Peer Review in European VET

PEER REVIEW MANUAL
FOR GUIDANCE
IN ADULT EDUCATION

ADAPTED FROM EUROPEAN PEER REVIEW MANUAL FOR INITIAL VET

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Ljubljana, 2009

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Preface

In the past decade, quality assurance and quality improvement have become increasingly important for institutions providing vocational education and training, and for education authorities throughout Europe. Different procedures have been introduced for evaluating quality at the level of VET institutions/providers. They include quality management schemes adapted from the business sector (such as ISO, EFQM, BSC, etc.), inspections and audits by government agencies, and self-evaluation.

One particularly promising instrument of quality assurance and development is Peer Review – the external evaluation of VET institutions/providers by Peers. Peer Review is prevalent in higher education but the use of Peer Review has so far been marginal in vocational education and training. Peer Review can build on quality activities already in place at a VET institution/provider, it is cost-effective and it fosters networking and exchange between VET providers.

The European Peer Review Manual describes a European standard procedure for carrying out Peer Reviews in initial vocational education and training. It was developed in the course of the Leonardo da Vinci Project "Peer Review in initial VET" by a team of experts from eight institutions in seven European countries. In 2006, 15 transnational pilot Peer Reviews were carried out in eight European countries. Recommendations based on the experiences of the pilot phase have been taken into account in the revision of the European Peer Review procedure. The European Peer Review Manual thus presents a procedure which has passed the test of practical implementation and capitalises on the experiences gleaned from the pilot Peer Reviews.

The European Peer Review procedure implements the principles of the Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF) and, in turn, also seeks to contribute to the further development of the CQAF model. It takes a formative, development-oriented approach and aims at supporting VET institutions/ providers in their efforts to offer high quality education and training. The focus lies on the promotion of continuing quality improvement in an atmosphere of openness and mutual trust that contributes to enhancing transparency and comparability in Europe. Good practice is valued and mutual learning encouraged in a dynamic and motivating process, from which both the VET institution reviewed and the Peers can benefit.

The European Peer Review Manual was developed for use by VET professionals across Europe. Its focus is on a practical approach: it offers directly implementable guidelines for VET providers who want to introduce Peer Reviews in their quality assessment and development procedures. The Manual is complemented by a practical Tool-box available from the project website www.peer-review-education.net, providing forms, checklists, additional information and

recommendations in electronic format. The Tool-box is also available on CD-Rom from the project coordinator.

We hope that the European Peer Review will live up to our expectations and become a useful and attractive instrument for VET institutions/providers all over Europe. Since we are dedicated to the further improvement of the European Peer Review procedure, feedback on this Manual will be very much appreciated!

For the team of the project "Peer Review in initial VET"

Maria Gutknecht-Gmeiner Project coordinator

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Introduction to the Slovenian edition

When the colleagues from Finland and Austria invited us to participate in the Peer Review Extended II project, we were extremely pleased: at the Slovenian Institute of Adult Education we were at that time intensively thinking about adequate qualitative methods to evaluate quality. We were already offering training of educational institutions and encouraged them to use the methods of data analysis, benchmarking and focus groups. These methods turned out to be a very suitable addition to the methods already used in institutions, but also suitable to be used on their own in organisations wishing to continuously monitor the quality of their processes and the results of their work. On one hand, such methods enable quality evaluation in a way that the classical empirical methods simply do not, and on the other, they represent a welcome retreat from the sometimes routine and tiresome surveys. An important aspect of these methods is a systematic learning about good practices and networking between similar organisations, but also between educational organisations and industry or other subjects in the local environment.

When studying various suitable methods we found the "peer review" method that was not entirely new in our country, but it certainly wasn't (commonly) used in the processes of the evaluation of education quality. We thought it would be suitable for those educational organisations who were not beginners at a systematic quality evaluation and have carried out at least one extensive cycle of self-evaluation and whose working collectives have a clear idea about why quality must be systematically dealt with, what is the role of different (outside) interest groups in the process etc.

When given the chance to join this international project we felt it was an excellent opportunity, because it gave us the chance to meet experts who placed this method into the processes of quality development in vocational education and training in a number of European countries and tested it in practice. Their experience was, without doubt, a great help.

During our work in this international group we also got to know the manual that was created in a previous project. We felt that translating this very practice oriented manual, which at the same time offered thorough knowledge about the method, would be useful for all those who work in quality development in education. Our international colleagues were kind enough to allow the translation and we thank them for that.

The manual was prepared for the use in VET. However, as we are currently forming and implementing a holistic approach to quality development in adult education guidance centres (ISIO centres) we decided to add another aspect to the manual: how to use the method not only in VET, but also the adult education guidance activities. This also created a precedent on how to adjust the method to be used in other activities or services. The solutions have been prepared to suit the situation in adult education currently in place in Slovenia and are most applicable here. We do hope, however, that they can be an example of how to use the peer review method in guidance for some other European countries as well.

We prepared the solutions so that we have added texts about the use of the peer review method in adult education guidance procedures, especially in adult education guidance centres, whenever we felt it was necessary. The content of some chapters is more general, or written in a way that did not require a further explanation on how to act in a case of counselling in adult education.

Guidance activity has always been an additional activity of adult education and learning. It has gained a new role and an incentive for development at the beginning of this century with the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, especially with its fifth key message that speaks about guidance for all, in all age groups. (European Commission, 2000). Thus guidance activity gained an important role also in Slovenia, as a core support activity for the processes of lifelong learning of adults whose goal is to acquire new knowledge, skills and competencies that they need in their work, personal and social life.

Since 2001, adults in Slovenia have had a chance to receive free guidance from one of the 14 regional centres within the network for adult education guidance centres. Guidance activities in these centres have two primary objectives:

- provide all adults with quality, professional and holistic information and guidance as a support for their education and learning;
- connect as many adult education and guidance providers on the local level into a network and thus guarantee quality, holistic, and harmonised activities of all the subjects in informing and guidance in adult education.

Guidance centres provide adults with:

- free, impartial, confidential, holistic, and quality information and guidance at their education and learning,
- informing and guidance before the enrolment in an education programme (choosing an appropriate programme and organisation that carries it out, familiarising oneself with enrolment requirements, the educational process, etc.), during the process (how to organize one's learning, how to overcome study problems, etc.), and at the end of the education process (evaluate what one has achieved and what other educational opportunities are still ahead, etc.);
- accessibility of information and guidance in different ways: guidance centres provide personal guidance, information and guidance by telephone, written guidance – by ordinary and electronic mail, and via information materials; if agreed, group consultations and counselling outside the guidance centre are also possible.

Ever since the establishment of the first guidance centres we have been aware that they would only be effective if their response to the needs of individuals and organisations in their area is fast and of high quality. In order to be able to follow their efficiency and the processes that caused it, certain fundamental indicators about guidance centre activities have been determined on the national level; these are monitored and analysed regularly. Based on the performed analyses, the policies and the practice of guidance centres' activities were adjusted and developed on the

level of each individual centre and on the level of the entire network. However, the five- or six-year development demands a new development step in systematic monitoring of guidance centre quality. We wish to strengthen the experience we have with the monitoring of their activities, complement the goals and monitoring methods with new aspects and thus implement **systematic quality evaluation and development in guidance centres for adults**. For this reason we have developed a special model/approach and based it on three primary objectives of counselling and guidance activities in adult education:

- on providing access to guidance for education and learning to all adults, especially to vulnerable groups,
- on providing quality guidance service for education and learning,
- on effective measures for better involvement and success of adults in lifelong learning.

More about the model in the manual itself.

Here we would like to emphasize that we encountered several difficulties when translating the manual: how to use the expressions for which no adequate translations exist in Slovenian as yet. Colleagues for some other (non-English speaking) countries advised us to use the expression "peer review" and the expressions derived from it, as they have done themselves. However, after consulting with the translator and the Slovenian language scholars from the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana we have decided to use the term "kolegialno presojanje" to describe the method; we have also looked for other suitable Slovenian expressions that we are now offering the users for a debate, always with the hope that we have chosen well.

We are aware that the peer review method for the processes of education quality development will not be established easily and everywhere; it is not quite as simple, especially not in a culture where it is not a common practice to lay out in the open methods of work and their results in front of peers and expose them to their opinions. Nevertheless, we hope that this manual and the use of the peer review method will be a challenge for the teachers, counsellors in adult education, other experts and the managements of educational organisations; that they will use it to test in practice and embrace the opportunity to learn from each other, which is what the peer review method particularly encourages.

Sonja Klemenčič
on behalf of the authors of the Slovenian addendum to the manual

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I. INTRODUCTION

What is Peer Review?

Peer Review is a form of external evaluation with the aim of supporting the reviewed educational institution in its quality assurance and quality development efforts.

An external group of experts, called Peers, is invited to assess the quality of different fields of the institution, such as the quality of education and training provision of individual departments or of the entire organisation. During the evaluation process, the Peers visit the reviewed institution.

Peers are external but work in a similar environment and have specific professional expertise and knowledge of the evaluated subject. They are independent and "persons of equal standing" with the persons whose performance is being reviewed.

The use of **peer review in adult education guidance and in ISIO guidance centres** is a process that can trigger important incentives for quality development in adult education guidance, or in quality of individual ISIO guidance centre or even in the entire ISIO guidance centre network in Slovenia.

Peers – peer reviewers – can in this case be heads of other guidance centres, guidance counsellors from other guidance centres, but also counsellors from other levels or strata of education system. In specific cases, or to asses specific work processes, the peers could also be other experts (for example, experts for promotion, if the quality of the guidance work promotion were assessed).

Why Peer Review?

Advantages and benefits of Peer Review as an instrument of quality assurance and development

European providers of VET can expect to benefit from a Peer Review, as proposed in this Manual, by

- obtaining critical yet sympathetic feedback on the quality of their VET provision from colleagues in the field,
- becoming acquainted with an external perspective,
- ascertaining the quality of their provision,
- presenting their strengths and showcasing good practice,
- enhancing accountability towards stakeholders,
- detecting blind spots and weaknesses,
- receiving advice and discovering the good practice of Peers,
- engaging in mutual learning with Peers,

- establishing networks and cooperation with other VET providers, and
- obtaining an external evaluation report on the quality of their training and education at a comparably economic cost.

Advantages and benefits of peer review are **similar** for guidance centres and guidance in adult education – of course in the former case the assessment is not about the quality of vocational education and training, but about the quality of guidance work.

An outside view or a possibility of a professional debate about the quality of individual processes, solutions and results is possibly **even more important** for guidance counsellors than it is for teachers and other professionals in vocational education and training. If the latter have, by the nature of their working environment, more – at least theoretical – possibilities for informal talks, comparison and evaluation of their own work, the guidance counsellor in an organisation works alone for the most part, or there are just two counsellors working together. Such environment may curtail or even prevent the possibility for the flow of information, discussion, comparison and also evaluation. Using the peer review method thus guarantees the counsellor – among other things – **a wider professional field/environment that allows him/her a possibility of quality development**.

What are the aims and principles of the European Peer Review procedure?

Generals aims and principles

The general aims of the European Peer Review procedure are

- to promote quality assurance and development,
- to enhance transparency and comparability of quality in VET in Europe through a common European standard, and
- to support equal opportunities.

Important specific requirements and characteristics of the procedure are

- **a focus on the people** involved and **their interests and needs**,
- **objectivity and impartiality** of the Peers,
- **transparency** of all elements of the procedure to all persons involved,
- **rules on confidentiality and on the use of results**, to be set up in advance and adhered to by all persons involved,
- **avoidance of conflicts of interest and direct competition** between Peers (and the institution they come from) and the reviewed institution,
- **promotion of openness, integrity and sincerity** as a prerequisite for mutual learning,

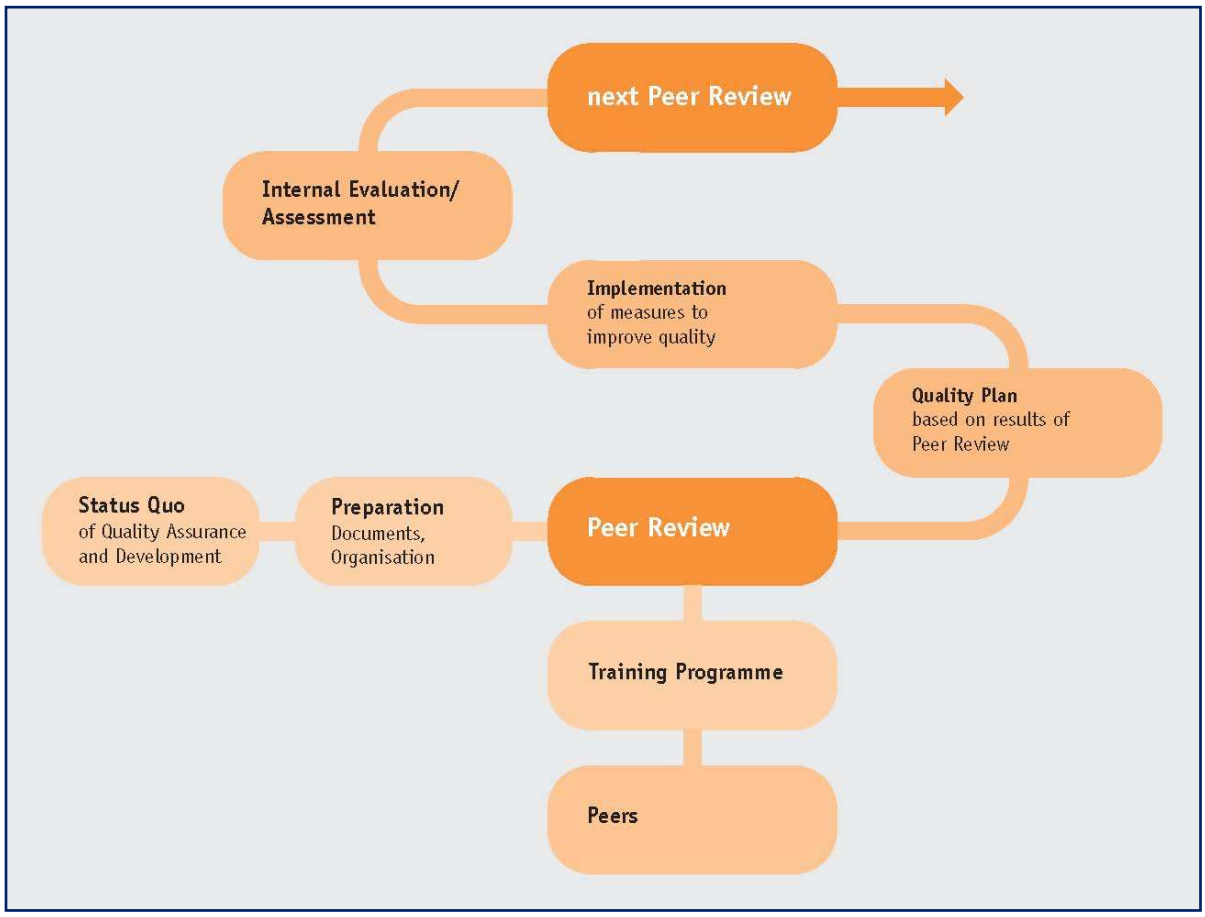
- awareness of **cultural influences** both on vocational education and training provision and on evaluation, especially in transnational Peer Reviews,
- **promotion of an enquiring and critical attitude** both in the Peers and the reviewed institution, and
- **the design and implementation** of Peer Review not as a technical and bureaucratic procedure but as **a dynamic and motivating process**, from which both the reviewed institution and the Peers can benefit.

The European Peer Review as a voluntary and formative evaluation procedure

The European Peer Review procedure has been developed for voluntary use by VET providers/institutions. It has a formative, development-oriented function and puts particular emphasis on the promotion of continuing quality improvement.

The European Peer Review assists the VET provider/institution in determining the status quo in terms of high-quality provision as well as providing valuable suggestions and recommendations for improvement. Thus, the primary addressees of the European Peer Review procedure are the reviewed VET providers themselves. **The main focus of the procedure described in this Manual is the stimulation of continuous quality development.**

Graph 1: **Continuous Quality Improvement with Peer Review**



Here we would like to draw attention to three fundamental objectives that the guidance centre network has set for the **development of the quality of guidance work**. These are:

OBJECTIVE 1: Adults have **access** to guidance for education and learning.
OBJECTIVE 2: Adults are guaranteed **quality guidance service** for education and learning.
OBJECTIVE 3: Guidance activity effectively contributes to **inclusion and successfulness** of adults in lifelong learning.

If we compare these objectives with the objectives that direct the peer-review method – the **promotion of quality development** and **greater transparency and comparability of quality** in Europe using the same European standard – it is impossible to overlook the links and similarities between them. If we ask whether these **objectives and principles** of peer review can be used for work in the **field of guidance**, the answer is undoubtedly affirmative. The field of guidance is one of the fields where the demand and desire for **transparency and European comparability** has been present for a while, and thus the method of peer review is most welcome for this reason, especially if it will enable international comparison of quality levels, which would be certainly welcome in Slovenia and would further strongly motivate quality development in its relatively small network of guidance centres. We are bound to this by the *Report on adult learning: it is never too late to learn* that specifically emphasises providing quality information and guidance among the activities for removing obstacles for greater inclusion of adults in life-long learning. (European Commission, 2006)

It will certainly take some more thought, learning and overcoming hindrances before we actually start to respect and follow these principles in practice. Here, we are mostly referring to the **principles of objectiveness and impartiality, avoiding the conflict of interest and direct competition, the principle of openness, integrity and honesty**. Not only guidance services and guidance centres are at stake here, but the entire culture of closedness, competitiveness, envy and fear, that is sometimes obvious in other systems, too, and not only in Slovenia. The work in the field of quality undoubtedly demands some fundamental values:

- **integrity and honesty** of the review and the person whose work is being reviewed,
- **respect** for the achievements of others, regardless of the level, and consideration of the circumstances in which the achievements were made,
- **trust** in the abilities of the reviewer and the reviewed,
- respect of **confidentiality, professional and business ethics**,
- **openness** to novelties, **eagerness to learn**,
- **acceptance of differences** (different solutions, style of work ...) etc.

The institution that does not respect these and similar values cannot be fully committed to quality development. The ISIO guidance centre network successfully incorporated these values (and conquered the anxiety connected to them) when

building its network of strategic and professional partners, and when individual guidance centres were joining the network. These experiences will undoubtedly be valuable when carrying out peer reviews.

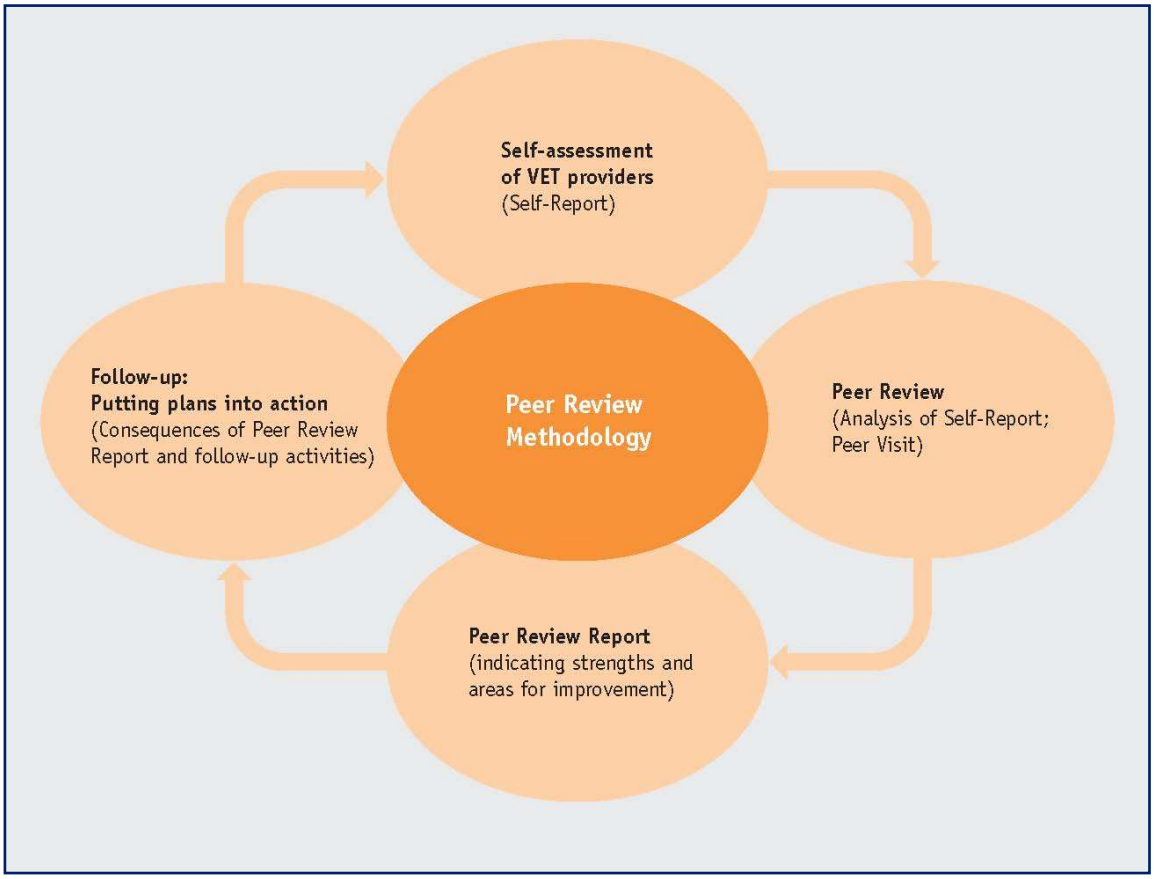
European Peer Review and the Common Quality Assurance Framework

The Peer Review procedure described in this Manual corresponds to the **Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF)** developed by the Technical Working Group (TWG) on Quality in VET (Technical Working Group 'Quality in VET' 2003 and 2004) and adopted by the European Council in 2004.

Within the framework, Peer Review can be implemented as **a new methodology for ensuring and improving quality**. It can be used for an extended internal assessment as well as for external monitoring of the quality of VET provision. Additionally, quality criteria and indicators have been proposed for relevant Quality Areas.

The Quality Assurance Model formulated by the TWG is adhered to within the Peer Review methodology. Its elements comprise the quality management circle prevalent in state-of-the-art quality management schemes. The European Peer Review as a systematic procedure can be depicted as follows:

Graph 2: **The Quality Assurance Model of the CQAF and Peer Review**



Who can use the European Peer Review procedure?

The primary target group for the European Peer Review procedure is **providers of initial VET in Europe with experience in quality assurance and development.**

Of the same importance are other target groups such as **counsellors in education** and **their networks.**

The minimum experience recommended as a basic prerequisite for conducting a Peer Review is that **a VET provider has previously undergone a self-evaluation process at least once**.

Although the common quality assurance frame, endorsed by 31 European countries, social partners and the European Commission, speaks primarily about the questions of quality in VET, it is – because of its universality – **adaptable for other areas of education**. It is characterised by **not prescribing the methods for quality evaluation**, but by merely defining certain elements that that are to be contained in the approaches to quality evaluation. The nature of these elements means they can be considered in approaches that vary greatly. They are: **planning of quality evaluation**, **evaluating** the questions determined in the plan, **establishing the results** based on the evaluation, which then become the basis to **plan for changes**, **quality improvements** and **monitoring the implementation of these plans**. All these procedures must be based on the chosen, holistic **methodology**. In short, it is about a "universal" approach, characteristic for all contemporary approaches to quality development, not just in the field of education, but also elsewhere.

For these reasons, this approach, or the so called CQAF frame, can also be used in the field of guidance work. The only problem that needs to be solved are the areas, quality indicators and standards that in guidance activities are different from those in another field (in this case, the VET). However, if we have the **areas**, **quality indicators** and **guidance activities** defined – which is the case in the ISIO guidance network, **all the conditions are fulfilled to use the Common Quality Assurance Frame (CQAF)**.

Role of stakeholders in the European Peer Review procedure

The involvement of various relevant stakeholder groups in the whole review process is highly recommended. Stakeholders in VET are all the people working and learning within a provider of VET: teachers, learners, administrative staff; cooperation partners of the VET provider; parents; graduates; schools whose graduates are admitted to initial VET as well as institutions of further education; potential employers and the labour market; educational authorities and social partners, and society at large.

It should be pointed out that particular consideration should be given to enterprises as cooperation partners in VET (apprenticeship scheme, internships etc.) and future employers.

Stakeholders can be interview partners both during the self-evaluation and the Peer Review. They may also serve as Peers if their special experience and know-how contribute to the process. Additionally, (groups of) stakeholders may also be interested in the outcomes of the Peer Review (e.g. the Peer Review Report).

The guidance centre network has **interest groups** similar to the ones listed above; however, some are specific to it. Thus the following basic interest groups could be included into ISIO guidance network interest group:

- potential users of guidance services,
- guidance clients,
- former guidance clients,
- guidance counsellors,
- guidance centre managers,
- other employees in institutions where the seat of guidance centres is,
- members of strategic councils of guidance centres,
- members of boards of experts of guidance centres,
- social partners, especially unions,
- educational institutions from the surrounding areas,
- development institutions from the surrounding areas,
- educational/school authorities.

Similar to other fields, the **guidance activities require** that **different interest groups are actively involved in the processes of quality development**.

Documentation of the European Peer Review

European Peer Review Portfolio

All relevant documents of the European Peer Review should be collected by the VET provider in a European Peer Review Portfolio. The European **Peer Review Portfolio contains**:

- the Initial Information Sheet,
- the Self-Report,
- the Peer Review Report,
- and other important documents gathered during the Peer Review process.

In the Leonardo Project "Peer Review in initial VET", **a certificate** completed the portfolio.

Since in Slovenia we have no experience with using the peer review method in the guidance centre network yet, **it is hard to predict if the same documentation that was developed in the mentioned project will be used**. We shall certainly use the experience from this project, but monitor its suitability for the network. **We shall develop additional documentation if it proves necessary**.

European Peer Review Certificate

The coordinator of the Leonardo da Vinci project "Peer Review in initial VET," in cooperation with the project steering group, has issued **a European Peer Review Certificate** to VET providers who have successfully carried out a Peer Review according to the requirements set out in this Manual.

For now, **a certificate for guidance networks is not foreseen.** We will present the experience developed over these few years in Slovenia on international level and start the initiative for a certificate to be developed also for the field of guidance.

PROCEDURE – OVERVIEW

Coordination and organisation of the European Peer Review

Peer Reviews can be organised in different ways – depending on

1) the networks available,
2) the resources (personnel and finances), and
3) the needs and requirements of VET providers.

A single Peer Review can be carried out by **a VET provider** who wants want to obtain some external feedback from Peers and intends to network with other VET providers in an ad hoc and spontaneous way by making use of existing contacts. There need not be any further cooperation between the reviewed VET provider and the VET providers the Peers come from.

Mutual Peer Reviews between two VET providers are also possible, calling for stronger and steadier cooperation.

For the most part, Peer Reviews are carried out in a network of three or more partners. The networks either already exist or are set up for the purpose of carrying out Peer Reviews. This usually expands the cooperation from a one-off activity to more comprehensive networking: common preparatory activities like selection of Peers, training, matching Peers and VET providers, etc. may be introduced, as well as common reporting and monitoring schemes. A Peer Review network will usually also agree on common guidelines and indicators. All of this involves a more stable network and needs suitable structures and sufficient resources. The added-value of the network approach may be

- synergies concerning the conduct of Peer Review between the VET providers in the network,
- an extension of the number and institutional backgrounds of possible Peers,
- a wider external recognition of the Peer Review (which will be fully accepted, at least within the network)
- a higher chance of possible spin-offs in terms of further cooperative activities beyond the Peer Review.

If Peer Reviews are to be carried out in a larger network, a **coordinating body** will be needed to ensure high-quality Peer Reviews and effective coordination of the network members. This function can also be assumed by **one of the VET providers** in the network. The tasks of this coordinating body comprise, for example, managing the network, coordinating the development of common procedures (guidelines and indicators), giving support and advice to the individual VET providers, selecting and training Peers, and coordinating and monitoring the Peer Reviews. This is why the tasks and responsibilities of a coordinating body are also delineated in the European Peer Review procedure.

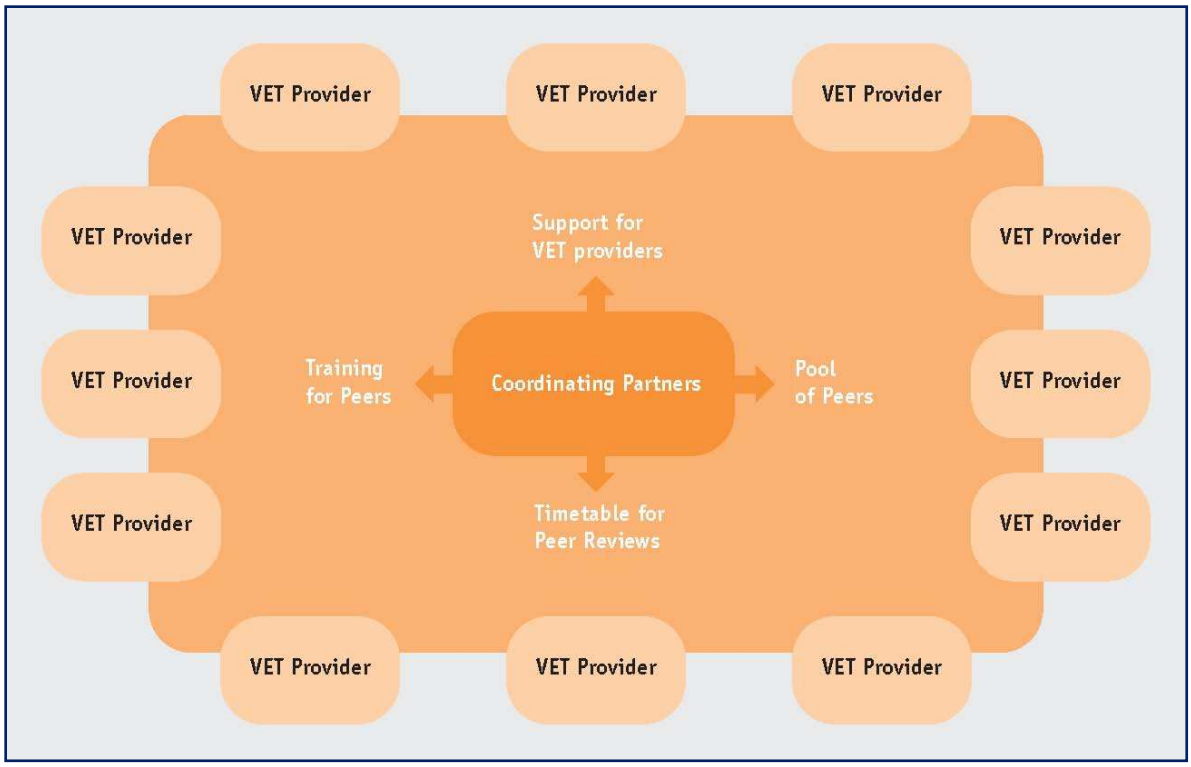
European Peer Review in practice:
coordination of Peer Reviews in the network

The pilot Peer Reviews carried out in the LdV project "Peer Review in initial VET" were based on a network of 14 operative partners. The process was coordinated and monitored by four institutions that were responsible for the pilot phase within the overall project management structure:

- **öibf** (Austrian Institute for Research on Vocational Training) and **FNBE** (Finnish National Board of Education) **were responsible for coordinating and monitoring the Peer Reviews;**
- **The University of Pécs** was the **responsible partner for processing Peer Applications** and **setting up a database of Peers for the project** (This database is currently being extended to a European Peer Register by öibf.)
- **Aberdeen College** provided and administered a web-based training course for Peers.

Additionally, in countries with more than one operative partner, national coordinating partners in the network assisted the operative partners during the pilot phase.

Graph 3: **Peer Review in the partner network of the Project "Peer Review in initial VET"**



Guidance centres will have no trouble in choosing partners to carry out peer review, because the network is consolidated. There are several possibilities. The mutual peer review could be undertaken:

- in the entire guidance centre network,
- between guidance centres from the neighbouring region,
- between guidance centre with a roughly similar structure and profile of clients,
- between guidance centre with the approximately same number of inhabitants in the region,
- between guidance centres that are introducing a new approach into the guidance work etc.

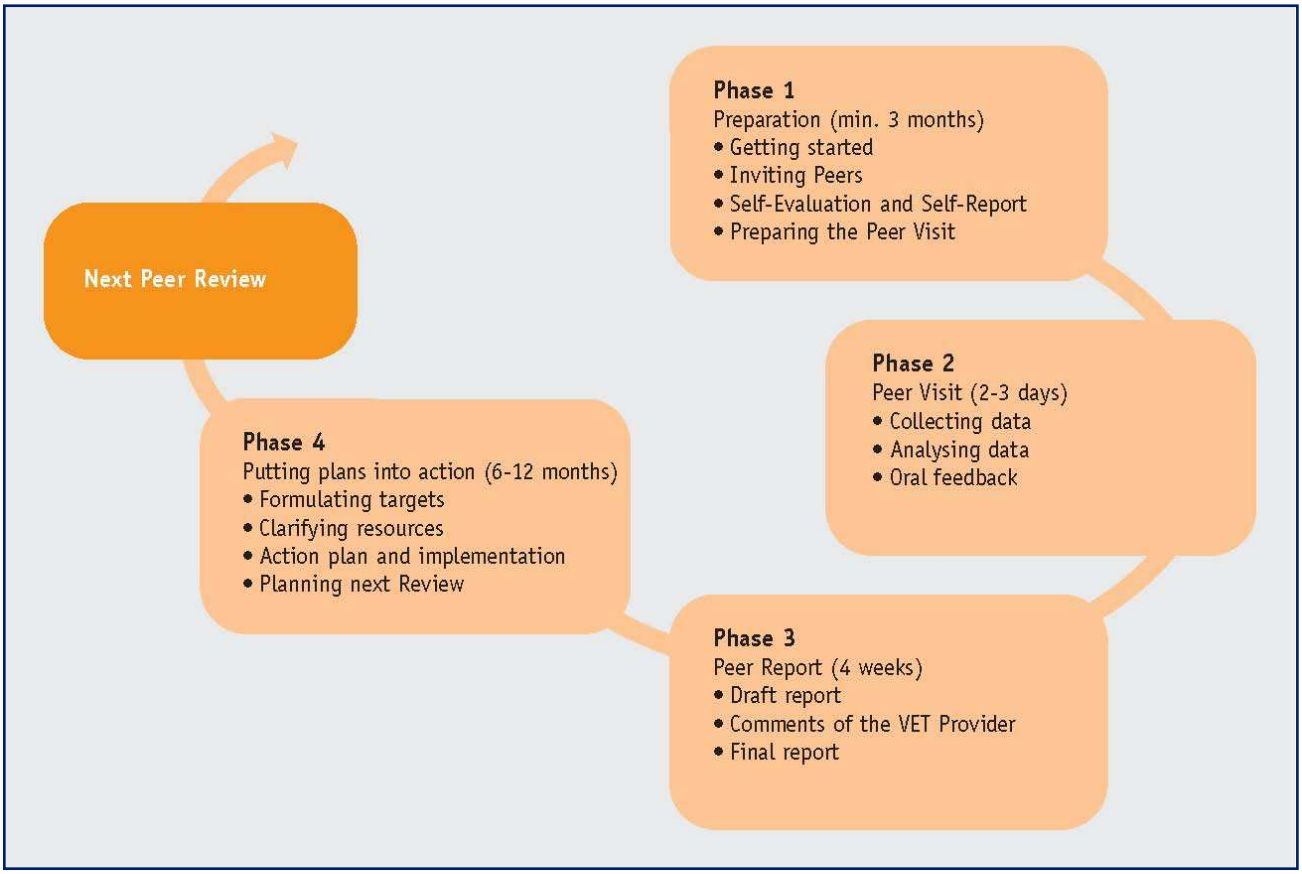
At least in the pilot phase it makes sense that **the SIAE takes on the role of a coordinator**, because one of its primary missions is to introduce different development innovations into the guidance network. The Institute's role can be primarily educational, guidance and organisational.

Four Phases of a European Peer Review

The Peer Review procedure comprises 4 phases.

1. The Peer Review starts with **a preparatory phase**. In this first phase, the Peer Review is organised and **a Self-Report** is written **by the VET provider**. Peers must be recruited and **trained**. **A timetable** for the Review is drawn up and arrangements are made for the Peer Visit.
2. In the second phase, **the Peer Visit**, which is the core activity of the Peer Review procedure, takes place: Peers come to **visit the VET provider** and **carry out an evaluation**. This evaluation includes **a tour of the premises and interviews with different groups of stakeholders**. The Peers give **initial oral feedback** at the end of the Peer Visit.
3. After the Peer Visit, **a draft report** is drawn up by the Peers. This report is **commented on by the VET provider** and the **final Peer Review Report** is issued.
4. The fourth phase is crucial for the improvement of VET provision and organisational development: results and recommendations from the Peer Review are transferred into concrete actions for improvement, which are planned and implemented.

Graph 4: **Four Phases of a European Peer Review**



As far as **guidance services in adult education and guidance centre network** are concerned, **such blueprint for peer review can be used in its entirety in guidance networks.**

Estimated time needed for the European Peer Review

Time needed for preparation

Ample time is needed to adequately prepare and organise a Peer Review.

If a self-evaluation has already been conducted earlier, the Peer Review process can be started right away. At least **three months**, however, should be reserved for the preparation and organisation of the Review. The Self-Report **should be available at least one month before the Peer Review** in order for the Peers to prepare adequately for the Visit. If no self-evaluation has been carried out beforehand, a minimum period of six months should be scheduled for the self-evaluation, which must precede the Peer Review.

Time needed for Peer Visit and Report

The Peer Visit will usually **take two to three days**; it may also **take up to five days**, depending on **the size of the institution reviewed** and **the scope of the Peer Review**, i.e. **how many Quality Areas are to be investigated**. Experience gained in the pilot phase of the project Peer Review in initial VET suggests that Peer Visits of two to three days should be scheduled, with another half day of preparatory work in the Peer Team preceding the visit: while one day was deemed too short for conducting a comprehensive and meaningful evaluation (and if Peers need to travel, (limited) funds for travel should also be used efficiently), Peer Visits of more than three days would put considerable strain on Peers and VET provider alike. Note that the scope of the Peer Review, i.e. the number of Quality Areas investigated, must be in line with this time-frame (see also others Chapters).

Time needed for the implementation of improvement measures and procedures for change

Within two months of receiving the final Peer Review Report, **an action plan** should be presented; **at least six months to a year** should be scheduled for follow-up measures to be implemented and take effect.

Overview: Timetable and responsibilities in the European Peer Review

Table 1: **Tasks of the VET providers, Peers and coordinating body in the European Peer Review procedure, in chronological order**

Phase 1 – Preparation

VET provider/institutions

Getting Started:

- ❑ Decide to carry out Peer Review
- ❑ Decide on external organisation of Peer Review (single Peer Review, Peer Review Network)
- ❑ Decide on internal organisation of Peer Review (responsibilities and tasks)
- ❑ Decide on Quality Areas
- ❑ Send Initial Information Sheet (including a proposal for a rough time schedule) to the coordinating body
- ❑ *Optional: Organise coordination meeting of the VET providers/institutions in the network and the coordinating body.*

Peers and Peer Team:

- ❑ Look for suitable Peers with regard to Quality Areas scrutinised
- ❑ Invite Peers to apply to the coordinating body
- ❑ Select Peers in consultation with the coordinating body
- ❑ Conclude contracts with Peers.

Self-Evaluation and Self-Report:
- ❑ Conduct self-evaluation
- ❑ Write Self-Report
- ❑ Submit Self-Report to Peers and to the coordinating body
- ❑ Make other necessary documentation available to Peers and to the coordinating body.

Preparing the Peer Visit
- ❑ Schedule Peer Visit: Set date and draw up Peer Review agenda
- ❑ Organise preparatory meeting of the Peers
- ❑ Prepare local organisation of the Peer Visit (rooms and equipment, interviewees, lunch, tour of the premises, etc.)
- ❑ *Recommended: organise preliminary meeting of Peers with VET provider to clarify review assignments and to answer questions from the Peers ("Question and Answer Session").*

Peers

Peers and Peer Team:
- ❑ Submit application to become a Peer
- ❑ Sign contract for Peer Review
- ❑ Prepare for Peer Review and undertake Peer Training.

Self-evaluation and Self-Report:
- ❑ Receive Self-Reports from VET providers
- ❑ Read and analyse Self-Report
- ❑ Identify areas for investigation and evaluation topics for the Peer Review.

Preparing the Peer Visit:
- ❑ Assist in the scheduling of the Peer Visit, especially in the drawing-up of the Peer Review agenda
- ❑ Exchange opinions in Peer team on the content of the Self-Report, agree on evaluation topics for the Peer Review
- ❑ Prepare questions for interviews and criteria for observation
- ❑ Take part in preparatory meeting of Peers for team-building and to prepare the Peer Visit
- ❑ *Recommended: Take part in preliminary meeting of Peers with VET provider to clarify review assignments and to receive additional information, if necessary ("Question and Answer Session").*

Phase 1 – Preparation

Coordinating body

Getting Started:

- ❑ Send information on Peer Review procedure to VET providers/institutions
- ❑ Collect Initial Information Sheets
- ❑ Make an initial plan of the Peer Review schedule (master plan) by using the information on the Initial Information Sheets from VET providers
- ❑ *Optional: organise coordination meeting of the VET providers/institutions in the network and the coordinating body.*

Peers and Peer Team:

- ❑ Look for suitable Peers – request, process and assess applications
- ❑ Match Peers with the VET providers/institutions (with regard to Quality Areas to be scrutinised)
- ❑ Select Peers (in consultation with the VET provider/institution)
- ❑ Supervise and assist with contract with Peers.

Self-Evaluation and Self-Report:

- ❑ Receive Self-Reports of VET providers
- ❑ Forward Self-Report to Peers (if not sent directly).

Preparing the Peer Visit:

- ❑ Scheduling of Peer Visit (in consultation with VET provider and Peers)
- ❑ Organise preparation and training for the Peers.

Phase 2 – Peer Visit

VET provider/institution

Support Peers in the following activities:

- ❑ Make equipment and rooms available
- ❑ Facilitate interviews and observations
- ❑ Facilitate a tour of the premises
- ❑ Receive feedback from Peers
- ❑ Engage in communicative validation.

Peers

- ❑ Collect data
- ❑ Visit the premises
- ❑ Conduct interviews and observations
- ❑ Analyse and discuss findings in the Peer Team
- ❑ Carry out a professional assessment and come to common conclusions
- ❑ Give oral feedback to VET provider
- ❑ Engage in communicative validation
- ❑ Carry out meta-evaluation in the Peer Team.

Coordinating body

- ❑ *Optional: Involvement in Peer Visits.*

Phase 3 – Peer Review Report

VET provider/institution

- ❑ Comment on the draft Peer Review Report.

Peers

- ❑ Write Peer Review Report and submit it to the VET provider/institution
- ❑ Receive comments of the VET provider/institution and finalise Peer Review Report
- ❑ End of Peer involvement.

Coordinating body

- ❑ *Optional: Receive Peer Review Report*
- ❑ *Optional: Involvement in writing or finalising the Peer Review Report.*

Phase 4 – Putting plans into action

VET provider/institution

- ❑ Decide to follow up the findings of the Peer Review
- ❑ Plan improvement measures
- ❑ Implement improvement measures
- ❑ Plan and carry out the next Peer Review.

Coordinating body

- ❑ *Optional: Involvement in the follow-up.*

The overview of chronological individual tasks as seen by the evaluated party, in our case, a **guidance centre**, as well as from the point of view of the **reviewer** and the **coordinating body (the Slovenian Institute of Adult Education)** can be considered an **appropriate guideline** for the execution of peer reviews. Of course, the initial pilot studies will show, which procedures can be carried out in a different order, organised differently, or with different contents.

EUROPEAN PEER REVIEW PROCEDURE – PREPARATION (PHASE 1)

Getting started

Decision to undertake a Peer Review

Starting a Peer Review involves

- the decision to carry out a European Peer Review with high commitment by the management and other important stakeholders,
- the decision on whether the Peer Review should cover the whole institution or only parts of it,
- the decision on the aims and purposes of the Peer Review,
- the distribution of tasks and responsibilities including the appointment of a Peer Review Facilitator and a quality team, and
- the decision on time and resources allocated to the Peer Review.

Efficacy in terms of quality improvement depends on **the cooperation and participation of the people involved**. From the start, **a high commitment by senior management** (director, department heads, etc.) must be ensured, but also **by staff** (teaching and administrative) and **other relevant stakeholders**. This must also include explicit dedication to implementing procedures for change as a follow-up to the Peer Review Report in Phase 4 of the Peer Review procedure (Putting Plans into Action).

Responsibility for **the coordination of all activities** concerning the Peer Review should be assigned to a **Peer Review Facilitator**. S/he, **as a member of staff**, will be the link between the VET provider/ institution reviewed and the Peer Team reviewing the institution. S/he should be carefully selected because of the crucial role of the Peer Review Facilitator.

As the **guidance centres** in Slovenia are **units with one, two or at most three employees**, it is neither possible nor sensible to nominate a coordinator to plan and execute the review; this task would undoubtedly fall upon the counsellor who works at the centre the most hours. On one hand, this does represent **burden for the counsellor**, but on the other, it is **an advantage of guidance centres**: because they are so small, a series of time consuming coordination tasks becomes obsolete.

Thus, the most important step in this phase is to adopt a decision, **which interest groups to include in the peer review**. Of course, such decision strongly depends on the areas, chosen for the review, and the most important target groups are guidance counsellors and guidance clients. We hope that guidance centres will often decide to include other interest groups as well, especially those who represent their most important users (strategic partners, expert partners, development agencies/factors in the region, industry etc.).

Decision on Quality Areas

The next step is to decide which Quality Areas should be dealt with in the Peer Review. **The decision on the Quality Areas should be made by the management in agreement with staff and other important stakeholders, if possible**. VET providers/institutions should only choose **Quality Areas over which they have an influence**. For an overview of the Quality Areas, please go to Chapter VII.

Issues that may be considered in the choice of Quality Areas are:

- Are there Quality Areas that are essential due to national/regional/local, etc. quality requirements and standards?
- Are there Quality Areas that show examples of best practice and excellence?
- Are there Quality Areas that urgently need to be reviewed, i.e. because problems have been detected?
- Are there Quality Areas that are particularly important, i.e. because new developments are to be initiated?
- Are there Quality Areas where innovation has taken place, which calls for an evaluation?
- Are there Quality Areas that are of particular interest to important groups of stakeholders?

The overall guiding principle for the selection of Quality Areas is their relevance. Additionally, feasibility should be taken into account: the broader the range of Quality Areas to be reviewed, the more time and resources will be necessary for the Review. A policy of "small steps" will be suitable especially for VET providers with little previous evaluation experience. (These may also decide to test the procedure for parts of their institution only.) **For a Peer Visit of two days, it is highly recommended that no more than two Quality Areas be chosen** - only very experienced Peers will be able to deal with more Quality Areas within this time-frame. Note that too many Quality Areas will either lead to a rather superficial evaluation or will force the Peers to narrow their focus to selected topics within the Quality Areas.

Furthermore, it may make sense to include areas which have previously undergone internal evaluation in order to reduce the self-evaluation effort.

Additionally, **special evaluation questions** can be formulated for the Peers: in addition to the Quality Areas, VET providers can give "assignments" to the Peers to pay special attention to specific issues and questions that are of particular importance to the VET provider. This will enhance the usefulness of the results of the Peer Review.

The decision about the quality areas to be evaluated is one of the most important decisions for the guidance centre to make, and it needs to be taken before the peer review begins. Here we can come across the first major difference between VET and guidance activities, since the **quality areas and indicators in guidance work are significantly different from the ones in VET, although a number of common areas can be seen.**

When deciding on a peer review in guidance we will mostly emphasize areas that are determined as quality-defining areas for guidance. On the EU level, common basic areas and quality indicators for guidance activities are yet to be defined; we do, however, know of such definitions in individual countries (for example England). **In 2008, the quality areas, indicators and quality criteria in adult education guidance centres were defined in Slovenia as well**. These areas and indicators will be introduced in more detail in the continuation of this document. They are, in any case, the starting point that the guidance centres will use when deciding which quality area to assess with the help of a peer review.

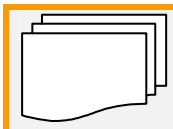
When choosing the area, the guidance centres will benefit from asking the questions listed above for vocational education and training.

Initial documentation and information

The basic decisions concerning the conduct of the Peer Review should then be documented by the VET provider **in written format**. The "Peer Review Initial Information Sheet" serves as internal documentation and as external information for the coordinating body, the Peers, other VET providers in the network, etc. The form should be filled out and sent to the coordinating body in good time, i.e. at least three months before the Peer Review.

The "Peer Review Initial Information Sheet" includes documentation of

1) contact information,
2) the starting situation and the decision to undergo Peer Review (and by whom it was taken),
3) the aims and purpose of the Peer Review,
4) how it is to be organised,
5) the internal distribution of tasks and responsibilities,
6) an overview of the procedure and a time schedule (which steps will be taken and when),
7) the Quality Areas,
8) Further Comments and
9) a list of possible Peers.



The form Peer Review Initial Information Sheet can be found in the Tool-box.

Optional: Coordination Meeting

If the Peer Reviews are organised as reciprocal reviews or in a network of VET providers, **a meeting between the representatives of VET providers** (and, if applicable, also the coordinating body) will improve the whole process[1].

The following activities can be part of the agenda:

- Introducing each other, short self-portraits of the VET providers;
- Expectations of VET providers, motivation of management and teachers;
- Information on and discussion of the Peer Review procedure (purpose, targets, process and activities, resources and work-time for the persons involved);
- Competence profile for the Peers, mode of selection of the Peers;
- Commitment of the management and the staff involved;
- If applicable: information and/or decision on the involvement of authorities;
- If applicable: contractual relations between 1) the VET providers and/or 2) the VET providers and the coordinating body;
- Further steps, time scheduling, questions.

Recommended: Contracts between VET providers and coordinating body

If Peer Reviews are carried out on a larger scale, it is sensible to put **the duties and responsibilities** of the different parties into a mutual written agreement[2].

Important issues to be covered by such a contract are:

- Purpose of the agreement;
- Rights and duties, mutual expectations, conditions of network partners (and coordinating body, if applicable);
- Aims of the Peer Review procedure;
- Internal distribution of tasks and responsibilities;
- Costs;
- Data protection;
- Involvement of education authority (if applicable);
- Action plan and responsibility for the implementation of the action plan;
- Procedure, steps, time scheduling.

[1] In the European Project "Peer Review in initial VET," the 3rd transnational meeting in Trento (Jan. 16-17, 2006) served this purpose.
[2] In the European Project "Peer Review in initial VET," the partner contracts regulated these issues.

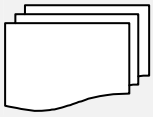
Selecting and inviting the Peer Team

Once the decision on conducting the Peer Review and a selection of Quality Areas has been made, the VET provider and/or the coordinating body become active **in recruiting Peers**. Preliminary information on the Peer Review procedure and the tasks of the Peers may be sent out to prospective Peers.

The Peers may come **from other VET providers or stakeholder institutions**. The VET providers may suggest suitable Peers. Alternatively, Peers can also submit applications of their own accord. If a coordinating body does not exist or is only marginally involved, the VET providers may also select and invite the Peers themselves. The use of a standard application form for Peers is recommended.

Apart from the competences and experience of the Peers, availability is an important factor in setting up Peer Teams. **Thus, the areas of expertise of the Peers must fit in with the Quality Areas to be reviewed while, at the same time, the time schedules of Peers and VET providers need to be compatible**. **The Peer Coordinator should be selected with great care**: S/he will be the key person in the Peer Team with overall responsibility for the Peer Review process: communication and coordination in the Peer Team; time management; relations with the VET provider, etc. If an Evaluation Expert is to guide the Peer Review process, s/he must also be recruited.

Further information on Peers and the Selection of Peers can be found in others Chapters.



A Peer Application Form can be found in the Tool-box.

Either the VET provider or the coordinating body should also **inform the Peers of their duties and tasks well in advance and conclude a contract**. Peers should therefore receive the "Initial Information Sheet" as well as a summary of what will be expected of them during the Peer Review. This information may also be attached to a formal invitation letter which should be sent out as soon as the matching of Peers and VET providers has successfully been carried out and a time schedule for the Reviews has been fixed.

A Model Contract Form for Peers can be found in the Tool-box.

To sum up, the selection and invitation of Peers involves

- soliciting applications from Peers using a standard application form,
- selecting Peers according to their expertise and matching them with VET providers,
- *optional: recruiting an Evaluation Expert to guide the Peer Review process*,
- nominating a Peer Coordinator,
- setting up a timetable for the Peer Reviews,
- sending out information to the Peers on 1) the Peer Review procedure, 2) the VET provider they are to review, and 3) their duties and tasks,
- concluding a contract with the Peers and sending out an official invitation to the Peers.

When choosing **the peers for the peer review of quality in guidance services** one should chose primarily among the **experts who have knowledge and experience in guidance work**. Thus this task could be carried out by **counsellors** from a **guidance centre** for another guidance centre or the entire network of guidance centres. Of course, the peer review can include experts – **counsellors from similar fields** (for example psychologists, social workers) or experts from other fields if the issues reviewed require them.

Regardless of which experts - counsellors are used, it is important that they are **well familiar with and trained to carry out the method of peer review of quality**.

Self-evaluation and Self-Report

Recommendations for conducting a self-evaluation

A sound analysis of strengths and areas for improvement is a prerequisite for the Peer Review. **A systematic self-evaluation of all Quality Areas selected for the Peer Review must therefore be carried out before the external Peer Review takes place** and the results of the self-evaluation must be documented in a Self-Report.

The self-evaluation must be an investigation at institutional level (or at the level of departments, branches, etc. of an institution) but may be preceded and supported by individual evaluations of staff, especially teaching staff. For the individual evaluations, a Peer Review procedure between individual teachers can be introduced (cf. Gutknecht-Gmeiner, 2005: Part I: International Research and Analysis).

No specific self-evaluation procedure is prescribed for the European Peer Review. On the contrary, VET providers are encouraged to make use of assessments and evaluations already carried out in order to avoid duplication of efforts. Thus, if a self-evaluation has been conducted **within a reasonable time** (up to two years) before

the Peer Review, the results can be used and need only be filled into the Self-Report. For areas or criteria not yet covered, additional evaluations must be carried out.

If a VET provider carries out a self-evaluation for the first time, recourse to guidance (and perhaps also consultation) is recommended. Suitable guidelines and handbooks on how to plan and carry out self-evaluations exist in abundance. To name only one example, which was created in European cooperation, the "European Guide on Self-assessment for VET providers" developed by the Technical Working Group on Quality in VET can be recommended[3].

Quality criteria for self-evaluation

The self-evaluation can be performed in different ways. VET providers may choose a suitable procedure according to their interests, needs, and experience. It is recommended, however, that a clear and structured procedure is employed, which focuses on relevant Quality Areas and evaluation questions. Apart from a clear commitment by management and staff, the responsibilities and tasks involved in the procedure should be transparent.

The procedure should

- be conducted in a transparent and fair way,
- involve all important stakeholders,
- employ suitable evaluation methods, and
- entail adequate sharing of information and results.

Feasibility of the self-evaluation in terms of time and resources must be ensured from the start.

Self-evaluation profile: assessing strengths and areas for improvement

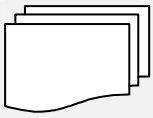
During the self-evaluation, strengths and areas for improvement should be identified for the Quality Areas reviewed. Actions to be taken for improvement should also be discussed and indicated in the Self-Report. A SWOT analysis, for example, is a well-known, simple and time-efficient procedure for obtaining a profile of performance in the Quality Areas chosen. Strengths and areas for improvement should be identified at the level of the criteria of the individual Quality Areas.

Self-Report

The Self-Report is the central document of the Peer Review procedure: it should contain all information necessary to prepare the Peer Review. It must therefore tackle all the topics to be evaluated during the Peer Review.

[3] Ravnmark, Lise-Lotte (2003): A European Guide on Self-assessment for VET providers, Technical Working Group on Quality in VET; available, for example, from http://communities.trainingvillage.gr/ quality in English, German, French and Italian.

While VET providers are free to chose their methods and procedures for the self-evaluation, **the Self-Reports should be standard and uniform in order to promote comparability**. The description of the self-evaluation results must be clear, concise and meaningful. Evidence to buttress the assessments provided in the Self-Report should be furnished in an Annex.



Self-Report Form, which should be adhered to, can be found in the Tool-box.

The first part of the report is an update of the **Initial Information Sheet**, which contains all relevant data on the Peer Review procedure. The second part comprises **a description of the VET provider** and the **study programmes** offered, **the mission statement, statistical data and information on organisational issues**. The third part contains **the results of the self-evaluation of the Quality Areas chosen**. It should provide an assessment of the strengths and areas for improvement and also indicate special evaluation questions for the Peers. The latter will help the Peers in targeting the Peer Review to the topics of particular relevance to the VET provider. Additional documents can be attached in an Annex.

In the guidance centre network in Slovenia self-evaluation was not systematically implemented, although all the centres regularly monitored their work using set methodology. This is an excellent starting point for the guidance centres to carry out a complete self-evaluation. We believe that data collected in this process could be used to carry out the SWOT analysis, which in turn can serve as a basis for a peer evaluation of the quality of a guidance centre. A holistic **quality in guidance centres model** is being prepares, and it is a combination of the processes of self-evaluation, monitoring and external evaluation. In this model, using **peer review for quality can be an excellent tool to carry out** these processes.

Preparing the Peer Visit

Tasks of the VET provider

After fixing the date for the Peer Visit and recruiting and inviting the Peers, the Peer Review Facilitator must make sure that the Peers receive **the Self-Report and all necessary documentation no later than one month before the Visit**.

Recommended: Meeting between the VET provider and the Peer Team

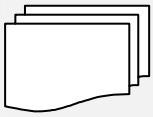
It is highly recommended, that **a meeting be organised between the VET provider and the Peer Team** in order to clarify questions from the Peers and discuss the agenda of the Peer Visit. This may comprise fine-tuning the evaluation

questions for the Peers, making decisions on the evaluation methods and on the groups of stakeholders to be interviewed.

Further information can be given to the Peers upon request. The outcome of the meeting is a detailed Peer Visit agenda.

Drawing-up an agenda for the Peer Visit

A detailed and realistic agenda for the Peer Visit should be drawn up by the Peer Review Facilitator. For this task, the Peer Review Facilitator should be aided by the Evaluation Expert and/or the Peers since **the agenda will reflect the kind of evaluation methods** that will be used and **what stakeholder groups will be involved** in the Peer Visit. Plan the agenda carefully to ensure a successful Peer Visit.



Examples of **Peer Visit agendas** can be found in the Tool-box.

Local organisation of the Peer Visit

The local organisation of the Peer Visit is undertaken by the Peer Review Facilitator, who is responsible for the smooth running of the Visit. The local organisation entails:

- selecting interviewees,
- reserving rooms and equipment,
- making a plan of the school premises and putting up signs giving directions (optional),
- inviting interviewees,
- informing and inviting other involved stakeholders,
- preparing.

Rooms have to be suitable and free from disturbance. One room should be reserved for the Peer Team throughout the whole day for interim sessions by the Peers. One spacious room should be reserved for briefing and for the final meeting between the representatives of the VET institution and the Peer Team.

Tasks of the Peers

PREPARING FOR THE REVIEW

To prepare for the Review, the Peers need

- to read and analyse the Initial Information Sheet and the Self-Report (and ask for additional information, if necessary),
- to attend a pre-review meeting with the VET provider (recommended),
- to attend Peer training,

- to exchange opinions on the content of the Self-Report in the Peer Team and agree on evaluation topics for the Peer Review,
- to draw up an agenda for the Peer Visit together with the Peer Review Facilitator,
- to attend a pre-review Peer Team meeting (the day/evening before the Visit),
- to prepare interview questions and criteria for observation.

PEER TRAINING PROGRAMME

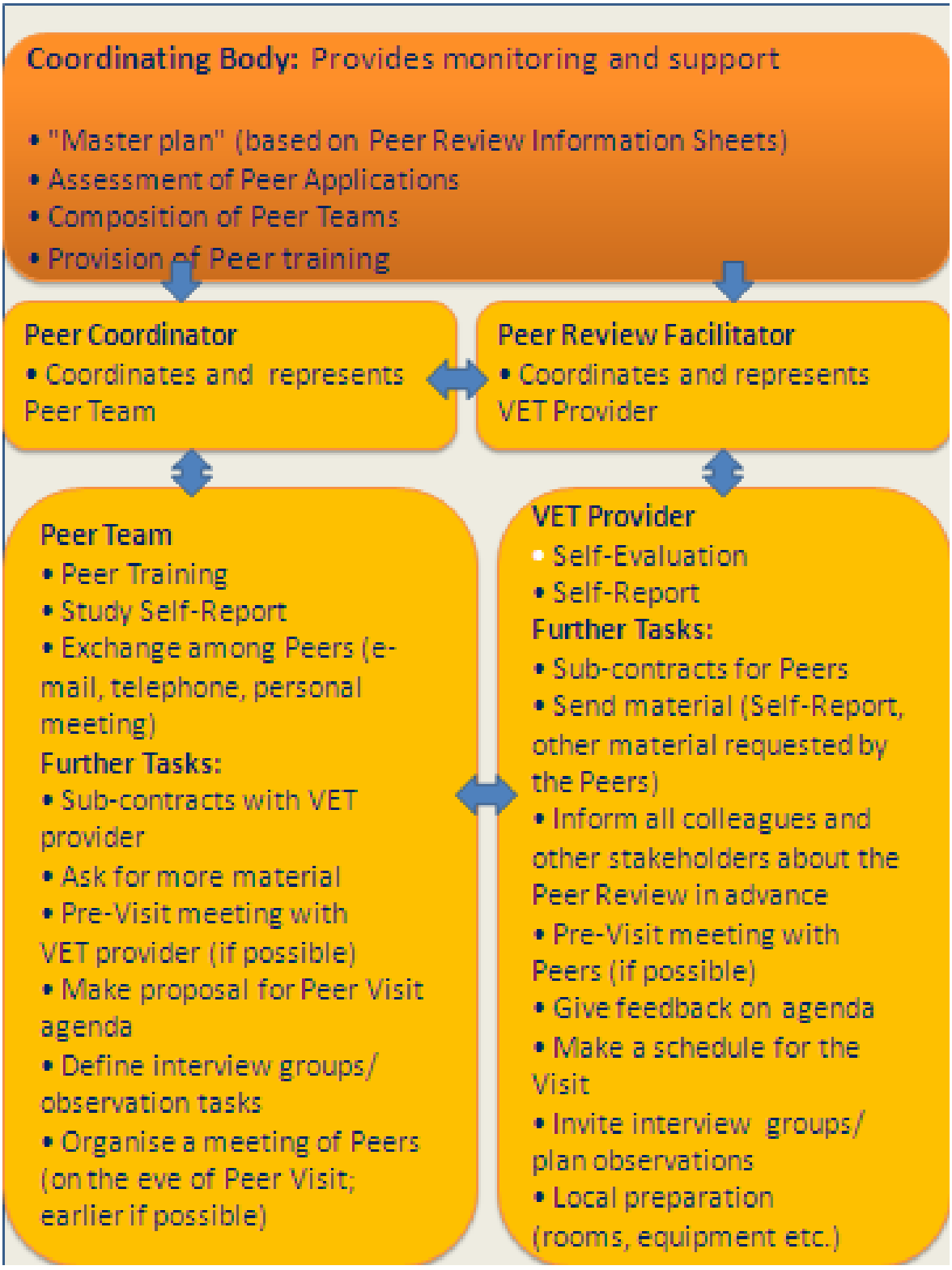
Prior to the Peer Review, the Peers should undergo a "**Peer Training Programme**" that prepares them for their work as external evaluators.

PREPARATORY MEETING OF THE PEERS AND PREPARATORY MEETING WITH THE VET PROVIDER

It is vital that the **Peer Team meets before the Visit** in order to get to know each other and to prepare the Visit together. This will enhance team-building and the efficiency of team cooperation during the Review. It will make sense for the Peers to have read and analysed the Self-Report prior to this meeting so that first impressions can be exchanged and specific questions and topics for the Peer Visit can be discussed. If possible, this meeting should also take place on the day before the first day of the Peer Review. Additionally, the Peers may also meet with representatives of the VET provider to be reviewed. Providing an opportunity for a "Question and Answer Session" with the VET provider, usually represented by the Peer Review Facilitator, may greatly improve the process.

For efficient organisation of the preparatory activities, both meetings can also be scheduled on the same day and, if possible, be linked to the Peer Training. Ideally, the whole Peer Team attends the face-to-face part of the Training Programme together. After or during the training, the Peers are joined by the Peer Review Facilitator (and perhaps other responsible staff of the VET provider). Subsequent to the discussion with the representative(s) of the VET provider, the Peers hold their team meeting.

Graph 5: **Responsibilities and tasks in the preparation of the Peer Reviews**



EUROPEAN PEER REVIEW PROCEDURE – PEER VISIT (PHASE 2)

What happens during the Peer Visit?

During the Visit, the Peers conduct a brief and condensed evaluation, which focuses on the Quality Areas chosen by the VET provider. The basis for the evaluation is **an analysis** of the previously furnished **Self-Report** and **other relevant documentation**. During the Visit, the Peers check the accuracy of the findings of the self-evaluation documents and conduct their own investigation. All of this usually entails gathering additional data.

Different evaluation methods can be used. Apart from **the analysis of the available documentation** (which can be extended to encompass further written sources of information during the Visit), the most common methods are **interviews** and **(focus) group discussions**, as well as **observations**. The data collected must then be analysed and discussed by the Peers. **Initial feedback** is given to the VET provider at the end of the Visit. Depending on the aims of the Peer Review, the Peer Visit can also be used for a more extensive exchange between Peers and representatives of the VET provider, comprising **elements of Peer consulting**.

Collecting data

The most common methods used for collecting data are:

Group and single interviews

Interviews are most often used in Peer Reviews. The aim is to collect as much information as possible from different stakeholders. Interviews may be conducted with single persons or with groups of persons (usually five to six, up to a maximum of about ten). Groups will be fairly homogeneous most of the time (focus groups), but groups with different stakeholder representatives are also possible. For important stakeholder groups, like students and teachers, two independent interview groups can be organised to gather comprehensive feedback.

Who is to be interviewed?

Usually representatives of all relevant stakeholders should be involved. The relevance of stakeholder groups depends on the Quality Area(s) reviewed.

The VET provider will choose the types of stakeholders to be interviewed and can be aided in this decision by the Peers and the Evaluation Expert.

Groups of interviewees are usually:

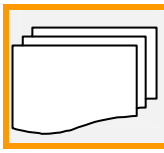
- **managers** (head of institution, heads of departments, etc.),
- **staff** (teachers and non-teaching staff),
- **students**,
- **former students**, and
- **other stakeholders**, such as representatives of enterprises, parents, suppliers, social partners,

other educational institutions, education authorities, etc.

If we decide to use interviews as a part of the guidance work review process, we would **include** especially the following:

- ❑ **guidance clients** (former and those currently participating in the guidance processes),
- ❑ **counsellors,**
- ❑ **guidance centre managers,**
- ❑ **directors** of institutions where the seat of the guidance centres are,
- ❑ **members of strategy and planning boards** and **expert groups**.

Invitation of the interview groups lies within the responsibility of the VET provider who – for the sake of validity – **has to make sure that a representative choice of interview partners is made within each group of stakeholders**. The Peers, however, should furnish clear criteria for the composition of the interview groups and monitor compliance. When composing interview groups, particular attention must be paid to social aspects like formal or informal hierarchies, existing conflicts, diverse interest etc., which can adversely affect the openness of the interviewees.



Forms for **Interview Minutes** and **Interview Analysis** for the Peers can be found in the Tool-box.

Tour of the premises

On an accompanied, on-site visit, the whole Peer Team or a Peer Tandem (the Peer Coordinator, who also writes the Peer Review Report, should ideally be included) assesses the infrastructure and equipment. In addition, informal information can be collected during this tour of the premises.

Guidance activity usually takes place in one room only, so in this case guided tours are not necessary. However, a visit to the premises where the guidance activity takes place gives important information and will generally be included into the peer review. Both the premises where the **seat of the guidance centre** is and any **dislocated units** should be included in the peer review process. Although dislocated units have lower demands in regard to the premises, they have to meet the basic standards of quality to carry out guidance work.

The review of the premises is particularly useful for the assessment to establish if they:

- ❑ enable confidential work of the guidance counsellor and the guidance client,
- ❑ use of different resources necessary for guidance work (telephone, internet, literature about guidance, other guidance instruments …),
- ❑ suitable environment for the counsellor to be able to work in a professional manner etc.

Peer observations (in classrooms, laboratories, workshops, sports grounds, etc.)

During a Peer Visit, observations can also be carried out. Classroom observations are most common but observations can also be conducted during practical training, i.e. in laboratories, workshops, etc., and in other social situations (breaks, etc.).

If observations are to be carried out, they must be prepared well. The aim(s) and the subject of the observation must be defined in advance (together with the persons reviewed, if possible) and a systematic procedure for note-taking must be drawn up. In the assessment, the evaluations of the individual situations must be aggregated so that conclusions will focus on the VET provider as a whole and not on individual teachers[4].

Observations of specific teaching and learning activities can be linked to the tour of the premises, which will then take more time. Apart from the individual classroom visit, which usually focuses on a certain topic, whole classes may be shadowed throughout a day or all classes may be visited for a short time.

[4] If serious problems are detected which concern a single teacher, feedback should go directly to the teacher (and perhaps also the director) but must not be mentioned in the Peer Review Report.

In guidance, **the role of observations is very limited**. The basis, on which the guidance process is built, is confidentiality between the counsellor and the client. For this reason it is impossible to allow the third person to be present during the process, as this would hinder the establishing of an appropriate guidance relationship and the necessary confidentiality mentioned above. The only possibilities for observations are, in our opinion:

- during the process of **informing the client**, which is a process not confidential in nature (in the way that the guidance process is),
- in cases of **representing** the guidance client in other institutions,
- in cases of group **informing and counselling**, where the reviewer will not be a disturbing element in the processes of informing, guidance or training.

Of course, so far we were only been discussing the fundamental guidance process, the actual guidance. However, a number of other processes that support this fundamental process are important for the quality of guidance. These **supporting processes** may include:

- promotion of the guidance centre activities,
- establishing partner relationships in local environment,
- the use of approaches for guidance work quality evaluation, managing and organising work.

In all these processes, there are no limitations in regard of using the observation method.

Example: Guidance centres in Slovenia organise the annual Guidance Centre Day, which is dedicated to promoting their activities and presenting the general public with the possibilities these centres offer. For this purpose, the centres organise, for example, discussions in libraries, set up information stalls in shopping malls, prepare radio and television programmes. All these can become a subject of observation during the peer review process.

Other methods

A wide repertoire of methods is possible in order to be able to align the process to the aim and content of the review. Apart from the most common central elements of a Peer Visit described above, other methods, such as (short) questionnaires and surveys, collection and analysis of relevant documents, shadowing, photo, video or picture evaluation, role play, etc., may also be employed.

Analysing data

A preliminary analysis and assessment based on the Self-Report must be made by the Peers before the Visit. During the Visit, it is advisable to sort through and

discuss the findings of the individual sessions and activities immediately afterwards. Peers should not jump to conclusions but carefully weigh the evidence found and seek to gather additional information if findings are inconclusive. **A communicative validation of findings** – especially with learners, as the ultimate beneficiaries, or with the responsible management – can also help to challenge earlier judgements and to obtain a more comprehensive impression. In order to distil, analyse, and discuss the collected information, sufficient time must be reserved for repeated exchange in the Peer Tandems as well as for the final analysis of the findings in the whole Peer Team.

European Peer Review in practice: reserve time for analysis

The experience of the Peers in the pilot phase of the project "Peer Review in initial VET" indicates that ample time for analysis is crucial: if the Peer Visit agenda focuses primarily on collecting large quantities of data, too little time is left for analysing and making sense of this data. Peers feel overwhelmed, stressed and frustrated and experience difficulties when they have to come to a final assessment.

Thus, a balance must be found between the requirement to glean comprehensive data from different stakeholders (cf. below, "Triangulation") and the need for a thorough analysis and discussion of the findings.

We also have similar experiences in the guidance centre network in Slovenia. All guidance centres **very carefully and systematically collect various data** about their own activities. A special computer programme for monitoring work has been developed for this purpose. **However, it often happens that data collection becomes a goal unto itself and that we don't take enough time to thoroughly analyse the collected data** and use them as a base for reconsideration whether the activity is going as planned, and what changes or adjustments are necessary. These practical experiences can be helpful when planning the data analysis phase of the peer review process – help us reflect on the relationship between data collection and analysis already when planning the process.

Assessment and feedback

The central element of a Peer Review is **the assessment, i.e. the professional judgement** by the Peers. It is necessary to reserve ample time for the challenging task of **organising and distilling findings**, **judging** their reliability and **relevance**, discussing different perspectives and opinions in the Peer Team and arriving at common conclusions.

A final meeting of the Peers should be held before the feedback session with the VET provider. In this meeting, the collected data are reviewed and matched for relevance and representativity. Important issues may be selected and visualised on flip charts so that they can be presented to the VET provider in the feedback session. During the discussion meetings of the Peers, the different perspectives of the individual Peer Team members should be taken into account. **It is recommended that the Peers come to consensual conclusions**; statements of differing opinions should only be given if no agreement can be reached. All assessments must be substantiated.

A Quality Area Assessment Form can be found in the Tool-box.

Oral feedback

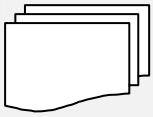
A very useful element is **the feedback session** at the end of the Peer Review, in which the **Peers communicate their findings** (and perhaps also their recommendations) **to the reviewed institution**. This also allows for a communicative validation - direct comments from the institution, including the clarification of misunderstandings or irrelevant conclusions – and an exchange between the Peers and the reviewed institution.

Feedback can be fairly **descriptive** - merely describing the findings of the Peer Visit - or it can **involve reporting an assessment**, identifying strengths and areas for improvement. The latter will usually be the case in European Peer Reviews[5].
Giving and receiving feedback is, of course, **a delicate task**. On the one hand, Peers must be fully aware of their responsibility to provide useful and critical feedback to the VET provider in a friendly and professional manner. When assessments are presented during the oral feedback session at the end of the Peer Visit, they must be prepared and formulated with great care so as not to offend the representatives of the VET provider and cause conflicts.

[5] Descriptive feedback will be given if 1) the VET provider explicitly asks for this kind of feedback or 2) cultural attitudes towards feedback and/or the lack of or negative experience of the VET provider in the field of external evaluation suggest a cautious procedure.

Representatives of the VET provider, on the other hand, should neither start defending themselves nor arguing their case against the findings, but accept the feedback as valuable information in their quest for development and growth. Coming to a full understanding of the feedback should therefore be the focus of this oral exchange.

Thus, both the Peers and the VET provider must collaborate in the constructive handling of feed-back. It is helpful if the staff of the VET provider reviewed assumes a self-confident stance which also accepts criticism. The Peers need to refrain from any kind of sweeping statements or statements focusing on specific persons. An inoffensive form of language should be used by all involved, descriptions should be as clear as possible rather than abstract; Peers should concentrate on behaviour and not on assumed personal characteristics; positive aspects should be mentioned alongside the negative, and judgements and conclusions must be based on facts and observations.



A Checklist for the Peers on reflective and constructive feedback can be found in the Tool-box (see Ground rules for Peers).

It seems that this might be one of the **focal critical points** of executing the peer review process, as the review of someone else's work by itself causes feelings of anxiety, and therefore resistance on one side, and (sometimes unsubstantiated) feeling of superiority on the other. **Such situations would be even more dangerous in the cases of guidance centres, because in many cases**, there will be only one guidance counsellor working in the centre and any criticism might, although unintentionally, c**ome across as a review of an individual/a particular counsellor** and not s a evaluation of the guidance processes or the guidance centre. If this phase of the peer review is ill planned or executed, it might cause the years of careful building of social network – the guidance centre network – to start crumbling. The most important steps to ensure that such situations do not occur are:

- **placing the peer review firmly into the process of growth of the entire ISIO guidance centre network;** the network cannot succeed unless all its members are successful,
- maintaining **the culture of lifelong learning by learning from each other**,
- **solid training for the peers,** who need to be aware of their role, their mission, but also their limits; training must also provide them with good "techniques" for carrying out individual phases of the peer review, the most important among them being **knowing how to formulate findings** based on the completed peer review and **knowing how to communicate these findings.**

Final assessment

The final assessment should only be made by the Peers after the feedback session (including the communicative validation) so that comments and feedback from the VET provider can be taken into account. The assessments and conclusions will be included in the Peer Review Report.

Recommendations

Recommendations are usually part of evaluation procedures. In a European Peer Review, the Peers will formulate areas for improvement in the Peer Review Report as an indication to the VET providers that action should be taken in these areas.

Recommendations beyond this indicative assessment should only be given by the Peers if the VET provider asks for them. If the VET provider does not seek recommendations from the Peers during the Peer Review this should be clarified before the Peer Review - when the assignment for the Peers is defined - or at least in due time before the feedback session.

If recommendations are desired, they can be presented and discussed during the Peer Visit in an open exchange between the Peers and the representatives of the VET provider. Such a discussion should then focus on mutual exchange and learning from good practice.

Peer consulting

As has been pointed out before, useful feedback is the central agent for quality improvement and mutual learning in the Peer Review process. Feedback can be a one-way communication but may also develop into a dialogue between the Peers and the reviewed institution. In a discussion of strengths and areas for improvement, the Peers may also suggest advice on certain topics. This must be done carefully, though: Peers should focus clearly on the situation at hand and not try to "proselytise" the reviewed VET provider to adopt solutions successful in their home institutions. Again, Peers should only assume the additional role of consultants if the VET provider expressly asks them to.

The peer review, as it is placed into the processes of quality evaluation and development within the ISIO guidance centres, is an important process that should contribute to the quality development in an individual guidance centre, and also to the quality of the entire network; therefore the **recommendations and peer guidance have an important role** in the process. This is why we don't put them into the process as a choice – the reviewed guidance centre decides whether they want to hear recommendations or not. **We understand them to be an integral part of the process which finishes by the peers presenting their findings and give recommendations to the guidance centre**, suggesting what can be done in the discussed areas in the future. If at all possible, the peer reviewers also suggest the guidance centre what to do in particular cases or situations. Of course,

suggestions and recommendations are indeed just guidance – **the guidance centre takes notice**, and then uses what is deemed suitable or necessary for its future work; everything else can be discarded without any consequences.

This is another phase in which the role of the peers can be very delicate. When communicating recommendations and when guiding they must be careful that

- ❑ recommendations and advice **are based on the facts established as objectively as possible**,
- ❑ recommendations and advice a**re not presented as the only possible way**, but rather as possible solutions,
- ❑ recommendations and advice **are not communicated in a patronising manner**,
- ❑ **they create an atmosphere of collegial cooperation and mutual learning.**

What happens if the Peers make important findings which were not called for?

Although the Peer Review should focus primarily on the Quality Areas chosen, it may happen that important findings by the Peers concern issues which are not covered by the (chosen) Quality Areas. In this case, the Peers and the VET provider should decide jointly on how to deal with these results. Although digressions from the agreed topics should be limited, essential feedback should not be suppressed automatically if it does not fit into the previously agreed scope. Additional findings can be presented merely orally (e.g. in the feedback session) or, if all parties agree, could also feature in the Peer Review Report as an addendum.

Meeting quality standards

Triangulation [6]

Using different methods and different sources of information in the collection of data contributes to the quality of the evaluation in terms of objectivity, reliability and validity. Soliciting diverse points of view from different stakeholders during the Peer Visit will enable the Peers to gain a more accurate and complete picture.

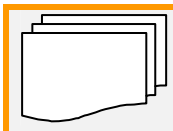
Communicative validation

Communicative validation is also used in qualitative social research to enhance the validity of results: feedback on findings is systematically solicited from different stakeholders to challenge the data collected as well as its interpretation. A communicative validation can be carried out whenever necessary in the Peer Review process, in most cases it will used in the final stages of the Visit, e.g. shortly before, during or after the feedback session with the VET provider.

[6] In social research, the approach of including different methods and sources is called triangulation.

Ground rules for Peers

Professional behaviour of the Peers is an essential quality requirement. They must assume a critical stance while remaining open and sympathetic.



A list of Ground rules for Peers can be found in the Tool-box.

Time management

Good time management is pivotal for the success of a Peer Review. A realistic Peer Review agenda is a must since activities usually tend to take more time than planned: if the agenda is too tight, any slight delay may cause grave problems in the process (interview time is reduced, observations do not start on time, time delays add up, activities have to be postponed at short notice, etc.). **Agendas should therefore also include some time** (such as extended breaks) **to buffer delays.**

During the Peer Visit, time-keeping is essential. It is the Peer Review Facilitator who is responsible for local organisation – availability of interviewees and classes during the data collection period, organisation of final meeting, provision of catering and transport (if necessary) throughout the Peer Visit.

Last but not least, a high level of time-keeping discipline is required from the Peers. The Peer Coordinator (who may be aided by the Evaluation Expert) assumes central responsibility for time management in the Peer Team. S/he must make sure that the time-frame of the agenda is respected, that the Peers are punctual, that discussion sessions in the Peer Team are not overextended, and that decisions are made, if problems arise, on how to best use the limited time available.

Duration of the Peer Visit

The duration of the Peer Visit depends on the size of the VET provider, the scope of the Quality Areas and the time available. It is advisable to plan fairly short Visits since

1) a Peer Visit will to some extent disrupt the routine processes at the VET provider and
2) Peers will not be able to take leave for an extended period of time.

Peer Visits of 2 to 3 days at the most are recommended.

Elements of the Peer Visit

Model **Agendas for the Peer Visit** can be found in the Tool-box.

Optional: "Question and Answer Session"

If the Peers still need information or clarifications from the VET provider – concerning the Self-Report, the evaluation topics or other relevant issues, for example – some time should be reserved for a "Question and Answer Session" with the Peer Review Facilitator and/or other representatives of the VET provider.

Ideally, this session should take place before the Peer Review, either in the meeting between Peers and VET provider when the agenda is discussed or, alternatively, before or after the Meeting of the Peers on the eve of the Peer Visit (if it is held at or near the VET provider). If this is not possible, some time should be reserved for questions and answers at the beginning of the Peer Visit, for example during the welcome session.

Welcome and first session with the VET provider

The Peer Review Facilitator welcomes the Peer Team and makes sure that organisational preparations have taken place. The Peers introduce themselves to the VET institution. The Peer Review Facilitator gives a summary of the purpose and target of the Peer Review process and the time schedule. Directors/department heads may be present to welcome the Peers.

Interviews, observations, on-site visit and analysis in Peer Tandem

The interviewees (stakeholders, such as students, former students, teachers, representatives of stakeholders, etc.) are interviewed in groups of about 5 people for 45-60 minutes. Do not prepare more than 5 or 6 interview questions for each group. If more people are included in interview groups, either the number of interview questions must be reduced or not everybody will be able to answer all the questions due to time constraints.

To support the smooth running of the different activities during the Peer Visit, it is advisable to plan the organisation of the interviews and the other activities and draw up a chart showing who is to be interviewed/observed by whom, when and where. This organisation chart can also be included in the Peer Visit agenda.

Model **Organisation charts for the Peer Visit** can be found in the Toolbox.

If observations are being carried out, observation guidelines should be filled out, and analysed and summarised after the end of the observation session.

Sufficient time should be reserved for the analysis of the interviews/observations. For an hour of interviewing, at least half an hour will be needed for a first analysis. Breaks must also be taken into account in order to draw up a realistic agenda.

Meeting of the Peer Team to carry out a first internal analysis of the findings

During the internal analysis, the Peer Team aims to get an overview of the main results in order to prepare the final meeting with the VET provider. A structured discussion takes place, monitored by the Peer Coordinator or the Evaluation Expert. Concise and meaningful feedback to teachers, other staff and management is prepared. In a two-day Peer Visit, at least three hours should be reserved for this task.

Feedback session

As has already been pointed out, the final meeting at the end of the Peer Visit is a vital element of the Peer Review. Its main purpose is feedback to the VET provider and communicative validation of the findings.

All Peers should take part in the feedback session. They may all be active in communicating the feedback (taking turns talking) or one person may be selected to present the feedback – usually this is the Peer Coordinator. The Evaluation Expert may chair the final meeting.

On the VET provider's side, management and the Peer Review Facilitator, at least, should be present during the final meeting. Participation can be extended depending on the internal strategy of the VET provider. Presenting the evaluation results to a large number of teachers and other staff of the reviewed VET provider can be helpful since it makes the whole process very transparent for all those involved and there can be immediate reaction. It probably also raises awareness of problems in an even more efficient way than a written report alone ("paper is patient"…). Furthermore, dissemination of results within the VET provider is ensured. Yet such a large meeting is expensive and may be an organisational challenge to the VET provider. Therefore other routes for disseminating the findings within the organisation may be pursued.
The Peers present the distilled findings and assessments for every evaluation area (e.g. through visualisation in a PowerPoint presentation, on flip charts, etc.). Teachers and management are invited to comment. If Peer consulting is one of the principal aims of the Peer Review, the meeting of the Peers and the VET provider should be extended to encompass further discussions.

Since guidance centres typically have small staff, we recommend that **every full- or part-time employee of the centre attends the meeting at the end of the peer visit**. This is the only way to enable a constructive discussion and an atmosphere of cooperation.

The only question that may remain open is whether the director of the educational institution where the seat of the centre is should attend the meeting. As a manager, s/he should be interested in the quality of the activities and service the institution offers, so it would be wise that s/he attends the meeting. The exception could be made in cases where the director doesn't work closely with the guidance centre in terms of the programme contents, and the subject of the review are limited expert questions (for example, guidance methods, guidance props usage ...).

Reflection on results and meta-evaluation of the process

After the communicative validation, the Peers meet to revise their findings and assessments. The Peer Visit ends with the Peer Team looking back on the Visit.

There are two aims for this final session of the Peers:

- Comments and questions of the final meeting have to be reflected upon and discussed again. Peer Teams revise their assessment of the Quality Areas.
- In a meta-evaluation, the members of the Peer Team reflect on their experiences, thus providing indications for further development of the Peer Review procedure.

A sheet for documentation of the **Meta-evaluation of the Peers** can be found in the Tool-box.

EUROPEAN PEER REVIEW PROCEDURE – PEER REVIEW REPORT (PHASE 3)

The Peer Review Report is the final document. All Peers should contribute to the report. The writing, however, can be done by one or two persons with the other Peers commenting. It is recommended that the Peer Coordinator, together with the Evaluation Expert, be responsible for producing the Report. Usually, Peers should come to common conclusions and recommendations through discussion and argumentation; if this is not possible, dissenting opinions can also be presented.

European Peer Review in practice: writing the report

The pilot phase of the project "Peer Review in initial VET" clearly showed that the writing of the report should be started during the Peer Visit: once the Peers are back in their usual working invironment, finishing the report may be postponed for weeks and even months. In addition, direct communication between the Peers is usually not possible after the Visit.

It is therefore **highly recommended that the Peers arrive at common conclusions during the Peer Visit** and that the main results of the Peer Review are already inserted into the forms during the analysis phase (Quality Area Assessment Form; Peer Review Report). Should any (usually minor) adaptations be necessary after the communicative validation with the VET provider, they should also be made immediately so that – apart from some finishing touches – the draft Peer Review Report is ready at the end of the Peer Visit.

A draft report is issued, on which the reviewed VET provider should have the opportunity to give feedback. The final report should take these comments into consideration. In the European Peer Review, the final Peer Review Report is addressed primarily to the VET provider. All relevant internal stakeholder groups (teachers, students, other staff, etc.) **should have access to the report**.

Additionally, the VET provider may also pass on the Peer Review Report to **relevant external stakeholders and/or education authorities**. Often, parts of the report (usually the summary) are also made accessible to **a wider public**, e.g. over the internet.

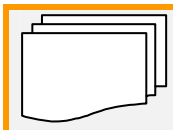
Structure of Peer Review Report

For reasons of consistency and transparency, the Peer Review should have the same kind of structure and format as the Self-Report. It should indicate strengths and

areas for improvement and possibly – if asked for by the VET provider being reviewed – recommendations.

The Peer Review Report contains:

1. Title
2. Table of contents (glossary and abbreviations, if necessary)
3. Data sheet
4. Short portrait of the VET provider (about 1 page)
5. Peer Review procedure
6. Assessment of Quality Areas
7. Overall assessment
8. Annex: e.g. agenda for the Peer Visit, interview guidelines, observation guidelines



Peer Review Report form can be found in the Annex.

Principles for writing the Peer Review Report

After the Peer Coordinator (with the assistance of the Evaluation Expert) has written the report, the Peers revise it.

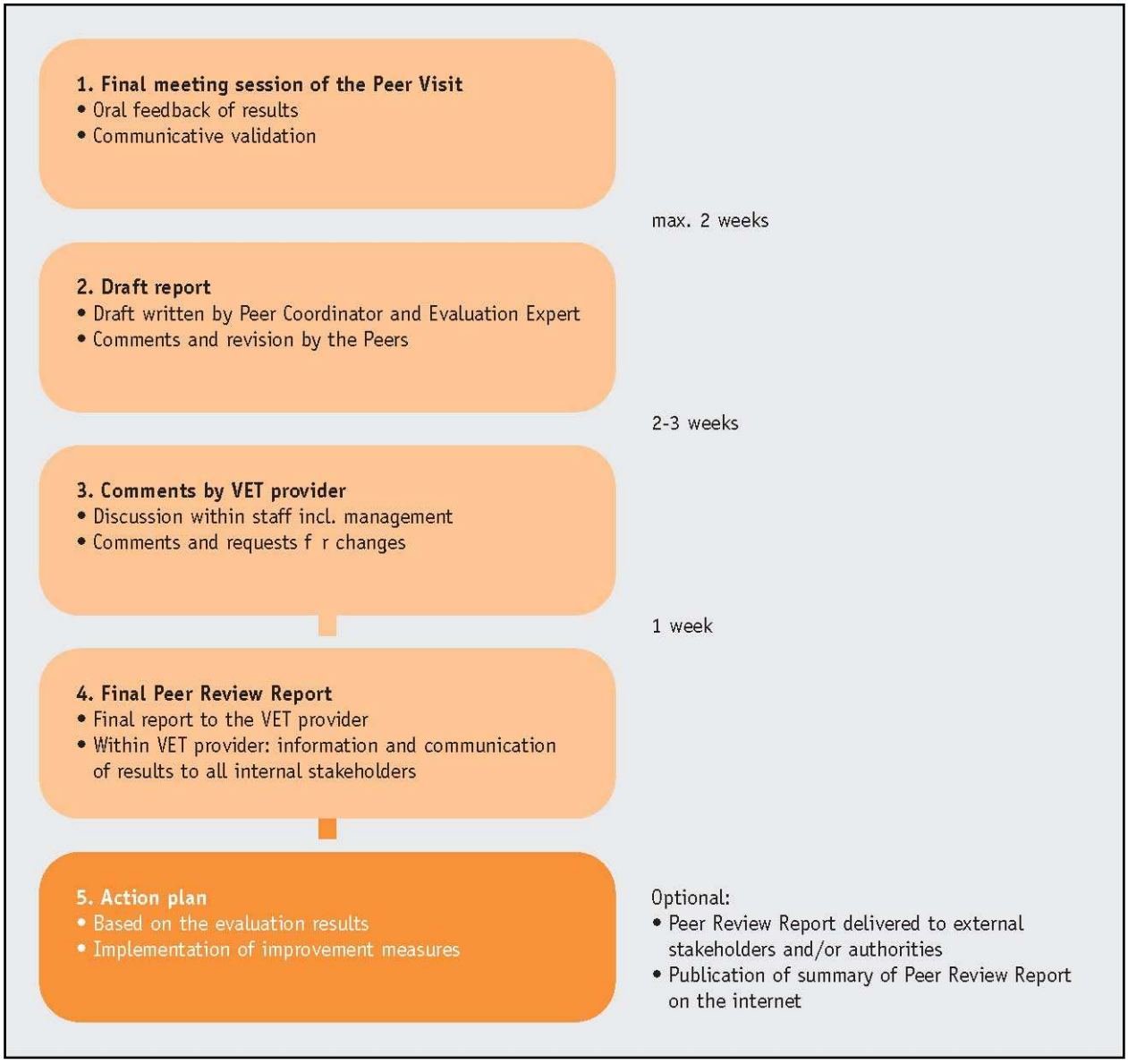
The report should provide a description of the findings of the Peer Review and an assessment of these findings given by the critical friends (the Peers). Strengths and areas for improvement are pointed out and conclusions are presented. If the VET provider agrees, recommendations can also be part of the report.

The report should only include results that have been presented to the VET provider (i.e. during the communicative validation). **The report should not contain any surprises for the VET provider. Nor should the report include comments on individuals.**

The draft report is read and validated by the VET institution, which may comment on it.

From the Peer Visit to the final Peer Review Report

Graph 6: **Procedure and time schedule for the Peer Review Report**



EUROPEAN PEER REVIEW PROCEDURE – PUTTING PLANS INTO ACTION (PHASE 4)

Evaluations should always have an effect on practical work: conclusions must be drawn and procedures for change must be implemented (cf. TWG for Quality in VET 2004, 9 f.) in order to justify the time and effort invested in the review process. Putting the results of the Peer Review into action is thus the critical element for the success of the Peer Review in terms of systematic, continuous and sustainable quality improvement. It lies within the responsibility of the management to ensure that the results of the Peer Review are used consistently.

How to make sense of the results of the Peer Review

Making sense of evaluation results is usually one of the main challenges of systematic improvement at the VET provider level. In the European Peer Review, several elements of the procedure directly enhance the definition of suitable goals and measures.

Areas for improvement will be indicated during the feedback session and in the Peer Review Report in an open and understandable manner; the communicative validation of the findings and the possibility of a dialogue between the Peers and representatives of the VET provider further deepen comprehension and appreciation of the feedback. If deemed appropriate, recommendations for the follow-up procedure can also be furnished by the Peers.

Additionally, the Peer Review process itself supports the qualitative interpretation of the self-evaluation data as well as of data collected during the Peer Visit: the feedback of the Peers should provide the VET provider with easily understandable and meaningful information as to the future course of procedures for change.

How to prepare procedures for change

For putting results into action, a systematic process is proposed, based on the quality circle. It should be supported by a candid and comprehensive information policy ensuring that all relevant stakeholders have access to the results of the Peer Review. If possible, an open debate within the organisation should precede the implementation of procedures for change. All of this will improve the quality of the decisions made and enhance motivation and commitment within the VET provider.

How to proceed - a systematic approach to procedures for change

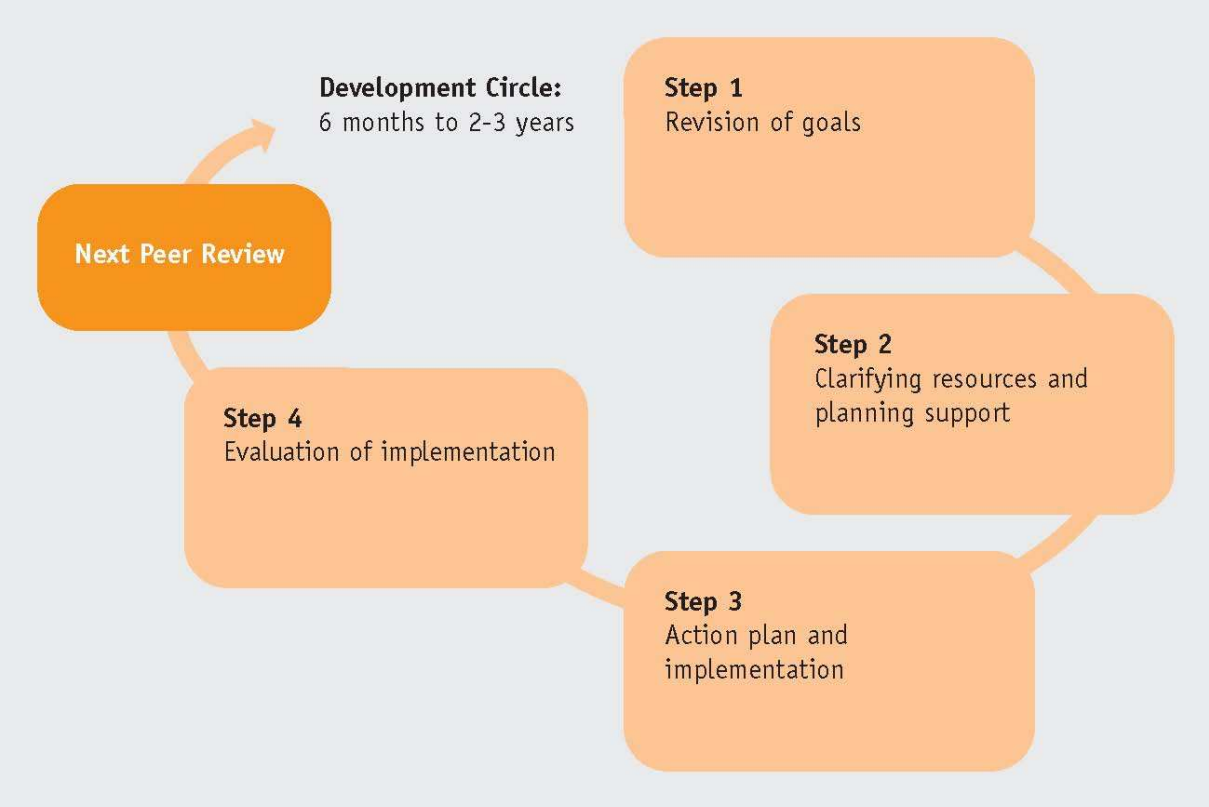
Revision of goals

If possible, procedures for change should be planned cooperatively within the VET provider. This should **start with the revision of quality objectives and planning based on the results of the self-evaluation and the Peer Review**.

The revision should encompass the strategic and the operational levels, which should be interlinked. Attainment of operational targets should be possible within a realistic time-frame of 6 months to 2-3 years. It is recommended that they be defined as **SMART targets**:

S – specific
M – measurable
A – attractive
R – realistic
T – time-related

Graph 7: **From knowing to acting**



Clarifying resources and planning support

For putting a plan into action, it is necessary to clarify the available resources and integrate the plan in the whole development process of the institution. Individual and institutional needs have to be considered when doing this:

- Which supporting forces exist and can be used? (e.g. networks, teachers)
- Which supporting structures can be activated? (e.g. quality groups, mutual class observations, mentoring, supervision, peer coaching, project groups, etc.)
- Which financial, personnel (internal and external) and time resources are available?
- To which hindrances and stumbling blocks must attention be paid?
- How can we manage challenging situations?
- How do we deal with resistance?
- Do we need consultancy? Why? What for? Who could do it?
- Do we need educational training, new methods or new action models?
- Are training programmes for teachers suitable and sufficient?

A realistic and motivating action plan and schedule are drawn up, based on the information on resources and support.

The above questions are quite adequate for guidance centres as well, when they consider what sources and resources they have available to implement improvements in their work. The following can be added:

- ❑ Which support groups exist and can be used: in addition to the already listed, there are strategy and planning boards, expert groups from the local environment, guidance services on the other levels of education, other guidance services …
- ❑ Which support group can be established anew: groups of counsellors in the regions, benchmarking in other centres, supervisions, experienced counsellors as mentors, project groups etc.

Action plan and implementation

The following guiding questions can be used when setting up an action plan:

- How do we start? What are the next steps? What are priorities?
- What do we have to do to reach the aim?
- Are midterm aims and milestones adequate?
- What resources (financial, personnel, time) are available?
- Who is involved or takes responsibility?
- Would it be convenient to appoint a steering group?
- Who has to approve the action plan?
- How can we communicate the action plan?

Development steps can be recorded in an action plan:

Table 2: **Action Plan**

	Priority	Time Frame	Responsible Person	Resources
What should be done?	What is urgent?	By when?	By whom?	What do we need?

Evaluation of implementation – planning the next Peer Review

All development plans at an individual and institutional level call for another feedback loop. The evaluation must include the assessment of the achievement of the targets defined. Guiding questions to determine the success of the improvement measures may be:

- How do we know if we have made progress?
- How do we work out whether we have reached our aims?
- What criteria and indicators of success can be formulated?
- Which feedback methods do we apply?

- To whom are we held accountable?
- To whom do we have to report?
- Who reminds us to follow our aims and our plans if we neglect them?

- What positive consequences do we expect if we reach our aims?
- How do we reward ourselves if we reach our aims?
- What consequences are there if we do not reach our aims?

A self-evaluation of the implementation of procedures for change can again be complemented by external feedback through Peer Review – starting the next cycle of a continuous improvement process.

QUALITY AREAS

Quality of VET provision and the definition of Quality Areas

What is the "quality of VET provision"? The term "quality" is a generic term. Quality is context-dependent, i.e. the concrete context has to be known in order to define quality. A useful specification given by the Technical Working Group (TWG) on Quality in VET (cf. Faurschou, 2003) **is to relate quality to the fulfilment of goals connected with VET provision, i.e. to analyse reality against expectations:**

Thus, in order to determine what kind of VET provision is high quality and what is not, it must be clear what the context-specific goals of VET provision are. Goals can be found at different levels of the VET systems and vary to some extent from country to country and from VET provider to VET provider. Thus, there is no generally accepted definition or description of the key quality issues in VET.

The success of a Peer Review, however, 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, which

- comprises the crucial areas of a high-quality VET provider in a clear, practical and workable form, and which
- covers most of the national Quality Areas of the partner countries, thus facilitating its use at a European level, and
- serves as a tool for cross-reading different national quality frameworks, thus enhancing transparency and comparability within Europe.

A question similar to the one above came up at the SIAE when we were beginning to create the quality model for the ISIO guidance centre network. We knew that we would not be able to create a good model if we didn't first answer the question what the quality of guidance in adult education is. In the study we created for this purpose[7], we wrote:

[7] Vilič Klenovšek, T., Klemenčič, S., Možina, T., Dobrovoljc, A. (2007): Izhodišča za razvoj kakovosti v svetovalnih središčih za izobraževanje odraslih. Ljubljana: Andragoški center Slovenije.

"The most important question here is: what are the objectives of quality evaluation and development of guidance activities? The answer is multi-layered, as there is no single answer to this question, simply from the point of view of one of the subjects of planning, execution and use of guidance services. Guidance service quality must be evaluated from at least the following three points of views:

- of the **one who ordered/paid** for the service (it could be the state – usually through the relevant ministry or an individual organisation, or similar),
- **the one who carries out** the activity,
- **the final user**, the client in the guidance activity.

The contemporary concepts of guidance work as a rule describe the direct user – the guidance client –– as the basic starting point. However, we cannot overlook the legitimacy of the objectives of other subjects that play an important role in planning and executing guidance services. Such a wide range of subjects and their activities connected to the guidance activity requires development of adequate measures to evaluate quality. This opens a question which aspect, result or effect of guidance activity to evaluate in order to get idea about its quality. The answer is not simple. Some experts believe that quality evaluation is always a combination of several aspects that are intertwined and interconnected. These experts emphasise that the differences occur in the starting point itself – they are directly connected to the reasons for the quality evaluation of guidance activity. Plant (Plant 2001) says that the activity can be evaluated:

- for political reasons: to justify the importance of the guidance activity (service),
- for financial reasons: to show that the service is useful,
- to measure client's progress: the rate of the set goals achieved,
- to keep a record of what is going on : monitoring,
- for strategic planning: organisational development,
- to monitor the practice and development policies: benchmarking good practices.

Various reasons also influence how the criteria for achieving quality levels are determined. We shall present three different approaches:

When evaluating the quality of guidance activities from the point of view of **those who plan and decide** about carrying out certain guidance activities, we focus on (see also UDACE, 1991):

- assessing the effect of investing in these activities (economic aspect),
- evaluating the fulfilment of needs that were the reason for the guidance activity to be developed and started,
- how rational the services working in individual areas are,
- obtaining feedback about the effects the activities,
- providing continuous development in accordance to the needs of those planning the activities (and decide about them), and those who are the target group of a particular activity.

For the entity that carries out the activity, some of the aspects are the same as for the "planners and deciders" (they are responsible for making decisions – creating "policies"), but there are some that are specific:

- assessing the fulfilment of the needs that necessitated the inception and development of individual activities,
- effectiveness of organising and executing the activity,
- receiving feedback about its effects,
- evaluating the effects of measures, contents and fundamental principles for carrying out individual activities,
- providing constant development in accordance with the needs of all who use the activity etc.

From the point of view of **an individual guidance user/client** the importance of evaluation is emphasized:

- does the individual get what s/he needs,
- is the content of the activity s/he enters transparent,
- how effective is what s/he gets.

Similarly to what we can read in professional literature, the entirety of the question of determining how to evaluate quality of guidance work can also be researched in the light of the circumstances currently prevalent in the guidance activities in Slovenia at the moment. We have to decide whether to conceptualise the suggested quality evaluation and development model from the point of view of the:

- state – Ministry of Education and Sports that supports and finances the activity,
- the SIAE that provides expert development, support and monitoring of the work in guidance centres,
- activity (guidance in adult education),
- guidance centre as an organisational unit (and in wider sense also from the point of view of community adult education centres/folk high schools, where the seat of the guidance centre is,
- a client – the person who receives guidance in a guidance centre.

From such different points of view, it is really not a simple task to define the basic objectives of guidance activity that would in turn serve as the basis for the quality evaluation, especially because in the expert literature, policy documents and also the already formed model of ISIO guidance centres in Slovenia, we can find a number of objectives whose starting points also vary.

Having considered all the points discussed above, and knowing the circumstances and needs in Slovenia, we believe that the basic starting point when creating the quality evaluation and development method are the following elements:

- ❑ **accessibility of guidance services,**
- ❑ **quality of guidance services,**
- ❑ **results and effects of guidance services.**

Relation between the European Quality Areas for VET providers and institutional/national frameworks

The set of Quality Areas (including criteria and indicators, see below) should therefore by no means replace national frameworks. Instead, it is intended to support European cooperation in evaluation at VET provider level: a framework with common Quality Areas can be used for facilitating transnational Peer Review and/or can serve as a point of comparison for reviews carried out in a national context.

Special national/institutional quality elements can, of course, be added to this framework depending on national and/or institutional demands. For purely national use of the European Peer Review procedure, national frameworks can substitute the Quality Areas proposed below.

Fourteen European Quality Areas for VET institutions

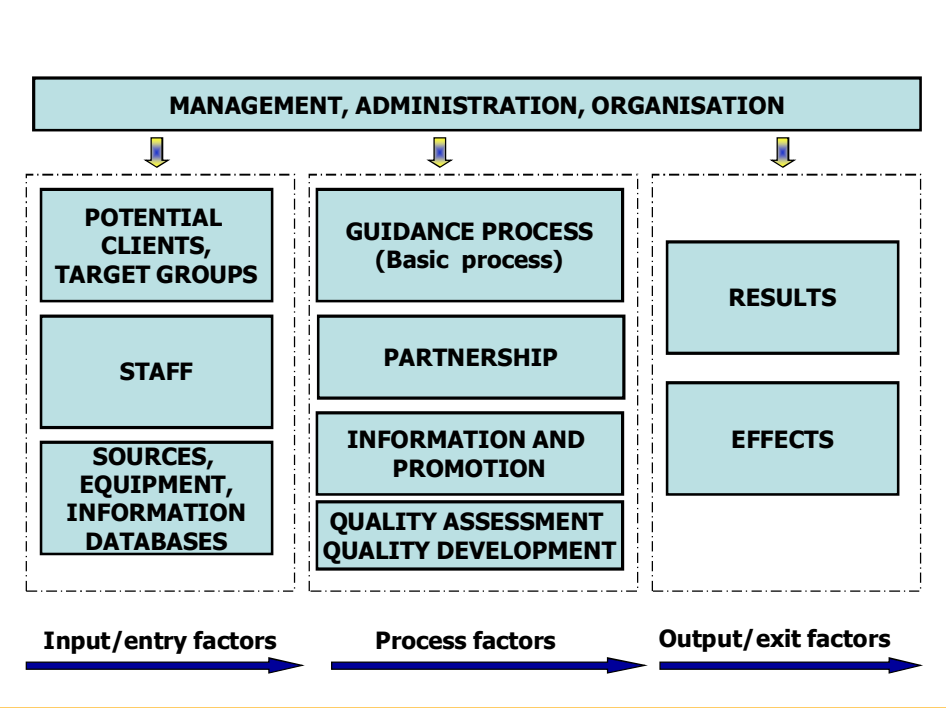
The 14 Quality Areas proposed are:

	Quality Area 1:	Curricula
	Quality Area 2:	Learning and teaching
	Quality Area 3:	Assessment
	Quality Area 4:	Learning results and outcomes
	Quality Area 5:	Social environment and accessibility
	Quality Area 6:	Management and administration
	Quality Area 7:	Institutional ethos and strategic planning
	Quality Area 8:	Infrastructure and financial resources
	Quality Area 9:	Staff allocation, recruitment and development
	Quality Area 10:	Working conditions of staff
	Quality Area 11:	External relations and internationalisation
	Quality Area 12:	Social participation & interactions
	Quality Area 13:	Gender mainstreaming
	Quality Area 14:	Quality management and evaluation

On the European level, there is no selection of quality areas for adult education guidance activities. Therefore we defined the area ourselves when creating the Slovenian model; we have, of course, taken into consideration the already established findings in other fields of education, both on the national and the European level. The basic decision about the areas was based on the defined objectives of the activity, the subjects entering the guidance process or are connected to it and the analysis of the guidance processes. We have defined the following 10 areas[8]:

1. potential clients of guidance (target groups),
2. staff,
3. resources, equipment, databases,
4. guidance process,
5. partnership,
6. information and promotion,
7. quality assessment and quality development,
8. results,
9. effects,
10. management, administration, organisation.

FIGURE 1: 10 areas for quality evaluation and development in adult education guidance centres



[8] Možina, T., Klemenčič, S., Vilič Klenovšek, T., Rupert, J. (2009): Model presojanja in razvijanja kakovosti v svetovalnih središčih za izobraževanje odraslih. Ljubljana: Andragoški center Slovenije.

Core and Optional Quality Areas

The 14 Quality Areas comprise four Quality Areas that relate directly to the "key business" of VET institutions, the learning and teaching processes. They are thus called "**Core Quality Areas**". Since these four Quality Areas usually lie within the decision-making power at the institutional level, VET providers all over Europe will be competent to act on the results of external assessment in these areas. In order to highlight their importance, these Quality Areas are positioned as the first four areas within the framework proposed for quality at the VET provider level.
For a European Peer Review, it is recommended that **at least one of the four "Core" Quality Areas** be tackled.

Thus, the **4 Core Quality Areas** are:

	Quality Area 1:	Curricula
	Quality Area 2:	Learning and teaching
	Quality Area 3:	Assessment
	Quality Area 4:	Learning results and outcomes

The remaining 10 Quality Areas – **Optional Quality Areas** – are considered necessary for the operation of the VET institution, they support the processes of the Core Quality Areas.

In the Leonardo project "Peer Review in initial VET", a "**European Peer Review Certificate**" was only issued to a VET provider/institution if a minimum of two Quality Areas had been reviewed successfully, at least one of which had to be a Core Quality Area.

The Certificate indicates all Quality Areas dealt with and the specific evaluation questions of the VET provider/institution for the Peer Review.

When determining the areas for quality in adult education guidance service we have not defined core and elective areas. It is true that we have defined one area fundamental process – **the guidance process** –, and the three others – **partnership**, **informing and promotion** and **quality evaluation and development** – as supporting processes, but our aim was not to define on the national level which areas have to be assessed in every evaluation process, including the peer review. Our experience in the field of adult education show that even when there is no directive to do so from the outside, those entering a self-evaluation process always chose at least one process that can be classified as fundamental.

In any case, we suggested those who solicited our help in carrying out quality evaluation to choose one or at the most two areas to review at the same time.

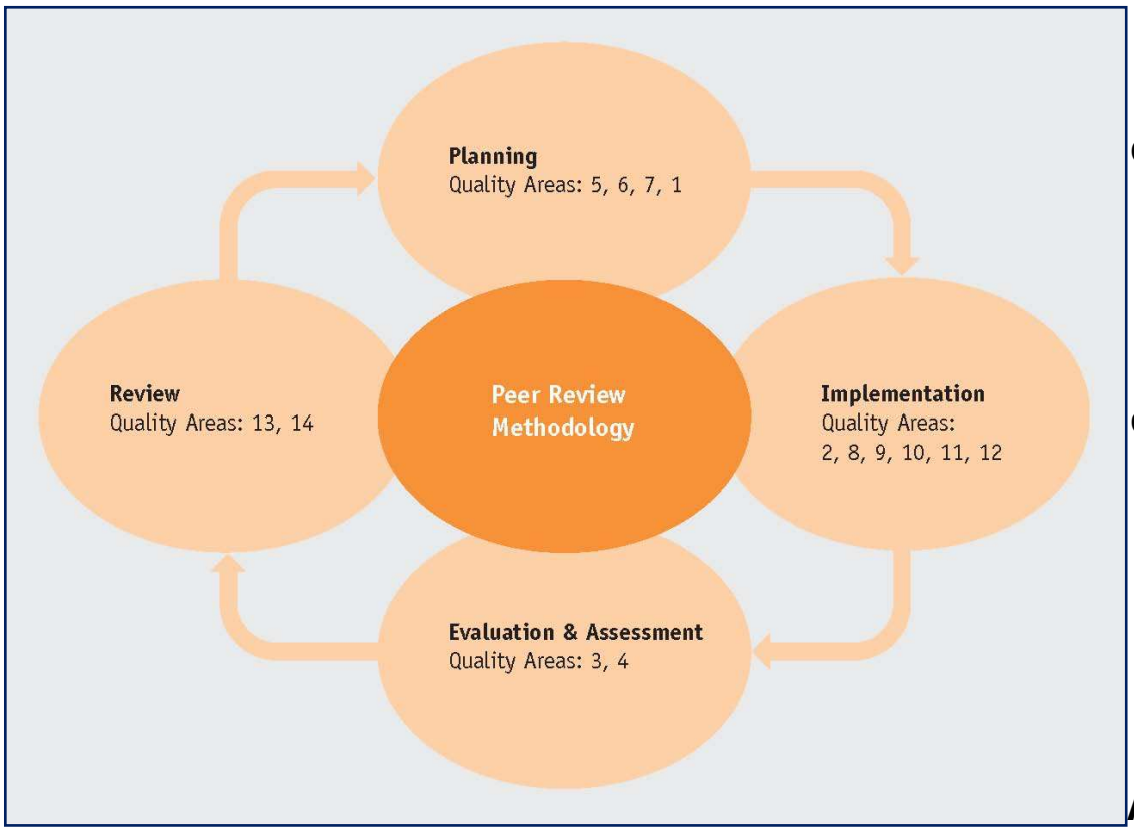
Since the described practice turned out to be adequate, **we thus never prescribe the key quality areas (that would be compulsory in all peer review processes) in the guidance process; the partners also decide by themselves how many areas they will review at the same time, the suitable range being 1 or 2 areas**.

The Quality Areas and the Quality Assurance Model of the CQAF

As has been pointed out in the Introduction to this Manual, the European Peer Review procedure is based on the Quality Assurance Model of the Common Quality Assurance Framework. Peer Review is proposed as an innovative methodology for external evaluation of VET at provider level.

How do the Quality Areas relate to the Quality Assurance Model of the CQAF?

1) The Quality Areas themselves can be directly attributed to one of the elements of the model, e.g. planning, implementation, evaluation and assessment, and review. In this way, the Quality Areas are related to a logical framework of continuous improvement.



Graph 8: **The Quality Areas within the Quality Assurance Model of the CQAF**

2) Furthermore, within the European Peer Review procedure, all elements of the quality circle will be considered in an integral and systematic manner in the assessment of the Quality Areas. Planning, implementation, evaluation and assessment, and review and procedures for change must be part of self-evaluation as well as the Peer Review. This is to ensure that there is a coherent and comprehensive quality strategy and a systematic link between evaluation and improvement. Since Peer Review should promote continuing quality improvement, special emphasis lies on the follow-up process.

When considering the guidance activity in adult education, the division of areas according to the CQAF model doesn't seem too useful; we do, however, see **a close connection between this model and the basic processes we defined in the model for quality evaluation in adult education guidance centres**. Within it, we have defined the following processes:

- the process of **defining** quality,
- the process of **evaluating** quality, and
- the process of **developing** quality.

Each of these processes is further broken down into internal processes, that could be defined with the Deming quality circle, on which the CQAF model is also based:

- plan,
- do,
- check,
- act.

This can be defined using one of the described processes, for example the quality evaluation process, as a showcase. The guidance centre creates a quality evaluation plan, carries out the evaluation, evaluates the gathered results and plans quality improvements based on these results. Thus we can provide a coherent and holistic quality strategy in this model as well.

How the Quality Areas are specified

Criteria

Each Quality Area is clarified by a set of criteria. **These criteria identify the key aspects of quality in the relevant area**. The criteria therefore represent the guiding principles for quality assurance and quality development efforts in the specific Quality Area.

In a European Peer Review, at least 2 criteria should be reviewed for each Quality Area selected. However, the list of criteria is not exhaustive, which means that further criteria can be added, depending on individual needs. All criteria to be reviewed must be dealt with in the self-evaluation and the Self-Report.

Examples of indicators

Additionally, the criteria are further specified by indicators which serve to exemplify the criteria. They are merely suggestions and are not prescribed for the European Peer Review procedure. This means that they can be exchanged or complemented by other indicators, if necessary.

Some of the indicators are based on "**hard" quantitative data**, which can be measured and counted statistically (e.g. drop-out rate). Some of them will be provided by the VET provider/institution in the Self-Report. The majority of indicators outline **"soft" qualitative indications** of the existence of certain conditions or trends. The "soft" indicators presented in this Manual are formulated in a precise way and prescribe requirements for the fulfilment of the individual indicator.

Sources of evidence

This category is considered to be a support for both the VET institution and the Peers. The sources of evidence indicate examples and suggestions as to where and how the specific requirements for the indicators can be allocated and documented.

The whole list of the **European Quality Areas** with criteria, indicators and sources of evidence can be found in the Tool-box.

A similar, although different structure was also determined in the quality evaluation and development model in adult education guidance centres[9]. In addition to the already mentioned **areas of work** of a guidance centre, the model determines the pertaining **standards of quality, indicators of quality and criteria**.

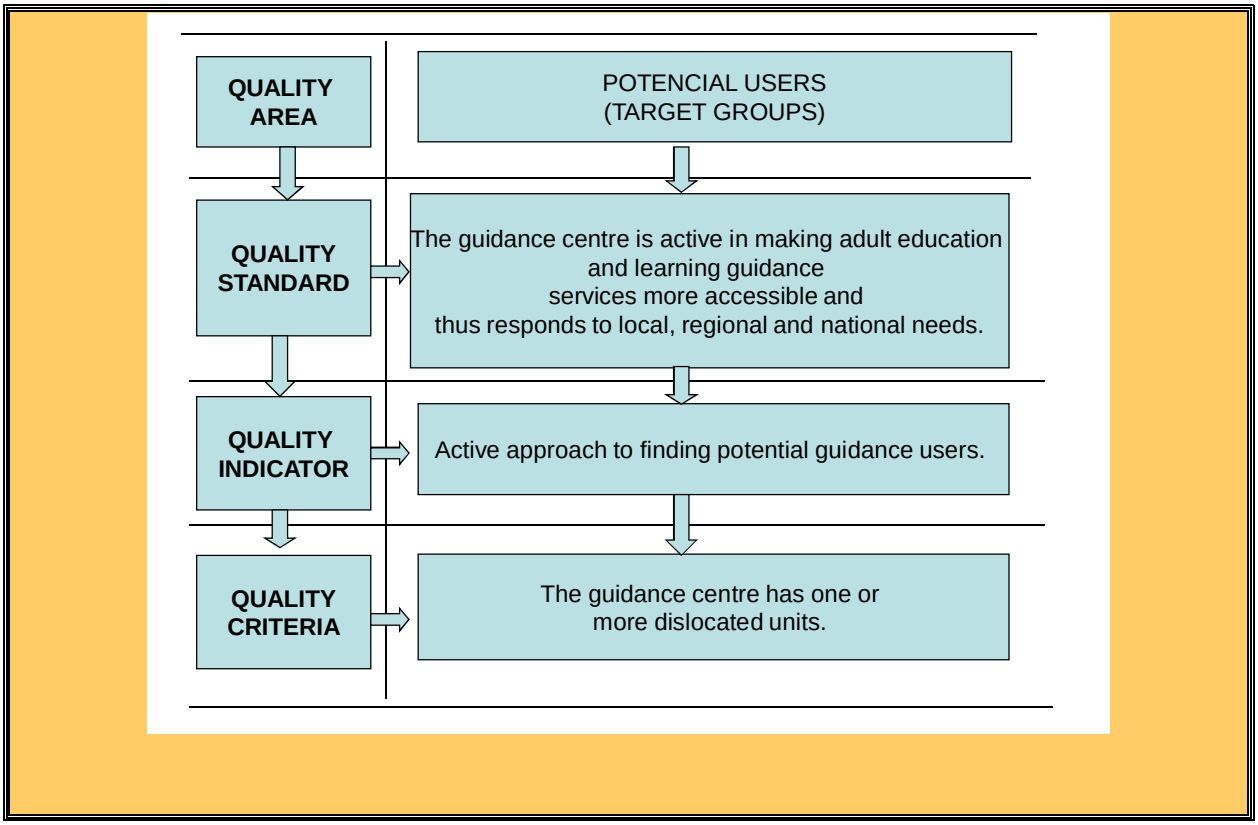
We have defined **the standards of quality** for particular areas. The standards of quality can in broadest sense be defined as **statements describing expected/desired quality of the key aspects of the guidance activity and its results and effects**. On the most general level the formation of standards of quality helps us find the answer to **what kind of guidance activities for adult education we want**, be it on the level of an individual counsellor, guidance centre, or development of guidance for adults on national level.

Each standard has its own indicators and criteria. **Quality indicators** direct us to look into important aspects of quality, which determine the studied area, in more detail, while the **criteria** present the tool to "measure" the defined standard of quality. Depending on the nature of the standard of quality, the criteria can be either numerical or descriptive.

They are, in a way, a point of reference that we set as a goal we need to achieve to be able to meet the defined standard of quality (an overview of standards, indicators and criteria within this model can be found in the Appendices).

FIGURE 2: The basic structure of a quality evaluation and development model to be used in adult education guidance centres – a case presentation/presentation with an example

9 Ibid.


QUALITY AREA
POTENCIAL USERS (TARGET GROUPS)
QUALITY STANDARD
The guidance centre is active in making adult education and learning guidance services more accessible and thus responds to local, regional and national needs.
QUALITY INDICATOR
Active approach to finding potential guidance users.
QUALITY CRITERIA
The guidance centre has one or more dislocated units.

PEERS

Who is a Peer?

A Peer is a person

- who is **an equal of or is on equal standing** with the person(s) whose performance is being reviewed
- who **works in a similar environment** (and/or in a similar institution)
- who **is external** (i.e. from a different institution) and **independent** (has no personal/institutional "stakes" in the evaluation process)
- who **has specific professional expertise and knowledge in the field** (shares values, professional competence and attitudes, language, etc.)
- who **can thus bring a degree of "inside" knowledge of the object of review into the process and combine it with the external view** of somebody coming from a different organisation ("external insider").

Peers are sometimes also called '**critical friends'**.

Core task of the Peers

The core task of the Peers is to come to an understanding of the particular situation of the reviewed VET provider/institution and to give critical feedback. Recommendations and solutions to problems should only be given if expressly asked for by the VET provider.

Composition of the Peer Team

The European Peer Reviews will be carried out by teams of 4 Peers. **It is recommended that the overall size of the review team is an even number**, because sets of two Peers (Peer Tandems) should be formed to conduct the interviews with the different stakeholder representatives. (If larger Peer Teams are employed, the number of Peers should not exceed 8).

The composition of the Peer Teams depends on the subject of the Peer Review since, first and foremost, Peers should have extensive expertise in the Quality Areas reviewed. **It is important to note, however, that the team as a whole must cover the expertise and experience required and not necessarily any single team member**. In detail, a Peer Team for a European Peer Review should consist of experts with the following occupational backgrounds: At least half of the Peers should be "real" Peers, i.e. colleagues from other VET providers: teachers, counsellors, managers, quality experts, etc. These VET professionals should have the following expertise:

- in the review topics under scrutiny,
- in teaching and learning processes (at least 5 years of teaching experience), and
- in quality assurance and quality development procedures (i.e. quality management approaches, evaluation methods, etc.).

It is also recommended that two of the Peers currently work as teachers.

Additionally, a stakeholder representative (or representatives) can be included in the Peer Team. This Peer can come, for instance, from "external cooperation partners," such as institutions at other educational levels (e.g. lower secondary level, universities, polytechnics), from the closely related business world (representatives of enterprises) or from other relevant stakeholders (labour market experts, social partners, parents, etc.).

It is recommended that one member of the Peer Team be able to assume the role of an "Evaluation Expert" with expertise in evaluation, moderation and communication. This Peer may also come from an institutional background other than VET (e.g. evaluation, research, consulting, etc.). This person should, however, also have sufficient experience in VET since s/he will fulfil both the function of a "normal" Peer and the function of Evaluation Expert. The Evaluation Expert need not be recruited from outside VET, a "real" Peer from another VET provider, who has the required qualification and expertise may also assume the role of the Evaluation Expert.

Given the not too great number of all counsellors in the guidance centre network it would certainly not be possible or sensible to form large groups of peer reviewers. Four peers would be only suitable in cases of larger reviews. In all other cases **we recommend that the peer review group consist of two peer reviewers.**

In the case of guidance centres, **peer review groups** (pairs) **can consist of the following peers:**

Peer reviewer – expert in the field of guidance (e. g. a manager of another guidance centre, a counsellor from another guidance centre, counsellor from another level of educational system).

Peer reviewer – expert in the reviewed field (if, for example, the field of managing guidance centre is reviewed, the member could be a manager of another

guidance centre or a head of another working area in an educational institution). In special cases, or in cases when particular work processes are being reviewed, the reviewers can also be experts from other fields (for example, promotion experts, if the quality of promotion of guidance work were reviewed).

Peer reviewer, who has more knowledge/experience in the field of quality evaluation and development (for example, a counsellor with experience in self-evaluation, another expert from the organisation that hosts the seat of the guidance centres, familiar with self-evaluation, a counsellor for adult education quality). The member could also be a representative of one of the strategic or expert partners of the guidance centre who is at lest slightly familiar with guidance activity and has experience wit quality processes in her/his line of work.

In some cases it would make sense for **a member of an outside interest group** to be a member of the peer group: guidance clients, educational organisations, other guidance services. This can bring more "independence" of the entire group of peers.

If possible (considering financial limitations and language barriers) it would be positive to at least sometimes invite an **international peer** to participate in the peer review.

Roles within a Peer Team

Within a Peer Team, the following roles should be filled:

- Peers
- a Peer Coordinator
- an Evaluation Expert
- a gender mainstreaming expert
- a transnational Peer (if applicable).

Peers

The Peers analyse the Self-Report, draw up an evaluation plan (who is to be interviewed, interview guidelines) and carry out the Peer Review (e.g. collecting information, interviewing, analysing findings, giving feedback, etc.).

Peer Coordinator[10]

In addition to the tasks of a Peer, the Peer Coordinator is the leader of the Peer Team. S/he is the primary contact for the VET provider, coordinates and plans the activities of the Peers and is concerned with the moderation of the review process

[10] The Peer Coordinator can be appointed either by the VET institution itself or by the coordinating body organising the Peer Review.

and time management. S/he is also responsible for the writing of the Peer Review Report.
The Peer Coordinator thus assumes a central role. S/he needs a high level of competence in evaluation, team-leading, communication, moderation, and time management and must therefore be selected carefully.

Evaluation Expert

The role of the Evaluation Expert should also be covered in the Peer Team to make sure that at least one person has comprehensive expertise in evaluation, moderation, and communication. This role can be assumed by the Peer Coordinator or one of the other Peers in the team.

If the Peer Team is not very experienced in evaluation, the Evaluation Expert will guide the Peer Team and support the Peer Coordinator in her/his tasks. In this event, the Evaluation Expert can be responsible for moderating the internal analysis meeting(s) of the Peer Team where the findings of the various Peer Tandems are discussed and the feedback to teachers, other staff and management is prepared. Furthermore, the Evaluation Expert may moderate the final meeting. S/he may also assist the Peer Coordinator in the writing of the Peer Review Report. If possible, the Evaluation Expert will also support the Peers with special evaluation expertise in the preparation phase by assisting them in the drawing-up of interview guidelines, for example.

Transnational Peer

Employing a transnational Peer is optional. For a transnational European Peer Review, though, recruiting a transnational Peer is a requirement.

On the one hand, inviting a Peer from another country can be a very enriching experience for all parties involved – the transnational Peer, the VET provider and the other Peers. Confronting one another with different systems and practices can enhance mutual learning and innovation transfer. Additionally, the independence and evident distance of a transnational Peer often stimulates a special atmosphere of openness and critical reflection.

On the other hand, including a transnational Peer requires careful preparations and certain conditions on the part of the VET provider and the Peers. First of all, all parties involved must be aware of the additional efforts necessary: the language question, in particular, needs to be considered carefully as must the diversity of VET systems and cultural differences. Inviting a transnational Peer usually also calls for extra funding, for travelling, for example, or for translation costs.

Table 3: **Composition of Peer Team: roles, occupational background and competences**

Number of Peers (4 Peers)	Occupational Background	Required Competetnces
2 "Real" Peers (minimum)*	**Professionals from other VET providers** (teachers, counsellors, managers, quality experts, etc.)	▪ Knowledge of Quality Areas under scrutiny ▪ Experience in teaching & learning processes ▪ Experience in QA and QD procedures
1 "Stakeholder" Peer **	**Representative from other stakeholder groups** (other educational levels, companies, social partners, etc.)	• Knowledge of Quality Areas under scrutiny • Experience in QA and QD procedures
1 Evaluation Expert*	**Professional evaluator/quality assessor** (e.g. from research institute/ university, independent auditing/accrediting body, also from VET provider)	• Expertise in evaluation, moderation and communication • Knowledge of VET system
1 Transnational Peer (optional)***	**Any of the above,** usually a VET professional	• Knowledge of Quality Areas under scrutiny • Experience in teaching & learning processes • Experience in QA and QD procedures
*required for a European Peer Review ** recommended for a European Peer Review *** required for a transnational European Peer Review		

Required competences and expertise of Peers

Peer Teams as a whole should thus have expertise

- in teaching and learning
- in quality assurance and development
- in the Quality Areas under scrutiny.

In addition, one Peer should have expertise in gender mainstreaming and one Peer should have the competences to fulfil the role of Evaluation Expert. As the Peer Review procedure presented in this manual is designed as a transnational instrument, it is recommended that at least one Peer from abroad is engaged. For the selection of a transnational expert, transnational experience, intercultural competences and language skills are essential.

Thus, additional requirements are

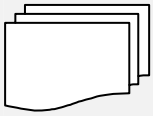
- expertise in evaluation
- transnational experience.

The required competencies and skills for the colleagues to participate as peer reviewers in the field of guidance are:

- ❑ training in **adult education guidance**,
- ❑ training in **quality evaluation and development** (in adult education and guidance in adult education),
- ❑ training in **the areas that are the subject of the peer review of quality in guidance centres**.

Applying to be a Peer

The Manual also provides an application form for persons who are interested in becoming a Peer and have the relevant expertise. Peers who want to take part in a European Peer Review are required to fill out and submit this application form.



A Peer Application Form can be found in the Tool-box.

Preparation and training of Peers

Peers are obliged to analyse the VET institution's Self-Report and contribute to the preparation of the Peer Visit by attending meetings with the VET provider and the other Peers, by setting up an agenda for the Peer Visit and by formulating evaluation questions for the Peer Review.

Prior to the Peer Review, Peers should also undergo a "Peer Training Programme" that prepares them for their work as external evaluators. The training programme should introduce Peer Review as an evaluation methodology, explain in depth the different phases of the Peer Review, and clarify the role and tasks of the Peers. Additionally, training in quantitative and qualitative data analysis and in qualitative evaluation methods (e.g. interviews and observation) may be provided if needed. Training in soft skills, i.e. social, communicative and moderation skills should complete the training programme.

If face-to-face training is possible, the Peer training may also be used to support the Peers in the preparation of the Peer Visit, i.e. to provide guidance in the analysis of the Self-Reports and/or counselling in the preparation of the Review design and the

Peer Visit agenda (e.g. which methods to use for which topics, who to interview/observe, how to prepare questions for interview guidelines or grids with criteria for observations, etc.).

European Peer Review in practice: Peer Training

In the project "Peer Review in initial VET", the training of Peers generally took 1.5 – 2 days and included two complementary sections:

- **a web-based training programme for the Peers** (1 day) that could be accessed from the website: http://www.peer-review-education.net, and

- **a face-to-face training workshop for Peers** (0.5 - 1 day) that also served to prepare the Peer Visit and therefore usually took place on the day before the Peer Visit (lower travel costs; cf. also the prereview Peer Team meeting). This meeting also offered the Peers an opportunity for teambuilding.

Liaison with the Peer Review Facilitator

The primary contact person for the Peer Team during the whole process is the Peer Review Facilitator S/he should make additional documentation accessible upon request and is responsible for the organisational preparation and conduct of the Peer Review (invitation of persons to be interviewed, reservation of rooms and other facilities needed, logistics during the review, etc.). Thus, the facilitator's core role is to ensure that the channels of communication between the VET provider/institution and the Peer Team (mainly in the person of the Peer Coordinator) work effectively. The facilitator is not a member of the Peer Team and will not make assessments about the topics under scrutiny. S/he should not be present during interviews or during internal discussions of the Peer Team.

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S U P P L E M E N T S

SUPPLEMENT 1 **Glossary**

SUPPLEMENT 2 **Standards and corresponding indicators and criteria according to the ISIO model in individual areas**

SUPPLEMENT 1 - GLOSSARY

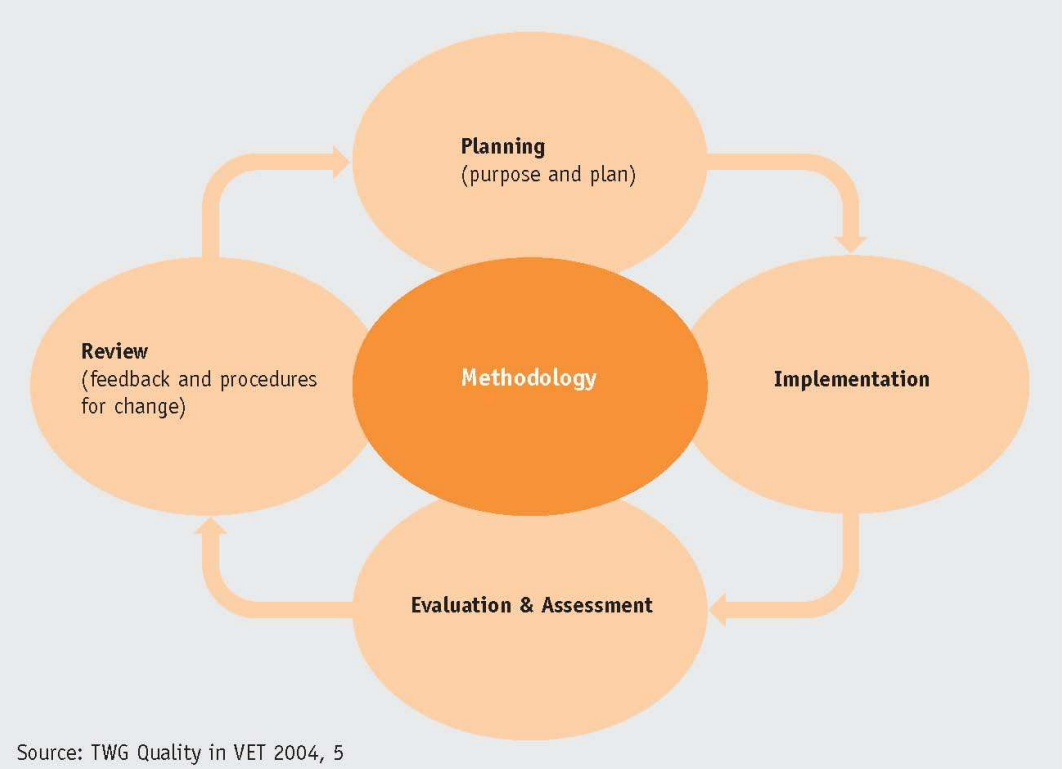
Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF)

The Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF) has been developed by the Technical Working Group on Quality, a high-level European working group, following a mandate from the European Commission. The CQAF constitutes a European reference framework to ensure and develop quality in VET, building on the key principles of the most relevant, existing, quality assurance models. The CQAF comprises:

- a model (4 common core criteria)
- a methodology for assessment and review of systems: the emphasis has been given to self-assessment, combined with external evaluation;
- a monitoring system: to be identified as appropriate at national or regional level, and possibly combined with voluntary peer review at European level;
- a measurement tool: a set of reference indicators aiming at facilitating monitoring and evaluation by member states of their own systems at national or regional levels.

The model presents the 4 common core criteria for quality assurance: Planning, Implementation, Evaluation and Assessment, and Review (feedback and procedures for change).

Graf 9: **Common Core Criteria**



Source: TWG Quality in VET 2004, 5

Communicative Validation

Communicative validation is used in qualitative social research to enhance the validity of results: feedback on findings is systematically solicited from different stakeholders to challenge the data collected as well as its interpretation. A communicative validation can be carried out whenever necessary in the Peer Review process; in most cases it will be used in the final stages of the Visit, e.g. shortly before, during or after the feedback session with the VET provider.

Coordinating Body for Peer Review

If a suitable structure and sufficient funding is available, the coordination of the Peer Review network can be carried out by a competent organisation/unit. For the purpose of this Manual, this support structure will be called the "coordinating body". Establishing such a body is recommended for the management of complex (transnational) Peer Review networks.
The coordinating body can be central to the coordination and organisation of Peer Reviews. It can be either a coordination unit set up by a network of VET providers, the staff of a (publicly funded) pilot project on Peer Review or a (more or less) independent Peer Review agency established by education authorities.

The degree of influence and the scope of the tasks of the coordinating body may vary, depending on its set-up: it may process applications from Peers, select the Peers according to a predefined profile, match the VET providers with suitable Peers, draw up a timetable for the Reviews, collect and forward information, organise Peer

training and provide consultation for the VET providers throughout the whole process.

"Critical Friends"

Synonym of "Peers".

Formative Evaluation

Formative Evaluation is an ongoing evaluation that serves the purpose of improving ("forming") the evaluation object, which may be, for example, a Quality Area, an entire organisation, a programme, a project, a product, an intervention, a policy or a person. In the case of the European Peer Review, a formative evaluation is carried out of certain areas or departments of VET providers/institutions.

The main focus of a formative evaluation is to support further improvement and sustainable development (whereas a summative evaluation is geared towards quality assurance and control). It can be used to exchange and share information and to provide feedback to staff, students, participants and other persons involved. In the European Peer Review, the results of the formative review are addressed primarily to the reviewed institution, to be used for internal quality development.

Evaluation Expert
The Evaluation Expert is a Peer with additional knowledge and expertise in evaluation. In addition to the activities of a Peer, s/he will support the Peer Team in preparing interview questions for the Peer Visit, s/he will moderate the internal discussion sessions of the Peer Team during the Visit and also the communicative validation session with representatives of the VET provider at the end of the Visit. S/he may also coach/assist the Peer Coordinator in the writing of the Peer Review Report.

Management of a VET Provider
Person(s) responsible for managing the institution: these can be the directors, principals, general managers, etc. plus department heads and other managers (i.e. financial, quality managers, etc.).

Peers
Peers are mostly colleagues from other VET providers/institutions (teachers, managers, counsellors, other staff). They are external but work in a similar environment and have specific professional expertise and knowledge of the evaluated subject. They are independent and "persons of equal standing" with the persons whose performance is being reviewed.
Peers are sometimes also called "critical friends".

Peer Review
Peer Review is a form of external evaluation with the aim of supporting the reviewed educational institution in its quality assurance and quality development efforts.
An external group of experts, known as Peers, is invited to judge the quality of different fields of the institution, such as the quality of education and training provision of individual departments or of the entire organisation. During the evaluation process, the Peers usually visit the reviewed institution.

Peer Review Facilitator
The Peer Review Facilitator is the person responsible for the organisation and the smooth running of the Peer Review at the VET provider/institution. S/he will see to it that the Peers are selected and invited in due time, that the Self-Report is ready and forwarded to the Peers and that the Peer Visit is prepared. S/he will be also the primary contact person for the Peers during the whole Peer Review procedure.

Peer Review Report
The Peer Review Report is a written documentation of the Peer Review. It is drawn up by the Peers. Usually the Peer Coordinator, with the help of the Evaluation Expert, will write the report on the basis of notes taken by the Peers, internal discussions among the Peers and the outcomes of the communicative validation. All Peers will contribute to the report and the Peer Team as a whole is responsible for the Peer Review Report.

Peer Tandems
Peer Tandems are pairs of Peers. For all activities concerning data collection it is recommended that two Peers be present at any given time. This is an important precondition for a fair and equitable process since, with two peers involved, the probability of subjective and arbitrary judgements can be reduced substantially (principle of dual control). Two persons will also be able to take in more than one person. In practice, this means that the Peer Team splits up into pairs – Peer Tandems – and carries out different activities at the same time, thus making the process more efficient.

Peer Review Network
Peer Reviews are very often carried out in networks of VET providers/institutions. This network may have been established for the purpose of conducting Peer Reviews or, alternatively, an existing network may have decided to carry out Peer Reviews. Peer Review Networks can prove a valuable means of exchanging good practice and working jointly on the improvement of the whole sector of VET.

Provider/Institution of VET
In the Peer Review Manual, the term "VET provider/institution" is used to encompass the institutions who are responsible for quality assurance and development primarily at the school/college level but also at the level of the maintaining institution if this is where quality assurance and development are coordinated. Throughout the Manual, the terms "VET provider" and "VET institution" are used synonymously.

Quality of Vocational Education and Training
"Quality" is a generic and context-dependent term. It can be equated with the fulfilment of goals. In other words, quality is the experienced reality measured against expectations (goals). For the European Peer Review procedure, important Quality Areas have been defined to give an indication of what quality in initial vocational education and training is about.

Self-Evaluation of a VET Provider
Self-evaluation is an evaluation carried out by the VET providers themselves. It is an important approach for fostering quality assurance and quality development at an institutional level throughout Europe. For a Peer Review to take place, a self-evaluation must first have been carried out. Results of the self-evaluation are an important basis for the Peer Review. They are usually documented in a Self-Report.

Self-Report
The Self-Report comprises the findings of the self-evaluation of the VET provider carried out prior to the Peer Review. It is the basic document for the Peer Review.

Summative Evaluation
Summative evaluation aims at arriving at final conclusions concerning quality and usefulness of the evaluation object, which may be, for example, a Quality Area, an entire organisation, a programme, a project, a product, an intervention, a policy or a person. Summative evaluation is geared towards quality control and external accountability. It often uses quantitative and comparative information to make

recommendations on possible actions, such as retaining, enlarging or reducing the evaluation object. Summative evaluations thus also support the process of decision-making by political authorities and funding bodies.

Stakeholders (in VET)

Stakeholders in VET are
- students,
- staff (managers, teachers, counsellors and administrative staff),
- enterprises (as cooperation partners in the provision of VET, as prospective employers),
- educational institutions leading to VET (institutions of compulsory education) or taking in graduates from VET (post-secondary/secondary sector of education),
- parents,
- social partners,
- education authorities, etc.

The inclusion of various relevant groups of stakeholders in the whole review process is highly recommended. First of all, high-quality evaluation calls for the involvement of stakeholders in the process. Secondly, the importance of stakeholders in quality assurance and development has repeatedly been emphasised as an important aspect of European and national VET policy.

Students (of VET)
The term "students" is used to denote the participants in initial vocational education and training. Synonyms are: pupils, learners.

Triangulation
In social research, the approach of including different methods and sources is called triangulation. Using different methods and different sources of information in the collection of data contributes to the quality of the evaluation in terms of objectivity, reliability and validity. Soliciting diverse points of view from different stakeholders during the Peer Visit will enable the Peers to gain a more accurate and complete picture.

VET
VET is the acronym for "Vocational Education and Training".

Addendum to the glossary, prepared by the Slovenian authors

Benchmarking
Benchmarking is a systematic process evaluating products and services known for their best practices in order to improve the work of one's own organisation.

Benchmarking visit (in other guidance centres)
A benchmarking visit is an integral part of the benchmarking method and it is carried out in the institution (guidance centre) we are benchmarking. This visit is pre-arranged and has a detailed plan of action, which includes benchmarking areas (topics), the timetable, the methods of execution (discussion, observation, etc.) and the participants.

Dislocation of the guidance centre
Dislocation of the guidance centre is a situation in which a guidance centre operates outside its headquarters. The counsellors, employed at the guidance centre, offer their services on certain days/hours in other organisations outside the seat of the guidance centre (for example, libraries, municipality buildings, other educational organisations, companies, etc.)

Documentation analysis
Documentation analysis is a systematic procedure during evaluation process which helps us to acquire, assess and interpret data and information from different written, visual and other material sources (minutes, reports, photos, recordings, etc.)

External interest groups
External interest groups are not located within the educational organisation, but exercise their influence on the organisation from the outside.

Focus group
A focus group is a session of a group of people whose discussion is focused on a pre-determined topic and follows a set blueprint. The method is mostly used in social studies research and is one of the qualitative research methods.

Guidance centre for information and guidance in adult education (also called ISIO guidance centre, regional guidance centre for adult education)
Guidance centres provide adults with free, impartial, confidential, holistic, and quality information and guidance at their education and learning, informing and guidance before the enrolment in an education programme, during the process, and at the end of the education process. It provides accessibility of information and guidance in different ways: guidance centres provide personal guidance, information and guidance by telephone, written guidance – by ordinary and electronic mail, and via information materials; if agreed, group consultations and counselling outside the guidance centre are also possible. Guidance centres service all adults, but particular attention is given to those groups of adults in a particular area who are marginalised, have more difficulties accessing education, are less educated and less active about their education.

Regional guidance centres for adult education are thus called because their activities (including the activities of their dislocated units) cover the entire region.

Guidance centre network
Guidance centre network is made up of all the guidance centres for adult education information and guidance in Slovenia. The network has common objectives of the guidance activities, common work principles and different activities that, while common for the entire network, vary from centre to centre.

Headquarters of the guidance centre
The headquarters of the guidance centre is in one of the larger adult education organisations in the region. The guidance centre is an independent organisational unit, which operates at the address of the chosen educational organisation, which is at the same time the formal and legal provider of the activities connected to the guidance centre. The work of the guidance centre is, however, independent from the organisation, because it follows the agreed model and follows the needs of adults in the region.

Information and guidance in adult education/educational guidance for adults
Information and guidance in adult education is a process supporting adults entering or participating in education. It includes information and guidance before entering the education process (choosing the appropriate educational programme and an organisation that provides it, getting familiar with entrance requirements, the education process, etc.), during the process itself (how to organize learning, how to overcome study problems, etc.) and at the end of the education process (evaluating one's achievements, deciding on further educational options, etc.).

Information and guidance in adult education connects three inter-linking areas: personality/personal development, career course and development and adult education/training.

Information and promotion in guidance services
Information and promotion activities in guidance services include planned information activities of all potential adult groups about the possibility of information and guidance in adult education in the local environment, and also planned promotional activities (in mass media and different milieus) tailored specifically to fit the guidance activities. The promotional activities are carried out in different ways for different groups of adults.

Interest groups
A group, consisting of individuals, groups or organisations that have any kind of direct or indirect, positive or negative relationship with the educational organisation. The quality level of the educational organisation influences the interest group, but it is also possible for the interest group to influence the levels of quality in an educational organisation.

Interest groups (in information and guidance for adult education)

The following basic interest groups could be included into guidance network interest group: potential users of guidance services, guidance clients, former guidance clients, guidance counsellors, guidance centre managers, other employees in institutions where the seat of guidance centres is, members of strategic councils of guidance centres, members of boards of experts of guidance centres, social partners, especially unions, educational institutions from the surrounding areas, development institutions from the surrounding areas, educational/school authorities etc.

Internal interest groups

The characteristic of internal interest group is their involvement into the work of the educational organisation from the inside (management, staff, union ...).

Primary interest groups

Primary interest groups are those whose participation is essential for the existence of the educational organisation. They are integral to the key process of the activity that is the core of the organisation's service.

Quality area

Quality areas are units, complete in terms of contents, that encompass (for example, in the quality evaluation model) all different aspects that have to be taken into account when evaluating and developing the quality of work in an educational organisation.

Quality area in the model of quality for guidance centres

Quality areas are units, complete in terms of contents, which encompass all different aspects that have to be taken into account when evaluating and developing the quality of work in guidance centres.

Quality criteria

The quality criteria present the tool to "measure" the defined standard of quality. Depending on the nature of the standard of quality, the criteria can be either numerical or descriptive. They are a point of reference, or a goal we set to achieve in order to guarantee the realisation of the defined quality standard.

Quality indicators

Quality indicators direct us to look into important aspects of quality, which determine the studied area, in more detail. They are necessary to help us define in more detail the aspects the quality of which will be assessed in order to establish whether the set quality standards have been met.

Quality standards

The statements that describe the expected/desired quality of the most important aspects of a particular activity, organisation, educational programme, system, etc.

Quality standards in adult education

Quality standards in adult education can be used to determine the expected/desired quality of the key input, process, output and contextual factors of adult education on the level of educational system, educational organisation, etc.

Quality standards in guidance

For the purposes of determining quality in guidance, the standards of quality can in broadest sense be defined as statements describing expected/desired quality of the key aspects of the guidance activity and its results and effects. On the most general level the formation of standards of quality helps us find the answer to what kind of guidance activities for adult education we want, be it on the level of an individual counsellor, an guidance centre, or development of guidance for adults on national level.

Secondary interest groups

Secondary interest groups are not included into the direct relationships and exchange with the organisation, but they have the capability and possibility to mobilize public opinion in favour or disservice to the goals of the organisation. Because of their position within the system they can influence how and whether the educational organisation reaches its objectives.

Vocational guidance

Vocational guidance includes transmitting information and advice that enable adults to make an informed choice about the type of their vocational (work) life; the type they feel capable for and which meets their expectations. Vocational guidance includes the possibility of vocational assessment – interest tests, aptitude tests that help charter and develop career path, help with decisions and planning the educational path with regard to the development of the professional/work career of an individual, etc.

SUPPLEMENT 2 - Standards and corresponding indicators and criteria according to the guidance centres quality framework model in individual areas

AREA 1: POTENTIAL CLIENTS OF GUIDANCE (TARGET GROUPS)		
STANDARDS	**INDICATORS**	**CRITERIA**
1.1 The guidance centre is active in making adult education and learning guidance services more accessible and thus responds to local, regional and national needs.	1.1.1 Knowing potential guidance clients in the view of local, regional and national needs.	1.1.1.1 The guidance centre has analysed the local, regional and national needs of adults for guidance.
	1.1.2 Active approach to finding potential guidance clients.	1.1.2.1 The guidance centre has one or more dislocated units.
		1.1.2.2 Every year, the guidance centre performs at least three information and guidance activities away from its headquarters and dislocated units.
		1.1.2.3 Every year, the guidance centre performs at least one promotional activity aimed at recruiting potential guidance clients.
AREA 2: STAFF		
STANDARDS	**INDICATORS**	**CRITERIA**
2.1. Guidance activities are carried out by adequately educated and trained counsellors with appropriate personality traits.	2.1.1 The structure and number of staff in the guidance centre	2.1.1.1 The guidance centre employs one full-time counsellor if it performs 1000 guidance activities and has 800 clients of their services.
		2.1.1.2 Guidance work of one full-time counsellor can be replaced by the work of several part-time counsellors, if at least one of them works for the guidance centre at least 70% of his/her time.
		2.1.1.3 Each guidance centre has a guidance centre manager. The role of the manager can be filled by a counsellor.
		2.1.1.4 If more than one counsellor is employed at the centre, the role of the manager is performed by the one who works at the centre most of the time.

AREA 2: STAFF (continued)		
STANDARDS	**INDICATORS**	**CRITERIA**
2.1. Guidance activities are carried out by adequately educated and trained counsellors with appropriate personality traits. (continued)	2.1.1 The structure and number of staff in the guidance centre. (continued)	2.1.1.5 The director of the institution where the seat of the guidance centre is participates in the centre's activities with 5% of her/his time.
		2.1.1.6 The accountant of the institution where the seat of the guidance centre is participates in the centre's activities with 5% of her/his time.
		2.1.1.7 One administrator from the institution where the seat of the guidance centre is participates in the centre's activities with 5% of her/his time.
		2.1.1.8 One member of technical staff from the institution where the seat of the guidance centre is participates in the centre's activities with 5% of her/his time.
		2.1.1.9 One information system maintenance technician from the institution where the seat of the guidance centre is participates in the centre's activities with 5% of her/his time.
	2.1.2 Education of the guidance centre manager and counsellor	2.1.2.1 The guidance centre manager and the counsellor have a bachelor's degree, a specialisation, a master's degree, a doctorate in the field of pedagogy (preferably andragogy), psychology, social pedagogy, sociology (preferably in human resources management), systems organisation and management (preferably in organisation and management of human resources systems), social work.
		2.1.2.2 The counsellor and the guidance centre manager have pedagogic or andragogic education.
		2.1.2.3 The counsellor and the guidance centre manager have passed the professional qualification exam in education.

AREA 2: STAFF (continued)		
S TANDARDS	**INDICATORS**	**CRITERIA**
2.1. Guidance activities are carried out by adequately educated and trained counsellors with appropriate personality traits. (continued)	2.1.3 Guidance centre manager's and counsellor's training	2.1.3.1 The guidance centre manager and the counsellor have successfully completed basic training for counsellors in guidance centres.
		2.1.3.2 The guidance centre manager and the counsellor attend at least two educational meetings that the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education organises per year for guidance centres.
		2.1.3.3 The guidance centre manager and the counsellor attend at least 16 hours of other professional training for guidance per year.
		2.1.3.4 The guidance centre manager is trained for managing and organising the work in the guidance centre.
	2.1.4 Work experience of the guidance centre manager and the counsellor	2.1.4.1 The counsellor has at least three years of work experience in education or counselling.
		2.1.4.2 The guidance centre manager has at least five years experience in education or counselling.
	2.1.5 Personality characteristics of the guidance centre manager and the counsellor.	2.1.5.1 The guidance centre manager and the counsellor successfully pass the test of basic personality characteristics necessary for guidance work (empathy, active listening, communication skills, etc.)

AREA 3: RESOURCES, EQUIPMENT, DATABASES, INSTRUMENTS		
STANDARDS	**INICATORS**	**CRITERIA**
3.1 Guidance centre provides adequate premises, equipment, specialised library, database and guidance instruments which allow a complex, quality and engaged guidance work.	3.1.1 Premises	3.1.1.1 At the seat of the guidance centre a special room (not smaller than 10 square metres) is set aside for guidance work. It must allow for individual guidance work.
		3.1.1.2 For the work of a dislocated unit, a room that allows individual guidance work is provided.
	3.1.2. Equipment	3.1.2.1 Minimum equipment at the seat of the guidance centre includes: a desk and a chair for the counsellor, a computer, a printer, telephone and internet access, a book-case/cabinet, a materials stand, a desk and several chairs for clients.
	3.1.3. Specialised library	3.1.3.1 The guidance centre has a library and a selection of magazines specialised in guidance and education.
	3.1.4. Databases	3.1.4.1 The guidance centre has a database that includes all the fundamental documents needed for guidance work (at least the basic legislation for the area of adult education, national calls for enrolment, an overview of certified adult education programmes, an overview of adult education providers).
		3.1.4.2 The guidance centre keeps its own regional database, which includes the information important for the education and learning of adults in their own environment (it must include at least education programmes providers, education programmes, possibilities for formal and informal education, various forms of help etc.)
	3.1.5 Guidance instruments	3.1.5.1 The guidance centre uses different guidance instruments in its work.

AREA 4: GUIDANCE PROCESS		
STANDARDS	**INDICATORS**	**CRITERIA**
4.1 The guidance centre guarantees to the clients of its services a complete guidance process that will help them decide on the choice and the course of education and training.	4.1.1 The types of guidance process	4.1.1.1 The guidance centre provides all three types of guidance process: guidance before enrolment into education or learning, guidance during the course of education and guidance when education process is complete.
	4.1.2 Guidance process activities	4.1.2.1 The guidance centre offers all the activities of the guidance process: informing, counselling/advising, guidance, evaluation, training, representing, feed-back.
	4.1.3 The methods of executing the guidance process	4.1.3.1 The guidance process is executed in at least the following ways: - by telephone, - in person, - by electronic mail, - in writing/by mail, - via information brochures/materials.
		4.1.3.2 The guidance process can also be executed in another way, for example, by setting up an information corner, via call-in radio programmes, via advice column in a newspaper.
	4.1.4 The ways of including guidance clients	4.1.4.1 The guidance process is open to individuals or groups.
	4.1.5 Duration of the guidance process	4.1.5.1 The length of the guidance process is adjusted to the problem and the needs of the service clients.

AREA 4: GUIDANCEPROCESS		
STANDARDS	**INDICATORS**	**CRITERIA**
4.1 The guidance centre guarantees to the clients of its services a complete guidance process that will help them decide on the choice and the course of education and learning. (continued)	4.1.6 The structure of the guidance process	4.1.6.1 The in-depth forms of guidance include: - preparations for the guidance process (for repeat guidance service), - getting to know the client and her/his needs (also using guidance instruments), - planning the best possible solutions (also using guidance instruments), - an agreement to realise solutions, - monitoring of realisation (in repeat guidance services), - evaluation (in repeat guidance services).
4.2. The guidance centre regularly monitors those characteristics of its clients that are important for decision making and success and effectiveness of education.	4.2.1 Characteristics, important for the decisions regarding education.	4.2.1.1 The guidance centre has a defined method of determining those characteristics of the clients that are important at making decisions for education.
	4.2.2 Characteristics, important for success and effectiveness of education	4.2.2.1 The guidance centre has a defined method of determining those characteristics of the clients that are important for success and effectiveness of education.
AREA 5: PARTNERSHIP		
STANDARDS	**INDICATORS**	**CRITERIA**
5.1 The guidance centre develops partner networks to provide wholesome and quality guidance services and planning and evaluation of guidance services in local area.	5.1.1 Strategic partners	5.1.1.1 The guidance centre has an established network of strategic partners. This network includes the most important subjects that plan and make decisions about local development and development of human resources (at least representatives from the city council, employment service office, organisations involved in regional development, regional offices of the Chamber of Commerce and Chamber of Craft and Small Businesses).
		5.1.1.2 Strategic partners form a strategic council.

AREA 5: PARTNERSHIP		
STANDARDS	**INDICATORS**	**CRITERIA**
5.1 The guidance centre develops partner networks to provide wholesome and quality guidance services and planning and evaluation of guidance services in local area. (continued)	5.1.2 Cooperation of strategic partners in planning the development of the guidance centre	5.1.2.1 The guidance centre reviews its plans together with its strategic partners at lest once a year.
	5.1.3 Cooperation of strategic partners in evaluation of the guidance centre's work/activities.	5.1.3.1 The guidance centre evaluates its work together with its strategic partners at least once a year.
	5.1.4 Expert partners	5.1.4.1 The guidance centre has an established network of expert partners which includes a network of organisations that locally work in the field of guidance or adult education (at least representatives of adult education institutions, other counselling organisations, employment offices).
		5.1.4.2 Expert partners form a part of the expert group.
		5.1.4.3 The expert group discusses and adopts professional guidelines/directives, connected to the work of the guidance centre.
	5.1.5 The participation of expert partners in the implementation of the guidance process.	5.1.5.1 The guidance centre includes expert partners into the implementation of the guidance process as needed.
		5.1.5.2 The guidance centre responds to the needs of the partners who need to perform a guidance process.
		5.1.5.3 The guidance centre initiates common activities within the network of experts.
	5.1.6 Partnership among guidance centres	5.1.6.1 The guidance centre participates in common activities of the guidance centres' network.

AREA 6: INFORMATION AND PROMOTION		
STANDARDS	**INDICATORS**	**CRITERIA**
6.1 To allow the greatest possible access to the guidance centre services for all adults, the guidance centre systematically informs potential target groups about its activities.	6.1.1 Operational plan	6.1.1.1 The guidance centre has at least a one-year plan for informing potential target groups and promoting its activities.
	6.1.2 Frequency	6.1.2.1 The guidance centre has at least one permanent form of informing potential target groups and promoting its activities.
	6.1.3 Diversity	6.1.3.1 The guidance centre performs the activities of informing and promotion via different types of media (radio, newspapers, television, world wide web, leaflets, posters, billboards).
	6.1.4 Adaptability to target groups	6.1.4.1 The guidance centre adjusts the method and the contents of information and promotion to the needs of different target groups.
	6.1.5 Regional coverage	6.1.5.1 The guidance centre carries out the informing of potential target groups and promoting its activities in the entire region.
AREA 7: QUALITY EVALUATION AND DEVELOPMENT		
STANDARDS	**INDICATORS**	**CRITERIA**
7.1 The guidance centre has implemented systematic quality evaluation and development.	7.1.1 Planning	7.1.1.1 The guidance centre has a defined system of quality evaluation and development (a published declaration of quality, accessible to the general public).
		7.1.1.2 The guidance centre has a defined self-evaluation plan for a determined time frame.
	7.1.2 Implementation	7.1.2.1 The guidance centre carries out self-evaluation according to the self-evaluation plan.
	7.1.3 Presentation of quality evaluation results	7.1.3.1 The guidance centre prepares the self-evaluation report and the debate in accordance to the self-evaluation plan.
	7.1.4 Implementation of improvements	7.1.4.1 The guidance centre already has a defined plan of action for a set period of time and is implementing it.

AREA 8. RESULTS		
STANDARDS	**INDICATORS**	**CRITERIA**
8.1 The guidance centre provides guidance service to the adults in its area, and gives special attention to the groups of adults who have difficulties accessing education and learning or need more support and help for education and learning.	8.1.1 Number of services	8.1.1.1 The guidance centre with one full-time employee carries out 1000 guidance service acts per year.
	8.1.2 Number of service clients	8.1.2.1 The guidance centre with one full-time employee has 800 service clients per year.
	8.1.3 Demographic characteristics of service clients	8.1.3.1 The gender structure of service clients does not deviate by more than 20% from the gender structure of the population in the region.
		8.1.3.2 In regards of the educational structure, at least 50% of the guidance clients have completed less than four years of secondary education.
		8.1.3. The percentage of unemployed guidance centre service clients is at least equal to the percentage of unemployment, registered in the region.
	8.1.4 Vulnerable groups	8.1.4.1 At least 20% of the clients come from vulnerable groups (immigrants, refugees, homeless, the Roma community, adults with special needs, less educated seniors, young adults with no vocational training).
	8.1.5 Priority target groups from the point of view of the local and regional environment	8.1.5.1 At least 50% of the clients come from the priority target groups in the local environment.
8.2 The clients of the guidance centre are satisfied with the quality of the guidance services and estimate that the services contributed to the solution of their problem.	8.2.1 Client satisfaction	8.2.1.1 At least 75% of the polled clients are satisfied with the guidance centre services.
		8.2.1.2 At least 50% of the clients who have not yet solved their problem are satisfied with the guidance centre service.
	8.2.2 The contribution of the guidance centre to the solution of the client's problem	8.2.2.1 At least 75% of the polled clients who have solved their problem estimate that the help of the guidance centre contributed to the solution of their problem.

AREA 9: EFFECTS		
STANDARDS	**INDICATORS**	**CRITERIA**
9.1 The guidance centre contributes to the increased participation of adults in the lifelong learning, increase in study success and a decrease in dropout rates and social marginalisation.	9.1.1 Increased participation of adults in lifelong learning	9.1.1.1 Guidance helped the adult decide on further formal or non-formal learning.
	9.1.2 Increased study success and decrease of dropout rates	9.1.2.1 Guidance during education process helped the adult overcome learning problems.
		9.1.2.2 Guidance during education process helped the adult complete education successfully.
	9.1.3 Decrease in social marginalisation	9.1.3.1 Guidance helped the adult in social inclusion.
AREA 10: MANAGEMENT, ADMINISTRATION, ORGANISATION		
STANDARDS	**INDICATORS**	**CRITERIA**
10.1 The guidance centre is developmentally embedded into the environment in which it works; it works within its parent institution in a way that enables it the necessary professional autonomy and working conditions suitable for the mission it has as a regional information and guidance centre.	10.1.1 Orientation into development.	10.1.1.1 The guidance centre determines the development strategy within its model at least for the period that is coordinated with the timeframe of the adopted regional development programme.
		10.1.1.2 The annual plan of the guidance centre reflects the needs of the narrower and wider milieu and takes into account the needs as determined in the regional development programme.
	10.1.2 Professional autonomy	10.1.2.1 The institution and the guidance centre have determined the questions that are considered strictly professional and are decided upon independently by the guidance centre manager or the manager with her/his co-workers in the centre.
		10.1.2.2 The institution and the centre have defined the questions that are co-decided or decided upon by the director of the institution.
		10.1.2.3 The guidance centre, in relationship to its parent institution, independently decides upon professional questions that touch the work of the guidance centre.

AREA 10: MANAGEMENT, ADMINISTRATION, ORGANSATION (continued)		
STANDARDS	**INDICATORS**	**CRITERIA**
10.1 The guidance centre is developmentally embedded into the environment in which it works; it works within its parent institution in a way that enables it the necessary professional autonomy and working conditions suitable for the mission it has as a regional information and guidance centre. (continued)	10.1.3 The normative organisation of the guidance centre position and its activity.	10.1.3.1 The position of the guidance centre is normatively organised within the institution.
		10.1.3.2 The institution has adjusted, or specifically created and passed normative acts that are required for the smooth operation of the guidance centre (for example, personal data protection in the centre, public information, job classification, work hours …).
10.2 The organisation of work in the guidance centre is effective and as such supports the guidance process, the achievement of good results and effects of work.	10.2.1 The role and position of the guidance centre manager	10.2.1.1 The guidance centre manager has defined responsibilities and competencies that allow him/her to perform his/her tasks.
		10.2.1.2 The guidance centre manager organises her work and the work of her co-workers in an effective way that guarantees good results.
		10.2.1.3 The guidance centre manager supports team work, professionalism, responsibility and quality.
		10.2.1.4 The guidance centre manager plans and guides professional development of the staff in the guidance centre.
		10.2.1.5 The guidance centre manager develops positive communication with the environment, strategic and professional partners, within the institution in which he works, with co-workers and with clients.
	10.2.2 The role and position of counsellor(s) in the guidance centre	10.2.2.1 Counsellor(s) in the guidance centres have responsibilities and competencies defined by the guidance centre model, and these allow them to perform their tasks.

AREA 10: MANAGEMENT, ADMINISTRATION, ORGANSATION (continued)		
STANDARDS	**INDICATORS**	**CRITERIA**
10.2 The organisation of work in the guidance centre is effective and as such supports the guidance process, the achievement of good results and effects of work (continued)	10.2.2 The role and position of counsellor(s) in the guidance centre (continued)	
		10.2.2.3 The guidance centre counsellors do their work in an effective way that guarantees good results.
	10.2.3 The role and position of other staff in the guidance centre (institution director, information system support technician, administrative, accounts and technical support employees)	10.2.3.1 Other employees at the guidance centre have their responsibilities and competencies determined according to the guidance centre model that allows them to fulfil their role.
		10.2.3.2 Other employees in the guidance centre do their work in an effective way that guarantees good results.
	10.2.4 Connecting the work of the workers in the guidance centre and in the parent institution	10.2.4.1 It is precisely determined in which cases the managers or employees of the guidance centre can also perform tasks for other activities of the parent institution (of the guidance centre).
		10.2.4.2 The work that the guidance centre manager or employees do for the parent institution is recorded and evaluated from the funds that are not the funds of the guidance centre.
		10.2.4.3 It is precisely specified, which employees of the parent institution are included in the work of the guidance centre, with what purpose, to what extent and with what responsibilities.
		10.2.4.4 The work of the employees of the parent institution do for the guidance centre is recorded and evaluated from the funds of the guidance centre.

AREA 10: MANAGEMENT, ADMINISTRATION, ORGANSATION (continued)		
STANDARDS	**INDICATORS**	**CRITERIA**
10.3 Managing money and other guidance centre funds is transparent and effective.	10.3.1 Managing money and other guidance centre funds	10.3.1.1 The guidance centre manager prepares expert groundwork to plan for the necessary monetary and other funds for the undisturbed work of the guidance centre.
		10.3.1.2 Every year, the financial plan is prepared on time and it defines the necessary means for the operation and development of the guidance centre.
		10.3.1.3 The guidance centre manager and the director/principal of the parent institution co-decide on the planning and spending the monetary and other funds.
	10.3.2 The ability of acquiring monetary and other funds	10.3.2.1 The guidance centre manager monitors and reacts to the possibilities to acquire the necessary monetary and other funds for the operation of the guidance centre.
	10.3.3 Effectiveness in spending monetary and other funds	10.3.3.1 The manager and the employees of the guidance centre analyse the effectiveness of the monetary and other funds spending.
	10.3.4 Transparency of the spending of monetary and other funds	10.3.4.1 Money income and expenses are transparently recorded and have a base in the results of work.

List of Partners of the LdV Projects "Peer Review in initial VET", "Peer Review Extended" and "Peer Review Extended II"

Austria

- Österreichisches Institut für Berufsbildungsforschung (öibf) – Austrian Institute for Research on Vocational Training, Austria; www.oeibf.at
- Institut für Höhere Studien (IHS) – Institute for Advanced Studies, Austria, Employment-Qualification-Innovation (EQUI); www.equi.at
- Hertha Firnberg Schulen für Wirtschaft und Tourismus – Hertha Firnberg Schools for Business and Tourism, Österreich; www.hertha-firnbergschulen.at
- Höhere Technische Lehr- und Versuchsanstalt (HTL) für Textilindustrie und Datenverarbeitung Spengergasse – Higher Technical Federal College and Research Institute for Textile Industry and IT, Austria; www.spengergasse.at
- TGM Höhere Bundeslehr- und Versuchsanstalt Wien 20 - Institute of Technology Vienna; www.tgm.ac.at
- Bundeshandelsakademie und Bundeshandelsschule Wien 12 - International Business College (ibc-:) Hetzendorf; www.ibc.ac.at
- Berufsschule für Verwaltungsberufe Wien 5 - Vocational School for Business Administration; www.bs-wien.at
- Höhere Bundeslehranstalt (HBLA) für Mode und Bekleidungstechnik sowie für künstlerische Gestaltung HBLA Herbststraße - College of Fashion and Dressmaking, College of Arts and Crafts; www.herbststrasse.at

Czech Republic

- Národní ústav odborného vzdeláváni (NUOV) - National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education; www.nuov.cz

Denmark

- Odense Tekniske Skole – Odense Technical College, Denmark; www.ots.dk
- Dalum Uddannelses Center – Dalum College of Food and Technology (Denmark); www.dalumuc.dk
- Syddansk Erhvervsskole Odense-Vejle - SDE College; www.sde.dk
- Kold college; www.koldcollege.dk
- Erhvervsskolen Nordsjælland - College of Technology and Business North Zealand; www.esh.dk

Finland

- Opetushallitus – Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE), Finland; www.oph.fi
- Ravintolakoulu Perho – Helsinki Culinary School, Finland; www.perho.fi
- Jyväskylän ammattiopisto, Palvelualojen oppilaitos - Jyväskylä Catering Institute, Finland; www.jao.fi
- Etelä-Karjalan ammattiopisto - South Carelia Vocational College, Finland; www.ekamo.fi

Germany
- Univation: Institut für Evaluation Dr. Beywl & Associates GmbH – Institute for Evaluation Dr. Beywl and Associates GmbH, Germany; www.univation.org
- Berufliche Schulen Odenwaldkreis (BSO) - Vocational Schools Odenwaldkreis; www.bso-michelstadt.de

Hungary
- Pécsi Tudományegyetem Felnottképzési és Emberi Eroforrás Fejlesztési Kar – University of Pécs, Faculty of Adult Education and Human Resource Development, Hungary; www.pte.hu
- M & S Consulting Tanácsadó, Szolgáltató és Kereskedó Kft. - M & S Consultancy, Service and Trading Ltd.
- Hansági Ferenc Vendéglátóipari és Idegenforgalmi Szakiskola és Szakközépiskola - Ferenc Hansági Technical and Professional School for Catering and Tourism www.hansagi.sulinet.hu

Italy
- Istituto per lo Sviluppo della Formazione Professionale dei Lavoratori (ISFOL) - Institute for the Development of Vocational Training for Workers, Italy; www.isfol.it
- Federazione Nationale Centro Nazionale Opere Salesiane - Formazione Aggiornamento Professionale CNOS-FAP, Italy; www.cnos-fap.it
- Istituto Professionale per l'Industria e l'Artigianato - I.P.S.I.A, Italy; ww.ipsiamonza.it
- Istituto di Istruzione Superiore "don Milani – Depero" - Vocational Institute of Administration, Tourism and Leisure, Social Services and Arts, Italy; www.mide.it
- Centro Italiano Opere Femminili Salesiane - Formazione Professionale CIOFS-FP Puglia (Italy); www.ciofsfppuglia.it

Netherlands
- ROC Aventus – Regional Training Centre Aventus, The Netherlands; www.aventus.nl.

Portugal
- Instituto de Soldadura e Qualidade – Welding and Quality Institute (ISQ), Portugal; www.isq.pt.
- Centro de Formação Profissional para o Comércio e Afins - Vocational Training Centre for the Trade (CECOA), Portugal; www.cecoa.pt.

Romania
- Institutul de Stiinte ale Educatiei– Institute of Educational Sciences ISE, Romania, www.ise.ro.
- Colegiul Tehnic de Posta si Telecomunicatii "Gh. Airinei" – "Gh. Airinei Technical College of Post and Telecommunication, Romania; www.ptcbuc.8k.com.
- Universitatea Politehnica Bucuresti – Polytechnic University of Bucharest (PUB) (Romania); www.pub.ro.

Slovenia
- Andragoški center Slovenije (ACS) - Slovanian Institute for Adult Education (SIAE); www.acs.si

Spain

- Direcció General d'Ensenyaments Professionals, Artístics i Especialitzats Departament d'Educació, Generalitat de Catalunya - Ministry of Education (Catalan Government), General Direction of VET and Lifelong learning www.xtec.es/fp/
- IES Quercus - Secondary School Quercus; www.iesquercus.com

Switzerland

- Erziehungsdirektion des Kantons Bern – Zentralstelle für Lehrerinnen- und Lehrerfortbildung - Educational Directorate Bern, Switzerland; IPS – "Intensivprojekt Schule" www.erz.be.ch.

Turkey

- Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart Universitesi (COMU) & Milli gitim Bakanligi - Çanakkale Onsekiz Mar University & Ministry of Education; www.comu.edu.tr, www.meb.gov.tr

United Kingdom (Scotland)

- Aberdeen College, Scotland, United Kingdom; www.abcol.ac.uk