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**Trustworthy, Reliable and Engaging Scientific Communication  
Approaches**

## D7.4 Risk Management and Quality Assurance Plan



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## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This document describes the Risk Management and Quality Assurance plan of the TRESKA project. The Risk Management plan lists possible difficulties that might arise in the course of the project, and provides a protocol for adequate solutions. In light of uncertainties related to COVID-19 lockdown measures, it also anticipates alternative routes for tasks that involve face-to-face meetings. The Quality Assurance plan describes how to assist and monitor project progress and how to ensure the release of high quality outputs.

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## INTRODUCTION

Projects are rarely immune to difficulties or change, and the TRESKA project is no exception. To mitigate anticipated risks and maintain high quality output, we have established two management protocols to be adopted by the project consortium: (1) the *Risk Management Plan* and (2) the *Quality Assurance Plan*. The Risk Management plan lists a number of potential risks and respective mitigation strategies. With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdown measures, we pay special attention to tasks affected by lockdown measures (e.g., face-to-face meetings), and we detail alternative strategies for enabling these tasks to proceed in adapted formats. The Quality Assurance plan describes procedures for the ongoing project progress and maintenance of quality. In short, progress is safeguarded via regular, focused meetings and short communication lines between partners. The quality of deliverables is maintained via an agreed deliverable review process. Partners are invited to become reviewers based on their expertise and interests. Reviewers are members of consortium partners who have not been already involved in the drafting or production of deliverables as authors or contributors.



# 1 RISK MANAGEMENT

While several risks might arise in a project, many of them can be anticipated and effectively mitigated. Table 1 lists potential risks in the TRESKA project and how the consortium anticipates to mitigate these. The COVID-19 outbreak directs our focus to uncertainties related to lockdown measures. Any activity that involves offline contact will potentially need to be moved online, and as detailed below, we are well-prepared for this scenario.

*Table 1: List of risks and proposed risk mitigation measures*

Risk No.	Description of risk	WP	Proposed Risk Mitigation Measures
1	A partner leaves the consortium before the end of the project	WP1, WP2, WP3, WP4, WP5, WP6, WP7, WP8	All partners are closely involved in the conception and development of the TRESKA project. Each partner expressed their motivation and devotion to the success of the project. However, unforeseen circumstances may lead to a partner leaving the consortium. Should this be the case, the project management team will involve all WP leaders to discuss their options to take over the tasks or involve new partners.
2	A partner is unable to produce work on time	WP1, WP2, WP3, WP4, WP5, WP6, WP7	Each consortium partner has experience in delivering work on time. Partners have been consulted in setting out the timeline for the TRESKA project. However, should it become clear that timely contribution is at stake, early mitigation is essential. Options are: have another representative from the partner organisation take over the work or assist in completing the work. In extreme cases, it may be necessary to remove work from the partner organisation.
3	A partner is unable to effectively work together with other partners or stakeholders	WP1, WP2, WP3, WP4, WP5, WP6, WP7	Should there be an issue in cooperation between partners, the project management team will find the underlying issue. The project management team will work together with WP leaders to mediate with partners.

4	A partner is unable to produce work of sufficient high quality to standards of consortium partners or the European Commission	WP1, WP2, WP3, WP4, WP5, WP6, WP7	The risk for this task is likely to be low as most partners have experience in working on this type of project. However, a revision cycle is included in the project quality assurance plan in order to ensure high quality documents.
5	Deliverables are late or milestones are missed	WP1, WP2, WP3, WP4, WP5, WP6, WP7	A timely delivery is essential and all consortium partners are dedicated to the timeline. Consortium members are consulted and informed of the project timeline. Should the risk occur of a deadline to be missed, earlier mentioned strategies may apply. However, the management structure will help mitigate the risk of falling behind schedule.
6	Budget is exceeded	WP1, WP2, WP3, WP4, WP5, WP6, WP7	To prevent the TRESKA project from going over the allocated budgets, an extensive budget plan was established before the start of the project. Additionally, the risk is low due to the fact that only financially viable organisations are included in the project consortium. Still, budget excess should be reported so that WP leaders, or if needed the project management team, can respond accordingly and implement measures to restore the budget plan.
7	Diverging paths in development process are taken by consortium members	WP1, WP2, WP3, WP4, WP5, WP6, WP7	Projects with international teams run the risk of diverging in their development paths. This risk is mitigated by holding regular face to face meetings as well as scheduled consortium conference calls and ad hoc contact via email or other methods.
8	Required technical components are not available	WP4, WP5	The risk of technical setbacks exists in projects where innovation is a central task. However, this risk is mitigated by including expert organisations that are involved in the creation of the artefacts and MOOC as described in the WPs.
9	Third party involvement	WP3, WP5	The risk of involving third parties in the TRESKA project is of medium height, as they

			will contribute to core activities while not being subject to the Grant Agreement or Consortium Agreement. This risk can be mitigated by setting up a contract or similar legally binding agreement for the work done by third parties.
10	Funding ends for partner based in the UK due to withdrawal agreement	WP1, WP5, WP6	Science Business is currently registered as a partner in the UK and should not be affected by the UK withdrawal from the European Union. However, as Science Business has part of its base of operations in Belgium, the partner may make a full transition to this identity and PIC number before the completion of the project.
11	Data leak	WP1, WP2, WP3, WP4, WP5, WP6, WP7, WP8	In current times, data leaks whether they are due to deliberate attacks or human errors, are increasingly likely. However, this risk can be mitigated by working with responsible and expert organisations, and an extensive data management plan that is compliant to GDPR.
12	Difficulties with subcontractors	WP3, WP4	<p>For the online survey we will be contracting a subcontractor to conduct public opinion poll research in seven EU countries as explained in WP3. For the survey, subcontracting will be thoroughly vetted in relation to an open bid process that will also ensure that the best subcontractor (in terms of quality and value for money) will be chosen. Full payment for work will not be completed until the work is satisfactorily completed. An advance payment will be issued when signing the contract, while full payment will be issued after the delivery of the complete dataset.</p> <p>For the animation, editing and design work of the MOOC, subcontracting outside of the consortiums' organisations will be done if needed. Full payment for work will not be completed until the work is satisfactorily completed.</p>

13	Citizen SciCom workshops cannot be held face-to-face because of COVID-19 lockdown measures	WP2	<p>Citizen SciCom workshops were initially planned to be held offline, however, due to COVID 19-lockdown measures - even if travel becomes partially possible during the transition phase - we anticipate that the workshops will need to be held online to accommodate this new normal. We also anticipate that it will be more difficult to recruit certain subsections of the public due to fear and limited digital literacy.</p> <p>D2.1 is being rewritten to include an alternative workshop plan that involves adapted scripting, instructions and recruitment strategy for online workshops. It also explores different face to face options that can be adapted to new lockdown rules.</p>
14	Consortium meetings cannot be held face-to-face because of COVID-19 lockdown measures	WP7	<p>Consortium members are not new to virtual meetings: they meet on online conference platforms for WP meetings (twice a month) and TRESKA progress meetings (monthly). Should it be impossible to hold full consortium meetings offline, then online meetings will be held. Offline meetings will be resumed as soon as possible.</p>

### 3 QUALITY ASSURANCE

#### Meetings

The main foundation of quality assurance in the TRESKA project are regular meetings followed by the drafting of minutes detailing action points. Consortium partners regularly meet via online conference tools. In monthly TRESKA progress meetings, all consortium partners are invited to give and receive updates on the status of work packages. These meetings, led by the coordinator, are an opportunity to discuss the overall project progress, find synergies, and assess where assistance is needed.

Two-day consortium meetings are held every 5-6 months, and when possible these occur face to face. These meetings are thematically structured around upcoming key efforts in the TRESKA project that are due in the following months. In this way, partners' efforts are effectively directed towards work packages that need the most attention and assistance in the respective stages of the TRESKA project.

Apart from meetings involving the entire consortium, partners also regularly meet in smaller teams for work package meetings. Work Package Leaders are responsible for the organisation of monthly or fortnightly WP meetings and for monitoring progress made on WP tasks and deliverables. At the time of the submission of D7.4, partners involved in WP1 have been meeting every two weeks to discuss progress made in D1.1, D1.2, D1.3, D1.4 and next steps to be taken on D1.5. Similarly, the management team also meets fortnightly to discuss how to better adapt the internal strategy and to allocate workload to assess where additional research and management effort is required to safeguard output quality, timely delivery and to ensure constant progress and maximise visibility.

Meeting fortnightly in small teams has proven very effective for WP1 and has protected the team from disruptions due to the pandemic. All other WP leaders have been already invited to adopt the same strategy to facilitate smooth communication and collaboration within each WP and across WPs. The Research Director participates in the majority of these meetings and helps partners to be aware of ideas and synergies emerging in other WPs. Ad-hoc meetings for specific deliverables are organised depending on partners' needs. No minutes are recorded for this type of informal meetings. There have been no instances of

absenteeism during regular meetings and all partners attended the online consortium meeting taking place on Monday 18th (from 9:30am until 17:00pm) and on Tuesday 19 (from 10am until 12pm) May 2020. With the meeting structure that is currently in place, partners' levels of engagement, commitment, and satisfaction are high.

## Deliverable Review Process

The deliverable review process is an important measure to enhance and maintain high quality work that adheres to European Commission's criteria. During the TRESKA consortium meeting in January 2020, partners agreed to follow the quality assurance process detailed here. Members of Consortium partners who are not directly involved in the drafting or production of a deliverable, are invited to become reviewers depending on their expertise and also on workload allocation envisioned in the Grant Agreement. Reviewers are individuals who are not already involved as primary authors or significant contributors to deliverables. Reviewer selection is performed every six months during a discussion taking place during a consortium meeting. The team of the Coordinator and the Research Director invite potential reviewers, but reviewers have the final word on accepting or declining the invitation. If they decline, they are invited to suggest another reviewer. Information on reviewers' assignment is recorded in a spreadsheet accessible to anyone via TRESKA's shared Google drive. An example of the latest spreadsheet is displayed in Table 2. Because TRESKA is a small consortium, we agreed to add individuals' names in order to facilitate timely communication and to ensure accountability. As a rough guideline, deliverables should be sent to reviewers about one week before the submission deadline. Deliverable leaders are expected to communicate with reviewers about the exact timeline of the review.

*Table 2: List of reviewers assigned to deliverables in the coming 6 months*

D#	Deliverable name	Lead partner	Contributors	Reviewing Partner	Reviewer Name	Due date
D7.1	Kickoff meeting report	EUR	CSIC	CSIC	Luis and Francisco	29-02-2020
D6.1	Project website, social media accounts, and other	EUR		CSIC	Sara	30-04-2020

	communication channels					
D6.2	Planned Events	SBP		OBS	Jason and Marina	31-03-2020
D7.2	Data Management Plan	EUR	CSIC	OBS	Giuseppe	30-04-2020
D7.4	Risk management and quality assurance plan	EUR	CSIC	KURZ	Marc/Lizzy	30-05-2020
D6.5	Blog section of project website live	OBSERVA		EUR	Jason	31-05-2020
D1.3	Report with elaborated focus area descriptions and trending topic analysis	CSIC	EUR; OBS; ZSI	SBP	Jenny/Janni	31-05-2020
D1.1	Meta-Analysis map: relevant factors shaping public perception of science communication	CSIC	EUR; OBS; ZSI	EUR	Jason	30-06-2020



D1.4	Fully developed scenario description for video scripting and development	EUR	KURZ; CSIC; OBS	SBP	Jenny/Janni	30-06-2020
D2.1	Citizen SciCom workshop plan and scripting, instructions and recruitment strategy	OBS	EUR; CSIC	ZSI	Pamela and Gabor	30-06-2020
D1.2	Science communication and policy trend report	ZSI	EUR; SBP; OBS	CSIC	Sara	31-07-2020
D3.1	Set of illustrated vignettes with questions	CSIC	EUR; ZSI; KURZ	OBS	Giuseppe	31-08-2020
D1.5	Overview of (Dis)incentives for scientists to engage in SciCom	ZSI	OBS; EUR	CSIC	Luis	30-09-2020
D2.2	Dataset with transcriptions and other qualitative data	OBS	EUR; ZSI	CSIC	David	31-12-2020

	from the workshops					
D4.1	New SciCom video script and storyboard	KURZ	EUR	EUR	Jenny	31-12-2020
D3.2	Complete and cleaned factorial survey dataset	CSIC	EUR	OBS	David	31-01-2021
D4.2	White paper on best practices for producing science communication videos	EUR	KURZ	CSIC	Sara	31-01-2021

## CONCLUSION

The Risk Management and Quality Assurance plan defines structures created to guide risk mitigation and maintenance of high quality work in the TRESKA project. Even the most carefully-designed protocols will only be useful if they also work in practice. For the time being, consortium partners have agreed to the protocols above, and where applicable, the protocols are already being successfully implemented. In dialogue with the consortium partners, the management team will regularly evaluate which aspects of the Risk Management and Quality Assurance plan work, and which aspects need adjustment.