

Most Common Mistakes in Reporting of EU funded projects

- **DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN DIFFERENT PARTS OF PROGRESS REPORT / FINANCIAL REPORT**

Discrepancies between different parts of the Progress report / Financial report, such as receipts, payments, time sheets, travel costs, amounts, dates, or numbers of hours, and also compared to the approved project and budget, are frequent mistakes observed in the reporting of EU funded projects. These discrepancies can undermine the accuracy and reliability of the reports and may raise concerns about the appropriate use of EU funds. It is crucial for project managers to meticulously cross-check and reconcile all financial and progress data to ensure consistency and alignment with the approved project documentation and budget.

- **TIME SHEETS NOT DETAILED ENOUGH**

Time sheets not being detailed enough is one of the most common issues in EU funded projects reporting. Unfortunately, the level of required detail is different with every MA and often even with every different project officer. The lack of detail usually means that the work done is not specified enough (i.e., “meeting” vs “meeting with whom and on what topic” or “analysing documents” vs “analysing which documents with which results”). Various details of time segments to be reported are often required by different programmes (one line per every hour, day, month etc.)

Time sheets play a critical role in tracking the hours worked by project personnel and are used to justify the allocation of staff costs. Incomplete or insufficiently detailed time sheets can lead to discrepancies in cost calculations and raise doubts about the accuracy of reported personnel costs. Project managers should establish clear guidelines for time sheet completion and emphasize the importance of providing detailed and accurate records of work activities to support the transparency and credibility of project reporting. It is advisable to prepare the timesheets continuously, however time-consuming that can be.

- **CHANGES NOT APPROVED IN ADVANCE OR NOT EXPLAINED PROPERLY**

Changes made to the project that are not approved in advance or not adequately explained are another common reporting mistake. EU funding programs typically require beneficiaries to obtain prior approval for any significant changes to the project's objectives, activities, or budget. Failing to seek approval or insufficiently justifying changes can result in non-compliance with funding regulations / contract and may lead to financial sanctions or to the rejection of reimbursement claims. It is crucial for project managers to closely adhere to the change management procedures outlined by the funding authorities and ensure proper documentation and communication when modifications to the project are necessary.

- **MISTAKES IN REPORTING DIRECT VS INDIRECT COSTS (AND VICE VERSA)**

Mistakes in reporting direct versus indirect costs (and vice versa) also often occurs during the reporting phase of EU funded projects. Direct and indirect costs are clearly defined in the respective programme Guide for Beneficiaries (Programme Guide) and/or in the Call for proposals. Mixing up these cost categories or misrepresenting them in the financial reports can lead to inaccurate financial statements and non-compliance with EU regulations. It is important for project managers to have a clear

understanding of the distinction between direct and indirect costs and diligently report them according to the guidelines provided by the funding program.

- **NOT FOLLOWING PROCUREMENT PROCEDURES**

Not following procurement procedures is a recurring mistake in the reporting of EU funded projects, same as the one mentioned earlier in on-site checks. Failure to comply with the established procurement rules and guidelines when reporting procurement-related information can raise concerns about the fairness, transparency, and value for money of the project's procurement activities. It is essential for project managers to ensure that all procurement procedures are followed correctly, including documenting and reporting procurement processes, maintaining appropriate records, and adhering to the procurement regulations on all levels – EU, national, institutional – and to always use the strictest of them.

- **FORMAL ISSUES (MISTAKES, CHANGES IN AUTOMATED COUNTING IN EXCEL FORMS, MISSING ATTACHMENTS, DATA FILLED IN WRONG PARTS OF THE FORMS, NOT FOLLOWING REPORTING DEADLINES)**

Formal issues, including mistakes, changes in automated counting in Excel forms, missing attachments, data filled in wrong parts of the forms, and not following reporting deadlines, can also be common mistakes in the reporting of EU funded projects. These issues relate to the proper completion and submission of the required reporting forms, which serve as essential documents for monitoring project progress and financial accountability. Failing to address formal issues may result in delays in the review and approval of reports or even non-compliance with reporting obligations. Project managers should pay careful attention to the correct and timely completion of reporting forms, ensuring accuracy, proper attachments, and adherence to the specified deadlines.

- **NOT COMMON: PROGRESS (MONITORING) REPORT NOT APPROVED AT ALL**

While not as common, the failure to have the Progress (monitoring) report approved at all is a significant mistake. EU funding programmes usually require regular progress reports to be submitted for review and approval and set strict deadlines. Failing to submit or obtain approval for these reports may indicate a lack of compliance with reporting obligations and may hinder the project's access to subsequent funding tranches. It is crucial for project managers to diligently follow the reporting procedures, provide accurate and comprehensive information, and ensure timely submission of progress reports for review and approval. The approval of progress reports demonstrates the project's achievements, compliance with program requirements, and maintains a positive relationship with the funding authorities, which is vital for the successful continuation of the project and future funding opportunities.