

# ENSEMBLES Annual Reporting – Lessons learned

The following lessons have been learned during the first year of reporting for the ENSEMBLES FP6 project. All of the comments below apply to situations that actually arose. I have provided a summary of what the problem was and what ACTION is needed to help prevent the problem arising again. I'm sure many people would agree that it was a difficult process, so please let us have any further comments or feedback to help us improve the process in the future.

*Please note: this working document may need revising as a result of any comments that we may receive from the EC.*

## **Contact names**

At the start of the project we asked partners to provide us with all of their appropriate contact email addresses. However, during the reporting process we discovered that the people we then contacted did not necessarily pass on the relevant information to the appropriate (particularly administrative and financial) people.

**ACTION:** please provide the email addresses of the people at your institute, particularly the appropriate administrative people, who are able to provide information for the reports. This includes scientific reports, financial reports, and scientific and financial planning.

## **Schedule/deadlines**

It takes us a lot of time to compile the reports and to carry out sufficient quality control checks. A **lot** of information was not provided to us on time for year 1, which meant that we spent (=wasted) a lot of time chasing up the information and did not have as much time as we would have liked to do careful checking and editing.

**ACTION:** Please provide everything as soon as possible and definitely by the date requested.

## **CPF A3.3 – financial plan for next 18 months**

Every year we update Contract Preparation Form (CPF) A3.3 to show each partner's total eligible costs and requested budget for the next 18 months. This form is used to determine their next advance of money.

**ACTION:** Each partner needs to take into account how much money they have already received from us, what they have claimed on their Form Cs so far, and what their total (5 year) budget is. A spreadsheet showing this historical information will be available on the members-only website.

A reminder: AC partners' indirect costs should not exceed 20% of direct costs; FC/FCF partners' requested EC contribution for RTD can not exceed 50% of their total RTD eligible costs; No-cost partners have no requested EC contribution!

## **Form C**

**ACTION:** Please take note of the following points, which might not have been clear to you:

- All partners, including no cost partners, need to provide two signed copies of Form C.
- The latest version of Form C (available from our reporting web site) should be used.
- Please complete all relevant boxes, including "Period from....to...."
- ENSEMBLES partners have agreed not to charge the cost of the audit certificate to the project (see Section 5.3 of the Consortium Agreement).
- Contract Preparation Form (CPF) A3.1 and A3.3 detail how each partner's budget is distributed between the different "activities" listed on Form C, which are RTD, Training, and Consortium Management (cells B34 etc.).
- Form C has the following checks - AC partners' indirect costs should not exceed 20% of direct costs; FC/FCF partners' requested EC contribution for RTD can not exceed 50% of their total eligible RTD costs.
- No-cost partners should have no requested EC contribution in cell L54!

- Confusingly, “receipts” (cell L47) do not mean the annual payments that many of you receive from us. Most (all?) partners will not have receipts – a receipt is something that gives rise to profit (although I might be over-simplifying it by expressing it this way)
- Please remember to have your forms signed.

### ***Audit certificate***

**ACTION:** Please take note of the following points:

- All partners who request money from the EU will need to provide an audit certificate at the end of the project.
- Any partner whose total requested cost to date exceeds €150,000 needs to provide an audit certificate.
- Special Clause 39 allows partners whose total requested cost to date has not exceeded €150,000 to choose whether or not to provide an audit certificate. However, some partners chose to have an audit done in year 1 and did discover problems, that if left undiscovered, would have been problematic.
- Please remember to check that the exchange rate used is consistent between the audit certificate and the Form C
- Please check that the cost model stated on the audit certificate is correct (i.e. matches that listed in Section 9.1 of the DoW) and matches that on the Form C
- Please remember to check that the wording on the audit certificate is correct. Last year several partners missed some paragraphs.

**ACTION:** Therefore, we **strongly** recommend all partners who have requested money from the project from year 1, or will do so at the end of year 2, to have their Form Cs audited next year so that they can uncover any potential problems (perhaps with their institute’s accounting systems for FP6) at as early a stage as possible. Alternatively it might be worth having your year 1 costs and Form C audited now for your own internal purposes. I am making these suggestions because discovering problems at the end of the project could cause problems for you.

### ***Tabular overview of budgeted vs actual costs (“Table 3”)***

**ACTION:** Please take note of the following points which might not have been clear to you:

- Partners need to take into account what money they have already received, what they have claimed on previous Form Cs and what their total five year budget is. This information is contained in the summary spreadsheet, [http://ensembles-eu.metoffice.com/secure/confidential\\_archived\\_finance\\_reporting/Budget vs actual costs for EC funding Jul06 noecontrib.xls](http://ensembles-eu.metoffice.com/secure/confidential_archived_finance_reporting/Budget_vs_actual_costs_for_EC_funding_Jul06_noecontrib.xls)
- All figures are for total eligible costs, not “requested EC contribution”.
- The “BUDGET” column shows the total eligible costs for the 5 years, as listed on CPF A3.1
- The “ACTUAL COSTS” columns for each year (“Period 1” is year 1, etc.) of the project are the costs that correspond to those reported on the Form C, but with slightly different categories.
- The total cost in Period 1 (cell D13, unless you have modified the original version) should correspond with the total eligible cost in Form C (cell L39).
- The EC’s reporting guidelines don’t specify what constitutes a “major cost” so please use your best judgement. Several partners had travel as a major cost, which seems reasonable, but it is probably also valid for many partners to not have any major cost items.

### ***Tabular overview of budgeted person month and actual person month (“Table 4”)***

In year 1 this information was collected through the WP and RT leaders for their WPs and RTs, and then collated by the coordination team.

In year 2 we think it will simplify the reporting process if each partner sends this information directly to the coordination team.