



Trans-SEC

Innovating Strategies to safeguard Food Security using Technology and Knowledge Transfer

Designing a conflict management tool for transdisciplinary and international research projects

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Introduction

Projects on real-world problems, such as global food security, require the expertise and cooperation of scientists from different disciplines and stakeholders.

Such research projects are highly complex organizational settings: They tend to be transdisciplinary, international, interorganizational, donor-funded, temporary and virtual. Each characteristic impacts on the work environment.

The work setting bears a high conflict potential that can hinder work processes and even result in project failure.

The integration of a conflict management program shall facilitate a good work environment and a successful project implementation.

Case Study

The food security project, Trans-SEC, is used as case study. It represents a common project structure with more than 100 researchers of 15 world-wide institutes forming one international research consortium. The integration of a conflict management program has been made integral part of the project design.

Methodology

Qualitative research methods to establish needs of and recommendations for conflict management structures. Focus Group Discussions, Individual Semi-Structured Interviews, World Café Session, Interactive Workshops.

Result

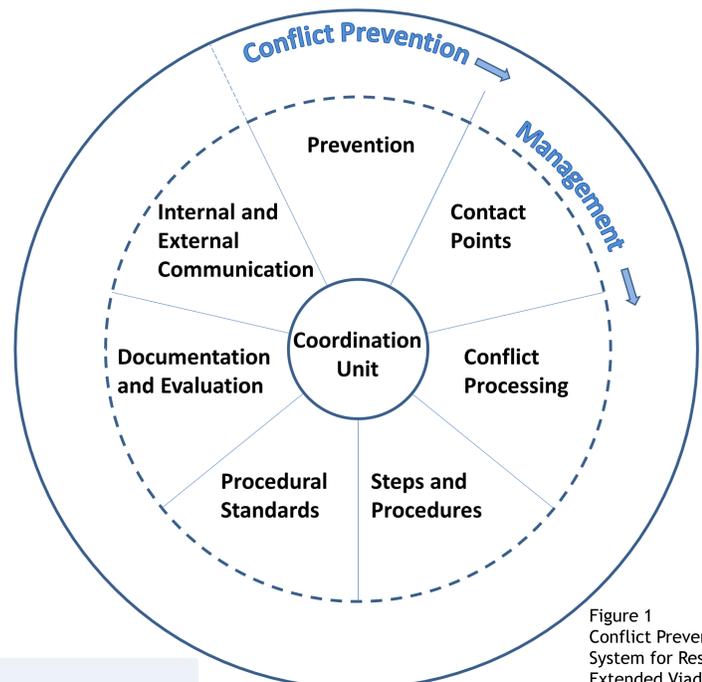


Figure 1
Conflict Prevention and Management System for Research Projects
Extended Viadrina Component Model
(PwC/EUV 2011; 2013)

Coordination Unit
Conceptual work - Training and advice - Conflict Management

Prevention

- Workshops: conflict awareness, team building, (intercultural) communication
- Individual and team support services: supervision, coaching
- Training of CPM- staff
- Jour fix with project coordinator

Contact Points

- Decentralized structure
- One contact point per institution (CCP/FP)
- Coordinated by a national coordinator

Conflict Processing

- 1st Conflict Contact Points/Focal Persons analyze conflict and facilitate conflict management
- 2nd National Coordinators
- 3rd External party

Steps and Procedures

Internal document outlines the procedures in case of conflict

Procedural Standards

Cultural standards of conflict management

Documentation and Evaluation

- Integrated research component: interviews, questionnaire survey, scientific publications
- Feedback after each activity
- Template for case documentation
- Report to donor agency

Internal and External Communication

Internal: intranet, workshops, sessions at annual conferences
External: internet, conferences, scientific publications, donor report, grey literature, press releases, networking for collaborations

Conclusion

- Participation in the design process and a decentralized program structure are key to create ownership of project members.
- Measures of conflict prevention are essential to facilitate open communication and mutual understanding and minimize conflicts.
- Varying approaches to conflict management have to be integrated.
- Program evaluation is necessary to adapt structures and evaluate the overall success.



References

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