

IN-CLOUD
INNOVATION IN THE CLOUD BRIDGING UNIVERSITIES AND BUSINESSES
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European Lifelong Learning Instruments' Definitions

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1. Introduction

The 4 IN-CLOUD Professional Qualifications developed are in line with the European Lifelong Learning instruments (EQF, ECVET and EQAVET) to allow their recognition and usability at European level.



2. European Lifelong Learning Instruments'

2.1 European Qualifications Framework

The **European Qualifications Framework (EQF)** for Lifelong Learning is a common European reference tool that facilitates comparison between qualifications systems in Europe. This reference framework allows improving the transparency, comparability and portability of citizens' qualifications in the different EU countries. This should support learners and workers interested to move between countries or change jobs or move between educational institutions within EU.

The major users of the EQF are bodies in charge of national and/or sectoral qualification systems and frameworks. Once they have related their respective systems to the EQF, the EQF will help individuals, employers and education and training providers to compare individual qualifications from different countries and education and training systems. In practice, it will be used as a translation device for qualifications. This will promote students and workers' mobility and recognition of their professional competences.

The EQF encompasses general and adult education, vocational education and training as well as higher education. The EQF uses 8 reference levels based on learning outcomes (defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences).

The eight levels cover the entire span of qualifications from those achieved at the end of compulsory education to those awarded at the highest level of academic and professional or vocational education and training. Each level should in principle be attainable by way of a variety of education and career paths.

The EQF shifts the focus from input (lengths of a learning experience, type of institution) to what a person holding a particular qualification actually knows and is able to do. Shifting the focus to learning outcomes:

- Promotes a better correspondence between the needs of the labour market and education and training.
- Facilitates the validation of learning acquired through channels different from formal education (non – formal and informal learning)
- Facilitates the transfer and use of qualifications among different countries and education and training systems.

2.2 European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training

The **European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET)**¹ is a common methodological framework to support the learning credits accumulation and transfer from one certification system to others. The system aims to support the mobility of European citizens, facilitating the validation, recognition and accumulation of skills and knowledge acquired during learning experiences in another country or in different contexts.

ECVET aims for better compatibility between the different vocational education and training (VET) systems in place across Europe and their qualifications.

ECVET is based on:

Learning outcomes (LOs): statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process. For ECVET purposes the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is used as a reference for levels.

¹ Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET)

LOs are developed in the process of designing qualifications and may be acquired through a variety of learning pathways, modes of delivery (school-based, in-company, workplaces etc.), in different learning contexts (formal, non-formal and informal) or settings (i.e. country, education and training system).

Units of learning outcomes: components of a qualification, consisting of a coherent set of knowledge, skills and competence that can be assessed and validated.

Units enable progressive achievement of qualifications through transfer and accumulation of LOs. Assessment and validation verify and record that the learner has achieved the learning outcomes expected.

Depending on the existing regulations, units may be common to several qualifications or specific to one particular qualification. Units are accumulated based on the requirements to achieve qualifications.

ECVET points: provide additional information about units and qualifications in a numerical form, representing the overall weight of LOs in a qualification and the relative weight of units in relation to the qualification.

The number of ECVET points allocated to a qualification, together with other specifications, can indicate for example, that the scope of the qualification is narrow or broad.

The number of ECVET points allocated to a unit provides the learner with information concerning the relative weight of what s/he has accumulated already. It also provides the learner with information concerning what remains to be achieved.

Credit for assessed Units designates individuals' LOs which have been assessed and which can be accumulated towards a qualification or transferred to other learning programmes or qualifications.

Credit refers to the fact that the learner has achieved the expected learning outcomes which have been assessed positively and the outcome of the assessment was documented in a personal transcript. Based on this documentation, other institutions can recognise learners' credit.

Credit is a different concept than ECVET points. While credit designates the LOs the learner has achieved, ECVET points provide information about the qualification and the units

Credit can be transferred and accumulated if the competent institution recognises that what the learner has achieved is relevant and can be taken into account as part of the qualification the learner is preparing (or seeks recognition) for. ECVET points provide information about the credit the learner has transferred and accumulated (e.g. what is the relative weight of units the learner has already achieved).

Mutual trust and partnership among participating organisations are expressed in memoranda of understanding and learning agreements.

2.3 European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training

The **European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET)** is a community of practice that develops and improves Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training by using the *European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF)*.

The EQAVET Recommendation² establishes a reference instrument to support Member States to promote and monitor continuous improvement of VET systems. The framework comprises a cycle of four phases (planning, implementation, evaluation and review); each supported by quality criteria and indicative descriptors, to be applied at the VET-system, provider and qualification awarding levels.

The indicators proposed for measuring VET quality improvement concern data such as investment in training of teachers and trainers, participation, completion and placement rate in VET programmes, utilization of acquired skills at work place, unemployment rate, prevalence of vulnerable groups, mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market and schemes used to promote access to VET.

EQAVET has contributed to advancing a quality culture in VET in European countries, as well as to its practical implementation, through the development notably of quality operational measures within the EQAVET network.

The possibility to encounter some difficulties using EQAVET is due to different reasons: EQAVET descriptors are very general and often cover aspects that are not covered by specific QA measures but feature rather in VET policies and policy-making approaches. Furthermore, national QA measures often are not presented in comprehensive documents and do not necessarily adopt the EQAVET structure. EQAVET proposes different terminologies for quality of the VET system and at VET provider level.

² Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training