

Polytechnic University of Madrid, Spain  
University Carlos III of Madrid, Spain  
University of Murcia, Spain  
TN1302 BESTPRAC  
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Subject: STSM Report- Marijana Kroteva  
Report upon application for a STSM No.COST-STSM-TN1302-27488

As an early stage administrator, I was informed for the STSM possibility through COST BESTPRAC TN-1302, and I decided to apply primarily because I found it an exceptional opportunity for me to meet with colleagues from the same branch in order to share experience and to discuss the most common job related issues, something that I truly needed for an effective daily work in my office. Now, two weeks after the STSM is successfully conducted, I could say that my expectations were fulfilled and I came back with improved knowledge on European project management, new contacts and possibilities for cooperation, but also ideas of new things to be implemented at my home institution.

The STSM was held in the period from 21.09.2015 to 25.09.2015 on three universities in Spain: University Carlos III in Madrid (UC3M), Polytechnic University in Madrid (UPM), and the University in Murcia (UM). The STSM with the proposed working plan fulfilled its purpose in terms of strengthening and improving the skills for administering EU projects and networking.

**Day 1** started with a visit to the European Project Office at UPM, where a detailed presentation on the structure, organization and activities of UPM, the participation in FP7 projects, as well as the structure and organization of the European project office and its activities and services for the researchers was held by Mr. Javier Lopez. Afterwards we met with all the colleagues working in the office and got acquainted with their facilities. This was followed with a presentation on post-award management in H2020 by Ms. Beatriz Cubeiro with a very clear and detailed reflection on all the activities taking place in the post-award phase, the challenges, issues and solutions. The first half of the day here ended with a presentation on IT Tools (Acuse project) with an explanation on how this innovative idea was structured, developed and implemented, as well as all the advantages of its application on the university. Then, we went to CAIT Campus and met with PhD Gonzalo Leon, a brilliant person with whom we met informally during the lunch and learned more about his career and the need of the 21<sup>st</sup> century education, and later, we he had a very useful presentation in his premises on Commercialization and exploitation of the research results at CAIT-UPM. This was an opportunity to learn from another perspective of a direct implementation on the science in the society. This day ended with a short visit to the three interactive units at this Campus for TV, management and space, and it was nice to meet these people and to learn of the technology and devices they use in their everyday work.

**Day 2** continued on the UPM with a presentation on MSCA actions given by Ms. Carmen Gasco, encompassing both the pre and post-award phases of the MSCA program, activities, budget and overall administration of the program. The first half of the day here ended with presentation of the participants in the STSM, and I had a presentation on my university, our activities and fields of study, and the other two colleagues from Slovenia Ms.

Lesjak and from Hungary Ms. Bordas had presentations on their universities. The second half of the day was spent at the UC3M where we were welcomed by the colleagues and got introduced with their facilities and the working team. Ms. Chelo Moran, Ms. Christina Velasco and Mr. Rafael Oliveros had three presentations on the structure, organization and activities of the International project Office, the institutional instruments for promoting and support the participation in the EU programs, the research service and the implemented and administered projects. The institutional strategy for promoting participation in international projects was presented and it was useful to hear on the challenging practices they imply in order to motivate their researchers to prepare more project applications.

**Day 3** started with a presentation on Office for Scientific Information and Office for Promotion of Research Activities. These presentations were very explicit in the activities of the offices, their methodology of work, the objective and the mission, as well as the result of the activities, which points to the importance of establishing this kind of offices within the university. Within the OPERA presentation I learned of the possibility for strategic partnership of the universities for establishing such an office and the results of the combined strengths. We were also presented the Conex program, and the communication part of the UC3M (IT tools- web-site) in regards to the dissemination of the information regarding everything taking place at the university, and the influence and benefit of this communication and marketing plan. This day ended with an individual meeting with the colleague Ms. Myrna Pacheco with who we discussed more on the Interreg project and their best practice example.

Later in the afternoon this day we went to the town of Murcia.

**Day 4** and **day 5** were planned for the University of Murcia. The first day here started with introduction of the facilities and colleagues at the campus, and was followed with a presentation on OPERUM by Mr. Chuso Argente. The focus of this presentation was primarily on the activities of this office and the obtained results. After the short break, the day continued with detailed presentations given by the colleagues Ms. Elena Vidal and Ms. Marta on the post-award phase in particular relating to the management of the budget and preparation for an audit, followed by an example of a completed audit and the experience of it.

The last day started with a presentation on the International Relations Office and the management of all the activities under their disposal. The rest of the administrative area of the campus relating to the IR was shown to us, and the day continued with a presentation on the Cofund program. In the evening of this day the host institution was organizing a Researcher's Night.

This STSM definitely contributed in terms of networking. During the five working days I had the opportunity to meet in person with colleagues with who I previously worked a lot, but we had only e-communication. Also, I met new colleagues working in the same area as me, and together we discussed issues relating to our everyday work, which led me to confirm to myself that besides the size and age of a university, the administrative staff is facing similar problems and striving to find the best solution for the sake of efficiency. This new network will be very useful for me for the future activities at work, and the communication is always easier when people know personally. In terms of networking, I couldn't but notice that at all three universities people had coffee breaks and lunch within the university restaurant which looks very sympathetic from aside, but I believe the deeper purpose besides is again the networking even within the institution. This is something that I would really like to share as a best practice at my home institution, because working in the IR I noticed too many times that my co-workers hardly know each other. I truly see this "method" of informal lunch very beneficial for easier coordination and more productive mutual activities with colleagues from different departments.

The most impressive thing for me were the Offices for European Projects. I learned the organizational structure of such an office and the division of tasks in both the pre and post award phase, and then within each phase as well. I learned and I saw the importance of such an office and how it simply is impossible to be replaced by the IR office. We do not have such an office at my institution, and my idea is to propose this to our management and to consider the possibilities for establishing such a department because I see it simply as a necessity if we would like to be effective and efficient in the management of the EU programs and projects.

In terms of IT tools and dissemination activities on the web-site I could see the mutual improvement and I was also in a position to share some best practices from UGD, because the e-student system and the e-university is well developed at my institution and the IT center works according to the newest standards. The development of a specific IT tools for projects was yet useful to learn for it facilitates the work of all the people involved in institutional projects, and this is another topic which will be shared and discussed at my institution.

Goce Delcev University already has a cooperation with the University in Murcia, and together with the colleagues we considered the possibilities for deepening this cooperation primarily through a mutual participation at an EU project. The possibility for cooperation with UPM and UC3M was also considered, in particular in the field of natural and technical sciences. I will suggest these institutions to my colleagues working on project applications as potential partners, and I believe on that way we could establish a very productive long-term cooperation.

Overall, I learned of the different approaches at the project administration work and the true productivity besides them when implemented appropriately. I had the opportunity to be part of a busy dynamic working team and to experience at first-hand the Spanish everyday working atmosphere. The hosts were very pleasant, kind and ready for knowledge sharing and administrative experience. Eventually, this STSM was very beneficial for improving and strengthening my knowledge, skills and capacities, and I shared this experience internally at my home institution, among colleagues from other national universities, but also externally, on a regional level among the team of colleagues from different Balkan universities who work on project management.

Submitter of the report  
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