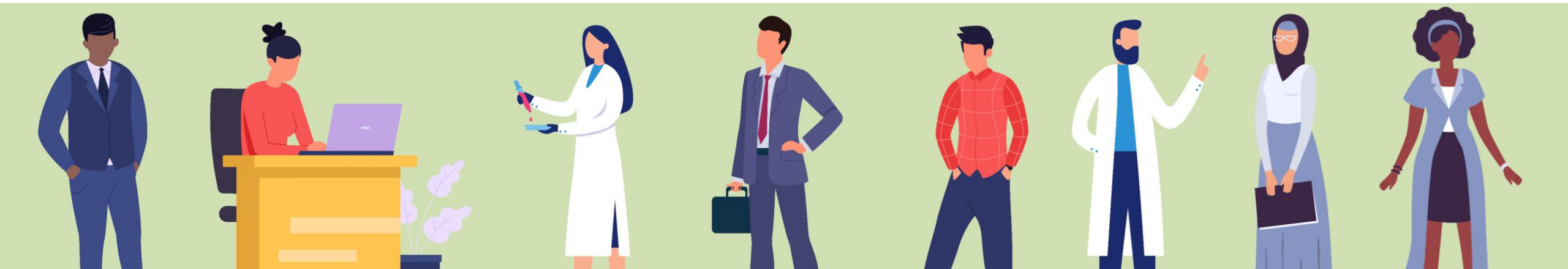


# Insights and learnings from the MSCA4Ukraine application process

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## APPLICATION STAGE

**403: Total number of submitted applications before the 1<sup>st</sup> cut-off on November 11, 2022**

- ✓ **402: Total number of candidates**
- ✓ **28: Countries**
- ✓ **4,4%: Ineligible applications**

**198: Total number of additional submitted applications before the 2<sup>nd</sup> cut-off on November 25, 2022**

*Apply as early as you can:  
Done is better than perfect!*

*MSCA4Ukraine ToR for applicants: “It is advisable to submit your application as soon as possible after the portal opens, as demand is likely to be high and funding is likely to be exhausted quickly.”*



# EVALUATION BY EXTERNAL EXPERTS

- ✓ Over **400** researchers
  - from over 25 countries
  - including at least **13 ERC grant-holders**
- ✓ Over **340** provided evaluations
- ✓ A total of almost **1400** evaluation reports requested
- ✓ ca **11%** declined or declared as having a Conflict of Interest

*Appropriate choice of the*

- *Research Area Code(s)*
- *Keywords*



# FINAL RESULTS

✓ **Selected for funding:**

**124 applications, including:**

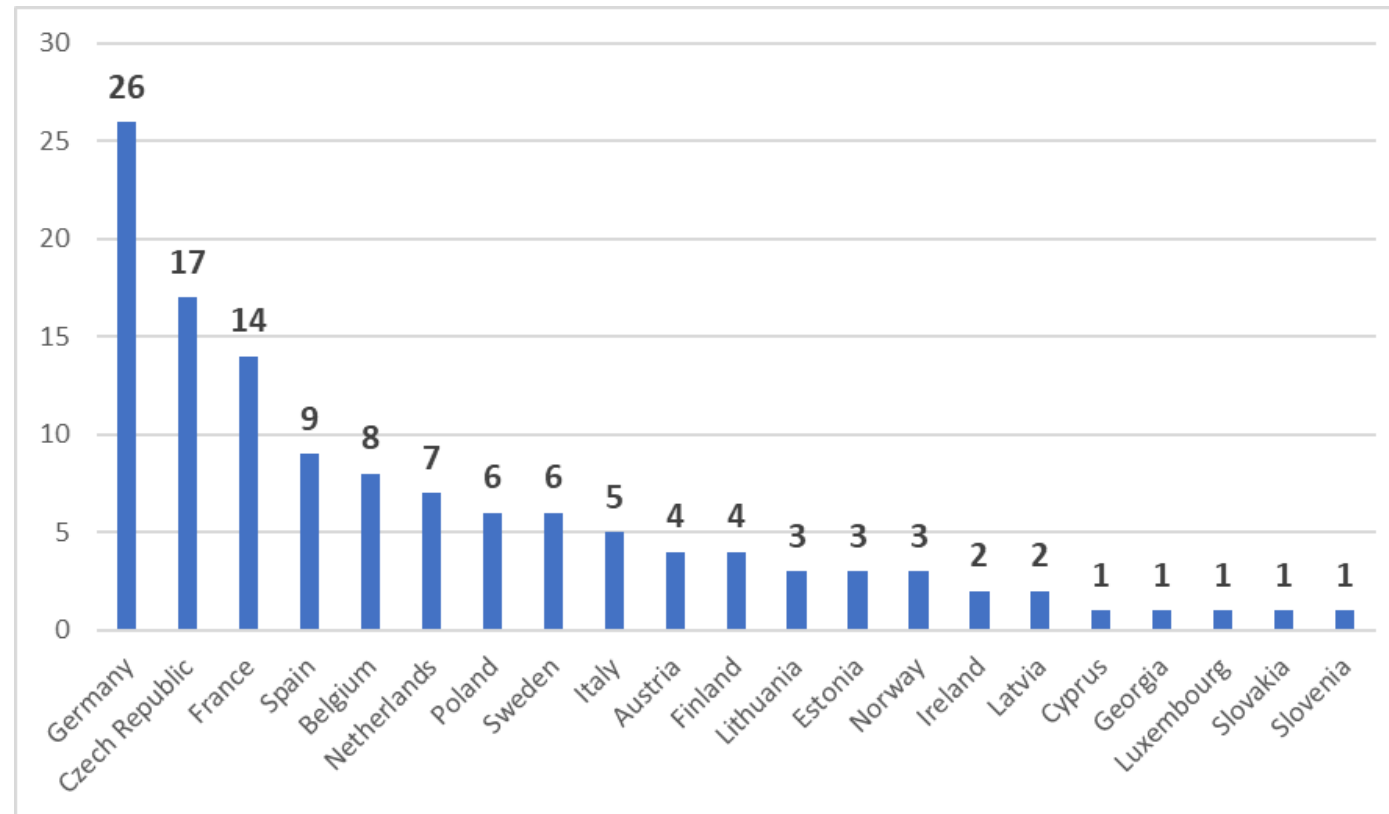
- ✓ 13 doctoral & 111 postdoctoral candidates

**24 applications placed on the reserve list**

- ✓ **ca 17 % - Not funded on formal grounds:** Applications evaluated below the 70% (10,5 points) threshold or when the average score for at least one of the individual criteria was below the threshold of 3,5 points)
- ✓ **ca 45 % - Not funded:** All other applications

## DISTRIBUTION OF THE AWARDS BY COUNTRY

Applications submitted by host organisations in **France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Czechia** and **Finland** were on average more successful, compared to what would have been expected based on the number of applications submitted



## Distribution of the awards by research area

Chemistry (CHE)/ Social Sciences & Humanities (SOC)/ Economic Sciences (ECO)/ Information Science & Engineering (ENG)/ Environment & Geosciences (ENV)/ Life Sciences (LIF)/ Mathematics (MAT)/ Physics (PHY)

Applications submitted on behalf of researchers in fields of **chemistry, mathematics and physics** were on average more successful, compared to what would have been expected based on the number of the applications submitted

Research Area	No (Total= 124)	%
LIF	32	25,81
SOC	27	21,77
CHE	22	17,74
PHY	14	11,29
ENG	13	10,48
ECO	7	5,65
MAT	5	4,03
ENV	4	3,23

# Evaluation

Each application was assigned up to **3 evaluators** from the MSCA4Ukraine expert evaluators pool, 35 applications around the cut-off were discussed by the **MSCA4Ukraine Selection Committee** (16 February)

- **Scores and comments for 3 criteria (Excellence, Impact & Implementation):**
  - scores below between **0 (unsatisfactory)** and **5,0 max (excellent)**, up to one decimal point
  - **brief comments** in each of the sections below on the strengths and weaknesses of the application for each criterion, addressing the sub-criteria
- **Qualitative assessment:** In your expert opinion, this proposal:
  - A. Should be funded
  - B. Could be considered for funding
  - C. Should NOT be funded
- **Comments on any ethical issues**

*Understand the evaluation criteria*

- *Read the Guidelines for evaluators*
- *Evaluation Form)*



# Excellence (35%)

## Sub-criteria:

- 1.1 Quality of the researcher's professional experience, competences and skills, and potential for future research accomplishment. *For PhD candidates:* Quality of the researcher's competences and skills, and potential for future research accomplishment.
- 1.2 Quality of the researcher's proposal in terms of originality and potential to create a significant contribution to the respective field of research. *For PhD candidates:* Quality of the proposal in terms of a first independent contribution to the relevant academic field.

## In the briefings evaluators were asked to pay attention to:

- Career stage of the researcher & potential for future research accomplishment
- Any prior academic achievements of the candidate, in case the researcher's career was already interrupted due to the relocation in 2014 (from the temporarily occupied areas in the East of Ukraine or Crimea)





## COMMENTS FOR THE TOP EVALUATED APPLICATIONS: PROPOSAL

- ✓ *“The proposed research project is **well structured** and **prepared, guaranteeing its feasibility.**”*
- ✓ *“The proposal is **original**, in that it identifies a **clear knowledge gap**, and the proposed research is appropriate for testing the hypothesis.”*
- ✓ *“The research plan is clear and **matches with the previous research topics of the candidate.**”*
- ✓ *“The proposed research is **original, of very high quality and thoroughly elaborated.**”*
- ✓ *“The proposal is **very well written**. The **objectives are ambitions and, at the same time, realistic**”.*
- ✓ *“The research proposal is very clearly written and **details a timely, original and impactful research agenda.**”*

# COMMENTS FOR THE TOP EVALUATED APPLICATIONS: PROPOSAL

- ✓ *“The proposal itself **addresses a global issue**, and its result has the potential for a re-thinking of best practices in [...].”*
- ✓ *“[The proposed research question] is **interesting not only from several important scientific perspectives**, but also from **a number of immediate practical applications**.”*
- ✓ *“The proposed research is scientifically sound and **aims to fill a significant knowledge gap** in the field of [...].”*
- ✓ *“The proposal identifies potential bottlenecks ... and **explains contingency plans**.”*
- ✓ *There is a **clear timeline of the milestones matching the objectives**, and a **coherent risk mitigation strategy**.”*
- ✓ *“The project itself **leverages the candidate's prior experience and interest**, as well as those of the host.”*

## COMMENTS FOR THE APPLICATIONS WITH LOW(ER) SCORES: PROPOSAL

- ✓ *“The application **does not define a compelling research question.**”*
- ✓ *“The project is **not internally consistent.** [...] research questions not directly linked to planned publications [...] and phases of project [...]. The second publication mentioned in the plan is supposed to be a paper on [Topic], but this topic does not appear anywhere in the proposal before.”*
- ✓ *“The researcher’s **proposal is very weak: it doesn’t explain what exactly will be studied ...**, it doesn’t describe ... what the state of art is (I miss the references). It **uses empty phrases [...].** The **proposal contains factual mistakes [Example].** **The project is presented not as a scientific contribution, but rather as a wish [Example].**”*
- ✓ *“Although the supervisor filled in the questionnaire in great detail, the **applicant’s contribution to the application (the project description) is short, vague and poorly written.**”*
- ✓ *“- Research project is **very vague** and seems **overly ambitious.** ... **No clear research question or hypothesis for the empirical work**”*
- ✓ *“Proposal **written in general terms** only, leaving a reader to make their own conclusion on how the stated aims are supposed to be achieved.”*

## COMMENTS FOR THE APPLICATIONS WITH LOW(ER) SCORES: GOALS & OBJECTIVES

- ✓ *“One of the objectives in the project is to define the current state of the research on [research topic] by reading and collecting relevant literature. This means, **it is not yet clear whether there is a gap of knowledge at all** that can be closed by the proposed research. [...] I also missed some explanation on the reasons, why such analysis of [research objects] would be relevant at all and how this would contribute to the development of the field.”*
- ✓ *“The envisioned cooperation and project proposal both address huge areas of the humanities [...]. It seems as if the **focus of the project still needs to be developed.**”*

## COMMENTS FOR THE APPLICATIONS WITH LOW(ER) SCORES: PROPOSAL'S PLAN

- ✓ *“The proposal **leaves many questions open and shows signs of rushing**. [...] The paragraphs on theoretical and methodological orientations remain **vague and unclear**. There is **no work plan**, no mentioning of research literature, no sentence on planned results.”*
- ✓ *“...“There’s **no clear timeline** for the project development and realization.”*
- ✓ *“The project description **does not include a work plan**. [...] The project **does not include a risk management plan**.”*
- ✓ *“The entire **concept of implementation is very weak and not consistent**”.*

## COMMENTS FOR THE APPLICATIONS WITH LOW(ER) SCORES: METHODOLOGY

- ✓ *“**Methodology part needs to be expanded and more detailed:** which specific variables are of interest, how will they be estimated, what are the underlying hypotheses, how will the group ensure, that their sample is powered enough and unbiased, what are the other limitations and how will they be addressed? [...] How will the issue of confidentiality and data protection be addressed, where and how will the data be saved, etc.?”*
- ✓ *“**Another big weakness in the proposal is the methodology section.** One is not informed about what kind of interviews will be conducted, how videos will be observed, how qualitative and quantitative methods will be mixed, how the candidate will anonymise, whether and how the orality of interviews will be researched as well, how interviews will be transcribed....”*
- ✓ *“**Methodological approaches are named in great numbers. However, just naming them provides a rather poor idea of how these methodologies will be put to use.**”*

## COMMENTS FOR THE TOP EVALUATED APPLICATIONS: RESEARCHER

- ✓ *“The applicant is a **great expert with a very significant publication record** on the various aspects of [...]”.*
- ✓ *“They have **an impressive record of publications in international peer-reviewed journals and patent applications, given their early career stage.**”*
- ✓ *“...has **high-level capabilities in quantitative analysis, and is competent in scientific writing.**”*
- ✓ *“...published over **25 articles in the peer-reviewed international scientific journals, several manuscripts and filled multiple patents.**”*
- ✓ *“This is an **extremely strong candidate, with a high potential for an academic career. ... a most impressive publication record. ...has been awarded a number of times, ... well connected internationally.**”*
- ✓ *“... has an **excellent publication record, ...competences and scientific skills are ideally suited for the successful implementation of the proposed project.**”*

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## COMMENTS FOR THE APPLICATIONS WITH LOW(ER) SCORES: RESEARCHER

- ✓ *“...several publications appeared in **low-tier regional journals.**”*
- ✓ *“Applicant’s career includes high administrative and pedagogical positions rather than research [...]”*
- ✓ *“... there **are no internationally relevant publications in languages different from Ukrainian**, so that it is not possible to assess the quality of the papers published. Most of them are quite short and published by the home institution of the candidate.”*
- ✓ *“The application sometimes uses **language that suggests a lack of scientific objectivity or neutrality.**”*

# Impact (35%)

## Sub-criteria:

- 2.1 Quality of the host organisation's **plan for supporting the researcher**, including the quality and **suitability of training and career development measures** proposed and efforts **to enhance temporary integration in the host country's academic community**, including plans to support access for fellows and family members to accommodation, medical services, schooling, and other social supports.
- 2.2 Quality of **measures proposed to prepare for reintegration** (in the future, in most cases, beyond the fellowship, when safe conditions for return are met), including **efforts to (remotely) maintain and strengthen connections with organisations and researchers in Ukraine** while on the fellowship
- 2.3 Quality of the explanation for the proposed fellowship duration in respect to the specific needs and interests of the researcher, and advancement of the proposed research. In the case of short-term fellowship requests (under 18-months), quality of the proposed measures to either (a) prepare for reintegration to Ukraine (where this is stated rationale for the short-term request) or (b) prepare for follow-up fellowship or position outside Ukraine after the short-term fellowship.



# Implementation (30%)

## Sub-criteria:

- 3.1 Suitability of the professional **match between the researcher and the academic mentor/host organisation** (work in similar areas of research, potential for mutual academic benefit).
- 3.2 Compatibility with the host organisation (departmental strength in the researcher's area, or alternatively a void that the research can successfully fill). *For PhD researchers:* Compatibility with the host organisation (departmental strength in the researcher's area).



## COMMENTS FOR THE TOP EVALUATED APPLICATIONS: HOST'S SUPPORT

- ✓ *“Extremely thorough and well conceived framework for re-integration, future development. [...] Best support for personal welfare (school, accommodation, banking, language)! Really great to see and should be a model for other future applications.”*
- ✓ *“I found the statement by the host institution [...] **convincing**, it enables a **temporary integration into the work of the institution while keeping contact with the home institution**; [the host] ... **has collaborated** with the applicant for some time and is dedicated for a good cooperation with the applicant.”*
- ✓ *“The host institution has given considerable thought to providing opportunities for integration, collaboration, and support.”*

## COMMENTS FOR THE APPLICATIONS WITH LOW(ER) SCORES: HOST'S SUPPORT

- ✓ *“No concrete reintegration measures”*
- ✓ *“It would be necessary to have a specific relationship with experts in the field of [research field], which do not seem to be present at the planned hosting institution.”*
- ✓ *“The planned mentor doesn’t know the applicant personally, **and from the letter one cannot see real interest in a close cooperation.**”*
- ✓ *“**The plans** ... for maintaining the candidate's connections to research and innovation communities in Ukraine **are not particularly clear.**”*
- ✓ *“The compatibility is more based on humanitarian grounds than on scientific parameters.”*