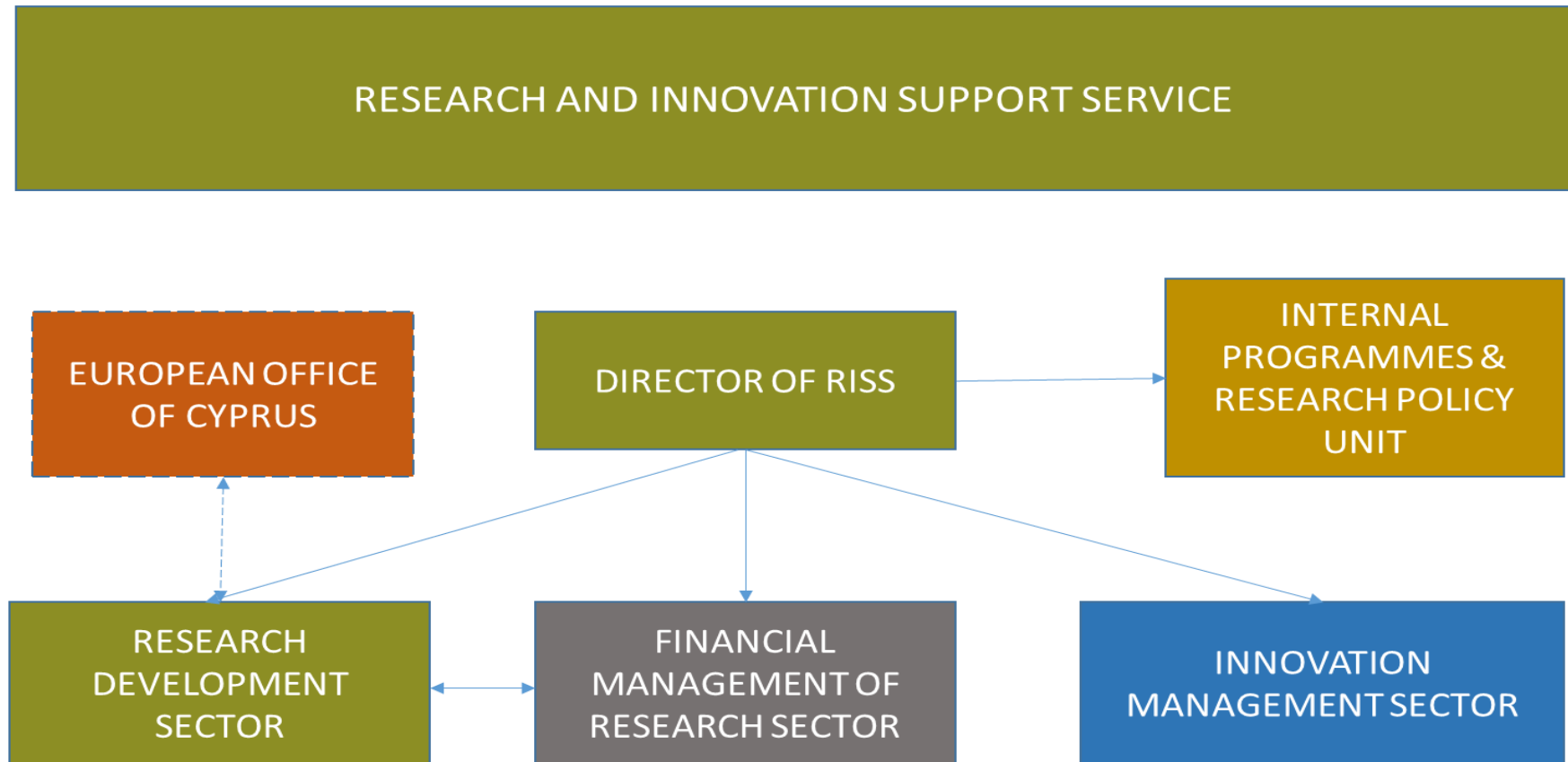


Key tips for success in securing a MSCA-COFUND project

Presentation by Marios Demetriades - Project Coordinator

Director of Research and Innovation Support Service, University of Cyprus
Executive Director, European Office of Cyprus

R&I support structure



The role of RISS in securing funding @ UCY

- Over €7 million in external funding and over €6 million from bottom-up H2020 projects which offer the academic/research community numerous opportunities for recruiting post-docs and carrying out multithematic and cross-sectoral research
- Over €1 million in external funding for strategic coordination and support actions for R&I policies, support structures, training programmes, action plans, etc.
- Through these projects RISS recruited soft funding personnel that has contributed tremendously in developing the potential of RISS to secure funding yet further
- RISS has demonstrated to the UCY academic community that successes can come as a result of building expertise, having perseverance and exploiting appropriate calls for proposals according to the needs and wants of UCY

ONISILOS Main Objective:

The key objective of ONISILOS is to enhance research excellence by extending the traditional academic research training setting and exposing fellows to alternate research practices and complementary resources, through the multidisciplinary and cross-sectoral character of the fellowships and the international secondments

Aims:

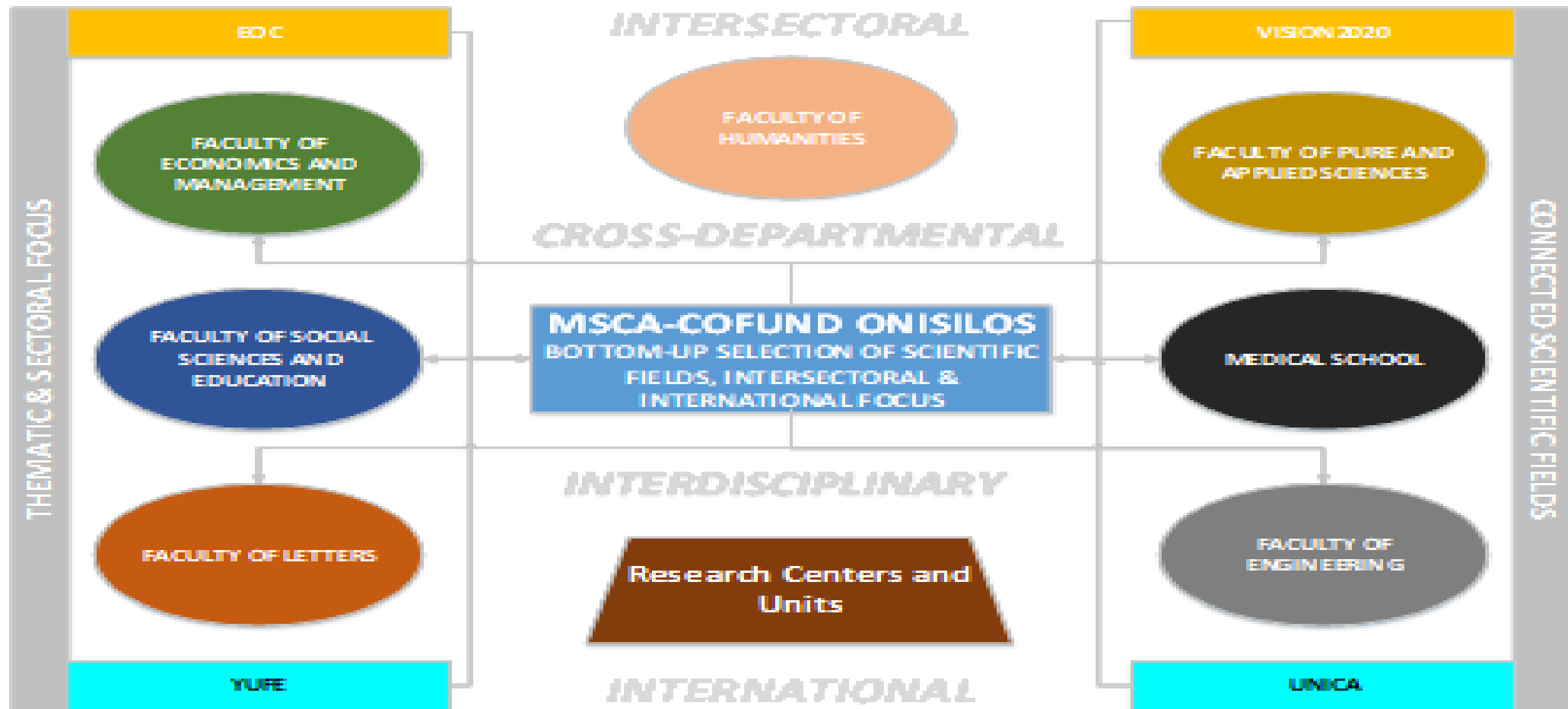
- transform the current post-doc fellowships internal programme of UCY into an international, intersectoral and interdisciplinary funding scheme for ERs
- Enhance high quality research at UCY and more broadly in Cyprus
- Create the conditions through which international and intersectoral mobility of researchers will be secured both to and from Cyprus with the prospects of having a substantial number of ERs returning and staying in Cyprus
- Offer both innovative training through research and transferrable skills training to the fellows involved
- Attract the future generation of top researchers in Cyprus by offering a very attractive remuneration package
- Combine science with industry experience (secondments /training events) to develop an entrepreneurial culture within the research community in Cyprus, the region and in Europe

Our writing team and contributors:

- Project Coordinator: Marios Demetriades
- RISS Officers: Christina Delaporta & Ioanna Papaphilippou (Coordinator of the Research Development Sector)
- Support Scientists: Garin Tashdjian & Maria Koraki
- Coordination with the academic community of UCY for receiving input, suggestions and Letters of Support was suggested and undertaken by Christina Delaporta
- Review and suggestions by the MSCA NCP at the time, Georgia Kleanthous
- In-depth proposal review and suggestions by Prof. Stavros Kassinos

Interdisciplinarity of ONISILOS within UCY

The figure below shows how the thematic fields of UCY become interconnected with the ERs.



Related Scientific Fields & Academic Departments at UCY

- **Medieval Emotions and Cognitive Neuroscience**

1. Department of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 2. Department of Psychology, 3. Department of French and European studies

- **Respiratory System and Physiology and Functioning**

1. Department of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering, 2. School of Medicine, 3. Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering , 4. Department of Physics, 5. Department of Chemistry, 6. Department of Biological Sciences

- **Cancer Biology and Novel Therapeutic Strategies**

1. Medical School, 2. Department of Biological Sciences, 3. Department of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering

- **Nurturing of citizen's critical disposition and active participation in evidence-based public discourse on topical socio-scientific issues related to energy, nutrition and public health**

1. Department of Information Science, 2. Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, 3. Medical School

Related Scientific Fields & Academic Departments at UCY

- **Intelligent and interoperable operation of electricity assets**

1. Department of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering, 2. Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering , 3. Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering

- **Architectural Technology**

1. Department of Architecture , 2. Department of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering,

- **Mathematical, statistical, computational, Neurogenetics/ genetic methods for identification of social influence, and mitigation strategies during disease spreading**

1. Department of Mathematics and Statistics, 2. Medical School, 3. Department of Business and Public Administration

Key success factors

- The initiative for the proposal as well as the proposal coordination and writing were undertaken by the Research and Innovation Support Service implementing a bottom-up approach
- There was an existing post-doc fellowship scheme, of which the upgrade was the main foundation of the proposal
- UCY has successfully implemented hundreds of externally funded research projects to date, including over 40 projects funded through MSCA-IFs & WFs, which was a major plus for the evaluation of the proposal
- UCY ranks in the 1st place amongst institutions from all WIDENING countries in secured funding from H2020 in absolute terms and 137th of all 40.500 unique participants with secured H2020 funding of over €75 million.
- UCY has committed to offer €3.678.000 in a period of five years starting from 2021 to upgrade the existing postdoctoral funding scheme in order to attract and support excellent Experienced Researchers (ERs)
- The RIF H2020 Complementary Funding scheme allowed RISS to receive funding for hiring support scientists who contributed substantially in this success

Key tips for success - general

- **Perseverance** – The proposal was submitted three consecutive times before it was funded, do not get disappointed and keep trying
- **Trust your closest collaborators** – A team member of RISS reinvigorated the interest and coordinated the third try effort and modifications to the proposal which proved to be crucial
- **Reach out for expert support** - The MSCA NCP contributed with valuable suggestions at critical points of the process
- **Suggest a thematic focus** – If the research focus of your organisation is broad, have at least some general thematic orientation for the proposal, highly preferably a multidisciplinary/cross-sectoral one (for example around the UN SDGs)
- **Letters of support** - Even if you leave the thematic orientation open, ask for meaningful support letters early on, especially from partners who can provide specialized training and secondments to the post-doctoral fellows

Key tips for success - general

- **Involvement of research community** – Involve your researchers/academics in the proposal preparation process in an open, transparent and meaningful way
- **Reach out for expert support** - The MSCA NCP contributed with valuable suggestions at critical points of the process
- **Communicate the importance of MSCA COFUND to your management**- It is critical to explain the benefits of a success in securing such a project for your organisation to the management and decision-making bodies, as their support both in cofunding and in the subsequent project management is necessary
- **A wide range of specialized and transferrable training**- The proposal must demonstrate that the fellows will have a variety of training opportunities at their disposal. This is a great opportunity to build in-house training sessions if not available and if not feasible cover the gap with international & intersectoral secondments

Key tips for success – specific

- **Stakeholder analysis**– MSCA COFUND is a monobeneficiary project so you need to carry out a stakeholder analysis beforehand in order to have a plan for actions needed to engage them in the project
- **Create a clear flow chart for the evaluation and selection process**– Emphasise that all steps of the evaluation and selection of post-doc projects will rely on external, independent and peer-reviewed processes and depict them in a clear and detailed flow chart
- **Underline equal opportunities**- Make sure that in the relevant sections of the proposal, your approach toward securing equal opportunities (gender, disabilities, refugees, etc.) is articulated
- **Include training for the ERA priorities and horizontal issues:** Your proposal should include training on open science, ethics, securing equal opportunities in research including gender, citizen engagement, data management plan with emphasis on FAIR principles and treatment of personal data, IPR management, etc.

Key tips for success – specific

- **Include a list of indicative supervisors for the fellows** – Ensure that an indicative but not exhaustive list of potential supervisors with short bios is included in the proposal in the Excellence section when you explain the concept and approach
- **Include a table of ambitious yet relevant KPIs** – You need to show that your expected impact is well-thought and relevant to what MSCA COFUND aims to achieve. A list of KPIs focusing on advancing the career of the fellows while embracing research excellence can be of utmost importance for explaining the impact of the proposed project
- **Commit to comply with the EU Charter and Code principles** – This will count positively for the evaluation if you respect and implement the principles of the EU Charter and Code for Researchers, by utilizing EURAXESS for publishing the position openings and applying the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) linked to the EU Charter and Code.
- **Distinguish between dissemination and communication** – Any activities related to the promotion of the project and its results should have clear target-groups, dissemination for the research community and communication for the wider public incl. schools, students etc.

Thank you for your attention!

Questions are welcome!