

**Handbook on a practical model of
ECVET framework in validation
processes of LOs in WBL and toolkit
for practical use**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Identification phase.....	4
3. Documentation phase	6
4. Assessment phase	7
5. Certification phase	8

1. Introduction

This handbook aims to be a guide for the identification, documentation, assessment and certification of learning outcomes related to a certain period of work-based learning, following the quality principles provided by the ECVET framework.

The handbook is intended to be used by VET teachers and companies together, but it has been developed following an approach more suitable to the companies' needs and language as a way to promote their participation and involvement in WBL, considering:

- The “marketing” aspect of the handbook (to be attractive);
- Its practicability, including ideas and templates from and for real life situations, adapted to the needs of VET schools and companies;
- The ECVET technical framework.

Following the stages proposed by ECVET, the handbook has been designed with this structure:

Identification phase. In some countries or regions (like the Basque Country) there are already official documents provided by the education authorities that are mandatory to follow for the Identification and Documentation phases and they have been designed following ECVET principles. During the project, we have detected, however, that there is some room for improvement, i.e. instead of the VET school having the weight of the definition of learning outcomes, it should be a process done together by companies and the VET schools. Although in theory it should be this way, the reality is that in most cases the VET school/teacher does this job first and then shares it with the company (at the most). Our intention is to provide a tool that can be filled out at the same time by companies and by VET schools, where both sides can express their needs, can compare and match, by identifying tasks that can be done by students. And all this should be done by using a language suitable for the company.

Documentation phase. According to the international literature on the topic and the preliminary research done in this project, the Documentation phase seems to be one of the most challenging points in the validation process of LOs. There is too much distance between school and company in terms of identification of evidence, criteria and methods. And in a general way both of the parties (school and company) complain about problems related to timing, language and cooperation. As a result, very often the Documentation phase is up to the school, while the role of the company is just limited to approving it. For this reason, following the approach of the Identification phase mentioned above, we propose a more “company-oriented” approach and related practical tools, where the company can play an active role in this phase moving from its needs and its language. Technically speaking, it means talking about real tasks

to fulfil and practical outputs to be realised; in this way the involvement and the contribution of the company side to the Documentation phase of LOs can be much more effective.

Assessment phase. This will consist of the evaluation of outputs (achieved/not achieved) and tasks (defined already in the identification phase) related to the production of each output (according to a scale) plus the evaluation of personal competences (defined also in the identification phase, related to the tasks).

Certification phase. The certification of a WBL period depends on the regulations of each country. However, there are European tools (European skills passport, Europass...) that can be used to show the learning outcomes acquired by a student during his/her WBL period.

2. Identification phase

The implementation of the ECVET system is very unbalanced among the EU countries due also to the very different levels of implementation of work-based learning.

In general, those countries with a higher importance of work-based learning in recent years (like Portugal or Spain) have adopted more of the ECVET technical framework to apply in the different stages (Identification, Documentation, Assessment and Certification).

Regarding the countries involved in the “People in WBL” project, we could also see these differences: Spain with a higher level of implementation; Italy with a medium level and taking steps towards a higher one; and Slovenia with practically none of the ECVET aspects applied in their framework for work-based learning.

In the case of Spain or Italy, we could also appreciate some differences among regions. Focusing on the region of the Basque Country (Spain) where work-based learning has a bigger importance than in other regions of Spain (there are around 20.356 students in dual VET programmes in Spain, 2.400 of them from the Basque Country and placing the region with the highest number of dual VET students in Spain). For the Identification phase there are already documents available, provided by the education authorities, that are compulsory to set up a work-based learning process. The document follows ECVET recommendations to define a Learning agreement and includes the following aspects:

- Data from the VET college, the VET teacher in charge of the student, the student, the company and the tutor in company.
- The learning outcomes of the whole VET programme and which of them will be acquired in the VET college and which ones in the company.
- The evaluation criteria to be applied to each learning outcome.
- The process the VET teacher and the company will use for the follow up and monitoring of the student's progress.
- The working hours and calendar of the student in the company.

Although the document gathers all necessary information, during the interviews we had with Basque VET teachers and companies and during the discussions the partners had during the project, we came to the conclusion that the document is too “education-oriented”, in the sense that it manages concepts directly taken from the official curricula and companies are not only used to them, but actually not even concerned about them. They would rather have the possibility to express what their needs are in terms of what the student's tasks would be and which kind of activities, responsibilities he/she would have.

In order to simplify this, the model we propose is aimed to be filled out together by a VET teacher and by the tutor in the company. The yellow section has to be filled out by the company tutor and the blue section by the VET teacher. During the Identification phase, the company should start by filling out the model with information according to its needs and the particular job position the student will cover. Specifically, these are the sections:

- What are the tasks of the job position?
- What is the importance of that task (from 1 to 10)?
- Which competences/skills are needed to carry out the task successfully?
- What is the output of the task? Which means, what is the result of the task that can be observed and therefore assessed.

Once this information is provided by the company, the VET teacher will be able to complete this one:

- Learning outcomes involved from the official curriculum. According to the information provided by the company, the teacher will be able to identify which learning outcomes could be covered by it.

3. Documentation phase

The documentation phase is strictly linked to the identification phase and it is focused on evidence that learning outcomes are reached (according to European Guidelines for validation of non-formal and informal learning – Cedefop 2018 – “in some countries identification and documentation are grouped together”).

Evidence can be of several types: the only important thing is that they must provide sufficient proof that expected learning outcomes are acquired. According to the European literature, common formats and better knowledge of learning outcomes approach across Europe have been improving the implementation of this phase over the last years. However, there are still too many differences among Countries and among different organisations within the same countries. Moreover, the process still looks too much “educational oriented”. In most of the cases the main player is only the school: taking the initiative; identifying evidence with related criteria and methods; setting the timing; leading the whole process with company and student.

As confirmation of that, we had an important part of the preliminary study of validation of LOs in WBL realised under our project “People in WBL”. We addressed interviews both to school tutors and company tutors in all project countries (Italy, Spain, Slovenia). All of the tutors recognise the Documentation phase as a problem in terms of timing to be spent, lack of coordination and cooperation between school and company, lack of a common language. Going in-depth, they agree in recognising the lack of cooperation in identifying criteria as the most problematic challenge. Many companies just absorb criteria from schools without having an active role in designing them. And schools agree with this. As a result, the Documentation phase is too “school-oriented”. Consequences: on one side, schools complain about the amount of work; on the other side, companies complain about not understanding and not feeling involved.

Moving from that point, we propose an approach that is more “company-oriented”, where companies have the possibility to be more involved and to feel more engaged in actively taking part in the process. In order to do that, a central role in the tools proposed will be played by the definition of the tasks and outputs. The aim is to introduce an approach and to speak a language close to the needs and the interests of the companies.

Companies want to talk about tasks to fulfil and outputs to be realised. Simply by starting from these two practical and tangible concepts the companies become available to be effectively involved in the Documentation phase.

In our model, this step requires the company to fill the section “Output” in yellow. The company will write here the result of the task done by the student. This result can be of any nature (a document, a design, a prototype, a reply to a customer...) but in any case, it will be something tangible, measurable and assessable.

The VET teacher will also complete the section “Output”, but the blue one, following the same criteria but from the education sector point of view. In this case, the output can cover more than one task and can be a diary of everyday activities done by the student, a self-reflection report on the learning process or any other result useful for the teacher to check that learning outcomes and skills associated to them are being achieved.

In this way, the learning process is documented, and we can go to the next step.

4. Assessment phase

There are several fundamental and overlapping issues in the assessment of a WBL experience. We can start by stating what may be considered a simplification, that is “assessment should be seen as a process rather than as a discrete event”.

The process of reporting the achievements of individual students on work placements involves making decisions about:

- What must be assessed?
- How should it be assessed?
- Who must it be assessed by?
- How the relevant information must be gathered and reported.

Assessment presents difficulties because there is little control over the learning environment, in the traditional sense; students carry out different activities and they are therefore learning different things; schools and companies evaluate different aspects of the learning experience. Companies usually look for work-related skills while schools are looking into the learning process itself and finally the student must make a reflection on his own learning.

Therefore, our challenge has been to define an assessment instrument which will suit all players in work-based learning.

In our model we propose 3 fields to be completed by the VET teacher and 3 by the company, corresponding to the assessment of the outputs described beforehand by each of them during the Documentation phase. The yellow fields, corresponding to the company will be:

- Indicators. Which aspects of the outputs will be assessed? What is taken into consideration to judge the output? (completeness, customer satisfaction, timing...)
- Level. Which level reaches each of the indicators?

- Descriptor. In order to successfully accomplish the task and achieve the output, what must the student be able to do?

The blue fields, corresponding to assessment to be filled out by the teacher, will have the same headings (indicators, level and descriptor) but the information provided here will be obviously referred to the outputs defined during documentation phase.

5. Certification phase

The recognition of a period of WBL depends on the regulations of each country. Receiving formal recognition for the learning outcomes acquired during a WBL period means that the learner does not have to repeat or catch-up missed elements of learning in the school.

Following the ECVET principles, well-documented learning puts learners in a better position to present acquired skills to companies and here is when certification comes into place.

Although in each country there may be different ways and documents to certify the successful completion of a learning process, there are also European tools that may be used, complementary or standing alone, to show the learning outcomes acquired by a student during a WBL period.

These tools can be found in the Europass section of the Cedefop Website, <https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/> and include:

- The Europass CV, to present a student's skills clearly and effectively.
- The European Skills passport, to reinforce the CV and provide a more comprehensive picture of skills and qualifications.
- The Language passport, a self-assessment tool for language skills.
- The Europass Mobility, a record of skills acquired during a learning period abroad.
- The Certificate Supplement, description of skills acquired by holders of a vocational training certificate.