Brussels,
EACEA/A1

Sjur Baardsen
NORGES MILJO-OG BIOVITENSKAPLIGE UNIVERSITET
UNIVERSITETSTUNET 3
NO - 1433 AS

Programme	**Erasmus+**
Action	**KA - Knowledge Alliances**
Proposal	**EAC/A02/2019**
Application No	**621764-EPP-1-2020-1-NO-EPPKA2-KA**
Title	**Digitalisation of water industry by innovative graduate water education**
Decision	**ACCEPTED**

Dear Applicant,

You have submitted an application to the Erasmus + Programme 2020 call for proposals for the action specified above. The call for proposals closed on 26 February 2020. The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) received 217 applications for this call.

I am writing to inform you about the selection decision taken by the Head of Department of the Agency, acting in her capacity as authorising officer, based on the recommendations of an Evaluation Committee.

I am pleased to inform you that your application has been selected for EU co-funding.
It received 82/100 points.

For your information, out of the 216 eligible applications, 30 have been selected for funding and 2 have been placed on a reserve list.

Attached to this letter you will find an evaluation report drawn up by the Evaluation Committee. Please take into account that most of the evaluation reports were written by non-native speakers.

The maximum amount of EU funding to be awarded to your project is 999,990.00EUR.

On behalf of the EACEA, the Research Executive Agency Validation Services (REA Validation Services) may contact you via the messaging system embedded in the Participant Register, requesting you to submit certain documentation within a specified deadline.

This is in order to prove – in the event that your PIC number (Participant Identification Code) has not yet been validated – the legal existence and status of your organisation. In case of a multi-applicant proposal, each applicant will be contacted individually.

The REA Validation Services may also contact your organisation requesting documentation to assess the financial capacity of your organisation

Please ensure that your bank account is registered in the new bank account section of the Participant Register.

This new functionality will allow you to see the bank accounts registered through the new bank account section for your organisation and the status of the validation.

Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency
Avenue du Bourget 1 – 1049 Brussels - Belgium
Office: SPA2 05/88, Telephone: direct line +32 229 52596

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During the registration process, you will have to enter your data in a wizard and upload relevant supporting documents. The preferred option is to upload a bank statement or equivalent document. As a last resort, you can also download a pre-filled Financial Identification Form to be stamped by the bank.

You will be guided through the registration process. If you need further support, please have a look at the IT manual or contact the IT helpdesk in case of technical issues.

If you have any question on the validation process, please refer to the Research Enquiry Service and Participant Validation webpage.

In addition to the documents requested from the REA Validation Services, you will soon receive the information on the documents needed to prepare the grant agreement in a separate message.

The process of awarding a grant can only be finalised once all requested documents have been received and processed by the REA Validation Services and the EACEA.

This letter does not represent a financial or legal commitment of the Executive Agency. The offer of an award is confirmed only when the legal representative of the Executive Agency signs the Grant Agreement associated with this application.

We remind you that in accordance with Article 193(2) of the Financial Regulation, a grant may be awarded for an action which has already begun provided that the applicant can demonstrate the need for starting the action prior to signature of the grant agreement. In absence of such justification sent to the Agency and accepted by it, any costs incurred before the signature of the grant will not be financed by the grant.

Please do not hesitate to contact us should you have any further questions.

Yours sincerely,

José-Lorenzo VALLÉS

Head of Unit

Annex 1 - Evaluation report

Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency

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	Award Criteria	**Comments**	**Score**	**Max Score**
1	Relevance of the proposal	The proposal identifies the need for water professionals and technologists to cooperate to improve the industry's progress on SDG6, to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water. In an effort to reduce both the water related skills, and digital skills mismatches in the water industry, the proposal will develop a Digital Water curriculum in collaboration with industry. The objectives of the proposal are in line with the aims and priorities of a Knowledge Alliance in that it aims to develop new, multidisciplinary approaches to teaching and learning, to stimulate entrepreneurship in both sectors, and create opportunity for the exchange and co-creation of knowledge and skills. The proposals' needs analysis is based upon existing knowledge and identifies that there is a need to strengthen the innovation capacity of the water industry and to develop innovative solutions in the sector. The proposal argues that there is a strongly felt need based on literature analysis as well as on the experience and personal views of the partners. Two previous projects are cited, however, it is not clearly explained how the present proposal will build on them. The analysis lacks a properly documented review of the already existing courses in the water sector. In relation to consistency, the proposal clearly states how it is aligned to EU policies in education and training (ET2020) and through actions in digitalisation, development towards the Digital Single Market strategy and the Digital Education Action Plan. The strategic relevance to each organisation is clearly made and provides an excellent fit to each partner. The proposal provides a detailed description and explains clearly how the expected results, outputs and outcomes meet the identified needs of both sectors and the partner's ambitions. The proposal demonstrates innovative elements, through the modern approaches in teaching and learning, such as curiosity-driven education, collaborative mentoring and remote co-supervision, and use of digital tools for group creativity and promoting virtual mobility. The plan is to involve different actors across the water sector, which has been a weakness to date. Considering the spread of countries in the partnership, it is positive that regional contexts are considered and implicated in solutions. The project demonstrates a significant European added value because it will enhance the quality of teaching in educational institutions in the EU in the water sector. Through the digitalisation of the water industry, the project will contribute in creating a water-smart economy across Europe. This will be achieved by joining forces of HEIs with a consolidated experience on innovative training and teaching methodologies and the European enterprises from the water industry. The potential project will create opportunities for transferability of knowledge and information across the partner countries and generate benefit transnationally.	21	25

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	Award Criteria	Comments	Score	Max Score
2	Quality of the project design and implementation	The methodology proposed for achieving the objectives of the project is very well described and includes major milestones and well defined, quantified, measurable indicators. The proposal presents a coherent process for the realisation of the work packages (WPs). There is a logical sequence of activities demonstrating coherence and continuity. The whole concept is illustrated by an explanatory diagram showing the relation and interconnection of all WPs. The proposal includes learning mobilities for students, which are clearly described. These mobilities are well organised and have a clear added value mainly because they will support the project implementation and will contribute to enhancing the learning exchange among the Alliance. The overall structure of the work plan is convincing and adapted to the project objectives. The WP description is clear and very comprehensive. The content of the WPs is adequate in terms of tasks and foreseen deliverables and the planning is logical and realistic. Each WP will be led by one partner, defined to match the needs of each WP. The 7 WPs are allocated to the 7 partners on the basis of the know-how, resources and experience of each partner, which is logical. The project management strategy is well designed and confirms involved actors, responsibilities and lines of reporting. There is a balanced allocation of budget to partners in line with the work plan and a clear explanation that justifies the expenditures separately for each work package. In terms of quality, the programme of work identifies clearly the milestones and timings to meet the KPIs. The proposal includes the development and implementation of a Quality Assurance Plan at the beginning of the project, which describes the procedures adopted for monitoring the quality of outputs (e.g. evaluations on trainings, ICT tools etc.). It will include a cross-project evaluation to exchange assessments between several ongoing curricula development projects, which is very good. External quality assessment will be carried out by a team of four professors from universities in the network of the academic partners. There is no information regarding the selection procedure and criteria for selection. Quality assurance measures are provided in detail and are clear and realistic and of such a nature to deliver a high quality project. The recognition and validation of the curriculum developed is addressed in overview. The proposal discusses future use of the EQF and services of NARIC, but it does not stipulate what EQF level the new curriculum will be at nor if it will accrue ECTS points, thus not indicating level and length of study. The mobility of students does not provide ECVET recognition. The budget is balanced amongst partners. The mobilities for students are few in number and less than appropriate given the purpose of the project and when considered against the overall maximum expenditure of the proposal, is not rationally explained, whereas staff based mobilities are relatively high. The exploitation of the outputs are relatively limited by number of beneficiaries and this reduces the overall cost-benefit ratio of the proposal.	22	25

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	Award Criteria	**Comments**	**Score**	**Max Score**
3	Quality of the project team and the cooperation arrangements	The rationale for setting-up the partnership is very well explained. The national pairings in six participating countries make for facilitation of output course events, and the possibility of strong national exploitation. Partners have experience of working together in previous projects (e.g. Horizon 2020 program on smart water economies). Three industry partners are HEI spin-offs which shows a good level of innovation and entrepreneurship as well as comparability with the ethos of the HEIs. The partnership includes an end-user organisation and an overarching European Association of water users. It is very positive to see these two involved and critically, at important project stages (e.g. P12 leading WP1 Digital Water Needs). The industry partners will be actively involved in curricula review and revitalisation to address the needs. The HEIs have experience in delivery of water technology related programmes from graduate to PhD levels. The proposed project coordinator (P1) has extensive experience in project management. Partners provide evidence of skills and experiences relating to the tasks/roles outlined, however, the role of the organisations are frequently brief and do not explain the full role of the partner in the project activities. In terms of commitment to the project, each partner puts forward relevant staff for the project delivery and include some details of staff from each category. Often the staff are of senior positions in their respective organisation which might limit the total amount of input by them. Otherwise the staff put forward are well qualified and appropriate, with an exception; P2 is tasked with the development of the augmented reality product but the person allocated the task is not known; this should have been delegated more precisely as it is a key output for the project. It is positive to see that the industry partners are taking an active role in the leadership of appropriate WPs (e.g. P4 and WP3). Different partners bring expertise in relation to SCADA (supervisory control and data acquisition) and applying ICT to e-Learning, Mobile-Learning and Open and Distance Learning, which is appropriate for the development of the e-learning platform and potentially other platforms. The contributions of the HEIs and the partners are very complimentary. They blend well and support each other in the different facets of the project delivery. The highest governing body will be the Project Steering Committee (PSC) which is the ultimate decision-making and conflict resolution body of the project, but these practices are not clearly explained. It will comprise one representative from each partner organisation and will ensure the proper management of the project and its activities. The proposal specifies the number, date and venue of the scheduled meetings of the PSC. The communication strategy is described well. The rewards for the HEI partners are concrete, in terms of new curricula (modules on Big Data and IoT and Cybersecurity in water critical infrastructure). They will be able to demonstrate examples of entrepreneurship in practice with market uptake of innovations developed. For the industry partners, the rewards are clear; they are enabled to utilise innovative ideas for co-development and market entry; they will build networks and partnerships for future potential working benefit, and potentially develop new business opportunities. They will be involved in reviewing the curricula at all partner universities, and have access to potential future employees with additional industry- and innovation-oriented entrepreneurs graduating from partner universities.	26	30

Annex 1

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	Award Criteria	Comments	Score	Max Score
4	Impact and dissemination	The exploitation strategy is sufficiently substantiated to demonstrate the effective exploitation of results. The target groups are clearly identified and their benefits from the project outcomes are convincingly explained. Round-tables will be created for non-partner universities and info days run in order to promote training and Master studies in the field of digital water. It is suggested that through the Living Lab and Innovation Camps local communities will benefit and use the outputs, however this is not explained well nor is how the general water industry is to exploit the outcomes, other than through and from dissemination. The European community at large is to benefit from increasing competitiveness of the European water sector. Both qualitative and quantitative indicators are provided and these provide sufficient means to measure the level of exploitation within the project lifetime and in the long-term. Dissemination activities commence on project initiation and the dissemination strategy is rich in activities aiming to promote the project results. These include the project website, promotional materials, social media, and publications. It includes several milestones and performance indicators to monitor their proper implementation. For some of the activities the description lacks detail concerning quantification. The project promotional materials are scheduled to be produced mid-way in the project duration. This will eventually affect the effective dissemination of the project, especially with regards to project visibility. All key stakeholders' groups will be involved in the project dissemination and exploitation activities. However, disseminating to facilitate the recruitment of new learners/participants to undertake the learning/experiences provided is not a major focus. Overall, the plans for dissemination are satisfactory for the project. The likely impact of the project at European level is significant mainly because the project will contribute to increasing the competitiveness of the European water sector and improving attractiveness of European Higher Education in this sector. The qualitative and quantitative indicators to assess impact are well defined, including actual target numbers. Open access will be given to scientific publications, guide books and the modules of learning developed and media produced. In relation to the e-learning platform, plans are not finalised, leaving it questionable as to whether the e-learning provision is made open source or not, as the project partners will consider opening the e-lecturing sessions during the project to the wider public, but afterwards no provision is made. This remains to be discussed and agreed during the implementation of the project. The proposal lists a number of well-defined activities that will be sustained. These include, among others, incorporation of curricula and lecture materials into study programs of partner universities. A positive step is the formation of an advisory board/forum to discuss, and promote the needs of industrial partners to HEIs and wider stakeholders, initiating innovative ideas, and involvement of additional university partners to share project results motivating them to provide reviews and constructive comment. It is positive that the proposal aims to initiate collaboration with other related bodies (e.g. ICT4Water cluster, Water Europe, Water Harmony) and the use of EU and International Water Associations to whom results and findings can be networked. However, how the proposed KA will be continued and expanded is not fully discussed, nor for how long the outputs will be maintained. There is little commitment demonstrated by any of the participating organisations or other entities to provide financial support, so the long-term sustainability of the KA is unsubstantiated.	13	20
		Sum:	**82**	**100**