



# APPRAIS

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

## 1<sup>st</sup> Online Partners Meeting

*Date 5 July 2021*

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# MINUTES

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**Project:** APPRAIS «governAnce, quality, accountability: a Piloting Reform pRocess in kurdistan region of Iraq»

**Event Title:** 1<sup>st</sup> Online Partners Meeting

**Date of the meeting:** 15 July 2021

**Time:** 9:30 am – 12:30 pm CEST

**Minutes by:** Silvia Marchionne, UNIMED Project Manager and APPRAIS coordinator

**Venue of the meeting:** Zoom Platform

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### Objective of the meeting:

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The main purpose of this 1<sup>st</sup> Online Partners Meeting held on July 5, 2021 was to update all the partners on the progress of the activities implemented so far in the past 6 months and to plan the next steps to be taken after the summer break. In particular, the meeting was focused to present the activities carried out in the framework of the WP1 launched in March 2021 and on the three transversal WPs namely WP6 Quality, WP7 Dissemination and on WP8 Management.

After each WP presentation by the leader and co-leader of the WP, partners had time to discuss, to rise questions and thus to share their views and feedback among each other in order to progress in the activity implementation, to know eventual obstacles and difficulties and more importantly to plan future steps to be taken.

All the 13 partners were present and from the UNIMED Staff, Dr. Marcello Scalisi welcomed the participants and gave his greetings; Ms. Silvia Marchionne, Project Manager and project coordinator of APPRAIS introduced the purpose of this 1<sup>st</sup> Online Partners Meeting and the importance to go through each WP to better gain knowledge of the project and update all the partners on the progress so far achieved. The UNIMED staff has been also represented by Ms. Martina Zipoli, Project Manager, by Dr. Marco Di Donato, UNIMED Researcher and by Mr. Orlando Luca, Financial Manager of APPRAIS project.

Dr. Mohammed Hussein Ahmed, Director General, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research KRG gave his speech to welcome all the participants from all the partners and congratulated with all for the new logo of the APPRAIS project, democratically selected by all the partners and also congratulated with UNIMED and the University of Duhok to coordinate their efforts for the activities of the WP1 implementation, especially about the online workshops of the self-assessment sessions hold with all the Kurdish partners. Despite the covid19 and the mobility restrictions that prevent the partners to move and to visit each other's, he underlined the great commitment and engagement of all the partners and the coordinator of the project for all the steps so far achieved and the great job accomplished so far. He also reiterated the Ministry support and collaboration for the success of the APPRAIS project and its willingness



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to share the results of the project with also other HEIs in Kurdistan non partners of the project. He wished then a successful meeting to the partnership hoping that after the summer break it would be possible in autumn to meet each other physically in Kurdistan.

In annex I, there is the agenda of the Online Partners Meeting and in Annex II the group pictures.

## Summary of the main points of the 1<sup>st</sup> Online Partners Meeting and next steps:

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Monday 5 July 2021

### WP1 - Update of Need Assessment

The presentation on the state of the art of the activities done in the framework of the WP1 It has been a shared presentation among UNIMED, the University of Duhok and the EU partners. The presentation was delivered indeed by Ms. Silvia Marchionne, project coordinator and by Ms. Martina Zipoli from UNIMED, by Dr. Rund Hammoudi and Dr. Ismail Ali from the University of Duhok as leader of the WP1, together with Dr. Drivan Jalal from University of Garmian. We heard also from Dr. Bjarne Skov from University of Oslo, Prof. Marco Abate from University of Pisa and Dr. Juan Jorge from Murcia University. The presentation of the WP1 activities done so far included the following sections:

- 1) an overall view of the University Glossary made by Ms. Martina Zipoli from UNIMED and the above-mentioned partners from Europe;
- 2) an insight on the desk research and literature review on the topic made by Dr. Rund Hammoudi from the University of Duhok and by Dr. Drivan Jalal from University of Garmian;
- 3) the self-assessment exercise presentation done by Ms. Silvia Marchionne from UNIMED.

First of all, to start the WP1 presentation, Ms. Silvia Marchionne, project coordinator, has highlighted the overall aim of the WP which is to assess and analyse the needs of KRI universities, so to identify gaps and priorities in governance, quality assurance practices and credit recognition.

### About University Glossary

Ms. Marchionne after the introduction of WP1 objectives, gave the floor to Ms. Martina Zipoli from UNIMED who presented generally speaking the glossary's purpose which is to explain and describe the specific terminology and concepts on University Governance, Quality Assurance, Recognition of credits for learning mobility in order to make understandable to everyone the used language and to have all the same level of knowledge on the main topics of APPRAIS. The Glossary serves also as a common reference in the dialogue between Kurdish and European HEIs. She presented also the working methodology for the glossary: University of Pisa, University of Oslo, University of Murcia, University of Evora and UNIMED have shared the responsibility of drafting the Glossary. The definition of the contents and the working approach has been discussed and refined thanks to the contribution of the WP Leader University of Duhok. The Governance Glossary includes terms and definition of concepts, together with a reference of the sources used to compile the document. Finally, she presented the structure of the Glossary:

- Mobility and credits recognition (University of Murcia)
- Quality Assurance (University of Oslo)



- University Governance (University of Evora and UNIMED)
- Higher Education structures (University of Pisa): it includes an overview of HE structures in each of the Partner countries (IT, SP, NO, PG). It also Includes a comparative table of the figures / bodies in the university's organigrams and an explanation about hierarchical relations at the university

After that, Ms. Zipoli gave the floor to the EU partners who were in charge of each topic in the glossary definition and each colleague (as mentioned above before) gave an insight about the terms and concepts focused on the selected topics of the Glossary. It was then the turn of Dr. Ismail Ali from the University of Duhok who also presented the general structure of the higher education system in Kurdistan through the presentation of the organigramme of the University of Duhok.

The partners appreciated the efforts done by their colleagues in putting together the Glossary that will be finalised after the summer break on early September for the editing and the graphical review. Once shared with all the partners, it will be validated and the partners agreed also to translate it into Kurdish language, to guarantee more visibility to the tool and to emphasize the use by the Kurdish universities not only partners of APPRAIS but also outside the partnership. It was also considered the possibility to translate the Glossary in Arabic to reach a wider audience at Arab countries level for the importance of the deliverable.

### **Desk research**

After this long and very detailed presentation on the Glossary, Dr. Rund Hammoudi from the University of Duhok introduced the work done by all the Kurdish Universities and the Ministry on the desk research and literature review for the elaboration of the report of WP1 on the state of the art of the university governance and the higher education system in Kurdistan. She recalled the 4 sub working groups who met regularly during the past months to advance and to progress on this deliverable:

- 1) Collection of secondary sources on the issue of HEIs state of the art in KRI

Responsible Partners: University of Sulaymaniah + Halabja University

- 2) Collection and Translation of national legislation

Responsible Partners: University of Salaheddine + University of Charmo

- 3) Identification and studying of good practices

Responsible Partners: University of Zakho + DPU

- 4) Study on international rankings

Responsible Partners: Garmian University + University of Duhok

It was now the turn of Dr. Drivan Jalal from University of Garmian who presented the general structure of the report of WP1 underlined that there would be a section on the state of the art of the HE system in Kurdistan from the historical perspective and a focus on the national regulatory framework thanks to the translation of the laws made by the Ministry and with the support of Salaheddine and Charmo Universities. Another section of the report will be dedicated a collection of the good practices related to the APPRAIS topics and Dr. Dler from the University of Zakho thanked all the KRI universities who replied to the survey for the collection of these good practices. UNIMED will be in charge in harmonize the content for all the practices to be included in the report. Finally, Dr. Drivan presented also the analysis of the results of another survey launched by the sub working group UoD and Garmian Universities on the international rankings and accreditation.



## Self-assessment

The presentation on the WP1 activity has then concluded by Ms. Marchionne, Project coordinator who Presented the self-evaluation that has been performed by KRI universities through the diagnostic tool. The self-evaluation has been completed by all the 8 KRI universities, through bilateral sessions with each HEI to grant real-time support and ease the process in answering in the online tool.

The self-assessment 's main aim is to to better identify needs, weakness and constraints but also to be aware of priorities and strengths of each KRI university involved in the project. The project coordinator explained that the self-evaluation is an assessment of the perceptions of the staff working at the university in strategic positions and that allows University Leaders (at different levels) to identify the dimensions and subdimensions of governance in need for improvement, starting from a self-evaluation of current governance arrangements at each HEIs. It may stay as an instrument for universities to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of future developments, in comparison to how things function today. The self-evaluation based on some selected and specific dimensions of university governance:

- Management
- Autonomy
- Accountability
- Participation

These governance dimensions have been assessed in relation to each strategic activity of the university TEACHING, RESEARCH, THIRD MISSION. Ms. Marchionne informed all the partners that the KRI universities have been asked to evaluate (on a scale 1 to 5) their capacity/position on each indicator identified for the 4 dimensions and sub-dimensions.

- Autonomy is assessed in its different forms, that are Organizational autonomy, Academic autonomy, autonomy in deciding upon Human Resources and Financial autonomy.
- The Management Techniques evaluated are: Quality Assurance mechanisms, Effective use of performance planning tools, Effective use of evaluation results.
- Accountability is assessed in relation to decisions about Organizational aspects, Academic issues, Human Resources management and decisions about financial issues.
- The assessment of the Participation dimension is carried out to evaluate the participation of internal and external stakeholders in in the institutional life and their involvement in the decision-making process.

The results from the desk research and self-evaluation will be further discussed, finalised and validated during three field visits conducted by UNIMED staff to the three Kurdistan provinces: in Erbil at Salaheddine University (Salaheddine University, Charmo University and the Ministry); in Sulaymania at Sulaymania University (Garmian University, Halabja University and Sulaymania University); and in Duhok at Duhok University (Zakho University, Duhok Polytechnic University and Duhok University).

In terms of WP1 deliverables, the first draft version of the WP1 Report is foreseen by 31 May 2021, which will include desk research and the governance glossary. The results from the self-assessment by the HEI will be provided by 31 July 2021. Finally, the final report of the WP1, is foreseen by 31 October 2021 (included desk research, self-evaluation and field visits reports). All the partners will contribute to the final report in reading, reviewing and giving feedback. UNIMED and University of Duhok will contact in the next days the partners to start concretely working on the first two tasks of the WP1: desk research and glossary which are for the next two months the priority tasks.



Finally, Ms. Marchionne informed the partnership that 66 participants/Survey have been completed over 8 universities, for an average of 8 people per institution. The participation was from a minimum of 6 people to a maximum of 13 people: Thus, she congratulated with the partners for the great result achieved. She mentioned that the participation saw Presidents, the three vice-presidents, the General Director in charge for administrative and financial management, the Director of the International Relations office, the Director of the Quality Assurance office, Director of the department of Studies and Planning, Director of the Finance department and some dean of colleges.

The UNIMED team will then analyse the answers to the online survey in the next weeks and will communicate to each KRI university the results of the analysis for the university's feedback and validation. The overall analysis will be thus included in the final report of WP1.

At the end of the presentation on WP1, the project coordinator has informed the partners that the results from the desk research and self-evaluation will be further discussed, finalised and validated during three field visits conducted by UNIMED staff to the three Kurdistan provinces:

- in Erbil at Salaheddine University (Salaheddine University, Charmo University and the Ministry)
- In Sulaymania at Sulaymania University (Garmian University, Halabja University and Sulaymania University)
- in Duhok at Duhok University (Zakho University, Duhok Polytechnic University and Duhok University)

These field visits should be organised by mid-October 2021 if the pandemic conditions would allow to organise such visit. Ms. Marchionne reiterated the willingness of the UNIMED staff to go to Kurdistan as soon as possible once the sanitary situation will improve and really hoped to do that by Autumn.

The final deadline for the accomplishment of the WP1 is October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021, but of course after the summer break the UNIMED team will share with the partners first the Glossary draft, then the results of the self-evaluation and a first version of the report included desk research by mid-September, 2021.

## WP6 – Project Quality and Evaluation

The meeting continued with the presentation on the state of the art on the Work Package 6 Quality and Evaluation by Dr. Barzan Hama-Kareem from Halabja University, co-leader of this WP, after a general introduction by the leader, Dr. Nabil A. Fakhre from Salahaddin University. Attention has been directed on the presentation of the table of contents of the Quality Plan that has been drafted. Dr. Barzan informed again the partners that the composition of the Quality and Evaluation Committee has been discussed during the project kick-off meeting organised online in February 2021 and the dedicated WP session in March 2021. Therefore, the co-leader presented the role of the Quality and Evaluation Committee: he is in charge of the quality assurance of the project, including process and progress assessment. It is thus responsible for:

- The quality assessment of the project results
- The peer-review of the project deliverables
- The validation of the quality reports

Finally, Dr. Barzan informed the partners that a call for the External Evaluator (ToR) has been launched on May 26<sup>th</sup> and that the deadline to receive candidatures was June 10<sup>th</sup>. UNIMED who is in charge of subcontracting an external person who will carry out this job, has published the terms of reference for the selection of the External Evaluator (<https://www.uni-med.net/terms-of-reference-external-evaluation-apprais-project/>).



Within the deadline which was June 10th, he informed that 10 applications were received. Salaheddine and Halabja universities, together with UNIMED, have evaluated the received application through an evaluation grid based on the selection criteria included in the TOR. After the Online Partners meeting, the two leaders of WP6 will ask all the members of the Quality Committee to evaluate the 4 candidates of the short-list in order to select the winning candidate.

At the end of the presentation, Dr. Barzan informed the partners about the next steps to be taken:

- 1) Validation of the Quality Plan by the Quality Committee and finally sharing with the Steering Committee
- 2) Sending the evaluation questionnaire to the participants of the KoM and WPs session and for this new management meeting of July in order to evaluate the three meetings as requested by the project and the quality plan
- 3) To communicate the decision of the Quality Committee for the name of the External evaluator by mid-July.

### **WP7 - Dissemination and Exploitation**

Dr. Muhammad Duhoki from Duhok Polytechnic University, leader of the WP7 presented the activities under the WP7, with the collaboration of UNIMED as co-leader. 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. Sharing results, lessons learned and outcomes and findings beyond the participating organizations will enable a wider community to benefit from the APPRAIS results. Duhok Polytechnic University presented the dissemination and exploitation activities, which are very interrelated to communicate with the target audience, make results visible, engage stakeholders and facilitate further use of the project outputs. The WP7 leader informed all the partners about the selection of the project logo and its visual identity. He informed that a dedicated website, promotional materials and social media pages will be further developed. 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.

Dr. Duhoki shared the main points of the dissemination strategy for the project and informed all the partners that the team is working on the dissemination plan that has been drafted already and will soon share with all the partners.

Among social media, partners agreed to open a Facebook page dedicated to the project. It has been underlined the importance to publish in the institutional website of each partner a reference to the APPRAIS project and the link to the formal website when available and to re-publish news. Also, traditional media as radio, newspaper, tv should play an important role at local level when events are organised in KRI. The Ministry agreed to support all the partners to give greater visibility to the projet and exploit as much as possible the results of APPRAIS, beyond the project and current partnership.

### **WP8 Management**

The meeting was concluded by a focus on Work Packages 8, meaning on Project Management by Ms. Silvia Marchionne on behalf of the UNIMED Team. She gave a special focus on the operative



management of the project, presenting again the final composition of the management bodies, the distribution of responsibilities among Partners and the communication arrangements for the project.

Ms. Marchionne reminded that a google group has been set up for all the partners representatives (apprais@googlegroups.com) where general information on the project activities addressed to all the partners will be then shared with all. This Google group by now included mail addresses from the Assembly of Partners and from Scientific Committee, for the moment we have included all to avoid missing information among partners.

The UNIMED coordinator presented very briefly the summary and the content of the project management handbook that will be shared also with all the partners very soon.

She also informed that all the 13 Partnership Agreements have been signed and sent on time to the EACEA as requested and that a financial webinar has been organised for the benefit of the partners on May 27<sup>th</sup>,2021 aimed to support partners with explanations on financial matters. She also reminded that some financial documents to all the partners, in particular the budget file of the staff cost to each partner with the templates of the supporting documents for the staff cost reporting: timesheet and joint declarations, have been shared by Mr. Orlando Luca, Financial manager of APPRAIS.

Ms. Marchionne then informed the partnership that another financial webinar will be organised to be focused on equipment procedure and purchase (late September 2021) and that the First mid-term management meeting should be organised in Kurdistan (late October 2021), together with the field visits of the WP1.

The meeting concluded then by thanking once again all the partners for their commitment and efforts in advancing well in the overall APPRAIS project that despite the difficulties to be a project started and launched virtually due to the covid19, didn't know any particular obstacle or problem in the past months and all the partners were very cooperative.

At the 12.30 pm CEST, the meeting ended.





# 1<sup>st</sup> Online Partners Meeting

Monday 5th July 2021

## AGENDA



UNIVERSITÀ DI PISA



UiO : University of Oslo



UNIVERSIDADE DE ÉVORA



Link to the virtual room:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84073696200?pwd=azc1M2VPSHh1YjdqZ2Z1UN1JFSHZlZ09>

ID meeting: 840 7369 6200

Passcode: 703315

Useful Contacts:

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Martina Zipoli, [m.zipoli@uni-med.net](mailto:m.zipoli@uni-med.net)



**Monday 5th July 2021**

**9.30-12.30 CEST (Italy, Spain, Norway time)**

**10.30-13.30 Erbil time**

**8.30-11.30 Portugal time**

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09.30-09.45	<b>Greetings and introduction to the 1<sup>st</sup> Online Partners Meeting</b>  <b>Marcello SCALISI</b> , UNIMED Director <b>Mohammed HUSSEIN AHMED</b> , Director General, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research KRG
09.45 – 10.30	<b>WP1 – Update of Needs Assessment</b>  <i>Presentation on the progress of the WP and next steps: State of the art on the desk research, the governance glossary and self-assessment exercise</i>  University of Duhok & UNIMED with the collaboration of EU partners
10.30-11.00	<b>Questions and answers on WP1</b>
11.00-11.10	<b>Coffee break</b>
11.10-11.30	<b>WP6 – Project Quality and Evaluation</b>  <i>Presentation on the progress of the WP and next steps: The composition of the Quality Committee, the Quality plan and the selection of the external evaluator</i>  University of Salaheddine & University of Halabja
11.30-11.50	<b>WP7 – Dissemination and Exploitation</b>  <i>Presentation on the progress of the WP and next steps: The selection of the logo of the project, the dissemination plan and the website information</i>  Duhok Polytechnic University & UNIMED
11.50-12.10	<b>WP8 – Management</b>  <b>Presentation on the progress of the WP and next steps</b> <i>UNIMED</i>
12.10 – 12.30	Further questions, wrap up and conclusion

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## ANNEX II / Group Photos

