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(I)EXPLORING THE ADEQUACY OF OPENPM² TO EUROPEAN UNION – FUNDED INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT GRANT PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED BY CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

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The European Union (EU), considering the Development Assistance Committee EU member states together with the EU Institutions, is the world's leading donor, contributing in 2017 to 51% of the world's total net Official Development Assistance. An important part of it is delivered via International Development projects that are implemented by Civil Society Organizations (CSO), also referred to as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO). These projects are vastly diverse; showcase several differential characteristics and are subject to numerous factors that influence their performance. This communication explores how the recently European Commission (EC)-developed Project Management Methodology, OpenPM², could improve the set of management procedures currently used by the EC. A proposal is presented to tailor OpenPM² to fit the specific needs and constraints of these projects, identifying concrete elements to be adapted, issues where there are complementarities with current EC procedures and aspects that need to be incorporated in order to meet EC development policy requirements and to contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Keywords: *Project Management; International Development; OpenPM²; Civil Society Organizations; Non-Governmental Organizations; Sustainable Development Goals*

(I)ADECUACIÓN DE OPENPM² A PROYECTOS DE DESARROLLO INTERNACIONAL SUBVENCIONADOS POR LA UE E IMPLEMENTADOS POR ORGANIZACIONES DE LA SOCIEDAD CIVIL

La Unión Europea (UE), considerando los estados miembros de la UE que pertenecen al Comité de Ayuda al Desarrollo junto con las Instituciones de la UE, es el mayor donante del mundo, habiendo contribuido en 2017 con el 51% de la Ayuda Oficial al Desarrollo neta de todo el mundo. Una parte importante es proporcionada a través de proyectos de Desarrollo Internacional que son ejecutados por Organizaciones de la Sociedad Civil (OSC), también denominadas Organizaciones No Gubernamentales (ONG). Estos proyectos son enormemente diversos; presentan características diferenciales y están sujetos a numerosos factores que afectan a su desempeño. Esta comunicación explora cómo OpenPM², la metodología de gestión de proyectos recientemente desarrollada por la Comisión Europea (CE), puede mejorar los procedimientos de gestión que la CE usa en la actualidad. Se presenta una propuesta de adaptación de OpenPM² para encajar las necesidades y condicionantes de este tipo de proyectos, identificando elementos concretos que deben adecuarse, áreas donde hay complementariedades con procedimientos de la CE y aspectos que resulta necesario incorporar para ajustarse a los requerimientos de la política de desarrollo de la CE y para contribuir a los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible de Naciones Unidas.

Palabras clave: *Gestión de Proyectos; Desarrollo Internacional; OpenPM²; Organizaciones de la Sociedad Civil; Organizaciones No Gubernamentales; Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible*

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1. Introduction – The EU as International Development donor and the role of CSO

International Development (ID) is an industry sector that mobilizes billions of euro each year. According to the latest available data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC), the European Union (EU) (DAC EU member states together with the EU Institutions) is the world's leading donor contributing in 2017 to 51% of the world's total net ODA (Official Development Assistance) (OECD, 2018, p. 267). The European Commission (EC) is the EU Institution with the mandate to lead and design the European international cooperation and development policy and to deliver international development aid. The EU operates 141 Delegations and Offices around the world, working in close partnership with local governments, private sector and Civil Society Organizations. The Delegations manage development and cooperation programmes while representing the EU in host countries.

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda), with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at its core, is a transformative political framework to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development globally. In 2017 the EU adopted the new European Consensus on Development (the Consensus, para.10) as "the cornerstone of the EU's development policy, which is part of the overall response to the 2030 Agenda. The primary objective of the EU development policy [...] is the reduction and, in the long term, the eradication of poverty". The Consensus gives specific importance to the participation of Civil Society Organizations (CSO) in ID "as promoters of democracy and defenders of rightsholders and of the rule of law, social justice and human rights" (the Consensus, para. 17). CSO are also often referred to as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) and Non-State Actors (NSA). In 2016, over USD 2 billion of bilateral ODA was channelled to and through CSOs, corresponding to 11% of bilateral ODA (OECD, 2018, p. 311). Only in Europe, there are more than 2,600 NGOs members of CONCORD, the European confederation of Relief and Development NGOs, as potential ID projects implementers.

There is a common understanding regarding the importance of projects carried out by CSO as instruments to deliver international assistance (Golini, Kalchschmidt and Landoni, 2014), but, in general, there are not many studies of the non-profit sector within the project management literature (Lannon and Walsh, 2016). In fact, there is little quantitative data available to support the importance of projects in ID. In 2013 the OECD DAC modified the structure of its annual Development Co-operation Report (DCR) and started to include data on the modalities used to deliver country programmable aid, establishing the following categories: a) budget support; b) project-type interventions; c) technical assistance; and d) contributions to pooled programmes and funds. In 2016, the EU Institutions implemented over 5,6 million USD as project-type interventions (33.1% of the total net ODA).

Table 1: EU Institutions ODA (Million USD)

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Total Net ODA	15.572,66	13.597,63	13.907,10	13.669,60	16.985,29
Project-type interventions	4.261,97	3.873,19	4.328,42	4.576,97	5.630,07
Aid to and through CSO.	1.661,70	1.750,80	1.851,60	1.807,70	2.030,70

Source: Own development based on OECD Development Co-operation Reports 2013-2018

Table 1 shows the evolution of the EU Institutions ODA as project-type interventions and channelled to and through CSO. We have seen that the EU is the biggest global donor; projects are key instruments as aid delivery mechanism; and CSO are fundamental international development agents. We will now analyse these projects and the Project Management (PM) challenges they face.

2. ID Projects – Characteristics regarding project management

ID projects have been studied and characterized from several points of view. Golini and Landoni (2014), have undertaken a revision of the available literature systematizing the characteristics of ID projects. According to their study, there are some common characteristics of ID projects, which are usually present at the same time and that influence their management. Boakye and Liu (2016) have identified causes of project failure, noting that a majority of them, if not all, have been mentioned time and time again in extant PM literature. Hermano et al. (2013) identified and systematized Critical Success Factors (CSF) for ID projects and selected 7 of them, acknowledging the multiplicity and the lack of consensus about them. Table 3 summarizes these findings.

Table 2: Characterization of ID projects

Identified characteristics Golini & Landoni (2014)	Identified causes of failure Boakye & Liu (2016)	Identified CSF Hermano et al. (2013)
Lack of a defined and/or powerful client	Poor project planning	Team building
High number of stakeholders	Weak supervision	Local environment
Difficult, complex and risky environments	Low commitment by host government	Implementation approach
Resource scarcity	Poor management	Learning opportunities
Difficulty in using PM techniques in the context of other cultures	Lack of flexibility	Policy characteristics
Presence of intangible outputs, which can be difficult to define and measure	Poor Quality-at-Entry (QAE)	Availability of resources
	Optimism bias	Stakeholders/beneficiaries satisfaction
	Project understaffing	
	Exogenous factors	
	Non-performing contractors	
	Delays in project start-up	
	Not admitting failure	
	Project complexity	

EU-funded ID grant projects generally conform with this characterization. However, some aspects may be discussed. Regarding a defined, strong client or stakeholder’s satisfaction, it needs to be noted how the characteristics of the grant affect the governance of the project. As we will later see, EU grants are donations that do not cover 100% of the project’s budget, but co-finance it together with the CSO’s own funds or with other donors. This implies that the governance of the project is subject to a complex network of clearly identified and powerful clients. Both the EC, by means of its development policy, and the CSOs by means of their own internal mandate, should have an obligation to consider as their client the final beneficiaries of the projects, even if they do not fund the project and do not play a role in terms of supervision and direction of the project.

Also, very frequently, CSOs will have to deal with local, regional and/or national government institutions; local contractors and providers; partners and the final beneficiary population. In general terms, ID projects may be strongly influenced by many diverse factors: political, social, economic, cultural, religious, institutional, capacity, technology, environment, etc. ID projects have a very strong human dimension (as they involve poverty alleviation) that affect project management and as such needs to be taken into consideration.

Regarding resource scarcity/availability of resources/poor management there are two flanks to consider. In one hand, given that the EC is accountable for the management of public funds, it is very careful and strict with the examination of the proposed budgets and justification for all expenditure is thoroughly demanded. In the other hand, it should be considered that in the context where ID projects are implemented, professional project

managers are not abundant. “Most of the ID professionals are “accidental” project managers, as they hold project and program management responsibilities yet lack any formal project management education and background”. (Ika, 2012, p. 37). Generally speaking, “the developing world is characterised by poor PM capacity” (Boakye and Liu, 2016, p.80).

ID projects implemented by CSO are reported to have high failure rates and their performance is often not satisfactory, with even empirical evidence showing that ID projects often lack efficiency and effectiveness (Golini, Kalchschmidt and Landoni, 2014). However, there is general recognition on the importance of incorporating improved PM practices to improve project success. Joslin and Müller (2015) studied the relationship between the use of a project management methodology (PMM) and project success. The results showed that the application of a PMM account for 22.3% of the variation in project success.

Golini, Kalchschmidt and Landoni (2014) undertook a large-scale survey among project managers working for NGOs and dealing with ID projects to assess the extent of adoption of PM methodologies and tools. Their work shows that “in NGOs, some PM tools are frequently adopted (e.g. logical framework, progress report), whereas others appear to be neglected (e.g. critical path method, issue log, earned value management system). Typically, NGO are more likely to adopt simple techniques than to focus on more structured and analytical methodologies.” (p.657) In fact, in EU-funded ID grant projects the use of logical framework, progress reports, budget/cost accounting and Gantt-chart are adopted because they are compulsory, in line with their findings: “only the basic tools are adopted because they are required to receive funding, but there is lack of knowledge of practical principles of PM and this brings to a lower performance.” According to their conclusions, there is “evidence on the adoption and impact of PM tools on project performance in NGOs” (p. 658).

ID projects share common characteristics, failure causes and critical success factors. But they are also extremely diverse, with such diversity coming from different angles:

- Size of the CSO: The EU funds projects by large International NGO with thousands of employees worldwide and strong, professionalized internal procedures but also, projects implemented by local CSO with only a few employees and limited know-how.
- Size of the projects: the EU funds projects that range from several million euro to projects of a few thousand euro.
- Sector of intervention: The EU funds projects in a wide variety of sectors, from “hard projects” (focusing on infrastructures, for example water and sanitation facilities) to “soft projects” (focusing on capacities, for example LGBT rights protection).
- Location of the project: The EU finds projects worldwide, with different environmental, social and cultural conditions (for example, projects in South-East Asia or in the Sahel.)

In the past, several international aid agencies have developed their own standards and supported related training and education in developing countries (Golini, Kalchschmidt and Landoni, 2014). According to Landoni and Corti, (2011) “the evolution toward a new international standard for ID projects should be fostered, at least in terms of a general framework and terminologies” (p. 59).

There are several private initiatives that have proposed specific PM methodologies, adapted to the characteristics of ID project and to the needs of the CSO, such as Project Management for Development Organizations (PM4DEV) and PM4NGOs. Both offer methodologies specifically targeting CSO and certification programmes. More recently, answering to the needs of CSO, the IPMA Coaching for Development® (IPMA C4D) initiative has been launched to help non-profit organisations in their social development and humanitarian aid projects. According to IPMA’s own data, only 36 % of the aid projects achieve their intended impact (IPMA, n.d.).

3. ID Project Management in the European Commission

Given the importance and diversity of ID projects, the EC has provided itself with a well-structured procedure for setting in motion EU-funded ID projects. The EC considers projects as contracts in which a selected implementing partner undertakes the agreed intervention with the provided funds. The legally binding contract establishes the conditions, rights and obligations of each party in the project. It may be signed by the EC or by a Contracting Authority (CA) – usually a partner country. The procedure is described in the “Practical guide on contract procedures for European Union external action” (PRAG) (European Commission, 2018). It is the knowledge base for all stakeholders in preparing and implementing procurement and grant projects in the field of EU-funded external action, providing detailed procedures and practical, ready-to-fill-in templates. Eighteen different versions have been released since the first one in 1996, growing and evolving to adapt to the Institution’s needs.

Table 3: Summary characteristics of grants vs procurement contracts

	Grants contracts	Procurement contracts
Procedure	Call for Proposals	Call for Tenders
Nature	Donation	Purchase
Object	Project proposal	Services, supplies or works
Objectives	Set by the grant beneficiary in line with priorities established by the CA	Set by the CA by means of defined Terms of Reference
Final owner	Grant beneficiary	CA
Financing	Co-financing	100%
Profit-making	Not allowed	Allowed

Source: Adapted from PRAG (Section 6.1.1. Definition)

A key element for EU-funded ID projects is the clear distinction between contracts awarded by means of calls for tenders (procurement contracts) and those awarded by means of calls for proposals (grants contracts), even if both are competitive procedures. Calls for proposals are the main instrument for CSO to participate and receive funding from the EC to implement ID projects. One single call for proposals usually yields to several grant contracts, whereas a call for tenders yields to one single contract. Table 3 summarizes the differences between grant contracts and procurement contracts. These characteristics imply consequences that differentiate grant projects from procurement projects in terms of Project Management.

PRAG is perceived internally by the EC as a project management tool: “It is used by the Commission services responsible for the **management of projects and programmes** financed under the external financing instruments and the EDF [...]” (PRAG version 2018.0, section 1.1, emphasis added). It does include and describe in detail a process for planning, initiating, contracting, controlling, and closing projects. However, it guides only the procurement and contracting processes of the grant, providing very limited tools for the management of the execution phase. As an indication: PRAG provides an extensive number of annexes that complement and guide all the steps of the different procedures. There are 41 published annexes for Grants to guide and facilitate the steps of the procedure. However, most of those annexes (66%) are administrative forms and internal documents used by EC officials to implement the procurement procedure leading to award the grant contracts (most of them, for example, guiding the assessment procedure that evaluates the proposals in order to determine their fitness for funding). Only 13 of the 41 published annexes may be considered of management use, 6 reporting templates included. The non-reporting annexes with managerial implications are the following:

- **Application form:** It includes two different documents:
 - a) **Concept Note:** The Concept Note is as brief document (compulsorily limited to 5 pages) that introduces the objectives, stakeholders, internal logic and context of the project and must justify the relevance of the project. It is used for the initial proposal assessment. The proposals that do not reach a certain threshold score are rejected.
 - b) **Full Application:** The Full Application is also limited in extension (to 20 pages) and it informs on all relevant elements of the project, such as activities, internal logic, target groups, expected outcomes, methodology, sustainability of the action, etc. It is compulsory to include an “indicative action plan” (in maximum 4 pages), for which a Gantt-chart-type template is provided. It is used for the final assessment and only the best scored proposals are proposed for contract signature (funding). If funded, the Full Application becomes an annex to the contract, as the description of the action.
- **Budget:** Details the necessary resources for the project and its justification.
- **Logical Framework:** Taken from the Logical Framework Approach (LFA), a matrix template provides with a summary of the activities, outputs, outcomes and objectives as well as indicators, targets, sources of verification and assumptions (risks).
- **Four other annexes** provide with the contractual conditions, financial obligations, administrative procedures and rules for the project during its implementation: a) Standard grant contract (special conditions); b) General conditions; c) Procurement rules to be followed by grant beneficiaries; and d) Addendum format.

These annexes are compulsory to use in order to participate in any given call for proposals and are part of the contract. They are the backbone documents that govern the project and they are what EC officials use as reference for project management, as it is what is legally binding. CSOs may define their own PM practice and procedures for the implementation.

In 1992 the European Commission adopted Project Cycle Management (PCM) as its primary set of project design and management tools (based on the LFA), and a first PCM manual was produced in 1993. Two updates have been undertaken, the most recent dating from March 2004, the PCM Guidelines (European Commission, 2004). They provide with a description of a cycle of operations: Programming – Identification – Formulation – Implementation – Evaluation and Audit. They include also a thorough explanation on the LFA. They are oriented to guide EC project managers, at Delegations and in Brussels; and at their official partners in third countries in the management of EU-funded projects of a certain type (geographical budget lines) and not others. The PCM operational guidelines “focuses on a description of the key steps and responsibilities for managing geographical budget lines, **not for calls for proposals**” (PCM Guidelines, p.17, emphasis added).

The PCM Guidelines contain general PM principles, but “PCM is a framework rather a tool” (Golini and Landoni, 2014, p. 123) and it does not consider the specific characteristics of grant projects. Fuster (2006) undertook a comparison of PCM/LFA with international PM standards and methodologies. The conclusions of his study suggest that although PCM/LFA is good in defining and managing many life-cycle aspects, it presents gaps in various important areas of project management.

The EC has dedicated a lot of effort to develop and update the PRAG given the importance of keeping up to date the contractual procedures that affect all projects. In the other hand, limited attention has been given to providing project management guidelines. Specifically, no attention has been given to the management of grant projects – mainly implemented by CSOs – even if they have great importance in terms of volume of funds and in terms of political significance. However, the EC has recently developed a generic PM methodology - PM² - that, with the necessary tailoring, could contribute to improving PM for these projects.

4. OpenPM²

Kourounakis (2018) summarized the origin and development of PM² shortly after the inaugural PM² Conference on February 2018. The first version of PM² was developed in 2008 to address an internal need from the EU Institutions. Investing in improving Project Management is recognised by the EC as a good decision and of high and long-lasting strategic value. Internal audit recommendations suggested a need to merge the variety of approaches that many EU Services were using, into one single, common methodology. Even if other methodologies were readily available, selecting and tailoring a third-party proprietary methodology was deemed to be complicated and politically challenging. An internal survey oriented the decision to develop a methodology designed to fit the specific needs, culture and constraints of EU Institutions. The methodology has integrated experience and lessons from EU Institutions practitioners, along with internationally recognised best practices, into a single document: The PM² Methodology Guide. Its current edition (3.0) was published in October 2018. It has been adopted so far by the EC, the Council of the EU, the European Parliament, and many other EU institutions and Agencies. Adoption and use are rapidly rising, and it may be considered the *de facto* PM methodology of the EU Institutions.

“The methodology is light and easy to implement and addresses the complete lifecycle of projects. It incorporates elements from a wide range of globally accepted PM best practices” (Pantouvakis, 2018, p. 246). PM² has deliberately avoided to present itself as a comprehensive body of knowledge on PM. Instead, it presents a set of best practices in a simple and non-intimidating way that encourages users to start by practicing.

The methodology is founded on best practices and supported by four pillars, in what is known as “The House of PM²” (governance, lifecycle, processes and artefacts):

- The **governance model** of PM² proposes a set of formal management roles and clearly assigns management responsibilities to all of them. The governance model is divided into 5 layers (top to bottom: governing, steering, directing, managing and performing) and two sides (the requestor side, where the client is represented by the Business Manager; and the provider side, represented by the Project Manager).
- The **lifecycle** of PM² has four phases (initiating, planning, executing and closing plus an overarching, parallel set of activities for monitoring and control) with interfaces between phases and with established phase gates to ensure revision and approval as checkpoints for quality control before proceeding to the next phase.
- **Processes.** In PM² each lifecycle phase has a set of specific activities assigned to each relevant stakeholder following a Responsibility Assignment Matrix (RAM). It ensures that all necessary project tasks are assigned as one of the key functions: Responsible, Accountable, Support, Consulted, Informed.
- **Artefacts.** PM² provides a complete set of templates and documents that support the processes, guiding stakeholders in the documenting process of the project in order to complete the lifecycle according to the governance model.
- Additionally, PM² provides also orientation regarding what are defined as **mindsets**. These are the attitudes and behaviours that help project teams focus on what matter to achieve the project’s goal, providing a common set of beliefs and values for all PM² practitioners. The PM² Methodology Guide includes as annexes an overview of commonly used PM tools and techniques.

OpenPM² is an EC initiative which brings the PM² Methodology and its benefits closer to its broader stakeholders. Its vision is: "One open, free, and common Project Management Methodology for Europe." The goal of the OpenPM² is to provide free and open access to the PM² to enable increased effectiveness across all stakeholders. All PM² publications are

published with an open source license, encouraging the community to use and improve them by only acknowledging the source. The methodology is supported by the Centre of Excellence in PM² (CoEPM²), which coordinates the PM² development, promotes it through the OpenPM² initiative and maintains an Open PM² wiki, to make it available to the public.

5. Tailoring of OpenPM² to ID EU-funded grants:

As we have seen, EU-funded ID grant projects have a distinct set of characteristics that have not been specifically considered by the EC in terms of PM. We have also seen that PM² has been developed by the EC in order to fit the needs, culture and constraints of EU Institutions. We have seen its main potential benefits. “PM² is ideal for projects related to the public sector, EU programs and grants” (Obradovic, 2018, p. 54). Given the ODA volume managed by the EU Institutions and the specificities of ID projects managed by CSO, it would be reasonable to have a unified adapted PM Methodology under the umbrella of OpenPM².

EU-funded ID grant projects are a deep-rooted instrument and there is an already established culture around them. The adoption of any new methodology should be done constructing over what is in place and the tailoring of PM² to EU-funded ID grant projects would need to consider the specific needs, characteristics, constraints and culture of both the EC and the CSOs. For example: the LFA has been criticized and has several acknowledged shortcomings (Hermano et al., 2013). However, it is part of the backbone of current management practice and it should not be replaced but complemented. PM² would need to merge PRAG and PCM Guidelines to be useful to EC Task Managers and to CSOs project managers, integrating all the phases, tools and roles in an EU-funded ID grant project.

OpenPM² defines a project as “a temporary organisational structure which is set up to create a unique product or service (output) within certain constraints such as time, cost, and quality. [...] A project ends when its objectives have been achieved and all deliverables have been produced and accepted by the organisation or person who requested the project (the client). All deliverables are then handed over to the client and the project team is disbanded” (European Commission, 2018, PM² Guide). As we have seen, in EU-Funded ID grant projects there is no final hand over to the client, but final ownership remains with the provider. In this regard, it would be necessary to adjust the definition of project as a first step.

One of the main declared objectives of OpenPM² is to provide with a common vocabulary (glossary) to facilitate communication and application of concepts in project teams. There are terms that are already established in the EU-funded ID grant projects and are part of their culture. It would be beneficial to revise the current terminology and blend it in with the PM² terminology in order to provide a common vocabulary without introducing unnecessary new terms. For example, the Concept Note may be easily taken as the Project Initiation Request in PM². Also, and in the same line, according to the Consensus (para. 16) “the EU and its MS will implement a rights-based approach to development cooperation”. As a mere first step, it would be necessary to adopt a terminology based on this approach replacing, for example, the term “beneficiary” and using instead “right-holder”, in line with a rights-based approach.

5.1. PM² Elements to be tailored

Regarding governance of the project, the client/provider relationship that is established by a grant contract is conditioned by several elements:

- The project objectives are defined by the provider in line with priorities set by the client and is the final owner of the project. Accordingly, there is no final hand out of deliverables, but there needs to be acceptance from the client to obtain the final payment.

- The provider is also a client as is funding the project with its own resources (or from another donor), being accountable for the use of those funds too. Additionally, a CSO has generally a solid mandate to serve a certain constituency.
- The client monitors the execution of the project by means of progress reports but does not participate in the day-to-day implementation of the project.

PM² marks a clear distinction between the “Requestor (client) side” and the “Provider side”. In the case of EU-funded grants, such a distinction may be confusing. In PM² the Project Owner (PO) is “the key project decision maker and is accountable for the project’s success” whereas the Solution Provider (SP) “assumes overall accountability for project deliverables” (European Commission, 2018). Aside from the obvious confusion that may arise from the title “Project Owner”, the established relationship does not follow a general client/provider logic. The governance of these projects is determined by the grant contract conditions. It is necessary to adapt the vocabulary and simplify the governance structure to fit the current management practice. It is important to define who does what considering the contractual conditions, identifying roles and positions in order to increase clarity and accountability. At the same time, CSOs need to understand that in an EU-funded ID grant project they play a role as a provider to the EC, but they are also a client to the external sub-contractors and providers that necessarily take part of the project, and they need guidance in that dual role.

Regarding lifecycle, PM² proposes a linear lifecycle comprising 5 phases (initiating, planning, executing, closing and an overarching phase for monitor and control). In PM² the initiating phase starts with a client’s request for addressing a need, problem or opportunity. We have seen that one characteristic of grant projects is that the client sets priorities, but it is the provider who in fact assesses the needs of the final beneficiaries and defines the objectives of the project. Even if ID projects are standalone interventions, they are usually part of the wider, long-term plan to fight against poverty, as declared in the Consensus. No single project is going to end poverty on its own, but it may contribute to it. Accordingly, it is necessary to incorporate knowledge management to a cyclical/circular structure that takes into consideration lessons from experience to inform the design of successive calls for proposals and projects to incorporate improvements in effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability with the long-term objective in mind. This knowledge management should be done at the closing phase, which is a phase not considered under PCM and resolved under PRAG only with a final report and audit. Phase gates, as considered in PM² are somehow present in the current PRAG procedure, but adaptation would be necessary.

In this line, it could be beneficial to incorporate a programming phase, where the Commission designs the priorities of the calls and follows the procurement phases for launching and assessing the calls that yield to the submission of Concept Notes, which would be already part of the initiating phase. PCM has a phase for the functions of evaluation and audit, as part of the knowledge management system that needs to inform the programming phase. Not all grant projects are formally evaluated, but those that are (or if there is a formal evaluation of a call for proposals) need to feed the programming phase.

It is suggested that an “inception phase” is integrated as part of the planning phase. It is not uncommon that many months may pass between the moment a Full Application is submitted to the moment the project contract is signed. In challenging and constantly changing contexts there is a need to update key elements of the project such as the budget (as prices may have changed), the work programme and maybe even the log frame.

Regarding processes, it would be necessary to adjust the activities and responsibilities, in line with the adapted governance framework and lifecycle, to the procurement procedure that leads to the award of grants. As an example: in PM² the Project Owner and the Solution Provider both participate in the preparation of a Project Initiation Request. However, this is not possible for grant projects as the procurement procedure needs to be transparent and

several Solution Providers (CSO) participate in a competitive procedure for the funding of their project proposals and interaction with the Project Owner is strictly regulated.

Fuster (2006) and Hermano et al. (2013) identified the lack of consideration of PCM/LFA to Human Resources (HHRR) management. As an identified Critical Success Factor for ID projects, it would be necessary that PM² would offer guidance to CSO in this area. For instance, a template/artefact for a standards Project Manager Job Description and recruiting procedure. Similarly, little attention is provided in PRAG to the process of capturing lessons learned and post-project recommendations, apart from a section in the final report template. It is necessary to reinforce the activities in the closing phase and make them flow into the learning process to programme subsequent calls for proposals.

There are several areas of key importance for EU-funded ID grant projects that need to be addressed by incorporating specific sets of activities. One of them would be regarding visibility and communications. It would be advisable to integrate key elements from the Communication and Visibility Manual for EU External Actions (European Commission, 2018), which contains compulsory requirements in this area for all contractors and implementing partners. Another key area that needs to be included involves the justification of the expenditure. Whereas a procurement project is usually paid progressively as the deliverables or outputs are implemented; grant projects follow an advance payment mechanism. This means that the CA advances payments as progress is reported, but it withholds the right to establish the eligibility for funding of any (or all) of the expenditure incurred by the project at the end of the project. This means that if the CA considers at the end of the project (ex-post) that it has not been implemented according to the contract conditions, it may claim back part (or all) of the advanced payments.

PM² may help strengthening the monitoring and control activities necessary to improve project performance. By adopting and using the proposed project logs and checklists all stakeholders could increase the amount and quality of the available information necessary for decision making. Monitoring could be reinforced with the introduction of monitoring reporting templates. The EC has a unified methodology for monitoring ID projects called Results-Oriented-Monitoring (ROM), as an independent review of EU-funded ID interventions launched in 2002. It is a consistent, highly structured methodology ensures the quality and the comparability of the collected data. Interventions are scored against standard evaluation criteria and substantiated by concise explanatory texts. Each year, a selection of EU-funded projects undergo ROM reviews to provide an overview of the performance of the EU development aid portfolio and inform decision makers (European Commission, 2018). In the same line, it is not uncommon that the EC provides itself (via procurement contracts) with technical assistance by private contractors to operate Project Management Units/Offices (PMU/O) that provide support to EC task managers and CSO in the monitoring and management of projects. These are denominated Project Support Offices (PSO) in the OpenPM² Guide. The adoption of an adapted methodology could greatly contribute to homogenize and improve the performance of these PMU/O and improve learning processes.

Regarding artefacts: building on what is already in place, it is possible to adapt the current templates and incorporate new ones. PRAG already provides for a set of templates that include documents that contain elements present in a Business Case, a Project Handbook, Project Reports, etc. It would be desirable to make the necessary adjustments and incorporate as compulsory additional artefacts to facilitate management of the projects. It has been asserted that “LFA is an inefficient and very limited framework for managing ID projects” (Hermano et al., 2013, p. 28), but there is no doubt that the LFA is a de facto standard in the ID industry (Landoni and Corti, 2011).

Risk management is an area to which not enough attention has been given in EU-funded ID grant projects despite the complexity of the projects in terms of context and stakeholder

involvement. “Regarding risk management, only one example of the risk management matrix is given [in the PCM Guidelines], without providing instructions on how to obtain it” (Landoni and Corti, 2011, p. 52). PM² includes a Risk Log and a Risk Management Plan that should be adapted and included as compulsory for EU-funded ID grant projects.

In order to improve the contribution to the learning processes to inform the planning/programming phase, it would be advisable to systematize the information included in the Project-End Report by incorporating a summary of the project logs (change, risk, issue, decision) to understand the evolution of the project. In this regard, the inclusion of project logs as part of the compulsory templates to follow should be considered. Additionally, the already available templates for the ROM exercises could be adapted and incorporated to the PM² artefact catalogue. One PM² artefact that could be of exceptional value for monitoring, with the necessary adaptations, would be the PM² canvas, as it provides in a single, simplified view all the key necessary information.

Table 4: Summary elements of PM² tailoring to EU-funded ID projects by CSO

Governance	Lifecycle	Processes	Artefacts
Acknowledge diversity of strong clients	Adopt a circular lifecycle	Adapt to standard contract conditions	Build on what available from PRAG
Specify the dual role of the CSO	Incorporate phases for programming, inception and evaluation	Include HHRR	Adopt common language
Adapt roles and responsibilities		Reinforce closing	Adapt templates
		Incorporate visibility, communication and funds justification	Systematize learning
		Align monitoring to ROM practice	Consider compulsory/ advantageous adoption

Cross-cutting issues to incorporate: Gender, environment, participation, SDGs, rights-based approach

In general terms, it is necessary to encourage the systematic adoption of the methodology by CSOs. This could be done by increasing the number of templates/artefacts that would be considered compulsory as part of the submission of project proposals. Alternatively, the use of PM² artefacts could be considered an advantage in the assessment procedure in order to be awarded a grant. CSO staff with PM² certification could also be considered an advantage.

5.2. Elements to be incorporated into PM²

There are several additional aspects that OpenPM² does not cover but that are of special relevance for EU-funded ID grant projects. These are reflected in the PRAG templates, in the PCM Guidelines and in the Consensus as cross-cutting issues such as environmental/climate change issues and promotion of gender equality and equal opportunities. It would be necessary to incorporate specific adapted tools and/or templates to embrace these cross-cutting issues as management priorities. Of course, not all projects may have a strong environmental or gender orientation, but it is always possible, and necessary, to take them into consideration as part of any ID project. Overall, the SDGs need to be incorporated as the main framework for ID targets for poverty eradication.

The LFA is at its core a participatory approach and this needs to be embraced. “The EC emphasizes participation significantly, highlighting the main principles on which participation approaches are based and suggesting behaviours that should be adopted” (Landoni and Corti, 2011, p. 50). The adoption of a rights-based approach, as it is endorsed by the Consensus, points in the direction of reinforcing participation to ensure ownership and sustainability. It is necessary that PM² incorporates participatory tools to its knowledge base.

OpenPM² counts already with training materials and an established open certification mechanism (the PM² Alliance Certification programme) that can reach developing countries. Rehr and Katsagounos (2018) have recently proposed a strategy for e-learning via mobile devices to introduce PM² to the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) projects in the field of European security. A similar strategy could be applied to ID projects to reach CSO project managers around the world to improve their contribution to the eradication of poverty.

6. Conclusions

The EC has developed Open PM² as a common methodology for PM that aims at becoming a European standard. We believe that OpenPM² is in a unique position to contribute to the improvement of EU-funded ID projects implemented by CSO around the world.

As we have seen, ID projects implemented by CSO present great diversity, coming from several elements, and characteristics that make them different to other ID projects. As such they require a methodology able to fit and adapt to the specific needs and constraints faced by the CSO in these projects, while meeting the needs and constraints of the EC as donor and at the same time improving project performance. The following are some of the identified strong points of OpenPM² that cover these needs and constraints:

- **Open:** In the CSO environment (not-for-profit) and in an environment of scarce resources, the open concept is a considerable advantage. It offers free access to all the available materials. CSO would not need to invest on a proprietary methodology but would adopt a methodology built on the foundation of what is already familiar (LFA and EU procedures).
- **Light:** The methodology guide has been kept to 85 pages plus annexes and yet provides simple and easy to implement guidelines on all key areas of PM. Guidance to beginners is given to start using it in 6 simple steps. CSO do not need to face a heavy and overly complicated methodologies, but a methodology that can be easily understood and implemented by different profiles, even without previous knowledge/experience in PM.
- **Set of ready-made templates:** The artefacts that are provided add an extra layer of simplicity and guidance, in line with the templates already provided by PRAG.
- **Flexible:** Specific parts of the methodology may be modified or even omitted in order to fit the project and/or the implementing organization. The EC already makes compulsory the use of some PM tools (LFA, Gantt chart, budget). The flexibility of the methodology could allow to tailor it to specific types of projects or calls for proposals., adapting it to fit the different sources of diversity, such as size of the grants, of the CSO, sectors, etc.

The adaptation of PM² and its adoption as a unified and homogeneous PM methodology for all EU-funded ID grant projects could not only improve project performance, hence increasing their contribution to the global objectives of poverty eradication, but it could improve the PM capacity of the CSO community, as a key partner in international development. Sustainable Development Goal 17 aims at strengthening the means of implementation and to revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development. It seeks to strengthen global partnerships to support and achieve the ambitious targets of the 2030 Agenda, bringing together national governments, the international community, civil society, the private sector and other actors. By adapting OpenPM² and facilitating its access to CSO around the world, the EC would be strongly contributing to this important objective.

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