

Widening Country Inspiration Story

“Preparing a solid COFUND project requires teamwork and co-creation. Put together a team of grant advisors and researchers.”

Organisation name: Institute of Physics, Czech Academy of Sciences

Organisation type: Public research organisation

Country: Czechia

Project Acronym: P4F

Project start and end date: 1.09.2023 – 31.08.2028

Type of MSCA, Horizon Europe:
COFUND

Is your organisation a coordinator? Yes

What is your project about? The Physics for Future (P4F) postdoctoral programme exposes young researchers to diverse fields in order to guide their research towards a highly interdisciplinary approach. It supports individual-driven mobility and exchange of knowledge.

Our world is changing rapidly, and new technologies rely on major advancements in physics: on discoveries of new materials as well as groundbreaking innovation. At the same time, advanced and emerging technologies such as machine learning and high-performance computing are transforming physics. With this in mind, we have created a training programme that would be attractive to postdoctoral researchers worldwide, while also making the whole package competitive. The 60 P4F fellows will benefit from personalised supervision and mentoring as well as a range of secondment partners in industry.

Why is your project important for society? The P4F programme trains a new generation of researchers to solve society's biggest future challenges, from achieving energy sufficiency and



protecting critical raw materials to advancing space exploration.

What communication and public engagement measures have you foreseen? We promote P4F on the inter-academy level in the region, among local universities, through the Czech liaison office in Brussels and at conferences. We will soon see the first fellows presenting their findings to the general audience at Science Fairs, at Researcher's night events and at Open labs day. We expect that P4F fellows will in the future find careers not only in academia but also in industry. Therefore a 3-day P4F colloquium will feature partners from both academia and beyond. We also promote P4F to science policy makers as an example of mobility of researchers, interdisciplinary knowledge exchange and science internationalisation.

What kind of support did you get? In the initial preparatory phase, we relied on two intensive training courses organised by the Czech NCP which was invaluable. Without the training it would have taken us much longer to fully understand the call and its broad guidelines. We have also used the [MSCA-NET handbook](#) for reference and consulted with successful holders of the grant. It took us several months to prepare for writing. In that time we identified gaps and analysed the institutional needs and together with researchers co-designed the programme. To write the proposal itself, we put together a group of five people, each of them with different expertise. We succeeded the second time we applied.

Do you have other successful projects under Horizon 2020? Yes, we do. We participate in two ERC projects, several MSCA and Research infrastructure projects, one Pillar II project and three EIC Pathfinder Open projects.

What in your experience helped you to succeed? As a research institution, we focus our effort mainly on Pillar I and Pillar III of Horizon Europe. We invest time in preparation and use a combination of multiple channels of communication, training and collaborative work.

How did you attract resources for the co-funding of your project? We wanted P4F to be attractive and our goal was to make the whole package – not only the remuneration – competitive. Trying to find co-financing for MSCA COFUND programmes is not easy. We applied for the P4F COFUND project after careful consideration of internal resources, and we are co-financing the programme ourselves. We were fortunate enough to receive a partial contribution for each fellow from the Czech Academy of

Sciences as the Institute of Physics is one of its institutes.

As a mono-beneficiary programme MSCA COFUND is very well suited for synergies with ESIF funds. We would appreciate simple guidelines for the combination of the Framework Programmes and ESIF funds by the European Commission.

What tips can you give other organisations that would like to apply for MSCA? Allocate sufficient time for preparation, be it for training of your writers or internal analyses and identifications of needs. Preparing a solid COFUND project requires teamwork and co-creation. Put together a team of grant advisors and researchers. Rely on NCPs and their resources – they are doing a fantastic job!

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 COFUND aims to stimulate regional, national or international programmes to foster excellence in researchers' training, mobility and career development, spreading the best practices of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions.

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.

