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PEER REVIEW METHODOLOGY GUIDELINES FOR PROJECT PARTNERS

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Being driven by the spirit of interregional learning, the peer reviews require an overall readiness to share, reflect and improve among all parties involved. Preparation is required on all sides to ensure the selected peers are well matched to the needs of the host region. In addition, you can be a host receiving advice on one occasion and provide your expertise as a peer the next time around. **This is a true win-win exchange!**

(Interreg Europe Programme)

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Table 1. List of abbreviations used in the text.

AF	Application form
AP	Action Plan
BDRM	Business Digitalization Regional Road Maps
BL	Budget line
DESI	Digital Economy and Society Index
CV	Curriculum Vitae
EC	European Commission
eIDAS	EU regulation on electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions in the European Single Market
EU	European Union
GP	Good Practice
HP	Hosting partner
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IE	Interreg Europe
JS	Joined Secretariat
LU	University of Latvia
LP	Leading partner
MC	Management Committee
MoEPRD	Ministry for Environmental Protection and Regional Development
PP	Project partner
PR	Peer Review
PRM Guidelines	Peer Review Methodology Guidelines
PRR	Peer Review Report
RS	Regional Studies
SH	Stakeholder
SG	Steering Group
SP	Sending partner
SME	Small and medium enterprise

This PR methodology is using specific terms, such as:

- **PR expert** – the expert hired by the project sending partner;
- **Hosting partner** – the project partner responsible for organizing the PR event;
- **Hosting region or country** – the region or country, where the PR event takes place;
- **Sending partner** – the project partner responsible for hiring and sending the PR expert.

1. Introduction

Peer review is the evaluation of creative work or performance by other people in the same field in order to maintain or enhance the quality of the work or performance in that field¹.

PR process includes evaluation carried out by professionals – external experts working on the digital transformation of enterprises, such as policy experts or practitioners, researchers or consultants, or other skilled professionals depending on their professional experience and

¹http://www.linfo.org/peer_review.html

capability to carry out tasks assigned by project partners. PR does not follow a specific scientific approach but rather encourages mutual learning and transfer of GP.

Considering current **conditions influenced by the COVID-19 pandemics**, these guidelines provide a general framework, which can be further adjusted by the DigiBEST partners following the Interreg Europe Measures for additional flexibility (See Attachment 5). Given the current situation in the World due to the COVID-19 pandemics, the PRM Guidelines are intended for the organizing of PR events mostly online with a possibility to organize them also partly online.

The **PRM Guidelines** are designed to **guide the DigiBEST partners**, how to carry out the PR process foreseen by the AF in a coordinated and comparative manner. The draft PRM Guidelines have been accomplished by the end of the 2nd Semester (July 2020) and the final version is due by the end of 3rd Semester (January 2021) of the DigiBEST project.

The PR process is **directly related to the DigiBEST project**, its objectives and achievable results. This relation is explained in the AF.

The main objective of the PR process is to have an external analysis performed by external qualified experts of the situation on digital transformation of SMEs and microenterprises in each partner region, including analysis of GP. The PR is based on the desk research, including review of literature, policy documents and legislation, as well as meetings, interviews, site visits (online) or presentations and networking. The PR external experts should provide recommendations for promoting the digital transformation SMEs and microenterprises by improving partners' policy instruments stated in the DigiBEST Application form.

Throughout the DigiBEST project a **definition on the digital transformation** of the European Commission is being used: "Digital transformation is characterized by a fusion of advanced technologies and the integration of physical and digital systems, the predominance of innovative business models and new processes, and the creation of smart products and services." Advanced digital technologies provided in the processes of digital transformation, such as the Internet of Things, big data, advanced manufacturing, robotics, 3D printing, blockchain technologies and artificial intelligence, as well as smart use of ICT in SMEs offer businesses new opportunities for building on their competitiveness.²

Each partner, except the Advisory Partner, **is responsible** for hiring two PR experts and providing a technical specification or a list of tasks to be done. Specific tasks for PR experts should be stipulated by **job contracts**, which should include tasks related to the implementation of PRs following from this PRM Guidelines and its attachments, as well as specific requests of PP.

According to the AF, the **concept of the PR** is as follows: "PR in partner regions will be implemented by external experts contracted by project partners. Each partner will contract two external experts to perform PR. Each PR team will include two PR experts from two different partner regions and representatives of partner regions, as well as one representative of the Advisory Partner. The host partner will be responsible for the PR agenda. During the PR visit interview session involving local SHs will take place followed by a joint working

²https://ec.europa.eu/growth/industry/policy/digital-transformation_en

dinner “Digital Hub Gathering” (if partly online organized). During PR visits relevant findings and recommendations for the AP will be presented to SHs during the workshop and later submitted to the HP region. In addition, elaborated conclusions and recommendations related to tackle policy instruments will be presented in one final document.” (AF, p.36).

The **funding** for hiring PR experts and organizing PR events is included in each partner’s budget and can be used according the AF pp. 54-58.

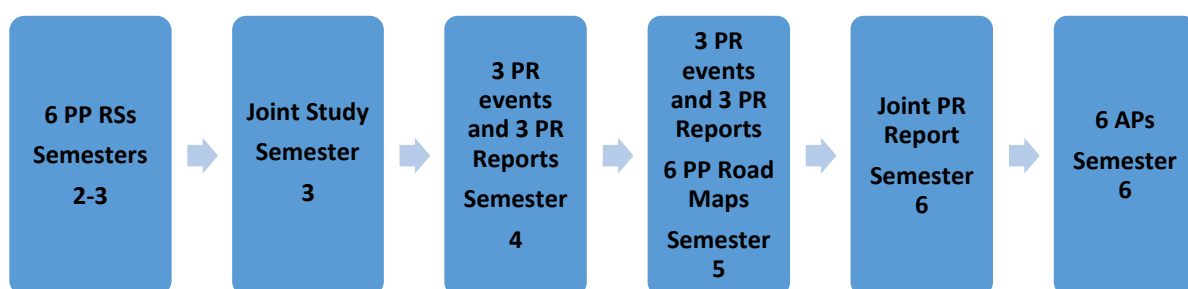
The AF foresees the **framework for the PR**: “During the 4th semester (01/02/2021-31.07.2021) PRs on all partner territories will be implemented based on the methodology and timetable approved by the partnership and SG (Steering group). PR will be planned for 2.5 days including meetings and interview sessions with local SH, joint working dinner “Digital Hub Gathering” (if partly online organized) and final workshop with presentation of PR findings and results to local SH, as well as discussing them. Findings of RS and GP will be used by the PR experts to assess the state of play in partner regions and provide additional findings, as well as recommendations for regional APs.” (AF, p. 49)

The **PR is a part of the DigiBEST interregional learning process**. PRR will be used for creating partners’ BDRM and AP.

Peer Review relevance – PR conclusions and recommendations should be relevant and usable for regional BDRM³ and APs⁴. Recommendations provided by PR reports during the 4th and 5th Semesters are important for conducting regional BDRM and AP during the 5th and 6th semesters. PR implementation and results are crucial for successful and timely DigiBEST project implementation.

The PR is a consecutive part of the DigiBEST methodological process that is reflected in the Figure 1.

Figure 1. Scheme of the DigiBEST methodological process.



³ The BDRM is a preliminary framework of the DigiBEST partners’ Action Plans. It will also serve for an integrated mutual assessment & learning following peer reviews. The aim of the PP BDRM is to receive important suggestions and inputs from previous researches and PRs in order to come up with proposals for actions and plans, how to improve the policy instrument, adopt new measures/policies, transfer knowledge and good practices to promote the digital transformation of SMEs and microenterprises.

⁴ <https://www.interregeurope.eu/enhance/action-plans/>

2. Selection of Peer Review Destination and Calendar

The selection of PR destinations was based on the scoring results of DigiBEST good practices submitted by project partners. All GPs templates were collected on the DigiBEST G-Drive folder and scored by PPs.

Scoring of GP was based on the 3 main criteria:

1. **Track record/ results/ impact** – the overall appearance of a GP, its usefulness and impact from the DigiBEST project perspective.
2. **Learning potential for “sending” partner’s region** – assessment of usefulness of a GP from perspective of partner’s region/country. PP should assess if there is any use of GP for their region and if it can be used in the regional/national context.
3. **Of special interest/ relevance for my region** - assessment of relevance of a GP for transferring to your region/country or using for influencing a policy change, especially, if a GP can be useful for the AP plan of a PP.

According to scoring values, partners choose their PR destinations. Scoring of GPs helped to select those destinations which are particularly interesting for each partner and allows in-depth study chosen GPs and the region. From this perspective, PR will provide additional added value for all PPs. After the scoring was completed, preferences of partners and selected destinations were discussed and confirmed during the DigiBEST online SG meeting on 27 May 2020. (See Table 2.)

Table 2. Matching of Peer Reviews.

No	PR Hosting partner	Countries sending PR experts
1	Ministry for Environmental Protection and Regional Development (MoEPRD), Latvia	NORWAY, AUSTRIA
2	Trondelag County Council, Norway	ITALY, SPAIN
3	Sviluppo Basilicata SPA, Italy	SPAIN, PORTUGAL
4	Granada County Council, Spain	LATVIA, ITALY
5	Austria Wirtschaftsservice Gesellschaft mbH, Austria	NORWAY, PORTUGAL
6	Intermunicipal Community of Tamega and Sousa, Portugal	LATVIA, AUSTRIA

During the 4th and 5th semesters (February 2021 – January 2022) PR on all partner territories will be implemented based on the PRM Guidelines and timetable approved by the partnership. Depending on the format (online, partly online, etc.) PR will be planned for 2-2.5 days including meetings and interview sessions with local SH and a final workshop with presentation of PR findings and results to local SH, as well as discussing them. Findings of regional study and good practices will be used by the PR experts to assess the state of play in partner regions and provide additional findings in the PRR. (See Table 3.)

Table 3. Peer Review calendar (TBC.)

Partner organisation and country	Peer review hosted in month (April–November2021) ⁵
Ministry for Environmental Protection and Regional Development (MOEPRD), Latvia	1-3 June
Trondelag County Council, Norway	October
Sviluppo Basilicata SPA, Italy	November
Granada County Council, Spain	26-30 April
Austria Wirtschaftsservice Gesellschaft GmbH, Austria	September
Intermunicipal Community of Tamega and Sousa, Portugal	18 – 20 May

In cases if PR events should be postponed this should be discussed and agreed with the LP and the IE Joint Secretariat.

3. Organization of Peer Reviews and Expected Results

According to the Interreg Europe programme PR should involve PR experts from at least two countries, other than the country of the host.⁶ The host partner facilitates the thematic exchanges during the PR visit.

In the framework of the DigiBEST project it is planned that 6 PRs will be carried out involving participation of around 12 external experts, Advisory Partner (LU/P2) and PP selecting respective experts. Each DigiBEST partner, except Advisory Partner is selecting two external experts to participate in two different PR events. It has been planned that the Advisory Partner representative will participate in all 6 PRs and that PPs can participate in PR events upon their availability and resources. PR will take place according to the **Matching of PRs** and the **PR Calendar** (See Tables 2 and 3.).

The PR research is **based on the Regional Studies** of project partners and it focuses on the digital transformation of SMEs and microenterprises.

Theoretical basis of the PR:

- 1) Documents and information that aren't publicly available: Regional Study, results of DigiBEST surveys, State of Art of the Digital Transformation Report (Joint Report), policy documents and documents or summaries that are important, but not publicly available in English;
- 2) Relevant documents and information that are publicly available on national/regional websites (please, provide a list of websites if not mentioned in the Regional Study);
- 3) IE website and IE Policy Learning Platform (GP database);
- 4) Relevant EC studies and documents, especially EU studies (DESI, EU Benchmark, etc.), Directives, Regulations and other relevant normative acts (eIDAS, etc.) if not tackled by Regional Studies;
- 5) Internet search;
- 6) Other relevant information and projects identified by partners.

⁵ The exact dates of the Peer Review will be agreed between the PR team and the hosting partner and take into account travel options of the visitors (PR team).

⁶ <https://www.interregueurope.eu/peer-review/>

It is important to ensure that all documents or most of them, or their summaries for experts are available in English. In a case if the document is not available in English this is important for the HP and SP could prepare a basic information (if this can't be found in the Regional Study) for the PR experts about the necessary document or organize an interview with a responsible authority.

3.1. Tasks and Responsibilities of Project Partners

According to the AF each DigiBEST PP, except the Advisory Partner, acts in two different roles – as Sending partner and Hosting partner. Therefore, partners are responsible for a successful implementation of PR in their countries, as well as in those partner countries, where they are sending their hired PR experts. Also, both partners share responsibilities for timely and quality outputs (See Figure 2 and Table 4.)

Table 4. Tasks and responsibilities of partners.

Steps	Sending partner (SP)	Hosting partner (HP)	Advisory partner
Methodology and planning	Participates in the process of preparation of PRM Guidelines with their comments and proposals, approves the PRM Guidelines. Responsible for conducting PR according to the agreed PRM Guidelines.	Participates in the process of preparation of PRM Guidelines with their comments and proposals, approves the PRM Guidelines. Responsible for conducting PR according to the agreed PRM Guidelines.	Provides PRM Guidelines and related templates for PR Report and its attachments.
Hiring experts	SP are responsible for hiring PR experts. SP has to cooperate with the Host partner to develop requirements for experts to be included in procurement documents or job tasks. Through a coordinated process in cooperation with the HP hires two PR experts - responsible for setting their tasks and achieving expected results.	HP and SP has to cooperate to develop requirements for experts to be included in procurement documents or job tasks. Requirements should be agreed before hiring the experts, for developing tasks for preparing the procurement.	Advises PP if necessary.
Preparation of PR	If PR experts also are required to provide the analysis for SP: Sends RS, Joint Report, national/regional level policy documents that aren't available online or translated in English, as well as a list of other documents to be studied PR experts one month prior to PR event.	Sends RS, Joint Report, national/regional level policy documents that aren't available online or translated in English, as well as a list of other documents to be studied PR experts one month before the PR event.	Advises PP if necessary.

Steps	Sending partner (SP)	Hosting partner (HP)	Advisory partner
	SP undertake a responsibility for coordinating cooperation and communication between the HP and PR experts.	Organizes PR event and its Agenda, ensures that tasks of PR experts can be fulfilled; Agenda must be ready two weeks before the PR event. Prepares a list of PR members with their short bios and photos and sends to all involved parties, as well as local stakeholders together with the PR Agenda two weeks before the PR event.	
Implementing PR	Takes part in PR visits if feasible and possible, especially in cases in there are assigned tasks for PR experts to provide outputs also for SP.	Coordinates the PR event and cooperation between all involved parties – SP, AP, PR experts, as well as local stakeholders. Responsible for organizing one PR event (Agenda, including meetings, interviews, workshops, social gatherings and PR logistics), as well as completing provided templates, collecting evidence (lists of signatures, photos, videos, etc.), following PR experts work, revising and approving outputs.	Participates in all PR events and monitors the PR process and its correspondence to the PRM Guidelines, advises and supports partners is necessary.
Output of PR	Coordinates timely and quality delivery of final outputs with PR experts and HP. Checks if the outputs provided by PR experts suits interests of both parties – SP and HP.	Checks and approves the PRR and its attachments and approves them from HP side.	Conducts the Joint PR Report after all PR Reports are completed and delivered.

Expected results/outputs stated in the DigiBEST AF (outputs of Semester 4, AF, p. 50):

- PRM guidelines
- 6 PR online or partly-online events involving 12 external experts
- At least 60 local stakeholders involved in the PR activities
- Additional outputs of individual partners corresponding to IE JS additional flexibility measures.

- 6 PRR (developed by PR experts)
- Joint PR report (conducted by Advisory Partner)

Usability of the PR outcomes and further steps:

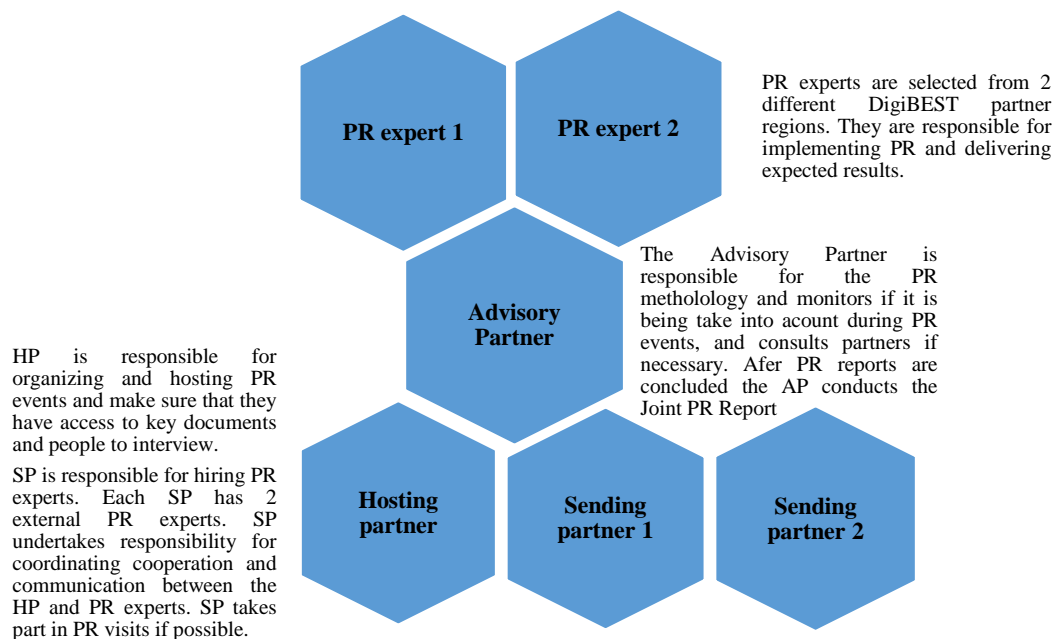
- Results of the PR research should produce findings on the digital transformation of SMEs and microenterprises situation, problems and possible solutions in partner regions and recommendations for their BDRMs with an aim to identify possible policy solutions, learning and transfers of GP resulting in recommendations for the AP.
- Initial results of the PR desk and field research will be presented to SHs during the workshop on the 3rd day of the PR event and later submitted to the PPs.
- In addition, elaborated conclusions and recommendations related to tackle policy instruments will be presented in one final document – PR Reports and related templates.

The AF also states that findings of RSs and GPs will be used by the PR experts to assess the state of play in partner regions and provide additional findings on the state of digital transformation of SMEs and microenterprises, as well as recommendations for regional AP.

3.2. Structure of the Peer Review Team

Each PR team is composed according to the structure reflected in the Figure 2.

Figure 2. Structure of the Peer Review team.



After both PR experts performing a joint PR in one PP territory are acquainted with each other, they have to divide their tasks and agree who will be the main coordinator during the PR to make sure that other involved partners (HP and SP, and AP) are timely informed about PR activities, their tasks and responsibilities. PR experts are responsible for dividing their tasks for preparing the PRR and other materials requested by both, SP and HP in a good quality and timely manner to get them approved (See Table 5).

4. Hiring of External Experts and Their Tasks

Each partner hires **two** external experts to be employed in PRs, actively contributes to PR processes and participates in PR events. PR experts can be external experts working in the ICT and related areas, such as policy experts or practitioners, researchers or consultants, or other skilled professionals depending on their professional experience and capability to carry out tasks assigned by their job contracts and technical specifications/task descriptions that are assessed through personal management hiring procedures.

There aren't any requirements for PR experts set by the Interreg Europe programme except that they need to have a relevant thematic expertise. Therefore, the DigiBEST partners can select their PR experts based on their considerations and needs. In this case one solution doesn't fit all. For example, policy making partner organizations might be interested to have PR experts with an experience in working with policy documents, while others might consider that PR experts with experience and skills in the business sector are more suitable. Therefore, **the SP, who hires PR experts and the HP have to agree on a common set of requirements for PR experts in order to suit interests of both sides.**

4.1. Requirements for Hiring Experts

There should be following requirements considered for hiring PR experts:

- excellent English communications and writing skills;
- higher academic or higher professional education;
- at least five years' experience working in the ICT sector (public or private) or having experience working on the digital transformation of SMEs and microenterprises, as well as a competence about digital tools and policies for promoting the SMEs digitalization in the sending partner's country or region would be recommendable;
- understanding of policies regulating SMEs and microenterprises and their business environment could be an advantage;
- understanding and knowledge about relevant European Union (EU) studies - DESI or EU Benchmark, as well as the EU Digital Agenda, especially, with respect to digitalization of SMEs and microenterprises;
- specific list of requirements based on interests identified by the hosting partner;
- specific list of requirements based on interests identified by the sending partner.

All of the above-mentioned requirements should be listed on one page and included or attached to the package of documents prepared by the contracting SP responsible for hiring the PR expert.

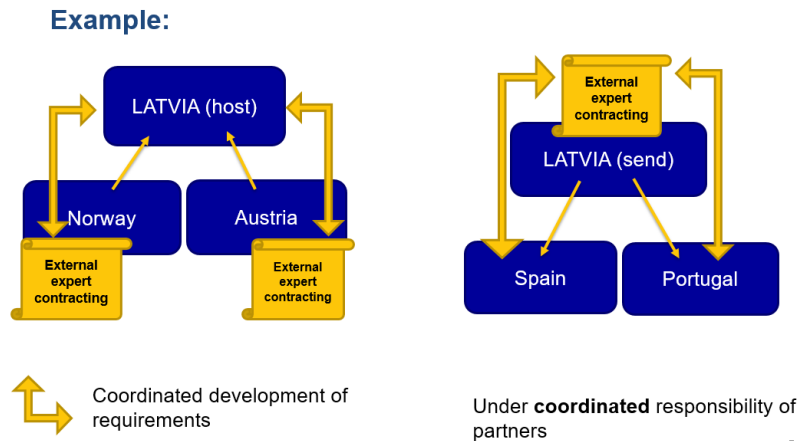
SP and HP should agree on the selection of PR experts in a mutually coordinated way. In this respect, the SP should ask the HP about their specific requirements for hiring the PR expert in advance. If the PP has hired PR experts already then, they should agree about the PR expert's tasks with the HP before the PR starts.

4.2. Process of Selecting and Approving PR Experts

Procedures of hiring and employing PR experts must be in line with the Interreg Europe and national regulations regarding procurement thresholds and corresponding procedures. Also, types of contracts with PR experts depend on the practices in each partner organization, as

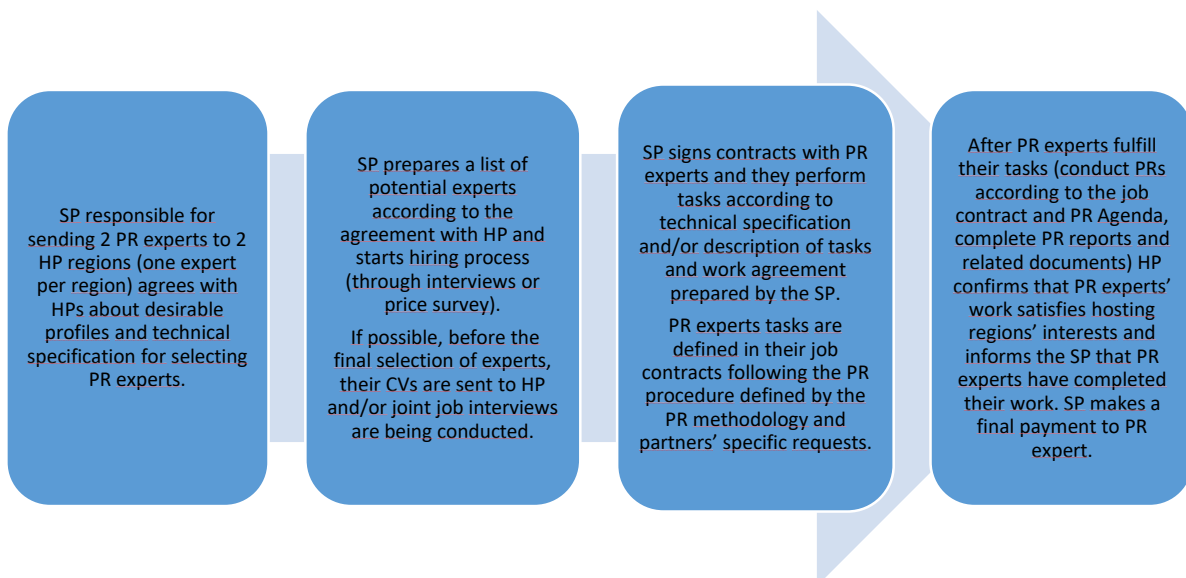
well as the national legislation. For example, some organizations, like universities, might choose to have a royalty or author’s remuneration agreement. In any case this is recommendable to have an interview with selected PR experts before signing a contract. Each expert hired by one partner will be involved in one PR visit together with the expert from another partner’s territory. In result, each PR team (See Figure 2) will have **two PR experts from two different partner regions**. For example, one PR expert selected by Norway and one PR expert selected by Austria will conduct the PR in Latvia.

Figure 3. Coordinated process of selecting PR experts.



The process of selecting and approving PR experts, as well as roles of SP and HP are described in the Figure 4.

Figure 4. Selection of PR experts, roles of SP and HPs.



Taking into account that this isn’t fully clear if PR events will take place online or face-to-face, DigiBEST partners shouldn’t include travel and related costs in the PR experts’ fees, but cover these costs from the project budget BL “External expertise and services”.

4.3. Responsibilities and Tasks of PR Experts

Hiring PR experts this is important to acknowledge their responsibilities and tasks. Please, see the detailed description of PR experts' responsibilities and tasks in the Table 5.

Table 5. Responsibilities and tasks of PR experts

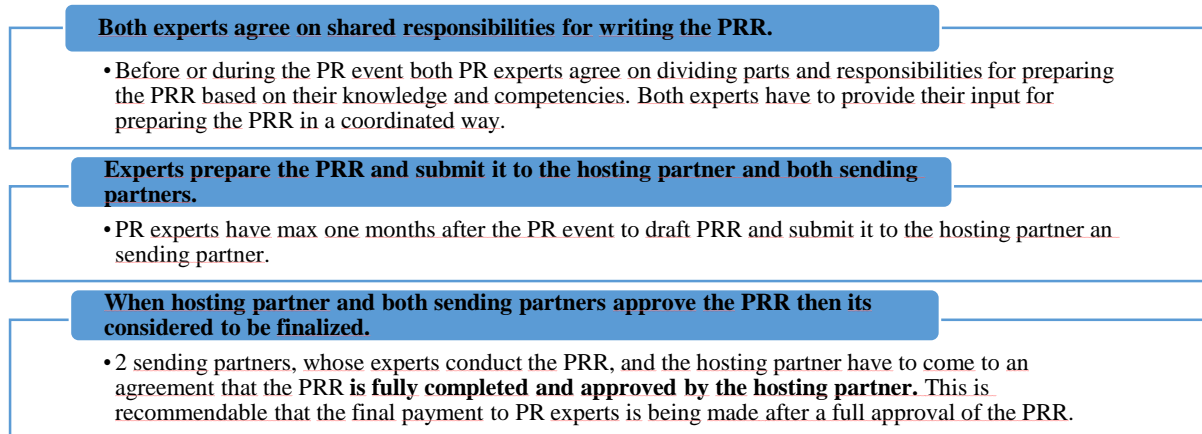
Steps	Description
Preparation	<p>Both experts conducting PR in the PP country/region depending on their knowledge and competences must agree, how they will divide their tasks to deliver one PRR for the HP and their SPs. Both experts are equally responsible for achieving timely and quality delivery of the PRR. If the SP has specific requests for its PR experts then their tasks should be separately agreed and related outputs delivered to the SP according to the work contract and technical requirements and/or list of tasks signed between the SP and its PR experts.</p> <p>After the PR experts are selected, they conduct the desk research prior to the participation in the PR event.⁷</p>
Implementing	<p>The other part (field work) of PR experts' work is done during and after the PR event. During the PR event the PR experts gather the necessary information through meetings, interviews and discussions which are organized by the HP, who organizes the PR event according to the Agenda.</p> <p>After the PR event - PR experts continue analysing the information and additional documents to finalize the PRR and related attachments to be submitted to HP and SP.</p>
Result	<p>PR experts have max one months after the PR event to draft PRR and submit it to the hosting partner and sending partner.</p> <p>PR experts have to cooperate and they are equally responsible for preparing the PR Report (PRR) based on the evaluation of the level of digital transformation of SMEs and microenterprises in the assigned DigiBEST partners' regions or countries, and based on the desk and field researches. The PRR should provide elaborated conclusions and recommendations on how to facilitate the promotion of the digital transformation of SMEs and microenterprises by improving partners' policy instruments stated in the DigiBEST Application form and according the PRR template can be find in the Attachment 1.</p> <p>PR experts should be capable to identify also the potential of the transferring the GP from HP's to SP's region/country if this is of an interest for the SP and give an input in the final PR Report not only for the HP, but also some recommendations for the SP (See PRR, Attachment 1.).</p> <p>PR experts are responsible for good quality timely provided outputs approved by HP and SP.</p>

⁷ **Theoretical basis** of the Peer Review: 1) Documents and information that aren't publicly available: Regional Study, results of DigiBEST surveys, State of Art of the Digital Transformation Report (Joint Report), policy documents and documents or summaries that are important, but not publicly available in English; 2) Relevant documents and information that are publicly available on national/regional websites (please, provide a list of websites if not mentioned in the Regional Study); 3) IE website and IE Policy Learning Platform (GP database); 4) Relevant EC studies and documents, especially EU studies (DESI, EU Benchmark, etc.), Directives, Regulations and other relevant normative acts (eIDAS, SDG etc.) if not tackled by Regional Studies; 5) Other relevant information and projects identified by partners; 6) Internet search.

5. Preparation of the Peer Review Report

When the PR process is accomplished the most important outcome – PR Report should be prepared and submitted to both, HP and SP. The process of PRR report preparation and approval is further described in the Figure 5.

Figure 5. Cooperation between PR experts, SP and HP to achieve expected results.

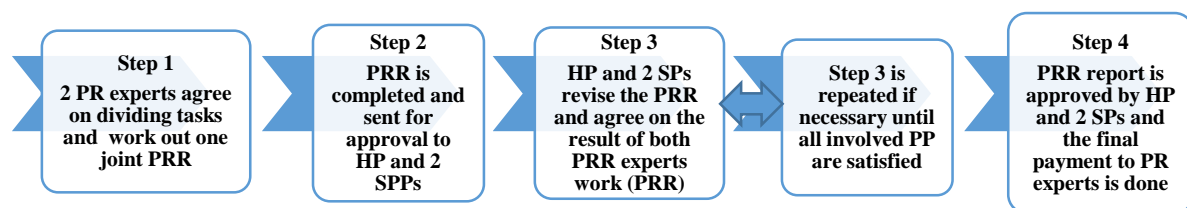


Further information about the content of the PRR is provided in the PRR template (Attachment 1).

This is highly recommendable that sending partners shouldn't pay the PR expert the final payment before the expert's work is fully completed and approved by both SP and HP.

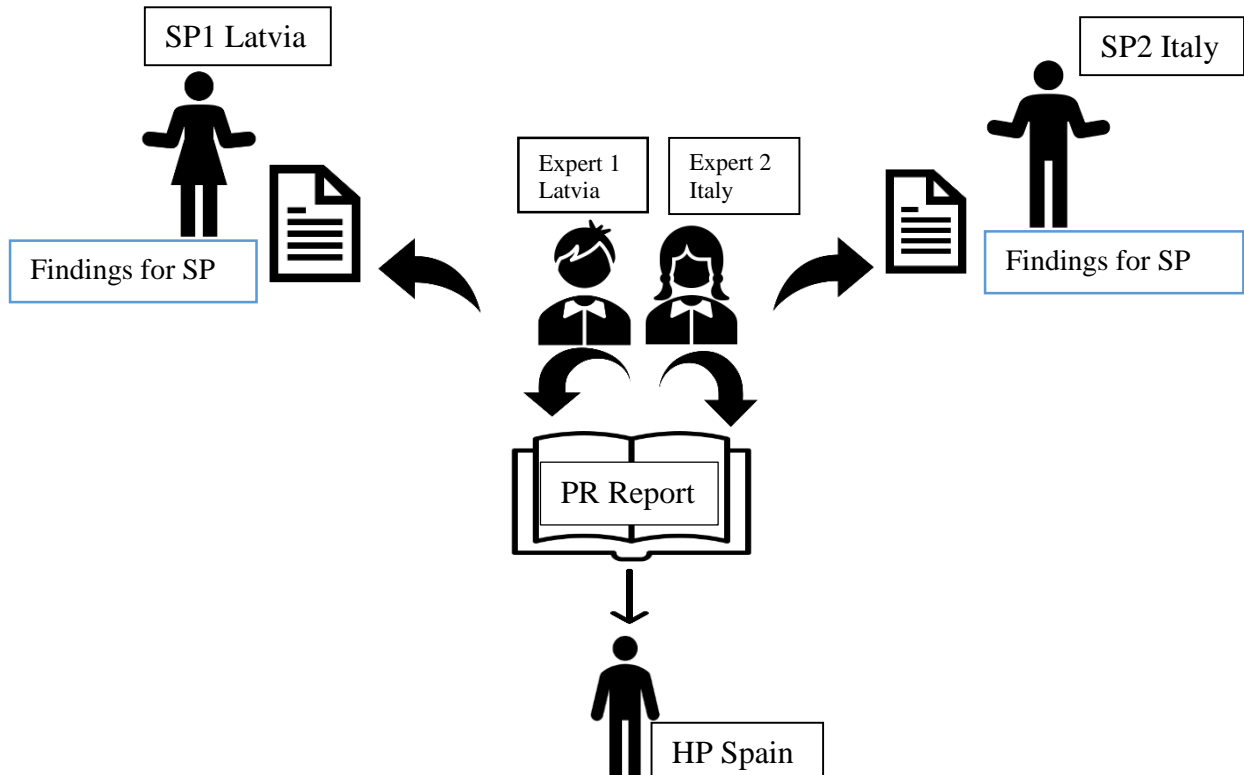
The process of executing tasks of PR experts until the approval of the PR Report by SP and HP is also reflected by steps in the Figure 6.

Figure 6. The process of approving PRR between SPs, HP and PR experts.



After the PR visit is finished, the PR experts work on the Peer Review Report (PRR) that has to be submitted to contracting (sending) partners **one month after the PR visit**.

Figure 7. Cooperation between the PR experts, HP and SP - example



After the PRR is reviewed by the contracting (sending) partners it has to be sent to the DigiBEST partner (hosting partner), where the PR was performed for reviewing and approval. If necessary, the PRR is being elaborated according to comments of all involved parties (Please, see the PRR template in the attachment).

The PR expert must complete tasks assigned by both, SP and HP according to the job contract and the agreement between the HP and SP.

The PRR has the following parts:

Attachment 1. DigiBEST Peer Review Report

Attachment 2. DigiBEST Peer Review Feedback for Sending Partner template

Attachment 3. DigiBEST Peer Review Event Feedback for Peer Review Team

Attachment 4. DigiBEST Peer Review Feedback for the Hosting Partner

Attachment 5. DigiBEST Peer Review Key Details

Attachment 6. DigiBEST Peer Review. Interreg Europe: COVID-19 crisis – additional measures for projects, issued 10 June 2020.

6. Implementation of the Peer Review Event

The implementation of the PR event is a very significant part of the PR process. It provides the main information and sources for PR experts to be able to conduct PR Reports, identify findings and conclusions for the DigiBEST partners. (See Figure 8)

Figure 8. The procedure of implementing Peer Review



6.1. Preparatory Work

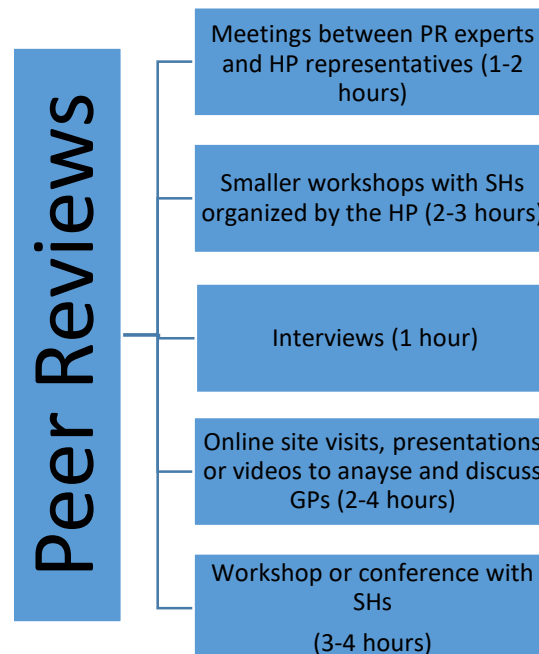
At least one month before the PR event takes place the HP and SP provide PR experts with the DigiBEST Regional Study on the State of Digital Transformation and Its Impact on the Regional Business (Regional Study), information on selected GP, as well as other informative and official documents upon the request of external expert. These are the key documents for PR experts' preparation ahead of their visit and field work, and must, therefore, be carefully elaborated. The PR experts should also consider the EU DESI related findings, EU Digital Agenda objectives, as well as relevant EU surveys and legislation with respect to digitalization of SMEs and microenterprises.

At least **two weeks before** the PR event takes place the HP has to prepare an Agenda of meetings and interviews, as well as a list of PR team members, their short bios and photos and send these documents to the PR Team members, as well as local stakeholders.

6.2. Work Plan for the PR Event

Preparing the PR event this is important to include all necessary elements to ensure that PR experts will get a full information from local authorities and experts (stakeholders) and receive answers to their questions. The quality of PR experts' work and its' results is very much related to quality and completeness of PR event and its elements (See Figure 9).

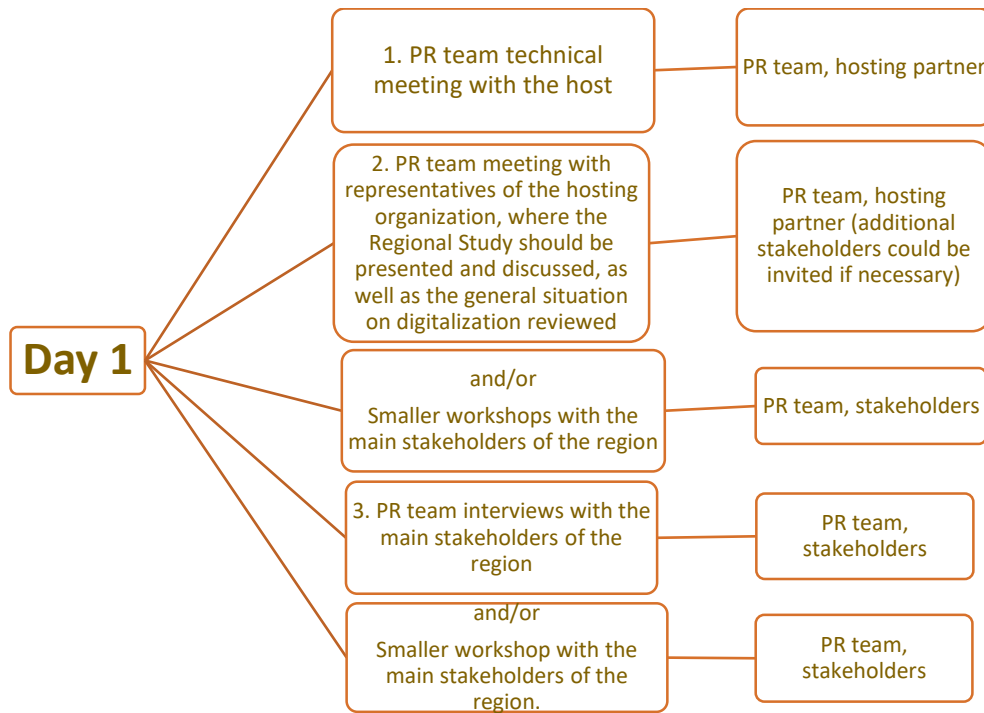
Figure 9. Recommended elements for the Peer Review event.



First day:

- The first meeting of the PR should be the technical meeting with the hosting partner to clarify unclear questions about PR event, scheduled meeting, involved participants, materials provided, etc.
- The next meeting should provide an overview of the digitalization policy of the hosting region, digitalization level of business entities and support measures.
- In one of the meetings the RS should be presented and discussed between PR experts and local participants. The hosting partner should be prepared to provide background information such as the national institutional setting, political landscape, and key actors' openness for policy improvements.
- The meetings could be organized as a discussion between the PR experts and representatives of the hosting partner, and as small workshops involving representatives of organizations responsible for digitalization and support of SMEs, as well as with different stakeholders' groups.
- If there is still time left then the PR can continue with individual interviews with the main stakeholders. (See Figure 10 and Table 6.)

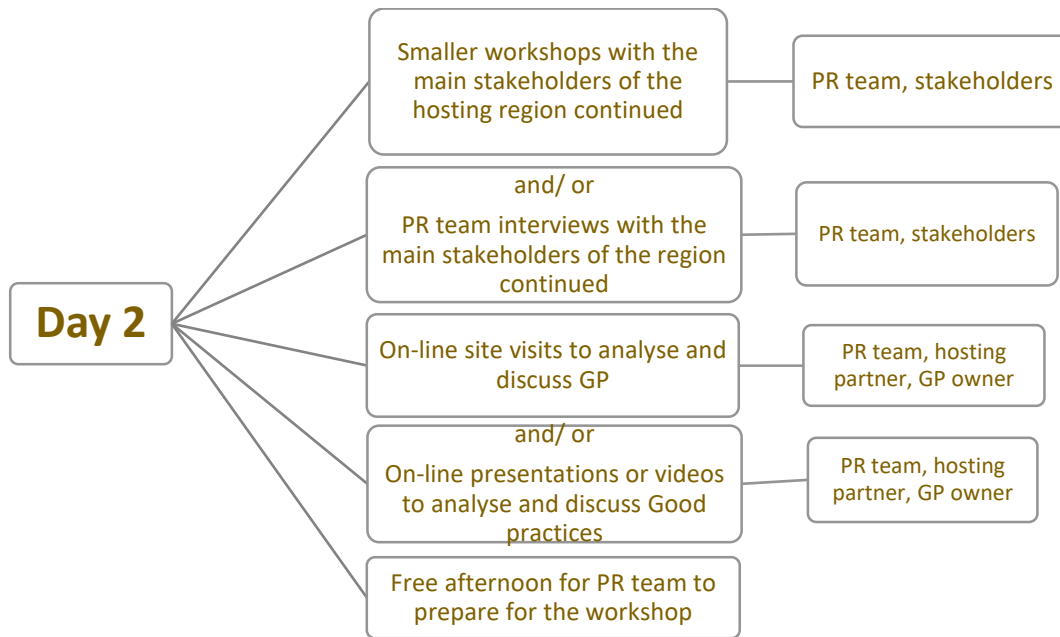
Figure 10. Recommended logistics for the first day of PR event.



Second day – PR events can be continued with individual interviews with the main stakeholders. Also, during the second days the PR experts should be introduced with the region’s GP, including discussing and analysing these practices. The presentation of GP can be organized as online presentations or videos followed by discussions with GP owners, site visits to locations of GP, including discussions with GP owners. In the case of online site visits this should be also possible to have a video presentation of the site by using video camera. (See Figure 11 and Table 6.)

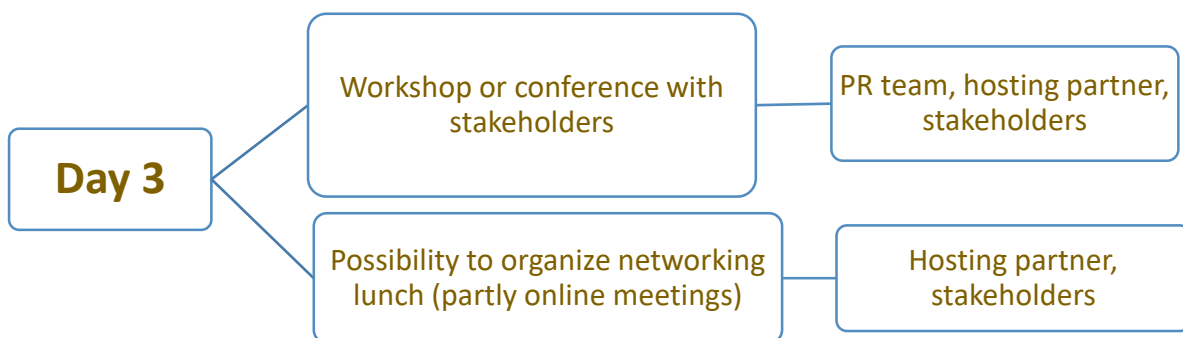
During the second half of the day, the PR team members prepare conclusions and presentations for the 3rd day.

Figure 11. Recommended logistics for the second day of PR event.



Third day – during the first half of the day a public online session takes place, where the PR team shares its initial findings, conclusions and draft recommendations in the ppt presentation with a larger group of stakeholders and interested persons. In a case of organizing bigger event the assistance of a moderator could also be useful. The feedback received during discussions following the main presentation of PR team will help team members to re-evaluate their conclusions for the final Peer Review Report to be submitted one months after the PR event. (See Figure 12 and Table 6.)

Figure 12. Recommended logistics for the third day of PR event.



If this is still possible then the hosting partner can still organize local events, i.e. meetings, workshops and/or conference, working lunches or the social gathering - working dinner Digital Hub Gathering for local stakeholders with their direct participation.

Please, see additional guidelines how to structure the PR visit in the Table 6.

Table 6. Structure of the Peer Review visit

Day	Element	Timing	Participants
1	PR experts technical meeting with the host	1-2 hours	PR experts, HP.
1	PR team meeting with representatives of the hosting organization, where the RS should be presented and discussed, as well as the general situation on digitalization reviewed and/ or	1-2 hours	PR experts, HP (additional SH could be invited if necessary), Advisory Partner.
	Smaller workshop with the main SHs of the region.	2-3 hours	PR experts, SH, Advisory Partner.
1	PR team interviews with the main SHs of the region and/ or	1 hour for each interview	PR experts, SHs.
	Smaller workshop with the main SHs of the region. 1-2 hours	2-3 hours	PR experts, SHs, Advisory Partner.
2	Online site visits to analyse and discuss GP and/ or	2-4 hours (1-2 hour for one visit)	PR experts, HP, GP owner, Advisory Partner.
	Online presentations or videos to analyse and discuss GPs	2-4 hours in total	PR experts, HP, GP owner.
2	Free time for PR experts to prepare conclusions and recommendations to be presented on the 3 rd day.	½ day	PR experts, with the possibility to involve the Advisory Partner for consultancy, support, if necessary.
3	Workshop or conference with SHs.	3-4 hours	PR experts, HP, SH, Advisory Partner.

7. Technical Issues Related to Organizing PR Events

Organization of the PR visit jointly with the study visit in online or partly online format can still be considered.

There are many tools available for online meetings (Zoom, Skype, Skype for Business, Webex, GoToMeeting, MS Teams, etc.). The HP must choose the most appropriate tool, which is tested before and can provide the best quality for online meetings. (See Figure 13)

Figure 13. Options for online meetings



Several Interreg Europe projects have already successfully organised online policy learning events. See for instance: <https://www.interregeurope.eu/oss/news/article/8571/stakeholdersonline-workshop-session/>

The example of an online conference hosted by the TV studio (in Latvian) can be seen here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x3C-eMuCqDw&feature=emb_logo

The PR experts also must prepare and submit to sending partner and hosting partner lists of participants at each event (without signatures in a case of an online event), as well as screenshots if a meeting take place online.

For all online meetings recordings should be made by PR experts and stored by SP and HP. In case of a regular meeting the lists of signatures should be prepared and photos taken.

Original lists of signatures and photos (in case of face-to-face meetings), screenshots, audio and/or video recordings (in case of online meetings) as well as the Agenda of PR event, must be kept by the HP.

Please, also see in the attachment PR follow-up template and other PR templates to be filled during and after the PR event.

8. Attachments

Attachment 1. DigiBEST Peer Review Report template

Attachment 2. DigiBEST Peer Review Feedback for Sending Partner template

Attachment 3. DigiBEST Peer Review Event Feedback for Peer Review Team template

Attachment 4. DigiBEST Peer Review Feedback for the Hosting Partner template

Attachment 5. DigiBEST Peer Review Key Details template

Attachment 6. DigiBEST Peer Review. Interreg Europe: COVID-19 crisis – additional measures for projects, issued 10 June 2020.