

# Marie Curie Individual Fellowships Evaluation: Do-s and don't-s from the perspective of an evaluator

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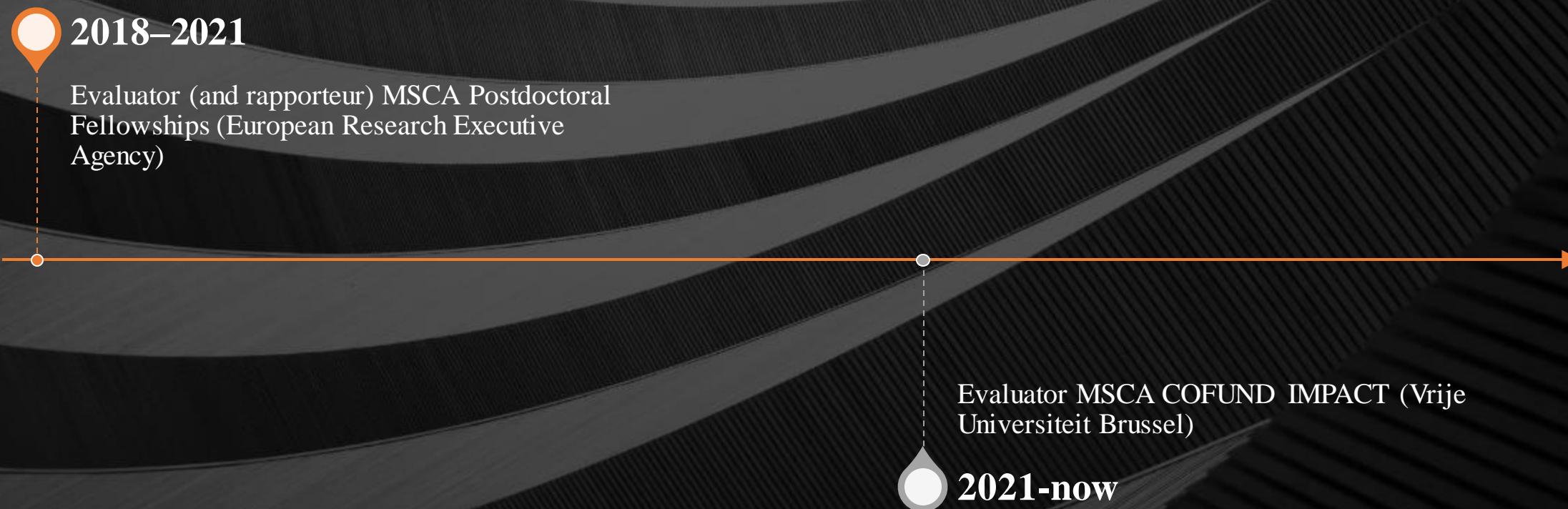
Dr. Brunilda Pali, KU Leuven and University of Amsterdam

[brunilda.pali@kuleuven.be](mailto:brunilda.pali@kuleuven.be); [b.pali@uva.nl](mailto:b.pali@uva.nl)

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# Background experience with the MSCA evaluation



# Responsibilities of evaluators

- **Independent:** they do not represent their employer, their country, or their direct discipline
- **Objective:** evaluate the proposal as written and make no additional assumptions, do not read between the lines, do not “google” applicants
- **Accurate:** use the official evaluation criteria only and not their own ideas of what are good projects
- **Consistent:** apply the same standard of judgment to each proposal
- **Incommunicado:** external contacts on evaluation are not permitted during or after the evaluation



## Process of evaluation from my perspective

- **Always:** Update of my profile and expert areas in the expert database as evaluators are selected from the database on the basis of the level of expertise relevant to a specific call
- **Spring-Summer:** We get a series of e-mails to confirm interest, receive confirmation and then receive and sign contract
- **Autumn:** Evaluation takes place.
- **September:** We receive an e-mail for starting process of evaluation (accepting tasks). The evaluation tasks are assigned by matching an evaluator's expertise to the topic of each proposal and by ensuring complementarity with the expertise of the other two evaluators. Therefore, we are generally asked to not decline tasks in SEP.
- **October:** Evaluation itself takes place in about one month and it's very intense, especially if one is working full time.
- **November:** This is usually the time when the consensus reports are written (I have never had a situation of dissensus but should this arise there are procedures in place!)
- **Tools:** E-learning, manual, assessment grid, and feedback and guidance and oversight of vice-chair (and if needed chair)

# How a proposal is evaluated

## **Stage 1. Individual evaluation**

- Each proposal is read independently by three experts
- The experts each prepare an Individual Evaluation Report (IER) on that proposal
- Experts should not indicate any score at the IER phase.



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

# Individual evaluation report

## CRITERION 1 – EXCELLENCE

Quality and pertinence of the projects' research and innovation objectives (and the extent to which they are ambitious and go beyond the state of the art)

- Strengths
- Weaknesses

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)

- Strengths
- Weaknesses

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

- Strengths
- Weaknesses

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

- Strengths
- Weaknesses

### *Questions from Assessment Grid*

*Are the state-of-the-art, specific objectives and an overview of the action provided and relevant?*

*Is the proposed research methodology and approach credible (in view of the type of research / innovation activities proposed)?*

*Is the planned research original and innovative? Will the action contribute to advance the state -of-the-art within the research field (i.e. new concepts, approaches or methods)?*

*Where applicable, are there interdisciplinary aspects to consider?*

*Where applicable, is the gender dimension in research content well addressed (i.e. in research activities where human beings are involved as subjects or end-users)?*

# How a proposal is evaluated

## **Stage 2. Consensus Report**

- After the submission of all three IERs for a proposal, one of the three evaluators will receive a task to draft the Consensus Report (CR) for some or all of the proposals they evaluated in the IER phase (becomes a Rapporteur).
- A rapporteur has previous experience and good drafting and moderating skills. A rapporteur is only expected to have a generic knowledge of the proposal's field.
- The evaluators agree on a CR and grade it, all under the guidance and oversight of the Vice-Chair (and if necessary, the chair).



# General tips and guidelines

- **Rule 1:** Familiarise yourself with the MSCA funding programme and do not hesitate to ask for help
- **Rule 2:** Be sure to develop a competitive CV
- **Rule 3:** Develop your idea properly
- **Rule 4:** Find a good match with the host institution
- **Rule 5:** Highlight the 2-way transfer of knowledge
- **Rule 6:** Study and strictly follow EU proposal template
- **Rule 7:** Take care with all sections
- **Rule 8:** Proposal: Structure, structure, structure
- **Rule 9:** Get as much feedbacks as possible
- **Rule 10:** Do not forget the final check of your application

**Source:** Baumert P, Cenni F, Antonkine ML (2022) Ten simple rules for a successful EU Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Postdoctoral (MSCA) fellowship application. PLoS Comput Biol 18(8): e1010371.  
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pcbi.1010371>



# Do's and don'ts

- Even though evaluators are experts, you should prepare your proposal for both expert and non-expert evaluators [strike a balance].
- Write everything in your own words and do not copy paste from others. Evaluators read many proposals all the time, so they can spot proposal jargon [be personal and original].
- Proposals that are very general do not give a good impression (blah blah..) [so please be specific!].
- It is very visible when the institution and supervisor wants you or not, so please if you don't have a good collaboration with them, be sure that this will not pass unnoticed [consider changing institution].
- Evaluating might seem very technical but it is essentially about impressions, so do not deliver a sloppy work [proofread everything!].



# Do's and don'ts

- Make sure you provide information for all the evaluation criteria and all sub-criteria [self-answer honestly the assessment grid questions]
- Even though some criteria have technically more weight, all sections need to be perfectly developed! [Do not focus on this weighting, you are competing with the very best, so once points are lost for minor issues, proposal slips easily form the threshold.]
- Be explicit, structured and make it easy for (busy) evaluators to find the rights answers, but also for fair evaluators to stand their ground [Do not provide unreadable long blocks of text, make headlines or highlights that evaluators can easily find back the essential information they are looking for.]