

## SHORT TERM SCIENTIFIC MISSION (STSM) – SCIENTIFIC REPORT

The STSM applicant submits this report for approval to the STSM coordinator

**Action number: TN1302**

**STSM title: BESTPRAC – The voice of research administrators building a network of administrative excellence**

**STSM start and end date: 12/06/2018 to 14/06/2018**

**Grantee name: Virág Zsár**

### PURPOSE OF THE STSM

I graduated in 2012 thus still belong to early stage research administrator, however, I am coordinating the International Office in HETFFA, meaning that my duty is many-folded: to plan and develop project proposals for different EU calls, to support contracting, as well as to facilitate the management from thematic, administrative, and financial points of view of the approved projects. HETFFA Research Institute is an independent think tank engaged in policy support and analyses, urban and territorial development as well as entrepreneurship and competitiveness.

Thus my aim was to discover existing knowledge of a private research institute in the field of EU project development and management, identify potentially transferable practices and deepen our collaboration with the elaboration of joint projects with mutual benefits on the common fields.

SPI and HETFFA have much in common, both regarding their research topics (public policy analyses, entrepreneurship, territorial development) and also their functioning (research institutions). Therefore, the main goals of my STSM were the following:

- 1) Identifying and sharing good practices and possible pitfalls in project management with a special regard to H2020 and Erasmus +
- 2) Getting in-depth information on strategies and key success variables to promote the participation in international research projects in both, home and host institutions
- 3) Sharing of best practices, management tools and internal processes between both institutions
- 4) Exploring possibilities of collaboration at different levels and identifying common interests to work on together.

### DESCRIPTION OF WORK CARRIED OUT DURING THE STSM

#### ***Meeting with Douglas Thompson – introduction of international activities of SPI***

*Detailed introduction to the international activities of SPI. SPI works with partners from different sectors and fields, their key approach is to run innovation based projects. SPI is involved in projects funded by H2020,*

Erasmus +, INTERREG, development agencies and banks as well as different DGs of the European Commission (EC) thus having great experience both in the development and management of these projects.

#### **Meeting with Nishant Shandilya – SPI in H2020**

SPI acts either as coordinator or partner in different topics. In each case different strategies are followed. We went through the steps of elaborating proposals in details – direct consultation with the EC, visiting infodays and other useful tips on building consortia, preparing proposals, division of work, elaboration of impact strategies, exploitation plans, dissemination strategies as well as budgets were shared.

#### **Meeting with Marilia Cunha – SPI in Erasmus +**

In addition to the steps presented in case of H2020, significant aspects were highlighted: to ensure the innovative character of the project it is important to map previous projects, develop new ideas, check videos to see the interest of the target groups, and lastly, to explain well the innovative character. Moreover, SPI generally includes the set-up of an Advisory Board which can support the quality management externally, review documents and give feedback.

#### **Meeting with Dora Fazekas, Martha Octavia and Marilia Cunha - practices used in management, communication and dissemination activities**

SPI develops a good number of management tools and methods to ensure the effective coordination of the consortium, e.g. document storage, templates for time sheets and other materials, checklist for communication and dissemination, etc.

We also discussed the case when the scientific and the management coordination were divided within the consortium. Clear communication with regard to the role of both had to be done in the beginning and each coordinator had to act accordingly.

#### **Meeting with André Barbosa – SPI in scientific tenders**

A DG Regio tender led by SPI on S3 was showcased. The main success factors were highlighted:

- good relations had to be established with bigger players
- the so-called bigger players are generally cross-sectoral companies lacking sometimes highly specialized expertise which enables smaller organizations to take an important role in the consortium
- it is important to involve umbrella organizations to ensure the outreach
- the role of each partner has to be formulated in line with their scientific profile.

#### **Meeting with João Medina – SPI in urban and territorial development**

SPI is involved in projects dealing with urban planning, urban renewal, river front, ocean front, attracting enterprises, innovative districts in cities, city branding, social inclusion, etc., funded by H2020, local municipalities and international development banks. The role of SPI mainly focuses on the transformation side instead of the technical parts as well as the preparation of exploitation plans, policy papers, recommendations and dissemination activities.

#### **Meeting with Sara Medina – possibilities for future cooperation**

Based on the extensive knowledge exchange, we discussed the potential steps to reinforce collaboration between HETFAs and SPI. Different funding mechanisms and topics of common interest were identified which can provide a good basis for joint work. The involvement of SPI in BESTPRAC was also agreed on. (For more details see the section on Future Collaboration).

### **DESCRIPTION OF THE MAIN RESULTS OBTAINED**

My STSM in SPI was very well organized, full of useful knowledge and provided an important motivation for me by using the showcased methods and tools to improve the operation of our office in HETFA. A number of failures were also shared with me that have also happened to us, however, strategies developed to avoid such risks now ensure the professional way of work in SPI. To summarize briefly the main outcomes of the STSM are the following:

#### **1) One of the strengths derives from the profile of the staff:**

- *has strong project management skills,*
- *is involved in international networks of specialized experts*
- *generally works with multiple projects*
- *has experience at global level.*

#### **2) During the preparation of the proposals it is important to**

- *have strategies and profiles to become a coordinator and to become a partner in H2020*
- *not go for everything but allocate sufficient staff for the elaboration of a proposal with highest likeliness to be approved*
- *define a scientific field / expertise which makes the participation of the organization necessary in a consortium, in case of applying for partner status,*
- *develop a quality assurance methodology to be used before the submission of the proposal*
- *understand evaluators' approach*

#### **3) During project management, communication and dissemination activities it is important to**

- *communicate everything clearly, in advance*
- *develop support materials to ease the job both of the partners and the coordinator itself*
- *continuously search for new platforms, communities in which the project can be disseminated and the outreach can be raised*
- *be aware of the differences in online/social media popularity across countries and target groups*
- *shares messages which are attractive and contain some brief and interesting content*
- *prepare tailor made content – pictures, gifs, tags, hashtags, interesting few lines: 80% content, 20% promotion*

### **FUTURE COLLABORATIONS (if applicable)**

My STSM hosted by SPI provided the opportunity to discuss potential opportunities for future collaboration which are the following:

- 1) *SPI is interested in getting involved in BESTPRAC activities – to do so, I'll update them regularly on actual calls*
- 2) *Erasmus +: HETFA is planning to develop projects under Erasmus + in common fields (entrepreneurship, social innovation, social enterprises, etc.)*
- 3) *SPI is interested in joining INTERREG and other projects focusing on urban and territorial development: this topic is interesting for both organizations having relevant expertise at national level so joint projects are expected to be formulated too*
- 4) *EEA and Norway fund: since both countries are beneficiaries of the scheme for regional / transnational cooperation, apart from the one project being elaborated currently, other topics can provide opportunity for joint work*
- 5) *ESPON and other tenders: HETFA will check the envisaged topics for targeted research works and will discuss with SPI which fall under their interest*