Proposal writing
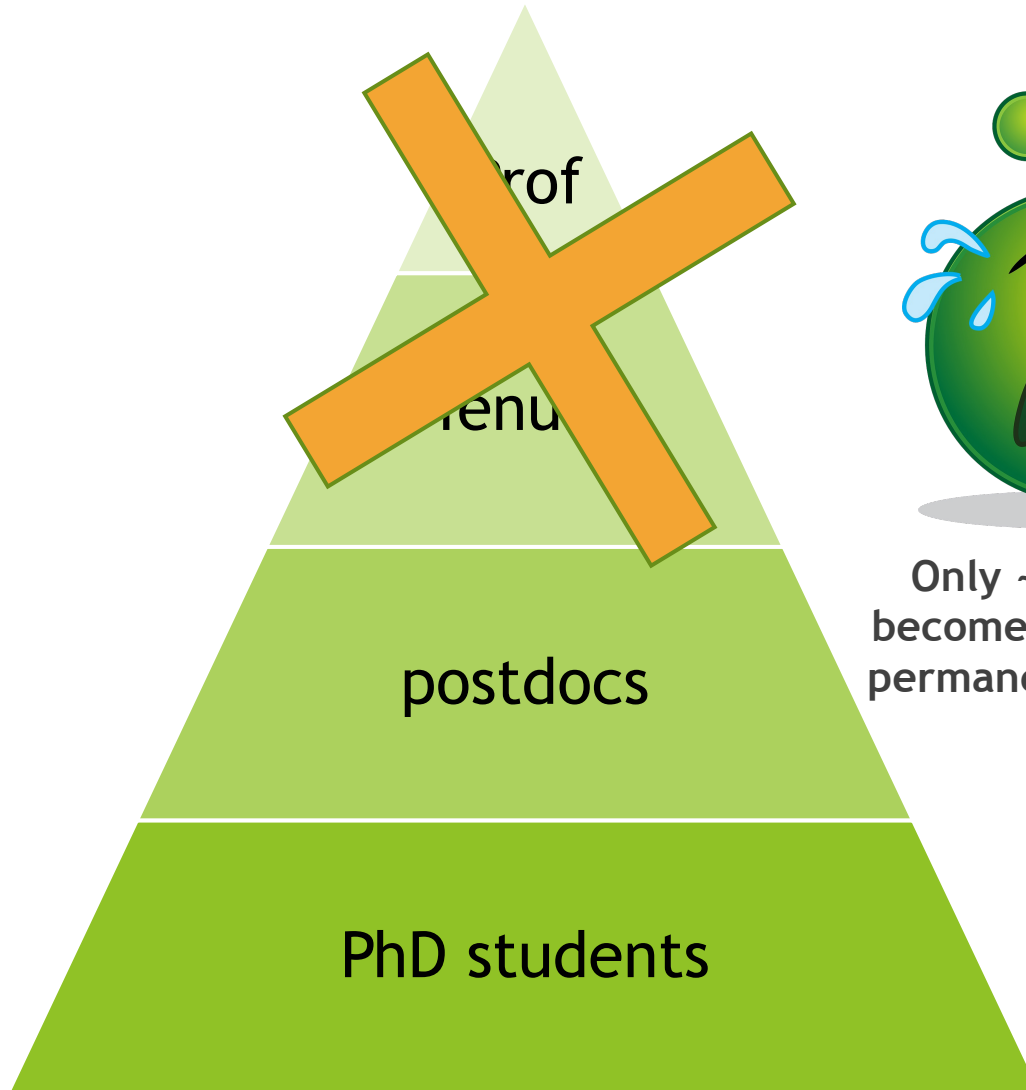
Joint Workshop FACCE ERA-GAS and MEMO^2

Sylvia Walter

14 June, NCGG8 Amsterdam

The academic pryramide

Prof

Tenu

postdocs

PhD students

Only ~ 5 of 1000 PhD become Prof, 35 become permanent research staff

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Staying in science means writing proposals...

... but leaving science does not necssarily means the opposite!

Common structure of a proposal …

▶ Background to the topic, significance and research problem

▶ Research aims and questions

▶ Review of literature

▶ Study/project design

▶ Timeline

▶ Expected outcomes/impact

Why writing a proposal and for whom?

Why writing a proposal …
… and for whom?
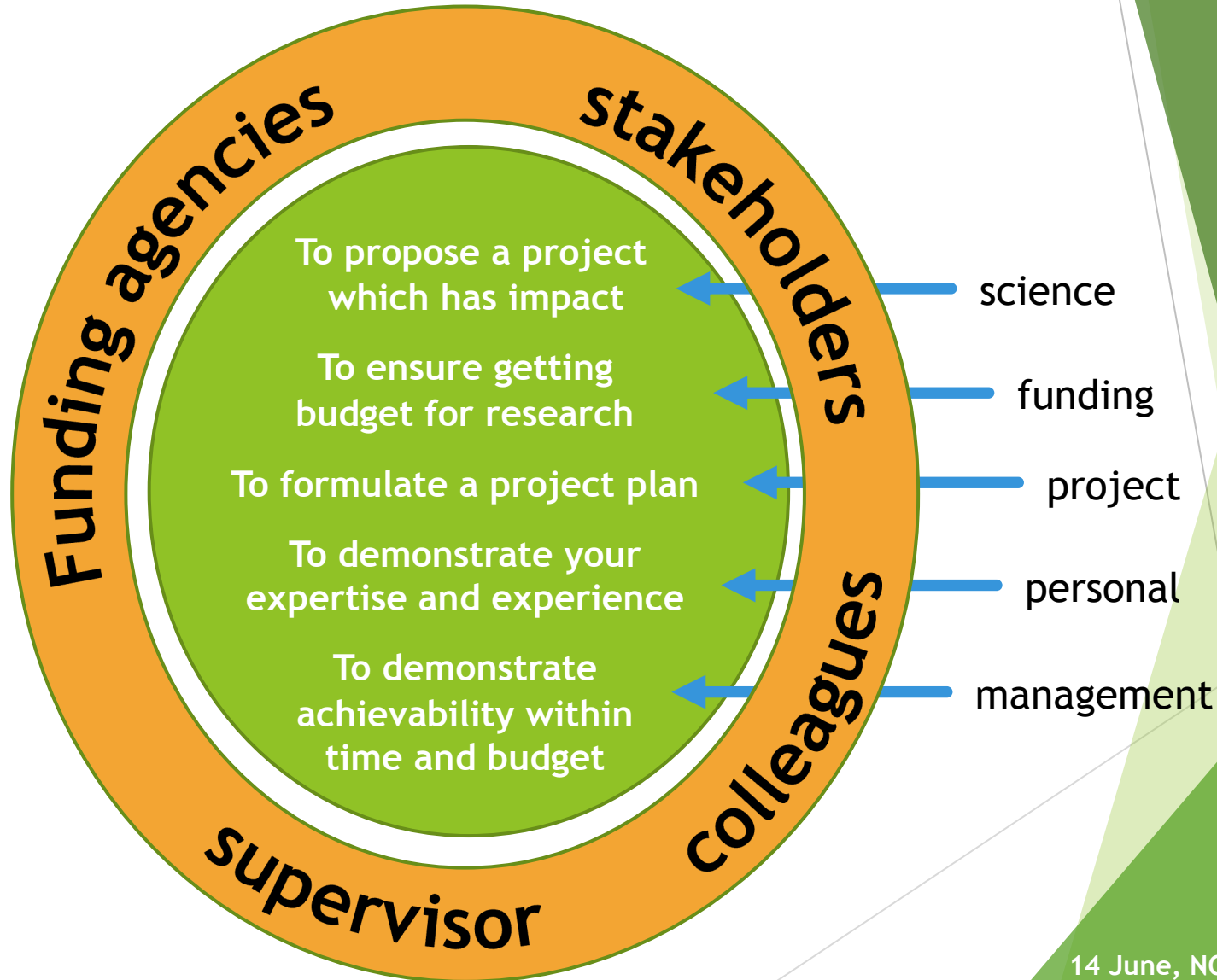
Skills

► **Scientific knowledge**

  ► You know your topic

  ► You are familiar with the research / methods

► **Critical thinking skills**

  ► You can argue and evaluate

► **Communication skills**

  ► You can „sell" your topic to your audience
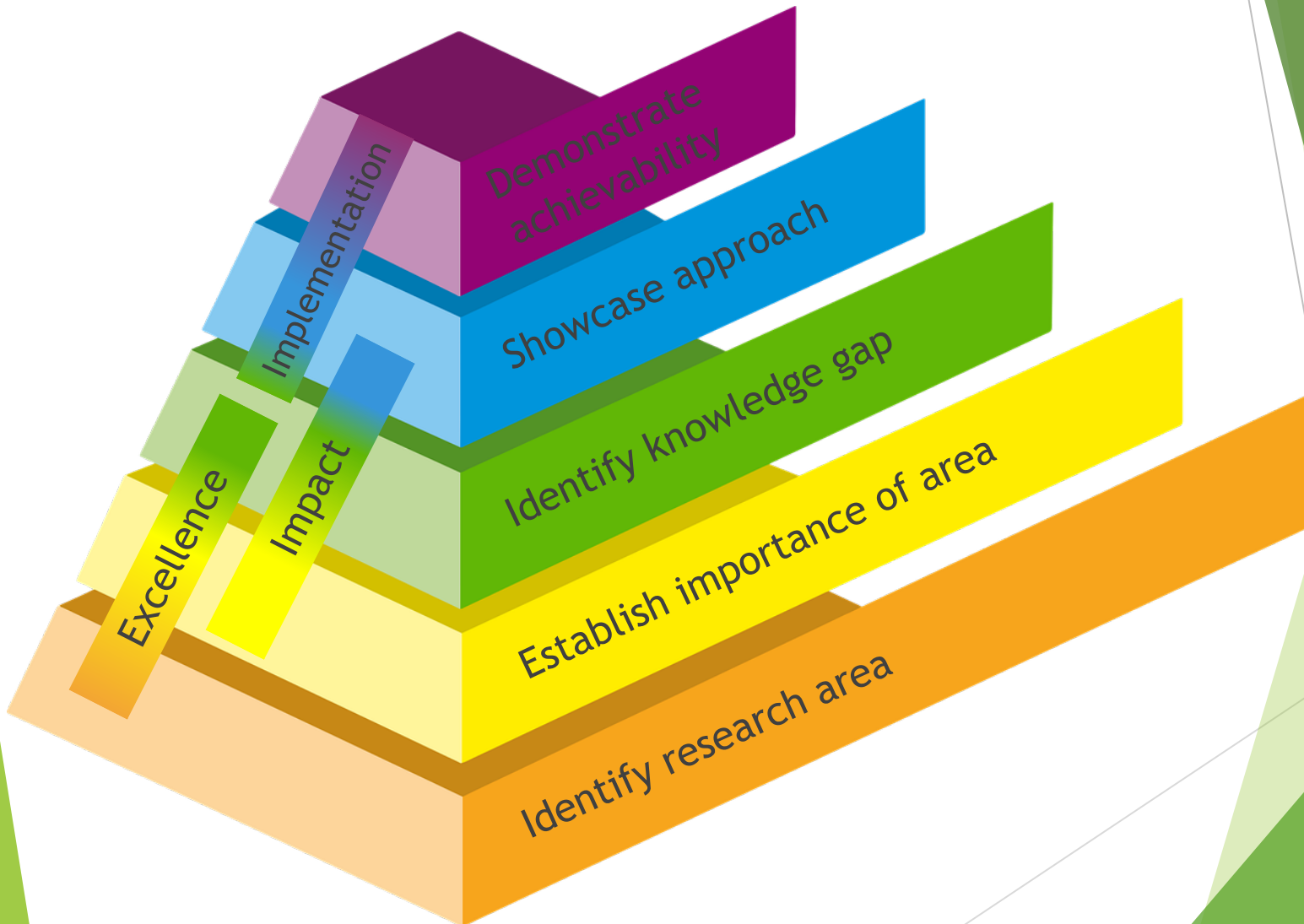
TIP
Skills can be learned but need to be exercised!

Steps towards a successful proposal

▶ Think about the purpose of your proposal

▶ Identify your audience

▶ Ask yourself a lot (really a lot) of questions!

Translate the descriptions and requirements of a call into questions which need to be answered!
? Why – How – Who ?

https://www.research.fsu.edu/media/1268/guideproposalplanningwriting.pdf

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Build your proposal pyramide

Demonstrate achievability

Showcase approach

Identify knowledge gap

Establish importance of area

Identify research area

Implementation

Impact

Excellence

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MSCA
Individual Fellowship

- A4 page size
- margins (top, bottom, left, right) of at least 15 mm (not including any footers or headers)
- a clearly readable font (e.g. Arial or Times New Roman)

Tables are for illustrating the core text of the proposal. They cannot be used to contain the core text itself.

The page formatting will be systematically checked by the REA. Should a proposal not comply, applicants will be asked to reformat their proposal. **This can lead to excess pages which will subsequently be disregarded.**

Footnotes are to be used exclusively for **literature references**. Their minimum font size is 8. They will count towards the page limit. Any other information included in a footnote will be disregarded.

Part B of the proposal should not contain any hyperlinks in the core text. Any additional information provided through hyperlinks in the core text will be disregarded.

Please make sure that the Part B of your proposal carries on **each page**, as a **header**, the **proposal acronym** and the **fellowship type** to which you are applying (i.e. Standard EF, CAR, RI, SE, or GF). All pages should be numbered in a single series on the footer of the page to prevent errors during handling. It is recommended to use the numbering format "Part B - Page X of Y".

Part B-1:
The maximum total length for this document is **10 pages.** It should be composed as follows (detailed description below):

- Section 1: Excellence
- Section 2: Impact
- Section 3: Implementation

Of the **maximum 10 pages** applied to sections 1, 2 and 3, applicants are free to decide on the allocation of pages between the sections. However, the overall page limit will be strictly applied: after the call deadline, excess pages will automatically be made invisible, **and will not be taken into consideration by the experts**. It is the responsibility of the applicant to verify that the submitted PDF documents are readable and are within the page limit. PDF documents can contain errors.

Applicants will not be able to submit their proposal in the submission system unless both Parts 1 and 2 are provided in PDF format (Adobe version 3 or higher, with embedded fonts).

http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/c all_ptef/pt/2018-2020/h2020-call-pt-msca-if-2018-20_en.pdf

Marie Skłodowska-Curie
- Individual Fellowships

Requirements

- PhD

- International mobility, not lived in host country (12 / 36 months)

- European fellowships (EF)

  - Max. 2 years, between EU countries

- Global fellowships (GF)

  - Max. 2+1 year, from EU to non-EU and back to host

- Yearly deadline in September

General tips

▶ Start with thinking about the IMPACT of your proposed idea

Stuffed Frogs Cambodia
Hannah Steinacker
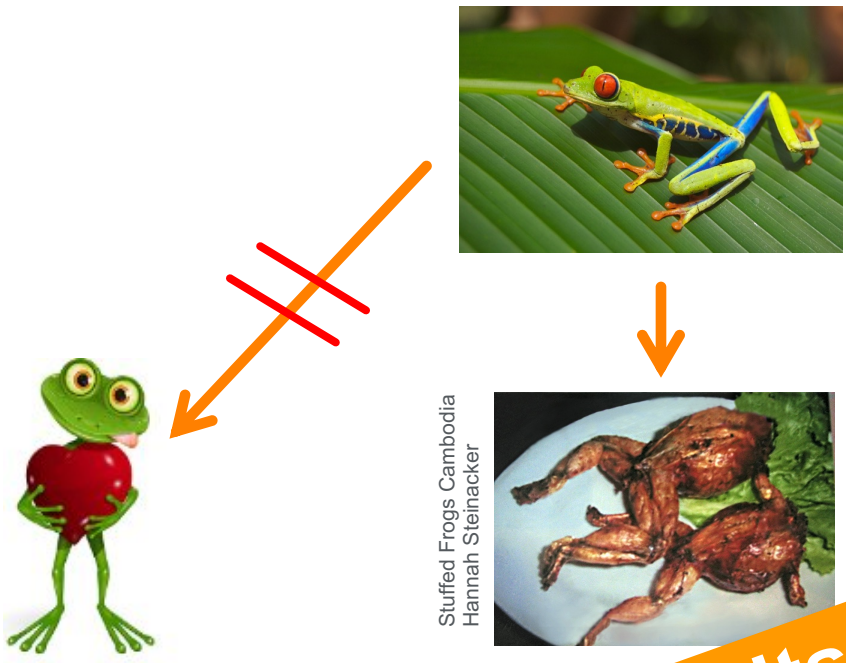
... But:
- Sustainable s~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~ein
- Preven~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~blems
- ~~~~~~~~~~~~ther modeling predictions
- ~~~~~educe traffic emissions

Krötenwanderung

Selling your results: how and to whom?

... Frogs have an impact!

General tips

▶ Start with thinking about the **IMPACT** of your proposed idea

▶ Start early, it always takes longer than expected!

▶ Read the guidelines and instructions!!!

    ▶ Don´t exceed word / page limits

    ▶ Stick to the given format

    ▶ Don´t exceed the budget

    ▶ Get familiar with the submission procedure

▶ Be aware, reviewers might not be experts in your field

▶ Ask for help and feedback

    ▶ Support offices

    ▶ Supervisor / colleagues

    ▶ laureates

TIP
Good writing is learning by doing!

Commonly made mistakes
- summary -

"The neural crest (NC) is an embryonic stem/progenitor cell population that generates a diverse array of cell lineages, including peripheral neurons, myelinating Schwann cells, and melanocytes, among others."

The summary should be **READABLE** for all reviewers and committee members. Starting a summary like this will alienate most of the readers immediately.

"However, the molecular processes of this process are poorly understood, requiring new scientific approaches to determine the mechanism, with the ultimate goal being improved medical outcomes."

Use the text wisely, sentences like this may sound good, but they are empty (no meaning at all) and take up precious space. Be **SPECIFIC**!

Commonly made mistakes
- main text -

"The Group of Advanced Research at the Host University has a long-standing reputation regarding the characterization the protein of interest of this proposal."

"We will find develop novel mechanisms and tools for future therapeutic intervention"

"I plan to study the growth of cells upon knockdown of protein X"

The proposal should sound like **YOUR idea** and research, not that of your host lab. This is YOUR project.

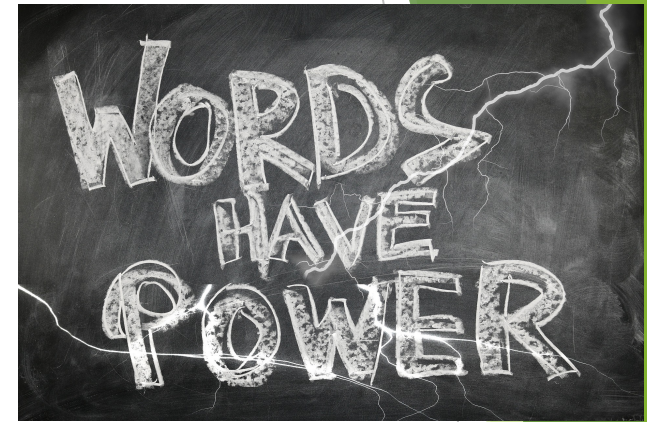Don't write "we", write "I", remember it is **YOUR project**.

Don't write "I plan", "I feel", "I would like to"… write "I will"!

Write **YOUR expectations**, not what you hope to do.

Sylvia Walter
14 June, NCGG8 Amsterdam

Action

- write a pitch for your proposal -

▶ What do you want to do?

    ▶ Finance your position

    ▶ Participate in a conference

    ▶ Organise a measurement campaign

    ▶ By equipment for your research

▶ To whom do you want to propose?

    ▶ Supervisor

    ▶ University

    ▶ stakeholders

    ▶ National / international funder