



WORK PACKAGE 1

Report about Transnational Peer Review Experimentation

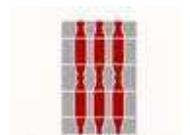
Project
P.R.I.S.D.O.Q.

“Peer Reviews:
Increasing
Sustainable
Development
Of Quality”

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication [communication] reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

LdV-TOI-11-IT-771 - CUP G92F1100039006

Associazione FORMA.Azione srl



Regione Umbria



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1. Introduction

P.R.I.S.D.O.Q. primarily aims at implementing transnational Peer Reviews at the European level, by involving VET providers from Italy, Germany, Turkey, Social Partner from Lithuania (VET Trade Union) and a Regional Body of Italian VET System (Regione Umbria). Consequently, it intends to share the structure and process developed by the Thematic Group of ENQUAVET, starting from the experimentation of the Transnational Peer Review and the promotion of further exploitation of the results of the three previews Leonardo da Vinci projects on Peer Review.

By experimenting, verifying and consequently validating the actions suggested in the "Proposal for structure and process for Transnational European Peer Reviews", P.R.I.S.D.O.Q. can support the strategy of the Member States to improve their QA approach in VET as foreseen by the EU recommendation.

It also aims at enhancing the efforts that some of the key actors involved in this new proposal, have made in previous projects and initiatives: on one side Regione Umbria which took part (in 2008 – 2009), as a representative of the Italian Regions Quality Assurance in VET experiences, together with the Coordinator of the QANRP to the Thematic Group "Developing guidelines for supporting quality assurance in VET" of ENQUAVET; and on the other side Associazione FORMA.Azione srl, coordinator of PRISDOQ, Perspektiv Wechsel and LETU (partners), as they were all involved in a previous LdV multilateral partnership on continuous improvement of Quality Assurance in VET systems (entitled "From the good to the Best"), have approached Peer Review as one of the more sustainable and voluntary methods to enhance quality in Vet organizations.

The European Peer Review Manual and the Tool box are the basic tools to concretely transfer the methodology to transnational VET providers and to assure its wide dissemination, as recommended by the European Thematic group.

The architecture of how to implement Transnational Peer Review, as described by the European Thematic Group, is the guideline of the experimentation. The obtained results and outcomes represent the milestones for further process of dissemination and future exploitation of the good practices developed.

The project has also to be seen as part of the policies and actions promoted by each Member State within the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training.

Such recommendation wants to facilitate the Member States in promoting and monitoring the continuous improvement of their VET systems, through the creation of a European Framework of Reference for Quality Assurance (EQARF). The framework should comprise a quality assurance and improvement cycle of planning, implementation, evaluation/assessment and review/revision of VET, supported by common quality criteria, indicative descriptors and indicators.

The Member States are invited to manage the monitoring processes, including a combination of internal and external evaluation mechanisms, in order to identify the strength of systems, processes and procedures and areas for improvement.

Furthermore the recommendation places strong emphasis on monitoring and improving quality by combining internal and external evaluation, review and processes for improvement, supported by measurement and qualitative analysis. The framework should be a basis for further developments at European, national, regional and local levels, as a result of cooperation among the actors involved.

The approach chosen at European level is not meant to prescribe a particular quality assurance system or approach, but rather to provide common principles, quality criteria, indicative descriptors and indicators that may help in assessing and improving existing systems and provision of VET. The aim is not to introduce new standards, but to support Member States' efforts, whilst preserving the diversity of their approaches.

The Framework, in accordance with national and regional legislation/practices, should be regarded rather as a 'toolbox', from which the various users may choose those descriptors and indicators that they consider most relevant to the requirements of their particular quality assurance system.

The Member States are invited to devise, not later than 18 June 2011, an approach aimed at improving quality assurance systems at national level and making best use of the framework, involving social partners, regional and local authorities, and all other relevant stakeholders in accordance with national legislation and practice (National Plan for Quality Assurance in VET).

It is clear that the approach and the purpose of the European institutions is an attempt of valorising and strengthening both the institutional directives and the practices already in place in the different Member States, mainly organised on a voluntary basis and with a bottom-up process. Among those, self-evaluation and Peer Review certainly represent coherent, simple and useful tools that are easily replicable even where structured Quality assurance policies are not yet in place.

With regard to this, the Italian Quality Assurance National Plan, a part from being already in line with the EU suggestions, aims at strengthening the practices experimented in the different regions, as self-evaluation and Peer Review.

In addition, keeping in mind the need of integrating the new methodologies with the accreditation system for VET providers already implemented, it drives them in the direction of adopting the systems suggested at European level. The diffusion of the Peer Review in Italy and in the P.R.I.S.D.O.Q. partners' countries is still very low. Most of the experimentations, thanks to the LdV programme, have been implemented in schools and VET centres committed to initial education.

Up to the moment, adults' education and continuous training are less involved in similar pilot projects and therefore represent an interesting testing ground for the self-evaluation tools and the Peer Review.

The P.R.I.S.D.O.Q. project has been developed specifically for this target – centres for adults' training and long-life learning, focusing the experimentation on Transnational Peer Review.

For that, the experimentation has an important added value as it provides practical information on the efficacy and the implementation of TPR, with the specific focus on VET providers at the European level.

The adopted approach has been founded on the assumption that the condition for a qualified and objective point of view on the TPR is an active involvement of all the partners on a peer review process. In doing so, the conclusions of the project will be effectively replicable by the other VET providers in Europe. The analysis of the conducted experimentation, also through the recognition of its strengths and weaknesses (SWOT

analysis and focus group), has led to the production of practical and operational suggestions in the section 'Lessons learnt' at the end of the report. It represents a useful tool for all those actors who want to start implementing the Peer Review or other self-evaluation processes.

The added value of the experimentation is therefore:

- 1) Full transnational dimension that required a much more demanding approach in providing Peer Review by each partners involved. Previous experiences were only carried out by one Transnational Peer rather than the whole team;
- 2) Involvement of small vet providers and their management as Peers to be fully committed in the Peer Review methodology and procedures. Previous experiences were developed by teachers and trainers; while headmasters and principals usually were not Peers;
- 3) European and transnational point of view on the usefulness and efficacy of the TPR, directly expressed by insiders and key actors of the VET system;
- 4) Definition and elaboration of useful suggestions for those who want to implement such quality assurance tools in order to maximise the efficacy and avoid already-made mistakes;
- 5) Opportunity of shaping a functional training for peers that could target specifically the required competencies for the quality assurance of VET providers at national and European level;
- 6) Consolidation and development of practices of mutual learning and mutual trust that are at the core of efficient quality assurance policies based on a bottom-up approach.

The features above described underline what P.R.I.S.D.O.Q. project did differently from the other European projects based on Peer Review. The experiences developed seem to be much closer to the EQAVET Quality Management cycle (coherently with CQAF cycle), by introducing a change management approach and not only Quality Assurance Procedures.

In conclusion, it is worth to underline that the experimentation was not conducted roundly among the partners (partner 1 acting as peer for the partner 2, partner 2 for the partner 3 and so on) as planned in the project but rather mutually with all the partners as suggested by the expert Giorgio Allulli in occasion of the kick-off meeting. In doing so, it has been strengthened the value of the project because the peers have taken part to different Peer Reviews, implemented in a variety of cultural and linguistic environments. It enlarge the scope of the experimentation and improve the European added value of the project itself. This approach is more in line with the ideas and expectations behind P.R.I.S.D.O.Q. of continuous and mutual improvement and development of shared practices to be disseminated across Europe.

2. Aims and objectives of the experimentation

Having to assure a wider diffusion of Transnational Peer Review among VET providers – specifically adults education and continuous education – at the transnational level, the P.R.I.S.D.O.Q. partners has opted for an experimentation based on themselves and their institutions. This direct experience of the procedure has been considered a pre-condition for a proper understanding of the tool and its efficacy in order to ensure a wider diffusion through the detection of the weaknesses and the encountered difficulties.

In addition, being the experimentation the first step of a longer process of diffusion of the Peer Review, a second objective is to proceed to a meta-reflection on the implementation of the procedure for VET providers, as tool recognised by the EU institutions to promote the continuous improvement of the quality assurance systems in training and education. Such reflection is an attempt of making clear which are the weaknesses and the criticism emerged during the experimentation of the procedure, taking into account the point of view of actor of the VET system coming from different experiences and contexts. The strength of the reasoning on the experimentation has to be detected exactly on the heterogeneity and the level of understanding of the different stakeholders involved (VET providers, consultants, social parts, local governments) and the support they received by external experts (Benedetta De Marsanich – Evaluator DNV Italia, Giorgio Allulli – Expert of Peer Review, National Coordinator and Reference Point for QA).

The meta-reflection contributed on two different levels of analysis:

- 1) The efficacy of Peer Review (not only Transnational) as instrument to pursue the continuous improvement in the quality of the VET providers and the education system at large;
- 2) The employability of the instrument in different institutional and organizational contexts (micro-VET providers, training centres within enterprises, big VET centres, etc.) that provide different services such as ESF founded courses, internal training, private training courses, etc.

Finally, through the experimentation, the partners have tried to verify which are the effective advantages that people working within the VET system could gain from implementing the Peer Review and how this methodology could be further improved in order to fully be adopted and spread at the European level.

The objective has been met especially through the definition of a check-list for the evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of the Peer Review adoption, objective of the specific report required on WP2.

3. Context and state of art of QA and Peer Review in partners' countries

This section will be dedicated to the experience of Transnational Peer Review conducted by the partners during the first phase of the P.R.I.S.D.O.Q. project, with reference to the wider framework of the Quality Assurance processes of one's own country.

Considering that QA development in VET has reached different stages across Europe, it is interesting to highlight how the different contexts have led to different opportunities and results. The purpose is not to stress on the strengths and weaknesses of the existing quality systems (on which a consistent literature has been produced) but rather to describe how the new methodology has been put in place with reference to them and which could be the future developments.

The uniqueness of the carried out experimentation can provide useful and consistent information on the effectiveness and the opportunities of the Peer Review implementation to social parts and policy-makers.

Three out of the four participant countries (Italia, Germania, Lithuania), being members of the EU, have already developed their QANRP whereas Turkey does not. In addition, Italy and Germany have an accreditation/recognition system for VET providers which directly influence their capacity of implementing processes, procedures and indicators for QA. The ISO 9001 quality system represents a further tool to ensure certain quality standards which is well known and spread across countries. It has a specific importance for VET providers in Italy because it guarantees a facilitations during the accreditation process, as is the case of Regione Umbria. Turkey, for its part, is extremely interested in the topics of continuous improvement and QA systems development in VET, as attested by the public financing call issued ("Improving the quality of vocational and technical education in Turkey (IQVET)" - TRH2.2.IQVETII/P-03 - Europeaid/133086/M/ACT/TR).

To complete the excursus on actual QA requirements in the partners' countries, it has to be said that, in Lithuania, VET providers are not asked to prove the quality of their training offer. Any action in the field of QA is delegated to individual choices, with the possibility for VET centres to undertake the ISO 9001 certification process.

Through the National Reference Point, it has been possible to:

1. receive a qualified training by the coordinator of the National Reference Point (Lithuania and Italy, even though in the latter case we are referring to a transitional profile – Giorgio Allulli);
2. initiate contacts and relations with national, transnational and European networks, differently committed to QA in VET (Germania, Italia e Lithuania);
3. have access to updated information on the state of art of the experimentations on the Peer Review, in particular in Italy and Germany.

A further aspect that needs to be considered is the different familiarity with and awareness of the P.R.I.S.D.O.Q. partners as regards QA systems and practices. It has necessarily led to disparities in the implications and outcomes of the experimentation.

Last but not least: the role of Regione Umbria, partner and local public institution in charge of the education and training policies, and the accreditation system. It has brought a significant contribution to the whole scope of the project thanks to the institutional point of view it has been able to share with the different stakeholders. For Italy and Umbria, in particular, its participation will influence concretely the QA system development and implementation at the regional and national level, testing and acquiring new methodologies such as self-evaluation and Peer Review and integrating them with the

current practices and procedures. Regione Umbria could therefore play the role of referent for the other regions thanks to its participation in the Board of National Reference Point to guarantee quality in VET and promote the adoption of the methodology at regional and national level.

Regione Umbria, project partner, has not taken part into the PR as host organisation. Rather, it has provided human resources and competencies on the methodology, essential contributes to the evaluation process, and its institutional point of view.

The report will now provide a descriptive presentation of each partner who hosted a PR Visit, with a specific focus on the organisational aspects that characterise its QA procedures.

OPAL Turkey is a small VET provider which successfully offer training courses and events without having a structured system for the training offer quality monitoring and management.

It provides seminars to parents about parenting techniques; to university students about working experience, management skills, self-confidence etc., to adults about public relations, human resources, development of the efficiency of employers and soft skills, drama courses, personal development seminars, time management-stress management courses etc.

The organisation is not structured in a way that ensures a consistent planning and management of the quality oriented towards a continuous improvement. The extremely positive results reflected in the satisfaction of the customers, then, have to be ascribed to the personal capacities of the owner-trainer.

It is interested in adopting new methodologies which can assure an easy but efficient management of the quality of the training offer, both through the ISO 9001 certification process and the Peer Review.

The involvement of OPAL in the project, result of previous collaboration with PERSPEKTIVWechsel, has to be considered as a considerable advantage within the Turkish environment, which is gradually addressing the topic of the quality in VET but has not defined yet models and procedures. In fact, it has acquired specific know-how on the methodology of the Peer Review thanks to the training for peers received by Giorgio Allulli in Turkey, and it can act as a laboratory for experimentation and research.

PERSPEKTIVWechsel is a small consulting and VET education centre specialised in three different types of services which are addressed to executives and trained staff of NGOs/SMEs in the social and educational sector: - vocational trainings - counselling / consultancy - European projects. It's main areas of interest are leadership, teambuilding, female entrepreneurs, conflict solving, communication, counselling techniques and media trainings focused on Interactive Social Media (ISM) and public relations for NGOs by means of ISM. Since 1998 PERSPEKTIVwechsel has been engaged in several transnational projects supported by the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union.

PERSPEKTIVwechsel has not implemented systematic quality procedures, but uses several tools of self-evaluation like satisfaction surveys to the customer at the end of any service delivered (see document "Session on evaluation methods").

It has chosen not to be accredited as VET-provider by the Ministry of Education of Northrhine-Westfalia.

PW takes part in a value-oriented movement called „Forum für Wertorientierung“ (<http://www.forumwerteorientierung.de/>). Trainers, counsellors and providers sign a list of shared values. For customers the official logo of this movement is a guarantee of quality. It first came in contact with the Peer Review thanks to the LdV multilateral partnership "From

the Good to the Best", realised together with LETU and FORMA.Azione.. Being part of P.R.I.S.D.O.Q., it has acquired competencies and capacities on the Peer Review approach by a coaching (Dr. Maria Gutknecht-Gmeiner, www.impulse.at) and by a training for peers, conducted in Germany by Angela Kühn at the beginning of the project.

FORMA.Azione is ISO 9001:2008 certified and, since 2002, accredited by Regione Umbria for adults' education and training (High-level training, Continuous Vocational training and adult education). It mainly works with the ESF, the inter-professional funds and other national funds. It delivers training courses on a variety of topics, using external experts and consultants of the specific sector.

It is the partner with more experience with regard to QA in VET and can therefore provides suggestions, data and methodologies already implemented and tested.

The organisation counts 13 employees (the "biggest" of the partnership) and, together with the certification body DNV Italy, promotes an agile approach to quality and certification, tailored on its effective needs.

Having in mind the expenses that the maintenance of the ISO certification requires, especially for small enterprises, it is concretely interested in testing, acquiring and disseminating those methodologies that are more cost-effective such as self-evaluation and Peer Review.

It works closely with Regione Umbria, partner in P.R.I.S.D.O.Q. and regional accreditation body. During the first phases of the project, and thanks to Giorgio Allulli, it has attained knowledge and capacities on the PR methodology and on the training for Peers.

LETU (Lithuanian Education Trade Union) is the only education trade union organisation in Lithuania uniting workers in all fields of education, ranging from pre-primary teachers to lecturers and researchers in universities and vocational school teachers. The Union is actively engaged in promoting the overall professional and trade union interests of its members at all levels – national, regional and institutional. It is really committed to quality assurance in education and training as key factor to promote teachers and trainers improvement and speed up the socio-economic development of the country.

The focus of its involvement in the projects is to generate a clearer overview of the factors which can influence the quality of VET and the current situation of social partners participation in creating a positive effect on employment rates. In addition, it wants to examine the successful design and management of high performance work-based lifelong learning processes and to make recommendations on how to increase the involvement of social partners in LLL strategies design.

In 2010, after having participated in a multilateral partnership on the definition of key indicators to evaluate the quality in VET, it has initiated its own QA process, which has defined the profiles responsible for quality and has structured satisfaction surveys for the customers/participants.

In doing this, it pursues an individual desire of continuous improvement because there are no specific requirements for VET providers in the country.

Thanks to its involvement in the project and the collaboration of the Lithuanian QANRP, it has acquired specific knowledge and capacities on Peer Review and on the training of the peers.

4. The case of Turkey: host organization - Opal

Timeframe and (due) dates of the Peer Visit

From 29th of February to 3rd of March 2012

List of Peers with names and contact information

Rule	Name	Institution
Peer Coordinator	Karen Blümcke	PERSPEKTIVwechsel - DE
Transnational peer	Antonietta Petetti	Regione Umbria - IT
Transnational peer	Inga Puisa	LETU / LT

Special Functions

Rule	Name	Institution
Evaluation Expert	Giorgio Allulli	ISFOL - IT
External Evaluator	Benedetta De Marsanich	DNV Italia - IT
Gender expert	Sylvia Liuti	FORMA.Azione - IT

Quality Areas evaluated

- Quality area 4: Learning results and outcomes
- Quality area 6: Management and Administration

Aims and purpose of the Peer Review

- to take part in the PRISDOQ-project (WP1) as a partner
- to strengthen the organisation in the international stage, thanks to the contribute of Vet Providers coming from different backgrounds
- to support OPAL change process in becoming a VET Provider.

How was the experimentation

The TPR experimentation in Turkey has been the first one for all the partners. Thus, it has been an attempt of formally applying the methodology with the support of the external evaluators Allulli and De Marsanich.

To initiate the experimentation within a low-structured organisation in terms of QA as OPAL has not assured the best environment and initial conditions. It could have been better to start it from FORMA.Azione, which already have the ISO 9001:2008 certification and is accredited by Regione Umbria.

At the same time, though, being new to the quality systems has created the conditions for OPAL to actually adopt and implement new solutions and tools.

The Peers have found a really informal environment, strongly influenced by personal and confidential relations among the staff members and with the participants in training.

The whole process has suffered for the partners not being familiar with and prepared for the methodology, especially concerning the nature of the relationships among peers (interviews with the employees of the host organisation, discussion among peers and with the external experts).

Meta-reflection on Peer Review Methodology expressed through its strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths

Friendly and flexible environment

This first TPR was characterized by a friendly and supportive approach/behaviour among the peers.

- cooperation based on a goal-oriented approach;
- continuing monitoring of the process and its adaptation according to the needs;
- importance of the different (international) perspectives represented during the TPR.

Professionalism of the peers

- the professionalism of the peers, despite their unfamiliarity with the methodology, allowed a smooth and effective working process – a relationship of esteem and mutual trust previously established is essential; capability of coping with not well defined situations, e.g. continuous adaptation of the agenda; strong flexibility of the working process, combined with equally strong management capabilities of the Peer Coordinator that kept the participants focused and on track; similarity of peer companies – ability to understand the situation

External support

The technical and methodological support of the 2 external evaluators, which ensured the accuracy in the procedure and the collection of important data and considerations;

Weaknesses

Inexperienced Peers

Firstly, the inadequacy of the hosting peers and organisation and its being the first PR caused concerns and stress on the Peers. For that, the phase of data collection should be better prepared and conducted. Secondly, the lack of consistent self-evaluation and the consequent inefficacy of the self-report affected the agenda and the expected results. Lastly, the interviews have not been conducted with shared and homogeneous methodology, result of the previous training on Peer Review. In this occasion, the information collection has to be avoided.

Preparatory activities

“the day before” – the phase that precedes the PR is very useful and has to be considered as part of the methodology itself, allowing a clear and efficient planning of the working agenda (e.g. information on the arrival times shared among the peers). The agenda has to be planned properly, reserving the required time for information collection, reflexion, minutes drafting and breaks. During the Peer Visit, the agenda has to be followed and, if necessary, the changes have to be shared and agreed on by all the Peers, considering also the impact on the expected results and evaluations.

Language difficulties

A key problem of communication has emerged, due to the facts that the documents were mainly written in the original language: this may be a problem of the methodology if developed in an transnational way.

5. The case of Germany: host organization – PERSPEKTIVWechsel

Timeframe and (due) dates of the Peer Visit

From 1st to 3rd April 2012

List of Peers with names and contact information

Role	Name	Institution
Peer Coordinator	Tatjana Babrauskiene	LETU / LT
Gender expert	Francesca D'Aprile	ASS. FORMA.AZIONE / IT
External evaluator	Benedetta De Marsanich	DNV Srl / IT
Transnational peer	Inga Puisa	LETU / LT
Transnational peer	Ali Ulusoy	OPAL - TR

Quality Areas evaluated

- Quality area 4: Learning results and outcomes
- Quality area 14: Quality management and evaluation

Aims and purpose of the Peer Review

- to take part in the PRISDOQ-project (WP1) as a partner
- to experience Peer Review as a hosting and a visiting peer
- to clarify if Peer Review can be the method we use for quality development in our company (or would another method fit better to PERSPEKTIVwechsel)

How was the experimentation

The experimentation in Germany was hosted by the partner PERSPEKTIVwechsel, a micro VET provider not using a systematic QA system. For that, the preliminary self-evaluation gave the opportunity to reflect on its own internal procedures. Doing this the quality criteria and indicators had to be adapted to serve best the specific needs of PERSPEKTIVwechsel. Developing the self-report was most interesting and promoted further developments of the organization. It supported coming to a decision regarding the implementation of a systematic QA-system.

The Peer Review Report was less helpful because it did not refer to the company's quality mission. It's recommendations were characterized by a different understanding of quality (different cultures and values).

PERSPEKTIVwechsel is a customer-oriented organisation that mainly works 'for' and 'with' private clients and for that is strongly objective-oriented, attempting to cut off all the bureaucracy and superfluous procedures.

The combination of this lean organisational model and the PR methodology could represent a good opportunity to develop an adequate QA system.

Recommendation: A specific, more flexible instrument for micro VET providers would be desirable.

Meta-reflection on Peer Review Methodology expressed through its strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths

The self-evaluation as an opportunity to reflect

The time spent to write the self-evaluation has given to the organization the opportunity to reflect about itself, to discuss key elements of the quality circle, to identify shared points of view and to come to agreements on shared procedures and tools.

The cultural diversity as both resource and barrier

The cultural diversity among the Peers, despite the linguistic barriers, is a considerable strength as allows the participants to come in contact with and learn from different organisational and evaluation methods (exchange of good practice). Through a Transnational Peer Review, the Peers have access to good practices and innovations to be replicated within their organisation. Cultural approaches can also be a barrier when the Peers do not understand the national specifics well enough.

Weaknesses

Language difficulties

A key problem of communication has emerged, due to the facts that some documents were written of course in the original language: this may be a problem of the methodology if used in a transnational way.

Lack of preparation

Data and information that has been translated in English and shared with the Peers well beforehand has to be read, recognised and understood.

Emphasis on verification

During the visit the Peer Review shifted to a demand of verification. This is not useful in Peer Reviews, as PR is not an auditing process where documents have to be evaluated against a given quality standard.

6. The case of Italy: host organization – Associazione FORMA.Azione srl

Timeframe and (due) dates of the Peer Visit

From 20th to 23rd May 2012

List of Peers with names and contact information

Rule	Name	Institution
Peer Coordinator	Ali Ulusoy	OPAL – TR
Transnational peer	Tatjana Babrauskiene	LETU / LT
Transnational peer	Audrius Jurgelevicius	LETU / LT
Transnational peer	Angela Kühn	PERSPEKTIVwechsel - DE
Transnational peer	Defne Cali	OPAL – TR

Special Functions

Rule	Name	Institution
Evaluation Expert	Giorgio Allulli	ISFOL - IT
Observer as Coordinator of QA national reference Point Italy	Ismene Tramontano	ISFOL - IT
Gender expert	Antonietta Petetti	Regione Umbria - IT

Quality Areas evaluated

- Quality area 4: Learning results and outcomes
- Quality area 11: External relations and internationalisation

Aims and purpose of the Peer Review

- to point out advantages and disadvantages in using peer review (one of the purpose of PRISDOQ-project - WP1);
- to compare the Peer Review methodology with our methods of quality assurance (Regional Accreditation);
- to improve our work processes, above all Quality Area 4 (Learning results and outcomes) and Quality Area 11 (External relations and internationalisation).

How was the experimentation

Thanks to the previous TPR experiences shared by the partners and the longer tradition of QA of the host organisation (audit practices, ISO 9001:2008 certification, inspections by Regione Umbria and other local institutions for the ESF projects, etc.), the Visit has been easier and more efficient.

The visit has been more coherent with the planned agenda and, despite the changes of locations required for meetings with different stakeholders, has been smooth and well-organized. Giorgio Allulli has participated, together with the Peers, at the first day of the Visit to check the development of the project and Ismene Tramontano, QANRP Italy Coordinator, at the second day, as referent of the QA in VET European network.

Many different profiles have been interviewed, with respect to QA 11, assuring stimulating and meaningful contributions to the experimentation and mutual contaminations.

Even with the sound tradition on QA of the host organisation, the PR experience has once more confirmed the uniqueness of the Peers' contributions, playing as experts/colleagues and *critical friends*.

Meta-reflection on Peer Review Methodology expressed through its strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths

Involvement of relevant stakeholders

The participation of Regione Umbria, key stakeholder and major purchaser of the host organisation, ensured a deeper understanding and sharing of the analysed processes and the data collected.

Experienced peers

The experience earned by the participants in the previous PR visits have determined a more efficient and choral team work.

Weaknesses

Over demanding Agenda

The excessive work load and agenda have determined a less active participation in the final reporting phase and a less valuable final product.

Inaccuracy in using the tool-box

Lack of focus on gender mainstreaming, as transversal element of the host organisation. This has probably to be ascribed to an underestimation of such aspect in applying the TPR methodology.

7. The case of Lithuania: host organization – Lithuanian Education Trade Union

Timeframe and (due) dates of the Peer Visit

From 18th to 21st July 2012

List of Peers with names and contact information

Role	Name	Institution
Peer Coordinator	Sylvia Liuti	ASS. FORMA.AZIONE / IT
Transnational peer	Karen Blümcke	PERSPEKTIVwechsel - DE
Transnational peer	Ali Ulusoy	OPAL – TR
Transnational Peer (GM Expert)	Antonietta Petetti	Regione Umbria - IT

Quality Areas evaluated

- Quality area 4: Learning results and outcomes
- Quality area 6: Management and Administration

Aims and purpose of the Peer Review

- to point out advantages and disadvantages in using peer review (one of the purpose of PRISDOQ-project - WP1);
- to get an international support from partners in evaluating the learning outcomes of the learners and revising the administration and management of the education and training process in the LETU.

How was the experimentation

Also in this case, being the last PR experimentation, the implementation of the methodology has been much more fluent and regular, especially with regard to the cohesion among peers and the result-oriented approach.

The host organisation is a social partner, which mission is to recruit an increasing number of members and safeguard their rights/interests (in terms of access to training and information, VET system development) rather than train them.

From a practical point of view, it has to be said that the subjected postponement (close to the holidays) has determined some organizational inconveniences, such as the absence of most of the workers.

However, because of the small size of the host organisation and its specificity (not a VET provider), the small group of Peers resulted in the end as useful and functional.

The choice of QA 6, the same addressed in Turkey, has not allowed a further exploration of the TPR potentialities.

Meta-reflection on Peer Review Methodology expressed through its strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths

Peculiarity of the host organisation

The different cultures and organizational missions represent an added value for the evaluation and the analysis of the QA.

The meta-reflection has been considerably enriched by the experimentation on such a different organisation.

Finally, LETU can stand as promoter of a new culture of QA in VET, with regard to the adoption of easy and efficient tools such as self-evaluation and PR. In Lithuania, in fact, despite the presence of a QANRP, the topic of QA is not yet a priority like in Italy or Germany.

Flexibility in applying the methodology

Another strength is represented by the choice of conducting the interviews with all the 4 Peers together rather than in tandem. This practice is emerged naturally during the Peers Visit and has added interesting and stimulating points of view/perspectives/reflections to the process. It has been seen as result of the maturity of the group and its acquired easiness of discussing and collaborating but can imply consequences on the standard implementation of the methodology.

Weaknesses

A context in development

The approach towards QA and other innovative organizational tools, pays the old statist point of view, legacy of the Soviet Union.

The lack of institutional and political incentives towards the adoption of innovative processes and solutions, together with the lack of accreditation and monitoring systems, may reduce the importance and the impact of LETU actions.

Inaccuracy in using the tool-box

Lack of focus on gender mainstreaming, as transversal element of the host organisation. This has probably to be ascribed to an underestimation of such aspect in applying the TPR methodology.

Lack of information

By adopting the flexibility above mentioned it is to underline the risk of lack of information by working all the peers together instead of two different tandems.

8. LESSONS LEARNT

The TPR experienced by the P.R.I.S.D.O.Q. partners has taught them important lessons, which will be further analysed and disseminated to VET providers and public institutions in the upcoming phases of the project.

In particular, the analysis of the Partners' Check Lists developed to point out advantages and disadvantages in using Peer Review shows that:

First lesson

Participating in the PR makes clearer the different aspects of QA.

The active involvement in the PR phases, and in the different roles required, represents an outstanding opportunity of training and professional growth, increasing considerably the awareness regarding the tools and procedures for upgrading VET organisations' quality.

In addition, it is also an exceptional chance of getting to know the other European systems and the solutions that have been put in place with regard to VET providers, contributing to stimulate cooperation among them and mutual acknowledgment.

Both management and staff should be participating in the PR process.

Second lesson

The training of the Peers and on PR methodology is essential.

As suggested in the Manual, it is a shared opinion that only after a proper training of the professionals involved in QA in possession of the required skills, the methodology can be fully and properly implemented. To be in tune with the other Peers and to be familiar with the methodology and the procedures are essential preconditions for the success of the PR. The external evaluators have pointed out, for instance, the importance of the Peers' capacity of rephrasing questions and sentences during the interviews if a full comprehension is not achieved and the message is not understood. From the methodological point of view it is highly recommended to keep separate the phase of data/information collection and that of interview and writing minutes. From a practicable point of view it is very efficient that one Peer leads the interview and the other Peer takes the minutes.

Additionally it is important that Peers have skills in the following fields: interview techniques and data collection, other methods of data collection, analysis of data according to hosting Peers social-cultural and systemic framework, providing feedback in a constructive and supporting way.

Third lesson

To perceive the PR methodology as “a critical friend”

The experience has pointed out how important it is to actually put in place a relationship among peers, based on mutual trust and the main objectives of a Peer Review. The risk that Peers judge and criticise the hosting institution has to be avoided. One of the main objectives is the experience that Peer Review and quality development is an opportunity of improvement and upgrading.

In general, the experimentation has underlined that the PR reduces considerably the resistances of VET providers to engage in quality assurance and development. This is particularly the case for the micro and small organisations that are not familiar with QA procedures.

Fourth lesson

The cultural diversity as both a resource and a challenge

The cultural differences, together with the mismatch of the main areas of work, represents an added value for the evaluation and the analysis of the QA. It offers the opportunity to come across with new organisational models and evaluation systems, from which suggestions and elements can be adopted and integrated in one's own arrangement.

The Transnational PR, in addition, is an opportunity for benchmarking with the "diversity" and represents an important chance for personal and professional growth. In promoting the TPR, this aspect should be more emphasized.

Fifth lesson

Accuracy in applying the methodology

The methodology has to be carefully adopted, following in detail especially the preparatory phase and the meta-reflection one, which ensure efficacy and usefulness to the entire process. It is important to avoid the risk of *making just a study visit* rather than a mutual learning experience based on a rigorous methodology and a professional approach.

Nevertheless it also necessary to integrate it with some improvements and adaptations, as emerged from the experimentation:

- the manual is focused on middle sized organizations while the VET providers in PRISDOQ are usually micro organisations – the Peers should therefore modify their questions to the target and specify the focus on the informal approaches;
- brief units have to be included in the agenda: are we following the manual at this moment? – to be sure that the methodology is working;
- drafting a "TPR_overview" to be updated in the preparatory phase and shared among the participants to the Peers Visit, which includes all the organisational details (e.g. arrival times, roles, etc).
- the minutes should be written using a PC rather than paper sheets in order to have them ready as files in the evening of the observation day;
- the main papers should be printed (e.g. Quality Area including questions to be asked for interviewers).
- the Peer Review risks to be less efficient and coherent with the preparatory activities if the human resources involved with the self-evaluation process and the self-report drafting do not take part in it.
- Due to limited resources in VET provider institutions, having two peer tandems to carry out the Peer Visit is probably not practicable on the long run. When it comes to a wider dissemination of the PR methodology it is recommended to be flexible with this standard.

Sixth lesson

Peer Review methodology needs to be tailored on small-micro VET providers' organizations

How to tailor the methodology to small size organizations is a relevant question that needs to be deeply addressed. As PRISDOQ project main aim is to increase the adoption of Peer review in VET, even by small and micro VET providers, it needs to be adapted to these small organizations. This means that it is important to establish which are the minimum requirements to consider a Peer Review as such and not simply a formal procedure of Quality Assurance system.

9. CONCLUSIONS

After experiencing Transnational Peer Review the Consortium of P.R.I.S.D.O.Q. project can express its satisfaction by listing the following positive results:

- all partners developed a quality-oriented culture and/or improved the existing Quality Assurance system
- a discussion on a needed shift in VET towards outcome-oriented approach has been started
- the mutual trust and understanding between partners was deepened
- all partners started to get insights in other national educational systems and policies
- effective and successful tools, methods and approaches were shared
- the TPR supported the teambuilding, the staff development and the organisational development in the hosting organisations
- understanding of the need for Peers to be qualified, accredited and for PR to become a recognised procedure

ANNEXES

Project P.R.I.S.D.O.Q.
“Peer Reviews: Increasing Sustainable Development Of Quality”
LdV-TOI-11-IT-771 - CUP G92F1100039006

**CHECK LIST TO POINT OUT ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES IN USING
PEER REVIEW**

ADVANTAGES IN USING EUROPEAN PEER REVIEW METHODOLOGY

Starting from the experience of the Transnational Peer Reviews carried out during the P.R.I.S.D.O.Q. project, please point out your comments about the items described below.

ADVANTAGES	
1	Makes VET Providers be actively involved into quality assurance process
2	Supports VET Providers in finding new ways to quality improvement
3	Is transferable to the work-based education in SME from different sectors, e.g. nursing homes, factories, NGOs in third sector
4	Is applicable and adaptable in / to different (local / regional / national) contexts
5	Is useful and effective at transnational level
6	Is useful and manageable for Micro-VET-Providers in quality assurance
7	Encourages to use the evaluation results for continuous quality improvement
8	Makes it possible to learn from good practices and experiences of others and different VET contexts
9	Reinforces the willingness for self-evaluation as a regular practice of the VET provider
10	Improves the staff competences for self-evaluation
11	Helps to overcome stereotypical points of view, e.g. one best way to approach the quality
12	Stimulates to accept critical suggestions and assessments
13	Reduces the resistance of Micro-level-VET Providers to be externally evaluated
14	Strengthens recognition and mutual trust between VET Providers from different countries and regions (Transnationality reduces competition between VET Providers (= peers) during quality development process)
15	Strengthens recognition and mutual trust between VET Providers, Stakeholders and social partners
16	Creates a common basis to enhance a better cooperation between VET Providers
17	Encourages and facilitates mobility of educators, VET management staff, VET decision makers, trainee and students

DISADVANTAGES IN USING EUROPEAN PEER REVIEW METHODOLOGY

	DISADVANTAGES
1	Needs time and resources for preparation: writing the self-report (hosts), translation of documents, reading the report (guests) etc.
2	The efficacy is exclusively under the responsibility of the Peers directly involved (e.g.: conflict of interest, confidentiality, following procedures, absence of external third part control)
3	In absence of a peers network (both at national and European level), the dissemination of the methodology requires time and previous direct knowledge between the organizations involved
4	Different languages, different cultural backgrounds and VET systems of the Peers involved
5	High detail of tools provided by the PR Methodology
6	Absence of addressed funds for travel and staff costs

Comments

Name _____ **Role** _____
Date _____ **Signature** _____

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.

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