

FINAL QUALITY REPORT¹

Project title	Development of master curricula for natural disasters risk management in Western Balkan countries
Project acronym	NatRisk
Project reference number	573806-EPP-1-2016-1-RS-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP
Coordinator	University of Nis
Project start date	October 15, 2016
Project duration	36 months

Reporting date	31.03.20
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Project number: 573806-EPP-1-2016-1-RS-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP

"This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein"

¹ This form concerns quality issues of NatRisk project. The report is based on internal project quality evaluation forms. It should be prepared by QAC and send on e-mail address: natriskuni@gmail.com till October 10th.

1. Introduction

This report serves as the Final Quality Report for the NatRisk Project. It should be regarded as an additional deliverable to Work Package 5 and has been necessitated by the short 6 month extension awarded to the project to complete activities. The report will comment on three main aspects: a progress report on outstanding tasks since the last report of the QAC (addressed to the Management Committee in September 2019); an overall discussion on the quality of the project, as well as a qualitative evaluation of the project.

2. Progress report on outstanding tasks/deliverables

At the final meeting in Belgrade in September 2019 there were a few outstanding tasks noted by the QAC report to the Management Committee. Each of these will now be discussed in turn alongside a report on Progress.

- **Realise the implementation of the Masters Curricula where these are still outstanding**

Delays were noted to the accreditation of the programmes prior to Belgrade meeting, however in September it was reported that all programmes had been accredited and implementation would shortly begin.

- **Ensure that SMS mobilities are realised**

Great efforts were made by both the consortium leaders and the WP leaders to try to overcome some of the obstacles to the realisation of mobilities. These efforts had led to better momentum with the realisation of these mobilities. Overall 116 (of the 125 planned) staff mobilities have been realised and 30 (of the 41 planned) student mobilities by the end of the project; representing a 93% and 73% completion rate respectively.

- **Update the website according to the review comments of the external quality audit**

Work was undertaken immediately following the Belgrade meeting (September 2019) on the both the internal website and the management portal to ensure that it was updated. This included the addition of project document, project events and outcomes to increase the visibility of the project. Although mostly completed, these activities will continue to the end of the project to ensure that all project information is available via the project website and project portal.

- **Quality control activities should be extended as per the activities identified above**

A number of activities were suggested to extend the quality reporting of the project to mid-April 2020. Rather than undertaking an additional Annex Q (WP reporting) this report is intended to replace this to report on specific outstanding activities. Section 4 details the evaluation undertaken to add to the previous Annex T self-evaluation. All outstanding Annex S (Deliverable checklists have been completed and uploaded to the management portal. There was the idea to seek testimonials from students who have completed the Master's curricula in

the future once they have graduated. Where possible self-evaluation reports of Masters programmes have been collected and 11 have been completed to date. It has not yet been possible to collect all reports as due to the delays in accreditation some programmes are only now running the second semester for the first time (UNI, UPKM, KPU) and UNID is only undertaking the initial run of their first semester.

3. Overall quality of the project

Overall the quality of the project has been high and project partners have been dedicated to the successful realisation of the Masters Programmes. The project has not been without its challenges, however with support from the coordinating team from the University of Nis, these difficulties have been overcome. This section will provide a brief quality overview of each of the WPs.

WP1: Analysis of natural disasters needed to be managed in Western Balkan region

The three deliverables associated with WP were completed and the WP finalised according to schedule in April 2017. The WP encountered a couple of difficulties. The lack of inter-comparability of the databases and approaches to crisis management in the different countries necessitated individual country reports accompanied by a comparison document. Secondly, understanding the specific arrangements and details of Masters curricula is more complex than was anticipated. The WP leader adopted the EU Bologna standards for the development of new Master Curricula in WB countries to ensure some consistency. Both of these difficulties were overcome due to the flexibility of the WP leaders and additional effort in working developing approaches to find consistency and led to the successful and timely completion of the work package. This provided a good grounding for the initiation of the development of the Masters' Curricula.

WP2: Development of master curricula

The development of Master Curricula were undertaken on time as per the project requirements by each of the WB countries, with steering and input from the EU partners. The aims, specific competences and learning outcomes, alongside teachers' competencies were produced and discussed at project meetings. The resulting course syllabi and programmes were subsequently finalised and published online. This WP involved each of the EU partners hosting WB in training activities which were undertaken between May and October 2017. These events were evaluated to be very successful with benefits obtained from both sides. Activity WP2.5 which involved the tendering and purchase of laboratory equipment and software was delayed in the case of one of the WB partners due to a change in legal status. However, the legal and administrative issues were eventually resolved and the laboratories equipped albeit a few months behind schedule. The signing of internships with external companies is a key success of this WP and WB project partners should be commended for securing these opportunities. Of great benefit to the project, this WP has delivered two additional reports above the planned deliverables "Best practice in teaching innovative teaching methods" and "Report on training of teaching staff for innovative teaching methods". All activities within the work package were successfully completed.

WP3: Development of trainings for citizens and public sector

WP3 delivered a survey (over 300 responses per WB country) and associated analysis report concerning the awareness of natural disasters of both citizens and those working in the public sector. This provided detailed information, not only for the development of the Masters' curricula, but also for the training courses run in the WB. NATRISK has run successful (and highly evaluated) training courses for many hundreds of citizens and public sector staff across the WB. The training materials produced for these courses has been collated and printed as an accompanying handbook *A Handbook for Civil Sector Training about Natural Disasters for Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo*. Parallel to the training visits (WP2), study visits (concerning disaster risk content) were successfully held by each EU partner between May and October 2017, these were equally well received as the training visits. All activities and deliverables were completed from WP3.

WP4: Implementation of developed master curricula and trainings

WP4 suffered some significant challenges and delays due to the complexity of the accreditation process in many WB countries; involving many factors which were out of the control of the project. Obviously, delays in accreditation had a knock-on impact on the possibility to implement the Masters curricula. These delays ultimately led to a no-cost extension to the NATRISK project. The WP developed action plans to help those partners who were behind with implementation to catch up. All partners had successfully accredited programmes by September 2019, allowing all programmes to be implemented by the end of NATRISK. So although there was a delay in completion of this WP, all activities have now been realised. **Six new master curricula** (3 in RS – KPU, UNI (Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture), UNID, 2 in BA – UBL, UNSA and 1 in XK - UPKM) and **one specialist professional study programme** (1 in XK - TCASU) in the field of natural disasters risk management are **accredited** by the responsible accreditation bodies in WB countries, according to the Bologna requirements and ECTS credit scoring. Also, **one master curriculum** at UNI (Faculty of Occupational Safety) is **modernized**. In total **124 master students** were enrolled (University of Nis (UNI) – Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture – **16**, University of Nis (UNI) – Faculty of Occupational Safety – **22**, University of Sarajevo (UNSA), Center for Interdisciplinary Studies – **23**, University of Banja Luka (UBL), Faculty of Security Science – **15**, University of Criminal Investigation and Police Studies (KPU) – **16**, University of Defence (UNID) – **10**, University of Pristina in Kosovska Mitrovica (UPKM), Faculty of Technical Sciences – **10**, Technical College of Applied Sciences Urosevac with temporary seat in Leposavic (TCASU) - **12**). Evaluations of the initial Masters' cohorts were very positive and learning from the initial sessions was being fed back into the next running of the programme.

WP5: Quality assurance and monitoring

WP5 developed a Quality Control Plan that was adopted by the Quality Assurance Committee (which met at each project meeting) on the behalf of the project. This developed the process for the quality monitoring and reporting for the project. Quality reporting was successfully undertaken by all partners on an annual basis (Annex R) and by biannually by work package (Annex Q). Additionally, self-evaluation questionnaires were completed on an annual basis to undertake an internal quality review. All of these monitoring activities assisted in maintaining the high quality of the project and ensuring that all work packages remained on-track, through

the early identification of issues. The QAC provided a biannual report to the Project Management Committee detailing progress and ongoing challenges. Additionally, working with work package leaders, the QAC have produced a checklist for each of the deliverables to provide some quality assurance. The QAC produced a register of documents for ease of collation and recording. All of these reporting documents (Annexes) have been uploaded to the project management portal. Overall, the project was well received by partners (see internal quality reporting and qualitative evaluation provided as part of this report) and externally. Inter-project coaching activities were successfully undertaken in March 2018 and reported on. WP5 also included external evaluation in terms of an External Quality Audits (summer 2018 and summer 2019) and Financial audit (successfully completed in Summer 2019). In general, there was high external regard for the NATRISK project and its activities with praise being offered about its timeliness and potential real-world impact. These quality audits made some key recommendations which were responded to by the project team and where appropriate suggestions adopted. As the whole project extended by 6 months, it was necessary to also extend WP5 and the opportunity to add additional tasks and gain additional feedback. These activities were completed by April 2020.

WP6: Dissemination

WP6 was critical for the external promotion and dissemination of the project and its activities. The approach was steered by the Dissemination Plan and strategy which was created and adopted in the early stages of NATRISK. A project website was an early product of the WP, along with the creation of additional leaflets (in English and Serbian). This WP suffered some challenges including the complexity and time consuming tasks of managing multiple platforms and gathering the information needed. Ensuring that all partners were informing the dissemination team about key activities and events and that there was relevant information being passed on within the consortium was at times difficult. This was tackled with support of the Project Coordinators who added this as a standing item at all Project meetings and regularly reminded Partners of their obligations in this regard. In particular, many efforts were made in September 2019 to ensure that the website was updated with all of the relevant information. This WP also dealt with student promotions and additional documents were provided to assist activities to identify and promote the new courses to students. This is a critical project activity for the realisation of curricula implementation. All tasks within the WP were completed according to the revised timeframe of the project.

WP7: Exploitation

This WP created both an Academic and Sustainability Plan which have guided activities throughout the project. WP7 also had two of the most challenging tasks of the NATRISK project. The accreditation process for each of the Master's curricula were much more complex and lengthy than had originally been anticipated. This was often difficult as progress in this activity was beyond the control of the project and WP leaders and participants. However, accreditation was finally completed for the final outstanding programme in September 2019. Additionally, the project may be able to provide some lessons about how to more effectively navigate these processes in the future and commendation should go to the WP leader, the Coordinator and all those partners who worked hard to navigate this difficult process.

The second challenging task for WP7 was the realisation of the staff and student mobilities. NATRISK had an ambitious target of achieving 125 staff and 41 student mobilities over its lifetime. The project got off to a slow start with partners taking some time to put the necessary inter-institutional agreements in place, however with strong encouragement and support from the WP leader and Coordinator at project meetings, the necessary documentation was put in place to allow the mobilities to occur. A range of challenges with the realisation of mobilities were reported, including: difficulties for staff and students to time mobilities, having students of relevant disciplines available to undertake the mobilities and the taxation of the funds to realise the mobilities in the WB region. The latter was a difficult issue as it reduced the level of funding available for individuals and impacted the financial viability for some to travel to EU partners. The issue was raised with the relevant national ministries, but a solution could not be found. This may have impacted not only on the number of mobilities realised, but also might have excluded the participation of some individuals who were unable to undertake the mobilities with the reduced funds being received. Overall, 93% (or 116) of staff and 73% (or 30) student mobilities were realised which is of credit to all project partners and participants. From a quality perspective, the project adopted a clear application and selection process (in line with EU guidelines). Additionally, it was pleasing to note that these efforts have been worthwhile with very positive evaluations of experiences reported by both staff and students in WP7.3 deliverable reports.

WP8: Project management

The coordinating partner, the University of Nis have shown exceptionally strong leadership throughout the lifetime of the project. WP8 developed and delivered project management tools (e.g. the management portal) and guidance (e.g. reporting guidance, contingency Plan). Quarterly reporting was required by all partners to document inter-meeting progress and detail financial contributions utilised. Tasks and expectations were clearly communicated to all project partners and the Coordinator was available to project support to partners when needed. The strong leadership shown and the activities of WP8 throughout the project were fundamental to the high quality of the project, the timeliness of the project (even when difficulties were experienced) and to ensuring the efficient delivery of outputs.

4. Qualitative Evaluation

The 6 month extension to the project afforded the possibility to undertake additional feedback activities as part of WP5. A qualitative evaluation was undertaken to gather some more perspectives on the benefits and limitations of the project and (personal and professional) experiences of being involved. Some open questions were provided in an online survey tool to all those who had been involved in the project (both project partners and those who participated in SMS activities) between 26 February and 06 March 2020.

As well as asking respondents about if they were EU or WB Partners, the survey asked the following open questions:

- What were the positives (if any) of the NatRisk project?
- What were the negatives (if any) of the NatRisk project?
- If you were directly involved in the creation and/or delivery of one of the Master's Programmes, in your opinion, what benefits are these programmes having?
- For those involved in undertaking / hosting an SMS mobility as part of the NatRisk Project, please write a couple of sentences about your experience.
- Have any additional collaborations or new projects occurred because of your involvement in the NatRisk Project?
- Please write a couple of sentences describing the key benefits you have gained (both personally and/or professionally) from participating in the NatRisk project.

The following section provides details of the feedback provided. The types of responses are provided in the description section along with some indicative quotations from participants in the quotation section of the table.

A total of 47 completed questionnaires were returned, either fully completed or with *some* questions answered. Of these, 10 were EU partners and 36 were WB partners (one was left unanswered).

The **n** = (the top right hand corner of the table for each question) refers to the specific number of responses to that particular question. Those that were left blank, N/A or left unanswered have not been included in the response rates for each question.

What were the positives (if any) of the NatRisk project?	n = 47
Description	
<p>It was very encouraging to see that all respondents were able to provide positive responses, both on a personal and professional level. These included: obtaining and exchanging new knowledge; meeting, working with and learning from new colleagues. Excellent organisation was mentioned several times as was the creation of the Master's Curriculum in organisations. It was also clear that NATRISK had provided participants with new opportunities.</p>	
Some specific answers	
<p>"Excellent collaboration across all borders and nationalities to achieve a common goal"</p> <p>"I saw some new culture, and met some new people"</p> <p>"Great new opportunities"</p> <p>"Exchange of experiences regarding the teaching methods and research methodologies"</p> <p>"Excellent organization and hospitality"</p> <p>"Exchange of experiences in the area of risk management"</p> <p>"For me personally, is the network that we made with partner institutions, both from EU and Western Balkans"</p> <p>"Excellent collaboration across all borders and nationalities to achieve a common goal. Fostering mutual understanding of different cultures and ways of working"</p> <p>"Great opportunity to see how partners from EU countries work and to apply acquired knowledge in home institution"</p>	

What were the negatives (if any) of the NatRisk project?	n = 13
Description	
<p>Although a majority of the respondents had no negatives responses, a small number of respondents (13) did provide negative responses. These were generally about the administration involved in the project and included the lengthy, onerous reporting procedure and lots of administrative tasks. Other comments received included: workshops not being relevant to all participants and not being aware of how people were selected for NatRisk project activities at certain organisations. Also, a concern about insufficient funds for equipment was mentioned.</p>	
Some specific answers	
<p>“There weren't any negatives”</p> <p>“Small funds for the equipment”</p> <p>“The reporting requirements are quite onerous at times”</p> <p>“The financial reporting documentation was time consuming”</p> <p>“Sometimes heavy bureaucracy to fulfil EU regulations”</p> <p>“A little time to learn about native content. Also, there is no opportunity to give a lecture as a visiting teacher.”</p> <p>“All team members should have been involved in all Working packages”</p> <p>“A lot of unnecessary paperwork”</p>	

<p>If you were directly involved in the creation and/or delivery of one of the Master's Programmes, in your opinion, what benefits are these programmes having?</p>	<p>n = 31</p>
<p>Description</p>	
<p>Again it was encouraging to see so many benefits identified by respondents from the 31 respondents that this question applied to. Respondents were positive about their experiences and these include the exchange of knowledge and experience among colleagues of different countries and institutions, the opportunity to develop new teaching methods and exchange knowledge with students and provide them with new laboratory equipment.</p>	
<p>Some specific answers</p>	
<p>“Training of teachers and students (from different disciplines) for the planning of protection against natural risks”</p> <p>“Implementing of best practices”</p> <p>“Main benefits are new skills, which students can obtain”</p> <p>“Better practical education, more EU experienced knowledge”</p> <p>“.....it opens up the great possibilities for many scholars and professionals to be involved and to cooperate during the years that are about to come”</p> <p>“New professionals will use acquired skills to spread first of all the awareness on dangers that natural risks disasters impose, and will actively participate in mitigating, decision making and other activities related to natural disaster risks management”</p> <p>“When you are out of our country a lot of opportunities are coming to you”</p> <p>“Benefits of these programmes are in first line education master students with wide range of specific competencies for managing Natural disasters situations”</p> <p>“A new program was created enabling students to have a new master which is very important for the mitigation of natural disasters”</p>	

<p>For those involved in undertaking / hosting an SMS mobility as part of the NatRisk Project, please write a couple of sentences about your experience.</p>	<p>n = 28</p>
<p>Description</p>	
<p>This question was not answered by all respondents as it did not apply to them. From the responses received they were all of a positive nature and again highlighted the new opportunities and experiences undertaken. Observing and acquiring new teaching methods and planning future projects were also mentioned.</p>	
<p>Some specific answers</p>	
<p>“Transferring new knowledge, planning future projects, sharing ideas, meeting new people and places”</p> <p>“.....very positive experiences of students and teaching staff regarding SMS mobility”</p> <p>“It was great to have visitors, they brought new ideas and experiences”</p> <p>“I met new great people, exchange experiences and knowledge, got to know how other Universities work/ on project(s) but also in other spheres”</p> <p>“I improved my foreign language skills and learned from good practices abroad”</p> <p>“Very well organized and informative”</p> <p>“It was a great opportunity to participate in the education process of EU partner and to see how their system operates. Knowledge acquired is implemented in practice at home institution”</p> <p>“It was very interesting experience. I have learned a lot of about different universities, their functioning and their organization. Of course I have been involved in some kind of preparations of articles and lectures abroad”</p> <p>“As a host for professors and students from different EU and WB universities, I can say it was my pleasure to host and meet all of them”</p>	

Have any additional collaborations or new projects occurred because of your involvement in the NatRisk Project?	n = 26
Description	
<p>This question tried to establish whether collaborating on NATRISK has nurtured new and lasting working relationships. A number of new initiatives, proposals and projects were identified, with some Erasmus+ and EU funded projects successfully awarded.</p>	
Some specific answers	
<p>“New Erasmus+ project applied for and granted”</p> <p>“New projects are under preparation”</p> <p>“New project with some partners we had already in NatRisk”</p> <p>“Expertise, IT training”</p> <p>“An EU funded project working with a partner from the NatRisk project”</p> <p>“Experience gained working on this project helped work in other similar projects”</p> <p>“Further Erasmus+ project applied for in 2020”</p> <p>“Applications for two other smaller projects written and submitted”</p>	

<p>Please write a couple of sentences describing the key benefits you have gained (both personally and/or professionally) from participating in the NatRisk project.</p>	<p>n = 44</p>
<p>Description</p>	
<p>A summary of benefits from participating in NATRISK was sought from respondents, both from a personal and/or professional capacity. From the 44 responses received, we can see the many new experiences achieved, new countries visited, NATRISK participants developing their knowledge of practices and meeting new people were all mentioned.</p>	
<p>Some specific answers</p>	
<p>“Gaining knowledge of masters provision in other organisations/countries”</p> <p>“New skills New friends”</p> <p>“New knowledge, new interesting friends, experts, a lot of experience regarding my personal occupation”</p> <p>“Traveling and getting to know new places”</p> <p>“Better knowledge on how to work on EU projects”</p> <p>“Improving teaching”</p> <p>“Insight into risk management challenges in different western European countries”</p> <p>“Raising awareness of the importance of planning and protection against natural disasters”</p> <p>“The multi-disciplinarity required to address the issue of protection against natural disasters”</p> <p>“I received many new contacts in Western Balkan countries and had the chance to be involved in several follow-up project proposals”</p>	