

Part 1 – Excellence

- 1. The participants from the widening countries are less successful at Horizon Europe calls. As an evaluator of e.g. MSCA proposals, what do you see to be the main problem of the widening countries proposals? Are they not ambitious enough or less innovative? Is it possible to say what is the main weakness in the widening countries proposals?**

Hard question. Widening countries were saying that you are influenced by the partners that you see, is true when we speak about big actors, big countries, institution, big research centres. I am not going to lie, it is true that you are going to give the money to those who are more experienced; they have more money and resources. I am not talking about the quality of the research at all. I am talking here about the implementation, the networks that you have... There were some issues about the evaluator that there were some biases. The EC said no, but there was some „blind evaluators“ only for EIC Pathfinder calls, for Pilar 3 and I would be curious if there is going to be some study about the impact of blind evaluation to see if there is some bias. If we realised that more widening countries were offended (and we will see), then there is some problem with evaluation and as evaluators we are influenced by the partners we see in consortia etc. At the moment there are no studies about that. We can't say there is some bias, or some problems in evaluation and funding of widening countries - and if it is because of evaluator's bias or because there is a lack of innovations. But I see there is more widening countries participation, there is some geographically spread coverage of countries with low performance in the projects. As I see it, there is not lack of innovation but maybe more about the size of the partners. Perhaps as there are a little bit smaller, you would be better as partners (rather than coordinators).

- 2. What is the difference between outcomes of the project/ results / impact?**

I will talk about that in section 2.

- 3. Where and how to select/ to find suitable partners for project proposals?**

I will talk about that in last session, there are some platforms which are useful, first are your NCP and the EC portal.

- 4. How many stakeholders are required for strong consortia?**

I will talk about it also in last session. It depends a little bit on the budget. Between 4 to 8 is fine, as it was written in H2020 guidelines. It is some advice to make the project manageable, what EC wants to avoid is that some partners go to bankruptcy. For the project of 4 mil. €, between around 7 – 8 or 10 partners is ok. There are no rules. It depends on what you put in work packages, the tasks you put in work packages etc. The evaluators need to be sure that everything you describe in the workplan can be address by the competences of one of the partners. It really depends on what you put in the project content wise. Please avoid having a lot of partners, such as 20. Then 7 – 8 partners are fine.

Part 2 - Impact:

- 1. Could you please specify the difference between formulation of objectives and activities? Activity is to develop/to test/to justify... And objective is the change of the current state of the art?**

The activity, basically this is the „What “– what you will do? E.g. you want to increase this and that of this material. This is the objective and the activity is to say you will analyse, from a research point of view, you will first solve the simulation, experiments and stuff like that, this is really concretely the „what“ you will do. And the objective? This is really what you need to research yet So that is really the big difference between objective and activities. Activity - normally you have deliverables that are linked to the activities, you have the result that is linked to your activities and once you reached your result this validates your objectives. (This answer goes more for excellence part)

- 2. What is a difference in evaluation of various types of actions, e.g. CSA, RIA, IA? From the point of view of more or less the same evaluation criteria for each type of action?**

It's quite simple. I did not talk about CSA, there is a bit of difference. For RIA, IA there is a clear difference, even the impact session has big weight, I didn't mention that it has a weight of 1,5 compared to the excellence and the implementation. What we want to see in IA is a clear focus, you need to be really perfect with your impact and we will check the innovation potential. You need to be of course close to the market, we will check the terrain they will check your innovation is really what drives your project. The way you present it is higher, is innovative, is ambitious and they will want to check the impact because since it is an IA, the terrain is close to the market and they want to really focus on that, because if you are close to the market you will reach impacts more quickly. So, there is a big focus on that. This is the only thing I can say. Because the platform where I can see the evaluation reports for RIA or IA proposals, there is not that much difference, except that the later will have bigger focus on impact and exploitation etc. And everything I have presented here will have stronger focus, because in IA you are able to target better the community and end users. In RIA it is little bit behind. For CSA, there is a big difference because there are not truly speaking research and development activities, they are more networking activities, development of methods, basically its support to research, which is a big difference. They will check if you cover the coordination and support actions (CSA), that you support the big value chain of the research project, let's say if it is horizontal project, but is a little bit hard to say for CSA, they have some different criteria, but bigger difference is basically RIA.

- 3. Is it necessary or even important to describe sustainability of the project?**

Yes, it is. This is a good question. It is important, the sustainability after the end of an EU project. Indeed, you will have a discipline of the exploitation of sustainability because if you manage to exploit, to present your prospers, exploitation strategy means that even if you don't have EU money anymore, you are able to make something out of the project. And that you are able to make it sustainable, in terms of exploitation, in terms of the activities, because EU is scared that results are not exploited, that there is not sustainability. I hope you are not talking about green sustainability but about the sustainability like duration of EU projects after the EU

project financing ends. Because then you have other notion that the project has to be sink, has not to hurt environment. For sustainability you have to show that your project after the end is sustainable: You don't need to write full paragraph on that, or in bold, or in specific box. Because if you really have good strategy for exploitation and dissemination and you have in your consortium end users and you have a big network of end users and stuff like that, you will be able to aim for a nice sustainability regarding your project even after the EU financing ends. If you explain properly your exploitation strategy with a nice table and you are quite credible with your dissemination and stuff like that and you say you have mapped your network perfectly, they should be quite convinced that you will be able to have some result that will be sustainable and exploited. There should be basically the red line along the project regarding the sustainability because making a project otherwise has no point: Bear in mind they will not give you 5 million if you are not sustainable after the EU finance ends, you have to be able to exploit everything.

- 4. Thank you for explaining the template into details, this is very helpful. The template for widening session (not the pillar II) is divided into the same 3 sessions, but with limit of 30 pages. Do you think we can use the similar structure presented now for the templates in widening scheme calls just shorten in aliquots?**

Yes, absolutely. You can use everything what I have presented here also for widening templates. There is one call which is even shorter, EIC Pathfinder, where it is only 15 pages but this is exactly the same structure, maybe there is one question less or something like that, but everything has to be but just shorter. There is quite nice exercise, from my point of view, you can ask yourself the question what is really crucial for the evaluator in widening calls but from my point of view everything that I am saying here is valuable as for widening templates.

- 5. Can you provide example of KPIs for dissemination under Monitor Actions?**

Yes. I didn't put it yet in communication. I think I deleted one slide and there was the dissemination, I don't have it there. It is related to scientific exploitation, is related to number of publications, articles in scientific journals, number of participants in your events, number of scientific joint publications etc. And you could put some KPIs for this action. This is – if you organize some event tent to say we tend to have XYZ number of participants in 2-hour event. You make some policy briefs, e.g. 4 policy briefs (PB) related to this and this and that and you provide some numbers that will make it possible to evaluate and at the end of the project you achieve everything. So, if in some point of view, you have only 3 PB and you said you will have 4, it means that you didn't achieve everything perfectly, you can find some justification. It is good to provide every time figures for dissemination.

Part 3 - Implementation:

1. The most common mistakes in writing projects?

Very common mistake from researcher is you forget the industrial sector. Industrial sector is very crucial for this kind of projects, you should know whom to involve from industrial sector, end user etc. Then, another mistake is to think that this is only about the science. You are researcher, it is true, but although the things such as open science, gender, interdisciplinarity, management are not your cup of tea, you will not win the grant if you don't fully understand how your project works, what are the back-up policies behind an EU project, what is expected. The evaluators need to be provided your plans about that.... they will be happy about your consideration about EU policies. The industrial sector in consortia will maximize you impact.

Other mistakes are in the budget. You cannot anymore negotiate your budget. Before, in H2020 you could negotiate the budget. Not now. Once you submitted your budget, it is fixed. Be careful about overestimated budget. Evaluators validate the project as it is and the budget as it is. They will not be any changes. If the evaluators think this that it is a very good project, but your budget is overestimated, they will say no. Be careful with the budget when you estimate it, when you mentioned everything, when you provide details and your resources, they do check if you are credible with your budget. Another advice, be aware of composition of the consortium, this is the first what we see when we receive the proposal.

2. The widening countries have lower PM rates compared with more developed countries. What is your recommendation concerning PM distribution between consortium partners? Should be by money or by PM, concerning the proportionality inside consortium?

Absolutely not by PM, because there is a big difference. You should not increase the PM, because it will be checked, if your PM and deliverables are coherent. You should estimate everything regarding PMs, then how much time you need for this work and then calculate PM, not vice versa. How much money I need, that much PM I will put in the proposal. Be aware of overestimating it, we see it much in lower incomes countries with lower salaries.

3. What is the main consideration from Horizon National Office to accept a successful project proposal particularly which is composed by a PhD student?

It is slightly unclear what is implied by this question. A PhD student is not eligible to apply directly in any of the Horizon Europe project calls. While being a PhD student, you might need to look for other smaller fellowships which do not involve your direct application to Horizon Europe. You may want to try for example the website of the Slovak Academic Information Agency (SAIA) or Euraxess. Later on, once you successfully defend your PhD, you may then become eligible to apply for MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowship. However, to be eligible you would have to be in possession of a PhD degree at the time of application.

4. Can you recommend any agencies that could professionally write a project proposal for us?

Instead of your answer, we are providing your contact:

Marie Prouteau: m.prouteau@makeit-eu.eu