



## **D7.1: Project management handbook**

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<sup>1</sup> Please consult the Grant Agreement: R: Document, report; DEM: Demonstrator, pilot, prototype, plan designs; DEC: Websites, patents filing, press & media actions, videos, etc.; DATA: Data sets, microdata, etc; DMP: Data management plan; ETHICS: Deliverables related to ethics issues; SECURITY: Deliverables related to security issues; OTHER: Software, technical diagram, algorithms, models, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Please consult the Grant Agreement: PU – Public, fully open, e.g. web (Deliverables flagged as public will be automatically published in CORDIS project’s page); SEN – Sensitive, limited under the conditions of the Grant Agreement; Classified R-UE/EU-R – EU RESTRICTED under the Commission Decision No2015/444; Classified C-UE/EU-C - EU CONFIDENTIAL under the Commission Decision No2015/444; Classified S-UE/EU-S – EU SECRET under the Commission Decision No2015/444

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## List of abbreviations

<b>GA</b>	Grant Agreement	<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>CA</b>	Consortium Agreement	<b>LLS</b>	Living Labs
<b>EU</b>	European Union	<b>DSS</b>	Decision Support System
<b>ES</b>	Ecosystem Services	<b>IPR</b>	Intellectual Property Rights
<b>O</b>	Objective	<b>PME</b>	Project Management Executive
<b>CAP</b>	Common Agricultural Policy	<b>PSG</b>	Project Steering Group
<b>WP</b>	Work Package	<b>AB</b>	Advisory Board
<b>LCA</b>	Life Cycle Assessments	<b>PC</b>	Project Coordinator
<b>WPL</b>	Work Package Leader	<b>DoA</b>	Description of Action
<b>Ben.</b>	Beneficiary	<b>CFS</b>	Certificate of Financial Statement
<b>PP</b>	Participant Portal	<b>QAP</b>	Quality Assurance Plan
<b>UoR</b>	Use of the resource		

# 1. Project Management plan

## 1.1 Introduction

### 1.1.1 Purpose

The VALERECO Project Management Handbook aims to monitor all the project-related work and management activities, towards Quality Assurance, and control them towards Risk Management. This document summarizes all the knowledge needed for the proper management of the project. It contains all the information related to the management strategy, consortium structure, reporting issues, templates to be used, procedures, etc. In addition, this guide serves to clarify the legal and financial aspects of the Grant Agreement and the Consortium Agreement that may need further clarification for the beneficiaries. This document will be constantly assessed and evaluated during the project. Each time the document is updated, all partners will be duly informed of any updates and changes made from the previous version.

### 1.1.2 Relation to other documents

In the event of a discrepancy between documents, this document is overruled by the Grant Agreement including its Annexes and possible amendments, and the Consortium Agreement with its possible addendums.

## 1.2 Project duration and budget

The fixed starting date of the project is 1 June 2024, and the end date is 31 May 2028 (48 months project duration). The project has a 100% funding rate of the action's eligible costs, and the total budget is 4,899,856.2€, that have been financed by the European Commission. The budget detailed per beneficiary and the corresponding EU contribution of each beneficiary is detailed in the Annex 2 of the Grant Agreement – Estimated budget of the action. The payments and recoveries will be done according to the respective Articles of the GA.

## 1.3 Contractual documents

### 1.3.1 Grant Agreement

Grant Agreement (GA) with the EC: Grant Agreement No. 101135472. This is the contractual document signed by all the project partners which defines the rights and obligations of the Consortium regarding the EC. The GA and its annexes are available for all partners in the project's repository (accessible for project partners).

The Grant Agreement includes the following annexes:

*Table 1. Annexes of the Grant Agreement.*

<b>Annex 1</b>	Description of the action
<b>Annex 2</b>	Estimated budget for the action
<b>Annex 2a</b>	Additional information on unit costs and contributions (if applicable)
<b>Annex 3</b>	Accession forms (if applicable)
<b>Annex 3a</b>	Declaration on joint and several liability of affiliated entities (if applicable)
<b>Annex 4</b>	Model for the financial statements

### 1.3.2 Consortium Agreement

The Consortium Agreement (CA) is the internal contract of the consortium partners which is signed and accepted by all partners. It defines the Consortium's internal rules for project management, the Consortium organization and decision-making mechanisms. In case of discrepancy, the Consortium Agreement is overruled by the Grant Agreement. The Consortium Agreement is also available for all partners on the project's repository (accessible for project partners).

## 1.4 Project structure

### 1.4.1 Objectives

The overall objective of VALERECO is to promote the adoption and understanding of the value of legume crops towards the transition to sustainable, productive, climate-neutral, environment-friendly, and resilient farming systems. The project aims to quantify and enhance the environmental and economic value of ES provided by these crops. It seeks to encourage diversification of farming practices throughout the EU and Associated Countries, which can contribute to healthier and sustainable diets and climate change resilience.

Objectives (O):

**Objective 1:** Develop a knowledge base on the ecosystem services provided by legumes.

- O1.1 Developing a comprehensive understanding of legume ecosystem services.
- O1.2 Assessing the alignment of legumes with the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).
- O1.3 Identifying benefits of legume inclusion in cropping schemes.
- O1.4 Linking with other projects and networks to exchange knowledge on legumes and their ecosystem services.

**Objective 2:** Establishment of Living Labs to co-create and demonstrate economically and environmentally feasible solutions for legumes incorporation into cropping systems.

- O2.1 Understanding the perception of supply chain actors and consumers on the ecosystem services of legumes.
- O2.2 Analysing the market penetration and global competitiveness of legume crops.
- O2.3 Designing behavioural strategies for the promotion of legumes adoption.
- O2.4 Supporting WP6 with knowledge of drivers, challenges and opportunities behind the decisions of farmers, retailers and consumers for a more focused dissemination.

**Objective 3:** Promotion of diversified legume-derived ecosystem services across the value chain.

- O3.1 Participatory design and co-evaluation of on-station participatory trials on legume-related ecosystem services
- O3.2 Delivering and measuring the magnitude of the key ecosystem services related to legumes
- O3.3 Assessing the effects of legume cultivation to weed dynamics and communities
- O3.4 Evaluating the climate change adaptation capability of major and minor legume crops.

**Objective 4:** Experimentation of innovative uses of legumes for promoting biodiversity driven ES in diversified farming systems

- O4.1 Providing standards and typologies for the agroecological transition of conventional farming systems adopted at national level.
- O4.2 Contributing to the environmental (LCA) and economic (cost-benefit) assessment of legume-inclusive cropping schemes.
- O4.3 Identifying the technical feasibility and pitfalls of legume-based agroecological systems.

**Objective 5:** Develop a digital legume information hub to upscale and uptake of VALERECO's results

- O5.1 Developing a decision tool directed primarily at farmers but communicating results also to stakeholders in the value chain.
- O5.2 Building an information hub that compiles, processes and digitizes the results of the other WPs for the use of stakeholders along the value chain.
- O5.3 Developing policy recommendations about how to advance the exploitation and generate value from legumes based on their associated biodiversity and ecosystem services.

### 1.4.2 Work packages

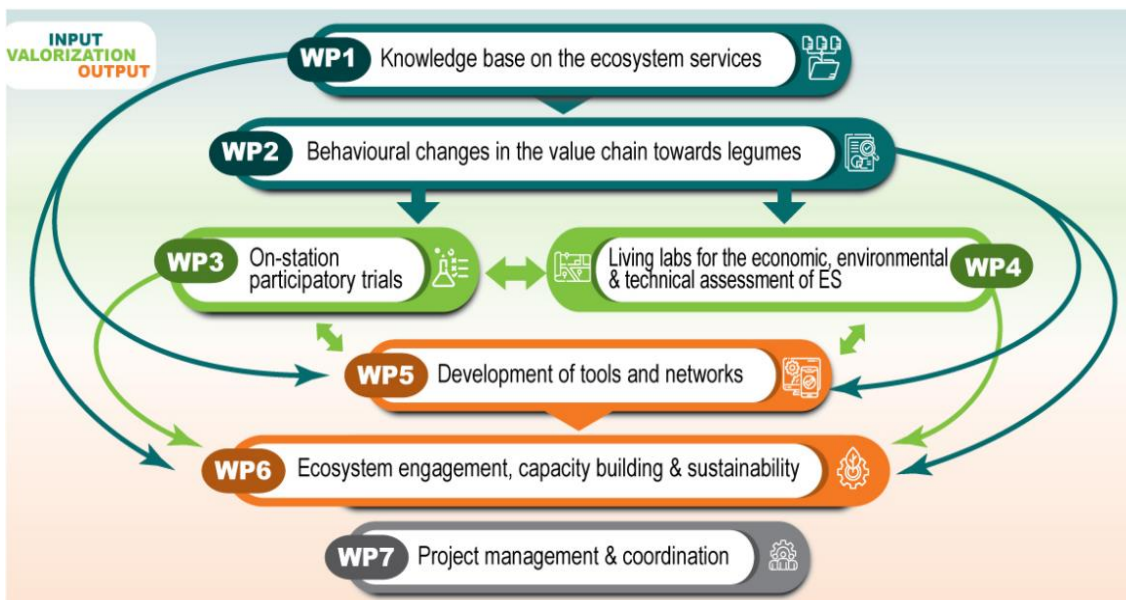


Figure 1. Work Packages inter-connection (PERT chart).

The detailed description of each Work Package's activities is outlined in the Description of Action (Part A) within the Grant Agreement (GA). Each WP has a named WP Leader who is the partner in charge of the leadership and coordination of the technical and economic aspects of the WP. This includes responsibility for the preparation of any technical reports, achieving milestones, achieving deliverables, and provision of deliverables to the Coordinator on schedule. The partners concerned shall appoint a named individual to carry out the role of WPL.

Table 2. List of the Work Packages.

WP No.	WP name	Lead Ben.	Person Months	Start Month	End Month
WP1	A knowledge base on the ecosystem services provided by legumes	3 - DELPHY	97.46	1	48
WP2	Behavioural changes in the value chain towards legumes	2 - BSB	89.66	1	42
WP3	On-station participatory trials to quantify multiple ecosystem services from legume crops	12 - UNIPI	201.88	1	48

WP4	Living labs for the economic, environmental and technical assessment of ecosystem services	8 - WR	125.50	6	48
WP5	Development of tools and networks for the exploitation of legumes in agroecologically-based farming systems	7 - LUH	81.85	6	48
WP6	Ecosystem engagement, capacity building & sustainability	5 - RFF	113.60	1	48
WP7	Project management & coordination	1 - AUA	45.15	1	48

### 1.4.3 Deliverables

During the project, the deliverables listed in Annex 1 of the GA must be completed and submitted to EC according to the schedule indicated in the List of VALERECO deliverables. All deliverables must be submitted electronically via the Participant Portal (PP).

To verify the correct progress of the Project, apart from uploading the deliverables in the Participant Portal on the due date, the Project Coordinator is also required to send an email with each deliverable to the Project Officer.

If any kind of delay is detected, this should be reported to the Project Coordinator so that the necessary corrective actions can be taken, and the EC Project Officer is kept informed.

*Table 3. List of VALERECO deliverables.*

No.	Deliverable name	WP No	Lead Beneficiary	Type	Dissemination Level	Due Date (Month)
D1.1	Knowledge synthesis on legumes and their associated biodiversity and ecosystem services	WP1	4 - UC	R — Document, report	PU - Public	8
D1.2	Meta-analysis on beneficial effect of legume integration into cropping systems	WP1	6 - IFVCNS	R — Document, report	PU - Public	18
D1.3	Entry points of the new CAP for the integration of legume ecosystem services	WP1	8 - WR	R — Document, report	PU - Public	14

D1.4	Establishment of VALERECO LLs and LL boards (version 1)	WP1	1 - AUA	R — Document, report	PU - Public	3
D1.5	Establishment of VALERECO LLs and LL boards (version 2)	WP1	1 - AUA	R — Document, report	PU - Public	18
D1.6	Establishment of VALERECO LLs and LL boards (version 3)	WP1	1 - AUA	R — Document, report	PU - Public	40
D1.7	Synergies plan (version 1)	WP1	3 - DELPHY	R — Document, report	PU - Public	3
D1.8	Synergies plan (version 2)	WP1	3 - DELPHY	R — Document, report	PU - Public	18
D1.9	Synergies plan (version 3)	WP1	3 - DELPHY	R — Document, report	PU - Public	36
D2.1	Behavioural status quo analysis	WP2	7 - LUH	R — Document, report	SEN - Sensitive	18
D2.2	Market dynamics and legume quota by country	WP2	2 - BSB	R — Document, report	PU - Public	24
D2.3	Strategies to promote healthier and sustainable diets	WP2	2 - BSB	R — Document, report	PU - Public	40
D2.4	Behavioural design strategies to leverage the adoption of legumes in production	WP2	7 - LUH	R — Document, report	PU - Public	42
D3.1	Dataset compiling all the experimental data produced in on-station trials (batch 1)	WP3	12 - UNIPI	DATA — data sets, microdata, etc	PU - Public	24

D3.2	Dataset compiling all the experimental data produced in on-station trials (batch 2)	WP3	12 - UNIPI	DATA — data sets, microdata, etc	PU - Public	42
D3.3	Relationship between yield quantity and quality stability, agroecological management and environmental conditions	WP3	12 - UNIPI	R — Document, report	PU - Public	48
D3.4	Identification of relationships between agroecological management and legume N2-fixation potential	WP3	12 - UNIPI	R — Document, report	PU - Public	48
D3.5	Disservice suppressive capacity of legume-based system	WP3	14 - SSSA	R — Document, report	PU - Public	36
D3.6	Assessment of climate change adaptation capability of legume varieties	WP3	11 - UNIFI	R — Document, report	PU - Public	46
D4.1	Establishment and reporting of the co-creation and demo activities in the LLs (version 1)	WP4	8 - WR	R — Document, report	PU - Public	18
D4.2	Establishment and reporting of the co-creation and demo activities in the LLs (version 2)	WP4	8 - WR	R — Document, report	PU - Public	36
D4.3	Establishment and reporting of the co-creation and demo activities in the LLs (version 3)	WP4	8 - WR	R — Document, report	PU - Public	48
D4.4	Determination of the technical feasibility for the inclusion of legume crops in crop rotations	WP4	14 - SSSA	R — Document, report	PU - Public	46
D4.5	Cost-benefit analyses	WP4	3 - DELPHY	R — Document, report	PU - Public	48

D4.6	Life Cycle Assessments	WP4	8 - WR	R — Document, report	PU - Public	48
D5.1	Model for farmers DSS	WP5	7 - LUH	DATA — data sets, microdata, etc	SEN - Sensitive	36
D5.2	Digital Hub (version 1)	WP5	1 - AUA	OTHER	PU - Public	24
D5.3	Digital Hub (version 2)	WP5	1 - AUA	OTHER	PU - Public	48
D5.4	Policy briefs (recommendations for the exploitation of legumes in agroecological systems, version 1)	WP5	8 - WR	R — Document, report	PU - Public	24
D5.5	Policy briefs (recommendations for the exploitation of legumes in agroecological systems, version 2)	WP5	8 - WR	R — Document, report	PU - Public	48
D6.1	Dissemination, exploitation & communication plan and report (version 1)	WP6	5 - RFF	R — Document, report	PU - Public	6
D6.2	Dissemination, exploitation & communication plan and report (version 2)	WP6	5 - RFF	R — Document, report	PU - Public	42
D6.3	Practice abstracts (batch 1)	WP6	5 - RFF	R — Document, report	PU - Public	16
D6.4	Practice abstracts (batch 2)	WP6	5 - RFF	R — Document, report	PU - Public	42

D6.5	E-learning Training Platform and Report on trainings and capacity building (version 1)	WP6	10 – AFL	R – Document, report	PU - Public	12
D6.6	E-learning Training Platform and Report on trainings and capacity building (version 2)	WP6	10 - AFL	R – Document, report	PU - Public	36
D6.7	IPR management & sustainability Plan (version 1)	WP6	5 - RFF	R – Document, report	SEN - Sensitive	18
D6.8	IPR management & sustainability Plan (version 2)	WP6	5 - RFF	R – Document, report	SEN - Sensitive	36
D7.1	Project management handbook	WP7	1 - AUA	R – Document, report	PU - Public	3
D7.2	Data Management plan (version 1)	WP7	1 - AUA	DMP – Data Management Plan	PU - Public	6
D7.3	Data Management plan (version 2)	WP7	1 - AUA	DMP – Data Management Plan	PU - Public	24
D7.4	Data Management plan (version 3)	WP7	1 - AUA	DMP – Data Management Plan	PU - Public	48

#### 1.4.4 Milestones

The identified milestones and their verification means are listed below:

*Table 4. List of Milestones.*

No.	Milestone Name	WP name	Lead Ben.	Means of Verification	Due Date (month)
1	LLs and LL boards establishment described	WP1	1 - AUA	D1.4 submitted	3
2	Ecosystem services of legume crops identified	WP1	4 - UC	D1.1 submitted	8

3	Demand and supply-side dynamics of legume consumption	WP2	2 - BSB	D2.2 submitted	24
4	Experimental protocols and first report on participatory assessment of ecosystem services in on-station trials	WP3	12 - UNIPI	D3.1 submitted, verification pictures of the on-station trials sent	24
5	Legume-based cropping systems to support ecosystem services through weed community management assessed	WP3	14 - SSSA	D3.5 submitted, verification pictures of the sites with balanced weed community management sent	36
6	Co-creation and demo activities in the LLs established initially reported	WP4, WP1	8 - WR	D4.1 submitted, verification pictures of the sites for the demo activities sent	18
7	Conceptualization of the Digital Legume Information Hub	WP2, WP5	1 - AUA	D5.2 submitted, initial version of the hub launched	24
8	Initial Dissemination, Exploitation & Communication plan	WP6	5 - RFF	D6.1 submitted	6
9	Final IPR management & sustainability Plan	WP6	1 - AUA	D6.8 submitted	36

## 1.5 Project Management

### 1.5.1 Management Structure

The organizational structure of the consortium shall comprise the following Consortium Bodies (as indicated in the Consortium Agreement):

- The General Assembly as the ultimate decision-making body of the consortium
- The Executive Board is the supervisory body for the execution of the Project, which shall report to and be accountable to the General Assembly.
- The Project Management Executive (PME) is the tactical decision-making body, responsible for reviewing the progress of the deliverables/milestones, making all strategic decisions, and approving the activities implemented in VALERECO.
- The Project Steering Group (PSG), is the body responsible for the monitoring of the experimental parts of VALERECO in the LLs.

- The Advisory Board (AB) is the body that provides independent advice and support to aid the parties, perform the tasks assigned to them, and serve as the link between the methodologies of VALERECO with the private sector and the food sector:
- The Coordinator is the legal entity acting as the intermediary between the Parties and the Granting Authority. The Coordinator shall, in addition to its responsibilities as a Party, perform the tasks assigned to it as described in the Grant Agreement and this Consortium Agreement.

#### 1.5.1.1 Project Coordinator (PC)

The project coordinator will be the AUA team led by Ass. Prof. Ilias Travlos. The scientific project manager will be Ms. Metaxia Kokkini. The administrative and financial project manager will be Ms. Vasiliki Kontogeorgou.

The project coordinator will be responsible for what is written on Consortium Agreement and simply:

##### **Communication**

- Carry out all communications between the project and the European Commission
- Carry out all communications between the consortium and the Project Officer
- General assembly and project meetings, administration, minutes
- Preparing, communicating and reporting the yearly project progress to the general assembly

##### **Monitoring**

- Following up and adapting to the project plan
- Coordinating the payments to partners
- Monitoring of the expenses and allocation of the budget, assistance towards the participants concerning administrative aspects of the project
- Organizing, steering, checking and assuring the reporting in time, towards the EC
- Overall monitoring of progress on all WPs and setting in place procedures for ensuring more detailed progress monitoring in consultation with the subgroups

##### **Reporting**

- Deliverables, progress reports, and yearly management reports
- Sending paper documentation to EC.

#### 1.5.1.2 Work Package leaders

The Work Package Leaders (WPL) ensure that the tasks contained in each work package are completed on time while promoting interaction between all partners involved. They are also responsible for all WP deliverables as well as carrying out the tasks that link each work package.

### 1.5.1.3 Project Management Executive (PME)

The project management will be monitored by the Project Management Executive (PME) which consists of the WP leaders and will meet 3 times per year, virtually and 1 physically. The PME is the tactical decision-making body, responsible for reviewing the progress of the deliverables/milestones, making all strategic decisions, and approving the activities implemented in VALERECO.

### 1.5.1.4 Project Steering Group (PSG)

The Project Steering Group (PSG) will consist of the WP 3, 4, 7 leaders and one representative from each LL, meet annually, and be responsible for the monitoring of the experimental parts of VALERECO in the LLs.

## 1.5.2 Project Management procedures

### 1.5.2.1 General Management procedures

Partners are responsible for:

- Effective economic management and the execution of operational tasks in compliance with program rules as well as ethical and legal guidelines
- Complying with the general terms and conditions governing grants, as well as any specific terms and conditions issued by the European Commission for each grant or granting program.
- Managing and supervising operational employees
- Meeting HE reporting requirements and the call

### 1.5.2.2 Decision taking mechanism

Decisions must always be made at the appropriate level. In this sense, the project Consortium Agreement defines the functions and obligations of each Consortium entity.

Each Consortium Body shall not deliberate and decide validly unless a quorum of two-thirds (2/3) of its members are present or represented. Each member of a Consortium Body in attendance or represented at the meeting has one vote. A Party which the General Assembly has declared of the Consortium Agreement to be a Defaulting Party may not vote. A two-thirds (2/3) majority of the votes cast is required to make decisions.

### 1.5.2.3 Monitor and Progress Reporting

Each partner will report project progress to the Project Coordinator on a six-monthly basis. This will include monitoring and updating the identified risks, as well as technical progress, outcomes, deliverables, and compliance with the WP timetable. The management will assist the project coordinator throughout the process, as well as in the revision of legal and administrative issues. Before being forwarded to the European Commission, this progress report needs to be approved by the Executive Board and the General Assembly.

## 1.6 Information Management

### 1.6.1 Document Management

The management procedures must ensure that the project's documentation is produced, updated, disseminated, and stored appropriately and efficiently. The project's official documentation repository is partially accessible by the current date (M2) and will be divided into two sections: public and private. The main dissemination route will be the project website's public section (the domain name will be announced in the coming months). The private repository (MS SharePoint) includes sections for storing the document private data.

### 1.6.2 Management repository

On SharePoint and MS Teams.

**General channel (access and host of the project's meetings)**

**VALERECO Project Dissemination-Communication-Exploitation (access to reporting DEC activities)**

**VALERECO Project Implementation**

- Contractual documents (containing the Grant Agreement with EC and its annexes and the Consortium Agreement with its annexes)
- Financial (Financial & Administrative HE guidelines: Access to the generic guidelines provided by the EC for Horizon Europe projects)
- Deliverables (list of deliverables and monitoring excel)
- Project meetings (templates, minutes, audio-visual material, presentations, etc.)
- Templates and dissemination material (communication guidelines, official project templates, logo, promotion material, brochure, leaflet, banner, etc.)
- Work Packages (analytic details, templates, guidelines for all Tasks)
- Contact Lists per WP, Task, activity
- Numbers monitoring and timeline of VALERECO

### 1.6.3 Website

VALERECO will develop a website under the domain valereco.eu. It will serve the communication of the project to a broad audience, the dissemination of public documentation (i.e. practice abstracts), the announcements of events and news, and the publicly available project results and other useful material. Moreover, the website will host the digital hub, and the digital tools developed during the project, the "Digital Legume Information Hub", the "Decision Support System" tool, and the E-learning platform. The hub will serve as a "One-stop-shop" for stakeholders (farmers, agricultural advisors, and agrifood industry stakeholders) who can explore the Ecosystem Services of legumes, cropping methods, and other benefits legumes offer that they may want to adopt.

#### 1.6.4 Technical information flow chart

The WP leaders are the key figures in managing the technical information within the project. Within each WP, all technical issues must be referred to the WP Leader. The work package leader is responsible for dealing with and resolving any issues that may arise. If the issue cannot be resolved, it is referred to the PC. The PC resolves issues raised by the Work Package Leaders. All pertinent concerns related to project work and planning are discussed within the PME as soon as possible.

WP participant → Task leader → WP leader → Project Coordinator

#### 1.6.5 Administrative information flow

Administrative information includes all information about the project's administrative procedures, including financial difficulties. Information about the project's beneficiaries is also included in the administrative information, and any changes to this information (legal information, change of organization name, change of authorized representatives of each organization, etc.) must be communicated to the project coordinator as soon as possible so that he/she can take the necessary measures. Each partner must provide the administrative data directly to the PC.

#### 1.6.6 Templates

All official documents of VALERECO (presentations, deliverables, external communication, meeting minutes, etc.) must comply with the templates provided on the project's repository. The project logo must also be integrated into all project-related documents. The European flag and funding statement must also be acknowledged in all documents (including media relations, conferences, seminars, and information material, such as brochures, leaflets, posters, presentations, etc., in electronic form, via traditional or social media, etc.). For more details, see Article 17 of the GA.

The following disclaimer must be mentioned in all communication and dissemination activities: "Funded by the European Union under Grant Agreement No. 101135472. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them."

As the templates may be changed during the project, it is recommended to download them from the VALERECO repository each time an official document is created.

#### 1.6.7 Review and Submission of deliverables

All deliverables must be finalized and submitted within the deadlines defined in Annex 1 of the Grant Agreement. Please see subsection 1.4.3 of this document.

All deliverables shall be submitted to the European Commission online via the Participant Portal. Each Task leader (in charge of the relevant deliverable) and WP leader is responsible for the technical quality of the deliverables. To ensure the quality of the delivery to be submitted, the following procedure to review each deliverable has been defined:

1. Three weeks before the submission of the deliverable, the task leader responsible for the generation of the deliverable will send the deliverable to the PC and after having implemented the required changes, the WP leader will receive it for further revisions.
2. The WP leader will send the deliverable to the partners that participate in the relevant WP or the entire consortium (if the deliverable is linked with horizontal activities). Once the deliverable is sent, there is one week to collect comments/suggestions from the reviewers. The reviewers will be indicated by the PC for each deliverable. The WP leader will send the review to the Task leader in charge of the deliverable that has been reviewed.
3. Ten (10) days before the submission, the partner responsible for the deliverable concerned will send the final version to the WP leader. The WP leader will send the document to the project Coordinator at least one week before the due delivery date. The Project Coordinator will be responsible for uploading the document to the participant portal and submitting it to the Commission online and will send an email with the deliverable to the Project Officer.

The deliverable numbering will follow the Deliverables list numbering included in DoA. The delivery number shall be used as a code on the front page of all deliverables. The title of the document/deliverable must follow the titles included in the work program.

## 1.7 Financial Management

The PC is responsible for the financial contribution of the EC to the project. This means that PC not only maintains a separate account for the project but also transfers payments to the partners' bank accounts without unnecessary delay and by the rules of the GA. The PC also monitors the submission of the cost statements (Annex 4 of the GA) and monitors any redistribution of funding within the consortium. PC is responsible for what is described in Section 7.2 of the Consortium Agreement.

Moreover, the PC has bank details from all partners who are requested to inform the PC about updates or other changes. They are notified about upcoming payments well in advance with relevant references to the amount of distribution. When the PC received the pre-financing for the project from the EC, the partners were informed by the Administrative and Financial Project Manager at UC about the amount of payment and the 5% retention that was directly paid into the Guarantee fund by the EC on behalf of the beneficiaries.

Management activities in this field will also largely focus on cost reports including the preparation, collection, and review of partners' Form C and cost explanations. The latter also called the use of the resource (UoR) table provides a more detailed explanation of individual cost items. Costs can principally be claimed on the project when they are incurred during the duration of the project, used for the sole purpose of the project, and recorded in the accounts of the beneficiary. More information on the (in)eligibility of costs is laid in Article 6 of the GA. The UoR table justifies these costs more specifically in terms of their project relation which helps the EC to understand a partner's cost claim better. It generally focuses on the following major types of costs and requires explanations as outlined below:

Table 5. Type of costs.

Type of Cost	Focus of Explanation
<b>Personnel costs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>List name, job title, cost and person month per staff member</li> <li>PM = effective time a project member has been working on the project without illness, special leave, or vacations as reflected by timesheets, for instance</li> <li>PMs should align with the partner's input provided for the resource table in the periodic report. Let the PC know if revisions are required</li> <li>Link cost items to WPs</li> <li>Etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Other direct costs (travel, subsistence consumables)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>List costs per travel, name and number of attendants, destination, date of travel and travel purpose (special justification for travels outside Europe)</li> <li>Aggregate the travel costs of several attendees to the same event</li> <li>List of costs of consumables linked to relevant tasks and WPs</li> <li>Link cost items to WPs</li> <li>Etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Other direct costs (equipment)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specify whether equipment has been acquired purely for the project (or to which extent equipment is used in project) and what it is used for</li> <li>Specify depreciation methodology according to financial regulations of your organization</li> <li>Link cost items to WPs</li> <li>Etc.</li> </ul>

The eligible costs and the best value for money decisions follow certain rules:

- Actually, incurred by beneficiaries during and in connection with the action
- Foreseen in Annex 1 and 2
- Identifiable, verifiable and in compliance with national law
- Reasonable, justified and financially sound
- You must ensure and demonstrate “best value for money” and “avoidance of conflict of interest” in purchasing and subcontracting
- You may not, under any circumstance, subcontract to another beneficiary During the cost reporting process, the PC will provide specific guidance on the following areas:
- Provides templates for partners to record their financials for the reporting period,

- Informing partners of required documents such as financial statement certifications,
- Clarifying how to enter numbers into the participant portal, and
- Reviewing cost statements for consistency and completeness

Consultations will occur via email and/or Microsoft Teams/Skype/Zoom and templates will be made available online. Once the document has been finalized, uploaded to the participant site of the EC and approved by the Commission, the signature process (which in HE is mainly electronic) will be organized and sent as soon as possible through the coordinator.

Important note for the subcontracting costs: This category must not be reallocated / changed without authorization from the Coordinator and an Amendment approved by the Project Officer; should be fully in line with the predicted costs in Annex 2 for the activities described in Annex 1.

## 1.8 Project Reporting

### 1.8.1 Period reporting to the European Commission

Monitoring project implementation is an ongoing process that occurs at any time during the active period and beyond. There are contractual obligations that make project monitoring more important at different points in the project's life cycle, most notably after each reporting period at the time of payments.

The EC expects that continuous reporting is continuously updated with:

- ✓ Preparation of publishable summary
- ✓ Timely submission of deliverables
- ✓ Timely achievement of milestones
- ✓ Additional info and revision of critical risks
- ✓ Follow-up on the ethical issues
- ✓ Providing additional info requested by EC

According to the GA, project reporting responsibilities to the Commission are as follows:

#### 1.8.1.1 Deliverables (as described in DoA)

The complete list of deliverables to be submitted to the Commission is available in section 1.4.3 (See Table: List of deliverables). Besides this list, there are specific deliverables aimed at monitoring and reporting the progress of the work and implementation of the project in all WPs.

### 1.8.1.2 Periodic reports – Article 21 and 22 of GA

Reporting					Payments	
Reporting periods			Type	Deadline	Type	Deadline (time to pay)
RP No	Month from	Month to				
					Initial prefinancing	30 days from entry into force/10 days before starting date – whichever is the latest
1	1	18	Periodic report	60 days after end of reporting period	Interim payment	90 days from receiving periodic report
2	19	36	Periodic report	60 days after end of reporting period	Interim payment	90 days from receiving periodic report
3	37	48	Periodic report	60 days after end of reporting period	Final payment	90 days from receiving periodic report

The reviews will be at the end of each reporting period. Carried out by REA with the support of independent experts. Meetings organized by the consortium in collaboration with the PC either online, in Brussels, or back-to-back with a project meeting such as a General Assembly. Presentation of work & results; discussions & clarifications; conclusions and the next steps in project implementation.

Project Reviews			
<i>Grant Preparation (Reviews screen) – Enter the info.</i>			
Review No	Timing (month)	Location	Comments
RV1	20	Online meeting (TBC)	
RV2	38	Online meeting (TBC)	
RV3	48	Online meeting (TBC)	

## 1.8.2 Content of reports

### 1.8.2.1 Periodic reports

The beneficiaries must continuously report on the progress of the action (e.g. deliverables, milestones, outputs/outcomes, critical risks, indicators, etc.; if any), in the Portal Continuous Reporting tool and by the timing and conditions it sets out (as agreed with the granting authority).

The technical part includes an overview of the action implementation. It must be prepared using the template available in the Portal Periodic Reporting tool.

Narrative document – written by the Coordinator based on input from partners.

Clear, informative, straight to the point, transparent and concise.

- ✓ Information on the work carried out and overview of the project progress
  - work done and results for each Work Package
  - contribution to the expected impacts
  - tackling of potential issues and risk mitigation
- ✓ Plan for exploitation and dissemination of results
  - actions implemented and their outcomes to optimize impact
- ✓ Explanations of deviations from DoA (Description of Action)
  - clear explanations in relation to the foreseen tasks
  - in relation to the use of resources (budget, sub-contracting, etc.)

The financial part of the additional pre-financing report includes a statement on the use of the previous Pre-financing payment.

The financial part of the periodic report includes:

- the financial statements (individual and consolidated; for all beneficiaries/affiliated entities)
- the explanation on the use of resources (or detailed cost reporting table, if required)
- the certificates on the financial statements (CFS) (if required; see Article 24.2 and Data Sheet, Point 4.3).

### 1.8.2.2 Final report

At the end of the project, one Final Report needs to be submitted in addition to the periodic reports for the last period. The content of the Final report (technical & financial) is compulsory and determined by the Commission; see Article 22 of the Grant Agreement.

### 1.8.3 Submission of reports

The submission of reports to the European Commission is the responsibility of the Coordinator. The Coordinator will submit all reports online via the EC funding and tenders portal.

## 1.9 Project changes

An amendment to the GA is a legal act modifying the commitments stated in the GA that may create new rights or impose new obligations on the parties. It allows the Consortium to modify the GA during its lifetime. The Agreement may be amended unless the amendment entails changes to the Agreement that would call into question the decision awarding the grant or breach the principle of equal treatment of

applicants. The amendment requests must be justified (Article 39.2 of the GA) and sent to the Project Coordinator (PC). The coordinator submits and receives requests for amendments on behalf of the beneficiaries. The amendment is done through an exchange of letters:

- a letter-request from the coordinator on behalf of the consortium
- a letter of acceptance of the amendment (the coordinator on behalf of the consortium)

Any project amendment is subject to official acceptance by the EC. Any substantial modification to the content of Annex 1 (Description of the Action), as well as to the administrative and financial information of the project (related to project partners, project budget, work packages, outputs, activities, duration, etc.) needs the official acceptance of the EC through an amendment process. The PC strongly recommends the partners check any issue that might be subject to an amendment and contact the PC.

The primary premise of the project is to complete the tasks and activities within the timeframe and resources specified in Annex I (DoA) of the grant agreement. Any change in a beneficiary's status must be reported to the Coordinator as soon as possible. The Coordinator is responsible for resolving issues and notifying beneficiaries. If necessary, the Project Coordinator will contact the EC Project Officer to obtain clarifications and procedures to be followed.

Significant project changes and deviations from the work plan must be documented. The participant or WP leader requesting the change must send a formal message to the PC and the consortium describing the reason for the proposed changes and the immediate impact on the budget, work plan, etc.

Generally, any update to the grant agreement (GA) or its annexes requires an amendment to the GA. In some situations, the GA allows the parties to make certain revisions without amending the GA. Finally, in certain circumstances, the need for an amendment must be carefully considered.

If an update to the GA is required, the Project Coordinator will request the amendment process from the Project Officer on behalf of the Consortium.

Minor adjustments in the implementation of activities and/or the plan outlined in the DoA should be considered normal for a research project. However, these minor deviations must be noted and described in the description of the activities in the appropriate periodic report, as well as the corrective actions taken (if any).

More details are found in Article 39 of the GA (Amendments).

### **1.9.1 Changes requiring an amendment**

Please check carefully Article 6 and the specific rules in Annex 5 of the GA.

Any amendment needs to first be discussed with the Project Officer.

The following changes, transfers, and re-allocation of the budget NEED an amendment:

- Addition/removal/re-allocation of tasks in Annex 1

- Transfers between different forms of costs (actual costs, unit costs, etc.) → If no budget was foreseen for the 'form of cost' receiving the transfer
- New subcontracts, new in-kind contributions (STRONGLY ADVISED)

For any questions, partners are requested to contact the Administrative and Financial Project Manager at AUA.

### 1.9.2 Potential problem areas

The biggest potential problem for the project is the case of beneficiaries not meeting their contractual obligations, especially the due deliverables as described in the DoA. Such issues will be addressed by the PME and the other Consortium Bodies as they are identified.

Each partner in the consortium must notify the WP Leader of any potential inconvenience. The WP Leader will properly inform the PME, the PSG, and the other Consortium Bodies as needed.

## 1.10 Audits and controls

### Ex-ante checks:

- Certificates on the financial statements (CFS): Conditions: Schedule: only at final payment, if threshold is reached Standard threshold (beneficiary-level):
  - *financial statement*: requested EU contribution to costs  $\geq$  EUR 430 000.00
- Special threshold for beneficiaries with a systems and process audit (see Article 24):
  - *financial statement*: requested EU contribution to costs  $\geq$  EUR 725 000.00
- Certificate on the methodology: Optional for average personnel costs (unit costs)

### Ex-post audits:

- Audits of the Commission limited to two years after the payment of the balance
- Extension of audit findings in case of systemic errors, irregularities, fraud or breach of obligations
- Record-keeping five years after the final payment.

## 2. Risk Management Plan

### 2.1 Introduction

#### 2.1.1 Purpose of the Risk Management Plan

The risk management plan aims to maximize the probability of the project's success by identifying potential risks early and planning mitigation strategies to eliminate or reduce the likelihood of a poor outcome.

Due to the participatory nature of the activities carried on within the project, which will require the involvement and commitment of various stakeholders (farmers, advisors, industry, consumers, researchers, and policymakers), there are several risks to address to ensure the successful execution of the project. These risks include external elements such as the engagement of the local stakeholders in the project, which may vary among countries due to different local mobility habits and local policies. Moreover, risks associated with the technological ecosystem of the project exist, such as implementation risks connected to the ability to implement what has been foreseen. Risks may also be caused by internal vulnerabilities expected in any collaborative research project such as those related to the management and coordination of the consortium and the dissemination and exploitation of the project results, as well as on the up-take of the project's solutions.

### 2.2 Risk Management Procedure

#### 2.2.1 Approach

The risk management process is divided into five distinct stages:

*Table 6. Risk Management stages.*

1	Identification	Involves the identification of a risk
2	Quantification	Assessment of risk importance
3	Response	Development of risk mitigation strategy
4	Control	Continuous check of progress
5	Reporting	Updates of risk assessment and state-of-play for risk mitigation

If a risk surpasses the acceptable thresholds, a risk quantification and analysis activity will be invoked to identify the necessary activities to bring the risk back within acceptable limits. Furthermore, risk management entails the preparation of contingency actions, the redistribution of resources, the evaluation of results, and guaranteeing the stability of the new status.

### 2.2.2 Risk identification

During the proposal preparation, several possible risks were identified, and their respective mitigation measures were proposed. These can be found in section 2.4 below. The situations described in the list of identified risks and any new unforeseen risks will be continuously monitored in Task 7.2: Risk Management and Quality Assurance. Task 7.2 will follow the processes outlined in this Risk Management Plan to ensure that project objectives are met within the timeframe and funding allocations of the GA.

### 2.2.3 Risk quantification and analysis

For each identified risk, PC has estimated the likelihood of the risk occurring and the expected impact on the project (low/medium/high/critical). The risk exposure matrix shown below is a useful tool for assessing the level of risk and determining the appropriate mitigation measures:

*Table 7. Likelihood and severity of risks*

<b>Severity</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Critical</b>
	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>
	<b>Low</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>
	<b>Probability</b>		

### 2.2.4 Risk response and mitigation

The risk response and mitigation strategy specify a set of activities or mitigation strategies to address potentially hazardous situations/events identified as a risk to the project. This is a contingency plan that assigns roles and tasks and proposes a clear response plan and timeline to risk owners. Once a risk is identified and its exposure is assessed, risk owners liaise with the PC to determine if the situations/events that may cause the risk can be avoided without introducing additional risk to the project. If certain situations/events cannot be avoided, risk mitigation strategies are proposed.

#### Risk ownership

As a collaborative project, VALERECO requires that when a risk is identified, the associated responsibilities are clearly and correctly defined. Although oversight of project progress and risk management is the responsibility of the PC, the PME and the PSG, all partners have an obligation to participate appropriately in project activities, to achieve quality outcomes, and to identify and manage risks as they arise. In this context, it is critical responsibility for risks within the risk management process so that appropriate tasks can be established, and techniques used to mitigate risks.

## Coordinator

The PME is responsible for overseeing the project process and risk management. It performs the tasks of managing and monitoring the risks that may be identified during the implementation of the project and assists the PC in its obligations and responsibilities towards the European Commission.

## Work Package leaders

WP leaders are responsible for carrying out the work within their respective WP. Therefore, WPLs bear the risk for deliverables and milestones within the WP they lead. WPLs ensure the identification and management of risks and should inform the PC. When new risks are identified, they should be reported to the PC so that the risk management process can be activated.

### 2.2.5 Risk monitoring and control

Project Partners are responsible for informing the PC of the status and effectiveness of each risk and associated mitigation measures so that the PC can update the current status of risk management and assess the relevance and effectiveness of the risk management plan and mitigation measures.

Actions to be taken for risk monitoring and control:

- The risk owner will ensure that mitigation measures have been implemented correctly and that the reaction has been effective.
- The risk owner will continuously monitor the situation and notify the PC.
- The PC shall maintain a constant evaluation of the risk exposure and, if necessary, change the mitigation measures.

### 2.2.6 Risk reporting

Risk tracking and reporting is the last key step. The PC will keep track of how well risk mitigation measures are performing, which is to be discussed during project meetings. This record should include all risks identified throughout the project along with relevant mitigation measures, the assessment of their risk level, and the current status of each risk.

A project risk register must be kept and reviewed at the physical and online project meetings. For each identified risk, the risk register must contain at least the following information:

- Title of the risk;
- Description of the risk;
- Description of the impact of the risk;
- Date of record;
- Probability of occurrence (Low/Medium/High/Critical);
- Possible consequences for the project;
- Work package in which the risk is managed;
- Owner of the risk;

- Risk status (open / occurred / not occurred / cancelled);
- A list of planned solutions / a plan to mitigate the risk;
- The deadline for the decision;
- Progress / comments.

### 2.3 Roles and Responsibilities

The responsible person for the risks in the VALERECO project is the Project Coordinator (PC). Their primary responsibility is to identify, monitor, and manage internal and external risks, as well as to notify all (or directly engaged) partners as necessary. At the level of risk detection, the Work Package Leaders have a key role in communicating any upcoming risk to the PC. The consortium meets physically, online or hybrid once every year, and WPLs are expected to discuss their WP's progress and successes, as well as an assessment of any risks that may impede progress and suggest contingency plans to manage any specific identified concerns.

### 2.4 Risk mitigation measures

An analysis of the critical risks associated with the implementation of the scientific / operational / administrative activities that could affect the accomplishment of the project objectives has been conducted. The critical risks and the risk management strategy, as well as possible mitigation measures are presented in the Table below. The Likelihood and severity of these risks are also presented.

*Table 8. List of critical risks.*

	Description of risk	WP involved	Proposed Mitigation Measures
1	Delays in establishing the on-station participatory trials focus groups and LLs (Likelihood: Low, Severity: Medium)	WP4	A strict time schedule will be organised at the beginning of the project to ensure early adaptations in case any delays are foreseen. Each partner will appoint a responsible person. If delays still occur, then additional resources or personnel will be allocated to areas of the project that are experiencing delays to help get things back on track.
2	Climatological risks due to climate change to crops establishment (Likelihood: Low, Severity: High)	WP3, WP4	The co-creation with the stakeholders of the on-station participatory trials and the LLs, and the literature review will help to choose the most optimal time windows for all operations. In case of failure of crop establishment due to climatological risks, alternatives will be designed (e.g., delayed sowing of legumes or other legume varieties). The

			3 years of duration of the trials will reasonably guarantee at least 2 years of temporal replications.
3	High diversity of cost-benefit analyses, LCA and policy recommendations (Likelihood: Medium, Severity: Low)	WP4, WP5	Partners are aware of the broad spectrum of cost-benefit analyses, LCA and policies that may be linked with legumes. A clear framework for conducting these analyses will be established, including agreed-upon methodologies, criteria, and indicators.
4	Inconsistent outputs from co-creation activities and workshops (Likelihood: Low, Severity: Medium)	WP6	VALERECO partners will agree and implement approaches and procedures that result in consistent and comparable outputs between on-station trials and LLs in co-creation activities and other workshops.
5	Low interest and feedback from stakeholders to participate in VALERECO ecosystem (Likelihood: Medium, Severity: Medium)	WP3, WP4, WP1	Apart from already established stakeholder networks in each region, LLs will leverage additional connections and synergies across agricultural networks, to ensure that a low level of participation will be avoided. Initial involvement of a larger group of stakeholders than actually needed by means of personal contacts and related project consortium members. Targeted identification of potential participants and their specific interests and contact details, careful planning of the activities in line with availabilities of potential participants, ensuring that issues to be covered are topical and are of interest to them
6	Proposed solutions do not meet farmer needs and ambitions (Likelihood: Low, Severity: Medium)	WP3, WP4, WP6, WP2	The information-in stage (WP1, WP2), the development of knowledge base and the demonstration activities and workshops will allow early communication with stakeholders, identify their needs and ambitions, and design tailor-made solutions.
7	Budget inappropriately assigned (Likelihood: Medium, Severity: Medium)	WP7	Re-distribution of budget according to importance for the project: renegotiating the value for-money with WP leaders/partners in order to achieve a better-balanced output against payment.
8	Delays in the delivery of Deliverables (Likelihood:	WP3, WP4, WP1, WP6,	Deliverables have been evenly shared among the partners. Reallocation of resources when critical

	Medium, Severity: Medium)	WP2, WP7, WP5	deliverables are expected to be delayed is foreseen.
9	Project partner withdrawal (Likelihood: Low, Severity: Low)	WP7	The partnership is designed in a complementary way. However, the involved partners are providing multiple competencies that are also allowing for short term replacement of competencies and bridging situations until a final replacement is coordinated.
10	Difficulty to create consensus among all partners (Likelihood: Low, Severity: Medium)	WP3, WP4, WP1, WP6, WP2, WP7, WP5	Regular meetings with the partners, WP leaders and coordinators. Project Management Handbook. If the need arises, the routine of the calls will be intensified.

### 3. Quality Management Plan

#### 3.1 Introduction

The Quality Assurance Plan (QAP) defines the main rules to be followed by the partners of the VALERECO consortium during the project to ensure that the technical deliverables of the project are produced according to high-quality standards.

The QAP defines the role and responsibilities of each partner, the procedures and templates to follow when preparing agendas and minutes, PowerPoint presentations, (interim) deliverables specified in the grant agreement, and other reports, internal deliverables, or milestones that may be established during the project.

Quality assurance applies to all project activities, including Deliverables. Quality assurance is a joint responsibility of all partners during the project lifecycle. The Project Coordinator and WP leaders have the authority to implement and verify compliance with all quality evaluation policies and procedures related to the project.

#### 3.2 Quality Plan

##### 3.2.1 Meetings

Regular project meetings will provide the basis for effective consortium collaboration and development of the work. After the initial kick-off meeting, project meetings (PMP) will be held annually in person, online or hybrid. WP meetings are also held at least twice per year.

Meetings will act as a forum for project participants to exchange information and solve problems. Information is supplied, taken, or exchanged to reach a group conclusion. This dialogue will be formalized by an agenda, which will be extended to meeting minutes.

The chair of the meeting will prepare the agendas and minutes, and the administrative framework will be prepared by the respective partner hosting the meeting.

### 3.2.2 Delivery process for project outcomes

Regular and thorough monitoring mechanisms will be implemented among project participants to ensure the quality of the work. The defined project milestones and deliverables will serve as the primary basis for monitoring and approval of the project's progress. The PC will be in charge of monitoring the Project's successful and efficient implementation, while the WPL will have similar obligations at the WP level. The Task Leader will report to the WPL, and the WPL will report to the PC and the PME. The consortium will prepare several reports documenting technical progress, results achieved and compliance with the work plan, and costs incurred, at least every year during project implementation. The PC will compile all information and forward it to the PME. The PC and the PME will be able to keep a general overview of the technical development and cash flows within the project through this monitoring system. The PME will verify that the project is by the project plan and propose changes as necessary. In addition, the PME will evaluate scientific and technical articles before publication to ensure the technical quality of the project deliverables. The PC will also prepare the Periodic and Final Technical and Financial reports at the end of each reporting period, using the information provided by the WPL.

### 3.2.3 Document preparation

Any partner who wishes to propose a new template for a document should send an informal message to the PC.

### 3.2.4 Documentation templates

A set of standard document templates has been produced for partners to use. Templates have been designed following the VALERECO identity.

Specifically, a set of templates have been produced and stored on MS SharePoint:

- Deliverables
- Periodic Monitoring Reports
- Meeting Minutes
- Letter (simple and landscape)
- PowerPoint Presentations

These templates can be found in Microsoft Teams and SharePoint repository. The most updated version of these templates will be kept in a Microsoft Teams folder accessible to all consortium partners.

### 3.2.5 Progress monitoring and reporting

Regular and thorough monitoring mechanisms will be implemented among project participants to ensure quality of work. Defined project milestones and deliverables will serve as the primary basis for monitoring and approving project progress. The PC will be responsible for monitoring the successful and efficient implementation of the project, while the WPL will have similar responsibilities at the WP level. The Task Leader will report to the WPL, and the WPL will report to the PC.

During project implementation, the consortium will report at least once per year on technical progress, results achieved and compliance with the work plan, and costs incurred. The PC will collect all information and provide it to the PME. Through this monitoring system, the PC and the PME will maintain a general overview of the technical progress and financial flows within the project. The PME will assess whether the project is in line with the project plan and propose changes if necessary. Complementing this, the PME is responsible for reviewing scientific and technical documents before their publication to ensure the technical quality of the project deliverables.

At the end of each reporting period, the PC will also prepare the Periodic and Final reports, supported by the information provided by the WPL. In addition, based on the financial accounts of the partners, the PC will provide a consolidated summary of the project's budgetary status. The financial statements, as well as the interim and final reports, will be submitted.

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