



**empoweremployees**

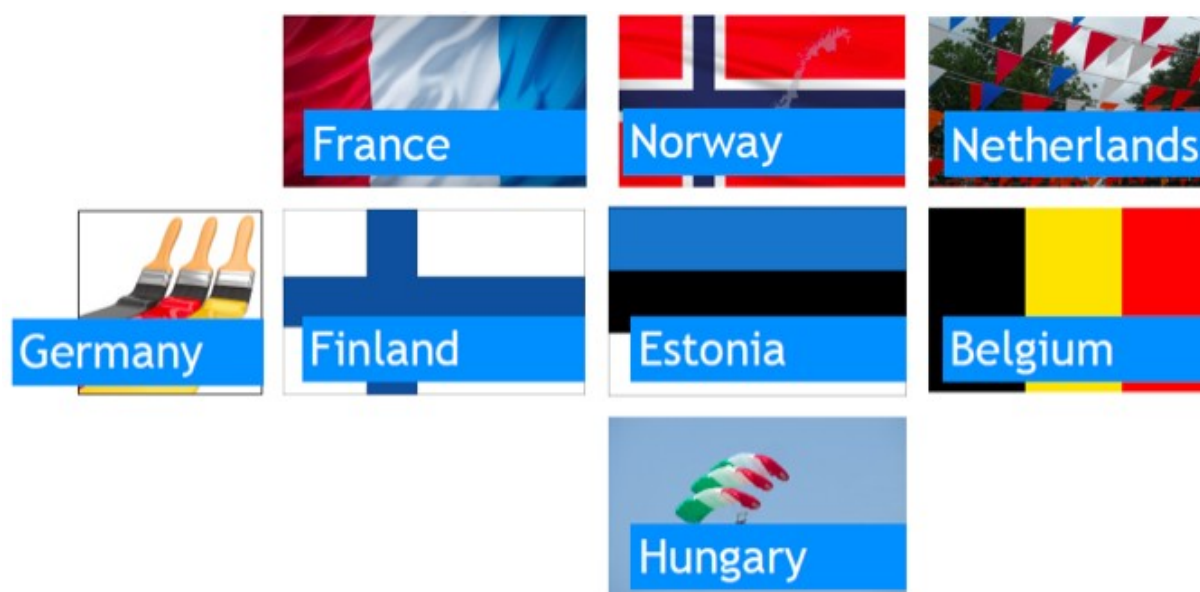
## Using the principles of ECVET and EQF for the labour market: the success story of the YEBISU e.e. partnership

*'Face to face' with Mr. Huigens, the partnership leader of the YEBISU e.e. partnership and Mr. Hertog, managing director of Irado*

### Can you explain why YEBISU e.e. is a good example of ECVET for the labour market?

“e.e.” is standing for Empowers Employees. The project is a partnership which can be seen as a community of practitioners. Twelve companies (!) and four educational institutes as well as a branch organization and some researching institutes are members of this group.

It is the story of a company who is working on skills development of their employees. They strongly believe that this is essential for the future of their company. You could call it an ECVET experience but in reality it is all covered under the umbrella of the EQF. Actually we are convinced that you cannot implement ECVET, without the EQF.



### The demand for this initiative came from companies. They see ECVET/ EQF as a solution for their human resource and labourmarket challenges. Can you explain this?

Mr Huigens, the partnership leader, explains that he started already some years ago with the first YEBISU project. It was on the initiative of a Dutch company “Van der Spek group”. A company in the gardening sector. Van der Spek group is still the leading company in the YEBISU history, but now we are exploiting and using the YEBISU principles in other contexts, other companies and other levels as well. He underlines that the reason for taking Irado as an example in this interview is the focus of Irado on the lower level employees, which fits with the New Skills Agenda.

Irado, one of the core partners, is a Dutch company. They collect garbage and maintain the public greens, street cleaning of the public space in parts of the Netherlands. They are relatively small and therewith vulnerable in an internationally operating market. They are service providers for the cities, so it is in the interest of these cities to get these services for the lowest price. The management of Irado wants to continuously improve, develop and distinguish themselves. For this reason, the management started to develop all employees of Irado from service provider for the cities to partners in business.

For example, Irado trains unemployed people to adjust their work discipline in a way they can find a job in a different sector. Irado also provides work for people with a distance to the labour market because of a disability. This branche is changing fast and Irado requires that their employees continuously adapt their working attitude and that they are aware of the core values of the company. Employees are working in a constant changing context, which requires different type of skills and competences. Irado is now both using the EQF levels and descriptors as the ECVET principles in a very efficient way, which makes them more competitive in the market.

According to Mr. Hertog, the biggest challenge is the experience of learning in different contextual situations and handling the limitations of mental models. The link to learn the ability of making one selves vulnerable.

### **How does it work in practice? Do you use the concept of the Learning outcomes?**

In the project, one of the steps was to do research concerning the expectations of companies in behavior of their employees. We came to the conclusion that it is all about Intrapreneurial behavior. In Finland they were called the 'hidden competences'. We worked this out in a profile and the companies translated our profile in a practical way in concrete units of learning outcomes. For this we used the ECVET principles.

About 60% of the employees are handling their work on EQF level 1 and 2. Irado is working on Intrapreneurial skills, which can be seen as generic skills, professional skills and socio-emotional skills. Those can easily divided in ECVET units. For example: the employees of level 1 and 2 are trained in units with Dutch language skills to make sure they can read the safety and handling instructions of new machinery. Besides, they train them in units with professional skills. All the employees at Irado follow at their own level a unit on social emotional skills and competences. All these development/ training sessions (divided in units) take place under working time and the director himself leads this process.



**According to you, is this concept of units of learning outcomes sufficient to understand each other? Both between countries, as within one country between the labour market and educational institutes?**

The language of the learning outcomes is the language of the companies. This might be the big difference between the labour market and educational institutes. The concept of units makes it easy to develop small learning units with outcomes based descriptors for training of the lower level workers.

EQF is a common language for the YEBISU partners and it makes sure that we understand each. For example, among the partners we fully understand each other when we speak about the level of certain professional profile, in a certain context. The ECVET concepts, like the units, are used for the individual development plans of the employees. We are expecting from the VET institutes in our regions that they carry out the validation and recognition of these individual learning units. The companies take care of the accumulation in the their job profile. Mr. Hertog emphasizes that learning horizontally is maybe as important or even more important than vertical learning. Development within the levels and not focusing from one level to a higher level as the VET institutions are used to think of.

**Learning from your experiences, what is needed to make ECVET workable for the labourmarket/ companies. What are the success factors?**

The VET institutions should understand that learning can take place in all kind of circumstances. That makes recognition of learning easier and that makes employees more motivated for LifeLong Learning. This is maybe the biggest challenge: to make employees more aware of their own role in the company. When employees are aware of their own involvement, they can connect themselves to team thinking and team learning and the overall mission of the company. This is what makes the companies in YEBISU more competitive compared to other companies. Irado is a good example of this process. However, Mr Hertog is underlining that it is a slow process, which takes time. Irado started with this process in 2002.

The secret of its success is the intrinsic motivation, the involvement of the management and the theory of the learning organization together with the open dialogue with the YEBISU partners. For this the European instruments are a big help. Borderless learning is what the EQF, ECVET and its instruments are working for.

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