



APPRAIS

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

APPRAIS Sustainability Plan

November 2023



Introduction

This Sustainability Plan – deliverable D7.1 within the task 7.1 of the WP7 Dissemination and exploitation of the Erasmus+ APPRAIS structural project n° 618781 – aims to ratify the commitment of the Kurdish partners of the project in ensuring the long-lasting duration of the main results of the project, achieved during its 3-years lifetime.

Sustainability is the ability to maintain or support a process over time. It is among the core elements of initiatives such as APPRAIS, willing to generate a systemic change. As part of the project plan, the sustainability of the project outputs must be designed, agreed and implemented by the whole Consortium.

Starting point to define sustainability measures is a reflection on the long-term impact the APPRAIS project is willing to generate. Impact sustainability is guaranteed by institutional commitment of the Partner universities that will fully appropriate the project results. Partners agreed on the actions to be put in place during the project lifetime and beyond its end date.

Project summary

The APPRAIS project addresses governance, strategic planning and management of higher education institutions in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, 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. To institutionalize good governance practices in Iraqi HEIs also means enforcing institutional values such as autonomy, accountability, participation, quality assurance, and internationalization, as well as implementing well-structured management systems. This three-years project has contributed to the development and modernization of the HE sector in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, supporting HEIs in meeting international standards and empowering university staff to effectively manage and implement changes.



Overall sustainability strategy

Outcomes	Strategy to ensure their sustainability	Resources necessary to achieve this	Where will these resources be obtained?
Institutional strategic action plans	HEIs from Kurdistan region of Iraq, that drafted their own strategic plan, keep using it as a guideline after the lifetime of the project, thanks to the acquired institutional support, the trained human resources, and further contacts with Ministry	Institutional support from the beneficiary universities	Partnership with Ministry and university staff himself
Capacity building for university staff (academic and administrative)	Involve a higher number of university staff in APPRAIS local training to transfer skills to a wider number of beneficiaries in Kurdish universities.	University staff	Institutional level
Capacity building for university staff of non-Partners HEIs in the Kurdistan region of Iraq	Involve a high number of university staff members in local training to not-Partner universities, delivered by the staff from the 8 Kurdish Partner HEIs, to transfer skills to a wider number of beneficiaries in the region and allow the HE system to harmonize.	University staff	Institutional level. KRG Ministry.

Quality Assurance Directorates increased capacities on Bologna process implementation	Commitment of the University leadership in supporting the QA Directorates through learning and training experiences, and through the use at institutional level of the APPRAIS QA software.	Quality Assurance Directorates staff well engaged, trained and committed	Institutional level
Sustaining Bologna process implementation at national level	Based on the commitment of University leadership and decision-makers in line with the Ministry indications. Promotion of the APPRAIS experience and training materials. Extended use of the APPRAIS MOOC and QA software.	Institutional support from the beneficiary universities and local Ministry	Institutional level. KRG Ministry.
Increased number of HEIs staff mobility	Based on the new established relationship with EU partners as natural consequence of Bologna process implementation	Institutional support from the beneficiary universities in addition to a more structured access to Erasmus+ funds	Institutional level. E+ funds.

Article 1 – Purposes of the sustainability plan

This Sustainability Plan –aims to ratify the commitment of the Kurdish partners of the project in order to:

- 1) maximize the impact of the APPRAIS project results at the institutional and national level;
- 2) continue to use the Quality Assurance Management Software created as part of the APPRAIS project to provide maximum benefit to the administrative and academic staff of the 8 Kurdish universities and to further expand its adoption and use to other university non-partners of the project;
- 3) ensure the access to a wide university community of the APPRAIS MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) produced within the framework of the project;
- 4) provide a continuing training and capacity building actions for dedicated staff at Kurdish universities;
- 5) enlarge the benefits of the training of trainees (ToT) to further university staff members from the 8 Kurdish HEIs and from other universities non-partners of APPRAIS with the coordination and supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research KRG and the support of all the 8 HEIs;
- 6) adoption of the University Governance Glossary as a reference for all the HEIs in the KRG region through publication of the document on the institutional website of the HEIs;
- 7) ensure the implementation of the university strategic plan for the adoption of the Bologna process and good governance framework within each partner university;
- 8) promote further collaboration with European University partners through mobility of staff and students, new projects and initiatives (such as new capacity building projects, international credits mobility activities, MoU, summer and winter school, training staff week, job shadowing for administrative and academic staff and further);
- 9) accompany the universities and the Ministry in implementing the ESG (European Standard Guidelines) in quality assurance at institutional and national level.
- 10) identify the sources of financing necessary for the sustainability of the project in the future, starting from organisations' own resources and beyond.

This sustainability plan does not constitute a legally binding document, but it constitutes a roadmap that the partners give themselves in order to continue the changes initiated by APPRAIS and to measure them. It is part of the legacy the APPRAIS project leaves to the Partner institutions, and collects the commitment of each university to keep the project results alive and make sure the changes started spread beyond the APPRAIS initial target group. This operating plan defines the strategy and activities to be implemented to ensure effective exploitation of the project results. This document aims at reporting the inputs emerged from Partners during the discussions about the APPRAIS sustainability, as part of a larger exploitation strategy.



Article 2 – Adoption of the APPRAIS software by other KRI HEIs

Objective	Maximize the use the Quality Assurance Management software purchased as part of the APPRAIS project at national level
Actions undergone	Gradual adoption and use of the Quality Assurance Management software by all the HE institutions in KRG. The APPRAIS partners already testing an using the software, will train other university non-partners of the project.
Target	University academic and administrative staff from all the KRI HE institution.
Impact Level	Institutional and National level.

Background

Within the project, the APPRAIS consortium has agreed to purchase of a specific Quality Assurance and Management software, with the aim to allow an accurate and professional management of the services delivered by the QA Directorate within each university, in particular with regards research, students services and third mission.

These were also among the three dimensions that emerged as the weakest from the needs' assessment in the WP1, therefore in need to be strengthened.

The Kurdish partners of APPRAIS have been testing the use of the software since July 2023 after several meetings and trainings (in-presence and online) conducted by the Awrosoft company, the provider of the software.

The KRG Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research has recognized the usefulness, the value and the great potentiality of the tool and agreed to extend its use also to other Kurdish universities and further encourage non-partner Kurdish HEIs to apply the software to manage some of their QA activities.

Actions to be carried by Kurdish partners after APPRAIS ends

- First of all, the software piloting period by the 8 beneficiaries of APPRAIS will last until January 2024, and consequently they will train the internal staff of the Colleges in the use of the software and engaging a wider pool of users at the institutional level, by April 2024.
- A task force is established with the KRG Ministry and dedicated team members (QA Directors and IT staff) from each Kurdish university to monitor and regularly follow up the use of the software and the piloting.



- All the 8 APPRAIS HEIs, after the official end of the APPRAIS project, will continue to report on the use of the software to the KRG Ministry, while the Project Coordinator UNIMED could facilitate the organisation of online meeting to regularly follow-up on the implementation of this action.
- A first follow-up online meeting is organised on March 18th, 2024 by the Project Coordinator UNIMED with the 8 Kurdish HEIs and the Ministry.
- From September 2024 the software will be gradually extended to other university staff in the region (among private and public institutions). The KRG Ministry will decide when, how many and which universities will be the next group of universities adopting this tool. The technical and financial procedure will be managed directly by the KRG Ministry with the Awrosoft company.

Article 3 – Sustainability of the APPRAIS MOOC

Objective	Capacity building for university staff (academic and administrative) and related improved skills
Actions undergone	Staff taking part in the training in Europe. Staff taking part in the MOOC. Staff taking part in the APPRAIS local training to transfer their skills to colleagues.
Target	University academic and administrative staff
Impact Level	Institutional and National level

Background

The capacity building action of APPRAIS includes, after the cycle of in-presence training, a Massive Open Online course. The APPRAIS MOOC is part of the process of empowering Kurdish universities to implement the Bologna Process and set the basis for the definition of their own institutional strategic plans.

The course is composed of six modules, which explore different aspects related to governance, the design of the study programs (learning outcomes, student workload, and the European Credit Transfer System), recognition of credits, learning mobility, and internal and external quality assurance. All the European partners, under the overall guidance of the WP4 coordinator, University of Murcia, and the co-leader, University of Zakho, contributed to the MOOC by sharing their own experience, good practices, and knowledge, providing an overall view about the principles of the Bologna Process as it was implemented in their HEIs.



After the piloting phase involving the Kurdish partner universities and Ministerial staff, the course was made openly accessible to learners in different formats and platforms. The MOOC enhances and multiplies the training effect of the project, it was and will be used as a teaching tool for the local training of academic and administrative staff at Kurdish Partner universities, and it is a training resource for other staff members at Kurdish HEIs not part of the Consortium.

MOOC materials are made available in English. For the local training, some of the training resources were also translated into Kurdish.

The MOOC is designed for the academic and administrative staff of the Kurdish universities' partners in the project, specifically those involved in the governance and implementation of the Bologna Process. Target groups for the MOOC are:

- University Presidents
- Vice-president for Scientific affairs and Vice-president for Students affairs
- Director of the Quality Assurance Office/Programme development, and office team members
- Director of the International Relationship Office and team members, preferably in charge of Erasmus+ programme
- Members of the Bologna Process Committee
- Dean of college involved in Bologna process implementation
- Heads of Departments involved in Bologna process implementation
- Members from the Department Scientific Committee (i.e. senior lecturers)
- Staff at the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in KRG, specifically responsible for Quality Assurance, Bologna Process implementation, governance and strategic planning.

Opening the MOOC: from the APPRAIS community to a wider audience at KRG level and beyond

The Kurdish partners agree to the following actions to ensure the sustainability of the MOOC:

- All Partners agree to open the course to other staff members from their own institutions, other universities in the region and potentially to all interested parties: <https://learn.uni-med.net/course/view.php?id=43>
- For digital preservation purposes, the MOOC will remain on the UNIMED Learning platform, with an open access.
- All Partners from KRG will check the possibility to upload the MOOC to their Moodle platforms.
- UNIMED created a dedicated section of the project website where the MOOC is presented, recordings and training resources are accessible, and details are shared on How to use the course.
- A Booklet was designed to present the MOOC, integrated with information on how to access and make use of the course content. This is uploaded as PDF on the website and also made available to all the Partners to print and share.

- In March 2024, all the 8 Kurdish HEIs will submit a report about the institutional access to the MOOC and their sustainability plan implementation for a wider use of the MOOC.

Article 4 – Strengthening the skills of university staff (academic and administrative) of the 8 Kurdish HEIs

Objective	To provide a continuing training and capacity building actions for dedicated staff in the 8 HEIs.
Actions undergone	A specific calendar of trainings (ToT) will be scheduled within each of the 8 HEIs by using training material from the project and the access to the MOOC.
Target	University academic and administrative staff from the 8 KRI HE institution.
Impact Level	Institutional and National level.

In order to ensure a better strengthening of the skills of university leaders, academic and administrative staff and quality assurance managers of Kurdish universities, the Kurdish Partners agreed to pursue and continue the cascade training towards their own internal staff.

The already trained staff in the previous ToT will develop subsequent activities of training directed to other colleagues from other Colleges and Departments that were not involved yet during the project lifetime.

The ToT series will be performed during the 1st year after the official end of the APPRAIS project and this will increase the number of the Kurdish beneficiaries, generating also a harmonization effect in the Higher Education system. The EU partners will be available to organise some online meetings and webinars on specific topics to further update the training and to transfer new knowledge.



Actions to be carried by Kurdish partners after the end of APPRAIS:

The Kurdish partners agree to the following actions to ensure the sustainability of their training effect:

- to organise another local ToT (duration to be decided by each university partner) addressed to other university staff and department members who did not benefit from the APPRAIS ToT organised during the lifetime of the project;
- UNIMED as Project Coordinator will be in touch with the 8 Kurdish HEIs to establish a calendar and to be informed about the ToT programme and beneficiaries: the second round of local institutional ToT are planned between April and June 2024
- An online meeting will be organised by UNIMED project coordinator in May 2024 to regularly follow up the University partner in this task

Actions to be carried by European partners after the end of APPRAIS:

The European partners agree to the following actions to ensure the sustainability of their training effect:

- A series of webinar from May to July 2024 will be organised by the EU partners (University of Murcia, University of Pisa, University of Evora and University of Oslo) to update the training topics already tackled during the project or to focus on new ones (ESG guidelines implementation, national qualification frameworks, international accreditation, academic entrepreneurship and employability issues, virtual exchanges and collaborative online international learning, internationalisation of research, quality assurance and management of research, international projects in research, innovation and new teaching technologies etc). A webinar will be organised in mid-May 2024, two more webinars in June 2024 and one in July 2024, by the EU Project Partners.
- UNIMED as Project Coordinator will seek to involve also other University network experts on other above-mentioned topics to run another series of webinars from September to December 2024 (at least one webinar each month, in synergy with other UNIMED projects on governance of higher education in other countries.

Article 5 – Enlargement of the ToT benefits to other non-partner universities in KRG

Objective	Enlarge the benefits of the training of trainees (ToT) to university staff from other universities non-partners of APPRAIS.
Actions undergone	A specific calendar of trainings (ToT) will be scheduled where to involve.
Target	University academic and administrative staff from all the KRI HE institution.
Impact Level	Institutional and National level.

Background

In the framework of APPRAIS project, during the past months, each Kurdish Partner organised its own local training to other university staff members with the purpose of transfer knowledge achieved during the Capacity Building action. More than 160 participants from the 8 Kurdish universities took part in the local Training of Trainers (ToT), that lasted 6 days in each institution and were focused on a number of topics from good governance and strategic planning to quality assurance and Bologna process, from internationalisation to social responsibility. The KRG Ministry is willing to further enlarge and widen the beneficiaries of the ToT to other universities which are not partners of the APPRAIS project, in order to enhance the project impact and ensure the sustainability of the project results well-beyond the project lifetime

In this regard, at the occasion of the APPRAIS Final Conference, all the other universities in the KRG region were invited by the Ministry to attend the project closing event, and in particular to participate in the dedicated session about the ToT enlargement jointly organized by the Ministry and UNIMED with the purpose of presenting APPRAIS project and its main results, and to introduce to the not partners universities the training opportunity offered by APPRAIS.

Enlarging the ToT benefits to other non-partner universities

With the direct engagement of the KRG Ministry, APPRAIS project could potentially reach the highest possible number of Kurdish universities in the region, strengthening the sustainability

of the project results and creating a Higher Education environment where competences are shared and universities advance at the same pace despite singularities and differences.

The Ministry agreed to further enlarge the ToT to the following universities outside the APPRAIS consortium:

1. Soran University (public university)
2. Koya University (public university)
3. Erbil Polytechnic University (public university)
4. Sulaymania Polytechnic University (public university)
5. Raparin University (public university)
6. Hawler Medical University (public university)
7. Nowruz University in Duhok (private university)
8. Bayan University in Erbil (private university)
9. Cihan University in Sulaymania (private university)
10. Other 3 technical institutes

This is the potential list of 9 universities (public and private) plus three technical institutes that will be also chosen by the Ministry, which are not partners of APPRAIS, and who will benefit of the ToT.

The KRG Ministry, supported by the project coordinator, UNIMED, will organise by June 2024 at the Ministry premises a meeting to discuss the organisation of the calendar for the ToT enlargement.

Two or three APPRAIS Kurdish partner will joint their efforts to deliver the ToT to other 2 or 3 non-university staff members (at least 10 members each university) according to their expertise, geographical proximity and university interests.

During the months from May to June 2024, the universities will prepare the ToT program and will inform the other university beneficiaries, who can start to run the APPRAIS MOOC by August 2024.

The ToT enlargement plan will run after the summer break, in September-October 2024.



Article 6 – Adoption of the University Glossary as a reference for all the HEIs in the KRG region

Objective	Adoption of the University Glossary as a reference for all the HEIs in the KRG region.
Actions undergone	Encouraging all the 8 Kurdish universities of APPRAIS to publish the Glossary on their institutional website. Organising some seminars and workshop where to present and describe the Glossary.
Target	All the University academic and administrative staff from all the KRI HE institution.
Impact Level	Institutional and National level.

Background

The APPRAIS Glossary is part of the Deliverable D.1.1 of Report stock taking of governance framework including glossary and it is designed as a Governance Glossary aiming to explain and standardize concepts and terminology related to university governance and quality assurance, to learning mobility and credit recognition, as well as to university structures. In the framework of the project, it aimed at making understandable to everyone (the Partners and the general audience) the used language and to have all the same level of knowledge on the main topics of APPRAIS. It provides a definition for the most frequently used terms and a reference of the sources used to compile the document.

Beyond the project, it wants to be an instrument for the colleagues at Kurdish Universities in their process of implementation of the Bologna process, and a common reference in the dialogue between Kurdish and European HEIs, staying as a valuable reference even after the end of the project.

Actions to maximise the use of the Glossary

- Encouraging all the 8 Kurdish universities of APPRAIS to publish the Glossary on their institutional website
- Organising some seminars and workshop where to present and describe the Glossary
- The KRG Ministry will organise an event for all the Kurdish HEIs where to present and describe the Glossary, UNIMED and EU partners can participate online.



Article 7 – Implementation of the university strategic plan for the adoption of the Bologna process and good governance framework within each university

Objective	Implementation and follow up for the university strategic plan.
Actions undergone	The university Committee set up for the definition of the strategic plan will regularly organise meetings to follow up. The Ministry will be regularly informed about the implementation.
Target	University academic and administrative staff from all the KRI HE institution.
Impact Level	Institutional and National level.

Background

The WP5 aimed to develop Institutional Strategic Plan for University Reform: it meant for each Kurdish Partner to develop a strategic plan, with the involved stakeholders for each university (all the trained staff, including figures such as Vice-Presidents, Directors for QA, etc) and that was later validated by the leadership of each university and by the Ministry itself.

The strategic plan includes the university strategy on quality assurance, recognition of credits, Bologna process and in general on their management of the governance system of the university, the pillars of the APPRAIS project. This strategic plan is based on the roadmap defined in WP2 and on the shared Strategy of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Kurdistan region of Iraq, and followed the many discussions held during the 3-years project and specifically during the Ministerial workshop in Erbil in February 2023

Actions to follow up the implementation of the strategic plan

- The University Committee set up in each of the 8 Kurdish university, in charge for the definition of the strategic plan, will also regularly organise meetings to follow-up its operationalisation and to ensure the smooth implementation of the activities, and will measure the achievement of the objectives of the plan based on the provided indicators
- The Ministry will be regularly informed about the strategic plan implementation through a six-monthly report.



- One year after the end of the project, an online meeting will be organised with the 8 Kurdish HEIs, the Ministry, UNIMED and the EU partners to update each other about the progress of the plan implementation, potentially in January 2025.

Article 8 – Promotion of further collaboration with European partners

Objective	Further cooperation between EU universities and Kurdish universities.
Actions undergone	EU partners will try to sign MoU with Kurdish universities and to carry out specific cooperation activities: students and staff mobility and other projects of capacity building.
Target	University academic and administrative staff from all the KRI HE institution.
Impact Level	Institutional and National level.

Background

During the lifetime of the project, the EU partners (Pisa University, Oslo University, Murcia University and Evora University) have already signed MoU with some of the Kurdish universities partner of the project and they have already participated in some new project proposal in the framework of the International Credit Mobility Action (ICM107) under the Erasmus+.

Actions to follow up

The EU partners are committed to pursue the cooperation with the Kurdish universities and to promote further the collaboration with the higher education system, looking at different opportunities in the framework of the Erasmus + through staff mobility and other projects of capacity building, summer and winter school, training staff week, job shadowing for administrative and academic staff and further.



Article 9 – ESG Committee working for a long-term strategy in quality assurance system implementation

Background

During the lifetime of the project, the Kurdish universities and the Ministry have the opportunity to be trained in a number of training activities and workshop on quality assurance (internal and external) tools and mechanisms to be adopted by the HEIs as a way to improve the performance and the quality of teaching, learning, research, third mission and students' services in a perspective of a long-term strategy that is framed within the Ministry strategy. In particular, in the light of adoption and implementation of the Bologna process principles and practices, some specific training sessions have been focused on this topic, with particular attention to the ESG (European Standard Guidelines) implementation on quality assurance (internal and external).

At this purpose, an ESG Committee has been established by the KRG Ministry to closely follow up with university experts and from the Ministry how to implement ESG guidelines and principles at the HEIs in Kurdistan region of Iraq.

Actions to follow up

The ESG Committee, formed by teachers and experts from the 8 Kurdish university partners of APPRAIS and the Ministry Directorate for Quality Assurance and Accreditation, will regularly meet to define the work plan and actions necessary to implement concretely the ESG at the quality assurance system at institutional level. UNIMED, as project coordinator, will follow up with Ministry the work of the Committee and if necessary, will ask advice and guidance to the EU partner and other UNIMED university members to share good practices, knowledge and lessons learnt on ESG implementation at the European universities.

Article 10 – Coordination and synergies with other key initiatives around APPRAIS themes

This sustainability plan aims to ensure coordination between the APPRAIS project and other projects and initiatives at regional, national and international levels, linked to key themes around governance, quality assurance, strategic planning and Bologna process. The objective is to ensure the continuity of APPRAIS results beyond the official end of the project in synergy with the good governance reform process initiated by the Kurdish Ministry of HE for Kurdish universities. UNIMED, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in KRG as well as the Kurdish and European Partners, will monitor further occasion of promotion of APPRAIS locally, regionally and internationally, and will take advantage of occasions of dialogue, cooperation and synergy-creation to continue advancing.



Article 10 – Internal communication and Secretariat

For communication aspects, the APPRAIS group mailing list and the project website will remain as the two main communication instruments.

The Secretariat will be provided by UNIMED with the support of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in KRG, and an APPRAIS Committee will be set up in each of the 8 HEIs forming by:

- 1) The University President;
- 2) The Vice-President;
- 3) The Quality Assurance Director
- 4) An expert from the Bologna Process Committee
- 5) The Director of the International Relations Office

The Ministry in the figure of the Director of Quality Assurance and the Director General of the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Directorate, will continue to coordinate the work internally at the Ministry and with the other Directorates, according to the scope of the actions to be carried out, to ensure harmonization at systemic level and the use of the APPRAIS results over time.

This Committee at each of the 8 Kurdish institutions, with the supervision of the Ministry and the support of UNIMED, will ensure the progress of the sustainability plan and will monitor its implementation. The Committee composition is annual and renewable. A President from a Kurdish University will be in charge of the Presidency of the Committee for one year.

The Committee, beside the actions described above in the articles 1 to 9, will also be committed to organise an international event every two years where to discuss and update each other about the new priorities in the framework of the good governance system at higher education level.

This Committee will collaborate with UNIMED, the EU partners and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in KRG to further enlarge in a long-term perspective the sustainability of the APPRAIS results also at national level, to HEIs in the federal government of Iraq in a national cooperation vision.



Article 11 – Validity of the Sustainability Plan

This sustainability plan will be implemented after the signature by the Partners and will have a validity period of three years. It is of course renewable and it is not a binding contract among the Partners, rather a commitment statement about the willingness to fulfil the sustainability of the APPRAIS project results.

