

BESTPRAC Training School “How to support successful grant proposals in FP9: from Cross- cutting Issues to Grant Writing”

10-12 December 2018

Universidade NOVA de Lisboa, Lisbon, Portugal

Report of the Training School

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Resume

The COST Action BESTPRAC organised a three-day training school on Horizon 2020 grant writing tasks

The high complexity and competitiveness of the current research and innovation ecosystem, with a growing diversity of funding sources associated with often complicated application processes, necessitates the support of research administrator experts in pre-award and, particularly in grant writing/grant revision. As such, research administrators play a key role in supporting both, research institutions and individual researchers getting competitive funding and improving successful rates, particularly in high competitive funding schemes as EU Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation. The role of research administrators in institutions is now more important than ever, given the increasing need for external research funding. Securing science funding simply cannot perform without efficient processes running their engine. Scouting opportunities and support to proposal preparation, particularly in grant writing and revision, reinforced by a strong knowledge on EU funding programmes and its specificities are key to success.

Training School at a glance

Key objectives

This training school is a three-day practical course designed for administrative staff who have been assigned to these tasks in pre-award, and who:

- are familiar with the H2020 proposal preparation procedures, but also
- have limited experience or training in grant writing/grant revision

What can you get out of this?

First and foremost, this training school is primarily about sharing knowledge, best practices, practical solutions, tips and hints, with:

- Focus on the role of Research Administrators (RA) in the topic;
- Providing training for RA by RA;
- Integrating presentations by experts with practical examples and exercises;
- Ample time will be set aside for Q&A sessions and discussions.

Trainers

Claudia Oliveira, Brussels Agency for Business Support - hub.brussels, Belgium

Marisa Borges, H2020 National Contact Point, Portugal

Schenk Borbála, Centre for Social Sciences Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Hungary

Sofia Azevedo, H2020 National Contact Point, Portugal

Virág Zsár, HÉTFA Research Institute and Center for Economic and Social Analysis, Hungary

Venue

The training school took place in NOVA School of Social Sciences and Humanities / Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas (Lisbon, Portugal). The room was previously set with tablet arm chairs, flipcharts, writing materials and free Wifi access so that participants could join in groups for the training school exercises.



Training School Programme

The final programme is available at <https://bestprac.eu/training/past-training-schools/lisbon-december-2018/>

PROGRAMME

Day 1 – 10th Dec 2018

R&D EU funding: from H2020 to FP9

After a welcoming message from the Vice-Dean for Research of NOVA FCSH and a brief introduction about BESTPRAC and the Training School logistics by the TS managers, the general guidelines and main differences from H2020 to Horizon Europe were presented, focusing on the new challenges that FP9 brings towards Global challenges/Mission-oriented projects, a greater engagement with the society/co-creation and Open Science/Open Innovation.

Grant writing - From the research idea to the submitted proposal

The purpose was to endow the participants with techniques how they can support the proposal-making in order to meet these requirements. The session was built on the active participation of the group members and also provided room for exchanging own best practices and lessons learned.

Impact sections in the H2020 proposals - foundations, challenges, practices

In this section we discussed the notion of impact from the research managers' perspective, giving a concise overview of how to set up a well-grounded and convincing Impact section of a collaborative project proposal in the H2020 funding scheme.

Social event: Group dinner at Zambeze Restaurant

Day 2 – 11th Dec 2018

How to tackle cross-cutting issues in H2020 proposals and what to expect in the new FP

The second day started with an overview on how to identify cross-cutting issues (Gender, Ethics, Social Sciences and Humanities, Open Science, Responsible Research and Innovation related topics), as well as how to successfully answer the challenges these issues present.

Ethics and Open Access/ Open Science in practice

This was an interactive session covering Open Science, RRI and Ethics, where research administrators put into practice what was learned during the morning, shared experiences, saw examples of winning proposals and thus had the chance to have a hands-on experience with H2020 experts. At the end of the second day, we explored the understanding of the cross-cutting issues discussed before under the umbrella of RRI and how these issues are related.

Social event: Mouraria guided tour and Dinner at Mouraria Sports Club

Day 3 – 12th Dec 2018

Science communication: importance and practices

The last day was dedicated to the importance and role of science communication and practices, concepts, tools and methodologies used in science communication within and beyond the academic community.

The training school ended with a final session of questions and answers about the topics presented and sharing experiences and opinions about the importance of such training actions for the research administrators' professionals.



Participants

Call for participation

The call for application was published on BESTPRAC website, mailing-list and social networks, with a provisional programme, information about the venue and an online application form to be submitted with one month to the deadline. Interested applicants needed to complete information about their organisation, their personal tasks in their current position, their job profile and level of experience, particularly on the training school topic. Furthermore, they had to briefly describe the potential development and benefit this training would bring to their professional daily life.

The number of participants was limited to 20 with reimbursement (group A) and 15 'local' participants which could easily reach this training school without reimbursement (group B) - for this second group, priority was given to candidates from Portugal.

This was the second training school where we included a local group of participants. The objective was to enlarge the number of participants, while still allowing for active engagement by all participants and one-on-one dialogue during the sessions. Furthermore, the participation of specific applicants from Portugal envisioned to favour the regional development of research managers and administrators from this inclusiveness country.

No deadline extension was granted and all applicants were notified of acceptance or rejection by November 3, 2018.

Participants' selection

We received in total 137 applications from 12 different COST Countries. The evaluation committee included:

- Borbala Schenk (Trainer)
- Cláudia Oliveira (Trainer)
- Cristina Oliveira (Training School vice-manager)
- Madalena Martins (Training School manager)
- Virag Zsár (Trainer)

The final score consisted in the average grade of the five evaluators (up until 5), plus extra points in case the applicant is an Early Stage Administrator and in case it works on H2020 grant writing/grant preparation issues (one point per criterion). For both participant groups we have decided for a cut-off grade of 4 (out of a maximum of 7) points, taking into consideration that including participants without H2020 grant writing/grant preparation experience and/or with no (immediate) future professional application could make the trainers and trainees experience less efficient.

A lump sum of 700 Euros towards travel and accommodation expenses was available for participants from Group A coming from abroad and 350 Euros for Portuguese people (coming out of the Lisbon region). Group B participants, since coming from the Lisbon region in Portugal, participated in this training school without reimbursement.

No additional financial support for participants was available from COST.

Group of participants

In total, there were 42 individuals participating in the Training School: 35 trainees, 5 trainers and the 2 Training School managers.

The selected trainees came from 12 different countries, with geographic spread from South, North and Central Europe (Figure 1).

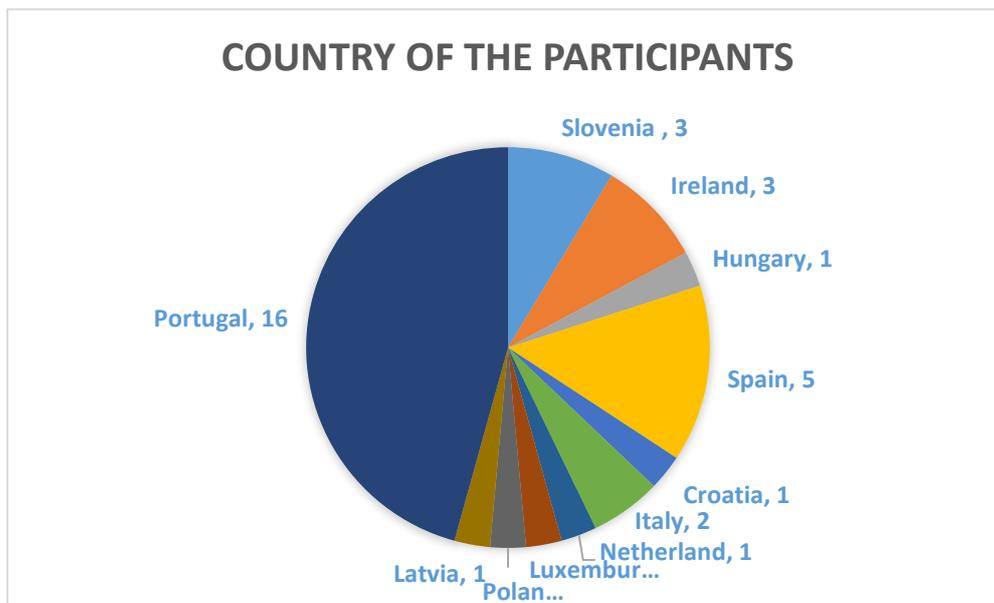


Figure 1. Participant' countries (11 COST Member states)

Figure 1 shows the participant' countries which includes 11 COST Member States (6 (55%) inclusiveness countries). Besides 12 participants from Portugal, Group B included also 3 participants initially from group A, but, still with an excellent grade, could not be reimbursed due to excessive high-quality applications in Group A. In total, 68% of the participants work on COST Inclusiveness Target Countries (ITCs), fulfilling the goal of further disseminating BESTPRAC and research management professional development in these inclusiveness countries.

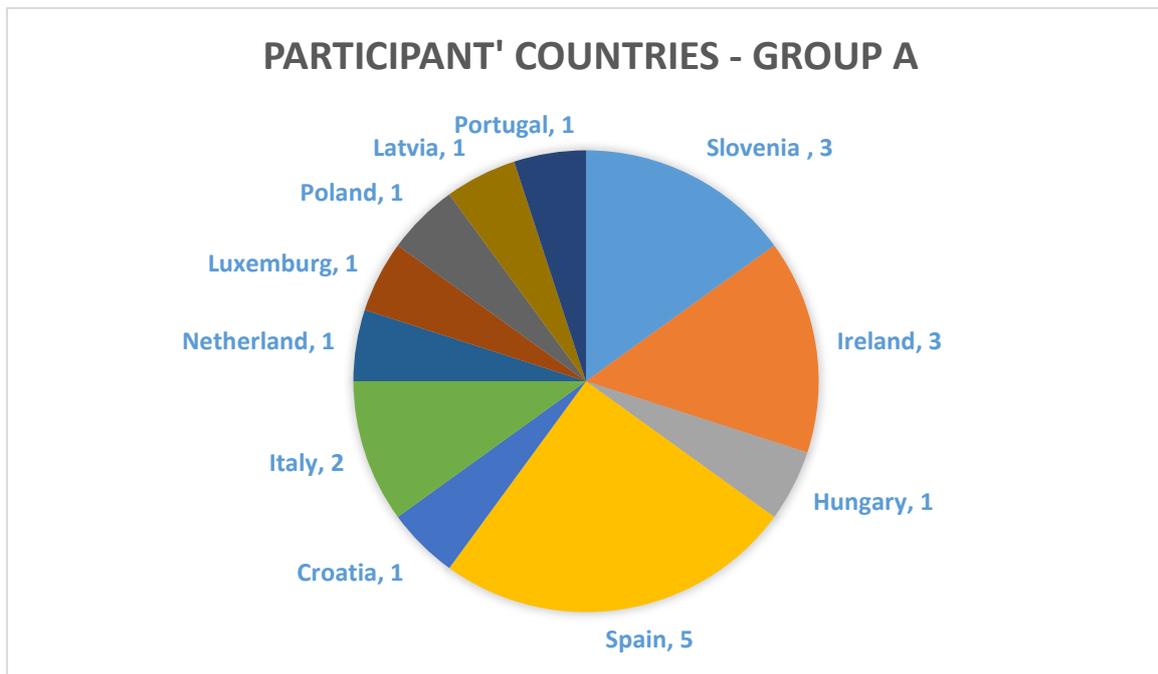


Figure 2. Participant' countries from Group A (9 (47%) inclusiveness countries)

Figure 2 shows the participant' countries regarding only the Group A (20 RA outside of the local group B) which includes 9 COST Inclusiveness countries (47%).

Regarding gender, only 20% of participants were male, as a reflection of a more dominant female participation in research administration.

The five experienced trainers also work in research institutions from different European countries: Belgium, Hungary and Portugal. All of them are or were active members of BESTPRAC, specifically in the working group 1 dedicated to pre-award.

Evaluation

To improve the BESTPRAC Training Schools and further adjust future activities to the trainees needs, a short satisfaction survey was requested to Group A trainees. 20 out of 20 participants replied with a very positive feedback and strongly agreed that:

- 70% strongly agree that TS will have a positive impact on their professional performance
- 90% would strongly recommend this TS to a colleague

Organization and trainers were evaluated as Excellent: average of 4,6/5

The trainers' skills and training materials were also greatly appreciated, as well as the training school organization. Still, there is place for improvement, especially adding more time for discussions and more theoretical information.

Overall, the training school was a great success and highly appreciated by all participants, as stated in their personal comments:

"Practical exercises, team work and discussions, possibility to analyse real projects and evaluators feedback, taking into account cross-cutting and impact topics related to coming project call. Explanations how to address gender balance, interdisciplinary, citizens role, etc. in projects."

"The trainers were excellent. Their different approaches, activities and communication styles were a great complement to each other and helped the structure of the training school"

"Learn interactive ways to communicate/organise relevant aspects of a grant proposal preparation"



"The fact that was easy to follow and related to practical issues."

"Exchanging knowledge with colleagues and the teaching in general - very good!"

Contact

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