
E-MANUAL

GUIDE TO PLANNING EU PROJECTS IN THE HEALTH AND SOCIAL HEALTH SECTOR

3.3 PROJECT ORGANIZATION

Planning a project involves a number of activities:

- management of contractual relations with project partners;
- definition of roles;
- creation of a "project culture."
- formation of European and national working groups;
- establishment and maintenance of a communication system;
- establishment and maintenance of an information and reporting system; management of critical phases.

DEFINITION OF ROLES

One of the main organizational tasks of the Coordinator is to precisely define the respective roles together with the entire group.

The definition of roles is closely related to the activities required to achieve project goals, to be considered competence, communication skills and ability to work effectively in a team. It is extremely important to avoid assigning roles and tasks according to a top-down approach. Instead, it is better to involve all members of the group in the decision-making process. The project team must decide on the assignment of specific content to individual members and, equally important, agree on the scope of their respective responsibilities in specific activities.

It is essential that those who serve as project managers have the necessary time to devote to the project. Here is a useful analysis of the required qualities:

- experience working on projects;
- knowledge of project management and use of related tools;
- experience with project content;
- ability to handle complex structures and situations;
- communication skills: moderator and speaker skills, ability to facilitate constructive and effective communication within the project and its social environment, understanding of social dynamics within a project;
- leadership skills: leading groups, motivating people, organizing and developing processes, dynamic approach to implementing and completing tasks;
- ability to cope with pressure: tenacity and perseverance, especially in the face of unforeseen problems, urgencies and resistance from within or outside the

project organization.

If envisaged in the budget, it is always advisable to identify two other figures to support the project manager: 1. junior project manager (who will also take care of all secretarial aspects), 2. administrative.

CREATION OF PROJECT GROUPS

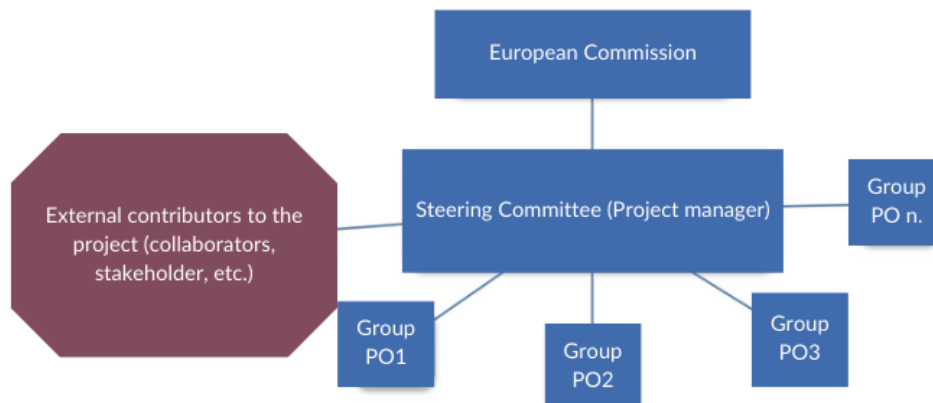
The Steering Committee

The actual project working group consists of the active representatives of each lead partner, 1 to 2 from each partner. Two people are obviously more effective than one, but sometimes this possibility is ruled out because of financial problems. Overall, the group is more effective and less costly when its membership is less than 12. Six to eight people is the ideal number for good group work.

The Working Groups (or technical group)

In many European projects, the creation of working groups, or technical teams across the partnership, is an organizational necessity. Large partnerships especially require more differentiated organizational structures.

Groups can be formed in many ways. Usually, a group corresponds to a work package. Each group must appoint a coordinator from within it, who is usually on staff to the partner leader of that work project (WP). They will, if necessary, represent the group in Transnational Steering Committee meetings, or otherwise, respond for the group when called upon by the project manager.



Most of the work is done in technical groups. The Steering Committee mainly carries out coordination, evaluation and monitoring, planning and review activities. Each partner may have other external partners, operating nationally or internationally, such as "collaborating partners" (to be checked according to the relevant programme as to whether such costs are eligible).

COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

Because partners are separated by great distances, an effective communication system is essential in transnational projects. On the one hand, there is a need for a functioning technical system that supports partners in verbal and written communication and working together. A culture of communication must also be established so that group members not only work together, but also know how to make the most of the benefits of a good working group for the progress and success of the project, in spite of the distances that separate them. In addition, communication with the project's environment should not be overlooked, which must be integrated into the system.

As a rule, communication in European cooperation projects is carried out in the following ways:

- project-related meetings;

- bilateral or transnational visits;
- formal presentations;
- reports, memos and notes;
- fax messages;
- correspondence;
- phone calls;
- voice messages;
- email;
- video conferences;
- Virtual tools for collaborative projects.

Long distances can be bridged by using new technologies for project-related communications. The structure of the communication system must be planned from the beginning and estimated in the budget.

An IT expert should be appointed and tasked with the installation and maintenance of the facilities. The expert should know what tools are already available, as well as the relevant providers or institutions that offer them. If necessary, the IT expert should devise a tool suited to the specific needs of the project. In addition, it should provide assistance to other project members in the effective use of IT facilities.

It is important to make an informed decision about the means of communication and to choose the most useful tools in view of the money available and the type of project (e.g., use email for regular, daily communication and messaging; set up an intranet on a project website or use another digital sharing tool such as Google Drive to collaborate in a virtual work environment; use teleconferences to intensify the work of the transnational group in the intervals between steering group meetings, or with group members who do not travel regularly).

INFORMATION AND REPORTING SYSTEM

It is important to put in place an effective system of information, documentation and reporting within the project. Each participant must be kept up-to-date on the current status of the project, work completed, next steps, outcomes of national and transnational meetings, and assignment of tasks. Information on all

planning tools, such as the structured work plan and Gantt charts, should also be shared, as well as on operating units, which are actually some of the most important and effective communication tools within a project. The others are meeting minutes and interim reports.

The establishment of the documentation and reporting system is one of the tasks incumbent on the coordinator (through the project manager), as well as being the main tool for project management and monitoring.

MANAGEMENT OF CRITICAL PHASES

One can always speak of a crisis when things do not go according to plan and serious difficulties arise. The reasons can be varied. It is up to the Coordinator to deal with the crisis and find ways to get the project through this difficult period.

Critical factors should already be included in the detailed planning of the project. Work package planning and Gantt charts should enable the identification of likely bottlenecks in terms of human resources or time. Regular monitoring of progress and financial resources can help to predict a crisis and devise possible countermeasures in advance.

For optimal crisis management, one must be alert and anticipate crises: the earlier one catches them, the more limited and easier they are to manage. One of the main management tasks of the Coordinator is to firmly control the entire project at every stage. Contrasts between groups and individual members exert considerable influence on the success of a project. The Coordinator is tasked with addressing these contrasts immediately so as to avoid a deeper and worse crisis for the whole project. Conflict within a partnership can also result in the loss of a partner, an outcome that can jeopardize the quality and outcomes of a project, or even its very existence. From the outset, it is essential to formulate a sound strategy for conflict and crisis management and to agree within the partnership on how to handle such problems.