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## How to write a successful MSCA IF proposal from an Expert viewpoint

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## How to write a successful MSCA IF proposal from an “Expert” viewpoint

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*Disclaimer: No guarantee of any kind is implied*

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## Background

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### Education:

- B.Sc. in Electronics and Communications Engr.
- M.Sc. in Electronics and Communications Engr.
- M.Sc. in Electrical Engineering
- M.Sc. in Applied Mathematics
- Ph.D. in Electrical Engineering

### MSCA experience:

- Fellow (2010-present)
- Expert (2013-present) in the ENG and MAT panels



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## The Big Picture

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### the Good

- ❖ Perfect start to a successful career in Europe for a junior researcher
- ❖ Ideal resource for that post-doctoral / sabbatical visit you were planning for in your dream *third country* (or in Europe)
- ❖ Wonderful chance to *refocus* a research program for a senior researcher
- ❖ One of the few programs that support a career **restart**

### the Bad

- ❖ Extremely competitive, need to establish and successfully present a balance between good CV, good research problem, contribution to society, and 50 other points

## The Big Picture

### the Ugly

- ❖ Once you receive the fellowship and the excitement is over, welcome to the world of **Turkish tax laws** and the **Magical Brotherhood of Accountants**, which will never stop in its quest to stop you from using your funds!



## Preparing a successful proposal

- ❖ No single trick to achieve this;  
every **researcher/proposal/host** combination is unique

## Things to pay attention to

- ❖ Make sure you are applying to the most appropriate type of action
- ❖ Some people can satisfy the eligibility conditions of multiple types; evaluate your options!

INDIVIDUAL FELLOWSHIPS		EUROPEAN (EF)				GLOBAL
		ST	CAR	RI	SE	GF
EXPERIENCED RESEARCHERS	Nationality	ANY	ANY	MS, AC or long-term residents	ANY	MS, AC or long-term residents
	Mobility	From ANY country	From ANY country	From TC directly to MS or AC (location of the host institution)	From ANY country	From ANY country
		to MS or AC	to MS or AC	to MS or AC	to TC	then to MS/AC
		≤ 12 months in the last 3 years	≤ 36 months in the last 5 years	≤ 36 months in the last 5 years	≤ 36 months in the last 5 years	≤ 12 months in the last 3 years
	Career break in research	-	at least 12 months within 18 months prior to call deadline	-	-	-
PARTICIPANTS	Beneficiary	MS or AC	MS or AC	MS or AC	MS or AC Non-academic only	MS or AC
	Entity with a capital or legal link	MS or AC	MS or AC	MS or AC	MS or AC Non-academic only	MS or AC
	Partner Organisation	MS or AC	MS or AC	MS or AC	MS or AC (both academic and non-academic)	Outgoing phase (mandatory): TC
						Secondment (optional): MS or AC
DURATION (months)		12 to 24	12 to 36	12 to 24	12 to 24	12 to 24 + 12
SCIENTIFIC AREAS		8	8	8	8	8
NUMBER OF RANKING LISTS		8	1	1	1	8
BUDGET (total EUR 294.49 million)		EUR 236.49 million			EUR 8 million	EUR 50 million

## Things to pay attention to

- ❖ *"The evaluators have to assess each sub-criterion."*
  - ❖ The researchers then need to make sure they address these sub-criteria.
- (reminder to myself: scare them with the 90+ threshold)

4. AWARD CRITERIA AND REQUIREMENTS
4.1 ASSESSMENT AGAINST AWARD CRITERIA
There are 3 main award criteria "Excellence", "Impact" and "Implementation" each of them further split in sub-criteria. The evaluators have to assess each sub-criterion. Additionally, aspects relative to basic operational capacity and participants from countries not listed in the Work programme must be assessed.

- ❖ A common issue in proposals from Turkey until recently.
- ❖ One quick trick is to use subsection headers for each sub-criterion!



# Tips for a successful proposal

- ❖ The curriculum vitae is the first stop in an expert's journey towards your perfect research
- ❖ Address key accomplishments
- ❖ Do not waste ~~space~~ time
- ❖ Be prepared for a diverse expert pool



# Tips for a successful proposal

## 1. *Excellence*

1.1 *Quality and credibility of the research/innovation action (level of novelty, appropriate consideration of inter/multidisciplinary and gender aspects)*

- ❖ A perfect balance for project objectives that are doable (credibility sub-criterion) and imaginative (innovative aspects, creativity).
- ❖ Can move a little further to the innovative (risky?) side if you can demonstrate a strong academic background (builds confidence in the expert)

# Tips for a successful proposal

## 1. *Excellence*

1.1 *Quality and credibility of the research/innovation action (level of novelty, appropriate consideration of inter/multidisciplinary and gender aspects)*

- ❖ *"Discuss the gender dimension in the research content (if relevant). In research activities where human beings are involved as subjects or end-users, or in research activities using e.g. animal models, gender differences may exist."*

# Tips for a successful proposal

## 1. *Excellence*

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

- ❖ When the proposal template calls for a two-way knowledge transfer, it means it!
  - ❖ We traditionally think of MSCA IF as a great benefit to the researcher; it has to be one for the host as well!
  - ❖ Both parties must bring something to the table (in case of GF, knowledge from the third country is the most precious one and it has to be transferred to the incoming host!)

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# Tips for a successful proposal

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## 1. *Excellence*

### 1.3 *Quality of the supervision and of the integration in the team/institution*

- ❖ Supervisor is not automatically the most senior person in the department
- ❖ We used to get away with doing that, but IF assign very important responsibilities to the supervisor; need to choose them very carefully
- ❖ Also, notice the word “supervision”; go beyond the “supervisor”, explain the quality of supervision (and not simply how famous the supervisor is)!

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# Tips for a successful proposal

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## 1. *Excellence*

### 1.4 *Capacity of the researcher to reach or re-enforce a position of professional maturity/independence*

- ❖ Only few get these fellowships, have to prove (in combination with the CV) that you belong to the select few!
- ❖ IF ask for continuous development of the researcher’s career - you have to set a higher goal not just maintain your current status.



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## Tips for a successful proposal

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### 2. *Impact*

#### 2.1 *Enhancing the potential and future career prospects of the researcher*

- ❖ Think of more long-term for this sub-criterion. How will this fellowship (if granted) affect your career **during and after** the fellowship duration?

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## Tips for a successful proposal

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### 2. *Impact*

#### 2.2 *Quality of the proposed measures to exploit and disseminate the action results*

#### 2.3 *Quality of the proposed measures to communicate the action activities to different target audiences*

- ❖ Again, it was much easier to use *clichés* here in early days; need to be creative, make a good plan.
- ❖ The financial source is the people; they need to know what you are doing with their money!



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# Tips for a successful proposal

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## 3. *Implementation*

3.1 *Coherence and effectiveness of the work plan*

3.2 *Appropriateness of the allocation of tasks and resources*

- ❖ A little bit more mechanical portion of the proposal - keep things on the simple / safe side.

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# Tips for a successful proposal

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## 3. *Implementation*

3.3 *Appropriateness of the management structure and procedures, including risk management*

- ❖ “They” will find a way to punish you for any weakness here!
- ❖ Very difficult to figure out a way to efficiently explain all of these (you probably ran out of space by the time you reach this part of the proposal).

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# Tips for a successful proposal

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## 3. *Implementation*

### 3.4 *Appropriateness of the institutional environment (infrastructure)*

- ❖ The easiest portion if the proposal is theoretical :)
- ❖ Don't rely on the host to be well-known; have to point out the relevant infrastructure and how they will be used for the good of the project.

Good luck!