

ERASMUS+ PROJECT 2023-1-RS01-KA220-HED-000156660

EPIR | E-Procedure of Institutional Recognition of
Foreign Higher Education Documents

SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

Workpackage 4: Promotion, Dissemination and Sustainability

Updated Version - November 2024

Executive Summary

This updated Sustainability Plan for the EPIR project provides a strategy for ensuring that the tools, procedures, skills, and knowledge developed during the project lifetime will continue to deliver value beyond the funding period. The plan includes specific sustainability measures, concrete indicators for monitoring long-term impact, and clear mechanisms for maintaining project outputs.

The plan reflects the importance and comprehensive scope of the EPIR project by establishing frameworks for technological sustainability, institutional policy integration, human resource capacity development, financial sustainability, and strategic partnerships. This document raises awareness that EPIR project results will continue to modernize and digitize recognition procedures for international students in higher education institutions across Serbia, Croatia, Italy, and Romania long after project conclusion.

By integrating sustainability considerations into all project activities from the beginning, the EPIR consortium demonstrates its commitment to creating lasting systemic change in higher education recognition procedures and maximizing the long-term impact of European Union investment.

The project is expected to create outcomes that will be used on a daily basis for years to come. Through the development and improvement of information systems used in the recognition procedure of HE documents and the creation of well-informed institutional environments underpinning digital transformation, project results will advance the recognition process by increasing efficiency of work flows and access to HE and reducing costs, stress, and complexity of admission of international students.

EPIR project partners:



UNIVERSITY
OF NOVI SAD



UNIVERSITÀ
POLITECNICA
DELLE MARCHE



ROMANIA
1 DECEMBRIE 1918
UNIVERSITY OF ALBA IULIA



50 years of
University
of Split



REPUBLIC OF SERBIA
Qualifications Agency

1. Introduction and Strategic Context

1.1 Purpose and Scope

Developing and implementing an effective sustainability plan is a core component of Workpackage 4, led by the "1 Decembrie 1918" University of Alba Iulia. This plan establishes concrete mechanisms to ensure the longevity of project results through clearly defined tasks, responsibilities, methods, implementation periods, and participant engagement strategies.

The sustainability plan establishes models at each partner institution for the phases of change and maintenance necessary in the development and operation of information systems, which are crucial for achieving the project's general and specific objectives. This approach ensures that the digital transformation initiated by EPIR becomes embedded in institutional practices and continues to benefit stakeholders for years to come.

1.2 Link to Dissemination Strategy

The sustainability strategy is closely integrated with the Dissemination Plan to ensure that project visibility and stakeholder engagement support long-term adoption and use of EPIR results. Key integrated elements include:

- Project website maintained for at least 5 years post-project to serve as ongoing resource hub
- Social media platforms sustained by lead institution for continued community engagement
- Training modules integrated into regular academic activities at all partner institutions
- Best Practices distributed widely and archived for ongoing reference
- Follow-up EPIR collaboration network established among interested higher education institutions

2. Sustainability Objectives with Measurable Indicators

The EPIR Sustainability Plan establishes six key strategic objectives, each supported by specific, measurable indicators:

2.1 Ensure Long-term Use and Maintenance of IT Tools

Objective: Institutional efforts enabling IT platforms developed or improved during the project to remain operational, updated, and accessible

Measurable Indicators:

- Platform uptime
- System updates
- User support responsiveness
- Usage statistics

2.2 Embed Improved Recognition Procedures in Institutional Policies

Objective: Integrate digital recognition workflows into standard operational frameworks of partner universities

Measurable Indicators:

- Policy adoption and relevant revisions
- Standardized documentation

- Compliance - recognition cases processed using EPIR tools

2.3 Continue Capacity Building Efforts

Objective: Maintain and expand staff and student training programs after project conclusion

Measurable Indicators:

- Training sessions for stakeholders of the recognition process

2.4 Facilitate Continued Knowledge Sharing

Objective: Maintain active networks for sharing experiences and innovations

Measurable Indicators:

- Network meetings
- Network expansion through sharing best practices
- Publication outputs

2.5 Develop Viable Business and Governance Models

Objective: Establish sustainable financial and organizational structures

Measurable Indicators:

- Institutional budget allocation for system maintenance
- Institutional structure for system functioning
- External funding if possible

2.6 Establish Collaborative Network for Future Projects

Objective: Create foundation for continued collaboration and mutual support

Measurable Indicators:

- New partnership agreements among consortium members
- Joint activities (conferences, publications, projects) among consortium members

3. Comprehensive Sustainability Framework

The EPIR Sustainability Plan is organized around five interconnected pillars, each with specific measures, indicators, and responsibilities:

3.1 Technological Sustainability

Core Strategy: Ensure IT platforms remain operational, secure, updated, and scalable

3.1.1 Maintenance and Updates

- **Designated IT Teams:** Each university assigns internal IT team responsible for platform maintenance and updating schedule
- **Compliance Monitoring:** Regular review of evolving legal and technical standards

3.1.2 Documentation and Knowledge Transfer

- **Complete Documentation:** Comprehensive technical documentation including system architecture, user guides, and maintenance procedures
- **Open-Source Approach:** Where feasible, make tools open-source to enable wider adoption and community development
- **Knowledge Repository:** Maintain centralized repository of all technical documentation accessible to authorized users

3.1.3 Scalability and Future Development

- **Scalable Architecture:** Systems designed to handle increased user volumes and additional features
- **Modular Design:** Enable easy addition of new modules or integration with other systems
- **Innovation Plan:** Reviewing of emerging technologies and potential enhancements

Specific Measurable Indicators:

- Platform uptime
- System updates
- User support data
- Usage logs
- Documentation completeness

Responsible Partners: IT departments at each partner institution

3.2 Institutional and Policy Integration

Core Strategy: Embed digital recognition workflows into official institutional policies and structures

3.2.1 Policy Development and Adoption

- **Policy Integration:** Digital recognition workflows incorporated into each institution's official recognition policy documents
- **Legal Framework Alignment:** Ensure compliance with national legislation and Bologna Process principles
- **Approval Process:** Formal approval by university senates and governing bodies
- **Policy Review:** Reviewing and updating of policies to reflect changing requirements and best practices

3.2.2 Organizational Structures

- **Dedicated Support Units:** Establish or strengthen offices responsible for recognition procedures
- **Clear Responsibilities:** Define roles for policy enforcement, system operation, and continuous improvement
- **Quality Assurance:** Integrate recognition procedures into institutional quality assurance frameworks

3.2.3 Stakeholder Engagement

- **Faculty Involvement:** Engage academic departments in recognition decisions and continuous improvement
- **Student Participation:** Include student representatives in policy review and feedback mechanisms
- **External Partnerships:** Maintain connections with national recognition centers and quality assurance agencies

Specific Measurable Indicators:

- Updated policy documents
- Recognition cases processed digitally
- Stakeholder satisfaction through regular surveys

Responsible Partners: Academic and administrative leadership at each partner institution

3.3 Human Resource Capacity and Knowledge Transfer

Core Strategy: Maintain and expand staff expertise through ongoing training and knowledge transfer mechanisms

3.3.1 Ongoing Training Programs

- **Regular Training Sessions:** internal training sessions per partner per year on EPIR tools and procedures
- **Onboarding Programs:** standardized training for all new staff members in recognition offices
- **Professional Development:** include EPIR training modules in regular staff development activities
- **Certification:** develop internal certification program for recognition specialists

3.3.2 Knowledge Transfer Mechanisms

- **Mentoring Programs:** Pair experienced staff with new employees for knowledge transfer

- **Peer Learning Networks:** Regular meetings among recognition specialists across partner institutions
- **Documentation:** Maintain comprehensive procedure manuals and decision-making guides
- **Case Studies:** Develop library of recognition case studies for training purposes

3.3.3 Staff Retention and Continuity

- **Career Development:** Create clear career progression paths for recognition specialists
- **Workload Management:** Ensure adequate staffing levels to prevent burnout
- **Recognition and Incentives:** Acknowledge expertise and contributions to institutional internationalization

Specific Measurable Indicators:

- Training sessions
- New staff trained annually
- Staff retention in relevant positions
- Training satisfaction

Responsible Partners: Human resources and professional development units at each partner institution

3.4 Financial Sustainability

Core Strategy: Establish diverse, stable funding sources to support ongoing operations and development

3.4.1 Internal Funding Mechanisms

- **Annual Budget Allocation:** Each institution should aim at having a dedicated budget line for system maintenance, updates, and training
- **Multi-Year Planning:** Integrate EPIR costs into institutional strategic plans and budgets
- **Cost Efficiency:** Document time and cost savings from digital procedures to justify continued investment

3.4.2 External Funding Opportunities

- **Follow-up Project Applications:** Pursue additional Erasmus+ and other EU funding for expanding and enhancing EPIR
- **National Funding:** Seek support from national education ministries and research funding agencies
- **Philanthropic Support:** Explore foundations and donors interested in educational innovation
- External funding secured: Track amount and sources
- Cost-benefit analysis: Annual report documenting efficiency gains and cost savings

Responsible Partners: Financial and planning offices at each partner institution

4. Comprehensive Sustainability Indicators and Monitoring Framework

This section consolidates all sustainability indicators into a comprehensive monitoring framework with clear responsibilities for data collection and reporting.

Area	Sustainability Measure	Indicator
Technological	Active IT platform with regular updates	Platform uptime, updates, user support data
Policy Integration	Recognition procedures adopted into regulations	Updated documents, formal approvals, usage rates
Human Resources	Regular internal training sessions	Trainings held, staff trained, retention rates
Financial	Budget allocation and external funding secured	Annual budget lines, funding applications
Network & Partnerships	Continued collaboration and network expansion	Meetings held, new members, joint activities
Dissemination	Continued online presence and events	Website analytics, social media engagement

4.1 Data Collection and Reporting Schedule

- Annual Reports
- Bi-Annual Reviews
- Three-Year Assessment
- Continuous Monitoring

5. Risk Management and Mitigation Strategies

Proactive identification and mitigation of sustainability risks ensures long-term success:

Risk	Mitigation Strategy
Lack of funding for ongoing updates and maintenance	Secure institutional budget commitments early; apply for additional grants; explore revenue-generating business models; demonstrate cost savings and efficiency gains to justify continued investment

Risk	Mitigation Strategy
Staff turnover and loss of expertise	Implement comprehensive documentation; establish mentoring programs; create career development opportunities; maintain knowledge repository; provide competitive compensation and recognition
Legislative and policy changes affecting recognition procedures	Involve legal advisors in planning; maintain flexible system architecture; establish relationships with policy makers; participate actively in Bologna Process and ENIC-NARIC networks; build modularity into technical systems
Technological obsolescence or compatibility issues	Use widely-adopted, standards-based technologies; maintain regular update schedule; monitor emerging technologies; build systems with modular architecture allowing component replacement; maintain relationships with technology partners
Declining stakeholder engagement and network participation	Provide clear value proposition for participation; organize engaging events and activities; recognize contributions publicly; facilitate peer learning opportunities; maintain active communication; share success stories
Changes in institutional priorities or leadership	Secure formal policy adoption through governing bodies; demonstrate alignment with institutional strategic plans; document efficiency gains and cost benefits; build broad stakeholder support; integrate into quality assurance frameworks
Insufficient user adoption or resistance to change	Invest in comprehensive training; emphasize benefits to users; ensure user-friendly interface design; provide ongoing support; collect and act on user feedback; celebrate early adopters and champions
Security breaches or data protection issues	Implement robust security protocols; conduct regular security audits; ensure GDPR compliance; maintain backup systems; develop incident response plans; provide security training to staff; encrypt sensitive data

6. Conclusion and Commitment

The EPIR project is designed with sustainability as a fundamental principle, not an afterthought. Through this comprehensive Sustainability Plan, the consortium demonstrates its commitment to ensuring that the investments made by the European Union and partner institutions continue to deliver value for years to come.

By establishing clear objectives with measurable indicators, comprehensive frameworks across five pillars, and a proactive risk management, this plan provides a foundation for the long-term success of EPIR. The combination of technological robustness, institutional embedding, continuous training, financial planning, and strategic partnerships guarantees that the benefits of the project will continue to support students, staff, and stakeholders long after the project officially ends.

The sustainability of EPIR extends beyond maintaining what has been created during the project period. It encompasses continuous improvement, adaptation to changing needs and contexts, expansion to new institutions and regions, and contribution to the broader European Higher Education Area's goals of mobility, recognition, and quality assurance.

All partner institutions will aim at implementing this Sustainability Plan and ensuring that EPIR's results are being build upon, as part of the lasting transformation in higher education recognition procedures.