Webinar

Preparing an application for a Marie Curie post-doctoral fellowship

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TROPIBIO TAXON-TIME

How to turn your research idea into a 10-page proposal

Juliana Stropp

19/07/2021

1. What is the MSCA-PF fellowship?

- Post-doctoral fellowship funded by the European Commission
- Strong component on training
- Call opened 22 June 2021
- Call closes 12 October 2021

https://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions/calls/msca-postdoctoral-fellowships-2021

About MSCA ▾ | Actions ▾ | **Funding** | Jobs | Resources ▾ | What's new ▾

MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships 2021

Reference HORIZON-MSCA-2021-PF-01

Deadline 12 Oct 2021

MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships enhance the creative and innovative potential of researchers holding a PhD and who wish to acquire new skills through advanced training, international, interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral mobility. MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships will be open to excellent researchers of any nationality.

The scheme also encourages researchers to work on research and innovation projects in the non-academic sector and is open to researchers wishing to reintegrate in Europe, to those who are displaced by conflict, as well as to researchers with high potential who are seeking to restart their careers in research.

Follow this like to learn more details about MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships .

Fellowships will be provided to excellent researchers, undertaking international mobility either to or

2. Getting started

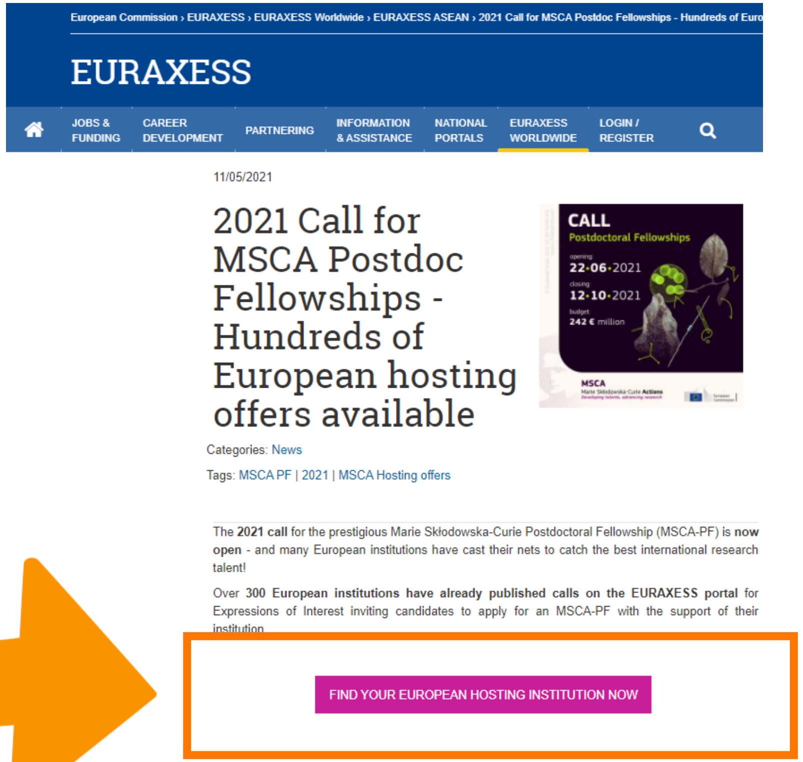
- Define topic and main ideas
- Download form
- Contact potential supervisor and host institution

Over 300 institutions

Info and form at:

https://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions/calls/msca-postdoctoral-fellowships-2021

Search host institution at:
https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/



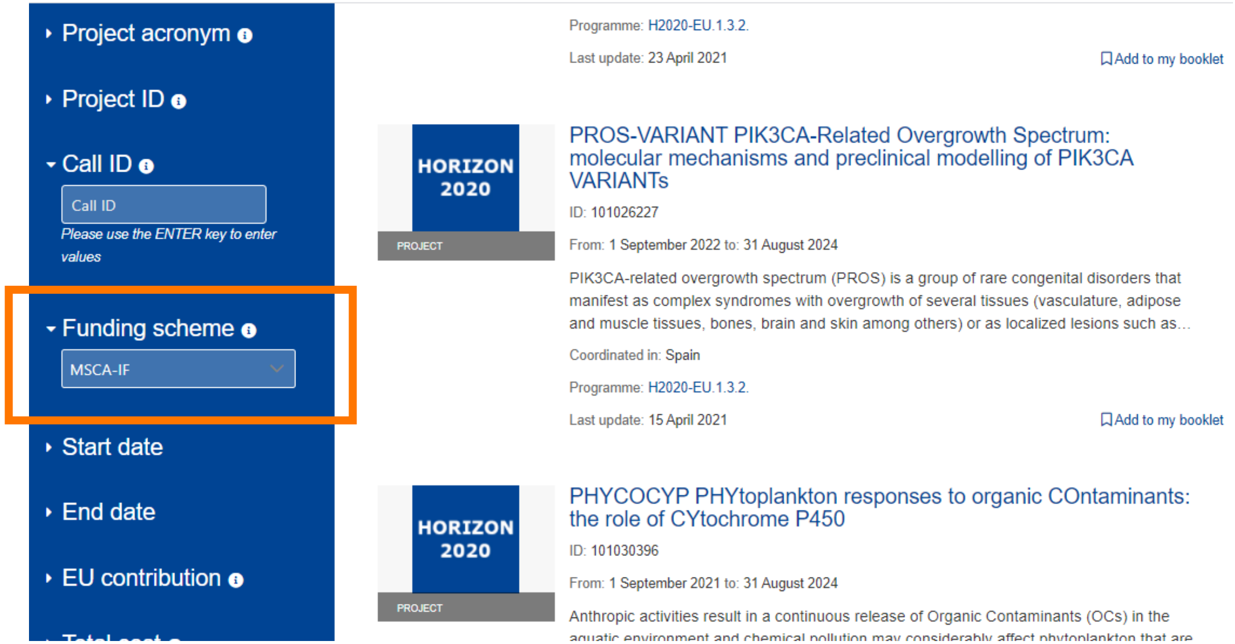
2. Getting started

- Check approved projects

CORDIS database

https://cordis.europa.eu/

MSCA-IF



3. Timeline

- Ideas and contact with supervisor (mid-July)
- First draft (COMPLETE!) (end-August)
- Corrections and revisions (September and October)

- Deadline (12 Oct. 17: 00 h – Brussels time)

4. Proposal

- Excellence
- Impact
- Implementation

Scores

0 – *The* ***proposal fails to address the criterion*** *or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.*
1 – Poor. *The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.*
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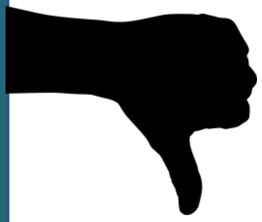
Minimum 4.7

4. Proposal

- Excellence
  1. Research & Innovation
     - Why this project?
     - Why you?
     - Why now?

- Broad scientific impact
- Test of hypothesis that is relevant for a whole discipline
- Paradigm shift
- Interdisciplinary research
- Scale-up
- Use of new technologies



- Case study
- Replicate study
- New method for an old question

4. Proposal

- **Excellence**

  1. **Research & Innovation**

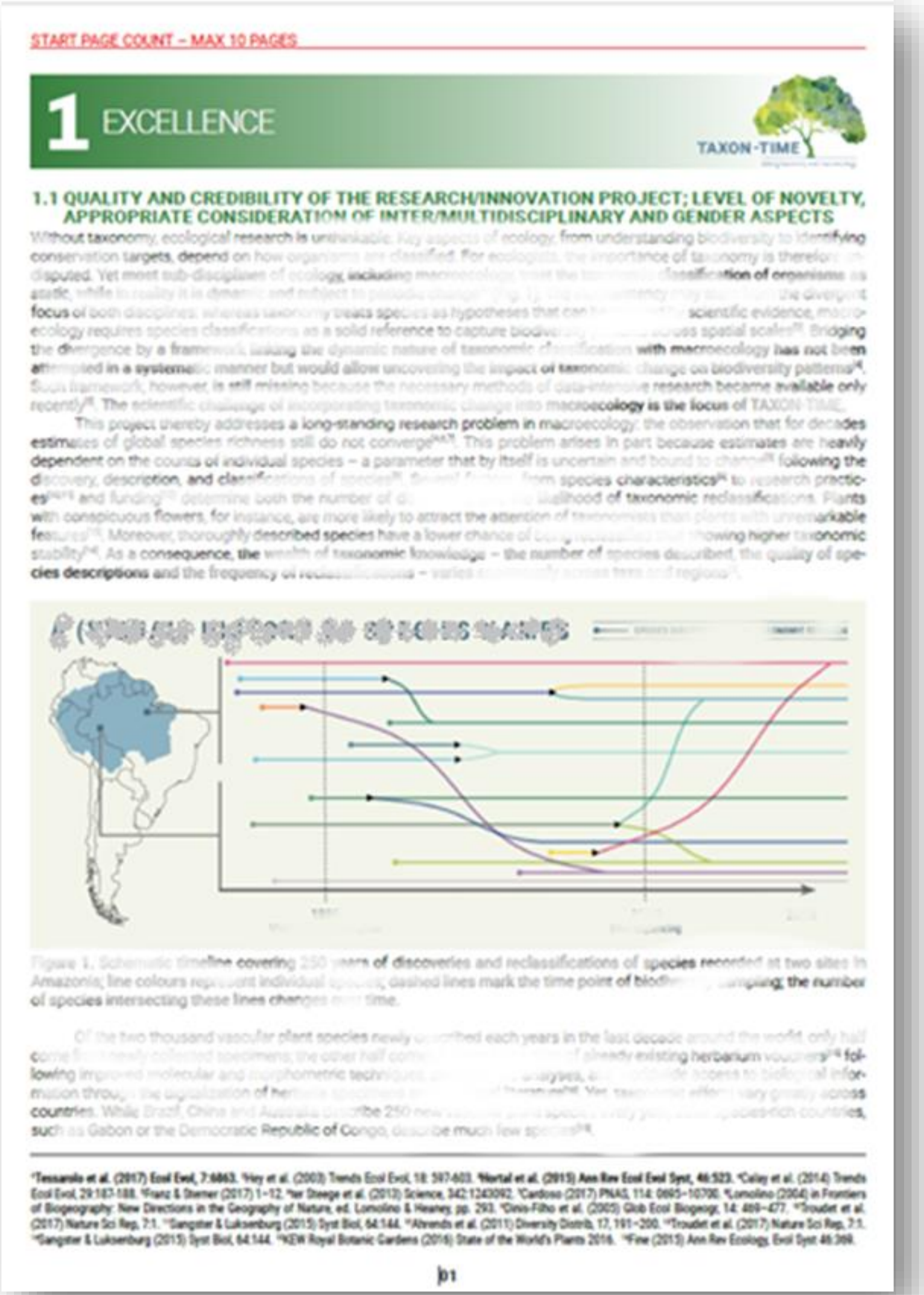
  2. Methods (interdisciplinary approach, gender issues, open science, engagement with society)

  3. Two-way knowledge transfer

4. Proposal

- **Excellence: research & innovation**
  - Easy-to read text
  - Present the rational behind your project
  - Present a visually engaging figure
  - Show scientific credibility
  - Show that you can do the work

Page 1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1 EXCELLENCE

TAXON-TIME

1.1 QUALITY AND CREDIBILITY OF THE RESEARCH/INNOVATION PROJECT; LEVEL OF NOVELTY, APPROPRIATE CONSIDERATION OF INTER/MULTIDISCIPLINARY AND GENDER ASPECTS

4. Proposal

- **Excellence: Research & Innovation**

In a few senteces:

- What is known?
- What is unknwon?
- How are you going to close a specific knowledge gap?

- Trigger curiosity, present contrasting ideas, new view on a old topic, etc.

Page1


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1 EXCELLENCE

TAXON-TIME

1.1 QUALITY AND CREDIBILITY OF THE RESEARCH/INNOVATION PROJECT; LEVEL OF NOVELTY, APPROPRIATE CONSIDERATION OF INTER/MULTIDISCIPLINARY AND GENDER ASPECTS

Example:

Without taxonomy, ecological research is unthinkable. Key aspects of ecology, from understanding biodiversity to identifying conservation targets, depend on how organisms are classified. For ecologists, the importance of taxonomy is therefore undisputed. Yet **most sub-disciplines of ecology, including macroecology, treat the taxonomic classification of organisms as *static*, while in reality it is *dynamic* and subject to periodic change**[1] (Fig. 1). The inconsistency may stem from the divergent focus of both disciplines: whereas taxonomy treats species as hypotheses that can be rejected by scientific evidence, macroecology requires species classifications as a solid reference to capture biodiversity patterns across spatial scales[2]. Bridging the divergence by **a framework linking the dynamic nature of taxonomic classification with macroecology has not been attempted in a systematic manner but would allow uncovering the impact of taxonomic change on biodiversity patterns**[4]. Such framework, however, is still missing because the necessary methods of data-intensive research became available only recently[5]. **The scientific challenge of incorporating taxonomic change into macroecology is the focus of TAXON-TIME**.

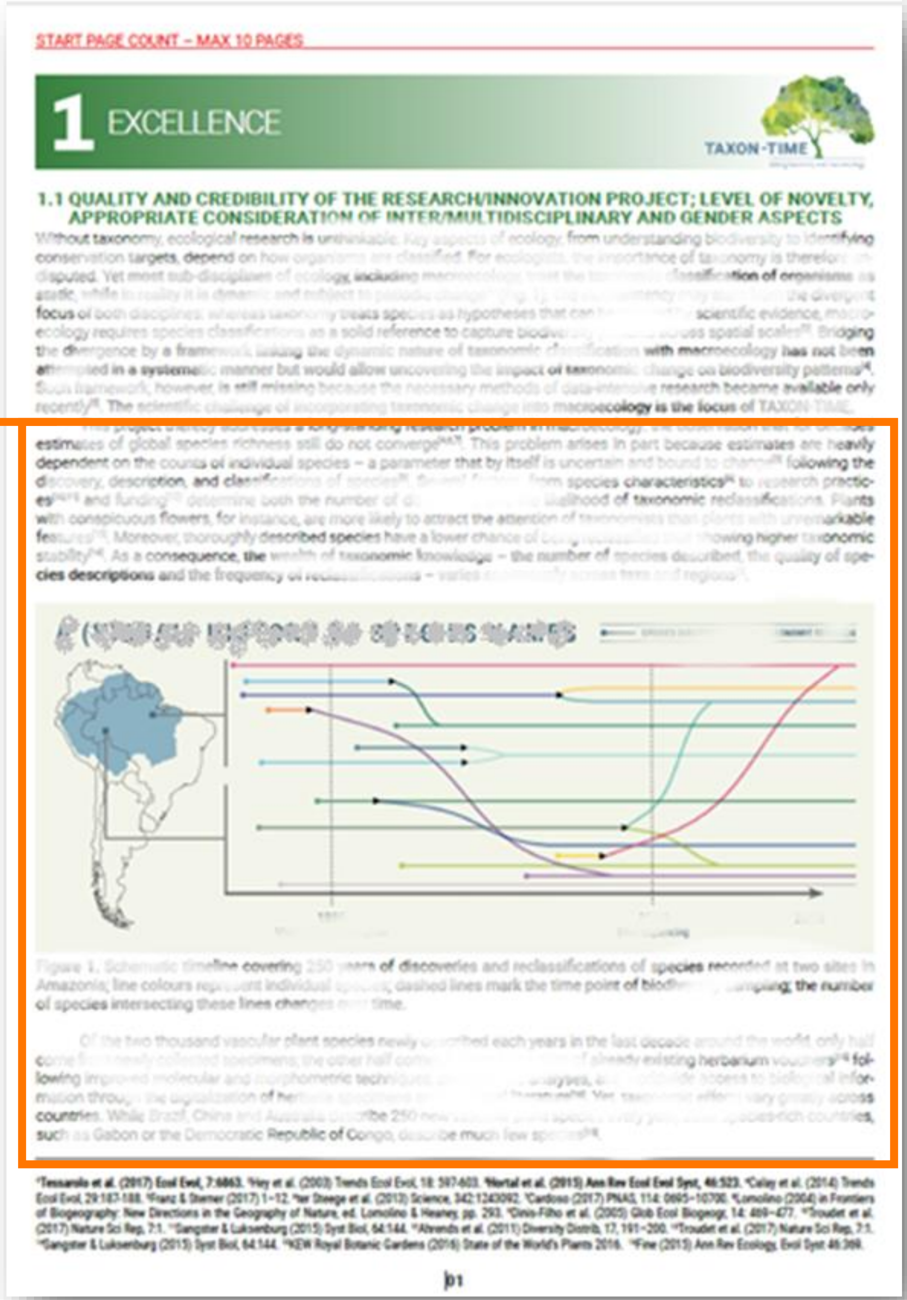
4. Proposal

- Excellence: Research & Innovation

- Background information for a broad audience (avoid jargon)

- Figure; photo; graph...

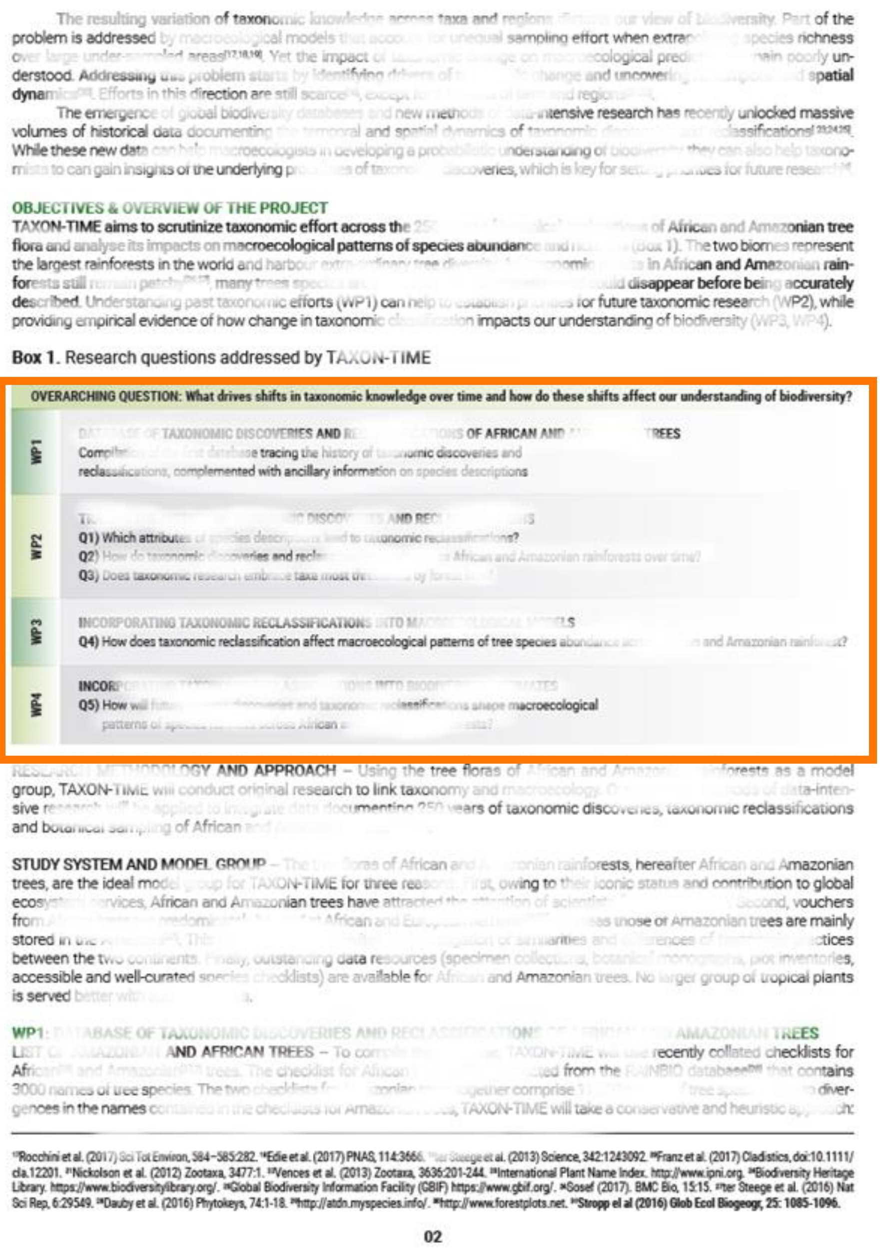
Page 1



4. Proposal

- **Excellence: Research & Innovation**

Page 2

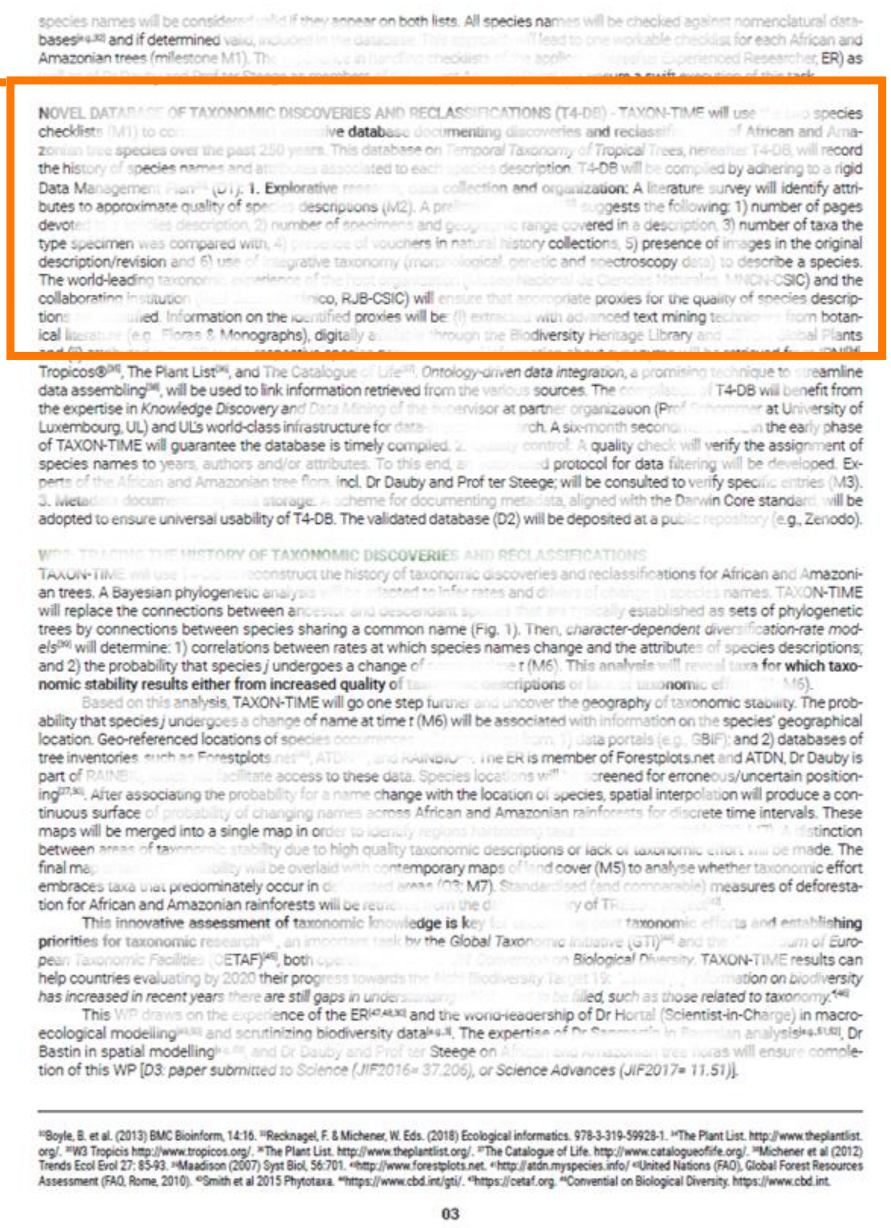


- Show how the project is organized in work packages.
- Research questions presented by WP.

4. Proposal

- **Excellence: Methods**

Page 3



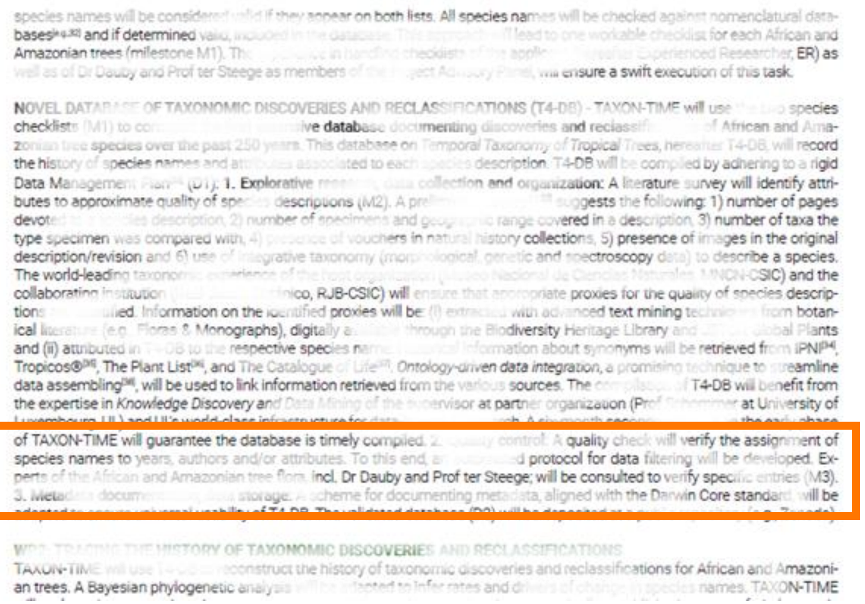
- For each WP, provide a short description of the methods.

4. Proposal

- Excellence: Methods

- How to convince evaluators that you are able to do the work?
- Show that you have done similar work before (cite your own articles or those of your supervisor).

Page 3



species names will be considered valid if they appear on both lists. All species names will be checked against nomenclatural databases[e.g.,32] and if determined valid, included in the database. This approach will lead to one workable checklist for each African and Amazonian trees (milestone M1). The [illegible] in handling checklists of the applicant (hereafter Experienced Researcher, ER) as well as of Dr Dauby and Prof ter Steege as members of the Project Advisory Panel, will ensure a swift execution of this task.

NOVEL DATABASE OF TAXONOMIC DISCOVERIES AND RECLASSIFICATIONS (T4-DB) - TAXON-TIME will use the two species checklists (M1) to [illegible] ive database documenting discoveries and reclassif[illegible] of African and Amazonian tree species over the past 250 years. This database on *Temporal Taxonomy of Tropical Trees*, hereafter T4-DB, will record the history of species names and attributes associated to each species description. T4-DB will be compiled by adhering to a rigid Data Management Plan[illegible] (D1): 1. Explorative [illegible], data collection and organization: A literature survey will identify attributes to approximate quality of species descriptions (M2). A pre[illegible] suggests the following: 1) number of pages devoted [illegible] description, 2) number of specimens and geographic range covered in a description, 3) number of taxa the type specimen was compared with, 4) presence of vouchers in natural history collections, 5) presence of images in the original description/revision and 6) use of integrative taxonomy (morphological, genetic and spectroscopy data) to describe a species. The world-leading taxonomic experience of the host organization ([illegible] MNCN-CSIC) and the collaborating institution ([illegible] nico, RJB-CSIC) will ensure that appropriate proxies for the quality of species descriptions [illegible] ied. Information on the identified proxies will be: (i) extracted with advanced text mining techni[illegible] from botanical literature (e.g. Floras & Monographs), digitally a[illegible] through the Biodiversity Heritage Library and [illegible] Global Plants and (ii) attributed in T4-DB to the respective species name. [illegible] information about synonyms will be retrieved from IPNI[34], Tropicos®[35], The Plant List[36], and The Catalogue of Life[37]. *Ontology-driven data integration*, a promising technique to streamline data assembling[38], will be used to link information retrieved from the various sources. The [illegible] of T4-DB will benefit from the expertise in *Knowledge Discovery and Data Mining* of the supervisor at partner organization (Prof [illegible] at University of [illegible]

of TAXON-TIME will guarantee the database is timely compiled. 2. [illegible] control: A quality check will verify the assignment of species names to years, authors and/or attributes. To this end, a[illegible] d protocol for data filtering will be developed. Experts of the African and Amazonian tree flora, incl. Dr Dauby and Prof ter Steege; will be consulted to verify specific entries (M3). 3. Meta[illegible] storage: A scheme for documenting metadata, aligned with the Darwin Core standard, will be [illegible]

WP2: TRACING THE HISTORY OF TAXONOMIC DISCOVERIES AND RECLASSIFICATIONS

TAXON-TIME will use T4-DB to reconstruct the history of taxonomic discoveries and reclassifications for African and Amazonian trees. A Bayesian phylogenetic analysis will be adapted to infer rates and drivers of change in species names. TAXON-TIME

Example: The experience of the ER [47,48,30] in bla-bla and the world-leadership of XX (Scientist-in-Charge) in bla-bla-bla [e.g.,3] will ensure completion of this WP [*D3: paper submitted to ZZZ (JIF2019= xx), or YYY (JIF2019= xx)*].

4. Proposal

- **Excellence: Two-way knowledge transfer**

  - How important is the project for developing your scientific skills?
  - Importance of the project for your career
  - How important is the project for your host institution?
  - Importance of the project for the host institution

1.3 Quality of the supervision, training and of the two-way transfer of knowledge between the researcher and the host

At a minimum, address the following aspects:

- Describe the qualifications and experience of the supervisor(s). Provide information regarding the supervisors' level of experience on the research topic proposed and their track record of work, including main international collaborations, as well as the level of experience in supervising/training, especially at advanced level (i.e. PhD and postdoctoral researchers).
- Planned training activities for the researcher (scientific aspects, management/organisation, horizontal and key transferrable skills...).
- For *European Fellowships*: two-way transfer of knowledge between the researcher and host organisation.
- For *Global Fellowships*: three-way transfer of knowledge between the researcher, host organisation, and associated partner for outgoing phase.
- Rationale and added-value of the non-academic placement (if applicable).

https://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions/calls/msca-postdoctoral-fellowships-2021

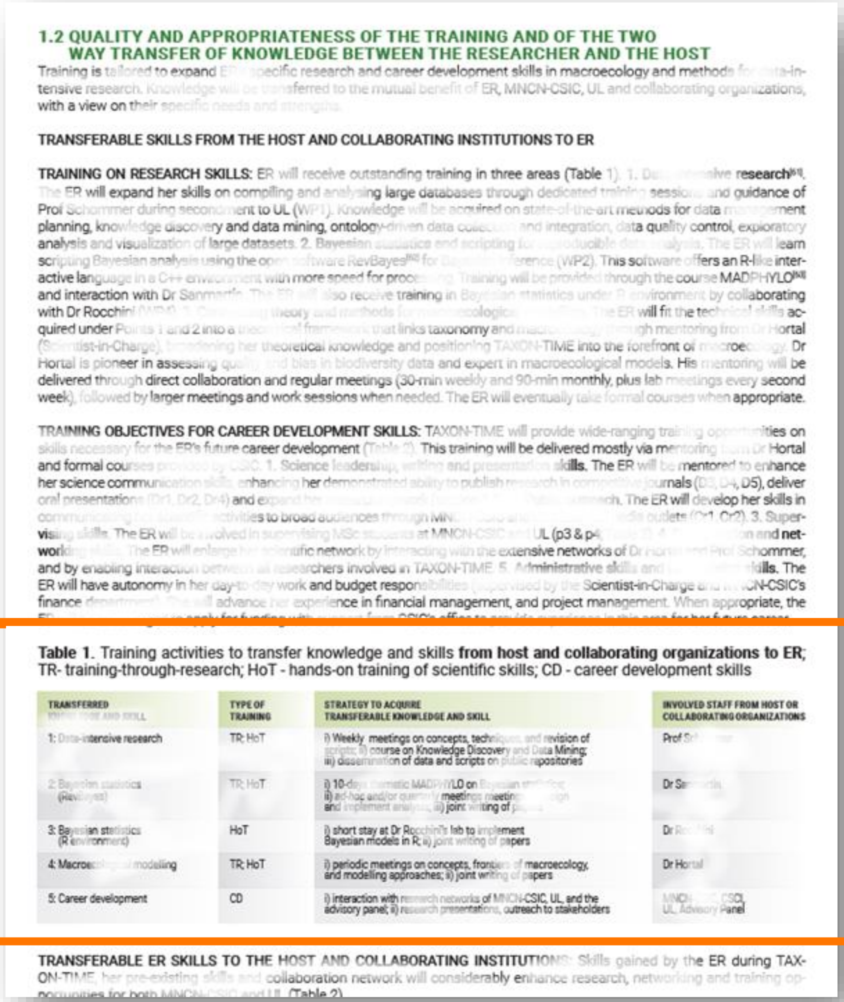
4. Proposal

- **Excellence:** Two-way knowledge transfer

  - Which skills will you acquire?
  - How? Course, meetings, hands-on-training, etc.
  - With whom? Names of researchers or institutions involved in the training

Página 5 - 6

Training (two tables)
host institution → candidate
candidate → host institution


1.2 QUALITY AND APPROPRIATENESS OF THE TRAINING AND OF THE TWO WAY TRANSFER OF KNOWLEDGE BETWEEN THE RESEARCHER AND THE HOST

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS FROM THE HOST AND COLLABORATING INSTITUTIONS TO ER

Table 1. Training activities to transfer knowledge and skills **from host and collaborating organizations to ER**; TR- training-through-research; HoT - hands-on training of scientific skills; CD - career development skills

4. Proposal

- Excellence
- Impact
- Implementation

Interpretação das notas:

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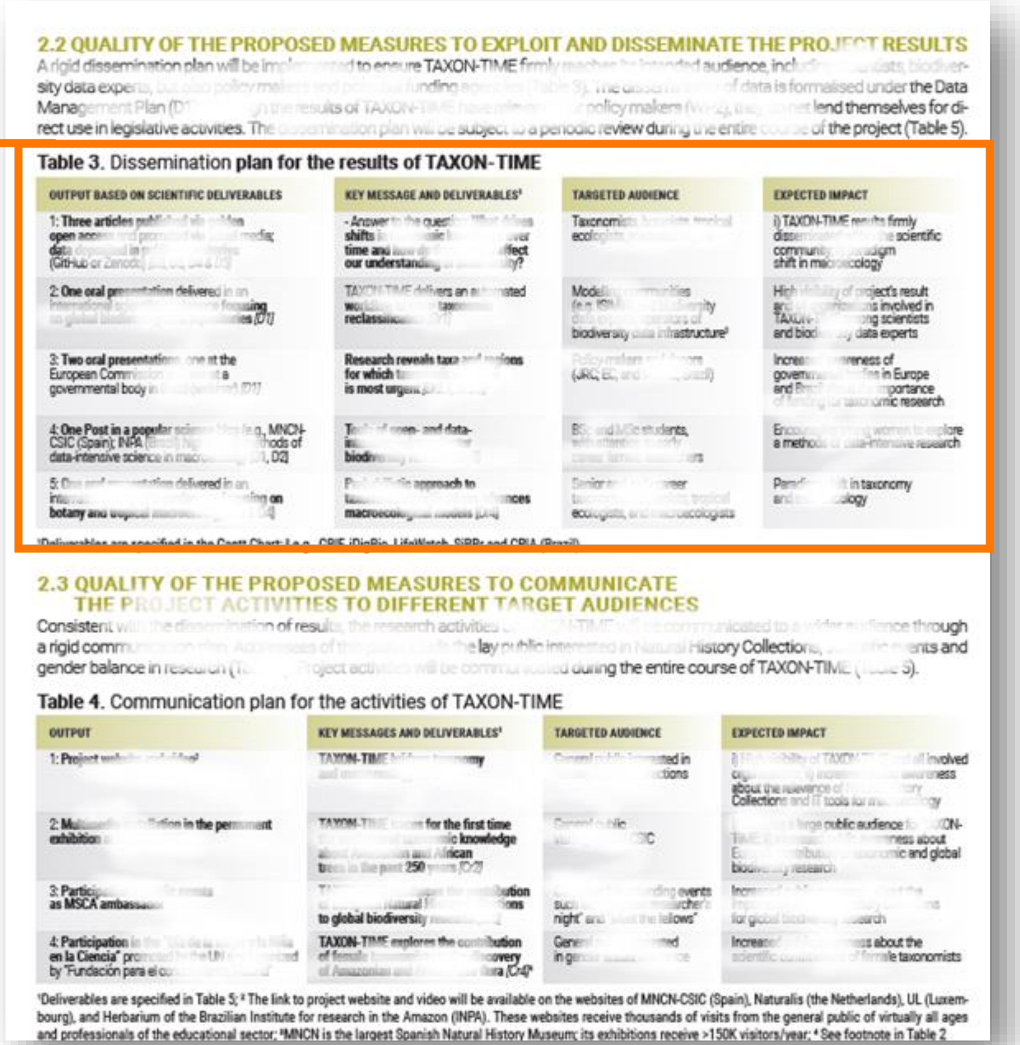
Minimum 4.7

- **Impact:** Dissemination & Exploitation
  - **Output based on scientific deliverables:** e.g., *TAXON-TIME One oral presentation at xx.*
  - **Key message** *[Deliverable]*
  - **Targeted audience:** e.g., *TAXON-TIME: Modelling communities (e.g. ISIMIP) and biodiversity data experts, operators of biodiversity data infrastructure; BSc and MSc students, with attention to early career female researchers*
  - **Expected impact:** e.g., *TAXON-TIME: results firmly disseminated within the scientific community. Young women encouraged to explore methods of data-intensive research*

Page 8
Dissemination



4. Proposal

- **Impact:** Dissemination & Exploitation

YEAR 1 – Rejected

Results will be communicated during the entire course of TAXON-TIME . **Priority will be given to exploit and disseminate scientific results, giving full access to the database generated** (Table 3). This database will be stored in public repositories such as Zenodo, and will also be available for download at the website of the MNCN (Spain). The target audience of both phases will be the general public, policy makers, donors and young and senior researchers".

YEAR 2 – Approved

A rigid dissemination plan will be implemented to ensure TAXON-TIME firmly reaches its intended **audience, including scientists, biodiversity data experts, but also policy makers** and potential funding agencies (Table 3). **The dissemination of data is formalised under the Data Management Plan** (D1). Although the results of TAXON-TIME have relevance for policy makers (WP2), they do not lend themselves for direct use in legislative activities. **The dissemination plan will be subject to a periodic review during the entire course of the project** (Table 5).

4. Proposal

- **Impact:** Dissemination & Exploitation

YEAR 1 – Rejected

In line with the guidelines "Communicating EU research and innovation guidance for project participants", **in Table 4 we outline the activities that will be carried out to maximize the impact of TAXON-TIME**.

<u>Evaluation Report</u>
<u>Weaknesses</u>:
*"**Relevant target audiences**, such as the local stakeholders in studied tropical regions, **are not adequately discussed in the dissemination Strategy**".*

YEAR 2 – Approved
"Consistent with the dissemination of results, the research activities of TAXON-TIME will be communicated to a wider audience through a rigid communication plan. **Addressees of this plan include the lay public interested in Natural History Collections, scientific events and gender balance in research** (Table 4). Project activities will be communicated during the entire course of TAXON-TIME (Table 5)".

<u>Evaluation Report</u>
<u>Strength</u>:
*The proposed measures to disseminate the project results are clearly presented and described; these will increase the visibility of the project and researcher. The research findings will effectively reach a broad range **of pertinent target groups including the scientific community and policy-makers**.*
*-"The planned communication routes and activities that are aimed at **reaching different audiences are impressive and include an ambitious plan for engaging the general public**."*

<u>Weakness:</u>
Details on potential exploitation of the project results are incomplete.

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4. Proposal

- Implementation
  - Gantt Chart organized by WP
  - Rows: main activities (as in the text)
  - Google: Gantt Chart Templates

Page 9

Gantt Chart (one table)

Table 5. Work plan of TAXON-TIME. Person-month (pm): one person-month equals 168 hours of work; i.e. 21 days of 8 working

	Project members involved in task* (pm)									Year 1														
Main research / training activities	ER	SiC	SS	LB	GD	DR	IS	HtS	Σ	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
WP1: COMPILATION OF T4-DB											M1													
i. Compilation [illegible] checklist	.9				0.1			0.1	1.1	0.5	0.4													
ii. Lit. review (proxy quality sp. description)	.9	0.5							1.4	0.5	0.4		D1				M3							
iii. Data [illegible] compilation (UL)**	5.9		1.0		0.1			0.1	7.1		M2	1	1	1	1	1	0.9						D2	
WP2: TAXONOM[illegible] AND REVISIONS												T1							M4					
i. Integr. of geo-[illegible] sp. into T4-DB	.6								0.6									0.3	0.3	M5				
ii. Compilation of land-cover data	.5			0.1					0.6									0.2		0.3	M6			
iii. Charac.-[illegible] divers.-rate models	1.5						0.8		2.3										0.5	0.5	0.5	M7		
iv. Interpolation an[illegible] analysis	.4			0.2					0.6										T2		0.2	0.2	D3	
v. Writing scientific article	2.3	1.0	0.5	0.3	0.3		0.2	0.2	5.3								0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.8	0.6	
WP3: MAC[illegible]ELS																								M8
i. Integration of sp. abundance into T4-DB	.9							0.2	1.2														0.1	0.8
ii. Models of change [illegible]ructure	1.4	0.5							1.9															0.1
iii. Writing scientific article	2.1	1.0	0.5		0.3			0.2	4.1															0.1
WP4: BIODIVER[illegible]TES																								
i. An[illegible]ian time series regression	1.8					0.3			2.1															
ii. Writing scientific article	3	1.0	0.5		0.2	0.3		0.2	5.2															
TOTAL person-month	2.2	4.0	2.5	0.6	1.0	0.6	1.0	1.0		1.0	0.8	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.6	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.7	1.0
WP5: DISSEMINATION AND COMMUNICATION																								
i. Dissemination and Communication of results	1	0.2							1.2		Cr1							Dr1	Cr2			Dr2.1	Dr2.2	
WT: PROJECT MANAGEMEMT																								
i. Organisation and management	Included above									O1	O2						O3						O4	
ii. Progress reporting											Pr1				Pr1				Pr1		DT1	Pr1		
ii. Progress monitoring										P1	P2		P2	P1		P2		P1	P2		P1		P2	P1

Research; Training through research; T Dedicated tra

*ER; SiC (Scientist-in-Charge) - Dr Hortal; SS (Supervisor during secondment) - Prof [illegible]; LB - Dr [illegible]; GD - Dr Daubi; DR - Dr [illegible]; IS - Dr [illegible]; HtS - Prof ter Steege. **Activity durin

- Milestones [M] – [M1] Check lists of AFR AMZ trees compiled; [M2] Proxy of quality of species description defined based in a literature review; [M3] T4-DB compiled; [M4] Ge Land-cover data compiled; [M6] Character-dependent diversification-rate models built; [M7] Spatial Interpolation of nomenclatural stability performed; [M8] Data on field species change in community structure built; [M10] Bayesian time series analysis performed.

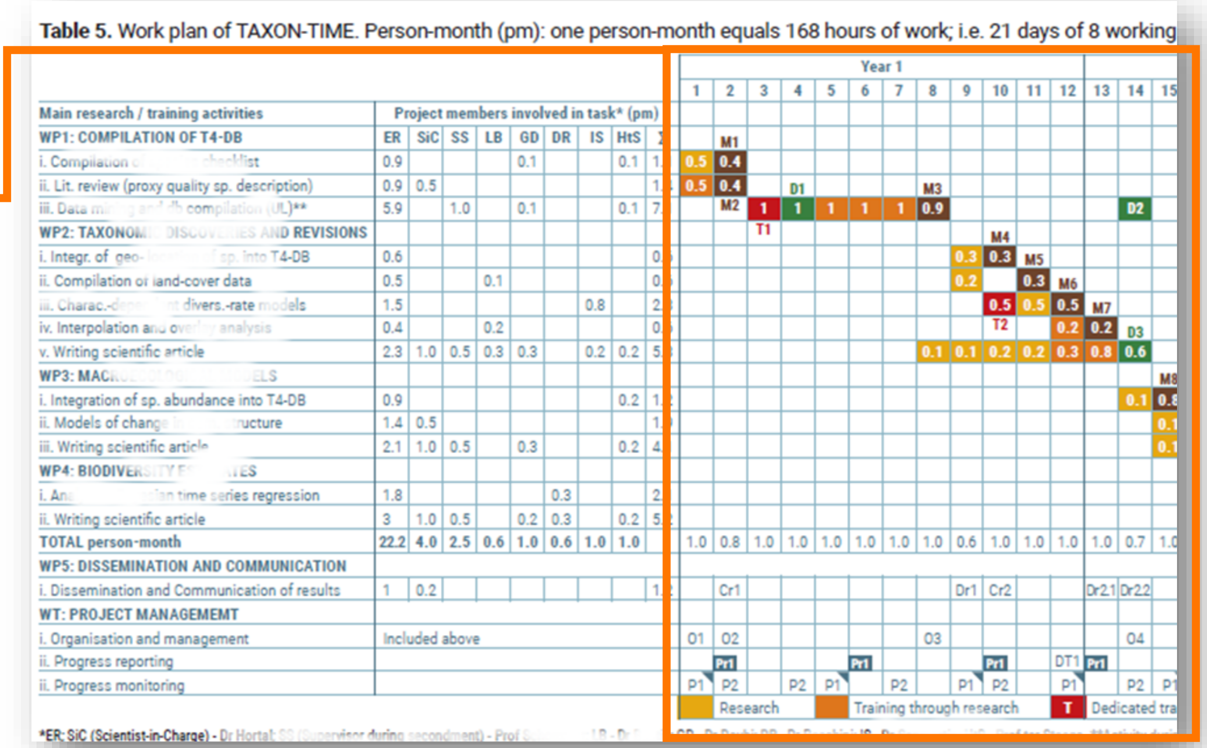
4. Proposal

- **Implementation**

  - Milestones and deliverables mentioned in the text
  - Balance between ambition and reality; e.g., TAXON-TIME: 2 main papers and 1 database

Page 9

Gantt Chart (one table)



Milestones [M] – **[M1]** Species check compiled; **[M2]** Proxy of xxx based in a literature review; **[M3]** Database compiled; **[M4]..[M10]** Bayesian time series analysis performed.

Deliverables [D] – **[D1]** Data management plan delivered; **[D2]** Database uploaded to a public repository; **[D3]** Paper WP2 submitted; **[D4]** Paper WP3 submitted; **[D5]** Paper WP4 submitted.

4. Proposal

- **Implementation**

  - Milestones and deliverables mentioned in the text
  - Balance between ambition and reality; e.g., TAXON-TIME: 2 main papers and 1 database

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Gantt Chart (one table)

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iii. Data [illegible] db compilation (UL)**	5.9		1.0		0.1			0.1	[illegible]		M2	1 T1	1	1	1	1	0.9						D2	
WP2: TAXONOM[illegible] AND REVISIONS																			M4					
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ii. Compilation of land-cover data	0.5			0.1					[illegible]									0.2		0.3	M6			
iii. Charac.-[illegible] divers.-rate [illegible]	1.5						0.8		[illegible]										0.5 T2	0.5	0.5	M7		
iv. Interpolation [illegible] analysis	0.4			0.2					[illegible]												0.2	0.2	D3	
v. Writing scientific article	2.3	1.0	0.5	0.3	0.3		0.2	0.2	[illegible]								0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.8	0.6	
WP3: MAC[illegible]ELS																								M8
i. Integration of sp. abundance into T4-DB	0.9							0.2	[illegible]														0.1	0.8
ii. Models of change [illegible]ructure	1.4	0.5							[illegible]															0.1
iii. Writing scientific article	2.1	1.0	0.5		0.3			0.2	[illegible]															0.1
WP4: BIODIVER[illegible]ES																								
i. An[illegible] time series regression	1.8					0.3			[illegible]															
ii. Writing scientific article	3	1.0	0.5		0.2	0.3		0.2	[illegible]															
TOTAL person-month	22.2	4.0	2.5	0.6	1.0	0.6	1.0	1.0		1.0	0.8	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.6	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.7	1.0
WP5: DISSEMINATION AND COMMUNICATION																								
i. Dissemination and Communication of results	1	0.2							[illegible]		Cr1							Dr1	Cr2			Dr2.1	Dr2.2	
WT: PROJECT MANAGEMEMT																								
i. Organisation and management	Included above									O1	O2						O3						O4	
ii. Progress reporting											Pr1				Pr1				Pr1		DT1	Pr1		
ii. Progress monitoring										P1	P2		P2	P1		P2		P1	P2		P1		P2	P1

Legend: Research; Training through research; T Dedicated tra[illegible]

*ER; SiC (Scientist-in-Charge) - Dr Hortal; SS (Supervisor during secondment) - Prof [illegible] LB - Dr [illegible] GD - Dr Daubi; DR - Dr [illegible]; IS - Dr [illegible] HtS - Prof ter Steege. **Activity durin[illegible]

Training [T] – **[T1]** Data Mining; part of the master program (XX); **[T2]** Madrid workshop on Phylogenetics (RJB-CSIC)…

Dissemination [Dr] & Communication [Cr] – **[Cr1]** Project website… **[Cr3]** ER's participation in xx; **[Dr1]** Oral presentation at xx

Project Management [O] and Progress Monitoring [P] – **[O1]** Formal meeting with CSIC staff for implementation of MSCA grant; **[O2]** **[P1]** 40 min. e-meetings with xx **[Pr1]** Risk assessment report

4. Proposal

- Implementation

YEAR 1 – Rejected

Table 5. Outline of work plan and chronogram of major activities in TAXON-TIME

Project year - Calendar year	Year 1												Year 2											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Main research / training activities																								
WT - Project management												DT1												DT1
WP1 - Data management																								
i. Literature review and database comp (DB-						M1																		
i. Literature review and data mining and									M2							D1								
1. Database compilation (DB-Plots)																			M3					
WP2 - Q1 and Q2																								
i. Time series analysis												M4												
ii. BSTS														M5										
iii. Writing scientific article																D2								
WP3 - Q3																								
i. Spatio-temporal analysis																M6								
ii. Writing scientific article																D2								
WP4 - Q4 and Q 5																								
i. Analitical framework																			M7					
ii. Writing scientific article																				D4.1	D4.2			
WP5 - Q6																								
i. Analysis -																								D5
ii. Writing scientific article																								
WP6 - Exploitation and Dissemination																								
i. Various activities		E1				E2	E4				E3					E4		E3				E5		
ii. Scientific conferences						SC1									SC2									

M Milestone D Deliverable

Weaknesses

- The **allocation of resources is presented in only a general manner** and not discussed in sufficient detail.

YEAR 2 – Approved

Strengths:

*- Details of the work plan are coherent and effective; impressive **attention has been paid to these and to the description of the allocated tasks**.*

*- The work packages of the proposal are logically inter-related and he **Gantt Chart provides an excellent overview of the distribution of the work load for the researcher and collaborators**.*

- The management structure is very good and includes coherent and effective progress monitoring to ensure delivery of the project objectives.

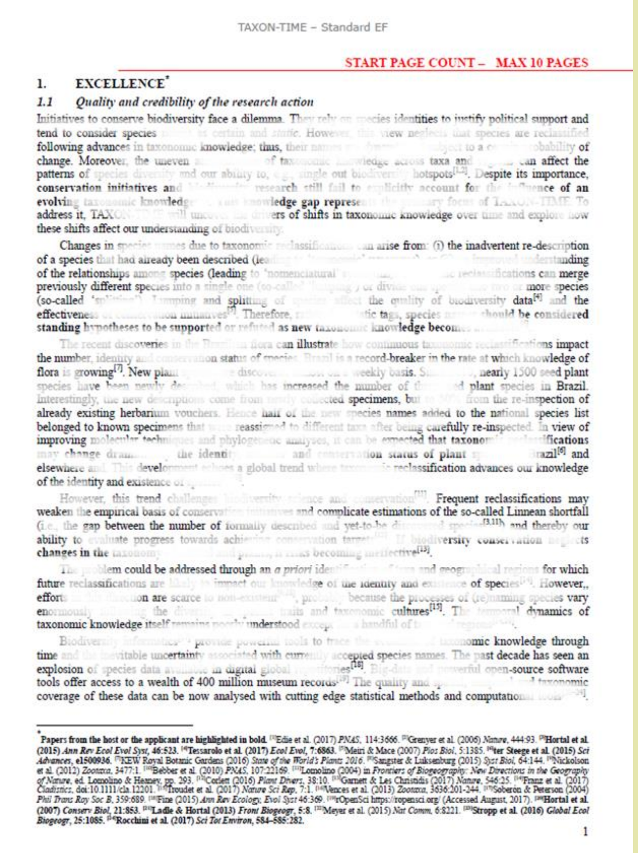
- Risks are very well identified and effective mitigation measures are proposed.

- The host and seconding / collaborating institutions have the necessary infrastructure, facilities and environment to enable the researcher to undertake the project successfully.

4. Proposal

- Layout

YEAR 1 – Rejected



YEAR 2 – Approved

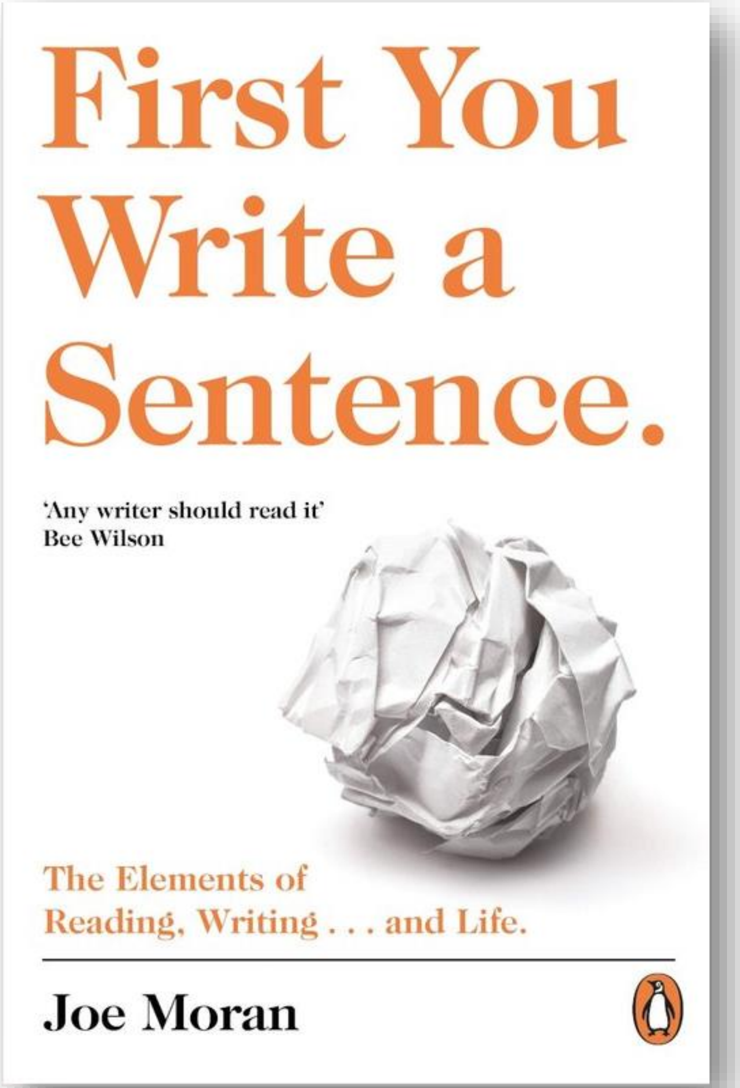
- Logo
- Colour
- Figures
- Tables
- Text in bold

5. Tipps for writing

- Acronyms should be easy to pronounce/remember
- Discuss your ideas, questions, and progress with colleagues (!!)
- Towards the end: many revisions and corrections with supervisor

5. Tipps for writing

- “Learn to love the full stop
- Vary the length of your sentences
- Shorten your paragraphs
- Using mostly short words in a sentence has a happy side effect: a richer pattern of sounds
- When the vowel sounds vary and there are lots of stresses syllables, each word seems distinct from its neighbours. Every word counts
- … fewer writers notice a bigger problem: repeated sounds
- Writing drifts into obscurity when it overuses a certain kind of abstract noun: a nominalization”.



Webinar

Preparing an application for a Marie Curie post-doctoral fellowship

Richard Ladle
ERA-Chair, Tropibio
@TropibioP

Juliana Stropp
MSCA fellow, TAXON-TIME
@taxon_time

TROPIBIO TAXON-TIME

Thank you!

juliana.stropp@gmail.com

www.taxon-time.com

https://taxon-time.com/a-few-more-thoughts-on-writing-a-msca-if-proposal/