

# **COST Targeted Network TN1302 BESTPRAC**

## **The Pursuit to Unhappiness**

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## **A How-To guide to rejected proposals**

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# General

- Sources for my observations: discussions in evaluator panels, evaluation summary reports, study of rejected proposals, proposal preparations, discussion with call coordinators, experience
- On the one hand there are many hints how to write a proposal but you will never get a guarantee that you win
- On the other hand it is much easier to get a guarantee how to lose - a few hints might be sufficient

# Fighting fixed mindsets

- When supporting the proposal preparation you are sometimes confronted with fixed attitudes, mindsets, prejudice
  - due to research education (monodisciplinarity, only addressing academic sector, lack of knowledge in project management)
  - due to invisible barriers (proposal does not add to my career perspectives)
  - reservations towards other researchers, sometimes seen as competitors
  - due to other funding schemes which are mixed up
  - due to rumours
- This is damaging the credibility and coherence of your proposal
- As proposal writer, you should be aware of it and complement or support the researchers in overcoming the pitfalls
- Some main pitfalls you should always monitor during the whole preparation, they affect the backbone of the proposal

# Don't read the guide for applicants!

- ☹ I don't need the hints written in the
  - Guide for Applicants,
  - Proposal template,
  - Supporting documents on the website of the call
- ☹ No need to read and reflect the call text
- 😊 Does everybody read the supporting documents of the call at the participant portal?
- 😊 Take the burden of reading everything from the researcher

## My ideas are so brilliant, the proposal must win?

- ☹️ I don't need to describe how exactly I shall implement my ideas
- 😊 EC calls for proposals are not competitions for ideas
- 😊 They are proposals for **projects**
- 😊 Dont stuff the proposal with too many ideas, it might lose plausibility and feasibility.
- 😊 You must have for each idea a clear plan, how you will tackle it in terms of methodology and approach and
- 😊 How this translates into concrete work packages, tasks, deliverables, responsibilities and timeline.

# They will understand me: it is self-evident

- ☹️ I do not need to explain, convince or elaborate further, they will understand me
- 😊 Evaluators are briefed only to assess in the proposal what is written in black and white
- 😊 Most likely, not all three evaluators will have the same expertise as needed
- 😊 What is not written explicitly, will be assessed as missing
- 😊 Reading is not between the lines

# Everything is unclear, risky - better not to write it

- ☹ Better to remain unclear, not promising anything because then we cannot be blamed for non-delivery
- ☹ There are no risks with the proposal
- ☹ Of course somebody might get sick, this is a risk
- ☺ Do not write the proposal in the conditional form, avoid: „may“, „might“, „could“, „would“
- ☺ Everything which is unsure has to be considered as part of the risk plan, where every SPECIFIC risk which is endangering the achievement of the scientific goals has to be presented, assessed and combined with a mitigation plan

## They know me and they know my experience

- ☹️ I will write the consortium synergies chapter („chapter 3.3 consortium, as a whole“) at the end of the preparation
- ☹️ I will write the partner information (section 4) at the end of the preparation
- ☹️ Evaluators will know me, they know my excellence, at least they look at my website
- 😊 Everybody should know each other in the consortium as early as possible in the preparation
- 😊 Think of synergies and complementarities in the consortium already at the start
- 😊 Do not forget to mention your selling points or that of your organisation



## Why pre- or self-evaluation?

- ☹️ After three months of preparation I perfectly understand my proposal
- ☹️ Why should I give this a third non-involved person to read?
- ☹️ I am sure that the evaluators can completely follow my ideas after two hours reading?
- 😊 Give your proposal in due time (e.g. four weeks bevor the deadline) to a third non-involved person for pre-check

**THANK YOU !!!**

**Robert Link**