



LEarning and action alliances for **NexuS** **E**nvironments
in an uncertain future

LENSES

Project coordinator



Project partners



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GA n° [2041] [LENSES] [Call 2020 Section 1 Nexus IA]





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Minutes of the kick-off meeting held online
31st May – 1st June 2021



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Introduction

The kick-off meeting of the project LEarning and action alliances for NexuS EnvironmentS in an uncertain future (LENSES) was successfully held on-line on Monday 31st May and Tuesday 1st June 2021, from 8:30 AM to 1:30 PM CEST. The event was organized by the Council for Agricultural Research and Economics (CREA), in a joint effort between its Research Centre for Agricultural Policies and Bioeconomy (CREA-PB) and the Research Centre for Agriculture and Environment (CREA-AA), and with the members of the project internal Steering Committee, namely Anna Osann (Agrisat Iberia SL), Alessandro Pagano e Raffaele Giordano (CNR-IRSA), Leon Kapetas (DRAXIS). The event gathered over 49 participants from all partner institutions and organizations; the PRIMA Project Officers (PO) Mr. Ali Rhouma and Mr. Paul Gull; the members of the External Advisory Board.

All the material (e.g. Agenda; PPTs; video recording) shared by speakers during LENSES kick-off meeting was gathered and made available online for consultation to all project partners in a dedicated [Dropbox folder](#). In the next months, it will be published on a dedicated webpage on the official LENSES website.

Opening session

The event was opened by Stefano Fabiani, project coordinator and team leader at CREA, who welcomed the participants and briefly explained the key rules and Teams functions to exploit, in a way to facilitate a proactive participation and a smooth interaction among the participants during the event. Then, he informed all participants that the meeting would have been recorded.

Mr. Stefano Fabiani gave an [overview on LENSES](#), a project funded under the PRIMA Programme with the aim to improving the understanding of the Water, Ecosystem, Food (WEF) Nexus as a framework to resource security and sustainable development, by overcoming the compartmentalization, allowing an equitable and socially acceptable allocation of resources, and supporting the stakeholders in navigating the complex and non-linear Nexus system. LENSES will move beyond a mere scientific Nexus understanding, to enabling collective learning processes through the active, inclusive and equitable engagement of all decision-makers and multi-stakeholders involved in the Nexus management. In order to achieve this objective, the project involves, beyond the Council for Agricultural Research and Economics (CREA) as a coordinator, 12 partners coming from 6 European countries distributed across the Mediterranean basin. The selected 6 countries cover a wide range of environmental, socio-economic and socio-technical conditions that are relevant across the whole Mediterranean area. Mr. Fabiani explained in detail the conceptual framework and the 9 specific objectives of the project, that will be achieved through the implementation of the activities foreseen within the 9 project Work Packages (WPs) and thanks to the establishment of 6 demonstration pilot sites distributed across the 6 countries involved in the project. Ultimately, Mr. Fabiani explained the expected impacts of the project that include, among the others, the development of an operational approach to the interdependent management of WEF resources under Mediterranean region conditions; the creation of strong cross-sectoral links between institutions including ground-level beneficiaries and relevant public authorities that govern the Nexus approach; the set-up of a collaborative WEF Nexus space across the Mediterranean region.

[Mr. Ali Rhouma](#), PRIMA project officer gave an overview on the need for monitoring and reporting of projects funded under PRIMA programme. He introduced the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Platform (MEL), to which both coordinator and all project partners have access. The project coordinator will be primarily

responsible to create and update the session dedicated to the LENSES project, by uploading in the platform all info required (e.g. project description; objectives; targets; beneficiary countries). Then Mr. Rhouma explained the main rules for regularly reporting to the project donor on the implemented activities and incurred expenditures. A full project report, which include both a financial (PART A) and a technical (PART B) component, must be presented to the donor at the end of each 18 months' period and not later than 60 days after the end of the reporting period. Therefore, in the case of LENSES, which will last for 36 months, two reporting period are foreseen: the interim report shall refer to the period 1st May 2021 to 30 November 2022 and its final version must be submitted by January 2023. The second reporting period goes from 1st December 2022 up to 30 April 2024, and the related report must be submitted by 30 June 2024.

Ultimately, Mr. Rhouma illustrated the key rules to accomplish the visibility requirements for EU and PRIMA funded project. Furthermore, he highlighted the importance to acknowledge the PRIMA programme in all dissemination and communication activities, including the publication of peer reviewed papers.

[Mr. Pau Guell](#), PRIMA Financial Manager highlighted the main rules to be followed to accomplish PRIMA financial requirements. In particular, his presentation focused on the following components: Need for financial reporting; Eligibility of costs and expenditures; Records and Audit of financial report; Amendment of the GA.

Session 1: Partners presentations

The first session of the event was facilitated by Tiziana Pirelli, LENSES project manager. The overall objectives of this session were to introduce the LENSES “family” constituted by the members of each team involved in the consortium: the coordinator and the partner institutions, the External Advisory Board, and the “sister project” REXUS.

The team leader of each partner institutions involved in the project, gave a brief overview on his/her own organization’s main mission, with a focus on the organization/institution background as relevant to LENSES. Then, he/she explained the main contribution that the team is expected to provide to LENSES and ultimately, he/she introduced all team members by briefly explaining, for each person, the background and the specific role both in the team and in the project.

Stefano Fabiani introduced [the External Advisory Board](#) (EAB) by briefly explaining its role and expected contributions within the project. The purpose of EAB is to provide guidance on how to maintain the project at high S&T and innovation standards, while securing high impact and relevance for practical application. Mr. Fabiani introduced the current members of the EAB (i.e. Nuria Rodriguez and Ramiro Martinez of the Mediterranean Network of Basin Organisations – MENBO; Claudia Pahl-Wostl from the University of Osnabruck and co-chair of the Global Water System Project; and Konstantina Toli, Senior Programme Officer at GWP-Med) and highlighted that the introduction of additional members will be considered in the course of the project lifespan, according to the project needs.

José González Piqueras of the University of Castilla La Mancha (Spain), coordinator of [REXUS \(Managing Resilient Nexus Systems Through Participatory Systems Dynamics Modelling\)](#), a project funded by the European Union, under the Horizon 2020 Programme, gave to participants an overview on REXUS. He explained the overall objectives, the conceptual framework and the expected impacts of the project that will

involve 17 partners from 6 countries across Europe plus Colombia. Mr. Gonzalez highlighted the fact that the two projects (LENSES and REXUS) have been built to be strictly interlinked and complementary between them, with multiple opportunities for synergies and cooperation to be explored and implemented across their programmes of work.

Session 2: Pilot areas

The second session of the event was introduced and facilitated by Anna Osann, Team Leader for Agrisat Iberia SL and leader of WP8: Pilot implementation. Ms. Osann gave an overview on the six demonstration pilot sites (PS) distributed across the Mediterranean basin, namely PS1: ILTER (GR); PS2: Gediz (TR); PS3: Tarquinia (IT); PS4: Doñana (ES); PS5: Galilee (IL); and PS6: Middle Jordan Valley (JO). The pilot sites have been identified to cover a wide range of environmental, socio-economic and socio-technical conditions that are relevant across the whole Mediterranean area. Their main role is to allow for moving “from a Nexus thinking to a NEXUS doing”. In fact, each pilot is expected to carry out the implementation of the Nexus in practical terms, with the aim to thoroughly assess it and to select the most suitable solution(s) for LENSES implementation in each area. Furthermore, each pilot will perform a participatory evaluation with the multi-stakeholder Learning and Action Alliance (LAA) community, as a key contribution to WP2.

In turn, the leaders managing each of the 6 LENSES pilot areas introduced briefly the essence of each pilot, focusing mainly on a few aspects characterizing the area and identified as relevant: location and scale; current status of WEF challenges and conflicts; main stakeholders, and quality of existing contacts; what is already in place, what is needed and what LENSES can provide.

From the discussion it has emerged that, even though the greek pilot was conceived as a single pilot site, it would be much better to split it in two different and complementary PS: PS1a (the Cretan observatory: Koiliaris CZO) and PS1b (the Thessaian pilot - Pinios Hydrologic Observatory-PHO). The two greek areas, in fact, although sharing common features, diverge considerably in several aspects. Therefore, it would be better to consider them individually, thus allowing for further comparisons and for the creation of synergies between them.

Session 3: WP intentions and roadmaps

The third session of the LENSES kick-off meeting was introduced and facilitated by Leon Kapetas, Team Leader for DRAXIS and leader of WP7: Nexus operationalization for SDG delivery. Mr. Kapetas introduced the WPs framework by focusing on the multiple interconnections existing among the various WPs and on the fact that building synergies among WPs and acting in a joint effort will surely optimize the results of the project and contribute to maximize its impacts.

Following Mr. Kapetas introduction, each WP leader gave an overview on the activities to be implemented within each WP, by focusing on few relevant aspects: main objectives and the expected outcomes; task(s) and deliverable(s) by including, for each of them, the list of contributing partners; roadmap until M12; input needed from pilot; and dependencies with other WPs.

Session 4: Stepping into action and commitments – WPs and Pilots

Report on the interactive session

The Interactive session implemented in Session 4 constituted a key part of the kick-off meeting. The main scope of this session was to start the process for matchmaking the main needs and concerns in the LENSES pilots and the main WPs' outcomes. To this aim, three main activities are planned in LENSES: i) WPs and pilots surveys; ii) discussion session during the KOM; iii) dedicated Pilots/meetings.

This report describes the results of the discussion held during the KOM. The session was organized in two sub-sessions. The first one was dedicated to defining the degree of involvement of the WPs in the pilots. To this aim, a survey was sent around and a table was developed showing the WPs' preference concerning the implementation of the "full version" and the "basic version" of the different products. During the session, WP leaders were required to provide a definition of the two levels of products development. Figure 1 shows the results of this part of the discussion.

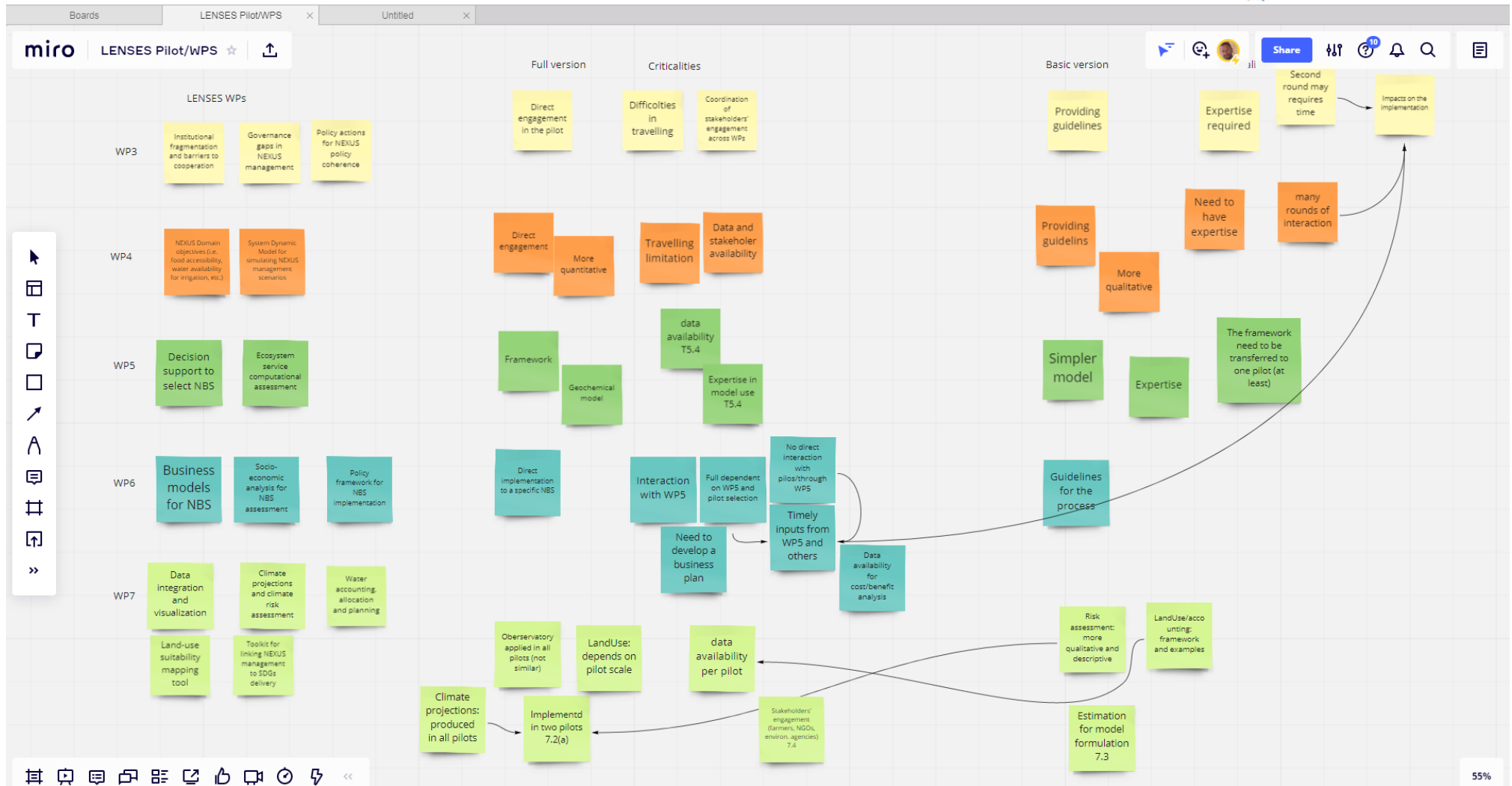


Figure 1 : level of WP engagement in the pilots

As shown in figure 1, there are two main definitions of “full version” of the products: i.e. direct engagement and quantitative assessment (or model). Similarly, participants were requested to specify the meaning of the “basic version” of the product. This version is different from the full one either because more qualitative, or because there will be no direct engagement of the Wp in the pilot. In the latter case, the interested WP will provide guidelines to be followed by the local partners to carry out the expected activities.

Participants were also required to describe barriers to the actual implementation of both full and basic version. On the one hand, the implementation of the full version could be hampered by the lack of data, by the difficulties in the direct engagement (i.e. travel limitations), by the lack of coordination concerning the stakeholders’ activities, and by the lack of coordination among different WPs. On the other hand, the implementation of the basic version could be hampered by the lack of local expertise in implementing specific methodologies (e.g. the PSDM), the delay in transferring the experiences from one pilot (frontrunner) to the others (followers).

The second part of the discussion concerned the coupling between the WPs products and the pilots. Figure 2 shows the results of this session. Interestingly, most of the pilots expressed great interest in the WP7 products. This is because the lack of a systemic approach to data management and analysis (main goal of the REXUS observatory) is perceived as a key barrier to the sustainable nexus management. Great interests was demonstrated also toward the NBS-oriented products, and specifically the socio-economic tools. Finally, the the PSDM and the policy analysis products were considered interesting for enabling the actual implementation of nexus measures defined in other WPs. Table 1 summarizes these results.

Table 1 Summary of the outcomes of the interactive session.

WP	Products	Pilots	Comments
WP2	Institutional fragmentation and barriers to cooperation	Pinios; Tarquinia; Donana	A document describing the WP2 products will be shared.
	Governance gaps in NEXUS management		
	Policy actions for NEXUS policy coherence		
WP3	NEXUS Domain objectives (i.e. food accessibility, water availability for irrigation, etc.)	Pinios; Tarquinia; Donana; Menemen	A document describing the WP3 products will be shared.
	System Dynamic Model for simulating NEXUS management scenarios		
WP4	Decision support to select NBS	Hula, Koilaris Menemen Tarquinia Deir-Alaa	The role of ES needs to be investigated in the Jordan pilot
	Ecosystem service computational assessment		
WP5	Socio-economic analysis for NBS assessment	Hula, Koilaris Menemen Tarquinia Deir-Alaa	The business model is key for the Koilaris to facilitate the NBS implementation
	Business models for NBS		
	Policy framework for NBS implementation		
WP6	Data integration and visualization	Tarquinia	
	Climate projections and climate risk assessment	Donana Menemen Deir-Alaa	
	Land-use suitability mapping tool	Menemen Tarquinia	
	Water accounting, allocation and planning	Donana Menemen Deir-Alaa Menemen Tarquinia	Use of satellite images for water allocation
	Toolkit for linking NEXUS management to SDGs delivery		
	Maps of irrigated areas	Donana Menemen Deir-Alaa Menemen Tarquinia	

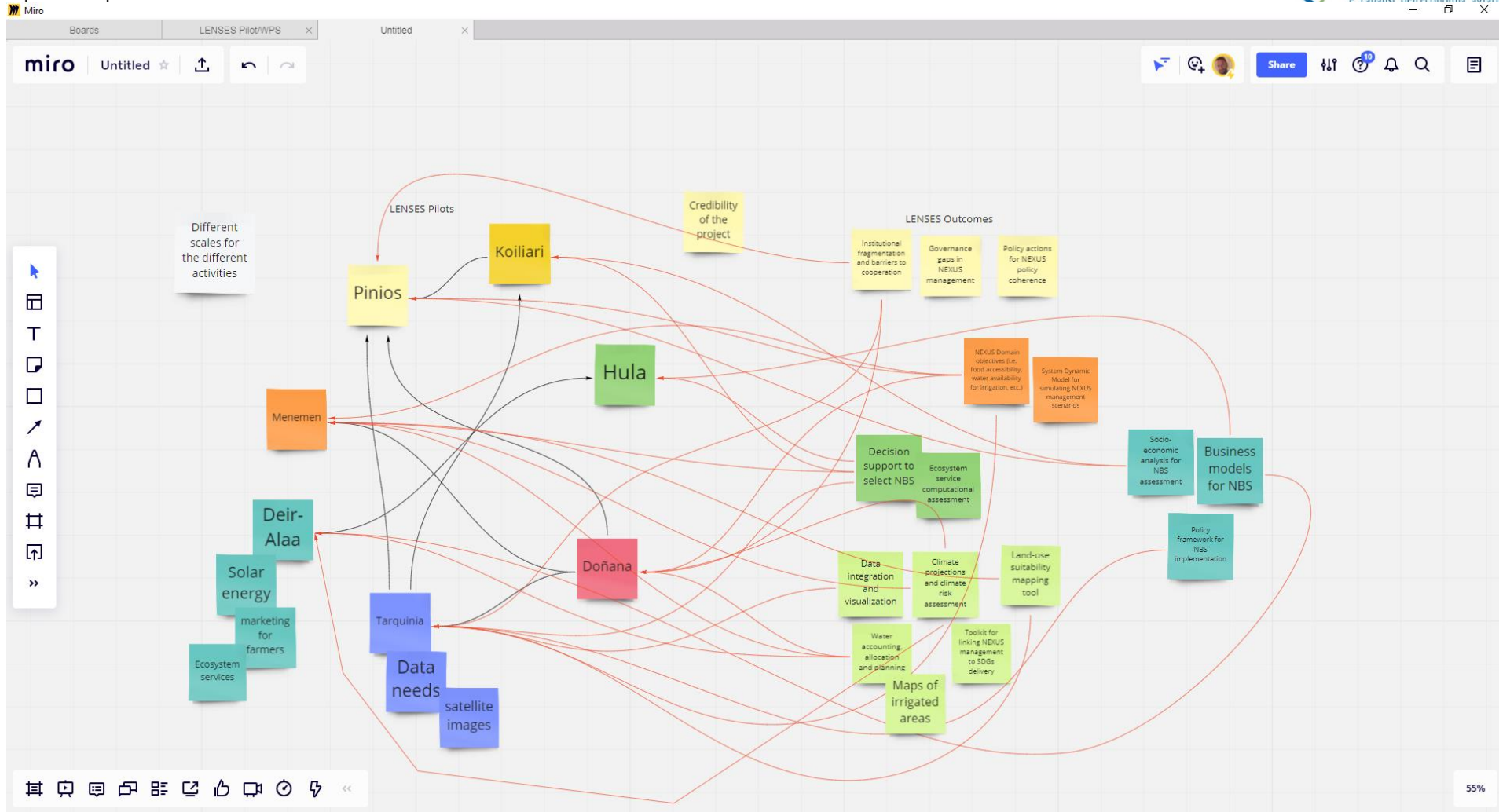


Figure 2: coupling between the WPs products and the pilots

Session 5: General Assembly first meeting.

According to the Consortium Agreement (CA) the General Assembly is one of the two governing bodies, together with the Executive Board. The members of the LENSES General Assembly are all WPs leaders, namely: Stefano Fabiani, CREA (WP1); Manuel Bea, ECOADAPTA (WP2); Raffaele Giordano, IRSA-CNR (WP3); Alessandro Pagano, IRSA-CNR (WP4); Nikolaos Nikolaidis, TUC (WP5); Juan Diego Restrepo, ETIFOR (WP6); Leon Kapetas, DRAXIS (WP7); Anna Osann, AGRISAT Iberia SL (WP8); Tiziana Pirelli, CREA (WP9).

This first meeting of the GA was meant to discuss briefly the following topics:

- i- Grant Agreement (GA) & pre-financing payment, preview on reporting obligations.
- ii- Update of Consortium Plan (first version is GA Technical Annex);
- iii- Steering Committee;
- iv- First Plenary Meeting;
- v- aob (any other business).

Antonella Di Fonzo (CREA), in her role of reference persons for project financial issues and compliance with PRIMA programme rules, gave a short speech to clarify a few [Administrative and Financial Issues](#), which are key to meet PRIMA requirements. She explained a few legal and financial principles (e.g. Consequences of non-compliance; requests for budget amendments; Third parties or subcontractors) and gave details on project financial reporting requirements and payments.

According to the GA, the project is divided into 2 reporting periods (i.e. RP1: from month 1 to month 18; RP2: from month 19 to month 36). The Consortium shall submit to the EC both the narrative “Progress report” and the “Financial report” by 60 days upon the end of each reporting period. Therefore, the payments will be released as follows:

- pre-financing payment: it corresponds to 60% of the total budget assigned to each PPs.;
- one interim payments: upon the approval of the first interim narrative and financial reports;
- one payment of the balance: upon the approval of the final narrative and financial reports.

CREA, the project coordinator, will transfer the pre-financing payment to all project partners (PPs), within one month after the reception from PRIMA of the total pre-financing payment.

All templates and guidelines to fulfil both the narrative and the financial report are available on the EC platform.

Two key issues were raised by the general assembly:

- what is the maximum percentage in which it is possible to redistribute the budget between the different items of expenditure?
- Does the pre-financing payment foresee an insurance fee of 5%, as it is for H2020 project?

The two issues were forwarded by email to Mr. Pau Guell, PRIMA project Officer, who clarified that: there are no thresholds in the amount that can be transferred from one cost’s category to another. In any case, an email must be sent in advance to PRIMA foundation asking for an amendment to the original budget, by explaining the reasons for the request. PRIMA will send a feedback by clarifying on how to proceed. PRIMA does not retain the 5% of the pre-financing payment as a guarantee, as in the case of H2020 project. 60% of the total grand amount is paid as a pre-financing payment.

A further topic discussed during the GA meeting was the need to define the date for the first progress meeting, to be held after 6 months from the launch of the project, thus around 1-15 November 2021. It was



agreed that the project coordinator will create and circulate a doodle poll to identify the most suitable date for the first progress meeting on the basis of the availability of all project partners.

Meeting was closed at 1:30 PM CEST



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