

Widening Country Inspiration Story

“Choose a topic that you are passionate about.”

Name of the fellow: James Ciarlo

Country of the host: Malta

Project Acronym: PALEOSIM

Project start and end date: 1.08.2022 – 31.01.2025

Type of MSCA, Horizon Europe: Postdoctoral Fellowship



What is your project about and why is the topic important for science advancement?

This is a study about climate change impacts on the habitats of arthropods (insects, centipedes, spiders, etc.) in the Circum-Sicilian islands. Arthropods are very important to the integrity of ecosystems, especially in small islands which can be vulnerable to sudden changes. The project uses a regional climate model to prepare 3km resolution simulations of these islands starting from the last ice age. This will allow us to shed light on past and ongoing climate changes affecting these biospheres.

Why is your project important for the society?

It is very important for society to understand the differences between natural and human impacts on the environment. This project looks at very different time periods to understand how different processes affected the habitats of various arthropod species.

What communication and public engagement measures have you foreseen?

To encourage public engagement, the project includes a citizen science program where volunteers can get to know the organisms being studied as well as multiple seminars and public talks, all of which are announced

through the project page (and the institute's Facebook page).

Why did you choose a widening country as a host?

As a small arid island, environmental resources in Malta are naturally limited. These conditions coupled with high population density and vast land-use can cause significant impacts on vulnerable ecosystems. As regional climate models are finally able to resolve details such as small islands, this was a golden opportunity to push the research boundaries in this direction. Furthermore, being able to work with the Maltese expert entomologist Prof. David Mifsud is of great importance to the project.

How did you find your host organisation?

Throughout my doctoral studies at the University of Malta, I met several experts in fields impacted by climate change. During my post-doc in Trieste, I maintained contact with these experts and when I started considering the MSCA PF, I concluded that it would be the ideal host organisation.

What kind of support did you get?

I got in touch with the NCP 18 months before the submission date. They explained the process and opportunities involved, including the 2021 IPAS+ support scheme which provides funds to engage an expert in EU applications (iKonsulting) as a consultant for the proposal. Throughout the entire process, support was also provided from the prospective supervisors, the host and partner institutions, and a former MSCA IF awardee. The discussions with participants and their input during this process were invaluable to the success of the proposal.



Do you have a non-academic placement within your project? What is its purpose?

The project includes a placement at the Explora Interactive Science Museum, with the objective to develop a display on the final project results. This will provide exposure to science communication experts, which will lead to improved dissemination skills and access to relevant stakeholders.

What tips can you give other researchers who would like to apply for MSCA?

When you are developing your project idea, consider your own limitations and where you may push your own

boundaries. Choose a topic that you are passionate about, as it will naturally encourage you to be meticulous and detailed in your planning. It is essential to plan well in advance as this will provide the opportunity to discuss and revise your material and/ or any challenges that come your way. To do so, you will also need to be open to other people's insights and opinions.

More information on the project:



The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) support researchers at all stage of their career across all disciplines. The MSCA also support cooperation between industry and academia and provide innovative trainings and career developments.

The MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships (PF) enable talented researchers to work on project in Europe and beyond. They aim at enhancing the innovative potential of postdoctoral researchers through advanced trainings, international and intersectoral mobility.

The MSCA-NET project is the MSCA NCP project to facilitate the transnational cooperation to achieve a consistent and harmonised level of NCP support. The scientific community can also profit from our project to support their MSCA application.

