MSCA in Cyprus

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RESEARCH
& INNOVATION
FOUNDATION

Marie Skłodowska-Curie (1867 –1934) was a Polish and naturalized-French physicist and chemist who conducted pioneering research on radioactivity. She was the first woman to win a Nobel Prize, the first person and only woman to win the Nobel Prize twice, and the only person to date to win the Nobel Prize in two different scientific fields.

To honour her extraordinary scientific achievements, the EU has named its flagship funding programme for doctoral education and postdoctoral training after her – the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA).

Table of Contents

Introduction

On Friday 29 September, the 2023 edition of the European Researchers' Night ⧉ (ERN) is taking place in 26 countries across Europe, including Cyprus. ERN is a Europe-wide public event, which displays the diversity of science and its impact on citizens' daily lives in fun, inspiring ways.

In Cyprus, the Research & Innovation Foundation ⧉ (RIF) has been organizing ERN since 2006. This year's event is entitled Mission: CONNECT ⧉, and focuses around the EU Missions.

The ERN events are funded through the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions ⧉ (MSCA), the European Union's flagship funding programme for doctoral education and postdoctoral training of researchers.

Taking this opportunity, this Guide aims to highlight Cypriot participation in recent MSCA Calls for Proposals. The Guide focuses on a series of Success Stories by recent successful projects coordinated by organizations in Cyprus, to showcase their research excellence and the impact of MSCA on their career development. The success stories provide insights into the applicants' participation experience, and aim to motivate others to take part.

Organizations and researchers interested to apply to any of the open or forthcoming MSCA Calls can receive free information and support by the MSCA National Contact Points (NCPs) in Cyprus at RIF (*p. 8*).

What are MSCA?

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions ⧉ (MSCA) are the European Union's flagship funding programme for doctoral education and postdoctoral training of researchers.

MSCA are under the 'Excellent Science' Pillar of Horizon Europe (Pillar I), the EUs framework programme for research and innovation. The MSCA Work Programme 2023-2024 ⧉ has a budget of €1.7 billion, while an additional €8 million are available for 'ERA Fellowships' through the 'Widening Participation and Strengthening the European Research Area' part.

MSCA fund excellent research and innovation, and equip researchers at all stages of their career with new knowledge and skills, through international mobility and exposure to different sectors and disciplines. They are one of the EU's tools to build Europe's capacity for research and innovation, by investing in the long-term careers of excellent researchers.

MSCA also fund the development of excellent doctoral and postdoctoral training programmes and collaborative research projects worldwide. By doing so, they aim to achieve a structuring impact on higher education institutions and research centres, as well as non-academic organisations.

The main principles underlying MSCA include:

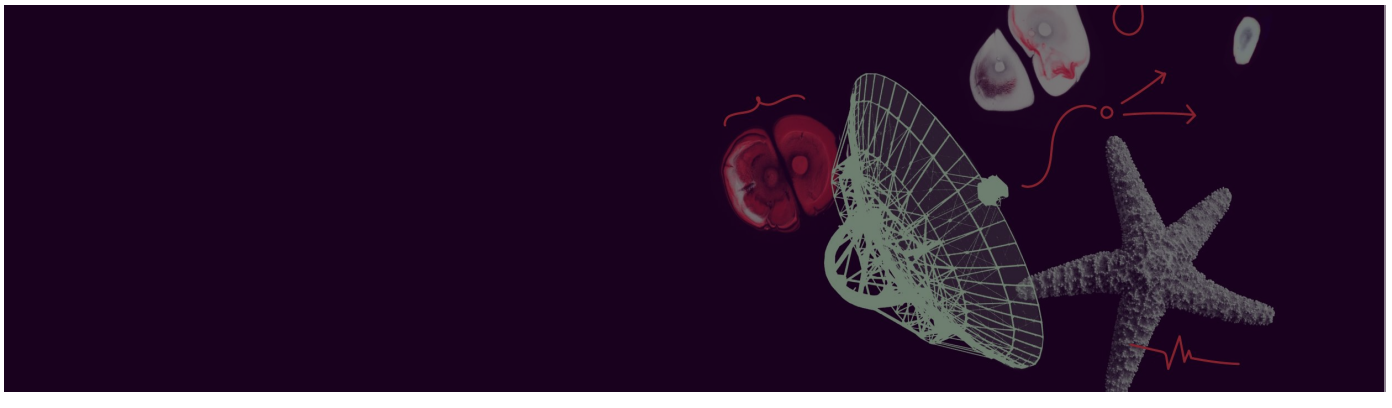
Excellence
MSCA support excellent researchers. They also foster excellence in research and innovation collaborations, knowledge transfer, methodologies and content, as well as in training, supervision and career guidance.

Mobility
MSCA support the mobility of researchers between countries, sectors and disciplines to acquire new knowledge, skills and competences.

Bottom-up and open to the world
MSCA are open to all domains of research and innovation, and encourage international cooperation to set-up strategic collaborations.

Excellent recruitment, working conditions and inclusiveness
MSCA promote the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers ⧉.

Effective supervision and career guidance
MSCA promote effective supervision and adequate mentoring and career guidance, based on The Guidelines for MSCA Supervision ⧉.



The Actions

There are 5 types of MSCA targeting different objectives:

Postdoctoral Fellowships ⧉

support the careers of researchers holding a PhD, and foster excellence in research and innovation.

Doctoral Networks ⧉

implement doctoral programmes (including joint doctorates and industrial doctorates) by international partnerships of organisations from different sectors.

Staff Exchanges ⧉

encourage short-term international and intersectoral exchanges of research and innovation staff through sustainable, collaborative projects in Europe and beyond.

COFUND ⧉

co-finances regional, national and international doctoral and postdoctoral programmes for researchers' training and career development.

MSCA and Citizens ⧉

brings research and researchers closer to children, families and the public at large through the European Researchers' Night and the Researchers at School Initiative.

Who can take part in MSCA?

MSCA are open to all domains of research and innovation, chosen freely by the applicants in a fully bottom-up manner.

Any type of organisation can apply for funding, including universities, research institutions, businesses including SMEs, and any other socio-economic actors.

Organizations

can submit a proposal to ***any open call*** on behalf of their organization or a consortium

apply via F&T portal ⧉

Postdoctoral Researchers

can develop and submit a proposal to ***an open Postdoctoral Fellowships call,*** jointly with their host organization

apply via F&T portal ⧉

can apply to vacancies in Postdoctoral Programmes advertised by ***funded MSCA COFUND*** projects

find positions on the EURAXESS website ⧉

Doctoral Candidates

can apply to vacancies in Doctoral Programmes advertised by ***funded MSCA Doctoral Networks or COFUND*** projects

find positions on the EURAXESS website ⧉

Find out more:

- Sign up to the newsletter ⧉ of RIF's European Programmes Department to receive updates about events and activities organized in Cyprus.
- Visit the MSCA website ⧉ to learn more about the Actions and explore all the opportunities offered by the programme.
- Read the MSCA Work Programme 2023-2024 ⧉, and find the open and forthcoming calls on the Funding and tender opportunities portal ⧉.
- The European Research Executive Agency ⧉ manages MSCA on behalf of the European Commission. Its website provides a wealth of information and materials on the application process, and the management of funded projects.

MSCA National Contact Points in Cyprus

The MSCA National Contact Points (NCPs) in Cyprus are hosted in the European Programmes Department of the Research and Innovation Foundation ⧉ (RIF), and offer free information and advice to support the participation of Cypriot organizations and researchers in MSCA.

RIF has been hosting all the NCPs for the EU's framework programmes, since the first participation of Cyprus in the programmes in 1999. The Cypriot MSCA NCPs provide a wide range of support services to researchers, organizations and enterprises to help them develop their proposals.

This portfolio of services is complemented through RIF's participation in the EU-funded MSCA-NET project, that connects MSCA NCPs worldwide. The main objective of MSCA-NET ⧉ is to facilitate transnational cooperation among MSCA NCPs, enabling them to provide a quality level of support to all applicants.

A wide range of material is therefore produced by the project and made available for free ⧉ to applicants to help them in their participation process, including Proposal Preparation Handbooks, policy briefs, a Q&A blog, and more.

Our Services

Information & Awareness Raising

Horizon Europe Microsite ⧉
Mailing Lists ⧉
Social Media ⧉
Direct Communication

Advice & Trainings

Infodays
Webinars
Proposal Writing Workshops

Proposal Preparation Support

Pre-proposal Checks
Full Proposal Checks
Resolving Queries (REA, MSCA NCP Network)
NCP Open Days

MSCA-NET Material

Website ⧉
Proposal Preparation Handbooks
Q&A Blog

Post-award Support

Grant Agreements
Legal & Financial Issues
IPR Issues
Project Management

Get in touch

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Participation from Cyprus in recent calls

Postdoctoral Fellowships

The Postdoctoral Fellowships 2023 ⧉ Call for Proposals has recently closed, with a deadline for submissions on 13 September 2023. To support applicants through the participation process, a wide range of events and activities have been organized by the Cypriot NCPs. These included an online infoday on 29 March 2023, in collaboration with the National Documentation Centre (MSCA National Contact Point in Greece) and the European Research Executive Agency (REA). The recording and the presentations are available online ⧉. Targeted infodays also took place to inform potential postdoctoral fellows about available hosting opportunities in Cypriot organizations, in collaboration with EURAXESS Worldwide, the High Commission of Cyprus in the UK and the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. In addition, two proposal writing workshops were organized, one onsite (15 June 2023) and one online (5 July 2023). Finally, one-to-one support was provided to applicants through proposal pre-screenings and the organization of open days with the NCPs.

Postdoctoral/ERA Fellowships 2022

34

proposals with 35 CY Participations

8

projects with 8 CY Participations

1.3

million euro EU funding

The results from the Postdoctoral Fellowships 2022 Call ⧉, which had a deadline on 14 September 2022, were announced to applicants in February 2023. A total of 34 proposals were submitted by organizations in Cyprus, representing a 38% increase compared to the 2021 Call, despite the -16% decrease observed in the EU-wide number of proposals between the two years.

Among these, 7 proposals were retained for funding, with a total requested EU Contribution of € 1,13 million. In addition, 1 more proposal was retained for funding through the 'ERA Fellowships' Call, with an additional EU Contribution of € 0.15 million. The proposal success rate for Cypriot organizations was 20.6%, which was higher than the average success rates for EU Member States (18.1%), as well as Widening Countries (10.7%). Information about the funded projects is already publicly available via CORDIS ⧉.

Doctoral Networks

The Doctoral Networks 2023 ⧉ Call is currently open for submissions. The Call was launched on 30 May 2023 and will have a deadline on 28 November 2023. An online infoday, including tips from an evaluator and testimonials from previous successful applicants, was organized by the Cypriot NCPs on 11 May 2023, in collaboration with the National Documentation Centre (MSCA National Contact Point in Greece) and the European Research Executive Agency (REA). The recording and the presentations from the infoday are available online ⧉. Applicants who are preparing proposals are welcome to get in touch with the NCPs for one-to-one support, including proposal pre-screenings.

The results from the Doctoral Networks 2022 ⧉ Call, which had a deadline on 15 November 2022, were announced to applicants in March 2023. Similar to the Postdoctoral Fellowships Call, there was an increased participation from Cypriot organizations in

submitted proposals. Specifically, there were 58 Cypriot participations in 41 proposals, representing a 21% increase compared to the 2021 Call, in contrast to the -12% decrease observed in the EU-wide number of proposals between the two Calls.

Among these, 5 proposals with 7 participations from Cyprus were retained for funding, with a total requested EU Contribution of € 2,1 million. One of the funded projects will be coordinated by a Cypriot organization. The proposal success rate for Cypriot organizations was 12.1%, which was slightly lower than the average success rates for EU Member States (16.3%).

Doctoral Networks 2022



41 **proposals** with 58 CY Participations

5 projects with 7 CY Participations and 1 CY coordinator

2.1 **million euro** EU funding

Staff Exchanges

The Staff Exchanges 2023 ⧉ Call will open on 5 October 2023 and will have a deadline on 28 February 2024. Organizations interested to take part in the forthcoming call are invited to stay in touch with the NCPs through our several communication channels (*p. 8*), to receive updates about our upcoming events and services.

Staff Exchanges 2022



14 **proposals** with 21 CY Participations

9 projects with 13 CY Participations and 2 CY Coordinators

1.9 **million euro** EU funding

The results from the Staff Exchanges 2022 ⧉ Call, which had a deadline on 8 March 2023, were announced to applicants in May 2023. In summary, 9 proposals with 13 participations from Cyprus were retained for funding, with a total requested EU Contribution of € 1,9 million. Two of the funded projects will be coordinated by Cypriot organizations. The proposal success rate for Cypriot organizations was 61.9%, which was much higher than the average success rates for EU Member States (38.6%). Further details on the funded projects will be made available via CORDIS once the grant agreement preparation for the funded projects is finalized towards the end of 2023.

Success Stories

Postdoctoral Fellowships

SepsISensoR

Christoforos Panteli, Postdoctoral Fellow (Horizon Europe)

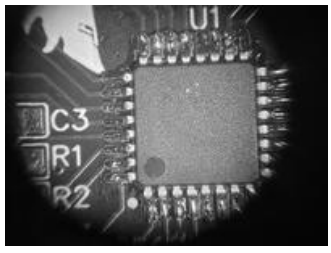
What is your project about and why is it important for the advancement of science?
SepsISensoR is a device about diagnosis of sepsis *via* real-time detection of biomarkers in exhaled breath. The current diagnosis protocol in ICUs relies on clinical symptoms identification from nurses and doctors before chemical analyses are initialised. SepsISensoR will give clinicians a new medical instrument in their arsenal, that will allow non-invasive diagnostics in hospitals. It will also deliver new knowledge on the sepsis development stages and exhaled gases, and infection source and load.

Why is your project important for society? Have you planned any public engagement activities for those interested to learn more?
Sepsis kills 11 million people every year, out of which 2.9 million children under 5 years old – 1 death every 2.9 seconds. Half of sepsis cases occur in ICUs and 46% of those are fatal. Additionally, one sepsis case costs $70000 and annual costs sum to $24 billion. SepsISensoR aims to decrease the avoidable morality by increasing the efficiency and accuracy of sepsis diagnosis. By real-time breath monitoring and chemical detection of biomarkers, a more precise diagnosis can be achieved and thus administer specific antibiotics. Hence, this project will contribute to the antibiotic resistance, save lives and cost. To communicate and engage with the public, a Twitter account is already active, and we are also participating in the European Researcher's Night.

What kind of support did you get, and what materials did you use during the application process?
The preparation process for an MSCA fellowship took about 5 months. Initially, the supervisor in the host organization was my main support. We had lots of discussions to find common ground, formulate an idea and transfer of knowledge. I received lots of advice and guidance while writing the application. Additionally, the NCPs was the second source of support. They organised seminars on the specific call but also other European Horizon programs that were very beneficial for understanding the expectations and focusing on the details. The NCPs gave me feedback on my application, and this was a huge help to finally succeed.

Why did you choose Cyprus as a host country?
The reason behind choosing Cyprus as a Host Country was not only that it is my home country, but also because there is a lot of scientific development in the recent years on the island. This suggests

growth and innovation. Being able to return to my home country and contribute to this innovation was a big motivational factor. Additionally, the growth of the Cypriot economy and scientific community, implied that there are going to be new job opportunities in the near future.



How did you find your host organisation?
Being originally from Cyprus I was already aware of the academic institutes on the island. Thus, I researched the output and quality of research in those institutions. Given my interests in biomedical research and breath analysis, I found common aspects in the University of Cyprus, and specifically the Nanotechnology Imaging and Detection Laboratory.

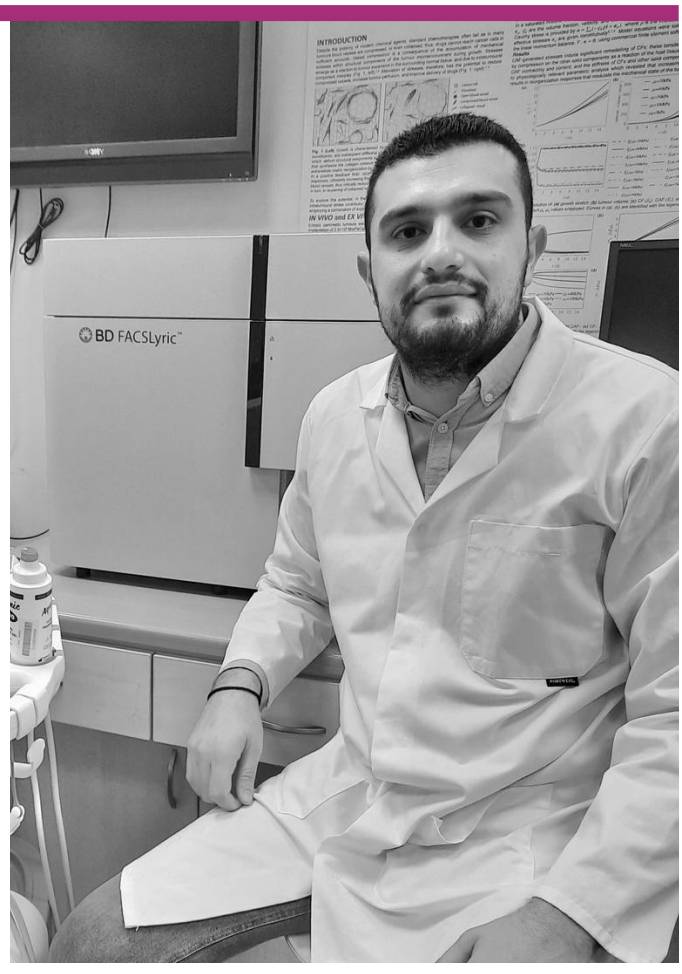
What tips can you give other researchers who would like to apply for MSCA?
The tips I would like to give to future MSCA applicants are: (a) find a supervisor in the host organization with whom you communicate well. It is important to agree on the topic, while giving you constructive feedback and guidance; (b) have a good reason why you want this fellowship. The competition across EU is large and so the quality of your application must be among the best. To achieve this hard work is required. Therefore, you need to be highly motivated and stay focused on your goal; (c) be organised in your application and pay attention to detail.

Project: Sepsis Diagnosis via Integrated Breath Sensing System with Change-Point Detection for Real-Time Point-of-Care
Start date: 3 Oct 2022 - **End date:** 2 Oct 2024

Topic: HORIZON-MSCA-2021-PF
Grant agreement ID: 101062837

Coordinated by: University of Cyprus

Find out more on CORDIS ⧉



CancerCOtreat

Chrysovalantis Voutouri, Individual Fellow (Horizon 2020)

What is your project about and why is it important for the advancement of science?

My project focuses on developing an *in silico* systems biology approach to model SARS-CoV-2 infection and drug actions in cancer patients with COVID-19 and other preconditions. This topic is crucial for science advancement as it accelerates the repurposing of existing drugs and helps identify optimal treatment combinations and schedules. This research is timely and has broader implications, setting a mathematical framework for treating cancer patients with various infectious diseases, ultimately improving clinical outcomes.

Why is your project important for society? Have you planned any public engagement activities for those interested to learn more?

Our project holds significant societal importance as it aims to improve treatment outcomes for vulnerable cancer patients with COVID-19 and other preconditions. By identifying optimal drug combinations and schedules, we can enhance patient care and reduce the burden on healthcare systems.

To ensure public engagement, we plan to disseminate our findings through scientific publications, conferences, and open-access platforms. Additionally, we will organize seminars, workshops, and webinars to educate healthcare professionals and the public about our research and its implications. Collaborations with patient advocacy groups and media outlets will further amplify our message and foster dialogue on this critical issue.

What kind of support did you get, and what materials did you use during the application process?

The MSCA National Contact Points (NCPs) at the Research and Innovation Foundation (RIF) provided us with essential information, clarifications, and advice on proposal preparation. We also consulted guidelines, templates, and best practices provided by the MSCA and European Commission websites. Additionally, we sought insights from other successful applicants within our network, who shared their experiences and offered recommendations for crafting a strong proposal. All these greatly contributed to our proposal, enhancing its quality and alignment with MSCA objectives.

Why did you choose Cyprus as a host country?

I chose Cyprus as a host country due to its strong research infrastructure, particularly in the fields of systems biology and cancer research. The country's academic and research institutions foster a

> ***This project aims to set a mathematical framework for treating cancer patients with various infectious diseases, ultimately improving clinical outcomes.***

collaborative environment, facilitating interdisciplinary knowledge exchange. Additionally, Cyprus offers a high quality of life, making it an attractive destination for researchers. The unique blend of research excellence and a supportive living environment makes Cyprus an ideal choice for my project's success.

How did you find your host organisation?
I identified the host organization through a combination of online research and networking within the scientific community. Their strong reputation in systems biology and cancer research, along with a history of successful collaborations, made them an ideal match for our project.

Do you have a non-academic placement within your project?
Yes, I have a non-academic placement, which aims to bridge the gap between research and real-world application. This placement will enhance my understanding of industry dynamics, facilitate knowledge transfer to stakeholders, and contribute to career development by fostering connections and honing practical skills.

What tips can you give other researchers who would like to apply for MSCA?

- Start early: Give yourself ample time to research, plan, and refine your proposal.
- Seek guidance: Consult MSCA NCPs, guidelines, and successful applicants for advice.
- Interdisciplinary approach: Develop a well-rounded project with broader impact.
- Clear objectives: Clearly articulate your goals, expected outcomes, and societal relevance.
- Networking: Connect with potential host institutions and establish strong collaborations.
- Non-academic placements: Include industry exposure to enhance career prospects and practical skills.
- Proofread: Ensure your proposal is polished, concise, and free of errors before submission.

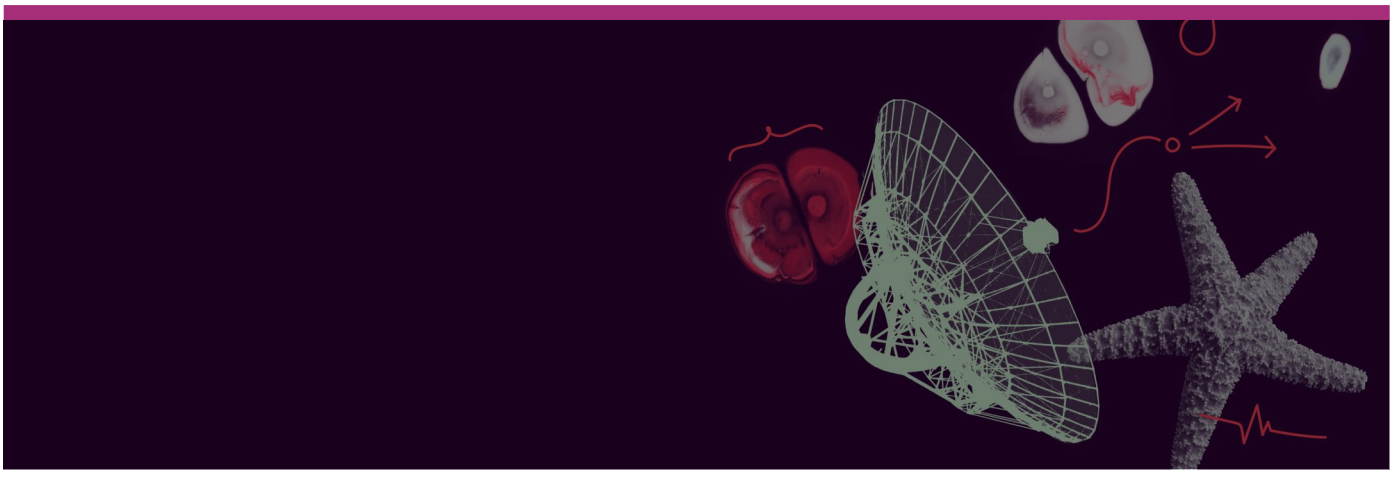
Project: Optimizing treatment of cancer patients infected with COVID-19 and other preconditions using mathematical modelling
Start date: 1 May 2021 - **End date:** 30 April 2024

Topic: H2020-MSCA-IF-2020 (Global Fellowships)
Grant agreement ID: 101028945

Coordinated by: University of Cyprus

Find out more on CORDIS ⧉

Find out more on project website ⧉



CanSENS

Marios Constantinou, Individual Fellow (Horizon 2020)

What is your project about and why is it important for the advancement of science?
The CanSENS project aims at the development of a non-invasive and cost-effective breath analysis sensor platform for early-stage colon cancer (CoC) screening, based on Surface-Enhanced Raman Spectroscopy (SERS). This project will improve the understanding of the complex relationship between the Volatile Organic Compound (VOC) profile and CoC occurrence, as well as establish a more accurate list of CoC-related VOCs and lead the way to a new clinical breath-based test.

Why is your project important for society? Have you planned any public engagement activities for those interested to learn more?
This CanSENS project is based on the development of a breath analysis device for a low-cost, rapid, non-invasive, and accurate screening of CoC. The proposed non-invasive breath device has the prospect of being used as a supplementary technique to the primary screening method currently being used in cancer diagnosis globally (i.e. colonoscopy). This will allow a further increase of the disease detection at early stages (I, II) and effectively reduce its mortality rate.

The CanSENS project has been actively participating in public engagement events, including the European Researcher's Night, promoting science at upper secondary schools, as well as communicating with the general public via social media and local press to boost the positive role and contribution of research to society.

Why did you choose Cyprus as a host country?
Cyprus has great potential to evolve as a research hub in the Mediterranean region. The excellent growth of the educational institutions, as well as their exceptional researchers, made me choose Cyprus as a host country. In addition, Cyprus is my home country, therefore after gaining skills and knowledge abroad I decided to bring my scientific experience back, contribute and be part of the research development of the country.

How did you find your host organisation?
After thorough research on the potential scientific prospects in my field, I have chosen the University of Cyprus as the host organisation for my project as it is renowned for its multidisciplinary research in the country.

> ***Cyprus has great potential to evolve as a research hub in the Mediterranean region. The excellent growth of the educational institutions, as well as their exceptional researchers, made me choose Cyprus as a host country.***

What tips can you give other researchers who would like to apply for MSCA?
Start the process as early as possible by finding a topic, an academic supervisor and a beneficiary. It is very important to define the impact of the project, become familiar with the application process and start preparing the first draft as early as possible. This allows you to start casual conversation with the project supervisor and/or collaborators, get feedback, discuss ideas and improve the written proposal. Last but not least, consult RIF for their meticulous and excellent feedback.

Project: Colon Cancer Breath Screening using Nanowire-SERS
Start date: 6 Sep 2021 - **End date:** 15 Sep 2024

Topic: H2020-MSCA-IF-2020
Grant agreement ID: 101024362

Coordinated by: University of Cyprus

Find out more on CORDIS ⧉

Find out more on project social media ⧉

Hybland

Ploutarchos Tzampoglou, Individual Fellow (Horizon 2020)

What is your project about and why is it important for the advancement of science?

The "Hybland" project will develop a novel method for the construction of landslide susceptibility and hazard maps using as testbed the Paphos District. The methodology will be based on the use of classical geotechnical research and modern Earth Observation technologies in a combination of multimodal determinist and Machine Learning approaches. The produced maps will identify with high reliability the areas which are susceptible to landslides, something which will be of high importance to all.

Why is your project important for society? Have you planned any public engagement activities for those interested to learn more?

The project will help decision-makers take the most suitable preventive measures and management actions to protect the built environment and to secure sustainable urban development.

To enhance awareness on landslides and promote scientific advancement, we will have a project website and scientific pages on social media such as Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.

To further communicate the impact of the research we will organize a workshop and participate in the European Researchers' Night. A series of short lectures will also be delivered during geotechnical courses at UCY. During these engagements we will present the scientific challenges, approaches and major findings of the research, and encourage young people to engage in related research projects.

What kind of support did you get, and what materials did you use during the application process?

In the beginning, I was hesitant to participate as I had read that the process is very competitive and the chances to get funded were not great. However, I knew I had a well-structured idea and, thanks to the guidance and coaching received from my supervisor at the time Dr. Loukidis, and his faith in my capabilities, I decided to apply.

I searched the internet and looked at previous successful proposals to get guidance on how to draft and structure the proposal. The most helpful guidance was however received during the workshop organized by RIF and the tips and suggestions

> ***The most helpful guidance was received during the workshop organized by the MSCA NCPs at RIF, and the tips and suggestions received from the RIF team.***

received from RIF team. After that workshop I had a complete picture of how to present my idea and structure a successful proposal.

Why did you choose Cyprus as a host country?
Cyprus has been significantly affected by landslides due to its geological conditions, mountainous geomorphology, heavy rainfalls and high seismicity. Specifically, more than 1842 landslides have been recorded in Paphos and Limassol District causing extensive damage to the built environment. Therefore, due to the large density of landslides and availability of relevant raw data, Cyprus offers an ideal test site for achieving the scientific goal of this project.

How did you find your host organisation?
I discovered GeoImaging Ltd through an extensive internet search. The company specializes in this field and has a wide portfolio of European co-funded projects. Following initial discussions with them I was impressed by their impeccable professionalism and knew they were the right host for this project.

What tips can you give other researchers who would like to apply for MSCA?
In my view, three critical tips: find an original and clever idea in which they strongly believe. Choose the best possible partners to implement this idea is equally important and seek help and guidance from the Research and Innovation Foundation team and follow their guidance faithfully. My last advice is to pursue the proposal with passion and stubbornness and even if they fail the first time, to never give up. Successful is the one who, no matter how many times they fall, gets up one more time.

Project: Development of a hybrid methodology for the susceptibility and hazard analysis of landslides
Start date: 18 Apr 2022 - **End date:** 17 April 2024

Topic: H2020-MSCA-IF-2020
Grant agreement ID: 101027880

Coordinated by: GeoImaging Limited

Find out more on CORDIS ⧉

Find out more on project website ⧉

Find out more on project social media ⧉

PartialIO

Eleni Aristodemou, Individual Fellow (Horizon 2020)

What is your project about and why is it important for the advancement of science?
My project develops new and less restrictive consumer demand discrete response models, and examines the determinants affecting individuals' decisions over time. I study the role of inertia in choices and the importance of dynamics in decisions when consumers choose alternatives offered at different quality levels. A better understanding of consumer behaviour will stimulate further and better-quality research in the areas of Econometrics and Applied Microeconomics.

Why is your project important for society? Have you planned any public engagement activities for those interested to learn more?
Achieving a better understanding of individual and consumer behaviour is important to regulators and policymakers, since it enables them to make better and more targeted social welfare and competition policies, to firms, when deciding whether to launch a new product or what prices to set, and to the marketing industry, when designing advertisement campaigns.

Dissemination of the project's results will occur through numerous channels including my personal and UCY's webpages and social media accounts. Furthermore, the project's results will be communicated to the public, by participating in several events such as the European Researchers' Night Event, the annual Researchers' Night organized in Cyprus, and various academic seminars and conferences.

What kind of support did you get, and what materials did you use during the application process?
Personally, I received great support from the Faculty of Economics and Management and the Department of Economics of UCY, particularly Mrs Nicoleta Nicolaou, (former) senior University Officer at the Faculty, and Professor Elena Andreou (UCY), who is the Supervisor of the project.

Furthermore, I followed very closely the guidelines provided in the MSCA-IF handbooks of previous years, which give detailed instructions and all the necessary information on how to write a successful proposal, and what the evaluation committee is looking for. I also followed the "Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions" webpage and Facebook page, and I joined the "Marie Curie Individual Fellowship"

> ***The MSCA fellowship at UCY was a great opportunity to return home and continue my academic career, carrying out my MSCA project at one of the top 100 Economics departments in Europe***

Project: Can less be more?: Semiparametric and partial identification in panel data discrete response models with an application to consumer demand
Start date: 1 Sep 2021 - **End date:** 1 Mar 2025

Topic: H2020-MSCA-IF-2020
Grant agreement ID: 101028470

Coordinated by: University of Cyprus

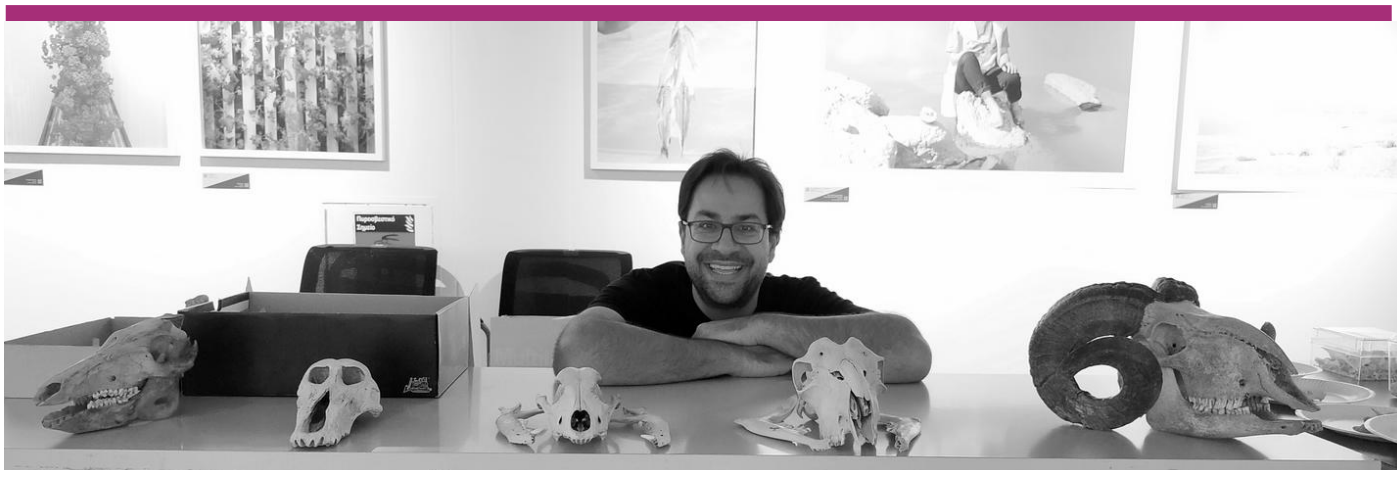
Find out more on CORDIS ⧉

Find out more on fellow's website ⧉

Why did you choose Cyprus as a host country?
Cyprus is my home country, and the University of Cyprus is the largest public university on the island. After spending 15 years in the UK and the Netherlands, the position at UCY was a great opportunity to return home and continue my academic career, carrying out my MSCA project at one of the top 100 Economics departments in Europe, whose academic members specialize in the areas of Econometrics and Applied Industrial Organization, and would guarantee the highest quality academic results.

How did you find your host organisation?
UCY is one of the top 100 young universities in the world whose impressive development over the past 30 years cannot go unnoticed. More specifically, I got to know its Economics Department better via the work of its many highly established academics, whom I also met at various academic conferences.

What tips can you give other researchers who would like to apply for MSCA?
The MSCA-fellowships are an excellent opportunity for any young researcher to advance their career and acquire new skills. The advice I would give to other researchers is to spend time making their proposal as clear as possible, be ambitious, and build on their work and expertise, but at the same time have a realistic plan and execution timeline. Finally, give extra attention and follow the guidelines provided by the MSCA, as this will make the application much stronger.



SACHROFICS

Angelos Hadjikoumis, Individual Fellow (Horizon 2020)

What is your project about and why is it important for the advancement of science?
Project SACHROFICS investigates the production, preparation and consumption of food for rituals in the Classical, Hellenistic and Roman period in Cyprus. It promotes the scientific approach to archaeological questions through an interdisciplinary methodology and diachronic scope. The project findings open windows into the past and reveal how ancient Cypriots managed animals, how they produced and cooked food, and the multiple role of rituals in ancient societies.

Why is your project important for society? Have you planned any public engagement activities for those interested to learn more?
Curiosity about our ancestors, and especially the unknown aspects of their lives, is innate in humans. SACHROFICS specifically sheds light on our relationship with nature and animals in the past. Problems such as environmental deterioration, social inequality and brutality against animals are not new and knowledge of their past is important. Beyond satisfying our need to know our past, this project and archaeology in general help humanity avoid repeating mistakes and plan a more sustainable future to the benefit of both humans and animals. To spread the new knowledge produced, the project includes regular public outreach events with hands-on activities involving animal bones and teeth, which are very popular especially with younger crowds.

How do the MSCA actions support your research?
The MSCA actions constitute shining examples of adequate research funding. They contain provisions that enable the beneficiaries to conduct high-quality research, enhance professional skills and share the knowledge with the wider society through encouragement for public outreach (European Researcher Night).

Why did you choose Cyprus as a host country?
Cyprus has a long and rich archaeological record and, in combination with its insular nature, presents unparalleled opportunities for archaeological research. My professional vision is to develop zooarchaeology in Cyprus and eventually seeing it established and flourishing in my country of origin. Project SACHROFICS provides me with the opportunity to pursue this vision.

> ***Cyprus has a long and rich archaeological record that presents unparalleled opportunities for archaeological research. My professional vision is to develop zooarchaeology in Cyprus and eventually seeing it established and flourishing in my country of origin.***

How did you find your host organisation?
The Science and Technology in Archaeology and Culture Research Center (STARC) of The Cyprus Institute is the ideal place to carry our research in archaeological science in Cyprus. It has well-equipped labs, equipment and a collaborative spirit..

What tips can you give other researchers who would like to apply for MSCA?
MSCA provide unparalleled opportunities to develop additional research skills, widen your research scope and advance your career. Moreover, the mobility involved and availability of funds for secondments and conferences and meetings promote international collaboration and enhance opportunities for further future research.

Project: Sacrificial food in Classical, Hellenistic and Roman Cyprus: an interdisciplinary diachronic approach in an island laboratory
Start date: 1 Nov 2021 - **End date:** 31 Oct 2024

Topic: H2020-MSCA-IF-2020
Grant agreement ID: 101029092

Coordinated by: The Cyprus Institute

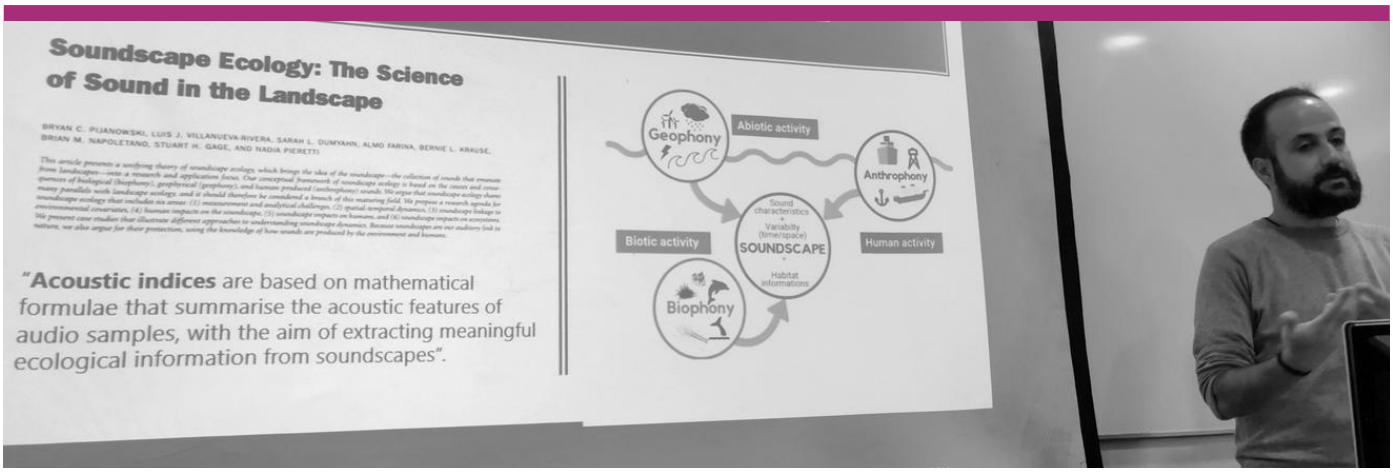
Find out more on CORDIS ⧉

Find out more on project website ⧉

Find out more on project social media ⧉

Success Stories

ERA Fellowships



BIOMON

Christos Mammides, ERA Fellow (Horizon Europe)

What is your project about and why is it important for the advancement of science?

The primary goal of BIOMON is to develop an innovative passive acoustic monitoring protocol that can be used to survey bird communities in biodiverse agricultural farmlands across Europe using acoustic sensors and AI techniques. Agricultural intensification and other human activities frequently result in biodiversity loss. As a result, there is an urgent need to develop automated tools that can accurately monitor an area's ecological status over large temporal and spatial scales.

Why is your project important for society? Have you planned any public engagement activities for those interested to learn more?

The development of automated biodiversity monitoring tools is a key objective of the European Union's Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and, subsequently, of the European Green Deal. Such tools can be used to protect species with high conservation value, which are integral elements of Europe's natural heritage. BIOMON includes a number of communication and public engagement activities, including participation in the European Researchers' Nights, where members of the public can learn about the project's objectives, visits to schools during which students are introduced to the project and technology used, and social media engagement.

What kind of support did you get, and what materials did you use during the application process?

To successfully prepare my application, I relied heavily on the guidelines made available by the European Commission. I also found the "MSCA-IF Manual For Evaluators" to be extremely useful, as it describes in detail how proposals are evaluated in relation to the various sections. I participated in MSCA-specific webinars, where I was able to ask questions about my proposal. I read multiple successful proposals that were available online, as well as proposals submitted by applicants in Cyprus in previous years. More importantly, I worked closely with the MSCA National Contact Points in Cyprus, who reviewed my proposal and offered helpful feedback. I truly believe my proposal would not have been successful without their feedback.

Why did you choose Cyprus as a host country?
Cyprus is one of the EU's most biodiverse countries. Because of its rich avifauna, the island represents an ideal study area for the development of such biodiversity monitoring tools. Furthermore, the island's research capacity has grown rapidly over the last few years, hosting a large number of talented scientists, making Cyprus an ideal location for conducting cutting-edge research.

How did you find your host organisation?
As a native Cypriot, I was already familiar with Frederick University (FU) and its leading role in conserving the island's biodiversity. FU is home to the Computational Intelligence Laboratory, led by Dr. Harris Papadopoulos, an expert on Machine Learning and the algorithms that are integral to BIOMON's monitoring methods.

What tips can you give other researchers who would like to apply for MSCA?
Given the highly competitive nature of MSCA actions, interested researchers must use all of the resources made available by the European Commission and the National Contact Points. I strongly recommend that you speak with previous applicants about their experiences. I also advise you to contact the NCP as soon as possible so that they can assist you with the proposal preparation process.

Project: Using passive acoustic monitoring methods to survey birds communities in biodiverse agricultural farmlands in the EU
Start date: 1 June 2022 - **End date:** 31 May 2024

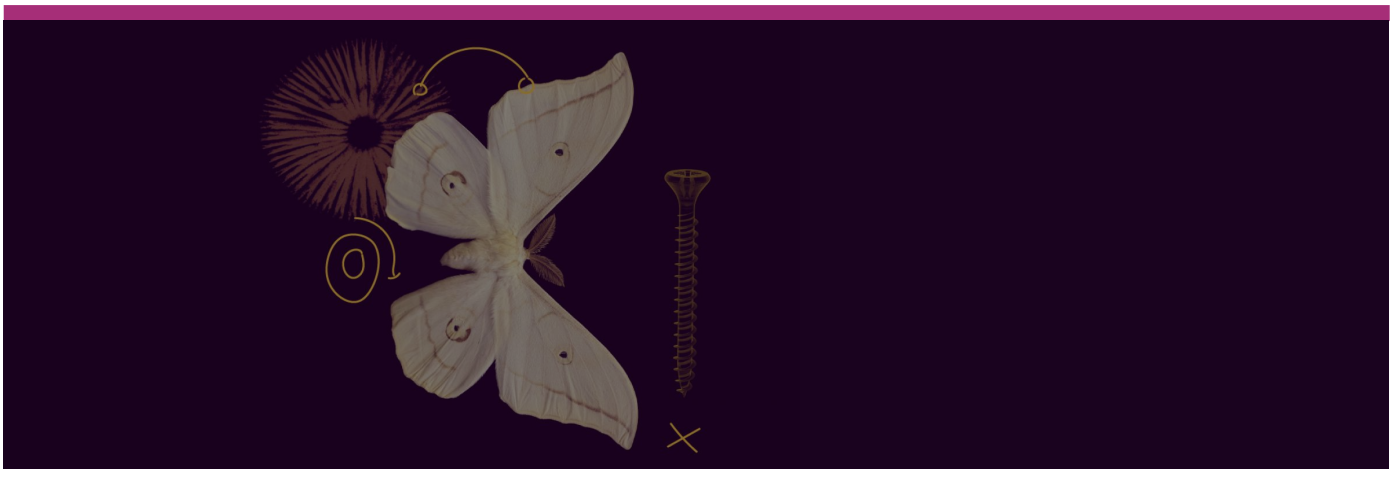
Topic: HORIZON-WIDERA-2022-TALENTS-02
Grant agreement ID: 101090273

Coordinated by: Frederick University

Find out more on CORDIS ⧉

Find out more on project website ⧉

Find out more on fellow's social media ⧉



Sus-Bio-plastics

Evdokia Syranidou, ERA Fellow (Horizon Europe)

What is your project about and why is it important for the advancement of science?
Sus-Bio-plastics will exploit an innovative applied environmental biotechnology approach to deliver tailored strategies for the integration of sustainability in every stage of bioplastics' waste management. The project is structured under 3 innovation pillars, concerning 2 processes and 1 tool applicable for the management of bioplastics (1 non-biodegradable and 3 biodegradable) and it will be implemented at the Environmental Bioprocessing Laboratory of Cyprus University of Technology.

Why is your project important for society? Have you planned any public engagement activities for those interested to learn more?
Increased recycling of plastics will trigger beneficial impacts in the societies of EU by creating employment. Moreover, natural resources/public goods will be preserved and CO2 will be sequestered by the implementation of the microalgal-based technologies developed.

The dissemination strategy will not only just raise scientific awareness for the innovative results derived from the project, but it will also focus on other target groups, including professional, commercial, investment, social, environmental, policy-making as well as educational activities.

Why did you choose Cyprus as a host country?
Cyprus is an attractive destination. In combination with the top-quality universities established the country is ideal for hosting MSCA fellows.

How did you find your host organisation?
CUT is a prestigious Technical University in Europe, while the Environmental Bioprocessing Laboratory directed by Michalis Koutinas has a strong background in the areas of environmental biotechnology, fermentation technology, biological modelling and advanced molecular techniques.

What tips can you give other researchers who would like to apply for MSCA?
It is important to prepare a solid proposal with high innovation potential. The fellows should select carefully the hosting institute and the supervisor.

Project: Recycling process trains of waste bioplastics
Start date: 1 Nov 2022 - **End date:** 31 Oct 2024

Topic: HORIZON-WIDERA-2022-TALENTS-02
Grant agreement ID: 101090336

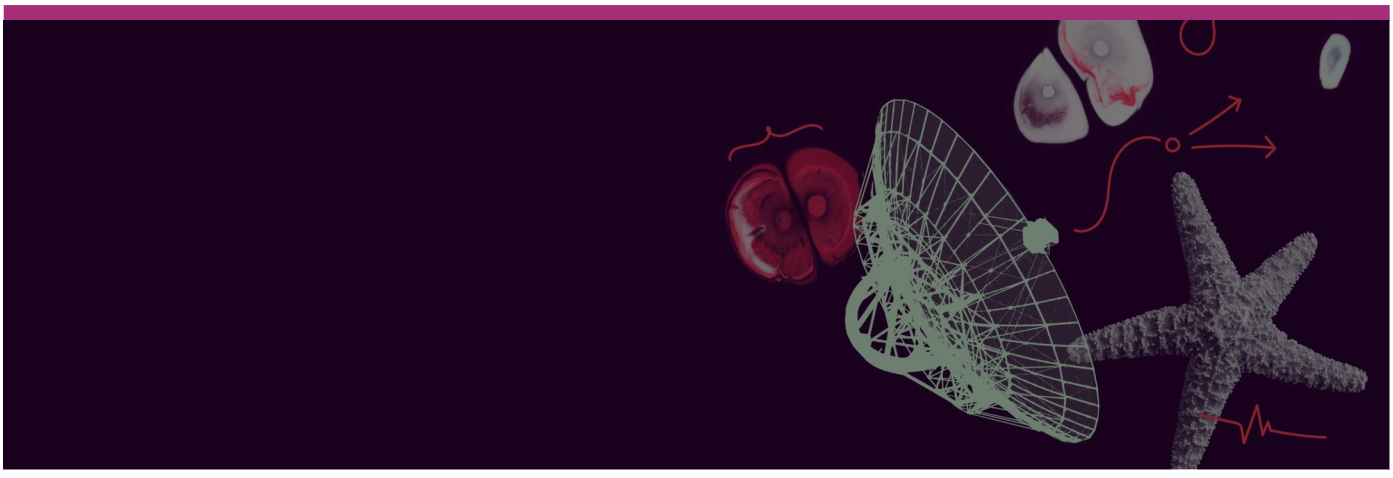
Coordinated by: Cyprus University of Technology

Find out more on CORDIS ⧉

Find out more on project website ⧉

Success Stories

Doctoral Networks



AQTIVATE

MSCA Doctoral Network (Horizon Europe)

What is your project about and why is it important for the advancement of science?
The AQTIVATE project offers an interdisciplinary training program for fifteen PhD research fellows in high performance & quantum computing, scalable algorithms and machine learning. AQTIVATE will deliver an innovative doctoral program that goes beyond the usual standard university curriculum. It aspires to produce excellent graduates, who will be ideal to develop innovative approaches in multiple scientific fields (physics, computer engineering, biology) and solve important scientific problems.

Why is your project important for society? Have you planned any public engagement activities for those interested to learn more?
AQTIVATE responds to the advancements and investments in supercomputing infrastructure and quantum computing systems and the need for developing new algorithms and software, delivering the much needed human capital that is essential to ensure Europe's leadership in exploiting digital technologies for research and innovation. The researchers' skills will be utilized at computational centers throughout Europe, working at the interface between industry and academia and facilitating the diffusion of knowledge into the society at large. Publications in international peer-reviewed high-impact journals, presentations in scientific meetings public announcements and press releases are some of the public engagement measures that have been foreseen.

What kind of support did you get and what materials did you use during the application process?
The European Office of Cyprus and the Research and Innovation Foundation of Cyprus provide a lot of information and support regarding the preparation and submission of MSCA Doctoral Networks applications. The EU Funding and Tenders portal provide all the necessary materials and documents for a successful MSCA Doctoral Networks application preparation and submission.

What previous experience helped you to succeed?
Horizon projects must have a significant and specific social impact mission, and goals that are challenging and achievable within the predefined fellowship time period. Horizon projects are investments in people, who will contribute in science advancement regarding research and innovation in order to benefit the society of tomorrow.

> ***The researchers' skills will be utilized at computational centers throughout Europe, working at the interface between industry and academia and facilitating the diffusion of knowledge into the society at large.***

How did you find the partners in your consortium?
Consortium partners were detected using the Partner Search function of the EU Funding & Tenders Portal, also using Partner Search tools and services of third parties and finally through scientific events organised by different scientific networks.

What tips can you give other organizations that would like to apply for MSCA?
Prepare a strong grant proposal that should be clear, concise, and compelling. Focus on the application requirements, its impact on the society and find the appropriate partners.

Project: Advanced computing, quantum algorithms, and data-driven approaches for science, technology and engineering
Start date: 1 Mar 2023 - **End date:** 28 Feb 2027

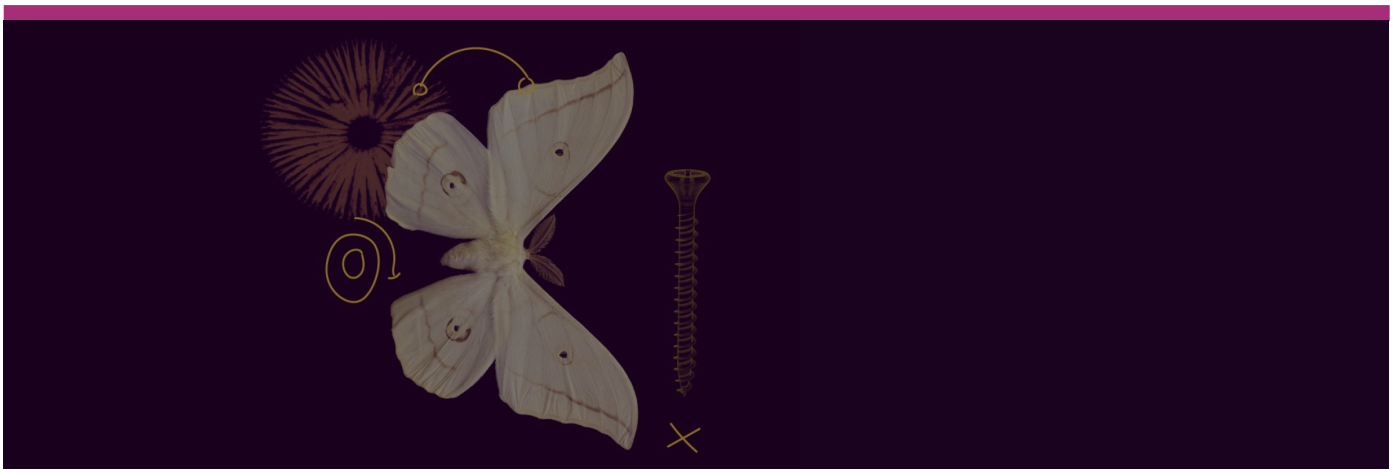
Topic: HORIZON-MSCA-2021-DN-01
Grant agreement ID: 101072344

Coordinated by: University of Cyprus

Find out more on CORDIS ⧉

Find out more on project website ⧉

Find out more on project social media ⧉



CLIPE

MSCA Innovative Training Network (Horizon 2020)

What is your project about and why is it important for the advancement of science?
The primary objective of CLIPE is to train a generation of innovators and researchers in the fields of virtual characters (VC) simulation and animation, and help bringing Europe at the forefront of the field. Virtual characters are an important component of Virtual worlds and their applications. The research objective of CLIPE is to design the next-generation of VR-ready characters, addressing the most important current aspect of the problem: making the characters capable of: behaving more naturally; interacting with real users sharing a virtual experience with them; and being more intuitively and extensively controllable for virtual worlds designers.

Why is your project important for society? Have you planned any public engagement activities for those interested to learn more?
CLIPE will provide a comprehensive training program that will prepare participants for roles in both academia and industry. This includes the cultivation of an entrepreneurship mindset in the ESRs.
Europe is a major player worldwide in the fields of virtual reality, graphic animation, content creation and virtual human simulation. Many research groupsacross Europe are major contributors to the best international conferences and journals in the relevant fields. CLIPE will strengthen these industries through its scientific results and the trained ESRs.
Communication and public engagement includes: the project social media (website, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter); presentations at scientific conferences and publications in academic journals; participation in industry events (eg. FMX, Siggraph, Laval-Virtual); some of the CLIPE training workshops will be open to the public; promotional videos; participation in local events (e.g. European Researchers Night, start-up events, school visits)

What kind of support did you get and what materials did you use during the application process?
We had support from the Research Support Offices of UCY, UPC and INRIA, as well as from the MSCA NCPs in Cyprus. They reviewed our draft proposal and gave us tips on how to improve it and what to include. They also provided a handbook with explanations on what the Commission expects in each section.

Project: Creating Lively Interactive Populated Environments
Start date: 1 Mar 2020 - **End date:** 31 Aug 2024

Topic: H2020-MSCA-ITN-2019
Grant agreement ID: 860768

Coordinated by: University of Cyprus

Find out more on CORDIS ⧉

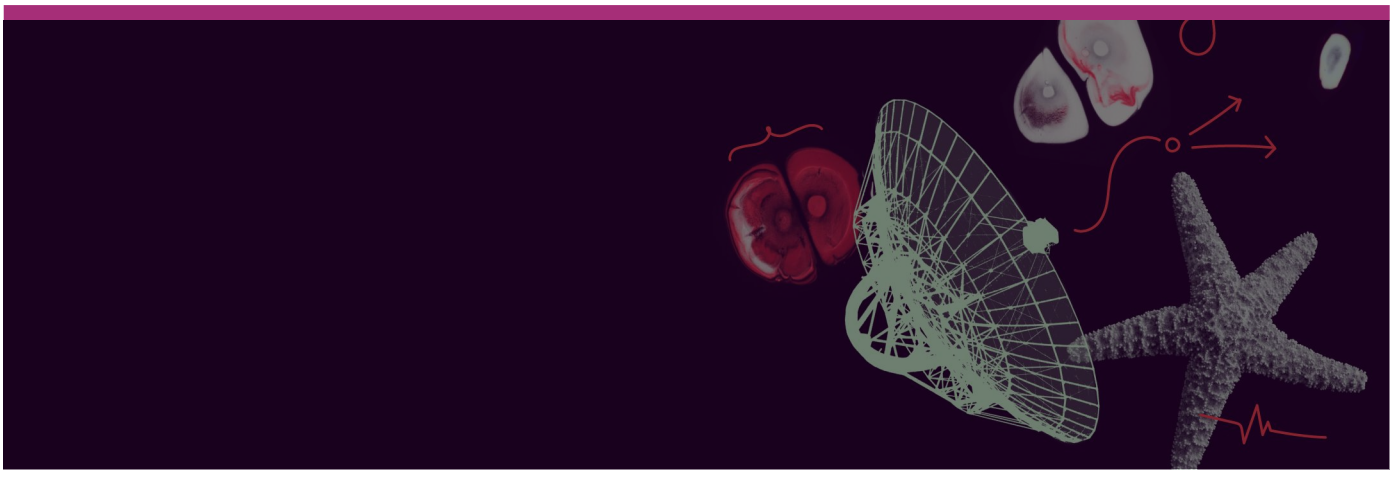
Find out more on project website ⧉

We also had support from previously successful applicants that gave us some example proposals and guidance. Finally, since the proposal was only successful the 3rd time round, we had taken into account the input given by the reviewers in the first two rounds.

What previous experience helped you to succeed?
The most important aspect is to have the right partners. Then, there are two parts in a successful project: (a) one needs to manage to secure the funding. This requires a lot of attention to detail, hard work and determination, as well as patience to revise and re-submit when it fails the first time. Most importantly, though, is to understand exactly what the call is asking for and stay focused. (b) once the project starts then it takes good management of the consortium. The Coordinator needs to make sure everybody is following the plan.

How did you find the partners in your consortium?
The partnership for the MSCA project was formed by bringing together researchers with which we have been collaborating for years together. We did not have to search much. We just selected a group of researchers that we knew performed excellent research in the specific field but also had the complementary expertise that we needed.

What tips can you give other organizations that would like to apply for MSCA?
The most important thing in such a project is to build the right consortium. You need partners that are excellent researchers but at the same time are good collaborators. The hardest part of the project was to find the right ESRs to hire. This was especially hard in a smaller, more remote country such as Cyprus.



CLIPE

Nefeli Andreou (ITN Fellow)

What is your project about and why is it important for the advancement of science?
Leveraging the large amounts of high-quality motion capture data and the latest advancements in deep-learning we are designing data-driven models for the task of motion generation in 3D. Our models can be controlled with intuitive means, such as text and speech, making the generation of 3D content creation accessible to a wider audience.

Why is your project important for society? Have you planned any public engagement activities for those interested to learn more?
The project is based on the observation that the usage of new techniques for creating and controlling interactive virtual characters is hindered by the limited availability of trained personnel possessing multi-disciplinary expertise in computer animation, technology-related fields, and human factors. Consequently, CLIPE aims to cultivate the next generation of scientists who will facilitate this technological revolution and consolidate the innovation capacity in the field of computer animation by drawing on expertise from numerous disciplines. The project covers the entire pipeline of character generation, from character design to interactions between groups, interactions with the surrounding environment, and perceptual evaluation.

Why did you choose Cyprus as a host country?
I strongly believe that Cyprus has the potential to emerge as a leading technological hub due to its strategic location and abundance of highly talented individuals, including several accomplished scientists. As a citizen of Cyprus, I am keen on contributing to the progress of our country, striving to bring it up to international standards.

How did you find your host organisation?
The University of Cyprus is a renowned institution on both national and international levels. What specifically drew me to this institution was its high standard of research, particularly in the field of Computer Graphics.

Do you have any collaboration with the non-academic sector within your project?
As an integral component of the project, I will intern at Amazon Research. The objective of this placement is to investigate the suitability and impact of academic research in real-world industrial challenges. Non-academic placements establish valuable bridges between industry and academia.

What tips can you give other researchers who would like to apply for MSCA?
The research journey, and a PhD in particular, can be a challenging one. MSCA gives researchers the opportunity to collaborate with different institutions throughout the course of the project, fostering the exchange of knowledge at an international level. The project includes training workshops designed to enhance skills beyond the academic realm including networking, entrepreneurship, leadership, and communication, thus contributing to the cultivation of well-rounded researchers.

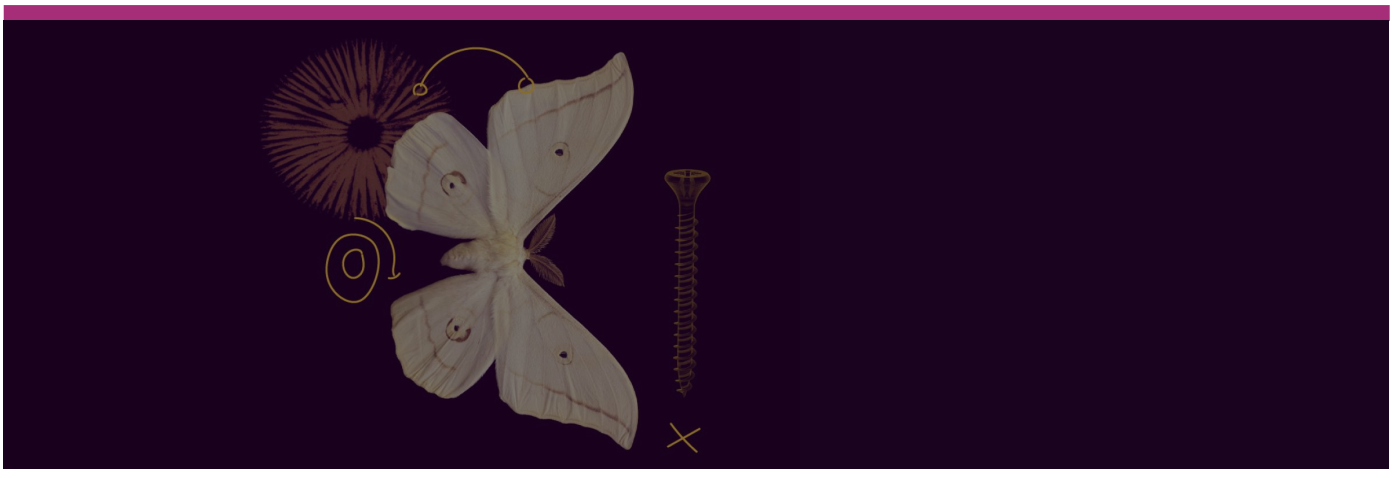
Project: Creating Lively Interactive Populated Environments
Start date: 1 Mar 2020 - **End date:** 31 Aug 2024

Topic: H2020-MSCA-ITN-2019
Grant agreement ID: 860768

Coordinated by: University of Cyprus

Find out more on CORDIS ⧉

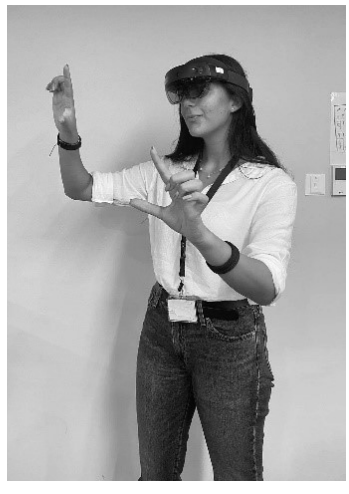
Find out more on project website ⧉



CLIPE

Marilena Lemonari (ITN Fellow)

What is your project about and why is it important for the advancement of science?
CLIPE trains researchers in virtual character (VC) simulation. VR and AR are becoming common, but creating interactive VCs requires specialized programming/artistic abilities. Aiming to design natural characters interacting and being controlled by users, the consortium brings together experts in VR/AR, computer graphics, animation, psychology, and perception, providing exposure to cutting-edge research through a training program, equipping ESRs with skills for the competitive industry.



Why is your project important for society? Have you planned any public engagement activities for those interested to learn more?
The project aims to create cost-effective, diverse, and realistic virtual characters that answer to societal demand and have several applications in education, psychology, and entertainment. To disseminate the produced content and make it accessible, the project will establish a social media presence, use traditional and new media, promote work through EU info-days, promotional videos, and online newsletters. The project also offers avenues for ESRs to participate in public engagement eventsboth locally and at the EU level, such as the European Researchers' Night, MSF, and Nicosia Café Scientifique.

What kind of support did you get and what materials did you use during the application process?
Getting support during the MSCA application process is crucial, and there are several avenues to explore, such as NCPs, the MSCA Helpdesk, and other MSCA-organized workshops and information sessions. While online material is abundant, speaking with successful applicants can provide valuable insight into how the information is translated into practice, helping you understand the process and motivation for each step. Knowing the practical benefits of the application process can also increase motivation and readiness for interviews. Lastly, getting feedback from experienced individuals is crucial to ensure proper interpretation of the application information.

Why did you choose Cyprus as a host country?
UCY's and Silversky3d's (S3D) research interests, facilities, resources, and personnel shaped my choice. UCY's Computer Graphics Lab is equipped with modern technologies, has experienced researchers and advisors working on crowd simulation and character control which aligns with my interests. S3D provides insight into industry processes and professional skills, and their multidisciplinary approach encourages collaborations. Coming from a multidisciplinary background myself, I value this greatly.

How did you find your host organisation?
By utilizing MSCA tools and knowing UCY's reputation and research activity that coincided with my research interests. My supervisors' research profile and involvement in national/EU projects, their network of associates, and expertise showed the potential from working within the UCY and S3D teams.

Do you have any collaboration with the non-academic sector within your project?
Yes, which provides hands-on experience on industry practices and how academic research is integrated in practice. While at Goalem, I will learn to manage the industry's demands and the academia/industry interaction, gaining transferable skills, enhancing my employability and broadening my network.

What tips can you give other researchers who would like to apply for MSCA?
Being part of an MSCA project shapes your career, so making the right choices during the application process is crucial. Reading project guidelines, choosing the right fellowship type, and finding a suitable host organization increase your chances of success. A strong research proposal, highlighting your skills and expertise is essential, as is studying the research area thoroughly, including objectives, methodology, and expected outcomes, and getting feedback through MSCA tools or applicants.

Project: Creating Lively Interactive Populated Environments
Start date: 1 Mar 2020 - **End date:** 31 Aug 2024

Topic: H2020-MSCA-ITN-2019
Grant agreement ID: 860768

Coordinated by: University of Cyprus

Find out more on CORDIS ⧉

Find out more on project website ⧉

For any feedback or clarifications regarding the contents of the Guide, please get in touch with the MSCA National Contact Points in Cyprus

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