

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND THE ETF SIGN AN AGREEMENT TO PROMOTE THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION OF COVES

In November 2021, the European Commission and the ETF signed an agreement to promote international cooperation among Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) in ETF partner countries and EU member states. For 24 months, the ETF will act as a contractor for the European Commission, more specifically the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, to carry out research in vocational excellence. Research outcomes will inform peer learning, capacity building and self-assessment in vocational education.

Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) are vocational skills providers recognised for excellence in providing high quality training in specialised technical skills. They are innovation hubs with strong ties to industry, businesses, and local communities. They strive to provide relevant initial training for young people and continuing education for adults, guiding them as they upskill and reskill through flexible, timely training programmes designed to meet the demand for skills.

According to the [Erasmus + call](#): “The initiative on Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) supports a bottom-up approach to Vocational Excellence involving a wide range of local stakeholders. It enables VET institutions to rapidly adapt skills provision to evolving economic and social needs, including the digital and green transitions. CoVEs operate in a given local context, being the linchpin of skills ecosystems for innovation, regional development, and social inclusion, while working with CoVEs in other countries through international collaborative networks.” CoVEs are institutions, clusters or networks that share, and to some degree embody, a set of common standards for vocational excellence.

The project supports vocational excellence in four areas:

1. Vocational excellence: setting standards and building tools

Two main outputs:

- an international self-assessment tool for CoVEs (**ISATCoV**)
- a training, coaching and guidance programme on how to use **ISATCoV**

A four-phase process:

- **Phase 1, March-October 2022:** develop concept and a digital instrument called ISATCoV (International Self-assessment Tool for CoVEs)
- **Phase 2, late 2022:** run 1st pilot programme to test the English version of ISATCoV on a small group of CoVEs
- **Phase 3, March-April 2023:** run 2nd pilot programme to test the 2nd version of ISATCoV, which will be in three languages (including English), on 30 CoVEs
- **Phase 4, late 2023:** release ISATCoV with user manual

Throughout this process, key actors and stakeholders will be consulted to ensure ISATCoV has value for its users.

2. An EU quality award for excellence in CoVEs

Purpose: to cultivate a culture of excellence, foster international dialogue and recognise effective practices. Both the award and the label will be based on the set of criteria established in ISATCoV and be aligned with EU policies and priorities regarding CoVEs.

Projected outputs:

A feasibility study with recommendations on the character, the processes, the feasibility and benefits and challenges of an Award for Excellence for CoVEs.

A four-phase process:

- **Phase 1, January-June 2022:** ETF will conduct a mapping exercise to identify national and international awards for CoVEs
- **Phase 2, late 2022:** develop an award concept in terms of objectives, eligibility criteria, standards for excellence and making the award operational
- **Phase 3, early 2023:** conduct feasibility study to establish award methodology and prototype
- **Phase 4, mid-2023:** run award simulation with limited number of volunteer CoVEs, evaluate lessons learnt and potential impact of award ahead of final consultation.

3. Vocational excellence for innovation: building evidence to support the role of CoVEs in applied research, the digital transition and the green transition

Main outputs include three studies providing:

- in-depth knowledge on how to support the role CoVEs play in the digital transition with a focus on teaching, training, learning and curriculum
- in-depth knowledge on how to support the role CoVEs play in the green transition with a focus on teaching, training, learning and curriculum
- an overview of international best practices on VET's contribution to applied research and innovation with a focus on policy frameworks and financing mechanisms

The studies' projected release is spring 2023.

4. Policy support and capacity building through communication tools

A communication plan will be developed during the project's inception phase when communication channels, main messages, and target groups will be identified. Inclusion and participation of CoVEs and their stakeholders are essential to the success of this initiative. To encourage knowledge sharing and peer learning, there will be a series of workshops, on-line consultation, consultations in partnership with other associations and a final international conference.

Main outputs include:

- creating the project's visual identity
- engaging relevant stakeholders through communication activities
- developing communication products based on output from each area
- developing dissemination tools
- organising tutorials on the evaluation tool in four European languages
- organising three workshops for policy shapers and practitioners
- a final internal conference
- consultation and validation meetings

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