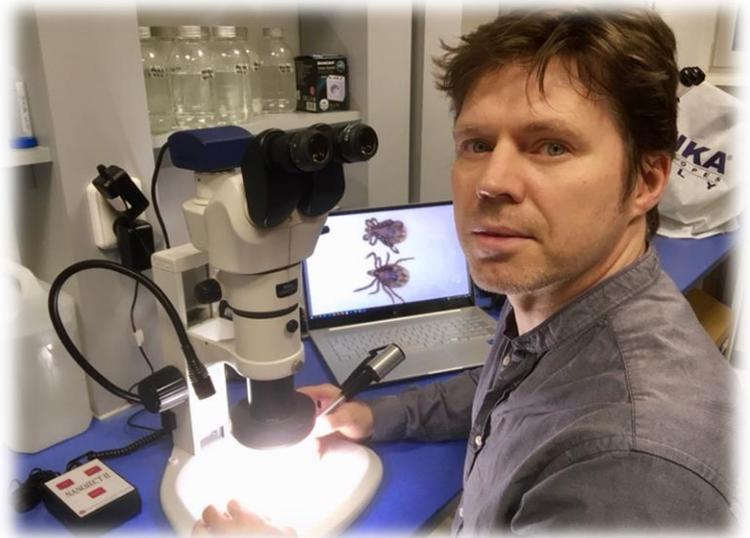


Widening Country Inspiration Story

“The key element to my successful proposal was the mentoring programme provided by the NCP.”

Name of the fellow: Juraj Koči
Country of the host: Slovakia
Project Acronym: TVISTOFF
Project start and end date:
 01.09.2021 – 31.08.2023
Type of MSCA, Horizon 2020:
 Individual Fellowship



What is your project about?

How much do we know about the interactions between ticks and viruses, such as tick-borne encephalitis virus? The knowledge we have is limited and so are the tools to study those interactions. Therefore, we are concerned with the identification of virus virulence factors and the potential involvement of the tick neurosecretion compounds in virus transmission. We set out to develop tools and models that could be useful for the scientific community and applicable to other tick species and viral pathogens.

Why is your project important for society?

In Europe, the incidence of tick-borne encephalitis is on the rise despite the available vaccination. The outputs of this project, such as tools (recombinant viruses) and models (infection in vivo models) shed some light on the intricate relationship between viruses and their vectors, which is a major aspect of virus circulation in nature, where the disease poses a significant health risk to the public. Hence, the project will help to identify new antivirals and may contribute to the generation of novel preventive measures.

What communication and public engagement measures have you foreseen?

We have learnt that society is interested in this topic but there is often only incorrect or no information. So, we strive to enhance public awareness via popular science e.g., talks, science festivals, and media platforms.

Why did you choose a widening country as a host? How did you find your host organisation?

When I began thinking about returning from the postdoc to my home country, I was already aware of the prestigious MSCA fellowships. This was an excellent opportunity to reintegrate into an organisation that perfectly aligned with my research interests and offered me a chance to build my research programme.

What kind of support did you get?

I would like to express my gratitude for the full support I received from the National Contact Point (NCP) in

Slovakia. Seminars organised by the NCP provided helpful tips along with materials to facilitate my proposal preparation. Moreover, the key element to my successful proposal was the mentoring programme provided by the NCP. Regular sessions with the selected mentor helped me understand the format of the Horizon 2020 grant and provided me with invaluable insights based on which I prepared a strong and competitive proposal. In addition, I would like to express my appreciation for the support and help from some MSCA alumni, H2020 grant awardees, and colleagues, who critically commented on my proposal.



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

Preparation of the MSCA application can be challenging. My suggestion to organisations interested in MSCA would be to consider creating their own project unit specialised in the MSCA programme that would assist in application preparation, in this way increasing the chance of being awarded MSCA grants.

Secondly, provide an opportunity to highly motivated and self-driven applicants, whose ambition is to build an innovative, interdisciplinary (and a little risky) research programme, which can be a key to success.

More information on the project:



The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) support researchers at all stage of their career across all disciplines. The MSCA also support cooperation between industry and academia and provide innovative trainings and career developments.

The MSCA Individual Fellowships (IF) provide opportunities to researchers of any nationality to acquire and transfer new knowledge and to work on research and innovation in Europe and beyond.

The MSCA-NET project is the MSCA NCP project to facilitate the transnational cooperation to achieve a consistent and harmonised level of NCP support. The scientific community can also profit from our project to support their MSCA application.

