

ICRC-ERA-HumanBridge

Human Bridge For Strengthening Integration Of ICRC Into European Research Area

Final Report

01/09/2013 – 28/02/2017 (M1-M42)

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International Clinical Research Centre (ICRC) is an emerging centre of excellence in the European Research Area (ERA). It is an innovative science and research centre and a top-quality public healthcare centre focusing on prevention, early detection and cure primarily of cardiovascular and neurological diseases. ICRC is based on almost ten years of successful cooperation between St. Anne's University Hospital in Brno and the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota (USA). Increasingly, partnership with knowledgeable research institution in the EU is being built, however the integration to the European Research Area currently represents a weak point of ICRC. The ambitious idea to establish ICRC materialized in 2010, after a successful application for funding under the Operational Program "Research and Development for Innovation" which is co-financed by the Structural funds of the European Union.

The justification for such a massive investment from Structural Funds and national funds came mainly from our track-record in producing outstanding research results, both academic papers and applied results, in partnership with Mayo Clinic and University of Minnesota and their industrial partners. What our centre lacks so far is a stronger European dimension. For this very reason, we would like to use the opportunity offered through the REGPOT funding for developing stronger ties with key European players relevant to our research focus, both academic institutions and industrial partners. Moreover we expect that the proposed project will enhance the RTD capacity and capability especially in the area of human potential, it will enhance ICRC innovation potential and improve visibility of ICRC.

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Introduction and overview

The main purpose of this document is to highlight overall results and key issues of the ICRC-ERA-HUMANBRIDGE project. All particular details are included in the periodic reports and in submitted deliverables.

The project title designed the purpose and the key aim of the project: “Human Bridge for Strengthening Integration of ICRC into European Research Area”. Tools for reaching this aim were activities defined in nine work-packages (WPs). Here is the list of tasks and partial results divided among WPs:

WP1 - Twining with research institutions in the ERA

The WP1 was focused on strengthening of cooperation with foreign scientific institutions via bidirectional mobility actions (outgoing secondments and invitation of foreign experts). Main goals were these: Creating platform for multicentre research protocols and studies; Knowledge transfer; HR development; Sharing technologies (ICRC can share its unique equipment with partners and thus reducing dependency on investments from public sources); Fundraising (for its sustainability, it is obligatory for the ICRC to obtain research funding).

T1.1 Establishment of strategic partnership in the ERA

The aim was to bring the current relationships between our institution and foreign scientists to institutional level concerning these strategic partners University College London, UK; Karolinska Institutet in Stockholm, Sweden; University of Gdansk, Poland; GE Health Care, UK.



T1.2 Secondments - Outgoing visits

Outgoing visits were enabling the ICRC researchers to become involved in a research team at a foreign institution, acquire new methods, and get the latest expert approaches and also to take advantage of their own knowledge in favour of the guest institution.

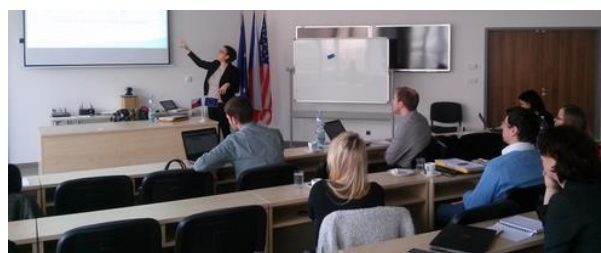
T1.3 Secondments - Incoming visits

Scientific workers from partnership institutions (= visitors) visited ICRC with the purpose of meeting the research team, adjusting and opening research statements, setting research processes - providing know-how of the good practices from their home institution.

T1.4 Workshops

Workshops in the ICRC were held during stays of foreign visitors. Invited speakers from one or more organizations met here in order to solve the common research problems and to present progress and real

research results and methods used in a particular European institution. Participants of the workshops were composed of foreign invited speakers and the ICRC research staff.



WP1 RESULTS

Task	Plan to reach	Realised
T1.1 Establishment of strategic partnership in the ERA	4 cooperation agreements	100 % (4)
T1.2 Secondments - Outgoing visits	2355 secondment days	67 % ¹ (1573)
T1.3 Secondments - Incoming visits	577 visit days	88 % ¹ (508)
T1.4 Workshops	43 workshops organised	167 % (72)
Joint proposals	10	440 % (44) 11 successful H2020
REPORTING - deliverables	11	11 IN TIME

WP1 Conclusions

In general this WP was performing very well (part of effort from WP1 was transferred to WP5¹, where the result is outstanding) and it brought the most valuable results which are NEW JOINT PROJECTS. Contrary to the plans there have been already submitted 44 joint proposals with project partners (mostly H2020) and 11 of them were successful. This effort has been continuous so there is (at the moment of this report) several applications waiting for evaluation and several is being prepared for new calls (FNUSA-ICRC submitted 112 project proposals to national and international grant schemes - only within the year 2016).

¹ Based on the agreement with the project policy officer Dionysia Lagiou (EC), this lower number is accepted by the commission taking in account that all mobility activities will be assessed together (Twin out – 67 %, Twin in 88 %, Result presentation 281 % = average 145 %).

WP2 - Recruitment

The goal was to supply skills that were missing in the ICRC. Recruitment of skilled professionals should help establishing proper research environment and facilitate achievements of our research goals.

This approach represented a dynamic approach which was confirmed by the PO in the earliest months of the project run. Proposed plan was to hire 18 researchers mostly for the whole project duration (36 Months), but there were many obstacles how to do it related to legal, institutional, international and personal aspects. Because this WP was dealing with large budget of 2,2 million EUR, every delay in hiring was resulting into a considerable budget reserve. So we have agreed with the PO that it is essential for fulfilling the project aims to use this reserve via creating new positions later within the project.

Additionally, recruited researches purchased essential small equipment for their labs from allocated other cost budget and consumables from "bench fees" budget or for each recruited position. In the same way some of these positions has allocation for travel connected with their work within the project.

Examples of recruited researchers:

Dr. Simon Boulton ERC Advanced Investigator, EMBO Gold medalist, IF1018 (top paper IF38,6) Cancer Research UK	Dr. Tomas Barta CZE returnee from Newcastle Univ. UK	Prof. A. Melzer Over 100 patents, own EU funding about 10MEUR in 5Y, mentor of CARDIO5 ICRC team
Prof. Zoran Culig The most cited urologist in EU, 13 scientific awards, 5 publications over IF10 Innsbruck University AT	Dr. G. Tsivgoulis Over 188 publications University Hospital of Alexandroupolis, GRE	Prof. K. Narkiewicz Over 280 publications, IF1052, scientific award „the Master“ Medical Univ. of Gdansk, POL

WP2 RESULTS

Task	Plan from proposal	Recruited
Recruitment – head count	18	64 (356 %)
Recruitment – effort (FTEs)	416	664 (160 %)
Results (cumulative IF produced by recruited researchers)	-	815
REPORTING - Deliverables	4	4 (3/4 IN TIME)

WP2 Conclusions

In sum, this dynamic approach brought a great opportunity for how to respond to the actual needs of research teams. All changes and new positions were consulted with the top management of the ICRC (Vice Chairs or the Chair himself) as a guarantee of keeping the process in line with the research vision of the ICRC.

The impact on the FNUSA-ICRC was enormous at this was the most important aspect of the project - new researchers has brought not only excellent know-how, but also huge cooperative potential. The real results can be measured only after in 3 years after the end of the project, but now at the end of the project there were produced publications with cumulative IF 815, which is much better then all expectations were.

WP3 - Equipment and tools

The objective of this WP was to acquire the following four items: two laboratory and one diagnostic device and one software. The requested items are described in detail below. The budget of this WP was only 20% of the total budget. Every task represents one purchase.

T3.1 Upgrade of the VenaFluxTM Platform – 47 356 EUR

VenaFluxTM is semi-automated microfluidic platform for cell rolling, binding/adhesion and migration studies under shear flow mimicking in vivo flow rates and the upgrade is concerning multifunctional software for complex image analysis to fully use all functions of the system described in the proposal in detail.

**T3.2 Chemical and siRNA library – 96 181 EUR**

These libraries contain thousands of little consumables to create an etalon for further research. There were different approaches in purchasing:

- Chemical lbr.(25.000 EUR) was acquired piece by piece based on up-to-date research needs with serious plan to purchase 96% of it until M21 and leave the rest (1.000 EUR) for the end of the project.
- SiRNA lbr.(60.000 EUR) it is better to acquire it in 1 or 2 packages for better comparability of its compounds.



T3.3 Upgrade of software on X-Ray Philips Allura Xper FD 10 – 22 562 EUR

Upgrade of X-Ray system allows performance of Peripheral arterial DSA in real time; ROADMAPING and OVERLAY; Quantitative vascular analysis and the software for on-line quantitative analysis.



T3.4 CO monitors + calibration kit – 5 306 EUR

Carbon monoxide analyser (very often called also Smokelyzer) is a worldwide-renown method of rapid analysis of exhaled carbon monoxide. This level permits to assess level of tobacco exposure and/or use, as well as to verify answers in surveys. This instrument is in daily use in Nicotine Dependency Centers as well as in research in the field of Smoking Cessation.



WP₃ RESULTS

Task	Plan	Realised
T3.1 Upgrade of the VenaFlux TM Platform	1	100 %
T3.2 Chemical and siRNA library	1	100 %
T3.3 Upgrade of software on X-Ray Philips Allura Xper FD 10	1	100 %
T3.4 CO monitors + calibration kit	1	100 %
REPORTING - Deliverables	4	4 IN TIME

WP₃ Conclusions

All aims were fulfilled with a positive financial balance, thanks to savings from very well realised open tenders, so after the approval of PO, the remaining resources were used for additional upgrade of mentioned devices.

WP₄ - Research meetings and conferences organized by the ICRC

The particular objectives of organizing conferences, meetings and schools were:

- The presentation of research results which were the results of the cooperation of ICRC and partnering organizations mentioned in this project.
- Education of ICRC researchers
- Attraction young talents from the area of secondary school students, university undergraduates, PhD students and postdocs.

The overall plan was initially to organise 10 international conferences + 15 Mendel Lectures. Because of objective needs of responsible researchers we have re-scheduled the initial plan, 2 events were replaced and additionally with in the planned budget we have add 3 more events (after approval of PO).



T_{4.1} SITS-EAST International Conference

11-13 / 06 / 2014		Prague, CZE		150 participants (17 countries)		www.sits-east2014.eu
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SITS-EAST meeting of National coordinators

4-5 / 04 / 2014		Attika Mati, GRE		23 participants (12 countries)		www.sitsinternational.org
8-9 / 09 / 2015		Vravrona, GRE		21 participants (11 countries)		www.sitsinternational.org
5-6 / 04 / 2016		Brno, CZE		40 participants (5 countries)		www.sitsinternational.org
9 / 9 / 05 / 2016		Barcelona, ESP		50 participants (19 countries)		www.sitsinternational.org
13-15 / 11 / 2016		Stockholm, SWE		10 participants (5 countries)		www.sitsinternational.org
14 / 12 / 2016		Vienna, AT		8 participants (2 countries)		www.sitsinternational.org

1st Czech Multidisciplinary Simulation Conference

23-24 / 04 / 2015		Brno, CZE		103 participants (4 countries)		www.sice.cz
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2nd Czech Multidisciplinary Simulation Conference

14-15 / 04 / 2016		Brno, CZE		107 participants (6 countries)		www.sice.cz
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Conference of the Society for Medical Innovation and Technology (SMIT)

10-12 / 09 / 2015		Brno, CZE		280 participants (18 countries)		www.smit2015.com
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Smoking Cessation Conference

16-17 / 10 / 2014		Brno, CZE		85 participants (5 countries)		www.kardiovize2030.cz
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Creating Life in 3D

2-4 / 09 / 2015		Brno, CZE		246 participants (17 countries)		www.ceitec.eu/creating-life-in-3d
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Structure-Specific Endonucleases in Genome Stability Meeting

04-06 / 11 / 2015		Brno, CZE		120 participants (18 countries)		www.nucleases.eu
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DNA Repair and Replication Workshop

24 / 11 / 2016		Brno, CZE		23 participants		www.fnusa-icrc-org
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Mendel Lectures 16 realised from 15 expected

03/2015 – 12/2016		Brno, CZE		2799 participants		mendellectures.muni.cz
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Czech and Slovak Cerebrovascular Congress

15-17 / 06 / 2016		Mikulov, CZE		264 participants (4 countries)		http://www.mhconsulting.cz/cs-kongres-kongres_obecne-92.html
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International Technology Transfer Conference: Commercialization of Medical research

15-17 / 06 / 2016		Brno, CZE		150 participants (6 count.)		http://medrestt.fnusa-icrc.org/
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Joint Conference

10-12 / 10 / 2016		Brno, CZE		90 participants (9 count.)		www.fnusa-icrc-org
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WP4 RESULTS

Task	Plan	Realised
International conferences organised	10	12 – 120 %
Mendel lectures organised	15	16 – 107 %
Participant visited in all events organised by project	2800	4370 – 156 %
REPORTING - Deliverables	5	5 IN TIME

WP4 Conclusions

Conferences are a great opportunity to address both scientific and public audience. They present not only an opportunity to attract numerous people to the ICRC but also to inform them about the ICRC activities and also about the role of the project ICRC-ERA-HumanBridge in strengthening the integration of ICRC into the European research area.

WP5 - Presentation of research results

Research results were presented at national and international conferences. The goal was to share research results with other researchers, obtain feedback from audience and peers, advocate for our results, and aid networking. Research plans were also presented on brokerages to promote our research plans and to draw attention of potential partners and thus accelerate partnering and networking.



T5.1 Presentation ICRC research results in conferences

According the proposed plan, there were planned some events where the ICRC researchers would present, but in the practice our research teams leaders are selecting the most important events according to their recent needs and with respect to an appropriate use of allocated resources.

T5.2 Presentation of the ICRC research proposals at brokerages to call attention from potential partners

The ICRC is active in networking, but research teams have used other resources for this activity.

The management of the ICRC and also of the project was very active in this reporting period in workshops of H2020 projects focused on a gap between old and new member states concerning medical research.

- DanuBalt – FNUSA-ICRC partner - <http://danubalt.eu>
- RegHealth-RI – FNUSA-ICRC associated partner - <http://rhing-net.eu/reghealth-ri>

WP5 RESULTS

Task	Plan	Realised
T5.1 Presentation ICRC research results in conferences	100	281 % (281 ppts)
REPORTING – Deliverables	4	4 IN TIME

WP5 Conclusions

Practical aim was to reach 100 presentations. Final result dramatically overcame this expectation thanks to a possibility of flexible approach among mobility activities described in the WP1 chapter.

WP6 - Project PR and Results Dissemination

Objectives of this WP were:

1. Spread project results to research organizations and business partners to strengthen and enhance research collaboration;
2. Strengthening the collaboration in the region (with research subjects);
3. Inform partnering organizations about progress of the project and its research results;
4. Inform administration, municipalities and scientific societies about the project and its results to gain their support;
5. Create a positive and true image of the research results of the grant supported by EU by the means of media and PR activities.

Project dissemination and PR activities were clearly described in periodical reports. The project is following a PR strategy described in the first report and will be recapitulated by the end of the extended implementation period in final project report.

WP6 RESULTS

Task	Plan	Realised
REPORTING – Deliverables	7	7 IN TIME

WP6 Conclusions

This WP was performed according to the initial plan. The project and its management team has come with its own PR initiatives such as lab tours which enable the administrative staff to better understand the nature of the scientific work. This leads, in turn, to better work relations at the entire ICRC.

WP7 - Strengthening IP development plan and industrial partnerships

The aims of this work package were to improve the internal capacity and know-how for managing the relations with end users and to increase the portfolio of partners and potential clients.

T 7.1. Improvement of internal capacity for management of IP at all levels

Technology transfer department (Center for Clinical Development and Technology Transfer) was very difficult to establish and to attract experienced experts from TT field took longer than it was expected. Until this moment it would not be effective to use this project to strengthen this department. On this base we have negotiated with PO postponing the most important activities to later phase of the project:

- strategic intellectual property development plan for 2015-2020 until M24
- expert trainings until M36

Fortunately there have been other supporting national projects for establishing this essential department for commercialisation of results and clinical trials and so for sustainability of the whole research centre (FNUSA-ICRC)

T 7.2. Strengthening the portfolio of corporate partners

The strategic business partner for the project remains GE healthcare, UK. The cooperation is based on regular meetings with the Research Manager for Europe, Middle East and Africa who is Dr. Jerome Boichot.



GE Healthcare
Academic Research

WP7 RESULTS

Task	Plan	Realised
TT trainings realised	3	281 % (3)
REPORTING – Deliverables	5	5 (3/5 IN TIME)

WP7 Conclusions

Despite initial personnell troubles mentioned in T7.1 the department has been performing well and it helped to create theoretical training modules (D7.1, D7.2, D7.3) in time and with 1,5M delay Intellectual Property Strategy (D7.5). All training were provided in the last year of the project.



WP8 - Ex-post Evaluation

This WP was realised within last period (09/2016 – 02/2017). The evaluation was completely performed within this project period. Basic steps were:

- Initial meeting – 9-12/10/2016 - there were agreed clear plan of the procedure and independent evaluators was introduced to the project and to the FNUSA-ICRC institute,
- Self-evaluation report – based on requests of evaluators, there were prepared a Self-evaluation report (see deliverable D8.1) for providing detailed overview of the project and institutional aspects.
- Interview meeting – 14-16/12/2016 – 2nd meeting was scheduled for meeting both institutional top management, and users – leaders of research groups.
- Final meeting – 27-28/2/2017 – the final meeting was held together with the last meeting of the project Steering Committee and there were presented evaluation findings and recommendations for the future. The evaluators also delivered the Evaluation report (see deliverable 8.2)

WP8 RESULTS

Task	Plan	Realised
REPORTING – Deliverables	3	3 IN TIME

WP8 Conclusions

The final meeting was concluded by independent evaluators: “The evaluation conclusion is that the REGPOT project was performed in an excellent way and the project impact on the FNUSA-ICRC is remarkable.”

WP9 - Management of the project

The two main objectives of this work package are:

- To ensure smooth, accurate and professional management of the project and
- To ensure the highest possible impact of the project.

T 9.1. Management of the project

The ICRC-FNUSA is unique because of the research centre has been established in the hospital (all other research centres in the Central Europe are established on university fields). This idea is great for the research itself and it is extremely valuable for our partners, that we are able to provide real clinical research. On the other hand the project management of such a large project in this hospital environment requires more people in the project management team and their intensive effort:

- Project Coordinator – Mr. Lukas Palko (nominated by Amendment 03)
- Project Manager – Mr. Lukas Palko

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Grant agreement no.: 316345

- Project Financial Manager – Mrs. Romana Prudilova (former Vasinova)
- Project PR Coordinator –Mrs. Alena Malachova
- Project Mobility Coordinator – Mrs. Jana Sadilkova
- Project HR Partner – Mrs. Kristina Chuda
- Project Assistant – Mrs. Eliska Skalicka, Mrs. Dominika Fajnova
- Interns – 1-2 students without salary



Project management board contains WP leaders and a supervisor, who is actually from its position WP7 leader. All members are financially independent on the project (no provisions for any project activity):

Leader of	Name	Position
WP1	Jana Sadílková	Head of mobility department
WP2	Alena Kružíková	HR Manager
WP3	Michal Janota	COO
WP4	Robert Mikulík	Former Vice Chair, STROKE - Research Team Leader
WP5	Kamil Paruch	Head of the CBCE platform (most involved research team)
WP6	Pavel Gejdoš	PR manager
WP7	René Samek	Director for External Affairs
WP8	Gorazd B. Stokin	Chair
WP9	Lukáš Palko	Head of Grant Support Centre

All management procedures are described in detail in the D9.6 (Project management principals and organizational structure).

T 9.2. Steering Committee

This task is described in the D9.6 and in D9.1 (Establishment of the Steering Committee). The SC contains partnering institutions, independent regional and national authorities and ICRC top management:

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Name	Position
Christopher G. A. McGregor	University College London, UK
Michael Mazya	Karolinska Institutet, Sweden
Jerome Boichot	GE Health Care, UK
Naďa Koníčková	NCP for H2020, head of NICER, Technology Centre ASCR
Monika Vrbková	South Moravian Innovation Centre
Gorazd B. Stokin	ICRC – Chair
Jan Vitula	ICRC – CSO and CFO
Viola Galligioni	ICRC –ViceChair, PI of Animal Centre
Irena Krontorad koutna	ICRC –ViceChair, PI of cGMP
René Samek	ICRC - Director for External Affairs
Lukáš Palko	ICRC - Project Coordinator

WP9 RESULTS

Task	Plan	Realised
REPORTING – Deliverables	7	7 IN TIME

Other results:

- Deliverables submitted – 51 pcs delivered (100 %) - IN TIME (95 %) or with APPROVED delays (5 %)
- Milestones fulfilled – 49 pcs (100 %) - IN TIME (74 %) or with APPROVED delays (26 %)
- MEETINGS
 - o 4 x SC - Kick-Off meeting, SC M12, SCM24 - 11/2013, 09/2014, 10/2015, 02/2017
 - o 6 x Project Management Board 12/2013, 04/2014, 01/2015, 05/2015, 03/2016, 06/2016
 - o 6 x Bilateral work seminar with EC (Colombe Warin, Dionysia Lagiou)
 - 11/2013 (Brno), 05/2014 (Brussels), 12/2014 (Brussels), 03/2015 (Brussels), 12/2015 (Brussels), 02/2016 (Brussels)
 - o 127 x internal project meeting (Project team)
- Amendment 01 - 11/2013 – Change of the project coordinator name
- Amendment 02 - 07/2016 – Extension of the implementation period of the project
- Amendment 03 - 09/2016 – Change of the project coordinator name
- About 60 minor changes negotiated and approved



WP9 Conclusions

The project management was successful in the key role – to keep smooth implementation of the project. Thanks to good communication with POs (Colombe Warin and Dionisia Lagiou) the project is able to follow overall aims without any troubles.

Because of all ICRC research teams involved, “side effects” of this effort are very positive for whole ICRC. Examples of this are:

- Positive PR of the ICRC
 - o Internal - satisfaction of internal and hired researchers
 - o External – providing support for project partners and presenting the ICRC
- Internal processes – based on project task, many internal methodologies (HR, mobility, consumables procurements etc.) and process workflows were updated and became more effective.

Amendments

Amendment	Date	subject
01 - Change of coordinator's name	14/11/2013	Dr. Tomáš Kára -> Mrs. Veronika Svobodová
02 – Extension of the implementation period	7/7/2016	09/2013 – 08/2016 -> 09/2013 – 12/2016
03 - Change of coordinator's name	15/9/2016	Mrs. Veronika Svobodová -> Mr. Lukáš Palko

Summary and Conclusions

The project was executed in excellent way and it was confirmed by independent evaluators and by policy officer – Dionysia Lagiou (EC) during the final project meeting.

The EC policy officer concluded the final project meeting and supported the evaluation findings that the project fulfilled and partly overcame all project aims and expectations.

The conclusion was that the FNUSA-ICRC is a great example of a synergy between structural funds and framework programmes (FP7 and H2020).

Status of activities relevant to the reported period:

TIME	BUDGET	ACTIVITIES
100 % M42 from 42 months	97 % 4,4 MEUR from 4,5 MEUR	158 %

1. Twinn.	2. Recruit.	3. Equip.	4. Conf.	5. Results	6. Diss.	7. TT	8. Eval.	9. MGT
172 %	356 %	100 %	112 %	281 %	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %

Deliverables	Milestones	Project reviews
100 % of 51 96% IN TIME 4% delay approved by EC	100 % of 49 82% IN TIME 18% delay approved by EC	100 % of 16 ~96% IN TIME 4% delay approved by EC + 127 internal meetings