



Innovative Governance Practices in
the Higher Education Institutions in Iraq

MidTerm External Evaluation Report

by
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INsPIRE

1. Introduction

INsPIRE is an Erasmus Plus structural project for Capacity Building in Higher Education KA2 which carries the official code of 598790-EPP-1-2018-1-IT-EPPKA2-CBHE-SP 15/01/2019. In view of the urgent need to improve the Higher Education System in Iraq, a project proposal was submitted in February 2018 and successfully accepted in August 2018. It has officially started in January 2019 and is coordinated by the University of Siena, Italy. Ten Iraqi Universities along with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Baghdad are participating in this capacity building project. These universities are geographically distributed to cover Iraq from northern , middle and southern parts of the country. These higher education institutions show active participation and commitments to implement of the different activities of the project in their universities through signing the partnership agreements and following up with the different clauses of the agreement. Moreover, four European academic institutes from Italy, Portugal and Turkey are partnering in this project as well as UNIMED -Mediterranean Universities Union. The project has multiple work packages and tasks, all of which are great support to improve the governance system at the Iraqi partner academic institutions. The derogatory effects that the Iraqi universities suffered due to previous protracted situations of instability and isolation, make this project of capacity building in governance so much more valuable for each one of those academic institutions, as shown in the need analysis in the project application. Many activities of the project have been achieved so far and it is hoped that the rest of the activities are also accomplished during the last period of the lifetime of this project that will end in January 2023.

2. Partners Universities

- Università Degli Studi Di Siena (Italy). Coordinator of the project.
- Unimed - Unione Delle Università Del Mediterraneo (Italy)
- Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna (Italy)

- Universidade De Evora (Portugal)
- Istanbul Aydin Universitesi Vakfi (Turkey)
- University Of Baghdad (Iraq)
- University Of Basrah (Iraq)
- Wasit University (Iraq)
- Ministry Of Higher Education And Scientific Research (Iraq)
- University Of Sumer (Iraq)
- Al Qasim Green University (Iraq)
- Basrah University For Oil And Gas (Iraq)
- Al-Karkh University Of Science (Iraq)
- Southern Technical University (Iraq)
- University Of Mosul (Iraq)
- Al-Furat Al-Awsat Technical University (Iraq)

3. Aim of External Evaluation

The prime goal of the external evaluator of INSPIRE project is to critically examine the extent to which the project meets its objectives and to highlight the evidence of successful outputs according to the original plan stated in the project proposal as agreed on by all the partners.

The aim of this external evaluation of capacity building project is to ensure the high quality of outputs of the different activities planned within the project. The evaluation also includes the process of dissemination within institutions and their plans for sustainability. Also, to support the project coordinator, partner universities and participants to reach the ultimate goals of the project through the implementation of the work package.

This report covers the activity conducted by all the partner universities from the Kickoff meeting on Jan.15, 2019 to March 15, 2022.

The objective of this midterm evaluation report is to chronicle the different steps that have been taken thus far, and assess the degree with which the objectives of the project have been achieved.

4. INSPIRE Overview

4.1. *Background of INSPIRE Project:*

INSPIRE aims to modernize the governance system and internationalization of the Iraqi partner universities, along with the different academic values, through multiple training activities. Also, to establish ten Consultative Centers that serve this purpose in each partner university. These centers are to serve the modernization of governance process, and to ensure the sustainability of the outcomes after the project's lifetime.

This project was founded depending on the undeniable need for supporting the higher education system in Iraq. Like all the Iraqi institutions, the higher education system in Iraq went through hard crises since 1980, this is due to the Iran/Iraq war, severe international embargo, liberation of Iraq war and its aftermath, sectarianism civil war and ISIS invasion. Thus, implementing the project in the backdrop of such environment is not easy at all. Iraqi Higher Education System is inherited from the British System during the forties and fifties of the last century when Iraq went through different stages of colonization by Britain. Since its beginnings the Iraqi System of Higher Education has not been through substantial changes to its management system, and there has hardly been any training on different management levels especially the lower echelons of university governance. Therefore, INSPIRE proposal was submitted.

INSPIRE was submitted during the call of Erasmus Plus in 2018 and officially started on Jan. 15, 2019, during the Kickoff meeting in the University of Siena, Italy. INSPIRE got the approval and support from the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Baghdad to take this opportunity to benefit from the European universities' experiences as added value to upgrade their system of governance. In addition, the Ministry is planning to adopt the European Bologna Process in within different Iraqi universities.

This is the very first Erasmus Plus national project designed to build competencies of the personnel in order to affect a positive change in the Iraqi System of Higher Education except Kurdistan Region.

4.2. *INSPIRE's Goals and Objectives:*

INSPIRE project has its goals and objectives that fit the needs of the Iraqi Higher Education System, and hence were highlighted in the project proposal. All of them are for the sake of modernization and enhancing the governance model with the Iraqi Higher Educating System. The goals of the project are:

1. Enhance good governance, management, and accountability practices
2. Establish a clear governance framework,
3. Strengthen the capacity of HEIs to develop their own specific strategies
4. Strengthen the international relations management within the HEIs
5. Improve the participation in strategic planning and development activities of non-university actors.

6. Enhance good governance, management, and accountability practices
7. Establish a clear governance framework,
8. Strengthen the capacity of HEIs to develop their own specific strategies
9. Strengthen the international relations management within the HEIs
10. Improve the participation in strategic planning and development activities of non-university actors.

In summary, the project aims is to build the capacities and competencies of the academic staff and administrators as well from the Iraqi partner universities, by training the leaders, decision makers and high skilled professionals on the modern governance, management, and accountability system.

4.3. *INSPIRE in Brief:*

- Duration: 3 years and 1 year extension.
- The official starting date of the project is: Jan.15, 2019
- The official ending date of the project is: Jan.14, 2022
- The official ending date after extension is: Jan.14, 2023
- The project was put on hold for the period from September 2019 until June 2020, for almost ten months.
- Maximum grant approved: 993.365,00 EUR Consortium structure from Partner Country: Ministry of Higher Education, 10 Higher Education Institutes from Iraq
- The consortium is formed by program Countries, 4 Higher Education Institutes and a Network of Universities.
- Project coordinating institution: University of Siena.
- Project tasks held online along the year 2021, in the light of travel restrictions due to the COVID19 Pandemic.
- All onsite visit activities, both in the EU and Iraq were moved to 2022.
- Work Packages:
 1. Update of the need analysis.
 2. Training and capacity building activities for internal staff in quality assurance and strategic planning.
 3. Implementation of changes and best practices through action plans
 4. Modernization of Iraqi HEIs International Relations Strategies
 5. Launching of consultative centers in each of the partner Higher Education Institutions to coordinate between the University, state and not- state actors,
 6. Project Quality and Evaluation.
 7. Dissemination and Exploitation.
 8. Management.

5. Evaluation Design

The assessment will concentrate on the overall quality and the progress status of INsPIRE at the Iraqi partner universities since the kickoff meeting in Sienna University on Jan. 15, 2019 till March 2022. The evaluation is based on different data collection tools like:

- Partnership performance (which include quality of the management and WP leaderships, effectiveness of the communication, meeting deadlines, etc.
- Progress toward the contractual; outcomes and respect of the work packages and its task details.
- Quality and relevance of the project outcomes in reaching the set objectives.

The data were obtained through structured two questionnaires to all partners, they were asked 28 choice questions and detailed questions regarding the management. The response are 15 represents 16 partners.

Twelve structured interviews were conducted with the key representatives of INsPIRE project from the Iraqi partner universities. The interviews were dedicated for their feedbacks on the implementation phase of the project, which includes the status quo of the project in their university, different challenges faces the implementation of the project as well as their future plans and their opinions regarding improving the implementation phase.

The evaluation also considered a detailed reviews of the deliverables, level of participations as well as commitments of the participants toward INsPIRE.. The analysis of the data collection from used tools targeted the Qualitative and Quantitative Criteria measured all together gave an integrated picture of the results, outputs, and the expected impact of the project. The criteria are interrelated and hence inevitably overlap.

To carry out the External Evaluation, the External Evaluator was given a full access to all relevant external and internal documents and the project's website. The given access was for example: the project proposal, the Logical Framework Matrix, available documentation included reports & deliverables, internal quality control and monitoring reports for work packages, internal intermediate report, and feedback.

Direct communications with the Principle Coordinator of the project, Prof. Riccardo Mussari, Sienna University and with Ms. Martina Zipoli from UNIMED were obtained almost on daily bases, as well as virtual meetings and email communications with contact persons from other project partner institutions in Iraq to collect and summarize the important information for reporting and evaluation findings. The methodology started with project overview and analysis of the planed and achieved deliverables, and cross-matching with logical framework matrix to define to which extent the quality of results meets the plan according to the available indicators.

6. Evaluation of the Implementation and Performance

6.1. Formal Attribute of the project:

The Logo: The logo has been created and represented in all the documents related to the project. Also, the logo has been accepted by all the partners according to the feedback form the Iraqi partner universities.

The website <https://projectinspire.eu> has been created and continuously updated, it transparently contains all the project activities, along with project individual actions and outcomes. A comprehensive critique was written by the external evaluator regarding the website and distributed among the partners to enhance the quality of the website. All the mentioned points in the report were taken into consideration by the consortium to enhance the website and make it user friendly.

6.2. The Implementation of INsPIRE Work Packages:

INsPIRE has eight work packages that covers all the main activities and tasks needed for the project to achieve its goals and ultimate outcomes. The European partner universities as well as the Iraqi partners are participating actively in reaching this goal for the benefit of the Iraqi universities to modernize their governance system and its values. According to the published project Management Handbook, every partner institute in this project has its role in implementing the work packages and its tasks. The Management Handbook defined the capacity of each university and its role and commitments in implementing the work package.

To control the quality of the work package implementation the project coordinators in the partner universities have to fill a results report in a template form to show the status of achievements of the work packages.

6.2.1. Update of the Need Analysis Work Package:

INsPIRE need analysis was divided into different tasks, the table below show the description of each task and the status que of the achievement.

Task	Evaluation	Progress
Key Stakeholder maps	<p>Comprehensive map identified the internal and external stakeholder for each university point of view was formulated as a useful report. The report considered that each university is in different area and has different relations where the stakeholders are different. The report shows the impact of each stakeholder can have on the project. The universities can make intervention plan of the involvement of the stakeholders to support the project. The stakeholders were divided into national and international actors and national and international authorities.</p> <p>The stakeholder map was published on the website and shows a very good satisfaction of the participants from all the partner universities in the management survey.</p> <p>https://projectinspire.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Stakeholders-Mapping.pdf</p>	<p>DONE</p> <p>According to the website and communications with the coordinator</p>
Diagnostic Tools for Institutional Self Evaluation on Governance	<p>Comprehensive measures were taken to use for self-evaluation they are 10 bilateral meetings with the Iraqi partner universities and real time support for their need, also around 80 answers were collected as a response to the questionnaire on self-assessment.</p> <p>https://projectinspire.eu/senza-categoria/diagnostic-tool-for-institutional-self-evaluation-on-governance/</p> <p>The second diagnostic tool is the explanatory document which is an informational report was published as a diagnostic tool or guidance to self-assess governance and its dimension in academic institute. Like autonomy, accountability, management techniques and participation.</p> <p>https://projectinspire.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/INSPIRE_Diagnostic-Tool-explanatory-document.pdf</p> <p>The third measure is the self-assessment rich questioner was considered as a diagnostic tool for</p>	<p>DONE</p> <p>According to the website and communications with the coordinator</p>

	<p>feedback from the participants. The external evaluator survey shows a very good satisfaction with the survey as a tool for self-assessment.</p> <p>https://projectinspire.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Self-assesment-questionnaire-PDF.pdf</p> <p>A fourth measure was a very thoughtful information were published regarding news about self-assessment of institutional governance which keep the institutional involved updated with the latest diagnostic tools.</p> <p>https://projectinspire.eu/news-and-events/news/iraqi-universities-performing-a-self-assessment-on-institutional-governance/</p>	
Virtual Focus Group with Iraqi Universities	<p>Three Virtual focus groups on governance and autonomy were formulated by 13 active participants from the Iraqi partner universities along with representation from European universities.. These focus groups met between Jan.19, 2019 and January 2021. They negotiated and suggested plans for decision making, process, accountability, strategic planning, quality assurance, students involvement and international collaboration.</p> <p>https://projectinspire.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Virtual-Focus-Groups_Main-outcomes.pdf</p>	<p>DONE</p> <p>According to the website and communications with the coordinator</p>
Final Report with Updated Need Analysis	<p>A complete comprehensive final report about the updated need analysis were formulated by staff of UNIMEd with the contribution of staff from the Ministry of Higher Educaation and Baghdad university. The report published in the website. The purpose of this report is to understand the need of the partner universitis to enhance the good governance and to orient the content of the raining toward the actual need of the partners.</p> <p>https://projectinspire.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/INsPIRE-D1.4-Report-on-the-Iraqi-HE-system.pdf</p>	<p>DONE</p> <p>According to the website and communications with the coordinator</p>

Conclusion: The work Package no 1 achieved its goal and fulfilled its tasks and deliverables. The reports published is a good example for what the Iraqi universities in general need. The Iraqi system is very centralized through the Ministry of Higher Education in Baghdad and hence the system is almost the same in each and every university, so the published report can serve as a guide like for future development for non-partner Iraqi universities. The updated need analysis report is a rich report has all the needed issues that the partners can take into their consideration to enhance the good governance within their universities.

6.2.2. Training and Capacity Building Activities for Internal Staff in Quality Assurance and Strategic Planning Work Package:

Task	Evaluation	Progress
Online Training Platform	An online course in the UNIMED learning platform, the Iraqi HEIs have attended. 45 hours of course that started in December 2021 until end of January 2022	DONE
Training Seminars and Workshop	<p>Six training seminars were conducted by the different EU partners, most of them represent the European vision and practices on the topics. These seminars are contributing to the good governance and it is considered an eye opening to the participants on the moderns models of governance and it parameters. The topics were on autonomy, governance models, quality in higher education, accountability and internationalization.</p> <p>https://projectinspire.eu/results/training-webinars/</p> <p>Four training workshops on the different topics of Governance were also given virtually to the Iraqi universities staff. They tackled the quality assurance, accountability and management, universities social responsibility and governance and leadership. By having these condense training the participants showed have the adequate knowledge to implement the new trend of governance in their universities and convey the knowledge to their peer as well.</p> <p>https://projectinspire.eu/senza-categoria/training-workshops/</p>	Achieved up to date and to be continued
Study Visit to EU Universities	The European consortium are planning to invite the participants to the study visit to European universities during June. The preparation started with the nomination of the participants.	In the planning phase

Local TOT in Iraq	The arrangements for the TOT has been been Done to be started soon.	To be started soon
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Conclusions: The main part of this work package has been achieved through conducting multiple online training sessions and workshops by the EU partners. The total number of beneficiaries from the training are 148 staff members from the different Iraqi universities. The consortium needs to work as soon as possible to continue the other activities of training, Training of the Trainers (TOT) and the study visit. Due to the time constraints the consortium needs to start immediately to prepare for the remaining tasks so they can meet the deadline.

6.2.3. Implementation of changes and best practices through action plans:

This work package is dealing with the implementation of change to the Iraqi universities following the institutional action plans. According to the website and the communication with the coordinator.

Task	Evaluation	Progress
All tasks	The tasks not been totally achieved thus far	Ongoing

Conclusions: all the tasks belonging to this work package have not been totally achieved thus far. WP3 Leader Istanbul Aydin University is coordinating working groups at each Iraqi HEIs as a Strategic Plan Task Force, in charge of filling our an Action Plan. The coordinator has developed a template for Partners to use, upon the reflection on their own strategic goals. It is obvious that this work package needs the involvement of the high-level authorities of the partner Iraqi universities, it is important to host a dedicated meeting for the presidents or vice presidents as they are the decision-makers at their universities along with representative from the Ministry in Baghdad with the European partners to stress on the importance of the development and implementation aspects of this project and as a part of their commitments. It is vital that the partners from Iraq need to take concrete action to strengthen the implementation of this work package.

6.2.4. Modernization of Iraqi HEIs International Relations Strategies Work Package:

It is organized to be launged during the Training week in Bologna University at mid-May 2022

6.2.5. *Launching of consultative center in HEIs to coordinate University, state and not- state actor Work Package:*

Not started yet

6.2.6. *Project Quality and Evaluation Work Package:*

Task	Evaluation	Progress
Internal Quality Plan	<p>The internal quality plan define the quality cycle and establish commitments between the partners and a measurable matrix for the work packages to ensure the quality together with monitoring the performance. A report have been produced to explain and show the different activitie that need an action within a feasible deadline. The report used the terminologies of value chain model presented by Michael Porter to follow.</p> <p>https://projectinspire.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/INsPIRE_D6.2-Quality-Plan.pdf</p>	<p>DONE</p> <p>According to the website and communications with the coordinators</p>
External Quality Plan	Submitted	<p>DONE</p> <p>According to the website and communications with the coordinator</p>
Midterm Evaluation Report (External and Internal)	<p>Internal Midterm evaluation report have been submitted</p> <p>External Midterm Evaluation report submitted</p>	<p>DONE</p> <p>According to the website and communications with the coordinator</p>
Final Evaluation Report (External and Internal)	To be submitted on time	

Conclusion: This work package has been progressing within the time frame. Comprehensive quality plan report has been submitted as a guideline and control of the quality of the different

activities. It seems the Iraqi partner universities are very much engaged in the planning phase which give the indication that they have high motivation.

6.2.7 Dissemination and Exploitation Work Package:

Task	Evaluation	Progress
Dissemination and Exploitation	<p>The plan draw up the strategies of the project to reach out to the target groups and beyond. The plan was published as report that covers all the segment of the project. The report included the priority of communications and exploitation. The report also tackled the sustainability of the project after its lifetime.</p> <p>The report was prepared by Baghdad University with the consultation of UNIMED and the European partners.</p> <p>https://projectinspire.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/INsPIRE_D7.1-Dissemination-Exploitation-Plan.pdf</p>	<p>DONE</p> <p>According to the website and communications with the coordinator</p>
Project Website	<p>A multilingual website dedicated for INsPIRE project has been formulated and published, the website covered all the activities up to date. The deliverable has been published along with all the information and the activities.</p> <p>https://projectinspire.eu</p>	<p>DONE</p> <p>According to the website and communications with the coordinator</p>
Dissemination and Branding Materials	<p>The dissemination of the deliverable within the consortium and beyond tackled three lines: Media Kit Promotional Material, which contain many useful branding materials like postcard and posters and webinar flyers in Arabic language Photo gallery, unfortunately it has few photos representing the activities . The third line is the Publications which has great access to the partner websites and their news</p>	<p>Achieved up to date, to be continued</p>

	along with the access to social media like Facebook and Twitter. https://projectinspire.eu/media/	
Sustainability Conference		To be started ontime
Final Project event		To be started ontime

Conclusion: this work package has achieved its goal up to date. However, most of the activities should be continued.

6.2.8 Management Work Packag:

Task	Evaluation	Progress
Project Management Handbook	A comprehensive handbook or guide to the management procedure of INsPIRE during its lifetime and beyond has been produced and published on the website. It is very useful guideline to follow for all the partners. It has all the information about the project and the strategies of managing the implementation phase. https://projectinspire.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/D8.1-INSPIRE-Project-Management-Handbook.pdf	DONE According to the website
WPs Result Report	Not yet published	
Report on Plenary meetings	One plenary meeting, the kickoff meeting of INsPIRE has been achieved. https://projectinspire.eu/senza-categoria/plenary-meetings/	Achieved up to date
Virtual Meetings	Many of the virtual meetings have been accomplished the agenda and the minutes was shared in the website. https://projectinspire.eu/senza-categoria/virtual-meetings/	

Conclusion: The different management tasks have been achieved perfectly and published for the activities up to date.

More in-person meetings are needed for this project according to the demand that was received from the participants in the two surveys. Having such in person meeting will upscale the motivation of the participants and the leaders of the partner universities

6.3 *Management meetings:*

According to the feedback from all the partners during the interview and the survey, all of the planned activities were implemented according to the schedule that was agreed upon between the partners after the suspended period of the project. All the activities were designed according to the proposal and after agreement with all the partners on the date of the meetings. The participants received the agenda of the meetings in advance. The meetings discussion points adhered to the distributed agenda. All the partners participated in almost all the meetings and most of them there were active and engaged in the discussions.

Different kinds of management arrangements skills were taken from the start of the project till March 2022. The skills were used to implement the activates categorized into: Partnership meetings, Training, workshops, Webinars, and Bilateral communications publications managing the website and social media activities. All the administrative data regarding these activities like agenda, minutes, contents materials, attendees list and outcomes are available on the website or with the coordinator.

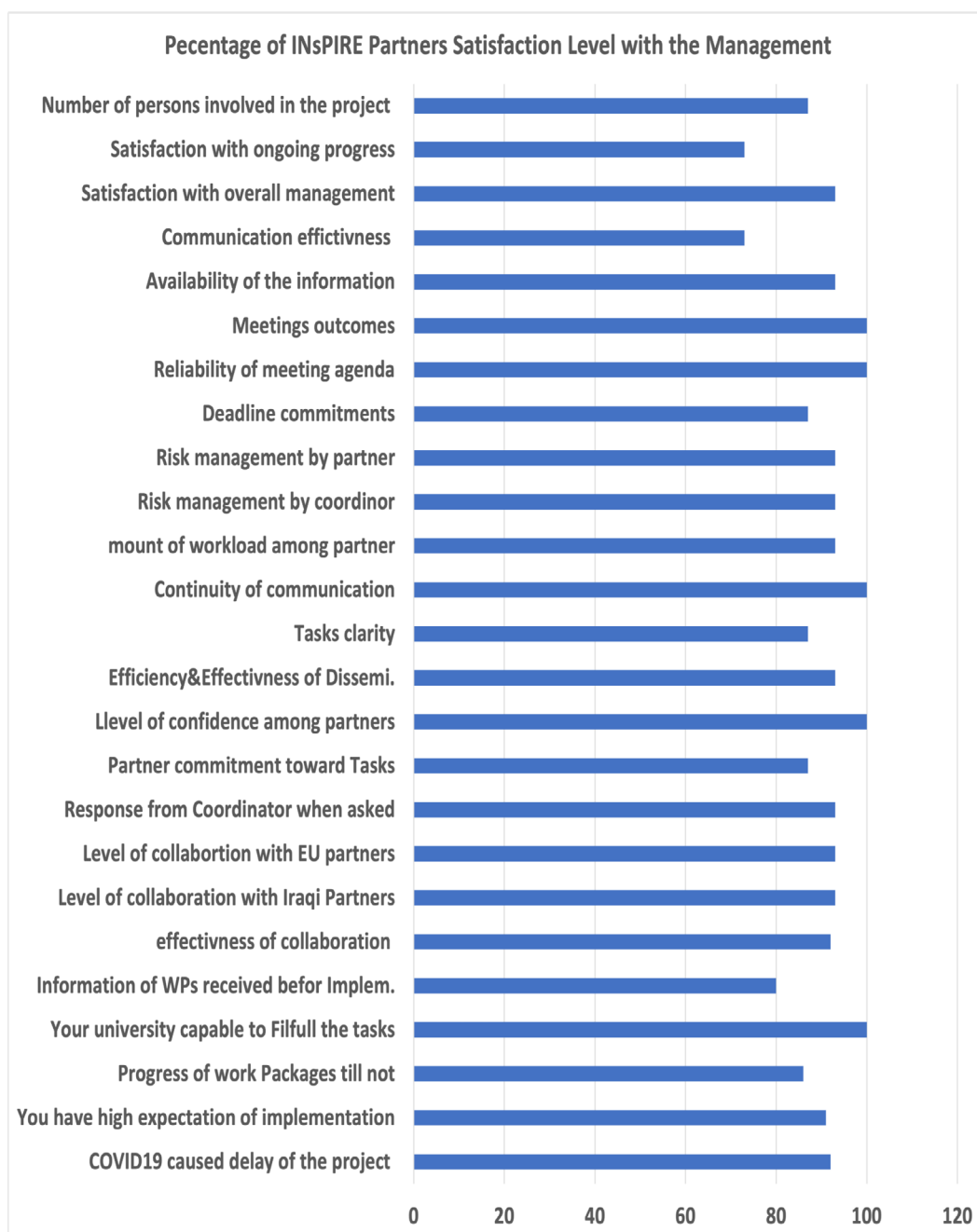
The summary Of the partnership meeting including one plenary meeting is in the below table.

Date of meeting	Name of meeting	Type of meeting	No. of Participants	Partner universities
19-21 February 2019	Kick of meeting	University of Siena	48	All
22 September 2020	Partnership meeting	Virtual	41	All
17 December 2020	Partnership meeting	Virtual	42	All
15 June 2021	Partnership meeting	Virtual	37	All
25-26 January 2022	Partnership meeting	Virtual	32	All universities except Summer and Southern al Karkh

Conclusion: The planned management meetings were achieved, though all of them are online excep the kickoff meeting. The representatives form the partner universities benefitted from the outcomes of these meeting to follow up with the adminstration and managemets of the activities.

6.4 Analysis of the Management Survey:

The parameters of the management that were taken into consideration through the evaluation of the project are: the efficacy of the implemented, guidance of the European partner universities, the level of communications, the engagement of the partner universities, the concentration on the goals, priority actions, continuity and following up. These parameters were included on the evaluation of all the work package tasks and activities. All these points were taken in as survey questions that were answered by all the partners. The participants were from all the partner universities. The quantitative results are illustrated in the following diagram as a percentage of satisfaction of the different items of management:



Conclusion: The analysis of the satisfaction of the partners of INSPIRE in the management as the diagram shows is very high. This reflects the motivation of the partners specially from the Iraqi universities. There are two points where the satisfaction was within 70%, the lowest evaluation, they are the satisfaction of the overall progress of the project and the effectiveness of communications. It is obvious the delay of the implementation of the project and the period that the project was put on hold affected the degree of satisfaction of the participants, also the online communication almost through all the period of the INSPIRE reflected on the satisfaction of the effectiveness of communications. Almost all the participants from the Iraqi universities never met so far with the European partners or with Iraqi partners as well.

Nevertheless, in general the result shows the individual participants who represent their universities' experience are satisfied and motivated but the system among the university level and the ministerial level is not helping the participants to achieve the optimum results of the project with the defined time.

The multiple telephone interviews with the coordinator from each university, shows almost the same outcomes from the survey. In general, the partners' universities have great feedback regarding the level of management despite the challenges.

However, there are some notes received from different Iraqi partners through the survey and the interviews showing the following suggestions:

- 1- They want to receive the materials of training in advance to have the adequate time to get acquainted with topics.
- 2- They are looking forward to consolidating their experience in internationalization of universities through students and staff mobility, as well as in fund raising.
- 3- Most of the partners are concerned that the online trainings are less effective than in person trainings.
- 4- The struggles with the money transfer might affect the consultative center to be initiated.

6.5 Training Sessions:

Multiple training sessions were conducted through the first period of the project. After studying the contents of each training, it became clear that the training topics are in line with goals of the project. The contents of the training constituted the core of the capacity building of the trainees toward modern governance and university management. The total of Virtual training on University Management was 40 hours from December 20, 2021, to January 21, 2022. The total number of participants was 148 academic staff from the Iraqi partner universities.

The topics of the training and the dates are shown in the table below:

Topic of training	Date	Leaders
Financial Webinar	30, Sept. 2020	UNIMED & University of Siena
University Autonomy	15, July 2021	University of Siena and & University of Evora

Governance Models	28, July 2021	Advisor on Higher Education Policy in Ireland & Head of Cabinet in the Portuguese State Secretary of Science
Quality in Higher Education	9, Sept. 2021	Advisor to the President of Board of Trustees of Istanbul Aydin University
Accountability and Financial Accountability	16, Sept.2021	University of Siena
Trends of internationalization	23, Sept. 2021	University of Bologna
University Models	30, Sept. 2021	University of Coimbra, Portugal & University of Evora

6.6 The workshops:

Multiple virtual workshops were given to the academic participants from different Iraqi universities by European partner universities, all of them tackled the most important topics of modern university management and governance. The sequence of the topics of the workshops delivered are logical. The number of participants is constant to ensure the participation of all the partner universities.

Number	Title	Date	Leaders	Participants
Workshop 1	Quality Assurance by Istanbul Aydin University	15/11/2021	Istanbul Aydin University	40
Workshop 2	Accountability and Management orientation for results	18/11/2021	University of Siena	40
Workshop 3	University Social Responsibility and Third Mission	23/11/2021	University of Bologna	40
Workshop 4	Governance and Leadership	25/11/2021	University of Evora	40

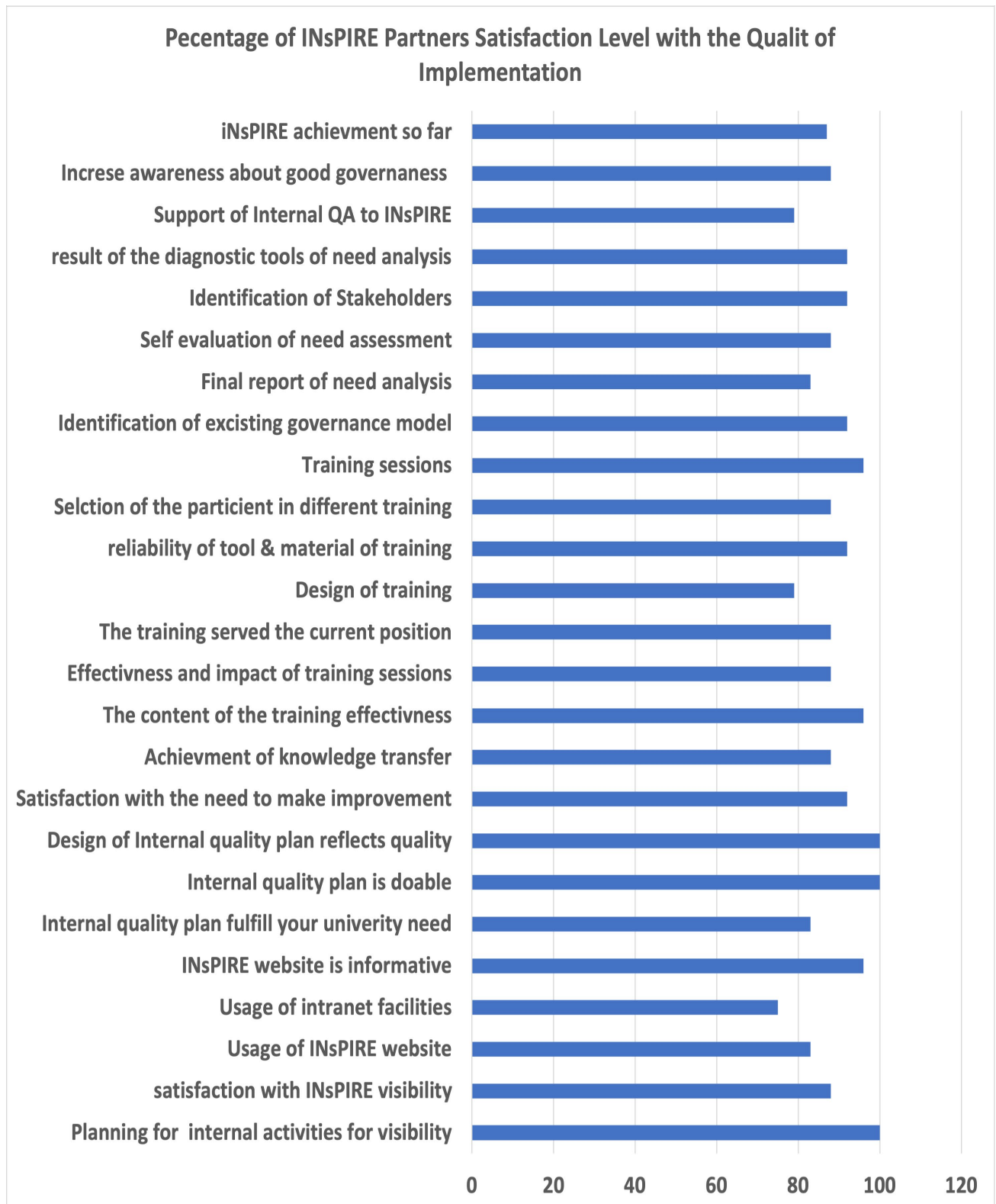
Conclusion: The application of workshop for partner universities is satisfactory with impact on a good number of participants This is according to the feedback from the survey and interviews.

6.7 Quality analysis of the outcomes:

quality assurance of INsPIRE project, is to present and summarize the findings and conclusions taken from the quality assessment tools. The aim of the monitoring and evaluation of INsPIRE is to ensure a high-quality level of work results and a very satisfactory achievements toward the expected impact.

To measure the quality of the outcomes of INsPIRE the External Evaluator considered different quantitative and qualitative tools are: 1- Quantitative measure of comprehensive quality survey tool to evaluate the performance of the different activities with its outcome and interactions. Also, 2- Complete qualitative integrated quality picture of the effect and impact of the training sessions, workshops, and deliverable through reviewing all the activities and the published materials. Together with Evaluation of the outcomes of structured multiple interviews conducted with the partner universities regarding the quality of the project on their universities and the ministry.

- The Interim quantitative analysis evaluation of the project:
quality is produced through detailed quality survey of the performance and outcomes of the different activities of the project during the first implementation period. Multiple questions were structured targeting the quality of the project through the multiple outcomes of the work packages. The questions were structured on the outcomes and the future expectations of the outcomes. The result of this tool is as the below diagram which reflect the percentage of satisfaction of the participant on different quality measures:



Conclusion: The above diagram shows high quality and expectation of the contents and outcomes of the project so far. The general result fluctuating between 75-100 %. Considering all the challenges INsPIRE went through, the result of the quality of the project performance is very good in its different aspects.

- The qualitative measures of the evaluation were considered through the review of the contents of the trainings, workshops, seminars, deliverable and their accordance with the expected outcomes in the proposal. The other qualitative tool of evaluation is comprehensive interview with the leaders of quality work package. All the activities that took place during the period of INsPIRE so far coincide with the goals and expected outcomes.

Conclusion: The total numbers of the participants from different Iraqi universities that have taken one or more training is 148. They represent all the partners from Iraq. It is expected that those trained people will run the consultative center in each partner university and serve as consultant to university leaders and decision makers.

7. External Evaluator General findings

The success of the project dedicated for capacity building is mainly measured by its goals' achievement. After in depth analysis of the project performance and outcomes it can be concluded that INsPIRE achieved many tasks that lead to capacity building in the partner universities and has affected a change in the mind set of individual participants. The INsPIRE vision is to be involved decision making for multidimensional aspects by the leadership to make a positive change into internal governance of the higher education system of the beneficiary Iraqi universities. The evaluation parameters that are considered for the evaluation are: the effectiveness, the efficiency, sustainability, and the European added value of the actions that took place.

7.1 Effectiveness:

Effectiveness investigates what extent were the objectives achieved. All the activities (training, workshops, meetings, data collections, discussions, publications) were considered quantitatively and qualitatively in the effectiveness analysis which adopted the following indicators:

- The achievement of the topics of the training like: University Autonomy, Governance Models, Accountability, Trend in \ University Models, are comprehensive factors toward effective outcomes of the project topics. The continuity of the different training topics and workshops made the project more effective.
- Bringing strategy and culture of quality, this is achieved by the offered training sessions on the Quality and workshop on quality assurance in higher education.
- Bringing Culture of internationalization through training session on Trend on Internationalization. This topic is one of the cores of the modern university governance.

- The trained 148 staff members from the different Iraqi universities considered as preparation of professional workforce within the higher education system in different Iraqi universities along with the Ministry of Higher Education in Baghdad, the trained staff will serve and advocate for the cause of the project.
- To enhance the network between European partner universities and Iraqi institutions for future collaboration.

7.2 Efficiency:

efficiency refers to the use of resources toward the achievement of those project goals. Our observation so far, is that the financial allocations and the human resources are used in efficient way to serve the project cause.

The full capacity of the European human resources is used for knowledge collecting data, analyse data and knowledge transfer for the aim of the project. Also, the financial aspect is used so far for European staff cost and training. The budget was used as well for the kick-off in person meeting in Siena University in 2019. No more financial allocation was used for the Iraqi partner university due to challenges with money transfer that need a decision from Ministry of Finance which is beyond the partner universities ability. The feedback from the Ministry of Higher Education in Baghdad regarding this issue is that they are working on it and there is a promise to be solve soon.

Having the Iraqi academics devoted their efforts and time to the project without having had any staff cost received from the project so far has a negative impact to their motivation which is in turn reflects on the project outcomes.

Although the budget is efficient to a certain extent, but the Iraqi partners universities need to think of the co-funding part of the project.

7.3 Sustainability:

Sustainability is referred to the continuation of benefits of the project after its lifetime. So, the main question here is: To what extent will the outcomes and the activities of the project be expected to continue after the project ends?

By now the partner Iraqi universities have put in place a strategy to continue the implementation with a sound good work plan. The project has trained and built capacity of academic staff from Iraqi university, they are ready to integrate good practices into their universities, they will use their new knowledge to advocate for the change as well. This is evidenced by the quality survey and the management survey which shows great impact of the project on the attendees. This project is invested on the human resource development through increasing capacity and promoting professionalism at international level for the universities involved in this project. This investment will sustain in each university through its staff, and it will be the catalyst for initiating a culture of good governance in the Higher Education System in Iraq. The networking that the

project provides between European expert and Iraqi staff could be a seed for more collaboration. It is important to strengthen institutional relations between the Iraqi universities and the European universities, to open new synergies among them for more collaboration to sustain the relations.

The consultation office at each university will be in effect the custodian for the aspect of sustainability in each of the partner Iraqi universities and this will be one of the most important outcomes of the project when they will start operating.

7.4 European Added Value:

- The project provides opportunity for the Iraqi universities to be trained and share experiences and knowledge with the European partner universities. The experts from Europe gave comprehensive training sessions and workshops to academic staff in order to convey their experiences in European higher education to the Iraqi system
- Enhancement of the skills of staff in Iraqi universities in accordance with European standards in higher education.
- Strengthening the academic networking and internationalization between the European universities and the Iraqi universities.
- Developing academic staff acquainted with the European style of university governance and European academic values and opportunities.

8. INsPIRE's Challenges

INsPIRE project started at a very difficult time in Iraq history. Like all the Iraqi institutions, the higher education system in Iraq went through hard wars, civil war, embargo, ISIS crises since 1980. We can summarize these challenges as the followings:

- The project started just after the Iraqi government and forces from the international community liberate Iraqi territories from ISIS. ISIS controlled more than $\frac{1}{4}$ of the Iraqi territories for more than two years. The liberation war was tough and affected the different levels of Iraqi governmental and non-governmental sectors and the Iraqi communities. Some partner universities like University of Mosul were controlled by ISIS which destroyed its infrastructure, some other partner universities are located adjacent to the ISIS controlled areas. The INsPIRE project started just after the liberation of most of the Iraqi lands from ISIS control. Technically, all parts of Iraq were involved in the war against ISIS just before INsPIRE started. The middle and southern parts Iraq were under severe terrorism attacks and political unrest before and during the implementation of INsPIRE. This complex environment is extremely difficult for the coordinator and the partner universities from Iraq and Europe to achieve the ultimate goals of the project within the planned time span.
- During the period of implementation of the project, the COVID 19 hit the world which affected INsPIRE project just like any other projects worldwide. Most of the activities like meetings, trainings and discussions were turned over to online. The online meeting is great

solution to keep life going but it won't give the ultimate outcomes compared to in person interaction.

- The third challenge INsPIRE was facing is the Iraqi universities have no previous experiences with Erasmus Plus projects in Iraq except the northern Kurdistan Region of Iraq where the universities over there implemented multiple Erasmus projects and have the required knowledge of dealing with European international projects. Nevertheless, the universities in Kurdistan Region enjoy more autonomous system than the other part of Iraq which made the implementation phase way easier.
- However, all the partner universities of INsPIRE would like to implement the project smoothly with great outcomes, but in such completely centralized system they couldn't make any action without the approval from the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Baghdad. The said ministry in turn is very much connected to different ministries like the Ministry of Finance and all the involved bureaucracy. Therefore, it is not possible as yet for every partner university to have its own bank account to facilitate the money transfer from the European coordinator. The continuous change of the Leading administrators in the Ministry in Baghdad added another complex segment to the implementation.
- The delay of the signing of the partnership agreement affected the implementation for almost 10 months. As the project was put on hold for the period from Sept. 2019 until June 2020 when the partnership agreements were signed by all the partners.
- Taking into consideration the above obstacles that face INsPIRE implementation, the project progress is on the way of achieving its final goals as indicated by the success in the implementation with good outcomes of most of the work packages in the current schedule.

9. Opportunity/Threat analysis form External point of view

This Opportunity/Threat analysis form external point of view might help shows the perspective of the progress of the project. The conclusions below were diagnosed from the overall qualitative and quantitative picture of the project activities, participations and deliverable.

Opportunities	Threats
<p>The Ministry of Higher Education shows its support to the project, and they try to facilitate their activities.</p> <p>There is a tendency to make a change in the HE governance system.</p> <p>Most of the Iraqi partner universities are committed and trying to make change.</p> <p>COVID19 Is easing of and many countries are back to normalcy.</p>	<p>Required change will in considerable part need approval from higher level within the Ministry of Higher Education which might be a delaying factor.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The partner Iraqi universities have no autonomy in decision making regarding the project. No specialized academic staff participating with required background in higher education system management.

<p>Universities are looking for beneficial collaboration with substantial outcomes. The project has elaborated a comprehensive website which is accessible to all. The possibility of the efficient use of the technology in Iraq will help increasing the efficiency, and reduce the time of operation. The rich information that INsPIRE equips its partner might benefit other universities in Iraq outside the consortium. Open doors for more opportunity for Iraq higher education institutions. Level of commitment of the personnel is medium to high.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Money transfer to the Partner universities in Iraq is not smooth and quick and needs new legislation from the Ministry of Finance. 7. Poor English language skills for many of the participants. 8. Most of the participants have no previous experience with European projects.
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10. Recommendations

In the process of examining the implementation of the INsPIRE project in the Iraqi universities it is pertinent to suggest recommendations which are thought will enhance the implementation phase of this project as in the following:

- Many of the challenges that were faced since the start of the implementation phase stemmed from the fact that all communications and interactions were online. It is suggested here that the remainder of the planned meetings should all be in-person to clarify the way forward for completion of the INsPIRE project.
- The financial issue and money transfer to Iraqi universities need to be solved as soon as possible through the support of the presidents of the Iraqi partner universities, as they have easy accesses to the decision makers within the Ministry of Higher Education in Baghdad.
- In an interview of the current external evaluator with the coordinator of Al-Karkh University of Science, it was discussed that the Iraqi universities ought to draw up plans for phased gradual changes in their modes of governance in line with the spirit of the INsPIRE project, and recommend that the Ministry of Higher Education supports this positive change. This would imply stepping upwards through different levels of universities autonomy gradually. We strongly support this recommendation-
- The interviews showed high levels of commitment and engagement. We suggest that we use this momentum for moving forward with the remaining part of implantation of INsPIRE through dealing with the pending issues.
- A visit by European partners to some Iraqi partner universities is crucial at this stage to see first hand the on going governance system and to keep the engagement level high through their meetings with Iraqi universities and the Ministry of Higher Education leaders and decision makers.