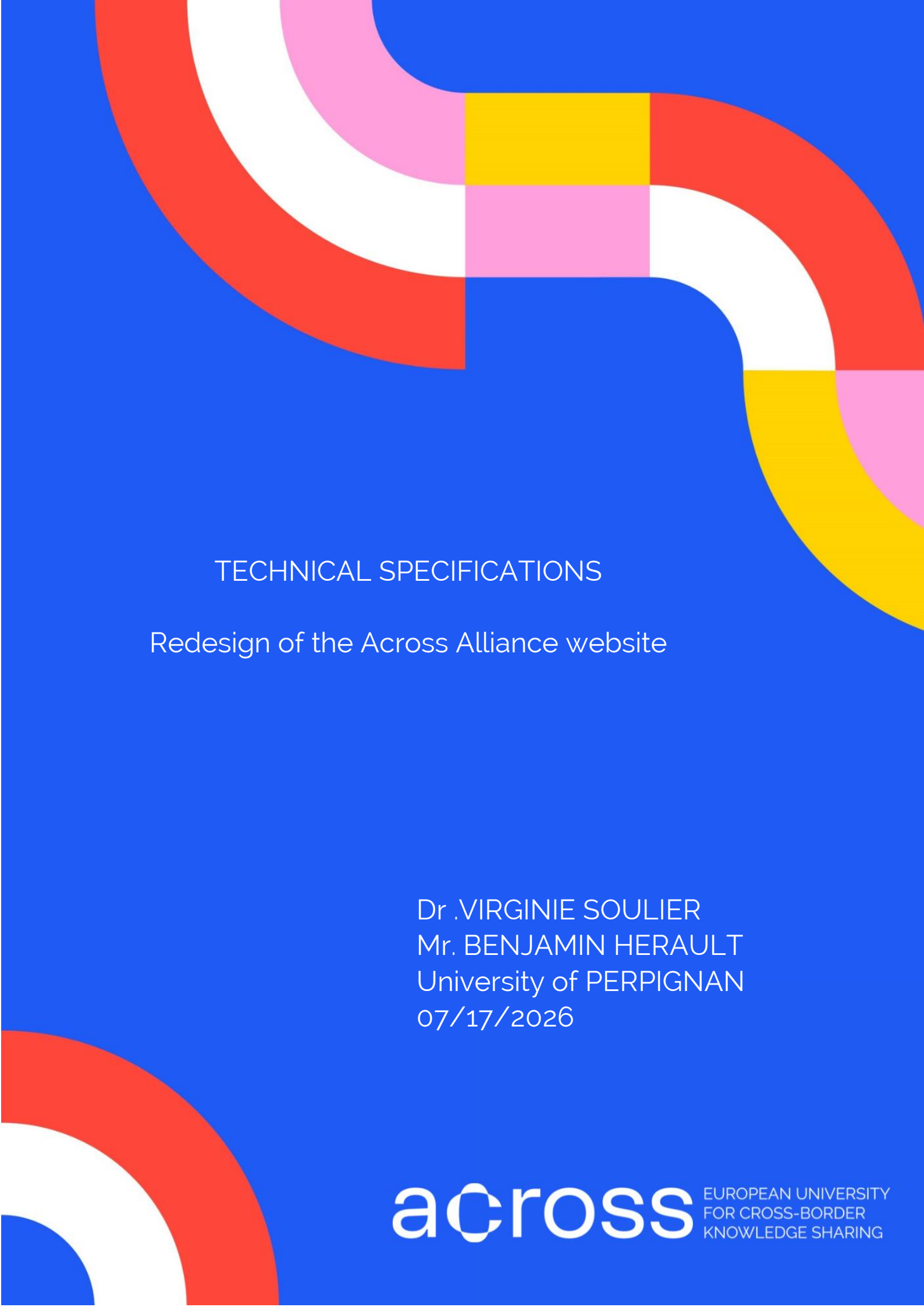


across

EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY
FOR CROSS-BORDER
KNOWLEDGE SHARING





TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Redesign of the Across Alliance website

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Article 1 – Contractor

The contractor is:

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Represented by its President

TERMS OF REFERENCES

1. Project background

The University of Perpignan Via Domitia (UPVD), as part of the European University "Across – European University for Cross-Border Knowledge Sharing", is seeking for a service provider to redesign the Alliance's website.

This document defines the requirements for the revision of the existing website of the Alliance. The project aims to improve the website's performance, usability, visual design, accessibility, search engine optimization (SEO), analytics capabilities and overall user experience while maintaining business continuity.

Across is an alliance of nine universities Across Europe, funded under the Erasmus+ 2024 call for proposals for a period of four years. Spanning nine different countries, it is dedicated to fostering cross-border cooperation, promoting academic excellence and enriching Europe's educational landscape.

<https://www.univ-perp.fr/upvd/strategie-et-grands-projets/Across>

Among the nine member universities of the Alliance, UPVD is responsible, alongside the University of Banja Luka (UNIBL), for communication and the dissemination of the project's activities and results (WP4 – Task 4.1)

The Across Alliance pursues the following objectives: the development of joint training programmes, the enhancement of student mobility, the structuring of collaborative research, contribution to regional development, and the promotion of cultural and scientific heritage.

The Across website constitutes one of the Alliance's main communication, dissemination and stakeholder engagement tools. Beyond its institutional function, it shall support the Alliance's visibility, attractiveness and long-term sustainability by promoting its educational, scientific and territorial achievements to European and international audiences.

The Alliance's website is a key communication tool, but it was developed prior to the launching of the project, thanks to the financial support of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). It was developed based on WordPress with an Elementor Pro template and is hosted on raidboxes.io with a staging and production environment.

In accordance with the Grant Agreement signed with the EU Commission, the Across Alliance aims at undertaking a complete overhaul of the website, in order to reposition it as an institutional, scientific and educational platform at European level, in line with the communication plan and strategy developed by Task 4.1.

Article 1 – Project objectives

The main objective is to optimise the architecture, design, content and functionality in order to improve the user experience, strengthen the Alliance's visibility at European level and support the communication and dissemination objectives defined in the Erasmus+ Grant Agreement.

The redesigned website shall serve as the Alliance's primary public digital platform, enabling students, researchers, staff, partners, policymakers, and citizens to discover and engage with Across activities. It will complement the eCampus, which provides access to collaboration, learning, and other authenticated services for members of the Alliance. The contractor shall consider the website not only as an institutional communication tool but as a strategic platform supporting the dissemination of project results, stakeholder engagement and the long-term positioning of Across as a European University Alliance.

The redesign website must take into account the Alliance's strategic developments, user needs (students, staff, partners, the general public) and current standards regarding usability, accessibility, web analytics and performance.

This redesigned website should:

- Modernise the graphical interface and strengthen the Alliance's visual identity while ensuring a consistent user experience across the public website and the eCampus. The redesign should reinforce recognition of the Across brand in Europe and be based, where feasible, on the same WordPress design framework as the eCampus to ensure long-term design consistency and sustainability across both platforms. The website must provide a seamless experience on both mobile and desktop devices without compromise.
- Redesign the website content structure according to user-centred principles and differentiated user journeys.
- Organise content by theme to improve readability, target audiences and user needs in order to improve discoverability and navigation.

- Allow for multi-language delivery employing both automated translation capabilities and change tracking for manual translated content.
- Allow the non-technical user base an easy-to-use backend to create and edit news, calendar entries and pages.
- Provide a staging and a production environment to enable a safe environment for changes without interrupting live service.
- Optimise technical performance: SEO, speed, accessibility (compliance with WCAG 2.2 Level AA requirements and delivery of an accessibility statement.), Core Web Vitals, multilingual indexing and environmental performance.
- Enhance existing features and integrate new ones where necessary.
- Ensure optimal compatibility with the alliance's digital tools, in particular the eCampus, while maintaining a coherent visual and functional user experience.
- Provide a reliable backup and recovery implementation

Article 2 – Scope of the service

The service provider will be responsible for the conception, design, development and implementation of a new cross-border, multilingual website for the Across alliance, as well as its maintenance and the training of the alliance user base in the integration of new content and day-to-day management.

The contractor shall adopt a user-centred design methodology based on usability principles, accessibility standards and evidence-based digital communication practices.

Particular attention shall be paid to multilingual user experience and equitable access to information for all audiences.

The service comprises all tasks necessary for the creation of the WordPress website.

- Phase 1 – Assessment of the existing website and strategic scoping

The service provider must carry out an analysis of the existing website, identifying current usage patterns, and conduct a benchmarking exercise against other alliance websites.

The assessment should include:

- SEO audit
- UX audit including heuristic evaluation, user journey analysis, navigation assessment and usability recommendations.
- Accessibility audit
- Content audit
- Analytics review
- Benchmark of European University Alliances: identify best practices regarding navigation, storytelling, information architecture, student engagement and dissemination.

- Benchmark of higher education digital platforms: identify best practices regarding navigation, storytelling, information architecture, student engagement and dissemination.
- Identification of opportunities to increase the Alliance's digital visibility

This assessment aims at identifying possible areas for improvement:

- Outdated visual design that requires modernisation while remaining fully aligned with the Alliance's visual identity and brand guidelines.
- Complex or unintuitive navigation.
- Slow page loading times.
- Limited mobile usability.
- Accessibility issues.
- Technical bugs or broken functionality.
- Suboptimal SEO configuration and limited optimisation of metadata, page structure, and content, reducing the website's visibility in search engine results.
- A complex and inefficient content management process due to the current WordPress setup, including an excessive number of plugins and a fragmented backend, making content updates, maintenance, and long-term administration more time-consuming.
- Security vulnerabilities or outdated software.

The contractor shall propose an editorial strategy designed to support continuous audience growth through regular publication of scientific, educational and territorial content. Particular attention shall be given to storytelling, highlighting students, researchers, innovation projects and societal impact.

This phase must enhance:

- The communication strategy, which is currently purely informational and currently focused on static institutional communication.
- The development of a strong narrative identity
- The user experience (UX)
- The visibility of the academic community
- The promotion of universities and cross-border regions
- The news feed

- **Phase 2 – Working method: design, development, testing, migration and launch**

The contractor must design a new website based on the Alliance's graphic charter. They will submit the following documents to the 4.1 team for approval: mood board, mock-up, wireframes and graphic mock-ups. The design must be responsive, promote readability, showcase the content and embody the European and territorial dimensions.

The contractor will therefore propose a user experience and information architecture with a usage-centred site map, differentiated user journeys and a clear content hierarchy.

The website's architecture and sitemap shall be designed around users' needs, expectations and navigation patterns rather than the Alliance's internal organisational structure or work package organisation.

The contractor shall demonstrate how the proposed information architecture and user experience support the Alliance's communication and dissemination objectives by improving content discoverability, increasing user engagement, facilitating conversion towards strategic actions, providing intuitive navigation and maximising the visibility of Across activities, services and project outcomes.

They will then develop the website and integrate the editorial content. The 4.1 task team is responsible for providing all visual, audio and textual content in the various languages.

The contractor shall appoint a dedicated project manager as the main point of contact throughout the project. Likewise, the Alliance will appoint a dedicated project manager to coordinate the project internally, facilitate communication, and ensure timely feedback and decision-making.

Regular coordination meetings shall be organised with the Contractor and the 4.1 task team to review progress, validate deliverables, discuss any issues and approve the transition between project phases.

The contractor shall deliver iterative versions of the website throughout the development phase, including **at least three feedback and review cycles** with the Alliance. Feedback provided after each review shall be incorporated into subsequent versions. Once the agreed revisions have been implemented, the contractor shall deliver a beta version of the website for final testing and acceptance. Following the acceptance testing phase, any identified issues shall be corrected before the website is migrated to the Alliance's production server and officially launched.

The revised website shall:

- Be fully responsive across all devices.
- Comply with current web accessibility standards (WCAG 2.1 AA or higher where applicable).
- Follow SEO best practices.
- Load efficiently and achieve strong performance metrics.
- Use HTTPS throughout the website.
- Comply with applicable data protection regulations (e.g., GDPR).
- Be compatible with current versions of major web browsers.
- Be maintainable and scalable.

Phase 3 – Training for the across user base

The service provider must prepare tutorials for the across userbase and offer them a training session so that they can update the website's content independently.

- **Phase 4 – Proposal for a website backup and maintenance contract**

The contractor undertakes to retain and provide the website data for one year for any technical requirements. They shall propose a contract for the maintenance and updating of the website.

The maintenance proposal shall include, as a minimum:

- WordPress core, theme and plugin updates;
- security monitoring and vulnerability management;
- Regular automated backups and documented disaster recovery procedures, including tested restoration processes. These measures shall be implemented as part of the core offer to ensure business continuity and minimise data loss in the event of system failure or security incidents. performance optimisation;
- technical support and bug fixing;
- monitoring of compatibility with future WordPress releases;
- maintenance of compliance with applicable GDPR requirements and European accessibility standards throughout the duration of the contract.

The maintenance proposal shall specify the service levels, including response times, incident management procedures, corrective maintenance, security updates and performance monitoring.

Article 4 – Deliverables

The contractor shall provide the following deliverables throughout the project:

Phase 1 – Analysis and strategic scoping

- UX audit report;
- SEO audit report;
- Accessibility audit report;
- Content audit report;
- Analytics review;
- GDPR compliance documentation for the analytics solution, including:
 - description of the proposed analytics architecture;
 - data flows;
 - identification of processors;
 - description of international data transfers (if any);
 - recommended privacy notice updates;
 - recommended cookie consent configuration;
 - documentation supporting GDPR compliance.
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- A benchmark report analysing the websites and digital platforms of European University Alliances and comparable higher education institutions, including, where relevant, examples such as **EUTOPIA, CIVIS, Circle U., ENLIGHT, Una Europa, CHARM-EU, EUT+**,

and YUFE, as well as other higher education digital platforms identified as best practices;

- Editorial and communication strategy recommendations;
- Recommendations for improving the Alliance's digital visibility.

Phase 2 – Design, development, testing, migration and launch

- Information architecture and sitemap;
- User journeys;
- Wireframes;
- Mood board;
- High-fidelity visual mock-ups;
- Functional prototype, where applicable;
- Fully developed multilingual WordPress website;
- Content integration;
- Test report (functional, technical and accessibility testing);
- Migration plan;
- Production deployment.

Phase 3 – Training

- User guide for website administration
- Training session for the communications officer;
- Tutorials and supporting documentation.

Phase 4 – Maintenance

- Maintenance and support proposal;
- Backup and recovery procedures;
- Maintenance plan, including security updates, technical support and performance monitoring.

Each deliverable shall be submitted to the Contractor for review and approval before the subsequent phase of the project may commence.

Article 5 – Specific requirements

The website shall showcase the people and communities that make up the Alliance through dedicated editorial content, including:

- Student profiles highlighting participation in Alliance activities, mobility, and joint initiatives.
- Student testimonials sharing experiences of studying, collaborating, or engaging across partner universities.
- Student-led projects developed within the framework of the Alliance (e.g. challenge-based learning, innovation, sustainability, entrepreneurship, or civic engagement).

- Researcher and academic staff profiles showcasing expertise, collaborative research, and contributions to the Alliance.
- Academic ambassadors and Alliance champions promoting the vision and activities of the Alliance.
- Alumni stories illustrating the long-term impact of Alliance opportunities on careers and personal development.
- Mobility stories featuring students, researchers, and staff participating in physical, blended, or virtual mobility programmes.
- Community portraits highlighting multicultural collaboration, interdisciplinary teams, Alliance events, and the diversity of the Alliance community.
- Podcasts featuring interviews, discussions, and insights from students, researchers, staff, and external partners.
- Videos promoting Alliance initiatives, educational opportunities, research collaborations, events, success stories, and institutional achievements.

The design shall facilitate the integration of testimonials, portraits and multimedia content while ensuring compliance with image rights and personal data protection requirements.

4.2 Territorial and heritage dimension

- map of universities
- presentation of regions
- narratives of the regions
- innovation ecosystems
- living labs
- local stakeholders
- cultural routes
- regional opportunities

4.3 Scientific dimension

- conferences, publications
- collaborations
- research themes
- open science
- cartography of ABEC (Across-border Engagement Centers)
- page dedicated to the Across Think Tank

4.4 Narrative dimension

The website must produce a narrative structure around:

- the European university alliance in action
- cross-border cooperation

- societal impact
- The editorial narrative shall place students, researchers and regional communities at the centre of the communication strategy.

4.5 Environmental sustainability

The website must demonstrate consideration for environmental issues and sustainable development.

The website shall be designed according to recognised **eco-design and digital sustainability principles**, with particular attention to reducing its environmental footprint while maintaining high standards of performance, accessibility and usability.

The contractor shall demonstrate how the proposed solution integrates best practices such as:

- optimisation of images and multimedia content;
- efficient loading strategies (e.g. lazy loading);
- lightweight page design;
- optimisation of scripts and external resources;
- energy-efficient web development practices;
- compatibility with sustainable hosting solutions

4.6 Educational aspect

The training programme is developed on a separate "eCampus" site, which will be directly integrated into the Alliance's website. Technical compatibility between the two platforms must be ensured. A seamless, secure connection between the Across website and the e-campus, with a consistent functional and visual experience across the Alliance's digital ecosystem.

4.7 Performance and dissemination

The future website shall contribute to the communication objectives of the Alliance by increasing the visibility and dissemination of Across activities and results.

Based on a baseline of approximately **100,000 annual website impressions in 2025**, the digital strategy should support a sustainable annual growth trajectory of approximately **20%**, corresponding to an indicative objective of around **173,000 annual website impressions by 2028 (indicative communication objective)**.

The contractor shall explain how the proposed information architecture, editorial strategy, SEO optimisation, multilingual approach and user experience contribute to these objectives.

4.8 Compliance with GDPR, image rights and EU visibility requirements

The website shall be designed and developed in compliance with the applicable European legislation on personal data protection (GDPR), intellectual property rights and image rights.

The contractor shall ensure that the proposed solution facilitates compliance with these requirements, including:

- management of privacy notices and consent information where applicable;
- GDPR-compliant contact forms and newsletter subscription forms;
- secure storage and processing of personal data;
- integration of cookie consent mechanisms compliant with applicable European legislation;
- appropriate management of image metadata and copyright information;
- display of photographer credits where required;
- integration of accessibility statements and legal notices.

Web analytics and GDPR

Any web analytics solution proposed by the Contractor shall comply with Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR) and applicable guidance issued by the European Data Protection Board (EDPB). Preference shall be given to privacy-friendly, EU-hosted analytics solutions capable of operating without or with limited cookies where feasible.

The Contractor shall explain:

- the categories of data collected;
- whether cookies or similar tracking technologies are used;
- whether user profiles are created;
- whether personal data is transferred outside the EU/EEA;
- the legal basis relied upon;
- the technical and organisational measures implemented to ensure GDPR compliance.

EU and Funding Visibility Requirements

The contractor shall ensure that the website fully complies with the visibility obligations applicable to the ACROSS Alliance and all its funding programmes.

The website design shall allow for the permanent and appropriate display of:

- the official **Across Alliance** logo;
- the **European Union** emblem;
- the **Erasmus+** visual identity, where applicable;

- the mandatory funding acknowledgement: **"Co-funded by the European Union"**, where required;
- the logos and acknowledgements of other funding bodies supporting the Alliance or specific activities, including, where applicable:
 - **France 2030**;
 - the **German Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space (BMFTR)**;
 - the **German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)**;
 - the **Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange (NAWA)**;
 - and any additional funding organisations contributing to the Alliance during the lifetime of the contract.

The website layout shall ensure that these elements remain clearly visible, comply with the respective branding and visibility guidelines of each funding organisation, and can be updated easily as funding arrangements evolve without requiring major redesign or redevelopment

Article 6 – Multilingualism

The website will be available in 11 languages, with a layout adapted to each language. The website shall support multilingual content management. While some content may vary between language versions to reflect local needs, the system shall provide robust translation management features to ensure consistency where required. In particular, it shall include mechanisms to identify and track outdated or incomplete translations, notify content editors when the source content has changed, and facilitate the synchronisation of translated content across all language versions.

Article 7 – Expected functionalities

The website must include:

Functional requirements

The website shall include the following functional modules:

- **News management:** a flexible news module allowing the creation, categorisation, tagging, scheduling, multilingual publication, and archiving of news articles, with featured news and related content suggestions.
- **Events calendar:** an interactive calendar enabling users to browse, filter, and search events by date, location, partner university, topic, audience, and event type. Events shall include registration links where applicable and support export to personal calendars.
- **Internal search engine:** a fast and intuitive search function with filtering by content type, language, topic, and partner institution, including predictive search suggestions.
- **Calls for projects and opportunities:** a dedicated module to publish, categorise, filter, and archive calls for projects, funding opportunities, competitions, and other Alliance opportunities.
- **Contact forms:** configurable contact forms with spam protection, routing to designated recipients, GDPR compliance, and confirmation messages.

- **Interactive map of partner universities:** an interactive map presenting Alliance partners and associated institutions, with links to institutional profiles, campuses, and relevant information.
- **Newsletter:** integration with the Alliance's newsletter platform, allowing subscription management, GDPR-compliant consent collection, and tracking of subscription conversions.
- **eCampus integration:** seamless integration with the Alliance eCampus, providing consistent navigation, visual identity, and single sign-on where applicable.
- **Resource centre:** a searchable repository of publications, policy documents, reports, deliverables, media files, and other downloadable resources, with filtering and metadata.
- **Social media hub:** integration of the Alliance's social media channels, including social sharing features and dynamic content feeds where appropriate.
- **ABEC cartography:** an interactive map and searchable directory presenting the ABEC network, with filtering, institutional profiles, and links to relevant resources.

SEO and discoverability

The website shall be designed and developed according to current SEO best practices to maximise its visibility and discoverability in search engines. At a minimum, it shall include:

- **SEO optimisation:** implementation of technical and on-page SEO best practices, including optimised page titles, meta descriptions, heading structure, clean URLs, image optimisation, canonical URLs, and fast page loading.
- **Multilingual SEO:** support for multilingual indexing, ensuring that each language version is correctly optimised and independently discoverable by search engines.
- **Schema.org structured data:** implementation of structured data for relevant content types (e.g. news, events, organisations, people, publications, and educational content) to enhance search engine understanding and rich search results.
- **Open Graph metadata:** automatic generation of Open Graph and social sharing metadata to optimise the appearance of website content when shared on social media platforms.
- **XML sitemap:** automatic generation and maintenance of XML sitemaps covering all relevant public content, with support for multilingual pages.
- **hreflang implementation:** correct implementation of hreflang tags to indicate language and regional variants, preventing duplicate content issues and directing users to the appropriate language version.
- **Internal linking strategy:** implementation of a coherent internal linking structure that improves navigation, content discoverability, user experience, and search engine crawling.

Analytics and performance

- Integration of a GDPR-compliant web analytics solution to monitor website traffic and usage while respecting the principles of data minimisation, privacy by design and privacy by default. Preference shall be given to European-hosted solutions capable of operating without cross-border transfers of personal data and, where feasible, through cookieless or privacy-preserving configurations.
- Analytics dashboard including, at a minimum:
 - website impressions (monthly and annual)
 - users and unique visitors
 - average session duration
 - page views and pages per session
 - traffic acquisition channels
 - engagement rate
 - most visited pages
 - multilingual audience distribution
 - newsletter subscriptions and other agreed conversion indicators
 - Core Web Vitals monitoring

The proposed analytics solution shall allow the Alliance to produce the indicators required for Erasmus+ reporting while minimising the processing of personal data.

Compliance and accessibility

- Cookie management
- Accessibility statement

Media library

The media library shall facilitate the management of photographs and audiovisual materials by allowing the integration of copyright information, photographer credits, alternative text and descriptive metadata.

Footer and legal information

The website footer shall provide permanent access to:

- Legal Notice
- Privacy Policy
- Cookie Policy
- Accessibility Statement
- European Union funding acknowledgement

European Union emblem displayed in accordance with the applicable visibility requirements.

Article 8 – Provisional schedule for 2026–2027

- Publication of the request for proposals: 09 October 2026
- Proposal submission period: 09 October– 25 October 2026
- Evaluation of proposals and selection of the service provider: 26–30 October 2026
- Contract signature and project kick-off: 2–3 November 2026
- Discovery, analysis and technical specifications: 2–6 November 2026
- UX/UI design and validation: 4–13 November 2026
- Website development and content preparation: 9 November – 4 December 2026
- Content integration and data migration: 23 November – 11 December 2026
- Testing and iterative review, including at least three feedback cycles: 16 November – 11 December 2026
- User acceptance testing and final adjustments: 14–18 December 2026
- Training, documentation and knowledge transfer: 14–21 December 2026
- Final migration and website launch: target date of 23 December 2026, and no later than 31 December 2026
- Warranty and post-launch support: January – March 2027

Some phases may run in parallel to meet the launch deadline while retaining at least three feedback cycles.

Article 9 – Required skills

The service provider must demonstrate expertise in:

- UI/UX and Graphic design
- Web development
- Experience in international projects, particularly European ones
- Ability to effectively communicate in English, both verbally and in writing

Article 10 – Selection criteria

Expertise and experience in academic and international settings, references from similar projects: 20%

Bilingual communication (French & English): 15%

Cost of the service and the maintenance contract: 15%

Ability to attend on-site meetings: 13%

Quality of the technical and graphic proposal: 12%

Design quality (UI/UX): 8%

Project management and communication: 6%

SEO and website performance: 5%

Security and compliance: 4%

Scalability and future development: 2%

Total 100%

Scoring method

Each criterion will be scored on a 0–5 scale:

0 = Does not meet requirements

1 = Poor

2 = Fair

3 = Good

4 = Very Good

5 = Excellent

The final supplier score is calculated as: $\text{Final Score} = \sum (\text{Criterion Score} \div 5 \times \text{Weight})$

Article 11 – Submission requirements

Candidates must include:

- methodological note
- technical proposal
- schedule
- detailed budget
- portfolio

Article 12 – Contractor's contacts

- Company : UPVD
- Project Leaders : Benjamin HERAULT , Virginie SOULIER
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