

# Building project ideas during the DIAnet International School

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The sustainability challenges addressed by Horizon 2020 require international and interdisciplinary approaches. Each of these challenges will play out differently in different areas of Europe and will require both localized knowledge (as reflected, e.g. in knowledge of local languages and historical legacies influencing the available paths for development) and an overarching approach. By linking a specific area, i.e. the Danube River Basin, a target area of a macro-regional strategy of the EU, with the Grand Challenges of Horizon 2020 and building an interdisciplinary network of young scholars, DIAnet schools contribute to the preparation and workability of Horizon 2020. By offering experience in interdisciplinary group work, DIAnet schools engage in capacity building in a crucial area and at a crucial moment. By mapping the EUSDR challenges onto Horizon 2020, DIAnet schools pave the way for successful participation in Horizon 2020.

During the 2015 edition, as well as the previous, the second half of the school was dedicated to group work by students. Participants were divided in six working groups, each of them representing a variety of disciplines and countries as well as PhD-students and young post-doc researchers. Working groups identify a common idea for a future project, which addresses one of the

societal challenges of Horizon 2020 and takes into account the challenges of the DRB. Draft project proposals developed in Working groups should ideally represent a part of an application to a funding authority. Group presentations with direct feedback by an evaluation committee will end the experience.

## **THE GROUP WORK PROCESS**

Each Working Group developed a draft of a project proposal. It was up to the group to identify the topic of the proposal, which had to be related to cultural heritage and the sustainable development of the Danube Region. The protection, conservation and exploitation of cultural heritage are interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary field by their very nature, therefore the project proposals need to involve several research areas and reflect the synergy of interests and expertise available in the Working Groups. They also had to take up the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, the Societal Challenges of Horizon 2020, as well as the Strategy EUROPE 2020 and other reference documents and strategies participants found relevant for the project idea.

The organizers did not expect that participants would be able to develop a full project proposal in such a short time. They had to focus in particular on some important parts.

The first and most important one was a clear definition of the problem groups wished to address and the resulting objectives of their project proposal. The participants had to describe how the project was connected to the sustainable development of the Danube Region in general, and more specifically to the EU Strategy of the Danube Region, Societal Challenges and other relevant documents (which problem it takes into account, how it contributes to an improvement of social, economic and/or ecological problems, etc). Then they had to break down the overall objective to clear research questions and tasks and define the scientific disciplines which have to be involved, possible data and methods needed. Eventually, the groups had to select a specific Danube Region area where to work and describe the particular state-of-the-art of the selected cultural heritage (tangible: movable or immovable objects; intangible; digital etc.) and the environmental and/or socio-economic situation.

We strongly encouraged participants to prepare the proposal as if they were applying to one of the calls listed below which were open under Horizon 2020. Helping participants to apply for a real funding will be one of the best rewards for the entire DIAnet school team.

## SOCIETAL CHALLENGES

### REFLECTIVE SOCIETIES: CULTURAL HERITAGE AND EUROPEAN IDENTITIES

- Topic *Innovation ecosystems of digital cultural assets*
- Topic *Emergence and transmission of European cultural heritage and Europeanisation*
- Topic *Cultural opposition in the former socialist countries*
- Topic *Communication and dissemination platform*

## SCIENCE WITH AND FOR SOCIETY

### CALL FOR MAKING SCIENCE EDUCATION AND CAREERS ATTRACTIVE TO YOUNG PEOPLE

- Topic *Innovative ways to make science education and scientific careers attractive to young people*

### CALL FOR INTEGRATING SOCIETY IN SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

- Topic *Pan-European public outreach: exhibitions and science cafés engaging citizens in science*

## HOW PROJECT IDEAS WERE DEVELOPED

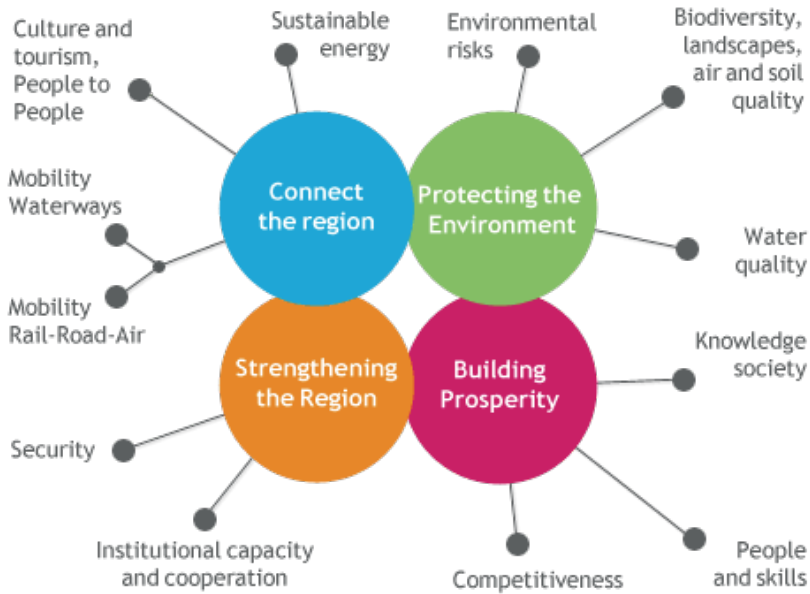
Instructions given to participants on how to develop a project idea:

### 1) **Select the Social Challenge you would most like to work on:**

*Listed all six challenges but please keep in mind that your topic should be related to cultural heritage.*

- Health, Demographic Change and Wellbeing
- Food security, Sustainable Agriculture and Forestry, Marine, Maritime and Inland Water Research and Bioeconomy
- Secure, Clean and Efficient Energy
- Smart, green and Integrated Transport
- Climate action, Environmental, Resource Efficiency and Raw Materials
- Europe in a Changing World – Inclusive, Innovative and Reflective Societies
- Secure Societies – Protecting Freedom and Security of Europe and its Citizens

2) **Connect them to one or more pillars and priorities of the Danube Strategy:**



3) **Select a thematic focus.**

4) **Focus on a specific area of the Danube Region, if your research is place-based.**

5) **Select the call you would like to apply with your project proposal.**

Please take into account the following items:

- How and why is your theme relevant from the point of view of cultural heritage and how it is linked with sustainability on the Danube Region?
- How does your topic relate to a Societal Challenge and EUSDR priorities?
- What are the main research questions and hypotheses?
- Which research/scholars are needed to tackle it and for what are they needed?

- Which methods do you envisage necessary for solving the problem and why?
- How is your theme connected with other sustainability issues of the Danube Region?

We encourage you to start thinking about your project ideas and relevant calls and to use the time prior to the school to get to know about other group members. Please make the best of the time during the 2015 DIAnet International School to learn from each other and to foster your innovative ideas and original project proposals from this specific multidisciplinary environment.

### *What do we expect from you?*

The groups have to deliver a Concept Note of WG project idea consisting of the following parts:

- Call to apply for
- Project work title
- Short summary of the project idea
- Short description of the project background and problem(s) targeted

By the deadline, the groups have to deliver a paper consisting of the following parts:

- Front page, indicating: title, abstract, keywords and authors
- Project proposal of max 12 pages
- References

On the last day of the School, the groups have to give a short presentation of the work.

## **PARTICIPANTS INCLUSION**

The general impression we – as facilitators – had is that participants found 2015 DIAnet School very useful for their future professional development. Most of them had no previous experience regarding the international (EU-funded) project implementation. Therefore, it was very important for them to cooperate in quite a shuffled team and to experience so many aspects of cooperation during one of the most critical phases of international project management: the proposal preparation. On the other hand, we also learned a lot, since the

expertise participants brought from their fields was spanning along many scientific areas.

During the first half of the school they were mostly attending lectures and making field trips with a very busy schedule. Nevertheless, they did find time to interact and set up initial project ideas they developed towards the end of the 2015 DIAnet School. This was very useful for them since they realized that their professors and more experienced colleagues were facing the same issues – deciding on the exact project idea that will be pursued with their international colleagues from various different institutions. During the second half of the School they experienced full hands-on approach (every day, from dawn 'til dusk) in the development of a project proposal for very specific Horizon 2020 Open Calls of their interest (aligned with the overall topic of the school: THE ROLE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DANUBE REGION). Besides learning techniques of project proposal preparation, the participants also experienced all the benefits of multidisciplinary international teams.

It was crucial for them to understand the importance of appropriate planning for a successful project implementation (and, at first, evaluation). By learning about structuring their brainstorming processes, the participants provided us, as facilitators, with a very important feedback - this particular facilitation was supposed to be combined with a training approach. It was accepted both by facilitators and participants, once again proving that interaction is of crucial importance. They learned about preparation of the following aspects: general and specific objectives, context (with background and problem statement), methodology, consortium creation, work package structure and budget needed for the action.

It was very interesting to see that practically all of them actively contribute within their teams to the development of a proposal that could be sustainable. As for the general results of the school, what is even more encouraging is the fact that several groups expressed the interest to pass the information to their university supervisors, in order to further develop their proposals.