TEMPLATE FOR THE GOOD PRACTICE

What is a good practice?

A good practice is not only a practice that is good, but a practice that has been proven to work well and produce good results, and is therefore recommended as a model. It is a successful experience, which has been tested and validated, in the broad sense, which has been repeated and deserves to be shared so that a greater number of people can adopt it.

Element	Description
Title*	*Embedding International Quality Standards through the European Training Foundation's Commitment to Vocational Excellence Certification*
Name of the VET Provider	*Academy of the State Customs Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan (ASCCA)*
Thematic domain	What is the thematic domain covered by this good practice? More than one domain can be indicated ☑ Innovation ☑ Digital ☑ Green ☑ Inclusion Entrepreneurial Career guidance ☑ Lifelong learning ☑ Creating partnerships/skills ecosystems
Introduction*	*What is the context (initial situation) and challenge being addressed? Provide a short description of the problem/challenge being addressed and specify the period during which the practice has been carried out.* The Academy of the State Customs Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan (ASCCA), which is also unique in terms of its status as the World Customs Organization Regional Training Center in Azerbaijan, operates in a context of rapid transformation of customs services, driven by digitalisation, international trade facilitation requirements, sustainability agendas, and evolving skills needs. Prior to this good practice, institutional quality development initiatives were implemented mainly through individual projects or activities, without a single, comprehensive international framework for assessing and benchmarking vocational excellence. The key challenge was to introduce a **systematic, evidence-based and internationally recognised approach** to institutional self-assessment, quality

enhancement, and strategic development in vocational education and training. This good practice was implemented during **2024–2025**, culminating in ASCCA being awarded the Commitment to Vocational Excellence certificate by the European Training Foundation.

Stakeholders and Partners	*Who are the beneficiaries or the target group of the good practice? Who are the users of the good practice? Who are the institutions, partners, implementing agencies, and donors involved in the good practice, and what is the nature of their involvement?* The primary beneficiaries of this good practice are: • academic and training staff of ASCCA, • customs officers and professionals participating in vocational and lifelong learning programmes, • students (both the BA and MA students, as well as those enrolled in customs-related education; • parents; • employers. Key stakeholders and partners include: • the State Customs Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, • the European Training Foundation (ETF), as the certifying and methodological authority, • ASCCA Leadership; as well as the International Cooperation and Projects portfolio; departments involved in institutional self-assessment and strategic planning. ETF provided the methodology, assessment framework, and external validation through the International Self-Assessment Tool for Centres of Vocational Excellence (ISATCOVE), while ASCCA implemented the process institution-wide.
Impact*	*What has been the impact (positive or negative) of this good practice on the beneficiaries'? Has there been social impact? Has the CoVE impact environmentally, financially, and/or economically the region where it is based (and if applicable, become more resilient), and if yes how? What evidence does show this impact?* **Results and effects** The good practice resulted in: • the successful completion of a comprehensive institutional self-assessment against international vocational excellence criteria, • the development of a structured Strategic Development Plan based on identified strengths and improvement areas,

	• the awarding of the Commitment to Vocational Excellence certificate by the ETF in 2025.
	The impact is primarily institutional and social, reflected in strengthened quality culture, improved strategic coherence, and increased international recognition of ASCCA as a vocational education and training provider. Evidence of impact includes the official certification, internal strategic documents, and the continued integration of excellence principles into training, project development, and international cooperation activities.
Innovation and Success Factors *	*In what way has the good practice contributed to innovation? What are the conditions (institutional, economic, social, and environmental) that need to be in place for the good practice to be successfully replicated (in a similar context)?*
	The innovative character of this good practice lies in ASCCA's decision to institutionalise vocational excellence through a structured, **evidence-based institutional development process**, rather than through isolated projects or short-term initiatives. In 2024–2025, ASCCA conducted a comprehensive institutional self-assessment using the International Self-Assessment Tool for Centres of Vocational Excellence (ISATCOVE) developed by the European Training Foundation. The assessment covered 238 international excellence criteria across teaching and learning, partnerships and coordination, and governance and funding.
	The results of this self-assessment were consolidated into a **five-year Institutional Development Plan (2025–2030)**, which defines clear developmental objectives, concrete improvement actions, responsible units, required resources, implementation timelines, and monitoring status. This Development Plan serves as the central instrument for embedding vocational excellence principles into ASCCA's long-term strategic management and operational planning.
	This approach represents a systemic innovation in the national vocational education and training context, as it translates international excellence standards into an actionable, institution-wide strategy rather than treating excellence as a declarative or certification-based goal. The Development Plan links quality assurance, digital and green transition, lifelong learning, partnerships, and governance reforms within a single coherent framework.
	Key success factors include strong leadership commitment, cross-departmental involvement in the self-assessment process, adaptation of the ISATCOVE framework to the customs-specific and national context, and the direct linkage between assessment findings and measurable strategic actions. External methodological guidance and validation by the European Training Foundation further strengthened the robustness and credibility of the process. This combination of international benchmarking, internal ownership, and strategic

	planning makes the practice transferable to other vocational and public-sector training institutions.
Constraints*	*What are the challenges encountered in applying the good practice? How have they been addressed?*
	Challenges includef the complexity of coordinating a comprehensive self-assessment across multiple institutional areas, limited prior experience with large-scale excellence frameworks, and the need to ensure staff engagement alongside regular operational responsibilities.
	These constraints were addressed through phased implementation, internal coordination, capacity building, and continuous communication on the purpose and benefits of the process.
Lessons learned *	*What are the key messages and lessons learned from the good practice experience?*
	Key lessons learned from this good practice include:
	- institutional excellence requires a systemic and evidence-based approach; - international frameworks are most effective when adapted to local institutional contexts; - staff involvement and ownership are critical to sustainable quality improvement; - certification processes can serve as catalysts for long-term organisational learning rather than end goals.
Replicability and/or up-scaling	*What are the possibilities of extending the good practice more widely? What are the conditions that should be met/respected to ensure that the good practice is replicated, but adapted to the new context?*
	The aim is to go further than the section "Innovations / critical success factors" in specifying the requirements for replication of the practice on a larger scale (national, regional, international).
	In **June 2025**, at an international meeting held in the World Customs Organization Europe Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB Europe) in the capital city, Baku, Repulic of Azerbaijan, ASCCA presented its experience in implementing the ETF-led ISATCOVE self-assessment, the resulting Institutional Development Plan, and its approach to developing a Centre of Vocational Excellence to the World Customs Organization Regional Training Centres in the Europe Region, covering countries from Europe to Central Asia. Through this exchange, ASCCA demonstrated the transferability and replicability of this model across different institutional and national contexts.
	The good practice demonstrated by ASCCA is replicable and scalable because it is based on a **structured institutional development model** rather than on

context-specific training activities. Replication does not require copying individual measures, but rather adopting the **process logic** applied by ASCCA: international self-assessment, evidence-based strategic planning, and phased implementation.

Central to this practice is the **Institutional Development Plan (2025–2030)**, which operationalises the results of the ISATCOVE self-assessment into clearly defined objectives, actions, responsibilities, timelines, and resource needs across teaching and learning, partnerships and coordination, and governance and funding. This structure allows the model to be transferred to other vocational or public-sector training institutions, while enabling adaptation to different regulatory, sectoral, or national contexts.

For successful replication or up-scaling, several conditions should be met: institutional leadership commitment, the existence (or establishment) of an internal coordination mechanism, staff engagement in self-assessment and planning, and readiness to implement improvement actions gradually over a multi-year period. The ASCCA Development Plan illustrates how institutions can move from diagnostic assessment to long-term implementation without requiring immediate full capacity or funding.

At national and regional levels, the approach can support the creation of vocational excellence ecosystems by aligning institutional strategies with labour market needs, digital and green transition priorities, and international cooperation frameworks. At international level, the practice provides a transferable model for public-sector and specialised VET providers seeking to embed vocational excellence systematically, using internationally recognised frameworks supported by the European Training Foundation.

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URL of the practice	*Can the good practice be found on the Internet?* https://www.ascca.gov.az/en/news/1833/Commitment_to_Professional%20Excellence https://ascca.gov.az/az/news/1664/DGKA_Beynelxalq_sertifikat_2025_az https://learn.skillman.eu/blocks/skillman/view_member.php?slug=academy-of-the-state-customs-committee-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-ascca&courseid=1&blockid=3344&embedded=1
Related resources that have been developed	*What training manuals, guidelines, technical fact sheets, posters, pictures, video and audio documents, and/or Web sites have been created and developed as a result of identifying the good practice? How can them be accessed?*

The ISATCOVE self-assessment documentation and the Institutional Development Plan are internal strategic documents of ASCCA. While these materials are not publicly disseminated, ASCCA can share its methodological approach, implementation experience, and lessons learned with interested institutions upon request.

The developed materials include:

- Institutional self-assessment reports based on ISATCOVE
- Strategic Development Plan for vocational excellence
- Internal guidelines and coordination
- Dissemination materials related to the ETF certification process