

«INnovative governance Practices for Higher Education Institutions in Iraq»

Virtual Partners' meeting 25-26 January 2022

MINUTES



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Agenda Day 1 January 25th 2022

| 09-30 – 10.00 | Greetings and introduction to the Partnership Meeting INsPIRE update on the activities performed Presentation of the workplan for 2022 Professor Mussari, University of Siena |
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| 10.00 – 10.15 | The role of Internationalisation Marcello Scalisi, UNIMED |
| 10.15 – 10.45 | WP2 – Presentation of activities performed Presentation of remaining tasks Paulo Resende da Silva, University of Evora Nazar Haddad, University of Basrah |
| 10.45 – 11.00 | Coffee break |
| 11.00 – 13.00 | WP3 – Presentation of the WP workplan Presentation of the WP3 tools Discussion over the WP3 next steps Nazim Irem Celal, Istanbul Aydin University University of Sumer |
| 13.00 – 13.30 | WP4 – Training week in Bologna Filippo Sartor, University of Bologna University of Mosul |





SCOPE OF THE MEETING

The first day of the virtual partners' meeting had the following scopes:

- To present the project work plan and its deadlines;
- To present the results of the WP2 performed training activities and of the remaining tasks;
- To present the WP3 work plan, the organization of its tasks and the tools that will be used;

To propose a work plan for the Training week in Bologna related to WP4.

MINUTES

Welcome and opening

The meeting was opened by the Project Coordinator – Professor Riccardo Mussari from the University of Siena - who thanked all the partners for their presence, underlining that the joint participation and high commitment of all partners is crucial for the implementation of the project's activities planned for 2022, the last year of INsPIRE. Particular importance has been given to the timing of the project, underlying the necessity to conclude the activities by 2022, as approved by EACEA.

General updates and illustration of upcoming activities and deadlines

Professor Mussari started his presentation by highlighting that an update on WP5 was not included in the Meeting Agenda because a meeting with the representatives of the Iraqi Ministry of Education (leader of WP5) is planned for the following weeks.

He then recalled the activities already performed from the beginning of the project (WP1, part of WP2, plan of WP3, and the transversal WPs, i.e. WP6., WP7 and WP8). He particularly thanked Professor Paulo Resende da Silva from the University of Evora (leader of WP2) for his great job done in WP2, both in terms of compliance and of accountability.

He then presented a proposal of agenda for the upcoming remaining tasks in which the project's inpresence activities are planned during the spring and summer months, hoping in a better pandemic situation.

Professor Mussari also presented the activities that should be performed in-presence during the period between May and September 2022:

- WP2. 3 training study visits at EU Universities (Siena, Evora, Aydin)
- WP4. Train the trainers International Relations Strategies (Bologna)
- WP4. National workshop at the Ministry of Higher Education (Baghdad)
- WP5. National Consultative workshop report (Baghdad)
- Mid-term Partners' General Meeting

Also the final Partners' General Meeting, to be held at the end of the year, will hopefully be held in presence.





The role of Internationalisation

Mr. Marcello Scalisi –Director of UNIMED– gave a brief speech about the importance of cooperation between European Universities and the Iraqi ones. He underlined that the EU, through programs such as Erasmus+ –that INsPIRE is part of– is trying to harmonize the high education systems of countries, making international cooperation the fulcrum of these programs' success. He recalled INsPIRE as a means to give Iraqi Universities the autonomy to manage their institutions by themselves and to improve their education system as a whole. Mr. Scalisi pointed out the importance of working on mobility both of students and of researchers, but also of making clear internationalization plans and of creating right international networks. Hoping to see all the partners in presence in the future, Mr. Scalisi left the floor to the following speaker.

Update on WP2

Professor Paulo Resende da Silva from the University of Evora – leader of WP2 –, on behalf also of the University of Basrah – co leader of WP2 –, gave the presentation. He presented the tasks already performed and those still to be performed.

As for the activities performed, he presented a summary table to describe the capacity building webinars and workshops held. The table showed a decreasing number of participants and a low number of responses received to the quality of workshops survey proposed to the participants, thus making evaluation quite difficult. He finally invited the Iraqi partners to a higher and better participation.

As for the upcoming activities, he proposed a detailed schedule including:

- A MOOC;
- ToTs to be held between February and March locally at each Iraqi University;
- A virtual conference to be held at end of March to share the results of ToTs;
- 3 training study visit at EU Universities at Siena, Evora and Aydin Universities.

Prof. Paulo Resende da Silva then stated that he, as WP2 leader, will help the Iraqi partners in the selection of participants for ToTs and training study field visits, as to choose proper people for each activity. Martina Zipoli from UNIMED pointed out the importance of reporting all the activities that will be performed locally through reports, photos, list of participants and so on.

Update on WP3

Professor Celal Nazim Irem from Istanbul Aydin University gave the presentation also on behalf of Sumer University, co leader of WP3, underlining its fundamental role in supporting the dialogue with Iraqi Universities. After presenting the general aim of WP3 (writing an action plan by each Iraqi University), Prof. Celal Nazim Irem showed the objectives of WP3:

- Support the adoption and adaptation of international managerial techniques to the local context;
- Guarantee a successful implementation of governance changes in Iraqi HEIs;
- Periodically assess the impact and refine decisions based on the outcomes achieved and lessons learned during the action plan implementation.





As for the expected outcomes of WP3, Prof. Celal Nazim Irem highlighted:

- Development of an action plan for each Iraqi University;
- Reporting of the piloting (e.g. general guideline handbook).

Prof. Celal Nazim Irem recalled the importance of the Needs Analysis made by UNIMED within the scope of WP1 as a fundamental starting point for the development of the action plans.

He also stated that monthly feedback from the Iraqi Universities will be asked about the development and advances made to the action plans.

He showed a summary template on what the self-evaluation reports must include; the sections of the reports are: current situation, goals and strategy. He also reminded that having a common template allows to have comparative information from each University. Finally he proposed February 10th as the deadline to convey the WP3 participants and stated that after that date an online training workshop will be organized to show how to prepare the action plan.

Prof. Mussari intervened, thanking Dr. Nazim for his presentation and stressing the importance of choosing the right persons to participate in WP3 and of the little time left to conclude the Project's activities.

Prof. Celal Nazim Irem gave the floor to Professor Ilkay Karaduman from Istanbul Aydin University who showed a detailed strategic plan template indicating the report header, the paragraphs subdivision and the contents to be included in each paragraph.

Prof. Mussari thanked Prof. Celal Nazim Irem and Prof. Ilkay Karaduman for the detailed and accurate presentation and stimulated questions from the audience.

Dr. Hayder Dibs from Al Qasim Green University asked whether the strategic plan that they are going to draft will cover just the Project period or a longer time. Prof. Celal Nazim Irem and Martina Zipoli from UNIMED answered that the monitoring by the INsPIRE team will cover the period of the Project implementation, even if positive changes may remain for a longer time as a long-term outcome of the Project.

Update on WP4

Mr. Filippo Sartor from University of Bologna (leader of WP4), also on behalf of University of Mosul (coleader of the WP), gave the presentation. He underlined that WP3 and WP4 have many points in common, as they both deal with strategic planning; that's why the template for the internationalization strategic plan will be similar to the one presented for WP3.

Mr. Sartor showed the main block of activities of WP4, which are:

- 1. Fine tuning of the WP on the basis of baseline study (WP1);
- 2. Implementation of a train the trainers event on Internationalization Strategies at University of Bologna;





- 3. Writing/updating the university internationalization strategic plan in each Iraqi University (by September 2022)
- 4. Organization of a national workshop at the ministry of Education (by November 2022 TBC).

He then recalled internationalization aspects identified in the Needs Analysis conducted for WP2. Mr. Sartor then deepened the organization aspects of the trainings in Bologna, identifying:

- Schedule (16-19 May 2022);
- Number of participants (2 for each University + 2 from the Ministry + Staff from EU partners);
- Aim of the training (define template/methodology for a strategic plan for internationalization in each University);
- Selection process criteria (people dealing with internationalization at the highest University levels, directors of cultural or international relation divisions, and so on);
- Medical requirements for participants (reinforced green pass);
- Deadline for communicating the list of participants and filling the registration form (28th February).

Conclusion

Professor Mussari thanked all the participants and the speakers, and closed this first Meeting session.





Agenda Day 2 January 26th 2022

| 09.30 – 09-45 | Recap of the 1 st day of meeting Professor Mussari, University of Siena |
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| 09.45 – 10.30 | WP8 Management Administrative and Financial procedures Elena Cellai, University of Siena |
| 10.30 – 11.15 | WP6 Quality – Presentation of activities performed Presentation of remaining tasks Al-Furat Al-Awsat Technical University Paulo Resende da Silva, University of Evora External evaluation Rund Hammoudi, External Evaluator (TBC) |
| 11.15 – 11.30 | Coffee break |
| 11.30 – 12.15 | WP7 Dissemination Presentation of activities performed Planning of Sustainability Conferences Sudad Amer Dayl, University of Baghdad Martina Zipoli, UNIMED |
| 12.15 – 13.00 | Consolidation of decisions Professor Mussari, University of Siena |





SCOPE OF THE MEETING

The second day of the virtual partners' meeting had the following scopes:

- To present the results of the WP8 performed administration and financial procedures;
- To present the WP6(quality) performed training activities and of the remaining task and external evaluation;
- To present the WP7(dissemination) performed activities and planning of sustainability conferences;
- To propose the deadline for doing commitments related to continuing the project.

MINUTES

Welcome and opening

The meeting was opened by the Project Coordinator – Professor Riccardo Mussari from the University of Siena - who thanked all the partners for their presence. Prof. Mussari remembered that each WP is coordinated by two different universities and that one of these universities is always an Iraq university; he also stressed on the fact that only working together the Project's objectives can be achieved. He underlined the necessity of concentrating the Project's activities in the few months that remain until the end of the project, pointing out that not all the activities can be performed in the same months because of the probability of only a few months (spring-summer) available to work in person.

WP8 Management-Administration and Financial procedures

Dr. Elena Cellai from University of Siena started her presentation by highlighting what has been already done and what is left to be done. She said that all activities related to administration and finances are performed since the beginning of the project in 2019 including:

- From February 2019 to March 2020, the signature of partnership agreements (because of extended project);
- From May to August 2019, payment of the first pre-financing to EU partners;
- February 2021, interim report to the EACEA.

She displayed an interim report of the mid-last year (the budget heading, how much was granted and spent, pre-financing by EACEA).

She informed about an update of the interim report at the end of December. An interim report was supposed for 20 January 2022 as a summary for having the figures and in February for having the support documents. But it is presented as a partial interim report because only 4 partners have finished the staff summary. She displayed partial reporting. She said that the INSPIRE team needs to update the EACEA about the decisions on the contents of the project as well as on the financial progress of the project.





Then, she presented the upcoming activities including:

- Finalizing internal report by 25 February 2022:
 - Finalizing all staff summaries by 5 February 2022(the whole exercise and internal report);
 - Sending signed timesheets and joint declarations by the end of the February.
- Payment of second of their staff pre-financing to EU partners who have spent the 70% of previous installments.
- Payment of pre-financing to Iraq partners which is on the university of Siena account.
- Request for a second pre-financing payment to the EACEA if 70% of the previous one has been spent.
- Final report to EACEA by 60 days after the end of the project, i.e.,14 March 2023.

Dr. Elena Cellai recalled that the template of the summary had been sent by the INSPIRE team as the UNISI last December. Also, individual budgets should be updated to verify how many days you have on the budget and how many staff are available on the budget. The INSPIRE team has sent the project work plan updated that summarizes all the activities that all partners carried out in the reporting period (from 1 July 2020 to 31 October 2021). So, there are whole meetings and all the activities related to WPs. There are also the materials of the financial webinars that have been held in September 2020 between her and Paola Romano (from UNIMED) that were put on the project website. Also, the INSPIRE team is connected by one-to-one assistance to submit a budget and under summary by one-to-one meeting. She stressed that all partners must pay more attention to dates and to prepare interim reports. She explained about a summary of work plan of activities and date of completion that have been already prepared.

In the end of this section, Prof. Mussari added the comments on this presentation for resolving ambiguities. The first point was that public money must be spent according to very strict and serious regulations and then be controlled by editors, UNISI and EACEA. Regulation must be accepted by all partners. The second point was not to confuse the report with payment. In order to make the transfer of money possible from UNISI to Iraq universities, Iraq universities must have institutional account current. In the rest of the months, a meeting can be organized at the highest level by UNIMED, the university of Siena with the ministry of higher education of Iraq for presenting possible alternative proposals. The third point was preparing the report according to regulations.

WP6: Quality Assurance plan of the project

Dr. Hussein Jaaz from Al-Furat Al-Awsat Technical University presented the quality plan of the project also on behalf of University of Evora, WP6 co-leader. He started his presentation by saying that the purpose of WP6 is to measure how much the project impressions and meets its objectives.

He presented:

- the tools used to evaluate whether the project moves smoothly with plan timing for WP1, WP2, WP6 and WP7. He displayed that all activities in these WPs have been done.
- The table for the evaluation of each WP.
- Forms related to training sessions (workshops, learning processes, ...) for all participants.





- The tool used for the evaluation of participants (Google form).
- INSPIRE website evaluation that is supposed to start soon.

He indicated two participants' impressions as following:

- Low interaction and poor participation of participants in the different activities;
- Some sessions give just a basic and wide topic without a real framework and implement a case to practice the concept and see how it works in real life.

Mr. Hussein Jaaz added that he's waiting for other evaluations of WP.

Martina Zipoli from UNIMED pointed out that WP6 results must be collected in a report in such a way that all the details related to the work plans and improvements are desired to achieve an excellent result.

Prof. Paulo Resende da Silva from Evora university also emphasized that it sometimes created a kind of confusion and difficulties to understand the communication process and this must be solved.

Another important issue pointed out, was the difficulties in implementing all the activities demanded by the Iraqi partners because of the High volume of activities because some of them are still implemented related to the other WPs and some WPs are still at the beginning (WP3 and WP4).

External evaluation

Prof. Rund Hammoudi, External Evaluator firstly introduced herself briefly. She explained about her job importance and the several projects conducted at the international relationships. She explained the highlighted topics about her evaluation:

- The importance of internationalization as a way to have a relation with other universities in the world. She stressed on international projects as necessary tools for internationalization of universities.
- The importance of fundraising opportunities and networking
- The importance of EU projects such as Erasmus Plus that provide opportunities for universities mobility
- The importance of INSPIRE and its activities about which she will submit two reports (a mid-term report and the final report).
- The importance of the role of the external evaluator for the improvement of universities' situations.

At the end of her presentation, Prof. Hammoudi showed the result of the first step of evaluation conducted through a survey underlying, among the other things, that:

- This evaluation concentrated on the management but unfortunately many universities didn't respond to the survey;
- About 60% of participants were satisfied with the ongoing progress of INSPIRE;





- About 80% of participants were satisfied with the overall management of the INSPIRE;
- About 80% of the INSPIRE information were available;
- About 70% of INSPIRE activities were efficient and effective;

Prof.Mussari emphasized that international knowledge and relationships are necessary for universities.

WP7 Dissemination and Exploitation tasks

Dr. Sudad Amer Dayl from University of Baghdad gave the presentation also on behalf of UNIMED. He started his speech by identifying what have been already done and what need to be done next, including:

- Design of the dissemination and exploitation plan (Done)
- Creation and management of bilingual project website (Done)
- Preparation of dissemination materials, such as slides, postcard, project logo (Done)
- Deployment of dissemination and sustainability campaign(Must be done)
- Organization of the final conference(Must be done)

Dr. Sudad Amer Dayl explained better tasks performed in WP7:

- 7.1. Dissemination plan and exploitation strategies of the project: The final version of the dissemination and exploitation plan is put on the website on 21 May;
- 7.2. Project website that was first released in October 2019 in English and in November 2021 in Arabic that include the main activities and results of INSPIRE and all required material. Also, there is INSPIRE social media on Vimeo (showcase of all the project video and training sessions and Twitter (INSPIRE channel to display project news);
- 7.3. Dissemination and branding materials include project postcard, project poster, webinar flyers and twitter banner. INSPIRE should be presented to stakeholders and policy makers at the national level and dissemination materials are available on the Media section of the website. INSPIRE publications page records all appropriate news and the News page reports all projects developments and news.

He also presented sustainability of INsPIRE with the purpose of having structural impacts on participating universities; The commitment of Iraq universities to work on governance practices; The best of the consultative centers as a strategic asset for institutional improvement.

Then, Martina Zipoli from UNIMED pointed out that the project needs the contribution of every one to succeed, also highlighting the importance of reporting every activity that is performed. She also invited all participants to follow the INSPIRE social accounts and to publish a dedicated section of the project on its own institutional website. She mentioned the importance of the sustainability conference for presenting the results of WPs. Finally, she discussed the location of the final meeting that could be in Rome.

Prof. Mussari added some comments that all partners should be proud of being part of INsPIRE and it is important for all universities to show the capacities to produce results even at the international level.





Conclusion

Prof. Mussari Indicated that all partners should focus on planned activities and INsPIRE agenda. Also, Prof. reminded the upcoming activities of INsPIRE project presented during the previous session of the Meeting. He proposed all partners a detailed timeline for 2022 activities including:

- ✓ January 31 : deadline to fill survey for project quality evaluation(WP6)
- ✓ February 5: deadline to finalize staff summaries
- √ February 25: deadline to send signed timesheets and joint declarations
- √ February 10: deadline to communicate WP3 list of participants
- √ February 15: deadline to communicate ToTs list of participants (WP2)
- ✓ February 28: deadline to communicate WP4 list of participants and fill registration form
- √ February-March: ToTs at local level (WP2)
- ✓ June: training study visits at Siena, Evora, and Aydin universities (WP2)
- ✓ May 16-19: Train the trainers-international relations strategies in bologna (WP4)
- ✓ May/June (TBD): national workshop at the ministry of higher education in Baghdad (WP4)
- ✓ May/June (TBD): National consultative workshop in Baghdad (WP5)
- √ May/June (TBD): Mid-term partners' general meeting
- ✓ November/December (TBD): final partners' general meeting and conference

All the partners agreed with this proposed agenda and at the end of the meeting, Prof. Mussari thanked all the participants and the speakers and closed this second Meeting session.





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Pictures











