Final Report Summary - NECOBELAC (Network of collaboration between Europe and Latin-American and the Caribbean countries to spread know-how in scientific writing and provide the best tools)

Executive summary:

The project ‘Network of collaboration between Europe and Latin-American and the Caribbean countries' (NECOBELAC) was focused on public health and was part of the global commitment to abate barriers limiting the free circulation and proper use of scientific information.

The project aimed to spread know-how in scientific writing and open access (OA) publishing models in European and Latin-American academic and research institutions. The main objective was to create a network of institutions to enhance the production and dissemination of quality scientific information in the field of public health, through a specific training strategy addressed to different stakeholders.

The project partners were represented by institutions seated both in Europe and Latin America conveying different skills and experiences in information dissemination practices:

Istituto Superiore di Sanità (ISS, Italy, project coordinator), Agencia Estatal Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC, Spain), the University of Nottingham (UNOTT, United Kingdom), BIREME/PAHO/WHO, Brazil), the Instituto de Salud Pública de la Universidad Nacional de Colombia (ISP, Colombia), the Universidade do Minho (UMINHO, Portugal).

To reach its objectives, the project developed and implemented three parallel actions: a two-level training strategy in scientific writing and OA publishing, the creation of flexible training tools and a networking and cooperation activity.

The two-level training programme (based on train-the-trainers courses and local training replication activity) permitted to maximise the project impact and create major involvement of local institutions in European and Latin-American and the Caribbean (LAC) countries. This strategy also allows a long-term sustainability of the project activity aiming at an equal distribution of global information resources in public health.

Within the project term, 8 train-the-trainers courses were delivered: 4 in Europe (Italy, Spain, Portugal, Ireland) and 4 in Latin America (Brazil, Colombia, Argentina, Mexico) and 40 training replication activities were organised at local level involving more than 1,000 attendants.

The project developed original training tools, the NECOBELAC topic maps, based on semantic web technologies. They include different training modules on issues related to scientific publication and OA which can be utilised in a flexible way to build up personalised training programmes. NECOBELAC topic maps are available online in the four project languages (English, Spanish, Portuguese and Italian).
NECOBELAC network of supporting institutions was mainly developed through training activities; it currently (July 2012) includes 212 institutions from 16 countries: 5 in Europe and 11 in Latin America.

Online and printed materials in four languages (English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian) were also created to support training and guarantee wider understanding, easy dissemination and appropriate use of the project contents at local level. Moreover, 63 dissemination activities were performed to strengthen the project impact.

The focus on public health and the involvement of different stakeholders at international, national, and local level (researchers, librarians, editors, policy makers, administrators etc.), according to a methodology based on cooperation and training, favoured a wide and long run impact of the project in the interested geographical areas and sustainability of its training methodology.

Project context and objectives:

In the last decades, the OA movement supporting free access to scientific information and data has acquired a worldwide dimension thus creating major awareness on the importance of promoting Internet distribution of scientific knowledge without barriers. The number of online sources is continuously increasing as well as the initiatives in support of a transition towards a digital environment guaranteeing immediate and free access to information for all.

The Berlin Declaration, one of the most famous statements promoting OA, clearly summaries the goal of the movement and stresses the necessity of the active commitment of 'each and every individual producer of scientific knowledge and holder of cultural heritage'.

Information diffusion and the proper use of existing sources play a strategic role in every field of activity and even more in public health where knowledge is directly associated with human well-being.

NECOBELAC project, focused on health, was part of the global commitment to abate barriers limiting the free circulation and properly use of information. One of the original aspects of the NECOBELAC project in support of OA to scholarly output was to create major community involvement to guarantee an equitable distribution of knowledge. In this respect, the project addressed to different stakeholders in wide geographical areas, mainly researchers as authors of scientific publications and editors, librarians, information specialists, administrators and decision makers, and involved them to take an active role within the project strategy.

The project implied a cultural change in traditional publication models and therefore its full impact will be appreciated in the long run.

NECOBELAC strategy was mainly based on three action lines:

1. Two-level training strategy

The strategy consists in developing and implementing a flexible and sustainable training programme in scientific writing and OA publishing for the diffusion of health information. Two levels of training activities were envisaged to guarantee the programme sustainability and impact:

- Training for trainers (T1 activities), where NECOBELAC project partners performed the role of teachers together with selected local experts.
- Local training (T2 activities), directly delivered by participants in the above T1 activities with the support of NECOBELAC
project partners and local experts. The local training was based on NECOBELAC training materials and tools (topic maps),
which were properly selected according to the needs of academic and research institutions in Latin American and European
countries.

2. Training tools

They are represented by online topic maps, and other online and printed material to be used in ad hoc training programmes
and to support local training initiatives. NECOBELAC topic maps on scientific writing and OA were identified as an appropriate
training tool for such a large scale project requiring great flexibility. They are based on the semantic web technology (see
http://code.google.com/p/ontopia/ online for further details); ontopia has a navigator framework - a JSP tag library and Java API
- which enables the development of web-based interfaces associated with topic maps. This technology permits the
relationships among different factors, actors and initiatives and represents information using ‘topics', ‘associations’ and
'occurrences'.

The NECOBELAC topic maps consisted of different modules on scientific publication and OA, each one having a scheme, a brief
textual description, links to selected online resources and suggested points for discussion. This online tool was selected for its
modular structure and therefore adaptability to different local training requirements.

Other online and printed material explaining the NECOBELAC training strategy and the use of the project online resources was
provided to the participants in T1 activities who committed themselves to replicate the training at local level. All material was
produced in the four project languages: English, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish.

3. Networking and cooperation activity

Since the very beginning of its activities NECOBELAC project aimed to promote, improve and strengthen networking activities
between European and LAC countries. More precisely, the network approach has been conceived as a means to stimulate the
production of information tools as well as the development of infrastructures (digital archives OA compliant) by scientific
institutions acting in the countries involved in the project. As a matter of facts, the concept of a networking space covering
both institutions and individuals has been considered pivotal to develop a global public health scientific information flow based
on high-quality reference standards. In this sense, national and regional institutions were called to play a critical role either as
producers or intermediaries or users of information in the domain of public health.

This activity was intended to develop a community of institutions able to promote the diffusion of health information and, at
the same time, develop joint research activities.

An online sample survey was first planned to have an initial scenario of the areas where the project would operate. The survey
was intended to collect data on scientific and academic public health institutions to be involved in the NECOBELAC capacity
building programme, including data on their publication output and training activities in scientific publishing (the survey is
available in four languages at http://www.necobelac.eu/Surveys/necobel.htm). The responding institutions were invited to take
part in the NECOBELAC training programme for trainers.

The network was developed as a consequence of participation in the training activities and of contacts established among
them for an enhanced aggregation of European and Latin-American institutions within the project objectives.

When supporting local training activities (T2) for scientific writing and dissemination of health information, the NECOBELAC
network also promoted new scientific collaborations in public health and related disciplines among institutions of the two
interested geographical regions.
A discussion list, a newsletter and social network activities were also set up for up-dating the NECOBELAC community on events, initiatives and publications related to the project themes and contribute to developing the network.

Project results:

A general overview of the project activity is reported according to the three interrelated methodological action lines envisaged in the project strategy:

1. two-level training strategy (T1: Train-the-trainer courses, T2: Local training replication);
2. training tools;
3. networking and cooperation activity.

Action line 1: Two-level training strategy

T1 training activities were realised from April 2010 to May 2012 and included 8 training courses for trainers attended by over 200 participants. The programmes of T1 training courses were slightly different one from the other although the core modules on scientific writing and OA publishing were always present in all courses and the duration was always three days (except for the T1 course held in Dublin, one day, which was followed by three webinars).

NECOBELAC training courses for trainers (T1) in the years 2010 - 2012 reported according to place, date and lead organising partner:

1. Sao Paulo, Brasil 13-15 April, 2010, BIREME
2. Rome, Italy, 18 - 20 October, 2010, ISS
3. Bogotá, Colombia, 9 - 11 November 2010 ISP
4. Madrid, Spain, 28 March, 2 February, 2011, CSIC
5. Buenos Aires, Argentina, 16 - 18 May 2011, BIREME - ISS
7. Guadalajara, Mexico, 22 - 24 August 2011, ISS-ISP
8. Dublin, Ireland, 9 May 2012 + 3 webinars, ISS-UNOTT.

In the T1 course in Bogotá, the active and close interaction between NECOBELAC project partners and the course attendants led to the drawing up and signing of the Declaration of Bogotá, a position paper stating the need of sound policies promoting the quality of science communication and information process in LAC countries and outlining the commitment of the whole NECOBELAC community in this respect. The Declaration is available in the four project languages on the project website (see http://www.necobelac.eu online) and is included among the declarations in support of OA (see http://oad.simmons.edu/oadwiki/Declarations_in_support_of_OA online for further details).

An online feedback questionnaire was administered to the participants in all T1 courses immediately after each event, in order to assure the maximum survey response rate possible. The questionnaire was designed using LimeSurvey, an open source online survey application, and was structured into four parts concerning personal data, an overall course assessment, a judgment on logistics and duration of the course, an in-deep evaluation for each module envisaged in the course programme and a final evaluation regarding the impact on future professional activities.

Results from the survey were in general quite satisfactory in terms of participants' involvement, lively and critical discussion on the debated topics and useful suggestions and comments regarding the replication of training activities at local level. The responses to three core questions of the survey revealed a general positive assessment (corresponding to the best (percentage) evaluation expressed by the answer formulations: very useful / useful; yes, definitely / yes somewhat; strong
agree / agree) provided by participants per country of all T1 courses, with respect to the following parameters:

(a) utility of the training course;
(b) learning of new concepts; and
(c) methodology adopted in the course.

With respect to each course, the score relating to the three single parameters are reported as follows:

- Brasil: 92, 83, 70; Italy: 100, 100, 100,
- Colombia: 100, 100, 93,
- Spain: 95, 94, 89; Argentina: 100, 93, 90,
- Portugal: 100, 100, 91,
- Mexico: 100, 95, 87,
- Ireland 93, 79, 71.

The mean values for the three parameters are respectively: 98, 93, 86.

Besides, relevant parameters relating to the adequacy of the training material and the duration of the length of the course were investigated.

As a result, the response rate percentage relating to the attendants who favourably assessed training material as adequate for their needs was equal to 91 %, whereas the length of course was rated as about right by 67 % of attendants. Respondent suggestions and comments reported in the LimeSurvey questionnaire revealed good acquaintance of the two main topics addressed during the course: scientific writing and OA. However, some comments pointed out the need to deepen the topic of scientific writing and publication and to increase practical activity in this regard by organising dedicated working groups during the course. It is also worth mentioning that, in general, comments reporting lack of interest in OA issues and lack of institutional adherence to OA policies were more common in European countries rather than in LAC ones.

After the train-the-trainer courses, 40 replication activities were performed in Europe and Latin America in the period April 2010 - July 2012. Further replication activities are already envisaged in the second half of 2012.

The outcomes of replication activity (T2 courses) carried out by attendants to T1 courses were evaluated through an online questionnaire administered to them in 2012. Among the initiatives organised in their own institution to spread out the T1 contents, formal training courses and seminars represented the most part and were addressed prevalently to researchers and scientists. As far as the material on the NECOBELAC website used to support the activities, respondents declared they had mostly used topic maps and ppt presentations delivered by project partners during the T1 courses.

Regarding the first steps taken in order to set up an institutional repository and developing an OA policy in their own institutions, the response rate percentage was 36 and 51 %, respectively. About the increasing of articles published in OA journals, there was a positive response in 29 % of cases. Along with these data, some interesting issues relating to the crucial points as setting up repositories, developing OA policies and monitoring of papers published in OA journals were raised by respondents. They mainly refer to the need of improving the function of repositories by providing tailored services and offering support for publishing to the internal community. Great efforts were also devoted in planning OA policies by involving both research staff and managers on the benefits of the OA paradigm.

Action line 2: Training tools (including topic maps and support to trainers)

All project partners contributed to the development of training tools and provided support in carrying out replication activities.
The results achieved in this regard can be summed up into two basic groups: topic maps and support to trainers.

**Topic maps**

The development of NECOBELAC topic maps required different stages. The initial stage consisted in the representation of knowledge on scientific writing and OA publication through general and specific topics; this task was also facilitated by the results of an initial online cloud-storming questionnaire utilised as a screening process for identification of terms and concepts related to those issues and to determine their weight within different targets. The two general schemes, scientific publication and OA, display such knowledge representation showing different interconnected categories and sub-categories within the topic maps.

**Support to trainers**

This action was developed through different tools, mainly the creation of online and printed material described below, as well as direct contacts (e-mails, teleconferences, and vis a vis meetings) to help NECOBELAC trainers in their replication activity. Furthermore, the project partners sometimes took part in or directly organised T2 activities.

Several supporting tools were produced and uploaded for free accessibility on the project website:

- A booklet collecting the abstracts of the basic modules was prepared for the first training course for trainers held in Sao Paulo (Brazil) in April 2010. Such basic modules were repeated with minor adjustments in all NECOBELAC training courses for trainers. The booklet was intended to focus on the main issues that would be presented during the course and, at the same time, it was conceived as a useful support tool to help attendants in their role of future trainers - developing a customised programme at local level (T2). The booklet was produced in English, Spanish and Portuguese.

- A guide for trainers was realised at the beginning of the project training activity in the four project languages to be used by new NECOBELAC trainers in their training replication activity at local level as well as for those who have specific interests in the project training strategy and contents. The guide contains specific information on the two-level training strategy (courses for trainers and training replication at local level), the training tools (topic maps), and the training modules related to scientific publication and OA both including issues for discussion and suggested online resources.

- A guide to use the NECOBELAC topic maps (produced both in textual and audiovisual format) was intended to help trainers become familiar with the structure of the topic maps. It displays the screens and provides a step-by-step explanation of how concepts are related, how to search in the topic maps, how to have access to schemes and other resources and how to extend text to have a complete description of the module. It is available in English and Spanish.

- A NECOBELAC memo card for trainers was produced to help NECOBELAC future trainers to realise training activity at local level. The aim was to stimulate the new NECOBELAC trainers to utilise all the project promotional and training tools for a better organisation and effectiveness of their training replication activities.

**Action line 3: Networking and cooperation activity**

The network of European and Latin-American institutions involved in the project activities, starting from the initial project partner nucleus, has been continuously increasing as a result of the training initiatives and parallel actions undertaken to develop the NECOBELAC community.

The initial online survey, performed from October to December 2009, at the early stage of the project, was answered by 79 institutions in Europe and LAC and was important to establish a baseline of information about the activities of institutions to be
involved in the network with respect to research outputs (in terms of publications) and training courses in scientific writing and OA.

The scope of the NECOBELAC community is represented by the list of individuals and affiliated institutions available under ‘Contacts & Community’ from the project website home page (see http://www.necobelac.eu/en/frmcommunitytoNET.php online).

In the 'Contacts & Community' section data were organised per country and derived from the lists of participants in the NECOBELAC training courses and from respondents to the initial questionnaire delivered by the project. Then reference information gradually increased including other individuals who showed interest in the project activities and initiatives. Joining the NECOBELAC community has therefore quickly become a simple opportunity to get in contact with people sharing proposals of developing scientific collaborations among teams of researchers acting in LAC and European countries.

The total number of institutions now included in the network is 212 (93 from 5 European countries and 119 from 11 Latin American ones).

The numbers of institutions affiliated with the project within the European and Latin-American geographical areas are reported below:

Europe 93, including:
Ireland 14, Italy 30, Portugal 22, Spain 22, United Kingdom 5.

Latin America 119, including: Argentina 23, Brazil 28, Chile 1, Colombia 24, Costa Rica 3, Cuba 1, Ecuador 4, Mexico 27, Peru 2, Uruguay 4, Venezuela 2.

The NECOBELAC cooperation relies on the principles of the 1999 Organisation of the United Nations for the Education, Culture and Science (Unesco) Declaration: Declaration on Science and the use of scientific knowledge. In this view, the NECOBELAC project adopted in its action the principle that sees the scientific community committed in increasing dialogue and exchange with the other sectors of the society, promoting science in society and for society. In particular, a message of the UNESCO Declaration, which directly recalls regional and international cooperation and research network to support the construction and development of scientific research capacity of each country, was of particular relevance for the action of the NECOBELAC project in the European and Latin-American countries.

The NECOBELAC cooperation adopted a bi-directional approach between Europe and Latin America in the mutual recognition of skills and experiences, and on taking into account and valorise the existing cultural differences. At the same time, the NECOBELAC cooperation was a tool to reach common objectives on the basis of shared principles among the cooperating partners. In this way, it realised an exchange and mutual transfer of knowledge, data and experiences for the improvement of scientific production and the promotion of wide information diffusion in public health through OA publication models.

The NECOBELAC project supported the EU-LAC cooperation in the field of public health by promoting and strengthening existing scientific cooperation initiatives among research groups and institutions of European and Latin-American countries. This activity has been promoted, in particular, by the two project partners performing training and research activities in public health, the Istituto Superiore di Sanità (ISS, Italy) and the Instituto de Salud Pública (Colombia).

Some examples of cooperation initiatives are represented by NECOBELAC participation in:

(a) existing scientific collaboration between ISS and the Universidad de Mendoza (Argentina) focused on public health topics, such as rare diseases and in particular infant botulism (2009);
Moreover, the NECOBELAC project favoured a technical-scientific collaboration agreement (2011-2014) between the ISS (Italy) and the Universidad Nacional de Colombia / Instituto de Salud Pública with the goal to develop joined research activities on public health, training and mobility of personnel of the two institutions, organisation of seminars on specific topics, diffusión of scientific information in public health, etc.

Furthermore, the project has been involved in the following international events:

- 1st workshop IILA-ISS, (Rome, 19 October 2009)
- NECOBELAC promoted the development of a new collaboration between ISS and Istituto Italo-Latino Americano (IILA) (see [http://www.iila.org](http://www.iila.org) online for further details). The IILA is an international organism, including 20 Latin-American countries and Italy. It operates through numerous activities and initiatives with the objective to strengthen scientific, technological, economic and cultural collaboration between Italy / Europe and Latin America. Since 2009 and 2010 IILA has been contributing and participating in several NECOBELAC project initiatives. A poster of the workshop was realised on the occasion of the international OA week in 2009. NECOBELAC partners took part in the initiatives which included also a teleconference with other European and Latin-American organisations.

- Science picnic, (Warsaw, 28 May 2011)

This event represents one of the largest outdoor events dedicated to science having the objective to promote and disseminate science culture among the general public, in particular young people (see [http://www.pikniknaukowy.pl/2011/en](http://www.pikniknaukowy.pl/2011/en) online for further details). Each year the picnic is devoted to one subject. In 2011 it was ‘freedom’ which in science is also intended as freedom of knowledge, freedom of dissemination and free access to health information to research results, prevention and cures. A poster on NECOBELAC was hosted within the ISS stand within the event.

- 23rd Annual Conference of International Society for Environmental Epidemiology (ISEE), (Barcelona, 13 - 16 September 2011)

NECOBELAC supported cooperation initiatives in environment and health within the ISEE Conference series, an important annual appointment for environmental epidemiologists. In this contest, NECOBELAC also contributed with a Latin-American research group to build up a regional inventory of ongoing research projects in environmental health, and associated research groups and professionals to develop a Latin American network for environmental health research.

- Seminario internacional ‘Cambio climático, ambiente y salud’, (Quito, 28 - 30 November 2011)

In this workshop Latin-American and European experts addressed environmental health issues, relevant for public health both in Europe and in Latin America, such as climate changes, air pollution, industrial sites contamination, waste cycle, epidemiology of professional diseases, with particular attention to asbestos-related diseases due to professional and environmental exposures.

The workshop joined these issues with the NECOBELAC training contents to improve information production and OA diffusion in public health, with particular reference to the interdisciplinary field of environmental health. The workshop was realised in collaboration with the Italian and Colombian partners (ISS and ISP) and the Universidad Tecnológica Equinoccial de Quito (Ecuador). On that occasion, NECOBELAC also supported new forms of technical-scientific cooperation between Italy and Ecuador in the sector environment and health. An abstract book of the workshop presentations was also published in Italian and Spanish within a series of publications edited by the ISS (ISTISAN Congressi 11/C7).
EMMILE Conference on Media and Information Literacy Education, (Milan, 26 - 29 February 2012)

NECOBELAC collaborated in the scientific programme and organisation of the EMMILE conference (see http://emmile.wordpress.com/ online for further details), supported by many institutions and associations of international relevance including Unesco and IFLA. A communication on NECOBELAC strategies to produce and disseminate information in public health was presented. Following this communication and the commitment in EMMILE conference, new collaborative initiatives are in progress to promote health information literacy at international level.

- SciELO workshop, (Rome, 21 June 2012)

To foster Europe-Latin America cooperation, the ISS organised a workshop on Scientific Electronic Library Online (sciELO), a cooperative model to electronic journal publication. Opportunities to take part in the development of SciELO Italy’. Abel Packer, director of SciELO, presented the journal collection and discussed the development of a global SciELO Public Health, involving the ISS-NECOBELAC Project and the BIREME/PAHO/WHO-VHL and SciELO Public Health. The workshop was also intended to highlight the recent advances of SciELO as multidisciplinary collection in view of developing of a SciELO Italy collection.

Dissemination activity

The production of the dissemination material for the NECOBELAC project was an aspect closely related to the project communication with the aim to promote wide information and a dialogue among internal and external stakeholders of the project. This material had a communicative objective to give information and to favour awareness on the project thematic field and, at the same time, to contribute at building the perception of the quality of the project performed activities.

Most material was produced in the four project languages and was finalised to:

(a) present the project aims, strategy and activity as well as project partners and the funding scheme within the European Commission (EC);
(b) facilitate the access to the project outcomes, to the NECOBELAC website, including the project publications and the training contents realised by the project partners and containing the NECOBELAC conceptual maps as well as the trainers presentation in the courses for trainers performed in European and Latin-American countries;
(c) stimulate interest and links with other projects, in particular European projects, operating for the diffusion of the research results in OA in Europe and Latin America, through the diffusion of the project outcomes in national and international conferences, seminars and events in which the project partners have been involved.

- Posters and booklets of the NECOBELAC project
Posters and the booklets on the NECOBELAC project were produced to present the project and the partners as well as the objectives, activities and opportunities provided by the project. Most posters were produced in four languages.

- NECOBELAC video in four languages
The NECOBELAC 3-minute video presents the project in four languages. The video contains the Project objectives, tools and opportunities for the EU - LAC collaboration. This video has been produced in order to be utilised during the training courses for trainers as well as by the new NECOBELAC trainers in the training replication activities at local level to facilitate the understanding of the project and provide information on its aims.

- Booklet 'NECOBELAC project - some questions to understand it'
This booklet, realised in the four project languages, contains a series of questions which help to easily understand how the project works (frequent asked questions (FAQs)). It is based on the online FAQs. The questions and related answers are
divided into three groups concerning:
(a) training activity and methodology based on two training levels (T1 and T2);
(b) major project tool in support of the training activity, i.e. NECOBELAC topic maps;
(c) NECOBELAC community and development of technical and scientific collaborations.

- NECOBELAC newsletter

The idea of a project newsletter was developed to spread in a quick and easy way useful information on the most recent and future project activities both in Europe and Latin America. Ten issues were produced in the period April 2011 - July 2012. The newsletter provided information that may be useful to the growing NECOBELAC community and suggested possible contacts and relationships among institutions and individuals of EU - LAC countries (e.g. training courses for trainers and local training activities, including virtual courses, partners participation in national and international conferences and events, initiatives supporting the development of the EU-LAC cooperation involving academic and research institutions of the two regions operating in the field of public health and related disciplines.

- NECOBELAC bookmarks

5 editions of bookmarks were realised to encourage a wide diffusion of the project key messages and the website link, and contains specific information on the project training activity. The first bookmark focuses on the training activity performed during 2010-2011 and the others refer to those performed and planned during the 2011 - 2012. The last project bookmark reports the overall training, cooperation and dissemination activities.

- NECOBELAC gadgets

Some NECOBELAC gadgets were created to help disseminating the project activities and resources, in particular:
(a) a pen drive reproducing the project logo was designed and distributed during the T1 courses containing the PPT presentations of the NECOBELAC training modules;
(b) a bag with the NECOBELAC logo and project title and website was designed to carry project papers and other documents;
(c) a set of blue pens and key chains with the project logo and website were created for distribution at the mentioned 'Science Picnic' in Warsaw, as a prize for winners of the 'science games' therein organised by project partners.

Within the project dissemination activities, partners took part in many other conferences and workshops and associated activities within the wide areas of information management and dissemination, often organised by major professionals associations of the field such as the European Association of Science Editors, the Mediterranean Editors and Translators Association, the European Association of Health Information and Libraries, the series of the Berlin Conferences for OA, International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA).

All material produced within the project activity has been described in this project final report, Section 4.2 (Use and dissemination of foreground), template A.2 (List of dissemination activities), as well as in project deliverable No. 1.4 ‘Final Project activity Report’ and in project deliverable 2.4 (Overall evaluation of the results achieved). It is also available in the project website.

Project communication channels

- NECOBELAC website

The NECOBELAC website (see http://www.necobelac.eu/en/index.php online) was developed in January 2009, and went live to the public at the end of March 2009. Within the Project, the central role of the website has been to form both an internal and external communication channel for NECOBELAC partners and stakeholders. For the former, the 'Partner Login' allowed project partners to access the partners’ reserved area page, where they could access and upload documents, report drafts, meetings minutes, and other documents for internal use. The rest of the website has focused on external communication and has aimed at informing visitors about all aspects of the NECOBELAC project, providing advice and materials to stakeholders in different
countries, and helping to build an informed community. In this way it has acted as a crucial resource for wider communication, since the start of the project.

The contents of the website have been made available in the project four languages: English, Spanish, Portuguese and Italian.

The website includes the following sections accessible from the left-hand side menu on the home page:

- home,
- training activities (course materials and photographs),
- dissemination (publications, reports, and promotional materials),
- topic maps,
- other projects and events,
- contacts and community,
- wiki,
- about the project,
- FAQs,
- newsletter,
- posters,
- partner login.

For each NECOBELAC T1 Course a page was created with all information related to the course, including leaflets and presentations. The NECOBELAC wiki (see [http://www.necobelac.eu/pmwiki/](http://www.necobelac.eu/pmwiki/) online for further details) was created to provide a home for community contributions from across Europe and LAC countries, but it was used only in the initial stage of the project.

The right-hand side menu on the NECOBELAC website provided a space to publish forthcoming courses and the latest news. This section was kept up-to-date throughout the project, and provided access to the latest newsletters, memos, and most recent posters and videos. These videos, often took the form of recorded testimonials, and were made available on the YouTube Channel as well as on the website.

The NECOBELAC website was most often used in the period immediately after training activities, when presentations, photos and videos were uploaded to the project website and promoted. In this way the website has been integrated with NECOBELAC activities and has worked to support them. The website has attracted new visitors over the period of the project and has also engaged repeat visitors in the long term, proving to be a useful source of information for project partners and stakeholders.

- Communication through community building

Community building is an additional communication tool used in the project. It was hoped that the building of the NECOBELAC community would create an informed and active group of stakeholders. These stakeholders were identified as including: academic authors and researchers, librarians and information professionals, senior institutional administrators, funding agencies, medical practitioners, publishers, learned societies, patients and the general public. The creation of an informed and self-supporting community was seen as critical for the sustainable development beyond project funding boundaries. Peer-to-peer contact and peer-support was also seen as essential, and project staff has worked to support this over time. The community building activities have consisted of:

(a) Creation of NECOBELAC e-mail discussion list

Created at the beginning of the project, it had over 300 members. This list was essential for the distribution of NECOBELAC course resources, the promotion of conferences and events, the sharing of research articles and other studies, and the exchange of experiences. The discussion list was an important resource
used to engage the community in the project. The growing number of members, as well as the positive feedback that members sent through the discussion list, demonstrate strong network consolidation.

(b) Use of OA mailing lists
Such as the SPARC OA Forum, the American Scientist OA Forum (now Global OA List - GOAL), and the Open Science Forum (Lista Latinoamericana sobre Acceso Abierto y Repositorios, LLAR, OS-REPOSITORIOS, E-REVISTAS, IWETEL, European Association of Science Editors forum list and other international lists). The messages shared on these lists included a project description and information on future events.

(c) Development of stakeholders lists
Lists of researchers, practitioners, and other stakeholders, in fields related to NECOBELAC, created so that face-to-face meetings might be arranged in order to discuss the possible coordination of project goals.

(d) Dissemination of project posters
Sent out to medical schools and other relevant institutions in European and Latin American countries, as well as made available for download from the website.

(e) Creation of a Wikipedia article
Produced to help to disseminate information about the NECOBELAC project. The article is available in English, Portuguese and Italian and describes the projects details, goals and management. It makes reference to training courses and FAQs.

(e) Development of social networks
Social networks, in the form of a Facebook page, a Twitter account, a LinkedIn network, and a YouTube Channel were created. They were used to share relevant information about the NECOBELAC courses and support the network of partners and stakeholders.

The Facebook page and a Twitter account for the NECOBELAC project were created in February 2011 and have both been used to disseminate video testimonials, photos, course presentations, course materials, course information, and other relevant information. The number of active users of the Facebook page increased around the time of each T1 Course, with page views, as well as feedback, such as comments and ‘likes’ increasing in this time period.

Since the introduction of Twitter, there has been a good rise in its use, with the numbers of followers almost doubling over an eight month period. These two social networks have proved to be effective communications channels for the NECOBELAC project.

The NECOBELAC YouTube Channel was also created in February 2011, and it has been used to share testimonials about the courses, as well as other project videos. There have been a large number of channel views the channel holds 30 videos which have been viewed over 2 500 times, indicating good use of this communication channel. Sharing videos has been a positive experience and has allowed for many different stakeholders to share their experiences of the NECOBELAC courses.

A LinkedIn account was created for the NECOBELAC project in October 2010. NECOBELAC connections have grown over time and there has been an appreciable amount of e-mail traffic arising from LinkedIn contacts.

A NECOBELAC group within the EXIT directory (see http://directorioexit.gtbib.net/ online for further details) for professionals related to OA and scientific publishing was also created.

All of NECOBELAC social networks have shown an increase in use from their establishment, with good overall levels of use. Social networks have acted as important communication tools for the NECOBELAC project and community, and the approach of having a number of differing dissemination and support channels, including social networking, allowed the project to have a
greater reach.

(f) Support of repository establishment
Libraries seemed the most logical contact point for supporting the establishment of repositories and it was decided that they would be contacted and offered support in setting up collaborative groups that could sustain local, in-country collaborative work. E-mails were sent to libraries and repository managers (and equivalent post-holders) in Latin American countries, to enquire about the possibility of starting networks, similar to United Kingdom Council of Research Repositories (UKCoRR) in their own countries. Partners also sent e-mails to potential key contacts for policy development.

A detailed description of the project training experience, including topic maps on scientific writing and OA publishing, is available in the report issued by Istituto Superiore di Sanità (http://www.iss.it/binary/publ/cont/12_26_web.pdf)

Potential impact:

The socio-economic impact of NECOBELAC project includes several aspects closely related to its specific nature, such as:

(1) integrating multidisciplinary skills from information professionals and scientists in the field of public health;
(2) joining experiences from European and Latin-American countries;
(3) strengthening the process of capacity building addressed to young researchers and academics to improve their literary production and diffusion;
(4) raising awareness among librarians and ITC people about the importance of setting up sound information infrastructures;
(5) stimulating the statement of OA policies at local level in view of becoming active parts of regional networks;
(6) widening the horizons of health information literacy of citizens thus promoting the progress of knowledge in the context of the global challenges affecting the current society, in a multilingual and multicultural approach.

Experience gained by the project partners in document production and distribution in the field of public health within European and LAC countries was one of the strengths of the NECOBELAC project. Partners were selected on the basis of their recognised excellence in information production and dissemination; in fact, they are experts affiliated with valuable academic and research bodies, capable to use their contacts and experience in the field to develop a sound network of collaborating institutions.

The project approach offered great advantages to European and LAC countries by increasing bi-directional exchanges and sharing of experiences, tools and strategies and by creating awareness on the issues at stake, promoting advocacy on OA models and new aggregations among institutions and countries. This approach will have a positive impact on all stakeholders involved in the information transfer process, since OA guarantees free and unconditioned access and dissemination of information through the net without geographical or economic barriers. In this regard, it was pivotal that Spanish and Portuguese speaking countries were involved in the project network, in order to counterbalance the prevalent production of documents in English. This helped stimulating an original local production and the subsequent use of relevant 'hidden' research for the safeguard of public health. In line with this a cross-national support structure of the project, the NECOBELAC website and in particular the NECOBELAC topic maps on scientific writing and OA publishing, provided key resources in four languages for local stakeholders which can be adapted with flexibility to their own needs within their own countries. The project website represented a key point of contact for stakeholders, providing a communication hub between peer groups in different countries and providing outreach and information on the project objectives and contents.

Moreover, one of the strengths of the NECOBELAC project resulted in using existing technologies in order to carry on activities in view of immediate progress. Given the large geographical area concerned and the cultural differences between partners, language barriers and general communication flows have been managed properly. As a consequence, a mutual change of experiences and knowledge has favoured common efforts and cooperation among countries and institutions. This may
represent a starting point to enhance sound awareness on the importance of a cultural change in the production and access of high-quality health information.

Developing a coordinated strategy towards a cultural change required significant work on advocacy and community engagement. The impact of the project has been maximised thanks to the strong involvement of all stakeholders: researchers, institutional librarians, information specialists, policy makers, funding agencies. Within this framework, all Project dissemination material, as described in 'The main S&T results / foreground' section, represented an added value to the activities performed throughout the project thus contributing to increase the overall project impact. All project dissemination activities produced within the Project appear in this project final report, Section 4.2 (Use and dissemination of foreground), template A.2 (List of dissemination activities) and are also described in the project website.

Focusing on one subject discipline as health, which represents a global issue, resulted as a strategic choice as the OA paradigm is particularly welcome in order to maximise visibility of research outputs. This may be considered a milestone to really affecting the development of health information communication and to build links between European and LAC countries.

The project strategy showed how NECOBELAC has been moving on different paths to improve and promote exchange and sharing of information resources for the benefit of public health. Training in scientific writing and OA dissemination of research output was a way to contribute to a more equitable use of information resources and, at the same time, it was an opportunity to create new and long standing research collaborations in public health among the European and Latin American institutions participating in the project.

Thanks to the NECOBELAC strategy focused on spreading quality health information standards and best practices, through training, networking and dissemination, all the actors involved in the production and dissemination of relevant scientific data joined to share concerns and solutions in view of a balance of interests amongst different stakeholders. This shared effort could raise awareness about some critical points still represented by the economic aspects of the OA publishing model.

Given all the considerations above, such a large scale project as NECOBELAC could be fully evaluated after the time span of the project itself.

List of Websites: Project contacts:
- Coordinator: Paola De Castro paola.decastro@iss.it Istituto Superiore di Sanità (ISS) Italia
- Carlos Agudelo caaguadeloc@unal.edu.co Universidad Nacional de Colombia (ISPS), Colombia
- Adalberto Tardelli birdir@bireme.org interim Director, Centro LatinoAmericano e do Caribe de Informação em Ciencias da Saude (BIREME), Brazil
- Lilian Caló lilian.calo@bireme.org Centro LatinoAmericano e do Caribe de Informação em Ciencias da Saude (BIREME), Brazil
- Bill Hubbard bill.hubbard@nottingham.ac.uk University of Nottingham (UNOTT), United Kingdom
- Alicia López Medina alopessm@pas.uned.es Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED), España
- Daniela Marsili daniela.marsili@iss.it Istituto Superiore di Sanità (ISS), Italia Reme Melero rmelero@iata.csic.es Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC), España
- Elisabetta Poltronieri elisabetta.poltronieri@iss.it Istituto Superiore di Sanità (ISS), Italia
- Pedro Príncipe pedroprincipe@sdum.uminho.pt Universidade do Minho (UMINHO), Portugal
- Eloy Rodrigues eloy@sdum.uminho.pt Universidade do Minho (UMINHO), Portugal
- Alma Swan a.swan@talk21.com Key Perspectives Ltd, United Kingdom.

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