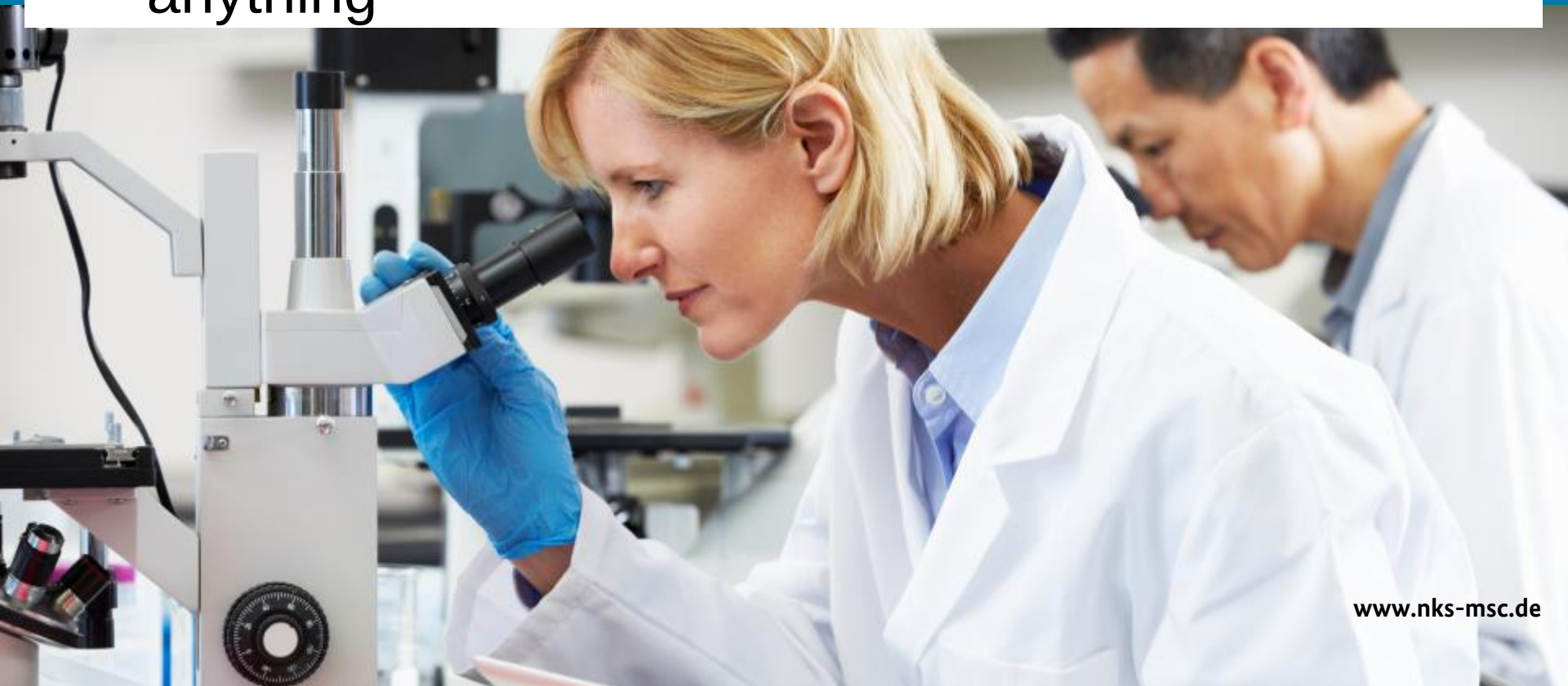
Federal Ministry
of Education
and Research

NKS Marie-Skłodowska-Curie-Maßnahmen
Nationale Kontaktstelle zum EU-Programm Horizont 2020

Welcome to the webinar „How to write a successful MSC-IF proposal“ - We will have a soundcheck at 13:55h – at the moment, you cannot hear anything



www.nks-msc.de

Contents

Application procedure

- Time frame for application

  → **11.04.2017 – 14.09.2017**

- Call for application once a year, dates can be found in the MSCA Work Programme 2016/17
- Participant portal http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal Call, documents (Work Programme, Guide for Applicants), proposal template, submission system (electronically)
- Closing date: 14 September 2017, 17:00 p.m. (Brussels local time)

Application procedure

- Proposals are submitted in a single stage and evaluated in one step

Parts of the proposal:

- Part A: Administrative Data
- Part B: proposal text

Scheduling

- Application: 5 months (11 April – 14 September 2017)
- Evaluation: max. 5 months (results: 13 February at the latest)
- Preparation: max. 3 months to sign the grant agreement

Earliest possible starting date: beginning of the following month after signing the grant agreement

Latest possible starting date: 12 months after signing the grant agreement (exceptions are possible)

Documents

Part A

1. General information (about proposal, including the abstract)
2. Administrative data of participating organisations
3. Budget
4. Ethics
5. Call specific questions

Documents

Part B – Document 1

- Start page (1 page)
- Table of contents (1 page)
- List of participating organisations (1 page)

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1. Excellence
2. Impact
3. Quality and Efficiency of the Implementation

} max. 10 pages

Documents

Part B – Document 2

4. CV of the experienced researcher (5 pages)

5. Capacities of the participating organisations (1 page each)

6. Ethical aspects

7. Letters of commitment of partner organisation (GF only)

Part B – Evaluation Criteria

1. Excellence (50%)

2. Impact (30%)

3. Quality and Efficiency of the Implementation (20%)

(cf. MSCA Work Programme 2016/17, pp. 60-65)

IF: Marie Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellowships		
Excellence	**Impact**	**Quality and efficiency of the implementation**
Quality and credibility of the research/innovation project; level of novelty, appropriate consideration of inter/multidisciplinary and gender aspects	**Enhancing the potential and future career prospects of the researcher**	Coherence and effectiveness of **the work plan**
Quality and appropriateness of the training and of the two way **transfer of knowledge** between the researcher and the host	Quality of the proposed measures to exploit and **disseminate** the project results	Appropriateness of the allocation of **tasks and resources**
Quality of the supervision and of the integration in the team/institution	Quality of the proposed measures to **communicate** the project activities to different target audiences	Appropriateness of the **management structure and procedures**, including risk management
Capacity of the researcher to reach or re-enforce a position of professional maturity/independence		Appropriateness of the **institutional environment** (infrastructure)
50%	**30%**	**20%**
Weighting		
1	**2**	**3**
Priority in case of *ex aequo*		

Part B – Proposal text

Format

- Use **footnotes** (for references exclusively) at the bottom of each page – endnotes or citations within the text are not allowed
- Use font size 11 in running text, font size 8 in footnotes and tables
- Line spacing: **single**; not multiple or 1 ½
- Use Arial, Arial Narrow or TNR – you can save at least ½ page by using TNR compared to Arial – do not use Verdana (font of the template)
- Respect the **page limit** by all means

B.1 Excellence

B.1.1 Quality and credibility of the research/innovation action (level of novelty, appropriate consideration of inter/multidisciplinary and gender aspects)

- **Introduction and state of the art: do not write an abstract, write an introduction** (not as a start: „This research project focuses…“, but „Since Einstein‘s groundbreaking theory of relativity, curvature of space is …“ – draw the bigger picture and raise curiosity.
- **Objectives (i.e. research goals) and overview of the action** (Research Work Packages should be mentioned here): describe your research goals and how they are embedded into your work plan (the research work packages)

B.1 Excellence

- **Research methodology and approach**: highlight the type of research and innovation activities proposed and connect them distinctively to your objectives

- **Originality and innovative aspects of the research programme** → how does the research project contributes to the advancement of the field? (use words like „novel“, „innovative“, „first-time“, „advance“, „inter-/multidisciplinary“)

B.1 Excellence

- **Gender dimension** in the research content (if applicable): must be mentioned in case of being a crucial part of the research project, i.e. sociological surveys, clinical trials, etc. with gender aspects

- **Interdisciplinary** aspects of the action (if relevant): this should always be relevant, i.e. your research project must be interdisciplinary (though it depends on the field of research – in Humanities, it is always interdisciplinary, in Pure Mathematics not that much (if at all)) – describe it briefly here and mention it before as well

B.1 Excellence

- Explain how the high-quality, novel research is the most likely to open up the best career possibilities for the *experienced researcher* and new collaboration opportunities for the host organisation(s):

  please keep that paragraph short → this is part of the following chapters as well. Just write a harmonic upshot/prospect (2-3 sentences)

B.1 Excellence

Important aspects apart from the mentioned subcriteria

Strengths

- Inter/multidisciplinary aspects have to be emphasized distinctively
- Research methodology has to be attuned to the research object and objectives explicitly
- Introduction is a launch to the overall topic, not an abstract of the proposal
- brief mentioning of potential risks

B.1 Excellence

Important aspects apart from the mentioned subcriteria

Weaknesses

- Lack of current state of the art; most recent international results/developments are not mentioned
- Methodology is described in no satisfying conjunction with the objectives; pros and cons of the methodology are not explained explicitly enough
- Description of advancement of the field is missing
- No potential risks are mentioned (briefly)

B.1 Excellence

B.1.2 Quality and appropriateness of the training and of the two way transfer of knowledge between the researcher and the host

- How does the researcher gain new skills by training at the host institution – scientific skills (**separate chapter**) and soft-skills (**separate chapter**)?
- How does the host institution benefit from the research stay of the scientist and his/her expertise (**separate chapter**)?
- **Global Fellowship**: How will the newly acquired skills be transferred back to the European host institution?

B.1 Excellence

Important aspects concernig the training (scientific training as well as training of transferable skills)

- Clarity and quality of the research training objectives (new techniques, new measuring methods that will be acquired)
- How will these new scientific skills be acquired? Through working on your project? Through special scientific courses at the host institution?
- Courses in „research integrity“ + „big data/open science“
- Relevance and quality of the additional scientific education and the training of transferable skills

B.1 Excellence

Important aspects concernig the training (scientific training as well as training of transferable skills)

Concerning the qualifications (esp. transferable skills):

- They must be helpful to reach an independent position in research (relevant for career development)
- Complementary to yet existing abilitites

B.1 Excellence

Transferable skills considered to be appropriate

- Teaching as well as tutoring/mentoring of students and doctoral candidates (→ leadership/communication skills)
- Project-/Financial-/Organisational Management (project planning, organization of a conference – through your research project)
- Development and organisation of follow-up projects (fund raising, proposal writing)
- Acquisition/Development of abilities in working in an international environment (communication, building networks)
- Business Thinking (through your own project)
- Handling IPR, training in patent law
- Course in gender awareness

B.1 Excellence

Frequently expressed criticism

- Description of training aspects too short (**how the goals will be achieved**)
- Transferable skills are not described significantly enough (**holistic development of the researcher is important, not only scientific development**)
- Lack of a concrete training scheme and its phases
- Lack of indicators/milestones to screen the training progress
- Training scheme is too ambitious
- Particular training elements are missing (esp. secondment to the industrial sector if possible/appropriate)

B.1 Excellence

Transfer of knowledge to the host instituion

- Transfer of **special scientific (unique) expertise** to the host institution through the fellow (for research)
- Transfer of this expertise to the host institution via **teaching and mentoring** undergraduates and PhD students
- Providing **new network opportunities** for the host institution

B.1 Excellence

Adjust **training and transfer of knowledge** to the **specific needs** of the researcher and the host organisation

„Doing more with less“:

- Concentrate on a few training activities you really need instead of trying to be trained in everything → unrealistic
- Acquire management and leadership skills → you will need them in your (non-)academic future as an independent and mature researcher

  Why is the host institution the **perfect match** regarding your accumulated (scientific and transferable) needs?

  How can your expertise promote the host institution?

B.1 Excellence

B.1.3 Quality of the supervision and of the integration in the team/institution

Qualifications and experience of the supervisor(s)

- Track record (academic positions – short)
- Level of experience on the proposed research topic
- How many publications (number) + most important journals? H-Index? Any major patents?
- Major international Collaborations + renowned Prices/Awards/Grants
- How many PhD students/Postdocs so far? → „success stories“ - are they now in leading positions?

B.1 Excellence

Hosting Arrangements

- Further members of the research group
- Further chairs/working groups at the institution
- Interdisciplinary discourse at the institutions – collective colloquia?
- Integration into (inter-)national networks

In case of a Global Fellowship: explain the practical issues and the help by the Welcome Center/International: flat hunting, insurances, dealing with public authorities…

B.1 Excellence

B.1.4 Capacity of the researcher to reach and re-enforce a position of professional maturity/independence

Keep it short 

- Research experience and results
- International Publications (first authorships/single authorships)
- Experience in project implementation/Managment
- Fellowships/Awards
- Experience in supervision/teaching
- Experience in the industrial sector
- International collaborations so far

B.1 Excellence

B 1.4 – What experts appreciated to date

- Being proactive/showing one‘s own initiative (initiation of cooperations (also with the industry or foreign countries), research stays abroad, short research stays in well-respected labs/research groups, organisation of scientific events)
- Proactive pushing of research activities, participation in project management, procuration of third-party funds
- Publications as single/first author
- Supervision of students/doctoral candidates

Mention the Career Development Plan – short-term as well as long-term goals (in chapter 1.3 or 1.4)

B.1 Excellence

Self Description

Do not be too modest (but stay authentic), your competitors are not modest neither

Describe your **individual achievements** and **potential**
→ Explain why

- **your** scientific background is (to a certain degree) unique
- **you** have excellent potential
- **you** are perfectly able to carry out the project
- **you** would greatly benefit from this project

B.1 Excellence

B.1.4 Capacity of the researcher to reach and re-enforce a position of professional maturity in research

- **Refer to the just mentioned aspects:**

  - 7 publications so far → 4 more during the fellowship
  - xy international cooperations so far → new networks
  - no supervision/mentoring/tutoring so far → will gain first experience in this field
  - some experience/skills in organisational/project management → will gain new skills (which are necessary for the next step – in 2.1.)

B.2 Impact

B.2.1 Enhancing the potential and future career prospects of the researcher

Illustration of how the research- and trainig-activities (incl. secondments) make a positive impact on the researcher´s career (**after the fellowship**)

→ Where do you want to go? How does the IF contribute to getting there?

And: Impact on European Research Area (ERA) and European society/economy (only briefly)

B.2 Impact

Impact – Impact on personal career development

- Now you are at 80% → the MSC-IF gives you the missing 20%
  - You will be integrated in existing European and international networks of the host institution as well as have created your own (transnational) networks
  - You will apply the project management experience in the future
  - You will apply your leadership skills you learnt through the supervision of undergraduates and PhD students in the future
  - You will unproblematically be able to work in an international and interdesciplinary research environment

B.2 Impact

Impact – Impact on personal career development

- You will be more visible in the scientific community as you will have produced great publications
- You will have gained teaching experience necessary to get a call for a professorship
- You will know perfectly how to write research proposals

Ideally, all this will bring you in a position to be a fully independent researcher, to apply e.g. for an ERC grant, to be a group leader/junior professor, to get a call for a chair, to initiate your own international collaborations as the coordinating person

B.2 Impact

Impact on ERA

- Your research contributes to Europe strengthening its world-leading position in your field of research (if Europe holds this position now), or
- Your research will help to reduce or close the gap to e.g. the USA/Asia (if they are currently leading)
- And: the new networks will be sustainable and contribute to European researcher‘s mobility in the future

B.2 Impact

Impact on European society/economy

- There is the Europe 2020 strategy (http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm),
- and there are 7 major societal challenges Europe has to face (http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/h2020-section/societal-challenges)
- Inform yourself about and try to embed your research into one of these challenges and shortly mention it

B.2 Impact

These 7 societal challenges are:

- Health, demographic change and wellbeing;
- Food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine and maritime and inland water research, and the Bioeconomy;
- Secure, clean and efficient energy;
- Smart, green and integrated transport;
- Climate action, environment, resource efficiency and raw materials;
- Europe in a changing world - inclusive, innovative and reflective societies;
- Secure societies - protecting freedom and security of Europe and its citizens

B.2 Impact

B.2.2 Quality of the proposed measures to exploit and disseminate the action results

- Identify your target groups (not just the scientific community, it can be e.g. politics, think tanks, special interest groups, companies, etc. as well)
- Dissemination via journals: explicitly name the journals, do not just write „high impact journals/most renowned journals“
- Dissemination via conferences: explicitly name the conferences you are going to attend, do not just write „the results will be presented at the international conferences of the field“

B.2 Impact

- Always mention open access – though it is mandatory in MSCA anyway, one has to mention that there will be open access, **but** → not only publications in open access journals! Fees can be paid with the institutional unit costs

- If there are further stakeholders: invite them to a talk, arrange a special section for them when organising a conference/workshop etc. – explain why your results will be of interest to them

B.2 Impact

Exploitation of results and intellectual property

- At best, the results respectively new techniques/methods are applicable immediately
- Applicability of the product in the industrial sector
- If not applicable directly: give a prospect how your results may be applicable in the long-term (pure research is seldom applicable immediately)
- Mention possible patents
- IPR must be respected in any case: refer to IP Department of your institution who will handle it, refer to the partnership agreement, refer to the accordance with IP Guidelines of Horizon 2020 (https://www.iprhelpdesk.eu/FS_IP_Management_H2020_proposal)

B.2 Impact

B 2.3 Quailty of the proposed measures to communicate the action activities to different target audiences

The project **must reach a broad public (the tax payers, who, in fact, finance your research), not only a broad scientific community** (considered as essential).

Adequate measures to reach this goal are:

- Collaborations with schools
- Participation in Girls‘ Day/Boys‘ Day or similar events
  → especially in science to reach the underrepresented females

B.2 Impact

- Open Lab Days, participation in science nights (MSCA Researchers‘ Night)
- Participation in scientific events, e.g. science slams
- Interviews with newspapers, articles in local press or articles in journals of popular science
- Public lectures (can be in the context of conferences)
- Apply for „MSCA fellow of the week“ on Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/Marie.Curie.Actions) or use other social media (create a Youtube-channel, write a blog, etc.)
- In case of installing a website: make sure it is linked to further sites to generate enough visitors (MPG, your university/institutes website and their social media sites)

B.2 Impact

Communication and Public Engagement

- These activities must be credible and, at best, in accord with own experience as well as existing activities of the host institution
- Always refer to the support of the institution‘s Press Office and Event Office and their contacts to the media etc.
- Explain why you are going to participate: Do not just write you will participate in the Girls‘ Day – you will participate because one cannot start early enough to try to raise curiosity for research (pupils) and, in this special case, to attract women for science (as they are underrepresented in e.g. Physics)

B.3 Implementation

B.3.1 Coherence and effectiveness of the work plan

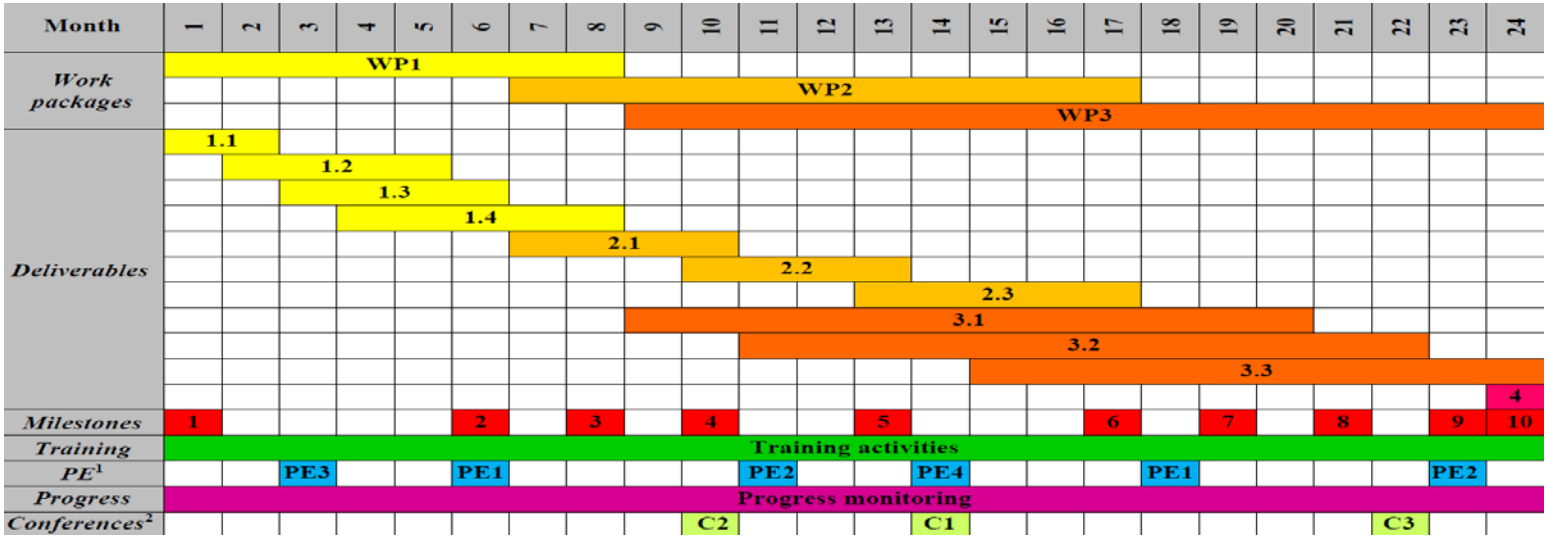
Write an introductory phrase that the plan is perfectly thought through,

then: shortly describe **each work package** (research work packages should have been described in the Excellence chapter in more detail) with its corresponding **Deliverables** and **Milestones** (and the secondment, if appicable) → in running text, marked (**D1.1**, **D1.2** …, **M1.1** …) in heavy print – **you do not have to use tables which waste space**

B.3 Implementation

Gantt Chart (not more than 1/3 or 1/2 page)

You do not have to use the one from the Guide for Applicants, this is just an example; put it in **grouped style** according to the text



B.3 Implementation

B 3.2 Appropriateness of the allocation of tasks and resources

- Describe how the work planning and the resources mobilised will ensure that the research and training objectives will be reached

- Explain why the amount of person-months is appropriate in relation to the activities proposed

Brief justification why your research will be conducted exactly the way as proposed

B.3 Implementation

B.3.3 Appropriateness of the management structure and procedures, including risk management

Organisation and management structure

- Experience of the involved scientists and the **finance department** with the implementation of third-party funded projects; allocation of tasks in the project (who manages what?); **progress monitoring mechanisms** (e.g. bi-weekly meetings, short progress reports, attending colloquia to get feedback, CDP etc.)

B.3 Implementation

Research and/or administrative risks that might endanger reaching the action objectives and the contingency plans to be put in place should risk accur

- **Risk evaluation (research risks)**, especially if the project depends on external parameters/preconditions; outline alternatives in case of problems – if there is no risk at all, then maybe it is not first-class research

If no risks and corresponding alternative strategies are mentioned, it is considered a major weakness

B.3 Implementation

B.3.4 Appropriateness of the institutional environment (infrastructure)

- Describe your workplace offered by the institution (equipment) and the institute (very briefly)
- Describe the key facilities (laboratories, libraries (access to how many e-journals etc.) necessary for your project
- Mention **further institutions in the region** (other MPIs with their facilities (if applicable), universities (if applicable), access to other libraries (Landes-/Staatsbibliothek as well) – draw a picture of an inspiring research region

B.3 Implementation

- Mention under any circumstances the **Welcome Center/International Office** (support in flat-hunting, dealing with public authorities and insurances, organisation of events for incoming fellows etc.), the **Career Center** (that offers the training courses) and if your host is a **family-friendly workplace** (childcare etc.)

B.3 Implementation

Description of the main tasks and commitment of the beneficiary and all partner organisations (if applicable)

In my opinion, everything that is required here, should have been already said in the proposal. Write a

Short and concise statement why this project in exactly this constellation **(you, the host (expertise and infrastructure), the proposed research with its great goals and expected results)** must be considered as outstanding / is a perfect match. It is **synergetic** and bigger than the sum of its parts.

Make the reviewer think „Wow! This has to be funded without ifs and buts.“

General hints

- Write the proposal **in cooperation** with the supervisor/host institution
- Let **others (non-experts as well)** read your proposal 
- Avoid too many spelling errors → make use of professional proofreading if necessary
- **Adhere closely** to the given format
- **Readability**: Make it easy to find the relevant aspects in the text, use figures, **emphasise by formatting (heavy type)**, separate sections, use footnotes sparingly (just documentation, no important information), …
- Do not overuse graphs etc.

General hints

- Do not use super special language exclusively (experts are not necessarily from your exact field of research)
- Avoid a manifold usage of external resources (links to websites)
- The **beginning** of your proposal must arouse curiosity and impression, the **end** must be a harmonious final chord → these two paragraphs are of special importance in any kind of text
- Do not underestimate any category of a proposal with less value concerning the evaluation criteria → **All parts of the proposal** are important to be successful
- Do not write a technical report – **tell a story, sell a story**
- Do not hesitate to contact your **EU Liaison Office** and the **National Contact Point**

Links

http://www.net4mobility.eu/ncp-doc.html

- Guide outreach activities
- IF Survivors´ Guide
- Guide proposal Writing
- Guide IP-Management