

Recording Hours Guidelines

Introduction

While larger organizations and those who have received grants from their own governments may have developed systems for staff to record hours, many others, including Universities, Research Institutes and commercial bodies have not. Some organizations will only be interested in time of arrival and time of departure and vacation and sickness records, while others will already be allocating personnel costs to products or budget headings based on a sophisticated time (often computerized) system.

Unless a member of staff is working all of his time on an EU project, some means of recording time (and therefore personnel costs) to be allocated to the project and other productive tasks, will need to be implemented. Estimates are unacceptable and daily recording of time allocation is therefore essential. We have always advised at least minimum recording of hours per day with allocation between projects (and in FP6 between activities). This has sometimes been resisted, particularly within some Research Institutes and Universities where it has been considered almost an infringement of personal liberty.

Alternative means of recording hours

1. We have seen systems in use where time is recorded by all staff using Internet facilities with allocations between projects, types of work, activities, training, sickness, vacations etc. Frequently there is an automatic closure of the system monthly (say three working days after the month end), after which only the personnel department, with special authority for top management, can amend the records and therefore the reports. Here the records are stored electronically only and reports are generated as needed by classification (including EU projects).

2. At the other end of the scale, some organizations merely have a total of the hours for the month (with or without classification between activity, task or project) which have been prepared from notes made during the month (which are often destroyed when the monthly report has been approved). Sometimes these figures will be reconcilable to time records from a “clocking in and out” system (usually now computerized). The records may or may not be capable of amendment after the month end and the printed reports may or may not be signed by the staff and department head/project manager.

3. Between the two extremes most SME’s and other organizations have realized the need to record staff’s time on EU projects, even if other time is not allocated to tasks/projects. Here the organization will frequently devise its own form to give minimum information to the accounting

departments to determine the time spent on the EU project in relation to other tasks, vacation, sickness etc and therefore the correct allocation personnel costs.

Proposed example of time recording, where no system allowing project and activity allocation exists within the organization.

As an example, we can show you an Excel based system for recording daily and monthly time for staff working on Framework projects. Time is recorded daily by the staff in a standard format which allows the information to be automatically transferred to a master spreadsheet for the activity report on the various projects' progress. The individual sheets are used by the accounting department to allocate personnel costs between projects. Each sheet within the workbook automatically totals through to the summary sheet for the month which can then be printed in hard copy format to be signed by the staff and project manager/department head.

Use of these sheets, or similar system, allows SME's and other organizations without sophisticated time recording equipment or programmes to fulfil their obligations and report time and personnel costs accurately.

Example

Excel summary timesheet in pdf format and one example of underlying project sheet – see link <http://www.finance-helpdesk.org/front/ShowCategory.aspx?ItemID=481>

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