

PROJECT HANDBOOK ON FINANCIAL REPORTING

Version 1.0 – APRIL 2019



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Chapter 1 Introduction

The goal of this internal project handbook on financial reporting is to gather important facts concerning the financial project reporting. The handbook aims to give a general financial overview as well as to explain how to work with and how to enter your financial data in the participant portal. In general, this handbook is not exhaustive, but reflects good practices and common examples.

For SPARTA two reporting periods were defined:

- Reporting Period 1 from M01-M18
- Reporting Period 2 from M19-M36

Directly linked to these are two financial reporting periods, after which payments are distributed if all project results were positively reviewed. In addition, intermediate reviews without any payments are being planned for M12 and M24 but not confirmed yet.

All information is based on the official EC Grant Agreement for Research and Innovation Actions. For detailed information please have a look at the guide on SVN, following the link: https://sparta.technikon.com/02-Legal-Documents/01-GA/830892 Grant Agreement.pdf

Furthermore, the EC issued a document issued February 2016 on how to avoid common errors identified in cost claims. The document can be found on SVN, following the link: https://sparta.technikon.com/00-Contacts-Howtows-Guides-Templates/Guides/avoid-finance-errors2 en.pdf

Detailed descriptions on the financial rules can be found in the Annotated Grant Agreement in version 5.2 issued June 2019:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/amga/h2020-amga_en.pdf

The EU guidelines for a financial audit in version 3.0 issued July 2019 can be found here: http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/gm/audit/h2020-iap en.pdf

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Chapter 2 General Financial Information

2.1 Eligibility of Costs

2.1.1 General rules for the eligibility of costs (GA Article 6)

To be considered eligible, the cost must be:

- Actually incurred by the beneficiary (not estimated, budgeted or imputed)
 When actual costs are not available at the time of establishment of the financial statement, the closest possible estimate may be declared in conformity with the accounting principles of the beneficiary. However, these estimates should be adjusted when the actual costs are available.
- they must be incurred in connection with the action as described in <u>Annex 1</u> and necessary for its implementation;
- they must be identifiable and verifiable, in particular recorded in the beneficiary's accounts
 in accordance with the accounting standards applicable in the country where the beneficiary
 is established and with the beneficiary's usual cost accounting practices
- they must comply with the applicable national law on taxes, labour and social security
- they must be reasonable, justified and must comply with the principle of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency.
- Incurred during the duration of the project (respective period)
- Used for the sole purpose of the project under the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness

2.1.2 Exception: Costs eligible though incurred after the project end

According to Article 6.2 of the Grant Agreement there is one exception for costs being eligible even though they have been incurred after the end of the project:

Costs for reporting at the end of the action – Costs related to drafting and submitting the
periodic report for the last reporting period and the final report are eligible even if they are
incurred after the action duration.

Those costs include the cost of certificates on the financial statements (CFS) required by the GA and the cost of participating in a final review carried out by the Commission/Agency before the submission of the final reports. They may also include the cost of personnel necessary to prepare the periodic report for the last reporting period and the final report. However, they do NOT include research or innovation activities undertaken after the end date of the action.

These costs may have been incurred <u>during the period</u> of up to 60 days after the end of the project or the date of termination, whichever is earlier. In this case, these costs are stated as eligible costs.

You can estimate your travel expenses and personnel costs for the review meeting (if it takes place within the 60 days after the project end) and claim it in your Form C as a preliminary estimation before the review meeting takes place. After the review meeting, there will be some time to update those figures to make sure to report the exact final costs.

To summarize, the EC considers final review (and CFS) costs as being related to the preparation of the final reports, and covered by Art II.14.c of the ECGA Annex II. So costs such as travel, subsistence, organizational / logistics and management-task related personnel time e.g. for drafting reports are all eligible (but see the 60 days rule above). No other categories of costs (e.g. related to research, demonstration, dissemination, training, and production of deliverables) are normally eligible after the end of the project. The final review must be held within 60 days after the project end, otherwise costs incurred by the review will not be eligible. There is no possibility to extend the

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60-day period. The detailed schedule within the 60-days period should allow enough time for the report and overall resources / costs situation to be ready for reviewers to study them properly. We as the coordinator do not stipulate a definitive NEF submission before the review meeting, but the report should be as stable and as complete as possible.

In any case, please note that we, the Coordinator and the administrative support, can never guarantee if the EC will accept everything or whether they come up with additional questions.

2.2 Different types of costs

2.2.1 Personnel costs (GA Article 6.2 A)

Direct costs are all those eligible costs which can be attributed directly to the project therefore personnel must:

- Be directly hired by the beneficiary in accordance with its national legislation,
- Work under the sole technical supervision and responsibility of the latter, and
- Be remunerated in accordance with the normal practice of the beneficiary.

Only the costs related to participation in the EU co-funded project may be reimbursed, hence the beneficiary has to record time spent by their personnel.

Generally, the calculation of personnel costs is based on hourly rates. They are based on all eligible personnel cost elements and the total productive hours.

Calculation of personnel costs:

```
{ ( hourly rate multiplied by number of actual hours worked on the action ), plus for non-profit legal entities: additional remuneration to personnel assigned to the action under the conditions set out here¹ }
```

Personnel costs cover the basic remuneration (i.e. basic salary and components, overtime, etc. – as defined in the employment contract) and ONLY for non-profit legal entities also additional remuneration (bonus for participating in projects, etc.). Further, the number of actual hours for a person worked on the action must be identifiable and verifiable.

The total number of hours declared in EU grants, for a person for a year, cannot be higher than the annual productive hours used for the calculations of the hourly rate. Therefore, the **maximum number of hours** that can be declared for the grant are:

```
{ number of annual productive hours for the year (see below)
minus
total number of hours declared by the beneficiary, for that person for that year, for other EU grants}.
```

The beneficiaries must use the **annual personnel costs** and the **number of annual productive hours** for each full financial year covered by the reporting period. If a financial year is not closed at

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¹ http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/amga/h2020-amga_en.pdf; p.44, Point A.1



the end of the reporting period, the beneficiaries must use the hourly rate of the **last closed financial year available**.

Example: Action with 1 reporting period of 18 months from 01.01.2019 to 30.06.2020. The beneficiary's financial year closes on 31st December of every year.

Calculation of the hourly rate:

For hours worked on the action from 01.02.2019-31.12.2019: the hourly rate of 2019 must be used; i.e. hourly rate calculated on the basis of the annual personnel costs and annual productive hours of the closed financial year 2019.

For hours worked on the action from 01.01.2020 – 31.07.2020: the hourly rate calculated for the last closed financial year available must be used, e.g. in this example the one of the year 2019. Therefore, the beneficiary will not calculate another hourly rate for the period from 01.01.2020 – 30.06.2020. Instead, it will simply continue applying the hourly rate calculated for 2019 for the hours worked in 2020 until 31.07.2020.

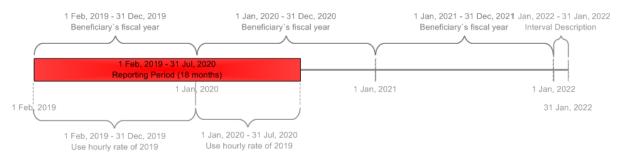


Figure 1: Sample timeline for hourly rate to be applied

Once declared, personnel costs can normally **NOT be adjusted due to a re-calculation** of the hourly rate. A correction is only possible if there was a mistake in the calculation of the hourly rate used to declare costs (e.g. incorrect information).

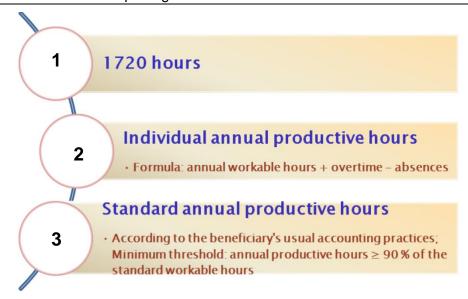
Calculation of the hourly rate calculated per full financial year:

{ actual annual personnel costs (excluding additional remuneration) for the person divided by number of annual productive hours }

For calculating the number of <u>annual productive hours</u>, the beneficiaries must use one of the following **three** options:

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- 1. `fixed number of hours´ 1720 hours per person per year, working full time (or corresponding prorate for persons not working full time)
- 2. 'individual annual productive hours'

{ annual workable hours of the person (according to the employment contract, applicable collective labour agreement or national law)

plus

overtime worked

minus

absences (such as sick leave and special leave) }

Annual workable hours relates to the period during which the personnel must be working in the year for the beneficiary and carrying out the activity or duties either under the employment contract, applicable collective labour agreement or the national working time legislation. If the contract (or applicable collective labour agreement or national working time legislation) does not allow to determine the annual workable hours, this option cannot be used

3. `standard annual productive hours´ - applied by the beneficiary for its personnel in accordance with its usual cost accounting practices (at least 90% of standard annual workable hours)

As an alternative, beneficiaries can calculate the **hourly rate** also **on a monthly basis** as follows:

```
{ actual monthly personnel cost (excluding additional remuneration) for the person divided by (number of annual productive hours / 12 ) }
```

using the personnel costs for each month (one twelfth of) the annual productive hours calculated according to the fixed numbers of hours or the standard annual productive hours.

In case your financial accounting is calculating personnel costs on the basis of unit costs such as average personnel costs or SME owner costs, we will be happy to support you individually.

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Furthermore, calculation guidelines for personnel costs on the basis of unit costs can be found in Article 6 in the annotated model GA².

The EU co-finances the projects carried out by the entities with appropriate research resources. Beneficiaries need to demonstrate that the project personnel is in fact their personnel.

Time recording is necessary in order to justify personnel time spent on the project (estimates of hours worked are not allowed)

Full time recording is recommended, which allows identifying time spent on all activities.

Irrespective of the system chosen for time recording, the beneficiaries should ensure that the **time** is recorded and reported regularly and is verified by the personnel and supervisor (i.e. the timesheets are signed).

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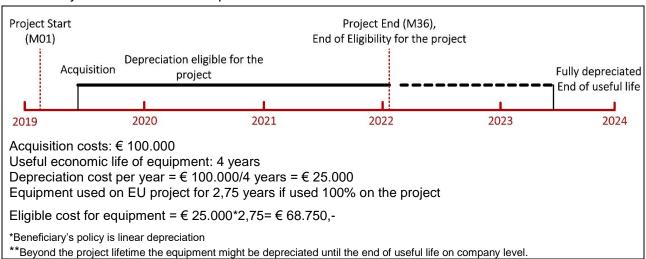
² http://ec.eu<u>ropa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/amga/h2020-amga_en.pdf</u>, p.49f



2.2.2 Other direct costs (GA Article 6.2 D)

Durable Equipment:

- Usually the equipment purchased for the project can qualify as eligible
- Only **depreciation charges** (in accordance with international accounting standards and the beneficiary's usual accounting practices) can be charged to the EC (example see below)
- Costs for renting or leasing equipment, infrastructure or other assets are eligible as long as they do not exceed the depreciation costs of similar items.



- Beneficiaries should provide:
 - Proof of the purchase of the equipment (date and cost)
 - Proof of existence and the use on the EC project
 - Description of the depreciation policy and purchase of durable equipment

Travel costs:

- Must be related to the project
- Must comply with the beneficiary's usual practices and be adequately recorded
- Must reflect the actual expenses of the beneficiary: the actual travel costs or lump sums/per diems if the latter are used to reimburse travel costs to the personnel
- Keep proof of travel expenses

Costs of other goods and services (GA Article 10):

- Must be necessary for the project
- Eligible cost only if consumables purchased after the start date of the project
- Such goods and services include, for instance, consumables and supplies, dissemination (including open access), protection of results, certificates on the financial statements (if they are required by the Agreement), certificates on the methodology, translations and publications.

Value added tax (VAT)

VAT is an eligible cost if non-deductible and paid by the beneficiary.

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In-kind Contributions (Article 11 & 12):

If necessary to implement the action, the beneficiaries may use in-kind contributions provided by 3rd parties **against payment or free of charge**. The beneficiaries may declare costs related to the payment of in-kind contributions as **eligible** up to the 3rd parties' costs for the **seconded persons**, **contributed equipment**, **infrastructure or other assets or other contributed goods and services**. The 3rd parties and their contributions **must be set out in Annex 1**.

Subcontracting (GA Article 13):

Subcontracting may cover only a **limited part of the action**. The beneficiaries must award the subcontracts ensuring the **best value for money** or, if appropriate, the lowest price. The tasks to be implemented and the estimated cost for each subcontract **must be set out in Annex 1** and the total estimated costs of subcontracting per beneficiary must be set out in Annex 2.

2.2.3 Indirect costs (Overhead)

- flat-rate of 25% of the eligible costs direct excluding
 - costs of subcontracting
 - o costs of in-kind contributions provided by 3rd parties which are not used on the beneficiary's premises.

2.2.4 CFS (Certificate on financial statements)

In case a partner's or linked third party's **requested accumulated EC contribution** of all periods **exceeds 325.000 EUR**, an audit certificate has to be provided at the end of the project. Please note that according to Article 20 Chapter 6 of the Annotated Model Grant Agreement (V4.0) costs based on lump sums, flat-rates (e.g. <u>indirect costs</u>) or unit costs (other than those for personnel costs and costs for internally invoiced goods and services) are <u>NOT counted for the 325.000 threshold</u> (and do not need to be covered by the certificate). Costs incurred for such a CFS (Certificate on Financial Statements) or Certificates on the Methodology constitute eligible direct costs and are charged under **other direct costs for goods and services.**

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Chapter 3 Guidelines participant portal

FINANCIAL REPORTING

Click here to go through the Online manual and the Video tutorial of Technikon:

STEP1: Log on to the Participant Portal

http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/home.html

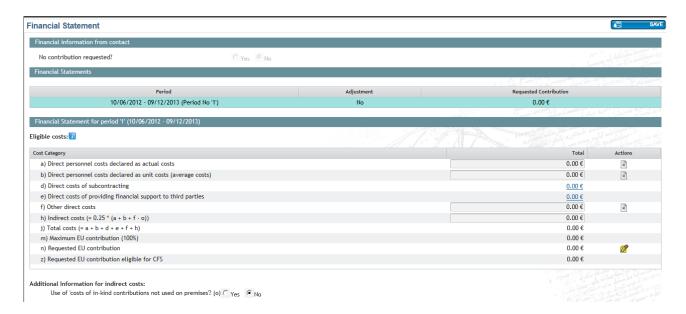
Guidance: Step 1: All beneficiaries receive a notification and log on to the Participant Portal. If you follow the link, you will be asked to log on to the Participant Portal:

- Log in with your credentials, or if you are not registered yet, create your account. Make sure you log in as "external". Please have a look at the **Chapter 4** where you find the current roles assigned to the project.
- ✓ After successful log in select "my area" "my projects" and afterwards select "MP" (Manage Project) for SPARTA.
- ✓ A new window opens and shows a session for "Periodic Reporting".

Step 2: Complete, e-sign and submit Financial Statement

Guidance: <u>Step 2: All beneficiaries complete their own Financial Statement and their contribution to the Technical Part of the Periodic Report. Beneficiaries e-sign and submit their Financial Statements to the Coordinator.</u>

Draft the financial statement: usually done by participant contact → click on "Financial Statement" and insert your organization's financial data for the requested period.



- ✓ **Direct Personnel costs:** click on "Actions" button and explain the PMs and associated WPs. The button "add detail" allows to enter your PMs on WP level.
- ✓ **Direct costs of subcontracting:** click on the blue, underlined figure and a new window will pop up and allows to enter details for subcontracting.
- ✓ Other direct costs: click on "Actions" button and fill in the details per cost category (travel, equipment, other goods and services). If costs declared under "other direct costs" are equal or

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greater than 15% of claimed personnel costs for the beneficiary in each reporting period, major direct costs items need to be recorded.

- ✓ Indirect costs are calculated automatically
- ✓ Maximum EU contribution is calculated automatically.
- ✓ **Requested EU contribution:** Usually you re-insert the same amount as listed in the field "maximum EU contribution"

After filling in the cost figures, "Save" and close the form.

Click on Validation button to see whether you have filled in all information correctly, then close the current screen and return to Participant Portal.

- b) **Lock the financial statement for review:** usually done by participant contact → click "Lock for Review" button, which will prevent further editing and generate a pdf. The PFSIGN will receive a message from the system which asks to sign and submit the financial report to the coordinator.
- c) Review Form C and sign & submit it to the coordinator: Only PFSIGNS (project financial signatories) can perform this action! The PFSIGN has to log in with his ECAS credentials (My Area → My Projects → MP → Periodic Reporting
 - ✓ Click on task "Financial Statement" and perform review.
 - ✓ Once reviewed, the Form C can be unlocked "Unlock to draft" for further editing or electronically signed & submitted "Sign and Submit" to coordinator.
- d) The system will then ask for **confirmation** if the information is valid and once confirmed, you will have to **enter your ECAS password** again.
- e) After that the **Form C is completed** and will be reviewed by the Coordinator.

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Chapter 4 Appendix – Roles in participant portal

Currently the following persons are assigned to the project in the participant portal. Some parties have not assigned a Project Financial Signatory (PFSIGN) yet.

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