



Project BIOLAWEB

Deliverable D1.2

Project Handbook

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Deliverable D1.2

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Deliverable summary

The Project Handbook (PH) is a communication tool that provides project information and guidelines for consortium partners. The purpose of the PH is to facilitate efficient project implementation in terms of administrative management and communication. It outlines the scope and contains the main project facts including legal aspects, management structure, deliverables, reporting, risk management and communication. The PH is a manual with practical instructions for administering the BIOLAWEB project and it cannot replace the Grant Agreement nor the Consortium Agreement.

The PH is a public document and could be updated during the project lifecycle if necessary.

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1. General BIOLAWEB information

1.1 Overall objective

BIOLAWEB aims to sustainably strengthen research and enhance networking skills in biomonitoring at UB-ICTM, by twinning with internationally leading counterparts in the EU, the French National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and Environment – INRAE (France) and the Norwegian Institute for Water Research – NIVA, (Norway), making the acquired knowledge available to the international community and relevant national stakeholders.

1.2 Project impacts

Many European surface waters (lakes and rivers) did not reach good ecological status despite significant management efforts. Waterbodies in South Eastern Europe (SEE) are particularly affected by water pollution. This problem is further exacerbated by the absence of regular water monitoring. New DNA-based methods for biomonitoring have made it easier to monitor waterbodies by more efficient sample throughput. The UB-ICTM in Serbia has extensive background on biodiversity, freshwater ecology, and conservation of water bodies in SEE, but lacks the knowledge on how to develop and intercalibrate indices that are in accordance with EU regulations for watercourse monitoring, and how to apply modern DNA-based methodology. The BIOLAWEB project will help the UB-ICTM to establish cooperation with twinning partners, the French National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and Environment – INRAE, and the Norwegian Institute for Water Research – NIVA, to build capacities in the development of new indices adapted to SEE region and DNA (meta)barcoding. The overall objective of BIOLAWEB is to raise the research profile in biomonitoring, enhance networking skills and strengthen research management and administrative capacities at UB-ICTM. BIOLAWEB will contribute to the following expected impacts:

Scientific: The project will significantly contribute to the development of eDNA methods for the ecological status assessment of water bodies in the EU and worldwide.

Economic: The UB-ICTM works closely with water managers and managers of aquatic nature protected areas. New methods developed in BIOLAWEB can provide opportunities for expanding the cooperation with different stakeholders in the water sector. In addition, wider application of molecular methods for watercourse biomonitoring in the Western Balkan region can increase the efficiency of national biomonitoring programs and generate economic opportunities by gaining experience in the use of molecular biological tools that are applicable in a wider context.

Societal: BIOLAWEB will contribute to improve the ecological status of water bodies in Serbia and the EU and thereby contribute to the well-being of citizens, accelerate transition to a knowledge-based society, and help to increase available human resources for lake monitoring.

1.3 BIOLAWEB consortium

The BIOLAWEB consortium was assembled by inviting state-of-the-art research institutions to strengthen research and enhance networking skills in biomonitoring at UB-ICTM. The twinning partners INRAE and NIVA of the BIOLAWEB consortium have an internationally recognized track record on index development and in DNA-based methods for biomonitoring, essential for raising the competence of UB-ICTM. In total, three countries are present in the consortium: Serbia, France, and Norway (Table 1).

Table 1. List of BIOLAWEB participants

N°	Legal name	Short name	Role	Ctry	PIC	Main contact person
1	Institute of chemistry, technology and metallurgy	UB-ICTM	COO	RS	999530875	Miloš Ćirić ciricmilosh@yahoo.com
2	Institut National de Recherche pour l'Agriculture, l'Alimentation et l'Environnement	INRAE	BEN	FR	999993274	Frederic Rimet frederic.rimet@inrae.fr
3	Norsk institutt for vannforskning	NIVA	BEN	NO	997826585	Susanne Claudia Schneider susi.schneider@niva.no

2. Legal aspects

To ensure that the BIOLAWEB project ('action 101079234') is implemented properly the beneficiaries signed the Grant Agreement (GA) and the consortium agreement (CA). In addition, detailed internal arrangements are set out in this Project Handbook (PH) to ensure high quality of deliverables, reports and effective communication during the project lifetime. The GA defines the work that all beneficiaries commit to carry out during the BIOLAWEB project, and it cannot be replaced by any other document. In case of any discrepancy between these documents, the next order of precedence should be followed:

1. Grant Agreement (GA)
2. Consortium Agreement (CA)
3. Project Handbook (PH)



2.1 Grant Agreement

The GA is composed of:

- Preamble
- Terms and Conditions (including Data Sheet)
- Annex 1 Description of the action
- Annex 2 Estimated budget for the action
- Annex 2a Additional information on unit costs and contributions
- Annex 3 Accession forms
- Annex 4 Model for the financial statements
- Annex 5 Specific rules (if applicable)

The central contact point for the granting authority is the coordinator which directly signed the GA and represents the consortium (towards the granting authority). By signing the Accession Form, other beneficiaries also signed the GA and agreed to implement the action under their own responsibility and in accordance with the GA. During the Grant Agreement Preparation (GAP), the persons authorized to sign the GA on behalf of each beneficiary were appointed. Finally, the information a person can view (e.g., access to the full GA text) is linked to the user's role in the project.

2.2 Consortium Agreement

The Consortium Agreement (CA) was negotiated, concluded, and signed by all partners. It is based upon the DESCAs model consortium agreement. CA complements the GA and it does not contain any provision contrary to it. The purpose of this document is to specify the relationship among the partners with respect to the BIOLAWEB project. In particular, CA arranges the rights and obligations of the partners related to the project governance structure, financial issues and payment, access rights, liability, conflict resolution as well as ownership, transfer, and dissemination of results. The Project Officer was informed as soon as CA was signed by all beneficiaries.

3. Management Structure and procedures

The project management structure is shown in Figure 1. The project organizational structure has two layers of decision-making:

- Management level
- Executive level

BIOLAWEB

Boosting Institute of Chemistry Technology and Metallurgy in Water Biomonitoring

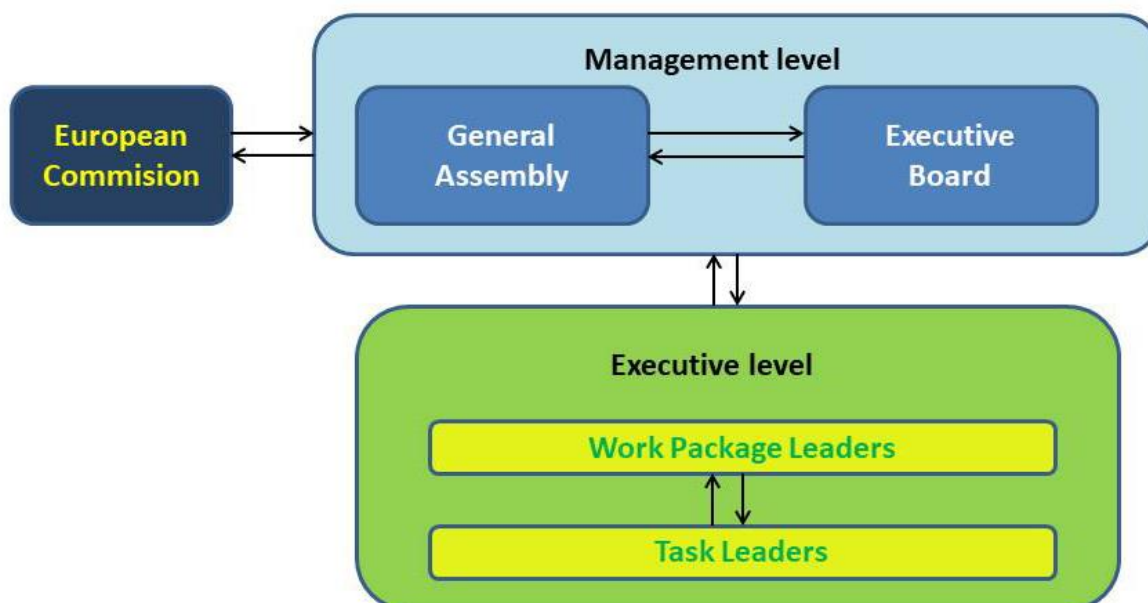


Figure 1. Managerial structure of the BIOLAWEB project

The **management level** is comprised of the General Assembly and Executive Board. Two persons from each member of the Consortium make up the Executive Board (Table 2).

Table 2. Executive Board members

Member of Consortium	Name of team member
ICTM	Miloš Ćirić
	Aleksandra Marković
INRAE	Frédéric Rimet
	Agnès Bouchez
NIVA	Susanne Claudia Schneider
	Andreas Ballot

The role of the Executive board is fundamental for the project to ensure successful execution of the project by taking care of the coordination and correct implementation of the scientific project tasks. The Executive board was formally constituted at the kick-off meeting (held on November 22, 2022).

The General Assembly consists of members of the Executive Board and one legal representative of each member of the consortium (Table 3). The role of the General Assembly is restricted to the resolution of disputes or particular difficulties.

Table 3. Legal representatives of consortium members

Consortium member	Legal representative
ICTM	Jasmina Stevanović
INRAE	Pascal Boistard
NIVA	Thorjørn Larssen

The **executive level** is comprised of WP and Task Leaders (Table 4). Within this level they are responsible for carrying out all activities and tasks as described in the individual work packages, keeping close contact with the partners involved in specific tasks and WPs.

Table 4. Work package leaders

Work Package	Legal representative
WP1	Miloš Ćirić
WP2	Miloš Ćirić
WP3	Frédéric Rimet
WP4	Andreas Ballot
WP5	Dragana Zlatović
WP6	Aleksandra Marković

3.1 Project meetings

To facilitate communication in the BIOLAWEB team the following events will be prepared and organized:

- Regular consortium *on-site* meetings
- Consortium *on-line* meetings

Regular consortium on-site meetings will be held at least once every six months during the project lifetime. The purpose of regular face-to-face meetings is twofold. The first part of a meeting will be dedicated to discuss the progress in each work package during the 6 months preceding a meeting. In the second part, the project team will plan the project activities in the following six months. Extraordinary meetings will be organized whenever necessary upon written request of any member of the Executive Board. The coordinator's responsibility is to send information in written form containing exact date and time, as well as a meeting structure (final agenda) no later than 14 calendar days preceding an official on-site consortium meeting and 7 calendar days preceding an extraordinary meeting. An addition of a new agenda item might be made by any member in writing and no later than indicated in the CA (Section 6.3.2.4). Finally, the formal record of all decisions (taken on the meeting) will be integrated into minutes. The coordinator should send minutes to all members within 10 calendar days of the meeting. The written record of decisions taken during the meeting will be accepted if all members adopt the minutes and no party send an objection to the coordinator related to the draft minutes within 15 calendar days from receipt. Travel and subsistence costs related to these meetings should be covered from beneficiaries' own budget.

Consortium on-line meetings will be held using the Zoom communication platform. These meetings will be scheduled according to the needs and will be organized more frequently during periods with a high level of project activities. On-line meetings should be focused on making an efficient arrangement of work, and clear definition of roles in executing tasks within each WP. The UB-ICTM team agreed to hold brief internal meetings on a weekly basis in order to successfully fulfil the requirements linked with the coordinator's role.

4. Communication plan

4.1 Internal communication

Internal communication refers to communication within the Consortium. There are 2 options to communicate internally:

- E-mail
- Meeting using the Zoom application

4.1.1. E-mail

Emails relevant to the project activities should be sent and received via biolaweb2021@gmail.com, the project's official email address. This improves communication transparency by grouping emails around project challenges. The coordinator provides all priority and critical information to all partners at the same time. Project partners are advised to choose "Reply to All" if the material is relevant to the Consortium overall.

4.1.3. Zoom

The Consortium has selected the audio-video conferencing technology Zoom.us as its preferred working environment for internal communication. Setting up and scheduling video conferences is easy. It is user-friendly and simple to access through a phone or computer.

4.2 External communication

Communication between stakeholders outside of the consortium is classified as external communication. There are several ways we can communicate externally:

- Project website
- Social media
- Promotional materials
- TV appearances
- Newspaper

Details on external communication tools are presented in the Dissemination and Exploitation Plan (DEP) produced within WP6.

5. Document standards/templates

The visual identity of BIOLAWEB was developed at the very beginning of the project. All project deliverables, documentation related to the project, and project outputs should respect the document guidelines required by the European Commission.

The Consortium's internal and publicly accessible documents, as well as all project deliverables, communications, materials, etc., will respect the document standard.

All project templates, including deliverables, presentations, and memoranda, were forwarded to all partners. It is also suggested that internal project documentation, such as meeting agendas, correspond to this standard. In Dissemination and Exploitation Plan (D6.2), document templates are described in more detail. In brief, the following items and information (foreseen in GA, Article 17) must be included in public project document:

- European flag and funding statement;
- Quality of information – Disclaimer

6. Reporting

In the BIOLAWEB project, 1 reporting period and 2 reviews (interim and final review meeting) are foreseen. The project coordinator's responsibility is to inform the partners about reporting tasks, templates and deadlines as soon as possible, but no later than M6 of the project (March 2023).

6.1 Reporting scheme

To ensure that all milestones, deliverables as well as the project expenditures are successfully achieved and two reports (Progress Report and Periodic Report) compiled on time, both partners agree to make **several internal progress reports** and send them to the project coordinator according to the plan presented in the Table 5.

Table 5. BIOLAWEB reporting scheme

Type of report	Time span	Deadline for the project coordinator to send templates to the WP leaders/partners	Deadline for WP leaders/partners to send the report to the coordinator	Participants	Deadline for the project coordinator to submit the report to EC
Internal Progress Report 1	M1-M6 Oct. 2022- Mar. 2023	31.03.2023	30.04.2023	All	n/a
Internal Progress Report 2	M7-M12 Apr. 2022- Sep. 2023	30.09.2023	31.10.2023	All	n/a
Internal Progress Report 3	M13-M15 Oct. 2022- Dec. 2023	01.12.2023	31.12.2023	All	n/a
Progress Report	M1-M15 Oct. 2022- Dec. 2023	01.12.2023	31.12.2023	UB-ICTM	29.02.2024
Internal Progress Report 4	M16-M24 Jan. 2024- Sep. 2024	30.09.2024	31.10.2024	All	n/a
Internal Progress Report 5	M25-M30 Oct. 2024- Mar. 2025	31.03.2025	31.04.2025	All	n/a
Internal Progress Report 6	M30-M36 Apr. 2025- Sep. 2025	01.09.2025	30.09.2025	All	n/a
Periodic Report	M1-M36	01.09.2025	30.09.2025	UB-ICTM	30.11.2025

n/a – not applicable.

6.2 Progress Report and internal progress reports

During the Grant Agreement Preparation phase, **the Progress Report** was included as a deliverable at month 17 (D1.3), as the basis for the interim review meeting. According to the GA (Article 21), the Progress Report is a 'standardized deliverable that must be submitted using the templates published on the Portal.'

During the project lifetime, six internal progress reports will be created by all participants (partners' and coordinating institution) aiming to collect information about progress towards achieving the BIOLAWEB objectives (Table 5). **The internal progress report** is designed to facilitate the compilation of official reports: The Progress Report and the Periodic Report. It

contains the explanation of the work carried out per WP (brief narrative description of technical progress), including a short explanation of any deviations from the DoA (GA: Annex 1). Information on the project results covering six-months period will be collected from the task leaders and compiled by WP leaders. Then, the WP leaders will send their reports to the coordinator. In summary, the internal progress report will be prepared in the following steps:

- The project coordinator will send a template for report to the WP leaders a month before the deadline;
- A document with a brief narrative description of the work carried out per WP will be created by the WP leaders/partners according to the deadline specified in the Table 5;
- The above-mentioned documents will be collected from all participants and arranged in a final report by the project coordinator. The project coordinator will send the final report to the consortium;

The consortium sends back the reviewed version of the final report to the coordinator no later than one week (5 working days).

6.3 Periodic Report

The BIOLAWEB coordinator will submit a Periodic Report through the EU Funding & Tenders Portal Grant Management System within 60 days after the end of the reporting period as the pre-condition for receiving payment. EU Project Officer will complete the information on the project reporting period in the Grant Management system.

There will be 1 reporting period: 01.10.2022 – 30.09.2025 (M1 – M36)

The Periodic Report includes a Technical and Financial Report.

The 'Periodic Technical Report' is divided into:

A) *Part A* contains structured tables with project information that must be entered into the Portal Continuous Reporting screens. After completing all tables, the part A is generated by the IT system. The project coordinator is responsible for part A.

B) *Part B* is a narrative description of the work carried out during the reporting period. It must be downloaded from the Portal Technical Report (Part B)/Termination Report screen, completed, then compiled and re-uploaded as PDF on that screen.

Partners compile a report on WPs activities (Part B) and send it to the project coordinator according to the deadline specified in the Table 5. The project coordinator consolidates the provided information and sends the complete Periodic Technical Report to the consortium for review. The consortium sends back the reviewed version of the completed report to the coordinator no later than one week (5 working days). The final approved version is then uploaded to the Participant Portal by the project coordinator.

The 'Periodic Financial Report' is composed of:

a) Financial statements (individual and consolidated). **The Individual Financial Statement** must be filled out directly on the Portal Financial Statements screen (each beneficiary for themselves and their affiliated entities for the reporting period concerned). **The Consolidated Financial Statement** is created automatically by the IT system (on the basis of all submitted financial statements). The financial statement must contain detail information for each budget category (i.e., personnel costs, other direct costs, indirect costs) and must match the amounts recorded in the accounts and in supporting documentation. Finally, each partner remains

responsible for the cost it declares regarding eligibility, sufficient records and supporting documents.

b) Use of Resources Report – **Cost Explanations**. This report contains structured tables with personnel costs, in-kind contribution, subcontracting costs, purchase costs, costs of equipment, other goods works and services etc. that must be filled out directly on the Portal Financial Statements screen.

The Financial Statement and Cost Explanations should be completed on-line by appointed PFSIGNs for each beneficiary (and their third parties, if any). The project coordinator's task includes quality-checking documents/information submitted by the beneficiaries (e.g., 'reviewing the individual financial statements from each beneficiary to verify consistency with the action tasks, as well as their completeness and correctness').

7. Keeping records – supporting documentation

For personnel costs (declared as actual costs or on the basis of unit costs), the partners follow their existing procedures which are in compliance with the EU reporting. There is no such procedure in place at UB-ICTM, so the coordinating institution will use the recommended form - *EU grant Time declaration* using the following link:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/temp-form/report/time-declaration_en.docx

8. Project execution – Deliverables

The BIOLAWEB project is divided into six Work Packages (WP). Each WP is coordinated by a WP leader. WP leaders are in regular contact with the coordinator to inform him about the on-going and planned WP activities, and recent and future WP results and achievements.

Table 6 shows all WPs, WP leaders and Table 7 lists all deliverables.

Table 6. BIOLAWEB WPs and leaders

WP No.	Work Package Title	WP Leader
WP1	Project coordination and management	Miloš Ćirić (UB-ICTM)
WP2	Scientific and innovation strategy	Miloš Ćirić (UB-ICTM)
WP3	Training and networking	Frédéric Rimet (INRAE)
WP4	Research and partnership	Andreas Ballot (NIVA)
WP5	New International Research Management Office	Dragana Zlatović (UB-ICTM)
WP6	Dissemination and outreach	Aleksandra Marković (UB-ICTM)

Table 7. List of the foreseen deliverables

WP No.	Title	Due month	Dissemin. level	Lead Beneficiary
WP1	D1.1 Data Management Plan (DMP)	6	Public	UB-ICTM
	D1.2 Project Handbook	6	Public	UB-ICTM
	D1.3 Progress report	17	Public	UB-ICTM
	D1.4 Updated DMP	18	Public	UB-ICTM
	D1.5 Revised DMP	34	Public	UB-ICTM
WP2	D2.1 Report from expert visits	13	Public	UB-ICTM
	D2.2 Strategy and Action Plan	15	Sensitive	NIVA
WP3	D3.1 Reports from joint events	16	Public	NIVA
	D3.2 Reports from STSM	28	Public	UB-ICTM
	D3.3 Learning and teaching material	34	Public	NIVA
WP4	D4.1 Protocols for diatoms, phytoplankton	32	Public	INRAE
	D4.2 Protocols for molecular tools for macrophytes	32	Public	NIVA
WP5	D5.1 The Strategy and AP for IRMO	15	Public	UB-ICTM
	D5.2 Training materials	33	Public	UB-ICTM
WP6	D6.1 Project website and social media	2	Public	UB-ICTM
	D6.2 Dissemination and Exploitation Plan	6	Public	UB-ICTM
	D6.3 Updated Dissemination and Exploitation	24	Public	UB-ICTM
	D6.4 Proceedings of scientific conferences	36	Public	UB-ICTM

*International Cooperation and Project Office (ICPO) is a new and officially accepted name (with acronym) for the established office. IRMO was an initial acronym used in the project proposal.

8.1 Quality Control (QC) of project deliverables

The goal of QC will be to inspect and revise draft versions of each deliverable before uploading it to the Participant Portal. WP leaders should send the first draft version to the Executive Board members no later than 30 calendar days before the deliverable's due date. Members should send back their remarks within 15 calendar days from receipt. After considering all received comments, the WP leader should produce the final version and send it to the coordinator within 7 calendar days from receipt. Finally, the coordinator should make a final inspection before submission to the EC, avoiding the upload at the last moment. If the beneficiary is late in submission of any project deliverable, the coordinator may act according to the Grant Agreement and Consortium Agreement (Section 6.4.2).

8.2 Dissemination of results and Open Access

The partners must - as soon as possible (but not before a decision on their possible protection) - disseminate their results (i.e., make them public). Some of the widely used means of dissemination are:

- Official project website
- Social media platforms
- Peer reviewed publication (Open Access)
- Presentation at scientific conferences or other public presentations

The rules for communication, dissemination and visibility are covered in Article 17 of the GA.

Unless the EC requests or agrees otherwise or unless it is impossible, communication and dissemination activities of the beneficiaries related to the project must acknowledge EU support and display the European flag (emblem) and funding statement (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Examples of the European flag options with the funding statement

In addition, any communication or dissemination activity related to the action must use factually accurate information and must indicate the following disclaimer (translated into local languages where appropriate):

“Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Executive Agency (REA)/European Commission. Neither the European Union nor the European Research Executive Agency (REA)/European Commission can be held responsible for them.”

9. Risk management

The BIOLAWEB proposal included a description of the initial risk assessment. The risk matrix is used to estimate the exposure to a specific risk.

The COVID-19 pandemic is still having a significant impact on work. Many duties may need to be delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, while others may be changed to virtual presentations, webinars, and workshops.

Also, there are other risks regarding partners, researchers, and stakeholders and their involvement in the activities of the project like not doing the tasks on time, leaving the project, low participation of researchers and stakeholders in a survey of UB-ICTM research performance, not attending exercises and trainings, a lack of cooperation on a policy-maker level, etc.

All potential risks or those that were noted during the proposal stage of this project are listed in the table below.

Table 8. List of critical risks and proposed mitigation measures

Risk No	Description Risk	Work Package No(s)	Proposed Mitigation Measures
1	The pandemic situation continues (medium likely)	WP1, WP2, WP3, WP4, WP5, WP6	In case of travel restrictions, BIOLAWEB will organize online courses whenever possible, or postpone some of the joint field work, if it does not affect the course of the project. Courses and meetings can be restricted to a maximum number of participants.
2	Partner is not carrying out its tasks or will leave from BIOLAWEB (low likely, high severity)	WP1, WP2, WP3, WP4, WP5, WP6	All partners have common interest in the activities proposed by BIOLAWEB. INRAE and NIVA are well-established institutes and known collaborators of UB-ICTM. In the case of resignation, the management will take action for reassignment of work to other parties.
3	Low participation of researchers in survey of UB-ICTM research performance needed for developing The Strategy (low likely, high severity)	WP2	To guarantee a higher participation in BIOLAWEB activities, we have already asked researchers at UB-ICTM to complete internal questionnaire about their potential involvement in the project events and opinion about roadmap that will bring UB-ICTM an advantage in the next decade.
4	Low involvement of ESRs in workshops and summer school (low likely, high severity)	WP3	There is a close collaboration synergy between UB-ICTM and other faculties at UB. This network will be used to ensure the engagement of existing/future ESRs (e.g., for the 1 st metabarcoding workshop in March 2023 more than 20 students applied for the on-site attendance).
5	Participant's inability to attend the training (low likely, high severity)	WP3	Another team member will be asked to replace the participant.
6	Weather conditions can negatively affect fieldwork (medium likely, medium severity)	WP3, WP4	BIOLAWEB will deal with this situation by (1) postponing fieldwork until good conditions prevail, and (2) switching to a different set of lakes.
7	PCR amplification: insufficient DNA concentration (medium likely, high severity)	WP3, WP4	Samples will be taken in duplicates.
8	No eDNA found (medium likely, high severity)	WP4	Sampling can be repeated. For maximum yield for each new sample material different lysis buffers should be tested in parallel.
9	ICPO's staff unable to assist an increased number of scientists applying for grants (low likely, medium severity)	WP5	Experienced research and administrative staff at UB-ICTM (FP7, IPA etc.) will assist ICPO staff.
10	Lack of cooperation on a policy-maker level (medium likely, high severity)	WP6	WP6 roundtables will foster the policy-maker collaboration, supported by the international experts.



10. Concluding remarks

This PH is directed to the consortium partners and defines guidelines for a successful implementation of the BIOLAWEB project. The collaboration among the BIOLAWEB partners so far is excellent, and all partners look forward to the continuation of the project.

