



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

Partners' General Meeting
Bologna, 16 May 2022

Minutes



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Welcome and registration of participants

The INsPIRE Partners' General Meeting has been held at the Rectorate building of the University of Bologna. Before the start of the Meeting all the participants registered (see Annex 1 for the list of participants). The scheduled Agenda (see Annex 2) has been fully respected.

Mr. Filippo Sartor from University of Bologna welcomed all the participants.

Professor Riccardo Mussari, Project coordinator, opened the session, highlighting the relevance of holding the meeting in the oldest University in the world. He also stressed on the importance of meeting in person after more than two years and on the necessity of keeping working hard in this last period of project implementation to reach the results promised to EACEA.

Professor Raffaella Campaner, Vice Rector for internationalisation at University of Bologna, thanked all the participants, emphasizing the importance of collaboration and of involvement in international Projects.

Mr. Marcello Scalisi, director of UNIMED, after thanking the University of Bologna for its hospitality and the University of Siena for the efforts made as Project coordinator, highlighted the role of UNIMED as facilitator of cooperation between European universities and the Iraqi ones and for their internationalization.

Professor Mudhafar Al-Zuhairi, Rector of Al-Furat Al-Awsat Technical University, after giving a brief recap of the INsPIRE Project life, stressed on the importance of achieving all the planned project objectives.

Finally, Dr. Moafaq Samir, representative of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MOHERS) in Iraq, after showing his gratefulness to the European Universities and UNIMED for the efforts made in the Project, highlighted the importance for the Iraqi MOHERS of getting involved in such a kind of international Project such as INsPIRE.

Project recap and updates

Professor Mussari opened the working sessions of the meeting, providing an overall presentation of the Project situation. He informed the partners that, as Project coordinator, he has a continuous dialogue with the delegate of EACEA, with whom he had a meeting the week before during which the delegate was informed about the objectives already reached and the other ones that are supposed to be reached by the end of the Project. Prof. Mussari also stressed on the importance of both the two different parameters through which the Project activities are evaluated (i.e., the managerial and the financial one) and on the need of not making them overlap.



After this brief introduction, the Project Coordinator showed the plan that was supposed to be followed after the last INsPIRE General Meeting (25-26 January 2022) and stated that few of these activities were actually performed. For this reason, he stressed that all the project activities must be performed by the end of the 2022 (as in January 2023 the Project will expire) and that no other project extensions will be needed if all the partners work and commit themselves. He pointed up that responsibility is not only in the hands of the leaders and co-leaders of the WPs, but everyone must do his/her best for the success of the entire Project.

He stressed on the necessity of accomplish all the tasks, especially those ones for which there is a delay (such as those related to WP3).

Prof. Mussari also put emphasis on the fundamentality of WP5, that is coordinated directly by the MOHERS and on the need of not confusing the WP5 outputs with financial issues.

He then presented the activities that are to be performed by the end of the Project, highlighting the necessity of implementing all the in-presence activities from May to September (for weather reasons).

He also informed the Iraqi partners that he would meet the European colleagues in that afternoon to discuss and propose a calendar for the field visits that must be done under the scope of WP2. In this regard, he also took the opportunity to push Iraqi partners to do their best in choosing the right persons for each field study. The purpose of the field study, in fact, is not to teach-and-learn new contents, but rather to share knowledge, so persons already in the relevant field for the field visit need to be chosen.

He ended his presentation by underlying the openness of European Universities for any kind of cooperation (research, institutional, and so on), but by the moment the partnership must fulfill the specific objectives promised to EACEA.

He also proposed to have at least two other general partners' meeting (a mid-term one in Istanbul and the final one in Bagdad).

WP2: Training and capacity building activities for internal staff in quality assurance and strategic planning

Professor Paulo Resende da Silva from University of Evora gave the presentation also on behalf of the University of Basrah, co-leader of WP2. He did a recap of the WP2 tasks already performed and of those still to be carried out. Among the latter there are:

- 3 training study visits (T2.5);
- Organizing and conducting capacity building in Iraq (T2.6);
- Organization of 10 ToTs at local level (T2.7).



As for the 10 ToTs, Professor Paulo Resende da Silva stated that very few information he has received from the Iraqi partners on whether and how they are conducting their ToTs; moreover, he warned that a delay in the performance of each task will cause an overlap with other tasks, thus making the achievement of all the goals more difficult. He also proposed a schedule for the 3 training study visits at the European Universities.

A brief discussion about the availability of Iraqi Universities in joining the field visits in the scheduled way followed. Prof. Resende da Silva concluded that he would have discussed again the schedule with the other European colleagues who will host the field visits (Siena and Aydin Universities) after that Meeting.

WP3: Implementation of changes and best practices through action plans

Professor Celal Nazim Irem from Istanbul Aydin University gave the presentation also on behalf of Sumer University, co-leader of WP3. Due to the impossibility of coming to Bologna in person, the presentation of Prof. Celal Nazim Irem was made online via the Teams platform. He stated the action plans of each Iraqi University, the main output of WP3, will be designed on the basis of the needs analysis made by UNIMED in WP1. He also explained that, to date, Iraqi partners have been asked to identify their main problems, their vision and mission, their objectives and to think about a possible strategy to mitigate their problems. Prof. Celal Nazim Irem then showed some practical examples and models to design strategic plans and stressed on the importance of performing a wise SWOT analysis.

He also informed that just 5 universities out of 10 have already sent the draft of their action plan. These universities are Al-Qasim Green University, Basrah University of oil and gas, Southern Technical University and Wasit University; a fifth University -Al Karkh University of Sciences- will discuss its action plan draft with the WP leader during a zoom meeting scheduled for 26th of May. The WP3 leader invited the University that have not sent their draft to do so as soon as possible.

Professor Mussari added a brief comment by arguing that the action plans must be individual and designed according to the specificities and needs of each University.

WP4: Modernization of Iraqi HEIs International Relations Strategies

Mr. Filippo Sartor from University of Bologna (leader of WP4), also on behalf of University of Mosul (co-leader of the WP), gave the presentation. He said that there is a strict link between WP3 and WP4, as international strategies developed in WP4 represent a specific field inside the action plans designed in WP3. He reminded the 4 main blocks of activities involved in the WP:

- 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
- 4) Organization of a national workshop at the Ministry of Education

Then Mr. Sartor introduced the training activities that that would be carried out from the next day (17 May) until Friday (20 May) there in Bologna. In particular, after briefly showing the aims of the training and how participants of the training were selected, he informed the participants that during the training the Iraqi partners would define the infrastructure of their strategic plans.

Mr. Sartor concluded his presentation by encouraging the partners to be original in designing their strategic plans by focusing on their own strengths and capabilities.

WP5: Launching of consultative centers in HEIs to coordinate University, state and not-state actors

Dr. Moafaq Sachit Samir, representative of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Iraq, gave the speech. As he is the new representative if the MOHESR, he took the opportunity to introduce himself and to tell the partners that he had to familiarize with the Project and in particular to understand what the WP5, of which the MOHESR is leader, required.

He stated that he will work for the launch of consultative centers, proposing to change the “centers” in “units” to make them more feasible according to the administrative and financial issues that the creation of centers would imply. He also informed the participants that a letter has been sent by the MOHESR to the Project Coordinator, Professor Riccardo Mussari from University of Siena, in which his help for three specific issues is asked.

WP6: Project Quality and Evaluation

Dr. Ali Al-Shamani from Al-Furat Al-Awsat Technical University gave the presentation also on behalf of University of Evora, WP6 co-leader. He showed that a lot of people changed in the Quality Internal Committee since 2019, when the INSPIRE Project started.

Through a monitoring grid on project progressing, he also presented the deadline accomplishment of the various tasks included in each WP and whether they were accomplished on time or not. He also presented the survey that was sent to all the partners through which each can assess the quality of the project.

He also made the participants aware that according to the participants’ expressed opinions, low interaction and poor participation of the partners have characterised the different activities of the Project; moreover, many participants asked for more concrete training sessions that allow them to understand how to put in practice the theoretical concepts analyzed to see how they work in real life.



Ms. Martina Zipoli from UNIMED then informed the participants that an external evaluator has been selected and appointed and that her first report has been prepared and is ready for dissemination.

WP7: Dissemination

Dr. Sudad Amer Dayl from University of Baghdad gave the presentation also on behalf of UNIMED, co-leader of WP7. He firstly showed the tasks of WP7; in particular, the tasks already accomplished are:

T7.1 Design of the dissemination and exploitation plan

T7.2 Creation and management of the Project website

T7.3 Preparation of dissemination Materials

The tasks still to be performed are:

T7.4 Deployment of Dissemination and Sustainability Campaign

T7.5 Organisation of the final Conference

Dr. Sudad Amer Dayl then showed the Dissemination and Exploitation plan that has been validated in May 2021. He also presented the updates that were made to the contents INspIRE website and the social media used for the Project (Vimeo and Twitter).

WP8: Management and wrap up of the meeting

Professor Mussari, Project coordinator from University of Siena presented the letter he received from the MOHESR. In the letter three main requests are made by the MOHESR:

1. The request for a further project extension till June 2023 to better achieve the results of the Project.
2. The request for an amendment in the MOU signed between the University of Siena and Iraqi Universities by adding one paragraph stating “the Iraqi government will open institutional bank accounts in Dollars or Euro for the Minister oh Higher Education and Scientific Research in Iraq, to receive the financial transfer from the University of Siena and the new issued MOU will be signed by the Minister of Finance in the Iraqi government.
3. The request to University of Siena of buying by itself the equipment for Iraqi Universities (as expected under WP5) and then to ship it or give it via the EACEA delegates in Iraq.

The letter also informed that the Iraqi Ministry nominated a committee of WP5 that started carrying out its part.

The Project coordinator stated that he would inform the project officer about the received letter to find a solution for the requests made. He then moved on dealing with the issue of bank accounts, as the Iraqi universities still do not have institutional bank accounts to which the Project money can be transferred. He also informed the participants that he had different meetings with the representatives of the Ministry and with the Project officer of EACEA to try to solve the bank account issue once for all.

Professor Mussari then informed the partners that he would send the letter received from the Ministry to the Project officer of EACEA and that he would arrange a meeting with him to discuss the issue and try to find a solution.

He also invited the Partners to prepare the financial report and documentation seriously, including just the activities effectively performed in the scope of INsPIRE.

Finally, the coordinator informed the partners that four new positions have been appointed within WP8; the positions are:

- Internal auditor
- Project Manager supporter
- Training and capacity building supporter
- Deliverables achievement supporter

Conclusion

The Project coordinator, Professor Mussari, thanked all the participants and the speakers and closed the Meeting.

ANNEX 1: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

First Name	Family Name	Institution	e-mail address
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ANNEX 2: AGENDA OF THE MEETING





INsPIRE

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

Partners Meeting

Bologna, 16 May 2022

AGENDA

Venue:

Rettorato – University of Bologna, Via Zamboni, 33
Aule Belmeloro - University of Bologna, Via Beniamino Andreatta, 8



Monday, 16 May 2022

09:30 a.m. – 04:30 p.m.

Rettorato – University of Bologna, Via Zamboni, 33

09:30 – 10:00	<i>Welcome and registration of participants</i>
10:00 – 10:30	Institutional Greetings Riccardo Mussari, University of Siena University of Bologna Marcello Scalisi, UNIMED Moafaq Samir, Representative of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Iraq Mudhafar Al-Zuhairi, Rector of Al-Furat Al-Awsat Technical University
10:30 – 11.00	Project INsPIRE: where are we now and what is next Riccardo Mussari, University of Siena
11.00 – 11.20	WP2 Training and capacity building activities for internal staff in quality assurance and strategic planning. Paulo Resende da Silva, University of Evora
11.20 – 11.35	<i>Coffee break</i>
11.35 – 12.15	WP3 Implementation of changes and best practices through action plans Celal Nazim Irem, Istanbul Aydin University
12.15 – 13.00	WP4 Modernization of Iraqi HEIs International Relations Strategies Filippo Sartor, University of Bologna
13.00 – 14.00	<i>Lunch</i>
14.00 – 14.30	WP5 Launching of consultative centers in HEIs to coordinate University, state and not-state actor MOHESR
14.30 – 15.00	WP6 Project Quality and Evaluation Al-Furat Al-Awsat Technical University
15.00 – 15.30	WP7 Dissemination University of Baghdad
15.30 – 15.45	<i>Coffee break</i>
15.45 – 16.30	WP8 Management and wrap up of the Meeting XY, University of Siena
20.00	<i>Social dinner</i> <i>To celebrate that we can finally sit at the same table!</i>

ANNEX 3: PICTURES



