

### **Winning FP7 project: Mission possible**

Successful project application from Bosnia and Herzegovina is not a fairy tale

Quite often I listen to researchers from universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina complaining that it is practically impossible to win a FP7 project without some highly influential lobbyist assistance. Additionally, they mention their problems in lack of knowledge on how to prepare FP7 project, highlighting the complexity of the application procedure and so on. Couple of years ago, I would have had the same impression. But now, I just smile and tell a story of successful FP7 project application with the main applicant from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

My first encounter with Framework Programme was through FP6 project in which my institution, Human Rights Centre of the University of Sarajevo, has been involved as a partner. At that time, series of Info Days on Framework Programme have been organized by the National Contact Point for EU Framework Programmes in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Even going to the Info Days couldn't get me from the feeling that it is too complex to even try to apply for a project within the Framework Programme. I was so wrong. It was not the complexity that was the main problem but our (by that I mean researchers, project managers and other staff at universities) fear of even trying to invest efforts (or to say it in more common language: why bother when the outcome is uncertain). In February 2009 I had the opportunity, as one of the coordinators within the Regional Research Promotion Programme in the Western Balkans (RRPP), to participate at the workshop on International Project Management for Social Scientists from Western Balkan countries. The workshop was held by Ms. Elke Dall from Centre for Social Innovation, project manager of WBC-INCO.NET project. The workshop was really good, especially because we were provided with advice on what to pay attention to while writing a project proposal, but also the examples Ms. Dall shared with us from her own experience. This training has been of great help to me and in 2010, when the call for FP7 Capacities - Science in Society was published (of which I was informed through the WBC-INCO.NET website) I decided to apply to this call through my institution - the Human Rights Centre of the University of Sarajevo as the main applicant. The workshop and tips and tricks shared by Ms. Dall with us, plus contacts established through the Regional Research Promotion Programme in the Western Balkans and a bit of my own experience gave me enough potential for developing the application for FP7. We had quite smooth process with the European Commission and not much has been changed from the first draft of the application after the negotiation process. We had no lobbyist engaged in order to win the project. Finally, our project entitled "Support for Establishment of National/Regional Social Sciences Data Archives (SERSCIDA)" has been approved and the Grant Agreement with EC signed. SERSCIDA project has come to life on 01 January 2012 (more info on the project: <https://www.serscida.eu/en/>).

Let's be honest, it wasn't easy to write the application for FP7. It means investing a lot of efforts, time and energy. It can be stressful, time consuming and sometimes seem as too much trouble. But it pays off. To me, it paid off with the fact that it proved that it is possible to win a FP7 project even when you're coming from Bosnia and Herzegovina and not from some of the EU countries, even when you're not hiring a lobbyist to do the part of the job and even when it is your first time to apply for project within Framework Programme. This case was a proof that it only takes a decision to use all the existing resources available to make a winning project. My advice to all researchers/university staff from WBC countries is to take a step forward: if you have idea for a project just wait for the call for proposals within Framework Programme/Horizon 2020 which fits the objectives of the project. WBC-INCO.NET website was the main information source for me and I would recommend it as key resource for both information on existing or upcoming calls for projects plus opportunity to find partners or even useful documents. Choose your partners in the project carefully and read thoroughly the guidelines provided in the call for proposals. Find someone who had the experience with this kind of projects and seek for advice (or even organize training). And most of all: be brave and take the risk of applying even with the uncertainty of winning the project first time. There is always a second chance.

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**Short bio:**

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