

SPOIL CONTROL

management and control
of spoilage microorganisms
in the production
of fermented beverages

International PhD Program SpoilControl Project

**Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions
Doctoral Networks (DNs)**

Horizon Europe MSCA



**Funded by
the European Union**

Call for PhD Position

- **Position Title:**

Doctoral Candidate (DC8) – SpoilControl – Chemical and Sensory Profiling of Interactions Leading to Fermented Beverages Spoilage (CHEMSPOIL)

- **Main Location:**

Wine Research Centre (WRC) / University of Nova Gorica, Slovenia (SI)

- **Application Deadline:** 10/12/2025

*The application deadline may be extended as needed, according to each beneficiary institution, until the position is filled.

- **Context:**

The **University of Nova Gorica** is proposing applications for a PhD position within the **SpoilControl project**, funded by the **Horizon Europe Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) program**.

SpoilControl aims to train the next generation of polyvalent researchers in the field of sustainable fermentation technologies, addressing microbial spoilage to improve the quality and safety of fermented beverages.

Europe is the historical leader in fermented drinks, but its competitiveness is increasingly challenged. Microbial spoilage in fermented food is a growing concern, both financially (economic losses) and from a health perspective (increased presence of pathogens, particularly in artisanal and homemade products). These issues are exacerbated by societal and environmental changes, such as the trend toward low-input products, sustainable practices, small-scale productions, and climate change. The fermentation sector also lacks a global framework, leading to duplication of efforts and partitioned investments.



SpoilControl will implement a novel strategy encompassing multiple beverages (wine, spirits, beer, cider, kombucha, kefir), disciplines (environmental and life sciences, engineering, economics), and solutions (sustainable biological, chemical, and physical treatments).

With 34 partners—including universities, SMEs, large companies, innovation clusters, startups, analysis laboratories, technical institutes, and homebrewers' groups—SpoilControl covers the entire fermentation chain from fermentation to glass.

The project aims to generate scientific, societal, and economic impact by improving public awareness of safety issues, developing innovative treatments, and promoting best practices for industry and consumers alike.

Spoilcontrol will recruit a total of 15 PhD candidates across 12 of our partner institutions in Europe.

- **PhD position description and responsibilities:**

The recruited PhD candidate for CHEMSPOIL research project will focus on **chemical and sensory interactions leading to wine and apple cider spoilage from microbiological origin (Brett character, volatile acidity/acescence).**

- **Main responsibilities of the recruited student will include:**

- Developing methods for volatile compounds analysis by GC/MS (SPME and liquid-liquid extraction);
- Chemically characterizing the volatile (aroma and off-flavor with possible use of GC-olfactometry and HPLC fractioning) and non-volatile compositions (phenolics, polysaccharides) of macerated (also called “orange wines”) and conventionally made white wines and apple ciders (from table and cider apples);
- Investigating the volatility of volatile phenols, acetic acid, and ethyl acetate in white wines (macerated and conventional) and different types of apple ciders by measuring headspace partition;
- Investigating the influence of macerated white wine and apple cider non-volatile matrix on volatile phenols, acetic acid and ethyl acetate volatility (partition coefficient);
- Measuring perception thresholds of volatile phenols, acetic acid, and ethyl acetate in different wine and cider matrices;
- Investigating sensory interactions between the volatile compounds of macerated white wine and apple cider and targeted off-flavor compounds;
- Investigating sensory interactions between the non-volatile compounds of macerated white wine and apple cider and targeted off-flavor compounds.

This PhD will involve collaborations with:

- Work Package 3 (WP3) “Characterize spoilage’s impact” with DC9 (consumer behavior toward off-flavors)
- WP3 with DC10 (economic impact of microbiological spoilage)

• **Planned Secondments**

- 12 months (M13-M24) at **University of Montpellier (SPO Lab)** (France-FR) to characterize the non-volatile composition of targeted fermented beverages and investigate its interaction with wine and cider off-flavor

Short stay (20 days between M6-36) at **NIBIO** (Norway-NO) to assess the sensory impact of off-flavor in apple cider

• **Supervision and Progress Monitoring:**

The selected DC will benefit from a structured progress monitoring and evaluation system to ensure smooth implementation and timely completion of the research project. This will include:

1. **A thesis committee** composed of a main supervisor (from the University of Nova Gorica) and co-supervisor(s) from associated partners :

- Guillaume Antalick (main supervisor - WRC)
- Audrey Bloem (co-supervisor - University of Montpellier - SPO)
- Sophie Tempere (co-supervisor - University of Bordeaux)

2. **Monthly formal meetings** with the supervisory team to track research progress, training activities, and dissemination efforts.

3. A six-month review of the **Career Development Plan (CDP)** with supervisors to assess scientific advancements, training milestones, and employability prospects.

4. Submission of **periodic reports** detailing training achievements and scientific results.

5. Mid-term evaluation to ensure alignment with the Personal Career Development Plan (PCDP) and to implement corrective actions if necessary.

6. **Oversight of the WP5** “Recruitment, Training and DC support” by the training leader and the Project Coordinator, who will provide additional support in case of scientific or logistical challenges.

7. External evaluation from an **Advisory Board (AB) during annual meetings**, ensuring high-quality research and alignment with project objectives.

- **Eligibility Criteria:**

- Applicants can be of any nationality as long as they satisfy the **MSCA mobility rule:**

“No residence or main activity (work, studies, etc.) in the country of the recruiting beneficiary for more than 12 months in the 36 months before their recruitment date. Country of main activity = not only where the fellow was physically based but also the country of the institution for which the main activity was performed”.

- Candidates must hold a **Master’s degree or equivalent** (e.g., engineering degree) or be in the process of obtaining it by the start of the PhD project.

Related fields: Analytical Chemistry, Chemistry, Sensory Analysis

- **Conditions and Benefits:**

- Doctoral contract for 36 months within the SpoilControl project frame.

The future DC will have to enroll for a fourth year to complete his/her PhD in accordance with Slovenian law. Tuition fees for this additional year will be covered by WRC-UNG.

- The salary will be in accordance with MSCA-DN funding and Slovenian regulations (approximately €1,900.00 net per month for the first 36 months). The financial conditions for the fourth year will be discussed with the head of WRC-UNG at a later stage.
- Tuition fees and visa-related fees are covered by the consortium.
- Access to University of Nova Gorica and University of Montpellier infrastructure and resources.
- Supervision by experienced researchers.
- Opportunities for mobility and international collaborations within the SpoilControl consortium.
- Possibility of Slovenian language courses organized by the University of Nova Gorica.
- Training opportunities in food and fermentation technology careers.

Application Procedure

Applicants must submit the following documents by e-mail specifying the title of the PhD position: spoil.control@u-bordeaux.fr before **December 10th, 2025**.

Document	Size	Comments	Name of the file
Detailed CV	1-2 pages	In English	Name.Lastname_CV
Personal statement	1 page	Free writting	Name.Lastname_PS
2 Reference Letters		In English	Name.Lastname_RL
Copies of academic diplomas & transcripts		In English	Name.Lastname_Grades
Copies of English language proficiency certificates		For non-native English speakers	Name.Lastname_Lang

• Selection Procedure:

SpoilControl will guarantee a genuinely independent, transparent, and professional evaluation of exceptional quality. The selection process will include the following steps:

- **Eligibility Check:** The Project Manager (PM) will carry out an initial eligibility check for all applicants.
- **Application Review:** Future academic supervisors, in accordance with the MSCA Green Charter, will review applications based on key evaluation criteria.

 The 4-5 highest-ranked proposals for the PhD project will be shortlisted for the next stage.

- **Interviews:** Remote interviews will be conducted by the recruiting beneficiary and future supervisors, including non-academic members. These interviews will adhere to the MSCA Green Charter and the HR policies of the relevant institute.

- **Ranking List:** After the interviews, a ranking list will be generated for each DC project. The list will be sent to the Selection Board (SB) along with the applications and evaluation marks.
- **Selection:** The Supervisory Board (SB) will review the ranking list and endorse the final selection. They will establish the final shortlist and reserve list, which will consist of 15 applications for both categories (top selection and reserve).

- **Notification of Results:**

The PM or main supervisors will notify applicants of the final results by e-mail

EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR APPLICATIONS AND INTERVIEW:

	Max. Score	Criteria
Application	30	Experience
	20	Leadership Potential
	10	Career development
Interview	20	Presentation
	40	Research ability
	40	Leadership potential

For further information, please contact : Camila Martinez - SpoilControl
Project Manager

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