

## INCEPTION SEMINAR 2018

### for recipients of grants awarded following the 2016 DEAR CfP

### Brussels, 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> March 2018

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#### **This report ...**

... provides a summary overview of the presentations, discussions and outcomes of the inception seminar with 70 participants representing 23 projects awarded grants following the 2016 EC's DEVCO DEAR Programme Call for Proposals.<sup>1</sup> Several European Commission staff members and a number of project coordinators of previous DEAR projects also took part.

#### **The Inception Seminar 2018 ...**

... provided an opportunity to build the capacity of newly contracted EU DEAR projects staff members by providing a space for discussion and learning, as well as information on various organisational, finance and DEAR specific topics. The Seminar was organised for participants to exchange their experiences and to request guidance on numerous project management issues. Various presentations made at the Seminar are available online at: <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/dear/news/presentations-dear-inception-seminar-2018>

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<sup>1</sup> For a list of projects awarded contracts see: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/europeaid/online-services/index.cfm?do=publi.welcome&nbPubliList=15&orderby=upd&orderbyad=Desc&searchtype=RS&aofr=151103>

## 1. Programme and context of the Inception Seminar

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The two-day seminar was attended by **70 Civil Society Organisation and Local Authority representatives** of the 23 projects that were awarded a contract following the 2016 DEAR Call for Proposals. Three representatives of each of the projects participated in the seminar: project managers from all lead applicants, lead financial or administration staff and one partner/co-applicant.

In addition, **seven EC DEVCO staff members**, with specific responsibilities for the DEAR Programme, took part, providing inputs into plenary and group discussions. Plenary inputs were also provided by other Commission staff on Contracting and Financing and EU Visibility and Communications. The event was facilitated by members of the **DEAR Support Team**.

The purpose of the seminar was:

*To build the capacity of newly contracted EU DEAR projects by providing a space for discussion and learning, as well as information on various organisational, finance and DEAR specific topics.*

The Acting Head of Unit DEVCO.B.1 - Gender Equality, Human Rights and Democratic Governance, **Fabienne Van Den Eede**, opened the seminar assessing the difficult times as a “moment for us to recommit to our European fundamental values of peace and democracy”:

“[DEAR] is a unique programme in EU development cooperation as it is the only programme that works in the EU and targets the EU citizen – to make him better informed, better engaged. And we want more DEAR-active citizens.” She stressed the importance of communicating the results and impact, finding “achievements that we can share [to a wider public].”

After Harm-Jan Fricke (DEAR Support Team) presented the programme of the 2 days, the Head of the Commission’s DEAR Sector, **Joseph Schermesser** and DEAR Programme Task Manager **Markus Pirchner** briefly described the issues to be discussed and kicked-off the discussion with a brief comment on 'What is a good narrative report?' Interim and final narrative reports are expected to focus on results and outcomes and not on lists of activities carried out by the projects. Reports should provide a basis for communicating the relevance of project outcomes to EU publics and to global development.

Taking up the communications theme highlighted by Fabienne Van Den Eede, Joseph Schermesser said that in our context “it is more important than in the past to reach audiences that are not yet informed – if we are to contribute to global change of minds and public opinion, in terms of returns and ability to change behaviour as voting, as consumers, as actors.” Markus Pirchner concluded by saying that “DEAR is more important than ever to address, as far as possible, the wider citizens – the people in the street – those who may not have heard your message before”.

## 2. Introductions of projects and their Task Managers

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The opening words were followed by an introduction of the Commission's Task Managers to 'their' projects.

Throughout the two-day event a few slots of time in the programme – and also the breaks - were dedicated to this opportunity. Project representatives were grouped with the Task Manager that will follow the projects on implementing their activities and reporting their results. Five groups were formed around the DEAR Programme Task Managers: **David Flynn, Anne Marie Vermunt, Alfredo Janampa, Markus Pirchner and Jady (Zhengyu) Wang.**

Getting to know each other, sharing the main goals of each project, introducing the way in which they are going to communicate throughout these next few years and raising questions about the (financial) administration of the project, were the main themes for discussion at these sessions. "Task Managers were participating really well and getting to know each other was a good objective", considered one participant.

Different time slots in the programme were dedicated to allow discussion of specific issues and questions posed by each project with their Task Manager.



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### 3. Learning from past DEAR projects: the importance of M&E

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Throughout the two-days of the Inception Seminar there were a series of sessions that introduced participants to some of the experiences and learning from previous DEAR projects. A number of former DEAR project managers had been invited to provide case study inputs based on their experiences: highlighting processes, achievements and sometimes also failures, and how they can be a basis for learning, including by new projects.

Four coordinators of former EU supported DEAR projects, already concluded or on their final reporting phases, participated in the Inception seminar:

- **Tereza Čajková**, from the 'Eat Responsibly' project (Glopolis, CZ)
- **Elaine Mahon**, from 'Challenging the Crisis' (IDEA, IE)
- **Sofia Caiolo**, 'Ladder project' (ALDA, BE)
- **Mirjam Hägele**, 'Make Fruit Fair' (OXFAM, DE)

The first good practice sharing session was dedicated to the monitoring and evaluation of DEAR projects, as well as sharing former project experiences of EC ROM visits and reviews. Key concepts to consider:

- **Monitoring** = to do with the activities and the costs that help you to achieve your outcomes (What? How much? How many?)
- **Evaluation** = to do with assessments of the quality, effectiveness, relevance, sustainability, impact, efficiency of your project
- and (possibly the most important aspect) **Learning** = to do with using your experiences and evidence to plan future work (and correct your route to further implementation).

Two former managers from very diverse projects - one working with schools & teachers and one a pure campaigning & advocacy project - presented their inputs. '**Eat Responsibly**' is a project working with schools and teachers in ten countries, aiming to introduce concepts relating to responsible food consumption in teaching and learning programmes. The project was nominated for the 'Global Education Innovation' award and has recently been accepted for further promotion by the Eco School Network, strengthening sustainability of outcomes. '**Make Fruit Fair!**' was a project that aimed to affect supermarket policies and practices in relation to their supply chains for tropical fruit

The former manager of '[Eat Responsibly](#)', **Tereza Čajková**, (presentation available [online](#)) stressed the importance of **Learning** from implementation as part of the project. To support this, the team prepared monthly reports ("sometimes was hard to meet this target" and track all highlights happening in project countries) and set up "learning circles" that proved to be a good way to harvest results and successes (once in two months through skype calls). This **Outcomes harvesting** was always finalised through Coordination Calls - time for knowledge and experience transfer between all partners involved in the project.

The project had designed 30 progress and outcome indicators which were reported on in **Partner Quarterly Monitoring Reports** (quantitative) and in a **Twice-yearly Qualitative Monitoring Report**.

It had been a hope that the **external evaluator** would bring "deep insights" into learning from the project. What the evaluator did was identify those project components that played a enabling role in supporting

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sustainability of impact and the core meaning of the action even after the end of the Eat Responsibly project. The evaluator also identified the factors (good practices) that have supported project success in the project partner countries, with special focus on the global dimension. However, because the evaluator was only brought into the project at the mid-term stage not as much use was made of evaluation and learning as originally intended. In the words of Tereza: “We really should have had the evaluator involved from the beginning of the project”.

Other recommendations from Tereza: for Lead partner to consider updating the formal project Log-frame to the intervention logic, including set of indicators. For Lead and partners to re-examine expenditure made to date per budget line and budget heading, proceed with an analytical forecast for future costs, considering adjustments of budget. For the **Final evaluation**, the stress was on summarizing experience of individual actors and identifying factors enabling and supporting sustainability.

**Mirjam Hägele** (presentation [online](#)) related a different experience from the “[Make Fruit Fair](#)” project, a tropical fruit supply chain campaign & advocacy project involving 27 organisations and working in 20 EU member states. “We had an evaluator from the beginning, working with me and the internal monitoring and evaluation staff member.” The **external evaluator** accompanied the building of the project and “understood what we were doing”- attended also the kick-off meeting where he explained to all “what M&E is about”, helped to develop an M&E system that was based on the EU system and worked with the team to review and find the adequate indicators for the project. Recommendation is: “plan before you rush into working with your external audiences.”

As part of the mid-term evaluation an **internal Learning report** was developed with findings from M&E work done to date and with recommendations for further project implementation. It was discussed and followed up at planning meetings. The **Final evaluation** was done both for MFF and EC interests, covering outputs and outcomes / impacts.

As for lessons learned, M&E of such a big project is a heavy workload and there are budget constraints. For an external evaluator becoming a 'critical friend' and an invaluable support to the project, you need to budget 3% to 6% of the budget to MEL activities (“it may sound a lot, but it pays you back in improved efficiency and effectiveness”). Mirjam also found that monitoring monthly is a discipline that pays off, so you do not have too much to do at once - “we also simplified the process over time and it became easier and more useful for all.” **Outcome harvesting** was seen as crucial in being able to identify project achievements: “we reported what we really did as changes, what somebody is doing differently due to the project” - so decide on what you are going to measure and why, “don’t collect information on everything”, or you can be swallowed by a mountain of data.

Regarding the **ROM visits and reviews** - Tereza reported that the ROM experience in the first year of implementation of our project “definitely wasn’t ideal. We had a big consortium and most partners didn’t have enough knowledge on the topic. ROM came at a moment when we still had a lot of work to do.” However, ROM experience went well especially for partners who appreciated having the attention “and we got quite a good review, everywhere green light, which was very supportive for us as lead coordinator.”

The ROM evaluator also provided a recommendation of what could be improved – which can be challenging to receive “but this input was actually very helpful. We were told we really needed to strengthen our global dimension and all our partners took this criticism really seriously” after they scored



so well in other areas, so all really focused and boosted the project's actions. "It made our work as the lead of the consortium much easier."

Mirjam agrees that "ROM is more difficult to host if they come too early in the project cycle as you don't have so much to show them. But their external view is very helpful." A ROM visit involves a lot of preparation work, to set up enough interviews and, in MFF case, to visit 6 country/partners and also to bring all the German partners together - "and this happened in a week when everyone had flu! It was an organisational headache." But ROM experts were very interested and understanding "and you just have to show what you have done and all the preparations that you have made."

After both experienced projects managers sharing, Harm-Jan Fricke **summarised recommendations on MEL**

- Focus on outcomes not on activities – keep track of outputs, but outcomes is also key for reporting
- Together with an external Evaluator/Critical Friend, develop a Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning plan at the beginning of your project
- Decide on what you are going to measure – and why? Don't collect information on 'everything'!
- Integrate ME&L activities in implementation plans – and not as an additional thing to do
- Include a budget for ME&L – for ongoing monitoring, for regular evaluation, for ongoing learning
- Allocate plenty of time for ME&L: learning takes time but is time well spent and adjust your plans in the light of your learning
- Keep it simple, adequate and use tools that are easy and/or already used by partners/staff

The participants were then invited to work in groups to exchange the initial ideas on how projects are planning to develop its M&E set-up; which questions they have relating to setting up and implementing an M&E system; and how are planning to solve those questions. A few main issues arose from this fruitful discussion:

- Should the monitoring be separated from the external evaluation? The discussion pointed to the projects' need to have a monitoring system feeding data into the evaluation.
- One prevalent issue is the monitoring of outcomes: how to measure change, the qualitative side?
- But a clear recommendation is: include a degree of and framework for M&E planning at the proposal stage, even if not much information is requested in the application form.

For further ideas and best practices, the DEAR Support Team recommends taking a look at the reports from two previous M&E workshops with DEAR projects (on the website [here](#) and [here](#)) and the '[Planning & Implementing EU DEAR projects' paper](#) distributed to participants - all online at Capacity4Dev.

## 4. Capacity4dev/dear, new visibility guidelines and communication planning

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The DEAR Support Team gave a short presentation on two tools that can be used to support DEAR projects work and the visibility of their achievements. Sarah Simpson summarised what exists and the possibilities at [www.capacity4dev.eu/dear](http://www.capacity4dev.eu/dear), a sharing, learning, collaborating space for DEAR staff/practitioners:

- an EC DEAR webpage with reference resources as key documents, papers and reports
- with articles on projects main achievements – eventually all projects will be contacted to cooperate
- a group where all projects can participate and become active members

Another platform with information about EU-DEAR projects is [www.dear-programme.eu](http://www.dear-programme.eu): it contains a map of the EU which links to DEAR projects and basic information, provided by project coordinators, on previous and present projects. Such a map is updated by a project fiche, so all participants are requested to fill and update their project fiche, to feed the public basic information and to enable a simple search facility (theme, target and other tags).

Two projects shared their communication strategies, tools and actions. [Elaine Mahon](#) shared how the project “[Challenging the Crisis](#)” planned and re-planned the advocacy and communication work with young people to promote awareness and involvement in Social and Solidarity Economy in Europe. The project was set-up as a response the crises and austerity measures that had hit some EU member states very severely following the 2008 economic crash. Partners in Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Greece, Italy and Slovenia were involved in the project.

Communication to a ‘general’ European public about the existence and opportunities of a Social and Solidarity Economy in times of crises would not be easy and the project decided to focus in particular on engagement of young people: helping them to implement SSE activities and to promote wider awareness and involvement in their own settings. Letting young people lead the project and its implementation “on their own terms” (with support from project partners) created ownership and young people’s sense of responsibility to make a success of their involvement. Face-to-face engagements and lengthy discussions meant that actions took perhaps longer to design than if partner organisations might have been able to do it, but it ensured real participation, skills development of participants and communication to a wider public that was geared to create further involvement as opposed to a marketing or sales approach.

[Mirjam Hägele](#) explained that at the start of the project, the “[Make Fruit Fair](#)” team developed a common understanding of the topic, including through development of a shared ‘Theory of Change’, a set of common key political questions, common communication guidelines and layout of the campaign, and a central multilingual project website. A practical set of guidelines to campaigning and multiplier training (‘Game ON!’) was developed together with a series of campaign tools and activities.

In aiming to improve the conditions of fruit producers the project developed a wide range of actions including case studies, speaker tours (bringing people, speaking face to face, getting examples of what is happening in countries, media interviews, radio stations), stands and lectures at events (festivals, great audiences), petitions, publications, video clips. A European Action Week targeting supply chains (including project volunteers putting stories of banana workers in banana boxes at Lidl supermarkets); social media work used all partners’ and volunteers’ existing networks, and story-telling and use of banana costume in public spaces - all this helped to spread the messages and objectives of the project. Towards the end of

the project an MFF multi-stakeholder discussion in the European Parliament had a big impact – because “we had an MEP organising it together with us.”



Richard Hands from EC DEVCO communication unit gave an [overview](#) of the new Communication and Visibility requirements of the European Commission: not a 'how to guide', not a manual, but showing the EU flag the right way “it’s what you have to do [...] if you want the EU to exist, and continue to prosper, everybody has to do their part making our achievements visible”.

Richard Hands pointed out the essential ingredients of a Communication & Visibility plan:

- Plan communication as any other output of the project, from the start
- Not prescriptive, not imposing templates: needs targets, objectives, results – the rest is creativity
- Think about ‘audience’ more than target and everything you do is linked to this ‘who is the audience?’
- Think, what do you want to accomplish, the desired state at the end of project
- Channels (how, what media is useful? Forget about newspapers, brochures, leaflets, even websites for youth targets)
- Use digital, audiovisual channels, that are relevant and used by your audience – e.g. Instagram, Snapchat etc.
- Look for creativity, not an institutionalised way of communication
- Use language that people understand, don’t use development jargon
- Use multipliers, celebrities, whoever works for your project/objectives
- Focus on people & storytelling about people: don’t use the “EU releases €300 million for mitigation” but do use stories that highlight “food, family, fear, fire”
- ‘Pull people in’ by any means, use the brief window of attention you have to convey your messages
- End goal: we want people to look and think of the EU as something as a force for good, for citizens.
- But it is not to say “purge yourselves” but communicate directly to citizens
- Do not forget: use disclaimers when needed; standard texts for explaining EU support; and intellectual property permits and rights of anything you produce are available for use by the EU.

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## 5. Ideas for using internal information systems, sub-granting & change agents

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Three parallel workshops gave attention to the following themes:

- A: Setting up and using internal information systems (with Mirjam Hägele and Jady Wang)
- B: Managing sub-granting (with Sofia Caiolo and Sandra Oliveira)
- C: Developing and working with change agents (with Tereza Cajkova, Elaine Mahon and Harm-Jan Fricke)

### A – Setting up and using internal information systems

*Learning from ‘Make Fruit Fair’*

**Mirjam Hägele**, Make Fruit Fair project manager, introduced various aspects and learning from the internal information systems used by that project:

- Face-to-meetings are key.
- Start to get to know each other – and have regular all-partner meetings.
- All the partners need to be aware of the contractual obligations.
- First set up the information system and only then move on to the action. Setting up systems takes time – a lot of time
- Coordination update + Telephone conferences: only after face to face meetings, then move to regular telephone and Skype meetings, keep minutes and circulate them.
- Set up a project steering committee: MFF had five members relaying info to the entire project (27 partners)
- Set up thematic working groups with links to the steering committee to take charge of planning, updating project activities. MFF didn’t have the budget to allow working groups to meet face-to-face but should have done.
- Assign coordination and contact with Southern partners (if you have them) to one or two of the EU partners only: if all EU partners contact your Southern partners it is likely to lead to confusion. Developing meaningful contacts with and input from your Southern partners takes time and attention. Be aware and take account of language and cultural differences.
- Keep a central, on-line, secure and easily searchable folder system to keep all documents in one place. (MFF project ended up with 17.000 documents in their shared folder!). Use tools that are useful e.g. [Teamwork](#), [Trello](#) or other real-time planning app, but make sure that everyone is using the same internal communications channels.
- Auditors will take money back from you unless you can report back on measurable outputs/results. Make sure that whatever claim you make about results or outcomes can be backed-up through relevant reports, documents and other evidence.
- KEEP IT SIMPLE – Mirjam Hägele: “from my personal view, the simpler, the better.”

The issue of how to manage an ever-greater complexity in the number of partners engaged in a project took up a lot of discussion in this workshop. For some projects, once all small sub-grantees are taken into account, it may involve 50 to 100 partners.

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On-line tools are an obvious support, as is an overall project manager who can focus on strategic management of the project including through regular visits to EU partners, leaving detailed planning and execution to others in the partnership.

Exchange visits between partners are also very helpful: if they haven't been budgeted for, try to raise relatively small amounts from charitable or (local) governmental sources or see if other main funding sources can be used for this (e.g. Erasmus+ was mentioned).

Concerns were raised over the sustainability of project results and continuity of activities. MMF did look into follow up funding since there are continuity concerns, but mainly tried to organise and pass information in a sustainable manner.

In concluding the session **Jady Wang**, EC DEAR Programme Task Manager, stressed that setting aside planning time was crucial in making sure that appropriate communication channels were instituted across the partnership.

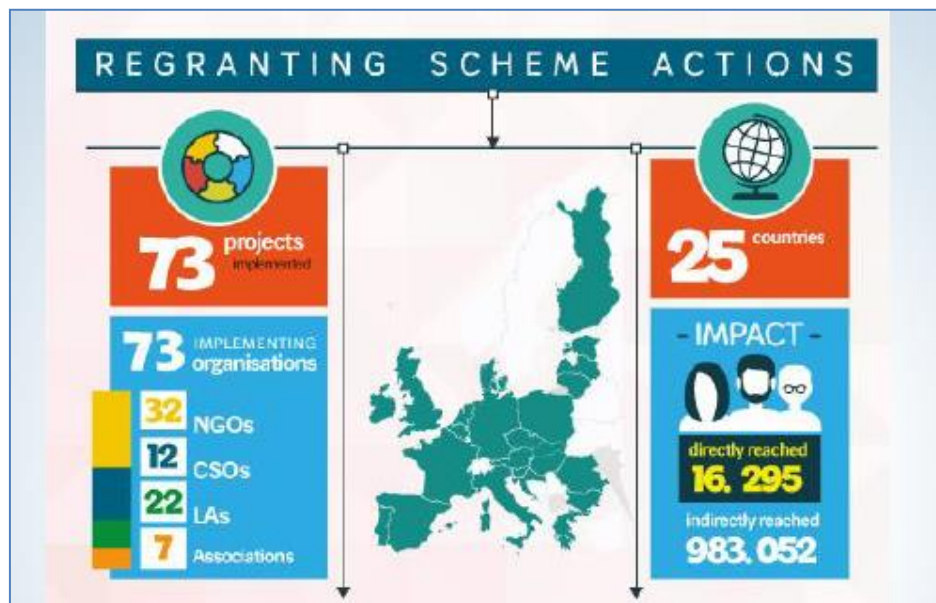
## **B - Managing sub-granting**

### *LADDER Project experience*

The complexity and large partnership of LADDER (Local Authorities as Drivers for Development Education and Raising Awareness) made the sub-granting phase one of the central implementation challenges of this project, parallel to research, capacity building and advocacy actions. (See: <http://www.ladder-project.eu/>) Former coordinator **Sofia Caiolo**, from ALDA lead organisation, managed the partnership of 27 co-applicants and 19 associates in 28 EU countries and summarised the process of sub-granting:

- Why? Sub-granting was aimed to support localisation of the SDGs through DEAR actions, to inform citizens about SDGs.
- Where? One Call was organised in each EU Member State, the ten focal countries where the project had more partners had two calls each.
- What? The Calls by the project in 2016 and 2017 enabled grassroots organisations (CSOs, LAs, ALAs, network of CSOs) to apply for a grant of between €2000 and €3000.
- How? An internal toolkit for the management of the sub-grants was created for use by the consortium partners. An external call to all partner networks was then launched. The toolkit and partnership agreement are as detailed as possible: the project preferred to have fewer but strong actions. Follow up focussed on monitoring (visiting) the action, control costs, a template for reporting by sub-grantees with clear delivery dates of reports to be met by the sub-grantees. Sub-grantees were reminded that visibility for their work was a key consideration and the project lead organisation expected to receive photos and stories from sub-grants.

This image summarises the results of LADDER sub-grants:



The facilitator, **Sandra Oliveira**, summarised a few other sub-granting case studies shared at a Learning Hub that took place in May 2017 – projects 'Rural DEAR', 'Supply Change', 'Stop Mad Mining' and 'Amitie Code' all shared their experiences with different procedures and smaller or bigger sub-grants management. Find the report [here](#).

Among the issues discussed by participants were the following:

- Can any DEAR project, from other Lot, decide to use sub-granting, canalising parts of the project budget? There is nothing against this in EC rules, if you want to consider sub-granting locally or specific thematic issue, then consult with your Task Manager.
- Can sub-grants be reported financially as a lump sum? Though that would be most handy, all former projects managers who had used sub-granting opted to ask from their sub-grantees the same kind of reporting and financial justifications as all DEAR projects must report back to EC. This requires more work on the part of the sub-grantee but then there is no surprise during the reporting phase.
- 'Can a sub-grant be given to an informal group or community, with no legal entity? (This question is part of the Q&A annex in preparation.)

### C - Developing and working with change agents / multipliers

*Learning from 'Challenging the Crisis' and 'Eat Responsibly'*

**Elaine Mahon** and **Tereza Čajková** shared their views on the use of multipliers as a centre piece of both their projects. Capacity building for 'Change Makers' needs to be focused on motivational aspects and leadership skills, not only technical skills to do with a particular issue. Elaine considered that "building change makers takes time" and research, that enables a project to relate to the local, national country context, and audiences: "we never know enough about these."

The need to create and manage a rather complex accountability chain: from project lead organisation, then change makers, then final audience of the project, tracing of how you invest your money and reach outcomes.

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Another point raised in the presentations was about dealing with (and enabling change makers/multipliers to deal with) negative stakeholders: anticipate that some people will be against whatever the multiplier wants to promote or advocate. The project should provide training and alternative approaches/tools to deal with people who disagree with your multipliers. This requires the project to spend time with its potential change makers: investigating and creating responses and support for multipliers to deal with negative feedback at an emotional level too.

According to Elaine, what helps in making successful change makers/multipliers is if the project organisations take on a role as coaches and facilitators, instead of being the fount of all wisdom for the participants. Tereza used the following drawing to illustrate some of the change makers involved in the 'East Responsibly' project



Participants discussed how TV stars, known footballers or other famous, nationally or locally known people could be used as multipliers. One campaign partner had successfully worked with famous persons, messaging campaign issues to the wider public.

Further ideas from previous projects about the use of change agents/multipliers can be found on the DEAR website.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See: <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/dear-programme/event/dear-site-cluster-meetingprague-0>

## 6. Financial and other procedures, budgets, changes: questions

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Day 2 opened with a re-cap of the discussions and information from first day.

The first session of the day was an enabling session to give information about the process by which DEAR project staff and also EC Task Managers and other EC staff can clarify questions to do with procedures, budgets and changes to project plans that may be required – and to put this in practice in the following group work where participants elect a question and look for its answer.

**Markus Pirchner** kicked-off the enabling session with the review of reference financial regulations and documents (a summary of his presentation can be found at [Capacity4development](#)), stating that this session's work "is about giving you the tools, the information you need, to find the solutions to your problems". And allow participants to understand that the contractual relationship between EC and the financially supported projects have various levels.

The four main reference documents are:

1. **Financial Regulations** – this is the core publication that states the principles of the entire EU, the legally binding information. There is no need to look here, as all these procedures are detailed in the PRAG. But if one questions a decision, you can refer back to this and challenge the decision. But generally grantees are not expected to have to visit this document.
2. **PRAG - PRActical Guide**, is the complete guide to all procedures, explaining all rules, is updated regularly – differs from Financial Regulations as PRAG covers more topics; PRAG is not a legal document, is more of a guideline, an internal document (not endorsed by member states). Financial Regulations are the 'Ten Commandments' while PRAG lays out specific rules for meeting the 'Ten Commandments'.  
Read selectively: one has to go through the documents and work out what is applicable to own specific situation. And look only at the rules that really apply to own case. For example, Article 6.8 lays out the rules for modifying the contract (read this before approaching the EC for changes), while Article 7.2 refers to Financial Regulations and other top level documents that are relevant.
3. **Guidelines published with each Call for Proposal** – set the parameters projects cannot deviate from, also:
  - duration of the projects (3 years)
  - eligibility (as Brexit unfolds, rules are being rewritten and changed)
  - version of PRAG to be applied – the doc is rewritten almost every year and the contract states which PRAG version is relevant for your project
  - parameters – duration, eligible organisations, visibility and sub-granting (known in most documents as Financial Support)
4. **Contract** – is specific to the project; states the contract is between which parties; for what objectives; how much and when. The annexes of the contract set the parameters for changes and management of:
  - Annex I. the ToR
  - Annex II. the General Conditions – sets the basic rules for DEAR contracts. Defines who is who, what is a beneficiary, what are the legal liabilities, confidentiality and ownership rules. For example, ownership/intellectual property rests with the partner/producer, but the EU has the right

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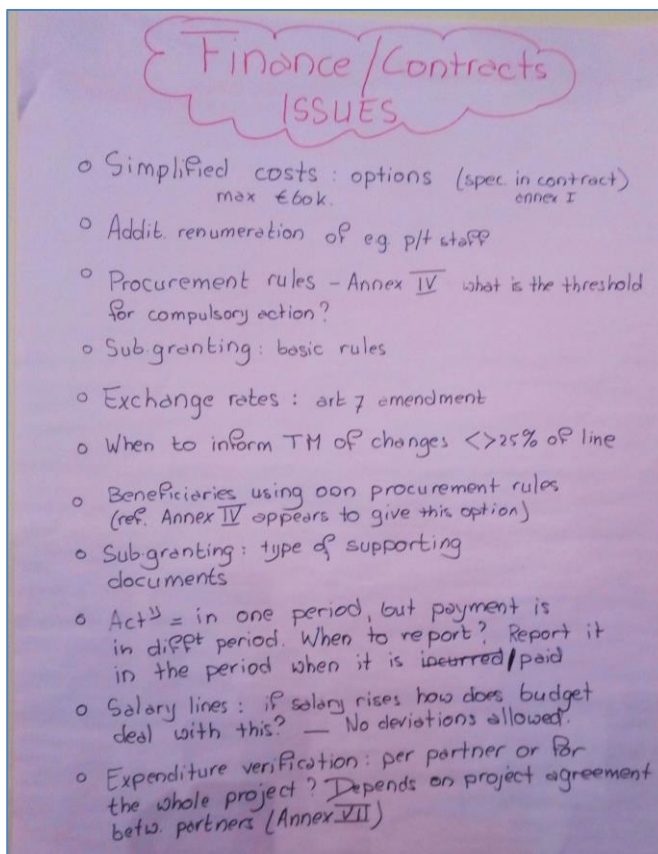
to use or adapt as they see fit. This Intellectual property is set by article 7. Another example, what are you required to do about changing your contract? Check the contract, as this is laid out in the articles at the end of the document.

- Annex III. the Budget
- Annex IV. Procurement etc

Markus Pirchner's presentation was followed by one specifically focussed on sub-granting (or 'third party support' as the Commission prefers to call it). **Dominique Biard**, from EC DEVCO Finance and Contracts staff, gave a short [overview](#) of the documents where DEAR Projects can find almost all the answers to their questions about the management of sub-granting:

- Financial Regulations – the rules are set here under 'Financial Support' in articles 137 and 210 RAP;
- Companion – an internal guide for clarification of PRAG and Financial Regulations, in section 19.2.10.2
- PRAG – in section 6.9.2
- Annex II to Contract, also known as 'General Conditions' – under "Financial support for 3<sup>rd</sup> parties" in article 10

Questions formulated through groupwork, also involving DEAR Task Managers followed these sessions. The main issues raised there were reported back in plenary (see flipchart:



- How do you go about re-allocating spending between budget lines?
- Questions around salaries – additional salaries or staff not noted OR you want to remove someone, you don't need them. How?
- Procurement rules – how do you go about buying services and supplies, what are the rules?
- Costs related to the project before it started – you got approval and then made some preparations that incurred costs, can they be recuperated?
- Changing activities of the timing of activities – introduce new ones or scrap some altogether.

All these and other questions raised at the Seminar have been summarised and an answer sheet will be produced by the Commission.

One final notice: If you cannot find an answer to your question and you really need to send a question to your Task Manager, "always give the contract number when communicating with the EC so they know exactly what project and agreement

you are referring to" - include the number of the contract on the e-mail, if possible both on the title of the e-mail and next to the question text.

## 7. Working in large partnerships and making your project finances work

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Two parallel workshops took place after the lunch break, before the last slot of time to work with the Task Managers.

### *Working in large partnerships*

**Mirjam Hägele** and **Tereza Čajková** shared their views as coordinators of two large partnerships of co-applicants. This session completed the Internal information systems work group session with these two specific projects practices and tips – more about this challenge can be found at the [Learning Hub report](#).

- Diversity of partners – Large partnerships give a rich context to work with and a larger target group – but they also pose specific challenges. Keep in mind the fact that all partners have a diversity of country, cultural, personal, organisational specific ways of implementing and managing the project. So start by making every objective and procedure clear and achieve a common understanding of the project; address all difficulties (language, different levels of experience; different agendas etc.) and find common solutions, before partners disengage or problems arise.
- Trust & Common ground – this is part of the solution: face-to-face meetings that allow sharing and discussing all activities, procedures, documents, problems and specific contexts of all partners
- Common Theory of Change – A project can build a real Theory of Change with the whole methodology with all partners, so all can reach common ground and the written proposal that was approved can be fine-tuned, operationalised and its strategy sketched. Or can use other methodology that can reach this minimum common ground and check the efficiency of the project, the outcomes it wants to reach and the efficiency of the activities to do so.
- Decentralization – steering groups, thematic working groups, work package groups – all are good strategies to spread the governance, support coordination and create ownership of the project throughout the partnership.
- Good coordination – a few tools can help (see communication and internal information sections) but an international coordinator needs to face the fact that most of the time will be devoted to contacts, visits, informal or formal talks, monitoring etc., in fact building the common ground and sharing the flow of information that can make the project effective, more focused, and owned by each partner and each staff member. An eagle eye perspective is always needed.
- M&E as support of coordination – Monitoring and an evaluator (internal and/or external evaluator and a 'critical friend') is a key asset for the coordinator, to allow learning and an impact management along the life of the project.
- Impact – Sure is greater due to size, but has advantages & challenges well known from project managers – and the need for and international coordinator to disconnect a lot of their time from implementation is clear.
- One of the main queries for participants in this workshop was the fact that a large partnership project requires a long preparation – which is not always anticipated in the project's timetable. Updating of the proposal to take account of this during implementation may be required. The message of EC Task Manager Markus Pirchner was that all reasonable proposals that may support efficiency and impact will be taken into account and can be negotiated.

### *Making the Project Finances Work*

The majority of seminar attendees chose to go to this session as it was one more opportunity to clarify how to make their project finances work. **Sofia Caiolo**, from “LADDER”, started a short [presentation](#) explaining the need to make every rule clear from the start. One thing that helps successful implementation and financial management is a clear and detailed partnership convention or agreement, where main tasks, roles, resources, deadlines are sketched out and agreed across the partnership.

“First step in partnership agreement was to draft contracts, and templates for budgeting and reporting, also for timesheets etc.” said Sofia. “We also provided guidelines on how to fill these in.”

Second step was to establish the monitoring tools and regularity and apply it – the coordinator kept a close eye on this. A financial situation point was reported every six months per partner - and every three months during the last year so any extra costs or spared funds could be channelled to more activities. In this way any budget deviation was able to be reviewed and a solution found.

**Elaine Mahon**, from “Challenging the Crisis” noted that “as the lead partner, the budgeting is one of the most challenging aspects of the role” and highlighted the importance of being “flexible, as sometimes as you work through the project, you come up with more practical ways of doing things – so don’t be afraid to make revisions.”

The first task for Elaine’s project was to create a master budget – every budget for every country for every year. “It was a big job but really useful for us to reference against through the life of the project to make sure we weren’t double funding or requesting funding for the same activities from different donors.” IDEA (the lead organisation) decided to share the 7% administration costs between all the partners, but in hindsight Elaine said that they were not sure if they would do this again as “I think there are a lot of additional expenses for the lead partner.”

Every partner was asked to report early and not wait until the end of the first year – “and frankly the reports were a disaster.” Lessons learned: year 1 reporting was very difficult, “but don’t panic if yours doesn’t go as smoothly as one would have hoped. We gave clear instructions to the partners, but they sent us the information in the format that suited them...”

“We started issuing common queries and FAQ as we found that many partners had the same questions. Much confusion around salaries, income taxes, all partners had different approaches to per diems, etc – so, this FAQ and a checklist also really helped.”

It’s also really good to get the financial person from your partner involved – “I am not a financial person and many of us were not working in their first language... but as soon as we got the financial people talking to each other directly, things got a lot smoother - I saved myself a few grey hairs!”

## 8. Conclusions, participants' feedback and suggestions for the future

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The final, concluding sessions gave participants another opportunity to meet with their Task Manager, to summarise findings from the Seminar and to highlight any further questions.

Questions raised by participants at the Seminar have been collated and it is the Commission's intention to address those that are frequently asked in a FAQ to be publicly available.

After the event participants were asked to provide feedback on and their assessment of the two-day Seminar. 41 responses from the 69 project participants (a 60% response rate), revealed that this Inception Seminar was rated in average as of a high quality. "This was much better designed and implemented" said one experienced project manager who had taken part in previous Inception Seminars.

Participants also mentioned that "It was reassuring to hear that the EC DEAR focuses on the 'bigger picture', the impact - therefore gives freedom to the project staff to come up with meaningful activities and inputs that lead to the expected results." Other highlights from the feedback surveys include a general consensus of the need to have "some kind of FAQ or Frequently Made Mistakes, lessons learned" to answer basic doubts. These "would level the knowledge" of participants and avoid lack of clarity in guidance, as "different levels of experience among participants made it not easy to organise or improve" - thus, seminars in the future would be able to go "deeper and [be] more specific".

A large majority of participants requested: "please make sure that there will always be a place [in future Inception Seminars] where reference to former projects is available!"

Against a series of aspects the average feedback from participants was as follows:

- |   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| • Achievement of participants' expectations:  | 7,77 (out of 10) |
| • Achievement of the Seminar objectives:      | 7.85             |
| • Relevance to participants' work:            | 8.33             |
| • Facilitation by DEAR ST staff:              | 8.53             |
| • Involvement of EC Staff in the seminar:     | 8.35             |
| • Involvement of former project coordinators: | 9                |
| • Logistics support:                          | 9.62             |

The overall success of the seminar was rated at **8.17** (out of a maximum of 10 points)

The very responsive rate of feedback and the suggestions gives a good basis to improve future events and enables useful follow up by EC staff and the DEAR Support Team - including answers to a few as yet unanswered questions, the nurturing of Task Managers' rapport with their projects and good support for implementation phase.

Asked if there were particular things that participants felt were missing from the agenda, and asked for suggestions for future Seminars, respondents mentioned the following more than once:

- 'Should take place earlier - when we're in the middle of the project, we have deeper questions and the seminar should be then practical.' - going 'deeper and specific'
- 'Q&A sessions' & 'answers to the five main issues collected' were 'not satisfactory' > need follow up
- More 'systematic' set up and 'more guidance' both in these sessions and those with Task Managers

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- Good to meet people/projects – 'some kind of speed dating could be organized, for newcomers'
- 'Understand the idea (find answers ourselves) but when answers in PRAG or in contract are not clear, EC must be able to provide a clear answer'
- Regarding communication, participants want presentations shorter and more relevant to DEAR: 'more than one hour was spent on conveying only one message: visibility of the EU flag'
- Prepare key points presentations for every session: more clear and shareable with partners
- To have face-to-face time with Task Manager was seen as invaluable for projects staff, Task Manager inputs were much appreciated but more is needed– direct and regular communication from now on is most wanted
- Logistics was considered top level, the location is good, but break-out spaces for group work is key
- Sharing 'old' project experiences is key, but it needs a general context (eg. comments from EC staff on their assessment of how that particular project went: its positive and negative aspects from an EC point of view)

## List of Annexes

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- Annex 1. List of participants and their projects
- Annex 2. Programme
- Annex 3. Presentations (available from [C4D](#))
- Annex 4. Inception Seminar 2018 Participants Evaluation survey results
- Annex 5. FAQ (will be published in due course)