

Reflection Report (IO6) and Assessment of Pilot Peer Reviews (O7)

Final report

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Assessment of Pilot Peer Reviews (IO7) and Reflection Report (IO6)

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CONTENTS

1. Background and aims of the project Peer Review VNFIL Extended.....	6
1.1 European Peer Review.....	6
1.2 The project Peer Review VNFIL Extended.....	6
2. Aims, topics and methods of the qualitative study and assessment.....	7
2.1 Formative and summative aims and approach	7
2.2 Research questions.....	8
2.3 Design and methods.....	8
2.4 Available documentation and response rates	9
3. Peer Review Pilots	11
3.1 Organisation of pilots	11
3.2 Participation in Peer Review pilots	13
3.3 Quality Areas	14
3.4 Peers	15
3.5 Peer Training and other forms of support.....	19
3.5.1 Training and support offered	19
3.5.2 Participation in trainings and other forms of support.....	20
3.5.3 Feedback on trainings and support during preparatory phase.....	22
3.5.4 Level of “preparedness” of VNFIL providers and Peers.....	23
3.6 Preparation of the Peer Review (Phase 1).....	23
3.6.1 Preparation of the VNFIL Providers.....	23
3.6.2 Self-Report	23
3.6.3 Preparation in the Peer Teams.....	24
3.7 Peer Visit (Phase 2)	25
3.7.1 Peer Visit Agendas.....	25
3.7.2 Experiences during Peer Visits	27
3.8 Peer Review Report (Phase 3)	29
3.8.1 Feedback session and usefulness of feedback	29
3.8.2 Timeliness of reports.....	29
3.8.3 Writing the “Peer Review Report”	29
3.8.4 Peer Consulting	29
3.9 Putting plans into action (Phase 4).....	30
3.9.1 Communication of results	30
3.10 Cooperation, roles and transnational aspects.....	31
3.10.1 Quality of cooperation during Peer Reviews.....	31
3.10.2 Benefits of multiple participation of Peers and facilitators.....	31
3.10.3 Lessons learned from national and international cooperation during Peer Review.....	31
3.10.4 Transnational aspects: The importance of international Peers	32

4.	Effects of the Peer Review	33
4.1.1	Institutional „return on investment“ of the Peer Review	33
4.1.2	Relevant changes in terms of institutional development since the Peer Review	33
4.1.3	Good practices in VNFIL during Peer Review transferred to other institutions/countries	34
4.1.4	Lessons learned during the Peer Review in terms of institutional QA and QM	34
5.	General assessment of Peer Review	35
5.1	Applicability and added value of Peer Review for VNFIL	35
5.2	Potential of (transnational) Peer Review for the development of VNFIL and quality assurance in VNFIL	35
5.3	Further development of institutional quality assurance through Peer Review	35
5.4	Challenges for implementing (transnational) Peer Review in VNFIL	36
6.	Feedback to Manual and Toolbox and recommendations for finalisation	37
6.1	Manual	37
6.2	Quality Areas	37
6.3	Toolbox	37
7.	Documents and (re)sources	39
7.1	Basic documents	39
7.2	Documentation of pilot phase and monitoring data	39
7.3	Reports and publications	39
7.4	List of interview partners	39
7.5	Participants reflection workshop	40
7.6	Additional tables	41

Table of exhibits

Figure 1: Phases of the European Peer Review	7
Table 2: Overview of documents delivered by VNFIL providers.....	9
Table 3: Survey responses	10
Table 4: Participating VNFIL providers and Peer Visit dates	13
Table 5: Number of deployments per Peer	13
Figure 6: Number of Peer Reviews with ... Peers.....	14
Table 7: Quality areas chosen by VNFIL providers.....	15
Figure 8: Countries of Peers.....	16
Figure 9: Functions of Peers during review of own institution.....	16
Figure 10: Institutional backgrounds of active Peers.....	17
Figure 11: Previous Quality Assurance Training of Peers	17
Table 12: Review skills of Peers (self-assessment)	18
Figure 13: Participation in (types of) Peer Trainings.....	20
Figure 14: N° of Peer Trainings per Peer	21
Figure 15: Other forms of support for Peers (multiple answers possible)	21
Table 16: Feedback to European Peer Training.....	22
Table 17: Level of “preparedness” of the Peers	23
Table 18: Peer Visit Agendas: Number of sessions, number of interviews with different interview groups.....	25
Table 19: Representation of candidates in Peer Visit.....	26
Table 20: Quality of cooperation in Peer Team.....	27
Table 21: Quality of cooperation between Provider and Peers	31
Table 22: Peers per Peer Review	41
Table 23: Peers: distribution by sex	41
Table 24: Peers: distribution by country	41
Table 25: Institutional background of Peers.....	42
Table 26: Types of Peer Training completed by Peers	42
Table 27: N° of Peer Trainings per Peer	42
Table 28: Previous Quality Assurance Training of Peers	43
Table 29: Review/evaluation skills of Peers (self-assessment).....	43
Table 30: Participation of Peers in Peer Review of own institution	43
Table 31: How was the cooperation within your institution in the preparation and conduct of the Peer Review?	44
Table 32: Was the time for the Peer Visit sufficient?	44

1. Background and aims of the project Peer Review VNFIL Extended

1.1 European Peer Review

Peer Review is a form of external evaluation with the aim of supporting the reviewed educational institution in its quality assurance and quality development efforts. An external group of experts, called Peers, is invited to assess the quality of different fields of the institution, such as the quality of education and training provision of individual departments or of the entire organisation. During the evaluation process, the Peers visit the reviewed institution. Peers are external but work in a similar environment and have specific professional expertise and knowledge of the evaluated subject. They are independent and "persons of equal standing" with the persons whose performance is being reviewed. Peer Review has in the past 10 years been adapted from higher education to vocational education and training in a series of European projects that were closely linked to EQAVET.

The European Peer Review procedure provides a quality assured procedure and common standard for conducting Peer Reviews across Europe. The procedure is documented in the European Peer Review Manual and Toolbox. It was originally developed in the area of vocational education and training in the years 2000 (Peer Review in initial VET, 2004-2007; Peer Review Extended, 2007; Peer Review Extended II, 2007-2009). After 2009, the European Peer Review was introduced as an external instrument for quality assurance in the vocational education and training systems in various European countries, among which are Finland, Italy, Hungary, Catalonia and Austria.

On a European level, transfer of Peer Review was buttressed by subsequent calls for projects in the Lifelong Learning Programme (priority for transfer of innovation projects) which resulted in further experimentation of Peer Review in vocational guidance and counselling (EuroPeerGuid, 2010-2012) and, from 2014 onwards, also in the area of recognition of prior learning in Portugal, France, and the Netherlands (EuroPeerguid-RVC, 2014-2015).¹

1.2 The project Peer Review VNFIL Extended

The 'European Peer Review VNFIL Extended' project takes up from these previous projects. It seeks to introduce Peer Review as an instrument of quality assurance and quality development to the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL). In particular, it builds upon the results of EuroPeerguid-RVC which it aims to extend – to new countries (Austria, Lithuania, Slovakia), to transnational use of Peer Review and to a sustainable integration of Peer Review into the national – and potentially also European – quality strategies for VNFIL.

A decisive element of the project was to test the applicability of the European Peer Review procedure in 11 pilot Peer Reviews in 6 of the participating countries, adopting a transnational approach, i.e. with half the Peer Team coming from another country (O5). The latter was intended to foster mutual learning between VNFIL providers across borders, enhancing transfer of innovation in VNFIL and enhancing mutual trust in the quality of VNFIL provision in Europe. The pilots took place between June 2016 and May 2017 and were headed off by a joint European Peer Training (June 2016).

A comprehensive assessment and in-depth qualitative investigation of the pilot phase was crucial for determining the usefulness of Peer Review for the quality development of VNFIL provision. It provided a basis for the development or finalisation of the majority of project outcomes:

- the finalisation of the Manual (O2), the Toolbox (O3), and the Quality Areas (O3)
- the development of the business model (O7), the national strategies for Peer Review in VNFIL (O8) as well as the Peer Review Reader (O9) and the European policy paper (O10).

¹ Information on the „history“ of the European Peer Review and past projects can be found on the website of the European Peer Review Association www.Peer-review-network.eu.

2. Aims, topics and methods of the qualitative study and assessment

2.1 Formative and summative aims and approach

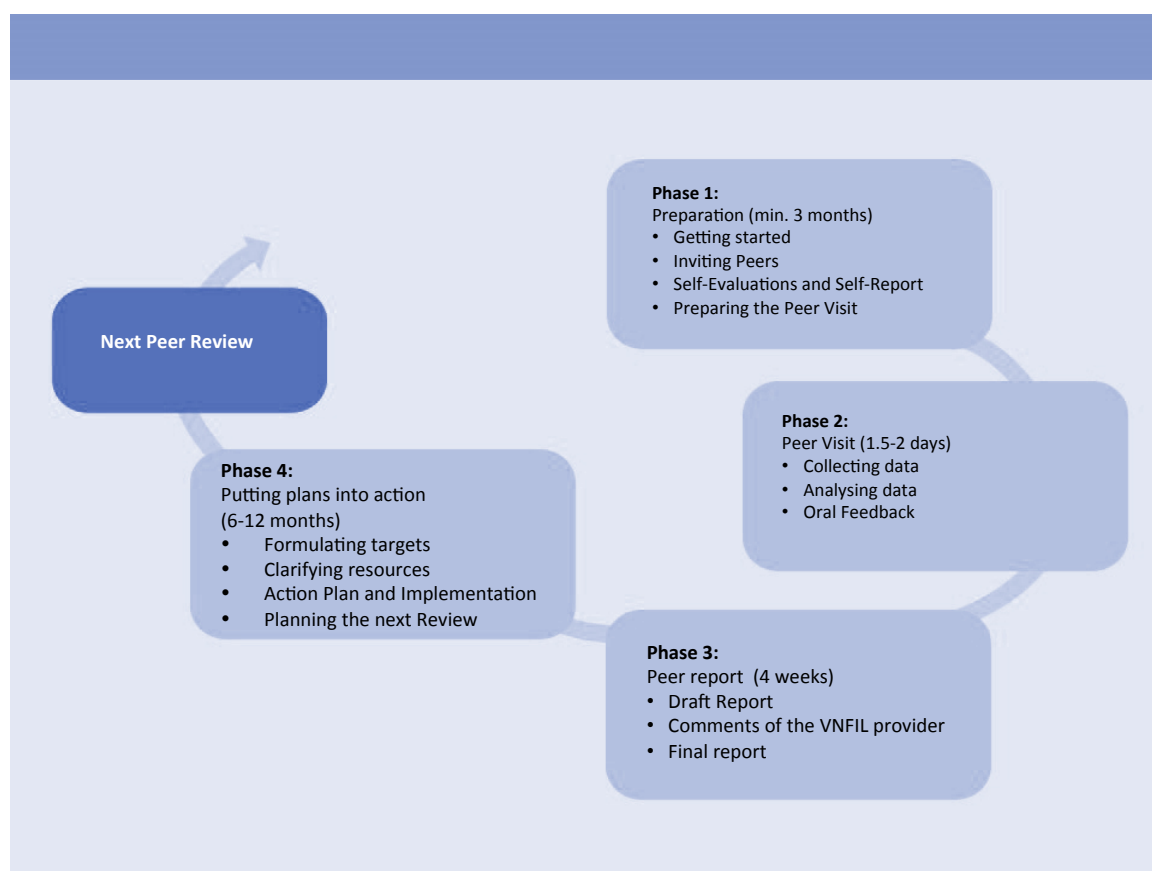
The overall aim of the assessment and qualitative study of the pilot phase was to appraise the feasibility and suitability of the use of the European Peer Review procedure in VNFIL with the prospect of a possible expansion to other VNFIL institutions. This also included an investigation of the usefulness and added value of Peer Review for the Peers and the VNFIL institutions involved. Assessing the success of the transfer of Peer Review to VNFIL thus was the *summative part* of the investigation. In addition, the assessment and qualitative study wanted to contribute to further improvement of the organisation, preparation and conduct of European Peer Reviews in terms of a *formative assessment*.

A two-step approach was taken to produce valid and dependable results:

- An in-depth examination of the eleven pilot Peer Reviews ascertained the quality of the process (including training and support by the coordinating body) and the level of implementation fidelity in terms of adherence to the European Peer Review procedure as laid down in the Manual and the Toolbox (O7).
- Based on this, the qualitative study (i.e. the reflection report) was carried out (O6).

Since the two steps are inseparably interlinked – the latter part cannot be done in a serious manner without the prior process assessment – this report is based on a coordinated data collection effort between the two responsible institutions and comprises the outcomes of both O6 and O7. The fidelity assessment also constitutes integral part of the Peer Review label award (O7). It followed the phases of the Peer Review as described in the Manual.

Figure 1: Phases of the European Peer Review



Source: European Peer Review Manual for VNFIL

2.2 Research questions

Part 1: Process evaluation and assessment of implementation fidelity

- How (well) were Peers and VNFIL providers prepared for the pilot Peer Reviews? What were the contributions of the European Peer Training? What other support did Peers and providers receive? How could the provision of training and support be improved?
- How were the Peer Reviews conducted? Were the quality standards of the European Peer Review procedure (Manual, Toolbox) adhered to? How can the process be improved?

Part 2: Qualitative study

- Is the Peer Review methodology suitable for VNFIL? Is the training programme appropriate? Are the quality areas and indicators suitable for VNFIL providers? How can the Peer Review methodology (Manual, Toolbox) still be improved and fine-tuned to VNFIL?
- What are the pros and cons of international Peer Review? How do you assess the contribution of international Peers? How did the process work with two international Peers? What were benefits or drawbacks of multiple participation of Peers and facilitators and mutual Peer Reviews?
- What kind of impact did the Peer Reviews have on the institutions and on the Peers?
- What is the added value of (transnational) Peer Reviews for institutional QA and QM and is the integration of Peer Review a possible further development of institutional quality assurance?
- What are the possibilities and challenges in further implementation of transnational Peer Reviews for VNFIL? Is there potential for implementing (transnational) Peer Review as a formative external evaluation for VNFIL on national and/or European level?

2.3 Design and methods

The combined assessment and study followed a mixed-method design with a triangulation of different stakeholders, sources and methods including both quantitative and qualitative elements. A wide range of data and sources were used with

- “hard data” from the documentation of the Peer Reviews (documents, monitoring data) and online surveys gathering information and feedback from participating Peers and Providers (O7)
- complemented by a workshop with partners and qualitative interviews as well as a qualitative analysis of survey responses (open questions) and selected monitoring documents, in particular, the meta-evaluations of Peers (O6).

1. Monitoring data on the pilot Peer Reviews

- Peer Review database: overview of pilot Peer Reviews
- Peer database containing all information from Peer applications
- Peer Review documents (Toolbox)
 - Self-Reports
 - Peer Review Agendas
 - Meta-evaluations of Peers
 - Peer Review Reports
 - Other documentation of Peer Review, if existent: presentations, documentation of feedback session, interview and observation guidelines, interview protocols, photos

2. Online questionnaires for participants in pilot Peer Reviews

In September 2017, an online survey (using the online tool LimeSurvey) was conducted, encompassing quantitative and qualitative questions. They included separate questionnaires for

- Peers and
- VNFIL providers (Peer Review facilitators/coordinators, managers of reviewed centres).

3. A workshop with the project partners in the form of a World Café as part of the project meeting in May/June 2017

4. Qualitative interviews with 7 project partners based on an interview guide

Cf. List of interview partners in annex

2. 4 Available documentation and response rates

Databases and pilot documentation (monitoring)

The purpose of the documentation of the Peer Reviews and the establishment of a pilot database was to support the planning, monitoring and steering of the pilot Peer Reviews.

Table 2: Overview of documents delivered by VNFIL providers

Code	Initial information sheet	Self report	Agenda for Peer Visit	Other documentation Peer Visit	Meta evaluation of Peers	Peer Review Report	Peer Applications
16_01_NL	✓	✓	✓	minutes of 3 interviews	✓	✓	✓
16_02_AT	✓	✓	✓	ample	✓	✓	✓
17_03_LT	✓	✓	✓	attendance list	✓	✓	✓
17_04_FR	✓	✓	✓	ample	✓	✓	✓
17_05_PT	✓	✓	✓	minutes of 11 interviews, final presentation	✓	✓	✓
17_06_AT	✓	✓	✓	ample	✓	✓	✓
17_07_AT	✓	✓	✓	questions matrix, findings of Peer Team	✓	✓	✓
17_08_PT	✓	✓	✓	minutes of 6 interviews, findings	✓	✓	✓
17_09_AT	✓	✓	✓	ample	✓	✓	✓
17_10_NL	✓	✓	✓	minutes of 6 interviews, QA Assessment	✓	✓	✓
17_11_SK	in Self-Report	✓	✓	attendance list	✓	✓	✓ except 1

Source: Pilot Database; documentation of pilots

All main documents were provided in English. The coordinating body also collected Peer contracts and photos documenting the Peer Reviews.

Online questionnaires

The questionnaires were online from September 1st to October 16th, 2017 (providers) and from September 4th to October 31st, 2017 (Peers). Response rates for the questionnaires were 100% for VNFIL providers and 89,3% for Peers. (2 Peers filled in one questionnaire together, which was counted as two responses in the response rates as well as in the overall analysis.)

Table 3: Survey responses

<i>Country</i>	<i>VNFIL providers</i>		<i>Peers</i>	
	<i>total number</i>	<i>responses</i>	<i>total number</i>	<i>responses</i>
Austria (AT)	4	4	9	9
France (FR)	1	1	1	1
Lithuania (LT)	1	1	5	4
Netherlands (NL)	2	2	6	4
Portugal (PT)	2	2	4	4
Slovakia (SK)	1	1	3	3
Total	11	11	28	25

Source: Online survey of VNFIL Providers and Peers

Up to two direct reminders were sent to respondents via LimeSurvey during the online period (in case of Peers up to 3 reminders for some). In addition, emails were sent directly, or (in case of Peers) via mediating project partners.

3. Peer Review Pilots

3.1 Organisation of pilots

Organisational structure

Organisation in a larger network requires an active coordinating body as asked for in the European Peer Review Manual. The task of the coordinating body is to

- manage the whole process of conducting the Peer Reviews,
- ensure a coherent approach,
- provide support and guidance to Providers and Peers,
- check implementation fidelity
- conduct constant monitoring
- and support evaluation.

In the project, the part of the coordinating body was assumed by the partner Libereaux (aided by project coordinator Erik Kaemingk). Libereaux was also the partner responsible for Intellectual Outcome 5. General management and support remained with the project coordinator. EPRA was responsible for preparing the assessment of the pilots, acted as “sparring partner” for the coordinating body and assumed an advisory role providing general orientation and expertise.

An online platform (Shareboard, www.share-board.nl) was installed for the project and managed by ErikKaemink C.V. Although individual spaces were set up for all Peer Reviews, the platform was not widely used in the pilot phase since finding material as well as uploading/downloading documents was not as easy as the partners had expected. Documents were thus passed on to the coordinator mainly via email. EPRA provided a Dropbox folder for sharing information between the three partners steering the process, which was then also used to store comprehensive information on the pilot phase and make it accessible for analysis.

Process

The Peer Reviews were scheduled for the second project phase, June 2016 – May 2017 and conducted between November 2016 and March 2016.

Registration for the Peer Training was available from end of January 2016, the online Peer application tool was open starting mid-May 2016. The coordinating body devised a plan (“Peer puzzle”) for matching Peers and institutions for the Peer Reviews. The challenge was to organise the Peer Reviews in a way that all teams include national and at least 2 international Peers. The coordinating body also ask partners to start preparing the pilot phase before the Peer Training so that the individual plans could be revised, if necessary, and aligned with an overall action plan upon during the training.

The toolbox was ready before the Peer Training. However, an updated version of the Quality Areas with a revised structure of criteria was only presented during the Peer Training. Since partners had already started the preparation of the initial phase of the Peer Review (deciding upon Quality Areas, setting up an internal structure, requirements for Peers), this required some changes. After some initial confusion the adaptation to the “new” Quality Areas overall did not pose a problem for partners.

A common European Peer Training preceded the pilot Peer Reviews: It was held between June 13-17, 2016, in Vienna, in the Netherland, an additional national training followed (cf. III.6) in which also national Peers and other stakeholders participated. The training was also used to prepare the pilot phase and come up with a master plan for the Peer Reviews as well as matching Peers and institutions. Contrary to previous pilots a d due to the funding requirements of Erasmus+, at least two international Peers participated in every Peer Review and the Peer pool was largely made up of personnel of the project partners and only a few external Peers. This resulted in a high mutuality of Peer Reviews with participating providers exchanging Peers.

A member of the coordinating body also participated in all Peer Reviews (Marloes Smit from Libereaux or Erik Kaemingk) ensuring high consistency of approach, direct support for Peer Teams and Providers and ongoing second order learning concerning the Peer Review process during the pilot phase.

Documentation and monitoring of the pilot phase was carried out by the coordinating body from the start and accompanied the whole pilot phase. It allowed for a constant monitoring and steering of the pilots and provided a very good database for the assessment and the study.

An internal mentoring scheme was set up according to plan during the Peer Training. It was, however, not used much during the initial stages of the Peer Reviews since partners had ample support through the coordinating body (cf. Mentoring report).



Project team "Peer Review VNFIL Extended", June 2016, Vienna (during European Peer Training)

3.2 Participation in Peer Review pilots

The following overview shows the participating institutions and the timetable for the Peer Visits:

Table 4: Participating VNFIL providers and Peer Visit dates

Code	VNFIL provider	Date
16_01_NL	Libereaux BV, The Netherlands	Nov. 24-25, 2016
16_02_AT	Weiterbildungsakademie (wba), Austria	Dec. 6-7, 2016
17_03_LT	Vilnius Vocational Training Centre for Service Business Specialists, Lithuania	Jan. 18-19, 2017
17_04_FR	Centre Interinstitutionnel de Bilan de Compétences (CIBC), Bourgogne Sud, France	Feb. 13-14, 2017
17_05_PT	CITEFORMA, Portugal	Feb. 2-3, 2017
17_06_AT	University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU), Unit of lifelong learning, Austria	March 22-23, 2017
17_07_AT	Frauenstiftung Steyr, Austria	Apr. 4-5, 2017
17_08_PT	ISLA Santarém, Portugal	March 9-10, 2017
17_09_AT	AK Salzburg/BFI, Austria	May 8-9, 2017
17_10_NL	EVC Centrum Vigor, The Netherlands	March 29-31, 2017
17_11_SK	Národný ústav celoživotného vzdelávania NÚCŽV, Slovakia	Jan. 10-12, 2017

Source: Pilot Database

The 11 Peer Visits were carried out in Austria, France, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Slovakia. The duration of the visits was between 2 and 2,5 days; the duration of the Peer Reviews was between 1.75 days and 2 days (2 days for most Peer Reviews)

All in all, 28 Peers became active during the pilot phase (see also below). All 13 Peers that only participated in one Peer Review were employed as national Peers. More than half of the Peers participated in more than one Peer Review (54%), most of whom in 2 Peer Reviews (39 percentage points). 15% were active in 3 or more Peer Reviews (among whom one person from the coordinating body with 7 participations). These Peers with multiple engagements all came from partner institutions and were active during the whole project (participation in transnational meetings and in Peer Training, responsibility for Intellectual Outcomes). Overall, there were 52 deployments of Peers; on average, a Peer was active 1.8 times during the pilot phase.

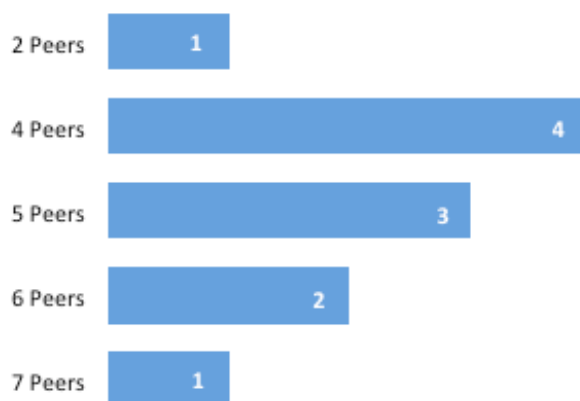
Table 5: Number of deployments per Peer

Deployments	Nº Peers	%
1	13	46
2	11	39
3	2	7
4	1	4
7	1	4
Total	28	100

Source: Pilot Database

The Peer Reviews were conducted in teams of 2 to 7 Peers, with an average of 4.7 Peers per review/institution. The standard number of Peers according to the Manual is four, but larger Peer Teams are permissible if the organisation and the Peers agree. In the case of our project it also allowed more people to experience the process first-hand.

Figure 6: Number of Peer Reviews with ... Peers



Source: Pilot Database

The number of Peers in the pilot phase seemed to be suitable no matter what the size of the team, and no recommendations were made to adjust the number of Peers in the Manual: Of those providers with 4 Peers on their review's Peer Team, 3 answered in the survey that it was the optimal group size. From the Peers' perspective, 41.7% also rated 4 the optimal group size, another 41.7% judging it workable but that other group sizes are possible as well. The other ratings of group size do not deliver statistical/useful information on adequacy of group size.

All Peer Reviews were carried out in a transnational manner with at least two Peers coming from another country; in all Peer Reviews but one, the team consisted of at least 50% transnational Peers. Thus in this pilot phase the deployment of transnational Peers (29 or 56% of all Peers) for the first time outnumbered the national Peers (23 or 44%). For an overview of the numbers of Peers (national and transnational) per Peer Review please see the Annex.

3.3 Quality Areas

In all Peer Reviews, the European Quality Areas were used. As recommended in the Manual, most pilots reviewed two Quality Areas, except for one partner who reviewed three and one partner who reviewed only one Quality Area.

Except for one case, all Peer Reviews covered at least one "core" quality area (i.e. one of the Quality Areas 1, 2, 3, 4). Quality area 8 ("Quality Management") was not chosen by any institution. Feedback from partners suggests that this was due to the fact that the Quality Area (which was called "Quality Assurance") was misunderstood to mean only external evaluation (subtitle of earlier version of this Quality Area was misleading: "Evaluation procedures and reports on tactic and operational level"), while the indicators clearly point to a more comprehensive view of quality assurance. QA 1 (Identification) and QA 5 (Information, Guidance and Counselling) were reviewed most often. All other quality areas were selected by at least one institution. Coverage of the quality areas is thus overall satisfactory and shows which issues the partners' institutions are currently most interested in.

Table 7: Quality areas chosen by VNFIL providers

Code	Nº of QAs	QA 1 Identification	QA 2 Documentation	QA 3 Assessment	QA 4 Certification	QA 5 Information, Guidance, Counselling	QA 6 Stakeholder Coordination	QA 7 Competences of Practitioners	QA 8 Quality Management	QA 9 Organisation of VNFIL Provision	Special evaluation questions
16_01_NL	2				1	1					✓
16_02_AT	2	1					1				✓
17_03_LT	2	1						1			--
17_04_FR	2	1				1					✓
17_05_PT	2				1			1			✓
17_06_AT	2			1		1					✓
17_07_AT	2	1	1								✓
17_08_PT	2				1			1			✓
17_09_AT	3	1	1			1					✓
17_10_NL	2							1		1	✓
17_11_SK	2	1				1					✓
Total	2,1	6	2	1	3	5	1	4	0	1	10

Source: Pilot Database

All but one institution took advantage of the possibility to pose special evaluation questions to the Peers. Some institutions even did so extensively. This contributed to tailoring the Peer Review to specific information needs and making its outcomes useful to the institution. In some instances, however, the special evaluation questions were in fact asking for expert consultancy and/or were impossible to answer in the framework of a Peer Review. This put stress on some Peer Teams who thought it their duty to answer these questions even though the Manual specifies that recommendations and consulting are only part of the Peer Review in exceptional cases (and this was also highlighted during the training).

3.4 Peers

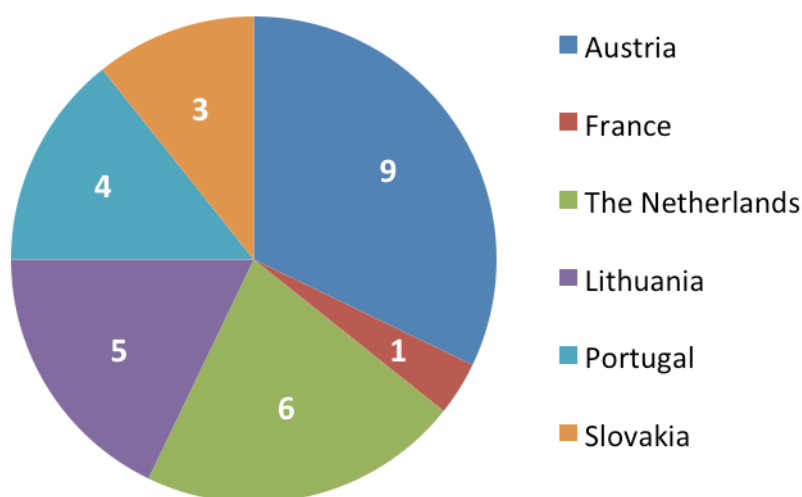
Peer applications

In total, 32 people applied online as Peers, 20 women and 12 men, from different countries with varying institutional backgrounds. About one third of the applicants (10) work for VNFIL providers. About 50% of all applicants had experience in VNFIL. 5 of the applicants did not participate in Peer Reviews, 4 of which had also participated (at least partly) in the Peer Training. In the end 28 Peers became active during the pilot Peer Reviews. One application was only partly filled out and one Peer did not fill out a Peer application at all and did not participate in the training either.

Background and characteristics of Peers

Of the Peers, about two thirds (18) were female, one third (9) male. They came from all partner countries: 9 from Austria (almost a third – due to the high number of Austrian partners), 6 from The Netherlands (including the coordinating body), 5 from Lithuania (with a high number of national Peers, 4 from Portugal, 3 from Slovakia and (only) 1 from France.

Figure 8: Countries of Peers

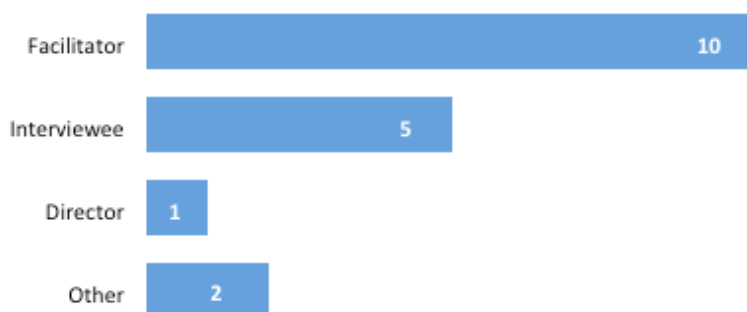


Source: Pilot Database and Peer Register (merged)

Of the 28 people who participated in the role of a Peer, 19 were from an institution that was also being reviewed in the project (67,9%). The others were Peers external to the project and recruited by the Providers for the Peer Review.

Whether Peers were involved in the Peer Review of their own institution was also a question asked in the survey; 15 Peers (64%) answered in the survey that they did so (which corresponds to the analysis above)², two thirds of these as Facilitators, one third as interviewee, one Peer also as a director and two Peers also in other functions: one supported the Facilitator, the other trained Peers (multiple answers possible).

Figure 9: Functions of Peers during review of own institution

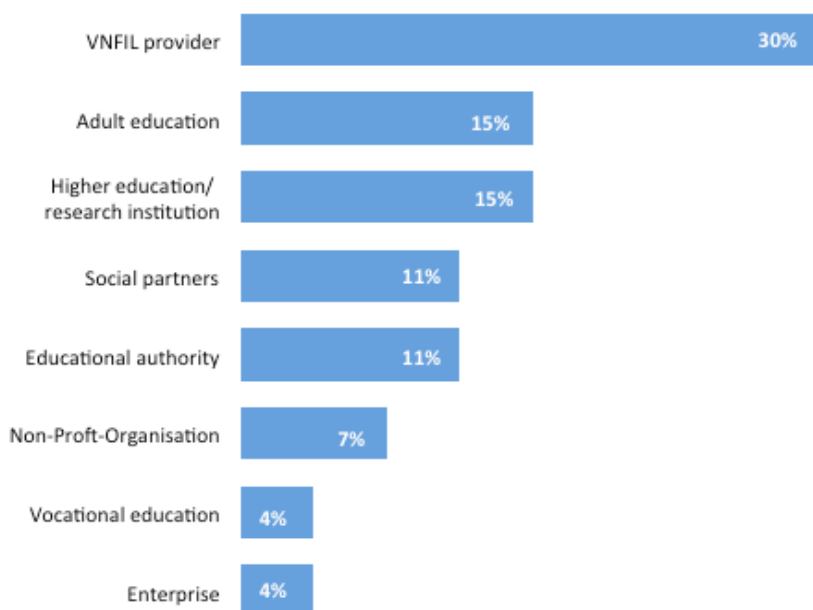


Source: Online Survey of Peers (N=15), multiple answers possible

² Not all Peers answered the online survey, see above response rates.

The table below shows the different institutional backgrounds of the active Peers:

Figure 10: Institutional backgrounds of active Peers

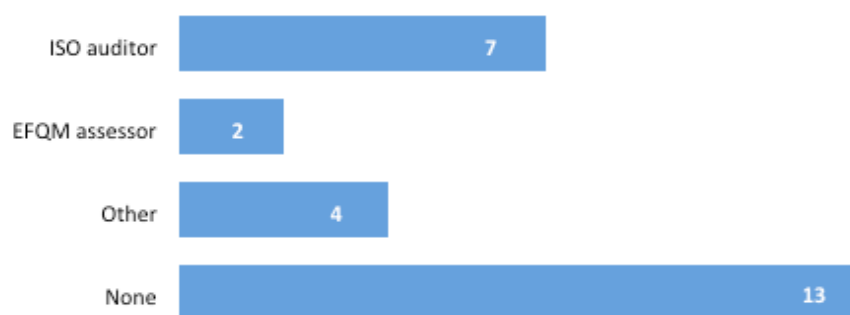


Source: Peer Register, N=27

15 of the 28 Peers had experience in validation of non-formal and informal learning, many of them also long-term experience (median: 7 years; mean: 9 years), 6 Peers even for 10 or more years.

The majority of the Peers had (some) experience in evaluation/quality assurance. According to the information in the Peer application, 20 of the 28 Peers had previously done review/evaluation work. About one fourth of the Peers (7) had had training as ISO auditor (2 also as external auditor), 2 Peers were trained EFQM assessors. 4 Peers had had some other relevant training (other QM systems, training during university studies), about half of the Peers had had no training in quality assurance before.

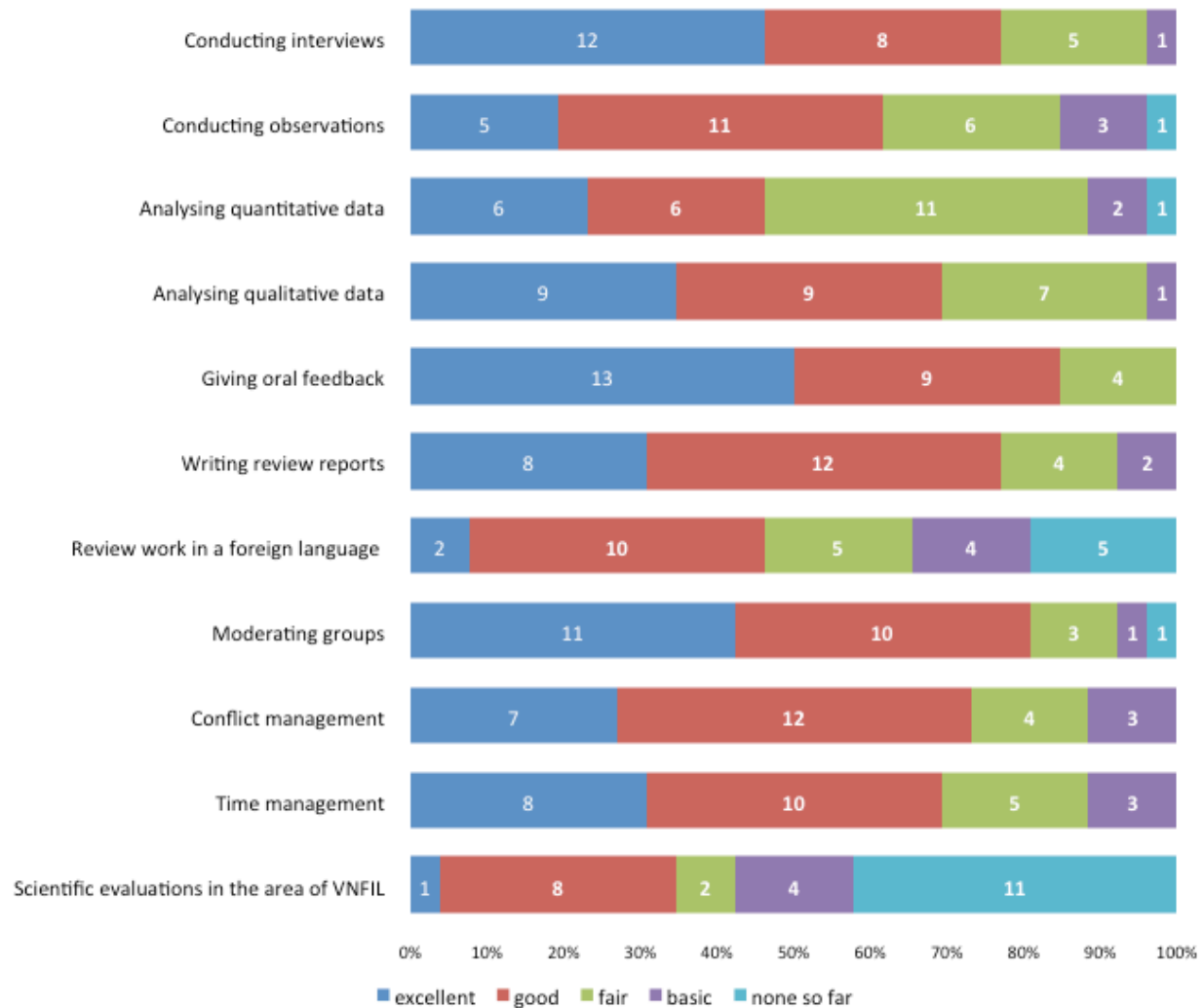
Figure 11: Previous Quality Assurance Training of Peers



Source: Peer Register, N=26

18 were from an institution that had been reviewed before, mostly in ISO audits (or related assessments), some in Peer Reviews during previous European projects.

Peers were also asked for a self-assessment of their expertise in different skills and competences necessary to carry out a Peer Review.

Table 12: Review skills of Peers (self-assessment)

Source: Peer Register, N=26

According to their self-assessment, Peers bring a very high level of relevant review skills to the job:

- Being able to give oral feedback, conduct interviews and moderate groups are the areas where the Peers rate their competences highest, followed by analysing qualitative data, writing reports and general skills like conflict management and time management.
- Conducting observations, analysing quantitative data and doing review work in foreign languages are skills where Peers feel less competent.
- The Peers have comparably low expertise in scientific evaluations of validation.

The previous experiences of review processes or evaluation skills did not influence the composition of the Peer Teams since other considerations took precedence when the Peer Teams were put together (see above “Peer puzzle”). It turned out that some Peer Teams did not encompass Peers with report writing skills, although they had indicated otherwise in their application, or that in some instances Peer Coordinators felt overwhelmed by their role. So perhaps some of the Peers were overconfident in the assessment of their own skills.

(→ For more details on profiles of Peers, see tables in Annex)

3.5 Peer Training and other forms of support

3.5.1 Training and support offered

European Peer Training, June 2016, Vienna

The European Peer Training took place in the Chamber of Labour („AK Bildungszentrum“, Theresianumgasse 16-18, 1040 Vienna) and at the site of the Weiterbildungsakademie between 13th and 17th of June 2016.

The Peer Review Training aims to impart to prospective Peers all necessary knowledge, skills and competences to conduct a Peer Review in a professional manner and according to the quality criteria set out in the European Peer Review Manual. The training followed the European Peer Training curriculum that had originally been developed in an earlier project and had subsequently been adapted to VNFIL in the current project. The training covered all phases of the Peer Review and put special emphasis on the quality of the Peer Review process and the professional role and tasks of the Peers. It is described in detail in a separate document.³ The training also included an international Workshop with Austrian experts (afternoon of June 15)⁴ and an extensive planning phase for the upcoming pilot phase.

Upon completion of the training, all participants received a European Peer Training Certificate from EPRA and were included in the European Peer Register.

A detailed agenda, a powerpoint presentation and other material were made available for further trainings on the national level.



European Peer Training, June 2016, Vienna

23 people participated in the European Peer Training (of which one person was the trainer and one person participated only partly).⁵ The majority of the active Peers had thus undergone the same training (see also below). Since most participants had multiple functions in the pilot phase, this also meant that there were 1 to 2 people present from every reviewed institution (at least one per institution). 3 participants of the European Peer Trainings did not participate in Peer Reviews afterwards.

³ Gutknecht-Gmeiner, Maria (2018): Peer Training Programme for the Project „Peer Review VNFIL Extended“, Vienna.

⁴ Workshop “Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning (VNFIL) in a European Perspective. Exchange of Experiences and Peer Review as an Instrument to Stimulate Quality Development” organised with support of the Chamber of Labour. 39 Austrian and international participants.

⁵ The attendance list thus shows 22 participants.

National Training Netherlands, October 2016

A national training was carried out on October 5th and 6th, 2016, in the Netherlands. The training was fully documented. It dealt with the most important elements of Peer Review. The second day was used to prepare the first Dutch Peer Review (Libereaux, November 2016).

12 People, among whom all Dutch Peers who became active in the pilot phase, took part in this training. Three Dutch Peers thus had two training experiences – on the European and the national level. The training also involved further people who were not directly involved in the pilot phase.



Dutch Peer Training, October 2016

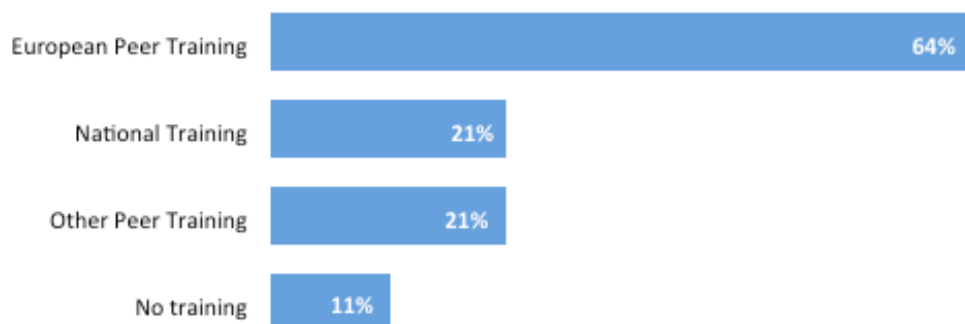
Other forms of support

Other forms of support came mainly from the coordinating body (see above: 3.1. Organisation of Pilots) and through mentoring/learning activities between partners (cf. Mentoring Report).

3.5.2 Participation in trainings and other forms of support

Monitoring data and the responses from the Peer Survey show that almost all Peers underwent some sort of training.

Figure 13: Participation in (types of) Peer Trainings

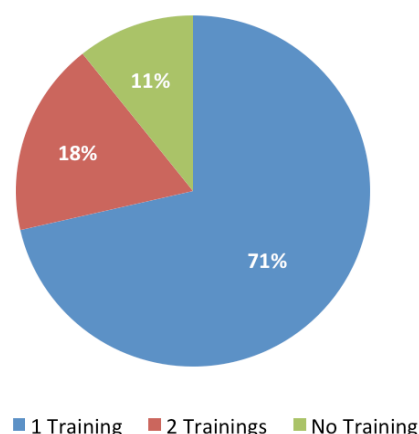


Sources: Pilot Database, Documentation of European and National Peer Trainings; Online Survey of Peers; data merged; N=28; multiple answers possible

Almost two thirds (18 res. 64%) of the Peers had taken part in the European Peer Training. 6 Peers (21%) participated in a National training in the Netherlands, 3 of which had also participated in the European Peer Training. There were seven active Peers who neither participated in the European Peer Training nor the National Training in the Netherlands, four of these had had other Peer Trainings. All in all, 6 people had participated in other Peer Trainings previous to the current project, two of which had taken part in the EuroPeerguid training, which followed the same basic quality standards and curriculum.

Three Peers had received no training at all (11%), but they did receive other forms of support. The rest had at least 1 Peer Training (71%) or even two (18%), most of which participated in the European Peer Training in June 2016 in Vienna. This shows a comparably very high level of training of Peers.

Figure 14: N° of Peer Trainings per Peer

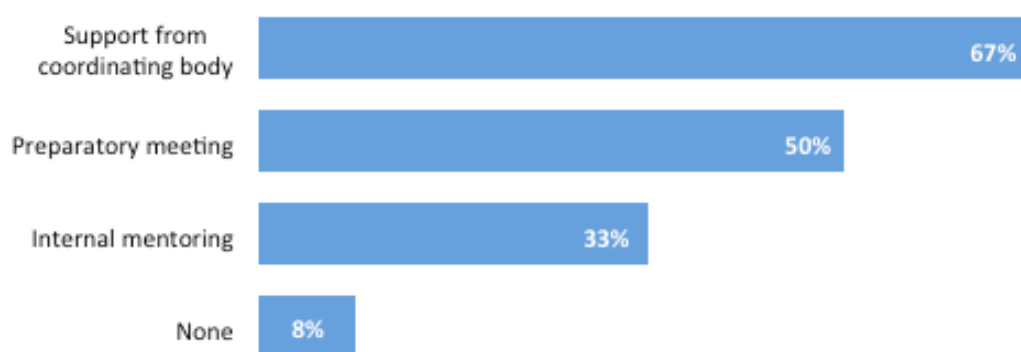


Sources: Pilot Database, Documentation of European and National Peer Trainings; Online Survey of Peers; Data merged; N=28

The most common and most important form of support for Peers was support from the coordinating body (2/3), followed by preparatory meetings (50%) with the other Peers in their team, 4 of which mentioned doing it over Skype. In 2 of these cases, the VNFIL provider and/or the facilitator were involved. The coordinating body received support from the European Peer Review Association.

Internal mentoring was reported as a form of support for a third of the Peers (all of which worked in an institution that was also being reviewed). Only two Peers (8%) had not received any further support during the pilot phase, they had, however, participated in the European res. Dutch Peer Training.

Figure 15: Other forms of support for Peers
(multiple answers possible)



Source: Online Survey of Peers (N= 24, multiple answers possible)

Except for the Lithuanian VNFIL provider (who was, however, supported by the Lithuanian project partner), all reviewed institutions had staff trained during the European Peer Training. 9 of the 11 providers (82%) had support from the coordinating body; 4 did some internal mentoring/mutual learning activities during the preparatory phase (see also → Mentoring report) and 4 providers mentioned having had a preparatory meeting. Altogether, all providers received some kind of support; 54,5% received more than one form of support, 2 on average.

3.5.3 Feedback on trainings and support during preparatory phase

Feedback on European Peer Training

The European Peer Training was considered either “helpful” (38,5%) or “very helpful” (61,5%) by all 13 Peers who answered this question.

Providers were a little less satisfied – but the training was also not geared towards them, but to the Peers. Still, almost all providers (91%) found the European Peer Training either “useful” or “very useful” as well, except for one who found it “not so useful”, the reason being that the staff of this provider were already very experienced.

Table 16: Feedback to European Peer Training

How helpful?	Peers	Providers
Very helpful	61.5%	50%
Helpful	38.5%	40%
Not very helpful	--	10%
Not helpful at all	--	--

Source: Online Survey of Peers (N=13)

Online Survey of Providers (N=10; one provider did not send staff to the European Peer Training)

Being taken through all the steps of the Peer Review and/or practicing them in simulations/exercises were mentioned as particularly helpful aspects. 5 participants (out of 9 who commented on what they missed or what should be changed) expressed the wish for even more practical examples/case studies. One Peer commented: „I missed information on how to write a Peer report. The format provides a lot of information, but does not provide any examples. [...] I think it would be a good idea to add 'writing the Peer report' to the training (mainly the part where you describe your findings, the rest is pretty clear).“ Getting to know the other Peers was also a positive aspect of the European Peer Training (as intended).

The (mostly activating and experience-oriented) training methods used were considered either helpful (one third) or very helpful (two thirds) by the Peers.

The English language affected participation for 5 participants in some instances, the rest (12) experienced no problems at all.

Feedback on and other support (including National Training in the Netherlands)

13 Peers also gave feedback to the other support (including the Dutch national training): the support they received was rated either “helpful” (38,5%) or “very helpful” (53,8%) by all participants but one, who rated it “not helpful at all” but did not further comment on their rating. Comments in the Peers Survey suggest that for some participants, a little more time for further elaboration and practice would have been helpful (especially for those who had not been in the European Peer Training), but overall satisfaction seemed high.

3.5.4 Level of “preparedness” of VNFIL providers and Peers

91% (10 out of 11) of providers rated their institution as “well prepared” or “very well prepared” for the Peer Review. The one institution that felt “not so well” prepared answered that this was due to conducting the first Peer Review in the project.

Providers felt that Peers were well prepared (45,5%) or very well (54,5%) prepared for their task. The Peers themselves felt slightly less prepared (44% very well prepared and 44% well prepared) than indicated by the providers⁶. But only 3 Peers felt “not so well prepared”, two of which were new to Peer Review, and had some experience but had to “jump into” the first Peer Review in the role of facilitator (and actually felt better prepared when first active as Peer later on). One response pointed out that level of “preparedness” also has to do with how much time and energy the Peers themselves invested in the preparation of the Peer Visit (by reading and analysing the Self-Report, preparing the Visit etc.).

Table 17: Level of “preparedness” of the Peers

How well prepared were the Peers?	Perspective of Peers		Perspective of Providers	
	Nº	%	Nº	%
Very well	11	44	6	54.5
Well	11	44	5	45.5
Not so well	3	12	--	--
Not well at all	--	--	--	--

Sources: Online Surveys of Peers (N=25) and Providers (N=11)

3.6 Preparation of the Peer Review (Phase 1)

3.6.1 Preparation of the VNFIL Providers

Tasks of preparation of the Peer Review were clearly distributed at the VNFIL Providers as the open answers of the survey show. The main preparation work had to be done by the Peer Review Facilitator. Mostly s/he worked closely with a team where e.g. the manager or the quality manager was involved. S/he was responsible for doing the agenda, writing the self-report with definition of the questions and the choice of interviewees. Several people were involved in the preparation, especially the director in drawing up the self-report. For the concrete preparation of the Peer Review meetings were held with the persons involved. So topics and questions of the counsellors were considered in the self-report.

As many as possible were informed about the activities within the institution, above all the counsellors and assessors. Information took place in different forms like presentations in den regular team meetings or via e-mail.

3.6.2 Self-Report

All Self-Reports followed the prescribed format. Peers were asked in the questionnaire if the Self-Report had been a good basis for the Peer Review (i.e. if it was understandable and provided all relevant information); 60% answered “yes”, 40% answered “partly”; no one answered “no”.

The qualitative answers showed that some Self-Reports were more, some less meaningful for the Peers: Some analyses were not very extended, so the Peer Team had to ask questions which could have been answered already in the Self-Report; in some cases, the report was delivered very late (or even too late) to be useful for the Peers in the preparation of the Review. It was stated in interviews that the Self-Report should include more detailed description of the provider’s VNFIL process or a

⁶ This is a phenomenon that has been observed also in previous Peer Review pilots, in their self-assessments Peers tend to be more critical than the providers.

description of the roles of involved persons in VNFIL-processes. The qualitative answers show that the Peers realised during the experience how important the Self-Report is (cf. also Manual) and that it should be written in a way to cater to outsiders who do not know the institution or the national setting. As always, there were some who wanted more detail and others who thought the report should be shorter.

The extent and the content of the Peer reports was very various. You could really tell that some providers made a lot of effort and that some providers did not have time to prepare the [self] report. One of the reports was a one-on-one copy from another provider. Most of the time, there were some questions after reading the Self-Reports. During a Skype meeting before the visit, these questions were always answered by the facilitator. In general, I noticed that the 'simple stuff' is forgotten by the facilitator. Just because (s)he is very in to the process, and forgets to mention the small things that are very crucial for the Peers to understand the process. A good and complete Self-Report is very important, especially when it concerns transnational Peer Reviews. Without a good Self-Report and a good description of the VNFIL-provision in the particular country, as a Peer Team, you need a lot of (valuable time) to understand this and be able to carry out a good Peer Visit. (experienced Peer and Facilitator)

3.6.3 Preparation in the Peer Teams

Several partners emphasised in the interviews and at the workshop that joint preparation in the Peer Team was very important. It was confirmed as good practice that the team meets in the afternoon of the first day of the stay to discuss the Self-Report and to prepare interviews. At this point of time, the tasks must be divided as well. In addition, intensive exchange by e-mail and Skype meetings were used for preparation before the Peer Visit. It was identified as best practice for the Peer Teams to work out the interview questions in advance so there is less time pressure on the team immediately before the Peer Visit.

The findings of the partner workshop also confirmed that a training in Peer Review for all prospective Peers is a prerequisite for a successful Peer Review. Peers must be able to conduct interviews, analyse, draw conclusions and write a report about the findings.

As required by the Manual, the Peer Visit agenda should be discussed in advance between provider and Peers so that they can make some suggestions for improvement.

3.7 Peer Visit (Phase 2)

3.7.1 Peer Visit Agendas

The structure of the agendas of the Peer Visits largely followed the recommendations of the Peer Review Manual; most adapted the model agenda from the Toolbox. The Peer Visits only varied slightly in length, following the experiences of the project EuroPeerguid-RVC the visits took two days (or almost two days). The intensity of the Peer Visits however varied with 4 Peer Reviews having fewer than 10 data collection sessions, and the others up to 12 or even 14 sessions.

Table 18: Peer Visit Agendas: Number of sessions, number of interviews with different interview groups

Peer Visit			Nº of interviews							Other (e.g. Presentation)	Observations	Tour premises	Document analysis	Total nº of sessions	Overall time for analysis (hours)	Quality Areas
Code	Duration days	Preparation days	Management/ coordinators	Counsellors/ Assessors (Trainers)	Candidates	Former candidates	Other stakeholder	Other staff	Nº of interviews							
16_01_NL	2	0,25	2	3	1	0	2	4	12	1	1	0	0	14	4,5	4; 5
16_02_AT	2	0,5	3	2	1	2	1	0	9	0	1	1	1	12	6,25	6; 1
17_03_LT	1,75	0	2	2	?	1	0	0	5	1	1	1	0	8	5,5	1; 7
17_04_FR	2	0	2	2	?	1	1	0	6	0	0	1	0	7	3	1; 5
17_05_PT	2	0,5	2	7	2	0	0	0	11	0	0	1	0	12	7	4; 7
17_06_AT	2	0,25	4	0	2	0	0	1	7	3	0	1	1	12	5,75	3; 5
17_07_AT	2	0,5	2	2	2	2	2	0	10	0	1	1	0	12	6,75	1; 2
17_08_PT	2	0,16	2	7	2	0	0	0	11	0	0	1	0	12	6,75	4; 7
17_09_AT	2	0	2	5	2	0	0	1	10	0	0	1	0	11	6	1; 2; 5
17_10_NL	1,75	0,25	2	1	?	1	0	2	6	1	0	0	1	8	4,5	7; 9
17_11_SK	1,75	0,4	1	1	2	1	1	1	6	2	0	1	0	9	0	1; 5
Average	1,9	0,2	2,2	2,9	1,3	0,7	0,6	0,8	8,5	0,7	0,4	0,8	0,3	10,6	5,1	2,1

Source: Peer Review VNFIL Extended Pilot Database, information from pilot documentation, esp. Agendas, Peer Review Reports

Inclusion of stakeholders

An analysis of the Peer Visit Agendas shows that the relevant stakeholder groups were by and large included in the Peer Visits. A very positive result is that partners also managed to involve former candidates. In one case, an online survey on the Peer Review topic was carried out with former candidates before the Peer Visit and the results were made available for the Peers.

There are, however, some Peer Visits, for which the official agenda showed no interviews with candidates and in one instance also not with practitioners. During the partner meeting in Bratislava, partners pointed out that in fact these groups had been included (e.g. through an interview taped before the Peer Visit). Partners were asked to furnish further information, but to no avail. With data missing, there can be no final assessment on the question of full inclusion of candidates from the document analysis. Yet the feedback from Peers and providers in the survey suggest that by and large candidates were involved sufficiently (see below).

Data collection and time for analysis

The most frequent data collection method was interviews, many of them with one interviewee or only a very small group of interviewees. In some cases, staff members of the providers gave presentations. In at least 4 cases observations took place and in 3 cases also a document analysis.

There was more time allotted to analysis than in the EuroPeerguid-RVC project with the Austrian and Portuguese agendas clearly in the lead, while in the Netherlands and in France time for analysis does not seem as important. Perhaps we also see cultural preferences in this respect.

All VNFIL providers answered in the questionnaire that the Peer Visit proceeded as planned in the Peer Visit Agenda. But it was pointed out in the workshop, that in some cases there was too little time scheduled for reflection and for interviews.

Involvement of candidates

The pilot phase showed that it was possible to recruit candidates for the Interviews as part of the Peer Review. Providers were content with the recruitment of candidates for the Peer Visit, the Peers were a little more critical. The results show that all Providers managed to include candidates.

Table 19: Representation of candidates in Peer Visit

How well were candidates represented?	Perspective of Peers		Perspective of Providers	
	Nº	%	Nº	%
Fully represented	9	37.5	5	45.5
Sufficiently represented	15	62.5	6	54.5
Not sufficiently represented	--	--	--	--
Not at all represented	-	--	--	--

Sources: Online Survey of Peers (N=24) and Providers (N=11)

According to the providers it was partly a challenge to find candidates who have time during the day, since most are in employment. It is therefore necessary to show flexibility and fix interviews with candidates in the procedure according to their time possibilities.

Another issue is that usually only content and committed candidates who are committed to the validation process are available for interviews. This, however, does not promote a balanced view of the validation offer. Most important, possible drawbacks and stumbling blocks may not be detected by only talking to the successful candidates.

It would be helpful to meet "dissatisfied" participants, or "drop outs" from the process. It is difficult to organise, but it would prevent potential bias from self-selection. (Online Survey of Peers)

In order to reach those candidates who have (temporarily) discontinued the VNFIL process, a partner institution developed an online questionnaire and sent it to those candidates with a request to return it completed. The questions concerned their experiences with VNFIL. This approach worked well and could be included in the Peer Review Manual to provide the Peers with additional information about this less successful group of candidates. This is, however, a data collection activity that should take place during self-evaluation (as was the case in the example cited).

Another avenue for capturing the experience of the unsuccessful candidates is through the perception of the VNFIL practitioners:

Someone who reports on his own failure is certainly difficult to find. It is always easier to get the successful ones. But through the coaches and the assessors you can approach the difficulties too. They have a good overview of what works and what does not. (Source: Interview)

Openness and protection of interviewees

Protection of anonymity of interviewees can be a problem if interview groups are (very) small as was the case in most Peer Reviews in VNFIL and/or if only one representative of a group of stakeholders is interviewed. The latter should be avoided if possible. Generally, Providers undergoing Peer Review as well as Peers should be made aware of this problem. During the pilot phase, the opinions of individual were given in the Peer Review Reports naming the source. This is principally not admissible and would require official consent by the interviewee concerned. Obviously, the general feeling that everybody is “friends” in an institution obfuscates the fact that this behaviour is a severe breach of professional conduct.

When asked about possible reticence of interviewees (especially staff who might be afraid of repercussions), Peers mostly reported that all interviews had been conducted in a very open manner and that interviewees had been forthcoming. In rare cases, where interview participants had had little information on the Peer Review beforehand, there was some reluctance at first. In these cases, the purpose of the interview and the confidentiality of the interviews were explained and interviewees became more relaxed.

3.7.2 Experiences during Peer Visits

Peers said in interviews and at the workshop that it is very important that all relevant documents are in place at the start of the Peer Visit. In addition to those that were previously prepared like the Self-Report, upon request of the Peers additional documents may be furnished, like an example of a portfolio or an overview from feedback of the candidates. Peers should ask for it in good time so that these documents and also necessary information - e.g. about the proceedings or the interviewees - can be prepared.

In a transnational Peer Team, it is essential to receive information about the education system and the VNFIL system in the country beforehand. This was why country fiches were developed in the project (O1), but it seems that pilot phase participants did not extensively use them. If the provider does not deliver the necessary documents in time or if they do not contain enough information, problems with time and schedule may arise due to open questions and misunderstandings.

It was stressed by the Peers that a constructive working atmosphere between all persons involved is very important, which was the case in all Teams: More than 83% of the Peers rated the cooperation in the Peer Team as “very good”, the rest (17%) as “good”. No conflicts were mentioned.

Table 20: Quality of cooperation in Peer Team

Cooperation in Peer Team	Nº	%
Very good	20	83.3
Good	4	16.7
Some conflicts	0	
Not good	0	
Total	24	100

Source: Online Survey of Peers (N=24)

The good cooperation between Peers is, if nothing else, the result of a good joint preparation. A positive effect is achieved by communicating openly and transparently between Peers and the representatives of the institution. It must be clear from the beginning who will take on which tasks. As confirmed in the interviews, Skype meetings for arrangements in advance and preparation on the first evening serve this purpose. During these meetings, the agenda and interview questions must also be discussed.

According to the project partners, time pressure has a negative effect on the atmosphere and the results of the Peer Visit. Provider and Peers have to take care of the time management during the Peer Visit. If too much time is used, for example, on the interviews, this time will be missing in the important phases of reflection and drawing conclusions, which are paramount. A lack of time for reflection was criticised by several Peers. The problem seems to have been a minor one, though: In the survey, 50% of them said they had experienced some problems because of time pressure, though none of them were serious problems. Mentioned issues were that it took more time than planned, sometimes due to extra translation time. The other 50 % found the time for the Peer Visit sufficient.

The Peers had the experience that it is necessary to work digitally with laptops during the Peer Visit. Therefore, Peers should also be granted access to Wi-Fi and a printer. One Peer described that there was a delay due to an unclear room situation for the interviews.

Some Peer Teams experienced language problems. Over 50% of providers answered in the questionnaire that English/language problems were an issue; though they were not necessarily always problematic. All Peers were fluent in English as well as in their mother tongue. A problem in this context was that some manager or interviewees in the institutions did not speak English. Not only did this cause a lot of time being spent on translations; in some cases, the summarising nature of the translations, which were done by national Peers, also lead to loss of content. Also, spontaneous questions, comments and notes became more difficult. Additionally, consecutive interpreting can be very exhausting for the person in role of the translator. Consequently, some Peers who did not understand the original text did not feel as involved in the interviews. For such cases a timely, direct translation is recommended in the interviews, which means not too much shortening of the original text. Possible language difficulties are to be determined already ahead of the Peer Visit during and have to be taken into account for the scheduling of the Peer Visit.

Peers said that for successful interviews well prepared questions are crucial, as well as the right choice of interviewees. In some Peer Reviews, the questions were compiled at short notice at the beginning of the Peer Visit.

Both the preparation of interview guidelines in advance and comprehensive information of interviewees at the beginning of interviews are part of the Peer Review procedure and were taught during the Peer Training. Balancing the narrative flow of interviews while not losing sight of the main questions of the interview is a skill Peers need to develop for truly exploratory interviews. Peers who do not have the experience are advised to stick more closely to the interview guidelines.

Peers also pointed out that in some cases the interview(s) with the manager(s) is/are so crucial to the Peer Review findings that it/they should be attended by the whole Peer Team. However, this should not be generalised since it will depend on the concrete situation and the working approach of the Peer Team, which can have more or less distribution between Peer Tandems.

At the end of the Peer Review, a presentation of the results is to be planned together with the provider. It is important that this presentation is scheduled by management and that other relevant employees like a counsellor or the quality manager are present as well.

In the experience of the Peers, this presentation fulfils two main functions: First, it is a motivation for Peers to present the results of the analysis in mutual appreciation. Secondly, the reviewed institution can use the results and the process of implementation can begin.

3.8 Peer Review Report (Phase 3)

3.8.1 Feedback session and usefulness of feedback

63.6% of providers found the feedback they received in the feedback session and the Peer Review Report “useful”; the other 36.4% found it at least “partly useful”.

3.8.2 Timeliness of reports

Result orientation and good cooperation in Peer Team during the visit is a prerequisite for a solid feedback session during the visit and a meaningful Peer Review Report.

Some Peer Review Reports were delivered after the due date, but all were delivered before providers had to fill out the questionnaire.

3.8.3 Writing the “Peer Review Report”

The writing of the Peer Review Report was seen as a key element in completing a Peer Visit. However, some Peers experienced problems writing the report.

One particular problem was that in some Peer Reviews it was difficult to deal with the report structure which focuses on Quality Areas. This was due to the fact that the Peer Review process often veered from the original Quality Areas and/or that findings were related to more general issues and touched upon more than one Quality Area. In addition, in many Peer Reviews a lot of emphasis was laid on providing direct recommendations and advice for the reviewed institution (which is not a common part in a European Peer Review). It was therefore discussed in the project team to expand the Peer Review Report and add (sub)chapters for general feedback and recommendations/advice. Since this is, however, not a constituent part of the Peer Review and would mislead future users in believing that giving general feedback and providing advice is a mandatory task it was decided to leave the form as it is. In future rounds of Peer Reviews it could, however, be pointed out that the form can be adapted, if necessary, as long as the core parts are retained. In the end, experienced report writers will find a way of incorporating all important information.

Another suggestion was to provide yet another guideline on how to write a Peer Review Report. Yet, the report form already provides ample guidance and it is questionable whether lacking report writing skills can be built by providing such a guideline. In the end, this feedback as well as information on the reporting processes for some of the Peer Reviews points to selecting Peer Teams more carefully and making sure that at least one member has sufficient experience in report-writing. The suggestion to schedule more time during the Peer training to discuss the writing of the Peer Visit report can be heeded in future trainings. It will, however, not remedy the situation of lack of expertise in the Peer Team if it does not include an intensive (and time-consuming) practical exercise in report writing. This in turn would necessitate simulation of an entire Peer Visit and report writing (Phase 2 and 3 of Peer Review).

3.8.4 Peer Consulting

Peers had engaged in a considerable amount of consulting – trying to be as helpful as possible and answering “evaluation questions” of providers asking for advice on “tricky” problems. This was for the most part beyond the scope of a Peer Review (see above). During the pilot phase, ways for dealing with this situation developed with the help of the coordinating body – delineating the boundary between the kind of advice or “suggestions” Peers were able to furnish and the requests for consulting that Peers could not provide. In future Peer Reviews it should be (even more) highlighted that specific recommendations (consulting) are not the aim of a Peer Review (which is an evaluation). Instead the reviewed institution should find its own solutions to problems – and not pose evaluation questions that are impossible to answer in a Peer Review.

3.9 Putting plans into action (Phase 4)

In the survey, 90.9% of the providers stated that they will act at least partly on the feedback received (including 4 providers who said would act on almost all feedback). Only one institution answered not acting upon feedback, the reason given was not having received any feedback during the meeting but only with the report – so this answer clearly resulted from a misinterpretation of the survey question.

The results of a Peer Review are findings on different sub-aspects of the chosen Quality Areas. Which topics are quickly implemented in the institutions depends on whether or not they are urgent or silent questions. Some cannot be implemented immediately due to missing structural requirements. However, there are some examples of findings that were quickly implemented, in particular when they were in the realm of the VNFIL professionals and did not touch upon larger structures:

- The recommendation to prepare a set of standard keywords in the context of labour market policy or in the context of a company for using it during validation or competence assessment.
- Another recommendation that has been implemented concerns the sustainable effect of the candidate's validation: So that the participants should also later be reminded of their competences the participants writing e-mails to themselves during the validation that they receive at a later point in time.
- In one case, it was realised that the portfolio should not only be used as a tool for validation, but that it should also be usable for preparing candidates' curriculum vitae
- In another case, an open problem from a previous evaluation process was solved: This question was why many candidates do not complete the validation. As a result of the Peer Review, a closer support for the participants and an optimised schedule will be offered.

In addition to the implementation of concrete measures within the institutions, the project also allowed the exchange of experience, even across borders. In the interviews, the following measures were identified exemplary, that could be transferred concretely:

- It seemed interesting, that in one country exist the role of the editor who formulates the portfolios of the participants in such a way that they become compatible to the National Qualification Framework.
- It was also noticed that the role of initial consultation is very important in one country. The appropriate degrees are identified from a catalogue of 18.000 possible qualifications. In this way, the candidates' competencies and what is possible along the qualification standards are matched.

3.9.1 Communication of results

At the end of each Peer Visit, the Peers presented their key findings to the involved staff of the VNFIL-provider. The feedback was verbally communicated, mostly in the context of a presentation, to the director and the interviewed staff. In some cases, additional members of the staff, who were not involved in the Peer Visit, were present, e.g. the quality coordinator. The other employees were informed about the feedback and a follow-up carried out in different ways of corporate information and communication like websites, newsletters or personal information. In single cases it was not possible that the optimal selection of employees could be informed in the context of the final presentation.

About half of providers had either an extra presentation or invited other staff to the final meeting (or both). Others only shared or published the report (sometimes translated). In three institutions, there was no further dissemination of results within the institution except for sharing it with the director.

3. 10 Cooperation, roles and transnational aspects

3.10.1 Quality of cooperation during Peer Reviews

The online surveys for VNFIL providers and Peers and the qualitative interviews provide information on the quality of cooperation during the whole Peer Review process. Cooperation was generally rated very positively:

All providers answered that cooperation within the institution had been either “very good” (> 60%) or “good”. Regarding the Cooperation between providers and Peer Teams, both sides rated it either “very good” (>60%) or “good” as well. Providers were noticeably (even) more content than the Peers.

Table 21: Quality of cooperation between Provider and Peers

Cooperation between Providers and Peers	Perspective of Providers		Perspective of Peers	
	Nº	%	Nº	%
Very good	9	81,8	14	60,9
Good	2	18,2	9	39,1
Some conflicts	--	--	--	--
Not good	--	--	--	--
Total	11	100	22	100

Source: Online Survey of Providers (N=11) and Peers (N=22)

Cooperation within the Peer Teams was also rated highly positive: 83.3% found it “very good”, the rest found it “good” (see also above). No conflicts were mentioned.

3.10.2 Benefits of multiple participation of Peers and facilitators

Multiple engagements were regarded highly positive by the Peers (85% rated it as “mostly positive”) and no negative side effects were mentioned. Comments suggest that the experience of Peers who had already participated in other Peer Reviews was helpful to the process and to those Peers who did not have any previous experience.

Experiencing both perspectives - in the role as a Peer and as facilitator - was also judged as positive in the qualitative interviews. In particular, it was seen as an advantage if the role Peer is first taken. The insight into the Peer visit process makes it easier to make preparations in the own institution – also on a very practical level:

“Based on our initial experience, I have developed a matrix that was practicable during the subsequent Peer Visits.” (Source: Interview)

A mutual Peer Review (i.e. providers exchange Peers) is not deemed a decisive element of the method, but was rather due to organisational and financial considerations. Thematic expertise of the Peers remains the main criterion for choosing Peers. As a peculiarity of the mutual Peer Review, an interviewee mentioned that there is a special commitment between the institutions and that this raises the motivation and constructive cooperation of Peers and providers and so also the quality of the results.

3.10.3 Lessons learned from national and international cooperation during Peer Review

The Peer Reviews offered the institutions the opportunity to get in touch with other experts in a similar area of work, which was highly appreciated both nationally and internationally: On the national level, Peers gained experience in other educational subsystems; internationally, completely different education systems could be explored. The special feature of Peer Review is to gain very deep insight into the systems. This was mainly supported by personal contact, especially through the Peer Visits, where you intensively deal with detailed questions of the institution investigated.

As transnational participants, the Peers experienced that a close relationship with the visited institution was felt even though they were in a different environment.⁷ The reason was that you already knew a lot about the partner and that you shared goals and work experiences with the institution you visited. This comparability surprised when getting to know other educational subsystems. A visit without cooperation in a Peer Review would not render such a deep insight. However, with regard to transnational Peer Reviews, it is necessary to make the restrictive observation that as an international Peer, you must either have prior knowledge of the foreign education system and the institution you are visiting in order to understand the inner workings of the reviewed institution or your fellow Peers must bring you up to par during preparation time.

In this case the international part was very interesting. But before you can do an international Peer Visit, you have to know about the country, the system and the institution you go to. Otherwise it costs a lot of time really [learning] about that system in the whole country and the system in the institution. It is a lot of information and you need a clear goal with the international partners. (Source: Interview)

3.10.4 Transnational aspects: The importance of international Peers

In the surveys, the transnational aspects were generally rated positively by all VNFIL providers – more than 80% found them positive, the rest “partly positive (with some problems)”. Requirements res. recommendations for including a transnational Peer were

- awareness of language issues (56%),
- sufficient knowledge of national system (33%),
- sufficient funding (22%).

The importance of insight into education systems of the country visited was emphasised also in the interviews (see above).

The opinion was expressed in some interviews, that Peer Review supports the implementation of VNFIL well and in different ways. Especially in a transnational Peer Review, it becomes clear that an international Peer has no conflict of interest and can thus give very open feedback without having to deal with issues of competition. In the view of one partner, working in the foreign language English also creates the necessary distance from everyday business. The internationality also brings with it an “aura of expertise” (those who come from far away must have some special expertise...) that can strengthen the motivation in the institution to take the feedback seriously. You also slip into another role with the journey and leave the focus on your own system behind. The international Peer brings no prejudices to the task, which helps to take a step back and look at the situation in the visited institution with a professional distance.

By contrast, at the national Peer Review, especially in a small country, the selection of Peers must be made carefully. A national Peer is rather part of his/her system and constantly takes into consideration his/her own position within the national system. Cross-connections and relationships are automatically taken into account.

The composition of Teams with two international Peers was generally evaluated positively: It seems helpful to be able to exchange views with another international Peer, especially with regard to the external view of the system. It is also possible in this way that the international Peers split into different tandems during the Peer Visit. From the provider's point of view, bringing in experience from two other education systems and/or VNFIL processes is beneficial. This can only be achieved if the international Peers are not from the same country or are employed in different educational subsystems.

⁷ This has also been a recurring phenomenon in previous transnational Peer Review projects.

4. Effects of the Peer Review

50% of VNFIL providers answered in the survey that there were additional effects of the Peer Review apart from following up on the feedback received. Effects mentioned in the survey were implementation of special interest groups (1 answer), more involvement in policy making (1), organisational learning on quality assurance and new evaluation methods (1), impact on professional development of staff (1) and validation becoming part of the aims of the institution (1).

Additionally, having staff of one's own institution participate in the Peer Review(s) of other VNFIL providers also had additional effects on that institution, because it is a great learning opportunity for the Peers as well.

As a Peer you bring back a lot of implicit and explicit knowledge to your own organisation.

The insight into the validation procedures of other institutions made the view more clear for the possibilities that exist at one's own institution. (Provider)

4.1.1 Institutional „return on investment“ of the Peer Review

The Peer Review method was judged to be beneficial to the institution in several ways. For many institutions, this form of quality development has been a new experience and is regarded a good complement to summative quality assurance procedures. It was seen as a benefit to have specialists in the institution with different perspectives and visions and a view from outside. The study of the specific institutional issues by Peers offered the examined institutions an outside perspective. The institutional self-image could be compared with the external view of the Peers.

Peer Review allows a very deep insight into the visited organisation that cannot be achieved by mere visits or exchanges. The openness and honesty of the Peers and the trusting and collegial relationship are particularly appreciated. The role of Peers is to help the institution develop further (and was also recognised as such) which enhances the usefulness of the Peer Review and its findings. The process of dealing with concrete problems of the work had a motivating and inspiring effect on all participants. Positive feedback from the Peers is perceived as confirmation. Some of the results could be implemented in a concrete way or encouraged a longer-term development. Participation in the European project itself and the opinion of the international Peers is often used in the context of marketing and public relations. As an example of optimal dissemination, it can be mentioned that "Frauenstiftung Steyr" received the "Austrian National Award for Adult Education" for their participation in this project in November 2017.

The Peer Reviews led to various findings within the institutions. Writing the Self-Report as a provider required a critical examination of one's own processes in the run-up to the Peer Review, so the importance of regular self-evaluation became evident. The findings and recommendations of the Peers were an important basis for institutional development. The advantage of Peer Review is that it examines exactly those topics that the institution has chosen to analyse. The learning process was further promoted by taking on the different roles as a Peer and as representative of a provider. This way, one can get to know institutions within one's own area of provision very thoroughly and from the inside. It was possible to compare what is similar, what is different between institutions, and to incorporate this knowledge into one's own institution.

4.1.2 Relevant changes in terms of institutional development since the Peer Review

During the Peer Review, the participating partner institutions mostly discussed those areas where weak points were suspected and the need for change was already evident. The focus of the questions was based on the Quality Areas, also with regard to the delineation of the problem areas. Based on the issues analysed, the Peer Review did not result in any overall structural change in the institution. The purpose of the Peer Review was specially to clarify changes concerning certain issues or to develop different scenarios for change in more detail. In this case, the Peer Review Report serves to underpin the need for changes – also for the management of the institution.

In some organisations, institutional changes were immediately implemented as a result of the Peer Review; in other cases, it will be a long(er) process until changes can actually be implemented. The existence of an effective quality management system will help to follow-through on changes.

In general, Peer Review has a positive effect on the awareness for quality issues and the willingness to reflect one's own work. One example for this was the clarification of roles brought about by the Peer Review in one institution. This was possible because the responsible persons involved as many colleagues as possible in the preparation, implementation and follow-up of the Peer Review.

Yes, we had changes and development. The Peer Review was like a confirmation of the development-plans, that they are o.k. Now we have a new structure of the portfolio-procedures. A few weeks ago we had the official start of the new ones. (Interview)

4.1.3 Good practices in VNFIL during Peer Review transferred to other institutions/countries

The feedback from project partners shows that Peer Review offers good conditions for the transfer good practices of VNFIL to other institutions and / or other countries. The basic idea of validation in the institutions is always the same, but there are differences between systems that often do not allow a complete transfer. In general, it will be sub-aspects that are transferred from one system to another. However, it is often hard to see from where the influences that cause changes in the VNFIL process of the institutions ultimately originated. Effects are most noticeable when changes take place immediately after a Peer Review and are documented in the Peer Review Report.

I saw a lot of nice methods and instruments that are being used. They can be transferred. (Interview)

4.1.4 Lessons learned during the Peer Review in terms of institutional QA and QM

For some partners, the Peer Review method was completely new. For them, the learning effect at the first visits as Peer, but also in the role as a provider was the biggest. Some already knew the method from the national context. The VNFIL providers considered how the Peer Review method for VNFIL could be integrated into the quality management. Peer Review was seen as a good method of quality development, complementing other external evaluations and audits that rather support quality assurance.

Above all, the collegial aspect was highlighted as positive. The effect is different in the Peer Review than in an audit because it is not about having to obtain a certificate. It is also advantageous that, unlike certifications, one or two individual questions can be examined very intensively. Therefore, the Peer Review as a supplement to existing QA procedures makes sense.

Whether concrete activities for implementing Peer Review will follow depends on the extent to which VNFIL is already anchored on the political and legal levels. Concrete discussions with education policy stakeholders about Peer Review for quality development of VNFIL have already been held in the Netherlands. If VNFIL is not yet anchored, Peer Review can help to build up or further develop the sector.

A provider said, that the method of Peer Review is particularly suitable for building up a lot of know-how in a short time, which is especially helpful at the time of establishment of VNFIL. Only when VNFIL is already firmly established, quality assurance methods such as audits seem appropriate. The development-oriented feature of VNFIL could be a motivation for government to provide financial resources for Peer Review for VNFIL, especially in countries where VNFIL is not implemented yet. The findings from VNFIL through Peer Review can also be used on the political level for further planning.

5. General assessment of Peer Review

5.1 Applicability and added value of Peer Review for VNFIL

Peer Review has proved to be very well applicable in VNFIL and has met with very high approval by VNFIL providers and Peers:

- According to the answers of the providers' online survey, 54.5% will certainly conduct a Peer Review again, the others will consider doing so. No provider precluded implementing Peer Review in the future. Only 27.3%, however, plan to do a transnational Peer Review, with its additional challenges, again.
- When asked if they would recommend other VNFIL providers to use Peer Review, 81.8% answered „yes“, the other 18.2% answered „yes, but with reservations“, the reservations concerning time (2 out of 11) and financial resources (1 out of 11).
- (Almost) all Peers recommend becoming a Peer to other professionals, with the exception of one Peer (out of 28), who did not specify any reasons.

Peer Review and VNFIL have parallel goals and processes and are therefore considered to be a “good match”: VNFIL is always about discovering or making aware of competencies of a person. Thus, the person upgrades her or his qualifications and becomes more self-confident. Peer Review has similar goals and effects: It is about evaluating upon request and at eye level and to give feedback in a constructive and appreciative way.

The pilot phase has also shown that Peer Reviews have a positive effect on the continued organisational and professional development of VNFIL providers and Peers.

5.2 Potential of (transnational) Peer Review for the development of VNFIL and quality assurance in VNFIL

The added value of transnational Peer Review for VNFIL is that differences in national and institutional processes become visible. Exemplary aspects can be adopted by other systems that are less developed in terms of VNFIL. For example, if VNFIL is less developed in one country due to unfavourable policy priorities, impulses for development can be gleaned by looking at the practice of those countries and/or providers who are more advanced. These experiences can then possibly also be passed on to the political level.

Because there does not exist an international basic structure for VNFIL yet, it is important that transnational Peer Review supports the development of an international standard at a higher level of VNFIL process: Best practices of all institutions provide an improved standard of VNFIL.

5.3 Further development of institutional quality assurance through Peer Review

In the interviews partners confirmed their interest in continuing to apply Peer Review in their institution. The possibility to combine Peer Review with other already established quality assurance methods is assessed differently. On the one hand, Peer Review is flexible enough to integrate it into institutional quality assurance. On the other hand, the additional expenditure of time and resources is considered an obstacle. Some institutions must meet quality certification requirements (e.g. ISO certificate), for them Peer Review can be an additional activity to mandatory quality assurance. Conducting a Peer Review is especially considered when new issues and developments need to be tackled. The international feature is expected to provide additional perspectives for solving very specific questions. Additionally, the Peer Review is also seen as an opportunity to evaluate quality management systems.

Currently, ISO is compulsory and Peer Review the “free style” section. From the point of view of a partner Peer Review could be integrated into ISO certification so that (some) audits can also be re-

placed by Peer Reviews.⁸ This would offer the opportunity to opt for Peer Review while still complying with ISO, which is a necessity for many educational institutions who need a quality label to be able to compete in public tenders.

5.4 Challenges for implementing (transnational) Peer Review in VNFIL

There are several challenges for implementing Peer Review as a formative external evaluation for VNFIL on the national and international level. Public funding for Peer Reviews is seen by the project partners as the most important requirement.

Also the specificity of the process- and development-orientation of Peer Review was emphasised. This means that the system has to be flexible enough for further development. The question is whether there is (still) a need for this kind of evaluation procedure if VNFIL is (more) established, especially when Peer Review is competing with other (obligatory) standardised audits.

From an international perspective it should be remembered, that legal anchoring is not implemented in every country. In those countries increased efforts are needed for developing and implementing VNFIL. Peer review could make an important contribution to this – if funding for a coordinating structure and for transnational activities is available.

⁸ Actually, research on Peer Review showed that a strand of Peer Review originally developed from special types of second-party audits or “dress-rehearsals” for third-party audits in ISO (cf. Gutknecht-Gmeiner 2008).

6. Feedback to Manual and Toolbox and recommendations for finalisation

6.1 Manual

Compliance with the Manual is the precondition for a good Peer Review – this was also corroborated by partners in their feedback.

The Manual was evaluated positively by the partners and deemed suitable for the evaluation of VNFIL. All Peer Reviews by and large followed the procedure as laid down in the Manual. The Meta-evaluation revealed only problems that were due to deviations from the Manual.

Nevertheless, whereas some said that no adjustments needed to be made, some proposed a “simplification” of the Manual in order to meet the time and resource constraints of the people involved in the Peer Review. Others asked for more detail and more practical instructions and examples. With these conflicting expectations, it was decided during the Bratislava that the careful balance of a concise but sufficiently detailed description of Peer Review in the Manual should be maintained. Partners are free to add checklists and flowcharts to support inexperienced colleagues.

6.2 Quality Areas

The Quality Areas and the indicators were used successfully during the pilot phase, there were no indications of problems. The overall assessment was that they were well-suited to structure the Peer Review and that they help to focus on important issues:

- 79.2% of Peers found the Quality Areas and outcomes/indicators for VNFIL providers either suitable or very suitable in the current format. 20.8% found them not so suitable, all of which mentioned that the Quality Areas are too long and detailed and "try to achieve everything, incorporate everything". Suggestions were to either downsize the Quality Areas or to create an additional overview (which, in fact, already exists).
- Over 90% of the participating VNFIL providers found the Quality areas and outcomes/indicators for VNFIL providers in the current format either suitable (63,6%) or very suitable (27,3%).

That the structure of the Quality Areas follows the process of VNFIL was highlighted as a particularly positive aspect. They were used to reflect on the different phases of the validation process and to identify those areas that should be considered in the Peer Review. The reporting of outcomes, examples of criteria and sources of evidence facilitated the writing of both the Self-Report and the Peer Review Report. The Quality Area “Quality Assurance” (now “Quality Management”) was misinterpreted by some partners.

The Quality Areas are so comprehensive that the institution can pick out aspects of current interest and to take into account the stage of development of VNFIL in the institution. The breadth also offers the opportunity to closely examine different areas in successive Peer Reviews.

Since the Quality Areas must be kept comprehensive in order to 1) cover the whole VNFIL process and 2) be applicable across countries and requests for changes were contradictory it was decided during the Bratislava to keep the Quality Areas as they are – with some improvements to be made in the formulation of the Quality Area on Quality Assurance to prevent further misinterpretations.

6.3 Toolbox

The Toolbox was considered very good and helpful. Partners appreciated that tools were flexible enough but clear when it comes to giving guidance for their work. Two forms (Gender Mainstreaming tool, Quality Area Assessment Form) were not used but as recognised useful for the Peer Review. Especially the Gender Mainstreaming Checklist was seen as a necessity for a European project.

Critical feedback to the toolbox largely oscillated between the forms being “too detailed” or “not detailed enough” so that, overall, the tools seem to strike a good balance between the two extremes.

No comments were made on the redundant basic information in the Initial Information Sheet to the Self-Report and Peer Review Report which is necessary for maintaining a satisfactory level of information in all documents. It seems that the information on the possibility of copy-pasting identical information from one form to the next was passed on successfully during training and through direct advice.

In some instances, partners changed forms that were only supportive documents and not mandatory. This was the case especially for the interview minutes – Peers modified the form or found different ways of documenting interviews. This is in line with the European Peer Review procedure as long as sufficient documentation is taking place. The same holds good for the model Peer Visit Agenda, which can be adapted or supplanted by own forms. The Quality Areas Assessment form was not used at all. It seems that its purpose as an instrument of preparing the central part of Peer Review Report during the Peer Visit (without the additional chapters and information asked for in the Peer Review Report) was not clear.

Partners suggested incorporating the Gender Mainstreaming form into the Self-Report in order to stress its importance from the very beginning. This would, however, result in a much more comprehensive and time-consuming report – which is contrary to the aim of making documentation as “light” as possible. Central information on gender splits (candidates/participants; staff) is already included in the Self-Report form.

The meta-evaluation tool was rated as enriching since it promotes the exchange among Peers and partners. It was also deemed very useful for the coordinator who needs to write the report.

The difficulties Peers experienced in filling out the Peer Review Report have been discussed above. No changes are needed since the problems did not lie in the report structure but rather in the way the Peer Review was set up and/or developed. In some instances, Peer Teams or Coordinators also missed crucial analytic and report writing skills. It is, however, recommended to point out to future users that the report structure can be adapted (e.g. adding a general feedback section or a section for recommendations, if necessary) as long as the core parts remain.

In the same vein it could be helpful to point out more candidly

- which parts of the toolbox are mandatory for ensuring a high-quality and transparent Peer Review – namely the Initial Information Sheet, the Self-Report, the Peer Review Report as well as the “Groundrules for Peers” as a fundamental set of rules governing the Peer Review process from the perspective of Peers –
- and which forms and checklists provide help and guidance but may also be changed or in some cases also omitted or replaced (all others).

7. Documents and (re)sources

7.1 Basic documents

European Peer Review Manual for VNFIL

Peer Review Toolbox for VNFIL

Peer Training Programme

7.2 Documentation of pilot phase and monitoring data

Peer Review pilot database: overview of pilot Peer Reviews

Peer register containing all information from Peer applications

Documentation of trainings: Training programmes in English (aims, contents, agenda/schedule, methods), list of participants

Peer Review documents (Tool-box)

- Self-reports
- Peer Review Agenda
- Meta-evaluation of Peers
- Peer Review Report
- Other documentation of Peer Review, if possible: presentations, documentation of feedback session, interview and observation guidelines, interview protocols, photos

7.3 Reports and publications

Gutknecht-Gmeiner, Maria (2008): Externe Evaluierung durch Peer Review. Qualitätssicherung und -entwicklung in der beruflichen Erstausbildung. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag. (Doctoral thesis, University of Klagenfurt 2006).

Sprlak, Tomas (2017): Synthesis Report on VNFIL in partner countries, Bratislava.

Gutknecht-Gmeiner, Maria; Kroiss, Sophie (2018): Mentoring Report for the Project „Peer Review VNFIL Extended“, Vienna.

Gutknecht-Gmeiner, Maria (2018): Peer Training Programme for the Project „Peer Review VNFIL Extended“, Vienna.

Gutknecht-Gmeiner, Maria (2018): Peer Review Label and Quality Assurance for Peer Review, Vienna.

7.4 List of interview partners

Burtscher Klaudia, Frauenstiftung Steyr

Fuchs-Weigl Franz, AK Salzburg

Gonçalves Susana, Citeforma

Guimaraes Teresa, Citeforma

Osterhout Kees van, Vigor Transitions

Paulus Christina, BOKU

Smit Marloes, Libereaux

Wagner Giselheid, WBA

7. 5 Participants reflection workshop

All participants of the project meeting in Lisbon

Erik Kaemingk
Marloes Smit
Madeline Eichner
Eva Brazdilova
Francesca Operti
Franz Fuchs-Weikl
Heidi Wagner
Christina Paulus
Inga Puisa
Isabel Miguel
Michaela Freimüller
Sabine Fischer
Susana Goncalves
Teresa Guimares

7.6 Additional tables

Table 22: Peers per Peer Review

Code	VNFIL provider	Peers		
		National	Trans-national	Total
16_01_NL	Libereaux BV, The Netherlands	3	3	6
16_02_AT	Weiterbildungsakademie (wba), Austria	2	2	4
17_03_LT	Vilnius Vocational Training Centre for Service Business Specialists, Lithuania	5	2	7
17_04_FR	Centre Interinstitutionnel de Bilan de Compétences (CIBC), Bourgogne Sud, France	0	2	2
17_05_PT	CQEP CITEFORMA, Portugal	2	2	4
17_06_AT	University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU), Unit of lifelong learning, Austria	2	2	4
17_07_AT	Frauenstiftung Steyr, Austria	2	3	5
17_08_PT	ISLA Santarém, Portugal	2	3	5
17_09_AT	AK Salzburg/BFI, Austria	1	3	4
17_10_NL	EVC Centrum Vigor, The Netherlands	2	4	6
17_11_SK	Národný ústav celoživotného vzdelávania NÚCŽV, Slovakia	2	3	5
Total pilot phase		23	29	52

Source: Pilot Database

Table 23: Peers: distribution by sex

Sex	Nº Peers	% of total
F	18	64
M	10	36
Total	28	100

Source: Pilot Database and Peer Applications (merged)

Table 24: Peers: distribution by country

Country	Nº Peers	%
Austria (AT)	9	32%
France (FR)	1	4%
Lithuania (LT)	5	18%
The Netherlands (NL)	6	21%
Portugal (PT)	4	14%
Slovakia (SK)	3	11%
Total	28	100%

Source: Pilot Database and Peer Register (merged)

Table 25: Institutional background of Peers

Type of organisation	Nº of Peers	%
VNFIL provider	8	30%
Higher education/research institution	4	15%
Adult education	4	15%
Educational authority	3	11%
Social partners	3	11%
Non-Profit-Organisation	2	7%
Consulting firm	1	4%
Enterprise	1	4%
Vocational education	1	4%
Total	27	100%

Source: Peer Register, N=27

Table 26: Types of Peer Training completed by Peers

Type of Peer Training	Nº of Peers	%
European Peer Training	18	64%
National Training	6	21%
Other Peer Training	6	21%
No training	3	11%

Sources: Pilot Database, Documentation of European and National Peer Trainings; Online Survey of Peers; data merged; N=28; multiple answers possible

Table 27: Nº of Peer Trainings per Peer

Nº of Peer Trainings	Nº of Peers	%
1 Training	20	71%
2 Trainings	5	18%
No Training	3	11%
Total	28	100%

Source: Pilot Database, documentation of Trainings, Online Survey of Peers merged, N=28

Table 28: Previous Quality Assurance Training of Peers

Type of Training	Nº of Peers	%
ISO auditor	7	27%
<i>ISO internal auditor</i>	7	27%
<i>ISO external auditor</i>	2	8%
EFQM assessor	2	8%
<i>EFQM internal assessor</i>	1	4%
<i>EFQM external assessor</i>	2	8%
Other	6	23%
None so far	13	50%
Total	26	100

Source: Peer Register, N=26

Table 29: Review/evaluation skills of Peers (self-assessment)

Expertise in...	excellent	good	fair	basic	none so far
Conducting interviews	12	8	5	1	0
Conducting observations	5	11	6	3	1
Analysing quantitative data	6	6	11	2	1
Analysing qualitative data	9	9	7	1	0
Giving oral feedback	13	9	4	0	0
Writing review reports	8	12	4	2	0
Review work in a foreign language	2	10	5	4	5
Moderating groups	11	10	3	1	1
Conflict management	7	12	4	3	0
Time management	8	10	5	3	0
Scientific evaluations in the area of VNFIL	1	8	2	4	11

Source: Peer Register, N=26

Table 30: Participation of Peers in Peer Review of own institution

Participation in Peer Review of own institution	Nº	%
Yes	16	64
No	9	36
Total	25	100

Source: Online Survey of Peers (N=25)

Table 31: How was the cooperation within your institution in the preparation and conduct of the Peer Review?

Cooperation in Provider	Nº of Providers	%
Very good	7	63,6
Good	4	36,4
Some conflicts	--	--
Not good	--	--
Total	11	100

Source: Online Survey of Providers (N=11)

Table 32: Was the time for the Peer Visit sufficient?

Sufficient time	Nº of Peers	%
Yes	12	50
Overall yes, but some problems because of time pressure	12	50
Serious problems because of time pressure	--	--
Total	24	100

Source: Online Survey of Peers (N=24)