STSM Report

Title: *Research Administrators Career Experience – RACE*

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Duration: 2 days in KUL (18th -19th of May, 2015);
2 days in Ghent University (20th -21st of May, 2015), and
1 day Brussels University (22nd of May, 2015)

Content

1. Summary

The BESTPRAC STSM organized within the period of 18/05/2015 and 22/05/2015 in the **Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KUL), Ghent University and Free University Brussels (VUB)** brought us the valuable opportunity to exchange and see best practices in:

- research support structure and internal hierarchy and organization,
- job description of the administrators involved, their professional background and fields of specialization,
- technical support provided towards research and project development, as well as internal rules and procedures,
- dissemination strategy and knowledge transfer activities,
- international networking and collaboration.

Within this intensive one week of meetings with experts in charge of the research support, technology transfer, and the research groups as well, the general conclusions refer to the following important issues:

- The three universities have managed to develop well-organized organizational structure with clear rules and responsibilities within the different Research support structures (units), and also to multiply researchers' commitment towards scientific excellence and collaborative research into sustainable social value and practical results.
- There is a strong commitment towards a long-term strategy for quality of the research and education, and the social impact and visible effects towards community.
- A "*project culture*" – for preparing, submitting and successfully implementing projects - has been developed and enforced as part of the organizational culture and is considered as a powerful mechanism to promote and sustain scientific excellence.
- The motivation of the scientists to build fruitful and collaborative environment, where young scientists and PhD students are given the opportunity to develop research, has contributed to excellence in particular research field and continuum of research efforts.
- The active communication and intensive relationship with researchers give relevant information about the open and forthcoming calls for proposals; and further researchers' interest to be competitive participants when proposing their ideas and building their partnerships.

The **purpose** of our STSM was to receive knowledge and insight about how Research Support and TTO could be developed in a way to efficiently represent the main pillars for science promotion and university excellence as a long-term commitment and policy. Since I am working in a University where such tradition is lagging behind, the possibility to access such experience was more than important. Although immediate results could

not be possible to be achieved in Trakia University, still there are important improvements that will be considered in practice. In particular:

- More active communication with researchers, regular meeting sessions and info-days;
- The direct supervision of the Rector could be efficient way to suggest and identify together with all Faculty Deans medium-term priorities in research and project work that could focus research efforts towards particular project thematic areas and consequently results that are important to be achieved;
- More visibility of the on-going projects to stimulate researchers and show possibilities.

2. Description of the work carried out for each Work package

Work package	Description of Results
WP1: Research Coordination Unit: organization, facilities and strategy	• Detailed description of the Research Support Unit and the experts involved; • Meetings with other units involved in the EU projects management - TTO Office; • Meetings with experts from the Legal and Financial Units; • Information about the Universities' long-term strategy and main pillars for working on EU projects and other successfully managed projects; • Information about the networking and building partnerships at university level, national and international level; • Information about the evaluation of project results, success rate, evaluation reports, mechanisms for promoting Universities' science and knowledge, etc); • Information about the Communication strategy with researchers.
WP2: Responsibilities and services provides	• Information about the services and how the information is disseminated – website, info days, seminars, trainings, involvement of consultants; • Pre-award responsibilities – clear distinction between researchers' and RSO' responsibilities regarding the proposal stage, incentives to apply for open calls and be active part of project writing; • Post-award: main activities, duties and responsibilities (when the University is

WP	Content
	coordinator, and when it is not); • Networking.
WP3: Internal procedures and supporting tools	• Information about the internal pre-award procedures - content of proposal, budgeting, management, work plan and work packages, IPR, third parties, etc.; • Types of agreements and instruments (Consortium agreement, NDA, declaration of honor, etc.) • Information about internal post award procedures for project management, audits, control and monitoring; • Mechanisms for multiplying project results; • Tolls for timesheets and time recovering.
WP4: Relevance of the role of research administrator	• Educational and career profile of research administrators – PhD and research background is complementary to management responsibilities; • Typical responsibilities and duties, qualifications and key skills, organizational approach and day-to-day activities; • Training and career development opportunities.
WP5: Dissemination and outreach activities	• Dissemination of projects' results and impact.
WP6: Relationship with business: TTO Unit	• Services and information, type of exchange and arrangements, e.g.: • Knowledge transfer and multi-institution collaboration; • Partnership options - contract research, collaborative research, commercialization of intellectual property; • External consulting, testing and training services.
WP7: Experiences from MSCA projects	• Budget; • Contracts; • Secondments; • Reporting.

This important information was structured to comply with the STSM BESTPRAC main goals, namely to provide opportunities for networking in the field of legal, financial and administrative issues; to share experience and further capacity building of project administrators; and last but not least to create collaboration among different universities and countries.

The STSM was very fruitful experience for me, since I managed to receive important practical solutions and successful approaches towards project management and research support, to create new contacts and to share the experience of my work in my home organization so that to receive professional feedback and advices.

3. Details on the information received

KU LEUVEN

(18/05/2015 – 19/05/2015)

The KU Leuven has a long and proud history dating back from 1425. In 1816 the University has been re-established to dedicate its resources and capacity to high-quality interdisciplinary research and education. The first lectures in Dutch were given in 1911. In the year 1970 was the division of the KU Leuven and the V.C. Louvain. Since the policy in the country is totally regionalized, this is also reflected in the funding resources identified in Flemish and Federal Funds, of course EU funding and contract research.

For the year 2013 students in KUL amounted to 56000. There are 16 Faculties in the following main groups - Humanities and Social sciences, Biomedical Science, Science, Engineering and Technology. The university has established 15 campuses and is offering to the students 79 Bachelor Degrees, 203 Master Degrees and 43 Advanced Master Degrees.

Management of KUL is supported by the Board of trustees, the Board of governors, the Academic Council, and the Executive Board. The main principles of the university are:

- Excellence in education;
- Excellence in science;
- Service to society.

R&D in KUL

The KUL R&D was one of the first offices in Europe, established in 1972, which nowadays serves as an engine of supreme research and dedicated policy towards generating social impact and transfer.

The following scheme represents the structure of the organization:

TN1302: BESTPRAC
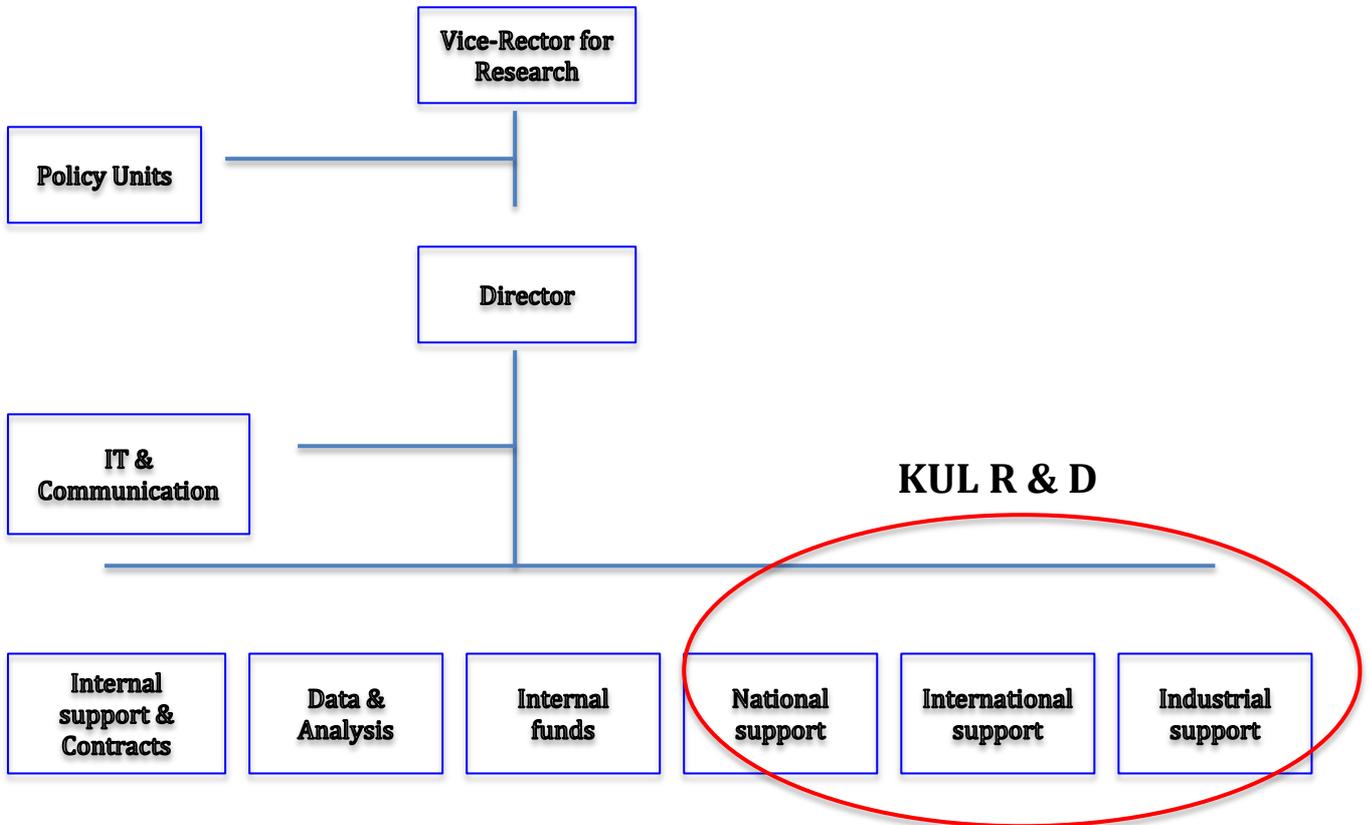
There are three general categories of funded research:

- Basic research;
- Socio-economic research with short-term impact;
- Socio-economic research with long-term impact;

These three basics are funded through operational subsidies, special research funds and through the Industrial Research Fund. The national (regional) contact points that support research are identified as:

- VLEVA – Flemish EU Liaison Office;
- Programme Committee delegates; and
- National Contact Points.

The Industrial Research Fund has been established to support collaborative research and practically implement research results. This process is operationalized through the active work of 30 industrial researchers, hired for the period of 5 years to serve as *knowledge brokers*. ¾ of these collaborators come from non-academic institutions and represent scientists with different profiles to focus on bridging research results to society. The types of networks established are classified in the following:

- **Horizontal network** for knowledge exchange, partnering high-tech business and innovation partners (Leuven Innovation Networking Council);
- **Vertical networks**, such as DSP Valley – ICT research groups; and LSEC for privacy issues and security;
- **Thematic centers** – CD3, Leuven Material Research Center (L-MRC), Inno Energy (EIT Energy);
- EU Association of research managers and administrators.

Within their field of expertize, the structure of the R&D in the KU Leuven is divided in between:

- **DOC** or the *Research Coordination office*, that brings the idea into a proposal and in general organizes pre-award support, match-making on certain topics, policy issues and compliance, and international mobility;
- **LRD** (*Tech Transfer Office*) and back-up offices, such as finance, legal, HR and IPR to translate proposal into a working project.

17 people altogether, mostly with PhD and scientific background and professional experience, are following the research from the idea to practice.

Lobby and networking	→	Idea -> Proposal	→	Proposal -> Idea	→	Project -> Post project

Research Coordination office

The DOC offers management support when necessary, particularly in the cases of inexperienced coordinators, while the financial reporting is done by the Financial department, which includes 7 people altogether. Two lawyers are checking the legal content of the project work, including Consortium agreement and other related legal documents. There is no research check of the proposals, but the researchers are requested to adopt the suggested improvements in their work.

Following the pre-award phase, the DOC is involved in the following activities:

A. *Information meetings:*
- Focus on departments with specific and target-oriented presentations;
- Exchange meetings, usually organized one month before launching the proposal;
- Bilateral meetings;
- H2020 launching events.
B. *Newsletter*, *website* and *focused mailing* to provide information to the relevant people;

C. *Training courses*, including but not limited to:
- Proposal writing, management, mock interviews;
- Enhance preparation.
D. *Financial incentives*, since preparatory funding leads to higher success rates. Such incentive is the distribution of the 25% of the overheads category, which is divided by 14% for the central government, 8% for the research group, 3% for the Leverage fund and other internal funds.

Important part of the project support in KUL is the **Research tool**, developed to serve as database for funding opportunities according to the types of projects – for mobility, research. It also provides information for the internal funding. The e-platform provides information for the International funding with public and private access, Internal/ External events for the related projects, regional level opportunities provided by the IWT for the applied research and FWO for fundamental research.

The strategy towards the H2020 is organized within the following:

- Funding opportunities;
- Strategy for design;
- Strategy to write;
- Setting budget;
- Information on how the proposal is evaluated.

Tech Transfer Office

The mission of the LRD is to promote and support technology transfer between university and the industry and society through managing research collaboration, IPR and spin-offs, and providing incubation instruments. The office is represented by close to 80 people and is organized within the following units:
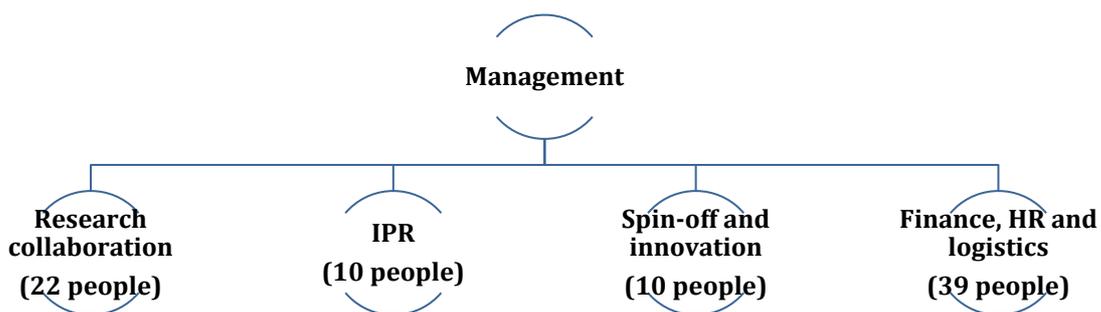
The unit supports virtual groups of researchers, who represent different disciplines and field of studies, but at the same time gather to work in a interdisciplinary projects and research. For the 2013 the number of these groups is 420, created to support the work of 1571 researchers.

Together with the business developer the activities of these groups result in:

- Research collaboration and funding through the Flemish & Federal funds and the European funds (7 FP, H 2020, Structural funds, etc.);
- 114 million euros income and 1774 new agreements in 2014;
- Different forms and levels of collaboration.

While the overall responsibility and administration is for the research team, the involvement of the DOC and the LRD in the pre-award and post-awards phases complements and is generally organized in the following research collaboration:

- Submission, including timely communication and contacts, legal check, financial check, compliance with the guidelines of the funding programme and the University rules, co-financing arrangements, public procurement obligations, administrative support and general feasibility.
- Project phase – signature, drafting, reviewing and negotiation collaboration, non-scientific project management;

The KUL provides also financial incentives for researchers:

- Overheads, distributed among the LRD, the KUL and the remaining and the largest part flows back to the research division;
- Building reserves to expand, to invest in patents and spin-offs.

The role of the IPR and the results of the intellectual labor, e.g. patents, copyright, database, is to offer:

- Awareness;
- Feasibility and patentability;
- Protection strategies;
- Procedures and optimized costs;
- Work with patent attorneys;
- Structuring Patent Fund as selective support of research groups.

For the year 2014 129 patent applications were registered, there are 586 active patent families in total, 42 PCTs and 87 million euro license income. The incentive for the inventor is organized in the following scheme:

- < 5 million euro   40%
- 5 – 25 million euro   30%
- 25 – 50 million euro 20%
- > 50 million euro   10%

For the spin-offs is planned support for the business plan, to validate the business models and legal support as well. A competent team stimulates networking and clusters, which in the recent years results in 105 spin-offs, 87 of which still active, which provide employment for 4100 people.
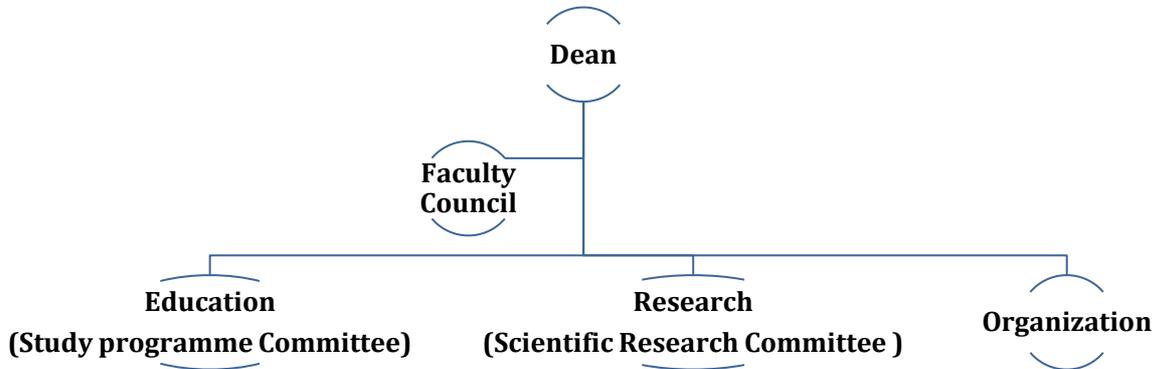
The process is organized in the following phases:

- Research proof of the project concept, IPR;
- Business plan development;
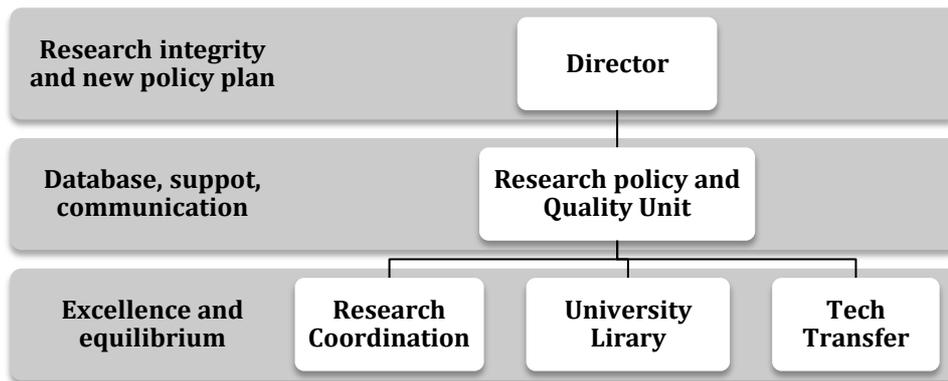- Finding team and investors;
- Agreement with all partners.

GHENT UNIVERSITY

(20/05/2015 – 21/05/2015)

Research administration and management in Ghent University is supported by the work of 9 administrators dedicated to support the projects at their proposal stage and post-award stage, serve as policy advisors and for financial reporting.

The organization within the University is organized as following:

Dean

Faculty Council

Education (Study programme Committee)   **Research (Scientific Research Committee)**   **Organization**

Research coordination is organized:

Research integrity and new policy plan	Director		
Database, suppot, communication	Research policy and Quality Unit		
Excellence and equilibrium	Research Coordination	University Lirary	Tech Transfer

60% of the funding is provided by the Regional and National Public Resources while 20% comes from Private Research funding. In general there has been identified 4 funding streams:

- Block grant – for education (55%) and for research (45%);

- Regional and Federal based on competitive selection principle;
- Regional, federal, European funding through competitive selection process;
- Private funding.

The research in Ghent University is represented by 65 Research networks, 1123 professors, 1241 assisting academic staff, 3329 other researchers, including 272 PhD fellows, 266 Post-docs, 21 Clinical PhD. For each researcher is organized personalized research track and the research fields are focused in:

- Global studies;
- Business model innovation;
- Medieval history;
- Penal law;
- Clinical Psychology.

Technology transfer is funded by the Industrial Business Fund.

Within the university are organized 22 consortia, developed within the research field of food, biotech, pharmacy, medical, ICT, electronic & photonies, materials, energy & cleantech.

HR Excellence in research includes:

- Academic Progress model,
- Talent developing and training;
- Quality recruitment and support;
- Mobility;
- Gender;
- Doctoral school.

Research conducted is aimed at long-term collaborations and broad based projects, and requires multiple involvements of professors and joint study. Research innovation is promoted by 5 incubators and 2 accelerators – Biotech or ICT, and science parks in Ghent and Ostend as well.

Research impact speaks for itself – 21005 are the international co-publications, of which 13540 only in Ghent University and 6174 released as Belgium publications.

Research department is organized with 9 people in EU Public affairs, Project support & Administration, Financial support:

EU Public affairs	Project support & Administration	Financial support
• Follow-up policy; • Dissemination; • Lobbying and networking; • Stakeholders' groups; • Membership in UK Research Office	• Funding; • Information sessions – workshops, individual meetings, newsletters; • Grant agreement preparation; • Understanding for responsibility; • Accounting; • Consortium agreement.	Financial incentive for coordinator (gathering team, consultants); Financial check in case of c-financing; Full access to proposal; Hire part-time project manager; Consultants for ERC candidates; Organize mock-interview; Receive tenure track position, buy-off teaching time; Recup overheads (18% for Ghent University and 17% for research team)

The societal value creation is supported by the policy for open access and open database. Research integrity is operationalized for quality assurance. Data management to plan and store research outputs is supported by bibliometrics, research evaluation, GISMO, which represents information system to upload research information, CVs for project application, etc.

Tech Transfer Office (TTO) is divided into 3 departments – Legal office, Business development and IP department. Their responsibilities fall within the following categories:

- Review proposal, in particular impact and implementation sessions;
- When coordinating, the team is also drafting the CA;
- 20 business developers, regularly evaluated are supporting practical implementation of research work, including licensing, patents, ensuring knowledge for growth;
- α coordinators in the field of Socio-economic science.

VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT BRUSSELS

(22/05/2015)

Research in the Vrije Universiteit Brussels **-** VUB is organized within 150 research groups, 14000 students, 6000 employees, University Hospital and 2 main campuses – Etterbeek and Jette.

The science is developed within the following fields: Photonies, Mobility, Electrical Vehicle, Data Privacy protection, Reproduction, Rehabilitation Sciences, Robotics &

Social Robots, Cosmetics, Diabetes, Fundaments human rights, End-of-life care, High-energy Physics, Educational science.

In the pre-award phase, 4 people and the supporting and advising staff are working. Research and development Department and TTO are supported by Science & Communication, Research Policy Unit, and Research coordination and are in charge of 140 projects at the moment.

Division of the responsibilities is structured within the three phases of the project operationalization:

- Pre-award phase where important information is given, support on project development in certain items including budgeting;
- Project implementation where financial support has strict reporting rules and requested documents (e.g. invoices, flight tickets, timesheets)
- Post-award phase to optimize financial check and audit procedures.

Pre-awards	Post-award
- Task of R & D; - Follow up; - Legal support; - Contractual and financial document flow; - Proof-reading (e.g. impact); - Consortium structuring.	- Information about deadlines and timing; - Reporting; - Internal and external financial reporting; - Eligibility of costs; - Tips and advice.

Particular priorities are the ERC projects that are subject to support from the very start of the idea up to the successful candidature.

4. Possible implementation for Trakia University

One of the specific benefits for Trakia University is its regional importance and provision of research and education that has practical implementation within particular scientific fields: medicine, veterinary medicine, economics, agricultural science, technique and technologies. Nevertheless to stimulate project activity several are the problems to overcome – lack of researcher initiative due to different reasons – language barrier, fewer incentives for increased workload, administrative difficulties and bureaucracy, national legal framework, etc.

Research support office in Trakia University is a very young unit, especially considering the fact that before its establishment, the functions that now fall within its responsibilities have been performed within different units. It is therefore very important to identify at the University level the profile and the functional implementation of the three priority areas of the BESTPRAC: administration, finance and legal aspects.

Understanding the interrelationship and interdependence between the administration and scientific implementation of a project is more than necessary given the opportunity to create:

- Consistency and balance between our internally established institutional procedures and practices with the external rules and requirements;
- Understanding on how to apply the requirements of the specific program funding, as well as compliance with established deadlines and reports;
- Good communication with representatives of the European Commission and particular DGs;
- Access to quality training in preparation and implementation of projects, including effective communication and planning time;
- Effective organization in search of partners.

For this one year, since Research Support Office has been established, we have managed to set and operationalize internal rules that could overcome the problems possible to be solved at the organizational level, including:

- Introducing online register for project proposals and already funded and implemented projects to keep track on the scientific history and successful research teams;
- Organization of meetings and publishing of information about open and forthcoming calls;
- Networking and collaborative activities with other HEI and research organizations to set relationship at certain scientific field; and with local and national authorities to receive visibility and support on the research and education;
- Involvement in pre-award phase in the management and administrative part of the proposal.

To further the effect of these it will be also important to involve training on certain project related topics; invite consultants to elaborate and improve project proposal; to stimulate communication and regular meetings with successful project teams to share experience. A very positive effect could be structuring internal research groups that could evolve around specific scientific field. This idea could have multiply results including:

- involvement of young researchers and PhD students,
- support advanced researchers to educate and transfer their knowledge and experience to the next generation;
- prioritize the research interests in the University and focus efforts instead on scattered research efforts into a more strategic-based and focused science.

These steps are very important pre-condition for Trakia University and its administrative units to work as a well-structured system of experts, which contributes to success of researchers' work on international projects.