



***Pan-European twinning to  
re-establish world-level  
Neuroscience Centre in Kiev***

**MEETING WITH POLICY MAKERS -  
PLATFORM FOR COMMUNICATION**

**TOPIC:**

**NEUROSCIENCE ADVOCACY: HOW TO INCREASE GRANT SUPPORT IN UKRAINE**

**MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 30<sup>TH</sup> 15:00-18:00**

**VENUE: HOTEL KYIV (26/1, HRUSHEVSKOHO ST. 01021 KYIV)**

**MINUTES**

**PARTICIPANTS:**

**Nana Voitenko**, Coordinator, Bogomoletz Institute of Physiology, Ukraine  
**Gorazd A. Weiss**, Team Leader, Centre for Social Innovation, Austria  
**Dmitri Rusakov**, Team Leader, University College London, United Kingdom  
**Georgy Bakalkin**, Team Leader, Uppsala University, Sweden  
**Boris Safronov**, Team Leader, Institute of Cellular and Molecular Biology, Portugal  
**Pavel Belan**, Team Leader, Bogomoletz Institute of Physiology, Ukraine  
**Inna Sovsun** - Member of Parliament of Ukraine,  
**Yuriy Dzhyhyr** - Deputy Minister of Ministry of Finance,  
**Mladena Kachurets** - Deputy Minister of Ministry of Health,  
**Yuriy Polyukhovych** - Deputy Minister of Ministry of Education and Science (MES),  
**Dmytro Cheberkus** - Director General of the Directorate of Science of MES,  
**Anatoly Zagorodny** - Vice-President of NASU,  
**Marina Gorokhovatska** - Scientific manager, presidium of NASU,  
**Yulia Bezvershenko** - Deputy Chairman of the Council of Young Scientists of NASU  
**Oleg Krishtal**, Director of the Bogomoletz Institute of Physiology, Ukraine  
**Alexey Kolezhuk** - Head of Scientific Committee of the National Council for Science and Technology Development of Ukraine (SC NCSTD),  
**Svetlana Arbuzova** - Member of the SC NCSTD,  
**Leonid Yatsenko** - Head of the Scientific Council of the National Research Foundation (NRF),  
**Alexey Soldatkin** - Member of the Scientific Council of the NRF,  
**Oksana Sulaieva**, - Member of the Scientific Council of the NRF,  
**Boris Sorochinsky** - Executive director of the NRF,  
**Svetlana Ivanova**, Project Manager, Bogomoletz Institute of Physiology (BIPH), Ukraine  
Snizhana Marurenko – press service of NASU  
**Andrey Dromaretskiy**, member of Project Management Team, BIPH, Ukraine  
**Andrii Kostiuk**, member of Dissemination/Communication Committee, BIPH, Ukraine  
**Hanna Stretovich** – Assistant of Deputy Minister of Ministry of Health.  
**Olga Kononenko**, Team member, Uppsala University, Sweden

*Welcome and introduction (Prof. Nana Voitenko)*, Tour de table including brief presentation of the partners & participants

***Introduction to NEUROTWIN: Aims and Scopes***

**Voitenko** briefly presented the main objectives of NEUROTWIN, one of which is

- **Boosting productive communication with the public and the policymakers in Ukraine, to advocate the importance of Neuroscience research for public health and biomedical education.**

**Voitenko** emphasized that the major goal of this Meeting was to bring together scientists and policymakers, with the aim of improving mutual understanding. Voitenko further stated that this Meeting was not only about Neuroscience research and the ways of getting additional support for

Ukrainian science from abroad, but also about **creating an environment necessary for successful grant management. At present, the conditions for grant management in Ukraine are far from optimal.** Voitenko was saying: «While our Western colleagues are delighted to receive positive grant decision Ukrainian scientists are getting worried, to a large extent... To tell the truth, the management of an international grant is a real nightmare. Even those few international grants, which are given to our researchers, are not transferred to Ukraine because of the inadequate regulations. Even if one of the scientists would win a famous ERC grant, or other prestigious portable grant, he/she will never perform this research in Ukraine (unless he/she is out of his mind) ». Voitenko proposed to discuss main obstacles for grant management in Ukraine. She expressed the hope that today, in the presence of the representatives of Parliament, Ministries, Academy of Science, National Research Foundation, and Scientific Committee, one could start this difficult yet essential process of solving these problems.

***Importance for Ukraine of capacity building for getting foreign support, especially European grants (Gorazd A. Weiss)***

**Weiss** told that the capacity building activities (i.e twinning, teaming) help Ukrainian R&I performing organisations to exchange knowledge in the scientific field with European counterparts as well as enable them to use the research infrastructure of EU partners (in some of the types such projects). From the other side it enables also researchers from EU member states to know better the Ukrainian R&I landscape. Furthermore, also the activities like exchange of practices in project management, exploitation of projects result, function of the Research grant offices in research organisation (managing the project grants, IP issues, technology transfer) are contributing to better performance of Ukrainian research institutions.

The capacity building activities are performed also by bilateral projects (funded by different countries, international organisations), some of this funding possibilities will be presented by Prof Rusakov later. As regards the upcoming EU Program “Horizon Europe” (start 2021) which is an ambitious €100 billion research and innovation programme to succeed Horizon 2020. This program will be more market oriented and focused more to innovation as compared to the Horizon 2020. Ukraine should make all efforts to associate to the program as it was with previous one.

***International funding for science in Ukraine (Prof. Dmitri Rusakov)***

**Rusakov** has spoken about numerous funding opportunities in Europe for Ukrainian scientists. He emphasised the importance for Ukraine to be involved in the Horizon Europe program at early stages, since it gives higher chances to score. Rusakov also mentioned that from €100 billion Horizon Europe research and innovation programme a significant amount will be allocated to biomedical research. He stressed the importance of applying for all local grants and awards (i.e. NASU, MES, STCU, and hopefully, NRFU), to raise the capacity of Ukrainian scientists to apply for international funding.

Rusakov has emphasised some key requirements for successful grant implementation in Ukraine:

- 1) **To harmonize legal framework for contractual and financial management of EC grants with EU regulations.**
- 2) **To train Finance and Human Resources personnel on EU-adopted procedures and protocols.**
- 3) **To fully implement the status of individual PIs as grant holders in the system of NAS and Universities.** This is extremely important. In the UK the head of department can have zero while a PI can have millions of external research funding. In such cases, only the PI is responsible for grant implementation and grant spending.
- 4) **To help create a European / International Research Office structure with contractual signatories for international funding.** There should be a person or persons at the organization – so called Legal Entity Appointed Representative (LEAR) – who can sign for the EC all the grants documents. There is no need to have a director as a signatory in the EC grants.

**Sovsun:** I have a question for the representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science, and perhaps the Ministry of Finance. Since the new Horizon Europe program starts in 2021, have negotiations already begun on Ukraine’s entry into this program?

**Weiss:** Last week during the R&I days in Brussels, the EC proposal for the Horizon Europe has been presented. In this event representatives of MES also participated. So far the process is internal (including only EU member states). After the adoption of the Horizon Europe in EU other countries

will be invited to associate according to the conditions published and by EC. During this event in Brussels it was also announced that for associate members, conditions will be announced early next year. However, the association process will be different as in H2020.

**Cheberkus:** The ministry will take all necessary steps as soon as the conditions are known.

**Sovsun:** Thanks. I think that the ministry should discuss these issues with parliament so that the necessary money is allocated on time. We must make every effort to get a discount. For participation in the Horizon2020 program, Ukraine received a huge discount.

**Cheberkus:** Thanks for the support. As far as I know this time there will be a different scheme. Participating countries will pay as much money as they received in the form of grants in the previous year.

### *The specific of neuroscience' support in Sweden (Prof. Georgy Bakalkin),*

**Bakalkin** raised an issue related to evaluation of scientific capacity of researchers and institutions. He referred to recent paper published in "Nature" that discussed the problem of self-citation. According to "Nature", the authors from Ukraine and Russia have the highest self-citation rates, i.e. the highest proportion of self-generated, spurious significance of their research. (<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-02479-7?fbclid=IwAR1imGigPZlzo5dxNViENgn4bAmluDcIzsHkFO9wKc90xiZWGz1WtqpuZhc0>)

He also presented the data about specific of neuroscience' support in Sweden.

**Sulaieva:** What language is used in Sweden for grant applications?

**Bakalkin:** 100% of applications are in English, as in most of non-English speaking European countries.

**Weiss:** In Austria national funding programs for Research an Innovation accept applications only in English. This is done to enable international peer-review/evaluation.

**Rusakov:** In rere cases, as in France, applications are accompanied by a short annotation in the national language

**Cheberkus:** The English-written applications for national grant-bodies are hardly possible, according to the new language law, according to which Ukrainian is the only official language in our country.

**Arbuzova:** That is not correct, since in the part of the law that related to science (Article 22. State language in the field of science), indicated, for example, that PhD and doctoral theses can be written and officially defended in English.

**Voitenko:** I would like to add, that me and my colleagues from Scientific Committee have visited several National grant bodies in Poland, Austria, Georgia and Estonia. In all these countries with one official national language, grant applications are done in English (including humanities).

**Sovsun:** I fully support this idea. I have scientific experience in Sweden and I know how important it is to have independent international expertise for a small country. I'm not sure that legislative changes are needed in order to translate all the applications into English, but if necessary, I'm ready to negotiate with members of parliament and representatives of the National Investigation Fund to make appropriate amendments to the law.

**Belan:** There are also some other language-related issues in grant management. For example, the requirement to translate all grant agreements and reports into Ukrainian - for banks, MES, and institution' accounting office. These requirements must be abolished. If necessary, the appropriate amendments to the law should be made.

**Sovsun:** I have to leave now, but I was happy to be here. I thank Nana and I think I would invite you to meet again to discuss these problems in more details. I am not sure what exactly require the changes to legislation on the level of Parliament or Government, but if any, I surly will be happy to serve as an ambassador of this community to the Committee of Science in the Parliament.

### *Success and problems of neuroscience: experience of Portugal (Prof. Boris Safronov)*

**Safronov** started his speech from appreciating the titanic effort by Prof. Voitenko and all team leaders to succeed in obtaining this remarkable funding award from the EC. Although Portugal has no such a capacity of financing research as major European countries, some important steps have been made to develop neuroscience, which could be relevant to Ukraine, at least at this stage of development. 1) Organization of 'Associate Laboratories' – which had a kind of agreement with Government, to receive increased financing. Status of 'Associate Laboratories' were given to 5-6 best institutes of the country for the term of 5 years based on their external evaluation. This privileged status had to be confirmed

each 5 years. 2) Creation of private charity-based institutions (Gulbinkian and Champalimaud bequeathed their fortunes to create institutions that bear their names), which able to recruit some top scientists from around the world. This could be taken as an example of usage of non-budget funds for scientific purposes. Of course, some necessary regulations and legislations should be created in this respect. 3) Building-up the conditions to receive the EC funding. Thus, the number of research groups working in neuroscience and a number and quality of publications increased during the last decades. But, unfortunately this success could be greater if a number of problems would not interfere with a daily-life of research community. Since Ukraine is aiming to enter one day EC, and already now is trying to have an access to European funding, the negative experience of countries like Portugal can help to analyse the situation and not to repeat mistakes:

1) Irregular financing of institutions and individual projects (grant calls available only once in 3 years with a low success rate). Thus, irregular financial support leads to the loss of researches in the scientific groups, with low chance to get them back in three years.

**Conclusion: if there are shortage of grant support of science in the country, regular support of best research group is of extreme importance.**

2) Bureaucracy is killing research: (i) too complicated application forms; (ii) problems with acquisition of equipment; (iii) local bureaucrats refer to the EC rules; however, partners from developed countries (UK, Germany, France) do not have such problems.

**Conclusion: while adapting the EC rules on the top of national ones, politicians should be in contact with active researchers (national and international) to avoid overregulation.**

**Sorochinskiy:** Could you tell about the reasons of involvement of business in science support in Portugal? Are there any privileges? Tax exemptions?

**Safronov:** I am talking not only about business sponsors, but also about those people who leave an inheritance not only to children and grandchildren, but also to science. The founders of these two institutions, which I mentioned, died from cancer and Alzheimer's and bequeathed all their money to the creation, respectively, of a cancer research institute and a neuroscience institute.

**Rusakov:** This is called charity. This is a very important aspect of supporting science. In the United States and the UK, more than half of biomedical research is funded by charities. Thanks to charity, many scientific institutes have been created, including famous networks of institutions funded by Howard Hughes, Rockefeller, John Hopkins, Wellcome Trust and others. This is something that does not yet exist in Ukraine. Wealthy people here continue to 'invest' in prestigious homes and expensive sports cars. Charity needs to be somehow introduced. Bill Gates spends a huge part of his fortune on charity. He would never buy expensive cars.

**Bakalkin:** I have question to Dmitri. Is there a role of the government in charity promotion?

**Rusakov:** Yes, of course. It's a tax rule. The philanthropists have tax exemptions on the amount they donate. No taxes for charity.

**Safronov:** It is very important that institutions receive the name of the person who created it. It perpetuates the memory of this man.

### ***Problems of grant management in Ukraine (Prof. Pavel Belan)***

**Belan** raised several important issues that were also discussed before the meeting with other H2020 grant coordinator **Semen Yesilevsky**:

1) Lack of infrastructure for successful participation in competitions and management of national and foreign grants in Ukraine. So called "Grant Offices" exists in all western scientific institutions which helps scientists in grant applications and management. **Conclusion: Development of regulatory framework will allow the establishment of "Project and Grant Management Departments" in academic institutions**

2) The tremendous problems occur due to foreign grant management via treasury accounts. Some regulations, which do not exist in the EU countries, greatly complicate the process of project implementation. Among them: (i) the need to use contracts for a purchase of all, even inexpensive, goods and services; (ii) necessity to plan short-term budgets for foreign (non-budgetary) grants; (iii) restrictions on purchase of certain goods and maximal prices of goods and services; (iv) impossibility of any reimbursement; (v) requirement to submit grant-related financial statements to the non-grantors institutions; (vi) difficulties in auditing by foreign agencies;

**Conclusion: Deregulation is required to allow the management of non-government grants through separate bank accounts. To allow purchasing inexpensive goods and services according to invoices (rather than contracts). Cancellation of additional planning - grant spending should be performed according to the grant budget. Removal of all restrictions on purchases of goods when non-budgetary funds are used.**

3) All Ukrainian H2020 coordinators meet with big difficulties to answer the EC requirements to submit some financial documents on the status of the grantee institution before the grant activation. Ukrainian accountants are not familiar with those documents that should be submitted in English.

4) Requirement to translate all grant agreements and reports into Ukrainian - for banks, MES, and an institution's accounting office.

**Conclusion: It is necessary to develop templates of the documents - translations of Ukrainian standard financial documents into English (according to the EC requirements)**

### *Discussion with Meeting participants: How to improve the grant management in Ukraine*

Moderated by Nana Voitenko, Bogomoletz Institute of Physiology, Ukraine

**Cheberkus:** Regarding the grant offices. These are not just rooms or positions. These are primarily people. Every rector or director who is interested in having professionals who can help write grants should look for opportunities to hire such people. According to the law on higher education and according to the law on science, this is the competence of the leaders of organizations. We have a shortage of people with the appropriate experience. The European Union knows about this and has created national contact points (NCPs) in our country. Not all of them work well, but some may provide competent advice for grants submitting. The fact that not all NCPs work well is not the blame of the ministry. **But we will definitely conduct an analysis, and for those NCPs that work unsatisfactorily we will conduct a new competition.**

**Belan:** These are completely different things - NCPs and grant support offices. They have different competencies and responsibilities. It would be good if the Ministry of Education and Science and the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine officially recommend scientific institutions to create such structures and organize courses and trainings for staff. **Grant office performance is much higher for a particular organization than NCPs tips.**

**Cheberkus:** All the problems voiced by Professor Belan are the cry of the soul of our scientists. I support all of them and, in general, I agree with the proposed ways to address them. I would suggest grouping these problems into three groups. The first group is related to the budget codex. This falls within the competence of the Verkhovna Rada. All problems in this group stem from the status of a budget organization. **One must either change the budget codex or refuse the status of a budget organization, which is not yet possible.** The second group of issues is related to the self-government of organizations, with the desire of managers to organize the appropriate infrastructure. For this, it is necessary to raise a common grant culture. One need to understand what overhead costs are (I know from the personal experience of Deputy Minister Polyukhovich that in the USA they reach 40%) and how grant offices can be organized at their expense.

The third group of questions relates to problems of the usage of English language and incorporation it into the scientific legislation. As already noted, **it is necessary to amend the law on the language accordingly.**

**Safronov:** In Portugal, all grants are submitted exclusively in English. Ukraine should adopt this practice. **Submitting grants in Ukrainian is a loophole for corruption that you fight.**

**Gorokhovatska:** I would like to add that the problem with additional planning also stems from the budget codex. This is a daunting problem because grant money, even if it goes to the institute's "special account", is considered as budget money and is subject to the regulation of the budget codex. **Special exceptions must be made in the budget codex for research grants. For such money, there also should be a simplified procurement procedure and a change in the terms of tenders.**

**Yatsenko:** There were and there are a few European grants at our institute. As far as I remember, in the framework of FP7 program there was the opportunity to make purchases on invoices and even receive reimbursements on checks. Much depends on the competence of the grant manager.

**Gorokhovatska:** Unfortunately, the regulations are changing and now it is impossible to make even small purchases on invoices or receive reimbursement on checks. It should be changed back.

**Kachurets:** Unfortunately, now there is the only one way to overcome this problem - the rejection of the status of a budget organization. Abandoning this status, **the organization can take advantage of the public entity.**

**Cheberkus:** Another way to solve the problem is the creation of subsidiary non-budgetary institutions. Many universities create, for example, technoparks in which university employees are affiliates, and they are grant recipients. Thus, grant money does not fall under the jurisdiction of the budget codex.

**Arbuzova:** I want to return to the issue of providing financial documents to the EC. As far as I know, each institution should have an official representative - LEAR - and he/she is responsible for this process.

**Voitenko:** That's right, it is to the representative that the EC addresses. At our Institute, this is Svetlana Ivanova. However, the representative is not a financier, and the EC requires financial documents. One has to go to the accounting department, which has no idea what is at stake.

**Cheberkus:** This is an internal affair of the institute. If the director is interested in having many grants in the organization, he should hire professional accountants.

**Belan:** Unfortunately, institutions do not have the means to support accounting at this level. That is why we propose that the Ministry of Education and Science, which has more experience in managing horizon grants than a single scientist, develop examples of such documents in English. We know that the Ministry of Education and Science has plans to develop such kind of regulatory acts.

**Weiss:** If your organization is a project coordinator and the requested EU funding for the action is equal or superior to €500,000 a financial capacity assessment has to be performed by the Commission services in accordance with the H2020 provisions. I would like to stress that this process is required for coordinating organizations from all countries, Ukraine is not an exception. And it's a good idea to create templates and explain the process to the future successful applicants (coordinators) from Ukraine. As documentation to be sent to EC validation services vary from country to country due to different national legislations. ([https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/support/faq?categories=p\\_registration;programme=null;actions=;keyword=/8232](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/support/faq?categories=p_registration;programme=null;actions=;keyword=/8232))

**Arbuzova:** I propose to supplement the list voiced by Belan with one more problem. Not all areas of scientific activity are covered by classifier codes. For example, there is no code for the payments of open access journals publication fee. This also needs to be changed.

**Kolezhuk:** It would be good if all the problems listed by colleagues were tied to normative legal acts. Then it would be easier for us and the representatives of the ministry to understand what needs to be changed.

**Bezvershenko:** I think that this task should be entrusted to the employees of the Ministry of Education and Science, they are better than ordinary scientists familiar with the regulatory framework. With the permission of the meeting participants, I will attract a group of active young scientists to discuss the issues raised so that we can deal with them together. Would you mind?

**Voitenko:** Of course, Yulia, please, do it. Now I ask Oleg Kristal, as the director of the Institute, which has grants, and as a scientist who led the grants himself, to express his point of view. Is it possible to change something locally in the organization in order to improve grant management?

**Krishtal:** Locally, only a specific issue can be resolved. What we are talking about today is much broader and it scares me. The only way to solve the problem is to start all over from scratch. You can recall the example of Germany. When East and West Germany merged, despite the fact that East Germany was a fairly developed country, West Germany zeroed the entire East industry. And that was the only right decision - to start all over from scratch. I will also give an example from my experience. For ten years, my research was funded by the Howard Hughes Private Fund. This fund allocated about 15 grants of half a million dollars to the entire Soviet Union. It was a lot of money. At the same time, the management of all grants was centrally carried out by one person. This was possible because of the simplicity of the regulations. **We need to create new legislation for scientific grants from scratch. And we should appeal to parliament with this proposal.**



## Photos



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