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Transforming Regions for an Inclusive Europe

WORK PACKAGE 5

Increasing Regional Research Impact

Deliverable 5.1

Work Plan and Organisational structure

May 2024



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1 Used terms and abbreviations

- D5.X - Deliverable 5.X
- ESR - Early-Stage Researchers
- ESR MP - Early-Stage Researchers Mentorship Programme
- EURAXESS - *Researchers in Motion* is a pan-European initiative delivering information and support services to professional researchers. It is backed by the European Union and its Member States.
- HRS4R - *The Human Resources Strategy for Researchers* is a tool launched by the European Commission that supports research institutions and funding organisations in the application of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the recruitment of researchers.
- M5.X - Milestone 5.x
- NRF - NEOLAIa Research Framework
- NRST - NEOLAIa Research Support Team
- ORU - Örebro University
- Q1 - First Quarter of year
- Q2 - Second Quarter of year
- Q3 - Third Quarter of year
- Q4 - Fourth Quarter of year
- T5.X - Task 5.X
- Task Force - working group for a specific task
- UT - University of Tours
- WP - Work Package
- WPCoL - Work Package Co-Leader
- WPD - Work Package Delegate
- WPL - Work Package Leader

2 Introduction

NEOLAIa, with its slogan 'Transforming Regions for an Inclusive Europe', is an Alliance of nine European Universities co-funded by the European Commission in its 2023 call for the period 2024-2027. The aim of NEOLAIa is to transform regional connectivity by embracing (i) digital transformation, through (ii) inclusion and diversity in a context of (iii) enhanced mobility, which are the three pillars of the project. To achieve this end, the work of NEOLAIa is being organised around ten lines of action, or work packages (WPs):

WP1 Project Management

WP2 Improving Teaching and Learning

WP3 Diversity and inclusion - Overcoming Barriers to Participation

WP4 Enhanced Mobility

WP5 Increasing Regional Research Impact

WP6 Entrepreneurship - NEOLAIa Capabilities for the Society of Tomorrow

WP7 Towards a Plurilingual and Intercultural European university

WP8 Adopting and Sustaining Open Science

WP9 Digital Transformation

WP10 Sustainability and dissemination

The NEOLAIa partners are: University of Jaén, Örebro University, Bielefeld University, University of Ostrava, University of Nicosia, Ștefan cel Mare University of Suceava, University of Tours, University of Salerno, and Šiauliai State University of Applied Sciences.

WP5, *Increasing Regional Research Impact*, focuses on strengthening and implementing research with regional impact at the universities of the NEOLAIa Alliance. Recognizing the importance of research alongside teaching and societal engagement, NEOLAIa is dedicated to addressing regional needs and supporting the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

These are the aims and activities of WP5:

- To encourage research groups and centres at the NEOLAIa partner universities to form new multidisciplinary and transnational research teams and projects, in order to produce substantial and high-impact research addressing societal challenges of regional relevance. This will be supported by the launch of the NEOLAIa Research Framework (NRF), containing principles for sharing research resources in an efficient, sustainable and quality-enhancing manner (T5.1).
- To support inclusive research of regional relevance by mapping and sharing infrastructure of the NEOLAIa universities' (e.g. technical equipment, databases, cohorts, staff, regional collaborative networks, and living/social/impact labs) and identifying research synergies as a basis for forming transnational research teams (T5.2).
- To create Expert Support Teams specialized in academic career development and general research support to strengthen academic collaborations and prevent brain-drain of researcher out of our regions (T5.3).
- To offer targeted activities for Early-Stage Researchers and create opportunities to form transnational research projects and networks through mobility and mentoring, thus providing enhanced quality and regional relevance of NEOLAIa research (T5.4).
- To create the NEOLAIa Living Lab Hub to provide open platforms for co-creation of knowledge with stakeholders, resulting in innovative and regionally relevant high-impact research linked to societal needs (T5.5).

3 Executive summary/abstract

NEOLAIa is an Alliance of nine European universities co-funded by the European Commission for the period 2024-2027 and where work is divided into ten work packages (WPs). WP5, led by Örebro University (ORU), focuses on enhancing research through regional development and alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. It aims to support academic career growth, combat regional brain drain, support regional and transnational research collaborations, and more. In WP5, which is divided into five tasks, we will develop the NEOLAIa Research Framework (NRF) to support sustainable research collaborations, map research resources and infrastructure across NEOLAIa universities, establish Research Support Networks, initiate an Early-Stage Researcher (ESR) seminar series and mentoring program, and promote knowledge exchange through Living Labs. The Work Plan outlines a structured approach for

executing these tasks, including forming dedicated teams, conducting seminars and workshops, and creating a policy framework to support research within the NEOLAIa network. This Work Plan is pivotal for advancing the NEOLAIa project's overall objectives in research, demonstrating a comprehensive strategy for regional development and international collaboration.

4 Description

4.1 Introduction

WP5 comprises five distinct tasks:

- T5.1 - Developing a NEOLAIa Research Framework
- T5.2 - Mapping NEOLAIa research resources and synergies
- T5.3 - Creating NEOLAIa Expert Support Teams
- T5.4 - Designing actions for NEOLAIa High-Impact Research
- T5.5 - Launching the NEOLAIa Living Lab Programme

The Work Plan is designed to provide an overview of the planned activities necessary to achieve the three deliverables and seven milestones during the project period. For more information, see each task in the Work Plan in Section 4.3 and in Annex B. Additionally, a timeline is attached as Annex A detailing planned activities for each quarter throughout the project period. This timeline should be considered an integral component of the Work Plan. Before presenting the Work Plan, we will present an overview of the organisational structure of WP5 in the next section.

4.2 Organisational structure

ORU assumes responsibility for the execution of WP5, under the leadership of Magnus Kristoffersson as the WP Leader (WPL), and Ignacio Rangel serving as the WP Co-Leader (WPCoL). Additionally, Local Coordinator Pia Bro-Nygårdhs actively contributes to the project's progression, while Ingela Abramsson provides essential administrative support. Efforts within WP5 are coordinated in liaison with Åke Strid, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Internationalisation, and Ida Andersson-Norrie, International Strategy Officer.

Moreover, each task has a Task Leader, a person responsible for that specific task. The other universities within the Alliance have designated delegates for WP5 (WPDs). Additional staff can work on different activities in the tasks of WP5; these are called the Task Force. The composition of members of a specific Task Force will be decided by each university in each case:

- The work in T5.1 will mainly be carried out by the Task Leader with support from the WPDs.
- T5.2 will mainly engage WPDs. Due to the differences between scientific fields, and their use of different research infrastructures, additional people at each university will most likely be involved.
- For T5.3, two different teams will be established, in accordance with M5.4. One team is the NEOLAIa Research Support Team (NRST). The other team will be assigned to work with HR issues and the HRS4R tool (HRS4R Team).



- In T5.4, a specific Task Force will be set up to assist with M5.5 and M5.6: The NEOLAIa Early-Stage Researchers seminars (ESR Seminars) and the NEOLAIa Early-Stage Mentorship Programme (ESR MP).
- For T5.5, and as a part of M5.7, a specific team will assist in launching the NEOLAIa Living Lab programme.

4.3 Work Plan

4.3.1 General information

Below, a general overview of the task execution strategies is provided, accompanied by a timeline describing the specific activities scheduled for each year's quarters (Q1, Q2, Q3 and Q4), extending through 2027. The current year's (2024) plan is detailed, with decreasing granularity for subsequent years, due to the inherent challenges of long-term planning. Nonetheless, estimates have been made regarding future activities. One key ongoing task is the WPL's and Co-Leader's visits to Alliance universities to kick-start the collaboration in the WP. These visits are important to gain a deeper understanding of the preconditions at each Alliance Partner.

4.3.2 Task 5.1: Developing a NEOLAIa Research Framework

Task Leader: Magnus Kristoffersson, ORU

The aim of the NEOLAIa Research Framework (NRF) is to foster long-term, sustainable research collaborations within the Alliance, focusing on efficient and equitable resource and infrastructure sharing. It seeks to enhance research impact and inclusivity by leveraging collective strengths. Key initiatives include collaborative research, publication of peer-reviewed papers, and organizing NEOLAIa-led activities. The framework will address academic freedom, regional relevance, diversity and inclusion, academic career development, sustainability, digital advancements, mobility, exchange programs, research ethics, and collaborations with private and public sector organisations and NGOs. Additionally, the NRF will support transnational projects and the NEOLAIa Living Lab Programme. Each Alliance university is also obliged to contribute seed funding to support the activities described.

As a part of this task, a report outlining the NRF will be issued M18 and updated M36 (M5.1). At the end of Q4 2024, the first draft of the NRF will be finalized for further discussions and considerations among the WP Delegates.

The completion of Deliverables D5.2 and D5.3, along with this Work Plan (D5.1), will predominantly be executed under Task 5.1. This process will involve continuous consultation with WPDs. Draft versions of the reports are scheduled for publication as part of D5.2 (Intermediate report on High-quality research with regional impact) and D5.3 (White paper: High-quality research with regional impact), which will be reviewed during one or more dedicated workshops. The standard procedure entails the WPL preparing initial drafts, followed by consultations with WP Delegates.

More details are found in the indicative timeline (Annex A).

4.3.3 Task 5.2: Mapping NEOLAIa researchers and synergies

Task Leader: Ignacio Rangel, ORU

As a foundation for the development of the NRF (T5.1) and to support Task 5.3-5.5, we will conduct a comprehensive mapping of i) infrastructure, and ii) research across all NEOLAIa universities.

Infrastructure and staff are crucial for facilitating collaborative research under the NEOLAIa Pillars, emphasizing resource and expertise sharing to achieve impactful, regionally significant, and inclusive research. A detailed mapping will identify opportunities for sharing resources such as technical equipment, databases, personnel, labs and various research networks. This will initially be performed through the internal exploration of competences and facilities at each university. In addition, a mapping of the research conducted at each university, focusing on the NEOLAIa Pillars, will be carried out with the aim of identifying collaboration possibilities among NEOLAIa universities and their researchers. Meetings, seminars and conferences will be held to support the creation of new research collaborations within the Alliance. The information from the two mappings will be summarized and published in digital platform(s), making this information easily accessible to staff at all NEOLAIa universities.

The task has two milestones: M5.2 (First Map of research resources published) and M5.3 (First Map of research synergies). These milestones are due in month 12 (M12) of the project (December 2024) and then updated by the end of each following year.

More details are found in the indicative timeline (Annex A).

4.3.4 Task 5.3: Creating NEOLAIa Expert Support Team

Task Leader: Clementine Perinaud, UT

The aim of this task is to set up the following two networks:

- 1.) The NEOLAIa Research Support Team (NRST) will facilitate collaboration and the exchange of knowledge among research support staff throughout the Alliance. The NRST will for example have expertise on research project management, academic collaboration, science communication, research education, and expertise on technical platforms.
- 2.) The NEOLAIa HRS4R Team addresses the need to decrease brain-drain and attract international talent by providing good working conditions for researchers and to adhering to the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct via HRS4R and EURAXESS.

In spring of 2024, a call will be issued for member universities to participate in the NRST and the HRS4R Team, complemented by targeted virtual meetings led by the Task Leader to gather data on university-specific conditions and opportunities.

The official launch of these teams is scheduled in Tours in Q4 of 2024. However, there will be on-line meetings before then. To comply with what is outlined in M5.4, a series of seminars/workshops will be

outlined, a best practice guide for incoming researchers will be developed, obtaining of the HRS4R award will be supported, and physical and virtual mobility will be carried out.

More details on the activities in T5.3 are found in the indicative timeline (Annex A).

4.3.5 Task 5.4: Designing actions for NEOLAIa High-Impact Research

Task Leader: Magnus Kristoffersson, ORU

In this task, we aim to establish i) an Early-Stage Researchers (ESR) seminar series, and ii) an ESR Mentorship Programme. When launched in Q1 2025, the seminars will be held four times a year and the ESR MP will be running twice (ESR MP I and ESR MP II) during the project period with different participants and will include both online meetings and physical mobility. These two activities will be designed to develop general skills for ESRs (PhD students and Post Docs) in their future academic careers.

Regarding ESR seminars, Q1 and Q2 2024 will be devoted to understanding what already existing seminars and workshops aimed at ESRs are already up and running at the different Alliance universities. Such a mapping will be carried out in dialog within WP5 (discussion between WPL and WPDs).

During Q2 2024, an ESR Team will be established. This ESR Team will coordinate the seminar activities and the ESR Mentorship Programme and should consist of 3 to 5 people. A call for manning the team will be announced during Q2, 2024. During Q3 and Q4 2024, the ESR Team will plan the ESR seminars and ESR MP that will be launched in Q1 2025.

More details are found in the indicative timeline (Annex A).

4.3.6 Task 5.5: Launching the NEOLAIa Living Lab Programme

Task Leader: Clementine Perinaud, UT.

The NEOLAIa Living Lab Programme involves all partner universities and aims to develop a regional outreach-oriented approach by involving a wide range of stakeholders including large and small regional companies, local authorities, NGOs, and other civil society actors. These stakeholders will collaborate to identify regional challenges, co-produce studies, discuss solutions, and disseminate results. The goal is to enhance the applicability of research outcomes and address regional issues affecting various community sectors through a diverse and inclusive Citizen Science approach by focusing on responsible research, innovation, and Open Data/Open Science practices. Furthermore, this initiative also seeks to increase knowledge exchange from and within the Living Labs already operational within the NEOLAIa consortium, and to inspire establishment of new such infrastructures in member universities, in case they are absent.

Task 5.5 starts in Q2 2024 with a call directed towards the NEOLAIa partners to join the Living Lab Hub. More details are found in the indicative timeline (Annex A).



5 Conclusion

Developing D5.1, Work Plan and Organisational Structure, has largely been a planning endeavor. Primarily, the WP management (WPL, WPCoL; Task Leaders, Local Project Coordinator) has crafted this document. The WP delegates have then been given the opportunity to provide input during the process. The work has had relatively fixed parameters based on how WP5 is outlined in the Grant Agreement and in other relevant documentation. Designing Tasks 5.1, 5.4, and 5.5 have been relatively straightforward, whereas planning of Tasks 5.2 and 5.3 was more complex. It should also be noted that overlaps exist both between the different tasks within WP5 and in relation to other WPs (e.g. WP8), which has introduced another dimension of challenges that had to be addressed.

6 References

Grant Agreement. Project 101124794 — NEOLAIa. (2023).

Consortium Agreement. Project 101124794 — NEOLAIa. (2024).

7 Annexes

Annex A: Timeline

Annex B: WP5, including description, Deliverables and Milestones