Fostering excellent science for future generations through the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA)

Ilse DE WAELE – Project Adviser

European Research Executive Agency (REA)

14/05/2024

The MSCA under Horizon Europe

Pillar I
EXCELLENT SCIENCE

European Research Council

Marie Skłodowska-Curie

Research Infrastructures

Pillar II
GLOBAL CHALLENGES & EUROPEAN INDUSTRIAL COMPETITIVENESS

Clusters
- Health
- Culture, Creativity & Inclusive Society
- Civil Security for Society
- Digital, Industry & Space
- Climate, Energy & Mobility
- Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture & Environment

Joint Research Center

Pillar III
INNOVATIVE EUROPE

European Innovation Council

European Innovation Ecosystems

European Institute of Innovation & Technology

WIDENING PARTICIPATION AND STRENGTHENING THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA

Widening participation & spreading excellence

Reforming & enhancing the European R&I system

European Commission

Pillar I: Excellent Science

Reinforcing and extending the excellence of the Union's science base

European Research Council

Frontier research by the best researchers and their teams

€16 billion

Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions

Equipping researchers with new knowledge and skills through mobility and training

€6.6 billion

Research Infrastructures

Integrated and inter-connected world-class research infrastructures
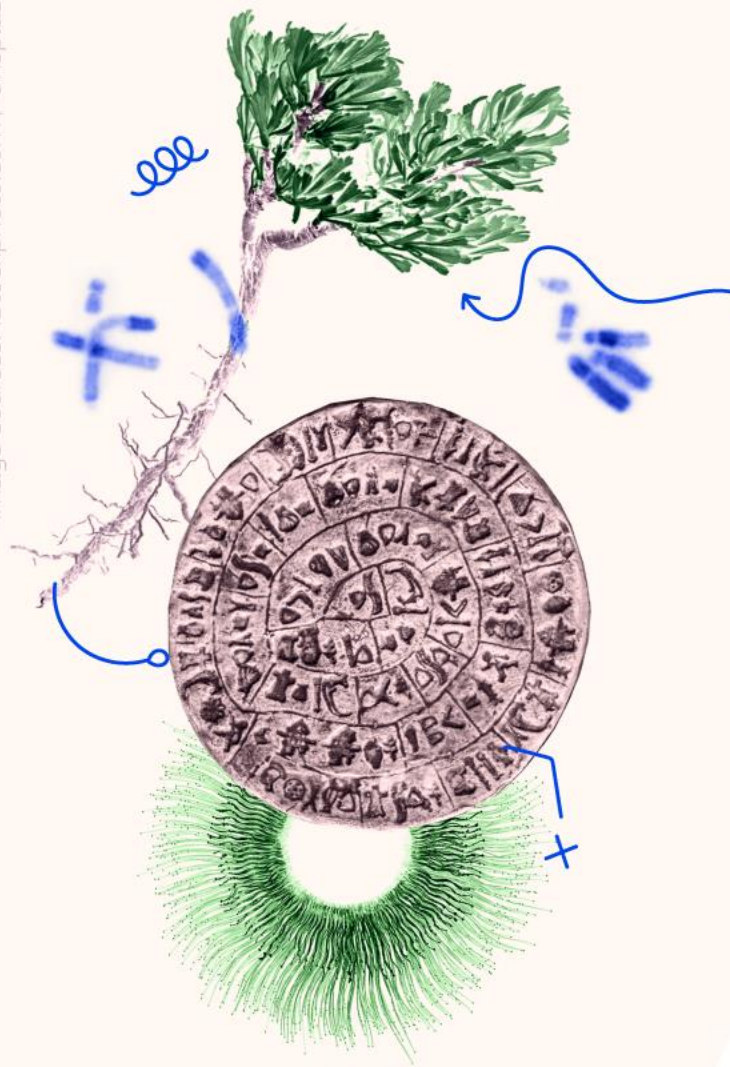
€2.4 billion

European Commission

Introduction to the MSCA

EU's reference programme for doctoral and postdoctoral training, contributing to:

- A highly skilled research-based community able to detect and tackle upcoming challenges and communicate scientific evidence to society.

- Provide researchers with skills needed in the labour market, so that their knowledge and ideas can be converted into products and services for the benefit of public use.

- Develop excellent doctoral programmes enhancing the global attractiveness and visibility of the institutions involved.

- Promote the EU's global attractiveness for talents.

- Budget under Horizon Europe: **6.6€ billion**

- **Worldwide** geographic coverage.

Policy background, principles and priorities

- Contribution to the **European Research Area (ERA)** and **European Education Area (EEA)**

- Contribution to the **EU external policy objectives**

- Committed to the **European Charter for Researchers** and the **Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers** + **Innovative Doctoral Training Principles**

- Underlying Principles: **Open Science, Responsible Research & Innovation**

- New publishing platform: **Open Research Europe** (open peer-review): https://open-research-europe.ec.europa.eu/

Key features of the MSCA

Researchers' training, skills & career development (all career stages)

Excellent research in all domains (bottom-up approach)

International, cross-sectoral & interdisciplinary mobility

Attractive working & employment conditions

Structuring impact on organisations through excellent programmes

Strong collaboration with industry & SMEs
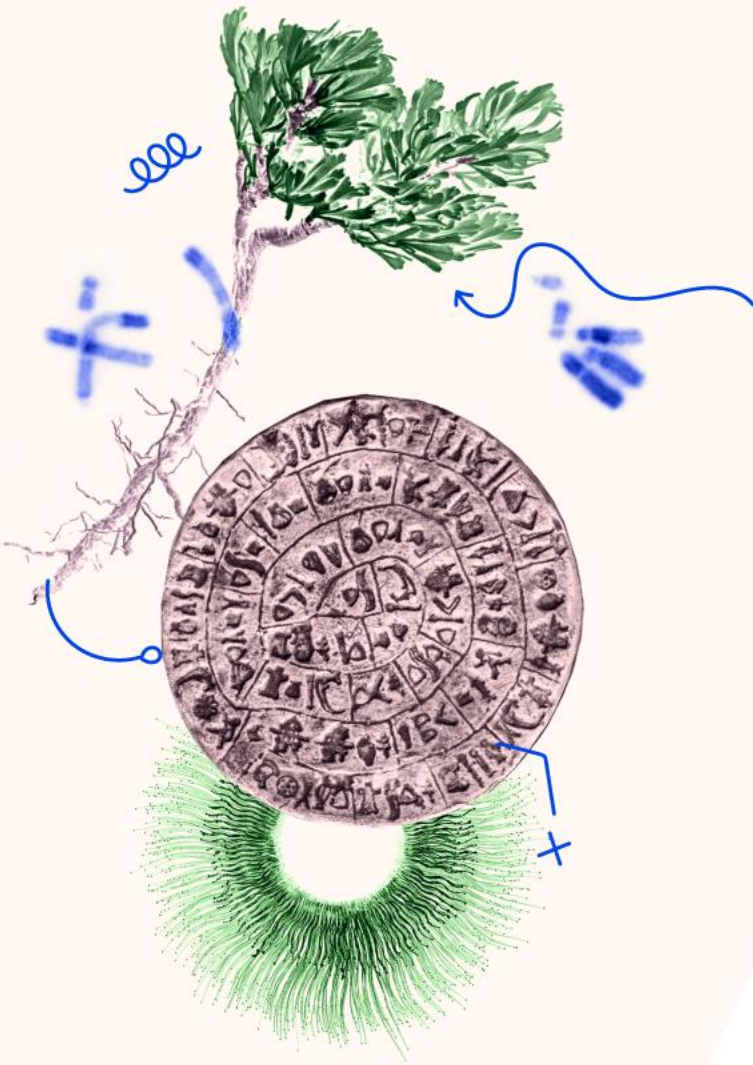
European Commission

Principles of Horizon Europe

- **Streamlined actions**, clearer identity

- **Simpler rules**, harmonised conditions

- **Demand management** to maintain high quality

- **Reinforced synergies** within Horizon Europe and with other EU funding programmes

- New **guidelines on supervision** to ensure that researchers are adequately supervised

- Towards **"greener MSCA"** to promote sustainable behaviours and policies, support policy and decision-making, through MSCA Green Charter, Green Deal thematic clustering events…

European Commission

More gender-friendly and inclusive MSCA

- Horizon 2020: **Over 41% of female fellows** (from 38% in RISE to 44% in ITN)

- In line with the Charter and Code, all MSCA projects are encouraged to **embrace diversity**

- In the interest of **non-discrimination and equal opportunities:**

  - ➢ Family allowances will be accessible to all, even if their parental status changes during the duration of the project

  - ➢ Long-term leave allowance in case of researchers' leave, including maternity, paternity, parental, sick or special leave

  - ➢ Broader definition of family to ensure full access to these allowances (recognised LGBTI+ couples)

European Commission

The Actions

Doctoral Networks

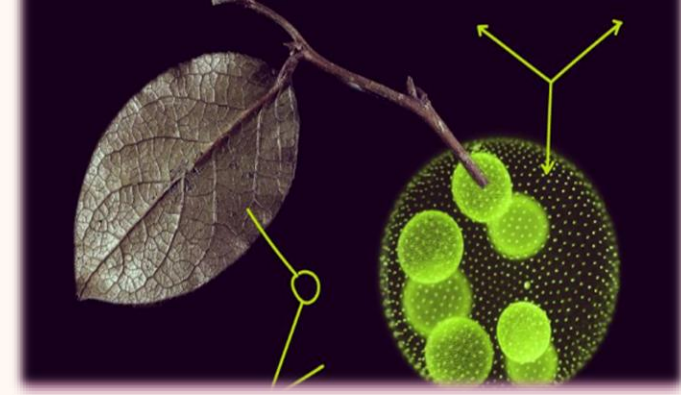*Doctoral programmes in and outside academia incl. joint & industrial doctorates*

Postdoctoral Fellowships

Support to excellent postdoctoral researchers

Staff Exchanges
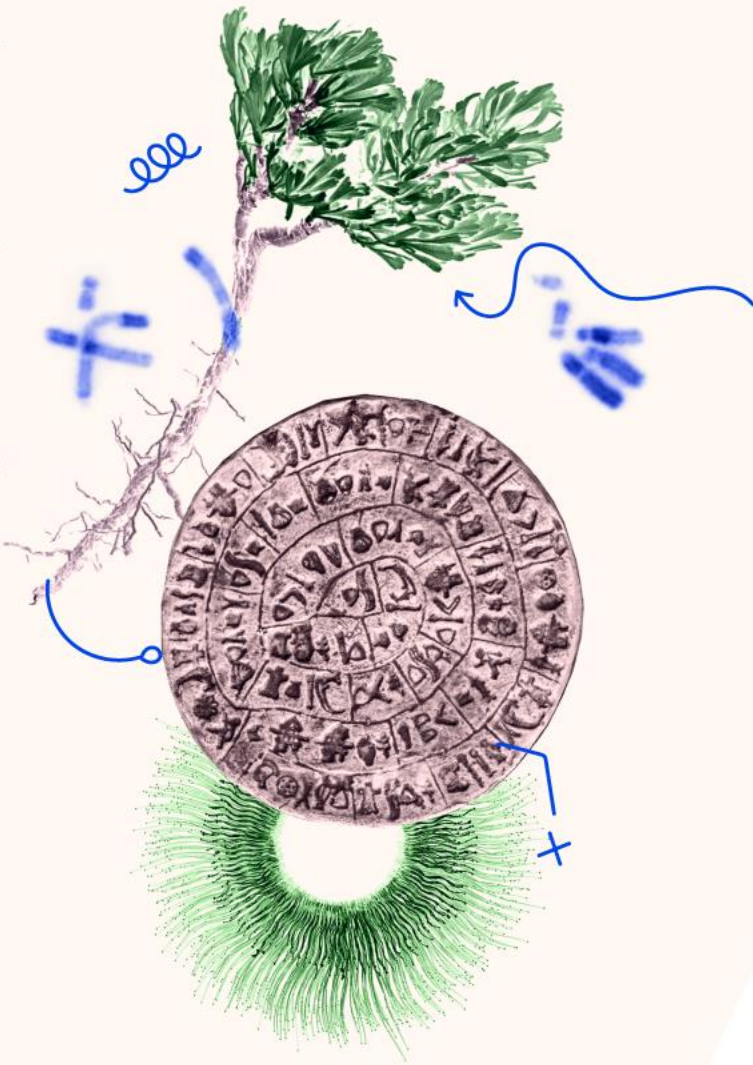
Support for research and innovation staff exchanges

COFUND

Co-funding doctoral and postdoctoral programmes

MSCA and Citizens

Public outreach events (Night)

European Commission

Postdoctoral Fellowships

- Support researchers' careers and **foster excellence in research and innovation.**

- Researchers holding a **PhD** can carry out their research activities, acquire **new skills** and develop their **careers abroad**, whilst developing competences in **non-academic sectors** and working within **interdisciplinary teams**.

Benefits of the MSCA

- High-quality research training and supervision offered

- Build up strong research and innovation partnerships

- Strengthened research capacity

- New knowledge and skills in and outside academia

- Innovation-oriented mindset, to convert ideas into products and services.

- Increased career prospects and employability

- Scientific excellence promoted in all countries

- Stronger European Research Area (ERA)

- New links between research, industry and society

European Commission

MSCA-backed Nobel Laureates

- Since the beginning of the programme, **17 MSCA researchers** have been awarded the Nobel Prize. Some of the Laureates also **supervised** the award-winning research.

Most recently in 2023, Anne L'Huillier and Ferenc Krausz were awarded the **Nobel Prize in Physics.** Both researchers supervised and coordinated several **MSCA** projects under the **FP6, FP7 and H2020** frameworks.

- The work of MSCA researchers continues to **change our lives for the better** through their **scientific discoveries** across all research and innovation disciplines.
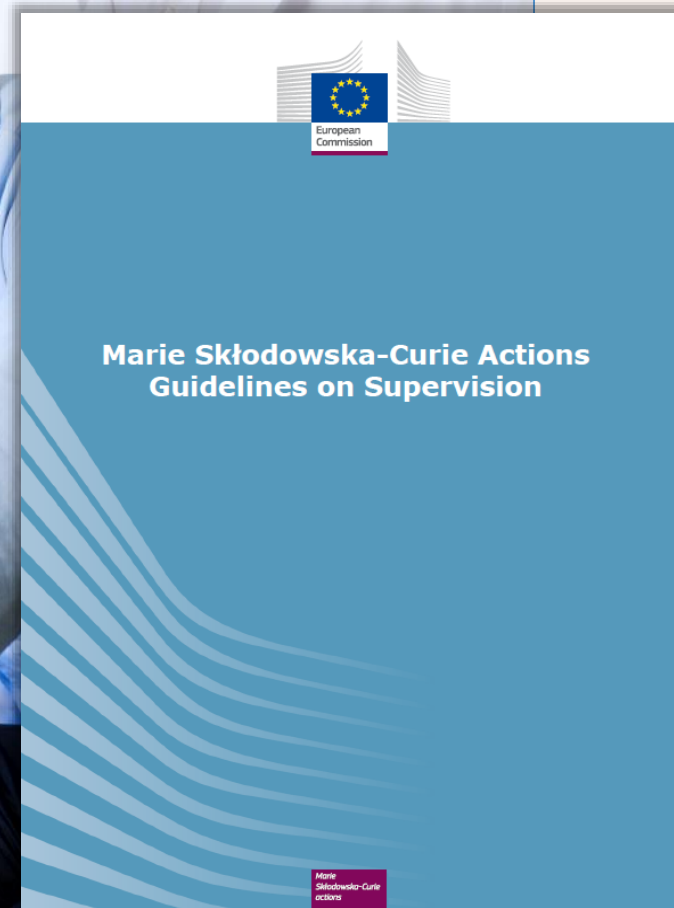
European Commission

Recommended Guidelines in the Horizon Europe Work programme

*"All MSCA-funded projects are encouraged to follow the recommendations outlined in the **Guidelines for MSCA supervision"**.*
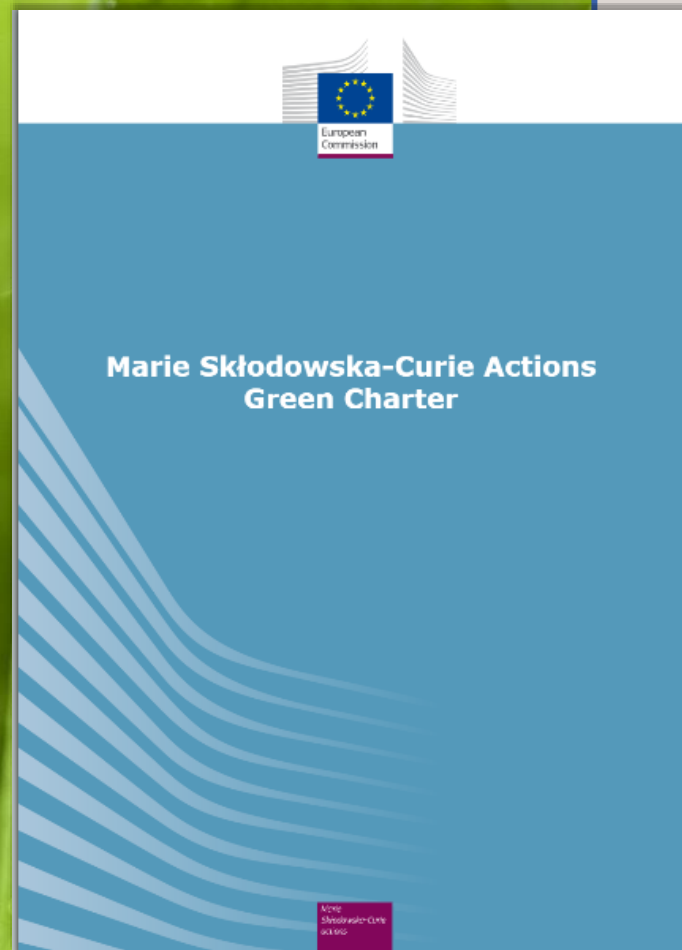
A set of recommendations to be adopted on a best effort basis by participants in the programme (both individuals and institutions):

e.g. from research support and career development to well-being, conflict resolution and training for supervisors.

https://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions/about-msca/msca-guidelines-supervision

**Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions
Guidelines on Supervision**

Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions

European Commission

Recommended Guidelines in the Horizon Europe Work programme

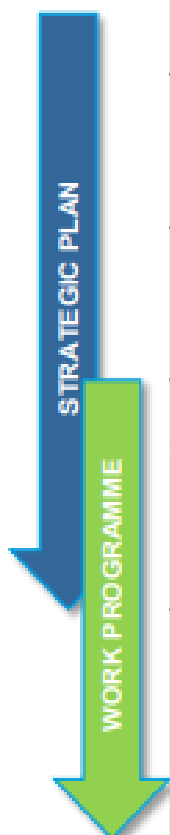**Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Green Charter**

*"All MSCA-funded projects are encouraged to address the principles of the **MSCA Green Charter** and implement measures to minimize the environmental footprint of their activities".*
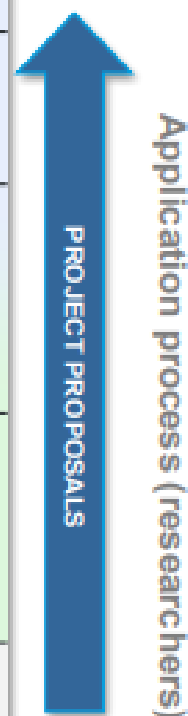
https://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions/green-charter

European Commission

Link between policy priorities and project results

EU POLICY PRIORITIES	Overall priorities of the European Union (Green Deal, Fit for the Digital Age,...)
KEY STRATEGIC ORIENTATIONS	Set of strategic objectives within the EC policy priorities where R&I investments are expected to make a difference
IMPACT AREAS	Group of expected impacts highlighting the most important transformation to be fostered through R&I
EXPECTED IMPACTS = DESTINATIONS	Wider long term effects on society (including the environment), the economy and science, enabled by the outcomes of R&I investments (long term). It refers to the specific contribution of the project to the work programme expected impacts described in the destination. Impacts generally occur some time after the end of the project.
EXPECTED OUTCOMES = TOPICS	The expected effects, over the medium term, of projects supported under a given topic. The results of a project should contribute to these outcomes, fostered in particular by the dissemination and exploitation measures. This may include the uptake, diffusion, deployment, and/or use of the project's results by direct target groups. Outcomes generally occur during or shortly after the end of the project.
PROJECT RESULTS	What is generated during the project implementation. This may include, for example, know-how, innovative solutions, algorithms, proof of feasibility, new business models, policy recommendations, guidelines, prototypes, demonstrators, databases and datasets, trained researchers, new infrastructures, networks, etc. Most project results (inventions, scientific works, etc.) are 'Intellectual Property', which may, if appropriate, be protected by formal 'Intellectual Property Rights'

Strategic Planning and Programming (EC)

STRATEGIC PLAN

WORK PROGRAMME

Application process (researchers)

PROJECT PROPOSALS

European Commission

tips for a successful proposal

use the PF 2024 call template and instructions!

1. **Part A (Administrative Form):**
   1. Keep the host organization (beneficiary), any associated partners (GF host, secondment or NAP hosts), and your current organization clear to avoid confusion or penalisation.

2. **Part B1 and B2 (Core of the Proposal):**
   1. Clearly describe your research plan and methodology. Proposals that are overly general or too vague will not receive a high score.
   2. Write in your own words, tailored to your expertise. Evaluators spot "proposal jargon" easily.
   3. Highlight the innovation compared to existing state of the art, ensuring the plan is also achievable within 2-3 years.
   4. Address all criteria without contradicting yourself.
   5. Pay equal attention to all sections; do not neglect the impact and implementation (Sections 2 and 3).
   6. Clearly address transfer of knowledge (both ways) and any (technical/soft) training you will receive (<u>be specific!</u>)
   7. Ensure the Gantt chart aligns with the written text.
   8. <u>Stay within the page limit</u>; excess pages won't be visible to evaluators and can lead to a significant score drop.

3. **Clarity and Structure:**
   1. Use explicit, structured text that is easy for busy evaluators to navigate.
   2. Avoid lengthy blocks of text or too-small fonts; use headlines and highlights for essential information.
   3. Proofread thoroughly before submitting to ensure clarity and understanding.

- Maintain good communication with the host organization for necessary information. Evaluators easily spot proposals where the host input was minimal.

- Follow the provided template!

European Commission

Thank you!

_____

#MSCA #HorizonEU

@REA_research

▶ https://rea.ec.europa.eu/funding-and-grants/horizon-europe-marie-sklodowska-curie-actions_en

_____

European Commission