REFINING THE SCOPE
A DEEP UNDERSTANDING OF THE VIRTUAL CENTRE TRANCHE 2 (VCT2) TARGETS

JOËL JORDAN
Programme Director, Virtual Centre Tranche 2

Joël Jordan is at the forefront of skyguide's One-Sky-by-One-System, and responsible for breaking down the overall concept of the Virtual Centre into small bits of "daily deliverables". The challenge, he states, is to introduce new items whilst assuring the stability of skyguide's normal air navigation services. Joël Jordan and his team are now fully concerned with the development and delivery phase of Virtual Centre Tranche 2 (VCT2), which will keep them busy until 2020. Due to its innovative content, Joël Jordan talks about the challenge of holding up predictability in this programme. This is an issue which he and his team try to address with a dynamic and flexible scope management while the parameters of time and finances are fixed to provide stability. In this context, one can talk about continuous scope refining, inspired by the findings of the agility philosophy.

SKYGUIDE How do you act exactly? What is your time frame, and how is the programme funded?

JOËL JORDAN The Executive Board and the Board of Directors have agreed upon a set of intentions for the programme duration with an estimated financial budget. This agreement also fixes the financial cadence and allocates certain sums to every calendar year. Annually, the programme management defines the scope and has it approved in the governance process. It is represented by a set of expected objectives and deliverables for one year. This is then further broken down by the agile projects for software development and by classical projects for others.

Refining the scope surely comes into play when unexpected problems occur. What specific measures do you take in this case?

JJ Depending on the magnitude of the problem, we act at macro-level or micro-level. A continuous dialogue between micro and macro level takes place weekly in the framework of the programme governance.

At macro-level, the programme management proposes adaptations to our steering committee and programme owner. These adaptations must not endanger the core of our intentions and the engagement of skyguide and the partner organizations. This requires cautious attention in order not to salvage progresses by too brutal actions. These adaptations will be finally reported to the Executive Board and the Board of Directors in the annual review. This proceeding also enables us to integrate learnings and consequences for the next year.

At micro-level, we empower the projects, especially the agile ones. Together with key programme and business stakeholders, using their backlogs, considering their velocity, the teams decide the features they can include in their planning according to the minimal value our goals demand to deliver. In this process, a deep understanding of the superordinate intentions and goals is vital. The progress is measured at certain commissioning points according to what the agile or classical project commission requires.

Does an ongoing scope refining with a fixed time frame and a fixed budget not lead to inefficiencies? And is there not a certain danger of disengagement of some of the staff when these fixed requirements cause repeated stops-and-goes in the development of the programme?

JJ Yes, these dangers exist, especially when you act at macro-level. You can be led to pause work temporarily to focus progress onto an initiative in the portfolio of your programme. Understanding the interdependencies and the value contributions in the programme is very critical at that point. A transparent and calm dialogue with stakeholders, steering members and programme owner is crucial. Scope refining is an uncertainty and therefore a stress factor for organizations. It can also create conflicts. Scope refining and flexibility have a price;

“ Managing the
unexpected in innovation
is a matter of the
entire organization ”

passive disengagement from the organization is
part of it. This is where margins of tolerance in the
definition of time and budget can really help. The
resilience of such an approach is also very dependent
on a strong alignment and commitment of the various
governance boards. Managing the unexpected in
innovation is a matter of the entire organization.
Actually scope refining has to continuously involve all
decision levels. A coherent communication adapted at
each level is a must to maintain common understanding,
trust and motivation across the entire organization.
This is the true challenge of scope refining. ▮

PROGRAMME BACKLOG REFINEMENT

PRIORITIZING

ESTIMATING

FEATURE A, B, C

CAPABILITY A
EPIC 1

CREATING AND REFINING
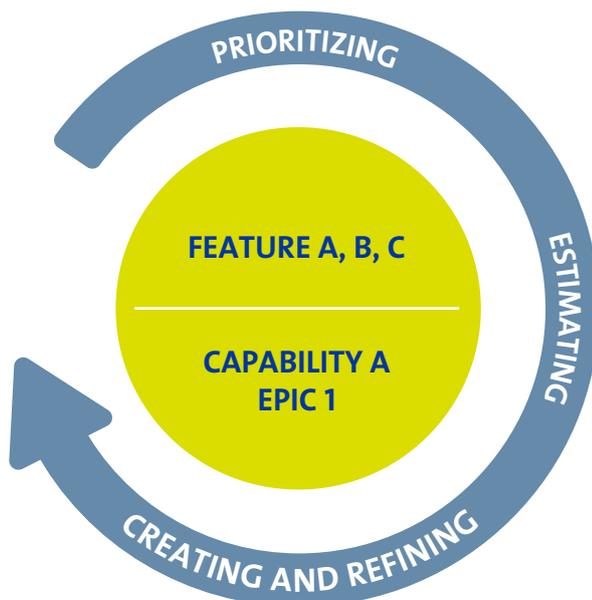
Capabilities that are closer to Programme Increment need
breaking down (in Features), re-estimation and re-prioritization