Training Workshop 4 – Practical Networking

Date: 21 June 2024

Time: 13:00 – 14:30 CET (1 hour 30 mins)

Trainer: Dr Darcey Gillie, Freelance Careers and Education Consultant and Research Staff Careers Consultant at the University of Edinburgh

Participants: 25

- Gender split: the group of 25 participants consisted of 13 women (52%) and 12 men (48%)
- Countries of origin: The participants were originally from Afghanistan (10), Ukraine (8), Syria (2), Russia (1), Cuba (1), Sudan (1) and Ethiopia (1)

Format

- The interactive training was held online in a group format led by an experienced trainer who led the webinar prior to this training. The format prioritised interactive and direct participation by each attendee and allowed for attention to individual queries and contexts. The training was not recorded in order to encourage robust and unfiltered participation by all attendees and in consideration of the security of each scholar. This format was arrived at based upon previous experience shared by organisations within the consortium experienced in organising trainings and workshops for researchers at risk, including based on feedback from participants following past events.

Preparations

- The topic for this webinar was chosen based on the topics agreed in the Grant Agreement and on positive feedback received from the two previous Inspireurope+ webinars on the topic of networking
- The topic provided an opportunity for specific and interactive follow-up training following the Inspireurope+ public webinar held in March 2024 on 'making friends and influencing people', which broadly focussed on networking. The webinar took a broader approach to this topic listed under D2.4 in the GA, whilst the interactive training session focussed on the practical aspects of networking, ensuring it was applicable to all researchers regardless of discipline
- Given the professional development nature of Work Package 2 of the Inspireurope+ project, Darcey was deemed to be the appropriate fit for delivering a training session around the theme of overcoming professional isolation, developing networking and communication skills as set out in the grant agreement
- Darcey Gillie has been a qualified careers practitioner in higher education for 15 years, specialising in working with research staff and research students. She is a part-time member of Careers Support Team in the Institute for Academic Development at the University of Edinburgh providing confidential, impartial, expert careers guidance to research staff. She

also runs her own careers consultancy, The Career Doctor Online. Darcey explains that helping people have satisfying careers is her purpose in life.

Agenda Overview

The session was intended for researchers at risk and was led by Darcey Gillie. The session focussed on the practical side of networking, looking at the *what* and *how* of networking, and tools and techniques to use. Darcey led the training session but there was an emphasis on group discussion, with several breakout room opportunities throughout the 90-minute session. There were three main activities as part of the training:

1. Networking as a way of helping others
2. Getting beyond small talk
3. Broadening your network

Participants were put into breakout rooms for each activity to ensure groups were small enough to allow each participant the opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences. Once participants had left the breakout rooms, they were encouraged to share what they had discussed with the wider group. Each group elected one person to speak which worked well and gave everyone the chance to speak.

Group learnings from the session included:

- Taking time to generate questions at the beginning of conversations was effective to understand the context and the person with whom you are speaking with;
- Taking time to build a connection and have conversations that are not solely transactional helps in building lasting relationships;
- Be strategic in how you operate and proactive in the giving nature of networking.

The final part of the session was dedicated to any questions participants had that had not already been answered. There was good engagement and open discussion between several participants at this stage. In addition to the question and answers session, Lucia Simms (moderator) responded to queries throughout the session via the chat function. Darcey Gillie was also answering questions throughout the session that arose in the chat function.

Observations/Learnings

- It was apparent that only a select few participants were keen to ask questions and speak openly without being prompted when part of the wider group discussion.
- Breakout rooms encourage participants to freely discuss their own ideas and resulted in more participation from all researchers.

Evaluation/Feedback

- Feedback forms have been sent out to all participants. The form template can be found in Annex A. A summary of the feedback will be provided in the coming weeks once sufficient responses have been collected.
- Some immediate feedback was received via email from several participants who reached out to express their interest in further sessions if available.

Participant guide and resource list

- Researchers were provided with the slides from the session (annex B), including links to useful resources. The trainer has also provided her contact information for participants to reach out if they would like to.