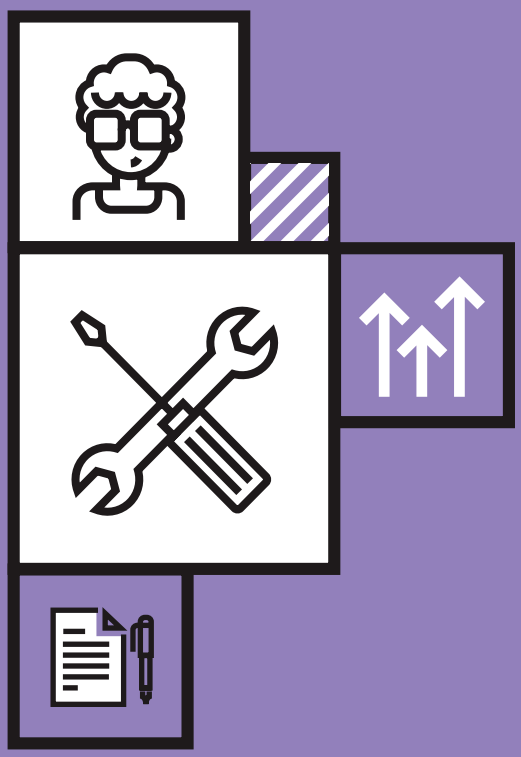
Mid-Term Evaluation of the Use of ECVET within the Erasmus+ Programme



DZS

MŠMT

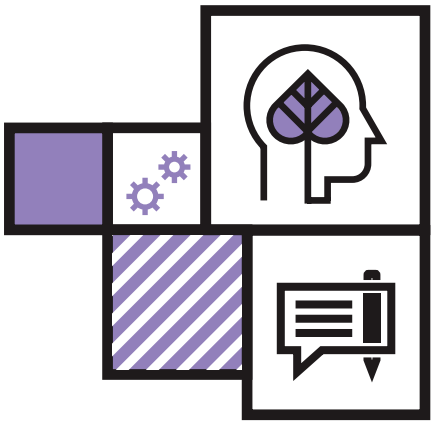
Erasmus+

ecvet
European Credit system for
Vocational Education & Training

Table of contents

1

Introduction



For many years, international mobility projects for students attending various types of VET schools have been implemented in the EU countries. These projects have shown that they contribute both to the labour market success of their participants and to improving the quality of vocational training. That is why the development of mobility in vocational education is one of the priorities of the European Commission's strategic documents concerning education.

In the *Education and Training 2020* strategic framework from 2009[1], four strategic objectives are set out, the first of which is encouraging the member states to make the effort to ensure that lifelong learning and mobility becomes a reality. In respect of the set objectives, indicators were set that are supposed to be achieved by 2020. These include the objective that, by 2020, at least 6% of persons aged 18 to 34 with an initial vocational education should spend some time learning or training abroad. After evaluating the results achieved in 2014, the European Commission set out six priority areas for the 2016 - 2020[2] period . One of them is formulated as follows: transparency and the recognition of skills and qualifications to facilitate learning and labour mobility. In line with these intentions, the number of participants in international mobility projects is also increasing in the Czech Republic.

In order to improve the quality of mobilities, in addition to their scope, the European Commission incited the creation of the **European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET)**[3], announced in 2009. Since then, ECVET has gradually been implemented. The most significant results in the implementation of ECVET have been achieved in the Czech Republic since 2014, when the European programme Erasmus+ supporting education also started being used. Since approximately one-half of the 2014 - 2020 period has elapsed, it is now a good opportunity to assess the achieved results of the implementation of ECVET in mobility projects through performing a mid-term evaluation.

The aim of the mid-term evaluation of the use of ECVET in mobility projects is to summarize the results achieved during the implementation of ECVET, to assess them, to identify their positive and negative aspects, and to propose plans for the implementation of ECVET for the coming years. In terms of time, the evaluation relates to the 2014 - 2017 period, while from the geographical point of view, it relates to the Czech Republic. In terms of content, it relates to the implementation of ECVET in international mobility projects as well as in mobility projects at the national level. The conception of the mid-term evaluation uses the main principles of European quality assurance in vocational education and training (EQAVET) and applies to three of the four stages of the quality assurance cycle: implementation, evaluation, and review.

The content of the mid-term evaluation is arranged into several chapters. The second chapter summarizes the development of the implementation of ECVET prior to the 2014 - 2017 monitored period. The third chapter describes the previous work of the national team of ECVET experts and the main features of its vision for the next period. The fourth chapter characterizes the implementation of ECVET in mobility projects during the monitored period using quantitative and qualitative indicators. The impacts of the implementation of ECVET on the educational activities of Czech VET schools (both secondary and tertiary levels) are dealt with in the fifth chapter. The sixth chapter includes feedback from mobility project grant beneficiaries on the implementation of ECVET. The conclusions of the mid-term evaluation are presented in the last, seventh chapter.

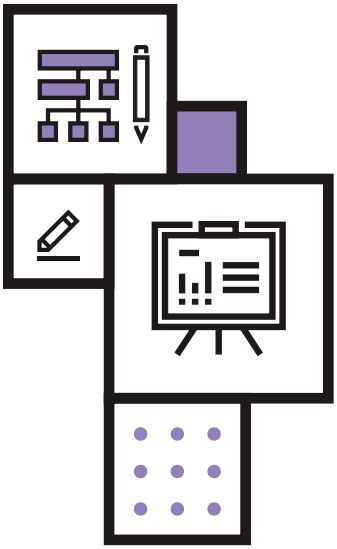
1 https://www.ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework_en

2 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the Strategic Framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020). Official Journal of the European Union C417/25, 15.12.2015.

3 https://www.ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/ecvet_en

2

A Description of the Initial State



The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) was officially introduced by the adoption of Recommendation No. 2009/C 155/02 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on ECVET. However, the main objectives of ECVET and its principles had been proposed and verified earlier. This is evidenced, for example, by the first group of 11 pilot projects from the 2008 - 2011 period, in which the ECVET principles were first tested in practice. Each of these 11 pilot projects was an international project involving partner institutions from different EU countries, focused on a certain sector of vocational education, and financially supported by the European Commission. The Czech Republic was represented by institutions that were partners in three of the pilot projects.

The *CREDCHEM* project was managed by the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) in Bonn, Germany. In addition to two other German partners and partners from Slovakia, Bulgaria and Italy, the Czech National Institute for Education (at that time under the former name the National Institute of Vocational Education) was also a partner in the project. The possibilities of transferring vocational education credits in the chemical sector were tested in the project. The mobilities of both students and teachers formed part of the project. The project also included five Czech vocational schools: The Technical-Economic Vocational Training Centre in Prague, The Secondary Technical School in Ústí nad Labem, The Integrated Secondary School – Centre of Practical Training in Valašské Meziříčí, The Secondary Technical School of Chemistry in Pardubice and The Secondary Technical and Vocational School in Kralupy nad Vltavou.

The *RECOMFOR* project focused on international trade. Building on the former *Cominter* project, it dealt with the development and verification of a common qualification profile for the profession of import and export assistant. The extensive project partnership was managed by the French Confederation of Wholesale and International Trade. Three more organizations from France, three from the Netherlands, three from Portugal, two from Italy, two from Romania, two from Slovenia, and one each from Belgium, Spain, Greece, Switzerland, and the Czech Republic were members of the partnership. The Czech Republic was represented by the former National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education in this project.

Within the *CAPE-SV* project, the use of ECVET principles and the accumulation and transfer of credits in the "performing arts" sector was verified. The project was managed by the French Vocational Training Centre for Performing Arts. Two more organizations from France and one each from Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the Czech Republic were partners in the project. The Czech partner organization was the Theatre Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague.

Almost parallel, the second phase of the *VQTS* project, supported by the Leonardo da Vinci programme, was under way in 2007 - 2009. The project focused on the development of a method for describing and comparing competencies between different qualification systems in the mechatronics and electrical engineering sector. It was managed by the Austrian consultancy organization 3s Unternehmensberatung. Three more organizations from Austria, four from the Netherlands, two from Germany, and one each from Slovenia, Malta, and the Czech Republic were partners in the project. The Czech partner organization was again the National Institute for Education.

The participation of the National Institute for Education and of other Czech organizations in the aforementioned projects made it possible to obtain information on the use of the ECVET system and created the prerequisites for the establishment and functioning of national bodies focused on supporting the implementation of ECVET. The proposals for their establishment were prepared at the end of 2011 and submitted to the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports (MEYS). On 10 April 2012, the MEYS approved the document entitled *Introduction of the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) in the Czech Republic*. This document contributed, inter alia, to the establishment of the ECVET Coordination Centre as the body responsible for coordinating activities related to the implementation of ECVET in the Czech Republic. The National Institute for Education was entrusted with the management of the Coordination Centre.

In 2012, the European Commission incited, within a project managed by its Education, Audiovisual, and Culture Executive Agency, the establishment of national teams of ECVET experts. Their main task is to help with the implementation of ECVET. The management of the Czech national team of ECVET experts was entrusted to the Centre for International Cooperation in Education (at that time under the name Centre for International Services in Education), which also performs the function of the National Agency for European Educational Programmes. Like the National Institute for Education, the Centre for International Cooperation in Education is an organization managed by the MEYS. The national team of ECVET experts became part of the ECVET Coordination Centre.

The Czech national team of ECVET experts was established as a seven-member team. The team included two specialists from the National Institute for Education, and representatives from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic, the Chamber of Commerce of the Czech Republic, a VET school and a non-governmental organization involved in vocational education.

The first years of activity of the national team of ECVET experts – 2012 and 2013 – were the last period of the European Lifelong Learning Programme or, in the area of vocational education, of its component – the Leonardo da Vinci programme. At that time, hundreds of projects focused on the international mobility of students and teachers from vocational schools were already being implemented in the Czech Republic every year. This provided good opportunities for the use of the ECVET system principles in these projects.

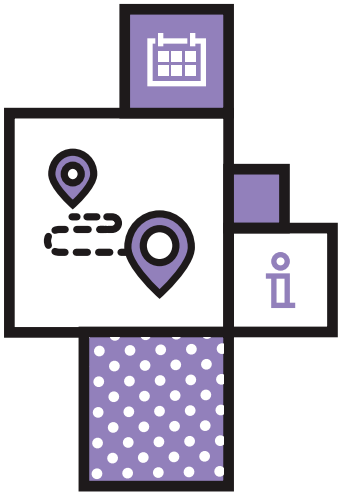
To make this possible, the national team of ECVET experts focused on raising awareness of ECVET in the relevant target groups during the first period of its activity. Therefore, the team members started to present the topic at seminars for grant applicants and grant beneficiaries and, at the same time, prepared several informational materials on ECVET that were then published by the Centre for International Cooperation in Education. The first published brochure was called **ECVET: Evropský systém pro zvýšení kvality mobility v odborném vzdělávání: otázky a odpovědi (European system for improving the quality of mobility in vocational education: questions and answers)**[4]. The brochure explained the nature of ECVET, its concepts, principles, benefits, documents used, etc. It was distributed to all VET schools. A section to present information about ECVET was created on the Centre for International Cooperation in Education's website. The first leaflets focused on ECVET were also printed and distributed.

Thus, the period up to 2014 can be characterized as the initial period of the implementation of ECVET in the Czech Republic, focused on the establishment of the necessary bodies to support ECVET, on the first phase of disseminating information about ECVET, and on preparation for the implementation of ECVET in the coming years. Since this period, e.g. the creation of the main preconditions for the implementation of ECVET in international mobility projects can be assessed positively. On the other hand, less success has been achieved in disseminating information about ECVET among the target groups outside the education sector – among employers and representatives of the employment services sector.

4 ECVET, Evropský systém pro zvýšení kvality mobility v odborném vzdělávání, Otázky a odpovědi. Prague: The Centre for International Services in Education, 2013. ISBN 978-80-87335 52-9.

3

The Development of Activities of the National Team of ECVET Experts



3.1 Year 2014

In 2014, activities of the national ECVET experts team focused on two main objectives. As in previous years, the team continued working to raise awareness of the ECVET system among four main target groups: vocational education managers at the national and regional levels, headmasters and teachers from all types of VET schools, mobility project grant beneficiaries, and employers. In addition, however, the team intended not only to explain the basic ECVET principles, but also to provide practical advice on how to apply the ECVET principles to specific mobility projects and how to prepare relevant documents, particularly units of learning outcomes, the Memorandum of Understanding, and Learning Agreements.

In 2014, the team members participated in 11 seminars for grant applicants, grant beneficiaries, and evaluators that concerned international mobility projects within the framework of the Erasmus+ 2014 Call. The team members‘ presentations at the seminars focused on providing information about ECVET and the practical use of the ECVET principles in mobility projects. In addition to participating at the seminars, the team members prepared several brochures that were subsequently published and distributed by the Centre for International Cooperation in Education.

The brochure with questions and answers concerning ECVET from 2013 was revised and published in as a second edition.[5] Compared to the first edition, the text of the second edition was refined and expanded. It included two examples of units of learning outcomes, forms of the Memorandum of Understanding, and a sample of a completed Europass Mobility document. 2,000 copies of the brochure were published by the Centre for International Cooperation in Education.

The content of another brochure entitled **Jak vytvořit jednotku výsledků učení (How to create a unit of learning outcomes)**[6] was focused on the core ECVET document – a unit of learning outcomes. In the brochure, potential authors of units of learning outcomes were recommended a standard content structure for units and a template for recording the individual content sections of units. The team‘s effort, which was aimed at a practical focus of the brochure, was expressed by including specific examples of appropriate and inappropriate formulations of the expected learning outcomes. Several examples of units of learning outcomes were also included in this brochure.

5 Evropský systém pro zvýšení kvality mobility v odborném vzdělávání, Otázky a odpovědi. Prague: The Centre for International Cooperation in Education, 2014. ISBN 978-80-87335-79-6, 30 pages

6 Čičváková, Michala, Crouchley, Lenka: Jak vytvořit jednotku výsledků učení. Praktický průvodce pro realizátory projektů v rámci programu Erasmus+. Prague: The Centre for International Cooperation in Education, 2014. ISBN 978-80-87335-86-4, 25 pages

After the submitted project grant applications from the 2014 Call were assessed and grants were awarded, it turned out that 43% of the applicants decided to use the ECVET principles in their mobility projects. That was a good result for the first call of Erasmus+ mobility projects, and it also showed promise for the coming years.

The team of ECVET experts was already trying to analyse the approved applications from the point of view of the quality of the application of the ECVET principles[7]. For each application, it tried to identify the sections of the applications that made reference to ECVET and how these references were expressed. Based on this, it was concluded that about 20% of applications could be regarded as very good from the point of view of the quality of the ECVET implementation, about 60% as average, and about 20% as being of poor quality. Therefore, the results showed that only a small proportion of the applications were successful in achieving the appropriate quality of using ECVET.

In 2014, the team also began to coordinate its activity with work carried out throughout the Czech Republic by staff working with other European tools or networks. That is why the team members participated in a specialized seminar with people representing these tools and networks. In addition to ECVET, current work results and experience concerning e. g. European quality assurance in vocational education and training (EQAVET), Europass, Euroguidance, Eurydice, etc. were presented at this seminar. The seminar was useful because it helped to improve mutual awareness of the implementation of the individual tools in the Czech Republic and better coordination.

Articles published by the team members in relevant expert newsletters and journals also helped to improve the awareness of ECVET and its implementation in the Czech Republic. Five articles were published by them in 2014. With the aims of disseminating information about ECVET and popularizing its benefits, the team also incited the creation of a short film about ECVET entitled **Do Evropy na zkušenou (To Europe, to get experience)**. The nine-minute film was made by the College of Media and Journalism in Prague. It includes an explanation of basic information about ECVET, interviews with members of the ECVET experts team and with teachers, and examples of using ECVET in practice. The film was distributed on DVD and can also be viewed at *http://www.naerasmusplus.cz/cz/reformy-a-systemy-vzdelavani-ecvet/*.

Members of the ECVET team also paid attention to international cooperation in 2014. They participated in several international events. A seminar was held in Croatia (Mala Nedelja) for members of the national teams of ECVET experts and Erasmus+ national agencies from certain EU countries, which was aimed at exchanging experience with implementing ECVET. Experts from seven countries (Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia) participated in this seminar. Participating in the seminar made it possible to compare the results achieved in the implementation of ECVET in the Czech Republic with other countries. The usefulness of the exchange of experience is evidenced by the fact that similar seminars have subsequently been held each year.

The team cooperated particularly closely with its Slovak colleagues. In 2014, the team members participated in two Czech-Slovak events. The first was a conference focused on Erasmus+ international mobility projects which was held in Prague. The second was a seminar on the issue of learning outcomes and was held in Bratislava. Three members of the team also participated in the ECVET Forum, which was held in Vienna.

2014 can be regarded as a year in which the awareness of ECVET was improved, the ECVET principles were successfully applied to a significant proportion of international mobility projects, and the first steps were taken to monitor and ensure the quality of the implementation of ECVET. On the other hand, the results of the work showed that more and more attention should be paid to the practical issues of implementing ECVET and to improving its quality in the coming years.

7 Slámová, Hana: Analysis of KA 1 Applications under the 2014 Call – Successful Applicants. Internal material from the Centre for International Cooperation in Education, 2014, 23 pages

3.2 Year 2015

The work plan of the national team of ECVET experts for 2015 built on the results achieved in 2014. Since the focus of the team's work in 2014 proved to be successful, the team set two similar main goals for 2015: to continue to raise awareness of ECVET among the target groups and to focus on providing advice on practical steps related to the application of the ECVET principles in mobility projects.

The main activity employed to further raise the awareness of ECVET was the active participation of the team members in 17 seminars and other events for applicants for grants to support international mobility projects, for grant beneficiaries, and for evaluators of applications. In addition to these seminars, the team members informed attendees about ECVET and its previous implementation in the Czech Republic e. g. at the Dissemination Conference in Ostrava.

For the first time, an information campaign was carried out for applicants for the Erasmus+ VET Mobility Charter as a new quality certificate announced by the European Commission. The team members also participated in this campaign and informed interested parties about ECVET as a tool for improving the quality of mobility projects. As many Czech vocational schools were interested in this certificate, high number of teachers from VET schools participated in this seminar.

In 2015, the team incited creation of another short film entitled **Se systémem ECVET za kvalitnějšími stážemi (With ECVET for better internships)**. This more than six-minute video showed the experience with implementing ECVET in one particular school (The Secondary School of Business, Applied Arts and Design in Plzeň) during a three-week internship of its students in Germany. The film also explained what a unit of learning outcomes is and how it should be prepared. This film was also distributed on DVD and can be viewed at *http://www.naerasmusplus.cz/cz/reformy-a-systemy-vzdelavani-ecvet/*.

The team performed analytical work in the effort to obtain information on the quality of the ECVET implementation in 2015. As in the previous year, the team analysed the approved applications submitted under the 2015 Call[8]. The results of the analysis showed that the share of international mobility projects that applied the ECVET principles increased from 43% in the previous year to 75% in 2015. The use of ECVET in international mobility projects has thus already penetrated into most of these projects. In addition to this quantitative result, however, the analysis also identified the improvement of the quality of the ECVET implementation in mobility projects. The share of applications in which the use of ECVET was considered to be very good increased from 20% to 30% compared to the previous year, the share of projects with an average quality of the use of ECVET decreased from 60% to 45% and the share of projects with a low quality use of ECVET increased from 20% to 25%. The text of the analysis was included in the report on the implementation of ECVET in the Czech Republic, published in 2016[9].

In 2015, the team prepared an analysis of units of learning outcomes for the first time[10]. The subject of the analysis were units prepared when submitting grant applications to support international mobility projects in 2014. The aim of this analysis was to identify the positive and negative characteristics of the analysed units. One of the identified positive characteristics was the improvement of the structure of the set of units from the point of view of VET fields (the units related to 21 of such fields). Furthermore, a good level of the specification of the units' relationship to the levels of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and a reasonable range of units were identified. The identified negative characteristics of the units included a frequent lack of specification of the professional qualifications to which the particular unit related, and a high share (about 50%) of units with too low number of expected learning outcomes. The biggest problems were identified in formulations of the expected learning outcomes, since these formulations were sometimes very general. The analysis of units of learning outcomes thus provided the team of ECVET experts not only with a wealth of useful information, but also with many impulses for its further work.

The implementation of ECVET expanded, in addition to international mobility projects, to mobility projects at the national level. The thing is that the *Pospolu* project, which focused on fostering the cooperation between schools and enterprises, was implemented at the national level in the Czech Republic (see Chapter 4.1 for more informati-

8 Slámová, Hana: Erasmus+ Programme, An analysis of project applications under the 2015 Call – Mobility projects for individuals (KA1) – Vocational education and training.

9 Slivková, Helena (ed.): Report on the implementation of ECVET in the Czech Republic, based on the results of Erasmus+ projects and the Pospolu national project. Prague: The Centre for International Cooperation in Education, 2015, 21 pages

10 Coufalík, Jaromír: An analysis of units of learning outcomes from mobility projects within generation 2014 of Erasmus+ programme Internal material from the Centre for International Cooperation in Education 2015, 11 pages

on). Within the framework of this project, the application of ECVET elements in the practical training of students of secondary vocational schools at employers' workplaces was also verified. When the national team of ECVET experts prepared a report on the previous implementation of ECVET in the Czech Republic in 2015 [11], that report also included a report on the implementation of elements in the Pospolu project. This report showed that the use of ECVET was also possible and effective in national projects and that it helped improve the quality of the practical training of students even in these projects.

Also in 2015, representatives of the team participated in several international events. In Bratislava, they participated in a conference dedicated to the issue of work-based learning. In Croatia (Terme Tuhelj), they participated in a seminar focused on exchanging experience with implementing ECVET. They also took part in the ECVET Forum in Barcelona and in a seminar in Bratislava that dealt with formulating learning outcomes. In addition, these events expanded the information and experience of the team members and made it again possible to compare the implementation of ECVET in the Czech Republic with the situation in other European countries. The comparison showed that the implementation of ECVET in the Czech Republic compared well with other EU countries.

The implementation of ECVET in the Czech Republic made progress in 2015. As can be seen from the aforementioned information, the scope of the implementation of ECVET in mobility projects (at both the national and international levels) expanded and, at the same time, its quality improved.

11 Report on the implementation of ECVET in the Czech Republic, based on the results of Erasmus+ projects and the Pospolu national project, 21 pages *www.naerasmusplus.cz/cz/reformy-a-systemy-vzdelavani-ecvet/dokumenty-8.*

3.3 Year 2016

The work plan of the national team of ECVET experts for 2016 also focused on fulfilling two main objectives: raising awareness of ECVET and providing advice to ECVET users on practical issues related to the application of the principles. These objectives were somewhat similar to those in the previous year, but when fulfilling the second mentioned objective, the team's attention was focused on, in addition to ECVET documents (unit of learning outcomes, the Memorandum of Understanding, the Learning Agreement), to a greater extent on the procedures of assessment, validation and recognition of learning outcomes.

The number of seminars in which the team members provided information about ECVET and practical advice on its application increased compared to the previous years. There were six seminars for applicants for grants to support Erasmus+ international mobility projects (three from the 2016 Call and three from the 2017 Call), four seminars for grant beneficiaries from the 2016 Call and one seminar for applicants for the VET Mobility Charter. Four more seminars were organized for evaluators of grant applications (out of which one was for VET Mobility Charter evaluators). In addition to these seminars, the team members actively participated in other events, such as the Dissemination Conference in Brno (its agenda included an ECVET workshop) and two educational fairs in Liberec and Ostrava.
In an effort to raise awareness of ECVET among employers, the team prepared a **leaflet for employers**. The leaflet is available in electronic form on the Centre for International Cooperation's website

The team members also participated in several specific events. Like every year, there was a meeting of people representing European tools and networks concerning education as well as a round table with members of the ECVET Coordination Centre. Together with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the National Institute for Education, the Centre for International Cooperation in Education organized a seminar on providing methodological support for authors of units of learning outcomes. In December 2016, when the European Vocational Skills Week was held for the first time in EU countries, the team members participated in a discussion on vocational education in the Czech Republic that was organized by the Centre for International Cooperation in Education, entrusted with coordinating the European Vocational Skills Week in the Czech Republic.

2016 saw an increase in the frequency of consultations provided by the team members to authors of units of learning outcomes on proposals of their units. These were both personal consultations held during seminars and similar events and e-mail consultations.

Thanks to the dissemination of information about ECVET, the share of international mobility projects using ECVET further increased in 2016, reaching 95% of the total number of international mobility projects.

The team prepared three written materials in 2016. The first of them was an analysis of the units of learning outcomes.[12] For this analysis, the team developed a new methodology that allowed the quality of the analysed units to be evaluated by means of points awarded for fulfilment of the set requirements imposed on units of learning outcomes. On the one hand, the analysis confirmed the positive characteristics of the quality of units (e.g. further expansion of the branch structure of the set of units, good identification of the levels of the European Qualifications Framework in units). On the other hand, it identified the negative characteristics of the quality of units and indicated what the team‘s further work should focus on. The identified share of units that specified the professional qualification to which the given unit related was still low. Only 35% of the analysed units received more than one-half of the possible number of points. The analysis also showed that the formulation of expected learning outcomes through specialized activities predominated in units, while formulations through knowledge, skills, and competences occurred only in a smaller proportion of units.

That‘s why the team prepared another brochure entitled **Příklady využití ECVET v praxi (Samples of the use of ECVET in practice)**[13], which dealt with the creation of units of learning outcomes and placed emphasis on the practical procedures in the creation of units. The brochure included examples of units of learning outcomes from various fields of VET. There were published both high-quality units and units with deficiencies. The graphic layout of the brochure was designed in such a way as to make clear the deficiencies of the units. These deficiencies are marked in the brochure, commented on, and accompanied by recommendations on how they could be eliminated so that the unit would be of a higher quality. The brochure was published by the Centre for International Cooperation in Education. It is available both in printed and electronic form.

A novelty in the team‘s production was the preparation of a manual whose content focused on the procedures of assessment, validation and recognition of learning outcomes[14]. Each procedure is explained in the manual from the point of view of the ECVET principles and its desirable attributes and specific examples are presented. For assessment of learning outcomes, the manual emphasizes the role of the evaluator from the host organization and the use of assessment records (personal transcript) For the procedure of recognizing learning outcomes, the manual recommends processes that should be used by mobility project implementers while applying the ECVET principles. The manual is entitled **Jak hodnotit, validovat a uznávat výsledky učení (How to assess, validate, and recognize learning outcomes)**. It was prepared in electronic form and is available on the Centre for International Cooperation in Education’s website.

The team recorded two webinars in 2016. Their topics are **ECVET in Application and How to Create a Unit of Learning Outcomes**. The webinars are available on the Centre for International Cooperation’s website at *www.naerasmusplus.cz/cz/reformy-a-systemy-vzdelavani-ecvet/webinare.*
Four more articles on ECVET and its implementation in the Czech Republic were also prepared and published. The Centre for International Cooperation in Education also made panels with information about ECVET.

As regards the team‘s international cooperation, its members participated in several events. In Vienna, they participated in the international Peer Learning seminar on evaluating and recognizing learning outcomes and the follow-up conference on validating non-formal and informal learning. They also participated in the annual ECVET Forum in Rome. In Slovakia, they participated in a seminar on evaluating learning outcomes in mobility projects. A novelty was the participation of one team member in a monitoring visit to the Slovak host organization of one of the mobility projects using ECVET.

2016 can be regarded as a year in which ECVET was successfully implemented in almost all international mobility projects. The implementation of ECVET also penetrated into mobility implemented at the national level. The set of informational materials on ECVET expanded so much that it already covers all main topics of the implementation of ECVET. The quality of the implementation of the ECVET principles also increased, although it has not yet reached the desired level. Significant reserves remain in the use of ECVET outside the initial education sector, particularly with employers.

12 Coufalík, Jaromír: An analysis of the units of learning outcomes from mobility projects within generation 2015 of Erasmus+ programme. The Centre for International Cooperation in Education, 2016, 11 pages

13 Příklady využití ECVET v praxi. Prague: The Centre for International Cooperation in Education, 2016. ISBN 978-80-88153-17-7. 25 pages

14 Jak hodnotit, validovat a uznávat výsledky učení. Prague: The Centre for International Cooperation in Education, 2016, 15 pages

3.4 Year 2017

In 2017, activities of the national ECVET experts team has been focused on two content areas. Both built on the results achieved in the previous periods. The first content area of activities has been focused on further dissemination of information about ECVET and the experience with its use. The team members have again participated in seminars organized by the Centre for International Cooperation in Education for grant applicants, grant beneficiaries and evaluators during which they have presented the ECVET principles, recommendations for the preparation of units of learning outcomes, assessment records, the Memorandum of Understanding and Learning Agreements, and they have informed attendees about the previous experience with the use of ECVET in international mobility projects and about other sources of information about ECVET.

The seminars have concerned projects implemented within the framework of Erasmus+ Key Activities 1 and 2, both in connection to the 2017 Call and relating to the 2018 Call. The ECVET topic was also included in the seminars for applicants or holders of the Erasmus+ VET Mobility Charter and for evaluators of applications for this charter. Altogether, the ECVET topic has been included in the agenda of 18 seminars in 2017. Thanks to that and to the team‘s other activities, it has been possible to further increase the share of international mobility projects using ECVET to more than 99%, so that the use of ECVET has already penetrated into almost all international mobility projects.

In addition to information seminars, members of the national team of ECVET experts have participated in several specific events. In April 2017, there was a two-day monitoring meeting of grant beneficiaries. One of the three main parts of this event focused on ECVET in the final report on project implementation. In October 2017, the international contact seminar entitled *Cooperation in vocational education in the fields of health and social care* was organized. At this seminar, the team members led one of the three workshops. It was focused on determining learning outcomes when using ECVET. The awareness of ECVET was raised by the team members at the meeting of the European networks representatives (April 2017), at the Erasmus+ Dissemination Conference in České Budějovice (November 2017), at the opening event for the European Vocational Skills Week with the theme *Supporting vocational education in the Czech Republic*, which was held at the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (November 2017), and at the annual meeting of the ECVET Coordination Centre with the theme *Discover your talent - ECVET elements supporting the modernization of vocational education in the Czech Republic*, which was held at the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic (November 2017).

One of the activities of the ECVET team in 2017 was the participation of its members in monitoring visits to grant beneficiaries in the area of international mobility. These monitoring visits took place in two Czech VET schools acting in the role of the sending organization (Jablonec nad Nisou, Plzeň) and abroad in one Polish vocational school and in a Polish enterprise (Pszczyna), where internships were held by students of one Czech secondary school (Podbořany). Thus, the team members were able to see, in a real environment, the evaluation of Czech interns by a representative from a foreign host organization that took place with regard to the used units of learning outcomes.

The information activities of members of the national team of ECVET experts in 2017 has also included recording two webinars (January, May) with practical recommendations for authors of units of learning outcomes, the Memorandum of Understanding and Learning Agreements. The webinars are available on the Centre for International Cooperation in Education’s website. The team also developed a new leaflet for employers emphasizing the benefits of ECVET.

The second content area of the team‘s activities in 2017 was analytical work. This year, the most extensive analysis of units of learning outcomes so far prepared was elaborated. All members of the team participated in it. The analysis covered units of learning outcomes prepared as annexes to Erasmus+ grant applications for supporting international mobility projects. More than 800 units of learning outcomes from 2016 and 2017 were analyzed. The analysis made it possible to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the quality of units of learning outcomes. Its results were used in the team‘s other activities. The results of this analysis are included in Chapter 4 of this Mid-Term Evaluation.

The team used outputs from the said analysis of units of learning outcomes in several ways. Firstly, the team members prepared an innovative template to prepare a unit of learning outcomes and an assessment record. These innovative templates are (in addition to being published on the Centre for International Cooperation in Education’s website) presented and recommended at seminars for

grant applicants and grant beneficiaries under the 2018 Call. Secondly, the results of the analysis provided ideas for the conception of units of learning outcomes for long-term mobilities within the framework of the European ErasmusPRO initiative. These units will be used for the first time in projects connected to the 2018 Call. Since long-term mobilities have, compared to the still prevailing short-term mobilities, several particularities that also concern units of learning outcomes, the team also proposed for project implementers, at the end of 2017, principles for creating units of learning outcomes used in long-term mobility projects. The analysis also provided material for selecting units from various fields of VET suitable for publication as aids for authors of units.

In 2017, the team has also paid attention to the procedure of assessment, validation and recognition of learning outcomes for which it prepared a specific manual in the previous year. The team has presented its content in above mentioned seminars for beneficiaries and at other specific events, and has informed attendees about it in an article published in the most important Czech journal for teachers.[15]

In 2017, the team has expanded its contacts with representatives from the employment services sector who work with an extensive target group of job seekers, whose education through retraining could use the ECVET principles. Following several meetings with staff from the employment services sector, the team members obtained more detailed information on chosen retraining courses for which principles similar to those used in ECVET are applied. In October 2017, they participated, at the General Directorate of the Labour Office of the Czech Republic, in a meeting of the Retraining Working Group which brings together representatives of the mediation and guidance departments of the regional branches of the Labour Office of the Czech Republic. At this meeting, they informed the attendees about the ECVET principles. The discussion at the meeting showed, inter alia, that the use of the ECVET principles in retraining could be possible after amending the existing legislation regulating ways of employment support.

Also in 2017, members of the national team of ECVET experts have dedicated themselves to international cooperation. In October, its representatives participated in Bratislava at the international seminar entitled *Using ECVET Principles in Work Based Learning with Special Focus on Involvement of all relevant Stakeholders*, which was attended by members of national teams of ECVET experts from ten European countries. For this seminar, the Czech team of experts prepared a presentation with information on the possibilities of using ECVET in chosen retraining courses in the Czech Republic and the team's representative presented it at the seminar.

In October 2017, the team's representatives also participated in the annual ECVET Forum with the main theme of *The role of ECVET to inspire action towards more flexible vocational pathways*, which was held in Malta. At this event, the team members participated also in several workshops where they informed about the results of their work and about the experience with the use of ECVET in the Czech Republic. In November 2017, two team members participated, at the invitation of the Macedonian Erasmus+ National Agency, at the seminar entitled *Promotion and exchange of good practices in implementation of ECVET between Republic of Macedonia and Czech Republic*, which was held in Skopje. At this seminar, they delivered two presentations on current results and the experience from the team's work. In November, the team representatives participated at the Austrian annual seminar on the use of ECVET which was held in Vienna.

2017 was thus a year in which the use of the ECVET principles was successfully incorporated in almost all international mobility projects (and also in almost all fields of VET). The prepared analysis of units of learning outcomes made it possible to determine in more detail the quality of units as the key ECVET document and its results also provided the basis for innovating templates for preparing a unit and the personal assessment record form. This year has also brought new ideas for the team's subsequent work, particularly as regards units of learning outcomes and the procedure of evaluating and recognizing learning outcomes in long-term mobilities and as regards the relationship between units of learning outcomes and professional qualifications.

15 Coufalík, Jaromír: Jak hodnotit, validovat a uznávat výsledky učení z praktických stáží programu Erasmus+ (How to assess, validate, and recognize learning outcomes from Erasmus+ practical internships). Učitelské noviny, issue 20, vol. 2017, page 27.

4

Indicators

4.1 Quantitative indicators

One of the most important quantitative indicators that expresses the level of the ECVET system implementation is the percentage share of mobility projects using ECVET in the total number of mobility projects. As during the period in question, both international mobility projects (under the Erasmus+ programme) and projects verifying the implementation of the ECVET elements at the national level were implemented, this indicator is presented separately for each mobility project group.

International mobility projects supported in the Erasmus+ programme are implemented under the Key Action 1 of the programme. There has been a constantly high interest in these projects in the Czech Republic. Every year, only a part of applicants receives grants from the Erasmus+ programme. Even though a high number of applications is recommended for the awarding of grants based on the quality evaluation, only some applicants receive the grants because the allocated disposable amount per year is not sufficient to support all applications. Information about the numbers of projects by year is provided in the below table.

As the table indicates, the numbers of submitted and approved applications have been fluctuating but they show the overall trend of a growing mobility project number. Information about the numbers of submitted and approved applications proves a steady interest in grants for international mobility projects and that only a smaller number of applicants receives an Erasmus+ grant every year. Figures in the last column of the table show to what extent is ECVET used in international mobility projects. While in 2014, ECVET was only used in a minority of the total number of projects, in the subsequent years, projects using ECVET prevailed and their share kept growing. In 2017, ECVET has been used in nearly all international mobility projects.

Call	Number of submitted applications	Number of approved applications	Number of approved applications with ECVET	Share of approved applications with ECVET
2014	286	147	63	43 %
2015	311	122	92	75 %
2016	341	119	113	95 %
2017	334	136	134	99 %

The above result was achieved mainly through an intensive dissemination of ECVET information at seminars and in publications. Between 2014 – 2017 the ECVET topic was included in 45 seminars for applicants and beneficiaries and 20 other similar events. We estimate that they addressed about 3,000 headmasters and teachers from VET schools and other educational organizations. Every year, a team of ECVET experts also prepared a brochure that was later published by the Centre for International Cooperation in Education or presented in electronic form at the Centre's website (see Chapter 3). Altogether, the Centre for International Cooperation in Education published five brochures on ECVET. In addition, several leaflets and folders with information on ECVET were published.

The ECVET expert team's work also included analyses of international mobility project applications with respect to ECVET. An analysis like that was prepared already in the first years of the period in question[16]. Among other things, the analysis found out in which sections of the application should ECVET be effectively referred to and to what extent applicants refer to ECVET in the respective sections of their applications. The analysis identified seven sections of applications where it is useful to mention ECVET. The following list of such sections provides a percentage value of applications for each section that actually mentioned ECVET.

Section D – European Development Plan: 0%
Section E – Project description: 63%
Section F – Participants profiles (especially section F. 1 – Acquired knowledge and skills): 100%
Section G – Preparation: 90%
Section H – Main activities (especially section H. 1 – Activity Details): 55%
Section I – Follow-up activities: 64%
Section K – Summary: 63%

The results of the analysis were presented by the ECVET expert team members at seminars and were used to provide participants with recommendations as to what should be included in the given sections of their applications.

Other quantitative data concerned the ECVET implementation in the period of 2014 – 2017 are numbers of individual consultations that were provided by members of ECVET expert team members to authors of applications and/or documents used for ECEVT (the Memorandum of Understanding, the Learning Agreement, units of learning outcomes). Starting from about 2015, it was agreed that members of the ECVET expert teams would also provide face-to-face consultations or e-mail consultations to those who are interested. The consultations mostly concerned the units of learning outcomes. Proposed units were assessed and recommendations were made as to where and how the proposed units should be improved. The Centre for International Cooperation in Education started to register the number of consultations provided per e-mail from May 2016. Since then there were more than 100 of such consultations.

The popularization of ECVET was further supported by short films that the ECVET expert team created and webinars mentioned in chapter.

The implementation of ECVET elements in mobility projects at the national level was verified in the *Pospolu* project. The *Pospolu project – Fostering Cooperation between Schools and Enterprises with Focus on Vocational Training in Practice* – was a national systemic project financed from the European Social Fund, implemented by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports together with the National Institute for Education between December 2012 and October 2015. Among other things, the project verified potential use of ECVET principles during cooperation between schools and enterprises. As part of the project, 65 units of learning outcomes were published at the Methodological Portal rvp.cz out of which 30 were usable in work placement provided to students of secondary technical schools, 24 in practical training provided to students of secondary vocational schools, and 11 in teacher internship. In 2014, 25 seminars were held in different Czech regions, focused on the topic of *The Support and Development of Mobility at Secondary School – possible ECVET applications.* Furthermore, a methodical publication dealing with ECVET in practical training and student mobility at the national level was published.[17] It contains, among other things, a template for creating unit of learning outcomes and examples of units of learning outcomes from several fields of study. The aim of the publication was to present the ECVET system to schools and employers with respect to a possible transfer of best European practices to the national level and to show them advantages. Emphasis was put on a specific description of outcomes that were generated in the Pospolu project and were verified during the ECVET principle piloting.

16 Slámová, Hana: Analysis of KA 1 Applications under the 2014 Call – Successful Applicants. Prague: The Centre for International Cooperation in Education, 2014,

17 Čičváková, Michala, Kaňáková, Martina, Petrovič, Pavel: ECVET Elements and their Use in Initial Vocational Education at the National Level. Prague: The National Institute for Education, 2015. ISBN 978-80-7481-129-6.

4.2 Qualitative Indicators

As the previous section suggest, the implementation of ECVET in the Czech Republic spread so much over the respective period, that it is now regularly used in international mobility projects. However, the implementation of ECVET must be assessed not in terms of quantity, but rather in terms of quality. Therefore, the ECVET expert team also paid attention to the issue of quality of ECVET use during the period in question.

The focal point of their work were the analyses of the units of learning outcomes as the crucial ECVET document. The units of learning outcomes make it possible to precisely define anticipated learning outcomes during mobility and specify their relationship to the relevant vocational qualification and the level of the European Qualification Framework (EQF). During the period in question, the ECVET exert team analysed the units of learning outcomes three times: in 2014, in 2015 and in 2017 (units from 2016 and 2017). Analyses included units that were attached by applicants for grants from the Erasmus+ programme with their applications. Altogether, 894 units of learning outcomes were analysed. A majority of the analysed units was prepared in 2016 and 2017. A positive is that the analysed units of learning outcomes concern 25 groups of VET fields, i. e. almost all existing branches.

While in 2014, the analysis focused on identifying both positive and negative features of the units of learning outcomes, units from 2015, 2016 and 2017 have already been analysed under a unified methodology whose aim was to express the quality of units with scores. The analysis methodology was based on assigning score for meeting certain requirements of the units. It also followed advice given by ECVET expert team members to potential authors of units at seminars and in publications. According to these recommendations, every unit should have five parts (and it could have also others):

- the title of the unit,
- the code and the name of the vocational qualification to which the unit contents relate,
- EQF level,
- expected learning outcomes,
- methods for verifying the learning outcomes

A score of ten points was awarded for an apt and specific title of the unit and another ten points were awarded for code specification and the name of the relevant vocational qualification. The unit was awarded 40 points for an adequate number of learning outcomes that were precisely (specifically) formulated; if the requirement was met only partially, a score of 20 points was awarded. A similar procedure was applied during the evaluation of prescribed methods of learning outcome verification. The evaluation was carried out by six ECVET expert team members when each member evaluated a certain number of units. The maximum score was 100.

The analyses of the unit titles confirmed that the title was sufficiently apt for approximately two thirds of the units. In this respect, no major differences were identified between units from different years. The requirement to specify a vocational qualification to which the contents of the unit refer to was met by approximately two fifths of all units. As far as this criterion is concerned, the share remained more or less the same over the years. The established result is influenced mainly by two factors: first, the Czech National Register of Qualifications does not include and cannot include all qualifications (currently, it contains about 1 150 vocational qualifications) and second, for the authors of the units of learning outcomes (usually teachers at VET school) is not usual/common to relate vocational training to professional qualifications of the National Register of Qualifications.

As far as the determination of expected learning outcomes is concerned, the analysis of the units showed a positive development. While in 2015, the learning outcomes in the analysed units were evaluated with an average score of 26.5 points (out of a maximum score of 40 points), in both subsequent years, the average score was higher (29.2 and 28.1 points). This proves the increasing quality of formulating the expected learning outcomes in units. Moreover, the analyses showed that in the units, learning outcomes are largely formulated through vocational/practical activities and that knowledge-, skill- and competence -based learning outcomes occur only in a smaller number of units. There were about 80% of units with learning outcomes formulated through vocational activities. This is because the requirements concerning the vocational qualifications in the National Register of Qualifications (qualification standards) are also formulated with the help of vocational activity.

The analyses also identified a qualitative improvement in the formulation of learning outcome verification. In units from 2016 and 2017, the learning outcomes verification

method was awarded 24 points which is almost ten points more than in 2015 units.

The increasing quality of the units of learning outcomes is best seen when we compare the overall score that was awarded to the units in different years. While in 2015, the analysed units were awarded 38.6 points, in 2016 and 2017, it was an average of 63.5 points. This means that over recent years, the quality of the units of learning outcomes has increased and on average reached approximately two thirds of the optimal level.

The national ECVET expert team address the qualitative issues of ECVET implementation also in their other specialized activities. At the beginning of the 2014 – 2017 period in question, the expert team engaged in explaining relationships between qualifications in the Czech Republic, the European Qualification Framework (EQF) and the ECVET system. This resulted into a brochure[18] designated both for experts who manage or influence vocational education at the national, regional and sector level, and experts who participated in developing and updating the Czech National Register of Qualifications.

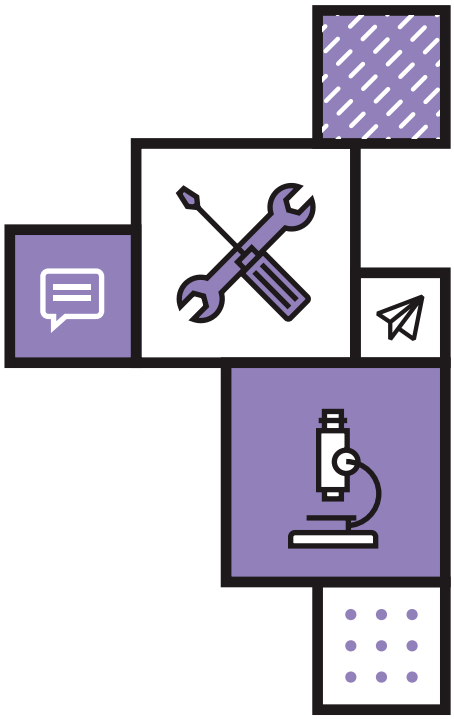
In order to enable the monitoring of the development of ECVET implementation quality, the ECVET expert team initiated surveys among ECVET users. At the end of 2015, a survey was carried out among grant beneficiaries under the 2015 Call. The aim of the survey was to obtain information about the use of ECVET and the progress in ECVET awareness. The results of the survey were supposed to allow the ECVET expert team and the Centre for International Cooperation in Education purposeful planning of their further activities. The respondents identified seminars and publications published by the Centre for International Cooperation in Education as the main sources of information. A positive finding was that many schools use the units of learning outcomes also outside international mobility projects, such as for student's internship and for teacher training. Furthermore, the survey showed that the procedure of learning outcomes assessment is performed in line with the ECVET principles. Respondents also pointed out that the use of ECVET is also associated with a certain administrative load. 74% of all respondent said that in their opinions, ECVET helps to increase the quality of mobility projects.

Results of the above ECVET expert team studies show that together with a wider application of ECVET, the quality of ECVET implementation and its benefits have been increasing. Despite that the implementation still shows weak point such as an insufficient use of ECVET by employers for continual vocational training.

18 Coufalík, Jaromír: Report on coherence of ECVET with the European qualification framework (EQF). Prague: Centre for International Cooperation in Education, 2014. ISBN 978-80-87335 611.

5

The Impact of ECVET Implementation in Educational and Other Activities at Vocational Schools



5.1 The Impact on Educational Programmes at Schools

Since the 2015 call, the ECVET expert team members have also engaged in the evaluation of final reports on international mobility projects. The main reason was the opportunity to obtain information from grant beneficiaries not only about the preparation, implementation and evaluation of mobility projects, but also about the impact of the projects. The information received is both from the final reports and from data included in annexes to the final reports. These also include elaborated units of learning outcomes, the evaluation of internship by participants, etc. All of the above documents make it possible to determine whether and how the ECVET principles and requirements were met during the project implementation.

During the final report evaluation, team members collected information about the following ECVET aspects:

- the units of learning outcomes and other ECVET documents,
- the procedure of learning outcome assessment and validation,
- the procedure of recognition of learning outcomes,
- the impact of project implementation on educational activities carried out by schools.

Information concerning the units of learning outcomes made it possible to see the final form of units that were used during the project implementation. Where team members analysed the units as part of other studies/outcomes (see the previous chapters) and provided advice and recommendations concerning the units during

consultations, those concerned draft versions of the units of learning outcomes. The final report evaluation made it possible to study and assess the final versions of the units that were usually of a higher quality that the drafts.

Information concerning the procedures of assessment and the validation of learning outcomes as described in the final reports made it possible for the team members to determine whether students were assessed by an authorized employee of the foreign receiving organization at the end of their internship. Based on final report evaluation results to date we can say that this requirement was met in a vast majority of the projects. Moreover, the team members assessed whether assessment records were made for the learning outcome assessment and what their quality was. It became evident that assessment records were successfully prepared and used especially in mobility projects from the last calls. Subsequently, final report evaluation made it possible to identify and assess the procedure of learning outcome validation and the procedure of their recognition by the sending organization. The procedures were mostly in line with the ECVET requirements.

As far as the project implementation impact is concerned, team members monitored it mostly to determine whether and to what extent VET schools use the knowledge and skills gained during the project implementation to improve their training programmes. The final report evaluation shows that the project implementation impact VET schools but it cannot be quantified more precisely. This is because the impact has several forms. Some VET schools will include tasks addressed by interns among tasks that form part of vocational education curricula. Other schools will use the units of learning outcomes in students' work experience. Brief glossaries of terms prepared under mobility projects are used by the school in foreign language training. The final report evaluators consider it a serious defect if information on the exploitation of project experience is missing in the final report. As team members also use knowledge obtained during final report evaluation at their seminars, mentions/references/remarks/ of project impact on the improvement of schools' educational programmes appear with a higher frequency. Benefits of ECVET are also manifested by the increasing quality of schools educational programmes.

Information on using ECVET in the Czech Republic that was gathered by team members during the evaluation of final reports on mobility project implementation confirmed the results of questionnaire surveys carried out in 2017, covered in chapter 6 of this Mid-Term Evaluation.

5.2 ECVET and the Erasmus+ VET Mobility Charter in Vocational Education and Training

In 2015, the European Commission introduced a new certificate entitled Erasmus+ VET Mobility Charter. Successful grant beneficiaries in the field of international mobility who also have a well elaborated internationalization strategy can apply for the certificate. If they receive it, their projects are considered to have been implemented so well that they can receive a grant for another mobility project without the usual quality evaluation of their grant applications.

Applicants were able to apply for the certificate first time in 2015. At the time, four applicants were awarded this certificate in the Czech Republic, following a demanding evaluation. In 2016, the certificate was awarded to another seven applicants and another seven followed in 2017. Altogether, the certificate is held by 18 VET schools.

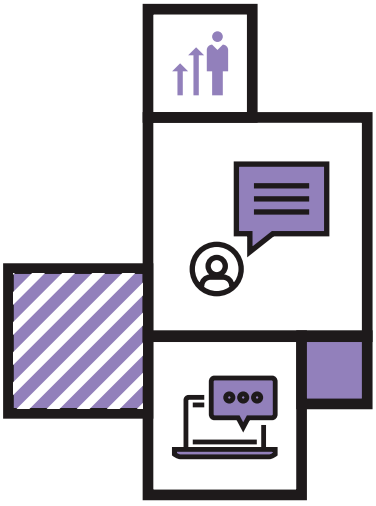
Requirements that must be met by applicants for the certificate also include three projects successfully implemented in the previous years. This guarantees that applicants have extensive experience and are able to implement high-quality projects. Applicants must attach their internationalization strategy to their applications. The strategy should prove that international cooperation in VET is an integral part of the applicant's work. Plans concerning the applicant's international cooperation development the following five years should be described in the action plan with the help of specific indicators.

The existing 18 certificate holders in the Czech Republic are among experienced grant beneficiaries who can also make a good use of ECVET. This is documented, among other things, by some units of learning outcomes that were prepared and evaluated as being of a good quality by the ECVET expert team members during the analysis of 2016 and 2017 units and recommended for publication.

The implementation and use of the VET Mobility Charter together with the ECVET system helps to increase the quality of international mobility projects

6

Feedback from Grant Beneficiaries on Implementation of ECVET



In order to obtain feedback, the national ECVET expert team sought to identify the response of the key groups to ECVET and its implementation since the first years of their work. The team would usually take advantage of seminars where team member used to meet VET teachers as their main target group. As part of preparation for this mid-term evaluation, the ECVET team performed two questionnaire surveys on the occasion of grant beneficiary seminars in 2017.

Between June and September 2017, a questionnaire survey was carried out among 2014 - 2016 grant beneficiaries. The main purpose was to identify information that concerns the use of ECVET, progress in awareness of the ECVET system among VET schools and the benefits of using ECVET. 133 respondents took part in the survey. The questions were divided into three categories: a) process-related (related to the project organization and the extent of using the ECVET principles); b) content-related (focused on the proper use of ECVET principles) and c) evaluation-related (discovering respondents' opinion of ECVET benefits). Some questions followed up the previous questionnaire survey from 2015 and answers to them also enabled to monitor the implementation of ECVET in the Czech Republic.

As far as process-related issues are concerned, one half of the respondents had previous experience with using the ECVET principles in mobility projects. A positive development can be seen in the formation of the units of learning outcomes. Most respondents (101, i. e. 75%) formed the units in collaboration with a foreign partner. The percentage was lower in 2015 (46%). This resulted into a lower share of sending organizations that prepare their own units (45% in 2015 and 25% in 2017) while the share of partnerships where the receiving and the sending organizations agree on the contents was higher. This trend corresponds to the ECVET principles by increasing the quality of internships.

The most frequent source for the formation of the unit of learning outcomes was a school educational programme-school curriculum (92 respondents, i.e. 69%), or a relevant qualification from the National Register of Qualifications (84 respondents, i. e. 63%). Other responses included the actual lists of competences, suggestions and requirements by foreign partners, practical work experience and internships abroad, experience from workshop with foreign instructors. Regardless of the units' origins, most of them are used in other mobility projects (70%).

As far as the use of the units of learning outcomes, they were most frequently used for internships abroad. However, one third of the respondents (43%) stated that they also used the unit(s) when adjusting the school educational programmes which reflected experiences gained abroad. In addition, the units are used by collaborating enterprises to specify the contents of both practical training and theoretical education.

The questionnaire survey also provided information about the proper use of the ECVET principles. The evaluation of the units of learning outcomes was done properly by 75% of the receiving institution (101 respondents). Unlike 2015, a major improvement was achieved. The percentage of cases with double evaluation decreased from 12 to 6%. At the same time, the number of students whose internship outcomes were recognized and credited for with a grade increased (from 31 to 57%).

As far as ECVET benefits are concerned, the use of ECVET benefits is mostly based on the use of the units of learning outcomes (as a method to determine the content of internships) and a transparent evaluation of acquired skills. 103 respondents (i.e. 77%) said that these principles made internship more beneficial to their participants. On the other hand, 88 respondents said that the application of ECVET principles means an administrative load for them.

Regarding the question of ECVET benefits to the development of international collaboration and the simplification of searching for new partners, 74 respondents replied positively and 32 respondents were not able to assess the benefits. 27 respondents do not consider the ECVET principles in this field beneficial. As far as the issue of implementing ECVET, respondents showed most interest in practical examples of the units of learning outcomes and their availability on websites. The respondents also highly valued seminars focused on practical issues of unit formation and the preparation of recommended documents. A lower interest was identified in brochures, webinars and other information materials. Suggestions and comments regarding the contents of the webinars included topics such as the formation of the units of learning outcomes, the evaluation of created units, the formulation of learning outcomes and evaluation criteria. The most recommended topics for brochures included examples of the units of learning outcomes (available online if possible), examples of the most frequent mistakes when using ECVET, best practice examples, etc.

The second questionnaire survey was also performed by the national ECVET expert team in summer 2017 on the occasion of seminars for grant beneficiaries under the 2017 call. 60 respondents provided their opinions during the survey, i. e. about one half of those who received grants for mobility projects under the Erasmus+ programme. Two thirds of such respondents were from VET schools that have implemented international mobility projects in the past, one third were VET schools that implemented their first mobility project. We can say that respondents from organizations that already have experience with mobility projects and ECVET prevailed. This is proved not only by the number of projects that have been implemented, but also by the number of units of learning outcomes already prepared by the respondents. The average number of prepared units was 5,2.

Questionnaire survey confirmed that ECVET users most often obtained information about ECVET at seminars, publications and website of the Centre for International Cooperation in Education. To a lesser extent, respondents identified the Internet, colleagues from other schools and foreign partner organizations as the main source of ECVET information.

The questionnaire also included questions that concern compliance with ECVET principles, such as evaluation of the mobility participants by representatives of the receiving organization. Survey results showed that this principle is observed by a vast majority of grant beneficiaries. Internship participants are not assessed again by the sending organization after their return. We can say that ECVET helped simplify the procedure of internal evaluation.

Respondents' answers to the question whether in their opinion ECVET helps increase the quality of mobility projects were most important. Positive answers largely prevailed. Examples of some answers:

- *better planning of job tasks, standardized evaluation of student outcomes during their internship,*
- *better project preparedness, a more detailed student work planning,*
- *thanks to a more precise description of learning outcomes, the foreign partner was able to better prepare the content of internship and select a workplace,*
- *the internship programme was more specific, the outputs were more specific and students approached the whole thing with a greater responsibility,*
- *the receiving organization knows exactly what to teach the students.*

Both questionnaire surveys made it possible to determine the ECVET users' standpoints. Participants provided a positive evaluation of ECVET.

Besides questionnaire surveys, the ECVET team obtained information about how ECVET is used by its users; the information was gathered from final reports on the implementation of mobility projects and from direct participant reports. These sources of information also confirm the good level of ECVET application in the Czech Republic and a largely positive assessment of ECVET as an instrument to increase the quality of mobility projects.

7
Conclusions

The implementation of ECVET in mobility projects in the Czech Republic significantly proceeded in the first half of the 2014 – 2020 period. From being originally used in several pilot projects, ECVET gradually expanded into nearly all international mobility projects and some mobility projects at the national level. An instrument that was used only occasionally has become a regular one. The use of ECVET increased the quality of mobility projects.

Together with a wider application of ECVET in mobility projects, the quality of ECVET implementation grew over the monitored period. This is obvious namely from the increased quality of the unit of learning outcomes and other documents when using ECVET. The created units related to all fields of VET. The quality of procedure evaluation, validation and recognition of learning outcomes has also increased.

The above mentioned positive outcomes were achieved largely with the help of a national ECVET expert team. This confirmed the benefits of the existence of such team and the focus of their work. However, besides positive outcomes, the mid-term evaluation also showed certain negative aspects of the existing ECVET implementation.

Even though ECVET implementation in mobility projects has expanded, most project participants were only VET school students who are getting their initial vocational education. In the vast field of continuing education of adults (both employed and unemployed ones), ECVET has only been used to a small extent. This is also affected by the fact that mobilities are not as common in this field.

The mid-term evaluation of ECVET use helped to identify the main positive and negative features of the scope and quality of ECVET implementation over the period in question.

It also laid foundations for proposing objectives for a next period. The work plan of the team for the period until the end of 2020 is based on achieved results, weak points of the ECVET implementation to date and the intentions of the European Commission.

In the next period until the end of 2020, the team plans to focus its work on the following objectives:

- increasing the quality of learning outcomes formulations in the units of learning outcomes; the team will further work with those who design the units in the form of seminars and via consultations and will expand the set of published units of learning outcomes;
- increasing the quality of learning outcome assessment; the team will continue analysing units and

will use their outcomes when working with the authors of the units;

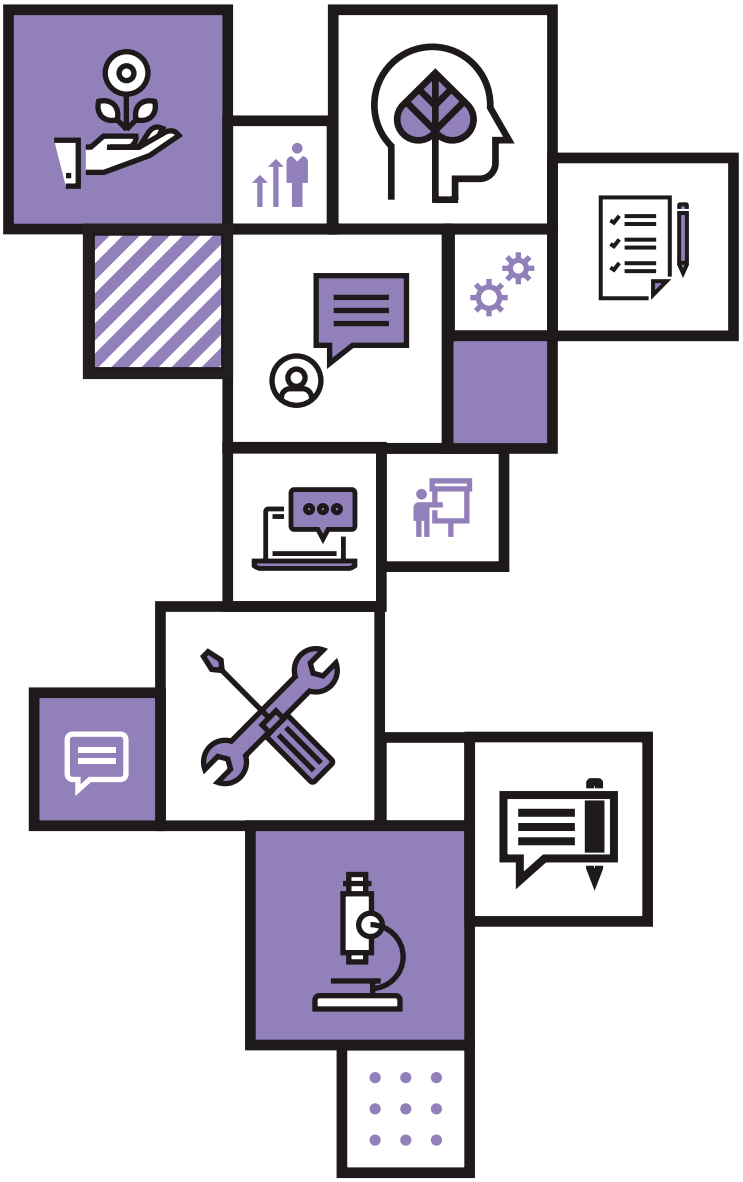
- dealing with the relationship between qualifications of the National Register of Qualifications and the units of learning outcomes; the team will collaborate in the ECVET Coordination Centre when verifying the options to create the units of learning outcomes as part of qualification standards;

- expanding collaboration with employers when implementing ECVET; the team will deepen its contacts with employer associations in important sectors and with providers of continuing vocational training;

- pursuing international collaboration; team members will continue participate in international seminars and other activities that concerns ECVET;

- cooperating with European Commission bodies when planning ECVET review; the team will help implement Commission's intentions aimed at improving the ECVET system.

notes:



Mid-Term Evaluation of the Use of ECVET within the Erasmus+ Programme

Dům zahraniční spolupráce (DZS), 2017
Na Poříčí 1035/4, 110 00 Praha 1
www.dzs.cz
www.naerasmusplus.cz
info@dzs.cz
ecvet@dzs.cz

Team of authors
Graphic design: Ondřej Kunc – artLab

Co-financed with the support of the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union and the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports.

ISBN: 978-80-88153-51-1

Dům zahraniční spolupráce (DZS)
Na Poříčí 1035/4
110 00 Praha 1

+420 221 850 100
info@dzs.cz

www.dzs.cz
www.naerasmusplus.cz

Facebook
www.facebook.com/dumzahranicnispoluprace
www.facebook.com/erasmusplusCR

Instagram
www.instagram.com/dzs_cz/

Twitter
twitter.com/dzs_cz