
Expert Point of View:
How to write a successful
proposal

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Background

Professor of Electrical and Electronics Engineering
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Education:

- B.Sc. in Electronics and Communications Engr. (ITU)
- M.Sc. in Electronics and Communications Engr. (ITU)
- M.Sc. in Electrical Engineering (Univ. of Notre Dame)
- M.Sc. in Applied Mathematics (Univ. of Notre Dame)
- Ph.D. in Electrical Engineering (Univ. of Notre Dame)

MSCA experience:

- Fellow (2010-present)
- Expert (2013-present) in the ENG and MAT panels (CIGs, IFs, and PFs)



Main actors & their resources



Main actors & their resources

Researchers equipped with

- a brilliant idea!
- a desire to establish a strong research program in Europe



Main actors & their resources



NCP is always with you through

- Call conferences
- Manuals detailing proposal submission
- Proposal templates
- Sample proposals
- Frequently asked questions
- Pre-evaluation support

Main actors & their resources

REA coordinates the whole process and guarantees a fair evaluation of your work!

- Call coordination
- Guides for both applicants and expert evaluators
- Transparent processes for each step of evaluation



Main actors & their resources



Expert evaluators are out to get you :)

They are equipped with

- Expertise in the proposal area
- Have access to high-quality learning materials about the call details
- Have easy access to very experienced Vice-Chairs
- Manual for evaluators
- Assessment grid

Main actors & their resources

MSCA 2025



All bias belongs to ChatGPT; I simply asked for noncute creatures for the expert evaluators :)

Main actors & their resources

Update for
2026!



The Assessment Grid: What about it?

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the title "MSCA-PF GRID v1.0.html" and a "Open with Google Chrome" button. The main heading is "MSCA-POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS: GRID" with the subtext "Guided • Range-based • Informed • Decision-making" and "Your co-pilot for MSCA-PF scoring clarity". A navigation menu includes "Help & Info", "1. Excellence", "2. Impact", "3. Implementation", "Summary of Score Ranges", and "Back to Top". The "1. Excellence" section is active, containing two sub-sections: "1.1 Quality and pertinence of the project's research and innovation objectives" and "1.2 Soundness of the proposed methodology". Each sub-section has three numbered questions with radio button options for "Fail / Insufficiently addressed", "Poor", "Fair", "Good", "Very Good", and "Excellent".

MSCA-POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS: GRID
Guided • Range-based • Informed • Decision-making
Your co-pilot for MSCA-PF scoring clarity

[Help & Info](#) [1. Excellence](#) [2. Impact](#) [3. Implementation](#) [Summary of Score Ranges](#) [Back to Top](#)

Criterion 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)

1. How are the quality and pertinence of the project's research and innovation objectives?
 Fail / Insufficiently addressed Poor Fair Good Very Good Excellent

2. To what extent are the research and innovation objectives achievable, measurable and verifiable?
 Fail / Insufficiently addressed Poor Fair Good Very Good Excellent

3. To what extent is the proposed work ambitious and going beyond the state of the art in the field?
 Fail / Insufficiently addressed Poor Fair Good Very Good Excellent

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 do you assess the soundness of the proposed methodology, including the concepts, models, and assumptions underpinning the project?
 Fail / Insufficiently addressed Poor Fair Good Very Good Excellent

5. To what extent are important methodological challenges identified, and are appropriate measures proposed to tackle them?
 Fail / Insufficiently addressed Poor Fair Good Very Good Excellent

6. How effective are the combination and the integration of expertise and methods from different disciplines to pursue the project's objectives? *If not relevant for this proposal, please select "not applicable".*
 Not Applicable Fail / Insufficiently addressed Poor Fair Good Very Good Excellent

7. How well are the gender dimension and other diversity aspects taken into account in the proposal's research and innovation content? *If not relevant for this proposal, please select "not applicable".*
 Not Applicable Fail / Insufficiently addressed Poor Fair Good Very Good Excellent

Preparing a successful proposal

- ❖ No single trick to achieve this;
Every **researcher/proposal/host** combination is unique
- ❖ Goals have significantly changed over the years!

Preparing a successful proposal

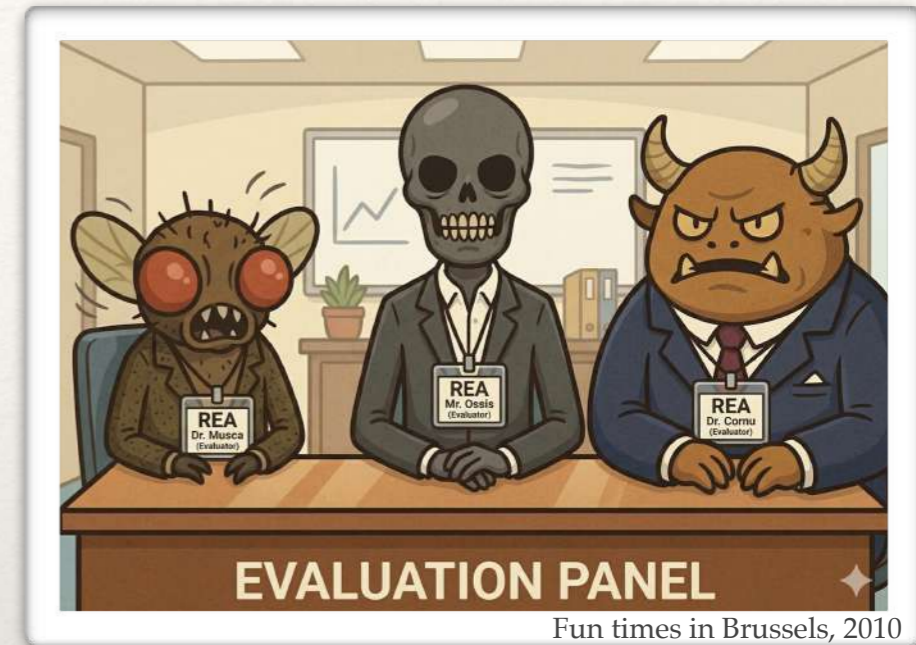
- ❖ Consider the proposal scoring method

- 1. Excellence** - weighted 50%
- 2. Impact** - weighted 30%
- 3. Quality and Efficiency of the Implementation** - weighted 20%

- ❖ Useful information -- if it were 10 years ago!

Preparing a successful proposal

- ❖ Pusane vs. Pusane in 2010 (Özlem's 83.40 vs. Ali's 82.60)
 - ❖ *S&T Quality*: The research methodology consists of a combination of existing methods; **originality should be further clarified.**
 - ❖ *S&T Quality*: The design part of the **methodology is not clearly described.** The channel specification and the corresponding engineering requirements are important factors in this respect.
 - ❖ *Researcher*: The researcher has not yet established an independent research course.
 - ❖ *Researcher*: The applicant's leadership qualities have yet to be clearly established.
 - ❖ *Implementation*: There is **inadequate information supplied on the host's infrastructure and resources.**
 - ❖ *Implementation*: Phase 1 is too long given the researcher's experience on the subject.
 - ❖ *Impact*: The potential of **transfer of knowledge to the host is not adequately described.**
 - ❖ *Impact*: **Contribution to European excellence is not fully convincing.**
- ❖ **I was able to get away with these *major* weaknesses!**



Preparing a successful proposal

The competition pool

- ❖ 8039 proposals in 2023
- ❖ 10360 proposals in 2024
- ❖ 16836 proposals in 2025

Number of eligible proposals	1428 proposals	162 proposals	1560 proposals	966 proposals	1966 proposals	196 proposals	1032 proposals	1912 proposals	60 proposals	15 proposals	109 proposals	107 proposals	143 proposals	10 proposals	110 proposals	436 proposals
Cut off score for funding*	93.6	92.0	94.8	95.2	94.2	91.4	92.0	94.2	95.0	92.0	96.4	95.2	96.0	92.8	95.0	96.0
Score equal to or above	EF-CHE	EF-ECO	EF-ENG	EF-ENV	EF-LIF	EF-MAT	EF-PHY	EF-SOC	GF-CHE	GF-ECO	GF-ENG	GF-ENV	GF-LIF	GF-MAT	GF-PHY	GF-SOC
Number of eligible proposals	2360 proposals	246 proposals	2786 proposals	1703 proposals	3368 proposals	328 proposals	1669 proposals	3208 proposals	67 proposals	15 proposals	129 proposals	111 proposals	193 proposals	16 proposals	107 proposals	530 proposals
Cut off score for funding*	96.4	95.0	96.8	96.8	96.8	97.0	97.0	96.4	97.6	93.4	96.4	97.0	95.8	97.4	97.2	96.0
Score equal to or above	EF-CHE	EF-ECO	EF-ENG	EF-ENV	EF-LIF	EF-MAT	EF-PHY	EF-SOC	GF-CHE	GF-ECO	GF-ENG	GF-ENV	GF-LIF	GF-MAT	GF-PHY	GF-SOC

<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/HORIZON-MSCA-2024-PF-01-01>

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Things to pay attention to

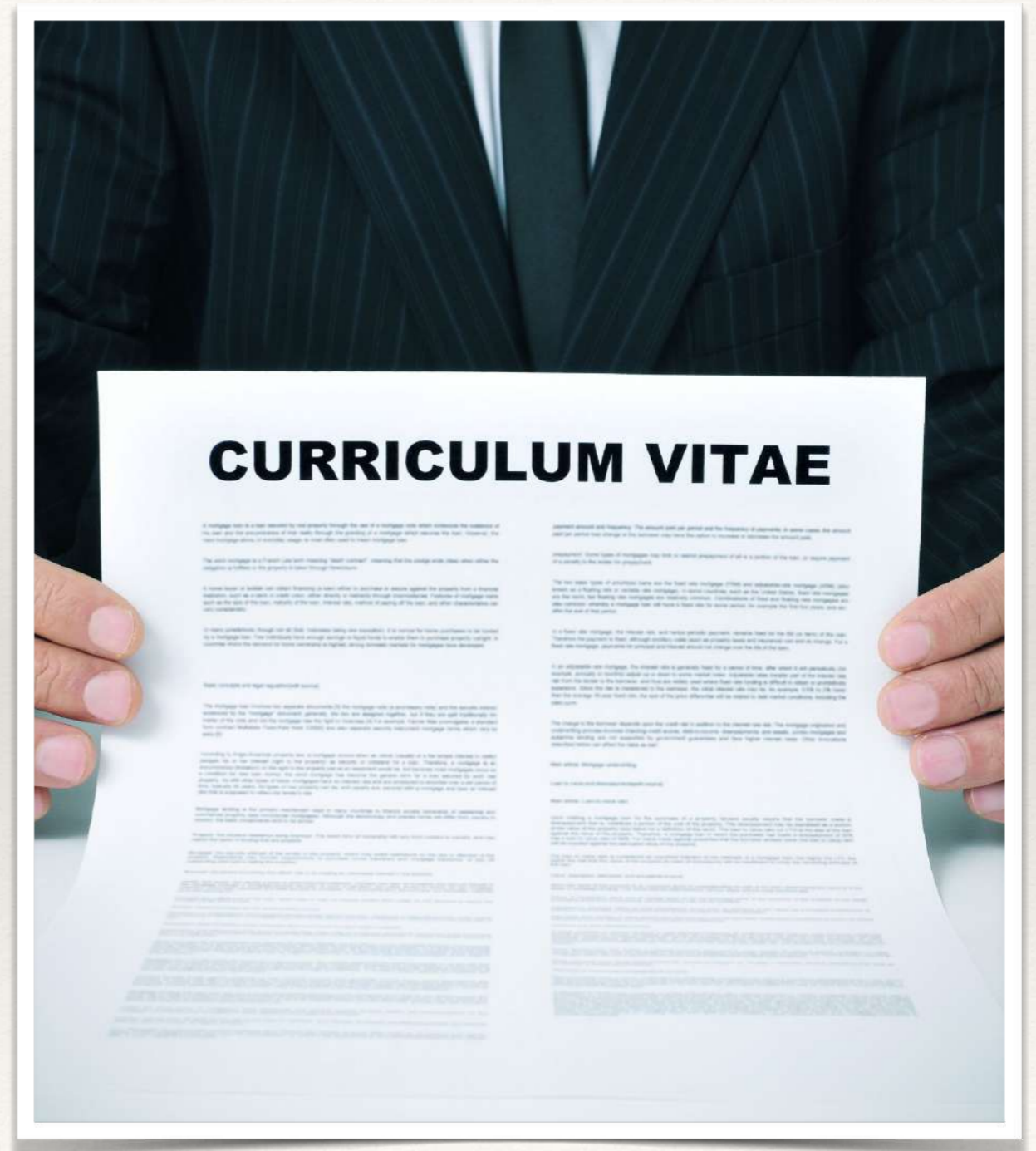
The use of the **Assessment Grid** is highly recommended to ensure that all sub-criteria are covered in the evaluation of a proposal.

Manual for Evaluators

- ❖ *“The evaluators have to assess each sub-criterion.”*
- ❖ The researchers then need to make sure they address these sub-criteria.
- ❖ A common issue in proposals from Turkiye until recently.
- ❖ One quick trick is to use subsection headers for each sub-criterion!

Beginning of the evaluation journey

- ❖ 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*

Although the core of the proposal, do not use all your space on this!
(5.0 in Excellence + lower in other criteria = low overall score)

2. *Impact*

Impact on career perspectives should be clear.
Dissemination / exploitation / communication should be very clear.
Do your best with scientific, societal, economic impact.

3. *Implementation*

There is no reason not to score a 5.0 for this criterion.

Tips for a successful proposal

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):*

1. *How are the quality and pertinence of the project's research and innovation objectives?*
2. *To what extent are the research and innovation objectives achievable, measurable and verifiable?*
3. *To what extent is the proposed work ambitious and going beyond the state of the art in the field?*

- ❖ 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)
 - ❖ SoTA is critical; need to convince the "expert" expert evaluator that you are confident in your knowledge on this domain.

Tips for a successful proposal

1. *Excellence*

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 do you assess the soundness of the proposed methodology, including the concepts, models, and assumptions underpinning the project?*
5. *To what extent are important methodological challenges identified, and are appropriate measures proposed to tackle them?*
6. *How effective are the combination and the integration of expertise and methods from different disciplines to pursue the project's objectives?*
7. *How well are the gender dimension and other diversity aspects taken into account in the proposal's research and innovation content?*
8. *To what extent are appropriate open science practices implemented as an integral part of the proposed methodology?*

- ❖ Methodology should be clearly shown; no place for vagueness or a *figure it out as you go* approach :)
- ❖ Is the proposal interdisciplinary? No problem if it is not, but if it is, it should be clearly discussed how these disciplines will be brought together.
- ❖ Is the gender dimension relevant? No problem if it is not, but you should then demonstrate this.
- ❖ Are open science practices in place? Go beyond open-access publications.

Tips for a successful proposal

1. *Excellence*

1.3 *Quality of the supervision, training, and the two-way transfer of knowledge:*

9. *How is the quality of supervision, considering the qualifications and experience of the supervisor(s), their expertise on the research topic, international collaborations, and experience in supervising/training at an advanced level?*

10. *How is the quality of the planned training activities for the researcher (on scientific aspects, management/organisation, horizontal and key transferable skills, etc.)?*

11. *How effective is the transfer of knowledge between the researcher and the host organisation (for European Fellowships), or among the researcher, the host organisation, and the outgoing phase host (for Global Fellowships)?*

12. *How do you assess the rationale of the non-academic placement and the added value to the proposal?*

13. *How do you assess the rationale of the secondment(s) and the added value to the proposal?*

- ❖ When the proposal template calls for a two-way knowledge transfer, it means it!
 - ❖ We traditionally think of MSCA PF 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 Europe!)

Tips for a successful proposal

1. *Excellence*

1.4 *Quality and appropriateness of the researcher's professional experience, competence, and skills:*

14. *How do you assess the researcher's professional experience, competences, and skills?*

15. *How appropriate is the researcher's existing professional experience in relation to the proposed research project?*

- ❖ Only few get these prestigious fellowships, have to prove (in combination with the CV) that you belong to the select few!
- ❖ You might have an amazing background -- on another field :(

Tips for a successful proposal

2. *Impact*

2.1 *Credibility of the measures to enhance the career perspectives and employability of the researcher and contribution to their skills development:*

16. How credible are the measures to enhance the researcher's career perspectives inside and/or outside academia, including the contribution of the proposed skills development to their employability?

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

Tips for a successful proposal

2. *Impact*

2.2 *Suitability and quality of the measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts (dissemination, exploitation, communication activities):*

17. *How appropriate are the dissemination and exploitation measures, and how effectively do they address the target audiences?*
18. *How appropriate are the planned communication and public engagement activities in terms of their objectives, main messages, tools, and channels?*
19. *How solid is the strategy for the management and protection of intellectual property?*

- ❖ The financial source is the people; they need to know what you are doing with their money!
- ❖ Dissemination, exploitation, communication to the public, IPR, etc.

Tips for a successful proposal

2. *Impact*

2.3 *The magnitude and importance of the project's contribution to the expected scientific, societal and economic impacts:*

20. *To what extent are the results expected to create a scientific impact, beyond the immediate scope and duration of the proposal (e.g., magnitude, importance and credibility of the expected impacts)?*

21. *If, in your judgement, the results are expected to have economical/technological and/or societal impacts, how do you assess their credibility in terms of magnitude and importance, as outlined in the proposal?*

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- ❖ No need to exaggerate. Give a fair evaluation of the expected scientific, societal and economic impact.

Tips for a successful proposal

3. *Implementation*

3.1 *Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages*

3.2 *Quality and capacity of the host institutions and participating organisations, including hosting arrangements*

- ❖ A little bit more mechanical portion of the proposal - keep things on the simple / safe side.
- ❖ Risk management is often overlooked, but is a critical part of this criterion.

Final tips

- ❖ **Sample 1 from 2024 - 94.40**

- ❖ *Impact:* The societal and economic impacts of the proposed research are not sufficiently developed.
- ❖ *Impact:* The magnitude, importance and credibility of the expected impacts are not sufficiently substantiated and they are generic.
- ❖ *Implementation:* The number of deliverables and milestones is not convincing, considering the project's duration. This is considered as a minor shortcoming.
- ❖ *Implementation:* Research and administrative risks are not sufficiently identified in the proposal.

- ❖ **Sample 2 from 2024 - 96.80**

- ❖ *Excellence:* The measurability of some of the research objectives is insufficiently discussed in the proposal.
- ❖ *Excellence:* Not enough details are presented on how open science practices will be implemented.
- ❖ *Impact:* The societal impact of the proposal is overestimated.

Final tips

❖ **Sample 3 from 2025 - 97.00**

- ❖ *Excellence:* The training plan does not include sufficient details on how and when the training activities will be executed.
- ❖ *Impact:* The proposed public engagement activities are generic, insufficiently defining clear objectives, tools, and target audiences.
- ❖ *Impact:* Intellectual property management is not described in sufficient detail and mainly relies on host procedures.
- ❖ *Implementation:* The risk management plan does not give a sufficiently detailed description of how the technical risks will be mitigated. In addition, the plan does not include sufficient information on possible administrative risks.

❖ **Sample 4 from 2025 - 95.40**

- ❖ *Excellence:* The progress beyond the state-of-the-art in WP... is not sufficiently detailed. Key methodological and technical challenges are well identified, while the related measures are less clearly defined. Scientific training lacks focus on specific courses. The researcher's experience in ... is not convincingly demonstrated*.
- ❖ *Impact:* The scientific impact beyond the immediate scope and duration of the project is not sufficiently evidenced by concrete and credible indicators and/or actions.
- ❖ *Impact:* Economical and societal impacts are described in a generic way. Only general-public benefits of ... are briefly enumerated.
- ❖ *Implementation:* The proposal does not consider sufficiently administrative risks.

Good luck!