

# **GUIDANCE FOR USERS OF THE EU INTERNATIONAL SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR CENTRES OF VOCATIONAL EXCELLENCE (ISATCOVE)**

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# ISATCOVE – a European tool to support COVEs

The term, *Centre of Vocational Excellence*, has been used for many years, in research, policy-making and work on institutional development. The meaning of the term has and continues to vary between time and place, but it usually refers to a vocational skills provider that:

- is of high quality (with respect to its processes and/or outputs);
- has extended functions or additional activities;
- coordinates or collaborates with other skills providers and/or other organisations to achieve shared goals.<sup>1</sup>

From 2018, the European Commission has engaged with practice and thinking around CoVEs producing, in 2019, a Mapping Report that described and analysed the work of CoVEs in Europe and beyond.<sup>2</sup> Since then, the European Commission has supported the development of CoVEs, in particular, through Erasmus + funding.<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of the ISATCOVE is to support the **development** of CoVEs in a systematic way that is complementary to Erasmus +. ISATCOVE will help to share what has been learnt about vocational excellence from CoVEs with other skills providers. The tool sets out an explicit and comprehensive framework, that can serve as a scaffold, against which other VET providers can plan their own development. The framework is composed of 23 criteria – each of which describes an element of vocational excellence. The criteria are grouped into three dimensions of vocational excellence: teaching and learning, partnership and cooperation and governance and funding.

The tool is designed to help users to identify and interpret the evidence that is pertinent to judging the criteria. ISATCOVE proposes 25 evidence indicators on average for each of the 23 criteria; making preliminary judgements in relation to these Indicators will assist CoVEs to make informed, collegiate judgements in relation to each criterion.

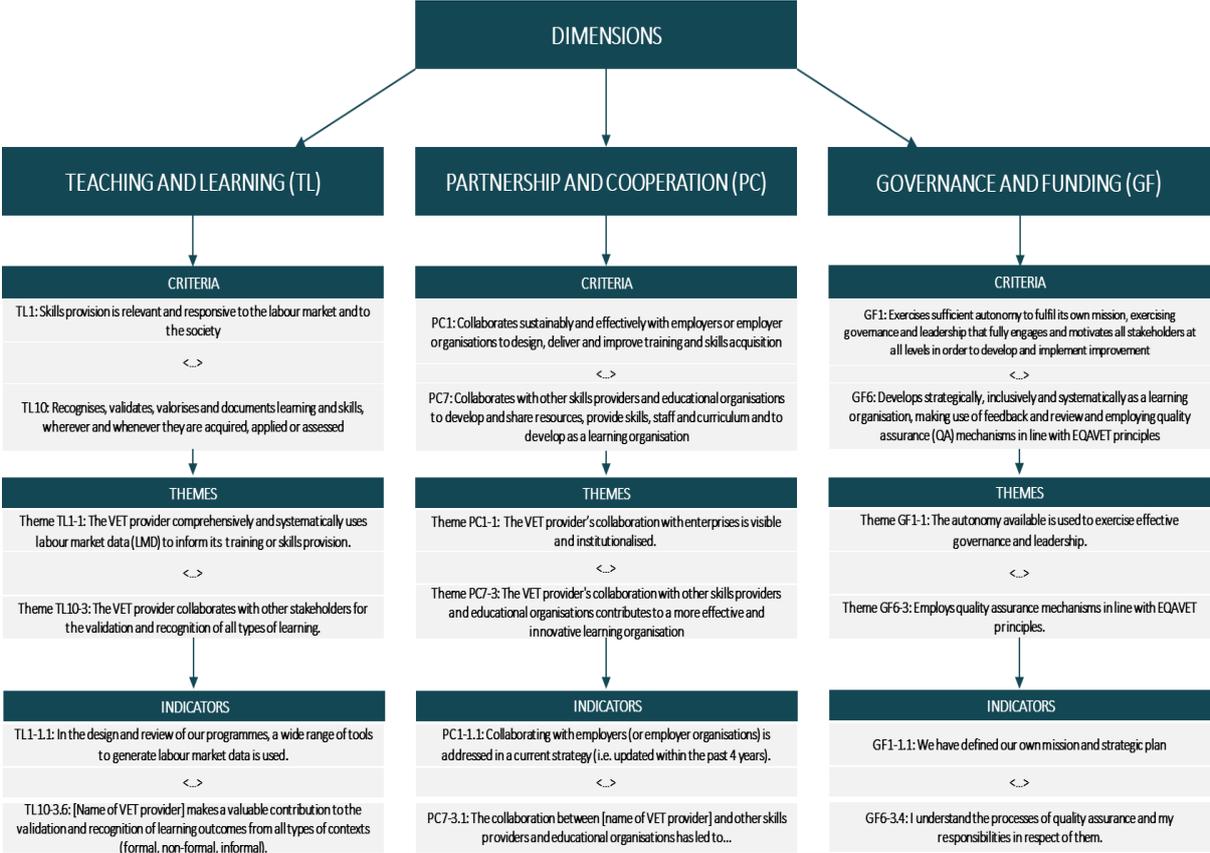
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<sup>1</sup> Centres of vocational excellence: an engine for vocational education and training development: an international study (2020), ETF, Luxembourg, Publications Office. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2816/771725>

<sup>2</sup> Mapping Centres of Vocational Excellence, (2019), EC, Luxembourg, Publications Office

<sup>3</sup> <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-b/key-action-2/centres-vocational-excellence>

**FIGURE 1. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CRITERIA AND INDICATORS**



Vocational skills providers can use ISATCOVE to discover their own profile of excellence – a profile which does justice to the complexity of the dimensions and layers that make up excellence. The self-improvement tool is intended to assist teachers, managers and stakeholders at a VET Provider develop a shared understanding of their own profile and to explore how they want to develop over time.

ISATCOVE has been designed to be an international tool. The criteria and indicators have been written so that they reflect vocational excellence at an international level and the tool has been designed to support comparisons, sharing of practice and collaboration internationally. In this sense, the tool reflects an European approach to CoVEs which places a particular emphasis on the benefits of international collaboration between skills providers within and outside of Europe and also provides a way of communicating the European approach to vocational excellence to the rest of the world.

## ISATCOVE – a tool for self-assessment

ISATCOVE is based on what is currently understood to be vocational excellence internationally, however it is designed to be relevant for skills providers of different sizes and specialisms, working in different contexts, at different levels of development. The framework is comprehensive and exhaustive, however, skills providers can choose to use only parts of it. If necessary, they can introduce additional indicators if this reflects their situation or objectives. Where they lack evidence they can choose not to make use of an indicator<sup>4</sup>.

ISATCOVE is designed to support a self-assessment process. Users are supported to gather relevant evidence and to encouraged to consult widely so that they can make informed judgements about their own performance. However, the skills providers themselves must decide which evidence to collect and which of their own stakeholders to consult. Ultimately skills providers are invited to make a collegiate self-assessment based upon the evidence that they collect and upon what they have learnt about other skills providers. The tool helps educational organisations to gather, to organise, store and display all of this evidence. Ultimately, it is the actors in the organisation that control and perform the self-assessment.

ISATCOVE is not a tool for external evaluation, however, it could be used as part of a systemic internal self-evaluation process.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> A CoVE can propose a new Evidence Indicator and make sue of it for its own purposes within ISATCOVE. In order for the Evidence Indicator to be made available to other users, it must first be approved by the system manager.

<sup>5</sup> In some countries, all VET Providers are required to carry out institutional internal evaluations on a regular basis.

## ISATCOVE – a database for VET Providers

It is intended that ISATCOVE will gather examples of good practice, linked to the criteria and indicators that characterise CoVEs. Users will be able to interrogate the database to investigate what good practice looks like in different institutions and countries.

Users will also be able to explore the character of vocational excellence across a filtered group of organisations. For example, a user might want to learn about the average performance of VET providers that serve the same industrial sector in relation to a particular theme, such as the Green Transition or the needs of SMEs.

The ISATCOVE database will also provide a resource for research and analysis. It will permit, for example, analysis to understand how the profile of vocational excellence differs between sectors, countries, organisation types and over time.

# ISATCOVE – the benefits for VET Providers

ISATCOVE helps VET skills providers to learn more about other providers and about themselves. In particular, it helps VET providers to learn about the excellent provision of vocational education exemplified by Centres of Vocational Excellence. It communicates comprehensively and systematically what many CoVEs have done and are doing, over and beyond the ‘basics’. It also provides real examples of excellent practice that illustrate the descriptions provided by criteria and indicators, and reveal what concrete form vocational excellence takes in different contexts.

It is recommended that VET providers start off by using ISATCOVE to learn about what CoVEs are doing. If they are inspired then can then decide to use ISATCOVE (or another comparable tool<sup>6</sup>) carry out a comprehensive institutional self-assessment or simply to self-assess in relation to a few selected criteria.

VET providers may use ISATCOVE as a way to get national or international recognition as a Centre of Vocational Excellence. They can use ISATCOVE to learn and to make selective comparisons and to explore what steps they might take to extend their scope, improve their quality or deepen their capacity. The European Union is developing formal labels that will permit a VET provider to apply for formal recognition of its vocational excellence (see below, the chapter of ISATCOVE and Recognition). In some countries, VET providers can apply to be formally recognised as COVEs and ISATCOVE can provide relevant evidence.

A VET provider that is already formally recognised as a CoVE can use ISATCOVE to learn from other CoVEs but also to share its own excellent practices. ISATCOVE can help a CoVE to find partners, national or international, with whom it can cooperate. It may be preparing a bid for funding through Erasmus +, or some other scheme, in which case it can use ISATCOVE to systematically explore and communicate its own strengths and weaknesses, together with areas for potential development and collaboration.

All the descriptions, generalisations and examples of vocational excellence in ISATCOVE come from CoVEs or from other VET providers.

ISATCOVE endeavours to harvest vocational excellence manifested by VET providers and to make it accessible to any VET provider that is inspired to engage with it.

*The philosophy of ISATCOVE is that excellence in vocational education and training in CoVEs should inform and assist the development of vocational education and training more generally.*

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<sup>6</sup> There are other self-assessment tools available that VET Providers may like to consider.

## ISATCOVE - how was it developed

ISATCOVE has been developed by ETF in partnership with international representatives and stakeholders for vocational education and training.<sup>7</sup> The development work has been underpinned by research into the needs of providers and comparable tools.<sup>8</sup> Potential users have been consulted extensively through meetings and through on-line surveys.

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<sup>7</sup> The ISATCOVE Consultative Panel for this project includes representatives from EFVET, EVTA, EVBB, Enabel, BIBB, EURASHE, ENAIP, Tknika, Humana, Cometa, Helsinki Business College, CFA Bizerte, Šolski center Nova Gorica, French Ministry of Education, EQAVET, PEEP

<sup>8</sup> The Mapping Report on Self-Assessment Systems is available at: <https://openspace.etf.europa.eu/pages/self-assessment-tool-coves>

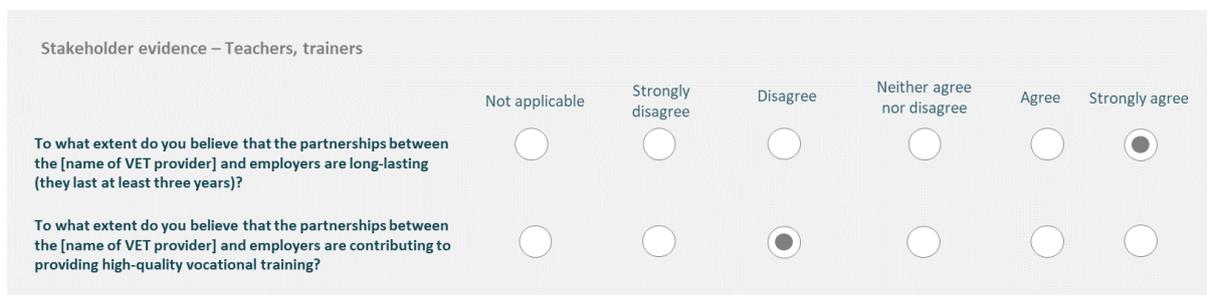
# Who is ISATCOVE for

## Individual vocational schools, training centres and applied universities

An individual vocational school, training centre or applied university can use ISATCOVE to expand its horizons – for example, to learn about what other vocational skills providers are doing and to explore opportunities for improvement. School managers will value the comprehensive character of the framework and the opportunities it provides to go beyond what is familiar. ISATCOVE makes it easier for VET providers to see what is going on in other countries, to make comparisons with similar providers (e.g. that are teaching the same profiles).

ISATCOVE can also help VET providers to recognise what they have already achieved and to understand in more detail their own strengths and weaknesses. ISATCOVE can be used to engage internal and external stakeholders in evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of a VET Provider, to help them to understand one another and to develop a consensus in relation to evaluation and improvement. ISATCOVE could be used to inform a standard national internal evaluation process.

**FIGURE 2. JUDGEMENTS OF STAKEHOLDERS ABOUT THE LEARNING ORGANIZATION**



Although some VET Providers may prefer to develop quite independently, ISATCOVE will help them to learn from others. In this way it will help to reduce the risk of repeating the mistakes of others or failing to capitalise on what they have learned.

ISATCOVE generates and helps to communicate evidence – thus helping to share knowledge within and between learning organisations. It also includes planning tools and monitoring tools, that help VET providers to make use of this knowledge.

ISATCOVE protects the data of its users. Each organisation controls the degree of public disclosure and can decide which internal and external users can view data. VET providers can choose between simple and more complex (customised) ways of using ISATCOVE. It is expected that most VET Providers will identify an *Assessment Team* who will take charge of the self-assessment process and will make use of the ISATCOVE tool to engage other actors and stakeholders and communicate results.

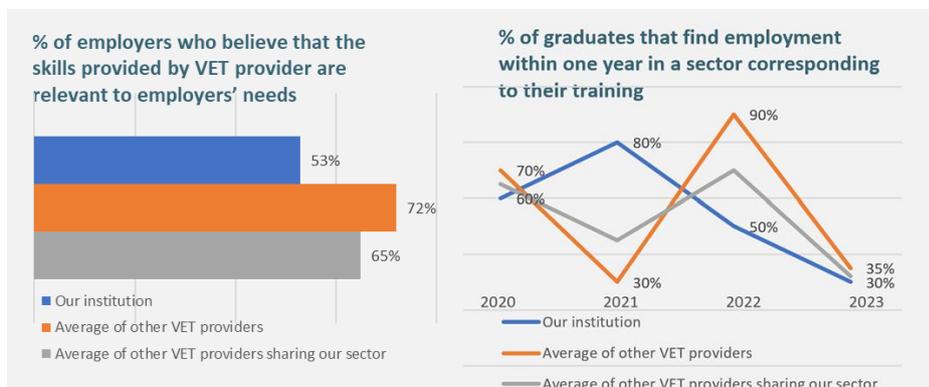
ISATCOVE is designed to support the development of VET providers – whether they offer secondary, tertiary, continuing or other programmes. It is suitable for VET providers that serve multiple sectors as well as only one sector and also for training centres and vocational schools that provide general as well as vocational programmes.

ISATCOVE is available for VET providers and CoVEs based in Europe and elsewhere in the world. It has been designed to facilitate and encourage the development of CoVEs through international sharing and collaboration.

## Clusters or groups of vocational schools and training centres

ISATCOVE enables all VET providers to compare their activities to those of other organisations. However, it offers a special functionality that allows groups or clusters of VET providers, that have established a relationship of trust, to carry out self-assessment in a mutually-transparent manner.

**FIGURE 3. COMPARISON WITH OTHER SCHOOLS**



A cluster of VET providers can choose to reveal their self-assessments to one another, making it possible for them to discuss the reasoning and evidence behind their judgements. In this way, VET providers can help one another to understand their strengths and weaknesses and to explore the steps that they could take to improve. Each VET provider in a cluster remains responsible for its own self-assessment, however, they have the chance to see how other providers in their cluster evaluate their own performance.

VET providers that form a cluster could, if they want, extend their collaboration to include peer assessment. They might, for example, set up some joint meetings between members of the assessment teams of cluster members. These meetings could be used to discuss assessment decisions at the level of indicators or at the level of criteria. Such meetings will help VET providers benefit from independent judgement, rooted in professional practice, but informed by different experiences.

It is up to each VET provider to decide if it wants to assess in this collaborative manner and with whom it wishes to collaborate. It is expected that most VET providers will want first to self-assess privately using ISATCOVE before they enter a cluster. Belonging to a cluster makes for a self-assessment that is informed by the experiences and judgement of other, trusted VET providers.

Clusters may already be collaborating, for example, sharing practices or jointly implementing projects. Collaborative self-assessment can build on a history of collaboration and also pave the way for further joint developments.

A cluster might consist of just two VET providers, but over time the cluster could grow. In some countries, VET providers in the same district or region that already work closely together, might decide to complement their existing collaboration using ISATCOVE. However, ISATCOVE can also facilitate collaboration that is not 'local', for example, VET providers in different countries may form a cluster because they are all providing programmes that address the same industrial sector or that employ the same technology.<sup>9</sup>

Clusters may be long-term and open-ended or they may be created only for a fixed period. For example, a group of VET Providers may agree to work together to respond to a call or to implement a project or to provide a joint programme. In this case, the cluster may decide to use ISATCOVE to assess their base-line and subsequently to monitor their progress. They can choose to select only those criteria and

<sup>9</sup> The Erasmus plus programme has supported the development of international platforms of CoVEs that have this character.

indicators that are relevant to the planned collaboration. If they find that that ISATCOVE does not already contain pertinent indicators, then the cluster can create and add its own.

*ISATCOVE has been designed to fit in with different collaboration landscapes.*

*Essentially, it is a tool for knowledge sharing and knowledge exploitation – whose value is enhanced by collaboration.*

## Coordinating Centres

ISATCOVE will also be of value to centres or organisations whose mission is to coordinate VET providers, e.g. TKNIKA or Katapult.<sup>10</sup>

A co-ordinating centre could self-assess using only those criteria from ISATCOVE which are relevant to its mission. However, ISATCOVE is most likely to be useful as a tool to support the **coordinating role** of such centres. A coordinating centre can use ISATCOVE to initiate, support and valorise self-assessment and organizational development in those centres that it supports.

The coordinating centre might conduct training, coaching or knowledge sharing in relation to the ISATCOVE framework. It could use its networks to set up and support one or more clusters. It can help VET providers to prioritise dimensions or criteria or to use self-assessment as a framework for coordinating improvements through new projects, organizational development, professional development and investment. If a coordinating centre wishes to initiate collaboration in relation to new objectives then it may choose to develop new indicators or even new criteria to address them. In this way, ISATCOVE can serve as a knowledge-sharing platform or it could also complement another platform belonging to a network.

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<sup>10</sup> Such organizations come in many different forms. They may be national, regional or international. They may be public, private, third sector or hybrid and they may have a broad scope (such as for example, TKNIKA) or a relatively focused scope (such as Katapult). They may themselves provide VET programmes or not and they may or may not call themselves a CoVE

# Using ISATCOVE - Stages

## 1 Deciding whether or not to use ISATCOVE

Before using ISATCOVE, learning organisations will want to familiarise themselves with the tool by exploring it in demonstration mode. Potential users can explore the criteria, the indicators and the good practice. In addition, users are advised to participate in an introductory webinar or, best of all, to speak to an advisor or to a VET provider that has already used the tool.

Potential users will need to decide whether the ISATCOVE tool can serve their needs for organisational learning or development. They will need to consider the time taken to conduct the self-assessment, the commitment required from staff, managers and stakeholders and the extent to which the self-assessment process will support or distract from development activities that they have already committed to. They will want to allow several months to prepare for a self-assessment so that they have time to discuss the process with all of the actors, to gather contact details and to assign responsibilities to key actors. The self-assessment process itself will require 2-4 weeks, depending on the size of the organization.

Users will need to decide when to conduct the self-assessment. The timing should fit with other commitments but also connect to the planning and development cycle of the organisation. Conducting a self-assessment is only worthwhile if something useful is done with what has been learned, for example, if the self-assessment feeds into development planning or partnership building.

Schools or centres will appoint a Self-assessment Team to manage and coordinate the self-assessment process. This group will make the key decisions about which criteria to select and who will take responsibility for particular tasks. Collectively they will make or confirm self-assessment judgements at the level of criteria. The Self-assessment Team should include senior managers and experienced teachers and trainers. Collectively they should have an understanding of all of the selected criteria and should be able to apply them to their learning organisation.

## 2 Designing your own assessment process

A centre or school will need to register to make use of ISATCOVE. This will require permission from the system administrator who can be contacted at: [IntVE@etf.europa.eu](mailto:IntVE@etf.europa.eu). The first user will be asked to provide some basic information about their organisation. The first registered user can invite others to register with ISATCOVE. They can be assigned a particular role: for example, Self-assessment Team members, learners, trainers and stakeholders. Users can either be added one by one or through a 'bulk' upload. Once users have been added, the ISATCOVE tool will be able to send them a tailored questionnaire.

Unless the user has selected the **Starter Level** they will then have to choose which criteria and indicators they wish to assess against and what type of VET providers they wish to compare with.

They will also view the privacy settings and decide which information can be shared with whom.

### 2.1 Selecting Criteria and Indicators

There are 23 criteria grouped into three dimensions or areas: **Teaching and Learning, Partnership and Coordination and Governance and Funding**. The organisation's *Self-assessment Team* must decide which criteria will be used in their self-assessment. If they choose the **Starter Level** then a minimum set of criteria are selected automatically. Otherwise, they will choose criteria taking into account the following considerations:

- What are the priority areas of development for their organisation? These priorities may be identified in their organisational development plan or their national strategy?
- What do they know already from past self-assessments or evaluations?
- What criteria have been selected by other VET providers, for example, those in same country or serving the same industrial sector?
- What is most useful at this point in time: a comprehensive self-assessment across all the criteria relevant to a CoVE or a self-assessment focused on particular dimensions or criteria?

If a user is not clear what is implied by a criterion or an indicator they can follow a link to investigate examples of good practice corresponding to this particular kind of vocational excellence. Over time, good practice examples will accumulate in the system, so users will be able to see the different ways in which vocational excellence have been achieved in different contexts.

## 2.2 Assigning Indicators – Stakeholder Indicators

Some of the evidence indicators have been designed for particular stakeholders, for example, learners and employers. These are known as *Stakeholder Indicators* and are designed to capture the perspective of stakeholders, for example, employers, parents or learners. The *Self-assessment Team* will decide which of these evidence indicators will be used. It will choose those indicators which it believes are relevant *and* for which it will be able to identify stakeholders that will be willing to respond.

**FIGURE 4. EXAMPLE OF STAKEHOLDER INDICATORS**

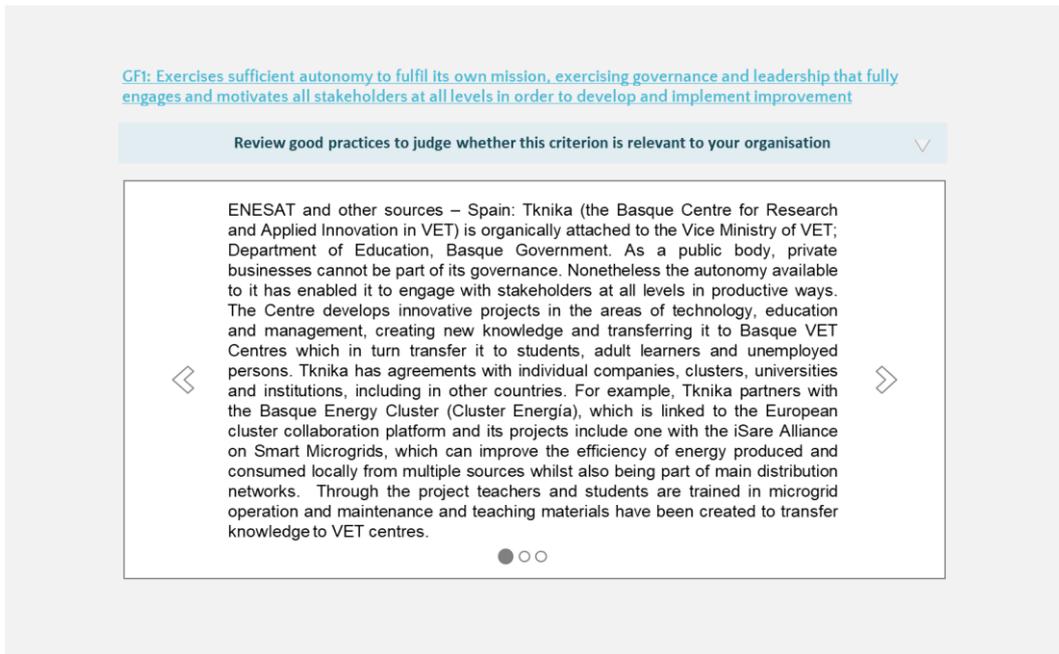
Stakeholder evidence – Teachers/Learners/Employers		Not applicable	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Teachers	I have benefited from a placement or internship organised by employers for teachers or trainers as it helped me to update my knowledge, skills and competences.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Learners	The internship I did in an enterprise as part of my programme at [name of VET provider] helped me to practice and improve skills relevant to my professional training.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employers	In general, the processes for setting up, coordinating and monitoring internships or apprenticeships work effectively	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If the *Self-assessment Team* selects one of the *Stakeholder Indicators*, ISATCOVE will automatically add it to a questionnaire together with other items for the same stakeholder. The *Self-assessment Team* will decide when the questionnaire will be mailed out.

## 2.3 Adding good practice

Any member of the *Self-assessment Team* can add examples of good practice which should be referenced to particular criteria and evidence indicators. ISATCOVE provides a template to structure the information. Good practice examples will be limited to 500 words but can be supplemented by URL links.

**FIGURE 5. EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE**



Exchanging examples of good practice helps VET providers to understand how vocational excellence is exemplified in particular contexts. It helps VET providers to see what activities or processes they could adopt and how this might support their aspirations for improvement.

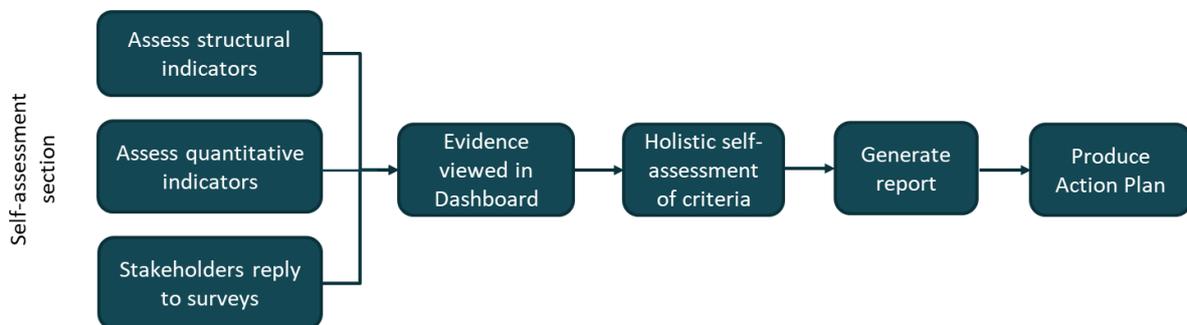
The good practice can be written in any language but translations can be added. A moderator will check uploads to ensure that they are intelligible and do not cause offence.

ISATCOVE provides a repository of good practices that are mapped against criteria and indicators.

### 3 Conducting the Self-Assessment

The flowchart below shows how once the self-assessment has been designed, the evidence is gathered and then used to inform a holistic self-assessment at the level of the 23 criteria.

**FIGURE 6. STAGES OF SELF-ASSESSMENT**



The learning organisation should decide the timetable for the self-assessment (which may take 2 to 4 weeks). The *Self-assessment Team* will meet to make collegiate judgements on the Structural and Quantitative Indicators. It may, as explained above, delegate some of these judgements to sub-groups.

The *Self-assessment Team* must decide whether all or some of its members should come together to respond to groups of evidence indicators. For practical purposes, it may be best to organise a number of meetings, each of which deals with a limited number of criteria. For example, one meeting may deal with the Teaching and Learning criteria and another with the Partnership and Coordination criteria.

### 3.1 Structural Indicators

Most of the evidence indicators in ISATCOVE are qualitative. Where the indicators describe an activity or a process precisely, users are invited to judge whether or not this activity or process is in place.

If the evidence indicator describes an activity or process that is less precisely defined – then users are invited to respond by stating the degree to which that process, activity or behaviour is in place. A ‘hover-over’ explanation specifies the expectation in the case that the evidence indicator is met ‘Extensively’.

**FIGURE 7. EXAMPLE OF STRUCTURAL INDICATOR WITH RESPONSES**

Structural evidence	Not at all	Planned or in development	To a little extent	To some extent	To a large extent
Our programmes systematically support (as a cross-cutting issue) the development of entrepreneurship competences and an entrepreneurial mindset.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Our programmes take a systematic approach to incorporating entrepreneurship competences by adapting to or aligning with external references, such as EntreComp (The EU Entrepreneurship Competence Framework).	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We – in partnership with other organisations – have established a conducive environment for graduates to start their own business (e.g. business incubator; offering advisory services).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### 3.2 Quantitative Indicators

Some of the Evidence Indicators require a quantitative response. This may take the form of a percentage, a number or a value in currency. In the case of currency, the user can provide the data either in Euros or another currency. To support comparison over time, the user is asked to specify the reference year of any quantitative data. The default has been set as ‘the last full school year’ so if the data available is from a different year, the user should modify the default.

**FIGURE 8. EXAMPLE OF QUALITATIVE INDICATOR WITH RESPONSES**

Quantitative source	Value
% of learners who take part in employer-based practical training periods (placements, internships) during the course of the last school year	32
Number of our current partnerships with SMEs that have lasted for at least three years	6
Total financial resources acquired from SMEs either as a donation or as a payment for services in the last three years (in local currency)	17000

A ‘hover-over’ explanation is provided to specify how the quantitative response should be calculated. It may be that administrative data have to be checked in order to find the data – it is possible to skip an indicator and return to enter the data after it has been looked up.

### 3.3 Stakeholder Indicators - engaging stakeholders through surveys

If a VET provider wants to make use of a stakeholder indicator it will have to build a contact list of relevant stakeholders. It may be relatively easy to gather the contact information for current students. However, gathering and entering contact lists for employers, graduates, parents, local government contacts is time consuming. Administrative assistance may be required. Many VET providers will already have contact information stored. It will be possible to upload contact data through a spreadsheet.

Once the *Self-assessment team* has completed the process of including or rejecting stakeholder indicators, the system will generate questionnaires for each type of stakeholder.

The user can choose to remove items from the questionnaire. A separate questionnaire is generated for each type of stakeholder. This means that the user can, if they want, remove items or add a tailored explanation.

The centre can choose how best to conduct the survey for each type of stakeholder. For example, it might identify a representative sample of learners and then inform those in the sample that, the following week, they will receive an invitation by email or through their Learning Management System and that they have a week to return it. The centre may decide that it is better to conduct the survey through a focus group – to gather a collective judgement rather than separate responses. With this approach, a member of the Self-Assessment Team could facilitate the discussion in order to engage the stakeholders and ensure that they understand what is being asked of them.

Type of Stakeholder
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Teachers and Trainers</li><li>• Other staff in school or centre (including managers, assistants)</li><li>• Graduates</li><li>• Learners</li><li>• Employers or employer representatives (includes Sector Organisations)</li><li>• Employers that are SMEs</li><li>• Other Social Partners</li><li>• Local and regional government organisations</li><li>• National government organisations</li><li>• Parents</li><li>• Other educational providers (Other schools or skills providers)</li><li>• Research organisations and Technology Centres</li><li>• International partners</li><li>• Board Members</li></ul>

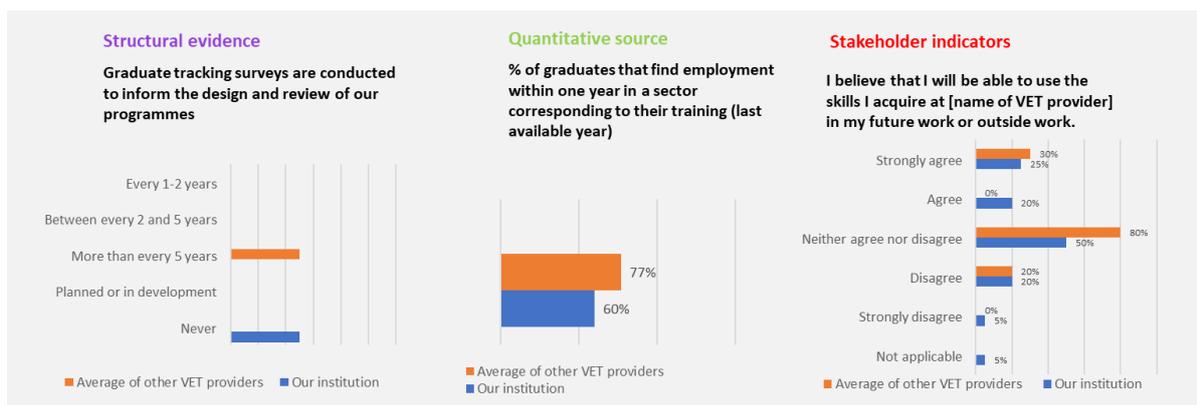
Some centres already conduct surveys of their stakeholders and they may find it easier to add one or more items to an existing survey rather than generating a new survey through ISATCOVE. In this case they will be able to upload the results of their survey to ISATCOVE through a spreadsheet.

### 3.4 Making judgements on criteria

The *Self-assessment Team* has to make a collegiate judgement about the degree to which their organisation achieves each selected criterion – on an 11 point scale (0-10). This implies the *Self-assessment Team* reviews all of the evidence that has been collected through responses to all of the evidence indicators that have been used. This evidence will be made available in a number of charts organised as a dashboard.

ISATCOVE has not been programmed to automatically generate a score for the criterion as a consequence of the responses to the evidence indicators. The *Self-assessment Team* must reflect upon the evidence in the dashboard, taking into account that some of the evidence may more reliable than others (perhaps based on a higher number of responses) and that some Evidence Indicators may be more important than others for their organisation.

**FIGURE 9. DASHBOARD**



To assist their discussion and judgement, the *Self-assessment Team* may choose to investigate the way that other VET providers assessed the same criterion. For example, a VET provider might compare the results of the average VET Provider in their country, of a similar size or in their sector, with their own results. Alternatively, centres can choose to compare their results with those VET providers that self-assessed themselves mostly highly (the top 10%). If users choose to make these comparisons, then the way that they evaluate evidence and judge criteria will be informed by the way that other centres have judged.

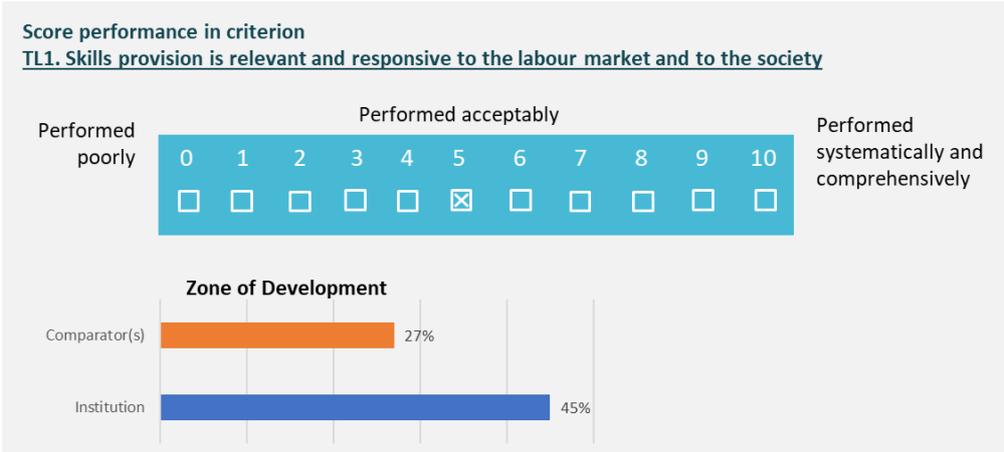
It is important to understand that ISATCOVE is a **self-assessment** tool – ultimately the learning organisation itself has to weigh-up evidence from different sources taking into account its own context as well as the performance of others. ISATCOVE helps to increase the quantity and quality of evidence available – but each VET provider has to decide which evidence is relevant and useful.

*ISATCOVE helps to increase the quantity and quality of evidence available – but each VET provider has to decide which evidence is relevant to its own self-assessment.*

# Setting a Development Target

ISATCOVE invites users to set a *Development Target* for each criterion it has used. Users are invited to set a development target for 3 years. The process of self-assessment will help the learning organisation to understand how it can improve because it shows what evidence would warrant a higher score. For example, a learning organisation can understand how changes in pedagogy, the curriculum and site management could contribute to an improved rating in relation to the Green Transition or Pedagogy or Innovation. Users can also explore good practices, linked to the evidence indicators, which provide examples of the activities or processes that they might introduce to their organisations.

**FIGURE 10. ZONE OF DEVELOPMENT**



To assist users to set an appropriate development target, ISATCOVE can display a *Zone of Development* which reflects the developmental aspirations of the profile of VET providers that the user has selected for comparison purposes. For example, a user might ask to see the zone of development corresponding to other VET providers in the same country or of the same size. Alternatively, the user could ask to view a Zone of Development that reflects the aspirations of the most ambitious VET Providers.

## Reporting

ISATCOVE will generate a report that consists of a number of charts that visualise the results of the self-assessment criteria by criteria and indicator by indicator. If requested it will also include the results of comparator organisations and historical assessments (if any).

Where a user is part of a Cluster, it will be possible to generate a *Cluster Report* that compares the results of all cluster members.

## Reviewing Progress

Users that have already completed a self-assessment can re-enter ISATCOVE to remind themselves of their historic self-assessment and the targets that they set. When they are ready, which may be after 2, 3, 4 years, they can re-assess. Reassessment involves reassessing all of the criteria that were assessed previously. However, a user may choose at this point to self-assess on additional criteria.

The dashboard will show the historic assessment and also the current assessment of each evidence indicator. In the light of this evidence, the *Self-assessment Team* can reappraise the score for each criterion. The report will show historical and current scores, showing the extent of progress, indicator by indicator and criterion by criterion.

## Action Planning

ISATCOVE includes a template to support action planning. Users are supported to create an action plan in relation to any criterion they choose. The template encourages them to identify their objectives, key results, resources, responsible person and deadline. Developing an Action Plan for selected criteria offers users a way of exploiting what has been learnt during the self-assessment.

Clearly it is vitally important to involve the right people in action planning – whether they are invited to draft the plan, to be consulted or to validate it. All those involved in the action planning will be able to see the reports generated by ISATCOVE.

Action Plans will be included in reporting and also stored along with historic self-assessments.

## Support, Mentoring and Peer Review

The ISATCOVE tool will assist VET providers to know themselves better, build consensus and develop action plans. However, evidence from school improvement studies suggests that these processes can have more impact if a VET Provider receives external support. This support could be provided by an international organisation, a national support agency, another CoVE or through a group of VET providers. In some cases, a VET provider may be able to obtain support from several organisations and groups.

It is part of the concept of a CoVE that it is able to support the development of excellence amongst other VET providers. ISATCOVE includes indicators that give credit to CoVEs that transmit their excellent practice. In addition, the tool has been designed to serve as a platform for collaboration, mentoring and support.

Coaches and mentors are particularly valuable since they can help a VET provider make best use of the self-assessment. They can advise on how other VET providers managed the process, for example, how they gathered and judged evidence and engaged stakeholders. They can help the *Self-assessment Team* to create realistic but demanding aspirations. They can help the VET provider to interpret their report, provide constructive advice and reduce apprehension.

The European Union plans to provide mentoring and guidance services to support the take up of ISATCOVE, working with international VET associations and existing CoVEs. National, regional and local VET development and support agencies may decide that they can use ISATCOVE to support organisational learning and development in their territories.

## ISATCOVE and Recognition

The main reason for undertaking a self-assessment through ISATCOVE is to bring about organisational learning, to extend knowledge of what other VET Providers are doing and to support organisational improvement. However, it is valuable for VET providers to gain recognition for their commitment to excellence and for their excellent achievements. It motivates those involved and it helps to signpost what vocational excellence looks like and how it can be achieved. For this reason, the European Union is developing two labels. The *Committed to Excellence* label will recognise that a VET Centre has made a commitment to work together with CoVEs to share practice and assess vocational excellence using ISATCOVE. This implies that they have engaged their stakeholders and actors, carried out a self-assessment on a minimum number of criteria and indicators, shared good practice and committed themselves to a development plan in the light of this self-assessment. The *Advanced Excellence* label will recognise that the VET Provider has achieved a high level of excellence across a specified range of criteria and indicators. In this case the self-assessment conducted by the VET Provider will be externally validated.