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# Horizon 2020 SME Instrument

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Evaluator's view...

*Klaus M. Weinberger, PhD*



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# Agenda

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- ❖ Topics and pitfalls in
  - ❖ Impact
  - ❖ Excellence
  - ❖ Implementation
  - ❖ Other (official and unofficial) aspects
- ❖ General remarks and recommendations



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# Evaluation

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- ❖ Slight differences between SME instrument phase I and phase II, and FTI pilot proposals
- ❖ Focus on common themes, discuss details later
- ❖ Main criteria Impact, Excellence, and Implementation
- ❖ Important other aspects
  - ❖ Within scope?
  - ❖ Operational capacity?
  - ❖ Subcontracting





# Accept some randomness

- ❖ Four independent evaluators
  - ❖ Two 'scientific' experts
  - ❖ Two 'commercial' experts
- ❖ No consensus meeting
- ❖ Very **short** evaluation period
- ❖ Very **high** threshold for acceptance
- ❖ Random effects may play a role
- ❖ Don't give up easily but do improve for resubmission!



# Impact

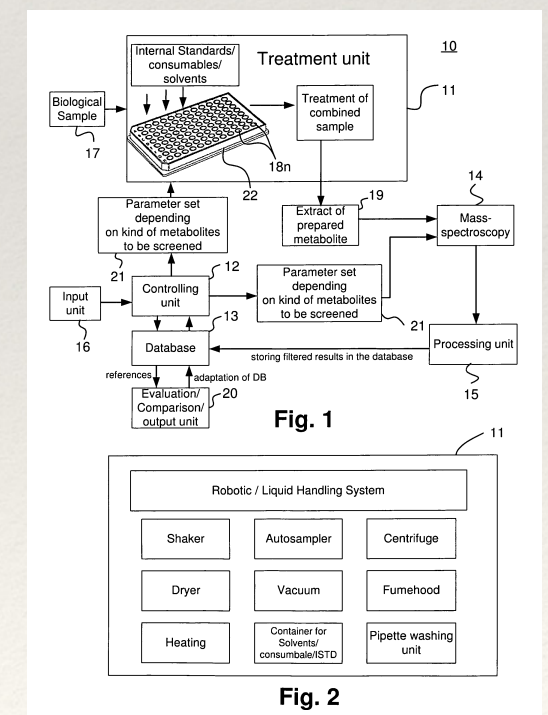
- ❖ Targeted users and their needs
  - ❖ Users' challenges, unmet needs
  - ❖ Shortcomings of currently available solutions
- ❖ Market analysis, demand, willingness to pay
- ❖ Competition
- ❖ Justified growth scenario





# Impact

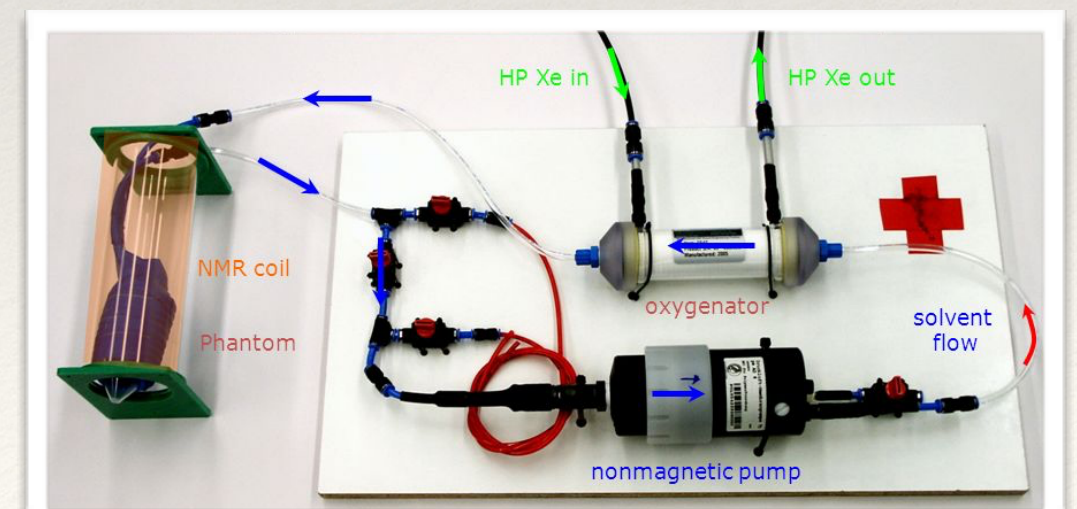
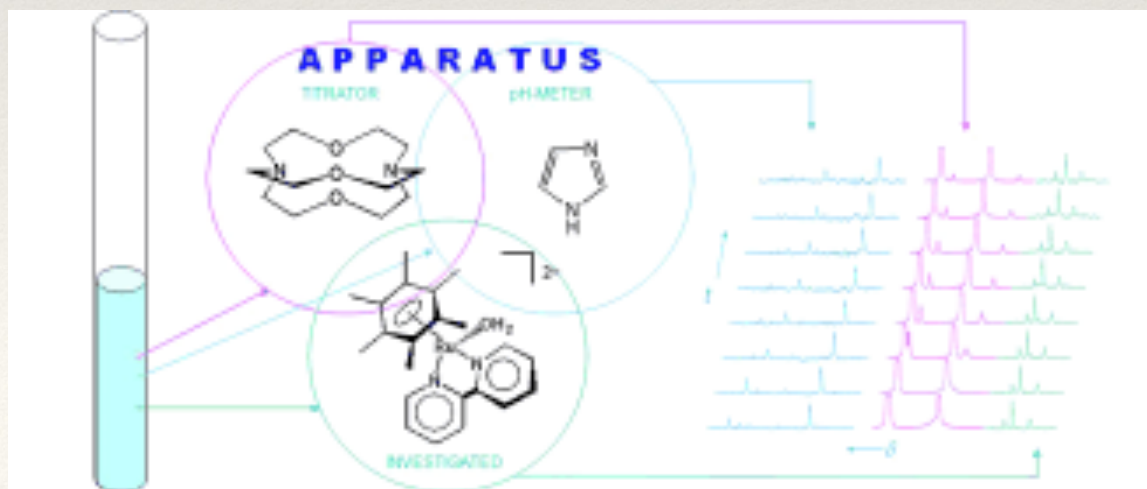
- ❖ Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)
  - ❖ Description of IPR landscape
  - ❖ Own patents and patent applications, relevant content and status
  - ❖ Future strategy (patenting?, trade secrets?)
- ❖ Freedom-to-operate?
  - ❖ Search strategy?
  - ❖ Preliminary results?





# Excellence

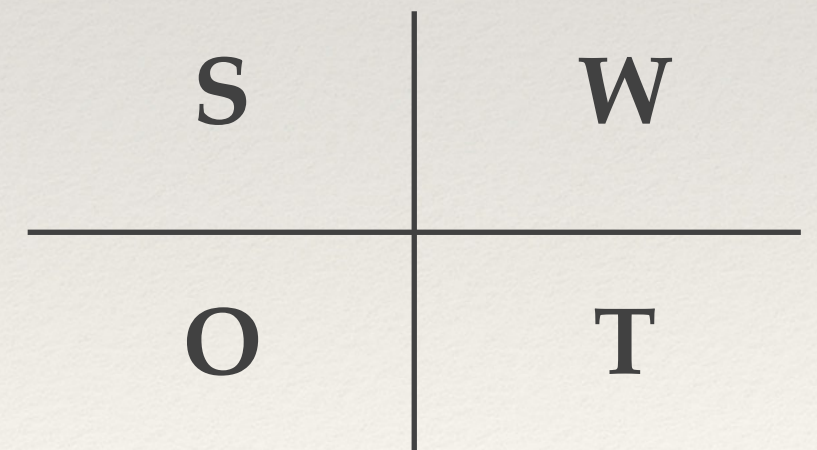
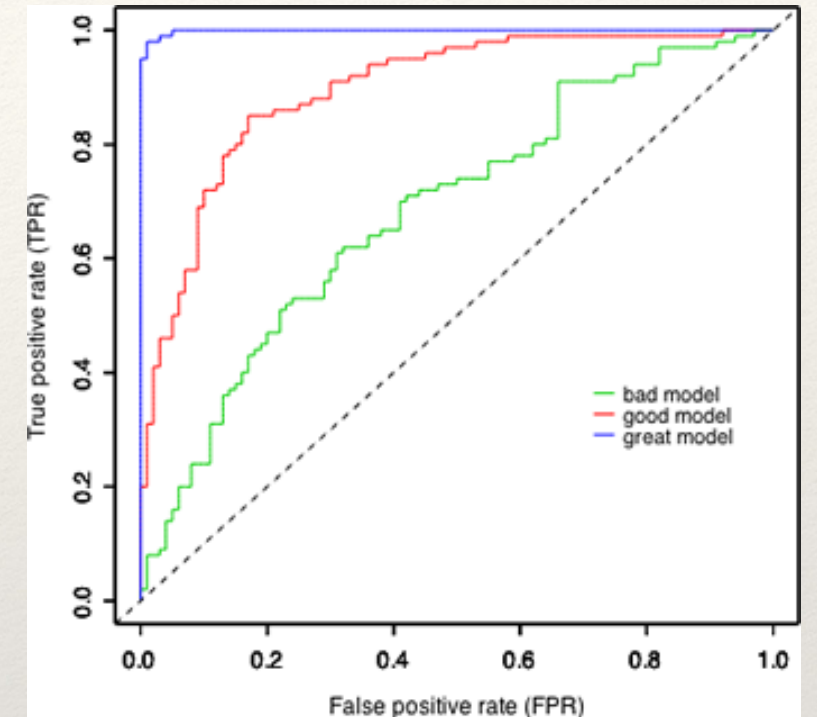
- ❖ European / global challenge addressed?
- ❖ Innovation, disruptive potential, improvement compared to existing solutions
- ❖ Scientific and/or technical description
- ❖ Current stage of development (TRL, prototype)





# Excellence

- ❖ Expected performance
  - ❖ Theoretical assumptions?
  - ❖ Pilot study results!
- ❖ Opportunities identified?
  - ❖ Don't be too modest!
- ❖ Risks identified?
  - ❖ Don't be too careless either!





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# Implementation

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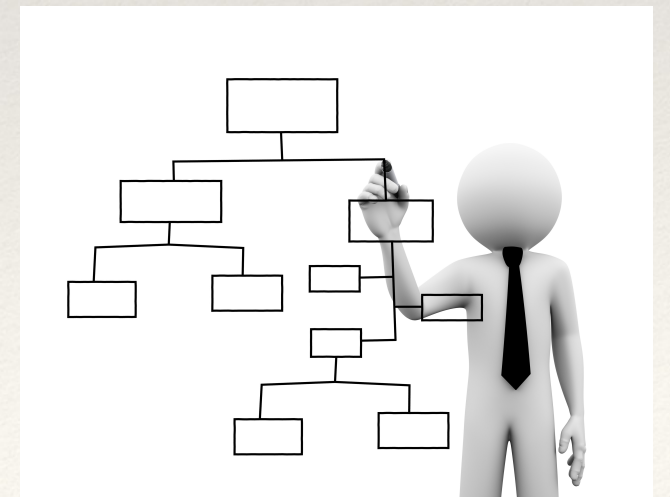
- ❖ *Actually* available resources
  - ❖ Staff, facilities, equipment
  - ❖ Network, partners, ...
- ❖ Complementarity of partners and matching definition of roles
- ❖ Work plan (milestones, deliverables) and timelines (overall and for specific phase)





# Implementation

- ❖ Leadership team
  - ❖ Relevant skill sets: scientific, technical, clinical, commercial, managerial
  - ❖ Experience and track record
  - ❖ Advisors instead of team members?
- ❖ Organisational structure and decision making (not just in consortia)





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# Other (official) aspects

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- ❖ Within scope or not?
  - ❖ Address a specific call topic in a justified manner!
- ❖ Operational capacity to conduct this project?
  - ❖ A tiny start-up to run a multi-centre clinical trial?
- ❖ Subcontractors well-selected and justified?
  - ❖ Critical tasks?
  - ❖ Independent?
  - ❖ Best value for money?





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# Other (unofficial) aspects

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- ❖ Length limits (observe borders, fonts, etc.)
- ❖ Figures with readable legends (redraw if necessary!)
- ❖ Put information where it belongs (many reviewers read and assess chapter by chapter)
- ❖ Keep sections 4 and 5 informative but not epic
  - ❖ One page may not be enough, 94 pages are certainly way too much



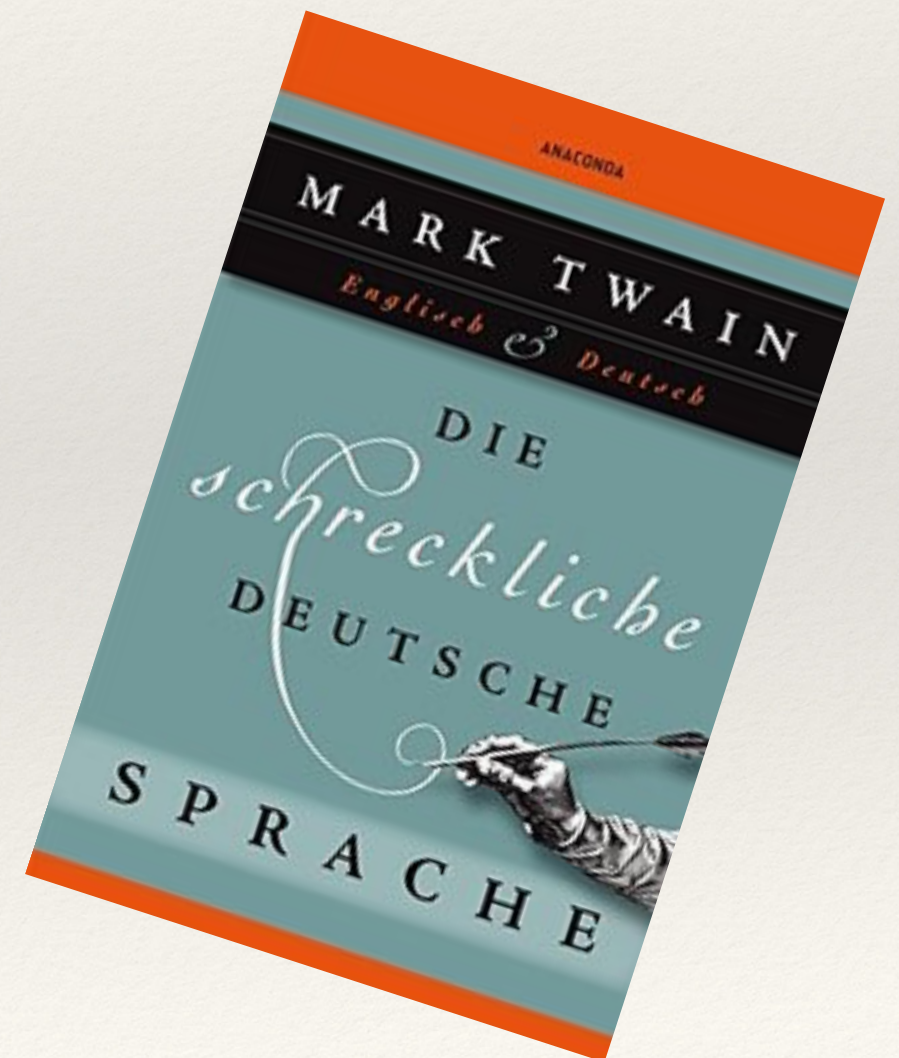
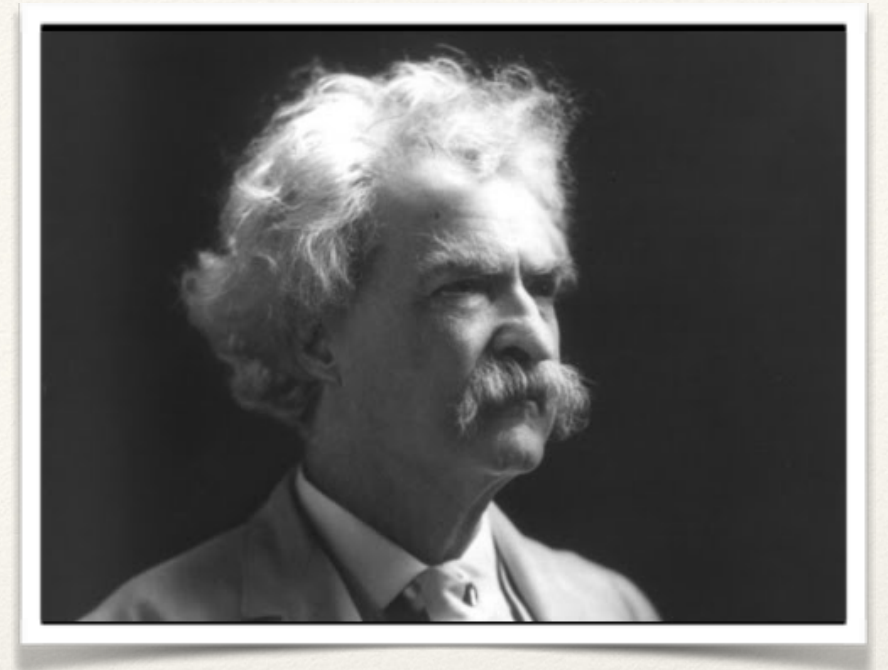
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# Language

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Pay attention to language quality!!!

- ❖ No official evaluation criterion
- ❖ Ensures clarity of proposal
- ❖ Key qualification for further steps (VC acquisition)
- ❖ Take advantage of your competitive edge within Europe!





“I may be crazy but I’m not stupid.”

*Rick Nichols (and many others)*



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# Don't take the evaluators for fools

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- ❖ Evaluators don't have much time
  - ❖ 90 minutes for a phase I proposal
  - ❖ 120 minutes for a phase II or an FTI pilot
- ❖ ... but they know how to retrieve information from literature, citation, and patent databases
- ❖ Nobody (and no proposal) is perfect
- ❖ So, honesty and realistic mitigation measures for obvious gaps instead of easily recognisable lies





# Questions?

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