



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 662287.



EJP-CONCERT

European Joint Programme for the Integration of Radiation Protection Research

H2020 – 662287

D 7.17 - 1st Annual report on activities of the task showing progress made and future plans

Lead Author: MJ Atkinson

With contributions from:

Reviewer(s): CONCERT Coordination Team

Work package / Task	WP 7	T 7.5
Deliverable nature:	Report	
Dissemination level: (Confidentiality)	Public	
Contractual delivery date:	Month 12	
Actual delivery date:	Month 19	
Version:	1	
Total number of pages:	4	
Keywords:	Education and Training	
Approved by the coordinator:	M19	
Submitted to EC by the coordinator:	M19	

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Task 7.5: European integration of junior scientist career development

(Lead: HMGU; Partners: UniPv, NRIRR, CIEMAT, VUJE, CEA, Med Uni Vienna, MTA-EK, UT, NCRPP, IMROH; LTPs: NMBU, IST)

This task is designed to reverse or at least slow the decline in competence in radiation protection throughout Europe. There are many activities supported by learned societies and national governments to recruit and train graduate level students, but almost no concerted effort to retain these qualified individuals within the research and stakeholder communities.

- Subtask 7.5.1 Initiate and encourage interaction between CONCERT, the platforms and the EURAYS association of junior radiation research scientists.
- Subtask 7.5.2 Establish a cross-border network of mentoring for junior scientists based on a selection and mentor-mentee matching Programme.
- Subtask 7.5.3 Conduct career days for junior scientists during CONCERT meetings, to include meetings with senior scientists, job fair, career advice and networking.
- Subtask 7.5.4 Hold “Meet the Professor” lunches during international conferences held in Europe (including the IRPA, ERR, ICRR, MELODI and DoReMi meetings), to allow junior scientists contact with leaders in the community from academia and stakeholders, regulators and policy makers.
- Subtask 7.5.5 Establish the NEWS network to facilitate dialogue between junior faculty members in new and established member states.

Report:

The task 7.5 is intended to promote integration of researchers across boundaries, be they national, political or research interest. A set of subtasks (subtasks 7.5.1 -7.5.5) has been designed to target different audiences in the promotion of scientific integration.

Subtask 7.5.1 is intended to promote participation of young scientists in CONCERT activities, providing them with an opportunity to make contacts, to become informed on over-arching and crosscutting topics in radiation protection, and to interact with other junior academics from within CONCERT. This is intended to coordinate activities with EURAYS group of young investigators.

Subtask 7.5.2 is intended to provide cross border mentoring for junior staff engaged in the CONCERT programme, thereby promoting their career development and giving them access to high-level academics with an established profile in radiation protection.

Subtask 7.5.3 The junior scientists engaged in CONCERT projects will be encouraged to join discussion with senior academics to learn about career development opportunities and strategies.

In Subtask 7.5.4 the junior staff of the CONCERT projects will be invited to meet senior scientists and policymakers in an informal setting to provide access to networks hitherto closed to them.

In the final Subtask 7.5.5 we will establish networking activities between new member state scientists and colleagues who are already participants in EU activities.

Task 7.5 is committed to integrative activities focused on two groups of junior researchers. Those entering CONCERT during the lifetime of the programme through participation of their home institutions in research activities of CONCERT, and those in new member states not associated with research activities of CONCERT. As the CONCERT calls have not been completed at the time of this report we cannot provide information on the number of junior academic staff who will enter CONCERT. The planned Task 7.5 activities for the MELODI/Radiation days meeting in Oxford (September 2016) were postponed until the results of the CONCERT call are available.

Nevertheless, we have used the time to focus our first efforts on the activities seen as being the most important, increasing participation of research teams from the new member states, from the southern regions of the community and from accession countries.

On June 13-14th 2016 the first public presentation of Task 7.5 (subtasks 7.5.1, 7.5.3 and 7.5.4) was made in Budapest as part of an OPERRA training workshop in polymerase chain reaction technologies. On the 13th Prof. Atkinson (Helmholtz Zentrum Muenchen) held a lecture on the work of past EURATOM FP7 projects Dark-risk, Procardio and Cerebrad. This was followed by his presentation on participation in EU contracts. This lecture was designed to encourage participation by the junior scientists in attendance and to raise awareness of the roles, obligations and expected contributions from researchers. On the second day of the meeting Prof. Salomaa (University Eastern Finland) presented a technological overview and followed by a presentation on the roles of a coordinator in EURATOM research projects. Here the experience of NOTE and DoReMi were transmitted and paths to join consortia discussed. Both sets of lectures were followed by meet informal the professor sessions where the speakers were able to answer individual questions, provide advice and strategies for participation and in general encourage and motivate the junior researchers.

The support and interaction activity 7.5.1 is intended to interact with the EURAYS group. However, the leadership of EURAYS has been dissolved due to major players discontinuing their activities in EURAYS. It was suggested that the CONCERT Task 7.5 could take over the role of EURAYS coordination and Dr Omid Azimzadeh was nominated as chairman elect of EURAYS and other young investigators approached about serving on an advisory / management board. Due to ill health Dr Azimzadeh resigned his position after two months. Fortunately Dr Liz Ainsbury (HPA) has taken the initiative to reinvigorate the EURAYS concept through a COST proposal. Task 7.5 (subtask 7.5.1) is supporting this activity and should this prove successful will offer support and advice for forthcoming events.

The next subtask activities are all centered on the RAD17 meeting in Budva, Montenegro in June 2017. We have selected this conference for our major activity as it is attended by over 200 young scientists predominantly from new member states, candidate countries and countries currently underrepresented in the CONCERT programme. Moreover the RAD17 meeting, unlike other conferences includes a broad range of topics from radioecology, nuclear safety, radiation biology, radiation protection and radiation medicine. A draft programme has been agreed with the conference organizers that sees a half-day long session on current EURATOM radiation protection research. This will be followed by training activities to encourage junior scientists to participate in research consortia and networking activities for career development.