Lessons learned from the coordination of an Initial Training Network (ITN)

"BioTiNet"
Academic-Industrial Initial Training Network on Innovative Biocompatible Titanium-based Structures for Orthopaedics

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Thanks to: Jürgen Eckert, Birgit Benz, Annet Gebert, Denise Beitelschmidt, Judith Kalkstein, Jana Friebel, Varvara Efimova, BioTiNet Consortium

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Project overview

- **Duration → 48 months →** 1.January 2011 – 31.December 2014
- **Budget (EC): 3.5 Mil. €**

  496 person months (PM)
  12 ESRs + 6 ERs

- **Consortium → 12 full partners**

  10 from academia (univ. + institutes)
  2 industrial partners

  → 5 assoc. part.

  end-users, industry & private comp., hospitals

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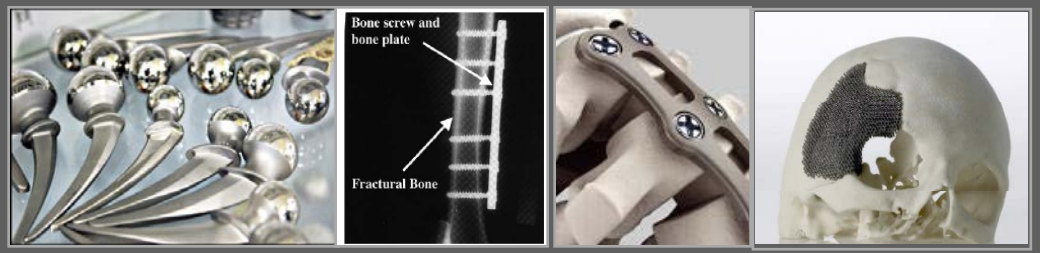
Research

Why BioTiNet?

Commercial orthopaedic materials → serious problems of safety and long-term durability in the human body, resulting in repeat surgical operations

- **medical device industry**
- **clinics**
- **patients**

Critical need for reinforcing research in load-bearing orthopaedic implants



Metallic biomaterials with improved performances!

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BioTiNet ITN - Overall goals

basic principles:

- **Focus on the career development of individual researchers**
- **Support transnational mobility of researchers**

- **Knowledge-based biocompatible low-stiffness Ti-base materials**
- **Highly skilled young scientists → biomedical materials field**

BioTiNet interdisciplinarity

- Structural design & physical metallurgy
- Innovative processing
- Material response under mechanical loading
- Functional interfaces between Ti-materials and bone
- Biosystem-metal interactions (biocompatibility stud.)

- **Materials Sci. & Eng.**
- **Physics**
- **Chemistry**
- **Mechanical Eng.**
- **Medical Eng.**
- **Microbiology**

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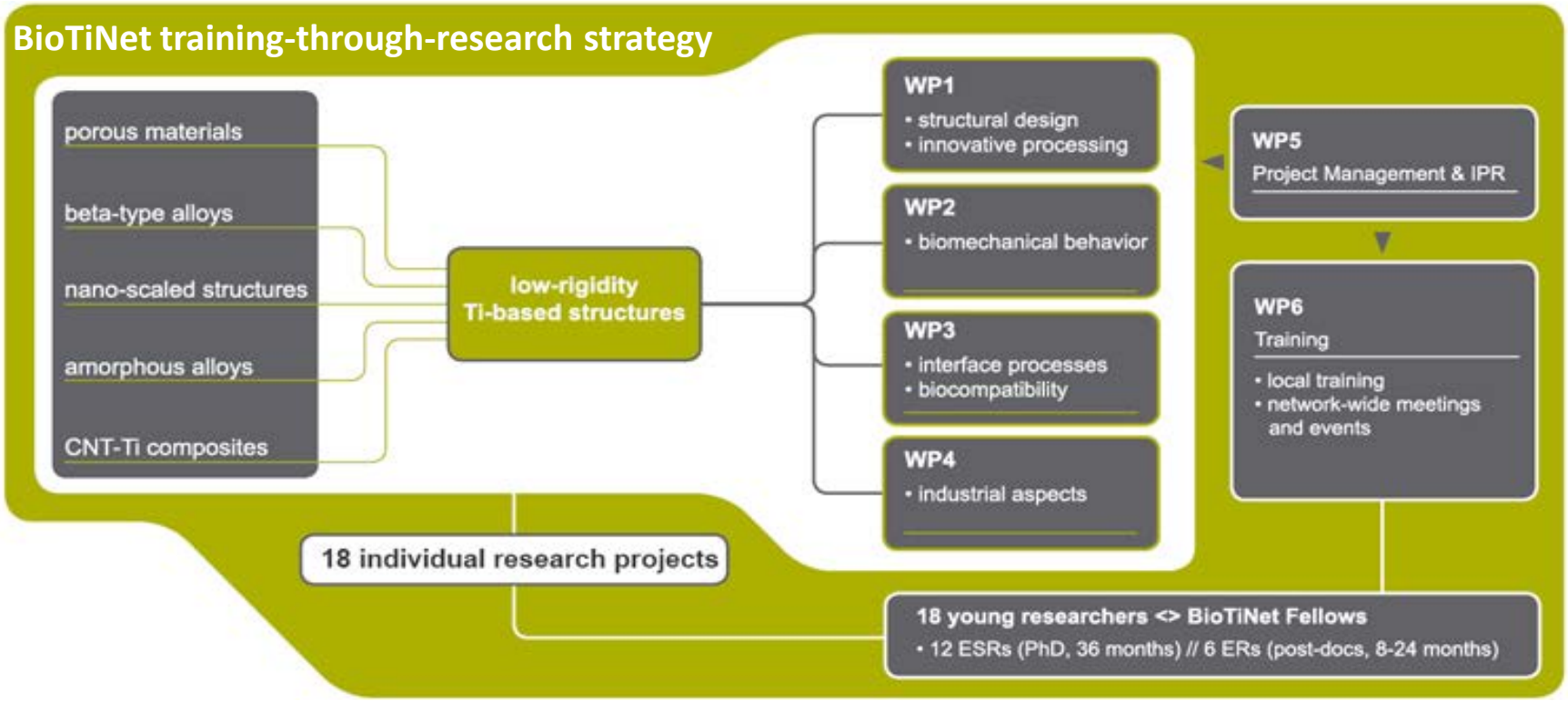
The Work Plan

6 Work packages (WP)

- **4 research WPs → 496 person months → 12 ESRs + 6 ERs**
- **1 management & IPR**
- **1 training**



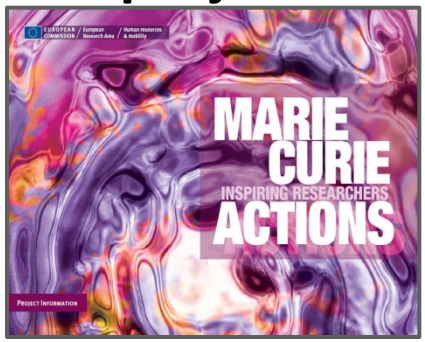
Plan your proposal

Research Idea

- **Select an "interesting" research topic/idea:**
  → be focused on an applied problem
  (…in an specific field, e.g. in medicine…)

❖ **Multi-disciplinarity**
❖ **Innovative aspect**

- **Read & understand the Call/ITN purpose**
- **Check your topic in the projects data base of EC – funded projects**
  → no overlap with other (already) EC-financed projects



- **Visit (many) websites of other ITNs**
  → get a feeling of 'project on work'
  → become familiar with the ITNs
- **Visit the websites of international conferences in your research topic**
  → identify the 'hot' topics in the field
  → look at the 'sessions' structure & participants
  (multi-disciplinarity, complementarities,….countries, names, institutions…)

Plan your proposal (contd.)

- **'Hot' topic / innovative research idea**

  → the proposed work is a progress in the state-of-the-art

- **Partners Selection**

  → quality of the Network is important!

-scientific excellence
-complementarity in research tasks
-different sectors of activity (academia vs industry, public vs. private)
-good geographical & 'political' distribution
(North-South vs East-West; 'old' vs 'new' EU members)
-experience in EU projects
-existing collaborations between partners
-good gender balance (…PIs)
- max. 10-12 full partners / beneficiaries.

Plan your proposal (contd.)

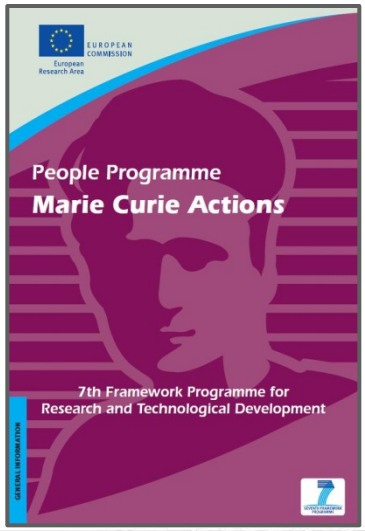
…but 'great science' alone is not enough…

- **Why should your proposal be funded?**

  …who needs your research effort/work?....insert your 'hot' research idea into the **EU research landscape**……know the industries that can be positively impacted by this work…connection with **European society needs ….**official EU documents & statistical data … **added value for the EU**)

First steps…

– Write 1-2 page draft with the proposal research strategy to send to potential partners to win them for the project
– Explain why & how teams will complement each other
– Make sure you agree early who will contribute what to the proposal
– One contact person per partner → avoid chaotic exchange of info
– Ideally, set up a timetable and have everyone agree it.

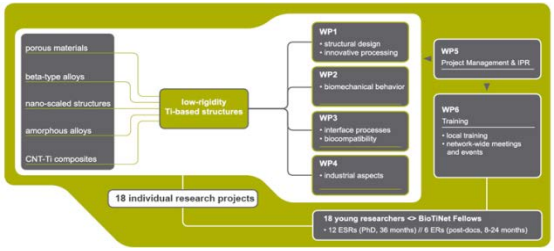


Proposal preparation & writing

Be sure that you are working with the actual documents of the Call
(Call Fiche, Guide for Applicants, Work programme)

- **Part B → ITN proposal**
  - follow strictly the guidelines (chapter structure, contents, font size, requested tables, etc.)
- Clear, self-explainable proposal title
- **First 1-2 pages of Part B → make clear from the beginning what's about in your proposal**
  - main objectives, research areas, who needs your research effort, why this Network
  - some statistics, concrete evidence stating why the problem needs to be solved
  - underline the inter-disciplinary aspects → excellent for training young scientists
- **S & T Quality**
  - clearly formulate the problem and put it in context of contemporary scientific and theoretical debates → the proposed research work is a progress in the state-of-the-art
  - give references stating that the problem addressed in the proposal needs to be solved
  - add relevant 'nice' figures, diagrams, schemes
  - 'convincible' list of references (including partners' publications).

Proposal preparation & writing (contd.)



Research plan

- Innovative, ambitious, but realistic
- Contains experimental and theoretical components
- Not too many WPs → multi-partner WPs, inter-disciplinarity, complementarity
- Keep the plan simple and clear (objectives, tasks, partners involved, milestones, individual projects of fellows, person-months, supervising arrangements…)

Training

You have to clearly demonstrate the training capacity of the Network!

- Separate WP → Good match between Research and Training program
- Key skills vs. complementary skills (give examples…. table form)
- Convincible, credible, well structured and organized
- Explain how partners will complement each other, role of associated partners
- Network-wide and local training events → give as many details as possible: training event title/topic, organizer, place, period, draft agenda, participants (table form)

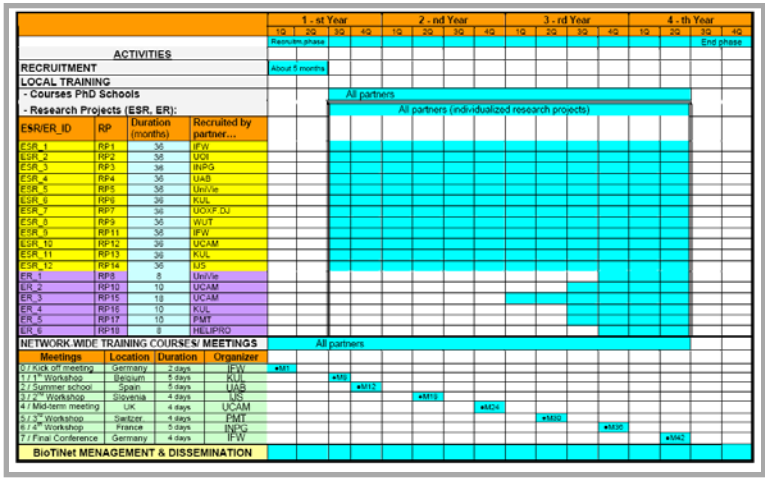
… No need to reinvent the wheel!…visit the websites of other ITNs

-summer schools, workshops, events organized by the industrial partners-

Proposal preparation & writing (contd.)

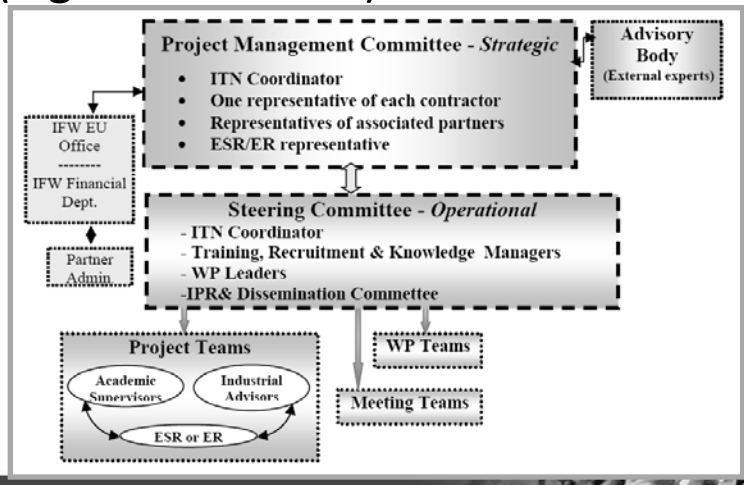
Implementation

- Careful Planning of WPs, deliverables, milestones (table form)
- Ganutt diagram
- Underline the complementarities and synergy among partners



Organisation & Management structure

- Separate WP (including IPR management and dissemination)
- Clear and convincible management structure (Fig. + table form)
- Identify any sensitive issues or potential problems which need to be addressed (risk management plan)
- IPR & Knowledge management
- Dissemination plan
- Explain the recruitment strategy
- Good gender balance



Proposal preparation & writing (contd.)

Organisation & Management structure (contd.)

- Plan carefully the budget → agree a budget (Person Months) early on (this avoids misunderstandings later)
- Make sure the proposal text reflects the budget and vice versa
- Experience in EU project management of the coordinating institution
  → support & help from the **EU office of IFW Dresden**: B. Benz., J. Kalkstein, J. Friebel
  → make use of the help you're being offered from the **Contact National Point**

Impact

→ very important, often underestimated!

- Overall impact of the proposal
- Benefits to the ITN fellows
- Benefits to participating institutions
- Benefits to the European level and European Research Area

…instead of Conclusions…

•**ITN proposals are extremely time consuming** → Start drafting the proposal even before *the Call* is published (info from **National Contact Points**, **EU offices at your own institution**)

•Partner selection → scientific excellence, complementarity

•Check carefully the evaluation criteria

- Follow rigorously the guidelines and templates (max no. of pages, indication of length of sections, recommended font size, tables…) → These requirements are inflexible!
- Some preparatory measures and administrative work (on-line forms in the *Participant Portal*) are required → fill in the admin. forms well in advance
- Avoid chaotic exchange of information within Consortium → Involve the partners for certain proposal's sections → use templates to make your life 'easier' and give deadlines

•Do not be focused on the technical part (science) only

•Keep the research & training plan simple and clear

•Make the proposal 'attractive' → clear and concise structured, well organized, containing 'eye catchers' (figures, diagrams, schemes…)

•Make it easy for the evaluators to find the information in the proposal

•Do not submit the proposal too close to the deadline!

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RESEARCH PARTNERS TRAINING FELLOWS DISSEMINATION CONTACT LINKS | INTERN

www.biotinet.eu

NEWS

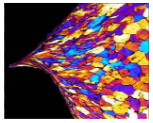
- BioTiNet Winter School
  25.02.-01.03.14
  in Austria
- 4th BioTiNet Workshop
  26.-28.06.13
  in Switzerland

Recent updates »

VACANCIES

All positions are currently filled.

Welcome to BioTiNet



BioTiNet is a **Marie Curie Initial Training Network (ITN)** for early-stage researchers (ESR) and experienced researchers (ER) funded by the European Commission under the **FP7 - `People` Programme**. The start date for the 4-year project is January 1. 2011 (G.A. no. 264635).

The project provides research and training opportunities for 18 young researchers/fellows in the field of biomedical materials, with special emphasis on the development of advanced low-rigidity Titanium-based structures for orthopaedic use. This involves both multi-disciplinary scientific training, secondments in both academia and industry, and courses in complementary ("soft") skills.

BioTiNet conducts its own research, which addresses hig
questions in the area of Materials Science and Engi
Nanostructures, Laser-Assisted Rapid Manufacturing, Skeletal
Surface Science and Microbiology.

This Network comprises 12 Full Partners and 5 Associated
(Germany, France, Belgium, Austria, UK, Poland, Greece, Slove

Questions regarding the BioTiNet project can be addressed he

Thank you!