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2.2 Standard Unit Costs for researchers and academics participating in OGs

Rationale

In the Multi-actor Approach (MAA) to cooperation for innovation different types of partners are involved, with the aim of building up bridges/connections between farmers/foresters and results of research. Within the EIP-Agri Operational Groups (OGs), researchers and academics make a significant contribution to the development and dissemination of innovation, the transfer and share of their knowledge on innovation, inside and outside the OG. However, MAAs are time-consuming, so that the willingness and efforts, if not capacities, of researchers/academics to effectively apply interactive models for innovation within OGs are be limited.

Solution

The use of simplified cost options can help simplifying the administrative processes, through reducing the bureaucratic burdens related to the participation of staff employed in the actions of the OG by Public Research Institutes and Universities.



Keywords

Simplification, Standard costs, interactive innovation , Operational Groups



Potential users

Managing authorities of the CAP strategic Plans, Paying agencies, auditors and certifying bodies, Partners of OGs, Advisors, Innovations brokers



Country

Italy



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In line with the principle set by the EU Regulation that promotes the use of simplified cost options (SCO) methods already in place for similar types of operations and beneficiaries under other EU policies (i.e. Operational Programmes 2014-20 funded by the ERDF (European Regional Development Fund)), the Managing Authorities (MAs) of the RDPs of the Sardinia Region and the Emilia-Romagna Region adopted the standard unit costs established for the typical three professional levels of researchers and academics.

That methodology, that had been shared with the European Commission, has been developed by a study of the *ad hoc* working that had been promoted by the MAs of the National Operational Programmes for Research and Innovation and for the Enterprise and Competitiveness 2014-2020, the Agency for Territorial Cohesion, its Audit and Control Unit and in collaboration with the European Commission.

All in all, hourly standard unit costs are established for the staff of Universities and Public Research Institutes who do not receive salary for carrying out project activities detailed by professional level (high, medium, low) and based on series of historical data of expenses certified to the EC for research and universities staffs under EU funded programmes for the period 2009-2016.

| Professional level | High | Medium | Low |
|--------------------|--|--|---|
| Research | 55 | 33 | 29 |
| | Director of Research Technologist 1 st level Researcher 1 st level | Researcher and Technologist 3 th level | Researcher and Technologist 4 th – 7 th Levels Technical support Administrative staff |
| Academia | 73 | 48 | 31 |
| | Ordinary Professor | Associate Professor | Researcher/Administrative and Technician staff |

In practice...

The methodology was applied by the Regions of Sardinia and Emilia-Romagna under the RDPs 2014-2020 for the staff of research and universities participating in OGs.

In practice, the overall personnel cost to refund to the research body/university is calculated by multiplying the n. of worked hours in the project of the OG and reported by the timesheet for each staff employee by the SUC of pertinent professional level.

Practical implications for replicability

The use of standard costs under the CAP Regulation 2023-2027 has been furtherly simplified. However, some administrative arrangements remain relevant:

- The standard unit cost was defined starting from a database implemented on the historicity of the projects, obtaining from those carried out in the 2009 - 2016 period (similar, in terms of industrial research and experimental development activities, nature and beneficiaries, to the interventions of the 2014-2020 programming cycle), the information necessary for the analysis and definition of the sample for the determination of the standard hourly cost. If the standard unit costs are updated to a more recent period, the new hourly values identified can be applied.
- The MA should clearly provide for the use of standard costs and indicate the adoption of the specific methodology by the DP of the CAP and the call of the OG.
- The MA should clearly indicate the documentation required to demonstrate the actual commitment of the staff of the universities and public research organisations in the interactive actions (e.g. attendance sheets, named timesheets, signatures during meetings, reports, etc.) and to be attached to the request for staff remuneration.

Benefits

- Administrative simplification due to the reduced use of probative documentation and of time to spend for cost reporting
- Acceleration of the achievement of performance targets
- Acceleration of the declaration of expenditures to the European Commission
- Incentivization for researchers/academics to actively participate in OG

Further information

[Public call for applications for OGs \(IT\)](#) – Region Emilia Romagna

[Public call for applications for OGs \(IT\)](#) – Region Sardegna

[Guidelines of the National Rural Network \(EN\)](#) – Simplified costs for operational groups (2018)

[Interministerial decree 24.01.2018 about Calculation Methodology Standard Unit Cost Tables, Standard Unit Cost Tables, Official Journal 9 May 2018 \(IT\)](#)

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