



Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions

June 2022 | Postdoctoral Fellowships

Drafting tips

MSCA NCP | pcn-mariescurie@recherche.gouv.fr



Evaluation grid, scoring & results 2021

Three criteria - Grid 2022

Excellence	Impact	Quality and efficiency of the 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 maximise 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		
50 %	30 %	20 %

Scoring and threshold

Each criterion is evaluated out of 5 :

0 – Proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.

1 – Poor. The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.

2 – Fair. Proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.

3 – Good. Proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.

4 – Very Good. Proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.

5 – Excellent. Proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

Nota Bene : the total score must reach a minimum threshold score of 70%

Horizon Europe novelty : proposals having received a score less than 70% must not be resubmitted the following year.

PF 2021 - Threshold scores

	European Postdoctoral Fellowships						
Panel	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
CHE	92,8						
ECO	92						
ENG	92,8						
ENV	93,6						
LIF	94,4						
MAT	92,4						
PHY	92,2						
SOC	93,6						

	Global Postdoctoral Fellowships						
Panel	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
CHE	92						
ECO	83,8						
ENG	95						
ENV	95,8						
LIF	95,8						
MAT	92						
PHY	94,2						
SOC	92,8						

Legend :

- Highest threshold score
- Lowest threshold score

PF 2021 - Success rates

European Postdoctoral Fellowships			
Panel	Number of Proposals		
	Evaluated	Retained for Funding	Success Rate
CHE	1062	148	13,94 %
ECO	123	17	13,82 %
ENG	1052	143	13,59 %
ENV	896	123	13,73 %
LIF	1672	230	13,76 %
MAT	163	23	14,11 %
PHY	847	119	14,05 %
SOC	1624	222	13,67 %
Total	7439	1025	13,78 %

Global Postdoctoral Fellowships			
Panel	Number of Proposals		
	Evaluated	Retained for Funding	Success Rate
CHE	65	11	16,92 %
ECO	9	2	22,22 %
ENG	70	11	15,71 %
ENV	119	19	15,97 %
LIF	119	19	15,97 %
MAT	13	2	15,38 %
PHY	69	11	15,94 %
SOC	344	56	16,28 %
Total	808	131	16,21 %

Postdoctoral Fellowships			
Panel	Number of Proposals		
	Evaluated	Retained for Funding	Success Rate
TOTAL	8247	1156	14,02%

More information: [NCP Statistics](#)



Drafting tips for Postdoctoral Fellowships proposal

These tips are based on the analysis of evaluation summary reports from
proposals evaluated under the 2021 call

Criterion 1 : Excellence (1/8)

1. Scientific project

a. Introduction

- Introduce clearly the issues to be solved or dealt with
- Give contextualisation elements connected with the state of the art of the current research and tied into pertinent research objectives and coherent research goals
- Submit a proposal supported by detailed and solid preliminary data and / or built on major previous works

b. State of the art

- Draft a detailed, credible and understandable state of the art
- Highlight limits, deficiencies, weaknesses, gaps, existing needs in the field of research under study
- Demonstrate that it is essential to develop certain aspects in the research field in order to meet current challenges
- Emphasize that this is a topic that has been under-explored or under-exploited to date and that will give the opportunity to address major, still unresolved, questions
- Indicate how the expected progress will go beyond the state of the art significantly

c. Objectives

- Indicate objectives that are : precise and detailed / coherent, appropriate and relevant / ambitious and innovative / realistic, measurable and verifiable. They also result from the state of the art, are integrated into the research activities and answer to the hypothesis
- Express precisely the hypothesis
- Demonstrate that they will allow to go beyond the state of the art
- Describe new achievements, new expected results
- Indicate that the objectives are related to the applicant's previous research work and are credible in terms of the respective expertise of the applicant and the host institution

➔ These three points should make it possible to highlight what has been done so far in the field of research, the remaining challenges and the project objectives to overcome them.

Criterion 1 : Excellence (2/8)

d. A **credible** project (a/b)

- Propose an original, innovative, stimulating, relevant, timely/topical project.
 - innovative aspects must be detailed, sound and contribute to effective applications
- Propose an ambitious but credible and achievable project:
 - clearly identify the period
 - outline the steps, the strategy to be followed in order to carry out the action
 - describe new techniques that make a significant contribution
- Emphasize inter and multidisciplinary aspects :
 - exposure to different scientific approaches via the participating teams
 - collaborations with actors from different disciplines and/or sectors that are relevant to the project
 - wide possibility of multidisciplinary applications
 - significant contribution to the applicant's career
- Indicate the capacity of the project to address critical issues
- Highlighting the capacity to achieve scientific advances in the field, to obtain new results, new knowledge
- Take into account all scientific aspects (methods, procedures, factors, environment)
- Consider the gender dimension and other diversity aspects
- Offer new career opportunities to the applicant

Criterion 1 : Excellence (3/8)

d. A **credible** project (b/b)

- Highlight collaborations created that fit with the needs of the project and are beneficial to the applicant's career.
- Do not neglect possible applications and exploitations (medical, industrial, etc.).
- Indicate the competition, especially when it is a very active field.
- Describe networking opportunities and show how the applicant will be able to interact with these networks (internationally, with both sectors [academic and non-academic], etc.).
 - The objective is to demonstrate and increase the applicant's international visibility.

e. Methodology & approaches

- Describe and detail the methodology and approaches in order to adequately address the different aspects of the proposal.
- Propose innovative and adapted approaches for the project with updated methods
- Propose a methodology based on existing procedures, supported by preliminary results or preparatory work
- Propose a logically structured and solid methodology in order to :
 - cover all the steps necessary to achieve the objectives set
 - take into account all factors
 - use different innovative approaches (analytical, numerical, experimental, multidisciplinary, complementary, etc.).
 - include cutting-edge techniques

Criterion 1 : Excellence (4/8)

f. “Two-way transfer”

- Detail a transfer of knowledge that is meaningful for both the applicant and the beneficiary (added value in both directions) and that will strengthen the proposal and the collaboration
- Emphasize this transfer of knowledge with the beneficiary but also with the associated partner in case of secondment/placement or within the framework of a Global Postdoctoral Fellowship
- Demonstrate the obvious complementarity between the applicant and the laboratory allowing a highly potential transfer
- Describe all skill acquisitions: scientific, technical, transferable, complementary, personal
- Indicate the methods of transfer (training and supervision of doctoral students, advice to laboratory staff, participation in seminars, regular meetings with the laboratory, etc.)
- Underline that this transfer of knowledge will reinforce the applicant's skills and allow them to develop new ones.



Criterion 1 : Excellence (5/8)

g. Open Science practices

- **Warning:**
 - Do not refer to outreach actions. Outreach actions may be planned as part of communication, dissemination and exploitation activities and must be evaluated under “Impact”
 - Experts must not evaluate Open Access to peer reviewed publications. This remains a contractual obligation (as in Horizon 2020) and is mandatory by default
- Forecast a clear, detailed and appropriate data management plan
- Provide the practices to be implemented
- Address Open science aspects in terms of data (management, standardised organisation and sharing) and code (open source and versioning platform)
- Include the Open science principles as an integral part of the methodology
- Ensure the Open science practices by following FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable)
- Indicate appropriate Open Science practices for the field
- Make the results of the project transparent and accessible to the wider scientific and non-scientific communities.

Criterion 1 : Excellence (6/8)

2. The training

- Propose a detailed training plan, with realistic objectives. The training should be :
 - in connection with the research project
 - complementary with the applicant's past experience
 - in line with his career development prospects
 - Innovative (include innovative aspects)
 - Describe all training offered: scientific, transferable, complementary, technical, personal (life skills).
- ➔ Do not forget to describe the training given during a secondment, a placement or the outgoing phase of a Global Postdoctoral fellowship!
- ➔ The training plan allows the applicant to reinforce their skills and develop new ones
- Enable the expansion of career opportunities and prospects
 - Emphasize the **strong complementarity** between the applicant's previous experience and the proposed project:
 - broadening of skills and knowledge
 - better visibility within the scientific community
 - network expansion
 - credible professional development as a mature and independent researcher
 - Distinguish the knowledge, skills and know-how that the applicant will develop in relation to their past expertise.
 - Indicate the planning and format of training courses (seminars, modules, on-the-job training, etc.) as well as the people in charge of this training
 - Indicate if the proposed training courses will be accessible to external persons (Master, Bachelor and PhD students).
 - Propose a career development plan that will be reviewed regularly in order to put in place corrective measures if necessary.

Criterion 1 : Excellence (7/8)

3. The applicant

- Demonstrate the quality of the applicant:
 - quality publications
 - significant achievements
 - international prizes
 - experiences in Europe and internationally
 - teaching and coaching
 - obtaining and managing financing
 - participation in collaborative projects, seminars and conferences → excellent visibility within the scientific community
 - ability to adapt to different cultures and environments (scientific, geographical, industrial, etc.)
 - member of international networks
 - motivated researcher
 - etc.
 - Do not neglect any non-scientific skills that could have a positive impact on the project
 - Ability to show initiative, leadership and recognition in the field
 - Demonstrate the fit between the applicant and the supervisor, the project objectives and the host institution.
 - Demonstrate that the applicant has the capacity to carry out such a project.
 - Highlight the applicant's potential to build a solid CV in order to achieve professional maturity and independence.
- ➔ The new competences and skills acquired during the fellowship added to the previous ones will enable the applicant to reinforce their professional maturity and independence.
- ➔ The applicant's previous career is taken into account during the evaluation

Criterion 1 : Excellence (8/8)

4. The supervisor & the supervision

- Highlight their quality, skills, experience, recognition in the field and their commitment to the project; all in line with the project's objectives.
- Highlight their scientific network and collaborations
- Indicate whether he or she has experience of European projects.
- Demonstrate their ability to train and mentor researchers (young and experienced, MSCA laureates)

➔ Do not forget the supervisor during the secondment, the placement (if applicable) or the outgoing phase of the Global Postdoctoral fellowship!

Criterion 2 : Impact (1/6)

1. Career plan

- Acquire, diversify and consolidate scientific, technical (leading-edge, experimental, etc.), transferable, complementary and personal skills (e.g. proposal drafting, project management, teaching, coaching, leadership, conference or workshop organization, industrial application)
- Demonstrate that the applicant's past experience + the experience gained during the fellowship provides a winning combination for the applicant's future career.
- Offer new career opportunities and maximize employability, competitiveness
- Provide the opportunity to work in a multidisciplinary and stimulating environment
- Achieve an independent research position (team building, funding, permanent position)
- Enlarge the applicant's networks (national, European, international), collaborations and cooperation in order to obtain a better visibility.
- Benefit from inter-sectoral exposure
- Take advantage of an emerging research area or laboratory: allow the applicant to contribute to advances in the field or in the infrastructure.
- Define a credible career plan

➔ Demonstrate that the grant will raise the profile of the researcher and thus have a positive impact on his or her future career.

Criterion 2 : Impact (2/6)

Communication , dissemination and exploitation : definitions

- Exploitation : further use of the project results by you and your host institution (both commercial and for research, education etc.)
- Dissemination : transmission of the project results to the end users outside of the project (both academia and industry)
- Communication : bring the research to the attention of the society, show its impact on our daily lives.

You should propose targeted draft plans for dissemination and for communication.

Ask dedicated support services of your Host Institution for help!

Criterion 2 : Impact (3/6)

2. Communication and dissemination of results

- **Describe communication and dissemination measures**
- **Detailing an original, solid and realistic strategy**
- **Integrate actions accurately into the Gantt Chart**
- **Undertaking activities:**
 - at different scales: local, regional, national, etc.
 - in different terms: short, medium, long
 - through different channels: newspapers, books, newsletters, radio, institutional website, scientific portals, conferences, workshops in schools, courses, competitions, exhibitions, video animations, video games, applications, artistic visualizations, experimental platform, social networks, public software sharing, open days, festivals, Marie S. Curie ambassador, interaction with other European projects, secondments, etc.
 - adapted to take into account all audiences: general public, students, patient associations, clinicians, industry, policy makers, NGOs, targeted audiences (e.g. age, geographical area, women, tourists), etc.
- **Emphasize public involvement and mobilization through these specific actions ("*public engagement*")**
- **Indicate the applicant's personal involvement in these dissemination, public awareness and outreach activities.**
- **Use the applicant's past experience for this type of activity** (e.g. communication expert through participation in numerous seminars and conferences, freelance journalist, collaboration with radio, training in communication and dissemination of results, etc.).
- **Build on the existing skills and services of the institute** (e.g. public relations department, experience of the beneficiary in communicating with non-specialists, etc.).

Criterion 2 : Impact (4/6)

3. Exploitation & Intellectual Property

- Think about an exhaustive, realistic and achievable operating strategy
- Describe the measures for results' exploitation
- Describe the business approach (if applicable)
- Include the results' exploitation in the Gantt Chart
- Ensure a strategy for technology transfer
- Describe intellectual property issues
- Do not neglect the management, protection, exploitation and commercialization of this intellectual property.
- Rely on the experience of the applicant, the supervisor and the laboratory
- Rely on the services of the host institution (dedicated service)

Criterion 2 : Impact (5/6)

4. Benefits

- Highlight the impact on the researcher's career: what new doors the project will open to the applicant ?
- Show the impact on the research theme (direct and longer term), the scientific community and European society.
- Do not forget the impact on the actors potentially concerned by this research (e.g. hospitals, non-academic sector, etc.).
- Choosing the right strategy to maximise the contribution of the grant to scientific excellence and European competitiveness
- Creating a long-term synergy between European laboratories
- Demonstrate the benefits to the host institution through the applicant's knowledge and expertise
- Highlighting the benefits of "secondment".
- Thinking about potential business value
- Demonstrate the importance of involving industrial partners



Criterion 2 : Impact (6/6)

5. Magnitude and importance

- A list of **relevant** and **realistic** impacts
- Well define and describe the scientific, societal and economic impact of your project and the link with your expected impacts. Examples:
 - It has the potential to reveal novel connections between diverse areas of research
 - Contribution to Un Sustainable Development goals and EU Green Deal
 - Impact to the Horizon Europe's key Strategic Orientations
- Credible measure the scientific, societal and economic impact (and describe)
- Explain the impact during and after the end of the project (and more if possible)
- Relevant stakeholders in the activities
- Global Postdoctoral Fellowships: Explain the impact during the first phase and the return phase

Criterion 3 : Implementation (1/6)

1. Work plan

- Draft a structured, feasible, credible and flexible work plan
- Propose a work plan that is coherent with the project's objectives
- Link it to the personal career development plan of the applicant
- (if applicable) Think of a logical chronology: from basic research to market launch

2. Tasks (Work packages - WP) (a/b)

- Describe each task (WP) in order to effectively justify the time and resources allocated, both scientific and non-scientific WPs
- Articulate the different tasks in an appropriate and efficient manner
- ➔ Do not neglect the Gantt Chart:
 - proposing an appropriate timetable for the completion of the various tasks and showing the progress made in their completion
 - all activities must appear with the allocated duration: scientific tasks, training, dissemination, communication, management, secondments, etc.
- Indicate the interactions between the different tasks (WPs): possibly with a Pert Chart
- Establish a realistic time schedule
- Propose an adequate allocation of tasks and resources :
 - based on the resources available at the host institution, associated partner, collaborators within the laboratory network
 - based on the applicant's previous experience
 - help from an engineering assistant, a student (master, doctoral student) to carry out specific points of the project within the allotted time of the grant

Criterion 3 : Implementation (2/6)

2. Tasks (Work packages - WP) (b/b)

- Indicate the person/month allocation per WP
- Do not underestimate the time that certain activities may take (experimental applications, need to acquire a skill beforehand, secondments, publication, translation of a book, data analysis, etc.).
- Do not forget a "non-technical" WP in order to follow "non-technical" activities such as training, communication and dissemination as well as management
- Highlight the applicant's contribution and involvement in research and training activities

3. Milestones & Deliverables

- Describe the steps and objectives in a detailed, organized, realistic manner that meets the expectations of the project.
- Include them in the Gantt Chart
- Indicate a sufficient number of intermediate targets to :
 - monitor and evaluate the progress of the project
 - allow for corrective measures to be taken when problems arise

➔ If the work packages, milestones and deliverables form a logical chain, this will ensure a credible and coherent work plan and a successful implementation of the project.

Criterion 3 : Implementation (3/6)

4. Risks

- Assess and describe the risks that could harm the projects (scientific and management). Do not omit the risks related to the current pandemic
- Provide for mitigation measures or even plans B (proof of the applicant's scientific maturity)

5. Monitoring process

- Indicate the regular monitoring of the project and of the researcher's career development by the supervisor(s) (beneficiary organisation, partner, secondment): meetings, reports, interviews, e-mails, indicators, etc.
 - ➔ Do not forget the frequency as well as the modalities of these meetings. Pay attention to secondments and placements!
- Show the experience of the supervisor(s) in terms of project monitoring
- Demonstrate the interaction between the researcher, the research team and the applicant in order to move the project forward, discuss progress and difficulties encountered, etc., and to ensure optimal development of the project

Criterion 3 : Implementation (4/6)

6. Host lab & Host institution (Global Postdoctoral Fellowships, secondment, placement)

- Describe the infrastructure, equipment and advanced technologies made available to the researcher and, if possible, the exclusivity of these devices
- Indicate that you have taken action to guarantee your access to these equipment and infrastructure
- Emphasize that all these measures are in line with the objectives and guarantee the realization of the project.
- Emphasize the quality of the scientific environment: scientific and experimental expertise, collaborations, networks, international recognition, multidisciplinary activity, culture of excellence, human resources, etc.
- Support the complementarity between the different participants (beneficiary, associated partner, applicant)

7. Host institution & associated partner (Global Postdoctoral Fellowships, secondment, placement)

- Highlight the skills, experience, quality and complementarity with the applicant's activities and project objectives (contribution to the success of the project)
- Demonstrate credible commitment, real contribution to the project and effective support for the applicant's research and training activities.
- Highlight the experience in hosting researchers and all the administrative mechanisms to support them.
- Highlight experience in managing MSCA contracts and other European funding
- Highlight interactions with specific audiences (patient associations, pharmaceutical groups, farmers, clinicians, etc.).

Criterion 3 : Implementation (5/6)

8. Secondment & placement

- Demonstrate added value and relevance to the project
- Allow the development of additional skills and multidisciplinary aspects
- Emphasize that the partner organization has a research infrastructure :
 - quality, with state-of-the-art equipment and facilities
 - necessary for the implementation of the project activities
- Indicate the commitment of the associated partner
- Demonstrate that the duration and period of time dedicated to the secondment/placement is relevant and timely.

9. Financial and administrative management of the project

- Highlight the quality infrastructure available for credible and appropriate project management
- Describe the practical and administrative arrangements for the implementation of the project.
- Describe the financial management of the project
- Highlight the services made available to the researcher for effective management (e.g. research transfer service, intellectual property, editing, HR, finance, etc.).
- Indicate the applicant's involvement in these activities and draw on his or her skills if possible

Criterion 3 : Implementation (6/6)

10. Hosting arrangements (including the integration of the researcher)

- Demonstrate the facilities to ensure a smooth start to the project, optimal integration of the researcher and excellent working conditions:
 - administrative support in welcoming researchers
 - integration in the different fields of expertise and disciplines
 - creation of synergy between team members and the emergence of an independent researcher
 - cooperation with experienced researchers
 - events to promote social and professional relationships among the members of the institution
 - adjustments in line with the Charter and the Code
 - existing collaborations between the applicant and the laboratory (beneficiary or partner)
 - advice on resuming a research career after an interruption
 - work-life flexibility

➔ **Nota Bene : Do not forget the institutions hosting the secondments, the placements and the outgoing phases of the Global Postdoctoral Fellowships!**