



Project BIOLAWEB

Deliverable D2.1

Report from expert visits

Acronym:	BIOLAWEB
Full title:	Boosting Institute of Chemistry, Technology and Metallurgy in Water Biomonitoring
Grant No:	101079234
Call:	HORIZON-WIDERA-2021-ACCESS-03
Topic:	HORIZON-WIDERA-2021-ACCESS-03-01
Type of action:	HORIZON Coordination and Support Actions (HORIZON - CSA)
Granting authority:	European Research Executive Agency
Starting Date:	01/10/2022
Project Duration:	36 months



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101079234.





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Report from expert visits

Deliverable data sheet

Deliverable number:	D2.1
Deliverable title:	Report from expert visits
Work package:	Scientific and innovation strategy (WP2)
Lead Beneficiary:	UB-ICTM
Type:	R — Document, report
First submission on:	31/10/2023
Due month:	13
Dissemination level:	PU - Public

Version history

Version	Date	Main author(s)	Summary of changes
V01	27/10/2023	Dr Miloš Ćirić	First version created
V01	31/10/2023	Dr Miloš Ćirić, Dr Susanne Schneider	Final version compiled

Quality control

Activity	Name	Date
Created	Dr Miloš Ćirić, Dr Aleksandra Marković	27/10/2023
Reviewed	Dr Susanne Schneider	30/10/2023
Revised	Dr Miloš Ćirić, Dr Susanne Schneider	31/10/2023





Deliverable summary

The expert visits followed the planned activities within WP2 (Task 2.1), including an interview (consultations), on-line survey and meetings that were closely interlinked with Task 2.2 and Task 2.3, which were crucial steps for the writing preparation phase of the Strategy for UB-ICTM (T2.4). The purpose of the expert visits was completely achieved.

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1. Introduction

In order to meet BIOLAWEB **Objective 1** (*Substantial raising of scientific excellence and innovation capacity by developing a tailor-made scientific strategy for UB-ICTM*) the project consortium designed a series of strategic measures and planned their implementation within four tasks of **WP2 – Scientific and innovation strategy**. In a four-stage approach of strategic science visioning for 2023-2027, the UB-ICTM team along with leading researchers from the Norwegian Institute for Water Research (NIVA) and the French National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and Environment (INRAE) planned to:

- (1) identify UB-ICTM research gaps
- (2) screen UB-ICTM research needs
- (3) define a Scientific strategy for UB-ICTM (The Strategy) and
- (4) make an Action Plan for implementing The Strategy

For the purpose of getting insight into the research gaps (1) and needs (2) of the research staff of the coordinating institution from the Widening country, as well as to better understand the internal organizational structure of UB-ICTM, **expert visits** of senior scientists from partner institutions (Science Advisors or SAs) to UB-ICTM were planned and conducted within WP2 (Task 2.1). SAs visited UB-ICTM on two occasions and the purpose of the expert visit mentioned above was completed.

2. The first expert visit to UB-ICTM: general information & summary of outcomes

The first expert visit of **four SAs** from twining partner institutes was conducted at the same time as the kick-off meeting in Belgrade to optimize time and financial resources. Two senior researchers from INRAE (including research director of UMR Carrtel), two leading scientists from NIVA and BIOLAWEB principal investigator (PI) participated in the expert meeting with the President of the Scientific Board of the UB-ICTM on **November 23, 2022** in Belgrade (Fig. 1). The agenda for the meeting, with the list of attendees, was prepared and sent to all participants in advance (Appendix 1).

The purpose of the first expert visit was aligned with the WP2 objective 1) – *Development of a tailor-made scientific and excellence strategy for UB-ICTM and application of emergent DNA biomonitoring methods in Serbia and SEE*. More specifically, the goals of the first expert visit were: a) to explain the current management structure and research profile of UB-ICTM to the partners from INRAE and NIVA, and b) to identify gaps and propose measures to improve the research excellence of UB-ICTM (the outcome of this goal was the base for designing the questionnaire conducted between the first and the second expert visit). Finally, the President of the Scientific Board of the UB-ICTM and the BIOLAWEB PI answered the questions related to:

- ✓ organization of UB-ICTM (number of departments, their connectivity and sources of funding)
- ✓ the position of a new biomonitoring laboratory into the organizational structure of UB-ICTM
- ✓ the compliance between the strategic goals of UB-ICTM and the Ministry of Environmental Protection in Serbia
- ✓ the invitation of eminent researchers connected with European Union environmental bodies to take part in BIOLAWEB events

As a **result** of the first visit, experts from the leading partner institutions got an insight into the internal structure of the UB-ICTM and emphasized the need for stronger connectivity between different departments and researchers (transdisciplinary approach). Moreover, the simultaneous strengthening of UB-ICTM's scientific excellence and the ability to address the important societal challenges was stressed.



Figure 1. Expert visit on November 23, 2022 at UB-ICTM

3. The second expert visit to UB-ICTM: general information & summary of outcomes

In order to perform **the interviews/consultations** with UB-ICTM's researchers in person and to discuss the first results of **the questionnaire** on the short and long-term research needs and research excellence, **four SAs** from leading partner institutions visited the coordinating institution in Belgrade on March 27 and 28, 2023. The interview was the activity within Task 2.2 – *Systematic survey of current research excellence indicators of UB-ICTM* and Task 2.3 – *Identification of short and long-term research needs of UB-ICTM* (mentioned as *consultations with stakeholders*). Similar to the first visit, the project team agreed to conduct the on-site interviews at the same time as the second consortium meeting in Belgrade to optimize time and financial resources. Before their visit, the SAs and UB-ICTM project members prepared a series of questions for a survey that were approved by BIOLAWEB consortium.

The questionnaire Between the first and the second expert visit, a questionnaire was distributed to around 200 researchers at UB-ICTM, asking for input on the perceived current strengths in freshwater science and biomonitoring at UB-ICTM, as well as potential future directions and challenges (Task 2.2). The questionnaire was developed in close cooperation between the BIOLAWEB partners at NIVA, INRAE and UB-ICTM. In total, 77 researchers at UB-ICTM responded to the questionnaire which was almost twice as much as it had been expected (for instance, a result of a similar survey in the project application phase showed that approximately 20% or around 40 scientists of UB-ICTM research staff contributes to the water-related research domain). The results obtained in the questionnaire serve as a basis for creating a tailor-made scientific strategy for the UB-ICTM in the next phases of the BIOLAWEB project (Task 2.4).

The **purpose** of the second expert visit was aligned with the WP2 objective 2) – *To develop an Action plan that complies with the Strategy*. In particular, the goals of the second expert visit were: a) to get deeper insight into the research profile (e.g. participation in the former EU projects) and short and long-term research needs of UB-ICTM research staff (through interviews/consultations with the selected researchers and analysis of the questionnaires that will be incorporated into a more extensive SWOT analysis of UB-ICTM as a part of the Strategy for biomonitoring) and b) to define internal deadline for achieving WP2 Objectives 1 and 2. This was achieved by two following activities:

- ✓ the meeting with INRAE and NIVA experts held on March 27, 2023 (Fig. 2). The agenda for the meeting, with the list of attendees, was prepared and sent to all participants in advance (Appendix 2).
- ✓ the interviews/consultations with UB-ICTM's researchers held on March 28, 2023 (Fig. 3).

Specifically, the participants of the Expert visit discussed also the following issues:

- UB-ICTMs position within the University of Belgrade (financial and legal aspects).
- How to align a strategy for biomonitoring with UB-ICTMs overall Scientific Strategy?
- The impact of UB-ICTMs transformation within the SAIGE project (funded by the World Bank, EU, and the Serbian government) on strategy and management of UB-ICTM.
- The Internal structure of UB-ICTM - 6 departments (financial and legal aspects).
- BIOLAWEB plans for establishing a "biomonitoring lab", and how the biomonitoring lab might "fit" into the organizational structure of the University of Belgrade.

The Interview During the second visit of NIVA and INRAE experts at UB-ICTM, the interview/consultations with UB-ICTM researchers was conducted (Task 2.2 and Task 2.3). They were asked to explain their academic contribution to the field of biomonitoring (including different aspects, e.g. from water chemistry to geographical mapping), their participation (including colleagues from their research groups) in past/current EU projects, and to identify the current research strengths, as well as limitations in achieving scientific excellence. In total, 8 researchers of UB-ICTM participated in on-site interview/consultations.

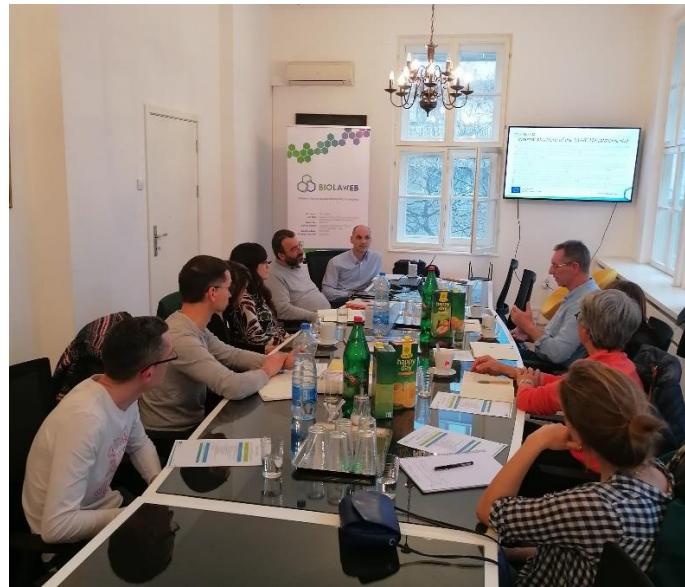


Figure 2. Expert visit (meeting) on March 27, 2023 at UB-ICTM

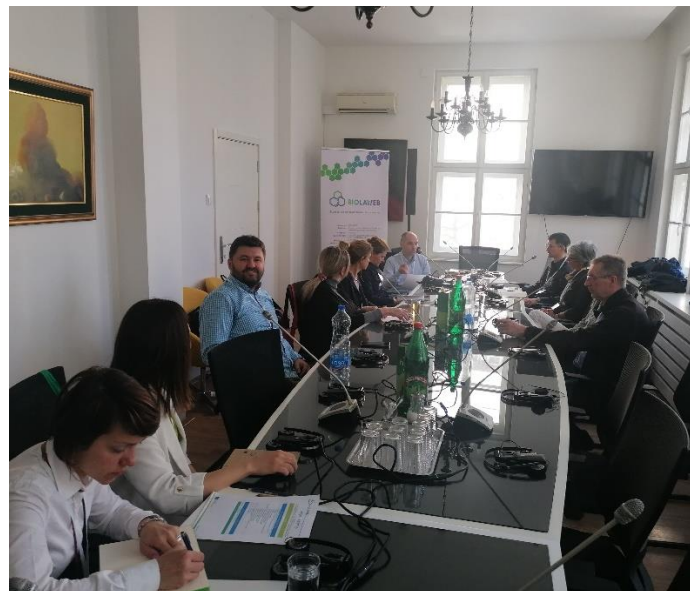


Figure 3. Expert visit (interview with researchers) on March 28, 2023 at UB-ICTM



4. Appendix 1 – Agenda



Expert visit (WP2)

23rd November 2022

The Institute of Chemistry, Technology and Metallurgy - National Institute of the Republic of Serbia (ICTM, Serbia), Director's Office, Njegoševa 12, Belgrade, Serbia

Agenda

11:15 – 12:00	<p><i>Meeting</i> UB-ICTM: Dr Jasmina Stevanović (director) and Dr Dejan Opsenica (the president of the Scientific Board), Dr Miloš Ćirić (BIOLAWEB coordinator), Dr Danijela Vidaković (BIOLAWEB member)</p> <p>NIVA: Dr Susanne Schneider (Science Advisor*), Dr Andreas Ballot (Science Advisor)</p> <p>INRAE: Dr Frédéric Rimet (Science Advisor), Dr Agnès Bouchez (Science Advisor)</p>
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch break



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5. Appendix 2 – Agenda



Expert visit (WP2)

27th - 28th March 2023

The Institute of Chemistry, Technology and Metallurgy - National Institute of the Republic of Serbia (UB-ICTM, Serbia), Conference room, 1st floor, Njegoševa 12, Belgrade, Serbia

Agenda

DAY 1 (Monday 27th March) 17:00 – 19:00

17:00 – 17:15	<i>The development of Scientific and Innovation strategy (WP2) - Activities and plan for the next 6 months</i> Dr Miloš Ćirić, coordinator of the BIOLAWEB project, UB-ICTM <i>Discussion</i> Participants from UB-ICTM: Dr Dejan Opsenica (the president of the UB-ICTM Scientific Board) Dr Miloš Ćirić (BIOLAWEB coordinator) Dr Danijela Vidaković (BIOLAWEB member)
17:15 – 18:00	Aleksandra Marković (BIOLAWEB member) Participants from NIVA: Dr Susanne Schneider (Science Advisor) Dr Andreas Ballot (Science Advisor) Participants from INRAE: Dr Frédéric Rimet (Science Advisor) Dr Agnès Bouchez (Science Advisor)
18:00 – 18:15	<i>Presentation of the „UB-ICTM - Systematic survey results</i> Miloš Ćirić, UB-ICTM
18:15 – 19:00	<i>Discussion</i> All participants

DAY 2 (Tuesday 28th March) 09:00 – 13:30

09:00 – 10:30	<i>Interviews with the UB-ICTM researchers</i> All participants
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee break



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