TEMPLATE FOR THE PEER REVIEW REPORT

The template hereafter provides the structure for the peer review report that needs to be prepared by the peer reviewers.

The report is submitted to the SERSCIDA Project Coordinator at the email lsk@hrc.unsa.ba or for attachments larger than 2MB at serscida@gmail.com.

If the peer review expert feels that he/she does not have the competence or the information to answer a question, he/she must declare it in the corresponding sections.

PEER REVIEW REPORT

Grant Agreement number:	288985
Project Acronym:	SERSCIDA
Project title:	Support for Establishment of National/Regional Social Science Data Archives
Funding Scheme:	FP7-SCIENCE-IN-SOCIETY-2011-1
Project starting date:	01 Jan 2012
Project duration:	30 Jun 2014
Name of the scientific representative of the project's coordinator and organisation:	University of Sarajevo, Human Rights Centre
Project web site:	www.serscida.eu
Work package reviewed:	
Date and place of review meeting (if applicable):	

Name(s) of peer reviewer(s):

Prof K. Schürer
Pro-Vive-Chancellor for Research and Enterprise
University of Leicester, UK

Name of the Project Coordinator: Lejla Somun-Krupalija

1. OVERALL ASSESSMENT

a. Executive summary

Comments, in particular highlighting the scientific/technical achievements of the Work package, and its impact:

I have read the reports for deliverable 4.1 and the associated deliverables 4.2, 4.3 and 3.1 relating to Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia. In short, in relation to the agreed work plan, they have all achieved what was planned and intended.

The requirements for these WPs are relatively straightforward: producing an action plan for the establishment of the respective social science data archives (4.1), a training manual (4.2), a report on training activities (4.3), and the related conference report (3.1 – 'Opening data services in the Social Sciences'). As far as I aware I was asked to focus on the evaluation of WP4.1 but also considered the other reports and documents as context/background to this.

The Training Manual (4.2) and the two reports (4.3, 3.1) are exactly what they purport to be. They are all well-written and informative. The last two are quite detailed descriptions of events held as part of this project, and in this regard completely fulfil terms of the award. The Training Manual is a very useful document, but one which, I think could say more about different models of data archiving (centralised/distributed/mixed) and the differing strengths and weaknesses of different approaches. Whilst this is over and above the requires of this deliverable, I would recommend that (if possible) this document be made more generic and re-formulated for a general audience beyond the project per se as it could be a useful reference tool for others (beyond the EU, especially in developing countries).

It is difficult to know quite what to say in any detail about deliverable 4.1. The requirement is to produce an action plan for each country and this is exactly what has been done. It is not clear if I am being asked to comment on: 'have they done what they said they would do?' or 'are the action plans produced adequate?'. If the former, then the answer is clearly – Yes. If the latter, then this is a question which is almost impossible to answer, and will not be known until the plans are in place and being actioned. In this regard, I do think it is worth making a number of observations, which I do under section (b) below.

☑ Excellent progress (the project has fully achieved its objectives and technical goals for the work package or has even exceeded expectations).

b. Overall recommendations (e.g. on overall modifications, corrective actions at WP level, or for other reasons, like re-focusing…).

Following on from my comments above, I think the following observations are relevet, and hopefully helpful.

1) Flexibility

I am slightly worried that the action plan appears rather fixed and rigid. Given the uncertainty over the timing and amount of financial support in each country I think that there has to be greater flexibility in the plans. Contingencies need to be made within the plans to ensure enough flexibility is the finances are delayed, are reduced (or increased), or are granted with conditions attached. In short, it is difficult to have any firm action plan until the funding is secured and in place.

2) Staff and skill set

I have some concerns that the staffing schedule and structure is too rigid. Any institution of this type and nature will change and evolve over time. Consequently the staffing structure and skill set that one may require in the first 6-12 months during set-up may very well not be the same as once a more steady state is achieved. For example, in the initial phase of development, one might expect there to be an emphasis on technical development (setting up the web service, catalogue entries, archiving infrastructure) data ingest and marketing (raising user awareness, collecting data), while as the institution matures this may switch more to user support and training. The point is that the staff component and skill base needed will change over time, and I do not se this clearly reflected.

3) Growth

Linked to the points above, it is never easy to estimate in advance what the likely pace of take-up of the new data archiving facility will be. Data gathering and processing may take a lot longer than expected; user take up could be a lot slower than anticipated. Conversely, it could all take off very quickly and they could be swamped by demand. The action plans seem to me to overly assume a kind of steady-state, as if workloads and demands on the service will be constant. Whatever happens, this undoubtedly will not be the case.

2. WORK PACKAGE OBJECTIVES and WORKPLAN

a. Progress towards WP project objectives: Have the objectives for the work package been achieved?

Yes

Comments

The objectives as set out have been achieved (see a. Executive Summary), however, see also the suggestions under section b. Overall Recommendations.

B. Milestones and deliverables: Have planned milestones and deliverables been achieved for the work package?

Yes

Comments

All the milestones have been achieved and the deliverables, as defined are in place.

3. USE AND DISSEMINATION

a. Impact: Is there evidence that the objectives of the work packages has/will produce significant scientific, technical, commercial, social, or environmental impacts (where applicable)?

Yes

Comments

This project is all about establishing three new national data archiving facilities. They are well within reach of doing just this. These, once up and running, should have significant impact on the research communities that they will serve.

b. Dissemination: Have the beneficiaries disseminated project results and information adequately (publications, conferences…)?

Partially

Comments

They have produced the required reports on the conference and training sessions and these are available via the project website. But as I have already commented, I do think there is an opportunity for the Training Manual and associated materials to me produced in a more generic format and disseminated more widely, as these will be helpful beyond this project. This said, I realise that this is nota project deliverable and is over and above the requirements.

c. Please identify potential information that should be disseminated to:

- Policy makers

National statistical offices, and key government departments involved in the creation of key social scientific data should all be kept up to date with general progress using methods appropriate to each partner, for example, through face to face meetings; by email updates; by copy of project reports. As far as I can tell, the project is in contact with these bodies.

- The scientific community

Academic funders and research councils. As above.

- The general public

- A specific group of end users

As I have commented in a previous evaluation report, there is little evidence that commercial (private sector) data producers and users as well as third sector organisations are being engaged. I would suggest that if this is not the case to date, they are contacted during the remaining period of the project.

d. Involvement of potential users and stakeholders: Are potential users and other stakeholders (outside the consortium) suitably involved (if applicable)?

Partially

Comments

Again, as I have commented previously, I think the project may need to think more about roles of central government (and regional government) data producers, other than central statistical office. Equally, the third sector (as users) may need greater involvement and the relationship with commercial data suppliers and users needs to be investigated.

4. OTHER ISSUES

If applicable comment on whether other relevant issues (e.g ethical, policy-related/regulatory, safety and gender issues) have been handled appropriately.

No.

Comments

Name (s) of the expert(s): Prof K. Schurer
Date: 31 January 2014

Signature(s):