



Uniwersytet  
ŁÓDZKI

Biuro Programów Badawczych i Strukturalnych  
Office for Research and Structural Programmes

Łódź, 19 November 2014

***STSM Scientific Report***  
***COST Action TN1302: BESTPRAC 'The voice of research  
administrators building a network of administrative excellence'***

**Grantee:** Agnieszka Brzękowska

**Home Institution:** University of Lodz, Poland

**Host Institution:** Instituto Superior de Agronomia, University of Lisbon, Portugal

**Supervisor:** Professor Maria da Graca Abrantes

**Title:** 'Polish-Portuguese cooperation for the benefit of researchers' support'

**Period:** 12-19 November 2014

SUMMARY

Between 12 and 19 November 2014 I, undersigned Agnieszka Brzękowska, an employee of the Office for Research and Structural Programmes at the University of Lodz, Poland, had a chance to participate in the STSM within the COST Action TN1302.

Visit at the University of Lisbon - at ISA's Projects Office and Inovisa as well as at the International Projects Office at the Faculty of Science - gave me an opportunity to gain new experience and insights into their work.

PURPOSE OF THE STSM

The aims of my visit were as follows:

- mutual understanding of a project support offered by both Universities,
- comparison of practices used,
- improving quality of the services provided for researchers by identifying success factors,
- getting insights into internal procedures of the Universities,
- professional development,
- promoting future collaboration.

DESCRIPTION OF THE WORK CARRIED OUT DURING THE STSM

13 November 2014 - Meetings with ISA Projects Office staff:

- Ms Ana Dias – responsible for international projects
- Mr Marco Matos - responsible for national projects

and introduction to their duties.

- Campus-site visit

14 November 2014 - Meeting with Professor Maria da Graca Abrantes, Coordinator of the ISA Projects Office, Vice – President of Instituto Superior de Agronomia  
- Introduction to Human Resources and Financial Team of ISA  
- Working with the ISA's Projects Office team

- 17 November 2014 - Meeting with Mr Joao Santos Silvia, EUROAGRI NCP (introduction to Eureka and Eurostars)  
 - Introduction to INOVISA (Inovisa is a Technology Transfer Unit and Business Incubator at ISA)  
 - Presentation of the Forest Centre at ISA
- 18 November 2014 - Meeting with International Projects Office staff at the Faculty of Science and introduction to their responsibilities  
 - Working with the ISA's Projects Office team
- 19 November 2014 - Debriefing, preparation of the report and departure

#### CONTRIBUTION TO THE GOALS OF THE COST TARGETED NETWORK

- exchanging experience in the area of administration support of projects between projects administrators,
- sharing best practices aiming at improving the efficiency in project management,
- gaining new contacts and initiating building a network of administrative excellence,
- contribution to a brochure of best practices - a suggestion of creating a manual for a successful preparation for the EC audit.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE MAIN RESULTS OBTAINED

Due to the STSM I have a bigger picture of how other university deals with a project administration and management.

The visit at the University of Lisbon revealed some similarities and differences between functioning of both universities. Some of the differences are:

<b>Projects Office at ISA, University of Lisbon</b>	<b>Research and Structural Programmes Office, University of Lodz</b>
The Faculty has its own projects office and supporting offices (e.g. HR, financial team).	The Projects Office is a central unit (even though there is a decentralization at the University there are rather no projects offices at the Faculties' level) and all supporting offices are also at the central level.
The Office is subordinated to Vice President (Faculty's level).	The Office is subordinated to Pro-Rector in Charge of International Affairs (central level).
The Office offers an administrative support for preparing applications for funding programmes but only with respect to finances.	The Office specialists provide an administrative as well as a content-related support for project proposal application.
There is one bank account for all projects.	There are separate bank accounts for each and every project.
Projects Office staff have an access to a system enabling them calculation of hourly rate for each researcher (necessary for calculation of personnel costs for a project).	The Office staff ask the Head of Payroll Department to calculate hourly rate for a researcher.
Public procurement – there is no unit responsible for that at ISA/University of Lisbon. If the cost of goods or services is higher than 5000€ Projects Office staff contact an appropriate Agency (Compras Publicas platform:	Public procurement – there is an office at the University responsible for public procurement making sure everything is in accordance with state legislation.

<a href="https://www.compraspublicas.com/">https://www.compraspublicas.com/</a> and prepare necessary documentation.	
There is no legal advice team at ISA who would consult e.g. consortium agreements, IPR issues. In this matter Projects Office is supported mainly by the University's central service.	There is a legal advice team at the central level. Additionally Office for Research and Structural Programmes cooperates with a lawyer independently.

Even though there are some differences at organisational level, work of Projects Offices of both Universities is similar (with similar rules/solutions implemented) and we seem to struggle with the same problems, e.g. researchers coming for an advice the day before the deadline or difficulties in initiating cooperation between academia and business sector.

ISA's Projects Office is mainly responsible for:

- Administrative support for preparing applications for funding programmes, collaboration agreements and contracts for services but only with respect to finances
- Financial administration, including financial statements preparation
- Monitoring of implementation of activities in regard to an allocated budget
- Preparation of financial information for project leaders
- Preparation of administrative / financial information for Management Bodies
- Support to other central services and project teams in audits
- Communication with financial services and human resources responsible for processing expenses, purchase of services, hiring of researches

During interesting conversations regarding research projects we discussed costs per category (Framework Programmes): personnel costs, travels, equipment, consumables, subcontracting, indirect costs (to understand mechanisms of their recording in home and host institutions) and we shared our knowledge and best practices used at both institutions. Additionally, I had a chance to exchange my experience related to financial administration of COST Actions (at the University of Lodz I was responsible for financial administration of the COST Action TD0802). We also shared experience from an audit (University of Lodz had 3 projects audited few months ago, Science Faculty of the University of Lisbon had their audit in June 2013 and ISA will have their first audit 19-21 November 2014).

What I found surprising was that ISA's Projects Office team do not help with writing proposals (they consult just budget issues) but still there are no problems with getting scientists involved in projects. I learned that to calculate an hourly rate ISA's staff use the actual number of productive hours of an individual researcher taking into account his/her holidays, sick days etc. which was approved by EC auditors (they do not use an average number of 1680 yearly productive hours (FP7) and 1720 yearly productive hours (H2020)).

Indirect costs are shared between ISA and particular unit involved in the project.

I found it very interesting that at the Office there are people responsible for checking EC documentation to make sure that University's internal rules are in accordance with them.

At ISA a timesheet is used for all projects. At the University of Lodz we use the same solution as it is easier to monitor researcher's involvement in projects (our internal rules say that a researcher can spend up to 50% of his/her time on research).

I was also informed about filing system – Projects Office keeps administrative documents and all financial documentation is stored with Financial Team. At my University all project documentation is held in Projects Office. Additionally documentation is kept in Financial Department/ Accountancy Department/Public Procurement Office.

There is no specific system used for a project management. ISA staff use excel sheets both for recording proposals and for monitoring of approved projects.

What I really liked was the information that Faculty's academic staff are willing to share their project experience with their less experienced (in projects) colleagues.

What is more, I was happy to see Inovisa's digital communication tool, AGROFOOD 3.0 at which e.g. scientists can upload 1-minute movies about themselves and their work (for example as a way to find project partners) – it has inspired me to suggest similar solution at my university.

The staff visit in the institution with a substantial number of research projects and meetings with specialists in the field of research and innovation support was a great opportunity for me to enrich work experience, observe good practices and improve my skills and efficiency in project administration and management.

#### FUTURE COLLABORATION WITH THE HOST INSTITUTION

- Such an experienced and offering fantastic administrative and financial support University as the University of Lisbon would be a desired project partner for the University of Lodz. We have already identified common research areas: biology, environment, water, food and agriculture. Those are the fields that the University of Lodz is experienced in as well (that concerns projects not only at national level but also at the international one),
- active participation in exchanging best practices,
- possibility of future staff visits, e.g. within Erasmus+ Programme, Cost Actions.

#### CONFIRMATION BY THE HOST INSTITUTION OF THE SUCCESSFUL EXECUTION OF THE STSM

Attached.

#### OTHER COMMENTS

I would like to thank University of Lisbon staff for their hospitality and openness.

I do believe it is worth to organise and participate in such staff visits as they are the key to professional development and improvement of services offered.

Agnieszka Brzękowska



**Confirmation by Instituto Superior de Agronomia / Universidade de Lisboa  
(the host institution) of the successful execution of a Short-Term  
Scientific Mission**

To the Grant Holder of the COST Targeted Network TN1302 – BESTPRAC  
Lisbon, 19<sup>st</sup> November 2014

STSM Applicant (first name and last name): Agnieszka Brzekowska  
Home Institution: University of Lodz, Poland  
Host Institution: Instituto Superior de Agronomia / Universidade de Lisboa,  
Portugal,

hereby confirms that Ms Agnieszka Brzekowska visited our institution on 12 – 19  
November 2014, within the framework of the BESTPRAC Short-Term Scientific  
Mission (STSM) programme.

The STSM report done by Ms Agnieszka Brzekowska reflects the activities carried  
out during those days.

We were pleased to host these STSM and we found this experience very useful,  
including all the mutual interchange of knowledge with ISA staff.

Yours sincerely,

Vice-presidente do ISA

(Prof<sup>a</sup> Doutora Maria da Graça Silva Abrantes)