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1. Give us a brief overview of your professional career and how you ended up in your current position.

I have been working with the University of Copenhagen since 1994, where I was employed at the Faculty of Science. I was building up a research support office, and in 1999 I moved on to become part of Rectors Office. I was here working with the Research Board and other research related issues as building the next generation of the University's Research Information System (CURIS). In 2005 I tried to escape from the University and got a job on the Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University, which was merged into the University of Copenhagen 2007, and already in the summer 2006 I was allocated to the Merger Secretariate and have had that as a major field of work ever since – merging academics is a long-lasting and deep going process. My other major work field is external funding of Research where I primarily work with EU-funding of Research – not least the strategic and lobbying sides of it. Finally I have always been actively involved in the community of Research Managers and Administrators, nationally and internationally. I was one of the founders of the Danish Association of Research Managers and Administrators and Board member here for two years, until I was elected Chair of EARMA in the spring 2010.

2. What are your current responsibilities and what are the most challenging aspect(s) of your current position?

I have three major fields of responsibilities as mentioned above, Research strategy and planning, external funding and professional development. I get a kick out of having them meet and be fruitful in the sense of giving inspiration to new ideas and projects.

The most challenging aspect is to have people meet and work for the common goals and at the same time make sure that their (and my own) personal goals are met. I think it is important to keep focus on the fact that we are human beings.

3. What are the key qualities required in your position?

Diplomacy and Humor. My key qualification is the ability to see the long-term perspectives and policy elements of the field of Research. Without that I would not have been in the position I am in today. It is not something I have learned, I am just doing it by nature.

4. You recently became Chair of the European Association of Research Managers and Administrators (EARMA), could you please highlight the mission of EARMA and the vision you have for the organization?

“The main objectives of EARMA are to increase the efficiency and maximise the impact of public- and private funded research within the European Research Area and to bring research output into the benefit of society; to improving the quality and professionalism of Research Management and Administration – throughout Europe in interaction with funders and research community by removing obstacles and administrative burdens.

EARMA shall reinforce its position in Europe as a strong and trustworthy partner, for funders, policy makers, national and international networks and associations within the field and other associations with relations to the field. EARMA shall collaborate with national and international associations and will take on the responsibility of being the European node in a global network. This aim shall be reached through exchange of information, common activities and through the participation in common projects, and through mutual participation in each other’s annual meetings and other relevant activities.

EARMA will provide the open platform for European Research Managers and Administrators, and involve members actively in the formulation and carrying out of EARMA’s goals.

EARMA shall develop a career development scheme, with the aim to support professional development for all members and member-types within EARMA.”

So much the formalities and the goals we want to achieve. My vision is that EARMA can play the role for facilitating the “Agora” where funders, policy makers and stakeholders (industry and society) meet to discuss and develop new ideas and improve existing frameworks, and in that capacity becomes the true “European” voice in the global network.

5. What are the similarities and dissimilarities of administering domestic and international programs?

There are huge differences. First and foremost all text is in your mother tongue, so you do not need much interpretation to get the grasp of a program. You also know, or are able to understand the administrative procedures, as they follow the lines of your day-to-day interaction with society, e.g. tax regulations. And most important, the domestic programs have been running for ages, and they represent 90% of your funding scheme, so everybody in the system knows them more or less by heart. In international programs you have to understand a new logic (in applying and managing). It is normally a cultural challenge rather than a technical challenge. Because these programs play a minor role in the funding portfolio, they also tend to be “hand hold” in administrative terms, and what usually causes most of the problems. Most international programs tends to be larger than domestic programs, so issues like many partners, IPR-rights, international conventions etc. play a larger role in the preparation and management of the programs.

6. What do you see are the upcoming challenges in international research administration over the next 5 years?

First and foremost we will see a shift in public financing of research from basic funding to universities and research institutions to competitive funding through new or growing programs. We will see a shift towards further emphasis on international funded research, through “Joint Programs”, more competition for the larger international funds, new international funding schemes, etc. As the competition for funding increases, we see a shift towards the lobbying process and a more structured approach towards setting long term research agendas, as have been seen with European Technology Platforms. From the administrative side, we will also see a diversification in research funding and the emerging of new complex application and funding schemes not necessarily giving less work for the research managers and administrators. So it will be more work to research administrators, but it will also be more fun (I hope), as we will deal more with global issues and great societal challenges.