

Short Term Scientific Mission report

Grantee: Thomas Brandl

Home Institution: Institute of Science and Technology Austria

Host Institution: University of Iceland, Reykjavík University

Title of the STSM: Sharing best practices between the University of Iceland, Reykjavík University and the Institute of Science and Technology Austria

- Summary

In the frame of BESTPRAC Short Term Scientific Mission I had the opportunity to visit the University of Iceland and Reykjavík University between May 18-20, 2015. During this stay I was able to get an insight about the research administration and the interaction with the researchers at both institutions and at the same time I had the opportunity to share my experiences and best practices when working in the area of research administration at the Institute of Science and Technology Austria (IST). Beyond that in various meetings with the colleagues responsible for research services, academic affairs and intellectual property rights I had the opportunity to gain knowledge in fields not directly representing my core work as being situated in post award grant management, nevertheless these meetings were very interesting and informative for me since it gave me the possibility to broaden my horizon and understand the duties and responsibilities of the work of my colleagues at IST dealing with these topics better.

- Purpose of the STSM

The aim of this STSM was to share best practices of research administration of the institutions involved and to receive an insight in the internal procedures and services offered by the University of Iceland / Reykjavík University for their scientists. During various meetings with the different units involved in research administration I had the opportunity to understand to which extent services are offered for the scientists and how they are used and valued by the scientists. Moreover I could compare the different communication channels used within the institutions to how communication works in my home institute.

- Detailed description of the work carried out during the STSM

Participants at the various meetings:

Baldvin Zariouh, Project Manager, University of Iceland

Sigurður Gudmundsson, Project Manager, University of Iceland

Ólöf Vigdís Ragnarsdóttir, Secretary of the Intellectual Property Committee, University of Iceland

Eiríkur Smári Sigurdarson, Director of Research, University of Iceland

Kristján Kristjánsson, Director of Research Services, Reykjavík University

Björgvin Richardsson, Program administrator, Reykjavík University

Jóhann Hjartarson, Director of Finance, Reykjavík University

Claudia Oliveira, International Funding Officer, University of Lisbon

Nomeda Gudeliénė, Senior Manager, Mykolas Romeris University, Vilnius

Day 1, Monday, 18 May 2015
Meeting at University of Iceland

In the first meeting at University of Iceland an introduction of all participants took place and the programme for the week was presented. Baldvin Zarióh, project manager at University of Iceland, gave a very informative presentation about the structure of the University of Iceland consisting of 5 schools: School of Education, School of Health Sciences, School of Humanities, School of Social Sciences and School of Engineering and Natural Sciences. The schools are supported by a central administration for science and academic affairs and finance and operations. Afterwards the other participants of the STSM, represented by Claudia Oliveira, International Funding Officer at University of Lisbon and Nomedá Gudeliéné, Senior Manager at University of Vilnius, informed about their home institutions.

In the afternoon the meeting place was moved to Reykjavík University (RU) where we were able to get to know the campus and the structure of Reykjavík University. RU is a private university divided into 4 schools: School of Law, School of Computer Science, School of Science and Engineering and the School of Business. Kristján Kristjánsson, Director of Research Services at RU, informed us about the organizational structure of Reykjavík University as well as the strategic direction they are heading to.

During these meetings I was able to compare my institute and the organizational structure with the organization of the two Universities. It seemed that Reykjavík University as being a rather young institute is more similar to my Institute, the Institute of Science and Technology Austria, which was established in 2009. The general principles and ways of communication at Reykjavík University within administration and between administration and scientists were very familiar to me as we at IST have a similar split of tasks and responsibilities between scientific and administrative staff. At both institutes the administrative units act as one-stop shop for questions from the funding agency about the management of their research projects.

Day 2, Tuesday, 19 May 2015
Meeting at University of Iceland

On the second day Baldvin Zarióh gave a presentation about the bonus system at the University of Iceland for scientific efforts of their scientists. Points are given to researcher for various activities such as publishing scientific results, teaching, doing administration within University, services for the public and other relevant experience and publications. Based on the assessment in these fields a yearly report is written for every scientist. Afterwards the scientist can send in written response in case he is not satisfied with the result and ask for review. By the end of August the final results will be announced and in September the bonus is usually paid to the scientists.

Afterwards Eiríkur Smári Sigurdarson, Director of Research at the School of Humanities, University of Iceland, gave us an insight on the importance of research funding for the and the consistent process of finding grant opportunities. At the University of Iceland there is no central grant office / research service department installed, the departments dealing with

grant related issues are rather located directly in the different schools of the University, though the school of engineering and natural sciences plan to launch a post-award office together in future.

Ólöf Vigdis Ragnarsdóttir, Secretary of the Intellectual Property Committee, University of Iceland, informed us about the duties of the Intellectual Property Committee at the University of Iceland which was established to encourage staff and doctoral students to transfer technology from research results for the benefit of society. Ólöf also presented us some successful patents held by University of Iceland as well as the challenges they are facing for the future. Quite often they are facing the problem that scientists do not value the importance of an IP office at an Institute, so the scientists have to be convinced to get in contact with the IP committee.

These presentations were followed by Kristján Kristjánsson giving an insight on the research service at Reykjavík University. The main tasks of the research service at RU are monitoring funding opportunities nationally and abroad, assisting academic employees in writing grant applications and offer them support in writing reports and manage their research projects. Due to its geographic position RU is not only interested in national and European grant opportunities but also in Nordic and American grants. Thank to this high level service Reykjavík University was recently being awarded an ERC grant.

Day 3, Wednesday, 20 May 2015
Meeting at Reykjavík University

On the last day of the STSM the Jóhann Hjartarson, Director of Finance at Reykjavík University, explained us the split of tasks and responsibilities between the different units and between the scientists and administration when it comes to set up a grant within the administrative departments at Reykjavík University. Since this area is directly related to my personal job profile it was very interesting for me to understand how the different parties are involved when administrating a research grant interact with each other. I learned that RU was using the same accounting system like we have at IST, Microsoft Navision, so I was able to exchange my experiences directly with Jóhann about strength and weaknesses when using Microsoft Navision. It turned out that they are facing the same problems we do with this accounting system and that was the reason why they changed the system some years ago. Beyond that I learned that the finance department and the research service have a very close collaboration on the area of third party funded projects. At IST the Grant Office is situated within the finance department and therefore we also have very close collaboration with finance.

- **Contribution to the goals of the COST Targeted Network**

I believe that this short term scientific mission completely fulfilled the goals of the BESTPRAC project. When doing research administration you often have the feeling of being isolated and nobody around you to share best practices in this very special field of work. But sharing best practices is extremely important when being a research administrator and therefore it is crucial to have such networks like BESTPRAC to exchange on financial, legal and administrative issues with other institutes / universities encountering the same problems and how different the solution approach of the various institutes can be.

Within the scientific community there are a lot of networks and collaboration. For the area of research administration these kind of networks rarely exist by now, but should be fostered and are fostered with networks such as BESTPRAC.

- **Description of the main results obtained**

For me it was very interesting to see how other universities deal with the different topics in research administration. I would like to highlight 2 topics, which impressed me most:

1. The installed incentive system at University of Iceland for scientific achievements in all its complexity was very impressive. I am convinced that this system positively influences the scientists to improve in their research activities. Though the system also shows weaknesses, since the bonus system is rather based on quantity than on quality, the basic principle of the system is clear to me and shall encourage the scientists to do excellent research. This area is not what my daily work is related to at IST Austria, but it is definitely something I will discuss with the responsible unit at IST upon my return.
2. The second topic I would like to mention is the high level service, offered by Reykjavík University, to their scientists was the very strong commitment of the Research Service for their scientists when they are applying for grants which in the end lead to awarding an ERC grant for a scientist at RU. This example shows that a well-established Research Service department / Grant Office is very important for scientists and can have a major impact on obtaining grants.

- **Describe which of the best practices / tools / system from the host institution will be (tried to be) implemented by you within your institute. Please also describe the reason / benefit of its implementation.**

Reykjavík University presented us their newly implemented PURE system, a system that is used by some other Nordic universities as well to collect data of their scientists like publications, CVs etc. This area is not directly related to my job as being a research administrator in post award grant management, but I would like to take the opportunity to speak with my colleagues from our academic affairs department to tell them about this tool and maybe they want to implement or at least test this tool at IST.

- **Future collaboration with host institution**

We are always open for future collaboration with both the University of Iceland and Reykjavík University. We will see if there will be further collaborations on the area of research administration, in the past we were quite successful in awarding grants, so I can imagine collaboration on the pre-award side. Beyond that since some of our research fields are quite similar, I could imagine establishing scientific collaborations between the scientists of our institutes.

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

See attached