How to prepare a successful H2020 proposal

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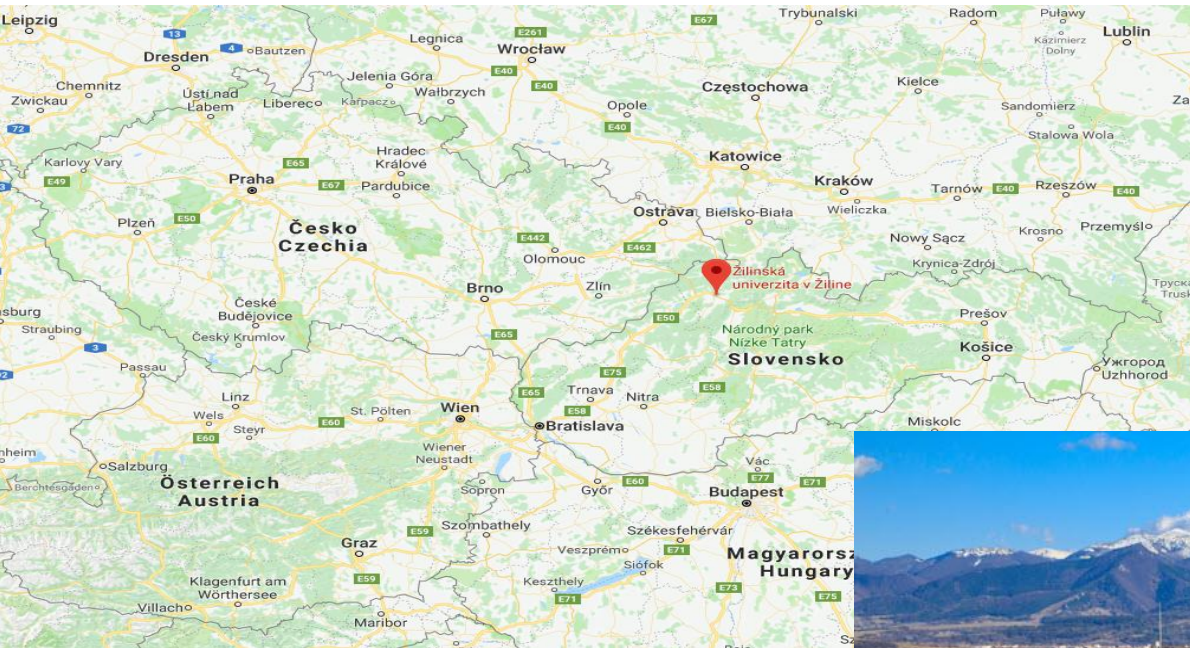martin.hudak@uniza.sk

Scientists for Cycling Workshop: "Decongesting Europe: New approaches to freeing our cities"
13.3.2018

Outline

- About the University of Zilina

- Introduction to H2020

- H2020 proposal in 5 quick steps

- How EC evaluates project proposals?

- MoTiV project

- Final tips

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University of Zilina

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1. Co-operative ITS
2. Decarbonisation of Mobility
3. Urban Mobility / Smart City
4. Intermodal ITS

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H2020 pillars
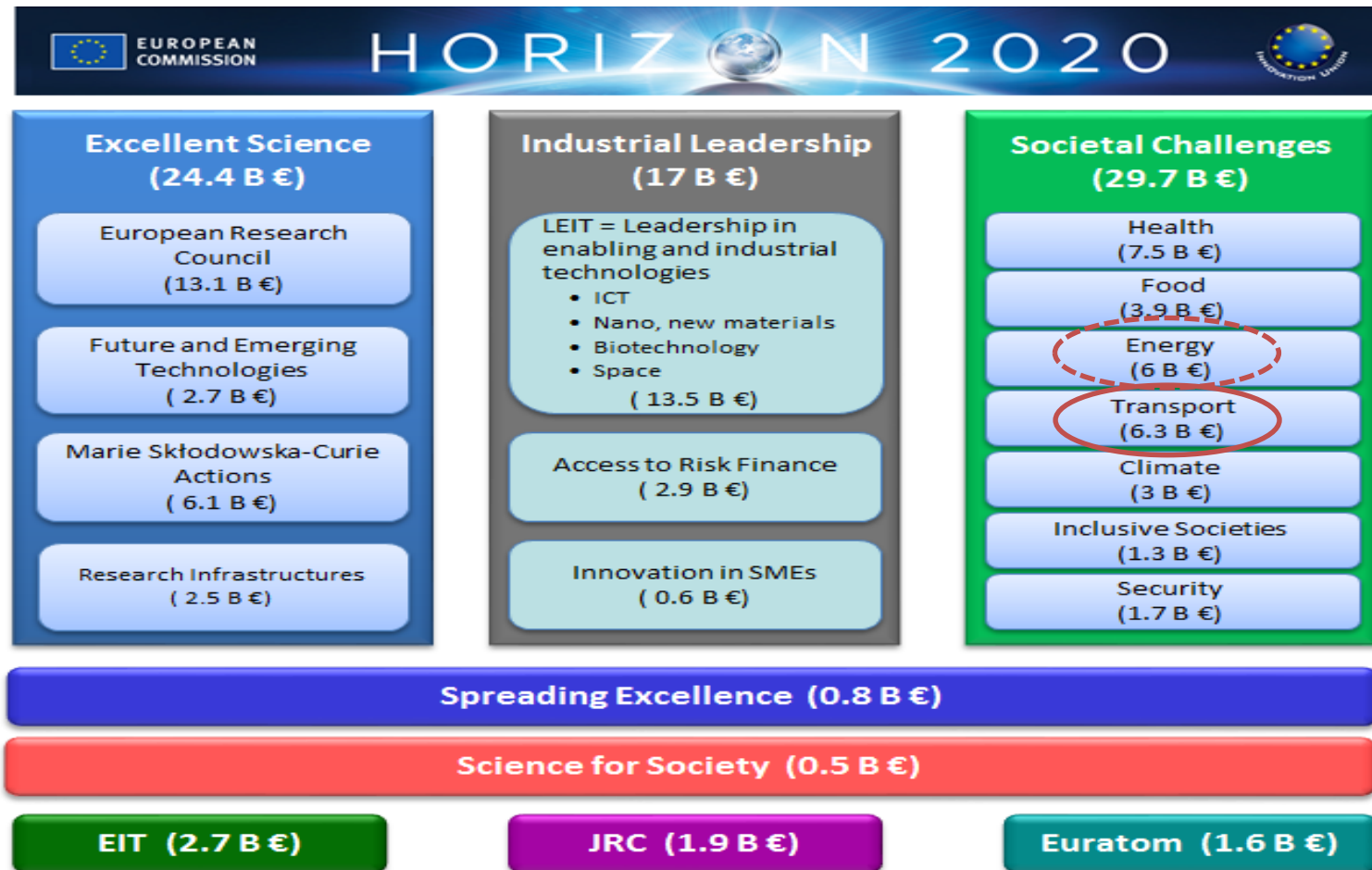
1. Is H2020 the right fit for you?

- It is not about the single player, short-term results, but about Internationalisation, collaboration, long-term benefits, creating networks that can potentially speed up the results and improving the overall scientific output of Europe

- Not about single country/region, but about bringing Europe/regions together both economically and politically and ensuring its various Member States are pulling in the same direction

- Tips:
    a) Read the Rules for participation (eligible vs not eligible)
    b) Start on your application as early as possible
    c) Visit the EC Portal (all the information you need to apply for funding)

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2.Get closely acquainted with your call

- Many proposals fail in impact (they haven't studied the market enough and they don't talk about how they will address things at a European level)

- Don't start with details, BUT write a one-page outline to provide a high-level overview of your project proposal

- Tips
  - Make your objective extremely strong and clear - you will be referring to it throughout the application process and sharing it with your consortium
  - Remember your customer is EC – understand what motivates the Commission and keep this in mind when creating your one-page outline

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3.Create a strong consortium

- Don't create a consortium with partners of the same type and skills
  - ➢ Mix of individual academics and scientists as well as SMEs, universities, research organisations and industry partners
  - ➢ Consortium - not only wide ranging, but also strategic
    - ○ Inviting people or organisations to join - know exactly why you want them on board and how their strengths will be used
- Pin down a project coordinator
  - ➢ Person who is responsible for the project and oversees its progress
  - ➢ Experienced in coordinating large-scale projects (proved in the application)
- Tip
  - ➢ H2020 is more interested in funding projects that have an eye on commercialisation
  - ➢ Industrial members play a large part in this process

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4. Consider your application from the point of view of the evaluator

- Don't wait till the last moment, but read the Guide for evaluators at the very beginning

- Evaluators looking at the three criteria

  - **Excellence**, **Impact** and **Implementation**

- Think of how an evaluator will read your proposal

  - Make the **abstract** as attractive as possible
  - Put together **a realistic budget** (no negotiation)
  - Explain clearly **a role of each partner** (complementarity)

- Tips

  - Evaluators are human - do your best to make your proposal memorable
  - EC selects external evaluators via a database

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5. Submit your proposal early and often

- **Don't wait till the last minute, but submit your proposal early**

  - ➢ It can take a while for the server to submit the proposal, causing you to miss the deadline
  - ➢ You can submit as many times as you would like up to the actual deadline - take advantage of this feature

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Five key questions to be addressed by the abstract

WHY YOU?

WHY NOW?

EXISTING?

PRIORITY?

WHAT?

SUCCESS RATE

Why you?
(Are you the best people to do the work?)

Why now?
(What would happen if we did not do this now?)

Is the solution already available?
(product, service, etc.)

Is it a European priority?
Could it be solved at national level?

What problem are you trying to solve?

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Overview of the Evaluation Process

		Evaluators		
Receipt of proposals	Individual evaluation	Consensus group	Panel Review	Finalisation
Eligibility check	Individual Evaluation Reports	Consensus Report	Panel report	Final ranked list
Allocation of proposals to evaluators	(Usually done remotely)	(May be done remotely)	Evaluation Summary Report	
			Panel ranked list	
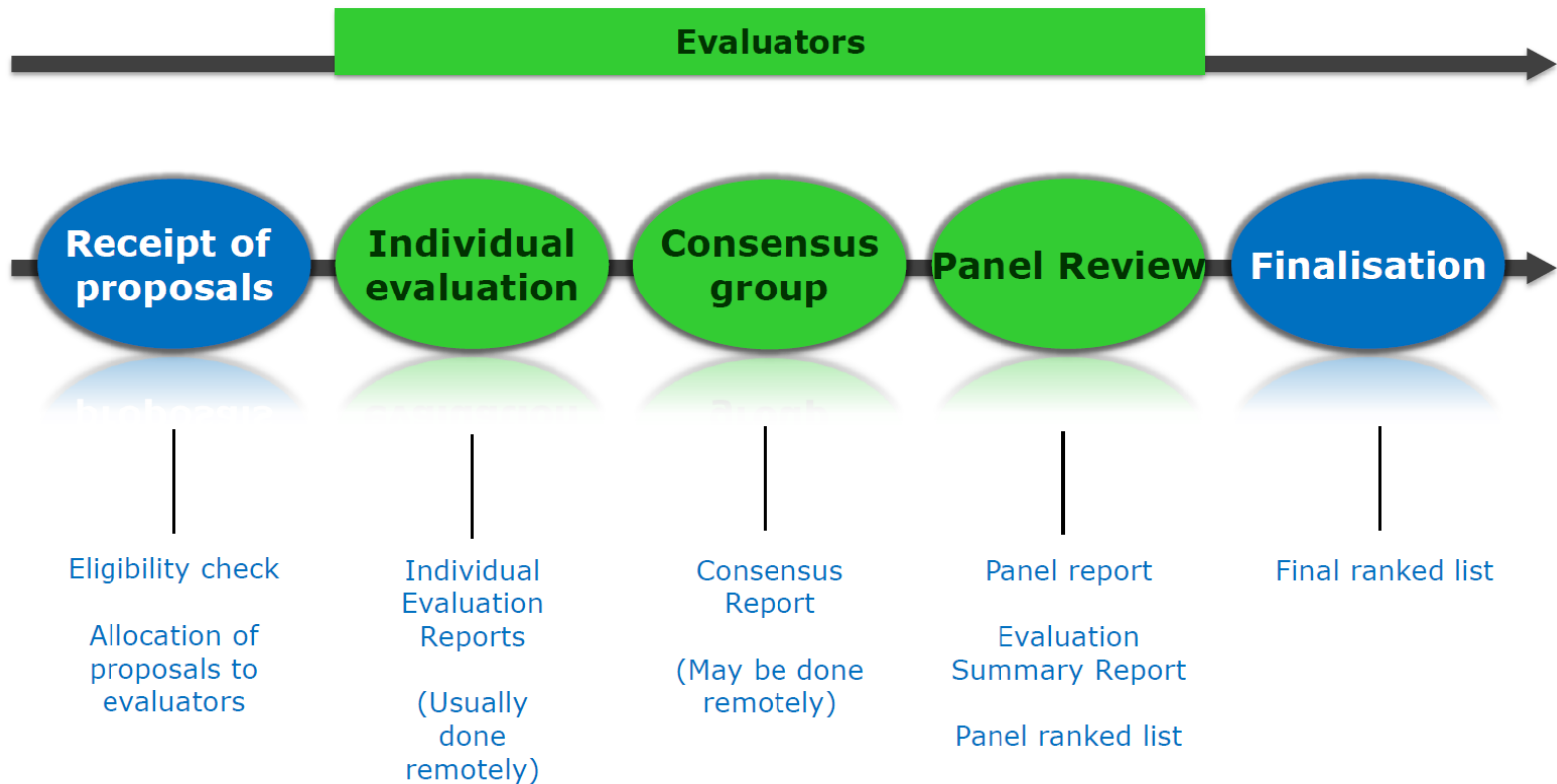
Mobility and Time Value

From Idea to Proposal

www.motivproject.eu

The process of preparing the MoTiV project

- The Idea - **Personal Time Banking**
- Discussions within the internal team
- Developing the Idea
- Getting the right partners
- Follow-ups

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Drafting the Proposal

- Once the conceptual building blocks of the proposal and the Consortium are established, it is time for a "deep dive" into Proposal writing

- In the case of MoTiV, this has happened over 2 months (December and January). Normally, at least 4 months should be allocated to this activity

- While writing the proposal, it is important to **consider how it would be implemented if successful**

Get to Know the
EC Participants Portal

Collecting Input from Partners

- **Be specific in the input needed from each partner**
  - Section 1-3 (Excellence / Impact / Implementation)
  - Section 4-5 (Consortium Members / Ethics and Security)

- **Coordinator should ensure coherence** of the whole text, hence adapting collected inputs as necessary

- **Request and consider partners feedback**, but keep in mind overall aim, pillars and structure

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Collecting Input from Partners - 2

- Apart from specific proposal content, **discuss with each partner also the following:**
    - WP / Task Leadership (proposal by Coordinator)
    - Estimation of contribution in terms of tasks (PMs)
    - Partner hourly rate, to calculate budget share
    - Other costs envisaged by the partner
    - Any special needs / requests from the partner

- **Coordinator should keep overview**
    - Excel sheets with WPs, Tasks, PM estimation, budget, timeline (Gantt chart)

- **Be ready to face criticism and doubts in diplomatic, but firm manner**

Internal Reviews

- When the proposal is almost ready, it is important to **carry out "internal reviews" to receive further feedback from colleagues** (reading the proposal from different perspectives)

- Each major version ("milestone") of the proposal draft should be also **shared with Consortium Members**
  - Use online repository to upload and share proposal versions with partners

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MoTiV Evaluation Report

- **Total score:** 13.50 (threshold: 10)

Criterion	Mark	Threshold
Excellence	4.50 / 5.00	threshold: 3/5;
Impact	5.00 / 5.00	threshold: 3/5;
Implementation	4.00 / 5.00	threshold: 3/5;

- **Results of MG-8-5-2017: 2 projects approved**

Proposal Acronym	Proposal Title	Duration	Coordinating Institution	Coordinator Country	Number of Participants	Budget Requested	Evaluation Score
MoTiV	Mobility and Time Value	30	ZILINSKA UNIVERZITA V ZILINE	SK	7	1,930,840.00 €	13.5
STARS	Shared mobility opporTunities And challenges foR European citieS	30	POLITECNICO DI TORINO	IT	9	1,805,665.00 €	13.5

Success rate: 6,4% (30 submitted, 2 funded)

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Project Implementation

- Succeeding in H2020 project is only the beginning!

- In short time, Coordinator has to address many issues such as:
    - Grant Agreement preparation
    - Consortium Agreement preparation
    - Addressing Ethics Requirements (if any)
    - Developing trusted relationship with EC Project Officer
    - Strengthening collaboration with Project Partners
    - Internal organization (e.g. budget allocation to partners, hiring staff as required, trainings, setup of IT tools)
    - Planning activities in detail, both from scientific and administrative/financial viewpoints
    - Promote the project nationally and internationally

Final tips

- Plan ahead – don't wait for the call to open
- Write for an informed, non-native English speaker
- Make it interesting for the reviewers
- Concise, attractive and clear
- Narrative, diagrams, images
- Shorter is better
- Don't expect reviewers to assume
- Use the H2020 on-line resources
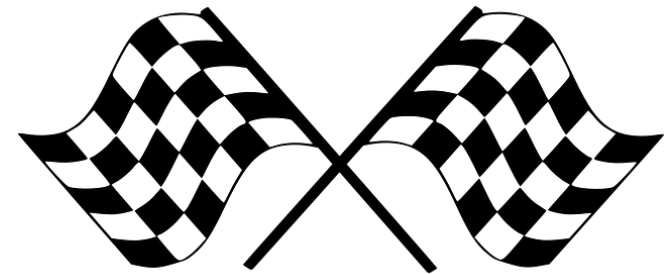
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Thank You for Your Attention!
Time for Questions

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