7th International Academic Conference on Teaching, Learning and Education
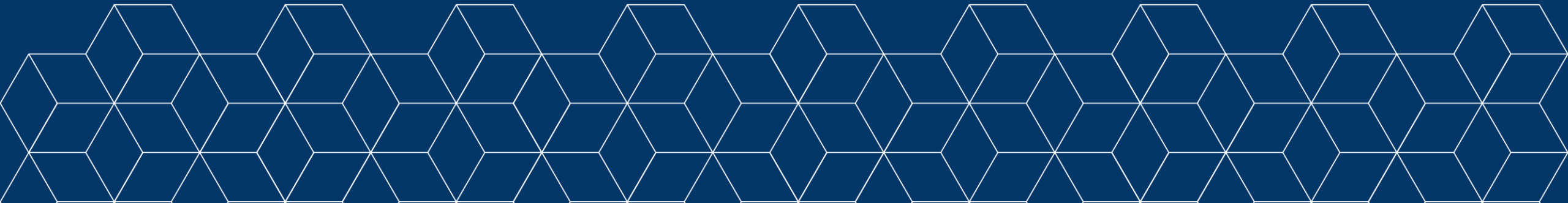
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EQAVET NETWORK

Part 2) EQAVET Peer Review methodology and experimentation

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BACKGROUND

CONTEXT

EXPERIMENTATION

RESULTS

CONCLUSIONS

The Italian EQAVET **National Reference Point** (NRP) was established in 2006 and is placed in **INAPP**, in Rome.

The Italian NRP promotes a **National Board** which includes delegates from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Ministry of Education and Merit, the Regions and the Autonomous Provinces, the Social Partners as well as training experts and representatives of Italian Vocational Education and Training providers.

The Italian NRP encourages the application of the **EU Recommendations** and supports the national process for the implementation and **development of a National QA strategy in VET**, through the dissemination of a technical-scientific QA culture and the circulation of practices and tools for the adoption of a continuous improvement process.

National Reference Point Italiano presso Inapp

ANNO EUROPEO DELLE COMPETENZE

2006: the **Italian NRP was established** in ISFOL with the aim to support QA in VET

2009: the EU **Recommendation on EQAVET** highlights the role of the NRPs

2020: the EU **Recommendation on VET** reinforces the role of the NRPs

2021: the **Italian NRP was newly established** and located in INAPP

2023 end of the **first cicle** of the NRPs activities and start of the second one

European VET Recommendation 2020 – the relevance of Peer Review

A Quality Assurance National Reference Point for vocational education and training brings together all relevant stakeholders at national and regional levels to:

— take concrete initiatives to implement and further develop the EQAVET Framework;

— inform and mobilise a wide range of stakeholders, including Centres of Vocational Excellence, to contribute to implementing the EQAVET framework;

— support self-evaluation as a complementary and effective means of quality assurance to allow the measurement of success and the identification of areas for improvement, including with respect to digital readiness of VET systems and institutions;

— participate actively in the European network for quality assurance in vocational education and training;

— provide an updated description of the national quality assurance arrangements based on the EQAVET Framework;

— **engage in EU level Peer Reviews of quality assurance to enhance the transparency and consistency of quality assurance arrangements, and to reinforce trust between the Member States**.

WHAT IS THE EUROPEAN PEER REVIEW?

"*The European Peer Review methodology as set down in the European context of the EQAVET network is **a procedure for quality assurance** in Vocational Education and Training (VET) systems in various European countries (among which Italy is included). A **Peer Review** is an **external evaluation** carried out by **Peers** (in total 4), i.e., colleagues working in similar institutions or environments, who participate in a **Peer Review visit** at the premises of a Peer Review host which is the organization evaluated by the Peers. For the Peer Review, the evaluated organization will prepare a **Self-Assessment Report**, as basis for the Peers' evaluation, and the Peers will draft the Final Peer Review Report* (Fonzo, Evangelista, 2023)".
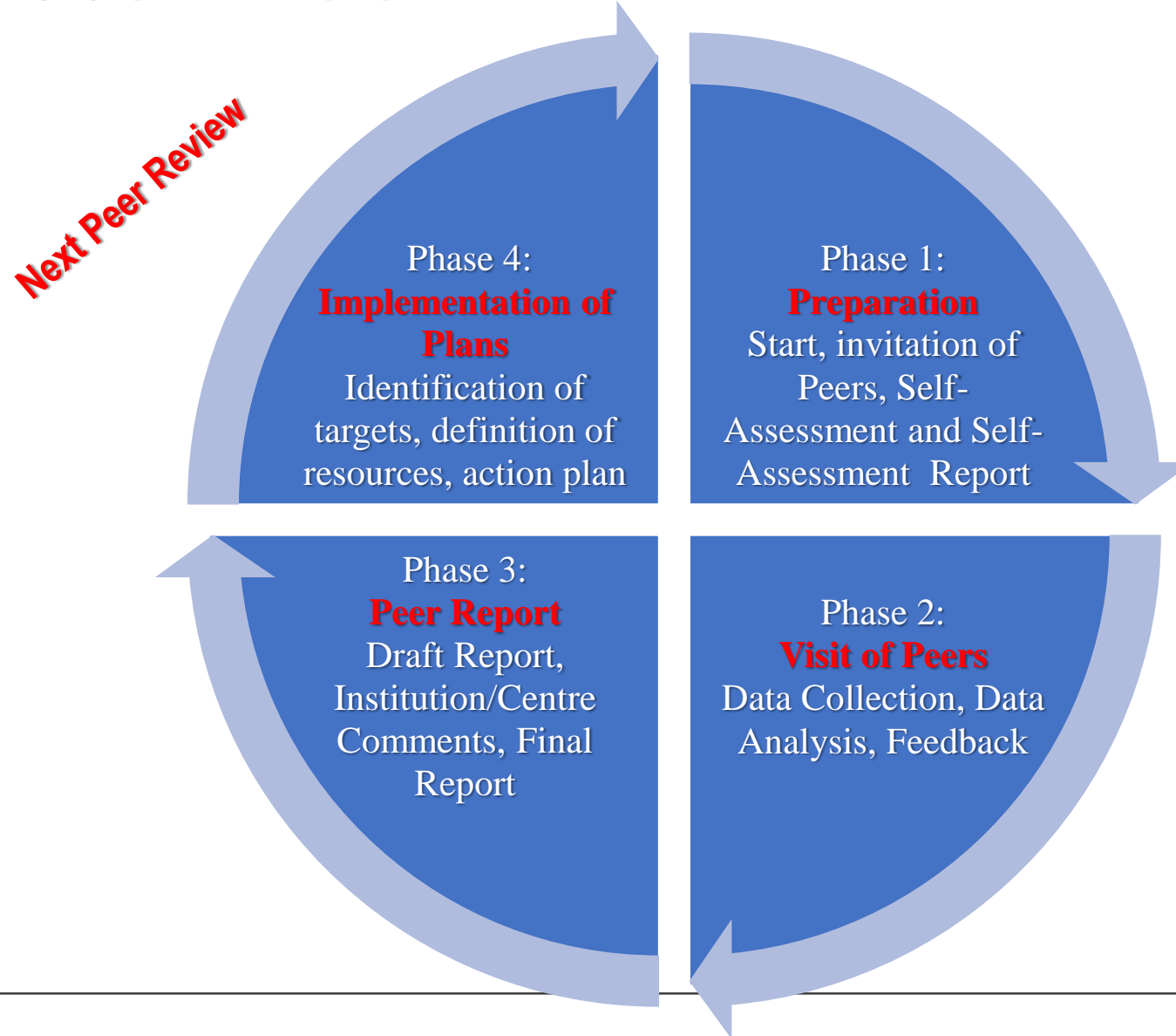
Peer Review has been:
- used as a long tradition in the evaluation of research;
- adapted for use in other areas which call for the assessment and development of professional activities;
- implemented in professional contexts when knowledge and expertise in a particular field of work are essential for an adequate evaluation.
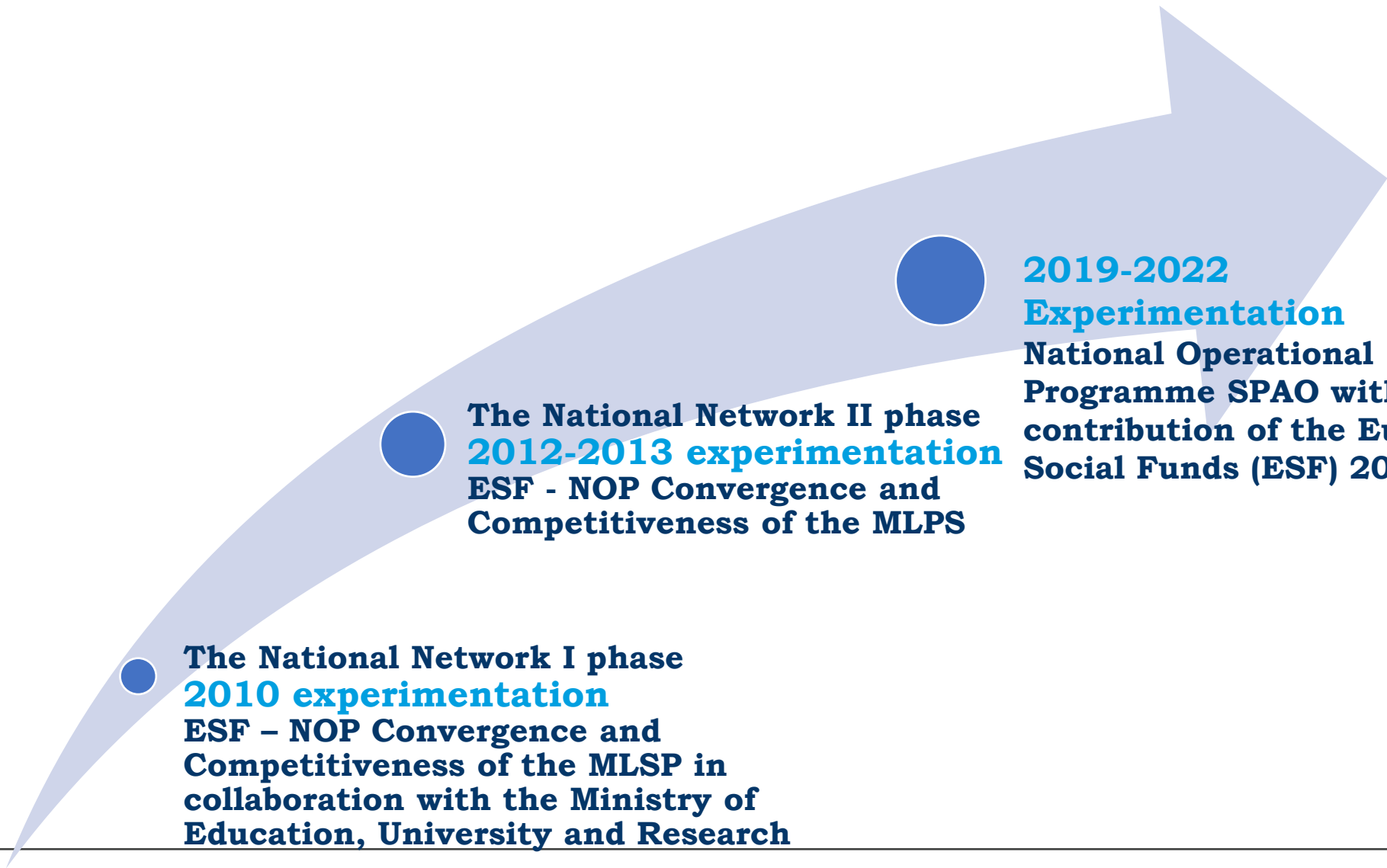
(Source: European Peer Review Association)

THE PHASES OF THE EUROPEAN PEER REVIEW

Next Peer Review

Phase 4:
Implementation of Plans
Identification of targets, definition of resources, action plan

Phase 1:
Preparation
Start, invitation of Peers, Self-Assessment and Self-Assessment Report

Phase 3:
Peer Report
Draft Report, Institution/Centre Comments, Final Report

Phase 2:
Visit of Peers
Data Collection, Data Analysis, Feedback

ANNO EUROPEO DELLE COMPETENZE

NATIONAL EXPERIMENTATIONS

2019-2022 Experimentation
National Operational Programme SPAO with the contribution of the European Social Funds (ESF) 2014-2020

The National Network II phase
2012-2013 experimentation
ESF - NOP Convergence and Competitiveness of the MLPS

The National Network I phase
2010 experimentation
ESF – NOP Convergence and Competitiveness of the MLSP in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, University and Research

QUALITY AREAS

Quality Area 1: Curricula

Quality Area 2: Learning and teaching

Quality Area 3: Assessment

Quality Area 4: Learning results and outcomes

Quality Area 5: Social environment, access and diversity

Quality Area 6: Management and administration

Quality Area 7: Institutional ethos and strategic planning

Quality Area 8: Infrastructure and financial resources

Quality Area 9: Staff allocation, recruitment and development

Quality Area 10: Working conditions of staff

Quality Area 11: External relations and internationalisation

Quality Area 12: Social participation and interactions

Quality Area 13: Gender mainstreaming

Quality Area 14: Quality management and evaluation

(Source: European Peer Review Manual for initial VET, 2007)

The **precondition** for the national experimentation of the Peer Review that allowed the comparison among two systems: education and training, was the **revision of the evaluation tools** used by the European Peer Review methodology.

To this end, to ensure an effective implementation of the European Peer Review methodology in different learning and teaching contexts and to **avoid duplication and redundancy between the different assessment tools** (e.g., ISO quality certification) already applied.

The assessment tools were revised, integrated and modified with the aim of making them consistent with what has already been achieved by Invalsi (National Institute for the evaluation of the education and training system).

The national experimentation included the revision of the following tools:

- gender mainstreaming – checklist

- **Self-assessment Report**

- **agenda template for the Peers visit**

- Interview Report

- fundamental rules for Peers

- Peer meta-evaluation form

- **Final Peer Review report**

- **sheet with the Quality Areas**

The work of integrating the Quality Areas/Indicators of the Peer Review, with main reference to the European methodology used in VET, with the columns of the Self-Assessment Report of the National Evaluation System, was aimed to maintain the structure of the latter in order to facilitate the adoption and dissemination in the education environment.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE EXPERIMENTATION

	Tools of the National Evaluation System	Tools of the European Peer Review	Note
1	RAV - Self-Assessment Report	Self-Assessment Report	The two documents have similar purposes and structures that can be integrated.
2	Column	Quality Area	See above
3	External Evaluation Report	Peers Evaluation Report (Final Report)	
4	Visit Plan	Peers visit agenda	Tools that are already extremely coherent in terms of structure and purpose
5	Guidelines of the evaluator	Rules of work for Peers	
6	School questionnaire + Grid for reading the Context and Process data - before the visit + the Grid for reading the results - before the visit	Initial Disclosure + Background Data Processes disaggregated by gender (Initial Information Sheet + Gender Mainstreaming)	The School Questionnaire already includes all the elements present in the Evaluation methodology

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE EXPERIMENTATION

	Tools of the National Evaluation System	Tools of the European Peer Review	Note
7	Satisfaction questionnaires (teachers, parents, students, ATA staff)		
8	Sheet for observation in the classroom		
9	Grid for conducting the visit	Interview report + evaluation guidelines + Meta-evaluation	
10	Form for identifying improvement objectives	Peer Review Improvement Workshop (Seminar for the definition of the improvement plan)	
11		Peers' Application Form	
12		Peers's Agreement Model	During the National experimentation, it was not considered appropriate to provide for the introduction of a contract at this stage

VET schools and centers were identified based on the following criteria:

- **an almost equal number among schools and vocational training centers,** identified respectively in **6 schools and 8 centers;**

- **a balanced mix of VET schools and centers** between those who have already had experience of Peer Review and those who are new to it;

- **a geographical distribution** such as to ensure the involvement of schools and centers operating in the northern, central and southern areas. To this end, the following Regions were identified: **Puglia, Lazio and Veneto**.

The National experimentation began in September 2019, but at the beginning of 2020 the Covid-19 emergency brought about a halt in activities.
In September 2021, upon the reopening of the school year 2021-2022, the schools and VET centers that had in the meantime withdrawn were replaced.

With the start of the National experimentation, a first training session for Peers was held on 16 and 17 December 2019, followed by 2 hours online in January 2020 (reproduced in 3 editions to facilitate participation). The second training session of the Peers took place on 4 March 2020 with a second part which, due to the closure of the schools during the lockdown, was carried out online in 2 training sessions.

The training of each Peer lasted an average of 12 hours, with a specific dedicated agenda.

At the end of all the training sessions, 69 teachers/trainers from 22 different institutions including schools and vocational training centers were involved.

The visits of the Peers of the national experimentation began in April 2021 and ended in March 2022. **A total of 14 Peer Visits took place according to a specific calendar**.

As required by the procedure, **the Peer visits took place with a daily schedule of 2.5 days**. Due to the difficulties linked to the health emergency, a Peer' visit was held entirely online as it was carried out at a time when the spread of the virus was particularly worrying.

For the evaluation by the Peers, a tool was developed consisting of **a questionnaire submitted to all the Peers**. The action made it possible to identify suggestions and areas for improvement essentially relate to the following points:

- ❑ **the performance of the Quality Areas/Indicators**, the reading of which should be simplified;
- ❑ **the lack of some pre-requisites of knowledge relating to the areas of intervention** (education and training) despite the fact that the relationship between the Peers and the host was fluid and profitable;
- ❑ **the incentives for the digitization of the documents**, providing for integrated documents (to avoid transcribing the same information several times);
- ❑ **the lack, in the online mode, of some aspects of empathy** that arises from face-to-face contact and the ability to check the training environments.

However, the provision of an online Peer Review has allowed for an optimization of time and the possibility of reaching all actors in different places, making it possible to carry out the visit in all its phases.

The experimentation has fully highlighted the opportunities and strengths of the Peer Review methodology, which each of the Peers has directly acted and personally confirmed: **friendly approach, low costs, immediate feedback of meaningful and usable data, sharing of points of view and broadening of the horizons of the organization.**

A theme placed at the center of reflection in the conception and implementation of the project was **the possible cultural and linguistic gap between the world of education and training**, which could have forced the Peers group to a preliminary negotiation of meanings or to a tiring 'simultaneous translation'. By carrying out the activities it was possible to ascertain that this generally did not occur.

The central moment of the methodology, that of the visit on which expectations, hopes and fears are concentrated, was actually the most agile and fruitful moment. **Facilitated by the preliminary online meetings**, the visits took place within the foreseen times and methods and with the interested participation of teachers, stakeholders and students interviewed.

THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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