# How to Explain the Relevance of your Proposal to EU Policies

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European R&D programmes are an important source of funding for European researchers. The criteria that are used to assess proposals include the scientific excellence of the proposal; the economic and social relevance of the proposal; the structure of the consortium; the project management approach; and the relevance of the proposal to European Union policies. This article describes how to explain the relevance of your proposal to European Union policies.

1. The Role of European Union Policies

The activities of the European Union can be summarised in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Activities of the EU
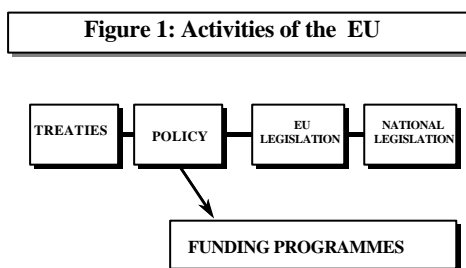
The **Treaty** defines the areas where the member states co-operate e.g. environmental protection, transport, social issues, development of the regions etc. Article 164 of the Amsterdam treaty states that the member states will undertake R&D to support EU policies and to support the competitiveness of EU industry.
Polices are detailed plans on how the treaty will be implemented. The policies include, for example, regional policy, social policy, transport policy, environmental policy etc.

Policy can be implemented in two ways:

- Through **legislation**, where member states are obliged to implement the policy
- Through **funding** programmes where organisations and individuals are provided with finance to support the EU policies.

Most researchers who submit proposals to the EU spend considerable time studying the funding documentation. This diagram shows that it is also essential to understand the areas of policy that the funding supports. Every single line of the EU R&D work programmes can be traced to a policy document of the European Union.

THE BACKGROUND TO POLICY

To really understand EU policy it is necessary to understand the political priorities in Brussels i.e. 'How do they think in Brussels?'
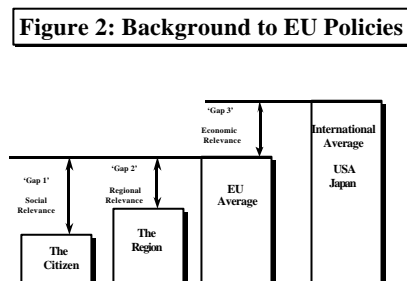

Figure 2: Background to EU Policies

Figure 2 is a graphical display of how the politicians and the bueracrats in 'Brussels' think.

- The first level is the level of **citizen**. "We want a Europe built for the citizens by the citizens" Mr. Prodi, Lisbon, June 2000
- The next level they think at is the **region**. In 'Brussels' they do not think about Germany, France, Portugal etc. They divide Germany into 13 regions, Portugal into 5 regions, Greece into 3

regions, etc. They define a region as the geographical area where initiatives can be implemented, where resources can be shared and where co-operation can take place at a personal level. There is even an EU institution called the 'Committee of the Regions'. If your project has a geographical dimension it is best to base your research at regional level rather than national level.

- The next level they think at is **Europe**. They are not interested in Peugeot, Renault, Mercedes, and BMW - they are interested in the European automobile industry. They are not interested in researchers who undertake research on Alzimers Disease in Sweden, Germany, and Italy. They are interested in European Research on Alzeimers. One of the main differences between national and EU R&D funding for industry is that national R&D is focussed on individual companies whereas EU funding is based on the EU industrial sectors.
- The final level they think at is the **international** level and the role of the EU on the international stage. In practice international usually means the USA and Japan. If you examine the recently published document 'Towards a European Research Area' the first chapter and practically all of the annexes compare EU research activities with those of USA and Japan. In the recently published Futures Report (http://futures.jrc.es) technology maps are presented for all of the main technology areas. The colour coding of the technology maps compare EU technology levels with USA and Japan.

The Key Point!

EU policies and EU funding are designed to fill 'Gaps' and all the 'Gaps' are relative to the 'EU Average' (figure 2). If you research can help fill any of these 'Gaps' then your proposal will be very welcome in Brussels. There is a golden rule in EU funding. You never go to Brussels looking for money for your R&D? You only go to Brussels to help them to fill a 'Gap' that **THEY** have identified.

The following is an overview of the 'Gaps' shown in Figure 2

GAP 1: The Social Relevance of your proposal
First you must identify a group of EU citizens where some aspect of their lives is below the European average (e.g. the elderly, the disabled, the long term unemployed; cancer patients, AIDS patients). If the EU has a policy to fill this 'gap' then you have identified an ideal area for your research proposal.

GAP 2: The Structural Funds and Sustainable Development
The best example here is case of Ireland. In the early 1990's, Ireland's gross domestic product (GDP) was less than 75% of the EU average GDP. Ireland received 8 billion euros of structural funds to fill the 'GDP Gap'. Over the past eight years Irelands economy has grown significantly and today Ireland's GDP is 95 % of the EU average GDP. In April 2000 the Irish Government applied for further structural funds. As there was only a small 'Gap' they received only a fraction of the previous structural funds. In other words "no gap, no funding".

GAP 3: The Economic Relevance
This is the most important 'gap' for researchers. If you can identify a sector where Europe is behind the USA or Japan and if your research will help the sector to catch up (or better still to help the EU sector to be the world leader) then your proposal will be very welcome in Brussels.

Priorities of EU R&D Programmes.
If we now translate the above thinking into the priorities of the EU R&D programmes we identify the following:
- The aim of the **Quality of Life** programme is to improve the quality of life of citizens where some aspect of their lives is below the European average.
- The aim of the **Growth** Area is to improve the competitiveness of EU industry (with relevance to the US and Japan)
- The aim of the **Energy, Environment and Sustainable Development** programme is to improve job creation and sustainable development (at a regional level.)
- The aim of the **International Co-operation (INCO)** programme is to increase the globalisation of knowledge (i.e. develop researchers who can operate at an international level.)
- The final (and most important aim) of EUR&D programmes is to establish the EU as a focal point for scientific and technological excellence. This is the most important point in your proposals i.e. what aspect of your proposal will establish the EU as an international leader.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

When you are writing an EU proposal it is essential to be able to access the policy documents and the background documents which established your area as an EU priority. This section identifies the sources of information which can be used to identify the relevant EU polices. All of these Web-sites can be found on: www.hyperion.ie/usefulwebsites.htm

- Towards a European Research Area. (http://europa.eu.int/comm/area.htm)
- The Future Report (http://futures.jrc.es) This report identifies the technologies that the EU will need over the period 2000-2010. It consists technology maps for each technology (e.g. energy, materials, IT etc.) and it clearly identifies the 'Gaps' between EU and US technologies.
- Europa – the official EU web-site http://europa.eu.int The main policy areas can be found under the Commission's web-page. For example to find the policies on Transport , select the commission web page and then the transport policy web page.
- EU Search Engines http://europa.eu.int/gen-info/ In this web-site there are a range of search engines. The most important is ECLAS. ECLAS contains 200,000 EU documents which have been used in the preparation of EU policies. (This is one of the best sources of information.)
- OECD website (www.oced.org) The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development was established to provide policy makers with information for national and EU policies. It is a very good site to source international data for your proposal.

CONCLUSION

Over the past two years Hyperion has trained over 3600 researchers on EU policy and the role of research in the policy making process. The researchers have found the understanding of EU policy and the relevance of their work to EU policy both interesting and rewarding – they are winning more EU R&D contracts.

AUTHOR

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Other activities of the author:

1996: Chairman of the Irish Advisory Group on Innovation

1997: Evaluator of EU Innovation Programme

1998: Prepared Strategy to Improve the links between Research and Industry in Finland.

1998: Prepared an Innovation Strategy for the 12 Institutes of Technology in Ireland

2000: Chairman of EU Committee on Obstacle to Mobility between Academia and Business