

# VET POLICY DEVELOPMENT

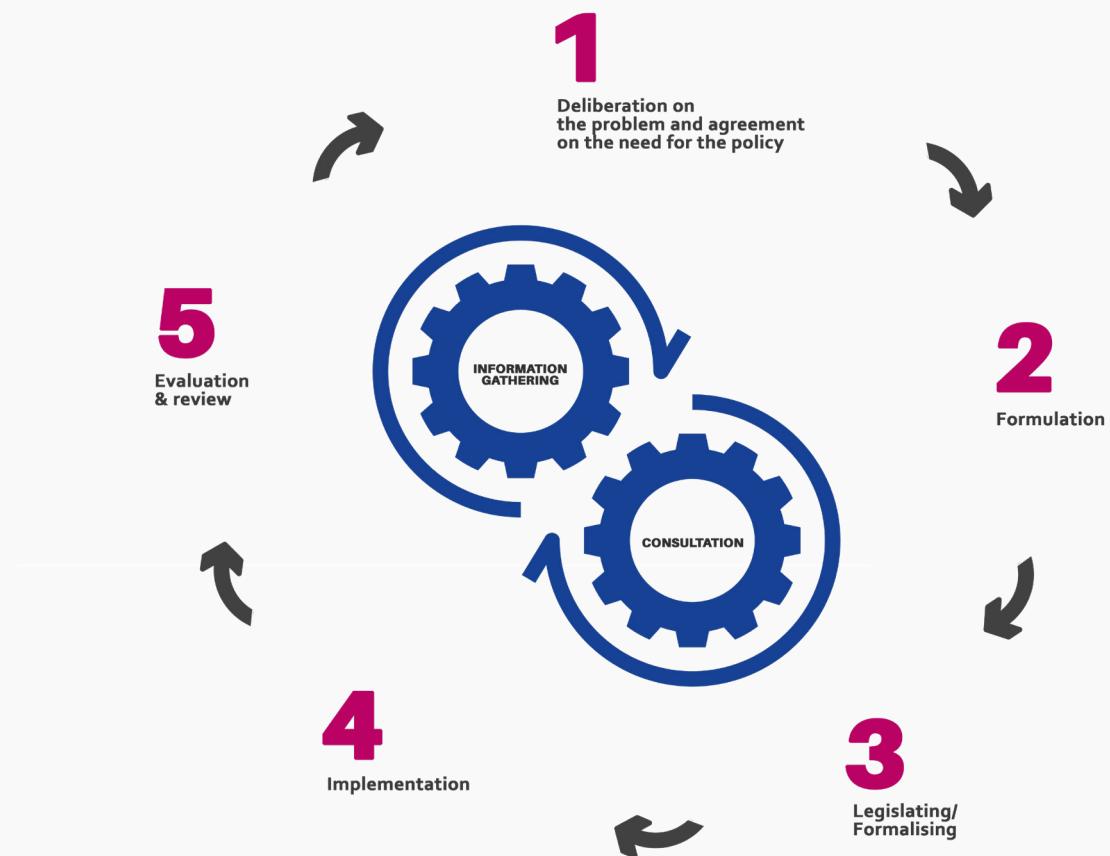
Process, lessons learned & recommendations

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This guiding note gives advice on **how to approach the challenge of VET policy development**.

It takes up practical experiences and lessons learned from VET stakeholders and **inspires the discussion on VET policy development in the global VET community**.

## VET policy development: an iterative process



**In theory**, policymaking unfolds in an orderly fashion, following **a series of linear steps**:

1. Deliberation on the problem and agreement on the need for the policy
2. Formulation
3. Legislating/formalising
4. Implementation
5. Evaluation and review

Some essential **steps** are often **forgotten** though:

1. Sufficient **information gathering**, including (international) lessons learned
2. Wide **consultation** throughout the different steps, meaning listening to all the voices: students, youth organisations, teachers, VET-provider management, private sector representatives, industry partners, trade unions...

And in **reality**, especially in complex systems, policymaking:  
(*Mueller, 2020*)

- Can be messy, non-linear and contested
- Has unforeseen obstacles and unintended consequences
- Can be obstructed by stakeholders not keen on change
- Is often unsuccessful

## **Bottom-up or top-down approaches?**

*(Gornitzka, Kogan and Amaral, 2005; OECD, 2008; Cerna, L., 2013)*

Change happens due to dynamic, iterative processes. Top-down and bottom-up approaches were previously seen as oppositional to each other.

More recent insights however, encourage us to **combine the two approaches** and differentiate strategies adapted to the specific country and sector context (leadership, stakeholders, organisational capacity, political situation, *inter alia*).

Policy design ideally takes a **systemic approach**, involving all actors in the sector - upstream and downstream - in an oscillating movement between internal and external partners. Broad bottom-up consultation and co-design (e.g. through roadshows, surveys, focus group discussions, civil society group representation at all levels of the policy design,) combined with competent, future-focused, top-down final decision-making and implementation support.

## Lessons learned and guidance for successful VET policy development

Topic	Lessons learned	Recommendations
On the set-up	<p><b>1.</b> Clear political will, commitment and leadership from the top are essential.</p> <p><b>2.</b> The best policy is useless if the resources are not available for implementation.</p> <p><b>3.</b> VET policy needs to be aligned to the ever-changing specific country context, including the changing labour market needs.</p> <p><b>4.</b> Flexibility and autonomy of the VET institution are essential for success.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinate and engage stakeholders in a policy dialogue, including those who can influence the relevant environment and support opportunities.</li> <li>Ensure the back-up of policies by solid resource planning. This includes the support from technical and financial partners for policy implementation.</li> <li>Consider VET reform in the first place as a strategy to support skills development to increase employment opportunities.</li> <li>Keep a close eye on the future of the labour market by regularly consulting all relevant stakeholders.</li> <li>Make use of existing good practices - without simply importing, as adaptation to the specific context is essential.</li> </ul>
On the process	<p><b>5.</b> Policy based on strong local consultation, and ideally co-creation, and thorough information-gathering has better chances of acceptance and thus success.</p> <p><b>6.</b> Divergent stakeholder views may delay decision processes, but decisions are needed to progress.</p> <p><b>7.</b> It is important to have a plan, but the plan needs to remain flexible for revision.</p> <p><b>8.</b> When advice and consultation are not taken seriously by policymakers, policy reversal is likely.</p> <p><b>9.</b> Less is more, but the (policy) context matters.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include information gathering and broad stakeholder consultation, and ideally co-creation, early on and throughout the process of VET policy development.</li> <li>Include international examples, results from pilot projects, scientific data etc. in the information gathering.</li> <li>Manage stakeholder' expectations and ensure a transparent process of decision making.</li> <li>Integrate regular advice and consultation sessions for reviewing plans and activities throughout the policy development process.</li> <li>Be ready to change the approach, instruments and expectations, if it is clear that the initial plan is not working.</li> <li>When developing a particular policy consider whether any additional policies or any policy updates are required to allow implementation of the new policy.</li> </ul>
On stakeholder involvement	<p><b>10.</b> Stakeholders, especially practitioners, often have a very good insight into what works and what does not.</p> <p><b>11.</b> No matter how wide the consultation process, there will always be those who feel excluded.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involve a diverse network of public institutions, as well as private partners, public and private VET-institutions, civil society organisations etc. in the policy development process.</li> <li>Build trust between the stakeholders as a foundation for collaboration.</li> </ul>