

GRANT WRITING



HZDR
HELMHOLTZ ZENTRUM
DRESDEN ROSSENDORF

Rodin's "Le Penseur" reimagined
by ChatGPT (July 2025)

HELIUM 25 - Helium Burning and Perspectives for Underground Labs

Career Development Day – Grant Opportunities and Grant Writing

Dr. Carola Franzen | International Collaboration and Research Funding | HZDR

DRESDEN
concept 

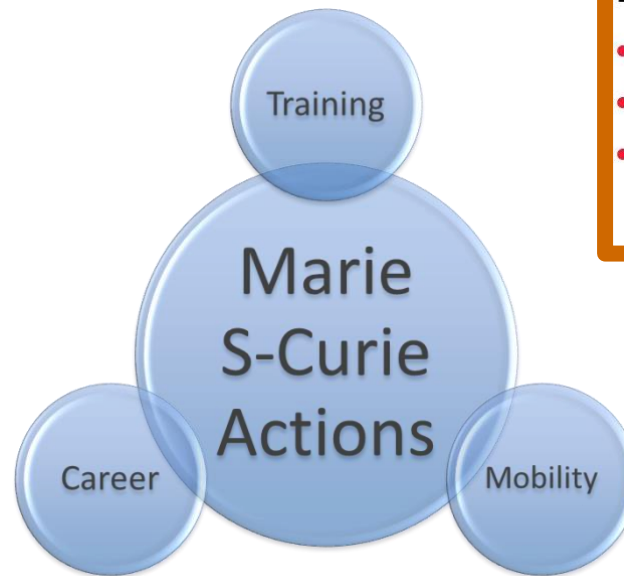
Grant Opportunities – MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowship

A European Union funded programme launched in 1996 for support researcher **training, mobility and career development** in and outside academia

PhD defended latest by the time of the call deadline

*Scientific age, max 8 years research experience (FTE) after PhD**

* Can be extended for a variety of reasons such as parental leave, time outside research...



MSCA in Horizon Europe is part of Pillar 1 “Excellent Science”

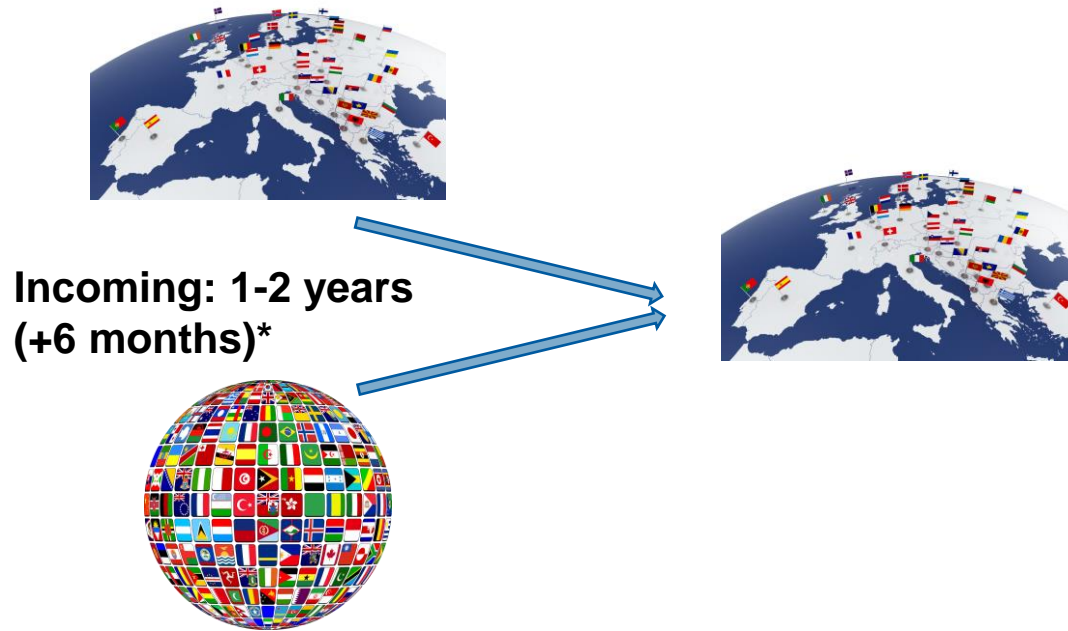
→ excellence relates to ...

- the fellows
- the research itself, methodologies
- the training, supervision and career guidance provided to the fellows

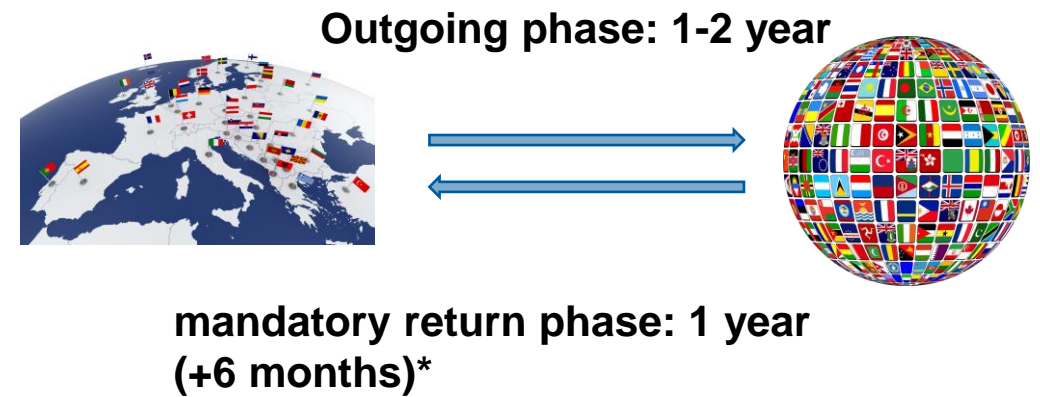
they must not have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in the country of the beneficiary (for European Postdoctoral Fellowships), or the host organisation for the outgoing phase (for Global Postdoctoral Fellowships) for more than 12 months in the 36 months immediately before the call deadline

Types of Postdoctoral Fellowships

European Postdoctoral Fellowships



Global Postdoctoral Fellowships



Both types of fellowships may also include **short-term secondments** anywhere in the world during the fellowship (except during the return phase of a Global Fellowship).

*researchers can receive **additional support to carry out a placement of up to 6 months** in a non-academic organisation based in an EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country.

Grant Writing – Are you Ready to Write?

- **Tip 1: Make Your Project's Goals Realistic and Clear**
- **Tip 2: Be Organized**
- **Tip 3: Write in Clear, Concise Language**
- **Tip 4: Your Reviewers Are Your Primary Audience**
- **Tip 5: Edit Yourself**
- **Tip 6: Enlist Help, Share for Comments**

Horizon Europe calls for proposals: How to read and understand

- Find the right call for your idea
- Carefully read the [Horizon Europe Work Programme](#), to understand the objectives and guidelines of the specific call for proposals.
- Familiarise yourself with the [EU policy objectives](#) to put your proposal into perspective.

It is extremely important to pay proper attention to these steps, because a research project that is not well aligned with the call has little chance to obtain (EU) funding. This refers to the specific [Work programmes](#) but also to the admissibility conditions and eligibility criteria (as detailed in the Annexes A, B and C of the [General Annexes](#) to the Horizon Europe Work programmes) and to mentioned additional documents ...

It is good to remember that all the words in the Horizon Europe call topics have a meaning and are included in the text with a specific intent. None of them can be ignored, on pain of the project's competitiveness.

Horizon Europe calls for proposals: How to read and understand

Verbs

In the "Scope" section, verbs indicate which actions are expected in the project (e.g. "set-up", "develop", "validate"), and which will therefore guide the definition of the project's objectives.

Verbs such as "reduce" or "increase" recall quantitative measurers, thus indicating that the European Commission expects to read in the project both an indication of the current situation and values, and what they might be at the end of the project and afterwards, thanks to the actions developed in the project.

Verbs such as "shall", "should", "could", "is recommended", "is encouraged" give a further indication of the European Commission's expectations.

Indications on the degree of alignment with the call

Often in the text of the call, for both sections "Expected outcome" and "Scope" you will find bulleted lists, preceded by phrases such as "all the following expected outcomes" or "most of the following research activities". The words "some", "all" and "most" will guide you on what the level of adherence of your project to the call should be.

Indications on target groups

In the section 'Expected outcome' you will find indications of the target audiences that are expected to benefit from your research results. This will guide you in choosing the most suitable outputs for each audience, but also in defining your dissemination and exploitation strategy.

Horizon Europe calls for proposals: How to read and understand

Examples, inclusions, and exclusions

Words such as "may include, but are not limited to" introduce examples of what the European Commission expects.

On the contrary, words such as "should not address..." or "are excluded from the topic" indicate themes which are not the subject of the call and therefore should not be included in your project.

Legislative or scientific context

In some cases, footnotes include references to external documents (either policy documents or background information), which will guide you to understand what has been done so far, what the objectives are on the policy agenda in your specific field, and how your project fits into this context.

Suggestions on collaborations and synergies

Phrases such as "The involvement of is encouraged" or "synergies should be sought with...." can give you indications on the types of organisations that should be involved in your collaborative project as partners, or synergies that should be created in the course of the project.

Horizon Europe calls for proposals: Find information and help

- Check the [CORDIS website](#) for past and ongoing EU-funded projects to get insights into how these projects have been designed and partnerships established.
- Attend [Info Days](#) on the specific call for proposals you would like to apply for. These are organised to explain each call for proposals, and are a great opportunity to learn about the topics open for funding and to ask questions. If you cannot attend an Info Day, make sure to check the recordings.
- Contact your nearest [National Contact Point](#) (NCP) for support. In addition to advice, some NCPs offer training courses on the drafting of project proposals.

Horizon Europe calls for proposals: Formulate and plan your proposal correctly

- Structure your proposal in a **logical and cohesive manner**. Outline the general project methodology and organise all elements of the project. This will help to align it with the objectives of the specific call and the evaluation criteria.
- Consider the **other requirements or policy considerations** that are assessed in the evaluation of projects. This may include aspects such as multi-disciplinarity (partners with complementary types of knowledge), the inclusion of Social Sciences and Humanities, Open Science, etc.
- Remember that the **budget must match the workload** in the different work packages, so that the project is feasible in terms of timing and financial resources.
- Create a **timeline for the entire proposal writing process**, including specific tasks, deliverables, responsibilities and deadlines. This will ensure that everything is completed by the call deadline.
- Use the [guidance](#) and the [templates](#) applicable to the funding programme you are applying for, available in the submission system on the Funding and Tender Portal. Remember that **using the correct template is an admissibility condition**.

Horizon Europe calls for proposals: Address the project's pathway towards impact

- Explain clearly the relevance of the **challenge** your project aims to address and **why it should be tackled now**. Provided arguments should **demonstrate why the problem matters and for whom**.
- Explain how the proposed intervention will have a **long-term impact** on the market, on industry, technology, environment, or society in general.
- Foresee **novel research**
- Think how your project can contribute to the **expected outcomes** and impact set out in the Horizon Europe Work Programme.
- Explain how you will comply with legal obligations.
- Demonstrate how the **consortium is well-suited** to carry out the project.
- Plan activities to increase the impact of your project results. Learn the differences between Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation

Don'ts

- Don't rush! Take your time to carefully read the call's requirements to ensure you meet the eligibility rules.
- Don't leave your submission to the last minute, to avoid unnecessary mistakes or technical setbacks.
- Don't 'overwrite' your proposal - try to remain simple and straightforward.
- Don't use buzzwords. Try to explain your project in realistic terms.
- Don't exceed the page limit.
- Don't paraphrase the Work Programme. Translate it into your proposal.
- Don't forget to explain clearly the connection between the aims, the activities in the project and the expected outcomes.
- Don't confuse the terms results, research output, outcomes and impact.

Useful Links

Resources available

[Horizon Europe – Programme guide](#)

[Horizon Europe – Who can apply](#)

[Horizon Europe - Who can apply \(Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions specific guidance\)](#)

[Horizon Europe - How to apply](#)

[Funding and Tenders Portal](#)

[The research and innovation community platform](#)

[Tackling gender equality in Research and Innovation: gender dimension and Gender Equality Plans](#)

[National Contact Points \(NCPs\)](#)

[Partner Search Services](#)

Webinars

[How to prepare a successful proposal in Horizon Europe \(part 1\)](#)

[How to prepare a successful proposal in Horizon Europe \(part 2\)](#)

[Recipe for success: Tips and Tricks while writing your Horizon Europe proposal](#)

[Lump sum funding in Horizon Europe](#)

[The Gender Equality Plan eligibility criterion in HE: Who is concerned? How to comply with it?](#)

[How to evaluate Open Science in Horizon Europe proposals](#)

[How to evaluate Social Sciences and Humanities in Horizon Europe proposals](#)