



D2.8. ANNUAL REPORT ON ACTIVITIES OF WP2

Review of First Years Activities for Tasks 2.3 to 2.5

(9th December 2021)

(TUS / NHLStenden)

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 Scope of the Annual Report

This report presents the activities of WP2 relating to the delivery of Tasks 2.3 to 2.5 from inception of RUN-EU on 1st November 2020 to 1st November 2021. The task activities are detailed as follows:

- Identification of Interregional RDI activities and embedded postgraduate and postdoctoral training programmes (Task 2.3):

This task involves (a) identifying and creating inter-institutional RDI teams with relevant RDI activity goals and funding targets and (b) development of Master, PhD and post-doctoral training programmes with a common structure. The RUN-EU+Horizon2020 funded Practice Based Postgraduate training programme will also be aligned here along with RUN-EU WP5 for Structured Postgraduate training programmes.

- Sustainable, regional and interregional Innovation and Development (Task 2.4):

This task involves (a) building an interregional sustainable innovation and development network with all associated partners to stimulate and drive the creation of a future European Zone for Interregional Development (EZ-ID) and (b) develop co-operation and collaboration opportunities among all partners. A Virtual Infrastructure platform to host this network will assist in accomplishing this task.

- Interregional education and training opportunities and future skills needs (liaising with WP 3, 4, 6 & 7) (Task 2.5):

This task involves the establishment of a working group to identify Future Skills needs and disseminate to other RUN-EU groups for sustainable regional skills development including structured mobility CPD for research students and staff. The bundling and shaping of inputs to FASA, SAP and Mobility WPs is essential to facilitate connectivity and output to skills training needs for our associated partners and regional stakeholders.

1.2 Impacts and Alignments

The first year of activity initiated with the production of an Audit of all Infrastructural, Human Capital, Resource, Activity and Network capacities of all RDI entities within the RUN-EU consortium members (D2.1). To produce this audit report, each of the eight RUN-EU alliance members was asked to indicate, to each thematic area, in a predefined form, the Research Institute / Centre / Group that could be related to such area, principal researchers' contacts, specific infrastructures, research policies and procedures, main projects awarded and main recent publications. They were also asked to list their main external partners or other entities, relevant for each thematic area.

This first form was spread to all the eight members, in articulation with the leaders of WP5, given the similar and complementary information that would be needed for the first audit, due in both work packages.

The audit responses obtained in the first iteration from the several RUN-EU members revealed diversity in the way research and researchers are organised in each member. While in some cases the responses included only reference to established research centres, organised by scientific area, in other cases there were mostly research groups, multidisciplinary, mainly organised by focus theme. Differences arise not only from each member organisational option, but also from distinct evaluations mechanisms put in place by the responsible science regulating agencies in the different countries.

Given this diverse scenario, we opted for a broad and inclusive approach, to produce the first version of this audit. Thus, the following definitions and terms were considered:

- **Research units** – include established research centres, that somehow tackle the topics within each hub area, as well as research groups, with or without an external recognition or evaluation, with or without their own facilities.
- **Contact PI** – contacts provided by the HEIs, of the researchers associated to the research units listed in the previous point.
- **External partners** – external partners identified by the RUN-EU members as being related to each hub's thematic area. For the sake of generalisation, the option here was to include only representative entities (e.g.: incubators, accelerators, associations, etc.) and not isolated firms operating in each domain.
- **Facilities** – based on the data received, the option was to consider only those facilities that are specific to each thematic area, and not common facilities such as meeting rooms with computers.
- **Training courses** - based on the data received, the criterion was to consider training courses specifically related to each thematic area issues and mainly directed to professionals, with a view to contributing to their upskilling or reskilling.

This presented the WP2 team with the task of reaching an overall understanding of what an Innovation Hub was in each RUN-EU member organisation, considering diverse national cultures, government definitions and policies for metric analysis.

The second driving activity included the design of the EIH strategic plan (D2.6) which would encompass all WP2 tasks and deliverables, defining clear pathways for all RUN-EU members RDI staff and stakeholders in which to engage with each thematic EIH. Within this task the mechanisms for implementing actions for Tasks 2.3 to 2.5 are defined, however, as this is the first annual report, all tasks and their activities as detailed above are at various stages of development and implementation.

This report has been prepared by work package 2 leads Michelle McKeon-Bennett (Lead- TUS) and Peter Mulder (Lead - NHLStenden).

2. Identification of Interregional RDI Activities and Embedded Postgraduate and Postdoctoral Training Programmes (TASK 2.3)

2.1 Interregional RDI Activities

This task is a nexus activity for interconnectivity of all RUN-EU members and associated partners. Its purpose is to provide a means of generating RDI activity under the directed umbrellas of the three thematic European Innovation Hubs. To bring together clusters, research / innovation / enterprise hubs, associated business, industry, regional government and community partners to enable a critical mass of expertise, capital infrastructure and regional funding opportunities to be reached. Through this critical mass development, symbiotic relationships across the networks can form to address 'low hanging fruit' projects, skills training and informing development of future programme provision and innovation activities.

Activity to date in initiating this task involved collating all RDI data from the Audit Report (D2.1) under the umbrellas of the three thematic EIHs. In some cases, based on the diversity of activity of individual research clusters, they were positioned in more than one thematic EIH. This activity also included the associated partners and other regional stakeholders.

Thematic EIH teams then invited members of targeted areas where current synergies have aligned to immediate funding opportunities. Three examples include: Smart Manufacturing in EIH 1; Food and Biotechnology in EIH 2 and Tourism in EIH3. These activities provide an immediate 'quick win' opportunity for each of the EIHs and enable a formal launch of the EIHs at RUN-EU events in Q1 or Q2 2022.

Larger meetings are being arranged of both RDI internal RUN-EU personnel and external partners and stakeholders for early Q1 2022, to broaden awareness and engagement across the thematic EIH groups.

2.2 Embedded Postgraduate and Postdoctoral Training Programmes

To date, eight Interregional structured postgraduate research programmes are in place between TUS Athlone and IPL and HAMK (In areas of Business and Tourism). An additional programme is in place between TUS Athlone/Limerick and IPL (Software Engineering). An additional four programmes are planned for February 2022 between TUS Limerick and IPL. Other links are being developed to expand these opportunities to other RUN-EU members. Currently, TUS and SZE are the only members with the ability to award to PhD.

3. Sustainable, Regional and Interregional Innovation and Development (TASK 2.4)

3.1 Development of a Sustainable Interregional Network

In order to drive the creation of European Zones for Interregional Development (EZ_ID), a virtual network platform is needed to facilitate profiles of RDI personnel and partners, free communication of RDI activities, ideas and dissemination of outputs. Currently this infrastructure is being constructed through personnel in NHLStenden and will be launched in Q1 2022. This network will be modelled on similar professional network platforms such as LinkedIn, but will be managed and promoted by RUN-EU.

3.2 Stimulate the Creation of a Future European Zone for Interregional Development

Parallel to the construction of this virtual network, regional partners and stakeholders are compiled and will be invited to EZ-ID focused meetings under the EIH banner in Q1 2022. The output from this meeting will be signed partner MOUs for engagement with RUN-EU activities.

4. Interregional Education & Training Opportunities and Future Skills Needs through WP3 to 7 and RUN-EU+ (TASK 2.5)

4.1 Interregional Education and Training Strategy

This task involves the establishment of a working group to identify Future Skills needs and develop a strategy for sustainable regional skills development, continuous professional development opportunities and mobility programmes from research students and staff. This working group has yet to be established but this is targeted for January 2022, with development of an audit questionnaire to disseminate to regional stakeholders. Each WP2 team member will be charged with connecting with their regional skills forum manager to discuss regional government strategies, skills demand, infrastructural and responsiveness needs. The data from this will be collated and an action plan designed. A similar questionnaire will be designed for research related staff and students focusing on availability and access to diverse and suitable training programmes both within their organisations and through the wider community activities, such as online webinars and accredited micro-credentials.

4.2 Strategy for Informing Future Skills Needs to RUN-EU

A key function of this task is the establishment of an infrastructure to facilitate knowledge and information flow between WP2 and the other RUN-EU work-packages in order to inform strategy and programme structure to meet Future Skills needs as identified in 4.1.

To date, the main information flow has been with WP5 on the development of the RDI activities audit form. However, our overall approach to information and knowledge flow between all work-packages and RUN-EU+ has been the dual membership of WP2 teams on the other WP and RUN-EU+ committees. This facilitates dissemination of planned actions and outputs bilaterally.

A more formal knowledge flow infrastructure is planned to be included in the Virtual Framework platform as discussed in 3.1 and also the hosting of an annual dissemination conference of RDI activity. The first was held online as part of the RUN-EU General Assembly Meeting from 1st to 5th November, 2021. The ISBN for the Conference Proceedings is 978-1-9196081-0-5. It is available through the RUN-EU website repository.



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