

Insights from an Evaluator

Key Considerations for
Successful EU Mission Proposals

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Understanding EU Missions

Key Differences to Consider

EU Missions represent a **unique framework** within Horizon Europe, focusing on addressing societal challenges through targeted actions, requiring distinct proposal strategies to achieve successful outcomes.



Mission Alignment

Ensuring Strategic Fit and Impact

Aligning your proposal with EU Missions requires a thorough understanding of strategic goals, contributions to societal challenges, and effective collaboration among diverse stakeholders for maximum impact.

Alignment Must Be Demonstrated, Not Assumed

- Explicit reference to Mission objectives
- Clear contribution to Mission targets
- Logical chain: activities → outputs → outcomes → impacts



Typical evaluator comment:

"The relevance to the Mission objectives is not sufficiently demonstrated."

The Evaluator's Role

Understanding Responsibilities and Insights

- Expert evaluators evaluate the proposal against the evaluation criteria: Excellence, Impact and Implementation taking into account the **requirements of the topic** under which the proposal is submitted.
- Expert evaluators assess proposals based on specified criteria, providing **valuable feedback** to enhance project quality.
- Their insights guide researchers in aligning proposals with EU Mission objectives.

How Evaluators Work:

- High number of proposals, limited time
- Strict reliance on call text & criteria
- Individual assessment → consensus discussion



Evaluation Criteria

Understanding the Core Components

Evaluators read against the Work Programme text and Topic, not against your internal project logic!

Think like an evaluator:

Time-pressed, compares many proposals side-by-side.

Looks for evidence, not intentions.

Clear structure and well written = easier to score.

Evaluation Criteria

Understanding the Core Components

EXCELLENCE

Proposals must demonstrate **exceptional quality** in research and innovation, addressing EU Missions' specific objectives and challenges.

What is the clarity of the objectives, concepts, methodology, ambition level of the proposal?

IMPACT

Effective proposals outline **real-world benefits**, showcasing how outcomes will contribute to societal challenges and enhance EU strategic goals.

If the proposal reaches its objectives, is successful, what will happen? Will it achieve the expected impacts?

IMPLEMENTATION

Strong plans detail the **feasibility and management** of project execution, ensuring risk mitigation and resource allocation are well-defined.

Does the consortium have the necessary expertise, management structures, to actually carry out their objectives?

Excellence Beyond Science

Broadening the Definition of Quality

Successful proposals must integrate scientific excellence with broader societal implications, emphasizing innovation, ethical considerations, and stakeholder engagement to ensure comprehensive quality and maximize impact.

- Clear, specific, measurable objectives aligned with topic.
- Real “beyond state-of-the-art”, not buzzwords; position aligned with existing projects.
- Credible, coherent methodology and interdisciplinarity.

AVOID:

- *Vague or generic objectives.*
- *Methods not really linked to objectives.*
- *Co-creation / living labs mentioned but not operationalised.*



“Excellent science that is not Mission-relevant scores poorly.”

Impact Pathways

Strategies for Effective Change

Understanding impact pathways is crucial for translating research outcomes into **tangible societal benefits**. Engaging stakeholders early fosters collaboration and maximizes the potential for real-world transformation.

- Explicit mapping to expected outcomes & impacts in the call/Mission.
- Clear impact pathways: activities → outputs → outcomes → impacts.
- Few, robust KPIs with baselines and targets.

AVOID:

Generic statements (“supports Green Deal”) with no mechanism.

Weak or missing exploitation strategy and stakeholder targeting.

Underuse of policy, business and social-science expertise.

“Impact is planned – not left to chance.”



Implementation

Implementation: credibility test

Logical WP structure, realistic timing, risks & mitigations.

Budget matches effort and tasks.

Consortium covers all competences and end-users expected in Missions (regions, SMEs, citizens, etc.)

- Mirror the template headings, use tables/figures for key messages.

DONT:

Treat open science, SSH, gender, ethics as afterthoughts.

Overpromise beyond your consortium's real capacity.



Work Plan & Risks

Realistic Strategies for Proposal Success

A well-structured work plan is essential, addressing potential risks methodically. Proposals should highlight proactive measures to mitigate challenges, ensuring feasibility and **maximizing project success** throughout implementation.

- Coherent work package logic
- Clear deliverables and milestones
- Realistic timelines and resources
- Risk assessment with mitigation measures



Common weakness:

Over-ambitious scope without sufficient capacity.

Stakeholder Engagement

Inclusive Participation in Proposals

Successful proposals actively involve stakeholders and citizens, ensuring diverse perspectives are integrated.

This commitment enhances project credibility and effectiveness, aligning with EU Mission goals for societal impact.

- Early and continuous involvement
- Co-design and co-creation approaches
- Defined roles for non-academic actors
- Integration of SSH perspectives



Evaluator red flag:
Stakeholders listed, but no meaningful role described.

Consortium Design

Building Collaborative Research Partnerships

A **strong consortium** is essential for success. It should blend diverse expertise, ensuring effective project execution, innovative solutions, and comprehensive stakeholder engagement tailored to mission objectives.

Evaluators assess:

- Complementarity of expertise
- Balance between research, practice, policy
- Relevance to Mission geography and context
- Clear leadership and coordination



Common Weaknesses

Identifying and Overcoming Proposal Challenges

Many proposals fail due to **lack of clarity**, insufficient stakeholder engagement, and poor alignment with mission objectives. Addressing these pitfalls is essential for crafting a successful submission.

Frequent Weaknesses:

- Vague or generic objectives
- Weak Mission alignment
- Standard impact sections
- Poor WP integration
- Management treated as an afterthought



Key message:

Most rejected proposals are not bad – **just not convincing.**

Writing for Evaluators

Crafting Clear and Concise Proposals

Successful proposals require **clarity and precision** in writing. Focus on conveying your ideas succinctly, ensuring that evaluators can easily understand your vision and objectives.

- ✓ Mirror evaluation criteria in structure
- ✓ Clear headings and summaries
- ✓ Minimal jargon, explained acronyms
- ✓ Visuals that support understanding

Write so that “a tired expert” can find and justify high scores quickly.

“Clarity creates confidence.”



Final Advice

Essential insights for successful proposals

To ensure successful EU Mission proposals, focus on **alignment with mission objectives**, clarity in writing, and active engagement with stakeholders throughout the proposal development process.

Fit to topic, clarity, credible impact, solid implementation = fundable.

“If it is not clearly written, it does not exist.”





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