



Experience with the CoVE self-assessment tool

Challenges, learnings, and positive outcomes

Belgian development agency

enabel.be



1. Purpose of the CoVE self-assessment

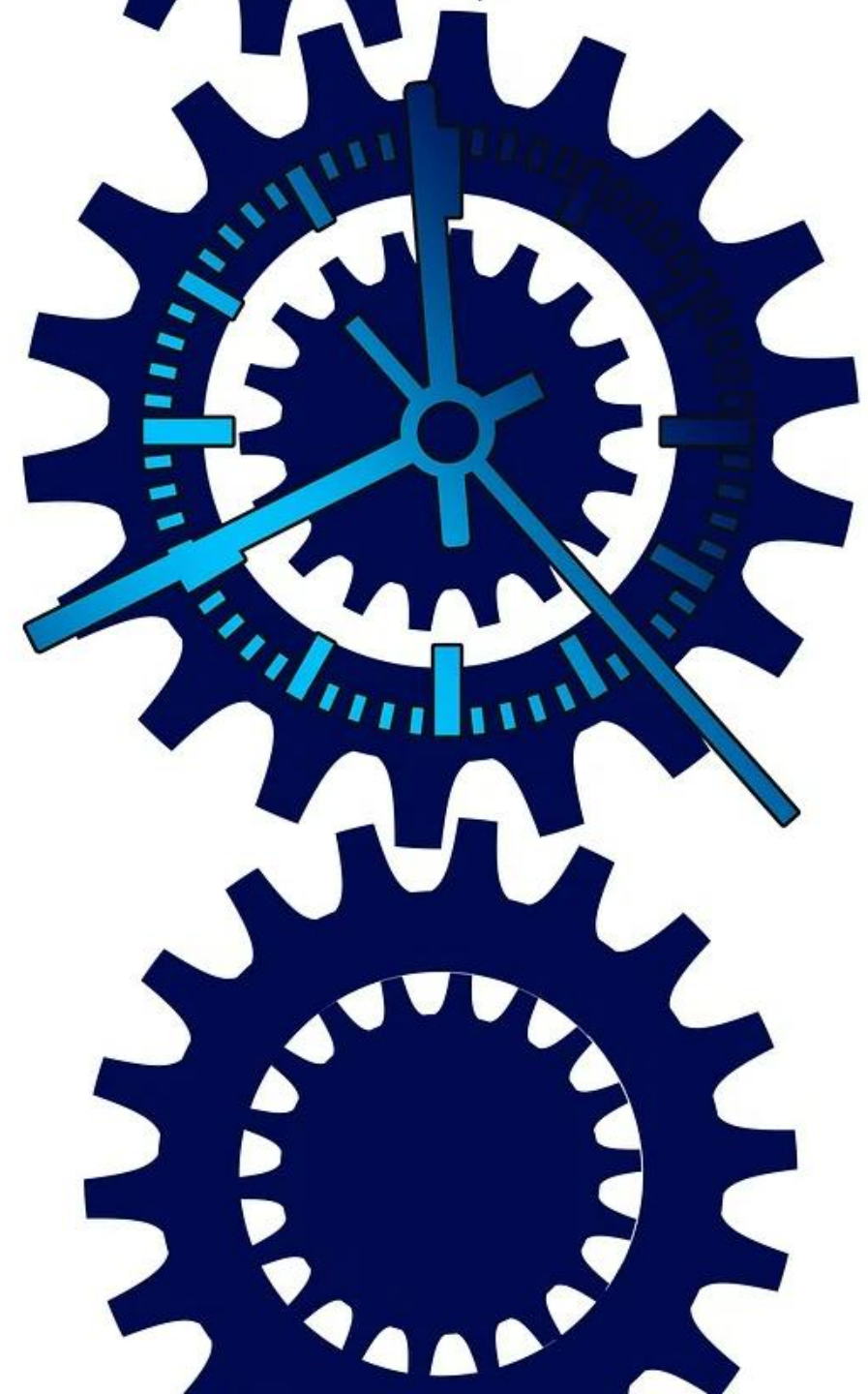
- Check where a VTI stands against the CoVE framework.
- Identify gaps, priorities, and areas for improvement.
- Support **learning and transformation** – **not ranking per se.**
- Inform capacity-strengthening plans and roadmaps.





2. How the process works

- Framework = **13 criteria**
 - **Strategic Leadership & Institutional Governance – (Criteria 1-6)**
Management, Heads of Department and students
 - **Training Quality, Relevance & Learner Outcomes (Criteria 7-11)**
Instructors, students
 - **Partnerships, Networks & Sustainability (Criteria 12-13)**
Partnership officers, students involved in WBL
- Team – splits into 3 groups
- **Evidence first** → discussion → agreed score





3. Who is in the assessment team?

- **VTI team:**
 - Management – Liaison officers, Head of departments and Students (≈ 20 participants)
- **Enabel:**
 - VTI Officers and Skilling Expert
 - Enabel role: **Facilitator – not evaluator**

Scores agreed **collectively** (not individually)



4. What worked well (1)

Impartiality - Ownership - Inclusivity

- Facilitators from Enabel working on different regions → fewer personal ties, less bias and less political influence.
- Ownership and awareness
 - Institutions see gaps themselves
 - They identify priority actions
 - They acknowledge & own weaknesses with no external judgment





4. What worked well (2)

- CoVE assessment as the foundation for annual roadmaps and targeted support to VTIs.
- Shared reflection and **collective learning**, bringing together teachers, management and students.





5. Challenges (1)

1. Self-assessment bias

- Natural tendency to **over-score** and “sell strengths.”
- Misconception: **high score = grant eligibility**
- That expectation can create tension in discussions

=> Why facilitation matters

- Keep the objective clear: **improvement**, not funding,
- Challenge claims when **evidence** is missing
- Refocus the group on **concrete proof**
- Mediate for **unrealistic expectations**





5. Challenges (2)

2. Tool design: Length and participation

- 13 criteria can be heavy even when split by themes
- Some actors (e.g., directors) join only one thematic discussion, hindering overall alignment
- **Risk: Key issues may be compromised** (private sector, learner welfare)





6. Reflection: Does Enabel's presence limit ownership?

- Today, Enabel still organises and facilitates for **complete hand-over tomorrow**
- VTI partners **still request Enabel's facilitation support** currently, risking the future full ownership
- **Without Enabel**, neutrality and objectivity could be compromised but...
- How can we ensure these elements? → **hands-off & eyes-on method?**





7. Possible direction

Peer-to-peer assessment and student survey

- Principals/managers from other VTIs assess peers
- Creates inspiration (“If Enabel can, we can too”)
- **Strengthens ownership** and reduces dependency
- Remove false expectations for honest reflection
- Supports **peer learning** and motivation
- Pre-evaluation made by students (survey) – The students don’t open up easily when they have their professors at the same table.





8. Key learnings and final message

- Participatory assessment builds **ownership**
- Facilitation improves **genuine & real self-assessment**
- Peer-to-peer is a **promising evolution**
- The real value is **not the score** but the **collective reflection** it creates
- It helps institutions see where they are, where they want to go, and **what must change**
- **Must reflection:** how to **handover the full ownership** without compromising **objectivity & neutrality**

