Management and Quality Assurance guidelines

DOMANI

www.domaniproject.eu

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D1.1. Project Management Guidelines

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
AB	Advisory Board
CA	Consortium Agreement
DoA	Description of the Action
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
F&T Portal	Funding and Tenders Portal
GA	Grant Agreement
HE	Horizon Europe
PI	Principal Investigator
PC	Project Coordinator
PM	Person-Month
PMG	Project Management Guidelines
PO	Project Officer
SC	Steering Committee
WP	Work Package
WPL	Work Package Leader
CC	Chief Coordinator
WC	Vice-coordinator
QA	Quality Assurance

1. Introduction

This Project Management Guideline is intended to support the achievement of project objectives, the effective management of partner progress and the timely delivery of project results. It is aimed to support partners in the effective and efficient administration, procedural and financial management of the Project. It focuses mainly on project implementation procedures, structures and coordination and sets out key responsibilities.

The **objectives** of this Project Management Handbook are as follows:

- To define the procedures and standards to be used in the Project
- To define key roles and responsibilities
- To demonstrate how the Project will be carried out, measured, monitored, accounted for and safeguarded during the Project

The general principles for the execution of the Project are defined in the Grant Agreement GAP-101179859 (GA), including the Description of the action (DoA) – Annex 1 to the GA, and the Consortium Agreement (CA) concluded by the consortium.

The Project Management Guidelines does not replace any of these agreements, nor does it replace any of the EU guidelines for project implementation and documentation, as there are the Annotated Model Grant Agreement (AMGA) and the online manual.

2. Project Overview

The project's general objective is to develop Micro-credentials Ecosystems in Ukraine and Mongolia for Competitive and Resilient Green Economies.

The specific objectives of the **DOMANI** project are:

1. To develop ecosystems for microcredentials provision at 4 PC HEIs, including the organizational, educational policy learning, ICT aspects, student mentorship and engagement with labor market actors, to ensure uninterrupted access of students and Lifelong Learners to the competences they require, to ensure flexibility of learning pathways, and to support challenge-based education
2. To develop regulatory proposals for microcedentials provision in MN and UA based on the principles and best practices of the European Educational Area, and accounting for the experiences of DOMANI.
3. To develop new and upgrade existing microcedential courses as well as challenge-based modules for students and LLLearners covering DOMANI cross-cutting themes addressing green transformation in PCs as well as war resilience and post-war recovery in UA.
4. To develop capacity for academic mobility, shared experimental facilities and joint curriculum development and research by PIs & beyond.
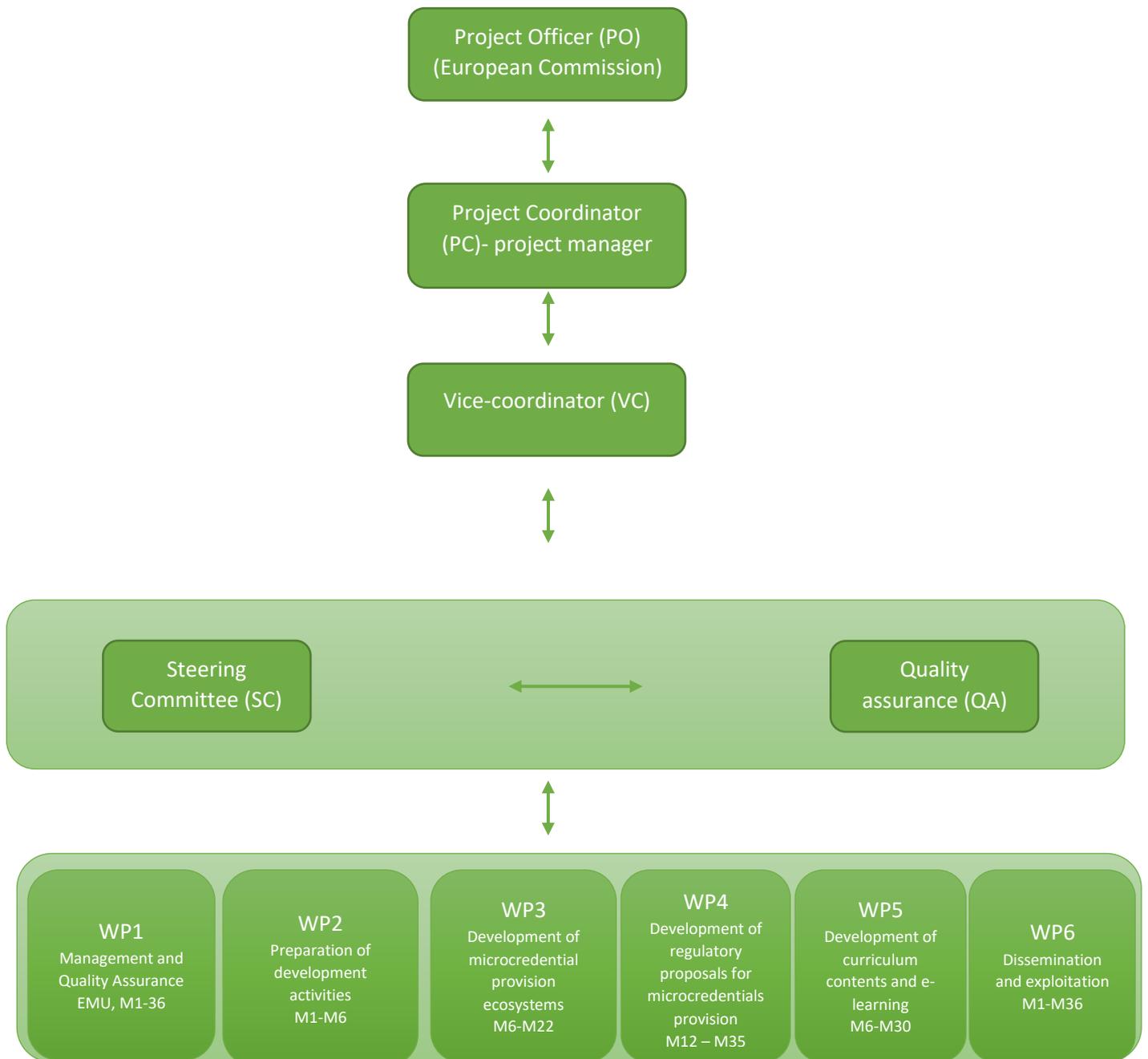
The Project is divided into 6 individual but mutual connected work packages (WPs). Each of them contains a set of structural tasks and deliverables. Along the project life cycle there are 6 main milestones and 15 deliverables.

3.   Project Governance Structure

Governance Structure

The Governance Structure consists of several governance bodies:

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        ┌──────────────────────────────┐
        │   Project Officer (PO)       │
        │   (European Commission)      │
        └──────────────────────────────┘
                      ↕
        ┌──────────────────────────────┐
        │   Project Coordinator        │
        │   (PC)- project manager      │
        └──────────────────────────────┘
                      ↕
        ┌──────────────────────────────┐
        │   Vice-coordinator (VC)      │
        └──────────────────────────────┘
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Steering Committee (SC)	←→	Quality assurance (QA)

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| WP1 Management and Quality Assurance EMU, M1-36	WP2 Preparation of development activities M1-M6	WP3 Development of microcredential provision ecosystems M6-M22	WP4 Development of regulatory proposals for microcredentials provision M12 – M35	WP5 Development of curriculum contents and e-learning M6-M30	WP6 Dissemination and exploitation M1-M36

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In addition to the points below, further details of the duties, responsibilities, and meetings schedule are described in the Grant Agreement and Consortium Agreement (both available at project´s Microsoft Teams and sent by emails).

Inter-relation of the work packages

The Project is composed of two groups of WPs. The first one runs horizontally through the duration of the Project and deals with administration (WP1), dissemination activities (WP 6). The second group is developed in stages. It deals with the project outputs, and the deliverables of each WP support the development of the next one (WP2, WP3, WP4, and WP5).
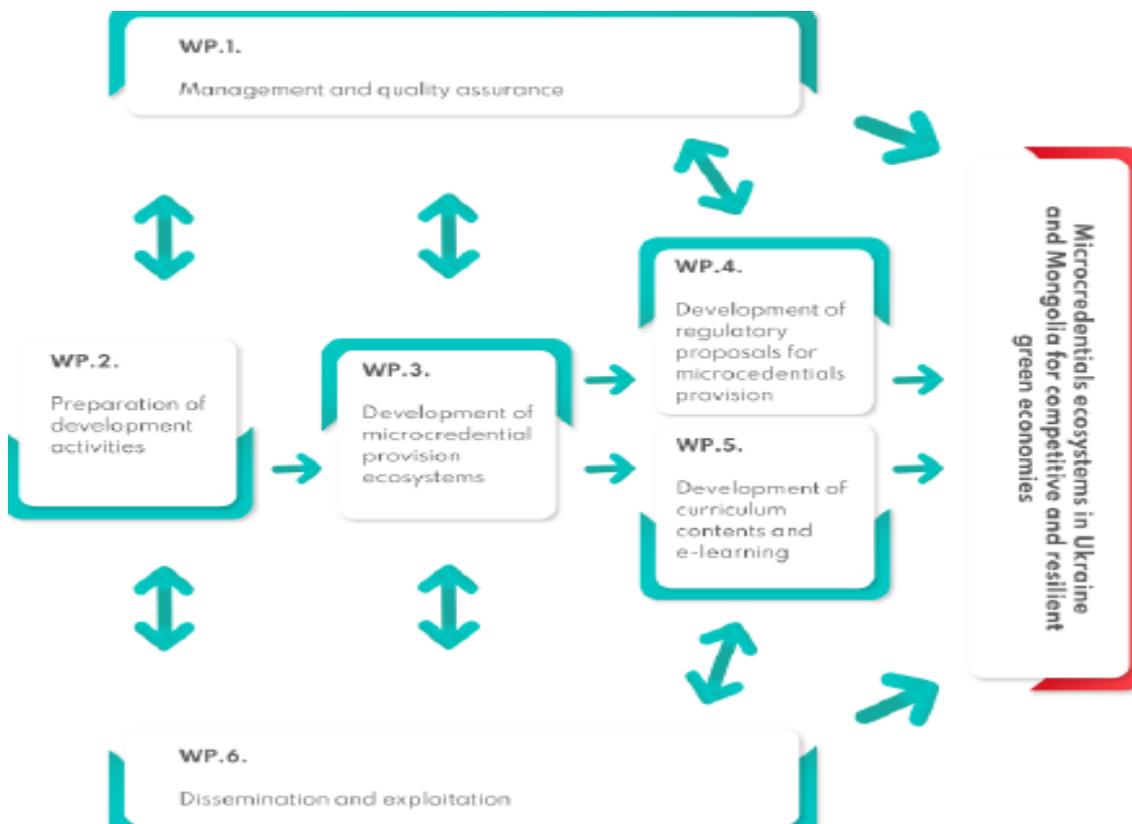
The project **Pert Chart** provides a clear division of WPs, taks and deliverables, together with their timing and rensponsibilities. The Project Coordinator keeps the Pert Chart updated in the project´s Microsoft Teams.

3.1 Project Officer

For each Project, there is a dedicated project officer (PO) at the **F&T Portal** who accompanies the consortium throughout the project implementation and oversees the scientific and technical progress of the Project. The project officer is the main contact for any matters regarding Grant Agreement and

reporting on project implementation. The Project Coordinator (PC) acts on behalf of the whole consortium with the PO throughout the Project. Our project officer is Giordana Bruno.

3.2 Coordinator/Project manager and vice-coordinator

The Coordinator is the legal entity acting as the intermediary between the Parties and the Granting Authority. In addition to its responsibilities as a Party, the Coordinator shall perform the tasks assigned to it as described in the Grant Agreement and Consortium Agreement.

The project's Chief Coordinator (CC) is Kristina Marran from the Estonian University of Life Sciences (EMU). She oversees the overall scientific development of the project. His primary responsibilities are to ensure that the project's principal goals are met and to verify the quality of all deliverables resulting from the Project.

The Vise-coordinator(VC) is Anton Shkraruba from the Estonian University of Life Sciences (EMU) contribute to the development and QA of curriculum contents related to biodiversity and sustainable planning; he will coordinate the pilots on challenge-based education, provide academic supervision to summer schools, and lead QA tasks.

The assigned Project manager is also Kristina Marran (EMU). She is overseeing the project lifecycle, monitoring deadlines, supporting the Consortium in administrative, financial, and legal issues, and communicating with the EC project officer.

In the event of major delays and/or problems with achieving the expected quality of outputs, the Coordinator and Vice-Coordinator will consult all the PIs, develop an action plan to mitigate the consequences, get it reviewed by the Steering Committee and approach EACEA for approval; any minor changes will be approved by the Steering Committee. Focal points in PCs will also oversee national organizational and reporting issues, and liaise with national Ministries of Education.

3.3 Steering Committee

The Steering Committee (SC) consists of one person of each Partner (hereinafter referred to as "SC Member"). Each SC Member is deemed to be duly authorised to deliberate, negotiate and decide on all matters listed in of this Consortium Agreement. The Coordinator chairs all meetings of the Steering committee, unless decided otherwise by the SC. The SC shall is free to act on its own initiative to formulate proposals and take decisions in accordance with the procedures set out herein.

The Steering Committee (SC) will comprise one member from each partner, and will monitor the progress of the project - both its process (barriers encountered, solutions available, financial developments, communication channels, quality control, etc) and outcomes (deliverables, engagements, results, etc.). The Coordinator, Vice-Coordinator and Steering Committee collect information about the project dissemination and exploitation (launching courses, CLP DO_learn deployment, timely submission of guidelines and regulation pieces); the implementation progress will be tracked by supporting documents, content reviews, dissemination, and mobility streams. Microsoft Planner is also for activity tracking

The SC and consortium will meet online or in-person three times a year (M2, M5, M9, M12, M16, M20,M24, M28, M35), and further meetings will be held in-between on as-needed basis, even monthly in periods of high activity.

3.4 Quality Assurance team

Quality Assurance Team (QA) comprises key representatives from consortium institutions who collectively ensure high standards in project outputs and compliance with quality objectives. This team is responsible for evaluating and monitoring project deliverables, including curricula, competency frameworks, and learning materials. The QA collaborates with an external quality assurance officer, who provides independent oversight by conducting mid-term and final evaluations.

Core tasks of the QA include:

- Peer-reviewing educational materials and curricula,
- Tracking project progress through a Quality Control Matrix (QCM),
- Addressing any delays or quality issues with corrective actions developed in collaboration with relevant work package leaders and the project Steering Committee.

The QAT is supported by the Estonian University of Life Sciences (EMU), which leads quality control activities, and external experts, who provide additional reviews for compliance with EU best practices.

QA Team:
1) Anton Shkaruba - Estonian University of Life Sciences(EMU)
2) Sergei Zapototskiy - Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (TSNUK)
3) Nadiia Cherkashyna - V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University (KKNU)
4) Oleh Shablii - Non-Government Organization "Ukrainian Joint Meteorological and Hydrological Society" (UMHS)
5) Namsrai OYUNCHIMEG National University of Mongolia (NUM)
6) Daginnas Batsukh - School of Agroecology and Business (SAEB)
7) Daniele La Rosa - University of Catania (UNICT)
8) Camile Fresto - Systems Innovation Center Kft. (CSI)

3.5 Work Package Leaders

Work Package Leaders will ensure that planned activities and objectives are met within the defined time periods in sufficient quality, supporting Task Leaders in reaching their specific tasks and sub-tasks. Progress towards main Milestones are closely monitored and reported on. WP leaders will prepare and present the outline and progress of their respective WPs at every meeting, which will be validated by the SC, and communicated to all partners. WP Leaders and Task Leaders will keep the Coordinator updated of all activities throughout the project, but all parties are co-responsible for ensuring that

actions and deliverables are implemented. The Coordinator will be responsible to ensure that the project runs according to the Consortium Agreement, Grant Agreement, and the expectations of the Call. In the event of major delays and/or problems with achieving the expected quality of outputs, the Coordinator and Vice-Coordinator will consult all the PIs, develop an action plan to mitigate the consequences, get it reviewed by the Steering Committee and approach EACEA for approval; any minor

changes will be approved by the Steering Committee. Focal points in PCs will also oversee national organizational and reporting issues, and liaise with national Ministries of Education.
WPL:
WP 1 led by EMU, UMHS (M1-M36)
WP 2 led by KKNU, co-led EMU (M1-M6)
WP 3 led by EMU, co-led TSNUK (M6-M22)
WP 4 led by CSI, co-led NAQA (M12-M35)
WP 5 led by TSNUK co-led UNICT (M6-M30)
WP 6 led by NUM, co-led CSI (M1-M36)

WP1 (Management and Quality Assurance) - WP coordinates the project's management, reporting, and quality assurance, including organizing consortium meetings and setting up quality assurance teams.

WP2 (Preparation of development activities) - focuses on preparatory tasks, such as conducting capacity surveys, developing terms of reference, and reviewing EU best practices for the project's baseline.

WP3 (Microc-degree provision ecosystem) - creating the ecosystem supporting micro-degree, mentorship, and ICT development.

WP4 (Policy and regulatory proposals) –involves creating regulatory proposals to support micro-degree and liaising with higher education authorities in partner countries.

WP5 (Curriculum development and E-Learning) - focuses on developing and accrediting curricula, challenge-based modules, and e-learning resources for micro-degree.

WP6 (Dissemination and sustainability) - dissemination activities, the DOMANI website, social media presence, and long-term sustainability strategies.

4.   Internal Communication

4.1 General communication

Based on the management and decision making framework of the project, the team aims to foster a culture of open communication and trust among all the partners. This will encourage honest and transparent communication, as well as a willingness to listen to and address concerns and feedback from people involved. Communication and cooperation among the partners have already been started during the preparation phase, in which there has been fluent communication through email, ZOOM

and face-to-face meetings or phone conversations. When the communication is transnational, the working language is English. During the project life cycle, the communication channels will be: Email and phone (Whatsapp) messages and calls among the contact persons of each organisation, Facebook group and an Microsoft TEAMs (also MS Planner) for project updates, document repository, storage of minutes, etc. The frequency of meetings, and the structure of the meetings has been established, but irregular virtual check-in meetings are also foreseen on as-needed basis. When the situation demands, the meetings can be bilateral (e.g. to cooperate on a learning material).

4.2 Meetings

The meetings ensure the continuous communication between partners, efficient monitoring of project activities and timely identification of risks and contingency plans. Online meetings are held in ZOOM or in Microsoft TEAMs.

4.1.1 Types and Schedules

There is a monhtly online Consortium meeting set up on fixed day and time in each month. This fixed monthly date can ba changed during the project according to the parners schedule (semester variables or other reasons).

We planning 4 consortsium meetings.

4.1.2 Annual Consortium Meeting

The annual consortium meeting is a formal meeting in a physical form hosted by one of the consortium members. Before each meeting there will be shared an agenda 3 weeks prior to the meeting (in draft format and allowing partners to make contributions). The host institution should provide travel and accommodation recommendations in advance. The minutes of the meeting will be issued within 2 weeks of each meeting and upload to SharePoint.

Together there are planned four consortium meetings during the whole project.

Meting	When	Where	Organizing Beneficiary
Kick – off meeting	26.01.25 – 1.02.2025	Tallinn, Tartu - Estonia	EMU
Consortium meeting	M12	Tallinn, Estonia	EMU, HARNO
Consortium meeting	M28	Italy, Catania	UNICT
Consortium meeting	M35	Mongolia	NUM, SAEB

4.1.3 Meeting Minutes

Keeping minutes for all project meetings is extremely important as they are a record of the decisions taken and the actions required by the partners in the project. Meeting minutes will be concise and

clear and will be prepared using the dedicated format, available in the collaborative platform. The template document for the meeting minutes is available in the project´s SharePoint.

4.2 MS Teams and Google Drive

The Consortium uses MS Teams and Google Drive as a main tool for the online collaboration, document repository, and communication. MS Teams provide well based environment for the online collaboration on the office documents such a Word document, Excel workbook, PowerPoint, OneNote, Planner and others.

The created team "DOMANI" in MS Teams and in Goolge Drive ERASMUS+ Domani 1.11-2024 – 31.10.2027 has been shared with the team members e-mail accounts. The online repository is managed by the Project Manager, who makes sure that all the project documents are uploaded and up to date. All partners can upload, download, and modify the files and documents they need.

4.3 E-mail communication

Besides the project's MS Teams platforms, the partners are invited to use other means of communication. MS Teams contain an updated list of all e-mail contacts of the persons involved in the project. This list should be considered as the valid repository of personal contact information and treated with adequate caution to preserve the privacy of all people involved.

An e-mail is a legitimate means of formal communication among the project's partners. It is considered valid for formal requests such as extraordinary meetings of consortium bodies or the issuing of official project-related documents.

It is advised that e-mail not be used as a means of engagement in complex or lengthy interactions to avoid overloading mailboxes and diluting potentially sensitive or relevant information. It is recommended to add the acronym "DOMANI" first in the subject of any e-mail associated with the project to identify the e-mails related to the project easily.

Example: [Subject: DOMANI_*the subject*]

4.4 Templates

Several templates are made available for the whole conosrtium to strengthen the uniformity of the outputs, including the presentations and reports. The templates shall be used by all partners during the whole project´s lifecycle for both internal and external communication. Templates are available in the MS Teams and sent by email to all Partners.

5.   Reporting

The purpose of the project reporting is for the EC to review the performance of the project, be assured of value for money and that the project is on track for successful delivery. It also helps the Coordinator to follow the technical progresses and use of resources, in order to ensure a smooth deployment of the project, and take corrective actions when necessary.

D1.1. Project Management Guidelines

5.1 Continuous Reporting

The continuous reporting starts with the beginning of the project. It is activated in the Funding and Tenders Portal (F&T Portal) via the SyGMA (System from Grant Management) and can and shall be updated on an ongoing basis. The information will automatically feed into the periodic reports.

The continuous reporting module is also permanently open to submit deliverables and to report on progress in achieving milestones. WPLs are responsible for the timely reporting of their WP deliverables. Also the quality of the deliverables is the responsibility of the WP. In order to guarantee the highest standard of excellence, a quality review process precedes the submission of the deliverable.

5.2 Internal Reporting

Interim monitoring reports are useful for identifying strengths and weaknesses, and for providing the responsible people with sufficient information to make the right decisions at the right time to improve the quality of the results. Together three (3) Interim reports are expected to be prepared during the project: 20.04.2025; 20.10.2025; 20.04.2026; 20.10.2026; 20.04.2027; 20.09.2027.

Interim reports will be used to collect information about the status of the project and the progress achieved by each single partner in the tasks/WPs of their responsibility, as well as the progress of the project as a whole. These reports shall include information on activities realised, results reached, usage of resources (financial report), issues (if any) arose during the period of reference and contingency plans suggested and/or agreed to solve the issues.

The interim reports template will follow a similar structure of the periodic report. The interim reports will collect the same information (in similar format) of the Periodic Report to facilitate the project coordinator, and the Steering Committee, the monitoring of project progress, and the integration of the information collected every twelve months to provide consolidated reports to the EC.

The interim reports will be also used to monitor the alignment of the usage of resources of each partner with respect to what planned in the DoA, and to provide information on any eventual adjustment needed.

Interim monitoring reports will be structured as follow:

- Budget utilization and expenditure tracking, financial report summary - 6 months period
- Progress overview - 6 months period, or often as needed
- Summary of activities completed during the reporting - 6 months period
- Status update on project milestones and deliverables - 6 months period
- Description of tasks carried out under each Work Package (WP) and their implementation
- Identified challenges or delays
- Risk mitigation measures implemented
- Any changes to project scope or schedule

Internal Interim Reports will be used to monitor both technical activities and budget expenditures. These reports will be elaborated for internal use in the consortium, not for the submission to the EC.

5.3 Periodic Reporting

The Coordinator must submit currently a periodic report about:

1) Deliverables
2) Milestones
3) Critical risks
4) Dissemination Activities
5) Communication activities
6) Events and training
7) Financial support to 3rd parties

A module is made available in the F&T Portal..

The Periodic Report will be created via the online system after the end of the reporting period of the project. The Project Coordinator will coordinate the work on the Report. Specifically:

- All partners will be requested to report on the work carried out during the reporting period
- Work Package Leaders provide report on the progress of their WP consisting of:
  o Progress towards WP objectives
  o Major achievements in the WP
  o Contribution of partners to the WP results
  o Report on results achieved in the individual WP tasks
  o Justification on deviations between the work expected under the DoA and work actually performed (if any).

The Periodic Report is used by the European Commission and external reviewers as the key document to review the project progress during the official Technical Review meeting that will be held after the end of the project first period.

5.3.2 Financial Report

The **Financial Report** consists of an individual financial statement with an explanation of the use of resources for each beneficiary for the concerned reporting period. The consortium members must declare all eligible costs, even if costs exceed the amounts indicated in the estimated budget.

Financial reporting must be submitted every six months as part of the regular reporting schedule. Additionally (if needed), an external financial audit is planned, with mid-term and final evaluations to ensure all expenses align with the project's budgetary guidelines. This process is managed by the coordinator, Estonian University of Life Sciences (EMU), in collaboration with the Quality Assurance Team.

6. External Communication and Dissemination

External communication is directed towards parties outside the consortium, media, stakeholders, European Commission and other target groups of the project. The external communication is mainly part of the WP6 Dissemination and Visibility for which beneficiary DU is responsible.

All dissemination activities and any infrastructure, equipment, vehicles, supplies or major result (including media relations, conferences, seminars, information material, such as brochures, leaflets, posters, presentations, etc., in electronic form, via traditional or social media) funded by the grant must acknowledge EU support and display the European flag and the following disclaimer (translated into local languages where appropriate):

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European flag and funding statement info: https://www.eacea.ec.europa.eu/about-eacea/visual-identity/visual-identity-programming-period-2021-2027/european-flag-emblem-and-multilingual-disclaimer_en

The emblem must remain distinct and separate and cannot be modified by adding other visual marks, brands or text. Apart from the emblem, no other visual identity or logo may be used to highlight the EU support.

The dissemination is further elaborated in the Dissemination and Visibility Plan (D6.1 of the project). You can find more information also in the Article 17 — Communication, Dissemination and Visibility of the GA.

7. Conflict resolution

As a general rule, Domani project consortium will aim at a consensus building and promoting in order to ensure the maximum cooperation within the consortium. However in the unlikely event that a conflict arises, the WPL shall immediately inform the PC to coordinate actions to best address the situation.

Where possible (conflicts related to technical and implementation issues that do not involve a change of the Description of the Action or a change of the budget or resource allocation), issues will be resolved in the regular monthly meetings. Decisions will normally be sought by reaching consensus.

Where the issue could not be resolved at the that level, then the matter will be reported to the Steering Committee, or to the granting authority if needed, with appropriate supporting evidence, which may include a full report or a presentation of the main issues of contention. Any further actions shall be governed by the Consortium Agreement.

8. Quality Control and Risk Management

The quality control and risk management are developed and described in the separate document the Quality Assurance (QA) and management guidelines (M6). The quality control ensures that the high quality results and outcomes are achieved. The risk management includes the measures and actions for preventing, mitigating and managing the potentials risks for the development of the project.

9. Useful Documents

Below you may find the main documents and links to help you find more information:

- **Grant Agreement** (Stored in the project's SharePoint)
- **Consortium Agreement** (Stored in the project's SharePoint)

10. Conclusion

The Project Management Guidelines provides the guidelines to ensure an effective management and implementation of the DOMANI project. The document plays an important role in the day to day operation of the whole Consortium to facilitate the monitoring of the project progress. These guidelines should be adopted by all project's partners in order to establish and share an operational methodology to reduce the project overhead and increase the efficiency of the work carried out.