

D7.1

Project Management and Quality Plan

WR

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	7
1. INTRODUCTION	8
2. PROJECT MANAGEMENT	8
2.1. Governance Structure	8
2.2. Management Procedures	10
<i>2.2.1. Communication processes and tools</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>2.2.2. Decision making processes</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>2.2.3. Conflict resolution</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>2.2.4. Progress monitoring</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>2.2.5. Reporting</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>2.2.6. Effort and financial management</i>	<i>13</i>
3. QUALITY PLAN	14
3.1. Roles and responsibilities	14
3.2. Quality criteria	15
3.3. Deliverable preparation	15
3.4. Deliverable quality assurance process	16
3.5. Milestones and quality control	18
4. RISK MANAGEMENT	20
5. CONCLUSIONS	23

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1: SUSTCERT4BIOBASED Project management structure	8
Figure 2: Levels of conflict resolution	12

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: SUSTCERT4BIOBASED meetings	11
Table 2: Roles and responsibilities in the production of project deliverables	14
Table 3: Deliverable preparation and review process	15
Table 4: SUSTCERT4BIOBASED deliverables and assigned reviewers	16
Table 5: SUSTCERT4BIOBASED milestones.....	18
Table 6: Critical risks and risk management strategy.....	20

ABBREVIATIONS

CA	Consortium Agreement
CIRCE	Centro de Investigación de Recursos y Consumos Energéticos
CU	Control Union Certifications Germany GmbH
EC	European Commission
ECOS	Environmental Coalition on Standards
EU	European Union
GA	Grant Agreement
PAB	Project Advisory Board
PC	Project Coordinator
PMQP	Project Management and Quality Plan
SC	Steering Committee
WEcR	Wageningen Economic Research
WFBR	Wageningen Food and Biobased Research
WHITE	White Research SPRL
WP	Work Package
WPL	Work Package Leader
WR	Wageningen Research

Executive Summary

The Project Management and Quality Plan (PMQP) is a document providing all necessary information related to the management of the project and the quality assurance including agreed procedures that are covered by the contract documents (Grant agreement and Consortium agreement). These include the governance of the project with all related roles and responsibilities, the processes to execute the day-to-day activities, the quality assurance plan and risk management. PMQP will be the guideline for all project partners to successfully fulfil the project's objectives, while meeting quality standards.

1. Introduction

This document describes the project management and quality plan for the SUSTCERT4BIOBASED project. It is structured into chapters as follows. Chapter 2 describes the project management divided into 2 sections. Section 2.1 provides information on the governance structure of SUSTCERT4BIOBASED. Section 2.2 describes the management processes, including communication, decision making, conflict resolution, progress monitoring and reporting. Chapter 3 is dedicated to the quality assurance plan, defining the various roles and responsibilities, and the processes to ensure that maximum deliverable quality is reached. Finally, chapter 4 provides information about risk management.

2. Project Management

The project management will be focused on: (1) creating the necessary governance structure for an effective project direction and management; (2) performing the financial, legal, administrative and technical coordination; (3) establishing the communication flows and methods for reporting, progress monitoring, and quality assurance; (4) management of knowledge and intellectual property when relevant; and (5) networking with other related initiatives. WP7 led by WR is dedicated to the management and coordination of the project to ensure that it stays on track in terms of scope, costs, resources, and quality.

2.1. Governance Structure

The governance structure is also described in the Consortium Agreement (CA) set up between the SUSTCERT4BIOBASED partners. The project bodies consist of management and advisory bodies, described further below: General Assembly, Project Coordinator (PC), Work Package Leaders (WPLs) and Project Advisory Board (PAB). The management structure is shown in Figure 1.

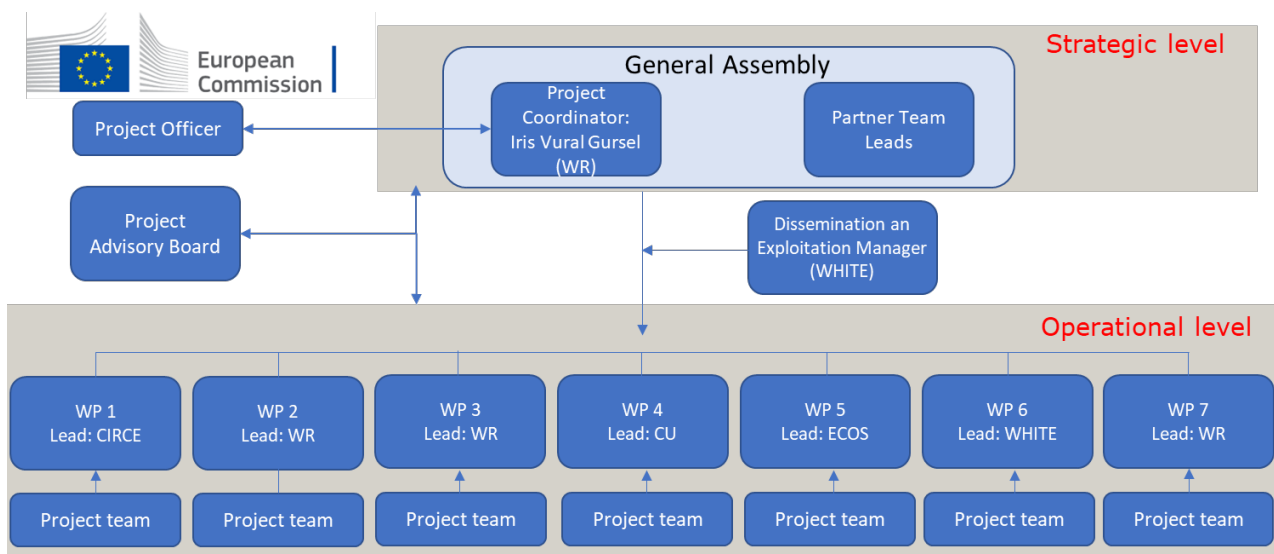


Figure 1: SUSTCERT4BIOBASED Project management structure

General Assembly:

The General Assembly is the ultimate decision-making body and will be responsible for monitoring the project implementation, taking major strategic decisions and determining the long-term strategy and direction of the project. The General Assembly is free to act on its own initiative to formulate proposals and take decisions in accordance with the procedures set out in the CA. It considers decisions on the content, consortium, finances and intellectual property rights. The General Assembly consists of one representative per project partner and is chaired by the PC. The General Assembly will meet once every six months. The voting rules and veto rights are defined in detail in the CA. PC is responsible for preparing the agenda, the minutes of the meeting and monitoring the implementation of decisions taken at meetings. PC will send the agenda no later than 14 calendar days preceding the meeting and any partner may add an item to the agenda no later than 7 calendar days preceding the meeting. PC will send draft minutes within 10 calendar days of the meeting, the minutes shall be considered as accepted if, within 15 calendar days no partners has sent any objection.

Project Coordinator (PC):

WR is the PC and is responsible for the overall management of SUSTCERT4BIOBASED and chairing the General Assembly. The PC will be supported by the Steering Committee. The PC will: (i) undertake the coordination of partners and project activities; (ii) act as intermediary between the European Commission (EC) and the consortium; (iii) perform overall legal, contractual, ethical, financial and administrative management; (iii) collect progress and financial reports from the consortium and prepare related reports to the EC, as well as submission of project deliverables to the EC; (iv) ensure on-time submission of deliverables and monitoring of the budget status; (v) act in a timely manner to resolve issues that were not foreseen and discuss any deviation with original planning with the EC if necessary.

Steering Committee (SC):

The SC is the main execution body consisting of WP leaders chaired by the PC. The SC will meet every month to discuss the project progress and coordinate the actions among WPs. The main tasks of the SC are to monitor project progress according to the work plan, and exchange information on tasks and budgets between the different WPs, intellectual property and dissemination strategies. SC will provide daily management of the project, ensure the implementation of the decisions made by the General Assembly, agree on joint releases and publications, agree on networking activities with other related projects, and guide and apply corrective measures if some deviations are detected.

Work Package Leaders (WPLs):

SUSTCERT4BIOBASED consists of seven work packages with a WPL assigned for each. Each WPL is also member of the SC. WPLs are responsible for: (i) the management of their WP on a daily basis monitoring all tasks are executed in line with the work plan; (ii) ensuring that the objectives and milestones of the whole WP as well as of the detailed activities within the WP are achieved in time; (iii) organising meetings with the WP members to ensure flow of information inside WP; (iv) facilitate interaction with other WPs and cluster projects; (v) budget management; (vi) reviewing, quality control and submitting the deliverable from their WP to the PC; (vii) preparation of periodic reporting concerning their WP. Each WPL has the task to present the status and progress of her/his individual work package to the SC and report back on these meetings to the members of their work package. The WP6 leader (WHITE) is also the Communication and Dissemination manager.

Project Advisory Board (PAB):

The PAB will be a consultation body (of 6-8 people) providing the project with feedback, strategic recommendations and guidance, contribute to the project dissemination through their wider stakeholder communication channels, and to maximise and sustain the project results. The PAB members will be invited to join General Assembly meetings held every six months, be invited to join relevant workshops organised related to specific tasks of the project or individually contacted to provide advice and feedback based on their knowledge and expertise during the project. Several experts have already been contacted during the proposal preparation and agreed to be in the PAB. The PAB will be finalized by M6 (Nov 2022).

2.2. Management Procedures

2.2.1. Communication processes and tools

The PC is responsible for the information exchange between partners. The PC will keep project participants fully informed about the project status, technical issues, work planning and other issues that are important and relevant. These activities include organization of project meetings, teleconference and e-mail communication, and a dedicated project repository (i.e. SharePoint) accessible for all partners. The consortium will exchange information at these communication channels.

Project repository:

The project SharePoint site (<https://wageningenur4.sharepoint.com/sites/SUSTCERT4BIO>) will be used as the central repository for the project where all partners will be able to share documents. This site will further serve as a web-based management tool. There are subfolders for each WP, partners create sub-folders for Tasks and include all relevant literature as well as working documents. Each partner is responsible for keeping the information on the Sharepoint updated. The final deliverables are copied in the separate Deliverables folder. Rather than attachments per e-mail, all documents are included in Sharepoint and links are provided in email. All relevant documents for SUSTCERT4BIOBASED will be available on the project SharePoint which includes the following:

- WPs (WP1 through WP7): working documents, references, etc.
- Meetings: presentations and minutes of meetings
- Deliverables: official deliverables as submitted to the EC in the participant portal
- Contractual documents: copy of the GA and the CA

Project mailing list:

Direct email will be used for sharing information and addressing day-to-day businesses of the project. An outlook mailing list was created for the project (sustcert4bio@wageningenur4.onmicrosoft.com). With any changes in personnel, emails will be added/removed accordingly. Instead of circulating project document (including deliverables) to the consortium by email, the responsible partner will upload it to the Sharepoint site and notify the partners through email with a link to the uploaded document.

Online meetings platform:

For the effective communication among the partners, regular online calls will be held. Partners are free to choose the most appropriate platform i.e. Microsoft Teams, Gotomeeting, Google Meet, Webex, Zoom etc. The online meetings organized by the PC will be held over Teams.

Project meetings:

Regular project meetings are the base for a good consortium cooperation and a sound working progress. A number of (internal) meetings will be held during the implementation of the project. Most of these meeting will be online. Partners will also have a physical plenary meeting at least once a year. Table 1 presents the type of meetings, the organizers, participants, frequency and location. Agendas and minutes of the meetings will be elaborated by the organiser of the meeting. An Action List will be jointly elaborated by the participants at meetings to be added to the minutes.

Table 1: SUSTCERT4BIOBASED meetings

Meeting	Organizer	Participants	Frequency	Location
Project progress meetings (SC meeting)	PC	All partners	Every month	Online
Plenary meetings	PC	All partners	Once a year	Physical
WP meetings	WP leader	All partners present in the WP	As needed	Online
Task specific meetings	Task leader	All partners present in the task	As needed	Online
General assembly meetings	PC	All partners	Every six months (more often as needed)	Online / Physical
PAB meetings	PC	All partners, PAB members	Every six months (more often as needed)	Online

External communication:

For external communications, the consortium will establish its own website and communicate with external stakeholders by e-mail, social media accounts and social platforms (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn).

All partners are expected to produce high quality presentations in relevant conferences and scientific papers for publication in journals as well as press releases demonstrating the impact of the project for a wide range of readers. In all external communication a reference to the project and the European funding will be made, with the project acronym (SUSTCERT4BIOBASED) and the GA number (No 101059785). The PC and all partners have to be informed on project related publications. External publications should be joint publications between project partners, whenever possible.

More information about the external communication will be presented in the Deliverable “D6.1 Dissemination and Communication Plan” to be submitted in M5 (Oct 2022).

Communications between the consortium and the Project Officer (EC) will be the sole responsibility of the PC.

Communication with sister projects

Close communication with the two other projects funded under this call will be maintained throughout the project. Coordinators of the 3 projects will meet regularly to discuss on the collaboration between the projects.

2.2.2. Decision making processes

Attempts regarding decision-making will be carried out in increasing order of authority, going from the lower level (WP/task level) to the highest level (General Assembly), as long as the decision may be executed at that level. The day-to-day decisions will be discussed in the WP meetings and more general decisions in the SC meetings. The major strategic decisions to determine the long term strategy and direction will be agreed upon in the annual General Assembly meetings. The PC has the final responsibility for project decisions. Processes for decision making were defined in the CA, based on the following premises: each partner will be represented by one representative and each member may appoint a substitute to attend and vote in the meetings. All topics to be formally discussed will be incorporated to the agenda. The PC will be responsible for the agenda for the General Assembly meetings and all partners may request to add an issue on the agenda. All issues (operational or strategic) are discussed among the partners and decisions are made based on voting. Each partner shall have equal vote. A party may only veto such a decision if it can show its legitimate interests would be severely affected. The voting rules and veto rights are defined in detail in the CA.

2.2.3. Conflict resolution

During meetings of this project, decisions will be taken by consensus by the responsible partners based on the work to be conducted. Transparency and good communication among the project partners are key to avoid conflicts. During the project, the partners may need to resolve various issues and reach agreements. The general principle is to solve conflicts at the lower possible level starting from the task level (see Figure 2) with strong emphasis on the use of negotiation skills.



Figure 2: Levels of conflict resolution

Task leaders and WP leaders should notify the PC as soon as possible when conflicts arise so that intermediate corrections can be proposed. PC mediates parties' discussion in trying to find a solution. Conflicts that are not being solved on the PC level, will be communicated to the General Assembly. In this unlikely case of serious disputes among project partners, conflict resolution procedures will be initiated whereby the PC will advise the General Assembly to meet in an emergency session to discuss the conflict and reach a resolution by majority vote. The meeting will attempt to achieve full consensus on the resolution of the issue but, failing this, a majority vote will be taken to determine what resolution should be implemented. Any correction measures will be in accordance with the GA and the CA.

2.2.4. Progress monitoring

The hierarchy defined in the management structure, results in responsibilities for the proper implementation of the work plan. Each WP leader is responsible for the achievement of the WP specific goals, being in close contact with the PC. Budgets and milestones build the basis for active project monitoring. A detailed plan for each task will be prepared by task leads. Regular tracking of progress compared to the plan will be carried out in monthly SC meetings. WP leaders shall present the WP activities done in the previous month, and report the status of the active tasks and upcoming deliverables. In case a deviation from the work plan is detected, the PC and respective WPLs will initiate corrective measures that will be implemented in dialogue with the partners affected. Additionally, General Assembly will keep a general view on the technical progress as well as financial flows within the project and if necessary propose modifications in the project plan.

2.2.5. Reporting

The PC will have the final responsibility for drafting the progress report, summarise the project status looking for inconsistencies, further elaborating reports and taking care of the final distribution. WP leaders will be responsible for preparing individual reports covering WP progress, deliverables, milestones and compliance with the plan based on templates and instructions that will be circulated by the PC. During the project implementation, the Consortium will have various reporting activities describing technical progress, results obtained (e.g. deliverables) and compliance with the work-plan, as well as costs incurred, on a six-month basis.

Periodic and interim reporting:

SUSTCERT4BIOBASED has 2 reporting periods:

- Reporting period 1 from M1-M18 – Midterm report (Nov 2023)
- Reporting period 2 from M18-M36 – Final report (May 2025)

The Periodic Reports are being prepared with the contribution of all partners and the overall responsibility and coordination of the PC. The PC must submit a periodic report within 60 days following the end of each reporting period.

Additionally, there will be internal Interim Progress Reports documenting the 6 months progress in between the reporting periods of the project i.e. M6, M12, M24, and M30. This will provide an overview on the technical progress as well as financial flows within the project. All partners will be asked to contribute based on templates and instructions that will be circulated by the PC.

There are two types of reports, the first related to the technical aspects whereas the second to the financial. The technical report documents the activities carried out by the partners during the reporting period. These reports will show the progress in relation to the project technical objectives, including the deliverables and milestones that were due in that given period. This report must include explanations justifying the differences between work expected to be carried out and that actually carried out. It must be prepared using the template available in the Portal Periodic Reporting tool. The financial part of the periodic report includes the individual financial statement from each partner for the reporting period concerned and an explanation of the use of resources. The PC will prepare a consolidated overview of the budgetary situation of the project, on the basis of the financial statements of the partners. Project review meetings will take place with EC once official reports (final and periodic reports) have been delivered to the EC. Location of these meetings are to be determined.

2.2.6. Effort and financial management

The aim of the effort and financial management is to ensure that the implementation of the project is conducted within the predefined PMs and Budget. The PC in collaboration with all partners will monitor throughout the implementation of the project, the effort and resources by comparing the actual numbers to the data defined in the GA.

The reporting of the effort and the budget absorption to the EC will be done in the 2 reporting periods of the project (financial reporting) as well as with the submission of the Interim Progress Reports. All partners must fill in their own financial statement and submit to the coordinator. The PC will provide all necessary templates and guidelines facilitate the completion of the reports by the partners. All consortium partners must keep monthly records of time sheets for each project employee. These timesheets are necessary to demonstrate claimed working hours, in case the EC may have the project efforts checked by independent auditors.

3. Quality Plan

The purpose is to describe the actions and measures that will be taken by the consortium, in order to ensure the quality of the project and its full conformance with the contractual requirements. Quality assurance is a joint responsibility of all partners during the project lifecycle. It applies to all project activities, especially deliverables. The main quality goals will be (1) to provide to all concerned a guide for the quality actions required by each partner, (2) decide the internal review procedures and roles, and (2) to exhibit project's quality performance in accordance to contractual requirements.

3.1. Roles and responsibilities

The project consortium is deeply committed on assuring high quality results. In addition to the measures taking in the project and the management structure definition, the project will monitor/supervise the quality through periodic controls, being the PC the final responsible.

For project deliverables WP leaders will act as a first-step of checking and approving the deliverable within their WP. Each WP leader is responsible for monitoring and controlling the implementation phase of the project and ensuring conformity with the quality requirements. The PC will act as a final control for approving and submitting the deliverables. The following table (Table 2) outlines the roles and responsibilities in the production of deliverables.

Table 2: Roles and responsibilities in the production of project deliverables

Role	Responsibilities
Task leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assign the lead author in charge of the deliverable Involve all contributors for the deliverables Set up delivery time plan and deadlines Follow the formatting of the document template provided Responsible for the technical content of the deliverable and its clear communication in written form Ensure timely preparation of the deliverable to meet deadline
WP leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check the technical quality and that the deliverable strictly follows the formatting template Check the consistency of all deliverables within the WP Monitor overall planning and timely submission of all deliverables in the WP
Reviewers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the deliverable, provide comments and propose corrections/edits for improvement
PC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor the overall submission process Conduct a final check of the content and of the formatting Approve final deliverables Submit the approved deliverable to the EC

3.2. Quality criteria

The quality criteria are based on the principles of completeness, correctness, and punctuality. Regarding the content, completeness is seen as covering in depth the topic without missing any important aspect or making redundancies. The accuracy is seen in the context of clear statement of the results, sufficiently evidence supports of the research and outcomes, minimization of errors and ambiguities. All the produced material has to follow the visual identity of the project and follow the templates of SUSTCERT4BIOBASED as well as conform to the specifications of the EC. Punctuality, refers to the timely delivery of deliverables based on predefined deadlines.

3.3. Deliverable preparation

SUSTCERT4BIOBASED has 32 deliverables, each one assigned to the responsible partner. The partner in charge of the deliverable is responsible for its timely and of high-quality submission to the PC. The deliverables will be prepared following the SUSTCERT4BIOBASED document template set up by WHITE. All reports will conform to a common format and visual identity of the project. After the quality review, the final version of the deliverable is uploaded by the PC to the EC portal. The deliverable preparation process is depicted in Table 3.

Table 3: Deliverable preparation and review process

Action	Responsible	Due Date
Agreement on contents and outline of the report with the reviewers	Deliverable lead	(at least) 6 weeks before deadline
Reserve date for review in the agenda of the reviewers	Deliverable lead	(at least) 4 weeks before deadline
First full deliverable draft shared for internal review	Deliverable lead	(at least) 3 weeks before deadline
Review complete and sent back to the deliverable lead	Assigned reviewers of this deliverable	(at least) 2 weeks before deadline
Preparation of the final draft deliverable, sending to PC	Deliverable lead	(at least) 1 week before deadline
Final check and approval of the final draft by PC and submission to the EC portal	PC	(at least) 1 day before deadline

The appropriate dates considering this time plan will be set for each deliverable in advance taking into account any weekend, holiday as well as the availability of the assigned reviewers. The task leads will reserve the set dates for review process in the agenda of the reviewers in advance. For long deliverables the review process can start earlier and the duration can be extended to 2 weeks as necessary. Any deviations from this set time plan should be communicated by the deliverable leader to the PC as soon as possible.

The central repository (SharePoint site) is used for storage, versioning and backup of documents. It is useful to follow a uniform naming system for deliverables:

<Deliverable number>_<Deliverable title>_<Date (DD-MM-YYYY)>_<Version>

An example: D7.1_PMQP_22-07-2022_v0.1.docx

In all deliverables, acknowledgement of the support by the European Commission should appear as well as a disclaimer. There are included in the document template provided by WHITE.

3.4. Deliverable quality assurance process

For each deliverable at least one partner is assigned as a reviewer (Table 4) not involved in the preparation of the deliverable. The review of the deliverable will focus on content (whether it meets its objectives, technical soundness) as well as proofreading for spelling, grammar, accuracy and clarity. The reviewer will provide comments and proposed corrections/edits to the authors to ensure the quality of the final document. The final version will be submitted to the PC that will perform a final review/revision before the submission to the EC.

Table 4: SUSTCERT4BIOBASED deliverables and assigned reviewers

Deliverable no	Deliverable Name	Lead	Type	Dissem. Level	Due Date	Reviewer
D1.1	Classification of biological resources and biobased products	CIRCE	R	PU	31 Oct 2022	WR (WFBR)
D1.2	Catalogue of sustainability certification schemes and labels	WR (WFBR)	R	PU	30 Apr 2023	CIRCE + ECOS
D1.3	Analysis of synergies and trade-offs	CIRCE	R	PU	30 Apr 2023	WR (WFBR)
D2.1	Identification of the most representative biobased value chains	CIRCE	R	PU	30 Apr 2023	WR (WEcR+WFBR)
D2.2	Database of trade volumes for biological resources and biobased products	WR (WEcR)	DATA	PU	31 Jul 2023	CIRCE + CU
D2.3	Analysis of effects of certification on EU trade of biobased value chains	WR (WEcR)	R	PU	30 Sep 2023	CIRCE
D3.1	Review of existing monitoring approaches for sustainability schemes and labels	ECOS	R	PU	30 Nov 2022	WR (WFBR) + CU
D3.2	Evaluation of existing schemes and labels	WR (WFBR)	R	PU	31 Mar 2024	ECOS + CU
D3.3	Description of the monitoring system	ECOS	R	PU	30 Nov 2024	WR (WFBR) + CU

D4.1	Review of methodologies for cost benefit analysis and internalizing externalities for sustainability certification	WR (WEcR)	R	PU	30 Apr 2023	CU
D4.2	Selection of biobased value chains for cost benefit analysis	WR (WEcR)	R	PU	30 Apr 2023	CIRCE + CU
D4.3	Data collection template for cost benefit analysis	CU	OTHER	PU	31 Oct 2024	WR (WEcR)
D4.4	Assessment of feasibility of certification adoption in selected value chains	WR (WEcR)	R	PU	31 Mar 2025	CU
D5.1	Summary of project deliverables findings	ECOS	R	PU	30 Apr 2025	all
D5.2	First policy brief	ECOS	R	PU	30 Nov 2023	WR (WFBR)
D5.3	Final policy brief	ECOS	R	PU	31 May 2025	WR (WFBR)
D5.4	Thematic briefs laying down recommendations to scheme/label owners	ECOS	R	PU	31 May 2025	CIRCE
D5.5	Thematic briefs to industrial biobased value chain actors	CIRCE	R	PU	31 May 2025	ECOS
D5.6	Thematic briefs to regional bioeconomy actors	CIRCE	R	PU	31 May 2025	ECOS
D6.1	Dissemination and Communication Plan	WHITE	R	PU	31 Oct 2022	all
D6.2	SUSTCERT4BIOBASED promotional package	WHITE	DEC	PU	31 Oct 2022	WR (WFBR)
D6.3	Dissemination and Communication Plan - final version	WHITE	R	PU	31 May 2025	all
D6.4	Network of Interest and project activities and events	WHITE	R	PU	31 May 2025	WR (WFBR)
D6.5	Mid-term clustering report for HORIZON-CL6-2021-	WR (WFBR)	R	PU	30 Nov 2023	WHITE

	ZEROPOLLUTION-01-07					
D6.6	Final clustering report for HORIZON-CL6-2021-ZEROPOLLUTION-01-07	WR (WFBR)	R	PU	31 May 2025	WHITE
D6.7	SUSTCERT4BIOBASED Exploitation and Sustainability Plan - initial	WHITE	R	PU	30 Nov 2022	all
D6.8	SUSTCERT4BIOBASED Exploitation and Sustainability Plan - updated	WHITE	R	PU	31 May 2025	all
D6.9	Concise glossy Final Report	WR (WFBR)	R	PU	31 May 2025	WHITE
D7.1	Project Management and Quality Plan	WR (WFBR)	R	PU	31 Aug 2022	all
D7.2	Project Advisory Board terms of reference and composition	WR (WFBR)	R	PU	30 Nov 2022	all
D7.3	Data Management Plan - initial	WR (WFBR)	DMP	PU	30 Nov 2022	all
D7.4	Data Management Plan - update	WR (WFBR)	DMP	PU	31 May 2025	all

3.5. Milestones and quality control

Ten milestones have been set throughout the duration of the project (Table 5). The Milestones can be also regarded as quality control points where the progress of the project is evaluated. For each milestone, means of verification have been defined to validate its achievement.

Table 5: SUSTCERT4BIOBASED milestones

MS no.	Name	Related to WP(s)	Lead	Due date	Means of verification
MS1	Project kick-off meeting completed	WP7	WR	30 Jun 2022	Minutes of meeting as reported and distributed part of Task 7.3
MS2	Web portal and first dissemination material ready	WP6	WHITE	31 Oct 2022	Deliverable D6.2 SUSTCERT4BIOBASED promotional package

MS3	Labels and certification schemes reviewed	WP1	WR	30 Apr 2023	Deliverable D1.2 Catalogue of sustainability certification schemes and labels
MS4	Most representative value chains identified	WP2	CIRCE	30 Apr 2023	Deliverable D2.1 Identification of the most representative biobased value chains
MS5	Methodology for CBA defined	WP4	WR	30 Apr 2023	Deliverable D4.1 Review of methodologies for cost benefit analysis and internalizing externalities for sustainability certification
MS6	Draft monitoring system developed	WP3	ECOS	31 May 2023	Checklist for evaluation/scoring developed within Task 3.2
MS7	First policy brief prepared	WP5	ECOS	30 Nov 2023	Deliverable D5.2 First policy brief
MS8	Best-in-class schemes and labels selected	WP3	WR	31 Mar 2024	Deliverable D3.2 Evaluation of existing schemes and labels
MS9	Pilot-audits completed	WP3, 4	CU	31 Oct 2024	Pilot audit reports prepared in Task 3.4 and Task 4.4
MS10	End of project	WP7	WR	31 May 2025	All reports delivered. Final reporting as part of Task 7.4

4. Risk Management

Risk management refers to all activities undertaken to identify, analyse, monitor, and mitigate potential risks that could affect the execution of the project. Risk management is a continuous process that will be undertaken throughout the lifetime of the project.

As defined in Annex A of the GA, several risks and risk-mitigation measures have been already defined at the submission of the proposal (Table 6). This serves as a baseline for the project's risk management. As three projects will run in parallel for the same call, an additional risk was identified and included (no. 12) concerning overlapping stakeholder engagement activities overwhelming stakeholders and making them reluctant in providing input. Communication among the PCs of three projects has already been established to manage this risk and an agreement was made to have a joint approach on stakeholder consultations to prevent stakeholder fatigue.

Table 6: Critical risks and risk management strategy

No	Description	WP	Proposed mitigation measures
1	The environmental, social, and economic impacts and trade-offs associated with biobased value chains are complex (high probability, medium risk)	WP1	We will seek collaboration with relevant projects on this task, utilize CU's practical experience and input from the Project Advisory Board.
2	Difficulties in getting proper/scaled information on how often and to what extent trade takes place under certified schemes (high probability, medium impact)	WP2	CU will help in the process of finding and assessing companies in the value chain to gather data. Confidentiality agreements will be considered, and findings are only shared via an aggregated dataset without disclosing sensitive information of the companies.
3	Data availability and quality are key issues that need to be considered in proposing the indicators and method of their evaluation (high probability, medium risk)	WP3	Good practices will be considered as proxy indicators where the monitoring of adoption of the defined good practices can be useful to measure progress.
4	Difficulties in getting companies to share information to carry out pilot audit for testing the monitoring system requirements in practice (high probability, medium risk)	WP3	As an experienced certification body, CU will help in the process of finding and assessing companies suitable for pilot audits. It is possible to conduct pilot audits in a local language and with limited travel, which saves costs and reduces the risks by COVID-19 restrictions.
5	Companies reluctance to share their economic costs and benefits (high probability, high impact)	WP4	The consortium acknowledges the possible reluctance of biobased value chain actors to share information. Also the risk that the quality and reliability of the data they will provide may not to be at a desired level. In this respect, CU has extensive auditing experience where data is collected and trust of companies are achieved

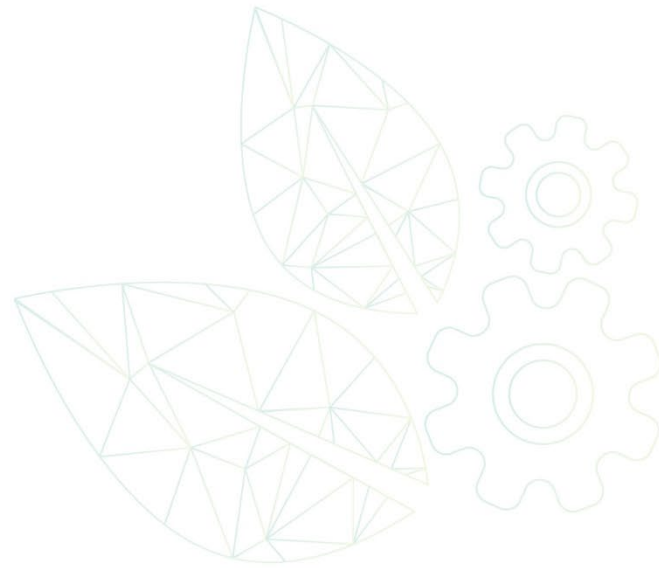
			through confidentiality agreements. Accordingly, in this project the targeted companies for data collection will be approached to contribute to this project based on specified confidentiality arrangements (similar to normal certification activities). For reporting information, data will be aggregated without disclosing sensitive information of participating companies. This will be part of DMP.
6	Hesitancy or resistance of key stakeholder groups on the recommendations provided (low probability, high impact)	WP5	The recommendations will be developed in consultation with the PAB and feedback will be attained through Nol during project execution. Therefore, the probability of this risk is expected to be low. As mitigation measure, dedicated communication campaigns and direct contacts will be employed as required to ensure clear communication of findings and to raise awareness. To get the recommendations adopted, the planned engagement activities with the relevant stakeholders will provide us with the understanding of their needs and perceived barriers. The consortium will be devising strategies to overcome the perceived barriers and communicating closely with the key stakeholders to convince them of the opportunities.
7	Lack of interest from target stakeholders to engage in project activities (low probability, high impact)	WP6	The consortium includes several organizations that have access to a wide network of stakeholders. Contingency planning and several actions have already been included in the design of the project to further minimize this risk (e.g., stakeholder engagement strategies, the Network of Interest).
8	Difficulty in clustering with relevant EU projects (low probability, high impact)	WP6	We have already identified projects that are relevant to collaborate with and it is expected that these projects will be interested to collaborate with us to seek synergies and use our resources efficiently. Further measures to minimize this risk include: (i) assignment of regular communications with contact persons from these projects; (ii) request of Project Officer's mediation; (iii) identification of other projects.
9	The physical project meetings might not be allowed due to COVID-19 (medium probability/low impact)	WP7	These meetings will be organized as remote meetings using the Microsoft Teams platform.
10	Changes in the project team (medium probability/low impact)	WP7	Partners are required to include substitutes with equivalent (or higher) qualifications and experience. All partners have strong teams that they can rely to in these situations.
11	Delay(s) in the project timetable (low probability/ medium impact)	WP7	The Steering Committee agrees and applies contingency plans (tailored to the exact circumstances) including: (i) re-allocation of resources, (ii) parallel execution of tasks and (iii) re-scheduling of activities.

12	Stakeholders fatigue (lack of response) for consultations	WP1-6	Since 3 projects will be working on the same call in parallel, overlapping stakeholder engagement activities can overwhelm stakeholders making them reluctant to cooperate. The consortium led by PC will establish close communication with the cluster projects to collaborate and carry out joint stakeholder consultations/workshops/events and avoid repetitions
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WP Leaders are accountable for the implementation of the work within their own WP, consequently WPLs have the risk ownership for the deliverables and milestones within the WP they are leading. If new risks are identified, these should be reported to the PC so that appropriate risk mitigation strategies can be put in place. PC will monitor the risk management supported by the SC. PC will keep a Risk Log to keep status of each risk and implementation of associated mitigation measures. If a risk is no longer considered a threat it will be considered closed.

5. Conclusions

This deliverable presents all relevant information regarding the project management and quality assurance plan of the project based on best practices and on the basis of what has already been defined and accepted by all partners by signing the Consortium Agreement and the Grant Agreement. The document shall be used as a reference for all processes and means that will be used throughout the lifecycle of the project. Although the Project Management and Quality Plan is developed as part of the project initiation, it should be a living document that evolves as the project progresses and will be updated with the latest relevant information as required.



About SUSTCERT4BIOBASED

SUSTCERT4BIOBASED is an EU funded (Horizon Europe) project aiming at defining and promoting the adoption of effective and robust sustainability certification schemes and business-to-business labels for industrial biobased systems to support tracing the sustainability (environmental, social, economic) of biobased products along the value chains and trades within the EU and globally for responsible production and consumption. This objective is realised by the development of a monitoring system, mapping of the current situation in global trade flows of biological resources and biobased products, and feasibility assessment from the adoption of certification schemes and labels considering actual economic as well as internalized environmental and social costs and benefits. The results of the project are leveraged to provide recommendations to four key target groups: policy makers, sustainability system community, industrial biobased value chain actors, and regional bioeconomy stakeholders. These ambitions are addressed by a strong, well-balanced and multi-disciplinary consortium comprised of 5 complementary partners. SUSTCERT4BIOBASED thereby supports the development of harmonized system requirements, continuous improvement of sustainability certification schemes and labels and contributes towards establishing a circular, climate-neutral and sustainable biobased industry.

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