

LCRDM

The National Coordination Point Research Data Management (LCRDM) is a national network of experts on research data management (RDM) in the Netherlands. The LCRDM connects policy and daily practice. Within the LCRDM experts work together to put RDM topics on the agenda that ask for mutual national cooperation.

A recipe for agreement

**Monic Hodes,
Yan Wang**

Nowadays, researchers are increasingly collaborating with researchers from other disciplines, organizations and other countries. Cross-institutional cooperation in the field of research data and resource sharing is a great adventure: different rules, customs and methods, who and what are leading? In the first three blog post in this series on *Collaboration in research* we showed that in collaboration “Trust is not enough” [www.lcrdm.nl/trust-is-not-enough], how the complexity of collaboration impacts data sharing [www.lcrdm.nl/complexity-of-collaboration] and we showed how researchers deal with data sharing in collaborations [www.lcrdm.nl/how-to-share-data]. One of the conditions for successful data sharing is a proper consortium agreement. In this fourth blog post we will further elaborate on this. Is an agreement a recipe for successful collaboration, and is there a recipe for agreement?

A good example: The Tasmanian responsible conduct of research policy

The purpose of the [Tasmanian code of conduct](#) is to guide institutions and researchers in responsible research practices. The policy describes the principles and practices for



responsible conduct of research, for institutions and researchers. In addition, the policy also describes what agreements must be made if you work with multiple parties. When the university is involved in a collaborative project with one or more external parties or collaborating researchers, several issues must be discussed and recorded at the start of the research. You can think about conflicts of interest, project risks, ethics approval and safety clearance, intellectual property and copyright; authorship and publication, etc.

ERC consortium agreement

The European Research Council (ERC) presents larger research collaborations with a framework for a consortium agreement. A typical Horizon 2020 agreement addresses various aspects, which can include:

- Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)
- Future use and commercialisation of the project's results.
- Knowledge transfer processes between project partners

We specifically mention the elements above since these will influence data sharing practices in collaborations. Since 2017, the [Open Research Data \(ORD\) pilot](#) has been applied to all thematic areas of the Horizon 2020 program. However, in general the project consortia tends to follow the minimal requirements set by the EC and in large projects, partners rely on their national policy to comply with the EC requirement. The [H2020 guide on open access](#) offers three opt-out (partially or entirely) possibilities even the project is opt in the ORD pilot, to accommodate different data sharing situations. However the data sharing agreement is a bit challenging to make among partners due to the fact that there is not a unified standard across the whole EC. In some cases, project consortia are suggested to opt out the open access pilot to have more flexibility of data deposit.

Institutional data sharing guidelines

Most research institutions at the Netherlands have an RDM policy in place (see [here](#) for an overview of RDM policies in Universities and University colleges). The part that indicates the topics for making the right agreements when collaborating with multiple parties in a research project is often missing. In Wageningen University & Research data sharing [guidelines](#) are being developed. These guidelines help the researchers to

understand why data can or cannot be shared depending on the type or classification of the data and e.g. who owns the data or who funded the research. In addition the data sharing guidelines include a framework for a data sharing, which researchers can follow when they make a collaboration agreement with external parties. Although the guidelines are not yet final, and not yet included in the institutional policy they provide a handy “shopping list” which help a lot of researchers in collaborative projects.

Conclusion

Research collaboration could benefit from agreements on data sharing practices at the beginning of a project. Although the EU offers a framework for such an agreement, much is left to the integrity of the researchers and the participating institutes. An national code of conduct which specifically mentions data (and other output) sharing would be beneficial. The Wageningen University & Research concept guidelines might be evenly beneficial for researchers from other institutes.

