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):

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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:	WP3 and WP4
Date and place of review meeting (if applicable):	
Name(s) of peer reviewer(s):	Adrian Dusa - - -
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:

The WP3 refers to the policy dialogue and the organization of a conference on establishment of social science digital data archives in the WB region, while the WP4 refers to building capacities for establishment of such data archives.
Upon evaluating the activity and deliverables, I have arrived at the conclusion that all WP objectives have been successfully met, and the progress of the project is remarkable. A very good conference has been organized, along with a series of training activities which have resulted in the development of a training manual for the new organizations. Along with that, a detailed action plan has been drafted as part of deliverable 4.1, with respect to the creation of the dedicated digital data archives in the Western Balkan countries.
Overall, the progress is excellent and objectives have been fully achieved.

- ☒ Excellent progress (the project has fully achieved its objectives and technical goals for the work package or has even exceeded expectations).
- ☐ Good progress (the project has achieved most of its objectives and technical goals for the work package with relatively minor deviations).
- ☐ Acceptable progress (the project has achieved some of its objectives for the work package; however, corrective action will be required)
- ☐ Unsatisfactory progress (the project has failed to achieve critical objectives for the work package and/or is not at all on schedule).

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

Given the excellent results of this reporting phase, I would have only one overall recommendation: to complement the detailed action plan with an exchange of experience with other Balkan countries.
It is very likely that the starting experience is similar, and particular solutions from similar problems would prove beneficial to the overall exercise. More over, for some of the issues the other Balkan data archives have already drafted IT tools which are available for the use of the community.

2. WORK PACKAGE OBJECTIVES and WORKPLAN

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

x		
Yes	Partially	No

Comments

The reports presented as part of the deliverables demonstrate a very high degree of professionalism, which demonstrates both that more advanced partners in the project have successfully transmitted their experience, and that WB countries have managed to internalize and reflect the acquired knowledge.

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

x		
Yes	Partially	No

Comments

The reports presented are submitted in a timely fashion, and completely answer the objectives of the WP3 and WP4.

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)?

x			
Yes	Partially	No	Not applicable

Comments

The potential impact of these Work Packages is enormous. For most social science research infrastructures in Europe, the data coming from the Eastern Europe and WB countries is almost completely absent. Should these institutions manage to be created and operated through a sustainable national effort, the overall European added value is going to increase exponentially, for the benefit of the academic community at large, but also for any other European stakeholder interested in comparing our societies.

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

x		
Yes	Partially	No

Comments

Granted, the report on the organization of the conference demonstrates a wide impact and dissemination accross many countries and different stakeholders. Not only the conference had a highly relevant international participation, but also among the participants there was the Minister of Education, Science and Technological Development from Serbia, which by itself is a fact that a very promising high level committment is present among the WB countries.

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

- Policy makers

The policy makers need to be informed about the overarching importance of having set up such a digital data archive, for the long term benefit of making informed public and social policies. The preserved data serves for knowing the current state of the society, in time compared with the past experience, and also to compare with other European societies.

- The scientific community

The scientific community needs to be informed about the enormous academic impact of the data stored in such institutions. There is a very high degree of correlation between the academic performance and the availability of data, especially for locally relevant studies. Particular experiences lead to particular theories, and the availability of data is central in the research agenda.

- The general public

The public in general might also be interested in the creation of such digital data archives, especially if the data dissemination process is made as friendly as possible even for non-specialists. Particular social and economic indicators might be of high intereste for the public, for example demographic changes, fertility rates, and various other indicators.

- A specific group of end users

In order to make this project sustainable, the decision makers in charge with the national roadmap for research infrastructures need to be informed and attracted, especially the national delegates to the ESFRI forum.

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

x			
Yes	Partially	No	Not applicable

Comments

Yes, all relevant potential users and stakeholders have been invited and involved in the Work Package(s) activities, from within and outside the consortium, as shown in the breakdown table of participants from the D3.1: research and academia, data infrastructure specialists, policy makers, and other important stakeholders.

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.

x		
Yes	Partially	No

Comments

The activity resulted from this WP obeys the usual scientific standards for social science research.

Name (s) of the expert(s):	Adrian Dusa
Date:	15.01.2014
Signature(s):	