



*« «INnovative governance Practices for
« Higher Education Institutions in Iraq » »*

**Virtual Partners' meeting
22 September 2020**

MINUTES





Project	INSPIRE project		
Event	Virtual Partners' Meeting		
Date	22 September 2020	Time	10:00 am - 1 pm
Place	Zoom platform	Minutes by	Elena Cellai

SCOPE OF THE MEETING

After the EACEA's communication sent to the University of Siena – the project coordinator – on 22 July 2020 with the authorization to resume the INSPIRE project, the virtual partners' meeting had the following scopes:

- to confirm the intention and commitment of all partners to continue in the implementation of the project activities ;
- to discuss and agree on an updated work plan;
- to illustrate the state of the art of the current ongoing WPs (WP1, WP6, WP7 and WP8) that were initiated in 2019.

MINUTES

Participants

The 16 partners of the project were all present and connected to the meeting's platform. The list of participants as well as the meeting's agenda and the pictures are attached to the present document.

The presentations showcased during the meeting were shared via email with all the participants

Welcome and opening

The meeting was opened up by the Project Coordinator – Professor Riccardo Mussari from the University of Siena - who thanked all the partners for their presence, underlining that the participation and the commitment of all partners is essential for the resumption and the successful implementation of the project. Professor Mussari gave then the floor to Dr. Alaa who read the official message of the Minister to all participants, with his greetings and best wishes for a fruitful discussion. Dr. Hussein Al-Rubaiey "Scholarship and Cultural Relations Directorate" of the Ministry of Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Iraq thanked the Project Coordinator for the organization of the meeting and highlighted that the INSPIRE project is a fundamental contribution to the modernization of the Higher Education System of Iraq, confirming the commitment of the Ministry to actively pursue and realize the project scopes and objectives.

Presentation of the new GANTT

Professor Riccardo Mussari from the University of Siena, opened his speech by recalling the structure of the project that was approved by the EACEA at the beginning of the project, as organized in its different Working Packages. He reminded all the partners that the project – as approved - should



terminate on 14 January 2022, however taken into account the administrative and political difficulties that INSPIRE had experienced until the present days, as well as the still unpredictable consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in the next months, he proposed to submit to the EACEA a request for one-year extension of the period of project eligibility. This extension is deemed necessary to guarantee the full implementation of project activities. The new work plan, organized as a GANTT diagram, was drafted taking into consideration this extension, was going to be presented to the meeting's attendees.

In the light of travel restrictions due to the COVID-19 crisis **the overall proposal is to held the project tasks online along the year 2021, and to move all onsite activities, both in the EU and Iraq, to 2022.**

In particular:

- WP1 (Preparation) – Update of the need analysis:
the WP that was supposed to be developed in 2019, will be closed by December 2020. Field visits in Iraq that were scheduled in September 2019 will be replaced with virtual focus groups with Iraqi universities by November 2020.
- WP2 (Development) – Training and capacity building activities:
supposed to be implemented from the end of 2019 along 2020, it will begin in November 2020 and end in October 2022. More precisely, from November 2020 to December 2021 training and capacities building activities will be designed and then delivered online, with an online training as MOOC to be performed in a virtual platform in Spring 2020, and four virtual training seminars organized by the European Universities members of the consortium (Siena, Evora, Bologna and Aydin) from August to November 2021. Each training seminar will have from 4 to 6 sessions per 1 day per week, for 5 people per Iraqi HEI.
Finally, study visits in person in Siena, Evora and Aydin for 3 people per each Iraqi HEI will be performed for 3 days from January to May 2022, and face-to-face training of trainers will be held at local level in Iraq from June to November 2022.
- WP3 (Development) – Implementation of changes and best practices through action plans:
supposed to be carried out from October 2020 to December 2021, its activities will begin in March 2021 and will end in February 2022, all online (development and piloting of specific action plans in each Iraqi HEI by September 2021, drawing up a Good Governance Guidelines Handbook by November 2021, assessing and refining the governance framework at each University by February 2022).
- WP 4 (Development) – Modernization of Iraqi HEIS International Relations Strategy:
foreseen from April to November 2021, it will be implemented from January 2021 to December 2022 with online activities in 2021 (modelling WP according to WP1 outcomes and selection of training participants), and onsite activities in 2022 (training visits at the University of Bologna by May 2022, definition of university international relations strategic plan for each Iraqi HEI, and national workshop at national level in Iraq by November 2022).
- WP 5 (Development) – Launching consultative centres in Iraq to coordinate HEI, State and non State actors:
envisaged from March to December 2021, it will be implemented from September 2021 with the definition of consultative centre strategy by January 2022, the organization of a National

Consultative workshop at the Ministry of Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Iraq to define the creation of consultative centre by March 2022, and the creation and launching of consultative centres in each HEI by September 2022.

➤ **WP 6 – Project Quality and Evaluation:**

As a transversal WP, it will be carried out until the new required extension, with the quality plan approval by November 2020, the appointment of the external evaluator by December 2020, midterm evaluations (internal and external) in June and December 2021 and in June 2022, Final evaluation in December 2022.

➤ **WP 7 – Dissemination and Exploitation:**

Another transversal WP to be implemented until the project end, with the deployment of dissemination and sustainability campaign from February to November 2021, the organization of 10 sustainability conferences in Iraq moved from July –October 2021 to the first part of 2022 (from January to April), and the final conference at the end of 2022 instead of December 2021.

➤ **WP8 – Management :** another transversal WP to be carried out continuously throughout the project, with the interim report to be moved from July 2020 to October 2020.

➤ As far as project meetings are concerned, in 2021 those will be held online, and in particular they are scheduled in March and October; in 2022 onsite activities will be resumed a partners' meeting will be held in Istanbul in April 2022 (in parallel with the field visit to Aydin University in WP 2), and the final meeting and conference will be moved from Rome to Baghdad and held in December 2022.

After the presentation given by Professor Mussari, all the partners agreed to adopt the reviewed work plan. The coordinator will contact the EACEA to officially submit the revised GANTT as well as the request for the 1-year extension.

Update on WP 1 – Preparation

Mrs. Silvia Marchionne – Project Manager at P2 UNIMED, that is the leader of WP1 – gave the presentation also on behalf of the University of Baghdad, coleader of the working package.

Mrs. Marchionne recalled the aims of the WP1 and the important point that its scopes can be achieved only if all partners collaborate to its implementation. She underlined that the WP was started after the kick-off meeting that took place in Siena in February 2019 and consists of 5 tasks:

- T1.1 Preliminary desk research, collection of relevant data
- T1.2 Identification of stakeholders
- T1.3 Identification of existing governance frameworks and best practices
- T1.4 Design and preparation of a diagnostic tool
- T1.5 Self-evaluation for a final assessment study

and 4 deliverables:

- D1.1 Key stakeholders map
- D1.2 Diagnostic tool
- D1.3 Two field visits in Iraq universities (Baghdad & Basrah)

- D1.4 Final report with the update needs analysis (included desk research e self-evaluation).

The activities already done consisted in

- Focus groups in Siena during the KoM + Results' report shared with all the partners
- Preliminary desk research, collection of relevant data (thanks to UOB support)
- Survey on the “State of the art of the Higher Education System and its Governance in Iraq”
- This survey was launched in May 2019 and all the answers given by the 10 Iraqi University leaders (Presidents and Vice-Presidents) were received by July 2019

The approved work plan envisaged its completion by November 2019, the new proposed GANTT establishes the new conclusion in December 2020.

In particular, the stakeholder map will be concluded by November 2020; field visits in Iraq will be replaced with virtual focus groups to be organized by end of October/Mid November 2020 in order to identify existing governance frameworks and best practices; the design and the preparation of the diagnostic tool will be achieved by the end of November 2020, and the self-evaluation for a final assessment study by December 2020.

Professor Nazar Samir Abd Al Wahab Haddad from the University of Basrah suggested that, since from the administration of the survey in Summer 2019, some positions in the Iraqi Universities may have been changed and leader could have been replaced, it would be good to re-administer the survey in order to get an updated state of the art.

Dr. Hussein Al-Rubaiey “Scholarship and Cultural Relations Directorate” of the Ministry of Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Iraq added that needs may have been modified also in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic that has uncovered unpredictable scenarios, situations and, along with them, necessities.

Silvia Marchionne welcomed these proposals and ensured that the need analysis will be updated accordingly.

The partners approved these proposals and the general schedule for WP1.

Update on WP 7 – Dissemination and Exploitation

Mr. Marco Di Donato from UNIMED – coleader of the WP -gave the presentation on the behalf of the University of Baghdad, leader of the working package.

After having summarized the aims of this transversal WP, Mr. Di Donato recalled the tasks to be carried out:

- Definition of the dissemination methodology and tools (including identification of major dissemination channels, such as public events, press, Web, etc.).
- Definition of the selection criteria for choosing the dissemination opportunities.
- Setting up the monitoring campaign.
- Design of dissemination materials, including eventual video materials.

He also repeated the new deadlines for the deliverables already presented by Professor Mussari (deployment of dissemination and sustainability campaign from February to November 2021, organization of 10 sustainability conferences in Iraq from January to April 2022, and organization of the final conference in late 2022).

He illustrated what has been already done, and in particular:

- Selection of the logo of the project
- Logo user-guide that will help use the logo in documents and the logo itself in all the formats and typologies
- Visual identity (PPT template, minutes template, one pager, deliverable template...)
- Project website: <https://www.projectinspire.eu/>
- Facebook page: @projectinspire.eu

UNIMED will share the dissemination strategy by end of October 2020 to be validated by all the partners, will create a poster, a flyer and brochure of the project for visibility purposes by end of November 2020.

All the partners were requested to link the project website to their institutional website and to give a description and presentation of the project and to like the Facebook page.

Dr. Hussein Al-Rubaiey “Scholarship and Cultural Relations Directorate” of the Ministry of Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Iraq thanked Mr. Di Donato asking to orientate the project website in a way that it can be used it not only to give static information on the project itself, but also as a platform for Iraqi Universities to share their opportunities, their improvements, and modernization activities.

All partners agreed with the proposal of Dr. Al-Rubaiey. UNIMED together with Baghdad University will follow up the dissemination tasks and will re-send the link of the website together with the dissemination materials already produced.

Update on WP 6- Project Quality and Evaluation

Dr. Ali Najah Al-Shamani from Al-Furat Al-Awsat Technical University and Paulo Resende da Silva from the University of Evora, respectively leader and co-leader of WP 6, gave the presentation.

They recalled the aims of this transversal WP and what has been done so far. In particular, the definition of the Quality Committee made up of 1 representative per partner was achieved in September 2019. Dr. Al-Shamani and Prof. Resende da Silvia invited partners to update the names provided in case changes have intervened in their organizations this meantime.

By December 2020 the Quality Work Plan will be sent to all partners for their comments and validation. Once on every 6 months an interim evaluation will be conducted, both internally and externally. The latter will be implemented by the external evaluator that must be appointed by the coordinator by the end of 2020.

The WP leader and coleader underlined the essentiality that all partners actively participate in this WP and are equally committed to collaborate in all tasks and activities.

Quality management cycle and the main point of the quality plan were presented and all partners confirmed their commitment in the implementation of this WP.

WP 8 – Management (Financial Issues and Interim Report)



Mrs. Elena Cellai from the University of Siena gave the presentation, showing first of all the approved budget of the project and informing that – in case the EACEA accepts the new GANTT – a change to the budget will be a direct consequence as certain activities onsite – that incurred travel costs and costs of stay – will be held online therefore with no travel and subsistence costs. She also recalled the characteristics of eligible costs and reminded that the interim report was due by July 2020. Since the project underwent considerable delays and its prosecution was pending until the end of July 2020, this report was not delivered and will be sent to the EACEA by October 2020. The report will cover all costs incurred in the first 18 months of the project, from January 2019 to 30 June 2020.

If on the one hand travel costs are managed centrally by UNIMED and subcontracting costs so far have been incurred only by UNIMED for the development of the website, staff cost must be reported by all partners.

She illustrated the reporting materials, namely the timesheets and the joint declarations, and the supporting documents that must be jointed (contracts, evidences of products produced and activities carried out, payslips, financial proves of payment). She also summarized the characteristics of the four categories of staff costs listed in the Erasmus Plus Capacity Building projects (Managers, Researchers, Technical and Administratives).

Many partners asked for a more practical presentation of the interim report documents, such as guidelines to the filling in of timesheets and joint declarations.

Mrs. Cellai proposed to organize a financial webinar for all partners, namely project manager/coordinators and person(s) in charge of the financial report, with a “hands on” and practical approach.

The partners accepted the proposal, and invited the University of Siena to schedule this webinar as soon as possible so to comply with the interim report deadline.

All partners will indicate to the University of Siena the name(s) of the responsible person for the financial report by Thursday, September 24th.



ANNEX 1 – LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

n	Partner Number	Partner Name	Name and Surname of participant	Email address
1	P1	Università di Siena	Prof. Riccardo Mussari	mussari@unisi.it
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ANNEX 2 – VIRTUAL PARTNERS' MEETING AGENDA, 22 September 2020

« *«INnovative governance Practices for
« Higher Education Institutions in Iraq »*

Virtual Partners' meeting

22 September 2020

AGENDA

Venue:

Zoom <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85214856554>

Meeting ID: 852 1485 65

*This meeting will be held in English

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	Tuesday, 22 September 2020
	10:00 a.m.– 13:00 p.m. CEST
10:00 – 10:10	<p>Welcome and Opening</p> <p><i>Prof. Riccardo Mussari, Project Coordinator, University of Siena</i></p>
10:10 – 10:30	<p>Welcome speech</p> <p><i>Prof. Dr. Ghassan Hameed Abdul Majeed</i> Minister’s Deputy for Scientific Research Affaires” and “General Director of Research and Development” Ministry of Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Iraq</p> <p><i>Dr. Hussein Al-Rubaiey</i> “Scholarship and Cultural Relations Directorate” Ministry of Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Iraq</p>
10:30 – 11:00	<p>Presentation of the new GANTT (workplan)</p> <p>University of Siena</p>
11:00 – 11:30	<i>Questions and Debate with the partners</i>
11:30 – 11:45	<p>Update on WP1 - Preparation</p> <p>UNIMED - Mediterranean Universities Union and University of Baghdad</p>
11:45 – 12:00	<p>Update on WP7 - Dissemination and Exploitation</p> <p>University of Baghdad and UNIMED - Mediterranean Universities Union</p>
12:00 – 12:15	<p>Update on WP6 – Project Quality and Evaluation</p> <p>Al-Furat Al-Awsat Technical University and University of Evora</p>
12:15 – 12:45	<p>WP8 – Management (Financial issues and interim report)</p> <p>University of Siena</p>
12:45 – 13:00	<i>Questions and closure of the meeting</i>



ANNEX 3 - PHOTOS

