

Main conclusions of impact assessment of Stepping-stone program

- **Objective:**

The aim of this impact assessment is to evaluate the **efficacy of the Stepping-stone programme in delivering appropriate, high quality, and useful training to support the development of skills and abilities for IDIBAPS researchers**. Specially, to increase their career development as well as employability within the European Research Area (ERA), within or beyond the academia.

- **Conclusions:**

Considering the results of the analysis shown in this report, it was possible to **identify 4 major strengths** that will be tried to be maintained along the time in the next editions of the programme:

- a. Satisfaction: the degree of satisfaction with the Stepping-Stone programme is very high and should set the standard for future editions of the programme.
- b. Quality of the training: The evaluation regarding speakers' presentation skills and the quality of the material used to deliver the sessions are very good and consistent with participant's satisfaction rates.
- c. Engagement: Each of the unique participants of the Stepping-stone programme attend 1 to 3 activities every year. Moreover, among them there is a strong "loyal group" of researchers that participate consistently to the activities proposed each year.
- d. Career development and employability of researchers: At least half of the participants to the survey consider positive or very positive the impact of the Stepping-stone programme in their professional development. Moreover, the activities of the Stepping-stone programme ensure in large part the acquisition of new knowledge and, to a lesser extent, new practical skills.

On the other hand, **3 points of weakness** regarding the Stepping-stone programme are identified to propose future improvements:

- a. Participation: Although 27% of IDIBAPS eligible researchers attended to at least one activity of the Stepping-stone programme, there is still a majority of people that do not participate or show interest in participating at all or regularly to the programme.
- b. Applicability of the trainings: Although, a high percentage of researchers (46%) gave a positive or very positive feedback regarding the applicability of what they learnt during the training to their job, there is still space to improve this important aspect. Nevertheless, it is important to take into consideration that the applicability can be limited by different causes not inherent to the programme.
- c. Support to the career progression: Stepping-stone training sessions are recognised as an effective instrument to help researchers' careers, however the general opinions are demure on this subject. Since more often researchers are asking for concrete examples of career options within and beyond academia, a different approach should be considered to allow them to become aware of all the opportunities available that would facilitate planning their future career paths.

The **improvements proposed to overcome these issues** focus on three different aspects:

- a. **Increase researchers' participation:** Raise awareness about the utility of the Stepping-stone programme and the importance of the transversal non-scientific skills by: Engaging with Principal investigators to support participation of R1 and R2 researchers of their groups to the Stepping-stone activities; Engaging with representatives of the R1 and R2 community to create group of influence promoting the activities of the Stepping-stone programme; Improving the communication campaign to reach as many researchers as possible that could be interested in participating to the Stepping-stone programme in order to expand the "loyalty group" already present.
- b. **Increase applicability of the trainings:**
The actions to be made are: Identify target populations for each training activity and define their needs to offer more focused activities; Create opportunities for participants to practice the skills learnt linking the programme activities to other activities promoted by IDIBAPS or other stakeholders from the sector; and, Help the speakers design more practical and applicable activities that can provide researchers with skills that can be used directly in their jobs.
- c. **Support to the career progression:**
The initiatives to be followed at this stage are: To launch activities with a new format in which there are dedicated sessions that allow interactions with real professionals working beyond the bench; Improve feedback analysis including more questions in the feedback form regarding knowledge and skills acquisition as well as applicability of the training sessions; Define, with the support of the Training Committee, standards of quality to be reached.