

SHORT TERM SCIENTIFIC MISSION (STSM) SCIENTIFIC REPORT

This report is submitted for approval by the STSM applicant to the STSM coordinator

Action number: TN1302

STSM title: Proactive pre-award research management system

STSM start and end date: 01/07/2019 to 03/07/2019

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PURPOSE OF THE STSM:

Identification and exchange of the best practices in research administration that would lead to increased participation of ISCTE-IUL in international, collaborative projects as well as exchanging the experiences in ongoing collaborative research projects and identifying the opportunities for the possibilities of the future collaborations in the multidisciplinary collaborative international projects. The STSM exchange between the ISCTE-IUL and ERASMUS MC was intended primarily to share the knowledge and experience of the STSM host ERASMUS MC, Ellen Schenk (Scientific Funding Navigator at the Department of Urology) and her colleagues within various departments and research support services, in order to give the insight into the internal organization and procedures of the research management and administration. The entire STSM was designed with the aims of BESTPRAC in mind, mainly allowing networking and the exchange of administrative experience, knowledge sharing and its transfer, increased efficiency in project management, overall structure of institutional science-management procedures and types of the support available to the researcher. The demonstrated procedures, information and practices were structured in a way to enable the most optimal acquisition of knowledge, and perception of the Research administration best practices at the institutional level, as well as at the level of the individual departments and the thematic lines, all with the purpose of facilitating knowledge transfer back to ISCTE-IUL research support team.

DESCRIPTION OF WORK CARRIED OUT DURING THE STSMS

The host of the STSM, Ellen Schenk, Scientific Funding Navigator at Erasmus MC Department of Urology, presented the institution Erasmus MC, its internal organization, composition of the research support structures that exist at the general institutional level as well as at the level of the research themes and research departments. Her presentations as well as productive conversations along the entire duration of the STSM has given the insight into the organizational practices, challenges, and valuable knowledge regarding the type of the support in the pre-award tasks, including the types of interactions with the individual researchers, but also institutional research support structures, regulations and protocols.

Exchange of the pre-award practices for EU collaborative applications with the Research Development Office (RDO) director Margrietha Vink and the members of the EU Team, Ismaela Nieuwenhuijs, Annejet Goede and Vedashree Ramakrishnaiah, gave an insight into the internal institutional procedures regarding the pre-award support for European funding proposals. The members of this team also support the preparation of the COST and ERASMUS+ proposals. The Research Development Office gives centralized support at the institutional level, including all the stages of the pre-award support from the initial contact with the researcher, all the way to the submission of the proposal. The support is structured in stages that correspond to the levels of the proposal preparation, and is facilitated by the already established regime,

internal guideline documents and presentations regarding the application/submission procedures that are available to the researchers through the institutional intranet.

Best practices in grant writing were presented by Erik Kreiter who is Grant writer for the Theme Daniel, one of the seven organisational themes in the Erasmus MC, related to oncological care, research and education. His support is focused to the process of the proposal preparation and structuring – starting from the initial scientific idea from the Theme Daniel, through the organization of the style of the proposal, project timeline, dissemination activities and social impact of the research studies. He also prepares the targeted newsletter for the specific research area of his researchers and coordinates the workflow within the process of preparation of the collaborative projects. Within the Theme Sophia, that involves the departments of the Erasmus MC Sophia paediatric hospital, Kimberly Kolijn, Grant Support Officer at the Research Support Office Sophia, presented her work regarding acquiring the information of the specific call and funding possibilities, presenting them to the potentially interested researchers and accompanying the proposal preparation and submission processes. She also gives individualized hands-on support, review of the preparation stages of the proposal and information regarding the specificities of the funding agencies and/or specific call.

Preparation as of the financial aspects of the research proposals of the Erasmus MC is the task of the financial and control managers at the level of the department or at the level of the institutional themes. Leo Grootenboer at the Theme Thorax that entails cardiovascular and pulmonology care, research and education, has presented his workflow regarding the pre-award as well as the example of the post-award financial procedure from his practise as the financial control manager.

At the departmental level, management of the project was presented by Jasmijn de Lijster from the Department of Paediatrics, who is in charge of the project management of the Horizon 2020 project “LifeCycle – Early Life stressors and life Cycle health”. The project consortium is composed of 18 members from 11 countries, with Erasmus MC as the leader of the consortium. The responsibilities of the project manager cover all the post-award non-financial duties: organization of the events, conferences, meetings, publications at the project web site, and coordination with all the members of the consortium. Also at the departmental level, project manager Magda Meester from the Department of Oncology, presented her work regarding the support of the successful ERC CoG grant preparation and submission process.

Technology Transfer Office (TTO) members Iya Muzykina and Rik Bouman presented their work regarding the best practices on the pre and post-award legal management of EU projects, that include very structured institutional procedure, designed in a way to enable access of all the relevant information of the awarded project to all the institutional staff related to the project, and therefore ensure that all the legal aspects are carefully followed and respected.

Research Policy of the Erasmus MC was presented by Adrian Cohen from the Research Policy Department, with the presentation of the one of the types of the analysis that is periodically preformed at the institutional level, including deep analysis of the scientific publications and already established collaborations. Research Integrity policy and procedures in Erasmus MC were presented by Angela van Tilborg, who called attention on the importance of informing the research staff at all levels to the national Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, especially including the young, less experienced researchers and post-docs, and that way preventing the possible issues in non-compliance with regulations. Talent Policy and Management was assessed by Maud Vissers, who advises the PhD students regarding their Training and Supervision Plan within the PhD studies, and also organises advising sessions and panel discussions with young researchers.

Exchange of the pre-award practices for EU personal applications, with Team Personal of the Research Development Office, was presented by Nathalie Weber, who explained how institutionally the young researchers are supported in their personal applications, through variety of consultancy classes, that enable them to build awareness of the importance of the internationalization of their curriculum from the early stages of the scientific career.

One of the most successful departments of the Erasmus MC regarding the funding acquisition is the Virosciences department, who has its own RMA staff devoted to the pre-award as well as the post-award project management. The excellent organization of the process of the project application is in the base of that success – the department has established their own system of following every stage of the pre-award process, following closely every step and developing the internal support charts that are shared with all the researchers and the support staff in order to maximise the efficiency of the process, documentation and support information. This process was presented by Martine van Roode, member of the Project Office of the Department of Virosciences.

DESCRIPTION OF THE MAIN RESULTS OBTAINED

The STSM to the Erasmus MC offered the insight into some of the aspects of the everyday work process and challenges that are quite similar and common for research administrators, as well as the awareness of the common difficulties and the ways of overcoming them in the every-day practise. The main focus was on the various aspects of the pre-and post-award research support, including:

Providing information and advice to researchers about funding opportunities and possible funding agencies (national funds, structural funds and international funds); Informing the research community by publishing the periodic newsletter; Personalised support through the proposal preparation; Assisting researchers to prepare competitive proposals – these services are provided at the several level, in different stages of the proposal preparation, including advising on the specific requirements and documentations, contacts with the members of the consortium, advising on the rules, procedures and authorization documentation; Advising young researchers and providing information of the personal grants and other opportunities for the professional development; Providing support in the grant agreement and consortium agreement negotiation and signing;

Erasmus MC is highly successful institution regarding the acquisition of EU funding. This STSM revealed some similarities between our institutions at the institutional level, as well as at the level of the individual departments, in implementation of the research support procedures. Keeping in mind different scientific target areas of our institutions as well as the size of the departments and number of researchers, I would like to call attention to the similarities of the general RMA support structure within both institutions: centralized support office mostly dedicated to the pre-award support with several support offices within the individual departments/units. However, size of the respective institutions and of the research units, with corresponding RMA support staff, implies also variations in the arrangement of the support. Having the RMA staff dedicated exclusively to the certain funding programs, with deep and specialized knowledge of the specificities of the certain funding programs (eg. EU; personal grants; national funding, etc) enables specialized and therefore highly successful support. Also, very developed system of the internal procedures (like the one developed internally in the Virology department) maximize the efficiency of the support staff and their time management, in every step of the support procedures, increasing the success in funding acquisitions. Additionally, variety of other institutional support departments (eg legal; policy advisement) that are giving additional specialized assistance for the variety of pre- and post-award circumstances, increase overall institutional success both in research funding acquisitions as well as in other areas (eg. education; outreach, etc).

This STSM at Erasmus MC improved and strengthened my knowledge and professional skills, which I will consequently share with my colleagues, apply at work and at the same time contribute to the capacity building at my own home institution. I have gained insight into different support systems in the field of search for funding opportunities and proposal preparation that will be useful in performance and optimization of my future everyday work within my institution. Most of all, this STSM gave me an opportunity for establishing direct professional contact with Research Administrative professionals from Erasmus MC and particularly my host Ellen Schenk, establishing basis for the future contacts and being valuable tool for the further professional development.

FUTURE COLLABORATIONS (if applicable)

This STSM has certainly laid the foundation for a more close relationship between ISCTE-IUL and Erasmus MC, which has the potential to lead to future collaboration. The possibilities of the future collaborations were discussed mostly in the aspect of the multidisciplinary research projects. ISCTE-IUL develops the research in the area of social sciences, while Erasmus MC aims to the health focused scientific research. The possibilities of collaboration are mainly identified in the next framework program, Horizon Europe, especially in the light of the current international scientific and funding trends of promoting the multidisciplinary approach while aiming to the highest possible public benefit of the scientific research.

Other comments

I would like to express my gratitude to Ellen Schenk who organized this STSM, devoted her time and was available to host me during the visit, and the staff of Erasmus MC for their hospitality and openness, their useful presentations, and for openly sharing their best practices in different aspects of the Research Administration procedures. I would like to thank EU COST-BESTPRAC for providing the funding for this STSM.