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A practical approach to Horizon 2020 Proposal writing - How to write and present a competitive proposal

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To deal with H2020 you have to keep in mind that:

✓ research is coupled to market-oriented innovation potential

✓ if you submit for different topics, (maybe under different workprogrammes), you arise the success probability of your proposal (so be brave and flexibile!)

✓ for each topic you choose there are specific <u>key words</u> and <u>features</u> that you have to remind for all the time of your proposal planning (as lighthouse in the storm)

✓ a strategy concerning dissemination and exploitation of project results has to be strongly developed in the proposal

✓ Gender Equality and Ethics policies, defined by EC, have to be strictly respected

Structure of the presentation

- ✓ First step: studying for proposal

- ✓ Topic description: use it

- ✓ How to proceed ?

- ✓ Structure of the proposal

- ✓ Evaluation criteria

1. First step: studying for proposal

Before starting to build your proposal, you have to:

✓ **check H2020 on line manual and read reference documents (guide for applicants, general rules)**

http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/index_en.html

http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/funding/reference_docs.html

✓ **read carefully H2020 example of administrative forms and template for the technical annex for proposals**

http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/call_ptef/pt/h2020-call-pt-ria-ia_en.pdf

✓ **read carefully the H2020 evaluation criteria**

http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/call_ptef/ef/h2020-call-ef-ria-ia-csa_en.pdf

✓ **read carefully the H2020 Plan for the Exploitation and Dissemination of Results**

https://www.iprhelpdesk.eu/sites/default/files/newsdocuments/FS-Plan-for-the-exploitation-and-dissemination-of-results_1.pdf

✓ **read carefully the H2020 Gender Equality policy**

http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/hi/gender/h2020-hi-guide-gender_en.pdf

http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetailDoc&id=18892&no=1

✓ **read carefully the H2020 Ethics self-assessment and guidelines on Open Access**

http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/hi/ethics/h2020_hi_ethics-self-assess_en.pdf

http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/hi/oa_pilot/h2020-hi-oa-pilot-guide_en.pdf

2. Topic description: use it

✓ what is a topic description?

✓ analyse it to understand what is expected

✓ transform the text into a list

✓ use this list as a "shopping list"

Topic description:

SPECIFIC CHALLENGE	• sets the context, the problem to be addressed, why intervention is necessary, whose problem
SCOPE	• delineates the problem, specifies the focus and the boundaries of the potential action BUT without describing specific approaches
EXPECTED IMPACTS	• describe the key elements of what is expected to be achieved in relation to the specific challenge

Call identifier: H2020-PHC-2014-single-stage
Topic identifier: PHC-20-2014

SC1: health, demographic change and wellbeing

Specific challenge: Citizens in an ageing European population are at greater risk of cognitive impairment, frailty and social exclusion with considerable negative consequences for their independence, quality of life, that of those who care for them, and for the sustainability of health and care systems. The challenge is to deploy innovative and user led ICT pilot projects in support of independent living with cognitive impairments and translate promising results into scalable practice across Europe.

Scope: Pilots should build on common, flexible and open ICT solutions which can be adapted to specific users' needs, allowing them to live independently for longer while experiencing cognitive impairment. Pilot deployment across Europe should develop best-practice and viable business and financing models, as well as evidence for potential return on investment. Gender and ethical issues should be paid due attention.
Proposals should focus on innovation in organisational and business models for service delivery, as well as standardisation and interoperability work on required ICT platforms, services and data sources. The number of users involved should be sufficient to ensure statistical significance in impact analysis, with a minimum of 4 pilot sites in 4 countries.

Expected impact:
Based on quantitative and qualitative output indicators and impact data, each pilot is expected to demonstrate relevant contributions to the following expected impacts:
- Clear evidence on return of investment, both for the private sector and in terms of societal benefits from ICT based solutions for cognitive impairments of older people;
- Best practice for viable business and financing models which are scalable across Europe;
- Clear evidence on the improvements of efficiency of health and care systems
- Clear evidence of improvements to quality of life and active ageing for involved users and careers;
- Contribution to the competitiveness of the European ICT industry in the domain, through enhanced interoperability and scalable markets

3. How to proceed ?

1- **Idea**: your future proposal idea has to be smartly tailored to fit as much as possible in the H2020 call you choose (absolutely not the opposite)

2- **Form Consortium**: build up the best possible project team (have good balanced consortium with a good mix between industry and academia and don't forget to include potential direct beneficiaries/end-users)
In this step use your network and matchmaking events organized by European Commission (infodays, brokerage events, workshops)

3- **Write Proposal**: you can get help from H2020 website, colleagues with experience on the matter, UNITN research support division.

4. Structure of H2020 proposal

1) Excellence: description of your project

$\Rightarrow$ What will you do ?

2) Impact: dissemination, exploitation and communication

$\Rightarrow$ How will you let the world know ?

3) Implementation: work plan, finances, management structure, consortium

$\Rightarrow$ Who will do what ?

4) Members of the consortium: description of the partners

$\Rightarrow$ Who is part of the consortium ?

5) Ethics and Security

4.1 Excellence

- ✓ objectives (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-related) and tangible results

- ✓ Innovation potential

- ✓ the proposal potential to go beyond the actual SOTA (state of the art)

- ✓ who are the end-users and how will they benefit?

- ✓ methodology

- ✓ suitable choice of your partners (with necessary and complementary skills)

Advice

- ✓ **Use your "shopping list"**

- ✓ **Ask someone who is not involved in your research to read it: if the 'outsider' understands it, the evaluators will do as well**

4.2 Impact

- ✓ Coherence between the project impact and those outlined in the topic description

- ✓ Strategy to disseminate and to exploit results

- ✓ Management of IPR: <u>what</u> (i.e. patents, copyright, trade marks, database rights, design rights, know how, industrial designs), <u>who</u> (owns them), <u>how</u>

Advice

- ✓ **Don't underestimate this part !**
- ✓ **Don't forget the general public**
- ✓ **Sort out the IPR before the start of the project**
- ✓ **Why not taking an IPR specialist on board ?**

4.3 Implementation and 4.4 Consortium

✓ Coherence and effectiveness of the work plan, including tasks and resources (make sure budget is sufficient and justified!)

✓ Appropriateness of the management structures (diagram!) and procedures

✓ Complementarity of the participants within the **Consortium** (suitable choice of your partners)

✓ **Gender balance in research teams**

  (check http://www-s.eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/tools-methods/making-gender-equality-plan)

Advice

✓ **Work package list: simplicity is the key word (avoid unnecessary complexity!)**

✓ **Work plan and management structure have to be in line with the chapter Excellence**

✓ **Is the coordinator also the most important partner ?**

✓ **Is it clear what the project will deliver and how it will achieve that ?**

✓ **Are the appointed person months appropriate ?**

4.5 Ethics and Security

Ethics: submit an ethics self-assessment and
provide the documents that you need under national
law (handle with care and in advance)

Security

Advice

**Handle with care this
step and be sure to be
in time to prepare all
docs and procedures
you need to complete.**

5. Evaluation criteria

✓ **Excellence**: the extent to which the proposed work corresponds with the topic description.

✓ **Impact**: what the impact of the outputs is (in conformity with those depicted in the topic description)

✓ **Quality and efficiency of the implementation**: what the quality of the management part, work plan, etc. is

For each criterion scoring from 0 to 5:
- 0 -the proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.
- 1 - Poor
- 2 - Fair
- 3 - Good
- 4 - Very Good
- 5 - Excellent

This form is made available to applicants who may themselves wish to arrange an evaluation of their proposal (e.g. by an impartial colleague) prior to final editing, submission and deadline. The aim is to help applicants identify ways to improve their proposals.

The forms used by the experts for their evaluation reports will be broadly similar, although the detail and layout may differ.

These forms are based on the standard criteria, scores and thresholds. Check whether special schemes apply to the topics of interest to you. The definitive evaluation schemes are given in the work programme.

A self-evaluation, if carried out, is not to be submitted to the Commission, and has no bearing whatsoever on the conduct of the evaluation.

Scoring

Scores must be in the range 0-5. Half marks may be given. Evaluators will be asked to score proposals as they were submitted, rather than on their potential if certain changes were to be made. When an evaluator identifies significant shortcomings, he or she must reflect this by awarding a lower score for the criterion concerned.

Interpretation of the scores

0 — **The proposal fails to address the criterion** or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.

1 — **Poor**. The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.

2 — **Fair.** The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.

3 — **Good.** The proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.

4 — **Very Good.** The proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.

5 — **Excellent.** The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

Thresholds

The threshold for individual criteria is 3. The overall threshold, applying to the sum of the three individual scores, is 10.

Two-stage submission schemes

The scheme below is applicable to a full proposal. For the evaluation of first-stage proposals under a two-stage submission procedure, only the criteria 'excellence' and 'impact' will be evaluated. Within these criteria, only the aspects in bold will be considered. The threshold for both individual criteria will be 4.

Weighting

For Innovation actions and the SME instrument (phases 1 and 2), to determine the ranking, the score for the criterion 'impact' will be given a weight of 1.5.

1. Excellence

Note: The following aspects will be taken into account, to the extent that the proposed work corresponds to the topic description in the work programme:

- **Clarity and pertinence of the objectives;**
- Credibility of the proposed approach;
- **Soundness of the concept, including trans-disciplinary considerations, where relevant;**
- **Extent that proposed work is ambitious, has innovation potential, and is beyond the state of the art (e.g. ground-breaking objectives, novel concepts and approaches).**

Comments:

2. Impact

Note: The following aspects will be taken into account, to the extent to which the outputs of the project should contribute at the European and/or International level:

- **The expected impacts listed in the work programme under the relevant topic;**
- Enhancing innovation capacity and integration of new knowledge;
- Strengthening the competitiveness and growth of companies by developing innovations meeting the needs of European and global markets, and where relevant, by delivering such innovations to the markets;
- Any other environmental and socially important impacts;
- Effectiveness of the proposed measures to exploit and disseminate the project results (including management of IPR), to communicate the project, and to manage research data where relevant.

Comments:

3. Quality and efficiency of the implementation*

Note: The following aspects will be taken into account:

- Coherence and effectiveness of the work plan, including appropriateness of the allocation of tasks and resources;
- Complementarity of the participants within the consortium (when relevant);
- Appropriateness of the management structures and procedures, including risk and innovation management.

Comments:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/call_ptef/ef/h2020-call-ef-ria-ia-csa_en.pdf

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