



The voice of research administrators: BESTPRAC - a network of administrative excellence

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Europe requires engaged and motivated research managers and administrators to release the full potential of the European Research Area. But who are those research administrators and how do they contribute to research and why do they need to collaborate?

These are some of the questions the COST Targeted Network BESTPRAC set out to answer since its establishment in 2013. Over the last five years about 700 engaged research administrators across Europe have developed, discussed and shared experience on how they as a profession can contribute to bring European Research forward. BESTPRAC is a network of research administrators on a common path, learning through sharing, and learning through practice. Specifically, the network established connections between administrators of research projects in order to overcome isolation, stimulate mobility and encourage professional development and progression, strengthening retention and recruitment of project administrators and emphasizing the need and importance of the profession.

In more detail, the activities of working group “administration” has improved the understanding of what research administration entails by creating a Research Support Staff (RSS) Framework of tasks, skills and competences. This framework aims at overcoming the currently very poor recognition and career development opportunities of the profession within Europe. It provides a reference for institutions contributes to an improved positioning and career perspectives for research administrators.

Since successful implementation of projects is connected not only with achieving the research objectives but also with successful financial project management, the working group on “finance” collected in a Financial Guideline useful information, best practices and tools with the aim of sharing technical knowledge in FP7 and H2020 financial management and helping colleagues in finding the way to a sound financial management. It covers a broad range of topics, from the calculation of the final grant amount to eligibility of costs, third parties and internal invoicing as well as more general financial management and reporting.

The working group on “legal” has successfully created a unique discussion forum and a collaboration platform for early stage and experienced lawyers from all over Europe providing legal support for their universities and research institutes. This highly specialized working group has reached out to colleagues without a legal background managing EU grants providing them with a range of checklists, practical tips, and mini guides. The four mini guides “Alone in the grant office – Survival Kits” are meant to be the first-aid for those alone in the office or for early stage research administrators.

After a first period of four years, BESTPRAC has been extended in 2017 for another two years. Currently, the core group is striving for finding a way to build a sustainable platform after the COST funding has finished.

The talk will conclude in providing an overview on the European landscape of established formal and informal networks connecting research administrators and managers.

The indicated documents as well as further information on BESTPRAC is available at www.bestprac.eu.