



**“Issues in EU Participation in U.S. Federal Science & Technology Research Funding Programmes”**

Session report



## Executive summary

A panel session on “Issues in EU Participation in U.S. Federal Science & Technology Research Funding Programmes”, organized by the Link2US project, was held on 24 June 2011 in Braganca, Portugal, as part of the 2011 Annual Conference of EARMA (European Association of Research Managers and Administrators).

During the session, two major U.S. funding agencies, the National Institute of Health (NIH) and U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) were represented and introduced to an audience of 40 attendees, representing 16 countries worldwide. The results of the survey, which was carried out in the project in order to identify barriers of cooperation and potential mechanisms for minimizing those barriers was also presented.

European grant administrators also actively contributed to the session, and shared their own experiences with U.S. grants during the discussion part. They agreed with the findings of the survey and they pointed out some challenging aspects of the U.S. system.

## The session

### Background information

The [Link2US project](#), co-funded by the European Union's 7th Framework Programme, strives to map opportunities of U.S. federal collaborative funding schemes and rules for participation through research and analyses; raise awareness by providing a central access point and network for information-sharing among the EU scientific community; and analyse obstacles to cooperation.

As part of the Link2US project, an Analysis of Barriers to Cooperation (Task 1.3) surveyed a sample of European researchers and institutions that participate in U.S.-funded research projects. The aim of the survey was to identify issues in European participation in U.S. funding programmes with the goals of identifying potential mechanisms for minimizing any barriers and promoting good practices.

A related event was organised in the context of the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of EARMA (European Association of Research Managers and Administrators), which was held in Braganca, Portugal, from 22 to 25 June 2011. The conference had more than 220 Participants from 31 Countries. The session organised by the Link2US project was entitled "Issues in EU Participation in U.S. Federal Science & Technology Research Funding Programmes".

The aim of the session was to better understand major U.S. research funding programmes open to European institutions and to help identify key issues and navigate obstacles related to these programmes for grant administrators/managers, particularly those in non-U.S. institutions. The session featured a discussion to elucidate those policy areas that should be made more coherent and compatible by U.S. and EU authorities to ease research cooperation. The outcomes of the session will be used for a report to the EC to provide recommendations on how European researchers might better utilize the research opportunities offered by U.S. grant schemes.

### Session summary

The session was held on 24 June 2011 from 11:00 to 14:30 at of the Agricultural School, Instituto Politécnico de Bragança (Annex 1). The panel session gave the opportunity for a limited number of speakers to give their view on the subject while stimulating an interactive discussion with the audience. 40 participants attended to the session, representing 16 countries from Europe and also China and Israel (Annex 2).

First the chair of the session, John Westensee (Aarhus University, Denmark) welcomed the speakers and the audience.



Then Dr Dóra Groó, director of Hungarian Science and Technology Foundation (TETALAP, partner of Link2US project) gave an overview on the project and its complementary project, BILAT-USA.

Bryan S. Clark, Chief Grants Management Officer at the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development provided an overview of NIH (National Institute of Health) extramural programmes in relation to EU-based principal investigators. He explained the difference between intramural and extramural programmes, and - after questions raised from the audience – between visiting fellow and visiting scientist and between unsolicited and solicited applications. He highlighted the policies for non-U.S. institutions and provided contacts for numerous information sources.

Dr Lesley Blancas, Science Advisor (Americas Portfolio and Int'l Grants Program Lead in the S&T International Cooperative Programs Office) gave an overview of U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) International Cooperative Programmes Office (ICPO) programmes available to EU-based institutions. As DHS is not a well-known funding agency among European scientists, she introduced its mission, goals and existing bilateral agreements. She spoke about the international research grants DHS offers, explained the eligibility rules and the application procedure. She also listed the awarded projects from the previous years as an illustration of the type of collaborative projects that are of interest to DHS.

After the break, Dr Tom C. Wang, Director for International Cooperation at American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), coordinator of the Link2US project, gave his presentation entitled “European Participation in U.S. Funding Programmes: Survey of Researchers & Grants Administrators”. He summarized the methodology and the results of the survey, gave recommendations to improve collaboration and raised some questions to open the discussion session.

From the questions raised (Annex 3) it became clear that the audience was mixed: some questioner was interested in basic call information, although some of them shared their experience with these grants. During the discussion session grant administrators who are experienced in U.S. grants agreed with the findings of the survey as they faced the same challenges when worked with U.S. grants. In the participants' opinion the biggest challenges are the audit requirements, the facilities and administrative (F&A) cost recovery and the terminology which differs a lot from the European one. They also highlighted that courses should be organised for European grant administrators to help them understand the U.S. system.



## Findings and Conclusion

During the session “Issues in EU Participation in U.S. Federal Science & Technology Research Funding Programmes” organised during the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of EARMA, participants received an overview on NIH and DHS grant programs that are open for European researchers, information that participants highly valued (according to the evaluation sheets, Annex 4) and discussed issues related to EU-based research participation in these grant programmes.

Many of the participants experienced in the U.S. grant processes agreed with the finding of the survey. According to them, the biggest challenges they face are the audit requirements and the F&A cost recovery. They also mentioned that the different terminology between the U.S. and EU systems results in confusion and increased difficulties when preparing a project proposal.

Using the findings and the comments of the session, a report will provide recommendations to the EU on how European researchers might better utilize the research opportunities offered by U.S. grant schemes. One of the recommendations will be to organise courses for European grant administrators in order to enhance the European participation in U.S. grant schemes.



## **Annexes**

Annex 1. Agenda of the event

Annex 2. List of participants

Annex 3. Questions and comments raised during the discussion

Annex 4. Evaluation results

Annex 1. Agenda of the event

**“Issues in EU Participation in U.S. Federal Science & Technology Research Funding Programmes”**

24 June 2011, Bragança, Portugal

11:00 – 14:30

Room 4

Agricultural School, Instituto Politécnico de Bragança

**Agenda**

<p><b>11:00-12:00</b>          11:00-11:05          11:05-11:10          11:10-11:30          11:30-11:35          11:35-11:55          11:55-12:00</p>	<p><b>Part I:</b>          Welcome – (Chair) John Westensee, Aarhus University, Denmark  <a href="#">Introduction to Link2US</a> –Dora Groo, TETALAP  <a href="#">National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant programmes</a> – Bryan S. Clark, NIH          Q&amp;A for NIH  <a href="#">Department of Homeland Security ICPO programmes</a> –Lesley Blancas, DHS          Q&amp;A for DHS</p>
<p><i>12:00-13:30</i></p>	<p><i>Lunch break</i></p>
<p><b>13:30-14:30</b>          13:30-13:50          13:50-13:55          13:55-14:30</p>	<p><b>Part II:</b>  <a href="#">Survey results of EU-based institution participation in U.S. grant programmes</a> –Tom C. Wang, AAAS          Brief Q&amp;A          Discussion Panel</p>

## Annex 2. List of participants

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Country</b>
Aida Diaz	AGAUR	Spain
Annika Glauner	University of Zurich	Switzerland
Barbara Tan	University of Antwerp	Belgium
Bea Krenn	University of Amsterdam	The Netherlands
Bruna Vives	Centre for Genomic Regulation	Spain
Carolin Auer	Medical University of Graz	Austria
Catarina Carona	IBCM, INEB & IPATIMUP	Portugal
Charo Sanchez	Universidad del País Vasco	Spain
Eva Vas	CEU	Hungary
Gabriele Picarella	European Bioinformatics Institute	UK
Hanna Honkamäkilä	University of Oulu	Finland
Harry Havskum	University of Copenhagen	Denmark
Ingrid Ragnarsdotter Jajke	Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences	Sweden
Ingrid Sogner	University of Oslo	Norway
Isabel Pinho	Universidade de Aveiro	Portugal
Jim Hanlon	Triumf	Canada
Katerina Rakusanova	Technology Center ASCR	Czech Republic
Kirsten Bache	Geological Survey of Denmark and Greenland	Denmark
Krisztina Cziner	Aalto University	Finland
Laia Lagunas	FUNDACIO IDIBELL	Spain
Liesbeth Krul	University of Cambridge	UK
Lingehun Yang	Peking University	China
Lorna Ryan	City University London	UK
Luzma Garcia	CNIC	Spain
Manuel Lemos de Sousa	Universidade Fernando Pessoa	Portugal
Margarida Trindade	Instituto de Medicina Molecular	Portugal
Maria Carol	Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (UPC)	Spain
María Dolores Fernández	AIMEN Technology Centre	Spain
Markus Torkkeli	Aalto University	Finland
Mary Tracey	Trinity College Dublin	Ireland
Olaf Svenningsen	University of Southern Denmark	Denmark
Oyvin Saether	NTNU	Norway
Rita Bruckstein	Technion Research & Development Foundation Ltd	Israel
Rosa Gallardo	CNIC	Spain
Sheila Vidal	Instituto Gulbenkian de	Portugal



	Ciência	
Shofenk Fan	Peking University	China
Siegfried Huemer	Vienna University of Technology	Austria
Stijn Delauré	Katholieke Universiteit Leuven	Belgium
Thomas Hyllested	NORDUnet	Denmark
Vanessa Ravagni	Università degli Studi di Trento	Italy

### Annex 3: Questions and comments raised during the discussion

#### Examples of questions raised during the discussion:

- How often are the calls for proposals published?

Answer: For DHS they are published once a year, generally in March for a September closing date. For NIH, however, it is different, and the NIH guide for grants should be consulted for more information.

- Is there a separate selection process for foreign institutes during the review process?

Answer: No, they are evaluated together with U.S. applicants.

- What is the difference between the extramural and the intramural programmes of NIH?

Answer: In intramural programmes the research happens within the NIH institutes, while in extramural programmes it can happen somewhere else.

- What is the difference between the visiting fellows and the visiting scientists?

Answer: Visiting fellows spend less time in NIH institutes, they usually attend to trainings. Visiting scientists spend more time there, they carry out research activities in a 2-5 year long period.

- What is the difference between the unsolicited and the solicited application?

Answer: During unsolicited application the subject of the research is not set (similar to the bottom-up approach in EU terminology), while in solicited application the subject is set (top-up approach in EU).

- Can the results of the DHS supported projects be published or are there limitations for publication due to security reasons?

Answer: There is no limitation, but the experts of DHS review the publications.

#### Comments added, experiences shared:

- Research administrators in the audience agreed that the audit requirements were the biggest challenge, because there are no examples of what auditors can follow.
- F&A (Facilities & Administrative) cost recovery is also challenging.
- Nomenclature of U.S. and EU grants is completely different.  
e.g.: call (EU) = FOA (Funding Opportunity Announcement) (U.S.), indirect cost (EU) = F&A cost (U.S.)
- Advice 1: Take time to understand the terminology.
- Advice 2: Take time for getting to know NIH website.
- Advice 3: Search for online trainings, there are several available.
- Courses should be organised for European grant administrators to help them understand the system.

## Annex 4. Evaluation results

### Summary of evaluation

Evaluation results show that the majority of participants found the session good and well organized (see table below). Attendees found Dr. Lesley Blancas' presentation very good, although many of them noted that it had no connection with their research fields. A common criticism from participants was that the NIH presentation was too general (see the comments received section below). The performance of the Chair and the discussion session was positively evaluated by most of the participants.

<b>Please tick</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Poor</b>
Whole session	42%	33%	25%	
Opening and introduction to the session	58%	14%	28%	
Presentation of Bryan S. Clark	29%	35%	29%	7%
Presentation of Lesley Blancas	64%	36%		
Presentation of Tom C. Wang	62%	25%	13%	
Discussion panel	82%	18%		

Participation Rate: 37,5%

### Comments received:

- I was disappointed with Bryan S. Clark's talk, because he didn't explain to which exact "calls" can EU researchers apply, it was too general...
- Although DHS is not directed to my areas of research, it was the best well explained.
- It would be very useful to have a place for foreign FOAs / calls on grants.gov
- I have learnt important information for my work.
- More time would have been good for the talk given by the second speaker. 3<sup>rd</sup> speaker was too long.
- Interesting to learn about different sources / funding opportunities besides the essential NIH for foreign institutions.
- The most useful was the information about NIH and DHS.
- The most useful information was the better overview over US programmes and opportunities.
- The room was very hot and noisy, it was difficult to follow the talks from the back.