How to Justify Personnel Effort Convincingly in Major EU Funding Lines (Examples on page 2)

Funding Line	What Evaluators Expect	How to Structure a Strong Justification	Senior Researcher (PI) Justification	When High PMs Are Credible	Common Weaknesses
MSCA (Doctoral Networks, PF, COFUND)	**Demonstrate/ link personnel effort to** • High-quality training • Knowledge transfer • Structured supervision • Career development dimension	**Link PMs to:** • Research objectives + Training modules • Supervision time • Secondments & intersectoral exposure ***Example:*** *The DC (36 PM) will develop the AI-based catalytic screening platform (WP2), including data generation, algorithm training, and validation. 6 PM are allocated to secondment at Industry Partner X for scale-up validation.*	**PI effort must show:** • Structured supervision • Training plan oversight • Career mentoring • Consortium coordination (DN) ***Example:*** *The Supervisor (5 PM) will oversee experimental design, ensure training milestones, and conduct quarterly career development reviews.*	• Multi-host supervision • Laboratory + computational integration • Significant training activities • Secondments	• Generic statements ("researcher works full-time") • No reference to training component • Missing link to MSCA mobility/skills dimension
Cluster / Missions (Horizon Europe Pillar II)	• Clear contribution to Impact pathway • Operational delivery of Work Packages • Stakeholder integration • Demonstration & validation	Link PMs explicitly to: • WP tasks/ Deliverables • Demonstration sites • TRL progression ***Example:*** *The Senior Engineer (24 PM) will lead pilot deployment (WP4), coordinate demonstration site calibration, and deliver performance validation report D4.3 required for TRL6 achievement.*	PI effort should demonstrate: • Scientific coordination • Integration across partners • Alignment with policy objectives ***Example:*** *The Coordinator (8 PM) ensures cross-WP integration and alignment with Mission implementation roadmap.*	• Large consortia management • Multi-site validation • Stakeholder co-creation processes • Regulatory compliance activities	• No link to Impact pathway • Over-allocation of coordination PMs without justification • Tasks described at high abstraction level
EIC Pathfinder	• Breakthrough ambition • High-risk experimentation • Interdisciplinary integration • Iterative testing cycles	Link PMs to: • Specific Deliverables • Risk mitigation strategy • Experimental cycles • Novel methodology development ***Example:*** *The Postdoctoral Researcher (36 PM) will develop and experimentally validate the non-linear control algorithm (D2.2–D2.4), requiring three iterative modelling–simulation–laboratory cycles to address technical risk R1.*	PI effort must show: • Conceptual leadership • High-level theoretical development • Critical risk decisions ***Example:*** *The PI (6 PM) defines the adaptive quantum coupling framework and supervises high-risk experimental adjustments at Milestone M2.*	• Custom instrumentation development • Repeated exper. replication • Multidisciplinary fusion (physics–AI–materials) • High scientific uncertainty	• Generic full-time claims • No explicit link to risk mitigation • No evidence of scientific novelty driving effort

Funding Line	What Evaluators Expect	How to Structure a Strong Justification	Senior Researcher (PI) Justification	When High PMs Are Credible	Common Weaknesses
ERC (Starting, Consolidator, Advanced)	• Intellectual ownership • Frontier research ambition • Independence of PI • Feasibility of ground-breaking idea	Link PMs to:• Scientific objectives• Hypothesis testing structure• Dedicated research streams *Example:* *The Postdoctoral Fellow (48 PM) will lead Objective 2, testing the stochastic resonance hypothesis via custom-built spectroscopy platform.*	PI effort is central:• Must show intellectual leadership• Minimum commitment requirement applies• Conceptual development & supervision *Example:* *The PI (minimum 50% time for StG) will steer theoretical development, supervise all hypothesis testing phases, and personally lead high-risk experimental decision points.*	• Multiple methodological workstreams • Complex experimental platforms• Frontier theory development • Strong PI involvement	• Diffuse task allocation • PI effort too low or poorly justified • Administrative PMs overemphasized

Cross-Cutting Principles for All Schemes: A convincing personnel justification always:

- → Links effort to concrete Deliverables and Milestones
- → Explains technical intensity (why the time is necessary)
- → Demonstrates role differentiation (Postdoc ≠ PI ≠ Engineer)
- → Connects effort to risk mitigation (especially Pathfinder/ERC)
- → Avoids generic phrasing

A. Postdoctoral / Senior Researcher Template: "The [Role] ([XX PM]) will lead [specific scientific/technical objective] within WP[X]. This includes [core methodological activities: modelling / experimental validation / algorithm development / pilot deployment]. The effort covers [quantified technical intensity: number of experimental cycles, dataset size, prototype iterations, stakeholder workshops, etc.], culminating in Deliverables [Dx.x–Dx.x]. The allocation reflects the need for [risk mitigation / interdisciplinary integration / replication / TRL advancement], which requires sustained, hands-on involvement."

B. PI / Senior Leadership Template: "The PI ([X PM]) will provide scientific leadership by defining the theoretical and methodological framework for [core breakthrough/innovation]. The PI will supervise critical risk points (Milestones Mx–My), validate major experimental pivots, and ensure integration across WPs. The allocation reflects high-level strategic oversight rather than operational execution."
For ERC: Emphasize intellectual ownership and hypothesis leadership | For MSCA: Emphasize supervision quality and structured training oversight.

C. Technical Staff: "The **Laboratory Technician** ([XX PM]) will operate and maintain the [specific equipment/platform], including calibration, quality control, and safety compliance procedures required for WP[X]. The role covers preparation of [number/type] experimental runs, instrument optimization across [X] parameter regimes, and systematic data logging in accordance with Deliverables [Dx.x–Dx.x]. OR "The **Field Technician** ([XX PM]) will coordinate and execute data acquisition across [number] pilot sites under WP[X], including sensor deployment, calibration under variable environmental conditions, and on-site troubleshooting. The allocation covers [X] deployment cycles, seasonal variation sampling, and compliance with local safety and regulatory requirements.