HEPMP

HIGHER EDUCATION PAIN MEDICINE PROJECT

Quality Assurance and Control Manual

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Strengthening Capacities for Higher Education
of Pain Medicine in Western Balkan countries –
HEPMP

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

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Contents

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List of Abbreviations

EACEA	Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
GA	Grant Agreement
HCWs	Health Care Workers
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEPMP	Higher Education Pain Medicine Project
LLL	Life Long Learning
LRCI	Legal representative of coordinating institution
NEO	National Erasmus+ Office
PA	Project Adviser
PA	Partnership Agreement
PC	Project Coordinator
PCC	Partner Country Coordinator
PCs	Partner Countries
PCT	Partner Country Team
PgCC	Programme Country Coordinator
PgCs	Program Countries
PgCT	Programme Country Team
PM	Pain Medicine
PMB	Project Management Board
PMG	Project Management Guidelines
QCB	Quality Control Board
TL	Task Leader
TLs	Task Leaders
UB	Faculty of Medicine University of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia
UBBL	Faculty of Medicine University of Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina
UF	Faculty of Medicine University of Florence, Italy
UHDM	University Clinical Hospital Centar "Dr Dragisa Misovic-Dedinje" Belgrade, Serbia
UK	Faculty of Medical Sciences University of Kragujevac, Kragujevac, Serbia
ULj	Faculty of Medicine University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
UP	Faculty of Medicine University of Podgorica, Montenegro
UR	Faculty of Medicine University of Rijeka, Croatia
UT	Faculty of Medicine University of Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina
WP	Work package

1. Introduction

This document sets basic guidelines for *quality assurance* and *quality control* on the project "Strengthening Capacities for Higher Education of Pain Medicine in Western Balkan Countries" aka "Higher Education Pain Medicine Project - HEPMP".

The manual will define:
- Standards /quality expectations for project deliverables;
- Procedures for internal and external quality assurance and control.

1.1. General remarks about quality assurance and quality control

Quality assurance (**QA**) is a way of ensuring quality and preventing mistakes and misunderstandings of all kinds during project implementation. The focus of quality assurance is on the processes and standards of essential importance for the project realization. Thinking about procedures and standards before or from the very start of the project implementation ensures desirable and error free outcomes and outputs.

Quality control (QC), on the other hand, is a way of determining whether project outcomes and outputs conform to the quality standards. When periodical checks of quality control are conducted during project implementation, we are talking about quality monitoring process. Sometimes, if necessary, these periodical quality controls can be used to improve project's quality assurance by improving procedures and standards of project implementation.

Quality assurance and control can be internal and external. Internal quality assurance and control (IQA) is the one maintained by the institution(s) and in general by all participants that are implementing the project. External quality assurance and control (EQA) is maintained by external experts that are not directly involved in the project. As such these experts can maintain higher level of objectivity. In general, IQA is essential since it is maintained by people implementing the project. EQA usually controls whether IQA is implemented properly.

1.2. Quality assurance and control in this project

Quality assurance and control in this project is defined in work package 6 - *Quality control*. The aim of the WP6 is to assure the optimal quality, structure, processes and results of the project.

Internal quality assurance and control (IQA). While the Project Management Board (PMB) and the Project Coordinator (PC) are responsible for project implementation, the Quality Control Board (QCB) is their direct support in monitoring and assessing the quality of the project and its results.

External quality assurance and control (EQA). The external monitoring of the project implementation will be performed by at least one external expert subcontracted following an open call, to supervise the work of both bodies and to conduct External Quality Audit (EQA). The external expert will take note of the recommendations made by the National Erasmus+ Offices (NEO) and EACEA.

2. Quality standards on the HEPMP project

2.1. Quality of the project implementation

Wider objective of the project is to increase quality of education in pain medicine in participating countries in order to contribute to the improvement of public health care services in PCs in line with the document Health 2020 (European health policy framework).

Specific project objectives are:
- Modernise an interdisciplinary Pain Medicine programmes in under/postgraduate studies by applying new methodologies and specific learning outcomes in partner country universities;
- Developing educational PAIN REGION WB Network in order to organize regional cooperation in the field of interventional pain of all partner and programme country universities;
- Delivering trainings of pain medicine in order to increase skills and competences of health care workers (HCW) in PCs.

In order to achieve these objectives all participants in the project implementation have to demonstrate commitment to the realization of the project activities while maintaining the best possible quality. In addition, it is expected, especially from members of bodies like PBM and QCB, to act in a professional and ethical way and be committed to good and constructive communication with other project participants.

2.1.1. Documents important for quality assurance in HEPMP

All participants in the project implementation should be familiar with this manual and follow its standards and procedures for quality assurance and control.

There are some other documents which are also important for quality assurance and control since they describe structure (including objectives, outputs, outcomes, activities etc.) and present the timeline of planned project realization.

The project Logical Framework Matrix (LFM) lists and organizes outcomes, outputs and corresponding activities into seven work-packages (WPs):

WP1 - Comparative analysis of education offer in Pain Medicine (PM);

WP2 - Development of joint curricula for PM study program;

WP3 - Development of LLL courses and interventional pain medicine courses;

WP4 - Establishment of Academic network;

WP5 - Project dissemination;

WP6 - Quality control;

WP7 - Management.

Project Management Guidelines define structure, main principles, and responsibilities of all parties necessary for efficient project management.

2.2. Quality of project deliverables

The deliverables of the project may be classified in four large groups:

1) **Document based deliverables (activities, events)**, such as: official reports, publications, learning materials (lectures, courses, trainings, and meetings);

2) **Developed resources**: WEB platform - PAINWEB network;

3) **Information available on internet**: website and its content, on-line project information, etc.

4) **Promotional printed materials** (for the purposes of dissemination): newsletters, posters, flyers, and other.

All these groups of deliverables should meet specific, previously defined, standards and to pass quality check procedures (which will be defined in later sections) in order to be used.

In general, a common quality expectation for all deliverables is their relevance to the reaching of the wider and specific programme objectives. Project deliverables are expected to reach high professional and quality-communication standards, respect professional ethics, and represent wider democratic values as equity, tolerance, care for the common good etc.

2.2.1. Quality of document-based deliverables (activities, events)

Document based deliverables include all documents intended for internal as well as for external purposes. If those documents are printed standards are still the same. Printed materials made for promotional purposes have separate set of standards.

All document-based project deliverables are expected to satisfy the following standards:

1) **Consistent and common format**. Word documents template should be used for all text documents. These templates are adopted in order to ensure a common appearance of deliverables as well as to ensure that a minimum amount of information will appear consistently in all documents produced by the project.

2) **Clearly stated author or authors of the document**. This requirement has two functions. First, to protect author rights and, second to denote person(s) responsible for the document and its quality;

3) **Compliance with project wider and specific objective(s), as well as with outputs and outcomes for specific WP**;

4) **Professional quality**. All documents produced during the project have to reach high professional standards and quality. Each document has to undergo a three-step quality control: the first step is conducted by the author, the second quality step is conducted by the project coordinator and finally, the third quality control step is conducted by the project management board prior to the acceptance of a document.

5) **Adequacy of used language** (in line with democratic values, professional, understandable for target population, literate). Language used in the documents need to depict high professional, academic and EU standards. All deliverables oriented to the wider public should pass the proofreading.

All events within the project, such as trainings, courses, promotional events, meetings etc. should meet high professional standards. In order to achieve quality standards, it is necessary to provide the following:

1) **Plan activities/events timely**. Each activity/event has to be planned in due time. Time for preparation activities depends on the type of the event. For training this will be only a couple of weeks before the event, but for a study programme preparation have to start much earlier, possibly couple of months earlier.

2) **Providing important information timely to all interested parties**. The organizers should provide in due time a full information package to the (potential) participants and co-organizers, including the draft agenda, letter of invitation and a note on the logistics (information about travel arrangements, venue, suggested hotels, etc.).

3) **Well organized registration processes**. The organizers should ensure smooth registration processes including preparing the List of attendees and the way how to distribute the material (Annex 4)

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4) **Event/activity has to be well structured**. The implementation of the event should have structured timetable, respecting appropriate time for event sessions and breaks.

5) **All necessary materials planned and prepared timely**. At the beginning of the event/activity all necessary materials have to be prepared for distribution (e.g. training and promotional material).

6) **Recording of minutes** (only for meetings). For meetings organizers shall ensure the recording of minutes.

7) **Preparing the feedback forms**. Each course has to be evaluated by the course participants. The duty of the organizer is to ensure that all participants fill in forms and provide feedback on their perceptions of the quality of training and / or events.

8) **Power point presentation(s) and all materials presented or distributed on the event should have the approval of QCB**.

2.2.3. Quality of developed resources

One of the most specific and valuable outputs of the HEPMP project is developing the functional PAINWEB platform that is the heart of the so called PAINWEB network.

During the development of PAINWEB platform developers should pay attention to the following:

1) **Platform needs to be user-friendly and easy to use**. Platform has to follow the best practices experiences in development of the similar software.

2) **End-users have to be consulted during platform developing**. Their suggestions and requests need to be considered as important inputs.

2.2.4. Quality of the information available on internet

In order to disseminate selected information about HEPMP project it has to be publicly presented or made publicly available. These include project web site, and other on-line posts.

General information

All information about the project has to be given with responsibility and in the best interest of the project objectives. Personal opinion from official standpoints defined by PMB has to be differentiated. It is recommended that all project sources, materials and products indicate the website, which contains full and official information.

Project website will be created, as a central point for dissemination purposes. This website will contain all relevant information regarding the project, its objectives, expected results, news, and upcoming relevant events.

The maintenance of the website includes adding of the electronic publications of the project that are intended for general public and for dissemination of the project. The site also offers a private area in which the consortium members can access all documents necessary for the management of the project.

The website is continuously updated.

Standards for on-line deliverables:

Project information and project deliverables available on-line are expected to satisfy the following standards:

1) **Full name of the project** "Strengthening Capacities for Higher Education of Pain Medicine in Western Balkan countries - (Higher Education Pain Medicine Project - HEPMP)" **and a logo** "Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union".
2) **Clearly stated author or authors of the announcement, if possible**. This requirement has two functions. First, to protect author rights and, second to denote person(s) responsible for the information and its quality.
3) **Professional and appropriate visual design**.

4) **Adequacy of used language.** The used language should be in line with democratic values, professional, understandable for target population, in accordance with the spelling and grammatical norm. Language used in the documents need to depict high professional, academic and standards in line with EU values. All deliverables oriented to the wider public should pass the proofreading.

2.2.5. Quality of promotional printed materials

Promotional printed materials are mainly designed for the purpose of dissemination (e.g. newsletter, flyers, poster, and other promo materials). Documents that need to be printed for internal (e.g. internal reports) and external purposes (e.g. learning materials) should be prepared by standards listed in chapter 2.2.1. Quality of document-based deliverables.

Promotional printed materials have to satisfy following standards:

1) **Full name of the project** "Strengthening Capacities for Higher Education of Pain Medicine in Western Balkan Countries - (Higher Education Pain Medicine Project - HEPMP)" **and a logo** "Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union".

2) **Professional and appropriate visual design.** When promotional materials are prepared it is necessary to pay attention to their aesthetics. It is suggested that one and the same design is used for all these materials. It is also suggested to sub-contract professionals to create this design.

3) **Adequacy of used language** (in line with democratic values, professional, understandable for target population, literate). Language used in the promotional materials needs to depict high professional and ethical standards. All deliverables oriented to the wider public should pass the proofreading.

4) **Adequacy of information presented on the promotional materials**. Promotional materials are produced for the purposes of dissemination. Dissemination as such is a part of WP5, so all produced materials need to be in line with outputs and outcomes set by this WP. Also, the presented information needs to be relevant for the wider and specific objectives of the project.

2.3. Quality of project management

Details on project management are set in the document "*Project Management Guidelines*", which lists responsibilities and obligations of all project partners by levels of project management.

This document sets general guidelines for management quality and management quality control.

Outputs and outcomes for project management are set in WP7, while quality control of project management is set by WP6.

2.3.1. Management structure – project consortium and management levels

The management structure of the HEPMP is created to provide effective financial and technical management of the project and to fit the requirements of the Erasmus+ program for successful realization of planned project activities. The project management structure was established and officially adopted at the kick-off meeting.

The project consortium consists of 9 HEI partners:

1	Faculty of Medicine University of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia	UB
2	Faculty of Medical Sciences University of Kragujevac, Kragujevac, Serbia	UK
3	Faculty of Medicine University of Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina	UT
4	Faculty of Medicine University of Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina	UBBL
5	Faculty of Medicine University of Podgorica, Montenegro	UP
6	Faculty of Medicine University of Florence, Italy	UF
7	Faculty of Medicine University of Ljubljana, Slovenia	ULJ
8	Faculty of Medicine University of Rijeka, Croatia	UR
9	University Clinical Hospital Center "Dr Dragisa Misovic-Dedinje" Serbia	UHDM

The project management structure was established and officially adopted at the kick-off meeting. It involves:
- Education, Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency
- Legal representative of coordinating institution,
- Project Coordinator,
- Project Management Board,
- Quality Control Board,

- Partner Country Coordinator,
- Partner Country Team,
- Programme Country Coordinator,
- Programme Country Team,
- Task Leaders.

Figure 1 -HEPMP management structure
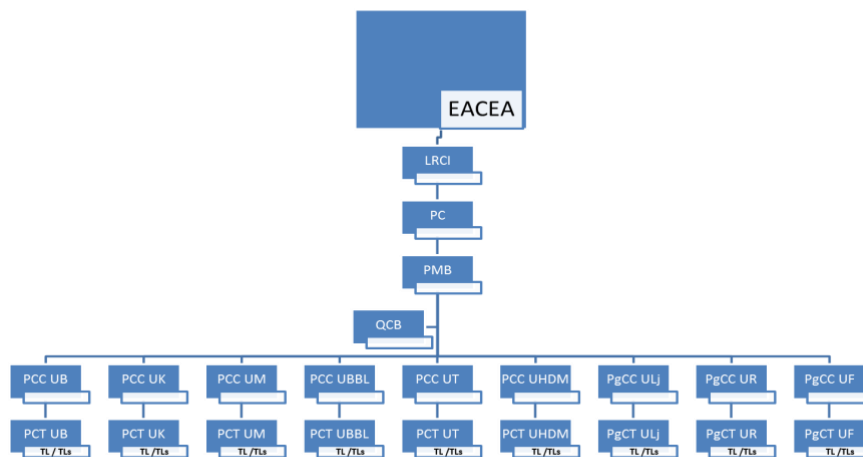
2.3.2. General standards/guidelines for quality of the project management

In order to assure quality of the project management project participants have to follow the following general guidelines and standards:

1) **High quality standards.** It is important that all partners (and all participants) in the project aspire to the highest possible quality standards. If those standards are not directly defined in the project documentation participants should set them on the basis of their personal values as professionals and experts in the pain medicine area.

2) **Responsibility.** It is important that all project partners (and participants) fulfil their part of the of the project implementation. It is not possible to achieve wider and specific project objectives without all participants doing their part of the job.

3) **Shared responsibility for project management by levels.** All associates in the project have to fulfil their responsibilities and obligations as defined in the document: "*Project Management Guidelines*" and by donator.

4) **Shared responsibility for project management by partners.** All partners share responsibility for decision making, since all project partners actively participate in project management. Operatively, all partners delegate their representatives in PMB which consists of 6 PCCs and 3 PgCCs (Project Coordinator + 8 members). In that way decision making process is shared in between PMB members, and all members (and partners) have influence on decision making. In addition, PMB (and all individual participants) have at their disposal the QCB - body responsible for quality assurance and control. However, PMB is only one part of the management structure. Each county (partner) has a Partner Country Coordinator, Partner Country Team, Programme Country Coordinator, Programme Country Team. This means that each country/partner has responsibility for project implementation in their area as set by the project.

5) **Available support for individual project participants in quality issues.** For all dilemmas about quality of the project management, all participants can consult PBM. Consultation on quality issues should be encouraged by PBM and QCB. All participants should have contacts from representatives of these two bodies.

3. Internal quality assurance and control

In this chapter focus is on the procedures that can assure standards internally set, during project implementation.

3.1. Levels of internal quality assurance and control

Internal quality assurance and control on the HEPMP project should be implemented on different levels of the hierarchy (figure 1). In this hierarchy each (project management) level has its own responsibilities considering quality assurance and control.

3.2 Quality Control Board (QCB)

As defined in project documentation, body responsible for quality assurance and control on the project will be the Quality (Assurance and) Control Board (QCB). However, quality cannot be achieved without mutual cooperation between QCB, PMB, and PC (which is member of the PMB). Although PMB is responsible for the implementation of the project, this body has to secure constructive communication with QCB in order to maintain quality.

General responsibilities of the QCB:
Main responsibility of this QCB is to secure that procedures and standards of quality set by this document are maintained during the project implementation.

Composition of the QCB:
QCB consists of the following members, coming from Partner Countries:
- Dr. Jelena Santric, Faculty of Medicine, University of Belgrade, Serbia;
- Prof. Dr. Vesna Plesinac-Karapandzic, Faculty of Medicine, University of Belgrade, Serbia;
- Prof. Dr. Dragica Pavlovic-Babic, Faculty of Phylosophy, University of Belgrade, Serbia

Obligations and responsibilities of the QCB:
- QCB is coordinated by the QCB manager, as agreed by the PMB;
- QCB is responsible for the quality assurance exercise of all deliverables;

- Cooperates with the Project Coordinator on general issues related to the level of quality of the projects deliverables as appropriate;
- Amending this manual on the request of PCC/PgCC, PC or PMB.

Functioning of the QCB:
- QCB will meet twice a year, once in approximately every six months.
- It is the **QCB** manager's obligation to schedule these meetings and suggest topics and objectives. His/her responsibility is to communicate with the Project Management Board in order to acquire materials that need to pass quality assurance and/or control.
- Each QCB member will have opportunity to suggest additional topics and objectives of scheduled meeting.
- QCB manager will assign one person on each meeting to keep minutes. This person's obligation will be to forward copies of the kept minutes to all members of the QCB and to the PMB not later than 7 (seven) days after the meeting.

4. External quality assurance and control

WP6 defines position(s) of external evaluator(s). Primary task of external evaluator(s) is to supervise the implementation of project activities. However, external monitoring of the project also includes assessment of various project aspects such as relevance (is the project still relevant in terms of its goals and achievements), efficiency (are the activities within the work-packages done on time and within planned budget), effectiveness (how well are the project specific objectives met), impact (at the different levels) and sustainability (what would stay after the project is finished).

Selection of external evaluators

The PMB will select at least one external expert to supervise the implementation of project activities. This expert(s) should be:

- independent and without conflict of interests concerning the project or its participants;
- with experience in conducting monitoring and evaluation of CBHE projects;
- familiar with quality assurance and control procedures.

General responsibilities of the external evaluators

External evaluator(s) can schedule independent monitoring visits however it is highly suggested to attend at least one PMB meetings. PMB is responsible to provide all project documents and deliverables to the external evaluator(s) on request.

At the end of the project the same (or new) external evaluator(s) should be sub-contracted to evaluate and write evaluation report of the whole project.

Detailed list of obligations and expectations from external evaluator(s) have to be defined in Terms of Reference (ToR) which will be a part of the contract with external evaluator(s).

External evaluator is responsible to:

- Evaluate the work of QCB;
- Evaluate the work of the PMB;
- Write monitoring report with suggestions;
- Evaluate the project as a whole;

- Write project evaluation report concerning project relevance, impact, dissemination, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability.

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