



SIERA

Integrating Sina Institute into the European Research Area

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Deliverable D3.2

Report on Proposal writing

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Executive Summary

This workpackage (WP3) in SIERA project aims at building the competencies and facilitate the participation of Birzeit University, in particular BZU Sina Institute, in EU funded research programs, namely in the previous FP7 and the current Horizon2020. This goal is to be achieved through the organization of a number of workshops on proposal writing in addition to participating in the writing of Horizon2020/FP7 proposals. This document (D3.2) highlights the achievements of the SIERA consortium in terms of capacity building in Horizon2020, as challenged by the transition from the previous framework programme, including the preparation of Sina Institute Horizon 2020 profile, to highlight Sina Institute's research interests and facilitate potential consortia building. In addition to highlighting some of the potential Horizon 2020 and other collaboration opportunities that Sina Institute has been working with, as part of WP3 activities.

As part of the SIERA project under WP3, Sina Institute also organized the second proposal writing workshop, covering the competencies required for a successful research project proposal, and introducing Horizon2020 as the new EU research framework programme, the workshop's agenda can be found in appendix 2 below. The workshop was presented by highly experienced professionals in managing EU funded projects; Mr. Ruben Riestra from Spain, and Prof. Paolo Bouquet, from the University of Trento Italy. In addition to a session presented by Prof. Mustafa Jarrar, presenting EU funded research projects at Sina Institute. Beside some important insights of how to position a potential proposal from the angle of the Palestinian participation. The workshop also included a number of private consultation sessions for BZU staff, and an in-depth session for BZU Sina staff. The sessions covered many topics of high importance regarding successful EU projects management. In addition to discussing BZU's and Sina's visions and strategies for Horizon2020. Finally, Mr. Riestra's and Prof. Bouquet's visit included several important meetings and discussions with potential stakeholders and partners for upcoming projects proposals and opportunities.

Furthermore, Sina Institute is currently working on a project proposal for Horizon 2020, in addition to the fulfilled task of submitting two FP7 projects that were reported at D3.1. The project is entitled "NGOs Coordination Hub" aims at providing the platform and the means at which the local NGOs in the Middle East could coordinate their work and activities with other relevant NGOs in the area, and with the funding bodies in the EU. The proposal is still under preparation, and is to be submitted to the *H2020/BES 12-2014* call for proposals in November.

Project Information

Project Number	FP7-295006	Acronym	SIERA
Full Title	Integrating Sina Institute into the European Research Area		
Project URL	Sina.birzeit.edu/SIERA/		
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Workpackage Structure:

Person-Months per Participant		
Participant number ¹⁰	Participant short name ¹¹	Person-months per participant
1	BZU	6.00
2	UNL	1.00
3	BBAW	1.00
4	UNITN	3.00
5	UNIMIB	1.00
Total		12.00

List of deliverables						
Deliverable Number ⁸¹	Deliverable Title	Lead beneficiary number	Estimated indicative person-months	Nature ⁸²	Dissemination level ⁸³	Delivery date ⁸⁴
D3.1	Report on proposal writing workshops and proposal-1 preparation and submission	4	7.00	R	CO	18
D3.2	Report on proposal-2 preparation and submission	4	5.00	R	CO	34
Total			12.00			

Description of deliverables
D3.1) Report on proposal writing workshops and proposal-1 preparation and submission: Report on: (i) the workshops that will be organized at BZU to train people on proposal writing, and (ii) the preparation and submission of the first FP7 proposal (report covers Task 3.1 and part of Task 3.2). [month 18] D3.2) Report on proposal-2 preparation and submission: Report on the preparation and submission of the second FP7 proposal (report covers remaining part of Task 3.2). [month 34]

Schedule of relevant Milestones				
Milestone number ⁸⁵	Milestone name	Lead beneficiary number	Delivery date from Annex I ⁸⁶	Comments
MS12	1st proposal writing workshop	4	12	
MS13	2nd proposal writing workshop	4	12	
MS14	Submission of first proposal	4	18	Delivery date is based on relevant call deadline
MS15	Submission of second proposal	4	34	Delivery date is based on relevant call deadline

Table of Contents

1. Organization of a proposal writing workshop (Task 3.1)	6
1.1. Workshop Sessions	6
1.2. Sessions' Attendance	8
1.3 Building-Up on the Previous Workshop	8
2. Sina Institute's Horizon 2020 and EU Funded Programs Preparations (as part of Task3.2)	9
2.1. Sina Institute Horizon 2020 Profile	9
2.2. Involvement of Palestinian SMEs.....	9
2.3. Further Networking and Outreach	11
2.4. Preparations for Erasmus+.....	11
3. Writing Horizon2020/FP7 Proposal (Task3.2)	12
3.1. H2020: NGOs Coordination Hub Proposal (<i>Under Preparation</i>)	12
3.1.1. Objectives	12
3.1.2. Sample Activities	13
3.2. FP7: agriMUSE Proposal (Rejected).....	13
3.3. FP7: MOSAIC Project (Accepted)	14
3.3.1. Objectives	14
3.3.2. Specific activities	15
3.4. SMART Heritage Multimedia Guide Proposal (Submitted)	16
3.4.1. Objectives	16
3.4.2. Specific Activities.....	17
3.5. Initial Preparations for other Relevant Research Proposals.....	17
4. Conclusion and Lessons Learned	19
4.1. Challenges faced during project proposal writing	19
4.2. Lessons learned about writing Horizon 2020 proposals	19
4.3. Sina Institute's Enhanced Networking Outreach	20
5. Quality and Self Evaluation	20
Appendix 1: Sina Horizon2020 Profile	21
Appendix 2: Proposal Writing Workshop Agenda	26

1. Organization of a proposal writing workshop (Task 3.1)

In an effort to introduce the new EU research funding program Horizon 2020 to the Palestinian academics and researchers, in April 2014 Sina Institute organized a dedicated 3-day workshop on proposal writing skills, covering a broad range of activities and audience. The workshop's agenda can be found in appendix 2 below, and further details and coverage can be found at this link: (<http://sina.birzeit.edu/news-and-events/sina-institute-organized-a-workshop-on-proposal-writing-skills-and-the-european-horizon-2020-program/>)

1.1. Workshop Sessions

The workshop was presented by highly experienced professionals in managing EU funded projects; Mr. Ruben Riestra, and Prof. Paolo Bouquet, from the University of Trento (Italy). Prof. Mustafa Jarrar also provided some important insights on Sina's and BZU's current EU funded research projects, and highlighted Sina's preparations for Horizon 2020. The workshop was organized in four sessions:

1. Public training session.
2. Private consultation session.
3. Final training session.
4. Set of networking meetings.

In the first part of the workshop a **public training session** was organized. This session was open for participants from all Palestinian universities and institutes. The workshop has been attended by about 60 interested staff members from Birzeit University, along with many participants from the local Palestinian institutes and universities, which allowed for vibrant discussions and remarks throughout the workshop. The workshop lasted for about 4 hours, and the following major contributions were presented:

- Prof. Mustafa Jarrar, the director of Sina Institute and associate professor at the IT faculty, presented Sina Institute and the current and previous EU funded projects that Sina Institute has been part of, both as a coordinator and partner. Prof. Jarrar also discussed Sina Institute's preparations for Horizon 2020, and the main research interests for Sina Institute at the upcoming programme.
- Prof. Paolo Bouquet then presented the Horizon 2020 program, explaining its various funding components. The presentation also discussed the main changes relative to the previous research funding program FP7, regarding research topics, administrative, and financial issues. Prof Bouquet concluded his presentation by explaining the shape and domains of the potential Palestinian participation in Horizon 2020, as part of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP).
- The last session was dedicated to highlight the skills of writing a competitive project proposal, presented by Mr. Ruben Riestra. Mr. Riestra first discussed the competitive landscape of the EU funded projects, and the different factors that contribute to the success of the proposal and how to

ameliorate them towards Horizon 2020. Mr. Riestra also provided some explanations on the characteristics of a good proposal, and how to better position a proposal to attain better evaluations.

- A vibrant Q&A session followed the presentations, where some of the highlighted topics at the presentations were discussed in further details. The main discussion point was how to better position a proposal coming from a Palestinian institute, in addition to many other administrative and financial topics.

In the second part of the workshop, a **private consultation session** dedicated to BZU's admin staff was organized. This session involved many department heads and managers, covering topics and best practices in managing EU funded research projects. The session also discussed BZU's vision and strategy for Horizon 2020, including the main interest areas and how to better position potential proposals.

In the third part, the **final training session** was dedicated to Sina Institute's staff members, to discuss the institute's preparations for Horizon 2020 and the main topics of interest that are covered at the published calls. The session also included some discussions on a number of specific proposals that Sina Institute was planning to prepare for Horizon 2020, in addition to discussing other administrative affairs.

The fourth and last part of the workshop was dedicated to **networking meetings**. Mr. Riestra's and Dr. Bouquet's visit also included important meetings to discuss potential areas of cooperation with local stakeholders and companies for both the SIERA project, and other Horizon 2020 opportunities. These meetings included an important discussion with Ms. Nada Atrach from the Centre for Cultural Heritage Preservation (CCHP) in Bethlehem, to discuss an initiative to deploy a guidance system in the city of Bethlehem based on OKKAM-QR technologies. In addition, another important meeting with the Palestinian Deputy Minister of Tourism and Antiquities served to discuss potential opportunities in the domains of multicultural knowledge sharing in Palestine, and further to discuss the OKKAM-QR based guidance system in Bethlehem and the possibility of expanding the system to include many other sites of heritage significance in Palestine.

Another meeting involving Dr. Bouquet was also held in Jericho, to discuss further ideas for cultural heritage preservation and multicultural sharing. The meeting included visiting a few places of heritage significance, like Hisham's Palace (Qasr Hisham), to investigate the possibility of expanding the OKKAM-QR system to Jericho, in addition to discussing potential systems that include Augmented Reality technologies for some of the ruins at these sites, which received praise and attention of the officials in Jericho, and the discussions are still underway for a potential project with the ministry soon.

Further meetings with both Dr. Bouquet and Mr. Riestra included some hands-on meetings regarding a potential Horizon 2020 proposal, illustrated below, in cooperation with the NGOs sector in Palestine and the area. Dr. Bouquet and Mr. Riestra, in addition to a number of staff members from Sina Institute, met representatives of local NGOs networks, including the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organisations Network (PNGO) (<http://www.pngo.net/>) and others, to discuss the details of selected calls that match the proposal scheme, and different details regarding the proposal's goals and activities.

1.2. Sessions' Attendance

- **The public session** has been attended by about 65 participants, from diverse backgrounds and from a number of Palestinian institutions. Despite the fact that the session had a more detailed illustration of the ICT components and calls within Horizon 2020, the session was also appealing to participants from many diverse disciplines; including Engineering, Biology, Physics, Law, Business, in addition to the IT related disciplines.

Based on a rough Q&A session that the instructors have performed at the beginning of the session, we observed that about 70% of the attendance had either none or limited knowledge of Horizon 2020, and about 40% only participated at EU funded programs before. Hence, we believe that the session was indeed suitable to enhance the outreach and knowledge of EU funded research programs to the local Palestinian academics and researchers.

- **The private consultation session**, dedicated to BZU's admin staff, has been attended by about 25 personnel. The attendees were mainly from the financial, human resources, planning, managerial departments at BZU, and two vice rectors, among others, affiliated with efficient management of EU funded programs. The session lasted for about two hours, with much vibrant Q&A discussion.

1.3 Building-Up on the Previous Workshop

The 2nd proposal writing workshop arose as a consequent of the previous proposal writing workshop held in June 2012. The 1st proposal writing workshop focused primarily on the details and best practices used for developing a competitive EU funded research project, and namely FP7, in addition to highlighting some managerial and admin issues affiliated with handling such projects.

However, for the 2nd proposal writing workshop, the vision of Sina Institute and the Siera consortium in general was to highlight even more on the point that a successful EU funded research project requires a successful implementation and management, in addition to a successful proposal. The 2nd proposal writing workshop was designed to provide more details of best practices and know-how required for successful projects management, which includes financial and human resourcing aspects, among others. This aspect of the workshop was fulfilled throughout the 2nd and 3rd sessions, dedicated to BZU and Sina Institute staff.

The 2nd workshop is also characterized with the transition from FP7 to Horizon 2020, where the structure of the 1st session was developed to cover the transition and differences between the two programs, along with covering the new elements of the new program, especially regarding societal challenges and the role of SMEs.

2. Sina Institute's Horizon 2020 and EU Funded Programs Preparations (as part of Task3.2)

EU's FP7 program was concluded in 2013, to be followed by the newly developed program of Horizon 2020. As part of its continued effort to be an influential participant at the EU funded research programs, Sina Institute took the initiative to adapt into the new program as soon as possible, and to spread the expertise and enhance the competency of other local institutes and researchers regarding Horizon 2020 proposals.

2.1. Sina Institute Horizon 2020 Profile

The profile was communicated via email to about **250 academics and researchers** in Europe and Europe Neighborhood countries, as well as publicly announced at several LinkedIn groups, to introduce the institute to potential collaborators and entities throughout the region and worldwide. It received lots of praise and attention that lead to brainstorming many ideas, some of which are currently in preparation to submit a proposal.

The prepared profile is available in appendix 1 below.

2.2. Involvement of Palestinian SMEs

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and innovation have been given a considerable space in Horizon 2020 due to their direct effects on economy and employment opportunities generation. Hence, as part of our Horizon 2020 preparations, we thought that the prospective Palestinian participation at Horizon 2020 calls should not be limited to educational and research institutes only, but also should include local SMEs. In particular, it was considered to involve ICT companies which constitute a valuable rule in the Palestinian developing economy. At this regard, we have been in durable consultation with the Palestinian Information Technology Association of Companies (PITA), the largest ICT companies association in Palestine, in addition to surveying and meeting a number of notable Palestinian ICT companies to cooperate closely in potential Horizon 2020 calls.

Within this scope, and as part of the preparations for Horizon 2020, Sina Institute conducted a survey and bilateral meetings with the Palestinian ICT sector, to identify current and future trends and find potential cooperation opportunities that can be utilized within EU funding programs in general, and Horizon 2020 in particular. The study included surveying and meeting about 20 entities of the Palestinian private and public sectors that are mainly affiliated with the ICT industry, through face-to-face interviews and brainstorming meetings. Such entities include the Palestinian Information Technology Association of Companies (PITA), the Ministry of IT and Telecommunications, The Palestine Information and Communications Technology Incubator (PICTI), among other several private sector companies and universities. The paragraphs below provide a brief outline of the findings.

ICT is one of the main sectors powering the Palestinian economy, with an estimated gross revenue generation of \$600 million in 2013. It employs close to 5,000 employees, with a strong focus and interest towards the application and usage of ICT for solving societal challenges. In addition, there is a thriving startup community, and there are

established venture capital (VC) companies and incubators/accelerators that aid in supporting this new ecosystem.

Nevertheless, the ICT industry remains focused on outsourcing, whether related to business process or software development outsourcing. As per our communication with PITA and the other ICT companies, we observed that outsourcing with reputable international companies such as Cisco, Intel and HP as their clients is their main activity. In this area, Palestine's strengths lie in having a good base of IT resources available, with strong demand from international and regional clients. Another area that has a strong demand is Arabic content generation, due to Arabic being the native language, coupled with a large educated population and a strong regional demand.

However, building a truly sustainable ICT ecosystem requires a more rigorous and concrete products-based industry rather than relying heavily on outsourcing, which is a vision that most of the ICT field workers in Palestine currently share. Given this vision, and the rapidly increasing attention in innovation, entrepreneurship and startups culture, we believe that Horizon 2020 will be an asset for the Palestinian ICT SMEs that should not be neglected. Currently, BZU and Siera partners are working on developing a strategy regarding the involvement of SMEs in Palestine with Horizon 2020.

Generally, Palestine has some issues to address in regards to improving the ICT sector, and these include: the perception of insecurity and instability, its captive economy which isolates it from competition, and a lack of capital to drive investment. However, with proper marketing and positioning, which is being mainly carried out by the Ministry of Telecommunication and IT, PITA (Palestinian IT Association) and PalTrade (Palestine Trade Center), Palestine is on the right track to become an IT hub for advanced technologies.

Other ways to further improve the Palestinian ICT sector include:

- IT dissemination and application in all public sectors and societal challenges.
- Improvement of law and identity protection.
- The introduction of 3G/4G bandwidth for mobile phones.
- Improvement in online banking services.

Throughout these different activities, and in the light of such findings, Sina Institute managed to initiate Horizon2020 potential proposals discussions both locally and internationally. On the local level, Sina's efforts to raise the awareness and disseminate the details of Horizon 2020 were successful to attract and involve many Palestinian academics, researchers, and most importantly some SMEs. The main purpose is to foster ongoing discussions and plans for Horizon 2020 proposals, charging the momentum and skills-set to produce competitive Palestinian proposals throughout the upcoming calls. On the international level, Sina commenced multiple discussions for potential consortia for multiple areas of interest in Horizon 2020 as shown in the following sections.

2.3.Further Networking and Outreach

In an effort to enhance Sina Institute's outreach and connections within the European research scene, and as part of the effort for potential Horizon 2020 consortia, Prof. Mustafa Jarrar, the director of Sina Institute, participated at the notable ICT 2013 event (<http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/ict-2013>) in Lithuania. The event included a conference, exhibition, networking sessions, and work programme sessions, which aimed at promoting the H2020 programs. Many bilateral meetings and discussions were conducted during this event, in which Sina Profile was presented, specially to people interested in topics like cooperation with Mena countries, e-governments, and main language technologies.

2.4.Preparations for Erasmus+

The transition from FP7 to Horizon2020 was also accompanied by the transition of another relevant EU funding program, Tempus, to Erasmus+. In its continued effort to remain an active and pioneering participant with all relevant EU programs, Sina Institute also made sure to grasp and adapt to the new program quickly.

As an integrated program, acting as an umbrella for several previous EU programs, Erasmus+ required detailed and careful review and understanding of the affiliated subcategories and action plans, some of which were vague and required clarification. On this regard, Sina Institute initiated several bilateral meetings with the National Tempus Offices (NTO) - now National Erasmus+ Office (NEO) - in Palestine and in the area, namely with the Jordanian NTO director. The meetings covered hands-on analysis of the new program, and how it fits for the Palestinian and Middle Eastern scope in general.

It is worth noting that the Erasmus+ calls that are relevant and specific to the MENA region are scheduled to be published around September. Sina Institute was also pioneering in planning out and building different consortia for the upcoming calls, with 2 particular projects currently in the pipeline covering the domains of innovative distance learning platforms, and social networks analysis.

3. Writing Horizon2020/FP7 Proposal (Task3.2)

The proposal writing Task 3.2 has been successfully fulfilled at the first phase of the SIERA project covered and reported in deliverable D3.2, with two FP7 proposals agriMUSE and MOSAIC, discussed below. However, and per our continued efforts regarding Horizon 2020, we are also currently working on submitting the “NGOs Coordination Hub” project, to the H2020/BES 12–2014.

3.1. H2020: NGOs Coordination Hub Proposal (*Under Preparation*)

This proposal will be submitted to the H2020/BES 12–2014 call for proposals.

The goal of the proposal (called NGOs Coordination Hub) aims at helping NGOs and human aid organizations in the Middle East area do a better job! The region is abundant with NGOs, working at a wide spectrum of different domains, and sometimes different languages and cultures. The project aims at providing the platform and the means at which these NGOs could coordinate their work and activities with other relevant NGOs in the area, and with the funding bodies in the EU.

Palestine and the Middle East are situated at the heart of a very vibrant NGOs field of operations, with countless organizations working in the region. However, most of these entities work in isolation and lack the regional outreach and scope of operations; in terms of news updates and in-depth analysis of the region. In addition to the know-how and knowledge sharing between entities working on similar domains. This usually leads to limited efficiency, excessive and unnecessary spending, corruption, and sometimes even danger for the individuals!

Examples of such issues include the human rights monitoring NGOs in Palestine, where to date, there are more than 11 recorded NGOs within Palestine alone that are documenting and following up on the human rights violations. The activities of such organizations can get somewhat redundant, so a centralized data collection, coordination and funding schemes are essential. The same applies to the NGOs working in human aid in Syria, where close connection and communication between such entities can assure wider coverage, better insights on the targeted regions, and better tracking of the beneficiaries.

3.1.1. Objectives

The coordination action between the NGOs and NGOs related entities in the region could help serve the following:

1. Increasing functionality and work efficiency, by facilitating remote cooperation between entities working on similar domains, achieving more value for the money. By means of:
 - a. Know-how and knowledge sharing between entities working on similar domains.
 - b. Coordinating joint activities and joint programs.
 - c. News and updates sharing regarding a certain geographic area or certain domain, which could help assuring safety and increases efficiency.

2. Reducing costs for the funding bodies, where the funds could then be directed and focused to support specific domains or specific areas, rather than specific entities.
 - a. Increasing transparency, where the activities would be visible and monitored by not only the local communities, but rather reflected upon the entire region.
3. Data and information collection and sharing, by making the previously collected data by any entity public for other entities registered at the system. This would eliminate the need to collect the data that has been already collected once before.
4. Sharing IT infrastructure and tools using cloud based services.

3.1.2. Sample Activities

1. Needs assessment and review of the current protocols and policies used at the regional NGOs.
2. Data portal and sharing framework, to allow for easy collection and sharing for the data and knowledge in between the different entities.
3. Domain specific search engines for the respective fields, in conjugation with the data portal mentioned before, to allow for a structured access for the data. The search engine could support multilingual sharing platforms.
4. Networking platforms, for both donors and NGOs, and maybe people in need. Bringing in active NGOs from the Middle East as partners.

3.2. FP7: agriMUSE Proposal (Rejected)

The agriMUSE project (Innovative Multilingual Content & Data Analytics Services for Agriculture) was under the call FP7-ICT-2013-SME-DCA. The project proposal was rejected at initial submission, however, a revision and resubmission is being considered for the 2nd round of ICT calls at Horizon 2020.

agriMUSE counts on the experience of the ongoing *Organic.Lingua* project (organic-lingua.eu) in the interest of developing multi-lingual services over a large-scale metadata aggregation infrastructure and that will (i) incorporate a set of language technology components and (ii) allow multilingual portals and services to be created on top of it. The project aims to make use of existing bilingual texts for agricultural sciences (available corpora, e.g., in English and Arabic) to train systems so it can: a) Provide a quick but accurate translations of metadata records as well as textual documents (e.g., PDF versions of papers) from English to a targeted language (e.g., Arabic) so that the speakers of this language can get access to literature available in English even if they have limited knowledge of English. b) Analyze and de-compose the core components of a paper (e.g., its method, protocol, materials, experimental set up, and produced results) using multilingual ontologies. In this way, English (as well as other languages) publications will be represented as semantically enhanced research objects that will be available to any targeted language (such as Arabic). In this way, even if an accurate translation of the text is not possible or not available, the main components of the research work that it is presenting can be made available in a language that targeted users may understand.

The main objectives of agriMUSE, as well as the corresponding measurable indicators are;

- Design, implement and deploy a set of Language Technology (LT) tools for multilingual enrichment of digital collections using ontology-based information extraction and natural language generation.
- Integrate LT tools instance into an operational data aggregation infrastructure.
- Extend existing software products of the participating SMEs to use deployed LT module.
- Deploy operating enhanced instances of the SME software products to support well-defined use cases of agricultural stakeholders.
- Carry out focused pilot trials, technical testing, and economic viability assessment for the deployed demonstrators.
- Investigate the market potential and develop clearly specified business models for the enhanced software products of SMEs.

BZU Sina and other 8 partners (University of Alcala (coordinator, Spain), Fondazione Bruno Kessler(Italy), Agro-Know Technologies(Greece), @mire (Belgium), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations(Italy), Aarhus University / International Centre for Research in Organic Food Systems(Denmark), Agricultural Information Institute / Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences(China), and Arab States Research & Application Network(Germany)) were involved in this project.

As a participating partner in agriMuse, BZU Sina fulfilled its role in the proposal writing process by supplying the coordinator with a short bio on BZU Sina and specifying the tasks and role in agriMuse. BZU Sina's contribution also extended to the revising of the proposal and providing feedbacks where necessary.

3.3. FP7: MOSAIC Project (Accepted)

MOSAIC project (Cooperation with Mediterranean Partners to build Opportunities around Societal And Industrial Challenges of Horizon 2020) under the call FP7-ICT-2013-10. MOSAIC is a Support Action that intends to foster International Cooperation between Europe and Mediterranean Partners Countries in the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) field, including also those societal challenges covered by Horizon 2020 that have been considered more relevant in the target region. In addition to facilitating smooth transition from FP7 to Horizon 2020.

3.3.1. Objectives

MOSAIC proposes the creation of two Technology Platforms (TP) focused on the two main regions of the Mediterranean area from a sociopolitical and geographical perspective: MED-TP1 covering *Maghreb* countries (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya), and MED-TP2 covering Mashriq countries (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestinian administrated areas, Syria Arab Republic Syria).

The MED-TPs that will be created by MOSAIC are instruments that will support dialogues between European

stakeholders and strategic partners in the Mediterranean region, to foster bi-lateral cooperation in R&D projects within the EU's Framework Programs (Horizon 2020) and also under relevant MED country programs.

MED-TPs will be key tools to reinforce industrial cooperation on ICT research and development and bridge the gap between research and the market. As they will allow better networking between European ICT Technology Platforms and relevant associations in MED countries, in order to strengthen cooperative research links around a selected set of research/societal topics. MED-TPs will pave the way to set-up sustainable mechanisms for enhancing cooperation between European organizations and relevant leading MED organizations.

The European Technology platforms (ETPs) and MED-TPs interaction will help in establishing mutually beneficial partnerships based on synergies to be identified between the Digital Agenda for Europe's (DAE) international agenda and ICT strategies in MED countries. The project intends to replicate the success of the Support Action FIRST (FP7 ICT4) that has implemented Technology Platforms on Future Internet, ICT Components and Systems in several countries of Latin America (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Mexico). FIRST aimed to extend the constituency of ETPs to Latin American strategic stakeholders from different ICT sectors included in the Future Internet field. This successful experience was attractive, as it led to the building of a similar infrastructure in other world markets such as Mediterranean countries. See: <http://www.latin-american-technology-platforms.eu/>

3.3.2. Specific activities

BZU Sina and other 12 partners from EU (Spain, Portugal and France) and the MED countries were involved in this project. BZU Sina as a partner in MOSAIC project has fulfilled its role in the proposal writing process by supplying the coordinator with a short bio on BZU Sina and specifying the tasks and role in the project. Sina has also contributed in revising the proposal and providing ample feedback where necessary.

The MOSAIC project had successfully retained funding. The main activities that BZU Sina will be responsible for with other partners are:

- Collecting data inputs in Palestine and analysis of collected data, from organizations involved in the fields of ICT, ICT for food and ICT for Energy.
- Consolidation and harmonization of the data analysis.
- Creating and launching Technology Platforms in MED countries. Several activities to be performed including, providing a strategic vision document which describes the significance of the particular technology and outlines the medium and long-term development objectives of the Technology Platform. At this stage, also the first governance rules will also be provided. In addition, BZU will contribute in the definition and implementation of a Strategic Research Agenda.
- Set up the Global Strategy for cooperation EU-MED. BZU Sina will contribute in the creation of a European-MOSAIC group of experts, the development of common EU-MED Vision document, and the definition of a common EU-MED Strategic Research Agenda.

3.4. SMART Heritage Multimedia Guide Proposal (Submitted)

This proposal was submitted to the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities last April, and it was a result of successful networking meeting with the deputy minister and local NGOs, with the project members. Prof. Mustafa Jarrar and Nasser Zalmout from Sina Institute, in cooperation with Prof. Paolo Bouquet, presented the idea to the deputy minister, and the ministry was then excited about the idea and asked to send a more comprehensive proposal.

The details of the proposal come about as a result of the cooperation with the University of Trento and its spin-off company OKKAM s.r.l, under the SIERA project, represented by Prof. Paolo Bouquet. The objective of the project is to enhance the experience of Palestine's visitors and valorise the cultural heritage (CH) of the country through an innovative and effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) and modern communication devices (smartphones, tablets, etc.).

3.4.1. Objectives

This objective will be achieved by: (1) identifying the CH objects/locations which the Ministry wants to valorise; (2) associating a collection of relevant multimedia resources (texts, audio files, videos, Apps) for each object/location as links; (3) making these resources immediately and easily accessible to visitors in loco through smartphones and tablets; (4) connecting the visitor's experience to social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google+, ...) for viral impact.

The expected results of the project are: (a) effective valorisation of Palestine's cultural heritage assets; (b) perception of an innovative society which cares for its CH assets; (c) increased presence of Palestine and its CH assets at a global level; (d) innovative support to tourist guides, who can benefit from multimedia material as a support to their oral illustration; (e) reduced costs for maintenance of CH information (e.g., replacement of interpretation panels); (f) reduced costs for information updates; (g) establishment of an extensible infrastructure, which can be developed in the future without new significant investments.

The most valuable features of ObjectLinks for the SMART Guide project are the following:

1. **VALORISATION OF PREVIOUS INVESTMENTS AND EXISTING RESOURCES:** ObjectLinks does not replace contents and services which were developed in the past (like videos, photos, texts, booking services, event feeds, etc.), but helps making them easily accessible to visitors through their smartphones in the right place and in right context. This increases the value of past investments and stimulates new developments
2. **EFFECTIVE AND DYNAMIC MANAGEMENT OF Cultural Heritage ASSETS:** once an *objectlink* is created for a particular location/object, the associated contents presented to visitors can be changed through the web-based interface (or through the platform's APIs) without the need of changing the physical QR codes or the links used in other web pages. This means that, for example, the QR codes at Hisham Palace

can be updated at any time by authorised personnel to keep up with new events, new materials, and new advices for visitors.

3. **RETURN ON INVESTMENT:** the ObjectLinks platform allows the creators of a project to host third-parties' contents and advertisement and charge them for the hosting (*à la* Google AdSense). This means that the project can generate revenues for the project owner.

3.4.2. Specific Activities

1. **Content preparation** and management to fit it within the standards of appropriate content provided at a tourist guide. This activity requires careful analysis of the length and type of content to be provided at the guide and then send it to the ministry to approve it.
2. **Audio recordings of the content** with at least 2 languages (Arabic and English for the first phase). The voice should be of suitable tone and speech speed, suitable for the settings of a handheld portable tour guide.
3. **Preparation and editing of suitable videos** highlighting the location's characteristics. This activity involves editing available videos to fit the purpose of portable tour guide.
4. **Producing subtitles for the videos**, with other languages and even for the same video language, since the surroundings of the location might be noisy and the voice unclear.
5. **Producing the ObjectLinks, by managing and aggregating the content** (audio, video, text, among the other links) and producing the ObjectLink using the web-interface.
6. **Printing and installing the QR codes** of the ObjectLinks on the locations. The QR codes will be printed on good quality stickers and installed using iron stands beside the corresponding location.

3.5. Initial Preparations for other Relevant Research Proposals

In addition to the Horizon 2020 consortia preparations discussed above, the SIERA consortium have also made preparations for addressing specific areas in Horizon 2020, based on the research strategy domains identified in SIERA. Such preparations include the cooperation with BBAW, for Horizons 2020's "Big Data" challenge. The preparations include new proposal with a focus on ontology development and ontology-lexicon mapping. Following work under SIERA, the lexicon is (the English) WordNet, and the results of the planned work would be easily applicable and transferable to wordnets in other languages, including Arabic. The planned work, while focusing on a few carefully selected parts of the lexicon and their corresponding ontological representation, is easily extensible to

domain ontologies. Though the planned work would be carried out manually, mechanisms for semi-automatic extensions will be proposed and tested.

The overall goal of the proposal is to identify and represent so-called dot objects both lexically and ontologically. Examples of dot objects are *book* and *physics department*. They are polysemous: *book* can refer to either the physical object (“the book was torn”) or its contents (“the book explained the history of the Ottoman Empire”); *physics department* can refer to the building (“the physics department occupies a whole city block”) or the institution (“the physics department tries to recruit the Nobel Prize winner”). The difference between these readings becomes apparent in sentences with multiple verbal predicates that are each compatible with only one reading, such as “the book was torn and explained the history of the Ottoman Empire” and “the physics department occupies a city block and tries to recruit the Noble Prize winner.” Such “zeugmas” are infelicitous or at best humorous. In underspecified contexts, both readings are possible (“Mary loves French books”; “the physics department is pretty old”); human language users have no trouble identifying the intended meaning through the broader context. Apresyan (1973) was among the first to point that the systematic polysemy of nouns like *book* and *physics department*, which extends to the entire categories to which these nouns belong. Thus, **publications** like *magazine* and *periodical* and **institutions** like *university* and *Supreme Court* are among the nouns that express dot objects.

The proposed work will identify categories on dot objects and their category members, which share the properties described above. The multilingual perspective here will be interesting: Do many languages lexicalize categories whose members are dot objects? If so, is this property linguistically marked in some way, as by a classifier, some kind of verb agreement, etc. These steps of the work will make use of corpora so as to provide an empirical, data-driven foundation.

Second, a novel representation of the corresponding noun classes in WordNet (and, ultimately, crosslingual wordnets) will be undertaken. A new entry (synset) will be created that represents the dot object. It will be linked to existing (and, where needed, newly created) synsets that express the specific reading of the underspecified dot object sense. The link will be a bidirectional pointer labeled “aspect” (such as “physical”) in one direction, from the specific synset to the dot object synset, and “dot object” in the reverse direction. The “aspect” pointer will be further refined and semantically and ontologically specified, in accordance with corpus data to show the use of the nouns in specific contexts. Properties of the nouns (dot objects and specific senses) will be stated as much as possible in terms of class membership so as to capture regularities and generalizations.

As of this writing, the proposal is still in the planning phase and only a handful of cases have been worked out. The appropriate program within Horizons 2020 will be identified and a full proposal will be prepared after the end of the SIERA contract.

4. Conclusion and Lessons Learned

The second workshop was successfully organized at BZU Sina, and Horizon 2020 has been properly disseminated to the interested staff from all Palestinian universities; including the description of the new program structure, pillars, admin issues, and potential strategy and positioning for the Palestinian potential participants. In addition to the training on the know-how and skills on proposal writing. The workshops also provided BZU and Sina staff with better understanding of the affiliate administrative issues on how to properly manage an EU funded research project. Sina, and as part of Siera, has also been involved in the active preparations for Horizon 2020, including preparing a comprehensive profile for Sina Institute, active discussions and reviews with the local SME's, in addition to actively working on a Horizon2020 proposal to be submitted.

4.1. Challenges faced during project proposal writing

The fact that the second phase of the project coincided with the transition to Horizon2020 imposed a number of challenges and obstacles in the proposal writing process, including:

- Limited information and details at the beginning of the program, which left the door open for lots of speculation and uncertainty during the initial preparations.
- Incomplete description at the beginning regarding the Palestinian participation and roles, as part of the Europe Neighborhood Policy.
- Some Communication barriers (such as late email response, difficulty of reaching partners).
- Since H2020 calls are research and EU-oriented, it is not easy for a Palestinian partner, like Sina institute, to convince the EU partners to coordinate an H2020 project, and it is also not very easy to join an EU consortium in a competitive proposal, as the consortium have to justify the participation of a non-EU partner.

4.2. Lessons learned about writing Horizon 2020 proposals

- Reading the call's instructions is often a key factor in assuring the success of a proposal, but often neglected. Many unsuccessful proposals can be caused back to not reading the instructions of the call well.
- Making sure to match the idea at hand to potential calls, rather than designing an idea to fit a call.
- Becoming more familiar with the criteria project offices base their evaluation on.
- Presenting a clear, consistent, and integrated technical, management, and cost plan.
- Preparing a proposal budget and reduce and justify the total cost.
- Establishing a team relationship and clearly communicating time frames/due dates with the project partners.

4.3. Sina Institute's Enhanced Networking Outreach

The different activities covered throughout the WP3 tasks at the 2nd phase of the SIERA project increased Sina Institute's local outreach to many of the active local research institutes and organizations, along with SMEs. The 2nd proposal writing workshop, especially through its public session, facilitated many discussions regarding potential cooperation opportunities for Horizon2020, which lead to more concrete cooperation strategy meetings with notable Palestinian organizations; including the Applied Research Institute Jerusalem (ARIJ), the Palestinian Hydrology Group (PHG), and the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, in addition to many other local Palestinian universities and institutes.

The preparations for Horizon2020 included the important activity of surveying potential SMEs stakeholders, also enhanced Sina Institute's outreach to the local Palestinian private sector. Such collaboration stands as an asset for potential project proposals opportunities under Horizon 2020, which identifies collaboration with SMEs as one of the new program's corner stones.

As for international networking, the development and communication of Sina Horizon2020 profile, which was communicated through both email and LinkedIn, introduced Sina to many new European and international research institutes that work at similar fields and initiated multiple current and previous discussions regarding potential consortia, which included institutes in Italy, Greece, Spain, Germany, and the US.

5. Quality and Self Evaluation

After drafting and finalizing this deliverable, it was sent to Prof. Christiane D. Fellbaum (BBAW) who was selected as an internal expert, according to the quality control procedure defined in WP5 (see task 5.3). Prof. Fellbaum, then sent her structured comments to the authors. The project coordinator, Prof. Jarrar, ensured that all comments were considered in the final version.

Appendix 1: Sina Horizon2020 Profile



Our Skills and Interests

(Multilingual) Knowledge Engineering

Arabic/Multilingual **Ontologies**, Methodology, Tools. Lexical **Semantics**, Lexical **Resources**, Terminology.

Information Retrieval & NLP

Multilingual **Search Engines**, Named **Entities**, Language Understanding, **Translation**, Tools & Algorithms.

Web/Open Data Management

Big Data, Semantic Web, Data Web, Data Anonymity, **Linked-Data**, OWL, RDF, SPARQL, Web 2.0, Mashups, **Graph Databases**

e-Services & Knowledge Management

e-Government, e-learning, **Data Mining**, Data Integration, Interoperability, **Data and Business Process Modeling**

Computers and Society

Social Networks, Multi Cultural Sharing and **Localization**, **HCI**, **Control**, **Entrepreneurship**, **R&D Valorization**

Our Current Projects

 SIERA <i>Project Coordinator</i> (5 partners). Multilingual & Multicultural Knowledge Sharing Technologies.	 Wojood <i>Project Coordinator</i> Research Excellency in tools and APIs for Arabic NLP.
 MOSAIC <i>Project partner</i> , 12 partners. Link EU Mediterranean ICT industries and prepare them for Horizon 2020 .	 E-Gov Academy <i>Project Coordinator</i> (11 partners). Establish the e-Government Academy & train ministries to build e-services.
 Arabic Ontology <i>Project Coordinator</i> To build a formal Ontology to represent all meanings of Arabic terms.	 Zinnar <i>Leading Partner</i> Help Palestinian ministries build The e-Government interoperability framework .
 Palestinian Dialect Ontology <i>Project Coordinator</i> . Build a corpus , map to the Arabic Ontology, and tools for processing it .	 Web Content Quality <i>Project Coordinator</i> Techniques to evaluate and increase quality Arabic web content .

We Also have Tools, Content, and Solutions

Lexical Database 100s of multilingual dictionaries digitized and Integrated into one huge Lexical database	Arabic Ontology Can be used as Arabic Wordnet , but it's much more sophisticated , with clean Top level concepts .	Arabic NLP Tools Categorizer, Spelling tools, root extractor, Query Expansion, Language detector, and many tools
Multilingual Ontology Studio Cross-lingual Mapping framework, Matching Algorithms . Smart portal	Arabic Entities A repository of Arabic named entities , and tools extract, process, and link them	MashQL A query formulation language for querying/ mashing up web semi-structured data
Interoperability Framework E-Gov Ontology, Service Repository, Service Bus, address server <i>(implemented by all ministries)</i>	E-Learning Material 500 teaching hours (10 courses) in advanced topics related to e-Governance <i>(slides and video online) (e-Government Academy)</i>	Graph Signature Indexing and query optimization for big datasets, RDF/Graph databases <i>(Much faster than Oracle 11g ST)</i>

Our Key Staff



Mustafa Jarrar, Associate Professor
(Institute Director)

Multilingual Ontologies, Lexical Semantics.
Semantic Web, Big Data, RDF, Databases, e-
Government and Interoperability.



Adana Yahya, Full Professor

Arabic/Natural Language processing,
Information Retrieval, Artificial
Intelligence, Reasoning, Computers and
Society.



Mahdi Arrar, Full Professor

Lexical Semantics, Arabic language, History
of languages, Semantic/language evolution,
Comp. Linguistics, Machine translation.



Bassem Sayrafi, Assistant Professor

Data Mining, Databases, Information
systems, Computer human interaction,
localization, social media



Ibrahim Abu Kteish, Director of the
Center of Excellence at BZU

Business modeling, Business startups, R&D
valorization, Entrepreneurship
Development, Software Incubation



Hanna Bullata, Assistant Professor

Vision Systems, Software Quality
assurance, Parallel and distributed
systems. (Long industry experience).



Mamoun Abu Helou, PhD Student

Multilingual Ontologies, Lexical Semantics,
Arabic Ontology, Ontology Matching,
Localization.



Ali Salhi, Research Assistant

Information retrieval, Arabic NLP, social
networks, Startup founder (Yorwa –Twitter
multilingual search).

Our Active Partnerships (Selected)

EU Partners



University of Trento, Italy



University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy



Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium



University of Namur, Belgium



Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal



Berlin Academy of Sciences, Germany



University of Cyprus



University of Savoie, France



AnswareTech s.l. Spain



TrueTrust, UK

Arab Partners



ALESCO, Arab League



Ministry of Telecom and IT, Palestine



Ministry of Interior, Palestine



Ministry of Local Government, Palestine



Palestine Polytechnic University



Palestine Technical University

US Partners



Princeton University



Maryland University



George Washington University

Our Relevant Calls in H2020

ICT 15 – 2014: Big data Innovation and take-up

- Fostering the development of open data supply chains.
- Data analytics solutions and services.
- Exchange and reuse of data assets.
- Big Data integrator platforms.

ICT 16 – 2015: Big data – research

- Data analytics, prediction and visualization tasks at extremely large scale and with diverse structured and unstructured data.
- Define relevant benchmarks.

EUJ 1 – 2014: Technologies combining big data, internet of things in the cloud

- Concrete implementations of interoperable solutions that integrate big data, IoT and mobile that are candidates for standardisation.
- Credible demonstrations based on cross-border business and/or societal applications of robust interoperable technologies
- Potential for commercial application in business environments,

Our Strengths

- Develop and valorize smart **data products** and services.
- **Data Integration Interoperability, and Quality**
- Provide, mine, annotate, index, search, translate, visualize **multilingual/Arabic big datasets** and its **semantics**.
- Provide **big datasets**.
- Un/Semi/Structured dataset and **data pipes** and **mashups**.
- Close partnership with **data owners**.

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Our Relevant Calls in H2020

ICT 20 – 2015: Technologies for better human learning and teaching

- Smart learning environments.
- Networking and capacity building.
- Standards for interactive content & its adaptations into learning.
- Large scale pilots (in real settings) for learning and teaching.
- Reduce restrictions of time and physical space in learning.

INNOSUP 5 – 2014: Peer learning of innovation agencies

- Engaging in peer learning on all topics relevant for design and delivery of innovation support programmes for SMEs

INNOSUP 6 – 2015: Capitalising the full potential of online-collaboration for SME innovation support

- Develop, and test new service designs for ‘assistance to online collaboration for innovation’ for SMEs
- Develop and test a qualification profile, curriculum and training courses for staff currently providing brokerage services in established networks or SME agencies.

Our Strengths

- Smart and social e-learning platforms
- Learning material and online courses.
- Founder of the Palestinian e-government Academy
- Smart solutions for people with disabilities.
- Multilingual knowledge management, collaboration tools
- Remote labs, Interoperability, Localization and Computer human interaction.
- System vision, speech technologies.

Our Relevant Calls in H2020

PHC 32 - 2014: eHealth interoperability

- Definition and description of health, medicinal and pharmaceutical products standards and terminology
- Contribute to better semantic interoperability of eHealth services
- The proposal should build on existing work done by projects such as epSOS and SemanticHealthNet

WATER 8_2015: Laying foundations for a Water Information System, (INSPIRE compliant)

- Finding new solutions to achieve interoperability between existing systems and developing new connectivity standards
- To develop ontologies and new interoperable solutions linked to the applications used in the water sector.

MG.7.1-2015. Connectivity and information sharing for intelligent mobility.

- Measures to improve and maximize the availability and (cross-border/cross-system) interoperability of transport data, fostering open data policy and real-time information exchange
- Definition and monitoring of data quality, while considering data security and integrity related challenges
- Green driving support systems

Our Strengths

- Interoperability, Integration, Multilingual Search engines, Semantic search. Web portals.
- Multilingual knowledge management, ICT laws and policies
- Access to Arabic Market, Industry, Data, Partners
- Data Anonymity
- Localization and Computer human interaction.
- System vision, speech technologies

Appendix 2: Proposal Writing Workshop Agenda

Tuesday, April 1, 2014	
CCHP center, Bethlehem	
9:00-14:00	Meeting with Nada Atrash from CCHP, Bethlehem Discussing the QR code tagging for the Palestinian heritage sites, among other topics.
Wednesday, April 2, 2014	
Public Session - Proposal Writing workshop, Sina Institute, BZU (open to anyone at Palestinian universities)	
8:30- 9:00	Registration
9:00- 9:10	Welcoming Message Dr. Ali Jaber, Dean of the Faculty of Information Technology, Birzeit University, Palestine.
9:10- 9:30	Overview of EU Projects at Sina Institute Dr. Mustafa Jarrar, Sina Institute for Knowledge Engineering and Arabic Technologies – Birzeit University, Palestine.
9:30- 10:00	Overview of EU funding schemes for Palestine Dr. Fahoum Alshalabi, The FP7 National Contact Person, Ministry of Higher Education, Palestine.
10:00- 10:40	Introduction to Horizon 2020 and its various pillars Prof. Paolo Bouquet, Trento University, Italy.
10:40- 11:00	Coffee Break

11:00 – 11:40	How to Design and Engineer Competitive Horizon 2020 Proposals Ruben Riestra, Grupo Inmak, Spain.
12:00- 13:00	Lunch Break
Private Session – BZU’s EU Funding Discussion (Selected people from BZU –VPs and Deans)	
13:00-15:00	BZU EU Funding Session A private session with members of BZU (selected VPs, Deans, Finance Dept.) to discuss topics including: • EU project management Q&A (admin and financial issues). • BZU’s EU projects strategy. • BZU plans for Horizon2020 and other EU research funding programs.
Thursday, April 3, 2014	
Hands-on proposal writing session with Sina members	
9:00-15:00	• Sina’s Horizon 2020 strategy. • Discussion on a sample Horizon 2020 proposal.