



Aarhus University's IMPACT guide

A guide for coordinators on structure and content of the IMPACT section in Horizon 2020 proposals

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Special thanks to: Peter Gorm Larsen for making the structure of his INTO-CPS proposal available to us and for allowing us to use and interpret the structure of the IMPACT section used in the proposal. Thank you for advice, guidance and feedback during the process of writing this document and for making knowledge and experience – as an applicant and as an evaluator – available for the benefit of others.

Questions or comments about this guide can be sent to Corporate Relations and Technology Transfer: to@au.dk or to the [Research Support Office](#).

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Introduction

This guide contains recommendations for the structure and content of the IMPACT section in a HORIZON 2020 proposal.

This document is structured in the following way: First, an introduction with a brief description of important points. The introduction is then followed by the guide. We recommend that you read the entire document.

[The Research Support Office](#) can provide additional information about the process of completing the HORIZON 2020 proposal.

1.0 What characterises a good IMPACT section?

“In order to get success under the Horizon 2020 programme, it is essential to be able to demonstrate a clear and convincing path from the envisaged results from the project via the activities undertaken from different groups of stakeholders in order to reach the desired impacts”...

Professor Peter Gorm Larsen, Department of Engineering, AU¹

1.1/ Experience from previous proposals

Evaluation summary reports for 21 H2020-proposals², with AU as the coordinator or partner, have been reviewed in order to uncover the factors which influence the IMPACT score. These evaluation summary reports cover 12 proposals which were approved, i.e. funded, and 9 proposals which were rejected. Only the IMPACT sections have been reviewed.

The primary purpose of the evaluation report review is to create a checklist of the pitfalls which usually lead to a low score. The purpose is also to point to some of the factors which lead to a high score for a proposal's IMPACT section.

The IMPACT sections of the 12 funded proposals have achieved a score between 4.5 and 5, whereas rejected proposals have achieved a score between 2 and 3.

Table 1 shows the distribution of the proposals and the scores of the IMPACT sections. The score is defined in table 2.

Score	Rejected			Funded			Total
	2	2.5	3	4.5	4.8	5.0	
Number of proposals	2	3	4	4	2	6	21

Table 1. Distribution of proposals/scores

¹Since 1990, Professor Peter Gorm Larsen has been involved in 22 EU projects contributing to industry as well as academia, and he is currently the coordinator of the INTO-CPS H2020 project. Peter G. Larsen is also an external evaluator of ICT-related proposals in connection with H2020.

²This number covers 19 Research and Innovation Actions and 2 Innovative Training Networks.

Score	Interpretation
0	The proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information
1	Poor. The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses
2	Fair. The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses
3	Good. The proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present
4	Very good. The proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present
5	Excellent. The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor

Table 2. Definition of scores

1.2/ Important points, tips and tricks

When writing the IMPACT section, it is important to be aware that the group of evaluators consists of people with various professional backgrounds, and that the proposal must be read and understood by this professionally diverse evaluation panel.

The AU IMPACT guide focuses on providing the evaluator with a complete overview of how the project will lead to expected IMPACTs.

Evaluation report reviews show that applicants first and foremost must be able to:

- Demonstrate project IMPACT in a convincing way
- Provide a clear and substantiated strategy for how to achieve IMPACT
- Ensure a match between proposal and call

This may seem obvious and elementary, but the review of the proposals with low scores showed that these factors may present a challenge which makes it difficult to demonstrate the project IMPACT in a proposal. In order for the IMPACT section to be convincing, it is important that the applicant focuses on the objectives and the target group through the whole process.

The figure below contains some significant and recurring statements from the evaluation reports:

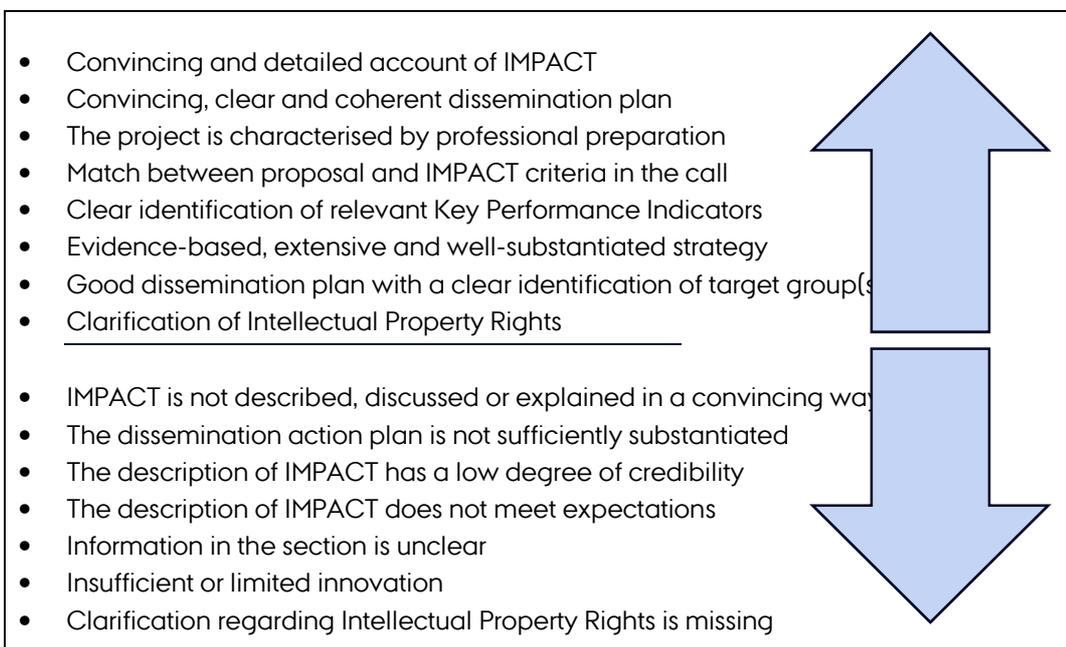


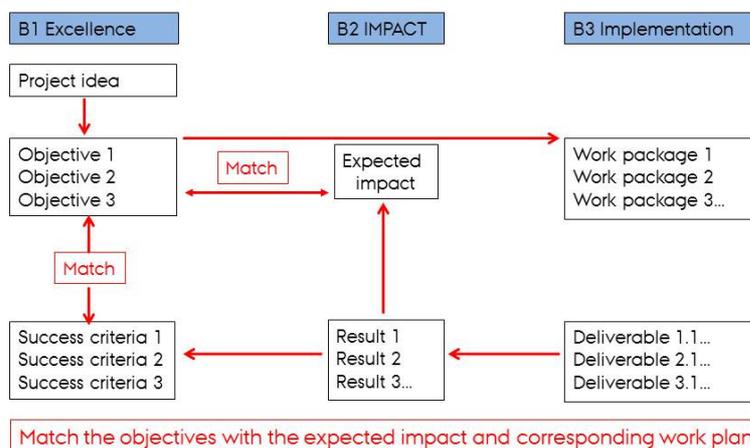
Figure 1. Examples from evaluation summary reports

The IMPACT section must describe the expected scientific and innovative effects of the project and focus on society as well as end users on a European and, if relevant, on a global level. The section must also explain how the project results will be used and spread to relevant stakeholders, for example the process from lead user and on to end users.

It is important to focus on the following when writing the IMPACT section:

- To read the call thoroughly. It is important to consider and present arguments that explain which of the expected IMPACTS the consortium will address with the project in question. These expected IMPACTs then constitute the framework for the argumentation in the IMPACT section.
- To consider whether the project contributes to other priorities and policies in the EU. [The Research Support Office](#) can provide additional assistance.
- To ensure that the connection between Objectives, IMPACT and Work Plan (deliverables) is clear through the whole proposal as illustrated below:

Objectives, IMPACT and Work Plan



Kilde: Anders Bjerrum: 'Sådan skriver du en succesfuld EU-ansøgning', Naryana Press, 2014

Source: Anders Bjerrum: 'Sådan skriver du en succesfuld EU-ansøgning' (How to write a successful EU application), Naryana Press, 2014

- To carry out a thorough analysis of potential project stakeholders e.g. lead users, end users, industry partners, research, citizens, policy makers etc before starting the writing process.
- To ensure that lead users, who may be crucial to project success, are represented in the consortium.
- To ensure that the consortium partners work together on the wording of the IMPACT section.
- To describe the IMPACTs which the project results are expected to have for the consortium, and how the consortium partners will benefit from the project. For example, an industry partner will be able to open a new business area, turnover will increase, new markets will emerge, researchers will obtain new publishable knowledge etc.
- To demonstrate the outcome and to present arguments which explain why the project is necessary. This can be done by:
 - Quantifying/describing the baseline for the topic, area, problem, challenge which the project wants to use as a basis for measuring its IMPACT.
 - Quantifying/describing the expected IMPACT at the end of the project.
 - Quantifying/describing the expected IMPACT e.g. three years and five years after the project is closed.
 - Describing the Technology Readiness Level (TRL) at the beginning of the project, and the expected TRL at the end of the project (if relevant). Section 3.0 'Toolbox' contains a definition of TRL.
- To define baseline correctly so that it shows the possible IMPACT of the project where it creates most value. This is done by finding the place in the value chain where IMPACT is most evident e.g. by defining that the project will lead to a 25%

reduction in private household's electricity consumption instead of a 2-3% reduction at a general EU level.

- To define the Key Performance Indicators which will be used to measure the project's progress towards the project's objectives. Section 3.0 'Toolbox' contains a definition of KPI as well as a template for creating a KPI overview.
- To write the IMPACT section in a comprehensible language which focuses on the target group and takes the various backgrounds of the evaluators into consideration. Please contact the Research Support Office or a communication adviser at the faculty's administrative centre if you need help.

2.0 The AU IMPACT guide

After reading the IMPACT section, it must be clear to the evaluator:

- *Why the project is necessary*
- *What difference it is going to make*
- *Why it has not been done before*
- *Why this consortium is able to take up this challenge and solve the task*

2.1/ Introduction to the AU IMPACT guide

The AU IMPACT guide is in line with the template for Horizon 2020 proposals. A Horizon 2020 IMPACT section contains the following predefined headings:

2. IMPACT

2.1 Expected IMPACTs

2.2 Measures to maximize IMPACT

The IMPACT section (section 2) must contain clear information about the following two main points:

- **Description of Expected IMPACTs:** Expected effect of project outputs (stated in the call)
- **Measures to maximize IMPACT:** Dissemination, exploitation, communication. How the project will ensure that stakeholders receive information about and exploit project results, and how the results are communicated to the general public.

The figure below illustrates this guide's recommended IMPACT section structure:

2 IMPACT

- Introduction to the section – reading guide
- Illustration of connection between Output/Action/Stakeholders and IMPACT:



- 2.1 Expected IMPACT
- 2.2 Measures to maximize IMPACT

Figure 2 – Illustration of IMPACT section structure

2.2/ Guide to section 2: IMPACT

The IMPACT section starts with a reading guide which describes the purpose of the section to the evaluator and the contents of the following sub-sections. The goal is to provide the evaluator with a clear understanding of the content of the section and how it relates to the call.

The introduction ends with a figure which illustrates the connection between output (products/results), actions, stakeholders and IMPACT. The figure is used to illustrate the connection to the Expected IMPACTS described in the call.



Figure 3. Illustration of connection between products/results and IMPACT. Complete the figure by adding the relevant outputs, actions, stakeholders and IMPACTs and use arrows to show the connection between the various parts of the figure. See page 17 for an example of a filled-in figure.

Potential stakeholders and suitable communication channels must be identified before you start writing the IMPACT section.

The figure is filled in from the right to the left i.e. from IMPACT towards Output. The figure's column to the right contains the Expected IMPACTs described in the call. The 'Stakeholders' column contains all stakeholders who play a role in achieving the various Expected IMPACTs.

In addition to the other project activities, the 'Action' column should also include the dissemination, exploitation and communication activities which ensure that the users receive and exploit project results.

The 'Output' column contains the overall results – data, knowledge, information, products – which the project generates.

An editable version of this figure is available from the [Research Support Office](#). Section 3.4/ contains an example of how to fill in the figure.

2.3/ Guide to section 2.1: Expected IMPACTs

Each of the Expected IMPACTs must be addressed and described in a separate subsection. The connections illustrated in the figure are explained based on the following structure (this part is also called the project's pitch):

- a. Problem: Describe, quantify (using TRL if relevant) and address the individual topics/areas/problems/challenges which the project is expected to solve.
- b. Solution: How does this project address/solve these topics/areas/problems/challenges? Describe how the project will deliver a solution and make it available to stakeholders. Include clear references to project deliverables and outputs in this description. Refer to the KPIs which will be used to measure project progress towards Expected IMPACT, the quantified results which will be achieved as well as the expected TRL at the end of the project (if possible). Section 3.0 'Toolbox' contains a definition of TRL and KPI, and a template which can be used to provide a KPI overview (section 3.2/).

Note: It is a good idea to address each topic/area/problem/challenge individually based on the recommendations above.

In a separate section, the barriers/obstacles to achieving the project's expected IMPACT (not to be confused with the risk analysis which refers to the research plan) must be described. We recommend that you create a list of the barriers/obstacles and describe which measures will be taken to overcome the barriers/obstacles. Section 3.3/ contains a template which can be used to describe the barriers/obstacles, and the measures that will be taken to overcome them.

Describe the types of barriers/obstacles (e.g. political, economic, regulatory, legal, social, cultural, ethical etc) which are relevant and which may influence the project.

2.4/ Guide to section 2.2: Measures to maximize IMPACT

The section starts with an introduction which describes the purpose and content of the section, i.e. to describe the actions which the consortium has planned to achieve the expected IMPACT. The section is divided into three sub-sections: dissemination, exploitation and communication.

Dissemination

Each stakeholder's interest in the project must be described, and the communication channels (scientific conferences, journals, summer schools, workshops, the project website), which the consortium intends to use to ensure the dissemination of scientific results, must be defined. Plan the activities to make it possible to receive feedback from stakeholders outside the consortium, e.g. a workshop with trade associations.

Describe the project's dissemination activities e.g. scientific articles, information on website, teaching material.

Exploitation

In this section, describe how the consortium partners and other stakeholders, if relevant, will use and exploit the project results. Divide the stakeholders into academic and industrial partners and stakeholders outside the consortium.

- **Academic partners:**
Describe how the project's academic partners will use the results for future research, teaching and outreach activities.
- **Industrial partners:**
Describe how each of the project's industrial partners will use and possibly further develop the results in connection with their activities/products/business, and the impact the results will have after the project ends.
Note: It is relevant to prepare a business plan, if project results/products can be launched onto the market within a fairly short time frame (approx. four years after the project is closed). The level of detail and information in the business plan depends on how close the product is to market launch. It is particularly important to provide a well-founded description of Return on Investment (ROI).
- **Stakeholders outside the consortium:**
Describe how stakeholders outside the consortium can use and exploit the project results. It may also be relevant to describe how the results could be used in other sectors.

IPR strategy

Identify the partners who have developed a specific result (and thereby have the exploitation rights). Describe other partners who have an interest in exploiting the same result, and the strategy for distribution of rights. Refer to the consortium agreement which the partners will enter into before starting the project.

Note: The description of how IPR will be managed by the consortium should be included in section 3 'Implementation'.

For this purpose, a standard text is available in section 3.5/.

Open Access

Describe the consortium's position on Open Access. Generally, 'green open access' is recommended unless specific conditions make 'golden open access' more relevant.

Communication

In this section, the project's communication activities are described. The purpose of the communication activities is to disseminate knowledge about the project.

Define target groups. What do you want to achieve through these communication activities?

For example:

- Influence key decision-makers
- Ensure that the project results are communicated to the industry
- Get specific target groups to act in a certain way - make the public interested in research
- Disseminate knowledge to the primary and lower secondary school and to the upper secondary school

How do you reach the target groups? Describe the communication channels which the project wants to use.

For example:

- Press releases
- Traditional news media (printed and electronic)
- Social media (e.g. Twitter, LinkedIn)
- Web
- Blogs
- Newsletters (e.g. for industries and trade associations)
- Cooperation with schools
- Business incubator centres and laboratories affiliated with educational institutions
- Webinars

A communication plan and a plan for strategic management of the communication initiatives must be prepared. Input for strategic planning of communication can be found in section 3.7/.

3.0 Toolbox

3.1/ Key terms

Baseline: The basis/starting point of the topics, areas, problems, challenges which the project is expected to have an impact on. If possible, a quantitative baseline should be defined.

End users: The end user is the buyer/the people who purchase the end product(s) which are introduced into the market by the lead user.

Key Performance Indicator (KPI): A KPI is a measurement which shows the state of the project in relation to the project objectives. KPIs are used to measure progress and to manage the project, as KPIs can show that changes may be required if the required progress is not achieved. KPIs can therefore be a convincing tool to use in a proposal to support the arguments for investing in the project and to show what the investors will get for their investment.

By using clearly defined KPIs, you demonstrate that you have considered how to measure the project results and when. For example: The EU wants to shorten the development time of product X (IMPACT). In the proposal, the consortium describes how it plans to solve this task e.g. by creating a set of product development standards based on input from a panel of industry stakeholders incl. sub-suppliers and end users (Output). In their proposal, the consortium then defines a number of KPIs which show how they plan to measure that the output in question will shorten the development time. Such a KPI could be: When using the standards, how many days does it take to complete product development phase 1? (Product development phase 1 and the use of the standards must be clearly defined). In the proposal, the consortium also defines when they plan to measure e.g. at the end of the first year of the project, and what the objective is e.g. a reduction of the development time of 10% in relation to the baseline. So basically, good KPIs must:

- Be measurable and clearly defined (e.g. unit of measurement, method, time, number of measurements during the project and objectives (e.g. reduce product development time by x%) must be defined)
- Measure on key parameters which are closely linked to project success, strategy and objectives (e.g. reduction of product development time (IMPACT))
- Be possible to measure objectively several times during the project
- Be agreed by the consortium

Note: In addition, it may be a good idea to define KPIs which show the project's impact on society and address current political issues (e.g. by measuring the project's impact on the environment, level of employment etc.).

Lead users: Lead users can either use/buy the project results/products and develop these further to make them ready for market launch, or, if possible, they can launch the result/product directly on the market.

Objective: The goals/results which you want to achieve during the project by using the available resources within a specified time frame.

Output: The products/results, which the project develops to create IMPACT, are the output. For example under 'KPI', the set of product development standards and the industry panel can be defined as this project's outputs.

Note: These outputs may consist of project deliverables which are created through specific work packages (WP) in the project. For example, a documentation task in the project may be defined as a work package, and this work package has a deliverable which is standard Y.

Stakeholders: A person/organisation etc with an interest in the project, who/which can affect or may be affected by the project, is a stakeholder. Stakeholders should be defined in the proposal to make it clear who has an interest in the project including lead users and end users. It is also important to demonstrate how you plan to involve your stakeholders in the project.

Return on Investment (ROI): Performance objectives used to measure the investment efficiency or to compare the efficiency of various investments. ROI measures the size of the Return on Investment in relation to the investment costs. The following equation is used to calculate ROI:

$$\text{ROI} = \frac{\text{Gain of investment} - \text{Cost of investment}}{\text{Cost of Investment}}$$

Source: Investopedia:

<http://www.investopedia.com/terms/r/returnoninvestment.asp>

TRL – Technology Readiness Level: Describes the maturity level of a specific technology. In HORIZON 2020 – WORK PROGRAMME 2014-2015 General Annexes, TRL is described in the following way:

“Where a topic description refers to a TRL, the following definitions apply, unless otherwise specified”:

TRL 1:	Basic principles observed
TRL 2:	Technology concept formulated
TRL 3:	Experimental proof of concept
TRL 4:	Technology validated in lab
TRL 5:	Technology validated in relevant environment (industrially relevant environment in the case of key enabling technologies)
TRL 6:	Technology demonstrated in relevant environment (industrially relevant environment in the case of key enabling technologies)
TRL 7:	System prototype demonstration in operational environment
TRL 8:	System complete and qualified
TRL 9:	Actual system proven in operational environment (competitive manufacturing in the case of key enabling technologies; or in space)

Source: Page 1 of 1 Extract from Part 19 - Commission Decision C (2014) 4995

3.2/ Table for KPI overview in relation to project schedule

The progress towards project objectives can be monitored by using quantitative and qualitative KPIs. The table below is used to summarise the KPIs – the measurements per objective per year. KPI objectives are achieved through deliverables. Therefore, it is defined for each KPI which deliverables are required to achieve the KPI objectives. The table contains an example.

Note: This table can be included in the Excellence section.

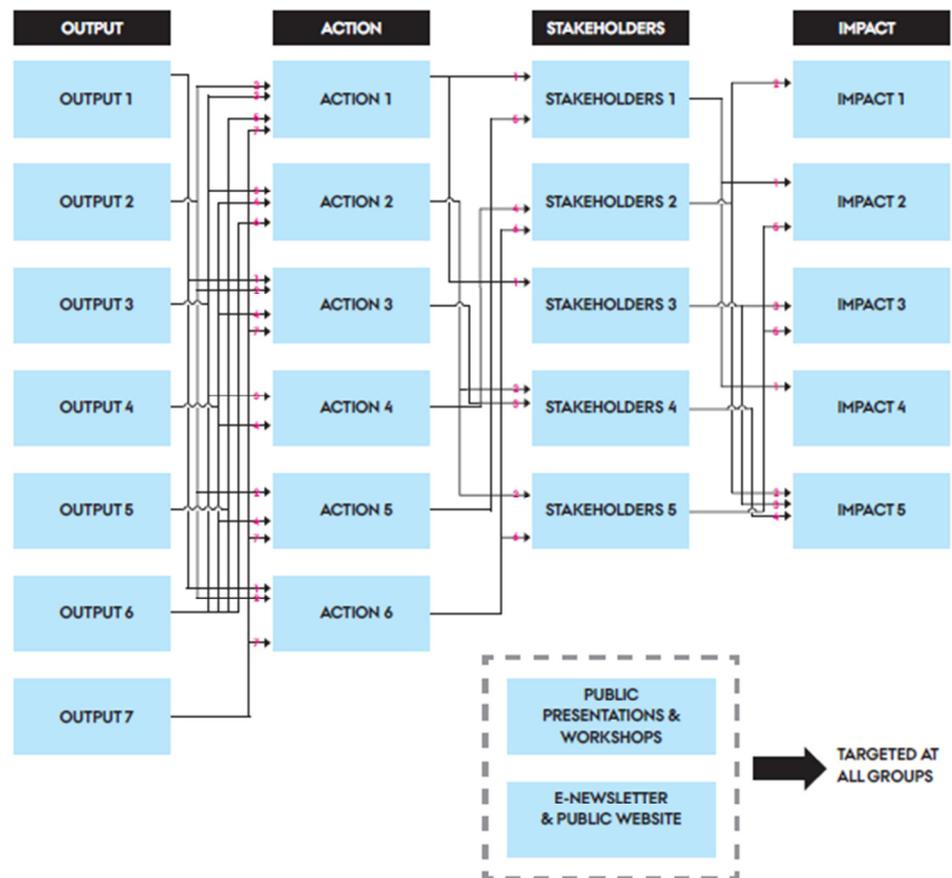
KPI reference (e.g. place the KPIs in alphabetical order as illustrated below)	Objective (Which of the project objectives is this specific KPI linked to? – Use the objective numbers which you have used to list project objectives in the document (excellence) – see examples below)	Indicator Describe what you are measuring and how	KPI objective (Remember to add a reference to the deliverable(s) in question)		
			Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
	[1,3,4]		Define the objective(s) for year 1 and include a reference to the deliverable(s)	Define the objective(s) for year 2 and include a reference to the deliverable(s)	Define the objective(s) for year 3 and include a reference to the deliverable(s)
[a]	[4]	E.g. duration of development phase	Example: 10% reduction (D1.1)	Example: 20% reduction (D1.2)	Example: 30% reduction (D1.3)
[b]	[1,2]				

3.3/ Table for barriers/obstacles and measures to overcome them

Expected barriers/obstacles	Measures to overcome expected barriers/obstacles
Example	Example
Etc.	Etc.

3.4/ IMPACT guide: Figure with examples

The IMPACT figure template is available in PowerPoint format from the Research Support Office. Complete the figure by adding the relevant outputs, actions, stakeholders and IMPACTs and use arrows to show the connection between the various parts of the figure. See example below:



3.5/ Foreground and IPR

Suggestion for parts of the text for section 3.2 *Management structure and procedures*

The text below may be used for all proposals for the HORIZON 2020 section concerning project results and IPR. The text may be copied directly and is written by Aarhus University's legal advisors and business developers. This is a standard text and adjustments may be required for the project in question. This is indicated by [].

Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and other legal issues will be covered by the Grant Agreement and the Consortium Agreement for the general rules.

Consortium Agreement. Production of a suitable Consortium Agreement (CA) will be led by the contracts office at Aarhus University. It will be agreed by all partners, and is to be signed prior to the commencement of the project. The CA will cover, in detail, management, financial, IPR and conflict-resolution procedures. The CA will lay out the project's treatment of Foreground and Background (as defined by EC) with a starting point in the de-facto standard DESCAs model (<http://www.desca-2020.eu/>).

Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Management. The project partners acknowledge that Foreground IPR generated by a project partner and Background IPR brought into the project by a partner belong to the partner(s) having generated or provided the said IPR. The project partners also acknowledge that the protection of IPR to allow possible commercial exploitation needs to receive due attention. To facilitate IPR management, the AU coordinator] will be supported by the staff at Corporate Relations and Technology Transfer at AU.

The project will use the following IPR management process:

- All inventions that require management will be registered in IPR Directory by the chairman of the board.
- Potential IPR resulting from the work done within the Work Packages will be identified and added to the IPR directory through the following procedure: Work Package Leaders will identify all potential IPR in their [six month and annual – depending on the reporting periods] reports to the project board.
- The Work Package Leaders will inform their respective IPR offices which will evaluate the IP and decide whether there is a realistic chance of obtaining IP protection. If there is more than one party that has contributed to the potential IPR the contributing parties shall in good faith discuss the IP strategy.

Further details on IPR issues, publications, and access rights will be laid down in the CA following the guidelines from the EC.

3.6/ Communication plan template

Stakeholders WHO	Message and interests WHAT	Form of communication HOW	Action deadline WHEN	Who is responsible?	Expected reaction	Comments

3.7/ Input for strategic communication planning

Communication planning involves decisions on how you intend to disseminate information about intermediate project results and end results.

- Who is supposed to benefit from these results, and what is required in order to make this happen?
- Communication about and dissemination of project results must be detailed and strategy-based and not just isolated activities.
- The evaluator must be able to visualise the effect of the completed project.
- Statements must be evidence-based – why does this have impact and can it be verified/documentated?

Typical mistakes	Best practice
Non-strategic communication	Strategy-based communication
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary focus on the medium, the message is secondary • Communication initiatives based on random ideas • The questions 'why' and 'what' have not been answered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target, target groups and message are clearly defined before the medium is selected • Plan established for how to achieve the desired results • Objectives are clearly defined

1. **Managing communication initiatives** Are resources allocated? Are the required professional qualifications available? If required, a communication officer at your faculty can help you prepare the communication plan and establish how to achieve the desired effects. The communication activities should be defined as an independent project work package. The template above can be used to create the communication plan. It is important to make sure that you know how to contact the EU Commission so that their communication channels can be used for messages relating to project results.
2. **Define targets and sub-targets.** What do you want to achieve through these communication activities? For example, influence key decision-makers, make sure that project results are spread to the entire industry, get specific target groups to act in a certain way. The targets must be specific, measurable and time-bound and could focus on:
 - The level of media exposure
 - Increase in funding
 - Number of new patents as a result of the research
 - Number of publications in specific scientific journals
 - End user surveys
3. **Who is your audience?** It is not sufficient to say 'the general public' or 'all stakeholders'. You need to be more specific and say e.g. 'SMEs in aquaculture', 'Master's degree students in x at y European universities', 'EU parliamentarians in transport committees'.

Define who may have an interest in the project results:

- Who might be interested in knowing something about the project result?

- Who will be directly affected by it?
 - Who will not be directly affected, but may influence relevant areas with an interest in the project result?
 - Locally, regionally, nationally, globally: Who are the potential stakeholders? Are there e.g. any regional focus areas within the field which may involve stakeholders who have an interest in using or spreading knowledge of project results?
4. **Choose your message.** What's new? What will the project affect/change? What makes this project important? What are the key elements? What will happen if the project is not carried out or if the project results are not used to take action? Tell a story that appeals to your target groups' feelings and imagination. Consider what the project means to ordinary peoples' everyday lives or to major societal issues. Make sure to place the project in a large socio-economic perspective which will make it easier to explain the results and their relevance to decision-makers and citizens. In addition, make sure that the message is in line with the project's communication targets.
 5. **Use the right media and resources.** Does the chosen medium reach the right target group? Does the message reach the right level - locally, regionally, nationally, globally? Are the project partners used actively to disseminate knowledge of the project?
 6. **Evaluate the initiatives.** Review targets and sub-targets. Have they been achieved? What are the lessons learned?

Communication channels to consider for the dissemination of project results:

- Dialogue
- Conferences
- Papers
- Courses and training
- Workshops
- Online debates
- Press releases
- Traditional news media (printed and electronic)
- Social media
- Web
- Blogs
- Newsletters (e.g. for industries and trade associations)
- Scientific journals
- Trade magazines
- Leaflets, folders (to be used at conventions, conferences etc)
- Exhibitions
- Cooperation with schools
- Business incubator centres and laboratories affiliated with educational institutions

