

## **MCAA South West Meeting (14.10.2016; Bristol, UK): Summary of Talks**

### Brian Cahill: MCAA Goals and Future

- Background for establishing MCAA: the need to extend the benefits of MSC beyond the scope of the fellowship's time period.
- Structure: Board of voting members (executive committee + ordinary members) and the Chapter leaders as non-voting members.
- 9 Working groups with various tasks. E.g. the Gender Equality Group is very active and has many members.
- Geographical representation through Chapters. A large portion of the world is covered by respective chapters. New chapters shall appear in Poland, Switzerland. Representation is desired in the Balkan region, Scandinavia, Romania.
- Medium term goals for MCAA: to grow, increase engagement, solve current web page issues.
- MCAA needs to build external relations with institutions (e.g. adding supervisors), advisors, and experts.
- Long term goals: Organizing/promoting career fairs, courses, innovation, start-ups.
- The next General Assembly will be held in March 2017 in Salamanca, Spain.

### Erik Lithander: Brexit

- Personal opinion that does not necessarily reflect the opinion of Bristol University.
- Disappointment with the outcome of the vote, however with the respect for the result.
- Brexit vote was the right answer to a wrong question – anti-establishment vote that reflects annoyance with the government and not necessarily with the EU.
- Brexit brings technical challenges, e.g. maintaining frameworks, but more problematic is the tone of the debate (Agitators and the stance of mainstream media should not be respected).
- UKIP confused/mixed the EU with Syrian refugees inducing panic and ignorance.
- Brexit is a wakeup call and causes of the public's frustrations should be established.
- At the moment frameworks keep staying, but the conversation among partners is challenging – UK partners are being under evaluated, staff leaves being pushed over the edge by the vote.
- What will happen with frameworks? H2020, Erasmus will be kept.
- International students are a “good start” in reducing the net migration, since they are registered and cutting visas is easy (currently 330 000 non-UK students are registered).
- Government's opinion – students are overstaying. In reality 1% of international students is overstaying. Only 25 % of “leave”-voters think that international students are migrants which shows that this opinion of the government is not well supported.
- What to do next? Lobbying EU through the public and staff. Currently strong voices are the Russell Group and Universities UK. Since EU offers necessary research prerequisites: large funding, mobility of people and international relationships, the EU should be lobbied through the government itself, including local government.

Nicole Dixon: H2020 projects (also see the presentation slides)

- Not much impact concerning the European project was seen at the Research Development office of Bristol University.
- At the moment H2020 is still available.
- H2020 concentrates on Excellence in science.
- ERC grants offer an opportunity for experienced researchers. Long term grants on high risk, high gain projects. Funding opportunities for all sciences, however excellence is a prerequisite. Highly competitive grants with 7% success rate.
- COST actions fund meetings, opportunities, and existing projects.
- UK opportunities: Newton Fund funds international projects.
- Impact of Brexit on ESR projects – currently no impact, however long-term it is unknown. The number of MSCF applications dropped this year showing that researchers are reluctant to apply for UK-based projects.
- At Bristol University only one consortium broke down as a result of Brexit vote. Other universities report some challenges.
- What can MCAA do to help the situation? – Keep lobbying for projects.

Josie Grindulis: Careers

Please, see the detailed presentation slides for the contents of the talk.

Carlos Constantino: Research in Industry (also see the presentation slides)

- Business is a competitive environment where needs have to be anticipated.
- Forming teams, collaborating between industry, academic partners and government and winning work is highly important.
- On example of Carlos' Ph.D. – an academic pathway with the focus on technical details. However later the recognition of a bigger picture to help the industry to identify risks and create regulatory frameworks.
- It shows that knowledge/expertise is an industrially relevant skill.
- Not technical skills are also highly important in the research since Business solves problems using research to maintain high revenues.