

**Project No:** 101129398- ERASMUS-EDU-2024-CBHE-STRAND-1

# **Improving University Quality Assurance Resilient Strategies Toward Excellence**

## **QA-SURE**

### **WP1- Deliverable 1.2**

### **Project Coordination Handbook**

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## Abbreviations

<b>CBHE</b>	Capacity building in the field of higher education
<b>CP</b>	Contact Point
<b>PT</b>	Project team
<b>QA-SURE</b>	Improving University Quality Assurance Resilient Strategies Toward Excellence
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>HEI</b>	Higher Education Institution
<b>PC</b>	Project Coordinator
<b>PMB</b>	Project Management Board
<b>PMP</b>	Project Management Plan
<b>PQAP</b>	Project Quality Assurance Plan
<b>SC</b>	Steering Committee
<b>WP</b>	Work Package
<b>WPL</b>	Work package leader
<b>WBS</b>	Work Breakdown Structure

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## Introduction

The purpose of the Project Management Plan is to facilitate day-to-day management of the project activities maintained through communication on the level of consortium, WPs, or even tasks. The document outlines the standard procedures the project consortium will implement when delivering project reports and other deliverables regarding the modernization and building of new quality assurance units among the partners of the consortium.

This document contributes to setting the basis and guidelines for smooth and transparent coordination, as well as defining roles and responsibilities of the coordinator and all partners, reflecting the Grant Agreement, Partnership Agreements, Erasmus+ Programme Guide, and internal set of rules for coordination.

The PMP might be updated whenever necessary. For the avoidance of doubt, the Grant Agreement and Partnership Agreement take precedence over this document. The structure of the document is as follows:

Section 2 presents the project description, section 3 management structures and responsibilities at the consortium level and the details on the work packages and deliverables are given in section 4. Budget and risk management are provided in sections 5 and 6 respectively.

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# 1. Executive Summary and Project Overview

## 1.1 Overview of the Project

The "Improving University Quality Assurance Resilient Strategies Toward Excellence (QA-SURE)" project aims to elevate the quality standards in academic institutions through targeted training and the implementation of a robust quality assurance framework. The initiative will focus on upskilling staff and introducing sustainable quality assurance practices.

QA-SURE is a project that will focus on adapting modern and European quality assurance practices, instruments, and methodologies. It therefore aids the alignment of quality assurance standards of the project partners with those set out via the ESGs 2015 and European best practices. This will be achieved by:

- (1) Realignment of QA structures and mechanisms based on policy and regulations, QA cycles, and other institutional indicators, and widening of input into the systems by higher participation rates of students and external stakeholders;
- (2) Training of QA, administrative and academic staff (>150), as well as, students (>50), to ensure better preparation and inclusiveness of administrative and academic products within the partner HEIs, especially when it comes to service and study product design; and
- (3) utilizing internationalization and digitalization as mechanisms for enhancing quality culture, while at the same time improving institutional transparency and accountability.

The project foresees the participation of a larger variety of participants in the QA systems as current Western Balkans HEIs struggle with this. More emphasis will be laid on the input and participation of

- (1) students since often students find themselves placed only at the end of the quality assurance cycles as a means to close it rather than considering them as productive sources of primary feedback and data, and,
- (2) external stakeholders (businesses, public institutions, civil society etc.), due to the high relevance of input that can be received for updating study programmes aiming to be based on the fit-for-purpose concept and employment.

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These processes apart from the increase in quality culture practices and mechanisms, will also enable the HEIs to prepare for international accreditation procedures as a tool to improve themselves within the European perspective further.

## 1.2 Key Objectives and Purposes

The concept of quality assurance in higher education formulated by the Bologna Declaration as a premise for the achievement of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is one of the basic priorities of the reforms in the education system being based on rigorous international standards. It is one of the pillars of education and lifelong learning in higher education in Albania and Europe, as well as a requirement of the Bologna Process and the Albanian legislation for higher education. Moreover, it is about providing quality education for professional stability and efficient employment planning for the new generation in the framework of globalization. In particular, high-quality educational provision is the mission and vision of the Western Balkans University (WBU) and partner higher education institutions (HEI) standards. The consortium, composed of the leader, WBU, and partners, including Polis University and Luarasi University in Albania, International Business College Mitrovica and University "Isa Boletini" in Mitrovica/Kosovo, South East European University in North Macedonia and International School of Social Sciences and Business Studies are all focused on professionalism through a dedicated and professional staff.

WBU and its partners are mostly newly established universities but given their quick adaptation in the national level networks of universities and the associated influence/feedback provided thus far, have gained a strong momentum with a strong inclination to implementing and embracing the best practices and models in the region and Europe. In this regard, the component of networking can become an influential factor in numerous practices, such as meeting the best standards for accreditation and certification according to European standards for the quality of higher education, while actively becoming part of the network of universities in the Western Balkans region and Europe as well.

The proposed intervention addresses the flexible nature of the institutional frameworks of each participating university, in the context of the integration of Albania, the Republic of North Macedonia and Kosovo into the big European family and with the opening of negotiations (December 2022 for Albania and Republic of North Macedonia, and free movement for Kosovo's citizens in January 2023).

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More specifically, it considers the primary objectives of these universities such as the provision of higher quality education, new integrated teaching methods and modernization in general. Quality education, in particular, is a mandatory requirement and a legal obligation for universities that ought to educate and prepare the new generations, as is the integration of higher education institutions/networks in the region and Europe in general. Meanwhile, the establishment of a solid Quality Assurance System for HEIs remains a key element to be considered, as well as an important guarantee that the study programs and other provisions offered by HEIs meet the highest standards in terms of quality, education and research. Moreover, it becomes an indispensable condition for improving employment, social cohesion and economic competitiveness. Quality Assurance (QA), especially for the consortium, is expected to become a continuous strategic planning process with monitoring of procedures and feedback based on evidence and comparison of data on enrolment, graduation and employment of prospective students. Through periodic and *ad-hoc* evaluations in teaching and research, financial support from third parties, a reporting system that provides key figures in key areas and cross-sectional ones, bench learning initiatives, etc, the overall strategic advantage from multi-stakeholder involvement can address them effectively and produce tangible results in the context of synchronized processes that enable the emergence of positive elements through national and regional trends. The production of data will be used not only for purposes of monitoring trends and development within the partner institutions but also for external benchmarking, enabling the comparison of data available from other institutions within the Western Balkan countries and the EU.

In this context, the **general objective of the project** is to establish/enhance and support quality assurance structures and mechanisms for effective management and operation through teaching and learning processes in the Western Balkan region, including deeper integration into European Higher Education Areas (EHEA).

As emphasized in the Erasmus+ program guide, high-quality and inclusive education and training of young people and participants of all ages not only supports citizens in their personal and professional development but ultimately equips them with qualifications and skills needed for meaningful participation in a democratic society, through intercultural understanding and successful transition in the open labour market.

The QA-SURE project is based on the *General Objective* of the Erasmus+ program which is “To support, through lifelong learning, the educational, professional and personal development of people in education, training, youth and sport, in Europe and beyond, thereby contributing to sustainable growth, quality jobs and social cohesion, to driving innovation, and to strengthening European identity and active citizenship”, and specifically

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to the *Specific Objective 1*: “Promote learning mobility of individuals and groups, as well as cooperation, quality, inclusion and equity, excellence, creativity and innovation at the level of organizations and policies in the field of education and training”.

The QA-SURE project is based on the KA2: Cooperation among organizations and institutions: Capacity Building of Higher Education (CBHE), which supports international cooperation projects based on multilateral partnerships between organizations active in the field of higher education for their relevance, quality, modernization and responsiveness for a socio-economic recovery, growth and prosperity and reacting to economic globalization. This project also falls under the Strand I category, which is designed to attract less experienced HEIs and small-scale actors to the CBHE action to facilitate access to newcomer organizations. In the consortium, the leader is a newly established university which has started its academic activity on October 2022. In addition, Luarasi University in Albania and University Isa Boletini Mitrovica in Kosovo are considered as less experienced ones as they do not have a high number of previous projects (the former with 1 and the latter with 5). Through this project, partnerships that will develop cooperation ideas as well as facilitate the know-how, experience and good practices, by fostering access to capacity-building opportunities, will be developed.

The proposed activities and QA-SURE project results aim at enhancing the management and administrative capacity of the targeted HEIs in WB through establishing new or enhancing existing quality assurance units and processes/strategies within partner institutions, which are crucial added values for the targeted beneficiaries such as academic staff, students and administrative staff.

The project is expected to contribute to the overarching priorities of the European Commission and Erasmus+ Programme not only for the Western Balkans University, as a newcomer higher education institution, but also for regional and European partner institutions, with some or more experience in quality assurance practice. It is expected to improve the quality/quality assurance of higher education partner institutions and enhance its relevance for the global and European labour market and society, especially for the Western Balkans countries (Albania, Kosovo) which are expected to join the EU soon.

Under the framework of Key Action 2 objectives, the project application is expected to have a significant contribution to the development, transfer and implementation of innovative practices of quality assurance of the EU and higher experienced universities to enhance the teaching, and assessment mechanisms for HEI staff and students, quality assurance,

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management, governance, inclusion, innovation, knowledge base, digital and entrepreneurial capacities, as well as the internationalization of HEIs of the partner countries; increase the capacities of HEIs, QA bodies in charge and competent authorities of higher education institutions to modernize their higher education systems, particularly in terms of quality, governance and financing; improve the training of teachers and continuous professional development to impact the longer term quality of the education system, especially in the Western Balkans countries.

The project will also create strong and foster cooperation of the consortium HE institutions and across different regions of Europe (EU and Western Balkans countries) on capacity building and enhancement and strengthening, and exchange of good practices, especially on the quality assurance for the national and international accreditation / re-accreditation in the institutional and study program's level.

HEIs which are already part or members of the EU QA networks, such as the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQAVET), the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR), the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) – as well as EU-wide networks in the field of education and training will foster their collaboration, while others have to apply and use the EU transparency and recognition tools for competences, skills and qualifications, to be part of these networks.

These similar or recognition tools are needed to ensure that competencies, skills and qualifications can be more easily recognized and are better understood, within and across national and international borders, in all subsystems of education and training as well as in all sectors of the global labour market, no matter whether these were acquired in the EU or Western Balkans countries, through formal education and training or other learning experiences.

The partnership with the European University networks has a very important role in bringing cross-border cooperation to the next level of ambition for top-quality education, research and innovation, based on a common vision and shared values. The purpose of the cooperation is precisely to raise the appropriate capacities both in terms of human resources and methodology for the design of the strategy and documentation necessary to achieve European standards for the quality of higher education.

As a prerequisite for Quality Assurance development throughout the consortium, impacting the relevant stakeholders, and the building of capacities of university staff engaged with QA processes via training is crucial to any university which fosters competitive behaviour and standardized internal and external academic processes. Therefore, establishing bridges of

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fruitful cooperation in the region and Europe, while taking from trends/examples of best models of Higher Education in Europe, becomes a necessary, intermediary step to implement the right methodology and work processes and promote directly the intra-university relationships to ready ourselves for the mandatory obligation for Accreditation of the university and their programs. It is therefore important to create a qualitative environment with the right people, structures, and methodologies/tools to achieve this final goal of simultaneous acknowledgement of Quality Assurance mechanisms in most of the consortium representatives.

Common characteristics also include building and enhancing the institutional capacities on internal quality assurance structures of HEIs within the consortium and towards implementation of QA; promotion and strengthening of QA trends already promoted in the region and Europe; development of improved quality guidelines based on EU trends and specific challenges; improvement of the methodology for internal QA for institutional accreditation; enhancement of QA management of HEIs through preparation on external national and international institutional accreditation or re-accreditation processes for all involved universities and overall generating real-time impact on how this transitioning process can be challenged by other related stakeholders or external parties in the field of higher education.

In addition, recognition of qualifications and diplomas of WB partner universities involved in the project within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is the vision as a long-term objective after the international accreditation processes.

The project is based on the general objective of the Erasmus+ Programme to support, through lifelong learning, the educational, professional and personal development of people in education, etc., through strategic cooperation, fulfilling the objective 1 requirements to promote learning mobility of individuals and groups, as well as cooperation, quality, inclusion and equity, excellence, creativity and innovation at the level of organizations in the field of education and training.

As mentioned above, the project belongs to Key Action 2: Cooperation among Organizations and Institutions: Capacity Building of Higher Education (CBHE), specific objectives of Action 4-8:

- Enhance the teaching, and assessment mechanisms for HEI staff and students, quality assurance, management, governance, inclusion, innovation, knowledge base, digital and entrepreneurial capacities, as well as the internationalization of HEIs in the third countries;

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- Increase the capacities of HEIs, bodies in charge of higher education and competent authorities of higher education institutions to modernize their higher education systems, particularly in terms of quality, governance and financing, by supporting the definition, implementation and monitoring of reform processes;
- improve the training of teachers and continuous professional development to impact the longer-term quality of the education system;
- Stimulate cooperation of institutions, capacity building and exchange of good practice;
- Foster cooperation across different regions of the world through joint initiatives.

Specific objectives of the QA\_SURE project, based on Key Action 2, are as follows:

- ***Objective 1: To establish/enhance Quality Assurance Units/Offices of HEIs in Albania and Kosovo and provide capacity building on quality assurance processes within networks of HEIs.***

Through this project, the consortium will fully engage and coordinate with each other to handle the multi-purpose establishment of the core group/unit/office for developing the internal quality assurance at WBU and enhancement of the offices at the other partner universities.

The indicators for the first objective are as follows:

- No. of QA units from each university involved in the project
- No. of staff from each university involved in the project, engaged in QA
- No. of universities with capacity building on QA processes

- ***Objective 2: To improve training processes for designing study programs of HEIs based on labour market needs, including the Action Plans for supporting the processes of QA in teaching, learning and administration.***

Moreover, the project addresses training needs for designing study programs of HEIs based on labour market needs, including the Action Plans that support Quality Assurance processes in teaching, learning and administration. The project itself promotes a long-term approach to how to maintain the study programs of HEIs and the associated Quality Assurance processes while supporting such an approach with the latest trends in the region and Europe in general. More specifically, this objective is about capacity building of the core quality team for the implementation of the newest methods and best practices for internal quality assessment, training of trainers (ToT), etc.

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The indicators for the second objective are as follows:

- No. of study programs of HEIs based on labour needs
  - No. of action plans for supporting HEI processes of QA in teaching, learning and administration
  - Level of training for designing study programs and action plans within HEIs
- 
- ***Objective 3: To improve coordination through a long-term policy and associated methodologies, for strategies on internal quality assurance at WBU and its partners, in preparation for international institutional accreditation of WBU and relevant partners.***

The project addresses the third objective, concretely improving coordination instances among the leader and partner universities, for long-term strategies that provide long-term policy support and associated methodologies for internal Quality Assurance throughout the consortium, in preparation for international institutional accreditation of WBU and relevant partner universities.

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## 2. Project Description

### 2.1 Work Packages

Work packages are essential components of project management that break down the project into manageable units of work. Each work package typically includes tasks, deliverables, timelines, resources, and dependencies.

#### **2.1.1 WP1: Management**

The coordinator of the project has to undertake the crosscutting management, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting are fulfilled by the following activities:

- Kick-off meeting
- Preparation of Project Management Plan
- Day-to-day management of project activities and reporting
- Financial management of the project
- Organizing Steering committee/Management Board meetings
- Progress and Final Report Writing

The objectives of WP1 are:

- Organization of Kick-off Meetings and other annual coordination meetings
- Selection of Project Management Board (PMB) and Project Quality Assurance Board (PQB) members
- Preparation of Project Coordination Handbook
- Preparation of Progress and Final Reports
- Financial management throughout the whole project period
- Realization of project coordination and management through diverse means

*Tasks under WP1:*

**T1.1** Kick-off meeting

**T1.2** Establishing project managerial structures and modes of communication between partner institutions

**T1.3** Partnership Agreement and Project Template Preparation

**T1.4** Project Coordination Handbook

**T1.5** Day-by-day project coordination and management of all project activities

**T1.6** Interim and Final Report Preparation

**T1.7** Annual coordination meetings

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## **T1.8 Project Financial management**

### *Milestones of WP1:*

**MS1** Kick-off Meeting

**MS2** Partnership Agreement/Project Coordination Handbook

### *Deliverables of WP1:*

**D1.1** Kick-off Meeting

**D1.2** Project Coordination Handbook

**D1.3** Mid-term progress report

### **2.1.2 WP 2. Preparation**

During the preparation phase, the main activities will consist of reviewing and reporting the situation of Quality Assurance Mechanisms, structures and the state of art regarding university recognition abroad for both Albanian and Kosovo partners including:

- In-depth analysis based on the pre-studies done by the 5 partner HEIs
- Introduction of the benchmarking system by ENQA
- A one-day workshop will be held to share the results in each partner country with invited stakeholders within and outside the consortium.

### *Tasks under WP2:*

**T2.1** In-depth analysis based on the pre-studies done by the 5 partner HEIs.

**T2.2** Introduction of benchmarking system in accordance with ENQA

**T2.3** Workshop to share results.

### *Milestones of WP2:*

**MS3** Need analysis report.

**MS4** Workshop on sharing results

**MS5** Introduction to Benchmarking system report

### *Deliverables of WP2:*

**D2.1** Need analysis report.

**D2.2** Introduction to Benchmarking system report

**D2.3** Surveys of Stakeholders

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### **2.1.3 WP 3. Establishment/Enhancement of Internal Quality Assurance Units/Offices**

WBU as a new university will establish with high-quality standards its Internal Quality Assurance Unit and other quality-related mechanisms and structures, whereas Luarasiy University (AL), University Isa Boletini Mitrovice (KO), POLIS University (AL) and IBC-M (KO) will enhance/modernize their existing QA offices or units by updating their strategies, developing their action and sustainability plans etc.

- Establishment/Enhancement of Internal Quality Assurance Offices/Units
- Development of Quality Assurance Strategies; Action Plans; Job descriptions etc
- University strategies for QA development will be elaborated and adopted at each partner institution
- QA manuals modernized at each partner university involved in the project;
- Action plans for further QA consolidation (sustainability of the project);
- Purchase of equipment for performing all the expected activities (computers, laptops, databases and software for QA assurance)

To equip the units with software/hardware it is needed to purchase the following software:

- Quality assurance software for managing assessment data, tracking progress, and generating reports.
- Software for creating, analysing and generating meaningful insights about surveys
- Software to manage various aspects of the university's operations, including academic processes and quality assurance data.
- Antiplagiarism tool

#### *Tasks under WP3:*

**T3.1** Establishment/Enhancement of Internal Quality Assurance Offices/Units

**T3.2** Development of Quality Assurance Strategies; Action Plans

**T3.3** University strategies for QA development will be elaborated and adopted at each partner institution

**T3.4** QA manuals modernized at each partner university involved in the project

**T3.5** Action plans for further QA consolidation

**T3.6** Purchase of equipment

#### *Milestones of WP3:*

**MS7** Establishment/Enhancement of Internal Quality Assurance Offices/Unit

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**MS8** Action and Sustainability Plan

**MS9** Equipment Purchase

*Deliverables of WP3:*

**D3.1** Establishment/Enhancement of Internal Quality Assurance Offices/Unit

**D3.2** Action and Sustainability Plan

**D3.3** Report on Quality Assurance Mechanisms

#### **2.1.4 WP 4: Engagement Model of Relevant Stakeholders**

This WP includes a share of knowledge, training and workshops with different stakeholders as follows:

- Study visits to EU HEIs to learn best practices on HEI QA mechanisms and structures (2 visits)
- Establish a functional dialogue between quality management structures and academic staff to complete the quality assurance cycle (2 trainings)
- Empower students to participate in quality assurance, and foster quality culture on the level of students and staff (2 trainings)
- Empower quality assurance offices to conduct self-evaluation and prepare accreditation process (2 trainings)
- Round table: Industry as a source of data for Albanian and Kosovo HEIs

*Tasks under WP4:*

**T4.1** Study visits EU HEIs to learn best practices on HEI QA mechanisms and structures

**T4.2** Establish a functional dialogue between quality management structures and academic staff to complete the quality assurance cycle

**T4.3** Empower students to participate in quality assurance, and foster quality culture on the level of students and staff

**T4.4** Empower quality assurance offices to conduct self-evaluation and prepare the accreditation process

**T4.5** Round table: Industry as a source of data for Albanian and Kosovo HEIs

*Milestones of WP4:*

**MS10** Trainings

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*Deliverables of WP4:*

**D4.1** EU Study Visits

**D4.2** Trainings on quality assurance

**2.1.5 WP 5: Internationalization as a Tool for Quality Enhancement**

Internationalization has a significant role in quality enhancement in Higher Education (HE). Its main role is to strengthen institutions in their efforts to meet standards and expectations in promoting institutional reputation, improving academic standards, encouraging continuous improvement, and fostering accountability. It gives an international dimension to the teaching, research, and service functions of higher education institutions. In addition, internationalization has a crucial role in enhancing the quality of higher education by providing students and faculty with a wealth of opportunities for growth, learning, and collaboration.

Through this WP, all Albanian and Kosovo partners, under the supervision, guidance and suggestions of EU partners, will ensure the implementation of QA standards in their respective institutions based on European Standards and Guidelines (ESG2015), which provides a comprehensive set of standards and guidelines for quality assurance in higher education and is used as a reference by quality assurance agencies and higher education institutions across Europe. These standards guide in the areas which are vital for successful quality provision and learning environments in higher education. The ESG is applied by HE institutions as a reference document for internal and external quality assurance systems. The main activities included in this WP are:

- Aligning Quality Assurance Offices with ESG 2015 and Quality Enhancement
- Switching from Quality Control to Quality Enhancement
- Improving Digitalization and transparency for internal and external mechanisms in QA
- Agreements among consortium members and other EU partners to increase collaboration and QA
- Fostering collaboration and networking between universities, businesses, and society (workshops)

*Tasks under WP5:*

**T5.1** Aligning Quality Assurance Offices with ESG 2015 and Quality Enhancement

**T5.2** Switching from Quality Control to Quality Enhancement

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**T5.3** Agreements among consortium members and other EU partners to increase collaboration and QA

**T5.4** Fostering collaboration and networking between universities, businesses, and society

*Milestones of WP5:*

**MS11** Aligning Quality Assurance Offices with ESG 2015 and Quality Enhancement

**MS12** Agreements among consortium members and other EU partners to increase collaboration and QA

*Deliverables of WP5:*

**D5.1** Aligning Quality Assurance Offices with ESG 2015 and Quality Enhancement

**D5.2** Switching from Quality Control to Quality Enhancement

**D5.3** Agreements among consortium members and other EU partners to increase collaboration and QA

### **2.1.6 WP 6: Quality Assurance of the Project**

WP6 is dedicated to the quality assurance of the project and will be led by UIBM and co-led by SEEU. The Quality Assurance Board (QAB) will be established by the project start to ensure the timely coordination and start of the activities between partners. It will ensure the overall quality management of the project in terms of coordination and strategic leadership to the project implementation partners. Internal and external mechanisms will be developed and checked through this WP. UIBM in collaboration with SEEU will develop a Quality Monitoring Plan for the whole duration of the project. The monitoring plan will be endorsed by the QAB and will be notified to all partners to catch up with this plan. The monitoring plan will include (i) the revised/contextualized logical framework matrix with a table of Indicators; Data Source; Data collection methodology; and the Responsible Partner(s); (ii) an Indicator Tracking Table (ITT) which will track the progress of achievement based on the indicator measurement Target Vs. Achieved ones.

To ensure the quality of the project implementation, a quality plan will guarantee the following activities:

- Establishing the Quality Assurance Board (QAB)
- Development of the Quality Assurance Plan/Strategy and Quality Monitoring Table
- Conducting evaluation forms about the activities

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The process of the end-of-project evaluation will be outsourced to an external evaluator to be able to measure the results of the project by the end of the project, with the prospects of the impact in the mid and long term. The methodology of the evaluation will follow the Results Oriented Methodology (ROM) based on the five criteria of the OECD. The perspectives of the project stakeholders and the external actors will be duly considered. The internal monitoring process will be conducted quarterly under the supervision of the SEEU. The evaluation report will provide useful insights into the impact. Quality Assurance (QA) Policies will be developed for teaching and learning and endorsed by the PQC to ensure ownership. It includes a Project Management Committee that will take project-wide decisions, including the Project Coordinator, Project Manager, and partner representatives; quality assurance-related communication will mainly be among WP leaders, the Quality Manager, and the Project Management Committee.

- Mechanisms for Internal QA
- Mechanisms for external QA

*Tasks under WP6:*

- T6.1** Establishing the Quality Assurance Board
- T6.2** Development of the Quality Assurance Plan
- T6.3** Conducting evaluation forms about the activities and feedback analysis
- T6.4** Determining Mechanisms for Internal and External Quality Assurance

*Milestones of WP6:*

- MS13** Approval of the Quality Assurance Plan
- MS14** External Quality Expert

*Deliverables of WP6:*

- D6.1** Quality Assurance Plan
- D6.2** External Quality Expert
- D6.3** Interim Evaluation Report
- D6.4** Final Evaluation Report

**2.1.7 WP 7: Dissemination and Visibility**

WP7 is related to the dissemination a visibility of the project and aims to gather key stakeholders and ensure that all project outputs and results are transferred outside the

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partnership, disseminated and used most effectively. This WP is led by IBCM and co-led by WBU, where IBCM in addition to having its leader role and based on the previous experiences related to the Erasmus+ project, will transfer this knowledge to WBU by checking and realizing all activities in collaboration with each other.

To achieve such objectives, transparent instruments of communication will be used, as well as adequate and timely inclusion of the targeted audience for the project. All will be integrated into the Dissemination and Communication Strategy, ensuring a smooth rollout of key messages, while synchronizing targeted outreach with project implementation milestones. A variety of communication tools will be used for measuring communication and awareness-raising effectiveness. To ensure the cohesive delivery of project outputs and results, internal communication activities will be performed concurrently with external ones.

In this WP the activities are the development and implementation of a dissemination and exploitation strategy (plan) with a clear Vision and Mission Statement (partners consultation, multi-channel communication), implementation of a multimedia-based (electronic, social media), and paper dissemination strategy (media design, publishing guidelines, and website design), and promotion of project results to key actors for a long-term exploitation effect.

Planned activities for promotion purposes are as follows:

- Preparation of Dissemination and Communication Plan/Strategy
- Design of the visual identity of the project, design, and development of the project website and social network pages for promotion
- Promotional materials and other channels
- Organization of the Final Conference and dissemination of the project results

*Tasks under WP7:*

**T7.1** Preparation of Dissemination and Communication Plan/Strategy

**T7.2** Design of the visual identity of the project, design, and development of the project website and social network pages

**T7.3** Promotional materials and other channels

**T7.4** Organization of the Final Conference and dissemination of the project results

*Milestones of WP7:*

**MS15** Dissemination and Communication Plan/Strategy

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*Deliverables of WP7:*

- D7.1** Dissemination and Communication Plan/Strategy
- D7.2** Promotional materials
- D7.3** Project website
- D7.4** Report on dissemination activities
- D7.5** Final Conference

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## 3. Governance Structure

### 3.1 Project Consortium

The Project Management Plan (PMP) aims to provide key information about the project, its aims, and objectives, and the role and responsibility of each project partner. PMP will give clear guidelines to all stakeholders about their tasks, and what are the needs to successfully implement of QA-SURE project.

QA-SURE project will be implemented as a joint project with a consortium composed of 7 partners in total, 3 from Albania, 2 from Kosovo, 1 from North Macedonia and 1 from Slovenia. In this consortium, WBU is the coordinator and all the other HEIs are beneficiaries. In this document, information about the following will be included:

1. Consortium details (list of partners, organization structure, roles, and responsibilities)
2. Operations management tasks, deliverables, resource allocation, work plans, and operation procedures
3. Financial Management procedures, reporting, costs, and budget transfer.
4. Communication management between all partners, channels, and documentation
5. Risk Management plan on risk assessment and risk mitigation approaches.

#### **Western Balkans University (WBU)**

WBU is a new University, established in 2021 and aims to be among the leading higher education institutions in the region. With a fully English education, the special focus of the WBU is on Medicine, Medical Sciences, Economy, Technology, and Innovation. The university was established under the special framework cooperation between “American Hospitals Group” in Albania and Kosovo, and “International Hygeia Hospital” in Tirana.

The mission of Western Balkans University is to invest in the professionals of the future, focused on the good and for the benefit of the individual and society, as well as the commitment to be an internationally renowned university in the field of research and innovation, with the main goal of improving continuous life, as well as its performance in all areas of activity within the local community, beyond the region and with other educational institutions within the region, as well as with higher education institutions abroad. Utilizing academic research and innovative technologies, in close partnership with businesses and

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private and public institutions, WBU aims to become a valuable source of opportunities for society in the fields of education, health and economics.

Western Balkans University provides full-time studies in 3 Faculties which offer the following study programs:

1. **Faculty of Technical Medical Sciences:** Bachelor in Nursing; Bachelor in Imaging Technician; Bachelor in Physiotherapy; Bachelor in Laboratory Technician and Master of Science in Nursing
2. **Faculty of Dental Medicine:** Integrated Cycle Program in Dentistry, Master of Science
3. **Faculty of Economics, Technology and Innovation:** Bachelor in Biotechnology; Bachelor in Biomedical Engineering; Bachelor in Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence; Bachelor in Healthcare Management; Master of Science in Hospitality Management

As it is a new university, WBU is working on establishing the best structures to ensure high-quality teaching, research, infrastructure and other performances that could rank it among the first ones in the region. Therefore, this project will have a great impact on the establishment of QA-related mechanisms and structures, which would directly influence the quality and ranking of the university.

### **POLIS University (U\_POLIS)**

Established in 2006, Polis University is a leading higher education institution in Albania in the fields of architecture, planning and design, civil engineering, environmental science, computer science as well as entrepreneurship and innovation, adopting an interdisciplinary approach while preparing students for a rapidly changing labour market through the incorporation of practice-based learning in various curricula. As a young and emerging institution, Polis has strengthened its capacities over the years through numerous exchanges with international experts in the field of higher education. Cooperating with European and international institutions through programmes ranging from Erasmus+ and Creative Europe to Horizon Europe, Polis has built long-term relationships with its collaboration partners, simultaneously enabling support and exchange of knowledge and capacities, thus spurring institutional growth. In collaboration with EU4Innovation in Albania, Polis has established Innovation Factory (IF), a design and technology lab operating both as a physical space (Makerspace where new designs can be prototyped and fabricated through 3D printing and scanning technologies) and an interdisciplinary unit linking the various study programmes not only among one another but also in the broader innovation ecosystem in Albania. Together with four other universities in Tirana, Polis University initiated Tirana Inc., an

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incubation and acceleration program for startups, which to date has completed one incubation cycle and has supported about 10 early-stage startups, leading two of them to enter the market. Polis University has grown into a leading ecosystem player in Albania, with an extensive network in both academia and entrepreneurship and know-how in design, digital fabrication and early-stage incubation on one hand and project management and coordination on the other.

**Luarasi University (LU)**

LU is a private higher education institution offering full-time studies in four faculties, including Law, Economics, Information Technology & Innovation, and Medical Sciences, for a total of 1800 students and 180 lecturers. The university aims to provide curricula that match labour market needs and economic development goals and strives to become a hub for national and regional academic cooperation, scientific research, and publication. Luarasi University participates in European Union and OECD university networks, creates joint degrees with universities in the European Union, Great Britain, and South-East Europe, and participates in European higher education academic and scientific development projects. The university encourages academic and student mobility and cooperates with Government, corporate, media, and civil society workers through collaborative projects. Luarasi University is dedicated to internationalizing study programs, academic processes, and personnel or research development through internationalization chances, and has joined UNIADRION to connect with important European regional institutions and research institutes.

**International Business College Mitrovica (IBC-M)**

The main principle behind IBC-M, being the only educational institution in Kosovo offering integrated education and ethnically mixed classes, is to provide quality education to students from all communities in Mitrovica and the region, which contributes to improving immediate economic prospects and reducing ethnic tensions. IBC-M is therefore an excellent model of education reform for other higher education institutions in Kosovo. The core expertise lies within business management, public administration, environment, agriculture and applied IT. The IBC-M has extensive experience in the coordination of international projects (CTPCIE, STAND, Research Cult, etc).

IBC-M was founded in 2010 by the Dutch NGO SPARK at the request of Kosovo's Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MEST), with donations from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Swiss Development Cooperation, DFID, the European Commission, and the Netherlands Ministry

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of Foreign Affairs as well as the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of Kosovo. It operated under the auspices of SPARK for 8 years. IBC-M became a Foundation NGO (not-for-profit) in March 2018. Its current Donor is the EU.

IBC-M is based in two modern campuses in Mitrovica (Kosovo) serving the different communities present in the city. It is characterized by its application-oriented approach, which ensures that its graduates hold a qualification that is relevant to the rapidly developing regional job market. The IBC-M motto "From Theory to Practice" is a commitment to a permanent orientation to the world of work. All courses are conducted exclusively in English and there are three different educational programs on offer for the Bachelor level.

**University 'Isa Boletini' of Mitrovica (UIBM)**, is a state university located in the north of Kosovo. This institution was initially established as a technical university in 1961, the only one of its kind in Kosovo, and in 2013 the government of Kosovo ratified this institution as the public university of Mitrovica. The vision of the University "Isa Boletini" of Mitrovica is that up to 2025, should be internationally recognized as a scientific and research institution, which impacts in interconnection of science, research and the economy. UMIB aims to prepare experts for the labour market, respectively for technical sciences, education, economics, and juristic fields through which Kosovo even the region will increase the competitiveness abilities, level of education as well as other aspects. UMIB will work on the creation of teaching staff who will provide quality education through contemporary teaching methods that will increase standards, skills and knowledge.

UIBM has 6 faculties: Faculty of Geosciences and Technology (FGT); Faculty of Food Technology (FTU); Faculty of Mechanical and Computer Engineering (FIMK); Faculty of Economics (FE); Faculty of Law (FJ); Faculty of Education (FED) and offers 20 accredited study programs for Kosovar students and it remains the only public higher education institution in the north of the country tailoring as such to the educational needs of major urban areas of the country. The university provides high-quality study programs along with fostering academic research that would benefit the region in particular and Kosovo in general. The University considers partnerships with European Universities to be of vital importance in ensuring it remains updated and included in international academic developments. UIBM has a teaching staff that is eager to engage in professional development as well as expand research capacities. Hence, the University is committed to this project and will be an active partner throughout the project as well as contribute to sustainability in later stages. In conclusion, while this project is an excellent opportunity for our institution to

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learn, expand and grow, it is also a chance to share knowledge and expertise with other higher education institutions.

UIBM is moving strongly on its development path, through commitment, responsibility, and our commitment to the transformative power of education. The dynamics of the development of academic life, through diverse learning, teaching, searching, and working environments, intellectual transformation is deepened and conditions for social transformation are created. Through our commitment to learn how we all can best serve the university, our community, and our nation and aiming the world, we intend and believe in the successful completion of the UIBM mission.

**International School for Social and Business Studies (ISSBS; <https://issbs.si/>)** is a dynamic private higher education institution, located in Celje, Slovenia, founded in 2006, with approx. 500 students and 50 faculty and staff members, delivering curricula in the fields of economics, management in education, and business and administrative sciences at all three levels of study (bachelor, master and doctoral). From the point of study programme delivery, ISSBS also conducts a Master's study programme Management and Quality in Education directly covering the topics of education and teaching – e.g., quality and management in education, e-learning, lifelong learning, and human resource development practices. Among the ISSBS's prominent features are its high-quality academics and long-standing international vocation in study and research. Innovations, responsiveness, and adaptability to new trends are the specific advantages of the ISSBS.

The ISSBS' internationalization process has consolidated and initiated new relations with other faculties and research centres abroad. This process has encouraged professors and students to be more and more involved in European and international exchange programmes. Internationalization being carried out by the mobility programmes for students and staff such as Erasmus+ (KA1), Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs (within COSME), and also by the implementation of international summer schools, involvement of foreign experts and visiting professors in the delivery of the programmes, lifelong learning events, promotional programmes of Slovenian research, as well as participation in delivery and coordination of many international R&D and lifelong learning projects. ISSBS cooperates with more than 50 European universities and implements national R&D projects which are in many cases financed by the Slovenian Research Agency (SRA), as well as other projects financed by the European funds, Slovenian ministries, etc. ISSBS has been successfully involved in many international R&D projects such as the 7th Framework Programme (project Tenancy Law and Housing Policy in Multi-Level Europe), Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Slovenia-Austria, and Erasmus+, mainly in the form of Jean Monnet projects,

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KA2-Strategic Partnerships and Capacity Building in HE, Key Activity 3 projects-Support to Policy Reform - with ISSBS as coordinator, etc.

Institution annually implements the international scientific conference MakeLearn & TIIM (<https://makelearn.mfdps.si/>) with editors' panels with over 20 distinguished editors of international scientific journals, as well as research and publishing seminars delivered by respected international professors, etc. Together with partners from Poland and Thailand ISSBS established international publisher ToKnowPress (<http://www.toknowpress.net/>) focusing on the publishing of scientific monographs and series of scientific journals (e.g. IJMKL, IJSR).

ISSBS has been involved in quite some R&D projects dedicated to fostering learning as well as social inclusion either in the context of education or the labour market. Some of the projects were also tightly connected to the use and promotion of ICT either as a support to learning or as a part of projects' outcomes (e.g., in the form of a developed e-platform). Among the projects, some of them were (at least partly) research-oriented, others were applicable and conducted in cooperation with local as well as national organizations, for example, SMEs, schools, NGOs, or even volunteering organizations. This way ISSBS has collected additional information and knowledge about the social inclusion issues as well as training approaches in different social or professional contexts. In recent years ISSBS has been actively involved in many activities in the area of volunteering – either through a unique course titled Social Responsibility and Volunteering which has been conducted within ISSBS's bachelor programmes for the last five years or through some of the international projects. Many of the volunteers involved in those projects were included in the work with underprivileged social groups such as Roma or migrant children and minors.

Besides regular study programmes, ISSBS also delivers (non-formal) training programmes for different target groups. In some cases, those programmes are offered in a blended learning approach using existing ISSBS's digital infrastructure. Many of those programmes, especially the ones provided in the context of international projects financed by the EU, are offered for personnel from primary as well as secondary schools – teachers, social workers, head teachers. For example, in the projects related to the inclusion of migrant youth in schools or labour markets, ISSBS has delivered numerous seminars and workshops for groups of participants from schools but also participants stemming from local and national authorities in the field of education.

ISSBS and its staff have extensive experience in the development and implementation of e-learning. In recent years they have developed their concept of blended learning as well as distance learning using either the infrastructure of Moodle platform – for education, or LearnDash or WordPress platform – for delivery of distant training within various R&D

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projects. Virtual learning environments include the inclusion of various digital teaching materials and major interactive approaches such as videos, forums, wikis, quizzes, etc. as well as the elements of gamification. Many of the learning platforms which have been created in the context of international projects also support multi-language use.

**South East European University (SEEU)** is a private, public, not-for-profit higher education institution, consisting of faculties, research centres and institutes as an integral part, specialising in socio-economic and technological sciences. The university is composed of six academic units-faculties namely, Business and Economics, Contemporary Social Sciences, Law, Contemporary Sciences and Technologies, Health Sciences and Language, Cultures and Communications along with two Research Centers Max van Der Stoel Institute and Business Innovation Center, a Doctoral School, and a Research Office that coordinates and manages the ongoing academic and research profile and portfolio of the university staff and the overall research activity. SEEU through its language policy called “flexible use of languages” offers possibilities for students to get an education in their mother tongue Macedonian or Albanian with the increasing importance of courses in the English language. Currently, the University offers study programs in all three cycles with over 5,000 students and around 15,000 graduates since its foundation in 2001; it has campuses in two major cities: Skopje and Tetovo.

The University has undertaken numerous research projects, either funded externally or internally. SEEU has also worked with international partners or sponsors, leading and being partners in various projects such as FP7, Tempus, UNDP, USAID, RRPP, ASO, HORIZON 2020, Erasmus+, etc. Since 2011 the SEEU has endorsed the European Commission’s ‘European Charter and Code for Researchers’, while since July 2015 SEEU has held the ‘HR Excellence in Research’ award (badge), being the first and the sole university in the country holding this logo, which makes it eligible for applying for HORIZON 2020 projects.

The SEEU is determined to respond to novel opportunities for research, scholarship, and development. One of its missions foreseen in the Strategic Plan 2017-2020 is to maintain originality, significance and rigour in research within a framework of high standards of infrastructure, training, and integrity. The maintenance of a sustaining research environment is crucial to the University’s research standing. Within available resources, it enhances the infrastructure which supports research at the highest level, including libraries and information systems.

The University welcomes and positively uses both national and international evaluation and quality accreditation for continuous improvement. We receive valuable evaluation and advice on a twice-yearly basis from our external Quality Champion. We also actively refer to

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the latest developments and trends in higher education in Europe which are part of the Bologna Process. Also, the University has been positively evaluated twice as part of the European Universities Association (EUA) external institutional review program; and its administrative and management processes have been successfully validated according to International Standards for Organization (ISO 9001/2008). Regarding the role of each participant in the project, it should be emphasized that each partner involved in the consortium has predefined roles and they will work together in line with each other to provide the aims and objectives of this project.

All the tasks of the QA-SURE are structured in 7 work packages adequately covering the main action and named: Management (WP1), Preparation (WP2), Development (WPs 3-4-5), Quality Assurance of the Project (WP6) and Dissemination and Visibility (WP7). Each work package is assigned to a competent lead partner responsible for its coordination and successful implementation in close cooperation with all partners of the consortium. In some of the cases where WPs have more weight, a co-leader is been assigned to distribute the workload and also to increase the active participation of all partners in all work packages.

### **3.2 Project Management Board**

The consortium adopts a co-responsibility approach: to this respect, the Project Management Board (PMB), composed of one representative of each partner, will be established; this group will be in charge of supporting the Project Coordinator (PC) in major/strategic decisions and risk management. The PMB will meet during project meetings or in online coordination meetings organized for this purpose. Operational management: the PC will be the reference person for the project, ensuring the implementation of the activities (on time and within the budget) and the consistency between objectives and outcomes. During the Kick-Off meeting, the consortium decided on the representatives of the PMB and PQAB members as listed below:

#### Project Management Board (PMB) members

- 1- Assoc. Prof. Dr. Albana Halili, WBU
- 2- Dr. Dael Dervishi, LU
- 3- Dr. Emi Hoxholli, POLIS
- 4- Dr. Flamur Abazaj, IBCM
- 5- Dr. Fatbardha Hoxha, UIBM
- 6- Dr. Nada Trunk, ISSBS
- 7- Prof. Dr. Lejla Abazi Bexheti, SEEU

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Project Quality Assurance Board (PQAB)

- 1- Dr. Eda Çela, WBU
- 2- Agim Alia, LU
- 3- Dr. Flora Krasniqi, POLIS
- 4- Dr. Gresa Ferri, IBCM
- 5- Dr. Zahir Çerkini, UIBM
- 6- Dr. Valerij Dermal, ISSBS
- 7- Dr. Veli Kreci, SEEU

Each WP has a leader. Decision-making will be based on 2/3 of PMB members. In case of drop-out of a crucial team member, PMB will appoint a substitute among existing members, or decide upon a proposal for a new member by the respective partner. MB will cooperate closely with the Project Quality Assurance Board (PQAB), and also utilize the Quality Assurance Plan and templates. PMB will be in charge of solving any possible minor issues and major conflicts, via e-mail or at PMB meetings, where timeslot will be dedicated to these issues. Conflict resolution will be based on recognized conflict resolution models. PMB will be in charge of providing maximum efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the budget expenditure. PMB will discuss and review the progress of project activities, approve deliverables, make decisions and agree on any risk contingency measures.

The PC will be in charge of dealing with the bodies responsible for the implementation of the programme, will take responsibility for all contractual aspects, including financial issues, ensuring terms and conditions of the contract are compliant with programme regulations and ensuring that appropriate and effective communications and procedures are in place. Progress and final reporting will be compliant with the rules and procedures for the Erasmus+ Programme. The PC will be in charge of drafting the official reports for the project, which will be sent to all partners for feedback, review and agreement, before delivery to the managing authority.

All partners will constantly communicate with each other and exchange on the status quo, to enable considerable discussion and development of the work. Partners' communication will take place mostly using online tools and channels. A mailing list will be created for written communication, while synchronous tools for online meetings (such as Google, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, etc.) will be used according to ongoing needs. Exchange of documents will be carried out via online storage: Google Drive Educational will be used for these purposes, in

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general, unless the project implementation will evidence different needs – in this case, further tools will be used according to the consortium’s decisions.

The management approach will be adopted to ensure the continuous contribution of all consortium partners to achieve project objectives in a high-quality and timely manner. The management tasks are mostly focused on management and monitoring processes encompassing all other project activities: preparation, development, and quality plan. Significant involvement of each partner in the management process is required and secured through institutional representation in the steering committee set up at an early stage of the project and the Quality Board (QB). This will keep a permanent overview of the project’s progress, empower participative decision-making, care for commitment and accountability, ensure addressing all parties’ priorities and interests, and enforce equal project ownership for all partners.

At the operational level, every work package will be led by one partner in charge and carried out under the active participation of all relevant partners. The progress, results, and lessons learned from each work package will be visible to all partners through regular reporting, and consultation in a common information management system. Responsibilities are divided among all partners concerning their respective roles and capacity to achieve clearly defined work packages’ objectives. Tasks within each work package are assigned to the partners based on their experience in similar projects and activities, capability in related methods and instruments, and availability of required skills and competencies.

Resources are allocated for each activity based on its complexity, duration, and participants to ensure effective and efficient implementation of the project along with balanced involvement and ownership of all partners. The responsibility for the work packages is divided as follows:

WP1: Management, will be led by WBU.

WP2: Preparation will be led by LU.

WP3: Establishment/Enhancement of Internal Quality Assurance Units/Offices will be led by U\_POLIS and co-led by UIBM.

WP4: Engagement Model of Relevant Stakeholders will be led by ISSBS and co-led by IBCM.

WP5: Internationalization as a tool for Quality Enhancement will be led by SEEU and co-led by U\_POLIS.

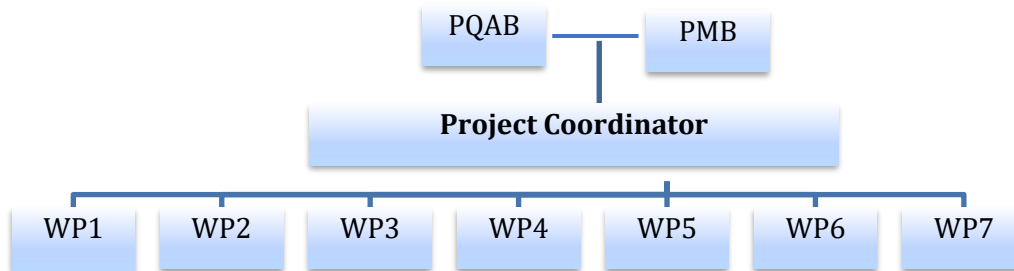
WP6: Quality Assurance of the project will be led by UIBM and co-led by SEEU.

WP7: Dissemination and Visibility will be led by IBCM and co-led by WBU.

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**Table 1:** Project management structure



### 3.3 Roles and Responsibilities

Detailed role descriptions and contact information for team and committee members.

#### **WP1 - Management will be led by WBU.**

WBU as the main coordinator is responsible for efficient project coordination, however, it is necessary to have a good willingness, communication and joint responsibility of all other partners to realize in time all project activities. Partners will actively participate in all meetings and activities as well as provide the supporting documentation promptly.

Project management and coordination will be focused on the project progress regarding expenditure, use of resources, implementation of activities, delivery of results and outcomes and the management of risks. To achieve the wide and specific objectives of the project, the project team will systematically collect, analyze and use relevant information about project progress. Systematic reviews and control will ensure the possibility to reflect on the progress of the project and the content of progress reports in case any problem occurs. Continuous communication is the most critical factor for efficient and effective leadership. Project partners share promptly the required inputs and supporting documentation for the draft of the monitoring reports and the successful development of the external audit procedure. In each meeting related to project management, each partner provides information on the state of the art of project implementation at their organization in line with planned activities. A detailed project management plan will be prepared during the first months of the project. The coordinator of the project has to undertake the crosscutting management, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting fulfilled by the following activities: Kick-off meeting; Preparation of Project Management Plan; day-to-day management of project activities and reporting;

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Financial management of the project; Organizing Steering committee/Management Board meetings.

**WP 2. Preparation will be led by Luarasi University.**

During the preparation phase, the main activities will consist of reviewing and reporting the situation of Quality Assurance Mechanisms, structures and the state of art regarding university recognitions abroad for both Albanian and Kosovo partners including an in-depth analysis based on the pre-studies done by the 5 partner HEIs, the introduction of the benchmarking system following ENQA and a final workshop to share the results at each partner country with invited stakeholders within and outside the consortium.

**WP 3 - Establishment/Enhancement of Internal Quality Assurance Units/Offices will be led by U\_POLIS and co-led by UIBM.**

During this WP, WBU as a newcomer will establish the Internal Quality Assurance Unit whereas LU, UIBM, U\_POLIS and IBCM will enhance/modernize their existing QA offices by updating their QA-related mechanisms and strategies. This WP includes the establishment/enhancement of QA Offices/Units both structurally and functionally. QA manuals, Action and Sustainability Plans and QA strategies will be developed and implemented at each respective partner country HEI.

**WP 4 - Engagement Model of Relevant Stakeholders will be led by ISSBS and co-led by IBCM.**

This WP includes sharing knowledge, training and workshops with different stakeholders by organizing study visits to EU partners to learn best practices on HEI QA mechanisms and structures and also staff training for both academic and administrative staff (4 planned in total). Moreover, this WP includes student training, which is an important added value for the impact the QA-SURE project will have. Other activities will also be organized to learn more from EU experts and also from industry as a source of data.

**WP 5 - Internationalization as a tool for Quality Enhancement is led by SEEU and will be co-led by Polis University.**

Internationalization has a significant role in quality enhancement in Higher Education (HE). Its main role is to strengthen institutions in their efforts to meet standards and expectations in promoting institutional reputation, improving academic standards, encouraging continuous improvement, and fostering accountability. It gives an international dimension to the teaching, research, and service functions of higher education institutions. In addition, internationalization has a crucial role in enhancing the quality of higher education by

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providing students and faculty with a wealth of opportunities for growth, learning, and collaboration.

Through this WP, all Albanian and Kosovo partners, under the supervision, guidance and suggestions of EU partners, will ensure the implementation of QA standards in their respective institutions based on European Standards and Guidelines (ESG2015), which provides a comprehensive set of standards and guidelines for quality assurance in higher education and is used as a reference by quality assurance agencies and higher education institutions across Europe. These standards guide in the areas which are vital for successful quality provision and learning environments in higher education. The ESG is applied by HE institutions as a reference document for internal and external quality assurance systems. The main activities included in this WP are aligning Quality Assurance Offices according to ESG 2015 standards and Quality Enhancement, Training for the QA Offices in HEI towards meeting ESG 2015, and Switching from Quality Control to Quality Enhancement. All partners will be active in the realization of these project activities.

#### **WP6: Quality of the project implementation**

WP6 is dedicated to the quality assurance of the project and will be led by UIBM and co-led by SEEU. The Quality Assurance Board (QAB) will be established by the project start to ensure the timely coordination and start of the activities between partners. It will ensure the overall quality management of the project in terms of coordination and strategic leadership to the project implementation partners. Internal and external mechanisms for QA will be developed and checked through this WP.

UIBM in collaboration with SEEU will develop a Quality Monitoring Plan for the whole duration of the project. The monitoring plan will be endorsed by the QAB and will be notified to all partners to catch up with this plan. The monitoring plan will include (i) the revised/contextualized logical framework matrix with a table of Indicators; Data Source; Data collection methodology; and the Responsible Partner(s); (ii) an Indicator Tracking Table (ITT) which will track the progress of achievement based on the indicator measurement Target Vs. Achieved ones. The internal monitoring process will be conducted quarterly under the supervision of the UIBM. The evaluation report will provide useful insights into the impact.

#### **WP7 Dissemination and Visibility**

WP7 is related to the dissemination and visibility of the project and aims to gather key stakeholders and ensure that all project outputs and results are transferred outside the partnership, disseminated and used most effectively. This WP is led by IBCM and co-led by

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WBU, where IBCM in addition to having its leader role and based on the previous experiences related to the Erasmus+ project, will transfer this knowledge to WBU by checking and realizing all activities in collaboration with each other.

To achieve such objectives, transparent instruments of communication will be used, as well as adequate and timely inclusion of the targeted audience for the project. All will be integrated into the Dissemination and Communication Strategy, ensuring a smooth rollout of key messages, while synchronizing targeted outreach with project implementation milestones. A variety of communication tools will be used for measuring communication and awareness-raising effectiveness. To ensure the cohesive delivery of project outputs and results, internal communication activities will be performed concurrently with external ones.

The staff's efforts to accomplish all the tasks of the projects are shown in the table below:

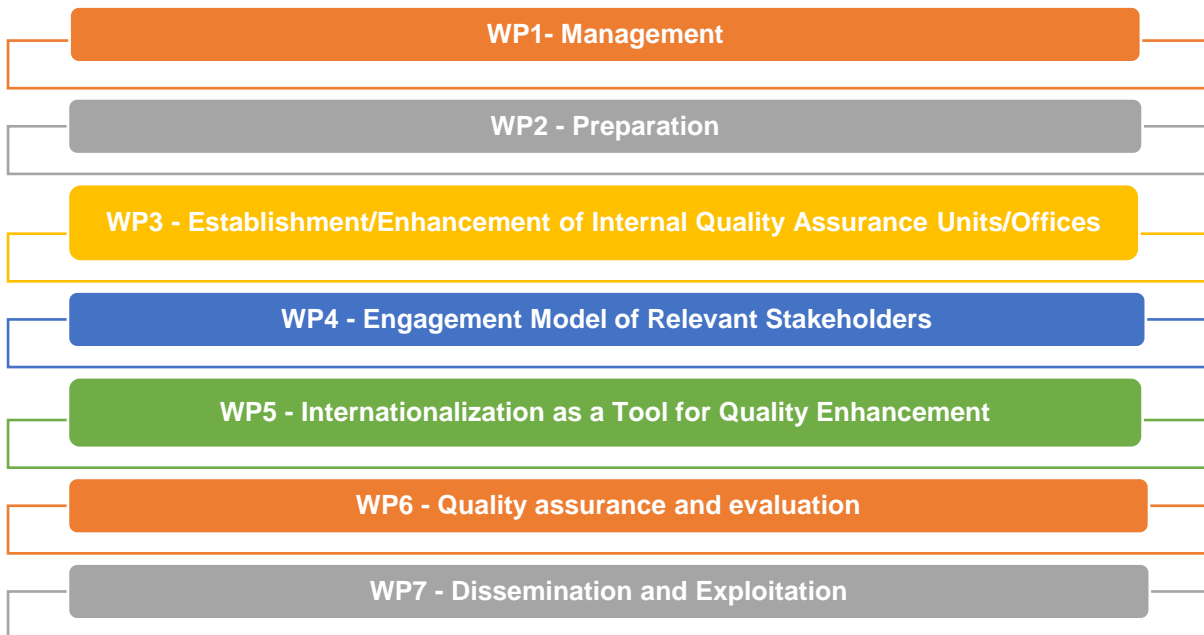
Work Package No	Work Package Title	Lead Participant Short Name	Start Month	End Month	Person-Months
1	Management	WBU	M1	M24	<b>25</b>
2	Preparation	LU	M1	M3	<b>15</b>
3	Establishment/Enhancement of Internal Quality Assurance Units/Offices	U_POLIS	M3	M9	<b>23</b>
4	Engagement Model of Relevant Stakeholders	ISSBS	M5	M16	<b>28</b>
5	Internationalization as a tool for Quality Enhancement	SEEU	M12	M20	<b>28</b>
6	Dissemination and Visibility	IBCM	M1	M24	<b>10</b>
7	Quality Assurance of the project	UMIB	M1	M24	<b>18</b>
<b>Total Person- Months</b>					<b>147</b>

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## 4. Project Implementation Methodology

The project implementation will be divided into 7 work packages as shown below:



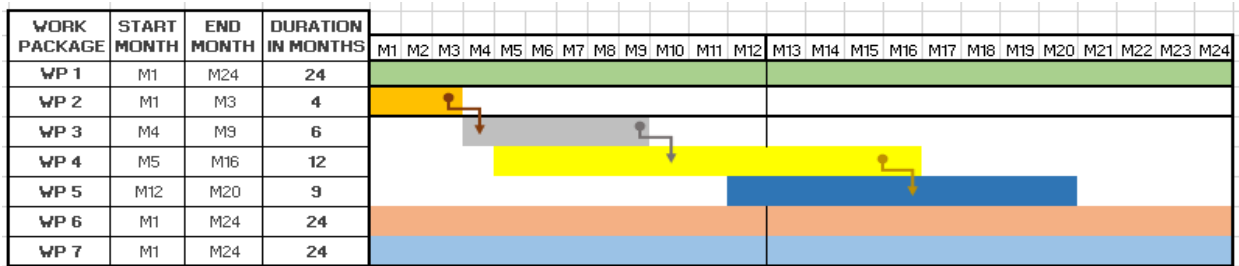
The division of work among partners for each work package is as follows:

- WP 1: Management, will be led by WBU (P1)
- WP 2. Preparation will be led by LU (P3)
- WP 3. Establishment/Enhancement of Internal Quality Assurance Units/Offices will be led by U\_POLIS (P2) and co-led by UIBM (P5)
- WP 4: Engagement Model of Relevant Stakeholders will be led by ISSBS (P6) and co-led by IBCM (P4)
- WP 5: Internationalization as a tool for Quality Enhancement will be led by SEEU (P7) and co-led by U\_POLIS (P2)
- WP 6 Quality Assurance of the project will be led by UIBM (P5) and co-led by SEEU (P7).
- WP 7: Dissemination and Visibility will be led by IBCM (P4) and co-led by WBU (P1)

The timeline of each work package within the 2 years of the project period is shown in the figure below:

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Gantt charts allow and plan and manage your projects online, visualize processes, create and assign tasks to team members, set deadlines and view the percentage of individual tasks completed against anticipated timelines.

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### QA-SURE GANTT CHART- Project Tracking

Task	Start	End	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10	M11	M12	M13	M14	M15	M16	M17	M18	M19	M20	M21	M22	M23	M24
<b>Work Package 1: Management</b>	<b>M1</b>	<b>M24</b>																								
<i>T1.1 Kick-off meeting</i>	M1	M3																								
<i>T1.2 Establishing project managerial structures and modes of communication between partner institutions</i>	M1	M6																								
<i>T1.3 Partnership Agreement and Project Templates Preparation</i>	M1	M24																								
<i>T1.4 Project Coordination Handbook</i>	M1	M6																								
<i>T1.5 Day-by-day project coordination and management of all project activities</i>	M1	M24																								
<i>T1.6 Interim and Final Report Preparation</i>	M12, M24	M12, M24																								
<i>T1.7 Annual coordination meetings</i>	M3, M12, M18, M24	M3, M12, M18, M24																								
<i>T1.8 Project Financial Management</i>	M1	M24																								
<b>Work Package 2: Preparation</b>	<b>M1</b>	<b>M3</b>																								
<i>T2.1 In-depth analysis based on the pre-studies done by the 5 partner HEIs</i>	M1	M3																								
<i>T2.2 Introduction of the benchmarking system in accordance with ENQA</i>	M1	M3																								
<i>T2.3 A one-day workshop to share results in each partner country</i>	M3	M3																								

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<b>Work Package 3: Establishment/Enhancement of Internal Quality Assurance Units/Offices</b>		M4	M9																	
<i>T3.1 Establishment/Enhancement of Internal Quality Assurance Offices/Units</i>	M4	M9																		
<i>T3.2 Development of Quality Assurance Strategies; Action Plans</i>	M4	M9																		
<i>T3.3 University strategies for QA development elaborated and adopted at each partner institution</i>	M4	M9																		
<i>T3.4 QA manuals modernized at each partner university involved in the project</i>	M4	M9																		
<i>T3.5 Action plans for further QA consolidation</i>	M4	M9																		
<i>T3.6 Purchase of equipment</i>	M4	M9																		
<b>Work Package 4: Engagement Model of Relevant Stakeholders</b>		M5	M15																	
<i>T4.1 Study visits EU HEIs to learn best practices on HEI QA mechanisms and structures</i>	M5	M8																		
<i>T4.2 Establish a functional dialogue between quality management structures and academic staff</i>	M9	M13																		
<i>T4.3 Empower students to participate in quality assurance, and foster quality culture on the level of students and staff</i>	M9	M13																		
<i>T4.4 Empower quality assurance offices to conduct self-evaluation and prepare the accreditation process</i>	M6	M12																		
<i>T4.5 Round table: Industry as a source of data for Albanian and Kosovo HEIs</i>	M14	M15																		

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<b>Work Package 5: Internationalization as a Tool for Quality Enhancement</b>		M12	M20																
<i>T5.1 Aligning Quality Assurance Offices with ESG 2015 and Quality Enhancement</i>		M15	M20																
<i>T5.2 Switching from Quality Control to Quality Enhancement</i>		M15	M20																
<i>T5.3 Agreements among consortium members and other EU partners to increase collaboration and QA</i>		M16	M18																
<i>T5.4 Fostering collaboration and networking between universities, businesses, and society</i>		M16	M19																
<b>Work Package 6: Quality assurance and evaluation</b>		M1	M24																
T6.1 Establishing the Quality Assurance Board		M1	M3																
T6.2 Development of the Quality Assurance Plan		M1	M6																
T6.3 Conducting evaluation forms about the activities and feedback analysis		M1	M24																
T6.4 Determining Mechanisms for Internal and External Quality Assurance		M1	M24																
<b>Work Package 7: Dissemination and Visibility</b>		M1	M24																
T7.1 Preparation of Dissemination and Communication Plan/Strategy		M1	M6																
T7.2 Design of the visual identity of the project, design, and development of the project website and social network pages		M1	M24																
T7.3 Promotional materials and other channels		M1	M24																
T7.4 Organization of the Final Conference and dissemination of the project results		M23	M24																

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## 5. Budget, Resources and Financial Management

This section aims to give orientations and clarifications for the financial aspects of the project. The aim is to provide the necessary rules for efficient financial management for all the project activities within the budget and within time limits. To provide maximal accuracy, the rules and orientations written below are based and most of them are taken from the EU Commission guidelines for the use of the grant. Most of the rules and the orientation for sharing and managing financial tasks are based on the Guidelines for the use of the grant ([UNIT COST DECISION](#)). Commission Decision C(2021)35, the Commission authorised the use of simplified forms of grants in the Erasmus+ programme 2021 – 2027.

Only those beneficiary organizations appearing in the Agreement can benefit directly from the grant awarded.

1. The grant is calculated based on Actual costs for the budget headings Equipment and Subcontracting, and Unit Costs for the budget headings Staff costs, Travel costs, and Accommodation and Subsistence cost.
2. All transfers to project beneficiaries are made via bank transfers and that all the bank statements are kept with the project accounts.
3. Any expenditure including VAT, duties, and charges (such as customs and import duties) are not eligible unless the coordinator can provide an official document from the competent authorities proving that the corresponding costs cannot be recovered. In any case, taxes and duties have to be treated following the tax exemption agreement, signed between the European Union and the Partner Country for which the equipment or services are destined.
4. Original supporting documents must be kept at the partner institutes. Readable copies must be sent to the PC with the project documentation and submitted with the final report and financial statement when specifically requested.
5. The list of supporting documents to be kept is available under each budget heading.

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Financial reporting for budget items based on unit costs (contribution to staff costs, travel costs, accommodation and subsistence costs) will be based on the principle of the "triggering event". Beneficiaries will have to prove that the activities have been actually and properly implemented and/or that the expected output(s) have been produced but they will not have to justify the level of spending. As a consequence, beneficiaries will have flexibility in the way they manage the funds awarded to cover the expenses necessary for the implementation of the activities concerned. These activities must be implemented during the eligibility period set out in the Agreement.

Subcontracting to external bodies should be very occasional. The specific competencies and particular expertise needed to reach the project objectives should be found in the consortium and should determine its composition. Sub-contracting for project-management-related tasks is therefore not eligible. Subcontracting must be done based on a contract, which should describe the specific task being carried out and its duration. It must include a date, project number, and the signature of both parties. Beneficiaries and their staff members are not allowed to operate in a subcontracting capacity for the project.

Partner	WP 001	WP 002	WP 003	WP 004	WP 005	WP 006	WP 007	Maximum Grant Amount
<b>WBU</b>	8,185	3515	31888	9807	8697	10719	9486	82301
<b>U_POLIS</b>	4526	4622	26844	9999	8890	3208	4622	62714
<b>UL</b>	3852	4333	26362	9422	8312	3015	4815	60114
<b>IBCM</b>	4637	4285	26507	9227	813	3609	5244	61646
<b>UMIB</b>	4012	3466	25399	8023	6930	3321	4907	56061
<b>ISSBS</b>	13409	0	5777	10285	6917	6578	4028	46996
<b>SEEU</b>	7286	0	2792	6984	3848	6159	1540	28612
<b>Total</b>	45909	20223	145574	63749	51729	36612	34644	398444

Beneficiaries are recommended to retain the following supporting documents:

- Invoices, subcontracts, and bank statements.
- In the case of travel activities of subcontracted service providers, copies of travel tickets, boarding passes, invoices, and receipts, or for car travel a copy of the internal regulations on the reimbursement rate per km. The supporting documentation aims to demonstrate that the activities took place.
- Documentation of the tendering procedure with three quotations from different suppliers.

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Staff costs are supported based on real unit costs based on the monthly incomes and salaries depending on the beneficiaries. The existence of a formal contractual relationship between the employee and the beneficiary institutions is required. The employee must be part of the payroll system of the beneficiary institution.

The applicable staff categories to be applied are the following:

- Managers (including legislators, senior officials, and managers) carry out top managerial activities related to the administration and coordination of project activities.
- Researchers, teachers, and trainers (RTT) typically carry out academic activities related to curriculum/training program development, development and adaptation of teaching/training materials, preparation and teaching of courses or training.
- Technical staff (including technicians and associate professionals) carries out technical tasks such as book-keeping, accountancy, and in-house translation activities.
- Administrative staff (including office and customer service clerks) carries out administrative tasks such as secretarial duties. Students can work for the project and can be considered as administrative staff, provided that they have signed a work contract with a consortium beneficiary institution.

The Staff category to be applied will depend on the work to be performed in the project and not on the status or title of the individual. The grant for Staff costs is calculated by multiplying the unit cost (corresponding to the applicable category of country and staff) by the total number of days spent on the implementation of the project per staff member. One working day is defined according to the applicable national legislation. In principle, declared working days per individual should not exceed 20 days per month or 240 days per year.

Eligible travel costs and costs of stay cover the costs of travel and subsistence allowances of staff and students participating in activities directly related to the achievement of the project. Travels are intended for the following activities:

1. teaching/training assignments,
2. training and retraining purposes,
3. updating program and courses,
4. practical placements in companies, industries, and institutions

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5. Project management-related meetings,
6. Workshops and visits for result dissemination purposes.

The existence of a formal contractual relationship between the employee and the beneficiary institutions is required to participate in any travel. The unit costs to be applied are calculated taking into account the following variables: the travel distance (for travel costs) and the duration in days (for costs of stay).

<b>Distance Band (in km)</b>	<b>Amount in EUR per return trip</b>
400-600	196
601-800	209
801-1200	221
1201-1600	230
1601-2000	295
2001-2500	343
2501-3500	433
3501-4500	527
4501-6000	637
6001-7500	720
7501-10000	961
10001-Max	1.101

Beneficiaries do not need to justify the expenditures. For activities funded with unit costs, the supporting documents will have to demonstrate that the volume and/or the nature of the activities implemented, justify the number of unit costs charged to the grant. For any financial evaluation and/or audit, beneficiaries will have to be able to justify/prove the following elements:

- The journeys took place.
- The journeys are connected to specific and identifiable project-related activities.

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<b>Country</b>	<b>Accommodation - Amount in EUR per night</b>	<b>Subsistence - Daily Rate in EUR</b>
<b>Albania</b>	101	50
<b>Kosovo</b>	92	60
<b>North Macedonia</b>	95	50
<b>Slovenia</b>	113	84

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## 6. Risk Management

Risk management is a continuous process throughout the lifetime of a project and addresses the planning of risk management, identification, analysis, monitoring and control. Risk assessment will be updated throughout the project lifecycle as unexpected sources of risk can be identified at any time. It is the objective of the risk management plan to decrease the probability and impact of events adverse to the project. In contrast, any event that could have a positive impact should be exploited. Transparency and good communication between the Steering Committee (SC), Work Package (WP) leaders and the project members are key to avoiding problems and conflicts before they arise. A good communication strategy will favour cohesion among the participants while giving a positive image of the project to the outside. It is the responsibility of all partners to communicate with the Project Manager about the status and effectiveness of each risk and mitigation plan to update the risk management plan and assess the relevance of the tools. Risk exposure will be continuously reevaluated and modified accordingly.

Some of the major perceived risks related to the project work plan are listed in the LFM and the table below, including a classification of their probability and a description of contingency measures envisaged by the consortium.

Risk	Reasons	Level of risk	Risk management strategy
<p><b>Low teacher/tutor/staff commitment</b></p>	<p>Limited opportunities for professional growth and advancement can lead to stagnation and disengagement. Excessive workloads and unrealistic expectations can cause burnout and reduce job satisfaction.</p>	<p>Low</p>	<p>The project proposal has been already discussed with the concerned staff and approved. Mitigation: increase internal communication, and provide incentives.</p>

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	Lack of administrative support, resources, and materials can hinder teachers' ability to perform their duties effectively.		
<b>Low stakeholders' commitment</b>	Stakeholders might not fully understand the importance of their involvement in the educational process or the specific needs of the institution. Stakeholders may feel that their involvement won't make a significant impact or that their input is not valued or considered in decision-making processes.	Low/Medium	depending on the nature of the involvement of universities with external supportive teams such as trainers. Mitigation: increase communication, enlarge networks of potential interested audience.
<b>Low interest by students</b>	Students are often looking for opportunities, as well as employment opportunities.	Low	Students are often looking for opportunities, as well as employment opportunities. Mitigation: increase communication, organize workshops with former interns, organize events for QA inclusionary policies.
<b>Low level of coordination with respect to QA processes</b>	Lack of experience in QA provision among some participating universities.	Low/Medium	depending on the nature of supervision from the university with QA offices towards the rest of

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			<p>participating universities.</p> <p>Mitigation: Study visits will reinforce the balance in order to compensate for the lack of experience in QA provision.</p>
<p><b>Low number of overall staff and students in trainings</b></p>	<p>Due to either/both internal or external factors, delays in project activities and/or project implementation may occur.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>depending on how much the staff and students would be willing to be involved in trainings</p> <p>Mitigation: each partner will be represented by different academic staff and students. Info sessions may be organized at each HEI to show to importance of these activities</p>
<p><b>Low level of involvement of stakeholders</b></p>	<p>There is a possibility that some of the stakeholders, may not be willing to take part in planned activities</p>	<p>Low</p>	<p>Ongoing communication with all stakeholders and focusing all promotion activities on target groups of the project.</p> <p>Already established cooperative links of partnering HEIs will be used to remedy this problem</p>
<p><b>Conflict among team members</b></p>	<p>During the implementation of the project, there is a possibility of conflicting activities</p>	<p>Low</p>	<p>Planning of project activities and scheduling during the preparation phase. Constant</p>

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	among project team members and overlapping of dependent activities.		communication among project coordinators of each team will ensure that any arising conflicts are resolved immediately.
<b>External conditions</b>	During the implementation of the project, there will be possibilities that external conditions of economic, political or legal nature may impede or endanger the implementation of project activities	Low	At least two different scenarios for implementing the project activities will be prepared during the Preparation Phase to smooth out any external effects that might occur throughout the project period.
<b>Delays in project implementation</b>	Due to either/both internal or external factors, delays in project activities and/or project implementation may occur.	Medium	Meticulous planning of project activities and scheduling during the preparation phase. Use deadlines for the project, as well as constant communication with partners, to ensure deadlines are met and delays do not occur. During the implementation of the project, risk assessment will be made at quarterly intervals, to ensure that objectives are met and risk management strategies are in action. If required,

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		project partners may change or adapt risk strategies to respond to current and expectant conditions.
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The project coordinator, together with work package leaders, is responsible to monitor and manage the risk management. In the QA-SURE project, risk management is performed as part of Work Package 1 – Management and it is under the responsibility of Western Balkans University (WBU).

A PERT (Program Evaluation and Review Technique) diagram is a project management tool used to schedule, organize, and coordinate tasks within a project. It is particularly useful for analyzing the time required to complete each task and identifying the minimum time needed to complete the total project. The simplified PERT diagram shows the sequence and dependencies of project tasks and highlights critical milestones and ongoing activities. The actual diagram might be more complex, but this gives a clear overview.

The project starts in the first month (M1) and the T1.1 Kick-off Meeting (M3):

T1.2 (Establishing project managerial structures and communication) starts immediately and runs until M6.

T1.3, T1.5, T1.8, T6.3, T6.4, T7.2, and T7.3 are ongoing tasks throughout the project duration (M1-M24).

T2.1 (In-depth analysis) and T2.2 (Benchmarking system) run until M3.

T2.3 (Workshop) happens at M3.

T6.1 (QA Board) and T6.2 (QA Plan) start early in the project.

T1.4 is completed by M6.

T4.4 (Empower QA offices) starts at M6.

T3.1-T3.6 include establishing QA offices, developing strategies, and purchasing equipment.

T4.1 (Study visits) and T4.4 continue through M5, M8, M9, and M12.

T1.6 (Interim Report Preparation) occurs at M12.

T1.7 (Annual meetings) occur at M3, M12, M18, M24.

T4.2 and T4.3 (QA activities involving students and staff) happen at M9, M13.

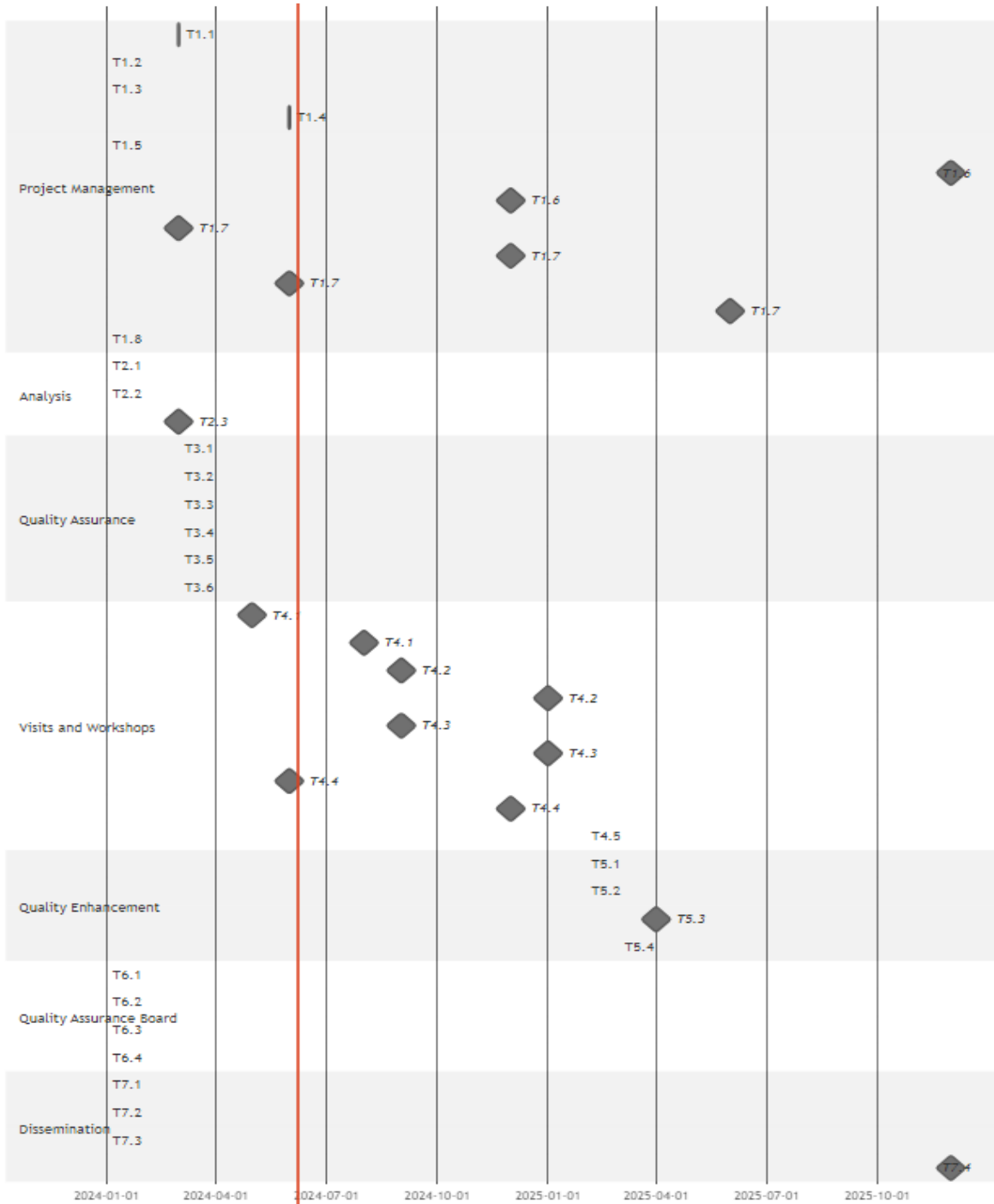
T4.5 (Round table) at M14-M15.

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T5.1-T5.4 (Aligning QA with ESG, switching to QA enhancement, fostering collaboration) occur M15-M20.

T7.4 (Final conference and dissemination) at M23-M24.



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