INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH-CONSORTIUM

IDC CCCP – A BOTTOM-UP ENVIRONMENT TO SUPPORT INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

Building bridges – Colloquium on interdisciplinary research (FWO, KVAB, JA, Departement EWI)
Noël Klima, Brussels, 9 September 2019
INTERDISCIPLINARY CONSORTIA (IDC) @UGENT

UGent experience: high individuality of researchers, less “big” funding due to smaller groups, lack of (focused) interdisciplinary cooperation and societal value creation, … (new research policy framework in 2012)

- Strategic support of several SSH disciplines, later extended to all disciplines

Aim: support of interdisciplinary bottom-up cooperation towards societal impact (IDCs)
PILOT FASE IDC-CONSORTIA

- Pilot funding 5 years for 5 consortia + coordinator
- "Carte blanche" to develop the consortium and to define and focus on relevant priorities
- Operate from scratch and define own mission, goals, way of working and outputs (bottom-up)
- Phase 1 (value creation through interdisciplinary cooperation) > evaluation
- Phase 2 (pathways to impact – impact planning) > evaluation
GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS IDC-CONSORTIA

Group of engaged principal professors from different disciplines
Dedicated research coordinator as knowledge broker
Sharing of knowledge and resources
Collaboration with Research Department and EU Office

IDC consortia

+ 6 new IDCs
COMBINING OUR STRENGTHS

- Bottom-up approach: researcher is central
- Individual tailor-made support
- Light consortium structure
- Flexible and adaptive towards new developments
WORKING TOGETHER TOWARDS 4 GOALS

1. Strengthening **SOCIETAL VALUE CREATION** initiatives and pathways to impact, including impact measurement
2. Obtaining **RESEARCH FUNDING** for interdisciplinary projects to conduct excellent research
3. Detecting and stimulating **SYNERGIES AND COOPERATION** within the group and with partners from different disciplines (including STEMM)
4. **ENABLING RESEARCHERS** to conduct more interdisciplinary research, apply through diverse funding channels and plan valorisation and societal impact
TO TARGET

SOCIETAL IMPACT

AT ALL

STAKEHOLDERS

ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

GHENT UNIVERSITY

POLICYMAKERS

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

PRACTITIONERS

GENERAL PUBLIC

STUDENTS
BOTTOM-UP APPROACH: RESEARCHERS ARE CENTRAL

- Starting point are **existing relationships** of individual researchers (projects, guest lectures, etc.)
- From ad-hoc to more structural cooperation (through regular IDC initiatives)
- Consolidation of interdisciplinary cooperation and extension takes **time** (unawareness, hesitation, mistrust, uncertainty, etc.)
INDIVIDUAL TAILOR-MADE SUPPORT

• **Needs of researchers** are collected on regular basis (1-1 meetings, group meetings)
• **Opportunities** for interdisciplinary cooperation, funding channels and ventures are provided on individual and group level
• Sharing **information** within the consortium (leading by example, share opportunities through structural internal communication)
• Support/advice for interdisciplinary project preparation
LIGHT CONSORTIUM STRUCTURE

- **No heavy administrative burden** for the member researchers
- **Enough time** to build trust, dedication and commitment of all members as well as mutual recognition and understanding between researchers (and coordinator)
- IDC is **complementary structure** intertwined with all other structures
FLEXIBLE AND ADAPTIVE TOWARDS NEW DEVELOPMENTS

• Coordinator is **knowledge broker** and keeps up with new developments/opportunities

• **Information flow** between researchers and coordinator (e.g. newsletter, news flash)

• Coordinator engages in **new initiatives** reports back and facilitates engagement of interested researchers (e.g. STEM-SSH match making, stakeholder events)
MAJOR LESSON’S LEARNED

• Researchers
  • Triggering openness towards interdisciplinary opportunities takes time
  • Expose regularly to occurring opportunities
  • Take individual needs into account
  • Take existing social interaction/cooperation as a basis
  • Leading by example in the group

• Structure
  • Not rigid and top-down, but bottom-up across boundaries
  • No extra administrative burden
  • Central information exchange focal and support point
  • Support on individual and group level
  • Feeding interdisciplinarity rather than ‘creating’
  • Size needs to stay workable
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