

# So you want to apply for EU funding?

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# What you need to be aware of before you start

- The person-month concept
- Budgets
- Paperwork and systems
- Potential problems
- Managing your risks
- Consortiums
- Sources of help

*Please chime in with your comments and questions*



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# My background

- Since 2009 - Professor Alan Walker's EU project manager for Framework Programme 7 projects
- ERA-AGE 2, FUTURAGE: delivery, reporting
- INNOVAGE, MOPACT: application, negotiation
- Structural funding/regional funding

# Research vs Administration

Grant me the serenity to accept the things I  
cannot change,  
The courage to change the things I can,  
And wisdom to know the difference.

# My assumptions

- Multi-partner collaboration
- Multiple countries (not always HEIs)
- Possibly multiple disciplines



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# The Person-Month concept

# The Person-Month concept

- A unit of time = a month of work from a single person
- Longer in the UK than in many other countries
- Planning, costing and reporting must be done in PM
- Abstract concept in UK HE, used only when costing models demand it

How many PM will your project take?

or

How many PM can you afford?



# The fallacy of PM

- Increased efficiency = decrease time allocated to senior staff, increase time to junior staff = increase in PM for the same budget
- Reduced budget = move time from senior staff to junior staff = same PM for lower budget
- Effect on skills, experience and expertise to deliver the project?



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# Budgets

You have €3 million euros for your whole project.

How are you going to spend it?

# How do you shape a budget?

- By WP
- By partner
- By research priority
- By discipline
- By political priority
- By relative country cost
- By effort/person month
- By assertiveness
- By dictatorship
- By relative overhead reimbursement

**There are better answers, not always right ones**

# How do you shape a budget?

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  - By partner
  - By research priority
  - By discipline
  - By political priority
  - By relative country cost
  - By effort/person month
  - By assertiveness
  - By dictatorship
  - *By relative overhead reimbursement*
- How much do you really have to spend?***

# The black hole of overheads

- Overheads may take up to 40% of your total budget
- You don't have €3m to spend
- How are you going to spend your €1.8m?
  - How have your budget decisions changed?

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*Simplification under Horizon 2020*



# The white hole to cover extra costs

EU funding does come with some costs

- Exchange rate differentials
- Ineligible costs – VAT, airport tax
- IT equipment
- Differing levels of reimbursement

Not all projects have such generous overheads

- Offset other research projects

Who understands their institutional funding  
structure?

What happens to the overheads generated?

# *Training opportunities*

- Budgeting
- Spreadsheets



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# EU paperwork and systems

# Research vs administration

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# Less paperwork, more system

- Research/financial reporting at least twice during the life of the project
- Move to aligned online submission
- Less paper – even signed documents – required
- Hierarchical layers of access and authority (less than there used to be)
- Cross check paper guidance against online systems

# Responsibilities

- Each partner – their own financial information
- Coordinator – everything else
  - Work package leaders – scientific activities
  - Partners – dissemination activities, publications
  - Impact statement

# Responsibilities

- Each partner – **their own financial information**
- Coordinator – everything else
  - Work package leaders – scientific activities
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*The claim can only be submitted when all partners have submitted.*



# Tactics for avoiding delays

- Keep an eye on budgets, dissemination activities, scientific activities etc through the project
- Ensure full transparency on deadlines, responsibilities
- Ensure everyone registered on EU systems in advance
- Peer pressure

# Audits and EU reviews

- Any partner's involvement in any project can be audited up to five years after the end of the project. This is a standard process.
- EU reviews are of the project (scientific activities) and are often carried out if the Commission has concerns about the competence of the consortium or coordinator.

# Belt and braces

(also called “defensive management”)

## Internal systems

- Papertrail - keep all emails, notes of calls
- Copies of everything – especially financial information

# *Training opportunities*

- EU specific courses on reporting/project management (fee)
- DG RTD briefing days (free, but only to grant winners)
- Informal/local support
- General filing/admin processes
- Spreadsheets
- Project management (for researchers) - project standards, compliance and reporting



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# Potential problems

# Languages

- English as a (mostly) common language
- Distinctiveness of non-native English speakers
- Disciplinary languages....lots of arguments about definitions



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## Anglo-EU Translation Guide

What the British say	What the British mean	What others understand
I hear what you say	I disagree and do not want to discuss it further	He accepts my point of view
With the greatest respect...	I think you are an idiot	He is listening to me
That's not bad	That's good	That's poor
That is a very brave proposal	You are insane	He thinks I have courage
Quite good	A bit disappointing	Quite good
I would suggest...	Do it or be prepared to justify yourself	Think about the idea, but do what you like
Oh, incidentally/ by the way	The primary purpose of our discussion is...	That is not very important
I was a bit disappointed that	I am annoyed that	It doesn't really matter
Very interesting	That is clearly nonsense	They are impressed
I'll bear it in mind	I've forgotten it already	They will probably do it
I'm sure it's my fault	It's your fault	Why do they think it was their fault?
You must come for dinner	It's not an invitation, I'm just being polite	I will get an invitation soon
I almost agree	I don't agree at all	He's not far from agreement
I only have a few minor comments	Please re-write completely	He has found a few typos
Could we consider some other options	I don't like your idea	They have not yet decided

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# A consortium of many cultures

- Organisational
- Administrative
- Scientific
- Regional
- National
- Austerity
- Legacy
- Stereotypes



# At the earliest stage

- You need internal support for your project
  - Talk to your PI/department/faculty
  - Talk to your central services
- Some projects may not be viable:
  - Some funding costs institutions money, if overheads are lower than cost
  - Some personnel funding may cost institutions more than the income secured
  - Some forms of funding may not be legally possible
- Some projects may not be supported – strategically or politically unacceptable

# Application stage

- Not meeting application rules – number of countries, mix of geographies, aim of research call
- Not enough/right partners
- Lack of agreement among partners
- Lack of time to develop proposal
- Not matching activities to budget
- Missing the deadline
- *Internal support*

# Negotiation stage

- Unhelpful Project Officer
- Partners refuse to negotiate on their activities or budget
- You realise some aspects are unfeasible
- You realise something has not been costed in

# Early days of implementation

- Delays in paperwork completion/payment
- Different start up/lead in times due to local rules
- You realise the Coordinator has no idea what they are doing
- You realise the other partners have no idea what they are doing
- The back-seat Coordinator shows up
- You realise 60 000 euros of temperature controlled courier costs have not been costed in

# Ongoing

- Lack of quality of research
- Lack of completion of activities
- Lack of leadership
- Delays in reporting (some partners dependent on cash income)
- Lack of confidence in project/consortium by funders
- Austerity

Some delays in delivery are expected....a few months can be caught up in a 3 year project

# *Training opportunities*

- Project management (for researchers) - Project scoping, Project planning including contingency planning, Project stakeholder management
- Negotiation
- Leadership
- Budgetting
- Spreadsheets



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# Managing your risks



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Has anyone been part of a project that failed?



# Formal risk assessment

- At beginning
- At regular intervals – particularly in response to any red flags
- Contingency planning
- Escalation of issues

# Communication is key

- Keep talking, emailing, meeting - transparency
- Manage expectations
- Be consistent
- Be clear that you want to know about problems before they become crises (no surprises)
- Do not be afraid to push (politely): add items to agendas, raise queries in emails, speak to other partners about your concerns

# The Consortium Agreement

- Obligatory for some contracts, optional for others
- Strongly recommended
- Defines obligations, expectations of partners
- Provides some routes for control, correction and mediation
- Complements all other paperwork, does not overrule it
- Standard templates available, can be customised as required
- May be 6 or 7 iterations

# Advantages to the CA

- It can reveal muddled and inconsistent thinking
- Forces partners to pay attention
  - They will be focused on their science
  - All other paperwork is standard
  - This is customised to the project and its partners
- Identifies areas of potential conflict
- Essential if any private sector/spin out activities/patents involved
- Essential for large consortiums – 20+ partners – helps shape the management processes

# Non risk management approaches

## The Ostrich Approach

- Refer back to the contract
- Deliver your contractual obligations
- But, if project completely fails, you may not be reimbursed

Mutiny?

# *Training opportunities*

- Project management (for researchers)
- Conflict management
- Leadership
- Project planning including contingency planning
- Stakeholder management



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# Consortiums



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Do you have all the partners you need for your project?



# Who should your partners be?

- Who do you know?
- Who has the expertise you need?
- What do you want out of the project?
- What do others want out of the project?
- Who will deliver?
- Who will add cachet to the application?
- Who do you want to work with?
- Who do you trust?

# What matters?

- Scientific excellence
- Reliability
- Collaborative approach
- Partnership approach (back-seat Coordinators?)
- Financial robustness
- Stakeholder connections/impact opportunities
- Experience with external funding
- Understanding of specific funding mechanism
- Flexibility to reflect political perspectives

# Consortium development

In ascending order of complexity

- Develop a project in advance
- Be invited to join an existing consortium
- Wait for call to come out and develop project and consortium in the six months before the deadline
- Do item 3, above, in six weeks

**Partners key to a successful project**

# *Training opportunities*

- Networking
- Communication
- Negotiation
- Stakeholder management



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# Sources of help

# Your networks

- Colleagues, mentors
- Other local researchers dealing with similar funding
- Departmental staff
- Central services staff
- National Contact Points
- Other partners

# Your skills

## **Project management for researchers**

- Project scoping
- Project planning including contingency planning
- Project risk management
- Project stakeholder management
- Project standards, compliance and reporting

# So you want to do EU research?







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# Good luck!

## *Questions?*

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