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5	04.03.2021	E.Schneider	UNI-KLU	Corrections after revision and QB evaluation

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# 1 Introduction

This deliverable “Periodical reports on status between the project coordinator (PC) and the funding agency” reports the results of the activities carried out in:

## **T7.4 Maintain flow of information between partners and the funding agency (Task leader: UNI-KLU)**

# 2 Objectives of the Deliverable

This document shall briefly list and explain the methods used to maintain the flow of information between the project partners and the funding agency throughout the project lifespan.

# 3 Methods used to ensure flow of information between the project partners and the funding agency

This section briefly lists and explains the methods used to ensure a transparent and smooth communication between the funding agency and the project consortium:

## 3.1 Communication between the project coordinator and the funding agency via the exchange of emails and formal letters

On a regular basis or once questions have arisen the project coordinator has communicated with the funding agency via the exchange of emails. The funding agency’s reply has always been forwarded to the project consortium via email, and PDF versions of the communication were uploaded to the project management Intranet space Confluence and/or discussed during project meetings to allow for maximum transparency. For matters that required the exchange of formal letters, such as the request for the extension of the eligibility period, the coordinator’s legal representative has exchanged formal signed letters with the funding agency. A scan of these formal letters was also always uploaded to Confluence and shared with the consortium via email (and discussed during meetings).

## 3.2 Participation in Erasmus+ CBHE regional cluster meetings

The Education, Audiovisual, Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) together with the local National Erasmus+ Office (NEO) organizes once per year or once every two years a regional cluster meeting in a specific country of interest in order to discuss the state of play of CBHE programmes in that particular region (here the Western Balkans – WB) as well as the impact and sustainability of project results in the HE sector of the region.

### 3.2.1 Oct. 22-23, 2019, in Durres, Albania - Regional Cluster Meeting on the impact of Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) projects in the Western Balkans

In 2019 the EACEA together with the Albanian NEO Office and the European Commission’s Directorate General for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport (DG EAC) held a two-day Regional Cluster Meeting in Durres, Albania on 22-23 October. The event gathered participants from WB HEIs, governmental authorities, NEOs, EU Delegation, DG EAC, and EACEA. Two WB BENEFIT representatives attended the event, namely Daniela Milović from the University of Niš and Željko Trpovski from the University of Novi Sad. The meeting was structured into 4 interactive workshops covering different topics such as

regional cooperation, HEI links with society and business, CBHE project impact on HE systems as well as the modernisation, accessibility, quality, and internationalisation of the HEIs in the WB.

3.2.2 Nov. 8, 2018 in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina – Cluster Meeting of Tempus/CBHE projects focusing on the university-enterprises cooperation in BiH

The selected topic covered 12 Tempus/CBHE projects focusing on the university-enterprises cooperation involving partner institutions from Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The aim of the Cluster meeting was to assess the cooperation in Bosnia and Herzegovina between university and the business sector in the 12 projects selected as well as to share experiences and provide some recommendations for the future. These projects contributed to the development of the higher education system in BiH by supporting the university-enterprises cooperation and enhanced links between higher education institutions (HEIs), companies and other relevant stakeholders. The meeting gathered representatives of 10 out of 12 invited Tempus/CBHE projects focusing on the university-enterprises cooperation (2 Tempus and 8 CBHE). The other two Tempus projects did not respond to the invitation. The other stakeholders also take a part like representatives of ministries (Ministry of Civil Affairs BiH and ministries of education of the entities), chambers of commerce of the Canton Sarajevo and entity of Republika Srpska, Foreign Trade Chamber BiH. The event was covered by the media (including: FENA, BH Radio 1, Radio FBiH).

Dusanka Boskovic, from the University of Sarajevo attended the meeting as BENEFIT representative and held a presentation about the project.

### 3.3 Field and desk monitoring visits and audits

- Desk monitoring visit from the National Erasmus+ Office in Serbia at the University of Novi Sad on October 18, 2018
- Field monitoring visit in Banja Luka in March 2019

These field monitoring visits have generated a report and feedback with questions and areas of intervention which have been thoroughly assessed and acted on. The actions implemented have been also documented in the mid-term report. All material such as the project officer's feedback and questionnaire are uploaded to the project management space Confluence to allow for maximum transparency within the project consortium.

### 3.4 Mid-term report and feedback

The compulsory mid-term report (or Technical Implementation Report) was timely submitted on April 14, 2019, and the EACEA provided an approval and feedback letter on August 2, 2019:

The assessment looked at the partnership's performance as regards the efficient implementation of the project. It considered the Technical Implementation Report but also the desk monitoring conducted by the EACEA since the start of the eligibility period and, where applicable, the field monitoring visits carried out so far. The project implementation had not only to respect the CBHE requirements but also be in line the original proposal included under Annex I of the Grant Agreement. In this context and in accordance with the Grant Agreement and with the Guidelines for the Use of the Grant, BENEFIT has been qualified as GOOD. Comments and recommendations with more feedback have been included in the Annex of the letter.

This approval and feedback letter on the mid-term report were forwarded and shared with the consortium, plus uploaded to Confluence. The project coordinator also created a summary email that listed the main feedback items to be discussed and worked on. Conference calls have been organised to assess and coordinate the work in the respective areas of intervention.

### 3.5 Invitation and participation of EACEA project officer Giulia Moro to project events

The BENEFIT project officer Giulia Moro was invited to attend the annual project meeting in Osijek on November 5, 2019, via teleconference. She participated in the afternoon session which summed up the project's main results and future activities, and at the end a small Q & A session between her and the project coordinator took place. The feedback and direct exchange were extremely valuable.

### 3.6 Project extension, budget remodulation and Amendment to the Grant Agreement as a response to COVID-19:

Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the project consortium has worked hard on a contingency plan as a response to those project activities majorly affected. A brief teleconference with the project officer Giulia Moro was organised to quickly address the main issues. Considering the precious inputs given during this conversation, a restructured plan was developed and sent to the EACEA with objective to fully guarantee the realization of all project objectives despite the pandemic. It consisted of the following four main pillars:

1) A project extension until Feb. 15, 2021: it was considered a necessary step as it allowed to include another academic semester into the project lifespan. The 2020 summer semester has been highly impacted by containment measures. For example, it had become difficult to reach out to students and engage them in project-related activities. Another full semester gave the necessary time to collect feedback about the courses modernized within BENEFIT and wrap-up other activities that involved the participation of students. Furthermore, physical meetings and teacher trainings, which were and are an important pillar of KA2 Erasmus+ projects, could not take place during the lockdown. A project extension gave us the physical time to hold these events.

2) Restructuring and preplanning of low-risk travel activities: while trying to maintain coherency with the initial mobility plan, and keeping as many travels alive as possible, the consortium restructured and readapted those travel activities that had a lower risk factor and the highest value for the project, e.g. teacher trainings. Unfortunately, a few mobilities had to be completely cancelled, such as the student mobility from Tuzla to Klagenfurt for 3 months, and the students summer camp at Ericsson Nikola Tesla lab in Zagreb. Teacher trainings within WP2 have been restructured in a way that two simultaneous meetings aggregated the partners from Serbia Bosnia and Herzegovina on a national level, to reduce the numbers of participants and international travel, thus risk. For all other travel activities, international long-distance travel where possible was reduced as well.

3) Additional equipment for remote teaching: Most professors were forced to switch to remote teaching, which for BENEFIT was interesting evolution since it was coherent with the project's main objective of modernizing teaching methodologies in ICT studies (activities of WP4). turned this situation in our favour and therefore needed to equip laboratories and teaching facilities with the appropriate instruments used during remote teaching in addition to equipment for practical training. That is why we proposed an additional list of items within the equipment category of the budget.

4) The three aforementioned pillars resulted in a budget remodulation: In particular, we shifted a consistent amount of budget from "travel and costs of stay" to "equipment", "subcontracting", and "staff" in order to fit the new plan. The increase in each of these categories was less than 10% of the original amount, therefore, no amendment of the grant agreement was needed.

The creation of this plan took two months of coordination and development activity among the consortium. To discuss the EACEA regulations and possibilities during the pandemic several conference calls among the consortium and with the PO have been organized and their output disseminated to the partners.

The result was the approval of the new workplan, budget, and an official extension of the eligibility period that resulted in an amendment to the Grant Agreement. All this communication and results have been shared with the consortium, discussed and uploaded to Confluence.

## 4 Conclusions

To conclude, the communication and flow of information between the funding agency and the beneficiaries has always been done in the most timely and transparent way possible. All responses, sessions, letters, and feedbacks have always been shared within the consortium and discussed thoroughly during project meetings to include the concerns of every project partner.