RUECVET: Piloting ECVET to the national VET system of Russia and Uzbekistan

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The RUECVET project aims to pilot the ECVET implementation in the national HE & VET system of Russia and Uzbekistan by creating a long-term platform of collaboration between leading HEIs engaged in the training of VET teachers for post-secondary non-tertiary education level. The basis of the project is to focus on the transfer and adaptation of the ECVET technical framework, utilizing the expertise of three HEIs from European Countries in order to explore the applicability of ECVET in Russia and Uzbekistan and ultimately creating a compatible, comparable VET system that serves both horizontally (within VET) and vertically (from VET to HE) at national and transnational level.

Introduction

The drive for a flexible and adaptable educational system to address the challenges of increased internationalization is behind the educational reforms implemented in Russia and Uzbekistan over the last few years. The application of EU instruments promoting quality, transparency and mobility (such as ECTS and ECVET) within and across EU borders is at the epicenter of the respective national strategies for educational reform. According to the main priorities of the "State Programme for the Development of Education" of the Russian Federation for 2013–2020 and the "State Programme for the Republic of Uzbekistan" for 2001-2020, introducing ECVET to the national VET system is considered a key step toward enhancing the flexibility and comparability of the VET system both at national and international level.

About the RUECVET project

The RUECVET project is a CBHE project funded under Erasmus+. The overall aim of the project is to create

a Higher Education and Vocational Education & Training platform for piloting ECVET to the national educational systems of Russia and Uzbekistan to promote and facilitate compatibility, comparability and complementarity of VET qualifications.

Whereas ECTS for Higher Education has been adapted at a national and institutional level in both the Russian Federation and the Republic of Uzbekistan (Partner Countries), the respective European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) has still not been transferred at either level. The lack of a transparent and comparable credit system in the VET sector creates a roadblock in the mobility of people moving from one learning context to another - either horizontally or vertically, and transnationally.

The project was first initiated by key HE institutions engaged in VET teacher training in Russia and Uzbekistan in consultation with the relevant Ministries of Education and Science in the two Partner Countries. The Russian State Vocational Pedagogical University (RSVPU), the noted university for VET teacher training in Russia, and the University of Nicosia in collaboration with Intercollege in Cyprus undertook the leading role in developing the proposal and forming a transnational consortium.

For the implementation of the RUECVET project a transnational consortium has been developed between 11 key HE and VET institutions (see Fact Box below), from 3 European Member States (Cyprus, Malta and Latvia) and two Partner Countries (Russia and Uzbekistan). All consortium members are strategically positioned to facilitate and promote the piloting of ECVET in the national VET system of Russia and Uzbekistan while capitalizing on the previously acquired experience of HEIs in the application of EU instruments for transparency and mobility (ECTS).

Given the interlinked structures between HE and VET in the two Partner Countries, developing a cooperation between the two sectors in order to test and implement ECVET in the national context of Russia and Uzbekistan is considered by the consortium as a highly recommended approach. The expected benefits of strong coop-

eration between HE and VET sectors for implementing the project's detailed work programme are as follows:

- To pave the way for the adaptation and implementation of ECVET in the VET system of Russia and Uzbekistan while capitalizing on existing experience and expertise collected through the implementation of the ECTS system;
- To ensure a synergy and establish a structural link between ECVET and ECTS – facilitating transparency and comparability between the two systems; and
- To facilitate and enhance lifelong learning through the development of flexible pathways and improve the learners' mobility both horizontally (within VET) and vertically (from VET to HE).

The project's main proposal for pilot testing the ECVET system in post-secondary non-tertiary education level, through the cooperation of HE and VET institutions is considered as a key structural measure for facilitating the flexibility and internationalization of VET in Russia and Uzbekistan. At the same time, this will contribute to the development of a common educational area, encompassing both the VET & HE sector between Europe and neighboring countries.
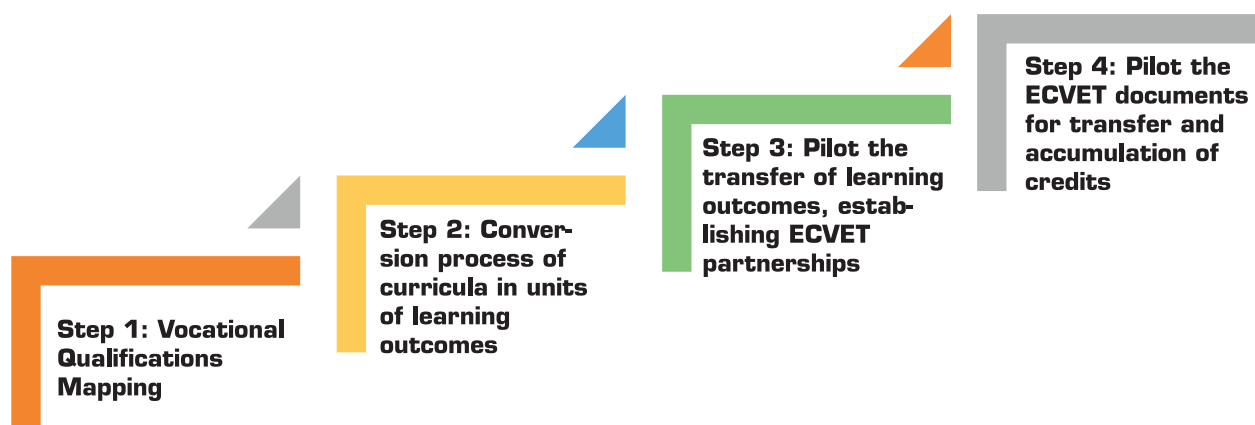
The key outputs
The project activities regarding the pilot testing of the credit transfer will

culminate in several outputs. The key outputs regarding the RUECVET methodology are listed below. All outputs will be posted on the project website and will be available to the public for free.

1. ECVET Master Guide for VET Instructors in Russia and Uzbekistan (EN, RU, UZ)
2. RUECVET – e-Training Manual for VET Instructors in Russia and Uzbekistan (RU & UZ)
3. Samples of 48 units described in learning outcomes covering 24 vocational qualifications from 8 different HE & VET institutions (EN, RU, UZ)
4. Four Training Centres (2 in Russia and 2 in Uzbekistan) offering off-line and on-line learning on ECVET and ECVET workshops as well
5. Multidimensional Roadmap of VET evolution (Policy Recommendation Report) on how to implement ECVET in the VET system in Russia and Uzbekistan (EN, RU, UZ)
6. A network of 30 ECVET contact points in all 5 consortium countries with expertise on ECVET available for guidance and support

RUECVET operating methodology
The RUECVET operating methodology for Credit Transfer is based on ECVET principles achieved in formal context settings. The RUECVET operating methodology can be seen in the following diagram.

Step 1: Vocational Qualifications Mapping

Step 2: Conversion process of curricula in units of learning outcomes

Step 3: Pilot the transfer of learning outcomes, establishing ECVET partnerships

Step 4: Pilot the ECVET documents for transfer and accumulation of credits

occupational standards representing the aggregated experience and understanding of employers and professional associations.

When implementing the ECVET system for a VET study programme, developers should take several actions to correctly describe the units of learning outcomes. The latter are both constituent parts of the qualification and the results of the educational process: what the learner must know and be able to do by the end of the programme. The actions to be taken are based on the universal method - functional analysis of the chosen qualification within a specific occupational area. The final step of the analysis is developing a functional map.

Functional analysis for identifying units of learning outcomes

One of the peculiarities of the national learning environment of ECVET implementation in Russia and Uzbekistan is the existence of two sets of state educational and occupational standards which need to be considered when implementing the technical framework of ECVET in any VET study programme. Often, these educational and occupational standards for a chosen qualification are not aligned. All experts engaged in developing VET study programmes inevitably face the challenge of the accurate identification and description of the training programme in building blocks (courses, modules or units etc.) of learning outcomes, which correspond to the qualification (skill level) within a specific occupational area. In this context, when developing a vocational study programme a team of developers should proceed not so much from the provisions of the available educational standards but rather from the sector/occupational area needs – which qualifications are in demand within a particular sector and what functions make up the essence

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of a specific qualification. When combined with labour market research and direct contact with employers, the expertise of the study programme developers will allow them to identify and relate market demands to the existing restrictions as to the content and form of study programme delivery. These restrictions are: 1) educational standards representing the aggregated experience and understanding of the educational community; and 2)

Functional analysis is the main tool used to determine the nature of an industry sector and the work functions performed in it. In addition, functional analysis is an important process for identifying vocational competencies and establishing boundaries between different qualifications. A detailed functional map makes it possible to establish the unique character of each occupation for the appropriate level of qualification and to realize in what ways the considered qualification is different from all the others. Functional comparison of various work actions also contributes to identifying the work functions necessary to achieve a certain level of specific activity, thus enabling definition of occupational competency through the creation or adoption of new and existing national occupational standards. Functional analysis may serve as a tool of seeking a "consensus" between the requirements of occupational and educational standards. It also provides a clear understanding of the list and content of work functions within the qualification required by the real employer or employers' associations (Skill Advisory Bodies).

What's ahead

The ECVET Master Guide and E-learning Tutorial reflecting the specifics of the Russian and Uzbekistan education systems are under construction. Despite the technical challenges and complexities which arise from the effort to transfer and adapt the ECVET technical framework to the national context of the two Partner Countries, the project is making sufficient progress. A number of valuable and innovative tools developed such as the Functional Analysis Map are is creating added value in the field of ECVET methodology, not only nationally but at European level as well.

For more information visit our project website at **www.ruecvet.uz**