

Putting the NFDI into Practice

Impulses of the German Council for Scientific
Information Infrastructures

Petra Gehring | NFDI Conference Bonn, 13 and 14 May 2019

RfII Recommendations for the NFDI

2016: *Performance through Diversity*
Position Paper, NFDI-Proposal

2017/18: RfII Discussion papers on the NFDI

- *Integrating step by step*
How Research Communities and Infrastructure providers can contribute to NFDI
- *Cooperation as an Opportunity*
Basic design questions regarding the NFDI: Organisation, Governance, Quality Management, Resources
- *Wide impact for research*
Consortia as stakeholders

On forming consortia

Some feedback on selected aspects

1. What NFDI-consortia and NFDI as a whole should achieve
 2. Role of consortia in the NFDI
 3. Portfolio development
 4. Size and shape of consortia
 5. Involvement of users
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1. What consortia and NFDI as a whole should achieve

- Comprehensive research data management and increased efficiency throughout the scientific system
 - Linking of research-oriented data services, improving interoperability
 - Accepted, standardised processes and procedures in line with methodological requirements of (very) different disciplines
 - A common voice for data concerns in the science-policy arena
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- But not**
- Merely accumulate „Data“
 - Collect local solutions (or repositories) waiting for future users
 - On-size-fits-all
 - Overly strict relementation („juridification“)

2. Role of consortia in NFDI & NFDI Consortia Assembly

- Help building the NFDI as a whole
 - Control question: What is the added value a consortium brings to the overall structure?
 - Creating a common knowledge base and organising horizontal structures between the consortia
 - Agreeing on common elements and standards for a federated data landscape in Germany
 - Contributing and sharing IT services as well as common concepts for training, consulting, software maintenance
 - Providing gateways to international networks
- But not**
- Outsourcing to additional service entities which apply separately for NFDI-Funding
 - Meta-Consortia (i.e. „small NFDI’s“ within NFDI)
 - Debate Clubs waiting for top-down initiatives

3. Portfolio development (1)

- Portfolio: a set of services for the chosen scientific domain/community
 - ... selected, maintained and operated in joint responsibility by the consortium partners
 - Services that – demonstrably! – are solutions for specific methodological requirements
 - Generic services with added value to the NFDI as a whole
 - Mode of operation: own services and tools, or integration of services operated elsewhere (possibly adapted for the domain)
- But not**
- Marketplaces/ directories for all existing tools
 - Unrelated use cases
 - Tools for individual projects
 - Just a location for storing data
 - Mere “Competence Centre”
 - one more generic solution (mere technology)

3. Portfolio development (2)

How to build the portfolio

- Integrate all (!) relevant players/research “nodes” in the domain at an early stage
- Define what “science-driven” means in and for the community
- Identify a range of essential services through comparative analysis, rational evaluation and selection
- Ensure the coordinated advancement of the selected (and future) services
- Establish procedures to prioritise future services and developments

But not

- Pool services of existing partners (at least not without a participatory process)
- Extra financing for already ongoing activities
- “phase-out” financing for existing pilot-projects

4. Size and shape of NFDI consortia

- Existing range and diversity of the selected domain covered (over time)
- Tangible value in the foreseeable future for a target group that is
 - not too specialised or exclusive
 - not too heterogenous
 - not too small
- Operating throughout Germany

Risks and challenges:

- Failure due to sheer size
- Remaining dynamic over the long term

But not

- Design based on “disciplines”, individual objects, or collections
- Simply extend the mandate of existing joint projects
- Supertankers
- One dominant player in the driver seat
- Small interest groups
- Local Projects
- Primarily social circles
- Temporary groups
- Random partners not representing the field

5. Involvement of users in consortia

- Effective participation structure for the researchers who use the services
 - Participation appears sufficiently important and rewarding from a researcher's perspective
 - Divergent requirements of data users and data producers are managed
 - Different groups within the user community have a balanced voice
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- But not**
- Provide a few „reference users“
 - Collect signatures of scientific societies or testimonials
 - Allow only one-way feedback
 - Know-it-all approaches

Final remarks

- Take your time – it is the degree of maturity of a consortium/concept that counts
- Join forces - roughly 30 consortia should be able to cover scientific needs in Germany
- Mandate properly – the essential needs of a community should not be distributed over several consortia
- It's a structure, not a funding program - make sure you can take on joint and potentially difficult responsibilities over the long term
- Use appropriate funding programmes (e.g. DFG, BMBF) for the development of (additional) solitaire services
- Negotiate with funders how current subcritical, temporary projects can prepare for accession to the NFDI

But not

- Hunt down „just another project“
- Apply „as a precaution“ or as part of a race (first come, first serve)
- List lots of initiatives without describing interfaces
- Dwell on general requirements
- Apply for double funding
- Underestimate the task at hand („make a start, the rest will follow“)

Thank you for your attention.

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