CESSDA Work Plan 2020

CESSDA Widening Activities and Journals Outreach 2020

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Executive Summary

This report reviews the activities taken place within the Mentorship Programme, a sub-task of the CESSDA Widening and Outreach 2020 Work Plan Task. Originally, the task was planned to focus on three mentorships, each including an on-site visit as the core activity.

The conditions for carrying out the task as planned changed drastically in March 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic spread all over Europe. At this time, the team already had received six applications for the mentorship from CESSDA partners and new CESSDA members. After reviewing the applications, the team found that many of the activities requested were not possible to fulfil under the prevailing circumstances. It was decided, while awaiting the development of the pandemic, to try to support all six applicants as much as possible, either by addressing their demands within the Mentorship Programme or by transferring their technical questions to the experts in other CESSDA Working Groups and projects.

As the pandemic went on, the site visits had to be cancelled. Since activities slowed down, in most institutions, mentorship was only possible in Croatia. ADP and CROSSDA representatives met in several online sessions to discuss concrete archiving issues and exchange about the organisation of online training sessions for researchers and students.

Given the situation, in May after consulting CESSDA MO, the team decided to engage in an additional activity and to create a bi-weekly Newsletter for data service professionals. This responded to an expressed need by some CESSDA partners. Based on the Newsletter recipients, the Newsletter was also appreciated within CESSDA members.

Finally, in October, in a virtual consultation meeting, the mentees and the mentors engaged in the 2020 Mentorship Programme discuss together new ways to actively support mentees without travelling. Regular online meeting open to all to discuss concrete archiving issues was the most appreciated idea.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

CESSDA	Consortium of European Social Science Data Archives
ADP	Social Science Data Archives, Slovenia
APIS	Portuguese Archive of Social Information
BAS	Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
CPC	Centre for Political Courage, Kosovo
CROSSDA	Croatian Social Science Data Archive
CTS	Core Trust Seal, certification for trustworthy digital data repositories
DCC	Data Curation Centre
DDI	Data Documentation Initiative
EDDI	European DDI User Conference
EOSC	European Open Science Cloud
FORS	Swiss Centre of Expertise in the Social Sciences
IASSIST	International Association for Social Science Information Service and Technology
ISSDA	Irish Social Science Data Archive
LIBER	Association of European Research Libraries
RDA	Research Data Alliance
RODA	Romanian Social Data Archive
SND	Swedish National Data Service
SP(s)	Service Provider(s)
SSHOC	Social Sciences & Humanities Open Cloud
UKDA	UK Data Archive
WG(s)	Working Group(s)

Introduction

Widening European coverage is among the priorities of CESSDA and widening activities have been at the centre of a number of past and current projects. One of the aims of the work plan task CESSDA Widening and Outreach 2020 is to build on recent developments and to ensure continuity of long-term CESSDA widening efforts. The ultimate objectives of widening activities are to help CESSDA partners (i.e., data archives that are aiming to join CESSDA) in building mature data services and to help their countries in achieving CESSDA membership.

For this purpose, one main activity was to offer more active and close support to CESSDA partners through the Mentorship Programme. Moreover, one new activity, the pilot CESSDA Newsletter for Data Service Professionals, was developed in 2020 as a consequence of the COVID crisis and the related changes to the Mentorship Programme's initial plan.

The CESSDA Service Providers (SPs) involved in this task were: FORS (lead), ADP and SND.

The Mentorship Programme 2020

Aims & plan

The Mentorship Programme between more mature CESSDA SPs and less mature CESSDA SPs and partners was launched under the Work Plan 2019 Widening Activities Task. Based on its success, it was decided not only to redo the Mentorship Programme, but also to propose it as a regular activity for the widening purposes. The CESSDA Mentorship Programme is a way to ensure that CESSDA partners and less mature SPs stay active during the year, clarify and move towards realistic goals, and are closely supported and encouraged.

Based on the 2019 experience, when the lesson learnt was that site visits are essential to make progress thanks to fruitful discussions and concrete presentation of the archiving processes, the main aim in 2020 was to continue with one-on-one support, matching mentors and mentees (on the level of the institutions), in order to assist the latter in defining and realising their short-term goals. This could be with respect to strategic, policy, practical, or technical aims. Thus, a site visit per Mentorship was planned this year and these were the core activities of the Mentorship Programme. Overall, the Mentorship rules were similar to 2019[1]: the mentor, i.e. the mentee's reference contact person for the year, is responsible for actively accompanying the mentees throughout the year, documenting their regular

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[1] See 4.4. Mentorship rules (pages 7-8) in Bornatici C., Alfredsson I., Bradic-Martinovic A., Glavica M., Hegedus P., Kurta A., Leontiyeva Y., Morkevičius V., Vipavc Brvar I. and Zibert G. (2020). CESSDA Widening Activities 2019: Deliverable 3 - Report on the Online Support Service and the Mentorship Programme. *Submitted for publication on Zenodo.*

interactions, and sharing with the other mentors their mentee's needs to find together solutions to assist the mentees if necessary; while the mentee, after agreeing to collaborate with their mentor, should provide a final report on the received mentorship (including goals and activities realised during the mentorship, an assessment on the mentorship received, and information on their current situation and plans for the next year).

Selection of mentees & first activities

The budget assumed up to three mentees and site visits in total. A call for applications was sent to each CESSDA partner and less mature CESSDA SP. The mentees' applications were expected to contain information on their current situation and goals for 2020 in terms of institutionalizing their archives and building and developing their services. Based on these goals, they were asked to mention how the mentors could help and what were the expected benefits from the Mentorship. The call was opened on the 15th of January, and a reminder was sent on the 11th of February. By the deadline, the 16th of February, six applications from BAS/Bulgaria, CROSSDA/Croatia, ISSDA/Ireland, CPC/Kosovo, APIS/Portugal and RODA/Romania were received.

The applicants were at different stages of development and CESSDA membership. Croatia and Portugal were already members of CESSDA and their respective archives, CROSSDA and APIS, were developing their services and protocols. RODA and ISSDA were established archives, but Romania and Ireland were not members of CESSDA. The archives at BAS and CPC were partly conceptualised, and Bulgaria and Kosovo were not members of CESSDA. In addition, CROSSDA and CPC were part of the Mentorship Programme in 2019. The other four institutions were new applicants.

The applicants' demands were diverse. Some wanted to raise awareness to funders and researchers by organizing an event with CESSDA participation (BAS, CPC, CROSSDA and RODA). Others were interested in training new staff (CROSSDA and RODA), gaining support to obtain the Core Trust Seal (APIS and ISSDA) or receiving information on upcoming conferences and training (CPC). The rest of the demands targeted technical aspects around the CESSDA metadata model and the inclusion of studies in the CESSDA Data Catalogue (APIS and ISSDA), DDI standards and the creation of DDI files (APIS and RODA), or the implementation of Dataverse and data access conditions (ISSDA).

After the review of the applications, the mentors (i.e., ADP, FORS and SND, the CESSDA SPs involved in this task) decided to support all applicants, either by addressing their demands within the Mentorship Programme (still 3 site-visits planned) or by transferring their demands to other CESSDA Working Groups (WGs) and projects and making sure that their demands were answered. Indeed, based on the CESSDA Annex II 'Service Providers' Obligations' articles 10 and 11, specific and technical questions related to metadata and DDI, the CESSDA Data

Catalogue, the Core Trust Seal, and Dataverse were transferred respectively to the CESSDA Metadata Office project, the CESSDA Tools and Services Working Group, the CESSDA Trust Working Group, and the Dataverse team (led by DANS) also operating within the H2020 Social Sciences and Humanities Open Cloud (SSHOC)[2] cluster project, coordinated by CESSDA Main Office.

Each mentee partner was allocated to a mentor as follows:

- ADP was the mentor of CROSSDA and CPC;
- FORS was the mentor of APIS and RODA;
- SND was the mentor of BAS and ISSDA.

The mentors looked together for different possibilities to address most of the demands. An example is the demand concerning the organisation of an event to raise awareness. There was no money to organise any additional local event, but one of these countries could host the CESSDA Widening Event planned in 2020, or CESSDA MO could maybe visit some of these countries to make contact with the ministries. The mentors also suggested additional ways to raise awareness, e.g., in the Bulgarian and Kosovan cases, by archiving some datasets to acquire concrete knowledge and develop a proto-archive.

This reflection was done before the start of the COVID19 pandemic. First, the mentors initiated communication with the CESSDA Working Groups and SSHOC project. Then, answers with propositions on how to support each applicant within the Mentorship Programme or via other CESSDA Working Groups were sent to the mentees on the 23rd of March, having in mind that these propositions were subject to change according to the evolution of the pandemic.

Substantial changes in activities due to the COVID19 pandemic

The mentees' answers to our propositions showed that their original plans for 2020 were changing due to the pandemic (e.g., postponement of decisions, lag or cut in funding). Even though the mentors had regular meetings, the context was challenging for both the mentees and the mentors and made it difficult to actively support the mentees. Also, originally planned site visits were first questioned, and finally cancelled.

The regular communication between the mentors and their mentees proved that situations were mostly blocked at the mentees' institutions and the Mentorship Programme was mostly inactive, except in Croatia. Indeed, CROSSDA was established in May 2020 as a faculty centre at the University of Zagreb, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and was on the way to initiate formal institutional cooperation with relevant research, policy and infrastructure

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organisations in the country. Two research assistants were hired in the autumn 2020, and two persons that were involved in previous projects on establishing a social science data archive took over leadership and coordination roles.

ADP and CROSSDA staff met in several online sessions to discuss archiving processes and concrete anonymization issues. ADP offered support and advice in relation to organisation, delivery and technical facilitation of three online training sessions for researchers and students organized in December by CROSSDA. These training sessions were well visited (almost 200 participants at the first event).

However, for most mentees, the COVID situation slowed down work capacities, the process of archive building and the lobbying activities, which are core activities when establishing an archive. Therefore, it also influenced the participation in the Mentorship. Other institutions were waiting for extra-funding in order to, for example, employ new staff to be able to start or continue archiving work. Since these funding opportunities were postponed or cancelled, the demands to train new staff (e.g., RODA) and to support first archiving work (e.g., BAS) were not anymore valid. In addition, the support asked by BAS, CPC, CROSSDA and RODA concerning the organisation of local events to promote local data archives and CESSDA membership was also not possible. Indeed, based on their goal, these events were meant to be face-to-face instead of online. Moreover, in some countries it would be ill-timed to convince the current government to engage in building a data archive, while the funding opportunities were even harder to follow due to the pandemic.

Finally, APIS and ISSDA need for support concerned only technical aspects outside the expertise of the mentors. Their questions were transferred to experts from relevant CESSDA WGs and projects. The mentors stayed in contact with APIS and ISSDA to make sure that their questions were answered. CDC's request to be informed about upcoming conferences and training was also answered by the creation of the CESSDA Newsletter.

Since so little could be achieved during the Mentorship Programme 2020, no report was asked from the mentees. However, a virtual consultation meeting between the mentees and the mentors was held on the 8th of October. The first goal was to share mentees' experiences. The mentee partners were asked to present their current situation, how the COVID19 crisis impacted their original plans and how they were overcoming it, as well as how the Mentorship Programme, and more broadly the CESSDA community, could assist them in their next steps. The second goal was to discuss new ways to actively support mentees without travelling.

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The Pilot CESSDA Newsletter for Data Service Professionals

Due to the COVID19 pandemic, planned activities (namely site visits) could not take place. The mentorship team (ADP, FORS, SND) discussed possibilities on how to proceed and provide much needed information to CESSDA partners and beyond. After consulting CESSDA MO, a decision was made in May 2020 to publish a bi-weekly Newsletter for data service professionals. This would meet CDC's needs of information as mentioned in their Mentorship application and, more generally, would answer a common problem of lack of information at CESSDA partners. Indeed, these institutions are not included in ordinary CESSDA information channels (e.g., CESSDA or projects related Basecamp, mailing lists). Moreover, since these institutions often lack funding, they do not have resources to search the web for announcements of funding and collaboration opportunities, training and events or to stay up to date with publications relative to data archiving. Thus, the pilot Newsletter should include more information than the 'sole' information shared through ordinary CESSDA information channels. Furthermore, such Newsletter could also be useful for CESSDA SPs staff who are not listed in ordinary CESSDA information channels. Finally, this pilot Newsletter could replace CESSDA Newsletter, since the previous CESSDA Newsletters were released only three times in December 2018, April and November 2019.

Concept

The Pilot CESSDA Newsletter for Data Service Professionals was published every second Monday to inform the community about:

- Upcoming Training Possibilities;
- Upcoming Conference and Events;
- Publications and other resources;
- Possibilities for Funding and Collaborations in EU Projects;
- Employment Opportunities; and
- News from the Community.

The goal was to set a collaborative Newsletter, in the sense that the news items shared to the community come from the information received from the community. However, very few news items were sent to the Newsletter editors. Thus, the editors had to collect publicly accessible information from CESSDA, its members and beyond (i.e., institutions, projects and initiatives such as OpenAIRE, EU, EOSC, DCC, EDDI, IASSIST, LIBER, RDA). The news items included in the Newsletter were selected for the target audience of data service professionals as well as data service users, namely researchers and students in social sciences.

Newsletters were distributed via email to registered members. The CESSDA email address archive-support@cessda.eu was used for subscribing or unsubscribing to the Newsletter, and

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to receive information and news from the community. Invitation to registration was circulated on several CESSDA Basecamps and sent directly to CESSDA partners.

In collaboration with CESSDA Communication Officer, all Newsletters were published on the CESSDA website, in the Newsletter section, which gave them even larger visibility.[3]

Finally, the news items collected for the Newsletter were used as a source for the CESSDA Resource Directory.[4] The relevant news items (e.g., publications) were transferred to the Resource Directory editors to be processed and potentially included in the Resource Directory.

Overview of the Newsletter's releases in figures

The first Newsletter was sent the 9th of June to the chosen persons at CESSDA partners and SPs,[5] and to CESSDA MO and CESSDA Working Groups' leaders. The Newsletter concept was explained in the accompanying email, which also included information on how to register and a request to share the Newsletter with their colleagues.

In total, from June 2020 to February 2021 the editors sent 18 Newsletters containing 365 news items (Table 1) to 49 representatives of 23 countries and 26 institutions (Figure 1). 50% of the news items were publications and other resources (e.g., webinar published materials), 25% concerned training possibilities, 17% conferences and events, 4% funding and collaboration opportunities, 4% job announcements and 1% (4 news items) were news from the community.

The preparation and publication of each Newsletter took between one to two working days since the editors had to search different websites for news to share and then compile and produce the document. Moreover, the team met regularly to discuss and improve the preparation (e.g., the sources of information used) and publication procedures as well as the management of recipients' list and questions and the promotion of the Newsletter. Therefore, the team spent more resources than what was initially planned for the Mentorship Programme. The extra resources were financed as an in-kind contribution of the mentors' institutions, knowing that the work will benefit all.

[3] https://www.cessda.eu/News-Events/Newsletters [24.02.2021]

[4] The aim of the CESSDA Resource Directory is to gather and disseminate specific resources that help to build sustainable and mature data archives and support the development of new services and features within existing data archives. More information are available from CESSDA website: https://www.cessda.eu/Tools-Services/For-Service-Providers/Resource-Directory [14.06.2021]. This is the direct link to the Resource Directory: https://www.zotero.org/groups/2382601/cessda_resource_directory/library [14.06.2021].

[5] One contact person was chosen per CESSDA SP and partner. These were individuals active in past and present CESSDA Widening Activities (e.g., participants in Widening Events), SPs staff active in CESSDA activities or SPs representative at CESSDA Service Providers Forum.

Table 1: Overview of the released Newsletters

Year	Newsletter	Date	News items
2020	Newsletter #01	2020-06-09	18
2020	Newsletter #02	2020-06-22	20
2020	Newsletter #03	2020-07-06	20
2020	Newsletter #04	2020-07-20	26
2020	Newsletter #05	2020-08-03	18
2020	Newsletter #06	2020-08-17	18
2020	Newsletter #07	2020-08-31	16
2020	Newsletter #08	2020-09-14	31
2020	Newsletter #09	2020-09-28	15
2020	Newsletter #10	2020-10-12	21
2020	Newsletter #11	2020-10-26	22
2020	Newsletter #12	2020-11-09	19
2020	Newsletter #13	2020-11-23	19
2020	Newsletter #14	2020-12-07	17
2020	Newsletter #15	2020-12-21	19
2021	Newsletter #01	2021-01-18	29
2021	Newsletter #02	2021-02-01	17
2021	Newsletter #03	2021-02-15	20
Total	18 Newsletters		365 news items

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Figure 1: Countries with Newsletter recipients (status February 2021)[6]
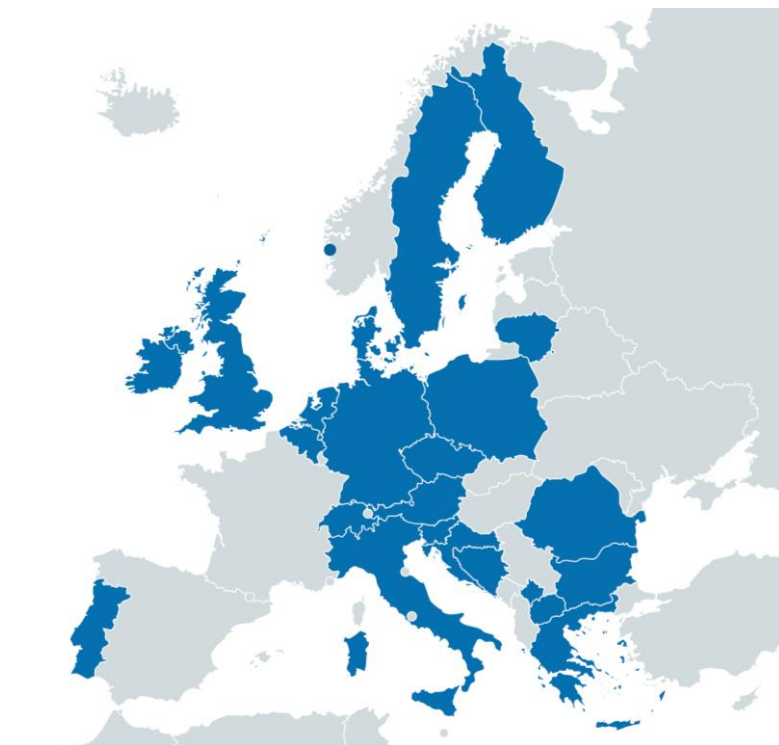
Overcoming challenges and organising the future

The above figures show that the main challenges for the future Newsletter are to engage CESSDA SPs and partners to share their news and to increase the number of recipients. Even though all data service professionals were invited to subscribe to the newsletter, very few communication officers at CESSDA SPs and partners registered to receive the Newsletter. These people are key partners to share their institutions' news, publications and events. Also, no IT staff registered for the Newsletter. A way of improving the Newsletter for this specific group could be to collaborate with the CESSDA Tools Working Group in order to publish relevant news items for them. Even though it was clear that the Newsletter could be improved both in terms of content and form to better answer CESSDA SPs and partners' information

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[6] The Newsletters reached recipients from CESSDA MO: from 16 (out 22) CESSDA SPs – ADP (Slovenia), APIS (Portugal), AUSSDA (Austria), CROSSDA (Croatia), ČSDA (Czech Republic), DANS (Netherlands), DNA (Denmark), FORS (Switzerland), FSD (Finland), GESIS (Germany), ISSDA (Ireland), MK DASS (North Macedonia), SO.DA.Net (Greece), SODHA (Belgium), SND (Sweden), United Kingdom (UKDA); from 7 CESSDA partners – CPC (Kosovo), DASS-BiH (Bosnia and Herzegovina), ISSK-BAS (Bulgaria), LiDA (Lithuania), PADS (Poland), RODA (Romania), UniData (Italy); and finally from two other institutions in Germany (Karlsruhe Institute of Technology) and in Lithuania (DAtA). Institutions are known from the recipients' registration email.

needs, other challenges could not be assessed during the project time frame, and the team only received thanks and encouraging remarks, such as:

"Thank you! This is a great idea! I appreciate it and fully support!"

"Connecting this way sounds like a great idea. I am looking forward to hearing from other archives and their experiences and learnings."

"Thank you for all your efforts in communication with the community of social science data archives."

"Nice work!"

"Good initiative!"

At the end of the year, the editors began a reflection about bringing the Newsletter to the next level. The editors and the CESSDA Communication Officer discussed possibilities to use MailerLite, a dedicated tool for sending professional newsletters, used in the past to distribute the main CESSDA Newsletter. This tool also facilitates the management of subscriptions. Since a new team is involved in the CESSDA work plan 2021-2022,[7] it was decided that the review of the Newsletter (both in terms of content and from) as well as the challenges already noticed should be tackled by the new team. Moreover, a survey among the Newsletter's recipients is planned in 2021 to review their needs and further develop the newsletter accordingly.

The transition between the 2020 team and the 2021-2022 team (SND, UKDA and CESSDA Communication Officer) was made progressively. The Newsletter's concept and the new version were discussed by the two teams in December and January. If the scope of this Newsletter is broader, it still provides information about upcoming training, conferences, newly published documents, and funding and collaboration opportunities that are interesting for data service professionals. The Newsletter 2.0 was sent for the first time in March 2021 by the new team.

Conclusion

Due to the pandemic, the Mentorship Programme could not deliver all activities that were planned for 2020. Activities were often interrupted, or uncertain and side visits cancelled. Only the ADP-CROSSDA Mentorship was successful despite the COVID situation. The team overcame this by developing a Newsletter to keep mentees and, more broadly, CESSDA SPs and partners informed about upcoming training and events, newly published resources targeting issues around data archiving and open access, and opportunities for collaborations

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[7] The main goal of this task apart for preparing and sending the Newsletters regularly, is to build a strategy for the development of the CESSDA Newsletter.

and funding. The positive comments from the Newsletter's recipients as well as the fact that the Newsletter reached a fair number of CESSDA SPs and partners (23) suggest that CESSDA should continue to publish a Newsletter for Data Service Professionals and to improve it based on more knowledge of CESSDA SPs and partners' interests and needs.

Concerning the Mentorship Programme, this year's mixed experience demonstrates that new arrangements need to be made for future editions. The 2019 Mentorship Programme has shown that one-to-one support focused on a site visit and regular online contacts was a successful manner to organise the Mentorship activities and was also appreciated by mentees. However, this year taught the Mentorship Programme team that organising Mentorship activities this way also entails a risk when the context forces mentee's institutions to slow down. If 2020 was specific in the fact that every country was in this situation, in the future a slowdown could also happen to a mentee institution. In that case, the mentor also risks underspending its personal months.

The virtual consultation meeting that took place in October and gathered all mentor and mentee institutions focused on new ways to actively support mentees. The ideas discussed offer a complement to the one-to-one support and thus also respond to the potential risk noticed above, as well as possible traveling ban in future pandemic crises. The main suggestion was to organise more regular meetings or open sessions for dealing with arising and concrete questions. A mix between bi-weekly one-to-one discussions and monthly online discussion sessions. These discussion sessions could target different audiences, for example they could be open to mentees, or to all CESSDA SPs and partners. These discussion sessions could also target specific issues – e.g., proposed by the mentee partners – or be more general and answer all types of questions like a lively Q&A where all participants could ask questions but also answer questions and share their experiences. Also, for specific issues, mentors could ask specific CESSDA experts to be present. In addition to these live discussion sessions, a chat could also be set where everybody can post questions, answers and discuss different topics in a longer time frame. Again, this possibility could be available only to the mentors and mentees, or to all CESSDA SPs and partners.

Based on these ideas, the next Mentorship Programme team should develop a new plan and strategy to support mentee institutions. This could include a review of the mentorship rules with for example the addition of the bi-weekly meetings. A last important point is to define the support CESSDA MO, WGs and SPs could provide to the mentees – and to other CESSDA SPs and partners – outside the Mentorship. Indeed, it was seen that several questions, notably technical questions, would be more efficiently and precisely answered by experts outside the Mentorship Programme team.