

The final annual ReUseWaste meeting, held in Erfurt in May ([see here](#)), was concluded with an internal self-evaluation session of strengths and weaknesses of the project. The aim of the exercise was to ensure that we all learn from the experiences gained during the course of a project of this nature and scope, and that lessons learned can be disseminated to other Marie Curie ITN projects.

Project participants were therefore split into five groups, each containing at least one ReUseWaste fellow, one supervisor and someone involved in project administration or management. Each group was asked to discuss what the **best aspects** of ReUseWaste were and **what can be improved** next time. Following lively discussion in the groups, we were able to synthesise the following important points.

- For **research planning and coordination**, the discussion centred on the pros and cons of providing fellows with a well-defined project at the start of their program, versus allowing them to develop their own ideas and projects. A strength in allowing fellows freedom to develop ideas is that they can assume ownership of their projects, and explore and plan their own work, whilst a weakness can be that fellows may spend too much time in the start-up phase, potentially causing delay. A recommendation here was to ensure a strong focus on planning the individual projects at the beginning of the fellowships. In particular, special attention should be given to facilitating planning of complicated field studies or sample sharing, as such activities require more planning and contingency planning in case something goes wrong. In particular, sample exchange posed a significant challenge in the early stage of the projects, strongly affecting those who were reliant on acquiring samples. The aspect of running joint experiments was also discussed in a project of this nature, however this would have been excessively complicated – fellow secondments are perhaps the best instrument to facilitate the linking of different experiments, and this has actually been successfully completed for many of fellows.
- **Secondments** were found to be a very good training activity in the fellows' view. The process of planning and undertaking secondments enhanced the power of the network and gave rise to excellent knowledge exchange and creation. Secondments should be planned early in the process, and it was discussed what the best timing and duration of secondments is – here the individual fellows needs are central.
- **PhD supervision**, unsurprisingly, was a topic of animated discussion centring on well-known supervision and supervisory issues and challenges. Supervision needs from the fellows' perspectives differed according to individual preference, whilst supervisors were generally happier when fellows were more autonomous and active in proposing ideas.
- Other aspects of the **training** program were also discussed, including the number and type of courses (fewer courses next time, perhaps more statistics and scientific writing). The **study tours** were a highly appreciated aspect as was the feedback at the regular project meetings.
- Participants agreed unanimously that being part of a Marie-Curie ITN project strengthened their **research network** - the interdisciplinary nature of the network helped to broaden the perspectives of the individual PhD projects.
- One note on the less positive side, was the challenge of how to engage **associate partners** in the network when they have no budget and hence less formal obligations – involvement has mainly been successful on an individual basis (e.g. industrial internships, making equipment or samples available etc.) with lesser network involvement.
- Finally, participants unanimously noted the high importance of **well-managed project coordination by the UCPH team**, which has been instrumental in this successful and rewarding partnership. We humbly accept this kind recognition of our efforts ☺ - and are happy that all felt it was successful.

