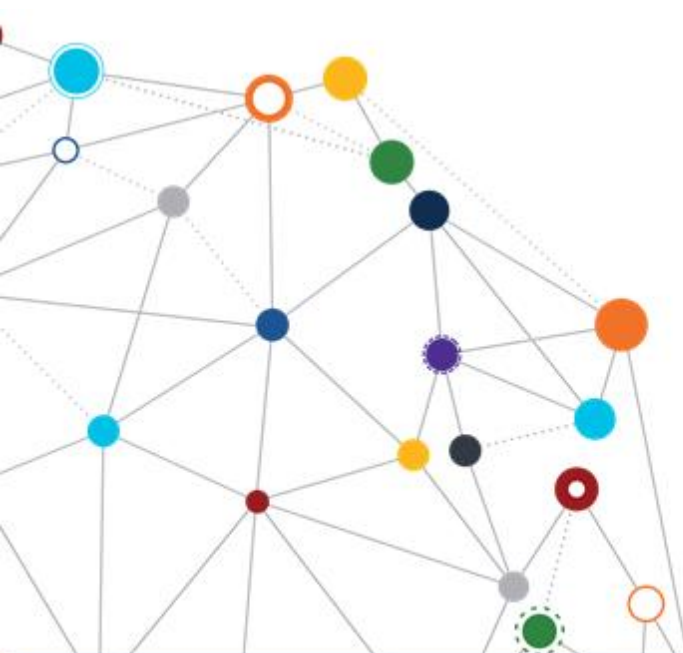# First annual report on project activities Work package 9.3

December 2020 | **INTER**nationalization at Home: Embedding Approaches and Structures to Foster Internationalization at Western **BA**lkans

610429-EPP-1-2019-1-AL-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP

Version	Revision	Date	Author	Comments
1	0	15/03/2021	Interba team	Draft release
1	1	15/05/2021		Final

Project information

Action Type	Capacity-building in the field of higher education
Project Agreement Number	610429
Project Title	INTERnationalization at Home: Embedding Approaches and Structures to Foster Internationalization at Western BAlkans
Project Acronym	INTERBA
Coordinator	University of Tirana
Programme Countries	
Partner Countries	
Project Manager	Kreshnik Vukatana Email: kreshnik.vukatana@unitir.edu.al
Reporting Period	From 15/11/2019 to 31/12/2020

Contents

Abbreviations

EACEA - Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency

IaH - Internalization at Home

HEI – Higher Education Institution

INTERBA – Project Title

WP – Work Package

QA – Quality Assurance

UT – University of Tirana

MDX – Middlesex University London

TUHH – Hamburg University of Technology

UNICA – University of Cagliari

CESIE – European Centre of Studies and Initiatives

UET – European University of Tirana

UC – Universum College

UP – University of Pristina

UNTZ – University of Tuzla

UNMO – University of Mostar

NA – Not available

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. **Schedule variance for the first year is negative.**

This indicator shows how much ahead or behind of planned budget your project is running. A positive value => ahead of schedule, a negative value => behind of schedule. Schedule Variance can be calculated by subtracting the Budgeted Cost of Work Scheduled from the Budgeted Cost of Work Performed.

Reasons:

- Late allocation of budget.
- None of Programme countries purchased the equipment yet.
- Timesheets prepared but not confirmed yet.
- No travel costs due to COVID situation

2. Percentage of Tasks Completed

This indicator shows a quick overview on project's performance.
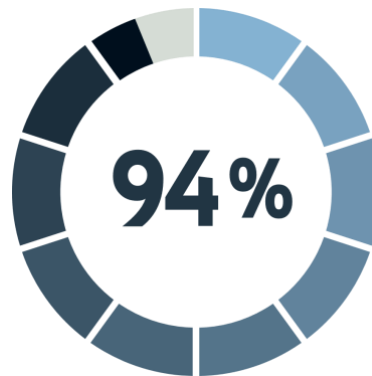
Figure 1. % of tasks completed

For the first year we have a high percentage of the completed tasks, with a total of 15 over 16 that were estimated. The only task not completed is related to the first-year report of external evaluator. CESIE and UT has prepared the Terms of Reference documentation, and UT will run a first public call tender in the month April 2021.

3. Schedule Performance Index

This indicator (Fig. 1) shows the number of tasks completed on time compared to crossed deadlines. It is a good practice to keep this percentage over 80%.

Figure 2. Schedule Performance Index

In a total of 16 task planned for reporting period 6 tasks are completed in time, 9 are delayed but completed and 1 is outdated.
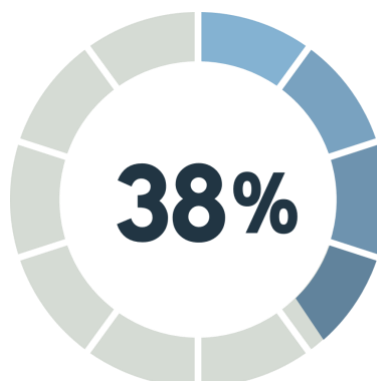
Reasons:

- Legal representative of UT changed.
- Force majeure (Earthquake in Albania).
- COVID 19 situation.

4. Overdue Tasks / Crossed Deadlines

This indicator (Fig. 2) shows an overview of how many project activities are overdue, calculated as a percentage of tasks with crossed deadlines compared to all the completed project activities. The figure shows a low percentage of overdue tasks.

Reasons:

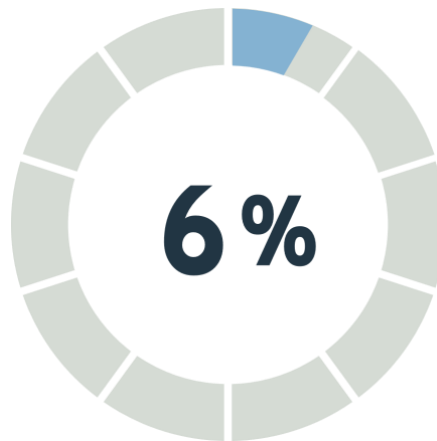- Delayed process of the first public call.

6 %

Figure 3. Overdue Tasks / Crossed Deadlines

5. Missed Milestones

Milestones are mostly related to WP2, WP3 & WP4 where there are the project KPI-s. These WPs are in progress and begin to be measurable in the second and third year. Also, project progress and final reports are to be done.

Reasons:

- No milestones present in the first-year report.

2. INTRODUCTION

The INTERBA first year report aims to provide an overview of the current state of the INTERnationalization at Home: Embedding Approaches and Structures to Foster Internationalization at Western Balkans project and the progress made towards its implementation in the period between 15 November 2019 and 31 December 2021. The report approach is based in three key areas: impact and sustainability, the activities and their deliverables, and the dissemination actions carried out. A set of indicators on the project management are shown in the Executive Summary section.

3. INTERBA IN BRIEF

INTERBA is a three-year European project funded by the Erasmus+ Programme Key Action 2 – Cooperation for Innovation and exchange of good practices – Capacity Building in the field of Higher Education. Internationalization of HEIs in the Balkan region so far has given a significant effect in modernizing the curriculum and exposure to different teaching and learning methodologies providing a better understanding on the role of education in XXI century. However, because the number of students and staff involved in these projects was limited, the impact has been asymmetric where some departments have reaped the benefits of these projects more than others. Thus, approaching internationalization on a more holistic way, by embedding and strengthening "internationalization at home" is vital.

The aim of the project is to strengthen international, intercultural, and global dimension via Internalisation at Home (IaH) implementation at HEIs partners to enhance the quality of education and to make a meaningful contribution to the society.

The objectives of the project include:

1. Formulate a coherent and detailed IaH concept that could be mainstreamed into the partner HEIs Roadmaps following on from their specific exigencies.
2. Level up the scope and viability of IaH activities implemented in partner HEIs.
3. Train expert pool capable of developing and integrating IaH into HEI environment.
4. Launch an online platform as a tool for IaH implementation.
5. Establish/modernise the existing structure/entities responsible for IaH at HEIs.

4. PROGRESS REPORT ON THE PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 Impact and sustainability

During the first year of the project implementation, the work begun with doing a need analysis on existing knowledge capital and finding a standardized way that will assist the creation of a knowledge repository part of the INTERBA project framework. Keeping the planning of the activities on track is essential for the achievement of the project objectives. For this reason, all partners were asked to report on their participation on the different work package deliverables that were expected as outcomes and products. Please refer Google drive.

In this first phase some other documents were also produced related to Quality Assurance (QA plan, 1°-year QA report, Terms of Reference for External Evaluator etc), Dissemination (Dissemination and Exploitation Strategy plan) and Management (1°-year report for management, Partnership Agreements, Gannt Chart, Communication management plan etc). Please refer Google drive.

The use of online tools for conferencing (Skype), documentation (Google drive) and management (Agganty) brought the teams to a better understanding of what will be produced upon the completion of each work package and has helped to align the teams' work and bring a common vision.

3.2 Activities and results

The project activities have been carried out as programmed in the Project timeline implemented online through a Gannt chart, with delays that have not affected the overall implementation foreseen for the progress reporting period. The Work Packages deliverables are concluded. Also, important documentations as Dissemination plan, QA plan, Communication plan, Gannt chart and management tools are fully implemented and prepared as it was foreseen in the project application.

The main difficulties encountered during this implementation period were related mainly to the COVID situation. The difficulties have been addressed by each work package leader and by the Project Management Team and solutions have been found. Also, the Albania earthquake situation postponed the first kick-off meeting held on March 2020.

The main results of the INTERBA project achieved in the first year of the reporting period were as follows:

Work Package 1 (Fully implemented)

The goal of the first Work Package was to identify existing knowledge capital in a standardized way that will assist the creation of a knowledge repository at institutional and national level. Specific tasks under this Work Package include:

- Performing analysis of knowledge capital in partner countries
- Conducting a needs analysis
- Prioritizing internationalization areas

The deliverable of this work package is a document with the topics that were covered most often by the partners through their projects divided in four categories:

- The first category includes the topics that were covered at least ten times.
- The second category includes the topics that were covered from five to ten times.
- The third category includes the topics that were covered up to five times.
- And the last category includes the topics that were not covered by any project.

In conclusion from the need analysis: none of the partners is experienced in areas of Access for disadvantaged; Energy and resources; Ethics, religion and philosophy (incl. Inter-religious dialogue); Natural sciences; Recognition (non-formal and informal learning/credits); Teaching and learning of foreign languages; Transport and mobility; Youth (Participation, Youth Work, Youth Policy); Post-conflict/post-disaster rehabilitation; Integration of refugees; Digital skills; Green skills; Civic engagement/responsible citizenship; Social entrepreneurship / social innovation; and Universities in more remote areas.

Work Package 2 (Partially implemented, but it begins from second year)

Delayed activities due to the inclusion of other persons in the team and waiting for WP1 activities to be completed. We expect that this initial delay in the implementation of the first task will not affect the project implementation revised timeline.

WP2 is articulated in the following three tasks:

- T2.1: Creating a knowledge repository.

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- T2.2: Creating a network of knowledge experts.
- T2.3: Introducing a bridging model to align knowledge cases to knowledge gaps.

The work on the above tasks is composed of the following main steps:

1. The definition of templates that describe the knowledge cases and the experts' profiles. This data will populate the knowledge and expert repositories, respectively.
2. The definition of a model to bridge the gaps between existing knowledge capital and the knowledge capital cases to acquire.
3. The selection of the most suitable technical infrastructure to create the repositories.
4. The creation and population of the repositories.

Regarding the first step, it has been carried out in synergy with all the partners. UNICA has firstly proposed and detailed the structure and the fields of the templates. Then, a survey has circulated among all the partners to receive feedback. This process has allowed finalizing the templates for both the knowledge cases (see the detailed report), which will take the shape of training, and the experts' profiles (see the detailed report). In conclusion two forms based on these templates were prepared and are online.

Work Package 3 & 4 (Partially implemented, but they begin from second year)

Middlesex University (MDX) as leader of WP 3 & 4 has prepared different drafts how it is going to implement those work packages. MDX will develop sample training content in the field of "Internationalization at Home". The topics covered in this training sample will include:

- Defining "Internationalization at Home".
- Determining knowledge transfer needs.
- Selecting project outputs to integrate in training sessions.
- Delivering knowledge transfer sessions.

A second document explained how the short training will be prepared and held. A designed training structure is proposed where each topic should be covered by a combination of:

- Foundation – providing the relevant theory explaining the topic.
- Application – demonstrating the relevance of the theory on specific scenarios.
- Reflection – triggering critique of the key issues of the topic covered.

They also proposed a draft document for Creating guidelines for Request for Knowledge (RfK) documentation, which is shared in order to be improved with the partners collaboration. The main outputs of deliverables covered by WP3, provide the necessary tools to be used for creating Request for Knowledge (RfK) entries to the INTERBA project repository and Network of Experts. These outputs include the following:

- RfK framework – it describes the knowledge synthesis process and helps to manage knowledge transfer activities.
- RfK flowchart – it paves the process from training needs analysis to identification of knowledge source and request for training.
- RfK template – it uses spreadsheet structure to support formal requests for training.
- RfK process guidelines – they document the entire process and support the creation of formal requests (these are discussed in further detail in the following section).

Regarding WP4, MDX provides three other drafts:
- Training key staff members, proposing various templates for: Training Structure; Training Content; Training Portfolio and Training Evaluation.

- Conducting training pilots: It is introduced a methodology to be discussed with partners on how to:
  - design the training pilots,
  - conduct the training pilots,
  - evaluate the training pilots,
  - report on necessary adjustments.
- Conducting re-training: It is prepared a draft document to be discussed with partners about:
  - Planning re-training sessions.
  - Creating re-training workshops.
  - Conducting re-training.
  - Planning the re-training monitoring and evaluation.
  - Reporting on re-training.

Work Package 5 (Not initiated, but it begins from second year)

European University of Tirana (UET) lead partner for WP5 was asked to report how they are going to implement E-learning platform. Considering that UET has already an LMS system operating in campus and that IT experts are very familiar to the usage of Moodle system, it was appropriate to choose this system to be implemented, in accordance with the partners. UET will ensure that the system will continue to work after the lifespan of the project, by including the server as integral part of UET IT systems. This WP includes the creation of Moodle structures for the delivery of e-learning and its monitoring for the lifespan of the project and beyond, the support of the introduction of materials and the monitoring of the translation of key documentation.

Deliverables of this WP are:

- 5.1 Creation of Moodle structures for the delivery of e-learning
- 5.2 Support of the introduction of materials
- 5.3 Monitor the translation of key documentation.
- 5.4 Monitor the use of the platform during training and re-training.

Work Package 6 (Not initiated, but it begins from second year)

Work Package 7 (Fully implemented for the first year)

Prepared a QA plan with the aim to provide a set of guidelines and procedures for internal use to ensure the overall quality and the progress of the project activities and also an efficient project management.

The overall quality management of the INTERBA project is a transversal activity and will be conducted by CESIE (WP leader) in close cooperation with the coordinator and WP Leaders throughout the full duration of the project. The main objective of INTERBA's QA plan is to ensure a successful achievement of the project objectives with the best possible quality. The quality management will support the project management and contribute to preventing, minimizing and containing issues and risks that might occur during project implementation. This will be done by monitoring and evaluating:

1. The progress of the activities against project work plan and timeline.
2. The Quality of the project outputs and activities.
3. The Performance of the consortium, including communication and cooperation.

The document describes the procedures for ensuring appropriate quality of work and documentation in the project, including development of project documentation consistent with the

general project concept, methods and tools employed to implement the work plan. For more detail please refer to the [document](#).

First QA Annual [Report](#) document a period covered from 15 November 2019 to 15 October 2020. It is based on two surveys: general monitoring questionnaire and WP leader questionnaire.

Findings evidenced by the report:

- Implementation: some difficulties because of Covid-19 crisis.
- Some delays in WP1 for this reason (and, consequently, in other WPs based on it); some issues mentioned as well by the Coordinator.
- Results so far: partners are divided – some are satisfied, others had higher expectations.
- Good progress in transversal WPs (WP7 Quality Assurance, WP8 Dissemination and WP9 Management) – a good fundament has been laid.

Suggestion stressed for improving the partnership:

- Management and Coordination: organization of regularly meetings at shorter intervals (monthly).
- Clear communication about project activities, deadlines, and reminders.
- Sharing of responsibilities:
  - WP leaders coordinate work under their WP.
  - WP leaders are supported by the Project Coordinator.
  - All partners actively contribute to the implementation of activities and ensure timely delivery of contributions.
- QA: important that partner as exact as possible impact numbers (e.g., persons reached through training activities).
- Dissemination: efforts should be strengthened by partners; continuous dissemination by all partners is important.
- In view of current health crisis: uncertainties and probably further needs of adjustments in project plan.
- Elaborate different scenarios of actions, especially for activities that might need adaptations (e.g., face-to-face training activities) and monitor closely the current situation.

A [Terms of Reference](#) for External Evaluator is prepared and finalised with the Project Coordinator, University of Tirana (UT), and will follow with a public [call for proposals](#). The evaluator will support the implementation of project activities by assessing its quality and providing recommendations and suggestions for improvement. It is foreseen that the external evaluator will draft three evaluation reports: one after each year of implementation.

[Work Package 8 (Fully implemented for the first year)](#)

See section 3.3.

[Work Package 9 (Fully implemented for the first year)](#)

See section 3.4.

3.3 Dissemination

Different actions were carried out related to the dissemination and exploitation of the INTERBA project. A website (https://interbaproject.com/) was created as a deliverable of Work Package 8.1 It is the central point of information and updates about the project and will be updated in line with the project progress.

In order to reach a broader audience, which includes students, policymakers, university staff and other organizations, a [Facebook](#) and an [Instagram](#) account have been set up. Although it might be too early to claim significant results, we have several followers on Facebook (149) and Instagram (31) up until now of writing the report. New indicators should be taken into consideration to further measure the impact of dissemination actions, such as website analytics and social media interactions.

Another component of the dissemination strategy was the development of branding with the colours, the logo, templates to be used during reporting and documentations. Also, prepared a roll-up banner, yearly E-newsletter, and leaflets.

The [communication plan](#) document how will be disseminated the project deliverables through the best practices for further use in other regions. Moreover, this document shows how all outputs and results of the project will be transferred to all partners and disseminated in the most efficient way. The overall aim of the INTERBA communication strategy is to ensure common communication, consistent and efficient communication, to ensure the visibility of the project, and to disseminate the good practices and policies as well as active networking to reach the target audiences.

Dissemination activities are also a central aspect of the sustainability of the project results. One was held at the University of Tirana in February 2020, where the INTERBA project was introduced to the presents. Also, during Erasmus Plus days held at UET in October 2020, the project coordinator presented the project aim and activities to the attendees.

Below is shown the progress of each derivable related to WP 8 (Dissemination) where UET is leader:

- 8.1 Setting up and maintaining the project Web site (including project visual identity – logo). Finalized. INTERBA project has a dedicated website https://interbaproject.com/ which is functional. All project activities and materials are incorporated into the website regularly.
- 8.2 Consolidation of Dissemination and Exploitation Strategy. Finalized. UET designed the Dissemination and Exploitation Strategy, which has been revised after the partners feedback, and then approved by the consortium.
- 8.3 Two papers on project activities and results published in relevant scientific magazines and/or presented at relevant international conferences. UET in collaboration with UC is currently working with the first Scientific Paper.
- 8.4 Organizing 4 dissemination events with relevant stakeholders. One Info Day has been organized at UET in February 2020.
- 8.5 Final International Project Conference in Tirana.
- 8.6 Creation of the financial and institutional sustainability strategic plan. The financial and institutional sustainability strategy plan has been drafted and has been send for review/approval to the coordinator.
- 8.7 Sustainable cooperation with labor market
- 8.8 Creation of the partner network between all institutions involved in the project.

3.4 Management

3.4.1 Risks

The following risks was pointed out during the first kick-off meeting:

1. Low commitment of the partners
2. Resistance to change

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3. Frequent changing of legal representatives
4. Frequent changing of contact persons
5. Force majeure
6. COVID 19

The first two are typical risk factors in project management, but in this partnership did not happened.

The third and the fourth has happened and affected mostly deliverables related to WP 9 such as partnership agreements, budget transfers to the partners and public call proposal related to the External evaluator.

The fifth risk also happened. In November 2019, Albania was struck by a 6.4-magnitude earthquake with an epicenter 30 kilometers west-southwest of Tirana. UT, as the project leader had to organize the first kick-off meeting and some delays related to accessing the institutions and organizing the event caused the meeting to be held in March.

In terms of administrative and project work in the international projects and especially in the INTERBA project, the main impact is the inability to travel and, as a consequence, the limitations in academic contacts as well as the extended time for administrative decisions (e.g. signing of documents, financial reports, etc.).

Regarding WP1, partners had difficulties in accessing institution wide information regarding details of the projects that were implemented in the past and people involved in the project. The inability to meet with institutional teams and other consortium partners also brought a delay in designing the methodology for conducing needs analysis.

In conclusion the issues emerged during the implementation of the project due to Covid-19 crisis principally the lack of face-to-face meetings since the beginning of the project slowed the activities of establishing a collaboration methodology among partners. Online discussions are more effective for carrying out tasks whose details have been already clearly set up. Moreover, face-to-face meetings are more productive when plenary discussions are needed to sort out the best way to carry out activities.

The solution of all these risks was a readjustment of project timeline paying attention to not exceed in time and to not affect the natural flow of work package deliverables.

3.4.2 Partnership agreement

A specific partner agreement was prepared by UT as project leader after the project start officially in 9-10 March (Kick-off meeting).

To formalize the relationship between Coordinator and partner organizations, detailing rights and obligations of all parties involved in the project. In the agreement the timing and procedures for payments was clearly defined the minimum expected results for each partner, as a further way to facilitate a general understanding of the correspondence between budget shares and subdivision of workloads, where in more detail some modification from EACEA guidelines were proposed:

In the article 5 (Payment arrangements) in agreement with all the partners was differentiated EU from Programme countries in the following way:

1. a) 50% of the estimated Erasmus+ grant contribution at the time of signature of this Agreement in the case that the beneficiary institution has equipment costs in the planned budget, or

1. b) 25% of the estimated Erasmus+ grant contribution at the time of signature of this Agreement, and 25% at the end of the first year based on the signature date of this Agreement where the beneficiary institution has fulfilled all its obligations related to the work packages and other documentations.

2. 40% of the estimated Erasmus+ grant contribution after the first review with the Executive Agency (if positive).

3. 10% of the estimated Erasmus+ grant contribution at the end of the project (if positive).

The reason was to stimulate all the partners to effectively execute the work regarding the deliverables and purchase of equipment.

For each partner in the Article 20/Annex I, it was prepared a Budget/Expenditure/Co-financing breakdown and budget category.

There were some issues in signing the PAs regarding the COVID situation and change of legal representation of UT. Another issue with the Hamburg University of Technology (TUHH) partner regarding some legal points that caused some delays but all the agreements are signed at least electronically and some also in hard copy. A summary of current situation it is shown in table 1.

Partner n°	Name	File name	Date of signature	Electronic/Hard copy
P2	MDX	PA Middlesex University	06-03-2020	Yes/No
P3	TUHH	PA TUHH	24-06-2020	Yes/Yes
P4	UNICA	PA University of Cagliari	18-04-2020	Yes/NA
P5	CESIE	PA CESIE	24-04-2020	Yes/No
P6	UET	PA UET	22-04-2020	Yes/Yes
P7	UC	PA Universum College	10-04-2020	Yes/Yes
P8	UP	PA University of Pristina	14-04-2020	Yes/Yes
P9	UT	PA University of Tuzla	15-04-2020	Yes/No
P10	DBUM	PA University of Mostar	05-03-2020	Yes/No

3.4.3 Financial Issues

The budget allocation of the first pre-instalment for the INTERBA project has different issues and we have phased some delays from the beginning. The following activities are done by the UT and partner members:

- On 19 February 2020 we provided the financial identification form to EACEA to proceed with the budget transfer.
- On 21 April 2014, EACEA informed us that the payment has not been made yet due to some technical problems linked to their current work on remote.
- On 19 May 2020 we received an email from EACEA's representative asking to provide a recent document from the bank, like a bank statement to confirm that the correct account name is UNIVERSITETI I TIRANES, and not: AKADEMIA E STUDIMEVE ALBANOLOGJIKE. To process the change in the bank account of INTERBA project, DG Budget responsible for the validation of the bank account was asking for more information, i.e., a recent bank statement, which shows that the correct account name is UNIVERSITETI I TIRANES.

- On 3 June 2020 we provided details of the dedicated bank account for the INTERBA Project, as requested by the Agency.
- On 12 October 2020, the financial assistance of EU, Mrs. SCHOONJAN officially informed from ex-UT legal representative, Mr. Koni regarding confirmation of the pre-financing payment of INTERBA project, initiated on the bank account.
- On 11 November email confirmation that the budget is at UT account.
- During the month of January, we have collected the FID from each of the partners to proceed with the budget transfer.
- On 12 February 2021, financial unit in the UT transfer the budget to each of the 9 partners. We were informed that three Partners (MDX, UNTZ and UNMO) did not have the right information regarding their intermediary bank account, and the budget transfer was pending. It took a long time to solve this issue. The partners provided the required information, and the money were transferred.

3.4.4 Meetings (To be extended with summary of each meeting)

Except for the first meeting that was held in Tirana, due to the COVID situation, all the partners agreed with the UT proposal, to hold the next meetings online. For this reason, a procedure was prepared and approved from the steering committee:

- Doodle link with possible dates.
- Draft agenda to be discussed.
- Skype link for video conference call.

A Minutes of Meeting (MoM) was prepared from the Communication team of UT and upload in Google drive. In these documents there are transcripts of the discussions regarding the agenda topics, and the steering committee, project board and quality board decisions.

In total 7 meetings were held, one in Tirana, the rest online:

- 17 January 2020
- 9-10 March 2020
- 15 April 2020
- 11 May 2020
- 10 July 2020
- 21 October 2020
- 23 December 2020

3.4.5 Reporting

The UT management team for reporting purposes prepared a short report template where each partners reports about Work package tasks, related deliverables to the reporting period, the task status (cancelled, not started, in progress and finished) and the reason for the task status. All the partners fill those reports regarding the completed tasks or the ongoing ones related to a work package.

Partners that are leaders in one of the work packages have filled a long report with at least the following sections:

- Work package description
- Methodology
- Implementation or proposed design

In [drive](#) there are present long reports for WP1 (UC), WP2 (UNICA), WP3 & WP4 (MDX), WP5 & WP8 (UET), WP7 (CESIE) and for WP9 (UT), the present.

Also a log issue template was prepared where the partners have to report on their delays. The attributes are the following:

- Task ID
- Status
- Priority (low, medium, high, critical)
- Issue Description
- Owner
- Estimated Resolution Date
- Escalation Needed (Y/N)?
- Impact   Actions
- Date Identified
- Actual Resolution/Completion Date
- Final Resolution & Follow-on actions

After an analysis on log templates send back, all issues were related to COVID situation, but with priority low to medium with some weeks delay, not affecting the new proposed project timeline.

Through Agantty, an [online tool,](#) the PCB members can monitor the project timeline. Every Monday morning through an email, each PCB member is notified regarding the tasks completed, in progress, not started and those outdated.