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**Interim report on ESTEEM Network setup**

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Executive summary

One of the key elements of sustainability of the ESTEEM project is the setting up and promotion of a virtual international network of organisations willing to share views, cooperate and join forces in order to become a reference point and a source of information for the policy makers (at the European, national and local level) concerning the future priorities in the field of transport safety and security.

Hence within WP4 a specific task has been dedicated to the setup of the network and this report briefly summarises the actions which have been put in place by the responsible partners within the consortium to meet the objective.

The report starts with a brief introduction summarising the strategy underpinning the setting up of the network and then it describes the structure, tools and responsibilities which have been defined and implemented to put the strategy in practice. In fact, as the network is a virtual one, most of the activities will be supported through ad hoc tools developed on the ESTEEM web site.
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1 Introduction

Since its inception, the ESTEEM project included as one of its major sustainability drivers the set up and enlargement of a virtual international network to include all those organizations in the Mediterranean basin which are interested in research and development in the area of Transport safety and security together with the most relevant European organizations with similar interests.

The original kernel of the ESTEEM network, therefore, consists of the organizations which are the formal partners of the ESTEEM project consortium. In fact the partners are convinced that the mutual knowledge and interaction between all the relevant stakeholders will facilitate and promote the creation of a common understanding of the relevant issues and problems to be addressed. This in turn will be the basis for a common, truly international and shared approach to shaping the future research themes and actions needed to help in solving the identified problems.

In other words, the network in its full implementation should become a reference counterpart for the research policy makers in the specific area of transport safety and security and in the Mediterranean basin, capable of providing information and guidelines on the current and future needs.

On this basis the strategy for setting up the network entails the following steps:

1. defining the contents of the network activities and the advantages the participants will draw from subscribing to it;
2. designing the services to be delivered by the network secretariat;
3. implementing and delivering the services;
4. promoting the Network in order to reach a significant number of active partners;
5. managing the network and promoting it vis-à-vis the policy makers.

This report describes the activities implemented by the consortium regarding steps 1 to 4.

2 Defining the network

The first step for setting up the network has been to define the message to be communicated to the potential subscribers in order to make clear what advantages they would receive for the participation.

Under this respect the following message has been formulated and communicated through the ESTEEM web site in the “Join the Network” section.

“... joining the ESTEEM network (totally for free and without any obligations) will provide an organization the following benefits:

- Receiving first hand and timely information about new trends on the topics at stake (e.g. public events, important research papers, relevant position papers, directives and other significant news);
- Having the possibility of expressing their views and priorities, and influencing the debate, in a forum which aims at becoming a reference counterpart for policy makers such as, but not limited to, the European Commission;
- Receiving first hand and timely information about new funding opportunities for research and other types of international projects;
• Getting in touch with a community of organizations interested in participating in publicly funded projects, thus being able to receive advice and guidance on how to take part, and more importantly facilitating the search for partners;

• Having the possibility of creating focus sub groups on specific topics of interest in order to raise the attention of the policy makers and to promote the debate on these.

Hence the participation in the ESTEEM Network should be seen as a factor of growth and internationalization for all organizations (inside and outside the research community) interested in promoting a Euro-Mediterranean approach to the issues of safety and security in the area.”

In summary the message aims at and makes clear that the subscribers will receive relevant information and consultancy and will be able to participate in and international debate on the issues at stake. All these services will be delivered through the Internet and mainly through the project’s web site as it will be described in the next section.

From the practical point of view, all the activities will be managed by a light Network Secretariat based in Rome which will be responsible for the development and delivery of the web based services.

One of the network basic activities, implemented throughout the action of secretariat, is the involvement and the participation, within the web site, of the wider number of users (both project partners and all the other actors involved in the surveys and in the workshops and external users).

3 Designing and implementing the services

The specific tools which have been developed in the ESTEEM web site for supporting the activities of the network are:

• the registration procedure;

• the ESTEEM Network mailing list;

• two dedicated sections:
  − “New trends and documents on transport safety and security”
  − “New funding opportunities”

• a section of the Forum reserved to the network members.

In the following paragraphs the functioning of each service is explained.

The ESTEEM Network allows to get in touch with a community of organizations interested in participating in publicly funded projects. Especially it can be seen as a good way to facilitate the search for partners.

Within the ESTEEM web site this activity can be done in different ways.

The partner can post a partner search in the section Network Discussion Forum and then the partners can get in touch directly between them.

Otherwise the partner can send to the secretariat a request for partner search specifying the call, the topic and the type of partner/competencies sought. The secretariat then forwards the request to the network’s participants.

Another possibility is through the direct support from the secretariat which can use its external networks of partners and of European programmes experts for guidance.

The Network members can also receive advices and guidance on how to take part to the networking activities. This can be done through a direct request to the secretariat, which will
dispatch it to the appropriate experts in European projects available within the ESTEEM consortium. Questions of general interest will be answered through the Forum.

The Network also provides the possibility of creating focus sub groups on specific topics of interest in order to raise the attention of the policy makers and to promote the debate on these. This activity can be done through a direct request to the Secretariat. The network should be seen as a dynamic entity, so improvements are always possible.

3.1 Registration procedures

Although the website has been designed to be user-friendly, a brief explanation was sent to Network partners to guide them through the process of entry and website browsing.

In order to start the registration and browsing, it was necessary to go to www.esteemproject.eu and begin the registration process in the Login Form section entering username and password. After this, partners received an e-mail with their account details that might be activated before they could use it clicking on the link provided or copying-pasting it in their browser.

After activation it was possible to login to the website and start the browsing.

The contact of ESTEEM project team and a form to require information or send messages to the team has been provided in order to give the wider support and help to members.

3.2 New trends on the project topics

This section allows to receive information about new trends on the topics at stake, through a link in the home page, reserved to the members, entitled “New trends and documents on transport safety and security”.

As documentation repository, this section contains timely information about new trends on the ESTEEM topics (e.g. public events, important research papers, relevant position papers, calls for proposal, directives and other significant news).

The Network secretariat is in charge for collecting relevant and up to date documents of common interest for the network members, for uploading them to this specific section and for altering the partners that a new document is on-line.

A member can propose a document for uploading by sending it to the Secretariat which will have it evaluated by the project steering committee and if the outcome is positive will proceed to publication.

So far Network members have the opportunity, through the stable contact and frequent appeal of secretariat and management team, to get informed about the state of art and the development on safety and security related research and the project management in general. They can make easier the diffusion of the networking tool participating actively in the upload and download of relevant documents about project activities. Indeed, they can communicate, compare experiences of each country, participate forum discussions and exchange of useful information and create links and opportunities for future partnership.

3.3 New funding opportunities for research

A specific section of the web site allows to receive first hand and timely information about new funding opportunities for research and other types of international projects.

Once a user has logged in, he has access to this section, reserved to the members, where it is possible to find helpful information and specific calls for proposal to be submitted.

The network itself works as a documentation repository at disposal of all users interested with transport safety and security aspects. A first dissemination of activities and results carried out so far and exchanges of documents related to the project have been implemented and published in the website. The networking activities, through the support of an e-mail alert tool, consist also of a constant update of timely information and events occurred and to arise about project activities and safety and security issues in general.
3.4 Forum section

This section provides to the users the possibility of expressing their views and priorities, and influencing the debate, in a Forum which aims at becoming a reference counterpart for policy makers such as, but not limited to, the European Commission.

This can be accomplished once the user has logged in. He can access a section of the Forum reserved to the members, entitled “Network Discussion Forum”

The Network Discussion Forum consisting of four sub-areas identified within ESTEEM project (plus a special general area available exclusively to registered users) is a virtual place where consortium members have the opportunity to get involved and contribute actively to discussions posting their own participation.

In this section, consortium members have the possibility of reading discussions and participation, interacting with all the relevant stakeholders, the chance of expressing their views and priorities, promoting and influencing a debate on ESTTEM related issues.

This section of the forum will be animated by the project partners. The roles agreed for each sub-area are the following:

- Sub-Area 1: University of Batna
- Sub-Area 2: CTL
- Sub-Area 3: INRIA
- Sub-Area 4: EMI

4 Results achieved and next steps

The ESTEEM network has been currently joining from about 26 people although the number of users is expected to increase. Among the 26 users, there are different categories:

- 11 of them are registered users (normal users);
- 14 of them are consortium partners;
- 6 are administrators (5 administrators are at the same time also consortium partners).

Secretariat and project management team have regularly been checking the network area in order to verify the correct functioning of website in general, to ensure the active attendance and participation of members and the presence and the flow of new contents and useful materials specially. Furthermore, secretariat and project management team have been handling the website with update information and documents, providing constant support to members and encouraging the partners to do as well.

To facilitate the participation of partners in involving their own contacts to join ESTEEM Network an e-mail format will be fixed up and sent to all network members. In this way, it is expected a greater involvement of all ESTEEM members and as a result the promotion of the network to each partners mailing lists will increase ESTEEM project results.

In order to spread out the benefit and knowledge created by the ESTEEM project and to make the ESTEEM network a functional tool of communication and cooperation, an active endorsement of all partners in future steps of networking is forecasted and any action to enhance their participation will carried out.

The forum section to be animated by leaders subareas and consequently by all members is expected to engage a wider number of active partners able to promote different discussions and issues.

The sharing and the exchange of research results and the circulation of information, a further contribution to the dissemination of transport research in Europe and Maghreb area and the establishment of a road map for future researches and master plans will be the next activities foreseen within the network.