

DEVELOPING EXCELLENCE

A STRATEGY FOR SLU

SLU EU-Team

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” SLU EU Team defines “lobbying as activities of a person or group of persons to provide relevant information and to present their views on an issue. Integrity is the most important element of effective lobbying, the information provided should be truthful and not misleading”
(after Blokhuis, 2009).

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this strategy is to present a model for how SLU could more efficiently work with lobbying vis-à-vis the European Union (EU). Through launching a dedicated lobbying effort, SLU aims to develop its prioritized research areas and increase the amount of research funding from international sources. This may be achieved through lobbying decision-makers within the EU about the relevance of SLU's expertise, as well as through informing, supporting and educating researchers at SLU about the benefits of proactive and efficient lobbying.

The point of departure is that SLU should strive to become an increasingly confident European actor. This includes increasing the number of EU projects in which researchers at SLU participate, as well as increasing the number of EU projects coordinated by SLU researchers. This strategy presents suggestions for how SLU more efficiently could make use of existing structures – National Contact Points (NCPs), European Technology Platforms (ETPs), etc. – to increase its influence on the European research agenda.

Moreover, the strategy highlights the importance of building strong international alliances and solid networks with other key universities and organizations, in order to further improve SLU's reputation as an international actor and give SLU a stronger voice when lobbying the policy and research structures of the EU. Through building international alliances and networks SLU would also enhance the influx of international students and researchers and thereby secure its position as a vital actor in the international research community.

By combining *(i)* efficient ways of lobbying the EU structures, *(ii)* building international alliances, and *(iii)* professionally supporting SLU's researchers in their applications for EU funding, there are good chances that SLU would reach the goals of further developing excellence and increasing the amount of EU research funding in the coming years.

BACKGROUND

WHY LOBBYING?

Ever wondered why calls from the EU are formulated and designed the way they are? Why focus is on one specific area one year and on another area the next year? The answer, to a large degree, is efficient lobbying from key European actors within the field of research. Actors that have realized the importance of influencing the right decision-makers the right way at the right time.

The first step to win an EU grant is of course a suitable call that fits your expertise and research network. Moreover, as many have learned the hard way, it is not always enough to have a scientifically strong application when it comes to winning calls from the EU. As a matter of fact, you may be an outstanding researcher with an outstanding team and an outstanding application, but still just not get the money. Somehow the calls often seem designed for someone else. And this is where lobbying comes in.

Calls from the EU are not formulated and designed in a vacuum. They are not paper products from central EU bureaucrats without any contact with the outside world. Quite the contrary, these calls are the result of a continuous dialogue with European stakeholders including the research community. Structural consultations take place, ideas are discussed with trusted partners, meetings and seminars are organized, and finally the exact formulations in the calls are decided. And the more efficient we are in participating in this dialogue, the more we will be able to influence the topics and texts in the calls. And once we have managed this, chances increase that our applications will be the most on target.

By combining excellence in research, a good scientific network and solid knowledge about how to influence decision-makers to make the calls slightly more in line with our research, we will increase our chances of securing EU funding.

In concrete terms, lobbying the EU policy and research structures means learning the Brussels' process and cycle in which calls are formulated, finding out who's who in the structures and working strategically and proactively to influence these people the right way (*the development of a Lobbying Manual including best practices and a list of contact details to relevant persons within the EU structures is planned*). But it also means building strong alliances with international actors and therefore increasing the impact when trying to influence.

Most of this work needs to be conducted on an individual level. As a researcher you are yourself responsible for securing funding for your own research, and you therefore need

to learn to use all tools available for winning the grants to which you apply (obviously, people within departments and research groups working in the same research area should coordinate and tune their efforts). But the university may also play a vital role in facilitating researchers in the best possible way. Getting qualified support from the university concerning how and when to apply, who to contact and how to write, may in some cases make the whole difference. It *is* a tedious job to apply for EU funding, it *is* cumbersome with all the administrative procedures you have to go through, but if you succeed it is worthwhile. By professionally informing, supporting and educating researchers at SLU about the benefits of proactive and efficient lobbying – as well as supporting them in each step of the application process – the university administration could play a central role in helping SLU to become a stronger European actor.

Moreover, by actively encouraging and offering incentives for the establishment of new and deeper international networks with key universities and organizations, the university may help facilitating contacts between SLU's researchers and strong research groups throughout the world. Through active networking new strategic collaborations may be created, which in turn will increase the chances for funding from international sources.

THE SITUATION OF TODAY...

RESEARCH FUNDING AT SLU TODAY

The external funding of research at SLU is increasing, in line with the strategy of the university leadership. Between 2006 and 2010 there was an average yearly increase of funds coming from international sources of around 4.5%, in 2010 the income from external funds was around 850 million SEK. SLU aims to increase the proportion of external research funds coming from international sources, in 2009 that proportion was around 9% which is comparable with other universities in Sweden. However, there is a worrying trend that this proportion is decreasing at SLU. Out of these international funds about 70% come from the European Union, mostly Framework Programme 7.

Twenty-four (24) international projects were initiated during 2008 compared to 21 in 2009 and 19 in 2010. A vast majority (55%) of these 64 projects was within FP7 and the rest being funded by 13 other programs. Fourteen out of the 64 projects are being coordinated by SLU. The focus on FP7 is also obvious when looking at applications, 62% (242) of international applications known to Grants Office (between Jan 2007 and June 2011) was submitted to this program. The number of applications to EU, and indeed to international bodies in general, has increased during 2010 compared to 2009. This trend is true for all four faculties. Another positive trend is that the number and proportion of applications with SLU as coordinating partner have increased substantially (almost doubled) in 2010 compared with the two previous years.

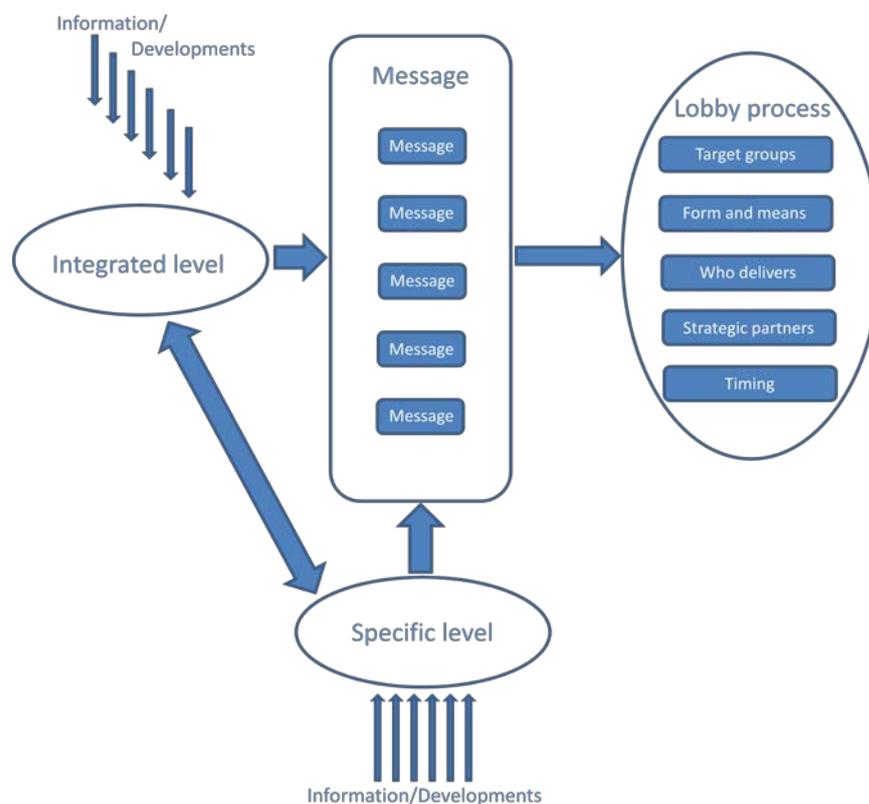
Even though 242 applications to FP7 may seem a lot, there is still room for improvement and thus more international money coming in to the university. For example, presently EU 'income' at VH faculty is about 7.5% of total external incomes. A survey made in February 2011 of earlier KBBE calls in FP7 shows that there is potential for about 15%; this simply as a result of researcher actually applying for those topics that would fit their research profile. With more suitable topics in future calls this may of course increase even more. Not being aware of the call, inability to prioritize working on a proposal and no appropriate contacts were among the reasons given for not participating more.

SLU'S SUPPORT STRUCTURE OF TODAY

- **SLU EU Team**

The SLU EU team was formed in 2007 for the purpose of facilitating researchers' participation in EU-funded research projects. The work of the EU Team is of strategic character, and its responsibilities have widened the last years to include also funding from other international sources. The team consists of representatives from each Faculty EU Network/Team, Grants Office (GO) and the university administration. Together, the EU Team acts as an efficient platform for exchange of information, communication and discussion about opportunities for increased international funding and international collaborations. For instance, the EU Team actively tries to make SLU researchers aware of future EU calls at an early stage. Therefore, when any member of the EU Team receives information about, or concrete drafts of, future calls, they are immediately distributed among all Faculty EU Networks.

During the last couple of years, the EU Team, together with GO, has started working with lobbying in a more coherent way. The EU Team and GO has outlined a first model for lobbying on several levels in parallel (figure below).



The “*Integrated level*” represents topics and research strategies that integrate different disciplines and are described on a “higher/more general level” (e.g.

integrated approaches to reduce emission of greenhouse gasses in agriculture). The “*specific level*” represents specific and more detailed research approaches (e.g. ruminant metabolism). Diverse sources of information (including scientific and policy developments) impact on these different levels (for instance EU policy developments for the “Integrated level” and scientific developments for the “specific level”) as indicated by a series of small arrows. Clearly, these different ‘levels’ are closely connected (indicated by the two-sided arrow). On both levels clear “lobby messages” need to be defined and written. These should include a description of the problem in question (on the appropriate level), the relevance of an international approach to the problem, and the specific contribution to the solution that SLU would bring. The lobbying process itself concerns primarily the coordinated strategic delivery of the messages in question. Some relevant aspects of this process are also indicated in the figure above.

- ***Grants Office (GO)***

The role of GO is primarily to assist SLU’s researchers when applying for international research funding, particularly from the EU, and to help administrating internationally financed research projects. The work is mainly conducted through consultative and administrative support to researchers, teachers and other personnel at the university. GO is based in Uppsala, Alnarp and Umeå.

Examples of services provided are:

- ✓ giving advice during the application procedure, e.g. on budget issues, legal documents and different parts of the application;
- ✓ practical help with the application;
- ✓ administration of applications for seed money;
- ✓ help during discussions and negotiations with partners and the commission;
- ✓ giving advice during the project;
- ✓ giving shorter courses to administrators at departments on framework program issues;
- ✓ keeping track of calls from national and international funding agencies;
- ✓ Project management support and administration during the project.

- ***Faculty EU Networks/Teams***

The Faculty EU Networks or Teams – one per Faculty – are responsible for EU-related activities at the faculties. The coordinators of the Faculty EU Networks are also the faculty representatives in the SLU EU Team. At the Faculty level, the coordinators work closely with the departments' EU-contact persons. At the University level, the coordinators work towards the goals of SLU's EU-Team. The coordinators are responsible for distributing information between the SLU EU-Team and the faculty EU Network, as well as for distributing information from the EU structures to the faculties' researchers.

The purpose of the Faculty EU Networks is to address the needs and questions of the faculties' researchers, with the aim of supporting their participation and engagement in EU projects. The general aim of the networks is to increase the participation of researchers in EU projects of all kinds, not only Framework Programs. Therefore the Faculty EU Networks aims to:

- ✓ increase the awareness of the possibilities to obtain EU funding;
- ✓ act as a communication and coordination structure to allow efficient exchange of information;
- ✓ develop strategies to create relevant information networks and lobbying capacities in EU and EU-related research structures,
- ✓ support all efforts to realize EU funding on the faculties' focal areas,
- ✓ actively and quickly distribute EU research Calls to relevant researchers within the faculties,
- ✓ work closely with Grants Office to increase the amount of EU funding for SLU in general and the individual faculties in particular.

- ***The role of the Research Officers (Forskningssekreterare)***

There are Research Officers at the faculties and at Ledningskansliet. Apart from other duties concerning strategic support to the faculty managements and the researchers of the faculties, the Research Officers cooperate with Grants Office concerning information on external research funding and guidance on applications to international calls. The Research Officers are furthermore actively involved in the Faculty EU Networks and act as a source of information and communication concerning the researchers' participation and engagement in EU related projects.

... AND SUGGESTIONS FOR TOMORROW

SCENARIO FOR A LOBBYING CAPACITY AT SLU

- *Aim, structure and tasks*

In order to reach the goals of developing our excellence and increasing the amount of international research funding to SLU in the coming years, SLU needs to develop a consolidated lobbying capacity responsible for initiating strategic activities vis-à-vis (primarily) the EU. This mandate could be given to the SLU EU Team, with a directive to actively pursue lobbying activities for the benefit of the university as a whole. In this scenario the SLU EU Team will keep its strategic responsibility for EU related issues, but will also carry out concrete actions with respect to lobbying and outreach activities. A smaller “**task force**”, recruited from the SLU EU Team, and in close collaboration with the SLU EU Team, will take responsibility of developing specific actions.

The SLU EU Team will write an **annual action plan** for suggested lobbying activities (including a budget). At the end of each year, the EU Team would write a report about the activities and results during the period.

On the basis of the generic strategy as described here, the SLU EU Team will also write a **lobbying manual for SLU’s researchers** with hands-on guidance and advice in the art of lobbying. The manual will include information about how, when and who to lobby, a description of the cycle in Brussels in which calls are formulated, a format to formulate lobby messages, as well as lists of relevant contact persons within the research and policy structures of the EU (including the National Contact Persons (NCPs)).

In order to learn from others’ experience, the SLU EU Team will **invite key actors** from (inter)national universities and organizations to discuss lobbying in practice within the field of research. This will include arranging meetings and seminars for exchange of lobbying experiences between international actors and relevant persons at SLU.

The SLU EU Team will also arrange **regular meetings with Heads of Department and leaders of research groups** to encourage and inform about ongoing and planned lobbying activities.

Furthermore, the team will **meet with relevant actors in the policy and research structures of the EU** to inform and lobby about the relevance of SLU’s

expertise in specific focus areas. Facilitating that EU calls “match” SLU’s scientific areas (i.e. include topics that fit SLU’s areas of expertise) is of central importance in order to increase the amount of EU funding being rewarded to SLU.

Moreover, the SLU EU Team will work to **increase SLU’s participation and engagement in the European Technology Platforms (ETPs)**. Since ETPs play a central role in influencing EU calls, a more active engagement in ETPs is of vital importance.

In addition, the team will **encourage SLU’s researchers to take part in European advisory bodies and policy groups**, and to **engage as evaluators in Brussels**.

- ***Time period and evaluation***

The SLU EU Team could be given a mandate to carry out concrete lobbying and outreach activities along the lines described above for a period of three years (2012-2015). The outcome of the efforts could be evaluated after the first three year period (end of 2015).

COOPERATION WITH GRANTS OFFICE

The SLU EU Team would have close cooperation with GO in terms of coordinating support to SLU researchers with an interest in applying for funding from the EU. However, while GO primarily would continue working with assisting SLU’s researchers in their application processes, the SLU EU Team would engage in outreach activities to more distinctly put SLU on the international research agenda.

COOPERATION WITH THE FACULTIES AND THE FACULTY EU NETWORKS

In the same manner as today, the SLU EU Team will cooperate closely with the Research Secretaries and the Faculty EU Networks in order to increase the awareness among researchers of the possibilities to obtain EU funding. The SLU EU Team will also continue to act as a communication and coordination structure to allow efficient exchange of information both within SLU and between SLU and international financial agencies/organizations/universities.

COOPERATION WITH THE EXTENSION LECTURESHIPS

As the Quality and Impact Evaluation (KoN 09) pointed out, the outside world expects SLU to increase and clarify its extension activities in a broad sense. The clearest response to this expectation is the announcement of around 20 appointments where successful candidates conduct their own research as well as collaborate with the surrounding community. The aim is that this initiative will promote skills development among SLU's stakeholders and also benefit the community as a whole. Ultimately, this initiative is also intended to improve research funding at SLU.

Required skills for these Extension Lectureships include excellence in maintaining a dialogue and a great interest in the outside world. Extension appointees are also expected to have a sound knowledge of associated research fields so as to be able to act as an entry point to SLU activities in other areas for a broader category of stakeholders. Appointees will also act as ambassadors for SLU as a whole in various external contexts

The SLU EU Team will work closely together with these extension lectureships to ensure an efficient communication with external stakeholders and to pave the way for deeper collaborations with strategic external actors. Since the SLU EU Team and the Extension Lectureships to a large extent share a common goal – promoting SLU to the outside world – there will be several interfaces between them. The extension lectureships could also play an important role in bringing the industry closer to the university and involving the industry in specific proposals, etc.

BUILDING ALLIANCES WITH KEY INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITIES/NETWORKS

Apart from actively lobbying the EU structures and (together with GO) professionally supporting SLU's researchers in their applications for EU funding, the SLU EU Team will (together with the leadership of the university) be involved in promoting and building strong alliances with key (inter)national actors within specific focus areas. Through forming alliances with strong actors within the fields of SLU's expertise, SLU will further improve its reputation as an international actor, and would gain a stronger voice when lobbying the financial structures of the EU to further develop its excellence.

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION OF RESEARCH NEWS

The SLU EU Team will also, possibly together with the Division of Communication and the newly established PGU Secretariat, develop a policy on how SLU could communicate research news internationally. One possibility is the development of a magazine in English (in paper or online) that regularly writes about ongoing international research projects at SLU (for example within FP7), including interviews with project leaders, articles on SLU's engagement in the Policy for Global Development (Politik för Global Utveckling, PGU), etc.

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

To ensure optimal progress of the activities for SLU, they will need a set of success indicators for their evaluation. The indicators are indirect and measure the "outcomes" (projects and funding) and the "infrastructure" (committees, contacts, etc). Taken together, the indicators demonstrate the success of SLU to increase its influence on European research policy, i.e. our ability to lobby. Such a self-assessment shall be done once a year by the EU Team.

The following general indicators shall be used:

- Number of applications.
- Number of projects under negotiation and/or funded.
- Number of coordinators.
- Success rate described as % of successful applications in relation to number of applications sent in.
- International funding in total, and as % of total external funding
- Internationally co-authored scientific papers.

Divided into:

- EU programmes and other international projects.
- SLU in total resp. faculty-wise.

Comparisons will be made with the two foregoing years (which is in accordance with the account in the annual SLU report for some of the indicators above).

Other success indicators of the work shall be:

- SLU representation in external committees, groups and international bodies.
- Participation from SLU researchers in evaluation process of EU funded programmes.

BUDGET

Most of the activities of the strategy are financed through already allocated personnel resources of Grants Office and the SLU EU Teams. However, the intensification of activities envisaged through the strategy will require strengthened financial resources, especially for information material, marketing, consultancy support, travelling and arranging national and international meetings of importance for SLU in relation to EU. The strategy should be implemented by SLU as a whole (within the coordination of the SLU EU Team) and the additional financial resources are intended to be used to facilitate the broader participation of people in the whole organisation. For 2012 this amount is estimated to SEK 0,5 million but should be annually revised on the basis of a yearly action plan.