



## 2019 Annual ECVET Forum

### 'Using the ECVET principles to connect learning and working in tomorrow's labour market - European, national, local and sectoral policies and initiatives'

#### Flash Report

The 2019 Annual ECVET Forum took place in Rotterdam (The Netherlands) on 20 – 21 June 2019. The morning of day 1 provided an opportunity to explore the overall European picture of skill demands in the future labour market before looking at how, at country level, work is underway to adapt and develop VET systems to the future needs of the labour market. Lastly, participants also had an opportunity to hear how this theme is being addressed at ground level in the advanced manufacturing sector. The agenda then provided participants with an opportunity to take part in five different workshops before a panel discussion closed day 1. Day 2 focused on an 'Ideas Incubator' where participants were able to share projects, discuss ideas or pose questions to other participants.

#### Why focus on using ECVET principles to connect learning and working in tomorrow's labour market?

Research predicts that the European labour market of the future will be shaped by technological change, demographic change, and increasing globalisation. A growing demand is projected for higher level qualifications (high level experts, managers and skilled professionals) as well as for lower level qualifications (for instance, in the care, hospitality and leisure sector). Digitalisation has implications for all sectors and skill levels therefore digital skills are a cross-cutting skill set for workers across the board.

To meet current and future economic needs, highly flexible and responsive education and training systems are needed. As professions evolve over time, and some even disappear, it is important to constantly reflect on the skills required to work in a company, job or sector, and how these skill demands can be met. This can include the need for upskilling and re-skilling.

The Annual ECVET Forum 2019 discussed how the ECVET principles can help to ensure flexible and adaptable VET systems and provisions for young people and adults that respond to these needs. ECVET principles centre on the use of units of learning outcomes for describing qualifications and on facilitating the transfer and accumulation of units (of learning outcomes) across different settings<sup>1</sup>. The practical use of the ECVET principles to connect learning and working in tomorrow's labour market was discussed in view of education and training systems and related policies and reforms, as well as from the view of specific target groups of learners.

#### The Annual ECVET Forum 2019 in numbers:

- 1.5 days event
- 137 participants, from 29 countries (25 EU Member States, plus Iceland, Norway, Serbia and Turkey)
- 23 presentations of projects, programmes, tools and services related to ECVET and the future labour market
- 10 workshops
- An idea incubator with 9 thematic discussion groups ...

....leading to exchanges and new ideas for tools, projects and other activities to explore ideas on how ECVET principles can be used to connect learning and working!

<sup>1</sup> For more information about the ECVET principles, please see: <http://www.ecvet-secretariat.eu/en/content/principles-supporting-flexible-vet-pathways>

## Key messages

- The future of work and the nature of the labour market in the future will mean that the types of work undertaken, and the skill levels required for work, will change. Atypical forms of work are on the rise via the rise in part-time employment, temporary contracts and the 'gig economy.' High-skilled jobs are also growing in numbers however VET graduates do not seem to be able to secure such jobs.
- As the skills needed for work changes and the nature of work changes, it is important to review the skills needed. A unit-based learning outcome approach can mean that VET qualifications can be updated in line with labour market needs more swiftly than before.
- To understand the current and future needs of the labour market, collaboration with labour market actors is important. This includes employers, social partners (such as trade unions) and sector representatives (where possible). They can offer valuable insights and can be an important vehicle to encourage learners to update their skills.
- Using simple jargon-free messages that employers, and other stakeholders, understand is important as they most likely do not have a deep understanding of VET systems or learning outcomes.
- Ground level support is important in delivering VET training to students and adult learners. VET teachers are at the forefront of VET delivery and pedagogical developments and it is important for them have an open mind to new approaches and methodologies. This can help them to adapt to new challenges and gradually make the step from a teacher role to the role of facilitator of learning. Teacher training and their buy-in is critical to ensure that they can deliver high quality, innovative VET.
- It is commonly acknowledged that employers are hard to engage with a view of finding out about current and future skills needs. However, communication methods can be tailored to employer needs, for example being proactive by visiting employers at their premises and organising meetings at times that suit them. Using best practice examples, case studies and 'employer champions' can also help to showcase how employers can work with VET bodies to adapt and create qualifications that meet current and future skills needs.
- Learning can take place in different settings, not just the classroom. For example, a lot of learning can take place in the workplace. Some work needs to be done for these (and other different) learning environments to be recognised and for systems to be put in place for this learning to be recognised. Working with partners and stakeholders can help to disseminate and promote this.
- The recognition of prior learning is important to ensure that learners have an opportunity to upskill or re-skill so that they can meet the needs of certain sectors or employers in the future.
- ECVET principles offer possibilities to create flexible VET learning pathways, which can be used for VET learners and in cases of re-skilling and upskilling according to the demands of the labour market. The concept of units of learning outcomes and modularisation can help to motivate low-skilled adults with a 'step-by-step' approach and assist with the accumulation and transfer of learning.

The Annual ECVET Forum is organised by the European Commission with the support of the ECVET Secretariat. The Forum is open to any interested member of the ECVET Community of Practice and interested parties. The full report of the Annual ECVET Forum 2019 will be available soon at:  
<http://www.ecvet-secretariat.eu/en/training-and-events/20-21-june-2019-annual-ecvet-forum-netherlands>