

APPRAIS

**governAnce, quality, accountability: a Piloting Reform
pRocess in kurdistan region of Iraq**

Kick-Off Meeting

Date: 02-03 February 2021

MINUTES



Participants

Partner Number	Acronym	Institution	Contact name
P1	UNIMED	Mediterranean Universities Union	Marcello Scalisi
P1	UNIMED	Mediterranean Universities Union	Marco Di Donato
P1	UNIMED	Mediterranean Universities Union	Martina Zipoli
P1	UNIMED	Mediterranean Universities Union	Marius Orlando Luca
P2	UNIPI	Università di Pisa	Francesco Marcelloni
P2	UNIPI	Università di Pisa	Marco Abate
P2	UNIPI	Università di Pisa	Tommaso Salamone
P3	UiO	University of Oslo	Bjarne Skov
P3	UiO	University of Oslo	Therese Gjessing
P3	UiO	University of Oslo	Eirik Olsen
P4	UMU	University of Murcia	Maria Jesus Periago
P4	UMU	University of Murcia	Constanza Saavedra
P5	UEVORA	University of Evora	Carlos Godinho
P5	UEVORA	University of Evora	Isália Morais
P6	SU	Salahaddin University	Mohammed Saeed
P6	SU	Salahaddin University	Prof.Dr.Jawhar fattah Saeed
P7	UoS	University of Sulaimani	Ridha Hasan Hussein
P7	UoS	University of Sulaimani	Karzan Khidhir
P8	UoD	University of Duhok	Rund A. Hammoudi
P8	UoD	University of Duhok	Lokman Hadi
P9	UoH	University of Halabja	Barzan Hama Karim

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P9	UoH	University of Halabja	Arieann Hamid
P10	DPU	Duhok Polytechnic University	Zeerak Ahmed
P10	DPU	Duhok Polytechnic University	Muhammad Ahmad
P11	UoG	Garmian University	Ahmed Tarkhany
P11	UoG	Garmian University	Ahmed Mohammed Omer-Bali
P12	UoZ	University of Zakho	Yaseen T. Mustafa
P12	UoZ	University of Zakho	Dler A. Jameel
P13	CHU	Charmo University	Salah Saeed
P13	CHU	Charmo University	Pshtiwan Mohammed
P14	MHESR KRG	Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Reasearch KRG	Dr. Mohammed Ahmed
P14	MHESR KRG	Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Reasearch KRG	Hawkar Arab

At the meeting took also part:

- Vincent-Guillaume Poupeau, Head of EU Office Erbil
- Ann Katherine Isaacs, University of Pisa, Bologna Expert

Takes Notes: Martina Zipoli, Marco Di Donato

02/02/2021

Opening and welcome

The meeting has been opened by a welcome speech of the UNIMED Director Marcello Scalisi, which confirmed the commitment of UNIMED towards supporting the reform of governance of Higher Education systems in the Mediterranean. UNIMED is eager to start this new project with old and new friends and colleagues, to improve the Higher Education system of the Kurdistan region of Iraq defining a path of common cooperation. APPRAIS is not only a matter of transferring capacities but mostly working together.

Welcoming words have been also shared by the Head of the European Union Office in Erbil, Mr. Vincent-Guillaume Poupeau. It has been around 10 years since the EU and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research of the Kurdistan region started a fruitful cooperation and the APPRAIS project is framed into that cooperation.

Keynote Speech

The Director General of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research KRG, Mr. Mohammed Hussein Ahmed delivered a keynote speech. After warmly greeting all participants, Mr. Ahmed congratulated the full Consortium for the project APPRAIS. We are very fortunate that this project is focusing on such crucial areas such governance, quality and accountability, which complements the new vision and long-term strategy for Higher Education issued by the Ministry, reinforces the implementation of the Bologna process principles in Kurdish universities and widen their international dimension. We want universities to modernize curricula, implement learning mobilities, enhance capacities of staff members, make young graduates capable to contribute to the region's development, and so on. In doing so, the Bologna process implementation (especially in terms of quality assurance improvement and recognition of credits mobility) are the key strategic objectives of the strategy of the higher education reform of the HEIs in Kurdistan region of Iraq, and the APPRAIS project is important in supporting this reforming process.

Building the partnership

The APPRAIS partners took time to introduce their institutions and the teams working on the project, to facilitate mutual knowledge despite meeting in-presence was not possible due to the COVID-19 pandemic and related difficulties. Few PPT presentations were shared, along to enthusiastic words to kick-off this new collaboration. Some universities are well-experienced in European funded projects, other will exploit this occasion to gain experience in international collaboration and have been granted full support on behalf of all Partners.

Keynote Speech: Update on the Bologna Process and prospects for Global Policy Dialogue in the new work period

Mrs. Katherine Isaacs has been involved in the Bologna process implementation since a long-time and was invited to the meeting to share with Iraqi Partners her expertise and experience in the matter. The «Bologna Process» has been under way since 1999 and after 21 years we have developed a broad area of understanding and developed, together, new goals, a Vision for 2030. In the next ten years we will continue working on a vision of the European Higher Education Area which is inclusive, innovative and interconnected. In the recently issues Rome Communiqué a statement was shared: «We commit to upholding institutional autonomy, academic freedom and integrity, participation of students and staff in higher education governance, and public responsibility for and of higher education». Along with that, attention is directed to: strengthening the social dimension of Higher Education; enhancing learning and teaching developing more flexible learning paths; reinforcing the commitment to mobility and to the creation of international learning environments. The APPRAIS project will allow us to share ideas and understandings of what the Bologna Process can mean for the institutions and for the higher education sector in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Overall presentation of the APPRAIS project

A brief overview of the APPRAIS project was delivered by Marco Di Donato from UNIMED, highlighting how the initiative is framed into a wider strategy of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, and confirms the commitment of UNIMED in the region, renewing cooperation with KRG. APPRAIS will support the institutional strategy of universities in the Kurdistan region of Iraq and enhance the capacity of HEIs to reach their strategic goals.

Mr. Lokman Hadi, Vice President for Scientific Affairs and Postgraduate Studies at the University of Duhok also shared few words on how APPRAIS responds to the need of universities in the Kurdistan region of Iraq of modernizing their management and implement quality and guidelines for Quality Assurance in line with European standards. Moreover, a focus on credit recognition will enable universities to support staff and student's mobility and the APPRAIS project will very much support these advancements for Kurdish HEIs.

Questions and Answers

Francesco Marcelloni from the University of Pisa takes advantage of the inputs shared to ask insights on how double degrees are implemented between Iraqi universities and European universities. Rund Hammoudi from the University of Duhok explained that most of the double degrees happened in the framework of the Erasmus Mundus program. Establishing joint degrees is a quite complex and long process but some are available. Students mobility is very much promoted through the E+ programme, and credits are recognized through a learning agreement. Regarding the staff, there were European professors coming to Kurdistan to teach in the joint degrees. Now with the pandemic, everything is online which makes it simple on the one side. A great focus is posed on the learning and teaching of the English language.

Closure

Marcello Scalisi, UNIMED Director, closed the meeting thanking all participants for their time and their enthusiasm in taking part to the first day of the APPRAIS kick-off meeting.

03/02/2021

WP8 Management

The second day of the meeting was opened by a focus on Work Packages 8, meaning on Project Management on behalf of the UNIMED Team. Marco Di Donato presented an overview of the objectives of APPRAIS, among all: *APPRAIS addresses governance, strategic planning and management of higher education institutions, with a particular focus on enhancing the capacities of human resources and proposing a reform for the local Higher Education system through the implementation of the Bologna process.* Target groups were identified, and the timeline of the project presented. To conclude, a list of project meeting and activities to be performed live is also presented, highlighting the difficulties related to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the strong will to perform activities in presence as soon as it will be possible, both in Europe and in the Kurdistan region of Iraq.

Martina Zipoli from the UNIMED team went through each WP to give Partners a comprehensive vision of the tasks to perform and the results to be achieved. A special focus was made on the operative management of the project, introducing the management bodies, the distribution of responsibilities among Partners and the communication arrangements for the project. In addition, two proposals for dedicated WP sessions are presented. Partners have been asked to express a preference to schedule these additional sessions.

Orlando Luca from the UNIMED team presented all the aspects related to the financial and administrative management of the project, going in details on the budget headings, the documents required to Partners, the financial reporting schedule, presenting the Partnership Agreement and the centralized financial management model proposed by UNIMED to manage travel and cost of stay expenses, among other things. Indications on the payment modalities is also introduced, together with a focus on the reserve fund.

The management session has raised many questions on behalf of the participating institutions, especially regarding financial and administrative issues. UNIMED has clarified doubts, renewing the availability for further clarifications and/or bilateral dedicated meetings.

WP1 Update of Need Assessment

Dr. Rund Hammoudi from the University of Duhok presented the Work Package 1 Update of Needs Assessment. The aim of the WP is to assess and analyse the needs of Partner universities, so to identify gaps and priorities in governance, quality assurance practices and credit recognition, and build the capacity building foreseen in WP3 and WP4. The needs assessment allows to identify the gap between the status quo and the set goals. The

following actions of the project will work to fill this gap. A presentation of the foreseen tasks is delivered, sharing details for each task and what is expected by Partners. First activity of the project will be a self-assessment conducted by Partners universities and a distribution of responsibility is indicated. WP1 foresees also a number of field visits, Partners agreed that a reflection is needed on how to reach the WP result in the current impossibility to travel. Expected results are listed and a timeline of the Work Package is presented. A final report will be produced to sum up the results of the analysis and give indications on the priorities to be addressed later in the project. The report will also include a session dedicated to the governance terminology as a further reference.

WP6 – Project Quality and Evaluation

Dr. Mohammed Azeez Saeed from Salahaddin University presented Work Package 6 Project Quality and Evaluation. Attention has been directed on the meaning of performing a quality assessment, on quality standards, and on the activities to be performed: quality planning, monitoring of processes, evaluation of outputs. During the project a Quality Plan will be drafted, a Quality Leading Team will be formed, reporting at set times on the quality assessment performed. All Partners are required to take part in the quality monitoring of the project, agree on quality criteria and methods, identify procedures and perform tasks.

WP7 - Dissemination and Exploitation

Activities serving the dissemination and exploitation of results are a way to showcase the work that has been done. Sharing results, lessons learned and outcomes and findings beyond the participating organizations will enable a wider community to benefit from the APPRAIS results. The aim of dissemination and exploitation is to ensure the visibility and communication of its actions and results vis-à-vis the main target groups as well as towards all those stakeholders who can be positively impacted by the exploitation of the same results. Duhok Polytechnic University will coordinate the dissemination and exploitation activities and a presentation is shared during the KOM by Dr. Muhammad A. Ahmad. Communication, dissemination and exploitation are interrelated to communicate with the target audience, make results visible, engage stakeholders and facilitate further use of the project outputs. WP 7 foresees the creation of a project logo and visual identity, a dedicated website, promotional materials and social media pages. Further dissemination activities will be scheduled to coincide with major events and thematic conferences organized by the partner institutions, other university networks in Europe and beyond. All Partners are required to actively contribute to dissemination activities.

Closure

The UNIMED team renews the thanks to all participant institutions and closed the meeting.

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Group Photos

