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LIST OF ACRONYMS

EQA	External Quality Assessment
EU	European Union
EURL	EU Reference Laboratory
INMI	National Institute for Infectious Diseases, Italy
PHAS	Public Health Agency of Sweden

PLAN FOR QUALITATIVE REVIEW AND FOLLOW-UP

SUMMARY

This plan outlines a structured and participatory methodology for the qualitative review and continuous improvement of activities within the EU Reference Laboratory for Public Health in the field of Emerging, Rodent-borne and Zoonotic Viral Pathogens (EURL-PH-ERZV). It defines how feedback, indicators, and stakeholder insights will be collected, analysed, and translated into actionable improvements, to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of the project.

INTRODUCTION

EURL-PH-ERZV aims to strengthen the diagnostic capabilities and preparedness of EU member states against high-risk viral pathogens. To ensure the continuous relevance and effectiveness of its activities, a structured plan for qualitative review and follow-up has been developed. This plan also responds to the expectations for evidence-based progress monitoring, impact assessment, and transparency in publicly funded health initiatives.

OBJECTIVES

- Systematically collect feedback from the laboratory network members and stakeholders.
- Assess the effectiveness, relevance and impact of EURL-PH-ERZV's activities.
- Use collected feedback to improve training, diagnostics and coordination efforts.
- Provide data and insights that support EU-level reporting and policy development.
- Evaluate impact of outbreak response and coordination mechanisms.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology is structured into five key phases:

1. Data collection:

- **Description:** This phase involves gathering feedback from stakeholders through post-activity surveys, feedback forms, interviews and focus groups. The goal is to collect comprehensive data on the experiences and perceptions of those involved in the project.
- **Tools/methods:** Surveys, interviews, focus groups.
- **Timeline:** Ongoing throughout the project.

2. Qualitative analysis:

- **Description:** In this phase, the collected data is analysed using coding software to identify common themes, patterns and areas for improvement. This analysis helps in understanding the qualitative aspects of the feedback.

- **Tools/methods:** NVivo or similar coding software.
- **Timeline:** Following each data collection period (i.e. training sessions, EQA rounds).

3. Reporting:

- **Description:** This phase involves producing mid-term and final reports that highlight key findings and recommendations from the qualitative analysis. These reports provide insights into the effectiveness of the project activities and suggest areas for improvement.
- **Tools/methods:** Report writing, data visualisation
- **Timeline:** Mid-term (M40-42) and Final (M80-84).

4. Action planning:

- **Description:** Based on the findings from the reports, this phase focuses on developing follow-up actions with assigned responsibilities and realistic timelines. The goal is to translate the insights into concrete steps for improvement.
- **Tools/methods:** Action plans, project management tools.
- **Timeline:** Following each data collection/analysis period.

5. Monitoring and follow-up:

- **Description:** This phase involves evaluating the implementation and effectiveness of the improvement measures. It ensures that the actions taken are achieving the desired outcomes and makes adjustments as necessary.
- **Tools/methods:** Follow-up surveys, interviews, progress reviews.
- **Timeline:** After M42

OVERVIEW OF KEY ACTIVITIES

Activity	Description	Tool/Method	Responsible	Timeline	Expected outcome
Training and twinning feedback	Evaluate relevance, clarity and delivery of training and twinning sessions	Training/twinning -specific questionnaire	INMI	Within M1 after training/twinning sessions	Improved training/twinning sessions
EQA feedback	Assess materials, clarity and process of EQA rounds.	EQA-specific questionnaire	PHAS	Within M1 after EQA rounds (M15, M40, M63)	Enhanced EQA processes
Laboratory network meeting evaluation	Collect views on content, relevance and logistics of network meetings.	Online survey	PHAS	Within M1 after network meetings	Better organised meetings
Stakeholder interviews	Assess the effectiveness and strategic value of activities.	Semi-structured interviews	PHAS	Annual	Strategic improvements

Focus group reviews	Explore experiences from recent events or outbreak responses.	Facilitated group discussion	PHAS	As needed	Actionable insights
Follow-up surveys	Assess the impact of actions taken (e.g. delivery of reference material/protocols)	Online survey/interview	PHAS	Within M2 post-activity	Effective follow-up actions
Mid-term evaluation	Summarise insights and trends to inform mid-course corrections.	Compiled report	PHAS	M40–42	Mid-term adjustments
Final evaluation and report	Comprehensive review of effectiveness and recommendations.	Compiled report	PHAS	M80–84	Final project improvements

OUTCOME INDICATORS

Indicator	Description	Target value
Protocol harmonisation	Number of laboratories adopting EURL-standardised protocols	≥7 laboratories by M63
Training/twinning impact	Proportion of participants implementing improvements within 6 months after participation (assessed via interviews)	≥70% of participants
Laboratory network and stakeholder satisfaction	Satisfaction score in post-event surveys	≥80% satisfaction score
Outbreak response efficiency	Timely activation and follow-up of feedback mechanism during outbreaks	Improved response times

RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Strategy
Low response rate to surveys and questionnaires	Medium	High	Ensure surveys are short, user-friendly and sent immediately after activities; send reminders.
Limited availability of stakeholders for interviews or focus groups	Medium	Medium	Schedule interviews well in advance; offer flexibility (e.g. online options); provide clear time estimates.

Feedback is too generic or lacks actionable detail	Medium	Medium	Use well-designed, specific questions; combine surveys with targeted interviews or focus groups.
Delays in analysing or acting on feedback	Medium	High	Set fixed internal deadlines; assign clear responsibilities; automate data collection where possible.
Difficulty measuring actual impact of changes implemented	Medium	High	Plan for delayed follow-up (e.g. 6–12 months); triangulate responses with other performance indicators.
Stakeholders disengage due to survey fatigue	Medium	Medium	Limit frequency of surveys per stakeholder; rotate feedback formats (e.g. alternating with interviews).

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Steering Group: Oversee the entire qualitative review process. Ensure alignment with the project objectives and timelines.

Project Coordinator (PHAS): Manages survey development, data analysis, reporting and evaluation oversight.

Work Package Leaders: Implement feedback-driven improvements in relevant work streams.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Enhanced effectiveness of EURL activities through continuous feedback and improvement.
- Increased satisfaction and engagement from the laboratory network.
- Improved diagnostic capabilities and preparedness against high-risk, rodent-borne and zoonotic viral pathogens in EU member states.
- Effective use of specific indicators and qualitative follow-up with the laboratory network members in case of an outbreak.

CONCLUSION

This plan for qualitative review and follow up ensures a structured approach to collecting and utilising feedback from the laboratory network. By systematically assessing the effectiveness of the EURL activities, the project can continuously improve and better meet its objectives, ultimately enhancing the diagnostic capabilities and preparedness of EU member states.