

Summary of the STSM:

During my short term visit to the Max Planck Institute of Biochemistry in Martinsried, I can say that I have gained enough knowledge in the field of Research Project management and administration, Project management and implementation, proposal writing, financial/accounting administration, and the main structure and operation of Max Planck Institute of Biochemistry and generally Max Planck Society.

Purpose of the STSM:

The main purpose of this Short Term Mission was to exchange best practices for the management and administration of research grants from a similar organization and field of interest. This short term visit's purpose was to help me:

- Further develop my skills, among others, in project planning & controlling, coordination of financial reports, communication with consortium and EU-Commission, financial controlling, contract management.
- Learn from a well-established organization and take part in international research and innovation projects, and advance in the EU project development and management field.
- Finally, organization of project meetings and events, and trouble-shooting for all in-house EC-projects.

Being in a place, Max Planck Institute of Biochemistry, one of the largest institutes within the Max Planck Society with a big methodological expertise in all of the Institute's research areas, was very important to me. From my short visit there I got support and guidance for the organization of post award research administrative services, establishment of policies and procedures associated with research management of national and international regulations. Moreover, I have gained exposure to and expertise in the management of research proposal, and development of project proposal.

Description of the work carried out/results obtained during the STSM:

Being in an Institute with great experience in the field of project management of research projects has helped me exchange financial, legal and administrative experience, allowed me to network with the relevant administrative, legal and finance services of the Institute, and provided me with many hints and tips to move on as an early stage research administrator in the Institute I work.

During my short term visit there, I firstly had an overview about the Max Planck Institute of Biochemistry and Max Planck Society. The Max Planck Institute of Biochemistry (MPIB) in Martinsried near Munich was founded in 1973 as the successor of three formerly independent institutes: the MPI of Biochemistry (founded in 1912 as Kaiser Wilhelm Institute in Berlin-Dahlem), the MPI for Protein and Leather Research (founded in 1922 as Kaiser Wilhelm Institute in Dresden) and the MPI for Cell Chemistry (founded in 1954 in Munich). The Max Planck Institute of Biochemistry belongs to the Max Planck Society, an independent, non-profit research organization dedicated to top level basic research. With approximately 850 employees coming from 45 different nations, the MPIB is one of the largest institutes within the Max Planck Society.

I had the chance to discuss with the other members of the EU Office at MPIB a document on the weaknesses in project planning and implementation gaining significant knowledge in project planning and implementation. We used the document as a basis to review and compare our experiences and discussed the relevance of individual items. Through a healthy dialog we have managed to add comments for the best completion of a list of weaknesses in project planning and implementation and a Manual of Best Practices. Upon final completion of the document of BESTPRAC, it will consist a useful tool in our daily work.

Through a tour in the accounting department, I have learned how the financial administration works out in the Max Planck Institute. Karin Drenth (Financial Administrator international grants) informed me on the filing system they keep for each individual project in order to simplify the audit procedure. Keeping original invoices for each individual project in a separate file is something that we do not keep here in our Institute, making audit procedure more difficult for us. The possible

adoption of this type of filling system is to be decided from our Financial and Administrative Director.

She has also shown me the accounting database that they keep for managing projects. What is more, their accounting and finance department is responsible for notifying scientists for the amount of funds they still have available to spend for a running project, the time limit they have, ensuring in this way that no amount is left unutilized. This is something that we do not have in our institution, thus enough funds are left unutilized. Upon my return to the Institute we decided that every month we will inform each project coordinator the amount left to be spent for each research grant in order to avoid unutilized funds.

Moreover, before making an order for a specific project, the purchase department (store) contacts the accounting department to get an approval before proceeding with the order. This is also something that we do not follow as an institution and will be further discussed for possible adoption.

Spotting the similarities and differences in the way of doing things will enable me adapt much of the work carried out to facilitate project implementation in my Institution.

In addition, I had the chance to see the proposal submission stages, and financial reporting submission through the participant portal for EU-funded projects. Beate Hesse-Engl (EU Project Administrator) has shown me the stages of the proposal submission in the participant portal, what is done in the negotiation stage, when the proposal is accepted, and periodic reporting. This was something that I did not have the chance to learn so far, as we do not handle much EU-funded projects in our Institute.

Finally, I was informed about the opportunities for Marie-Curie Actions, EMBO Fellowships, and Human Frontiers postdoctoral Fellowships. Anne Katrin Werenskiold (Head of EU-Office) has shown me proposals that have been submitted for Marie-Curie Actions together with an example of successful and unsuccessful proposal evaluation forms. This will enable me to help our early-stage researchers in writing their proposal. It will help me realize what is considered to be strength and what a weakness in a research proposal and be able to evaluate correctly their proposals. She has also stressed out some hints and tips for collaborative project

proposal writing. As Anne Katrin Werenskiold has a scientific background, she is able to extensively help scientists in the evaluation of their research proposals, spot the negative elements in the scientific part of their proposal and advise them of what needs to be changed. This is something that we do not have the ability to perform as we, as research administrators, do not have the scientific background. Anne Katrin has also advised me about the structure of a successful research proposal. Additionally, she has shown me the administrative templates that they use for their Institution as a reference document for proposal writing facilitating and helping scientists upon their proposal. This is something that we, as an Institute do not have so far. Having the chance to see and read such templates will help us adopt similar templates for our Institute as well, keeping in this way uniformity in specific parts of a research proposal. All these will even foster my knowledge for proposal writing and facilitate my work in the Institute.

Contribution to the goals of the COST Targeted Network:

From my point of view, living the daily work of an Institution is the most effective way of obtaining and adapting knowledge rather than just obtaining theory. I believe that my short visit to Max Planck Institute of Biochemistry together with other STSM that have and will be completed in the future will contribute to the successful completion of the goals and objectives of the COST Targeted Network. It allows networking and exchanging financial, legal, and administrative experience. It shares and develops best practices encouraging knowledge sharing, knowledge transfer, and increased efficiency in project management. It establishes a network for the administrative, finance and legal services in research institutions and entities. For us, the early stage research administrators, that do not have other mobility opportunities, BESTPRAC is a vital tool for strengthening the existing networks and fostering collaboration. What is more it plays a crucial role for gaining knowledge and experiences that will foster and enhance our daily work.