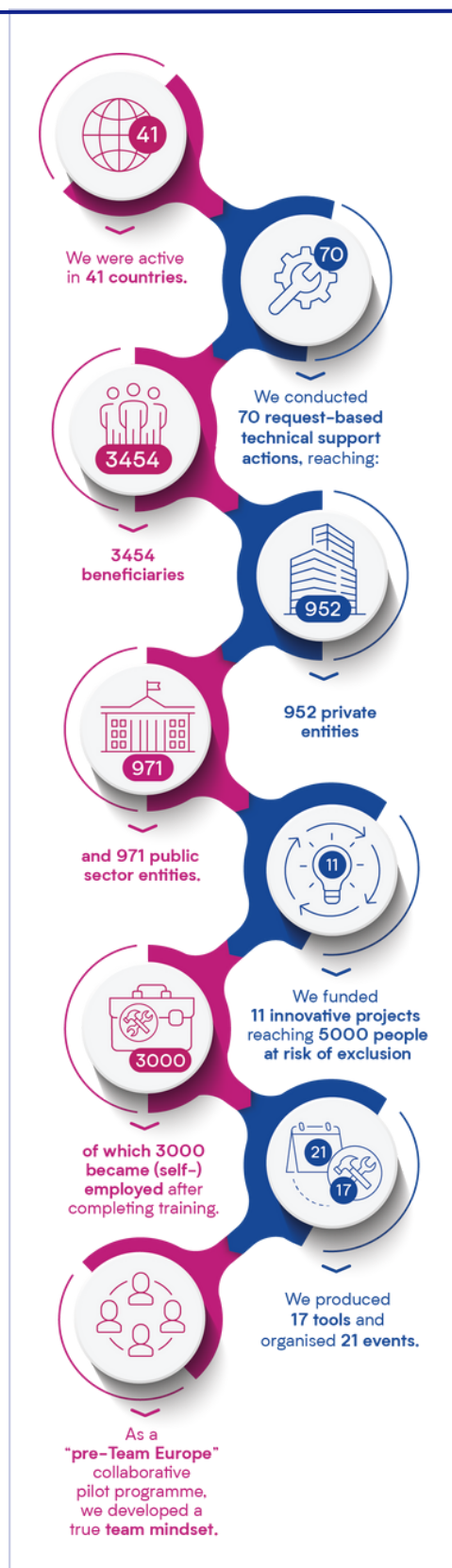


The first phase of the VET Toolbox programme, spanning from 2017 to 2022, operated across 41 countries in Africa, Asia, and South America. Its objective was to improve the effectiveness of Vocational Education and Training (VET) reforms by providing partner countries with know-how, tools and advice.

Key achievements



Main findings

Request-based technical support actions

- Short-term request-based technical support actions proved to be a good instrument to pilot innovative approaches.
- Actions were initially designed to deliver short-term support (+/-5 weeks). However, a longer support duration with robust follow-up support achieved better results and long-term sustainability.
- The effects of the actions depended on their integration into a larger initiative (strategic plans, policies, support programmes, budget, human resources, etc.).
- Early and committed stakeholder involvement with a clear action plan is crucial.
- Actions jointly implemented by partner agencies showed potential for better outcomes but required adaptable partners and may involve higher costs.

Inclusive VET grants

- A longer training duration (6 to 24 months) is needed, tailored to individual needs, especially for vulnerable individuals.
- Strategic employer relationship management is a key success factor for positive local-level impacts, especially for people in vulnerable situations.
- In labour market contexts with limited formal opportunities, a stronger focus on self-employment and entrepreneurial skills is needed. Entrepreneurship is bolstered when practical tools and income-generating activities are integrated into training.

Knowledge exchange network activities and tools

- Knowledge exchange activities, especially South-South exchanges (such as twinning partnerships and regional seminars) were highly appreciated and relevant. They were, however, insufficiently integrated in other activities.
- The tools could have benefitted from a better distribution and did not sufficiently feed back into the programme's MEAL system.

[Explore the VET Toolbox tools.](#)

The VET Toolbox consortium

- The consortium shared a common objective and vision, thriving through collaborative creation.
- It tapped into a wealth of knowledge and expertise while leveraging various networks for mutual gain.
- Challenges emerged from evolving procedures, shifting expectations and priorities.
- Staff resources were insufficient for a complex multi-agency setup.

Recommendations

Project design and strategy

- Base the actions on a **solid Theory of Change** for enhanced understanding and targeted action.
- Address **increased transaction costs** associated with multi-partner programme design, optimising the number of actors and actions, geographic and thematic spread, while allocating sufficient resources and capacity.
- Implement a **strategic MEAL** (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, Learning) **framework** that responds to the Theory of Change and invests in learning from each other.
- Establish a **solid strategy** and information base for **knowledge management** and **communication**, utilising existing partner-developed instruments and experiences.
- Leverage **in-house expertise** efficiently (e.g., through temporarily assigning an expert to a new position) to ensure appropriate capacity. Pair international consultants with local consultants to promote local ownership and capacity development.
- Integrate **decent work standards** and use existing frameworks and instruments, such as the Decent Work Agenda of the International Labour Organisation.

Consortium

- Strengthen **inter-agency collaboration**, promoting co-implementation in partner countries, while acknowledging increased transaction costs.
- Prioritise **open dialogue** with all stakeholders to ensure inclusivity and alignment with national consortium members' agendas.
- Create **learning communities of practice** to leverage partners' accumulated experience for improvements at the implementation level.
- Promote **peer learning** in conjunction with external evaluation methods to facilitate knowledge exchange and collaborative learning among consortium partners

Project implementation

- Embed activities in **larger programmes** for added value and potential upscaling, recognising the benefits compared to standalone efforts.
- Implement a **whole-system approach to VET**, considering the broader context, such as families, local communities, and the school and work environment, for sustainable and gender-inclusive action.
- Strengthen VET training with **transversal skills**, including personal, social, digital, and entrepreneurial skills, particularly in informal employment contexts.
- Promote **strategic employer engagement** and **work-based learning** in all VET programmes to enhance skills quality and labour market relevance.

With the solid foundation laid in its first phase, VET Toolbox now continues its **second phase until 2024**, supporting **human capital needs** of value and supply chain development and **investment** programmes in selected Sub-Saharan Africa countries. This second phase operates a **paradigm shift** with conventional approaches to VET through its **opportunity-driven approach**.

Visit www.vettoolbox.eu for more information on VET Toolbox's ongoing activities.

A partnership project

Co-funded by the
European Union

