

NOTE ON DOCUMENTS USED TO UNDERPIN ECVET PROCESSES

This note presents the synthesis of the discussion on Memoranda of Understanding (MoU), Learning Agreements (LA) and Learners' Transcript of Record that took place between the ECVET pilot projects during their sixth seminar in Prague on 18-19 November 2011. It is based on a comparison of the document templates and completed examples prepared and used by the pilot projects.

1 MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

When using ECVET, MoU is a general framework for cooperation and networking between the partners through which a climate of mutual trust is established.

Based on ECVET Recommendation

The ECVET Recommendation is rather clear on the content of the MoU but it does not provide much guidance when it comes to the type and 'level' (national, local?) of competent institutions' involvement in the definition of and signature of the framework agreement that the MoU represents. The ECVET projects represent a mixture of situations:

- SME Master Plus: in some of the partner systems (e.g. Norway or France) the structures for awarding qualifications for the type of qualifications concerned by the project are quite centralised (i.e. there is one national chamber organisation that decides on assessment, validation and recognition of learning outcomes) while in Germany the structures are regionalised. Consequently, this poses the question of whether the French partners need to sign an MoU with each regional chamber of crafts in Germany or whether an agreement signed by the national umbrella organisation can be considered as the framework agreement.
- OPIR project: the OPIR model was that the MoUs would be signed at the highest level – in other words by the authorities in charge of designing qualifications and developing rules for validation and recognition of learning outcomes. However, this was a solution for the work of this specific project and the project partners recognise that it is not possible to mainstream such model as that would impose administrative burden on the different ministries and it is not the role of ministries to manage such agreements. Furthermore, the model has limitations when it comes to sustainability in a long-term perspective. For instance, each time an element of the qualification is modified, the MoU would need to be changed and the Ministry asked to sign again the modified MoU. As an alternative, OPIR has thought about setting up a network or an association instead.
- RECOMFOR Project: in order to avoid administrative burden on the ministries, it was decided that the training centres will sign the MoU. However, the MoU indicates that training centres signed the MoU under the responsibility of their

competent authorities (often ministries). There is no formal delegation of responsibility: this statement is made on the basis of mutual trust.

- M.O.T.O project: the project considered several alternatives to who could sign the MoU – from national to provider level. It identified that a workable solution could be an agreement between regional authorities in charge of VET.

Summary:

- National level agreements can be envisaged in cases where competent authorities are not the ministries directly but for example sectoral organisations, chambers or social partners;
- Where the national level competent authorities are ministries it is unlikely to develop MoUs that would be specific to a given qualification as the mainstreaming of such approach would not be feasible. In such case, it will be necessary to reflect on agreements at other levels or to envisage agreements that would concern groups of qualifications.
- Signing MoUs at provider level is possible as long as the competent authorities in charge of validation and recognition of learning outcomes (if different than the provider) agree with such as approach. This implies that providers have sufficient autonomy to develop cooperation and exchanges in view of applying ECVET. There is therefore need for mutual trust between the competent authority at the level of the system and the provider.

Conclusions:

When defining the partnership and reflecting on who should sign a MoU:

- The partners should carefully consider the objectives of the partnership: Does it aim at establishing short or long-term mobility? Does it have a broader aim which is interlinking the different VET systems? Depending on the objectives, the partners and consequently the ones signing the MoU should have the competence to deploy actions to reach the objective. On the basis of what the partnership objectives are, the partners should determine which institutions should be involved and sign the MoU in order to reach these objectives. The decision will vary according to the national context of each partner.
- Define the ambition of the partnership. If the aim is for example to create units of learning outcomes that would be common to the partner countries or to establish equivalence between units of learning outcomes that exist in the systems that the competent authority in charge of defining the qualifications and units of learning outcomes should be involved and sign the MoU. If on the other hand the ambition is more 'local', for example to use 'units for mobility' (provided that this is possible within the national rules) as an operational tool to support the mobility between two or a few training centres then the MoU can be a framework agreement between providers.

Generic remarks:

MoU can in general be of two types:

- Those that are an operational framework for concrete and identified

mobility exchanges;

- Those that form a more strategic agreement or commitment to recognise (units of) learning outcomes from the partner countries;

Independent of the type, MoUs should be designed so as to accommodate for minor changes over time. For example if the detail of the mobility arrangements changes it should not be necessary to revise the MoU.

What information should be included in the Memorandum of Understanding?

The project partners agree that following items **should always figure** in a MoU:

- Objectives of the MoU;
- Description of what is a competent institution with regard to these objectives (to avoid explaining why each of the competent institutions is entitled to sign);
- Identification of the organisations signing the MoU (who are they and what are they competent for in their systems);
- The qualifications concerned by the MoU (it could be a group of qualifications);
- Period of validity of the MoU;
- List of signatures;

Optional, possibly useful items could be:

- For MoUs signed at a more strategic level: a list of VET providers who are able to operate in the framework of the MoU. This can be the list of their names or it can refer to the type of VET providers.
- Division of responsibilities between the partner institutions during mobility: who does what (referring to home and host institution);
- General principles or even rules for assessment in the context of mobility;
- Information about how (units of) learning outcomes will be validated and recognised.

2 LEARNING AGREEMENT

The learning agreement lays down that, if the learner has achieved the expected learning outcomes and these have been positively assessed by the 'hosting' institution, the 'home' institution should validate and recognise them as part of the requirements for a qualification, according to the rules and procedures established by the competent institution.

Based on the ECVET Recommendation

Overall, the ECVET pilot projects included similar information in the Learning Agreement. The Learning Agreement should *focus on the specific situation of a particular learner* and his/her learning mobility period.

In general it was considered that these items should figure in a learning agreement:

- Information about the learner (basic data such as name, address etc.)
- Qualification being prepared by the learner including possibly where the learner is in his/her learning pathway;
- Information about the home and host institution (contact information);

It is possible that there would be several partners in the host institution: for example a partner VET school and an enterprise where the learner will involve in on-the-job learning. In such cases it is important to have **one** contact person.

- Description of the learning outcomes to be achieved during mobility ;
- Identification of how the learner will be assessed abroad and what assessment criteria will be used;

In addition, it was noted, that if considered as useful by the partners the learning agreement could:

- Specify for the learner how the learning activities abroad will be organised in relation to the learning outcomes to acquire. The information provided does not need to be too detailed but it should be clear and relevant for the learning outcomes to guarantee that the mobility programme goes smoothly and the learners have sufficient and appropriate opportunities to develop learning outcomes for which they will be assessed.
- The prerequisites for the learner to be able to achieve the expected learning outcomes within the framework of the mobility period and the learning activities foreseen can also be specified.
- Project partners can also decide to include other practical details in the LA that are important for mobility but not related to the use of ECVET as such (e.g. practical aspects of the mobility, insurance, etc.).

3 TRANSCRIPT OF RECORD

A personal transcript is a document which details the learners' assessed learning outcomes, units and ECVET points awarded.

ECVET Recommendation

There was generally agreement among the ECVET projects that the personal transcript of record should include information on:

- Personal information about the learner
- The learning outcomes assessed which were achieved during mobility; and the
- The degree of achievement.

The transcript can for example include an assessment grid as completed by the assessor so as to reflect learners' achievement according to the expected learning outcomes. It should be made sure that the EQF levels are met. Europass mobility can also be used as a transparency instrument – countries are already familiar with it.

Some projects decided to combine Learning Agreement and Transcript of Records in order not to hand out too many documents.