



Concept Note

The Transnational Peer Review Partner Search System

The joint EQAVET NRP-project 2021-2023
with Finland, Croatia, Estonia, and Slovenia.

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Content

Objectives and general requirements	3
Actors.....	4
Current situation	4
How to find transnational Peer Review partners now	4
A survey to the NRPs about the current situation and needs	4
Definition of The Transnational Peer Review Partner Search System	6
Functional requirements	6
Limitation.....	6
Indented use of the data	7
Where is the service located	7
Where is the data collected.....	7
Who collects the data.....	7
Who updates the data.....	7
Resources for data collection	8
The registration authority (service provider)	8
Requirement and data content	8
Search features (data filters)	10
Service instructions, helpdesk	10
Proposal for further action.....	10
More information	11

Concept Note

The Transnational Peer Review Partner Search System

This planning work has been done as part of EQAVET NRP's joint project 2021-2023 where Croatia, Estonia, Finland and Slovenia have promoted the awareness of the peer review method and specially the use of transnational peer review among vocational educational institutions (VET providers) in the project countries.

Objectives and general requirements

Peer review is an excellent tool for developing the quality of VET providers and it also supports self-evaluation. The VET provider's experience from our project is that transnational peer review brings added value to development. In a transnational peer review, at least one of the peers is from a different country than the VET provider being reviewed. Through interaction with VET providers, common EQAVET framework goals can be promoted and implemented.

For transnational peer review to be possible, the VET providers must find a vocational institution familiar with the method and interested in cooperation. The need for a Transnational Peer Review Partner Search System has emerged in our joint EQAVET projects during the years 2019-2023, when we developed and piloted with the VET providers the handbook *European Peer Review Quality Areas and Criteria for Vocational Education and Training*, trained in the method and coordinated the implementation of transnational peer reviews online and onsite between the VET providers from all project countries.

For this Concept Note we have mapped the views of the NRPs and the VET providers on the content of the system.

The goal is to develop an open, online, simple and centralised service from which a VET provider can search for a VET provider from another country as a partner for transnational peer review. The system would serve as the first contact, based on which a VET provider can be found with which the conversation can be continued in more detail.

The system contains information about VET providers that want to cooperate as peers. The system does not contain personal data of peers, only the VET provider's organisation-wide email address and the website address, where you can find more detailed contact information. In addition, some general background information about the VET providers is needed, based on which the search can be targeted.

The service is openly available to everyone, including those VET providers who are not available as peers, but want to use the transnational peer review method and gain experience with it before becoming a peer.

In order for the use of the transnational peer review to become part of the quality management toolbox of the VET providers, the possibilities cannot be based on temporary projects, but needs to be supported by more permanent structures. In our opinion it would be most effective if the service would be developed and owned by the Commission, and maintained, for example, by the EQAVET Secretariat. The EQAVET network would be a natural actor to promote the matter.

The Peer Review Partner Search System promotes the wider use of peer review in vocational institutions and enables the emergence of new partnerships between VET providers. The centralised system offers the opportunity to develop monitoring data and statistics to create a situational picture of how widely transnational peer review is used and how its use is expanding. It also offers the opportunity to add the desired question to the background information of VET

providers to support evidence-based decision-making. This service helps the NRPs to promote EQAVET and the transnational peer review method, which supports the quality assurance of VET across Europe.

Actors

Actor	Role
EQAVET Secretariat	To coordinate system development, its maintenance and technical usage guidance.
NRPs	Nationally to promote the platform, to coordinate the data production and content usage guidance.
VET providers	Produce and use information.

Current situation

How to find transnational Peer Review partners now

During our EQAVET projects the VET providers found a partner assisted by the NRP-project team, but the situation is different outside the project. The VET providers cooperate with each other in many ways and can make use of their own institution-specific international networks, but through these it is not possible to reach all partners available for peer review and especially any who are familiar with the method.

A survey to the NRPs about the current situation and needs

As part of the ongoing project, we sent a survey to all the NRPs. We received responses from 8 countries, in addition to which we have information from 4 countries belonging to our project team, i.e., responses from 12 countries in total.

Questions	Answers
Do the vocational education and training (VET) institutions in your country carry out peer review as a method of external evaluation that supports their quality assurance?	50 % Yes, but we are still in the early phase of use 25 % Yes, we use the method 25 % No, not yet
This question is only for those who answered yes to the previous question: Do your country's VET institutions also carry out peer reviews with foreign VET institutions as an international peer review?	45 % Yes, it is also done as an international peer review (all these are EQAVET project countries) 55 % No it is not yet done as an international peer review
Do you have a system developed for the VET institutions in your country to contact institutions abroad to find a peer review partner?	1 country (Latvia): Yes, we do 11 counties: No, we don't
In your opinion, what information is important in the first contact phase when a VET institution is looking for a suitable international partner for peer review?	• Match of experts and topic of the Peer Review. • Information about the VET system and the quality management system in that country, profile of the VET provider. • Information about the field of VET provider's education (occupations) / educational programmes which the school provides and school specifics

	• Information about the quality management system used by the VET provider in place. Internal QA phase: initial/intermediate/upper phase. • Experiences of school or individuals with Peer Review. • Information about relevant best practice/initiative/pedagogy of VET provider if it already exists. • Information about the possibility to prepare cooperation projects. • An international platform for peer review should be developed with all the people who can be peers, and which should be promoted in all EU member states. NRP should be the institution that manages the information related to this process in the country of origin. Since a peer review also involves expenses for transport, accommodation and organisation of the activity, funds should be identified or organised in online format. • It is important to have first-hand information about a suitable international partner for Peer Review. Information that should be detailed as to allow the right choice and to guarantee trust at the transnational level.
If there was a joint international peer review partner search system, would it help your as NRP to market international peer reviews to the VET institutions?	75 % Yes, I believe it will help. 8 % No, I don't think it would change the situation from now on. 17 % I can't say yet.

Brief information about the systems already in use based on the answers:

Romania: We are piloting the implementation of the peer review methodology in 20 school units from the partner networks of VET schools through the EQAVET-NRP-RO project. We formed a group of about 100 teachers to be peers. The results of this pilot project will be uploaded on the GNAC website (<http://gnac.montivagant.ro>) and we will further develop this concept.

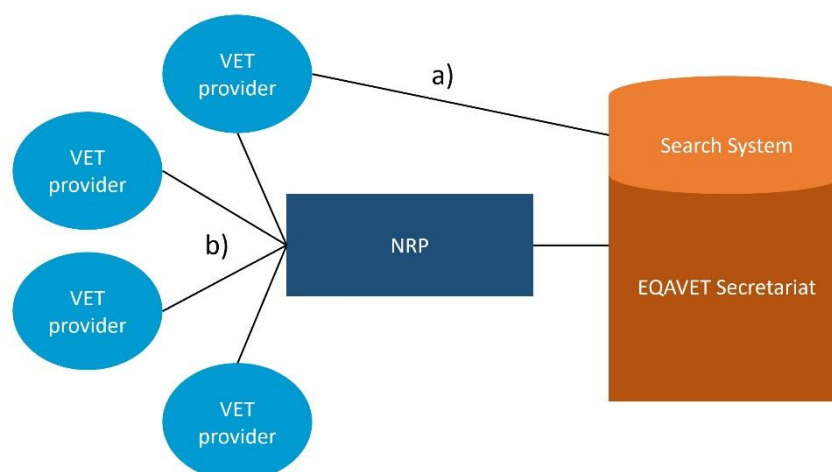
Latvia: In general (not only for peer review), if a VET institution does not have international experience or relationships, it can find information about international projects or about possible partners at the State Education Development Agency (VIAA). VIAA will provide information (www.viaa.gov.lv) for teachers, trainers, VET providers etc. about international/cooperation projects and project partners searching for activities.

Slovakia: We have been introducing a central database of trained/certified peers (evaluators). The institution interested in peer review contact us (the State Vocational Education Institute/Equavet NRP) and we organise the team for peer review according to the profile of the school.

Definition of The Transnational Peer Review Partner Search System

Functional requirements

Updating the data



Depending on the country's own decision and the technical implementation of the system, the educational institutions' information is updated either

- a) directly from the VET provider to the system or
- b) VET providers deliver the information to NRP, which delivers the information to the system.

Since the countries' situations are different, both options are needed.

Functional requirements:

- All functions must be user-friendly, and the system should be simple.
- Updating the data should be easy.
- Only essential organisational information is collected, so the information is more easily kept up to date. More detailed information can be obtained by contacting the VET provider found based on the search.
- Good data search filters are needed. All information compiled into a classification must serve as a search filter, and it is also important to be able to combine filters.
- The result of the search must be able to be printed (for a file) as a neat printout.
- The system needs an electronic information change notification process (e.g. adding a new VET provider, changing existing information, removing the VET provider from the list).
- Use of the service must be open to everyone (i.e., be online service).
- Necessary additional information: VET provider-specific date when the data was last updated, country-specific contact information, who is responsible for the delivery of information content (NRP contact information) and contact information of the technical support service (EQAVET secretariat)

Limitation

The service does not contain personal data, so it does not constitute a personal register. The service only contain public organisation-specific information.

Since people change, expertise accumulates over time and it also depends on the object being reviewed, the best result for finding the right transnational experts is a discussion between educational institutions.

Indented use of the data

VET providers that have experience of acting as peers either nationally or internationally share information about themselves, as do VET providers that want to start using the method as an international peer partner.

The information is used by educational institutions looking for a peer review partner from abroad. Information is used to make contact. A more detailed exchange of information is conducted in one-on-one conversations between educational institutions.

The accumulation of data also tells us about the use and expansion of the peer review method in Europe.

Where is the service located

Due to the nature of the joint search system, the best solution is centralised maintenance. Our proposal is that the service would be owned by the commission and maintained, for example, by the EQAVET Secretariat.

The solution is supported by the fact that

- The EQAVET Secretariat is already the key actor in promoting the quality of European vocational education.
- The Transnational Peer Review Partner Search System supports NRP's work to promote common quality management objectives and the implementation of the peer review method nationally.
- The service must have continuity (not to be project work).
- Information must be open and accessible to everyone.
- Common instructions and guidance on the method can be attached to the system. The system offers one more channel to share information with those interested in the method.
- The centralised system offers the opportunity to develop monitoring data and statistics to create a situational picture of how widely transnational peer review is used and how its use is expanding. This information could also be used by NRPs, e.g., in marketing the method in their own country.
- The centralised system offers the opportunity to develop a feedback feature from the VET providers directly to the EQAVET Secretariat.

Where is the data collected

The information is collected in each country from the VET providers.

Who collects the data

The VET providers or the NRPs collect the data, depending on the decision of the country in question. In both cases, the NRPs support the data collection in their own country. The information is delivered to the service provider as agreed.

Who updates the data

Depending on the implementation of the system: our proposal is EQAVET Secretariat.

Resources for data collection

This need to be evaluated if the project progresses to the planning phase of implementation. In this concept, please note that an effort has been made to minimise the need for updating data by including organisational information that changes less frequently in the service.

Depending on the maintenance solution, resources for data collection are needed from the EQAVET Secretariat, the NRP offices and the VET providers. In addition to data maintenance, resources are needed from the EU Commission for the technical maintenance of the service.

The registration authority (service provider)

The register is owned by the EU Commission.

Requirement and data content

Requirement	Data
It should be possible to contact the educational institution which can cooperate as a transnational peer	The name of the VET provider The address of its website An organisation-wide email address
It is necessary to know the fields of the institution. Several options can be selected.	Fields/programmes of the schools The fields of the vocational institution's qualifications (ISCED): 01 - Education 02 - Arts and humanities 03 - Social sciences, journalism and information 04 - Business, administration and law 05 - Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics 06 - Information and communication technologies 07 - Engineering, manufacturing and construction 08 - Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary services 09 - Health and welfare 10 - Services

It is necessary to know the expertise areas in which the institution can or wish to cooperate. Several options can be selected.	The kind of areas in which the VET provider wishes to collaborate, Expertise in these quality areas: • Management and leadership • Quality Assurance • Management of infrastructure, facilities and finances • Human Resources • Knowledge management, monitoring data • Internal and external relations • Internationalisation • Teaching and learning, pedagogical processes and assessment • Learning environments, including digitalisation • Work-based learning, apprenticeship and a free text field to specify the information next to all: • other or more specific
It is necessary to know the language in which transnational peers can work	English Others (text):____ We use an interpreter
It is necessary to know the target group of the institution's teaching	IVET CVET Both
To organise a peer review event, the host needs information about possible ways to organise the event.	Online Onsite (requires agreement on costs) Hybrid
It is necessary to be able to tell essential additional information (for example: experience with learners with special needs)	Open, free-form text field (max about 500-800 characters).
The system must have a place where instructions and support material can be placed	• The system should include the information on costs to the VET provider (act as host and peer): the countries agree on cost with each other • Guidance documentation on the transnational peer review method and process; maybe best practices • Support material for using the system, e.g., how the VET provider can be included in the register and how the data is maintained • Links to basic template documents • Links to other useful websites
It is necessary to know when the data is updated	The VET provider-specific date

It is necessary to know who to contact to ask technical questions	Country-specific contact information (NRP), where you can ask for more information about the transnational PR method and generally about the search system. Contact information of the technical support service (the EQAVET secretariat).
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The following content wishes were also received as feedback from VET providers and other NRPs, which the project team discussed and decided are not possible or essential in the system:

- *Size of the VET provider*: number of students. Not included because the number does not tell the desired fact due to the different size of the countries.
- *Background information about the VET provider*: school centre or school; public, private, other. Not included because this information is not essential for the peer review of the quality of VET.
- *VET provider's mission, vision and goals*. Not included because the strategy and goals usually includes longer and shorter-term development tasks, which are reviewed in agreed time periods. The information is variable and therefore difficult to use as a filter inside this kind of search system. This information can be included in an optional, free-form text field, if the VET provider considers it essential information about itself.
- *Time period when the VET provider is available as a peer* (e.g., a particular year). Not included because the information is very variable and therefore difficult to constantly update and use as a filter. Usability is always a matter of negotiation.
- *Experience in the peer review method in general* (hosting, acting as a peer, other). Not included because the experience in national or transnational peer review is a good thing, but the purpose is to encourage everyone to cooperate, a process during which they also learn. In the search system, it should be emphasised that the European peer review methodology is used, which you should familiarise yourself with.

Search features (data filters)

- Country
- All information compiled into a classification independently and combined.

Service instructions, helpdesk

NRPs will answer the questions about the content requested by the VET providers of their own country. The EQAVET Secretariat (or other centralised entity) support the technical questions of the system. The system should include instructions and FAQ.

Proposal for further action

The tasks depend on the development decision and the role that is given to the EQAVET Secretariat in it. If the system is developed, a communication campaign is needed in collaboration with the NRPs to raise awareness of the system and options for participating in a peer review.

More information

We are available if you want to discuss the matter further or need other additional information.

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