ECVET implementation in Lithuania: after the customized seminar

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The implementation of the European Credit in Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) system in Lithuania has taken its first steps. ECVET's implementation will be based on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) that was approved in 2010.

The Lithuanian NQF covers all education sectors and is consistent with the principles underpinning the European Qualifications Framework. From 2005-2008 the Concept of a VET Quality Assurance System was developed as part of a national ESF project 'Development and Implementation of a Common Quality Assurance System in Vocational Education and Training'. This Concept was elaborated on the basis of the "Study of Quality Assurance in VET in Lithuania and Other Countries" (2007) and has taken account of the EQAVET Recommendation. Once the background structures which support ECVET's implementation had been completed, Lithuania started to focus on using ECVET to improve the quality of VET. A modular VET system based on learning outcomes and credits will be piloted in 2015.

The team of five ECVET national experts was established in 2014. Their first task was to persuade the many different stakeholders in the VET sector that ECVET could add value to the quality of study programmes and provide immeasurable benefits to VET providers, learners and the labour market. To communicate the value of ECVET to VET providers and other stakeholders, the Lithuanian National Agency (Education Exchanges Support Foundation - Švietimo mainų paramos fondas) asked the European ECVET Team to organise a customised seminar in Lithuania for the national experts, VET providers, representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science and other stakeholders. The ECVET Team's experts (Mr. Thierry Lefeuvre and Mr. Segundo Gonzalez) worked with the national experts to support ECVET's implementation in Lithuania.

The customised seminar took place in October 2014. The training included theoretical presentations, explanations of different terms, examples of effective practice and workshops. The ECVET Team experts presented ECVET in a European context; explained the various tools which support ECVET's implementation; and discussed the meaning of many of the key terms such as 'learning outcomes, units, credits and points'. During the discussions on using ECVET for geographical mobility the experts presented examples of effective practice to show how ECVET mobility (where achievement in the host country is recognised in the home country) adds a great deal of value to the quality of VET.

The customised seminar included many practical activities which were organised in small working groups. The ECVET Team experts worked with the Lithuanian experts to organise and moderate the discussions during the workshops in order to achieve the expected results. The Lithuanian ECVET experts then led workshops on:

- how to connect ECVET to the Lithuanian vocational education system;
- how to create units of learning outcomes using ECVET;
- how to improve the quality of mobility programmes using ECVET.

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The ECVET Team's examples of effective practice inspired the Lithuanian experts to continue to promote ECVET's implementation, and the impact that ECVET can have on the quality of geographical mobility and the whole VET system. The information and examples from the 2014 customised seminar have been used by the Lithuanian experts to organise three seminars for representatives of VET providers on 'ECVET for geographical

mobility'. More than 100 directors, VET teachers and project managers from across the country attended the seminars and this has helped to raise awareness about the use of ECVET and its benefits.

Each seminar combined workshops and discussions. After a short presentation of ECVET and how it can be used to support geographical mobility, the seminar participants worked on a series of practical tasks. These enabled participants to work in small groups, discuss more detailed questions on

how to use ECVET, and share their knowledge and experience. By taking things slowly and by working together, the participants strengthened their understanding of why ECVET is useful and how it helps to improve the quality of geographical mobility and VET provision. One of the outcomes from the seminars was a series of requests from VET providers for further discussions and seminars at their teaching institutions. In these follow-up ses-

sions at the VET centres, the national ECVET experts were able to continue the process of transferring knowledge and building understanding. This dissemination has included consultations, seminars, workshops at VET schools, the production of brochures, articles, reports and other information on the websites of ECVET national experts' institutions and on the Lithuanian National Agency.

The on-going plan is for the ECVET national team to continue to deepen VET providers' knowledge about the application of ECVET; and consult with VET providers, employers and other stakeholders about using ECVET to strengthen geographical mobility and to improve lifelong learning. There is also a significant task for the national experts to work with the Ministry of Education and Science on the legislation relating to the ECVET principles in Lithuania. ◾