

BESTPRAC Joint Meeting of WG1/WG2/WG3

Programme

September 16-17, 2014 | Hotel Lindner, Bratislava, Slovakia

The second meeting of the three working groups of COST Targeted Network TN 1302 (BESTPRAC) was held on September 16-17, 2014 in Bratislava, Slovakia.

The main objective of BESTPRAC is to establish a network for the administrative, finance and legal services in universities, research organizations and related entities supporting researchers involved in the lifecycle of European funded projects in order to exchange experiences and share and develop best practices, encourage knowledge sharing, knowledge transfer and increased efficiency.

The target group BESTPRAC is aiming at is the staff in universities and research institutions carrying out administrative tasks in support of European projects during the post-award phase, often with low salaries, without any possibility to travel and to network and share experiences about carrying out administrative tasks in European research projects. The target group does not include researchers, European project officers focussed on the pre-award phase of the project lifecycle, managers/directors, people with PhDs.

The call for participation in the joint meeting was overwhelming. In total, 109 applications were received. Finally, 89 research administrators from 23 countries attended the meeting. Among the participants 26 % came from so-called inclusiveness countries, 23 % were MC members, and 70 % Working Group members.

During this meeting no MC meeting was scheduled in order to be able to accept as many as possible participants representing the target group of BESTPRAC as well as early stage administrators (ESA). This turned out to be successful by 59 % of the participants being ESAs. It shall also be mentioned that 89 % of the participants were female.

There was much of rotation in comparison to the participants of the 1st meeting in Zagreb. Only 36 of the participants of the 1st meeting in Zagreb also participated in the 2nd meeting in Bratislava. Especially for WG3 this turned out to be very positive, as now more lawyers were represented in the meeting which led to a more fruitful discussion.

The main part of the meeting was devoted to parallel meetings of the three Working Groups of BESTPRAC: WG1-Admin, WG2-Finance, and WG3-Legal.

Summary of WG1-meeting

During the BESTPRAC meeting in Bratislava, WG1 continued the discussions initiated at the first WG1 meeting in March 2014 in Zagreb on the definition of administration of EU projects and the skills and competences for an EU research administrator. Prior to the meeting, a survey was circulated among the WG1 members to further explore member profiles and positions as well as roles and tasks of administrators in the pre- and post-award phase. The outcome of the survey, which had a high response rate, was discussed during the meeting. Striking outcomes are that the majority of WG1 members is female, 60% of the respondents have a scientific background and are well-educated, only two of the various job titles contain "administration", 69% of the respondents is involved both in the pre- and post-award phase, and the majority have legal and financial tasks besides administrative activities. In subgroups the job descriptions and core tasks were discussed further using the survey outcome as a starting point. Overall, it was concluded that administration of EU projects contains a wide variety of tasks, and that job profiles of WG1 members are just too diverse to define a consensus uniform job description. Common tasks include general advising, informing, training and consulting, helpdesk and problem solver, and often hands-on support in application writing and project implementation. Shared problems defined are lack of acknowledgement, respect and knowledge, and communication with the different offices and departments involved in EU project administration. These will be the focus of the upcoming WG1 meetings. With respect to skills and competences it was concluded that this primarily depends on the type of job and positioning within the organization and that this is a combination of content-driven, personality and soft skills. A top 5 of soft skills was defined, composed of English fluency in writing and reading, communication skills, organisational skills, time management skills and analytical skills.

In the second part of the meeting, various WG1 members presented practical administrative tools during a market place, followed by presentations of best practices on how to deal with lack of knowledge on funding rules by administrators and lack of knowledge and commitment by researchers. The presentations will be made available on the BESTPRAC website and a dynamic overview of administrative tools is currently in preparation.

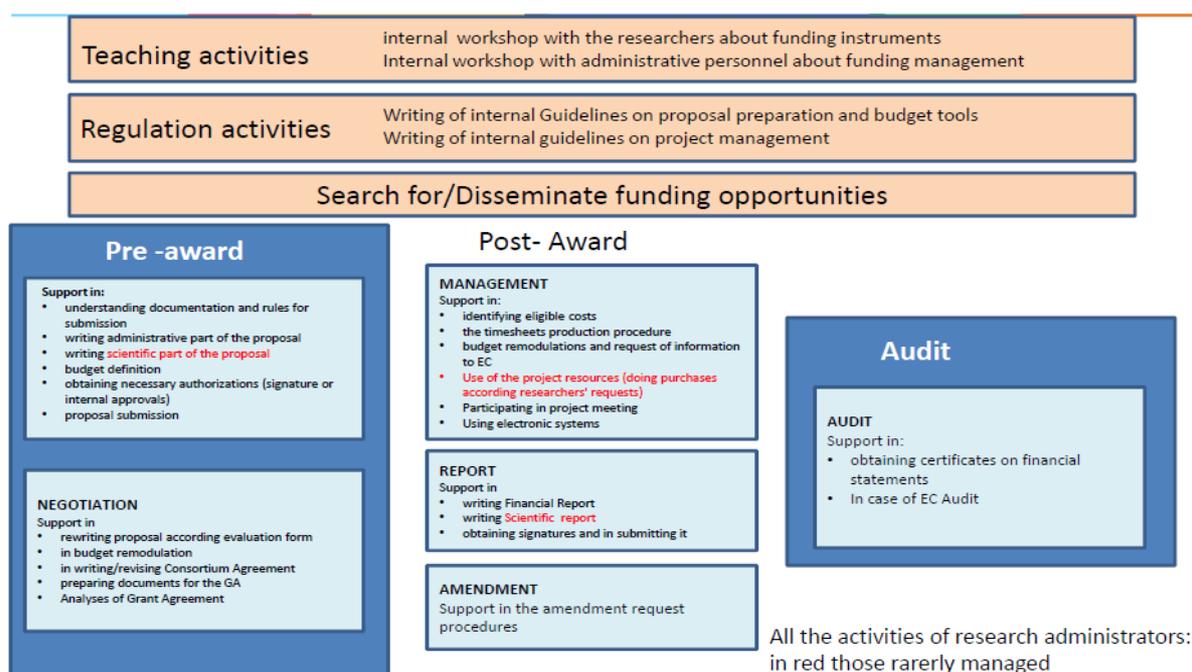
Overall, WG1 has concluded that there is still only poor recognition of EU project administrators, as reflected by the loss of dedicated management budget in Horizon 2020, inappropriate job profiles and limited respect at the local institutes, and the lack of training programmes to support individuals interested in an administrator position. An outreach plan will be developed to raise awareness at various stakeholders on the importance of professional administration of EU funded projects.

Summary of WG2-meeting

The discussion starts on the first day with a short presentation of the WG2 members (25 participants from 17 different countries, only 8 joined Zagreb meeting) and a agenda's presentation by Vanessa Ravagni, WG2 Leader. The participants agreed on following objectives:

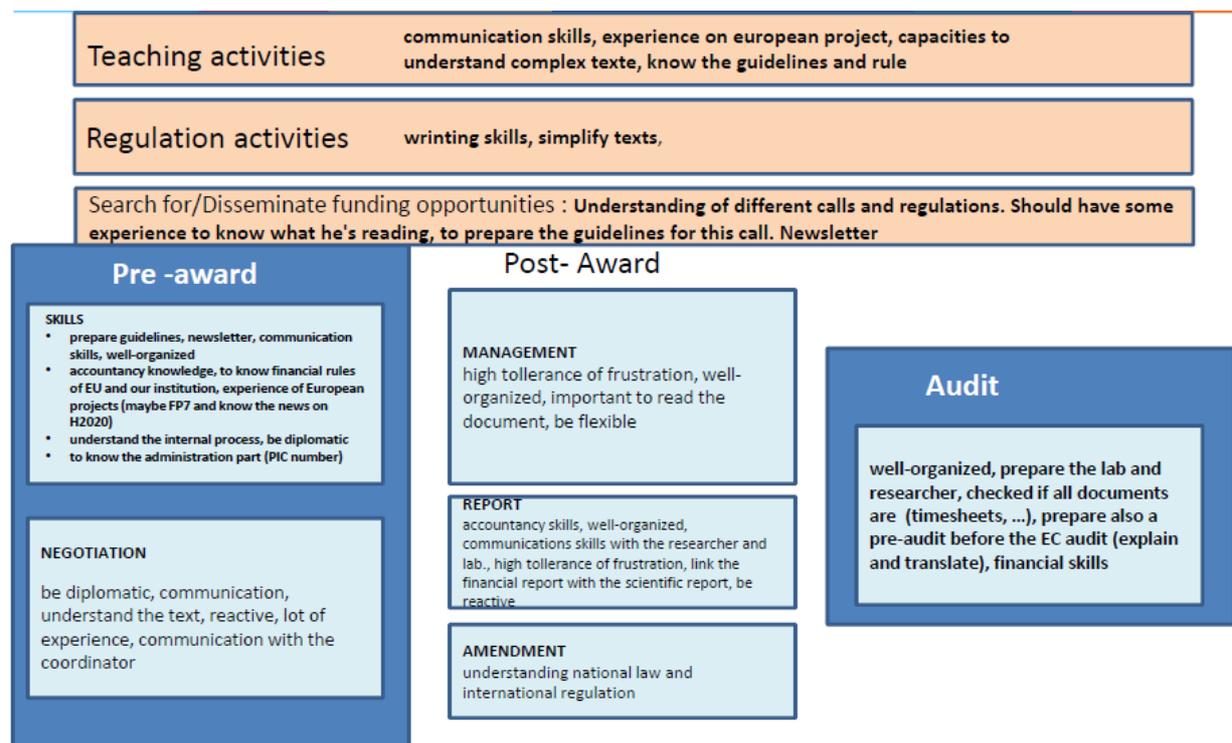
- reaching a consensus on **"Topic 1 Definition of administration of EU projects: tasks performed and skills and competences needed"**;
- better analyzing the **difficulties in dealing with European project** identified under **Topic 2**.

Referring to Topic 1, Vanessa Ravagni, WG2 Leader, described the outcome of the questionnaire "Tasks' Matrix" (sent to the WG2 members after the previous meeting). The participants, dived in 4 subgroups, led by Per Inge Andresen, Dirk de Craemer, Géraldine Leonard, and Marguerite Auberger. Geraldine Leonard, Université d'Orléans discussed skills and competences needed for an EU research administrator and reached a consensus. Each subgroup confirmed the variety of tasks performed by a research administrator, with differences relating to different project phases, as illustrated in Picture 1.



Picture1: "Tasks' Matrix"

Only few tasks (such as writing scientific part of proposals, use of project resources and writing scientific report) are rarely managed: the whole range of task is a proof of the complexity of the role of research administrators that requests a mix of technical (legal, financial and administrative) and not technical skills, as reported by the subgroup led by Geraldine Leonard, Université d'Orléans (Picture 2).



Picture2: Skills and Tasks for each project's phase

The case discussion: "Administration of EU projects: tasks performed and skills and competences needed" presented by Per Inge Andresen gave to the Members the possibility of better understand the best practice of the Norwegian University of Science and Technology.

Topic 2: Difficulties to be addressed by research administrators

During the Zagreb WG2 meeting, participants analyzed a list of difficulties that administrators are confronted with in dealing with European project and decided to better understand some of the difficulties through following questionnaire prepared, delivered and analyzed by WG 2 members. Budgeting is a core activity of research administrators, but this activity implies not only knowledge and experience with eligibility rule of the EU Programmes but also the capacity to translate the EU rules in internal procedures according national and internal regulations.

This "translation" is a complex process because, as demonstrated by the results of the questionnaire "One size fits all: same rules and system schemes for all European Programmes: harmonization need", by Per Inge Andresen, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, in the period 2007-2013, WG 2 Members managed 68 different EU Programmes, but only 10 Programmes ("TOP Programmes") reached more than 29 proposals in the selected period. WG2 members agreed on the following conclusions: BESTPRAC participants are involved in a vast array of EU Programmes with substantial variability in financial rules and procedures. For this reason they suggest to EU to establish uniform financial rules and procedures and online directory of links to rules and procedures.

Participants could better understand the importance of correct budgeting in the project administration throughout:

- the examples of direct/indirect costs collected by Dirk De Craemer, Ghent University, throughout the questionnaire "Direct vs Indirect Cost"
- the case Study "Personnel Costs. Difficulties, tools and best practices", presented by Géraldine Leonard, Université d'Orléans
- the case study "Budgeting in H2020. Difficulties, tools and best practices" by Per Inge Andresen, Norwegian University of Science and Technology.

After the presentations, participants discussed in 4 subgroups the open issues for the next meeting and decided to:

- better analyze the previous identified difficulty: "Personnel Costs in H2020" throughout a survey on "additional remuneration" proposed by Katarzyna Markiewicz-Śliwa, Silesian University of Technology and Jaco de Graaf, Leids Universitair Medisch Centrum
- implement the list of Direct/Indirect cost presented by the Dirk De Craemer , Ghent University throughout a list to be shared as a Guidelines for research administrators
- analyzing the optimization of indirect cost throughout a case study on "Large Infrastructures" presented by Per Inge Andresen, Norwegian University of Science and Technology
- reinforce the Network and sharing best practice as proposed by Sonja Alles, Leibniz University, Hannover
- work with WG 1 and 3 on the topics "Involvement of third parties " and "Time recording" on the materials organized and collected by Vanessa Ravagni, University of Trento

Referring to the questionnaire "Use of Overheads", WG2 members agreed on the discussion of results during the next meeting by Cristina Velasco, University of Madrid Carlos and Maddalena Tognola, University of Bern. An extended deadline can allow more WG2 members to answer and exchange materials and best practices.

Summary of WG3-meeting

Working Group 3 bringing together 25 legal experts from European Universities continued discussion on the scope of the legal support services at each stage of a research project life-cycle and the growing need of their cooperation with the research managers and administrators to provide more specific and relevant assistance to individual researchers involved in projects. Since identification of the most common legal 'pitfalls' and addressing them at an early stage contribute to avoiding potential legal problems at the post-award phase, Niina Mikkonen from Aalto University, Finland highlighted in her presentation on Non-Disclosure Agreements the importance of confidentiality while exchanging valuable information with other partners especially at the pre-proposal stage, while Carmen Gascó Fortea, Technical University of Madrid, Spain and Diana Pustula, University of Warsaw (Poland) explained the increasing importance of involving legal support services at the proposal preparation stage in terms of IPR and ethical issues, consortium governance structure etc. bearing in mind replacing the negotiation phase with the grant agreement preparation phase significantly shortened in Horizon2020. Aiming at providing supporting tools for early-stage administrators WG3 members are developing relevant check-list and internal guidelines concerning specific legal issues including negotiation of consortium agreement based on the DESCAs (initiated by Chelo Morán, Carlos III University of Madrid (UC3M), Spain and supported by Sarah Dello, University of Gent, Belgium).

At the 3rd WG3 meeting we will analyse the legal scope of declarations to be signed by the legal representatives at the grant preparation stage, discuss the "electronic signature", coordinator's liability and continue discussing in detail DESCAs model agreement. There is planned a common session with WG1 and WG2 on the project management cross-cutting issues. Outputs of the Bratislava meeting as well as the Warsaw Autumn School for non-legals will be shared.

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Tuesday, September 16, 2014

- 09:00 Welcome address to all participants & brief introduction of BESTPRAC
(Jan Andersen, Chair)
Introduction to WG1 / WG2 / WG3 (Ellen Schenk, WG1-Leader /
Vanessa Ravagni, WG2-Leader / Diana Pustula, WG3-Leader)
(*room Antwerpen*)
- 09:45 Coffee break
- 10:00 Parallel WG1/WG2/WG3-meetings
(*WG1: room Antwerpen; WG2: room Wien, WG3: room Praha*)
- 12:30 Lunch
- 14:00 Parallel WG1/WG2/WG3-meetings
(*WG1: room Antwerpen; WG2: room Wien, WG3: room Praha*)
- 15:30 Coffee break
- 16:00 Parallel WG1/WG2/WG3-meetings
(*WG1: room Antwerpen; WG2: room Wien, WG3: room Praha*)
- 19:30 Dinner at Hotel Lindner

Wednesday, September 17, 2014

- 09:00 Presentation & discussion on “The Matrix: core messages, target groups, and communication means” (Fred Balvert, Head of Communications Erasmus MC) (*room Antwerpen*)
- Communication matrix: how does communication work and which tools can you use?
 - Group exercise: design of outreach project in small groups using virtual project
 - Plenary presentation/discussion of proposed designs
- 11:00 Coffee break
- 11:30 Parallel WG1/WG2/WG3-meetings
(*WG1: room Antwerpen; WG2: room Wien, WG3: room Praha*)
- 13:00 Lunch
- 14:30 Summing-up session of all working groups
(*room Antwerpen*)
- 15:00 End of meeting

Programme of WG1

Tuesday, September 16, 2014 (room Antwerpen)

Definition of “administration of EU projects”

The discussions will start from the outcome of the previous WG1 meeting with the ultimate goal to reach a consensus on this theme. The outcome is to be included in a WG1 output document.

- 10:00 **Outcome online WG1 survey**
Tjaša Nabergoj, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
- 10:20 **Explanation on how to reach consensus on the definition of administration of EU projects**
Kaisa Männikkö, Tampere University of Technology, Finland
- 10:25 **Discussion in subgroups**
- 11:10 **Plenary consensus on definition “administration of EU projects”**
Kaisa Männikkö, Tampere University of Technology, Finland
- 11:40 **Short break**

Skills and competences for an EU research administrator

The discussions will start from the outcome of the previous WG1 meeting with the ultimate goal to reach a consensus on this theme. The outcome is to be included in a WG1 output document.

- 11:45 **Explanation on how to reach consensus on skills and competences for an EU research administrator**
Kaisa Männikkö, Tampere University of Technology, Finland
- 11:50 **Discussion in subgroups**
- 12:30 Lunch**
- 14:00 **Plenary consensus on skills and competences for an EU research administrator**
Kaisa Männikkö, Tampere University of Technology, Finland

Market place for administrative tools

There is a clear need for sharing tools helpful in administering an EU project (e.g tool for sharing of documents, planning of meetings, calculations, timesheets). During the market place session, WG1 members will present useful tools. The presented tools will be listed on the BESTPRAC website and will be included in a WG1 output document.

- 14:30 **Dropbox**
Ellen Schenk, Erasmus MC, The Netherlands
- 14:35 **Survey monkey**
Tjaša Nabergoj, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
- 14:45 **Impact tool**
Elina Humala, University of Jyväskylä, Finland
- 15:00 **pFACT, HEIs & fec: not so secret diary of a university research administrator**
Mary Caspillo-Brewer, University College London, UK
- 15:15 **EMDESK project management tool**
Anja Mertinkat / Kristin Smeral, WIFO, Austria
- 15:30 Coffee Break**
- 16:00 **Project spreadsheets**
Jan Andersen, University of Copenhagen, Denmark
- 16:10 **Symbaloo**
Ellen Schenk, Erasmus MC, The Netherlands
- 16:15 **Doodle**
Ellen Schenk, Erasmus MC, The Netherlands
- 16:20 **Hyperion website**
Ellen Schenk, Erasmus MC, The Netherlands
- 16:25 **Additional input from the WG1 group**
- 16:40 **Short break**

Open discussion on next steps for WG1

- 16:45 Topics for next WG1 meetings
- Format of WG1 meetings
 - Topics for training school
 - Output from WG1

Wednesday 17 September 2014 (room Antwerpen)

How to deal with lack of knowledge on funding rules by administrators and lack of respect and commitment by researchers

The goal of this discussion arising from the previous WG1 meeting is to define best practices, tips and tricks, templates, possibilities for training etc. for this topic. The outcome is to be included in a WG1 output document.

- 11:30 **Introduction**
Ellen Schenk, Erasmus MC, The Netherlands
- 11:35 **Quality procedures for the follow-up of European projects**
Nathalie Queffelec, Université de Bretagne Occidentale, France
- 11:50 **Training of administrators**
Nathalie Queffelec, Université de Bretagne Occidentale, France
- 12:05 **Good practices in the administration of large EU projects:
WWWforEurope**
Anja Mertinkat / Kristin Smeral, WIFO, Austria
- 12:20 **Best practice to inform administrators and researchers on
funding rules**
Eveliina Klemola, Aalto University, Finland
- 12:30 **Promoting good practice for best practice of projects
administration and participation**
Rita Vaicekauskaite, Klaipeda University, Lithuania
- 12:40 **Good Practice Guide for Lead Partners**
Mary Caspillo-Brewer, University College London, UK
- 12:50 **Conclusions and wrap up**
Ellen Schenk, Erasmus MC, The Netherlands

Programme of WG2

Tuesday, September 16, 2014 (room Wien)

- 10:00 **Outcome WG2 questionnaire on the "Task Matrix"**
Vanessa Ravagni, University of Trento
- The outcome of the questionnaire sent after the Zagreb Meeting will be used as a basis for the Bratislava discussions on the definition of administration of EU projects as well as on skills and competences for an EU research administrator.
- 10:10 **Administration of EU projects: tasks performed and skills and competences needed, Case discussion: Norwegian University of Science and Technology**
Per Inge Andresen, Norwegian University of Science and Technology
- 10:20 **Definition of administration of EU projects: tasks performed and skills and competences needed**
Discussion in subgroups
- 11:30 **Plenary consensus on definition "administration of EU projects"**
The chairs of the subgroups will present the outcome of the subgroup discussions. The WG 2 then needs to reach consensus on the definition (task performed and skills required). This will be included in the BESTPRAC deliverables report.
- 12:30 Lunch**
- 14:00 **Difficulties to be addressed by research administrators:**
During the last WG2 meeting, participants analysed a list of difficulties that administrators are confronted with in dealing with European project and decided to better understand some of the difficulties through questionnaire prepared, delivered and analysed by WG 2 members. At the end of each presentation WG 2 participants will reach a consensus on the results to be included in the BESTPRAC deliverables report.
- Difficulties to be addressed by research administrators:
Use of Overheads in different institutions**
Cristina Velasco, University of Madrid Carlos III

- 14:50 **Difficulties to be addressed by research administrators:
One size fits all: same rules and system schemes for all
European Programmes: harmonization need**
Per Inge Andresen, Norwegian University of Science and Technology
- 15:30 **Coffee Break**
- 16:00 **Difficulties to be addressed by research administrators:
Allocation Direct vs Indirect Cost**
Dirk De Craemer, Ghent University, Belgium

Wednesday 17 September 2014 (room Wien)

Difficulties to be addressed by research administrators:

WG 2 will discuss and share best practices for the “top issues” selected after the last meeting

- 11:30 **Budgeting in H2020 – Difficulties, tools and best practices**
Per Inge Andresen, Norwegian University of Science and Technology
- 11:55 **Personnel Costs – Difficulties, tools and best practices**
Géraldine Leonard, Université d'Orléans
- 12:20 **Third Parties – Difficulties, tools and best practices**
- 12:45 **Consensus and open points**
Vanessa Ravagni, University of Trento

Programme of WG3

Tuesday, September 16, 2014 (room Praha)

Based on the outcomes of the WG3 meeting in Zagreb development of tools for EU research programmes' legal support services will be started.

10:00 **WP3 welcome address and a brief summary of the outcomes of the WG3 meeting in Zagreb for the new members of the Group**

Diana Pustula, WG3 Leader

Expected outcome: All WG3 members present at the Bratislava meeting start their work enjoying the same scope of information allowing them equal involvement in the WG3 activities;

10:10 **Task 1**

Chelo Morán, Carlos III University of Madrid (UC3M), Spain

Presenting profile(s) of the legal support officers concerning educational background and professional experience, position in the organisation (central legal office, central research support office, school/departmental level, separate service/ part of a complex research support services provided by the institution) – report on the outcome of the quick written survey among WG3 members;

[Survey was prepared and sent out by the WG3 Leader in June 2014; Feedback was collected and summarized by the task 1 Leader]

Expected outcome to be presented by the task 1 Leader: Written description of the profile(s) of the research projects' legal support officers and their location in the organization structure;

Feedback on the task 1 outcomes from the WP3 participants followed by discussion and drafting conclusions to be presented at the plenary meeting

10:40 **Task 2a**

Niina Mikkonen, Aalto University, Finland

Involvement of legal support services as a part of the complex research project administration process and procedures involved - detailed analysis on legal issues at each stage of the project life-cycle identified during the WG3 meeting in Zagreb:

a. PRE-PROPOSAL STAGE

Analysis of examples of basic model NDAs used by the institutions taking into consideration different national legal frameworks and the rules of participation in the EU research programmes followed by discussion

[WG3 Members were asked to send samples of the model NDAs used in their institutions to the WG3 leader by the end of June which were collected and analyzed by task 2a Leader]

Expected outcomes to be presented by the task 2a Leader:

- *Exchange of best practices in respect of the model NDAs used by different institutions,*
- *Identification of the most important/tricky NDA's clauses,*
- *Drafting a check list for NDA (short list of "must check" clauses that cannot be omitted while negotiating NDAs by research institutions),*
- *Selection of a model NDA adjustable to the specific needs (institution/project/partners (academic and non-academic) in the easiest way.*

Feedback on the task 2a outcomes from the WP3 participants followed by discussion and drafting conclusions to be presented at the plenary meeting

12:30

Lunch

14:00

Task 2b (Part 1)

Carmen Gascó Fortea, Technical University of Madrid (UPM), Spain;
Diana Pustula, University of Warsaw, Poland

b. APPLICATION STAGE

Shifted focus from non-existing in H2020 negotiation stage requires from the legal support services to advise the researches on specific issues in advance in order to avoid problems at the implementation stage.

Therefore, the following issues based on examples (archive proposals) will be analysed and discussed in detail in the group:

- IPR issues in the context of the consortium partner profiles (non-profit/ commercial partners),
- potential TT issues,
- subcontracting and public procurement,
- ethic issues,
- consortium governance structure and business plan,
- open access,
- financial consequences

15:30

Coffee Break

16:00

Task 2b (Part 2)

Carmen Gascó Fortea, Technical University of Madrid (UPM), Spain;
Diana Pustula, University of Warsaw, Poland

Analysis of the above listed issues based on archive project proposals will be continued followed by discussion, sharing experience and best practices

Expected outcomes to be presented by the task 2b Leader:

- *Exchange of best practices – sharing experience on how to read the project proposals in order to identify “tricky” clauses and avoid potential problems related to them; Joint recommendations;*

[WG3 members are asked to bring selected passages from the proposals concerning above mentioned issues – as examples subject to the group analysis],

- *Drafting a check list for an application (short list of “must check” clauses that cannot be omitted while analyzing the research proposals).*

Wednesday, September 17, 2014 (room Praha)

11:30

Task 3

Chelo Morán, Carlos III University of Madrid (UC3M), Spain & Sarah Dello, University of Gent, Belgium

Presentation of the internal institutional guidelines on DESCAs model CA used by the post award research support officers (especially non-lawyers) as a daily work supporting tool based on the example provided by one of the WP3 members participating in FP7.

Joint analysis of the document followed by the collection of feedback from the WP3 participants will be sought on the adjustments needed to comply with the H2020 rules based on the experience in participation in the FP7 and the changes made to the new DESCAs model CA for H2020.

Expected outcomes:

Collecting suggestions from the WP3 group concerning modification of the internal institutional guidelines on the DESCAs model CA used under FP7 to be compliant with the H2020 rules in order to be able to prepare an updated daily tool for the H2020 project legal supporting services.

12:45

Summing-up

Diana Pustula, WG3 Leader