HORIZON EUROPE MSCA 2025 Calls Conference

Expert Point of View: How to write a successful (MSCA PF) proposal?

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MSCA – Postdoctoral Fellowships Expert Evaluator for European Commission (2022 - cont. ENV Panel)

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MSCA PF Fellowship (2019-2021 @METU)

First Trial – 2017
MSCA PF Call

Proposal Evaluation Form

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Horizon 2020 - Research and Innovation Framework Programme

Evaluation Summary Report

Call: H2020-MSCA-IF-2017
Funding scheme: MSCA-IF-EF-RI
Proposal number: 793727
Proposal acronym: SPELEOTOLIA
Duration (months): 24
Proposal title: Holocene climate reconstructions from western Anatolia based on speleothem data
Activity: MSCA-IF-EF-RI

N.	Proposer name	Country	Total Cost	%	Grant Requested	%
1	MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY	TR	157,845.6	100.00%	157,845.6	100.00%
	Total:		157,845.6		157,845.6	

Abstract:
Speleothems (calcareous cave deposits) are among the most useful archives that are utilized to reconstruct past environmental conditions, including palaeotemperature and moisture conditions, on decadal to millennial timescales. High-quality (high-resolution, precisely dated, complete, and robust) regional speleothem-based palaeoclimate records, specifically revealing the past variability of rainfall regimes, is of great importance for human water, and hence for the future estimations pertaining the human-climate-environment relationship. Research suggests that decreases in rainfall-driven water availability during the late Holocene in the Eastern Mediterranean region was one of the main reasons for the decline and/or collapse of some former civilizations (e.g., decline of Ottoman Empire in the preindustrial era, collapse of Uruk society in Mesopotamia during the transition from chalcolithic to the early Bronze Age, societal collapse of the Late Bronze Age). This project will generate an extensive dataset through a multi-proxy approach of isotope and trace element geochemistry using Holocene-aged stalagmites from several cave sites located in western and southwestern Anatolia (Turkey). The main objectives of the proposed action are: (1) to produce precisely-dated (U-series dating) and high temporal resolution paleo-records concerning the Holocene climate dynamics that affected the living patterns of ancient Aegean civilizations (e.g., Classical Greek and Roman), (2) to trace possible impacts of human-induced environmental and atmospheric pollution through a suite of high resolution stalagmite records, including stable isotope and trace element variations (e.g., changes in carbon and sulphur isotope ratios), and (3) to explore whether the speleothems reflect Holocene volcanic activities that occurred in the Aegean region, and if so, to distinguish these effects from anthropogenic activities.

Evaluation Summary Report

Evaluation Result

Total score: 77.60% (Threshold: 70/100.00)

Criterion 1 - Excellence

Score: **4.50** (Threshold: 0/5.00 , Weight: 50.00%)

10 Strengths, No weaknesses

Criterion 2 - Impact

Score: **3.50** (Threshold: 0/5.00 , Weight: 30.00%)

3 Strengths, 3 weaknesses

Criterion 3 - Implementation

Score: **2.90** (Threshold: 0/5.00 , Weight: 20.00%)

2 Strengths, 6 weaknesses

European Commission

MSCA PF Fellowship (2019-2021 @METU)

Second Trial – 2018 MSCA PF Call

MARIE SKLODOWSKA CURIE INDIVIDUAL FELLOWSHIP - Project Review Application Form

TÜBİTAK

1. Call Information

Programme:	H2020
Pillar:	Excellent Science
Theme:	MSCA
Call:	H2020-MSCA-IF
Call Identifier:	H2020-MSCA-IF-2018
Topic:	MSCA-IF-2018
Type of Action:	MSCA-IF-EF-CAR CAR Career Restart panel, MSCA-IF-EF-RI RI Reintegration panel, MSCA-IF-EF-SE Society and Enterprise panel, MSCA-IF-EF-ST Standard EF, MSCA-IF-GF

https://ufukavrupa.org.tr/en/supports/marie-curie-pre-evaluation-support

European Commission

MSCA PF Fellowship (2019-2021 @METU)

Second Trial – 2018 MSCA PF Call

✓ **Try as much as possible and get ESR(s) to revise your proposal in the right direction!**

Proposal Evaluation Form

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Horizon 2020 - Research and Innovation Framework Programme

Evaluation Summary Report

Call: H2020-MSCA-IF-2018
Type of action: MSCA-IF-EF-RI
Proposal number: 842403
Proposal acronym: SPELEOTOLIA
Duration (months): 24
Proposal title: Holocene climate reconstructions from western Anatolia based on speleothem data
Activity: MSCA-IF-EF-RI

N.	Proposer name	Country	Total Cost	%	Grant Requested	%
1	MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY	TR	157,355.52	100.00%	157,355.52	100.00%
	Total:		157,355.52		157,355.52	

Abstract:
Speleothems (calcareous cave deposits) are among the most useful archives that are utilized to reconstruct past environmental conditions, including palaeotemperature and moisture conditions, on decadal to millennial timescales. Highquality (high-resolution, precisely dated, complete, and robust) regional speleothem-based palaeoclimate records, specifically revealing the past variability of rainfall regimes, is of great importance for human water, and hence for the future estimations pertaining the human-climate-environment relationship. Research suggests that decreases in rainfall-driven water availability during the late Holocene in the Eastern Mediterranean region was one of the main reasons for the decline and/or collapse of some former civilizations (e.g., decline of Ottoman Empire in the preindustrial era, collapse of Uruk society in Mesopotamia during the transition from chalcolithic to the early Bronze Age, societal collapse of the Late Bronze Age). This project will generate an extensive dataset through a multi-proxy approach of isotope and trace element geochemistry using Holocene-aged stalagmites from several cave sites located in western and southwestern Anatolia (Turkey). The main objectives of the proposed action are: (1) to produce precisely-dated (U-series dating) and high temporal resolution paleorecords concerning the Holocene climate dynamics that affected the living patterns of ancient Aegean civilizations (e.g., Classical Greek and Roman), (2) to trace possible impacts of human-induced environmental and atmospheric pollution through a suite of high resolution stalagmite records, including stable isotope and trace element variations (e.g., changes in carbon and sulphur isotope ratios), and (3) to explore whether the speleothems reflect Holocene volcanic activities that occurred in the Aegean region, and if so, to distinguish these effects from anthropogenic activities.

Evaluation Summary Report

Evaluation Result

Total score: 96.60% (Threshold: 70/100.00)

https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/842403

Criterion 1 - Excellence

Score: **4.70** (Threshold: 0/5.00 , Weight: 50.00%) — 9 Strengths, 1 mild weakness

Criterion 2 - Impact

Score: **5.00** (Threshold: 0/5.00 , Weight: 30.00%) — 4 Strengths, no weakness

Criterion 3 - Implementation

Score: **4.90** (Threshold: 0/5.00 , Weight: 20.00%) — 6 Strengths, 1 minor weakness

European Commission

MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships 2025

Types of Postdoctoral Fellowship

EUROPEAN vs GLOBAL MSCA-PFs							
	STANDARD DURATION	ELIGIBILITY					
		RESEARCHERS				PARTICIPATING ORGANISATION(S)	
		Doctoral degree	Nationality	Mobility	Research experience	Beneficiary	Outgoing phase host
EUROPEAN POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS (EFs)	12-24 months	In possession of a doctoral degree or having successfully defended their doctoral thesis before the call deadline.	Any	Cannot have resided/carried out their main activity for more than 12 months in the 36 months prior to the call deadline in the country of the country of the Beneficiary (host institution)	Maximum 8 years from the date of award of the (first) doctoral degree (with exceptions)	(Host institution) Legal entity in MS or AC.	-
GLOBAL POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS (GFs)	**24-36 months** • **Outgoing phase:** 12-24 months • **Return phase:** 12 months (mandatory)		Nationals or long-term residents[1] of MS or AC.	Cannot have resided/carried out their main activity for more than 12 months in the 36 months prior to the call deadline in the country of the Associated Partner hosting the outgoing phase		(Return phase host) Legal entity in MS or AC	Legal entity in a non-associated Third Country (letter of Commitment is mandatory)

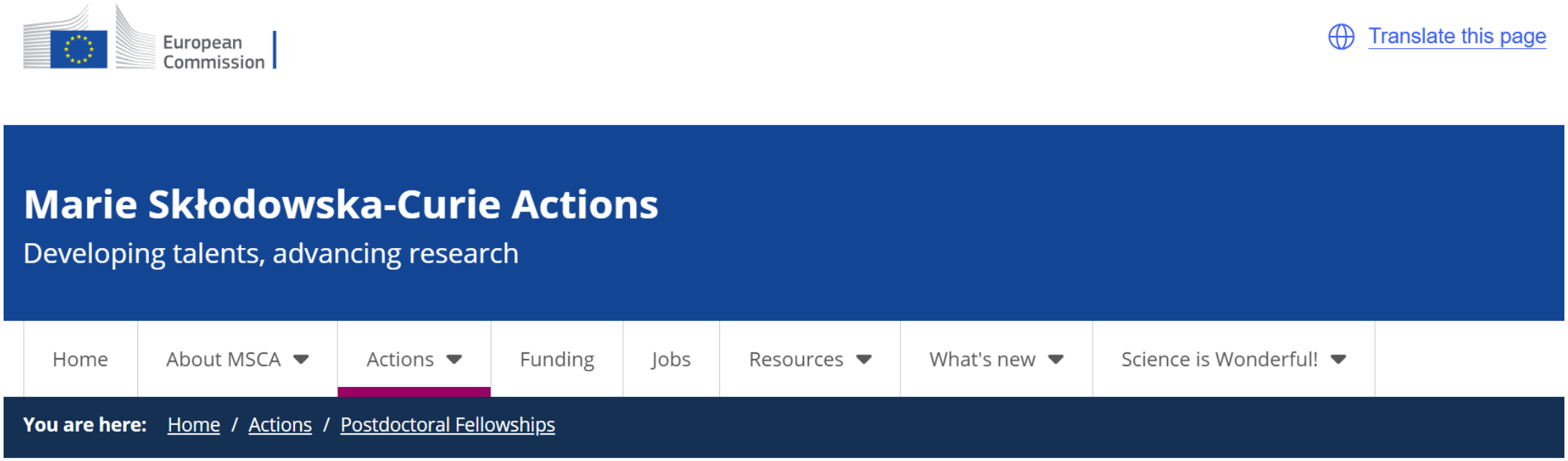
[1] Long-term residence means a period of legal and continuous residence within EU Member States or Horizon Europe associated countries of at least five consecutive years. Periods of absence from the territory of the MS or AC are taken into account for the calculation of this period if they are shorter than six consecutive months and do not exceed in total ten months within this period.

✓ **Select the right panel carefully based on your research keywords!**

- **Information Science & Engineering / Environment and Geosciences**
- **Chemistry / Life Sciences**
- **Social Sciences and Humanities / Economic Sciences**
- **Mathematics & Physics**

https://marie-sklodowska-curie-actions.ec.europa.eu/actions/how-to-apply

MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships 2025



✓ **Read the "Guide for applicants_MSCA PF 2025" very carefully!**
✓ **Call for proposals opens on 8 May 2025**

https://marie-sklodowska-curie-actions.ec.europa.eu/actions/postdoctoral-fellowships

MSCA PF Proposals

The MSCA-PF proposals are composed of two parts, Part A and Part B:

Part A includes administrative information on the beneficiary (host institution), associated partners for a non-academic placement, and for GFs also the associated partner for the outgoing phase.

Part A also contains information on the supervisor and the researcher as well as on ethics and security, and the proposal budget.

✓ **Submit your application through the the Funding and Tenders Opportunities Portal**

Proposal Part B structure and content:

PART B-1:

1 Excellence
2 Impact
3 Quality and Efficiency of the Implementation

10 pages max.

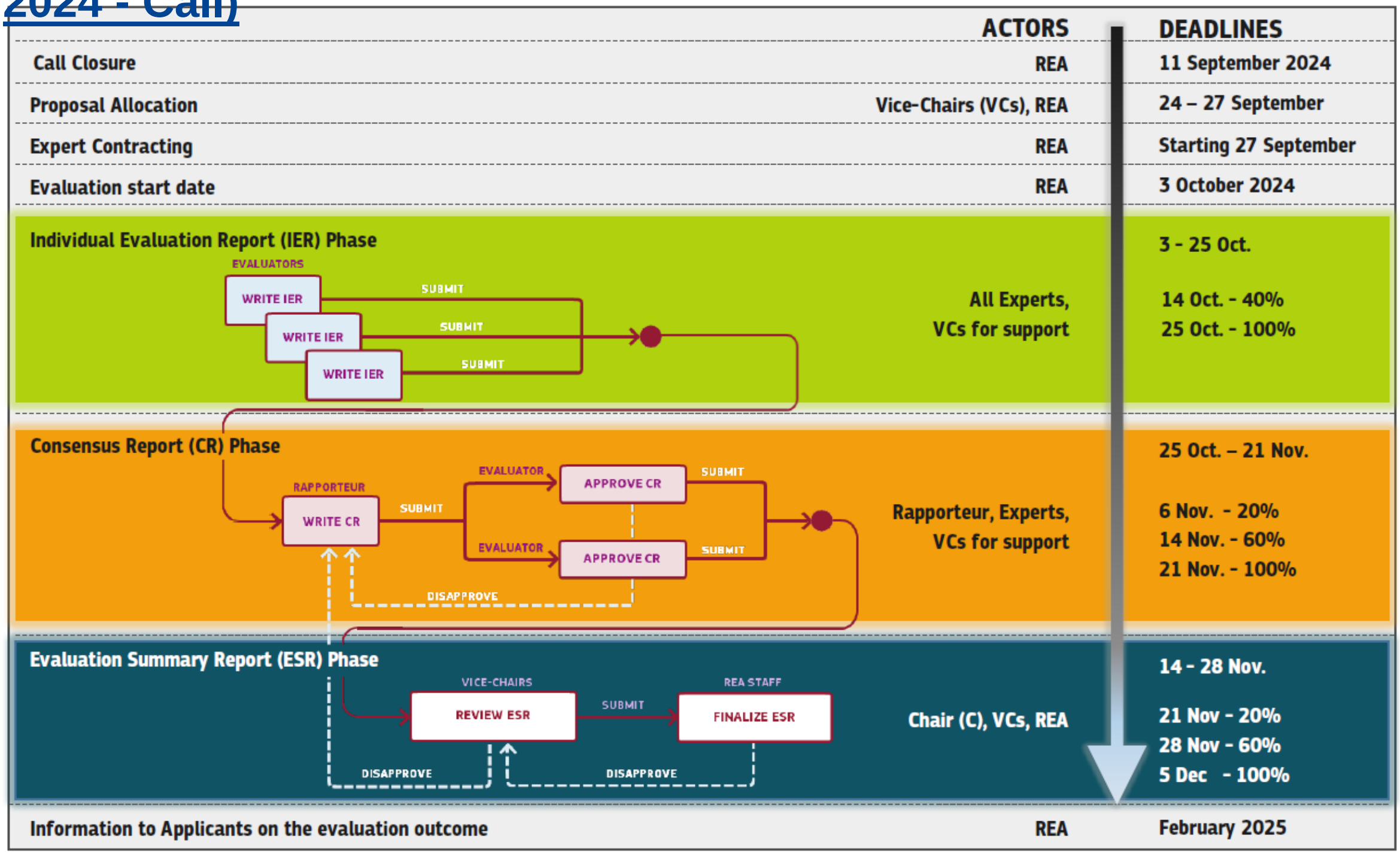
PART B-2 (no page limit):

4 CV of the researcher
5 Capacity of the participating organisation(s)
6 Additional ethics information
7 Additional information on security screening
8 Environmental considerations in light of the MSCA Green Charter
9 Required for Global Fellowships only: Letter of commitment from associated partners (hosting the outgoing phase)

Formatting standards described in **Guide for applicants_MSCA PF 2025**

MSCA PF Proposal Evaluation

Evaluation Process Overview and Deadlines (Previous – 2024 - Call)



IER: Individual Evaluation Report **CR**: Consensus Report **ESR**: Evaluation Summary Report

MSCA PF Proposal Evaluation

THE EVALUATION CRITERIA

1. **Excellence** - weighted 50%

2. **Impact** - weighted 30%

3. **Quality and Efficiency of the Implementation** - weighted 20%

- ✓ Each **criterion** is divided into multiple **sub-criteria**.
- ✓ Each **sub-criterion** is divided in several **assessment points** that are numbered across each criterion to facilitate the evaluation process.

Assessment Grid for Evaluators

POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS 2024 ASSESSMENT GRID		Qualitative assessment (n/a, fail, poor, fair, good, very good, excellent)
CRITERION 1: EXCELLENCE	pending full assessment of criterion 1	
***Sub-criterion 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)**		
1. How are the quality and pertinence of the research and innovation objectives?		make your choice
2. Are the research and innovation objectives realistically achievable, measurable and verifiable?		make your choice
3. To what extent is the proposed work ambitious and goes beyond the current state-of-the-art in the field?		make your choice
***Sub-criterion 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)**		
4. How sound is the proposed methodology, including concepts, models and assumptions that underpin the project? Are important methodological challenges identified and measures to tackle them proposed?		make your choice
5. Is an interdisciplinary approach necessary for the research? If necessary, how will expertise and methods from different disciplines be brought together and integrated to pursue the project's objectives? *If not necessary, please select "not applicable".*		make your choice
6. Are the gender dimension and other diversity aspects relevant for the proposal's research and innovation content? If relevant, how well are they taken into account? *If not relevant, please select "not applicable".*		make your choice
7. How appropriate open science practices are implemented as an integral part of the proposed methodology? *If not relevant, please select "not applicable".*		make your choice
8. Is the use, development and/or deployment of Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems planned in the proposal? If planned, are they technically robust? *If not planned in this proposal, please select "not applicable".*		make your choice
***Sub-criterion 1.3*: QUALITY OF THE SUPERVISION, TRAINING AND OF THE TWO-WAY TRANSFER OF KNOWLEDGE BETWEEN THE RESEARCHER AND THE HOST**		
9. How is the quality of the supervision considering the qualifications and experience of the supervisor(s), their level of experience on the research topic proposed and their track record of work, including main international collaborations, as well as the level of experience in supervising/training especially at advanced level?		make your choice

- ✓ Criteria are assessed (and scored) as a whole, considering all sub-criteria!

MSCA PF Proposal Evaluation

CRITERION 1: EXCELLENCE (5

EXCELLENCE SUB-CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT POINTS
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)	1. quality and pertinence of the research and innovation objectives 2. whether the research and innovation objectives are realistically achievable, measurable and verifiable 3. extent to which the proposed work is ambitious and goes beyond the current state of the art in the field
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)	4. soundness of the methodology, including the concepts, models and assumptions that underpin the project; whether important methodological challenges are identified and measures to tackle them proposed 5. if an interdisciplinary approach is necessary for the proposal: how expertise and methods from different disciplines will be brought together and integrated to pursue the project's objectives 6. if relevant for the proposal: how the gender dimension and other diversity aspects are taken into account in the project's research and innovation content 7. how appropriate open science practices are implemented as an integral part of the proposed methodology 8. technical robustness of artificial intelligence systems if their use, development and/or deployment are planned in the proposal

Open Science practices are not **outreach actions**. Outreach actions are part of the communication, dissemination and exploitation activities in the **'Impact'** (Criterion 2).

MSCA PF Proposal Evaluation

CRITERION 1: EXCELLENCE (50%)

EXCELLENCE SUB-CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT POINTS
1.3 Quality of the supervision, training and of the two-way transfer of knowledge between the researcher and the host	**9.** quality of the supervision considering the qualifications and experience of the supervisor(s), their level of experience on the research topic proposed and their track record of work, including main international collaborations, as well as the level of experience in supervising/training especially at advanced level **10.** quality of the planned training activities for the researcher (scientific aspects, management/ organisation, horizontal and key transferrable skills…) **11.** for European Fellowships: assess the two-way transfer of knowledge between the researcher and host organisation for Global Fellowships: assess the three-way transfer of knowledge between the researcher, host organisation, and associated partner organisation for outgoing phase **12.** if applicable: the rationale and added value of secondment(s) and/or non-academic placement.
1.4 Quality and appropriateness of the researcher's professional experience, competences and skills	**13.** curriculum vitae of the researcher, their professional experience, competences and skills **14.** quality and appropriateness of the researcher's existing professional experience in relation to the research proposal

Scientific supervision is crucial for a successful MSCA-PF.

MSCA PF Proposal Evaluation

CRITERION 2: IMPACT (30%)

IMPACT SUB-CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT POINTS
2.1 Credibility of the measures to enhance the career perspectives and employability of the researcher and contribution to their skills development	1. how credible and appropriate are the presented measures to enhance the researcher's career perspectives and employability inside and /or outside academia 2. how expected skills development contribute to the future career of the researcher
2.2 Suitability and quality of the measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities	3. planned dissemination and exploitation activities, and the target group(s) addressed 4. planned communication and public engagement activities (their objectives, main messages, tools and channels) 5. if relevant, the strategy for the management and protection of intellectual property
2.3 The magnitude and importance of the project's contribution to the expected scientific, societal and economic impacts	6. how the project's results are expected to have scientific, economic/technological and/or societal impacts beyond the immediate scope and duration of the proposal 7. magnitude, importance and credibility of the expected outcomes and impacts as outlined in the proposal

Sub-criterion 1.3 versus 2.1:

- **Sub-criterion 1.3**: quality of the planned training activities *during* the fellowship.
- **Sub-criterion 2.1:** expected impact of the skills acquired during the fellowship on the

MSCA PF Proposal Evaluation

CRITERION 3: Quality and Efficiency of the Implementation (20%)

IMPLEMENTATION SUB-CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT POINTS
3.1 Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages	1. quality and effectiveness of the work plan (including deliverables and milestones) 2. appropriateness of the effort assigned to each work package, including timing and duration 3. whether the mandatory Gantt Chart is included, complete and consistent in relation to the whole work plan (taking into account WPs, scientific deliverables, milestones, secondments and non-academic placement if applicable) 4. research and/or administrative risks that might endanger achievement of the objectives, and the contingency plans proposed should such risks occur
3.2 Quality and capacity of the host institutions and participating organisations, including hosting arrangements	5. quality of the hosting arrangements, including integration in the team/institution and support services available to the researcher 6. quality and capacity of all participating organisations, their infrastructure, logistics and facilities (including hosts for the outgoing phase (in GFs), for secondments and/or non-academic placements – if applicable)

- ✓ Risk mitigation plan should be very clear and suitably linked to the methodology and work plan. *Hint: A summary table of risks/contingency plans would be nice*!

MSCA PF Proposal Evaluation

CRITERION 3: Quality and Efficiency of the Implementation (20%)

- ✓ Evaluation of the consistency of the **Gantt Chart** with the information provided in the text on work packages, deliverables, milestones, secondments and non-academic placement (if there is) is important!

Table 1. The Gantt Chart illustrating the basics of the work plan for the proposed research action

WPs	Delivarables/Milestones	Months of the proposed research action																						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
WP1 - Project management and monitoring	Project management/monitoring																								
	D1. Setting up the project website																								
	D2. Budget plan																								
WP2 - Field work	D3. Collecting the samples/site monitoring																								
WP3 - Labwork 1	D4. Microsampling/sample preperation																								
	M1. Sample shipment																								
WP4 - Interpretation 1																									
WP5 - Labwork 2	D5. High-resolution microsampling																								
	M2. Sample shipment																								
WP6 - Site Check																									
WP7 - Interpretation 2	D6. Microscope work																								
	D7. Final report																								
	M3. Fisrt paper (QSR)																								
	M4. Second paper (open access)																								
Delivarables		D1	D2	D3			D4								D5			D6							D7
Milestones							M1									M2					M3			M4	
Dissemination												Di1	Di2											Di3	
Communication		C1														C2							C3		
Training																									

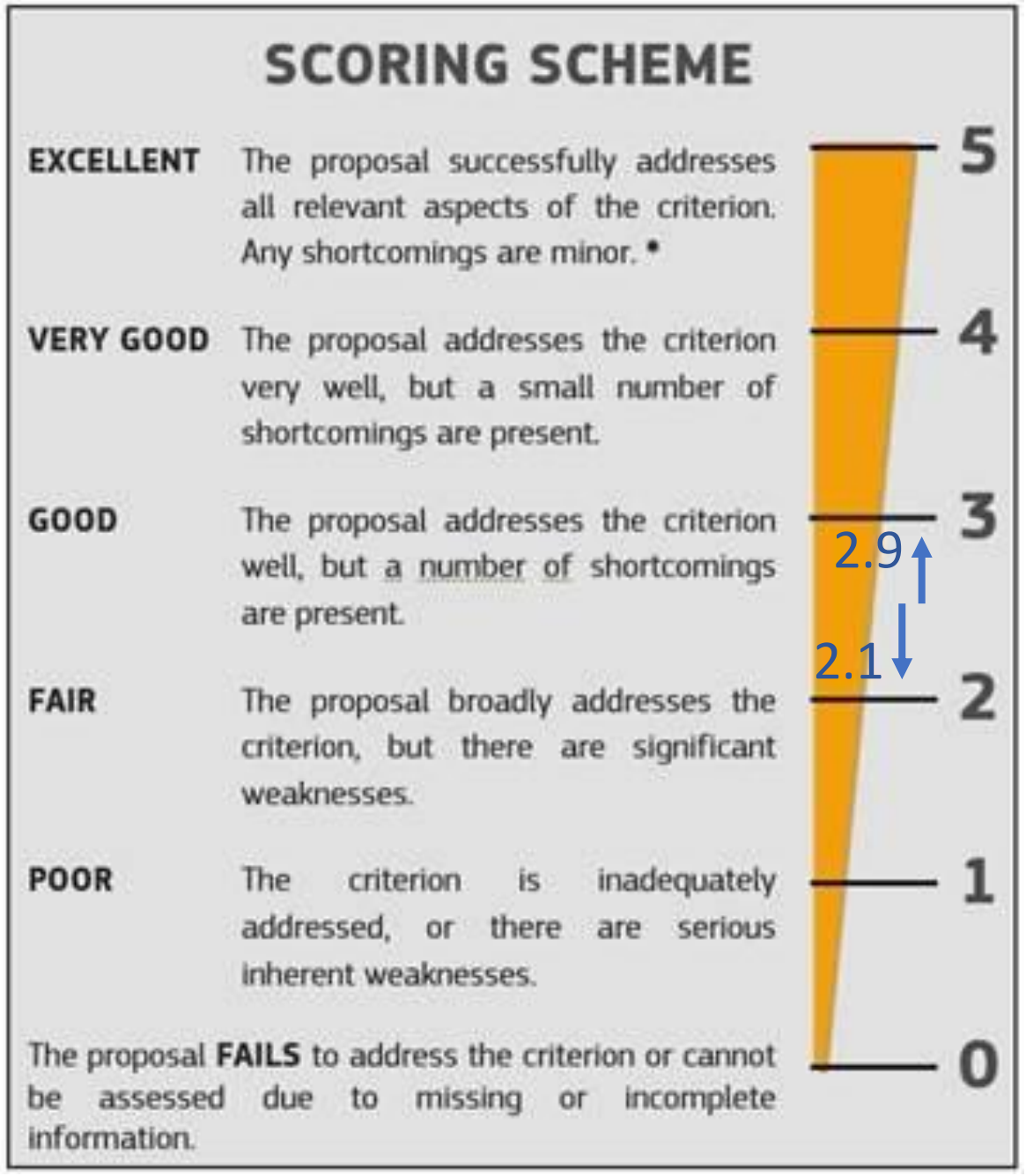
Example from Speleotolia project @ https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/842403

European Commission

MSCA PF Proposal Evaluation

Tips for a Successful Proposal:

- Novel (or ambitious) research trying to go beyond the state of the art successfully
- A very clear description of a gap in the research subject
- If there is, combining with previous work
- Innovative research objectives that are feasible and verifiable in the project's timeline!
- Honesty about possible shortcomings but determination in general approach
- Maximization of the impact!
- Addressing all of the sub-criteria satisfactorily
- Logical linkages between objectives, methodology and work packages.



European Commission

ANY QUESTIONS??

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