

## European Commission Learning & Development Hub 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> May 2017, Toruń, Poland - The use of Sub-Granting in DEAR projects -

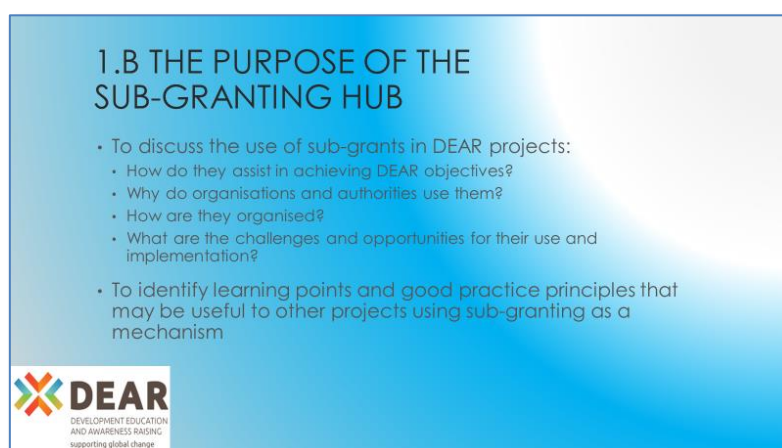
---

Harm-Jan Fricke, Sandra Oliveira, Caroline Vilos  
*DEAR Support Team*  
June 2017

### This report ...

... provides an overview of a workshop held by the DEAR Support Team with 20 participants representing five Commission supported DEAR projects including some of their sub-grantees.

### The purpose of the Learning and Development Hub



### Contents

---

1. Context.....	2
2. Participating projects .....	2
3. Why use sub-granting? .....	2
4. Organising and making use of sub-grants.....	4
5. How do sub-grants help to meet objectives? .....	7
6. Challenges in operating sub-granting schemes .....	8
7. Observations and recommendations by Hub participants to other DEAR projects considering use of a sub-granting scheme .....	10
Participant feedback on the Learning and Development Hub.....	13

## 1. Context

The 2013 DEAR Call for Proposals introduced the opportunity for grant applicants to use some of the project funds for work to be carried out by third parties. Such a 'sub-granting' or 'mini-grants' scheme has been used by the Commission before during the 1980s and early 90s. While previously the supported 'mini-grants' linked to the objectives of the Commission's DEAR programme, the new approach links the sub-granted work to the intentions of the DEAR project.

## 2. Participating projects

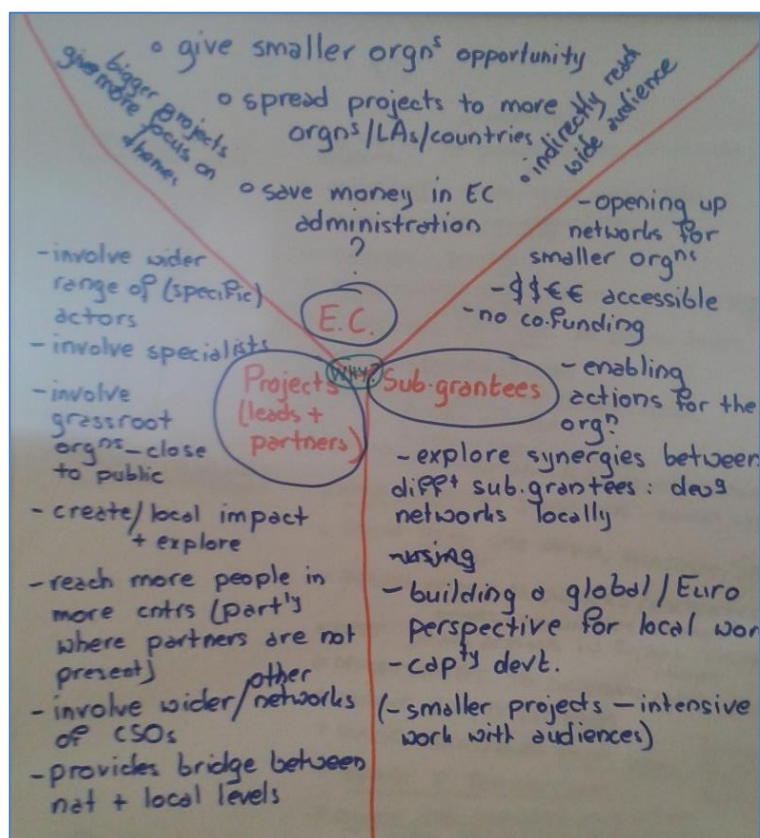
Five Commission supported DEAR projects had been invited to take part in the event:

Project title and hyperlink	Lead Organisation/Local Authority
<b>338-493</b> <a href="#">LADDER</a>	ALDA (the European Association for Local Democracy)
<b>338-383</b> <a href="#">Rural DEAR</a>	Valladolid Local Authority, Spain
<b>338-451</b> <a href="#">Supply ChaInge</a>	CIR (Christliche Initiative Romero), Germany
<b>352-275</b> <a href="#">Stop Mad Mining/ Time for Change</a>	CEE Web, Hungary
<b>338-472</b> <a href="#">AMITIE Code</a>	Bologna Local Authority, Italy

Apart from representatives of project lead organisations/Local Authorities and their partners, ten representatives of different sub-granted projects took part in the workshop.

## 3. Why use sub-granting?

Before getting into the meat of the workshop, Hub participants discussed reasons why sub-grants might be considered an appropriate approach by the Commission, by DEAR project applicants and by sub-grant recipients.



---

#### WHY SUB-GRANTS? FOR THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

- Enabling smaller CSOs to be part of the EU's DEAR Programme.  
Before the Commission's 2013 DEAR Call for Proposals, project support was limited to an EU contribution of €1 million per project *maximum* over three years. Since 2013 the DEAR Calls have only considered applications that were for an EU contribution of a *minimum* of €1 million over three years. The financial/accounting experience that this required from lead applicants meant that smaller organisations could no longer apply. Providing an opportunity for smaller organisations to still be involved in EU supported DEAR activities led to the (re-) introduction of sub-grants, enabling the involvement of smaller organisations in DEAR.
- Improving the spread of a project across more EU member states.  
Using sub-grants gives the opportunity to organisations in countries where no project partners exist, to become involved in an EU supported DEAR projects, thereby spreading the reach of the EU DEAR Programme. The requirement, also introduced in the 2013 Call, to implement a project in multiple EU member states means that project partners between them do not necessarily 'cover' all the countries where the project is meant to take place.
- Improving the reach of the DEAR Programme amongst EU publics.  
Sub-grants potentially increase the reach of the DEAR Programme since sub-grantees may have direct contact with members of the public that larger CSOs or LAs have no or little contact with.
- Improving the impact of DEAR.  
The larger projects each focus on a particular theme or issue. By requiring sub-grantees to also focus on that theme or issue the assumption is that DEAR Programme supported activities will have greater impact than a larger number of smaller projects.<sup>1</sup>
- Reducing the cost of project administration within the Commission.  
By introducing sub-grants, the costs of grant administration are shifted from the Commission to the project: increasing resources within the Commission for other work, but decreasing resources within the projects for practical work and activities with the public.

#### WHY SUB-GRANTS? FOR DEAR PROJECTS

- Provides opportunities to involve specialists in the project
- Provides opportunities to involve grassroots organisations and initiatives
- Creates opportunities to develop impact at local level
- Can try out small scale initiatives that may be worthwhile scaling up later in the project
- Provides a bridge between local and national level work

#### WHY SUB-GRANTS? FOR SUB-GRANT RECIPIENTS

- It helps to support capacity development of the sub-grantee
- It opens up (national or wider) networks of CSOs and LAs to local organisations
- Supports development of locally based networks of CSOs: by bringing different sub-grantees together
- Provides funds for work the sub-grantee wants to carry out
- Builds a national and global perspective into the local work of sub-grantees

---

<sup>1</sup> Participants questioned this particular assumption. It was mentioned that the Commission has no or little researched evidence of the impact of the DEAR Programme to support or disprove this assumption.



#### 4. Organising and making use of sub-grants

Each of the five projects presented how they had organised their sub-granting scheme, with one or more sub-grantees describing how they had used the sub-grant.

**THE LADDER PROJECT:** [HTTP://WWW.LADDER-PROJECT.EU/](http://www.ladder-project.eu/)

The LADDER project aims to improve awareness of Local Authorities (and CSOs) across the 28 EU member states of Global Citizenship Education and stimulate their support for and involvement in GCE initiatives.

In organising its sub-granting scheme, the project selected 10 EU countries as ‘focus countries’ each with its own sub-granting coordinator. In these countries two calls for proposals have been launched, leading to 5 sub-grants in each country.

In EU member states that are not focus countries one call for proposals has been organised leading to one sub-grant per country.

Sub-grant applicants have to meet specified criteria. Assessment of applications is done through assessors not involved in the relevant national project partner’s work, including the overall project manager, a project partner, a project associate, and an independent assessor.

To date (the project has not been completed yet) 68 grants have been awarded ranging in budget from €6k to €8k each.

All awarded sub-grantees take part in a joint training exercise informing them of the intentions and structures of the LADDER project.

Three examples of the use of sub-grants were presented:

1. Germany, Kontaktstelle für Umwelt und Entwicklung (KATE): Sub-grant focussed on formal education in the 14 to 16 year age group.

Thematic focus on climate change and food consumption.

Approx. 200 young people were involved and trained as multipliers in promoting the issues to their peers and others by means of education and promotional activities.

The sub-grantee has used the LADDER sub-grant as co-funding for a bigger project that works in formal education with this and other age groups.

- 
2. Denmark, FARIID: Sub-grant focussed on water and sanitation issues, developing and implementing a fun public awareness raising activity ('water race') that highlighted water and sanitation issues in different countries. The sub-grant enabled the development of collaboration with different NGOs who each brought their own experiences to the activity. Apart from stimulating networking between different NGOs, the sub-grant also led to fundraising activities relevant to water and sanitation development projects.
  3. Slovakia, Združenie Slatinka: Sub-grant focussed on the development of a local, multi-stakeholder network of CSOs and LA concerned with local-global relations. The grant enabled the development of a survey on issues of local and global quality of life, and the development of plans involving both CSOs and LAs. The results of this have informed Local Authority practices.

**THE SUPPLY CHA!NGE PROJECT:** [HTTP://WWW.SUPPLYCHAINGE.ORG/](http://www.supplychainge.org/)

The Supply Cha!nge project focuses on the environmental and social impact of food production, advocating supermarket practices that take that impact into account in their sourcing of products. The project organised ten sub-grants, nine of which were based where the project did not have partner organisations/co-applicants.

The aim of the sub-grants was to reach a wider audience than the project lead organisation and its partners would be able to reach on their own and to stimulate project relevant activities in countries where the project did not have partners.

In addition, sub-grants were used to increase the expertise in the project to ensure that target audiences would be reached with effective messages.

Sub-grantees were selected on the basis of criteria which were disseminated to potentially interested applicants via partner networks.

The tasks of the sub-grantee included:

- training of other CSOs in the country around the issues of supermarket supply chains, and
- involvement in project activities and responsibility for the organisation of those activities locally/nationally.

Each sub-grant had a value of €19k to €25k.

**THE TIME FOR CHANGE – STOP MAD MINING PROJECT:** [HTTP://STOP-MAD-MINING.ORG/](http://stop-mad-mining.org/)

The Time for Change project focuses on the production and consumption of raw materials.

Sub-grants used by the project were very focussed on specific requirements in support of the project including:

- the need for the project to work in a particular location, or
- the need for access to and work with particular media institutions, or
- the need for contacts and research in the South relating to aspects of the project's themes.

Targeted calls were used to recruit relevant sub-grantees.

Given the requirements and the level of expertise that each sub-grantee possessed each of them was largely 'left to get on with it' without much interference by the project's lead organisation

Sub-grants varied in size from around €40k to €50k.

**THE RURAL DEAR AGENDA PROJECT:** [HTTPS://WWW.RURALDEARAGENDA.EU/EN/HOME](https://www.ruraldearagenda.eu/en/home)

The Local Authority led Rural DEAR project aims to support development of a Development Education agenda with, for and in rural areas.

The project takes place in seven EU member states and involves Local Authorities and CSOs interested in designing, implementing and promoting work with a local-global perspective in the education sector.



---

In each of the seven countries at least four sub-grants have been awarded following open calls to interested agencies.

The Calls led to many more applications than expected and the selection process therefore also took longer than expected.

The maximum size of grants awarded was €6500.

In most cases sub-grantees were able to use the sub-grant as a starter fund or as co-funding for the raising of further funds that made each 'mini-project' possible.

Three examples of sub-grants were presented:

1. Italy, Istituto Istruzione Superiore Larino  
Local sustainable gardens development lead by the agriculture academia in three locations: at the university, at a local hospital and in a prison. A mini-project focussed on agricultural practices giving practical support to local skills development in the design and use of self-sufficiency.
2. Greece, Perrevia Network  
A second mini-grant involved a university led project with two NGO networks, working on themes of migration and sustainable development with municipalities in the region and other stakeholders. With a small grant and a lot of voluntary work, Perrevia Network developed school based awareness raising and education work linked to practical involvement in issues of local environmental development and migration. In addition, the grant supported the organisation of dozens of public awareness activities.
3. Spain, Medina del Rio Seco Municipality  
A mini-project led by a Local Authority focussed on social integration of gypsy communities, a large but marginalized population in Rio Seco. The sub-grant used its funds to organise a Forum theatre with a local group of young people from the community. They chose to address gender inequality issues with their peers, culminating in a public theatre presentation to the community.

**THE AMITIE CODE PROJECT:** [HTTP://WWW.AMITIECODE.EU/](http://www.amitiecode.eu/)

The project focuses on awareness raising of and involvement in responding to issues of migration, development and human rights.

Through an open-call the sub-granting scheme asked for initiatives that used film and other visual arts to raise issues of migration and development.

61 applications were received from which 12 were chosen, each receiving between €3k and €8k of financial support. The subgranting scheme was organised to boost the dissemination and public image opportunities of the Amitie Code project as part of the project's partner's Terra di Tutti Film festival in Bologna.

One sub-grantee described the work that they had been doing:

- Italy, Sopra I Ponti Association:  
The local grassroots association works with Morocco's migrant issues in Italy and addresses related public stereotypes, aiming to foster a better understanding and public image of Morocco. The small grant offered an opportunity to show the new artistic and intellectual life of Morocco and how the country is changing.  
In addition, within Terra di Tutti Film festival, the association organised a competition for Moroccan cartoon artists. This resulted in an exhibition in which a new generation of artists from Morocco took part. The artistic and other innovations taking place in Morocco were a surprise to many Moroccan immigrants and other participants alike.

---

## 5. How do sub-grants help to meet objectives?

### HOW DO SUB-GRANTS HELP TO MEET THE NEEDS AND INTERESTS OF SUB-GRANT RECIPIENTS?

- They support work at local level (where sub-grantees tend to operate)
- They enable work initiated by the sub-grantee (albeit within the confines of the overall project)<sup>2</sup>
- They provide starter funds/seed-funding for larger initiatives which the sub-grantee wants to implement
- They enable and promote the making of connections between local issues and global concerns (e.g. through the SDGs)
- They promote and enable networking between local initiatives and national projects and networks
- They help sub-grantees to develop their experience in working on EU supported projects and in meeting EU requirements
- They help sub-grantees in developing new skills and insights
- They can help in improving contacts between local citizen initiatives and Local Authority decision makers and civil servants
- They improve the financial basis of local initiatives: a sub-grant can help in releasing funds from other sources

### HOW DO SUB-GRANTS HELP TO MEET DEAR PROJECT OBJECTIVES?

- They contribute to showing the relevance of project objectives and issues at various scales: local, national, European, global
- They contribute real life stories and practical examples to the project
- They force CSOs (and LAs) to make contacts and work with those outside their established 'bubbles'
- They increase the range and number of participants in a project
- They increase the range of expertise in implementing the project
- They give opportunities to test new ideas before they get rolled out across the whole project
- They provide a direct link to citizens
- They contribute different and new perspectives to the implementation of the project's objectives
- They reach the audiences of the project in a manner that is often more effective than through national CSOs or through a Local Authority's own networks
- They improve contacts for national CSOs with local initiatives

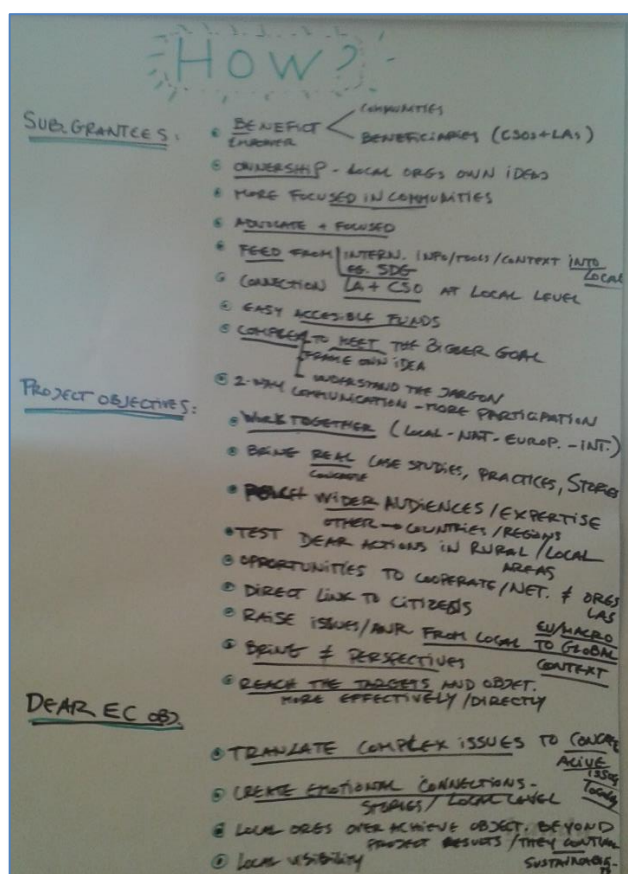
### HOW DO SUB-GRANTS HELP TO MEET THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S DEAR OBJECTIVES?



---

<sup>2</sup> Sub-grantees present at the Hub did not feel that the requirement to focus on the themes, issues and requirements of the overall project hampered them in making their own initiatives

- They help to translate complex global development issues into concrete, practical examples relevant to local inhabitants
- They help to create stories and emotional connections with global development concerns
- Because sub-grantees tend to over-achieve on their sub-grant requirements, they provide significant added value without extra cost to the EC
- They provide local visibility to the Commission and EU



## 6. Challenges in operating sub-granting schemes

Although participants felt that the use of sub-grants was beneficial in the experience of lead applicants, project partners and sub-grant recipients there were many challenges in operating the scheme.

Some lead applicants and partners had envisaged that pro-forma guidelines would be forthcoming from the Commission on how to implement, operate, address possible risks and account for the sub-granting. Since these were not forthcoming all had to **DESIGN** their own systems, selection and reporting processes.

- The setting up of the schemes, organising the Calls for Sub-Grant Proposals, translation of Call documentation and applications (where needed), selecting of sub-grantees and designing reporting and accounting systems, all took longer than originally planned or foreseen by the projects. In some cases this led to delays in other work that projects had been planning to do.
- Some projects felt that there were a number of 'grey areas' to do with, for example, the eligibility of certain costs to be made by sub-grantees, or the legality of providing a direct

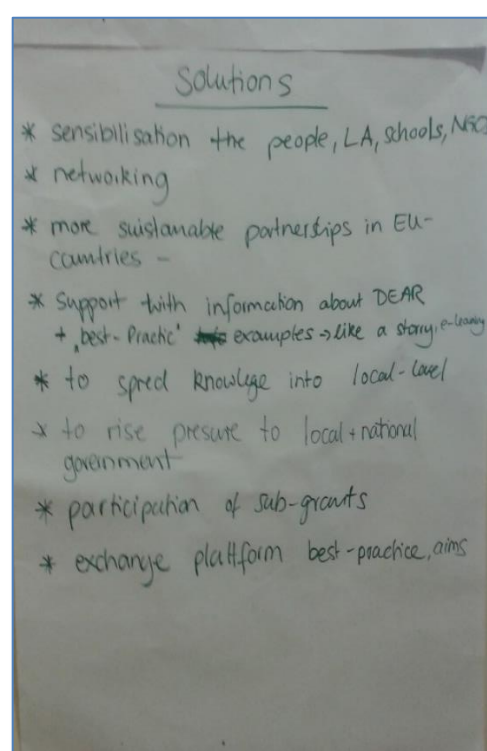
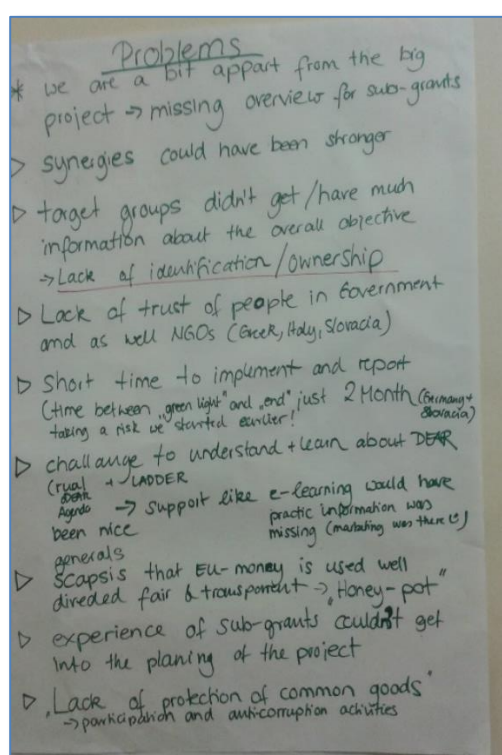


award (i.e. without a Call or other competition for a sub-grant). In some cases the Commission's DEAR Task Manager was also unable to give clear guidance on these.

Most projects – and in particular most project lead applicants – faced problems in the **FINANCIAL OPERATION** of the sub-granting scheme:

- Since their reserves are often very limited or non-existent, most sub-grant recipients require at least some funds 'upfront' (across the sub-grantees taking part in the Hub the figure of 80% of the total sub-grant was seen as required in the case of sub-grants of up to €10k). This can create cash-flow problems for the project lead agency, since it only gets reimbursed by the Commission at, in practice, irregular intervals.

It was also noted that there is no come back for the project if a sub-grantee does not deliver: the financial risk of the sub-granting scheme is borne by the lead applicant.



**SUB-GRANTEES**, who initially may not be familiar with Development Education, with global development issues, or with Commission regulations and requirements, faced **PARTICULAR CHALLENGES**, including:

- Understanding the jargon of DEAR and of Commission bureaucracy. Participants mentioned that the use of non-jargon terms would have helped them significantly in getting a better awareness and understanding of the requirements and objectives.
- Similarly, in some cases reporting forms to be used were over-complicated for the amount of money received and work done.
- Some sub-grantees felt that the initial briefing they received about the bigger project was inadequate.

- 
- For some sub-grantees, there was a sense that the project lead and its partner organisations lacked insight into the (lack of) capability and capacity in the sub-grantees and that the project too often made assumptions about the sub-grantee that were incorrect.
  - In some projects, the information flow between project and sub-grantee was not sufficient for the sub-grantee to feel part of a bigger effort. Regularly communication by the project showing what else is being done by the project and how what the sub-grantee does, fits in with that is an important motivational tool for the sub-grantee.
  - Some sub-grantees reported (and project leads acknowledged) that there was a very short time between being awarded the sub-grant, having to do the work, and reporting on it. Usually no time was built into the process to accommodate for example events that had to be postponed because of external issues. (As referred to above, participants felt that the time pressure was often due to the sub-grant selection process taking longer than originally planned.)



## **7. Observations and recommendations by Hub participants to other DEAR projects considering use of a sub-granting scheme**

After a review of the discussions and ideas presented in the Hub, participants considered the advantages and disadvantages of sub-granting. This discussion and work then led to the design of a number of recommendations which are listed below:

---

### General recommendations to the European Commission

- For Commission staff to take part in workshops and other exchanges between DEAR projects, so they improve their understanding of project experiences, issues and achievements
- For future DEAR Calls to include opportunities for medium sized organisations to take part in EU supported DEAR activities. Explanation: current DEAR Calls offer opportunities for large organisations and LAs to apply for and be involved in EU supported DEAR work. Through sub-granting small/grass-roots organisations can also take part. However, since 2013 medium sized organisations are practically excluded from taking part in EU co-funded DEAR activities. Middle sized organisations tend to offer experiences of relating on the ground, practical work to national/international influencing and vice versa: experiences that usually are lacking in large and small organisations.

### The value of sub-granting

- Sub-granting provides opportunities to engage civil society in depth in DEAR: it is a great way to reach civil society on a personal level

### Organising the sub-granting scheme – by the European Commission

- Provide guidance to projects that are planning to use sub-granting on possible ways of organising and reporting on sub-grants
- Create a central web-based platform that gives details of sub-granting intentions of all EC-supported DEAR projects, including e.g. overall objectives of each scheme, contact details, (provisional) timetables
- Require DEAR project applicants to specify in their EC-DEAR proposal if they will use an 'open call' or a 'direct award' system for their sub-granting - and the justification for this
- Clarify the requirements for 'own contribution' provided by project applicants/sub-grantees. Ideally exclude co-financing of sub-grants from the requirements (for both the sub-grantee and for the project applicant)

### Organising the sub-granting scheme – for project leads/partners

- Take time to plan the scheme and the implementation process well in advance: writing the Call, publishing and disseminating it (including translating it where necessary), receiving and evaluating proposals, agreeing implementation with sub-grantees, implementation, reporting, etc. takes longer than you think!
- Ensure that sub-granting provides a clear and efficient means to achieving the overall project objective(s) and activities
- Design a clear structure and road-map about how you want to deal with the re-granting scheme and re-granting process: from recruitment, to implementation, to dissemination, to reporting
- In the call for sub-grant applications, state clearly the
  - objectives of the sub-grant,
  - the tasks to be carried out by the sub-grantee,
  - success indicators, and
  - selection evaluation criteria
- In the evaluation criteria include those that focus on the likely:
  - quality of work, and
  - sustainability and impact (what is the lasting effect likely to be)?
- Limit the range of themes to be covered by sub-grants to not more than 2 or 3 (e.g. from the SDGs)
- Communicate the sub-grant intentions, application and reporting processes in a simple way (e.g. don't use European Commission or DEAR jargon)

- Assign one or more *dedicated* project staff members to managing and supporting the sub-granting process and relations with sub-grantees

#### Supporting sub-grantees and communicating between project lead/partners and sub-grantees

- Provide capacity building support for sub-grantees
- Ensure that sub-grantees are familiar and able to identify with the project and its objectives as a whole
- Ensure regular contact between project lead/partner and the sub-grantees: exchanging information about respective developments, achievements, issues, learning, etc.
- For project leads/partners to support their sub-grantees in reporting since many sub-grantees are not familiar with EC reporting requirements
- Arrange face-to-face meetings between sub-grantees and project leads and partners \* to share experiences and achievements and \* to improve sub-grantee understanding of and commitment to the overall project intentions
- Provide sub-grantees with examples of good practice (e.g. in managing their grant)
- With sub-grantees identify particular points when project lead/partner and the sub-grantee jointly learn from what has been done and achieved
- Agree at the start a timetable for implementation including when reporting is to be done

#### For sub-grant recipients

- Take your time in planning your sub-grant: don't rush into 'doing'
- Prepare a timetable for the implementation of the sub-grants and check with participants and other stakeholders if it is realistic
- Include 'buffer periods'/unallocated time in your timetable to accommodate delays (e.g. because of the weather if you've planned open air events)
- Ask for support from the project lead/partner in project planning, implementation and reporting – particularly if you are not experienced in this

#### Dealing with risks for the lead CSO or LA

- Pay sub-grantees in instalments:
  - for smaller sub-grants (e.g. up to €10,000?): pay 80% initially and 20% towards the end or at completion of sub-granted work
  - for larger sub-grants (e.g. over €10,000?): make three equal payments: one at the start of the sub-grant, one at mid-term, and one towards the end or at completion of the sub-grant
- For project leads/partners to monitor (and where necessary advise on) the implementation of sub-granted work to reduce risks of failure

#### Dissemination of sub-grant results

- Ensure that project leads/partners keep the media informed of the work done by sub-grantees
- Use existing networks of actors involved in DEAR to disseminate sub-grant work, experiences and achievements



After the event participants were asked to comment on the organisation and processes of the Hub via a web based questionnaire. The following summarises the opinions and suggestions received. 12 of the 20 participants responded to the questionnaire (a 60% response rate).

Achievement of participant expectations:	9.2 (out of a possible score of 10 maximum)
Relevance of the Hub to participants' work:	8.9
Quality of facilitation provided by DEAR Support Team:	9.5
Logistics support provided by DEAR Support Team:	9.1
Overall success of the Hub:	8.9

- The absence of Commission DEAR staff was noted and highly regretted during the event, not only from the point of view of Commission staff learning from DEAR projects but also from the point of view of projects learning from the Commission, e.g. as one respondent said: “We discuss about positive and negative point of sub-grant scheme, how to improve that and enhance the possibility to CSOs to participate making templates easier etc. Could be useful to have a direct discussion with the Commission to understand what could really change or even know their point of view on the topic.”
- The point was also made both during the event and in the written feedback that, although the sub-granting scheme is useful, it should not be used by the Commission to ignore the role that medium sized CSOs can positively play in DEAR. As one participant commented: “... Grassroot NGOs have an important impact and can motivate people to change behaviour. But a minimum of profession and background information is also needed. So NGOs of a middle size and LA contribute a lot to the DEAR aims. Don't let them fall out the programme!”

