ASSEMBLE

ASSOCIATION OF EUROPEAN MARINE BIOLOGICAL LABORATORIES EXPANDED

GENERAL DATA

Acronym: **ASSEMBLE Plus**

Project title: **Association of European Marine Biological Laboratories Expanded**

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Participants (names & institutions)	A. Stécy Jombert, UPMC Ilaria Nardello, EMBRC-EU ,

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Ethics	☐
Open Research Data Pilot (ORDP)	☐
Demonstrator	☐
Other	☐

Dissemination Level

Public	☒
Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)	☐

Document properties

Author(s)	A. S. Jombert I. Nardello
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Abstract

This deliverable describes a methodology helping the project participants to deal with potential problematic situations related to the research activities or the management of the project. Its purpose is to anticipate possible difficulties, which may occur, with the aim of ensuring a smooth and successful implementation for the project to achieve its objectives. Therefore, this document provides an approach to identify and evaluate the risk of the occurrence of adverse situations which can negatively affect the outcomes of the ASSEMBLE Plus project, and proposes a contingency plan to address the issues during the project.

The risk ownership is established through the role and responsibilities within the consortium. Besides, the foreseen risks are presented along with their corresponding mitigation measures.

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1. Introduction

This risk management plan intends to maximise the probability of success of the ASSEMBLE Plus project by identifying difficulties that the project could face and anticipating actions to prevent their occurrence or reduce their negative impact.

The ASSEMBLE Plus project brings together 23 beneficiaries and 6 third parties from 16 different countries. In order to decrease the risks inherent from the complexity of such a large consortium, a management structure and related procedures were defined to cover key aspects of the project operation and coordination.

In addition, intermediary reporting periods with 6-months intervals were also added to help detecting any deviation from what is planned. This facilitates anticipating and fixing problems before the crucial stage of reporting to the European Commission.

Risk management is an on-going process to be carried out throughout the project life for identifying, quantifying managing and monitoring threats. Here, it is divided up in five steps: Identification, Assessment, Response, Monitoring and Reporting.

This document is an instrument for the whole consortium. It provides a framework to help tackling potential issues arising during the project in a preventive, appropriate and effective manner by outlining how risk management activities will be performed. It reminds the organisation and the principles in place in the consortium, and lays out the responsibilities, strategy and procedures regarding the risk management in the ASSEMBLE Plus project. It helps avoiding threats in a timely manner and, as necessary, taking action by applying corrective measures to lessen negative impacts on the project. It also raises awareness about risk management to all participants involved in the ASSEMBLE Plus project, and provides them with a risk mitigation plan to help addressing problems.

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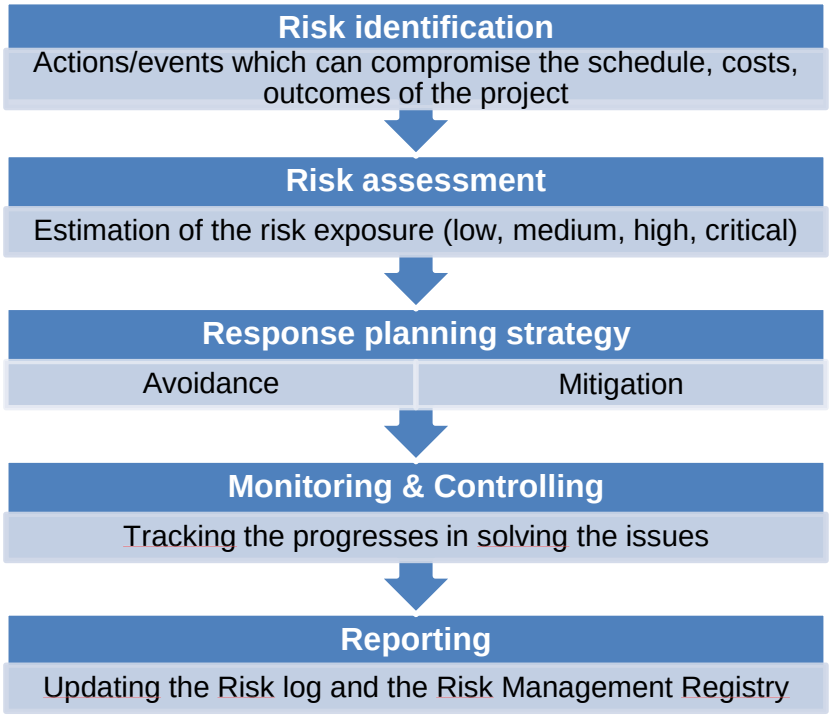
2. Risk Management process

The risk management process presented below is applicable for management, research activities or transnational access taking place within the ASSEMBLE Plus project, It describes how negative situations will be dealt with both at the project level and work package (WP) level.



2.1 Risk identification

During the project building phase, a number of possible threats and their mitigation measures were identified. Those were listed in the Risk Management Register to be available in the internal platform of ASSEMBLE Plus and to be updated by all partners at least at the end of each reporting period. The following issues shall be considered as tools and techniques for risk identification:

- Analysis of deliverable status
- Analysis of WP schedules and scopes

Regular communications between the WP leaders and the Management Team will ensure anticipating the risks throughout the project life. Besides, *it is the responsibility of each participant to inform the WP leader(s) and the Management Team about new potential risks*.

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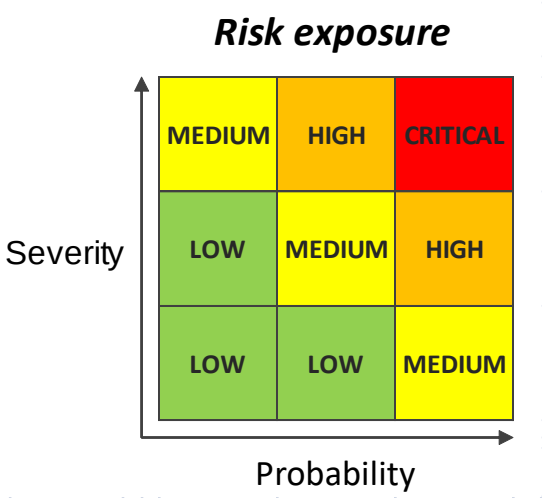
2.2 Risk assessment

For each identified risk, the Project Manager, in collaboration with the PIC, will estimate the probability for them to occur and the impact of these problems on the project (Low/Medium/High). The risk exposure matrix below will serve to estimate the risk level.



2.3 Response planning

The risk response process presents the strategy to tackle the threats. It is a contingency plan that assigns the roles and responsibilities, and provides a response framework for risk owners. The adequate mitigation measures, for each foreseen risk, are displayed in the Risk Management Register available in Table 1.

2.3.1 Risk ownership

The collaborative nature of this project requires well-defined responsibilities regarding the risks. Although the ASSEMBLE Plus Risk Management Plan is the responsibility of the Management Team (MT), all the partners are to run the project activities in a sensible manner.

Management Team

The MT is responsible for meeting the obligations and responsibilities towards the European Commission and for handling the organizational, legal and financial management of the project. The MT will endorse the risks management and is responsible of the risks management process, assuring the monitoring and control of risks throughout the project.

The MT is composed of the project coordinator, the project manager, the access officer and the communication officer.

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Work package leaders

The WP Leaders are accountable of the implementation of the work within their own WP, so they have the risks ownership for the deliverables and milestones within the WP they are leading. They assure the identification and management of the risks and they should inform the Management Team. If new risks are identified, they should be reported to the MT who will update the risk Management Register.

For actions in which several work packages are involved (such as workshops), the work package leaders will be co-responsible of the risks.

Project Implementation Committee

The Project Implementation Committee (PIC) of the project consists of the Scientific Coordinator and the leaders of the NAs and JRAs work packages. In collaboration with the MT, they will monitor the project and prepare the decisions to be taken by the General Assembly. Concerning the risk management plan, the PIC should advice the MT and the GA if problems cannot be easily resolved.

Advisory board

The Advisory Board (AB), a supportive structure, provides advices on the orientation and implementation of the project. The AB members should follow the assessment of risks by the Consortium and the resolution actions.

2.3.2 Response strategy

Following the evaluation of the risk exposure, the risk owner(s) will first seek to prevent actions and events that may harm the project from happening.

Avoidance

For management, networking, research or transnational access activities creating a threat to the project, the risk owner(s) will, when possible, try to eliminate the factors that cause the risk.

Mitigation plan

For threats that cannot be prevented, the risk owner(s) will establish a response strategy that minimises the damage to the project. The risks already identified are listed in the Risk Management Register. The corresponding mitigation measures are also displayed in the

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register (Table 1). Each partner is responsible for implementing the risk mitigation measures which relate to the WP they lead.

2.4 Monitoring and controlling

It is the responsibility of all ASSEMBLE Plus partners to communicate to the Project Manager the status and effectiveness of each risk and mitigation plan in order to update the risk management register and assess the relevance of the tools. The risk owner will confirm the correct implementation of the risk responses and will check the effectiveness of the response. The risk owner will keep track of the situation and inform the Project Manager. The risk exposure will be continuously reevaluated and modified accordingly.

The new risks are identified by a partner will be analyzed as those on the original risk list and added in the register.

2.5 Reporting

Risk Log

The Risk Log to be updated by the project manager will be reviewed during PIC meetings as a standing agenda item. The Risk Log will contain the list of issues which occurred during the course of the project, as well as the preventive measures and/or mitigation actions that were carried out.

Note. Risk status: a risk will be considered closed after the adverse situation occurred and it can no longer be considered as a threat to the project.

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3. Risk Management Register

This Risk Management Register will be accessible to all members through Basecamp. It contains the Risk Number, the Description, the WP involved and the Proposed risk-mitigation measures for risks foreseen before the start of the project and risks unforeseen at the start of the project.

Foreseen risks			
Risk	**Description of risk**	**WPs involved**	**Proposed risk-mitigation measures**
R1	Lack of overall coordination. *Probability low; Severity high*	WP1	Effective coordination is ensured by the managerial structure and through the project work plan. The coordinator has experience in coordinating large EU and national projects and is supported by an experienced PIC and MO. In case of unforeseen events, experienced persons can take over coordination tasks.
R2	Ineffective overall management. *Probability low; Severity high*	WP1 and all WPs	Effective management is ensured through timely recruitment of capable, expert and socially adept MO-staff with proven skills at managing large, complex projects. The MO-staff will be given the resources and support needed to perform tasks effectively. Tasks of the MO-staff and the coordinator will be delineated to ensure harmonious collaboration.
R3	Consortium disruption. *Probability low; Severity high*	WP1 and all partners	All partners have experience with large, international collaborative projects and with the cultural diversity of Europe. All are motivated to reach project objectives, which have been defined in the common interest of all partners. Any partner not adhering to this common interest for other reason than *force majeure* will be excluded from the project.
R4	Partner failure *Probability low; Severity high*	WP1 and all partners	All partners constitute medium to large institutes with strong in-house scientific communities and with secured public and private funding streams. Several partners obtain direct government funding whereas others belong within large, well-funded research foundations or universities. Therefore, chances of sudden partner failure are considered minute. In such an event, the consortium will redistribute funds and tasks over the remainder of the partnership; the large partnership will easily accommodate this.

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R5	Conflicts in the Consortium. *Probability low; Severity high*	WP1 and all partners	Partners will formulate a comprehensive Consortium Agreement. The PM follows strict administrative guidelines and implements actions against partners failing to comply with procedures agreed upon in the CA. The PM will maintain an easily searchable record of all relevant correspondence among partners to aid the coordinator in resolving conflicts. All partners have a track record of solving emergent problems in a collegial spirit.
R6	Delays in deliverables. *Probability medium; Severity medium*	WP1 and all other WPs	The PM will install the tools necessary for effective monitoring of project progress. A system will be implemented to spot delays of critical deliverables (those that link to milestones) early; mitigating actions will be discussed with relevant WP-leaders and officers involved to keep the project on time. Partners in WPs will appoint project personnel on time.
R7	Coordination problems within individual WPs. *Probability medium; Severity low*	All WPs	Most JRAs and NAs involve multiple partners, which collaborate to achieve their tasks in a timely manner. To achieve this, the work has been partitioned into internally coherent tasks with internal or EU- deliverables (only the latter are indicated, the internal ones serve to track progress). Task-leaders and WP-coordinators will monitor progress and flag problems in a timely manner to enable harmonious mitigation. In case of failure to deliver, tasks and associated funds will be redistributed over the partners to ensure delivery in the shortest time possible.
R8	Ineffective collaboration among WPs. *Probability medium; Severity high*	All WPs	JRAs and NAs provide deliverables that have to benefit TA and VA. The required collaboration will be ensured through a strong internal communication structure fostered and aided by WP1, ensuring effective information flow. Workshops will be organized to enable and enhance links among the professionals across the consortium to harmonize services through exchange of best practices.
R9	Bottlenecks and delays in the work of the JRAs *Probability medium; Severity low*	The JRAs	The JRAs have been designed based on the existing and potential capacity in the consortium. JRAs are considered medium-risk because although the partners possess the know-how, experience and collegial networks to deal with problems, research outcomes can be notoriously unpredictable. Although the deliverables will increase the attractiveness of the TA, none of them are so critical that their failure triggers consortium collapse.

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R10	Bottlenecks and delays in the work of the NAs *Probability low; Severity medium*	The NAs	The tasks in the NAs have been distributed based on the existing and potential capacity and know-how in the consortium. NAs are low-risk because the partners possess the knowledge and networks of colleagues to deal with any emergent problems. However, severity is high because several early deliverables constitute essential input for downstream tasks in other WPs. The PM will monitor progress and propose mitigating actions whenever delays become apparent.
R11	Problems with the start of TA provision. *Probability medium; Severity high*	WP1 NA1, NA2 and all TA providers	To ensure timely commencing of the TA program, an experienced Access Officer will be appointed ASAP upon the start date of the project. NA1 will provide all the documents and modules needed to populate the web portal designed by NA2 on the project website. The TA programme in ASSEMBLE Plus will start at M6 requiring timely promotion. This website will advertise calls for TA timely, and the calls will be advertised widely.
R12	Failure to obtain TA proposals in line with ASSEMBLE Plus objectives. *Probability low; Severity high*	WP1 and all TA providing partners	Information on project objectives and requirements of proposals will be targeted to diverse potential user communities via the TA web portal and other channels (WP1). Application procedures will be simple and straightforward. NA3 will engage with novel user communities, in particular with those from the private sector, as these may provide future funding streams next to public funding, thus ensuring long-term sustainability of marine stations in general and EMBRC in particular.
R13	Problems with TA provision due to communication problems between HQ and natl. nodes *Probability low; Severity high*	WP1, NA1 and all TA providers	The Access Officer oversees the TA program, establishing efficient communication with TA-providers at nodes (Liaisons Officers). Several TA providers have experience in previous projects or with access provision at their institute. Nonetheless, NA1.4 includes a workshop on access management organized prior to the start of the TA to inform parties about procedures and sorts out possible problems.
R14	Problems with TA provision due to communication problems between natl. node and third parties. *Probability low; Severity high*	WP1 and all TA providers	The organizational structure of nodes and third parties in many countries is new and requires clear definition of roles and responsibilities. The Access Officer monitors efficient and harmonious communication between nodes (Liaisons Officers) and third parties (local liaisons) and flags emergent problems to the coordinator. The NA1.4 workshop clarifies expected procedures and roles.

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R15	Delays between selection of TAproposals and actual access provision *Probability medium; Severity high*	WP1 and all partners	Contract negotiations between TA-provider and user will be facilitated by means of TA-contract modules establishing details of TA-provision and rules and regulations to comply with. Liaison officers will receive training in contract negotiation matters during the workshop (NA1.4) on access management organized prior to the start of the TA.
R16	Problems with TA provision due to lack of commitment at partner stations. *Probability low; Severity high*	WP1 and all TA providers	The Access Officer will monitor performance of each TA-providing partner, monitor progress of contract negotiation between node and TA user. Problems will be dealt with in a timely manner. Recurrent problems at a particular partner will be flagged to the coordinator who will take corrective action
R17	Mismatch between sites to which TA is requested and at which TA-funds are available given a priori distribution of TA-funds requested by EU *Probability medium; Severity low*	WP1 and all TA providers	Following the 1st year of TA-provision, the Access Officer will provide statistics on the distribution of USP-selected TA-projects over the TA providers. If severe mismatches become apparent, the distribution of TA funds will be re-evaluated and, where needed, redistributed over the TA providers to ensure that the selected TA-projects are carried out where the TA-users want to carry them out. Alternatives will be offered but not enforced.
R18	Failure to organize TA-pipelines through multiple INFRAIA consortia and cognate RIs (see NA1.3) *Probability low; Severity low*	WP1, NA1 and all TA providers	INFRADEV-4 projects develop procedures are developed to accommodate user access pipelines through multiple ESFRI RIs. When the projects have delivered the procedures ASSEMBLE Plus will seek to design and advertise shared calls for “pipeline” proposals with INFRAIA cognates. EMBRC maintains good relationship with sister RIs and engages with them in several INFRADEV-4 projects.
R19	Problems with VA provision. *Probability medium; Severity medium*	WP1, NA2 and all providing partners	VLIZ and HCMR will deliver VA, but their ability to do so requires that the partners make their data, generated with public funding, accessible. Workshops are planned to enable this, including IPR issues and licensing procedures. The Consortium Agreement will specify all matters related to data access. VLIZ and HCMR are best placed to deliver this task because of their bio-informatics know-how and their experience regarding dealing with data availability issues in previous EU-funded projects (see NA2)

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R20	Problems with cognate organizations *Probability medium; Severity high*	WP1	The ASSEMBLE Plus consortium includes EMBRC partners as well as partners in countries that are not (yet) member of EMBRC. Partners constitute medium to large marine stations providing access to rich ecosystems and extensive cutting-edge research infrastructure, carrying out strong in-house research, and having extensive experience with collaborative EU projects. Thus, the consortium qualifies as an advanced community of marine stations. To keep the consortium inclusive, but lean, focused and well suited to deliver its tasks, we could not include several small marine stations as their interests are out of focus of this project, and would dilute resources over too many different objectives. To share benefits over a larger community than the present consortium can accommodate, WP1 will build a community of stakeholders in which all European marine stations are invited, will publish deliverables widely for adoption by any marine station anywhere, and workshops will be open to stakeholders whenever possible. WP1 will engage with stakeholders by means of a strong communication program.
Unforeseen risks			
Risk	**Description of risk**	**WPs involved**	**Proposed risk-mitigation measures**
R21	Lack of involvement of marine stations receiving few calls *Probability medium; Severity low*	All TA WPs	To prevent a lack of engagement in the TA of partners receiving very few requests for access, the Access Officer will analyse the answers to the calls and propose mitigation measures for the following calls.
R22	Low quality of the deliverables *Probability high; Severity medium*	All WPs	For the quality of the deliverables not to be affected by the added reporting periods, their large number and their submission frequency, a control step before submission is added. This action carried out by the access officer will ensure the good quality of the deliverables.

Table 1. *Identified risks for the ASSEMBLE Plus project*

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4. Conclusion

The risk management plan presented in this deliverable defines the responsibilities towards the risks within the consortium. In addition, this document presents the anticipated risks that the project could be confronted to and proposes the corresponding mitigation measures. The risk exposure level was determined for each identified risk, and no critical risk was found.

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Appendix: Risk log template

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ASSEMBLE Plus project Risk log

#	Description	Date raised	Risk owner(s)	Probability	Severity	Impact	Counter-measure	Comments	Status

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