



Peer Review in Adult Learning
to Improve formal and Non-formal Education

*Piloting of the European
Peer Review methodology for
the Adult Learning sector:
QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS*



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of the European Union

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With the support of all the organizations and professionals involved
in the piloting activities in France, Italy, Lithuania, Malta and Portugal

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¹ Not included in this printed copy but available for consultation and download in the PRALINE project website at the page: <http://www.praline-project.eu/Result04.asp>.

I. INTRODUCTION

The document is the final report on the piloting of the European Peer Review methodology adapted to the adult education sector carried out in five countries – France, Italy, Lithuania, Malta and Portugal – over 16 months from October 2015 to January 2017. The piloting has been conducted within the ERASMUS+ project *PRALINE – Peer Review in Adult Learning to Improve formal and Non-formal Education* financed in Italy in 2014 [2014-1-IT02-KA204-003626].

The adaptation and testing of the methodology was primarily inspired by the findings of the PANTEIA study on "Developing the adult learning sector. Quality in the Adult Learning sector" (Final report, 2013) and the awareness that *in most countries there is a consensus that quality assurance systems should be developed for the adult leaning sector, and especially for the non-formal sector. Most countries are currently developing or revising their legislative framework for adult learning, putting more focus on quality assurance mechanisms. In the last few years, most countries produced white papers, communications, policy proposals and lifelong learning strategies in which they emphasize the importance of quality assurance. Nevertheless, the main challenge is to implement these strategies. Experience shows that it takes a long time to build consensus on the idea and content of quality systems* (p. XII). In this scenario, the aim of the Qualitative Analysis is to provide insights on the strengths and areas of improvement emerged from the pilot of the European Peer Review methodology applied to adult learning, considered an effective quality assurance mechanism thanks to the following main characteristics:

- result of a **bottom-up process** of definition of criteria and indicators conducted at transnational level;
- **coherent with the EQAVET framework** because applying its quality cycle and proposing Quality Areas which encompass the 10 EQAVET Indicators, and thus supporting the idea of an integrated approach and common framework for quality assurance in education – as underlined by Giorgio Allulli in its external evaluation *“These results well explain the importance and the actuality of a project, like PRALINE, whose aim is **introduce the Peer review approach for assuring quality in adult education, implementing and extending the framework previously established** to manage Peer review approach for assuring quality in the field of VET at the light of the Eqavet Recommendation”*;
- supportive for a **stronger cooperation among providers** within the sector **and with stakeholders**, mainly trade unions, companies and public authorities thanks to the possibility of having them working together as Peers in applying the methodology;
- based on a **voluntary adoption** - awarding schemes possible - and effective in **reinforcing the culture of quality within educational settings** at all levels, through the **guided self-assessment process** and the detail of the criteria and indicators available in the Quality Areas;
- possibly **integrated with existing standard-based quality assurance systems**, as the ISO 9001, thanks to the strong specificity of the European Peer Review methodology for the educational sector.

The analysis is divided in two main chapters, both having the same structure and following the logical and chronological order of the core activities of the piloting – respectively the transnational Training for Peers Trainers, the Trainings for Peers conducted at national level and the actual implementation of the Peer

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Reviews. In the first one – chapter II. PILOTING IMPLEMENTATION, it is described the structure of the piloting, its rationale and main figures. The second one – chapter III. ASSESSMENT OF THE PILOTING, reports a qualitative analysis of the implementation based on the feedbacks of the participating organizations and professionals, as well as of the partner organizations which managed the process nationally and transnationally. Indeed, the assessment here contained is the result of internal monitoring activities conducted throughout the whole piloting under the coordination of Associazione FORMA.Azione srl, with the active contribution of Contact points from the partner organizations: CFPPA de Rethel; CECOIA – Centro de Formação Profissional para o Comércio e Afins; LETU – Lithuanian Education Trade Union; MUT – Malta Union of Teachers and CIOFS Formazione Professionale; as well as from Regione Umbria and CUB – Corvinus University of Budapest with specific roles.

The whole process of piloting conducted at transnational level has been subject to a sound and coordinated monitoring in order to **collect data and evidences** for validating the approach adopted and the proposed adaptation of the European Peer Review methodology, considered a **valuable contribution to the wider EU-level discourse on the quality of adult learning**. Its planning and implementation has followed the model of the quality cycle (Planning, Acting, Evaluating, Reviewing), as also introduced by the EQAVET Recommendation. For every step of the project, it has been foreseen to collect feedbacks, reflective statements and meta-evaluations both by the project partners and by the other professionals involved. In addition to that, the piloting has been evaluated by external experts with proven expertise on quality assessment in education and training, and on the methodology of the European Peer Review for VET. The results of their work are summarised in chapter IV. This has led to a consistent amount of information and data which are analysed in this document and reported extensively in the Annexes.

II. PILOTING IMPLEMENTATION

1. The rationale behind the piloting and the milestones

The rationale behind was to structure a piloting phase that could support the actual introduction of the adapted methodology into the adult learning sector, starting from activities functional to the development of the required competences for its adoption in new contexts. For that, the first effort has been the identification of the competences needed for peers' trainers and the design of a 5-day training, so that they could in turn become themselves promoters and activators for the diffusion of the European Peer Review. Whereas testing had already took place – as it is the case of the training for Peers – it has been decided to build on the materials available by transferring the validated tools/practices to the context of intervention of the project; for the other activities, instead, in the planning phase a strong attention has been paid to the design of monitoring and evaluation tools in order to collect sufficient materials, data and info to assess the outcomes achieved and the potential influence quality assurance processes in adult learning.

As anticipated, the analysis contained in this document covers the whole piloting process carried out by the PRALINE Consortium, starting from the Training for Peers Trainers, to the Training for Peers and the actual first implementation of the methodology adapted to adult learning. The different phases were all very much interdependent, having the respective inputs on the results of the previous one. Indeed, the Training for Peers Trainers (TPT) intended to serve as a common basis for the piloting to be carried out in the five different countries – Italy, Portugal, France, Malta and Lithuania – and was designed accordingly taking into account the disparities in terms of prior knowledge and experience on the methodology among the partners. On one side, the competences so acquired have been spent for the organization, implementation and assessment of the Training for Peers editions in the respective countries; on the other, the practical activities have produced indications and materials to be used during the Trainings at national level, facilitating the learning process and reinforcing the homogeneity among countries.

The Trainings for Peers (TPs) – first step towards the acquisition of the adapted methodology as well as opportunity for raising awareness on quality assurance issues² – have been delivered as part of the piloting to transfer the European Peer Review methodology to professionals and organizations operating in the given contexts so to enlarge the experimentation to a wider network. It is worth to notice that the adapted methodology has been adopted by 15 organizations in the field of adult education, of which only 3 were partner organizations. It respond to a clear commitment of the partners in reaching out to their regions, peer organizations and stakeholders already during the period of project implementation to verify the efficacy of the European Peer Review methodology for newcomers and, at the same time, contribute to build a common understanding and movement for quality learning in the heterogeneous landscape of adult education. The training has targeted professionals with different backgrounds in formal and non formal contexts for adult learning, as to facilitate the encounter and exchange among them that is another expected outcome of the PRALINE project³. The whole process of piloting was subject to a shared assessment centrally coordinated by Associazione FORMA.Azione, as detailed in Chapter III. Assessment of the Piloting. Its aim was to facilitate the comparison among the results and feedbacks obtained in the various countries, as well as to support the review of the adapted methodology accordingly.

² Coherently with the Executive Plans developed by partner organizations as result of the Warming-Up Strategy - PRALINE project, *Warming-Up Strategy for developing a Quality Culture* (2016) – <http://www.praline-project.eu/Result01.asp>.

³ PRALINE project, *Warming-Up Strategy for developing a Quality Culture* (2016) – <http://www.praline-project.eu/Result01.asp>.

Piloting implementation

The **milestones** of the piloting are the following:

- Transnational Training for Peers Trainers, realised in Portugal.
- Trainings for peers, delivered in 6 editions in Italy, Portugal, France, Malta and Lithuania;
- 15 applications of the European Peer Review methodology for the Adult Learning sector in Italy, Portugal, France, Malta and Lithuania.

MILESTONES		oct-15	nov-15	dec-15	jan-16	feb-16	mar-16	apr-16	may-16	jun-16	jul-16	aug-16	sep-16	oct-16	nov-16	dec-16	jan-17
		Transnational Training for Peers Trainers															
TPs	Valletta (MT)																
	MT1																
	MT2																
	MT3																
TPs	Rethel (FR)																
	FR1																
	FR2																
TPs	Perugia (IT)																
TPs	Roma (IT)																
	IT1																
	IT2																
	IT3																
TPs	Vilnius (LT)																
	LT1																
	LT2																
	LT3																
TPs	Lisbon (PT)																
	PT1																
	PT2																
	PT3																
	PT4																

2. The training for Peers Trainers (TPT)

The Training for Peer Trainers aimed at improving competences among the staff of PRALINE partner organisations, in particular for those responsible for Quality Assurance, so as to develop a common approach of quality in the AL sector in Europe. Specifically, It was organised by CECOIA – Centro de Formação Profissional para o Comércio e Afins in Lisbon (PT), and spanned for a period of five days, namely from 26 to 30 October 2015. It is part of the piloting because it has been implemented as such for the first time and the results of its implementation were meant to lead to adjustments and further developments.

The training format was based on the one developed within the Leonardo da Vinci TOI project “Peer Review for EQAVET” (2012 – 1- -GR1 – LEO05 – 10063), a format meant to be transferred and reproduced in other contexts as well. The agenda was based on the assumption that learners need to be aware of the Training for Trainers double-approach used: the training is both focused on the European Peer Review Methodology and its main features, and the expected competences as trainers of peers, in terms of soft skills and andragogy.

It lasted 25 hours and combined different didactic methodologies, such as theoretical lessons, work groups, plenary discussions, cooperative learning, brain-storming and written exercises. Some of the exercises foreseen in the “Training Manual for Training of Peer Trainers” have been adapted to the Adult Learning context. In particular, the agenda was structured in such a way that:

- the working groups were focused on the whole process of Peer Review and on each phases’ expected tasks and activities;
- a method of group rotation has been introduced in order to favour discussions among participants and to come up with more self-reflective activities, both as trainers and peers;
- the theoretical interventions have been addressed to the European Peer Review history, and its connection with EQAVET and QA in VET and AL at European level;
- the plenary discussion have been focused more on the meta-evaluation on the role of trainer to reinforce the competences for the future role rather than on specificities of the methodology.

The course was targeting and reached 17 people from the all partner organisations. The selection of participants was based on two main criteria: competences within the Quality evaluation and responsibilities within the organisations that well-match with tasks foreseen by the PRALINE project as well as experience in teaching.

In practice, the unpredictable impossibility to participate of the trainer Leena Koski has requested a slight adaptation of the Agenda to facilitate the new trainer’s requests (Katalin Molnar Stadler). The general training architecture has been kept and the profile of the substitute has not affected the quality of the training.

The participants in the Training for Trainers were afterwards the ones who, in their own country, were in charge of delivering the trainings for Peers and management of the piloting. In case of France and Malta, which are newcomers in Quality Assurance or in the case of Portugal and CIOF-FP in Italy, that have a considerable experience in the field, the decision was to involve also other staff. In case of the Region of Umbria, the choice was not to be directly involved in the training. Considering this, additional participants coming from Lithuania and from France were involved. France's choice to enlarge the opportunity to a wider group is also based on its desire to maintain and reinforce quality competences in order to meet and comply with the requirements of the reform of the vocational training approved in 2014⁴.

3. The Training for Peers

The training targeted organisations in the formal and non-formal AL sector in the partner’s country and relevant stakeholders. It was delivered by trainer from partner institutions who benefitted of the transnational training for trainers described above and aimed at giving formal recognition as Peers,

⁴ Projet De Loi *relatif A La Formation Professionnelle, A L’emploi Et A La Démocratie Sociale*, Adopté par l’Assemblée Nationale en Première Lecture, Texte Adopté n° 288, 7 February 2014.

whereas at national level, it allowed them to be included in the National Register for Peers established by National Agencies, if foreseen⁵. The duration of the training was of 2 days – 12 hours – and the content was designed in accordance to the profile of competence contained in the Peer Review Tool-Box for Initial VET⁶ and adapted in accordance with the methodology developed for the AL sector. In Italy, partners chose to use the curriculum which has been inserted in the Umbria Regional Repertoire of Competences' Profile in 2013⁷. For the support materials, the coordinator has shared the agenda, a curriculum sample following the model registered by Regione Umbria and programme drafted by Leena Koski, that each partner was able to translate in their own national language. The standard training programme in the Repertoire of Regione Umbria foresees a minimum duration of 12 hours and has 4 Didactic Units, namely:

- 1) the role of peers in the peer review,
- 2) the planning of a peer review in view of the visit in loco,
- 3) the peer in the peer review,
- 4) leading a group of peers.

The drafted programme offered an approach towards the following topics: peer review as part of quality management and the principles involved; peer review as an evaluation method; orientation to the peer review process and its phases; preparing questions for the peer visit and questioning techniques; interview techniques; initial feedback and preparing the peer review report, and update on Quality Assurance developed within LdV and Grundtvig programmes.

4. The organisations involved: selection criteria for the participating peers and organizations

As regards the piloting phase of the European Peer Review, Associazione FORMA.Azione srl has elaborated detailed **Guidelines** for partners to help organisations throughout the implementation phase. The document was divided in four main parts, specifically:

- 1) Preparation of the Piloting,
- 2) Implementation of the Piloting,
- 3) Reporting of the Piloting
- 4) Tasks of the different actors involved.

As regards the **Preparation phase**, partners were asked to recruit organisations from formal and non-formal education that were both experienced and not in the PR, and where possible, to include those with which they did not have direct contacts – possibly through open calls to participation. As for the selection of Peers, it was suggested to include those who were trained as such during the PRALINE project, even without prior experience on the PR methodology applied to other educational domains. Both indications served the purpose of contributing – while piloting the methodology – to the expected achievements in terms of reach out and inform organizations and promote a quality culture and the European Peer Review methodology in AL sector.

⁵ In Italy, a **National Register of Peers** has been established by the National Reference Point EQAVET at INAPP (former ISFOL) – <http://www.isfol.it/eqavet/il-registro-nazionale-dei-pari>.

⁶ *Peer Review in initial VET*, LdV Thematic Project "Peer Review in initial VET", 2004-2007 – coordinated by the Austrian Institute for Research on Vocational Training - http://www.peer-review-education.net/index.php?class=Calimero_Webpage&id=12285.

⁷ As detailed in the Competences Standard "SYSTEM OF BASIC COMPETENCES FOR MANAGING A PEER REVIEW ADDRESSED TO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDERS" developed within the PRISDOQ project (LdV, 2011-2013) - <http://www.regione.umbria.it/lavoro-e-formazione/standard-professionali>.

Piloting implementation

The piloting of the European Peer Review was planned to involve 5 countries – Italy, Malta, Lithuania, France and Portugal – and 3 organisations each, for a total of 15 organisations, working both on Formal and Non formal AL domain.

The detailed plan was shared among partners with focus on the organisations and peers involved. In particular, the information related to the organisations were: name, recruitment/selection procedure, AL domain, experience in PR, motivations (organisational) and areas of improvement (Quality Areas); whereas for the peers involved: first name, last name, email, experience in PR, motivations (individual), areas of expertise⁸.

In addition, there were several criteria to be applied at country level and at organisational level. At country level it was requested that each organisation should select one from the 4 core Quality Areas and one from the others, in such a way as to cover as many QAs as possible to be assessed and further validated. At organisation level, it was requested to have:

- at least 50 adult learners per year in the past 2 years,
- at least 3 learning activities annually in the past 2 years,
- a structured QA system both for formal and non-formal domain – at least one among the piloting organisations,
- monitoring and assessment competences in place,
- direct involvement of the management department.

Finally, coherently with the Warming-Up Strategy promoted by the project, the recruitment phase was suggested to be accompanied by communication activities in order to inform potential AL providers interesting in participating in the piloting, other stakeholders about the ongoing results and policy makers on the possible expected impact on the AL provision.

One of the “musts” related to the implementation phase was that for each country a Contact Point, namely the person responsible for the coordination of the piloting in the country and for the communication with the transnational coordinator, should be selected preferably among those participants in the training. It was recommended that the first visit should start with the organisations having a structured QA system, with the most experienced trainer for peers as observer, and it should begin as soon as possible after the Training for Peers. The presence of an observer is not foreseen by the methodology previously developed and validated for initial VET and has been subject of discussion among the partners for its potential alteration of the PR environment and essential mutual trust among the parties involved. In the cases in which observers were involved, the reviewed organizations and the peers did not comment on their presence – either positively or negatively. All visits should have been scheduled from the beginning, in particular the first one before the Transnational Project Meeting in Malta on the 19th-20th May 2016, during which partners agreed on the overall piloting plan. Moreover, partners were coordinated by Associazione FORMA.Azione srl and were requested to share feedbacks on each single PR visit, question participants on the PR experience. All information provided would become the basis for the actual Qualitative Analysis Report (Intellectual Output 4 of PRALINE project).

Last but not least, the reporting phase was focused on the tasks of the involved Contact Point. They should send the following: first assessment forms evaluating the experience of each Peer and organisation

⁸ The information contained in the Plan for each Peer were coherent with those included in the Application Form provided in the Tool-Box, requiring a summary of the professional expertise detailed in the Application Form and an additional focus on the motivations functional to the assessment of the piloting – <http://www.praline-project.eu/Result02.asp>.

Piloting implementation

involved, observation grids with comments related to the PR implementation during the visit and the overall performances, self-assessment reports and the agenda of the visit; and then the final report of each single peer review.

III. ASSESSMENT OF THE PILOTING

1. Transnational organisation of the work & monitoring tools

In order to ensure a sound and effective analysis of the process and the results, both in qualitative and quantitative terms, a set of monitoring and assessment tools have been provided to the different actors involved in the piloting, from the Contact Points within Partners' organizations to reviewed providers and Peers.

In the case of the trainings, **the final assessment was mainly based on self-assessment tools**, more rigorous in the case of the **transnational TPT** as, on one side, **it was at its first edition and needed a validation of the training in itself** and, on the other, **its efficacy was functional to the implementation of the Trainings for Peers**. Indeed, in this case the project has decided to structure and distribute:

- a final test on the knowledge of the European Peer Review methodology and its specificities for the adult learning sector;
- a self-evaluation questionnaire investigating the confidence of the participants on delivering a Training for Peers – done before and after the training sessions;
- an overall quality perception questionnaire for collecting trainees' level of satisfaction.

Differently, in the case of the Trainings for Peers partners agreed on distributing a customer satisfaction questionnaire and on having oral feedbacks sessions at the end of the various editions. Only in some cases, e.g. in Italy and Portugal, also a final test was used having as a model the one developed for the TPT.

Moreover, for the implementation of the European Peer Reviews *the analysis conducted on the results of the PRALINE piloting is focused on the consistency of the first three phases of the Peer Review procedure and the relative documentation for the Adult Learning domain and does not include a systematic investigation over the 4th phase of the methodology and the impact of the evaluation on the reviewed organizations. For that, Peers have only been asked to fill in the Part I on "Preconditions and quality of Peer Review"* (Allulli, external evaluation). Each partner was asked to produce the documents as set in the Manual of the methodology for the different phases with the addition of an Impact Assessment Form⁹ for the single PRs and a Feedback on the methodology form to be produced by the Contact Point over the totality of the PRs conducted in its country. There was agreement within the PRALINE Consortium in having the reviewed organizations and the Peers working in their native languages, also in writing down the necessary documentation in order to facilitate their work, allow a deeper assessment of the methodology and facilitate a wider dissemination and impact of the tools in the practices of the countries involved. Nevertheless, if organisations felt confident in using English, they were recommended to use it as such to accelerate the subsequent translation from the partners. Following, all the different parties involved played a key role in the monitoring and assessment of the activities making up the piloting, with tasks divided between the coordinator of the project, partners, organisations and peers participating in the PRs, and the external evaluators.

The Coordinator was required to collect the information and data, while partners were required to identify the Contact Point responsible for the coordination of the Peer Review piloting in their respective countries, either among the participants of the Training for Peers Trainers or in the staff directly responsible for PRALINE implementation.

⁹ Developed within the Leonardo project 'Peer Review Impact – Ensuring the impact of Peer Review to improve provision of VET in Europe, 2009–2011' Project number – 2009-1-FI1-LEO05-01584, coordinated by Finnish National Board of Education.

Finally, the external evaluators would be asked to assess the Piloting of the Peer Review for AL in terms of contents/achieved results as well as of methodology, looking at the adopted tools (see IV. External Expert Evaluation).

2. Assessment of the Trainings

2.1 Training for peers trainers

The Training for Peers Trainer has been realised as a “Short-term joint staff training” hosted by CECO in Lisbon (PT). The agenda of the training and the expectations in terms of learning outcomes have been preliminary defined in cooperation with Leena Koski, senior expert on quality assurance at the National Board of Education in Finland, consulting various curricula for the training of peers available across Europe. Principally, the following have been examined: “Peer Review for EQAVET” project¹⁰, the competences standard and training for conducting a European Peer Review recognized by the Regione Umbria Repertoire¹¹ and the European Peer Training programme developed within the Leonardo da Vinci TOI project "Peer Review Extended II" (2007-2009).

The training was designed to allow participants to acquire the following **abilities and competences**:

- ability to motivate others – namely providers – for engaging in peer reviewing (in AL sector);
- ability to select and use training material and exercises to address the training needs of peers;
- ability to choose the tools for the different phases and the different roles in a peer review process (peer, interviewee, peer coordinator, peer facilitator);
- ability to address self-report requirements as the vital preparatory start of peer reviewing;
- ability to reflect on own skills and competences in respect of the peer profile, by establishing also specific development needs;
- identification of quality management and quality assurance role in the improvement of VET/AL;
- description of the peer review methodology (whole process, phases, different instruments and templates of the toolbox);
- description of the basic requirements for participating in a Peer Review;
- identification of peers and facilitator tasks and the essential requirements for forming a peer review team;
- identification of the critical requirements of a peer review agenda;
- identification and description of the basic requirements of peer review interviews and observation;
- transfer of outcomes collected and combined in the peer review process into attention areas for development.

In addition to this, participants have also identified a list of abilities and competences that need more training and/or practice, such as:

- ability to assess and analyse qualitative data and to give directions for their collection;
- ability to communicate within a peer review process resulting on learning and respect of all participants;

¹⁰ PEER REVIEW for EQAVET LdV TOI Project - No 2012-1-GR1-LEO05-10063, Training Manual for Training of Peer Trainers – peer-review.gr.

¹¹ <http://www.regione.umbria.it/lavoro-e-formazione/standard-professionali>

Assessment of the Piloting

- ability to give advises on communication of critical aspects through a constructive and positive dialogue;
- ability to make critical distinction regarding materials provided at the initial stage of peer review (opinion and fact);
- ability to recognize and use the 11 EU Quality Areas for PR in AL sector.

To facilitate the design of the training activity and the work of the assigned trainer, partners preliminarily shared a document describing the knowledge and expertise of their organizations and of the selected people from their staff with regard to the European Peer Review methodology at large. As per partner composition, the situation showed partners with extensive and differentiated experiences on PR such as Associazione FORMA.Azione, CECO, Regione Umbria, LETU e CIOFS-FP, which had previously being engaged in Quality Assurance projects, either through national or transnational Peer Reviews, and newcomers as the Corvinus University of Budapest, the CFPPA of Rethel and MUT, which were about to approach the methodology for the first time. In the case of Malta and France, the methodology of the European Peer Review was new for the countries and not only for the organizations, adding value to the experience in terms of scope of the piloting and potential for mainstreaming.

It is worth mentioning that the working groups and, generally the practical activities proposed during the training, were very participated, achieving a high quality level of results in terms of discussions and contributions to the revision of the materials distributed as piloting version and to the training for trainers format itself. Thanks to the short questionnaire “Self-evaluation regarding confidence in the capacity to deliver a Peer Training”, it has been possible to assess the level of improvement of the participants attitudes comparing the results obtained before and at the end of the training. Participants were asked to express from 1 to 10:

- Their understanding of the whole Peer Review process and its requirements
- Their ability to convince key decision makers on the benefits of participating in Peer Review piloting
- Their awareness on what needs to be known to be able to run the Peer Review methodology
- Their ability to list the areas of investigation of the Quality Areas for PR in Adult Learning
- Their ability to deliver a Peer Review training to Peers.

The results show improvements in all the 5 areas of investigation for almost the totality of participants, with a range from +1 to +5 points, inversely proportional to the starting level. Even though the training had a greater impact on those who initially felt more insecure about their competences, results confirm the importance and usefulness of a similar training also for the already experienced professionals who intend to manage networks of reciprocal Peer Reviews or to, in turn, train Peers. In addition to that, the confidence of the participants demonstrated the most considerable progress in the case of questions from 3 to 5, which on average showed a +3 improvement. In particular, **the self-confidence about the capacity of delivering a training for Peers** is about 8 on average for those who actually was then acting as trainers in the editions at national level, with only one person below 6 who participated as support trainer with a colleague.

Taking into consideration that it was the first time that such a training was developed at EU level, it was highly interactive, demonstrating the willingness of participants to actively contribute to its development. The training format allowed some considerations and adaptations were pointed out, so as to improve its effectiveness and functionality.

Assessment of the Piloting

Among these, the following are to be highlighted:

- 1) the importance to have a good combination of knowledge of the Peer Review methodology (both theory and practice), and trainers competences to facilitate the learning process;
- 2) the mandatory working groups approached each step of the Peer Review (self report analysis; Quality Areas investigation and comprehension; giving feedbacks and communication) and played a key role in the training, achieving a high quality level of results in terms of discussions and contributions to the revision of the materials distributed as piloting version and to the training for trainers format itself;
- 3) the exercise focused on producing the self-report – meant to be a preparatory activity to deepen the analysis of the AL providers’ organization and their quality evaluation processes – could be optionally proposed to reinforce peers’ level of knowledge and competences (in particular in the case of Peers Training);
- 4) plenary sessions should be used by the trainers as a way to refresh and improve the transversal competences and soft skills needed both as trainers and as peers, specifically in the oral feedback session and Constructive communication – during the TPT, the presentation of the work by the group leader should be an opportunity to improve the public speaking skills, whereas trainers have to reinforce their ability to communicate, as well as to favour the mutual understanding of country-specific communication styles;
- 5) the capacity of the Peers to analyse and evaluate the Quality Areas and their criteria and indicators are a pre-requisite to organize the training – and, later on, the Peer Reviews – in an effective and useful way. Refreshing these competences as well as practicing them through specifically designed working group exercises is highly recommended;
- 6) the AL and VET sector differences among the EU countries should be taken into consideration without though compromising the transnational dimension of the European Peer Review and its potential contribution to the internationalization of the sectors – following on the experiences of higher education and multinational companies.

The above **comments and lessons learnt** came up through the detailed internal assessment of the TPT are presented in the Table below thanks to the re-organizations done by the External Evaluator, Giorgio Allulli:

Comments	Lesson learnt
As trainers of peers, it is very important to practice/reinforce competences required for a proper choice of didactic materials and practical exercises coherent with the learners’ level of knowledge and their expected competences as peers. Not only a good knowledge of the European Peer Review Methodology is required, but also an adequate management of the classes, aimed at transferring the crucial knowledge and competences of the Peers in its 4 specific phases.	The Agenda of the Training for Peers’ Trainers has to include a good combination of knowledge consolidation about the Peer Review methodology (in theory and applied) and of trainer-specific competences to act as effective adult learning facilitators.
Highly recommended working groups to be organised during the training are those related to crucial competences of Peers: self-report analysis; Quality Areas (QAs) knowledge (in terms of reading, comprehension, analysis and identification of evidences in the Peer Visit phase) and their connections with the 4 stages of the EQAVET Quality Cycle; giving feedbacks and Questioning techniques; Constructive Communication.	The exercise focused on producing the self-report is not appropriate for the Training for Peers’ Trainers. It is important that the trainers are aware of the abovementioned connections with EQAVET.

Assessment of the Piloting

<p>Plenary sessions should be used by the trainers as a way to refresh and improve the communication and public speaking competences needed both as trainers and as peers, specifically in the oral feedback session and Constructive communication.</p>	<p>When the working group leader explains the work done by the group in the plenary session, the trainers need to focus also on his/her communication skills in order to give him/her feedbacks and remarks on them.</p>
<p>Evaluation and analysis competences of the Peers to analyse and evaluate the Quality Areas and their criteria and indicators are a pre-requisite to make the training – and later on the Peer Review – effective and useful. Refreshing these competences as well as practicing them through specifically designed working group exercises is highly recommended.</p>	<p>The knowledge of the QAs is crucial, but more crucial it is how to interpret the data and find out what is behind information and evidences collected, and to be able to transfer such level of analysis to the participants of the training.</p>
<p>Analysing the advantages in adopting the European Peer Review methodology, particularly the one at transnational level, it came up the opportunity to transfer it to multinational companies as a way to improve their globalised approach to the markets, sharing common competences, practices and areas of improvements. The transnational approach can be improved following the experiences developed by the Universities using Peer Reviews in researches and academic works.</p>	<p>It is important not to take the AL and VET sector aside of these transnational /internationalization processes.</p>
<p>By preparing self-reports to be used for the training (there were no available from the AL sector as the methodology has never been applied using the adapted Quality Areas) participants have stressed the importance of using “real ones”, or at least complete and detailed ones, in the Training for Peers to fully practice on evidences and sources of evidences – i.e. distinction of quantitative and qualitative data.</p>	<p>Always use complete Self-Reports during the Training for Peers, and preferably in participants’ language.</p>

2.2 Trainings of Peers

Malta Union of Teachers (MUT) was the first partner that organised the training for peers at national level. It was held on 2nd and 3rd February and delivered by James Sultana, trained in Lisbon during the TPT. It involved 9 participants, of which 4 represented the Directorate for Lifelong Learning and early School Leavers, 3 the Malta Union of Midwives and Nurses and 2 the General Workers of the Union. Due to the size of Malta, where the authority is the main provider of training locally, the Directorate for Lifelong Learning and Early School Leavers from the Ministry for Education and Employment provided the most participants. The participants stated that they would recommend colleagues to attend the training for Peers. Some comments included “I would like a follow-up in the near future” and mentioned that the trainer was well prepared, very helpful and exhausted the subject well. With regards to keywords to define the overall perception at the conclusion of the training, some words given were *informative, helpful, excellent, very knowledgable, cooperation, confidentiality, fruitful, clear way forward and better picture of what needs to be done.*



1. Training for Peers in Malta (Photo by MUT)

The programme that lasted 12 hours was divided in 4 parts, thus respecting the established format mentioned above. The **limited experience of the partner organization on the methodology of the European Peer Review**, which had participated to its adaptation to the adult learning sector and with some of the staff to the Training for Peers Trainers in Lisbon, but never conducted a Peer Review before, had an impact on the outcomes as it **was difficult to provide participants with first hand anecdotes and examples** or, generally, to enrich the programme with sound practical indications. Thanks to the regular monitoring

of the piloting and upon common reflection between MUT and the piloting coordinator, this aspect was counterbalanced by the presence of transnational Peers in the first Peer Review conducted in the country with the aim of supporting the initial phase of the PR implementation (see pp. 35-36). Overall, the accurate application of the methodology as reported from the Maltese partner and the relevance of the assessment carried out – *“the feedback was to the point, it tackled the questions and queries the management had. It tackled the areas in detail and gave also ideas on how to improve”* (MT1) – can be considered **positive long-term indicators of the quality of the training provided and effective for the validation of the methodology for AL thanks to the data and feedbacks collected.**

In **France**, the training of peers was held in four different sessions, respectively on 26th February, 4th, 11th and 18th March 2016 and it saw the participation of 9 people. As anticipated in the case of Malta, the CFPPA was at its first experience of implementation of the European Peer Review methodology even though the management and part of the staff had extensive competences on quality assurance and internal/external auditing, which supported the development of the piloting in France. In this case, the whole piloting – starting from the Training for Peers – has been arranged on the basis of an agreement with the other organization involved: FORMA.ON. **It has implied a process of reciprocal Peer Reviews and led to a stronger cooperation among the providers.** The training programme adopted has included additional contents with regard to the one standardized by Regione Umbria and agreed as common curriculum by the PRALINE Consortium, in order to allow **more time for practical exercises, including the writing of the self-report** which emerged as useful practice for newcomers from the meta-evaluation of the Training for Peers Trainers – *“it was difficult to interpret the self-report and identify the documents of the toolbox* (from the assessment of the Training for Peers)”. The learning outcomes have been monitored regularly throughout the training – especially to guarantee continuity from one session to the other – by one of the staff involved. Specifically, participants were asked to fill out an individual assessment form. At each session, each trainee completes the individual assessment form, as the training progresses; they are collected for analysis on the last day. The diversity of monitoring tools which emerges in some cases reflects the assessment practices of the partner organizations.

In **Italy**, the presence of three partners from the PRALINE project made possible to organize two editions of the Training for Peers, reaching out a larger number of professionals of the formal and non formal adult education sectors. The first was held in Perugia between 9 – 10 March 2016 as result of a public call for participation¹² launched by Regione Umbria and targeting for the first time not only the accredited providers, but also organizations from the social sector and CPIAs¹³. There were 3 trainers involved, namely Ismene Tramontano – Coordinator of the EQAVET NRP, Sylvia Liuti and Chiara Palazzetti, trained as Trainers for Peers. Out of the 40 initial inscriptions for the training course, 3 did not participate at all, while 2 took part only during the first day. The training course allowed participants to fulfil the annual requirements of the regional accreditation system for the following profiles: Responsible for the management process; Responsible for QA; Responsible for the design process; Responsible for training provision (which includes the evaluation process).

¹² Public call launched through the institutional website: <http://www.regione.umbria.it/lavoro-e-formazione/corso-di-formazione-progetto-praline-peer-review-in-adult-learning>.

¹³ CPIAs are the Provincial Centres for Adult Education, which substituted the CTP – Territorial Permanent Centres as of school year 2011/12; they operate under the Ministry of Education, University and Research.



2. Training for Peers in Perugia (IT)

At the end of the course, participants were asked to give feedback on key aspects related to the training, indicating also the level of satisfaction on a scale from 1 to 4. The aspects taken into consideration were: preparation and preliminary information, content of the training, organisation and trainers, prospects, environment, overall evaluation. Generally, the data was positive, considering that all participants have suggested other colleagues and peer to attend the course.

This positive data is also evidenced by the fact that:

- 69% of the participants evaluated the trainers with maximum rating – 4 out of 4, – while 27% of participants with 3 out of 4 points;
- with regard to the content, 62% of the participants evaluated it with the maximum score. The comments were mostly related to the ability of trainers to adopt a clear and comprehensive language and to promote a pleasant and easy-to-approach environment regardless of the difficulty of the topic. Instead, the aspects that should be improved are related to the didactic methodologies that were adopted;
- for 19% of the participants, the exercises and working groups were not so efficient for the overall comprehension of the European Peer Review, while 12% have considered the adopted methodologies sufficiently adequate.

Among the proposals to improve these weak aspects were the following:

- to allocate more time and a greater number of activities,
- to insert simulations; and
- to create more homogeneous working groups for the exercises.

Assessment of the Piloting

The second edition of the Training of Peers was held in Rome from 13 to 14 April 2016, and it was coordinated by CIOFS-FP with Francesca Di Paolantonio as trainer. There were a total of 11 participants on the first day and 8 participants on the second, that included institutions such as: Ca' Foscari University, Roma Tre University and the Regional Council of Lombardia Region. The group was quite homogeneous in terms of quality assurance competences and very interested in the European Peer Review methodology as demonstrates the presence of professionals from other cities and regions.

A final formal test was distributed to all participants: it was “checked” directly together with them thus “exploited” both as final assessment of the LOs and also as an input to further enter into those details not completely grasped by the participants.



3. Training for Peers in Rome (IT)

All participants attending the Italian editions of the training for Peers were given certificates of attendance.

In **Lithuania**, the training was organised in 6th and 7th May and involved 13 participants, of which 30,77% are in management positions and 69,23% are teachers. In particular, participants were from the *Vilnius adult education centre*; the *Kaunas adult education centre* and the *Panevėžys adult education centre* – thus from three different cities. It should be noted that while working in the same area and similar education establishments, they, nevertheless, had never had an opportunity to meet. The participants had a very positive attitude towards this opportunity to learn and work together and at the end of the training confirmed its impact in terms of improved collaboration thanks to the ideas and practices shared in the field of Quality Assurance.



4. Training for Peers in Vilnius (LT)

The Qualification and Professional Development Centre representatives hosted the training and they welcomed the Trade union's initiative to improve the quality of adult learning.

The trainings were quite intensive and the participants were very active in the working groups, having a lot of questions regarding the methodology and the whole process of PR. The discussion was linked to comparison of the existing elements of quality assurance system and the proposed by the PRALINE project methodology of PR in AL. Participants were very much in favour of the PR because from their point of view it was less formal but at the same time very reliable quality results oriented system. During the training it appeared that many elements of the PR methodology were not new for them, as well as the indicators available in the quality areas – providing a positive feedback on the efficacy of the methodology adapted to AL.

The teams representing the AL establishments included teachers, managers and administrative staff responsible for the QA. Therefore the division of the tasks was easy to adapt – everyone easily understood his/her role. The teams were very well gender and age balanced as well.

In the survey distributed for the Assessment of the Training, participants have mostly indicated the highest level of interest (4 points) with a small exception of two people giving 3 points to the organisation of the training, content, process and the methods which were chosen (questions 1, 2, 3, 4). The final assessment average score stayed at 21 point (out of 26).

Among the key words identified in conclusion of the evaluation there were:

Cooperation and collaboration; Nice and friendly atmosphere; Warm environment; Open minded and very supportive trainers; Informative and good willing; Useful and result oriented; mutual understanding and collegiality; Entertaining.

Portugal was the last country to organise the training. It was organised by CECOIA and it was held in 2 editions, in the 8th and 9th June and in the 28th July 2016. For the first edition, Cristina Dimas and Sílvia Coelho from CECOIA were involved as trainers and for the second only Cristina Dimas. In total 13 participants were trained and certified as peers. At the end of the training, participants were given a questionnaire composed of 8 items to analyse their satisfaction, in particular related to:

- preparation and support materials before the training;
- content;
- organisation and methodology;
- facilitators;
- general environment;
- perspectives; and
- overall appreciation.

The answers were given on the basis of a 4-point scale (with 4 being the highest value). Participants were also invited to present proposals and suggestions for improvement and to express if they would recommend the same training to other colleagues. The collected data showed that:

- the preparation and support material was rated 3.74;
- the content obtained 3.82;
- the questions related to organisation and methodology received a 3.91. score;
- trainers obtained the maximum level of satisfaction 4 – also thanks to their previous involvement at national level in the PR methodology (namely in other education subsectors) as facilitators, reviewed organisation and conceiver;
- the environment was rated with 3.91; and
- perspectives with 3.73.

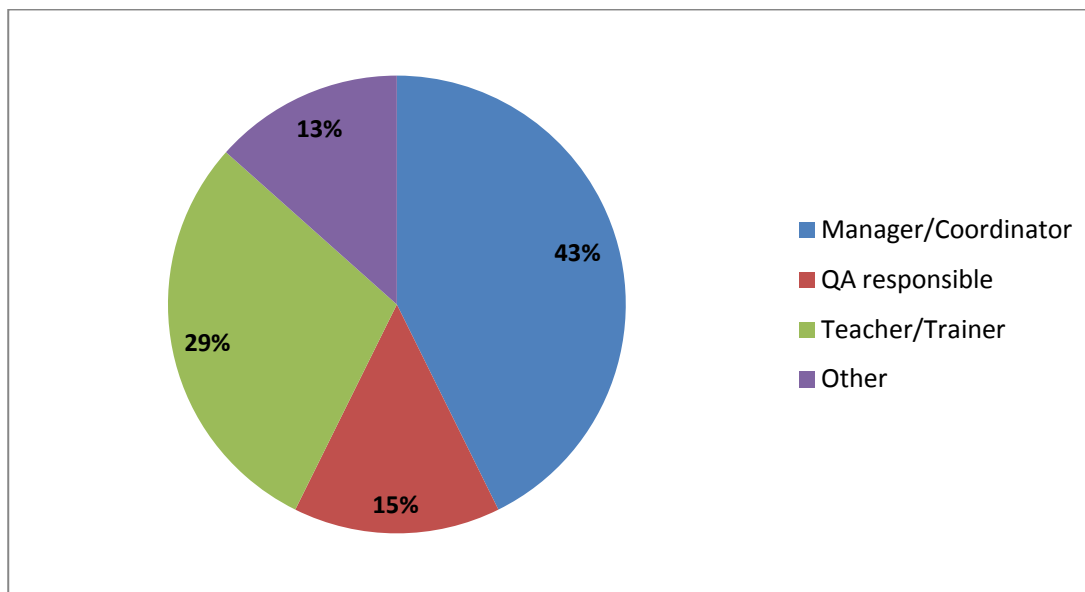
Hence, the overall appreciation of the training received 3.91 points, all agreeing that they would suggest this opportunity to their colleagues. The satisfaction questionnaire results displayed corresponds to the answers given by 11 participants.



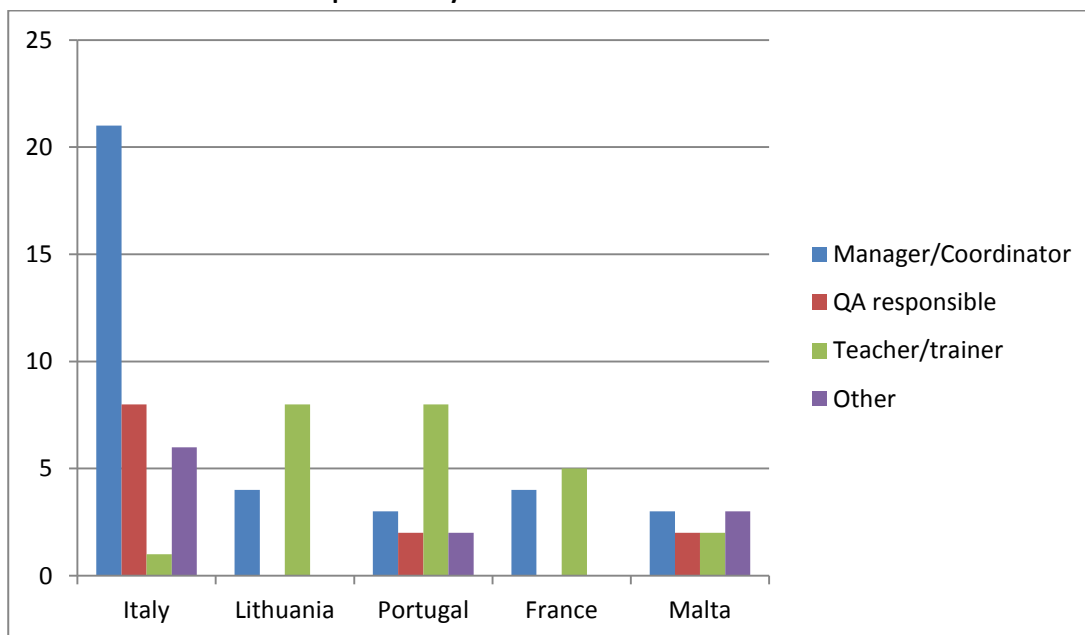
5. Peers trained in Portugal (Photo by CECO)

In conclusion, overall the trainings involved **82 participants** from 5 countries, of which Italy had the highest share of 44% due to the 2 editions realised and the presence of the training curriculum in the Umbria region repertoire of standard competences. The result is above initial expectations as partners set to 60 the number of professionals trained as Peer and would have accepted a minimum of 54 considered necessary for a proper implementation of the methodology in the countries concerned with the piloting. In the case of non reciprocal Peer Reviews, as it was in Italy, the possibility of training more Peers has guaranteed that organizations could select from a list of Peers those to contact for the assessment on the basis of their profile and professional curriculum. This possibility could be considered also in the case of reciprocal reviews as a way to access specific professionalisms coherently with the Quality Areas under evaluation. **The selection of Peers is in fact, together with the good quality of the training they need to receive, a critical element for the success of the implementation of the methodology** and in turn for its wider adoption at national and European level. With regard to the category of professionals who applied or have been selected to participate in the Trainings for Peers, it can be noted that overall the majority were Manager/Coordinator (43%), followed by Teachers/Trainers (30%). All the participants received a Certificate of Attendance by the organization delivering the training.

Profile of the Trained Peers – overall data



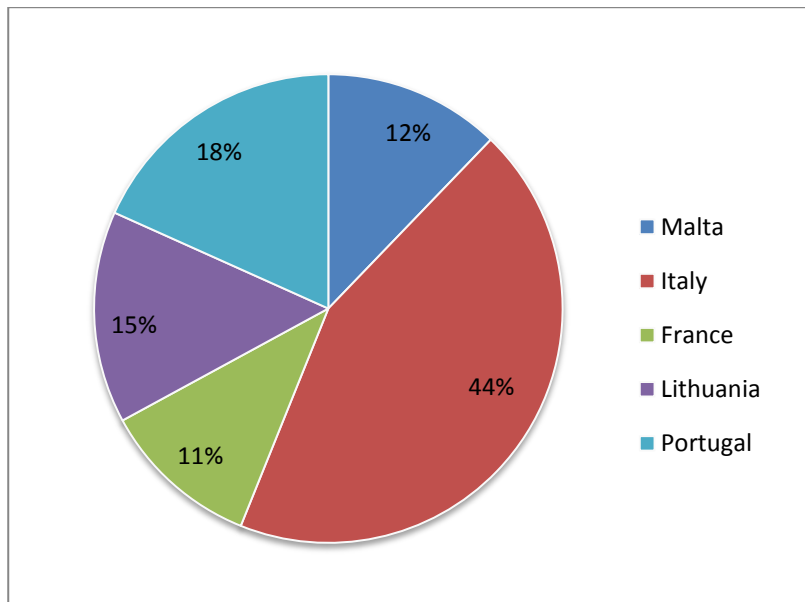
Profile of the Trained Peers – per country



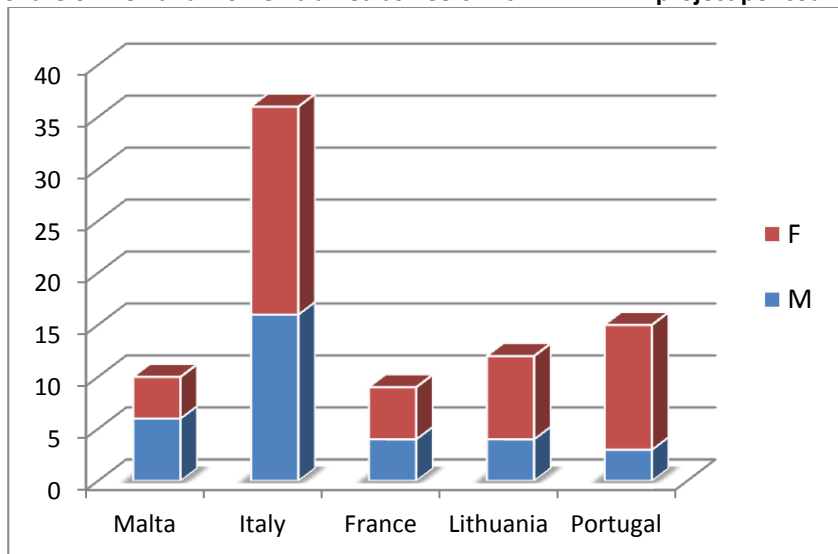
One of the features reported with more enthusiasm by the different editions of the Training for Peers has been the **high level of interaction and collaborative approach among the participants** which seem to anticipate the friendly environment of the actual Peer Reviews as later experienced. This could have been facilitated by the quality of the materials used, part of which had previously been shared with participants via email to support their learning process and empowerment with regard to the methodology, and to the closeness between trainers and trainees as well as among trainees. Indeed, the methodology requires Peers to be experienced educational professionals and PRALINE has always worked in order to valorise their competences and make the most of their expertises – starting already from the training phase. At the same time, **many participants pointed out that more time for practical exercises** would have been beneficial for a deeper understanding of the methodology – as later confirmed by some of the Peers who took part in the implementation of the Peer Reviews in the sector of Adult Learning. There were a total of 49 women and 33 men, while the proportion was quite balanced in the case of Malta, Italy and France:

40%, 55,55% and 55,55% of women. In case of Lithuania there was a share of 66,66% participation of women and in case of Portugal was of 80%.

Share of trained Peers within PRALINE project per country



Share of men and women trained as Peers within PRALINE project per country



3. Assessment of the European Peer Reviews carried out in the Adult Education sector

The focus will now be on the single Peer Reviews conducted in the countries involved as first implementation of the newly adapted European Peer Review methodology for the Adult learning sector. The analysis is going to first provide the details of the single Peer Reviews, including information on the organizations reviewed and on the Peers involved, and then conclude the section with an overall assessment of the application of the methodology. The expected result was to have 15 organizations in the first adoption of the PR methodology which were representative of both the formal and non formal adult education provision.

The Peer Reviews will be presented per country, following the alphabetical order: France, Italy, Lithuania, Malta and Portugal. Also, each PR is identified with the code assigned at the beginning of the piloting as part of the centrally coordinated monitoring. It simplifies considerably the communication between the Contact Points and the central coordinator and the collection and analysis of the documentation produced, reducing the margin of error for the latter – e.g. FR1, FR2, IT1, IT2, etc.

3.1 FRANCE

In case of France, two organisations have been involved in reciprocal Peer Reviews, namely **Forma-On Association** from Sedan and the PRALINE partner, **CFPPA Rethel - Centre de Formation Professionnelle et de Promotion Agricole** from Rethel. In both cases it was the first time dealing with the methodology and – as it was for Malta – **it required additional work in terms of preparation of the documentation, arranging the piloting and translating the toolbox to French**. It has been reported that the Quality Areas covered *too broad areas* and that they succeeded in *adapting the criteria* to the specificities of the reviewed centres (Feedbacks on the methodology, FR). The partner organization has worked on the adaptation of the criteria in consultation with Forma-ON to be sure to enclose a common language to which the two internal systems could be referred during the review processes.

The participation to the piloting has reinforced the idea that the European Peer Review methodology is able to **foster the cooperation among the organizations that decide to adopt it, as well as to represent a valuable support tool at all levels of the organization, from the management to the administration, and of course for the teaching staff**.

Organisations in France involved in the piloting

No. id	Organisation	City	AL domain	AL domain for PR
FR1	Forma-On	Sedan	Formal and Non-formal	Formal and Non-formal
FR2	CFPPA	Rethel	Formal and Non-formal	Formal and Non-formal

Forma-ON is provided with the ISO 9001 certification, standard that defines requirements for the implementation of a quality management system for organisations seeking to continuously improve the system. **The organisation both performs in the Formal and Non-formal AL domain** and decided to be evaluated on both. Its involvement was possible thanks to previous cooperation with CFPPA Rethel, which considered the opportunity offered by the methodology as a way to reinforce such collaboration while improving the service for unemployed adults. **It does not have experience in the Peer Review**, but it wished to participate in order to know more about this method and to apply it to its structure. It would also allow it to develop strategic vision and innovation and to lead an effective analysis of their ordinary practices and broaden their possibilities. The implementation of a management system through quality has become a determining strategic tool for the development and presentation of trainee centres nowadays, also in the cases of participation to call for tenders. The Quality Areas under assessment were 1 and 6, being specifically the development of the **Educational Offer** in the first case, and **Management and Administration**, with a focus on the provision of infrastructure and equipment. F. Valente was appointed as facilitator for this round of PR. The piloting took place in April 2016, and the Peer team was composed of Houda Soltani, Sabrina Mouissi and Honorine Gerard, coordinated by Laurent Bejot.

FR1 - Participants and roles in the Peer Review

Facilitator	Peer Team			
	Coordinator	Peers	Evaluation Expert	GDM Expert
F. Valente	L. Bejot	H. Soltani	H. Soltani	L. Bejot
		S. Mouissi		
		H. Gerard		

The second and last Peer Review conducted in France was hosted by **CFPPA Rethel**, which provide **Formal and Non-formal learning opportunities for adults** – both under assessment as part of the piloting. It is in progress for CFA’s/CFPPA’s National Charter of Commitments, that is a repository for the implementation of a quality approach and improvement of the centres with the implementation of a quality approach and involvement in the centres with the ability to obtain external recognition. **Differently from the recommendation given in the Manual (p. 14), the focus of the assessment was on 3 Quality Areas: 2 – Information, Guidance and enrolment; 3 – Learning and Teaching; 11 – Quality Management and Evaluation.** It has been possible thanks to the intention of putting at the centre of attention a specific activity, the TONIC programme¹⁴, and to the solid expertise of the staff involved with quality assurance and auditing – if not with the methodology as such. This specific request – which unites the two French organizations – facilitated the implementation of the methodology for newcomers and made possible the review of a wider set of criteria. S. Vial, head of the school, acted as facilitator in the process and, generally, **the management was involved in the process starting from the identification of the quality areas, in drafting the self-Report** and then in **considering the feedbacks in the strategic analysis of the centre** (Impact Assessment, FR2). The adoption of the Peer Review seemed to develop synergies in time and resource management thanks to the attention focused on specific issues from the preparation phase to the follow-up of the Peer Review.

FR2 - Participants and roles in the Peer Review

Facilitator	Peer Team			
	Coordinator	Peers	Evaluation Expert	GDM Expert
S. Vial	F. Valente	F. Adam	/	F. Valente
		B. Noizet		

¹⁴ The TONIC programme enables the beneficiary to construct a coherent training pathway, combined with a feasible professional project. Several formative strategies are possible, all of which aim at professional integration. The training strategy and its practical arrangements are defined with the beneficiary, and in consultation with the prescriber, after a diagnostic phase - <http://www.formationchampagneardenne.org/formation-pm1303-tonic-etape-a-rethel-vouziers-FC-1000018339.html>.

According to the Impact Assessment realised for FR2, the fact of being at the second experience ever of Peer Review already guaranteed a better management of the process thanks to the increased awareness of their role from the professionals acting as Peers and to the more confident use of the quality areas and related adapted indicators – *“Moreover, the fact of having benefited from a PR beforehand has improved the ability of questioning, analysis of the peer reviewers team allowing a quality of PR (FR2)”*.

In both cases, it has been possible to observe a strong commitment of the management as demonstrated also by the direct participation to the piloting activities - *in the identification of the quality areas for the PR but also in writing the self report (FR2)*. **Despite the variations applied to the methodology, it represents a considerable advantage for the up-scale of the European Peer Review methodology in France**, as hoped for given the evolution of the legislative context for adult training in the country¹⁵. At the end of the process, the feedback collected by the Directors and Deputies of the adult learning centres involved pointed out that they *considered the contribution of the PR allowed a significant improvement in the quality of the organization. [...] PR was perceived as a support to decision-making through a better understanding of the organization, its representation from the actors, its actual practices”*.

3.2. ITALY

In Italy the three organisations that took part in the piloting have been: Soc. Coop. Babele and CPIA – Centro Provinciale per Istruzione degli Adulti based in Perugia and CIOFS Formazione Professionale based in Rome. The first two organisations were reached through the public call launched by Regione Umbria for the training for Peers, while the latter decided to undergo the assessment as PRALINE project partner. As for previous experiences, **for all the organizations it was the first time hosting a Peer Review ever** but differently from the 2 Umbrian organizations, since 2006 **CIOFS-FP National Office has been involved in Peer Review and has supported in turn its own Regional branches and VTCs in adopting and testing the methodology in I-VET sector**, but it has never hosted nor it has been reviewed by a peer team.

Organisations involved in the piloting in Italy

No. id	Organisation	City	AL domain	AL domain for PR
IT1	Soc. Coop. Soc. Babele	Perugia	Non-formal	Non-formal
IT2	CPIA Perugia	Perugia	Formal and Non-formal	Formal and Non-formal
IT3	CIOFS Formazione Professionale	Rome	Formal and Non-formal	Non-formal

The first organisation involved in the piloting was *Soc. Coop. Soc. Babele*, that works in non-formal Adult Learning domain and is accredited as VET provider since 2011 as well as ISO 9001 certified since 2008. It expressed interest in being selected for the piloting of the methodology in view of the **undergoing process of enlargement of its service provision**, desire to **increase partners’ skills involved in the training and willingness to strengthen some of the specific areas in the Peer Review**. The focus of the assessment has been put on Quality Areas 1 – Educational Offer and 11 - Quality management and evaluation, respectively on Criteria *Development and educational offer* and *Learning Outcomes and Qualification*, and Criteria *Holistic quality management system* and *Evaluation and institutional development*. The Peer Team was coordinated by B. Di Pietro and involved A. Petetti, G. Costantini and S. Poeta. The PR visit was held in July 2016. The presence of the Peers was reported as professional and positive during individual and group

¹⁵ Law 2014-288 del 05/03/2014 on vocational training, employment and social democracy.

interviews – and positively matched with *the great openness to innovation and willingness to change demonstrated* by the reviewed provider (Impact Assessment, IT1). The **presence of more experienced Peers was useful to refocus the analysis on the specific questions risen by the hosting organization** – a deeper discussion in the Peer Team could have facilitated it, especially in the structuring of the interviews. In the intention of the management, the Peer Review was adopted to support the growth of the team *which is a very young and fresh group*, working together for the improvement of the services through the implementation of a stronger monitoring system.

IT1 - Participants and roles in the Peer Review

Facilitator	Peer Team			
	Coordinator	Peers	Evaluation Expert	GDM Expert
M. Pispola	B. Di Pietro	A. Petetti	A. Petetti	
		G. Costantini		
		S. Poeta		

The second Peer Review, again selected through a public call by Regione Umbria, was hosted by the *CPIA Perugia*, a recent institution – 2 years of activity – resulting from the reform of the former CTPs (Territorial centres for adult education). **Due to the reform dated 2014, it does not have a formal quality system in place yet**, although it is a public school under the management of the National Ministry of Education. Together with teachers and trainers, it carries out internal monitoring to assess the effectiveness of the main organisational, professional and teaching aspects, having in mind the specificities of the target groups reached out by the centre **with an offer of formal and non-formal provision**. CPIA chose to participate in the piloting in order to **understand and more structurally assess its performances and present situation, for adopting eventual adjustment measures**. The chosen Quality Areas were 1 – Educational Offer and 2 – Information, Guidance and Enrolment, both involving Criterion 1 and 2 being respectively *Development of the educational offer* and *Goals, content and format*, and *Promotion and outreach* and *Information*. There are two peers in the staff, namely M. Francia, who was also the facilitator during the Peer Review process, and A. Tirolì. The selected areas were consistent with the objectives set for the Peer Review as responded to actual identified needs of the school (Impact Assessment, IT2). The piloting was held in September 2016 and involved a Peer Team composed of E. Mancini, G. Costantini, A. Petetti and S. Liuti who also had the role as coordinator. **The quality of the review has been appreciated by the management, which admitted to have fully understood the potentiality of adopting the European Peer Review methodology during the Visit itself**, and has then decided to share the efficacy of the methodology as self-assessment tool for the other CPIAs in occasion of a interregional meeting. The duration of the visit – 1.5 days – has been evaluated as sufficient by the Peers and by the organization.

IT2 - Participants and roles in the Peer Review

Facilitator	Peer Team			
	Coordinator	Peers	Evaluation Expert	GDM Expert
M. Francia	S. Liuti	E. Mancini	E. Mancini	A. Petetti
		G. Costantini		
		A. Petetti		

CIOFS Formazione Professionale, the third Italian organisation that participated in the piloting is certified ISO 9001 and ISO 29990 for formal, non-formal and informal education and has experience as quality auditor for the CIOFS regional association, as well as coordinating body in previous PR experimentation run by INAPP (former ISFOL). However, **until September 2016 it has never been involved as reviewed organisation hosting a Peer Visit. CIOFS-FP covers both formal and non-formal domain**, but it chose to be evaluated only on the non-formal. Specifically, thanks to the experience of the staff involved and facilitator, it was decided to organize the Visit during the training event of non-formal education organized yearly at the very beginning of the formative year by the provider for the staff of its regional branches (regional Associations). **The event is the Seminario Europa and it required for the first time the visit to be conducted outside the venue of the reviewed organization** – the decision to proceed in this way was accompanied by the agreement that CIOFS-FP would have brought the documentation requested in advance by the Peers and the possibility, if needed, to have a second appointment after the visit for the consultation of further support material. **Ex-post, the experience required additional efforts by the Peer Team and commitment in remaining focused exclusively on the assessment assignment** but produced interesting results, as confirmed by the management that participated actively to the oral feedback session. Considering that the methodology for the VET sector had been applied to various regional centres, **the organisation was interested to take into evaluation the national headquarter, that is also undergoing a process of redefinition of the internal structure**. The PR was focused on the Quality Areas 1 – Educational Offer and 9 – External relations and internationalisation/ European cooperation, considering in both cases the first two criteria. Respectively, Criteria *Development of the Educational Offer* and Learning Outcome and Qualification for QA 1; Criteria *External relation and local/regional/national networking and cooperation*, and *International/European networking and cooperation* of QA 9. The selection of the Quality Areas was very appropriate in the opinion of the Peer Team and based on actual needs, in particular for the first Area (Impact Assessment, IT3). F. Di Paolantonio is a Peer in the organisation staff and facilitator during the PR. The Peer Team was composed of C. Palazzetti (coordinator), P. Chiodi, R. Cruccolini and S. Liuti.

IT3 - Participants and roles in the Peer Review

Facilitator	Peer Team			
	Coordinator	Peers	Evaluation Expert	GDM Expert
F. Di Paolantonio	C. Palazzetti	P. Chiodi	R. Cruccolini	S. Liuti
		R. Cruccolini		
		S. Liuti		

3.3 LITHUANIA

In the organisation of the Peer Review piloting in Lithuania, **LETU has launched a public call and the selected organisations were all recommended by the Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre**. The three organisations involved in the piloting deal both with **formal and non-formal education** and chose to be evaluated in the implementation of both sectors. None of the three organisations had previously experienced the Peer Review methodology but it should be noted that they have functioning QA systems, although mainly focused on an external evaluation from the establisher side. **The culture of quality is also quite low because the institutions are mostly oriented to show their best**

and not to report about weak points. For all the organizations, the decision to participate in the piloting was then strongly motivated by the formative value of the methodology announced by the PRALINE project and the *expectations were met for the quality of the review and punctuality of the suggestions received* (Impact Assessment, LT1). In some cases, it already led to open discussions within the organization, involving the different categories of staff. Therefore the proposed piloting *contributed a lot to the improvement of the QA approach and practices and helped to establish a new tradition of review of the processes*. The success of PR was grounded on the people, having the same experience and knowledge, working in the same area and not looking down on the organization (Feedbacks on the methodology, LT).

The Peer Teams, also representative of the various centres, expressed the idea that through the trade union the methodology should be further transferred across the country. Despite the overall positive experience, it contributed to develop their perception of the methodology *too bureaucratic in some aspects and asking for the same information at different stages or in different documents to be produced*. The Manual was of great support for the parties involved.

Organisations in Lithuania involved in the piloting

No. id	Organisation	City	AL domain	AL domain for PR
LT1	Vilnius adult education centre	Vilnius	Formal and Non-formal	Formal and Non-formal
LT2	Kaunas adult education centre	Kaunas	Formal and Non-formal	Formal and Non-formal
LT3	Panevezys adult education centre	Panevėžys	Formal and Non-formal	Formal and Non-formal

The *Vilnius adult education centre* is adopting a Quality Assurance and Development Policy that is implemented by the gymnasium strategic plan, operational plans, training plans, programmes, curricula etc. Every year the board carries out an in-depth audit, while the assessment of the school progress is carried out through the IQES Lithuania online platform¹⁶. In addition to this, a Working Group on Strategic Plan Monitoring is continuously conducting analysis; it monitors, corrects activities and presents them to the community. **The reason for taking part in this activity is to contribute and benefit to/from cooperation with other learning providers; to improve data-based management and to promote focused, result-oriented learning and teaching community;** as well as to **support activities that determine the quality of education and to pursue the individual student's progress**. At the end of the process, it was confirmed that the *exchange of good practices was performed collegially and openly*, and that *the analysis and assessments of the other education centres was an opportunity to reflect on one's own achievements and areas of improvement*, thanks to the reciprocity of the Peer Reviews (Impact Assessment, LT1). The Quality Areas taken into consideration were 2 – Information, Guidance and Enrolment and 6 – Management and Administration, whereas for the last, the chosen criteria were 5. Support and 6. Provision of infrastructure and equipment. The Peer Review took place in May 2016 and it was facilitated by N. Kimso, who is also trained as Peer in the organisation staff together with B. Kubilinskienė, O. Ziminskaja, J. Kalantienė, A. Stankevičienė, who were also part of the Peer Team.

¹⁶ IQES is the major web platform used by Lithuanian schools for feedback, evaluation and teaching development.

Assessment of the Piloting

LT1 - Participants and roles in the Peer Review

Facilitator	Peer Team			
	Coordinator	Peers	Evaluation Expert	GDM Expert
N. Kimso	V. Vėteris	E. Malskis	S. Vilimienė	S. Granskienė
		V. Račaitienė		
		A. Jėčius		

The *Kaunas adult education centre* as well as *Panevezys adult education centre* register among the existing quality practices the fact that they produce a secondary education programme accreditation report in addition to an external evaluation report. The first organisation foresees four people as peers in the staff, namely: S. Granskienė, E. Malskis, V. Račaitienė, V. Veteris. The reasons for the participation in the piloting activity were linked to the **need of sharing experience and practices in the assessed areas, to make observations and analysis, to evaluate the findings striving forward existing best practices form other institutions and exploring the ways of their implementation.** The meta-evaluation confirmed that the implementation of the Peer Review actually represented an opportunity of mutual learning and reinforced considerably the collaboration, thanks to the practices and experiences emerged or discussed throughout the process. The Quality Areas selected for the Peer Review, that was held in May 2016, were 1 – Educational Offer and 8 - Infrastructure and financial resources. For QA1 the criteria taken into consideration were *Development of educational offer and Longer-term programmes, programmes with formal characters, vocational and technical training offers*; while for QA8 the criteria approached were *Infrastructure and facility quality and Accessibility*. The facilitator in the Peer Review was S. Granskienė, while the team was composed of I. Puiša, S. Vilimienė, A. Jėčius, Z. Aleksandravičiūtė. In addition to the Peer Team there were three observers: O. Ziminskaja, A. Stankevičienė and B. Kubilinskienė.

LT2 - Participants and roles in the Peer Review

Facilitator	Peer Team			
	Coordinator	Peers	Evaluation Expert	GDM Expert
S. Granskienė	I. Puiša	A. Jėčius	S. Vilimienė	O. Ziminskaja
		Z. Aleksandravičiūtė		
		A. Stankevičienė*		
		B. Kubilinskienė*		

The *Panevezys adult education centre* aimed to take part in the Peer Review in order to **improve the quality of their education service by identifying weaknesses and finding improvement directions as part of a mutual learning process.** The PR took into consideration QA 3 – Learning and Teaching, in particular the criteria related to the *Learning process and Teaching and Training Material*, and QA 7 – Human Resources, taking into consideration the criteria of the *Staff qualification and Communication and cooperation culture*. The organisation has already Peers in the staff, who are A. Jėčius, Z. Aleksandravičiūtė, S. Vilimienė, the latter acting also as facilitator during the Peer Review. The Peer Team was composed of I. Puiša as coordinator, S. Granskienė, J. Kalantienė and E. Malskis. Additional observers have participated in the piloting, namely V. Račaitienė, V. Veteris and O. Ziminskaja. **The heterogeneity of the professional**

competences within the team allowed an in-depth understanding of the processes under assessment, also facilitated by the open and cooperatively approach demonstrated by the hosting centre. Differently, due to the complexity of the methodology **a longer training could be beneficial for the Peers** to make them more autonomous in the implementation of the European Peer Review methodology. Indeed, **the role of Coordinator is then reported as very important**, not just for the tasks assigned by the methodology but rather because it was needed to support the Peers throughout the Visit to make them more comfortable in their role (Meta-evaluation, LT3). **Deadlines and tasks were duly respected in all the phases of the methodology** – for instance in submitting the required documentation – but **initial difficulties were encountered due to the available translation of the tools and specific glossary in Lithuanian**.

LT3 - Participants and roles in the Peer Review

Facilitator	Peer Team			
	Coordinator	Peers	Evaluation Expert	GDM Expert
S. Vilimienė	I. Puiša	J. Kalantienė	O. Ziminskaja	S. Granskienė
		E. Malskis		
		V. Račaitienė		
		V. Veteris		

3.4 MALTA

In Malta, the PRALINE project made possible the first implementation of the European Peer Review methodology, receiving encouraging indications from the activated actors. For the nature of the partner organization and the organization of education in the country, **it has been possible to involve national-level learning centres and a trade union**. At the end of the piloting, all respondents *really were enthusiastic about the review and satisfied by the report and findings* – as demonstrated by the commitment of the management to follow on the received suggestions for improvement. For example in the case of MT1, they will work on how to be more accessible to certain disadvantaged groups which are not reached out sufficiently at the moment, whereas MT2 is going to speed up the process of accreditation of its courses.

Overall, **the expertise of the Peers was assessed positively even though there is room for improvement in the performances of the Teams** as for most of the professionals involved it has been the first time in such a role. In the three cases, the mix of the competences available – including professional and transversal ones – resulted sufficiently balanced. On the other side, among the staff of the reviewed providers reactions varied, being more relaxed in small organizations that easily shared the formative added value of the methodology and involved the majority of the staff in the preparatory phase, whereas more apprehensive in the bigger ones in which staff was used to different forms of external assessment (e.g. audits from inspectors). This difference also emerged during the visit from the management despite the general supportive approach and the efforts made to make it a participated process – *self-evaluation/self-report phase was a group effort of many persons within the organization* (Impact Assessment, MT3).

As for the agendas, Peers agreed that the right combination of activities had been foreseen in all the cases, confirmed ex post by the appropriateness of the collected information thanks to individual and group interviews, document analysis, observation. However, **since it was a learning exercise for the peers too, some minor changes or potential criticisms have been noticed and recorded for future Peer Reviews** – readjustment options, longer availability of the interviewees.

Organisations in Malta involved in the piloting

No. id	Organisation	City	AL domain	AL domain for PR
MT1	Lifelong Learning Centre Msida	Msida	Formal and Non-formal	Formal and Non-formal
MT2	Malta Union of Midwives and Nurses	Mosta	Non-formal	Non-formal
MT3	Unilang International School of Languages	Valletta	Formal and Non-formal	Formal and Non-formal

The *Lifelong Learning Centre Msida* delivers formal and non-formal education, and were both taken into consideration for the Peer Review. **At the time of the piloting, it didn't have neither system-level quality practices, nor other experience in PR.** The motivation to participating in the piloting laid in the fact that **the organisation was in the process of implementing a quality framework**, and thus it was interested in understanding and experiencing the PR in order to learn more about this practice of quality review. However, internal assessments were conducted as shown by the comments by the management, which inform about some steps that had been adopted to improve in outreaching learners.

The Quality Areas chosen were 2 – Information, Guidance and Enrolment and 3 – Learning and Teaching, in particular the first two criterion for each (2: *Promotion and Outreach, Registration and Enrolment*; 3: *Teaching and Learning Material, Methods*). The PR was planned for May 2016 and involved T. Agius as facilitator and a team of Peers composed of C. Palazzetti, A. Saliba and P. Balzan and coordinated by J. Sultana. It also involved S. Liuti as Gender Mainstreaming Expert. The presence of Transnational Peers was agreed on by the concerned partners as part of the support activities realised for the newcomers by the Coordinator – *helped a lot with the smooth sunning of the visit* – and resulted in a fruitful opportunity for all the parties involved. Attention was paid to balancing the review of both areas of investigations and, as they both had to do with the delivery of the service to the adult beneficiaries, all the interviews to learners and trainers covered both Quality Areas. Specifically for the first Area under assessment, the findings and the discussion that followed the oral feedback session show that the choice made on Quality Areas to be reviewed was actually the result of a sound self-assessment process – *genuine internal interest in change and improvement* (Impact Assessment, MT1). **Time has been an issue, only partially counterbalanced by the experience of some of the Peers.**

MT1 - Participants and roles in the Peer Review

Facilitator	Peer Team			
	Coordinator	Peers	Evaluation Expert	GDM Expert
T. Agius	J. Sultana	C. Palazzetti (Transnational Peer)	P. Balzan	S. Liuti
		A. Saliba		
		P. Balzan		

The second organisation involved in the Peer Review was *Malta Union of Midwives and Nurses* located in Mosta. **It works in the non-formal sector** and the same was taken into consideration for the assessment through the Peer Review, in which it was not experienced at all. However, **the organisation deals with quality practices**, in particular, the Education Committee evaluates each course by receiving feedback both from learners and teachers. The motivation in participating in an activity such as the PR lays in the fact that **it is a small organisation which is slowly promoting itself in the Adult Learning and Healthcare sector, therefore members were interested to find out how other peers are evaluating their work** and were

looking forward to getting constructive feedbacks that allow to continue with the good work and overcome the weaknesses – as reported: *The President and the facilitator had a really positive attitude towards the PR and were helpful and eager for suggestions and results* (Impact Assessment, MT2). In addition to that, it was explicitly shared the willingness to *feel how a peer review could complement the number of quality assurance measures* in place.

As regards the recruitment process, MUT was the one that approached the organisations and Ms. M. Cutajar, the President of the organisation accepted to fully cooperate, demonstrating strong commitment. The organisation has also two peer in its staff, namely A. Saliba and T. Saliba. The decision on Quality Areas was carefully discussed within the organization and the choice went for those areas in which an external opinion on possible improvements was actually needed and possible – also for the limited resources of the organization when it comes to learning provision. The chosen ones have been 1 – Educational Offer and 2 – Information, Guidance and Enrolment, respectively on *Criteria Development of the educational Offer and Goals, Content and Formar*, and *Criteria Promotion and Outreach and Registration and Enrolment*. The piloting took place in August 2016, thanks to the work of M. Cutajar as facilitator. The Peer Team was composed of A. Olivari, P. Balzan (also evaluation expert), J. Chircop and coordinated by J. Sultana, with the participation of A. Olivari as GDM Expert.

MT2 - Participants and roles in the Peer Review

Facilitator	Peer Team			
	Coordinator	Peers	Evaluation Expert	GDM Expert
M. Cutajar	J. Sultana	A. Olivari	P. Balzan	A. Olivari
		P. Balzan		
		J. Chircop		

The third organisation involved in the piloting was *Unilang International School of Languages*, **working both on formal and non formal sector**. It did not have experience in the Peer Review either, **deciding to be evaluated only on the non-formal domain**. Unilang has various existing quality practices such as the following, involving stakeholders in the various stages of process planning and implementation. **Unilag has demonstrated interest in quality and particularly in receiving feedbacks from the other organisations operating in the Adult Learning sector** in order to constantly improve the service. Specifically, MT3 at the time of the PR **was already carrying out a process of change and restructuring**, which made easier for them to discuss and eventually integrate indications coming from the assessment of the Peers – *thus PR was complementary and also a stimulus to keep on the right track while providing new insights* (Impact Assessment, MT3). The selected Quality Areas were 3 and 11, namely Criterion 1: *Feedback and self-/peer-evaluation at individual level* and Criterion 2: *Monitoring and Internal Evaluation*, respectively Criterion 1: *Didactics and sessions planning* and Criterion 2: *Technician and learning materials*. P. Fenech acted as facilitator in the Peer Review. The Peer Team was composed of A. Olivari as coordinator and Gender Mainstreaming Expert, J. Chircop, P. Balzan and T. Saliba. As in some case in the other countries, *the Peer Review procedure was felt that there is too much documentation to be filled in, sometimes repetitive, and that especially with regards to small organisations, this bureaucratic aspect should be simplified as much as possible so that time is dedicated more to discussing issues rather than filling reports with information already available in other similar documents in the Toolbox (Meta-evaluation)*.

MT3 - Participants and roles in the Peer Review

Facilitator	Peer Team			
	Coordinator	Peers	Evaluation Expert	GDM Expert
P. Fenech	A. Olivari	P. Balzan	P. Balzan	A. Olivari
		J. Chircop		
		T. Saliba		

3.5.PORTUGAL

Lastly, in Portugal there were four organisations involved in the piloting organised at national level and **covering both the formal and non formal adult education. The partner organization in this case was very experienced on the methodology**, had previously used the methodology in other education and training domains and had also adapted it to the activities of educational and vocational guidance for adults¹⁷.

The chosen quality criteria and indicators were almost the same for all piloting organisations (quality area 2 and criteria such as Promotion and outreach, Information, Guidance and counselling and Registration and enrolment) pointing out to **certain improvement areas in the field of promoting the organisations and the learning offer, reaching the “right” target groups, giving them the necessary information and guidance and clear, easy and efficient procedures for enrolment.** Even if it somehow cannot say a lot on the validity of the other quality areas developed for the adult learning sector, those quality areas and criteria chosen (2 and also in one case quality area 3) have *proven clearly their appropriateness to the structure of the piloting organisations* (Feedback on the methodology, PT).

Organisations in Portugal involved in the piloting

No. id	Organisation	City	AL domain	AL domain for PR
PT1	CECOA – Centro de Formação Profissional para o Comércio e Afins	Lisbon	Formal and Non-formal	Formal
PT2	KERIGMA - Inovação e Desenvolvimento Social de Barcelos	Barcelona	Formal, Non-formal and Informal	Non formal
PT3	CINEL - Centro de Formação Profissional da Indústria Electrónica, Energia, Telecomunicações e Tecnologias da Informação	Lisbon	Formal and Non-formal	Formal
PT4	CENFIC - Centro de Formação Profissional da Indústria da Construção Civil e Obras Públicas do Sul	Lisbon	Formal and Non-formal	Formal

The first, *CECOA*, partner in the PRALINE project works on **both formal and non-formal AL domain**, but **decided to be assessed only on the formal one.** The organisation has ISO certification since 2005 and it is certified by the national system of training providers quality assurance managed by DGERT/ Ministry of Labour for all training domains, though no longer needed since 2011 because considered as a public body whose mission is training. It is also accredited for processes of recognition, validation and certification of

¹⁷ LdV TOI Project "EuroPeerGuid - European Peer Review in Guidance and Counselling in Adult Vocational Education and Training", 2010-2012, coordinated by CECO A - Centro de Formação Profissional para o Comércio e Afins (PT).

skills and competences managed by ANQEP. **CECOA has previous experience in Peer Review** as it applied the methodology in iVET in 2006 and continued for cVET in 2009 and for Educational and Vocational Guidance for Adults in 2012. Indeed, this methodology is considered compatible with the different quality management systems of the providers, and in this *the added value of peer review is great*.

The staff decided to participate in order to acquire more knowledge about the methodology and use it as an **instrument and source for improvement for the QMS already in place in CECOA**. Its participation should have allowed the development of the organisation competences as well as the staff competences. **It also aimed to test the methodology in AL** as it was already tested it in other areas of activity and to strengthen the network with other organisations also concerned with the improvement of their organisations and services. The Quality Areas chosen were no. 2 – Information, guidance and enrolment, namely 2.2 *Information* and 2.5 *Registration and enrolment*; and no. 3 – Learning and teaching, in particular 3.4 *Learning process* (contd.) and 3.5. *Methods*. CECOA had already peers in the staff, who are Cristina Dimas, Sílvia Coelho, Maria José Jantarada and Lúgia Veloso. In the piloting activity, Ms. Dimas was the facilitator in the process, while the Peer Team was composed of Eduardo Reis (as Coordinator), Joana Carvalho, Maria José Rodrigues (as Evaluation Expert) and Ana Paula Viana (as GDM Expert). It was reported that *the Peer Team was able to work productively and cordially within the short time*, and in turn *the quantity/quality of the results was quite high and lived up to expectations*. Professionally it was a *great moment of learning and this method seemed beneficial for all organizations / institutions working in the area of Adult Education*, if not possibly adaptable to other professional areas (Meta-evaluation).

PT1 - Participants and roles in the Peer Review

Facilitator	Peer Team			
	Coordinator	Peers	Evaluation Expert	GDM Expert
C. Dimas	E. Reis	J. Carvalho M. José Rodrigues A. Paula Viana	M. José Rodrigues	A. Paula Viana

The second organisation that took part in the piloting was *KERIGMA - Inovação e Desenvolvimento Social de Barcelos* which **works on formal, non-formal and informal AL domain, and aimed at reviewing the non formal learning provision**. The organisation is certified by the national system of training providers and quality assurance managed by DGERT/Ministry of Labour, in 28 training areas, and accredited for processes of recognition, validation and certification of skills and competences (scholar and professional) since 2005. Furthermore, since 2014 KERIGMA is accredited for processes of recognition, validation and certification of skills and competences, both double certification processes (scholar and professional) and only professional certification. Although it hasn't any previous experience in Peer Review, **the organisation participated with the aim of getting familiar with the methodology, strengthening the development of professional and transversal competences, and testing the degree of applicability of the methodology in their professional context**. Moreover, its objective was to strengthen the work of the different departments and the network with other organisations and institutions at local, national and European level. At the moment of the piloting, KERIGMA had four Peers in the staff, J. Carvalho; J. Morgado; R. Silva; S. Pereira and chose to be assessed on the following criteria of QA 2 - Information, guidance and enrolment: 2.1 *Promotion and outreach*, 2.2 *Information*, 2.3 *Guidance and counselling* and 2.5. *Registration and enrolment*. The Peer

Assessment of the Piloting

Review activity was facilitated by Ms. Silva and the Peer Team composed of M. José Jantarada (Coordinator, Evaluation Expert and GDM Expert), José Domingues, Helena Rosado and Ana Borges. Overall, the process of review went well, with the Peers acknowledging that information about the PR had been properly shared within the organization and with stakeholders, such as students. In turn, **they have proven a good command in time and interviews management, increasing the level of the outcomes.**

PT2 - Participants and roles in the Peer Review

Facilitator	Peer Team			
	Coordinator	Peers	Evaluation Expert	GDM Expert
R. Silva	M. José Jantarada	J. Domingues	M. José Jantarada	M. José Jantarada
		H. Rosado		
		A. Borges		

The third organisation that was involved in the piloting was *CINEL - Centro de Formação Profissional da Indústria Electrónica, Energia, Telecomunicações e Tecnologias da Informação* from Lisbon. It is ISO certified since 1999 and certified by the national system of training providers and quality assurance managed by DGERT/Ministry of Labour for all training domains and also for the specific methodology of e-learning (no longer needed as a public body which mission is training, as in CECO's case). It was also involved in the creation of a methodology for the evaluation of CVET occupational programmes – European network for CVET evaluation – project Qualitrain – Leonardo da Vinci Programme. **The organisation approaches both Formal and Non formal AL domain and it was assessed on Formal service provision.** Despite the fact that it doesn't have any experience in the Peer Review, CINEL has four trained peers in the staff, namely M. José Rodrigues, F. Gomes, A. Paula Viana, J. Domingues. The organisation participated in the piloting in order to **raise awareness about the importance of a quality culture in vocational training with the development of tools to assure the achievement of learning outcomes as well as their adaptation to the different needs of the trainees.** It also aimed to **increase transparency and comparability in training quality; to know the methodology and the associated tools to high quality training,** also providing valuable suggestions and improvement recommendations; and to **know the resources needed to apply the methodology.** The assessment was carried on QA2, namely on criterion 2.1 Promotion and outreach and criterion 2.3 Guidance and counselling. The overall process was facilitated by Sofia Ventura and the team of Peers was composed of S. Coelho (Coordinator of the group and Evaluation expert), Renata Silva (GDM expert), Joana Morgado, and Francisco Sanches. **Among the strengths, it is worth to mention that the amount of outputs produced by the peer review was quite high,** as for the *added value of the professionals with regard to the concerned criteria.* In terms of Peers competences, the ability of peers to work together was strengthened and similarly, *the skills acquired by peers in the training context were further validated thanks to the visit.*

PT3 - Participants and roles in the Peer Review

Facilitator	Peer Team			
	Coordinator	Peers	Evaluation Expert	GDM Expert
S. Ventura	S. Coelho	R. Silva	S. Coelho	R. Silva
		J. Morgado		
		F. Sanches		

The fourth organisation involved in the piloting phase was *CENFIC - Centro de Formação Profissional da Indústria da Construção Civil e Obras Públicas do Sul from Lisbon*. It is ISO 9001 certified since 1998; certified by the national system of training providers and quality assurance managed by DGERT/Ministry of Labour (no longer needed since 2010 as a public body which social object is training); and accredited, since 2006, for processes of recognition, validation and certification of skills and competences. **CENFIC has experience in formal and non-formal AL domain and chose to be assessed on the formal domain.** The organisation was motivated to participate in order to **know more about the methodology, to collect indicators and apply "solutions" that allow to promote / increase CENFIC activity as well as customer satisfaction.** Moreover, it aimed to **strengthen ties with other training organizations, and to enrich staff skills and competences.** The assessment was conducted on QA2, in particular on criterion 2.1 Promotion and outreach and 2.2 Information, and it was facilitated by E. Reis. The Peer team involved S. Pereira as Coordinator and GDM expert, C. Dimas as Evaluation expert, L. Veloso and F. Gomes. As happened for others in Portugal and other countries, at the end of the visit the Peer team stressed the fact that more time during the visit would have reduced the stress on them as well as on the hosting organizations – facilitating the quality of the assessment. From the perspective of the reviewed organization, it was stated that *the feedbacks given were useful and clear, some of them of immediate application. Also, no objection was made to the report, which was accepted as coherent to the information transmitted in the feedback session* (Impact Assessment, PT4).

PT4 - Participants and roles in the Peer Review

Facilitator	Peer Team			
	Coordinator	Peers	Evaluation Expert	GDM Expert
E. Reis	S. Pereira	C. Dimas	C. Dimas	S. Pereira
		L. Veloso		
		F. Gomes		

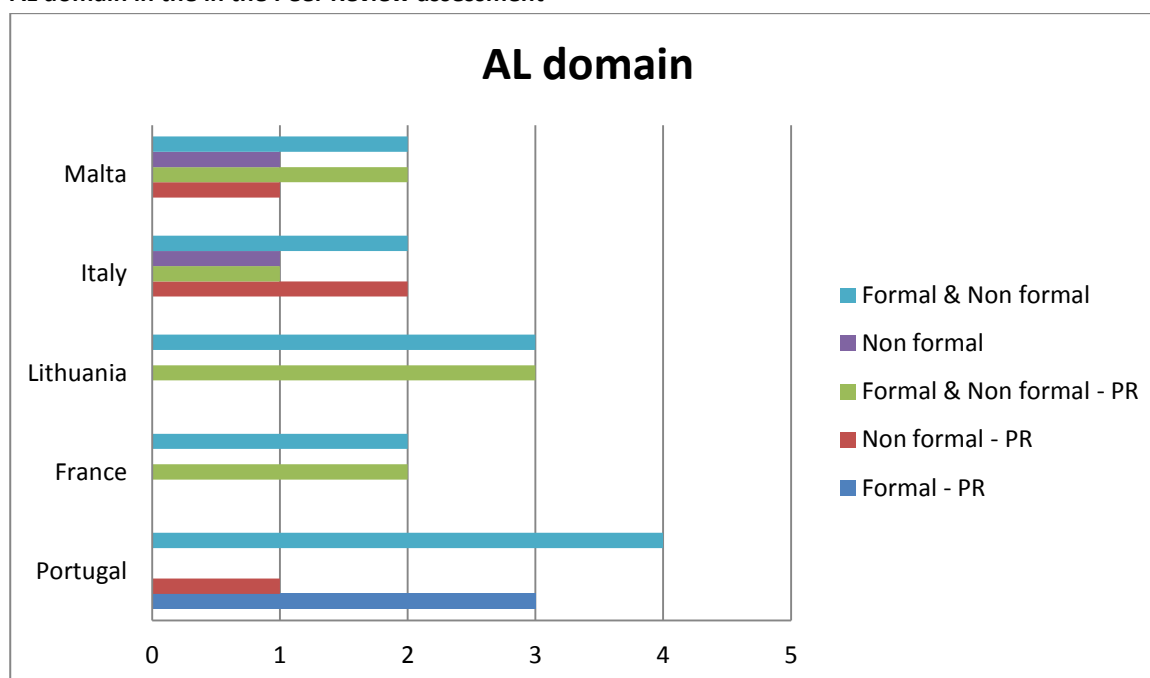
3.6. OVERALL REMARKS

To **sum up**, there were a total of 15 organisations involved coming from 12 different cities. In Malta, Lithuania and France, each organisation came from a different city. In case of Italy, there were 3 organisations that took part in the piloting coming from 2 cities, while in case of Portugal there were 4 organisations, of which 3 from 1 city. The scale of the geographical distribution of the reviewed providers,

on one side gives indications of how appealing the methodology is and, on the other, could be justified as a way to overcome the risks and fears of losing advantages with direct competitors. This consideration is also reinforced by the fact that organizations and Peers participated on a voluntary basis – covering themselves the expenses related to the participation – and in none of the cases it can be stated that negative or unconstructive comments were given.

With regard to the educational provision of the organisations, there were a total of 13 working both on Formal and Non Formal education and only 2 covering only the Non formal domain. In the case of Malta, Lithuania and France, organisations chose to be assessed during the Peer Review on the same AL domain as the operating one. In Italy there was only one that works on Formal and Non formal AL sector and was assessed only on the Non formal sector. Instead in Portugal, from the 4 organisations working both on Formal and Non-formal domain, 3 were assessed only on the Formal and one only on the Non formal AL sector.

AL domain in the in the Peer Review assessment



The homogeneity of comments and feedbacks collected from the many actors involved – on the side of the strengths acknowledged as well as on that of the weaknesses – seems to confirm the initial intuition of the PRALINE partners of the **European Peer Review methodology as appropriate for the very differentiated spectrum of adult learning opportunities**. Areas of improvement have been identified along the process, in particular in the amount and internal structure of some of the key documentation (such as Self-Report, model for Interview Minutes, Report of the Peer Review, etc.) but even the smallest organizations reviewed, developed an opinion on the methodology as *useful, appropriate* and easily *adaptable to providers' needs*.

Involvement of the management and of the staff

As recognised by the majority of QA approaches and by the recommendations set at European level, **the involvement of management is fundamental for a successful implementation of quality assurance systems**. It was agreed by partners that it was important to involve key professionals within the

organizations as well as Peers in the case of Italy where the Peer Reviews were not reciprocal. To this regard, the piloting in all the five countries recorded extremely positive results as reported by the 4.5 average score on the question on the **full commitment of the management, particularly to possible changes resulting from the Peer Review** (question 1.1 of the Impact Assessment – cfr. Annex IV). Indeed, **in most of the cases (top) management** – such as president, director, head of school, head of quality, etc. – **participated in the Peer Review mostly at the oral feedback session but in some cases also in the preparation phase for the selection of the quality areas and the production of the self-assessment/self-report** as underlined in particular for FR1, FR2, MT2, MT3, IT2, IT3.

Regarding the involvement of the staff, **organizations made efforts to ensure** – as far as possible – **the full participation of the staff**. For the small organizations – as for IT1 and MT2 for example – it was easier and allowed a very good team work in preparing and hosting the peer review. Also for the others, it is reported that the interviewed people from the staff and among the learners were aware of the process they were part of, supporting the statement that **background information and explanations had been shared in advance**. **Less effective was the involvement of the staff in the preliminary self-assessment process** as understandable from the contents of the Self-Reports and confirmed by the feedbacks of the Peer Teams through the question 2.3 of the Impact Assessment, which average score is 3.9 with one case on no involvement (1) and one very poor involvement (2). In case of LT1 the administrative staff was also involved and provided a good backup to the colleagues involved in the Peer Review process.

Peers performances and competences

In **Italy** there were a total of **12 peers involved in the piloting** (all having participated to the Trainings for Peers) – 69,23% women, – of which 2 from public body (Regione Umbria) and 10 from 9 different private bodies/ training centres. As regards the function within the organisation, there were a total of 2 public officers, 7 managers, 1 consultant and 2 trainers. In particular, 58,3% participants have expertise in Quality Assurance and Quality management systems, and 33,3% in VET and AL systems.

In **Lithuania**, there were **14 peers of which 11 have participated in the Training organised in Vilnius in May 2016**. Of these, 42,86% have management or executive roles and 57,14% are teachers with experience in the AL field, with additional expertise in internal and/or external audit and evaluation.

Among the **16 peers from Portugal**, 13 did not have previous experience in the Peer Review while the other 3 had at least participated in trainings for peers. 25% have management or coordinator functions in various departments such as training, recognition of skills and quality management.

In **France there were 9 peers trained**, of which 44,44% with management roles, 22,22% training assistants and 33,34% trainers. Among them, there were 55,55% peers with expertise in the Quality Assurance and the rest in front office and guidance in VET.

Malta involved a total of 10 peers who were trained by MUT, of which 30% have expertise in training and the other vary from management, to communications, evaluation, accreditation, research and statistics and course design and evaluation.

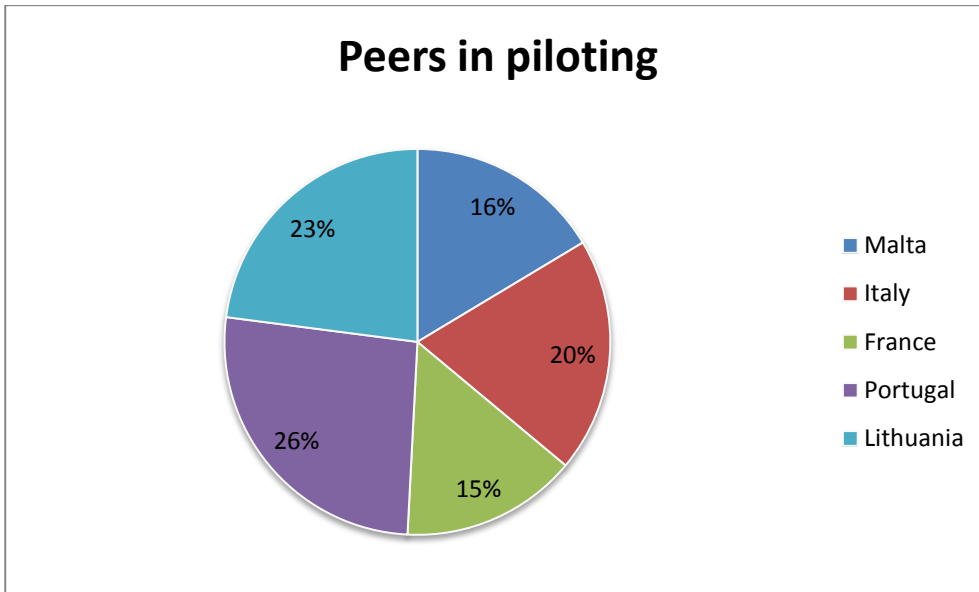
Overall the competences of the Peer Teams seemed to be in line with the tasks they had to carry out as confirmed by the score given to the question 2.1 of the Impact Assessment *“To what extent was did the expertise and competences of the Peer Team fulfil the requirements? (i.e. necessary expertise and institutional backgrounds)?”* – with an average of 4.4 out of 5 as emerged from the analysis in Annex IV. **Specifically, in most cases the peers assessed their colleagues and the Peer Team as a whole as good (4), and in few cases as very good (5)**. The Peer Team composition followed the rules laid down in the European Peer Review Manual, with a **good balance reported between Peers who have already done Peer Review(s)** – or similar type of activities – **and those who experienced it for the first time**. In their

Assessment of the Piloting

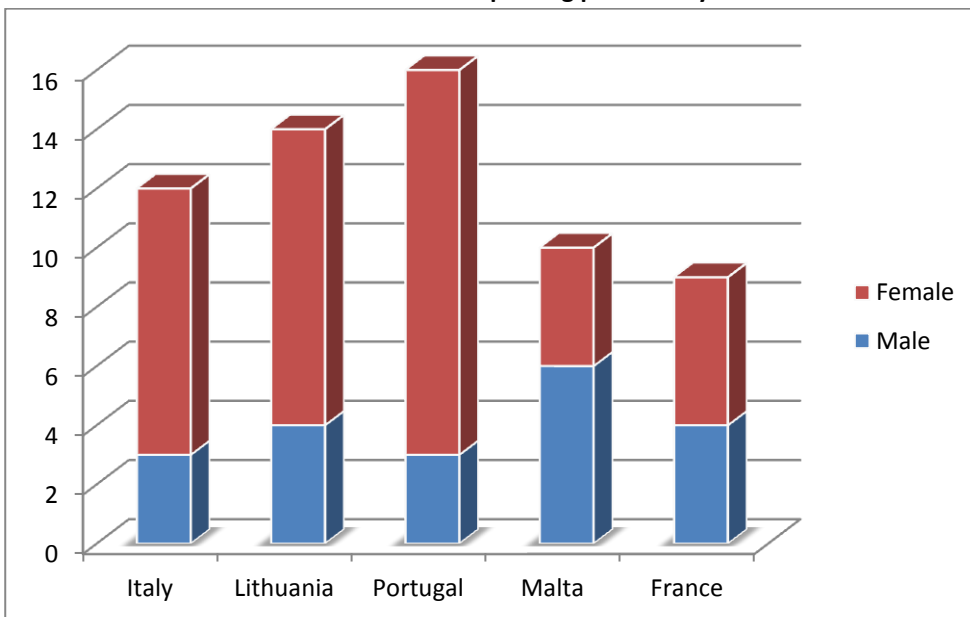
evaluations, the peers expressed some kind of self-criticism as well. One of the peers from IT2 noted for instance that **in order to valorise their competences at maximum all peers should have acquainted with the method and tools**. The reflection stimulated by the Meta-evaluation and the Impact Assessment forms supported the peers in highlighting some areas where they needed improvements (Annex IV).

From different reports came also comments on the **importance of the facilitator either for its experience with the methodology** (e.g. PT, LT), or **for the availability and constructive approach demonstrated** as emerged for instance in the case of IT1, IT3, MT2, PT1.

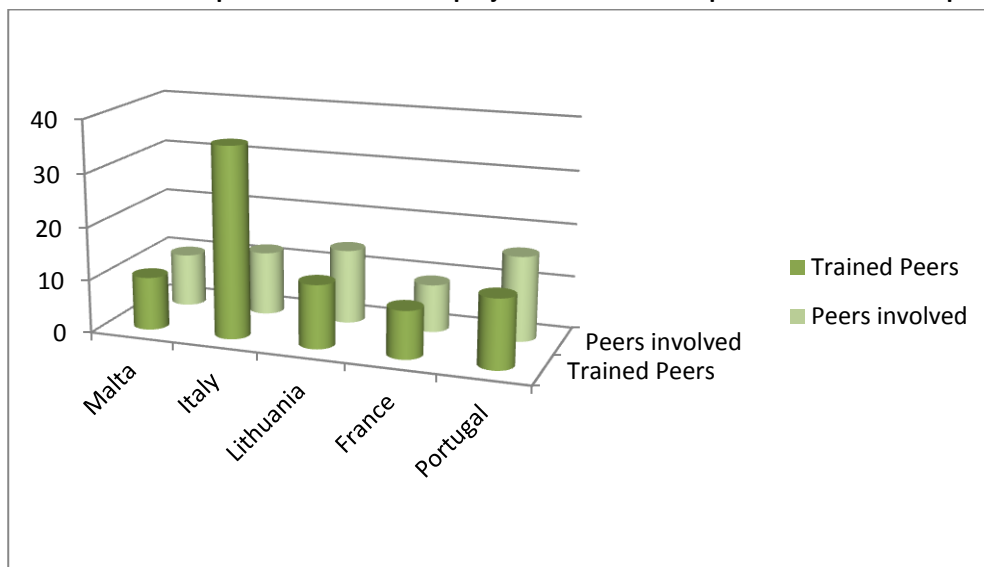
Share of Peers involved in the piloting per country



Number of women and men involved in the piloting per country



Number of trained peers in the PRALINE project and number of peers involved in the piloting per country



Quality areas selected and rationale

In order to validate the adaptation of the European Peer Review to the adult learning sector, **partners tried to cover as many Quality Areas as possible so to have the criteria and indicators directly tested by providers and stakeholders in the countries.** At the same time, there was agreement about **leaving the organizations free to choose those considered more relevant** not to compromise or alter their opinion on the methodology in light of a more sustainable implementation. Across the five countries, **a total of 9 out of 11 quality areas** have been chosen for assessment during the piloting. The most selected ones – reasonably from the 4 Core QAs – were:

- QA 2 – Information, guidance and enrolment (8 times)
- QA 1 – Learning offer (7 times)
- QA 3 – Learning and teaching (4 times).

In most of the cases the peers reported that the quality areas chosen were in line with the overall quality strategy of the institution (on average 4.25 out of 5, according to the Impact Assessments – see Annex IV), even though **generally selected through a top-down approach and thus mainly reflecting the only perspective of the management, which in many cases used the Peer Review as support tool for internal changes and restructuring.**

Feedbacks on the tools available for the implementation of the methodology

From all the involved countries came comments about the fact that **the methodology would need some adjustments or simplification**, in particular in the case of the **templates contained in the Tool-box.** Indications reflect how some of the tools are felt as *too much bureaucratic, repeating themselves, confusing, difficult to approach*, etc. In particular:

- Some section is repeated in the Initial Information Sheet, in the Self-Report and in the final Report of the Peer Review with no need;
- The interview minutes template requires to scroll up and down several times the document during the interviews (too much detailed and not easy to be filled in electronically), complicating the already complex assessment process;

Assessment of the Piloting

- Importance to enumerate the Tools and inserting references in the manual specifying when they have to be used (result of the Multiplier Event in Perugia – 05-12-2016 – working groups on the tool-box¹⁸)
- The references between the Manual and the tools in the Tool-Box not always provide clear indications on how to use the latter when adopting the methodology.

A for the Manual, the detail of information provided per phase of the review and overall structure seem not to have led to particular comments other than the usefulness to support the Peers (LT). The comparison between the piloting in Malta and France, which were newcomers but respectively did and did not participate in an actual Peer Review with more experienced Peers, **suggest the importance of a stronger cooperation across countries – either through trainings or the possibility of taking part as observers before acting as Peer**. At the same time, though, the results obtained – commitment of the organizations, positive feedbacks on the assessment received by reviewed providers, etc. – **reinforce the confidence on the validity of the methodology for the variegated sector of formal and non formal adult education**.

¹⁸ 3 working groups respectively on the “Validation of the *Manual for the European Peer Review in the field of adult education*: what works, what is missing, what should be changed”; “Validation of the *European Peer Review Tool-box in the field of adult education*: what works, what is missing, what should be changed”; and “Validation of the core Quality Areas (from 1 to 4) identified for the implementation of the *European Peer Review in the field of adult education*: what works, what is missing, what should be changed” held during the Dissemination Event “A Strategy for active participation of Adults in Education and Peer Review as a methodology *to feel at ease* with Quality Assurance”, realised in Perugia on the 5 December 2016.

IV. EXTERNAL EXPERTS EVALUATION¹⁹

For the activity of adaptation of the European Peer Review methodology to Adult Learning and its piloting, PRALINE project has decided to receive an external assessment in order to reinforce the outcomes achieved and have an expert opinion on the possible impacts of the project in the wider – and changing – scenario of adult learning in Europe, as well as on how to better support the adoption of the European Peer Review in QA systems in Europe. The **selection of the experts** has opted for professionals, on one side, with recorded expertise in the field of quality assurance and quality management systems for the educational sector and specifically on the Peer Review methodology, and, on the other, able to apply a strategic approach including a system-level perspective. The following two experts have been assigned to carry out the assessment:

- **Giorgio Allulli** – EQAVET Steering committee member, former EQAVET Italian NRP, Senior expert on quality assurance in education and training and on the European Peer Review methodology;
- **Leena Koski** – Counsellor of Education at Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI), EQAVET Finnish NRP, EQAVET Steering committee member, Senior expert on quality assurance in education and training.

The preparation of their work has been done through an exchange of emails and preliminary documentation – such as guidelines for internal monitoring and piloting planning, and an in-person meeting in Rome hosted by CIOFS-FP on the 11th February 2016 (after the Transnational Training for Trainers, in the phase of operational planning of the trainings at national level and subsequent PRs implementation). As clearly reported by Allulli in its contribution, the purpose of the external evaluation **is the evaluation of the European Peer Review adaptation to the Adult Learning sector**, and precisely of:

1. **The internal monitoring & assessment procedures adopted by the PRALINE partners,**
2. **The appropriateness of the Peer Review methodology for the Adult Learning sector,** as adapted and piloted within the PRALINE project.

In order to do that, the results of the internal monitoring and assessment process have been examined, analysing the documents produced in applying the methodology and mainly the meta-evaluation tools. The collection of comments and feedbacks has involved all the different actors: Peers, reviewed organisations, PRALINE partners.

The results of their analysis are reported below and have partially been used for the development of the ***Recommendations for Developing a Quality Culture and implementing Peer Review in formal and non formal adult learning sector***²⁰, Intellectual Output 5 of the project.

First of all, it is worth to focus on the **indications emerged on the process of the piloting implementation** itself, which has been an area covered by the evaluation of Giorgio Allulli. According to his comments, *the project planning and implementation has carefully followed the model of the quality cycle (Planning, Acting, Evaluating, Reviewing), following the reference model introduced by the EQAVET Recommendation, even if*

¹⁹ To facilitate the reading, it has been decided not to refer every quote to the original text in which it was contained – either the analysis from Leena Koski or Giorgio Allulli. However, all the contents of this chapter come from their reports. – (A) / (K).

²⁰ *“Recommendations for Quality Assurance in the Adult Learning Sector: the contribution of the European Peer Review Methodology and Suggested Implementation Areas”* – PRALINE project 2014-1-IT02-KA204-003626, May 2017-
<http://www.praline-project.eu/Result05.asp>.

there wasn't enough time in the project life-time to implemented the last phase. The assessment has found that for every step of the project, *the request of feedbacks, reflective statements, meta-evaluation by the project partners and other people involved. This collection of people involved reactions put the project managers in the position of improving the methodology used while improving the tasks and workload for the Contact points in the five countries.*

The only remark which is believed to have about the procedure relates to the fact that **not all partners have completed their final feedback from the experience carried out for all the activities conducted (A).**

Moving on to the assessment of the piloting, the first activities evaluated are represented by the **trainings**. The first one *managed by the project has been the Peer trainers training, to train the Project partners in order to implement Peers training at national level (A).* In this case, apart from the feedbacks collected by the beneficiaries as reported in III.2, *the comments put in evidence the complexity of Peer Review, and consequently the many facets of Peer role and of the relevant training. In particular the need of refreshing/improving evaluation and communication competences has been mentioned.* In addition, experts agree on the fact that *a more practical approach should be adopted. More practical exercises should be inserted in the agenda of such trainings and participants should be supported in working directly with the tools available, especially those to be used during the Peer Visit (e.g. Quality Area Assessment Form, Interview Minutes and Guidelines for Analysis, Meta-evaluation of the Peers) (A).* When organizing Peers training, *it could be useful to use case studies (description and self-assessment) (K).*

With regard to implementation of the Peer Reviews, the factors highlighted as more critical by the involved actors are those detailed in III.3, and specifically:

- The limited time available for the Peers compared to the complexity of the methodology and the areas to be investigated. This was the most frequent difficulty perceived by the peers. The time available for the visit to the provider was two days, filled by a dense series of meetings with numerous stakeholders. The time limitations have been felt especially when interviewing stakeholders and observing the class.
- The bureaucratic burden given by the high number of forms to fill, sometimes repetitive, especially with regards to small Organizations.
- The need for greater flexibility in the management of time to have the opportunity to deepen the most interesting and most important aspects considered.
- Difficulties of interpretation of the manual in the countries where there was not a version in the national language or the existing one was not adequate (LT, FR, PT)

One concern has also been reported because one Peer Review has been organized around an event (the seminar organized by IT3). This activity requested a good dose of flexibility by the Peers, because the Peer Review methodology is focused on reviewing organizations, and not events.

As to the **suggestions to improve**, the more frequent ones were connected to the issue of time: more time is considered by many partners necessary to the Peers for interviewing and reflecting. Also the issue of flexibility have been often raised, because the timetable of Peer Review methodology is considered quite tight.

The success of a Peer Review depends on **whether meaningful and relevant Quality Areas are being reviewed or not**. In addition, transparency and comparability between different Peer Reviews can only be ensured if a common framework serves as the point of departure. Thus, a framework of **Quality Areas has been defined for the European Peer Review Procedure in Adult Learning** that:

- takes into account the four quality dimensions identified above

External Experts Evaluation

- comprises the crucial areas of a high-quality adult learning provider in a clear, practical and workable form
- covers a wide range of Quality Areas used in the Europe, thus facilitating its use at a European level
- serves as a tool for cross-reading different national quality frameworks, thus enhancing transparency and comparability within Europe²¹. (A)

After testing PR manual and methodology on participating institutions (Adult Learning providers), Project's national contact points and partners have been asked to fill questionnaires reporting their feedbacks and their meta-evaluation regarding the experience. The positive comments were the absolute majority. **All the partners were overall satisfied**, as reports the Maltese contact point:

From the feedback received verbally by the three organisations that voluntary participated in the peer review piloting project, it looks like they really were enthusiastic about the review, both before and also after.

Similar comments went from the Lithuanian Contact point:

The proposed piloting contributed a lot to the improvement of the QA approach and practices and helped to establish a new tradition of PR, while in the holistic way you review all processes.

As to the Portuguese contact point:

In the feedback sessions all organisations management and staff expressed the relevance and pertinence of the review/evaluation and improvement suggestions presented by the peers teams and also emphasized the added value of the PT methodology on top of the existence quality assurance practices. The feeling was that many of the improvement suggestions made by peers would be taken into account to improve the quality assurance of the involved organisations. (A)

To conclude, some final suggestions coming from the External experts:

1. Concerning the **support needed for Peer Review implementation**, suitable Peer Training will be one of the important requirements for successful implementation of Peer Reviews in adult learning sector. **On national and on the European level some mentoring could be proposed**. For example peer team could consist of the newcomers and more experienced peers. Much attention should be given **to understand and interpret the quality areas and criteria and what criteria based evaluation means (K)**.
2. Introduce **more practical activities** and examples when organizing Peers training (A) (K)
3. The most critical point regarding the methodology pointed out by the Peers and project partners relates to the **limited time available** for the review visit compared with the activities requested by the Peer Review methodology. This is a challenging issue, because, as the Peer Review is generally a voluntary activity, it is difficult to extend the time spent by the Peers in the structure to be examined. On the other hand it is also difficult to compress the activities planned by the methodology for each Quality area. A possible solution (which could be considered specially if the Peers don't have a previous experience in the methodology) to this problem is to **focus the Peer Review on a single Quality area; this would allow to deepen the problematic issues connected to the area investigated, by focusing on this area the analysis before, during and after the visit**. Even the self-report, that when there is no previous material is a huge undertaking for the provider, could focus only on the area chosen. **On the other end, if only one quality area would be chosen**

²¹ A plethora of quality frameworks and research finding on quality in adult learning have been used in the definition of the quality areas and indicators.

- the organisation would get a limited input for the improvement** and it would take more time to overview the organisation's improvement areas. (A)(K)
4. **Comprehensive and active dissemination constitutes clearly a prerequisite for Peer Review implementation in adult learning sector.** A voluntary, development-oriented approach is not only adequate for the initial phase of Peer Review implementation where use of Peer Review depends on the motivation of adult education institutions and it is also in line with the general aims and principles of the European Peer Review procedures. **A critical number of adult education institutions must get to know the Peer Review procedure in practical experimentation to ensure bottom-up acceptance.** Therefore in all the participating countries of the project **extra effort should be made by the adult learning organisations to make the results and experiences visible.** The institutions that have piloted Peer Review in adult learning sector can e.g. form the backbone of a national Peer Review network /networks which could support further implementation. (K)
 5. **The positioning of Peer Review in the larger quality assurance system of adult learning sector will ensure further use of Peer Review and its recognition as external evaluation methodology at national and European level.** There are already in adult education sector different quality assurance methods in use in different countries. Therefore Peer Review should at first stage be introduced as complementary to existing quality assurance schemes, not as something which will replace the methods already in use. In particular, **the relationship to other forms of external evaluation and self-assessment seem to be important also in adult learning sector.** Future implementation of Peer Review thus will also have to include the definition of possible functions of Peer Review within steering systems of adult learning sector. Added value of the Peer Review in comparison to other methods and procedures should be pointed out too. In countries with long tradition of inspectorate and now introducing the Peer Review the link to the inspectorate has to be specified. (K)
 6. It could be useful to analyse in the future the results of PRALINE project in the framework of the impact analysis e.g. by using Peer Review Impact Guidelines. (K)

V. CONCLUSIONS

The experience conducted through the piloting of the European Peer Review in the adult learning sector has overall **confirmed the assumption that the methodology previously validated for other educational domains is in fact appropriate for formal and non formal adult education**. It has proven to be:

- **Flexible enough for providers with *non-mature* Quality Management systems in place** as it is for organizations working in the third sector that do not have the delivery of learning opportunities as main area of focus or for the very small providers as it is the case for some trade unions.
- **Effective for the non-formal learning sector** and thus able to support the dialogue with formal learning providers and their more structured and regulated approach in terms of objectives, target groups and societal results²², also favouring mutual learning and the exchange of practices.
- **Functional for the reinforcement of soft skills** both in the management and teaching/training staff, thanks to the exercise of social and communication skills, as well as the development of inter-cultural attitudes in the case of transnational PRs.
- **A support to the organizations going through period of change** either for internal restructuring or for changing conditions and requirements at system level, reinforcing the awareness of the practitioners about the relevance of quality assurance mechanisms as management tool rather than burden on the administration of educational provider settings.
- **A way to improve the use of self-assessment practices** in the organizations QM systems coherently with the objectives of EU policies.

In two cases during the piloting, the methodology has been **applied with a focus on a single learning activity or programme** upon consultation with the competent EQAVET NRP to respond to a specific need expressed by the organizations as result of their self-assessment. In both cases, the evaluation has considered the selected quality areas both generally and with the specific focus – resulting in detailed and precise feedbacks. Following on this, having tested the methodology on specific activities/programmes has convinced partner organizations that this possible application of the European Peer Review needs to be further addressed and developed.

The piloted approach and tools are the **results of collaborative work among various relevant stakeholders** – namely a public authority in charge of VET and AL policies; public and private, for profit and no-profit providers; national-level trade unions; an umbrella association promoting Peer Review evaluation in Europe and a research centre specialised on VET and AL research. The heterogeneity of the perspectives brought in during the development phase has been one of the leading principles of the work and resulted on a set of criteria and indicators that could be easily and beneficially used by experienced VET and AL providers, organizations from the third sector delivering training for their members, trade unions and public adult education centres. The successful cooperation has allowed to overcome the difficulties encountered throughout the piloting implementation – namely the difficulties of applying the methodology only having attending the Training for peers and the strictly connected need a more practical approach to the methodology, both during the training and through supported PR practices.

In order to guarantee an effective diffusion of the methodology across the countries, it is important to explore ways of **integrating it into existing systems for quality assurance in education, starting from VET,**

²² Panteia “*Developing the adult learning sector- Quality in the Adult Learning Sector*”, Final report (Open Call for tender EAC/26/2011) – 2013, p. XII.

Conclusions

as the cases of Regione Umbria and Lithuania demonstrate, respectively at regional and national level. The integration has also been pushed for by partner organizations as it can contribute to *broadening the scope of EQAVET to adult learning*, having it as reference point also for the specificities of the heterogeneous adult education sector. Partners are convinced of the validity of this approach and of the opportunity it provides in supporting the transition of European countries and regions towards **more consistent lifelong learning strategies** and the strictly related process of recognition of prior learning. The contribution of the PRALINE project and piloting to this regard are the following:

- Providing a **common language** – the one of the Manual and of the Quality Areas – inspired by the EQAVET framework and tailored on providers experiences and practices, and above all able to facilitate the cooperation and mutual trust across educational sectors. It is indeed possible to adopt the same methodology but apply the quality areas available for a given sector, possibly involving professionals with strong professional background in education but operating in a different context, and in turn enrich the value of the mutual learning practice – *an overarching methodology with attention for differences*.
- Supporting the shift of the educational systems in Europe towards a learning outcomes approach that can only be fully applied if competent results-oriented monitoring systems are in place, which is not the case in the majority of the systems where the assessment is focused on the compliance with a set of minimum standard and does not explore sufficiently the performances of the educational providers.

In addition to that, the possibility of **adopting the methodology at transnational level** seems to have the potential of reinforcing cooperation among the providers in Europe – in particular involving those not delivering vocational education which until now have had scarce opportunities for exchange of practices, mutual learning and contamination with colleagues abroad. Professionals acting as Peers across countries can support the growth and quality of the sector more homogeneously in the different areas of the Union while reinforcing their competences – both professional and transversal. The application of the European Peer Review has contributed and can favour the internationalization of formal and non formal providers and to their improved understanding of other VET and AL systems in Europe. It is important not to take AL sector aside of these internationalization processes going on in education, as a basis for a stronger and more competitive Europe.

To conclude, it is worth to recall the identified **areas of further development**:

- Rationalise and **simplify some of the tools provided** in the European Peer Review Tool-Box as emerged from the piloting evaluation.
- **Formalise flexible pathways for the application of the European Peer Review methodology** which enable organizations to adopt it according to the specific needs and contexts, without compromising the efficacy of the assessment as demonstrated by the PRs conducted on given programmes/training activities or suggested by the External Evaluators introducing the possibility of assessing only 1 Quality Area in the case of non-experienced providers.
- Investigate the **role of Peers as catalyst** for a smooth approach to quality assurance and management for non-experienced or non-structured providers, and as facilitators for the overall growth of quality in adult learning provision.
- Better assess the **impact** of the participation to European Peer Reviews **in terms of soft skills development/reinforcement**.
- Promote the **educational value of the Quality Areas** developed for adult learning, which can play a key role in the development of a culture of quality among the providers and the stakeholders, as well as in reinforcing their self-assessment and quality management competences.

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