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Report of the Short Term Scientific Mission of

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within COST BESTPRAC

Host:	Brunel University, London, UK; main contact: Antonis Vlasopoulos <Antonis.Vlasopoulos@brunel.ac.uk>
Visit:	from 28.07.2015 to 30.07.2015 (3 days)

SUMMARY Based on the so far gathered knowledge in European framework programs of both the host and the home institution, within the STSM an exchange of best practices took place as well as the basis for future collaborations were provided and agreed. The main focus was clearly on the **strategy of innovation and the proposal management** in both the host and the home institution. A special topic was the HORIZON 2020 funding program.

The specific topics were:

- **Services to promote the participation** of researcher in funding programs including proposal management
- **Services to support the project management** of granted research projects (with special focus on coordinated projects)
- **Communication ways**
- Identification of **future collaboration**

SPECIFIC The following main objectives were aimed by the STSM

AIMS

- Identify the **services** that are provided to the researchers regarding both pre-



and post-award stage of R&D projects

- Get an insight on the overall **communication strategy**, namely, how the institutions promote the participation in international R&D projects internally, and how they communicate with external stakeholders relevant for international R&D projects
- Exchange **tools, methods** and **best practices** that are used in the home and host institution
- Identify the **areas for future collaboration**

RESULTS

- The applicant was enabled to work out several **checklists and helpful tools for proposal management** with the gathered knowledge after the stay. Templates, databases, etc. will be discussed with the host institution also after the stay.
- The basis for the strategy of the **future collaboration** between the host and the home institution was set up.
- An ongoing development and **evaluation of the exchanged instruments** was agreed.
- A deeper **understanding for the processes** in the host institution was gathered and the network between people dealing with administrative and financial issues was extended (permanent contact e.g. linkedIN).

RELEVANCE

To experience a visiting stay at another institution promises the basis for a fruitful collaboration in order to enhance the acquired knowledge within the BESTPRAC action. Furthermore, this meets exactly the aim of the BESTPRAC action: bringing together administrative staff as well as extend and strengthen their network. At least, both the host and the home institution learned best practices, tools and methods from each other and have a better understanding for the processes within the institutions respectively.



Description of the work carried out

AGENDA	
Day 1	<p>*Presentation about host (incl. University tour) and home institution</p> <p>*Services offered to researcher</p> <p>Promote participation: Support services to researcher, ways of communication, interaction, providing and spreading information on funding opportunities, proposal support, dissemination, pre-award services, budget planning etc.</p> <p>Project management: Grant management, project management, administration, tools and templates, methods, documentation, reporting, etc.</p>
Day 2	<p>*Research/Communication strategy</p> <p>Internal: Way of working with the researcher, find a strategy, detect opportunities, which support is provided, relationships etc.</p> <p>External: Relationships and networks involved, relationships to European platforms, etc.</p>
Day 3	<p>*Evaluation and Identification of future collaboration</p> <p>Definition of a common strategy and conclusions</p>

Day 1: 28.07.2015

During the first day, I got an insight on the structure of Brunel University policy with (European) research projects. Similar to my University, the support for national and EU-funding is separated. Therefore, we came to the conclusion, that it is reasonable to divide support groups for national and international funding programmes. The support staff of EU-funded research projects is again divided into the pre- and the post-award phases. This separation is based on the fact, that there are different skills necessary for those phases, which made me think about my own job, as I have to deal with both phases. The research support is organized within the "The Research Support and Development Office" (RSDO), which exists for more than 15 years and is therefore well established within the University. It is build up in 3 different sections: the research development, the IP and contract and the business development section. My stay was regarding the research development section that has the following main tasks:



- Identification and promotion of research funding opportunities
- Build up the budget for proposals
- Support for proposal development
- Development and support for industry projects

The groups of research are divided in three main institutes:

- Institute of Energy Futures
- Institute of Environment, Health and Societies
- Institute of Materials and Manufacturing

I also learned about tools for dealing with statistical data about the proposal development and submission, which helps to evaluate the proposal stage and internal performance. Furthermore, I learned about how to evaluate and gather the knowledge gained from proposal writing and submission, based on the Evaluation Summary Reports for the submitted proposals.

We agreed on, to work together for the creation of templates for certain proposal sections that can be full text parts (e.g. organization description), checklists (e.g. dissemination) or models (e.g. innovation management). I learned about certain formulations within the proposal that were evaluated positively.

Another thing I learned during the first day was about the different support services for institute directors, the principal investigators and the individual researcher. A strong focus lies on projects that require significant effort investment.

We also talked about the activities of the RSDO to promote certain funding programmes, like info days organized by RSDO and providing relevant documents for the researcher on the internal section of the University homepage.

To increase the quality of the proposals, a system like a “reality check” is currently introduced. With the help of a questionnaire it should be easily found out, whether the proposal is worth the work on it and submission or the project idea is too far away from the call it should be submitted in.

We started to talk about networks and networking opportunities to find partners and position your University. The final task on the first day was the evaluation of an ESR for a FET-open proposal together.



Day 2: 29.07.2015

We started day 2 with an insight in how to efficiently and effectively organize (shared) documents and data, like working documents, statistics, templates etc. I got some useful hints how to deal especially with documents that are used by the whole group. This is also an important point: how to keep your colleagues updated and informed about the things they should know and that helps them to work on their own tasks.

I got a deeper insight in the costing system, both in the old and in the newly created one. A special issue in the UK is the different currency.

Furthermore we talked about how to set up a competitive consortium and how to systematically prepare and write a (good) proposal.

I got a proposal training which my host normally gives to the researcher. I got a lot of hints what to consider during creating a proposal, from expressions, terms that should be used or better not to parts that should be addressed to satisfy evaluators.

Day 3: 30.07.2015

On day 3 I met the lead of the RSDO dealing with European funding programs. She was on holidays before. Therefore, I gave my presentation about my University only on the last day.

After that general exchange of information we went ahead with the screening of calls and talking about other relevant funding programs as an example of how to do this effectively. The main axis for this exercise was the definition of priority themes for each organization. These themes were subsequently matched with Calls and topics of the 2016-17 draft work Programme. An extended discussion revealed substantial common ground in the fields of energy, water, social sciences, logistics and ICT. In these main fields, the potential for collaboration was identified, and there was agreement on follow up discussions after the conclusion of the visit.

We also talked about how to best promote the participation in funding programs and extend networks.

We agreed on, that I will make a presentation about my own experiences and activities within the COST targeted network BESTPRAC so far, which I will show internally within my home institution, but I also will share it with the Brunel University so that they can evaluate whether participation is useful for them too.

