

*Mutual learning exercise (MLE) on national practices in
widening participation and strengthening synergies
Madrid, 10-11 January 2018*

**Skills development,
information, communication
and training
(Topic 4 Widening)**

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The topic

Solutions, to be developed at a national level, to address those barriers to entry into the FP that relate to **information shortage and skills deficits**

Aiming at increasing both the **demand** and **success rates** in FP participation

Target group:

1. researchers in the public sector (academia, public research centres)
2. Researchers in the private sector (SMEs in particular).

Five dimensions

- 1. Information, advice and guidance**
(Needs differ between target groups)
- 2. National strategic positioning in FP**
(Both government and institutional strategies)
- 3. Skills development & training for research managers**
(in PROs/HEIs, SMEs)
- 4. Incentives**
(financial, ex ante, ex post, covering time & travel costs)
- 5. External Communication**
(promotion of domestic fields of excellence and their actors)

Landscape

Information, advice and guidance

- ✓ NCPs: large variety: centralised/decentralised; size; professionalism; activities; target groups
- ✓ Initiatives managed by PROs/HEIs and by SME support bodies
- ✓ University technology transfer offices or R&D liaison units
- ✓ Business Innovation Centres (BICs)
- ✓ European networks

Challenges

Information, advice and guidance

- ✓ Q1: How can information support services contribute to the more proactive behaviour of would-be FP participants?
- ✓ Q2: How can information support services better target their audiences to reach more would-be FP participants?
- ✓ Q3: How could SMEs be reached more easily and effectively?
- ✓ Q4: Is there scope for making access to some services mandatory in some contexts?
- ✓ Q5: How can the effectiveness of information services be monitored and assessed?
- ✓ Q6: What should be the scope of these services? What kind of EU activities should they cover?

Challenges

Information, advice and guidance – NCPs 1

- ✓ Q1: Under what conditions do centralised NCP models work better than decentralised models?
- ✓ Q2: What approaches can be taken to define the target groups of NCPs and to ensure the right balance between customers with different needs: advanced versus less advanced research actors; experienced versus newcomers?
- ✓ Q3: What are the specific approaches that work with the SME target group?
- ✓ Q4: What would taking a client-centred approach involve?
- ✓ Q5: How could good synergies be ensured within a NCP network?
- ✓ Q6: How could good synergies be ensured between NCPs and other support organisations, in particular university R&D liaison offices?

Challenges

Information, advice and guidance – NCPs 2

- ✓ Q7: What is the optimal combination of tasks for NCPs? Should a partner search function be included in the services? Should project management be part of the NCP portfolio or is this crowding out private sector consultant activity?
- ✓ Q8: What position should be taken by NCPs with respect to the use of private consultants to support FP participation?
- ✓ Q9: How can one ensure that NCP staff are well-embedded in relevant EU networks?
- ✓ Q10: What are effective communication channels? How can the visibility of NCPs be best ensured? How should those strategies be implemented vis-à-vis HEIs/PROs and companies respectively?

Landscape

National strategic positioning in FP

- ❖ Adoption of national goals with respect to FP participation
- ❖ Allocation of complementary tasks to various Ministries and institutions
- ❖ Definition of targeted policy mixes
- ❖ Organisation of exchanges of information and creation of synergies between key national actors concerned with FP participation

Challenges

National strategic positioning in FP

- ❖ Q1: How could general strategies be set up to maximise opportunities for FP participation and make this an effective political priority? What are the best conditions to mobilise key institutional actors for this purpose?
- ❖ Q2: How can national and regional strategies for FP reach the private sector?
- ❖ Q3: What use could be made of the work of programme delegates on a national basis, and how could they be better connected in the national support system?
- ❖ Q4: What are the options for undertaking 'strategic talks on FP' on a national basis?
- ❖ Q5: What can national governments do to support international strategic partnerships between universities?

Landscape

Skills development and training for research managers

- ❖ Training programme for NCP managers : NCP Academy
- ❖ Training within NCPs
- ❖ Training through specific 'specialisation degrees'
- ❖ Learning networks for research administrators

Challenges

Skills development and training for research managers

- ❖ Q1: What processes and tools are being, or could be, used to monitor and assess the effectiveness of training activities for research managers?
- ❖ Q2: How could the problem of high staff turnover and loss of institutional memory in support organisations be mitigated?
- ❖ Q3: What are the possible options to promote attractive career opportunities for research managers?
- ❖ Q4: What is the ideal combination between training opportunities provided at international level (administrators' networks) and at national level?
- ❖ Q5: Is it possible to adapt training and skills development actions to the SMEs target group?

Landscape

Incentives

- ❖ Small scale subsidies for FP project preparation
- ❖ Financial incentives within national R&D funding programmes: evaluation criteria, top up schemes, 'seal of excellence'...
- ❖ University-level incentives

Challenges

Incentives

- ❖ Q1: How could the value-added of funding for project preparation be ensured (while avoiding a situation where the money pays for projects that would have been developed anyway)?
- ❖ Q2: What is a good balance between financial incentives for FP participation granted ex ante (for preparation of proposals) versus ex post (when projects are successful and funded by FP)?
- ❖ Q3: Should financial incentives for FP participation be conditional on success or not?
- ❖ Q4: How can complementarity between schemes established at national level and at university level be ensured (e.g. funding travel costs for FP proposals preparation)? What is the optimal channel to deliver such incentives?
- ❖ Q5: How could awareness of existing support schemes be increased?
- ❖ Q6: How could criteria linked to FP participation in the programmes and delivery mechanisms of national funding agencies be incorporated?

Landscape

External Communication

- ❖ Information Portals on the Web
- ❖ Liaison offices in Brussels
- ❖ Competitiveness poles' action

Challenges

External Communication

- ❖ Q1: What could possibly be the role of university R&D offices in the external promotion of national research strengths, beyond their own university's promotion?
- ❖ Q2: How could a useful mapping of national R&D strengths be created, especially one which would support both external visibility and internal partnering needs? Where should such mapping appear and how could it be used?
- ❖ Q3: What is a good mix of national-level strategies to promote national research capacities on the international scene?
- ❖ Q4: What role could NCPs play in raising the visibility of the national research base and its specific strengths on the European scene?
- ❖ Q5: What are the most effective communication media that could be used to promote research excellence abroad?