

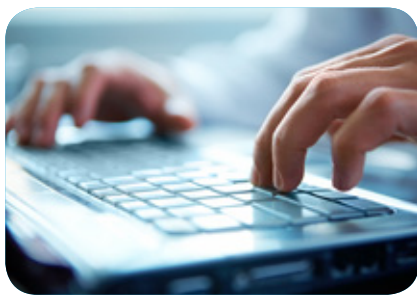
Idox Grants

EARMA Session Report



JULY 2016

Time for a New Philosophy in Research Funding Acquisition?



Contents

Introduction	2
Session Overview	
Session Agenda	3
A New Philosophy in Research Funding Acquisition	3
Case Studies	
Université de Neuchâtel	4
Slovenian Forestry Institute	5
RESEARCHconnect	6
Session Presentation	7
Further Information	10
Gallery	11

Introduction

The annual EARMA Conference is the largest calendar gathering of the European research community and a prime opportunity for us here at Idox to engage with research professionals from across the world.

Returning as Gold Sponsors in 2016, we were delighted to support this year’s event – the largest EARMA conference to date – and hear firsthand the current trends and topics affecting the sector.

In addition to our exhibition stand, we hosted a workshop – ‘Time for a New Philosophy in Research Funding Acquisition?’ – with guest speakers Tjaša Baloh, Project Manager at the Slovenian Forestry Institute and Rolf Klappert, Head of Grants and Tech Transfer Office at Université de Neuchâtel.

This report is a summary of the presentation co-chaired by Mylene Joubin and Alexander Nehm, alongside additional commentary from our guest speakers.

We trust that you all enjoyed the conference as much as we did.

We look forward to supporting future EARMA endeavours and engaging with you again at upcoming events and seminars.



Alexander Nehm and Mylene Joubin

New Business Sales Managers – Idox Grants
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Session Overview

Session Agenda

At a time when European research funding is becoming increasingly competitive and national funding schemes are largely in decline or over-subscribed, the question arises as to whether it is time to leave well-trodden paths and consider a new philosophy in research funding acquisition.

Traditionally, researchers across the member states of the European Union have sought research funding domestically before leaving their national comfort zones in search of additional funds. As the European Framework Programmes' budgets grow, national funding schemes struggle to keep up with the growing number of project proposals or even shrink disproportionately to the amount of research projects being carried out. Depending on the performance and capabilities of domestic funding bodies, European countries are in various stages of the process of internationalising their research funding landscapes.

Whilst some countries have had the EU as their main source for research funding for many years, others are only just beginning to capitalise on the opportunities offered by Horizon 2020 and other funding programmes. Are they coming too late? Not according to the first results of H2020's self-evaluation, which showed that 38% of successful proposals came from first-time applicants. But what does this mean for established players in Europe's research landscape? Success rates have dropped from 20% in FP7 to a mere 14% in H2020 with universities being among the least successful types of institutions in the competition for funding.

One solution to the challenges born out of the increasing competition for national and European funding is a change of philosophy and strategy. Whilst many researchers and research managers alike have been asking the question 'What funding opportunities are there from...?', we are proposing to move away from this approach and turn to a consideration based on three questions.

1. Am I eligible for this funding scheme?
2. Am I able to write a proposal in the language required?
3. Do I have a chance?

A New Philosophy in Research Funding Acquisition

Rather than focusing on the origin of funding opportunities, this new philosophy suggests a more pragmatic approach that pays less consideration to a researcher's comfort zone and extends the search for funds to new, untapped sources from all around the world. Three simple questions guide the way to those new opportunities:

1. **Am I eligible for this funding scheme?** A common misconception among researchers and, to a lesser degree, research managers across Europe is that they are not eligible for funding from outside their countries or the EU. While it is certainly true that most national funding bodies, both private and state-funded, limit the eligibility for their research funding schemes by nationality or residency, there are many internationally-focused funding opportunities from organisations worldwide that are open to researchers from any country, both as sole applicants and project partners. Often, funders are more interested in the subject and potential impact of a research proposal than in the nationality of the applicant.
2. **Am I able to write a proposal in the language required?** A surprisingly large number of funding organisations from non-English-speaking countries throughout Europe and beyond require even domestic applicants to submit their proposals in English. Naturally, this requirement is extended to international applicants whenever eligible, which means that funding from countries previously considered out of reach due to language barriers

becomes attainable for foreign researchers.

3. **Do I have a chance?** Unlike questions one and two there is no clear and simple answer to this last question as it is a matter of judging probabilities rather than determining a definitive result before-hand. Gathering information on the awarding process, budget restraints and the track record of previous applicants can help determine ones chances of winning a certain funding opportunity.

If the answer to all of the above questions is 'yes', a suitable funding scheme has been found. Therefore, what is required is a durable strategy for identifying such funding opportunities.

Case studies

It is clear that universities and higher education institutions need to adopt a strategic approach to the external funding of research. The impact of internationalisation, cuts in public funding and the introduction of new research funding programmes undoubtedly present challenges, but also opportunities.

The concept of a new approach to research funding acquisition is demonstrated in how universities and institutions are working to achieve greater impact for the research and innovation they support. The Université de Neuchâtel and the Slovenian Forestry Institute continue to utilise several key funding instruments whilst also actively seeking alternatives and undertaking due diligence to determine those funding avenues that fit their individual aim and objectives.

Université de Neuchâtel

Here, Rolf Klappert, Head of Grants and Tech Transfer Office at the university, discusses his approach to identifying external funding opportunities and how **RESEARCHconnect** enhances his work:

The Université de Neuchâtel is one of the smaller Swiss universities and has 4 faculties (law faculty, economic science faculty, social sciences and humanities faculty and science faculty). As with other universities, we are confronted with increasing competition for available research funding (national or international, public or private). Having only limited resources available to support researchers, we are interested in a tool which makes searching for funding more effective; allows us to look for funding off the beaten track; presents each opportunity in a concise way; and provides the links to the original call or funding websites.

Eligibility to a specific funding opportunity in terms of the residence of the researcher or institution, the nationality of the researcher and the place where the research will take place is naturally of the utmost importance. And being eligible for a funding opportunity in a foreign country, it is also essential to know whether I can submit my proposal in English. Last but not least, detailed information on the budget structure of a specific funding opportunity will help to assess the chances of success in a highly competitive environment. **RESEARCHconnect** is a helpful tool with respect to these issues.

RESEARCHconnect is used by our research support structure which selects and disseminates in a personalised way funding opportunities obtained through e-Alerts. These alerts are generated by keyword-driven daily or weekly automatic searches. Currently, we are scheduling training for a select group of researchers with the aim of enabling them to directly use **RESEARCHconnect**. The combined experience of the research support structure and the researchers will allow us to define best practice for our institution.

It is also advisable to apply some due diligence with respect to funding sources you do not know. It could be that in some cases you would not like to be associated with a particular funding organisation.

Last but not least, I would like to mention that we use **RESEARCHconnect** to promote funding opportunities to industrial companies, in particular SMEs, in our region. This activity complements perfectly the mandate we have from the Swiss government to promote European RDI programmes towards small and medium-sized enterprises.

Rolf Klappert

Head of Grants and Tech Transfer Office – Université de Neuchâtel



Slovenian Forestry Institute

The challenges met by the Slovenian Forestry Institute (SFI) are different, due to the relatively small size and specialised focus of this institution. Tjaša Baloh, Project Manager at the institute explains their strategy and philosophy as follows:

SFI is a public research institute of national importance, which conducts basic and applied research on forests. In short, the Institute is a scientific, professional, and cultural storehouse for Slovenia's relationship with its forests and the resources and services they provide.

Some of the challenges that the SFI faces in research funding are the following:

- Annually decreasing national research funding
- No stable funding, only competitive calls
- Low success rate in H2020 in general
- Depending strongly on international funding
- Institute size (80 employees)

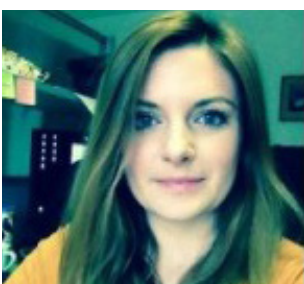
The biggest challenge of all is that there is little room for specialisation in the administration department, where 'everyone does everything'. Thus, the SFI team strives to get as much help from technology as possible.

The strategies the SFI employs to overcome these challenges are – among others – encouraging networking at different scientific and professional events and maintaining the networks and partnerships established. The SFI has a team of project managers that provide services such as searching for opportunities (e-Alerts, information days) and mentoring and sponsoring the employees in the project preparation stage. The main activity is brainstorming events. This is where **RESEARCHconnect** is most useful since the preparation time involved in searching for funding is insignificant compared to doing it manually, and addressing individual researchers is possible through this application by preparing personalised reports with relevant calls.

The SFI project management team is highly motivated to support the researchers in the best possible way. This means that the search for new best practices is an ongoing activity that does not end here.

Tjaša Baloh

Project Manager – Slovenian Forestry Institute



RESEARCHconnect

As our guest speakers have demonstrated, **RESEARCHconnect**, Europe's newest funding information tool, offers help in dealing with the challenges created by the changing funding landscape.

When following the approach outlined by our new philosophy, **RESEARCHconnect** provides easy and straightforward access to all information required for answering the three questions we discussed above.

- 1. Am I eligible for this funding scheme?** Step 1 and 2 of any funding search on **RESEARCHconnect** cover the most common eligibility criteria of a funding opportunity – type of institution, stage of scientific career, nationality, residency and research location. Further information on additional eligibility restrictions is provided within the fund details, hand-written by Ilox's dedicated research team for every single scheme in the database.
- 2. Am I able to write a proposal in the language required?** All funding schemes currently covered by **RESEARCHconnect** accept proposals in English or the domestic languages of all countries they are eligible for. Providing that all questions in the funding search are answered correctly, only relevant results will be shown.
- 3. Do I have a chance?** **RESEARCHconnect** helps in analysing the probability of a successful proposal by detailing both the awarding process and budgetary structure of funding opportunities. By understanding the total volume of funding provided and the maximum funding amount permitted per project, one can identify the number of successful proposals per iteration of the scheme and combine this with the information on previously successful applications to make an informed estimate of the likelihood of success.

Session Presentation



Time for a New Philosophy in Research Funding Acquisition?

*Mylene Joubin and Alexander Nehm – Business Development Managers, Idox
Tjaša Baloh – Project Manager, Slovenian Forestry Institute
Rolf Klappert – Head of Grants and Tech Transfer Office, Université de Neuchâtel*

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Agenda

- > Introduction: Mylene Joubin & Alexander Nehm (15 min)
 - Time for a New Philosophy in Research Funding Acquisition?
 - Demonstration: RESEARCHconnect International
- > Case studies: Tjaša Baloh & Rolf Klappert (20 min)
 - Challenges and solutions in research funding acquisition
- > Group exercise (10 min preparation / 10 min presentation)
 - How to address changes in research funding availability? How to move beyond the funding 'comfort zone'?
- > Questions & Answers (5 min)


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Introduction

> Who we are...



Alexander Nehm
Business Development Manager



Mylene Joubin
Business Development Manager

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Success rates in Horizon 2020

- > Success rates overall 20% in FP7 > 14% in Horizon 2020
- > University sector = least successful in Horizon 2020
- > Private Research (15%), Research Organisation (19%), Public Bodies (27%) and other Entities (19%) = better success
- > Newcomers to EU funding: 38% of successful applicants (80% of which are from the Private Sector)

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Extending your global reach to alternative international funders

- > Researcher awareness of certain high-profile funders within and outside their own country
- > However, fierce competition for grants and the complex bureaucracy of applying can deter

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Extending your global reach to alternative international funders


- > Good news!
- > The wealth of alternative sources of international funding which can be easier to access and apply to



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How does RESEARCHconnect address these challenges?


> Demonstration




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Introduction

> Who we are...



Tjaša Baloh
Project Manager
Slovenian Forestry Institute



Rolf Klappert
Head of Grants and Tech Transfer Office
Université de Neuchâtel

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Slovenian Forestry Institute – who we are

- > Public research institute of national importance
- > Conducts basic and applied research on forests
- > A scientific, professional, and cultural storehouse for Slovenia's relationship with its forests and the resources and services they provide

Slovenian forests & forestry needs ↔ EU opportunities

Slovenian Forestry Institute – who we are

Slovenian Forestry Institute – who we are

- > Annually decreasing national research funding
- > Only 10% of national research budget dedicated to Biotechnical sciences
- > No stable funding, competitive calls
- > Low success rate

Source: SFI presentation (prof. dr. Hajka Krogelj), SRA, public

Slovenian Forestry Institute – who we are

- > We strongly depend on international funding of different shapes and sizes:
 - ca 60 different projects currently running
- > Small institute:
 - Annual Budget of €3.5m
 - 80 people, 60 researchers
 - Project office 2.5 FTE

"Everyone does everything!"

So, we need all the help we can get...

SFI strategies to overcome the challenges

- > SFI Individuals:
 - Networking at different scientific and professional events
 - Maintaining the networks and partnerships established
- > Project office services:
 - Constant search for opportunities: eAlerts, info days
 - Networking at different professional events to ensure the capacity building and best practice exchange
 - Mentoring and sponsoring

SFI strategies to overcome the challenges

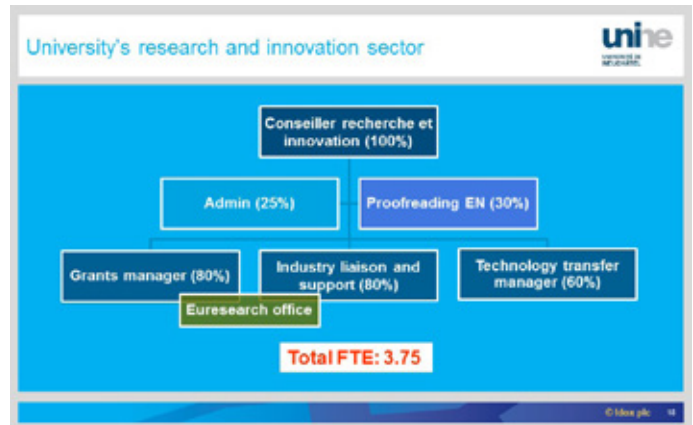
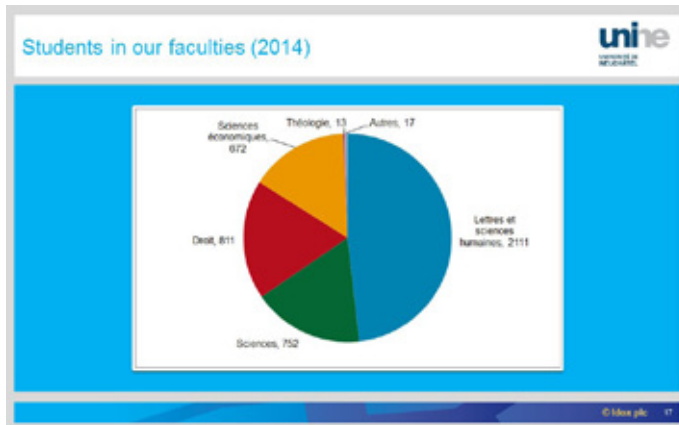
- > Project incubator:
 - Internal Info days for different programmes
 - Open calls overview
 - Brainstorming
 - Prep-time: before – unimaginable, RESEARCHconnect: half a day

SFI strategies to overcome the challenges

- > Individual researcher:
 - Specific (?) report with relevant calls (manually: 1 full working day or more; RESEARCHconnect: 10 min)
 - Prep-time: manually 1 full day or more; RESEARCHconnect: 10 min)
 - Staying up to date (RESEARCHconnect email alerts, home page news) – set up done by the project office

Université de Neuchâtel – who we are

- > The best small Swiss university
 - 11th in THE World2016 ranking, less than 5,000 students
 - 37th in THE World2016 ranking for world's most international universities
- > Students 4,376
- > Employees 768 FTE / 1,087 heads
 - Professors 114.4 FTE / intermediary staff 413.7 FTE
 - Females 48% FTE / 50% heads
- > Budget €125,000,000
 - third party funds 26% (€37m)



- ### Our main funding instruments
- #### Swiss National Science Foundation
- > Grants 2014: €771,800,000 (+3.7%)
 - 3,469 projects; 14,010 researchers (30/06/2014)
 - bottom-up
 - success rate 2014: 52%
 - however, in the future only one grant per main applicant

- ### Our main funding instruments
- #### European RDI programme Horizon H2020
- > FP7, annual CH contribution about €230,000,000
 - 'top-down' for most of it
 - overall success rate FP7: 21.2% (CH: 24.1%)
 - overall success rate H2020: 15.1% (CH: 17.8%)

- ### Our main funding instruments
- #### Commission for Technology and Innovation CTI (→ Innosuisse)
- > Grants R&D projects 2014: €137,000,000
 - in general 'bottom-up'
 - support to industrial innovation; needs a strong business case
 - success rate 2014: 55%

- ### How to find alternatives?
- Do your homework!
- > Google
 - > subscribe to eAlerts if any
 - > websites of 'competing' institutions
 - > Euraxess national pages
 - > compendiums of foundations
 - > foundations of big companies
 - > etc.
- Or you let others do your homework!
- > BUT

- ### How to find alternatives?
- There is no short-cut; you still need to do your own homework:
- > who will do the work for your researchers?
 - Grants Office, on faculty or institute level, individual researchers?
 - automatic searches generating eAlerts, search profiles need to be updated
 - Monthly Bulletin
 - > how does the information get to the researchers and how to make sure that they 'notice' the information?
 - personalised mails

- ### Due diligence
- Last but not least:
- > check what you get – all that glitters is not gold !
-


Group exercise

Please consider the below questions and bring together your findings and ideas on the sheets provided

- Time for preparation 10 min, then 2 min per group to power-present

1. How to address changes in research funding availability?
2. How to move beyond the funding 'comfort zone'?
3. Thinking outside the box

Questions & Answers




Thank you

- > Mylene Joubin
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- > Alexander Nehm
alexander.nehm@idoxgroup.com

Further Information

Thanks to all who attended our session and who provided such great feedback. If you have any further comments, please feel free to contact the team at rc.research@idoxgroup.com

Stay in touch

Looking for further information or seeking to access the latest EU funding and policy insight? We have a number of ways for you to keep in touch:



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www.researchconnect.eu

Read our other research briefings including *Demonstrating Research Impact – International Frameworks and Challenges* and *Knowledge Translation and the Golden Triangle of Research, Impact and Funding* on the **RESEARCHconnect Intelligence page**.

Gallery

