5.2. Project Schedule and Work Plan

Activities of a project will be defined and scheduled roughly in its planning stage. Scheduling of activities helps to identify the logical order, duration and interdependence\(^1\) of the project activities. The schedule should be as clear and realistic as possible, and it should cover the entire duration of the project\(^2\).

The activities should not be defined too strictly to ensure that the flexibility and learning during the implementation will not be affected. Roughly, defined activities will not be divided into more concrete activities until in work plans during project implementation. Once the activities have been split into concrete work tasks, they become easy to manage and understand; then the responsibility of implementation can be assigned to the responsible persons in the project organisation. It is important to find an appropriate level of definition for activities\(^3\).

The activities defined in the schedule should follow the project plan’s hierarchy of objectives to ensure that once completed, the activities lead to the accomplishment of the project objectives. This enables monitoring of the progress with the help of the schedule plan. This way the activities can be treated as tasks or objectives, which the project personnel aims to complete by the time reserved for them.

It is good to remember that the project schedule is always just an estimation, which will be defined and adjusted during the project implementation. One of the most common planning mistakes is that the monitoring is not included in the project activities or too little time is allocated for it when included.

An example of project schedule for the first year

An example of a monthly work plan during the project implementation

1. Interdependence between activities = whether some task must be completed before starting the next one.

2. The first year of a project is normally scheduled in more detail whereas in the years after, it is scheduled, for example, just on a quarterly basis.
3. The definition is appropriate when the duration of task and resources (human resources and costs) can be estimated, and the responsible person understands what he/she is expected to do.

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