

How to prepare a strong SMART Project Proposal

Evaluator tips · Call 10 PO Day · Vienna, 8 October 2026

10-minute practical checklist



START FROM HOW THE PROPOSAL WILL BE READ

The PO is short; every section must make evaluation easier.

- 1 State of the Art & Innovation: what changes and why it is credible
- 2 Consortium & cooperation added value: why these partners, why international
- 3 Expected impact & exploitation: who uses the results and how value is created

Golden rule: do not make evaluators search for the answer. Make each claim explicit, quantified and easy to verify.

BEFORE WRITING: PASS ELIGIBILITY AND TIMING CHECKS

A good technical idea can still fail if the proposal is not eligible or ready for national funding discussions.

Eligibility checks

- 1 At least 2 industrial companies from 2 participating countries
- 2 Civil purpose, innovation and strong market orientation
- 3 No participant above 70% of the overall budget
- 4 No country above 70% of the overall budget
- 5 Check national funding rules early with each Public Authority

Call 10 milestones

- 1 **PO Day:** 8 Oct 2026 · Vienna
- 2 **PO deadline:** 26 Jan 2027 · 11:00 CET
- 3 **FPP invitations:** 12 Mar 2027
- 4 **FPP deadline:** 15 Apr 2027 · 11:00 CEST
- 5 **Selected projects receive SMART Label:** 2 Jun 2027

USE THE ONE-PAGE SUMMARY AS THE PROJECT SPINE

Write it early; refine it last. It is the first impression and the anchor for the whole PO.

It must answer

- 1 What problem is being solved and for whom?
- 2 What is the entry state and envisaged exit state?
- 3 What are the numbered objectives?
- 4 What are the expected outputs and KPIs?
- 5 Why is SMART the right framework?

Avoid

- 1 A generic “manufacturing 4.0” description
- 2 Objectives hidden in long paragraphs
- 3 KPI percentages without baseline values
- 4 A summary written after sections by different partners
- 5 Claims that are not repeated and evidenced later

BUILD A CLEAR RATIONALE, OBJECTIVES AND ROADMAP FIT

The new templates ask for direct alignment between proposal content and evaluation criteria.

- A** Explain today's challenge and why current practice is not enough.
- B** Number the objectives and connect them to outputs, WPs, KPIs and risks.
- C** Tick the relevant SMART sectors/domains and explain the relationship in text.
- D** Quantify sustainability where possible: current state, target state and baseline.

Practical test: every objective should have a visible route to a demonstrator, a KPI and an exploitation route.

TECHNOLOGY & OUTPUTS: FROM SOTA TO MEASURABLE RESULTS

Evaluators are experts: realism scores better than inflated novelty.

Strong technology section

- 1 Industrial + academic State-of-the-Art assessment
- 2 Clear technological innovation beyond current practice
- 3 Entry and exit maturity readiness levels / TRL
- 4 Realistic outputs mapped to each work stream
- 5 Competing or alternative technologies considered

Strong KPI section

- 1 Quantified, measurable and baseline-based
- 2 Covers each major output, not only one demonstrator
- 3 Links success measures to SMART roadmap priorities
- 4 Shows validation method and expected evidence
- 5 Does not use unsupported “x% improvement” claims

CONSORTIUM: JUSTIFY THE TEAM, NOT ONLY THE NAMES

The proposal must show coverage, complementarity and added value of international cooperation.

For each partner, state

- 1 Role in the value chain and WPs
- 2 Specific expertise, facilities or market access
- 3 Contribution to the innovation and outputs
- 4 Why the cost level is proportionate
- 5 Relevant prior collaboration or competing projects

For the whole consortium, show

- 1 Balanced industrial leadership and research support
- 2 Why cross-border cooperation is necessary
- 3 How technology/capability gaps are covered
- 4 Governance, review frequency and escalation
- 5 Origin of sustainability and exploitation expertise

IMPACT & EXPLOITATION: MAKE THE BUSINESS CASE CONCRETE

SMART is market-oriented; describe the route from project result to business value.

Market and business logic

- 1 Accessible market and target customer segments
- 2 Near, mid and long-term exploitation plan
- 3 Expected revenue streams or cost/value impacts
- 4 Business differentiators and business model enabled
- 5 Barriers to market uptake and how they will be addressed

Exploitation and Europe

- 1 Foreground/background IP control and exploitation
- 2 Partner-by-partner use of results
- 3 In-sector and cross-sector applications
- 4 Academic/RTO exploitation where relevant
- 5 Contribution to Eureka Network members' skills, jobs and capabilities

IMPLEMENTATION, RISKS AND BUDGET MUST TELL THE SAME STORY

Credibility comes from alignment: objectives → WPs → milestones → risks → costs.

Implementation

- 1 Concise WP descriptions linked to objectives and KPIs
- 2 Milestones distributed across the timeline
- 3 Demonstrator and verification approach clearly defined
- 4 Critical path and interdependencies visible
- 5 WP lead and partner contributions explicit

Budget & risks

- 1 **Use the requested units consistently:** k€ and PY
- 2 Budget split should match real WP work and partner roles
- 3 Justify subcontracting and benefit-in-kind items
- 4 **Risk register:** category, score, mitigation, residual score
- 5 Risks must reflect the actual innovation level

Final checklist before submission

Use the template. Use AI responsibly. Review as one consortium.

- ✓ Answer every guiding question
- ✓ Make the eligibility checks explicit
- ✓ Keep PO sections coherent and non-repetitive
- ✓ Use AI for support, not for unsupported claims
- ✓ Human-review all text, figures, budgets and consistency
- ✓ Submit early enough to avoid last-minute gaps

Questions?