



# How I wrote MSCA grant

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18.09.2024

# Why to write a grant proposal

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- Own money means more freedom!
  - More time on your research.
  - Higher value for the institution
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  - Higher value for the institution
- Improve your CV
- Input from others in the audience:
  - Naturally make time for you to sort your ideas
  - You show to your boss you are independent

# Find the topic of the MSCA grant proposal

Interplay between you and the host institution

YOU:

- you learnt some new expertise abroad
- the expertise is missing here so you can bring it home

HOST:

- you have a novel idea which your host is the best place to perform

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**Ask every institution! You are potentially bringing money = you are interesting!**

# Plan the timeline well

- Check the deadline for grant submission well ahead
  - Evaluation of the proposal takes ~5 months
  - Starting date could be several months after receiving the grant.
  - You need few months to prepare it (when you really start from scratch).
- ➡ Get all info **18 months** before you want to start using it!

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- Real example how you can blow up
  - I want to start in August 2025, but GAČR deadline was 3rd April 2024



# Collect all info and documents

- Visit the call webpage <https://marie-sklodowska-curie-actions.ec.europa.eu/>
  - Read everything, it is not only for postdocs trying to get home.
- Step-by-step instructions [here](#)
  - Full of resources, check all of them!
    - sometimes, filtering is needed
- Ask someone who (ideally successfully) wrote the proposal for an inspiration
  - I can share mine after I get rating (better for you)
- Visit a workshop on How-to (i.e. [here](#))
- Host institution may have a dedicated office (good recommendation on FZU office)

# Filling the documents - part A

- Administrative part, filled online (a bit tricky to find in the F&T portal)
- In advance prepare:
  - acronym (one word, 20 characters) - easy to remember **SUBFERMIGLUONS**
  - title (200 characters) - striking with the main message  
**Scanning the changing gluonic shape of the nucleus with sub-femtometre precision**
  - abstract (2000 characters) - its new, its challenging, its understandable
  - Keywords (3 from the list + 2 free)
    - The list: Particles, Particle Physics, Nuclear Physics
    - Free: Gluon saturation, small Bjorken-x

# Filling the documents - part B

- Narrative part, prepare in advance for submission in pdf
- Use template rtf documents in the F&T portal of the corresponding call ([this year here](#))
- The template comes with some minimum instructions how to fill it
- Two parts, B1 and B2
  - B1 is about the project, it is page limited, has specific formatting
  - B2 is about you and your host institution, no limits required

# Filling the documents - part B1 - Excellence

- 1.1: Quality and pertinence of the project's research and innovation objectives
  - The key part!
  - Here, you describe your novel idea/what you want to do
  - You must show it is **STATE-OF-THE-ART** and it goes beyond
  - You must show it is a **CHALLENGE** but still **DOABLE**
  - Pay extra attention to the **FIRST 2 PAGES**
    - That's when the reviewers decide if they like it or not
  - Here you may add Why **YOU** want to do it and Why **NOW**

# Filling the documents - part B1 - Excellence

- 1.2: Soundness of the proposed methodology
  - Describe how you want to (This may partially overlap with 1.1)
  - Mention Interdisciplinarity - How do you connect different methods/disciplines
  - Gender dimension and other diversity aspects ([some info](#))
    - About the content of the work, not the team!
  - Do you use AI in your research? Mention it extra here.
  - Open Science and Research Data management ([some info](#))
    - Blame someone else, i.e. your host institution

# Filling the documents - part B1 - Excellence

- 1.3: Quality of the supervision, training and of the two-way transfer of knowledge between the researcher and the host
  - Few lines about the achievements of your supervisor
    - work experience, collaborations, number of lead student theses and postdocs...
  - How you will be trained
    - specifically write what and how will you learn
  - Transfers researcher-host
    - clearly state what you bring to the host and what you need from the host!

# Filling the documents - part B1 - Excellence

- 1.4: Quality and appropriateness of the researcher's professional experience, competences and skills
  - Here, you are selling **yourself**
    - in few lines describe your professional path from the beginning to today so the reviewer understand at what point of your career you stand
    - reviewer must have impression you are at the right position for the grant
    - difficult to balance between being humble and superman

# Filling the documents - part B1 - Impact

- 2.1: Credibility of the measures to enhance the career perspectives and employability of the researcher and contribution to his/her skills development
  - Applies for both, scientific sector and private sector
    - Leading a complex analysis, international collaboration, operation of expensive equipment
- 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
  - How you want to communicate results of the project
    - Mention specific peer-reviewed journals as well as arXiv, conferences, outreach...



# Filling the documents - part B1 - Impact

- 2.3: The magnitude and importance of the project's contribution to the expected scientific, societal and economic impacts
  - Scientific
    - Is the field highly interested in your work?
  - Technology
    - New detector? New measurement method?
  - Not all of it is applicable (i.e. you cannot sell your research)

# Filling the documents - part B1 - Implementation

- 3.1: Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages
  - Tables and charts about the plan, get inspiration from other applications and adjust
- 3.2: Quality and capacity of the host institutions and participating organisations, including hosting arrangements
  - Mention what your host institution brings you at different levels, i.e.
    - Country - Czechia contributes to ALICE grid
    - University - CTU has bodies to support and develop researchers
    - Department - In house experience in the field for discussions and quick help

# Filling the documents - part B2 - CV

- Use as much of space as you want
- Scientific CV is required
  - All your thesis and education, internships, courses
  - Mention your papers, proceedings, conference talks (stress out plenary and invited)
  - Leadership (convenership, collaboration, conference organization, paper reviewing)
- Mention Prizes and awards high
- Mention your outreach
- There are more items in part B2, but are quite straightforward...

# Usage of AI when filling in the documents?

- It is not forbidden, but it must be mentioned what tools you used and how
- I only used AI to find my mistakes in usage of articles (my Nemesis)
- My opinion: AI is great to speed up your work, but never use it blindly.
  - Have some experience with it before you use it for grant proposals

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- Input from others in the audience:
  - Process of (re)writing is important to sort your own mind and hence improve the project
    - usage of AI to rewrite for you will lead to loss of your personal improvement process
  - Reviewers can recognize when you do not speak with your voice - stay personalized
    - Clarity comes from your good understanding of the project, not the language
- Use AI as a mirror - discuss with it and learn from its output

# Statistics for Horizon Europe MSCA

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<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/horizon-dashboard>

- Very high success rate
  - Even in Czechia
  - Against my observation (0 out of 4)
- When you score over 70%, you can resubmit to <https://opjak.cz/>
- When filling form A:

4. Do you wish to participate to the ERA Postdoctoral Fellowships and thus increase your chances of being funded?

Yes  No