



NACETEM

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT

Best Practices for Preparing Successful MSCA proposals

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Presentation at EURAXESS Africa Webinar

19th June, 2024

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OUTLINE

- Background
- Overview of my MSCA project
- Opportunities within MSCA IF
- Challenges with MSCA IF
- Advice for potential applicants
- Concluding Remarks





Background

- ❖ The MSCA are the European Union's flagship funding programme for doctoral education and postdoctoral training of researchers.
- ❖ **Objectives of the MSCA**
 - It funds excellent research and innovation and equip researchers at all stages of their career
 - The MSCA help build Europe's capacity for research and innovation.

Key features



The information in this presentation is preliminary and subject to the adoption of the work programme





Background

- ❖ EU flagship programme for researchers' mobility and training through the development of excellent doctoral programmes, collaborative research and fellowship schemes
 - ❖ See: <https://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions>
- ❖ The goal of the Individual Fellowships (IF) is **to enhance the creative and innovative potential of experienced researchers**, through advanced training, international and intersectoral mobility.
- IF provides opportunities to **researchers of any nationality**
- It also promotes the **career restart of individual researchers** who show great potential.





MSCA Under Horizon Europe

- ❖ MSCA under Horizon Europe (HE) (2021-2027).
 - ❖ The budget for the MSCA is over **€1.23 billion for 2024**.
 - ❖ The budget throughout the duration of HE **€6.6 billion**
- ❖ Doctoral Networks (DN)
- ❖ Postdoctoral Fellowships (PF)
- ❖ Staff Exchanges (SE)
- ❖ Co-funding of regional, national and international programmes (COFUND)
- ❖ MSCA and Citizens

The Actions



The information in this presentation is preliminary and subject to the adoption of the work programme





Background

❖ Programme open to all thematic areas:

- Chemistry (CHE)
- Social Sciences and Humanities (SOC)
- Economic Sciences (ECO)
- Information Science and Engineering (ENG)
- Environment and Geosciences (ENV)
- Life Sciences (LIF)
- Mathematics (MAT)
- Physics (PHY)

❖ 100% funding based on unit costs

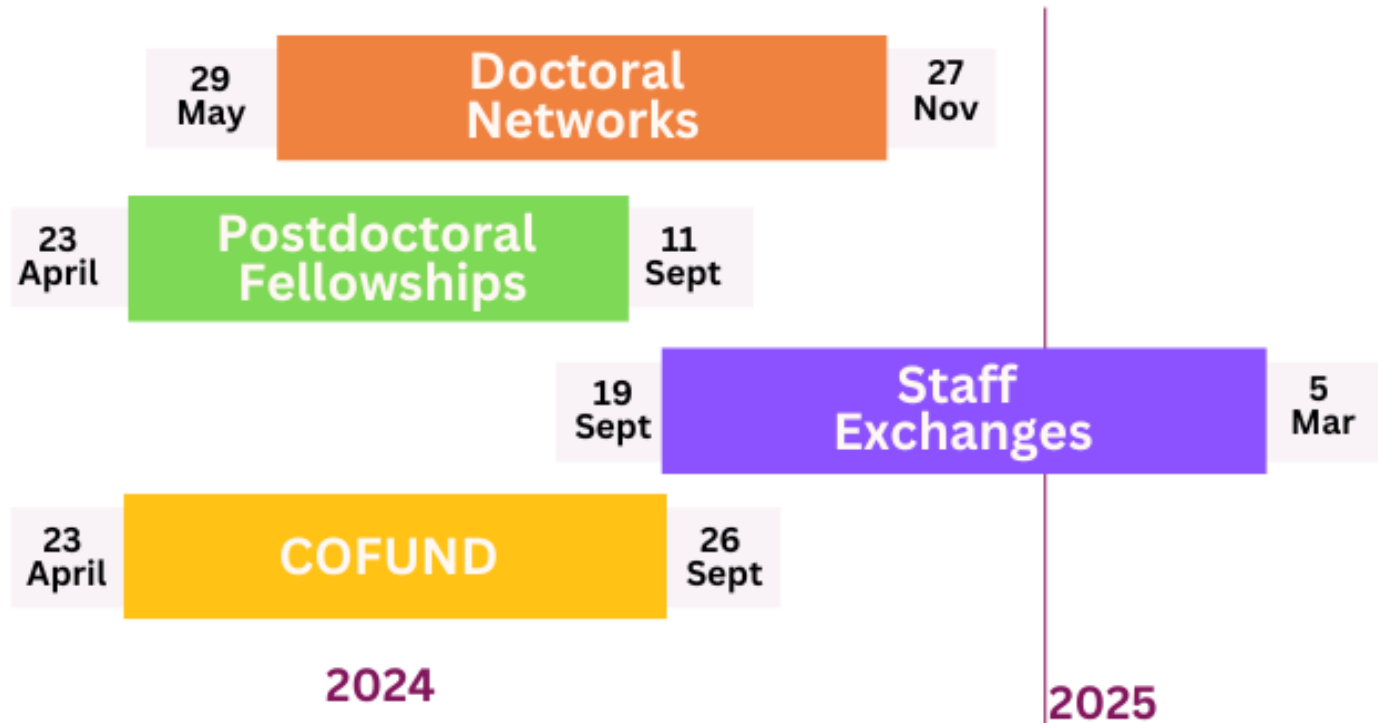
- Contributions for recruited researchers
 - **Living allowance, Mobility allowance, Family allowance**
- Institutional unit contributions:
 - **Research training & Mgt cost**





Dates and Deadlines for 2024

Calendar MSCA calls 2024





Some Rules and Restrictions to Applications

- Limits to **resubmissions**: Applicants can only resubmit if they get a score of **70/100** for PF applications, or **80/100** for the DN grants.
- Post-doctoral fellowships, **only candidates with a PhD** can submit a proposal.
- The MSCA Seal of Excellence is a quality label awarded to applicants for MSCA Individual Fellowships who scored **85% or higher** in the assessment.
- Candidates with maximum **8 years of experience** in research will be eligible.
- **Eligibility window is extended** if the applicant has had **a career break** in the first 8 years after their doctorate.
- **A long-term leave allowance** for all MSCA fellows who must suspend their fellowship for a longer period, e.g. for **maternity, paternity, parental, sick or special leave**.
- **Specific needs of MSCA fellows with disabilities**





Proposal Template and Evaluation Criteria

- ❖ Forms and templates: **Part A:** Administrative and **Part B:** Technical
 - **B1 (10 pages)**
 - ❖ Excellence
 - ❖ Impact
 - ❖ Implementation
 - **B2 (no page limit)**
 - ❖ Researcher CV
 - ❖ Institutional tables
 - ❖ Ethical aspects
 - ❖ Security screening
 - ❖ Letters of commitment (if applicable)





Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Weight
Excellence	50%
Impact	30%
Implementation	20%





Evaluation Criteria

Excellence	Impact	Implementation
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)	Credibility of the measures to enhance the career perspectives and employability of the researcher and contribution to his/her skills development	Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages
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)	Suitability and quality of the measures to maximize expected outcomes and impacts , as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities	Quality and capacity of the host institutions and participating organisations , including hosting arrangements
Quality of the supervision, training and of the two-way transfer of knowledge between the researcher and the host	The magnitude and importance of the project's contribution to the expected scientific, societal and economic impacts	
Quality and appropriateness of the researcher's professional experience , competences and skills		





MSCA Seals of Excellence

- The MSCA Seal of Excellence is a quality label awarded to applicants for MSCA Individual Fellowships who scored **85% or higher** in the assessment.
- Total MSCA Seals of Excellence awarded under Horizon Europe:
- **5,355** awarded under Horizon Europe so far
- **1,956** under 2021 MSCA PF
- **1,607** under 2022 MSCA PF
- **1,737** under 2023 MSCA PF
- **21** under 2021 COFUND
- **34** under 2022 COFUND

European Commission (2024)



Evaluation Criteria

Outcome

- Seal of excellence
 - Good, but not enough to be funded. Score: 92.40/100
 - Waiting list, in case awarded researchers/host drop-off.



Ivan Torres (Guest) +

From Ecuador to Germany – unexpected news

- Received an email from the NCP in Germany that I'm in
- Still things to do
 - Supervisor was offered a new position as a Professor
 - Decision to change the supervisor or to change the host
- Decision to change the host was approved
 - The new host must convince the reviewers. **Successful!**



Image Source: <https://www.facebook.com/Marie-Curie.Actions/>



Overview of my MSCA IF

- ❖ Participated in the MSCA IF in Europe in Horizon 2020
- ❖ The goal of the Individual Fellowships (IF) is **to enhance the creative and innovative potential of experienced researchers**, through advanced training, international and intersectoral mobility.
- IF provides opportunities to **researchers of any nationality** to acquire and transfer new knowledge and to work on research and innovation in Europe (EU Member States and Horizon 2020 Associated Countries) and beyond.
- It also promotes the **career restart of individual researchers** who show great potential.





Overview of my MSCA IF

- ❖ RFF-CMCC European Institute on Economics and the Environment (**EIEE**), Milan
- ❖ Sustainable Earth Modelling Economics (**SEME**) Research Division
- ❖ EIEE's economic and environmental research aim to facilitate the **transition to a sustainable and inclusive society**.
- ❖ **EIEE's founders:** Resources for the Future (RFF) and Euro Mediterranean Center on Climate Change (CMCC)
- ❖ **Project Supervisor:** Prof. Elena Verdolini
- ❖ **Project Manager:** Dr. Mariaester Cassinelli





MSCA in Figures

Horizon Europe: 2023

- ✓ **27739** Total Number of Proposals
- ✓ **4515** Total Number of Retained Projects (**16.28%**)

- ✓ **Nigeria**
- ✓ **Per action:**
 - 3 under PF 2021 call,
 - 1 under PF 2022 call

European Commission (2024)





Nigeria: Participation Since 2014

Horizon 2020

- ✓ **161** researchers
- ✓ **Per action:**
 - ❑ RISE: 88 (staff exchanges)
 - ❑ IF: 9 (postdoc)
 - ❑ ITN: 49 (doctoral programmes)
 - ❑ COFUND: 15
- ✓ **8** projects, **10** organisations, **12** participations
- ✓ **Horizon Europe (*available data)**
- ✓ **2** researchers (PF)
- ✓ **2** organisations in SE (staff exchanges)

Swan (2023)





Overview of my MSCA

- **Project title:** External knowledge sourcing strategies for environmental innovation in the industrial sector of Nigeria
- The overall objective of **ECO-innovation and the Dynamics of External Knowledge Sourcing (ECO-DEKS)** project is to examine the dynamics of external collaborations for innovation in the manufacturing and service sectors of Nigeria.
- H2020-MSCA-IF-2016: Total score: **84.40%** (Threshold: 70/100.00)
- H2020-MSCA-IF-2017: Total score: **84.20%** (Threshold: 70/100.00)
- H2020-MSCA-IF-2018: Total score: **89.40%** (Threshold: 70/100.00)
- Project Duration: **24months**; Stat Date: 23/10/2019; End Date: 21/10/2021





Participants at the MSCA IF Proposal Writing Workshop





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ECO-INNOVATION AND THE DYNAMICS OF EXTERNAL KNOWLEDGE SOURCING

Background

Majority of the current business models and production technologies are not only unsustainable, they are incapable of delivering long-term transition to low-carbon economy. Many firms are now looking beyond their internal knowledge boundaries in order to be competitive. Access to external knowledge through open innovation has thus been recognized as an important source of firm's innovativeness.

About ECO-DEKS

The overall objective of ECO-DEKS is to examine the dynamics of alliance portfolio for eco-innovation in the manufacturing and service sectors of Nigeria.



Expected Outcome

Open eco-innovation is crucial for global decarbonisation policies, and for global environmental sustainability in general, as it enhances technology and knowledge transfer between Annex 1 and the Non-annex 1 parties. In sum, ECO-DEKS will provide much needed evidence on how eco-innovative firms in a developing country access external knowledge and implement it internally.

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This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 846706

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Università Bocconi
ICRIOS
The Invernizzi Center for Research on Innovation, Organization, Strategy and Entrepreneurship



MICRO-DYNAMICS, CATCHING-UP AND GLOBAL VALUE CHAINS

FIRST CONFERENCE

20-22 NOVEMBER 2019

Bocconi University
Room AS03
via Röntgen 1, Milano

20 NOVEMBER 2019
2:00PM

WELCOME ADDRESS
GIANMARIO VERONA Rector, Bocconi University

OPENING SESSION
Chair FRANCO MALERBA Bocconi University
Speakers

GARY GEREFFI Duke University
XOLAN FU University of Oxford
KEUN LEE Seoul National University and Center for Economic Catch-up

GLOBAL VALUE CHAINS AND CLUSTERS
Chair VALENTINA DE MARCHI University of Padova

Speakers
ANDREA MORRISON Utrecht University and Bocconi University
RASMUS LEMA Aalborg University
CARLO PIETROBELLI Roma Tre University
CECILIA RIKAP Paris Descartes University

21 NOVEMBER 2019

9:00AM

BRAZIL

Chair ISABEL MARIA BODAS FREITAS
Grenoble Ecole de Management

Speakers

BRUNO FISCHER The University of Campinas
NATHÁLIA PUFAL Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul
NICHOLAS VONORTAS The University of Campinas

LATIN AMERICA

Chair ISABEL ALVAREZ Complutense University of Madrid

Speakers

JUAN CARLOS CASTILLO SANCHEZ Bocconi University
SUELENE MASCARINI The University of Campinas
JEFFREY OROZCO Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica

MULTI COUNTRY PERSPECTIVE

Chair ALESSANDRO ROSIELLO University of Edinburgh Business School

Speakers

FULVIO CASTELLACCI University of Oslo
MARIA SAVONA University of Sussex
KRZYSZTOF SZCZYGLIENSKI Warsaw School of Economics

ASIA

Chair ROBERTO MAVILIA Bocconi University
Speakers

RITUPARNA KAUSHIK Indian Institutes of Technology

SUNIL MANI Centre for Development Studies
ZHUIQING MAO Seoul National University and Center for Economic Catch-up

SARPANESWARAN SUBRAMANIAM
University of Malaya

22 NOVEMBER 2019

9:00AM

AFRICA

Chair THOKOZANI SILAS SIMELANE Tshwane University of Technology

Speakers

MICHELINE GOEDHUYNS United Nations University and Maastricht University

OLUSEYE JEGEDE University of Johannesburg
SWAPAN KUMAR PATRA Tshwane University of Technology

MAMMO MUCHIE Tshwane University of Technology

FINAL REFLECTIONS ON CATCHING-UP, GLOBAL VALUE CHAIN AND INNOVATION SYSTEMS

Chair and Introduction BENG-ÅKE LUNDVALL Aalborg University

GLOBAL VALUE CHAINS IN THE NEW ERA OF GLOBAL INTELLECTUAL MONOPOLY CAPITAL

Speakers

YANNIS CALOGHIROU National Technical University of Athens

VALENTINA MELICIANI Luiss Business School
JOSE MOLERO Complutense University of Madrid





Overview of my MSCA

- **Work Packages**
- **WP1. Literature Review and Methods**
- **WP2. Data collection, analysis and training**
- **WP3. Report Writing**
- **WP4. Project Outputs Communication and Dissemination**
- **WP5. Project management and data management plan**





Overview of my MSCA

- **Selected Project Outputs**
- **Sanni, M., & Verdolini, E. (2022).** Eco-innovation and openness: Mapping the growth trajectories and the knowledge structure of open eco-innovation. *Sustainable Futures*, 4, 100067.
- **Maruf Sanni and Yeon Jae Kim (2022)** How open are African inventors? The value of open green innovation in a fragmented African innovation system
- **Maruf Sanni (2022)** Many are called, few are needed: Eco-innovation typology and degree of novelty in open eco-innovation mode.





Overview of my MSCA

- **Selected Project Outputs**
- Presented paper in over **10 conferences**
- Participated in over **9 trainings**
- Attended over **15 conferences, workshops and seminars**
- Organised Horizon 2020 **proposal writing workshop**





Opportunities within MSCA

- Improvement in *skills and competences*
- *International mobility* opportunities
- Interdisciplinary cooperation opportunities
- Access to good research facilities/equipment/infrastructures
- Access to newest scientific and other knowledge and databases
- Opportunities to build new collaboration ties
- Proposal writing
- Ability to secure competitive research funding
- Improved visibility of your/your research to the academic community (Website)
- Review European Commission proposals





Challenges with MSCA IF

- Lack of adequate information regarding the fellowship/grant salary, and other arrangements prior to the start of the project
- Insufficient information and assistance provided by National Contact Points
- Difficulties in obtaining an employment contract with full social security for the researcher in the host institution
- Tax and salary differences in different cities
- Difficulties in finding accommodation in the host country
- Difficulties obtaining visas or work/residence permits
- Insufficient information and assistance provided by the host institution on the first day
- Declaration of value





Advice for potential applicants

- Ask about the tax situation from your host
- Look for a masterclass on proposal writing
- Check Euraxess for how to write grant proposals
- Use the MSCA handbook and create a masterclass from it
- Potential candidate can go to MSCA (MSCA PF 2023) handbook





Advice for potential applicants

- Ethical considerations
- Primary data collections
- Accommodation
- Obtain declaration of value before leaving Nigeria
- Present your work as much as possible within your country
- Network with top researchers abroad
- Setup affiliation with your host organisation
- Clarify issues of taxation before leaving your country
- Look for a masterclass on proposal writing: Check [Euraxess](#) for how to write grants
- Go to MSCA (MSCA PF 2023) handbook
- [Subscribe to EURAXESS Africa](#)





Advice for potential applicants

- Do not be overly ambitious, be realistic
- Be detailed on the structure of the proposal
- State how you intend to add value to the host organization
- Adhere strictly to the instructions of the template
- All sections are equally important
- Place emphasis on important points in the proposal
- Your CV does not have to be perfect.
- Your CV should be competitive
- Factor in future employability in your proposal





Concluding Remarks

- *Don't give up too easily*: Keep trying until you succeed
- *Build capacity at home*: Mentor other scientists/potential applicants





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Thank you for listening

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