

Statement on a European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training

Adopted by the BM51, 3th Dec 2006.

ESIB welcomes the initiative taken by the European Commission to explore the use of credits in Vocational Education and Training (VET). ESIB underlines the benefits credits can bring along for learners, i.e. better conditions for recognition of learning periods abroad through credit transfer and more flexible education programmes through a credit accumulation scheme.

ESIB takes note of the Commission proposal of a *European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET)*. ESIB is concerned about the development of an entirely new credit system for VET. ESIB stresses that the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is a universal approach, which is applicable to all levels and types of education. ESIB therefore strongly suggests to further develop the ECTS and to use ECTS within VET and within Lifelong Learning contexts, instead of developing a new separate credit system.

ESIB stresses that credits in higher education, VET and other contexts have to be comparable and compatible to be fully beneficial to learners. There are cases where a programme is considered higher education in one country, whereas it is part of VET in another country (e.g. nursing). Only compatible credit systems can cater for mobility and recognition in those cases.

ESIB reaffirms its support of the core principles of ECTS, description in terms of learning outcomes and credit numbers linked to student workload. ESIB holds this principles as universal and not dependent of the level or type of education. To be compatible with ECTS, a credit system must be based on the same principles and should be based on the same reference of 60 credits per year of full-time learning.

The principle of student workload makes a credit system student centred. Basing credit numbers on student workload is describing the weight of a unit in an education programme from a student perspective. The importance of a unit will rather be defined by the depth and breadth in which its outcomes are described, and how this description relates to the qualification's outcome description. Credit numbers should not aim at measuring importance, but describe student workload.

ESIB notes that the currently proposed ECVET is not based consequently on student workload. Hence, it will not be compatible or comparable with the ECTS. Consistency is not even provided within ECVET since it is proposed that different figures and estimations – or even a combination of them – determine credit numbers. Credit numbers from different institutions and countries will be incomparable, as they may describe something entirely different.

ESIB stresses that the proposal of a separate credit system for VET is contradictory to the overarching approach of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) for LLL and other initiatives, such as cooperation of higher education and VET in the area of quality assurance. Whereas the EQF aims at building bridges between the educational sectors, a separate ECVET may result in unnecessary boundaries which are a barrier to the mobility learners and workers.

ESIB calls upon the European Commission

- to postpone its current proposal for a new credit system ECVET,
- to extend the Expert Group to be balanced in terms of experts from VET, higher education and Lifelong Learning and
- to mandate it to further develop ECTS into a credit system applicable also for VET and Lifelong Learning, starting from ECTS as a working system which already foresees to be applied to different learning contexts.