RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE
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Communauté d'universités et établissements de Toulouse



ASCENT

Academic Secured Career Engagement in Toulouse

ASCENT
Writing Tips Webinar

Tuesday, November 3. 2026

Webinar programme

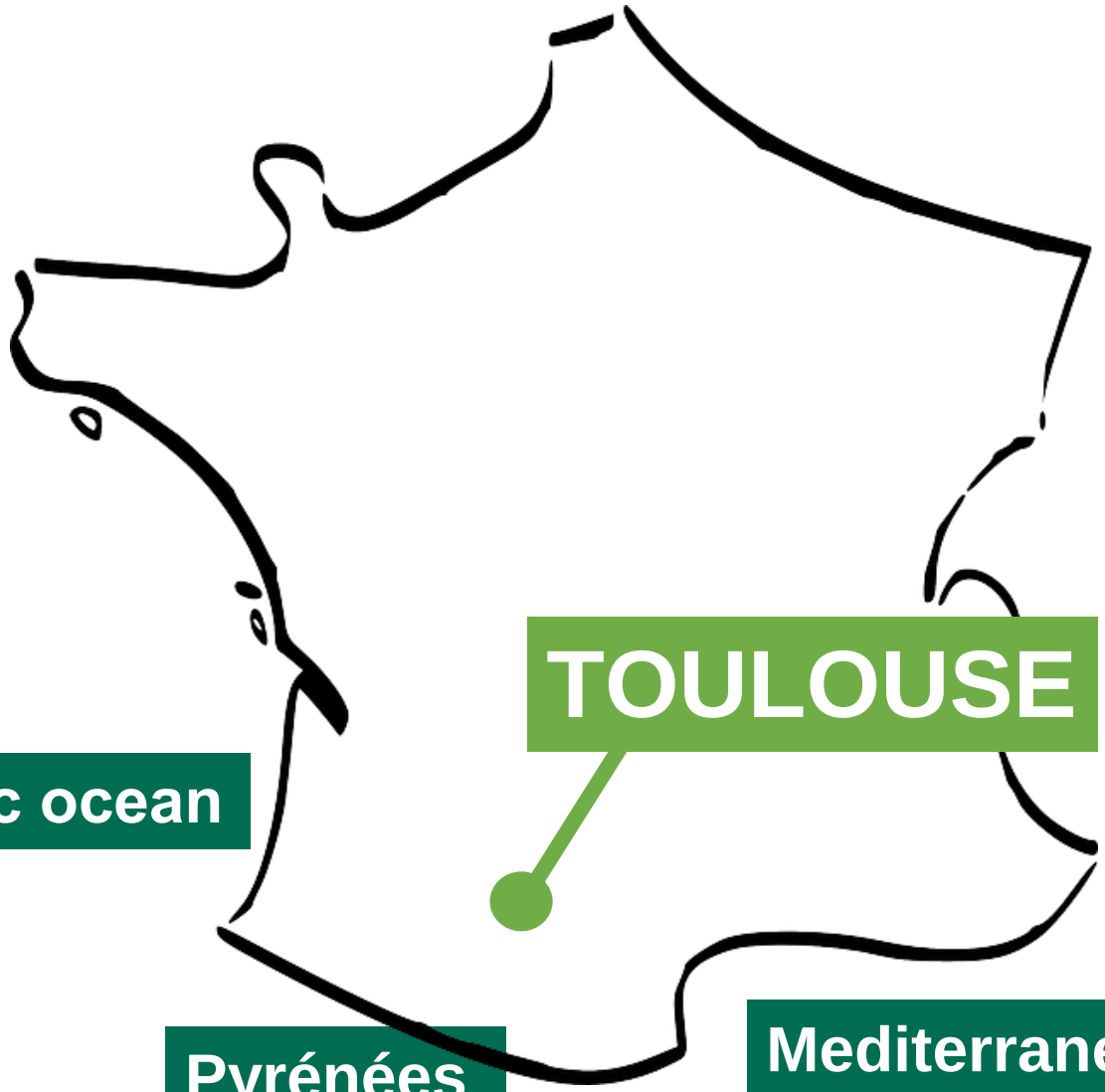
- **Welcome & Introduction** – *Etienne DAGUE, ASCENT Scientific Coordinator*
- **ASCENT Programme overview** – *Etienne DAGUE, ASCENT Scientific Coordinator*
- **Application file: reminder, general advice and common pitfalls** – *Etienne Dague, ASCENT Scientific Coordinator*
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- **Plenary Q&A & closing remarks** – *Etienne Dague, ASCENT Scientific Coordinator - Anna Vermunt ASCENT Project Manager*



Welcome & Introduction

Etienne Dague, ASCENT Scientific Coordinator

Toulouse in Europe, France, Occitania region





Toulouse a city of sport, culture, leisure and heritage



















In between the mediterranean, the mountains and the Atlantic

Narbonne plage 1h15 from Toulouse by train





Ax les Thermes 2h10 from Toulouse by train





Bayonne 3h30 from Toulouse by train



COMUE of Toulouse - Facts and figures

The **Community of Universities and Schools of Toulouse (Comue)** brings **together 22 academic and higher-education partners across western Occitania** comprising an exceptional powerhouse of teaching and research excellence.

15 higher education
+ 1200 training programs
110,000 students

7 national research organisations

3240 PhD students enrolled

14% international students
1500 cooperation agreements with 110 countries

144 laboratories
7000 researchers

17000 employees dedicated to teaching, research, and associated technical and administrative support

Research options: disciplinary clusters of University of Toulouse



BABS

Biology, agronomy, biotech, health



SDM:

Matter Sciences

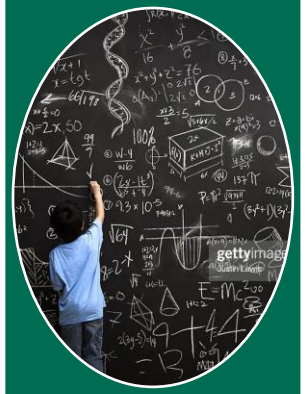


DSPEG:

law, political science, economics, finance



H-SHS: humanities and social sciences



MST2I: maths, information and engineering sciences and tech



UPEE: Universe, planet, space, environment

Université de Toulouse

ASCENT Programme Overview

Etienne Dague, ASCENT Scientific Coordinator

RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

Liberté
Égalité
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MSCA Cofund
Choose Europe For Science

ASCENT

Academic Secured Career ENgagement in Toulouse



ASCENT

Academic Secured Career Engagement in Toulouse

What is ASCENT?

- The **ASCENT program** *(Academic Secured Career ENgagement in Toulouse)* is a **prestigious fellowship program for advanced post-doctoral researchers** coordinated by the University of Toulouse and a core component of the TIRIS initiative (Toulouse Initiative for Research Impact on Society).

- **Co-funded by the TIRIS programme** *(Toulouse Initiative for Research's Impact on Society)* **and the European Commission under Horizon Europe** (MSCA-COFUND-2025, Grant Agreement n°101313640), ASCENT aims to position Toulouse as a European hub for scientific talent by offering long-term stability, freedom, and visibility to advanced post-doctoral researchers.

- It is designed to recruit **6 highly talented researchers, for 5 years,** in **one single call (2026-27)**. Fellows will conduct independent, high-impact research at the **University of Toulouse**, benefiting from an interdisciplinary and intersectoral environment.

Key features of ASCENT

- Duration: **5 years positions (phase 1: 36 months research + phase 2: 24 months consolidation)**
- Fellows: **6 researchers (single cohort)**
- Domains: **7 areas:** Climate, Gender studies, Public health, Space, Aeronautics, Governance, Biosciences
- Salary: **Phase 1: 3600€/month; Phase 2: 3300€/month gross**
- **PhD supervision included** (each fellow receives a 3-year PhD position)
- **HDR preparation, mentoring, career development plan**

7 research areas of the programme

These 7 ASCENT strategic research areas are directly link with the 3 TIRIS pillar and the University of Toulouse research clusters :

- **Climate and environmental sciences** illuminate the dynamics of our changing planet and the pathways to resilience.
- **Space and Earth observation sciences** open windows onto planetary systems, environmental risks and the technologies that help us explore and understand them.
- **Sustainable aeronautics:** advanced air mobility, sustainable fuels, hydrogen, green technologies.
- **Gender studies and social equality research** shed light on the structures, identities and transformations that shape human lives.
- **Governance, democracy, migration and human rights research** deepens our understanding of societies, institutions and justice in a rapidly shifting world.
- **Public health, epidemiology and infectious diseases** advance our capacity to protect populations, especially in the face of emerging global threats.
- **Biosciences and data-driven health research** unlock new insights into life, ageing, cognition and the biological processes that define human health.

Eligibility and engagements

PhD rule:
Doctoral degree (PhD) required
+ 5 to 10 years of research experience after the PhD defense

Mobility rule:
Not have resided in France for more than 12 months in the last 36 months (Jan 2024 - Jan 2027).
+ Not hold a permanent position at the prospective host.

Research engagements:
In line with one of ASCENT's 7 themes.

Select a host institution *(among our 144 eligible research units in Toulouse).*

Commit to various engagements:
→ professionalisation,
communication,
ethical compliance

Evaluation criteria

Phase 2: Shortlisiting of candidates

100 %	Excellence 50%	Impact 30 %	Implementation 20 %
CV 45 %	20 %	15 %	10 %
Project 55 %	30 %	15 %	10 %

Phase 3: Interviews of candidates

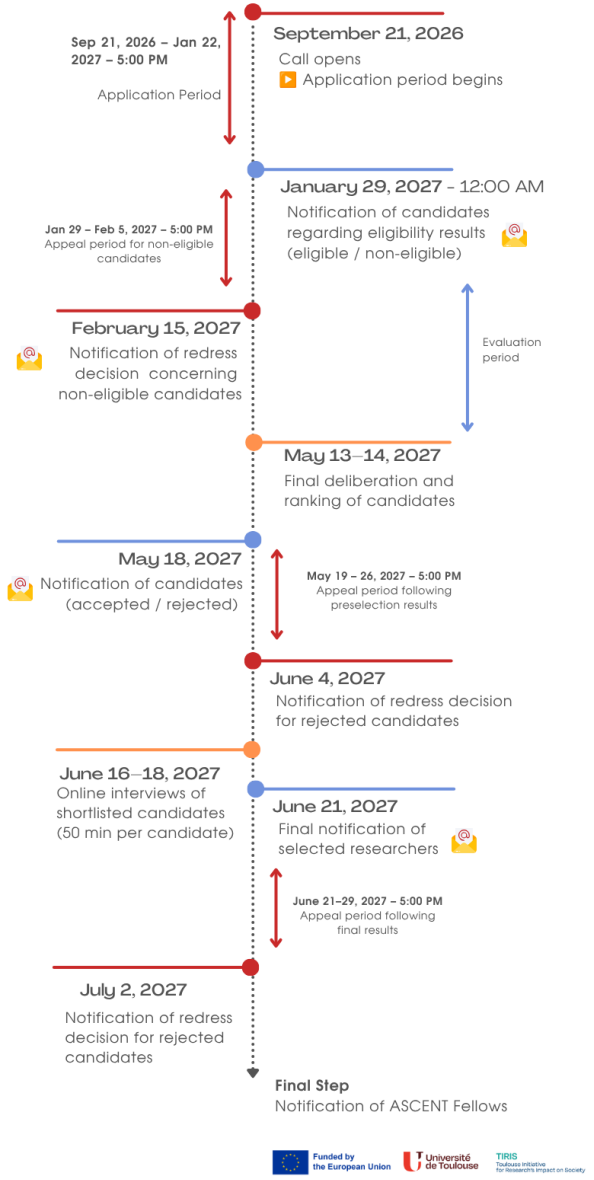
100 %	Excellence 50%	Impact 30 %	Implementation 20 %
CV 30 %	15 %	10 %	5 %
Project 70 %	35 %	20 %	15 %

- Applicants ≤ 60 %: will not be recruited.
- Applicants > 60: will be ranked on to a list of funded applicants and a complementary list.
- Applicants > 70 will receive a certificate of excellence awarded by UT, even if they are not funded.

Evaluation timeline

ASCENT Cofund Committees Timeline

- Call opens: **21 September 2026**
- Application period: **21 September 2026 → 22 January 2027, 5:00 PM (Paris Time)**
- Eligibility results sent: **29 January 2027 (eligible / ineligible)**
- Short Listing: **13–14 May 2027: Scientific Committee meeting**
- Notification + evaluation report: **18 May 2027 (interview / rejected)**
- Interviews (online): **16, 17, 18 June 2027 — ~50 min per candidate**
- Final notification : **21 June 2027**



Application file: reminder, general advice and common pitfalls

Etienne Dague, ASCENT Scientific Coordinator

Application process

Applications are submitted exclusively via the TIRIS online platform. Incomplete or applications received after application deadline will not be considered. You may used the provided application form template to help you (see documents & resources on the ASCENT web page)..

Required documents :

- Application form (to be completed online on the TIRIS online platform from 21 September 2026):
  - Applicant administrative data
  - Prospective host research unit/supervisor(s)
  - Research project (objectives, methodology, feasibility, impact, bibliography)
  - CV (following and complying with the application form template guidelines) & description of previous research activities
  - Ethics self-assessment
- Identity documents (to upload as a separate PDF document on the platform)
- PhD certificate (to upload as a separate PDF document on the platform)
- Motivation letter (to upload as a separate PDF document on the platform)

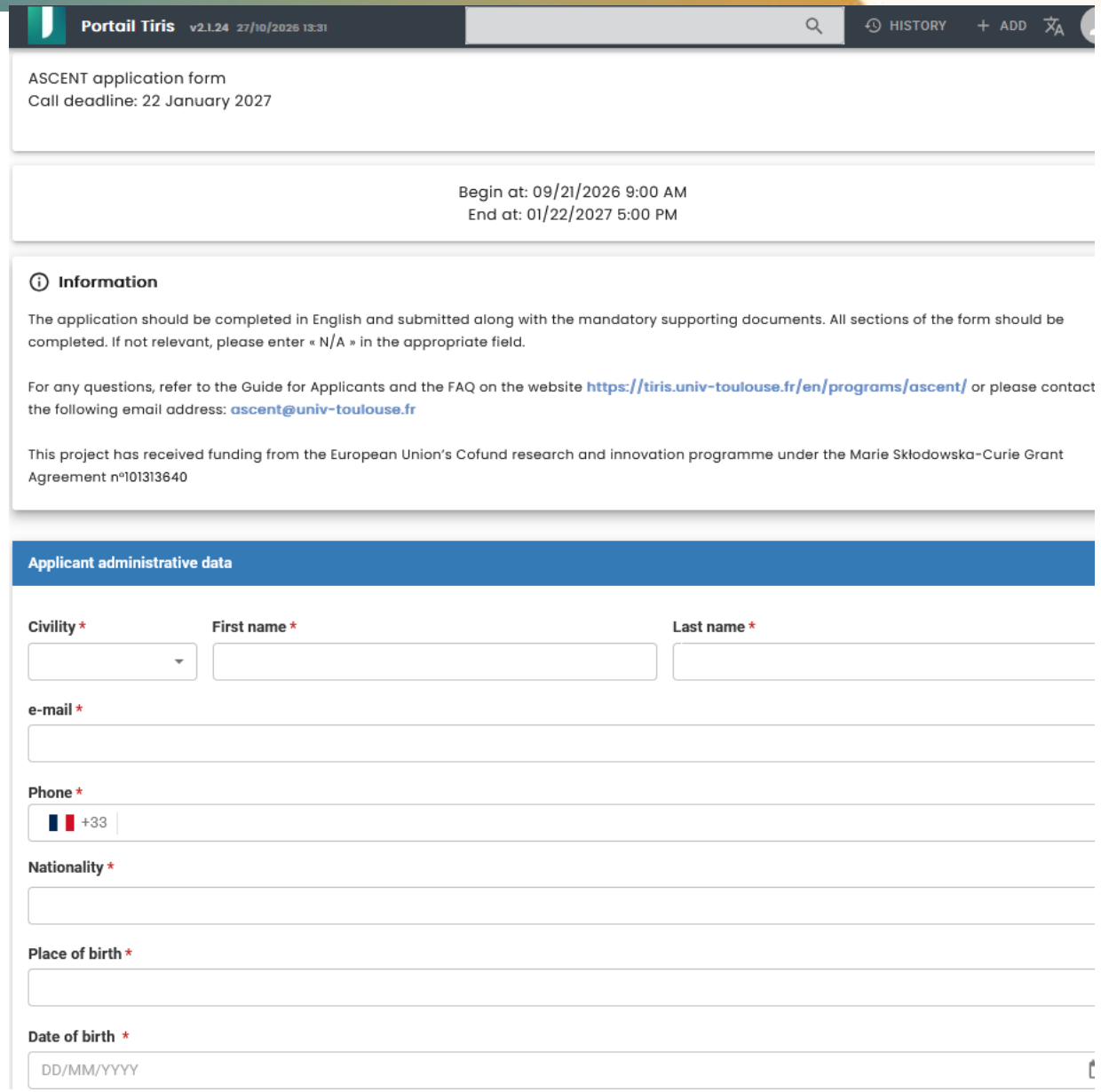
When recruited :

- Career Development Plan (CDP) template
- Data Management Plan (DMP) template

Important: Applications will be checked for scientific integrity, fraud, and eligibility.

Application file

- **Submit your application via the ASCENT online portal**
- **No applications submitted by email will be considered or reviewed. All applications must be submitted through the online portal only.**
- Please note that **you must create an account on this portal in order to access and complete the application form.**



General advices & common pitfalls

- **Abstract** Does your abstract answer what / why / why now / why you / why Toulouse in ≤200 words?

  Example: *"We will quantify food-access inequalities (what), address gaps in urban policy (why), as prices surge (why now), leveraging my causal-inference expertise (why you) with LISST & LEREPS data resources (why Toulouse)."*

- **Objectives** Are objectives specific, measurable, and time-bound?

  Example: *"By month 18, publish an open dataset of 10k geocoded retail points and a preprint on accessibility disparities."*

- **Respect characters limits**



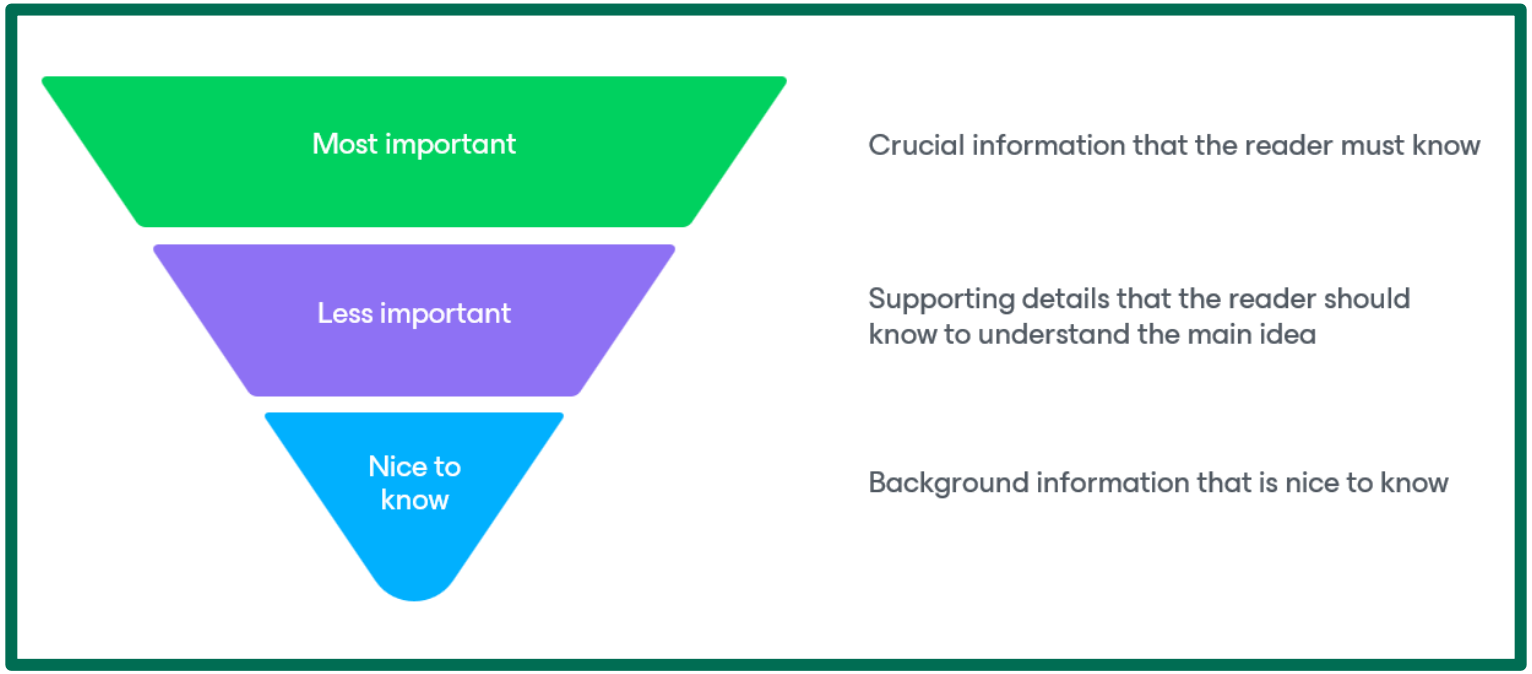
- ⚠ **Vague methods** ("we will explore…" → specify data, tools, stats).
- ⚠ **Over-promising** (too many aims for the project duration).
- ⚠ **Generic impact** (no audience, channel, or metric).

General advices & common pitfalls

- **Inverted pyramid structure:** start with the key message, then evidence; Assert the justify
- **Paragraph design:** one idea → evidence → mini-conclusion.

  Example: "We test H1 using 2018–2025 panel data… Results isolate policy effects… This shows feasibility in WP2."
- **Citations:** selective, recent, relevant (avoid long literature tours; cite to justify choices).

  Tips : use a bibliography manager and copy/paste directly on the appropriate platform section.
- **Language & style**: short sentences, active voice, define acronyms once, avoid jargon



Analysis of the application form and writing tips

Pierre Junca & Alana Moore, European Project Engineers

1. Excellence of the scientific project

- Introduce clearly the issues to be solved or dealt with
- Give contextualisation elements connected with the state of the art of the current research and tied into pertinent research objectives and coherent research goals
- Submit a proposal supported by detailed and solid preliminary data and / or built on major previous works

1.1. Originality of the research project and its positioning to the state of the art (5000 ch)

- Draft a **detailed, credible and understandable state of the art**
- **Highlight limits, deficiencies, weaknesses, gaps, existing needs in the field of research** under study
- Demonstrate that it is essential to develop certain aspects in the research field in order to **meet current challenges**
- Emphasize that this is a **topic** that has been **under-explored or under-exploited** to date and that will give the opportunity to address major, still unresolved, questions
- Indicate how the **expected progress will go beyond the state** of the art significantly

1. Excellence of the scientific project

1.2. Hypothesis and objectives (3500 ch)

- Indicate **objectives** that are : precise and detailed / coherent, appropriate and relevant / ambitious and innovative / realistic, measurable and verifiable.

- They also result from the state of the art, are integrated into the research activities and answer to the hypothesis:
  - Express precisely the **hypothesis**
  - Demonstrate that they will allow to **go beyond the state of the art**
  - Describe **new achievements**, new expected results
  - Indicate that the **objectives are related to the applicant's previous research work** and are credible in terms of the respective expertise of the applicant and the **host institution**

1. Excellence of the scientific project

- Outline the main scientific methods and tools that will be used, and explain how they serve the project's objectives

1.3 Research methodology and work organization (5000 ch)

- Describe and detail the **methodology for each Work Package** step-by-step and well as the **approaches** in order to adequately **address the different aspects of the proposal**.
- Propose **innovative** and **adapted approaches** for the project with updated methods
- Propose a methodology **based on existing procedures, supported by preliminary results or preparatory work**
- Propose a logically **structured** and **solid methodology** in order to :
  - **cover all the steps** necessary to achieve the objectives set
  - take into account **all factors**
  - use different **innovative approaches** (analytical, numerical, experimental, multidisciplinary, complementary, etc.).
  - include **cutting-edge techniques**
- In case of use of Artificial Intelligence, ensure its reliable and mastered use.

1. Excellence of the scientific project

- Detail how your project includes international, interdisciplinary and/or intersectoral aspects and the added value of such aspects.
- If applicable, justify the proposed mobility/secondment for your project and detail its organisation.

Secondments (intersectoral, international or interdisciplinary) consist typically of a short research stay (up to 6 months over the 5-year fellowship) in the premises of the host for secondment.

1.4 Interdisciplinary and/or intersectoral and/or international aspects (5000 ch)

- Highlight the **added value** of the interdisciplinary approach, its relevance to meet the project's objectives
- Emphasize inter and multidisciplinary aspects :
  - **exposure** to different scientific approaches via the participating teams
  - **collaborations** with actors from different disciplines and/or sectors that are **relevant to the project**
  - wide possibility of **multidisciplinary applications**
- Describe **networking opportunities** and show how the applicant will be able to interact with these networks (**internationally**, **with both sectors [academic and non-academic**], etc.).
  - The objective is to demonstrate and increase the applicant's international visibility.

1. Excellence of the scientific project

- Detail how your project includes international, interdisciplinary and/or intersectoral aspects and the added value of such aspects.

1.5 Interdisciplinary and/or intersectoral and/or international aspects – part 1 (3000 ch) (1/2)

- Highlight the **added value** of the interdisciplinary approach, its relevance to meet the project's objectives
- Emphasize inter and multidisciplinary aspects :
  - **exposure** to different scientific approaches via the participating teams
  - **collaborations** with actors from different disciplines and/or sectors that are **relevant to the project**
  - wide possibility of **multidisciplinary applications**
- Describe **networking opportunities** and show how the applicant will be able to interact with these networks (**internationally**, **with both sectors [academic and non-academic**], etc.).
  - The objective is to demonstrate and increase the applicant's international visibility.

1. Excellence of the scientific project

1.5 Interdisciplinary and/or intersectoral and/or international aspects (3000 ch) (2/2)

- If applicable, justify the proposed mobility/secondment for your project and detail its organisation.

Secondments (intersectoral, international or interdisciplinary) consist typically of a short research stay (up to 6 months over the 5-year fellowship) in the premises of the host for secondment.

Optional, the secondment must be clearly justified: both its **objectives**, its **duration** and its **integration into the project**.

- Demonstrate **added value** and **relevance** to the project
- Allow the **development of additional skills** and **multidisciplinary** aspects
- Emphasize that the partner organization has a research infrastructure :
  - quality, with state-of-the-art **equipment** and **facilities**
  - **necessary for the implementation** of the project activities
- Indicate the **commitment** of the **associated partner** (**if already contacted**)

2. Impact

2.1 Scientific and/or societal impact (5000 ch max including spaces)

- Describe any scientific, economic, social or cultural domains for which your project may have an impact.
- Detail how your project will address TIRIS objectives or Occitanie region key challenges.

➢ Include a list of **relevant** and **realistic** impacts. Only include outcomes and impacts where your project would make **a significant and direct contribution**. Avoid describing very tenuous links to wider impacts.

➢ Explain the impacts both **during** and **after the end of your project**.

➢ Be specific, referring to the effects of **your project**, and not R&I in general in this field. Identify the **target groups** that would benefit.

➢ Give an indication of **the magnitude** and **importance** of the project's contribution to the expected outcomes and impacts. Provide credible quantified estimates where possible and meaningful.

Magnitude = how widespread the outcomes and impacts are likely to be (e.g. size of target group likely to benefit)
Importance = value of the benefits (e.g number of additional healthy life years)

2. Impact

2.2 Career Development (5000 ch) (1/2)

- What are your immediate and long-term goals for your career?
- Explain your reasons for choosing this Fellowship and the host research units, secondment organisations and mentors to perform the project.
- What trainings could be relevant in order to achieve these goals?

➢ How does this project contribute to you achieving scientific independence and leadership goals (e.g. initiating a new laboratory or a research group, becoming a pioneer researcher in your specific field, new links with industry, potential ERC application etc)?

➢ Impact of the Fellowship, host research unit etc. on your career perspectives & skills development:

- What skills will you acquire, diversify and consolidate? Consider scientific, technical (cutting edge techniques, experimental, etc), and transferable skills (e.g. proposal drafting, project management, teaching, coaching, leadership, conference or workshop organization, industrial application).
- Enlarge your networks (national, European, international) and collaborations in order to obtain a better visibility

2.2 Career Development (5000 ch) (2/2)

- What are your immediate and long-term goals for your career?
- Explain your reasons for choosing this Fellowship and the host research units, secondment organisations and mentors to perform the project.
- What trainings could be relevant in order to achieve these goals?

Training :

- Propose a training plan with realistic objectives that target **identified skills gaps** rather than covering all skills.

- The training should be:
  - in connection with the research project,
  - complementary with your past experience, and
  - in-line with your career development goals.

- Consider all kinds of training: **scientific, technical and transferable** skills

- Identify the **pathways** for obtaining these skills (seminars, modules, on-the-job training, short courses, thematic schools or workshops, etc)

2. Impact

2.3 Integration within the host team – transfer of knowledge and skills (4000 ch)

- Discuss how you will gain new knowledge from the Host Institution during the fellowship. Which new skills will be acquired? How? Give details for both scientific and transferable skills
- Explain how your Host Institution may benefit from your work

➢ Highlight the complementarity between your profile, your supervisor(s), and the expertise of your host organization.

➢ **What new knowledge** will you gain during the fellowship (e.g. scientific, technical, transferable skills) and **how** will it be acquired (e.g., staff development programmes, workshops, seminars, online courses, internal meetings)?

➢ Explain the transfer of knowledge also with **the associated partner in case of secondment**

➢ Outline previously acquired knowledge and skills that you will **transfer to the host organisation**. Ask yourself how your expertise can benefit/promote the host institution.

➢ Indicate **how** the knowledge will be transferred: training and supervision of doctoral students, collaboration with laboratory staff, participation in seminars, regular meetings with the laboratory, etc

2. Impact

2.4 Communication, Dissemination and exploitation of results (3000 ch) (1/3)

- Describe how you intend to disseminate/exploit your results
- Describe public engagement activities you would plan to undertake in order to communicate scientific knowledge

Dissemination: making knowledge and project **results publicly available** free of charge **to the end users** outside of the project (both in academia and industry)

Exploitation: **make concrete use of the project results** by you, your host institution or those who can take the results forward or invest in them (both commercial and for research, education etc.)

Communication/Outreach: **informing, promoting and communicating the project activities and results** to the broader public; to show its impact on our daily lives.

2. Impact

2.4 Communication, Dissemination and exploitation of results (3000 ch) (2/3)

- Describe how you intend to disseminate/exploit your results
- Describe public engagement activities you would plan to undertake in order to disseminate scientific knowledge

Exploitation of the project results

- Mention, if relevant, applications and commercial potential of the research results (e.g., new product/service, new techniques/methods), possible patents.

- Describe the potential exploitation methods of your project results that will be used e.g.:
  - Further internal research
  - Collaborative research
  - Product development
  - Standardisation activities
  - Engagement with end users/policymakers

2.4 Communication, Dissemination and exploitation of results (3000 ch) (3/3)

- Describe how you intend to disseminate/exploit your results
- Describe public engagement activities you would plan to undertake in order to communicate scientific knowledge

Dissemination and Communication of results:

Define your **target audiences**:

- Dissemination: Industry (give examples of who could use the results for further development), Research fields (give examples), Expert users (clinicians, companies, services etc.), Regulators, Types of policy makers who would use the results, etc
- Communication: These should be non-expert audiences, e.g. University students, Primary/ secondary schools, Media (editors, journalists etc.), Community groups, charities, etc.

Specify the main **message** for each target audience.

Describe the **channels** that will be used : conferences, workshops, newspapers, books, newsletters, radio, institutional website, scientific portals, courses, competitions, exhibitions, video animations, video games, applications, artistic visualizations, experimental platform, social networks, public software sharing, open days, festivals (e.g. Fête de la Science in France), interaction with other European projects, secondments, etc

Provide **quantifiable performance indicators** – establish a benchmark:Web sites: Page views, unique visitors, time spent, downloads, etc. / Publications: Citations / Events: Number of participants, opinion surveys, follow up rate, etc.

3. Implementation of the project

3.1. Work Programme, ressources (5000 ch) (1/2)

- Describe the scientific programme and its work packages to demonstrate feasibility.
- Describe milestones and deliverables planned in your project
- Provide a few indicators allowing to follow the project implementation and to measure the level of achievement of the aims

Work plan

- Draft a **structured, feasible, credible and flexible work plan**
- Propose a work plan that is **coherent with the project's objectives**

Tasks (Work packages - WP)

- Describe each task (**WP**) in order to effectively **justify the time and resources allocated**, both **scientific and non-scientific WPs**
- all activities must appear with the allocated **duration**: scientific tasks, training, dissemination, communication, management, secondments, etc.
    - Propose an **adequate allocation of tasks and resources**: based on the **resources** available at the **host institution**, associated partner, collaborators within the laboratory network

3. Implementation of the project

3.1. Work Programme, ressources (5000 ch) (2/2)

- **Articulate** the different tasks in an **appropriate** and **efficient manner**
- Indicate the **interactions between the different tasks** (WPs)
- **Risk management and contengecy plan**
- Indicate the **person/month allocation per WP**
- Chose well the **starting moment for each task** and **not underestimate the time** that certain activities may take (experimental applications, need to acquire a skill beforehand, secondments, publication, translation of a book, data analysis, etc.).
- Do not forget a "non-technical" WP in order to follow "non-technical" activities such as training, communication and dissemination as well as management

3. Implementation of the project

3.2 Host Research unit (3500 ch)

- Please list/explain the facilities/equipment/software you will use and confirm availability or possible implementation.

Host lab & Host institution (laboratory, secondment, placement, …)

- Describe the **infrastructure**, **equipment** and **advanced technologies** made **available** to the researcher and, if possible, the **exclusivity** of these devices
- Emphasize that all these measures are in line with the objectives and guarantee the realization of the project.
- Emphasize the **quality of the scientific environment**: scientific and experimental expertise, collaborations, networks, international recognition, multidisciplinary activity, culture of excellence, human resources, etc.
- Support the complementarity between the different participants (supervisor, associated partner, applicant)

3. Implementation of the project

3.3 Sustainability (3000 ch)

Indicate how your research contributes to sustainable development, including environmental, social, or economic dimensions.

More information : https://www.agenda-2030.fr/en/the-17-goals/

- **AToUT participants** are expected to explain the **actions** they are taking **to address the sustainability of their research projects** in their proposal
- **MSCA Green charter** and its supporting material offer practical recommendations covering topics such as:
  - travel, events and meetings
  - resource-intensive research settings
  - hardware, software and data usage
  - facilities, infrastructure and procurement



Plenary Q&A & Closing Remarks

Etienne Dague & Anna Vermunt, ASCENT team

For more information

Useful links :

- ASCENT website
- ASCENT Guide for applicants
- ASCENT application form
- Follow us on LinkedIn
- Contact : ascent@univ-toulouse.fr



Thank you! ☺