EELISA Project Portfolio Management Framework

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The European Engineering Learning Innovation and Science Alliance (EELISA) is a consortium of ten higher education institutions from eight different countries in Europe that share the common ambition of defining and implementing a common model of European engineer rooted in society and of bridging engineering, sciences and humanities for inclusive, sustainable and digital societies.

ALLIANCE MEMBERS

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IMPORTANT NOTE

This document is an adaptation of the EELISA Portfolio Management Framework developed by EELISA Work Package 2 as Deliverable 2.1 and submitted on 30 April 2024.

Executive Summary

The Project Portfolio Management (PPM) Framework is one of the fundamental strategic frameworks for the EELISA alliance. The long-term goal of this living document is to provide a clear methodology on how to prioritise, pursue and implement EELISA projects throughout the lifespan of the alliance, drawing on the already established governing bodies, decision-making processes and resource structures. It is essential to underline that the PPM doesn't aim at centralising the administrative and financial management of the projects. In fact, each project will be managed by a project coordinator and will keep its own autonomy. Ultimately, the PPM framework will provide a playbook for the alliance's funding strategy and hence ensure its sustainable and prosperous future.

During the first phase of EELISA, the alliance had successfully prioritise, pursued and implemented a few significant projects. In the roll-out phase of EELISA, these projects are fully integrated into its strategic objectives and workflow: Unlocking Full innOvation capacity building and entrepreneurship (UNFOLDS) integrated into WP 10 and EELISA Innovation and Common Research Strategy Project (InnoCORE) integrated into WP 9. These projects and a successful track record illustrate the importance of the PPM methodology and its potential impact.
The PPM Framework document contains two parts: the first part addresses the aim and scope of the methodology, whereas the second part outlines the elements of the methodology, ready for its practical application. Moreover, it enables all EELISA partners to analyse candidate calls for projects, prioritise the most appropriate ones according to certain established criteria and, once the projects are awarded, manage and monitor the portfolio of projects based on the five key elements. These five elements include: (1) Identification of candidate calls for projects; (2) Pre-screening of candidate calls for projects; (3) Analysis of candidate calls; (4) Prioritisation of projects to define the EELISA Project Portfolio, and lastly, (5) Management, monitoring and optimisation of the project portfolio.

The document concludes with some future perspectives which explain that the PPM Framework will be revised and adapted throughout time along the growing maturity of the Alliance implementation. For this purpose, it will be embedded in a continuous improvement loop as EELISA will continue to develop, particularly considering the moment at which the alliance will acquire a legal entity.

1. Aim and Scope

1.1. Aim and scope of the EELISA Project Management Framework

EELISA already is a structured body hosting a portfolio of projects. These projects, in turn, support the specific goals of EELISA and foster the evolution of deep cooperation between all partners in their respective focus areas. So far, projects have undeniably contributed to the achievement of the Alliance's objectives by embodying and financing aspects not covered by Erasmus. For example, through the Digital Europe programme, a project that implemented a prototype joint professional master's program and an innovation ecosystem was developed). In this case, the project development dynamic was more bottom-up. Alternatively, there are more institutional projects that involve the Alliance itself or a significant part of its members (for example, Joint European Degree Label in Engineering - JEDI, EELISA Innovation and Common Research Strategy Project - InnoCORE, Unlocking Full innOvation capacity building and entrepreneurship - UNFOLDS), with a top-down dynamic aimed at positioning the Alliance in structuring projects of the European Education Area (EEA) and the European Research Area (ERA). However, no clear EELISA-level process had yet been defined for this purpose.
In the framework of the EELISA 2.0, the idea is to develop such a process to continue ensuring an organic and synergistic growth of the Alliance, through an efficient project portfolio management.

1.2. EELISA Project Portfolio Management Framework

1.2.1. Definition

The EELISA Project Portfolio Management Framework refers to a clear joint approach to be applied to different external grants and funding opportunities relating to EELISA strategic objectives, priorities and needs. It will allow new project opportunities to be easily identified, selected, prepared and developed by drawing on the already established governing bodies, decision-making processes and resource structures of the Alliance. This will facilitate the initiation, planning, alignment and implementation processes in a resource-efficient way, that otherwise normally consumes considerable efforts.
The framework does not aim necessarily at centralising the administrative and financial management of the projects. In fact, each project will be managed by a coordinator and will keep its own autonomy. But rather, the framework will showcase how multiple projects can be efficiently hosted and combined within the alliance, contributing to building trust across partners and reputation towards external stakeholders, ultimately contributing to the sustainability of EELISA.
Furthermore, considering the prospect of project calls that would introduce a positive evaluation criterion for projects originating from European Universities, a genuine portfolio management framework, beyond narrative, would be an added value in securing new projects.

1.2.2. Motivation

The EELISA Project Portfolio Management Framework will:

- allow EELISA to select and prioritize the right project at the right time, by aligning funding opportunities with its strategic direction and optimising the use of available resources for the benefit of the Alliance, its stakeholders and the broader community. In a nutshell, it will provide techniques and procedures for identifying, prioritising, preparing and developing projects as a portfolio,
- pool the necessary expertise (i.e. skills/experience in monitoring funding opportunities) for seeking the external grants and funding opportunities related to EELISA strategic objectives, priorities and needs,
- provide support for strategic decisions needed for project identification, selection and development,
- ensure transparency and compliance within the alliance,
- provide guidelines for managing from a programmatic perspective the projects of the EELISA portfolio,
- ensure alignment across projects of the EELISA Portfolio in line with the Alliance's brand and communication strategy,
- support bottom-up initiatives arising from EELISA Communities, academic staff, and other Alliance stakeholders,
- stay attuned to the evolving opportunities to ensure alliance's sustainable future.

1.2.3. Objectives

The definition of the objectives of the EELISA Project Portfolio Management Framework is a first critical step of the process. It is an adoption of the "definition of business objectives" step of the PPM framework to the EELISA context. The rationality behind this step is to understand the strategic goals that will guide the project portfolio management framework in all its subsequent steps. In this sense, projects that may fall under the framework are those that respond to the below objectives as well as are aligned with EELISA's mission statement and the alliance strategic goals:

- Projects that allow to develop new partnerships in line with EELISA's mission statement and its strategic objectives, increasing EELISA's geographical diversity and welcoming new associated partners, including non-European higher education institutions.
- Projects that contribute to the alliance growth with new capacity and sources of revenue, ensuring the long-term financial sustainability of EELISA in all its missions.
- Projects that allow to bridge and develop the alliance alongside its missions: education, research, innovation and impact on society.
- Projects that would allow to increase the joint education offer of the alliance through multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches and addressing the green and digital transitions.

- Projects that would support the alliance in building a strong and attractive network capable of attracting top researchers and talents as well as to encourage EELISA researchers to join forces and collaborate in research and innovation activities.
- Projects that would allow to develop complementarities to the specific objectives of EELISA 2.0 Erasmus+ Project.

2. Elements of the EELISA Project Portfolio Management Framework

As previously mentioned, the EELISA Project Portfolio Management Framework will mean an optimisation of resources and efficiency in the identification of project funding opportunities, proposal design and development phase. Following these steps, the framework includes five main elements that will allow for an efficient management of the EELISA Project Portfolio:

1. Identification of candidate calls for projects
2. Pre-screening of candidate calls for projects
3. Analysis of the candidate calls for projects
4. Prioritisation of projects to define the EELISA Project Portfolio
5. Management, monitoring and optimisation of the EELISA Project Portfolio

Figure 1 summarises such elements and differentiates the pre-award (1-4) and post-award phases (5)

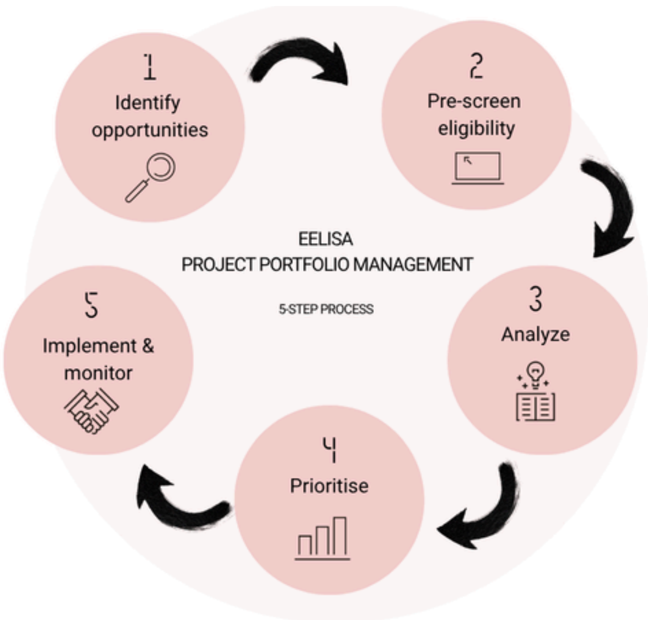

Figure 1. Elements of the EELISA Project Portfolio Management Framework
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2.1. Identification of candidate calls for projects

Once the objectives of EELISA project management are defined, the next step would be to create the pool of the candidate calls for projects. Practically, this step translates to the collection of potential funding lines and the calls for projects for which EELISA projects could be built and be considered as part of the EELISA project portfolio.
The creation of the candidate calls for projects pool can be done in two ways, either bottom-up or top-down.

In the bottom-up approach the EELISA Communities and/or researchers access the EELISA repository of funding opportunities. This information is maintained and kept updated by the International Project Offices of EELISA members, as well as by the EELISA Local Offices and the EELISA Central Office. The identification of candidate calls for projects should be done in alignment with the local International Project Office and EELISA Office.

In top-down approach the EELISA Executive Board, EELISA Local Offices, EELISA Central Office and Local International Project Offices disseminate among the Alliance partners the candidate calls for projects that are identified as a good fit with the EELISA portfolio.

2.2. Pre-screening of candidate calls for projects

Once candidate calls for projects have been identified, an eligibility check should be done. This includes gathering the call requirements and analyse them. This is why it is important that the potential project teams prepare a **summary document** with the main information of the call such as the objectives of the call, the types of activities that could be funded, the type of consortia requested, deadlines, funding to be allocated, key words and project's pitch and vision, including potential partners.

** **Acces the summary document to be filled out by potential teams here.**

2.3. Analysis of candidate calls for projects

Once the identification and pre-screening on candidate calls for projects is finalised and all the information is gathered in the summary document by the potential project teams, the next step is to see to what extent the potential projects could or not be part of the EELISA Project Portfolio and hence would be interesting for EELISA to apply. For that, a two-step analysis of the call for projects is to be done by the potential project teams.

In the first step, the potential project teams are to do a quantitative analysis of the call for projects that they wish is to be part of the EELISA Project Portfolio. This is to be done using *Table 2* of the summary document.

Scope	Alignment to the Project Portfolio Objectives	**1** (low alignment)	**3** (medium alignment)	**5** (high alignment)
	Alignment to EELISA's pillars	**1** (low alignment)	**3** (medium alignment)	**5** (high alignment)
	Alignment to EELISA's strategic objectives	**1** (low alignment)	**3** (medium alignment)	**5** (high alignment)
Demand	External to EELISA (EU priorities, grand challenges, market needs, current trends that need to be addressed, etc.)	**1** (low demand – the project will be providing answers to important issues, but perhaps there is not a significant demand attached to them or are connected to trends that aren't yet too tangible).	**3** (medium demand – the project will be providing answers to an identified demand, but which is not too aligned with EELISA priorities and/or EU priorities).	**5** (high demand – the project will be providing answers to a clear and significant demand which is aligned to EELISA priorities and/or EU priorities).
	Internal to EELISA (students, academics, staff)	**1** (low demand – the project will be providing answers to important issues, but perhaps there is not a significant EELISA internal demand attached to them).	**3** (medium demand – the project will be providing answers to an identified demand, but which is not too aligned with EELISA priorities).	**5** (high demand – the project will be providing answers to a clear and significant demand which is aligned to EELISA priorities).
Ratio of partners	EELISA Partners	**1** (2 full partners)	**3** (4 full partners)	**5** (9/10 full partners)
Revenue	Maximum funding	**1** (150.000 or less) **2** (150.000-600.000)	**3** (600.000 - 1.500.000) **4** (1.500.000 - 5.000.000)	**5** (5.000.000 or more)
	Level of co-fund requested	**1** (50% co-fund)	**3** (80% co-fund)	**5** (100% co-fund)
Impact generated	Impact generated	**1** (low impact)	**3** (moderated impact)	**5** (high impact)
Technical feasibility	Technical feasibility	**1** (the project is complex, may face some risks, requires a high effort).	**3** (the project is more or less complex, doesn't face too many risks, and requires medium effort)	**5** (the project is not too complex, doesn't face too many risks, and requires a reasonable amount of effort)

Figure 2: Table 2 for Quantitative Analysis Rubric for the prioritisation of projects for the EELISA Project Portfolio

The second step the potential project teams are to do a qualitative analysis of the call for projects that they wish is to be part of the EELISA Project Portfolio, allowing for a further clarification of the scores. This is to be done using *Table 3* of the summary document and analyzing the scope, demand, number of partners, impact generated, revenue and technical feasability ** Acces the summary document and the tables **here**.

2.4. Prioritisation of projects to define the EELISA Project Portfolio

Once the research on potential projects is finalised and the summary document, quantitative and qualitative analysis are completed, the potential project teams are to submit to the EELISA Central Office (office@eelisa.eu) and relevant EELISA Local Office(s) such three documents.

The EELISA Central Office and relevant EELISA Local Office(s) double check that the three documents are completed and that they can be submitted to the EELISA Executive Board. If the review is positive, the documents are submitted to an identified Executive Board meeting for approval, as indicated in EELISA Framework Agreement, i.e. “The EELISA Projects are approved by the decision bodies, who establish the procedures for proposal and acceptation of the projects”. If the Executive Board approves the project to be part of the EELISA Project Portfolio, an EELISA customised support letter is to be issued so that it can be joined in project application.

2.5. Management, monitoring and optimisation of the EELISA Project Portfolio

Efficient managing the EELISA Project Portfolio will allow the alliance to:

- Gather the key outcomes of the project and evidence affecting the alliance.
- Monitor the contribution to the overall Alliance regarding the target of the project in terms of education, research & innovation and impact on society generated.
- All joint education projects are gathered and carefully monitored.
- All joint research projects are gathered and carefully monitored.
- Gather key generated data from stakeholders' engagement in the Alliance data frameworks (mobility; participation; etc...).

This will require considering different levels. First, the governance of the portfolio. Secondly, the day-to-day management of the portfolio. And thirdly, ensuring that the portfolio is successfully running by monitoring its performance.

Characteristics of the different levels will vary according to the EELISA Project Portfolio categories, which are three:

- **Category 1: EELISA Strategic Projects** – projects that involve a major institutional collaboration between the partners.
- **Category 2: EELISA Communities Projects** – projects that arise from EELISA Communities.
- **Category 3: EELISA Members Projects** – bottom-up projects that arise from collaboration between at least 2 partners.

The three categories distinguish themselves in how the governance and monitoring is conceived for each of them. Details can be found in Table 4 below, but mainly, while Category 1 projects fully fall under EELISA governance structure, the other two categories do not. Moreover, while the performance of Category 1 projects is monitored more closely, for the other two project categories only an annual review is requested. More details can be observed in **Figure 3** below.

Regarding the roles and responsibilities, it is important to highlight that these also vary according to the different categories:

- **Category 1: EELISA Strategic Projects:**
  - Governing Board: Is kept informed and oversees the overall performance of the EELISA Project Portfolio.
  - Executive Board: Validates and takes the decisions regarding the project whenever it is needed.
  - EELISA Central Office: Supervises the overall process of the portfolio.
  - EELISA Local Offices:
    - Support their internal team from the identification to the management step.
    - Project managers of the projects are to be invited to their respective EELISA Local Office meeting to ensure proper project management coordination.

- **Category 2: EELISA Communities Projects:**
  - Executive Board: Provides support and liaison whenever it is required
  - ECO and ELOs: Provide support services whenever it is required

- **Category 3: EELISA Members Projects:**
  - Executive Board members Provide support and liaison whenever it is required
  - ELOs Provide support services whenever it is required

Every single project will still have its own project coordinator who will execute the financial, administrative and communication aspects.

Finally, the optimisation of the Project Portfolio will be the result of a close collaboration between the EELISA Central Office and the EELISA Local Offices, considering the monitoring of the contribution of each project.

Figure 3:Management characteristics of the EELISA Project Portfolio

EELISA Portfolio Category	Governance	Project Management	Performance monitoring

EELISA Strategic Projects	The project refers to EELISA's Governance structure, the Executive Board acting as the steering committee of the project	**What is offered:**
		• The proposal is done using the EELISA Framework Agreement.
		• Support letters from the Alliance may be provided.
		• Access to a wide network and increased visibility.
		• EELISA brand as a recognition umbrella.
		• ECO Communication and Dissemination support:
		  ○ Provision of the EELISA Global Communication Plan and Visual Identity Guidelines.
		  ○ Guidance in the development of each project's visual identity and communication strategy.
		  ○ Advisory services for communication actions of each project, including the establishment of website and social media channels.
		  ○ Support in the dissemination and promotion of key public events of each project through EELISA channels.
		  ○ Opportunity to participate in potential EELISA training sessions on communication and dissemination.
		  ○ For locally based actions, connections with the EELISA Local Communication Officers will be provided.
		
		What is required:
		• Person(s) responsible for strategic and communication aspects to be in regular contact with the EELISA Executive Board and the EELISA Central Office.
		• The development of each projects' visual identity should follow the EELISA visual identity guidelines.
		• Each project should be responsible for the production of its own strategic and communication / promotional materials.
		• To include the EELISA logo in all public events, communication actions and promotional materials.
		• For key public events, ensure there is a high-level representative figure of EELISA.
		• All public events should be in line with the "Guidelines for EELISA Events".
			Following the project life cycle through one-to-one project reviews between Project Coordinator, its EELISA Local Office and the EELISA Central Office on a regular basis (to be defined at the kick-off meeting according to the reality of each project).

EELISA Communities projects		**What is offered:** • The proposal is done using the EELISA Framework Agreement. • Support letters from the Alliance may be provided. • Access to a wide network and increased visibility. **What is requested:** • To include the EELISA logo in all public events, communication actions and promotional materials.	There is no need for a detailed follow-up of the projects. The EELISA Central Office and the EELISA Local Office ECO will be requesting an annual project update.
EELISA Members projects		**What is offered:** • The proposal is done using the EELISA Framework Agreement. • Access to a wide network and increased visibility. **What is requested:** • To include the EELISA logo in project related public events, communication actions and promotional materials.	Due to the bottom-up nature of these projects, there is no need for a so detailed follow-up. However, it is important to consider the evolution of these projects as part of the EELISA Project Portfolio. Hence, the follow-up will be mainly carried out at the EELISA Local Office level through an annual project update request.

3. Conclusions and future perspectives

The EELISA Project Portfolio Management Framework is a first step towards defining a well-functioning an efficient process that would allow the EELISA to apply to different external grants and funding opportunities as well as to showcase how multiple projects can be efficiently orchestrated and combined within the alliance, ultimately contributing to its sustainability.

As the document has been prepared at the very beginning of EELISA 2.0, it will necessarily require to be revised and adapted throughout time. For this purpose, it will be embedded in a regular improvement loop as EELISA will continue to develop, particularly considering the moment at which the alliance will acquire a legal entity.

Furthermore, it is important to highlight that this document will need to be accompanied by a clear implementation process. It is foreseen that gradual approach will be the most probable and realistic. Hence, the EELISA Project Portfolio would start to be built thanks to the top-down approach as well as to some projects arising from the EELISA Communities and, with time, more bottom-up projects may start forming allowing to consolidate the portfolio. In this process, the support from the EELISA Central Office and the EELISA Local Offices will be key.

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