



## How Horizon 2020 Helped Q-Interline Go Global

*Don't accept NO for an answer – Don't lose motivation if your first or second Horizon 2020 application get rejected – Be inspired by our great Danish client, Q- interline. Below, Martin Roithner Henriksen, CEO and partner of Q-Interline talks about how they fought hard together with us and got a big EU grant in the end!!*

Q-Interline is a high-tech company developing analytical equipment – both hardware and software – for quality and process control in areas like food, feed, agricultural and dairy production. There has never been any doubt about the potential of their products, technology used or the benefits for customers. However, developing the high-tech analysis devices require many economic resources. Consequently, it has been difficult to find resources for commercialisation of the products, but this is where the EU funding comes into the picture.

### 1. How did you hear about EU support?

Well, we were kind of headhunted - In November 2016, I received a phone call from Business Development Centre Zealand (Vaeksthus Zealand) – a business association under the Danish Business Authority. They had screened the local area for possible beneficiaries of a business support programme under the EU: Horizon 2020 and found us.

### 2. That must have been very convenient - How did you respond?

Thanks... but no thanks! Of course, we were flattered at first... but support grants... and from the EU... the epitome of slow, unworldly bureaucracy... it was all very far from our DNA. My partner Anders Larsen, founder and technical director of the company, and I did not think very highly of an EU-based grant project so kindly declined the offer.

### 3. What changed your mind then?

Luckily Vaeksthus Zealand did not give up so easily. They elaborated on the project's opportunities and potential and even offered to pay an external consulting firm to carry out a qualifying preliminary study of the project. On this basis, the consultancy would be able to help prepare the actual application. So, we looked into what Horizon 2020 really is and found out that it is the biggest EU research and innovation programme ever. The goal for the EU is to ensure that Europe produces world-class science, improves industrial leadership and removes barriers to innovation.

#### **4. How did Nordic Innovators come into the picture?**

Several professional consultancies specialising in preparing complex applications for public authorities, private foundations and EU support programmes were identified. Of these, Nordic Innovators was selected as our partner to help draft the application for Horizon 2020. Nordic Innovators armed Q-Interline with new knowledge of Horizon 2020's potential and with their professional help planning the application, we embarked on the project. As you know, this proved to be a defining business adventure for us with a huge export potential.

#### **5. What kind of project did you choose for Horizon 2020?**

We learned that the people behind Horizon 2020 require strong market potential for the product or concept for which support is desired – and they want something unique. “Therefore, we chose our latest analysis system, InSight Pro, as it is particularly aimed at the quality and process control of dairies. It is a patented, cost-effective, online-based analyser that builds on the latest generation of Fourier transform near-infrared (FT-NIR) spectroscopy technology – a pioneering analysis technology that provides the most secure and accurate analysis results on the market.

#### **6. What did you learn from the application process?**

That it was a very good idea to have a consultancy supporting us and controlling the extensive application process. The application was prepared as a detailed, phased work plan of how the product would be commercialised for a global market. Nordic Innovators chose to divide the project into six work packages with tasks, deliverables, milestones and associated budgets that would need to be carefully observed if the project were awarded funding. The form, content and level of detail of the application are essential in obtaining support. With competent advice from Nordic Innovators, the project description began.

#### **7. How did it turn out?**

After 4 very intense months, the application was submitted in February 2017. Yet, we got a rejection without any real justification, just not enough high score apparently. The rejection was, however, accompanied by an EU certificate, a “seal of excellence”, as recognition of our application. We were obviously disappointed, but Nordic Innovators took the rejection in their stride and said it was not uncommon to be rejected the first time. Nordic Innovators went into the application again and made a number of changes and resubmitted in May 2017. Four weeks later, we received another refusal, but this time with a higher point score.

#### **8. After two rejections - How did you get the motivation to continue the process?**

Frankly, at this point, we almost lost heart. It was a hard fight, however, Nordic Innovators remained steadfast once again and changed some minor details in the application before they submitted it for the third time.

#### **9. So, is the third time the charm?**

Yes, it definitely is! We were awarded a grant of no less than 837,000 EUR. A very large amount for a small company like ours! The first 45% of the grant was paid immediately which is a big advantage compared to other funding programmes as it gives basis for better cash position in the company.

After we completed the initial tasks in our plan, we looked for two marketers with international experience - one engineer, one IT specialist and one product specialist. 5 employees in total. The very detailed commercialisation plan already made presented job descriptions, tasks and objectives to the new employees very easy and concrete.

#### **10. How did the EU funding make a difference to Q-Interline?**

One year into the process, we already see results! We have gained access to Germany's largest dairy chain, DMK Group, where we have an installation up and running. We gained a foothold in the USA, where we have a pilot project running at a large dairy in Wisconsin. Moreover, we have installed several InSight Pro systems in

larger dairies in Ireland, Norway, England and, of course, in Denmark at Arla, who rank among the biggest in Europe.

The benefits of this support scheme have been enormous to us. We learned a lot from the process, which has forced us to work professionally across the entire commercialisation process. We have been given new knowledge and skills, we have increased our workforce with skilled and inspiring employees. In addition, we have gained several tangible working methods and models that we can directly apply to new product launches.

Horizon 2020 has given us new and greater horizons to explore and strive for! Therefore, we also took advantage of our good collaboration with Nordic Innovators with our new project, PIVITTE. Nordic Innovators advised us to first apply through the Market Development Fund, which was successful. So, let us see if it PIVETTE takes us further down the road of EU funding...