VNiVERSiDAD
Ð SALAMANCA

# GIRLS

## Generation for INNOVATION, RESILIENCE, LEADERSHIP and SUSTAINABILITY

## THE GAME IS ON!

**Project Handbook**

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# 1. ABOUT THE PROJECT HANDBOOK

The *Project Handbook* documents the selected approach for implementing the project goals. It also highlights the key controlling processes to be used, the project policies and rules, and the overall management approach.

The *Project Handbook* is an important document since it defines the outputs of the planning (i.e., it defines the plans necessary for managing the project as well as to what extent they should be customize or/and tailored).

The *Project Handbook* becomes the basis for managing the project throughout its lifecycle and is an important point of reference for all project members and stakeholders. The *Project Handbook* is kept up to date throughout the life of the project. During the Closing Phase, the *Project Handbook* becomes an important point of reference for the Project-End Review Meeting and should be properly closed and archived.

This *Project Handbook* is the central reference document for all partners and stakeholders involved in the Erasmus+ project GIRLS - Generation for Innovation, Resilience, Leadership and Sustainability. The game is on! It outlines the project's objectives, governance, processes, and standards. The handbook adopts the principles of the PM² Project Management Methodology developed by the European Commission to ensure a structured, transparent, and effective project execution. All project participants are expected to adhere to the guidelines presented herein.

## 2. PROJECT OVERVIEW

### 2.1. Project summary

The GIRLS project has been proposed as a game about innovation, resilience, leadership, the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and sustainability. It is structured innovatively as a game, with Work Packages (WPs) named "The Board," "The Rules of the Game," "The Game," and "Game Over!" and running from September 1, 2022, to August 31, 2025.

The game begins by drawing the roadmap, defining the setting and the instruction manual, 17 squares are covered, one for each SDG, and new sources of inspiration are sought. The winner's prize will be to share the experience and disseminate the results.

This GIRLS project is presented to promote several important aspects in Europe such as inclusion and diversity, equality, digital transformation, and the SDGs.

Currently, many teachers use innovative active methodologies in classes to motivate and engage students in their own learning, but this is not the case in higher education, where it is not so common to change the classic system of lectures. The GIRLS project promotes the use of active methodologies in higher education and engages more teachers to use them.

This project goal is to teach how to play by playing; that is, we are going to focus on 4 methodologies: research-based learning, game-based learning, competency-based learning and service-learning, which will be used in different activities all over the project.

The core motivation is to address key challenges in higher education by promoting innovative teaching practices, digital transformation, social responsibility, and the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The project brings together a diverse consortium of universities, a research centre, an NGO, and a secondary school from Spain, Portugal, Romania, and Mexico.

### 2.2. Critical Success Factors and Project Management Objectives

**Critical Success Factors (CSFs):**

- Strong Partner Commitment and Collaboration: Active engagement from all eight partners, including those new to Erasmus+, is crucial. Final indicators show overwhelmingly positive satisfaction with cooperation (rated 5/5).

- High-Quality, Accessible Deliverables: The production of innovative, open-access resources (Videogame, manuals, videos) that are inclusive (DUA model) and academically robust (Springer book) is a key measure of success.

- Effective International Cooperation: The successful integration of the Mexican partner (UVAQ) to provide an essential non-European perspective on SDGs and Service-Learning is a critical component.

- Tangible Impact and Wide Dissemination: Achieving a measurable impact on participants, institutions, and external stakeholders through a robust dissemination strategy.

**Project Management Objectives:**

- On-Time, On-Budget Delivery: Adherence to the project timeline and the lump-sum budget through careful monitoring.

- Effective Risk and Conflict Management: Proactively identifying and mitigating risks through fluent communication and collaborative problem-solving.

- Transparent and Consistent Communication: Maintaining clear and regular communication among all partners through planned meetings and digital tools.

- Adherence to Quality Standards: Ensuring all processes and deliverables meet the standards defined in the Quality Manual, based on the PM² methodology.

## 2.3. Project Stakeholders

The first target group of the GIRLS project are university teachers, who will be trained in innovative active methodologies and digital tools, which they do not usually use in their usual teaching practices.

Students are always directly or indirectly the final recipients of all the training of their teachers, so this group is also considered an important stakeholder in the project. In addition, considering that an App will be developed in the project, we think that this may attract them to participate in the activities that will be proposed during the project lifecycle.

In the same way, teachers and students from non-university educational levels will benefit from the project, since the resources developed during the project will be freely available and with the possibility of receiving suggestions and feedback continuously through networks and work platforms.

As an association and a secondary school also participate in the project, these will make easier to reach other associations and other primary and high schools.

Finally, since the project has a community work component, we could say that society will be the project stakeholder.

## 2.4. Project Dependencies or Interrelations

- Sequential Work Packages: The project's "game" structure implies a logical flow. The outputs of WP2 ("The Board") and WP3 ("The Rules"), such as the videogame and methodology manuals, are critical inputs for WP4 ("The Game").

- Inter-partner collaboration: The success of activities depends on the complementary expertise of partners.

- External Factors: The social immersion activity in Mexico (WP4) is dependent on successful international travel and logistics coordination.

## 2.5. Project Constraints

The main constraint of the project is the starting date. After some problems with the mandate letter signature by one of the partners, the project finally started the 1st of January 2023.

The project chronogram is fixed. It will finish on the 31$^{st}$ of August 2025, independently of it starting date. IT is a 3-years project and the finishing date will not be extended.

Thus, the constraints can be summarized as follows:

- Budget: The project operates on a fixed lump-sum grant from the Erasmus+ Programme.

- Timeline: The project has a fixed duration of 36 months, from 01/09/2022 to 31/08/2025. All activities and deliverables must be completed within this timeframe.

- Scope: The project must deliver on the objectives and results outlined in the Grant Agreement, focusing on the selected priorities: innovative teaching, digital transformation, and inclusion.

- Regulatory: Adherence to all Erasmus+ Programme rules, including co-financing principles and the Open Access requirement for all materials produced.
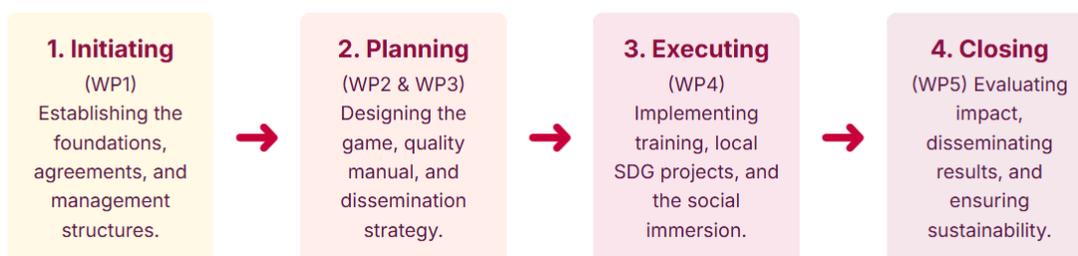
## 3. PROJECT APPROACH

### 3.1. Project Lifecycle

The project lifecycle is innovatively structured as a game, corresponding to the five Work Packages which align with the PM² phases:

## Our Journey: The PM² Project Lifecycle

The GIRLS project is structured using the European Commission's PM² methodology, ensuring a clear, efficient, and high-quality process from start to finish. Our journey follows four distinct phases, each with specific goals and outcomes.

| 1. Initiating | 2. Planning | 3. Executing | 4. Closing |
|---|---|---|---|
| (WP1) Establishing the foundations, agreements, and management structures. | (WP2 & WP3) Designing the game, quality manual, and dissemination strategy. | (WP4) Implementing training, local SDG projects, and the social immersion. | (WP5) Evaluating impact, disseminating results, and ensuring sustainability. |

### 3.2. PM² Tailoring – Required Project Documentation

The list bellow shows the templates and artefacts that have been developed for the GIRLS project. This list does not include all project documents, but all of them related to the PM² method.

- Project Handbook (this document).
- Quality Manual.
- Dissemination Plan ("Expansion Strategy").
- Dissemination Report (from each partner).
- Work Package Plans (as detailed in the application).
- Meeting Agenda (for online and on-site meetings).
- Meeting Minutes (for online and on-site meetings).
- Presentation.
- Sustainability Reports (from each partner).
- Final Reports for the National Agency (SEPIE).

### 3.3. Other Standards

In addition to PM², the project will not follow other (domain specific) methodologies.

No additional standards were considered when defining project approach.

## 3.4. Specific Project Management Rules

Frequent meetings, fluid communication between partners and the willingness of all will facilitate risk management. Quarterly meetings have been proposed during the 3 years of the project to facilitate the resolution of conflicts and possible delays that may arise in some activity. In the kick-off meeting, the deadlines for the activities will be reminded and measures will be proposed in case of delays or conflicts. Each partner will give detailed information on the activity he/she leads.

If a budget change between work packages is necessary, we will follow the regulations of the Spanish National Agency and request the corresponding modification.

In the preparation of the project proposal we have already worked as a team and we have seen the willingness of all the partners.

In addition to the contact persons with whom the GIRLS project has been defined, each partner has a collaborative team to achieve the objectives.

The way to resolve any conflict that may arise is through dialogue and teamwork. We are all used to work as a team and dealing with any problem that may arise. In addition, the coordinating team has experience in Erasmus+ projects and recently coordinated the 2017-ES01-KA203-038491 project, which was evaluated as a good practice.

As mentioned above, the new partners will participate in the management and in all project activities. Experienced partners will also participate in all activities and are committed to supporting and helping less experienced partners throughout the project and facilitating their work. It is about sharing this experience of an Erasmus+ project/game among everyone, knowing the rules of the game, forming a well-coordinated team that works with quality and efficiency and obtains the best results at a personal, institutional and European level.

The project is financed on a lump-sum basis. Budget control is managed internally by the coordinator, USAL, based on the agreed distribution per partner and WP.

All partner organisations guarantee co-financing and will provide the necessary resources to supplement the EU grant, ensuring project activities are fully realised.

## 3.5. Conflict Resolution and Escalations

During the development of the GIRLS project, several conflicts can arise in any of the levels below:

- Within the Project Core Team.
- Within a specific domain inside a partner's institution (e.g. the IT Community)
- With the client/requestor side or the user community. As several service-learning projects will be executed during the project, this could provoke a conflict.

Conflicts are situations in which one or both parties perceive a threat. They are considered to be critical issues and can be raised by any of the project stakeholders. The Project Management team should proactively identify, log and raise such issues for resolution. When required, conflicts are discussed on the Project Status Meetings or, if needed, escalated to the Project Steering Committee (PSC) and the project coordinator.

Conflict resolution activities are registered in the *Issue Log*, while conflict resolution decisions can be logged in the *Decision Log*.

The escalation procedure for this project is as following:

- Primary Resolution: Conflicts are addressed through open dialogue and a team-based approach during the frequent (quarterly) project meetings. WP leaders are the first point of contact for issues within their package.

- Escalation Path: If an issue cannot be resolved at the WP level, it is escalated to the Project Manager (USAL). If it remains unresolved, it is brought to the Project Steering Committee for a final decision.

## 4. PROJECT PROCESSES

### 4.1. Risk Management

The project risk management process defines the activities to identify, assess, prioritise, manage and control risks that may affect the execution of the project and the achievement of its outputs. Risks (e.g., delays, budget issues) are managed proactively through fluent communication and frequent monitoring at quarterly meetings. The experience of senior partners is leveraged to support newer partners and anticipate challenges. During the GIRLS project a four-steps process will be used:

- **Risk Identification:** risks are continuously identified throughout the project lifecycle by any project stakeholder and documented in the *Risk Log* (by any project team member).

- **Risk Assessment:** risks are assessed based on their likelihood of occurrence and the impact in project scope and constraints. The product of their likelihood and impact (in 5 point scales) defines the Risk Level which is then used as a reference for their prioritisation and risk response development.

- **Risk Response Development:** there are four strategies to be considered as risk responses to threats: Avoid, Transfer, Reduce or Accept a risk. After the strategy for each risk has been selected, specific actions to implement the strategy will be defined, described, scheduled and assigned, while a Risk Owner assumes the responsibility for its implementation. These actions will be incorporated into the *Project Work Plan*.

- **Risk Control:** the Project Status Meetings are used to revise the status of risks, probabilities and impacts, and related actions, and to identify new risks. Risks will be revised weekly, but also after the occurrence of any significant event. If any of the identified risks occur, then the Project Manager (PM) will implement the contingency plans and communicate the issue to the Project Steering Committee (PSC).

### 4.2. Issue Management

The project issue management process defines the activities related to identifying, documenting, assessing, prioritizing, assigning, resolving and controlling issues. It is a four-steps process that the Project coordinator executes whenever required throughout the project lifecycle:

- **Issue Identification:** Issues can be identified by any project stakeholder throughout the project lifecycle, using different communication channels such as meetings, emails, and reports. The issues are registered in the *Issue Log*.

- **Issue Assessment and Action Recommendation**: a first informal assessment considers the category, impact, urgency and size of the issue, followed by a more detailed analysis to identify the root cause and recommend a solution. This information is documented in the *Issue Log* and used as input to the appropriate decision makers (based on the escalation process). The decision is documented in the *Decision Log*.

- **Actions Implementation:** After issues are evaluated and the remediation actions approved, the Project Manager (PM) will incorporate these actions into the *Project Work Plan* and update project related documentation such as project plans and logs

- **Issue Control:** Project Status meetings will be performed weekly and used to revise the status of issues and related actions, and to identify new issues. Additionally, the Project Manager (PM) will report monthly the status of the major issues to the Project Steering Committee (PSC) and, when adequate, to other project stakeholders

## 4.3. Requirements Management

The requirements management process comprises the activities related to the specification, evaluation, approval, monitoring and validation of the project's requirements. In the case of Erasmus+ projects, this process consists of the following steps:

- **Specify Requirements (project proposal):** gather the project requirements together with the project stakeholders and document them unambiguously in the Proposal. As proposals are uploaded in the EU application, the structure is fix.

- **Evaluate Requirements:** the National Agency experts assessed the feasibility of the requirements and the estimation of costs to realise them. As current calls for projects consider a lump sum budget, there is no possibility to discuss about it after the approval.

- **Approve Requirements:** once the proposal is approved the Project coordinator negotiates and agrees the project results that will be realized during the project with the partners and stakeholders. The approved proposal became the baseline of the project scope.

- **Monitor Requirements Implementation:** the project coordinator (PC) continuously monitors the implementation of the requirements by the Project Core Team (PCT), besides the discovery of new requirements or changes to existing requirements.

- **Validate Implemented Requirements:** when the requirements are implemented the solution is validated by the business user in order to assess if the initial business need is satisfied. Formal acceptance of the project deliverables should comply to the Deliverables Acceptance Management process.

## 4.4. Project Change Management

The project change management process defines the activities related to identifying, documenting, assessing, approving, prioritising, planning and controlling changes, and communicating them to all relevant stakeholders. It is a five-step process that the project coordinator (PC) executes whenever required throughout the project lifecycle:

- **Change Identification:** a request for a change can be submitted formally via a Change Request Form or can be identified and raised during meetings as a result of decisions, issues or risks. The *Change Log* contains information to identify the change, such as the requestor, a short description, identification date, etc.

- **Change Assessment and Action Recommendation**: the size and impact of the change on the project scope, schedule, cost, quality, risk, and other project boundaries is assessed, where after a recommended action will be documented by the Project coordinator (PC) in the *Change Log*., This information is then used as an input to the formal change approval by the appropriate decision makers. Depending of the type of change, it would be notified to the National Agency.

- **Change Approval:** the approval of a project change will follow the defined escalation process for this project. For changes which do not have significant impact on delivery time and budget, the changes can be approved during the Project Status Meetings. Other changes (having a size L or XL) are approved by the Project Steering Committee (PSC). The decision details are documented in the *Change Log*.

- **Change Implementation:** the activities related to the implementation of approved changes will be documented in the *Project Work Plan*.

- **Change Control:** new or open changes will be identified/reassessed weekly during the Project Status Meetings and the Project Manager (PM) will then update the *Change Log* with the results of the analysis/review. For the Medium, High and Very High size changes, the Project Manager (PM) will report on a monthly basis their status to the Project Steering Committee (PSC) and, when adequate, to other project stakeholders.

## 4.5. Quality Management

A robust quality management process is in place, supported by all university partners.

- Quality Planning: Standards are defined in the Quality Manual using PM² methodology.

- Quality Assurance: Processes are monitored through regular reviews at quarterly meetings.

- Quality Control: Deliverables are measured against a comprehensive set of quantitative and qualitative indicators. Final indicators show outstanding success, with satisfaction rated 5/5, digital competence reaching "C1-Leader," and active methodologies like Service-Learning widely implemented.

## 4.6. Configuration Management

All official project documents and deliverables are stored in a central repository (Google Drive) accessible to all partners. Version control is applied to ensure all partners work with the most up-to-date materials. The project website serves as the public-facing repository.

**Naming convention of project management artefacts**

The following artefact naming convention will be used for the documents generated: DocumentName.(ProjectName).(dd-mm-yyyy).v(x.x).

Some examples are:

- Project_Handbook.(GIRLS).(15-05-2024).(v1.0)
- Meeting_agenda.(GIRLS).(dd-mm-yyyy).(v0.0)
- Dissemination Plan.(GIRLS).(10-09-2023).(v1.0)
- Dissemination Report.(GIRLS-[partner]).(dd-mm-yyyy).(v0.0)

**Versioning of project management artefacts**

All project management artefacts are under version control, except for the project logs and checklists.

## 4.7. Communications Management

Communication is managed through a multi-channel approach:

- Formal Meetings: physical and online (quarterly) meetings for progress tracking and decision-making.
- Digital Tools: Use of email, cloud platforms for document sharing, and a WhatsApp group for direct, efficient communication.
- Dissemination Channels: Project website, social media, academic conferences (e.g., SEFI, ICMASE), workshops, and publications (Springer).

## 4.8. Deliverables Acceptance Management

1. Drafting: The responsible partner(s) create the deliverable according to the WP description.
2. Internal Review: The draft is reviewed by the WP Leader and the Quality Assurance Team.

3. Consortium Feedback: The deliverable is shared with all partners for feedback.
4. Final Approval: The final version is approved by the Project Manager (USAL) and, for major results, the Project Steering Committee.

## 4.9. Transition Management

To ensure the long-term use of results after the project ends, a transition plan is in place. This includes housing all open-access resources on a permanent server and promoting their integration into academic curricula at partner institutions.

## 4.10. Business Implementation Management

The project aims to institutionalise change. For example, the project supports the University of Salamanca's goal to integrate Service-Learning into its official curriculum. The sustainability reports created by each partner also serve as a tool for long-term institutional implementation of SDGs.

## 4.11. Resource Management

Tasks and responsibilities are clearly allocated to each partner based on their expertise, as detailed in the application. The budget is allocated per partner and per WP to ensure adequate resources for all planned activities. The project relies on the co-financing and institutional resources of all partners.

## 5. PROJECT PROGRESS MEASUREMENT

### 5.1. Project Progress Measuring Approach

Progress is measured against the specific quantitative and qualitative indicators defined for each Work Package in the project application. This dual approach allows for the measurement of both tangible outputs and the project's impact on participants and organisations.

### 5.2. Project Reports

#### 5.2.1. Status and Progress Reports

Progress is reported formally at the quarterly online meetings. These reports cover the status of activities, deliverable completion, budget execution, and risk assessment. Final project indicators provide a comprehensive overview of achievements:

- Qualitative Success: Overwhelming satisfaction from partners, with most indicators rated 5 out of 5. Participants significantly improved digital competence to C1-Leader and B2-Expert levels.
- Quantitative Outputs: The consortium produced a high volume of quality results, including numerous videos, 4 methodology manuals, and a significant number of academic publications (e.g., partners produced Springer book chapters and conference papers).
- Dissemination Impact: The project successfully reached Higher Education Institutions and NGOs and public bodies different from the project partners.

### 5.3. Project Checklists

Checklists derived from the Quality Manual are used to ensure that all deliverables meet the required standards (e.g., inclusion of partner logos, adherence to DUA principles, open access license).

## 6. PROJECT ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

### 6.1. Consolidated Responsibilities Assignment Matrix (RAM/RASCI)

| Activity / Deliverable | Project Steering Committee (PSC) | Project Manager (PM - USAL) | Work Package (WP) Leaders | Quality Assurance (QA - CSIC) | Project Core Team (PCT - All Partners) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Overall Project Management | S | **A** | C | I | R |
| WP Deliverable Creation | I | S | **A** | C | **R** |
| Quality Assurance | I | A | C | **R** | S |
| Risk & Issue Management | S | **A** | R | I | C |
| Dissemination & Sustainability | S | A | C | I | **R** |
| Final Reporting to NA | C | **A** | R | I | R |

*Legend:* **R**=Responsible, **A**=Accountable, **S**=Support, **C**=Consulted, **I**=Informed

### 6.2. Description of Project Roles and Responsibilities

#### 6.2.1. *Project Stakeholders*

See Section 2.3.

#### 6.2.2. *Project Steering Committee (PSC)*

Composed of one key representative from each partner organisation. Responsible for strategic direction, major decision-making, conflict resolution, and formal approval of key project results.

#### 6.2.3. *Business Implementation Group (BIG)*

While not formally named, this function is fulfilled by academic authorities and department heads within the partner universities. They are responsible for supporting the institutionalisation of project results, such as integrating Service-Learning into curricula or adopting new digital tools.

#### 6.2.4. *Project Core Team (PCT)*

Comprises all staff members from the eight partner organisations who are actively involved in executing project tasks. They are responsible for creating deliverables, participating in activities, and contributing to the project's overall success.

#### 6.2.5. *Project Support Team (PST)*

This includes administrative staff at the coordinating institution (USAL's International Projects Office) and other partners who provide financial, administrative, and logistical support for project execution.