MIGNEX

MIGNEX Handbook Chapter 1

Project management and quality assurance

Jørgen Carling
Peace Research Institute Oslo

Anne Duquenne
Peace Research Institute Oslo

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MIGNEX

MIGNEX (Aligning Migration Management and the Migration-Development Nexus) is a five-year research project (2018–2023) with the core ambition of creating new knowledge on migration, development and policy. It is carried out by a consortium of nine partners in Europe, Africa and Asia: the Peace Research Institute Oslo (coordinator), Danube University Krems, University of Ghana, Koç University, Lahore University of Management Sciences, Maastricht University, the Overseas Development Institute, the University of Oxford and Samuel Hall.

See www.mignex.org.

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The MIGNEX Handbook

The MIGNEX Handbook grows chapter by chapter over the lifetime of the project. It is primarily as a tool for internal information-sharing and quality assurance. The text refers to 'we' as the team members and 'you' as an individual team member reader. The handbook is public in order to ensure transparency and facilitate knowledge exchange also on issues such as project management, methodology and communication.

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History of changes

Version	Date	Changes
1	21 December 2018	Version submitted as official deliverable to the EC.
2	12 March 2019	Updated with the revised template and ISBN numbers. Table 2 has been simplified to allow for greater flexibility in how the management files are organized. Terminology has been updated to reflect recent changes.

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1. Project management and quality assurance

The quality dimension is relevant to all the main components of the project: project management, data collection, analysis and communication. Good management with clear roles and procedures prepares the ground for productive and enjoyable teamwork.

Project management is not just the responsibility of the project leadership but concerns priorities and strategic decision-making throughout the project team.

Our quality objective is twofold: always ensuring quality above a minimum threshold and as often as possible raising the quality towards excellence.

We will follow ten overall strategies for assuring and maximizing quality within the project; each strategy is reflected in specific actions.

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to guide MIGNEX team members on issues related to project management and quality assurance. Project management refers to resource use and strategic decision-making throughout the project organization, not just the responsibilities of the project leadership. The chapter forms the reference document for information on the project structure, the different roles in the project, information management, internal communication, quality management, financial procedures and reporting routines. Separate chapters address the closely related issues of data management (chapter 3), research ethics (chapter 4), and impact maximization and monitoring (chapter 5).

The Description of Action indicates that this chapter will contain ethical guidelines and authorship guidelines. These items are placed in chapter 3 and 5, respectively.

1.2 Project structure

MIGNEX is a collaborative project carried out by a consortium of nine organizations. The following are key indicators of the project's size and complexity:

- 60 Months duration
- 10 Work Packages
- 80 Tasks
- 46 Deliverables
- 81 Publications
- 29 Events

The project is divided in 10 work packages. Each *work package* can be thought of as a sub-project within the overall project. Aside from the management and communication work packages, each has a different set of partners and team members. Work packages consist of several tasks and deliverables and are under the leadership of one specific person who is responsible for coordinating the work of the team members. Work packages are however strongly interlinked, and progress, or lack thereof, directly impacts on other aspects of the project. Collaboration is therefore key – hence the term collaborative projects.

Management and communication are separated in distinct work packages and run throughout the whole project period, with the involvement of all partners. One work package (WP2) focuses on the methodology to be used in both the data collection and the data analysis. Three work packages concentrate on data collection (WP3-4-5) and four on data analysis (WP6-7-8-9).

In total, 80 *tasks* are distributed throughout the work packages. Some of these tasks directly result in deliverables. *Deliverables* are official outputs that must be produced at given moments during the project. The total number of deliverables in the project is 46. Deliverables are sent to the European Commission (by way of uploading it to the portal) and shared publicly (unless stated otherwise) by the European Commission, and on the MIGNEX website. The vast majority of deliverables are publications. Some are compilations of several publications, which is why the number of publications is higher.

The project also includes 14 *milestones*, which are control points in the projects, indicating whether progress is achieved at a certain point in time. Usually, a milestone indicates that the next phase of the work can begin. Milestones do not require any formal action.

Figure 1 presents a simplified overview of the project organization and some of the roles that are described in the following sections.

1.2.1 Roles in the project

An overview of the specific individuals assigned to the roles described here is at all times available in the MIGNEX information folder.

Beneficiaries of the project

Nine institutions are beneficiaries to the project. When referring to beneficiaries we often use the term *partners*. In principle, there is one coordinator and several partners, but colloquially we use partner as a substitute for beneficiaries, a practice seemingly common in EU funded collaborative projects.

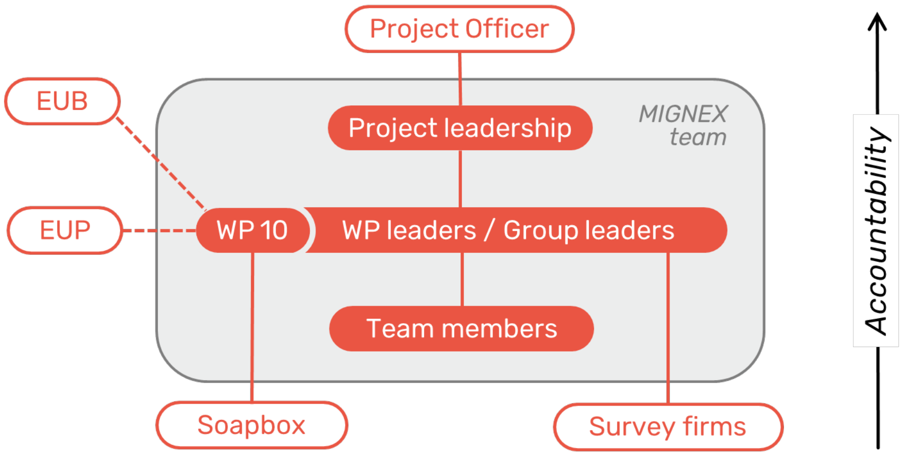

Figure 1. Simplified organization diagram of MIGNEX

1. Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)
2. Danube University Krems (DUK)
3. University of Ghana (GHA)
4. Koç University (KOC)
5. Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS)
6. Maastricht University (MU)
7. Overseas Development Institute (ODI)
8. University of Oxford (OXF)
9. Samuel Hall (SH)

The abbreviations listed here are for internal use and are not necessarily official designations.

Project coordinator

The lead institution (PRIO) is referred to by the European Commission as the project coordinator. The coordinator's responsibilities include the following:

- Coordinating and managing the project overall
- Supporting and guiding the project partners
- Monitoring and supervising the work in progress and the project's results
- Distributing the European Commission budget contributions
- Maintaining relations between the consortium and the European Commission
- Updating the European Commission on project progress
- Coordinating the scientific and financial periodic reports
- Coordinating preparation of the review meetings
- Implementing the terms of the contract with the European Commission
- Leading the General Assembly, Steering Committee and consortium meetings

The institutional responsibilities are shared between two individual roles:

- *Project Leader* (Jørgen Carling): primarily scientific and strategic responsibilities
- *Project Manager* (Anne Duquenne): primarily administrative and financial responsibilities

The project leader and the project manager are collectively referred to as the *project leadership*.

Work package leaders

Leading a work package is a role that is *both managerial and scientific*. Work package leaders are identified at the institutional level in the DoA, but the consortium allocates the role to a specified individual at the relevant institution. It includes the following responsibilities:

- Planning the workload
- Coordinating the division of labour among participants in the WP
- Monitoring the progress of activities
- Ensuring scientific quality in the tasks
- Overseeing the production of deliverables
- Quality-assuring the deliverables
- Ensuring the completion of deliverables according to the project schedule
- Informing the Coordinator of problems and delays

Group leaders

We use the term 'group leader' to refer to the person with overall responsibility for the MIGNEX participation of each partner. By default, the group leader is identified as the partner's representative to the General Assembly.

Team members

All the individuals carrying out research tasks within the project are identified as team members. Clarity about who is a team member is important for data protection within the project. Each team member has a profile page on the website. Access to non-public project information and resources is reserved for team members. In addition, access can be granted to specific support functions (e.g. for project finances). The work of team members within the project is defined by the specific roles listed below.

Task leaders

Each work package consists of a set of specific tasks, each of which has one leader. The task leader has the following responsibilities:

- Ensuring that tasks are completed on time and with the expected quality
- Coordinating, and working together with task contributors
- Reporting to work package leaders

Task contributors

Task contributors participate in carrying out the task. They have the following responsibilities:

- Delivering their contribution to the task on time
- Reporting to task leaders and work package leaders

Deliverable leaders

All the person-months are allocated to tasks, but many of the tasks involve production of deliverables. One person is identified as the *deliverable leader* for each deliverable. Deliverable leaders must take part in the task(s) producing the deliverables, but do not need to be task leaders. The deliverable leaders have the following responsibilities:

- Managing the division of labour in accordance with the authorship guidelines (see MHC5)
- Following the workflow towards submission of the deliverable (see appendix)

Guardians of objectives

The project is driven by ten specific objectives. Each objective depends directly or indirectly on tasks across several work packages. Accountability for each objective is assigned to one partner, who is tasked with using their project-wide influence to ensure that the objective is met.

1. Refine current understanding of the multi-level determination of migration processes: PRIO
2. Document how configurations of policies and non-policy factors shape migration processes: OXF
3. Refine current understanding of the multi-level effects of migration processes on development: PRIO
4. Document how configurations of migration and non-migration factors shape development outcomes: DUK
5. Identify opportunities for sound management of transit migration: KOC
6. Examine the links between migration legislation and new policy tools for migration management: MU
7. Clarify the links between migration management, development processes, and migrant integration: PRIO
8. Disentangle the foundations of policy incoherence in European migration and development policy: MU
9. Assess the effectiveness of the overall European approach to third-country cooperation on migration: PRIO
10. Ensure impact through continuous, professional, and effective engagement with stakeholders: ODI

1.2.2 Roles related to the European Commission

Project Officer

The Project Officer is the employee of the European Commission Research Executive Agency (REA) responsible for MIGNEX. Within the consortium, only the coordinator communicates directly with the Project Officer. All communication with potential contractual implications takes place through the communication centre in the Participant Portal grant management service. Other team members with access to the participant portal can see this communication, but only the coordinator can initiate a conversation. Reasons for the coordinator to contact the Project Officer include the following:

- Minor and justifiable deviations from the DoA
- Potential needs for amendments to the DoA
- Planning and follow-up of project reviews
- Key team members travelling to Brussels
- Communication with EC departments (including EUB members)

Policy Officer

The Policy Officer is the employee of the European Commission Directorate-General for Research and Innovation who, in collaboration with the project officer, facilitates interaction between the Consortium and relevant departments and agencies of the European Commission. Communication with the Policy Officer is managed primarily via the Project Officer.

1.2.3 Consortium and external bodies

General Assembly

The General Assembly is the ultimate decision-making body of the consortium. It consists of one representative per partner, who is, as described above, also the group leader. The General Assembly meets at least once a year and makes decisions, when required, on aspects related to the content of the project, finances and intellectual property rights as well as on the evolution of the consortium.

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is the supervisory body appointed to oversee the proper execution of the project. In order to have a small and efficient group, four permanent members have been chosen, based on the scope of their tasks and responsibilities in the project:

1. Peace Research Institute Oslo
2. Maastricht University
3. Overseas Development Institute
4. University of Oxford

In addition, each of the remaining partners will sit on the Steering Committee twice during the project. The rotating partner will sit on the Steering Committee for a period of six months. The periods change on 1 May and 1 November every year.

The Steering Committee meets at least every two months, and more when necessary. Minutes of the meetings are shared with the consortium. The tasks of the Steering Committee include the following:

- Monitoring the effective and efficient implementation of the Project
- Seeking a consensus among the partners
- Ensuring the proper implementation of the decisions of the General Assembly
- Preparing the agenda of the General Assembly and propose decisions
- Collecting information at least every 6 months on the progress of the project and if necessary, propose modifications of the plan to the General Assembly.

End-User Board (EUB)

The EUB is composed of 5–6 individuals who represent different categories of end users of insights from the project. They are expected to develop an understanding of the project and offer advice throughout the project lifetime. The EUB is convened by ODI as part of WP10 and is described in greater detail in MHC5: Impact maximization and monitoring.

The End-User Panel (EUP)

The EUP is a broader set of 100–250 end users who might benefit from the project. The panel is an innovative type of structure that sits in between the traditional advisory board (small and active) and mailing list (large and passive). The EUP is managed by ODI as part of WP10 and is also described in greater detail in MHC5.

1.2.4 Service providers and subcontractors

Specific contributions to the project will be made through contracts with third parties, subject to the regulations established by the EC for Horizon 2020 projects. The following third parties are particularly important.

Soapbox

The MIGNEX brand and website are developed by Soapbox under a contract with ODI, as part of WP10. Soapbox is a creative agency specialized in working with policy, research and advocacy organisations.

Survey firms

Survey data collection in six countries will be subcontracted to competent firms or organizations. The procedures for selection, training and monitoring will be described in MHC7.

1.3 Project management resources

1.3.1 Contractual documents

Grant Agreement

The Grant Agreement is the official contract signed with the European Commission, setting out the conditions for the financing of the project. The applicable terms and conditions form the main body of the contract and are followed by six annexes:

- Annex I: Description of the action
- Annex II: Estimated Budget for the action
- Annex III: Accession forms
- Annex IV: Model financial statements
- Annex V: Model on the certificate of the financial statement
- Annex VI: Model for the certificate on the methodology

Description of Action

Annex I, the Description of Action (DoA), is based on the project proposal. In addition to the narrative part, it includes all the work packages, deliverables, milestone and task of the project. All the scheduling information (start dates, end dates, deadlines) in the DoA are referred to by project months. Table 1 presents a conversion of project months into calendar months.

Since the DoA is part of the contract with the European Commission, we are legally committed to carrying out the work described in the DoA. Amendments to the DoA (and thus to the Grant Agreement) are possible in certain cases, upon approval of such requests from the European Commission. In some cases, the Commission may propose amendments as well.

Consortium Agreement

The partners in the project have all signed a Consortium Agreement (CA). Its purpose is to specify the relationship among the partners, in particular concerning the organisation of the work, the management of the project and the rights and obligations concerning inter alia liability, access rights and dispute resolution. All projects are obliged to have such agreements, but the European Commission is not involved in them.

Table 1. Conversion of project months to calendar months

M1	Sep 2018	M13	Sep 2019	M25	Sep 2020	M37	Sep 2021	M49	Sep 2022
M2	Oct 2018	M14	Oct 2019	M26	Oct 2020	M38	Oct 2021	M50	Oct 2022
M3	Nov 2018	M15	Nov 2019	M27	Nov 2020	M39	Nov 2021	M51	Nov 2022
M4	Dec 2018	M16	Dec 2019	M28	Dec 2020	M40	Dec 2021	M52	Dec 2022
M5	Jan 2019	M17	Jan 2020	M29	Jan 2021	M41	Jan 2022	M53	Jan 2023
M6	Feb 2019	M18	Feb 2020	M30	Feb 2021	M42	Feb 2022	M54	Feb 2023
M7	Mar 2019	M19	Mar 2020	M31	Mar 2021	M43	Mar 2022	M55	Mar 2023
M8	Apr 2019	M20	Apr 2020	M32	Apr 2021	M44	Apr 2022	M56	Apr 2023
M9	May 2019	M21	May 2020	M33	May 2021	M45	May 2022	M57	May 2023
M10	Jun 2019	M22	Jun 2020	M34	Jun 2021	M46	Jun 2022	M58	Jun 2023
M11	Jul 2019	M23	Jul 2020	M35	Jul 2021	M47	Jul 2022	M59	Jul 2023
M12	Aug 2019	M24	Aug 2020	M36	Aug 2021	M48	Aug 2022	M60	Aug 2023

1.3.2 Management documents

Project management information falls into two types that are managed in different ways (Table 2). In each case, the information is anchored in *one master source:* the MIGNEX Handbook and the project management Excel files, respectively. The DoA remains the primary reference document for the project, but the MIGNEX Handbook and project management Excel files contain additional specifications and reflect minor changes that do not merit a revision of the DoA.

Table 2. Management of project information

	Description	*Subject to monitoring and/or reporting*	*Master source*
Information that is largely static	Procedures, principles, roles, standards, workflows, etc.; description of work and objectives	No	MIGNEX Handbook
Information that is largely dynamic	Scheduling and progress on tasks and deliverables; roles of individual team members	Yes	Project management Excel files

MIGNEX Handbook

The MIGNEX Handbook plays a key role in the day-to-day administrative and scientific management of the project. It will grow chapter by chapter from M4 to M60 and consist of 14 chapters in total, abbreviated MHC followed by their number:

- MHC1: Project management and quality assurance (PRIO, Dec 2018, D1.1)
- MHC2: Key concepts and definitions (PRIO, Dec 2018, D2.1)
- MHC3: Data management plan (PRIO, Feb 2019, D1.2)
- MHC4: Research ethics and research integrity (PRIO, Feb 2019, D1.3)
- MHC5: Impact maximization and monitoring (ODI, May 2019, D10.1)
- MHC6: QCA conditions and measurement (DUK, Dec 2019, D2.5)
- MHC7: Survey data collection (ODI, Jan 2020, D3.1)
- MHC8: Qualitative data collection (PRIO, Jun 2020, D4.1)
- MHC9: Country-level policy review (OXF, Jun 2020, D5.1)
- MHC10: Documentation of survey data (ODI, Jun 2021, D3.2)
- MHC11: Documentation of policy review (OXF, Jun 2021, D5.2)

- MHC12: Documentation of qualitative data collection (PRIO, Jun 2021, D4.2)
- MHC13: Research area truth table (DUK, Jun 2021, D2.6)
- MHC14: Impact and exploitation of results (ODI, Aug 2023, D10.4)

In addition to the 14 chapters, the MIGNEX Handbook will have a series of appendices, including the following:

- Items that contain the type of information covered by the MIGNEX Handbook but do not logically belong within any of the chapters (e.g. Procedures for selecting research areas)
- Workflow tables for all parts of the project

All MIGNEX Handbook Chapters are deliverables and will be published on the website. See 1.4.1 regarding the division of project information between the MIGNEX Handbook and other sources; see MHC5 for detailed instruction on the form and content of handbook chapters.

Project management Excel files

Project management information is handled in Excel files that are edited by the coordinator only but viewable for all consortium members in the MIGNEX information folder (Table 3)

Table 3. Project management Excel files

File name	Master source for the following content
MIGNEX Overview	Work package and task dates (original and adjusted)
	Date range of events as specified in the DoA.
	Distribution of person-months across tasks and partners
MIGNEX Deliverables	Names of authors and reviewers for each deliverable
	Key workflow dates for each deliverable
	Progress on detailed workflow for each deliverable
MIGNEX Team	Roles of individuals as leaders and contributors
	Access rights to folders on the shared drive
MIGNEX Contacts	Names of team members and key support staff of each partner
	Contact details for team members and support staff
MIGNEX Events	Dates, venue and host for each main event
	Specification of sub-events for each main event

1.3.3 European Commission guidance and support

The following resources are particularly useful for support staff in H2020 projects but may at times be relevant for researchers.

Annotated Model Grant Agreement

The European Commission offers a user guide, the Annotated Model Grant Agreement (AGA), aiming to help understand and interpret the Grant Agreement. The AGA also helps finding answers about practical questions. Note that the AGA is frequently updated, so it is important to find it online, and not to refer to a copy saved on a computer. Simply google 'Annotated Model Grant Agreement (AGA)' for finding the latest version.

Participant Portal H2020 Online Manual

The Participant Portal – the EU website where EU bodies and beneficiaries manage EU funding – offers an online manual for the whole project cycle: http://bit.ly/h2020-grants. The online manual can be consulted for information on the following topics:

- Keeping records
- Amendments
- Reports and payment requests
- Deliverables
- Dissemination and exploitation of results
- Communicating your project
- Checks, audits, reviews and investigations

1.4 Information management and communication

This section addresses how information about the running of the project is managed and shared within the consortium.

For *information management* the general division of labour is as follows:

- Information about the running of the project: *PRIO*
- Detailed information about the execution of tasks: *WP leaders and task leaders*
- Data produced within the project: *WP leaders and PRIO* (see MHC3)
- Information for external audiences: *ODI* (see PH5)

For *communication* the general division of labour is this:

- Communication within the consortium as a whole: *PRIO*
- Communication with the European Commission: *PRIO*
- Communication with the End User Board: *ODI, coordinated with PRIO*
- Communication with the End User Panel: *ODI*
- External communication: *ODI, coordinated with PRIO and relevant partners*

1.4.1 Information management

Project information is stored and shared on the platforms listed in Table 4.

Table 4. Platforms for information sharing

	Audience/users	Platform	Editing rights
MIGNEX website	Primarily external	Drupal	ODI and Coordinator
MIGNEX information folder	Internal	OneDrive	Coordinator
MIGNEX collaboration folder	Internal	OneDrive	Relevant team members
MIGNEX data folder	Internal	OneDrive	Relevant team members
MIGNEX calendar	Internal	Outlook	Coordinator
[Data repository][1]	Primarily external	[To be determined][1]	[To be determined][1]

Notes: (1) See MHC3 Data management plan.

MIGNEX information folder

The MIGNEX information folder serves as a repository for project information that should be accessible to all team members, but which is not public.

MIGNEX calendar

An Outlook calendar, managed by the coordinator, is shared with all team members and contains the following information:

- Dates of project events
- Key deadlines in the workflow for deliverables
- Other items to be specified based on emerging needs

1.4.2 Internal communication

PRIO, as the coordinator, is in charge of the communication with the Consortium as a whole, as well as of the communication with the European Commission, through the Project Officer.

MIGNEX info e-mails

To minimize e-mail overload, PRIO groups several points into each info e-mail. These are numbered in a continuous sequence (info e-mail #1, info e-mail #2 etc.) which makes it easy to refer to them. The points addressed in the e-mail are listed in the subject line of the e-mail and in the beginning of the text, allowing to find information back easily when needed. Each point is followed by an indication on the action the reader must take 'For information' 'Action required by …' etc. All the info e-mails are archived in the MIGNEX information folder.

Teleconferences

The Steering Committee and other specific groups within the project – e.g. related to specific tasks and work packages –communicate via teleconference tools (Skype, Zoom, BlueJeans etc.).

Other e-mail

The project will necessarily generate a large amount of e-mail communication among team members in different constellations.

- Use the MIGNEX team overview to determine who recipients should be (e.g. all contributors to a specific task).
- Make your e-mails easy for recipients to relate to; the following should be obvious:
    - Why am I receiving this?
    - What does it require me to do, if anything?
    - When do I need to respond, if at all?
- If different responses are required from different recipients, indicate it clearly
- Be relevant to the thread and subject line
    - Start the subject line with a helpful label, e.g. [FYI], [Response required]
    - If you start a new topic, create a new message with a new subject line

1.5 Quality management

1.5.1 What is quality in the context of MIGNEX?

A high level of quality is both an aim in its own right and a precondition for achieving our expected impacts. The quality dimension is relevant to all the main components of the project:

- Project management
- Data collection
- Analysis
- Communication

The quality of each component will have a bearing on the quality of our deliverables.

Since quality is largely subjective and relative, the overall quality that MIGNEX has attained will first and foremost be evident in assessments and actions such as the following, at the end of the project:

- Are we truly proud of the work we have completed?
- Are end users applying new insights from MIGNEX?
- Are new insights, attributable to MIGNEX, gaining foothold in the research field?
- Does the European Commission regard MIGNEX as a success?
- Does the Research Executive Agency see MIGNEX as a well-managed project?
- Are the partners satisfied with PRIO's coordination of the project?
- Are the consortium members attractive to each other for future collaboration?

1.5.2 Quality assurance and quality maximization

There are two aspects to managing quality within the project:

- *Always* ensuring quality above a minimum threshold (quality assurance)
- *As often as possible* raising the quality towards excellence (quality maximization)

The difference is illustrated in Table 5 by means of two examples. Our approach to managing quality within the project must address quality assurance as well as quality maximization, which sometimes call for different measures.

Table 5. Raising quality above the threshold and towards excellence

Quality		Example: survey data	Example: policy brief
High	Excellent	Perfectly suited to our analytical needs; impeccable standards	Eye-opening, well-founded analyses with take-aways that readers remember and use.
	Barely sufficient	Free of serious errors and omissions, possibly containing redundant data or imperfect specifications	Free of errors, but with few new or interesting insights
Low	Insufficient	Marred by translation errors, interviewer mistakes, deviations from sampling procedures, or omission of key variables	Poorly written, with misleading interpretations and unsubstantiated conclusions

It might not be realistic to achieve true excellence in every component of the project, given that we must prioritize our resources. But these priorities should reflect deliberate decisions. For instance, maximum quality is particularly important for components that have ripple effects throughout the projects (such as the survey data), and for deliverables that play particularly important roles for achieving our expected impacts.

1.5.3 Strategies for assuring and maximizing quality

We will follow ten overall strategies for assuring and maximizing quality within the project.

Establishing standards, procedures and workflows

The coordinator and work package leaders formulate and share written standards and procedures in order to clarify expectations and prevent lapses that jeopardize quality.

Specific actions:

- Describing all repeated workflows in a standard format (workflow table)
- Compiling all workflows in a single place (MIGNEX Handbook appendix)
- Making the workflow table template available to WP leaders for additional uses

Ensuring that project information is easily accessible and reliable

Information that the team members need to carry out their tasks in accordance with expectations must be as easily accessible and reliable as possible.

Specific actions:

- Compiling all static information in the MIGNEX Handbook
- Posting the latest version of each chapter to the MIGNEX information folder
- Keeping all dynamic information in one master source (project management Excel files)
- Regularly sharing updated versions of print-ready overviews
- Compiling updates to the consortium in numbered 'MIGNEX info e-mails'
- Archiving the info-emails for reference

Allocating responsibilities according to qualifications

Work package leaders, task leaders and group leaders are responsible for ensuring that tasks are carried out by staff who are sufficiently qualified. Working on MIGNEX should be an opportunity for learning and gaining new qualifications, but when existing qualifications or skills are insufficient, adequate supervision and/or training must be ensured.

Specific actions:

- Emphasizing the need for expertise vis-à-vis the group leaders
- Providing group leaders with an overview of tasks to facilitate personnel planning

Establishing personal accountability

The formal structures of the project are (by design from the European Commission) clearly institution-centred. The institutional responsibility provides a guarantee that the work will be carried out regardless of staff changes, for instance. However, it is important for quality assurance to clearly assign personal accountability for tasks and deliverables. In this way, we avoid fragmentation of responsibility.

Specific actions:

- Keeping an updated overview of responsibilities in the project management Excel files
- Ensuring that this overview is easily accessible to all team members
- Following routines for authorship, approval and sign-off of deliverables

Exploiting opportunities for planning and preparation

Five years is a long lifespan for a project, and many tasks appear to lie far into the future. However, the number of person-months allocated to each task is limited, and the deadlines are strict once they approach. Using the opportunities for planning and preparing for each task helps ensure that high quality can be achieved in an efficient way.

Specific actions:

- Providing overviews of future tasks | *PRIO*
- Specifying expectations at an early stage (e.g. for specific deliverable types) | *PRIO, ODI*
- Placing tasks and deliverables on meeting agendas to initiate planning| *All leaders*

Prioritizing quality in trade-offs with other demands

There will continuously be trade-offs between different parameters of how the project is carried out—including cost, timing, scope, impact and quality. Such trade-offs should be managed in ways that ensure and strengthen the overall quality of the project's work and deliverables. In particular, the scope of a task or deliverable should be limited to what we are able to carry out with a high level of quality, given our resource constraints.

Specific actions:

- Designing deliverable templates that limit length and emphasize quality| *PRIO, ODI*
- Ensuring that the scope of activities does not expand (with repercussions for quality)
- Monitoring costs and spending in order to reallocate resources if necessary | *All leaders*

Following authorship guidelines

Correct attribution of authorship is important for the scientific and ethical integrity of the project. It ensures accountability for results and interpretations, and it ensures that credit is given where credit is due.

Specific actions:

- Formalizing authorship guidelines in the Consortium Agreement| *PRIO*
- Including the authorship guidelines in MHC5 'Impact maximization and monitoring' | *ODI*
- Including the early identification of authors in the deliverable workflows | *ODI*

Planning for journal articles

Publication of project results in leading scientific journals is essential for anchoring the project's scientific integrity in wider scientific communities, and for achieving the expected impacts. Journal articles are not included as project deliverables because the review and publication process is not controlled by the consortium; this does not make journal articles less important for the project.

Specific actions:

- Designing the Background Paper format with journal articles in mind | *PRIO, ODI*
- Budgeting for Open Access fees | *PRIO*
- Establishing a procedure for planning journal articles (see MHC5) | *PRIO, ODI*

Implementing review of all deliverables

Each type of deliverable will have a workflow that includes review, approval and sign-off procedures. The number of reviewers and inclusion of external reviewers depends of the type of deliverable. The Steering Committee is in charge of suggesting reviewers.

Specific actions:

- Specifying expectations for reviewing, approval and sign-off (see MHC5) | *PRIO, ODI*
- Including reviewing, approval and sign-off in the workflow tables | *PRIO, ODI*
- Identifying external reviewers at an early stage (see workflows) | *PRIO*
- Monitoring the review and approval process for each deliverable| *PRIO*

Creating an atmosphere of openness and trust

We are setting high standards for ourselves, while facing formidable logistical, managerial and scientific challenges. There will inevitably be setbacks and mistakes. These can best be managed in a solution-oriented, collegial atmosphere of openness and trust where problems are identified and addressed as early as possible.

Specific actions:

- Communicating frequently with consortium members| *PRIO, All leaders*
- Emphasizing our collective responsibility vis-à-vis the European Commission | *PRIO*
- Welcoming discussions about challenges | *All team members*

1.6 Project performance, trade-offs and priorities

The DoA specifies the work that we have committed to carrying out. Although these specifications are quite detailed, there is scope for substantial variation in *how* the project is carried out within our contractual commitments.

1.6.1 Project performance parameters

The performance of the project can be assessed along several dimensions, six of which are displayed in Figure 2 and discussed below. Two of them –Quality and Impact – are discussed in greater detail elsewhere but need to be seen in the context of other performance parameters because of the trade-offs between them.

Quality

The quality of our work and output is a key aspect of project performance. Management of quality is addressed specifically in section 1.5.

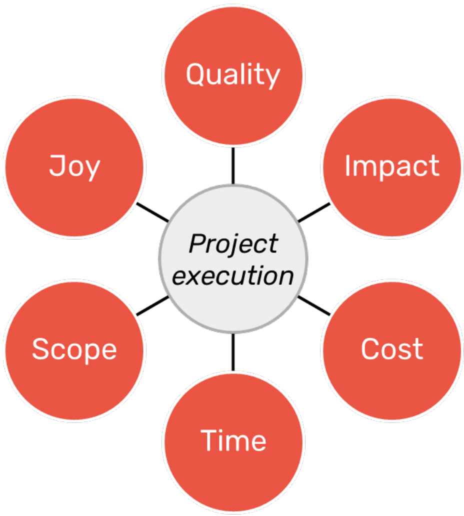

Figure 2. Selected project performance parameters

Impact

Variation in how we execute the project will affect whether our expected impacts materialize. Strategies for impact maximization are addressed in MHC5.

Cost

There is a difference between the budget (resources allocated), real costs (resources consumed) and actual payment (resources contributed by the European Commission), as explained in section 1.8. Moreover, it is a challenge that the budget was set up a very long time before the costs are incurred, and often with substantial uncertainty. There are several aspects to successful cost management:

- Are we successfully identifying opportunities for spending below the budget?
- Are we efficiently reallocating savings to other budget items for the benefit of the project?
- Are we avoiding costs that are ineligible or cannot be accommodated within the budget?

Time

Time is a critical factor in two ways: (1) the *points in time* that are established for submitting deliverables and reaching milestones, and (2) the *amounts of time* included in the budget, broken down by work package and partner. These two aspects of time raise several questions for our performance:

- Are we successfully following the schedule of tasks and deliverables?
- Are we successfully adapting our work to the amount of time available for each task?
- Are we prioritizing time use in the best way for the project?

Some team members may be able to allocate research time to the project beyond what is covered in the budget. Others do not have this possibility. Such contributions can increase the value of the project and the reward the individuals, since it may allow for additional publications or more comprehensive analyses, for instance.

Scope

The scope of the project overall – the extent of our activities and products – is established in the DoA. But large projects such as MIGNEX are vulnerable to *scope creep*, which refers to the tendency to grow beyond the initial specifications or assumptions reflected in the budget. For instance, there may be appealing opportunities to collaborate with other projects, organize additional events, or produce to additional publications. Some flexibility is needed – and accommodated in the budget – to ensure that we are responsive to opportunities for increasing our impact. But additional activities and products will create additional costs and could have repercussions for other parts of the project. Decisions of which opportunities to pursue must reflect these costs – including indirect costs of coordination, leadership, and communication, when relevant.

At the level of specific components and deliverables, scope plays a different role because the descriptions in the DoA leave considerable room for interpretation. For instance, how many different policy areas should be covered in the policy review? How many topics should be covered in the survey? How long should each Case Study Brief be? And how extensively should existing literature be reviewed as part of the background papers? Team members throughout the consortium will be facing such decisions. In each instance, we need to define the scope in a way that respects the limitations on time and cost as well as the commitment to quality and impact maximization. Issues related to scope are, in at least two ways, central to our success:

- Are we managing the scope of the project as a whole with the right amount of flexibility?
- Are we defining the scope for each component in the way that most benefits the project?

Joy

MIGNEX represents an opportunity for team members to learn, experience, share and contribute in ways that are professionally and personally rewarding. By leveraging this opportunity and making it a joy to be working on MIGNEX, we also prepare the ground for dedication, enthusiasm, collegiality and creativity, which are central to making the project a success. Project performance can therefore also be assessed with respect to enjoyment:

- Are team members experiencing MIGNEX work as an enjoyable part of their job?
- Does MIGNEX compare well with team members' experiences from other projects?

The joy of working on the project can partly be enhanced by minimizing frustrations that easily result from vague objectives, unclear division of labour, ineffective communication and the like. Moreover, we can contribute by recognizing and celebrating achievements.

1.6.2 Trade-offs

With fixed resources, there will inevitably be trade-offs between different parameters of project performance. For instance, raising the quality of one deliverable might require additional investments of time, which in turn reduces the amount of time available for other deliverables. Similarly, for a given deliverable, widening the thematic scope of the analysis could leave less time for perfecting the quality.

It is not always straight-forward how to address such trade-offs. Since quality is always part of the equation, the following principles from 1.5.2 offer guidance:

- *Always* ensuring quality above a minimum threshold (quality assurance)
- *As often as possible* raising the quality towards excellence (quality maximization)

1.6.3 Decision-making

Successful project management depends of making deliberate and well-informed decisions at all levels. Every task and deliverable involves important decisions between alternative approaches, which will ultimately affect the success of the project. Examples from the data collection phase include the following:

- Should focus group discussions cover several themes or concentrate on just a few?
- Should survey sampling procedures be the same in all countries?
- Should the policy review incorporate data from existing policy databases?
- Should the research areas in Nigeria be geographically distant from each other?

Figure 3 presents a decision-making framework that can guide our work. By taking care to identify the various options and subsequently evaluate them with a MIGNEX-specific perspective, we can ensure the best possible use of our resources.

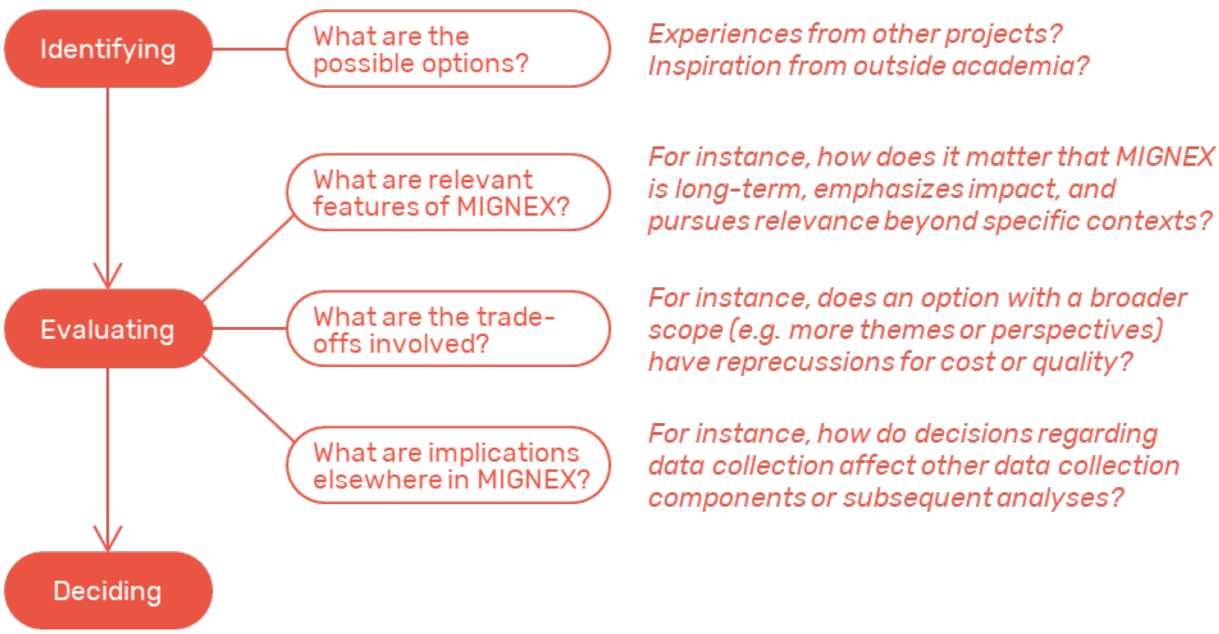

Figure 3. A framework for decision-making in MIGNEX

1.7 Deliverables

The European Commission will assess the progress and value of our project under more through the quality and timely delivery of the planned deliverables. Whereas managing quality is described in 1.5, it is important to remember that timing matters as well. The deadlines for deliverables are indicated in the DoA and are therefore in principle absolute. Failing to respect these deadlines essentially means failing to comply with our contractual obligations. We should therefore make every possible effort to submit deliverables on time.

The DoA specifies a *delivery month* for each deliverable. The coordinator will submit the deliverable before the end of this month. The dates for preceding deadlines – such as submission for review and for production – are established by the coordinator in consultation with deliverable leaders and WP leaders, as relevant, based on the workflow table for each deliverable type.

Deliverables have a pre-defined partner in charge, and in most cases several contributors. The deliverable leaders are to inform the WP leaders about progress and potential issues. Foreseeable delays are to be communicated to the WP leaders and coordinator as soon as these become apparent. PRIO will then communicate the delays to the Project Officer.

The reference for actual deadlines is therefore the project management Excel files, which will continuously be updated.

1.8 Approval and sign-off procedures

For *publications*, procedures for review, approval and sign-off are part of the workflow for each publication type, compiled in the MIGNEX Handbook appendix.

Many *other items* also require approval and sign-off. These include items that are intermediate steps in our work – such as the questionnaire for the survey, or the list of 25 research areas – as well as final output other than publications – such as the structure of the website, or datasets for third-party use. Many of these items represent one-off processes that cannot be standardized in workflows. The following general principles for items *other than publications* then apply:

- WP leaders are responsible for signing off items within their work package
- WP leaders are responsible for *consulting with other WP leaders* and *seeking approval from the project leader* when relevant, i.e. for items that significantly affect work in other work packages and/or project-wide objectives

As with the review of publications, all team members should be given the opportunity to provide input before important items are finalized.

WP leaders are encouraged to establish workflows for repeated or parallel tasks, such as those that are carried out for all 10 countries or all 25 research areas. The workflows should then be codified in the workflow table template and submitted to the project manager for posting inclusion in the MIGNEX Handbook appendix.

1.9 Financial procedures

1.9.1 The estimated budget

The estimated budget for MIGNEX is a few hundred euros short of 5m €. In no event will the total budget be increased. It could however happen that we end up with a lower final budget. The reason for this is that H2020 projects are *cost* based and not price based. In other words, we get paid for what we spend (and based on what we deliver), as far as the costs are deemed eligible by the European Commission.

The following section presents the basic financial rules that researchers should be aware of. It is of outmost importance that each partner has at least one person in their organisation who is familiar with the rules of funding in H2020. The coordinator cannot be a substitute for such a support staff, as many rules variate according to both institutional and national regulations.

Where to find the budget

Team members can consult the original budget in the DoA where personnel costs are reflected in the work packages tables, and other costs are reflected in the last pages of the narrative part. However, for a more detailed and updated budget, team members should consult the Project Information Folder.

How to read the budget

The budget is divided as follows:

- Personnel costs
- Other direct costs
- Subcontracts (when applicable)
- Indirect costs

Personnel costs are based on person-months units, per partner, per work package. Other direct costs include mainly data collection, travels and the organisation of events. In some cases, partners have subcontracting costs for data collection and communication-related tasks. Indirect costs are calculated automatically on all direct costs (meaning excluding subcontracts) with a flat rate of 25%.

Changes to the budget

The original budget is divided amongst the partners based on estimated expenses. It is however likely there will be changes in the distribution of costs within the partners' budgets and between the partners' budgets.

Moving funds is allowed up to a certain extend without requiring an amendment. If significant differences are to occur, we must inform the European Commission Project Officer and may need an amendment. Always inform the coordinator about such changes. The coordinator will then consult the Project Officer in case of doubt.

One example of change of distribution between partners: Originally, PRIO had a budget for the website, but since ODI is hiring a company for the visual identity who is creating the website as well, the budget line has been moved to ODI.

Another example, albeit one we hope to avoid, is if a partner cannot deliver on a task. Another partner will then have to take it up and associated costs will follow.

1.9.2 Basic financial rules

It is important to keep in mind that H2020 projects are public grants, meaning they come from taxpayers' money. It means that profit can never be directly generated.

All costs reported to the European Commission must be eligible. Costs considered as non-eligible or ineligible will be rejected, and they will never be reimbursed.

Eligible costs are:

- Foreseen in the project budget
- Actually incurred (they are real, not-estimated)
- Spent during the project (not before and not after)
- Needed for and directly linked to the project

- Identifiable and verifiable
- According to the national accounting rules
- According to the beneficiary's usual accounting practice
- Double funding is strictly forbidden!

Non-eligible costs are:

- Not fulfilling the criteria above
- Related to preparing, submitting & negotiating the proposal
- Currency exchange losses, bank costs for transfers, interest owed, deductible VAT …

Rules pertaining to personnel costs:

- Have to be related to personnel working for the beneficiary under an employment contract and assigned to the project
- Have to be backed up by time-registration mechanisms (time-sheets or others)
- Include salaries, social security, taxes, other remuneration (from national law/employment taxes)
- Cost are calculated based on the hourly rate multiplied by the hours worked on the project
- The hourly rate is calculated on the basis of the actual annual personnel costs divided by the annual productive hours
- There are three different calculation methods to determine the annual productive hours. Each beneficiary must choose one (see article 6 of the Grant Agreement).

Other direct costs include:

- Travel costs: hotel, transport, subsistence allowances
- Data collection
- Dissemination costs
- Event organization

Indirect costs:

- Are the overhead or running costs
- Cannot be measured directly
- Cover equipment that cannot be proportionated or linked to the project (e.g. electricity and computers used in daily work)

Subcontracting costs:

- Must be indicated in the DoA
- Do not refer to contracts to purchase goods, works or services
- Should ensure best value for money or – if appropriate – lowest price
- Must reflect a fair, transparent, efficient and traceable selection of subcontractor

1.9.3 Payment schedule

After signing of the Grant Agreement, all partners have received a pre-financing equalling 35% of the total estimated grant. 5% went immediately to the so-called guarantee fund – and will be distributed at the end of project.

The remaining 60% will be distributed according to the reporting periods schedule. The project is divided in four reporting periods, each lasting one year, except the second, which lasts two years:

- RP1: month 1 to 12
- RP2: month 13 to 36
- RP3: month 37 to 48
- RP4: month 49 to 60

Actual expenditure on the project will be presented in the periodic report following each reporting period. We have up to two months to prepare the report, and the European Commission will issue the financing within 90 days after submission (if the report and costs are accepted). The schedule will therefore be as follows:

– RP1: month 1 to 12	Report by Oct 2019	Paid by Jan 2020
– RP2: month 13 to 36	Report by Oct 2021	Paid by Jan 2022
– RP3: month 37 to 48	Report by Oct 2022	Paid by Jan 2023
– RP4: month 49 to 60	Report by Oct 2023	Paid by Jan 2024

The European Commission will not pay more than 90% of the maximum grant until the final report has been approved. Even so, due to the pre-financing, it is possible in some cases that partners have received more funds than they have spent, in which case they will need to send the money back to the funder.

1.10 Reporting procedures

As explained above, the project is divided in four reporting periods. A periodic report will follow each of these periods. A periodic report consists out of a technical report and a financial report.

The *technical report* explains the work carried out during the period and details the progress made in the project. The report also justifies potential differences between work expected and work actually performed. The report is entered in the Participant Portal and completed based on a template provided by the European Commission. The coordinator leads the compilation of the report, together with the support of work package leaders. All other team members are expected to participate to the effort as well.

The *financial reports* are prepared by each partner based on their own expenses. The coordinator reviews them and make recommendations where applicable.

After submission of the periodic reports, the European Commission organises *review meetings* with key team members. External reviewers, who are experts in the same field and who do not work for the European Commission, are appointed to review the deliverables and the progress of the project. They are present at the review meeting as well and subsequently issue a report. Issues identified by the European Commission and reviewers must be dealt with in the next period and reflected in the following periodic report. In some cases, deliverables can be rejected and sent back to the team members for revision.