



INTERIM QUALITY EVALUATION REPORT

University of Montpellier, WP5 Quality leader

09/2020

Project Acronym:	MINERVA
Project full title:	STRENGTHENING RESEARCH MANAGEMENT AND OPEN SCIENCE CAPACITIES OF HEIS IN MOLDOVA AND ARMENIA
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INTRODUCTION

1. CONTEXT

The MINERVA project is a Capacity Building in Higher Education project financed by the EACEA¹ and coordinated by the Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova. It aims to contribute to the strengthening of Research Management and Open Science capacities of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Moldova and Armenia and associates in total 16 partners (see list below). The project started in January 2019 and will last until January 2022.

More particularly, the objectives of the project are:

- To advance national and institutional guidelines, policies, and incentives related to the open science in Moldova and Armenia;
- To establish digital repositories at all project's partner HEIs in Moldova and Armenia and to foster their infrastructural development and interoperability;
- To build human research capacities in order to ensure the sustainable implementation
 of open science principles and enhance the social inclusiveness and accountability of
 publicly-funded research.

2. LIST OF THE WORK PACKAGES

WP	Title	Leader	Co-leaders
WP1	Mapping the Research & Open Science	P16-EPDRI/SP	P2-USMF/MD
VVI	Potentials & Practices	F 10-LF DIXI/SF	P6-YSMU/AM
WP2	Harmonization of Legislative Framework	P14-UCA/FR	P5-MECRRM/MD
VVFZ	on Open Science	F14-00A/TR	P10-MoESRA/AM
WP3	Developing Infrastructure for Open	P13-UV/ES	P3-TUM/MD
WFS	Science	F13-0V/E3	P8-YSU/AM
WP4	Building Capacities of Research	P11- ULIEGE/BE	P1-ASEM/MD
VV F-4	Management	T TT- OLILOL/BL	P7- ASUE/AM
WP5	Quality Assurance & Monitoring	P15-UM/FR	P3-TUM/MD
WFS	Quality Assurance & Monitoring	F 13-OW/T IX	P8-YSU/AM
WP6	Dissemination, Exploitation & Impact	P4-CR/MD	P2-USMF/MD
VVFO	Maximization	F 4-CR/MD	P9-BSU/AM
WP7	Project Management	P1-ASEM/MD	

¹ Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency of the European Union, see: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/





3. LIST OF THE PARTNERS

Reference	Name	Country
P1-ASEM/MD	Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova	Moldova
P2-USMF/MD	State University of Medicine and Pharmacy of	Moldova
	Moldova	
P3-TUM/MD	Technical University of Moldova	Moldova
P4-CR/MD	Rectors Council of the Republic of Moldova	Moldova
P5-MECRRM/MD	Ministry of Education, Culture and Research of the	Moldova
	Republic of Moldova	
P6-YSMU/AM	Yerevan State Medical University named after M.	Armenia
	Heratsi	
P7- ASUE/AM	Armenian State University of Economics	Armenia
P8-YSU/AM	Yerevan State University	Armenia
P9-BSU/AM Brusov State (former Yerevan Brusov State		Armenia
	University of Languages and Social Sciences –	
	YSULS)	
P10-MoESRA/AM	Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of	Armenia
	Armenia	
P11-ULIEGE/BE	University of Liege	Belgium
P12-USGM/IT	Università degli Studi Guglielmo Marconi	Italy
P13-UV/ES	University of Valencia	Spain
P14-UCA/FR	Université Côte d'Azur	France
P15-UM/FR	University of Montpellier	France
P16-EPDRI/SI	European Policy Development and Research Institute	Slovenia





I/ METHODOLOGY

The internal quality evaluation at mid-term aims to assess:

- the perception of the partners on the project management, with regards to the relevance and efficiency of different aspects of the project, such as the role of the coordinator, the communication between the partners, the management of internal resources or the dissemination of the project's results.
- the progress of the Work Packages (WPs), focusing on the status of the corresponding deliverable and the implementation of the project activities, as well as the divergences of the activities (content, timeline) as regards to the originally set plans.

As regards to the timeline of the project, three plans have been used:

- the project application as granted by the EACEA
- the operational plan for year 1, drafted and shared by the coordinator on XX/XX/2019
- the operational plan for year 2, revised and shared by the coordinator on 15/04/2020

The internal quality evaluation is complementary to an external evaluation involving independent experts and an External Advisory Board to assess the implementation of the project's activities and the quality of the results.

The internal quality evaluation report at mid-term intends to provide necessary information to the coordinator about the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the project, and assist them in further reporting to the EACEA, and to take necessary adjustments and measures in order to facilitate the project implementation during the second period of the project (until the end of the project).

Two questionnaires have been used in order to perform the quality evaluation which took place in June 2020, covering the period from January 2019 (beginning of the project) until May 2020:

- an single anonymous questionnaire sent to all the partner institutions involved in the project;
- tailor-made questionnaires sent to each partner institution.

1. MID-TERM MANAGEMENT ANONYMOUS QUESTIONNAIRE

The template of this questionnaire can be found in Annex 1.

It is divided in 4 subparts:

- Management, implementation and coordination
- Ongoing processes, workload and internal resources (internal)





- Partnership and collaboration (external)
- Impact and dissemination

Each part displays a set of 6-9 statements, to which the respondent is asked to agree/disagree on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), or indicate "NA/don't know". In each part, the respondents are asked to provide answers regarding the whole covered period, specifically without considering the COVID19 outbreak and the subsequent sanitary crisis and quarantine situation. 6 further statements target specifically this topic.

An open-ended question at the end of each part allows the respondent to express further comments. The respondent is also asked to identify good practices and promising opportunities in the project (collaboration, activities, etc.)

The questionnaire was send to all the (16) partner institutions on 02/06/2020 via the platform Google Forms, with a reminder on 09/06/2020. 11 partners had filled the questionnaire by 30/06/2020.

Although the name of the respondent and the institution was asked for statistics purpose, the responses were anonymised and are presented as such.

2. MID-TERM IMPLEMENTATION TAILOR-MADE QUESTIONNAIRES

The tailor-made questionnaire follows a similar structure for all the partners, divided in 7 sections according to the 7 WPs of the project. It addresses in particular the role and involvement of each partner as regards to the specific tasks list in the WP as described in the Operational Plan for Y1 and revised in the Operational Plan for Y2.

A template designed for the partner P6-YSMU/AM can be found in Annex 2.

The questionnaire consists mostly of yes/no questions.

- some are related to the accomplishment of specific tasks, with corresponding answers being "yes [the task has been accomplished]" / "no [the task is being accomplished at the moment]" / "no [the task has not yet been addressed]".
- when a question is answered "no", the respondent is invited to provide further information (in a free text answer).
- -some questions address the impressions of the respondent regarding the perceived efficiency of working groups or the perceived utility of training sessions for the project implementation, with answers ranging from "1." [very efficient/useful], "2." [quite efficient/useful], "3." [not so efficient/useful].





• for each WP, the respondent was asked to provide further information about the role of the institution in general (as WP leader or co-leader, when relevant).

The questionnaire was send individually to all the (16) partner institutions on 02/06/2020 by email and the partners were invited to contact the Quality Evaluation WP leader for further explanation and potential completion of the questionnaire through a live interview.

8 partners had sent the filled the questionnaire by 30/06/2020 (including 4 Armenian partners, 1 Moldovan partner and 3 European partners) and 1 partner had requested an interview to receive assistance in filling it.

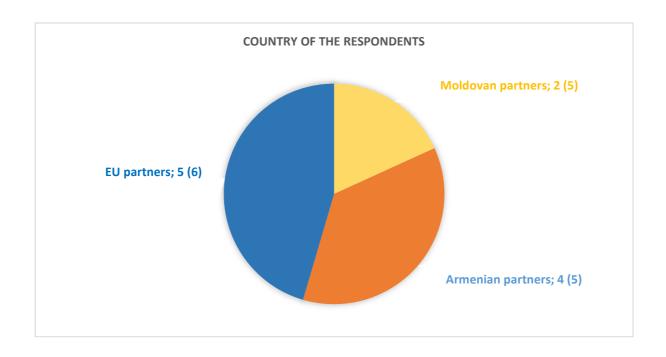




II/ PROJECT MANAGEMENT

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The MINERVA project is carried on by 16 partners, comprising 5 Moldovan partners, 5 Armenian partners and 6 European partners. The origin of the respondents show that Moldovan partners are relatively underrepresented in the study, whereas in comparison almost all Armenian and European partners have responded.

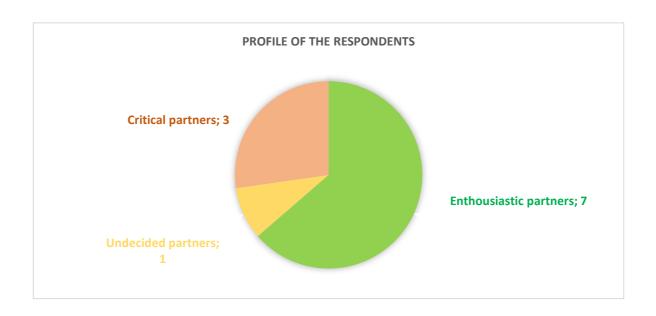






From a global analysis of the answers of the respondents, we can identify three profile-types within the partners:

- the enthusiastic partners
- the critical partners
- · the undecided partners



Among the 11 respondents, 7 are part of the type "enthusiastic". They provided the answers "strongly agree/agree" to more than half of the statements, as well as numerous positively-formulated comments and suggestions. We can deduce that these partners are rather satisfied with how the project is going internally in their institutions and externally within the consortium.

On the other hand, 3 respondents to the questionnaire can be categorized as "critical". They "strongly agreed"/"agreed" with fewer statements, and "strongly disagreed"/"disagreed" to more than 25% of them. They are also more virulent in their comments, which presumably shows that they are negatively affected by the project implementation.

The "undecided" type is represented by 1 respondent of the study, who mostly remained neutral in their answers ("neither agree or disagree") and did not provide any comments. It is however probable that the partners which did not respond to the questionnaire are of that type. The "undecided" partners seem to play a more passive role in the project implementation, waiting for instructions from the project coordinator.

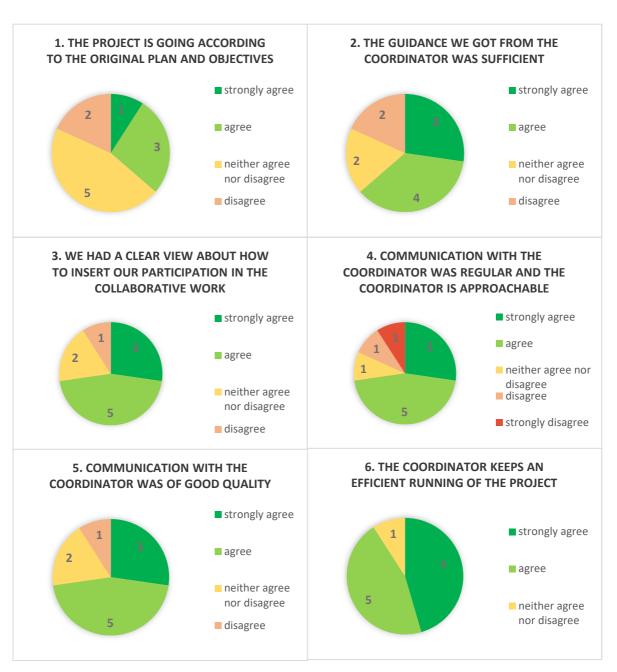




2. MANAGEMENT, IMPLEMENTATION AND COORDINATION

The partners were invited to express their opinions regarding more particularly the coordination of the project.

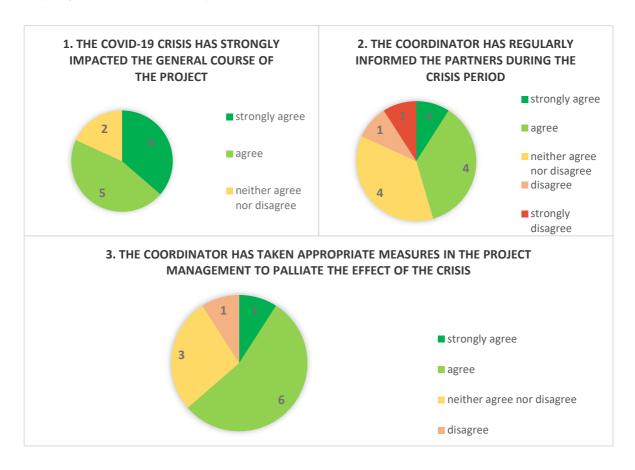
Half of the respondent did not position themselves as regards to the accordance between the original plan and objectives of the project and the actual developments for the first implementation period. The other half expressed mitigated answers. As regards to the coordination, 7 respondent deemed that the guidance received from the coordinator was sufficient, and a majority considered that communication was of good quality.







As regards to the outbreak of the COVID19 pandemic and the subsequent quarantine imposed on the partner institutions, the respondents expressed a strong feeling that the implementation project have been impacted, and whereas many considered that not enough effort has been done as regards to informing the partners about the effects of the crisis on the project, a majority consider that appropriate measures have been taken.



When invited to provide further comments and suggestions regarding the coordination of the project, the respondents pointed out enhanced communication as a necessary focus for the second half of the project.

"I believe it is necessary to **improve communication** and organizing online meetings to cope with this particular situation."

"Enhanced communication between consortium partners and **experience sharing** might bring a plus value."

"The coordinator should have **more contacts** with partners and inform about the ongoing process of the implementation phases in the associated counties' partner institutions. At least **one monthly update** and request of information to partners would be desirable."





Partners also called upon a better distribution of the tasks and responsibilities.

"The coordinator **endorsed all roles** (communication, leadership of WP) in the project and we are mitigated regarding the efficiency of this organisation."

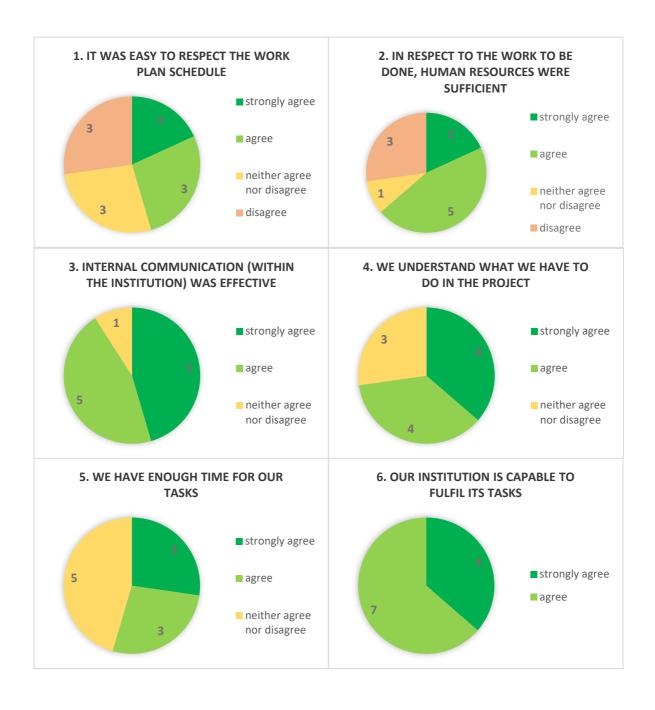
Two respondents finally mentioned the perceived necessity of an extension of at least 10 months to ensure a proper realisation of the objectives of the project.





3. ONGOING PROCESSES, WORKLOAD AND RESOURCES (INTERNAL)

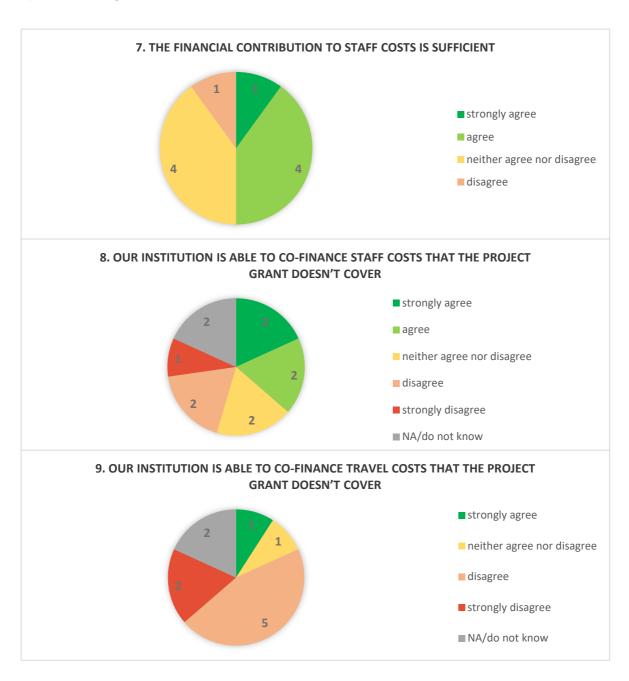
The respondents are rather satisfied with how the project is managed internally at their institution and they are rather confident in their capacity to timely and qualitatively fulfil their task within the project activities. Some however underlined that the work plan schedule was not easy to follow and there is not enough staff allocation to the complement of the tasks.







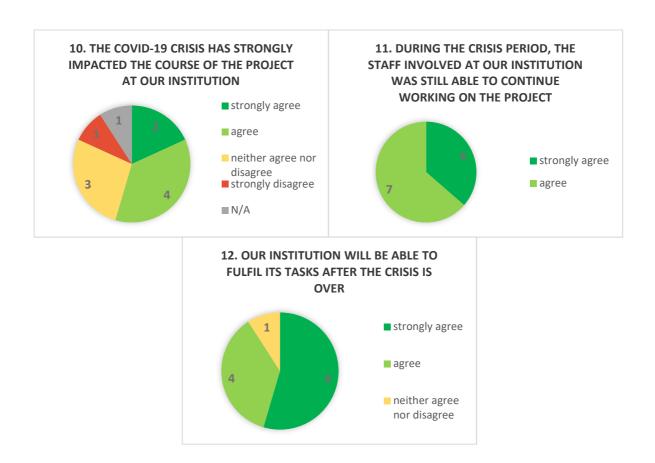
As regards to financial aspects, the respondents expressed quite divergent opinions. While only one of them deems the staff costs contribution insufficient as regards to the tasks to perform, 3 of them declare their institution will not be able to co-finance the involvement of staff members which is not originally covered by the project, and more than half expressed similar opinions as regards to travel costs.







The COVID19 crisis has impacted the partner institutions, however all of them kept working the project during the quarantine and the majority are confident in their ability to fulfil their tasks given the end of the crisis.



The comments of the respondents address once again the issue of communication of information. One European partner underlined it as follow:

"From our point of view, as EU partner, we have fulfilled our main tasks before the COVID period. However, we are not able to **follow the course of the project** as we are not receiving information."

Another partner expressed the need for a revision of the calendar, as the adaptation to the new situation has required a lot of time and dedication from the staff members of the HEIs.

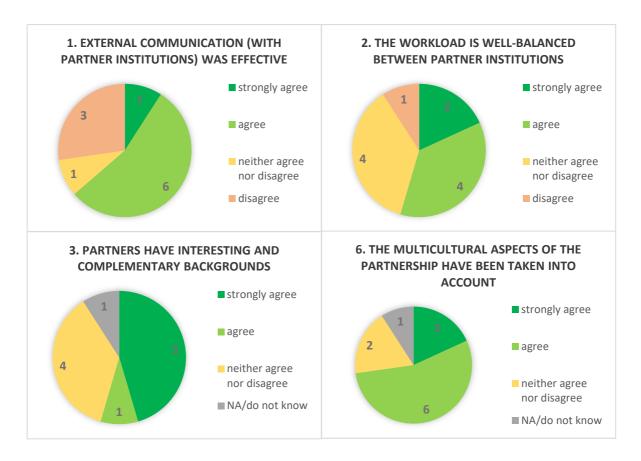
"Covid-19 pandemic imposed the acquisition of the new working skills in a rapid manner. Thus, the tasks, project and non-project related, increased exponentially. Thus, more time for adaptation and revision of some deadlines is necessary."





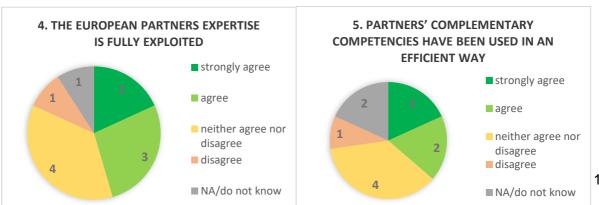
4. PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION (EXTERNAL)

The respondents are rather positive as regards with the way the partnership works. The expressed positive opinions in terms of communication between the partners, distribution of tasks and complementarity. They also deem that the multicultural aspects of the consortium are well handled.



However, the respondents were more critical about the input of the European partners, which was not unanimously deemed "fully exploited", and the efficiency of the use of the partners' complementarity. In particular, one European partner expressed the following reservations considering the observation visits:

"I still have question regarding the **efficiency of the site visits**: pertinence of participants, topics to share, expected achievements from meetings."

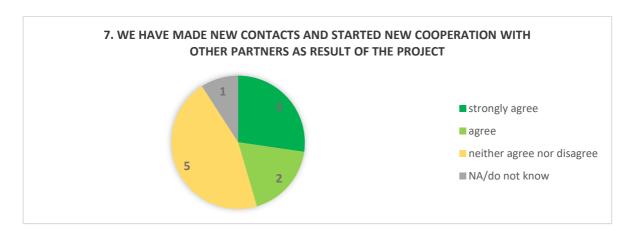






Nevertheless, some respondents stated that new contacts were made through the project. In particular, one partner expressed the following:

"[Our institution is] planning to go beyond MINERVA to deepen cooperation with UV, University of Liege and ASEM."



When invited to identify good practices or successful examples of collaboration of the partners within the project, the respondents indicated the following:

"Cooperation within Armenian partners is quite effective and all project-related decisions are made **in a cooperative manner** through intensive discussions. [...]"

"Exchange of work organization methods between different HEIs in Europe" "Very good training in Liege and Valencia"

"Regional co-coordinators are an asset to the project, as it allows a better supervision of the activities and a lesser need for involvement from the coordinator of the project in them."

One partner from Armenia also underlined the very fruitful cooperation with BSU "where the library has a quite developed structure and the expertise of the staff [who] is willing to share good practice for the rest of the partners [...]".





Recommendations for the partnership's cooperation concern again communication, but also a furthered dedication to the tasks and deadlines, as well as the systemisation of follow-up of the activities.

"We need to make more intensive online communications with the relevant EU partners."

"Provide **in time** the promised questionnaires."

"By being more responsive on requests; by sending the best persons to site visit."

"We should receive more updates on the work done at each institution. Despite travels are cancelled, some videoconferencing tools could be used in order to maintain the collaboration more alive and have more feedback and advances in the project. I believe that many of the goals can be developed despite COVID by using remote collaborative tools."

The partners finally underlined promising opportunities for the project and the partnership, in particular with regards to the project's objectives:

"[It] helps also EU partners, such as [our institution], to prepare and achieve EURAXESS HR label."

"To establish Academic ethics culture in [our institution]."

"OS national and institutional policies, HRS4R development, institutional repository."

"The research is declared **strategic objective of the new top management** of the university."

"Very high opportunity to evolve and get the EU HRS4R award."

"In the international level it has become a **strong requirement** to build institutional repositories which we hope to realize in the frames of MINERVA project."

They also mentioned opportunities in line with further collaboration beyond the project's end within the partner countries, and between the partner countries and European countries:

"Start **new project ideas**, based on MINERVA results."

"Collectively work on **new research projects** of mutual interest."

"Exploit the benefits of **deepening the collaboration** with EU partners beyond project objectives."

"A furthered cooperation of the HEIs in each partner country."



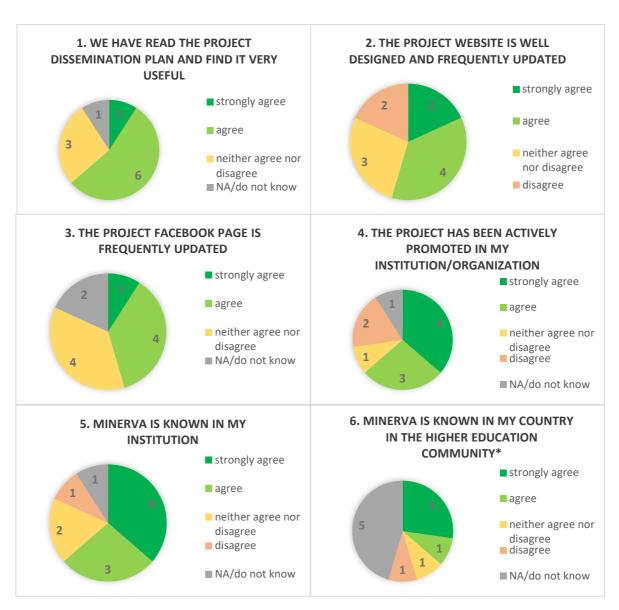


One partner however remains critical towards the opportunities of the project:

"The impact in the target countries and institutions could be very high if the project is **fully exploited**. At this point, I am not sure about it."

5. IMPACT AND DISSEMINATION

In general, the respondents deemed the dissemination work relevant. Although some doubts are formulated concerning the dissemination plan or the use and update of the website, the partners have a rather positive opinion regarding the project's Facebook page and efforts have been done to raise awareness about MINERVA internally in each partner institution, and externally.



^{*}The main focus being dissemination in the partner countries, the answers of the 5 European respondents have been replaced by "NA – Not Applicable".





One partner explains the difficulties of dissemination work in relation with the COVID19 crisis:

"The dissemination was compromised by Covid-19 pandemic. According to our experience, record dissemination impact functions optimally **in direct interaction** with the project beneficiaries in comparison with the on-line one."

Another suggests the use of video for dissemination purposes:

"[We could] develop short clip or movie about MINERVA project."





III/ ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTIVITIES

1. WP1: MAPPING THE RESEARCH & OS POTENTIALS & PRACTICES

Leader of the WP: P16-EPDRI/SP

Co-leaders: P2-USMF/MD, P6-YSMU/AM

Deliverable	Status
D1.1/ Report on current research potentials	DELAYED
D1.2/ Report on current Open Science infrastructure and policies	DELAYED

The deadline for the completion of the tasks related to WP1 leading to D1.1 and D1.2, which was originally set in December 2019, has been postponed to May 2020; however, to this day, it appears that the 2 questionnaires necessary to survey the HEIs on current research potential and OS infrastructures have not been shared with them. To this point, it is unsure whether P16-EPDRI/SI, responsible for the design of the 2 questionnaires, was able to produce them.

2. WP2: HARMONIZATION OF LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK ON OS

Leader of the WP: P14-UCA/FR

Co-leaders: P5-MECRRM/MD, P10-MoESRA/AM

Deliverable	Status
D2.1/ Report on EU open science practices and transfer of knowledge and skills	ACHIEVED
D2.2/ National policy of Open Science (OS)	PENDING
D2.3/ Institutional policies of Open Science (OS)	PENDING
D2.4/ Recommendations for the national OS policy	PENDING

The first activity (leading to D2.1) has been achieved with the setup of the National Policy Task Force in Moldova (NPTF/MD) and in Armenia (NPTF/AM) and the first study visit to P14-UCA/FR in May 2019. The interrogated partners however deemed that the two NPTFs were not functioning efficiently, which might endanger the quality of implementation of other pending activities. In particular, it appears that the NPTF/AM has met only once in January 2020 since its creation. Most interrogated partners could attend the study visit to P14-UCA/FR, which was





deemed quite useful as regards to the project implementation by a majority of them. Still, a partner reported that the study visit was attended by an official representative instead of relevant staff members. This questions the impact of the study visit as regards to the concerned institution.

Other pending activities include the drafting of a set of guidelines and directives for successful implementation of Open Science principles in Research and Education at the national level by the two NPTFs (leading to D2.2), the preparation of institutional polices by all the partner countries HEIs coordinated by P7-ASUE/AM (leading to D2.3) and the elaboration of recommendations to the national Action Plan for improving the impact and accountability of publicly-funded research through the implementation of Open Science principles by P4-CR/MD and the Moldovan and Armenian Ministries partner of the project (P5-MECRRM/MD and P10-MoESRA/AM), leading to D2.4. These deliverables are expected by December 2020/January 2021.

3. WP3: DEVELOPING INFRASTRUCTURE FOR OPEN SCIENCE

Leader of the WP: P13-UV/ES

Co-leaders: P3-TUM/MD, P8- YSU/AM

Deliverable	Status
D3.1/ Report on the EU standards related to OS services	PENDING
D3.2/ National standards for the OS services	PENDING
D3.3/ Integrated system of institutional repositories	DELAYED / PENDING
D3.4/ Training for the use of OS platforms	NOT STARTED
D3.5/ Methodology for monitoring the usage of OS platform	PENDING
D3.6/ Registry of the non-government funders	PENDING

As part of the activities leading to D3.1, Open Science – University Working Groups (OS-UWGs) have been set up in each partner HEIs. Three study visits to EU HEIs were planned: one took place at P13-UV/ES in November 2019 and allowed the partners to get insight on the tools and methods, as well as proper design of the OS frameworks for partner countries, and address issues of national standards for OS and the question of equipment and institutional repositories; the two others have been postponed due to the COVID19 outbreak to Spring 2021, given the conditions are met. Considering this situation, P13-UV/ES expressed that





"detailed information on how to settle infrastructures in both hardware and software" had been provided to the partners.

As regards to activities leading to D3.2, P13-UV/ES and P1-ASME/MD have taken the responsibility to formulate *national standards and guidelines for the development of web services, institutional repositories and databases enabling the implementation of open science principles,* which draft shall be presented by December 2020. Armenian interrogated partners expressed that the Ministry is preparing a new Law on Education and Science and that they are expecting amendments to be done to this draft Law to integrate the national standards.

D3.3 refers to the purchase of equipment (institutional repositories) by the partner HEIs as well as the development of OS platforms in Moldova and Armenia. It appears that the activities regarding the design or set-up of the structure of institutional repositories in each concerned institution are delayed: some partners expressed that they are expecting a template from P1-ASEM/MD and P13-UV/ES, while one partner reported that an institutional repository was already implemented at its institution (it is unsure whether this repository was already in place before the start of the project).

As for the OS platforms, P9-BSU/AM for Armenia and P4-CR/MD and P1-ASEM for Moldova shall present draft proposals for the structure of the platforms at the 2nd Country workshop in Armenia (due in Autumn 2020 according to the operational plan for Y2).

Other activities leading to D3.4, D3.5 and D3.6 are linked to D3.3 and the OS platforms. A draft of a set of indicators for the monitoring of the use and impact of the OS platforms (D3.5) is due by P8-YSU/AM and P13-UV/ES by November 2020, and a draft for the registry of the non-government funders (D3.6) is expected by December 2020 (under the supervision of P6-YSMU/AM and P3-TUM/MD in cooperation with the OS-UWGs).

The activities for D3.4 are due to start in 2021.





4. WP4: BUILDING CAPACITIES OF RESEARCH MANAGEMENT

Leader of the WP: P11- ULIEGE/BE

Co-leaders: P1-ASEM/MD, P7- ASUE/AM

Deliverable	Status
D4.1/ Report on EU practices related to research management	PENDING
D4.2/ HRS4R adopted	PENDING
D4.3/ HRS4R improved	NOT STARTED
D4.4/ Plagiarism monitoring tools implemented	PENDING
D4.5/ Researchers trained on C&C and HRS4R	NOT STARTED
D4.6/ Young researchers trained in various skills	NOT STARTED

Considering the activities leading to D4.1, Research – University Working Groups (R-UWGs) have been implemented in each partner HEI to address the issues related to consolidation and development of research management, which members attended a successful study visit hosted in October 2019 at P11-ULIEGE/BE. Still pending for that deliverable are: a study visit to be hosted in France at P13-UCA/FR and P15-UM/FR in Spring 2021, given the necessary conditions are met as regards to the COVID19 pandemic; and the draft of a report serving as a benchmarking standard highlighting key EU's HR and research management features determining further actions of Moldovan and Armenian HEIs in the area of enhancing research efficiency, to be presented by P3-TUM/MD and P11-ULIEGE/BE at the 2nd Country Workshop in Armenia (due in Autumn 2020).

As regards to D4.2, two set of activities are pending. On the one side, seminars on HRS4R shall be organised in each partner HEI concerned with accreditation (namely 5 partners: P3-TUM/MD, P6- YSMU/AM, P7-ASUE/AM, P8-YSU/AM and P9-BSU/AM) under the supervision of P11-ULIEGE/BE. The seminars were originally programmed to take place after the study visits, however given the circumstances they are set to be held in Autumn 2020 (online). On the other side, different steps have been identified for these partner HEIs to prepare the access to the HRS4R label. All the respondent concerned HEIs had appointed a HRS4R manager (step 1) and sent an individual letter of commitment to the EU to start the accreditation process (step 3). Only one institution reports not having created a "Euraxess" account to date (step 2). Step 4 (draft of HRS4H to be presented to P11-ULIEGE/BE) is meant to be reached by the concerned HEIs by October 2020.

D4.3, linked with improvement of the HRS4R for two partner HEIs (P1-ASEM/MD and P2-USMF was originally supposed to be delivered by December 2020, however the activities have





been postponed to start in 2021. Activities related to D4.4, D4.5 and D4.6 are also meant to start at that time (after the study visit to P14-UCA/FR and P15-UM/FR).

5. WP5: QUALITY ASSURANCE & MONITORING

Leader of the WP: P15-UM/FR

Co-leaders: P3-TUM/MD, P8-YSU/AM

Deliverable	Status
D5.1/ Internal QA reports	ONGOING
D5.2/ External QA reports	PENDING
D5.3/ Fine tuning of procedures and regulations	ONGOING
D5.4/ Audit	NOT STARTED

The deliverables and activities connected to D5.1 are:

- the Monitoring and Evaluation Manual (MEM) by P15-UM/FR
- monitoring visits to Moldova (by P15-UM/FR) and Armenia (by P1-ASEM/MD)
- and the interim and final evaluation reports (by P15-UM/FR)

The MEM has been released in April 2019, which contains guidelines for the evaluation of the project and tools for the quality assessment of deliverables and events. The tools which served for the interim evaluation report, have been designed independently and are yet to be integrated in the MEM. The monitoring visits were originally set for April 2020 but have been postponed as a result of the COVID19 pandemic, but are set to take place in Autumn 2020, potentially online. The data collection for the present report took place in June/July 2020 but the writing could only be finalised in September 2020.

As regards to external Quality Assessment (D5.2), contracts with three independent external experts have been signed for the evaluation of the outputs of the project and their impact at the institutional and national levels. The deadline for the evaluation is set in January 2021. The setup of an External Advisory Board (EAB), which role is:

- to comment on the data analysis and country profiles and suggests improvements as necessary;
- comment on the national strategies and action plans produced;
- advise the University Working Groups (UWGs) on the implementation of the strategies has been delayed (it was planned for December 2019 in the Operational Plan for Y1 and for June 2020 in the Operational Plan for Y2). To date, it is unclear whether this Board has been formed, nor if a plan of actions has been drafted.





D5.3 refers to the fine-tuning of procedures and regulations for the NPTFs in Moldova and Armenia and the OS-UWGs and R-UWGs in each partner institution. The respondent partners reported that the NPTFs had not been able to meet often, hence no fine-tuning was possible. As regards to OS-UWGs and R-UWGs, in the context of the COVID19 pandemic, some institutions managed to fine-tune the procedures, while some other did not.

D5.4 is closely linked to the final report to the EACEA at the end of the project, hence the activities related to the audit will take place only at the end of the project.

6. WP6: DISSEMINATION, EXPLOITATION & IMPACT MAXIMIZATION

Leader of the WP: P4-CR/MD

Co-leaders: P2-USMF/MD, P9-BSU/AM

Deliverable	Status
D6.1 Project promotional package	ACHIEVED
D6.2/ Project website and open science webpage	DELAYED
D6.3/ Target Groups Information sessions	ONGOING
D6.4/ Target Groups Orientation sessions	PENDING
D6.5/ Multiplier events realised	PENDING
D6.6/ Survey report on TG satisfaction and impact	DELAYED
D6.7/ The label "HR Excellence in Research"	PENDING

The project's visual identity, including the logo, as well as small promotional material (t-shirts, bags, pens, folders, notes, banners & roll-ups, posters, leaflet, etc) have been designed (D6.1).

The <u>website</u> of the project has also been released (D6.2). The site is well structured but it lacks crucial information, and thus requires regular updates.

The release of the OS platforms has been delayed (see point 3 on WP3, D3.3).

D6.3 encompasses the Launching Conference of MINERVA and Information Sessions aimed at the target groups of the project (Researcher/Lecturers, PhD students, relevant staff members) in each partner HEI. The Launching Conference took place in March 2019 (together with the kick-off meeting). Information Sessions have been held in 7 concerned HEIs (from 1 to 5 sessions in each HEI, reaching from 20 to 150 target group members). However, activities linked with the Information Sessions and Orientation Sessions (D6.4) have been stopped due to the COVID19 pandemic.





Multiplier events (D6.5) are set to take place in Armenia annexed to the Country Workshop (set in Autumn 2020) and in Moldova during the Concluding Conference of the project (set in October 2021). It still unclear to this point how these events will take place given the sanitary crisis.

Considering D6.6, the starting point to surveying the satisfaction of the target groups as regards to OS and the impact at the institutional level is the design of a questionnaire by P3-TUM/MD. Responding partners have reported that they had not to date received the template of the questionnaire. Hence the surveying activities related to D6.6, closely linked to D6.3 and D6.4 are delayed.

The HRS4R accreditation process and the issue of the "HR Excellence in Research" award (D6.7) have been postponed due to the COVID19 pandemic and are expected in 2021 (see point 4 on WP4, D4.2).

7. WP7: PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Leader of the WP: P1-ASEM/MD

Deliverable	Status
D7.1/ Project coordination	ONGOING
D7.2/ Project financial management	ONGOING

The project coordinator successful organised the kick-off meeting, drafted the handbook for the project management and organised the signature of the Partnership Agreements with all the partners. Pending are the request for an amendment to the Grant Agreement for an extension of the project implementation period of at least 6 months (as announced in the Operational Plan for Y2), and the hosting of the 2nd consortium meeting, due in Autumn 2020 in Yerevan. The interim report to the EACEA is due on 15th September 2020.

As regards to financial management, the activities are ongoing, and the financial reports for the justification of the costs in preparation of the interim report to the EACEA are pending.





IV/ CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. CONCLUSION

In conclusion of this study, the MINERVA project, on the one side, has good strengths and can already testify of some achievements, and on the other, faces several internal and external challenges.

First, the partners of the project express their motivation and dedication to the project's objectives. They clearly identified the benefits of the project both for their institutions and at the national scale for the partner countries. However, the COVID19 pandemic and the subsequent sanitary crisis has impacted not only the project implementation, with some activities delayed or cancelled, but also the partners themselves who saw their capacities diminished, facing the risk of a change of strategic priorities (at the institutional and national level) which could endanger the project for the second period.

Secondly, the expertise and input of EU partners has been highlighted as a strength of the project, with some staff members outstandingly committed to the project and to assisting the Moldovan and Armenian partners. Doubts have been formulated though as regards to the pertinence of the staff members from the partner countries who received training during the study visits, which threatens efficiency of the capacity building and transfer of knowledge.

Finally, the study shows that communication has been one major weakness in the implementation of the project, both vertically – between the coordinator and the rest of the partners, considering the agenda of the activities, and horizontally between the partners themselves – especially from the perspective of the European partners who expressed not knowing what goes on in the project. There is an opportunity for regional co-coordinators to play a crucial role in relaying information between the partner countries, the European partners and the coordinator of the project.

Strengths	Weaknesses
 Dedication of the partners to the project objectives Expertise of EU partners regarding OS and HRS4R 	 Communication between the partners (horizontal and vertical) Pertinence of the staff trained during the study visits
Opportunities	Threats
 Extension of the project's end date Key implication of regional co- coordinators 	 Delays and difficulties faced by the partners due to COVID19 Change in the strategic priorities at the governmental level





2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Institutionalisation of reporting of the activities carried on by the partners would profit the management of the project. It would allow the coordinating institution to overview the progress of the WPs and help its staff take necessary arrangements to amend the work plans. These reports would also provide material for the interim or final evaluations. They should be easy to do for the concerned institutions and easy to interpret for the coordinator. They could take different forms (questionnaire, check-up by virtual meeting, presentations)
- Based on these reports, further efforts can be made in terms of communication.
 Regular updates (monthly) from the coordinator could benefit to the project implementation, as it would ensure them that the project is still on and help the information to circulate to the consortium. The already existing practice of the circular newsletter constitute a good basis on which these updates can be shared. Identifying trusted relays of information (such as the regional co-coordinators) could also help in this.
- Sharing tasks and responsibilities could be an asset in the project. Giving more leadership to the partners as regards to the implementation of specific, clearly identified tasks would allow the coordinator P1-ASEM/MD to produce content in a lesser extent, and concentrate more on coordinating and supervising activities; it would potentially give a more acute sense of involvement to the other partners, some of which retain a rather passive role in the project implementation.
- To this point, it appears crucial to pinpoint the deliverables which have not been achieved as planned during the first implementation period. In particular, the reports on current research potentials and current Open Science infrastructure and policies in the partner countries (WP1) constitute the very basis on which depend the identification of the needs for the project (in terms of equipment, training, policies, etc). It appears essential that WP1 is achieved in the short term.
- Identifying relevant participants for the study visits could also benefits the project. Although it is important that higher management representatives of the partner institutions get an understanding of the European experience of Open Science and research management, it seems necessary that staff members who will actively be involved in the implementation of the project activities in the home institution get the proper training. The information sessions organised in WP6 could be good venues for the dissemination of the acquired competences.





- The COVID19 pandemic has impacted the project in many ways, one of which being the absence of, or difficulty to organise meetings. All institutions have understood the necessity to move quickly to more virtual ways of exchanging. It appears relevant to support the organisation of e-meetings for all the different working groups of the project, including the consortium of partners, but most importantly the Open Science and Research University Working Groups, and the 2 National Policy Task Forces.
- In terms of dissemination as well as follow-up of the activities, it could be relevant to
 ensure that the website of the project is up-to-date, and make sure in particular that
 the outcomes and deliverables are uploaded, all the tabs are functioning and the
 timeline is updated.
- Finally, the dissemination plan of the project would need to be revised in order to cope with the new situation caused by the COVID19 pandemic. It is indeed unclear whether the events that were planned to raise awareness about the project will be able to take place. In consequence, it appears necessary to design new dissemination tools in a virtual format. The partners have suggested video content, and other propositions can be studied, such as webinars.





ANNEXES

- 1. ANNEX 1: TEMPLATE OF THE MID-TERM MANAGEMENT ANONYMOUS QUESTIONNAIRE
- 2. ANNEX 2: TEMPLATE OF THE MID-TERM IMPLEMENTATION TAILOR-MADE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR P6-YSMU/AM

MINERVA Mid-term Management and Implementation Questionnaire

This questionnaire aims to monitor the keys aspects of the project implementation (management, involvement in the implementation, workload, communication) at mid-term of the project. This is a tool for the benefit of the coordinator and overall for the project. Take this chance to discuss with your colleagues involved in the project to provide one answer per partner institution.

Specific questions concerning the COVID-19 crisis under each category aim to assess its impact on the project, hence try to answer the other questions as much as possible with a general understanding since the beginning of the project to before the quarantine period.

The results of the analysis of this questionnaire will show globally the consortium's opinion, not individual perceptions. The name, email address and institution of the respondents are only used for the follow-up, and anonymity shall be respected. This gives you the opportunity to be impartial and honest in the answers you will provide.

*Required

1.	Name of the respondent *
2.	Email of the respondent *

3.	Your institution *
	Mark only one oval.
	P1-ASEM/MD
	P2-USMF/MD
	P3-TUM/MD
	P4-RC/MD
	P5-MECRRM/MD
	P6-YSMU/AM
	P7-ASUE/AM
	P8-YSU/AM
	P9-YSULS/AM
	P10-MoESRA/AM
	P11-ULIEGE/BE
	P12-USGM/IT
	P13-UV/SP
	P14-UCA/FR
	P15-UM/FR
	P16-EPDRI/SI

1. MANAGEMENT / IMPLEMENTATION / COORDINATION

Please express your opinion on the general management and the implementation of the project and the support you have received from P1-ASEM/MD, the Project Coordinator

4. General appreciation *

Mark only one oval per row.

	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree	NA/do not know
The project is going according to the original plan and objectives						
The guidance we got from the Coordinator was sufficient						
We had a clear view about how to insert our participation in the collaborative work						
Communication with the Coordinator was regular and the Coordinator is approachable						
Communication with the Coordinator was of good quality						
The Coordinator keeps an efficient running of the project						
The Coordinator is flexible and seeks solutions when needed						

5. Impact of the COVID-19 crisis *

Mark only one oval per row.

6.

	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree	NA/do not know
The COVID-19 crisis has strongly impacted the general course of the project						
The coordinator has regularly informed the partners during the crisis period						
The coordinator has taken appropriate measures in the project management to palliate the effect						

2. ONGOING PROCESS / WORKLOAD / RESOURCES

Please express your overall impression of the project ongoing progress, workload and resources at your institution

7. General appreciation *

Mark only one oval per row.

	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree	NA/do not know
It was easy to respect the work plan schedule						
In respect to the work to be done, human resources were sufficient						
Internal communication (within the institution) was effective						
We understand what we have to do in the project						
We have enough time for our tasks						
Our institution is capable to fulfil its tasks						
The financial contribution to staff costs is sufficient						
Our institution is able to co-finance staff costs that the project grant doesn't cover						
Our institution is able to co-finance travel costs that the project grant doesn't cover						

8. Impact of the COVID-19 crisis *

Mark only one oval per row.

	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree	NA/d not knov
The COVID-19 crisis has strongly impacted the course of the project at our institution						
During the crisis period, the staff involved at our institution was still able to continue working on the project						
Our institution will be able to fulfil its tasks after the crisis						

3. PARTNERSHIP / COLLABORATION

Please express your opinion on the involvement and co-operation of partners within the project and the methods of communication

10. General appreciation *

Mark only one oval per row.

	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree	NA/do not know
External communication (with partner institutions) was effective						
The workload is well-balanced between partner institutions						
Partners have interesting and complementary backgrounds						
The European partner expertise is fully exploited						
Partners' complementary competencies have been used in an efficient way						
The multicultural aspects of the partnership have been taken into account						
We have made new contacts and started new cooperation with other partners as result of the project						

11.	Good practices/examples in Partners' cooperation
12.	What could Partners do to improve collaboration?
1 2.	what could harthers do to improve collaboration:
13.	Which are in your opinion promising opportunities for the project?

4. IMPACT / DISSEMINATION

Please express your overall impression of the dissemination of project results and impact

14. General appreciation *

15.

Mark only one oval per row.

	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree	NA/do not know
We have read the project dissemination plan and find it very useful						
The project website is well designed and frequently updated						
The project Facebook page is frequently updated						
The project has been actively promoted in my institution/organization						
MINERVA is known in my institution						
MINERVA is known in my country in the higher education community						
Comments/proposition	ns for the	dissemina	tion of the	project		

Google Forms

Work Package	Activity	Question number	Question	Answer 1	Answer 2	Answer 3	Answer 4
WP1: MAPPING THE RESEARCH & OS POTENTIALS & PRACTICES	1.1 Report on current research potentials	1	Have you received the data collection tools on research potential from P16-EPDRI/SI?				
			highlight the correct answer	Yes	No		
		2	If yes, have you responded to the questionnaire and send it back to P1-ASEM/MD for publication?				
			highlight the correct answer	Yes	no, it is currently being completed	no, we have not started	
		3	If you have not responded to the questionnaire, please provide the reasons				
			write down your answer	your text	N/A		
	1.2 Report on current Open Science infrastructure and policies	4	Have you received the data collection tools on open science infrastructures and policies from P16-EPDRI/SI?				
			highlight the correct answer	Yes	No		
		5	If yes, have you responded to the questionnaire and send it back to P1-ASEM/MD for publication?				
			highlight the correct answer	Yes	no, it is currently being completed	no, we have not started	
		6	If you have not responded to the questionnaire, please provide the reasons				
			write down your answer	your text	N/A		
		7	As co-leader of this WP, what has been your role/input?				
			write down your answer	your text			
WP2: HARMONIZATION OF LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK ON OS	2.1 Report on EU open science practices and transfer of knowledge and skills	8	Has the National Policy Task Force group been set up?				
			highlight the correct answer	Yes	no, it is currently being completed	no, we have not started	
		9	If yes, how do you evaluate the efficiency of the NPTF?				
			highlight the correct answer	Very efficient	quite efficient	not so efficient	N/A
		10	If no, please indicate the reasons				

	1				1		
			write down your answer	your text	N/A		
		11	Did your institution participate to the study visit in May 2019 in Nice (hosted by P14/UCA/FR)?				
			highlight the correct answer	Yes	No		
		12	If yes, how do you evaluate the study visit, globally as regards to the implementation of the project?				
			highlight the correct answer	Very useful	quite useful	not so useful	N/A
		13	If no, please indicate the reasons for not participating.				
			write down your answer	your text	N/A		
		14	What has been your role/input in this WP?				
			write down your answer	your text			
WP3: DEVELOPING INFRASTRUCTURE FOR OPEN SCIENCE	3.1 Report on the EU standards related to OS services	15	Has the OS University Working Group been set up at your institution?				
			highlight the correct answer	Yes	no, it is currently being completed	no, we have not started	
		16	If yes, how do you evaluate the efficiency of the OS-UWG?				
			highlight the correct answer	Very efficient	quite efficient	not so efficient	N/A
		17	If no, please indicate the reasons				
			write down your answer	your text	N/A		
		18	Have you updated the OS-UWG and sent the updated Act of Establishment or Decision of Rectors to P1/ASEM/MD?				
			highlight the correct answer	Yes	no, it is currently being completed	no, we have not started	
		19	If no, please indicate the reasons				
			write down your answer	your text	N/A		
		20	Did your institution participate to the study visit in November 2019 in Valencia (hosted by P13/UV/SP)?				

			highlight the correct answer	Yes	No		
		21	If yes, how do you evaluate the study visit, globally as regards to the implementation of the project?				
			highlight the correct answer	Very useful	quite useful	not so useful	N/A
		22	If no, please indicate the reasons for not participating.				
			write down your answer	your text	N/A		
	3.2 National standards for the OS services	23	Have the national standards and guidelines for the development of web services, institutional repositories and databases been set up?				
			highlight the correct answer	Yes	no, it is currently being completed	no, we have not started	
		24	If no, provide the reasons				
			write down your answer	your text	N/A		
	3.3. Integrated system of institutional repositories	25	Has your institution designed a structure for institutional repositories and sent it to P1/ASEM/MD?				
			highlight the correct answer	Yes	no, it is currently being completed	no, we have not started	
		26	If no, please indicate the reasons				
			write down your answer	your text	N/A		
		27	What has been your role/input in this WP?				
			write down your answer	your text			
WP4: BUILDING CAPACITIES OF RESEARCH MANAGEMENT	4.1 Report on EU practices related to research management	28	Has the Research University Working Group been set up at your institution?				
			highlight the correct answer	Yes	no, it is currently being completed	no, we have not started	
		29	If yes, how do you evaluate the efficiency of the R-UWG?				
			highlight the correct answer	Very efficient	quite efficient	not so efficient	N/A
		30	If no, please indicate the reasons				

		write down your answer	your text	N/A		
	31	Have you updated the R-UWG and sent the updated Act of Establishment or Decision of Rectors to P1/ASEM/MD?				
		highlight the correct answer	Yes	no, it is currently being completed	no, we have not started	
	32	If no, please indicate the reasons				
		write down your answer	your text	N/A		
	33	Did your institution participate to the study visit in October in Liège (hosted by P11/ULIEGE/BE)?				
		highlight the correct answer	Yes	No		
	34	If yes, how do you evaluate the study visit, globally as regards to the implementation of the project?				
		highlight the correct answer	Very useful	quite useful	not so useful	N/A
	35	If no, please indicate the reasons for not participating.				
		write down your answer	your text	N/A		
	36	What has been your role/input in this WP?				
		write down your answer	your text			
4.2 HRS4R adopted	37	Have the Rectors of your institution nominated a HRS4R manager?				
		highlight the correct answer	Yes	no, it is currently being completed	no, we have not started	
	38	If no, please indicate the reasons				
		write down your answer	your text	N/A		
	39	Have you created an Euraxess account?				
		highlight the correct answer	Yes	no, it is currently being completed	no, we have not started	
	40	If no, please indicate the reasons				
		write down your answer	your text	N/A		

		41	Has your institution submitted an individual letter of commitment to the EU, for starting officially the process on the basis of the example sent by P11-ULIEGE/BE?				
			highlight the correct answer	Yes	no, it is currently being completed	no, we have not started	
		42	If no, please indicate the reasons				
			write down your answer	your text	N/A		
		43	Have you drafted the HRS4R documents and presented them to P11-ULIGE/BE?				
			highlight the correct answer	Yes	no, it is currently being completed	no, we have not started	
		44	If no, please indicate the reasons				
			write down your answer	your text	N/A		
WP5: QUALITY ASSURANCE & MONITORING	5.3 Fine tuning of procedures and regulations	45	Has the NPTF met to fine-tune to assess and compare the national legislative framework development, take stock of the activities undertaken at national level and identify challenges in implementation?				
			highlight the correct answer	Yes	No	N/A	
		46	If yes, has a calendar been set for meeting of the project's Y2?				
			highlight the correct answer	Yes	No	N/A	
		47	If no, please indicate the reasons				
			write down your answer	your text	N/A		
		48	Has the OS-UWG at your institution met to fine-tune to assess and compare the national legislative framework development, take stock of the activities undertaken at national level and identify challenges in implementation?				
			highlight the correct answer	Yes	No	N/A	
		49	If yes, has a calendar been set for meeting of the project's Y2?				

	1		ı				1
			highlight the correct answer	Yes	No	N/A	
		50	If no, please indicate the reasons				
			write down your answer	your text	N/A		
		51	Has the R-UWG at your institution met to fine-tune to assess and compare the national legislative framework development, take stock of the activities undertaken at national level and identify challenges in implementation?				
			highlight the correct answer	Yes	No	N/A	
		52	If yes, has a calendar been set for meeting of the project's Y2?				
			highlight the correct answer	Yes	No	N/A	
		53	If no, please indicate the reasons				
			write down your answer	your text	N/A		
		54	What has been your role/input in this WP?				
			write down your answer	your text			
WP6: DISSEMINATION, EXPLOITATION & IMPACT MAXIMIZATION	6.3 TG Information sessions	55	Have you organised meetings with the project staff at your institution to establish detailed timeline/calendar for Target Groups's Information sessions?				
			highlight the correct answer	Yes	No		
		56	If no, please indicate the reasons				
			write down your answer	your text	N/A		
		57	Have you organised Target Group Information Sessions since the beginning of the project?				
			highlight the correct answer	Yes	No		
		58	If yes, please describe (how many information sessions, what targets, how many participants?)				

		write down your answer	your text	N/A		
	59	If no, please provide the reasons				
		write down your answer	your text	N/A		
	60	Have you sent the timeline of planned TG's Info sessions and the targeted groups to P1/ASEM/MD?				
		highlight the correct answer	Yes	no, it is currently being completed	no, we have not started	
	61	If no, please provide the reasons				
		write down your answer	your text	N/A		
6.4 TG Orientation sessions	62	Have you sent the timeline of planned TG's Orientation sessions for young researchers to P1/ASEM/MD?				
		highlight the correct answer	Yes	no, it is currently being completed	no, we have not started	
	63	If no, please provide the reasons				
		write down your answer	your text	N/A		
6.5 Multiplier Events	64	Have you organised a multiplier event since the beginning of the project?				
		highlight the correct answer	Yes	No		
	65	If yes, please describe (how many events, what targets, how many participants?)				
		write down your answer	your text	N/A		
6.6 Survey report on TG satisfaction and impact	66	Have you filled the questionnaires for measuring the SATISFACTION of Target Groups (TGs) on OSP (Open Science Practices) development for Y1 and sent it to P1/ASEM/MD?				
		highlight the correct answer	Yes	no, it is currently being completed	no, we have not started	
	67	If no, please provide the reasons				
		write down your answer	your text	N/A		

		68	Have you filled the questionnaires for measuring the IMPACT at the institutional level of OSP (Open Science Practices) development for Y1 and sent it to P1/ASEM/MD?				
			highlight the correct answer	Yes	no, it is currently being completed	no, we have not started	
		69	If no, please provide the reasons				
			write down your answer	your text	N/A		
		70	What has been your role/input in this WP?				
			write down your answer	your text			
WP7: PROJECT MANAGEMENT	7.2 Project financial management	71	Have you sent to P1/ASEM/MD the 1st financial and technical report? (15.01.2019 - 14.07.2019)				
			highlight the correct answer	Yes	no, it is currently being completed	no, we have not started	
		72	If no, please provide the reasons				
			write down your answer	your text	N/A		
		73	Have you sent to P1/ASEM/MD the 2nd financial and technical report? (15.07.2019 - 14.01.2020)				
			highlight the correct answer	Yes	no, it is currently being completed	no, we have not started	
		74	If no, please provide the reasons				
			write down your answer	your text	N/A		
		75	Have you sent to P1/ASEM/MD the 3rd financial and technical report? (15.01.2020 - 01.07.2020)				
			highlight the correct answer	Yes	no, it is currently being completed	no, we have not started	
		76	If no, please provide the reasons				
			write down your answer	your text	N/A		