



Report on external evaluation of the RE@WBC project “Enhancement of HE research potential contributing to further growth of the WB region”

ERASMUS 561586-EPP-1-2015-1-RS-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP

The overall goal of this project is to contribute to enhanced management of human research potential at WB universities in line with national and EU strategies for researchers. Crucial project objectives include: 1) Improving institutional HR policies and practices by harmonising them with EU standards and strategies for researchers, and with national priorities for sustainable development; 2) Enhancing career development and cooperation opportunities of researchers through; 3) Professional and transferable skills improvement; and 4) Fostering regional cooperation in order to harmonise the management of university research potentials, and raise awareness about HRS4R principles. Activities are organized in 6 work packages to deliver the desired outcomes.

Overall achievement

Preparation for HR research management reform at WBC universities is the goal of WP1. The partners have prepared several questionnaires to map the research potential at WBC, and have gained experience on HR strategies at EU partners, classified in several categories, such as ethics and professional responsibility, recruitment, working conditions, education and training. They have realised a comparative study and most of the partners have developed action plans for HR strategy for researchers.

WP2 addresses practical issues on establishing university centres and HR offices, improving the competences of administration and university management, training the trainers, improving the procedures for promotion and ethical procedures, implementing plagiarism monitoring tools, and cooperation with scientific diaspora. All activities are reported with details on the agenda of the meeting, links to presentations and report on participants. Similar to this, all changes to University management procedures are documented including bylaws, regulation changes and updates, issuing new rulebook and amendments on existing legislative. This proves that these activities were realized with serious efforts to ensure good project results. However, not all required procedures are adopted by all project partners, as the coordinator has done. Plagiarism monitoring tools were introduced only at three partners.

Relations to the community are objective of WP3 that consists of activities to train researchers on C&C and HRS4R, young researchers, introducing pilot mentoring system, and publishing a guidebook. All organized seminars and trainings are well documented by relevant reports on organized event with all relevant statistical data on participants and increased awareness, knowledge and understanding, including training results. Pilot mentoring is introduced only by three partners. Guidebook is in its publishing phase.

WP4 is dedicated to ensure sufficient quality, by establishing Quality Assurance Committee (QAC), developing proper quality procedures, and reporting. The developed quality assurance strategy defines main responsibilities of all project actors, including, activity leaders, WP leaders, QAC, project coordinator, and steering committee. It also defines the workflow of reporting and levels of control. All reports on realized activities within work packages are easily accessible via web and prove that activities until April 2017 were

correspondingly well documented with details on quantitative identifications and quality outcomes.

Dissemination and exploitation constitute WP5. They have created a very functional and transparent web site, where one can get info on reports on realized project activities. The web site is constantly updated with new information. HR excellence in Research Logo is obtained by most of the consortium partners, and young researchers were motivated by introducing awards for their research work. A strategy was adopted by most of the universities on adoption of mentoring system and continual training of researchers.

WP6 is devoted to management activities. All public documents are transparent on the web site and they confirm that relevant activities were undertaken to manage all required activities and solve problematic issues, by established project management procedures. A software platform was used to enable monitoring of activities by corresponding project management bodies and coordinators.

The following table was produced by self-assessment of realised activities.

Progress of realised tasks X – completed task % – in progress empty – not realized	University of Nis	University of Kragujevac	University of Novi Sad	University of Belgrade	University of Montenegro	University of Sarajevo	University of East Sarajevo	University of Vlova	University of Tirana
1.1 Research potential at WBC universities mapped	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
1.2 Review of HR strategies at EU partners	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
1.3 Comparative analysis	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
1.4 Action plans for HE management reform	X	X	X			X	X	X	
1.5 HR offices and centres equipped	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2.1 University centres and HR offices reinforced	X	X	X		X	X	X		
2.2 Administrative staff competences improved	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2.3 University managements educated on the C&C implementation	X	X	X	X		X		X	X
2.4 HRS4R strategy created and adopted at partner universities	X	X	X			X	X	X	
2.5 Training trainers	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
2.6 Promotion procedures improved	X		X	X	X		X		
2.7 Plagiarism monitoring tools implemented	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
2.8 Ethical committee procedures improved		X	X	X				X	
2.9 Cooperation with scientific diaspora established						X		X	
3.1 Researchers trained on C&C and HRS4R	X	78 %	X	X	20 %	X	X	X	X
3.2 Webpages offer opportunity links		X			X	X	X	X	
3.3 Young researchers trained on research methodology	X	65 %	X	14 %	0%	90 %	X	X	X
3.4 Young researchers trained in various skills	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
3.5 Training on teaching methodology									
3.6 Pilot Mentoring system introduced	X		X					X	
3.7 Measures for enhancement of multidisciplinary in research									
3.8 Guide book published	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X

4.1 Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) established	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4.2 Project quality procedures developed	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4.3 WP reports	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
4.4 Annual QA reports	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
4.5 Reports analysis	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
4.6 External monitoring	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
5.1 Project web-site created and regularly updated	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
5.2 Promotional material distributed	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
5.3 Project results disseminated	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
5.4 The label "HR Excellence in Research" obtained by a number of WB partner universities	X	X	X				X	X	
5.5 Establishment of awards for young researchers		X		X	X	X	X		
5.6 Mentoring system adopted	X								
5.7 Strategy on continual training of researchers adopted	X						X		
6.1 Kick-off and coordinating meetings realised	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
6.2 Procedures for project management	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
6.3 Project management bodies set up and PA signed	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
6.4 Software platform for project management	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
6.5 Day-to-day coordination	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
6.6 Financial management	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%

Relevance

This project does not address changes at national strategy with human research management and tackles only University management only by introducing procedures and practices to motivate researchers and increase the research potential. Although, the project participants influenced national initiatives, this project cannot deliver any changes to national strategy. I strongly recommend that the project coordinators to make initiatives to meet with government officials and introduce the project concepts to be built in national strategies and action plans.

Some countries have already national strategies that coincide with their National Strategies and Action plan and will have a high impact, but there is no evidence on other countries.

The realized activities defined in the project *correspond* to the *project objectives* and addressed *real problems and needs*. The project partners have defined priorities and introduced (or improved the existing) University management procedures that boost research as defined by the project. The *target beneficiaries*, as defined within the project proposal have participated in planned activities and organized events (seminars, trainings, etc.) and other measures were taken to support the project realization (including implementation of plagiarism monitoring tools, establishing mentoring systems etc.).

All trainings and seminars were carefully prepared and organized. Final reports on all organized events and delivered documents are transparent and accessible on the web containing details on the organization, intended goal, lecturers and participants. Relevance can be confirmed by a high number of participants and quality of presentations. The

organizer of the event should also report on the selection criteria for all participants on realized activities, in order to ensure that the main target audience is communicated.

Finally, reaching the quality level to reach the “HR excellence in Research” label proves that the Universities have taken all relevant measures and ensured high standards, as the project proposal aims at. I believe that all project partners will obtain this label after implementing the relevant procedures at their University environments. I also suggest that the coordinator and other project participants will organize a final dissemination event for a more general audience including all other Universities that are not part of the consortium within the WBC country, in order to promote what they have achieved and encourage other universities to improve their research potential. This will improve the regional cooperation as this is one of the project outcomes.

Efficiency

The project was coordinated and managed in a professional manner. The web site, personal e-mail communication, skype conversations and other electronic supported technologies helped in better realization of all activities, as well as in coordination of a relatively huge number of project participants. In addition, the project partners communicated by a special software that helps in project management including monitoring of realized activities, which makes the efficiency to be on a high level.

Reporting is also realized on a high level, and all activities, organized events, trainings and seminars are well documented and relevant docs are shared on the project web site. This produces a high efficiency of project realization, especially that corresponding quality procedures are defined and set in early stages of the project realization.

Not all efforts and activities can be reported, for example, I have seen a real desire and excitement to make things work and the management team used a lot of energy and enthusiasm in realization, as one can also notice by just surfing the project web site.

Analysing how are the inputs and activities transformed into outputs, one can conclude that almost all the tasks have started in the planned time schedule, and are executed in planned deadline. No severe deviations have been noticed in project executions, and the small delays for some tasks were justified. The attached self-evaluation table about realised project activities confirms that relevant outputs are produced, and the remaining are on-going. As I was told, all planned activities will be realized until the project termination.

Effectivity

All wider and specific objectives defined in the project proposal are fulfilled and all main outputs delivered. The reports shared on the project web site confirm that the project purpose was reached by a high number of participants on the organized events. I would encourage the project coordinator to explain the strategy or methodology how the target group was selected for participation on the events, trainings or mentoring, giving details if all target audience is communicated. Note that not all project partners have the same level of participation for realization of the activities, as the project coordinating institution has, and would recommend that the others should also submit their reports sufficiently about realized activities, deviations if they occurred and how they were solved.

Promotional materials have been sufficiently developed and dissemination have been carried out. However, I would recommend that additional dissemination activities to be carried out, in order to raise awareness by including a more general audience and other Universities which are not in the consortium. These events need to cover also details on sustainability and further project results exploitation.

In addition to the web site and conventional electronic media dissemination, I can also recommend in near future to include social networks as means that will help in making better

and more efficient dissemination, etc. I am eager to see further development of these results that will make reaching the project purpose on a higher level.

Impact

The overall impression of the project is that it contributes to the realisation of the project general goal. All planned outcomes are being delivered or are in progress according to the project plan, including improvement of institutional HR policies and practices, enhancing career development offices and cooperation opportunities of researchers, improvement of professional and transferable skills and initiation of regional cooperation and harmonization of university research potentials. Especially, the awareness about HRS4R principles was raised, and obtaining a corresponding HR excellence in Research logo proves that the improved procedures are in practice.

In order to measure the overall impact, we need data on what was the situation prior to project start and what is the situation now. Since we lack data to make this comparison, I encourage the project participants to make a questionnaire among industry partners and career offices in order to evaluate the level the researchers are prepared for the labour market and society, as this is one of the essential project goals. Also, another questionnaire would evaluate the participants if the desired level of competences is enhanced via the conducted practical trainings and seminars. This would give sufficient answer on the project impact and quality of project results.

Sustainability

I recommend that a proper sustainability plan will be produced and evidence about its realization demonstrated.

Analysing the project sustainability, one can confirm that the project reached sufficient institutional sustainability, since almost all introduced procedures are supported by University bylaws and regulatory documents (decisions of Senate, Rector's office, etc.), and only a small number of them need to be adopted by all project partners. Some of the consortium partners should also initiate changes to national strategies and action plans to be updated according to these procedures.

Financial sustainability needs to be supported by action plans in addition to the adopted procedures and enable sufficient financing of the proposed procedures, presented by budget headings. For example, the financial sustainability means that the University strategy will be accompanied by an action plan that integrates the costs for maintenance and running the plagiarism software, existence of mentoring system, awarding the young researchers etc.

Enabling trained personnel in career development offices and management that will continue delivering trainings and seminars to researchers and enhance competence skills is must do action. Note, that some of the project partners have not established proper functioning of corresponding centers, and this needs to be corrected, as the project contractor has realized.

In addition, some more efforts need to be taken to motivate the researchers and enhance skills of researchers when they reach the market. I encourage that each University should organize the "Best researcher award" each year.

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