Benchmarking and performance management of research and innovation services

The working group on benchmarking and performance management was initiated at the EARMA leadership event in Brussels in April 2018. The objective of the group is to propose a set of indicators enabling institutions to benchmark their research and innovation support services with other institutions in Europe, related to services provided to researchers within the European framework programs for research and innovation. We have had two meetings and will deploy a survey to European research institutions this winter. We aim to present and discuss the results from the survey, proposed indicators and existing initiatives at the upcoming EARMA conference in Bologna.

The working group:

- Johanna Krappe, Turku University of Applied Sciences
- Wim Schreurs, Vrije Universiteit Brussel
- Tom Vercruysse, KU Leuven
- Jenni Virtanen, National Land Survey of Finland
- John Donovan, Dublin Institute of Technology
- Dulce Tienda, Catalan Institute of Nanoscience and Nanotechnology
- Hana Polaskova, University of St. Andrews
- Julian Randall, University of Fribourg
- Peter Hedges, University of Cambridge
- Patrick Reurink, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (conveyor)

Innovation Strategies working group

Participants:

- Wolfgang Kniejski (Ininovation)
- Angela Ivanova (Ininovation)
- Gabby Silverman (BIST)
- Cinzia Spinato (ICN2)
- Nadia Pons (ICN2)

In order to improve ICN2 innovation process (understand as the path to market), the group advice to put the effort at:

- Internal scouting

I. Mentoring during the notification process. This will allow researchers use the same language that the Business and Innovation Office and facilitate market assessment. The mentoring could implemented by creating an internal network with researcher that have already done that path or mentoring sessions with the KTT professionals.

II. It is very important to involve the business environment and venture capital from the very beginning once the notification is done.

- Entrepreneurship

III. Put the effort on engaging young researchers (in addition to GLs):

IV. Spread successful stories creating a "me too" effect

Improving internal policies to open a new career opportunity. Try to invest time in addition to money: allowing researcher focus in the development of not only scientific activities.

ICN2 Workshop on Research, Strategy and Innovation

Date: 4-5 October 2018
Venue: Hotel Rey Don Jaime Castelldefels (Barcelona)

Public engagement Working Group

Participats:

Eva Maria Moar, Head of the Research Development Office at EURAC Research
Guilermo Orts-Gil, Science relations and communications
Àlex Argemí, Head of Marketing and Communication at ICN2

The working group engaged in an informal discussion that covered a number of challenges regarding engaging different audiences. We understood the concept of "Public engagement" in a broad sense.

We would like to state that:

- There are a number of duties that are not listed in the present document because they are already extended in the institutional communication practices. We focused in a few strategic suggestions that might make a difference.
- Most of the talks delivered in the Workshop included needs related with communicating a message. The teams driving changes in the institutions should bear that in mind to include the institutional Communication team in the discussion when necessary.

That said we defined a short list of strategic actions that we would like to share with you:

- Actions involving citizens.
    - A bidirectional interaction should be fostered rather than unidirectional communication. We want to learn about their needs and concerns regarding the technologies developed at our institutions.
    - Although it is not clear how, citizens should be included in some way during decision taking at different moments of a research project: definition of project calls, evaluation of research lines impact, finding the right questions to be answered by a project.

    - Promote citizen science projects, scientific research conducted, in whole or in part, by amateur (or nonprofessional) scientists were citizens can be a source of research data.
    - Cooperate with local arts and cultural institutions.

- Actions oriented to industry:
    - Develop a strong portfolio, including demos, prototypes and products.
    - Making their products visible through our microscopes as an informal icebreaker.
    - Dating events to promote bidirectional exchange and promoting mutual trust.

- Actions involving policy makers and public administrations:
    - Policy recommendations and guidelines to have an impact on decision making. It might include dossiers of fact sheets about topics debated in the media.
    - Promoting the participation of our researchers in advisory boards supporting parliamentary and political decisions.
    - Use techniques to promote open minded exchanges, such as the Chatham House Rule debates which provide anonymity to speakers and encourage openness and the sharing of information.

- Actions oriented to the educational community:
    - Promote the creation of materials to be used at schools by the teachers (nanokit). Focus on feedback and impact assessment for the sake of continuous improvement.
    - Getting involved in long term collaborative actions with institutions that can provide innovative approaches (fellowships for arts students, shared challenges and goals)

- Actions involving research personnel:
    - Promote a public profile.
    - Getting involved in public debates, even if they are sensitive ones.

- Actions involving media:
    - Attract new media embracing science contents in original formats (Youtube, social media). It is necessary to have a strong web analytics strategy when defining online objectives and tracking campaigns.
    - Curate targeted materials for selected journalists in order to increase the possibility of getting the story covered.

- Using institutional collaborations such as BIST to share efforts and resources in order to shape stronger communication events and actions offering a multifaceted view.

Working Group 3.- Increasing success rates in competitive calls

Conclusions of the discussion:

To increase success rates, we agreed that the following three areas need work:

- Oftentimes the grants/projects office encounters resistance from the IPs. We need to (1) increase/incentivize their willingness to participate in proposals (an action that would probably need to be led from Management) and, in parallel, (b) work on increasing their openness and respect for input from the grants office team. This means developing a relationship of trust between project managers and researchers, which takes time and a high degree of professionalism.

- Make a thoughtful analysis of past proposals to improve future proposals. When a proposal is sent, in the grants/projects office we usually have an intuition as to whether it will be successful or not. This suggests that, as well methodological analysis of past proposals/CVs, some amount of information/advice can already be extracted from this "collective knowledge".

- Empower the grants/projects office by having well-trained staff. For instance, offering horizontal training in the general principles of communication (as a field that has existed much longer than the H2020 impact section) and science writing. This is especially relevant given that proposals will soon be evaluated by general experts. This kind of conceptual training could also be extended to researcher applicants.