Measures to maximize impact in Horizon Europe

The Impact Section is undoubtedly one of the most important aspects of any Horizon Europe proposal. Simply put, the project's proposed impact refers to the wider scientific/societal /technological/economical value of the project, that goes **beyond** its immediate results. Since the impact of the project is of the utmost importance, a mandatory Horizon Europe requirement is having a solid plan, as part of the project, that showcases how the impact will be maximized. The plan includes three measures: dissemination, communication and exploitation. Practically speaking, an initial strategically planned and objective-oriented plan should already be presented at the proposal stage. Later on, provided the proposal is selected for funding, the plan must be provided as a deliverable within 6 months from the project's start date. In this article, we will review how the three impact plan measures help maximize the impact in Horizon Europe projects, and offer our expertise and advise on how to efficiently use them to achieve the impact goal.

Dissemination and communication – what do they mean?

Let us start by understanding the meaning behind dissemination and communication activities:

- Dissemination- A process of promotion and awareness-raising during which a project's results are made available and presented – via any medium – to targeted stakeholders (e.g., research peers, industry, policymakers etc.). Stakeholders can then exploit the results for further activity such as research, policy-making, or training (see the following section on exploitation).
- Communication- Strategic and targeted measures taken in order to promote the project and its results to the public at large, while possibly engaging in a two-way exchange. The aim is to reach out to society while demonstrating how EU funding contributes to tackling societal challenges.

Although different in their functions and audiences, both dissemination and communication activities aim to extend and maximize the impact in Horizon Europe projects by informing about the project, its results and possible research outputs (e.g., scientific publications, data, software, algorithms), as well as potentially engage stakeholders and the public throughout the project.

Constructing a dissemination and communication plan

While developing a dissemination and communication strategy, it is important to keep in mind that the budgetary resources for such activities are limited and must be used wisely. The aspects below will help you ensure that your dissemination and communication plan achieves its ultimate goal of maximizing the impact of the project, all within a limited budget:

- <u>Objective(s)</u> – Activities should have concrete objectives. Some activities will aim at only informing about the project and its progress, while others will strive to engage target groups and stakeholders, or call them to take on specific actions. Make sure that each activity in the plan has a justified contribution towards the main goal of maximizing the impact in Horizon Europe projects.

- <u>Target audience(s)</u> – Identify the audiences and communities that are most relevant for the project activities, and focus on reaching out to them. If the project is related to a specific population (e.g., professional, demographic, geographical, sectorial, etc.), think about that population first. When there is more than one target audience, prioritize them according to the expected impacts of the project, from most important to least, but still make sure to address all of them.

- <u>Channel(s)</u> – After identifying the audiences and communities for your communication plan, it is important to identify the relevant platforms to effectively convey the message to them. Choosing the wrong channels can yield very low exposure of your messaging and communication activities. If you are addressing the scientific community, use platforms that are popular for this audience type, such as scientific journals and/or workshops. If you aim at engaging the elderly, perhaps social media will not be the best way to reach out to large segments of this specific target audience. Consider matters of usage patterns (for example who uses each platform, when it is used, etc) and accessibility when deciding where to disseminate project information and activity. Finally, after identifying the most relevant channels for your audience type, be sure to carry out your communication activities through several channels, rather than choosing only one. This can help to increase potential exposure of your research project.

- <u>Messaging</u> – The messaging of the dissemination and communication activities should be adapted both to the target audience and to the specific channel used. On the one hand, you'll need to consider the specific language and visual content that will appeal to them, and on the other – the rules and requirements posed by each marketing or communications platform. In the case of several audience groups, adjust the messaging accordingly, but try to keep a single general story that can be identified with the project.

Type of activities

There are various options for communication activities that can be performed throughout the duration of the project. While some activities are more intuitive (e.g., scientific publications, launching and updating a project website), others are less intuitive (e.g., organizing workshops, press releases). It is important to choose the activities that carry the greatest potential to achieve the objectives and reach out to the right audience. Here are some examples for such activities:

- **Dissemination** – Scientific activities are one type of dissemination activities. These are aimed at defusing the project's results to the scientific community. For example, scientific publications and books, organizing and participating in conferences and workshops, enabling open access to databases, or releasing reports describing the progress of the research. Other potential dissemination activities are those aiming to engage specific groups that can benefit from the results of the project. For example, projects developing novel health technologies can disseminate the results among health professionals and hospitals who, in turn, can adopt these results. Another example refers to results from projects on tackling social inequalities that can be presented to relevant policymakers, who can potentially adjust policies in accordance with the new knowledge.
- **Communication** – Informing activities – these activities can raise awareness about the project and engage the public you are addressing. It includes, for example, active social media presence and social networks activities, events, project website, press releases, engaging forums, advertisement and campaigns. More information about the role of Public Relations in a Horizon Europe project can be found here.

Exploitation

The future utilization of a project's results is another useful measure for maximizing impact. Exploitation activities are those concerning further development, creation and marketing of a product or process, based on the project's results. Exploitable results are those that can be further used by a range of people, including the scientific community, industry, policy-makers, governmental authorities, and the public.

IPR and Exploitation

In cases where Intellectual Property emerges from the project, a clear Intellectual Property Rights strategy should be presented, settling the manners in which they can be exploited.

Hence, the key exploitable results should be identified, as well as clearly defined. Namely, the strategy will point out who can and should use the results, and the premise for using them.

Examples of common exploitation practices:

- Scientific advances/re-use – Scientific outputs such as models, methods, prototypes, and any available data generated throughout the course of the project can be utilized by the scientific community for future research. For example, data collected for the purpose of studying lung cancer can be used by the scientific community to explore other lung diseases and/or other types of cancers.
- Commercial – Technological foundations, prototypes, and research data are some of the products that can be exploited for commercialization reasons. Simply put, these are outputs that can be used to create, expand, or influence markets. New technologies or methods that are developed as part of the project can serve as the first step towards creating a new start-up and entering the market.
- Policy-making – Project results may provide policy-makers and regulators with evidence-based information that can be useful in the process of forming new policies or changing existing ones. Results and new knowledge emerging from the projects can serve decision-makers while forming strategies in various fields such as health, environment, security and industry.
- Training and education – Some of the results can be used to develop education and training programs for professionals and/or the general public. They can provide skills and knowledge, and bring about societal transformation. For example, projects dealing with trustworthy online information can develop training for citizens on identifying and assessing the quality of health information online.

Conclusion

By now, it should be quite clear that Dissemination, Communication, and Exploitation activities are important Impact-boosting measures. As such, they should be handled wisely and should not be neglected. A well-planned Dissemination, Communication and Exploitation plan can contribute to the competitiveness of your proposal. For more information about forming the Dissemination, Communication, and Exploitation strategy, do not hesitate to contact us.