

## Widening Country Success Story

“The most important factor is having an innovative and interesting idea for excellent research.”

**Name of the fellow:** Riho Marja  
**Country of the host:** Hungary  
**Project Acronym:** Happybee  
**Project start and end date:** 1.01.2022-31.12.2023  
**Type of MSCA, Horizon 2020:** Individual Fellowship



### What is your project about and why is the topic important for science advancement?

I studied pollinators in agricultural landscapes, focusing on their movements, dispersal, and colony fitness. I also simulated real-world processes using buff-tailed bumblebee colonies to understand the various effects at local (crop type), landscape (proximity of semi-natural habitats), and regional (mean field size) scales. Additionally, I conducted homing experiments with bumblebees, marking them with RFID tags. [Here](#) you can see a popular science video about the project.

### Why is your project important for society?

Based on a recent report of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), 46% of bumblebee species in Europe are experiencing a decline in population. Bumblebee populations, along with other pollinator insects, are crucial for food production and maintaining natural plant biodiversity. This is a significant topic because the global annual economic value of animal pollination is estimated to be between 235 and 577 billion dollars, and approximately 35% of global crop production depends on pollinators, impacting both crop quality and yield.

### What communication and public engagement measures have you foreseen?

I introduced my project and its results to local farmers, university students and the scientific community, the general public, and I also participated in a children's camp.

### Why did you choose a widening country as a host?

Because of my earlier successful collaboration with my supervisor Dr. Péter Batáry, we had already published several scientific articles together, with me as the first author and him as the last author.

### How did you find your host organisation?

Since my supervisor established his own Landscape and Conservation Ecology research group in the host country

Hungary, I decided to apply for the MSCA Individual Fellowship.

## What kind of support did you get?

I participated in two one-day project application training sessions in my home country, Estonia - one in an earlier year when I did not apply, and another in the year that I applied. Additionally, my supervisor, Dr. Péter Batáry, provided significant help during the application process, offering valuable feedback and suggestions. It is also crucial to read and follow the official guidelines carefully!



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.



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

I believe the most important factor is having an innovative and interesting idea for excellent research. The project must also be realistic and achievable within the project period. Do not oversell yourself, as the evaluation process is very thorough. And, of course, a bit of luck is also needed!

More information on the project:

