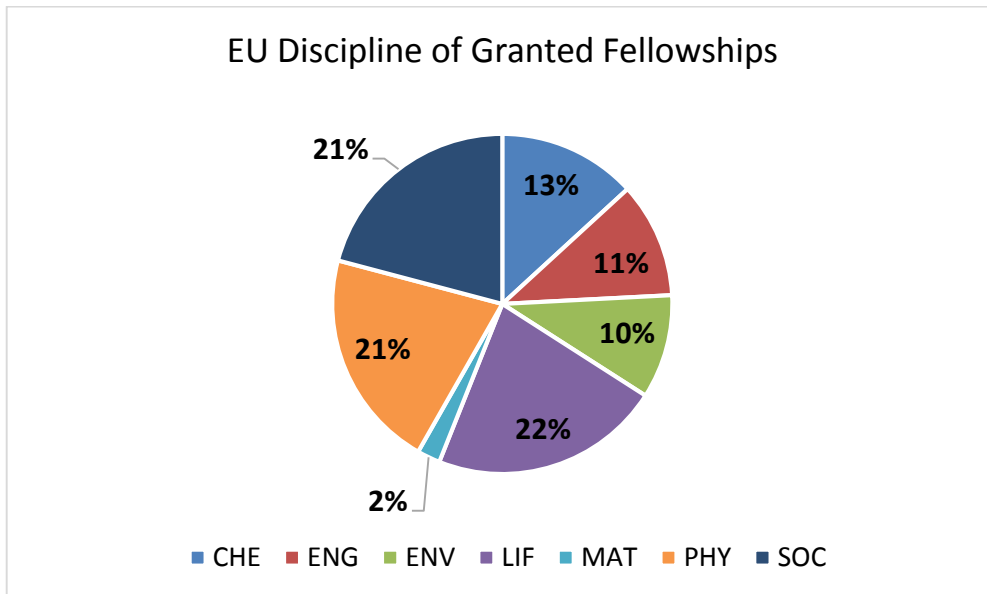
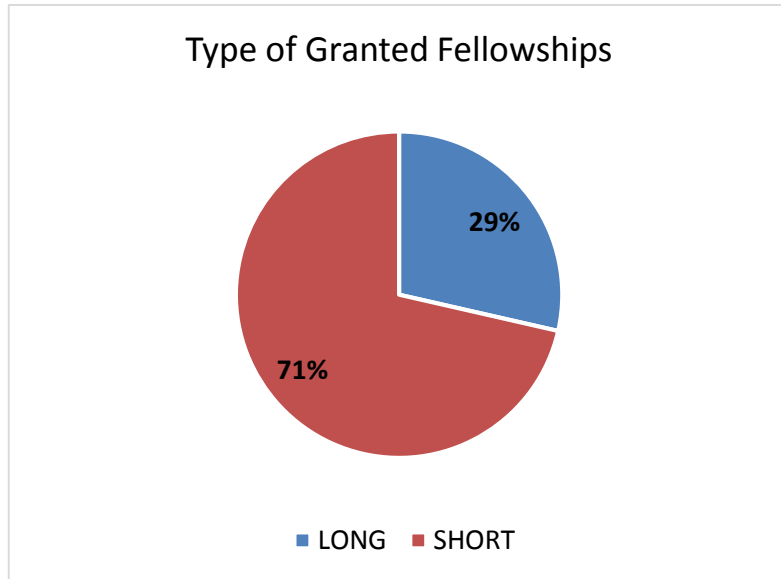


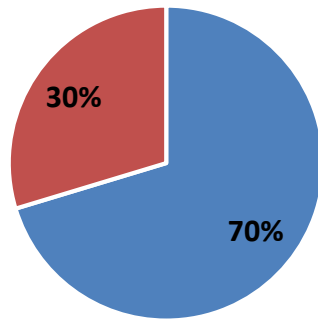
FWO and PEGASUS logo



General Distribution of all 91 PEGASUS fellows

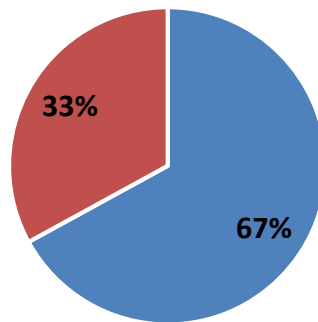


Gender of Granted Fellows



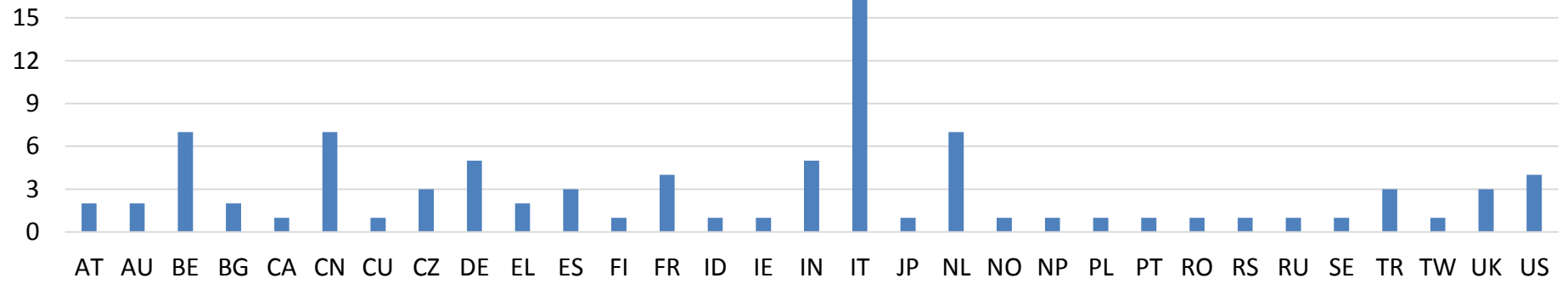
■ Male ■ Female

Nationality of Granted Fellows



■ EU MS ■ non-EU MS

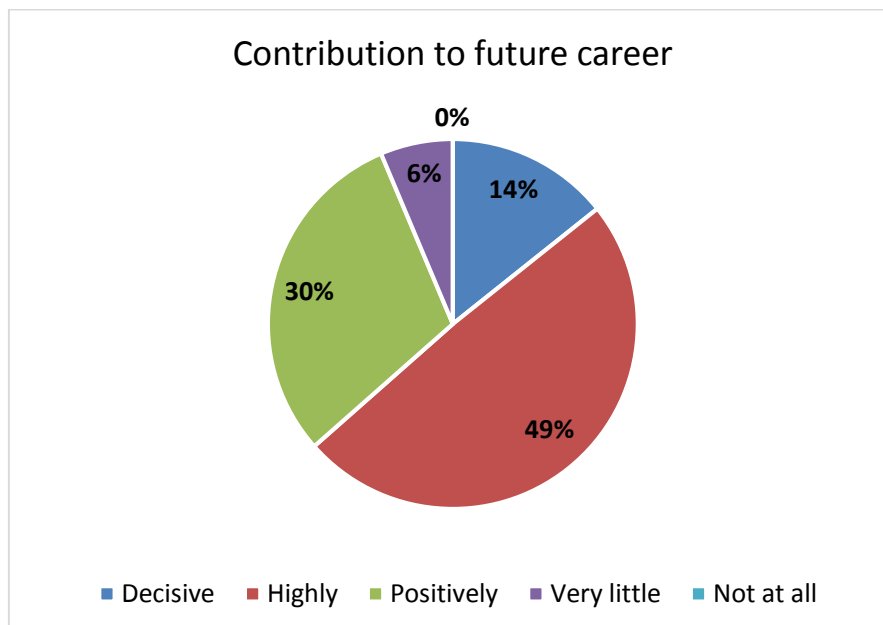
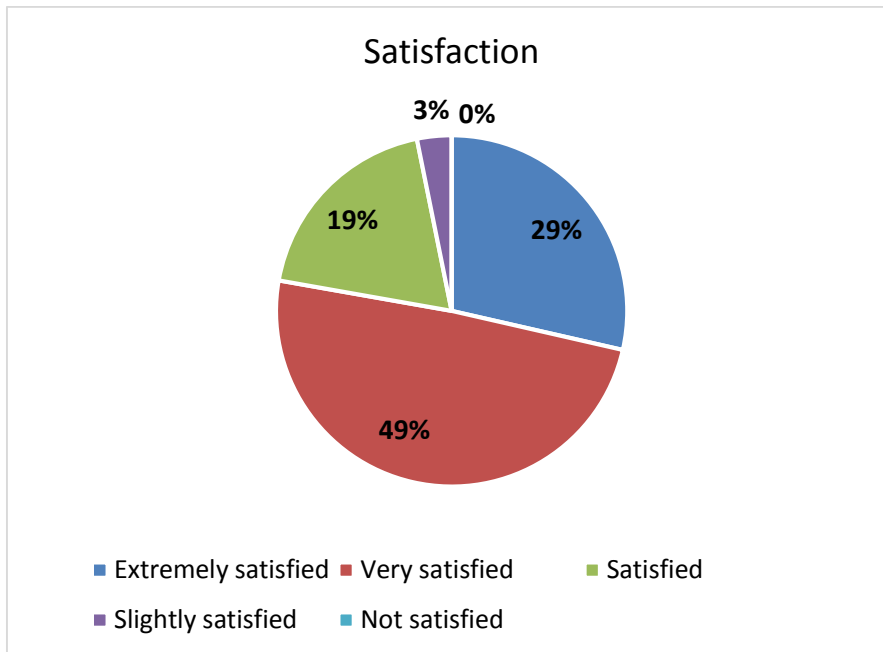
Nationality of Granted Fellows



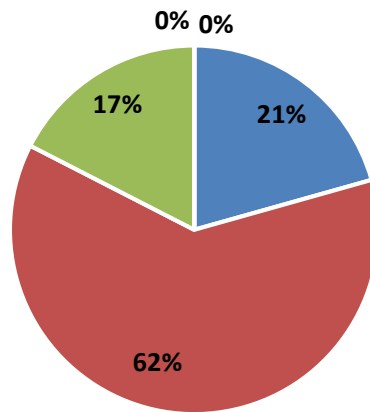
General Conclusion of the FWO Survey among PEGASUS fellows

(63 respondents out of 91 awardees – response rate 69%)

IMPACT

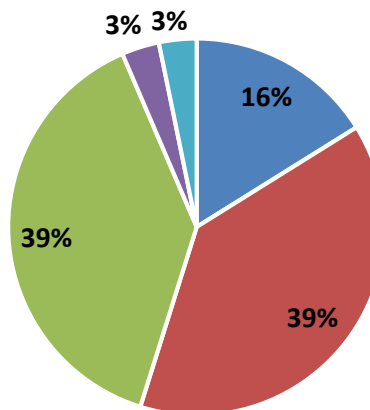


Impact on research capabilities/skills



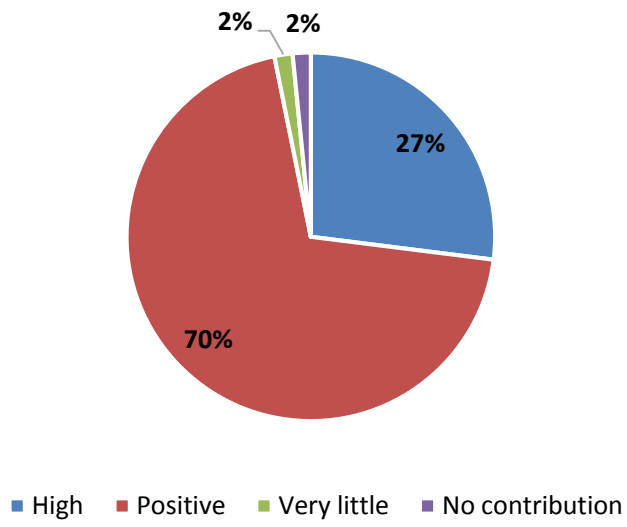
■ Very high ■ High ■ Positive ■ Very little ■ No impact

Impact on professional network



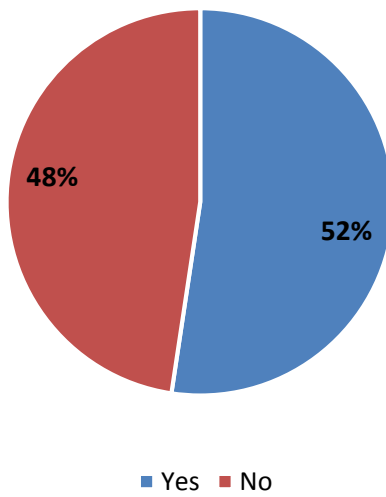
■ Very high ■ High ■ Positive ■ Very little ■ No impact

Contribution to Flemish host group

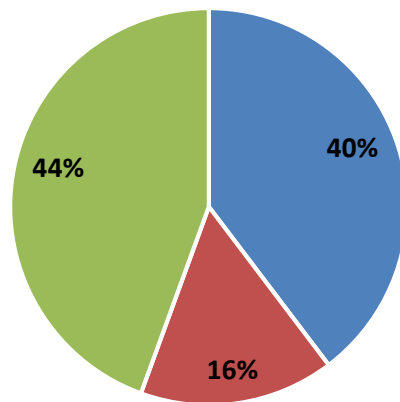


CAREER

Remained in Flanders after Pegasus

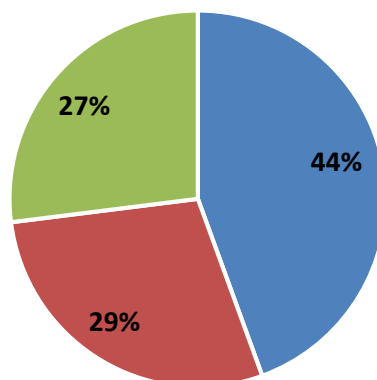


Applied for funding in Flanders during/after Pegasus

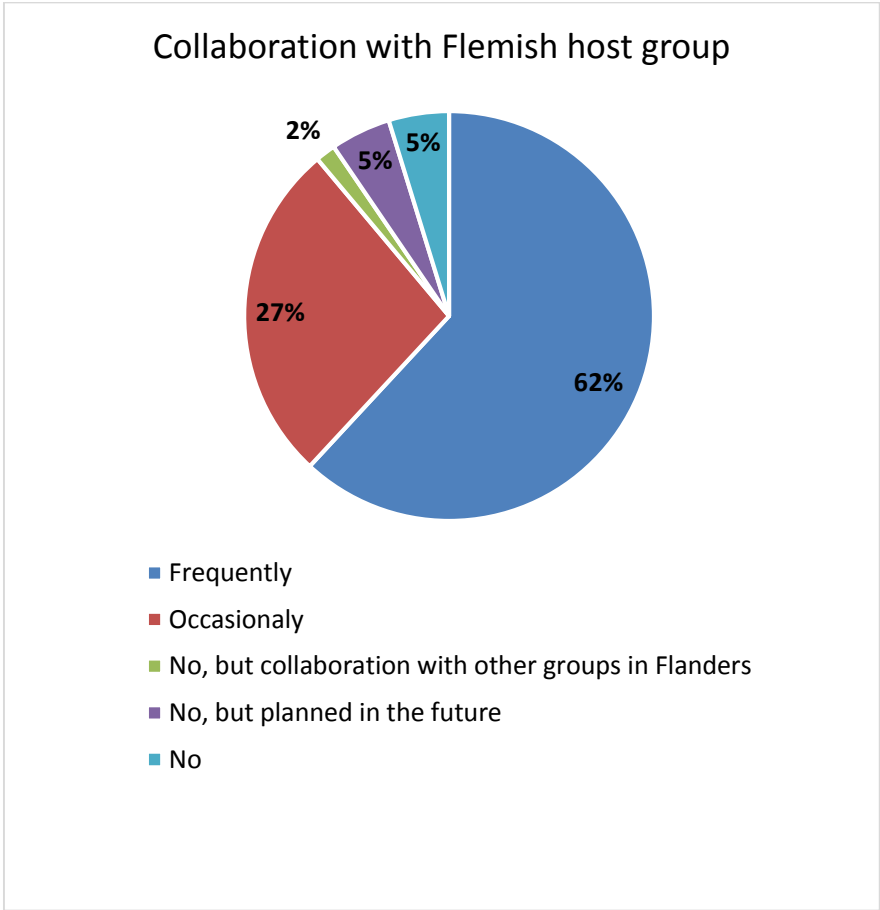
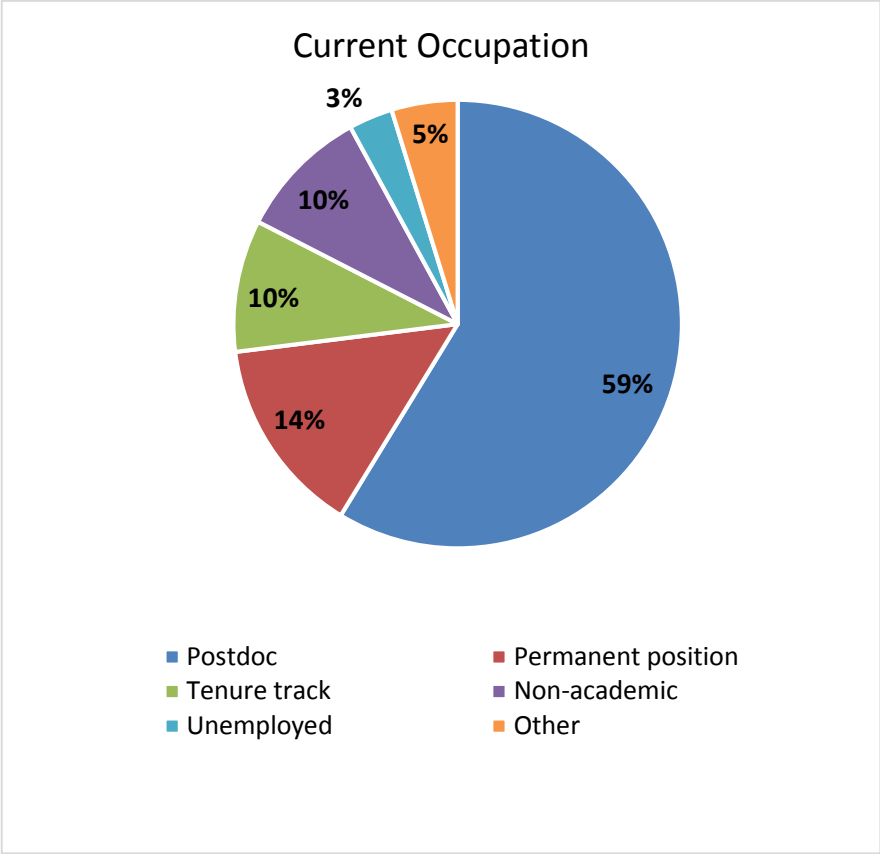


■ Yes, successfully ■ Yes, not successfully ■ No

Currently Professionally Active



■ In Flanders ■ In home country ■ Abroad (not home country)





External Evaluation Pegasus Marie Curie programme

Final report | July 25, 2014

Commissioned by

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1/ Introduction

1.1 Context of the evaluation

FWO supports fundamental scientific research, stimulates international cooperation and promotes equal opportunities. One of the FWO funding schemes is the Pegasus postdoctoral fellowship programme. The major aim of this programme is to attract young excellent postdoctoral researchers, who are active abroad, to Flanders in order to contribute to the advancement of Flemish research.

The Pegasus fellowship programme was established with the support of the Marie-Curie Cofund initiative under FP7. The current programme started in 2012 and will end in 2015. FWO will apply for an extension of the programme under the new European Framework Programme for Research and Development, Horizon 2020. In the context of this new application for co-funding, FWO wants to execute an external evaluation of the Pegasus fellowship programme.

1.2 Goals of the evaluation study

The aim of this study is to evaluate the Pegasus fellowship programme procedures and the achieved results. The emphasis will be on the following aspects:

- ▶ Evaluation of the Pegasus fellowship programme procedures managed by FWO (application, evaluation, feedback, contracting and reporting procedures);
- ▶ Evaluation of the impact of the programme on the researchers, their host institution and research in Flanders more in general.

1.3 Reader's guide

In Chapter 2 we provide some more context information on the Pegasus fellowship programme as background information for the remaining of the study.

In Chapter 3 we present the evaluation questions and the evaluation approach we applied.

Chapter 4 contains an analysis of the available data on applications, rejections, selections, ..., globally as well as more specifically for a number of profile characteristics.

The evaluation results on the Pegasus fellowship programme procedures are presented in Chapter 5, based on the results of an online survey as well as follow-up interviews.

In a similar way, chapter 6 presents the results of the evaluation of the impact of the programme.

Finally, in Chapter 7 we present the conclusions and propose a number of recommendations.



2/ The Pegasus-fellowship programme in short

This chapter provides a short overview of the Pegasus fellowship programme. We first provide some background information on the programme. Subsequently, we present the Pegasus programme procedures, i.e. the application, evaluation, feedback and reporting procedure.

2.1 Context of the Pegasus fellowship programme

The Pegasus research funding scheme from the Research Foundation Flanders (FWO) targets experienced researchers at postdoctoral level in all scientific areas. The Pegasus fellowship is open to all nationalities and focusses on incoming mobility or reintegration of Flemish researchers who currently work abroad. The research funding scheme was established with the support of the Marie-Curie Cofund initiative under FP7.

The **programme goals** of the Pegasus Marie Curie Fellowship are¹:

- ▶ To attract excellent postdoctoral researchers to Flanders in order to contribute to the advancement of Flemish science,
- ▶ To provide the selected fellows with optimal conditions to further develop their research career in Flanders,
- ▶ To raise the standards of the existing “Visiting Postdoctoral Fellowship Scheme” of FWO to the level of that of the regular postdocs, especially with respect to the recruitment and selection procedures,
- ▶ To serve as a pilot initiative in bringing FWO procedures and regulations in line with the European “Charter and Code, and to raise awareness about researchers’ rights and obligations in general.

The funding scheme has **two types** of fellowships²:

- ▶ Pegasus long: Postdoctoral fellowships of 3 years at a Flemish university. This fellowship is renewable once in open competition with the regular FWO postdoctoral fellowships.
- ▶ Pegasus short: Postdoctoral fellowships of 1 year at a Flemish university. This fellowship is not renewable, although candidates can apply afterwards in the open competition for a regular FWO postdoctoral fellowship. The Pegasus short is available under the form of an employment contract or a stipend (in exceptional cases).

The programme started in 2012 and will end in 2015. In total there were **six calls**. The outcome of the last two calls is still pending. The application and award cycle is indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Overview of the calls for Pegasus fellowships

Call	Call deadline	Nomination results	Start mandate ³	Category	Available fellowships ⁴
1.	01/02/2012	End June 2012	01/10/2012	Long and Short	30 long and 10 short
2.	01/05/2012	Mid November 2012	01/01/2013	Short	10 short
3.	01/02/2013	End June 2013	01/10/2013	Short	10 short
4.	01/05/2013	Mid November 2013	01/01/2014	Short	10 short
5.	01/02/2014	End June 2014	01/10/2014	Short	10 short
6.	01/05/2014	Mid November 2014	01/01/2015	Short	9 short

Source: Pegasus Guidelines for applicants

¹ Pegasus Guidelines for Applicants

² Pegasus Guidelines for Applicants

³ While initially the starting dates were fixed, FWO allowed later on some flexibility.

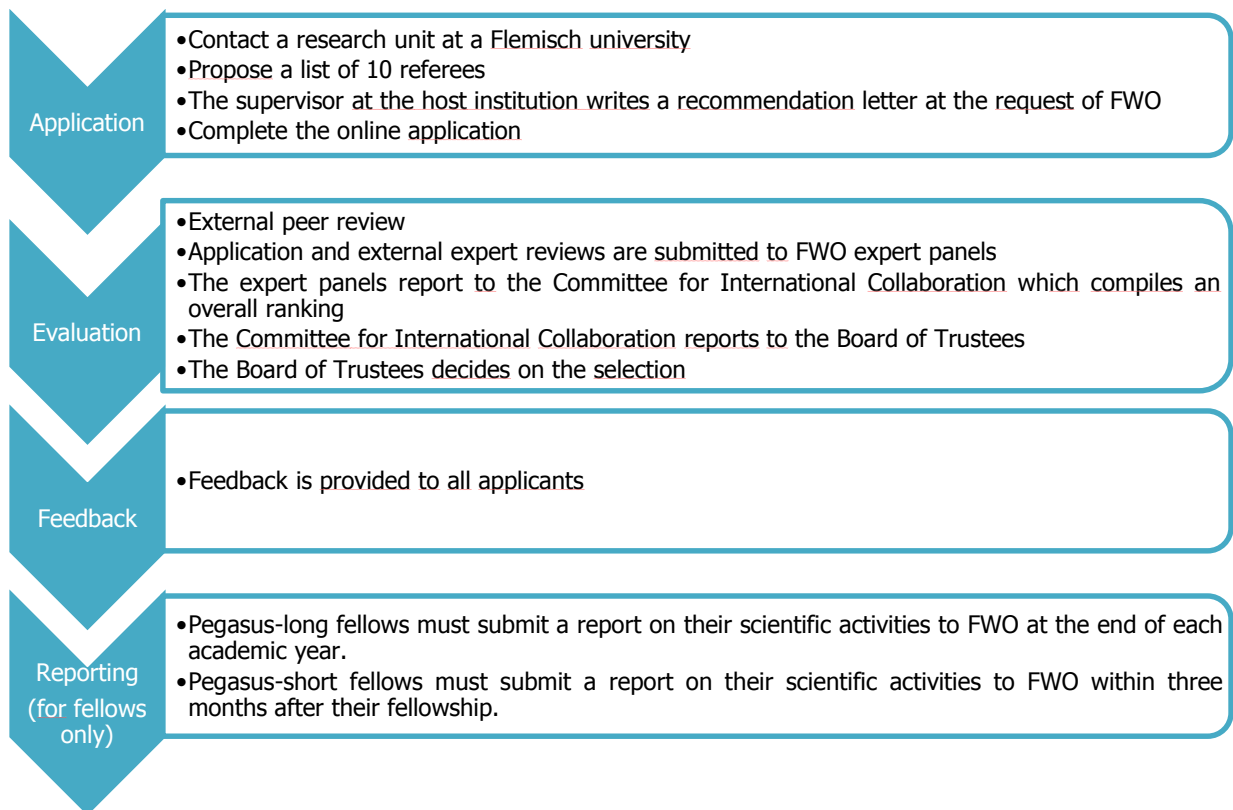
⁴ As originally foreseen.

The number of Pegasus fellowship contracts signed per call are different from the originally foreseen available fellowships.

Pegasus fellows receive a salary with full social security coverage, comprising health and accident insurance and the accumulation of pension rights. The salary of the fellow takes into account the seniority of the researcher. The salary scale ranges between € 29,069.73 and € 45,317.25 a year. A bench fee of € 4,000 per year is provided to every fellow which can cover the purchase of research equipment, research travels and other expenses related to the fellowship.

2.2 Pegasus programme procedures

Figure 1: Overview of the Pegasus programme procedures



Source: Regulations for Pegasus Marie Curie fellowships

2.2.1 Application procedure

There are **four eligibility criteria** which a Pegasus applicant has to meet and which relate to his/her PhD degree and seniority, the focus on incoming mobility and the need to have a host-institution.

- ▶ To be eligible for the fellowship, the researcher must hold a PhD at the start of the mandate. More specifically, the PhD must have been obtained by June 1 for those fellowships starting on October 1, or by November 1 for the short fellowships starting on January 1 of the next year. This means that candidates may apply prior to the actual defence of their PhD thesis.
- ▶ This PhD must be obtained no longer than six years (Pegasus long) or ten years (Pegasus short) ago. In both cases, the number of years is calculated at the planned starting date of the fellowship, and the time limit is extended by one year per pregnancy or parental leave, counted at the time of application. However, the rule does not apply to candidates who have not yet reached the age of 36 at the beginning of the fellowship. Candidates cannot apply for an (incoming) fellowship of which they have previously, even if only partially, been the beneficiary (such as a regular postdoctoral fellowship or a visiting postdoctoral fellowship).
- ▶ Pegasus aims at incoming mobility and/or reintegration. Therefore, candidates should not have carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in Belgium for more than 12 months in the 3 years immediately prior to the start of the fellowship.



- ▶ The applicant needs to identify a suitable host institution (and research unit) in Flanders. The research unit, where the researcher will be doing his research, must be a Flemish university (KUL, UGent, UA, VUB, UHasselt, KUBrussel⁵). In order to be eligible, applicants need the formal consent of the chosen host institution.

2.2.2 Selection procedure

There are **three selection criteria** for the fellows⁶:

- ▶ **Their own quality:** research capability and potential such as publications in peer reviewed journals as well as other elements of the candidate's CV and/or patents, teaching, advanced courses, etc., taking into account the level of experience; research skills and methodology; scientific independence (independent thinking, management experience and leadership qualities); scientific background of the candidate; mobility of the applicant (previous transnational and/or intersectoral mobility experience).
- ▶ **The scientific quality of their project:** originality and innovative nature (progress beyond the state of the art); feasibility; focus; relevance and coherence.
- ▶ **The context of employment:** quality of the research environment of the host group (researchers, infrastructure, etc.); quality of the supervision and training support of the host group; potential to acquire new scientific (disciplinary and interdisciplinary) and non-scientific skills ("soft skills", e.g. project management, IPR, grant writing, communication, ethics, etc.).

The evaluation procedure consists of **three main steps**. First there is the formal eligibility check followed by the external and internal peer review process.

1) Formal eligibility check

Before proceeding to the peer review stage, the application is subject to an administrative control which takes into account the eligibility criteria indicated in 2.2.1.

2) Peer Review stage I: external referees

The applicant has to provide a list of ten referees in the research field of their application. The regulations concerning eligibility of the proposed referees are strict; when the referees do not comply with the eligibility criteria, the application will be declared non-eligible.

FWO invites a number of referees from the list of 10 proposed referees. At least two of them need to deliver a written review on the application. The applicant is not informed about the selected referees nor about the content of their report. The referee report forms are submitted to FWO and attached to the application.

3) Peer Review stage II: FWO expert panel meeting

After the external refereeing process, the expert panel of FWO reviews the applications. FWO has 29 monodisciplinary expert panels and 1 interdisciplinary panel, which consists of 16 experts. The preliminary assessments by the external experts (peer review stage 1) are discussed by the expert panel of FWO and an overall score is attributed. The expert panel establishes a ranking of all Pegasus applications submitted to the panel.

The Committee for International Cooperation (CIS)⁷ decides on the global ranking of the applications across the fields of science. The composition of this committee does not overlap with the composition of the expert panels. Final funding decisions are made by the Board of Trustees, based on the advice provided by the committee.

The applicant is informed about the outcome of the evaluation within 32 weeks after the deadline for application.

2.2.3 Feedback procedure

All applicants receive a feedback letter with a summary of the external experts' review reports and the FWO expert panel evaluation. From the 5th call onwards, the feedback provided is more extensive including the external referee reports and the FWO panel report.

⁵ KUBrussel is now part of KULeuven.

⁶ Pegasus Guidelines for Applicants

⁷ Overall the evaluation procedure of the different FWO mandates are similar. There is one difference in the selection procedure with other FWO mandates though: the Pegasus fellowship has a uniform ranking of researchers whereas for other FWO mandates, a university ranking is considered.



2.2.4 Reporting procedure

Pegasus fellows have to submit a report on their scientific activities to FWO and the head of the host institution. For the Pegasus-long fellows this has to be done at the end of each academic year. For the Pegasus-short fellows, this has to be done within 3 months after their fellowship.

This report is evaluated by the FWO expert panel. FWO then further communicates the review to the fellow.

3/ Evaluation questions and approach

In this chapter, we first present the evaluation questions that guided the evaluation. Subsequently, we present the mix of methods that we used for the implementation of the evaluation.

3.1 Evaluation questions

Table 2 provides an overview of the evaluation questions.

Table 2: Overview of the evaluation criteria and questions

Dimensions and evaluation criteria	Evaluation questions
Processes: efficiency and effectiveness	<p>Is the Pegasus fellowship programme implemented efficiently and effectively?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Application procedure: use and clarity of information sources (including the Pegasus guidelines for applicants, clarity of application procedure, available support, administrative burden, user friendliness of online application procedure, requirement to propose experts, ... ▶ Evaluation procedure: perceived weight of evaluation criteria, objectivity and transparency of evaluation procedure, length of procedure, ... ▶ Feedback procedure: substantiation of rejection letter, agreement with reasons provided for rejection, length of procedure, ... ▶ Contracting procedure: clarity of conditions and obligations, flexibility of starting date, possibility to manage personnel file, available support, ... ▶ Reporting procedure: clarity of procedure and aim, administrative burden, usefulness of feedback, ...
Results and impacts: effectiveness	<p>Are the targeted researchers reached?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Are there sufficient applications? What are the reasons for non-eligible applications and the withdrawal of applications? ▶ Is there an overrepresentation of certain subgroups (like f.e. Flemish researchers returning to Flanders versus non-Flemish researchers coming to Flanders)? ▶ In case of, why do researchers not accept the fellowship when granted? <p>Are the results and impacts of the programme in line with expectations?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ What is the impact of the Pegasus fellowship on the researcher's career, research capabilities and skills and research network? ▶ What is the impact of the Pegasus fellowship programme on the host institution? ▶ What is the impact of the Pegasus fellowship programme on research in Flanders?
Results and impacts: sustainability	<p>Are the results and impacts sustainable (or do they stop with the end of the fellowship)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Do the researchers stay in Flanders after their fellowship? What are the reasons for staying in Flanders or leaving Flanders? ▶ When they stay in Flanders, do they apply for new funding? ▶ When they leave Flanders, do they continue to cooperate with their host institution?
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ What are the recommendations for (further) improvement of the Pegasus fellowship programme?



3.2 Methodological approach

We used a mix of different methods, both quantitatively and qualitatively, in order to provide an answer to the evaluations questions.

▶ Desk research

Our desk research initially focused on the different procedures (application and evaluation). Subsequently, we analysed the available data on the whole population of Pegasus applicants. These data provide an overview of, for example, the success rate (number of granted fellowship over total number of applications) for Pegasus long and short, the distribution across host institutions and science fields, the gender distribution etc.

▶ Online survey

The whole population of researchers that applied for a fellowship was invited to respond to an online survey, i.e. both successful and unsuccessful applicants as well as the group of applicants for which the outcome of their application is still pending. The survey questions were mainly closed questions, most of them presented as statements for which we asked the respondents to indicate the extent to which they agreed. But respondents were also invited to make remarks and suggestions. This qualitative information has been used to illustrate the quantitative analysis of the responses.

Content wise, the survey addressed the topics as listed in Table 3. In order to optimize the questionnaire, we conducted three exploratory interviews with Pegasus applicants. Table 3 also indicates the subpopulation(s) of respondents to which these questions were posed, because not every theme is relevant for all subpopulations. This also explains why the number of respondents is different for the different parts of the survey (see infra). The complete questionnaire is available upon request.

Table 3: Overview content of the survey

Theme	granted	rejected	pending
the information sources	X	X	X
the application procedure	X	X	X
the evaluation criteria	X	X	
the evaluation procedure	X	X	
the feedback procedure		X	
the contracting procedure	X		
the reporting procedure	X		
the impacts	X		
overall satisfaction	X		

The survey was launched on the 3rd of June 2014 and a reminder email was sent one week later. In total, we obtained a response rate of 45%, meaning that 295 of the 659 researchers who ever applied for a fellowship answered to the survey.

Table 4: Survey response rates (n=659)

Outcome of the Pegasus application	Population		Respondents		Response rate
	Number	Share	Number	Share	
My Pegasus fellowship application is still pending	161	24%	122	41%	76%
I have withdrawn my Pegasus fellowship application	36	5%	7	2%	19%
My Pegasus fellowship application was not eligible	21	3%	6	2%	29%
My Pegasus fellowship application was rejected	346	53%	104	35%	30%
The Pegasus fellowship was granted to me but I did not accepted it	25	4%	6	2%	29%
The Pegasus fellowship was granted to me and I accepted it	70	11%	50	17%	68%
Total number of applications	659	100%	295	100%	45%

Source: IDEA Consult

The overall response rate of 45% hides quite substantial differences in response rate between the subpopulations (see Table 4). Not surprisingly, the response rate of those applicants that were granted the fellowship and accepted it (68%), is much higher than the response rate of those applicants who were rejected (30%). But we note the highest response rate amongst those applicants whose application is still pending (76%).

In the analysis of the survey responses, we made the distinction between three subpopulations, whenever relevant: (1) those who were granted the fellowship (including those who finally did not accept it), (2) those who were rejected (including those whose application was not eligible) and (3) those whose application had not been evaluated yet at the moment of the survey⁸. A further distinction has been made between the applicants for a long versus a short Pegasus fellowship. Additional profile characteristics have been taken into account depending on the specific question, like the nationality of the applicant (Belgian or not), the host institution or the science field.

► In-depth interviews

The insights obtained from the desk research and the online survey were supplemented and enriched using information obtained from in-depth interviews. The interviewees were selected amongst those that at the end of the survey confirmed their availability to provide more information about their answers during a telephone interview (39 respondents in total). Based on different criteria (Pegasus long versus short, nationality, gender, ...), a selection of 10 interviewees was made, 7 who were granted a fellowship and 3 applicants who were rejected.

⁸ There is one subpopulations that is included in the "total"-figures, but not in the analysis by subpopulation, i.e. the applicants that have withdrawn their application before it was evaluated (7 respondents)



4/ Characteristics of Pegasus applicants

In this chapter, we present the profile characteristics of the Pegasus applicants; i.e. Pegasus-long and -short applications, call, host institution, field of science, gender and nationality of the applicant.

FWO received 707 Pegasus applications, of which 185 (26%) for a Pegasus-long and 522 (74%) for a Pegasus-short fellowship. 42 of the applicants filed an application twice and 3 applicants filed three times⁹. In total 659 researchers applied for a fellowship over the time period 2012-2014.

The overall success rate for a Pegasus fellowship is 15%.

27 Pegasus-long and 43 Pegasus-short fellowships were granted and accepted up to know. For the last two calls, which received 172 applications, the proposals are still under evaluation (Table 5). There was a small group of applicants, 25 in total, which were granted a fellowship but decided not to accept the fellowship.

The success rate for a Pegasus-long fellowship is 16% whereas for a Pegasus-short, this is 14%. From the 172 pending applications for a Pegasus-short fellowship, 23 fellowships still need to be granted. An overview on how the success rate is calculated is provided in Box 1.

Box 1: Calculation success rate

The success rate for a Pegasus fellowship is calculated as the number of granted applications versus the total number of evaluated applications.

Success rate = granted / (granted + rejected + granted but not accepted)

- The pending applications are not considered as these still need to be granted/rejected.
- The withdrawn and not eligible applications are not considered as these are never considered for evaluation (and are thus not in competition).
- The granted but not accepted applications are taken into account in the denominator. There are 25 applicants who received a fellowship but did not accept it. As the total amount of fellowships available is fixed, this means that 25 of the initial rejected applicants received the fellowship. The total number of evaluated applications therefore equals the sum of the granted, rejected and granted but not accepted applications.

To have an idea about the relative importance of the granted fellowships per indicator (i.e. type, call, field of science, gender, nationality), the share of the granted fellowships is calculated (see Box 2).

Box 2: Calculation share of granted fellowships

The share of granted fellowships is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Share}_i = \text{granted}_i / (\text{total number of granted fellowships})$$

For example, in Table 5, the share is calculated as 27 divided by 70 for Pegasus-long and 43 divided by 70 for Pegasus-short. This means that 39% of the granted fellowships are Pegasus-long fellowships and 61% of the granted fellowships are Pegasus-short fellowships.

⁹ The applicant for a short postdoctoral fellowship whose proposal is not accepted for funding is allowed to resubmit once more in a later call. An application for a Pegasus-long fellowship is considered as equivalent to one for the regular FWO postdoctoral fellowship programme, for which a limit of 1 resubmission also holds (see Pegasus guidelines for applicants).

Table 5: Outcome of the Pegasus applications - by type (n=707)

Outcome of Pegasus application	Pegasus - Long	Pegasus - Short	Total
Total applications	185 (100%)	522 (100%)	707 (100%)
Pending		172 (33%)	172 (24%)
Withdrawn	12 (6%)	26 (5%)	38 (5%)
Not eligible	5 (3%)	17 (3%)	22 (3%)
Rejected	132 (71%)	248 (48%)	380 (54%)
Granted but not accepted	9 (5%)	16 (3%)	25 (4%)
Granted	27 (15%)	43 (8%)	70 (10%)
Success rate	16%	14%	15%
Total share	39%	61%	100%

Source: IDEA Consult, based on FWO database

For the 1st call, most of the applicants (85%) decided to apply for a Pegasus-long fellowship.

When looking at the 6 different calls for a Pegasus-short application, we observe that each 2nd call of the year is more successful in terms of number of applications received for the Pegasus-short fellowship. This also results in a lower success rate for each 2nd call of the year. For the first call, the number of applications for a Pegasus-short is low compared to the number of applications for a Pegasus-long fellowship.

Table 6: Outcome of Pegasus applications - by call (n=707)

	Call 1 1/02/2012	Call 2 1/05/2012	Call 3 1/02/2013	Call 4 1/05/2013	Call 5 1/02/2013	Call 6 1/05/2014	Total
Pegasus - Long	185 (100%)						185 (100%)
Withdrawn	12						12
Not eligible	5						5
Rejected	132						132
Granted but not accepted	9						9
Granted	27						27
Success rate	16%						16%
Pegasus - Short	32 (6%)	116 (22%)	84 (16%)	118 (23%)	56 (11%)	116 (22%)	522 (100%)
Pending					56	116	172
Withdrawn		9	7	10			26
Not eligible	3	2	6	6			17
Rejected	17	92	51	88			248
Granted but not accepted	4	5	4	3			16
Granted	8	8	16	11			43
Success rate	28%	8%	23%	11%			14%
Total	217 (31%)	116 (16%)	84 (12%)	118 (17%)	56 (8%)	116 (16%)	707
Total Success rate	18%	8%	23%	11%			15%
Total Share	50%	11%	23%	16%			100%

Source: IDEA Consult, based on FWO database

KU Leuven is in 47% of the Pegasus applications the host institution of the applicants.

KU Leuven is in 47% of the applications indicated as host institution. The University of Gent, which is comparable in terms of size to KU Leuven, accounts for 20% of the applications. For a Pegasus-long fellowship, the success rate amongst the institutions is similar (17-19%) with only the Free University Brussels having a lower success rate of 9%. Overall, the success rate of a Pegasus-short application from KU Leuven (17%) and University of Gent (15%) is higher than for the other host institutions (10-13%).

Table 7: Outcome of Pegasus applications - by host institution (n=707)

	KU Leuven	University Antwerp	University Gent	University Hasselt	Free University Brussel	Total
Pegasus - Long	79 (43%)	31 (17%)	34 (18%)	6 (3%)	35 (19%)	185 (100%)
Withdrawn	7	4			1	12
Not eligible	3		1		1	5
Rejected	54	21	26	4	27	132
Granted but not accepted	3	1	1	1	3	9
Granted	12	5	6	1	3	27
Success rate	17%	19%	18%	17%	9%	16%
Pegasus - Short	250 (48%)	108 (21%)	111 (21%)	14 (3%)	39 (7%)	522 (100%)
Pending	89	33	36	4	10	172
Withdrawn	16	5	3		2	26
Not eligible	9	3	3	1	1	17
Rejected	106	55	58	8	21	248
Granted but not accepted	8	5	1		2	16
Granted	22	7	10	1	3	43
Success rate	16%	10%	14%	11%	12%	14%
Total	329 (47%)	139 (20%)	145 (21%)	20 (3%)	74 (10%)	707 (100%)
Total success rate	17%	13%	16%	13%	10%	15%
Total share	49%	17%	23%	3%	9%	100%

Source: IDEA Consult, based on FWO database

Most Pegasus applications are submitted in the field of Science and Technology while Interdisciplinary and Medical Science applications are rare.

Both for Pegasus-long and -short, the applications were most frequently submitted in the Science and Technology field, i.e. 32%. This may be linked to the strong position and international visibility of a number of Flemish research groups in this field. Interdisciplinary and Medical sciences applications were least common (i.e. 4% and 7%), which is surprising for the Medical sciences in particular. No Pegasus-long fellowships were granted for interdisciplinary research. Applications in Science and Technology also have the highest success rate (24%) followed by Medical Sciences (17%) and Biological Sciences (14%), which may be explained by the fact that there are a large number of FWO-expert panels for these fields and the fact that the best ranked applicants in each panel are typically always selected.

Table 8: Outcome of Pegasus applications - by field of science (n=707)

	Biological sciences	Humanities	Social sciences	Inter-disciplinary	Medical sciences	Science and Technology	Total
Pegasus - Long	41 (22%)	37 (20%)	28 (15%)	9 (5%)	11 (6%)	59 (32%)	185 (100%)
Withdrawn	1	4	1	2		4	12
Not eligible	2	1			1	1	5
Rejected	33	27	21	6	6	39	132
Granted but not accepted	1	1	3	1	1	2	9
Granted	4	4	3		3	13	27
Success rate	11%	13%	11%	0%	30%	24%	16%
Pegasus - Short	110 (21%)	103 (20%)	80 (15%)	22 (4%)	39 (7%)	168 (32%)	522 (100%)
Pending	39	33	25	7	9	59	172
Withdrawn	6	5	3		2	10	26
Not eligible	3	3	3		2	6	17
Rejected	51	56	45	11	22	63	248
Granted but not accepted	1	4		3	1	7	16
Granted	10	2	4	1	3	23	43
Success rate	16%	3%	8%	7%	12%	25%	14%
Total	151 (21%)	140 (20%)	108 (15%)	31 (4%)	50 (7%)	227 (32%)	707 (100%)
Total success rate	14%	6%	9%	5%	17%	24%	15%
Total share	20%	9%	10%	1%	9%	51%	100%

Source: IDEA Consult, based on FWO database

60% of Pegasus applicants are male and their share in the successful applications is 70%.

As regards gender, Table 9 shows that 60% of the applicants are males. The success rate for males is also higher compared to the success rate for females (17% versus 11%). When comparing the success rates over the different calls, Table 10 shows that in call three, the difference in success rate between males and females is large (31% versus 10%).

Table 9: Outcome of Pegasus applications - by gender (n=707)

	Male	Female	Total
Pegasus - Long	122 (66%)	63 (34%)	185 (100%)
Withdrawn	8	4	12
Not eligible	5		5
Rejected	82	50	132
Granted but not accepted	7	2	9
Granted	20	7	27
Success rate	18%	12%	16%
Pegasus - Short	303 (58%)	219 (42%)	522 (100%)
Pending	100	72	172
Withdrawn	13	13	26
Not eligible	10	7	17
Rejected	141	107	248
Granted but not accepted	10	6	16
Granted	29	14	43
Success rate	16%	11%	14%
Total	425 (60%)	282 (40%)	707 (100%)
Total success rate	17%	11%	15%
Total share	70%	30%	100%

Source: IDEA Consult, based on FWO database

Table 10: Outcome of Pegasus applications - by gender and call (n=707)

	Call 1 1/02/2012	Call 2 1/05/2012	Call 3 1/02/2013	Call 4 1/05/2013	Call 5 1/02/2013	Call 6 1/05/2014	Total
Male	139 (33%)	65 (15%)	48 (11%)	73 (17%)	35 (8%)	65 (15%)	425 (100%)
Pending					35	65	100
Withdrawn	8	5	3	5			21
Not eligible	7	2	3	3			15
Rejected	90	50	27	56			223
Granted but not accepted	9	3	2	3			17
Granted	25	5	13	6			49
Success rate	20%	9%	31%	9%			17%
Female	78 (28%)	51 (18%)	36 (13%)	45 (16%)	21 (7%)	51 (18%)	282 (100%)
Pending					21	51	72
Withdrawn	4	4	4	5			17
Not eligible	1		3	3			7
Rejected	59	42	24	32			157
Granted but not accepted	4	2	2				8
Granted	10	3	3	5			21
Success rate	14%	6%	10%	14%			11%
Total	217 (31%)	116 (16%)	84 (12%)	118 (17%)	56 (8%)	116 (16%)	707 (100%)
Total success rate	18%	8%	23%	11%			15%
Total share	50%	11%	23%	16%			100%

Source: IDEA Consult, based on FWO database

8% of the Pegasus applications concerns return mobility.

The Pegasus programme is open to all nationalities. 57 applicants (8%) have the Belgian nationality indicating that they are interested to return to Flanders. For the Pegasus-long fellowship, the share of Belgian applicants was relatively larger (13%) than for the short fellowship application (6%). Overall, the success rate for Belgian applicants is the same as for foreign applicants (15%).

When distinguishing between the different nationalities, we observe that Italian (12%) and Spanish nationals (11%) apply most frequently. Also in the neighbouring countries, the Pegasus-fellowship is known; French, Dutch, and German applications each account for 6% of the total applications. 7% of the applications originate from Indian applicants and 5% from Chinese applicants. US citizens represent 4% of the applications. This indicates that the Pegasus-fellowship is also known outside the EU.

Table 11: Outcome of Pegasus applications - by nationality (n=707)

	BE	Non-BE	Total
Pegasus - Long	24 (13%)	161 (87%)	185 (100%)
Withdrawn	1	11	12
Not eligible	1	4	5
Rejected	14	118	132
Granted but not accepted	4	5	9
Granted	4	23	27
Success rate	18%	16%	16%
Pegasus - Short	33 (6%)	489 (94%)	522 (100%)
Pending	12	160	172
Withdrawn	3	23	26
Not eligible		17	17
Rejected	16	232	248
Granted but not accepted		16	16
Granted	2	41	43
Success rate	11%	14%	14%
Total	57 (8%)	650 (92%)	707 (100%)
Total success rate	15%	15%	15%
Total share	9%	91%	100%

Source: IDEA Consult, based on FWO database

5/ Evaluation of the Pegasus programme procedures

A substantial part of the survey focused on the evaluation of the Pegasus programme procedures. During the follow-up interviews, these procedures were touched upon in more depth. In what follows, we distinguish between the application, evaluation, feedback, contracting and reporting procedures. Not all of these procedures are relevant for all types of respondents (see Table 3), which is the reason why the number of respondents is substantially different across these procedures. When relevant, we make a distinction by outcome (granted, rejected or pending), by type of fellowship (Pegasus-long versus Pegasus-short), by nationality of the applicant (Belgian- or non-Belgian) and by field of science.

5.1 Information sources about the Pegasus fellowship programme

Respondents are most frequently informed about the Pegasus fellowship by a personal contact at their (future) host institution. For Belgian applicants, the FWO website is the most important information source.

*Table 12: Information source about the Pegasus fellowship programme - by outcome (n=292)**

	Total (n=292)	Granted (n=56)	Rejected (n=107)	Pending (n=122)
A personal contact at my host institution	41,8%	44,6%	38,3%	43,4%
FWO website	23,1%	25%	25,2%	19,7%
Other	13,9%	8,9%	15,9%	13,1%
A personal contact at the institution where I was working when I applied for the fellowship	12,9%	16,1%	12,1%	12,3%
Universities and their media	8,8%	5,4%	8,4%	11,5%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

* Through which source did you initially find out about the Pegasus fellowship initiative?

Overall, 42% of the respondents were informed about the Pegasus fellowship initiative by a personal contact at their host institution. Granted respondents are more frequently informed about the fellowship by a contact at the host (45%) as well as at the home (16%) institution, compared to respondents whose application was rejected (Table 12). This could be an indication of the fact that these personal contacts may help to write a stronger application with a higher chance of obtaining the fellowship, which was confirmed in the follow-up interviews with selected applicants.

*Table 13: Information source about the Pegasus fellowship programme - by type (n=292)**

	Total (n=292)	Pegasus (long) (n=52)	Pegasus (short) (n=240)
A personal contact at my host institution	41,8%	42,3%	41,7%
FWO website	23,1%	26,9%	22,5%
Others	13,9%	13,5%	12,9%
A personal contact at the institution where I was working when I applied for the fellowship	12,9%	9,6%	13,8%
Universities and their media	8,8%	7,7%	9,2%
Total	100%	100%	100%

The differences between the Pegasus-long and Pegasus-short respondents are rather small (see Table 13). Pegasus-long respondents found out about the fellowship more often via the FWO website and less often via a personal contact at the institution where he/she was working when applying.

*Table 14: Information source about the Pegasus fellowship programme - by nationality (n=292)**

	Total (n=292)	BE (n=22)	non-BE (n=270)
A personal contact at my host institution	41,8%	31,8%	42,6%
FWO website	23,1%	59,1%	20,4%
Others	13,9%	4,5%	13,7%
A personal contact at the institution where I was working when I applied for the fellowship	12,9%	0%	14,1%
Universities and their media	8,8%	4,5%	9,3%
Total	100%	100%	100%

* *Through which source did you initially find out about the Pegasus fellowship initiative?*

For respondents with a Belgian nationality, the FWO website was most frequently the initial information source (59%) (see Table 14), whereas for non-Belgian respondents, a personal contact at the host institution was the main information source (43%).

5.2 Application procedure

The questions on the application procedure were addressed to all applicants since they all have experience with this procedure. 49 of them also provided additional comments when asked to do so in an open question.

The Pegasus guidelines are read by 98% of the respondents.

*Table 15: Reading of the Pegasus guidelines for applicants - by outcome (n=279)**

	Total (n=279)	Granted (n=53)	Rejected (n=98)	Pending (n=121)
Yes, and the Pegasus guidelines for applicants provided all the necessary information	83,5%	84,9%	80,6%	86%
Yes, but the Pegasus guidelines for applicants did not provide all the necessary information	15,1%	13,2%	18,4%	13,2%
No, but I am aware that this Pegasus guidelines for applicants is available	1,1%	1,9%	1%	0%
No, and I am not aware that this Pegasus guidelines for applicants is available	0,4%	0%	0%	0,8%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

* *Did you read the Pegasus guidelines for applicants?*

Overall, 83,5% of the respondents has read the Pegasus guidelines for application and indicate that these guidelines provide all the necessary information (see Table 15). An additional 15% of the respondents has read the guidelines but perceives that not all the necessary information is provided.

The respondents who were rejected read the guidelines as much as the respondents who were selected do, but they more frequently indicated that these guidelines did not provide all the necessary information. Only a small share of the respondents did not read the guidelines.

More Pegasus-short respondents indicate that the guidelines provide all the necessary information compared to the Pegasus-short respondents (85% compared to 78%).

Non-Belgian respondents more frequently indicated that they have read the guidelines and that these guidelines provided all the necessary information compared to the Belgian respondents who are more critical (85% compared to 69%).

The respondents are (very) satisfied with the application procedure except about the requirement to propose a list of 10 experts and the user friendliness of the online application.

*Table 16: Evaluation of the application procedure - by outcome (n=279)**

	Total (n=279)	Granted (n=53)	Rejected (n=98)	Pending (n=121)
When I asked them, the host institution offered sufficient help for the preparation of the application.	1,3	1,3	1,1	1,5
When I asked them, the FWO administration offered sufficient help for the administrative preparation of the application.	1,1	1,1	1,0	1,3
The available information on the application procedure is clear.	1,1	1,3	0,9	1,1
The available information on the funding possibilities is clear.	1,0	1,2	0,8	1,1
The time needed for the preparation of the content of the application is acceptable.	1,0	1,2	0,8	1,0
The time needed for the administrative preparation of the application is acceptable.	0,9	1,0	0,8	0,9
The online application procedure is user friendly.	0,7	0,8	0,5	0,9
The requirement to propose a list of 10 experts for the peer review is reasonable.	-0,2	0,0	-0,6	-0,1

** To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning the application procedure for the Pegasus Fellowship? (average score with strongly disagree = -2, disagree = -1, neither agree nor disagree = 0; agree = +1 and strongly agree = +2)*

Overall, we can first of all conclude that the respondents whose application was rejected are more critical for each of the statements compared to the respondents whose application was granted, which is in line with what we expected intuitively (see Table 16).

On the help provided by the host institution and FWO, most of the respondents (strongly) agreed. A substantial share of the respondents (15% and 34% respectively) ticked the “no opinion/not relevant”-option as they presumably did not ask for help.

The respondents also (strongly) agreed with the next four statements on the clarity of the available information about the application procedure and the funding possibilities, and on the acceptability of the time needed for the preparation of their application, content-wise and administratively. The difference between the successful applicants and the rejected ones is bigger for these statements though. With respect to the required time to prepare an application, some respondents to the survey as well some interviewees mentioned that for a Pegasus-short application, the required efforts are substantial taking into account the length of the fellowship of only one year.

Overall, 14% of the respondents disagreed (strongly) with the statement that the online application procedure is user friendly. In the open question as well as during the interviews, issues were raised with respect to the mismatch between the maximum number of words in the guidelines versus the online application tool, the compatibility between formats resulting in the loss of formatting and difficulties to implement corrections.

“The actual format; filling up a form is not good. It would be better uploading documents”

“An option for uploading word files would be preferable to copy-pasting into text fields”

“It took an awful lot of time to enter all my publications in the system. An attached CV would have been much easier”

A large share of the respondents (overall 48%, but 59% amongst the rejected applicants) (strongly) disagreed with the reasonability of the requirement to propose 10 experts. Amongst the 49 respondents that provided additional comments, 16 of them focused on this requirement. The combination of conditions that need to be fulfilled are said to make it very difficult for in particular young researchers to come up with 10 names. But also for more experienced researchers, the requirement can be tough since they may need to look for candidates outside their field who will be less familiar with the research topic. The fact that proposing an expert who does not fulfil the stringent requirements may make an application not-eligible, explains why applicants’ comments focus on this requirement.

“The list of 10 experts was difficult to compile due to the membership in large collaboration, and, in my opinion, did not provide independent and unbiased assessment”

“A list of 5 experts would have been sufficient”

“With the current strong collaboration networks that is typical in my field of science, I always face difficulties listing 10 referees that I have not already collaborated with before”

"I think the requirements for the ten peer reviewers are a bit limited if one is already somewhat experienced, since this entails having worked or published together with many of the experts in one's field. A consequence may then be that one has to ask people outside of the field, or perhaps people that are not in agreement with/sympathetic to one's views"

"A list of 10 experts for peer review is rather large. Perhaps 6-8 experts would be more reasonable"

Table 17: Evaluation of the application procedure - by type (n=279)*

	Total (n=279)	Pegasus - Long (n=51)	Pegasus - Short (n=228)
When I asked them, the host institution offered sufficient help for the preparation of the application.	1,3	1,2	1,4
When I asked them, the FWO administration offered sufficient help for the administrative preparation of the application.	1,1	0,9	1,2
The available information on the application procedure is clear.	1,1	1,0	1,1
The available information on the funding possibilities is clear.	1,0	0,9	1,0
The time needed for the preparation of the content of the application is acceptable.	1,0	0,9	1,0
The time needed for the administrative preparation of the application is acceptable.	0,9	0,9	0,9
The online application procedure is user friendly.	0,7	0,7	0,7
The requirement to propose a list of 10 experts for the peer review is reasonable.	-0,2	-0,3	-0,2

* To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning the application procedure for the Pegasus Fellowship? (average score with strongly disagree = -2, disagree = -1, neither agree nor disagree = 0; agree = +1 and strongly agree = +2)

Overall, Pegasus-long respondents seem to be a little bit more critical about the application procedure than Pegasus-short respondents (see Table 17). This could be related to timing though. There was only one call for a Pegasus-long fellowship at the very beginning of the programme, while there were 6 calls for a Pegasus-short fellowship. When we check the Pegasus-short respondents' satisfaction with the help offered by FWO for the administrative preparation of the application, we observe that this satisfaction is higher for the last calls than for the first two calls. This might indicate a learning process from FWO side in providing assistance to applicants.

Most of the respondents that withdrew their application did so because they had other job opportunities.

Seven respondents withdrew their application and provided an explanation for that decision. 4 of them did so because they were offered better job opportunities e.g. assistant professorship or other fellowships. Two respondents indicated that they submitted two applications (for a regular FWO postdoc and a FWO Pegasus-fellowship). After realising that this double application is not allowed, they withdrew their Pegasus application because the success rate of a regular FWO postdoc application is perceived to be higher. One respondent also realised that at the start of the fellowship he/she would have been living in Belgium for too long which would render his application not-eligible.

Other job offers are the main reason why granted fellowships are sometimes not accepted.

Five respondents were granted a fellowship but decided not to accept it. They either received other job offers in Belgium or abroad or they indicated that it was not possible to accumulate funding.

Finally, there are 2 more specific issues raised by some of the respondents in the comment field:

- The procedures are not always clear (6 respondents), in particular with respect to the mobility requirements;
- All instructions should be available in English.

5.3 Evaluation procedure

The survey questions regarding the evaluation procedures were posed to the successful and the rejected applicants. Not to the applicants who do not know the outcome of their application yet, because they cannot evaluate in a meaningful way the evaluation procedure.

The respondents consider the quality as a researcher and the scientific quality of the proposed project as the most important evaluation criteria.

*Table 18: Evaluation of the evaluation criteria - by outcome (n=144)**

	Total (n=144)	Granted (n=53)	Rejected (n=91)
My own quality as a researcher ¹⁰	4,2	4,6	4,2
The scientific quality of my proposed project ¹¹	4,2	4,4	4,0
The context of the employment at the host institution ¹²	3,6	3,8	3,6

** How do you evaluate the importance of the following criteria for the evaluation of your application for a Pegasus Fellowship by FWO ? (average score with not very important = 1, somewhat important = 2, moderately important = 3, important = 4 and extremely important = 5)*

FWO puts forward three main evaluation criteria. According to the respondents, these criteria are indeed (very) important, with a lower level of importance attached to the criteria by the rejected applicants compared to the accepted applicants (see Table 18). But the ordering is the same between the rejected and accepted applicants, with the quality of the researcher considered to be the most important criterion. The context of the employment at the host institution is most frequently evaluated as being only moderately important, with also a smaller difference in the score between successful and rejected applicants.

*Table 19: Evaluation of the evaluation criteria - by type (n=144)**

	Total (n=144)	Pegasus Long (n=46)	Pegasus Short (n=98)
My own quality as a researcher	4,2	4,1	4,2
The scientific quality of my proposed project	4,2	4,1	4,8
The context of the employment at the host institution	3,6	3,3	3,8

** How do you evaluate the importance of the following criteria for the evaluation of your application for a Pegasus Fellowship by FWO ? (average score with not very important = 1, somewhat important = 2, moderately important = 3, important = 4 and extremely important = 5)*

When making the distinction by type of fellowship, we notice in particular that Pegasus-short fellows assess the scientific quality of their proposed project as the most important criterion (see Table 19). They also consider the context of the employment at the host institution as relatively more important.

¹⁰ Research capability and potential; publications in peer reviewed journals as well as other elements of my CV; patents, teaching, advanced courses; research skills and methodology; scientific background; mobility

¹¹ Originality and innovative nature; feasibility; focus; relevance; coherence

¹² Quality of the research environment and of the supervision and training support; potential to acquire new scientific and non-scientific skills

Respondents are rather positive about the evaluation procedure, though more critical compared to the application procedure, with in particular 36% of them who consider the evaluation procedure at FWO not transparent.

*Table 20: Evaluation of the evaluation procedure - by outcome (n=144)*¹³*

	Total (n=144)	Granted (n=53)	Rejected (n=91)
The evaluation procedure at FWO is objective.	0,4	1,0	0,1
The time between submitting an application and the announcement of the decision by FWO is acceptable.	0,4	0,8	0,2
The evaluation procedure should include an oral defence.	0,0	-0,3	0,2
The evaluation procedure at FWO is transparent.	-0,1	0,0	-0,1

** To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning the evaluation procedure for the Pegasus Fellowship? (average score with strongly disagree = -2, disagree = -1, neither agree nor disagree = 0; strongly agree = +2)*

Overall, respondents agree to a lesser extent with the statements on the evaluation procedure compared to the previous statements on the application procedure¹⁴.

16% of the respondents (strongly) disagree on the objectivity of the evaluation procedure, in particular amongst the rejected applicants. 17% of the respondents also indicated to have "no opinion" on this statement. From the follow-up interviews, we learned that at least some of the respondents ticked this "no opinion"-option because they have too little information available to evaluate this statement.

The disagreement is indeed strongest for the statement that the evaluation procedure at FWO is transparent, with little difference in opinion between successful and rejected applicants. 36% of the respondents (strongly) disagreed on this statement and another 33% neither agreed nor disagreed. 10% of the respondents also indicated to have "no opinion" on this statement.

"How the fellowships were evaluated were extremely NOT transparent. There was only 1 page of the 12-page "guidelines for applicants" document that addressed this, and nowhere was mentioned how the application was scored. I had no idea whether the importance was place on my CV, the project, or the host institution that I picked. ... I therefore also have no idea how "objective" the evaluation procedure is!"

On average, respondents are neutral on the inclusion of an oral defence in the evaluation procedure. But taking into account the outcome of the application, the successful applicants tend to disagree on this statement while the rejected applicants would be in favour of an oral defence, probably because they think they would have made a better chance if they would have been able to orally defend their proposal.

*Table 21: Evaluation of the evaluation procedure - by type (n=144)**

	Total (n=144)	Pegasus - Long (n=46)	Pegasus - Short (n=98)
The evaluation procedure at FWO is objective.	0,4	0,0	0,6
The time between submitting an application and the announcement of the decision by FWO is acceptable.	0,4	0,7	0,2
The evaluation procedure should include an oral defence.	0,0	0,4	-0,1
The evaluation procedure at FWO is transparent.	-0,1	-0,6	0,2

** To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning the evaluation procedure for the Pegasus Fellowship? (average score with strongly disagree = -2, disagree = -1, neither agree nor disagree = 0; agree = +1 and strongly agree = +2)*

¹³ Due to a programming error, the response option "Agree" was not included in the survey. One should therefore interpret the response options "Neither agree nor disagree" and "Strongly agree" with care as these categories might also contain some respondents who "Agree" but were unable to use this response option.

¹⁴ Which can partially be explained by the programming error in the survey – see previous footnote.

Table 22: Evaluation of the evaluation procedure - by nationality (n=144)*

	Total (n=144)	BE (n=14)	Non-BE (n=130)
The evaluation procedure at FWO is objective.	0,4	-0,1	0,5
The time between submitting an application and the announcement of the decision by FWO is acceptable.	0,4	0,7	0,4
The evaluation procedure should include an oral defence.	0,0	0,8	-0,1
The evaluation procedure at FWO is transparent.	-0,1	-0,8	0,0

* To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning the evaluation procedure for the Pegasus Fellowship (average score with strongly disagree = -2, disagree = -1, neither agree nor disagree = 0; agree = +1 and strongly agree = +2)

Pegasus-long respondents as well as Belgian respondents more often disagree on the objectivity and transparency of the evaluation procedure than Pegasus-short respondents and non-Belgians respectively (see Table 21 and Table 22). When it comes to the time between submitting the application and the announcement of the decision, Pegasus-long respondents as well as Belgian respondents more often agree on this. From the open questions and the follow-up interviews, it became clear indeed that in particular for Pegasus-short and for non-Belgian applicants the time between submitting an application and the announcement of the decision by FWO is too long.

"For a job of one year, having to wait for more than six months for the results is quite long."

"The evaluation was clear, transparent and objective, but it took quite a long time to get it"

"The end of June is a bit late to hear back. (1) it was difficult to arrange visas, housing etc. in time to start at the beginning of October and (2) leaving my previous position on such short notice did cause some bad blood there."

5.4 Feedback procedure

Questions about the feedback procedure were only posed to the rejected applicants because the questions asked were only relevant for this subpopulation (even if also the accepted applicants receive a feedback letter). We should note however that although a feedback letter is provided to all rejected applicants, 22% of the respondents indicated that they did not receive one or do not remember receiving one. This may be due to the fact that many of them apply for several positions in parallel. The share of respondents which indicate that they did not receive one or do not remember receiving one is lowest for call 2 (6%) and highest in call 3 (29%).

Almost 60% of the respondents (strongly) disagreed with the reasons for rejection provided in the feedback letter.

Table 23: Evaluation of the feedback procedure - by type (n=71)*

	Total (n=71)	Pegasus-Long (n=18)	Pegasus-Short (n=53)
The feedback letter should be more elaborate, even if this causes extra workload or overhead costs at FWO, which in turn can lead to fewer available fellowships.	0,7	1,3	0,5
I received the feedback letter within a reasonable amount of time.	0,5	0,8	0,3
The reason(s) I got was/were clearly substantiated.	-0,2	-0,4	-0,2
I agreed with the reason(s) given.	-0,5	-0,7	-0,5

*To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning the feedback procedure for the Pegasus Fellowship? (average score with strongly disagree = -2, disagree = -1, neither agree nor disagree = 0; agree = +1 and strongly agree = +2)

A majority of rejected respondents (strongly) disagrees with the reason(s) for rejection and also the substantiation of these reasons (55% and 59% respectively) (see Table 23). Taking into account the type of fellowship, we see that the rejected applicants for a Pegasus-long fellowship are more critical compared to those that applied for a Pegasus-short fellowship. Some respondents indicated in their comments that there was no feedback procedure. Other respondents are mainly confused and frustrated that they received a positive review but no fellowship. Some also indicated that there was contradictory information in the letter or that the information was not detailed enough. This makes it unclear for the respondents why they were rejected.

"It is necessary to make a report of the commission's evaluation public. Now applicants only have the reviews at their disposal. In my case the reviews were highly positive, so I do not know at all why my proposal was rejected, how I could improve my future proposals, and what chances I have of getting my research accepted."

"I wanted to read the reports of the reviewers so I could improve on the application for a different funding body. Not getting detailed feedback means you cannot learn from the application and it basically is a waste of time then."

61% of the rejected applicants (strongly) agrees they received the feedback letter within a reasonable amount of time. 49% (strongly) agrees that the scope of the feedback letter should be more elaborate. When distinguishing between Pegasus-long and short-respondents, Pegasus-long respondents more frequently agree with both these statements.

*Table 24: Evaluation of the feedback procedure - by nationality (n=71)**

	Total (n=71)	BE (n=4)	Non-BE (n=67)
The feedback letter should be more elaborate, even if this causes extra workload or overhead costs at FWO, which in turn can lead to fewer available fellowships.	0,7	1,0	0,7
I received the feedback letter within a reasonable amount of time.	0,5	1,0	0,4
The reason(s) I got was/were clearly substantiated.	-0,2	-0,3	-0,2
I agreed with the reason(s) given.	-0,5	-0,3	-0,6

**To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning the feedback procedure for the Pegasus Fellowship? (average score with strongly disagree = -2, disagree = -1, neither agree nor disagree = 0; agree = +1 and strongly agree = +2)*

Belgian respondents on average agree more frequently that the feedback letter should be more elaborate and that they received the feedback letter within a reasonable amount of time, compared to non-Belgians (see Table 24. They also less (strongly) disagree on the reason(s) for rejection provided by FWO.

5.5 Contracting procedure

The questions on the contracting procedure were only answered by the successful applicants.

The respondents are rather positive about the surveyed elements of the contracting procedure, except about the flexibility of the starting date of the fellowship.

*Table 25: Evaluation of the contracting procedure - by type (n=48)**

	Total (n=48)	Pegasus - Long (n=19)	Pegasus - Short (n=29)
The possibilities provided by FWO to manage my personnel file are user friendly.	0,7	0,8	0,6
The contractual conditions and obligations were clear to me.	0,5	0,5	0,6
The start date of my fellowship was sufficiently flexible.	0,5	-0,1	0,8

**To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning the contracting procedure for the Pegasus Fellowship (average score with strongly disagree = -2, disagree = -1, neither agree nor disagree = 0; agree = +1 and strongly agree = +2)*

Overall, the respondents are rather positive about the surveyed elements of the contracting procedure (see Table 25). The flexibility of the starting date of the fellowship is an issue, in particular for the Pegasus-long type. In the beginning of the programme, the start date of the fellowship was not flexible. For the more recent Pegasus-short calls, the starting date of the fellowship can be postponed, at least upon request. This could explain why there is a large disagreement on the start date flexibility between the Pegasus-long fellowships (for which there was only one call in the beginning) and the Pegasus-short ones.

Some respondents specifically indicated the lack of flexibility of the start date also in their additional comments. Another issue that was raised in these additional comments is the lack of detailed salary information. For some applicants it was not clear what their wage would be. In Belgium the years of experience only count if you had a contract with a taxable salary which is often not the case in other countries where researchers are often hired on stipends. This is detrimental for the salary of researchers with many years of experience but paid via stipends.

A final issue mentioned by some respondents in their additional comments is that part of the contracting procedures is available in Dutch only, which led to a lack of information on e.g. travel budget, number of

holidays, contracting conditions etc. This comes as a surprise since most of this information is available in English, as confirmed by FWO.

16,7% of the Pegasus fellows received help from FWO with obtaining a visa or working permit (in particular Pegasus-short fellows) and another 10,4% did not, but would have appreciated such help (in particular Pegasus-long fellows).

*Table 26: Help from FWO for obtaining a visa or working permit - by type (n=48)**

	Total (n=48)	Pegasus - Long (n=19)	Pegasus - Short (n=29)
Yes	16,7%	10,5%	20,7%
No, but I did not need help from FWO	72,9%	73,7%	72,4%
No, but I would have appreciated it	10,4%	15,8%	6,9%
Total	100%	100%	100%

**Did you receive any help from FWO for obtaining a visa or working permit?*

Overall 16,7% of the Pegasus fellows received help from FWO with obtaining a visa or working permit (see Table 26). Another 10,4 % did not, but would have appreciated such help and almost 3 out of 4 of the respondents did not receive help but indicated they also did not need such help. The Pegasus-short fellows received more frequently help from FWO (20,7%) compared to the Pegasus-long fellows (10,5%), who would however have appreciated some more help.

"I found the visa requirements, contract requirements, etc. initially confusing. That's probably inevitable when moving to a new country, and everything worked out fine in the end. Still, any further guidance that the FWO could provide to foreign applicants would probably be helpful."

Host institutions provided help to settle in Flanders to almost 50% of the respondents.

49% of the respondents indicated that they were offered support to settle in Flanders by their host institution. 83% of this subgroup also made use of this support, which most frequently consisted of providing information on housing arrangements, social security, registration, school for children. Some institutions also foresee temporary housing, which provides some more flexibility to foreigners. University International Offices, HR departments as well as colleagues are important information sources.

Respondents were "moderately" (21%), but mostly "very" (53%) and up to "extremely satisfied" (21%) with the help offered by the host institution upon arrival. Nevertheless, the suggestion was made to compose a "starters guide" on working in Flanders with information on registration, holidays, sick leave etc. which could be distributed amongst foreign researchers together with the notification of the granted fellowship. This way the researcher can already start the integration process before arrival.

In addition, a good communication between the host institutions and FWO is important. Administrative departments at the host institution are well aware of the employment conditions at their institution but sometimes there is some uncertainty as FWO fellows are FWO employees and thus not employees of the institution.

5.6 Reporting procedure

A final procedure we evaluated is the reporting procedure. Only a subset of 29 respondents amongst the successful applicants already wrote a progress or final report. This small number needs to be taken into account for what follows.

Issues with respect to the reporting procedure are the lack of information on how the evaluation reports are evaluated and the usefulness of the feedback (if any), in particular for the Pegasus-long fellows.

*Table 27: Evaluation of the reporting procedure - by type (n=29)**

	Total (n=29)	Pegasus - Long (n=19)	Pegasus - Short (n=10)
The time needed for the reporting is acceptable.	1,2	1,2	1,2
The aim of the report is clear to me.	0,7	0,7	0,6
It was clear to me that writing a report is a requirement.	0,7	0,6	0,7
It was clear to me how the report was evaluated.	-0,3	-0,5	0,0
The feedback I received as a follow-up to my progress/final report was useful.	-0,5	-0,8	0,0

**To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning the reporting procedure for the Pegasus Fellowship? (average score with strongly disagree = -2, disagree = -1, neither agree nor disagree = 0; agree = +1 and strongly agree = +2)*

Preparing the report is not perceived as an administrative burden since 93% of the respondents consider the time needed for reporting to be acceptable (see Table 27). For about 70%, the requirement to write and the aim of the report were clear as well. There are no big differences by type of respondent for these first 3 statements.

The way these evaluation reports are evaluated is not clear for 45% of the respondents. 52% of the respondents indicated "no opinion/not relevant" on the last statement about the feedback received on their progress/final report. From the interviews we derived that it was not clear that this feedback would be provided. In the time between the survey and the follow-up interviews, several of them received this feedback from FWO, which changed the opinion of the interviewees on this question.

6/ Impact of the Pegasus programme

6.1 Introduction

A final set of questions in the survey focused on the impacts of the Pegasus fellowship. During the follow-up interviews, these impacts were even the major topic. In what follows, we distinguished between the impact (1) on the researchers, (2) on their host institution and (3) on the advancement of Flemish science.

Evaluating the impact is difficult though, in first instance because the Pegasus programme only started 2 years ago. FWO awarded 74 fellowships and 50 of them responded to the survey. But among these, there are only 15 respondents whose fellowship came to an end already. During the follow-up interviews, we further asked the interviewees what would have happened without the fellowship (in case of selected fellows) or did happen when the fellowship was rejected (in case of rejected applicants).

We further experienced, in particular during the follow-up interviews, that the researchers are hesitant to reflect on the impact of their Pegasus fellowship on their host institution and even more hesitant to say something about the impact on Flemish science. FWO therefore contacted the promoters of the fellows to collect additional input on these impact dimensions (see Box 3).

Box 3: FWO-survey amongst the promoters

FWO contacted 99 promoters of Pegasus fellows with the following three questions:

1. What has been the impact of the Pegasus fellow on your research and the activities of your research group in particular?
2. What is the more general impact of attracting Pegasus fellows on research in Flanders?
3. How can the Pegasus fellowship programme be further improved?

The promoters were invited to respond in writing. 32 of them submitted a response on time which has been analysed and used as additional information to illustrate the impact of the programme.

6.2 Impact on the researcher

Respondents are very positive about the impact of the Pegasus fellowship on their research career and their research capabilities and strengths.

Table 28 provides an overview of the survey responses to a number of statements concerning some specific impacts of the Pegasus fellowship on the researchers. Overall, the respondents agree to a large extend with each of these statements and in particular with the first 2 statements.

*Table 28: Evaluation of the individual career impacts of the Fellowship - by type**

	Total (n=47)	Pegasus Long (n=19)	Pegasus Short (n=28)
Plays/played an important role to further develop my research career.	1,4	1,6	1,3
Plays/played an important role to further develop my research capabilities and skills.	1,3	1,3	1,3
Stimulates/stimulated the creation or the expansion of my research network.	1,1	1,1	1,1
Contributes/contributed to the advancement of the scientific level of my host research group.	1,0	1,0	1,0

**To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning some specific impacts of your Pegasus Fellowship? (average score with strongly disagree = -2, disagree = -1, neither agree nor disagree = 0; agree = +1 and strongly agree = +2)*

53% of the respondents strongly agreed with the important role the Pegasus fellowship played/plays to further develop their research career. Another 36% agreed with this statement. Similarly, 91% of the respondents (strongly) agreed with the important role the Pegasus fellowship played/plays to further develop their research skills and capabilities.

For the first statement, we see that in particular the Pegasus-long fellows strongly agree, while for the second statement, there is no difference between both types of fellows.

Table 29: Evaluation of the individual career impacts of the Fellowship - by nationality*

	Total (n=47)	BE (n=6)	non-BE (n=41)
Plays/played an important role to further develop my research career.	1,4	1,8	1,4
Plays/played an important role to further develop my research capabilities and skills.	1,3	1,3	1,2
Stimulates/stimulated the creation or the expansion of my research network.	1,1	1,0	1,1
Contributes/contributed to the advancement of the scientific level of my host research group.	1,0	1,0	1,0

*To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning some specific impacts of your Pegasus Fellowship? (average score with strongly disagree = -2, disagree = -1, neither agree nor disagree = 0; agree = +1 and strongly agree = +2)

Table 30: The applicant's assessment of individual career impacts of the Fellowship - by current status*

	Total (n=47)	Fellowship is finished (n=14)	Fellowship is still running (n=33)
Plays/played an important role to further develop my research career.	1,4	1,4	1,4
Plays/played an important role to further develop my research capabilities and skills.	1,3	1,1	1,3
Stimulates/stimulated the creation or the expansion of my research network.	1,1	1,4	0,9
Contributes/contributed to the advancement of the scientific level of my host research group.	1,0	1,2	0,9

*To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning some specific impacts of your Pegasus Fellowship? (average score with strongly disagree = -2,; disagree = -1, neither agree nor disagree = 0; agree = +1 and strongly agree = +2)

Table 29 and Table 30 present the responses to the same question about the specific impacts, but now according to different profile characteristics. From Table 29 we learn that in particular the fellows with Belgian nationality (a small number) strongly agree with the positive impact on their research career. The current status of the fellowship, finished or still running, does not seem to make a difference in the appreciation of the (expected) impact on their research career, while respondents in the case their fellowship is still running are somewhat more positive about the impact on their research capabilities and skills compared to those respondents whose fellowship is finished.

Some respondents and interviewees stressed the positive impact on their CV and, consequently, on their further career. Directly, because there is a certain prestige linked to the fellowship, which further proves their ability to write research proposals and attract external funding. More indirectly, because the fellowship provides guaranteed funding which allows the researcher to focus exclusively on its research. The prestige comes from the fact that FWO is a highly regarded agency and the fact that the programme is also financed by the Marie Curie COFUND initiative under FP7.

"It has been considered as a prestigious award in Belgium (this was told to me during a poster presentation)"

"It proves that I have the capability to write a research proposal"

"I feel that it is very important to be able to demonstrate that you can acquire research grants"

"Three years of guaranteed research funding to pursue my work uninterruptedly at this stage of my career is absolutely fantastic."

"I believe it has been instrumental in getting accepted as a CERN cofund fellow"

"It was the stepping stone to an Odysseus grant and in the end a permanent position"

Besides the positive impact on their research capabilities in general, some respondents also provided examples of more specific skills which they acquired during their Pegasus fellowship.

"I learned a few statistical tools"

"In my project I gain new skills, such as working with a patient population"

"In addition to my lab research I have started up a core service which involves techniques which I have strong expertise in and techniques that I had to acquire."



The respondents are also positive about the impact on their research network which expanded.

Table 28, Table 29 and Table 30 also provide information on the respondents' opinion on whether the Pegasus Fellowship stimulates/stimulated the creation or the expansion of their research network. Overall, 76% of the respondents (strongly) agreed with this statement. The type (Pegasus long or short) or the nationality of the fellow does not make a difference, but the current status does: respondents whose fellowship is finished are much more positive about this impact compared to those respondents whose fellowship is still running.

When providing examples, we can make the distinction between the impact for in particular foreign researchers who get to know a new group of researchers in their host institution, and the impact as a consequence of the budget for travelling which is part of the fellowship and which allows the Pegasus fellows to attend conferences and meeting other researchers there.

"The opportunity to come to Belgium, and to Europe more generally, has been extremely stimulating and I've met a great number of new colleagues as a result."

"Thanks to the international network that this fellowship provides me"

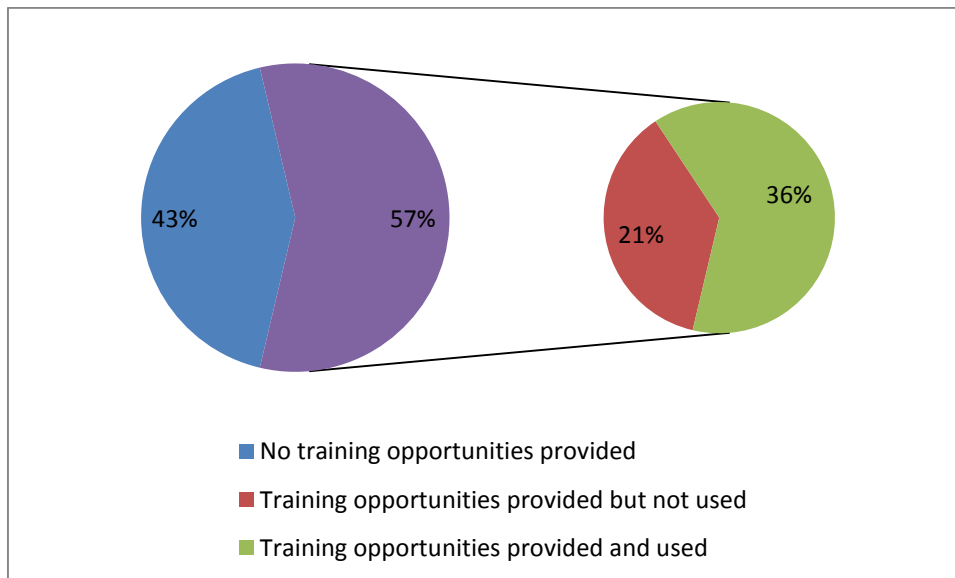
"Moving to a different institution allows for the expansion of your network."

"This is only because the budget for travelling is considerable and I went to a lot of conferences that year."

"Additional funding for travel allowed my participation in an international conference which may not have been otherwise possible"

According to the respondents, 57% of the host institutions provide training opportunities. 2/3rds of the respondents made use of these opportunities and most of them are "very satisfied" with this training.

Figure 2: Provision and use of training opportunities provide by the host institution



** Did your host institution provide training opportunities, formally organised or hands-on, to help you to develop your academic and research skills? (n=47)*

** Did you make use of these training opportunities? (n=27)*

There are only 17 respondents that were offered training opportunities and made use of it. 5 of them were "moderately satisfied", 8 were "very satisfied" and 4 were "extremely satisfied".

6.3 Impact on the host research group

According to the respondents, there is a positive impact on the host research group, which is confirmed by the promoters at these host institutions.

Again we refer to Table 28, Table 29 and Table 30 for the respondents' evaluation of this impact. 3 out of 4 respondents to the survey (strongly) agreed with the statement that their Pegasus fellowship also contributes/contributed to the advancement of the scientific level of their host research group. The type (Pegasus long or short) or the nationality of the fellow make no difference, while the current status does in a similar way as for the previous statement: respondents whose fellowship is finished are more positive about this impact compared to those respondents whose fellowship is still running.

Examples that were given by the respondents refer in particular to the additional papers and the complementary expertise they bring in.

"A few important papers have been published as a result of the collaboration"

"I brought new expertise to my host research group. My publications during this time now add to the advancement of the scientific level of my host institute."

"Allows (host institution) to have a continued strong presence in my field of research."

This positive impact on the host research group was confirmed by the promoters in the survey set up by FWO. The by far most frequently cited illustration of this impact relates to the complementary and new expertise the Pegasus-researchers bring in, mentioned by 16 out of the 32 promoters. It allows the host research group to extend its scope or to get familiar with the most up-to-date research methodologies.

"The Pegasus fellowship holder I recruited to the laboratory, has brought the latest molecular biology techniques into my laboratory - making us the first in Belgium to have access to this technology. The fellowship holder has also been a fantastic addition to the laboratory, and is in the process of applying for an ERC Start grant to run an independent laboratory in Leuven. In that regard, the programme has been an overwhelming success - it has brought in a foreign national who may not otherwise have entered Belgium, where she will be contributing to the long-term improvement of Belgian science. In that regard, an excellent example of brain gain"

Similar to the Pegasus-respondents, the promoters also refer to the additional scientific output and publications in particular, as a positive outcome for the host research group (mentioned explicitly by 5 promoters). But there are 2 additional impact areas mentioned by 5 promoters each and which have longer term effects contributing to the sustainability of these impacts. The first one is the network of international contacts that in particular non-Belgian Pegasus fellows bring with them. This results in more international visibility for the host research group and sometimes new research collaborations as well. The second impact area is the continued collaboration with the Pegasus fellows after they have left the host research group and either started at a new institution or returned to their original institution.

6.4 Impact on research in Flanders

The respondents were also invited to evaluate 5 statements concerning the more general impact of the Pegasus Fellowship programme and provide examples of such impact (see Table 31 and Table 32). The impact on research in Flanders was also addressed in the survey set up by FWO amongst the promoters.

*Table 31: Evaluation of the general impacts of the Fellowship - by type (n=47)**

	Total (n=47)	Pegasus Long (n=19)	Pegasus Short (n=28)
Stimulates international mobility of researchers	1,4	1,3	1,4
Contributes to the advancement of Flemish science	1,3	1,1	1,4
Attracts excellent postdoctoral researchers to Flanders	1,2	1,1	1,3
Stimulates new research streams	0,8	0,7	0,8
Stimulates interdisciplinary research	0,6	0,5	0,6

**To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning the more general impact of the Pegasus Fellowship programme? (average score with strongly disagree = -2, disagree = -1, neither agree nor disagree = 0; agree = +1 and strongly agree = +2)*

Table 32: Evaluation of the general impacts of the Fellowship - by nationality (n=47)*

	Total (n=47)	BE (n=6)	non-BE (n=41)
Stimulates international mobility of researchers	1,4	1,5	1,3
Contributes to the advancement of Flemish science	1,3	1,2	1,3
Attracts excellent postdoctoral researchers to Flanders	1,2	0,8	1,3
Stimulates new research streams	0,8	1,0	0,7
Stimulates interdisciplinary research	0,6	0,4	0,6

*To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning the more general impact of the Pegasus Fellowship programme? (average score with strongly disagree = -2,; disagree = -1, neither agree nor disagree = 0; agree = +1 and strongly agree = +2)

According to the respondents, the Pegasus Fellowship programme scores very positively in stimulating international mobility of researchers, in contributing to the advancement of Flemish science and in attracting excellent postdoctoral researchers to Flanders.

Respondents most strongly agreed with the statement that the Pegasus Fellowship encourages international mobility, because it “attracts not only Belgian researchers”¹⁵ and also allows the fellows to attend conferences and meetings providing them an “excellent chance to access the latest progress in (their) field”.

The Pegasus fellowship contributes to the advancement of Flemish science, for example “because one can continue working in the own research field, you bring new expertise and new topics to your Flemish host institution and add to the advancement of Flemish science.”

It is further said to attract excellent postdoctoral researchers to Flanders because “the Pegasus Fellowship is open to the researchers worldwide”, offering them “excellent research conditions and a prestigious position”. Another respondent mentioned that “although the Pegasus short programme may not be very attractive as it is only a one-year grant I feel that the working environment is really good here”.

For these first 3 statements, there is some more support amongst the Pegasus Short fellows compared to the Pegasus Long-fellows. The comparison between the Belgian and non-Belgian Pegasus fellows is less straightforward. Remarkable is the much stronger agreement amongst the non-Belgian fellows that Pegasus attracts excellent postdoctoral researchers to Flanders.

There is less support amongst the respondents for a positive impact on interdisciplinary research and stimulation of new research streams.

The respondents to the survey are less convinced about the stimulating impact of the Pegasus Fellowship programme on interdisciplinary research and new research streams. Besides the relatively larger number of respondents who ticked the “no opinion/not relevant” option (compared to the other statements), there were also 32% and 30% of the respondents respectively who (strongly) disagreed with these statements. With respect to the stimulation of interdisciplinary research, one of the respondents noted the following: “It was so hard to make the case that my project was interdisciplinary. On balance, it is better to apply to a disciplinary panel. The requirements for interdisciplinarity of the FWO are awkward.” We indicated before in Chapter 4 that the success rate for applications submitted to the interdisciplinary FWO-expert panel is the lowest amongst the different fields of science.

The promotors of the host research groups stress in particular the benefits for Flanders that result from the international character of the funding scheme.

The responses of the promotors on the more general impact of attracting Pegasus fellows on research in Flanders, can be clustered in three main sorts of impact. These can be considered as a kind of extrapolation of the impacts on the host research groups.

7 promotors stressed the fact that thanks to the expertise of the Pegasus fellows, the scope of research is widened in Flanders and/or existing research fields can be developed in a more efficient way. It is in particular the international background of most of the Pegasus fellows which contributes to the “revitalization of the knowledge base in Flanders”, like one of the promotors indicated.

¹⁵ This is confirmed by the relative distribution of Belgian versus non-Belgian researchers amongst the Pegasus applicants in Chapter 4.



5 promoters indicated the positive impact on the international status and visibility of Flanders as a research region. It was mentioned by one of these promoters that the existence of a funding scheme like Pegasus attracts positive attention amongst colleagues at international conferences.

Another 5 promoters focused on the benefits for Flanders as a consequence of the longer term international research collaboration which often results from the Pegasus fellowships.

Besides these 3 sorts of more general impacts, there were also 6 promoters that mentioned the difficulty to evaluate the more general impact of the Pegasus programme on research in Flanders.

8 out of the 14 respondents stayed in Flanders after their Pegasus fellowship was finished.

We had a number of survey-questions on whether the researchers stayed or not in Flanders after their Pegasus fellowship was finished, as well as about the (professional and/or personnel) reasons for staying or not. But because of the low number of respondents in this subcategory (14), it is not possible to draw strong conclusions.

8 of these respondents (1 Belgian and 7 non-Belgian) stayed in Flanders, mainly for professional reasons. 7 of them obtained another post-doc position in Flanders at their host institution.

The other 6 respondents (1 Belgian and 5 non-Belgian) left Flanders, because of a mix of personnel, family-related reasons and professional reasons (they obtained a tenure track position or another postdoc fellowship, or pursued other academic options abroad). 5 of them continued their collaboration with the Flemish host institution after they left Flanders.

Similar questions were also posed to those respondents whose Pegasus fellowship is still running (33 respondents). 20 of them do not know yet what they will do afterwards, 8 plan to stay in Flanders (3 Belgian and 5 non-Belgian) while the remaining 5 (1 Belgian and 4 non-Belgian) intend to leave Flanders. Again, the reasons for their intention to stay or leave Flanders, are a mix of personnel and professional reasons similar to those for the respondents whose Pegasus fellowship already ended.

7/ Conclusions and recommendations

In this chapter we present the main conclusions of this study, structured along the evaluation questions which guided the study, as well as our recommendations, mostly inspired by the suggestions made by the respondents, interviewees and promoters.

7.1 Conclusions

- ▶ **Overall, we evaluate the Pegasus Fellowship programme positively in terms of management** like implemented by FWO, **as well as in terms of impact** on the researchers, the host institution and research in Flanders more in general, insofar as this impact can be evaluated already at this stage.

In addition to the evaluation results presented in the previous chapters and the conclusions we list below, we can also mention here that 57% of the Pegasus fellows is "very satisfied" and another 40% even "extremely satisfied" with their Pegasus fellowship.

Figure 3: Satisfaction with your Pegasus fellowship*



n=47

*Overall, to what extent are you satisfied with your Pegasus fellowship?

Processes: efficiency and effectiveness

Is the Pegasus fellowship programme implemented efficiently and effectively?

- ▶ Respondents are most frequently informed about the Pegasus fellowship by a personal contact at their (future) host institution. For Belgian applicants, the FWO website is the most important information source. Granted respondents are more frequently informed about the fellowship by a contact at the host (45%) as well as at the home (16%) institution, compared to respondents whose application was rejected. This could be an indication of the fact that these personal contacts may help to write a stronger application with a higher chance of obtaining the fellowship, which was confirmed in the follow-up interviews with selected applicants.
- ▶ The Pegasus guidelines are read by 98% of the respondents and 83,5% indicate that these guidelines provide all the necessary information.
- ▶ **The respondents are (very) satisfied with the application procedure** (the help provided by FWO and the host institution, the clarity of the available information about the procedure and the funding possibilities, the time needed to prepare the application), **except about the requirement to propose a list of 10 experts and the user friendliness of the online application.**

The respondents whose application was rejected are more critical for each of the statements on the application procedure compared to the respondents whose application was accepted, which is in line with what we expected intuitively.

A large share of the respondents (overall 48%, but 59% amongst the rejected applicants) (strongly) disagreed with the reasonability of the requirement to propose 10 experts. The combination of conditions that need to be fulfilled are said to make it very difficult for in particular young researchers to come up with 10 names. But also for more experienced researchers, the requirement can be tough since they may need to look for candidates outside their field who will be less familiar with the research topic.



Regarding the online application procedure, issues were raised with respect to the mismatch between the maximum number of words in the guidelines versus the online application tool, the compatibility between formats resulting in the loss of formatting and difficulties to implement corrections.

- ▶ The respondents consider the quality as a researcher and the scientific quality of the proposed project as the most important evaluation criteria.
- ▶ **Respondents are rather positive about the evaluation procedure, though more critical compared to the application procedure, with in particular 36% of them who consider the evaluation procedure at FWO not transparent.**

The open questions and the follow-up interviews further made clear that in particular for Pegasus-short and for non-Belgian applicants, the time between submitting an application and the announcement of the decision by FWO is too long.

- ▶ **Almost 60% of the respondents (strongly) disagreed with the reasons for rejection provided in the feedback letter.**

Some respondents indicated in their comments that there was no feedback procedure. Other respondents are mainly confused and frustrated that they received a positive review but no fellowship. Some also indicated that there was contradictory information in the letter or that the information was not detailed enough. This makes it unclear for the respondents why they were rejected.

- ▶ **The respondents are rather positive about the surveyed elements of the contracting procedure, except about the flexibility of the starting date of the fellowship.**

The flexibility of the starting date of the fellowship is an issue, in particular for the Pegasus-long type. In the beginning of the programme, the start date of the fellowship was not flexible. For the more recent Pegasus-short calls, the starting date of the fellowship can be postponed, at least upon request.

Two other issues that were raised in the additional comments provided by the respondents as well as during the interviews are (1) the lack of detailed salary information and (2) the fact that part of the contracting procedures is available in Dutch only.

- ▶ 16,7% of the Pegasus fellows received help from FWO with obtaining a visa or working permit (in particular Pegasus-short fellows) and another 10,4% did not, but would have appreciated such help (in particular Pegasus-long fellows).
- ▶ Host institutions provided help to settle in Flanders to almost 50% of the respondents.
- ▶ Issues with respect to the reporting procedure are the **lack of information on how the evaluation reports are evaluated and the usefulness of the feedback (if any)**, in particular for the Pegasus-long fellows.

Results and impacts: effectiveness

Are the targeted researchers reached?

- ▶ **FWO received 707 Pegasus applications**, of which 185 (26%) for a Pegasus-long and 522 (74%) for a Pegasus-short fellowship. In total 659 researchers applied for a fellowship over the time period 2012-2014.
- ▶ 27 Pegasus-long and 43 Pegasus-short fellowships were granted and accepted up to know. There are still 172 pending applications. **The overall success rate for a Pegasus fellowship is 15%, which is quite low.**
- ▶ KU Leuven is in 47% of the Pegasus applications the host institution of the applicants.
- ▶ Most Pegasus applications are submitted in the field of Science and Technology while Interdisciplinary and Medical Science applications are rare.
- ▶ 60% of Pegasus applicants are male and their share in the successful applications is 70%.
- ▶ **8% of the Pegasus applications concerns return mobility.** When distinguishing between the different nationalities, we observe that Italian (12%) and Spanish nationals (11%) apply most frequently. Also in the neighbouring countries, the Pegasus-fellowship is popular with Dutch, French and German applicants (6%). 7% of the applications originate from Indian applicants and 5% from Chinese applicants. US citizens represent 4% of the applications This indicates that the Pegasus-fellowship is also known outside the EU.

- ▶ Most of the respondents that withdrew their application did so because they had other job opportunities.
- ▶ Other job offers are the main reason why granted fellowships are sometimes not accepted.

Are the results and impacts of the programme in line with expectations?

- ▶ **Respondents are very positive about the impact of the Pegasus fellowship on their research career and their research capabilities and strengths.**

Some respondents and interviewees stressed the positive impact on their CV and, consequently, on their further career. Directly, because there is a certain prestige linked to the fellowship, which further proves their ability to write research proposals and attract external funding. More indirectly, because the fellowship provides guaranteed funding which allows the researcher to focus exclusively on its research. The prestige comes from the fact that FWO is a highly regarded agency and the fact that the programme is also financed by the Marie Curie COFUND initiative under FP7.

- ▶ **The respondents are also positive about the impact on their research network which expanded.**

A distinction can be made between the positive impact for in particular foreign researchers who get to know a new group of researchers in their host institution, and the positive impact as a consequence of the budget for travelling which is part of the fellowship and which allows the Pegasus fellows to attend conferences and meeting other researchers there.

- ▶ According to the respondents, 57% of the host institutions provide training opportunities. 2/3rds of the respondents made use of these opportunities and most of them are “very satisfied” with this training.
- ▶ **According to the respondents, there is a positive impact on the host research group, which is confirmed by the promotors at these host institutions.**

Examples that were given by the respondents refer in particular to the additional papers and the complementary expertise they bring in. Promotors stressed in particular the complementary and new expertise the Pegasus-researchers bring in. It allows the host research group to extend its scope or to get familiar with the most up-to-date research methodologies.

- ▶ **According to the respondents, the Pegasus Fellowship programme scores very positively in stimulating international mobility of researchers, in contributing to the advancement of Flemish science and in attracting excellent postdoctoral researchers to Flanders. There is less support amongst the respondents for a positive impact on interdisciplinary research and stimulation of new research streams.**
- ▶ **The promotors of the host research groups stress in particular the benefits for Flanders that result from the international character of the funding scheme.**

Promotors stressed the fact that thanks to the expertise of the Pegasus fellows, the scope of research is widened in Flanders and/or existing research fields can be developed in a more efficient way. It is in particular the international background of most of the Pegasus fellows which contributes to the “revitalization of the knowledge base in Flanders”. They also indicated the positive impact on the international status and visibility of Flanders as a research region and the benefits for Flanders as a consequence of the longer term international research collaboration which often results from the Pegasus fellowships.

Results and impacts: sustainability

- ▶ **8 out of the 14 respondents stayed in Flanders after their Pegasus fellowship was finished.**

We had a number of survey-questions on whether the researchers stayed or not in Flanders after their Pegasus fellowship was finished, as well as about the (professional and/or personnel) reasons for staying or not. But because of the low number of respondents in this subcategory (14), it is not possible to draw strong conclusions.

8 of these respondents (1 Belgian and 7 non-Belgian) stayed in Flanders, mainly for professional reasons. 7 of them obtained another post-doc position in Flanders at their host institution.

The other 6 respondents left Flanders, because of a mix of personnel, family-related reasons and professional reasons. 5 of them continued their collaboration with the Flemish host institution after they left Flanders.

7.2 Recommendations

The following are a number of recommendations as collected amongst the respondents to the survey as well the interviewees and the promoters. They may partially overlap and are not always compatible. They are quite operational and mostly link to the issues raised in the context of the evaluation of the procedures.

It should further be noted that FWO already implemented some of these recommendations, like recommendations 3 and 6 for example, while there may be good reasons not to implement other recommendations because they need to be considered in a wider perspective taking into account FWO-policy (like for example recommendations 4 and 5 – see below).

1. Consider a shift from Pegasus-short to Pegasus-long. Respondents as well as interviewees and promoters often mentioned that the Pegasus-short fellowship does not allow to develop a real research project since one needs already to think about funding for the years to come. A number of promoters suggested all Pegasus fellowships could last 2 years.
2. For Pegasus-short, consider a light version for the application and evaluation procedure (shorter, with for example no external refereeing).
3. Improve the online application tool, for instance by providing the possibility to upload documents.
4. Reconsider the need to provide a list of 10 potential referees, in particular for Pegasus-short. The requirement to provide such list is however an important element in current FWO-evaluation practice for other fellowships and grants as well. Moreover it should be noted that the external expert review reports are only one input in the evaluation process.
5. More fundamentally, drop the requirement to propose referees and alternatively work with a “negative list”, i.e. applicants can disqualify experts proposed by FWO. Such an approach would however give a lot of power to the FWO-administration.
6. Consider the possibility for applicants to react to the expert referee reports within a restricted time period (for example within a week) and with a short note (for example with a maximum of 500 words).
7. Consider the possibility to increase the transparency of the evaluation procedure, for example by providing information on the weight of the different criteria and by listing the subcriteria.
8. Provide more extensive feedback, to all applicants (not only the rejected ones) with for instance the anonymised reports prepared by the external experts as well as the evaluation prepared by the FWO expert panel.
9. Verify whether all information on the Pegasus fellowship programme as well as the contract related documents are available in English and easily accessible.
10. If possible, provide more information on the salary conditions of Pegasus fellows.
11. Consider the possibility to put the years a researcher is paid with a stipend at equal terms with the years he or she is paid a taxable salary.
12. Allow more flexibility for the starting date, within the limits of what is feasible from an administrative point of view, and communicate about this flexibility in the guidelines.