

Learning paths with ECVET Earth Building



Thirteen examples of possible learning paths are given by interviews, and portray representatives from each partner country and from the principle target groups. The learning paths describe visions of the future. They anticipate the possibility of crediting the ECVET certificates towards national qualifications and their recognition and transferability between the vocational training systems of the participating countries. However, they also show what a diversity of learning, in particular in the sector of natural Building techniques, has already become reality throughout Europe. **ECVET Earth Building** allows these target groups to receive learning opportunities and qualifications which are tailored to their requirements.





Audrey Touchaud (FR), 29 years old

communications scientist and specialist worker in the preservation of monuments

The grains have changed her world view

Clay as a Building material was not really new to Audrey Touchaud. But when she received instruction from Sylvie Wheeler and was able to work for two weeks at one of her construction sites, she was however very surprised. “I never thought that it was THAT: simply grains. Watching the clay being separated into its component parts through sieving has altered my world view.”

The graduate communications scientist has worked previously in many very different construction craft sectors. But when she discovered clay in Africa during a pupil exchange which she was escorting, and subsequently successfully completed training courses in working with the material, her vocational path was clearly determined. For over eight months she underwent training at LE GABION as a specialist worker in the care of historical monuments. She received an OPRP* qualification. In 2009 the 29 year old “snatched” a three-month apprenticeship in a small Breton company. She found the salary and training, sealed by an AFPA** contract, to be excellent. Now she knows the most important qualities of the building material, can use clay plasters, make Earth wrapping, apply clay coloured finishes and test and try the material.

However, this is not enough for the Frenchwoman. She wants to combine her wide range of theoretical knowledge and practical skills. The more she learns about Earth Building, the better will be her advice to interested parties in the future. She wants to make a journey around the world, to exchange information at the places where Earth Building is used, to try out new techniques, penetrate to the primeval methods of processing, in order to then write an encyclopaedia of Earth Building. Her passion is for the colours. “Clay and colour. Experimenting with the colour of the clay, developing and producing mixtures, that is what I dream of.” Perhaps then she can take a degree course. In Unit 4, LearnWithClay offers a qualification in colour theory and interior design.

*Abbreviation for “Ouvrier professionnel en restauration du patrimoine” (Specialist worker in the restoration of historical monuments)

** AFPA, the French educational institution, finances vocational training for adults.



Marjolaine Camus (FR), 30 years old

interior designer

Childhood Connections



The interior designer Marjolaine Camus had her first contact with clay at a very early age, since it was part of her upbringing: her mother is a potter. Now 22 years old, she likes to use the clay unfired, as an ecological and decorative

material which “comes from the Earth, goes directly onto the wall and needs no transformation from extraction to building component”, thus making living in a house practical, interesting and pleasant. During her two years studying applied arts at the Paris College of Art, she learned to apply and work plasters, prepare substrates for lime plasters and to hone her skills in colour theory and room design. She knows how to put decor into its correct perspective and how to create a certain mood, can play with surfaces and designs her own decorative elements. “I want to work with clay in the same manner that I have learned with lime. The building material is natural and has wonderful aesthetic qualities - all those colours...”

The Frenchwoman has recently established herself as a freelance artist in the design sector, produces sgraffito, frescoes, mosaics, decorative plaster. She wishes to remain independent and creative, but can however imagine herself working with others on larger projects. Although she initially wished to continue her studies in the direction of monument preservation and art, she has now decided in favour of practical work. She now wishes to take short courses to get to know the properties of clay and its behaviour. In the ECVET Earth Building units 1 and 4 she will be able to find out how clay plaster mortar is made and how to use it imaginatively in interior spaces. The Frenchwoman is not averse to learning this abroad. In addition to her mother tongue, she speaks English and Italian. So a residence abroad „opens up more new horizons, conceals the unexpected.“

Marjolaine Camus uses clay intuitively. As she does all other building materials. For her, what is important is to meet other craftspersons in the course of her practical work, to watch their hands and learn new skills.



Mandy Köditz (DE), 20 years old
painter
First, she is going on a journey



To build a house from the ground up, entirely of clay, every part from the floor to the roof ridge - that is the dream of this 20 year old. Mandy Köditz has just completed her training as painter/ varnisher at the „Berufliche

Schulzentrum Leipziger Land“ in Böhlen near Leipzig. During her training she took advantage of the offer of a three-week foreign residence with the French partner Batipole en Limouxin, Centre national de formation du bâtiment, financed via the Leonardo da Vinci Mobility programme. The painter first came into contact with clay as a building material at their construction sites..

„It is so lovely working with clay, and also poses no health risk to hold it in your hands and model with it. The building material is good for the acclimatisation of rooms, and thus for the well-being of people.“ So says Mandy, who now would be happy to use this building material, e.g. for plastering walls. She wishes to find out more about clay architecture, rammed earth, adobe buildings. Before she starts her own business, she first wishes to go on a journey. She would like to travel - Europe-wide, world-wide. Perhaps she will join a guild.

She has no desire to visit a succession of schools, but wishes to extend her knowledge and skills at private sites and in various different businesses. It is possible that she will find out even more about clay plasters and clay colour finishes in practice in the

The diagram illustrates in the black part the learning path up till now, whereas the orange part illustrates a possible learning path in future, assuming a recognition of the ECVET certificates in the participating countries.



painting business of Sylvie Wheeler, whom she got to know as an instructor during her stay in France and whom she describes as the „top plasterer“. Subsequently, Mandy could take an examination at the LearnWithClay partners Le GABION and obtain the ECVET certificate “Interior design with clay plasters“.

In order to become her own boss, she needs to be able to do calculations and know how to successfully carry out discussions with customers. If she attends further courses with FAL e.V., she will be entitled to use the title “Designer for clay plasters“. She can also then register her business, with an emphasis on clay plasters.



Hywel Lewis (UK), 26 years old
dry walling specialist
**He is on his way as an ambassador
for building**

The place from which this 26 year old comes has a long tradition of house and wall building with natural stone and slate. In North Wales, a very harsh mountainous region, Hywel Lewis began as a child repairing stone walls on the farm. Today he works on and teaches strawbale construction, clay and lime plastering. His skill and comprehensive knowledge have made him one of the most sought-after specialists in dry-stone walling. This traditional technique is found throughout Great Britain and Ireland. Through his contact with amazonails, the Welshman has discovered that building with stone and strawbales can be complementary. He has attended various courses with the organisation and also passed a training course as ambassador there. Now he is travelling around as an ambassador for natural building, passing on his knowledge. „I get a great deal back from this, learn from it continually and profit from these many contacts.“ He is currently working on a Welsh construction site. A 200 year old house, formerly of stone and clay, is to be restored. Unfortunately, over the past century, little maintenance has been done, and that of poor quality. The rain has washed out the stone walls. Now wet is penetrating into the house. This breaks the heart of Hywel Lewis. „We must make good the cracks with clay mortar and protect it with lime, so that the building will survive for the next 100 years.“

The specialist in dry-stone walling will complete the various ECVET units in different European countries, in order to become familiar with the cultural dif-



ferences in earth building methods. He will complete units 1 and 2 at amazonails, he will be introduced to historical clay plaster techniques at LE GABION and will learn about fine quality coloured clay plasters at FAL e.V.. Next, the ambassador will go to Portugal, to help with the restoration of an old house and the new construction of a strawbale building, work with the local clay and research old formulations. „I consider my work as that of a sculptor, intuitive and creative. Incorporating a wealth of ideas into the construction process is what I really enjoy.“



Samir Outtar (FR) , 36 years old

bricklayer and Earth builder

Many stones cleared from the path



The 36 year old has had to clear many stones from his path before he was able to found his own bricklaying company. When Samir Outtar came to France, 8 years ago, he did not have the right diploma. His vocational experi-

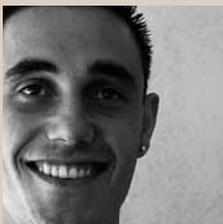
ence was not recognised for an adult training place at AFPA, although he had already learned with his grandfather in Algeria how to work with stone, clay and cement, although he had completed secondary education there and an apprenticeship as precision engineer. An accident then robbed him of this last strength. Despite this, he completed the training as bricklayer at AFPA and a practical course in rammed Earth, also a clay plaster course with Akterre.

The decision to make a career of earth building was reached by Samir as he viewed clay houses during his training which had already been occupied by several generations. The houses are now in need of renovation. But there is a lack of skilled craftspeople. This is what the bricklayer is planning for the future: To give old houses a new lease of life, to repair

rammed Earth walls - here a great tradition - and to build new ones, to decorate interior spaces, extend buildings - always using clay. The building material is „almost like a medicine, especially for people with breathing difficulties. It reminds me of my homeland.“ He is considering further training in Morocco, where French associations offer courses on arches, domes and coverings. Completing a course in Germany he currently sees as too difficult due to the language barrier, although he would find it very interesting. First, however, he must get some orders.. He could learn this in a course from the LearnWithClay partnership. But right now, there is neither time nor opportunity. At present his negotiations with customers are carried out by a young woman, since as a migrant he is faced with prejudice and therefore has less chance of success. Soon he wishes to employ another worker. He wants to pass on his knowledge of clay to others. Trainees from the organisation where he trained himself, AFPA in Saint-Etienne, will also be welcome.



Milko Stefanov Vakov (BG), 20 years old
drywall constructor and building technologist
Young people quickly make contacts



The 20 year old has already gained experience of international youth exchange. Firstly in the cultural sector. However Milko Stefanov Vakov does not want to miss the opportunity to get to know other people and their cultures, and to find

out more about the difference of their lives. So he can certainly imagine himself in a European country finding out more about clay, which seemed to have been almost forgotten in his homeland and has only in recent times - but still to a very limited extent - begun to be used again.

The trained drywall fitter and building technician would like to get a degree in architecture. He is preparing himself for the entrance exam at the university.

When he was offered a test course in clay plaster during his training at the German-Bulgarian Vocational Training Centre DBBZ in Pleven, Milko was happy to participate, since he “found it very pleasurable to try something new, which was not anchored in the traditional vocational training.” Thus the

Bulgarian will be able to acquire further basic and specialist knowledge of earth building, practical and theoretical, with the LearnWithClay partnership, both within Bulgaria and through the other member countries. There are six courses ahead of him, each with various levels, and each comes with a certificate.

This equates to his concept of “a thorough, training with other interested people and the learning of different techniques.” He would very much wish to pass on all of this experience to his colleagues in his homeland. He doesn’t see language as a barrier, and he can already speak a little Russian and English. “Young people make contact quickly. They get together in an uncomplicated way. Gestures and body language are enough initially. And why not immerse yourself in the language on the spot?” He still does not know how such learning programmes are promoted but knows he can rely on his former trainers, who will be able to help him to organise finance and maybe find grant funding.



Rainer Mons (FR), 42 years old
joiner, strawbale builder
Building side by side with others

It also works like this: Discovering clay on a journey – Rainer Mons saw earth buildings on the reservations of the Navaho Indians, helped to fit a door to a clay wall there - became more inspired by the building method - and then plastered his own house in France with the spoil from the drainage work. The rooms are now super insulated. The trained joiner has taught himself a great deal. But it was the courses at FAL e.V. which allowed him to enter into the theory. The 44 year old had previously always worked alone, but now gained enthusiasm for group activity, which he learned to enjoy in May 2009 on the courses „Mixing of clay plasters“ and „Application of clay plasters“, together with Finns, Dutch, Germans, Italians and French people. His aim is to build strawbale houses together with them, with the strawbales being coated on the room side with clay, thus making them fireproof. Both go together well, in his opinion. This is a group activity. „The motivation of a group inspires me.“ Together with like-minded others, he now works practically on earth building sites. To experience the great joy of Building a clay house, side by side with others, is for him the greatest result of attending the training courses.

Rainer Mons wants to encourage people to use this material from the earth. If he wishes to become an instructor at the AFPA, the French adult training institute, an ECVET certificate will be very useful. He next plans to attend the courses „Interior design with clay plasters“ and „Decorative features made from clay plaster“ at FAL e. V., in order to be able to finish rooms with professional colour and provide them with special extra touches. The self-employed craftsman still wishes to visit many countries. With his knowledge of four languages, he can make himself understood anywhere and thus get to know the various cultures. Since „the world consists of so many facets.“



Nora Kasanická (SK), 27 years old

Natural Builder

For a sympathetic construction – The Gentle Builder

It all happened very quickly: The Religious Studies student Nora Kasanická came into contact with Earth and strawbale building in 2006 during her European voluntary service in Turkey, and immediately, her love of building was rekindled. Already, as a child, she had helped her father with building in Slovakia. With great pleasure. However, the family decided that this career path was not suitable for girls.

Since that time Nora Kasanická has met many women in the natural building world, and feels very much at home there.

The meeting in Turkey with the German carpenter Fredi Fuchs, who owns her own strawbale company, was followed by the strawbale meeting in the eco-village of Siebenlinden, where in addition to Bee Rowan, one of the British founders of amazonails, she also met Martina Scharf. Both of whom supported her in her decision to carry on her studies in earth building.

The Slovakian successfully completed a two-week course in clay plaster on a strawbale building in Italy. „When I led a beginners‘ group after a couple of days, it became clear to me that I would make a career in clay plaster. Even after just a week, I loved

it so much...“ A course at amazonails in strawbale building, clay and lime plasters followed, then the successful completion of Units 1 to 3 at FAL e.V., also a course in Denmark with the world-renowned clay plaster experts from Arizona, Bill and Athena Steen. When she gave a clay plaster course for 20 people in the Czech Republic in 2009, it became clear to her that she still wishes to learn much more about the different techniques in various regions.

She wants to know everything she needs to be able to build a house. The 29 year old will visit FAL e.V. to take the courses for the further units 4 to 6, and has obtained a grant to learn carpentry work in the North of England on historic buildings (combined with an ICA* examination).

„The construction industry must alter its priorities with regard to materials selection and energy consumption.“ The 29 year old wishes to support this change everywhere in Europe through her work. She advertises herself as Nora – The Gentle Builder.

* ICA - Intermediate Construction Award in Wood Occupations. The qualification corresponds with an NVQ2 Level (National Vocational Qualification) in the UK



Funda Erdoğan (DE), 44 years old
pre-school teacher
It was new to her as a building material

integrates earth building activities in her **child therapy work**. ECVET earth building certificates improve her career chances as a pre school teacher and **Child Care Worker**.

works within a mobility exchange programme in Turkey restoring traditional earth built houses achieves the **ECVET certificates 2 and 3** level 1 or 2

participates in an introductory course clay plastering at BAUFACHFRAU Berlin (DE) and receives the **ECVET certificate 1, 4 and 5** level 1

works as a **Child Care Worker** for disabled children and youngsters

Funda Erdoğan's grandparents live in a Turkish hamlet with a population of 13. The ancient houses are still sound, and are built from clay, stone and wood. During her visits there, she found that clay equalises temperatures, keeping it cool inside, when it is hot outside. A wonderful property of this building material. The little house could do with some building work, and perhaps one day she will be able to do that herself. In the past year, the 44 year old has attended an introductory workshop of BAUFACH-FRAU Berlin e.V. at the multicultural neighbourhood garden in Neukölln, Berlin, in order to learn something new to do with her hands. It was a simple as that. And she was also able to improve her German at the same

time. This was when she was introduced to Earth as a building material, although she was familiar with clay, which can be rolled and kneaded. It made her happy to discover something new to her, which called upon the knowledge of our ancestors.

She now hopes to also be able to use Earth in her work with disabled young people. „Children and young people love to play with Earth. When they produce something with painstaking effort, it makes them proud and dissipates aggression.” As such, working with Earth on a small scale in this aspect of her work could be useful. If the Turkish woman receives a certificate for participation in an exam, this will increase her career and employment prospects as a child care worker.

Funda now wishes to take further courses in earth building in order to learn structural building as well as plastering. The LearnWithClay partnership offers courses abroad, which are sponsored as part of the lifelong learning programme. If a Turkish educational provider were to join the LearnWithClay partnership, she would be able to move closer to her dream of obtaining a certificate and at the same time being able to maintain her grandparents' house. And she could help to make earth as a building material known as a modern and future-viable building material in her home country, by passing on her experience as a role model and with practical examples.

The diagram illustrates in the black part the learning path up till now, whereas the orange part illustrates a possible learning path in future, assuming a recognition of the ECVET certificates in the participating countries.



Martina Scharf (DE)

self-employed earth builder

Her work is a process of constant learning

In her work, Martina Scharf from Münster follows her intuition. This has led her to sample various occupations in different places. There was the motorcycle workshop, in which she plied her tools for half a year, her successfully completed course of study as social worker and the course as brick-layer at the Berlin Kirchbauhof, specialising in earth building. Despite unemployment, she has remained „on the ball“ through further education, trade fairs and by contact with colleagues. Five years ago she became self-employed.

She was the very first to complete the course at FAL e.V. as „Designer for clay plasters“. There she learned much about clay surfaces, received information from various suppliers on which mixtures were the best, learned to get to know the grain sizes and the mixing of pigments. She can now build walls with all types of Earth products, plaster, produce light wood/clay mixtures, design and produce high quality wall surfaces from fine clay plasters. It is a real turn-on for Martina „totally, to produce straight walls with the material,“ it is to her „an inner satisfaction, to produce something beautiful every day.“

„The material is very forgiving,“ she says, since one can simply make it wet again, remix and try again. With each new order comes a new, previously unknown, challenge; her work is a process of constant learning.

Martina meets with a European learning group every year, which is made up of the women from amazonails who have specialised in strawbale building, in order to work with each other, to learn and to hold courses. She overcomes language barriers with great patience. In the end, it is much to do with imitation and working together; for this, few words are needed.

She loves the challenge, wishes to know more about the preservation of historic buildings and Japanese plastering techniques, by which an unbelievable number of very thin layers are placed on top of each other.

Martina wishes to pass on her profound knowledge, in other countries too. Preferably to female trainees.



Kimberley Burgoyne (UK), 27 years old

training as plasterer

There is Earth and chalk almost everywhere



Kimberley Burgoyne left school without qualifications in the South of England at a very early age, since her environment did not give her the support she needed for her dyslexia - and she became a herdsman. Day and night,

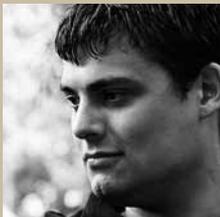
she spent her time with goats. Even as a small child, she wanted to build shelters for them and for herself from straw - cheap, energy-saving and safe. "Animals are like people, when they live somewhere and do not like it there, they move. They need secure breeding places in which they can bring up their young, otherwise there are no offspring."

A practical course in marine biology gave rise to the wish to work in a zoo. She wanted to search for solutions for the better housing of amphibians and fish. "Working and living 24 hours a day with animals can be a little lonely", the 27 year old found, so she moved to Brighton, worked in "trendy bars and pubs" and decided that this "much too fast, too hectic and unhealthy society" was not for her either. And so she emigrated to India. Coming back to the

North of England years later, she next learnt at amazonails how to climb a ladder properly, how to make houses weatherproof with lime, and attended further earth building courses with many other beginners. She now wants to become a plasterer. With this training she can work in many places, since there is Earth and lime almost everywhere. In the last few years she has always worked in the conventional manner and now wishes to see how far she can go with clay.

Next year she will take ECVET courses 1 and 2 at amazonails, and hopes that she can soon take the NVQ1 courses 1 and 2 for lime and clay. In Ireland, together with practitioners from across Europe, she is currently learning how to apply clay plasters to strawbale and stone houses. Then it will be an earth building workshop in Italy, after which she wishes to build up contacts with Bulgaria, in order to be able to complete further ECVET courses in different places.

The UK currently does not offer an NVQ (National Vocational Qualification) in clay plaster, but as part of the UK partners' vision on taking forward the work of the LearnWithClay project, they hope to create a new occupational standard and qualification - NVQ Clay Plaster, similar to the NVQ in lime plaster (Heritage skills).



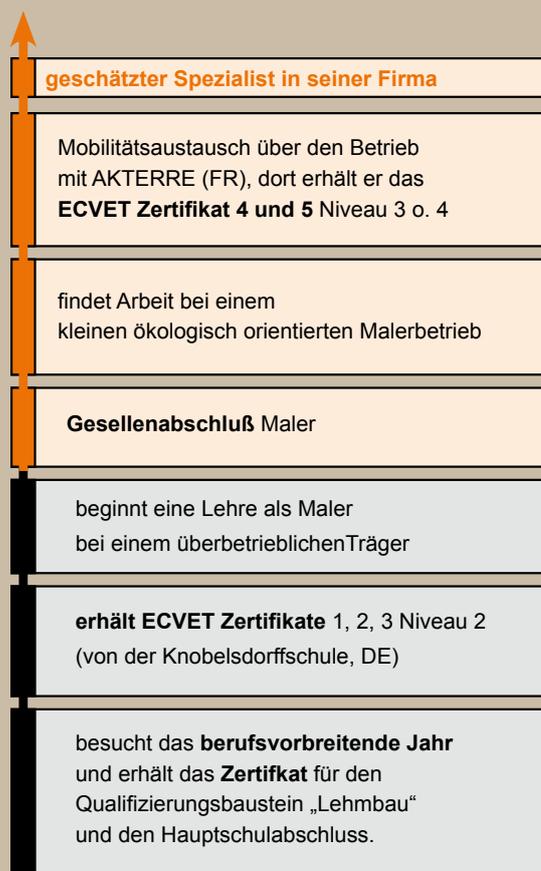
Julian Lenz (DE), 21 years old
vocational preparation year as bricklayer,
with emphasis on earth building
He is rather modern-minded

The 21 year old is happy to live in a high-rise building, and is “rather modern-minded - you know, more wallpapers and metal.” Nevertheless, Julian Lenz has decided in favour of clay at the Berlin Knobelsdorff-Schule in his career preparatory year. (He didn’t find the wood or concrete options anywhere like as interesting). He was astonished: “The things that you can do with it! The fact that the clay stays on the ceiling the way it does... that it can always be used again. That it can be worked thick or thin; corners or curves can be formed with it; that it can be coloured how you want... that clay is so versatile and that you can use your hands to build with it, something which is not possible with cement..“

During the last year, Julian has caught up with his secondary school qualifications. For him, that was the most important thing. And through his practical training with a master builder, he has received certification for the qualification module “Manufacture of building shells using earth building methods”, as well as the ECVET Earth Building certificate “Application of clay plaster” for Level 2. Over three years, he wants to complete his training as painter/varnisher, the rather finer type of building work, in his opinion. He will concentrate on that.

Julian has skilful hands, which is important for painting and for working with clay. However, he wishes to stay true to clay, through which he has quite suddenly found that his eyes have opened to seeing half timbered houses or pictures of mud huts in Africa quite differently, that he now literally sees the world quite differently. The same applies when he watches the progress of natural building work on the site of the children’s farm Pinke Panke.

Following his training, he could start work in a small Berlin painting firm, which sells ecological paints and clay plaster and where his knowledge of clay would come in very handy. He would also have the option of taking more in-depth courses with the LearnWithClay partners in France or England. Perhaps his company would be able to get him a placement there, within the framework of a Leonardo da Vinci mobility exchange for instance.



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André de Bouter (FR), 41 years old *course facilitator and trainer* **The energy changes**

André de Bouter's most valuable gain from his attendance of the courses at FAL e.V. was „to be able see things through the eyes of others.“ The 41 year old came to learn didactic methods, in other words to find out more about teaching, and to exchange experiences. Born in Holland, he wishes to establish a school for strawbale building in France where he now lives, and to issue diplomas and certificates himself. He has had a wide range of experience with this type of construction. For six years now, he has earned his keep with courses on strawbale building, which also integrate working with clay and „Clay and Art“. „Something special happens when you come into contact with the material, the energy changes.“ He wishes to turn this fascination into his career. First of all he will help others to discover nature, to then become more in harmony with themselves. During this process, he wishes to acquire a deeper understanding of clay as a building material himself. For this purpose he uses any meetings and assemblies of other interested parties, visits workshops, further courses and works with children. André de Bouter can make himself understood in four languages, but thinks however

that „the mind thinks in terms of pictures, and these pictures can also be activated in other countries.“

André de Bouter writes and translates books, reads all types of specialist publications with which he comes into contact, communicates via the Internet as a member of the Global Strawbale Network, and thus participates in the knowledge of experienced people and takes part in international strawbale meetings. He describes himself as „without fixed occupation“, SMF (Sans Métier Fixe)*. He had his first experiences with clay in India, where he participated in a construction project with earth and cement additions. In 2000 he travelled with his wife 11,000 km through Europe, from one strawbale project to the next. He got to know more about ecological building in Indiana USA and in Mexico, at Builders Without Borders, at an „intercultural build“. This also included role playing, in order to experience cultural differences.

* A play on words in French: SDF = sans domicile fixe = without fixed abode = tramp