



HEZELBURCHT

27-4-2023

EU funding for Neurosciences

UBNeuro



Institut de Neurociències
UNIVERSITAT DE BARCELONA

We **know** about ambition.

Content

1. General introduction

2. Individual grants

ERC & alternatives

MSCA-PF

4. Consortium grants

Building a strong consortium

Tips & tricks for writing

Upcomming calls

Research funding

Necessary, but extremely challenging:

**Access to relevant
information**

**Finding right
partners**

**Time-consuming &
complex**

Support system is available:



Compliance



Reporting



Writing application



Finding partners



Application management

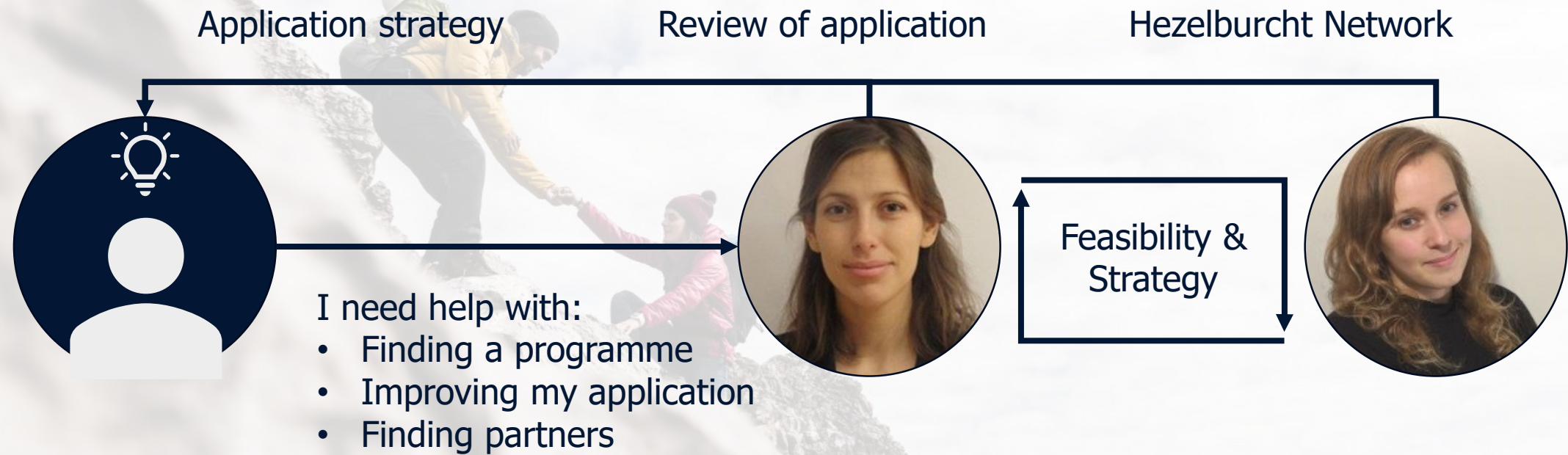


Finding programmes



Feasibility

Collaboration UBNeuro & Hezelburcht





HEZELBURC

About Hezelburcht

>25 years of experience in grant consultancy



Founded in **1995**



7 offices in Europe (Netherlands, Germany, Brussels)



More than **175** specialists



12 areas of expertise

Hezelburcht key figures

155.000

Grants and funding applied for since 1995

€ 1B

European subsidies per year

60%

Success rate in European grant applications

>2.500

Clients supported per year

95%

Returning clients each year



Clients from Academia



UNIVERSITY
OF TWENTE.



Clients from the Life Sciences, Health & Food industry





Grant programmes

We know about ambition.

General tips & tricks

*** Check funding criteria/ assessment form

Backwards approach:

1) Fill out assessment form/ list with funding criteria

Use this filled out list/form to:

2) Structure proposal

3) Highlight key points in proposal

Allows you to:

- Write from point of view of reviewer
- Find gaps early on
- Receive quick feedback from peers



Provide evidence

- Don't expect the reviewer to simply **believe** your claims
- **Concrete** evidence makes your proposal **unique**



Think about your competition

- Separation from **state-of-the-art**
- Separation from other **ongoing developments in the field**



Individual grants

We know about ambition.

GRANT

European Research Council (ERC)

The ERC stimulates **investigator-driven** frontier research in Europe through competitive funding **across all fields**, on the basis of scientific excellence. Both young and established scientists are eligible for this research programme. Researchers can apply for five different funding schemes:

- ✓ ERC Starting Grant (3-7 years after PhD);
- ✓ ERC Consolidator Grant (7-12 years after PhD);
- ✓ ERC Advanced Grant (10+ years of outstanding track record);
- ✓ ERC Proof of Concept Grant (ERC awardees);
- ✓ ERC Synergy Grant (consortium of PIs)



FOR WHAT?

Groundbreaking, high-risk high-gain academic research



FOR WHOM?

Both young and established researchers, as well as consortia of PIs with different levels of experience (SyG)



Deadlines

StG: ~ Oct 2023
CoG: ~Feb 2024
AdG: 23 May 2023
PoC: 21 Sep 2023
SyG: ~ Nov 2023

GRANT European Research Council (ERC) – where to start?

Question → What

Would the answer to the question be incremental or **disruptive** for the field?

Hypotheses

Are your hypotheses based on recent insights or methodological developments, i.e. is the project **timely**? Are your hypotheses specific, i.e. are they **risky**?

Approach → How

Is your approach **novel** (e.g. novel methods, novel combination of methods or novel application area of methods, i.e. goes beyond the **state-of-the-art**?

Can you make a convincing case, that your approach is the most appropriate/**feasible** way to test your hypotheses?

Are there **high dependencies** between your experiments or are the results still interesting for the field if e.g. 1 WP is inconclusive?



You → Who

Do you have the needed **experience/knowledge** to execute the project?

Is there evidence, that the field sees you as (upcoming) **expert**, e.g. citation of papers, invitations to conferences, co-authorships, etc.?

Have you demonstrated **independent, creative** thinking, i.e. have you published relevant work without your PhD supervisor or as senior author?

GRANT European Research Council (ERC) – what if unsuccessful?

Benefits regardless of success

Forces to answer two critical questions:

- What research questions really **interest** me?
- What is my **unique profile**?

→ Gives structure for applications for PI position

Basis for other grant applications

- ERC project criteria (novelty, risky, timely, etc.) are the **basic criteria** for all other **Horizon Europe** grants
- Often re-used for **national** funding programs

Alternative international programmes

EU calls

- ERC **SyG**, **MSCA** (PF, DN, COFUND), **Horizon Europe RIA**, **ERA-NET NEURON**

Foundations

- NY **Stem Cell** Foundation- [Robertson Neuroscience Investigator Awards](#): ~\$ 1.5 Mil for PIs who have established their own lab within last 6 years
- **Brain & Behaviour** Research Foundation- [Investigator Rewards](#)
 - Young Investigator: up to \$70.000 for 2 years
 - Independent Investigator: up to \$100.000 for 2 years
 - Distinguished investigator: up to \$100.000 for 1 year
- [Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research](#): \$50.000- \$2 Mil
- **Huntington's Disease** Society of America- [HD Human Biology Project](#): up to \$ 75.000 for 2 years (directed at young Postdocs)
- [Wings for Life \(Spinal Cord Injury\)](#):
 - Individual grant: salary for young researcher for up to 3 years
 - Project research grant: up to EUR 300.000 for 3 years

US/UK funding

- [Human Frontier Science Program](#): 3 years for 2-4 team members (assistants, PhD, Postdocs)
- Wellcome trust (co-applicant): [Wellcome Discovery Awards](#) (PI salary for up to 8 years + research costs)

GRANT

MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) Postdoctoral Fellowships is a leading programme in **developing talent** and advancing **exchange of knowledge** to foster excellent research. This grant is available to **individual researchers who hold a PhD degree**. Additionally, they cannot have more than eight years of experience in research from the date of the award of their PhD degree.

- ✓ European Postdoctoral Fellowships
- ✓ Global Postdoctoral Fellowships



FOR WHAT?

Stimulating mobility, research talent and career opportunities



FOR WHOM?

Individual researchers who hold a PhD



Deadline

13 Sep 2023

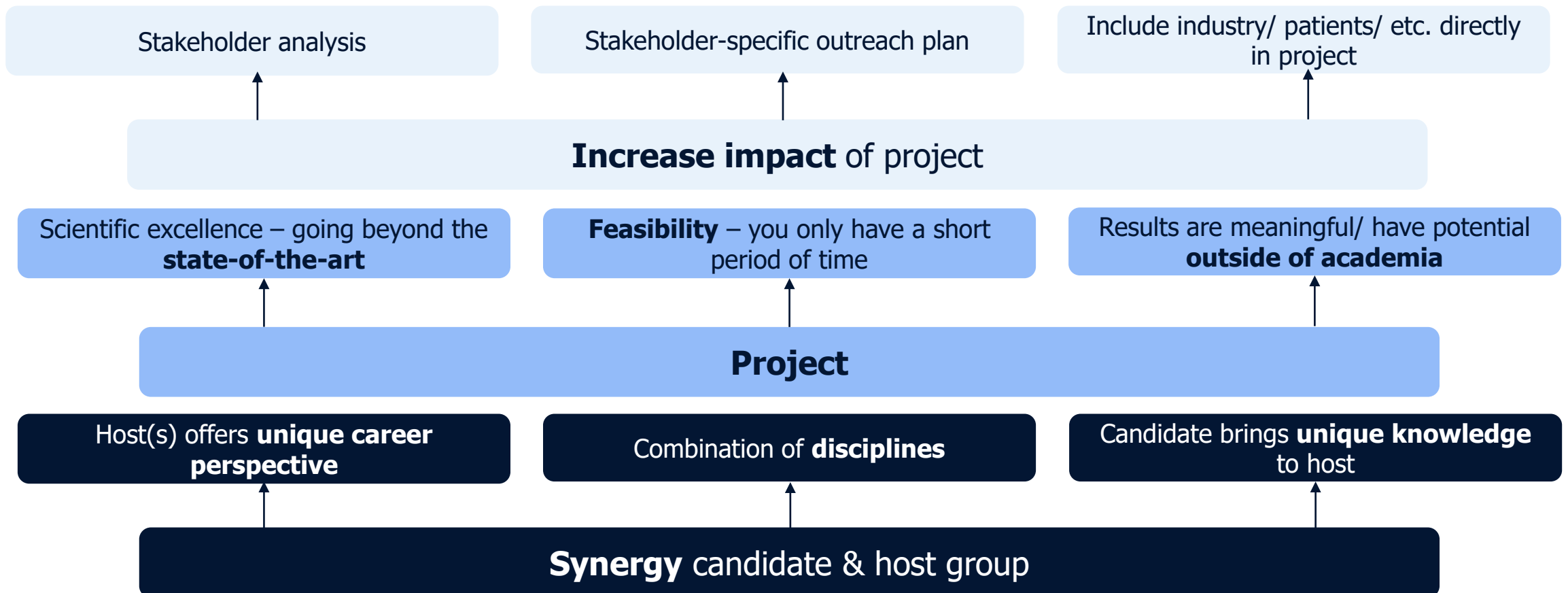


Added benefits for hosting PI

- High-quality Postdoc for “free”
- Strengthens leadership CV
- Extension of own network

GRANT

MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships – where to start?





Consortium grants

We know about ambition.



Consortium Grants – new important trends

Topics/ Approaches

Main motivation:

- **Healthcare system** might **collapse**
- **Europe** as **technological frontrunner**

Translates to:

- Needs to be oriented towards **realistic real-world applications** (economic and societal feasible)
- **Efficient** healthcare: prevention, personalized medicine, healing vs. treatment, smart decision systems
- **Digital** approaches

Consortium

- **Eastern European** partners
- **Diversity**
- Include the whole **stakeholder chain**
 - **social scientists** with focus on real-world applications
 - **Industry**
 - Lobby & **policy making**
 - **End-user**



Consortium grants – the consortium

We **know** about ambition.



CONSORTIUM GRANT

Building a consortium – finding partners

Use Hezelburcht's network, if you are

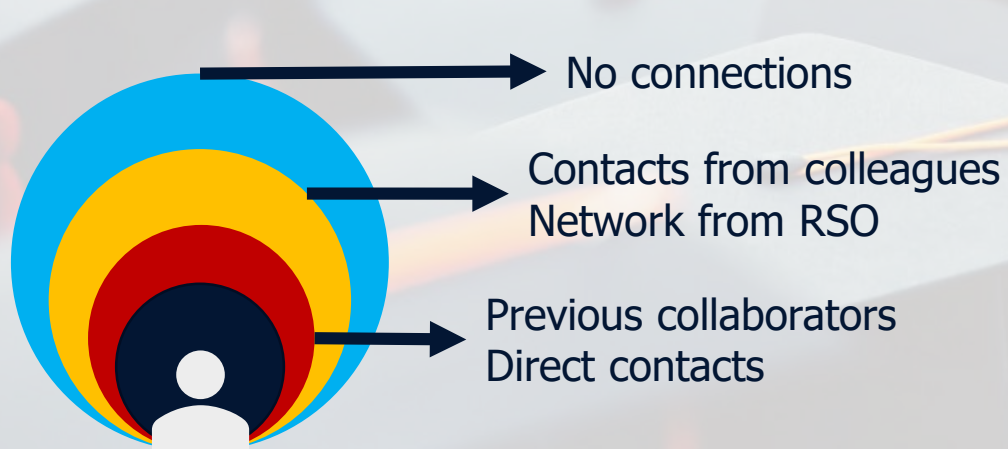
- Interested in a call, but have no consortium → possible that we have a consortium in our network
- Part of a consortium, but search for more partners → possible that we have potential partners in our network



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Building a consortium – finding partners

Academic partners



- **Conferences == Networking**
 - Use Networking features & events
- **Join information sessions about call/programme**
 - High density of interested parties
- **Don't be afraid to contact people "out of the blue"**

Also increases chances of being approached to join as partner

CONSORTIUM GRANT

Building a consortium – finding partners

Industrial & societal partners



- often *want* to join consortia
- **Networking events** → e.g. Brain Innovation Days
- Existing **connections via university** (RSO)
- **Hub & lobby** organizations: European Brain Council, FENS, Mental Health Europe, etc.
- **“Cold”** acquisition

CONSORTIUM GRANT

Building a consortium – finding partners

Industrial partners – things to consider



- **IP & data** ownership → **exploitation** of results
- **Trust** between industrial partners
- **Budget**
- **Time** (internal processes)

CONSORTIUM GRANT

Building a consortium – finding partners

Societal partners – how to utilize them



→ **Co-creation** approach

→ **Data acquisition**

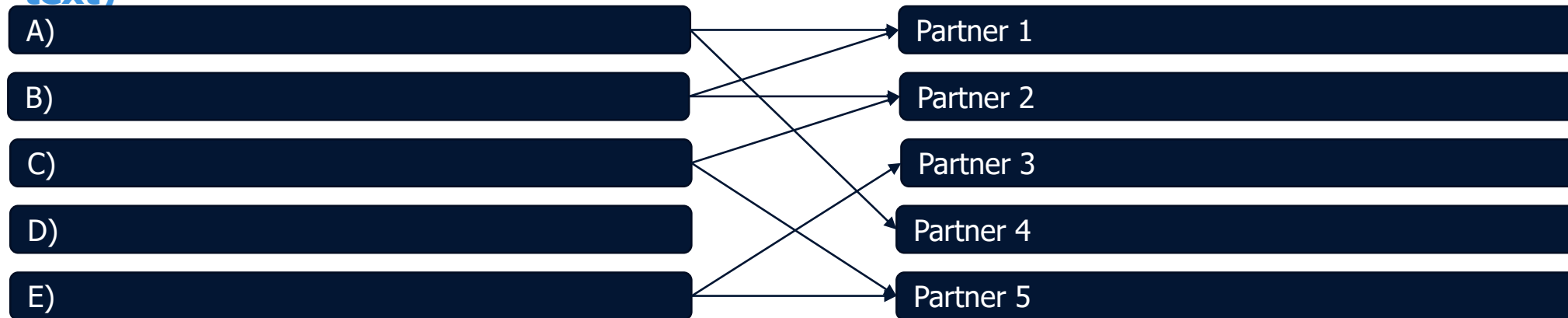


→ **Dissemination/ communication**
→ Professional companies

→ **Lobby**

Building a consortium – gap analysis

Elements of Scope and Excellence (call text)



→ *Every single word in topic text counts*

→ *Every requirement & cross-cutting element* (e.g. digital technologies, social sciences) **counts**

Working in a consortium during the application phase

Most common mistakes

- Avoidance of **uncomfortable topics** (IP, budget, etc.)
- Avoidance of **making decisions** → keep in the cycle of pros & cons
- No clear distribution of **tasks** and **responsibilities**
- Too little **communication** between WPs → no **coherence**

Best practices (no one size fits all)

- **Top-down approach** for e.g. budget, IP, etc.
- Clear **deadlines** for **input**
- Start with the **WPs** → critical discussions start there
- Regular meetings between **WP leaders**
 - **Expectation** management
- If possible: (external) **project management** team



Consortium grants – the proposal

We know about ambition.



CONSORTIUM GRANT

Excellence – tips & tricks

Most common mistakes & best practices

Objectives

- too broad/ not clear: “We aim to improve the life of Parkinson patients”
- **S**pecific **M**easurable **A**cceptable **R**ealistic **T**imely : “We aim to bring our technology from TRL 2 to TRL 6 within 5 years, demonstrating increased efficacy in min. 300 patients across Europe”



CONSORTIUM GRANT

Excellence – tips & tricks

Most common mistakes & best practices

Methodology

- Project not clear imbedded in **the state-of-the-art and other ongoing initiatives**: “Our approach is better than current clinical practices”
- Contrast project not only to current practices, but also **other initiatives**: “Our approach is better than current clinical practices and has advantage X, Y, Z over current initiatives A & B, as well as current technological development C. We work closely with initiative A & B to [describe synergistic effects].”
- Not enough attention to **cross-cutting approaches**
 - Digital technologies
 - Multi-actor co-creation approach
 - Social Sciences & Humanities

Impact – tips & tricks

Most common mistakes & best practices

Pathway towards impact

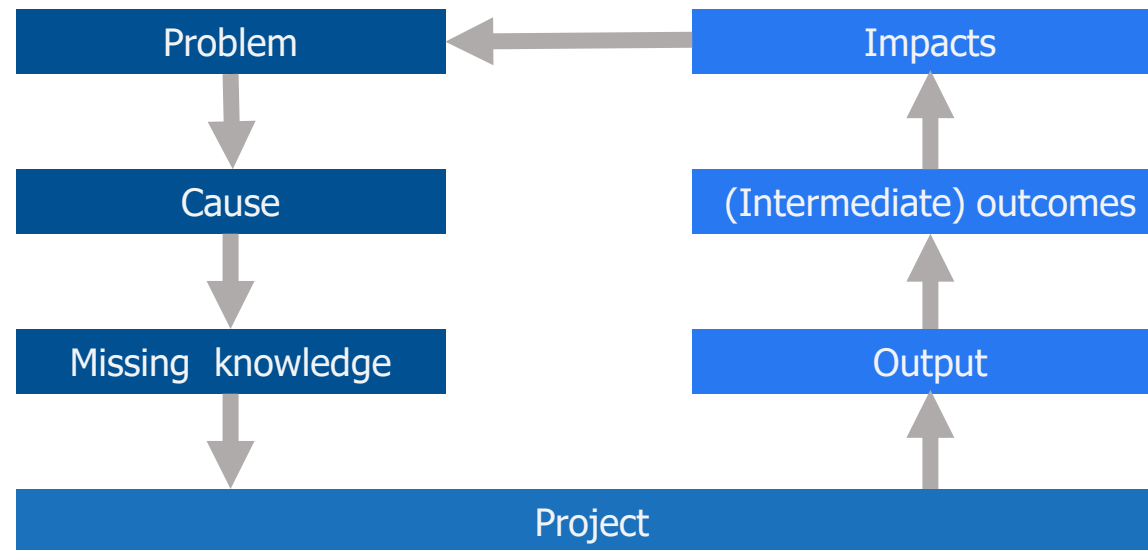
- **Mid-term and long-term goals** too vague and too unrealistic: “Potentially all patients will benefit from our technology”
- **Quantifiable** outcomes & targets: “At the end of the project we will have [describe clear deliverables, e.g. PoC of prototype, validated model, etc.]. Partner X and Y are dedicated to further develop our technology to reach market introduction/ clinical certification within 2 years after the project in at least 3 European countries, reaching >30.000 patients.

Impact – tips & tricks

Most common mistakes & best practices

Pathway towards impact

- **Requirements** and **barriers** often ignored
- **Theory of change**





CONSORTIUM GRANT

Impact – tips & tricks

Most common mistakes & best practices

Dissemination, Communication & Exploitation

- Strategies are not **stakeholder-specific**: focus points differ
- **One-way** communication: get **feedback** from stakeholders
- No way to **evaluate** strategy: make quantifiable (mid-)targets
- **Policy makers** often neglected – make specific deliverables



CONSORTIUM GRANT

Implementation – tips & tricks

Most common mistakes & best practices

- **WPs** are not appropriately **interlinked** –reference between WPs and create a PERTH
- **Deliverables & Milestones** are not in line with **Excellence & Impact** – deliver on what you promise
- **Partners** are too **dominant** (e.g. WP leaders come from 2-3 universities)
- No appropriate **risks** and **mitigation measures** – needs a mix of low, medium & high risks



Consortium grants – upcoming calls of interest

We **know** about ambition.

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Horizon Europe

Upcomming calls of interest:

[HORIZON-HLTH-2024-STAYHLTH-01-02-two-stage: Towards a holistic support to children and adolescents' health and care provisions in an increasingly digital society.](#)

Deadline: 19.09.2023 (first stage)/ 11.04.2024 (second stage)

[HORIZON-HLTH-2024-STAYHLTH-01-05-two-stage: Personalised prevention of noncommunicable diseases - addressing areas of unmet needs using multiple data sources](#)

Deadline: 19.09.2023 (first stage)/ 11.04.2024 (second stage)

[HORIZON-HLTH-2024-DISEASE-03-13-two-stage: Validation of fluid-derived biomarkers for the prediction and prevention of brain disorders](#)

Deadline: 19.09.2023 (first stage)/ 11.04.2024 (second stage)

[HORIZON-HLTH-2024-DISEASE-03-14-two-stage: Tackling high-burden for patients, under-researched medical conditions](#)

Deadline: 19.09.2023 (first stage)/ 11.04.2024 (second stage)

[HORIZON-CL3-2023-DRS-01-01: Enhanced citizen preparedness for disaster response and health emergencies](#)

Deadline: 23.11.2023 (single stage)

[HORIZON-HLTH-2024-TOOL-11-02: Bio-printing of living cells for regenerative medicine](#)

Deadline: 11.04.2024

[HORIZON-HLTH-2024-TOOL-05-06: Innovative non-animal human-based tools and strategies for biomedical research](#)

Deadline: 19.09.2023 (first stage)/ 11.04.2024 (second stage)

[HORIZON-CL4-2024-RESILIENCE-01-36: Advanced biomaterials for the Health Care](#)

Deadline: 07.02.2024 (first stage)/ 24.09.2024 (second stage)



FOR WHAT?

Large-scale research and innovation projects addressing societal challenges



FOR WHOM?

Researchers, companies, governments with big ambitions and groundbreaking ideas

HORIZON-HLTH-2024-DISEASE-03-13-two-stage: Validation of fluid-derived biomarkers for the prediction and prevention of brain disorders

Expected outcomes beyond effective biomarkers

1) Have or create a strong bio-behavioural model, that allows the tool to be integrated into personalized approaches→ Do not only look at biological mechanisms but integrate them with social and behavioural characteristics.

*The scientific and clinical communities make **effective use** of state-of-the-art information, data, technologies, tools and best practices to underpin the development of the diagnostics, and as such can also **facilitate** the development of **effective therapeutics and/or preventive strategies**.*

*The scientific and clinical communities advance the field through a better understanding of **mechanisms** underlying brain disorders at the **molecular, cellular and systemic level**.*

***Sex and gender aspects, age, socio-economic, lifestyle and behavioural factors** should be taken into consideration in the study.*

HORIZON-HLTH-2024-DISEASE-03-13-two-stage: Validation of fluid-derived biomarkers for the prediction and prevention of brain disorders

Expected outcomes beyond effective biomarkers

2) Have a concrete strategy for how the data & technology is widely made available for other developments → Integration with other running projects targeted at treatment and prevention. Include SMEs.

*The scientific and clinical communities make **effective use** of state-of-the-art information, data, technologies, tools and best practices to underpin the development of the diagnostics, and as such can also **facilitate** the development of **effective therapeutics and/or preventive strategies**.*

*The scientific and clinical community make wide use of **newly established and where relevant open access databases** and/or integrate them with **existing infrastructures** for storage and sharing of collected data according to FAIR principles, thereby **encouraging further use of the data**.*

***SME** participation is encouraged.*

HORIZON-HLTH-2024-DISEASE-03-13-two-stage: Validation of fluid-derived biomarkers for the prediction and prevention of brain disorders

Expected outcomes beyond effective biomarkers

3) Have a strong societal link and co-creator approach→ include patient organizations, policy makers/ lobby groups, first line healthcare professionals, SMEs etc. Include a theory of change model for each stakeholder. Include HTA experts and Social Sciences.

*Polymakers, funders, scientific and clinical communities, patient organisations, regulators and other **relevant bodies** are informed of the research advances made, while **health professionals envisage use of the biomarker tests** for early detection of the disorder and for guiding patients in the selection of personalised treatments/interventions.*

***Patients and caregivers** are sufficiently engaged with the research, which also caters for **their needs**.*

***Sex and gender aspects, age, socio-economic, lifestyle and behavioural factors** should be taken into consideration in the study.*

*To enable the management of brain disorders, consideration should be made in demonstrating the **gained cost efficiency** .*

GRANT

European Innovation Council (EIC)

The current European Innovation Council (EIC) has been established under the Horizon Europe programme. It is one of the flagship innovation programmes that helps **identify, develop and scale up groundbreaking technologies** and game changing innovations. The EIC programmes are:

- ✓ **EIC Pathfinder** (directed at academia)
- ✓ **EIC Transition** (directed at ERC PoC and EIC Pathfinder/ FET Open awardees)
- ✓ **EIC Accelerator** (directed at SMEs)



FOR WHAT?

State-of-the-art technologies and innovations



FOR WHOM?

Ambitious researchers and innovators



Deadlines

Pathfinder: ~March 2024

Transition: 27 Sep 2023

Accelerator: 4 Oct 2023

GRANT

Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA)

Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) is the leading programme in developing talent and advancing research. The programme is aimed at improving '**human research potential**' by offering (post)doctoral **training** and funding for excellent researchers at any career stage:

- ✓ Doctoral Networks: Financing of 10-15 PhDs
- ✓ COFUND: Up to 10 Mil EUR funding per project – ~20-50 PhDs/ Postdocs

→ Extremely high importance of including **non-academic partners** in the training



FOR WHAT?

Stimulating research talent and career opportunities



FOR WHOM?

Organisations, companies and knowledge institutes who want to employ researchers



Deadlines

Doctoral Networks: 28 Nov 2023

COFUND: 8 Feb 2024





Thank you!

Get in touch: n.dehaas@hezelburcht.com

We know about ambition.