



Education and Culture



Using ECVET for Geographical Mobility

PART II OF THE ECVET USERS' GUIDE



Education
and
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The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training

ECVET

Using ECVET for Geographical Mobility

PART II OF THE ECVET USERS' GUIDE



Education and Culture

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Education and Culture

Lifelong learning: Policies and Programme

Professional training; Leonardo da Vinci

This document was prepared by the ECVET Users' Group and it was approved during the ECVET Users' Group meeting on 11 May 2011.

It is part of the series of guidance documents and notes which constitute the ECVET Users' Guide.

If you wish to get a more detailed explanation of ECVET concepts, principles and processes, please refer to another element of the ECVET Users' Guide entitled: *Get to know ECVET Better – Questions and Answers*¹.

The following Users' Group representatives contributed to the drafting of the document:

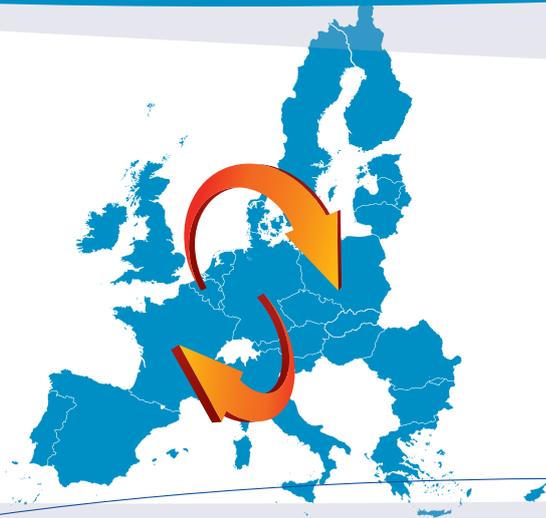
Hanna Autere (Finnish National Board of Education), Mounir Baati (European Training Foundation), Sonja Baron (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung -Germany), Alain Bultot (Ministère de l'enseignement obligatoire, Communauté française – Belgium), Gabriela Ciobanu (National Center for Technical and Vocational Education and Training - Romania), Sibilla Drews (Nationale Agentur Bildung für Europa beim Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung - Germany), Maja Leena Lampinen (Västra Götalandsregionen), Isabelle le Mouillour (Cedefop), Jos Noessen (Ministère de l'Education Nationale et de la Formation Professionnelle), Richard Maniak (Ministère de l'éducation nationale – France acting on behalf of the ECVET Support team), Anne Potters (CINOP on behalf of the ECVET thematic networks of National Agencies for the Lifelong Learning Programme), Brigitte Trocmé (Ministère de l'éducation nationale – France), Christian Sperle (UAPME - European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises).

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¹ The document can be downloaded at: http://www.ecvet-team.eu/sites/default/files/ecvet_qna_web_21_04_2010_1.pdf

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1 Introduction

The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) is a technical framework for the transfer, recognition and where appropriate, accumulation of individuals' learning outcomes with a view to achieving a qualification. ECVET tools and methodology comprise the description of qualifications in terms of units of learning outcomes with associated points, a transfer and accumulation process and complementary documents such as Learning Agreements, transcripts of records and ECVET users' guides.

Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council²

The implementation of ECVET has two broad objectives:

- To support mobility of European citizens
- To facilitate lifelong learning

This document concerns the use of ECVET for geographical mobility, in particular mobility that is organised as an element of learners' education and training pathways.

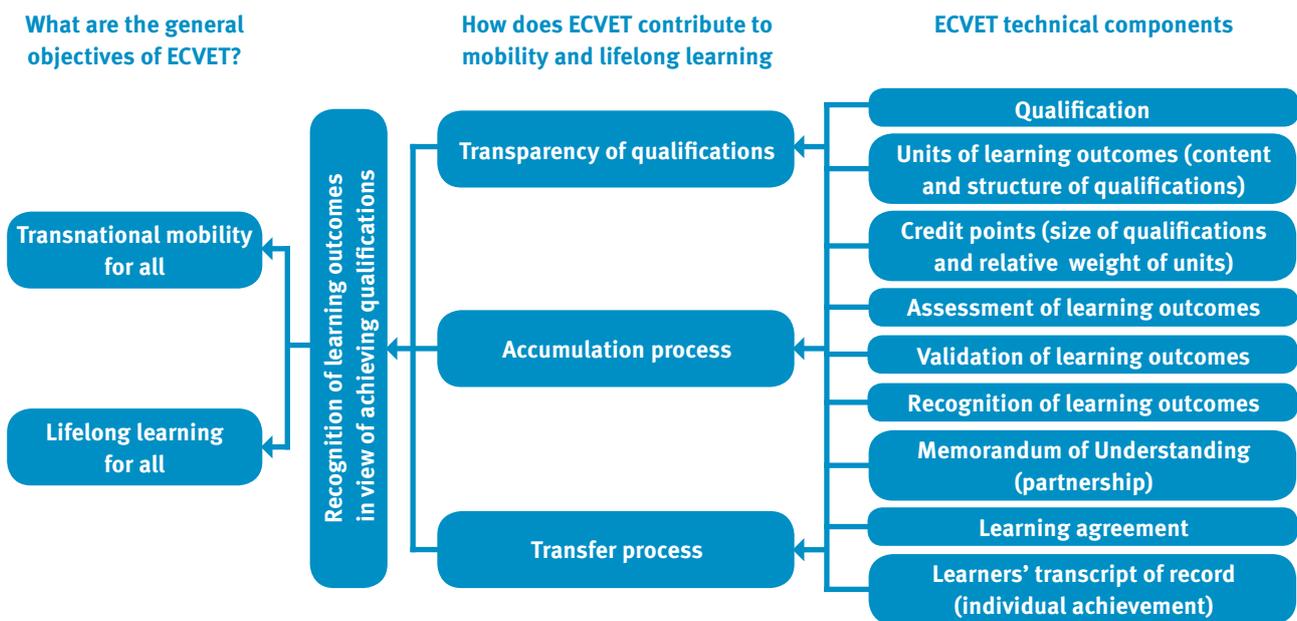
To support mobility, ECVET is expected to improve the possibilities for **recognition of learning outcomes** and thus to enable **people to build on what they have learned** abroad, in a different education and training institution or in different situations. In other words, thanks to ECVET, it should become easier to **fully integrate mobility into learners' learning pathways** and to make visible and recognised what they have learned abroad. The success of ECVET will depend on the development of **mutual trust** among competent institutions.

ECVET is based on a set of technical components that are all underpinned by the **use of learning outcomes**. The technical components referred to in this document are defined in the ECVET Recommendation and further explained in the document entitled *ECVET Questions and Answers*³. The relationship between the ECVET technical components and the ECVET objectives is schematically presented in Figure 1.

² See <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2009:155:0011:0018:EN:PDF>

³ The document can be downloaded at: http://www.ecvet-team.eu/sites/default/files/ecvet_qna_web_21_04_2010_1.pdf

Figure 1 | ECVET objectives and its technical components



This guide

The guide addresses the competent institutions and relevant multipliers wishing to promote ECVET for mobility in their qualifications systems. Due to the different structures of qualification systems and divisions of responsibilities among stakeholders across Europe, the understanding of 'who is a competent institution' with regard to ECVET varies greatly. The range of institutions and bodies that can be involved covers Ministries and other national authorities, social partners, chambers and representatives of sectors as well as education and training providers.

This guide was written to explain the role of ECVET in facilitating the transnational mobility of learners. It presents some possible scenarios for using ECVET in this context, but it is not designed as a manual explaining step-by-step what to do in order to implement ECVET for mobility. It rather seeks to encourage ECVET mobility through explaining the added value and the potential of using ECVET for mobility. It is part of a series of documents that constitute the 'ECVET Users' Guide'. More pragmatic documentation, such as templates of Memoranda of Understanding or Learning Agreements, will be progressively made available for VET providers and other stakeholders concretely involved in ECVET mobility projects.

This guide presents conceptually a complete picture of ECVET mobility. In practice, when stakeholders engage in ECVET mobility, they can potentially progress in several steps, which is completely in line with the flexible and gradual nature of ECVET.

The document contains:

- An explanation of the benefits of using ECVET for the organised geographical mobility of learners (Section 2).
- Explanation of the key issues to bear in mind when organising mobility using ECVET at different stages of the mobility process (Section 3).
- A table which shows the functions of competent institutions in using ECVET (Annex A). It is important that those engaging in using ECVET in a transnational context have a good understanding of 'who does what' in the partner systems. This table can be used to clarify these roles.
- A check list with issues and questions to tackle before, during and after mobility periods when using ECVET (Annex B).
- Two examples of learners' mobility experiences and the use of ECVET in this context (Annex C). These are real-case examples extracted from the experience of projects funded under the Lifelong Learning Programme testing ECVET.



2 ECVET and geographical mobility

Substantially increasing transnational mobility of VET learners and teachers, and recognising the knowledge, skills and competencies they have acquired abroad, will be an important challenge for the future.

The Bruges Communiqué on enhanced European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training⁴

While mobility in vocational education and training (VET) is already happening, the political ambition in Europe is to increase the numbers and the duration of mobility exchanges significantly. Development of learning mobility in VET implies putting in place a range of support activities adapted to the target group of VET learners including for example: language learning, creating funding opportunities or other preparatory and accompanying measures. The recognition of qualifications and the transparency of what learners have achieved abroad are core to mobility in vocational education and training. ECVET was designed as one of the European instruments to improve this recognition and transparency (other instruments being for example, the European Qualifications Framework or Europass).

2.1 Learning mobility using ECVET

ECVET supports the valorisation of learning mobility **because:**

- The **learning outcomes approach ensures** a better understanding and comparability of qualifications and learning achievements across countries. When using ECVET for learning mobility, the learning outcomes that the learner is expected to achieve abroad are clearly agreed by the partner institutions and stated in a Learning Agreement. Consequently everyone, including the home institution, the host institution and the learner; have a shared understanding of the objectives of the mobility. Following the participation in appropriate learning activities, learners acquire the expected knowledge, skills and competencies and they are assessed on what they have achieved. The learning outcomes that they have achieved abroad are documented in a transcript of record and thus made visible.

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/vocational/bruges_en.pdf

- The **validation and recognition of learning outcomes** are in the framework of **mutual trust** among partner institutions.

Individuals' mobility periods are set in a broader framework of agreements. Partner institutions set the conditions for smoother exchanges of learners and develop mutual trust. They also agree to the conditions under which learners' credit (i.e. assessed learning outcomes) achieved abroad will be validated and recognised. These agreements are formalised in Memoranda of Understanding.

ECVET can accommodate different forms of validation and recognition of learners' learning outcomes, such as:

- Awarding credit for the unit(s) of learning outcomes concerned.
 - Exemption from an assessment or its part.
 - Transcription of the learning outcomes achieved abroad in learners' transcripts of record.
 - Awarding additional credit to what s/he would have normally achieved.
- The **integration of mobility into learning pathways**.

When using ECVET all interested parties (learners, employers, education and training providers) will have a clearer understanding and evidence about the added value of learning in a partner institution. ECVET can improve the validation and recognition of both key competencies (such as foreign language skills) as well as more technical skills and competences.

Learners will have the chance to enrich their learning pathway by acquiring abroad the knowledge, skills and competences which they would not have had the possibility to achieve in their home institution (for example, because of the differences in technologies used or because of the variety of products).

ECVET may also help VET providers to respond to certain labour market needs by sending learners abroad for units they cannot deliver themselves (for example, because of the investment necessary to purchase the technology). For the same reasons, VET providers may be able to attract new learners from abroad.

What does it mean to use ECVET for transnational mobility?

In short, using ECVET for transnational mobility implies that:

- In one country, the competent institution (the host institution) assesses the learner's achievement of learning outcomes (as defined in units) and provides evidence of the results of the assessment (written statement on learning outcomes achieved or an assessment grid for example).
- In another country, the competent institution (the home institution) validates and recognises credit for units of learning outcomes. ECVET credit points are allocated to the learning outcomes, enabling the learner to add these credit points to those necessary to achieve a particular qualification. The unit(s) of learning outcomes achieved abroad is (are) recorded in a learner's transcript of record.

For organised mobility (i.e. when the learner goes abroad as part of an inter-institutional agreement), the process takes place in the framework of a Memorandum of Understanding and it is supported by an individual Learning Agreement. Therefore, the learning outcomes to be achieved, the assessment, validation and recognition processes are agreed between the competent institutions a priori thus facilitating the recognition of credit.



3 The phases of using ECVET for organised mobility

This section outlines the main issues to be taken into account in using ECVET for mobility. It is structured according to the three main phases: before, during and after mobility. These phases are summarised in Figure 2 below.

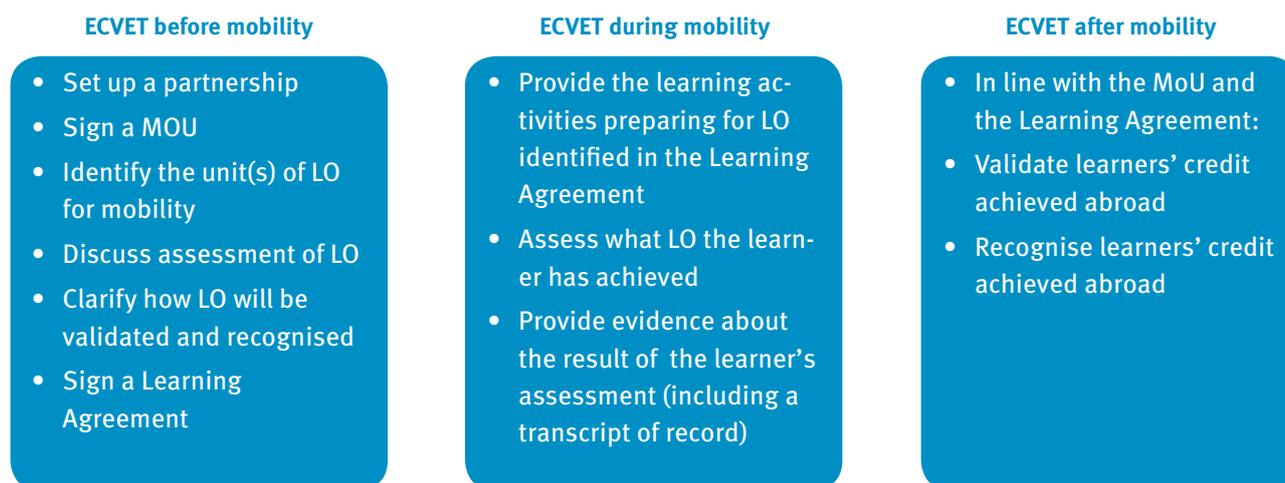
It may initially seem that ECVET is a complex instrument because a great deal of work is necessary in the preparatory phase (i.e. before the mobility takes place). To balance this perception of complexity, it is worthwhile to keep in mind that:

- The preparation phase is needed to make sure that when the learner returns, the knowledge, skills and competencies s/he has achieved can be validated and recognised and consequently accumulated. It can be considered as part of a quality assurance process.
- Once a partnership is operating and a Memorandum of Understanding is in place, the preparatory phase becomes much simpler.
- As the mutual trust among partners progressively develops, the partners become familiar with the other qualifications systems and their constraints; the opportunities for cooperation are clarified and the three stages become much smoother.

Note: This text refers frequently to the distinction between the **home** and the **host institution**. In the context of organised transnational mobility:

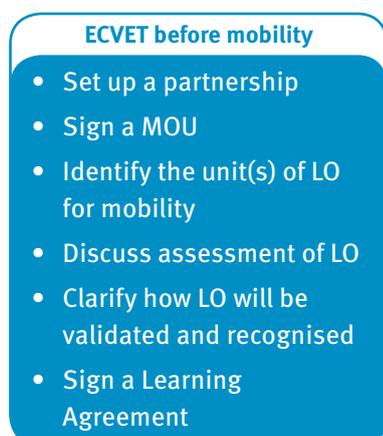
- The home institution is the one where the learner is regularly enrolled and where s/he prepares the full qualification.
- The host institution is the one where s/he spends a mobility period.

Figure 2 | Key issues to be taken into account before, during and after mobility when using ECVET



Legend: LO: Learning Outcomes; MoU: Memorandum of Understanding

3.1 Before mobility



This section discusses the aspects of ECVET implementation that need to be taken into account before the actual mobility takes place. The actions need to be carried out by VET providers (who can be schools or training companies) in association with the competent institutions that are responsible for validating and recognising the learning outcomes of mobile learners (the nature of these institution will depend on the qualifications system).⁵

3.1.1 Involving the necessary competent institutions

'Competent institution' means an institution which is responsible for designing and awarding qualifications or recognising units or other functions linked to ECVET, such as allocation of ECVET points to qualifications and units, assessment, validation and recognition of learning outcomes, under the rules and practices of participating countries.

ECVET Recommendation

The use of ECVET relies on a certain number of processes such as the identification and description of units of learning outcomes (including descriptions in terms of ECVET points), the assessment of learning outcomes and decisions on the validation and/or recognition of learners' credit. Depending on the way the qualifications system is organised, different organisations can be involved in different aspects of these processes.

The 'landscape of competent institutions' using ECVET across Europe is very differentiated. In certain qualifications systems, VET providers have a high level of autonomy and can decide to recognise learners' credit from abroad. In other qualifications systems, such decisions have to be made - or confirmed - by another type of competent institution, for example the national/regional authority in charge of the given qualification or an organisation representing the economic sector (e.g. chamber, branch organisation).

⁵ Please note that there is no fixed order of the necessary steps to be undertaken in each phase. For example, if a partnership is just about to be set up, the signature of the Memorandum of Understanding might take place at a later stage.

The organisations interested in developing partnerships can develop a good understanding of how the competencies for different functions of ECVET are distributed across the qualifications system in which they operate by reflecting upon these questions:

- Who and under what conditions has the competence to:
 - Define and/or describe (units of) learning outcomes – including ‘units for mobility’
 - Allocate ECVET points and using what method
 - Assess Learning Outcomes
 - Validate and recognise ECVET credit from abroad
- With how much flexibility can credit be recognised - in terms of comparability or difference between learning outcomes from the host institution and those in the qualifications standard of the home country
- How does validation and recognition of credit achieved abroad need to be carried out and recorded?

In many qualifications systems rules exist on the transfer of learning outcomes within the country from one institution to another, from one type of VET provision to another or from a non-formal or informal learning context towards the formal context in view of achieving a qualification. These rules can constitute the basic structures on which rules for recognition of credit in the framework of ECVET implementation can be put in place.

To identify who is in charge of what element of ECVET, it can be useful to refer to the table with functions of qualifications systems and ECVET-related functions that is presented in Annex A.

3.1.2 Developing ECVET partnerships and establishing mutual trust

A precondition for using ECVET in the framework of organised mobility is the setting up of a partnership. This partnership needs to bring together the competent institutions that fulfil the following functions:

- Identifying the unit(s) of learning outcomes suitable for mobility.
- Delivering the education and training programme/learning activities preparing for the unit(s) of learning outcomes concerned by the mobility.
- Assessing whether the learner(s) has(have) achieved the expected learning outcomes.
- Validating and recognising learners’ credit on their return to the home institution.

The partnership for ECVET mobility can be formalised by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

A MoU is an agreement between competent institutions which sets the framework for credit transfer. It formalises the ECVET partnership by stating the mutual acceptance of the status and procedures of competent institutions involved. It also establishes partnership’s procedures for cooperation.

Get to Know ECVET Better: Questions and Answers

A MoU is a framework agreement within which more detailed individual agreements (Learning Agreements) for specific mobility exchanges are signed. The MOU sets the structures and principles of how the partnership will operate. It specifies under what conditions learners’ credit achieved in partner institutions (qualifications systems) will be validated and recognised. **It should be designed so that it can last for a certain period of time** without needing to be amended each time the conditions of a specific mobility period change.

MoU can be developed by networks of competent institutions from several countries/systems, but they can also be bilateral. This depends on the partnership needs and ambitions. While the establishment of MoU is recommended for cases of organised mobility, if the institutions concerned already have trust in each other’s proce-

dures and they are competent to recognize credit without the agreement of another institution, they can put in place exchanges directly using the Learning Agreement.

Some examples of MoU are available on the ECVET pilot projects web-site⁶.

3.1.3 Agreeing learning outcomes for the mobility period(s)

The partnership and the MOoU set up the general conditions for recognition of learning outcomes achieved abroad.

To make the partnership operational, it is necessary to agree the content (unit(s) of learning outcomes) for each specific mobility period.

The agreement about the content of a specific mobility period is done between the home and the host institution. In this step the two institutions agree what the learner(s) will learn abroad and how these learning outcomes will be integrated into learners' qualifications. In other words, they **agree upon the learning outcomes and the corresponding unit(s)** that the learner(s) will achieve during mobility **and how learners' credit for these units will be recognised** in the home institution.

The nature of the units of learning outcomes will in general, depend on the qualifications system of the home institution. There are three main alternative possibilities:

1. Either the qualifications system already uses units of learning outcomes and the **credit to be achieved during mobility corresponds to a full unit** (or several units) or part of a unit. Consequently the credit achieved during mobility could be recognised as a full unit, or part of a unit, on learners' return; or
2. The qualifications system does not use units or the existing units cannot be used for mobility purposes. For example, because the existing units contain too many learning outcomes or these are too complex to be achieved during a mobility period of a short duration – this also depends on the duration of the mobility and the pre-requisites of the learners.

In such case, it may be possible (if enabled by the qualifications system rules for implementation of ECVET) to **create 'units for mobility'**⁷ specifically for the purpose of mobility partnerships. In systems that do not use units, 'units for mobility' could concern some of the learning outcomes of the full qualification.

3. A third option can be envisaged where the unit(s) achieved abroad is (are) recognised as additional credit (on top of the qualification being prepared by the learner).

Whatever the approach chosen (using existing units or developing 'units for mobility'), it is important that **for each specific mobility the partners have:**

- **Identified a unit of learning outcomes** that the learners can achieve during mobility.
- **Described the learning outcomes** that the learner is expected to achieve abroad.
- Ensured that **it is feasible to achieve the learning outcomes abroad** and that the host institution will ensure that the learner takes part in the relevant learning activities preparing for these outcomes.
- Ensured that **the credit for this unit can be recognised** when the learner returns to the home institution.

Note: When using ECVET qualifications and units of learning outcomes, they should be described using ECVET points. ECVET points provide additional information about qualifications and units of learning outcomes. They describe the size of the qualification as well as the relative weight of the units with regard to the overall qualification.

In the context of transnational mobility of learners, ECVET points give learners information about how the unit(s) of learning outcomes that they will achieve abroad relate(s) to the qualification they are preparing. They also make the achievement of a unit 'visible' because when the learning outcomes are validated and recognised the ECVET points are registered in a learner's transcript of record.

⁶ <http://www.ecvet-projects.eu/Toolbox/ToolboxList.aspx?id=16>

⁷ If you wish to learn more about the experience of ECVET pilot projects in creating units for mobility you can refer to the document on this topic written as part of projects cooperation activities. Useful Guidelines on 'Units of Learning Outcomes for ECVET, in the context of geographical mobility in the framework of partnerships: <http://www.ecvet-projects.eu/Documents/Guidelines%20on%20units%20for%20ECVET%20-%20geographical%20mobility.pdf>

3.1.4 Discussing the assessment of learning outcomes

During the mobility, each learner acquires the knowledge, skills and competencies that were agreed between the home and the host institution. At the end of (or during) the mobility period, the learning outcomes they have achieved will be assessed and documented.

To recognise a learner's credit when s/he returns to the home institution, the home and the host institutions need to discuss assessment and make sure that they trust the assessment approach used in the host institution. Namely they need to discuss:

- **Who will assess the learner, how will learning outcomes be assessed and in what context** (including where)? It is not necessary that the profile of the assessor, the assessment method or the assessment context be the same from one system to another. However, it is important that these points are discussed and that the partners agree that the approach to assessment of the host institution satisfies the requirements (for example in terms of quality assurance) of the system of the home institution.
- **When will the assessment take place?** This is a practical detail, but it is important to inform the learner, the institution who receives him/her and also the home institution about the time and place for assessment. Learners should also know how they will be assessed – especially if this is different from the way they are used to being assessed in their home institution.
- **What procedures will ensure the quality of assessment?** The quality assurance of assessment ensures that the learner is treated fairly and that the result of the assessment is valid and reliable. The lack of quality assurance may undermine the trust in assessment that took place abroad and in turn jeopardises the possibilities of validation and recognition.
- **How will the results of the assessment be recorded in a learner's transcript of record?** Evidence about a learner's achievement of learning outcomes is the basis for validation and recognition. It should be made clear before the mobility, how this will be documented.

Concerning validation and the recognition of credit achieved during the mobility period, each qualifications system will have its own rules. It is nevertheless important to **make it clear to the learner**, before the mobility takes place, **what form validation and recognition will take**.

3.1.5 Preparing and signing the Learning Agreement

A Learning Agreement is concluded by the two competent institutions involved in the training and validation process and the learner, in the framework of a Memorandum of Understanding.

ECVET Recommendation

The Learning Agreement defines the conditions for the mobility of each individual learner. In other words, it defines, for the specific mobility period, what units of learning outcomes the learner will achieve abroad, how and when these will be assessed and how the unit(s) will be recognised. Some examples of Learning Agreements are available on the pilot projects' web-site⁸.

The Learning Agreement can be accompanied by the Europass certificate supplement presenting the learning outcomes of the qualification the learner is preparing.

Note: If the conditions for mobility are the same for a group of learners it is possible to use the same text (in Learning Agreements) for all the learners in the group. However, each learner should receive and sign a Learning Agreement that concerns him/her individually.

⁸ <http://www.ecvet-projects.eu/Toolbox/ToolboxList.aspx?id=17>

3.2 During the mobility period

ECVET during mobility

- Provide the learning activities preparing for LO identified in the Learning Agreement
- Assess what LO the learner has achieved
- Provide evidence about the result of the learner's assessment (including a transcript of record)

During the mobility period the learner aims to acquire the knowledge, skills and competencies that s/he is expected to have achieved abroad. Several issues need to be addressed during the actual mobility phase.

3.2.1 The learner participates in learning activities relevant for the unit(s) s/he is preparing

The staff in the host institution need to be aware of the conditions of the mobility of the learner(s) from abroad. It is important that the learner participates in learning activities that actually prepare for the learning outcomes defined in the agreed unit description.

Independent of whether they are in a VET school or in a company, **the learning activities that the learner participates in, need to enable him or her to acquire the expected learning outcomes.** Obviously the learning activities will not be restricted to only those learning outcomes defined in the Learning Agreement because the learner might participate in learning activities that go beyond these agreed learning outcomes. However, it is also important that the learner has sufficient opportunities to progress in the knowledge, skills and competencies that his/ her mobility period is in particular concerned with.

The Learning Agreement and the description of unit(s) of learning outcomes it contains, is the guiding document for all: the teacher or trainer in the host institution and the learner.

3.2.2 Assessment of unit(s) of learning outcomes

Once the learning process is completed, the learner must demonstrate the achievement of the required learning outcomes, in line with the Learning Agreement and the MoU, in an assessment process⁹. There can be one or several assessments during the mobility period depending on the duration and the initial agreement. If the assessment does not respect the MoU and the Learning Agreement, the home institution could have difficulties validating and recognising learners' credit.

3.2.3 Documentation of learning outcomes achieved

Once the assessment is completed, it is important that its outcomes are documented in order to support the validation and recognition in the home institution on the learners' return. The evidence about the learning outcomes achieved can take several forms:

- The use of standardised assessment grids in which the assessors record learners' performance.
- Written statement by the assessor about what has been achieved fully, partially, etc.
- Grades, in which case it is important that there is a common understanding or a translation mechanism between the partner institutions as many education and training systems have very different approaches to grading.

⁹ If you wish to learn more about the reflection and solutions of the ECVET pilot projects on the topic of assessment, you can refer to the document Assessment of learning outcomes <http://www.ecvet-projects.eu/Documents/Note%20on%20assessment%20revised.pdf>

The use of Europass mobility¹⁰ can facilitate the recording of learners' learning outcomes achieved.

3.3 After the mobility period

ECVET after mobility

In line with the MoU and the Learning Agreement:

- Validate learners' credit achieved abroad
- Recognise learners' credit achieved abroad

When learners return to their home institution, learners' credit is validated and eventually recognised. There are different ways in which learners' credit can be validated and recognised, depending on the qualifications system of the home institution, these are outlined below.

Note: While validation and recognition take place after the mobility has been successfully completed, **it is important to clarify how learners' credit will be validated and recognised before the mobility takes place** (see Section 3.1). This should be clear to all: the learner, the teachers/trainers, possibly the school headmaster as well as the competent institutions that may be otherwise be involved in validation and recognition.

3.3.1 Different approaches to credit validation and recognition

At the core of ECVET is the recognition of credit (see the definition of credit below).

Credit for learning outcomes' (credit) means a set of learning outcomes of an individual which have been assessed and which can be accumulated towards a qualification or transferred to other learning 'programmes or qualifications'

ECVET Recommendation

For credit to be recognised in view of a qualification the **learning outcomes have to be relevant for the given qualification**. For example, it is highly unlikely that credit for a unit on 'designing electric circuits' will be recognised for the qualification of a cook, while it is much more likely to be recognised for a qualification preparing for the profession of an electrician.

However, there are differences among qualifications systems regarding the understanding about what is considered to be 'relevant' for a given qualification and how much flexibility is given. Overall, these three main distinctions exist:

- Some qualifications systems enable little flexibility and require that in order for credit to be recognised, **learning outcomes have to correspond to those that would have been achieved in the home system**. In other words, all the learning outcomes defined in the unit description in the home country, have to be contained in the unit for which the learner has achieved credit abroad. This means that **the person is expected to have learned abroad the same things as those s/he would have learned had s/he remained in the home country**.

In many qualifications systems this can be the case for certain units (element of qualifications), for example core units, units related to health and safety or those related to regulations: while more flexibility can be allowed for other units.

¹⁰ <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/europass/home/vernav/InformationOn/EuropassMobility.csp>

- Comparability between learning outcomes from different systems is often difficult to identify. Therefore in some qualifications systems, **it is accepted that the learning outcomes achieved in the foreign qualifications systems are not the same, but equivalent/ comparable**. This means that in general, the person has acquired abroad the knowledge and skills required to carry out the same activities as those that s/he would have learned had s/he stayed at home, even though the detailed knowledge and skills are somewhat different (maybe because the final product or the process are different). For example, the production of many culinary products will vary slightly from country to country.
- In some cases **it is possible to recognise credit even when the learning outcomes achieved abroad** (in the host institution) **differ from the learning outcomes that the person would have achieved in the home institution**. The competent institution can judge that the learning outcomes, even though different, are relevant for the qualification – or more exactly relevant for the profession for which the qualification prepares. This is possible when the qualifications system enables learners to choose from optional units and a unit which is not normally offered in the home qualification system can be ‘imported’ and validated as one of the options. For example, the learners can go abroad to learn about technologies and/or processes that their home institution does not provide.
- Finally, sometimes it is not possible to recognise credit when the learning outcomes are not equivalent to the learning outcomes prepared in the home qualifications system. However, it is sometimes still possible to **recognise** such credit as **additional credit** – on top of the learning outcomes defined in the qualifications standard. In these cases the person would achieve the full qualification and an additional unit that can provide additional value to the CV of the person when s/he will be seeking employment.

3.3.2 Validation of learners’ credit

Validation of learning outcomes means the process of confirming that certain assessed learning outcomes achieved by a learner correspond to specific outcomes which may be required for a unit or a qualification.

ECVET Recommendation

In some qualifications systems, the process of validation is not distinguished from the process of recognition, meaning that the two are done together in a single act. However, it is useful to conceptually distinguish between the two processes – also because in some systems they correspond to different acts and are the responsibility of different competent authorities.

The validation of learners’ credit takes place when the learner returns to his/her home institution.

It is based on the results of the assessment. The learner brings to the home institution evidence about the fact that the assessment in the host institution took place as agreed. This evidence also describes what learning outcomes the learner has achieved, compared to the unit description, and to what extent these are fully mastered.

Based on this evidence, the home institution confirms, in line with the Learning Agreement, whether the learner ‘passes’ – i.e. that **s/he has met the expectations** (in terms of learning outcomes) and if so, the credit is validated.

In practice, this can take several forms:

- The learner is not expected to repeat any courses/learning activities (this is a minimum form of validation).
- The learner can be exempt from a formative assessment. This means, for example, that based on the evidence of successful assessment, the title of the unit or the grade for the unit achieved is registered in a learner’s transcript of record.

- The learner can be exempt from a summative assessment. This could mean, for example, that based on the evidence of successful assessment, the unit achieved abroad is registered in a learner's transcript as being fully achieved.
- The learner can acquire extra credit. This means for example, that the unit achieved abroad is registered in a learner's transcript as additional credit on top of the credit achieved at home.

When learners' credit achieved abroad is validated it means that it has been **transferred**. It is considered to be an element of the qualification that the learner is preparing for. After the transfer of credit, the learner will continue building on the learning outcomes s/he has achieved and acquire new knowledge, skills and competence. In this way learners' credit is **accumulated**.

Learners' credit is typically recorded in a transcript of record and possibly described with ECVET points. This means that **the learner has a document that describes**, at minimum, the title of **units s/he has already achieved** in view of a given qualification (a short description of learning outcomes can also be provided). When the (unit(s) of) learning outcomes the learner has achieved abroad are registered in the transcript of record it should specify that these were achieved abroad. The accumulation of learners' credit is made visible by the fact that newly achieved (units of) learning outcomes are added to the transcript of record.

3.3.3 Recognition of learners' credit

Recognition of learning outcomes means the process of attesting officially achieved learning outcomes through the awarding of units or qualifications.

ECVET Recommendation

Recognition is the process through which the unit(s) of learning outcomes achieved abroad are officially attested and awarded.

Depending on the qualifications system, the recognition can be done by the same institution as validation or by another institution:

- Recognition can automatically follow validation if for example, the VET provider is at the same time the competent institution for awarding the units and the qualification. In such cases, if the unit is validated as part of a summative assessment, the VET provider can also recognise the unit by awarding a unit-certificate or through other means.
- Recognition can be delayed in time compared to the validation process. It can be done by another type of competent institution who will verify that rules have been complied with and only then, award the unit or the qualification.

Annex A: Functions of ECVET

Competent institutions

Abstract from *ECVET Questions and Answers*.

This table shows the different functions competent institutions can have in qualifications systems (in white) and the functions they have with regard to ECVET (pale blue). Some functions (dark blue) apply to the implementation of ECVET but are also present in qualifications systems.

The table shows, for example, that the institutions that have the competence to design qualifications are normally competent for describing qualifications in terms of units of learning outcomes and their descriptions in terms of ECVET points. However, these institutions can delegate this function to other competent institutions. The table enables those in charge of setting up a framework for the implementation of ECVET to clarify 'who does what' with regard to ECVET in their systems.

For an example on how this table can be used in the framework of ECVET partnerships see the example of the project Recomfor below.

Qualifications system	Conception functions				Realisation functions		
	Design of qualifications	Design of formal or non-formal programmes	Design of assessment/validation process and procedures	Carrying out the formal or non-formal programme	Assessment of learning outcomes (formal, non-formal and informal)	Validation of learning outcomes (formal, non-formal and informal)	Certification/recognition of learning outcomes (including the award of qualification, certificate, diploma...)
Support functions (both in qualifications systems and with regard to ECVET): information, guidance, documentation and communication							
ECVET functions	Design of ECVET elements				Use of ECVET for accumulation and Transfer		
	Description of qualifications in terms of units of learning outcomes	Link between units of learning outcomes and the formal or non-formal programme	Link between assessment/validation processes, the achievement of units of learning outcomes and award of associated ECVET points	Practical use of learning outcomes and credit for mobility	Establishment of learning agreements Assessment of learning outcomes and award of corresponding credit	Recording of assessed learning outcomes and credit in the personal transcript Validation of learning outcomes and of corresponding credit Award of corresponding ECVET points to the learner	Recognition of learning outcomes and process for taking credit into account for the award of qualification (i.e. transfer and accumulation)
Establishment of Memoranda of Understanding (all actors may be involved in the establishment of a MoU directly or by delegation)							

Annex B: Checklist for using ECVET for transnational mobility

This check list could be used as a basis for reviewing the use of ECVET for mobility by the competent institutions involved. It focuses on the key aspects of using ECVET for mobility but it can be further expanded or adapted.

Before the mobility period:

- What are the functions, including the validation and recognition of learning outcomes, that are covered by the competent institutions involved in the partnership?
- Which other institutions need to be involved to ensure credit transfer?
- Has a Memorandum of Understanding been signed?
- Has (have) unit(s) of learning outcomes for the mobility been identified?
- Is it clear how this (these) unit(s) relates to the learning outcomes of the qualification the learner is preparing for?
- Does the host institution agree with preparing the learner for the achievement of these learning outcomes?
- Are the learning outcomes linked to the assessment criteria?
- Are the assessment criteria understandable for the host and the home institution?
- Is there trust that the assessment criteria will be used for the assessment to the highest possible quality standard?
- Is it clear how learners' credit will be validated and recognised? Is the learner aware of how this will be done?
- Is there an agreement about how the host institution will document the result of the assessment (assessment grid, written statement – in what language(s))?
- Did the learner, the home and the host institution sign a Learning Agreement? Does the Learning Agreement identify the learning outcomes to be achieved, how these will be assessed and how learners' credit will be validated and recognised?

During the mobility period:

- Is the learner participating in learning activities that are relevant for the learning outcomes to be achieved?
- Are the teachers/assessors aware of the learning outcomes to be achieved by the learner?
- Are the assessors aware of the assessment criteria to be used to assess the learner? Do they know how to document the result of the assessment for the home institution?
- Was the Learning Agreement respected during the assessment?
- Was the learner provided with the evidence about his/her assessment which will serve as basis for the validation and recognition of credit?

After the mobility period:

- Based on the evidence of a learner's assessment in the host institution, did the learner achieve the expected learning outcomes?
- If so, has his/her credit been validated (and recognised) in line with the Learning Agreement?
- Has the credit for (units of) learning outcomes achieved abroad been recorded in the learner's transcript of record?

Annex C: ECVET for mobility in practice

Before mobility

During mobility

After mobility

EXAMPLE 1 **The mobility of Rosa, who is preparing for a qualification in the tourism sector (tourism organiser) in Finland**

Based on the experience of the ECVET pilot project M.O.T.O

Set up a partnership

In the framework of a broader agreement between the national competent institutions in charge of qualifications, a Finnish VET school developed a partnership with a VET school in Iceland. This broader partnership brought together the Finnish National Board of Education and the Icelandic Ministry of Education, but also other national authorities (from Italy and Austria) who took part in the M.O.T.O project.

In Finland the VET school is in charge of validating and recognising learners' credit. In Iceland, together with the VET school, an important partner institution was the employer who received Rosa and provided the work-placement.

Sign a MoU

The two VET schools sign a MoU which specifies, among other things, the requirements for assessment, validation and recognition of learning outcomes achieved abroad of each of the VET schools and the quality assurance used by each institution¹¹.

Identify the unit of LO

Rosa will go on a mobility period to Iceland. In Iceland she will achieve the learning outcomes that correspond to the unit of the qualification she is preparing for at home entitled *Implementing Tourism Services*. The learning outcomes for that unit are described in the Learning Agreement.

In Iceland, Rosa will be learning on the job. She will be learning in a riding centre where she will take part in various activities including taking care of horses (between 30 and 60), grooming them and taking customers on guided tours. Rosa has already worked with horses in the past and therefore she has the necessary prerequisites to fully take part in these activities.

This mobility will last three weeks.

Discuss Assessment of LO

The MoU states the general rules to be followed for assessment during the mobility period. It specifies that for Finnish students abroad:

When performing on-the-job learning in another country, the teacher in the host country arranges an assessment discussion at the end of the on-the-job learning period with the student, the workplace representative or job instructor and the contact person or a VET teacher from the host country VET institution

The Learning Agreement contains an assessment grid which also identifies the assessment criteria for all learning outcomes. Rosa's achievement of learning outcomes will be assessed using these criteria during a discussion between these three persons. This is also in line with the Finnish approach to learners' assessment.

Legend: LO – Learning Outcomes

¹¹ The completed MOU can be accessed on the web-site of the ECVET Pilot projects – go to 'more information': <http://ecvet-projects.eu/Projects/ProjectDetail.aspx?id=11>

Clarify how LO will be validated and recognised

Through this experience Rosa will achieve some very specific knowledge and skills that are in particular related to horse riding and breeding. These are not explicitly specified in the qualification she is preparing for at home. However, she will also develop more general competences that are related to the development and implementation of tourism services. These competencies are explicit in the qualification she is preparing for in Finland and hence she will be able to accumulate the credit for these learning outcomes.

If Rosa is positively assessed, she will achieve the unit *Implementing Tourism Services*. This will be recorded in her transcript of record and she will obtain the credit points that correspond to this unit.

Sign a Learning Agreement

When all the details of the mobility are agreed, Rosa signs a Learning Agreement in the home institution. She brings it with her to the host institution where the document is signed upon her arrival.

Take part in the learning activities preparing for the LO identified

As foreseen, Rosa takes part in the different activities of the riding centre. She takes care of horses and while doing it she observes the safety regulations (one of the learning outcomes to achieve). She guides tourists in English (language skills are also among the learning outcomes to achieve) and serves customers with courtesy taking into account their cultural background (also among the learning outcomes), etc.

Rosa is aware of the learning outcomes she is expected to achieve and if needed she can request that the job instructor let her further work/develop in a specific area which she needs to develop.

Assess what LO the learner has achieved

As foreseen, at the end of the mobility period, the job instructor, the VET teacher from the Icelandic school and Rosa have an assessment discussion. This discussion is guided by the assessment grid in the Learning Agreement. Rosa is first asked to self-evaluate her performance with regard to the different learning outcomes. The company representative does the same and the results are discussed between the three persons.

Based on the discussion, the VET teacher from the host institution confirms the assessment result.

It appears during the discussion that a small part of learning outcomes has not really been achieved because Rosa did not take part in related activities – this concerns mainly learning outcomes related to the use of resources on the work place. These learning outcomes are hence not assessed.

Provide evidence about the assessment

Rosa's self-evaluation, the assessment of the job instructor, as well as the assessment of the VET teacher are recorded in a single assessment grid that is attached to the Learning Agreement which Rosa brings with her to her home institution.

Validate learners' credit

When Rosa returns to her home institution, her teacher looks at the assessment grid and confirms that she has indeed achieved the learning outcomes needed for the unit *Implementing Tourism Services*.

Despite the fact that she has not achieved a few learning outcomes (because of lack of opportunities), the home institution considers this gap is a minor part of the unit and it does not prevent Rosa from achieving the unit.

Recognise learner's credit

The unit *Implementing Tourism Services* is recorded in Rosa's transcript of record, together with the grade that she has obtained (excellent). She is also awarded the credit points that correspond to that unit.

EXAMPLE 2 The mobility of Yvonne, who is preparing a qualification in the metal industry sector (Mechatronikerin) in Germany in the Dual VET System

Based on the experience of the ECVET ITP project MOVET¹²

(Modules for Vocational Education and Training for Competencies in Europe)

Set up a partnership

In the framework of a project with 15 partners in Germany, Finland and Denmark, vocational schools in Munich (DE), Pori (FI) and Copenhagen (DK) developed three modules (units) for IVET in the metal industry for the qualification mechatronic resp. automation technician. For the German consortium, a tight partnership between the dual partners on the one hand, the Berufsschule für Fertigungstechnik (vocational school for metal engineering) and on the other hand, the companies BMW, MTU aero engines and SWM Stadtwerke München – was elementary. The three VET schools had several years experience in student exchange – even before entering the ECVET topic. To process the IVET-modules all three schools co-operated with local companies – for visits and/or internal training.

Identify the unit of LO (module)

Yvonne will go on two transnational mobility periods, each lasting three weeks. In Copenhagen she will take part in a multinational module for Hydraulics. In Pori she will achieve learning outcomes in IT-BUS technology. Both are topics within the national curricula for mechatronics / automation technicians in Germany, Finland and Denmark. Besides the transnational learning periods, Yvonne will take part in the German unit for Programmable Logic Control. Here she will be one of the hosting students. Each unit of the curriculum is taken by local as well as guest students. The delivery of the training preparing for the units varies, but in general it combines a period of two weeks of school based learning and one week of learning in a company. All units are assessed through a final assessment (paper and pencil, skills demonstration and technical discussion).

The process of identification of these units of learning outcomes started with a comparison of the three national curricula. The VET schools had preliminary knowledge about special competencies in teaching in diverse technical fields. In addition, the level of expected learning outcomes had to be decided and ensured. Therefore an instrument called TaxonomyTable (TaxTab) was developed¹³.

Discuss Level and Assessment of LO

Developing the common units of learning outcomes involves several layers of discussion. From a rough idea concerning a first draft, to an elaborated description of all LO based on allocation in the TaxTab tool. The TaxTab tool provides transparency about the level of cognitive processes and the types of knowledge related to the skills and competencies. All the documents (description of LO, TaxTab, timetable for the module) are discussed and validated by the participating partners, mainly the sending and hosting schools and companies. The matching tasks for assessment and the criteria need to be developed in parallel.

Clarify how LO will be validated and recognised

Through this experience Yvonne will achieve some very specific knowledge and skills in automation technology. These are explicitly specified in the qualification she is preparing for at home. She will also develop more general competencies in the area of personal and social competencies as well as language skills. All the modules are processed in the English language. If Yvonne is positively assessed, she will achieve the units **Hydraulics and IT-BUS Technology** as transnational units and **Programmable Logic Control** as national unit. This will be recorded in the Europass certificate and documented by special certificates. The recognition she receives concerning the curricula of company based learning, is that she does not need to repeat these units in company based training.

¹² For more information about this project refer to the Adam data base description and the links provided there:

http://www.adam-europe.eu/prj/7093/project_7093_en.pdf

¹³ See <http://www.gomovet.eu> for details.

Sign a MoU

Yvonne and the three VET schools (and in Germany the companies) sign a MoU which specifies among other things, the requirements for assessment, validation and recognition of learning outcomes achieved abroad. The VET schools ensure the quality, including the consistency in the level of LO by filling in the TaxTab¹⁴.

Take part in the learning activities preparing for the LO identified

As foreseen, Yvonne takes part in the training by preparing for the three units; one unit is prepared at home, hosting the foreign students in her VET school and two units are prepared abroad, where she is a guest in the partner institutions.

She takes part in the school based and company based learning arrangements. She follows the cultural programme in the foreign country, participates in sports activities and visits historic places or cultural events. In the youth hostel she arranges with the other foreign students their daily catering and organises evening free time.

Yvonne is aware of the learning outcomes she is expected to achieve and, if needed, she can request that the teachers let her work and learn further in a specific area that she needs to develop.

Assess what LO the learner has achieved

As foreseen, at the end of the mobility period the VET teacher from the hosting school, the company trainer (if available) and Yvonne carry out the assessment about what she has learned. This has three parts: a small paper and pencil test in the school, a skills demonstration / programming task in the company and a technical discussion at the end. There is the possibility of participating as a guest observer for a person from the sending institution if interested (e.g. a company trainer from Munich).

The VET teacher of the hosting VET school (and the company trainer) confirms the assessment result. Yvonne receives the certificate and the Europass mobility.

Provide evidence about the assessment

Yvonne's skills demonstration (the programme file), her paper and pencil test, the assessment of the VET teacher (and if appropriate the assessment of the company trainer) are recorded and attached to the Learning Agreement which Yvonne brings with her to her home institutions.

Validate learners' credit

When Yvonne returns to her home institutions (VET school and company), her teacher and company trainer look at the assessment documents and the certificate and confirm that she has indeed achieved the learning outcomes needed for the unit **Hydraulics resp., IT-BUS Technology** and also the unit **Programmable Logic Control** which she participated at home.

Recognise learner's credit

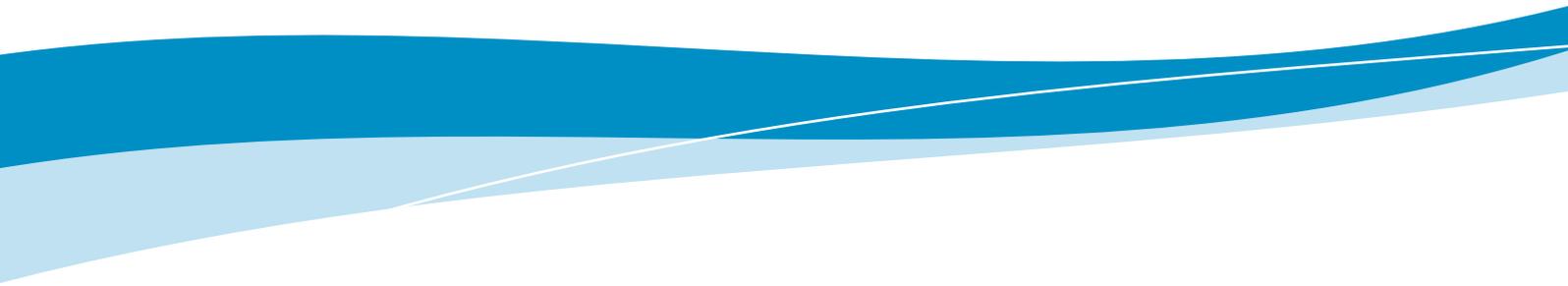
The units **Hydraulics resp., IT-BUS Technology resp., and Programmable Logic Control** are recorded in Yvonne's transcript of record, together with the grade that she has obtained (if appropriate).

(Due to the fact that Germany does not have an elaborated credit system, she cannot be awarded credit points.)





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