



EULEP

VET Councils in Practice: A Handbook and Toolkit for Design, Governance and Implementation

Deliverable n. 26
Deliverable D7.4



**Co-funded by the
European Union**

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1. Introduction

The European Learning Experience Platform (EULEP) is an Erasmus+ funded initiative that aims to strengthen vocational education and training (VET) systems by promoting innovation, cooperation and lifelong learning across Europe.

The project brings together a consortium of organisations from eight countries including VET providers, Chambers of Commerce, universities and public authorities working collaboratively to improve the relevance and attractiveness of continuous vocational education and training (VET) in a rapidly changing economic context.

A central focus of the project is the integration of innovation-oriented competences, in particular in the fields of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Virtual Reality (VR) and Social Innovation (SI).

This handbook is addressed to VET stakeholders who aim to create, develop or strengthen participatory structures similar to VET Councils, as tools to improve coordination, governance and responsiveness of vocational education and training systems.

In chapter 2 the handbook provides a clear understanding of what VET Councils are, explaining their role, characteristics and contribution to VET governance, as well as the added value they bring in connecting education, training and labour market needs.

In chapter 3 the handbook highlights how good practices can serve as a source of inspiration for stakeholders willing to design or improve their own governance structures. In this context, detailed examples are presented, including the experience of the Terrassa VET Council and the Emilia-Romagna Clusters, illustrating different approaches to stakeholder coordination and system development.

From chapter 4 to chapter 11 the handbook provides practical insights and guidance for organisations interested in implementing similar initiatives outlining the rationale and objectives behind their creation, membership, legal basis and organisation form, governance and decision-making, activities, funding and sustainability, challenges and strategies.

Finally, the handbook offers a practical toolkit to support implementation and replication. The Toolkit chapters translate key concepts into usable instruments such as checklists, templates and guidelines, helping stakeholders define objectives, engage actors and assess strategies.

By combining conceptual explanations, real case studies and practical guidance, this handbook aims to serve both as a reference framework and a practical toolkit, supporting stakeholders in designing, implementing and sustaining VET Councils adapted to their specific contexts.

2. What are “VET Councils”?

VET Councils are multistakeholder governance and coordination structures that bring together key actors from vocational education and training (VET), labour market, public authorities and society to support the design, implementation and improvement of VET ecosystems.

Their primary function is to strengthen the alignment between education and labour market needs, ensuring that training provision remains relevant, future oriented and responsive to economic and social developments.

From a practical point of view, VET Councils can be understood as a structured mechanism to connect stakeholders, align strategies and translate labour market needs into concrete VET actions. They are not always decision-making bodies, but they are essential facilitators of cooperation, dialogue and system improvement, especially in complex or multi-level governance environments.

VET Councils typically act as:

- Consultative bodies, providing input and recommendations to policymakers.
- Coordination platforms, facilitating dialogue between education, training and employment stakeholders.
- Strategic spaces, where skills needs, training priorities and innovation pathways are discussed and identified.

Key characteristics

VET Councils usually share several common characteristics:

- **Multistakeholder** composition:
They involve public authorities, VET providers, employers, SMEs, social partners, and often innovation and research actors.
- Link to **labour market needs**:
They contribute to identifying skills demands, emerging occupations and sectoral trends.
- Support for lifelong learning:
They play a role in promoting upskilling, reskilling and flexible learning pathways.
- Contribution to **policy and system** development:
They inform decision-making on curricula, qualifications, work-based learning and training provision.

Different forms of VET Councils

VET Councils can take different forms depending on the governance context:

- Formal institutional bodies embedded in national or regional systems
- Local or regional councils supporting territorial coordination
- Sectoral expert councils focusing on specific industries

- Informal working groups or advisory boards created within projects or networks

Role within VET governance

Within VET ecosystems, VET Councils play a key role in:

- Improving coordination between education, training and employment systems
- Reducing skills mismatches
- Supporting work-based learning and employer engagement
- Facilitating innovation in training (e.g. AI, VR, digital skills)
- Enhancing the attractiveness and relevance of VET

3. Learning from Practice: Good Practices in VET Council Implementation

3.1 Terrassa VET Council

In Spain, the Terrassa VET Council is a long standing local consultative and social participation body created in 2002 by the City Council and established in the city of Terrassa, Catalonia.

The Terrassa VET Council (*Consell de la Formació Professional de Terrassa*) is a local consultative and participatory governance body established by the City Council of Terrassa, designed to improve coordination and development of vocational education and training (VET) at territorial level.

It functions as a stable working platform, based on consensus and collaboration, bringing together the main educational, social and economic stakeholders operating in the city.

The Council was created with the objective of enhancing the quality, relevance and prestige of VET, positioning it as an attractive pathway aligned with labour market trends and local economic needs.

Role and functions

The Terrassa VET Council acts as a coordination and dialogue mechanism between stakeholders and contributes to improving VET governance at local level.

Its main functions include:

- Promoting and disseminating vocational education and training within the city
- Participating in the coherent planning of VET provision, ensuring alignment with labour market needs

- Facilitating communication and cooperation between training providers, companies and public institutions
- Supporting the adaptation of training to business demands, particularly in key local sectors
- Promoting innovation, internationalisation and openness to European initiatives
- Encouraging school-to-work transitions and social and professional inclusion
- Supporting mutual understanding between VET centres and companies, improving both training provision and workplace learning opportunities

Through these functions, the Council contributes to improving the relevance, accessibility and effectiveness of VET at territorial level.

Governance and participation

The Council is characterised by a broad and inclusive membership, involving:

- Local and regional public authorities
- VET providers and educational institutions
- Business organisations and companies
- Trade unions and social partners
- Universities and civil society organisations

This diversity of actors enables the Council to reflect different perspectives and interests, reinforcing its role as a multi-stakeholder governance platform.

Participation is based on dialogue and consensus, which supports shared ownership and long-term collaboration among stakeholders.

Strategic value at local level

The Terrassa VET Council represents a good practice of local VET governance, demonstrating how cities can:

- Strengthen the link between education and labour market
- Improve coordination between fragmented systems
- Promote VET as a key element of local development
- Support lifelong learning and employability pathways

By combining policy coordination, practical initiatives and stakeholder engagement, the Council contributes to building a more responsive and inclusive local VET ecosystem.

3.2 Clust-ERs of Emilia-Romagna

The Italian Emilia-Romagna Clusters (Clust-ERs) are regional multistakeholder communities for research, innovation and skills development, established to support the implementation of the Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3).

They are structured as formally recognised associations that bring together a wide range of actors, including universities, research laboratories, enterprises, VET and training providers, innovation centres and public bodies. Each cluster focuses on a key economic sector of the regional economy, such as agrifood, mechatronics, energy, health or culture and creativity.

The Clust-ERs operate as collaboration platforms that promote cooperation between education, research and business actors (knowledge triangle), with the aim of strengthening the competitiveness of the regional economic system.

Role and functions

The Clust-ERs combine innovation, education and labour market perspectives and contribute to VET governance through several key functions:

- Supporting collaborative research and innovation projects linked to regional priorities
- Promoting cooperation between companies, universities and VET providers
- Identifying emerging skills needs and contributing to the design of training pathways
- Supporting the development of higher education and vocational training initiatives
- Facilitating participation in regional, national and European funding programmes
- Promoting activities such as workshops, hackathons, company visits and stakeholder events

In particular, Clust-ERs actively work on skills intelligence, developing tools and methodologies to analyse labour market trends and support the adaptation of training provision to economic needs.

Governance and participation

The Clust-ERs are characterised by a formal governance structure, including:

- a General Assembly representing members
- an Executive Board responsible for management
- a President as legal representative
- thematic working groups aligned with sectoral value chains

Membership is open to a wide range of organisations, including companies, universities, research centres and accredited training providers. Participation requires a membership fee, ensuring a degree of commitment and sustainability.

Day-to-day coordination is supported by the regional development agency (Art-ER), which plays a key role in aligning cluster activities with regional strategies.

Strategic value at regional level

The Clust-ERs represent a good practice of regional governance, demonstrating how innovation ecosystems can be used to:

- strengthen the link between education, research and industry
- support skills development aligned with economic transformation
- promote cooperation and networking at national and European level

- enhance participation in funding opportunities and innovation projects

By integrating innovation, training and economic development, the Clust-ER model contributes to building a dynamic, collaborative and future-oriented VET and skills ecosystem.

4. Why are VET Councils important? (Rationale and objectives)

VET Councils are a key governance mechanism within modern vocational education and training systems, designed to address structural challenges, improve coordination, and ensure alignment with labour market needs. Their importance can be understood across several complementary dimensions:

Addressing gaps between education and labour market needs	• Provide a structured platform for dialogue and coordination between education providers, employers, public authorities and other stakeholders • Bridge the gap between training provision and real labour market demand • Address common systemic challenges such as: ○ Skills mismatches ○ Fragmentation between actors ○ Slow adaptation to economic and technological change ○ Inefficient allocation of resources • Promote a demand-driven approach to VET, ensuring relevance and responsiveness
Strengthening VET governance and coordination	• Improve multi-level coordination across local, regional and national actors • Connect different components of the VET ecosystem: ○ Education and training providers ○ Labour market actors ○ Public institutions ○ Innovation actors • Reduce fragmentation by creating permanent coordination mechanisms • Enhance policy coherence by aligning: ○ Strategies ○ Funding instruments ○ Training provision ○ Labour market policies

**Supporting labour
market relevance and
skills matching**

- Ensure **active involvement of employers and SMEs** in governance and decision-making
- Align training content and qualifications with:
 - Sectoral needs
 - Emerging occupations
 - Technological developments
- Strengthen **skills anticipation and forecasting**, using labour market data
- Contribute to:
 - Reduced skills mismatches
 - Improved employability
 - Better matching between supply and demand

Enhancing stakeholder engagement and co-creation	• Create a multi-stakeholder cooperation space involving: ○ Employers ○ VET providers ○ Public authorities ○ Social partners • Foster co-design of training programmes and policies • Increase shared ownership and trust in VET systems • Strengthen long-term commitment and collaboration among actors
Supporting lifelong learning systems	• Promote flexible upskilling and reskilling pathways • Respond to the needs of: ○ Adult learners ○ Workers in transition ○ SMEs • Strengthen continuous vocational education and training (CVET) • Contribute to more inclusive and accessible lifelong learning systems
Enabling innovation and system adaptation	• Facilitate the integration of: ○ Digital skills ○ Green skills ○ Transversal competences • Support the adoption of innovative approaches such as: ○ Artificial Intelligence (AI) ○ Virtual Reality (VR) ○ Social Innovation (SI) • Provide a framework for: ○ Pilot initiatives ○ Testing new training formats ○ Continuous improvement • Increase the flexibility and responsiveness of VET systems to change

Improving efficiency and coherence of VET systems	• Reduce duplication of efforts across institutions • Optimise the use of resources (financial, human, institutional) • Strengthen coordination between programmes and initiatives • Ensure that policies and actions are mutually reinforcing
Enhancing the attractiveness of VET	• Improve the visibility and perception of vocational education • Increase confidence among: ○ Learners ○ Employers ○ Society • Promote VET as a relevant and high-quality learning pathway • Strengthen its role in supporting career development and employability
Contributing to economic and social development	• Support workforce development aligned with regional and sectoral priorities • Contribute to: ○ SME competitiveness ○ Innovation ecosystems ○ Economic growth • Promote social inclusion by facilitating access to skills and employment opportunities • Strengthen social cohesion through lifelong learning

Practical implications for replication	Key success factors	Potential limitations
- Establish a structured platform for dialogue and coordination between education - Ensure alignment between training provision and labour market needs - Build permanent coordination mechanisms across governance levels - Promote policy coherence by aligning strategies - Ensure active involvement of employers - Use labour market data and skills intelligence - Foster co-creation and collaboration - Support flexible lifelong learning pathways - Integrate innovation (AI, VR, digital, green skills) into VET systems - Promote efficient use of resources and reduce duplication - Improve visibility and attractiveness of VET - Align VET Councils with regional economic and social priorities - Ensure VET Councils are implemented in relevant contexts	- Strong multi-stakeholder engagement and ownership (especially employers and SMEs) - Clear link between training content and real labour market demand - Effective coordination and facilitation capacity - Alignment with policy frameworks and funding instruments - Strong employer participation and relevance for SMEs - Evidence-based decision-making and skills anticipation capacity - High levels of trust, transparency and shared ownership - Ability to respond to adult learners and workforce needs - Capacity to pilot and scale innovative training approaches - Strong coordination between programmes and initiatives - Positive perception among learners, employers and society - Contribution to SME competitiveness, innovation ecosystems and inclusion - Clear strategic purpose and measurable objectives	- Low stakeholder engagement if no clear added value is perceived - Persistent skills mismatches if coordination is weak - Fragmentation between actors if coordination is insufficient - Duplication of initiatives and inefficient use of resources - Limited employer engagement reduces relevance and impact - Lack of reliable data reduces strategic relevance - Weak collaboration leads to low commitment and participation - Limited flexibility may reduce participation and inclusiveness - Slow adaptation to technological change - Resource inefficiencies and overlapping actions - Low attractiveness of VET limits participation and talent uptake - Weak alignment with regional needs reduces impact - Risk of creating structures without clear purpose or sustainability

5. Membership and Stakeholder Involvement

VET Councils rely on broad multistakeholder participation, recognising that effective VET governance requires the active involvement of actors representing education and training systems, labour market needs, public administration and social interests.

Stakeholders typically include public authorities, VET providers, enterprises and SMEs, social partners, innovation and research bodies, and intermediary organisations. While the composition and degree of formalisation vary depending on national and regional governance frameworks, all structures aim to ensure balanced representation, dialogue and shared ownership.

Stakeholder involvement typically includes:

- Public authorities responsible for education, employment and economic development
- VET providers and training centres
- Enterprises and SMEs
- Social partners (employers' organisations and trade unions)
- Innovation, research and digitalisation actors
- Intermediary organisations and local or regional bodies

However, important differences emerge in the structure, degree of formalisation and modes of participation, which can be grouped into three main models.

Formal and Institutionalised Multi-Stakeholder Representation	Flexible and Informal Collaboration Models	Centrally Anchored or Institutionally Driven Participation
• Characterised by formally defined and representative membership structures, often linked to legal frameworks or institutional mandates. • Stakeholder participation is clearly structured and regulated, with defined roles, representation rules and institutional legitimacy. It ensures high legitimacy, inclusiveness	• It operates through flexible, non-formalised participation mechanisms, prioritising adaptability, low administrative burden and voluntary engagement. • Stakeholder involvement is open and based on relevance, expertise and willingness to contribute, rather than formal representation.	• Characterised by strong involvement of central or regulatory authorities, with stakeholder participation closely linked to institutional roles within the VET governance system. Stakeholder involvement is structured around core institutional actors, with particular emphasis on public authorities.

and policy coherence, but often requires strong coordination capacity and well-defined governance mechanisms.	It supports agility, innovation and stakeholder motivation, but depends heavily on continuous engagement and coordination efforts.	It ensures strong institutional alignment and policy relevance, although it may be less flexible and more dependent on formal governance structures.
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Across all models, several common features emerge:

- Employer involvement is consistently recognised as critical for ensuring labour market relevance.
- Public authorities play a key role in providing legitimacy, policy alignment and sustainability.
- VET providers ensure practical implementation and feedback loops.
- Balanced representation and continuous communication are essential for effective cooperation.

In conclusion, there is no single optimal model. Effective stakeholder involvement depends on the governance context, the level of centralisation, and the capacity to balance formality, flexibility and inclusiveness within the VET system.

6. Legal basis and organisational form

Three main models can be identified:

Fully Institutionalised and Legally Defined Structures	Embedded or Locally Regulated Coordination Structures	Informal, Project-Based or Non-Formal Cooperation Platforms
It operates with a clear legal mandate and formal institutional recognition, often established through legislation or formal cooperation agreements. The legal basis is explicit and ensures that VET Councils are integrated	VET Councils that do not rely on a single national legal framework but are embedded within existing governance systems or regulated at local level, often combining elements of formal recognition and operational flexibility.	- informal or non-formal structures without legal status, often created within projects or existing networks, and relying on voluntary cooperation among stakeholders. - It enables high flexibility, adaptability and

into the official governance architecture. • It provides strong institutional legitimacy, continuity and direct influence on policy-making. • more complex administrative procedures.	• It combines institutional anchoring with operational flexibility, making it particularly suited to regional or local contexts where coordination needs to adapt to territorial realities.	innovation, but often depends on project funding, stakeholder commitment and alignment with existing institutions for sustainability.
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Across all models, several common patterns can be identified:

- Legal frameworks are closely linked to national governance structures, particularly the level of centralisation.
- Highly institutionalised systems provide stability and authority, while informal models enable flexibility and responsiveness.
- Embedding VET Councils within existing structures is a common strategy to avoid duplication and reduce administrative burden.
- Long term sustainability is more easily ensured in legally recognised structures, whereas informal and project based models require additional efforts for continuity.

Overall, there is no single legal model for VET Councils. Effective governance depends on finding the right balance between formal recognition, operational flexibility and strategic alignment with existing education and labour market systems.

7. Governance and Decision-Making

VET Councils can apply different governance approaches depending on institutional context, degree of formalisation and policy environment. Three main governance models can be identified.

Consensus-based and flexible governance	Structured and institutional governance	Centrally aligned governance
• based on voluntary cooperation and consensus decision-making, without rigid hierarchical structures.	• It relies on formal governance arrangements, with clearly defined bodies, roles and procedures. • Existence of governance bodies such as plenary	• It operates within established national or institutional frameworks, with strong involvement of regulatory authorities. • Governance is aligned with ministry structures or national VET systems

• Decisions are taken through dialogue and mutual agreement • Stakeholders contribute based on expertise and availability • Meetings and coordination are adapted to needs and priorities • It prioritises engagement, flexibility and stakeholder ownership, and is typically associated with informal or working group-based structures.	• sessions, committees or coordination units • Defined roles (e.g. chair, secretariat, coordination authority) • Regular meetings and structured decision-making processes • This approach ensures continuity, accountability and representativeness, particularly in complex governance environments requiring coordination across multiple actors.	• Decision-making is influenced by legal frameworks and policy processes • Councils often play an advisory or coordination role rather than an autonomous one • It ensures policy coherence, legitimacy and feasibility, especially in centralised governance contexts.
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Practical implications for replication	Key success factors	Potential limitations
• Use consensus-based governance when flexibility, experimentation and stakeholder engagement are priorities • Use structured governance when coordination involves many actors or requires continuity over time • Use centrally aligned governance when actions must be integrated into formal policy systems	• Clear coordination function (e.g. secretariat or leading organisation) • Transparent and predictable decision-making processes • Regular interaction and communication between stakeholders • Balance between flexibility and structure • Alignment with existing governance frameworks	• Flexible governance models may lack stability or long-term continuity • Structured governance may become bureaucratic and reduce agility • Centrally aligned models may limit innovation and bottom-up initiatives

8. Activities

The activities and areas of collaboration of VET Councils can vary significantly but can be grouped into three main types depending on their strategic focus and scope:

Innovation-driven and skills development activities	System coordination and governance activities	Local development and implementation activities
These activities focus on the integration of emerging competences and innovative learning approaches into VET systems. • Piloting AI, VR and Social Innovation learning modules • Supporting trainer upskilling and new teaching methodologies • Exploring micro-credentials and modular learning pathways • Promoting digital, green and transversal skills This model is oriented towards future skills and innovation, often linked to pilot actions and experimentation.	These activities focus on aligning policies, stakeholders and training provision. • Facilitating dialogue between education, training and employment actors • Supporting planning of VET provision and qualification frameworks • Contributing to skills forecasting and labour market analysis • Enhancing cooperation across institutions and governance levels This model aims to improve system coherence, efficiency and evidence-based decision-making.	These activities are oriented towards territorial impact and practical implementation. • Promoting VET visibility, attractiveness and public awareness • Supporting workplace learning, dual VET and company engagement • Organising events, fairs, campaigns and local initiatives • Facilitating school--to-work transition and lifelong guidance This model emphasises direct impact on learners, companies and communities, particularly at local level.

Practical implications for replication	Key success factors	Potential limitations
• Use innovation-driven activities when introducing new skills or methodologies into VET • Use coordination activities when improving governance and alignment is the main priority • Use local development activities when focusing on territorial needs and practical outcomes	• Clear link between activities and identified skills needs • Active involvement of employers and social partners • Use of labour market data and evidence-based approaches • Combination of strategic and practical actions • Visibility and communication of results	• Innovation-focused activities may face integration barriers in formal systems • Coordination activities may produce limited visible impact if not linked to implementation • Local activities may remain isolated if not connected to broader policy frameworks

9. Funding and Sustainability

Funding arrangements across the analysed VET Councils reflect their organisational form, legal basis and degree of institutionalisation. Four main funding models can be identified.

Institutional Public Funding	Blended and Multi-Source Funding	Project-Based and Embedded Funding	Centrally Embedded Funding Mechanisms
Based on stable public financing embedded in national or regional governance systems. • Funding provided through ministries, regional authorities or public agencies • Core operational costs (coordination, secretariat, governance) covered by public budgets • Often complemented by EU structural funds (e.g. ESF+)	This model combines multiple funding sources, including public, private and project-based contributions. • Combination of public funding (regional, municipal or national) • Contributions from participating organisations • EU project funding (e.g. Erasmus+) • In-kind contributions (expertise, facilities, participation)	This model relies primarily on project funding or existing institutional budgets, without a dedicated financial structure for the VET Council itself. • Activities funded through EU projects (e.g. Erasmus+) • Contributions from participating institutions within existing budgets • Limited or no dedicated funding line • Strong dependence on project cycles	In highly regulated systems, funding is integrated into national governance structures rather than organised through a dedicated funding scheme. • Activities aligned with national funding frameworks • Sustainability linked to integration into formal education systems • Funding channelled through existing programmes and policies
This model ensures continuity, institutional stability and alignment with policy frameworks, as the VET Council is integrated into the official governance system.	This approach enables flexibility and diversification of resources, allowing VET Councils to implement pilot actions and stakeholder-driven initiatives while maintaining a degree of stability.	This model supports experimentation and low-cost implementation but presents challenges in terms of sustainability and continuity.	This model ensures policy alignment and legitimacy but may reduce flexibility and autonomy.

Practical Implications for Replication	Key success factors	Potential Limitations
• Institutional funding models are recommended for long-term sustainability and governance integration • Blended funding models are suitable when combining innovation with stable coordination • Project-based models are useful for pilot phases or initial experimentation • Centrally embedded models are necessary in highly regulated or centralised systems	• Early planning of financial sustainability beyond project funding • Diversification of funding sources (public, private, EU, in-kind) • Strong alignment with national and regional policy priorities • Clear allocation of resources for coordination and governance functions • Demonstration of impact to secure continued funding	• Institutional models may reduce flexibility and slow innovation • Blended models require strong coordination and financial management • Project-based models risk discontinuity after funding ends • Centrally embedded models may limit local initiative and adaptability

10. Implementation Challenges

Several recurrent implementation challenges can be identified. These are not isolated issues, but structural constraints linked to governance systems, stakeholder engagement and sustainability.

Stakeholder engagement and participation	One of the most common challenges is ensuring consistent and active engagement of stakeholders, particularly employers and public authorities due to time constraints and competing priorities. In centralised systems there might be a difficulty to engage high-level actors in centralised systems. Engaging diverse actors required continuous communication, as stakeholders operate with different expectations and levels of commitment. This challenge is particularly relevant in multistakeholder systems where participation is voluntary or not linked to direct incentives.
Coordination across governance levels and institutions	Another major difficulty relates to coordination between institutions, especially in complex or multi-level governance systems. Sometimes aligning sectoral recommendations with national policies and institutional procedures can be administratively demanding. These situations often lead to slower decision-making and difficulties in translating coordination into concrete actions.
System rigidity and limited flexibility	In several contexts, VET systems can be structured and slow to adapt, limiting the integration of innovation that makes it almost impossible to create new formal structures.
Data, skills forecasting and evidence gaps	Although VET Councils aim to be evidence-based, data availability and forecasting capacity can remain a challenge. Without reliable data, strategic decisions may be delayed or less precise.

Financial constraints and sustainability	A recurring difficulty could be related to funding and long-term sustainability. The absence of a dedicated budget is described as a financial trap, reducing stakeholder commitment. The funding is not only a financial issue, but also directly linked to stakeholder engagement and continuity.
Achieving consensus among diverse stakeholders	In multi-stakeholder governance, reaching agreement can be complex and time-consuming. While consensus strengthens legitimacy, it can slow down implementation.

Practical implications for replication	Key success factors to overcome difficulties	Potential risks if not addressed
• Expect stakeholder engagement challenges, especially with employers and policy-makers • Plan for coordination complexity, particularly in multi-level systems • Anticipate resistance to change in structured VET systems • Ensure access to reliable labour market data • Address funding and sustainability early • Design processes that balance consensus and efficiency	• Strong and continuous communication with stakeholders • Clear demonstration of added value and practical outcomes • Use of pilot actions to show quick results • Alignment with policy frameworks and institutional priorities • Establishment of a coordination function or secretariat • Gradual and realistic implementation strategy	• Low stakeholder participation or drop-out • Fragmented and ineffective coordination • Limited impact of activities • Dependence on short-term project funding • Lack of integration into VET systems

11. Effective Strategies

Several strategies can be effective in addressing implementation challenges and ensuring the functioning and impact of multistakeholder governance structures.

Building on existing structures and frameworks	One of the most effective strategies is to anchor the VET Council within existing institutional and policy frameworks, instead of creating entirely new structures. This approach increases legitimacy, reduces resistance and supports long-term sustainability.
Ensuring strong employer and stakeholder engagement	Active involvement of employers and key stakeholders is essential for relevance and impact. Stakeholders engage more when they perceive clear, practical value.
Focusing on practical and concrete actions	Another effective strategy is to prioritise pilot actions and tangible outcomes over abstract discussions. Focusing on practical and concrete topics increase stakeholder motivation. Practical actions are key to sustaining engagement and demonstrating impact.
Using evidence-based and data-driven approaches	Effective VET Councils rely on labour market data and sectoral analysis to guide decision-making. Data-driven approaches increase credibility and support better policy alignment.
Maintaining flexible and adaptive governance	Flexibility in governance and participation might be a key success factor. Flexibility enables adaptation to changing contexts while maintaining stakeholder engagement.
Ensuring coordination and facilitation capacity	Effective coordination mechanisms are essential to sustain activities and stakeholder engagement. A dedicated coordination function is critical for long-term effectiveness.
Coordination is more important than formal structure	Effective coordination mechanisms matter more than the creation of new formal bodies. The key lesson is that governance improvement can be achieved through practical coordination, not necessarily institutional reform.

Stakeholder engagement depends on perceived value	Stakeholder participation is strongly influenced by visible and practical benefits. Engagement is sustained when stakeholders clearly see impact and usefulness.
Institutional anchoring increases legitimacy	VET Councils function more effectively when connected to recognised institutional frameworks. Institutional anchoring improves policy influence and continuity.
Flexibility is essential for early-stage development	In the initial phases, flexibility and structure and governance is key. Rigid structures too early may hinder development and participation.
Data and evidence strengthen decision-making	Effective governance requires reliable labour market information. Evidence-based approaches increase credibility and effectiveness.
Sustainability must be planned from the beginning	A recurring lesson is that sustainability cannot be an afterthought. Sustainability planning is essential from the design phase.

Practical implications for replication	Key success factors	Potential limitations and risks
• Build on existing governance structures and networks • Involve employers and key institutions from the start • Start with pilot actions and visible results • Use labour market data to guide decisions • Ensure flexibility in participation and governance • Establish a clear coordination and facilitation role • Do not prioritise structure over function and coordination	• Strong stakeholder ownership and motivation • Clear link between actions and labour market needs • Balance between strategy and implementation • Continuous communication and transparency • Alignment with policy frameworks and funding opportunities • Clear purpose and measurable outcomes • Continuous stakeholder engagement • Strong facilitation and coordination	• Over-reliance on voluntary participation may reduce continuity • Lack of concrete outcomes may weaken stakeholder engagement • Insufficient coordination capacity may lead to fragmentation • Limited use of data may reduce strategic relevance • Creating structures without clear added value • Overcomplicating governance models • Failing to involve employers meaningfully

• Design activities that provide immediate value to stakeholders • Ensure institutional anchoring where necessary • Maintain flexibility in early phases • Integrate labour market data into decision-making • Plan sustainability from the outset	• Balance between flexibility and institutionalisation • Evidence-based planning	• Ignoring funding and sustainability • Relying only on strategic discussions without action
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12.Toolkit: VET Council setup and operation

12.1 General guidelines

The establishment of a VET Council requires a structured but flexible approach that combines strategic planning with practical implementation. The following integrated recommendations and steps provide a comprehensive guideline for replication:

12.1.1 Define context, purpose and scope

- Analyse the **territorial and institutional context**, including existing governance structures and labour market needs.
- Clearly define:
 - Objectives
 - Mandate
 - Expected outcomes
- Focus on **specific priorities** (e.g. skills gaps, key sectors, innovation areas).
- Avoid creating structures without **clear added value**.

12.1.2 Build on existing structures and ensure alignment

- Use and reinforce **existing institutions, networks and governance frameworks**.
- Avoid duplication of mechanisms or initiatives.
- Ensure alignment with:

- Policy frameworks,
 - Regional/national strategies,
 - Labour market priorities.
- This approach increases **feasibility, legitimacy and sustainability**.

12.1.3 Identify and engage stakeholders

- Involve key actors from the beginning:
 - Employers and SMEs,
 - Public authorities,
 - VET providers,
 - Social partners.
- Ensure **balanced representation and participation**.
- Promote **stakeholder ownership and commitment**, which is critical for long-term success.

12.1.4 Select a governance model and establish coordination

- Define an appropriate **governance and membership model** adapted to the context.
- Establish a **clear coordination mechanism or secretariat**.
- Ensure:
 - Regular communication,
 - Follow-up of activities,
 - Organisational support.
- Strong coordination is essential for **continuity and effectiveness**.

12.1.5 Start with pilot actions and practical activities

- Begin with **pilot initiatives or limited-scope actions**.
- Prioritise **concrete and visible outcomes**, such as:
 - Training pilots,
 - Working groups,
 - Practical tools or services.
- Deliver **short-term results** to demonstrate value.
- Use early success to **build trust and scale progressively**.

12.1.6 Use data and evidence for decision-making

- Integrate **labour market data and sectoral analysis** into planning.
- Support decisions with **evidence-based approaches**.
- Strengthen:
 - Relevance of actions,

- Policy alignment,
- Credibility among stakeholders.

12.1.7 Secure funding and plan sustainability

- Identify and combine **different funding sources** where possible:
 - Local, regional, national and EU programmes.
- Align activities with **existing public funding instruments and strategies**.
- Develop **long-term financial models** to ensure continuity.
- Plan sustainability from the outset as a **key condition for impact**.

12.1.8 Monitor, evaluate and adapt

- Establish **monitoring and evaluation mechanisms** from the beginning.
- Track:
 - Results,
 - Stakeholder engagement,
 - Impact on VET systems.
- Use feedback to:
 - Improve activities,
 - Adjust governance and priorities.
- Ensure a process of **continuous improvement and adaptation**.

12.2 Template for VET stakeholders identification in a VET Council

Instructions: Identify the stakeholder category > Specify the name of the organisation > Define the potential contribution and the engagement strategy > Ensure a balanced representation of stakeholders across the VET ecosystem

Stakeholder Category	Name of organisation	Potential Contribution	Engagement Strategy
Public Authorities		Strategic direction, funding, legitimacy	Formal participation, institutional agreements
VET Providers / Training Centres		Training delivery, feedback loops	Working groups, co-design of programmes
Higher Education Institutions		Micro-credentials, research input	Strategic partnerships, joint programmes
Employers / SMEs		Definition of skills needs, training placements	Direct engagement, sectoral groups
Business Organisations / Chambers		Coordination, outreach, dissemination	Coordination role, networking activities
Social Partners (Trade unions / Employer associations)		Policy input, validation of qualifications	Consultation, structured dialogue
Innovation & Research Actors		Integration of AI, VR, new methodologies	Pilot projects, innovation labs
Intermediary Organisations (Clusters, networks, EDIHs)		Knowledge sharing, collaboration platforms	Joint initiatives, projects
Learners / Representatives		Feedback on training quality and relevance	Surveys, focus groups
Other Relevant Actors		Context-specific contributions	Tailored engagement approaches

12.3 Checklist and assessment of objectives of a VET Council

A) Alignment with labour market needs

Objective	Relevant	Partially relevant	Not relevant	Not feasible	Comments
Facilitate alignment between VET provision and labour market demand	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Reduce skills mismatches across sectors	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Support demand-driven VET approaches	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Integrate labour market intelligence and skills anticipation	☐	☐	☐	☐	

B) Governance and coordination

Objective	Relevant	Partially relevant	Not relevant	Not feasible	Comments
Improve coordination between VET, employment and policy actors	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Strengthen multi-level governance	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Reduce fragmentation across stakeholders and initiatives	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Enhance policy coherence across systems	☐	☐	☐	☐	

C) Stakeholder engagement and co-creation

Objective	Relevant	Partially relevant	Not relevant	Not feasible	Comments
Ensure active participation of employers and SMEs	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Promote multistakeholder cooperation	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Foster co-design of training programmes and policies	☐	☐	☐	☐	

Strengthen shared ownership and trust	☐	☐	☐	☐	
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D) Skills development and lifelong learning

Objective	Relevant	Partially relevant	Not relevant	Not feasible	Comments
Promote upskilling and reskilling pathways	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Support continuous VET (CVET) systems	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Improve employability and career opportunities	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Increase accessibility and inclusiveness	☐	☐	☐	☐	

E) Innovation and system adaptation

Objective	Relevant	Partially relevant	Not relevant	Not feasible	Comments
Integrate digital, green and transversal skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Promote AI, VR and innovation in VET	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Enable pilot actions and experimentation	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Increase system flexibility and responsiveness	☐	☐	☐	☐	

12.4 Strategies Checklist

Assess strategies according to chapter 11 (effectives strategies)

Strategy	Adequate	Partially adequate	Not adequate	Feasible	Partially feasible	Not feasible
Building on existing structures and frameworks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ensuring strong employer and stakeholder engagement	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Focusing on practical and concrete actions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Using evidence-based and data-driven approaches	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Maintaining flexible and adaptive governance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ensuring coordination and facilitation capacity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Institutional anchoring and alignment with policy frameworks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Planning sustainability from the outset	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐



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