



Short Term Scientific Mission (STSM) Report



“Capacity building for management of projects funded within ETC programs”

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Home Institution: University of Belgrade, School of electrical engineering

Host Institution: Joint Secretariat of the ADRIAN Programme, Bologna

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Summary

The visit to JS ADRION took place between 25th and 29th March 2019. During the visit I met the professionals working at Joint Secretariat of the ADRION Programme and Managing Authority of the Interreg V-B Adriatic-Ionian programme. I learned about ADRION Programme in general and implementation of synergies between IPA (The Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance) and ERDF (the European Regional Development Fund). The training covered both the proposal management and project management phase including topics such as budget planning and proposal development, using the support tools for scouting activities to improve visibility of researchers from IPA, use of Electronic Monitoring System (eMS), recording expenses, reporting and dealing with first level control.

Purpose of the STSM

The main purpose of this STSM was the exchange of general experiences especially in post-award phase and sharing of best practice. This included the following specific aims:

1. Meet colleagues who are involved in pre-award and post-award project phase and share the best experience with them;
2. Learn about pre- and post-award management policies from the programme point of view
3. Share the best practices related to activities useful to develop and support researchers and research organization to participate in ADRION as part of ETC (European Territorial Cooperation Programmes);
4. Share financial, legal and administrative experiences (best practices) and expertise related to the post award phase of European projects management – compare with financial management H2020 projects;
5. Sharing best practices on pre award activities: Coordination activities with NCPs
6. Discussed with staff in charge for implementation specific rules set up by the EC for this type of projects implemented in IPA countries (example: What is eMS? How to use Electronic Monitoring System (eMS)? How to use PRAG? Etc.);
7. Widen new competences through exposure to different environments and working practices.

Description of the work carried out during the STSM

Monday, March 25th

The morning meeting took place at the JS Office. Barbara di Piazza (Head of Office) introduced herself, her team and the programme for the next five days. I briefly introduced my organization. Then Barbara di Piazza presented the complex program architecture, actors involved in programme management and decision making as well as main programme documents.

The programme includes 4 EU Member States and 4 candidate and potential candidate countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia. Its main goal is to act as a policy driver and governance innovator, fostering European integration



among Partner States, taking advantage of their rich natural, cultural and human resources, as well as enhancing economic, social and territorial cohesion in the Adriatic and Ionian region.

The Managing Authority of the ADRION programme, is in charge of general implementation of the programme on behalf of the Partner States. The decision making body is Monitoring Committee and it consists of the representatives of each partner State participating in the Programme. It performs its tasks for the benefit of the whole programme and, in line with its coordination role, it further ensures that all programme bodies work together. The Managing Authority organizes the call for proposals and coordinates the assessment of the received applications and the monitoring of the funded ones. It is responsible for the sound financial management of the programme.

Emilia Romagna Region as the Managing Authority also carries out the functions of Certifying Authority. Certifying Authority is responsible for drawing up and submitting payment applications to the European Commission and certifying that they are based on verifiable supporting documents and have been subject to verifications.

The tasks of Audit Authority for ADRION have been entrusted to the Emilia Romagna Region. This body ensures that audits are carried out on programme management and control system and on a sample of funded operations to ensure the proper functioning according to the EU rules. I was also presented the main Programme documents, some of them valid for the whole duration of the programming period 2014-2020. and the others related to calls for proposals that need to be prepared for the launch of each call.

After that, presentation about Macroregional strategy for Adriatic-Ionian region-EUSAIR was delivered by Jelena Kolic, IPA Officer. The Strategy was jointly developed by the Commission and the Adriatic-Ionian Region countries and stakeholders, which agreed to work together on the areas of common interest for the benefit of each country and the whole region. The ADRION Programme funds the project which is providing support to the governance of the strategy.

Tuesday, March 26th

On the second day, IPA Officer Jelena Kolić presented the way programme activities are coordinated in 8 Partner States. ADRION has a network of National Contact Points present in each Partner State of the programme. They provide information and assistance to potential applicants and project partners both in pre-award and post-award phase. Applicants and beneficiaries can receive information on tools and institutions operating at national level, e.g. first level controllers, in their national language by the corresponding National Contact Points. The activities of the JS and the National Contact Points are funded through Technical Assistance funds. The coordination between the JS and the NCP is very important in order to ensure coherent set of activities in each phase of the programme implementation. I was presented the modalities of planning, implementation and reporting on the Technical Assistance Funds.

IPA Officer also presented public procurement rules applicable to all beneficiaries coming from IPA Partner States. According to the Programme rules, IPA beneficiaries must conduct their public procurement procedures in accordance with the Practical Guide to Contract Procedures for EU

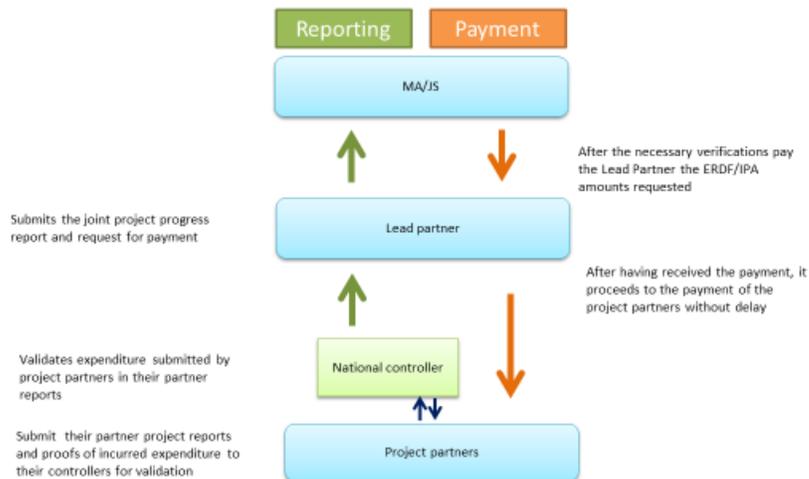


External Actions (PRAG). As these rules are different from the ones applicable for procurement in projects funded by the H2020, this was excellent opportunity to get familiar with the rules that have to be followed but also on the most common mistakes detected in implementation of these procedures.

Wednesday, March 27th

The third day was entirely dedicated to financial aspects and reporting. The Financial Officer, Evangelia Karpodini, presented the financial programme rules and the related documents. She started her presentation with the documents at EU level -EU regulations - which regulate financial aspects in ETC Programmes. I was presented the financial rules applicable to the ongoing projects funded under the 1st Call for Proposals. ADRION Programme has five budget lines and specific rules related to each one of them. This was very important to me, as my institution is participating in one Iterreg Danube project and the rules are different from the ones applicable to EU centralized programmes. I was also presented the procedure for modifications of the budget and the reporting requirements. All projects have reporting periods established in their Subsidy contracts. After each partner prepares its partner report which include narrative and financial part, it is submitted to the national First Level Control. This is the body at national level that checks the compliance of the reported expenses with the EU, Programme and national rules. After their check and report, the Lead Partner prepares Project progress reports, includes verified costs of each partner and submits it to the JS. The main tasks of the First Level Controllers and the documents they have to present in the reporting phase were also presented.

After the JS, MA and CA perform all necessary checks, the LP receives reimbursement for all partners for the related reporting period.



Finance Officer also showed me the electronic monitoring system the Programme is using in all phases of the project life cycle. The whole procedure is paperless, starting from the application phase which is done online through the system. The evaluation, negotiations, reporting and monitoring are also performed online.

Thursday, March 28th

On the fourth day I had meetings with JS Communication Officer, Giulia Frattini and two Project Officers, Lucia Calliari and Adela Franja.

Communication is very important aspect also in this Programme. The CO explained me the differences between communication requirements at programme and at project level. At programme level, one of the obligations laid down in EU Regulation is to organize Programme event every year. The preparations for this year event are ongoing, and it will take place in Budva on 6th May 2019. The focus of this year event is on participation of beneficiaries from IPA countries, benefits they have from it as well as their contribution to the Programme. At project level, each beneficiary has compulsory set of communication activities that have to be described already in the Application Form. I was explained general requirements for the project beneficiaries and shown examples of good practice in projects funded so far. These aspects are also carefully monitored by the JS CO in all project progress reports.

The POs explained the negotiation process in post-award phase when the beneficiaries are asked to adjust their Application Forms in line with the recommendations of the evaluators. Their role is to assist beneficiaries in implementation of their activities. After the project progress reports are



submitted, POs check the content part. I was shown the check list they are using to make sure that all necessary elements are present in the reports. If it is not the case, beneficiaries are asked to provide clarifications or modify certain parts of the reports. We also discussed some most common mistakes in reporting.

Friday, March 29th

On my last day, the Coordinator of the ADRION Managing Authority Unit Lodovico Gherardi presented me collaboration between the Emilia-Romagna region and the Universities and research centers of the region. As the Emilia-Romagna has several very strong industries, the cooperation with universities and research centers is very strong in this field. The cooperation between Region and Universities is based on common objectives in fields predefined in regional strategies. The region is coordinating some initiatives in ICT sector relevant for the territory of the South-eastern Europe that can be of interest for my institution and it was agreed to explore the possibilities of cooperation in this respect.

Contribution to the goals of the COST Targeted Network

The STSM “Capacity building for management of projects funded within ETC programs” allowed me: to build the network of personal contacts with several project officer and other supporting staff at the ADRION JS; to exchange financial, legal and administrative experience in project implementation, to share knowledge about cooperation with first level control and different internal processes on the country level; to learn about the “shared management” system and the best practices and difficulties in encouraging institutions to apply for this type of EU funded projects especially in IPA countries. Thus it fully contributed to the goals of the COST Targeted Network “BESTPRAC”.

Description of the main results obtained

Thanks to the STSM I now have the bigger picture on how the “shared management” system works and how the granted projects deals with project administration and project management. The visit to the ADRION JS revealed some similarities and differences between implementation of the projects financed directly by EC trough the “centralized management” and ETC trough the “shared management”. The main differences are:

- “Centralized management” system include all programs directly managing by EC such as H2020. Each of this programmes have different EU Regulation. For example, for H2020 it is REGULATION (EU) No 1290/2013.
- ETC implements all programmes trough “shared management”. They have one common EU Regulation No 1299/2013.
- Main differences between these two systems is responsibility. In centralized management system, EC has sole responsibility for programme and implementation of the projects but in shared management system, responsibility is divided between EC and managing authority of each specific programme. In case of the ADRION, it is Region Emilia-



Romagna. Because of that, control system on the level of beneficiary such as ETF is more complex.

The main results obtained from the STSM include learning from the ADRION JS team:

- What are the main point/ specificity of this type of programmes which should contribute to harmonious economic, social and territorial development of the Union as a whole.
- What are eligible criteria for ADRION programme and how to apply them.
- What are the main issues raising during the evaluation of the project proposals – common errors
- What are main differences between First and Second call for proposals in ADRION. Additionally, I was explained main point of the third call which should be published during the April 2019.
- Which programmes under ETC are available for institutions from Serbia
- How to implement ETC projects in my institution, especially transnational project such as ADRION and Danube.
- What are the main issues raising during the evaluation of the project reports – common errors
- Different level of jurisdiction and who is in charge for what. This is big question in dealing with First Level Control in IPA counters.
- I learned from their experience and know-how about how to find financial opportunity and empower researchers to take an active part in international projects financed through ETC programmes available for my institution.

Description of best practices from the host institution will be implemented by you within your institute

ADRION JS work exclusively on programme level and his internal system cannot be implemented in my institution but based on the experience and best practices of great project officers from host institution I learned several practices which I will try to implement in my institution. Most important of theme are:

1. I should, and I have an idea on how to build the system to follow the information about open calls and brokerage events organized in the future by different ETC programmes and empower researchers to take an active part in international projects financed through this programme
2. Besides the activities in the post-award phase, the practices on using eMS system and PRAG procedure, which I learned about, will be very usefully for the Faculty during the implementation of our ongoing Interreg project. .
3. According to the best practices and know-how transferred during this STSM, upon my return to Belgrade, my first step will be establishing system for managing project granted by some of ETF programmes



Future collaboration with host institution

We have already identified brokerage events, which will be held in Belgrade this and next year where colleagues from the ADRION programme will come to present new calls for proposals and possibility for institutions from IPA countries and benefits they have from it as well as their contribution to the Programme . On the other hand, the Emilia-Romagna region is coordinating some initiatives in ICT sector. They established “Big data center” for whole Europe. The Large infrastructure for this center was provided by EU. Cooperation with this center can be of interest for my institution, especially for researcher who work in this area. I will give my best to provide the possibilities of cooperation in this respect.

Confirmation by the host institution of the successful execution of the STSM

Please find attached

Other comments

I would like to thank the staff from the Joint Secretariat of the ADRION Programme, for their hospitality and openness and to express my big thank to the EU COST-BESTPRAC Network for providing the funding for this STSM. I would like to thank as well to all speakers for their very experienced and useful presentations and for openly sharing their best practices in different phases of the EU grants.