

UNICA Research

Supporting the coordination of multi-partner EU-funded projects

LEARNING FROM PRACTICE

EXPERIENCES FROM STOCKHOLM UNIVERSITY

Report of the UNICA webinar on 9 June 2022



Report UNICA Research webinar “Supporting the coordination of multi-partner EU-funded projects”, 9 June 2022

Webinar promoted by Stockholm University

Speakers of the event:

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Report UNICA Webinar

“Supporting the coordination of multi-partner EU-funded projects”

Summary

On June 9th, 2022, the UNICA Research working group hosted a webinar aiming to display the experience at Stockholm University in encouraging and supporting researchers to become coordinators of EU-funded projects. Together, the moderator - Maryam Hansson Edalat and the speaker - Ana Cordeiro, shared their expertise, experiences, and practices when it comes to coordinating multi-partner EU-funded projects. Following a presentation given by Ana Cordeiro, participants had the time to share their questions (see Annex I) and share some of their own experiences.

Webinar overview and topics of discussion

During the webinar, Ana Cordeiro provided her insight view and experience, coming up from her prior and her current position at University of Stockholm. Ana kicked off with relevant data linked to the different actors, areas, and University structure that the Office of Research, Engagement, and Innovation Services is also part of.

University Structures – Connection and accessibility matters

Going deeper into the subject, it was evident how important is for the Office to be structurally connected with the other departments and to be accessible to researches willing to use its services. That provides an interactive environment and fosters synergies of different actors, which supports the aim and defines the action of the Office - like

- Ensure high quality and sustainable long-term conditions for research and innovation
- Have public and global engagement, supporting innovation and research integrity
- Engage with nonacademic partners
- Contribute to increasing external research, by being engaged in several activities (calls for funding, capacity building, grant writing etc.) targeting separate groups.

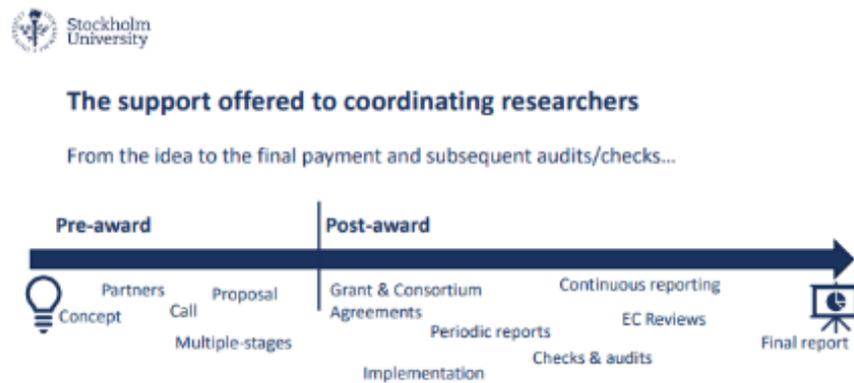
Clear Roles with Clear Targets – Approaches that bring results

To extract her key remarks, the speaker uses the Office's role in providing a one-to-one support for top researchers who want to apply for funding (public, private and EU) such as ERC grants. The role of a coordinator is perceived as very prestigious, usually being associated with scientific excellence, with leadership skills, therefore researchers are interested in taking up these roles. This choice can help increase their visibility and allow them to have further influence not only on the project they are coordinating or the partnerships they are involved with, but also open opportunities for different research activities. However, some might choose not to have such a role, as EU projects are very complex and there is a lot of non-scientific responsibilities in executing the tasks.

In this regard, the University of Stockholm defines each role separately and gives space for each of them to act in their own frame. That is translated to:

- **Project Management:**
 - Services and the role of Project Manager are integrated within the central administration.
 - EU funding insight is facilitated by administrators, who get to be integrated within the administration of the University and thus optimize their resources.
 - Integration within the central administration provides Project Managers long term perspectives - in terms of career or expertise. That can lead to increase the number of projects approved, as there is space for advancing the team's competences for more effective project management.
- **Researchers:**
 - Support and provide their services, which are directly linked to the project and its professional management,
 - having more time to focus on what is important on the scientific leadership of the project and attain, conceivably better results.

Each project (picture 1) has a process from the moment of applying for funding up to the final report. Thus, a Project Manager can focus on the key parts of the funding requirements and reporting. That gives space and time for researchers to focus on the implementation and creation of outcomes of the project.



Picture 1

Moving on, the speaker used ongoing projects from the University as a way to break down the specific support offered to researches and suggested skills a project manager should have. Points presented can be found in the [presentation](#) – slides 9 to 11.

Leading up to her conclusions and before getting into the Q&A part, the speaker shared the potential challenges a Manager can face (slide 11). The challenges addressed were:

- Launching phase and preparation, templates, and interactions - which need a prominent level of trust,
- Projects and set deadlines overlapping - there is the need for a Project Manager to be able to handle the workload across the different project and topics covers, along with the different time restricted tasks,
- Diversity of partners also means diversity of actors, tools used, working schedules within different time zones etc. - It is always necessary to set clear and realistic expectations, while being able to discipline (even if it can be challenging) when needed,
- Resources – Time and funding is very limited, regardless the workload.

Annex I

- Q1: How do you handle the balance between researches not wanting to be managed, but helped? Do your project managers have any power, or are they pure support?
- Q2: What are the project managers' professional background? What do they do when not working with project management (since they are working part time), are they working as "regular" research officers?
- Q3: Are the Project Managers financed via the Project? What happens to them after the end of the Project?
- Q4: What sections in the application would the project manager / research officer write?
- Q5: At what stage of the proposal development do you involve colleagues of TTO or IPR?
- Q6: I would imagine that a legal officer would manage the contracts, grant agreements and legal issues, and a financial officer the budget and financial reporting, but do I understand it correctly that the project manager is responsible for all of this?
- Q7: What percentage of your worktime is spent on the management of 1 Horizon project?
- Q8: Do you also offer that kind of support from central administration when your university participates in the project as a beneficiary? If no, who does that?
- Q9: Where do you find support to your role - do you have many written procedures to lean on? Or are you working closely with other experts (legal, financial etc.)?
- Q10: Do you include any form of redundancy in your position(s)? What happens if you are away?
- Q11: Do you use any project management software? Could you recommend something?
- Q12: Is it a prerequisite of your University to accept a Project Manager for a coordinated Project?
- Q13: I was wondering where the project manager is located? Are they in the RM office or closer to the coordinators (i.e., at departments?)?
- Q14: Why was it decided to entrust management of coordinated projects to the officer employed in central administration and not to administrators in the faculties conducting the project?
- Q15: You as a Project manager is part of the budget for the project?
- Q16: How many project managers you have? And how many projects one person usually handles at one time?