Recipe for success: Horizon 2020

Aware of the increasingly competitive funding environment in Europe, President Dino Babić reveals how the European Projects Association will uphold research and innovation expertise and secure future competitiveness in the region.

PART OF THE EU’s Multiannual Financial Framework, Horizon 2020 is the largest ever EU research and innovation programme, dedicating nearly €80 billion of funding to research excellence over its seven-year lifespan (2014-20). It couples research and innovation as key factors that will help Europe move toward smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, and secure future competitiveness in line with the purposes set by the Europe 2020 strategy.

Developed in collaboration with the European Academy for Education and Social Research, EPA launched a novel project in 2014 called the European Projects Accelerator. The initiative was motivated by official statistics that revealed a low success rate (around 14.53 per cent) for submitted project proposals under Horizon 2020 – applicants were hungry for more transparent assessment criteria in order to improve their written proposals and, therefore, ensure their eligibility.

The Accelerator consists of a five-day intensive course, in which attendees learn about project design ‘from A to Z’. While the course draws particular attention to Horizon 2020 funding, its main aim is to convey contemporary theoretical knowledge, practical experience and sharing of best practice.

EPA AT A GLANCE
EPA is a politically independent not-for-profit organisation. All information, networking, services and tools provided by the Association aim to improve participation in EU-funded projects.

GUIDING INNOVATION
Expert trainers lead participants through a detailed explanation of the pillars constituting Horizon 2020’s main structure and related objectives. But the core section of the training provides attendees with expert
EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE METHODOLOGY

European Projects Accelerator training involves:

- **Learning by doing** – practical exercises based on real cases ensure a better understanding of how to build a well-balanced consortium, correctly calculate research budgets and evaluate the quality of EU projects

- **Face-to-face meetings** – talking directly with representatives of the organisations active at the European level offers the opportunity for first-hand advice and guidance to maximise benefits for a proposal

- **Presenting success stories** – getting in touch with beneficiaries and seeing projects that have already been submitted with a successful result allows participants to learn best practices for the development of their projects

After validating the idea’s potential, a suitable call relevant to the innovation proposed must be found. At the same time a consortium of like-minded and valuable partners must be built. The quality of the consortium is measured based on the expertise and experience of its members, and represents another key driver for a successful application. The last step concerns drafting the proposal; this warrants particular attention in order to guarantee the call requirements and evaluation criteria are fulfilled by the project.

A WINNING FORMULA

Since September 2014, five editions of the European Projects Accelerator have been organised, involving more than 60 professionals from SMEs, NGOs, public institutions, universities and research centres. Nine out of 10 attendees thought the training was positive and 85 per cent strongly recommended participation in the course. Their feedback demonstrates that the communication methodology was purposeful and effective, and positively prepared them for greater participation in EU opportunities.

http://europeanprojects.org

guidance in developing winning project proposals. The approach is categorised into key steps and actions. The starting point is the concept – the innovative idea. Under the Horizon 2020 programme, innovation is of fundamental importance and represents a decisive eligibility factor. The idea must bring added value with respect to similar existing initiatives and the partners involved.