



D4.2 - Plan of training, mentorship and short-term visits opportunities targeting the ACU staff of research support services

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The GEMSTONE Project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under the grant agreement number 1010789881.

Introduction

Acıbadem Mehmet Ali Aydınlar University (ACU), based in Istanbul, is the biggest thematic university in the field of health in Turkey. Its mission is to be an academic institution which creates a model for Turkey, and which is shown as a reference in the world, with its high level of excellence, culturally and socially well equipped, dedicated to creating individuals who value ethical principles, who ensure modern, innovative and pioneering practices.

Although ACU's brand is appreciated in the Balkan countries and Turkey, lot of activities still need to be performed, to give ACU the opportunity to compete with leading European universities.

The GEMSTONE project aims to increase the ACU research excellence by improving the research staff expertise, expanding the network of scientific collaborations and building the overall capacity of the organization, so that it can become a leader in the health field.

According to a SWOT analysis performed by ACU at the time of preparation of the GEMSTONE application, the lack of experience in project application processes, project management, technology transfer and IP within the ACU Research Office staff was one of the factors limiting the scientific growth of the organisation.

For this reason, the project includes one specific work package (WP4), which aims to strengthen the profile of ACU Research Office staff members, by improving their competences and performance in supporting, managing and communicating the research, with the final goal to create efficient support services for researchers in these domains.

The first activities foreseen within work package 4 was a mapping of the competencies and skills available in the research support staff, as well as policies and practices on research management and administration in the two universities participating to the project, Acıbadem University (ACU) and Lund University (ULUND).

In the mapping phase, ACU generated a matrix on the competencies and skills of ACU research support services staff (ACU Technology Transfer Office) and completed a qualitative and quantitative analysis. Moreover, ACU researchers which were previously supported by the TTO staff were invited to complete a questionnaire about their experience and evaluations of the services provided by the ACU TTO and its staff. Finally, the ACU staff revised the research management and administration policies and practices used at ULUND and they organised a Zoom meeting with the ULUND research support staff to identify how to successfully transfer best practices to ACU to improve research support capacity and efficiency.

The results of the mapping phase are summarised in the deliverable D4.1 "Analysis of the data resulting from the mapping exercise and the online surveys" and represent the basis for the creation of a plan for training and mentoring the ACU TTO staff.



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Scope of this document

This document features the strategy and operative plan for the training and capacity building of the research support services staff.

The plan includes through a range of activities, such as training programs, workshops, mentoring, and coaching sessions and short-term visits for selected staff members.

These measures aim to address the weaknesses, knowledge and skills gap, and implement the best practices identified in the mapping phase.

Methodology

As a first step for the creation of the plan for training and capacity building of research support staff, the project team identified and analysed the priority areas resulting from the mapping phase.

Overall, the results of the analysis performed in the mapping phase (see deliverable D4.1) suggest that the TTO team has a strong foundation in certain areas, such as the management of funds and financial and human resources. However, there is room for improvement in other areas, where further targeted training and development programs are needed to address individual weaknesses and improve team performance as a whole.

In particular, among the six dimensions outlined for the creation of skills/competences matrix, the following areas have been identified as the most critical:

Table 1: Selection of priority areas from the SCM of ACU TTO Staff (Competency Level- Individual and Competency Level- Team)

Dimensions	Skills and Competencies
D2. Fund Information - Fund Management	6 Recognizes all research funds (internal, national, international, private sector sources), explains the necessary information in detail, organizes activities for its dissemination
	7 Researches new sources of funding, learns flow, announces and directs
	8 Recognize researchers and work areas to establish project teams for research funds
	9 Builds in-house research teams for multidisciplinary research funding
	10 Recognizes the right stakeholders in the ecosystem to engage in external collaborations on research funding
	11 Establishes external research teams/consortiums for research funds involving multiple disciplines/institutions/stakeholders
	12 Recognizes intellectual property outputs supported by research funds, guides inventors for further progress



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	13	Recognizes entrepreneurial fund support, directs business ideas to the relevant channel
	14	It determines the technology readiness level of the defined project/business idea, and offers suggestions for moving to the next stage
D4. University-Industry Cooperation	18	Provides consultancy on all R&D-oriented funds and other tools needed for the works to be done within the scope of university-industry cooperation (UIL) with companies.
	19	The company conducts interviews, defines the companies' R&D needs, matches the company's opportunities
	20	Keeps the list of laboratory facilities up-to-date to present to companies in university-industry collaborations
	21	Cooperates with other units of the university in establishing other collaborations (internship, laboratory use, testing services, etc.) with the university.
D5. Intellectual Property Rights Management	22	Provides consultancy on intellectual property rights
	23	Follows the intellectual property rights pool
	24	Takes initiatives to increase the Technology Readiness (TRL) of inventions in the intellectual property pool
	25	Advises on the commercialization of inventions
D6. Entrepreneurship - Incubation Activities	26	Provides consultancy on the educational, administrative and financial processes of entrepreneurship
	27	It carries out all financial and legal processes of TEKMER company in cooperation with the relevant units.
	28	Organizes awareness events within the institution for the purpose of announcing and disseminating academic entrepreneurship.
	29	Organizes awareness events on mentoring academic staff
	30	Carries out the administrative work of the Incubation Centre (use of the halls, lease negotiations and contract transactions of the Centre, tracking of rent payments and invoices, administrative support in licensing procedures, other administrative infrastructure needs of entrepreneurs, etc.).
	31	Recommends the relevant initiatives to the Innovation Commission of Acibadem Healthcare Group and makes the necessary preparations
D7. Bio-design Activities	32	Provides consultancy on the workflows of the Bio design Centre, recognizes the relevant forms
	33	It collects the requests coming to the Bio design Centre, passes the pre-selection, R&D and Intellectual Property Exchange. Prepares to present to the Commission
	34	Prepares the catalog of the Bio design Centre and keeps it up to date
D.8 Skills and Attitude	1	Follows workflows
	2	Has scientific literacy skills
	3	Has the ability to work in a team
	4	Reads projects in accordance with the rules
	5	Follows the legislation required by the job
	6	Makes an effective presentation
	7	Prepares reports in accordance with the rules
	8	He has the appropriate consultancy and mentoring skills.



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9	Has business development skills
10	It can carry out negotiations in accordance with the agreements.
11	Demonstrates appropriate communication skills
12	Uses the English language well
13	Uses electronic tracking systems appropriate to the subject.
14	Creates, archives and reports appropriate data on its subject
15	Defines the need for R&D
16	Manages contract processes
17	Dominates the commercialization processes of scientific data
18	manages funds
19	Compatible in teamwork
20	Is prone to multidisciplinary work
21	Receives feedback and exhibits appropriate behaviour
22	Develops a sense of belonging
23	Cares and transfers new knowledge
24	Prepares all tasks on time and delivers on schedule
25	Demonstrates the attitude that will initiate the interaction the job needs
26	respects fairness
27	Demonstrates the ability to work collaboratively between departments and institutions

In particular, the following conclusions have been derived from the analysis:

- In dimension 2, TTO employees do not consider themselves highly competent in funding information and project management. However, they evaluate the team as being able to carry out related processes above what is expected. This indicates that the team may be compensating for individual weaknesses by working together effectively.
- In Dimension 4, TTO employees do not perceive themselves as competent in university-industry cooperation, but they evaluate the team as competent. The manager, on the other hand, considers himself fully competent in one subfield and as expected in others. This highlights the need for more training and development in this area for individual employees.
- In Dimension 5, TTO employees evaluate individual competencies in intellectual property rights management as low compared to the reference. However, they evaluate the team as competent at the expected level. This may indicate that the team's overall competence in this area is satisfactory, despite individual weaknesses.
- In Dimensions 6 and 7, TTO employees consider entrepreneurship and bio design activities as not related to their work area, but they evaluate the team as sufficient at a certain level. This suggests that the team has a general awareness of these areas, but if necessary they may need more training and development to fully engage in these activities



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- In Dimension 8, which includes 27 sub-domain qualifications related to professional skills and attitudes, TTO employees consider themselves more competent in some areas than others. However, their evaluation of team performance lags behind in some sub-areas. This indicates the need for further training and development in these areas to improve team performance as a whole.

Moreover, although the results of the survey indicated that ACU researchers perceive the TTO team as harmonious and able to master process management, it also highlighted that competences in project development and writing stages need to be developed.

As a parallel finding in the research with TTO staff, it is revealed that while the team are well-experienced and qualified in internal scientific fund and the national funds, such as TÜBİTAK and TÜSEB; they do not have experience in international fund management.

Another element that has been taken into account for the definition of the training and capacity building plan is the composition of the staff.

As not all the staff members have the same function and possess the same level of knowledge, we have identified three different reference profiles and set specific capacity building objectives for each of them:

- **Senior staff member:** he/she has a strategic/decision-making role, should have an overview of the team, objectives and activities, and should be able to coordinate and give timely guidance to the various figures in the team.
- **Intermediate staff member:** he/she has a certain degree of knowledge and experience, but needs to strengthen his/her profile in order to be able to perform his/her tasks more autonomously and efficiently and to coordinate with other professional figures, also outside the TTO.
- **Junior staff member:** he/she has basic or very little knowledge. He/she takes care of the operational side, and should be able to provide useful information/inputs to the other professionals in the team.

Moreover, at least for the dimension related to grant development and management, we have reflected on the different stages of the process and have identified three different areas of support: pre-award phase, award phase and post-award phase.



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Plan of training, mentorship and short-term visits opportunities

Fondazione ICONS (ICONS) will take care of part of the training and mentorship activities.

ICONS is a non-profit organisation with a strong background in dissemination, communication and exploitation. In the past 20 years, ICONS has been involved in more than 100 EU funded projects so far (40 in Horizon 2020 and 40 in Horizon Europe) developing and implementing communication, engagement and exploitation strategies to generate awareness, social acceptance, uptake of research results while measuring their impacts via dedicated KPIs.

Thanks to its expertise in the participation to EU-funded research projects, it will be able to support ACU in training internal staff and researchers in Dimensions D2. Fund Information - Fund Management and D.8 Skills and Attitude.

ICONS has extensive experience in designing and organizing training activities covering funding programmes, grant writing, science communication, social and business innovation, to support researchers and academic staff capacity building programmes.

In particular, one of the member of the Grant Office in ICONS (Serena Cogoni) will be involved in the training and mentorship activities. The role of the GO is central in the sustainability and reputation of ICONS, as it deals with: scouting (search of funding opportunities), partnership (search and creation of consortia, with consolidated or new partners) and proposal writing (project idea development with the consortium and contribution to the project draft).

Table 2: Senior staff member

<p>Training and capacity building objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To know the specificity and competences of the different teams and units within the University • To be able to intercept collaboration / funding opportunities within and outside the university • To be able to promote effectively the specificities of the University in networking contexts (e.g. brokerage event) • To understand the logic of the Horizon Europe programme, to increase the impact of the applications • To establish University roles and policies to increase efficiency and effectiveness in the different phases of the grant processes 		
<p>Subjects / focus areas (Table 1)</p>	<p>Frontal training</p>	<p>Mentorship</p>	<p>Timeline</p>
<p>D2.6 Recognizes all research funds (internal, national, international, private sector sources), explains the necessary information in detail,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of Horizon Europe 		<p>Frontal training: M9 – M12</p>



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organizes activities for its dissemination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact Logic and Impact pathways 		
D2.8 Recognize researchers and work areas to establish project teams for research funds D8.15 Defines the need for R&D		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the researchers' base 	Mentorship: M13 – M18
D2.10 Recognizes the right stakeholders in the ecosystem to engage in external collaborations on research funding D2.11 Establishes external research teams/consortiums for research funds involving multiple disciplines/institutions/stakeholders		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to network (e.g. participation to brokerage events) and become a partner of excellence 	Mentorship: M19 – M24
D8.4 Reads projects in accordance with the rules		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish selection criteria and an application review process (to evaluate the quality of proposals before they are submitted) 	Mentorship: M25 - M27
D8.10 It can carry out negotiations in accordance with the agreements. D8.16 Manages contract processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roles in the organisation and in the portal (e.g. LEAR, LSIGN, FSIGN) Grant Agreement and Consortium Agreement: structure and implications 		Frontal training: M9 - M12
D8.18 manages funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview of the financial audit process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determining responsibilities and roles in the grant management Definition and adoption of organisation policies (e.g. travel policies) Creating an archiving system for documents 	Frontal training: M9 – M12 Mentorship: M13 - M18



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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to prepare for a financial audit 	
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Table 3: Intermediate staff member

Training and capacity building objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To navigate the programmes available at European and global level in the relevant field • To know the structure of the Horizon Europe programme and other programmes of interest • To search for grants and understand the eligibility requirements and features of each funding programme • To understand the structure of funding applications • To use the tools and platforms made available (F&T) • To understand the project workflow from the grant search to the project finalisation • To track and monitor project progress and interface with project partners in case of deviations • To be able to interface with the correct institutional stakeholders for the different processes • To organise effective and efficient project meetings 		
Subjects / focus areas	Frontal training	Mentorship	Timeline
D2.7 Researches new sources of funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to look for funding opportunities (methods and tools) • How to identify important elements of a call for proposal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervise the intermediate staff member in the update of the GEMSTONE funding opportunity database • Supervise the staff in specific case studies (researchers asking the TTO a support for the funding search) 	Frontal training: M9 – M12 Mentorship: M13 – M36
D2.6 Recognizes all research funds (internal, national, international, private sector sources), explains the necessary information in detail, organizes activities for its dissemination D2.8 Researches new sources of funding, learns flow, announces and directs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of Horizon Europe: structure of the programme, work programmes and topics • Eligibility criteria • How to use the F&T portal for the call search and for proposal submission? • What are the application documents? How the TTO contribute to them? • Financial instruments, financial rules and budget preparation 		Frontal training: M9 - M12



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D8.7 Prepares reports in accordance with the rules D8.24 Prepares all tasks on time and delivers on schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reporting requirements Cost eligibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparing the financial statement and the CFS Preparing the technical report Prepare for the review meeting 	Frontal training: M13 – M14 Mentorship: M15 - M36
D8.13 Uses electronic tracking systems appropriate to the subject. D8.14 Creates, archives and reports appropriate data on its subject D8.18 manages funds		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timesheets Payments Financial monitoring 	Mentorship: M9 - M36
D8.1 Follows workflows D8.3 Has the ability to work in a team		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meetings organisation 	Mentorship: M9 - M36

Table 4: Junior staff member

Training and capacity building objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To navigate the programmes available at European and global level in the relevant field To know the structure of the Horizon Europe programme and other programmes of interest To search for grants and understand the eligibility requirements and features of each funding programme To understand the structure of funding applications To use the tools and platforms made available (F&T) To understand the project workflow from the grant search to the project finalisation To understand how to monitor project progress 		
Subjects / focus areas	Frontal training	Mentorship	Timeline
D2.7 Researches new sources of funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to look for funding opportunities (methods and tools) How to identify important elements of a call for proposal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update of the GEMSTONE funding opportunity database Specific case studies (researchers 	Frontal training: M9 – M12 Mentorship: M13 – M36



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		asking the TTO a support for the funding search)	
D2.6 Recognizes all research funds (internal, national, international, private sector sources), explains the necessary information in detail, organizes activities for its dissemination D2.8 Researches new sources of funding, learns flow, announces and directs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of Horizon Europe: structure of the programme, work programmes and topics • Eligibility criteria • How to use the F&T portal for the call search and for proposal submission? • What are the application documents? How the TTO contribute to them? • Financial instruments, financial rules and budget preparation 		Frontal training: M9 - M12
D8.16 Manages contract processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Award phase: process and timeline, involved staff 		Frontal training: M13 - M14
D8.7 Prepares reports in accordance with the rules D8.24 Prepares all tasks on time and delivers on schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting requirements • Cost eligibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial monitoring • Preparing the financial statement and the CFS 	Frontal training: M13 – M14 Mentorship: M15 - M36
D8.13 Uses electronic tracking systems appropriate to the subject. D8.14 Creates, archives and reports appropriate data on its subject D8.18 manages funds		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timesheets • Payments 	Mentorship: M9 - M36

ICONS will provide information on external training opportunities (such as events and webinars) and resources (e.g. podcasts, factsheets, checklists) to deepen the topics listed above or to provide other expert points of view.



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