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**EUROPEAN CREDIT TRANSFER SYSTEM FOR VOCATIONAL
EDUCATION AND TRAINING (ECVET) IN THE CONTEXT OF
VIRTUAL ACADEMIC MOBILITY³**

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Abstract. *The article deals with the concept of virtual academic mobility, and the possibility of applying requirements of the European credit transfer system for vocational education and training (ECVET) for recognition of learning outcomes acquired in on-line learning*

Keywords: *European credit transfer system for vocational education and training (ECVET), virtual academic mobility*

Globalization affects the development of the world's educational space. Modern educational technologies are mainly implemented using ICT (information

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and communication technologies). Education is increasingly moving into virtual space.

Therefore, it becomes important to develop the problem of virtual academic mobility, as well as the procedures for recognition of learning outcomes obtained using educational technologies located in virtual space.

Virtual Mobility is a form of learning which consists of virtual components through a fully ICT supported learning environment that includes cross-border collaboration with people from different backgrounds and cultures working and studying together, having, as its main purpose, the enhancement of intercultural understanding and the exchange of knowledge [2].

Based on this broad definition the project identifies four main types of virtual mobility activities:

- a virtual course or seminar: Learners in a higher education institute engage in virtual mobility for a single course (as part of a whole study programme) or a seminar (series) and the rest of their learning activities take place face-to-face in a traditional way.
- a whole virtual study programme: Hereby an entire virtual study programme is offered at one higher education institute, giving students from different countries the chance to take this programme without having to go abroad for a whole academic year.
- a virtual student placement: Student placements are organized between a higher education institute and a company (sometimes in a different country). In the virtual equivalent students are using ICT to support their internship, giving them a real-life experience in a corporate setting without the necessity to move from the campus to the company or to relocate to another country for a certain period of time, and providing them with a practical preparation for new ways of working through (international) collaborative team work.
- virtual support activities to physical exchange: Virtual mobility enables both better preparation and follow-up of students who participate in physical ex-

change programs. Preparatory activities could include student selection at a distance through video- or webconferencing (for checking social and language skills) and on-line language and cultural integration courses. Follow-up activities will help students to keep in touch with their peers, scattered around the world, to finish their common research work and/or paper work. They could also take on the form of a so-called 'Virtual Alumni' organization, to foster life-long friendships and networks [2].

One of the first notions of virtual mobility ideas are found in the often cited S. Van de Bunt-Kokhuis's (1996) research paper where she creates a rather interesting though specific definition of Virtual mobility: the collaborative communication between a faculty member and his/her counterpart(s) mediated by a computer. More often, these meetings will be interactive and take place across national borders and across time zones. A more full-scale presentation of the concept is found at the Humanities project report, where virtual mobility is considered to be constituted of the following elements:

- transnational lectures and/or learning materials;
- cross-border recruitment of students;
- intensity of communication flows;
- international accreditation of achievements;
- multilingualism;
- complementarity between virtual mobility activities, traditional lectures, and physical mobility;
- international recognition and accreditation of study achievements [3].

The largest program to support academic mobility in Europe is the Erasmus program, founded in 1987. The most important direction of the Erasmus program is credit academic mobility.

Analysis of the educational services market shows that the actual trend is the implementation of educational technologies in the virtual space, but the procedures for the recognition of learning outcomes are practically not developed.

Adapted regulations and tools of the European credit transfer system for vocational education and training (ECVET) can become the basis for recognition of learning outcomes obtained in virtual space.

This credit system is based on the experience of applying the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) during the Bologna process. It is a set of principles and tools which supports the recognition of learning in one context, so that it counts towards a qualification in another. The principles can be applied flexibly in different countries and in different educational contexts. Some countries have decided only to use ECVET in connection with transnational learning mobility, whereas others also use it nationally in connection with lifelong learning strategies.

It is intended to aid the transfer, recognition and accumulation of assessed learning outcomes of individuals aiming to achieve a qualification and to promote lifelong learning through flexible and individualized learning pathways (European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2009). ECVET is also meant to support learners on their career and learning paths to a recognized vocational qualification, through transfer and accumulation of their assessed learning outcomes acquired in different national, cultural and education and training contexts. ECVET calls for better transparency and mutual trust between education systems and providers, as well as more efficient and readable recognition of non-formal and informal learning. ECVET is meant for individual learners to be able to accumulate, transfer and use their learning in units as they are achieved; to build a qualification at their own pace from learning outcomes acquired in formal, non-formal and informal contexts in their own country and/or abroad [1].

Piloting ECVET to the National vocational education and training system of Russia and Uzbekistan (RUECVET, 2016-2019) is currently being implemented on the basis of the Russian State Vocational Pedagogical University as part of a project supported by the Erasmus + (Erasmus +, ref. n. 574097-EPP-1-2016-1-CYEPPKA2-CBHE-JP). The overall aim of the project is to create a high and vocational education and training systems platform for piloting ECVET in the national high and vocational education and training systems of the two partner countries

(Russia and Uzbekistan), in order to promote and facilitate compatibility, comparability and complementarity of vocational education and training qualifications.

One of the possible prospective directions of using this project results is creation of the basis for developing procedures for recognition of learning outcomes acquired in on-line learning and also ensuring the development of virtual academic mobility.

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