

Project management in two large German national research projects - HD(CP)² and MiKlip

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We present our experience with the project management of two large (3-4 years, 10-22Mio.€ , around 20 national partners) climate science projects – MiKlip (fona-miklip.de) and HD(CP)² (hdcp2.eu) - funded by the German Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF), that have been running since 2011 and 2012 respectively. Both projects ended their first phase 2015 and have just started into a second phase. For both projects the move into the second phase came with new demands from the funding agency, both in terms of refocusing the research and in terms of the actual funding itself. The second phase has thus lead to changes both in the scientific content and the organizational structure of the projects, which in turn has implications for their management.

Even though there are many similarities between the projects, such as the demands on reporting and dissemination placed on the projects by the funding body and its project management agency, there are also many differences. One main differences is the way in which the projects are structured; MiKlip is split into four research modules and one synthesis module, each with its own coordinator, whereas HD(CP)² works with a central coordinator and expert users for the different infrastructure areas observation, simulation and model development. We will make use of the similarities and differences, between the projects and between the project phases, to highlight some examples on what has worked better and for what reason, focusing on topics such as project size, project structure, reporting and intra-project cooperation. Here our main aim is not to give final recipes, but rather to contribute ideas for further discussion of the topics highlighted in the session.

Furthermore, we will discuss the role of the project manager within the life-cycle of projects of this type. Here, we find several aspects that can be challenging, among others: timing of employment of the project manager (often after the project planning phase), the imposed reporting by the funding agency (giving the project manager little freedom for own reporting strategies), and the challenge of disseminating the results of the project (should or can the project manager take on the role of a scientist or rather that of PR?).