



EuroPeerGuid



European Peer Review Manual for Educational and Vocational Guidance for Adults

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| INTRODUCTION | 3 |
| WHAT IS PEER REVIEW? | 3 |
| WHY PEER REVIEW? | 4 |
| WHAT ARE THE AIMS AND PRINCIPLES OF THE EUROPEAN PEER REVIEW PROCEDURE?..... | 4 |
| EUROPEAN PEER REVIEW AND THE EUROPEAN QUALITY ASSURANCE REFERENCE FRAMEWORK (EQAVET)..... | 7 |
| WHO CAN USE THE EUROPEAN PEER REVIEW PROCEDURE? | 9 |
| ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS IN THE EUROPEAN PEER REVIEW PROCEDURE | 9 |
| DOCUMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN PEER REVIEW | 10 |
| PROCEDURE - OVERVIEW | 10 |
| COORDINATION AND ORGANISATION OF THE EUROPEAN PEER REVIEW | 10 |
| FOUR PHASES OF A EUROPEAN PEER REVIEW | 13 |
| ESTIMATED TIME NEEDED FOR THE EUROPEAN PEER REVIEW | 14 |
| OVERVIEW: TIMETABLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE EUROPEAN PEER REVIEW | 14 |
| EUROPEAN PEER REVIEW PROCEDURE - PREPARATION (PHASE 1) | 18 |
| GETTING STARTED | 18 |
| SELECTING AND INVITING THE PEER TEAM..... | 21 |
| SELF-EVALUATION AND SELF-REPORT | 23 |
| PREPARING THE PEER VISIT | 25 |
| EUROPEAN PEER REVIEW PROCEDURE - PEER VISIT (PHASE 2) | 28 |
| WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE PEER VISIT? | 28 |
| COLLECTING DATA | 28 |
| ANALYSING DATA | 31 |
| ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK | 32 |
| MEETING QUALITY STANDARDS | 36 |
| DURATION OF THE PEER VISIT | 37 |
| ELEMENTS OF THE PEER VISIT..... | 37 |
| EUROPEAN PEER REVIEW PROCEDURE - PEER REVIEW REPORT (PHASE 3) | 41 |
| STRUCTURE OF PEER REVIEW REPORT | 42 |
| FROM THE PEER VISIT TO THE FINAL PEER REVIEW REPORT | 43 |
| EUROPEAN PEER REVIEW PROCEDURE - PUTTING PLANS INTO ACTION (PHASE 4) | 44 |
| HOW TO MAKE SENSE OF THE RESULTS OF THE PEER REVIEW | 44 |
| HOW TO PREPARE PROCEDURES FOR CHANGE | 44 |
| HOW TO PROCEED - A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO PROCEDURES FOR CHANGE | 45 |
| QUALITY AREAS | 48 |
| QUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE FOR ADULTS AND THE DEFINITION OF QUALITY AREAS | 48 |
| RELATION BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN PROPOSED QUALITY AREAS FOR EDUCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE FOR ADULTS AND INSTITUTIONAL/NATIONAL FRAMEWORKS | 50 |
| NINE EUROPEAN QUALITY AREAS FOR EDUCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE FOR ADULTS | 50 |
| THE QUALITY AREAS AND THE EUROPEAN QUALITY ASSURANCE REFERENCE FRAMEWORK (EQAVET)..... | 52 |
| HOW THE QUALITY AREAS ARE SPECIFIED | 53 |
| WHO IS A PEER?..... | 56 |
| CORE TASK OF THE PEERS | 56 |
| COMPOSITION OF THE PEER TEAM..... | 57 |
| ROLES WITHIN A PEER TEAM..... | 59 |
| REQUIRED COMPETENCES AND EXPERTISE OF PEERS | 63 |
| APPLYING TO BE A PEER..... | 63 |
| PREPARATION AND TRAINING OF PEERS..... | 63 |



| | |
|---|-----------|
| LIAISON WITH THE PEER REVIEW FACILITATOR | 64 |
| LITERATURE AND (RE)SOURCES | 65 |
| LITERATURE | 65 |
| WEBSITES | 68 |
| REPORTS OF THE LDV PROJECT “PEER REVIEW IN INITIAL VET” | 69 |
| REPORTS OF THE LDV PROJECT “PEER REVIEW EXTENDED II” | 70 |
| SUPPLEMENT - GLOSSARY..... | 71 |

INTRODUCTION

What is Peer Review?

Peer Review is a form of external evaluation with the aim of supporting the reviewed guidance centre¹ 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 a guidance centre, such as the quality of the guidance activities, of the staff qualifications, of its results and/or of the entire guidance centre. During the evaluation process, the Peers visit the reviewed guidance centre.

Peers are external but work in a similar environment and have specific professional expertise and knowledge of the evaluated subject. Peers can be counsellors from other guidance centres, heads of other guidance centres, but also counsellors/heads from other levels/strata of the Education System. In specific cases, or to assess specific work processes, the peers can also be other kind of experts - for example, promotion experts, if the quality of the guidance work promotion is to be assessed.

The Peers are independent and "persons of equal standing" with the persons whose performance is being reviewed.

The use of peer review in Educational and Vocational Guidance for Adults is a process that can trigger important incentives for quality development in adult education guidance, or in quality of individual guidance centre, or even in the entire guidance activities in the country.

¹ The term guidance centre is used in this manual to encompass organizations/institutions/units which carry out guidance in Educational and Vocational Guidance for Adults. Guidance centres provide adults with free, impartial, confidential, holistic, and quality information and guidance at their education and learning, informing and guiding before the enrolment in an educational and/or vocational programme, during the process, and at the end of the educational and vocational 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 serve 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.

Why Peer Review?

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

Educational and vocational Guidance centres in EU can expect to benefit from a Peer Review, as proposed in this Manual, by

- obtaining critical yet sympathetic feedback on the quality of their guidance activities 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 guidance centres,
- obtaining an external evaluation report on the quality of their training and education at a comparably economic cost,
- establishing a quality process to be observed among the guidance centres to motivate stakeholders to cooperate only with those guidance centres who demonstrates good quality, and to motivate other guidance centres to establish similar quality procedures.

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 other professionals. 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 counsellor works alone for the most part, or there are just few 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?

General 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 guidance 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 guidance centre,
- promotion of openness, integrity and sincerity as a prerequisite for mutual learning,
- awareness of cultural influences both on guidance provision and on evaluation, especially in transnational Peer Reviews,
- promotion of an enquiring and critical attitude both in the Peers and the reviewed guidance centre, 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 guidance centres 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.

In 2009 within the European project Peer Review Extended II the guidelines were prepared for the first time for the implementation of the peer review methodology in Educational and Vocational Guidance for Adults. The guidance was prepared for the case of the Slovenian guidance centres network.

The European Peer Review assists the guidance centre 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 guidance centres themselves. **The main focus of the procedure described in this Manual is the stimulation of continuous quality development.**

Here we would like to draw attention to three fundamental objectives, important for Educational and Vocational Guidance for Adults. These are:

- ▶ Adults have **access** to guidance for educational and vocational training and learning,
- ▶ Adults are guaranteed **quality guidance service** for educational and vocational training and learning,
- ▶ 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 criteria - 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 to 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 enables international comparison of quality levels. 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 centres are at stake here, but the entire culture of closeness, competitiveness, envy and fear, that is sometimes obvious in other systems too. 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 peers 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 in guidance.

On the other hand, these values assume a very important role when Peer Reviews take place in small Guidance Centres, where only one Counsellor leads the



Educational e Vocational Guidance Process. In this case, it must be very clear to the whole Guidance Centre in general and to the Counsellors in particular, from the start, that the Peer Review will take place at the institutional level and no staff evaluation will take place.

Also, in this particular case, Peers should take special care to give assessments which are general enough not to imply a staff evaluation. Another solution might be to provide more general feedback to the Guidance Centre and having a special feedback session with the Counsellor involved.

Graph 1: Continuous Quality Improvement with Peer Review



European Peer Review and the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQAVET)

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. In the following years the framework

was further developed and, in the period of the development of this Manual, is known as the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQAVET)²

Within this 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 guidance provision. Additionally, quality criteria and indicators have been proposed for relevant Quality Areas.

The Quality Assurance Model is embedded 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 EQAVET and Peer Review



² <http://guidelines.enqavet.eu/>



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 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, **analysing the results** based on the evaluation, which then become the basis of **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 EQAVET framework, can also be used in the field of educational and vocational guidance for adults. The only problem that needs to be solved is the areas, quality criteria and indicators. However, if we have the **areas, quality criteria and indicators** and **guidance activities** defined - which is the case in this manual, **all the conditions are fulfilled to use the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQAVET).**

Role of stakeholders in the European Peer Review procedure

The involvement of various relevant stakeholders in the whole review process is **highly recommended.** Stakeholders of guidance centres are all the people working within or with the guidance centre and other stakeholders. The basic stakeholder can be:

- potential clients of guidance services,
- clients,
- former clients,
- counsellors,
- guidance centre managers,
- other employees in institutions where the seat of guidance centres is (e.g. administrative staff),
- social partners, especially unions,
- potential employers and the labour market,
- guidance centres from the surrounding areas,
- development institutions from the surrounding areas,
- educational institutions/schools, training centres,
- educational/school authorities,
- local authorities,
- sending organization, (organizations that send clients to the guidance centre e.g. employment service etc.)
- other cooperation partners of the guidance centre etc.

Stakeholders can be interviewed 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).

Documentation of the European Peer Review

European Peer Review Portfolio

All relevant documents of the European Peer Review should be collected by the guidance centre 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.

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 guidance centres.

A single Peer Review can be carried out by a guidance centre who wants to obtain some external feedback from Peers and intends to network with other guidance centres in an ad hoc and spontaneous way by making use of existing contacts. There is no need to have any further cooperation between the reviewed guidance centre and the guidance centres where the Peers come from.

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

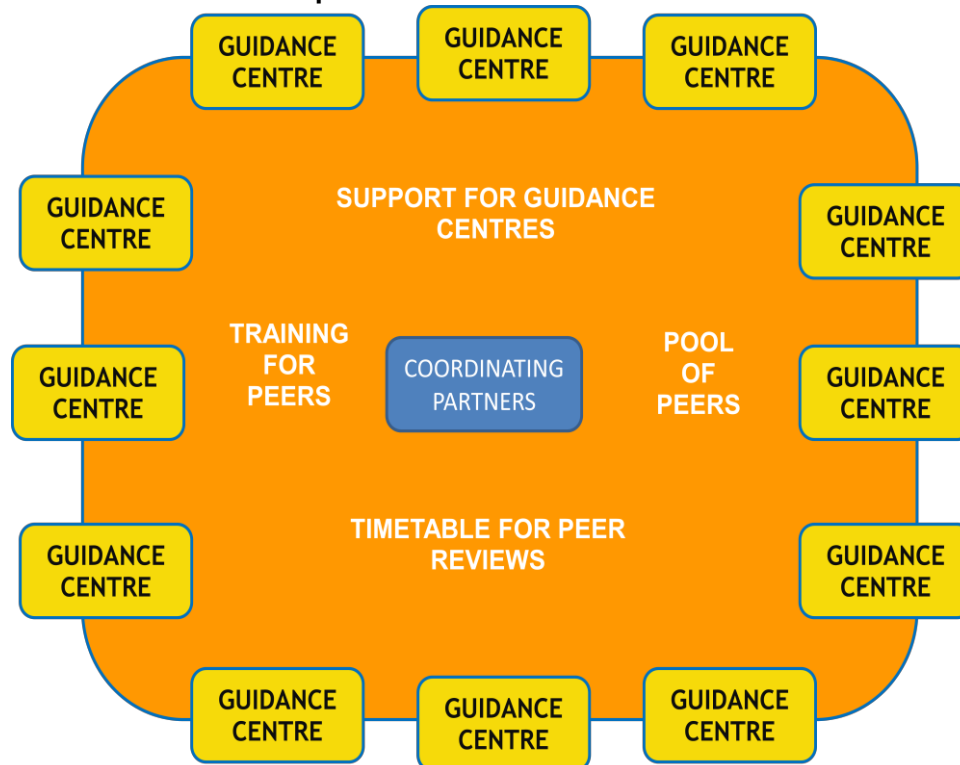
For the most part, Peer Reviews are carried out in a network of three or more partners. The networks either already exist or are set up for the purpose of carrying out Peer Reviews. This usually expands the cooperation from a one-off activity to more comprehensive networking: common preparatory activities like selection of Peers, training, matching Peers and guidance centres, 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 guidance centres 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 guidance centres** 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 guidance centres, 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.



Graph 3: Peer Review in the partner network



Guidance centres will have no trouble in choosing partners to carry out peer review. 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 centres with a roughly similar structure and profile of clients,
- between guidance centres with the approximately same number of inhabitants in the region,
- between guidance centres that are introducing a new approach into the guidance work etc.

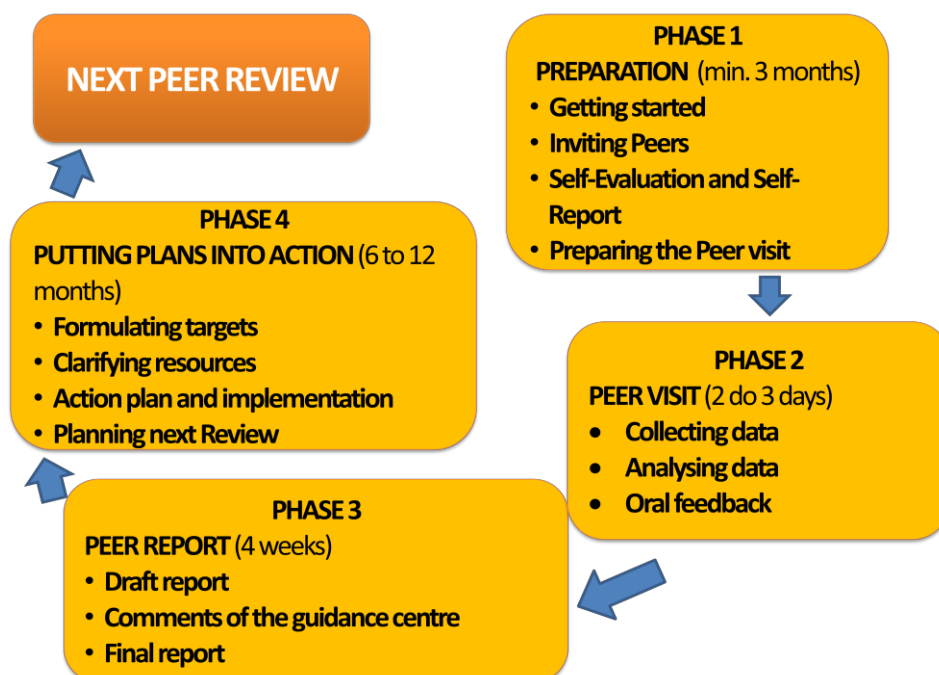
At least in the pilot phase it makes sense that **an organisation/guidance centre with experienced in evaluation and/or Peer Review Method takes on the role of coordinating body of the Peer Review**, because one of its primary missions is to introduce different development innovations into the guidance network. The coordinating body'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 guidance centre. 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 guidance centre and **carry out an evaluation**. This evaluation includes a **tour of the premises** (perhaps not the whole institution if guidance is only a small part, but at least the guidance centre itself) and **interviews with different groups of stakeholders**. The Peers give **initial oral feedback** at the end of the Peer Visit. Full attendance in the feedback session is desirable in terms of dissemination/diffusion and exchange with Peers.
3. After the Peer Visit, a **draft report** is drawn up by the Peers. This report is **commented on by the guidance centre** and the **final Peer Review Report** is issued.
4. The fourth phase is crucial for the improvement of educational and vocational guidance for adults and guidance centre development: results and recommendations (only in case they were requested) 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



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 to allow the Peers to prepare themselves 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 from **1,5 to 2 days**; it may also take up to **4 days**, depending on the size of the guidance centre reviewed and the scope of the Peer Review, i.e. how many Quality Areas are to be investigated.

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 guidance centre, Peers and Coordinator of Peer Review in chronological order

Phase 1 - Preparation

Guidance centres

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, which will be assessed in Peer Review
- Send Initial Information Sheet (including a proposal for a rough time schedule) to the coordinator of Peer Review



Peers and Peer Team:

- Look for suitable Peers with regard to Quality Areas scrutinised in consultation with coordinator of Peer Review
- Invite Peers to apply

Self-Evaluation and Self-Report:

- Conduct self-evaluation
- Write Self-Report
- Submit Self-Report to Peers and to the coordinator of Peer Review
- Make other necessary documentation available to Peers and to the coordinator of Peer Review

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.)

Peers

Peers and Peer Team:

- Submit application to become a Peer
- Prepare for Peer Review and undertake Peer Training

Self-evaluation and Self-Report:

- Receive Self-Reports from guidance centre
- 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 guidance centre to clarify review assignments and to receive additional information, if necessary ("Question and Answer Session")*

Coordinating body of Peer Review

Getting Started:

- Send information on Peer Review procedure to guidance centre
- 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 guidance centre providers



- ❑ *Optional: organise coordination meeting of the guidance centres in the network and the Coordinator of Peer Review.*

Peers and Peer Team:

- ❑ Look for suitable Peers - request, process and assess applications
- ❑ Match Peers with the guidance centre (with regard to Quality Areas to be scrutinised)
- ❑ Select Peers (in consultation with the guidance centre)

Self-Evaluation and Self-Report:

- ❑ Receive Self-Reports of guidance centre
- ❑ Forward Self-Report to Peers (if not sent directly)

Preparing the Peer Visit:

- ❑ Scheduling of Peer Visit (in consultation with guidance centre and Peers)
- ❑ Organise preparation and training for the Peers

Phase 2 - Peer Visit

Guidance centre

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 guidance centre
- ❑ Engage in communicative validation
- ❑ Carry out meta-evaluation in the Peer Team.

Coordinating Body of Peer Review

- ❑ *Optional: Involvement in Peer Visits*

Phase 3 - Peer Review Report

Guidance centre

- ❑ Comment on the draft Peer Review Report.

Peers

- ❑ Write Peer Review Report and submit it to the guidance centre



- Receive comments of the guidance centre and finalise Peer Review Report
- End of Peer involvement

Coordinating Body of Peer Review

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

Phase 4 - Putting plans into action

Guidance centre

- 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 of Peer Review

- Optional: Involvement in the follow-up.*

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 guidance centre 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** (counsellors and administrative staff) and **other relevant stakeholders**. This must also include explicit dedication to implement 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 guidance centre reviewed and the Peer Team reviewing the institution. S/he should be carefully selected because of the crucial role of the Peer Review Facilitator.

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**. Guidance centre should only choose **Quality Areas over which they have an influence making sure that there is enough data to sustain and carry out the Peer Review**.

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 guidance centres with little previous evaluation experience (these may also decide to test the procedure for parts of their centre only.) **For a Peer Visit of two days, it is highly recommended that no more than two Quality Areas are 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, guidance centre can give "assignments" to the Peers to pay special attention to specific issues and questions that are of particular importance to the guidance centre. This will enhance the usefulness of the results of the Peer Review.

Initial documentation and information

The **basic decisions** concerning the conduct of the Peer Review should then be documented by the guidance centre **in written format**. The document serves as internal documentation and as external information for the coordinating body, the Peers, other guidance centres in the network, etc. The document should be sent to the Coordinator of Peer Review in good time, i.e. at least three months before the Peer Review.

The documentation includes:

- 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 a list of possible Peers.

This form is prepared mostly for cases when the peers don't know the guidance centre very well. When Peers are acquainted with the guidance centre, it is not necessary to collect all these information.

For the ones using the methodology for the first time, sometimes it is difficult to fill the form out - in such cases we suggest to use an » invitation letter«. The **Invitation letter** is not a form, but it's prepared by each organisation that invites the peers, it is a letter sent by the director/manager of the hosting organisation. Such a letter should include: the **chosen quality areas and indicators to be assessed, a description if there is something which is of special interest for the organisation, when the peer review should take place, who in the organisation will be the contact person, who is invited as peer.** An example of such a letter is included in the Tool Box.



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

Optional: Coordination Meeting

If Peer Reviews are organised as reciprocal reviews or in a network of guidance centres, a **meeting between the representatives of guidance centres** (and, if applicable, also the Coordinating Body of Peer Review) will improve the whole process.

Such kind of meeting would be welcome, but nevertheless it should be noted that the implementation of the Peer Review requires a lot of work for the hosting organisation and for the peers. Therefore, it is very difficult to meet several times, especially when it comes to people from distance places. Therefore the PR coordinator, the Peers and the facilitator should try to merge the several stages, whenever possible and professional justifiable because, otherwise, there may come to the lack of interest in the implementation of the methodology because of the too complicated procedures.

The following activities can be part of the agenda:

- Introducing each other, short self-portraits of the guidance centres;
- Expectations of guidance centres, motivation of management and counsellors;
- 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/staff involved;
- If applicable: information and/or decision on the involvement of authorities;
- Further steps, time scheduling, questions.

Recommended: Contracts between guidance centre 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.

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.

Selecting and inviting the Peer Team

Once the decision on conducting the Peer Review and a selection of Quality Areas have been made, the guidance centre and/or the Coordinating Body of the Peer Review 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 guidance centres or stakeholders institutions**. The guidance centre may suggest suitable Peers. Alternatively, Peers can also submit applications of their own accord. If a Coordinating Body of Peer Review does not exist or is only marginally involved, the guidance centre may also select and invite the Peers themselves. The use of a standard application form for Peers is recommended.

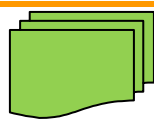
When choosing **the peers for the peer review of quality in guidance centres** one should choose primarily among the **experts who have knowledge and experience in guidance work**. Thus this task could be carried out by **counsellors from a guidance centre** for another guidance centre or the entire 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 invited, it is important that they are **well familiar with and trained to carry out the method of peer review in Educational and Vocational Guidance for Adults**.

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 guidance centre need to be compatible.**

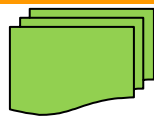
The Peer Coordinator should be selected with great care: S/he will be the key person in the Peer Team with overall responsibility for the Peer Review process: communication and coordination in the Peer Team; time management; relations with the guidance centre, etc. If an Evaluation Expert is to guide 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 guidance centre or the Coordinator of Peer Review should also **inform the Peers of their duties and tasks well in advance.** 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 guidance centre 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 guidance centre,
- *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 guidance centre 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.

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 the guidance centre level (or at the level of departments, branches, etc. of an guidance centre) but may be preceded and supported by individual evaluations of staff, especially counsellors.

No specific self-evaluation procedure is prescribed for the European Peer Review. On the contrary, guidance centre is 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 quality criteria and indicators not yet covered, additional evaluations must be carried out.

If a guidance centre carries out a self-evaluation for the first time, looking for support (and perhaps also consultation) is recommended. Suitable guidelines and handbooks on how to plan and carry out self-evaluations exist in abundance.

Quality criteria for self-evaluation

Self-evaluation can be performed in different ways. Guidance centres 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.

While guidance centres are free to choose 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 guidance centre and the guidance services 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 guidance centre. Additional documents can be attached in an Annex.

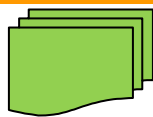
Preparing the Peer Visit

Tasks of the guidance centre

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.

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 stakeholders 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 guidance centre 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 guidance centre 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 guidance centre (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

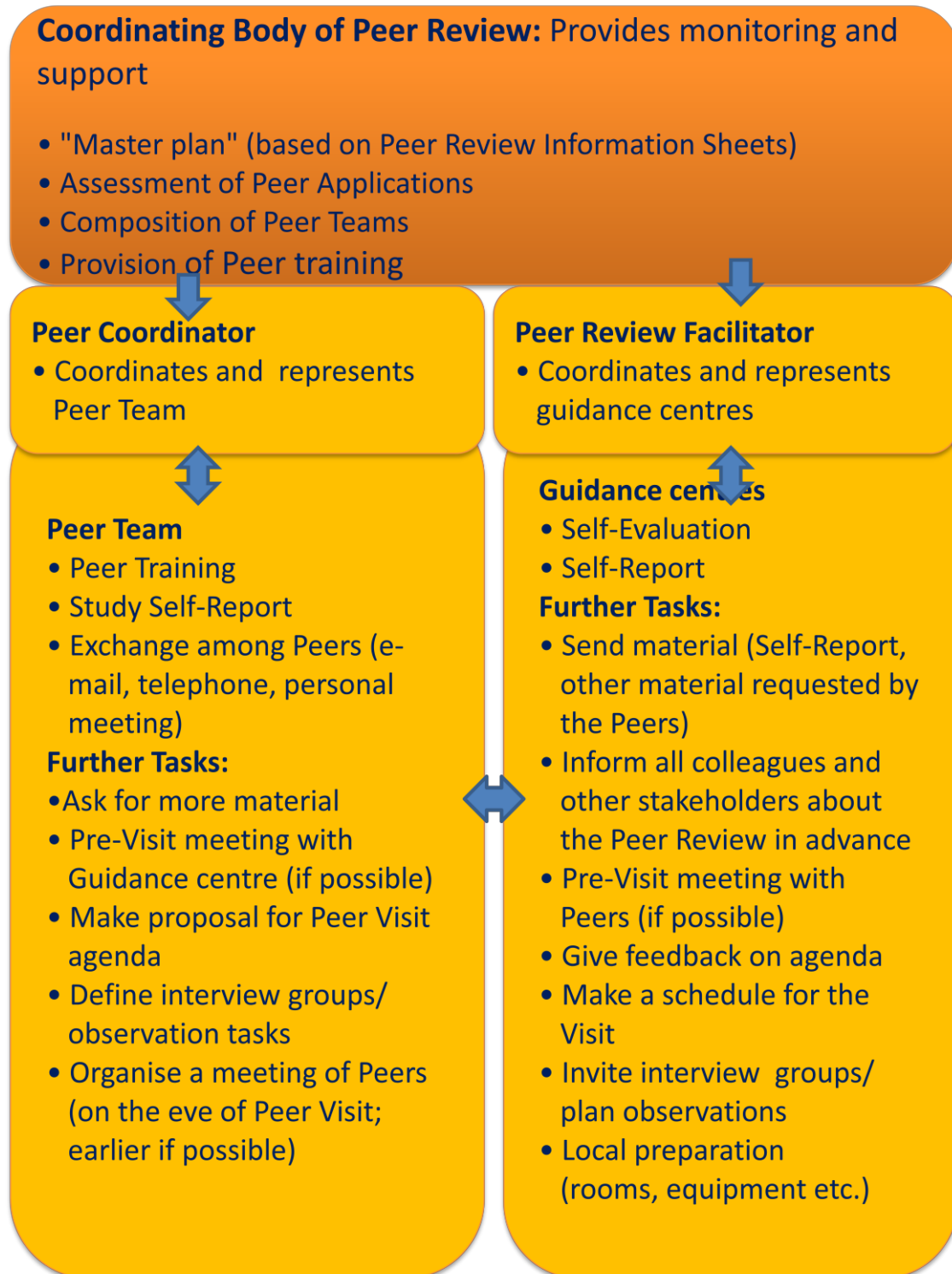
Prior to the Peer Review, the Peers should undergo a "**Peer Training Programme**" that prepares them for their work as external evaluators.

PREPARATORY MEETING OF THE PEERS

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.



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, Peers conduct a brief and condensed evaluation, which focuses on the Quality Areas chosen by the guidance centre. 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 guidance centre 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 guidance centre, 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's representatives are also possible. For important stakeholders, like clients and counsellors, two independent interview groups can be organised to gather comprehensive feedback. In all cases Privacy must be ensured.



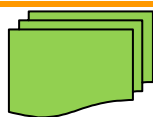
Who is to be interviewed?

Usually representatives of all relevant interest groups should be involved. The relevance of interest groups depends on the quality area(s) reviewed. Guidance centre 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:

- ▶ **clients** (former and those currently participating in the guidance processes),
- ▶ **counsellors**,
- ▶ **guidance centre managers**,
- ▶ **other staff** (non-guidance staff),
- ▶ **sending organisations**
- ▶ **representatives of other stakeholders**, such as enterprises, suppliers,
- ▶ **social partners**, other guidance centres, education institutions, education and local authorities, etc.

Invitation of interview groups lies within the responsibility of the guidance centre which - 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. The inclusion of clients as interviewees in the Peer Reviews is very important - their feedback is crucial to allow work improvement inputs for Guidance Centres.



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.

If the guidance activity usually takes place in one room only, guided tours are not necessary. However, a visit to the premises 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 counsellor and 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

During a Peer Visit, observations can also be carried out.

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 a 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 by nature (in the way that the guidance process is),
- in cases of representing the guidance client in other institutions,
- in cases of group information and counselling, where Peers will not be a disturbing element in the processes of informing, guidance or training.
- in cases when the client has given his written agreement to accept to be observed, in spite of the confidentiality rules.

Of course, so far we are only 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.

If observations are to be carried out, they must be well prepared. 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 guidance centre as a whole and not on an individual counsellor.

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 be employed.

We also recommend the use of the following methods during the review process:

- survey questionnaires** for clients and former clients,
- documentation analysis** (statistical data about the number of guidance services offered, number of clients, client's demographics, types of guidance, length of guidance sessions, use of guidance tools ...),
- focus groups** with the representatives of external stakeholders from local environments.

Analysing data

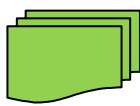
A **preliminary analysis and assessment** based on the Self-Report must be made by the Peers before the Visit. During the Visit, it is advisable to sort through and discuss the findings of the individual sessions and activities immediately afterwards. Peers should not jump to conclusions but carefully weigh the evidence found and seek to gather additional information if findings are inconclusive.

The analysis of the self-report is very important, as this is one of the basic sources for the quality areas assessment. In this stage the following procedure is recommended:

- Using the form for assessing the self-report, each Peer assesses for him/herself whether the guidance centre achieves the indicator or not, or if the data in the self-report is not clear enough to assess the achievement of an indicator;
- On this basis each Peer points out strengths and areas of improvement for each quality area;



- Then, each Peer makes a suggestion of who (counsellors, clients, stakeholders etc.) should be interviewed and what questions should be asked;
- Each Peer sends his/her proposals to the coordinator who prepares a proposal of the common assessment of the self-report, of the common list of stakeholders which are to be interviewed and of the common list of questions. The coordinator sends the common proposal again to the peer team and, after their comments/additional inputs, the first assessment of the self-report is prepared and the questions to be used within the interviews are approved.



The form to assess self- report can be found in the Tool-box.

A communicative validation of findings - especially with clients, 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 exchanges in the Peer Team/Peer Tandems, as well as for the final analysis of the findings.

Many experiences in the past indicate 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 and the need for a thorough analysis and discussion of the findings.

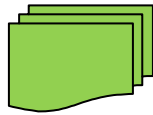
Assessment and feedback

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 guidance centre. In this meeting, the collected data are reviewed and matched for relevance and representativeness. Important issues may be selected and visualised on flip charts so that they can be presented to the guidance centre 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 guidance centre**. 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.

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 guidance centre 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 guidance centre and cause conflicts.

Representatives of the guidance centre, 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 guidance centre must collaborate in the constructive handling of feed-back. It is helpful if staff of the guidance centre reviewed assumes a self-confident stance which 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.



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, come across as a review of an individual/a particular counsellor and not as an 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 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.**



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

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 guidance centre 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. The Peers formulate areas for improvement in the Peer Review Report as an indication to the guidance centre that action should be taken in these areas.

Recommendations beyond this indicative assessment should only be given by the Peers if guidance centre asks for them. If the guidance centre 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 guidance centre. 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 guidance centre. 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 guidance centre to adopt solutions successful in their home institutions. Again, Peers should only assume the additional role of consultants if the guidance centre expressly asks them to.

On the other hand, the peer review, placed into the processes of quality evaluation and development within 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 orientations have an important role** in the process. **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, peers 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 orienting they must be careful that

- recommendations and advice **are based on the facts established as objectively as possible,**
- recommendations and advice **are 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 guidance centre 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

Triangulation³

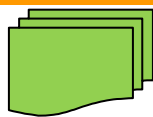
Using different methods and different sources of information in the collection of data contributes to the quality of the evaluation in terms of objectivity, reliability and validity. Soliciting diverse points of view from different stakeholders during the Peer Visit will enable the Peers to gain a more 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 be used in the final stages of the Visit, e.g. shortly before, during or after the feedback session with the guidance centre.

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

³ In social research, the approach of including different methods and sources is called triangulation.

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 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.

Also, in the case an International Peer is involved in the Peer Review, time enough for eventual simultaneous translations must be taken in account.

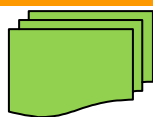
Duration of the Peer Visit

The duration of the Peer Visit depends on the size of the guidance centre, 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 guidance centre 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 guidance centre - 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 guidance centre. Ideally, this session should take place before the Peer Review, either in the meeting between Peers and guidance centre 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/near the guidance centre). If this is not possible, sometime should be reserved for questions and answers at the beginning of the Peer Visit, for example during the welcome session.

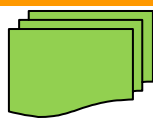
Welcome and first session with the guidance centre

The Peer Review Facilitator welcomes the Peer Team and makes sure that organisational preparations have taken place. The Peers introduce themselves to the guidance centre. 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 Team/Peer Tandem

The interviewees (such as clients, former clients, potential clients, counsellors, representatives of other 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/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 Tool-box.

If observations are being carried out, observation guidelines should be filled out, 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 guidance centre. A structured discussion takes place, monitored by the Peer Coordinator or the Evaluation Expert. Concise and meaningful feedback to counsellors, 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 to provide feedback to the guidance centre and to obtain 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 guidance centre'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 guidance centre. Presenting the evaluation results to counsellors and other staff of the reviewed guidance centre 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"...). That is why we recommend that **every full/part-time employee of the guidance centre attends the meeting at the end of the peer visit**. It is the only way to enable a constructive discussion and an atmosphere of cooperation. Furthermore, dissemination of results within the guidance centre is ensured.

The only question that may remain open is whether the head of the institution where the seat of the guidance centre is should attend the meeting - in cases when guidance centre is a part of other institution. 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 head of the institution doesn't work closely with the guidance centre in terms of the programme contents, and the subject of the review is limited to expert questions (for example, guidance methods, guidance props usage ...).

The Peers present the distilled findings and assessments for every evaluation area (e.g. through visualisation in a PowerPoint presentation, on flip charts, etc.). Counsellors 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 guidance centre should be extended to encompass further discussions.

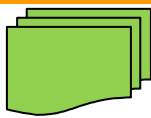


Reflection on results and meta-evaluation of the process

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 (for Peer Teams with more than 2 Peers). It is recommended that the Peer Coordinator, together with the Evaluation Expert, takes the responsibility 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.

Writing the report

The writing of the report should start during the Peer Visit: once the Peers are back in their usual working environment, 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. Should any (usually minor) adaptations be necessary after the communicative validation with the guidance centre, 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 guidance centre 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 guidance centre. All relevant internal stakeholders (counsellors, other staff, etc.) **should have access to the report.**

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

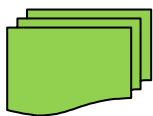


Structure of Peer Review Report

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 guidance centre 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 guidance centre (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 Tool-box.

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.

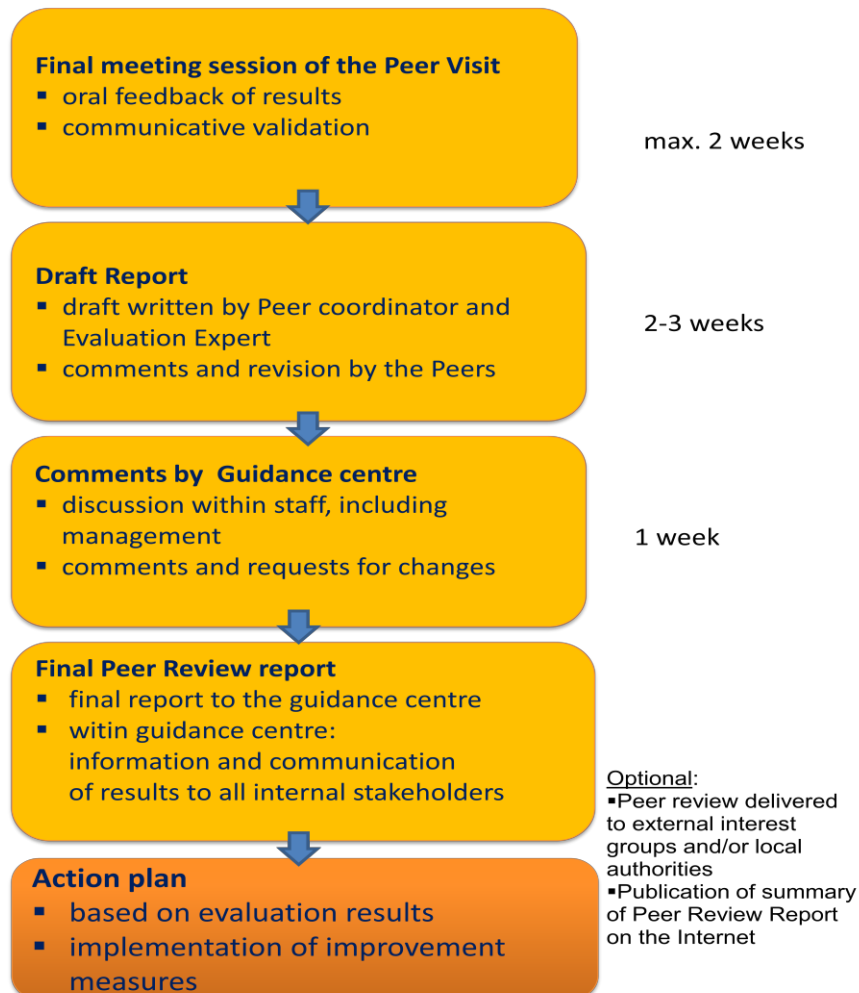
The report should provide a description of the findings of the Peer Review and an assessment of these findings given by the critical friends (the Peers). Strengths and areas for improvement are pointed out and conclusions are presented. If the guidance centre agrees, recommendations can also be part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

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

The draft report is read and validated by the guidance centre, 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 in order to justify the time and efforts 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 guidance centre 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 guidance centre 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 guidance centre 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 guidance centre 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 guidance centre.

How to proceed - a systematic approach to procedures for change

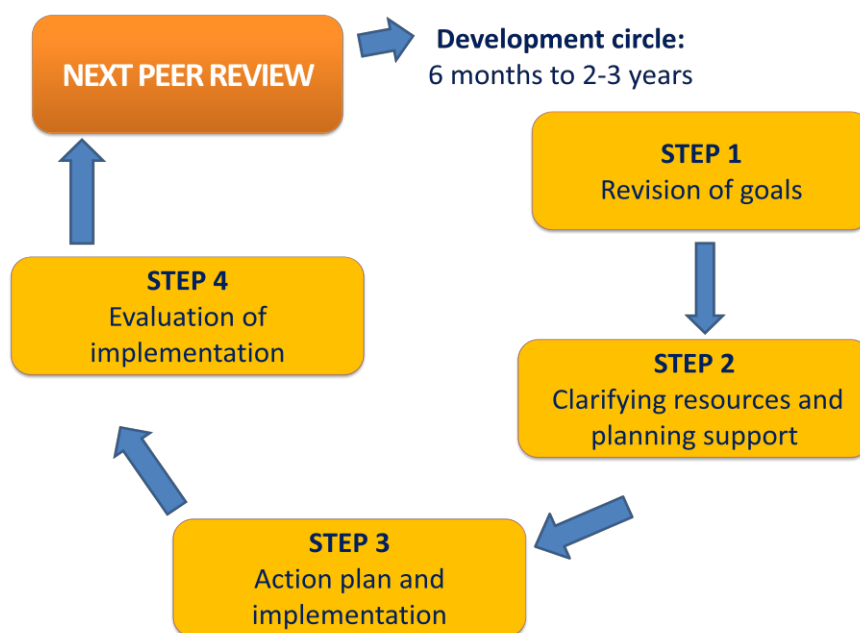
Revision of goals

If possible, procedures for change should be planned cooperatively within the guidance centre. 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, counsellors)
- Which supporting structures can be activated? (e.g. quality groups, 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 training, new methods or new action models?
- Are training programmes for counsellors suitable and sufficient?
- Which support groups exist and can be used (expert groups from the local environment, guidance centres on the other levels of education, other guidance centres)?
- 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.)?

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

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 who 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 Educational and Vocational Guidance for Adults and the definition of Quality Areas

What is the “quality of Educational and Vocational Guidance for Adults”? 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.

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.

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 centre. Guidance centre 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, local authorities, etc.),
- the one who carries out** the activity,
- the final client.**

The contemporary concepts of Educational and Vocational Guidance for Adults as a rule describe the direct 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 activities. Such a wide range of subjects and their activities connected to the Educational and Vocational Guidance for Adults requires development of adequate measures to evaluate quality. This opens a question regarding which aspect, result or effect of Educational and Vocational Guidance for Adults to evaluate in order to get an 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 Educational and Vocational guidance for Adults. Plant (Plant 2001) says that this 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 progresses: 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:

1) When evaluating the quality of Educational and Vocational Guidance for Adults 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 activities effects,
- 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.

2) 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 require 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.

3) From the point of view of **an individual client** the importance of evaluation is emphasized:

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

From such different points of view, it is really not a simple task to define the basic objectives of Educational and Vocational Guidance for Adults that would in turn serve as the basis for the quality evaluation. Having considered all the points discussed above, we believe that the basic starting point when creating the quality evaluation and development method are the following elements:

- accessibility of guidance centres,**
- quality of guidance centres, results and effects of guidance Educational and Vocational Guidance for Adults** ⁴.

⁴ Vilič Klenovšek, T., Klemenčič, S., Možina, T., Dobrovoljc, A. (2007): Izhodišča za razvoj kakovosti v svetovalnih središčih za izobraževanje odraslih. Ljubljana: Andragoški center Slovenije.

Thus, a framework of Quality Areas has been defined for the European Peer Review procedure for Educational and Vocational Guidance for Adults, which:

- comprises the crucial areas of a high-quality guidance centre 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.

Relation between the European Proposed Quality Areas for Educational and Vocational Guidance for Adults and institutional/national frameworks

The set of Quality Areas (including quality criteria and indicators, see below) should therefore by no means replace national frameworks. Instead, it is intended to support European cooperation in evaluation at Educational and Vocational Guidance for Adults 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 peer reviews carried out in a national context.

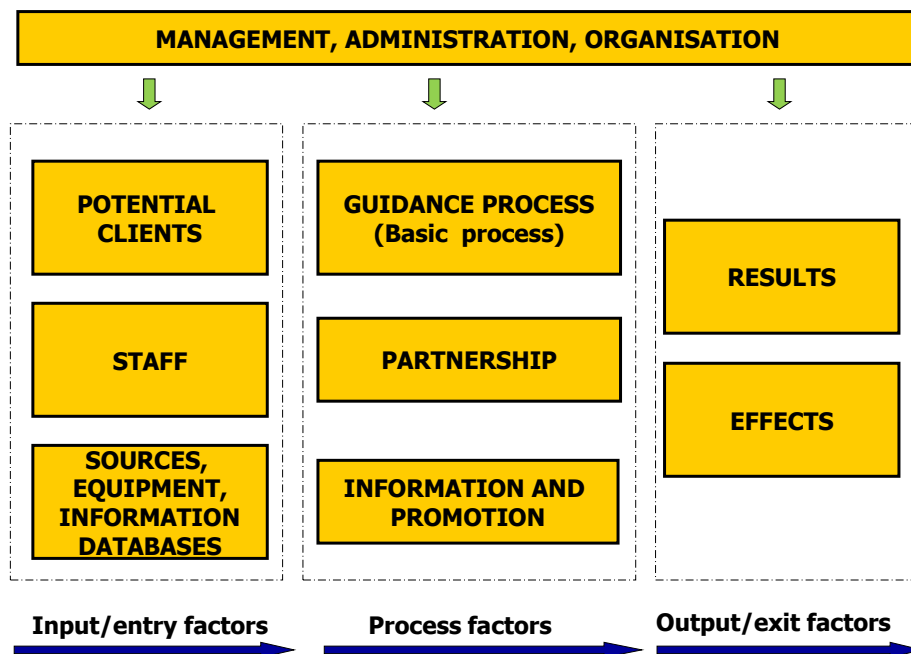
Special national/institutional quality elements can, of course, be added to this framework depending on national and/or institutional demands. For purely national use of the European Peer Review procedure, national frameworks can replace the Quality Areas proposed below.

Nine European Quality Areas for Educational and Vocational guidance for Adults

The 9 Quality Areas proposed are:

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Quality Area 1: | Potential clients of Guidance (target groups) |
| Quality Area 2: | Staff |
| Quality Area 3: | Resources, Equipment, Databases, Instruments |
| Quality Area 4: | Guidance process |
| Quality Area 5: | Partnership |
| Quality Area 6: | Information and promotion |
| Quality Area 7: | Results |
| Quality Area 8: | Effects |
| Quality Area 9: | Management, Administration, Organisation |

Graph 8: 9 areas for quality evaluation and development in Educational and Vocational Guidance for Adults



Core and Optional Quality Areas

The 9 Quality Areas comprise **five** Quality Areas that relate directly to the “key business” of guidance centres, the Educational and Vocational Guidance for Adults. They are thus called “**Core Quality Areas**”. Since these five Quality Areas usually lie within the decision-making power at the institutional level, guidance centres all over Europe will be competent to act on the results of external assessment in these areas.

For a European Peer Review, it is recommended that **at least two quality areas** should be tackled and among them **at least one** should be a “core” quality area.

Thus, the **5 Core Quality Areas** are:

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Quality Area 1: | Potential clients of guidance (target groups) |
| Quality Area 2: | Staff |
| Quality Area 4: | Guidance process |
| Quality Area 7: | Results |
| Quality Area 8: | Effects |

The remaining 4 Quality Areas - **Optional Quality Areas** - are considered necessary for the operation of guidance centres, they support the processes of the Core Quality Areas.

The Quality Areas and the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQAVET)

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

Graph 9: The Quality Areas within the Quality Assurance Model of the EQAVET



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.

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 and vocational training, we do, however, see a close connection between this model and the basic processes we defined in the model for quality evaluation in Educational and

Vocational guidance for Adults. 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 EQAVET model is also based.

How the Quality Areas are specified

Each Quality Area is clarified by a set of **criteria and indicators**.

Criteria

We have defined the **criteria** for particular areas. The criteria 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 criteria helps us find the answer to **what kind of guidance activities for adult education and vocational training we want**, be it on the level of an individual counsellor, guidance centre, or development of Educational and Vocational Guidance for Adults on national level.

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Example: | |
| QUALITY AREA: | RESULTS |
| CRITERIA: | Guidance services are provided to adults giving special attention to the groups of adults who have difficulties accessing education and learning or need more support and help for education and learning. |

Indicators

Each Quality Area is clarified by a set of indicators. **These indicators identify the key aspects of quality in the relevant area**. **Quality indicators** direct us to look into important aspects of quality, which determine the studied area. Indicators help us to focus on a narrow area of guidance, which is defined within the quality standard in a particular area of quality.

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Example: | |
| QUALITY AREA: | RESULTS |
| CRITERIA: | Guidance services are provided to adults giving special attention to the groups of adults who have difficulties accessing education and learning or need more support and help for education and learning. |
| QUALITY INDICATORS: | Number of services Taking in consideration the number of staff and other conditions in which guidance centre operates, the number of services is adequate according to adults needs for guidance in region. |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <p>Demographic characteristics of service clients. The demographic service clients' characteristics do not significantly deviate from the demographic characteristics of adult population in the region (gender, age, educational structure, percentage of unemployment etc.)</p> |
|--|---|

For each chosen quality area for the peer review **two indicators** should be reviewed.

Measures

It is important to understand that to “measure” the defined standard of quality indicators is not enough. For example: the quality indicator “number of services” does not say anything about the quality of a guidance centre. With the description of an indicator, as were developed in this manual, we clarified in broad what do we measure with this indicator. For example: “Taking in consideration the number of staff and other conditions in which the guidance centre operates, the number of services is adequate according to the adults needs for guidance in that region.” Such a description is useful as a guideline that all guidance centres in different European countries can use. But in a concrete context in which a concrete guidance centre is operating, more detailed measures are needed in quality assessment. With the development of such measures, we answer questions such as: How many services have the guidance centre to offer that will make for example the financiers satisfied? Or how many clients have to access guidance services so that the guidance centre meets the goals defined in the national strategy of guidance? To answer to such questions we need to develop detailed “measures”.

Different quality models include also quality measures. Such measures present the tool to “measure” the defined criteria of quality and more detailed indicator. Depending on the nature of the standard of quality and the indicators, the measures can be either numerical or descriptive. The measures therefore represent the guiding principles for quality assurance and quality development efforts in the specific Quality Area. 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.

In this quality framework, **quality areas, criteria and quality indicators** were developed. They represent a **broad quality framework for Educational and Vocational Guidance for Adults**. Such broad quality framework can be used as guidelines in all European countries. It is left to a particular country, guidance centre or a network of guidance centres to develop **more detailed measures**, according to the specificities of the different European countries, their VET and Guidance systems. It would be impossible to develop criteria which will suite to all countries and to all systems.

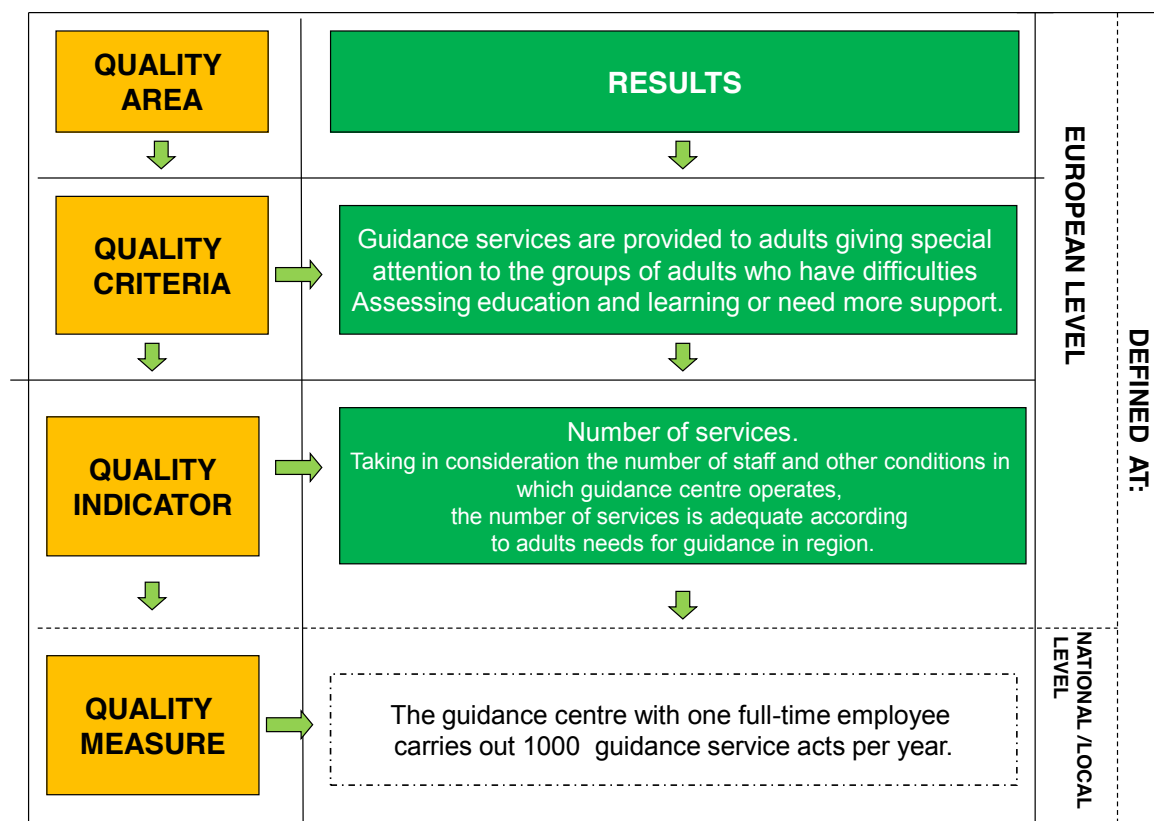
For example: “*The number of services*” depend a lot of the size of guidance centre, the number of counsellors and the budget that guidance centres have for

their activities. Or another example: the indicator “*Inclusion of vulnerable groups*” focus our attention to assess if the guidance centre pays attention to include the priority target groups from their local (regional, national) environment when offering guidance. But the “priority target groups” can be different it each country, region, local area.

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Example: | |
| QUALITY AREA: | RESULTS |
| CRITERIA: | Guidance services are provided to adults giving special attention to the groups of adults who have difficulties accessing education and learning or need more support and help for education and learning. |
| QUALITY INDICATORS: | Number of services |
| QUALITY MEASURE* | The guidance centre with one full-time employee carries out 1000 guidance service acts per year. |

**Example from the Slovenian quality framework for guidance centres*

Graph 10: The basic structure of a quality evaluation and development model to be used in Educational and Vocational guidance for Adults - a case presentation/presentation with an example



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 guidance centre and to give critical feedback. Recommendations and solutions to problems should only be given if expressly asked for by the guidance centre.

Composition of the Peer Team

The European Peer Reviews will be carried out by teams of 2 - 4 Peers. (If larger Peer Teams are employed, the number of Peers should not exceed 8). The number of peers depends of many factors:

- ▶ the size of the guidance centre;
- ▶ the number of people to be interviewed within the peer visit,
- ▶ if individual or group interviews are planned,
- ▶ if national or international peer reviews are taking place.

When forming the peer review team, it is also important to think about the characteristics of the guidance centre to be reviewed.

When the guidance centre is large or situated in different locations, it is recommended a larger Team of Peers - this way the execution of the peer visit can be divided and carry out separately the peer visit of different parts of the guidance centre or the interviews with different stakeholders.

The peer team should be larger in case group interviews (for example clients, counsellors, stakeholders) are planned - it allows the peers to divide the interviews among them.

Since guidance centres usually have a small number of counsellors, it would certainly not be possible or sensible to form large Peer Teams, especially if the Peer Team will carry out individual interviews with them. The same is relevant for other interest groups. It is not suitable if the number of peers is much bigger than the number of interviewees. In the case that was described above (individual interviews) **it is recommended that the peer review team consist only of two peers. When the group interviews are executed the number of peers can be higher, from four to five peers.**

The advantage of larger teams is the broader perspective and more inputs as well as the distribution of tasks to a larger number of people, the advantage of smaller teams is an easier coordination.

It is important also to take into consideration the specifics of **International Peer Reviews**. In this case, and if the language is identified as a problem, it is recommended to include a translator in the interviews to be carried out.

As it can be seen from different examples explained above, the decision about how many peers should be included in the Peer Team is not a routine or about following the recommendations of this manual. It has to be a professional decision. Before making this decision, it is important to think about the characteristics of the guidance centre and the different aspect of the Peer Review.

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 guidance centres: counsellors, managers, quality experts, etc. These professionals should have the following expertise:

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

It is also recommended that one of the Peers currently work as counsellors.

Peer Teams/Peer Tandems can consist on the following peers:

Expert Peer in the field of guidance (e. g. a counsellor from another guidance centre, a head of another guidance centre, a counsellor or head manager from another level of the VET system).

Expert Peer 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 a guidance centre). In special cases, or in cases when particular work processes are being reviewed, Peers can also be experts from other fields (for example, promotion experts, if the quality of promotion of guidance work is to be reviewed).

Peer with knowledge/experience in the field of quality evaluation and development (for example, a counsellor with experience in self-evaluation, another expert familiar with self-evaluation, and a counsellor for adult education quality).

In some cases it would make sense for a **stakeholder** to be a member of the peer group: clients, educational organisations, other guidance centres. This can bring more "independence" of the entire group of peers. This Peer can come, for instance, from "external cooperation partners," from the closely related business world (representatives of enterprises) or from other relevant stakeholders (labour market experts, social partners, local authorities, 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 guidance (e.g. evaluation, research, consulting, etc.). This person should, however, also have sufficient experience in Educational and Vocational Guidance

for Adults 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 Educational and Vocational guidance for Adults, a "real" Peer from another guidance centre, who has the required qualification and expertise, may also assume the role of the Evaluation Expert.

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 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 Coordinator⁵

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 guidance centre, coordinates and plans the activities of the Peers and is concerned with the moderation of the review process 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.

Within International Peer Reviews, the Peer Coordinator should be one of the national peers since he/she knows better the circumstances within which the peer review is taking place and can prepare the Peer Review (visiting the Guidance

⁵ The Peer Coordinator can be appointed either by the guidance centre itself or by the coordinating body organising the Peer Review.

Centre and developing the Peer Visit agenda) and coordinate the work more efficiently.

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 Peers/Peer Tandems are discussed and the feedback to counsellors, 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

To invite a Transnational Peer is optional.

On the one hand, inviting a Peer from another country can be a very enriching experience for all parties involved - the Transnational Peer, the counsellors 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.

In case an International Peer is invited for the Peer Review, his/her smooth integration can be achieved through a good preparation, for example meeting the transnational Peers beforehand or/and, having in consideration eventual language barriers, making decisions and provisions for translations during the interviews.

On the other hand, including a transnational Peer requires careful preparations and certain conditions on the part of the guidance centre 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 Educational and Vocational guidance for Adults systems and cultural differences:

- ▶ If the international peer is invited, the language of the peer review in which it will be possible to communicate among all peers (national and international) has to be chosen. Usually this is not a native language of the all peers. That means that all the communication is executed in that language and also all the

materials (self-report, the report of the peer review etc.) has to be prepared in that language. It is very important, when we choose the peers to take into consideration this dimension. Among other qualities of the peer, he/she also has to know the working language of the peer review. It is also possible, if the language is a problem, that one of the peers has the tasks during the peer review to translate the conversations in a peer team and at the interviews to an international peer. This can be a case when the conversation is executed in a language of the country where the peer review takes place.

- It is also very important that the system of guidance in the hosted country has to be explained to the international peer and also different providers of guidance, especially those who are included in the peer review. The transnational peer has to know the goals that the providers have and the context in which they work. Without having this insight it will be very difficult for the transnational peer to assess the self-report and to follow the conversations during the peer visits.

Inviting a transnational Peer usually also calls for extra funding for example for travelling, or for translation costs.

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

| Number of Peers (2 Peers) | Number of Peers (4 Peers) | Occupational Background | Required Competences |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|--|--|
| 1 Real Peer (minimum) | 2 "Real" Peers (minimum) | Professionals from other guidance centres (counsellors, heads of the institution, managers, quality experts, etc.) | -Knowledge of Quality Areas under scrutiny -Experience in Educational and Vocational guidance for Adults -Experience in QA and QD procedures |
| 1 "Stakeholders Peer" | | Representative from other stakeholders (VET institutions, 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) | -Expertise in evaluation, moderation and communication -Knowledge of Educational and Vocational guidance for Adults |

| | | |
|---------------------------------|--|---|
| 1 Transnational Peer (optional) | Any of the above , usually an Educational and Vocational guidance for Adults professional | -Knowledge of Quality Areas under scrutiny -Experience in Educational and Vocational guidance for Adults - Experience in QA and QD procedures |
|---------------------------------|--|---|

Suggested Tasks for the members of the Peer team:

Within the Peer Team, it is advisable for efficiency matters that the members of the Peer Team assume the following tasks:

► **One peer taking notes:**

The role of this peer is to take notes during the interview and to write down the interviewees answers. It is very important that one peer carries out this task, because it is difficult for the peers that are conducting the interviews (asking questions) also to take notes. As there are usually more interviews executed in one day, some important information's may get lost if notes are not taken during the conversations. If the peer possesses the suitable competences, it is suggested to write notes directly into his/her computer. It is also possible for the conversations to be recorded, but in this case the peer team needs the approval of the persons who are interviewed. Recording is also time consuming, as after the interviews the peers would have to listen to the recorded conversations.

► **One peer who follows the conversation even more carefully than the other peers who have other tasks and take notes for the first feedback that will be delivered by the peer group at the end of the peer visit:**

It is recommended in the peer review process, that peers prepare the first assessment of the achievement of the indicators and the strengths and areas of improvements, after assessing the Self-Report. The role of the Peers is to carefully monitor and register if the first assessment can be approved or if it is necessary to add or to change something. Such notes are very useful for the peer team at the end of the Peer Visit day, when the first feedback for the guidance centre is to be delivered, especially if we consider that the peer team has not a lot of time to prepare the first feedback after the interviews.

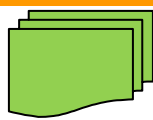
Required competences and expertise of Peers

Peer Teams as a whole should thus have expertise

- In Educational and Vocational Guidance for Adults,
- in quality assurance and development, also be trained in **quality evaluation and development** in Educational and Vocational Guidance for Adults,
- in the Quality Areas under scrutiny, also be trained to know **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.



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

Preparation and training of Peers

Peers are obliged to analyse the guidance centre's Self-Report and to contribute to the preparation of the Peer Visit by attending meetings with the guidance centre 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.).

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 guidance centre 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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Supplement - Glossary

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.

Clients (of a guidance centre)

The term "clients" is used to denote the adult participants in Educational and Vocational Guidance for Adults. It means a person who has received guidance - "person receiving guidance".

The European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQAVET)

The European Quality Assurance Reference Framework is a new reference instrument to help authorities of Member States to promote and monitor the improvement of their vocational education and training (VET) systems.

Quality Assurance can be used as a systematic approach for modernising education systems, especially by improving the effectiveness of training. Therefore, it should underpin every policy initiative in VET.

Member States are invited to develop and use this instrument on a voluntary basis. The main users of the reference framework will be national and regional authorities as well as public and private bodies responsible for ensuring and improving the quality of VET.

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 guidance centre.

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. The degree of influence and the scope of the tasks of the coordinating body may change depending on its set-up: it may process applications from Peers, select the Peers according to a predefined profile, match the guidance centre with suitable Peers, draw up a timetable for the Reviews, collect and forward information, organise Peer training and provide consultation for the guidance centres throughout the whole process.

"Critical Friends"

Synonym of "Peers".

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.) This is a case of "formal"/permanent place where the guidance is carried out.

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.)

Educational Guidance

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 learning problems, etc.) and at the end of the education process (evaluating one's achievements, deciding on further educational options, employment options etc.).

Educational and Vocational Guidance for Adults

Educational and Vocational Guidance for Adults includes a range of activities which: supports adults entering or participating in education; 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 learning problems, etc.) and at the end of the education process (evaluating one's achievements, deciding on further educational options, employment options etc.). It includes also 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.

Educational and Vocational Guidance for Adults connects three inter-linking areas: personality/ personal development, career development and adult education/ training. The last area is the most emphasized.

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 guidance centre at the end of the Visit. S/he may also coach/assist the Peer Coordinator in the writing of the Peer Review Report.

Focus group

A focus group is a session of a homogeneous 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.

Formative Evaluation

Formative Evaluation is an on-going 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.

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, clients 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.

Guidance centre

Naming organisations/institutions/units which carry out guidance in Educational and Vocational Guidance for Adults.

Guidance centres provide adults with free, impartial, confidential, holistic, and quality information and guidance at their education and learning, informing and guiding before the enrolment in an educational and/or vocational programme, during the process, and at the end of the educational and vocational 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 serve 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.

In guidance centres, can also be transmitted information and advices that enable adults to make an informed choice about their vocational (work) life.

In the Peer Review Manual, the term “guidance centre” is used to encompass the institutions who are responsible for Educational and Vocational guidance for Adults.

Guidance centre network

Informal or formal connection of similar guidance centres/organisations. The network has joint agreed upon goals of guidance activities, common work principles, different common agreed upon activities.

Guidance process

The process, in which the counsellor and the person receiving guidance participate with the intent of the client getting appropriate help (information, advice, counselling...).

Stakeholders (in Educational and Vocational Guidance for Adults)

Synonym of »Interest groups”

Groups who have influence or are interested in some aspect of guidance: potential clients of guidance services, clients, former clients, counsellors, guidance centre managers, other employees, social partners, especially unions, guidance centres from the surrounding areas, development institutions from the surrounding areas, educational/school authorities etc.

Stakeholders are those who would have interest to collaborate with guidance centre as those who already cooperate with counsellors in guidance centres.

The inclusion of various relevant 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 policy.

From the field of economy entered in the field of education (and educational guidance) also the term “interest groups”, to define groups who may have some influence or interest in education or in guidance. The terms can be used as synonymous.

Management of a guidance centre

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.).

Outreach approach

When the guidance is carried out as an occasional activity out away from the guidance centre seat, it is called “outreach approach”.

Peer Review

Peer Review is a form of external evaluation with the aim of supporting the reviewed guidance centre 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 guidance centre. During the evaluation process, the Peers usually visit the reviewed guidance centre.

Peer Review Facilitator

The Peer Review Facilitator is the person responsible for the organisation and the smooth running of the Peer Review at the guidance centre. 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.

Peers

Peers are mostly colleagues from other guidance centre (counsellors, managers, 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 Network

Peer Reviews are very often carried out in networks of guidance centres. 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 Educational and Vocational guidance for Adults.



Peer Tandems (for Teams of 4 or more Peers)

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.

Promotional activities in guidance

Planned activities of informing all potential groups of adults on possibilities of information and guidance for adult education in local environment and also **planned promotional activities in different media and places** carried out specifically to promote guidance activity. Promotional activities are carried out in different ways for different target groups of adults and also of information and guidance that enable adults to make an informed choice about the type of their vocational (work) life or career development.

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 measure

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. The criteria therefore represent the guiding principles for quality assurance and quality development efforts in the specific Quality Area. 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.

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 of Educational and Vocational Guidance for Adults

“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 Peer Review procedure on the European level, important Quality Areas have been defined to give an indication of what quality in Educational and Vocational guidance for Adults is about.

Quality criteria

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

Quality criteria in guidance

For the purposes of determining quality in guidance, the criteria of quality can in a 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.

Self-Evaluation of a guidance centre

Self-evaluation is an evaluation carried out by the guidance centre themselves. It is an important approach for fostering quality assurance and quality development at an institutional level. 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 guidance centre 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.

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".

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.

European Peer Review Manual for Educational and Vocational Guidance for Adults*

Development Team

Transnational Partnership of the EuroPeerGuid project - European Peer Review in Guidance and Counselling in Adult Vocational Education and Training - a contribution to EQARF implementation

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* Adapted from the European Peer Review Manual for VET and the Peer Review Manual for Guidance in Adult Education

