RETOUCH NEXUS

REsilienT water gOvernance Under climate CHange
within the WEFE NEXUS

Deliverable 6.4

Quality Plan

Maria Vrachioli (TUM)

Date 30/06/2023

RETOUCH NEXUS

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Project Acronym	RETOUCH NEXUS
Project Title	REsilienT water gOvernance Under climate CHange within the WEFE NEXUS
Project Coordinator	Maria Vrachioli
Project Duration	01.01.2023 – 31.12.2026

Nature of the deliverable		
R	Document, report (excluding the periodic and final reports)	X
DEM	Demonstrator, pilot, prototype, plan designs	
DEC	Websites, patents filing, press & media actions, videos, etc.	
OTHER	Software, technical diagram, etc.	

Dissemination Level		
PU	Public, fully open, e.g. web	X
CO	Confidential, restricted under conditions set out in Model Grant Agreement	
SEN	Sensitive	

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Executive summary

This document describes the RETOUCH NEXUS Quality Plan corresponding to Deliverable 6.4 of the project. This first version of the Deliverable 6.4 provides guidelines for supporting the management, reporting and the review process for the Horizon Europe project RETOUCH NEXUS. This Deliverable defines procedures to ensure high quality and timely completion of deliverables, as well as effective management of the project.

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1. Project governance, overview of roles and responsibilities

The organizational structure of the RETOUCH NEXUS project will consist of seven entities. The project coordinator, TUM, is in charge of the overall management and coordination and is also responsible for the communication with the EC Project and Financial Officers. Skilful TUM staff members with experience in managing EU-funded projects cover the administrative and financial needs of the project. The management and coordination of RETOUCH NEXUS will be performed by the following entities: Project Management Team, Steering Committee, WP leaders, Task leaders, Data Management Partner, Scientific Advisory Board and External Ethics Advisory Board.

The **Project Management Team** (PMT) is based at the Technical University of Munich (TUM) and will be responsible for the overall management and coordination of the project in a daily basis. The PMT is chaired by the project coordinator and will also be the focal point for all communications with EC and will serve as the intermediary between the consortium partners and the EC Project and Financial Officers .

The PMT at the Technical University of Munich is responsible for:

- Ensuring the smooth operation of the project: work plan maintenance, monitoring project progress;
- Submitting all required progress reports, deliverables and financial statements to the ECAS portal;
- Communicating all information in connection with the project to the EC Project Officer;
- Transferring advance payments and further payments to participants as per the provisional budget and approved actual expenses as laid out in the Consortium Agreement;
- Maintenance of the Grant Agreement (GA) and the Consortium Agreement (with amendments when needed);
- Preparing and completing the project's periodic reports;
- Financial administration (i.e., monitoring of expenses against budget allocations, control of cost claims according to contractual requirements, consolidation of financial summary sheets and Certificate on the Financial Statements produced by the partners);
- Effective project coordination and internal communication.

The **Steering Committee** (SC) consists of the WP leaders and a representative for Cross-Cutting Case Study Issues (TUM) and it is responsible for the executive decisions of the project. The Steering Committee will meet annually and will be chaired by the project coordinator (Maria Vrachioli). The SC will be responsible for ensuring the quality of the deliverables, performing the coordination among WPs, decide on and approve risk and contingency actions for the achievement of the project's objectives. The SC is responsible for the overall direction of all activities and re-orientation where necessary, along with revisions to the budget and measures relating to defaulting partners or other external disruptions. The SC prepares the decisions to be taken by the GA (e.g., concerning the description of work, budget and EC contribution allocation) and ensures that decisions are properly implemented. The SC oversees the work of the project, including quality control. The SC meets physically once per year (one meeting during the annual meeting of RETOUCH NEXUS) and monthly via conference calls. In case the project requires intermediate meetings, SC meetings are held at the instigation of the coordinator or with the support of a majority (more than 50%) of SC members. The SC makes decisions by simple majority voting, with a casting vote for the coordinator in the case of equal votes.

The **Work Package leader**(s) chair each work package and will be responsible for the following tasks:

    a. coordinate work achievements and deliverables,
    b. monitor and report the progress of the WP, and
    c. implement any corrective actions (in the case that it is required).

The Work Package leader(s) will also be responsible for the strategic and overall governance of the WP on a day-to-day basis. Each WP leader convenes individual meetings of their WP by teleconference on a bi-monthly basis. Where interactions between WPs occur, these should be held, where possible, jointly.

The **Task leader** is responsible for the effective implementation of the task and for ensuring that the milestones (if any) and deliverables of the task are achieved.

The **Project Data Manager** (PDM) of RETOUCH NEXUS is the coordinating institute (TUM) and is responsible for managing the research data collected and generated. The PDM and the WP Data Managers (see Deliverable 6.3), will develop and disseminate a data management plan in the first six months of the project that ensures that data will be findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable (FAIR). The data management plan is a living document and is expected to be updated throughout the duration of the project.

The **Advisory Board** (AB) is responsible for the project's scientific and technical management and will serve as an advisory body. The AB will consist of expert colleagues and stakeholders. The formation of the AB will start at the beginning of the project, while the first contact with

the members of it will start at an earlier stage (3-6 months prior to the project's starting date). The AB will meet annually to review the progress of the project and propose actions to maximize the impact of the project on its end-users (i.e., policymakers). The AB ensures that the RETOUCH NEXUS coordination team is kept informed of relevant developments external to the project and provides a watching and advisory brief over the implementation strategies and activities of the project. The AB meets annually and serves as an advisory body - a discussion platform to consult on different aspects of the project, as well as a powerful dissemination channel. Specifically, the AB:

- Advises the SC on changes in societal and policy priorities that may impact the project's objectives and expected impacts;
- Acts as a sounding board regarding how the impact of the project can be maximised and ethical matters;
- Proposes changes to the direction of the project in line with stakeholder and end-user priorities for maximising the exploitation and benefits of the project;
- Reviews project progress annually;
- Supports the dissemination of the project's results in their respective institutions.

The AB has access to all documents of the project. After each annual meeting, the AB formulates a statement on the progress of the project and a list of recommendations. The SC formulates a short response and a statement of future commitments and targets. A list of the members of the AB will be provided by October 2023.

Finally, according to the Ethics Report, the activities of the RETOUCH NEXUS project will be observed and guided by an **External Ethics Advisory Board**. For more details, please check Deliverable 7.3.

2. Internal Communication

RETOUCH NEXUS internal communication will be organised by regular meetings of different participant groups:

- **General Assembly** is composed of at least one representative per project partner and meets once per year during the RETOUCH NEXUS Annual Meetings to jointly discuss the progress of the project.

- **RETOUCH NEXUS Annual Meetings** to review and discuss the progress of the project, facilitate interactions and synergies among WPs and project partners, and plan the work for the next months. There will be four annual meetings:
  I.   Kick-off Meeting in Munich, Germany (online (preparatory) and in-person)
  II.   2nd Annual Meeting in Valencia, Spain

III.   3rd Annual Meeting in Malta
IV.   4th Annual Meeting in TBD
V.   Closing Meeting in Munich, Germany

- **Steering committee** meetings will be held monthly virtually.

- **Work Package meetings** will be held within each WP bi-monthly and virtually, discussing the progress within each task or planning future activities.

- **Cross-cutting case study sessions** led by TUM will facilitate the project workflow among all case studies in RETOUCH NEXUS. Cross-cutting meetings occur bimonthly virtually.

To optimise decision-making and virtual communication, RETOUCH NEXUS has created a Microsoft Teams channel for the project, including sub-channels for all the WPs. In addition, this communication channel can help minimise the use of email, local files, and processes that impair access to information.

3. Quality Assurance Plan

The Quality Assurance Protocol of RETOUCH NEXUS will be based in:

4. *Performance indicators* to assess all project outputs (KPIs are described in objectives and impacts tables);
5. *Quality reviews of the performance indicators*: quality reviews will be conducted alongside the regular management meetings to assess the performance of Work Packages and partners using the identified performance indicators. Results of quality reviews will be reported on D6.2 (Project Performance Report) and D6.5 (Report on the project indicators and impacts).
6. *Peer review process* for all deliverables and major assignments.
    - A senior member of the consortium (i.e., WP or Task Leader) will be the primary individual coordinating the assignment, and a timeline for drafting, review, completion and submission will be developed and followed. Prior to publication or submission, all deliverables and outputs will be reviewed by senior-level staff in addition to the deliverable leader with respect to content and appearance. Moreover, approval of key deliverables will require review by relevant Work Package Leaders and the Project Coordinator.
    - All deliverables and project outputs will be proofread and checked for English grammatical accuracy.
    - Deliverables and outputs for public dissemination will follow the European Commission's writing guidelines for communicating science to policy.

The consortium will use the project Microsoft Teams channel to collect, organise, cite and share documents. Compliance with the ethical and privacy requirements applicable to the project.

4. Deliverables – General protocol

Responsible for the overall WP activities is the WP Leader. The WP Leader will supervise the preparation of each WP Deliverable, assigned to different tasks or partner leaders, if not to her/himself. The assigned task or partner leader is responsible for the timely drafting of a Deliverable using the project document template. Deliverables will be prepared with input from the collaborating individuals.

- The Project Coordinator will communicate with the WP Lead two months before the submission deadline to check work status.
- After agreement within the WP members, a pre-print/draft version of the document will be circulated to all the RETOUCH NEXUS Consortium. This will be done 4 weeks ahead of the final submission deadline. The project consortium members may be given 1 or 2 weeks to review the document and provide feedback. If no comments are provided by the set deadline, implied consent will be assumed.
- Once comments have been taken into account and the deliverable is finalised, this document, checked for the language content (English) and consistent formatting, will be submitted to the Project Coordinator three days before the submission deadline to the European Commission.
- The Project Coordinator logs the receipt of the deliverables and submits them in the ECAS Portal.
- The Project Coordinator notifies the WP leader/main author of the deliverable of the acceptance of the document by the EC Project Officer or whether any suggestions have been made for modification and resubmission.
- All final, submitted and accepted Deliverables will be made available in a central repository in the MS Teams project channel and the project webpage as reference material for the entire Consortium.

For the Milestones, a similar protocol will be followed.

Table 1 –List of deliverables

N°	Deliverable name	WP	Lead partner	Type	Level	Date
D1.1	Factsheet on economic instrument development across Europe	1	UPV	R	PU	M8
D1.2	Comparative analysis of national and transboundary water governance strategies focusing on priorities and mechanisms of sectoral alignment	1	VUA	R	PU	M10
D1.3	A list of water governance indicators	1	TUM	R	PU	M12
D1.4	Available data, data gaps and their implications for the quantification of the water governance indicators	1	TUM	R	PU	M18
D1.5	Lessons learned using the proposed set of indicators for effective water governance	1	TUM	R	PU	M48
D2.1	Mapping of stakeholders and engagement mechanisms in RETOUCH Nexus case studies and at European level	2	adelphi	R	PU	M5
D2.2	Fact sheets on good practices and innovative tools for stakeholder engagement and public participation	2	adelphi	R	PU	M6
D2.3	Roadmap for stakeholder participation in each case study	2	GtI	R	PU	M12
D2.4	RETOUCH Nexus capacity development strategy and materials	2	adelphi	R	PU	M24
D2.5	Handbook on innovative mechanisms and success factors for stakeholder engagement and public participation in cross-sectoral water governance	2	adelphi	R	PU	M40
D3.1	White paper on evaluation and implications of economic instruments under a WEFE perspective - first version to submit to a journal	3	VUA	R	PU	M24
D3.2	Case studies dashboard on baseline, model development, economic instruments and business model building and performance evaluation	3	UPV	R	PU	M36
D3.3	Policy brief on the potential of economic instruments for improved water management and governance in Europe	3	TUM	R	PU	M40
D4.1	Case studies dashboard on baseline, governance practices and performance evaluation	4	SUA	R	PU	M12
D4.2	Comparative analysis on policy coordination arrangements and options for improvement	4	VUA	R	PU	M18

D4.3	Case study-based assessment of efficacy of society-centred and approaches	4	VUA	R	PU	M24
D4.4	Policy briefs for effective, sustainable and integrated governance structure at multiple levels	4	UPV	R	PU	M36
D5.1	Communication and Dissemination Plan	5	EQY	R	CO	M6
D5.2	Website and visual identity	5	EQY	DEM	PU	M6
D5.3	Report on communication and dissemination activities	5	EQY	R	CO	M48
D5.4	Roadmap for exploitation, replication and uptake of the Project Results	5	TUM	R	CO	M48
D6.1	Tools for management and information flow	6	TUM	R	PU	M3
D6.2	Project performance report	6	TUM	R	PU	M12
D6.3	Data management Plan	6	TUM	R	DMP	M6
D6.4	Quality plan	6	TUM	R	PU	M6
D6.5	Report on the project indicators and impacts	6	TUM	R	PU	M48

Table 2 –List of milestones

N°	Milestone name	WP	Date	Means of verification
MS1	Official start of the communication &dissemination	WP5	M6	Communication and dissemination plan ready
MS2	Analysis of governance & institutional set ups in Europe	WP1	M8	Draft version of D1.2
MS3	Baseline and data requirements for case study	WP3 WP4	M9	Draft version of D3.2 and D4.1 referring to data availability
MS4	CoP set up in case studies	WP2	M12	Roadmaps developed for each case study in D2.2
MS5	Conceptualization of economic instrument	WP3	M12	Draft version of D3.2
MS6	Data and monitoring framework basis	WP1	M18	Identification of data requirements in publicly available databases
MS7	Blueprints of the economic models	WP3	M24	Draft version of D3.2
MS8	Stakeholders' capacities raised	WP2	M24	Modules organised in each case study
MS9	End of the test in WP3/WP4	WP3, WP4	M36	Deliverable D3.2 submitted
MS10	Business models combined with economic instruments	WP3	M36	Deliverable D3.2 submitted
MS11	Draft strategy for exploitation, replication and uptake of the PR	WP5	M40	Draft version of D5.3
MS12	Training scheduled for experts	WP1	M46	Training material developed

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5. Deliverables and quality control procedures

The Coordinator is responsible for submitting all the deliverables to the ECAS portal in accordance with the timing and conditions set out in the Grant Agreement. The PMT shall monitor the progress and performance against the schedule of Deliverables, as declared in the Grant Agreement. The following guidelines, in terms of obligations and communication rules, apply:

- TUM will provide a template for the submission of deliverables. All partners must use this for interim and final reports, working papers, policy briefs, presentations, etc.
- All deliverables must be shared with the consortium at least **one month prior to the deadline**. This will ensure that quality control procedures can be applied in a timely manner, to attain the final submission to the ECAS portal within the deadline. This applies to all working papers, planned journal articles, and deliverables classified in the Grant Agreement as 'report.' Exceptions include other types of deliverables, such as forums and workshops, websites, patent filings, etc.
- The respective WP Leader(s) will conduct an internal peer review to assess the scientific quality and validate each deliverable.
- Each Task Leader(s) is responsible for submitting their appointed deliverables to the Work Package leader and coordinator in time. Each Task Leader is also responsible for ensuring efficient management and coordination of their deliverables, thus liaising with other partners (including the WP Leader) for collaborative inputs and research, in line with the declared efforts in person months. Compliance with the agreed deadlines must occur in order not to jeopardise the obligations towards the EC and the overall project's operations and activities.
- It is the relevant partner(s)' responsibility to contact the Coordinator, the WP Leader(s) and the specific Task Leader(s) for deviations of declared resources and deadlines, as foreseen in the Grant Agreement, or other unforeseen circumstances.

Should problems occur with the quality and timeliness of outputs, the Project Coordinator and the responsible WP Leader(s) will consult the relevant partner(s) and take the necessary steps to resolve the problem. If serious problems occur, then the Coordinator must contact the EC Project Officer and remedial action(s) shall be agreed.

6. Effective innovation management

For effective innovation management within the RETOUCH NEXUS, the **Innovation Management Committee** (IMC) is established and oversees the publication and dissemination of any knowledge generated by the project. The IMC will consist of two groups:

a. IMC for **research output**: TBD.
b. IMC for **digital output**: TBD

The responsibilities of IMC are to:

- Monitor any national and international research and innovation activities which could influence RETOUCH NEXUS implementation and its results;
- Approve publications from the project by making sure that all related to this publication partners have been consulted and agreed upon;
- Mediate and resolve any disputes or conflicts related to intellectual properties or publication of findings and dissemination of the digital output.

7. Knowledge management

7.1.   Data management

A detailed description of the Data Management Plan (DMP) is provided in Deliverable 6.3.

7.2.   Publications

- Each potential journal article and deliverable needs to be shared for a review with the whole consortium at least 30 days before submission.
- The final version of a journal article or a deliverable before submission must be approved by one of the responsible members of the Project Management Team based on the character of the publication. The allocation of topics per member will be decided in the following months.

Papers based on project activities must be published in Open Access. Authorship of papers based on research conducted as part of RETOUCH NEXUS should follow the American Psychological Association's guidelines. Authorship credit should reflect the individual's contribution to the study. An author is considered anyone involved with initial research design, data collection and analysis, manuscript drafting, and final approval. However, the following do not necessarily qualify for authorship: providing funding or resources, mentorship, or contributing research but not helping with the publication itself. The primary

author assumes responsibility for the publication, which includes ensuring that the data are accurate, that all deserving authors have been credited, and that all authors have given their approval to the final draft. The primary author also handles responses to inquiries after the manuscript is published.

Following the Grant Agreement, all dissemination of results must (i) display the European Commission emblem and (ii) specify that the project has received EU Horizon Europe research funding. All publications shall include the following statement: "Funded by the European Union. 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."

8. Gender Gap Management Plan

Given the differing circumstances of females in water management in the EU, RETOUCH NEXUS will touch upon gender issues in studying the impact of climate change on the gender gap and the role of women's role in promoting water sustainability. In addition, the SC will pay attention to gender issues to avoid gender discrimination and to support balanced gender participation among project partners. To assess progress towards achieveing project objectives in a gender neutral and sensitive manner, the project will target specific goals for selected KPI. The following will be considered:

- **KPI3**. Nb of policy makers using water governance recommendations (PR2.2) (**Target:** TBD % Women)
- **KPI4.** Nb of citizens engaged via engagement mechanisms and guidelines (PR4.1, PR4.2) (**Target:** TBD % Women)
- **KPI8.** Nb of practitioners participating in planning approach (PR2.3) (**Target:** TBD % Women)
- **KPI9.** Nb of policy makers informed with implementation recommendations (**Target:** TBD % Women)
- **KPI13.** Nb of policy makers using RETOUCH Nexus frameworks, studies and policy briefs to design new or adapt already existing water pricing policies (PR3) (**Target:** TBD % Women)
- **KPI14.** Nb of practitioners using guidelines for inclusive, fair water governance (PR2.5) (**Target:** TBD % Women)
- **KPI15.** Nb of practitioners using PR3 to link socioeconomic development & water management. (**Target:** TBD % Women)

9. Risk Management Plan

Each WP leader will have a risk management matrix to assess, mitigate and monitor open risks for which they are responsible. Each risk will be assessed according to its likelihood (low/medium/high) and its severity (low/medium/high). The combination of probability and severity will generate a classification of risks. A first table of risks is presented below and will be continuously updated.The risks and constraints to successful completion of RETOUCH NEXUS are summarized in the following table:

Table 3 – Critical risks for implementation

	Risk description and mitigation measure	WP	S	L	Risk Holder
1	Poor articulation between the RETOUCH Nexus and OECD monitoring frameworks	1	M	L	TUM
	The project data and monitoring framework (**PR1.1**) should support the implementation of the OECD water governance indicators, not act a competing governance tool. To mitigate this risk, support from the Advisory Board and exchanges with the JRC and the OECD are foreseen within the stakeholder workshop of T1.3.				
2	Poor specification of the RETOUCH Nexus data and monitoring framework	1	M	L	TUM
	The consortium includes **Case Study Leaders**, either as Beneficiary or as Associated Partner. That way, their direct involvement and collaboration with **TUM** in WP1 will ensure that **PR1.1** is operational and well specified to both case studies of the project and to the national scale with T1.5. T3.1 will also support **TUM** in the data framework design, defining case studies' data requirements, current availability and needs.				
3	Low participation of stakeholders in co-development activities	2	H	M	ADELPHI
	adelphi has experience with the engagement of water stakeholders, with several past projects on the topic. Leading WP2, **adelphi** will also benefit from the support of **Case Study Leaders**, who know the local water governance ecosystem. Tasks of WP2 are designed to understand local stakeholders' ecosystems (T2.1 and T2.2), empower them (T2.3 and T2.4) to develop and test innovative engagement mechanisms (**PR4.1**) in T2.5.				
4	Case-specific data collected not sufficient for good model running	3	H	L	UPV
	It is crucial for T3.3 to have sufficient data and information from case studies to develop the know-how for better pricing policy design (**PR3.2**), which is why T3.1 is dedicated to this. The need for data has also been anticipated by **UPV** and **VUA**, making sure that **Case Study Leaders** can provide them.				
5	Over reliance and mobilisation of case studies' stakeholders	3&4	M	M	UPV, VUA
	While ensuring stakeholders of case studies are strongly engaged for the objectives of WP2, their mobilisation in T3.3, T3.4, T4.3 and T4.4 is also foreseen. This will be carefully designed in collaboration with **adelphi**, to make sure there is no overlap and that stakeholders do not get over-solicited by the project.				
6	Difficulty to exploit the project results	5	M	M	ADELPHI

Risk description and mitigation measure	WP	S	L	Risk Holder
Innovation and IPR manager foreseen in T5.5, a preliminary exploitation strategy is outlined in section 2.2 and target audiences will be clearly engaged in almost all WPs (2,3,4) with the support of dissemination activities.				
Possibility of nationwide lockdowns due to unforeseen events, e.g., COVID-19	6	H	L	All
7 The methods used may require travel, meaning that pandemic-related risks can cause barriers to the distribution of the study among certain target groups. Therefore, pandemic evolution in the world will be monitored by **TUM** and **EQY** and pre-emptive measures will be taken according to national health plans. The possibility of delays will be investigated regularly to provide mitigation response strategies.				
Difficulties of collaboration between partners of different expertise	6	L	M	TUM
8 The activity structure considers the need for active collaboration throughout the project. The preparatory **WP1** thus ensures that all criteria, specifications and indicators are defined in collaboration. The Quality Board (T6.4) will also make sure cross-cutting priorities from disciplines mobilised in the project are met.				
Deviation on the tasks' duration from expectations	6	M	L	WPL
9 Steering of the project will be frequent. Milestones and deliverables have been placed for control. Should delay occur, WPL will encourage a review of task procedure and ask partners to place extra effort.				
Poor information flow between tasks and Work Packages	6	M	L	TUM
10 T6.1 has been specifically made to limit this risk. If the tools provided by **TUM** and the monthly conference are not enough, new measures will be decided to ensure that internal communication works.				

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