

Writing a successful MSCA-IF proposal

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Outline

- Short version.
- Basic issues.
- Excellence.
- Impact.
- Implementation.
- My personal experience with the MSCA-IF.

Short version

- Start as early as possible.
- Make sure you are eligible.
- Come up with an interesting idea.
- Make a plan on how to implement your idea.
- Explain why your research is important.
- Read the Guide for applicants **VERY** carefully!!!
- Get feedback before submitting your proposal.

Basic issues

- Make sure you give yourself sufficient time:
 - It is near impossible to write a successful proposal in a week.
 - Now is a good time to start working for this year's call (deadline 11 September).
- Find a host institution and discuss your plans with them:
 - Identify a potential supervisor.
 - Keep in mind the eligibility criteria.
- Come up with an interesting idea:
 - You should frame it such that your **project** will **meet** a **need** filling a **gap**.

Basic issues

- Come up with an interesting idea:
 - You should frame it such that your **project** will **meet** a **need** filling a **gap**.
- “Write down” the main scientific question that your project will address.
 - Identify a small number of scientific objectives.
 - Identify the specific tasks that should be performed to reach the objectives.
 - Think of the connections between the individual tasks.

Basic issues

<u>IF - Marie Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellowships</u>		
Excellence	Impact	Quality and efficiency of the implementation
Quality and credibility of the research/innovation project; level of novelty, appropriate consideration of inter/multidisciplinary and gender aspects	Enhancing the future career prospects of the researcher after the fellowship	Coherence and effectiveness of the work plan, including the appropriateness of the allocation of tasks and resources
Quality and appropriateness of the training and of the two way transfer of knowledge between the researcher and the host	Quality of the proposed measures to exploit and disseminate the project results	Appropriateness of the management structure and procedures, including risk management
Quality of the supervision and of the integration in the team/institution	Quality of the proposed measures to communicate the project activities to different target audiences	Appropriateness of the institutional environment (infrastructure)
Potential of the researcher to reach or re-enforce professional maturity/independence during the fellowship		
50%	30%	20%

- Keep in mind the evaluation criteria.
- Follow the Guide for Applicants carefully.

Excellence

1.1. Quality and credibility of the research/innovation project; level of novelty, appropriate consideration of inter/multidisciplinary and gender aspects.

- The introduction and state-of-the-art should be short and to the point:

Excellence

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- The introduction and state-of-the-art should be short and to the point:
 - 2-3 paragraphs.

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- The introduction and state-of-the-art should be short and to the point.
- References count towards the page limit. Use short form in footnotes:

¹ Hunsucker, R. D. (1982), *Rev. Geophys.*, 20(2), 293–315, doi:10.1029/RG020i002p00293.

² Fritts, D. C., and M. J. Alexander (2003), *Rev. Geophys.*, 41(1), 1003, doi:10.1029/2001RG000106.

³ Frissell, N. A., J. B. H. Baker, J. M. Ruohoniemi, A. J. Gerrard, E. S. Miller, J. P. Marini, M. L. West, and W. A. Bristow (2014), *J. Geophys. Res. Space Physics*, 119, 7679–7697, doi:10.1002/2014JA019870.

⁴ Zakharenkova, I., E. Astafyeva, and I. Cherniak (2016), *J. Geophys. Res. Space Physics*, 121, 12,138–12,156, doi:10.1002/2016JA023332.

⁵ Negrea, C., N. Zobotin, T. Bullett, M. Codrescu, and T. Fuller-Rowell (2016), *J. Geophys. Res. Space Physics*, 121, doi:10.1002/2015JA021574.

⁶ Zobotin, N. A., J. W. Wright, and G. A. Zhibankov (2006), *NeXtYZ: Radio Sci.*, 41, RS6S32, doi:10.1029/2005RS003352.

⁷ Hernandez-Pajares, M., J. M. Juan, and J. Sanz (2006), *J. Geophys. Res.*, 111, A07S11, doi:10.1029/2005JA011474

⁸ Yigit, E., A. S. Medvedev, A. D. Aylward, P. Hartogh, and M. J. Harris (2009), *J. Geophys. Res.*, 114, D07101, doi:10.1029/2008JD011132.

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- This is where your previously determined scientific question and objectives should be included.

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- Be brief, but comprehensive:

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- This is where your previously determined scientific question and objectives should be included.
- Be brief, but comprehensive:
 - You only have 10 pages.

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- This is where your previously determined scientific question and objectives should be included.
- Be brief, but comprehensive.
- Make it easy for the evaluators:

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- Make it easy for the evaluators:

Discuss the interdisciplinary aspects of the action (if relevant).

Evaluation criteria /
guide for applicants



Additionally, this project will have several interdisciplinary elements:

Actual proposal

Excellence

1.2. Quality and appropriateness of the training and of the two way transfer of knowledge between the researcher and the host.

- Your perspective supervisor is a renowned expert in your field.
- The perspective host institution has facilities that will greatly aid in your work.
- The knowledge and experience you bring to the host institution.

1.3. Quality of the supervision and of the integration in the team/institution.

- Do not assume the evaluators will know or look up relevant details about your host institution. You should provide these yourself in the proposal!

1.4. Potential of the researcher to reach or re-enforce professional maturity/independence during the fellowship

- The fellowship should serve as a launch pad for your career.

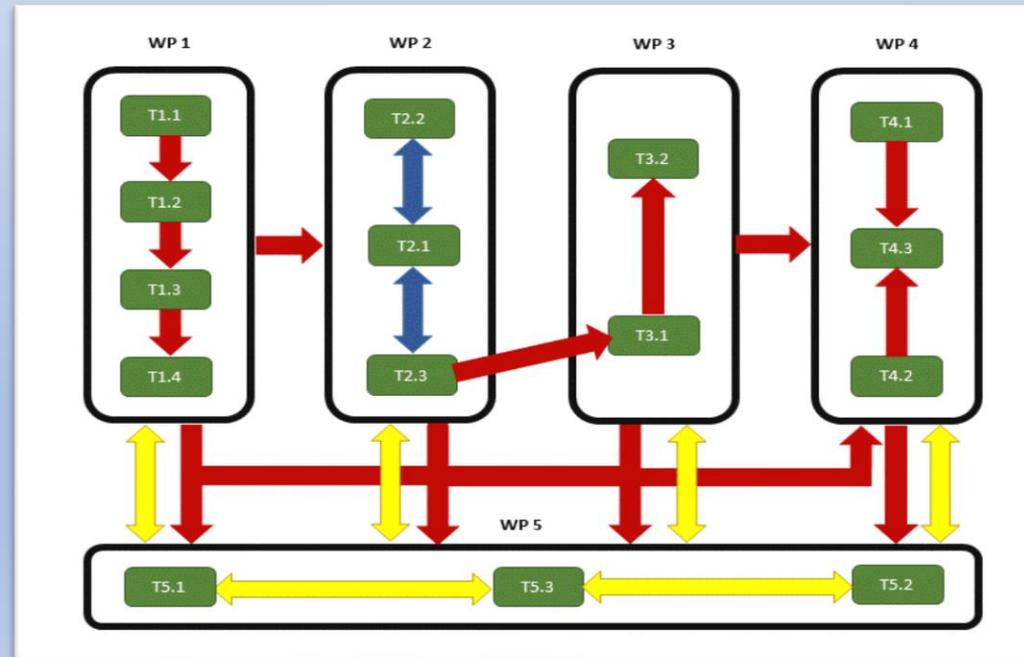
Impact

The expected, **demonstrable** contribution that your fellowship will make to your career, to science and to society in general:

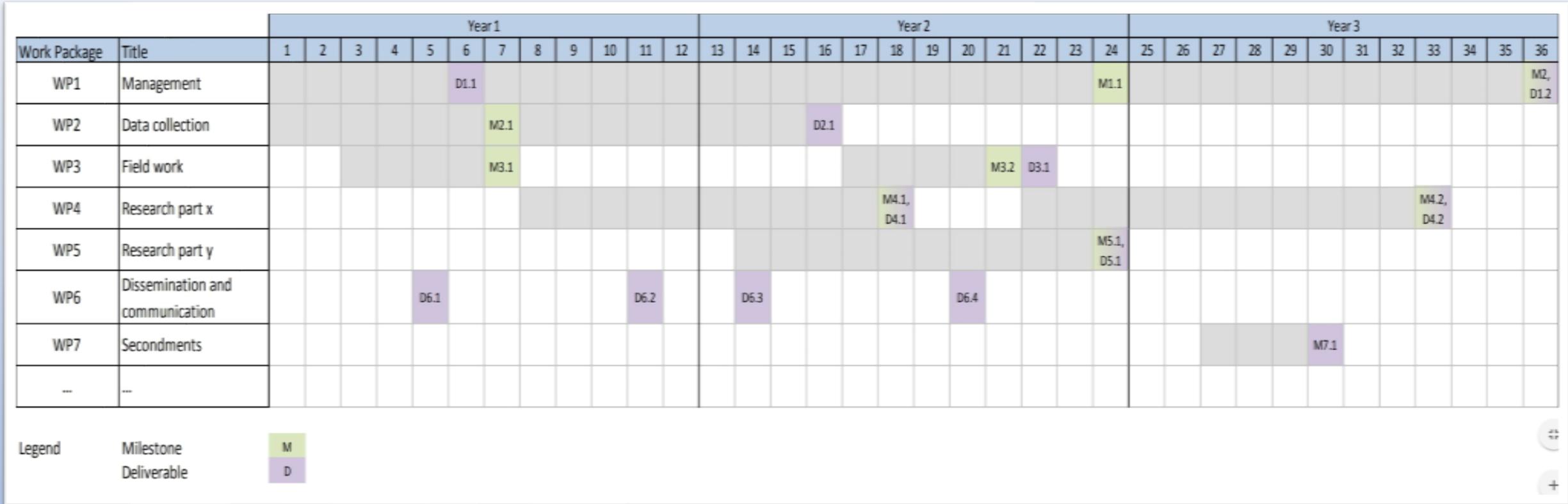
- What new career opportunities will become available to you through the work you're proposing.
 - This section (2.1) should be linked to section 1.4.
- Dissemination and communication are interconnected.
 - Dissemination is about the project results.
 - Communication is about the project itself.
- Don't ignore the impact on the broader public:
 - Since your project fulfils an existing **need**, your results and their implications should be of interest.
 - Make a website.
 - Give public seminars.
 - Participate in existing public events.
 - Etc.

Implementation

- Expect this section to be at least 4 pages long.
- Your Work Packages (WPs) could contain the tasks you identified in your initial planning stage.
- Highlight which WPs / tasks / deliverables will directly accomplish project objectives.
- Make it easier to understand by providing a schematic representation:



Implementation



- A Gantt chart is mandatory.

Implementation

Month	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
WP 1	█	█	█	█	█																			
WP 2					█	█	█	█	█	█														
WP 3											█	█	█	█	█	█								
WP 4																	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Deliverable						1.1		5.1			2.1						3.1			5.2				4.1 5.3
Dissemination and exploitation				█				█			█	█	█					█				█	█	█
Communication			█		█										█		█					█		
Project management								█													█			█

- A Gantt chart is mandatory.
- Many possible formats.

Implementation

- 3.2. Appropriateness of the management structure and procedures, including risk management.
- Even if this will be your “**individual** fellowship”, you still need a management structure:
 - Regular checks with your supervisor.
 - Having an advising committee.
 - Keeping a record of the work progress on the project website.
 - Proper risk management should take into account and provide contingencies for potential risk factors:
 - Don’t ignore obvious potential problems.
 - Don’t list minor or irrelevant problems for which you list no contingencies.

My personal experience with the MSCA-IF

- After you have a first draft, ask a few trusted colleagues / friends to provide feedback:
 - It's your work, you could suffer from tunnel vision when describing it.
 - The evaluators will not necessarily be experts in your particular line of research.
- The submission process might take a while, avoid leaving this for the last possible second.
- The evaluators will likely be knowledgeable experts, and the evaluation will be fair, but very harsh.
 - The tiniest of detail could cost you valuable points
 - Expect the competition to be fierce.

My personal experience with the MSCA-IF

- You choose to start the actual work considerably later:
 - If you apply in September 2017, you may start as late as September 2021.
- Some restrictions may be imposed on the other activities you're allowed to take part in:
 - Art. 32.1. (iv) of the Grant Agreement : **“the obligation of the researcher to work exclusively for the action”**.
- The communication with the project officer has been without reproach, but expect administrative tasks to take some time:
 - Some actions require the host institution's legal signatory (**which will not be you!**) and/or the Legal Entity Appointed Representative (LEAR, **also not you!**) to be involved.

My personal experience with the MSCA-IF

Guide for Applicants:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/guides_for_applicants/h2020-guide-appl-msca-if-2018-20_en.pdf

(just google “MSCA guide for applicants”)

H2020 Online Manual:

https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/index_en.htm

Annotated grant agreement (available in any language that might be of interest to you):

http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/amga/h2020-amga_en.pdf

Thank you!

Questions?