TOWARDS A WINNING MSCA PF STEP-BY-STEP

PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS OF MSCA PF

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You are holding a practical guide that aims to help MSCA PF applicants understand the rules and conditions of the call correctly and to help them with writing all project proposal sections step-by-step, exactly in line with the evaluator´s expectations. It should not substitute the official Guide for MSCA PF applicants. Instead, it complements it with practical recommendations and useful tips gained through several years of consulting and revising MSCA PF projects. In addition, this handbook provides explanation of specific terms of the project management jargon. These buzzwords usually surprise young researchers, who often do not understand them well but are expected to use them in their proposals. Therefore, I created a glossary at the end of this guide where you can find explanations of all the expressions labelled with a number index.

If, after reading this guide, you are still unsure about preparing your project proposal or would like to ask anything about MSCA PF, write to me. I will be happy to share my experience, answer your questions as soon as possible, review your project and provide a critical opinion and practical recommendations.

PRIOR TO WRITING YOUR PROPOSAL

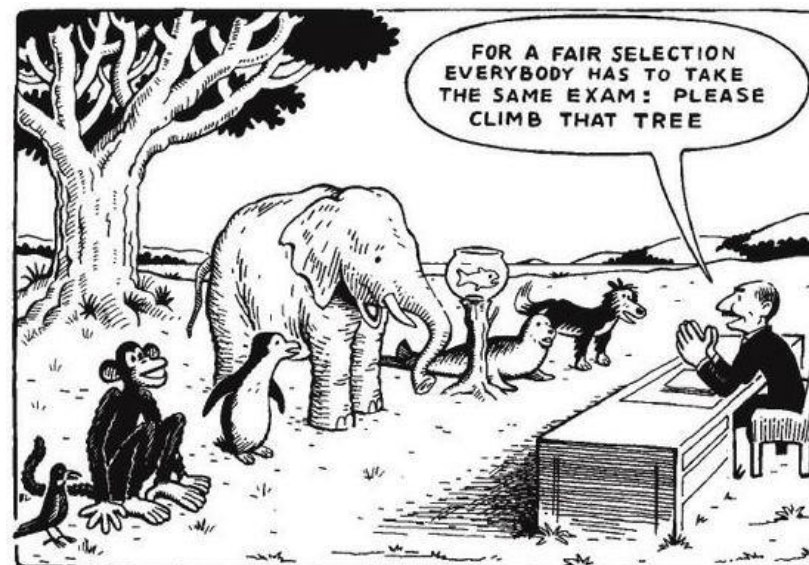### What distinguishes MSCA PF from other research grants?

- MSCA PF is not typical research project but a training through research. Apart of the research objectives, it is vital to address how the fellowship will help you meet your professional ambitions and Career Development Plan[1] goals (though the Career Development Plan[1] is not part of the proposal). Training should be fully integrated within each proposal section. Elaborate description of your training activities and their impact[6] on your career leading towards your future independence. Do not focus solely on scientific agenda!

- It is recommended that the research topic of your MSCA PF fellowship differs from your previous postdoc/PhD. The reason is that a change of your research focus is more likely to expand the range of your skills and knowledge. Do not apply for MSCA PF if you wish to stick with your current topic and plan to investigate it further in more details.

- Unlike many other grant schemes, it is NOT essential to have own preliminary data since you are expected to explore new research problem/field.

- It is NOT likely that the evaluators will be experts with exactly same scientific expertise (they might be previous MSCA fellows or scientists from an industry/commercial sphere). Therefore, make sure your proposal is written in a clear, logical and easy to follow way.

- In the MSCA PF, pay special attention to the impact[6] and outreach of your research. Impact[6] represents the second most important evaluation criterion (after scientific excellence), but applicants often underestimate it. Think of the impact[6] of your research on you as a person and scientist, on the research team, the host institution and importantly, do not forget the impact[6] at the system level (e.g. to increase the quality and competitiveness of European research, increase international, interdisciplinary and intersectoral mobility in Europe, better communication of R&I results to society).

What are my chances of success?

- The key factors influencing a candidate´s success are: (1) scientific excellence, (2) quality of the proposed training, (3) impact[6] of the proposed training and research on the young researcher's future prospects and the host institution and, (4) mentoring skills and supervising experience of your future supervisor. Bear in mind that the MSCA PF is a research-based training fellowship and not a research grant. It is crucial for your success to clearly understand the difference between the two and get familiar with the MSCA PF's award criteria HERE. A good curriculum vitae and an interesting scientific agenda do not guarantee the success of your proposal! Candidates often underestimate the impact[6] of the fellowship on their career development and the quality of two-way knowledge transfer between the researcher and the host.
- Mind that the success rate for MSCA PF was 17,5% in 2022 and 14.28% in 2021, however this number differs a lot for various EU members states. Soon you will be able to download detailed statics for each individual EU member state HERE.
- Check the repository of funded projects on the CORDIS[2] website to get a better idea on what is expected and what kind of projects gets support. Unfortunately, CORDIS[2] does not allow to search by keywords or topic, so you will have to scroll down and go through long list of different projects.

Which topic/research problem should I choose to succeed?

- MSCA PF supports researchers from any research field or discipline. However, it is highly recommended to opt for addressing different research problem than your current or previous ones. The main reason is that the fellowship aims to diversify researcher´s skills and help them to acquire brand new knowledge.

Who will be the best supervisor for my fellowship?

- Your future supervisor must have an excellent CV, previous experience in supervising postdocs and enough time to dedicate to you and your project (already during its preparation). Your MSCA fellowship will be your joint project! Therefore, discuss your initial intent and develop the project idea with your future supervisor far in advance. Make sure he/she agrees with the content of the proposal, supports you during proposal preparation and throughout the implementation of the fellowship. In fact, the input directly from your supervisor and your host institution will be inevitable in some sections of the proposal. Supervisors overwhelmed with too many duties apart of leading their research group (e.g. performing multiple functions elsewhere in academia or in industry) may result to a negative evaluation for your proposal. In case your supervisor is very busy person, put less stress on describing all the supervisor´s duties focus on his/her role in your project.
- Select your future host institution carefully. The quality of available infrastructure and the training offered matters a lot in the proposal evaluation! Inform yourself on the previous MSCA PF calls' success rates in the given institution.

How long does the preparation of the proposal take?

- Reserve 2-4 months at a minimum for intensive preparation. Start writing as far in advance as possible, not when the deadline is approaching or your superior forces you.
- Reserve enough time to get the necessary input from your supervisor/host institution, make sure you have time to use the feedback and comments. Your supervisor is a busy person and may not respond immediately to your requests.
- Consult/discuss your proposal with trusted colleagues. Do not hesitate to ask for help. Recommendations and advice from more experienced colleagues can make major contributions to your success, so do not underestimate the time for revisions! Have enough time to draft, redraft and refine - every word matters.
- There is only one call open per year (with deadline usually in mid-September), so if you fail to finish your proposal in time, you will have to wait another year. Make sure you also allow yourself to enjoy summer while preparing the project proposal.

How should I start?

I. First carefully select your host institution and the supervisor who works on the topic of your interest (consider all pros and cons). Once you agree on the project goal(s) and research hypothesis with your supervisor, stick to it and you can start writing your grant.

II. Download the proposal templates from the [Funding & Tender opportunities](#) portal[3]. You will have to log in and then start a new project proposal submission.

III. First focus on part B, for which you need to download the templates. Part A consists of general information about the project, contact details of the applicant and the host institution, budget, ethics and few call specific questions. Part A is filled in online, directly in the [Funding & tender opportunities](#) portal[3].

IV. Having the part B template downloaded, I recommend starting by formulating your project aims (both - research and training objectives) and key research and training activities. These will form the basic backbone of your project, to which you will add additional information. Once you know WHAT you want to do within the grant, continue addressing the questions: WHY you want to do it (What is your motivation? Why it matters? - impact[6]) and HOW you will do it (implementation).

Where can I get more information?

- [MSCA PF website](#) presents detailed information about open and forthcoming calls and eligibility and award criteria. In addition, I highly recommend checking the [MSCA alumni](#) website. You will find very practical advice on how to write a competitive project proposal, contacts to MSCA alumni from each country, an interesting blog, newsletter, job adverts and other useful information that may be of interest there.

- Get familiar with the [Guide for Applicants](#) of MSCA postdoctoral fellowships, to gain a proper understanding of this grant scheme's expectations. Also read the section of the [MSCA Work Programme for Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions](#) dedicated to the MSCA individual fellowship. You can find answer to some of your possible questions in [FAQ section for Postdoctoral Fellowships call for proposals 2023](#).

- Discuss your idea with other researchers who have already received a grant or have experience with supervising or evaluating individual MSCA fellowships.

- Contact [us](#). We will clarify any possible questions and revise your MSCA draft.

GUIDELINES TO WRITE A WINNING PROPOSAL

How to compose the perfect abstract?

The abstract represents a summary that, at a glance, outlines the KEY MESSAGE and provides the reader with a clear understanding of the overall project aim, identifies the purpose, methods, results, and conclusions of your future work. Your abstract should:

1. present your MOTIVATION - *WHY* does your topic matter? Why should we care?
2. clearly state the RESEARCH/TRAINING OBJECTIVES – *WHAT* problem do you address in your proposal?
3. briefly outline the SCIENTIFIC APPROACH/METHODOLOGY – *HOW* will you solve the given research problem?
4. specify the EXPECTED RESULTS.
5. address the IMPACT[6] of the fellowship on your career as well as the possible utility of the result. What change/implications will your project and its results bring?
6. comment on the originality and novelty of the project.
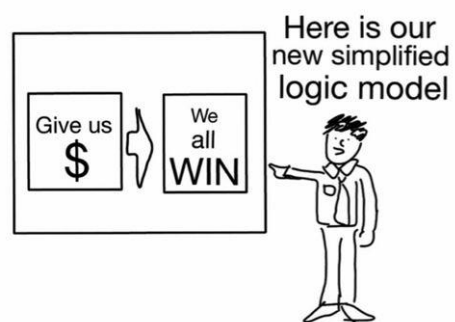7. carefully pick the key terminology – highlight the key statements.

1. Excellence

1.1 Quality and pertinence of the project's research and innovation objectives (and the extent to which they are ambitious, and go beyond the state of the art)

» **Introduction** (recommended length: very short paragraph)

- Explain WHY the given topic/research problem is interesting, attractive, timely and important. Remember that you need to attract the evaluator´s interest on the first two pages otherwise, you will not succeed.
- Briefly state the overall aim of your project. WHAT do you plan to do during your project and why? I recommend following the slightly modified KISS principle[4] that says - Keep It Simple and Specific.
- Graphic summary or graphic abstract are much appreciated, they provide more information in a short time than a long paragraph of the text.

Create a "logic model"
Give us $
We all WIN
Here is our new simplified logic model

» **State-of-the-art** (recommended length: ≤3/4 of A4 page)

- Set out a clear outline of the most important facts that are essential to understand your project goals. Do not overwhelm the evaluators with unnecessary details. The purpose of this section is not to demonstrate the depth of your knowledge! On the contrary, show that you can capture the most important information; grasp the problem with ease, perspective and in context.
- Highlight where the gap in current knowledge is that you aim to investigate. Explain how your project fits into the existing knowledge base.
- Make it brief. Avoid long, complicated sentences.
- Break the whole section into short paragraphs, each addressing specific issue of the research project.
- Be sparing with references – they take up space and evaluators are unlikely to read them. Choose only the most important ones.

» **Project objectives and overview of the action** (recommended length: short paragraph)

- Create a clear, explicit structure: the overall goal >>> up to four main objectives/aims/goals >>> individual sub-objectives/tasks/activities.
- Keep the project aims consistent throughout the proposal, label them with numbers or letters and stick to this labelling format.

- Place and highlight the statement of the main project aims towards the beginning of the Excellence section (e.g. using a frame or bold font). Do not strain the reader and do not leave formulating the project objectives until the later parts of the proposal.
- Create a SMART aim statement[5] = your project aim must be specific, measurable, applicable, realistic, and timely

1.2 Soundness of the proposed methodology (including interdisciplinary approaches, consideration of the gender dimension and other diversity aspects if relevant for the research project, and the quality of open science practices)

» **Overall methodology** (recommended length: 1/2 of A4 page)
- It is recommended to follow the structure of your project objectives and link the methodology to each specific project objective.
- Pinpoint the most interesting, original, and innovative methods. Do you use any novel concepts? Are you using any novel methodological approach that no one has ever used before? Do you develop innovative technology? List the remaining methods avoiding details - it would unnecessarily take up the space needed for addressing other issues.
- How will your project expand a particular research area/field?

» **Integration of methods and disciplines to pursue the objectives** (recommended length: short paragraph)
- Research lying on an intersection of two or more disciplines is appreciated (e.g. technical engineer or a computer scientist joining a biomedical research lab), though not compulsory. The reason is that projects with an interdisciplinary perspective expand your knowledgebase and enrich you more your experience.
- Do not forget that the project may fit into a single discipline but the impact[6] or output of the project could reach into other areas.

» **Gender dimension and other diversity aspects** (recommended length: short paragraph)
- Integrating a gender dimension in your research is welcome, though not compulsory. Gender dimension deals with sex and gender analysis in a research content, which is different from gender balance in a research group! Your project has a gender dimension only if gender is part of the research content (it is a subject of your study or has impact on gender) and is systematically controlled for throughout the research process (in sociological or psychological studies, medical research on diseases affecting males and females differently etc.). If that is the case

of your project, discuss the biological features as well as social and cultural differences. More information can be found [HERE].

- If gender dimension is not relevant to your research, still provide brief justification.

» **Open Science[17] practices** (recommended length: short paragraph)

- Discuss which open science practices will you implement, e.g. early and open sharing of research (through pre-registration, pre-prints, or crowd-sourcing etc.), providing open access to the outputs of the project (whether it is publication model, algorithm, software, protocol etc.), ensuring the reproducibility of your outputs, participation in peer-review, acquiring new knowledge on open science through training, consulting Open Science[17] aspects with specialized support staff at the Host Institution or involving the civil society or end users in the co-creation of the research content of your project. Ask your supervisor or admin staff about the open science practices implemented at the host institution.

» **Research data management and management of other outputs** (recommended length: short paragraph)

- What kind of data you will generate or collect? How will you handle these data?
- Plan to prepare Data Management Plan[18] (DMP) during first year of the project implementation and update it regularly (and mark it in your Gantt chart in the section *3.1 Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks and appropriateness of the effort assigned to workpackages*[10]) that will allow you to organize your data into presentable format and in line with the FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable). The aim of organizing your data in DMP is that it will make your work more efficient, save your time, contribute to safeguarding information and increase the impact, reusability and the value of the data, during project implementation and after its end.

1.3 Quality of the supervision, training and of the two-way transfer of knowledge between the researcher and the host

» **Qualifications and experience of the supervisor** (recommended length: ¼-$^1/_2$ of A4 page)

- The input from your future supervisor is vital. Ask for your supervisor´s CV. The best proposals are constructed where the supervisor has an active role in their development.
- Describe your supervisor´s main achievements in science, involvement in international, intersectoral and interdisciplinary collaborations, examples of awards, projects, and publications but the most importantly, provide details on

his/her mentoring skills and supervising experiences! How many postdocs and PhDs did he/she supervise? Any particularly successful alumni from the supervisor´s group? Your supervisor should play a model role in a given research field.

- For less experienced supervisors – justify their involvement e.g. they gain experience in EU funding, have the opportunity to grow their team and develop their own career.
- Appropriate level of supervision depends on the career stage of you and your supervisor and expectations of the projects – there is no general correct formula.
- You can name your supervisory committee and specify the collaboration with it if you wish.
- Describe the involvement of your supervisor and/or the supervisory committee in your fellowship (e.g. monitoring progress of your work, assistance with your Career Development Plan[1]). More details on guiding and supervising MSCA fellows can be find in an official MSCA guidelines on supervision HERE.
- To avoid repetitions, you can refer to part B-2 Section 5 - Capacity of the Participating Organisations.?

» **Training and knowledge transfer from host to the researcher** (recommended length: 1/2 of A4 page)

- What training will you get and what new knowledge will you gain from the new supervisor, new colleagues, host institution and a new country? How will it stimulate your research career in the future?
- Does the host institution have any postdoctoral program, seminar series, journal/discussion clubs, and other educational activities to further develop your talent and enhance your skills? Ask for input from your future supervisor or administrator at the host institution.
- Examples of training:

Transferable skills	Advanced research skills
Ethics in research	Training in new techniques
Patent application	Open science
Project management	Data management
Entrepreneurship and innovation	Scientific writing
IPR management and patenting	Experimental design
Leadership/influencing courses	Qualitative and quantitative methods
People management	User design
Public engagement	Gender dimension of research
Presentation skills	Language skills
CV preparation	
Interview skills	

Grant writing	

» **Knowledge transfer from the researcher to host** (recommended length: ¼-$^1/_2$ of A4 page)

- How will the host institution benefit from your experience/skills? What do you offer? Do you have any specific expertise/knowledge that might be beneficial for the host research group/institution?
- What specific measures will you use to embed your knowledge into the host organisation (mentoring students, delivering workshops, attending conferences, building collaborations within the host organisation)? Demonstrate the ability to transfer the knowledge.

1.4 Quality and appropriateness of the researcher's professional experience, competences and skills (recommended length: short paragraph)

- How will your current personal and professional experience and the proposed research contribute to your further development DURING the fellowship (mind the difference between this chapter and section *2.1 Credibility of the measures to enhance the career perspectives and employability of the researcher and contribution to his/her skills development*).
- Identify the most important benefits (skills, knowledge, experience) of your CURRENT training and put them in the contexts of what is required for excellence in your field.

2. Impact[6]

- Pay special attention to different dimensions of the impact[6] of your project – impact[6] is the second most important evaluation criteria; its weight is 30%, while science counts for 50%. Despite of that its importance is often underestimated, one of the reasons being a misunderstanding of expectations from this section.

2.1 Credibility of the measures to enhance the career perspectives and employability of the researcher and contribution to his/her skills development (recommended length: ¼-$^1/_2$ of A4 page)

- Specify your career goals/ambitions. You can mention more than just one intended career directions. How will the fellowship aid you to meet your Career Development Plan[1] goals? Positive impact on the researcher´s career development must be convincingly argued.
- Show how the newly gained skills/experience improve your future employability and career prospects inside or outside academia.

- What is the impact[6] of the proposed project on your future career AFTER the fellowship (immediately after the fellowship and in long-term perspective too)? How will the fellowship in the host team foster your career development towards independence? (be aware of the difference between this chapter and section *1.4 Quality and appropriateness of the researcher's professional experience, competences and skills*)

2.2 Suitability and quality of the measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts[6], as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan[7], including communication activities (recommended length: cca. $^1/_2$ – 1 A4 page)

- Plan dissemination on your project. DISSEMINATION = promotion and raising awareness about obtained results and outcomes
  - In your dissemination strategy[7] identify the OUTCOMES of the project and PEERS who will be informed and will benefit of it. The outcomes could be:
    - Knowledge (data, recommendations, policy, methodology, guidelines)
    - Product (software, GMO, material, algorithm, tool kit)
    - Service (analyses, advice – consulting, training)
    - Performance, installation, …
  - The peers to whom you will disseminate your results could be: peers in the research field, students, patients, parents, the elderly, industry, professional organizations, commercial players, policy makers etc.
  - Do not forget to discuss the open access[8] and data management – be clear about the nature and openness of your data. For publications OPEN ACCESS[8] mode is mandatory, you can also save your publications and data in available repositories. You can participate in Open Data Pilot and make specific data (except the sensitive data) publicly accessible.

- Explain if you plan or not any exploitation on your project. EXPLOITATION[9] = practical use of results for commercial or policy purposes.
  - Discuss whether the result is commercially exploitable and patentable or not. Show that you are aware of exploitation[9] possibilities. If you plan to generate exploitable results address the following:
    - What is the commercial value?
    - To whom is the commercial value of interest?
    - What is the exploitation[9] trajectory?
    - How can technology transfer office of the host institution assist me?
  - Demonstrate how the host institution can assist in exploiting the results.
  - For more information consult the official [Guidelines for IP management in MSCA](#).
  - Separate workpackage[10] for Dissemination & Exploitation[9]

- Include dissemination activities in Gantt-chart[11] in the Implementation section (in *3.1 Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks and appropriateness of the effort assigned to workpackages[10]*).
- Summarize your *Dissemination & Exploitation Plan[7]* in easily readable table:

WHAT to disseminate	TO WHOM	WHY	HOW	WHEN	KPIs[12]	RESOURCES
Ongoing results and progress	Researchers from the department	Gaining critical feedback and helpful advice, exchange of experiences, stimulating collaborations	Departmental seminar	2x year	>30 PhD students and postdocs, >6 groupleaders	Own data recorded in lab book
...						

➢ Apart of disseminating your results include other communication activities. COMMUNICATION = making your research activities known to society (the public and the media) by promoting your project including its results, achievements, expectations, project activities, lessons learned etc.
- After summarising WHAT do you want to raise awareness about, create a list of all groups you will target and WHO may benefit the most of achieved work. Think sufficiently broadly. The target groups could be:
  o end-users of the project activities (patients, industry, specific clients),
  o interested groups (researchers, other experts, students, parents, racial minorities…),
  o decision-makers at local, regional, national, and European level,
  o press and media,
  o general public (public engagement is welcome since it helps to gain direct feedback on public´s concerns, interests and priorities for science and technologies)
- Indicate HOW will you communicate with each target group about the project or its outcome. Your outreach activities could be:
  o publishing - scientific publication and other written material such as reports, articles in newsletters, press releases, leaflets, or brochures
  o participation on public events e.g. international conferences and other meetings,

- o using social media and blogging,
- o taking advantage of audio-visual media and products such as radio, TV, YouTube, Flickr, video clips, podcasts, or apps
- o collaboration with local influencers or influencers focused on similar topic
- o mentoring
- o MSCA/academic activity promotion (becoming MSCA Ambassador, participating in Researcher´s Night, Science Slams, Institutional Open Day).
- o project branding and logo
- o engaging existing contacts and networks
   - ▪ Do not forget to assess the impact[6] of each communication measure (e.g. number of articles in press, number of website views, number of trained students etc.). Use KPIs (=key performance indicators)[12] for evaluation of your communication strategy.
   - ▪ Link communication activities to EU policy when possible e.g. EU Science education

2.3. The magnitude and importance of the project's contribution to the expected scientific, societal and economic impacts[6] (recommended length: ¼ of A4 page)

- What are the results/new findings of your project good for? Are these results needed?
- Do your new findings help closing the gap of knowledge described previously in the state-of-the-art section?
- Discuss not only scientific impact[6] (how will the current knowledge advance?), but also societal impact[6], economic (decreasing costs, bringing new products or services to market etc.), technological (new technology development) or clinical impact (decreasing mortality, increasing efficiency of healthcare etc.), impact6 on you/your career and your host lab/institution too. Think of broader dimension - contribution to EU scientific excellence, innovation, and competitiveness.
- Consider the immediate impact[6], short-term and long-term impact[6] too if relevant.

3. Quality and Efficiency of the Implementation

3.1 Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks and appropriateness of the effort assigned to workpackages[10]

» **Workplan** (recommended length: cca. $^1/_2 - 1$ A4 page)

- Break-down your work plan into individual tasks or activities. Make the structure clear, logical and feasible.

- It is common to structure your work plan into WORK PACKAGES (WP) [10] = sets of related tasks that generate a separate project outcome. Each WP is characterized by effort and time and may cover a single task or several related tasks. Description of WPs can be summarized in the table like this:

WP1	Start month[M]: 1	Duration: 12
Title:	Identification of the biological role of XZ molecule in cell cycle regulation	
Deliverables:	D1.1: Optimised protocols for cell synchronization [M3]. D1.2: Presentation of new results in departmental seminar [M12]. D1.3 poster presentation at FEBS conference on Cell Cycle [M10].	
Milestones:	MS1: BY2 cell synchronization optimized [M3]. MS2: Identification of mechanism of XZ-mediated cell cycle regulation successfully achieved [M12].	

- For two years-long fellowship do not propose more than 6 WPs. Create a feasible plan.
- Plan and plot the work in time – draw the GANTT CHART[11] and identify interdependencies of subparts. The MSCA PF template B contains an example of Gantt chart but you can choose from countless other formats e.g.:

	year 1												year 2											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
WP#1	*Set up of XY protocol*																							
D		1.1				1.2																		
M		1		2		3																		
WP#2							*Application of XY protocol on mutants*																	
D										2.1								2.2						
M																4	5	6						
WP#3													*Quantitative analysis of mutants*											
D																		3.1				3.2	3.3	3.4
M																		7		8				

MONTHS	3	6	9	12	15	18	21	24	27	30	33	36
WP1.						D1.1						
Task 1.1			M1									
Task 1.2				M2		M3						
WP2							D2.1					
Task 2.1						M4						
WP3							D3.1	D3.2				
Task 3.1								M5				
WP4										D4.1	M6	D4.2
Task 4.1										M7		
Task 4.2											M8	
Task 4.3												M9

- Propose credible set of DELIVERABLES[13], ideally at least one deliverable for each project aim. Deliverable[13] means result of the action that is usually tangible.
  - Examples of deliverables[13]: article, database, website, career development plan1, report, conference presentation, poster, patent, prototype, data management plan18 etc.).
  - Use standard deliverable[13] labelling: D1.1 (= first deliverable in aim 1), D1.2 (= second deliverable in aim 1), D2.1 (= first deliverable in aim 2), D2.2 (= second deliverable in aim 2) etc.
- Create a comprehensive list of milestones[14]. MILESTONE[14] is an intermediate goal or point in time that helps to measure/control the progress.
  - Examples of milestones[14]: dataset/sample collection accomplished, method optimised, technology adopted as a basis for the next step of the project etc.
  - Use standard milestone[14] labelling: MS1 (= first milestone), MS2 (= second milestone) etc.
- Deliverables[13] and milestones[14] must be listed on the Gantt chart.

» **Risk analysis** (recommended length: single paragraph)
- Assess all important challenges that might endanger you achieving your project aims. Distinguish between operational risks[15] and experimental risks[16]. Do not give evaluators a chance to identify any risks that you forgot to mention!
- Outline honest and convincing contingency plan (alternative scenario, plan B) that helps you to minimize or avoid the identified risks. You can prepare an overview of major risks in the table e.g.:

Potential problem	Risk (low-high)	Probability (low-high)	Related WP	Contingency plan
...				

- Convincingly describe how administrative issues will be managed at the host institution – input from your future supervisor is needed! Will you get any admin support and help from experienced project managers? Does the host institution have in place practical arrangements for financial and administrative management and monitoring of progress and quality of the project?
- Describe regular meetings with the supervisor/supervisory committee and the hosting research group that will provide feedback on the work and career progress, and quality control. The plan for quality assessment is remarkable.

» **3.3. Quality and capacity of the host institutions and participating organisations, including hosting arrangements** (recommended length: single paragraph)

- Describe administrative, career development or other kind of support and guidance you will be offered for your professional development.
- How well will be organized your integration in the new environment at host´s premises?
- Does the host institution offer you a fully equipped workstation, access to libraries and laboratories, training program or academic courses (which significantly increases the credibility of the project)?
- Describe the infrastructure and capabilities of the host the institution needed to accomplish your project aims – inputs from your future supervisor are needed!
- How will facilities, infrastructure and research environment at the host institution/group stimulate your professional development? Discuss the impact[6] of the infrastructure and other opportunities at host institution on your future career and personal development. Examples: becoming member of specific community, participation in specialized training, gaining access to unique resources (archives, courses, infrastructure etc.).
- Describe briefly internal organization and mechanisms of work progress monitoring adopted at the host institution.
- Mention briefly, if the host institution has endorsed the Charter & Code principles, and if they have been awarded the HR Excellence in Research Logo.

Part B-2 Section 4 - CV of the experienced researcher

- Follow the template and use all the available pages to describe all your achievements so far.
- This is one of the first parts of the proposal that evaluators read. They seek coherence with section *1.4 Quality and appropriateness of the researcher's professional experience, competences, and skills.*
- The information mentioned in your CV could include:
  - Publications, relevant bibliometric indicators
  - Research monographs and any translations thereof
  - Expeditions attended
  - Granted patent(s)
  - Invited presentations
  - Prizes/Awards/Academy memberships
  - Supervising and mentoring experiences
  - Funding achieved so far

Part B-2 Section 5 - Capacity of the Participating Organisations

- Follow the template and ask for input from the host institution (your supervisor or grant officer).

Part B-2 Section 6 - Ethical Issues

- Respond honestly to all questions and consult with your supervisor.
- You do not need any official ethical approvals before submission. You will be asked to provide necessary approvals during negotiation in case your proposal succeeds and gets funding.
- For details consult the H200 Guide "How to complete your Ethics Self-Assessment"

WHEN YOU FINISH WRITING THE PROPOSAL

Just before submission

- Do not consider the proposal finished once you have written it. Read it repeatedly and revise the text as much as you can.
- Bear in mind the EVALUATION CRITERIA described in detail in the Guide for applicants. Make sure your proposal meets all of them! I highly recommend to check the specific MSCA evaluation forms.
- At latest one day before submission deadline, upload the most advanced version of your proposal to the **Funding & Tender opportunities** portal[3] to make sure you avoid technical problems if the system gets delays or fails at the last moment before deadline.
- Consider Widening Fellowships and/or Seal of Excellence as alternative routes to funding.

After proposal submission

- The Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) will be accessible from the Funding & Tender opportunities portal[3] after approximately 6 months. You will be informed about it by email.

GLOSSARY

[1]Career Development Plan (CDP) – is a tool for proactive planning and implementing steps towards the researcher´s career goals. CDP should be established and regularly reviewed together with the supervisor. It makes sense when it starts early in the researcher´s career and becomes a continual activity. CDP is a compulsory deliverable expected to be submitted within first 6 months of your MSCA fellowship. It brings a lot of benefits e.g., it helps researchers to set career goals, maximize their potential, seek and make the most use of development opportunities and many other benefits. More details including CDP examples can be found HERE.

[2]Cordis website - serves as a public repository with all project-related information held by the European Commission such as project abstract, title, list of participants, reports, deliverables[13] and links to open-access publications etc.

[3]Funding & Tender opportunities portal – serves as the entry point for participants and experts in funding programmes and tenders managed by the European Commission and other EU bodies. You will need to register here to submit your MSCA PF project. You use the same login to manage the project while implementing it, submitting reports, or searching for other EU funding opportunities.

[4]KISS principle – the KISS is originally acronym for "keep it simple, stupid". The idea is that a complicated project with complex project aims is difficult to develop, manage, and support, which is not what is expected in MSCA PF. Specify your project goals as simply and specifically as possible. It gives you better control over the implementation.

[5]SMART aim statement - "SMART" is an acronym for Specific, Measurable, Applicable, Realistic, and Timely. A SMART aim needs to be precisely formulated, its achievement should be verifiable and measurable, and involves a work achievable within a given timeframe.

[6]Impact – is the effect that your project has on individuals (such as you or your supervisor), host institution and society (scientific community, students, patients, users, industry, policymakers, EU and any other results users). The effects could be positive (preferred) or negative, intentional (preferred) or accidental, short and long-term.

[7]Dissemination Strategy - describes how to distribute information about the project, its progress, and results. Dissemination should be an ongoing dialogue with the target audience during your project. A detailed Dissemination Strategy describes which issue will you raise awareness of, to which target audience, the purpose (why?), timing (when?) and methods for dissemination.

[8]Open Access – is a principle through which research outputs are distributed online for free and without any other access barriers. In research, the unlimited online access to scientific information is usually provided either by publishing in open journals that do not charge readers or by archiving in publicly available databases and

open repositories (usually universities have their own repositories). Open access is compulsory for all research projects in Horizon Europe where intellectual property does not require any form of protection.

[9]Exploitation - is the use of results for commercial purposes or in public policymaking and benefiting from it. Exploitation relates to the development or commercialisation of a product or   a service and thus differs from dissemination. However, there might be some overlap between dissemination, exploitation, and communication, especially for close-to-market projects. Keep in mind, though, that the Horizon Europe programme focuses more and more on impact in society. Therefore, ways to exploit results should always be on your mind when writing a successful proposal or planning your research.

[10]Work package (WP) – is a group of related tasks within a project with defined time duration. WPs are useful tools that break an entire research proposal into defined sections (WPs), help to create a logical structure in the work and allocate resources (time, finances, and human effort) more effectively. Often WPs correspond to individual project aims. An additional WP dedicated to dissemination and exploitation is usually included in the workplan. At a minimum, each WP includes   a title, information about when it starts and ends, the objective and whether it leads to specific deliverables[13] and has any milestones[14].

[11]Gantt chart – shows a list of WPs (or project aims) displayed against time and demonstrates the dependency relationship between individual WPs. Thus, it nicely visualizes what has to be done (the activities) and when (the schedule). A Gantt chart can also include information about deliverables[13] and milestones[14]. There is an endless number of various Gantt chart formats available on the internet.

[12]Key performance indicators (KPIs) for evaluating impact of your communication strategy – are quantifiable metrics used to measure if you meet the objectives of your communication strategy (e.g. number of published articles, number of website views, and number of trained students). They are strategic indicators demonstrating if you communicated your project effectively and thus if you achieved expected impact.

[13]Deliverable – is a measurable and verifiable (often also tangible) outcome that completes a work package[10]/task e.g. publication, product, patent, data collection, tool.

[14]Milestone – describes the status of the project, represented by a moment at which one or more project activities are complete – marks a critical decision point / turning points e.g. data collection complete, model built, samples collected.

[15]Operational risks – are risks caused by circumstances unrelated to scientific work that can endanger your project. It could be: lack of suitable facilities to conduct planned research, incapability of MSCA fellow to integrate into a new group/host institution, long-term illness of MSCA fellow or supervisor, data lost, insufficient funds for all real costs of the necessary experimental material.

[16]Experimental risks – are risks directly related to your research e.g. inability to sufficiently optimize the method, expected research

results are not achieved, experimental plants are infected by pests, research hypothesis not confimed.

[17]Open science – is a growing movement to make science more open and to make process of research more transparent, inclusive, and democratic. It is based on open cooperative work, tools and diffusing knowledge.

[18]Data management plan – is a formal document that outlines what you will do with your data during and after a research project. It describes the type of data you use for your research, how are collected, organized, and stored, and what formats you use. When sensitive data are used, the DMP must also describe what steps you are taking to make your data secure and compliant with regulations. It details how data will be accessible and documented for sharing and reuse during and after the project is finished. Masaryk university provides application [Data Stewardship Wizard](), which serves as a tool to assess and manage data at research projects.