EU initiatives supporting VET in the UK

EU initiatives supporting VET in the UK (2016)

This document updates the publication "European VET Initiatives in the UK: What are they and how do they interact?" which was published by the UK EQF National Coordination Points in 2014. The field of VET is always evolving to better meet the needs of learners, workers, employers and the national economies. In line with this modernisation of VET, the EU initiatives have evolved and this document is intended to explain them and encourage their use.

In recent years there has been formal agreement amongst the EU Member States to use European level initiatives to enhance vocational education and training (VET) within a single competitive European market and in the context of lifelong learning. Taken together, the principles that these initiatives embody give a definite characterisation to VET at European level, however this character only becomes concrete at national level. In this report we look at the principles behind the European initiatives and how they are used in VET in the UK.

The document is written as a series of sections. First an overview of the EU initiatives is provided and this is followed by a summary of current EU policy in the field of VET. After this general introduction each of the five initiatives are explained in more depth. Since 2012 the EU Member States have been supporting work in the field of validation of learning gained in non-formal and informal settings. This area of development is described. Following this, the synergies between the initiatives and how they support one another is summarised. Various UK bodies have been working with the initiatives and promoting them with users who might benefit from them. The document describes how this work is coordinated in the UK and in the final section forecasts how the EU initiatives could evolve in the future.

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Overview of European VET initiatives

Countries in Europe have worked together to develop ways to help people move around Europe more easily to work or study. Within the context of European policy on VET, five European tools have been developed to support national systems, the mobility of people, the single labour market and lifelong learning. These work together to help with the recognition of learning throughout life and throughout Europe. An overview of these five initiatives is provided in table 1. In addition to these tools, there are other European initiatives that support the same policy objectives, for example validation of non-formal and informal learning. These are described later in the document.

Table 1: An overview of five European VET Initiatives

EU Initiatives Explained	What it can do for learners, workers and jobseekers	What it can do for employers and coll	What it can do for careers advisors
European Qualifications Framework (EQF) A way of understanding qualifications levels in different countries. Website http://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/en	Helps compare a qualification with one at the same level in another country – go to https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/en/compare	Will indicate how the qualifications of an applicant compare to a UK qualification. A website is available that provides the information needed, not just about qualification levels but also about foreign qualifications in different countries. It also provides lots of up-to-date information about learning opportunities. Try it: http://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/en	Help explain UK qualifications and levels to clients from other countries. Guide clients from the UK towards jobs and courses abroad that are accessible with their UK qualifications.

Europass A way of describing a person's knowledge and skills used across Europe. Website - http://www.uknec.org.uk/	This set of forms (including one for a European CV) will help people who want to move jobs in the UK or abroad or want to study in a different country. The forms make it clear to others what has been learned, including qualifications and personal achievements. 60 million people have completed a Europass CV so far. Sometimes in CVs the title of a course such as 'Language and History' does not mean much to an employer on its own, the Europass supplements help to explain what was involved in courses in much more detail. This helps make learning experience obvious to employers and admissions staff. One of the Europass forms explains the level of a person's language skills.	Shows what non-UK applicants have achieved. It covers more than qualifications and formal achievements, for example it shows language competencies. Makes recruitment easier. The five documents can help to identify the most suitable applicants, because they present and demonstrate the individual's skills and competences in a presentable format.	Helps you get clients off to a good start in describing their achievements for applying for work or study abroad.

| **European Credit transfer system for VET (ECVET)**

A way of getting work or study abroad recognised.

Website – http://www. ecvetexperts.org.uk/ | ECVET will help people who work or study in another country for a short time; it helps by making learning in the other country count towards study for a UK qualification. It will also let UK learning be recognised in another country.

Not all people have a fixed learning pathway for qualifications. Some change their minds and others have a break from courses. ECVET supports the national system to help carry forward past learning achievements to a new qualification.

Acknowledgement and recognition of achieved learning outcomes gives value to all learning experiences, thus improving employability. | Where ECVET is being used it probably indicates quality in an applicant's training. New recruits from abroad will be able to build on learning outcomes achieved in their home country.

Employees that are embarking on periods of work abroad will be able to use the experience in gaining formal qualifications in their home country. Their knowledge and understanding will also be improved through exposure to new and different work practices. | Clients might find the possibility of gaining formal recognition of periods of work and training abroad an advantage and improve their employability. |

European Quality Assurance system for VET (EQAVET) A way to be confident that training at home and abroad is good. Website - http://www.eqavet.eu/gns/about-eqavet/network-members/national-reference-points/uk.aspx	EQAVET works in the background to make sure the quality of education and training programmes (in the UK and abroad) can be trusted so that learners can feel more confident that they will benefit from their training and qualifications.	EQAVET ensures that training programmes can be designed using the same quality standards. Employers can be more confident that recruits have gone through a quality training scheme and have qualifications that will meet their needs.	Clients can be more confident in the training options abroad as EQAVET works to improve the quality of vocational education and training in the different European countries.
European Skills/ Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO) A way of understanding what's needed for jobs in other countries. Website - https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/home	ESCO will be able to help learners find jobs in the UK and other countries. It will allow them to see what employers from the UK and other countries want in terms of skills and qualifications and it will help learners to appreciate what skills and qualifications they have or might need for certain jobs. ESCO will allow a more efficient approach to job matching. Not only does online job matching provide job seekers with a wide range of relevant opportunities, it also helps employees to identify new career paths and show what transferable skills they have between occupations.	In conjunction with other initiatives it makes it easier for employers to make their job vacancies available in other countries. In the past the different languages of the EU have been a barrier to people looking for jobs in other countries and for employers trying to recruit people from other countries. ESCO aims to break down this barrier.	When ESCO is fully operational it will serve as a key tool for professionals in careers and employment services as it opens up the single European labour market to individuals. It will make the learning opportunities databases more useful. By using ESCO, employment services will be able to exchange job vacancies, CVs and other meaningful information across the European Union. This will encourage occupational and regional mobility; reduce mismatches between labour market demand and supply and lower operating costs for employment service providers.

2

European Policy for VET

Education and training in Member States is outside European Union legal powers and is the responsibility of national governments. However there are some aspects of European Union economic policy and social policy that impinge on national education and training practice and make a hard boundary between national actions and European initiatives impossible to sustain. For example, and directly relevant to this document, if there is to be a single European labour market and a competitive European economy, which is an aim of the Lisbon treaty, then vocational training in all countries needs to be highly effective. Ministers have therefore voluntarily agreed to accept developments at European level that aim to improve the quality of VET in the hope that it will enhance the single European market. The 'Copenhagen process' is the umbrella term used to describe all the European agreements that aim to develop VET in Member States, these include the initiatives that are the subject of this document and many others, for example improvements in counselling and guidance of learners and the principles for the validation of non formal and informal learning. The same may be said for higher education where knowledge-based businesses need to thrive on a supply of well-educated and highly specialised people. The 'Bologna process' aims to harmonise higher education programme structures across Europe and bring transparency and greater mobility of people with high levels of learning. Social inclusion and cultural exchange across Europe depends on actions in education and training. Thus it is inevitable that the boundary between European level and national actions related to VET is blurred.

The European initiatives such as Europass, EQF, ECVET, EQAVET and ESCO are all voluntary agreements supported by the ministries in the Member States. There are other such 'soft' agreements, such as the EU Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning. These voluntary agreements are developed through consensus among experts in the Member States and then scrutinised and amended by the European Parliament and 'recommended' to ministers in national governments who agree to voluntarily implement them. There is no legal imperative to implement them and different national circumstances might lead to varied levels of implementation. Thus the legal term for the 'soft' approach is to make a Recommendation that is adopted by national governments rather than making a legally enforceable regulation.

The Directive on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications
There is one area of European Union law that is enforceable and that impinges on education and training in Member States – the Directive on the recognition of professional qualifications. This general Directive replaced a series of more specific Directives and has been in place since 2005. It was modernised in 2013, and can be accessed at: http://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/services/free-movement-professionals/policy/legislation/index_en.htm

As its name suggests the Directive is not a soft law like a Recommendation but instead lays down hard legal requirements of national authorities to recognise the qualifications of people from other Member States. At the core of this law is that people who are a qualified general nurse, dentist, veterinary surgeon, midwife, architect, pharmacist and doctor must gain automatic recognition for their qualified status across the EU. In fact the effects of this Directive impacts on other professions and titles in Member States making it a key tool for mobility of EU citizens. More information can be found through the UK national contact point for the Directive - www.ukncp.org.uk

Lifelong learning
Encouraging lifelong learning is at the heart of European and national education and training policies. In 2009 the Council for the European Union stated:

'European cooperation in education and training for the period up to 2020 should be established in the context of a strategic framework spanning education and training systems as a whole in a lifelong learning perspective. Indeed, lifelong learning should be regarded as a fundamental principle underpinning the entire framework, which is designed to cover learning in all contexts – whether formal, non-formal or informal – and at all levels: from early childhood education and schools through to higher education, vocational education and training and adult learning.'

Lifelong learning policies also aim to increase participation in learning by stimulating the demand for learning and making sure that provision is adapted to the needs of individuals and other users of qualifications. As these policies are implemented, the demand for lifelong learning will have an obvious impact on how learning is delivered and will raise the demand for recognition of learning throughout life, and for more flexible validation and certification systems. Thus lifelong learning policies aim to improve permeability between different education and training systems, so that people can progress vertically (raise the level of their qualifications and competences) or horizontally (broaden their achievements, re-qualify or change learning pathways). These progression opportunities will mean people are more likely to take up the opportunity to be mobile within countries and across borders.

Learning and the labour market
There has been a strengthening of the role of EU-level policies with an employment focus in education and training. In 2009, EU education policy was reinforced by statements about linking education and training with the labour market needs of the future. Investing in people and modernising labour markets is one of the four priority areas of the Lisbon strategy. The last economic plan for the EU is based on three priorities:

- smart growth - economies based on knowledge and innovation require improvements in the quality of education, knowledge transfer, open and relevant education systems and a better gearing towards labour market needs;
- sustainable growth – by taking account of future skill needs and in particular skills for green jobs;
- inclusive growth -fostering high employment economies, social cohesion and implementation of lifelong learning principles.

In 2015 new deliverables were defined for the Copenhagen process, these included, inter alia:

Strengthened and simplified EU transparency and recognition tools: Transparency and recognition tools are essential for mobility, employability and lifelong learning, as well as to ensure the use of qualifications acquired outside the EU. Most Member States have developed National Qualifications Frameworks and have referenced these to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). Further work should promote a shift from transparency to recognition of qualifications across Europe, by strengthening the role of the EQF and promoting the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Adequate recognition and validation instruments for digitally acquired knowledge, skills and competences can support the uptake of open and innovative learning practices. Particular attention should be given to simplifying and rationalising existing EU instruments on skills and qualifications directed to the wider public to strengthen outreach.

It is not yet clear where the strengthening and simplification will lead in terms of changes to the existing instruments but it is clear that the need for them is underlined.

Increased focus on qualifications
Over the last few years ensuring the employability of citizens has resulted in EU policy that is strongly orientated towards qualifications. For over a decade, both qualifications and qualification frameworks have been high on the agenda of education and training policy-makers engaged in European level cooperation. The focus on qualifications also helps with improved recognition of learning across borders and with easing some of the problems confronting those who want to be internationally mobile.

With national qualifications frameworks established in almost all Member States the attention is now focussed on how learning outcomes can make these qualifications and frameworks more transparent and how learning outcomes can improve quality assurance of education, training and qualifications. This European trend towards more transparent qualifications systems is also evident around the world and is probably explained by the increasing international perspective seen in national policies on education and employment.

3

European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

The EQF is a translation device to make qualifications easier to understand across different countries and systems in Europe, its main aim is to help people moving from one country to another for work, or to continue their education or training.

The EQF was adopted in 2008 to make qualifications systems in the EU countries more transparent with the view that business, learning providers, learners and workers will find that their ambitions for mobility and recognition will be easier to achieve. Particularly significant was the desire of business sectors for a translation device to aid the understanding of the different national qualifications systems.

The EQF is an overarching framework of qualification levels. These levels can be related to those in each national qualifications system. Thus the EQF becomes a common European reference framework and through the EQF someone in one country can better understand another country's qualification levels. Figure 1 illustrates this.

Figure 1: How the EQF works
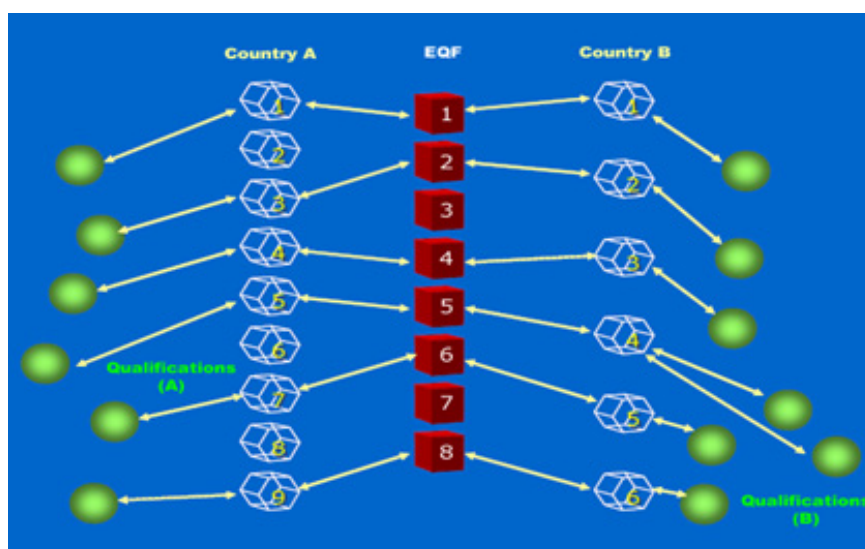
The eight levels of the EQF are described in terms of learning outcomes, which enables qualifications from one country (including general school education, higher education and vocational education and training) to be compared with qualifications from another country.

The UK NCPs have produced a short video film to illustrate the way the EQF works. The link can be accessed at:

http://www.mentormediatraining.co.uk/case-studies/video-production/ofqual-eqf-video/

The central concept of the EQF is that if each country makes a systematic link of its qualifications levels to those of the EQF then, through the EQF, there can be an indicative link between the levels of specific qualifications, (see fig 1). The 36 countries of the European Union and the European Free Trade Area have agreed to systematically link their qualifications systems to the EQF and to make reference to the EQF level of qualifications on certificates. Through this referencing process, national authorities responsible for qualifications systems, in cooperation with stakeholders responsible for developing and using qualifications, define the correspondence between the national qualifications system

and the eight levels of the EQF. Table 2 shows how the levels of UK National Qualifications Frameworks relate to the EQF levels.

In the final column of table 2 the correspondence of UK frameworks with the framework of qualifications for the European Area of Higher Education (EHEA) is shown. The latter covers qualifications levels in higher education.

Table 2: How the UK frameworks relate to the EQF

EQF (Lifelong Learning in Europe)	QCF (England, Wales and Northern Ireland)	CQFW (Wales)	SCQF (Scotland)	EHEA (Bologna) (European Higher Education)
8	8	8	12	3rd Cycle
7	7	7	11	2nd Cycle
6	6	6	10/9	1st Cycle
5	5/4	5/4	8/7	Short Cycle
4	3	3	6	
3	2	2	5	
2	1	1	4	
1	E3	E3	3	
	E2	E2	2	
	E1	E1	1	

In 2010 it was a sensible decision to link the QCF to the EQF, however in 2015 the QCF (and NQF for general qualifications) was replaced with a simpler Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF). The levels of these two frameworks are identical and so the original referencing position, shown in table 2, still holds.

Of the 36 countries involved with the EQF referencing, 26 have undertaken the referencing process and have endorsed referencing positions. Some of these have produced updates to their reports following developments in their qualifications systems. Most of the remaining countries are expected to have undertaken the referencing process by the end of 2016.

A second requirement of the EQF Recommendation is for countries to create a reference to the EQF level on new certificates. The UK took the view that this was for awarding organisations to decide. However the UK has provided publicity that will allow people to determine the EQF level of qualifications they hold and the EQF level is included in the data for every qualification in the main UK national qualifications databases.

For the EQF to work people need to be able to compare qualifications levels in different countries. To this end, the European Commission has set up a public portal to allow individuals and employers to quickly determine the correspondence between qualification levels in other countries. This portal allows people not only to compare qualification levels but it also provides information on specific qualifications that occupy those levels in national frameworks. The qualifications and learning opportunities website can be accessed at: http://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/en

Without the EQF, each of the levels of qualifications in every country would be difficult to

compare with those in other countries, therefore understanding and appreciation of the national qualifications systems across Europe would be extremely challenging.

EQF Implementation in the UK
Each member state is asked to nominate a National Coordination Point for EQF implementation. In the UK, because several qualifications frameworks operate, the EQF National Coordination Points (NCPs) are:

• England and Northern Ireland: Ofqual and CCEA Regulation
• Scotland: Scottish Credit & Qualifications Framework Partnership
• Wales: CollegesWales

For contacts in these organisations see section 10.

There are two main stages to implementation of the EQF. The first is to reference national qualification framework levels to EQF levels. The UK presented its report on referencing the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW), the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) and the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) to the EQF in January 2010. It was one of the first reports to be accepted by the EQF Advisory Group. Since 2010 the referencing process has evolved considerably and is currently being re shaped on the basis of the national experiences and, to a lesser extent, the more prominent position of the EQF in the world. The UK EQF NCPs are currently undertaking a project to scope out what would need to be done in the UK to update all of the referencing reports of the UK. Based on this work, a pilot exercise will be undertaken to test the process with the SCQF.

The second main stage to implementing the EQF is to make the outcome of the referencing process public by ensuring there is an EQF level on new qualification certificates. The UK qualifications regulators have not made it a requirement for awarding organisations to do this but they may do so if they wish. The EQF level is included in the specification of qualifications in the UK national qualifications databases. Recent research carried out with the UK awarding organisations shows a growing awareness of the value of the EQF and this may in time lead to voluntary inclusion of the EQF level on new certificates. The same research pointed to the need to promote the added value the EQF brings to awarding organisations and employers.

In fact the UK EQF NCPs have been working on a communications strategy since 2010. Communications activities so far have included the publication of leaflets and booklets, holding seminars, developing website material and more. In 2016 this work will continue with customised communications for specific audiences. In addition to the work on communications the UK EQF NCPs will be working on the possibility of updating our referencing reports and working on the theme of international qualifications and the EQF.

The Impact of the EQF
The European Commission 2013 EQF evaluation report states that the EQF is proving to be a useful reference tool and, whilst there is yet no hard evidence, there is confidence in the Member States that the EQF is having a positive impact on learners, employers, qualifications bodies, recognition agencies and internationally.

Only recently have the countries that are using the EQF turned their attention to measuring its impact and it will be some time before hard evidence becomes available.

There are now over 150 NQFs in the world and more are in development, the EQF is seen as a model for many of them and new regional qualifications frameworks are modelled on the EQF architecture and processes.

The EQF has had strong support from countries and can be seen as a driver to develop NQFs, learning outcomes, validation of non- formal and informal learning and more systematic quality assurance approaches. The EQF is used as a reference point in many other EU policies (for lifelong learning and economic and social policy) and for many national and European initiatives (such as those in this document).

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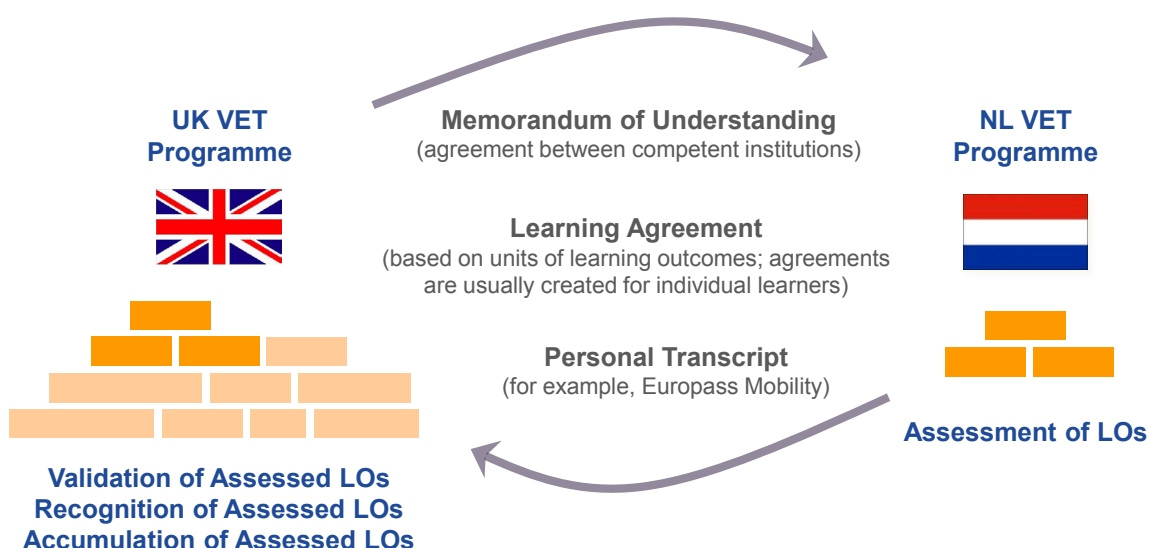# European Credit System for VET (ECVET)

The European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) aims to give people greater control over their individual learning experiences and make it more attractive to move between different countries and different learning environments. The system aims to facilitate the validation, recognition and accumulation of work-related skills and knowledge acquired during a stay in another country or in different situations. It should ensure that these experiences contribute to vocational qualifications.

ECVET can support mobility so that the skills people learn during a period of mobility can be made more visible in a CV or as part of a qualification. These skills include the soft skills (e.g. communication, team working) that are so often strongly developed during a placement. Additionally such periods of mobility are known to raise the aspirations of those who learn and work abroad. These are significant benefits of ECVET supported mobility periods.

ECVET aims to use a common language and structure to promote mutual trust among providers of vocational education & training and competent institutions across Europe. This will encourage more people to undertake periods of working, training or study in another European country. ECVET was conceptualised from 2002 onwards and adopted in 2009

The common language and structure provided by ECVET include a memorandum of understanding, learning agreement and a personal transcript. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) is completed by the organisation sending the learner or worker and the receiving institution. It forms an agreement between the two organisations and sets out how the procedure will operate. One aspect of the MoU is a statement about the scope of the MoU in terms of the qualifications and learning outcomes covered and how the learning might be recognised. The learning agreement applies at the level of the individual learner or worker and specifies the content of the placement including the expected learning outcomes and their assessment. It is from the learner's point of view a statement of the expectations to be met and how they will be met by all the partners involved. The personal transcript is a formal record of the outcomes achieved during the placement. Often the Europass mobility document is used as the personal transcript.   Figure 2 shows how these ECVET tools work together.

Figure 2: How ECVET tools work together

UK VET Programme

Memorandum of Understanding
(agreement between competent institutions)

NL VET Programme

Learning Agreement
(based on units of learning outcomes; agreements are usually created for individual learners)

Personal Transcript
(for example, Europass Mobility)

Assessment of LOs

Validation of Assessed LOs
Recognition of Assessed LOs
Accumulation of Assessed LOs

Through the use of the ECVET principles and tools, it becomes easier for employers to understand the content of qualifications achieved abroad and improves the credibility of international education and training experience by identifying and documenting what the learner has achieved. In this way ECVET facilitates cooperation between VET providers and companies and through this mechanism, strengthens the link between education and training and the labour market.

By giving learners the possibility to undertake parts of their training abroad, VET providers can enrich the training provision, raise the attractiveness of training programmes and enhance their reputation in Europe.

The higher education community in Europe has defined a separate system of credit accumulation and transfer – the European Credit transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)[1].

Without ECVET there would need to be multiple bilateral agreements between providers for credit awarded to learners to be transferred across the borders of countries.

Implementation
Some member states are however implementing ECVET at system level to reform their VET systems or develop a credit system using ECVET principles. It is clear that the UK has the elements required for ECVET (learning outcomes, units of assessment, credit points and credit transfer) already in place. For the UK a significant challenge is to make learners, providers and employers aware that ECVET is a convention that is being used here and abroad. The network of ECVET experts (see later) will help with this challenge.

The UK Government is committed to implementing ECVET and using the existing infrastructure of qualifications frameworks, learning outcomes based qualifications and credit arrangements. The core focus in the UK is to use ECVET to promote transnational mobility, to ensure a quality experience for the learner/worker and recognition/validation of their learning. UK ECVET Experts (www.ecvetexperts .org.uk)) are promoting and encouraging organisations involved in mobility to use ECVET in geographical mobility, linking ECVET to the Erasmus+ programme.

During July 2011 ECVET National Contact Points were established in Scotland (SCQFP), Northern Ireland (CCEA Regulation), and Wales (ColegauCymru/CollegesWales). An ECVET NCP for England has existed from April 2010 managed by ECCTIS Ltd. These designated contact points work closely with the UK National Agency for Erasmus+ on the implementation of ECVET through the Erasmus+ programme and the co-ordination of the UK team of ECVET Experts (www.ecvetexperts.org.uk).

ECVET activities are now included in the Erasmus+ National Agency (The British Council and Ecorys UK) yearly work programme. ECVET activities will run for the duration of the Erasmus+ programme (2014 - 2020). Thirteen UK ECVET Experts have been appointed by

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Ecorys UK for the period April 2014 to December 2015 to promote and raise awareness of ECVET. The aims of UK ECVET Expert activities are to:

- raise awareness of ECVET to key stakeholders;
- promote and encourage organisations involved in mobility to use ECVET in geographical mobility, linking ECVET to Erasmus+;
- provide specific support to organisations in understanding ECVET within the UK context via a suite of guidance materials, events and support visits; and
- develop an ECVET community of practice within the UK.

For further information on the work of the UK ECVET Experts, guidance, resource material and case studies visit www.ecvetexperts.org.uk

Impact
The European Commission undertook an evaluation of the ECVET recommendation and a final report from external evaluators was published in July 2014. The evaluation showed that it was too early for ECVET to have had impact with reference to its objectives. It showed that ECVET had limited progress at the national level. While it remained pertinent to the changing EU policy objectives in the field of vocational education and training (VET), it was not considered by all EU Member States to be equally useful, with commitment to it depending largely on their VET and credit systems. Countries with already functioning credit systems and those with VET systems dominated by work-based training saw less added value of ECVET than others.

In the UK the impact of ECVET is equally difficult to measure but judging by the level of interest in using ECVET for structuring periods of mobility under the ERASMUS+ programme the impact is growing. The experience of the UK ECVET experts working with college staff confirms this.

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Europass

Europass is a portfolio of documents that describes an individual's knowledge and skills in a way that's understood across Europe. All of these documents can be stored online using the European Skills Passport as a source of evidence of a person's skills, qualifications and experience. The Europass Skills Passport may help someone to work or study abroad.

The aim of Europass is to support the mobility of learners and workers by helping people to communicate their knowledge, skills and competences acquired through education, training or work as well as what they have learned in voluntary and informal settings. More specifically, Europass:

- helps citizens communicate their skills and qualifications effectively when looking for a job or training;
- helps employers understand the skills and qualifications of the workforce; and
- helps education and training authorities define and communicate the content of curricula.

Europass is actually a group of five templates.

Table 3: The Europass templates

Template	Function
Curriculum Vitae	To offer a common way to express a person's education, career and achievements so that comparisons can be made between candidates on a fair basis.
Language Passport	A self-assessment instrument for language skills and language qualifications. It is based on a widely used framework of six levels of language competence.
Europass Mobility	A way of documenting the knowledge and skills acquired in another European country.
Certificate Supplement	Describes in more detail than a qualification certificate the knowledge, skills and competences recognised in vocational education and training certificates.
Diploma Supplement	Describes for an individual the detail of the learning programme followed by holders of higher education degrees.

Without Europass there would be different approaches to describing qualifications and experience in every country and users (such as employers and course tutors) would find it difficult to make fair comparisons between the candidates for a job or study programme.

Impact
Since its launch in February 2005, almost 60 million Europass CVs have been generated online. Hundreds of thousands of Europass Mobility, Certificate and Diploma Supplements have been issued. The Diploma Supplement has become more popular following the Bologna process for harmonising higher education programmes. As more people become mobile the use of the Certificate Supplement is increasing. Across Europe, the Language Passport has been completed online by over 842,000 people since launch; 145,000 times in English. Europass Mobility records periods spent in another Member State for the purposes of work or learning. Over 10,000 Europass Mobility Documents have been issued in the UK since 2008.

Evaluation[2] shows all Europass documents have been successful in making skills, competences and qualifications more comparable across countries and sectors, as well as in making the selection processes for employers and educational institutions easier. The CV is regarded as the most useful, appreciated and best-known instrument of all the Europass tools. Stakeholders — including employers and trade unions — end-users and potential users agree that the Europass tools are contributing positively to mobility for lifelong learning or in the labour market. 58% of respondents to the European Commission survey carried out in an external evaluation felt that the CV helped them to be invited to a job, training or volunteering interview / be pre-selected for a job, training or volunteering position; 46% felt it helped them to be accepted on lifelong learning programmes (e.g. Erasmus), language courses etc. In particular, the Europass makes a valuable contribution to a change in job or location: 60.4% of respondents acknowledged the Europass contribution to this development.

The Europass helps to provide synergies between the EQF, ECVET and EQAVET. In future the challenge is to see the Europass CV develop interoperability with ESCO and become a powerful partner in job matching between recruiters and applicants.

The Europass CV has been completed by 1.5 million people in the UK since 2005. The Language Passport has been used by people in the UK and 14000 mobility passes have been completed and exchanged in the UK. A recent survey by UK NARIC indicates that 79% of UK Higher Education institutions currently issue a Diploma Supplement. Over half of them have received a Diploma Supplement from another European Country. Whilst the Certificate Supplement may not have yet achieved the widespread UK implementation of the Diploma Supplement, it appears to be gaining popularity with five awarding bodies currently issuing, or preparing to issue it, in the UK.

The UK National Europass Centre produced UK implementation guidelines with a view to maintaining consistency of content within Europass documents.

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[2] Second Evaluation of Europass, European Commission, 2013

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European Quality Assurance for VET (EQAVET)

EQAVET defines the nature of good quality assurance systems, provides indicators to determine how well those quality systems are performing, and case studies of good practice. It provides confidence in the quality assurance of vocational education and training programmes in Europe – it builds mutual trust.
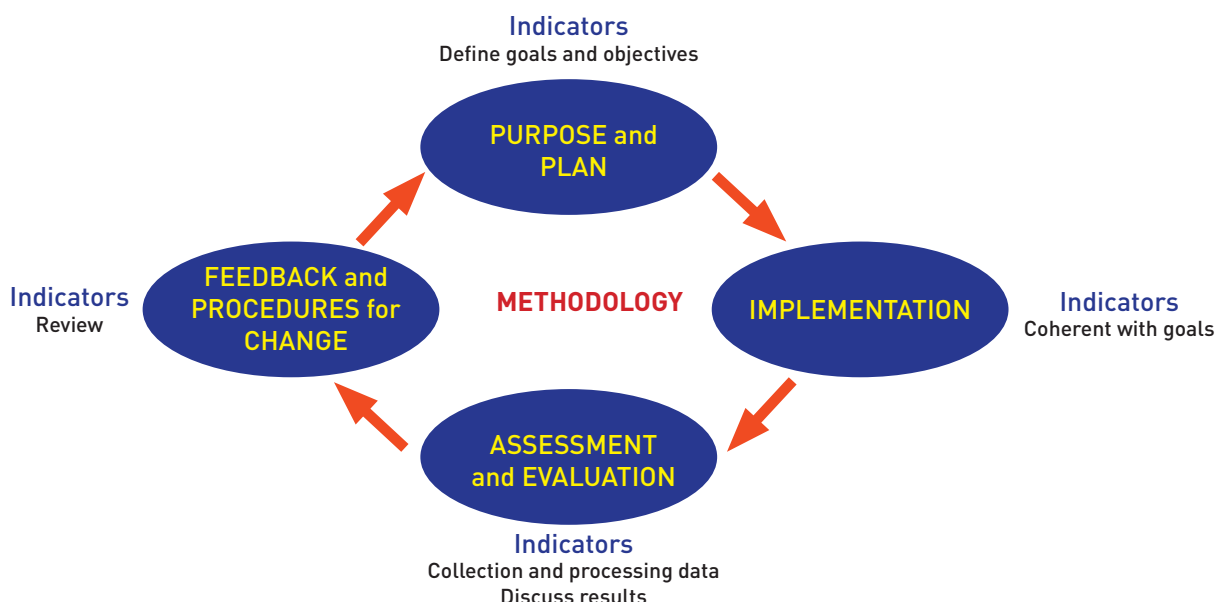
EQAVET is a community of practice bringing together Member States, employers, trade unions and the European Commission to promote European collaboration in developing and improving quality assurance in VET by using the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework. The EQAVET network:

• Assists member states to develop effective approaches to the development and implementation of quality systems.
• Supports the development of a culture of quality at all levels with the help of Quality Assurance National Reference Points (hyperlink) and other Network members.
• Supports member States and the European Commission in the monitoring and implementation of quality assurance systems within the context of the Education and training 2020 Strategy.
• Supports the quality assurance dimension of work in EQF and ECVET.

Quality assurance initiatives have been developing on a European basis for some time and EQAVET has brought together quality assurance initiatives since 2010.The European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQARF) builds on quality assurance linked with EQF, ECVET and previous European quality assurance systems (such as the Common Quality Assurance Framework – CQAF) in that it uses a methodology based on:

• a cycle consisting of four phases (planning, implementation, assessment and review) described for VET providers/systems;
• a recommended set of quality criteria, which will be useful for Member States to assess how their QA systems address all aspects of the quality cycle; and
• a recommended set of indicative descriptors to be used as a toolbox for Member States to improve their quality assurance systems, some based on statistical data, others are of a qualitative nature.

Figure 3: The European Quality Assurance Reference Framework

Besides promoting mutual trust and understanding across EU VET systems and providers, EQAVET aims to raise the market relevance, consistency and transferability of vocational education and training and qualifications across Europe.

To achieve these aims EQAVET provides a robust quality model, templates for national agencies to use to collect and analyse data on the VET systems, guidelines for the systematic gathering and use of data, good practice examples from different counties and a forum for encouraging exchange between members of the quality assurance community.

Some countries are experienced in the use of quality assurance models and EQAVET is compatible with the main quality models currently in use. These countries have begun to show how the national system provides the basis for reporting quality according to the EQAVET criteria and indicators. Other countries are new to systematic quality assurance operating across VET provision and EQAVET provides a model on which these countries can develop quality assurance processes.

A European Quality Assurance Reference Framework has been devised as a tool for policymakers and those involved in developing and implementing quality assurance systems. See http://www.eqavet.eu/gns/home.aspx

Without EQAVET there would be weaker levels of trust in VET systems operating in different countries and this would have a negative influence on mobility and the use of the other European initiatives.

Impact
It is clear that EQAVET has had two strong effects in countries, firstly coordinating national quality assurance reporting across countries and secondly, for other countries, acting as a model for shaping new broader systems. The development of a community of practice has been a strong influence on these two effects.

Evaluative evidence[3] showed that EQAVET was a valued development relevant to the needs of VET systems in member states, its impact was however uneven.

The four administrations of the UK have recently reported the progress they have made in relation to the EQAVET network.

The implementation of the EQAVET recommendations in England is led by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. The FE Quality Assurance System (introduced in April 2010) was designed to reduce burdens and bureaucracies that existed in previous performance management arrangements for post-16 learning. It was also designed in the knowledge of the ten EQAVET indicators.

The implementation of the EQAVET Recommendation in Northern Ireland is overseen by the Department for Employment and Learning. Northern Ireland has a quality improvement strategy in place and has therefore met the primary aim of the Recommendation. The initial phase of the implementation work focussed on an examination of the NI VET quality assurance system in comparison to the EQVAET indicators. The further education sector completed surveys allowing analysis at system and provider level, and a review document

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[3] Evaluation of EQAVET, ICF/GHK, 2013

was completed. Work done on the analysis of indicators will serve as useful groundwork for any future review of the Department for Employment and Learning's quality improvement strategy.

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) is acting as the National Reference Point for Scotland. Scotland continues to monitor the various quality assurance frameworks in use, such as Education Scotland's "Quality Framework for external review of Scotland's colleges" and SQA Accreditation's Regulatory Principles, against the EQAVET indicators to ensure that these frameworks remain in alignment with the EQAVET indicators. Scotland has mature quality assurance frameworks and EQAVET is used to ensure that quality improvements to these frameworks take account of the EQAVET indicators.

In Wales the Quality Effectiveness Framework (QEF) that was introduced in 2009 continues to play a critical role in Wales for FE institutions and Work Based Learning providers. Work was commissioned earlier this year to look at how existing quality systems in FE align with the EQAVET indicators. The key message was that there is common consent that all the data required by the EQAVET quality indicators is useful as measures of progress. The indicators measuring participation and completion/attainment rates are the most commonly used measures of progress. The further development of the Quality Effectiveness Framework (QEF) will be an important step given that a number of the indicators that are more difficult to quantify are identified as priority areas within the new framework. Work is ongoing with relevant Welsh stakeholders at all levels using the web quality cycle tool in order to improve awareness and understanding of the benefits of working within the framework.

7

European Skills, Competencies, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO)

The idea behind the ESCO initiative is for it to link all the national data systems for describing the occupations in the national labour markets and the skills and competences needed for jobs. It is hoped that this will help employers state their job vacancies in a way that can be understood in other countries and in a way that job seekers can understand in terms of their own ambitions and their knowledge, skills and competences. To do this there is a need to create a European classification that can link skills, competencies, qualifications and occupations, see figure 4.

Figure 4: Linking labour markets and education and training through ESCO

The ESCO database will show the skills, competencies and qualifications that are needed to get work in particular trades in Europe. When complete, the database will cover all recognised occupations and qualifications in EU member states and will use 24 languages.

Figure 5: State of play of ESCO

ESCO is constructed using three interrelated pillars of skills/competences, qualifications and occupations. These pillars are being designed in ways that are consistent with other initiatives such as the EQF levels and reflect the desire to promote the use of output based descriptions (learning outcomes) wherever possible.

It is expected that the first operational form of ESCO will be available in December 2016.

Particularly important is the potential of the ESCO database to link with the Europass CV and the EURES database[4] so that job matching can take place in real time. Until this happens the advertising of job vacancies and the application for those vacancies will be constrained by technical issues. Additionally the potential to define and match job vacancies with skills and competences across borders will be hampered by definitions and terminology.

Without ESCO national job markets will remain relatively isolated from one another.

Impact
The ESCO initiative is still under development and it is not possible to judge its impact. It is expected that the ESCO database will be continuously updated in line with market developments and the corresponding demand for new skills.

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[4] EURES is a European database for employers and employment services to promote or advertise job vacancies and for applicants to submit their CV for consideration by recruiters.

8

European Validation Initiatives

Learning that is achieved outside the formal education system, for example learning on courses in work or learning through life experience such as, caring for an elderly relative, are important parts of lifelong learning. People must be able to demonstrate what they have learned in order to use this learning in their career and for further education and training. To do so, they must have access to a system which identifies, documents, assesses and certifies (validates) all forms of learning. Figure 6 illustrates this process (Middle row of boxes) and shows the information, advice and guidance people might need as they undertake to have their learning validated (yellow boxes). Validation need not always end with a qualification certificate; the grey boxes show the intermediate exit points en route towards a qualification certificate.

Figure 6: A general summary of the validation process
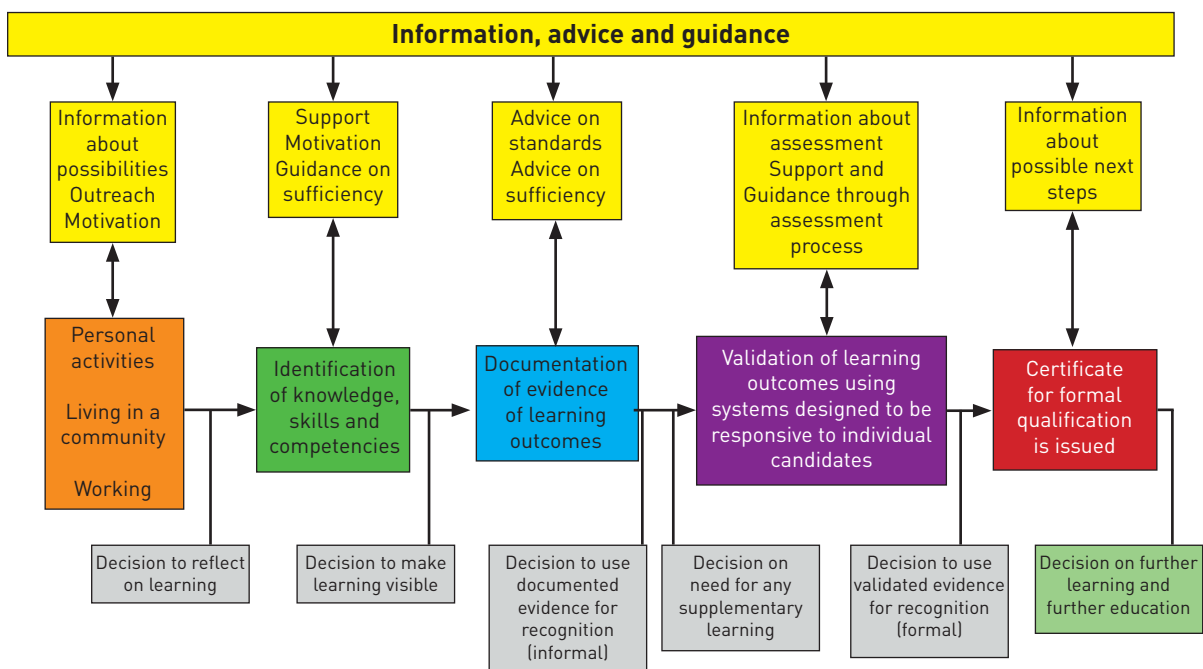
Since 2002 there has been a process of monitoring the progress of countries towards a validation system. These validation Inventories describe the state of play across countries and across public, private and voluntary sectors. The last inventory was produced in 2014 and can be accessed at:
http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory

Related and cross referenced to the Inventory is a European Guideline on validating non-formal and informal learning. These guidelines identify the main challenges facing policy-makers and practitioners pointing to possible ways to respond to those challenges. They are intended as a practical tool, providing expert advice to be applied on a purely voluntary basis. A second version of the European Guidelines is currently being prepared for publication. See http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/node/11010

In 2012 Ministers in the EU countries agreed to work jointly to improve the systematic nature of validation arrangement in their countries. They agreed that in 2018 they would have in place arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning which enable

individuals to have their knowledge, skills and competences validated to obtain a part or full qualification. Ministers agreed that:

• validation arrangements should be linked to NQFs;
• information and guidance should be available to individuals and organisations;
• guidance and counselling should be available and readily accessible;
• unemployed people can have a skills audit aimed at identifying their knowledge, skills and competences, ideally within six months;
• transparent quality assurance measures are in place that support reliable, valid and credible assessment methodologies and initiatives;
• development of the professional competences of staff involved in the validation process is available;
• qualifications comply with agreed standards that are either the same as, or equivalent to, the standards of qualifications obtained through formal education programmes; and
• the use of EU transparency initiatives, such as the Europass framework, is promoted in order to facilitate the documentation of learning outcomes.

Approaches to the validation of NFIFL in the UK countries
Although different approaches to the validation of NFIFL (more commonly referred to as the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in the UK) exist in the UK countries, it is fair to say that all countries have national arrangements linked to their National Qualifications Frameworks. However the actual implementation of the validation of NFIFL is decentralised and left to individual learning providers and awarding organisations.

Since 2010, there have been positive developments with regard to RPL, perhaps most notably in the HE sector, where RPL has been given a clear place in the QAA's Quality Code and in Scotland where the SCQF Partnership has developed supporting initiatives such as the RPL toolkit and online RPL guide. However, actual application of RPL is 'patchy' and relatively low in the UK as there is a perception amongst providers that RPL is expensive and time-consuming and lack of explicit resourcing for RPL is a barrier, particularly in the college sector. If RPL is to be increased, further support and awareness raising amongst providers and other practitioners involved in working with learners is required.

The UK European Qualifications Framework (EQF) Work Programme for 2012/2013 included a project to explore the approaches to recognising non-formal certificated learning in the UK countries. In addition, the Project identified case studies to demonstrate the approaches used within each country. The final project report 'Recognising non-formal certificated learning within and outside qualifications frameworks in the UK, the Netherlands and Finland' can be accessed at:
https://ec.europa.eu/epale/sites/epale/files/case_studies.pdf

9

# Synergies between the European VET Initiatives

The initiatives described above can be seen as an integrated framework, the impact of which depends on their consistency with one another and how they interact. Consistency depends on the principles on which each initiative is based and this aspect is firmly in the hands of the designers at EU level. Interaction between the initiatives is also strongly dependent on the national implementation. One productive way to look for synergy is to use two perspectives. Firstly that of the user which is best taken as the individual citizen, be they a learner or a recruiter. These users are looking for transparency and support from one or more of the initiatives as they plan their next steps. The second perspective is that of the national VET system and the question here is whether the EU initiatives are supporting reforms that are leading to a more effective VET system or simply reflecting current practice. These two perspectives are represented in figure 7. The five initiatives are located according to how they work together to support the individual and the national VET system.

Figure 7: Synergies between EU Initiatives – the VET system and the individual
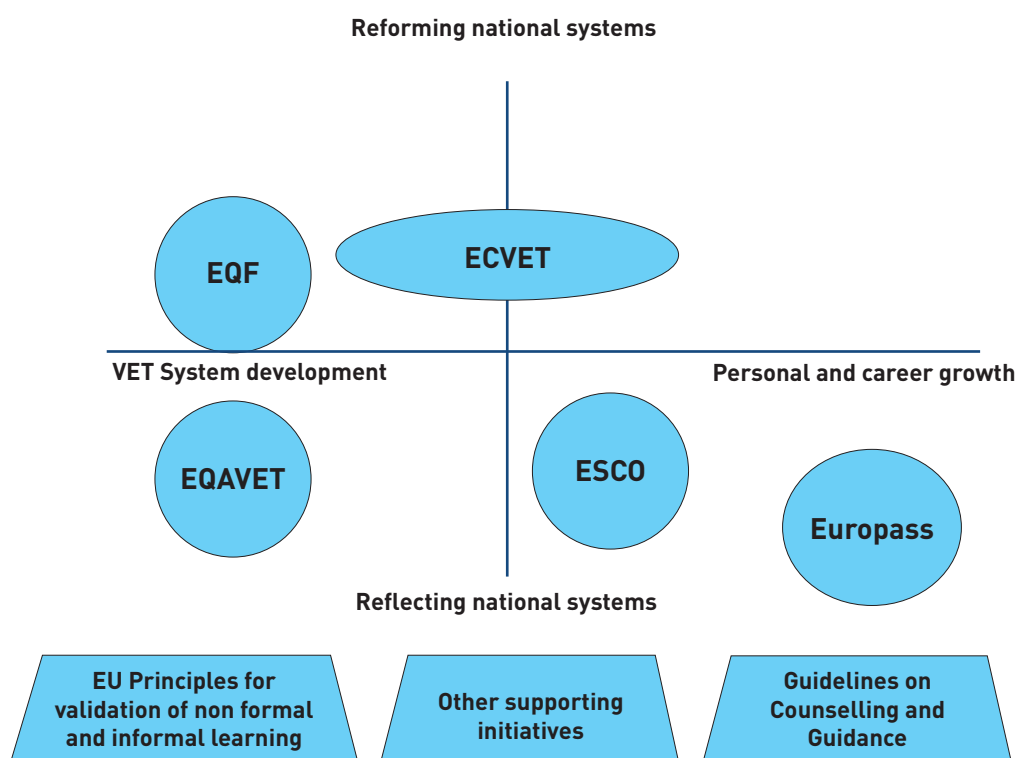
Synergies seen from the user perspective
The individual learner is the key user alongside employers and those that recruit on the basis of qualifications. The initiatives therefore need to interact and reinforce each other from the user perspective. The user needs to see that two or more of the initiatives can help with:

• presenting knowledge, skills and wider competences in a transparent way so that it improves access to learning and work at home and abroad;
• gaining an overview of learning opportunities;
• having a career that develops over time and allows the building of competence through learning gained from formal, non-formal and informal settings; and;
• reducing barriers to learning improving job and career prospects.

Synergies seen from a national VET system perspective
The key question is: how do the initiatives interact to add value to national VET strategies? There are many ways that VET is being improved across the EU countries but two of the most common strategies are: to make the VET system as responsive to the labour market as possible; and to create a system where upskilling and lifelong learning is the norm.

Coordination at EU level

It is generally accepted that to provide the support and guidance to implement and embed the initiatives in a way that is appropriate, efficient and effective, a strong European infrastructure with strong European coordination and guidance is needed. Some steps have already been taken, for example, from 2012 Europass documents will make references to NQF and EQF levels and to ECVET. However access to experiences gained in leading countries is also important, not only to help guide policy and practice but to demonstrate actual, as opposed to expected, benefits of reform. Other possible actions at EU level are to improve:

• representation in developments at EU level (social partners, sector associations, all Member States with special arrangements for large and federalised countries);
• synergy (cross-sector projects, broader based 'communities of practice');
• monitoring, analysis, evaluation and dissemination;
• responses to unintended consequences;
• assessment of the time needed for change and realistic timescales;
• information and guidance; and
• use of EU funds and projects to support developments.

Steps are being made at EU level to improve coherence through presenting information about synergies between the initiatives. In 2016 it is proposed to launch a public consultation on how the EU initiatives can work together better to support mobility, transparency and the single European market for goods and services.

Learning outcomes - a key to opening up links between initiatives
A key factor in creating synergy between the initiatives is the common approach to using learning outcomes rather than relying on such things as institutional structures and duration of programmes. All the initiatives are based on learning outcomes - these make it easier to appreciate links between the initiatives. For example, in Europass, all the templates require expressions of what has been learned, the language passport and the certificate supplements are good examples of the use of learning outcomes. The EQF level descriptors are only described in learning outcomes and in ECVET it is the use of learning outcomes that allows a unit to be assessed and weighted in terms of credit points.

The importance of the use of learning outcomes in EU initiatives is shown in figure 8.

Figure 8: The importance of national approaches to using learning outcomes
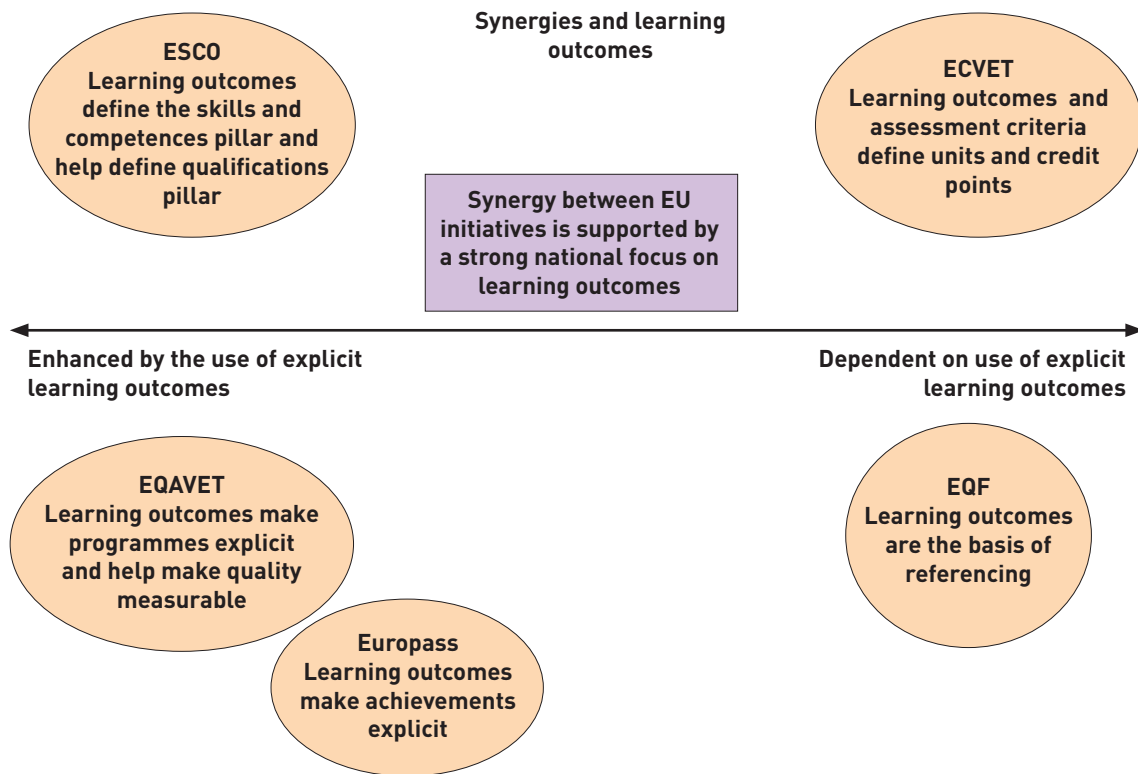
One of the common conclusions at meetings of national experts in VET is that there is no clear European level terminology and taxonomy with regard to learning outcomes. Work is being carried out to create a common format for learning outcomes. Cedefop is working on studies on learning outcomes, including the ways learning outcomes are written and used in different settings.

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Co-ordination of the work on the European VET initiatives in the UK

The initiatives are being implemented in the four administrations of the UK and this presents a serious challenge for coordinating activities and presenting coherent information to the users of the initiatives. For these reasons a UK Coordination group for VET was established which brings together the coordinators of initiatives and their government counterparts for exchanging information. This group plays a major role in ensuring that, from a user perspective as well as a policy perspective, the synergies between these initiatives are optimised and communicated. This document is an example of coordinated activity to stress synergies between the initiatives as they operate in the UK.

The UK European Coordination Group for VET has evolved in a short time into a valuable forum for people with a national role in VET in the UK and leaders of specific European initiatives in the UK to learn about the latest developments, see opportunities for cooperation and to seek further developments. All this within a collective view of what is affordable, practical and sustainable. Some of the achievements of the last two years include:

- successfully bidding for EU funding to support the implementation of the EQF and ECVET on a UK basis whilst paying attention to more regional priorities;
- linking and mutually supporting the reporting on EQAVET indicators from across the four UK administrations;
- commenting on reporting the UK VET system to the European agency for VET;
- advising on the approach to implementing EQF development projects in ways that ensure compatibility with other development work; and
- supporting the UK's use of ERASMUS + funding by promoting its potential and using the programme as a vehicle to promote the use of the EU VET initiatives.

In recent years the development of the European initiatives has coincided with a stream of reforms to VET in the UK. The goals of a high skills economy, a responsive training system, and flexible delivery of programmes has created an environment where the various EU reforms have reinforced UK strategies. For example there were qualifications frameworks in existence in the UK before the development of the EQF, the conceptual basis for credit arrangements were also well established before the definition of ECVET. In terms of databases of information about the labour market and qualifications (as is envisaged in ESCO) the UK has had systems in place for many years that have served UK needs. All of these relatively advanced positions are at least partly explained by the reforms of the 1980s to drive towards outcomes based descriptions of occupations, curricula and qualifications. The European initiatives have therefore never been perceived as a serious challenge to the direction of UK policies and it has been a straightforward process of supporting and using the European initiatives.

Erasmus+ is the European Union programme for education, training, youth and sport and offers exciting opportunities for study and training for learners and staff across Europe. Erasmus+ supports the use of ECVET to recognise the achievements of participants on Erasmus+ mobility projects. The UK Coordination Group aims to support the use of the EU VET initiatives through the ERASMUS + programme.

Getting the information you want
England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales have designated National Contact Points (NCPs) for implementation of the European initiatives. Each of them has a web site that explains the initiatives and contains up to date information and advice. The web addresses and contact details are shown in table 4.

Table 4: UK National Contact Points for the European VET Initiatives

Initiative	UK wide	England	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales
European Qualifications framework (EQF)	For higher education QAA England, Wales and Northern Ireland Southgate House, Southgate St, Gloucester GL1 1UB, United Kingdom Or QAA Scotland 18 Bothwell St, Glasgow, Glasgow City G2 6QY +44(0)1452557000 www.qaa.ac.uk	Ofqual Spring Place Coventry Business Park Herald Avenue Coventry CV5 6UB 0300 303 3344 info@ofqual.gov.uk www.ofqual.gov.uk	Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) 29 Clarendon Road Clarendon Dock Belfast BT1 3BG 028 9026 1200 info@ccea.org.uk www.ccea.org.uk	SCQF Partnership 201 West George Street Glasgow G2 2LW 0845 270 7371 info@scqf.org.uk www.scqf.org.uk	ColegauCymru/ CollegesWales Unit 7 Cae Gwyrdd Greenmeadow Springs Tongwynlais Cardiff CF15 7AB info@colegaucymru.ac.uk www.colegaucymru.ac.uk
Validation (RPL)	For higher education QAA England, Wales and Northern Ireland Southgate House, Southgate St, Gloucester GL1 1UB, United Kingdom Or QAA Scotland 18 Bothwell St, Glasgow, Glasgow City G2 6QY +44(0)1452557000 www.qaa.ac.uk	As above	As above	As above	As above

Initiative	UK wide	England	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales
European Credit system for VET (ECVET)	Erasmus+ UK National Agency Ecorys UK Quay Place 92-93 Edward Street Birmingham B1 2RA +44 (0)121 212 8864 www.erasmusplus.org.uk	ECCTIS Ltd Oriel House Oriel Road Cheltenham GL50 1XP +44(0)1242258614 www.naric.org.uk/ecvet	Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) 29 Clarendon Road Clarendon Dock Belfast BT1 3BG 028 9026 1200 info@ccea.org.uk www.ccea.org.uk	SCQF Partnership 201 West George Street Glasgow G2 2LW 0845 270 7371 info@scqf.org.uk www.scqf.org.uk	ColegauCymru/ CollegesWales Unit 7 Cae Gwyrdd Greenmeadow Springs Tongwynlais Cardiff CF15 7AB info@colegaucymru.ac.uk www.colegaucymru.ac.uk
European Quality assurance for VET (EQAVET)		Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) 2nd Floor, 2 St Paul's Place 125 Norfolk Street Sheffield S1 2FJ	Department for Employment and Learning Qualifications and e-Learning Adelaide House 39-49 Adelaide Street Belfast BT2 8FD	Scottish vq Board Scottish Qualifications Authority The Optima Building 58 Robertson Street Glasgow G2 8DQ	As above
Europass	UK National Europass Centre (NEC) ECCTIS Ltd Oriel House Oriel Road Cheltenham GL50 1XP +44 (0)871 330 8341 www.naric.org.uk/europass				

Initiative	
European skills, competences and occupations (ESCO)	UK Representation to the EU for ESCO Mrs Nicola Dissem 10 Avenue d'Auderghem 1040 Brussels Belgium ukrep@fco.gov.uk +32 (0)2 287 8211
ERASMUS +	The UK National Agency for Erasmus+ is a partnership between the British Council and Ecorys UK British Council – London Headquarters 10 Spring Gardens London, SW1A 2BN erasmusplus.enquiries@britishcouncil.org +44 (0)161 957 7755 Ecorys UK – Quay Place 92-93 Edward Street Birmingham B1 2RA erasmusplus@ecorys.com +44 (0)121 212 8947

The initiatives and learning providers
The UK National Agency for the Erasmus + programme aims to support all UK learning providers to use the opportunities provided by the initiatives, for both students and staff, for example studying abroad. The agency works to promote the Erasmus+ programme with UK learning organisations. For details of the support provided by the UK National Agency see:

https://erasmusplus.org.uk/about-the-uk-national-agency

Recognising qualifications in Europe and beyond
The European initiatives create the climate and ease the road to European mobility but they do not offer automatic recognition of achievements. There is a network of organisations across the world that aimto help interested organisations and individuals easily find information on current issues related to international academic and professional mobility, and on the procedures for the recognition of foreign qualifications. UK NARIC is part of this network and details of its services can be accessed at:

http://www.enic-naric.net/united-kingdom.aspx

Comparing Qualifications in the UK and Ireland
The qualifications systems in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland are different and each part of the UK has a different way of showing its qualifications system. For information on how qualifications in one part of the UK compare to another, a simple leaflet is available called 'Qualifications can cross boundaries'. The leaflet also shows how UK qualifications compare to Irish qualifications, and to the European Qualifications Framework levels. For an online version of the leaflet see:

http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/qualifications-can-cross-boundaries.pdf

11

What next for European VET Initiatives?

It is likely that the next three to four years will see some changes in the European VET initiatives, some like ESCO are still at the development stage and there is a wish to see all the initiatives work together to become more effective in supporting recognition and mobility.

The European evaluations of the Europass, EQF, ECVET and EQAVET all point towards the need for necessary improvements if these initiatives are to prove beneficial to more European citizens. Whilst all the initiatives have sound principles supporting them, their implementation draws them directly into the national education and training settings and for potential users of the initiatives it is the national provision which is the first port of call. This means that all the initiatives should be seen in countries as 'back office' tools to support national goals for VET, the labour market and the economy more generally. This is a serious challenge for the EU tools (to drive change and increase transparency but at the same time to remain more or less invisible to ordinary users). It is the need to make the tools effective for ordinary users that will probably lead to they way they will operate in future.

Added to this, ESCO is a very important coordinating initiative that has links across most of the other initiatives, for example the linking of ESCO with the Europass CV has enormous potential for job matching and therefore international mobility. A second example is the common format for presenting skills, competencies and qualifications within ESCO, building on the EQF and ECVET. This has the potential to increase transparency of these important aspects of VET across all Member States. However ESCO is still in development and its full potential is far from being realised. As it develops we can expect changes in the other initiatives that will facilitate greater added value and greater transparency.

The process of recognition of skills, competences and qualifications in another country is a complex area with many agencies involved and sensitive national interests at stake. Yet it is central to the European goal. All of the initiatives, in one way or another support recognition, however none of them deliver recognition directly. There is likely to be structural changes to the initiatives to make them work better in terms of supporting recognition.

UK EQF National Coordination Points

NCP for England
Elizabeth Stanton
Ofqual
Spring Place
Herald Avenue
Coventry CV5 6UB
T 0300 303 3344
Elizabeth.stanton@ofqual.gov.uk
www.ofqual.gov.uk

NCP for Northern Ireland
Caroline Egerton
Northern Ireland Council for the
Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)
29 Clarendon Road
Clarendon Dock
Belfast BT1 3BG
T 02890261452
cegerton@ccea.org.uk
www.ccea.org.uk

NCP for Wales
Adrian Sheehan
CollegesWales/ColegauCymru
Unit 7 Cae Gwyrdd
Greenmeadow Springs
Tongwynlais
Cardiff CF15 7AB
T 02920 522500
adrian.sheehan@collegeswales.ac.uk
www.collegeswales.ac.uk

NCP for Scotland
Aileen Ponton
SCQF Partnership
201 West George Street
Glasgow
G2 2LW
T 08452707371
a.ponton@scqf.org.uk
www.scqf.org.uk