DGIP-CEDS

Data Governance and Intellectual Property Governance in Common European Data Spaces

Pravni fakultet u Rijeci

Tips & tricks on how to prepare a successful proposal for an MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowship: a current MSCA postdoctoral fellow's application journey

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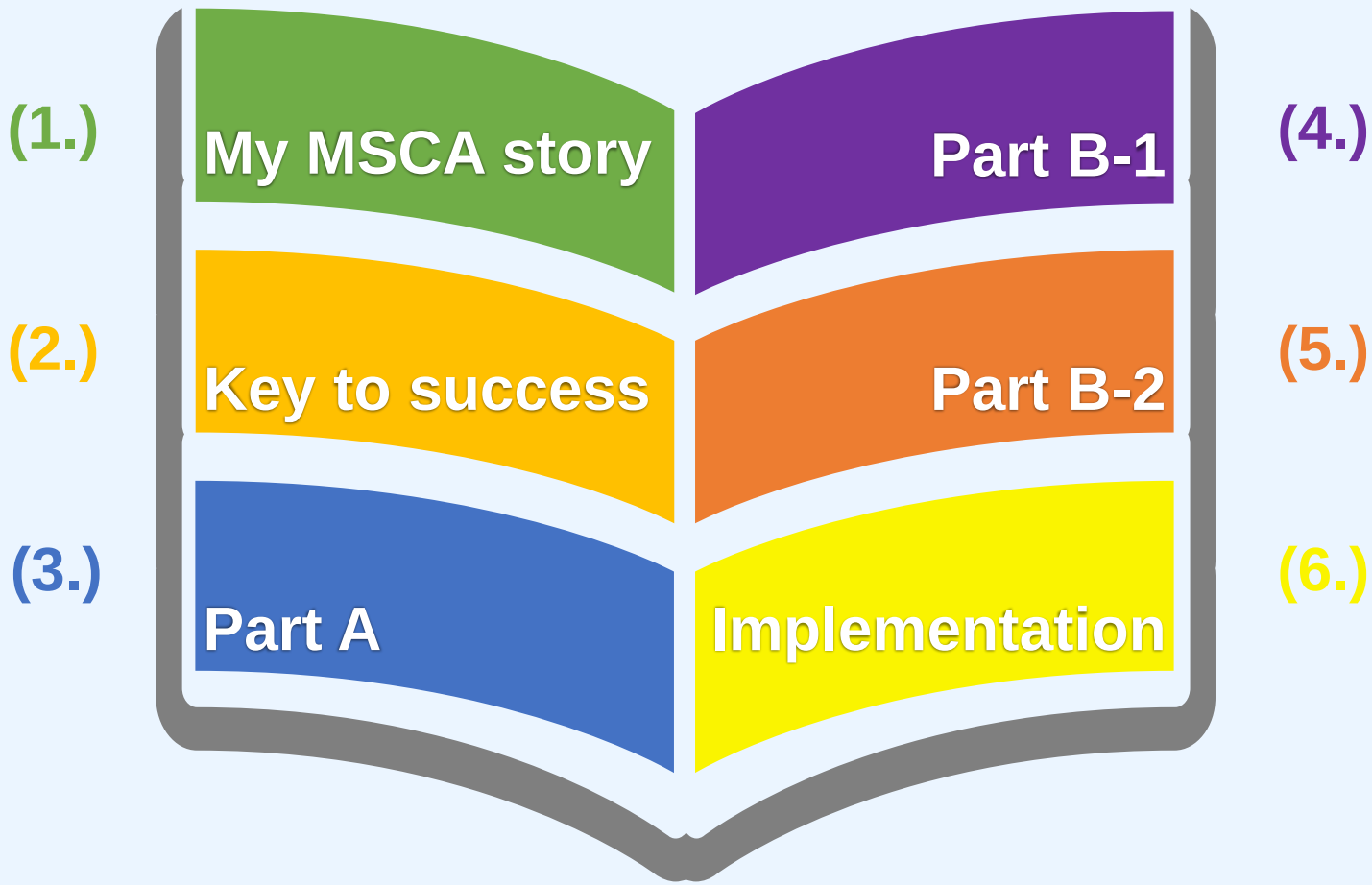
Sveučilište u Rijeci
University of Rijeka

Overview of presentation



1.) My MSCA story

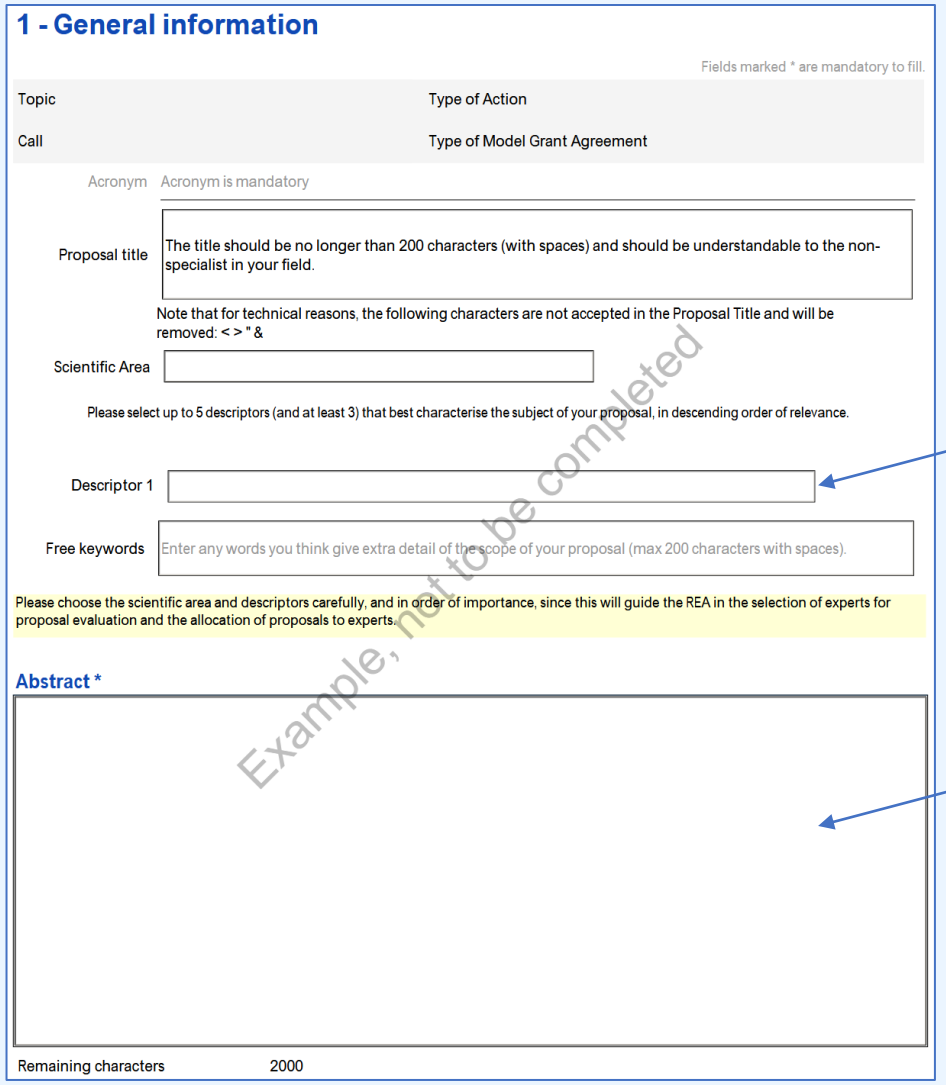
- Completed joint PhD programme as part of **MSCA Doctoral Networks** (2019–22):
  - University of Vienna
  - University of Bologna
  - University of Turin
- Currently engaged in **MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowship** (2025–27):
  - University of Rijeka, Faculty of Law (project coordinator: Prof. Dr. Sc. Ivana Kunda)
- **Key benefits and professional development opportunities** in MSCA programmes:
  - Prestigious EU programme offers adequate support for effective R&I and networking
  - Standardised implementation rules (similar to other Horizon Europe programmes)
  - Exposure to foreign work and living environments improves professional credentials

2.) Key to success: requirements-led proposal writing strategy

- Why is a **“requirements-led” perspective** useful when preparing an MSCA-PF application?
  - strict formal requirements to comply with
  - detailed guidance available on what to consider when answering questions
  - pre-determined evaluation criteria

- Working with the **right tools** to understand and meet MSCA-PF requirements:
  - **Proposal template (Part A: application form and Part B: technical description)**
  - **MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowship Handbook**
  - **Proposal evaluation form**

3.) Part A: “good to know” issues



1 - General information

Fields marked * are mandatory to fill.

Topic	Type of Action
Call	Type of Model Grant Agreement

Acronym: Acronym is mandatory

Proposal title: The title should be no longer than 200 characters (with spaces) and should be understandable to the non-specialist in your field.

Note that for technical reasons, the following characters are not accepted in the Proposal Title and will be removed: < > " &

Scientific Area

Please select up to 5 descriptors (and at least 3) that best characterise the subject of your proposal, in descending order of relevance.

Descriptor 1

Free keywords: Enter any words you think give extra detail of the scope of your proposal (max 200 characters with spaces).

Please choose the scientific area and descriptors carefully, and in order of importance, since this will guide the REA in the selection of experts for proposal evaluation and the allocation of proposals to experts.

Abstract *

Example, not to be completed

Remaining characters 2000

insert: MSCA keywords

Possible structure:

- context and research problem
- relevance
- research aim
- research objectives and methods
- expected scientific, societal / economic impact
- key features of hosting arrangement(s)

Style:

- “sell” project idea to non-expert audience

3.) Part A: “good to know” issues

List of up to 5 publications, widely-used datasets, software, goods, services, or any other achievements relevant to the call content.

Type of achievement	Short description (Max 500 characters)

List of up to 5 most relevant previous projects or activities, connected to the subject of this proposal.

Name of Project or Activity	Short description (Max 500 characters)

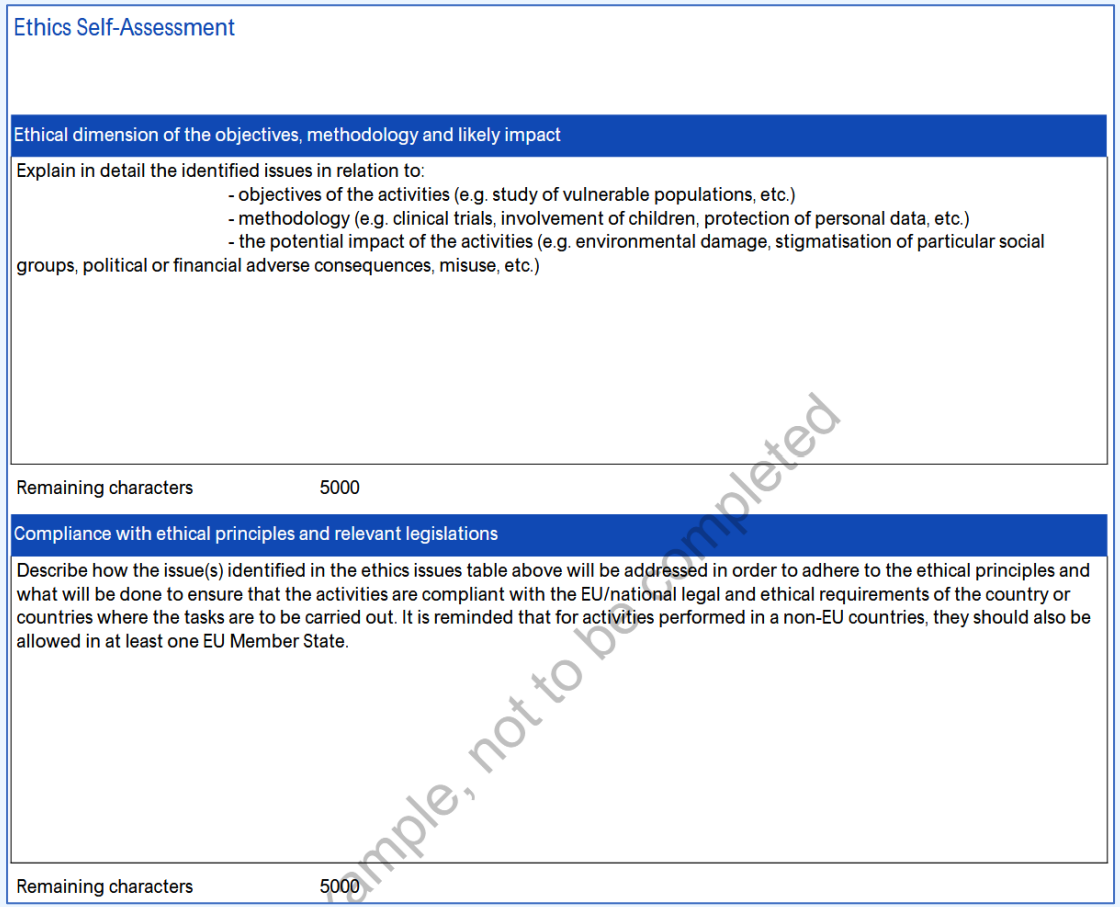
Description of any significant infrastructure and/or any major items of technical equipment, relevant to the proposed work.

Name of infrastructure of equipment	Short description (Max 300 characters)

completed

to be filled for the host organisation/supervisor and
should align with Part B-2 - 5. Capacity of the Participating Organisations

3.) Part A: “good to know” issues



Ethics Self-Assessment

Ethical dimension of the objectives, methodology and likely impact

Explain in detail the identified issues in relation to:
- objectives of the activities (e.g. study of vulnerable populations, etc.)
- methodology (e.g. clinical trials, involvement of children, protection of personal data, etc.)
- the potential impact of the activities (e.g. environmental damage, stigmatisation of particular social groups, political or financial adverse consequences, misuse, etc.)

Remaining characters 5000

Compliance with ethical principles and relevant legislations

Describe how the issue(s) identified in the ethics issues table above will be addressed in order to adhere to the ethical principles and what will be done to ensure that the activities are compliant with the EU/national legal and ethical requirements of the country or countries where the tasks are to be carried out. It is reminded that for activities performed in a non-EU countries, they should also be allowed in at least one EU Member State.

Remaining characters 5000

include information on data management, processing of personal data and handling of confidential data and align with Part B-2 - 6. Additional ethics information

4.) Part B-1: Excellence (50%)

1.1 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)

Example structure:

- Background: EU policy developments and relevance of the research problem
- Research aims and objectives
  - set three main research objectives (one per work package)
- State-of-the-art and innovative aspects of the project
  - possible connections with other EU-funded projects, and how the project could supplement them

Example evaluation:

"The research proposal is novel, ambitious, innovative, specific, very timely and of high societal relevance"

"The research objectives are realistic, achievable, measurable and easily verifiable."

"The state of the art, the knowledge gap and the need for the project are very well demonstrated. The referenced literature is extensive and current. The project addresses an emerging area of [the scientific discipline]. It is capable of going beyond the state of the art and making a significant contribution to both theory and practice."

4.) Part B-1: Excellence (50%)

1.2 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)

Example structure:

- Methodological approaches and integration of disciplines
  - strive for interdisciplinarity and provide overview of research methods for each work package
  - possible cooperation with public sector bodies and set up Expert and Stakeholder Advisory Board
- Diversity aspects
- Research data management and open science practices
  - Data Management Plan + personal data processing and confidentiality issues + OA and trusted repository

Example evaluation:

"The methodology outlined in the proposal is very clear and detailed, with several distinct and complementary steps. These measures are applied precisely, with a high level of detail and in a way that ensures consistency throughout the analysis."

"It is very good that the proposal takes into account several interdisciplinary issues related to the proposed research [.]; the idea of setting up an 'Expert and Stakeholder Advisory Board', including many people already identified with their specific expertise, is commendable."

4.) Part B-1: Excellence (50%)

1.3 Quality of the supervision, training and of the two-way transfer of knowledge between the researcher and the host

Example structure:

- Quality of the supervision
- Training and two-way transfer of knowledge between the host organisation and the researcher
  - Career Development Plan + training activities (provided for and by the researcher)

Example evaluation:

"The supervisor has good expertise in the areas covered by the proposal."

"The knowledge transfer activities are well described. The researcher would give seminars on Marie Sklodowska Curie projects and on [project-related issues] to students and researchers in [specific fields]."

"The planned training activities are poorly described: the proposal provides only participation in PhD seminars on [specific topics]."

4.) Part B-1: Excellence (50%)

1.4 Quality and appropriateness of the researcher's professional experience, competences and skills

Key point:

- summarise and highlight key points in CV (Part B-2 - 4. CV of the researcher)

Example evaluation:

"The researcher has already a very good track record in the field, with many trans-European and cross-sectoral experiences, which guarantees a successful completion of the fellowship with prospects for a future career."

"The researcher's academic and non-academic skills, experience and involvement in research projects and publications related to the topic of the proposal are very good."

4.) Part B-1: Impact (30%)

2.1 Credibility of the measures to enhance the career perspectives and employability of the researcher and contribution to his/her skills development

Example evaluation:

"The proposal adequately addresses the possibility of employment in academia. The expected skills acquirement would help the researcher build essential competencies for independent work, increasing their potential to secure tenure-track positions or ERC Starting Grants. Interdisciplinary expertise and broader networks could also open new collaboration opportunities within the EU."

4.) Part B-1: Impact (30%)

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

Key points:

- Communication and Dissemination Plan (or Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation Plan)
- differentiated communication and outreach strategy:
  - e.g. project website, LinkedIn, publication of scientific articles (in addition to deliverables), presentations to various scientific-professional and general-public audiences, organisation of events (e.g. conference)

Example evaluation:

"The proposed communication and outreach activities are very specific and detail essential elements such as preferred audiences. The communication plan addresses different stakeholders and uses different methods that are appropriately chosen to achieve their results."

"The proposed dissemination measures are adequate, very detailed, correctly identifying how to deal with it. It also determines in a concrete way the target groups, which correspond to what is proposed in the proposal. Professional, rather than general dissemination channels and tools are emphasized, which is appropriate. Feedback would be sought through an advisory board and collaboration with the relevant units of an important public research centre."

4.) Part B-1: Impact (30%)

2.3 The magnitude and importance of the project's contribution to the expected scientific, societal and economic impacts

Example evaluation:

"The scientific impact of the project would be highly significant, in that it could create high-quality novel insights that may inspire ongoing or subsequent efforts to draw up broader theoretical frameworks. It is highly likely to inspire policy initiatives (at EU level and elsewhere) [.]. The results would be highly relevant for both the private and public sector and industry in their attempts to foster innovation."

4.) Part B-1: Quality and Efficiency of the Implementation (20%)

3.1 Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages

Example work plan (Gantt-chart):

		Year 1 (months)												Year 2 (months)											
Work package	Title	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
WP1	Landscape analysis and typology for DGIP-CEDS						M1.1	**D1.1**																	
WP2	Impact analysis of the EHDS implementation								M2.1		M2.2		M2.3	**D2.1**											
WP3	Projective analysis for future common European data spaces																	M3.1		M3.2		M3.3	**D3.1**		
WP4	Training and transfer of knowledge	**D4.1**					M4.1		**D4.2**	**D4.3**												**D4.4**			
WP5	Communication and dissemination	**D5.1**	M5.1									**D5.2**		**D5.3**		**D5.4**		**D5.5**					**D5.6**		**D5.7**
WP6	Management activities	**D6.1**	**D6.2**											**D6.3**											M6.1

The tasks (T), milestones (M) and deliverables (D) described above are organised in six work packages (WPs):

WP1: **Landscape analysis and model-building for DGIP-CEDS** (Fellow: 5PMs; Supervisor: 0.4PM)

T1.1: Thematic analysis **T1.2**: Orientation meetings with the JRC and data space experts

M1.1: Typology developed

D1.1: *Typology of data governance and IP governance in common European data spaces*

4.) Part B-1: Quality and Efficiency of the Implementation (20%)

3.1 Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages (cont.)

Example structure:

- Work plan
  - set timing and workload for each work package (WP): tasks (T), milestones (M) and deliverables (D)
- Feasibility and risk assessment
  - Risk Management Plan

Example evaluation:

"The work plan is credible and complete in terms of work packages, tasks, deliverables and milestones."

"The Gantt chart meets the requirements and includes all aspects developed in the project."

"The workload is appropriately distributed to ensure the successful completion of the grant. The workload is reasonable, realistic and achievable; the resources to be committed are appropriate and cost-effective in relation to the proposed activities."

"The research risks of the project are clearly identified and mitigation measures are explained. A specific deliverable (i.e. 'risk management plan') is foreseen."

4.) Part B-1: Quality and Efficiency of the Implementation (20%)

3.2 Quality and capacity of the host institutions and participating organisations, including hosting arrangements

Example structure:

- Organisation and management structure
  - regular meetings with supervisor
- Quality and capacity of the host organisation
  - professional, infrastructural and administrative support
  - host organisation's involvement in relevant EU-funded projects

Example evaluation:

"A well-developed management structure is foreseen, including fortnightly progress monitoring mechanisms."

"The description of the hosting arrangement is fair. The host institution has good experience in managing projects [.]."

"The details on the integration of the researcher into the research teams of the host institution are not detailed enough."

5.) Part B-2: "good to know" issues

5.1 Template table: ***Overview of Participating Organisations***

Organisation role	PIC	Legal Entity Short Name	Academic organisation (Y/N)	Country	Name of Supervisor
Beneficiary					
Associated partner linked to a beneficiary (if applicable)					
Associated partner for outgoing phase (mandatory for GF)					
Associated partner for secondment (if applicable)					
Associated partner for non-academic placement (if applicable)					

Non-binding example of template letter of commitment for PF associated partners:

I undersigned *[title, first name and surname]*, in my quality of *[role in the organisation]* in *[name of the organisation]* commit to set up all necessary provisions to participate as associated partner in the proposal *[proposal number and/or acronym]* submitted to the call HE-MSCA-2024-PF, should the proposal be funded.

On behalf of *[name of the organisation]*, I also confirm that we will participate and contribute to the research, innovation and training activities as planned in this project. In particular, *[name of the organisation]* will be involved in [*free field for any additional information that the participating organisation wishes to indicate in order to describe its role and contribution to the project]*.

I hereby declare that I am entitled to commit into this process the entity I represent.

Name, Date, Signature

6.) Implementation: initial project management issues

- **Project management roles:**
  - MSCA postdoctoral fellow; project coordinator (supervisor); project legal lead; project administration staff; other host institution staff (e.g. librarian, IT support)
- **Legal and financial arrangements:**
  - employment and mobility-related legal issues (e.g. clarification of various MSCA-PF allowances in the employment contract, registration of residence, taxation, health insurance, pension scheme, recognition of certificates)
  - discuss internal avenue for applications and reimbursement of 'Research, training and networking' expenses (e.g. conference or external training costs) (see also MSCA Financial Guide)
- **Research-related considerations:**
  - start with drafting plans (CDP, DMP, RMP, CDP/CDEP) + organise documents and record activities + undertake necessary training + initiate collaborations with internal/external partners
  - 2 years: relatively short time to perform a broad range of scientific and research management tasks

Good luck with your application!

For related questions:

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Project website:

https://pravri.uniri.hr/en/project/dgip-ceds/