



SFB 754 - Managing a large interdisciplinary collaborative research centre: what matters?

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The German Research Foundation (DFG) funds Collaborative Research Centres (CRCs – in German: Sonderforschungsbereiche SFBs) that are generally applied for by one university, but may also incorporate neighbouring universities or non-university research institutions. SFBs are crossing the boundaries of disciplines, as well as faculties, departments, institutions and institutes. The funding of an SFB can be up to 12 years (3 x 4 years).

Kiel University and GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel received funding for the SFB 754 'Climate-biogeochemical interactions in the tropical ocean' in 2008. Currently, the centre is in its third phase comprising 17 scientific subprojects, one outreach project, a central coordination and management subproject and a subproject covering the research expeditions with a total project budget of 12 Mio Euro. Around 100 scientists of interdisciplinary research fields (e.g. physical oceanography, micro-biology, palaeontology, chemistry, modelling) are actively involved.

Besides generating high profile research, gender equality, early career support and data management are complementary goals of SFBs requested by the DFG. Within the SFB 754 the scientific coordination office is responsible for developing concepts and strategies to cover these additional requirements and over the past eight years the SFB 754 has been successful in setting up profound programmes and various measures. Some of the SFB 754 practices have been taken up by other projects, and hence allowed the SFB 754 to serve as a role model for 'best practice' within marine sciences in Kiel.

A main reason for the success of the SFB 754 to work towards the additional goals set out in the DFGs SFB programme is that the project is well tied into existing structures and builds upon outstanding management expertise available in Kiel. Three examples are highlighted here:

- young scientists programme (closely linked to a graduate school (Integrated School of Marine Sciences) and a postdoctoral network (Integrated Marine Postdoc Network) both set up by 'The Future Ocean', a project funded within the German Excellence Initiative)
- gender measures (close cooperation with the Central Office for Gender Equality, Diversity & Family at Kiel University)
- data management (part of a joint GEOMAR data management group)

Thus, a motivated and also creative coordination team interested in pioneer work is essential to manage a large interdisciplinary research community. Overall, networking, transparent management tools linked to active communication as well as fairness in processes such as the distribution of funds are basic prerequisites of trustful cooperation in large scientific consortia.

(This presentation is linked to posters by Dr. Nina Bergmann, Dr. Gesche Braker, Dr. Ruth Kamm and Dr. Hela Mehrstens.)