![SEASONED™ logo]

D 2.2 – Report from the Study visits
05/2025
WP 2 Upscaling the capacity of research management & administration units

FOOD SENSORY SCIENCE RESEARCH.

The project aims is to improve the knowledge, skills, and competencies of the research and admin staff of UPWr in the field of the sensory evaluation of food and consumer behaviour with special attention to newly designed innovative processed food products with healthrelated properties. The project also aims to establish an international network among leading universities and centres in food sensory analysis to prepare competitive research applications/proposals within the EU and global challenges (UN SDGs).

The project aims to establish an international network of leading universities, centres in food sensory analysis and innovation consultants (SDU, UMH, BCC, REDINN) to step up in science and research, improving managerial and administrative capacities, networking skills and strategies to engage society and citizens as well as public authorities and private businesses, and regional and European institutions. SEASONED will enable FBFS and its partners, leading research institutions from Spain, Denmark, and Italy, to co-develop a capacity building programme to share and integrate expertise and skills to access new research avenues and develop new approaches to prepare competitive research applications within the EU and global challenges (Green Deal, UN SDGs). Implementing Gender Balance Monitoring, Open Science, Citizen's Engagement, FAIR data research principles, and monitoring of Key Performance Indicators project will create short–to long-term societal, scientific, and economic impacts. Ultimately, UPWr's ambition is to develop and reach the top of the sensory evaluation centres' competencies and become the leading centre of excellence in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). As a result, at the end of the project and far beyond the project duration, UPWr wants to establish a Consumer Behaviour Centre (CBC). SEASONED CBC will be a unique platform dedicated to scientists (ESRs including the MSc and PhD students, ERs, other scientists from national and international units), business partners and consumers from this part of Europe.

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Grant Agreement No:	101079003	Project Acronym:	SEASONED
Funding Scheme:	C.3 Widening Participation, HORIZON-WIDERA-2021-ACCESS-03-01		
Project Title	Advances in food sensory analyses of novel foods.		
Project Coordinator	Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences (UPWr) Prof. Agnieszka Kita, agnieszka.kita@upwr.edu.pl		
Start date of the project:	1 October 2022	Duration:	34 months
Deliverable title:	Report from the Study visits		
Contractual delivery date:	Month 32 – May 2025		
Actual delivery date:	Month 32 – May 2025		
Type of Deliverable:	R — Document, report		
Dissemination level[1]:	PU - Public		

Document Revision History			
Date	Version	Author/Contributor/Reviewer	Summary of main changes
05.05.2025	1.0	Katarzyna Kopańczyk	First draft
12.05.2025	1.1	Jowita Chojcan	Second draft
28.05.2025	1.2	Roberto Pascal Martinez	Quality review and suggestions
29.05.2025	1.3	Maciej Supel	Quality review
30.05.2025	1.4	Agnieszka Kita	Final accept

SEASONED Consortium			
Participant Number	Participant Organisation Name	Short Name	Country
1	UNIWERSYTET PRZYRODNICZY WE WROCLAWIU	UPWr	PL
2	SYDDANSK UNIVERSITET	SDU	DK
3	UNIVERSIDAD MIGUEL HERNANDEZ DE ELCHE	UMH	ES
4	BASQUE CULINARY CENTER FUNDAZIOA	BCC	ES
5	REDINN - SRL	REDINN	IT

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[1] PU – Public, fully open (Deliverables flagged as public will be automatically published in CORDIS project's page), SEN – Sensitive (limited under the conditions of the Grant AgreementConsortium and the EC)

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1. Introduction

Work package 2 *Upscaling the capacity of research management & administration units* objective was to build up and train the administrative units and equip administrative staff in both hard and soft skills necessary to step up in expertise and skills in providing high-quality grant preparation, project management and support services. One of the key activities contributing to the achievement of Seasoned objective 2 (WP2>OB2) was a series of study visits.

2. Study visits at Partners' grant EU offices and administrative units. (Task 2.2)

2.1 Task description and study visits overview

The study visits implemented in Seasoned were aimed to enhance the competencies of administrative staff by exposing them to best practices in grant applications (pre-award offices), project management (post-award offices) and in general administrative services at Partners' institutions. Through direct engagement and observation, participants were able to discuss and verify the processes and procedures related to the project lifecycle at their home institution.

The following study visits schedule was implemented:
1) 1st study visit at SDU on 2-3 February 2023 (M5)
2) 2nd study visit at UMH on 25-26 September 2024 (M23)
3) 3rd study visit hybrid mode (online and at Redinn) on 3-28 March 2025 (M30)
4) 4th study visit (final meeting) at UPWr on 10-11 April 2025 (M31)

2.2 Study visit at SDU

The first study visit at SDU took place on 2-3 February 2023 along with 2nd GA and the 2nd Joint ideation workshop (T1.4). Since UPWr and SDU had not previously collaborated before the SEASONED project, the primary aim of the first visit was to establish connections between the universities' administrative staff and to gain an understanding of each partner's organizational structure. Administrative staff from UPWr, SDU, and UMH participated in the visit.

Agenda:

SEASONED Second meeting agenda

2-3 February 2023
Location: SDU

Executive Board meeting and Study visit (administrative staff) (Room Tesla)
GA and training (Room Ellehammer)

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Day 1: 2nd February 2023 (Thursday)

Day 1 - Part 1		
Executive Board meeting (Room Tesla), [Connection link will be sent via email] **GA and training (Room Ellehammer),** [Connection link will be sent via email]		
8.30– 9.30	Registration and welcome to SDU Coffee and pastry	
9.00 - 9.30	**Executive Board meeting -** part 2 Task 6.5 (30')	**[EB members only]**
9.30 – 10.45	**General Assembly** Welcome by the host (15') WP status update - part 1 **6*12' (75')**	**[ALL]** [SDU], Davide Giacalone [WP leaders] WP1: SDU WP2: UHM WP3: BCC WP4: REDINN WP5: UPWr WP6: UPWr
10.45 - 11.00	Coffee Break	
11.00 - 12.00	Research and networking skills: Proposal writing – part 2 (Ideation workshop) Task 1.4 (60')	[UWPr, SDU] SDU are facilitating this workshop (Doris Bell and Davide Giacalone)
12.00 - 12.30	Visit to SDU Philotek (30')	[SDU] Anne Thorst Melbye and Lone Bredahl
12.30 - 13.15	**Lunch break** **Lunch break**	
13.15 - 14.45	Research programme on products development and quality examination with a special emphasis on sensory evaluation of novel plant-based products Task 3.1 (75')	[UWPr]
14.45– 15.00	Coffee break	
15.00– 16.30	Project management skills Task 1.1 (90')	[BCC] Laura Vazquez

Day 2: 3rd February 2023 (Friday)

Day 2 - Part 1A		
Training (Room Ellehammer), [Connection link will be sent via email]		
8.30 - 9.00	Coffee and pastry in Room Ellehammer	
09.00 – 10.30	Getting published – part 1 Task 1.1 (90')	[SDU] Lone Bredahl
10.30 – 10.45	Coffee break	
	Getting published – part 2	[SDU]

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	Task 1.1 (90')	Davide Giacalone
12.15 – 13.15	**Lunch break** in Room Ellehammer	
13.15 – 14.15	Data Management – part 3 (Metadata in sensory science) Task 1.1 (60')	[SDU] Christina Rune
14.15 – 14.30	Coffee break	

You stay in Room Ellehammer for part 2 (Final discussion)

Day 2 - Part 1B		
Study visits at Partners' grant EU offices and administrative units (T2.2)		
Study visit - Administrative staff (Room Tesla), [Connection link will be sent via email]		
8.30 - 9.00	Coffee and pastry, in Room Ellehammer	
09.00 – 10.30	Proposal preparation process and grant agreement signing process - part 1 Task 2.2 (90')	[SDU] Doris Bell
10.30 – 10.45	Coffee break	
10.45 - 12.15	Proposal preparation process and grant agreement signing process - part 2 Task 2.2 (90')	[SDU] Doris Bell
12.15 – 13.15	**Lunch break** in Room Ellehammer	
13.15- 14.15	Closing discussion and planning of next study visit (60')	[ALL participants for the study visit]
14.15 - 14.30	Coffee break	

You need to move to Room Ellehammer for part 2 (Final discussion)

Day 2 - Part 2		
Final discussion (Room Ellehammer), [Connection link will be sent via email] – This is the same link as Day 2 – Part 1A		
14.30 – 16.30	Closing discussion and planning of next meeting (120') Discussion: - Follow-up from WP3 - Training suggestions (Task 1.1) - Task 1.3 (setting the date) - Summer school (setting the date) - 3. GA (setting the date) - Other	[ALL]

The host organization presented their structure and described how they cooperate with different university units (legal, financial etc.). The attending admin team have also presented their home institutions organisations and approach.

On the first day the participants (administrative and research staff) were able to get closer look on issues such as: i) project management – session led by BCC; ii) open science – session led by SDU, iii) data

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management plan - led by SDU. The very interesting insight into open science, data management and knowledge valorisation were provided by the visit at the University Library of Southern Denmark.

The sessions on proposal preparation process and grant agreement signing process were the main core of the second day. EU grant advisor Doris Bell from SDU has elaborated on support for project conception and consortium building, as well as SDU budget approval process. The SDU team has also shared their experience on strategic advice on EU policies and how they help with funding strategies for individuals and research teams.

Figure 1. *Study visit at SDU*

2.3 Study visit at UMH

The second study visit took place at the Miguel Hernández University of Elche (Spain) on 25-26.09.2025.

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Deviation: The second visit, originally planned for M10, took place in M24 due to the heavy workload of both administrative units at partner universities (UPWr, UMH). To observe and better map the processes at UPWr, the third study visit is going to take place in M31 (April 2025) at UPWr. The change has been accepted by the PO.

Agenda:

UNIVERSITAS
Miguel Hernández

hr
HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

Área de Proyectos
Internacionales
de Investigación

Day 1 – Wednesday, 25 September

9:00 - 9:30	Welcome coffee
9:30 - 9:45	Opening words meeting from IP of SEASONED Project – Angel Carbonell
9:45 – 10:30	Introducing and Explanation of SGI-OTRI
10:30 – 13:30	Sharing Good Practices in the UMH – UPWr in the participation of International Research Programmes

- Good Practices of the participation in Horizon Europe and others international Research Programmes
  - o Learning from common experiencies
  - o Acquisition of new practical skills
  - o Discovery of new ideas for effective Project management
- Good Practice in the management of International Projects
  - o Intercultural communication
  - o Special Project environment
  - o Effective cooperaiton and partnership
- Influencing and lobbying: Strategies to improve our impact in Europe

13:30 – 15:00	Lunch

15:00 – 17:00	Sharing Good Practices in the UMH – UPWr in the participation of International Research Programmes
20:30	Networking dinner

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Day 2 – Thursday, 26 September

9:00 – 11:30	UMH Doctoral School
	Presentation by the Director of the Doctoral School, Miguel Angel Sogorb
11:30 – 14:00	UPWr Presentation successes projects in Horizon Europe and others International Research Projects
	MSCA Programme UMH & UPWr
	Visit of departments involved in possible undertaken joint research
	Overview of the study visit - reflections
14:00 – 15:00	Lunch

The meetings provided participants with opportunities to exchange best practices in cooperation models between research groups and various administrative services, including proposal development, grant management, grant settlement, legal matters, and navigating the EU funding landscape. A further objective was to establish long-term cooperation between UPWr and UMH at the administrative level.

It is worth mentioning that the UPWr team was formally welcomed at UMH by prof. Angel Carbonell, who leads the UMH team involved in the SEASONED project. He also happens to be the Vice-Rector for Research and Technology Transfer, which places him also on the formal side of research management. In fact, more UMH researchers were involved in meeting the team from Wrocław, which shows the partners commitment to the TWINNING idea where research activities go hand in hand with research management and administration.

The programme was a mixture of formal presentations- for example by Miguel Angel Sogorb, the Director of the Doctoral School at UMH, and less formal process analyses supported by slides presented by members of administrative teams of both institutions.

On the first day the discussions showed both important differences as regards processes and procedures, which can be related to the size of both institutions, and similarities in approaches and overcoming hurdles when there is time pressure on completing tasks such as a „rushed proposal submission" or the submission of a mid-term report to Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe.

While on the second day a more formal presentation took place, during which the Head of the Doctoral School presented its history, objectives and opportunities for joint activities between the two universities. Several aspects were discussed afterwards. Most notably the fact that in Poland Doctoral Schools were supposed to be set up in a similar manner as the one that was applied in the case of the UMH Doctoral School. Potential for interaction between students from both Schools was identified during the online International Congress, which is held online every year. The event offers doctoral students a chance to have their first presentations or posters at an international conference. Also, the presentation showed

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how self-presentation and public speaking skills are considered important at UMH and the idea of a dedicated course offered to doctoral students is something that the UPWr team was impressed with and wanted to discuss with Polish Doctoral School governors on their return from Spain.

Furthermore, a presentation was conducted on how the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) is implemented at UMH. The UWPr's staff members were particularly impressed with UMH's commitment to research integrity and ethics, which is something that could be organised in a more efficient way at UPWr as a way to address the EU's commitment to these aspects, which is reflected in ethical reviews carried out on all proposals recommended for funding. It was planned that these issues will be further developed during the final meeting at UPWr, Wroclaw.

The visit was wrapped up by a working lunch where potential future actions were agreed on and the Spanish team offered plenty of useful advice on the Spanish culture, the region of Valencia and its uniqueness compared to the other Spanish regions.

2.4 Study visit hybrid mode (online and at Redinn)

Capacity building in Communication & Dissemination in Horizon Europe proposals was carried out in two parts. The first part included a series of presentations followed by practical exercises that participants attended online. The second part was an in-person visit to Rome, where the lead partner's office is located. Staff members of both the pre-award office and PR department at UPWr were among the participants.

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Here's the agenda for the online part:

Week 1: Communication & Dissemination for Horizon Europe Proposal Development

Monday, March 3, 2025 (10 am CET - 11.30 CET) – Leonardo Piccinetti

- Introduction to the Agenda and team

- Fundamentals of Communication in Research Proposals

- Understanding communication, dissemination, and exploitation in Horizon Europe proposals

- Identifying key stakeholders and target audiences

- Best practices for writing a compelling Communication & Dissemination Plan

Wednesday, March 5, 2025 (10 am CET - 12.00 CET) – Developing an Effective Communication Strategy & Measuring Impact. - Leonardo Piccinetti

Section 1: Performance Indicators in Excellence

- Understanding Excellence in Horizon Europe proposals

- Key performance indicators (KPIs) for measuring research excellence

- Best practices in defining Excellence criteria for a strong proposal

Section 2: Project's Pathways Towards Impact

- Defining scientific, economic, and societal impact of Horizon Europe projects

- Mapping the project's pathways towards impact (short-term, medium-term, long-term)

- Tools for impact assessment and reporting

- Integrating impact into the Communication & Dissemination Plan

Friday, March 7, 2025 (10 am CET - 12.00 CET)   – Practical Session & Assignment Leonardo Piccinetti

- Case study analysis: Examining successful EU project communication and dissemination strategies

- Exercise: Drafting a Communication & Dissemination section for a Horizon Europe proposal, incorporating Excellence KPIs and impact pathways

- Feedback session with trainers

Schedule Week 2

Week 2: Communication & Dissemination for Horizon Europe Project Implementation

Monday, March 10, 2025 (10 am CET - 12:00 CET) – Dissemination & Impact Measurement - Mauro Amoruso

- Effective dissemination techniques: conferences, workshops, policy briefs

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- KPIs for measuring impact & reporting to the EU

- Addressing risks & adapting strategies

Thursday, March 13, 2025 (10 am CET - 12:00 CET) – Communication During Project Implementation-Aneesa Reeve

- Strategies for engaging stakeholders and ensuring project visibility throughout its lifecycle

- Open Science, citizen engagement, and policy impact

- Tools for project websites, newsletters, media outreach

Friday, March 14, 2025 (10 am CET - 12:00 CET) – Practical Session & Assignment

- Hands-on workshop: Creating a dissemination roadmap for an existing research project

- Group discussion and expert feedback & Dissemination section for a Horizon Europe proposal, incorporating Excellence KPIs and impact pathways

- Feedback session with trainers

The online part took place over two weeks and offered a comprehensive introduction to key themes and practices related to communication and dissemination in Horizon projects. Participants engaged in a series of presentations led by Redinn staff and associates, which covered strategic communication planning, audience targeting, message development, digital tools, and Horizon Europe communication and dissemination requirements. Each presentation was followed by a related exercise, allowing participants to immediately apply what they had learned in a practical context.

Exercises gave participants the chance to apply theoretical concepts to practical scenarios, often simulating real project challenges. These exercises fostered collaboration and critical thinking, while group discussions and live Q&A sessions allowed for reflection, clarification, and shared learning. The virtual format also created a foundation for deeper engagement during the in-person visit.

The visit in Rome had the following agenda:

ROME VISIT AGENDA
From 24th March to 28th March 2025

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Capacity Building in Communication & Dissemination of European Research

📍 **Location:** REDINN C/O SAPIENZA,TOR VERGATA, CNR   📅 **Duration:** 5 days

Day 1 – Monday 24th March :Travel and Arrive to Rome: Accommodation

Day 2 – Tuesday 25th March: Site Visit UNIVERSITY "SAPIENZA"
- **Meeting at 9:30** in front of Sapienza Main Entrance: Piazzale Aldo Moro 5 - Roma
- Walking distance to reach Palazzina Tumminelli - (Building CU007)
- **Meeting at 10:00** with Grant Office Managers of SAPIENZA

Dott. Ciro Franco (Head of International Research Office), **Dott. Emanuele Gennuso** (Head of Unit "Grant Office and International Collaborative Programs Unit) and **Dott.ssa Giuditta Carabella** (Head of "Grant Office and Individual International Programs Unit), **Dott.ssa Daniela Magrini** (Head of Unit "Scientific Cooperation and Networks").

- Grant Office presentation on EU project strategies: PMs, Costs, Communication.
- Discussion with officers in charge for EU Projects: examples

End of Meeting Grant Office 11:30
- **From 11:30 to 12:30** visit at SAPIENZA Architecture and Campus https://virtualtour.uniroma1.it/

        LUNCH TIME
- **At 14:00** Science Cafè at Cannizzato Building
- Meeting with *Prof. Federico Marini* and his Team (Department Chemistry).
- Meeting with *Dott.ssa Claudia Zoani* (Division Sustainable Agrifood Systems) - ENEA Casaccia
  - ➢ Visit Labs and Presentation projects: actions in place and dissemination, communication exploitation results (KPI)
  - ➢ How to integrate research findings into EU policy and innovation impact & roadmapping for research infrastructures.
  - ➢ Roundtable Networking discussions and collaboration about vision and concepts for future opportunities
- Reading of rapporteur report - End of Meeting at 17:00

Day 3 – Wednesday 26th March: Site Visit UNIVERSITY "TOR VERGATA"
- **Meeting at 9:30 at the hotel and driving to Tor Vergata**
- Meeting with *Prof. Arnold Rakaj* and his Team (Department of Biology- Experimental Ecology and Aquaculture)
  - ➢ Visti Labs and Presentation of on-going projects: actions in place and dissemination, communication and exploitation results (KPI)
  - ➢ How to integrate research findings into EU policy and innovation roadmaps
  - ➢ Roundtable Networking discussions and collaboration about vision and concepts for future opportunities
- Reading of rapporteur report - End of Meeting at 13:30

        ***LUNCH TIME and* DRIVING BACK TO ROME CITY CENTER**
        VISIT AT GALLERIA BORGHESE MUSEUM from 17:00 to 19:00
        Free Time and Dinner

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Day 4 – Thursday 27th March : Site Visit APRE (Italian Agency for European Research)
Italian National Research Council - CNR

- **Meeting at 11:30 at the hotel and driving to APRE (Via Cavour,71 – 00184 Roma)**
- Meeting with *APRE Managers-NCP Dott.ssa Serena Borgna* and APRE Experts Team
  - ➢ Description of APRE and its services
  - ➢ How to integrate research findings into EU policy and innovation roadmaps
  - ➢ Presentation of correct actions to put in place a good dissemination, communication and exploitation plan.
  - ➢ Roundtable Networking discussions and about next calls for future opportunities

End of Meeting at 13:00

LUNCH TIME

- **At 14:00** Science Cafè at CNR – National Research Council M.Picone Institute Via dei Taurini,19
- Meeting with *Prof. Danilo Corradini (Chemistry), Prof. Pasquale Carotenuto (IAC- M.Picone Institute – Maths), Dott.ssa Serena Fugaro (Maths Committee for Exploitation)*
  - ➢ Visit of Institute and CNR Presentation
  - ➢ On going project presentation (PATHFOOD) and the actions in place for dissemination, communication and exploitation results (KPI)
  - ➢ How to integrate research topics with EU policy and innovation roadmaps
  - ➢ Roundtable Networking discussions and collaboration about vision and concepts for future opportunities
- Reading of rapporteur report - End of Meeting at 17:00

Free Time and Dinner

Day 5 – 28th March: Free time to visit Rome accordingly with time of return flight

Over the course of the visit, participants engaged in a series of activities that included site visits, micro training sessions, each focusing on a specific aspect of communication and dissemination—ranging from audience segmentation to effective use of digital channels, and roundtable discussions. These interactions allowed for the exploration of real-world examples of how communication and dissemination activities need to be strategically integrated into project design and implementation.

A key highlight of the Rome visit was the opportunity for participants to meet with project coordinators of funded projects e.g. **METROFOOD** project and **SWITCH** project, who shared first-hand experiences, challenges, and lessons learned from implementing communication and dissemination activities in these projects. These exchanges sparked rich discussions on stakeholder engagement, media outreach, choice of activities that enhance project visibility, use of digital tools, and effective communication planning — all central elements of successful dissemination of project results.

The meetings provided a collaborative space for UPWr participants to receive feedback and co-develop ideas for improving visibility and impact in their upcoming projects. The informal networking moments also played a crucial role in setting up new connections e.g. with APRE, the Italian Horizon Europe Contact Point, paving the way for future cooperation and knowledge-sharing.

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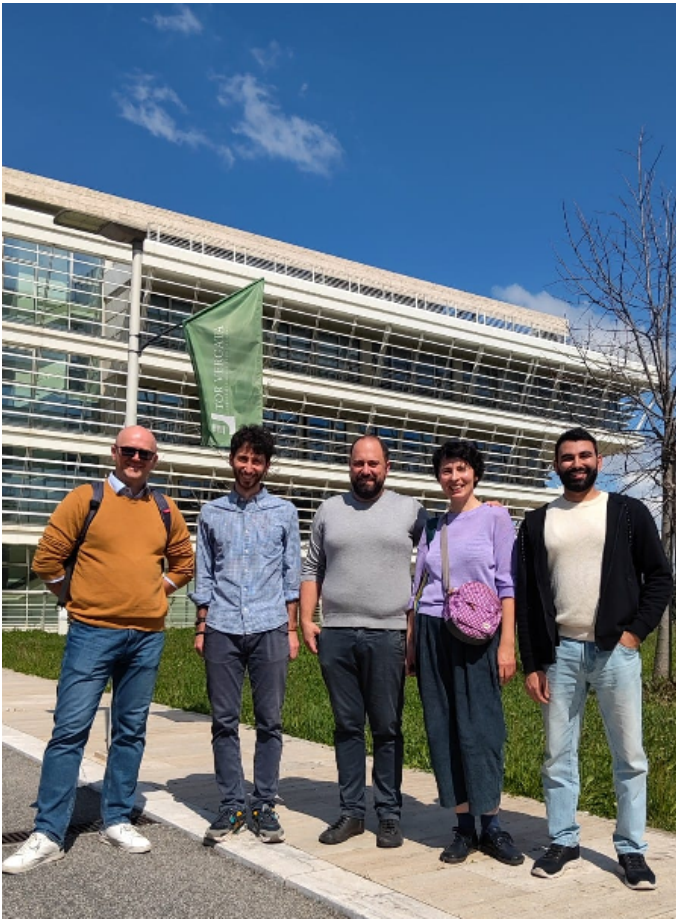
2.5 Study visit at UPWr

The final meeting of administrative staff took place at UPWr on 10-11 April 2025.

Agenda for the administrative staff meeting - Wrocław, 10-11 April 2025

Day 1 – Thursday, 10 April 2025, C-3 building, Plac Grunwaldzki 24a, room 018 (ground floor)

9:00 - 9:30 Welcome coffee

9:30 - 9:45 Opening words from the Host University (prof. Agnieszka Kita – Seasoned PI)

9:45 – 10:00 Introductions – new members in the admin team

10:00 – 10:45 Institutional updates – UPWr, SDU, UMH present brief updates on:

- **Recent research highlights and achievements (period October 2024-March 2025)** (up to 10 min. presentation each)

- Any new processes/systems introduced in this time – How the process of risk assessment at the pre-award stage looks like at the universities?

- Challenges and solutions

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10:45 – 11.00 Coffee break

11.00 – 13.00 Good practices in research support (pre and post award)

Potential topics:
- HR Excellence in Research – how does it connect with Horizon Europe? How to ensure compliance at project implementation phase? etc. (UMH – presentation; UPWr - presentation)
- Managing Ethics in research projects – UMH presentation (online session)
- Communication and Dissemination strategies in Horizon Europe projects (pre- and post-award) – Jowita Chojcan (International Research Office)

13:00 – 14:15 Lunch

14:15 – 16:00 Good practices in research support (pre and post award)
- Pre award best practices at the SDU RIO (online presentation 20-25 min)
- Using AI-based tools in Research Support (online presentation 20-25 min)

19:30 Networking dinner

Day 2 – Friday, 11 April 2025, A-1 Building, Norwida 25, room 205

9:15 - 9:30 Welcome coffee

9.30 - 10.45 Introduction to Horizon WIDERA calls 2025 – 2027 (presentation Karina Barantseva from National Contact Point)

10.45- 11.00 Coffee break

11.00 - 12.45 workshop on **European Excellence Initiative** - working in groups, analysing the call text, assigning actions to the Expected Outcomes etc. (UMH guests, UPWr pre-award & post-award, business cooperation department; NCP – facilitator)

13.00 - 13.45 lunch

14.00 - 16.00 – workshop on rebuilding/transforming the ICARE proposal (HEI Initiative call) into expected outcomes of European Excellence Initiative (UMH guests, UPWr pre-award & post-award, business cooperation department; NCP – facilitator)

The first day of the meeting began with opening remarks delivered by Prof. Agnieszka Kita from UPWr, PI of the Seasoned project. Shortly after, the new members of the administrative team were introduced to all participants (part of the UMH team and colleagues from SDU joined a meeting online). The morning continued with institutional updates from UPWr, SDU and UMH. Each institution provided a short

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presentation highlighting their recent project updates and new processes/tools implemented, e.g. UMH – the platform for staff effort monitoring, UPWr – the new procedure for project risk assessment.

The next session focused on good practices in research support (both pre- and post-award) and the topics were chosen based on the previous study visits experience. It included:

- **HR Excellence in Research**: UPWr shared their experience and post-audit insights, while UMH presented their ongoing implementation and everyday challenges. The UPWr part was presented by Katarzyna Osińska from HR department, who shared her experience from the last EC site visit, and gave a lot of useful recommendations to colleagues from UMH who are expecting the site visit next year. The discussion of a variety of HR Excellence in Research issues continued at length, even extending into the lunch break.
- **Managing Ethics in Research Projects**: Alberto Pastor Campos, the Head of the Responsible Research Office (UMH) gave an online presentation on their approach to managing ethics. The comprehensive approach UMH applies to managing ethics issues at the pre-award and post-award phase was very impressive. UPWr
- **Communication and Dissemination Strategies**: UPWr presented strategies tailored to Horizon Europe projects, including reflections from a recent Seasoned capacity building visit, led by Jowita Chojcan from the International Research Office.

The afternoon session was led by the colleagues from SDU - Delia Puzzovio, a research support consultant at SDU RIO (the central Research Support Unit), and Dusan Misevic, a member of the ulynks, a specialised IT unit at SDU. While Delia has given an overview of how research support works at SDU RIO and how its services have recently been enhanced through the use of AI tools, Dusan focused on the specific tools developed in-house. He briefly explained how these tools were created and the benefits they offer to both researchers and support staff. Everyone in attendance was clearly impressed with the tools and potential time savings enabled by such a well-designed application.

Day 2 was dedicated to the WIDERA part of the Horizon Europe programme. An all-day trainings session was organised for both UPWr and UMH featuring a brainstorming exercise dedicated to a potential joint proposal. The main aim was to deepen participants' understanding of WIDERA's objectives and related funding opportunities. Dr Karina Barentseva from the Polish National Contact Point facilitated the session.

The session began with an overview of the political and policy context behind WIDERA, highlighting its focus on reducing research and innovation disparities across Europe and fostering stronger integration within the European Research Area. Participants explored the programme's two main strands: *Widening Participation and Spreading Excellence*, and *Reforming and Enhancing the European R&I System*.

After a short break the workshop part began with an aim to brainstorm ideas for a potential joint project to be submitted under the upcoming call - **European Excellence Initiative**. This collaborative exercise offered participants a valuable opportunity to focus on translating the call's requirements into concrete project activities. Special attention was given to shaping a coherent work plan, aligning institutional strengths with expected outcomes, and identifying possible roles and contributions from UMH and UPWr respectively.

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The interactive format encouraged dialogue and peer learning, with practical discussions on how institutions can position themselves more competitively within the WIDERA framework. Several case studies and examples of successful projects were analysed to highlight best practices and common challenges. Everyone in attendance appreciated the opportunity for direct engagement and in-depth discussion, especially the chance to compare approaches and explore potential synergies for future collaboration.

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3. Conclusions

The study visit at Partners' institutions (SDU, UMH) along with the final meeting at UPWr reinforced everyone's belief that personal contacts will enable better cooperation between both pre-award and post-award offices, which can lead to quicker and more informed decisions as regards joint projects, consortium building, audit advice, ethics support etc. Additionally, the capacity building visit on Communication & Dissemination in Horizon Europe proposals will strengthen both the UPWr's PR department and pre-award office by enhancing their ability to design and support high-impact communication and dissemination plans.

Several important conclusions can be drawn from the visits:
All universities represent a different organisational structure which may be related to the different sizes of the institutions. At SDU there is a central office (RIO) cooperating with the administrative support at the faculties. At the UMH, the group dedicated to international projects is very small – 3 persons compared to UPWr – 10-ish group, which is spread over two separate units dealing with (1) pre and (2) post award activities. Also, at UMH both pre- and post-award services are placed in one unit.

Despite that, UPWr and UMH universities seem to follow a similar process flow when it comes to support of the proposal preparation process. The only difference being a legally trained person who supports the UMH unit while at UPWr all legal staff are part of the larger legal team. When it comes to the post-award management a lot more differences were identified with the UPWr team also responsible for the actual running and co-ordinating activities, procurement, recruitment, etc while the UMH team supervises things like procurement for instance and liaises with other units to carry out these tasks.

SDU seems to be the most advanced in terms of AI tools usage both at the pre-award and post-award processes, e.g. matching interdisciplinary groups, linking researchers with EU calls. UPWr and UMH were both impressed with the tools presented by colleagues from SDU. What seems to be the biggest obstacle in developing the tools at UPWr is the lack of IT specialists. At the SDU it was a bottom-up initiative with a small group of researchers and IT developers who have created the software.

Another notable difference between UPWr and UMH was a centralised Ethics Unit that carries out an ethical review of all projects at UMH before the grant agreement is signed. This is something that the UPWr team was interested in exploring, with an aim to investigate if a similar unit could be set up at UPWr in the foreseeable future. Also, the UPWr team were impressed with the UMH's commitment to the gender issues and again a separate unit that is tasked with that. This area seems to be where the two universities could cooperate more closely in the short-term perspective.

Furthermore, the implementation of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) was also very different at UPWr compared to UMH. In the case of UPWr, the Human Resources department leads activities, while at UMH the Research Support Office is also heavily involved. UPWr's longer-standing experience as an HR Excellence in Research Logo holder meant that, in this area, they naturally took on more of a leading role.

The conclusion from the Study visit dedicated to Communication & Dissemination is that internal collaboration is crucial. Strong cooperation between the pre-award office and PR/communications team improves the quality and feasibility of C&D plans. Institutions that foster this internal synergy are better positioned to support researchers in writing more competitive proposals and achieving more effective project implementation.

Satisfaction surveys – Summary

Following the visits, satisfaction surveys were conducted among participants, whose results allowed for the formulation of key conclusions regarding (1) observed differences, (2) similarities, (3) challenges, (4) potential areas for cooperation, and (5) adaptation of solutions.

Conclusions on Structure and Organization

The organizational structure of research project support differs significantly among UPWr, SDU, and UMH. UPWr operates a centralized structure with a single unit supporting projects. At SDU, research support is partially located within faculties and collaborates with the central Research & Innovation Organization (RIO). At UMH, the team handling international projects is smaller (3 people) compared to the UPWr team (approx. 10 people), with one unit at UMH responsible for both pre-award and post-award.

The observed structural differences are likely related to the different scale of the universities. SDU is significantly larger (approx. 4000 employees, over 26000 students) than UPWr (approx. 1500 employees, approx. 7000 students). Neither system was considered inherently better but rather adapted to the size of the institution.

Conclusions on Procedures and Processes

In the process of preparing project proposals, UPWr and UMH employ a similar workflow. A key difference at UMH is the presence of a lawyer dedicated to supporting the unit, whereas at UPWr, legal personnel are part of a larger legal team.

In managing projects after obtaining funding (post-award), greater differences were observed. The UPWr team is more involved in coordination, public procurement, and recruitment, while the UMH team primarily supervises these activities and collaborates with other units. Differences also concerned project accounting.

SDU practices organizing internal "kick-off" meetings at the start of a project. This solution was evaluated as very good and worth considering for implementation at UPWr.

SDU has different support roles: an account manager at the faculty level and a project manager at the central level. At UPWr, the process support is provided by a project officer at the central level. The need to build a team of project managers at UPWr was indicated.

Identified Areas of Good Practices and Challenges

The visit to UMH revealed that the unit at UPWr possesses strong and well-established research support practices.

UMH appears better organized in managing Ethics and Gender issues. It has a centralized Ethics Unit that conducts ethical reviews of all projects before the grant agreement is signed, and a separate unit dealing with gender issues. Setting up a similar office at UPWr should be considered for more effective ethics management. These areas represent a potential field for closer cooperation between the universities.

SDU is the most advanced in using AI tools for research support (e.g., matching groups, linking researchers with calls). A barrier to developing such tools at UPWr is the lack of IT specialists.

The importance of networking (e.g., DARMA in Denmark) for contacts with EU agencies and monitoring trends was emphasized. It was suggested to increase UPWr's presence in Brussels to obtain first-hand information and plan strategies. The value of a dedicated position for tracking EU trends was noted.

Challenges identified for UPWr include encouraging researchers to apply for competitive projects and aligning their research with societal and industrial needs. Convincing researchers and linking science with societal needs are challenges common to both UPWr and SDU.

Cooperation Potential

The study visits, especially to SDU and UMH, and the follow-up meetings confirmed the importance of personal contacts for better cooperation between pre-award and post-award units. These contacts enable quicker and more informed decisions regarding joint projects, consortium building, audit advice, and ethics support.

Significant potential for scientific and project cooperation between UPWr and SDU and UMH was identified. Particularly in areas such as food research, environmental engineering, spatial management, green technologies (UPWr-SDU), and generally in scientific matters (e.g., cooperation of PhD students/researchers) and project matters (UPWr-UMH). Calls were identified with potential for the universities to jointly prepare proposals.

It is possible to match PhD students from UPWr with mentors at SDU to apply for individual grants, such as MSCA PF.

Recommendations for Future Activities and Visit Organization

Survey participants suggested that future study visits should be longer (minimum 5 days).

They advocated for greater focus on practical aspects and tips, including analyzing specific call texts, practical aspects of the application process (proposal planning, working with researchers, documents, roles, signing the GA), and joint brainstorming on proposal ideas.

It was suggested that including representatives from other countries in future visits would enrich the experience.

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The necessity of international exchange of experiences for the university's development in acquiring and managing projects was emphasized.

In conclusion, the study visits to SDU and UMH provided valuable insights into the diverse structures and processes of research support in European universities. Despite differences stemming from scale, specific areas and practices (e.g., ethics and gender management at UMH, AI usage at SDU, internal kick-off meetings at SDU) worth analyzing and potentially considering for implementation at UPWr were identified. The importance of building personal relationships and active participation in research networks for future cooperation and development was also highlighted. Simultaneously, the surveys indicated the need for more in-depth, practical sessions during future capacity building activities.

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