HORIZON EUROPE: A ROOM FOR EXCELLENCE
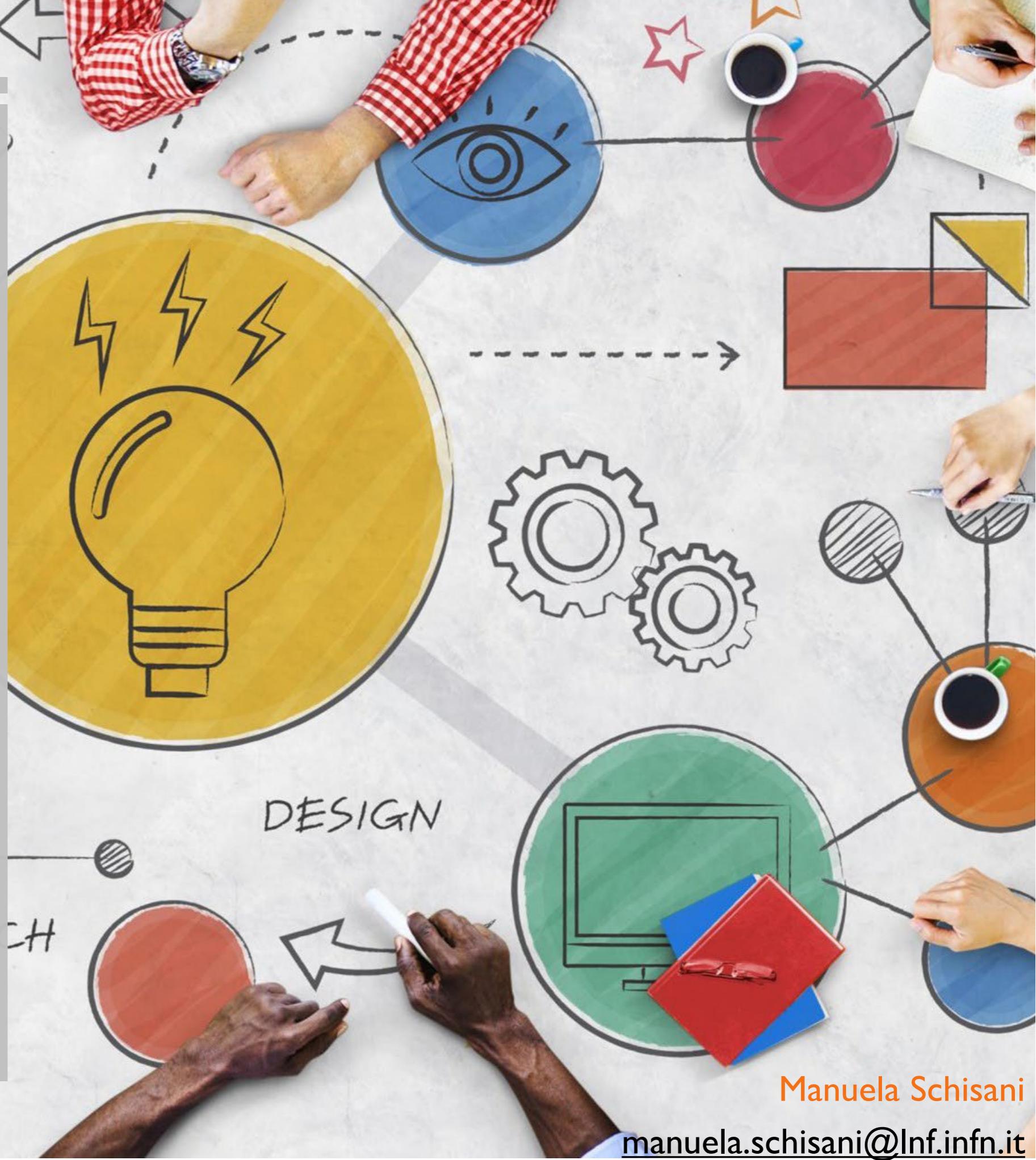
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OUTLINE

- Lesson1- ORIENTATION

- **Lesson 2 - Principles of EU Projects Planning and Development**

WHAT IS A PROJECT?

A project is a temporary endeavor undertaken to deliver a unique result, product or service.

- **Temporary:** it has a defined beginning and end in time, and therefore defined scope and limited resources.

- **Unique:** it means that the product or service is different in some distinguishing way from all similar products or services.

It is not a routine operation, but a specific set of operations designed to accomplish a singular goal. It creates something that did not exist before the project started.
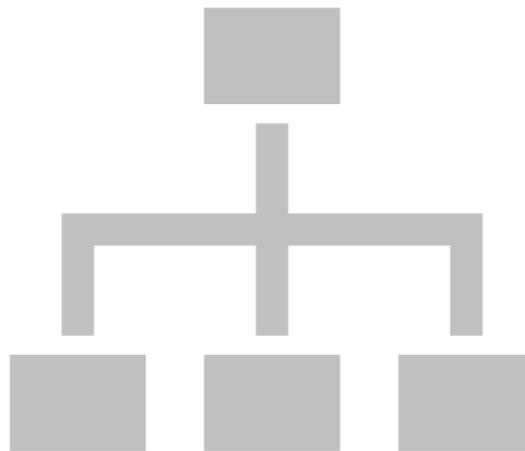
APPROACHING PROPOSAL PREPARATION

- It's not just putting fingers on a keyboard…

- A careful planning is required

PROJECT PLANNING

■**Planning is not only referred to the project content**

■You have to carefully plan the project writing process

■Prepare your personal plan and define delivery dates and outputs

■Set your milestones

PROJECT PLANNING

There are two indispensable tools to do that:

- Calendar

- Clock

PROJECT PLANNING

There are two indispensable steps before writing:

- Collect Info

- Analyse the call

STEP 1

COLLECTING INFO

WHY?

- Understand and analyse the context

- Have a wider perspective

- Know competitors & "ancestors"

- Identify hot topics

- Find your position
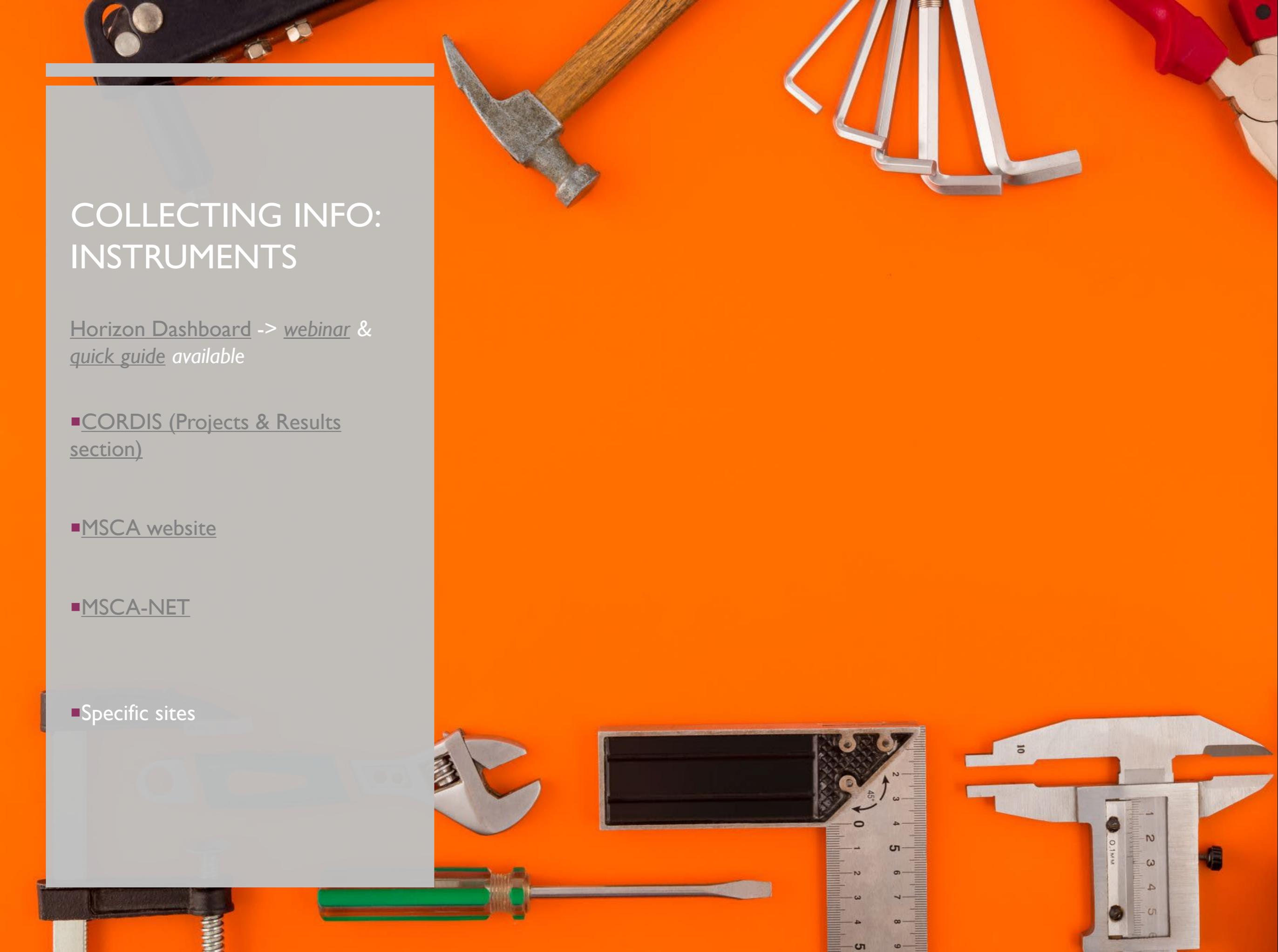
COLLECTING INFO: INSTRUMENTS

Horizon Dashboard -> *webinar* & *quick guide* available

- CORDIS (Projects & Results section)

- MSCA website

- MSCA-NET

- Specific sites

SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

- forms.asrt.sci.eg/msca2022/Default.aspx

**MSCA–NET**
Self Assessment tool
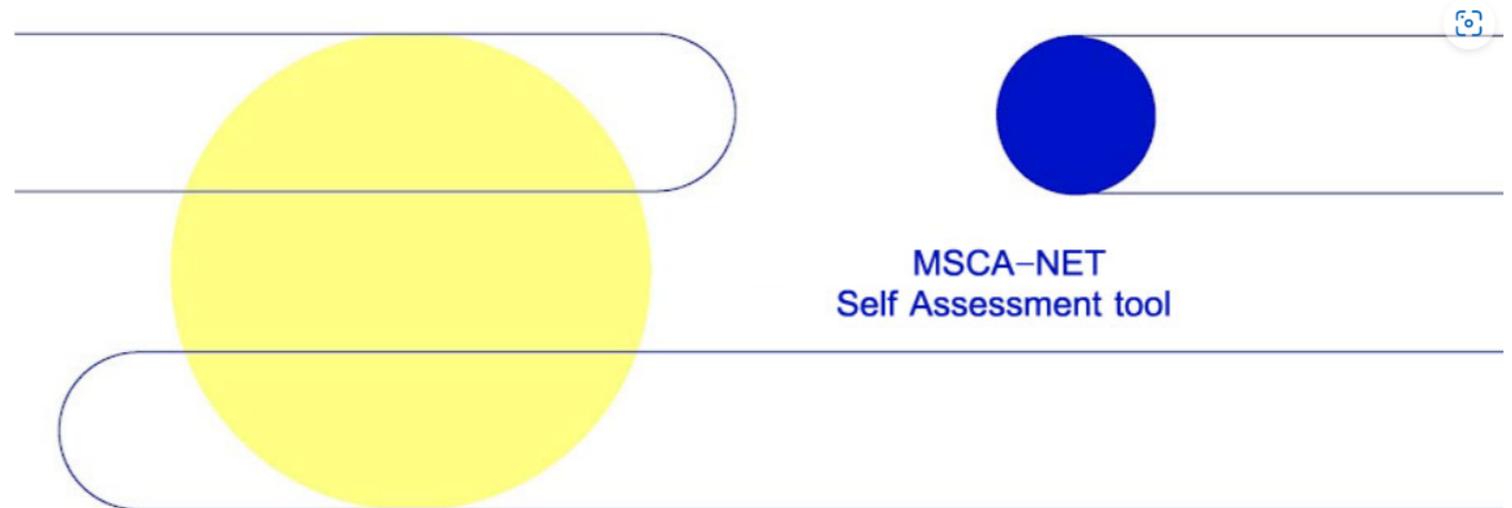
Welcome to the MSCA self-assessment tool! The self-assessment tool is meant to assess your knowledge of the MSCA by quizzing you playfully with randomly selected questions. Every time you play again, you'll be asked new questions. After answering all questions, click the «submit» button to receive your score. Corrections, links to resources, useful tips and hints will be provided once you click the submit button. This will contribute to preparing a competitive proposal. The timer will start when you click the "Next" button. Good luck and have fun!

STEP II

CALL ANALYSIS

WHAT?

- **Situation:** Call for proposal/Call for Tender/Prize

- **Principles:** Funding principles/ Mission & Vision/ History

- **Rules & Requirements:** Deadlines/ Platforms; eligibility criteria

- **Key elements, Goals & Expectations:** Role/ Impact/ Specific outputs

- **Documents:** Forms to be filled/ Documents to be provided

- **Processes:** Submission and evaluation steps; resubmission restrictions

- **Audience:** Scientific/ Technical/ Managerial/ Administrative; Generalist/ Expert; Human/ Non –human

- **Competitors/Ancestors:** Statistics/ success stories/ direct contacts
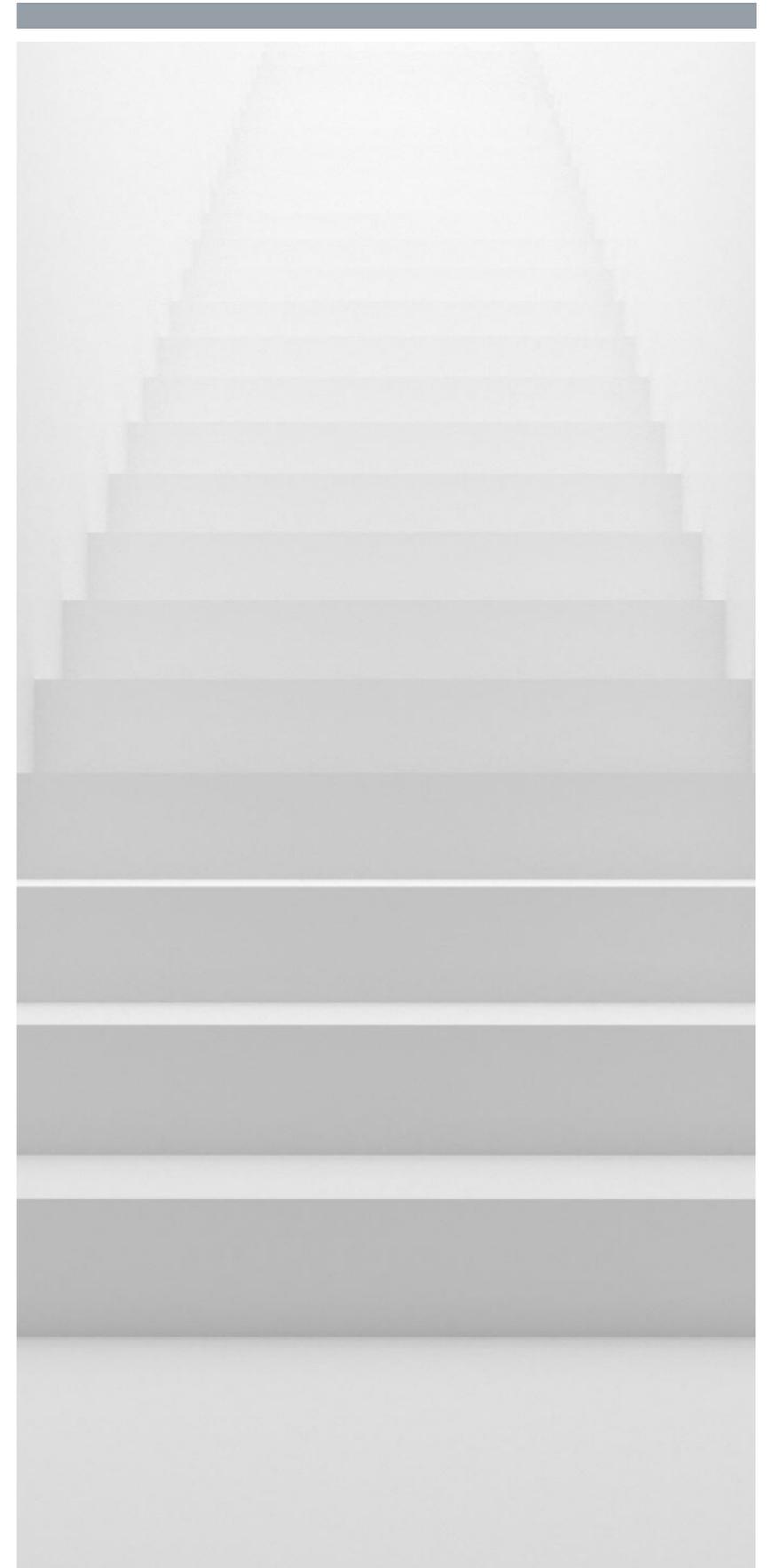
STATISTICS

Submitted eligible proposals in total (6909 in number)

- EUROPEAN POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS (EF): 6233
- GLOBAL POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS (GF): 676

MSCA – PF 2022

Submitted eligible EF Proposals by panels (6233 in total)
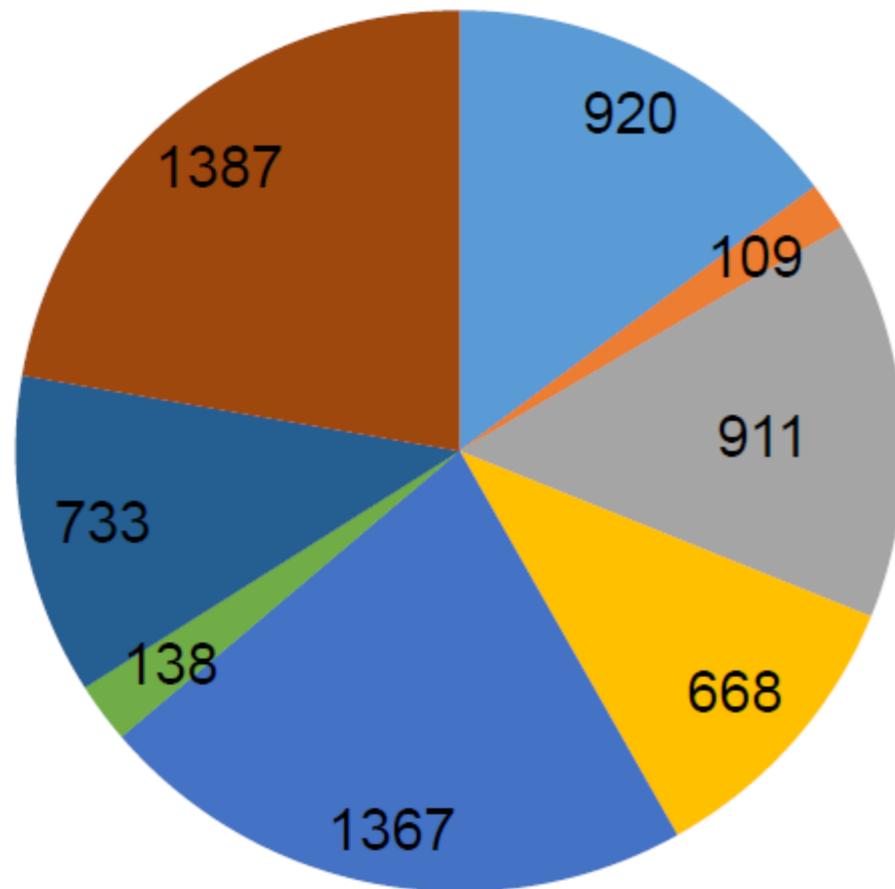
920 — CHE
109 — ECO
911 — ENG
668 — ENV
1367 — LIF
138 — MAT
733 — PHY
1387 — SOC

MSCA – PF 2022

Submitted eligible GF Proposals by panels (676 in total)
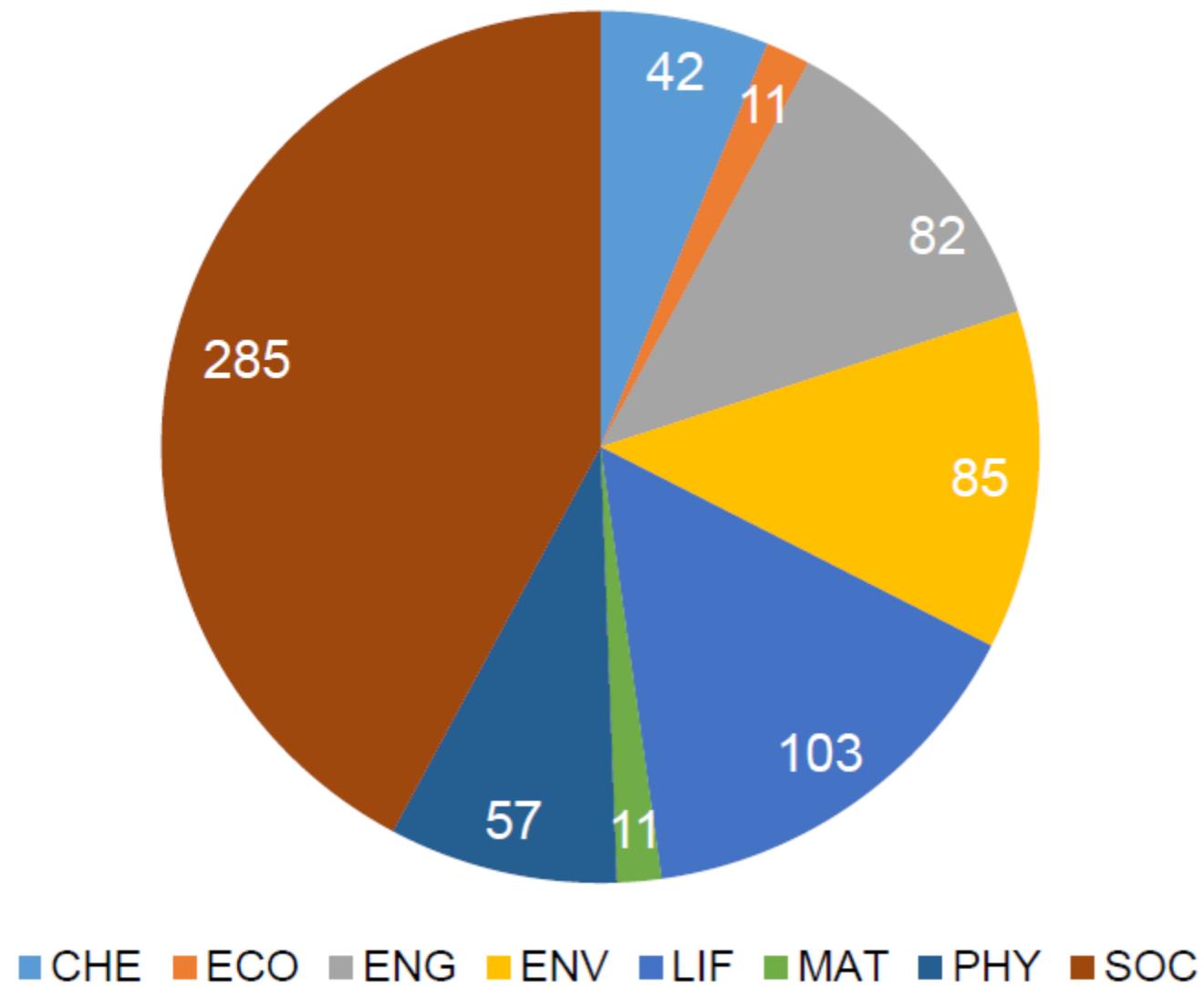
MSCA – PF 2022

Submitted-Funded Participants
(for all 7986 participants)
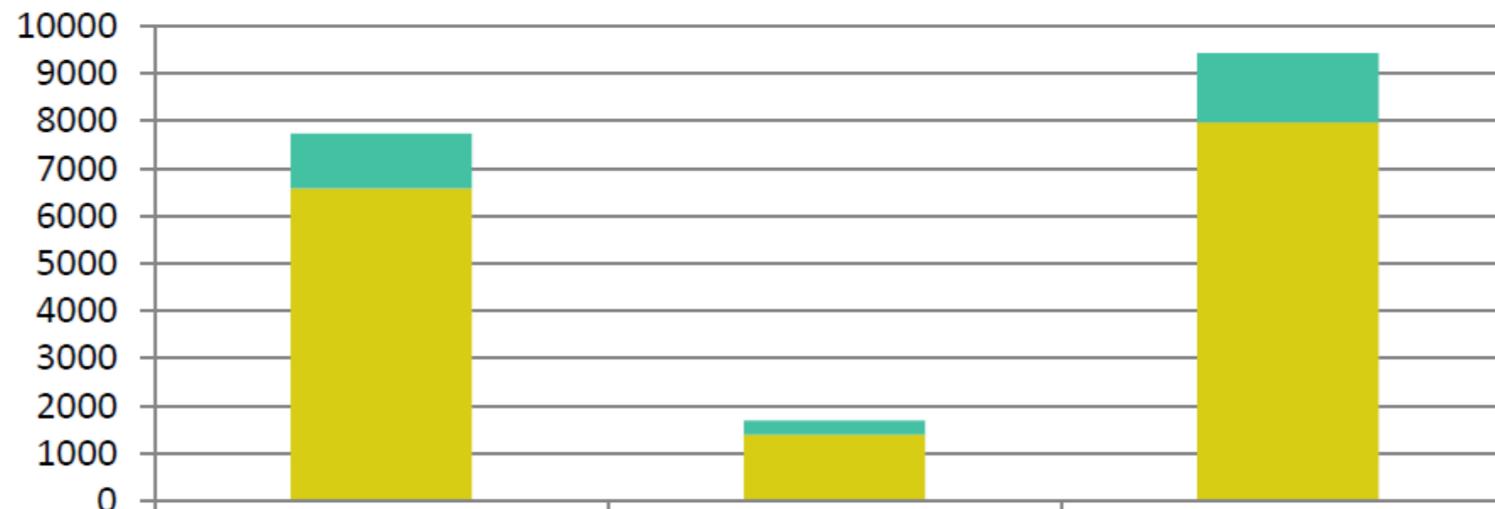
	EUROPEAN POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS (EF)	GLOBAL POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS (GF)	For All
Funded	1153	295	1448
Submitted	6590	1396	7986

MSCA – PF 2022

Cut-off scores (Main list) by EF panels

	CHE	ECO	ENG	ENV	LIF	MAT	PHY	SOC
Cut-off scores (Mainlist)	91.8	89.4	92.4	92.6	93.6	92.2	92.4	93
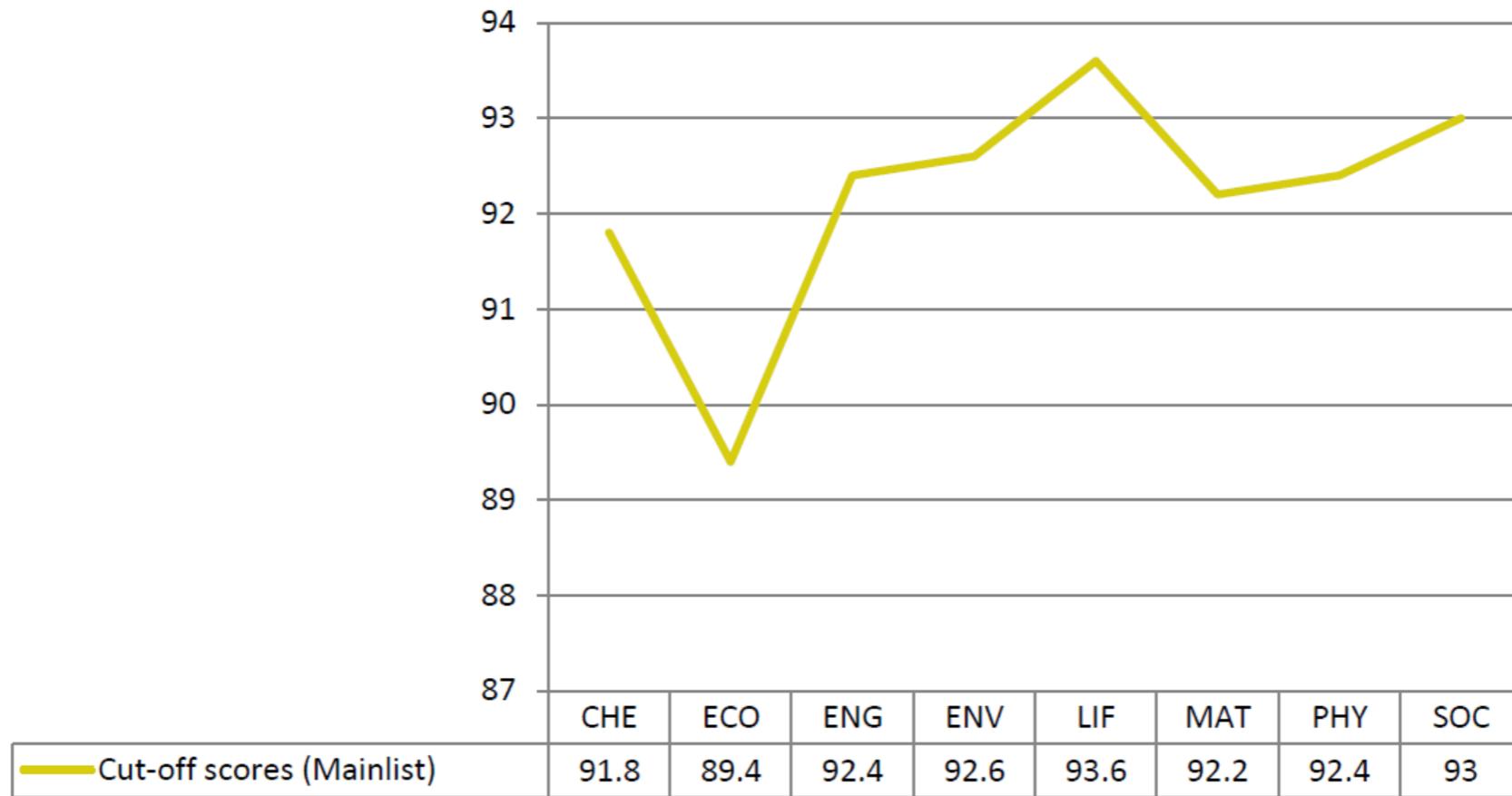
MSCA – PF 2022

Cut-off scores (Main list) by GF panels

	CHE	ECO	ENG	ENV	LIF	MAT	PHY	SOC
Cut-off scores (Mainlist)	95	81	96.4	94	92.6	90.8	93.4	93.6
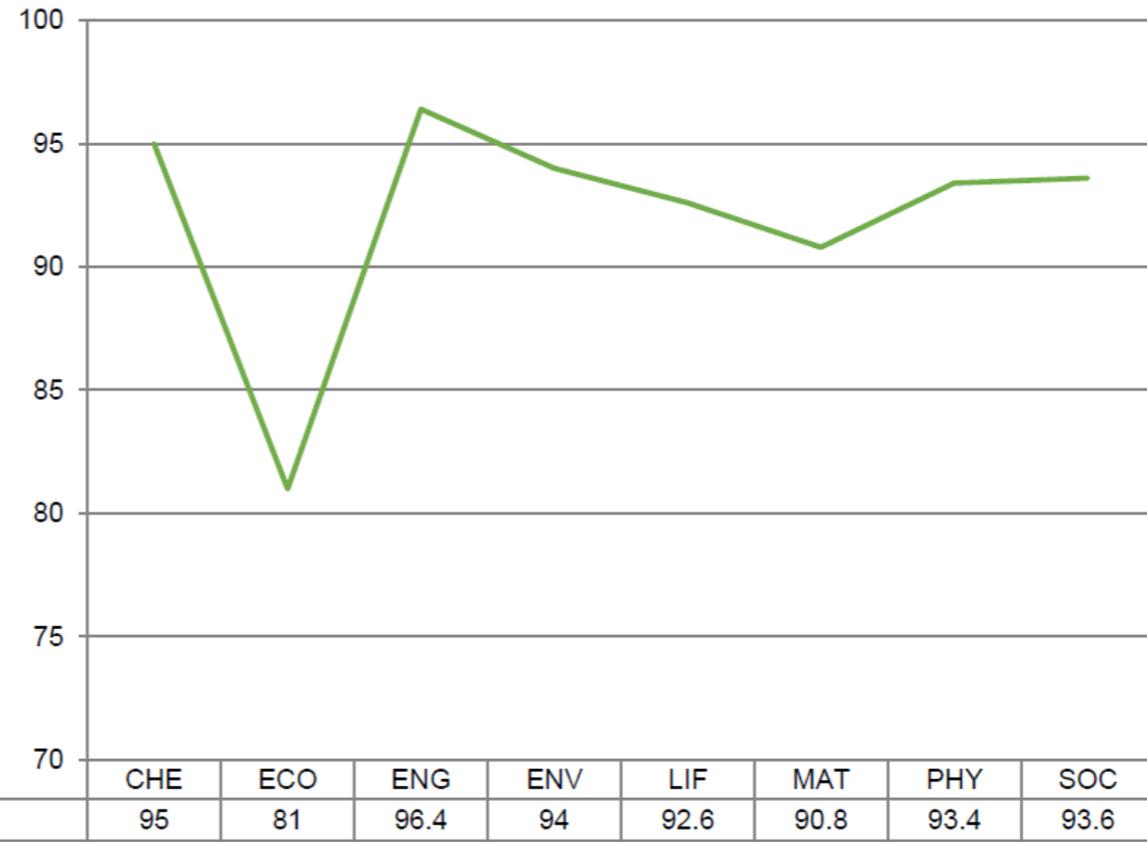
MSCA – PF 2022

Success rate (according to number of EF panel proposals)
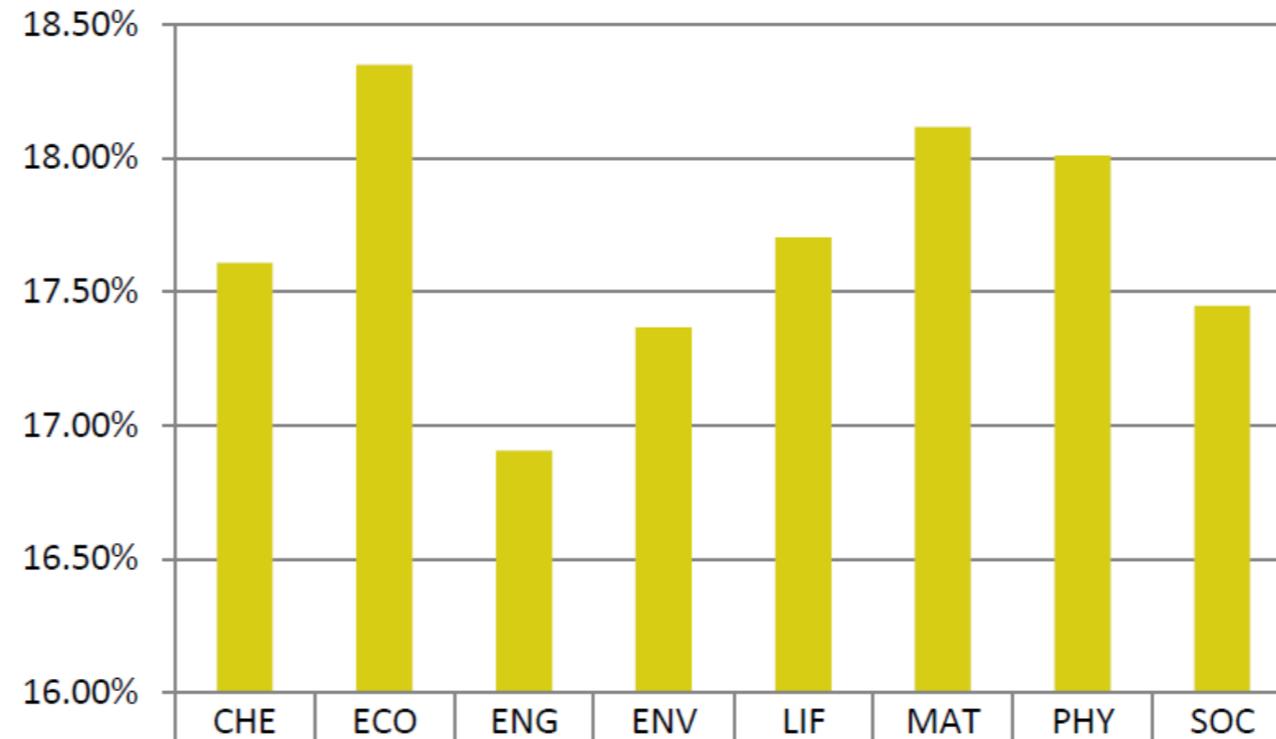
	CHE	ECO	ENG	ENV	LIF	MAT	PHY	SOC
Success rate (acc. to number of proposals)	17.61%	18.35%	16.90%	17.37%	17.70%	18.12%	18.01%	17.45%

MSCA – PF 2022

Success rate (according to number of GF panel proposals)

	CHE	ECO	ENG	ENV	LIF	MAT	PHY	SOC
Success rate (acc. to number of proposals)	21.43%	27.27%	21.95%	21.18%	20.39%	18.18%	19.30%	21.05%
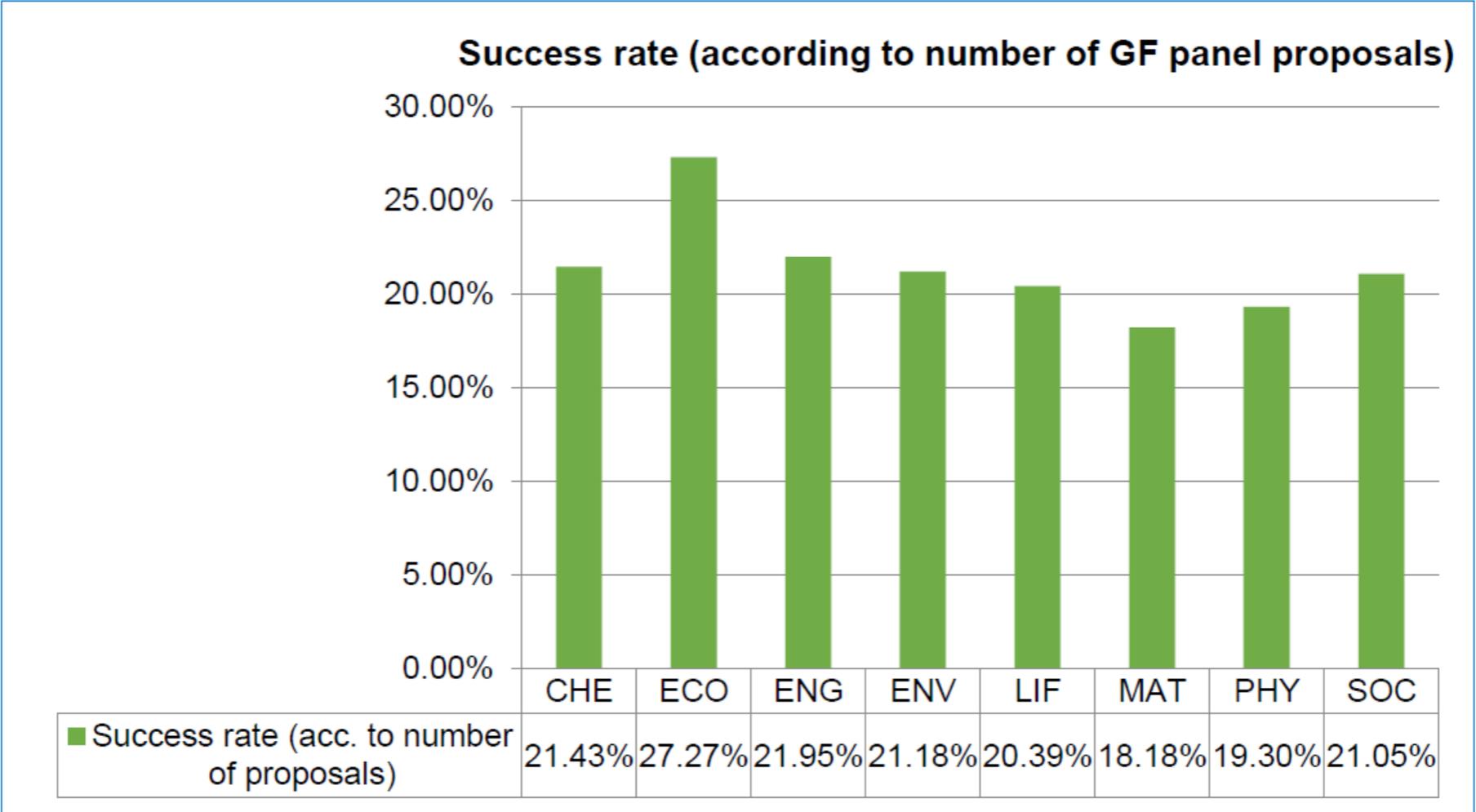
MSCA – PF 2022

Type of Organisations for Applicants (for all 9672 participants)

	Higher or Secondary Education Applicants	Research Organisations Applicants	Private for Profit Applicants	Public Body Applicants	Other Applicants
Funded	1020	258	51	14	38
Applicants	7366	1645	307	74	280
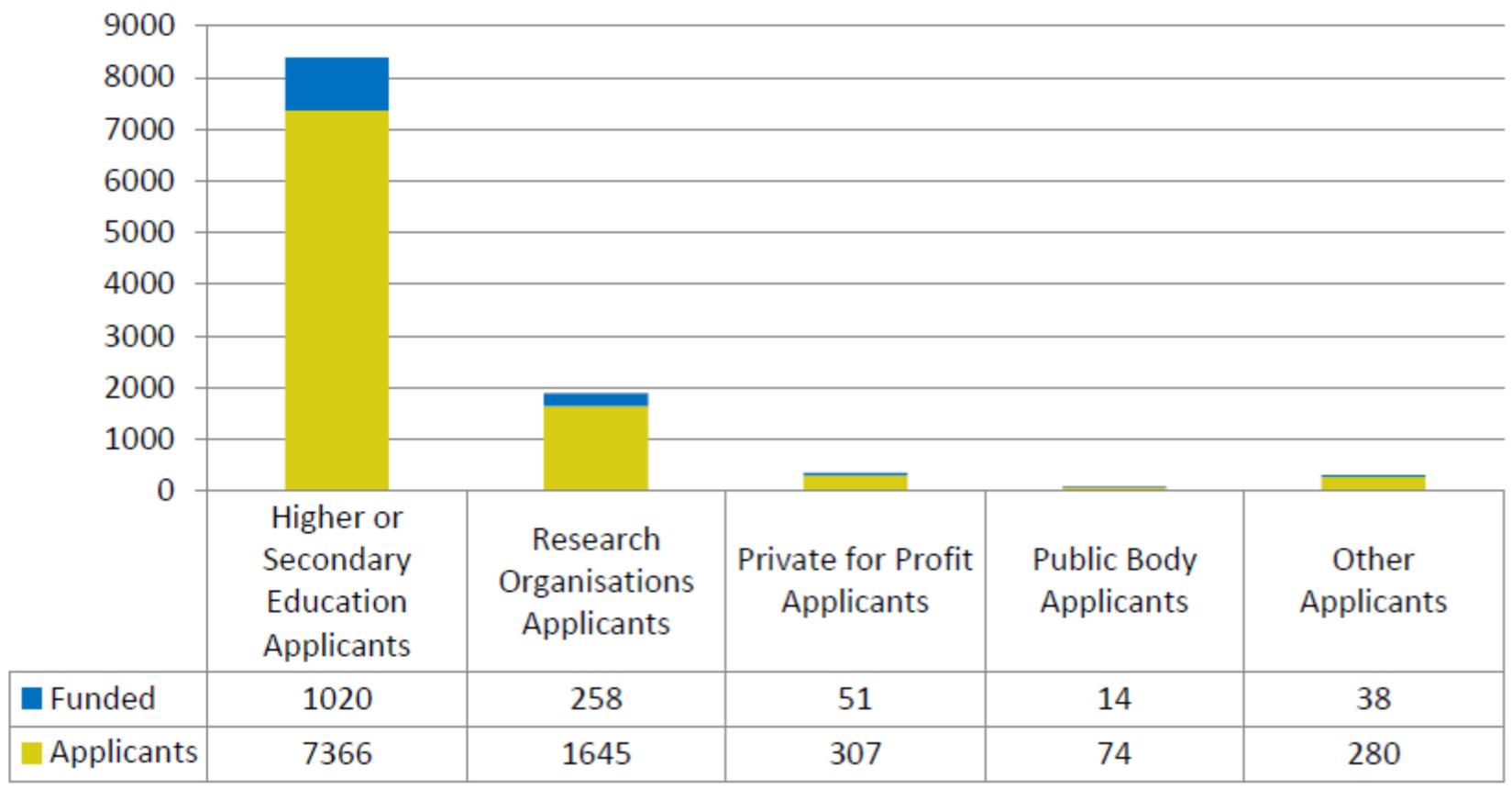
MSCA – PF 2021

Gender of researchers among (6909) eligible proposals
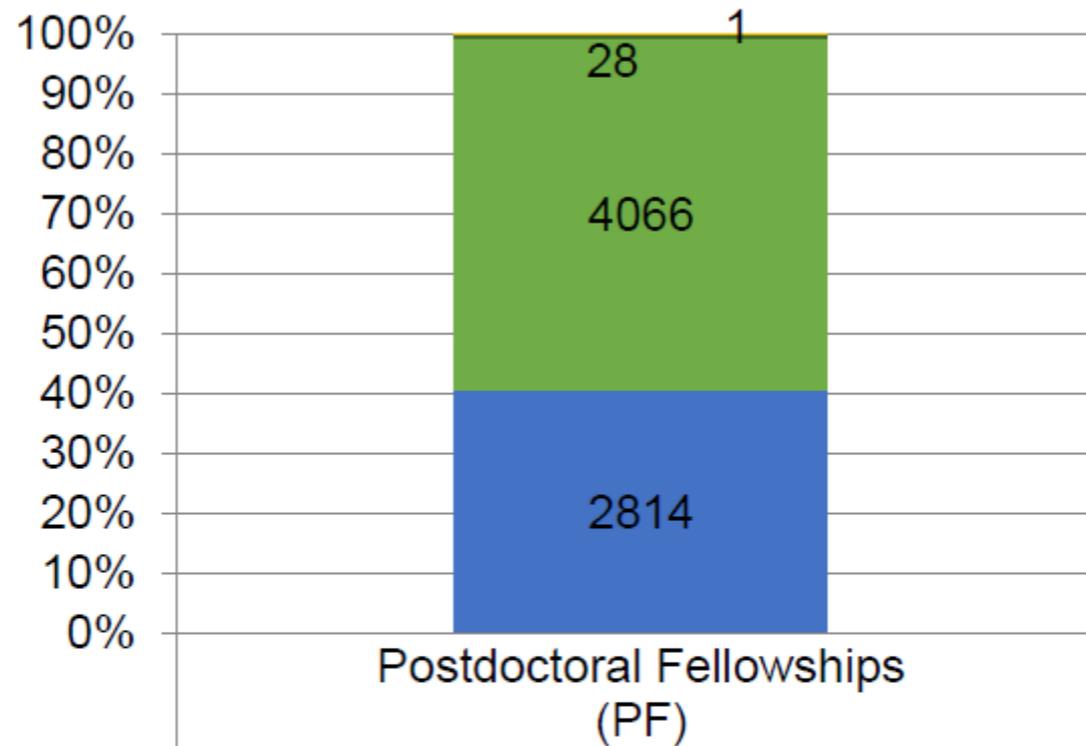
	Postdoctoral Fellowships (PF)
■ No Gender Information (Researchers)	1
■ Non Binary	28
■ Male Researchers	4066
■ Female Researchers	2814

MSCA – PF 2022

CALL ANALYSIS: INSTRUMENTS

Funding & Tenders portal

- The **single entry point** for applicants to funding programs managed by the EC

FUNDING AND TENDERS PORTAL

Information provided:

- **General information**

- Type of call and action

- Deadline model (single/multiple-stage)

- Opening & deadline dates
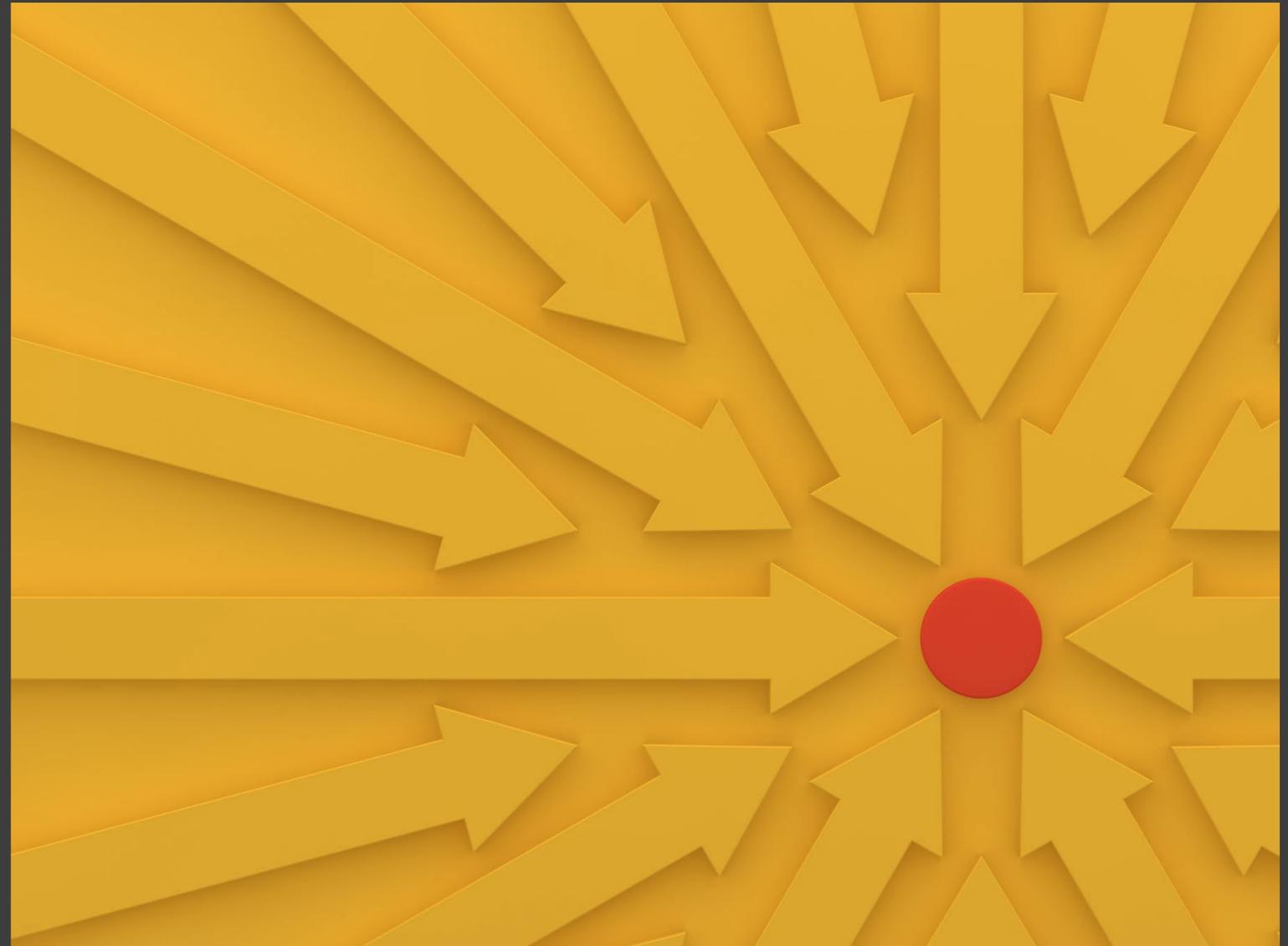
FUNDING AND TENDERS PORTAL

Submission system

■Online platform for proposal submission

General information

Programme
Horizon Europe Framework Programme (HORIZON)

Call
MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships 2023 (HORIZON-MSCA-2023-PF-01)

See budget overview

Type of action	Type of MGA	
HORIZON-TMA-MSCA-PF-EF HORIZON TMA MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships - European Fellowships	HORIZON Unit Grant [HORIZON-AG-UN]	Open for submission
HORIZON-TMA-MSCA-PF-GF HORIZON TMA MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships - Global Fellowships	HORIZON Unit Grant [HORIZON-AG-UN]	

Deadline model	Opening date	Deadline date
single-stage	12 April 2023	13 September 2023 17:00:00 Brussels time

FUNDING AND TENDERS PORTAL

Information provided

Topic description & conditions

Objective

Scope

Expected impact

Eligibility conditions

Evaluation criteria, scoring and thresholds

Indicative time for evaluation and grant agreement signature

Submission and evaluation processes

FUNDING AND TENDERS PORTAL

Information provided

Official Documents

Bi-annual Work Programme MSCA

Guide for applicants

Standard proposal template

MSCA standard evaluation form

MGA MSCA PF – Mono-Beneficiary

Other official documents

DOCUMENTS

✦ **Work programmes**: general objectives and impact, and budgets

✦ **Call for proposals**: eligibility, selection and award criteria, objectives/challenges and deadlines

✦ **Proposal templates (and Guide for Applicant)**: essential forms and guide to draw up and submit your proposal

HorizonEUrope Work Programmes

Calls for proposals

Topics

Specific challenge

Scope

Expected Impact

The 'problem'

Identifies the aspects of the challenge that needs to be tackled.

WP text does not outline the expected solutions to the problem, nor the approach to be taken by the applicant ("non-prescriptive" approach)

The 'problem in detail'

Provides **more details on the specific challenge** by specifying a perimeter to the problem described

The 'change' to be achieved

Provides a broad **description of what is the impact to be achieved through the project(s) to be funded.**

The **dissemination and exploitation** of future research results are vital for the impact

Work Programmes are bi-annual documents, revised annually: priority topics are not identical over the years

DOCUMENTS

Read carefully the **call text and all related documents**.

- The project proposal must be in line with all the requirements of the call text

- Do not to neglect any piece of the call text when constructing your project proposal

- Having an excellent project at hand may not be enough. If it does not refer to all the elements of the call text – the project might not be ranked high compared to other projects that do cover all the elements

- Rule of thumb: have the call docs handy throughout the proposal development process and revisit it often. This will help in verifying that the proposal presentation does not divert from the call text requirements as the proposal develops.

MSCA PF: KEY ELEMENTS

PILLS

■**What -** Marie Sklodowska Curie Actions (MSCA) are the Union's reference programme for doctoral education and postdoctoral training

■**Who -** encouraging and promoting for young women and men career in research, stimulate the best talents around the world, and giving the opportunity also to reintegrate researchers working elsewhere

■**How -** Skills MSCA supports human capital development across Europe. Researchers are equipped with new knowledge and skills, through international and inter-sectoral exposure (for example through academia-business collaboration)

■**Why -** The MSCAs strongly contribute to excellent research, boosting jobs, growth and investment. All these elements are needed for a strong and resilient society, the combination of skills for the future need on labour market and the ability to convert knowledge into product or services for economy and society is crucial to face the challenges of our times.

■**When -** Since 1996

The Covid-19 crisis has highlighted once more the importance of the Union's reliance on a highly skilled research-based human capital that is able to detect and tackle upcoming challenges, to communicate scientific evidence to policy-makers and the public at large, and to work across disciplines

PRINCIPLES

Main pillars:

- **Excellence**

- **Mobility**

- **Skills acquisition**

- **Bottom-up and open to the world**

- **Recruitment, working/employment conditions and inclusiveness**

- **Supervision**

GOALS & EXPECTATIONS

Remember that the goal of this call is to enhance the creative and innovative potential of researchers holding a PhD.

Postdoctoral fellowship projects are:

- a mean to reach such goal through its implementation
- an original and personalised research that identifies solutions to current/future challenges
- a novel and inter/multidisciplinary idea
- a mean to acquire new skills and competences
- an occasion to reach out society at large and make the results visible to citizens
- a funding opportunity open to all research domains and technological development (including areas of research covered by the Euratom Programme 2021-25)

RULES & REQUIREMENTS

- Possession of a PhD

- maximum 8 years full-time equivalent experience in research from the PhD

- Mobility rule

- 100% commitment on the fellowship

- Supervision

DOCUMENTS

Templates

- Part A - administrative information & budget

- Part B - the proposal

- Part B2- Annexes (not evaluated per se, used to complement and assess information on part B. Includes the CV)

PART A – ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

- Standard proposal template
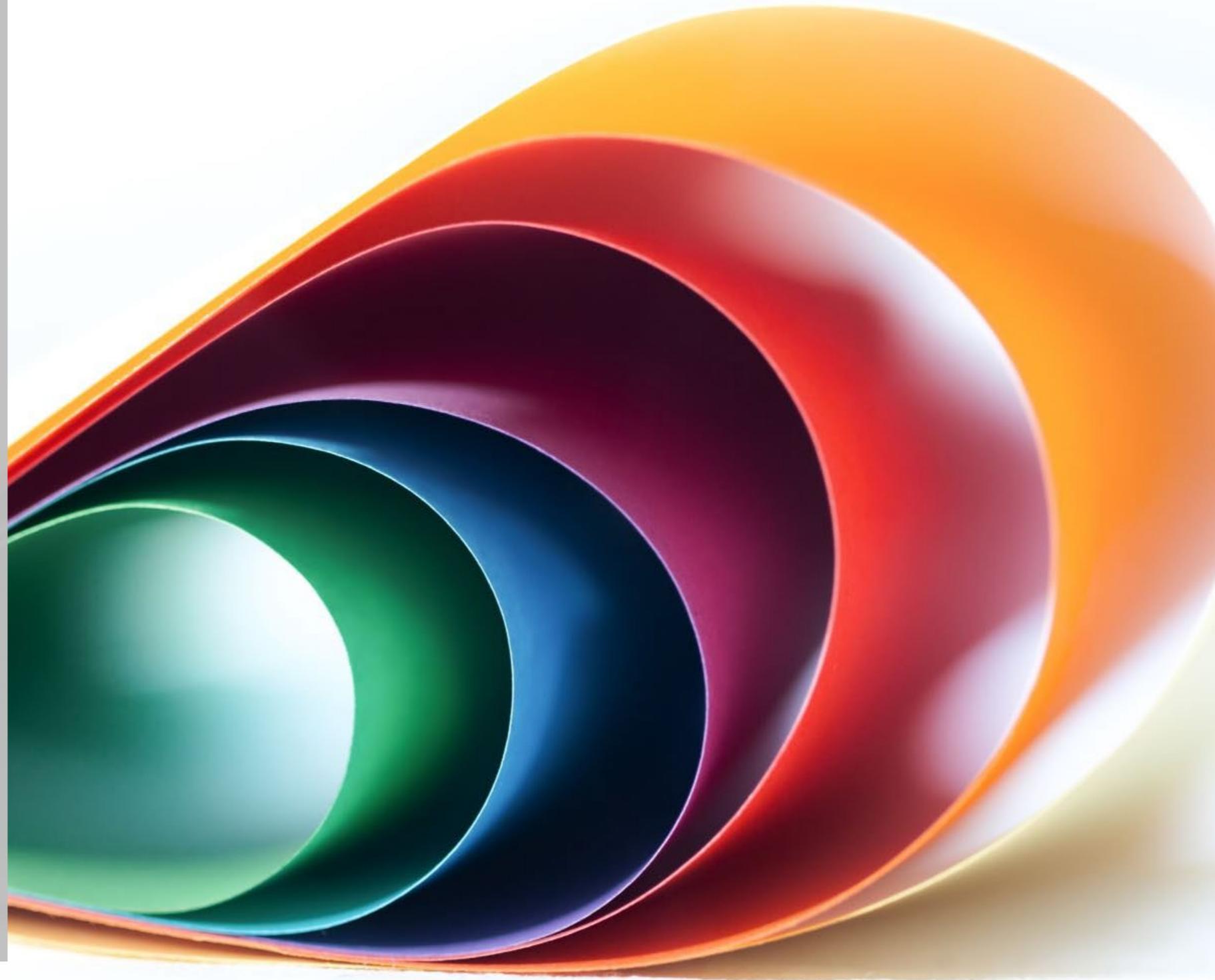
PART B - THE PROPOSAL

- **Structured Template**

- **3 main sections corresponding to the 3 evaluation criteria:**

- Excellence -> evaluation weight 50%

- Impact -> evaluation weight 30%

- Implementation -> evaluation weight 20%

PART B - THE PROPOSAL

Structured Template

- Overall limit: 10 pages

- No cover pages allowed

- No predefined limits for single sections

- Suggested (flexible) subdivision

- Excellence -> five pages

- Impact -> three pages

- Implementation -> two pages

PART B – THE PROPOSAL

Standard proposal template
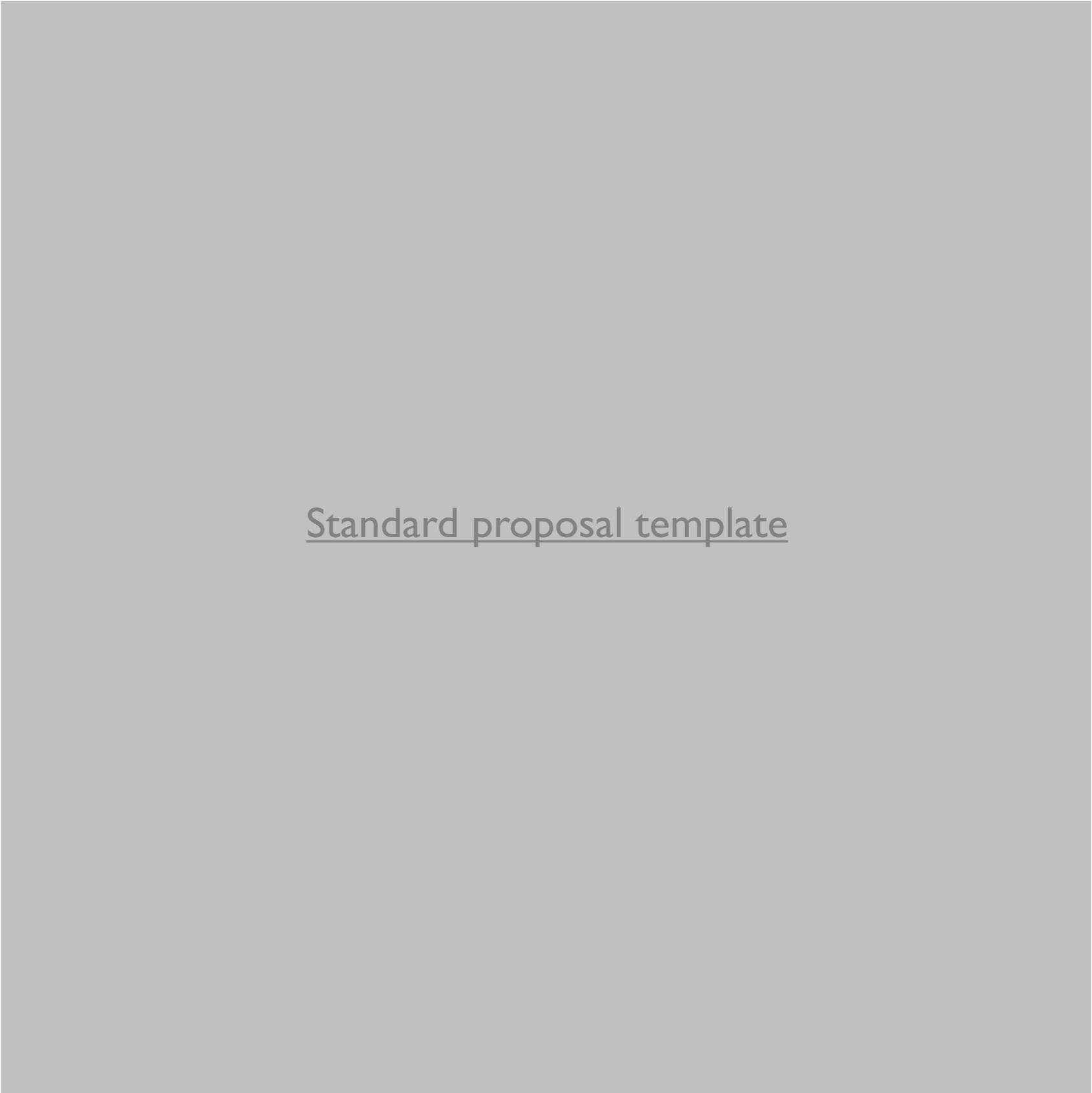
The EU Commission provides proposal templates:
their **use is mandatory**!

Having a **deep understanding** of the proposal template and structure undoubtedly help to write an **outstanding proposal,** which is needed if you want have chances to win

What does it mean? What I have to understand of a template?
The meaning of EU Commission language

Very often one main issue exist: a "logic gap" between what researchers assume the proposal template requires of them and what reviewers are most definitely looking for

Experience or experts support can be fundamental to understand the template requirements and logic and to avoid to lose time

EVALUATION PROCEDURE

In Postdoctoral Fellowships, proposals will be evaluated by one of eight 'main evaluation panels': Chemistry (CHE), Social Sciences and Humanities (SOC), Economic Sciences (ECO),Information Science and Engineering (ENG), Environment and Geosciences (ENV), LifeSciences (LIF), Mathematics (MAT), Physics (PHY). Each panel will establish two ranked lists, one for European and one for Global Postdoctoral fellowships. European and Global Postdoctoral Fellowships will have separate budgets. The distribution of respective available funds will be proportional to the number of eligible proposals received in each main evaluation panel. If the budget allocated to any panel exceeds the requirements of all proposals positively evaluated in that panel, the excess budget will be reallocated to the other panels based on the distribution as above. Equally, if the allocated funding to a panel is insufficient to fund the highest ranked proposal in that panel, the necessary budget will be transferred from the other panels based on the distribution as above, in order to ensure that the highest ranked proposal can be funded. In order to ensure budget optimisation and an equitable success rate across panels, the excess budget remaining after the initial allocation of funding to the proposals in the panels may be transferred between panels

EVALUATION CRITERIA

- Applications will be evaluated by experts, based on the award criteria 'excellence','impact' and 'quality and efficiency of the implementation'.

- Evaluation scores will be awarded for each of these criteria.

- Each criterion will be scored up to 5. Scores will be awarded with a resolution of one decimal place and will be subject to a weighting factors

- Applications scoring equal to or the % defined for a the specific call will be considered for funding — within the limits of the available call topic budget. Other applications will be rejected.

- Regarding evaluation, each panel will establish two ranked lists, one for European and One for Global Postdoctoral fellowships (they have separate budget)

EVALUATION CRITERIA

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 Quality and appropriateness of the **researcher's professional experience**, competences and skills	The magnitude and importance of the project's contribution to the **expected scientific, societal and economic impacts**	
50%	30%	20%

RESTRICTIONS ON RESUBMISSIONS

Restriction on resubmissions

Proposals involving the same recruiting organisation (and for Global Postdoctoral Fellowships also the associated partner hosting the outgoing phase) and individual researcher submitted to the previous call of MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships under Horizon Europe and having received a score of less than 70% must not be resubmitted the following year.

EVALUATION STANDARD TEMPLATE

MSCA standard evaluation form

A QUICK LOOK AT THE AUDIENCE

- Panel members not known
- With no defined mandate

- *8 'main evaluation panels':*
- Chemistry (CHE)
- Social Sciences and Humanities (SOC)
- Economic Sciences (ECO)
- Information Science and Engineering (ENG)
- Environment and Geosciences (ENV)
- Life Sciences (LIF)
- Mathematics (MAT)
- **Physics (PHY) -** One Physics panel gathering different expertises

- **Quality of retained proposals very high** - PHY is one of the panels with the highest numbers of submitted proposals
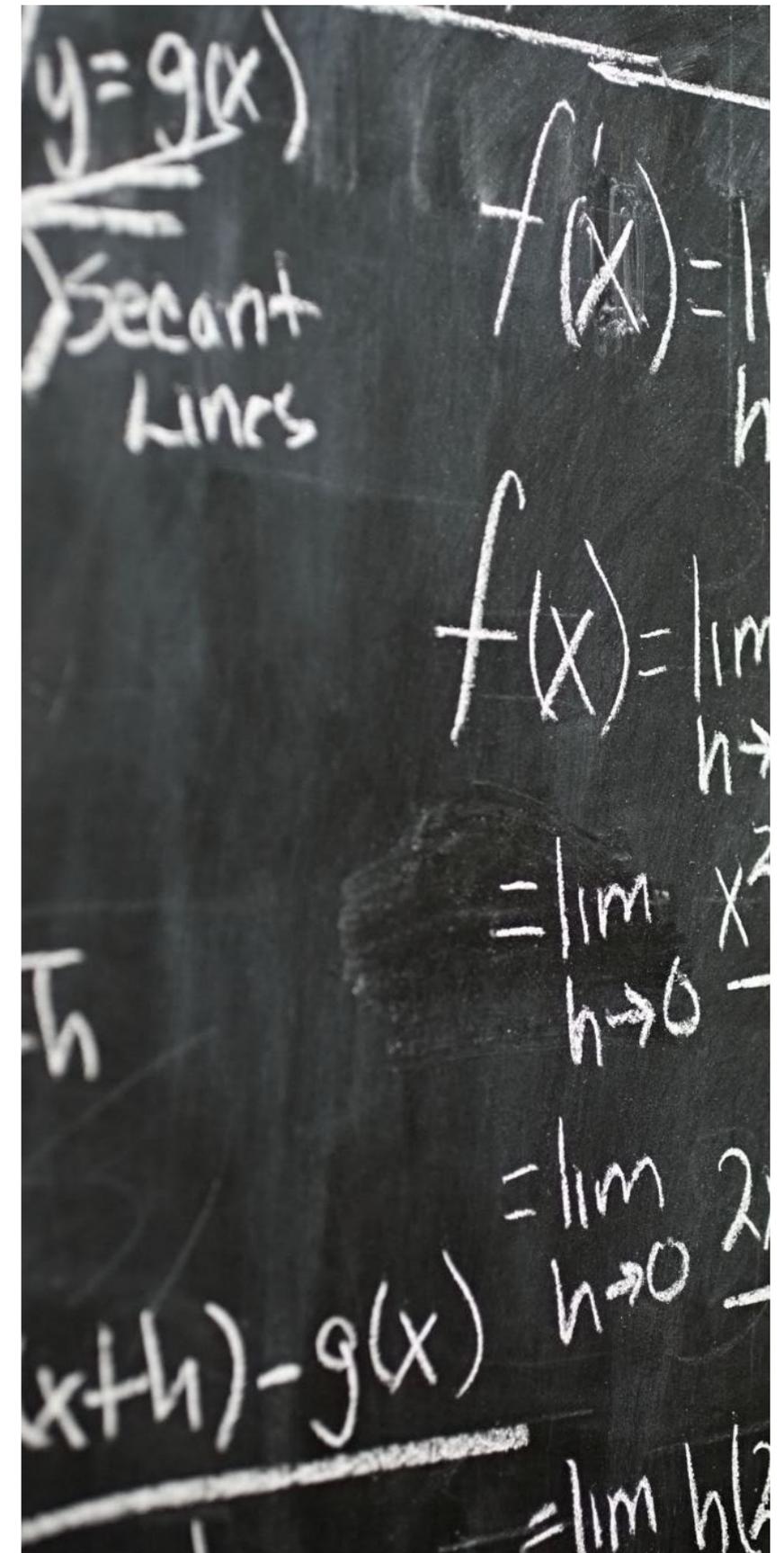
DEFINITIONS

Secondments (optional)

A period within the duration of the Fellowship and beyond in academia or in non-academic research to acquire more skills and do activities necessary to the project implementation; max one third of the duration for European PF one third of the outgoing phase for PF

DEFINITIONS

Supervisor

- The scientist appointed at the beneficiary (host) to supervise the researcher throughout the whole duration of the action. Her/his role is important also in the submission phase

- one at the host in European Fellowships, two (one at the host in MS or AC to HEurope and one also at the institution chosen for the out-going phase) in Global fellowships

- is the person who will integrate the researcher properly within his/her organisation in order that all parties gain the maximum knowledge and skills from the fellowship. This includes ensuring that the foreseen training-through-research takes place, as well as providing support and guidance for the personal and professional development of the fellow

DEFINITIONS

Career Development Plan

▪Having in mind the objective to enhance and expand the fellow's career opportunities inside and outside academia, a Career Development Plan:

▪should be established jointly by the Supervisor(s) and the researcher

▪comprises research objectives, researcher's training and career needs (training on transferable skills, teaching, planning for publications and participation in conferences and events aiming at opening science and research to citizens)

▪is a project deliverable submitted at the beginning of the project and monitored/updated throught the project duration

DEFINITIONS

Training - Skills

- A skill is the ability of a person to do an action in the job or activity that results in an outcome, with the desired performance

- Transferable skills are acquired in one context, and are applicable or useful to other. They are useful as a bridge from a career to another, in different environments of professional contexts. Are part of a portfolio of skills on the basis of which researchers can be able to face both academic and non-academic career.

- Some examples:
- Career development - Interview techniques
- Job searching and application
- Critical thinking - problem solving
- Science for technical and non-technical audience
- Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)
- Knowledge transfer
- Independence and responsibility
- Proposal writing and grant management
- Communication and public speaking
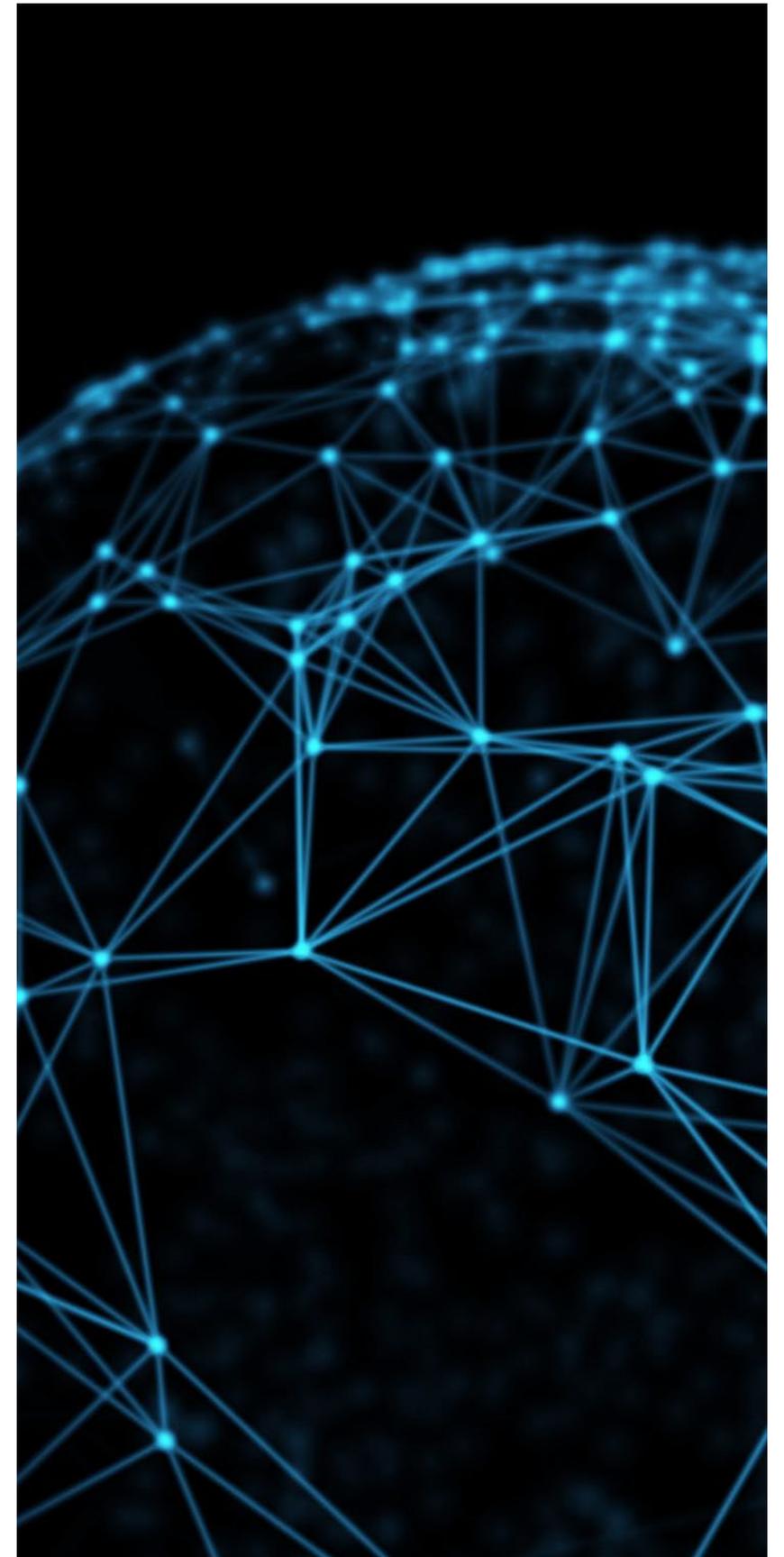
Seal of Excellence

Seals of Excellence will be awarded to applications with a total score equal to or higher than 85%, but which cannot be funded due to lack of budget available to the call.

DEFINITIONS
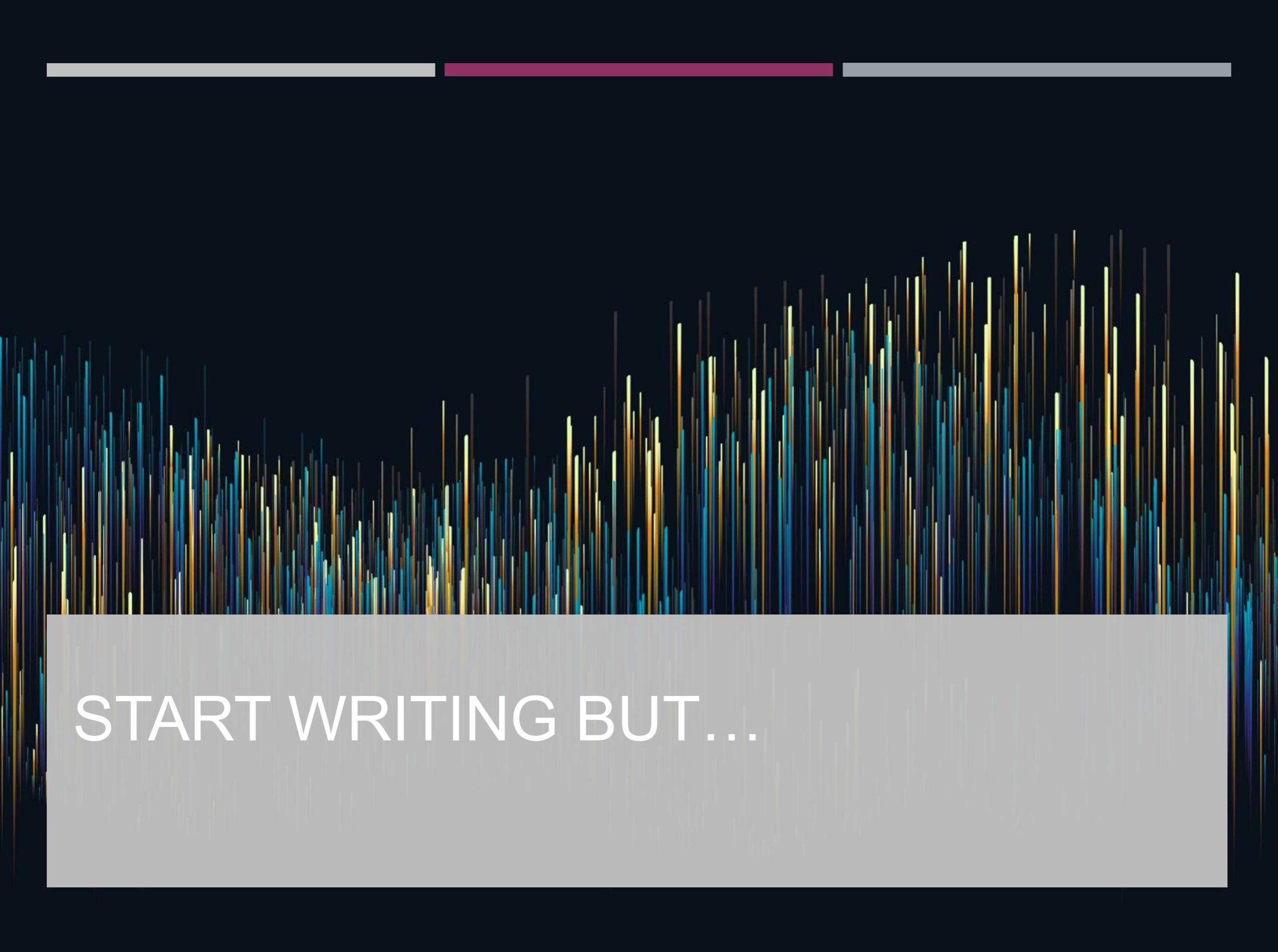
START WRITING BUT...

HAVE CLEAR IDEAS: OBJECTIVES AND FEASIBILITY

Objectives

- *Why is it relevant?*

- Among other reasons this is important because this helps us to identify many key aspects and influences how we are going to tell our story, and so adapt also the state of the art.

- Let's start thinking about how we can **contribute** to answer to some open questions. So we have clear the questions first, then we restrict the field cropping our specific expertise and idea to face the challenge.

OBJECTIVES

- *General objective* explains why the project is relevant to a given community and what impact the results produced will have, otherwise not obtainable. Its nature is more **'speculative'**. Example: 'Dark Matter existence is an established and yet mysterious paradigm. But what exactly is Dark Matter?'

- *Specific objective* traces a more operational trajectory, narrowing down the various elements that need to be solved in relation to the general question. It explains in more operational terms **what the solution consists of**. The specific objective is closer to what will be the activities under the control of the project. Example 'The project will perform measurements in an unexplored part of the parameter space with a new detector and a new approach to measurements.'

These two levels are the drivers for the description of the state of the art

- With this distinction in mind we are able to make a firts comparison with state of the art, context, the need of the comminuty, colleagues from the community

- Collection of preliminary data and results, a first step with respect to the scope of the idea with its first validation / rough verification

- This step may require multiple **iterations**, and involve different levels of depth. One or more specific activities are activated for in-depth analysis and to gather information on the real potential.

CHECK YOUR PROJECT PLANS

- Do you have a viable project?

- **Does it fit with the call scope**?

- Is there a level of innovation (i.e. going beyond the state of the art)?

- Are there uniquenesses of the concepts?

- Does it have a measurable impact?

- Do you have an achievable timeline?

- (for collaborative projects) Is your consortium strength for the purpose of the project?

GENERAL TIPS AND TRICKS

✦Set your project up in close collaboration with your future supervisor/partners

✦You need to **address all of the award criteria** (Keep the award criteria scheme and the self-**evaluation checklist** * by you while writing your proposal to ensure you cover each point fully)

❖if you do not address (sufficiently) the issues raised by the evaluation criteria, you may not obtain any mark in that criteria

✦Do not rely solely on former projects you might get your hand on. <u>Structure, award criteria, page limits etc. might change from year to year.</u>

✦<u>Expected impact</u>: study the impact requirements extremely carefully check that your proposed project satisfy **all** the impact requirements of the topic.

GENERAL TIPS AND TRICKS

✦ Be empathic and emphatic with the reviewers

✦ Evaluators would like to have: **minimum effort** (easy to read, follow and assess against the criteria) and **maximum accuracy** (easy to provide feedback)

✦ Facts and external references supporting your statement instead of opinions

✦ **Be concise**: Avoid open / empty statements. **Go to the point** and provide 'just enough' details needed to cover what is requested by the call and for the reader to understand

✦ Template is repetitive: Be repetitive (or refer to the place where you elaborate on the topic)

GENERAL TIPS AND TRICKS

✦ You can slightly influence the type of evaluator will read your proposal:

❖ **Choose the right evaluation panel:** if you do not clearly belong to one, choose the one (you think) can best appreciate your CV and the core of your project

❖ <u>Avoid open/ambiguous terms, acronyms, jargon</u>

❖ Evaluator are chosen matching keywords (and abstract) of your proposal and the keywords they used to define themselves (field of expertise)

- Check the public list of evaluators (if available) of the previous year. Think of 3-4 persons who would be the excellent evaluators for your proposal: What keywords do they use to define themselves?

POTENTIALLY FATAL MISTAKES

✦ No respect for instructions.

✦ Lack of understanding of the evaluation criteria

✦ Poor analysis and description of the starting points (e.g. state of the art) and the objectives

✦ Insufficient detail given of planned activities as evidence to convince evaluators of impact

✦ Poor impact analysis

✦ Small relevance of the project for the call objectives (e.g. a proposal with no planned training for the ER has small relevance for a MSCA PF)

✦ Text of different parts of your proposal is not consistent: evaluator get confused!

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QUESTIONS?

GOOD LUCK!

THANK YOU