



## **Cooperative Projects - Challenges and Opportunities**

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Today's research in Germany is often organized in large projects and collaborations, so-called cooperative projects ("Verbundprojekte" in German). These projects are defined by a large number of members (more than 50) and participating institutes, e.g. institutes of research organizations such as the Max-Planck society and the Leibniz association, Helmholtz centres, and universities. For coordination purposes these projects usually have a general project manager or project coordinator close to the speaker of the project. Despite this overarching position, it is often challenging for the project manager to really overview the entire project as he is, for example, not involved in the individual institute's recruitment processes or research connections to other institutes via other projects. Additionally, there is neither a formal obligation for the principal investigators and project scientists to report changes within their sub-projects, nor any formal dependency between these sub-projects and the coordination office to ensure a contemporary update of changes and progress in their specific tasks of the project. Therefore, the idea of a coordinating position to oversee the entire cooperative project is sometimes difficult to reach. Furthermore, project managers usually have no formal connection to other project managers. This means that recurrent tasks, for which cooperation between project managers would be helpful, need to be reinvented for each project anew. Due to the lack of this more formalized cooperation between project managers, acquired expertise is often lost.

We will illustrate the challenges of this kind of project management based on projects at the Max Planck Institute for Meteorology (Hamburg) and the Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research (GEOMAR, Kiel), but also point out opportunities that arise within a large collaboration of partners. Moreover, we present an approach to coordinate management processes in order to overcome some of the aforementioned challenges across several cooperative projects - a virtual centre for earth system science management (CESSMA).