Research support services in Higher Education and Research Institutions: approaches, tools and trends

Giuliana Rubbia a, Ciro Franco b, Dario Pellizzon c, Luca Nannipieri a
a INGV - Istituto Nazionale di Geofisica e Vulcanologia, Roma, Italy
b OGS - Istituto Nazionale di Oceanografia e di Geofisica Sperimentale, Trieste, Italy
c Università Ca' Foscari, Venezia, Italy
EU funding and research support services

- Italian researchers produce **good research** but are lacking in **transversal skills** such as research management, search for funding opportunities, exploitation of research findings through knowledge and technology transfer activities (i.e. patenting, licensing, spin off creation)

- **Research support services** have been established. Information on funding opportunities, support to proposals design, management of projects and related data are their main goals.
A nutshell survey

- Which are the main activities performed by the Office?
- Is the Office aware of those performance indicators which determine funding from Ministry of Education and Research? If yes, are there guidelines to optimise performances?
- Is there a system of incentives?
- Is there a system to monitor expenditures during the project?
- Is there a system to monitor person months?
- Are there young researchers responsible for EU funded projects?
- Which activities would the Office perform, if provided with more resources?
- What would you suggest to improve Office organization?
- Does a research information system exist to collect and manage information about personnel, projects and results?
- .....
... and still a moderate approach

(*): 9 HEIs and 4 PROs
(*) 9 HEIs and 4 PROs
Ca’ Foscari University of Venice

- 4 areas of excellence: humanities, languages, economics and management, environmental sciences
- Sound experience in EU funded research projects since the late 90s (4° and 5° framework programmes)
- GOAL #1: increase the number of researchers involved in EU funded projects
- GOAL #2: a successful Human Resources Strategy for Researchers

Rubbia et al., Research Support Services …
May 13 2014

CRIS2014 | Roma |
Ca’ Foscari: boosting research careers

- New strategies in approaching EU funding landscape:
- Diversification of EU, national and local funding streams
- Focus on individual grants: ERC, Marie Curie, SIR, private foundations…
- Paradigm shift from the "brain gain/brain drain" vision to the "brain circulation" one
- Incentives in evaluating applications to research fellowships are given to successful applicants in ERC, SIR or Marie Curie Actions
- 40% of internal funding for research reserved to early stage researchers…

Rubbia et al., Research Support Services …
May 13 2014
INGV- Ist. Naz. Geofisica e Vulcanologia

- A reference point in environmental sector
- Two outstanding (ESFRI) infrastructural projects EPOS - European Plate Observing System and EMSO - European Multidisciplinary Seafloor & water column Observatory.
- Other projects ...
INGV- Ist. Naz. Geofisica e Vulcanologia

- Under a reorganization of offices and structures to increase support services to researchers
- A new Project Office to identify calls of interests, harmonize administrative procedures during all life-cycle phases, identify critical points in financial management of each project, bridge the gap both between the three scientific Departments (Strutture) and Central Administration both among different offices of Central Administration
- Running a OA DSpace repository www.earth-prints.org
- Strategic goal: progressive adoption of an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system
- 1° research institution to join the pilot cohorts of Human Resources Strategy for Researchers
The NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF OCEANOGRAPHY AND APPLIED GEOPHYSICS is an internationally-oriented public research institute developing basic and applied research in the following scientific sectors:

- Oceanography (physics, chemistry and biology)
- Geophysics and marine geology
- Applied and exploration geophysics
OGS – Istituto Nazionale Oceanografia e Geofisica Sperimentale

- Policies aimed at the enhancement, valorisation and internationalisation of human capital

- First research centre in Italy granted the European Commission acknowledgement “HR Excellence in Research”

- Current and next actions for supporting mobility:
  - Promotion of OGS as hosting institution for ERC grants and MSCA
  - High quality incoming services for international fellows
  - Outgoing mobility measures for enhancing and diversifying researchers’ skills

Rubbia et al., Research Support Services …
May 13 2014
OGS – Istituto Nazionale Oceanografia e Geofisica Sperimentale

- Actions for implementing successful participation in European R&I programmes
  - Research Promotion and International Cooperation Office
  - Developing support services customised for the specific needs of researchers
  - Reinforcing integration between Central Administration and Research Departments
  - Increasing internal awareness and monitoring of on-going projects activities
  - A new information system is being currently implemented
Important notice! H2020 Grant Agreement

- Article 32: Obligation to take measures to implement the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers

- The beneficiaries must be proactive and take specific steps to address conflicts between their policies and practices and the principles set out in the Charter and Code of Conduct.
EU projects: trends and mobility figures (1)

- Considering the V, VI and VII Framework Programme, Italy is ranked as fourth country in Europe, as for the proposals submitted and funded, following UK, Germany and France.

- The trend of the Italian performance, i.e. the percentage of grants obtained has decreased over time: from a share of 9.4% in FP5 to 8.4% in FP7, probably due to the increased competition generated by the opening of the FPs to the new Member States.

- The spread between Italian contribution to the EU budget and the overall grants obtained within VII FP is negative for Italy (-3.9%); Germany is close to the balance, while the UK has a positive return equal to +4.4%.
EU projects: trends and mobility figures (2)

- The success rate of proposals upon Italian coordination (12.3%) is lower than the overall European success rate of proposals (15.9%).

- In the 7th FP, Marie S. Curie Actions (MSCA) are the only case in which the Italian success rate exceeds the European average. Nevertheless the alarming fact is that 78% of the mobility concerns Italian researchers going abroad, compared to 22% of foreign researchers choosing to come to Italy.

- In the ERC grants Programme, the success rate is particularly low in Italy (3.2%), much lower than the European average (14%). The Italian researchers funded are 154 - among which 65 Advanced Grants and 89 Starting Grants - and 86 of these are hosted by foreign institutions. (*)

(*) Source: Horizon 2020 Italy updated to Dec. 2012
Conclusions: what can help?

- At national level …

  - Active and continuative participation in the process of defining objectives and drafting programs;
  - The development of an Italian R&I system complementary and consistent with the European one
  - The coordination of ministries, local administrators, programme experts, both at national and European level;
  - Achieving a critical mass and promoting consultations among different national stakeholders to identify ideas and common priorities;
  - Reducing "barriers to entry", harmonizing national regulations to the EU ones (i.e. salary levels, visa issues, compulsory procedures to buy equipment or to hire staff members).
Conclusions: what can help?

- At individual institution level …
- Defining clear, strategic choices based on the identification of specific disciplinary sectors and types of funding programmes on which to bet and rely on;
- Genuine daring to invest adequate resources for the development and qualification of support services in order to foster participation to EU Research & Innovation funding programmes.
- CRIS would fasten procedures and free human resources for other strategic activities.
Thanks!

- Ciro Franco, OGS, Trieste
  - cfranco@ogs.trieste.it
- Dario Pellizzon, Ca’ Foscari, Venezia
  - dario.pellizzon@unive.it
- Giuliana Rubbia, INGV, Roma
  - giuliana.rubbia@ingv.it