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<p>Sano Centre for New Methods in Computational Diagnostics and Personalised Therapy</p>
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<p>D4.2: Research Exchange Programme and Travel Policies</p>
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Short description:

<p>This deliverable outlines the policies which will guide Sano in instituting its research exchange programme – which represents a major aspect of the Centre’s activities – as well as in facilitating academic and business travel of its employees and affiliates, where necessary to further the Centre’s goals.</p>

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1 Executive Summary

In order to be successful, the Sano Centre must develop an exchange and contact network with an international reach. Achieving this goal entails business and academic travel on the part of Sano employees and visiting researchers, PhD and internship programmes in which Sano members will take part as well as incidental travel necessitated by organisational or technical issues arising at the Centre. The goal of this deliverable is to provide guidance on how each of these activities should be accomplished.

2 Sano travel and exchange programme

2.1 Research exchange for PhD students

An important part of the doctoral education at Sano is to acquire a broad set of skills and general competence in context of their own research project. This can be achieved through an active participation in internalisation activities that involve international conferences, publication in international journals with peer review, collaboration with research groups in other countries as well as research stays at R&D organisations abroad. PhD students deemed eligible by the Scientific Affairs Director as well as by the prospective host institution will spend approximately 6 months at Advanced Partners or other collaborating institutions for training. The PhD student exchange programme emulates successful examples like USFD Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions and EU Networks of Excellence, such as CoreGRID¹.

The main premise when designing the Sano PhD programme was to benefit from the “teaming” nature of the Centre by complementing the Centre’s own activities with an extensive Research Exchange Programme (REP). This will be documented on a per-student basis to clarify the purpose of planned visits. Moreover, the exchange programme will be driven by a Training Needs Analysis for each student, similarly to the approach adopted by USFD.² Such analysis will be further developed and adopted by Sano, once the more detailed structured training programme is developed at Sano.

The main assumptions are:

- Every student should spend at least 6 months at foreign institutions throughout the PhD programme.
- This will be split into:
 - short visits (~1 week), and
 - longer stays (~1-3 months)

for training and research.

While the short-time research stays can be used for training, project meetings, consultations with the academic supervisors and collaborators, the purpose of the longer visit will be to learn also the academic culture of the hosting institution, to participate in day-to-day work of the research team, to get familiar with the best practices and to provide an alternative perspective on the research. Longer research stays will give the PhD students the opportunity to get to know new scientific methods and approaches, to get access to new knowledge and ideas as well as help establish new collaborations

¹ CoreGRID Researchers Exchange Programme: <http://coregrid.ercim.eu/mambo/content/view/95/101/index.html>

² USFD Training Needs Analysis: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/scharr/current/pgresearch/handbook/tna>



and networks. This would not only improve career prospects of individual PhD students, but also nourish Sano's scientific foundation. For these reasons, the recommended length of the longer stay is 3 months, and the minimum is 1 month.

We assume that the longer research visit will be hosted by one of Sano foreign partner institutions (USFD, Fraunhofer, FZJ), but it may be also hosted in another research, clinical or industrial institution, if this is justified by the given PhD project. For example, a visit to a new collaborating institution may be used to initiate a closer collaboration between Sano and this new partner. As Sano is open to collaboration with institutions worldwide, the REP can be used for travel to the collaborating institutions in these countries as well.

We require that a student prepares a short REP proposal that needs to be agreed between the student's supervisor (see stakeholders) and the hosting institution, and include:

- confirmation of the host (individual supervising the student at the foreign institution),
- description of the research goal,
- planned outputs (publications, software, data).

The template of this application is provided in Appendix A to this document.

The proposal will be approved by the Sano Director (a director may delegate this to a committee or a responsible person).

The application and approval procedure are as follows:

1. Sano agrees with the receiving institution on the purpose, the duration of the visit, and the name of the candidate;
2. The proposal is prepared by the candidate and sent to Sano office;
3. Sano office forwards it to the Scientific Affairs Director and 2 other researchers;
4. Review and approval expected within one week;
5. Sano office informs the interested parties;
6. Unless determined otherwise by Sano and the receiving institution, the visiting Researcher will start the visit within two months from approval – or inform Sano if another start date needs to be agreed;
7. Reporting at the end of the exchange.

The template of this report is provided in Appendix B to this document.

We assume that any IP-related issues related to these visits will be covered by the T2 and IRAP agreements for institutions who participate in these projects. However, individual agreements will be needed in the cases when there are more complex issues related to usage of partners IP or clinical data. This will be of particular importance for visits to institutions outside of the project consortium, such as industrial collaborators, who usually have strict IP regulations for internships and visiting researchers.

Table 1 provides an overview of funding allocated to the travel and exchange programme as per the current Sano financial plan (including per diem for short visits and lump sums for longer visits; similar to MCSA funding of 2500 EUR per month). The assumption is that each student will have a baseline budget for one week of short trip per every year and one conference per every two years. More trips can be funded if there is a budget available. The planned funding will cover all the PhD students employed by Sano during the IRAP and Teaming projects.

**Table 1 Budget for travel plans - overview**

short travel per person	trips per year	1
	cost per trip	6 000 PLN
conferences per person	trips per year	0.5
	cost per trip	10 000 PLN
long travel per person	months per year	2
	cost per month	10 000 PLN
incoming visitors, short trips per research team (6 teams planned)	trips per year	1
	cost per trip	12 000 PLN

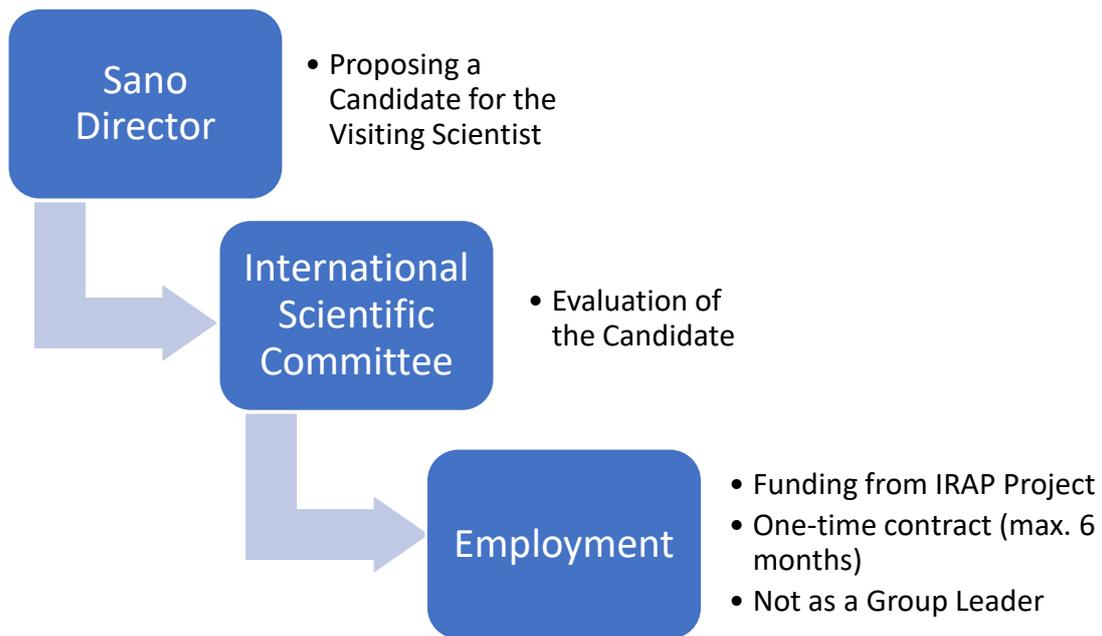
2.2 Visiting professors and professionals

The Centre's activities encompass short visits by external partners to research teams in Kraków for seminars and joint research, longer research visits (1 month or more) and sabbaticals. Typically, a visiting professor will always be present in Kraków. In addition, maintaining international status and culture at the Centre calls for frequent visits of visiting professionals from advanced partners and elsewhere. The Sano budget includes resource allocations for 300 visit-days during the first active 12 months, and at least 100 per year thereafter. More specifically, the current budget provides funding for 1-2 weeks (12 000 PLN) per year per research team, which gives 6-12 weeks, i.e. up to ~80 days per year. This coupled with the travel budget of USFD, FZJ and ISI can easily cover 100 days per year.

Visiting Scientists or Visiting Professors (Individual Scientists) would provide added value for Sano to extend the knowledge in particular scientific fields. Where feasible, Visiting Scientists will also support research work in different teams, for a period of up to 6 months.

The regulatory framework for hiring such scientists is as follows:

- A description of the research goal is formulated.
- Open call and/or recommendations from Sano employees and ecosystem are welcome.
- Interview sessions with research team and the Sano Director and Scientific Affairs Director.
- A candidate for a Visiting Scientist is presented by Sano Director to International Scientific Committee. The recruitment rules according to IRAP don't require an open competition.
- Hiring a Visiting Scientist requires a positive opinion from International Scientific Committee.
- Such an individual candidate could be hired at Sano on the presented terms, with no automatic prolongation option.
- Visiting Scientists are not hired as Group Leaders. Their scope of responsibilities may relate to completing particular scientific tasks or solving a research challenge. He/she can share his/her expertise with more than one scientific group working with IRAP.
- The salary costs and costs of research activities can be funded with IRAP funds according to the IRAP rules. Once a Visiting Scientist is hired, Sano should immediately upload the relevant information to the FNP electronic system.



2.3 Short travel for partner meetings

This activity is assumed relevant to all research and innovation staff, and we allocate budget for one week of travel per quarter.

Sano representatives who travel to meetings hosted by Project partners will be reimbursed from the travel budget as allocated in the Teaming Phase 2 budget. This applies to individuals who are directly employed in the framework of the Teaming project on the grounds of employment contracts.

A request to take part in an external meeting should be well motivated and be consistent with the objectives of the Teaming project. On the other hand, meetings where the physical presence of the project partners is not absolutely necessary, will be held virtually. The administrative department of Sano will define procedures for submitting the relevant application and obtaining approval, which should be issued by a member of the Board delegated for this purpose. Administrative personnel will provide employees with assistance regarding travel options, accommodation and other technical arrangements, which must, in each case, remain compliant with the applicable legislation, particularly as concerns the permissible expenses (for airfare, hotels, etc.).

Following a visit, the employee will need to submit an expenses form, detailing the incurred costs related to the meeting, and effect a financial settlement with the Sano office, returning any unused portion of the assigned funds. The frequency of such visits is not predetermined but will depend on approvals issued by the above-mentioned Board member(s) who, in turn, need to be mindful of the available resources and budgetary constraints.

2.4 Conferences

The Sano budget provides for participation in scientific and technical conferences. The Centre intends, among others, to actively attend leading biomedical conferences (VPH Conference, Conference on Mathematical and Computational Medicine, and similar) to advertise its PhD programme and open positions, and a series of KPIs have been defined regarding participation in such events, and organising workshops thereupon (at 5, 50 and 120 by Project Month 18, 72 and 120 respectively). Suitable financial resources are allocated to Project partners within the scope of WP4 and WP5 in the Teaming



Phase 2 project, and participation in scientific events is covered by Task 4.4 led directly by the Centre. Furthermore, Task 5.4 aims to coordinate participation in exhibitions, conferences, fairs and shows to build awareness of the Centre, its results and the products and services it offers.

The Sano financial plan envisions participation of Sano staff in external events and conferences roughly at the level of 1 event per year per person. With regard to top representatives of the Centre, i.e. the Director, the Scientific Affairs Director and research team leaders, more frequent travel is expected to ensure strategic presence at important industry events, scientific events and similar. The Sano administrative department will provide assistance in cases where such travel entails transport and/or storage of technical equipment or bulk materials (also in the case of visiting professors).



3 Safeguards

The procedures outlined in Section 2 describe the arrangements required to implement the process of Research Exchange. For completeness, this section itemises the additional factors required to safeguard the parties and ensure satisfactory outcomes.

3.1 International Authorisation

Conformity with international regulations on transfer, employment and residence will be observed.

3.2 Institutional Authorisation

Appropriate documentation that may be required by exchanging institutions will be completed.

3.3 Insurance

Source and Destination institutions will agree the details of any insurance required to cover personal, injury, liability and repatriation costs.

3.4 Intellectual Property

All Exchanges will be governed by the Sano Standard Operating Procedures on the identification and safeguarding of Intellectual Property.

3.5 Publications

Agreement between all parties will be required prior to any publication of results arising from exchanges.

3.6 Ethics

All parties will be required to adhere to the Sano Standard Operating Procedures regarding ethical conduct.



4 Effect of COVID-19 on the Sano research exchange programme and travel policies

The presented set of procedures has been developed under the assumption that difficulties resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic will not be of a permanent nature, and that travel restrictions will eventually be lifted, enabling the research exchange program to proceed as envisioned. Nevertheless, as of the submission time of this deliverable, there are still significant obstacles in place related to travel for research and other purposes.

Most scientific conferences and other live events of interest for Sano researchers have either been cancelled or are being organised using electronic communication tools. While participation in the latter is deemed relatively straightforward and does not entail significant procedural or logistic challenges, the net effect of this change is that there is likely to be underspending in the scope of Sano's travel budget. However, this is not regarded as a major issue from the point of view of project management.

In addition to the above, various institutions (scientific and otherwise) have enacted restrictions related to business travel of their employees as well as of foreign visitors. This could potentially hamper the research exchange program and employment of visiting professors, as outlined in the previous sections. While the Centre is still undergoing organisation and carrying out recruitment for key positions, the effects of this change have at present a very limited impact considering the development stage of Sano. Nevertheless, the Centre's team, under the supervision of the Scientific Affairs Director, monitors the situation and will take corrective action as necessary. Given the relative fluidity of the situation, long-term projections regarding travel restrictions are fraught with a high degree of uncertainty, necessitating a more agile response to emerging developments.

Insofar as is possible, the Sano team endeavours to conduct collaborative activities using electronic communication channels. A weekly series of Sano seminars has already been instituted as of July 2020, and plans are underway to organise further events of this type – including collaborative training sessions, hackathon type events etc. The Centre has procured access to the necessary online tools and software to facilitate this process.



5 Summary

The goal of this document is to present the procedural and organisational plans in place at the Centre with regard to its scientific research programme and foreign travel for research staff. It also aims to provide more detailed guidance concerning the purpose of the visits, the associated procedures and the frequency and duration of the visits themselves. While the situation remains in flux given the onset and spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, as of the publication date of this deliverable, we expect it to normalise early enough for the Centre to attain its stated KPIs reflecting foreign exchange activities, as originally envisioned in the Teaming Phase 2 Description of Action.



Appendix A template of the application form for the REP

Sano Researcher Exchange Programme (REP)

Application template

The text should not exceed three pages (bibliography not included)

1. Title of the proposal

2. Name of the REP candidate

Name:

Institute from which he/she is coming from

E-mail:

Phone number:

When needed, researcher supervisor name:

E-mail:

Phone number:

3. Name of the hosting institution

Name and address:

Scientific to host the Student/Researcher:

E-mail:

Phone number:

4. Specific links with the Sano Research Agenda

5. Added value for the Sano Centre

6. Description of the activities to be carried out during the exchange

- Background

- Objectives

- Schedule

- Number of weeks/months at the receiving Institute
- Potential starting date

- Bibliography

7. Expected technical report name and content



Appendix B template report from the REP visit

Sano Researcher Exchange Programme (REP)

Report template

The text should not exceed five pages (bibliography not included)

Title of the report

Name of the REP participant

Name:

Institute from which he/she is coming from

E-mail:

When needed, researcher supervisor name:

E-mail:

Name of the hosting institution

Name and address:

Scientific to host the Student/Researcher:

E-mail:

Dates of the visit

- 1. Scope and relevance to the Sano Research Agenda**
- 2. Objectives of the visit**
- 3. Description of the activities carried out during the exchange**
- 4. Results**
- 5. Conclusions**
- 6. Bibliography**