# UNIVERZITA KARLOVA

## HORIZON 2020

European Commission

# How to write a competitive research proposal in H2020?

## Quick Guide

# The secret of a good proposal

**It is important to have:**
- a relevant and important **research question**
- an **original idea** that addresses the research question
- a good description of the project proposal from which it is clear what can be done **(feasibility)** and what results you want to achieve **(impact)**
- proof that you are the **right person** at the right place

# „Build your case"

- Description of the problem, research questions and their relevance
- State of the art and existing solutions
- What are the gaps in the state-of-the-art knowledge?
- Is the proposal timely and important? Why is your project interesting?
- Why to do it now?
- What is your proposed solution?
- What do you want to focus on, what are your goals?
  › impact
- What is your approach?
- Why are you the right person?
- Expected outcomes and impact
- What is the added value of the project for your field?

**Problem**
relevant research question

**Current solution**
state of the art, literature and background

**Your solution**
aim

**Approach**
work plan and methodology

**Expected results**
impact

# Originality

- What has already been done? › a short summary of the literature of the topic/field
- What is unique about your project?
    - Preliminary data
    - Approach / methodology
    - Available data and resources
    - Expertise of individual team members
    - Your experience
- Why is your approach to solving the problem better than previously used approaches?

# The backbone of the proposal

Overall aim
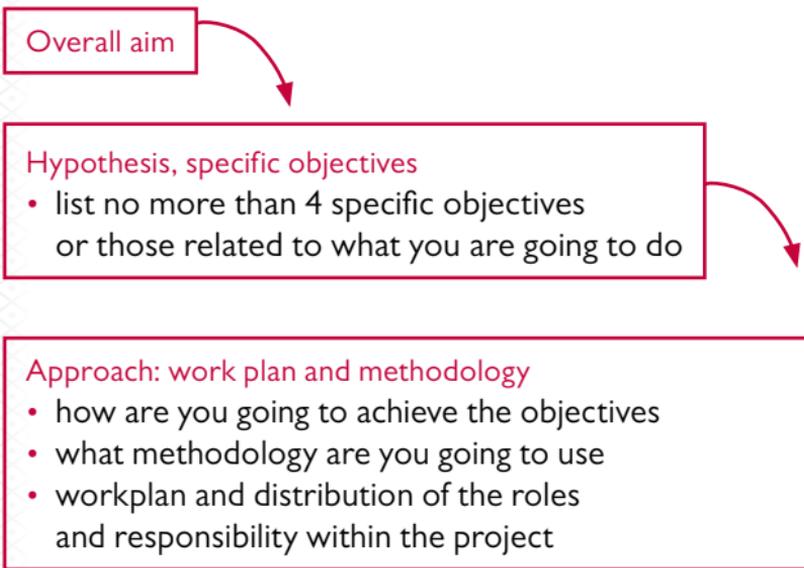
Hypothesis, specific objectives
- list no more than 4 specific objectives
  or those related to what you are going to do

Approach: work plan and methodology
- how are you going to achieve the objectives
- what methodology are you going to use
- workplan and distribution of the roles
  and responsibility within the project

# „Smart objectives"

**S**PECIFIC

**M**EASURABLE

**A**CHIEVABLE

**R**EALISTIC

**T**IME
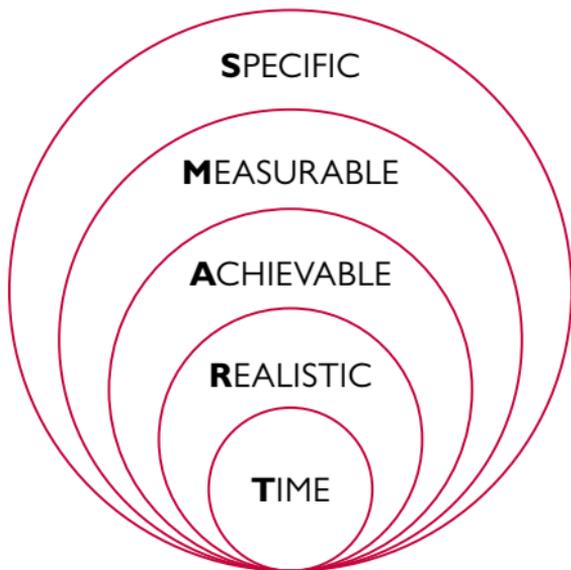
# Feasible work plan
## Demonstrate feasibility:

- Clear aim-specific aims-approach-method
- Preliminary study and data
- Access to resources, equipment and data
- Experience and importance of cooperation
- Risk management – have a backup plan
- Clearly described work plan
- Realistic time planning › Gantt Chart

## Layout:

- Split into **subsections,** use clear **headlines,** look at the **formatting** of the application, whether it is somehow restricted

- Clearly **visualize** objectives, hypotheses

- **Separate paragraphs** consistently, so that the text is **easy to read**

- Use pictures, charts if appropriate

- Use a **consistent structure**

## Get your message across:

- Start each new part of the text **summarizing the phrase** for the layman

- Be very **explicit:** end each paragraph with the specific point you want to relate to the individual criteria

- After the statement always mention the **expected results** and future perspective

- Link the objectives / research questions clearly with the research plan and **keep it as simple as possible**

# Right person...

- Study achievements
- Research experience
- International activities
- Other relevant academic activities
- Scholarships, grants and awards
- Publications

# ...right place

- Supervision, leadership
- Research group
- Resources: access to data and equipment

ACADEMIC

FUNDER
(European Commission)
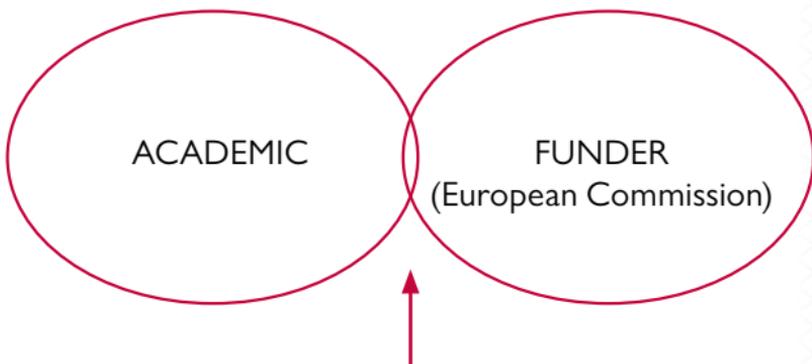
**Focus on describing matching interests
in proposal**

## Well written proposal

**Obtain the interest:**
- Title
- Summary
- Acronym

**Convince the reader:**
- Clear and feasible approach
- Fit the approach with research questions
- Expected results
- Societal relevance and impact
- You are the right man for the job

**Build your case:**
- A real scientific problem
- Scientific content
- Your original idea / hypothesis
- Clear objectives / research goal

**Don't forget the details:**
- Budget
- Use the form as intended
- Lay-out
- Language

```
┌──────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────────┐
│ **Project officer** will │──→  │ Preselection by      │
│ check the eligibility │      │ a panel **committee**  │
│ criteria             │      │ (summary, CV,        │
│                      │      │ research impact)     │
└──────────────────────┘      └──────────────────────┘


┌──────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────────┐
│ **Review report**      │←──  │ Review by **referee**  │
│ is reviewed by a whole│      │ (whole proposal)     │
│ panel committee      │      │                      │
└──────────────────────┘      └──────────────────────┘


┌──────────────────────┐
│ Recommendation       │──→   ☺ / ☹
│ for funding          │
└──────────────────────┘
```

## Panel members:

- Not necessarily experts in your field
- Rank the best projects
- Must read about 30 proposals

- **Tips:**
    - Write a summary that will be understood even by a scientist who is not directly in your scientific area

## Your referee:

- Expert in your field
- Consider possible reasons to reject the proposal
- May not read the proposal in one go

- **Tips:**
    - Demonstrate you are perfectly familiar with your area
    - Clear structure of the proposal (objectives › approach › methodology)
    - CV – be humble, but self-confident, admit your weaknesses and show how to come across

PROBLEM

- relevant research question
- **Why is it important?**

CURRENT SOLUTION

- analysis of state of the art
- **What is missing?**

YOUR SOLUTION

- **What's your idea?**

APPROACH

- **Work plan and methodology**

EXPECTED RESULTS

- **Impact**
- What is added value of your research?

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