



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

Partners' Final Meeting
January 11th, 2022

MINUTES



Co-funded by the
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OBJECTIVE OF THE MEETING

The final meeting was organized as a broad event through which not only present a brief overview of the latest activities that have been completed, but above all to share considerations on the potential benefits that the Project will leave to the Iraqi education system. Given this broad scope of the meeting, the Partners were strongly encouraged to extend the invitation also to other people, within their institutions or belonging to other Universities or organizations, potentially interested in learning about the INsPIRE results.

MEETING PARTICIPANTS

Despite the invitation to participate, none of the Iraqi Partners attended the meeting. The only exception is Dr. Moafaq Samir, who only lent himself to give his institutional greetings as representative of the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education. The absence of all Iraqi colleagues was anticipated through an email sent by Dr. Samir himself to all the INsPIRE Partners the evening before the meeting. The justifications for the absence, promoted at the forefront by the Iraqi Ministry, are as follows:

- a) the final meeting should have been held in Baghdad after completing all the requirements of the project. However – according to the Ministry – there are very important issues still pending.
- b) the still unresolved problem of the equipment purchase and personnel costs.

Ultimately, the meeting was attended only by the European partners. This implied a change in the Agenda that had been prepared also taking into account the speeches of the Iraqi partners who were supposed to share their experiences regarding the last tasks performed.

The complete list of participants and the Agenda are attached to this document.

MINUTES

Opening and institutional greetings

The meeting was opened by the Project Coordinator, Professor Riccardo Mussari from the University of Siena. After thanking the partners attending the meeting, he mentioned the emails exchanged in the previous days with the Ministry's representative that announced that the Iraqi colleagues would not have attended the meeting. Professor Mussari highlighted the importance of the event as a great opportunity to share the outputs of the Project and to make reflections on the possible outcomes. He also recalled the difficulties encountered since the beginning phases of the INsPIRE Project, stressing on

how, despite them, the partnership managed to accomplish important results. Professor Mussari thanked all the partners for their involvement, devoting a special thanks to the colleagues from UNIMED for their continuous commitment in all the activities performed.

Dr. Martina Zipoli, from UNIMED, brought the institutional greetings on behalf on the whole UNIMED staff. She underlined that INsPIRE has been a great opportunity to learn about different higher education systems, starting from the Iraqi one, up to the Italian, Portuguese and Turkish ones. Dr. Zipoli stressed on how INsPIRE's final meeting represent the starting point for a potential collaboration between the European Universities and the Iraqi ones, and not just the end of the Project.

Dr. Moafaq Samir, representative of the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education, took the floor. He said he was glad to have taken part in INsPIRE and extended his regards and thanks to all the Partners for the efforts done. On behalf of the MOHESR, Dr. Samir stated that, as far as they are concerned, the Project cannot be considered concluded because of some still unresolved issues. He specified that the faults for the failure to open the bank accounts for Iraqi Universities – one of the most critical points according to the Iraqi Ministry – cannot be attributed to anyone and that probably the Project should not have been signed before the bank accounts were opened. Given that unresolved issues, Dr. Samir reported that permission was not granted to Iraqi Universities to participate in the meeting. He concluded his speech by sharing the MOHESR's willingness to continue collaborating on other projects with the European Partners.

WP2 – Training process: feedback from the WP leader

Professor Paulo Resende da Silva from the University of Evora, leader of WP2, gave the presentation. He made a quick recap of the tasks completed, showing which ones were not concluded and which ones could have gone better. For example, he pointed out that he didn't get much news about the organization of the local ToTs. He also underlined that there were also Iraqi institutions that showed great efforts and commitment in the activities performed. Professor Resende da Silva pointed on two main issues that must be consolidate by the Iraqi education system, i.e., leadership and autonomy. Both the themes have been addressed during the training process done within the scope of WP2 and represent critical successful factors for HEIs. He concluded his presentation by thanking all for the opportunity he had to participate in the Project and by offering his availability in continuing to support the Iraqi colleagues for future cooperation.

Professor Mussari thanked Professor Resende da Silva for his speech, renewing his gratitude for the excellent work done as WP2 leader. Prof. Mussari also underlined how during the training process all the European partners did their best to involve the most suitable speakers for each topic proposed and discussed; he underlined how the availability and presence of personalities such as Rectors, Vice-rectors

and Department Heads who intervened during the training activities is something valuable that should not be taken for granted.

WP3 – Strategic plans preparation: feedback from the WP leader

Professor Celal Nazim Irem, from Istanbul Aydin University, gave the presentation as leader of WP3. He presented a document that outlines the consultative process with the Iraqi partners followed by Istanbul Aydin University to develop the institutional action plans of each partner university. He demonstrated the efforts done in this process by also outlining that, together with his staff, he has arranged Zoom sections, both individually with single Iraqi Universities or in group, to support them in preparing the documents. He explained that, according to what they had set, each Iraqi University should have sent two documents: a strategic plan and an action plan. Professor Irem pointed out to have received eight strategic plans and six action plans.

Professor Mussari thanked Prof. Irem for his presentation. He underlined how the experience of Aydin Istanbul University represents one of the best demonstration of how a project like INSPIRE should work. He mentioned Aydin's prompt response to host the Partners' general meeting of January 2022, even if, in the end, it had to be held online due to the pandemic situation. He also mentioned the flexibility demonstrated by the Turkish colleagues in arranging an online event on January 9, 2023 to substitute the field visit that should have done within the scope of WP2 but that, due to institutional issues between Iraq and Turkey, could not have been done. Professor Mussari also pointed out that cooperation is key for Projects like INSPIRE. To this end, he said that due to some problems encountered by Aydin University in preparing the "Good Governance Handbook", one of the deliverables of WP3, all the European partners offered their availability to share the work needed to prepare it.

WP4 – International relation strategic plans: feedback from the WP leader

Dr. Filippo Sartor from University of Bologna (leader of WP4) gave the presentation. He pointed his attention on why strategic planning for internationalization matters, stating that planning for internationalization is associated with a wide array of opportunities and that it is extremely useful for different reasons, such as helping in making decisions or in classifying requests according to predefined priorities orders of each University. Dr. Sartor also outlined some risks that developing strategic plans for internationalization can bring; among these: standardization, a myopic focus on international rankings, lack of experience, underestimation of the needed resources and lack of autonomy in carrying out the actions described in the plan. Then Dr. Sartor described the steps followed to develop the plans and the main tools used (e.g., the SWOT analysis). Dr. Sartor gave some final insights stating that the essence of a strategy for internationalization is differentiation, highlighting how "copy and paste" strategies cannot work well. Moreover, he outlined that the internationalization strategy of one university is part of the internationalization of the local territory to which it belongs. Dr. Sartor mentioned the chapter he wrote for the Good Governance Handbook, suggesting that it may represent

a good starting point to prepare the strategic plans for internationalization. To conclude, Dr. Sartor depicted the main steps followed to prepare the strategic plans, starting from the local training held in Bologna in May 2022. He said that he received some preliminary plans by the Iraqi university in July 2022, which have been revised by the staff from the University of Bologna. In November 2022 he received only five revised strategic plans for internationalization from the Iraqi colleagues.

Professor Mussari thanked Dr. Filippo Sartor for his speech and for the good accomplishment of the activities of WP4. He underlined how the presence of the University of Bologna has been an added value for INsPIRE given its historical experience in internationalization strategies. Professor Mussari also pointed out on the importance of the collaboration of non-academics, such as Dr. Filippo Sartor who, as a manager at the University of Bologna, can offer different perspectives than those given by the rest of the partners.

WP5 – Stakeholders engagement

Given the refusal from the MOHESR representative to give the speech about the development of WP5, Prof. Mussari decided to spend a few words to take stock of the WP5 situation, clarifying that it was not his intent to take the Ministry place with his brief speech. Prof. Mussari stated that WP5 was the most difficult WP to be implemented, especially as regards the equipment purchase. In particular, he reminded that the tender that was launched in August 2022 has gone desert, so there would not be enough time to launch another tender and asses the benefits coming from the purchase of the equipment before the end of the Project. For this reason, EACEA would not have authorized a late purchase. Prof. Mussari concluded this intervention by saying that despite the equipment purchase could not be possible, some activities included in WP5 have been performed, such as the opening of the consultative centers. He then left the floor to the external evaluator.

External evaluation

Prof. Rund Hammoudi, External Evaluator of the INsPIRE Project, presented the final report on external evaluation she is working on and that will be delivered by January 14, 2023. She started her speech by communicating her recent submission of the last Project survey. After a brief presentation of the evaluation of the formal attributes of the Project (logo, website, and so on), she presented the progresses made with each task of each WP. After that, Dr. Hammoudi presented the results obtained from the survey concerning the training activities performed in Bologna in May 2022, showing a high degree of satisfaction from the participants. She also summarized the main challenges encountered by INsPIRE, including the war in the beginning phases of the Project implementation, the pandemic situation starting from 2020, the Iraqi Universities' lack of the required experience with big Projects, and the continuous changes in the responsible contact persons from each Partner Institution. The external evaluator showed that despite all these challenges, more than 80% of the Project's results have been achieved. She thanked the Project Coordinator, the UNIMED staff, the other EU partners and all the Iraqi colleagues for their efforts.

Prof. Mussari thanked Dr. Hammoudi for the great job done and for the enthusiasm she transmits while maintaining the required independence.

The sustainability of INSPIRE results

Dr. Martina Zipoli, from UNIMED, gave the presentation. She regretted not having the opportunity to share the thoughts included in the presentation with the Iraqi colleagues. This is because the aim of her speech was to highlight how the results of INSPIRE could be useful even after the end of the Project. Dr. Zipoli stated that ensuring the sustainability of the Project means putting in place actions with the objective of:

- maximizing the impact maximizing the impact of project results;
- making results available to different actors;
- integrating practices and plans developed during the project lifetime in a sustainable way using them actively at institutional level even after the project end;
- mainstreaming the experience.

Then she illustrated the key actions needed for the transferability of results. Among them, she mentioned the importance of transferring the Knowledge by making the learning material accessible to everyone, by transferring the know-how from the trained staff members to others and by transferring practices to other Iraqi institutions. Dr. Zipoli also pointed out on the importance of the International cooperation that can be made possible if Partners commit to maintain relations between institutions, to make the best out of the INSPIRE cooperation framework with new initiatives, mobility, exchanges. And if relations with European universities is reinforced. She concluded her presentation by recalling that information and results developed within INSPIRE will stay accessible to all.

Professor Mussari thanked Dr. Zipoli for her presentation and the entire UNIMED staff for its continuous support given during the entire period of the project implementation, underlying how UNIMED's work has been crucial for the successful achievement of most of the Project's activities.

Final greetings and closure of the meeting

Before closing the meeting, Professor Mussari gave some final remarks. First, he outlined how INSPIRE belongs to that type of Projects whose results will only be visible in the medium and long term, so we will have to wait to be able to make judgements. Second, he stressed on how Projects like INSPIRE should be deserved more attention from EACEA. According to him, in fact, EACEA should know more about the institutional context of countries like Iraq; to this end, he mentioned the fact that the Ministry did not allow the Universities to attend the meeting. He also shared his idea according to which EACEA should adapt its regulation to each country. Moreover, being the Institution sponsoring the Project, EACEA itself should have found a solution to the bank accounts issue, thus avoiding leaving the European partners – and the university of Siena in the frontline as Project Coordinator – spending so much time in trying to

find a solution to this issue. Third, Professor Mussari made a short consideration on the role technology has played during the Project implementation. Specifically, although recognizing the strengths of technology in allowing to arrange meetings and to stay in contact during the pandemic, he also pointed out on the side effects it could have brought to the effective achievement of the Project results. He particularly stated that if the Partnership have had more possibilities to meet in person, this could have led to higher satisfaction of the partners – especially the Iraqi ones – because it could have allowed a better trust building. For this reason, he stressed on the importance of having the opportunity to continue strengthening the relationships with Iraq.

Professor Mussari concluded his speech by saying that, despite being the Coordinator of INSPIRE has been very hard because of all the challenging circumstances, he is proud of the results achieved. Professor Mussari thanked all the participants and the speakers and closed the meeting.

List of participants

Partner Number	Partner Name	Name and Surname of participant	Email address
P1	Università di Siena	Riccardo Mussari	mussari@unisi.it
P1	Università di Siena	Pasquale Ruggiero	ruggiero@unisi.it
P1	Università di Siena	Simona Caramia	simona.caramia@student.unisi.it
P1	Università di Siena	Daniela Sorrentino	daniela.sorrentino@unisi.it
P2	UNIMED	Martina Zipoli	m.zipoli@uni-med.net
P2	UNIMED	Silvia Marchionne	s.marchionne@uni-med.net
P2	UNIMED	Caterina Gravina	c.gravina@uni-med.net
P2	UNIMED	Orlando Luca	o.luca@uni-med.net
P3	Università di Bologna	Filippo Sartor	Filippo.sartor@unibo.it
P4	University of Évora	Paulo Resende da Silva	pfs@uevora.pt
P5	Istanbul Aydın University	Celal Nazım İrem	celalirem@aydin.edu.tr
P5	Istanbul Aydın University	Nazli Akyuz	nakyuz@aydin.edu.tr
P6	Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Iraq	Moafaq Samir	unorg.scrd@gmail.com
	External Evaluator	Rund Hammoudi	rund.hammoudi@uod.ac

Final conference

Wednesday, January 11th, 2023

9:30 – 13:00 (CET)

Online meeting

Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82689204869>

Please note you need to register to access the virtual room.

AGENDA

9:30 – 9:50	Institutional greetings Riccardo Mussari, University of Siena Marcello Scalisi, UNIMED Xavier Flament, Project Officer at EACEA Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education representative (to be confirmed)
9:50 – 10:05	WP2 – Training process: feedback from the WP leader Paulo Resende da Silva, University of Evora
10:05 – 10:20	WP3 – Strategic plans preparation: feedback from the WP leader Nazim Celal Irem, Istanbul Aydin University
10:20 – 10:35	WP3 – Strategic plans preparation University of Wasit (to be confirmed)
10:35 – 10:55	WP4 – International relation strategic plans: feedback from the WP leader Filippo Sartor, University of Bologna
10:55 – 11:10	WP4 – International relation strategic plans University of Mosul (to be confirmed)
11:10 – 11:30	<i>Coffee break</i>
11:30 – 11:50	WP5 – Stakeholders engagement Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education representative (to be confirmed)
11:50 – 12:05	Comments from the audience: the Iraqi experience
12:05 – 12:15	Open discussion – Q&A
12:15 – 12:30	External evaluation Rund Hammoudi, External Evaluator
12:30 – 12:50	The sustainability of INsPIRE results Martina Zipoli, UNIMED University of Baghdad (to be confirmed)
12:50 – 13:00	Final greetings and closure of the meeting Riccardo Mussari, University of Siena