

Surviving coordination of large research projects: do's and don'ts

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Coordinating large, multicultural projects is a major challenge and a time consuming task. It requires a sound management team, a detailed planning and monitoring and fluid internal communication. In the European project DEVOTES (DEVELOPMENT OF innovative TOOLS for understanding marine biodiversity and assessing good Environmental Status), 295 scientists from 24 partner institutions belonging to 16 different countries (EU and non-EU) worked for 4 years in developing new tools to assess marine biodiversity. To manage this large consortium, the coordination team implemented some efficient monitoring tools and a well-functioning working dynamic, which resulted in high scores for both internal and external performance indicators. Best practices will be analyzed and discussed with regards to: 1) proposal preparation and Consortium building, 2) internal communication tools, 3) the role of the Advisory Board, 4) monitoring the progress of tasks, and 5) core team composition for a competent coordination. A platform to share do's and don'ts in large projects is recommended to ensure legacy of knowledge in this field, often overlooked, which otherwise is likely to be lost.