance, student mobility, maintaining diversity while encouraging cooperation among learning institutions.
- 5) Respondents from trade unions and entities involved with work or social environment emphasised more aspects of equity, accessibility, mobility of workers, parity of esteem for VET, streamlining of the learning provision and harmonization at a European level.