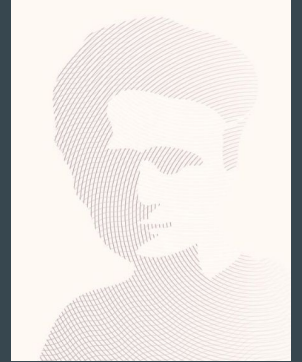


# Applying for Marie Curie and other European grants



## Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions

Developing talents, advancing research



David Keitel (Universitat de les Illes Balears)



ACHEP 2023, Rabat (Morocco), 2023-10-24

An unofficial overview  
and some personal  
recommendations –  
I'm in no way officially  
affiliated with the  
EU/EC/ERC!

# European\* funding schemes – postdoc level and beyond

- European Commission: **Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions**

- Doctoral networks and COFUND: large (cross-)institutional applications. Individual jobs (PhD and postdoc levels) will then be advertised by the participating institutions like normal jobs and you can apply to them directly.

- **“Postdoctoral Fellowships”** (renamed from old “Individual Fellowships”): you find a potential host and then apply directly to the EC with your own personal research proposal.  
2 years of (a very good) salary for yourself, plus some travel/networking money.

main topic  
of this talk!

- European Research Council

- Synergy grants: large (cross-)institutional projects
- For individual, experienced researchers:
  - Starting Grant: 2–7 years after PhD, up to € 1.5 million for a period of 5 years to start your own group
  - Consolidator Grant: 7–12 years after PhD, up to € 2 million for a period of 5 years
  - Advanced Grant: At least 10 years “track-record of significant research achievements”, up to € 2.5 million for a period of 5 years
  - All 3 schemes: up to 1€ million extra when moving to EU from 3rd country or for major equipment purchase

[\*] In this talk I'll lazily use “European” as synonymous with “EU” and “ERC”. Check the [actual country lists!](#)

# Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowships (MSCA PFs)

- <https://marie-sklodowska-curie-actions.ec.europa.eu/actions/postdoctoral-fellowships>
- Next call will open 9 April 2024. Deadline 11 September 2024.
- Standard “European” PF: moving within or into *EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country*, 1–2 years. Applicants of *any nationality*.
- “Global” PF: 1–2 years in a *non-associated Third Country*, followed by a mandatory return phase of 1 year to an *organisation based in a Member State or Associated Country*. *Only nationals or long-term residents of Member States or Associated Countries*.
- Optional short-term secondments anywhere in the world (except during GPF return phase, placement of up to 6 months in a non-academic organisation based in a Member State or Associated Country at the end of the PF.

# MSCA PFs: more rules

- Mobility rule: not been in host country >12m in last 36m before deadline.
- If topic falls under Euratom: only nationals or long-term residents.
- Must have PhD degree, or at least defended, at application deadline.
- Max 8 years research experience from PhD award date. Breaks taken into account. For nationals / long-term residents, time in 3rd countries doesn't count.
- Resubmission restrictions next year if scored below 70%.
- I'm sure I missed important points – please check the “work programme” and “guide for applicants” in detail!

# MSCA PFs: the project proposal

- Part A: online form, title, abstract, mainly administrative aspects.
- Part B: the scientific proposal. Word template available online.
- B-1: 10 pages. Sections “Excellence”, “Impact”, “Implementation”
  - What you want to do, what impact it will have in your field *and beyond*; why now, why you, why at the host institution?
  - Follow the template exactly.
  - Briefly summarise the state of the art, but don’t overdo references, they eat space.
  - Include specific, enumerated objectives, work packages, milestones and a timeline / gantt chart.
- B-2: no limit – CV, how great the host institution is.
- *All parts*, including B-2, are essential for a positive evaluation.
- Again, please check the “work programme” and “guide for applicants” in detail!

# MSCA PFs: personal recommendations

- Ask potential hosts far in advance, half a year or more before deadline. Make sure they will actually help with the proposal, not just be a contact with their university's administration.
- Formal approval by host's administration could take weeks and they might want a near-mature draft, so get started early both talking to them (via academic host) and with writing!
- Try to find colleagues who can pass you their successful proposals.
- Your project is supposed to not be a “direct continuation” of your PhD or other previous work, but you also have to demonstrate directly related competence.  
Anecdotally, some proposals can get away with being fairly obvious direct continuations, if they're really strong and smart at making the idea sound novel.
- Having some publication record independent of you PhD supervisor (papers as single-author or with colleagues from other institutions) seems very beneficial.

# ERC starting/consolidator/advanced grants

- Looking to fund “high-risk, high-gain” projects. Million-€+ projects: fund your research group (not your own salary, you’ll mainly hire people and buy stuff)
- Usually for faculty level, but (at least for “starting”) a permanent position is *not* required.
- Huge booster for your career, and you can take the money with you if you move.
- Even for “starting”, previous experience in managing (typically national) grants as PI is important.
- Even more challenging than in MSCA to satisfy the somewhat at-odds criteria of proposing something a) as new as possible but b) that you are already an established expert on.
- Two-stage application, but have to submit both parts of the very detailed written application right away. First cut based on shorter part; then second part evaluated + interview.
- Calls heavily oversubscribed, reviewers intent on “killing” candidates for the smallest weakness.
- Making a serious application will take a significant chunk of your time ahead of the deadline!
- Preparing for the interview with many rehearsals and colleague feedback is also essential.
- Check for support resources, training sessions etc offered by national contact points.

# National programmes in Europe

Many countries have “talent attraction” programmes of their own, at PhD/postdoc/faculty levels.

Just a few examples:

- UK: [UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships](#) and other programmes started while out of EU programmes
- Germany: lots of schemes from different funding agencies, see [this brochure](#)
- Netherlands: [Veni-Vidi-Vici](#) program for 3 career levels
- Spain: [Juan de la Cierva](#), [Ramón y Cajal](#), [Beatriz Galindo](#), [ATRAE](#) (rules can change every year)
- Many more...



# Time for a few questions now...

...and make the best of ACHEP2023 to ask any senior colleagues for their experience and advise...

...or maybe even find your MSCA host!

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