Improving *Governance* Practices at Palestinian Higher Education Institutions

First Annual Evaluation Report

Internal Quality Assurance Measures

Due date of deliverable: **11, 2017**

Actual achievement date: **06, 2018**

Project Coordinator:

An-Najah National University

Project Details:

Based on the communications: "Increasing the impact of EU development strategy: an agenda for change" and " European higher education in the work", this project seeks to support the modernisation,accessibility, and internationalization of HEIs in Palestine, through addressing five cross-cutting aspects of governance. More specifically, this project seeks to:

1. Create an enabling environment to adopt decent governance, management and accountability practices
2. Establish a clear governance framework, including well-defined and clear mission and goals.
3. Establish effective governance and management structures
4. Stimulate autonomy and accountability,
5. Strengthen links with different stakeholders (i.e. improve participation) in strategic planning and development activities (this will reduce the gap between recent graduates and the industry).

UniGov project will initially seek to address weaknesses in the existing governance systems across HEIs in Palestine. Through establishing a comparative study with European benchmark universities, we seek to establish a governance framework and adopt innovative practicies to improve existing structures. The partnership between European universities and Palestinian universities is expected to continue effectively over 36 months. EU parnters will asses and analyze the existing situation, recommand necessary changes, and transfer necessary experience to implement effective governance structure (through training, workshops and site visits). The European partners will be responsible for establishing action plans to address the challenges in the existing governance structures in Palestinian Universities.

Project Members:

Partner No	Partner Name	Abbreviation	Country
P1	An-Najah National University	ANNU	Palestine
P2	Birzeit University	BZU	Palestine
P3	The Islamic University of Gaza	IUG	Palestine
P4	Arab American University Jenin	AAUJ	Palestine
P5	Palestine Polytechnic University	PPU	Palestine
P6	Universita' Di Siena	UNISI	Italy
P7	University of Ljubljana	UL	Slovenia
P8	University College Cork	UCC	Ireland
P9	Miditerranean Universities Union	UNIMED	Italy
P10	University of Évora	UE	Portugal

Document Information:

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Summary	This report summarizes the internal quality assurance measures conducted as part of the overall project evaluation process. It represents the main activities and the overall results of the conducted assessments along with recommendations to improve the project overall performance.
Last Updated	June 25, 2018

Dissemination Level:

PU	Public	
PP	Restricted to other program participants (including the Commission Services)	
RE	Restricted to a group specified by the consortium (including the Commission Services)	
CO	Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)	✓

1. Introduction

This document aims to to highlight the intenal quality assuarnce measures conducted during the period (09/2017 – 05/2018). These measures were documented within the Project Quality Assuarnce and Monitoring Plan as part of the project Performance Measurement System. These measures were executed to support the consortium effort for a successful implementation of the UniGOV project (project management) and to ensure the project achieves its short and long term goals (project impact). The findings of the implemented assessments will be discussed in the nearest project management meeting to decide on the corrective actions and to serve as a roadmap for the needed improvments.

During this period, two main measures were implemeted. The first was an evaluation form to determine the quality and to serve as an evaluation for the partners' deliverables, while the second was a general evaluation online questionnaire that asks the consurtium about their openion and feedback on the following:

- Management and Coordination;
- Project monitoring and quality assurance;
- Overall impression of the project ongoing progress, workload and resources;
- Partnership and collaboration.

The analysis and findings of these activities show that the overall project performance is very good. Most of the deliverables were evaluated with an excellent output. On the otherhand, most of the partners (7 participants) in the online queastionaire agreed that the overall management, quality assurance and monitoring, workload and resources, and the partnership and collaboration activities were clear, sufficient, effective and efficient. However, the findings show that there are some weaknesses within these domains and some recommendations were submitted as suggestion for improvments.

In the next two sections, the implemented internal QA measures and highlights on the major findings and analysis of the conduted assessments will be presented. Furthermore, the relationship of findings with the developed KPIs will be highlighted. The final section will be used to present the major recommendations for improving the project overall performance.

2. Quality Assurance measures

The internal quality assurance measures are organized to show the management structure of the project, its governing bodies, committees and people, their inter-relations and obligations, the decision processes, and meetings' courses of action. These measures set the procedures and templates to internally evaluate the project progress and its deliverables with respect to a predefined list of KPIs and milestones, and were documented within the quality assurance plan.

To this endeavor, a team was formulated to carry out the execution of the quality assurance procedures. This team is composed of:

- Quality Assurance WP Leader (Chair)
- One team member from the project partners.

With the following responsibilities:
- Providing overview of the technical reports produced.
- Performing quality control on all deliverables submitted.
- Guiding (upon request) the WP Leaders on the expected characteristics and contents of the relevant deliverables.
- Checking the usability of the online training platform and the effectiveness of the training contents and modules.
- Developing recommendations for corrective actions.
- Preparing an annual evaluation report in coordination with WPs leaders.
- Preparing the final quality assurance report that includes the results of the final project assessment, the achieved outcomes, and the satisfaction of participants.
- Reviewing the external evaluator reports and recommendations

During the past period of the project life, the quality team undertook the following measures:

1. Provided feedback on the deliverables submitted within the various project WPs.
2. Conducted a review of the expected outputs to identify any missing deliverables, and communicated the findings with the consortium.
3. Evaluated the deliverables to make sure they were in line with the project quality standards
4. Developed an evaluation questionnaire to collect partners feedback about the project overall performance
5. Developed this report (The first annual internal evaluation report)
6. Collected and classified the set of recommendations to improve the project management, coordination, quality assurance, dissemination, and development.
7. Conducted meetings and coordination with the hired external evaluator.

3. Analysis and Findings

The major points presented in this section are derived from the results of the QA of deliverables and the project evaluation questionnaire. These activities were conducted during the period (04 – 05/2018). The summary of the full responses from both measures are presented in the annexes (1 – 4). As mentioned earlier in this report, the overall performance was very good.

The overall results of evaluating the WPs outputs are in terms of:

- Compliance with the objectives of UniGOV
- Compliance with the specific objectives of the workpackage
- Correspondence with the description of work of the relevant activity
- Compliance with the deliverables format
- Adequacy of written language
- Dissemination

Those were all marked as acceptable and hence the quality of the produced documents is in compliance with the project quality standards. On the other hand, the results from the project evaluation questionnaire indicated that the overall project management activities were sufficient as most of partners agreed that:
- Project Management is efficient
- Project objectives are clear
- The distribution of roles is clear
- The guidance of the Coordinator is effective
- The support of the Coordinator is sufficient
- Communication with the Coordinator is regular
- Communication with the Coordinator is of good quality
- All Partners are engaged in the project
- Project management procedures are clear
- Decisions are documented and disseminated
- Financial management procedures are effective

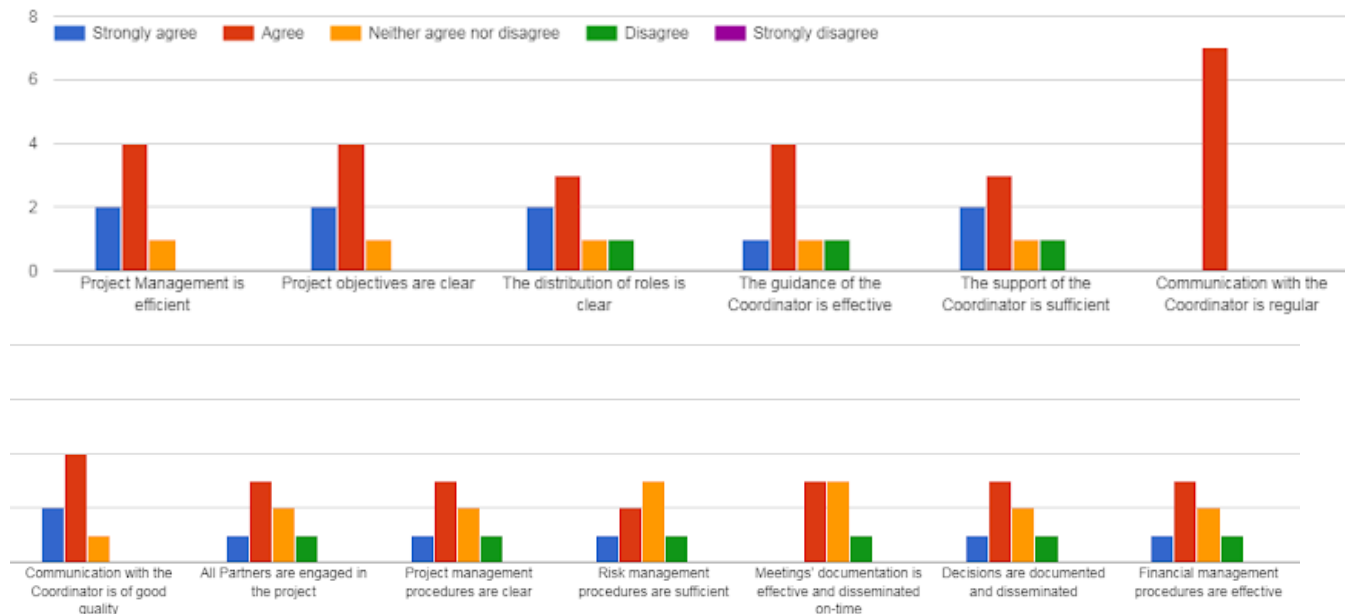These results are presented in the following chart:

Figure 1: Results of the project management activities evaluation

However, there are some weaknesses or a need for additional improvements in this domain as there was no agreement among participating partners that the Risk management procedures were sufficient nor the Meetings' documentation was effective and disseminated on-time.

The above scenario also applies to the QA and monitoring measures in which these measures were adequate and effective as shown (Figure 2). There was an agreement among most of participating partners on the follwoing:

- Monitoring and evaluation process is effective
- Project quality guidelines and monitoring procedures are clear
- Key Performance Indicators are SMART
- Project monitoring and quality load is sufficient
- Monitoring and quality assurance coordination is clear
- All Partners are engaged in the project monitoring and quality assurance process
- Project monitoring and quality assurance organization is clear
- Periodic reports are produced and disseminated on regular bases
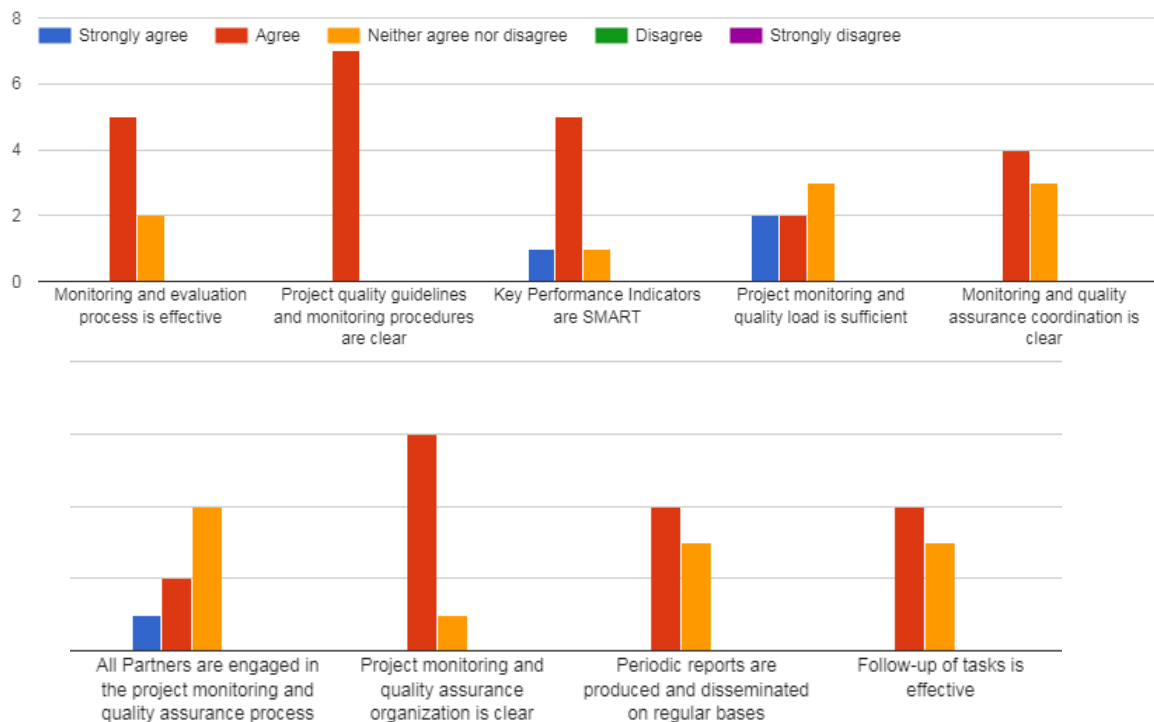- Follow-up of tasks is effective

Figure 2: Results of the project monitoring and quality assurance measures evaluation

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

As shown in (figure 3) below and in terms of project workload and resources, most partners ranked project overall work plan as suitable and they indicated that allocated budget for staff tasks were sufficient. Moreover there was an overall agreement on the following:

- It is easy to respect the project schedule
- Tasks are clearly distributed
- My tasks within the project are clear
- I have enough time for my tasks
- I have enough resources for my tasks
- I have enough support from WP Leaders and Partners
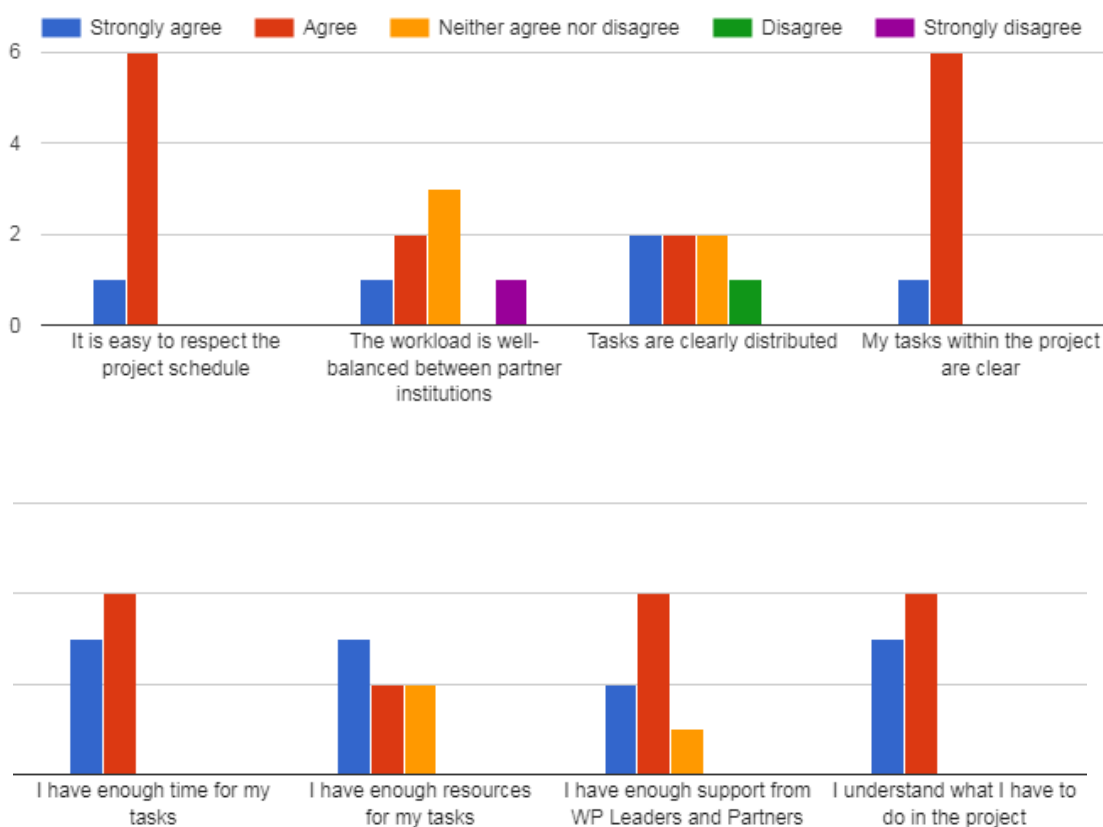- I understand what I have to do in the project

Figure 3: Results of the project workload and resources evaluation

However there was no agreement that the workload is well-balanced between partner institutions.

Finally, in evaluating partnership and collaboration, more than 50% of particpating partners agreed that the mutual confidence of project partners was good, around 30% agreed that it was suffcient, and 14% indiacted that it was well established. Similarly, they rated the effectiveness

of internal communications with the same evaluation. Moreover, as shown on figure 4, most of partners were satisfied with the following:

1. Support by Partners in fulfilling activities
2. Support by the Coordinator in fulfilling actvities
3. Communication among Partners is regular
4. Communication is effective
5. I got feedback when asking to Partners
6. Partners have interesting and complementary backgrounds
7. The multicultural aspects of the partnership is taken into account
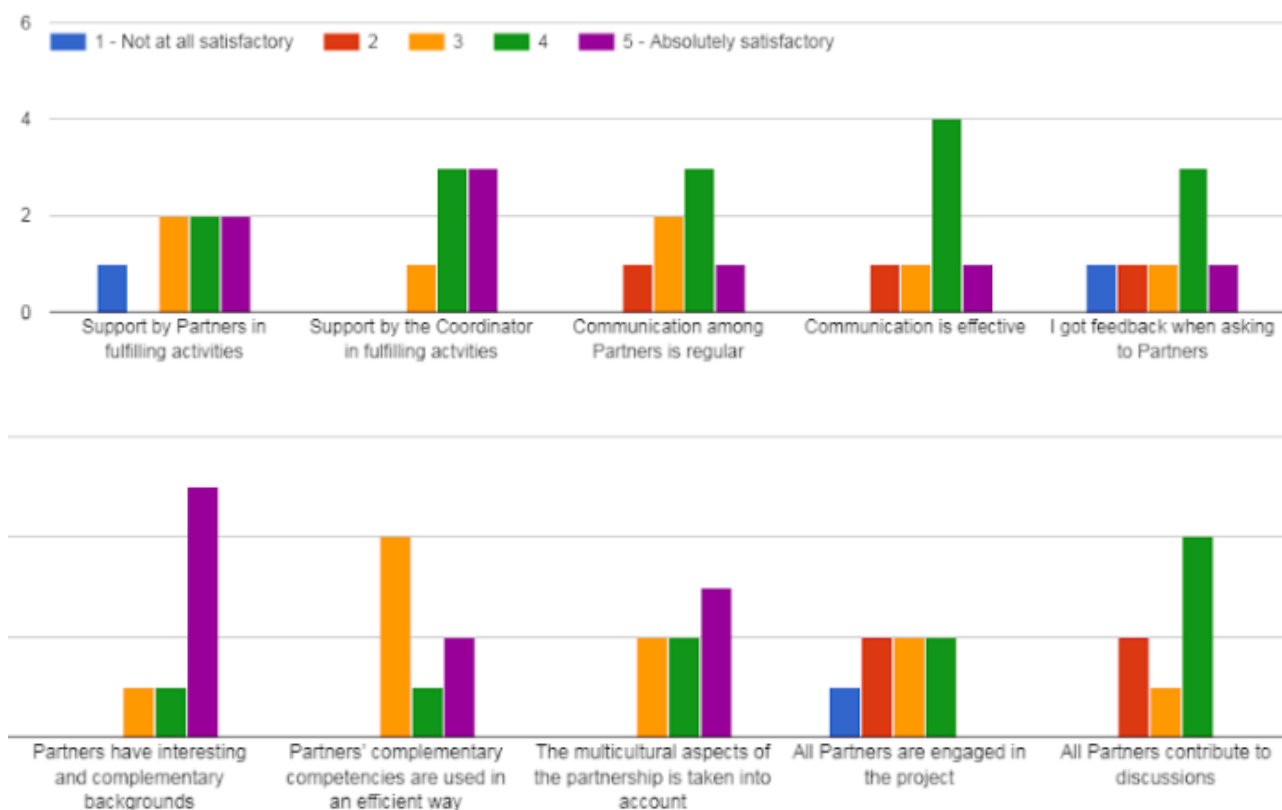8. All Partners contribute to discussions

Figure 4: Satisfaction with the project partnership and collaboration activities

However, there was no agreement on the partners' complementary competencies being used in an efficient way, and partners were not satisfied since not all of them are being engaged in the project.

The above presented findings along with the partners' feedback indicate that the following KPIs were met and verified:

1. Availability of Management and Coordination Procedures
2. Availability of Risk Management Procedures
3. Availability of Project Organization and Governance Structure Document, Committees' Formations and financial management procedures
4. Availability of Quality Guidelines and Monitoring Procedures
5. Availability of KPIs
6. Results Publicity Plan
7. Diagnostic Tool
8. Training Needs Assessment
9. Deliverables Evaluation
10. Communication between project partners

While the following KPIs witnessed some deficiencies and needed additional improvments from the whole consurtium to imporove the overall project performance:
1. On-Time Completion Percentage
2. Meeting Documentation
3. Decisions Documentation
4. Periodic Reports
5. Usage of the project website
6. Meetings frequency
7. Project Website and Communication Portal

4. Recommendations and Feedback

The following set of recommendations should be considered in order to improve the whole project performance:

1. Follow the quality and dessimination plan of uploading the output and documents to the project webiste and update them on regular bases.
2. Establish regular meetings (could be online) for local partners in order to manage the progress of the project and exchange knowledge and experiences.
3. Project meetings should be used to define all future meetings, deadlines and tasks.
4. Produce a monthly statement/report, discuss issues in smaller groups, and highlight governance methodologies to other partners.
5. Hold a joint conference among the partners, NGOs, and external stakeholders.
6. The project partners should be more collaborative and dynamic, as not all partners provide feedback or answers to the coordinator or WP leaders' communication and requests.

On the other hand, the following weaknesses should be discussed within the next management meeting and corrective actions should be applied:

1. The lack of risk management procedures
2. The quality and availability of meetings' documentation and dissemination.
3. The unbalanced workload between partner institutions.
4. The inefficiency of using Partners' complementary competencies.
5. The low level of partners' engagement in the project.