



Work Package 4 - UNITA Research and Innovation


Deliverable 4.2 - An operational model
for R&I Hubs
(including action groups)

F. Marias (WP4 Coordinator)



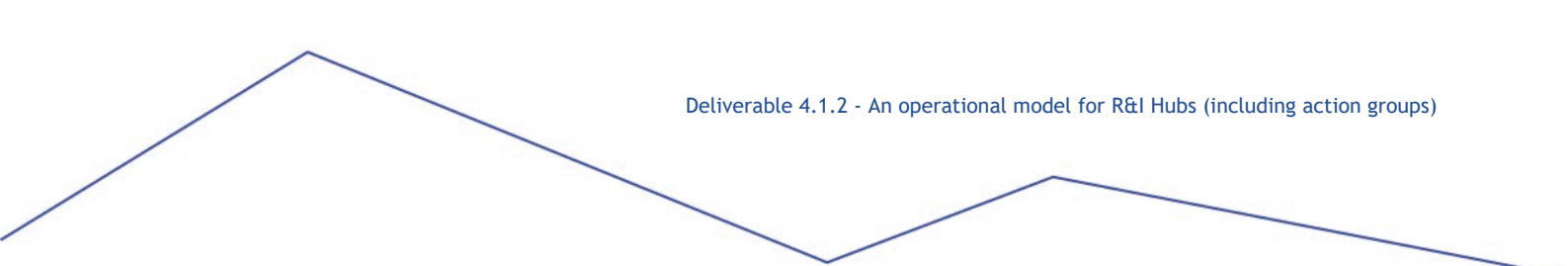
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Summary	2
1 Introduction and background.....	2
1.1 Need for hubs	2
1.2 Preliminary steps to hubs design.....	3
1.2.1 Connecting researchers	3
1.2.2 Organizing hub governance.....	3
2 Operational models for the UNITA WP4 R&I Hubs.....	4
2.1 WP4 General Organisation	4
2.2 WP4 Coordinating Committee	5
2.3 The R&I Hubs.....	6
2.3.1 Directors and deputy directors	6
2.3.2 The R&I Hubs task force	8
3 Risk Issues.	9
4 Conclusion.....	9

Summary

UNITA's Work Package 4 (WP4) on Research and Innovation (R&I) focuses on three main thematic areas: Cultural Heritage (CH), Circular Economy (CE), and Renewable Energies (RE). Its first task is devoted to “*focussing research on territories*” (Task 4.1) and is led by UPPA. The first tool that was created corresponds to Sub Task 4.1.1 “*Identifying actors in the three main areas*”. In order to fulfil the activities planned in the Grant Agreement and corresponding to “*connect research and learning*” (Task 4.2) and to “*energize the territories*” (Task 4.3), R&I Hubs had to be designed (Sub Task 4.1.2). The aim of this document is to give insights on the process that led to the current operational model and on the presentation of this model.

1 Introduction and background

1.1 Need for hubs

UNITA's Work Package 4 (WP4) on Research and Innovation (R&I) focuses on three main thematic areas (Cultural Heritage, Circular Economy, and Renewable Energies) in order to contribute to the development of rural and mountain areas through promoting the value of the natural resources, developing circular economy networks (including bio-economy), linking different economic activities (agriculture, tourism, industry and crafts), promoting the richness of the cultural and linguistic heritage, and optimizing the relationships between the different actors of each ecosystem.

Each of these thematic areas responds to a particular crisis, or societal challenge, that we all face today in Europe. Cultural heritage is pivotal today as it reinforces Europe's cultural identity in the face of Brexit, populist or extremist ideologies, or even the current COVID-19 crisis. Circular economy is a vital issue to examine in order to empower responsible consumers, invent more sustainable products, and reduce waste at all levels of the production and consumption chain. Renewable Energies are critical in order to place the European Union at the forefront of the fight against environmental pollution and global warming, and make energy accessible to all.

UNITA wishes to raise awareness about these societal challenges in order to strengthen our rural territories, empower our cross-border mountain communities, and reduce inequalities between the core and its peripheries through a creative combination of education and research. The project promises to deliver world-class quality research through innovative collaborations and pioneering projects on topics that matter most in today's European Union. UNITA will create a synergy amongst the students and researchers of our six universities and local stakeholders and companies of the regions concerned. In order to achieve this synergy across Southern Europe, UNITA is launching three Research & Innovation Hubs around Cultural Heritage, Circular Economy and Renewable Energies. These hubs constitute networks of researchers across universities working on projects in close collaboration with students and local stakeholders both in the public and private sectors.

1.2 Preliminary steps to hubs design

1.2.1 Connecting researchers

In order to build these hubs, it has been first necessary to “*Identify actors in the three main areas*” (Sub task 4.1.1). Indeed, as stated in Deliverable 4.1.1 by the end of May 2021 a first version of the cartography of the research activities being carried out in the alliance has been set-up. It was resulting from a call for expression of interest that was proposed to all the researchers of the alliance but also from work that was performed by groups of researchers that collected, analysed and organized the answers to this call. These groups were the embryos of the hubs for which the present document aims at describing the daily operation. This cartography was also a first step in making every researcher from UNITA to estimate possible collaborations within the alliance.

Thanks to funding from French *Agence Nationale de la Recherche* (ANR), it has been possible to offer 8 grants for Cotutelle PhD within the alliance. By the 7th of June 2021, a call for *Cotutelle PhD Proposal* was set-up and sent to the cartography’s contributors asking them to build a joint PhD Program. By the mid of June, 13 proposals were received (6 CH, 4 CE and 3 RE). The selection process was carried out by the embryos of the hub that had previously operate the organisation of the cartography.

Physical meetings of these groups were set-up by the mid of July. Cultural Heritage group met at UPPA, Circular Economy at UVT and Renewable Energy at USMB. During these meetings, the goal was not only that the connections between researchers is increased, but also to prepare face to face seminars, during which all the researchers of the alliance having interest in the three thematic of UNITA might get physically connected to their UNITA neighbours. These seminars took place on the 14th and 15th of October 2021 at UNITO for Cultural Heritage, 27th and 28th of October 2021 at UBI for Renewable Energy and 28th and 29th of October at UNIZAR for Circular Economy. 172 Researchers finally attend these seminars (either physically, around 130, or remotely). **The WP4 R&I Hubs were launched...**

1.2.2 Organizing hub governance

From the Kick-Off Re-UNITA on the 6th of November 2020, activities of WP4 were developed under the organization of two separate boards. The WP4 coordinate committee and the WP4 task force. While the first one had mainly concern with the organization of the research activities and their structuration, the second one was the kingpin for the development of the cartography. Some meetings took place for each thematic group, but the main meetings were organized for the coordinating committee and for the overall task force.

The work devoted to the design of the R&I Hubs really started by May 2021 where the coordinating committee had first thoughts on the organization of the R&I Hubs. Starting from a first proposal (see Figure 1) all universities worked by their own and present the result of their study to the WP4 Coordinating Committee.

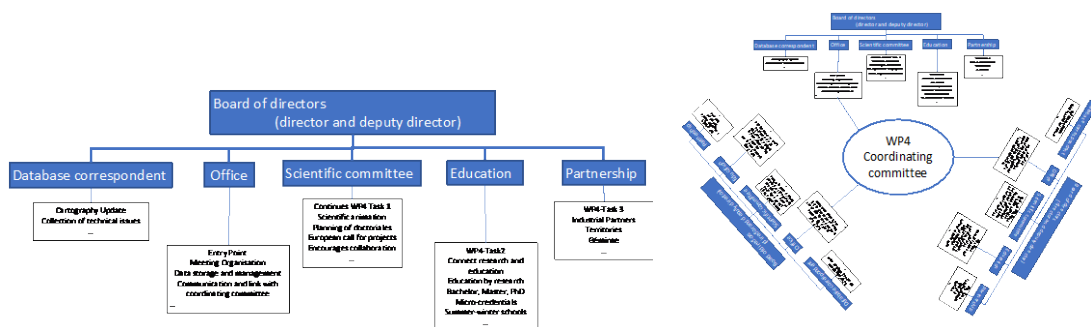


Figure 1 : First proposal for R&I Hub design and WP4 Organization

Finally, the design of the WP4 and R&I Hubs was presented to an “extraordinary meeting” on the 23rd of July 2021 where both the coordinating committee and the complete task force were joined. Since then, The WP4 was organized with a coordinating committee and the 3 R&I Hubs. Details on the current operation of the structure is given below

2 Operational models for the UNITA WP4 R&I Hubs

2.1 WP4 General Organisation

Operation of the R&I hubs could not be described without explaining its links with the overall project. Indeed R&I Hubs activities take place in the frame of the WP4, which itself, is a part of the European University UNITA and its different boards. Indeed, most of the progress of the project is being considered by UNITA Management Committee before being escalated to the Governance Board, and WP4 acts as a connection between research activities carried out in the hubs and these management and decisional boards. On the other hand, UNITA offices are key actors in the daily operation of all UNITA activities, including, among other, research. This means that they also need to have a specific position and connection with the R&I Hubs. Taking into consideration these different elements, the final organization of the WP4 was proposed during the meeting of the 23rd of July 2021, and to the Governance board held in Pau on the 23rd of September. As shown on Figure 2, it is composed of a coordinating committee, the three R&I Hubs and the UNITA offices.

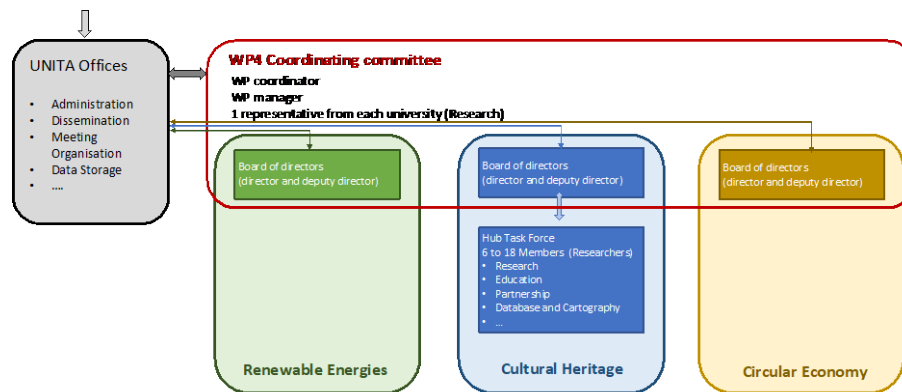


Figure 2 : Organisation of the WP4 and its coordinating committee.

2.2 WP4 Coordinating Committee

The WP4 Coordinating committee is the interface between the R&I Hubs and the management of the overall project. Thanks to the coordination by the WP4 leader there is a cross connection between this WP4 Coordinating committee, the overall project and the research activities. These ones are being reported to the WP4 coordinating by the Hubs directors and deputy directors. It is also necessary that the research activities being carried out in the hubs be in close connection with the research council of each partner university. This is the reason why, for each partner university, a researcher connected to its research council sits at the WP4 CC.

Finally, this coordinating committee is composed of:

- The WP4 coordinator (Prof F. Marias, UPPA)
- The WP4 Manager (Dr. L. Dissard until 1st of September 2021)
- A representative of the research council of each university
 - Prof. S. Soccoro, UBI
 - Prof. C. Haritchabalet, UPPA
 - Prof. J.L. Got, USMB
 - Prof D. Vizman, UVT
 - Prof C. Prandi UNITO
 - Prof S. Scarpellini, UNIZAR
- The Director and Deputy director for each hub
 - Prof. L. Roussillon-Constanty for UPPA, and Dr J. Cooke for UNITO (*Cultural Heritage*)
 - Prof. J.M. Fraile for UNIZAR and Prof. G. Mircea for UVT (*Circular Economy*)
 - Prof. B. Stutz for USMB and Prof. A. J. Marques Cardoso for UBI (*Renewable Energy*).

Representative of the research council of each University are appointed by their own University. Director and Vice director of the hubs are nominated by the governance board, for 1 year. The

specific procedure used for this nomination is detailed in section 3.3.1 “*Directors and deputy Directors*”.

Meetings of the WP4 Coordinating committee are organized online monthly, under the coordination of the WP4 leader and managed by WP4 Coordinating Committee manager. During 2021, these meetings were held on, the 6th of May, the 26th of May, the 1st of July, the 23rd of July, the 3rd of September, the 1st of October, and the 10th of November). Related information (Slideshows and minutes of meetings) is stored in the 3_U_WP4 Folder of the Datacloud.

2.3 The R&I Hubs

2.3.1 Directors and deputy directors

Within each hub the Board of Directors has a specific role since it coordinates all the research activities that need to be performed by the hub itself. The activities correspond to the fulfilment of the Tasks 4.2 and 4.3, led by USMB and UNIZAR respectively, and that ensure “*Connecting Research and Learning*” and “*energizing the territories*”, with corresponding deliverables and milestones. Hub Directors and deputy directors ensure proper activities of the hubs with the help of associated task forces. A “job description” was created in order to ask for candidacy to these specific positions.

Job Description.

Main Role

The WP4 R&I Hub director is at the heart of the research activities within European University UNITA. He/she ensures team animation of its task force and respect of the deadlines and content of the deliverable that need to be produced by each hub, in accordance with the UNITA Project. He/she also ensures link between research activities produced in the field of its hub (Cultural heritage, Circular Economy, Renewable Energy) and the WP4 Coordinating Committee which is an interface between hubs and UNITA Management committee.

Activities (3 to 4 hrs/week)

1. To be the referent for the thematic of the hub (CH, CE, RE) - for current and all prospective matters
2. Coordinate all the actions scheduled in the research-related areas of the UNITA network as de-scribed in the action plan (research, link between training and research, partnership, micro credentials, summer/winter schools, link with long life learners training programs...)
3. Head the hub meetings with representatives (task force) from partner universities every month

4. Organise effective collaboration of researcher's activities within the alliance through recurrent research presentations (weekly? Every two weeks? Monthly?) and seminars (every six months)
5. Participate in monthly meetings of the WP4 Coordinating committee
6. Actively participate in the development of the hub and establishing new partnership through various schemes (Conferences, seminars, Geminae, etc.)
7. Encourage and coordinate applications to cfps (such as Cofund 2021 or Horizon Europe).

The procedure that was set during WP4 Coordinating Committee meeting of the 1st of October 2021 for the nomination of the R&I Hub directors and deputy directors was the following:

- Setting-up of a R&I Hub Director "job description" and validation by the task forces of the Hubs before 12th of October
- Hub Temporary administrators send the job description to the Hubs Task Forces to collect candidacy before the 22nd of October (Possible discussion between candidates to define decide whether application is for direction or deputy direction)
- Appointment by each task force of the hubs (either by e-mail or during physical meeting) of the two candidates
- **Final nomination by the Governance Board of the 26th of November at UBI.**

The duration of the nomination is one year. Before the end of its mandate, the current and active board of directors has to organise a similar procedure for renewal of the board. The Cultural Heritage R&I Hub should be led by a pair composed of staff from UPPA and UNITO, the Circular Economy R&I Hub should be led by UVT and UNIZAR while Renewable Energy Hub should be directed by USMB and UBI.

For the period 1st of December 2021 to 30th of November 2022, the R&I hubs will be led by :

Cultural Heritage

- Director: Prof. Laurence Roussillon-Constanty (UPPA)
- Deputy Director: Dr. Jennifer Cooke (UNITO)

Circular Economy

- Director: Prof. José Maria Fraile (UNIZAR)
- Deputy Director: Prof Gabriela Mircea (UVT)

Renewable Energy

- Director: Prof. Benoit Stutz (USMB)
- Deputy Director: Prof. Antonio J. Marques Cardoso (UBI)

2.3.2 The R&I Hubs task force

The Task Force is the operational force (or the action group) of the R&I Hubs. It is indeed in charge of the different activities that need to be completed by each hub. Its scope falls into the followings:

- Research activities: Cotutelle PhD Thesis, Answer to MSCA Cofund call and coordination of answers to Horizon Europe Calls, Weekly research Presentation, Scientific knowledge share and development....
- Connection between research and learning: micro-credentials, summer-school...
- Partnership: Stakeholders, Geminae Partners, New Partners
- Update of the WP4 R&I Cartography
- ...

Depending on the available staff members to join the task forces and of the activities to be performed the number of researchers involved in each task force might vary between 6 and 18.

The researchers taking part in these forces are designated by each partner university. Meeting of the task forces will be organized monthly, under the authority of R&I hub boards of directors.

At the start of the Hub (1st of December) it is composed of

Cultural Heritage

- UBI : Helena Alves, Urbano Sidoncha
- UPPA : Laurent Jalabert, Laurence Roussillon-Constanty, Giovanna Hendel
- USMB : Silvia D'Amico, Christophe Gauchon, Myriam Roche
- UVT : Dana Percec, Andreea Lazea
- UNITO : Giaime Alonge, Jennifer Cooke
- UNIZAR: Ascensión Hernández-Martínez, Carlos Labarta, Vicente Lagüéns Gracia, Pedro Rújula López, Alexia Sanz-Hernández

Circular Economy

- UBI : Ana Paula Duarte
- UPPA : Carole Haritchabalet
- USMB : Gregory Chatel
- UVT : Gabriela Mircea, Mihaela Neamtu, Alexandra Petcu
- UNITO : Luca Simone Cocolin
- UNIZAR: Jose Maria Fraile

Renewable Energy

- UBI : Antonio J. Marques Cardoso, Luís Pires, Adérito Neto Alcaso, Carlos Figueiredo Ramos
- UPPA : Frédéric Marias, Christine Lartigau-Dagron
- USMB : Benoit Stutz, Jean-Luc Got, Jean-François Joye, Aude Pommeret
- UVT : Daniel Vizman, Corina Ilin

- UNITO : Cristina Prandi, Marcello Baricco,
- UNIZAR: Alexia Sanz, Jose Angel Pena, Jesus Perez Torrente

3 Risk Issues.

Because of the important of activities that need to be fulfil by the R&I Hubs and because of the low human resources involved in the Hub task forces at present time, a major risk has been identified and registered in the project Risk Log, according to UNITA Management guide.

ID	WP	Risk Description	Status ¹	Likelihood ²	Impact ³	Risk Level ⁴	Risk Owner	Risk Response Strategy ⁵	Action Details	Target Date
RL4_01	WP4	Suboptimal involvement of students, researchers, lifelong learners, and lack of projects from stakeholders	In Progress	1	3	3	Frederic Marias	Reduce	Solicitation action of the researchers by the Governance of each university and targeted advertising of UNITA R&I Hubs towards specific research groups (UNITA weekly online research presentation)	31/10/2023

4 Conclusion

WP4 R&I Hubs are expected to play a very important role in the promotion of UNITA and in the assistance to local territories to help them in reducing inequalities between core and non-central regions through sustainable development. It took one year to design these hubs, and several intermediate steps were required. This deliverable allows for the understanding of the overall process that was set-up to give birth to the hubs, and to state their operational model. The real start of the hub has taken place during in-person seminars that were organized in October 2021 in three of the Universities of the alliance. They will be fully operational after the Governance Board that will be held at UBI on the 26th of November, once the board of directors are finally designated.

Only two years are now remaining to fulfil the important number of tasks and sub-tasks scheduled in the grant agreement. The operational mode gives a frame under which activities can be carried out, but, given the low forces available in the task forces, there is a risk that willingness of the involved researches decreases. It might be balanced by the enthusiasm associated to being part of the development of European Universities and by involvement of more researchers in these task forces.