

1. Research project concept

for a MSCA PF-EF 2026 at ESO

(Marie Skłodowska-Curie **European** Postdoctoral Fellowship)

Purpose: This concept note is intended for researchers interested in applying for a Marie Skłodowska-Curie **European** Postdoctoral Fellowship (MSCA PF-EF 2026) at ESO. It is designed to support the internal pre-selection of promising project ideas and to facilitate discussions with potential ESO Faculty supervisors.

Please note that this document does not replace the official European Commission application template (Part A and Part B). Applicants selected through this process will be required to prepare and submit a full MSCA PF-EF proposal in collaboration with their ESO Faculty supervisor, in accordance with the official EU guidelines.

Please answer all questions using bullet points where appropriate. Responses should be specific, measurable, and realistic. Please ensure that the overall submission does not exceed the maximum length of 10 pages.

Personal Information	
First name(s), surname(s), gender (F/M/Diverse)	
Date of PhD (month and year): the certified date of the successful PhD defence instead of the date of the actual award.	
Current institution/ position	
Excellence: Provide evidence of scientific excellence and research potential (e.g. publications, awards, invited talks, leadership, collaborations, outreach, software/data products).	
Expertise & Growth: Describe your current expertise in the relevant research area and explain how this project will help you further develop and broaden your knowledge, skills, and scientific capabilities.	
Distinctiveness: Explain how this project differs from your previous research, particularly your PhD work. The project should represent a new direction rather than a direct continuation.	
Career Goals: Describe 2-4 specific short- and long-term career goals.	
ESO Host Institution and Supervision	
ESO Faculty Supervisor: Name(s) contacted.	
Motivation: Why do you want to carry out this project at ESO?	
Scientific Excellence	
Project Overview	
Project Title: Provide an informative, clear, and memorable project title.	
Acronym (if applicable): Provide a short and catchy acronym.	

Elevator Pitch: Summarise your project idea, novelty, and expected impact in 1-2 sentences.	
Key Objectives: List 3-5 SMART objectives you want to achieve (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound). One sentence per objective.	
Originality/ Novelty: What aspects of your project go beyond the current state-of-the-art?	
Scientific Importance: Why is your project timely and relevant now?	
Unaddressed Challenges: Identify the major unresolved challenges or knowledge gaps in your research field that your project aims to address. Briefly explain their significance.	
Innovation Potential: What are the expected scientific breakthroughs, methodological advances, or novel applications arising from your project?	
Methodology: Describe the methods and techniques to be used.	
Novel Methods or Applications: Will you develop new methods, improving existing ones, or applying approaches in a novel context?	
Interdisciplinarity & Intersectorality: Describe how the project integrates expertise across disciplines and/or sectors and identify opportunities for cross-sectoral collaboration or knowledge exchange.	
Impact	
Potential Users and Impact of Project Outputs: Describe who could use and apply your project results, including researchers, industry, policymakers, and society. Address the potential scientific, economic/technological, and societal impacts.	
European Dimension: Explain how the project contributes to Europe's scientific excellence, competitiveness, and international collaboration.	
Key Skills to Gain: Highlight international, interdisciplinary, intersectoral skills (technical, analytical, and transferable) you aim to gain through the fellowship, mobility and training experience.	
Training Plan and Knowledge Transfer	
Describe your planned research and professional training activities in consultation with your potential ESO Faculty supervisor.	
Explain how the training and experience will support your future career development.	

Describe the expected two-way transfer of knowledge between you and ESO as your host institution.	
Consider scientific training, methodologies, transferable skills, soft skills, workshops, outreach, leadership, supervision, and other professional development activities.	
Implementation	
Project Feasibility and Work Plan: Provide a brief overview of the planned project structure and timeline. Identify the main work packages or research phases and explain how the objectives can realistically be achieved within the fellowship duration.	
Challenges & Contingency Plan: Describe the main scientific or technical challenges of your project. Explain why these are non-trivial, and outline realistic strategies or alternative approaches to ensure the overall feasibility of the proposed research.	
Collaborations and Networking	
Definitive Collaborators: Provide the names, institutions, and roles of confirmed collaborators.	
Potential Collaborators: Identify likely collaborators and their anticipated contribution to the project.	
Needed Expertise: Indicate any additional expertise, disciplines, sectors, or organisations required for the project.	
Rationale: Explain why these collaborators are well suited to the project and how they contribute to scientific excellence, interdisciplinarity, and/or impact.	
Secondments and Non-Academic Placements	
Do you plan a short-term secondment and/or a non-academic placement? If yes, please describe: • the associated partner institution(s), • the planned activities, • the expected added value for the project and your career development, • and whether you have already contacted potential supervisors/collaborators.	