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**From the researcher's perspective
to the European point of view:
how to meet expectations of European evaluators**

Ciro Franco

***Head of National Research Support Office,
Sapienza Università di Roma***



Agenda



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From the funder perspective

Starting point

- **Awareness of the funding context**
- **Matching EU objectives and focussing on expected impacts**
- **In depth awareness of evaluation criteria and process**



Horizon Europe

Horizon Europe

Vision and objectives



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Horizon Europe, the ninth European Research and Innovation Framework Programme (2021-2027), is the EU's key funding instrument for research and innovation, with a budget of € 95.5 billions.



HORIZON EUROPE



fuel EU's **scientific and technological excellence** and the strengthen the European Research Area (ERA)

**Science
& technology**



tackle policy priorities, including **green and digital transitions** and Sustainable Development Goals

Society



boost Europe's **innovation uptake, competitiveness and jobs**

Economy

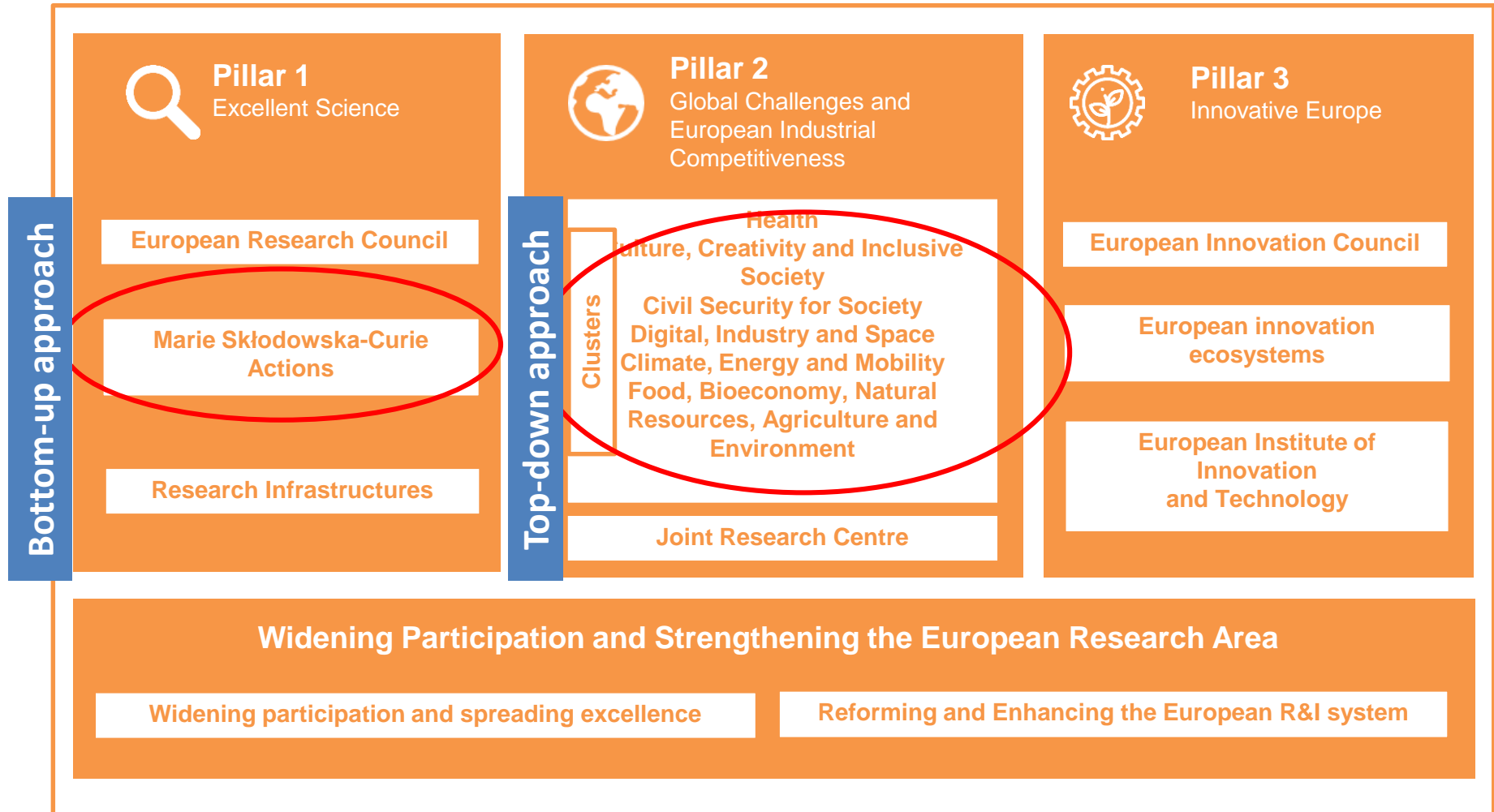


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Horizon Europe: overall structure



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The added value of a Horizon project

Projects need to demonstrate:

- How their objectives and planning are **targeted to the needs/problems and opportunities of end-users;**
- Complementarity with existing research and **best practices;**
 - ➔ What is the project added value? Avoid recycling projects: repetition or continuation of former projects.
- Sufficient involvement of **key actors with complementary types of knowledge** (scientific and practical) should be reflected in the composition of the project consortium to reach the project objectives and make its results broadly implemented.
 - ➔ Include partners beyond scientists, such as end users.
 - ➔ Consider the involvement of multipliers to strengthen impact.

Horizon call general approach



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- **Calls are challenge-based, and therefore more open to innovative proposals**
 - Calls are less prescriptive - they do not outline the expected solutions to the problem, nor the approach to be taken to solve it
 - Calls/topics descriptions allow plenty of scope for applicants to propose innovative solutions of their own choice
- **There is a greater emphasis on impact, in particular through each call or topic impact statements**
 - Applicants are asked to explain how their work will contribute to bringing about the described impacts
 - During the evaluation, you are asked to assess this potential contribution
- **There is more emphasis on innovation**
 - Horizon 2020 supports all stages in the research and innovation chain including non-technological and social innovation and activities closer to the market
- **Proposals may bring together different disciplines, sectors and actors to tackle specific challenges**

The structure of the project



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Part A

- **General Information and Abstract**
- **Administrative data of participating organisations including the role of each one**
- **Budget Table**
- **Researchers table – needed to follow up researchers careers (HE indicator)**
- **Self-declaration on gender equality plan (not part of the evaluation)**
- **Ethics self-assessment table and explanations (now moved to Part A)**
- **Security questionnaire**

Part B

- **Excellence (objectives; relation to WP; concept and methodology; ambition; interdisciplinary approaches, gender dimension, open sciences practices and engagement of citizens, civil society and end-users where appropriate)**
- **Impact (credibility of the pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts; measures to maximize the expected outcomes and impacts as set out in the dissemination & exploitation plan, including communication activities)**
- **Implementation (work plan; risks; consortium and necessary expertise)**

The page limits and sections subject to limits are clearly shown in the application form on the Participant Portal electronic submission system. The page limit applies only to Part B.

For the RIA/IA this limit is set at 45 pages. For CFS the limit is set at 30 pages.

Excess pages will be automatically made invisible, i.e. will not be evaluated.

Collaborative projects: fundamental information sources and relevant documents



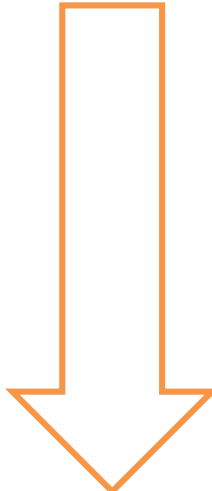
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- **Work Programme** (Policies, strategies, objectives, destination/expected impacts, etc.)
 - **The description of the TOPIC**
 - **Applicant guidelines** (if available)
 - **Part B template (Project structure)**
 - **Self-assessment form** (if available)
-
- **But also... policy documents by the European Commission**

An example: from the WP to the topic



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- 
- **Work Programme** - Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment
 - **Destination** - Fair, healthy and environment-friendly food systems from primary production to consumption
 - **Call** - Fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food systems from primary production to consumption
 - **Topic** - HORIZON-CL6-2021-FARM2FORK-01-15: Transition to healthy and sustainable dietary behaviour

From WP to specific topics



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What to carefully
analyse within a
topic?

- **Specific Challenge**
- **Scope**
- **Expected Impact**
- **Type of Action (RIA, IA, CSA)**
- **Available budget and
indicative request per project
proposal**



The evaluation process

Overview of the evaluation process



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STEP 1
REA Staff

RECEIPT OF
PROPOSALS

ADMISSIBILITY and
ELIGIBILITY CHECK

STEP 2
External Experts

BRIEFING

INDIVIDUAL
EVALUATION

CONSENSUS
PHASE

PANEL REVIEW*

Evaluators prepare
the Individual
Evaluation Reports

Rapporteurs prepare
the draft Consensus
Reports

Evaluators discuss the
draft Consensus
Reports

STEP 3
REA Staff

FINALISATION

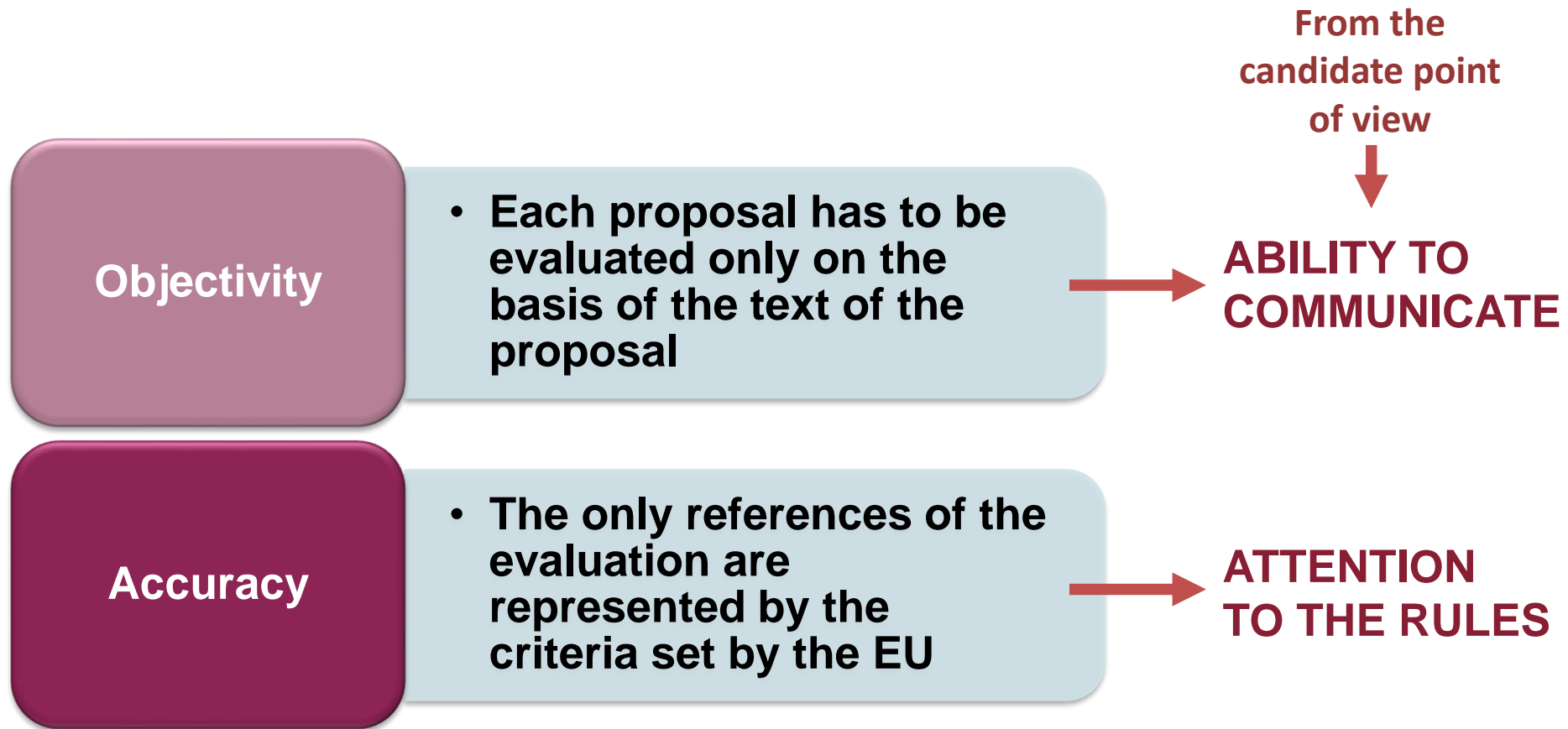
FINAL RANKED LIST

INFORMATION TO
THE APPLICANTS

Basic principles of the evaluation process



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From the
candidate point
of view



**ABILITY TO
COMMUNICATE**

**ATTENTION
TO THE RULES**

Two different approaches



Top-down calls (2nd Pillar)

- ✓ Relevance and **alignment to the topic**
- ✓ Particular attention to the **impacts expected from the topic**, as described in the WP
- ✓ **Measurability of specific impacts**



Collaborative projects
RIA – IA - CSA

Bottom-up calls (1st Pillar)

- ✓ Organization in **different scientific evaluation panels**
- ✓ **Strategic is the choice** of the evaluation panel
- ✓ **Originality** in the choice of the research topic



Individual projects
MSCA - ERC

Evaluation criteria in the top down approach



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Excellence

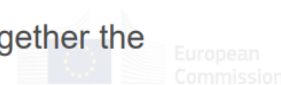
- Clarity and pertinence of the **project's objectives**, and the extent to which the proposed work is ambitious, and goes beyond the state-of-the-art.
- Soundness of the proposed **methodology**, including the underlying concepts, models, assumptions, interdisciplinary approaches, appropriate consideration of the **gender dimension** in research and innovation content, and the quality of **open science practices** including sharing and management of research outputs and engagement of citizens, civil society and end users where appropriate.

Impact

- Credibility of the **pathways** to achieve the expected **outcomes and impacts** specified in the work programme, and the likely scale and significance of the contributions due to the project.
- Suitability and quality of the **measures to maximize expected outcomes and impacts**, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities.

Quality and efficiency of the implementation

- Quality and effectiveness of the **work plan**, assessment of risks, and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages, and the resources overall.
- Capacity and role of each **participant**, and extent to which the **consortium** as a whole brings together the necessary expertise.



How evaluators assess EXCELLENCE



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Objectives	<p>Are the project's objectives clear and pertinent to the topic?</p> <p>Are they measurable, verifiable and realistically achievable?</p> <p><i>Is the proposed work ambitious and beyond the state of the art (e.g. ground-breaking R&I, novel concepts and approaches) – not for CSA</i></p>
Methodology, concept and approaches	<p>Is the scientific methodology (i.e. the concepts, models and assumptions that underpin the work) clear and sound?</p> <p>Is it clear how approaches from different disciplines will be brought together and integrated in pursuit of the objectives?</p> <p>Are open science principles implemented as an integral part of the proposed methodology?</p> <p><i>Are gender dimension aspects well considered in the proposed approaches? – not for all topics, CSA</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>SCOPE OF THE TOPIC & BUILDING ON PREVIOUS ACTIVITIES</u></p>
Cross-cutting aspects	<p>Multi-Actor - A form of responsible research and innovation, aims to make the R&I process and its outcomes more demand-driven, reliable and relevant to society</p>



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How evaluators assess IMPACT



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Pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts and scale and significance of the contributions	<p>Is the contribution of the project towards the expected outcomes of the topic and the wider impacts, in the longer term, as specified in the Mission introduction, credible?</p> <p>What is the contribution to each topic outcomes? Are the scale and significance of the project's contributions estimated and quantified (including baselines, benchmarks and assumptions used for those estimates)?</p> <p>Are potential barriers identified (i.e. other R&I work; regulatory environment; targeted markets; user behavior) and realistically addressed?</p> <p>Are the target groups of results well identified and relevant?</p>
Measures to maximise expected outcomes and impact	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF THE TOPIC</u></p> <p>Are the proposed dissemination, exploitation and communication measures suitable, proportionate to the scale of the project and of good quality?</p> <p>Are the target group for these measures correctly identified and relevant (e.g. scientific community, end users, financial actors, public at large)?</p> <p>Is the strategy for the management of intellectual property properly outlined and suitable to support exploitation of results?</p>



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How evaluators assess IMPLEMENTATION



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Work plan, risks, resources	<p>Is the work plan of good quality and effective? Does it include quantified information so that progress can be monitored? Does it follow a logic structure (for example regarding the timing of work packages)? Are the resources allocated to the work packages in line with their objectives and deliverables? Are critical risks, relating to project implementation, identified and proper risk mitigation measures proposed?</p> <p><u>COLLABORATION WITH OTHER PROJECTS</u></p>
Capacity and expertise	<p>Does the consortium match the project's objectives, and bring together the necessary disciplinary and inter-disciplinary knowledge (including on relevant horizontal aspects)? Do the partners have access to critical infrastructure needed to carry out the project activities? Are the participants complementing one another (and cover the value chain, where appropriate)? Does each of them have a valid role, and adequate resources in the project to fulfil that role?</p>

Comments and scores

Excellent. The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

Very Good. The proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.

Good. The proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.

Fair. The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.

Poor. The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.

The proposal **fails** to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.

5**Excellent****4**4.9
↑
↓
4.0**Very Good****3**3.9
↑
↓
3.0**Good****2**2.9
↑
↓
2.0**Fair****1**1.9
↑
↓
1.0**Poor****0**



From the evaluator point of view

The starting point



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- *When is a proposal good? When it facilitates the evaluator's work*
- *Evaluators do really hate verbosity, unclear language, bad layout, meaningless illustrations, small print, platitudes, etc.*
- *The first two pages are critically important – if you lose the evaluators' attention there, you are lost!*

Abstract: an accurate and compelling text



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**Why is
important?**

Why now?

Why you?

Impact?

Where to start from to draft the proposal



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- **Align** with the rationale of the **policy context** and funder expectations
- **Justify** research objectives against the state of the art
- Identify the **research aim/goal** and consequently the **objectives**
- Propose **measurable key performance indicators** for **each objective** listed in the proposal

Goals and Objectives

Goal

- A statement that describes in broad terms what will be done or achieved in long term
- Is overarching in relation to the objectives
- Is more ambitious than objectives can be

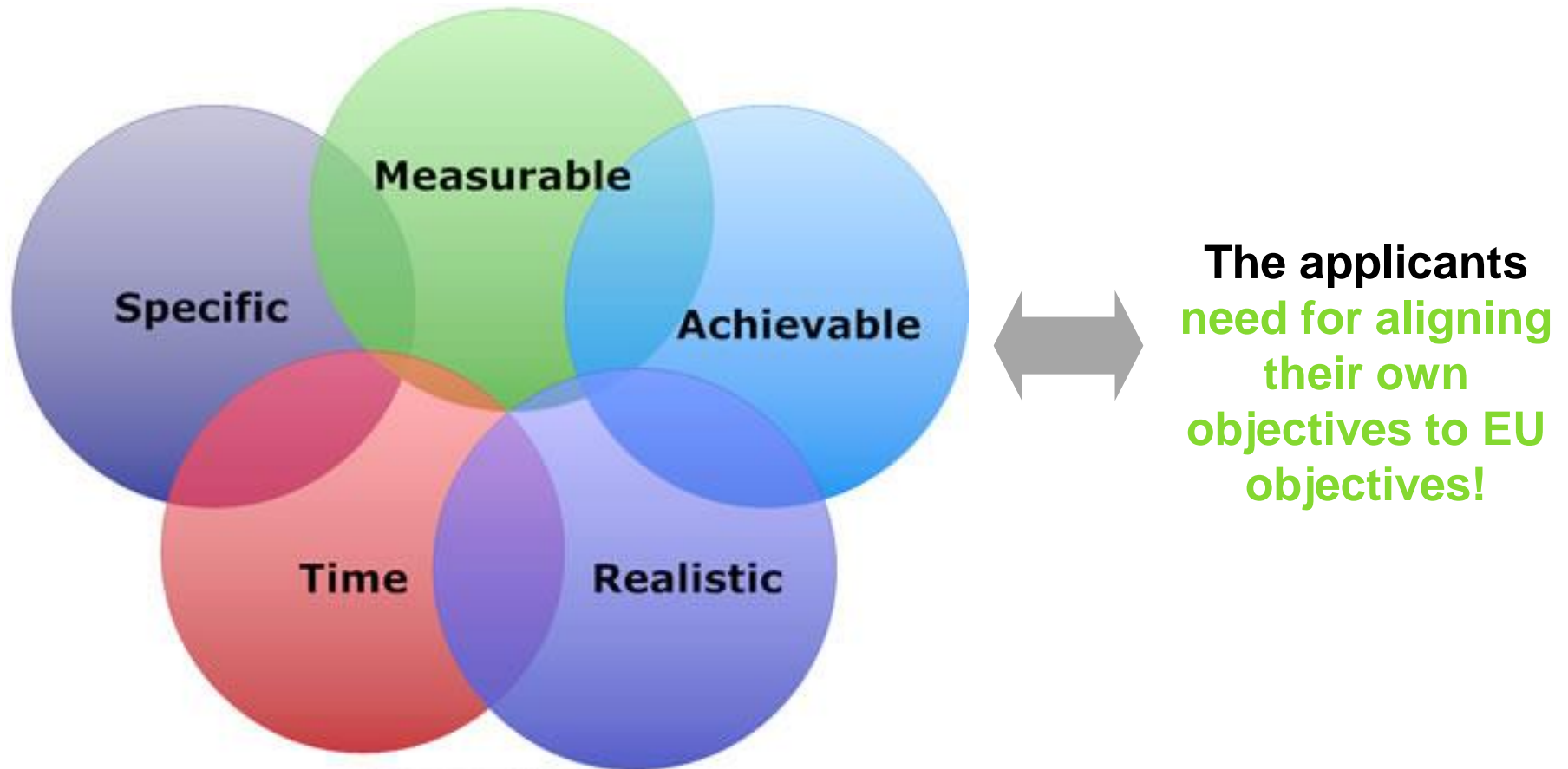
Can't be validated as is

Objective

- A statement in specific and measurable terms that describes what the PI or consortium will know or be able to do
- Consider to use S.M.A.R.T or SMARTER written objectives

Can be validated as is

Definition of the objectives

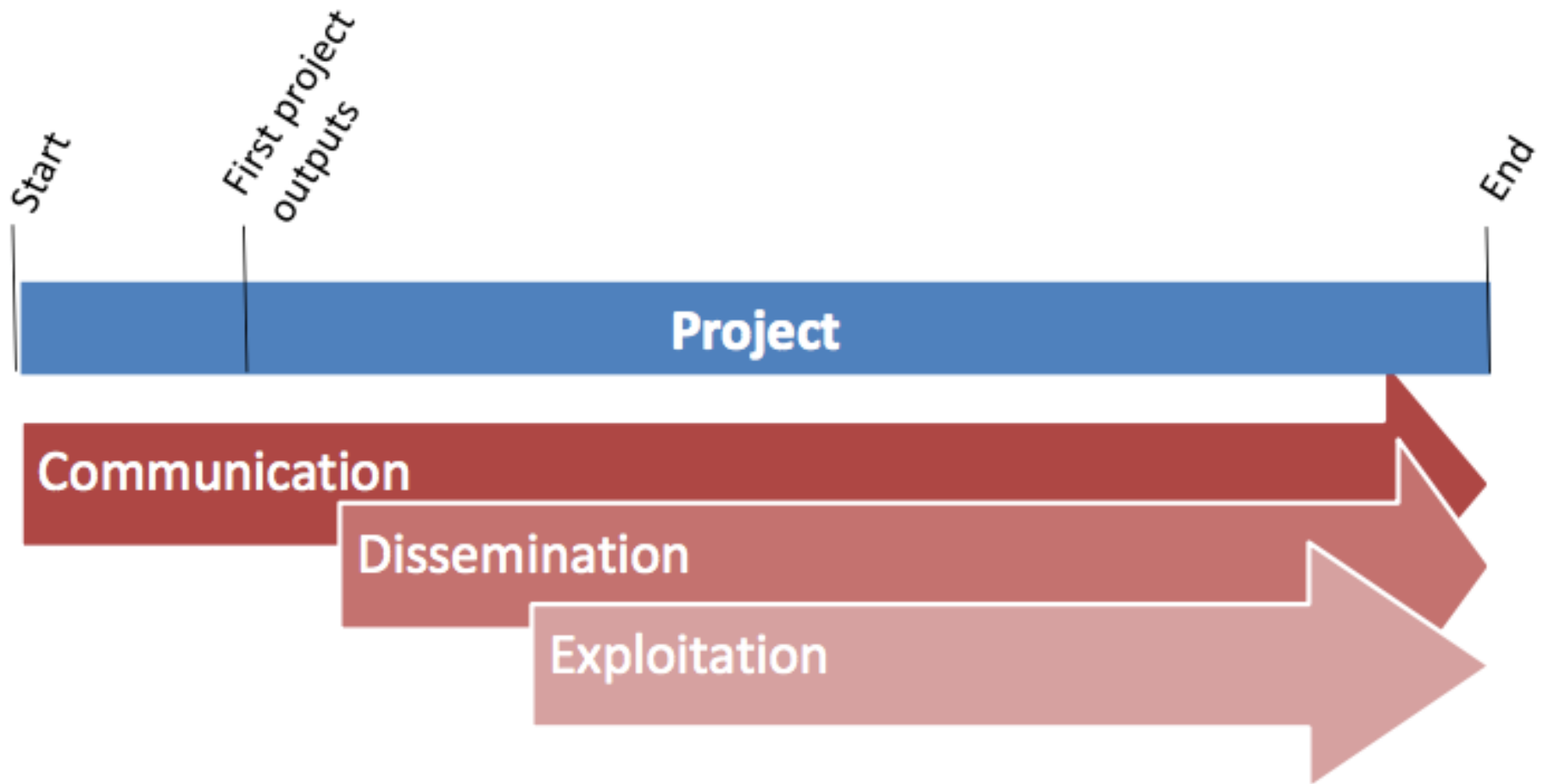


- **Dissemination** is a **process of promotion** and awareness-raising making **research results** known to **various stakeholder groups** (like research **peers, industry** and other **commercial actors, professional organisations, policymakers**) in a targeted way, to enable them to use the results in their own work.
- **Exploitation** is the **use** of the **results during** and **after** the project's implementation. It can be for **commercial purposes** but also for **improving policies**, and for **tackling economic and societal problems**.
- **Communication** means taking strategic and targeted measures for promoting the **project itself** and **its results** to a **multitude of audiences**, including the media and the public, and possibly engaging in a **two-way exchange**. The aim is **to reach out to society as a whole** and in particular to some specific audiences while **demonstrating how EU funding contributes to tackling societal challenges**.

Timing within project duration ...feasibility of the project



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*The most frequent weaknesses,
according to evaluators comments*

EXCELLENCE - Weaknesses



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The state-of-the-art of the research topic is very generic and the **contribution that the project is expected to make to advance the state-of-the-art** within the field is not carefully prepared

The choice of the partner institutions included in the research is not well justified

The proposal does not provide **neither specific goals nor clear, well defined or measurable target outcomes**

The **methodology is not presented in detail** especially with regard to the method to be used to progress towards the achievement of the research goals. The proposal plans multiple analyses, but it is not made clear how these will be linked together

Interdisciplinary and innovative aspects of the proposed research are not sufficiently presented

EXCELLENCE - Weaknesses



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Gender aspects of the area to be researched are not sufficiently taken into account

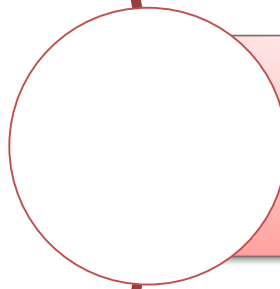
The planned case studies are often focused on specific problems and circumstances of particular countries, with consequent **doubts about the actual replicability of the project results** to the whole EU

One of the key activities is the engagement and participation of the relevant actors in the chain. However, the strategy to maintain the **equilibrium among the stakeholders is not well described**

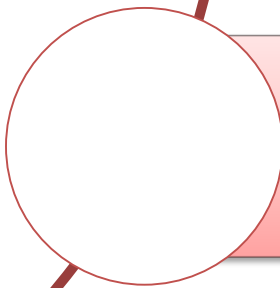
IMPACT - Weaknesses



The impact section **lacks specific and measurable indicators**



The proposal **does not sufficiently justify its optimistic plan to disseminate concepts** and results to be developed during the project through scientific publications by participants.



The question of the expected impact of the proposed dissemination measures is insufficiently addressed with respect to **professional organisations and policymakers**

IMPACT - Weaknesses



The plans related to activities to reach non-specialist and non-scientific audiences are not satisfactorily presented and their **benefits to society** not clearly explained

Outreach activities are considered but are addressed in an insufficient way. In general, the expected impact of the proposed communication measures has been given little attention. **Insufficiently detailed information is provided about the non-academic audiences to be addressed** and the concrete measures to address them

The issues of **dissemination and communication are overlapping** in the proposal

IMPLEMENTATION - Weaknesses



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The **deliverables and milestones are not defined** with sufficient specificity

There is not a **clear chronogram** by tasks

The details of the **work packages are not sufficiently explained**.
So the **feasibility** of WPs is not demonstrated.

The quality of the proposed **interaction between the participating organisations** is insufficiently demonstrated...

IMPLEMENTATION - Weaknesses



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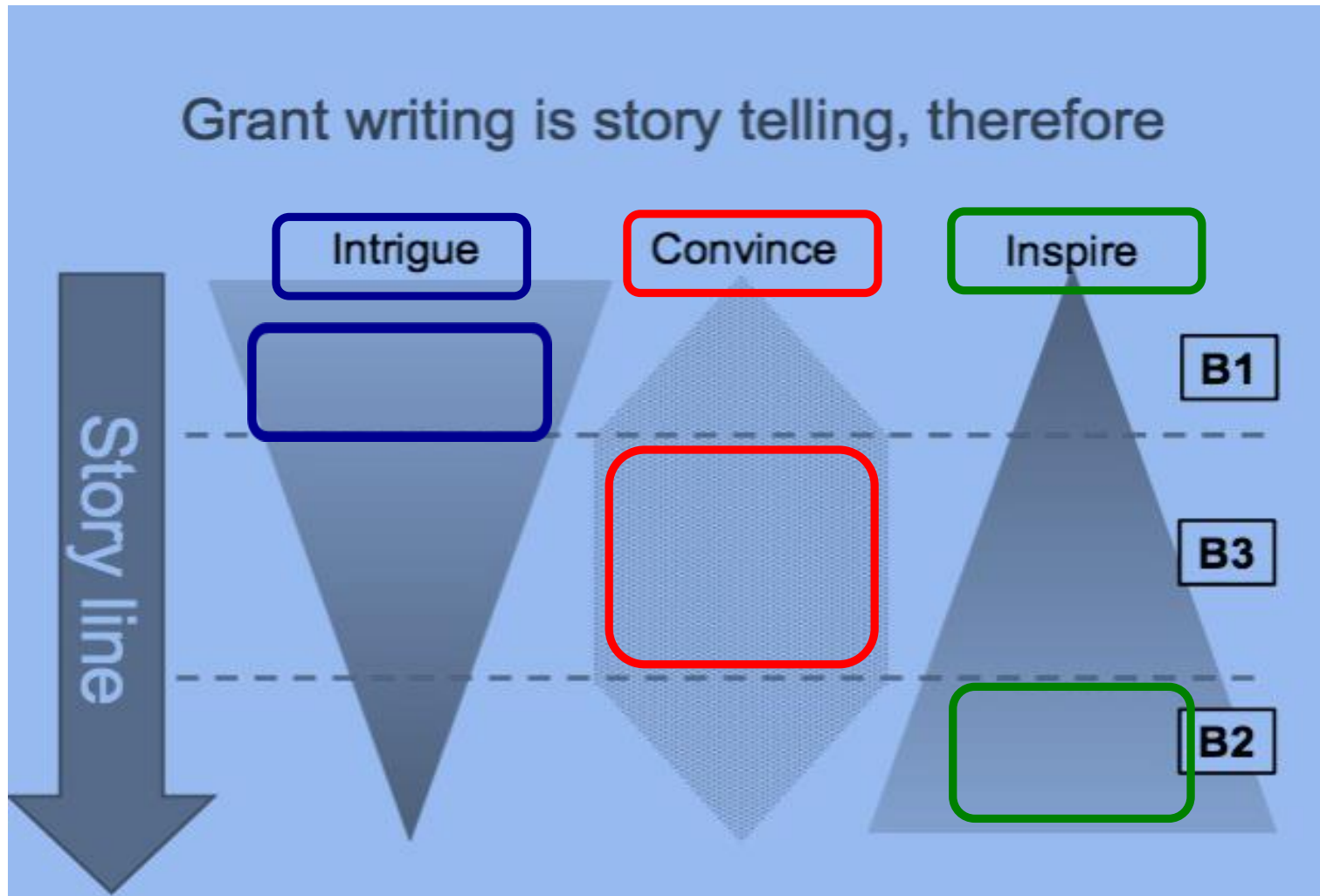
The **relationship between work packages** has some weaknesses, e.g. it is not clear how the tasks in WP1 and 2 relate to the tasks of WP4

The proposal mainly concentrates on **defining the infrastructure of the coordinating institution**

The management structure is not described with sufficient detail

Not clear and well defined mitigation measures related to the risk management are provided

To conclude: the right approach to the evaluators





HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

***Thanks
for your attention!***

Ciro Franco

Sapienza Università di Roma

Piazzale Aldo Moro, 5

www.uniroma1.it

ciro.franco@uniroma1.it

Tel. 0039 06 4969 0259