



December 2025

# The funding of research in France : the fundamentals

What you need to know to understand the environment in which you are conducting your research

# Introduction

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Former head of research projects support office (support to answering calls for proposals)

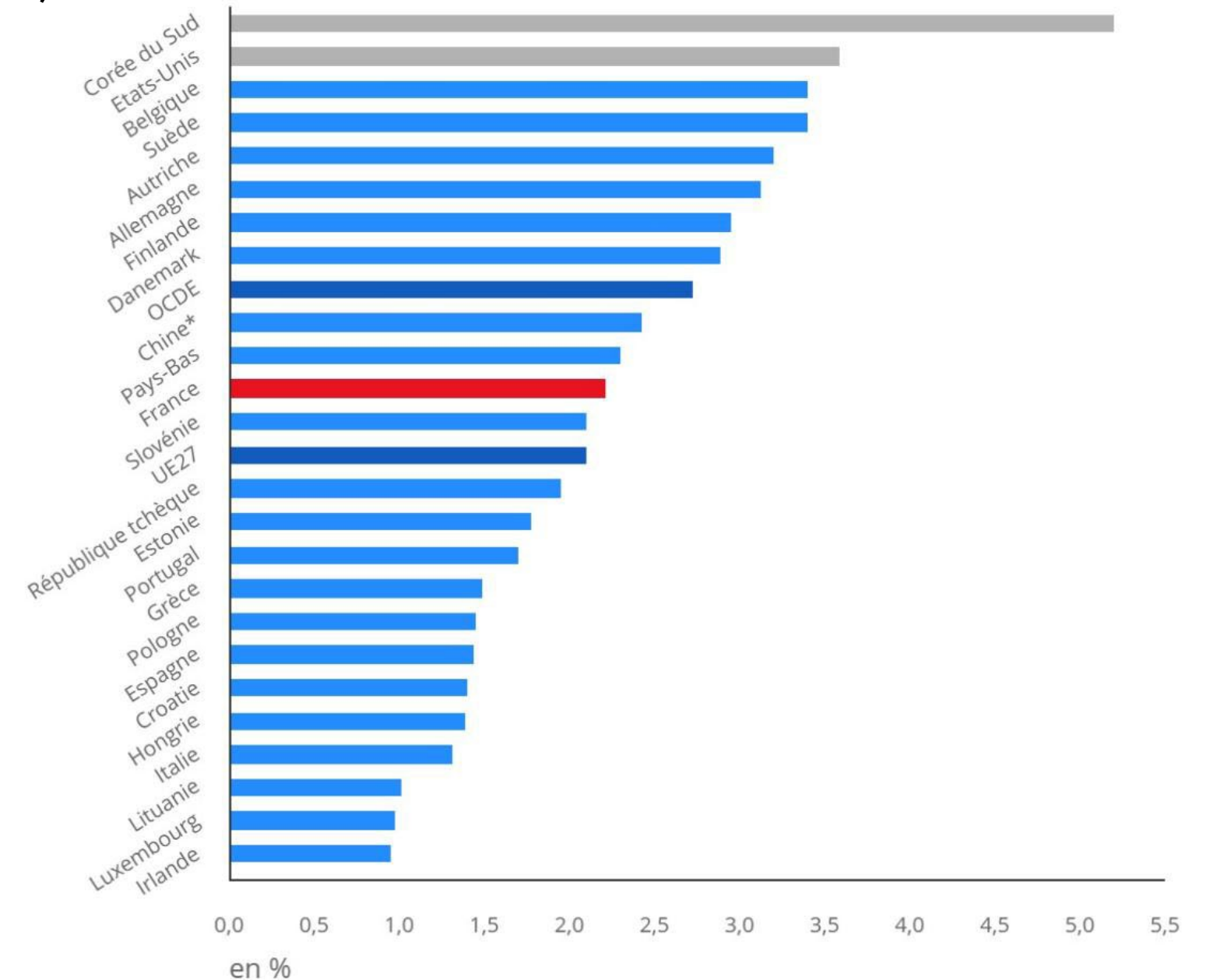
Working as a research administrator since 2007



My apologies to  
native speakers !

# Spending on R&D in France

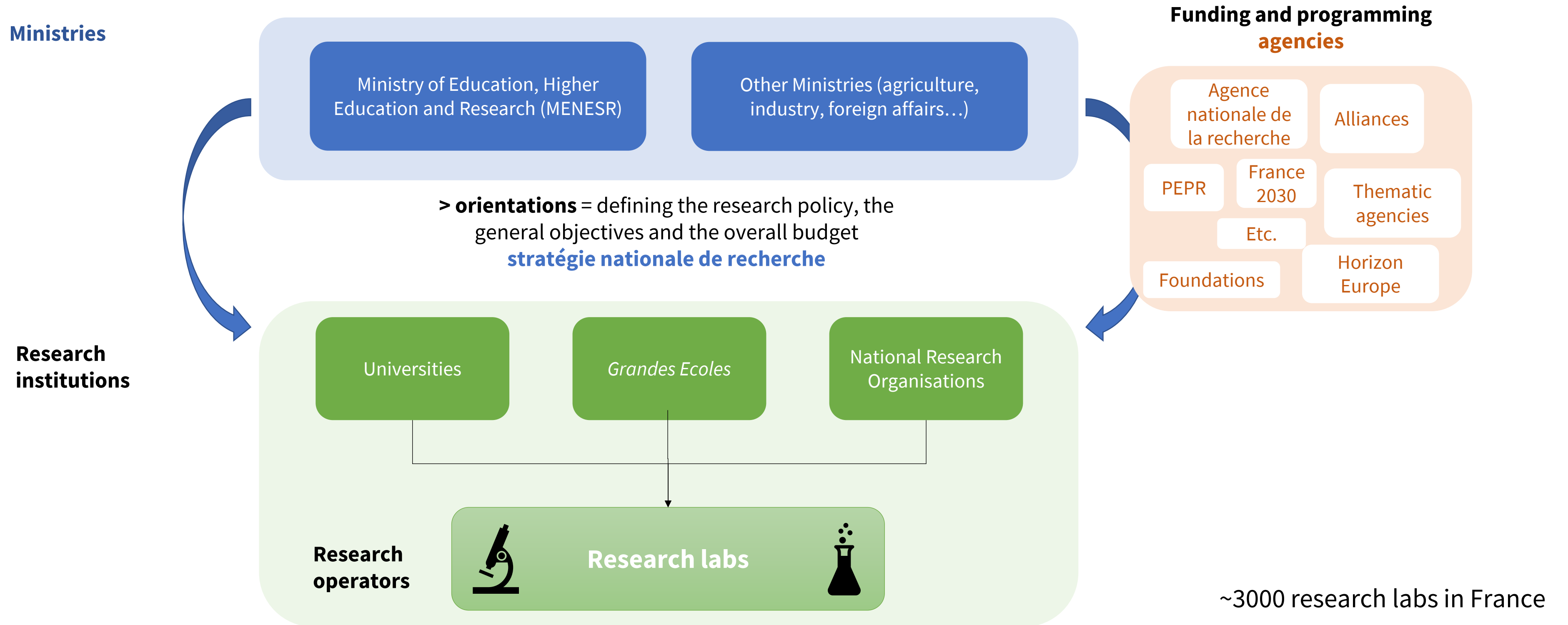
- Gross domestic spending (GDS) on R&D in 2022 in France : **58,9 billion €**
  - Spending of the public sector represents 23,1 billion € (ie ~40%)
  - Spending of the private sector ~60%
- GDS represents 2,22% of GDP in France in 2022
  - EU27 average : 2,1% of GDP (target : 3%)  
USA : 3,59% / Germany 3,2% / China 2,43%
  - +2,6% compared to 2021
  - France in 2022 :  
Education = 181,3 billion € - 6,8% of GDP  
Health = 313,6 billion € - 11,9% of GDP



Reference : annual report “[L'État de l'Enseignement supérieur, de la Recherche et de l'Innovation en France](#) »

Sources : OECD, Fipeco, INSEE ([link](#), 30/01/2025)

# Public research in France (made simple)



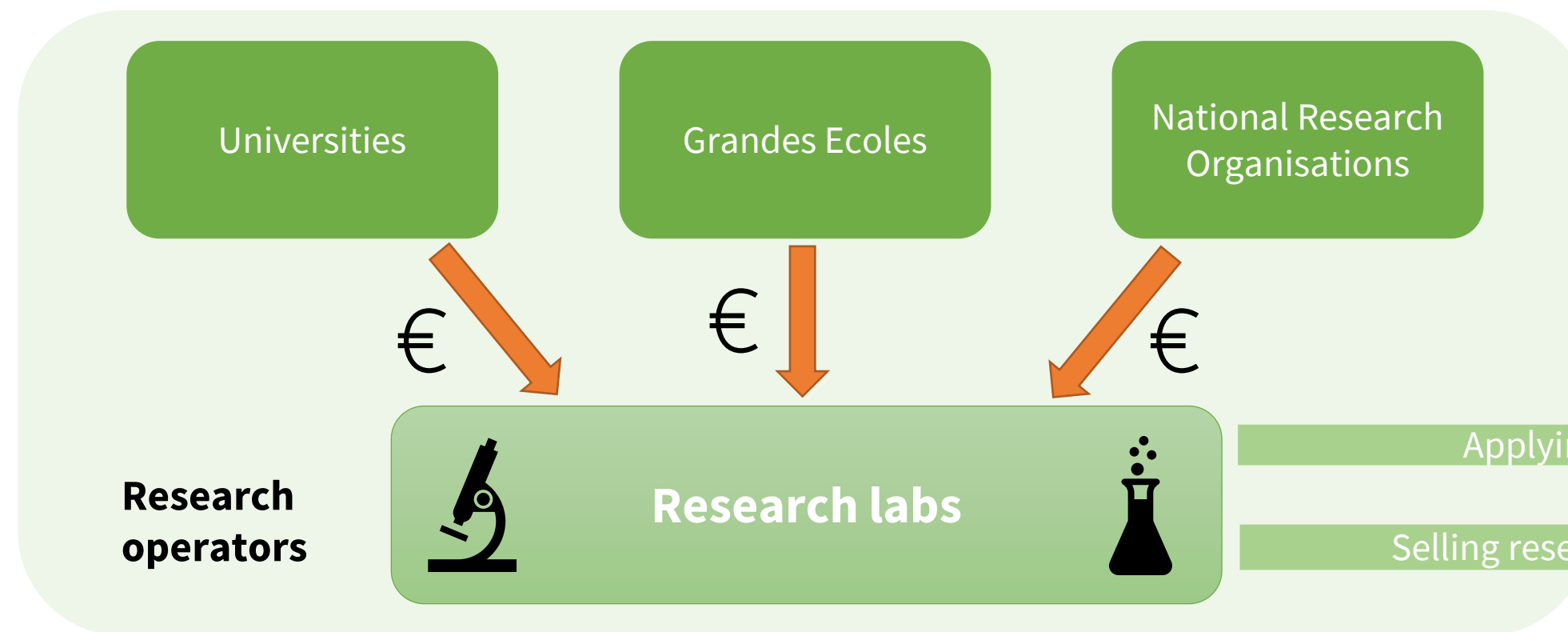
# Public research in France (made simple)

## Ministries



€ ↓ 60% from the ministries

## Research institutions



## Funding and programming agencies



25% from the research grants



15% from other resources (contracts, IP...)

Applying for research grants

Selling research services and negotiating private collaborations

# The quest for research grants

Research grants represents 25% of research funding...but probably over 60% of operational funding (excluding the funding of permanent staff)

- Answering calls for proposals is part of a researcher's activities
- Answering a call for proposals is answering a funder's need without loosing your own (scientific) objectives
- You can raise your chance of success by learning how to do it

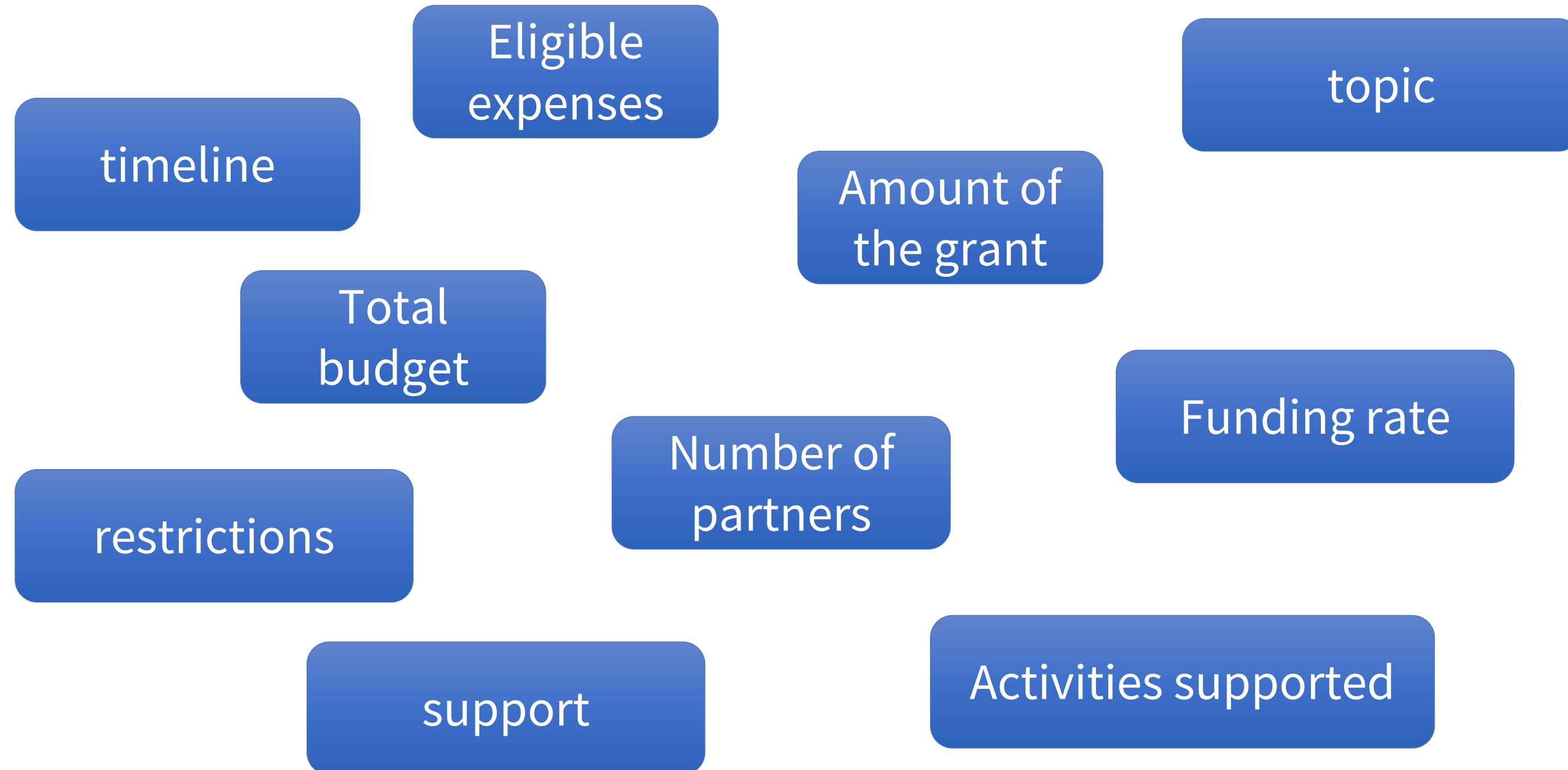


# The quest for research grants

## Few advises

- Understand the rationale behind funders' intervention
- Get training on grant writing
- Survey calls for proposals / Have an annual planning for major calls
- Survey funded projects (who coordinates proposals, on which topics...)
- Avoid wasting time : always conduct a feasibility study before answering a call
- Get started by participating in proposals with your supervisor, as partner, etc.
- Accept to « invest » time in your first proposals (it gets easier and easier)

# Understand the rationale



# Understand the rationale

Eligible

Who gives the money ?

the grant

Total

Why ?

restrictions

partners

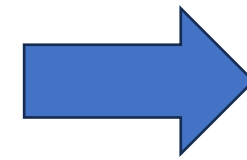
What's his interest ?

support

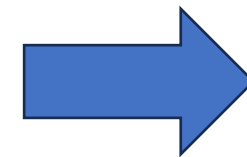
# Understand the rationale : for the love of science...but not only

A **call for proposals reflects political will**. It aims at guiding research, innovation, training, etc. on topics considered particularly strategic at a given time.

A call for proposals has a **strategic focus** that must be understood in order to respond effectively.



**Each funder follows a policy line**  
(and the university and its researchers can sometimes influence it: responses to formal consultations, position papers, informal exchanges, networks, etc.)

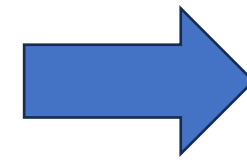


**The funder is not interested in your science but in the impact it may have**  
Impact must be the common thread running through the preparation of your proposal

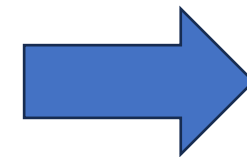
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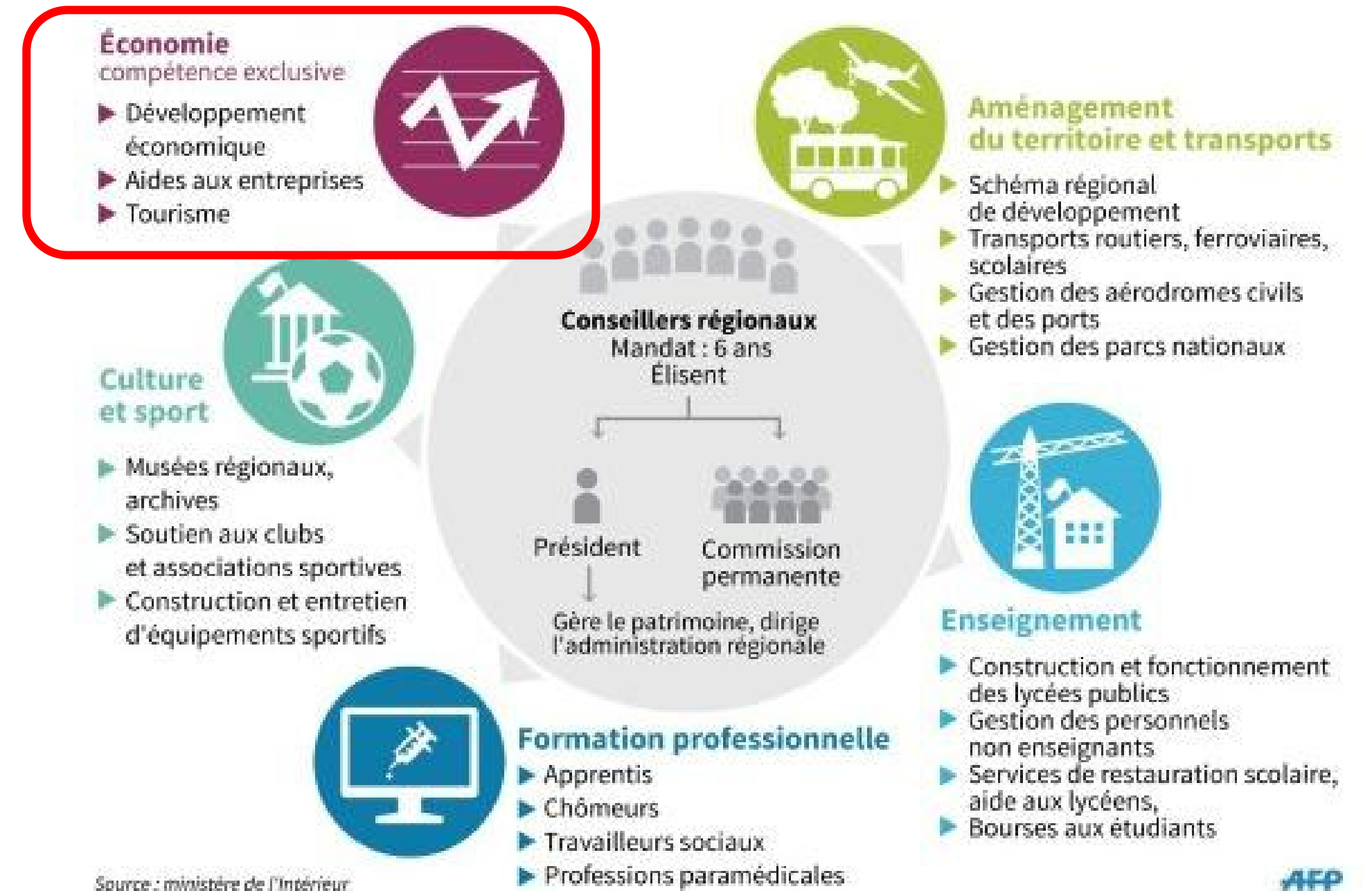
**The most important message / to be kept in mind when preparing your projects and writing your proposals !**

# Example : regional funding

It is under its 'Economic Development' responsibility that the Pays de la Loire region funds research projects.

This is a comprehensive policy (supporting universities = supporting economic activity in the region), but each project must also demonstrate its contribution to this objective (as elected officials will be sensitive to this when approving the allocation of funds, etc.).

## COMPETENCES DES REGIONS FRANCAISES



# Example : Horizon Europe

€95.5 billion (2021-2027)



Major objectives for the EU : increase tech transfer and increase private R&D Investment !

# Understand the motivations of the funder

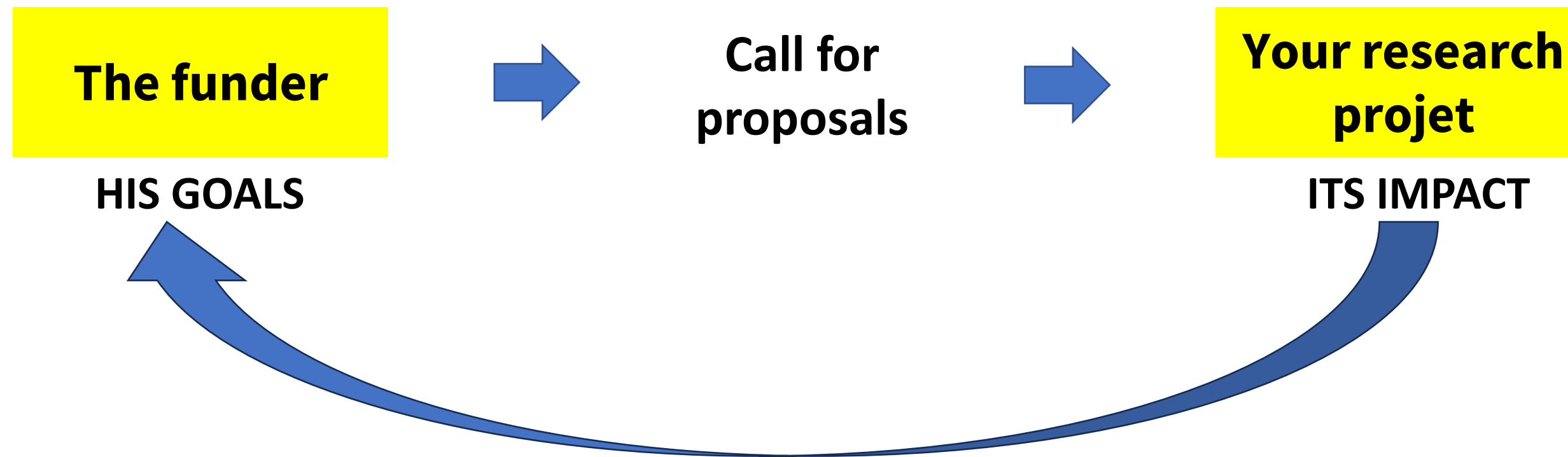
- Read the call text thoroughly (and try to read between the lines)
- Read context documents (including ‘policy’ documents)
- Try to know who writes the call
- Try to know who is consulted on the call / who influences the call before its publication
- Get the list of previously funded projects
- Get the list of evaluators
- Discuss with the funder whenever possible
- Become an evaluator

# The quest for research grants

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  - Avoid wasting time : always conduct a feasibility study before answering a call
  - Get started by participating in proposals with your supervisor, as partner, etc.
  - Accept to « invest » time in your first proposals (it gets easier and easier)
- ...and understand you have to build your projects from the impact you want to have !

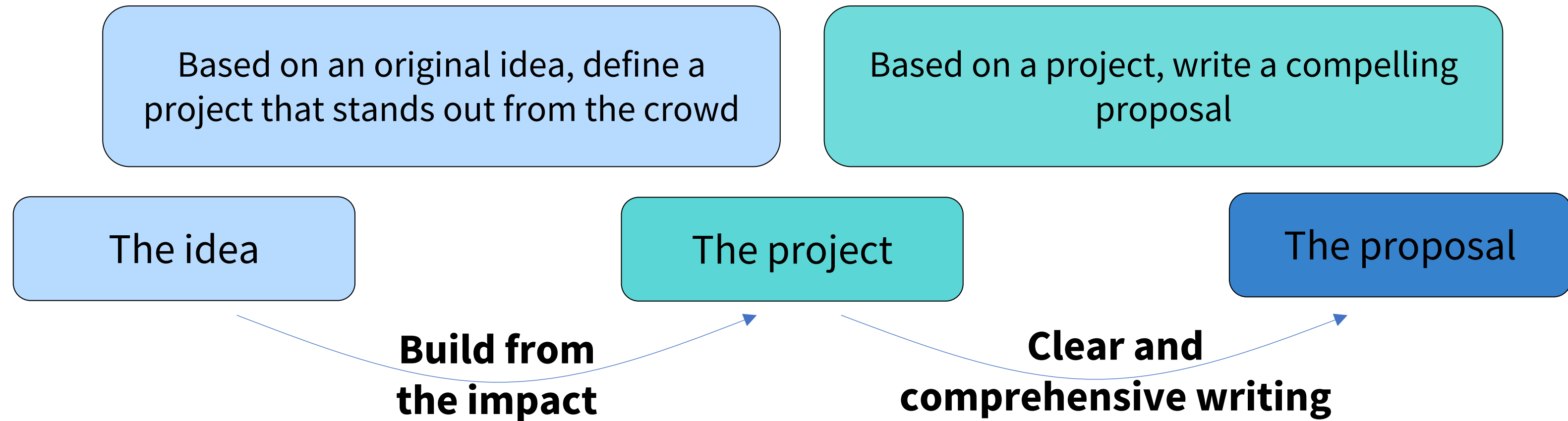
# Understand the rationale : build your project from the impact it may have



Impact is the lasting change resulting from the action, what remains when the project is completed.

The impact pathway describes research work, the transfer of knowledge outside the academic sphere, its transformation and its use by socio-economic actors (source: INRA, [projet ASIRPA](#))

# Understand the rationale : build your project from the impact it may have



- ✓ In-depth consideration of the project's impact and value
- ✓ In line with the call for projects
- ✓ The result of joint deliberation by the partners
- ✓ Positioned in relation to the economic, technological and scientific context, etc.
- ✓ Precisely defined objectives and results

- ✓ Clear and comprehensive drafting of concrete, measurable objectives
- ✓ a precisely described and justified methodology
- ✓ Writing led by the coordinator, with the support of all partners

# Understand the rationale : build your project from the impact it may have

Depending on the impact you want to have you will

- Choose different partners
- Set different levels of scientific objectives
- Implement new workpackages or strengthen workpackages you would otherwise consider as minor
- Choose different outreach activities and communication channels
- Etc.

# Identify calls for proposals

- Websites
- Lab's / Institute's newsletter
- Colleagues
- Networking

Nantes Université gives you access to the ResearchConnect database of funding opportunities

<https://funding.myresearchconnect.com/Home>

**ResearchConnect**

## Major funding agencies /funding programmes

**anr**®  
agence nationale  
de la recherche

**cnrs**  
and other  
research org.

Programmes et  
Equipements Prioritaires  
de Recherche



**NeXT**  
HEALTH AND  
ENGINEERING

**RÉGION  
PAYS  
DE LA LOIRE**

**euni  
well** European  
University for  
Well-Being

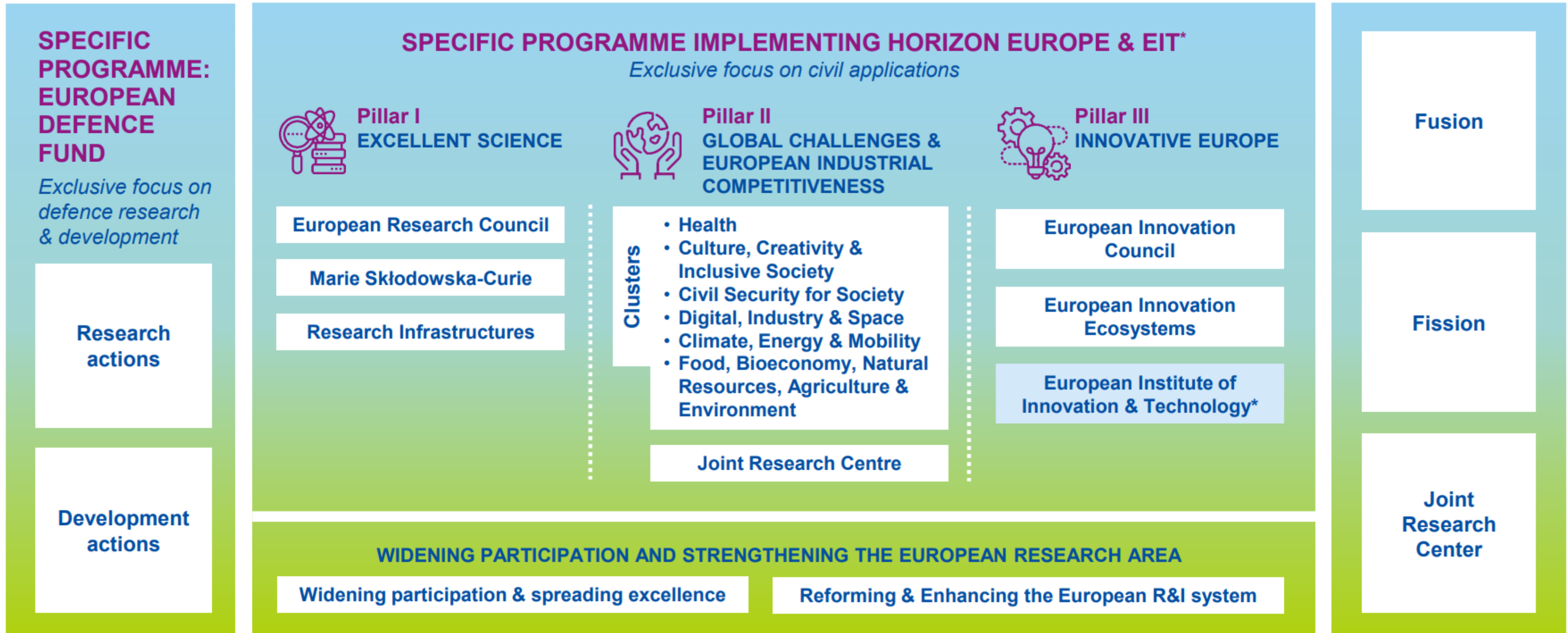
**horizon  
europe**

# Identify calls for proposals

- <https://www.appelsprojetsrecherche.fr/>
- <https://funding.myresearchconnect.com/Home> (connexion avec identifiants Nantes Univ)
- <https://recherche.aphp.fr/appels-a-projets/> [recherche clinique]
- <https://www.entreprises.gouv.fr/espace-entreprises/etre-accompagne/annuaire-poles-competitivite> [most *Poles de compétitivité* propose thematic surveys of calls > find the *Pole* that correspond to your expertise and check their websites]
- International calls : By targeted country > check the embassies websites
- International calls : [Horizon Europe](#) (or the [French website on HE](#))
- (to be completed)

# Horizon Europe

[link to full presentation of Horizon Europe](#)

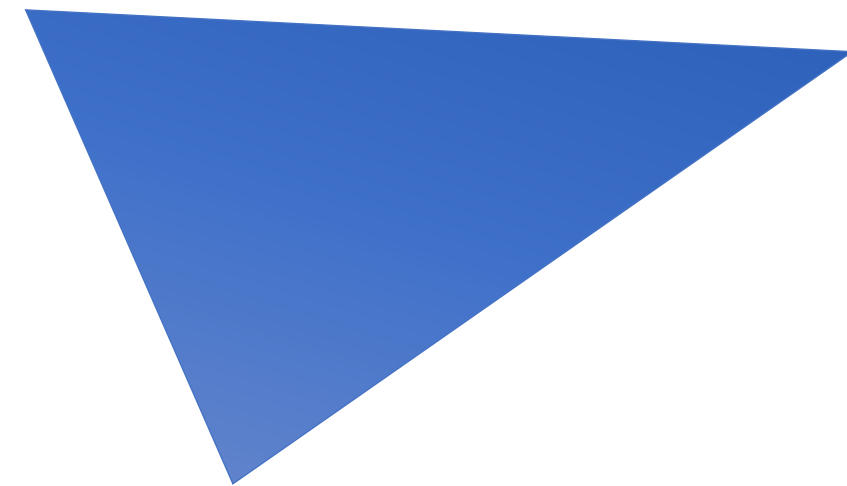


# Opportunity study

- An interesting call for projects for a researcher is one in which they can reconcile their own objectives with the expectations of the funder, while taking into account their resources.

## MY RESSOURCES

Time  
Equipment  
Knowledge  
...



## MY AMBITIONS

Financial needs  
Scientific outcomes  
Networking  
Societal impact  
...

## THE FUNDER'S EXPECTATIONS

**NW**

**U**

# Additional slides

# What's next ?

Congratulations  
for your PhD  
diploma !



## Doing research ...in the private sector

Position in the R&D department of a company [over 60% of researchers in France are in the private sector !]

## ...in the public sector

1-year teaching and research position (ATER)  
Post-doc(s) in France or abroad

And later : competitions for permanent positions as Research Engineers (IGR), *Chargé de Recherche* (CR) or *Maitre de conférence* (MCF)

## Not doing research but staying close

R&D support in public research institution : tech transfert engineers, scientific mediators, etc.

Positions in intermediary bodies : public innovation bank (BPIFrance), ANR, CCI, European Patent Office, etc.

Positions in R&D-related companies : consultancy firms, etc.

Deeptech entrepreneurship

**Grant writing is a career option for PhDs**

## Not doing research at all

Everything is possible !

**your everyday life in the lab represents just a small part of the possible careers !**

# Get funding for a postdoc position

- Option #1 : Apply for already funded post-doc positions published by research institutions  
all EU-funded research projects must publish their positions on EURAXESS
- Option #2 : contact a potential postdoc supervisor
  - 2.1 She/He has available funding to cover for your recruitment
  - 2.2 You apply with her/his help for specific post-doc grants >>> for example Marie-Curie Fellowships

# Writing

- The rules and writing style for a project in response to a call for proposals are very different from those for an academic article.
- **A proposal is a demonstration** that you write to convince your evaluators. It is to them that you are addressing yourself.
- **You must get straight to the point!** Try to construct each section as follows:

