How to write a successful proposal
(and why sometimes the best proposals don't get funded)
(some things you don't find in *guides for applicants*)

➢ Successes and failures

➢ Top – Down
  ➢ The call
  ➢ The proposal

➢ Miscellaneous points to consider

Experience

As PI (networks):

➢ SPICE – Marie Curie Research Training Network, proposal 2003, one-stage, successful (9% funded)

➢ QUEST – Marie Curie Initial Training Network, proposal 2007, two-stage, ranked 18/50, rejected

➢ QUEST – same call, but one-stage, ranked 3/54, A-Rating, successful (10% funded)

As evaluator:

➢ EU Marie Curie Programme

➢ European Science Foundation (networks, meetings)

➢ European Research Council (Investigator Grants)

➢ National Research Councils (Germany, USA, UK, France, Switzerland, Czech Republic)

➢ Supercomputing Centres (D, CH)

Calls for Proposals

- Does your idea fit EXACTLY the call?
- How much money is in the call?
- Experience with likelihood of success?
- Any information about the evaluators?
- How multi-disciplinary is the call?
- Is there good documentation of the call and a guide for proposals (rfm!)
- Is there information on evaluation criteria?
- Templates for the proposal?

EU: International Fellowships
outgoing, incoming, intra-European

What are Marie Curie International Outgoing Fellowships for Career Development?

This action aims to reinforce the international dimension of the career of European researchers by giving them the opportunity to be trained and acquire new knowledge in a *Third Country* high-level research organisation. Subsequently, these researchers will return with the acquired knowledge and experience to an organisation in a Member State or Associated country.

Part B: the proposal

➢ B1 SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL QUALITY
  - state of the art
  - previous own work
  - the scientific concept
  - methodologies employed

➢ B2 TRAINING
  - benefits for your career

➢ B3 RESEARCHER
  - Why YOU?

➢ B4 IMPLEMENTATION
  - Work plan, scheduling

➢ B5 IMPACT

Proposal abstract

➢ What?

➢ Why?

➢ Why now?

➢ Why you?

➢ Impact?

In 15 seconds!

Science and technology

➢ Scientific and technological quality, including any **interdisciplinary** and multi-disciplinary aspects of the proposal

➢ Research methodology

➢ **Originality** and **innovative** nature of the project, and relationship to the 'state of the art' of research in the field

➢ Timeliness and relevance of the project

➢ Host scientific expertise in the field (outgoing and return host)

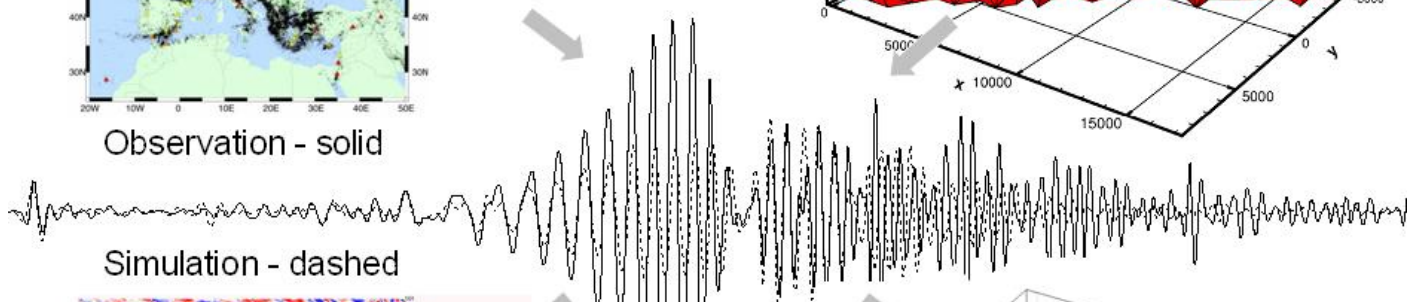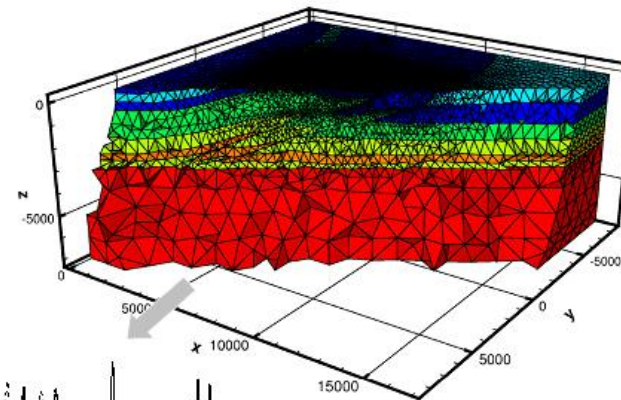➢ Quality of the group/supervisors (outgoing and return host)

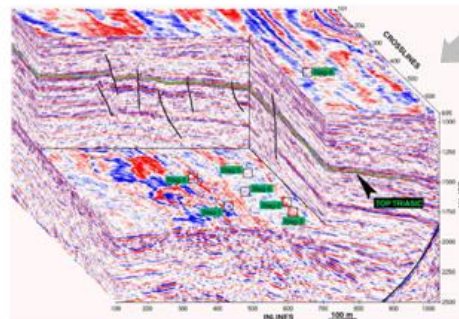# Supporting graphics, where useful

Seismic observations

Computer simulations
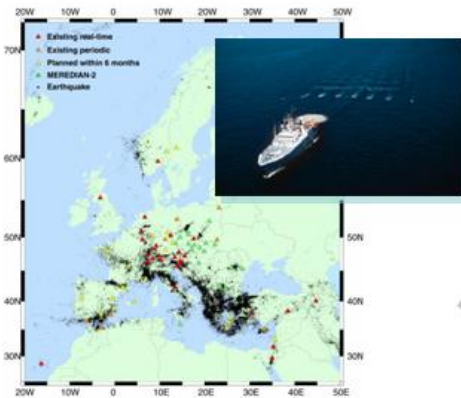
Observation - solid
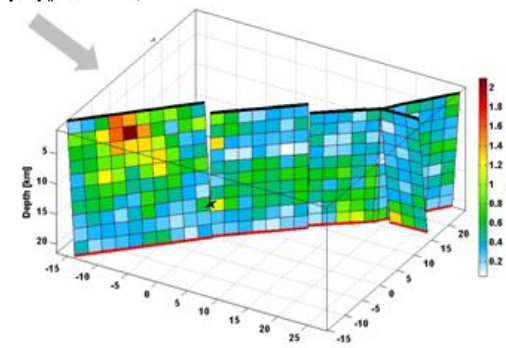
Simulation - dashed

Earth's structure

Seismic sources

Training

➢ Clarity and quality of the research training objectives for the researcher

➢ Relevance and quality of additional scientific training as well as of complementary skills offered

➢ Host expertise in training experienced researchers in the field and capacity to provide mentoring/tutoring (outgoing and return host)

Researcher/PI

(in case you apply yourself)

- ➢ Research experience
- ➢ Research results including patents, publications, teaching etc., taking into account the level of experience
- ➢ Independent thinking and leadership qualities
- ➢ Match between the fellow's profile and project
- ➢ Potential for reaching a position of professional maturity
- ➢ Potential to acquire new knowledge

Implementation/Work Plan

➢ Quality of infrastructure / facilities and international collaboration of host (outgoing and return host)

➢ Practical arrangements for the implementation and management of the project (outgoing and return host)

➢ Feasibility and credibility of the project, including work plan

➢ Practical and administrative arrangements and support for the hosting of the fellow (outgoing and return host)

Impact

➢ Potential of acquiring competencies during the fellowship to improve the prospects of reaching and/or reinforcing a position of professional maturity, exposure to complementary skills training

➢ Contribution to career development or re-establishment

➢ Potential for creating long term collaborations and mutually beneficial cooperation between Europe and the Third Country.

➢ Contribution to European excellence and European competitiveness

➢ Benefit of the mobility to the European Area

Miscellanea I

➢ Follow EXACTLY the template (EU)

➢ Turn some of the recommended contents, questions into titles and subtitles

➢ Cover all recommended items in each section even though there is tremendous duplication!

➢ Highlight **key words** or **key phrases** using bold face or italics

➢ Make some simple graphics that illustrate the concepts

Miscellanea II

➢ Details, details, details! (put them in tables, not necessarily the running text) – EU – not NSF

➢ Write at an appropriate technical level! (feed the outsider but also the expert)

➢ Don't miss an important paper by a potential referee!

➢ Create work plan with simple structures

➢ Define CREDIBLE deliverables

➢ Consistency (man-months, tasks, deliverables, etc)

Miscellanea III

How can you SURPRISE the reviewers?

- ➢ One very special industrial partner (IBM in our case)
- ➢ A Nobel prize winner as partner
- ➢ An unusual format for training … anything
- ➢ Award schemes, ingeneous management ideas
- ➢ Excellent external participants
- ➢ Special links to international (eg UN) initiatives, observational infrastructures (global networks)

Miscellanea IV

➢ Take enough time (3 months) for the whole process

➢ Don't do „cut and paste" write the proposal yourself as much as possible

➢ Present your key ideas in a few seconds at the beginning of the proposal. BANG!

➢ Study successful proposals

➢ Link to ongoing or future projects/activities/infrastructures

➢ Put yourself ALWAYS in the mind of a VERY critical reviewer

Miscellanea V

- ➢ Watch out for IP issues when industry is involved … mention it and provide a solution
- ➢ Get professional help (preparing the proposal and/or administering it -> even companies write it for you)
- ➢ Know your enemies, find out who else is proposing and what, be complementary (or join them)
- ➢ Be open about potential risks

Good Luck!